COLLABORATION AND CONTESTATION: THE VICTORIAN MULTIPLE-NARRATOR NOVEL

by

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This dissertation argues that the multiple-narrator structure enables unity and harmony among narrators rather than pursuing the perspectival splintering and cacophony that one might expect to rise from such a structure. The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, therefore, embodies a fantasy of smooth collaboration among a heterogeneous selection of narrators—including women and men, adults and children, working class and gentry—and thereby employs a liberal, though not quite democratic, integration of narrators. Although narrators may possess different backgrounds, interests, and beliefs, their narrations neatly support each other’s presentation of the facts; the multiple-narrator novel, therefore, provides a system by which to mobilize and collate facts—the fact being central to the Victorians’ conception of knowledge.

The dissertation’s opening chapter distinguishes the Victorians’ multiple-narrator offerings from similar iterations in the eighteenth and early twentieth century. Successful and self-conscious collaboration—both in narrative and in plot—proves unique to the Victorian versions of this structure. By drawing attention to the similarities between the two narrators of Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, chapter two argues that the novel’s content and structure actualize the shift between the aristocratic woman of surface and the feminine domestic ideal of depth. Chapter three covers novels that utilize more than two narrators: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,
Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*, and Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. In each novel, a foreign entity invades England, and the British respond with a narrative that counters the invader by creating a balance between the individual and the community. The *quick switch*—a sole, brief switch in narrators—in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Juliana Ewing’s *A Great Emergency* is the purview of chapter four. The *quick switch* is the exception to my argument because it magnifies rather than minimizes the differences between narrators by using narrative as a form of punishment. As chapter five argues, the narrators in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* differ in gender and status yet bond over the sharing of narrative, but while Lockwood and Nelly both desire distance and closure, Gilbert and Helen pursue exchange and closeness.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION: “ONE COHERENT AND TRUSTWORTHY CHRONICLE”

### 1.0 EPISTLES TO NARRATIVES TO MONOLOGUES: A HISTORY OF THE MULTIPLE-PERSPECTIVE FORM

- **1.1 THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL AND MORAL REALISM**
- **1.2 THE VICTORIAN MULTIPLE-NARRATOR NOVEL AND REALISM OF METHOD**
- **1.3 HEART OF DARKNESS AND THE SPEAKING SELF**
- **1.4 THE MULTIPLE-VOICE NOVEL AND REALISM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**
- **1.5 COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNICATION**

### 2.0 FROM SURFACE TO DEPTH: WOMEN, CLASS, AND THE DUAL NARRATION OF BLEAK HOUSE

- **2.1 DUAL—NOT DUELING NARRATORS**
- **2.2 QUESTIONING OMNISCIENCE**
- **2.3 SURFACE AND DEPTH**

### 3.0 “POWER OF COMBINATION”: INVASIONS AND MULTIPLE-NARRATOR COUNTER-ATTACKS IN THE MOONSTONE, THE WOMAN IN WHITE, DRACULA, AND THE BEETLE

- **3.1 THE INVADER**
LIST OF FIGURES

2.1 “Sunset in the Long Drawing Room.” ...................................................................................142

2.2 “Shadow.” ..............................................................................................................................143

2.3 “Morning.” .............................................................................................................................143

2.4 “Family Portraits at Mr Bayham Badger’s.” .........................................................................144

2.5 “In Re Guppy Extraordinary Proceedings.” ...........................................................................145

2.6 “Little Old Lady.” ..................................................................................................................146

2.7 “Miss Jellyby.” .......................................................................................................................147

2.8 “Sir Leicester Dedlock.” ........................................................................................................148

2.9 “Light.” ..................................................................................................................................149

4.1 “If any one of you six make a signal of any description, that man’s dead.” .........................286

4.2 “the squire raised his gun, the rowing ceased.” .................................................................287

4.3 “Death of Tom Redruth.” ......................................................................................................288
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INTRODUCTION: “ONE COHERENT AND TRUSTWORTHY CHRONICLE”

In Margaret Oliphant’s *A Beleaguered City* (1880), an invisible legion of the dead invades the French town of Semur and forcibly ousts its living inhabitants in an attempt to teach them the “true significance of life” (25). Martin Dupin, Semur’s mayor and the first narrator, enlists four other town residents to help him tell the story of this ghostly coup. Though the conceited Dupin believes that “no one” in Semur “could have more complete knowledge of the facts” than he does (3), he doesn’t consider his personal knowledge, however “complete,” sufficient to handle the task at hand:

> my attitude here is not that of a man recording his personal experiences only, but of one who is the official mouthpiece and representative of the commune, and whose duty it is to render to government and to the human race a true narrative of the very wonderful facts to which every citizen of Semur can bear witness. In this capacity it has become my duty so to arrange and edit the different accounts of the mystery, as to present one coherent and trustworthy chronicle to the world. (10)

The assimilation of “different accounts” into “one coherent and trustworthy chronicle” enables, rather than hinders, narrative unity and reliability (10). Through “differen[ce]” comes “coherence,” through multiple accounts comes “one,” through subjectivity comes “trustworth[iness].” “Collaboration and Contestation: The Victorian Multiple Narrator Novel” argues that although it might seem to imply splintering and cacophony, the multiple-narrator structure enables and pursues a rallying unity and harmony between narrators.
The language of unison in the aforementioned quotation becomes even more remarkable when one realizes that the five narrators’ opinions, statuses, and religious views drastically differ from one another. As Merryn Williams explains in her introduction to the novella, the story takes place a few years after the Franco-Prussian war ended in 1871 (x); by this time, France had transitioned from the short-lived Paris Commune to the long-lasting Third Republic. The French people were sharply divided between the Catholic Monarchists (generally the erstwhile nobility who called for a strengthened church and the return of the monarchy) and the anti-clerical Republicans (generally the middle class who refused the return of the monarchy and sought to weaken ties between the church and the state). Martin Dupin proudly asserts his middle-class standing (“bourgeois I was born and bourgeois I mean to die” [Oliphant 3]) and anti-clerical mindset. Another narrator, Félix de Bois-Sombre, belongs to a once noble family and identifies as a deeply religious monarchist. He pointedly sets himself apart, therefore, from the “respectable” but “not noble” Dupin (74) and from the strange, “revolutionary” Paul Lecamus (80). Lecamus, also a narrator, diverges from M. de Bois-Sombre’s more conventional spiritual beliefs by espousing “religious convictions of a curious kind” (13). Dupin’s wife (Agnes) and mother, both narrators, possess different religious convictions and class loyalties from one another; Agnes grew up poor, and Dupin’s mother claims her origins in the “haute bourgeoisie” (95). The five narrators of A Beleaguered City, then, own diverse political views, spiritual beliefs, and class identifications—these dissimilarities produce tensions, particularly between Agnes and her mother-in-law and between M. de Bois-Sombre and Lecamus. And yet, despite his obvious awareness of these tensions, Dupin requests narrations from this heterogeneous selection of the town. Dupin’s mother straightforwardly avers, “it is my misfortune not to agree
in all points with my Martin” (88); nonetheless, the narrations neatly support the others’ presentation of the facts. Interpretations of those facts may differ, but the facts themselves align.

Once the phantom visitors abruptly vanish, the previously divided town genuinely unites in a spontaneous group sing at the cathedral and at a church event the next day. Dupin describes how “with one voice, every man in unison with his brother, we sang with [the priest]” (108). Just as his explanation of the narration stresses the production of unity from multiplicity, the chorale features “every man” singing yet achieves “one voice” singing in “unison.” Dupin uses the pronoun “we,” confident that he can now speak on behalf of the group. Similarly, Dupin’s narration repeatedly uses the word “all” to indicate the harmony in and togetherness of these moments: “all understood” (107) and “all the people poured forth” (108). The use of the adjective “whole”—“the whole city assisted” at the church function—also highlights the unity that comes from diversity (108). Semur’s fantastic crisis, then, encourages the town to coalesce in the plot and in the narration. Dupin’s ability to respect other people’s deeply held beliefs (his “earnest desire to remain in sympathy and fraternity” with those quite different from him [110]), provides the unifying glue that keeps both the occupied town and the narrative project together. The multiple-narrator structure, then, offers the fantasy that characters who hold different world views can still see the world the same way. Unity can come from variety, solidarity from difference. Knowing his outcast status among the townspeople, Lecamus tells Dupin, “I am called visionary. I am not supposed to be a trustworthy witness” (13). Dupin, however, knows better. He knows that even (and especially) the “visionary” can fit into this utopia of unity.

Many examples of the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, then, embody this fantasy of smooth collaboration in order to solve internal problems and to meet external threats. Signs of contestation (particularly along gender, class, and racial lines) are apparent yet are overcome in
the overarching aim of collaboration and unity. A wide range of Victorian authors (both male and female) used multiple-narrator structures throughout the Victorian period, but only one study (a dissertation) has thus far explored this pocket of Victorian literature. This absence may be due to the general treatment of multiple-narrator novels as instances of mere multiplication or addition of basic narrative types rather than as a distinct type of narration. I consider the multiple-narrator novel as a distinct type of narration (composed of various subtypes) that cannot be quantified by simple math. For example, I categorize Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1852–1853) primarily as a multiple-narrator novel rather than primarily as a novel in which a third-person narrator alternates with a first-person narrator.¹ The distinction is slight, but crucial; the simple math approach fails to view a multiple-narrator novel as a structure beyond the sum of its parts. The experience of reading a novel with one first-person narrator, like Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), is not the same as reading Esther Summerson’s first-person sections of *Bleak House* precisely because Esther’s account does not stand alone and is not presented seamlessly.

Although not entirely silent on the multiple-narrator structure, the field of narratology offers little in the way of a coherent theory of multiple-narrator texts; multiple-narrator setups besides the frame narrative and the epistolary novel with multiple letter writers, like Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747), are largely overlooked. James Phelan invents the term “serial narration” to apply to such cases (197); however, I don’t use his phrase because it invites

¹ I use the terms “first-person narrator” and “third-person narrator” throughout this dissertation, although, like Gérard Genette and other narratologists, I consider the terms problematic and even incorrect. In my dissertation, I navigate between using these firmly entrenched—and at times helpful—terms and using Genette’s more precise, yet more cumbersome, set of terms such as heterodiegetic (third person) and homodiegetic (first person).
confusion with the serially published novel (much of Victorian literature and many multiple-narrator novels were published serially). Phelan, however, offers the term without elaboration in the epilogue of *Living to Tell about It*. Norman Friedman’s foundational essay “Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept” (1955) names and describes eight types of point of view, none of which resemble the multiple-narrator novel’s narrative approach. Although the frame narrative possesses a well-known label, a visual image (the frame or box-within-a-box), and a “built-in” interpretation (the frame is a short beginning and ending section that mirrors the central text in thematic or ironic ways), no “way of reading” exists for multiple-narrator novels such as Dickens’s *Bleak House* or Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). Therefore, another aim of this dissertation is to expand narratology to include and account for multiple-narrator novels.

Mikhail Bakhtin—inventor of terms such as heteroglossia, dialogism, and polyphony—would seem to be the go-to theorist for novelistic multiplicity. And though some critics have referred to his work, directly or indirectly, to offer insight into particular multiple-narrator novels, Bakthin’s conception of his key terms has little to do with what kind of narrator an author chooses to use. For example, though it is tempting to classify the multiple-narrator novel as inherently polyphonic, I argue that the Victorian multiple-narrator novel does not earn that designation. Bakhtin defines polyphony as a “plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world” (6); in polyphony, Bakhtin continues, characters are “free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him” (6). The author of the polyphonic novel (Dostoevsky is Bakhtin’s key example) refuses to treat his hero as a finalized object and instead “visualizes...the hero’s self-consciousness and the inescapable open-endedness...of that self-consciousness” (51). The author talks with rather than merely about his heroes. The multiple-narrator novel may seem to be a
perfect incarnation of polyphony’s “plurality of consciousnesses” (18); however, “plurality of consciousnesses” is only one part of the polyphony equation. The author must also have a specific attitude towards those consciousnesses, allowing them to be “free and independent” (51). Bakhtin clearly specifies that an author’s choice of a first-person narrator does not prevent monologism because such a choice does not necessarily evade authorial supremacy:

This problem lies deeper than the question of authorial discourse on the superficial level of composition, and deeper than any superficially compositional device for eliminating authorial discourse by means of the Ich-Erzählung form (first-person narration), or by the introduction of a narrator, or by constructing the novel in scenes and thus reducing authorial discourse to the status of a stage direction. All these compositional devices for eliminating or weakening authorial discourse at the level of composition do not in themselves tackle the essence of the problem; their underlying artistic meaning can be profoundly different, depending on the different artistic tasks they perform. (56–57)

I argue that the “compositional device” of multiple narrators in the Victorian novel doesn’t prevent monologically “see[ing] and know[ing] all things only in one way” (57). D. A. Miller takes up this line of reasoning in his reading of Wilkie Collins’s The Moonstone: “the novel is thoroughly monological—always speaking a master-voice that corrects, overrides, subordinates, or sublates all other voices it allows to speak” (54). Though, in essence, I agree with Miller’s assessment, I also diverge from it in three ways. Firstly, Miller presents the novel as completely—as such words as “thoroughly,” “always,” and “all” suggest—monological; the result of such a pure monology, Miller reasons, is that the novel is closed to all interpretation and leaves no space for ambiguity or debate. As he says, “all readers...pass the same judgment” (53).
The diverse and often contradictory critical response to *The Moonstone*, particularly with regards to the novel’s stance on empire, seems to disprove Miller’s claim that “all readers” act in unison. While I agree that “all readers” would agree on certain facts about the plot of *The Moonstone*, I also affirm that readers would, just as the characters do, interpret and judge those facts differently (perhaps this grants the novels some small degree of polyphony). What makes the fact that the dissimilar characters can see eye to eye so unusual is that they do so despite their diversity in personality, class, gender, race, and morality. Secondly, Miller argues that *The Moonstone* hides its monologism under a “ruse” of polyphony (52). Conversely, I argue that *The Moonstone* aims to be monologic rather than achieving such a state clandestinely. Thirdly, Miller applies his argument only to *The Moonstone* and not to the Victorian multiple-narrator novel in general. When Miller discusses *The Woman in White*, which uses a structure similar to *The Moonstone*, he is unable to account for the significance of its multiple-narrator structure: “The organizational device is a curious one, since nothing in the story ever appears to motivate it. Why and for whom does this story need to be thus told?” (156).

Criticism on the Victorian multiple-narrator novel has generated many articles and book chapters, and I identify two main interpretative trends in such criticism: the “struggle for narrative authority” approach and the “unreliability” approach. Although Alison Case’s *Plotting Women* and Lisa Sternlieb’s *The Female Narrator in the British Novel* are not nominally or exclusively about the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, they both effectively offer arguments about it since many canonical examples of Victorian female narration occur in multiple-narrator novels (interesting that the same can’t be said of male narrators). Case’s and Sternlieb’s opposing arguments both use the framework of feminist narratology to discuss the struggle for narrative authority between female and male characters. Case argues that “a feminine narrator
typically provides only the raw material of narrative, which is usually shaped and given meaning by a male ‘master-narrator’ within the text, or by an authorial or editorial frame that serves the same function” (13). She argues that Wilkie Collins’s novels intensely highlight this contrast by “opposi[ng]…a subordinated feminine narrator and a hypermasculine master-narrator who gains a full command of narrative authority and agency” (33). While Case stresses that feminine narrators “must be seen neither to plot nor to preach” (13), Sternlieb argues that female narrators’ “artfulness” and “artifice” allow them to “design, construct, and baffle while appearing to ingratiate with artless candor” (1). “They achieve power” over the greedy men who want to get hold of their writings “not through what they do, but through how they tell” (4). Both Case and Sternlieb ask the following question: who (and which gender?) possesses the narrative power and authority? Much of the critical work on the narrative structure in The Moonstone, The Woman in White, Dracula, Bleak House, and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall illuminates a (generally gendered) power struggle for narrative authority. Although I certainly agree that tensions between narrators exist (particularly between female and male narrators), I feel that such arguments overstate the struggle for narrative authority and concomitantly overlook the collaboration, unity, and agreement among narrators in the face of such tensions and differences.

Deeming one or all of a novel’s narrators “unreliable” is another common method for tackling the Victorian multiple-narrator novel. The title of Gideon Shunami’s article on Nelly in Wuthering Heights—“The Unreliable Narrator in Wuthering Heights”—is a case in point. Carol Senf takes this approach to the extreme by claiming that all of Dracula’s narrators are unreliable. Such arguments conflate the typical restraints of first-person narration with an undesirable unreliability. Shunami claims that Nelly qualifies as an unreliable narrator because she possesses a “limited, subjective view” (454)—but what first-person narrator (especially an “I as witness”
doesn’t have such a view? Senf similarly argues that Dracula’s narrators are unreliable because their narratives are only “subjective records” (“Dracula” 162)—but what else could they be but subjective? Dracula is never “seen objectively,” Senf argues (162); her claim reveals an assumption that perfect objectivity is attainable for a first-person narrator.

The one extended study of the Victorian multiple-narrator novel is Avilah Getzler’s dissertation, entitled First-Person Multiplied: Plotting Narration in Victorian Multi-Narrator Novels (2006). Her four-chapter dissertation covers five multiple-narrator novels: Wuthering Heights, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, The Woman in White, The Moonstone, and Dracula. Technically, our fields-of-interest are slightly different; Getzler only includes novels with multiple first-person narrators, while my dissertation incorporates multiple narrators of any kind. Her dissertation, therefore, excludes a novel key to mine—Dickens’s Bleak House. With the exception of her first chapter, which pairs (as I do) Heights and Tenant, each of her chapters covers one novel; with the exception of my chapter on Bleak House, each of my chapters is organized around a multiple-narrator subtype rather than around a single novel. To that end, four of my chapters look at two or more examples of each subtype to formulate a “way of reading” that subtype. Getzler and I proceed from the similar starting point that these novels are monologic; however, she uses that foundation to argue that “the plottedness of Victorian multi-narrator novels is responsible for their single-voicedness” (5). Her chapter arguments often employ the “struggle for narrative authority” approach described above. For example, she argues that in Tenant Gilbert “uses his narratorial position to claim possession and control of Helen and his story” (30). She interprets Gilbert’s “narrative moves” as “power grabs” (62) and reads Helen’s narrative as “exposing and undermining Gilbert’s attempts to claim absolute narratorial control” (52). With regards to The Woman in White, Getzler labels Hartright the “master
narrator” (14) who triumphs as the “final victor” in the novel’s “battle for dominance” (88). He earns such mastery, she argues, by “using [others narrators’] accounts to augment his power and legitimate his own version of events” (76). Although we share a similar topic and archive, therefore, Getzler’s dissertation and my own diverge in approach and argument.

Like any choice of narrator or narrative structure, the multiple-narrator structure operates under certain rules (although, admittedly, rules often prove to be guidelines, as authors refuse to be bound by the limitations associated with certain narrator types and narrative structures). In Victorian multiple-narrator novels, the matter of narrators’ reliability remains surprisingly constant. Since reliability and its negation are notoriously tricky and abused terms, some groundwork is needed before we can proceed. Wayne Booth coined the terms “reliable narrator” and “unreliable narrator,” and he “called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author’s norms), unreliable when he does not” (158–159). Even though Booth cautioned that “Unreliable narrators…differ markedly depending on how far and in what direction they depart from their author’s norms” (159), many critics took to calling narrators totally reliable or unreliable. In response, Phelan provides a helpful revision and expansion of Booth’s terms by asserting that narrators can be reliable and unreliable at the same time because three axes of un/reliability exist: reporting (axis of characters, facts, and events), reading/interpreting (knowledge and perception), and regarding/evaluation (ethical and moral considerations). Narrators can perform these functions wrongly/badly (mis-reporting for example) or can do them less than they could/should (under-reporting, for example). Surprisingly—because of its great potential to do otherwise—narrators
do not misreport in these multiple-narrator novels. The narrators don’t willfully lie. Narrators can be unreliable on the axis of interpreting (by interpreting an event, mystery, or crime incorrectly) or on the axis of evaluation (for example, by wrongly esteemimg certain characters). For example, in The Moonstone, Rosanna’s letter accuses Blake of ignoring her on a specific occasion, and she offers his “indifference” to her as motivation for his neglect (Moonstone 375). Blake directly answers this accusation in a footnote, claiming that Rosanna was “entirely mistaken. I never noticed her” (374). Rosanna’s whole letter, in comparison to Blake’s own narrative and response, is one long example of the tragedy of misevaluation. In love with Blake, Rosanna thinks Blake finds her utterly distasteful and presumptuous, while Blake, thinking that Rosanna stole the diamond, treats her coolly to prevent her from incriminating herself unduly, totally unaware of her affection. The evidence Rosanna provides, however, of Blake’s guilt, turns out to be reliable.

Because of the rules of reliability, certain characters cannot be trusted to narrate. Although critics have censured Walter Hartright for not allowing his eventual wife, Laura, to narrate in The Woman in White, Laura’s mental instability after her liberation from an insane asylum prevents her from being reliable on the axis of reporting, and hence, prevents her from narrating. And not only Walter, but also Laura’s sister Marian, find that Laura cannot express herself in a reliable manner. Although Laura’s memories of her brief London stay are “sadly

2 Sue Lonoff makes this observation in comparing Robert Browning’s multiple narrators in The Ring and the Book with Collins’s narrators: “Collins’s eyewitnesses are generally honest; they reliably report what they hear and observe. Their limitation is faulty or restricted vision rather than evasive language…Browning’s narrators may or may not be honest, and they may or may not report reliably” (149).
incoherent” and she reaches a “total blank” in rehearsing the events of her travels, those two issues are not enough to incapacitate her as a narrator (Woman 424, 427). Various other narrators are allowed moments of fragmentary, incoherent reporting, and various narrators in The Beetle and Dracula reach unnarratable blanks in their stories but are still allowed to narrate. Laura, however, proves to be unreliable along the axis of reporting; she actually and stubbornly remembers events incorrectly. Laura fully believes that she visited, had tea with, and spent the night with her old companion Mrs. Vesey in London; Mrs. Vesey’s and Fosco’s evidence, however, prove that Laura has done none of those things. Because Laura “persisted in asserting that she had been to Mrs. Vesey’s” (427), Laura cannot be a narrator: her memories are “difficult to reconcile with any reasonable probability” (426) and her recollection becomes “vague and unreliable” (427) as well as “contradictory” (427). The lawyer Mr. Kyrle points out that Laura would make a totally unreliable and unbelievable witness in a courtroom even if her confused state of mind were accounted for: “I only say that the jury will take the fact of her contradicting herself, in preference to any reason for the contradiction that you can offer” (443). Lest critics think that only unreliable females can’t narrate, the same thing happens to an unreliable male in The Woman in White. Sir Percival’s servant is present when Percival gets stuck in the blazing vestry and burns to death. Traumatized by the experience, the servant is not trusted to give testimony in the novel, and his confused testimony is not trusted in the court either. Other characters must be called in to identify Percival’s body. Walter speculates on the reason for the servant’s presence at the fire but then admits, “It is necessary to add, that the man’s own testimony was never obtained to confirm this view. The medical report of him declared that what little mental faculty he possessed was seriously shaken; nothing satisfactory was extracted from him at the adjourned Inquest” (525). When characters have flirted with madness or extreme
illness, they can only be trusted to narrate once they have sufficiently recovered and can only be trusted to narrate events untainted by their mental issues. For example, Mr. Candy, who falls ill early in *The Moonstone* and consequently suffers from amnesia, is unable to remember drugging Blake; therefore, when a letter authored by him appears late in the novel, the only subject covered in it is the recent death of Ezra Jennings. Candy doesn’t even mention the birthday dinner at which he spitefully added laudanum to Blake’s drink.

Furthermore, because of the golden rule of suspense, characters who know too much too soon are also refused the position of narrator, and retrospective narrators must underreport and restrict themselves to sharing only what they knew at the time. Phelan wisely distinguishes between this type of underreporting and unreliable underreporting, although some critics have criticized Walter for “deceiving” the reader for doing exactly what almost any retrospective narrator must do. Miss Clack rages against such a constriction in *The Moonstone* and asks Blake (who has paid her to write her narrative based on her diary entries) “whether she may be permitted to make her humble contribution complete, by availing herself of the light which later discoveries have thrown on the mystery of the Moonstone” (*Moonstone* 285). Blake, quite reasonably, responds no. As Dennis Porter argues, there are various “devices of retardation” that result in the “repeated postponement of a desired end” in detective fiction (32). These devices—which include an idiot or naïve narrator, detectives that misread the evidence or don’t reveal their solution until the end, and false criminals and suspects who must be cleared before the real criminal can be focused on and tracked—show that “the art of narrative is an art of misleading or of tactical retreat before an advancing reader” (33). Collins’s own reviewers noted that his narrative structure allowed for the creation of suspense: “It is scarcely necessary to point out the advantage which the constructor of a tale of mystery thus gains. First of all, the great secret can
never be revealed, and the author guards himself from revealing it, prematurely—for the actors are as much in the dark as the reader on the subject” (Page 86); “The advantage of this new method is, that the story moves forward without interruption, and that the reader’s curiosity is continually teased by a sense of mystery. The witness, relating only what he knows, piques our curiosity by his ignorance even more than he satisfies it by his disclosure” (Page 98). Rachel Verinder, who witnesses the drugged Blake steal the Moonstone from the cabinet in her room with her own incredulous eyes, must respond with unbreakable silence if the novel is to continue past page fifty. Her silence is Collins’s greatest aid in keeping the secret—that Blake himself stole the Moonstone—and in laying the groundwork for one of the greatest peripeteias in Victorian fiction. Sue Lonoff agrees that because narrators can’t lie and suspense must be fanned, Godfrey and Rachel can’t narrate in *The Moonstone*: “if they were [narrators], then according to Collins’s rules, they would have to give away the plot” (154).

Another common occurrence in multiple-narrator novels is that in reproducing another character’s narration, a narrator admits to slightly shortening it. Many critics rail on the editors for trying to thereby dominate the author of the reproduced story;³ conversely, I argue that it’s important to note the regularity of this type of abridgement and to recognize the way its deployment attempts to further the realism of the narrative. At the beginning of volume 2 of

³ Dubbing Walter the novel’s “editor-in-chief” (11), Heller specifically cites Walter’s presumed editing of Marian’s diary as evidence of his “controlling [of] the novel’s female voices” (15). Signorotti alludes to Gilbert’s “editing of Helen’s history” as his “attempt to contain and control her” (21). Because “he delivers his own edited version of Helen’s life,” Signorotti pronounces Gilbert as being “little interested in remaining faithful to Helen’s diary” (22).
*Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood explains, “I have now heard all my neighbour’s [Nelly’s] history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare time from more important occupations. I’ll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed. She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don’t think I could improve her style” (*WH* 157). Lockwood’s disclaimer that his repetition is somewhat “condensed” but otherwise accurate echoes the language used when other novels’ male narrators represent female narrations. For example, at the beginning of Marian’s diary in *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright adds a footnote that indicates that we do not see all of her diary (this is likely because Walter himself has not seen all of her diary, as he suggests at various points): “The passages omitted, here and elsewhere, in Miss Halcombe’s Diary, are only those which bear no reference to Miss Fairlie…” (*Woman* 162). In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, when Gilbert finally reaches the point in his long letter at which he recopies Helen’s diary for Halford, he too admits that he has omitted some of it (though Gilbert never saw all of Helen’s diary): “you shall have the whole [of Helen’s diary], save, perhaps, a few passages here and there of merely temporal interest to the writer, or such as would serve to encumber the story rather than elucidate it” (*Tenant* 129). In each case, the admitted alteration takes the form of small-scale omission rather than an alteration of style. Instead of interpreting these abridgements as evidence of the male narrators’ sexist prerogative in shaping and editing women’s texts, I discern the male narrators’ concern with realism. It’s not “realistic” that these more spontaneous and unedited forms of communication (the diary in Marian’s and Helen’s cases, the oral story in Nelly’s) would include no digressions. It would be odd if Marian’s uncut diary, for example, only concerned itself with her sister’s marriage and included no random, insignificant daily details; however, the entries that “bear no reference to Miss Fairlie” are not needed for the purposes of *The Woman in White* (*Woman* 162). To fit in with the tight structure of the novel, the inevitable
excess of the diaries and oral storytelling must be reduced; it’s the pointed nod, however, to the
existence of that narrative excess that vouches for the realism of these women’s primary texts.

Wayne Booth asks in *Rhetoric of Fiction*, “Why does a given historical moment foster a
given technical or formal revolution?” (414). The multiple-narrator novel features children
narrating alongside adults, women narrating alongside men, and members of the middle and
working class narrating alongside aristocrats and gentry; the Victorian multiple-narrator novel,
then, reflects the period’s gradual movement towards a more democratic state, marked by
expanding rights for women, children, and the middle and working classes. But, just as I’ve
argued that the Victorian multiple-narrator novel doesn’t qualify as polyphony, the form is not
truly democratic either; Sue Vice identifies the “polyphonic novel” as a “democratic one, in
which equality of utterance is central” (112). Though the majority of Victorian multiple-narrator
novels employ at least one female narrator (Stevenson’s multiple-narrator novels are the
exception), female narrators never open these novels and, with the exception of *Bleak House,*
ever conclude them. Male narrators, therefore, hold the positions of privilege; male character-
narrators are also often the ones responsible for gathering and presenting the collated narrative.
Children only narrate in works written for children. Middle- and upper-class narrators are more
represented than working-class narrators. The gentleman, then, still holds authority over these
narratives, just as he held supreme power in Victorian culture, economy, and politics. I do argue,
however, that the multiple-narrator novel showed a liberal (not to be confused with democratic)
approach to a period of incredible change marked by sustained population growth, intensified
industrialization, urban migration, textual proliferation, and an increasingly vocal and mobilized
public opinion. Jonathan Parry, who points out that “Parliamentary Liberal leaders were not
enthusiasts for democracy” (12), argues that, nonetheless, “Liberals saw government as a matter of integrating and harmonising different classes and interest groups within the political nation” (3). The Liberals were largely successful, Parry continues, in creating a “cross-class” (7) and “heterogeneous” (10) Liberal coalition. “Between the 1850s and 1880s,” Parry claims, “the Liberal coalition spanned an astonishing range of classes and groups, from aristocrats to artisans, industrial magnates to labour activists, and zealous Anglican high churchmen to nonconformists and aggressive free-thinkers” (7). Liberalism sought to unite “the diverse individuals, groups and classes which constituted the nation” (3) and to “integrate the four countries of the kingdom into a harmonious whole” (18). William Gladstone, the erstwhile Tory turned four-time Liberal prime minister, helped achieve such optimistic unity. Black and MacRaild add, Gladstone’s “political skills bridged the worlds of Parliament and of public meetings, for, under his leadership, Liberalism became a movement enjoying mass support. Gladstone appealed from Parliament to the public and sought to gain mass support for his politics of action and reform” (155).

Victorian multiple-narrator novels certainly “intergrat[e]” and “harmonis[e]” a “cross-class” and “heterogeneous” coalition of narrators; despite the “astonishing range of classes and groups” represented among the narrator-ocracy, the narrators find common ground, particularly with regards to the facts. For example, in *Wuthering Heights*, the two narrators are almost

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4 Parry explains that Liberals were more willing to reform parliament “along representative rather than democratic lines” (13).

5 In 1886, Gladstone’s determination to back Home Rule for Ireland split the liberal party, and, subsequently, the so-called Liberal Unionists allied with the Conservative Party. Parry explains that the Unionists split off because Home Rule threatened the core Liberal belief in “national and imperial integration” (297).
diametrically opposed. Lockwood is a wealthy gentleman: travelled, educated, privileged. Nelly is his housekeeper. She’s been a servant her whole life; she works where she is hired to work. She travels where she can walk to; Gimmerton marks the limit of her travels. Her education amounts to her independent book reading in the Grange library. Nonetheless, Nelly and Lockwood get along. Nonetheless, they share much in common—they are single and childless. Nonetheless, they approach the story of Cathy and Heathcliff’s passion similarly—with a mixture of desire and fear—and seek to impose a similar closure on its wildness.

The multiple-narrator novel, I argue, also offers a system to integrate facts. To the Victorians, as Thomas Richards reports, “the best and most certain kind of knowledge was the fact…generally it was thought of as raw knowledge, knowledge awaiting ordering” (4). There was, Richards explains, a hitch in the Victorian glorification and proliferation of the fact:

The problem here of course was that facts almost never added up to anything. They were snippets of knowledge…It took a leap of faith to believe that facts would someday add up to any palpable sum of knowledge, and that faith often took the form of an allied belief in comprehensive knowledge. Comprehensive knowledge was the sense that knowledge was singular and not plural, complete and not partial…that all knowledges would ultimately turn out to be concordant in one great system of knowledge. (6–7)

Take, for example, a particularly famous essay at combining positive and comprehensive knowledge (and itself a possible prototype for the multiple-narrator novel): Henry Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor* (1849–1850). Mayhew, a journalist, travelled the London streets, interviewing all manner of laborers about their professions and daily lives; his findings were published in a series of articles in the *Morning Chronicle* and later collected in a book
edition. Full of numbers, statistics, interviews, and drawings, Mayhew often allows the laborers to speak at length, uninterrupted by his questions or comments—he allows them to present their own first-person testimony about their experience in their own words.⁶ Mayhew’s own words about his project manifest his feelings about the fact, truth, and knowledge:

The attainment of the Truth, then, will be my primary aim; but by the truth, I wish it to be understood, I mean something more than the bare facts. Facts, according to my ideas, are merely the elements of truths, and not the truths themselves…A fact, so long as it remains an isolated fact, is a dull, dead, uninformed thing; no object nor event by itself can possibly give us any knowledge, we must compare it with some other, even to distinguish it…A fact must be assimilated with, or discriminated from, some other fact or facts, in order to be raised to the dignity of a truth, and made to convey the least knowledge to the mind.

To give the least mental value to facts, therefore, we must generalize them, that is to say, we must contemplate them in connection with other facts, and so discover their agreements and differences, their antecedents, concomitants, and consequences. (447–448)

A dialogue between the Verinder family steward, Betteredge, and Franklin Blake in The Moonstone echoes this distrust of mere facts. Having exhumed Rosanna’s safe box, Blake has

⁶ In his introduction to Mayhew’s work, Neuburg writes, “What Mayhew achieved was the fullest and most vivid picture of the experiences of labouring people in the world’s greatest city in the nineteenth century. In his pages many of them speak for themselves, and we hear of their hopes, fears, customs, grievances, habits, in their own words. No other social investigator came near to him: in its scope and execution his work has no peer” (xix).
just read his own name on a nightshirt with a smeared paint stain (it having already been
determined that the owner of the stained nightgown is the Moonstone thief). Blake exclaims in
exasperation, “there is the witness against me! The paint on the nightgown, and the name on the
nightgown are facts” (*Moonstone* 361). Betteredge calmly replies “Facts?...Take a drop more
grog, Mr Franklin, and you’ll get over the weakness of believing in facts” (361). Mayhew claims
that a fact, on its own, means little: “A fact must be assimilated with, or discriminated from,
some other fact or facts, in order to be raised to the dignity of a truth” (448). Richards describes
that, for the Victorians, the fact “await[ed] ordering” (4). The multiple-narrator novel provides an
actual system by which to mobilize facts. The multiple-narrator novel, along with its reader, is
constantly following Mayhew’s formula by “associating perception with perception” (449) and
by trying to make facts and information into, as Richards calls it, “one great system of
knowledge” (7).

John Stuart Mill provides a similar comparison between opinion and truth in his famous
supports free expression and demands free and open discussion of opinions because no one is
infallible and no one can be sure his opinion is correct. In portraying someone who discusses
openly and adjusts his own thoughts accordingly, Mill writes:

> he has felt, that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to
> knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons
> of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at
> by every character of mind…The steady habit of correcting and completing his
> own opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and
hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it. (25)

In a literal way, the multiple-narrator novel rehearses the “collating” of individual opinions that Mill encourages here. And indeed, it is only through this collation that “truth” of any kind is reached in these novels. Many of the characters and narrators in the novels, especially the minor characters and narrators, are rarely privy to everything being written by the other narrators (Dracula is the main exception), and so their own opinions don’t have the opportunity to change in reaction to the contact and conflict with other opinions; however, many of the character-narrators and the novels’ readers certainly undergo this process of “correcting...completing” and “collating.” Limitation becomes necessary, the route to something whole: knowledge and truth. Clearly valuing “liberty,” Mill outlines the way government should be run as to not trample on the individual’s liberty, and as Mill trenchantly states, without the various liberties of speech, thought, and press, “No society is...on the whole...free” (17). And these novels’ plots similarly seek to “free” their characters: to free Mina from the taint and power of the vampire, to free Helen from a tyrannical husband, to free Blake from the guilt and crime cast upon him by opium, to free Esther from the curse of her illegitimacy, and to free Laura from the false identity foisted on her by Fosco.

The dissertation’s opening chapter distinguishes the Victorians’ multiple-narrator offerings from similar iterations in the eighteenth and early twentieth century, arguing that the successful group cause and realism of method are crucial to Victorian versions of this form. The second chapter tackles Charles Dickens’s Bleak House; the novel’s inventive structure alternates between a third-person narrator and the first-person account of Esther Summerson (the back and forth structure). Rather than basing an argument on the supposed differences between Esther and
the other narrator (as many critics do), I highlight the similarities between the two narrators, including their mutual project to present the fall of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle class. The third chapter discusses Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone*, Collins’s *The Woman in White*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*. In contrast to arguments that stress the contest for narrative authority in these texts, I argue that all four novels rely on narrative collaboration to counter an invading foreign threat. In chapter 4, I compare how two late-Victorian works of children’s literature, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and Juliana Ewing’s *A Great Emergency*, employ a sole, brief switch in narrator, a structure I term the *quick switch*. The *quick switch* is the exception that proves my larger argument about the Victorian multiple-narrator novel. Though these two novels may seem to be examples of smooth collaboration—between a child and adult, between a brother and a sister—the quickness, sharpness, and shortness of the narrative swap heightens the perspectival differences between the two narratives, undermining the supposed collaboration. My final chapter merges the fields of visual art and narrative art. By researching nineteenth-century perceptions of art frames and the art of framing, I claim that contemporary reviewers of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* responded to those novels as if they were poorly or incorrectly framed paintings. Secondly, I argue that Anne and Emily Brontë’s frame narratives effectively use and misuse the conventions of pictorial framing to very different ends; however, in both novels, the collaboration and increasing equality between the narrators is stressed. Lockwood and Nelly approach the story similarly and bond over the process, while Gilbert and Helen use a balanced system of exchange that helps bring them together despite their different backgrounds.
1.0 EPISTLES TO NARRATIVES TO MONOLOGUES: A HISTORY OF THE MULTIPLE-PERSPECTIVE FORM

Initial reviewers of William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930) repeatedly praised the author’s “method” and “technique” as “unique” and “experimental.” *The Sound and the Fury* was labeled “one of the most important experiments in creative form and approach I have read for ten years” (Bassett 90), and *As I Lay Dying* was evidence of Faulkner’s “experiment that has widened the boundaries of modern fiction” (94). This celebratory discourse of *newness* existed alongside the tracing of Faulkner’s literary ancestry, an effort that, time and again, led back to one stylistic parent: James Joyce. Though some reviewers were willing to cede that Faulkner had “modified” Joyce’s style “to his own use” (87), it was common, almost requisite, for reviewers to note that “Joyce is the ultimate source, obviously” (89) before adding a quick comparison to *Ulysses*. I don’t quibble with the reviewers’ assessments of Faulkner’s debt to Joyce; I wonder, rather, that not one review extended Faulkner’s lineage back to the multiple-narrator novels of the nineteenth century, particularly late-Victorian examples like *Dracula*. Several reviewers of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*, on the other hand, refuted Collins’s own claims to structural novelty by reminding him of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel.7 Henry James, for example, noted that *The Woman in White*, on the other hand, refuted Collins’s own claims to structural novelty by reminding him of the eighteenth-century epistolary novel.7 Henry James, for example, noted that *The Woman in White* because Collins begged the critics not to reveal the

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7 I should note, however, that most Victorian reviews did not discuss novels’ structure, and they did so only for *The Woman in White* because Collins begged the critics not to reveal the
*White*, “with its diaries and letters and its general ponderosity, was a kind of a nineteenth century version of ‘Clarissa Harlowe.’ Mind, we say a nineteenth century version” (“Mary” 742). James’s comment positions *The Woman in White* as of its time and as existing in a larger literary tradition. In this chapter, therefore, I do what the early reviewers of Faulkner did not do: provide a history of the multiple-perspective form. I am elaborating on and illuminating what James might have meant when he confidently labeled *The Woman in White* a “nineteenth century version” of *Clarissa*. What are the different “versions” of the multiple-perspective form? With the nineteenth-century multiple-narrator novel at the center of my genealogy, I will look forward to modernist texts by Faulkner (*As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*) and Virginia Woolf (*The Waves*), and I will glance backward to eighteenth-century epistolary novels with multiple letter writers by Fanny Burney (*Evelina*) and Samuel Richardson (*Clarissa*). My project claims that it is useful to consider the epistolary novel with multiple writers, the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, and the modernist multiple-voice novel as related (though not identical) forms, as different “versions” of a similar structural impulse. Articulating the similarities and differences between these iterations will start to reveal what is *Victorian* to the Victorian multiple-narrator novel and how different literary eras have used the multiple-perspective form by different means and for different ends.

This chapter, then, will cover the main shifts in the use of the multiple-perspective novel from the eighteenth to early twentieth century. Firstly, authors have desired more and more flexibility in their use of this form. As Scholes and Kellogg rightly quip, “the novelist’s plot’s twists and turns in their reviews; since summarizing the plot was the typical purview of the Victorian review, the reviewers, in this particular case, were forced to find something else (structure!) to describe and assess.
determination to have the benefits of eye-witness narration without accepting its limitations has been indefatigable” (259). Secondly, though realism is always a concern, the kind of realism most valued by the author shapes the possibilities, boundaries, and rules of the multiple-perspective form that is being used. I do not, however, create a hierarchy of realisms; I fully agree with Wayne Booth that “the interest in realism is not a ‘theory’ or even a combination of theories that can be proved right or wrong; it is an expression of what men of a given time have cared for most” (63). I delineate the shift from the moral realism (I borrow that term from Edward Bloom) of Richardson and Burney to the realism of method (I borrow that term from Robert Louis Stevenson) in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel to the realism of consciousness.

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8 In The Rise of the Novel, Watt argues that “formal realism” is the defining trait of the novel as a genre. He defines “formal realism” as

the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under an obligation to satisfy its reader with such details of the story as the individuality of the actors concerned, the particulars of the times and the places of their actions, details which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms. (32)

9 Scholes and Kellogg’s comment, although about different kinds of characters and methods of characterization, strikes a similar note as Booth’s: “To suggest that one order of characterization is better than another is folly. To recognize that differences exist is the beginning of wisdom” (161).
evident in the novels of Faulkner and Woolf. Instead, I try to balance my awareness of what each era gained by privileging a certain type of realism with an awareness of what was lost. For example, although one might say that the narrators and speakers gain more realistic minds in the modernist novel, they also lose narratorial bodies; the movement towards the thinking self displaces the writing self. Thirdly, the Victorian multiple-narrator novel features a community created and strengthened via the group cause and via the (subsequent or simultaneous) exchange of documents. The characters initiate, are cognizant of, and perform the narrative collaboration themselves. In short, the creation of the narrative is part of the novel’s plot. Successful collaboration, therefore, proves crucial to the narrative structure and to the story in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel. In the eighteenth- and twentieth-century multiple-perspective novel, by comparison, the narratives are orchestrated by either an overt or covert author-editor figure who is not a character in the story. In the modernist multiple-voice novel, the lack of self-aware narrative collaboration is matched by the minimization and failure of the group cause in the plot. Physical community is replaced by a

10 See Auerbach on Woolf’s To the Lighthouse: “we are dealing with attempts to fathom a more genuine, a deeper, and indeed a more real reality” (540).

11 Exhaustion, extreme emotion, and sickness often affect and even impede narrators in Victorian novels. Marian’s diary in The Woman in White, which deteriorates and ends as her illness incapacitates her, is a case in point. Jason Compson, on the other hand, continues to tell his story even though he claims that his headaches are so severe that he is unable to think. Addie Bundren, against all logic, seemingly speaks from her coffin: her section occurs after she has died.

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prospective mental community, and mental exchange, instead of the exchange of material
documents, becomes the way to bridge the solitude of individual consciousnesses.

The author’s options in employing a multiple-perspective form—especially the range of
potential narrators and temporal types of narrating—have increased over time. Writing letters
costs money (for both the materials and the sending/receiving of the letters), consumes time
(Clarissa, for example, must have hours upon hours of leisure time), and depends on some level
of literacy (though less literate writers, like Joseph Leman in Clarissa, can fumble through their
occasional letters). The eighteenth-century epistolary novel, therefore, mostly limits itself to the
wealthy upper classes, seldom using lower-class letter writers. Furthermore, since letter writers
consciously direct their letters to a specific audience, the writers must be the kind of character
who would write the kind of letters that make for an interesting novel. Scholes and Kellogg’s
point about drama applies, in a sense, to the epistolary novel as well: “Hamlet is Shakespeare’s
Great Soliloquizer because he is, as a character, well designed for soliloquies; whereas Othello,
for example, is not” (178). Not all characters are well designed for writing letters. Although most
narrators still must be able to read and write in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, the number
of literate people dramatically increased over the course of the nineteenth century. Richard
Altick details the expanding social and governmental support for education (including adult
education) that enabled the increase in literacy. Because it isn’t exclusively devoted to letters,
furthermore, the Victorian multiple-narrator novel can turn to other methods of documentation,
like dictation, to give illiterate characters the opportunity to narrate. Collins uses such a method
in The Woman in White to enable Hester Pinhorn, Fosco’s illiterate cook, to narrate. The
modernist multiple-voice novel further widens the choice in who can speak. For example, As I
Lay Dying is told through the first-person perspectives of the illiterate Bundrens, and part of The
Sound and the Fury is told through the first-person perspective of the mentally limited and illiterate Benjy.

Over time, authors have also taken advantage of more temporal variety. Though letters can rehearse events that took place recently or long ago, in the eighteenth-century epistolary novel, they generally narrate the newly experienced. The term “writing to the minute” encapsulates the epistolary novel’s (particularly Richardson’s) “attempt to synchronize narration and experience” (Cohn 210). The major example of epistolary narration in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, however, shifts the focus from the recent past to the far past. Gilbert’s letter to his friend Halford in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall minutely describes, via his own narration and Helen’s diary, the events of two decades prior; furthermore, Gilbert provides few details about his and Helen’s present life. The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, then, makes room for retrospective accounts in addition to accounts that approach simultaneity (such as Marian’s diary in The Woman in White). In Clarissa and Evelina, the plot is unfolding as the letters are being written; however, the creation and collection of some of the narratives occurs after the central events in Tenant, The Woman in White, The Moonstone, The Beleaguered City and Treasure Island. The desirability of a certain viewpoint or the necessity of filling in a certain narrative gap often becomes clear after the main events of the novel occur, which requires certain narratives to then be requested, cobbled together, or written. The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, then, can accommodate character-narrators who wouldn’t have written of their own accord (who aren’t, in short, natural writers); not every character who possesses an important perspective can be as good, as willing, and as dedicated a writer as Clarissa is. For example, The Moonstone’s Gabriel Betteredge is not the type of man to have kept a diary, to have had the time to keep a diary, or to have written letters to others concerning the private
matters of the family he was serving (he cares too much for the family’s reputation to have done so); however, once requested by a family member to pen a retrospective portion of the narrative, he readily complies, even though he’s unsure of his ability to fulfill the request.\textsuperscript{12} The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, overall, allows for more options in the possible relationships between the narration and the story. Three of the four main “types of narrating” that Gérard Genette lists are easily covered by the Victorian multiple-narrator novel: subsequent, simultaneous, and interpolated (217).\textsuperscript{13} The modernist multiple-voice novel maintains the temporal flexibility of the Victorian novel. \textit{As I Lay Dying} effortlessly shifts between present-tense and past-tense sections. And although \textit{The Waves} and \textit{The Sound and the Fury} generally employ past-tense constructions, the language evokes a sense of being in the present moment.

\textbf{1.1 THE EPISTOLARY NOVEL AND MORAL REALISM}

The epistolary form, like the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, foregrounds the \textit{writing self}. These letter writers know they are writing letters; they follow the expected mores of such communication and frequently reference the act of writing and that ubiquitous instrument of it—the pen. Evelina repeatedly reflects on the letter she is writing or has just completed—“What a long letter have I written” (Burney 152)—gives temporal context to the act of writing—“I am now risen thus early, to write to you” (231)—and links her own body to her writing—“but I...

\textsuperscript{12} For example, Betteredge exclaims, “How hard I try to get on with my statement without stopping by the way, and how badly I succeed!” (\textit{Moonstone} 53).

\textsuperscript{13} Only “prior,” otherwise known as “predictive narrative,” isn’t easily accommodated by the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, but Genette points out that it “hardly appears at all in the literary corpus” (220).
blush to proceed—I fear your disapprobation” (370). Clarissa also references the length of her compositions—“Having written to the end of my second sheet, I will close this letter” (Clarissa 1: 135)—describes the documents’ physical appearance—“You will not wonder to see this narrative so dismally scrawled. It is owing to different pens and inks, all bad” (1: 487)—and connects her physical condition to her writing—“The pen, through heaviness and fatigue, dropped out of my fingers, at the word indebted” (1: 401).

Unlike the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, however, an overt authorial apparatus scaffolds these epistolary novels; the reader is never led to believe that the characters themselves are behind the collecting, editing, and presenting of the letters. This authorial persona unabashedly stands between the reader and the characters in order to, I argue, maintain the moral realism of the novel. Most blatantly, the author-editor of Clarissa adds clarifying and interpretative footnotes (the first one is appended to the novel’s second letter). That work is specifically done by a character in Wilkie Collins’s The Moonstone. Some of the footnotes in Clarissa merely encourage the reader to cross-reference the text: “See Mr. Lovelace’s Letter (xxxi) in which he briefly accounts for his conduct in this affair” (Clarissa 1: 7). Increasingly, however, the footnotes forcefully remind the apparently gullible reader of Lovelace’s thorough villainy and powers of manipulation. The author-editor aims to save us from being, like Clarissa’s family members, “puppets danced upon Mr. Lovelace’s wires” (1: 257). Another footnote presents a hypothetical and erroneous reader reaction in order to guide us (and shame us) into taking the desired stance: “This explanation is the more necessary to be given, as several of our readers (through want of due attention) have attributed to Mr. Lovelace...a greater merit than was due to him” (1: 353). The footnotes remind us that Lovelace is a “puppetmaster” (1: 353), is motivated by “pride,” and is incredibly “artful” (see 1: 441, 453, 501). These footnotes
point to one of the pervasive problems of first-person narration: even villains (or perhaps, especially villains!) become likeable and sympathetic. The villains, therefore, in Victorian multiple-narrator novels, rarely narrate, and when they do, they are terrifyingly persuasive (Fosco in The Woman in White is a case in point). Feared interpretative confusion over Lovelace doesn’t instigate all footnotes, however. For example, one footnote defends Clarissa against the reader’s possible “censure” (1: 501), and another counsels us to doubt Anna’s interpretation of Clarissa’s behavior (2: 156). In the novel’s postscript, Richardson justifies the addition of certain footnotes to convince the reader that Clarissa could never have been in love with someone, like Lovelace, so overloaded with “immorality”: “a few observations are thrown in by way of note in the present edition, at proper places, to obviate this objection, or rather to bespeak the attention of hasty readers to what lies obviously before them” (4: 558, 559). These footnotes, therefore, encourage us to understand the moral stakes of this issue; as Richardson explains in the postscript, Clarissa would have never been able to act so worthily and morally if she had been in love with Lovelace.

Just as the footnotes conduct the reader to the preferred moral responses to the characters and plot, Richardson’s brief preface and lengthy postscript further emphasize his moral intent both in the novel and in its epistolary structure. Richardson bluntly admits that to “warn and instruct” (1: xiv) was the chief purpose of his novel; the story’s ability to “entertain and divert” was a clever ruse, a “vehicle to the instruction” (1: xv). Additionally, he sets up Clarissa as an “examplar to her sex” (1: xiv). Most importantly, he gives a moral power to “writing to the moment,” an aspect of his epistolary style that oftentimes strains realism: “All the letters are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects...with what may be called instantaneous descriptions and reflections (proper to be
brought home to the breast of the youthful reader)” (1: xiv). The chief purpose, then, of employing such an “instantaneous” structure is so that the letters’ sentiments will find a better “home” in the “breast of the youthful reader.” Richardson then, in the preface, quotes from his own novel to further emphasize how such “instantaneous” letters are more “affecting” and more likely to “affect the reader” (1: xiv, xv). To Richardson, therefore, the novel’s epistolary structure enables the novel to accomplish his aims: “to warn,” “to caution,” and “to investigate the highest and most important doctrines not only of morality, but of Christianity” (1: xv). In short, the structure enables and furthers Richardson’s investment in moral realism.

The exclusion of certain letters in Burney’s Evelina manifests the novel’s hidden editor and reveals that editor’s devotion to upholding the novel’s moral realism. Unlike Clarissa, however, such a task is not furthered in Evelina by the novel’s preface or by editorial footnotes. Burney’s preface in Evelina only speaks vaguely and briefly about the novel at hand and doesn’t overtly call attention to the novel’s moral aims, and Burney totally avoids footnoting or excerpting letters. Burney’s authorial hand, however, is still visible in the selection of letters presented in the novel. Evelina omits many letters that we know to have been written and read. Although Clarissa sometimes explicitly calls attention to absent letters—“This, in another of her letters (which neither is inserted)” (Clarissa 1: 446)—other correspondence (much of Clarissa and Lovelace’s early, prohibited, and clandestine correspondence, for example) is hinted at but not reproduced in full for the reader. In fact, a letter that the reader never sees is explicitly responsible for starting Evelina; the absence of this inaugural letter in the text of the novel calls attention to both the arbitrary start of the novel and the selective hand behind its composition. Lady Howard writes the novel’s first included letter because she has “just had a letter from Madam Duval” and wants to both inform and seek advice from Mr. Villars with regards to its
contents (Burney 11). Since Lady Howard finds Duval’s letter “violent, sometimes abusive” (11), she decides “the letter itself is not worthy of [Villars’s] notice,” and she summarizes Madame Duval’s intentions rather than quoting from Duval’s letter, copying it, or forwarding it to Villars. Madame Duval’s letter—“violent, sometimes abusive”—becomes a metonymy for Madame Duval herself, who Lady Howard describes as “vulgar and illiterate” (12). Lady Howard, therefore, implicitly provides a moral rationale for not including Madame Duval’s letter in her own epistle to Villars. In fact, no letters to or from Madame Duval are included in the entire novel, even though we know many exist. Most of the main characters in the novel view Madame Duval as a transgressor who invades spaces (including England, carriages, and Lady Howard’s home) where she is unwanted and unsuited. Villars’s first description of Madame Duval paints her, through a series of “un” words, as the complete opposite of a proper and ethical person: “she is at once uneducated and unprincipled; ungentle in her temper, and unamiable in her manners,” and, additionally, “unhappy” (13). The less-biased Evelina, upon unexpectedly meeting Madame Duval (her grandmother) for the first time in London, writes to Villars (her guardian) that she will “not shock [him] with the manner of her acknowledging me, or the bitterness, the grossness—” (52). Omitting Madame Duval’s letters from the novel, therefore, can be seen as a moral judgment upon Madam Duval herself, suggesting that although she may force herself upon others in the plot, but she may not force her letters into the novel.

14 On another occasion, Evelina receives a letter from Madame Duval (a congratulatory note upon her engagement to Orville), and Evelina similarly summarizes the letter’s contents in her own letter to Villars (see Burney 398). Evelina even quotes snippets from Madame Duval’s letter, but the letter is importantly not included in full in the novel or reproduced in full by Evelina.
But the novel’s most glaring epistolary omission is the correspondence between Evelina and her good friend Maria Mirvan, Lady Howard’s granddaughter; I argue that this exclusion also maintains the moral realism of Evelina. I partially agree with Tracy Daugherty when she ascribes this exclusion to Burney’s “economy” and “great skill in narrative technique” (48); after all, Evelina has a tightness and shortness that Clarissa lacks. But such an explanation only explains why some letters have been omitted, and doesn’t explain why the Evelina-Maria correspondence should be less present than the Evelina-Villars correspondence, especially when we are given to believe that Evelina is more honest in her correspondence with Maria than in her communication with Villars.15 I argue, therefore, that the correspondence was likely omitted because it’s merely an expressive—and not an instructional—one. Edward Bloom writes that Fanny Burney valued didacticism, as she was “very much in tune with eighteenth-century

15 For example, Evelina “fear[s]” Villars’s “disapprobation” and asks his forgiveness because she has “first written an account of this transaction to Miss Mirvan” (Burney 249). The cited “transaction” was a hasty letter she wrote to Orville to apologize for how her extended family used her name to get access to his carriage. When she writes to Maria from Berry Hill, Evelina is more honest with Maria about her emotional state than she is with Villars: “Can you, Maria, forgive my gravity? but I restrain it so much and so painfully in the presence of Mr. Villars, that I know not how to deny myself the consolation of indulging it to you” (255). Evelina also informs Maria of Orville’s improper letter (which will turn out to be a forged letter, written by Orville’s rival Willoughby) nearly three weeks before sharing the same letter with Villars. Epstein notes, Evelina “divulges her real thoughts and feelings only to Maria” (118). Evelina’s “letters to Maria, unlike those to Villars, are direct, their style colloquial and forthright, their tone unstudied” (Epstein 118).
moralism” and “saw the novel as a preceptive vehicle” (xxiv).16 Evelina’s and Mr. Villars’s letters to one another comprise the main correspondence in the novel, and such correspondence is specifically presented as serving a moral function; it allows Villars to continue dispensing guidance to his young ward from a distance, and it permits Evelina to seek counsel while experiencing her “entrance to the world” which “parallels the temptation of Eve” (Bloom xx). In this vein, Evelina addresses her adoptive father and moral mentor (of course, it’s fitting that he’s a reverend and has also been a tutor) with a fervent mix of apology, gratitude, and self-debasement that stresses their roles in her moral education: “Unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself” (Burney 160). Mr. Villars’s letters flood with affection, anxiety, and cautionary wisdom, and he dispenses his judgments—approval or censure—upon her actions, motives, and acquaintances. His method vacillates between encouraging her to “learn not only to judge but to act for yourself” (164)—as she proves capable of doing when she daringly prevents Macartney from committing suicide—and prescribing specific behavior—as he does when he orders her to immediately leave the society of Orville. On that second occasion he emphasizes his maturity and her vulnerability: “A thousand times have I been upon the point of shewing you the perils of your situation...trust to my experience” (309). Evelina and Maria’s attachment, though certainly not an injurious one, isn’t particularly edifying

16 The reviewers of Evelina agreed with this assessment and recommended the novel to female readers “as conveying many practical lessons both on morals and manners” (Cooke 359). Another review imagined that readers would “grow wiser as they read” because of the novel’s “amusing and instructive” nature; the reviewer then likened the novel to Richardson’s: “It would have disgraced neither the head nor heart of Richardson” (359).
either. In fact, the two girls become like twins—inseparable and almost indistinguishable—doing the same action at the same time, sharing the same response to a gentleman’s question, or espousing the same critique of a play. Lady Howard sets them up as equals in a way that prevents any potential mentor-mentee relationship (such as Evelina has with Villars, with Orville, and even with the “masculine” Mrs. Selwyn): “I would have them love each other as sisters, and reciprocally supply the place of that tender and happy relationship to which neither of them have a natural claim” (21). “Tender” and “happy,” but not improving. Though seemingly less sheltered and more worldly than Evelina (though it is also her first time in London), Maria never advises Evelina, and Evelina never seeks Maria’s advice. Far from fulfilling the role of sisterly counselor, Maria “neither hopes nor fears but as” Evelina does (122). Miss Mirvan’s character is blank enough—she’s repeatedly described as “sweet” and “dear” and not much else—that she can effectively become Evelina’s “second self” (122), a mirror for Evelina. Only uttering a few lines of spoken dialogue in the novel (Evelina often answers on her behalf or paraphrases her words) and never penning a letter that the reader sees, Maria becomes a way for Evelina to better express and understand herself. So although the novel sets up a prolific sisterly correspondence—Maria “made [Evelina] promise to send her a letter every post” (165)—we only see small sections of that correspondence, and of those selections, we only see letters

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17 For example, “Miss Mirvan and I jumped involuntarily upon the seats of our chairs” (Burney 400); “Miss Mirvan and I both rejoiced that Madame Duval was absent” (78); “Miss Mirvan and I were perpetually out of countenance” (78); “We both, and with eagerness, declared that we had received as much, if not more pleasure, at the opera than any where” (109).
penned by Evelina.\textsuperscript{18} For example, all but one of the included letters from Evelina to Maria occur when she has returned to Villars’s home in Berry Hill; without Evelina’s normal epistolary correspondent (Villars), the novel must turn to her secondary epistolary correspondent (Maria) to reveal what’s happening at Berry Hill. We know that Maria, like a dutiful friend, responds to Evelina’s letters because the first sentences in Evelina’s letters reference the contents of Maria’s letters: “You accuse me of mystery, and charge me with reserve” (255); “I must own myself somewhat distressed how to answer your raillery” (259); “You complain of my silence” (262). But we never see the letters in which Maria accuses, teases, or complains to Evelina, and such omissions of “existing” letters call attention to the editorial hand behind the selections, and the information we do have about this correspondence suggests that though there is teasing there is little solid advising within the friendship.

Evelina and Maria’s friendship, after all, differs from Clarissa and Anna Howe’s friendship, and correspondingly, Clarissa and Anna’s correspondence is one of the two main correspondences in \textit{Clarissa}. Clarissa and Anna continually advise and ask for advice, chastise and commend. Richardson even emphasizes this core aspect of their friendship in his preface to the novel: “such instances of impartiality, each freely, as a fundamental principle of their friendship, blaming, praising, and setting right the other, as are strongly to be recommended to the observation of the younger part (more especially) of female readers” (\textit{Clarissa} 1: xiv). Their correspondence serves a moral purpose for one another and for the reader—an example to young, female readers of a mutually improving friendship. For example, once Clarissa has fled the safety of her family’s house to the dubious protection of Lovelace, she must constantly guard

\textsuperscript{18} Epstein imagines the Evelina-Maria correspondence as a missing “second novel...over which \textit{Evelina} rests like a palimpsest” (119).
herself against him; however, even in such an overwhelming and precarious situation, she continues to fulfill what Victor Lams calls the friends’ “judicial responsibility” (143):

I should think myself utterly unworthy of your [Anna’s] friendship did my own concerns, heavy as they are, so engross me that I could not find leisure for a few lines to declare to my beloved friend my sincere disapprobation of her conduct, in an instance where she is so generously faulty, that the consciousnesses of that very generosity may hide from her the fault. (2: 122)

To avoid one’s “judicial responsibility” would make Clarissa “utterly unworthy” (a phrase emphasized with its three-syllable parallel structure, opening “u” sounds, and closing “y” sounds). A “beloved” friend deserves to know if her conduct has been wrong, and a good friend is not afraid or too busy to “declare” her “disapprobation.” Though continually more flippant than Clarissa, Anna echoes Clarissa’s promise of being “sincere” by responding: “I give my sincere thanks for every line of your reprehensive letters” (2: 131). Anna adds that her pain in reading them—“I winced a little”—only increases her affection and respect for her friend: “I shall love and honour you still more, if possible, than before” (2: 131). And so the potentially friendship-breaking cycle of rebukes and penitence actually strengthens the friendship.

1.2 THE VICTORIAN MULTIPLE-NARRATOR NOVEL AND REALISM OF METHOD

Although the author-editors of Clarissa and Evelina reveal themselves as the ultimate directors of the novels, it is the characters in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel who are specifically made responsible for collecting and collating the various texts into a unified whole; sometimes it also falls to the characters to present the book to the reader as their own soldered creation. The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, therefore, continues the investment in the writing self found in
the eighteenth-century epistolary novels, but it replaces the authorial apparatus found in those novels-in-letters with a diegetic creation of the text. This replacement parallels and enables the shift from moral realism to realism of method. In writing the preface to the multiply narrated The Master of Ballantrae (years after the novel itself was published), R. L. Stevenson accounted for why he revised the novel from its original third-person narration to its final first-person form:

I had besides a natural love for the documentary method in narration...

I was doubtless right and wrong [to revise the book’s point of view]; the book has suffered and has gained in consequence; gained in relief and verisimilitude, suffered in fire, force and (as one of my critics has well said) in ‘large dramatic rhythm.’ The same astute and kindly judge complains of ‘the dredging machine of Mr Mackellar’s memory, shooting out the facts bucketful by bucketful’; and I understand the ground of his complaint, although my sense is otherwise. The realism I love is that of method; not only that all in a story may possibly have come to pass, but that all might naturally be recorded – a realism that justifies the book itself as well as the fable it commemorates. (‘Note’ 226)

Stevenson again and again associates the “documentary method” with “verisimilitude,” “realism,” and “natur[e].”

These Victorian novels habitually explain how, when, where, and why these narratives were written, revised, transcribed, given, read, etc.19 For example, in Wilkie Collins’s The Moonstone, the sleepwalking protagonist, Franklin Blake, originates the idea (along with his

19 As I discuss in chapter 5, Wuthering Heights is the exception that proves this rule. The novel neither clarifies how Lockwood’s narrative came to be nor clearly indicates that Lockwood’s narrative is even a written document.
lawyer) to put “the whole story” “on record in writing” (39). To attain that end, Blake repurposes an “old family paper” as the novel’s “prefatory narrative” (40); requisitions characters to narrate specific spans of the story (Betteredge, Bruff, Sergeant Cuff); pays characters to produce narratives (as is the case with the poor Miss Clack); obtains or receives other narratives to fill in narrative gaps (Rosanna Spearman’s letter, Ezra Jennings’s journals, a letter from Mr. Candy); and finally narrates himself when necessary or appropriate (as Blake does twice during the novel). Blake, therefore, takes over the duties and powers ascribed to author-editor agents in Clarissa and Evelina. Blake, in fact, like Richardson’s “editor,” adds footnotes throughout the novel to clarify issues, to defend himself (for example, against accusations in Rosanna’s letter; see Moonstone page 374), to guide the reader’s interpretation (as when he points out that Clack’s narrative is an “instrument for the exhibition of Miss Clack’s character” [236]), and to encourage the reader to cross-reference across the disparate narratives (which, as I explain more in chapter 3, aims to “validate” the story). The Moonstone’s prologue professes to be a narrative “Extracted from a Family Paper” (33); the reader may well wonder who exactly has done that extracting (a question begged by the selection of letters in the epistolary novel). But a few pages later, the reader discovers that the extractor was Blake: “The prefatory narrative I have already got by me in the form of an old family paper” (40). Similarly, in Margaret Oliphant’s A Beleaguered City, the mayor of the French town of Semur, Martin Dupin, declares on the first page that it is his “duty...to render...a true narrative of the very wonderful facts to which every citizen of Semur can bear witness. In this capacity it has become my duty so as to arrange and edit the different accounts of the mystery, as to present one coherent and trustworthy chronicle of the world” (10, emphasis added). Just as other writer-narrators in The Moonstone explicitly direct their narratives to Blake or make reference to Blake’s request for their narrative, other writer-narrators in The
Beleaguered City directly address their narratives to Dupin. Paul Lecamus, the novel’s second narrator, begins by stating, “M. Le Maire [that is, “the mayor”] having requested me...to lose no time in drawing up an account of my residence in the town” (Oliphant 57). Dupin’s mother, also a narrator, acknowledges that “my son wishes me to give my account of the things which happened” (88). Chapters 3 and 5 in this dissertation describe how The Moonstone, Dracula, and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall also follow this model, but, of course, there are exceptions. Multiple-narrator novels like Bleak House and Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, which both switch between heterodiegetic (third-person) and homodiegetic (first-person) narrators, prevent the kind of character-driven compilation of the entire narrative that occurs in other multiple-narrator novels. Since the heterodiegetic narrators that commence both of the aforementioned novels are “absent from the story” (Genette 244), their narratives do not exist in the story-world in the same way that narratives produced by homodiegetic narrators (Esther; Jekyll) do. It would be logically implausible, then, for a character such as Esther or Jekyll to compile and present his own narrative and the narrative written by the heterodiegetic narrator. In both of these cases, however, it’s important to note that the novels end with a homodiegetic narrator (Esther; Jekyll) though they start with a heterodiegetic narrator. The movement, therefore, is towards the story world, the writing self, and the narrator’s conscious presentation of his writing to an audience.20 Bleak House goes so far as to uncannily bridge Esther and the other narrator; Esther seems aware that she is only writing a “portion of these pages” (BH 27). She mentions, in her final chapter, Jekyll draws attention to his writing of his confession. The last line of his statement, and of the novel, is, “Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession” (Stevenson, Strange 62). At another point, Jekyll writes, “I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders” (61).

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“the unknown friend to whom I write” (985). That “unknown friend” could be the reader, though she doesn’t address the reader as such elsewhere, or it could be, inexplicably, the other narrator, who doesn’t even exist in her world.

*Clarissa*, however, does foreshadow this Victorian development by having characters in the story (namely, Belford and Colonel Morden) copy and collect many of the letters we presumably read in the novel. The two men, then, create a shadow compilation—similar to, but not the same as—the novel sitting before readers: “the inconsolable mother rested not till she had procured, by means of Colonel Morden, large extracts from some of the letters that compose this history” (*Clarissa* 4: 532). Clarissa’s mother, however, is only able to obtain “extracts” of “some of the letters”; such wording doubly emphasizes the difference between what Clarissa’s mother reads and what the reader of *Clarissa* reads.

To bolster the realism of method I have been discussing, the majority of narrators in Victorian multiple-narrator novels highlight their own trustworthiness and dedication to the truth. Narrators in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel never lie, in fact, though their interpretations may be skewed (though they are usually skewed so obviously that the reader can easily see through the structural irony). Stevenson’s *The Master of Ballantrae* begins with Mackellar’s oath of veracity:

> The full truth of this odd matter is what the world has long been looking for, and public curiosity is sure to welcome. It so befell that I was intimately mingled with the last years and history of the house; and there does not live one man so able as myself to make these matters plain, or so desirous to narrate them faithfully. I knew the Master; on many secret steps of his career I have an authentic memoir in my hand... (9)
Words such as “full truth,” “intimately,” “faithfully,” and “authentic memoir” support Mackellar’s claims for the authenticity of the narration and for being the most qualified narrator of the story. In a similar move to establish credibility, the first narrator of *A Beleaguered City*, Martin Dupin, asserts in the novel’s second sentence that “no one could have more complete knowledge of the facts—at once from my official position, and from the place of eminence in the affairs of the district generally which my family has held for many generations” (Oliphant 3). Within the same paragraph he reaffirms that the narrative he is assembling is a “true narrative” and a “trustworthy chronicle” (10). *The Woman in White* extends the multiple-narrator novel’s investment in reliability and honesty by associating the narrative and the courtroom: “Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect” (*Woman* 9). The “truth” alluded to here is quickly resurrected a few paragraphs later when Hartright declares, alliteratively, “the truth must be told” (10). Most every narrator in this novel, when his turn arrives, voices his qualifications for narrating and his allegiance to the truth. Gilmore asserts that he “can only tell the truth” (145). Whenever Marian lets her imagination run away with her, she orders herself to “return to sober matter of fact” (191), and she calls attention to the “regularity” and “reliability” of her journal entries (284). When Fosco brazenly reads Marian’s diary and inscribes a note within it, he further supports her truth-telling talents by attesting to her “wonderful power of memory, the accurate observation of character” (336). Eliza Michelson, the Blackwater Park housekeeper, assures us, “I have been taught to place the claims of truth above all other considerations” (357). Hester Pinhorn, Fosco’s cook, promises us, “I know that it is a sin and wickedness to say the thing which is not; and I will truly beware of doing so on this occasion”
Jane Gould, a mortician, bluntly pledges, “I can be trusted to tell the truth” (405). And so on and so forth. Characters and narrators throughout *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* identify themselves as “witnesses,” clearly linking the narrative and the courtroom. *Jekyll and Hyde*’s final narrative is labeled a “full statement of the case” (Stevenson, *Jekyll* 47) and a “confession” (41). The legal connotations of such terms are further endorsed when the reader remembers that Jekyll addresses the document to his personal lawyer, Mr. Utterson.

Although the epistolary novel uses the everyday form of the letter as its basis, the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, with its interest in truth, evidence, oaths, and witnesses, finds a corollary in the courtroom. But the multiple-narrator novel often presents the novel as more inclusive and thorough than an actual courtroom. In *Bleak House*, the ridiculously brief inquest over Nemo’s death includes the coroner, a jury, and a few witnesses. Called as a witness, Jo attests (much like Hester Pinhorn in *The Woman in White*) that he “knows it’s wicked to tell a lie” (*BH* 177), but the jury and coroner arbitrarily decide they can’t “receive his evidence” (177). The heterodiegetic narrator later labels Jo a “rejected witness” (181) and thereby proves the novel’s superiority to the courtroom (the novel accepts Jo), a courtroom that is endlessly mocked and critiqued through the travesty that is Chancery. Although, as previously mentioned, *The Woman in White* connects the novel to a court case, the setup also explicitly critiques the law as susceptible to the “lubricating influences of oil or gold” and as being the “pre-engaged servant of the long purse” (*Woman* 9). When Hartright, the novel’s protagonist, shares all of his accumulated evidence with a trusted lawyer two-thirds of the way through the novel, the lawyer honestly replies, “you have not the shadow of a case” (441). To justify this opinion, the lawyer explains that the average jury is essentially stupid and lazy: “When an English jury has to choose between a plain fact, on the surface, and a long explanation under the surface, it always takes the
fact, in preference to the explanation” (442). Undaunted, Hartright continues to accumulate evidence and track down narrators and their narratives, and he orchestrates a mock trial at the close of the novel to restore his wife’s identity to her. He prepares his “evidence” (617). He assembles the tenants from his wife’s childhood home as his jury. Like a prosecutor he “opened the proceedings” (618) and informs the jury that he will “prove [his case] by positive facts.” At the mock trial’s close, the lawyer exclaims that the “case was proved by the plainest evidence he had ever heard in his life” (618). Hartright turns to the imitation jury and asks them, “Are you all of the same opinion?” to which they respond, unanimously, with words and gestures, yes. Where the “legal remedy” fails (445), where the official “tribunals [are] powerless,” the multiple-narrator novel proves successful and powerful. Watt notes that the novel, in general, resembles the courtroom:

The novel’s mode of imitating reality may therefore be equally well summarised in terms of the procedures of another group of specialists in epistemology, the jury in a court of law. Their expectations, and those of the novel reader coincide in many ways: both want to know ‘all the particulars’ of a given case...and they also expect the witnesses to tell the story ‘in his own words.’ (31)

The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, however, reflects the courtroom in its very narrative structure; the witnesses “tell the story” not just in dialogue but in their own authored narratives.

1.3 HEART OF DARKNESS AND THE SPEAKING SELF

Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*—itself a transitional text between Victorianism and modernism—also marks a transitional point in the general movement from the writing self to the thinking self by emphasizing the speaking self. Like one who writes, one who speaks still
composes for an audience; like one who writes, one who speaks creates the story through his own body; but like one who thinks, one who speaks creates something ephemeral, only tangible in the moment, only to be recalled in memory. Heart fixates on orality; the three main actors in the narrative—the unnamed frame narrator, Marlow, and Kurtz—primarily speak. The frame narrator, though potentially the “writer” of the story, never mentions being a writer, writing down the story (during or after Marlow’s telling of it), or even being able to write. Even the narrator’s reference to another one of his productions sidesteps the writtenness of either narrative: “Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea” (Conrad 135). The “somewhere” mentioned is, in fact, Conrad’s earlier short story “Youth,” and the narrator does mention the “bond of the sea” on the story’s opening page; however, in Heart of Darkness, the narrator specifies that he has “already said” not “already written” it elsewhere, delicately distracting from the inevitable writtenness of both narratives and imbuing what follows with an aura of being spoken (135, emphasis added). The novel provides, and rejects, a pretense for Marlow writing his story: as he departs for Africa, his aunt bids him to “be sure to write often” (149) to her during his journey. The novel could have been a series of letters from Marlow to his aunt, much like Walton’s letters to his sister in Frankenstein; but, of course, it is not. Crucially, Marlow speaks his story.

Though Kurtz pens multiple documents (documents that he entrusts to Marlow), the novel overwhelmingly presents Kurtz as an orator rather than as a writer. Long before the much-delayed Marlow even reaches the long-abandoned Kurtz, Marlow imagines Kurtz as a talker, as a voice incarnate: “I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing...The man presented himself as a voice...his ability to talk, his words, the gift of expression” (203). This expectation is justified when Marlow actually encounters Kurtz: “A voice. He was very little
more than a voice” (205). The use of epistrophe—placing “voice” at the end of two successive sentences—syntactically stresses that the “voice” is the end all and be all of Kurtz’s being. Kurtz’s voice transcends his deteriorating body: “Though he could hardly stand, there was still plenty of vigour in his voice...in that profound tone” (233). Of Kurtz’s body parts, only his mouth—that producer and channel of the voice—remains robust: “I saw him open his mouth wide—it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him” (224). While his body lessens and weakens, his mouth still moves, expands, and attacks by “open[ing]...wide” and by viewing the whole world as a potential meal. It is specifically Kurtz’s “voice” that fascinates Marlow, hypnotizes Kurtz’s “disciple” (never given a proper name), charms Kurtz’s “Intended” (also never given a proper name), and impresses Kurtz’s former coworker at the newspaper. Though Kurtz does write—Marlow quotes a few lines from the infamous “report”—Marlow distributes the written paraphernalia to Kurtz’s colleagues and relatives with little fanfare, as if such paraphernalia was of little importance. When Marlow bestows the final packet of personal letters on the “Intended,” she doesn’t so much as glance at them, and the last words she wants to discuss are Kurtz’s last spoken words, not his last written words (compare, perhaps, with the Victorian obsession with written wills). In fact, the death of Kurtz hasn’t silenced his enduring voice, as Marlow feels that he can “hear” Kurtz’s final words “distinctly” during the meeting with the “Intended” (247).

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21 Marlow lessens the importance of Kurtz’s body to increase the importance of Kurtz’s voice. Once Kurtz dies, Marlow ponders, “the voice was gone. What else had been there? But I am of course aware that next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole” (Conrad 240). That “something,” Kurtz’s body, was not the essence of Kurtz’s soul.
Both Kurtz and Marlow become their voices as their bodies are concealed and diminished. Kurtz’s voice appears disembodied—both detached from and discordant with his body—since he can speak “without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips” (225). Furthermore, as the crepuscule dims into night, Marlow’s body becomes obscured, and Marlow becomes reduced to his voice as well: “It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another. For a long time already [Marlow], sitting apart, had been no more to us than a voice...I listened...[to] this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips” (173). Just as Kurtz produces his voice without “moving his lips” (225), Marlow appears to speak “without human lips” (173). Just as Marlow continually describes Kurtz’s body as a “shadow” and a “shade,” the “pitch dark” quickly shrouds Marlow’s body. Just as Kurtz is “little more than a voice,” Marlow becomes “no more to us than a voice.” Additionally, to the reader, the primary narrator remains a vague, disembodied voice in the darkness, as neither he nor Marlow provides any physical descriptions of him. Even the unspecified crewmember who interrupts Marlow’s account by grumbling “Try to be civil, Marlow,” is only “a voice” in the gloom and not a person accompanied with a name and a body (184).

As the seaman’s gruff remark above shows, in Heart of Darkness, the voice always has and requires an audience. The unnamed frame narrator seems to speak to the non-sailor reader who needs the maritime world explained to her. Though the primary narrator never uses direct address, he crafts his narrative as if it’s directed to a layperson rather than to a fellow crew member. The narrator helps us to transition to the sailor’s point of view; for example, he informs us that the ship’s Director “resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified” (136, emphasis added). He adds a clarifying description of the Chapman lighthouse, surely a familiar landmark to sailors: “a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat” (138). He provides
generalizations about the seagoing life and outlook: “most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life” (138); “there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself”; the “yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity.” As a narrator, Marlow uses “you” constantly, both to specifically address the crewmen-listeners and to imaginatively involve the listeners in his personal revelations. When, as mentioned above, that unspecified “voice” interrupts Marlow, Marlow responds directly with “I beg your pardon” (184)—just one of the many examples of “you” that clearly indicate an onboard audience member. But Marlow also switches from “I” to “you” for rhetorical emphasis. For example, at one point, Marlow affirms his connection to the Africans: “They howled and leaned, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar” (186, emphasis added). Though, in this passage, Marlow is ostensibly revealing his own “thought of their humanity” and his own “kinship with this...uproar,” the substitution of “you” for “I” forcefully incorporates his listeners (and the reader) into this recognition and, perhaps, prevents Marlow from experiencing this potentially unsettling epiphany alone. Kurtz, as well, demands an audience for his voice. His “disciple” quips that “you don’t talk with that man—you listen to him” (213), and Marlow later muses that Kurtz tolerated the “disciple” because “Kurtz wanted an audience...they had talked all night, or more probably Kurtz had talked” (217). Kurtz seems thrilled when he finally meets Marlow (Marlow’s reputable connections reached Kurtz via letter), probably because he senses that Marlow will make for another great listener, which is precisely what Marlow becomes—someone who literally can’t stop hearing Kurtz’s final words. Kurtz’s “splendid monologues” (222) possibly prefigure the soliloquies in The Waves, and the continual “he/she said” tags in Woolf’s novel imply a focus on orality; however, the “unique kind of thought-speech” (McIntire
31) used in *The Waves* isn’t spoken and heard in any traditional sense. Although, as will be discussed later, a soliloquy in *The Waves* will often thematically echo or foreshadow the previous or subsequent soliloquy—in an elusive stylistic and cerebral version of a conversation—the soliloquies aren’t addressed to anyone in particular; the soliloquists neither imagine nor need an audience in the way the main actors in *Heart of Darkness* do.

Comparing Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and *Heart of Darkness*—an early and late example of the nineteenth-century frame narrative—further explicates this movement from the written/writer to the oral/speaker. These narratives share an emphasis on oral narratives and also share a narrating location: on a boat. Frankenstein and Kurtz parallel each other so strongly that Shelley and Conrad use similar language to describe their characters, aspirations, and failures. They are both men with intellectual potential, driven by the desire to be useful and good, and yet, pride and ambition makes them overstep their bounds, deify themselves, lose restraint, and cause their own fall. Their great potential makes their subsequent falls over the metaphorical “edge” of the ethical “precipice” spectacular and tragic. Marlow comments that, unlike himself, Kurtz “had made that last stride. He had stepped over the edge” (Conrad 241) and was now “lying at the

22 Bernard’s final section is an exception to this rule, as he supposedly addresses it to an acquaintance: “Since we do not know each other (though I met you once I think on board a ship going to Africa) we can talk freely” (*Waves* 176); however, the reader understands that Bernard doesn’t *actually* speak this soliloquy to that acquaintance. Since Bernard needs the stimulating presence of others to feel both comfortable and at his most creative, this device makes sense for his character. Also, Bernard continues this final soliloquy after the supposed listener leaves, showing that Bernard is not thoroughly dependent on having a specific and embodied audience to speak his soliloquy: “I am alone now. That almost unknown person has gone” (218).
bottom of a precipice” (239). Frankenstein proceeds by a similar movement and fall: his feeling of “walking on the edge of a precipice” (Shelley 61) culminates in “his fall” (147). Additionally, both the creature and Frankenstein possess the oral “eloquence” that is Kurtz’s most defining feature. In his letters to his sister, Walton praises the “unparalleled eloquence” of his new friend Frankenstein (16), and Frankenstein warns Walton that the creature’s words are “eloquent and persuasive” (145), a warning that comes to fruition when Walton himself discerns the creature’s verbal “eloquence” (154). Characters repeatedly use the words “eloquent” and “eloquence” to describe Kurtz’s haunting and deep voice. In all cases, this “eloquence” is a wonder and a danger, a glorious seduction. The narrative structure of *Frankenstein*, however, contains this oral eloquence, both bracketing it with and mediating it through an epistolary frame. The whole novel, in actuality, is a series of letters from Walton to his sister Margaret Saville as Walton pursues his ambition of reaching the North Pole; it is during this trip that he witnesses the dog-sledding creature and rescues the nearly lifeless Frankenstein. The convalescing Frankenstein asks Walton to “listen to my tale” (17),23 and though Frankenstein initially shares this tale orally, Walton transcribes it for Margaret’s “pleasure” (17), and that written version is the one presented to the reader. Though it may seem, to the reader, that Frankenstein’s tale unfolds seamlessly (including his report of the monster’s story), the story actually takes “a week” to tell (146), and “every night” Walton “record[s], as nearly as possible in his own words, what [Frankenstein] has related during the day” (17). Nightly, then, Walton translates the story “hear[d] from [Frankenstein’s] own lips” into a written “manuscript” (17). Furthermore, Frankenstein offers, or rather, insists on, reviewing and editing Walton’s Margaret-bound dictation:

23 The creature uses the exact same words in demanding Frankenstein’s attention: “Listen to my tale” (Shelley 66).
Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history: he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving the life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. “Since you have preserved my narration,” said he, “I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity.” (146)

As I argue at length in the introduction, in-story revision of documents is, in the nineteenth century, both commonplace and enacted to help further the realism of the account and of its presentation. In a similar vein, Watt claims that Defoe’s and Richardson’s “very diffuseness tends to act as a guarantee of the authenticity of the report” as “a transcription of real life” (30). The device of in-story revision accounts for how Walton’s record of Frankenstein’s oral story is so minutely and artistically rendered. The reader can imagine that Walton’s original transcription was messier and more “diffuse”; the reader can forgive the story for its artistic shaping and incredible detail because she knows it has been edited by Frankenstein. Through the editing of Walton’s notes, Frankenstein replaces Walton’s monster of a text with a much improved narrative. As Frankenstein “infuse[s] life” in his creature, Frankenstein provides Walton’s copy with “life and spirit” (Shelley 34, 146). Frankenstein’s edits “corrected and augmented” the text so as to make it “not...mutilated” (146). Frankenstein always views and treats the creature, on the other hand, as a mutilated entity, as a “deform[ed]” “abortion” (114, 155), and Frankenstein literally mutilates the creature’s female partner: “I...tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged” (115). Frankenstein, therefore, not only becomes the author of his orally conveyed story, but he also collaborates with Walton in writing and revising the story afterwards. The final product, in its correctness and fullness, seems to replace Frankenstein’s earlier authorial project: the creature. *Frankenstein*, then, goes out of its way to foreground its written mediation;
furthermore, when the bulk of Frankenstein’s oral narrative is completed, Walton immediately and strongly reinstates the epistolary frame. When Walton returns as narrator, his first sentence indicates a date, invokes his correspondent, and emphasizes the writtenness of his narrative: “You have read this strange and terrific story, Margaret; and do you not feel your blood congealed with horror...?” (145).

Furthermore, at several points in *Frankenstein*, characters offer written documentation as trustworthy support to their oral narratives; such a move suggests that oral narrative must be authenticated and that written documentation is viewed as inherently authentic. The creature provides copies of Felix and Safie’s correspondence to Frankenstein in order to corroborate his orally given story: “I have copies of these letters; for I found means, during my residence in the hovel, to procure the implements of writing; and the letters were often in the hands of Felix or Agatha. Before I depart, I will give them to you, they will prove the truth of my tale” (83). The fact that the monster presents copies (made by his own hand) does not seem to weaken the letters’ ability to “prove the truth of my tale,” and Frankenstein doesn’t contradict this claim or the veracity of the creature’s tale. Actually, Frankenstein employs the same move of validation by showing the creature’s copies of Felix and Safie’s correspondence to Walton. These letters finally convince Walton of the truth of Frankenstein’s fantastic tale. Walton writes to Margaret, “I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he shewed me, and the apparition of the monster, seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asservations, however earnest and connected” (146). Evidence seen by Walton’s own eyes (the letters, the monster from a distance) is more believable and more reliable than evidence heard by the ears; even though Walton pronounces Frankenstein’s verbal chronicle “earnest,” “connected” (a term Walton uses twice), and “told with the appearance of the simplest truth,”
Walton still needs the corroborating visual evidence (146). Furthermore, Walton positions “the letters” as more important than “the apparition”; not only does he mention “the letters” first, but “the apparition” clause is isolated by commas and heralded with an “and,” which gives it the feeling of an afterthought. At every transition point in the narrative structure—Walton to Margaret, Frankenstein to Walton, the monster to Frankenstein—oral stories are verified by and/or translated into written documents.

Though the act and products of writing show up frequently in *Heart of Darkness*, such writing is mocked, faded, fragile, or secondary—it doesn’t convey truth to the extent that the voice can. The book that Marlow finds at the disciple’s abandoned riverside station—*An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*—is feeble and fragile: it has “lost its covers” (unlike Marlow’s oral story, which is effectively “covered” by the narrative frame), it has been worn down to a “dirty softness,” and Marlow handles it “with the greatest possible tenderness, lest it should dissolve in my hands” (Conrad 189). And this frail and grimy book is the sole survivor of the disciple’s library; with joy the disciple accepts the book from Marlow and reveals that the rest of the books couldn’t survive in the jungle—the written word is no match for the heart of darkness. The penciled note that the disciple leaves for Marlow at the abandoned station is “faded” and the note’s signature is “illegible” (188). Again, the written word lacks clarity, both visually and interpretatively. Marlow describes the first station’s accountant (who lives far away from Kurtz’s Inner Station) as “always, always writing” and palpably “devoted to his books,” but Marlow subtly mocks that endeavor (158). Though the accountant’s books are in “apple-pie order” (158) and he records “correct entries of perfectly correct transitions” (160), Marlow’s hyperbolic and even sarcastic tone (“apple-pie,” the repetition of “correct,” and the exaggeration of “perfectly correct”) highlights that this bookish “order” is laughably negligible in scope and impact. After
all, “[e]verything else in the station was in a muddle” (158). The “order” in these books and the accountant’s ceaseless writing do nothing to improve or even reflect the messy “fantastic invasion” that he’s a part of. Though Marlow does assess Kurtz’s infamous report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs as a “beautiful piece of writing” (208), the reader is encouraged to distrust Marlow’s evaluation (or perhaps is encouraged to take it as ironically meant in the first place) when Kurtz’s journalist colleague shows up and comments, “Kurtz really couldn’t write a bit—‘but heavens! how that man could talk” (244). Far from finding the report “vibrating with eloquence” as Marlow does (by the way, a very sound-oriented piece of praise), the journalist mutters “it would do,” as if the report merely justified his belief in Kurtz’s authorial mediocrity (207, 244). After all, Marlow only reproduces a few snippets from the “seventeen pages of close writing” that comprise the report; again, the reader feels as if Kurtz’s essence is not to be found in these documents (207). Even Marlow, who possesses, like most retrospective narrators, an impossibly strong and vivid memory, admits that the report was “difficult to remember, you know,” although he shows no difficulty in reproducing various conversations, scenes, and sensations (208). Kurtz’s written words are less memorable than his spoken ones.

1.4 THE MULTIPLE-VOICE NOVEL AND REALISM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The modernist multiple-voice novel moves away from the writing self and the speaking self to the thinking self, and correspondingly, shifts its core investment to realism of consciousness. None of the first-person sections in As I Lay Dying, The Sound and the Fury, or The Waves are characterized as being explicitly written or spoken. In The Sound in the Fury, for example, Benjy can’t write or speak, so his section is certainly not written or spoken by him. Quentin’s section is
implicitly contrasted with his written suicide notes (which Quentin frequently pats through his coat jacket). And Jason shows such a disdain for writing things down that it’s unlikely he would write this section: “I make it a rule never to keep a scrap of paper bearing a woman’s hand, and I never write them at all” (Sound 193). Jason’s narrative cultivates a hazy feeling of orality—his first line reads, “Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say” (180, emphasis added)—but such a feeling is never confirmed; no listener is ever identified. All of the male speakers in The Waves—Bernard, Neville, Louis—harbor literary talents, successes, or ambitions, but the soliloquies are presented as a “unique kind of thought-speech” (McIntire 31) rather than as writing. The “book, stuffed with phrases” that Bernard carries around with him is not the novel (Waves 219). Furthermore, the characters’ soliloquies or speeches are not presented as being spoken in the conventional sense. As critic Molly Hite explains, the “speakers ‘speak’ only metaphorically, in that their utterances are not dialogue addressed to other characters, nor are

24 Scholes and Kellogg agree that the unexplained pseudo-spoken quality of Jason’s narrative is just another example of Faulkner’s experiment[ation] with the eye-witness point of view. In his freest and most imaginative treatment of the problem he has simply ridden roughshod over the question of verisimilitude and presented characters like Jason Compson revealing themselves directly in a way which cannot be accounted for in realistic terms. To whom, under what circumstances, would Jason speak as he does? (262) Additionally, Jason uses direct address, but it remains unclear whether he is speaking to an actual human listener, to himself, to the reader, or to an imagined and hypothetical interlocutor. Who the “you” is in the following quotation remains ambiguous: “If you can’t think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw” (Sound 193, emphasis added).
they precisely internal monologue or the kind of soliloquy addressed to an audience in a dramatic performance” (xlii).25 This removal of the writing medium, a medium so privileged and necessary in the multiple-narrator novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, points to the modernist novels’ desire to access and present consciousness more directly; mediation via documentation had once bestowed both realism and authenticity to narratives, but such mediation is now viewed as a blockage rather than as a channel. For example, one review of The Sound and the Fury describes how the reader immediately found himself “in the chaotic brain of Benjy...in the disordered consciousness of an idiot” (Bassett 88, emphasis added). The double use of the pronoun “in” suggests that our access to Benjy’s consciousness seems both immediate and direct.

The narratives in the Victorian multiple-narrator novel foreground their written (or typed, in Dracula) mediation, but these modernist novels obscure such mediation—the reader doesn’t know how exactly their words came to be written. Many critics, therefore, argue that these characters aren’t “narrators,” but are rather “monologists” or “soliloquists.” Dorrit Cohn argues that these Faulknerian “monologues” are “unmediated, and apparently self-generated” (15). In Transparent Minds, Cohn traces the movement from narration to the internal monologue (which she calls the “autonomous monologue”); in a pure monologue—such as “Penelope” from Joyce’s Ulysses—the “narrative elements are reduced to zero” (15), and the monologist’s “voice totally obliterates the authorial narrative” (218). Gérard Genette makes a similar claim about monologists: “the narrator is obliterated and the character substitutes for him (174). Genette identifies the three Compson brothers’ sections in The Sound and the Fury as “monologues,” as

25 Robert Richardson concurs with this assessment: “Clearly, neither Bernard nor Neville is ‘saying’ in the usual sense of that term the speeches attributed to them” (695).
does Cohn (with some reservations, see 246–255), and Cohn counts some, but not all, of the sections in *As I Lay Dying* as monologues (see 206–208). Scholes and Kellogg also refer to the “characters’ monologues” in these Faulkner novels (262). Although Cohn emphasizes the “unmediated” appearance of such monologues, however, Scholes and Kellogg highlight the mediation in *As I Lay Dying*’s monologues: “Faulkner even abandons any attempt to couch his characters’ monologues in native idiom, but clothes all their speech with his own Faulknerian rhetoric” (262). Likewise, early reviewers of *As I Lay Dying* picked up on the ambivalent mediated/unmediated nature of these texts. For example, one reviewer complains that Faulkner does not seem even to have made up his mind whether his method of labeling chapters under characters is meant to represent the subconscious (or semi-conscious) flow of their minds, or what they actually say to themselves in words or thoughts. If the former, then of course he is justified in using fine language, as a poet is justified in using blank verse to express the exalted emotions of his persons...But then why all the colloquialisms and bad grammar? (Bassett 98)

Another review similarly indicates that “Mr. Faulkner repeatedly uses rhetorical devices of his own, and a vocabulary such as a Bundren never dreamed of, to render the thought in the mind” (96). Like the reviewers of *As I Lay Dying*, reviewers of *The Waves* accepted Woolf’s

26 Scholes and Kellogg define the interior monologue, like Cohn does, as “a direct, immediate presentation of the unspoken thoughts of a character without any intervening narrator” (177).

27 By the way, reviewers took far more issue with Faulkner making “white trash” (Bassett 96) like the Bundrens sound coherent and articulate than with Faulkner making Benjy, a mute “idiot,” think relatively coherently and articulately. Reviewers are willing to see Benjy’s section
mediation—her poetic license—in presenting the consciousnesses of her characters. One
reviewer of *The Waves* identified its soliloquy-method as “artificial” and “absurdly naïve”
(Majumdar 270) and concluded that the soliloquies were the characters’ minds made hyper-
conscious, poetic, and articulate via refraction through Virginia Woolf’s mind. The same
reviewer imagined Woolf claiming her own heavy mediation of the soliloquies: “If [the novel’s
speakers] were aware of themselves as I, their creator, am aware of them, and if, further, I were
to lend them all the resources of my mind and art, this is what they could tell us” (270). This
complimentary review also tackled the novel’s use of the first person, reasoning that it’s “a
transparent device; it is even, if you like, a kind of cheating, since once we have accepted it, it
gives us just that illusion of intimacy which, in logic, the method cannot for a moment support.
But this only means that Mrs Woolf has solved, for herself, the problem of how one may eat
one’s cake and have it” (270). This reviewer understands how “the quest for an ultimate personal
reality” might rely on various anti-realistic techniques (he uses the terms “artificial,” “illusion,”
and “transparent” to describe the method) (270). In short, he prefigures what Booth later says
about realism: “Whatever verisimilitude a work may have always operates within a larger
artifice; each work that succeeds is natural—and artificial—in its own way” (59). Similarly,
Scholes and Kellogg recognize that Faulkner’s narrative “experiment[s]” have “ridden
roughshod over the question of verisimilitude” (262). The increase in one kind of realism—
portrayal of consciousness—is met with an increase, in another area, of artificiality—the way
that consciousness comes to be articulated and represented. Although Cohn agrees that *The
Waves*’ soliloquies are “subject to poetic license, and that they must not be understood as

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as more realistically coming from his mind than the Bundrens’ sections realistically coming from
their minds.
realistic reproductions of the characters’ mental idiom” (265), she doesn’t discern that same “anti-realist intent” at work in *The Sound and the Fury*, particularly in Benjy’s section (265).

The covert or overt selector and arranger of letters in *Evelina* and *Clarissa* reappears in these modernist novels as the covert selector and arranger of voices and sections. In the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, the characters select and arrange the narratives and documents themselves, but the characters are not given those responsibilities/powers in the modernist novels I am discussing. Who assigns Benjy the date of April seventh, 1928? Who decides where Jason’s narration starts and stops? Who decides that Quentin’s section will follow Benjy’s? Robert Richardson agrees that “a central intelligence is implicit in the arrangement of the monologues themselves” in *The Waves* (698). Wayne Booth turns to *As I Lay Dying* as support for his claim that “impersonal narration is really no escape from omniscience” (161):

> Our roving visitation into the minds of sixteen characters in Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, seeing nothing but what those minds contain, may seem in one sense not to depend on an omniscient author. But this method is omniscience with teeth in it: the implied author demands our absolute faith in his powers of divination. We must never for a moment doubt that he knows everything about each of these sixteen minds or that he has chosen correctly how much to show of each. (161)

Some critical responses, I think, evince a discomfort with the ontological oddness of these texts, with the “omniscience with teeth.” An early reviewer of *As I Lay Dying*, for example, wrote, “we may I think conclude that Darl is identified in a special sense as the author of the book (not at all however identified with Faulkner himself), that the whole book is Darl’s” (Bassett 106). Cohn’s interpretation of *The Waves* echoes the reviewer’s conclusion: “*The Waves* as a whole would have to be understood as a single autonomous monologue produced, in chronological order, by
Bernard’s creative memory. The speeches of the six figures...then appear as interior monologues Bernard invents to articulate his memories” (265). By identifying one of the novel’s character-speakers—Darl or Bernard—as the novel’s “originator,” such responses try to articulate a more realistic explanation for how the book was created; such responses, perhaps, show a nostalgia for the Victorian multiple-narrator novel’s realism of method.

Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, for example, playfully implies its unrealism of method. The figure of the graphophone—a “talking machine”—becomes a metonymy for *As I Lay Dying*’s obscured narrative structure (*As 190*). The second Mrs. Bundren’s graphophone—whose music enchants Cash and seems to attract Anse to her house to borrow shovels—is presented as a piece of modern city technology, a so-called “talking machine” that Cash had been saving up to buy until Anse took Cash’s money to help pay for a new team after the river-crossing debacle. This graphophone uses records (see 261) as opposed cylinders, and was based on the earlier phonograph, the “wonderful machine” that Dr. Seward uses in *Dracula* to record his spoken diary entries (Stoker 237). While *Dracula* foregrounds its methods of recording (the phonograph, Mina’s stationary typewriter and portable typewriter, the telegraph, pen and paper)—always explaining the medium by which each document was created or transcribed—*As I Lay Dying* hides the mechanisms by which it exists, refuses to name the machine by which it talks. On the last page of the novel, Cash reminiscences about the family (sans Darl) sitting around the

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Wicke classifies *Dracula* as the “first great modern novel in British literature” (467) because it “stages the very act of its own consumption” (491) and production via “cutting edge technology” (470). I would argue, however, that despite its reliance on “cutting edge technology,” *Dracula* is an incredibly Victorian novel because of its investment in foregrounding its media, production, and consumption.
graphophone listening to the “new record...from the mail order” (As 261). Cash, then, talks about the characters listening to “record[s]” at the same time the reader has just about finished reading through the “order[ed]” “records” of the text. But while As I Lay Dying refers to its own structure only in metaphor, Dracula, by comparison, explicitly and repeatedly discusses its own structure. For example, Dr. Seward comments, “and so now, up to this very hour, all the records we have are complete and in order” (Stoker 251, emphasis added).

The Sound and the Fury begins with Benjy’s disorienting section; Faulkner’s techniques in presenting Benjy’s perspective disclaim realism of method in order to achieve realism of consciousness. Benjy is an “idiot” who “can’t talk” (Sound 47), but his section must be, inevitably and ironically, presented in language, and it uses language that is simple, unadorned, and straightforward. Benjy experiences both the present moment and remembered memories as existing in the same temporal plane (though the switch is often cued for the reader by italics). His “thoughts” are generally sensory impressions, and his senses (particularly his sense of smell—everyone has a distinctive smell to him) are particularly acute, as if to make up for his lack of language. He doesn’t understand either causality or his own motivations. For example, to calm him down, the servants often give Benjy Caddy’s old slipper: Dilsey “gave me the slipper, and I hushed” (60). As in this example, the paratactic “and” is used almost exclusively in Benjy’s section to connect clauses; Benjy doesn’t comprehend that he stops crying because he has the slipper (a causality that would be hinted at by a more hypotactic construction like “Dilsey gave me the slipper, so I hushed”). Instead, he views the two actions (Dilsey giving him the slipper and the cessation of his crying) as sequential but not necessarily causally related. Faulkner, then, brilliantly conveys Benjy’s consciousness, but to do so, Faulkner must ignore realism of method;
after all, Benjy would not be able to *think* in the kind of language that Faulkner uses on Benjy’s behalf.

In the Victorian *realism of method*, it is completely clear who authors a narrative and how he/she does so. Benjy’s section, however, defies classification because it is completely unclear who is responsible for Benjy’s section. It seems incorrect to call Benjy’s section an “interior monologue” because, as mentioned, Benjy likely can’t think in the terms presented in his section. The section, rather, fits better in Cohn’s category of psycho-narration. Cohn’s main example of psycho-narration is Henry James’s *What Maisie Knew*; James originally wanted to make Maisie the first-person narrator of the piece, but he then realized that he couldn’t do so because young Maisie didn’t have the “terms to translate” her own “perceptions” because of her age (qtd. in Cohn 47). As Cohn writes,

> one of the most important advantages of psycho-narration over the other modes of rendering consciousness lies in its verbal independence from self-articulation. Not only can it order and explain a character’s conscious thoughts better than the character himself, it can also effectively articulate a psychic life that remains unverbalized, penumbral, or obscure. Accordingly psycho-narration often renders, in a narrator’s knowing words, what a character ‘knows,’ without knowing how to put it into words. (46)

Like James’s Maisie, then, Benjy lacks the “terms to translate” his own “perceptions”; using psycho-narration, Faulkner can “effectively articulate a psychic life that remains unverbalized, penumbral, or obscure” in his own “knowing words.” In comparison with James’s psycho-narration of Maisie, however, Faulkner employs psycho-narration of Benjy that better *enacts*, rather than just describes, the features of Benjy’s mind (for example, his lack both of time sense
and of causality). Admittedly, most focal characters, like Maisie, are referred to in the third person, and Benjy is referred to in the first person. It is precisely this use of the first-person pronoun that makes it difficult to categorize Benjy’s section and makes it easy to call Benjy a “narrator” or a “monologist.” Booth does claim “person” as the “most overworked distinction” in point-of-view studies (150), but I do not think that Benjy should automatically be identified as a “narrator” or a “monologist” just because he refers to himself in the first person. Just as narratologists have a term for the so-called “third-person narrator” who uses the first-person pronoun (heterodiegetic narrator, which comes from Genette), we should have a term for a first-person focal character.

The modernist multiple-voice novel, therefore, is happy to “cheat” with regards to realism of method in order to better achieve realism of consciousness. The “use of the first person singular,” as The Waves reviewer quoted above said, can be “a transparent device...even, if you like, a kind of cheating” (Majumdar 270). That “cheating,” the reviewer claimed, gives us an “illusion of intimacy,” an illusion that Faulkner capitalizes on in Benjy’s section. The reader is placed on the morally correct side of Dilsey and Roskus, who both claim that Benjy “know lot more than folks thinks” (Sound 31). We’re separated from all those characters who abuse and belittle Benjy, from Caddy’s beau Charlie, to Dilsey’s daughter Frony, to Luster (“He cant tell what you saying...He deef and dumb” [49]). Faulkner repeatedly constructs Benjy as desperately trying to communicate—“I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed,

29 Wayne Booth has a specific objective in making this point. Booth wants to claim The Ambassadors’ Strether (and other Jamesian reflector characters) as the “most important unacknowledged narrators in modern fiction” (153). I (and other critics) disagree with Booth’s attempt to make Strether count as a “narrator.”
and I was trying to say and trying and” (53)—and the reader becomes the listener that Benjy always desired and deserved. The reader becomes even a better listener and interpreter than Caddy: “So that was it. And you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn’t tell her. You wanted to, but you couldn’t, could you” (42). Benjy can tell us.

Strangely, *The Sound and the Fury* retreats back to a limited heterodiegetic narrator in its fourth and final section after having thoroughly plunged us into the consciousnesses of its characters for the book’s first three sections; though this change may seem to indicate the novel’s lessening interest in the *realism of consciousness*, the alteration in technique serves to highlight the novel’s enduring investment in the *realism of consciousness*. Like *Bleak House*’s heterodiegetic narrator, the heterodiegetic narrator of *The Sound and the Fury*’s final section uses external narration, rarely knowing or revealing the characters’ interiorities. When this narrator wants to convey that Luster is preoccupied, he writes, “it was apparent that Luster’s mind was elsewhere,” and Luster’s hand moves “as if he were picking an inaudible tune out of the dead void” (277). By using Luster’s appearance (“it was apparent”) and description-conjecture (“as if he”), the narrator guesses at, but doesn’t invade Luster’s interiority. Benjy’s wailing “might have been all time and injustice and sorrow become vocal for an instant” (288), and Jason was “seeming to get an actual pleasure out of his [own] outrage and impotence” (303). By using tentative, hypothetical terms such as “might” and “seeming,” the narrator, through some subtle slight-of-hand, implies an interpretation of Benjy’s cries and illuminates Jason’s unexpressed pleasure. Characters in this section, therefore, often *look* their feelings. But why does a novel

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30 The major, sustained “slip” in this narrator’s external reportage is when a determined and nearly ballistic Jason chases after Quentin and red-tie-man; because Jason is *alone*, there is no opportunity for Jason to share his inner thoughts with someone else (as he somewhat

65
that has so thoroughly plunged us into the consciousnesses of its characters retreat back to a *limited* heterodiegetic narrator in its final section? Firstly, the plot of the final section—Dilsey’s work routine, Dilsey and Benjy’s visit to church, Jason’s solitary pursuit of Quentin, and Luster and Benjy’s drive to the cemetery—cannot be covered by focusing on one character or by using a sole character-narrator/monologist. The use of a heterodiegetic narrator, then, works strategically, but plot-necessity doesn’t explain why that narrator must be *limited* and not *omniscient*. The novel’s haunting last line resonates with the structure of the novel. Disconcerted by going an unusual way to the cemetery, Benjy wails; his serenity returns when Luster switches to the usual route, and “cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place” (*Sound* 321). That final trio of passing objects, grouped together via commas, is an apt metaphor for the book’s “order,” its movement from “depth” to “flatness.” Benjy and Quentin’s sections provide “windows” to their minds; Jason’s more controlled and present-oriented narrative and mind resembles the “doorway,” something that has depth only if opened; the external narration of the final section, focusing on surfaces and appearances, resembles the “signboard.” Benjy becomes calm when unexpectedly does with the sheriff earlier in the chapter). And we must know those thoughts because without knowing how high Jason perceives the stakes to be, we are unable to appreciate the pathetic tragedy of his failure. The heterodiegetic narrator of *Bleak House* pulls off a similar trick when he describes Tulkinghorn walking home and being oblivious to the death that waits for him there. The narrator (who narrates in the present tense) technically doesn’t know future events, but nonetheless advises Tulkinghorn, “Don’t go home!” (*BH* 747). As I argue in chapter 2, the masterful heightening of irony in the scene relies on the narrator temporarily expanding his privileges.
everything moves smoothly from “left to right”—the direction of reading in English. A “cornice” is one of the espied items—a potential eye pun on cornea. But why should the novel end with the “signboard” narration? My argument about Bleak House (in the next chapter) contends that the heterodiegetic narrator’s external description allows the homodiegetic narrator, Esther Summerson, to create her own depth and eschew the importance of surface, a surface that proves dangerous to other female characters in the novel. The Sound and the Fury, however, suggests that the surface is just a ruse and always hides more depth than imagined. When Dilsey and Benjy head to church, there is a striking image that calls attention to this potential dichotomy: “The road rose again, to a scene like a painted backdrop...Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted church, and the whole scene was as flat and without perspective as a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a midmorning filled with bells” (292). But then, of course, the characters “[enter]” the church, and we read about its interiority and about the guest preacher that—despite his “insignificant” appearance—gives a rousing and moving sermon that “transcended” his appearance (295). The scene doubly emphasizes the danger in trusting to appearances, in doubting the presence of depth. The flatness of the church is hyperbolically presented: the word “painted” is used three times; the words “scene,” “backdrop,” and “cardboard set” all point to two-dimensionality; and the terms “without perspective” and the twice-used “flat” further level the image. The text reminds us, however, that even something that appears to be nothing but a flat exterior is filled with incredible depth, just as a man-child that appears to be deaf and dumb harbors a rich interiority. By the time we reach this final section, then, Faulkner has trained his readers well; we are willing to see every character as one flooded with consciousness (whether or not we are privy to it), and the switch to external description becomes a genius shift to better
indicate the volcanic-bubbling of interiority underneath all external description. By denying us the “internal” perspective of the previous sections, Faulkner encourages us to imagine it. So when the final section repeatedly links Benjy with images of “nothing”—the ending to the title’s allusion—we don’t buy it. Benjy’s wails are described as “nothing” (288), his “gaze [is] empty” (320), and his “eyes were empty” (321). But the cycle that the novel traces—starting with Benjy and ending with Benjy—encourages us to move from these descriptions of emptiness back to the novel’s first section, in which that emptiness is filled.

1.5 COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNICATION

The Victorian multiple-narrator novel, both in form and in plot, centers on the group cause, a focus which differs from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples of the form. *Clarissa* and *Evelina*, as their one-word and one-name titles imply, concentrate on the main character and present the letters written to, from, and around her. Her death or her marriage—and the trials she must undergo to reach her fated conclusion—inspires the swarm of letters. Before the reader even begins *Clarissa* or *Evelina*, she already knows who the protagonist is. The title of Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is the closest one comes to finding a Victorian multiple-narrator novel named after a narrator. Helen, one of the novel’s two narrators, is the tenant of Wildfell Hall; importantly, though, she is not directly named by the title (even her gender isn’t revealed in the title). Instead of telling us who the protagonist will be, the title sets up a mystery (indeed, who is the tenant of Wildfell Hall?) and sets up the conflict between the neighborhood and the mysterious newcomer. But most of these novels’ titles—*The Moonstone*, *Dracula*, *The Beleaguered City*—name the item (the missing Moonstone), threat (Dracula), or place (the city that is beleaguered) that instigates the need for narrative collaboration; the titles indicate the why.
And these collaborations—in narrative and in plot—are generally successful. Any narrative gaps are effectively filled by a garnered or written narrative, innocence is restored (The Moonstone, The Woman in White), the threat is subdued (Dracula, The Woman in White, Treasure Island), marriage and family are consolidated (The Moonstone, The Woman in White, Dracula, The Beetle), and financial security is assured (Treasure Island, The Woman in White). In the modernist multiple-perspective novel, however, the group cause becomes suspect, lost, or parodied. Witnesses are aghast at the odorous funeral procession for the decomposing Addie Bundren in As I Lay Dying; one such woman decries (in an echo of “the horror, the horror”), “It’s an outrage...A outrage” (As 117). Lazy Anse inexplicably chooses this one mad undertaking as the one to doggedly pursue, ignorant that he’s merely fulfilling his wife’s planned revenge against him and unconcerned with his children’s sacrifice and injury in fulfilling it. So though the Bundren family, and to a certain extent, the community, unites to transport Addie to her desired burial plot in Jefferson, the unification is both ridiculous and ridiculed. Furthermore, ulterior motives encourage most members of the family to undergo the trip to the city: Anse wants a set of new teeth, Vardaman wants to see the train in the shop window, Dewey Dell wants an abortion, and Cash wants a graphophone. Burying Addie’s body—the ostensible group cause that drives the arduous journey—is the veneer of a motivation that hides more selfish desires. In The Sound and the Fury, the once grand and wealthy Compson family suffers a slow, spectacular, and public fall, as members are disowned, castrated, and buried (from suicide and alcoholism no less). Each brother who narrates—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—selfishly focuses on his own problems (particularly on how Caddy, in one way or another, has ruined his life), ignorant or careless of the family’s monetary and moral collapse around him (or even because of him). Though Marlow voluntarily enlists in the European imperialistic project in Heart of
Darkness, he ironically jests at and thereby deflates the greatness of that project: “After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings” (Conrad 155). The six main characters in The Waves lose their tight co-ed community once childhood passes and, after that, only meet twice more as a group over the course of their lives.

It is, in fact, a pervasive feeling of the community’s loss that organizes these modernist novels, a loss often mirrored in the novels’ narrative structures as well. The characters in The Waves violently mourn Percival’s unexpected death in India (which occurs at the mid-point in the book). Percival is the “silent center of the novel” (McIntire 40), never speaking via soliloquy; as McIntire notes, “we quite astonishingly hear only one word from Percival in the entire novel” (39), a word which is recorded in one of Bernard’s soliloquies: “No.” His silence magnifies his larger-than-life status, his godlike reputation among the others. Bernard cultivates the characterization of Percival as the lost center: “About him my feeling was: he sat there in the centre. Now I go to that spot no longer. The place is empty” (Waves 110). Meditating on Percival’s death, Bernard uses the anaphoric repetition of “you have lost” to amplify Percival’s unfulfilled potential: “you have lost something that would have been very valuable to you. You have lost a leader, whom you would have followed” (111). In The Sound and the Fury, each brother responds to Caddy’s absence (and to the loss of her innocence, which is foreshadowed by her muddy drawers) differently: Benjy wails, Quentin neurotically obsesses, and Jason rages. Caddy’s narrative silence (she is the only one among her siblings not to receive her own section) mirrors and amplifies her absence in the story world. Addie’s death propels the entire plot of As I Lay Dying (she is the “I” that lies dying), and though one blazing section is told from her point of view, she still narrates fewer chapters than every other Bundren family member excepting Jewel. Marlow’s mission in Heart of Darkness is to reach the lost—literally and metaphorically—
Kurtz, and the novel’s conclusion is drenched in ambivalence over the definitive loss of this “remarkable” man. The Intended twice enlarges the magnitude of his loss: “What a loss to me—to us!...To the world” (Conrad 249). The novels’ conclusions only emphasize, rather than counter, this loss. *The Sound and the Fury* ends with Luster driving Benjy to the graveyard where Benjy’s brother and father lay buried. *As I Lay Dying* ends with Addie having just been buried, and Anse’s abrupt marriage to the lady with the graphophone, whom he barely knows, is a travesty of a comedy conclusion. In the last line of the novel, Anse introduces his children to his new wife: “Meet Mrs Bundren” (*Sound* 261). Calling his new bride Mrs. Bundren only emphasizes the very recent loss and burial of the previous Mrs. Bundren. *The Waves*’ penultimate sentence alludes, again, to Percival’s death, and the novel’s last words are “O Death!” (*Waves* 220). *Heart of Darkness* ends (in the framed story and in the frame) with oppressive images of darkness and death. The “room was growing darker” throughout Marlow and the Intended’s meeting about Kurtz’s death (Conrad 248), and the frame narrative ends by describing the ship’s dark environs, including the “black bank of clouds,” “overcast sky,” and the looming “darkness” (252). Though Victorian plots often include or are precipitated by loss, their conclusions incorporate various gains that outweigh and eclipse that loss. So although the prized jewel is lost in *The Moonstone* and Lucy dies in *Dracula*, for example, the novels end with pregnancy and a newborn child, respectively. The rejuvenation of children minimizes the previously incurred losses, and such losses even help to create and strengthen family and community ties by the novels’ ends.

Although the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century multiple-narrator novels are comprised of self-conscious writer-narrators, the modernist multiple-voice novel focuses more intensely on the mind: both as the method and locale of collaboration and as the primary realistic investment.
This mental exchange is achieved via bald clairvoyance or an extreme empathy that approximates telepathy. In the Victorian multiple-narrator novel, it’s the villain who possesses mind-reading abilities (particularly the Beetle and Dracula), and the novel codes the enactment of such abilities as aggressive and invasive. Protagonists, however, such as Darl, Bernard, and Dilsey possess a mind-expansive quality in these modernist novels, and that quality provides a sense of coherence and stability in otherwise chaotic worlds and splintered narratives. Because of the multiply voiced structure of these novels, Faulkner and Woolf didn’t have to resort to making their characters clairvoyant. Many of Darl’s clairvoyant passages—describing the encounter between Jewel and his horse, describing Addie’s death scene—could have been easily narrated by another character such as Jewel in the first case and Dewey Dell in the second. The final section of *The Waves*, rather than being only spoken by Bernard, could have continued its expected cycle of soliloquies. Faulkner’s and Woolf’s structural choices, therefore, purposefully construct the mind as potentially expansive, swelling from its own time and body and space, in order to bridge the difference and division between characters.

*The Waves* proceeds on the possibility of mental communion. *The Waves* features nine sections of six characters’ soliloquies in rotation; short third-person italicized interludes that describe nature (and the waves in particular) reside in between the sections of soliloquies. The individual soliloquies are not spatially alienated from one another like the sections in *As I Lay Dying*, instead, they bump up against one another; however, their insistent speech tags—“said Jinny,” “said Louis”—continuously mark each character’s soliloquy as separate and different, as originating with and belonging to him or her. Bernard recalls the painful process of becoming differentiated from his childhood friends: “But we were all different. The wax—the virginal wax that coats the spine melted in different patches for each of us” (*Waves* 178); “We suffered
terribly as we became separate bodies” (179). Louis, too, expresses the severity of this difference: “We differ, it may be too profoundly” (92). The characters—especially the pair of outcasts, Louis and Rhoda—are constantly aware of their difference from others. And yet, there remains the desire to come together, to unify in a way that overcomes but doesn’t erase those differences. The two times the group reconvenes—to say goodbye to Percival before he goes to India and to have dinner in late-middle age at Hampton Court—they manage to create a mental community. Though their soliloquies are always appended with speech tags, critics roundly agree that they are not meant to be literally verbal; when the characters are physically congregated, however, the soliloquies advance like a mental conversation. We rarely learn what is actually said between characters; customary greetings and small talk, though implied, are absent in the text before us. But each soliloquy jumps off the previous one and leads into the subsequent one in a way that suggests a cerebral conversation, a conversation that depends on the characters’ intimate knowledge of the others’ thoughts. For example, during the first of the two gatherings, Louis (mentally) exclaims that he “hate[s]” all present except for Percival and Susan (92). Jinny, who speaks next, counters Louis’s claim as if she had heard it. “But you will never hate me,” she assures him, because of her body’s ability to “dazzle” others (93). Speaking next, Neville concurs with Jinny’s self-assessment, commenting that she does, in fact, “demand[] admiration” (93); furthermore, he refers to Jinny as “you” as if he were directly responding to her. In the same soliloquy, Neville changes the topic to his own life and professes that in “this pursuit”—the desire for love—“I shall grow old” (94). Next, Rhoda reuses Neville’s language (“pursuit” and “grow old”) to reflect on her own personality: “If I could believe...that I should grow old in pursuit and change...” (94). And so on and so forth. Certain words, images, refrains, and topics are tossed around like a ball, linking the soliloquies and giving them the rhythm of conversation.
Even Rhoda, perpetually terrified and secretly flailing, seems soothed by the telepathic nature of these rare meetings; she comments, “there are moments when the walls of the mind grow thin; when nothing is unabsorbed” (164). A few pages later she returns to this metaphor of the walled mind: “The still mood, the disembodied mood is on us... and we enjoy this momentary alleviation (it is not often that one has no anxiety) when the walls of the mind become transparent” (168). She imagines the mind’s boundaries, which protect it from the external world, becoming both “thin” and “transparent,” allowing everything to be absorbed and transmitted. Bernard also returns to the image of dwindling boundaries in his final section: “I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them” (214).

Bernard becomes the epitome of the desire and the possibility for mental community by speaking the novel’s final section on his own. Of the nine sections, a Bernard soliloquy starts off seven of them (section five and six are begun by Neville and Louis, respectively), and section nine features only Bernard, “sum[ming] up” on the behalf of himself and his friends to an acquaintance that he “hardly know[s]” (176, 186). Particularly in this final section, Bernard uses the language of the impersonal nature interludes and the language of the other characters’ soliloquies. Unlike most of his friends, Bernard is always a particularly open character, one who truly comes alive in the stimulating presence of others: “My being only glitters when all its facets are exposed to many people” (135). Even as a young man he conceives of his own self as plural and not single: “I do not believe in separation. We are not single,” and “we are not single, we are one” (48); in his final section, he reiterates: “I am not one person; I am many people” (205). This receptivity to “the stimulus of other people” (57), his vigorous imagination (Bernard is the unremitting phrase maker and storyteller), and his ability to sympathize (“I sympathise effusively” [55]) all situate him as the character most able to access his friends’ minds (either in
actuality or imaginatively—the book draws no distinction between the two options). Robert Richardson agrees, pointing out that as an “acute, sensitive, and sympathetic human being,” Bernard “use[s] knowledge of his friends’ personalities, sensibilities, and social circumstances to render the content and quality of that characters’ experience” (700). After all, having the final section *only* narrated by Bernard is a specific structural choice—a break with the pattern established by the rest of the book. Though Rhoda has committed suicide, Bernard does not mention any other of the main characters’ deaths; it would be completely possible, then, for the pattern to continue in this final section, just as it would be entirely possible for Faulkner to have chosen Dewey Dell and Jewel to narrate scenes that Darl narrates in absentia. Both Woolf and Faulkner, therefore, optimistically envision a unity sustained by empathy and imagination. Bernard, for example, recalls one instance of a *real* interaction with Rhoda, real though conducted by means of the imagination: “‘Wait,’ I said, putting my arm in imagination (thus we consort with our friends) through her arm. ‘Wait until these omnibuses have gone by’” (*Waves* 208). Bernard’s straightforward elaboration—“thus we consort with our friends”—renders such interaction-via-imagination routine; the placement of the explanation in parentheses further constructs the method of such “consort” as self-evident. Scholes and Kellogg, therefore, should add Woolf to their list of authors—Conrad, Faulkner, and Proust—for whom “the superiority of imaginative truth over empirical truth is maintained” (263).

Gabrielle McIntire argues that Bernard’s final section functions as his monologic shutdown of the text’s heteroglossic potential, and she thereby aligns Bernard with the fascism that was growing during the time that Woolf was writing *The Waves*. McIntire casts Bernard as the “narrative dictator” who “‘takes over’ the narration” (38, 31) in his final section. Limiting the final section to one soliloquist, however, does not automatically preclude and extinguish
heteroglossia (also, heteroglossia and monologism are not opposites though McIntire presents them as such). While McIntire contends that Bernard “impose[s] his single voice on the...plural experiences of others,” I would argue that Bernard opens his mind to that multiplicity of voices and experiences (35). Rather than aggressively “contain[ing] the diversity” of his friends, Bernard celebrates his friends’ distinct experiences and personalities. McIntire also accuses Bernard of yearning for a “homogeneity of identity” that aligns him with the fascist commitment to the “oneness of the crowd and the State” (38, 42). Bernard’s final section, however, does not obliterate difference to attain a generic sameness; Bernard’s section seeks to diminish distance to attain closeness. In one passage, Bernard says, “we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, ‘I am you.’ This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome” (Waves 214). Bernard references the fact that his friends are physically separated by space and, at this point, by death: “we are divided; we are not here.” His hope that no “obstacle” or “division” separates them reveals his imaginative attempt to close that inevitable distance. The “difference” and “identity” he mentions are not erased but “overcome,” another term that suggests a physical impediment being surmounted via this imaginative communion. Bernard’s affirmation that “I am you” doesn’t simplify the “you” but registers Bernard’s effort to sympathetically occupy another’s viewpoint. Furthermore, as Robert Richardson points out, Bernard is not the only character to “re-create and share even the most inward of another character’s experiences” (697). Though Robert Richardson acknowledges that Bernard’s “diffuseness,” openness, and “sympathy” differentiates him from his friends and enables him to better “assimilate [their] points of view” (699), he also notes that other characters, such as Louis
and Neville, also enact such assimilation, though on a smaller scale (something McIntire doesn’t acknowledge).

Much like Bernard in *The Waves*, Darl occupies “a highly privileged position as narrator” within *As I Lay Dying* (Bleikasten 56); like Bernard’s extraordinary empathy, Darl’s clairvoyance enables mental communication. Darl’s knowledge of the unspoken and unseen positions him as a god-like character; however, unlike Bernard, Darl is ultimately sacrificed and exiled because of these traits. Darl narrates nineteen of the novel’s fifty-nine sections (far more than any other character), and via clairvoyance, narrates scenes he’s not present at. In short, Darl “is the one who sees and knows the most, and it is through him that we are most completely informed” (Bleikasten 4). The very structure of *As I Lay Dying*, chopped into small divisions, each headed with the character’s name in bolded caps, heightens the sense of individual separateness; all that blank space at the end of and beginning of sections functions like an impassable gulf, but Darl is able to routinely cross that gulf. In the opening chapters, Darl authoritatively narrates Jewel’s actions, thoughts, and words, none of which Darl would be able see, know, or hear by traditional means. Darl famously narrates his mother’s death scene even though at the time of her death he’s on the road with Jewel and far away from the Bundren household. Darl communicates “without words” with his newly pregnant sister Dewey Dell (*As* 27). He intuitively knows that she’s pregnant and knows how desperately she yearns to ask Dr. Peabody for assistance in terminating the pregnancy. Dewey Dell and Darl even manage to hold a conversation over whether or not he will inform Anse of her pregnancy “without...words” (27). The Bundrens’ helpful neighbor Tull comments that Darl “don’t say nothing; just looks at me with them queer eyes of hisn that makes folks talk. I always say it aint never been what he done so much or said or anything so much as how he looks at you. It’s like he had got into the inside
of you, someway” (125). Tull also notes, therefore, that Darl’s knowledge is achieved “without words”—he “don’t say nothing”—and through Darl’s ability to get “inside of you.” Cora, who considers Darl as “touched by God,” describes God’s telepathic powers in the same terms that Tull uses to describe Darl’s telepathic powers; Cora comments, God “alone can see into the heart” (167). Darl furthers this divine parallel by situating himself as the listener to Addie’s posthumous prayers. He tells Vardaman that coffin-encased Addie is “talking to God...She is calling Him to help her” (214). By becoming the “listen[er]” that Addie is “talking to” and by “help[ing] her” in the way she apparently wants God to help her, Darl positions himself as the knowledgeable God who can hear and answer silent prayers. Darl can also “see into” his brother Cash’s “ultimate secret place”: “he and I look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another’s eyes and into the ultimate secret place where for an instant Cash and Darl crouch flagrant and unabashed in all the old terror and old foreboding” (142). This quotation situates Darl’s method of knowledge-gathering as more direct and as more effective than spoken or written language—his “looks” (emphasized through anadiplosis) are crucially “unimpeded.” The language of movement emphasizes how Darl’s stare moves through space and time—it “plunge[s]” “through” and “into” and resurrects the “old”—to reach the true inner core of someone: their “ultimate secret place.” Darl constructs actual voice as a pale and distant echo of the aforementioned soul-communion: “our voices are quiet, detached” (142).

Bernard too, though a logophile and born raconteur, comes to doubt his words and stories; in his final section, he admits, “How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases” since “none of them are true” (Waves 176). Addie much more virulently distrusts words: “words are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at” (As 171). Addie believes words to be false and clumsy tools that prevent communication rather than enable it: “we had had to use one
another by words like spiders...swinging and twisting and never touching” (172). She prefers “dark voicelessness” and “voiceless speech” (175). Addie’s phrase—“voiceless speech”—is an apt oxymoronic description of _As I Lay Dying_’s sections, which exist in the juncture between consciousness and unconsciousness, speech and non-speech. The Bundren family, however, does betray Darl, the family medium; to prevent Gillespie from suing the Bundren family for Darl’s intentional burning of Gillespie’s barn, the family agrees to institutionalize Darl. Furthermore, in his final section, Darl has split into two selves: a laughing self referred to as “Darl” and the “I” that observes and questions him. Such a split perhaps shows the price of his mental openness or of his family’s betrayal of that mental openness.31

Though the possibility of mental community exists in _The Waves_ and the possibility of mental communication exists in _As I Lay Dying_, _The Sound and the Fury_ lacks strong examples of either; however, Dilsey, the loyal Compson servant, possesses some of the clairvoyance that Bernard and Darl exhibit. But as the family crumbles around her stable presence, there is no one left for her to mentally communicate or bond with. Unlike Darl and Bernard, Dilsey does not narrate; the heterodiegetic narrator of the novel’s fourth and final section, however, does often focus on and follow Dilsey through her day. Her connection to the house and to its inhabitants manifests as clairvoyance: “Mrs Compson called her name again from within the house. Dilsey raised her face as if her eyes could and did penetrate the walls and ceiling and saw the old woman in her quilted dressing gown at the head of the stairs, calling her name with machinelike

31 To emphasize the split in Darl’s character, the section abounds in references to two: the “two men” escorting him on the train (_Sound_ 253); the “two seats” on the train (254); the “two faces” of the nickel (254); the two sides of a coin (the “backside” and the “face” [254]), and the “pig with two backs” in his raunchy spyglass.
regularity” (Sound 270). In Darl’s first section, he walks around the cotton house yet relays what occurs within its walls as Jewel walks through it; similarly, Dilsey’s “eyes...penetrate the walls and ceiling” to see Mrs. Compson. Later, when Dilsey brings Benjy to her church for the Easter service, the visiting preacher’s rousing sermon emphasizes his sight of the past and of the future: “I can see de widowed God shet His do; I sees de whelmin flood roll between; I sees de darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations” (296). The repetition of “I sees”—which becomes an anaphora in the last two clauses—constructs his sight as transcendently clairvoyant. During the guest sermon, the amassed members begin to think and breathe and respond as one: “their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words” (294). Like the wordless communication between Darl and Dewey Dell and like the mental conversations among friends in The Waves, the congregation members “speak[] to one another” without “words.” The passage uses plural pronouns like “them,” “they,” and “their” to stress the unity of the congregation: “a long moaning expulsion of breath rose from them,” and “they did not mark” (295, emphasis added). This “collective” moment represents the strongest example of community, both physical and mental, in the entire novel (294). Like the achievements of community in The Waves and As I Lay Dying, this particular instance is anomalous and short-lived; Dilsey must request and receive time off to attend the service (suggesting that she cannot always attend), and the preacher that so enthuses the congregation is a visitor. This magnificent collective moment, then, arises from special and irregular circumstances. Additionally, it doesn’t happen on any random Sunday, but on the Easter holiday, the most important Sunday of the Christian calendar. Furthermore, the congregation’s uncertainty about Benjy’s presence marks the community as exclusive. But the service and preacher’s speech do enable Dilsey to reach her full clairvoyant potential. Once the service concludes, a lachrymose Dilsey confidently portends,
“I’ve seed de first en de last...I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin” (297). Dilsey repeats this sentiment several more times in the section. The church scene and Dilsey’s prophecy read as the climax of the novel; everything that follows the service feels like the inevitable denouement of a tragedy, verifying Dilsey’s ominous prediction.

Just as Faulkner’s novels were labeled “experimental,” the core text of the next chapter, Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House*, has been praised for its “experimental” structure. Both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Bleak House*, however, share a multiple-perspective structure that features both first-person and third-person sections. Authors’ deployment of the multiple-perspective structure has certainly changed over time: transitioning from an investment in the writing self to the thinking self; shifting in its commitment to different types of realism; and moving its communal impulse from the plot to the mind. Nonetheless, the discourse of experimentation should exist side-by-side with the awareness that *Bleak House* and *The Sound and the Fury* could be viewed as related “versions” of a broad narrative type.
The third chapter of Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (*BH*) (1853) shocks when, completely unexpectedly, a new narrator, Esther Summerson, expresses her “difficulty in beginning to write my portion of these pages” (27). The previous two chapters had been narrated by an unnamed, disembodied narrator, but from chapter 3 onwards, the two narrators take turns narrating, the first narrator in the present tense and Esther in the past tense. The narrating duo nearly exactly split the chapter duties: Esther narrates for one less chapter total than the other narrator does, but she receives the novel’s last chapter and last word as if to make up for the slight imbalance. As far as narrative structure, nothing quite like *Bleak House* exists in Victorian fiction. Peter Garrett is not alone in deeming the novel “the most extraordinary formal experiment of the whole period” (15). Nothing in Dickens’s letters or working plans for *Bleak House* even hints at why he landed on such a unique, unprecedented structure for this novel. Many critics have offered

32 Although the narrator is not overtly gendered in the text, all critics except for Judith Wilt assume or argue that the heterodiegetic narrator is masculine. I agree with this consensus and may occasionally refer to this narrator as “he.”

33 Warhol agrees, “In terms of narrative perspective, *Bleak House* is highly experimental for its era” (149).
interpretations on the effect of and the rationale behind the dual narrative, but those readings often feel alienated from the plot of the novel even though critics widely agree that “the narrative method seems…to be part of the very substance of Bleak House, expressive of what, in the widest and deepest sense, the novel is about” (Harvey 91). Agreeing with Harvey’s assessment, I argue that both the content and structure of Bleak House actualize the shift—the shift Nancy Armstrong delineates in Desire and Domestic Fiction—between the aristocratic woman of surface and the new feminine domestic ideal of depth. The plot of the novel details the fall of the Dedlock family (and, by extension, of the aristocracy) and the concomitant rise of Esther Summerson and her community of sympathizing, more-or-less middle-class, hard-working friends and relatives. The first narrator, a heterodiegetic (third-person) narrator, largely narrates the fall of the aristocratic woman of surface and the fall of her class’s ostentatious lifestyle. I claim, in contrast with other critics, that this narrator is not omniscient and that he, thereby, narrates what he sees and hears—in short, he narrates surfaces. Leonard Deen calls this technique “‘external’ descriptive narrative” (206). Conversely, because she writes in the first person, Esther can and does create herself as a woman of depth by eschewing her physical appearance and by directing the desire (of both the reader and other characters) away from her appearance.

The other narrator supports Esther in her depth-creating endeavor by, on the whole, refusing to “see” her in his narrative and, therefore, refusing to make her a woman of surface and appearance. The non-competitive and respectful relationship between these two narrators, which grows out of a shared moral vision, embodies the sympathy, understanding, and cooperation that

34 Lisa Sternlieb’s chapter on Bleak House does an excellent job of integrating the content and plot of the novel with its narrative structure.
the novel endorses. My reading contrasts with the majority of criticism on *Bleak House*’s dual narrative. Interpretations tend to rest on emphasizing or exaggerating the differences between the two narrators. Some critics erect a hierarchy of narrators and elevate one narrator and one narrative as more artistic, more realistic, more persuasive, more powerful, or more Dickensian than the other narrator and narrative. My reading resists this “versus” approach by calling

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35 Some critics, like Harvey and Frank, argue that Esther functions as a foil or balance to the “extremeness” of the other narrator. Harvey writes that Esther’s flatness “functions as... a brake, controlling the runaway tendency of Dickens’s imagination” (91). Another set of critics—including Deen, Gaughan, and James Hill—propose that Esther represents the life or self that is missing from (but is often contextualized by or made necessary by) the other narrative. By successfully comparing the two narrators, both Audrey Jaffe and Bert G. Hornback are exceptions to the majority of interpretations on *Bleak House*’s dual narration. Jaffe focuses on how “Both narrators ‘efface’ themselves” (138). Because Hornback finds the similarities between the two narratives to be so striking and strong, he goes so far as to ask, “Is it possible or worthwhile to read *Bleak House* as entirely Esther’s novel?” (9).

36 Jadwin, Case, Moseley, Serlen, and J. Hillis Miller conclude that the heterodiegetic narrator (whom they all call omniscient) prevails over Esther for a variety of reasons. Delespinasse, Sawicki, and Peters make the opposite move, claiming that Esther possesses or gains dominance over the other narrative. For example, Moseley maintains that “Esther is subordinate” and classifies her pages as an “interpolated narrative” (41, 45); on the other hand, Peters reasons that “Esther’s narrative assumes authority over the novel” (124). As a subset of the dominant/subordinate binary critics, Delespinasse and Serlen argue opposite points in the debate over which narrative is more realistic. To Serlen, Esther’s narrative fails to acknowledge
attention to the similarities—in content, technique, tone, and ethics—between the two narrators. After all, *Bleak House* is a novel about the necessity of recognizing the connections between apparently un-connected things.\(^{37}\)

My interpretation builds from the previous work of the merry band of critics that I label the “Esther rescuers.” An early reviewer of the novel remarked that Esther was “proof of how unable Dickens is to enter into the real *depths* of a human mind” (P. Collins, *Dickens* 308). Much later, Martha Rosso reversed that claim: “Much…lies below the surface in Esther Summerson” (94). Such analysis helps redeem Esther from being the “failure” she was once commonly

or solve any of the problems that the “real” narrative presents openly and instead cushions itself in the protective bubble of romance. J. Hillis Miller similarly believes that the heterodiegetic narrator’s sections contain an irrepressible power and attraction, a “vividness and immediacy,” that imply that the “true reality, it may be, is the mysterious and threatening present plunging blindly into an unpredictable future” (*Charles* 178). Delespinasse, on the other hand, argues that Esther’s narrative triumphs over the other narrative by being more “real”: her narrative is “more convincing as a representation of real humanity” (258). These “versus” arguments sometimes fall into the trap of finding one narrative “bad” and the other “good” or of suggesting that the main purpose of one-half of the novel to be a negative contrast with “the half that matters.”

\(^{37}\) Buzard writes that, as an example of *metropolitan autoethnography*, *Bleak House* “proliferat[es] a series of discontinuous and seemingly irreconcilable spaces within Britain and set[s] into motion a narrative charged…with the task of demonstratively connecting them” (107); therefore, in the novel, “It cannot be safe to say something or someone…is not connected” (115).
considered to be;38 these “Esther rescuers” variously interpret Esther as a persuasive portrait of childhood trauma; as a complicated, feminist character whose writing approaches écriture féminine; and as a skillful and playful narrator.39 No longer dismissed as simple and bothersome, Esther now receives critical praise for her complexity and cleverness.

A note about terminology would be helpful before proceeding further. Critics frequently refer to the first narrator as the “omniscient narrator”; however, I deny that he is, in fact, omniscient. Some critics refer to him as the “third-person narrator.” Like others, however, I am dissatisfied with that term’s pronominal implications; therefore, I will use Gérard Genette’s coinage for a narrator who is not a character in the story being told—a “heterodiegetic” narrator. Esther, it follows, is a “homodiegetic” narrator, a narrator who is a character in the story being told. She covers both of Norman Friedman’s first-person categories—“I as protagonist” and “I as witness”—variously focusing on her own story and then dropping into the background and letting other characters take center stage. Although critics have tried to categorize Esther’s text as an autobiography, bildungsroman, memoir, life-story, diary, and journal, it is none of the above, or not quite enough of any of the above to qualify. Dickens himself provided an appropriate label: “Esther’s narrative.” From chapter 17 onwards, every “Esther section” begins

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38 Jadwin identifies Esther as Dickens’s “most notorious aesthetic failure” (113). Harvey defends Esther by reasoning that it’s amazing that Dickens didn’t fail more with her: “we should wonder not that Dickens fails, but that the failure is so slight. Still, he does fail” (94). Significantly, no one ever suggests that the other narrator or narrative fails.

39 See Zwerdling, Rosso, and Axton for interpretations focused on Esther’s traumatic childhood. Sadrin and Felber interpret Esther’s writing as “feminine writing.” Fletcher, Sawicki, and Kearns concentrate on Esther as a narrator.
with a chapter entitled “Esther’s narrative.” The terms applied to the narrators and to Esther’s text are important, as they contain certain expectations or assumptions and make certain readings of the novel easier or more difficult.

2.1 DUAL—NOT DUELING NARRATORS

One might imagine that two narrators in the same work would inevitably see the world very differently. And Bleak House’s two narrators, of course, do see differently because they see from different vantage points and with different limitations; however, the two narrators also possess many similarities in how they view the world of the novel. Philip Collins quips that Dickens missed “a rather obvious trick” by not having the narrators in Bleak House perceive the characters in the story differently (“Some” 139). To Collins, therefore, Dickens failed to “exploit the potentialities of the form he has devised” (138). But why can’t one of the “potentialities of the form” be having the two narrators strikingly coincide on their descriptions of the characters? In fact, the two narrators of Bleak House share a world populated with the same characters, the same government, the same weather, the same time scheme, and the same overarching plot. Furthermore, the narrators coincide on their attitudes towards those shared items: they describe characters with the same adjectives and catchphrases, they admire and despise the same characters, and they share the same moral views about issues from charity to Chancery.
The heterodiegetic narrator and Esther describe and value characters similarly. The heterodiegetic narrator and Esther describe and value characters similarly. Richard’s legal advisor, Vholes, is a good example of their consensus. Esther calls Vholes a vampire, and employing a similar monstrous vocabulary, the other narrator compares Vholes to a cannibal (BH 924, 622). In the heterodiegetic narrative, Vholes “always looks at the client, as if he were making a lingering meal of him” (624). In Esther’s narrative, Vholes exhibits the same creepy hungry manner: he possesses a “slowly devouring look” and finishes off Richard with “one gasp as if he had swallowed the last morsel of his client” (976). Vholes speaks in an inaudible way throughout the novel. Esther mentions his “inward speaking,” and the other narrator, in almost the exact same terms, describes Vholes’s “inward manner of speech” (607, 624). The foreboding “bloodless quietude” he displays in the heterodiegetic narrative is matched by Esther’s descriptors of “so bloodless” and “quite still” (624, 924, 608). Both narrators cite Vholes’s trademark black gloves and buttoned-up dress. Esther refers to him as that “buttoned-up unwholesome figure,” and the other narrator hyperbolizes that Vholes is “buttoned up in body and mind” (976, 629). Mr. George—the trooper turned shooting gallery owner—provides another examples of the two narrators’ harmony with regards to characters. The heterodiegetic narrator describes him as “swarthy” and “browned” with a “broad chest” and “sunburnt” hands and face (341). Esther also mentions Mr. George’s “broad chest,” his tendency to blush through his “brown” skin (393), and his “sunburnt smiles” (794). Mr. George’s friend Mr. Bagnet utters his signature catchphrase in both narratives: “Discipline must be maintained.” Mrs. Bagnet appears armed with a grey cloak and umbrella—as well as with a no-nonsense attitude—in both 40 Hornback, also interested in the “parallels between Esther’s narrative and the omniscient narrative,” shows the similarities in both narrators’ descriptions of Woodcourt, Bucket, and Miss Flite (10).
narratives. Esther describes her as “a weather-tanned bright-eyed wholesome woman with a basket” (798), and the other narrator concurs: Mrs. Bagnet has been “freckled by the sun and wind which have tanned her hair upon the forehead; but healthy, wholesome, and bright-eyed” (439). Lady Dedlock’s jettisoned servant, Hortense, keeps her set lips, unsettling mixture of confidence and propriety, and cat-like energy in both narratives.\footnote{One might argue that the narrators’ similar descriptions of characters illustrate Dickens’s incompetence or limitations as an artist—an inability to complicate his notoriously flat characters. Although this argument is difficult to either prove or disprove, I want to call attention to how much the descriptions sound equally credible within each narrative. Esther’s disgust with Vholes is plausible on account of her motherly, protective feelings towards Richard. The heterodiegetic narrator’s disgust with Vholes also rings true because Vholes represents hypocrisy and the pointlessness of the Chancery case, and the heterodiegetic narrator hates both of those qualities. Whether or not Dickens’s conception and execution of character is the reason that so many characters appear, unchanged, in both narratives, what is more striking is how unnoticeable and how convincing this consistency is.}

In fact, Esther and the heterodiegetic narrator see alike on more than just characters. They hold similar views on the moral and ethical issues at the heart of the novel, including charity and Chancery.\footnote{Senf and Peters both agree that the narrators “share a common moral stance” (Senf, “Bleak” 22). P. Collins likewise remarks that “the two narrators hold similar ideas and attitudes” (“Some” 135).} When the heterodiegetic narrator criticizes how Jo has been ignored by so-called do-gooders, he echoes Esther’s concerns about Mrs. Jellyby. Both narrators explicitly complain that the “home” is ignored by foreign-minded supposed philanthropists. Similarly, the other narrator
bemoans the pointlessness of Chadband’s empty and obtuse attempt to “improve” Jo merely by lecturing at him (409). Instead, the real help and charity come from Guster, the fit-prone Snagsby servant, directly after Jo escapes Mr. Chadband. The “charitable Guster” shares her “own supper” with Jo and asks him about his parents while she pats him on the shoulder, “and it is the first time in his life that any decent hand has been so laid upon him” (416). Guster’s small acts of kindness towards Jo are identified by the narrator as truly charitable and Christian—they’re the opposite of Chadband’s phony assistance. Similarly, when Ada and Esther visit a bricklayer’s family with Mrs. Pardiggle, they lament her selfish, ineffective, and disingenuous method of doing charity. Esther’s compassionate gesture—covering Jenny’s dead baby with a handkerchief—resonates with Guster’s authentic and small-scale goodwill. One might say that these two ideas—concentrating on the home country’s needs and valuing a certain type of charity—are obvious themes of the book as a whole; indeed, these themes come through as such despite the two narrators. Esther and the heterodiegetic narrator, then, share a value system.

Although readers may assume that the Chancery plot belongs to the heterodiegetic narrator because it’s the focus of his first chapter, Esther actually narrates the majority of chapters directly related to Chancery: “Of the eighteen chapters dealing with Chancery and its ill effects, sixteen are related by Esther; only two in the third person” (Grenander 302). Esther, then, often shares her thoughts about the wasteful whirlpool that is Chancery; after all, she witnesses Richard fall into its entrancing depths, inch by inch, whirl by whirl. The other narrator equates the “costly nonsense” of Chancery with the dense, omnipresent, and muddling London fog (BH 14). The case, it is specified, has “passed into a joke” (17). Chancery members “[make] a pretence of equity with serious faces, as players might” (14). Esther echoes these sentiments by calling Chancery a “great gaming system” (265) that is treated by insiders more like “a Farce or
a Juggler” than as “a court of Justice” (973–974). She calls the suit a “dead sea” that indifferently casts its human costs—its “ashey fruit”—“ashore” (608). When she goes to court one day with Richard, she reacts with a passion nearly equal in fervor to the severe disgust the other narrator expresses in his first chapter: “To see everything going on so smoothly, and to think of the roughness of the suitors’ lives and deaths; to see all that full dress and ceremony, and to think of the waste, and want, and beggared misery it represented” (396). Both narrators speak of the—to use the names of Miss Flite’s birds—the waste, want, ruin, despair, and folly of the case.

Both narrators share a sarcastic and ironic take on the social ills and hypocrisies that they witness. Critics have long noticed the “scathing irony” of the heterodiegetic narrator (Serlen 565). Moseley summarizes that the first narrator is “wise, sardonic, experienced and somewhat disillusioned, bitter about many things, sarcastic about others” (36). Critics have more recently recognized Esther’s own brand of critical humor.43 Thus, Axton writes, “Esther is a master of ironic commentary; she damns with faint praise, employs paraphrase with devastating effect” (545). Rosso also notes that Esther’s “shrewd appraisal of fraudulent intentions and objectives gives rise to some surprisingly caustic observations, some quite humorous, in a wry, sardonic way” (94).

Harvey writes that Esther’s style only resembles the normal Dickensian style on rare occasion and that these are mistakes, “slips” that “allow us to glimpse Dickens guiding her pen” (91).44 I agree that sometimes there are actual “slips.” For example, towards the end of the novel,

43 Zwerdling notes Esther’s “observant satirical eye” (432). Read Peters (109), Rosso (94), Deen (216), Graver (5), and Eldredge (267) for more discussion of Esther’s critical humor.

44 Harvey, like Taylor and Collins, has trouble accepting that Esther herself is sharp, observant, and critical. Taylor justifies the existence of Esther’s “wry, cynical, even biting tone”
Esther and Jarndyce are meeting with “conversation” Kenge. Kenge has always been an affable fellow, but one who believes wholeheartedly in the virtue of Chancery. He reiterates that sentiment this scene: “We are a great country….This is a great system…and would you wish a great country to have a little system?” (*BH* 950). Esther responds, not verbally, but in her narrative: “He said this at the stair-head, gently moving his right hand as if it were a silver trowel, with which to spread the cement of his words on the structure of the system, and consolidate it for a thousand ages” (950). The image is one of a man happily piling the bullshit around him. The image is hard, bitter, and unforgiving. It doesn’t sound like Esther, but it’s understandable why Dickens didn’t want to miss this prime moment of ridiculing and dismissing Kenge as a vapid continuer of the status quo. The very note of Esther’s humor and irony is its shyness and its avoidance of the overtly acerbic. For example, when Mrs. Pardiggle is telling Esther how she “encourages” her husband to contribute to charity just as she directs her children to do so, Esther imagines the “nonentity” husbands—Mr. Pardiggle and Mr. Jellyby—sharing a moment: “Suppose Mr Pardiggle were to dine with Mr Jellyby, and suppose Mr Jellyby were to relieve his mind after dinner to Mr Pardiggle, would Mr Pardiggle, in return, make any confidential communication to Mr Jellyby? I was quite confused to find myself thinking this, but it came into my head” (126). Esther sets up the joke, but she doesn’t deliver the punch line. Instead, she retreats with her characteristic “confus[ion]” and disclaims agency for the thought in the first place (it came into her head unbidden). She lets the humor float up and out, blurring around the edges.

by finding Dickens “simply inconsistent as a female speaker” (133). In the same way, P. Collins writes that “Dickensian perceptions, wit, and stylistic resources…[militate] against [Esther’s] characterization” (“Some” 137).
My discussion of a “slip”—a passage in which Esther sounds more like the other narrator than like herself—serves to show that the kind of humor Esther generally uses cannot be dismissed as a “slip” or as “inconsistency” because its hesitancy and obliqueness matches Esther’s character and behavior as a narrator. Esther’s brand of humor aligns with Eileen Gillooly’s discussion of feminine humor. Gillooly argues that feminine humor is often overlooked because of its difference from more easily-recognized masculine humor and because of the subtle way it pops up here and there throughout the text. Although masculine humor may be obscene, vulgar, aggressive, and thoroughly satiric (all in all, more recognizable), feminine humor “works with extreme subtlety and delicately nuanced gestures to confound the political and affective meaning of the text” (Gillooly xix). One of the subtle and nuanced gestures that Esther makes is to express her more pointed comments in parenthetical statements, as if the parentheses will prevent the “unkind” comments from either reflecting badly on her or from causing too much trouble.⁴⁵ Sometimes Esther reveals her criticism and understated humor by

⁴⁵ For example, when Ada and Esther accompany Mrs. Pardiggle on a charity run to a bricklayer’s home, Esther comments, “Mrs Pardiggle, leading the way with a great show of moral determination, and talking with much volubility about the untidy habits of the people (though I doubted if the best of us could have been tidy in such a place) conducted us into a cottage” (BH 130). It is only in the parenthetical space that Esther is able to speak out against the methods of Mrs. Pardiggle and express sympathy for the house’s inhabitants. Mrs. Pardiggle, Esther continues, displayed “rapacious benevolence (if I may use the expression)” (124). The humor of her oxymoronic concoction—the eager hunger of a supposedly altruistic organization—is subtle enough to perhaps pass over, but her parenthetical request reinforces that
adding a short “of course” to her observation.\textsuperscript{46} Other times, Esther lets her silence mark her disapproval or suspicions; therefore, she subverts the silence expected from women at the time.\textsuperscript{47} Esther does, it seems, find herself unable to bluntly and straightforwardly say something mean or disapproving about somebody else; that is, she finds herself unable to engage in masculine humor, which is openly aggressive towards the other (for example, Gillooly identifies Becky Sharp as a masculine humorist). That’s why it strikes one as odd, as a “slip,” when Esther so openly attacks the hypocrisy of conversation Kenge in the passage discussed above.

Both narrators, therefore, express similar moral values in their narrations; both narrators use sarcasm extensively, although Esther’s method is more covert; both narrators are telling the

\textsuperscript{46} For example, when Esther returns to the Turveydrop dancing studio where the poor Prince overworks himself to provide for his leech of a father, Esther merely comments, “Prince was teaching, of course” (\textit{BH} 375). That simple “of course” adds a spice of sarcasm to her observation by informing us that she disapproves of the status quo. After witnessing Mrs. Pardiggle’s push-and-shove method of charity, Esther muses, “Mrs Pardiggle…pulled out a good book, as if it were a constable’s staff, and took the whole family into custody. I mean into religious custody, of course” (132). Esther lets her metaphor run away with her. She has to remind the readers that, of course, Mrs. Pardiggle hasn’t actually arrested the household; in this case, the “of course” functions as a coy smile to the reader.

\textsuperscript{47} On one occasion, when Turveydrop offers her a loquacious and cliché welcome, Esther writes, “I said nothing, which I thought a suitable reply” (\textit{BH} 376).
same stories with the same characters; and the narrators strikingly coincide on their descriptions of and evaluations of those characters. Esther and the heterodiegetic narrator are working together—not against each other in a battle for supremacy—to increase the sense of realism and believability of their world. Although Philip Collins bemoans the fact that Dickens missed an “obvious trick” by not having Esther and the heterodiegetic narrator perceive characters differently, I think Dickens was purposefully avoiding that trick.

2.2 QUESTIONING OMNISCIENCE

The supposed contrast between the heterodiegetic narrator’s omniscience and Esther’s decided lack of omniscience is one of the most commonly discussed differences between Bleak House’s two narrators; additionally, many readings of the dual narrative rest upon this difference. I find this particular differentiation, however, to be incorrect—the heterodiegetic narrator is not omniscient. My interpretation shows that it is crucial to acknowledge the limits of his knowledge and to observe how he obtains his information.

Half of Bleak House critics call the heterodiegetic narrator omniscient (often calling him the “omniscient narrator”), almost casually, while the other half of critics greet the term with hesitancy, either prefacing its eventual use with a disclaimer or arguing that it isn’t applicable in the first place. Generally, the critics who label the other narrator omniscient take it for granted; after all, the narrator is knowledgeable, in the third person, and recognizably Dickensian, so it should follow that the narrator is omniscient. But the other half of critics specify that—although knowledgeable and although granted considerable powers—the heterodiegetic narrator is not “properly” or “technically” omniscient. These critics, whom I agree with, argue that the
narrator—for the most part—does not go inside characters’ minds,\textsuperscript{48} oftentimes cites characters or groups (like the fashionable intelligence) for the “insider” information he reports to the reader, and can only speculate about—rather than know—how the future will turn out, as evidenced by his use of the present tense throughout his narration.\textsuperscript{49} Dickens, however, does sometime “breach decorum” by breaking his own rules and making the heterodiegetic narrator “semi-omniscient” (P. Collins, “Some” 133); for example, the narrator sometimes offers insights from Lady Dedlock’s or Tulkinghorn’s consciousness directly after being unable to do so. Certain scenes hint at the future with such insistence (and, as we find out, with much accuracy) and, hence, break through the narrator’s general ignorance about the future (the chapter on Tulkinghorn’s death is the best example, although the stress on the story of the Ghost’s Walk could be a more subtle example of how “unconscious” foreshadowing crosses a line into clairvoyance).

\textsuperscript{48} Wayne Booth writes, “Complete privilege is what we usually call omniscience. But there are many kinds of privilege…The most important single privilege is that of obtaining an inside view of another character, because of the rhetorical power that such a privilege conveys upon a narrator” (160–161).

\textsuperscript{49} Toker, Peters, and P. Collins all argue that the heterodiegetic narrator is not omniscient. Deen replaces the word “omniscient” with “omnipresent” in his description of the narrator, explaining that the narrator “doesn’t know everything, and he does not have the key to anyone’s consciousness, but he does see everything, and his eye is extraordinarily far-ranging” (206). Guerard also writes that “as a rule,” the other narrator “could not go into the consciousness of the characters” (341). Like Deen, Guerard focuses on the narrator’s power of movement and affixes the moniker the “roving conductor” to the narrator (341). No critic before or since has come up with a better or catchier nickname for the so-called “other narrator.”
What is at stake in applying—or refusing to apply—the label “omniscient” to this narrator? As several narrative theorists point out, hardly any narrator is truly omniscient, and even if she were, she would still have to withhold information, as almost all narrators must do, to prevent giving away the story’s ending at the beginning; all narrators ration information and slowly disclose parts of it when and where it suits their purposes to do so.\textsuperscript{50} Also, as Audrey Jaffe and Joan Douglas Peters mention, if any narrator is to be considered omniscient, it should be Esther because she writes her story retrospectively years after it occurs.\textsuperscript{51} It might be easier, however, to consider the heterodiegetic narrator omniscient because such an assumption supports the common gendered interpretation of the dual narrative. Most interpretations rely, to some extent, on the separate spheres interpretation of the novel, in which the heterodiegetic narrator is

\textsuperscript{50} Wayne Booth writes, “very few ‘omniscient’ narrators are allowed to know or show as much as their authors know” (160). Stanzel makes a similar claim:

For all practical purposes, however, there is no narrator who is omniscient throughout a novel. Almost every authorial narrator who at first presents himself as omniscient will sooner or later have to be subject to a limitation of his horizon of knowledge, or he will be temporarily deprived of the ability to make a final evaluation of a character or event. (89)

\textsuperscript{51} Peters writes, Esther “already knows everything that happens in her story before she tells it” (105) while the other narrator remains uncertain about the future. Jaffe astutely rationalizes, “omniscience is not a fantasy limited to third-person narrators” since many first-person narrators, including Esther, “often perform the kind of reading usually ascribed only to omniscient narrators” (17).
coded as masculine and Esther is coded as feminine. The masculine narrator—more attuned, supposedly, to the public and political—possesses expansive powers (hence the use of the word “panoramic” by critics) marked by the superior knowledge, experience, range, and mobility of a Victorian male. In such an interpretation, all of this is countered and opposed by Esther—a domestic presence—and a narrating stance marked by timidity and by various limitations and lacks: movement, knowledge, experience, authority, confidence. As Alison Case succinctly puts it, the two narratives are “far from equal in status” (132) because the “omniscient” narrator’s vision is “comprehensive” (133) while Esther’s is “limited in scope and vision” (132). When Bleak House’s masculine narrator is also assumed to be omniscient, his considerable powers are made even more visible; the “limitations” naturally coming from Esther’s status (as female, as penniless orphan, as first-person narrator) are further illuminated by the contrast.

52 Senf and Blain argue that the novel enacts the division of separate spheres and then critiques it by showing the negative consequences of that division. Graver contends that, ultimately, Dickens is not “subvert[ing] Victorian womanly ideals but…celebrat[ing] a dutifully willed acceptance of them” (4). Kennedy, on the other hand, argues that Dickens does critique the Angel in the House stereotype by emphasizing Esther’s struggles to align with it.

53 For example, Frank writes, “The presence in the novel of a consciousness so different from Esther’s, whether we call this consciousness Dickens’ or the narrator’s, serves to emphasize the limitations of Esther’s perspective, and the inevitability of such limitation for every character in the novel” (92). For Stanzel, this distinction is the raison d’être for the novel’s structure: “the essential character of the structure of the novel Bleak House” is “namely the contrast between a panoramic omniscient perspective and a subjectively limited one” (11). Eldredge baldly states, “This other narrator sees and knows far more than Esther does… How can we doubt that the
Although I deny the heterodiegetic narrator’s omniscience, I grant that he speaks with authority and conviction on a range of matters. Importantly, he can generalize—easily shift between the story’s specific details and the larger patterns they illuminate and support—about the characters, about London, and about England. When transitioning from Chancery to the fashionable world (from chapter 1 to chapter 2), this narrator confidently situates both locales and, therefore, shows a cosmological knowledge of this universe and of the orbits of its planets: “It is not a large world. There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place. But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller’s cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun” (BH 20). Certainly this narrator is knowledgeable. But in the second chapter, the narrator obtains or verifies much of his information—particularly about Lady Dedlock—from sources other than his own omniscience. “The fashionable intelligence says so” (20), and so the narrator says as well. Just as the fashionable intelligence remains in the dark about Lady Dedlock’s future travels, the narrator too cannot offer her confidential itinerary; he repeats twice within a few pages that after her current trip ends, “her movements are uncertain” (20, 23). Despite this deference to the fashionable intelligence, the narrator can believably and concisely generalize the personality and history of a character. Sir Leicester, for example, is summed up by a list of adjectives: “an honorable, obstinate, truthful, high-spirited, intensely prejudiced, perfectly unreasonable man” (22). Likewise, Sir Leicester’s motivations for marrying Honoria—“Indeed, he married her for love” (22)—are effortlessly revealed. But the “whisper” that “still goes about” informs the narrator that Honoria did not have any family (22). The juxtaposition of this vision and Esther’s narrow, confused perspective was intended to make her look pathetic, if not absurd?” (276).
narrator also suggests that aspects of the Dedlocks’ minds are common knowledge. For example, although Lady Dedlock believes herself to be unreadable to others, she is really the opposite: “She supposes herself to be an inscrutable Being…Yet, every dim little star revolving about her, from her maid to the manager of the Italian Opera, knows her weaknesses, prejudices, follies, haughtinesses, and caprices” (24). As the narrator writes, the jewelers, the mercers, and the booksellers all know how to influence her—she is, to an extent, general knowledge. The narrator taps into that general knowledge; he knows what everybody already knows about Lady Dedlock, Tulkinghorn, and Sir Leicester. The narrator seems, for the most part, unable to extend his own knowledge beyond that “common knowledge.” When we first meet Lady Dedlock, she stares out her rainy window, bored as always: “My Lady Dedlock (who is childless), looking out in the early twilight from her boudoir at a keeper’s lodge” (21). On a second read of the novel, the parenthetical statement earns a double take—if this narrator is indeed omniscient and knows that Lady Dedlock is not childless, he has told out a flat-out lie in the second chapter. Of course, as Chatman accurately writes, “Knowing All, of course, need not mean Telling All. Narrators regularly conceal information” (212). Omniscient narrators, to maintain their credibility and their story’s suspense, will frequently sidestep or withhold information (Genette calls the sidestep move a paralipsis), but they rarely willfully deceive (the consequences of a narrator lying to the reader are more far-reaching than the consequences of sidestepping something). I am arguing, however, that the narrator is not omniscient but knowledgeable, resourceful, and omnipresent; in that light, the narrator simply, at this point, does not know that Lady Dedlock has a child that lives. Lady Dedlock’s secret is certainly not common knowledge. In fact, at this point, even Lady Dedlock is unaware that her daughter survived past birth.
Throughout the novel, the heterodiegetic narrator continues to strike this stance of uncertainty—to employ the tone and syntax of speculation—with regards to the future and to the interiority of the characters. Late in the novel, when Bucket has solved the crime and arrested Hortense for the murder of Tulkinghorn, Sir Leicester is finally left alone to assimilate the series of shocks he has been rapidly dealt; he stands and absently looks around him and “seems to stare at something” (*BH* 838), but the narrator writes that only “Heaven knows what he sees” (838). The narrator, subsequently, writes what Sir Leicester *may* have seen, but he conveys such information as a personal guess: “officers of police coarsely handling his most precious heirlooms, thousands of fingers pointing at him, thousands of faces sneering at him” (838). Even if we, as readers, accept these conjectures as facts, as what Sir Leicester actually *does* see, the narrator again reminds us of his uninformed stance: “But if such shadows flit before him to his bewilderment, there is one other shadow which he can name with something like distinctness even yet...” (838). There is always the “if,” the “seems,” the only “Heaven knows.” The narrator is only sure of Sir Leicester external actions: he speaks his wife’s name and, in anguish, reaches towards her portrait. Similarly, when the narrator desires to know Jo’s thoughts, he is not automatically and effortlessly made privy to them, rather, he must deliberately take steps to imagine himself in Jo’s place—only then do Jo’s possible thoughts find their way onto the page:

> It must be a strange state to be like Jo!...It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo *does* think, at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me?...It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all my life!

101
To see the horses, dogs, and cattle, go by me, and to know that in ignorance I belong to them. (257–258)

The subject shifts throughout the passage from “Jo” to an implied/dropped subject (“To be hustled, and jostled”) to the “me” and “I” that function as a combination of Jo and the narrator. The narrator strives to minimize the difference between himself and Jo, to make the “strange state” that Jo resides in less strange. Any insight we get into Jo’s mind is accomplished through an imaginative feat of willed sympathetic understanding. As usual, the narrator reminds the reader that Jo may not think this way at all (“for perhaps Jo does think”); after all, Jo himself has often said, “I don’t know nothink” (257). It is in line with the moral and thematic thrust of the novel that the narrator reaches conclusions—however tentative—about the inner worlds of the characters from empathy with those characters. In comparison, omniscience would be easy and unearned—unearned because it calls for no effort of sympathetic identification. All in all, the narrator operates along similar lines to Esther. In her introductory chapter she claims she is not clever but adds that her “understanding” “seems to brighten” when she “love[s] a person very tenderly indeed” (28). For both Esther and the other narrator, knowledge comes through sympathy with others—affection is the key to understanding. In his review of Bleak House, John Forster identified this very trait in Dickens himself: “ready and eager at all times, with genial warmth and fullness, to enter in all the peculiarities of others, we have him continually throughout his books apprehending and interpreting new forms of character and truth…because his genius is his fellow-feeling with his race” (P. Collins, Dickens 305).

In addition to being able to, occasionally and briefly, imaginatively propel himself into his characters’ minds, the heterodiegetic narrator adeptly draws on a character’s appearance and other external indicators to come to the “right” (or at least a believable) conclusion about the
character’s thoughts, feelings, or past. For example, when we first meet the stalwart and sunburnt Mr. George, the narrator spends a paragraph describing his appearance and bearing. The narrator concludes the paragraph as if presenting a logical conclusion to his nearly scientific observations of his subject: “Altogether, one might guess Mr George to have been a trooper once upon a time” (*BH* 341). We later learn that the narrator’s educated guess here is, as usual, correct. Similarly, when Jo stares at the cross atop Saint Paul’s Cathedral, the narrator uses external evidence to suggest Jo’s possible thoughts at the sight: “From the boy’s face one might suppose that sacred emblem to be, in his eyes, the crowning confusion of the great, confused city” (315). Jo’s potential musing is prefaced, like usual, with a disclaimer of uncertainty (“one might suppose”), although the musing’s believability is bolstered by the thought being illustrated on “the boy’s face” (315).

Although the heterodiegetic narrator can occasionally reveal the mind (hypothetically) of other characters either through empathetic understanding or through external clues, Tulkinghorn is doubly unreachable from the narrator’s powers. The narrator seems unable to enter into the same sympathetic understanding with Tulkinghorn as he does with the other characters, and Tulkinghorn’s outer appearance provides no clues to his inner state. Tulkinghorn remains an enigma throughout the novel, and his motives and feelings remain indecipherable. The long passage that explores Tulkinghorn’s possible motives for so monomaniacally pursuing and spitefully handling Lady Dedlock’s secret past exemplifies the narrator’s uncertainty about anything beyond or below Tulkinghorn’s surface:

> Yet it may be that my Lady fears this Mr. Tulkinghorn, and that he knows it. It may be that he pursues her doggedly and steadily…It may be that her beauty…only give[s] him greater zest for what he is set upon, and make him the
more inflexible in it. Whether he be cold and cruel, whether immovable in what he has made his duty, whether absorbed in love of power, whether determined to have nothing hidden from him in the ground where he has burrowed among secrets all his life, whether he in his heart despises the splendor of which he is a distant beam, whether he is always treasuring up slights and offences in the affability of his gorgeous clients – whether he be any of this, or all of this, it may be that my Lady had better have five thousand pairs of fashionable eyes upon her, in distrustful vigilance, than the two eyes of this rusty lawyer. (459)\[54\]

The repetition of many successive “it may be” and “whether” constructions indicates that the narrator is merely making informed and educated guesses—he cannot be certain, cannot be sure. Tulkinghorn seems to be immune to the kind of sympathetic imagining that allows the narrator to conjecture. The narrator apostrophizes, “tight, unopenable Oyster of the old school!” (161).

There is no way, even imaginatively, into this creature’s mind. Furthermore, Tulkinghorn doesn’t allow any sign of his inner thoughts and motivations to broadcast from his face and body. There is never so much as a “ruffle on the surface of his unfathomable depths” (357); he is “impenetrable” (353) and “wears his usual expressionless mask” (192). And because this narrator oftentimes obtains his conclusions about characters from their appearance, Tulkinghorn must remain an enigma: “One could not even say he has been thinking all this while…He has

\[54\] P. Collins discusses this passage in a similar manner as I do (“Some” 131–132). Fletcher cites it as well, but she concludes that the narrator does know what is happening in Tulkinghorn’s mind (72).
shown nothing but his shell” (168). This quotation emphasizes that the narrator gets his observations from the “shell,” from the surface of the characters being narrated.55

There are isolated cases in which the heterodiegetic narrator simply becomes temporarily and partially omniscient; however, the rarity of these instances proves that Dickens only resorts to that option when there is no other way to relay crucial information to the reader. Dickens uses a whole bag of tricks to avoid breaking this narrator’s contract. The narrator’s use of a rhetorical question with an unspoken yet strongly implied answer 56 and a character’s helpfully audible

55 Even the most personal (and most provocative) glimpse we are given of Tulkinghorn’s mind is, again, just another educated guess that may or may not be accurate:

perhaps sparing a thought or two for himself, and his family history, and his money, and his will – all a mystery to everyone – and that one bachelor friend of his, a man of the same mould and a lawyer too, who lived the same kind of life until he was seventy-five years old, and then, suddenly conceiving (it is supposed) an impression that it was too monotonous, gave his gold watch to his hair-dresser one summer evening, and walked leisurely home to the Temple, and hanged himself. (BH 353)

The “perhaps” sets up all that follows as hypothetical, and because everything is “a mystery to everyone” it is also a mystery to the narrator—even the motivations of the suicidal lawyer have to be “supposed.”

56 For example, when Guppy tells Lady Dedlock about Esther, the narrator phrases Lady Dedlock’s reaction as a question: “Is the dead colour on my Lady’s face, reflected from the screen which has a green silk ground, and which she holds in her raised hand as if she had
dramatic monologue are the two most frequently used tricks. The heterodiegetic narrator’s glance into a character’s mind is the last resort. Furthermore, readers should remember that almost every narrator will “breach decorum” at some point in her narrative (P. Collins, “Some”). James Phelan offers a useful way to imagine these “breaches” as productive moments rather than just as necessary mistakes. Phelan distinguishes between “narrator functions” and “disclosure functions.” “Narrator functions” cover what the narrator relays in accordance with his narrative situation, and “disclosure functions” consist of what the author needs to relay to the reader beyond the limitations of the narrator’s narrative situation. Having disclosure functions trump narrative functions can sometimes, Phelan maintains, “enhance a story’s overall purpose forgotten it; or is it a dreadful paleness that has fallen on her?” (BH 465-66). Clearly, the color is not a result of the screen she carries.

57 For example, when Bucket locks himself in Lady Dedlock’s room, he is all alone; however, he speaks his thoughts out loud so the narrator is justified in writing them down (BH 861). Similarly, the narrative makes it clear that Lady Dedlock is speaking aloud when she cries “O my child, my child!” (469): “Words, sobs, and cries, are but air; and air is so shut in and shut out…that sounds need to be uttered trumpet-tongued indeed by my Lady in her chamber, to carry any faint vibration to Sir Leicester’s ears; and yet this cry is in the house, going upward from a wild figure on its knees” (469).

58 In this example, the narrator does know what Tulkinghorn is thinking: “Mr Tulkinghorn observing it [Lady Dedlock’s pale face] as she rises to retire, thinks, ‘Well she may be! The power of this woman is astonishing. She has been acting a part the whole time’” (BH 743). There is no other way for the narrator to reveal this information to the audience while Tulkinghorn is in the company of others.
and effect” (28). Both narrators profit from such “enhance[ment]” when Dickens temporarily expands their regular privileges.

In a scene that few critics have discussed,59 Esther recounts, in detail, a tense meeting between Woodcourt and Vholes and the subsequent conversation between Woodcourt and Richard. Esther is not present at either event. Though we learn that Woodcourt has, at some point, shared his memory of these two interactions with Esther,60 Esther narrates as if she were present at the scene rather than narrating as if she were recounting someone else’s memory of the occurrence. In *Bleak House*, of all novels, this scene could have been easily been handled by the other narrator; Vholes, Woodcourt, and Richard routinely show up in both narratives—these characters aren’t solely in Esther’s purview. But having this scene appear in Esther’s section and not in the other narrative allows a “disclosure function” to trump the “narrator function.” It speaks to the intimacy between Woodcourt and Esther, an intimacy so strong that she feels able to present his memory of conversations as if they were her own—it’s as if they share a common memory. Dickens took advantage of the chance to disclose something about Esther (something Esther herself wouldn’t disclose and something which she isn’t aware that she is disclosing in the first place)—her continuing and future closeness with Woodcourt despite all signs pointing towards an inevitable Esther and Jarndyce union. That chance was worth momentarily overriding the rules that have generally bound Esther’s narrative.

59 Sawicki argues that when Esther relays this scene she is acting more “novelistic” because she’s imagining what it’s like to be at the scene (215).

60 Esther writes, Woodcourt “[told] me generally of his first visit to Symond’s Inn” (*BH* 782). Woodcourt also tells Esther, “he never could forget the haggardness of [Richard’s] face” (781).
In chapter 48, “Closing In,” the narrator imagines the clocks and chimney-stacks of London urging Tulkinghorn: “Don’t go home!” (BH 747). Guerard argues that since the narrator “knows Tulkinghorn will be killed,” “Dickens violates the terms of his contract” (342). Although the narrator does seem to have knowledge that death awaits Tulkinghorn at home, he seems to know no more than that (not who the murderer is, for example). After several paragraphs of the “Don’t go home” motif, the narrator returns to his normal stance: not knowing the future. When the shot rings out, the narrator returns even more strongly to his stance of uncertainty: “What’s that? Who fired a gun or pistol? Where was it?” (BH 749). At this point, the narrator immediately switches from the perspective of Tulkinghorn to the perspective of those outside, the walkers who “start, stop, and stare about them” (749) and who have no idea what has happened and only wonder “Has Mr Tulkinghorn been disturbed?” (750). The narrator’s powers are certainly broadened in this scene, but only temporarily, and not to the extent of all-encompassing omniscience. But why broaden the powers in the first place? Only through emphasizing Tulkinghorn’s willful ignorance—his self-righteous way of missing signs (pointing allegory) and believing himself to be invincible and untouchable—does the passage reach the level of masterful irony that it reaches. The passage can only emphasize Tulkinghorn’s ignorance by being momentarily more in the know than he is. To make Tulkinghorn look short-sighted, the narrator must possess more perfect sight. Again, this chapter is a place where Dickens saw an opportunity for irony and for disclosing something about Tulkinghorn that couldn’t have been revealed otherwise—a place where disclosure functions trump narrator functions. But, these scenes should not be viewed as making either the heterodiegetic narrator or Esther omniscient.
2.3 SURFACE AND DEPTH

The heterodiegetic narrator rarely enters characters’ minds and instead narrates characters based on their external surfaces. Esther, conversely, narrates herself from the inside and thereby creates herself as a person of depth rather than of surface. Most of the heterodiegetic narrator’s chapters focus on the Dedlock family and its professional helpers (Tulkinghorn and even Guppy). Esther’s chapters cover the broadly middle-class members of the Jarndyce household and its honorary members (such as Caddy). Much of the aristocratic content of the novel, therefore, is narrated by the heterodiegetic narrator—such content is narrated as surface and from the outside.

Within this narrative, Lady Dedlock, queen of the fashionable sphere, is further flattened into an image. Esther’s first-person narration enables the production of a deep interiority that contrasts with the façade-oriented heterodiegetic narration. The dual narrative, therefore, accentuates and facilitates the novel’s social transition from the aristocracy to the middle class, from Lady Dedlock to Esther Summerson.61

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong outlines the rise of the domestic woman in literature. This new feminine ideal—first promoted by conduct books and then by novels—was frugal, self-regulating, efficient, active, and modest. In short, she was the opposite of the shallow and material aristocratic female. Armstrong argues that this female ideal unified the disparate groups that would eventually form the middle class by “bringing into being a

61 Dean also uses spatial language in his discussion of the dual narrative: “Esther’s inner experience is the necessary complement to the author’s entirely external ironic description” (215). Deen elaborates that Esther’s “inner experience”—the “fulfilled affective life of the individual”—gives meaning and balance to the other narrative’s “satirical portrait of a disorganized society” (215).
concept of the household on which socially hostile groups felt they could all agree” (69).

Armstrong contends that, as this new domestic feminine ideal gained ground, eighteenth-century novels increasingly represented the conflict between classes “as a struggle between the sexes that can be completely resolved in terms of the sexual contract” (49). To recall two of Armstrong’s examples, the difference in station between Darcy and Elizabeth or between Mr. B and Pamela is displaced by gender differences, differences that can be resolved in marriage. By the mid-nineteenth century, Armstrong continues, the middle class no longer needed to portray itself as emergent; instead, it was more concerned with dividing and protecting itself from the marketplace and the working class. Published in 1852–1853, yet set in or before the previous decade,\(^6^2\) *Bleak House* concerns itself with resolving the conflict between the middle and upper classes, as well as with shielding itself from the working class and all of its implications.\(^6^3\)

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\(^6^2\) House writes, “The main story cannot have happened later than 1843–6, and is also assumed to be much earlier” (31). At length, House explores the novel’s contradictory clues as to its specific date; House concludes, “It is quite impossible to say that *Bleak House* has any predominating and consistent historical ‘atmosphere’: others of the novels can be dated with more confidence” (33–34).

\(^6^3\) At midcentury, Armstrong argues, madwomen started appearing in domestic novels. Armstrong convincingly contends, via Henry Mayhew, that the working class and its social organization were constructed as sexually deviant; therefore, the madwoman, who shows up in novels only to be exorcised from them, represents the middle-class fears of the working class and of working-class resistance. In *Bleak House*, Hortense, the crazy and impassioned French servant, neatly fills this role (Jarndyce even asks if she is mad). Her potent mix of sexuality, foreignness, violence, and vengefulness against men all align her with the most famous literary
Inspired by but distinct from Armstrong’s argument, I propose that in *Bleak House* the political contract between the upper and middle classes is not resolved by the sexual contract of marriage but by the generational contract between mother and daughter. The transition from an infirm, barren, and ineffectual aristocracy (Sir Leicester suffers from gout, has no children with Lady Dedlock, and fails to get his party’s candidate elected) to a healthy, fertile, and capable middle class is not softened or solved by a marriage of unequal classes but by a “natural” passing of the torch from mother to daughter, from the aristocracy to the middle class, from the “bored to death” Lady Dedlock to her hardworking, housekeys-loving daughter, Esther Summerson. In effect, it’s the daughter’s time. Through the story of Esther Summerson, *Bleak House* provides a fantasy of earned and bestowed legitimacy to a once illegitimate class. Esther rises above the “curse” of her illegitimacy through her own determination and hard work (“I would try, as hard as ever I could, to repair the fault I had been born with” [*BH* 31]) and through her mother’s blessing (Lady Dedlock kneels at Esther’s feet when they finally meet). Although this transition happens specifically between Esther and Lady Dedlock, it is given emblematic force because of the ways Esther’s character recalls other orphaned characters in Victorian fiction and because Lady Dedlock is one of the novel’s revered representatives of the aristocracy: she “has been at the centre of the fashionable intelligence, and at the top of the fashionable tree” (22). The novel’s “double ending” (the final chapters from each narrator) concludes with Lady Dedlock buried in madwoman, *Jane Eyre*’s Bertha. It’s no accident that Hortense reminds Esther of “some woman from the streets of Paris in the reign of terror” (*BH* 368).

64 Arac also discusses how *Bleak House*’s plot follows the rise of the middle class and the fall of the aristocracy (122–123) and points out how such a plot parallels the plot of Carlyle’s *The French Revolution*.
the family mausoleum (soon to be followed by her husband, the text informs us)—a depressing end pictured in the final illustration of the novel—and with Esther married, universally liked and admired, and surrounded by a family and community who depend on and love her. The final words of the double ending further emphasize the rise of one class and the fall of another; the heterodiegetic narrator’s chapter on the Dedlocks concludes with the dreary finality of “dull repose” (985), and Esther’s final sentence ends, famously, with a non-ending, an imaginative musing and dash that suspend closure: “even supposing—” (989).

In *Bleak House*, Esther Summerson, the “little housewife” (562), incarnates the domestic ideal that Armstrong discusses. When she arrives at Bleak House as Ada’s companion, Jarndyce sends Esther the housekeeping and cellar keys as well. Esther becomes the Mrs. Rouncewell of Bleak House, supervising and organizing the household. Although the keys surprise and overwhelm Esther, she strives to live up to the “trust” in her that they imply (89), and she frequently rings, kisses, and caresses them to remind herself of that trust when she feels less than dutiful (which occurs more often than one would think). Frugality—one of the core aspects of the domestic woman—is one of Esther’s most prominent housekeeping charms; Jarndyce frequently comments, “There never was such a Dame Durden [one of Esther’s nicknames]...for making money last” (942). Esther helps Caddy plan a respectable wedding and fashion a trousseau from a mere ten-pound note; Guppy interrupts Esther’s bookkeeping to propose to her. Furthermore, the ideal domestic female is active, and Esther bustles throughout the book doing housework, errands, and favors for others.

Esther is a homemaker in the truest sense of the word; after witnessing the chaotic Jellyby lodgings, Ada comments that Esther could “make a home out of even this house” (58). In addition, the Bleak House that Jarndyce purchases and decorates as a wedding gift for Esther and
Woodcourt is not a duplicate of the original Bleak House so much as an incarnation of Esther’s superior housekeeping skills: “I saw...my little tastes and fancies, my little methods and inventions...everywhere” (963). Esther has also mastered self-regulation—another key aspect to the domestic ideal. Esther repeatedly allows the reader to see these anguished moments of self-policing. She calls attention to the calculated effort, unstoppable tears, and chastising mirror-talks it costs her to be what she knows she is supposed to be: “Once more, duty, duty, Esther...and if you are not overjoyed to do it, more than cheerfully and contentedly, through anything and everything, you ought to be” (609). Her frequent repetitions of diction and sound in this passage point to the determination and guilt that propel her to domestic perfection: she recites “duty” like a mantra; she bids herself act “cheerfully and contentedly” with those lulling, closing ly’s; and she expresses her disdain of excuses with her twofold use of “thing” when she aspires to be jovially dutiful “through anything and everything.”

And finally, per Armstrong’s argument, the men of the novel certainly adore this domestic goddess: Esther fields proposals from Guppy, her guardian, and Woodcourt. Mr. George calls her a “pattern young lady” (958), Richard constantly praises her, and Bucket calls

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65 Hall argues that Esther must police herself so rigorously because, being illegitimate, she must “keep herself...out of trouble” (172). Hall argues that Esther also subverts the disciplinary gaze to critique the patriarchy. Kennedy argues that Esther’s self-policing functions as a critique of the female ideal Esther is struggling to attain.

66 Esther’s moments of self-chastising recall Jane Eyre’s masochistic portrait-painting session in which she draws a beautiful picture of Blanche Ingram and a plain one of herself: “Order! No snivel! – no sentiment! – no regret! I will endure only sense and resolution” (C. Brontë 187).
her a Queen (902). No less adored by the female characters of *Bleak House*, Esther also receives compliments from Caddy, Ada, and Charley. Caddy asks to learn housekeeping from Esther, and Esther shyly shows her “all my books and methods, and all my fidgetty ways” (477). Even though Esther is not yet married, Ada insists that Esther “teach” her how to be a “very, very good wife” to Richard (927). Esther is universally admired by the characters in *Bleak House* for the qualities that make her the ideal domestic woman.

Just as Esther encapsulates the new domestic ideal, Lady Dedlock embodies the ideal aristocratic female. The aristocratic female, according to Armstrong, was defined by showiness, surface, materiality, wealth, and status. Affluent and beautiful, Lady Dedlock has “conquered her world” (22) and is always “looked after by admiring eyes” (651). Her life is a whirlwind of leisure, entertainment, and traveling: “Concert, assembly, opera, theatre, drive” (182). Her languid haughtiness and boredom only emphasize the idle lifestyle that was the aristocratic female’s privilege. Lady Dedlock doesn’t exert control over the household at Chesney Wold like Esther does at Bleak House. In fact, all of Lady Dedlock’s servants seem out of her control: Hortense defies her and tries to frame her for murder, Rosa leaves her to be educated and married, and even Mrs. Rouncewell’s loyalty to her son George outweighs Mrs. Rouncewell’s loyalty to her mistress, Lady Dedlock. Furthermore, just as the aristocratic female was defined by her surface, Lady Dedlock is constantly fetishized as an image. When Weevle rents out Nemo’s old room in Krook’s shop, he modestly decorates the dwelling with “a choice collection of copper-plate impressions from that truly national work, the Divinities of Albion, or Galaxy of British Beauty, representing ladies of title and fashion” (330). We later learn that Lady
Dedlock’s portrait is one orb in this illustrious galaxy. Lady Dedlock’s impressive portrait at Chesney Wold, “a perfect likeness,” charms and dazes Guppy (110). The grand portrait in Chesney Wold so resembles Lady Dedlock that it starts to stand in for her when she is absent. Sir Leicester, often abandoned by the restless Lady Dedlock but detained at Chesney Wold due to his hereditary gout, looks to the painting as Lady Dedlock’s representative: “My Lady is at present represented, near Sir Leicester, by her portrait. She has flitted away to town” (256). When she disappears on her final flight, leaving Sir Leicester overwhelmed and devastated, he tries to communicate with her portrait: “there is one other shadow which he can name with something like distinctness even yet, and to which alone he addresses his tearing of his white hair, and his extended arms…It is she” (838). After her death he “reposes in his old place before my Lady’s picture” (983); the best substitute for her presence remains her painting.

Lady Dedlock’s crystallization into an image and an idol has deadly consequences, which suggests that the aristocratic female’s method of representation is dangerous and ineffective. Lady Dedlock eventually starts to crumble under the weight of such idolatry, the weight of being “set up for the world to respect” (838) on a “gaudy platform” (649). Lady Dedlock is eventually smothered by having to live up to the much-circulated image of herself. The illustration titled “Sunset in the long Drawing-room at Chesney Wold” (see fig 2.1) features a shadow falling on Lady Dedlock’s portrait; once we see this image of her image, Lady Dedlock becomes more and

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67 As Oost notes, by this time, a “technological and economic shift” made reproductions of paintings and portraits, as well as portraits themselves, more affordable and available to the middle classes (150). Sir Leicester “has always refused permission” (BH 110) for the main portrait of Lady Dedlock to be engraved, which suggests that the aristocracy was very aware of this shift.
more associated with shadows until she dies. Dickens’s description of sunset in the drawing room specifies that a “weird shade” threatens to fall on her portrait “as if a great arm held a veil or hood, watching an opportunity to draw it over her” (641). As the sun sets, “the shadow” falls upon the portrait with “threatening hands” (642). The shadow that descends on her portrait has seemingly infected her because the next illustration that features Lady Dedlock is captioned “Shadow” (see Figure 2.2). Now her actual self is the shadow—she is drawn as a semi-transparent ghost. The text also emphasizes her ghostliness: the heterodiegetic narrator writes that she is “very pale,” and Bucket comments that she “[d]on’t look quite healthy” (813, 814). Once she flees her home, Sir Leicester frantically gesticulates at her portrait, an artwork fittingly described as a “shadow” (838). Meanwhile, Bucket and Esther search through the snowy and “shadowy places” for Lady Dedlock (864) until she is found dead at the graveyard gate. In the accompanying illustration, “The Morning” (see Figure 2.3), Lady Dedlock’s body is draped on a set of stairs in the shadow of an archway; in fact, Michael Steig comments that her “corpse has been reduced almost to a thing by Browne’s treatment of it as a pattern of light and shade” (155, emphasis added). Indeed, the play of light and shadow on her body recalls the play of light and shadow on her portrait in the earlier illustration. The Dedlock mausoleum looms large in the novel’s last illustration, having just admitted Lady Dedlock and completing her illustrated downfall.\footnote{As Cohen notes, many of the illustrations in the final third of the novel are “dark plates,” a technique that “reflect[ed] the novel’s prevailing somber tone and atmosphere” (109). In fact, all of the illustrations discussed in this paragraph are dark plates. Another aspect to Lady Dedlock’s illustrated downfall, therefore, is that she is increasingly represented in dark plates.}
All portraits in *Bleak House*, whether they are of the aristocracy or of the middle class, have sinister implications. The Chesney Wold drawing room is described as an illustrated cemetery. The Dedlock family portraits are vivified only for a few moments—in the sunset or when the house is being shown—only to be killed, over and over again, with the return of darkness. As Oost points out, these family portraits “express not power, but decline” (149). Guppy’s portrait is “more like than life” (*BH* 614), a description that echoes Lady Dedlock’s eerie metamorphosis into her portrait. Only the epileptic servant Guster admires the Snagsby portraits—“of Mr Snagsby looking at Mrs Snagsby, and of Mrs Snagsby looking at Mr Snagsby” (157)—that illustrate the detrimental cycle of jealousy and surveillance that exists in the Snagsby marriage. The proudly displayed paintings of Mrs. Badger’s two previous husbands function like death warrants. Husband number one, Captain Swosser, sat for his portrait while he was ill and possibly dying: “It was taken on his return home from the African Station, where he had suffered from the fever of the country. Mrs Badger considers it too yellow” (206). Additionally, in Phiz’s illustration of the scene, “The family portraits at Mr Bayham Badger’s” (see Figure 2.4), a skull leers in the background of the second husband’s, Professor Dingo’s, portrait. Notably, the Badger walls only hold portraits of the dead husbands and of Mrs. Badger’s dead identities as their wives; there is no portrait of Mrs. Badger as Mrs. Badger, a noticeable absence that further suggests the link between portraits and death and between the lack of portraits and life. Mr. Badger points out, “Over the piano, Mrs Bayham Badger when Mrs Swosser. Over the sofa, Mrs Bayham Badger when Mrs Dingo. Of Mrs Bayham Badger in esse, I possess the original, and have no copy” (206). In addition, none of our indisputable “good” characters—for example, Ada, Esther, Jarndyce, and Woodcourt—have portraits done of themselves.
No wonder Esther recoils from being the “unrequited image imprinted on [Guppy’s] art” (510), from being his “idol” (632). She doesn’t want to be anyone’s image, anyone’s idol. Esther is suspicious of the image, of mirrors, of being reduced to her appearance. For example, when Guppy proposes to and subsequently stalks Esther, she expresses her nascent skepticism of the image. When he arrives at Bleak House, Esther is embarrassed by his near-obsessive attention: “He looked at me with an attention that quite confused me … I never looked at him, but I found him looking at me, in the same scrutinizing and curious way” (148). Although Guppy has only seen Esther a few times before this meeting, he claims that her “image has ever since been fixed in my breast” (153). In the chapter’s illustration, “In Re Guppy. Extraordinary Proceedings” (see Figure 2.5), Guppy dramatically bends down on one knee, looking smart and smiling; Esther, on the other hand, looks demure and concentrates on writing with her quill pen. The writing table comes between them. In the text, Esther mentions that she is engaged in the “business” of bills and bookkeeping when Guppy arrives at the house (148); she also indicates that she moves behind her desk as a barrier of sorts from the animated and tipsy Guppy. The illustration of this scene is the only time we actually see Esther in the act of writing; her writing, therefore, functions as protection against Guppy’s stares, looks, and attempts to crystallize her in an “image.” Notably, the illustration also features two framed portraits, one of which hangs directly above the scribbling Esther as if to heighten the contrast between the two methods of representation. Guppy may stare at Esther, but Esther responds by staring at her own writing, resisting Guppy’s attempts to make her into the fixed image that he has been carrying around in his heart and mind like a locket. Esther, therefore, suggests that Guppy, and the reader, will find a more adequate representation of herself in her writing than in her image.
Guppy’s devotion continues to confuse and alarm Esther. She notices him one night at the theatre, and she continually mentions how uncomfortable his unceasing gaze makes her:

to know that that absurd figure was always gazing at me, and always in that demonstrative state of despondency, put such a constraint upon me that I did not like to laugh at the play, or to cry at it, or to move, or to speak. I seemed able to do nothing naturally…So there I sat, not knowing where to look – for wherever I looked, I knew Mr Guppy’s eyes were following me… (203)

Guppy’s stare forces Esther to stiffen and freeze in constraint—to become unnatural—as if his stare were forcing his image of her upon her. Guppy’s eyes, “always gazing” and present “wherever I looked,” are omnipresent and relentless, much like the public’s interest in Lady Dedlock’s actions and movements. Finding herself unable to laugh, cry, move, or speak, Esther increasingly resembles the stoic, taciturn, reserved figure and manner of her mother, Lady Dedlock. Guppy’s forceful attentions, therefore, allow Esther to experience the imprisoned sensations of being treated as a publically available image.

The dual narrative—narrated from an “internal” perspective of Esther and from the “outside” perspective of the heterodiegetic narrator—highlights the social transition between the aristocracy and the middle class and allows Esther to create psychological depth and avoid the snares of a physically attractive surface. As Armstrong writes, the new ideal woman of the middle class

possessed psychological depth rather than a physically attractive surface… As femaleness was redefined in these terms, the woman exalted by an aristocratic tradition of letters ceased to appear so desirable…the aristocratic woman represented surface instead of depth, embodied material instead of moral value,
and displayed idle sensuality instead of constant vigilance and tireless concern for the well-being of others. (20)

The heterodiegetic narrator complies with Esther’s own desires to create depth and to avoid the image; although the other narrator could watch and describe Esther from the outside, as he does with all of the characters in his section, he spares her this treatment.

The heterodiegetic narrator, therefore, maintains a respectful distance from Esther’s narrative. Lisa Sternlieb reads the tone of this distance differently, however. Where Sternlieb reads an undesirable neglect in the other narrator’s treatment of Esther’s narrative, I find a desirable trust. She argues that the heterodiegetic narrator’s inattention towards Esther’s narrative functions as a structural embodiment of one of the main themes of the novel—neglectful parents and neglected children. Sternlieb claims that “the narrator is expert at overlooking Esther’s narrative” (83–84) because he is a “bad parent”; in contrast, I interpret such “overlooking” as indicating respect for Esther’s own capacity to narrate and compliance with Esther’s decisions as to her own representation. For all the critical talk about the heterodiegetic narrator’s mastery and dominance, the heterodiegetic narrator doesn’t re-tell the events that Esther narrates as if he could narrate them better or more completely. On the whole, *Bleak House* is not a “repeating narrative.” As Genette writes, in such a narrative, “the same event can be told several times not only with stylistic variations…but also with variations in ‘point of view, as in…The Sound and the Fury” (115). The two narratives of *Bleak House* overlap rarely and slightly, and in most of those sporadic cases, Esther, rather than the heterodiegetic narrator, instigates the repetition. In chapter 51, for example, Esther spends a mere two sentences relaying Jo’s death, an event she likely learned about from either Woodcourt or Jarndyce. That same death was the memorable and heartbreaking focus of chapter 47 in the other narration. Esther’s
brief and vague description, therefore, softens and quiets this rare instance of repetition. In fact, Esther doesn’t even call Jo by name in chapter 51, instead referring to him as the “poor boy” (BH 789). Dickens seems to have written the two narratives, on the whole, not to repeat. One narrative takes over where the other leaves off rather than the second narrative rehashing and returning to actions previously narrated. The two narrators, therefore, act like equally important relay runners rather than as a pair of unequal narrators.

One of the oldest and most insistent criticisms of Esther as a narrator could have been prevented (or at least mitigated) by having the other narrator treat Esther differently; critics complain that Dickens forces Esther to naively, clumsily, and annoyingly narrate her own virtues and goodness. Dickens’s friend and biographer John Forster, who was very fond of Bleak House as a whole, articulated this exact criticism: “Mr Dickens undertook more than man could accomplish when he resolved to make her the naïve revealer of her own good qualities. We cannot help detecting in some passages an artificial tone, which if not self-consciousness, is at any rate not such a tone as would be used in her narrative by a person of the character depicted” (P. Collins, Dickens 304). Dickens could have taken advantage of his own unique narrative structure and allowed the heterodiegetic narrator to “see” Esther and to disclose her virtues to the reader in his portion of the novel. Similarly, Philip Collins writes that “it could have been interesting to have [the heterodiegetic narrator’s] account of [Esther’s] appearance and his impressions of [Esther’s] personality” (“Some” 127). Dickens, however, decided to undertake “more than man could accomplish” and left Esther to her own devices. Esther is Esther’s own problem. For example, one of the lingering mysteries in the novel’s conclusion is whether or not Esther regains her beauty as her husband Woodcourt smilingly tells her she has. Many critics—particularly male critics—overrule Esther’s own ambiguous words on the matter and prefer to
believe Woodcourt’s estimation over Esther’s. The heterodiegetic narrator could have easily stepped in at this uncertain juncture and given us a definitive description of Esther’s appearance and removed the mystery, but he doesn’t. Since Dickens also chooses not to insert an illustration of the happy married couple, the reader is doubly frustrated in her desire to know the “truth” about Esther’s beauty beyond Esther’s own vague words on the subject. With Esther’s own words is where the novel, time and again, leaves the question of Esther’s representation.

Esther’s appearance in the heterodiegetic narrative would have problematized the very representation of herself she creates for the reader. Since the heterodiegetic narrator narrates surfaces, only occasionally and temporarily accessing the depth beneath, including Esther in his purview would have made her a character of surface rather than of depth. The other narrator does tease the reader with an anticipated glimpse of Esther at the end of chapter 56 but doesn’t deliver on it. Bucket arrives at Jarndyce’s home and asks Jarndyce to speak to Esther about whether or not she can accompany Bucket on his search for Lady Dedlock. Jarndyce goes upstairs to converse with Esther while Bucket waits downstairs; Jarndyce returns to tell Bucket that Esther will join them immediately, but before we can see her quickly descending the stairs, the chapter ends and the next is narrated by Esther, who takes up the story precisely where it left off. When Esther needs to enter the stage, she will also be the narrator. The only evidence in the novel that the heterodiegetic narrator may have “seen” Esther is the first sentence of chapter 7: “While

69 Zwerdling, J. Hill, Mary Smith, and Broderick and Grant all conclude that Esther has regained her beauty and that she is just too coy or insecure to know it or admit it. Kearns writes that Woodcourt “shows a truer knowledge of Esther than anyone else shows” (128); Esther lacks such knowledge, Kearns continues, because she “has not yet developed a sense of her own beauty (not only internal but external)” (128).
Esther sleeps, and while Esther wakes, it is still wet weather down at the place in Lincolnshire” 
(BH 103). Having narrated chapter 6, Esther finishes that chapter by ringing her housekeeping 
keys “hopefully to bed” (103); therefore, the first sentence of chapter 7, which references Esther 
sleeping and waking, functions as a clear topical transition (via sleep) between Esther’s narrative 
and the heterodiegetic narrative. This handoff marks the novel’s first changeover from Esther’s 
narrative to the heterodiegetic narrative; perhaps experimentally, Dickens here made use of a 
more obvious verbal transition between the two narrators than he ever uses subsequently. 
Although some critics reference this one instance as if it were representative of the relationship 
between the narrators throughout the book, Dickens never employs such a transition again. In 
fact, to my knowledge, the heterodiegetic narrator never mentions Esther’s name again unless it 
is spoken in dialogue by a character (as is done by George, Bucket, and Jarndyce).

The heterodiegetic narrator, therefore, largely refuses to watch Esther, describe her, or 
even mention her unless a character does; such behavior aligns with Esther’s own refusal to 
describe her appearance. By contrast, almost as soon as the heterodiegetic narrator introduces 
Lady Dedlock, he provides a lengthy and detailed physical description of her:

She has beauty still, and, if it be not in its heyday, it is not yet in its autumn. She 
has a fine face – originally of a character that would be rather called very pretty 
than handsome, but improved into classicality by the acquired expression of her 
fashionable state. Her figure is elegant, and has the effect of being tall. (22–23) Every aspect of her attractive yet aging appearance—the quality of her beauty, her face, her 
expression, her figure—is touched on, described, and qualified. Her features are described as 
valuable possessions she has managed to hold onto: she “has beauty still,” “has a fine face,” and 
has even “acquired” a certain dignified “expression” over time. At the tail end of the above
description, the Honourable Bob Stables, as befits his horse-inspired name, extols Lady Dedlock as the “best-groomed woman in the whole stud” (23), further emphasizing that her outer appearance makes her a prized possession. Because the other narrator never really introduces Esther into his narrative, she evades a similar physical description, and her value, thereby, can be placed and found elsewhere. In her own narrative, Esther gleefully avoids describing her appearance. Self-description is an artistic challenge for any first-person narrator, but Esther seems demurely determined not to meet that challenge. In comparison, by Jane Eyre’s second chapter, the eponymous heroine (who Esther resembles in many ways) uses her reflection in the red room mirror to describe “the strange little figure there gazing at me” (C. Brontë 18). In Esther’s opening chapter, chapter 3, Guppy conveniently indicates a looking glass, “In case you should wish to look at yourself, miss” (BH 43). Esther “took a peep at my bonnet in the glass to see if it was neat” (43). Only checking the neatness of her bonnet (the word “peep” suggests that Esther’s glance is furtive and quick) and not inspecting her face, Esther rejects the first-person narrator’s standard device of a mirror to describe her appearance for the reader. Similarly, when her mother’s face becomes “like a broken glass to me” (292), Esther refuses to exploit the unexpected reflection to communicate her appearance to the reader.

Esther’s illness draws attention to her appearance and frustrates that attention at the same time. Various characters’ comments demonstrate that Esther originally had been quite pretty, but smallpox significantly scars her face. Esther doesn’t recognize herself in the mirror during her recovery and has to slowly accustom herself to her disfigured features. Esther exclaims, “I was very much changed – O, very, very much” (572), but she tantalizingly refuses to clarify that “change” beyond signaling its intensity via her repetition and heightening of the phrase “very much.” Her description of her reflection continues, but her coy play on the word “definite” when
her depiction is nothing but *indefinite* is maddening to a curious reader: “Very soon…I knew the extent of the alteration in it better than I had done at first. It was not like what I had expected; but I had expected nothing definite, and I dare say anything definite would have surprised me…but I had been very different from this. It was all gone now” (572). Readers know that Esther isn’t exaggerating when she admits “It was all gone now” because little Charley sobs when Esther asks about the sickroom’s missing mirror and because Guppy reddens and stammers when Esther lifts her veil. Despite the stranger she meets in the mirror, some critics interpret Esther’s scarring as liberating. To Richard Gaughan, Esther’s illness “effectively makes her a new person” and frees her from a static source of identity (90). Anny Sadrin argues that Esther’s disfigurement releases her from the expectations associated with the ideal woman and, thereby, allows her to pursue a more unique identity: “I would say that, after the gift of writing, Dickens’s greatest gift to his heroine was this disfigurement” (55). Although Esther is shocked by the drastic alteration in her appearance and saddened by her mistaken assumption that her chances with Woodcourt have now evaporated, I argue that the “effacement” due to her illness actually furthers the way Esther has always, more or less, effaced herself.70

70 Several critics use the term “effacement” with regards to Esther, including Jaffe, Robbins, and Eldredge. Jaffe claims that Esther forms an identity through effacement of both her identity and her knowledge. Eldredge discusses Esther’s effacement as the consequence of Esther trying too hard to be perfect and loved by others. Robbins discusses Esther in conjunction with Gridley, Skimpole, and Bucket to claim that for all of those characters, “Self-effacement…is both the price of amateurism and the definition of a more efficient professionalism” (153).
When most characters first glimpse Esther’s altered visage, they act as if they register no change; their reactions imply that Esther isn’t defined by her appearance but by a deeper “Esther-ness” that remains untouched by the devastating illness. This feedback aligns with Armstrong’s contrast between the depths of the ideal domestic female and the surface of the aristocratic female. After Esther has sufficiently recovered, Esther anxiously meets with Ada but detects nothing in Ada’s look but “all love, all fondness, all affection. Nothing else in it – no, nothing, nothing” (BH 588). When Richard meets the convalescing Esther, he cheerfully remarks, “Always the same dear girl!” (591). Although Esther dramatically raises her veil to challenge this statement, Richard repeats, “‘Always the same dear girl’…just as heartily as before” (591). Ada’s and Richard’s parallel reactions suggest that what defines Esther is not her appearance, face, or surface; what defines Esther to the world is not what defines Lady Dedlock to the world. Esther’s suitors, Woodcourt and Jarndyce, still love Esther after her illness—in fact, Jarndyce holds off proposing until after Esther is sickened and marked. When Woodcourt finally confesses his love to Esther, he too echoes the sentiment that Esther hasn’t changed: “I learned in a moment that my scarred face was all unchanged to him” (937). Even jumpy Guppy, who hastily revokes his proposal at first observing his beloved’s transformation, reinstates his offer of marriage when he realizes he still loves Esther despite her blemished face.

The novel’s refusal to display Esther’s face in any illustration after her illness aligns both with Esther’s own suspicions of the image and with her aim to, as Armstrong writes about Pamela, redirect desire from “the surface of the female body and into its depths” (120)—from

71 Broderick and Grant present a similar interpretation of this scene: “Ada assures Esther of an identity she has earned, even created for herself, an identity independent of her appearance, as Ada’s words make clear” (255). Michie also discusses this topic (“Who” 207–208).
bodily surface to the “depths of her private feelings” in her own writings (122). In fact, not only do all post-illness illustrations of Esther hide her face, but the majority of illustrations in the whole novel conceal her face as well; therefore, the rationale behind the post-illness face avoidance cannot just be Dickens’s or Phiz’s fear that illustrating Esther’s scarred face would be improper. Lynette Felber notes, “Esther’s physical appearance remains vague in Hablot Brown’s illustrations, which usually portray her from the back or in profile” (14). Of the eighteen illustrations in Bleak House that include Esther, only eight show her face. Of those eight, six position her in profile and reveal only part of her face. In one of the two illustrations that display Esther’s whole face, her small figure is positioned in the background and lacks detail; the other image, which depicts her bashful embrace of the flowers Woodcourt has left for her, is the novel’s only real close-up of Esther’s surprisingly pretty face. The first three illustrations of Esther, however, hide Esther’s face from view, just as the last three illustrations of Esther do. In “The Little Old Lady” (see Figure 2.6), the novel’s first illustration, the faces of Miss Flite, Richard, and Ada are visible while Esther firmly parks her back to the viewer, a stance that sets the tone for the rest of the novel’s illustrations. In “Miss Jellyby” (see Figure 2.7), the viewer discerns Caddy’s petulant features, but Esther’s hair and the angle of her body artfully shroud her face. In “The Lord Chancellor copies from memory,” the next illustration of Esther, Esther’s bonnet and posture screen her face.

Ada, however, falls victim to Esther’s creation of personal depth. Esther creates a glamorized self—her surface alter ego—in best friend Ada. The general similarities between Esther and Ada—they are both pretty orphans taken in by Jarndyce who concur on almost

72 Taylor also notes, “In fact, most of the illustrations present [Esther] with her back towards us” (137).
everything—allow readers to easily see them as doubles. Critics have noted how Esther treats Ada as an alter ego. Alex Zwerdling writes that Esther has “from the first treated Ada as an idealized second self, as the girl she might have become if she had not been born ‘different from other children’ and ‘set apart’” (431). Esther’s identification with the perfect and charmed Ada, Zwerdling argues, allows Esther to “bear a great deal of humiliation and deprivation. It is as though she lived in the belief that no evil could affect her alter ego, no matter what happened to herself…Her need to protect Ada is an oblique form of self-preservation” (432). Helena Michie, Jasmine Yong Hall, and Patricia R. Eldredge consider Esther’s treatment of Ada in a more domineering light. Hall, for example, interprets Esther’s focus on Ada as a manifestation of the “male disciplinary gaze” (Hall 177), and Michie notes Esther’s voyeurism in her erotically charged descriptions of Ada (“Who” 203). Eldredge accuses Esther of treating Ada like a doll who can be molded to fit Esther’s changeable needs. I argue that Esther’s desire to emphasize and protect her own depth motivates her to flatten Ada into a merely beautiful portrait.

Ada’s attractiveness captivates almost every character, especially Esther. Ada’s beauty distracts Flite and Krook; Jarndyce apostrophizes her as Richard’s “pretty cousin” (BH 212); her beautiful appearance impresses Caddy and Lady Dedlock; and Skimpole waxes poetic on her beauty that is so “like the summer morning” that the “birds here will mistake her for it” (92). And Esther, charmed by Ada’s loveliness at their first meeting—“such a beautiful girl! With such rich golden hair, such soft blue eyes, and such a bright, innocent, trusting face!” (44)—proves more obsessed with Ada’s beauty than anyone else. Esther needlessly and ceaselessly reminds the reader, at nearly every stunning appearance of Ada, that Ada’s face is like an angel’s, her hair is golden, and her eyes are oh so blue. We receive two final reminders of Ada’s (seemingly increased) beauty in the final chapter alone: “I think my darling girl is more beautiful
than ever” (988); “my darling is very beautiful” (989). The litany of cutesy names that Esther uses for Ada—my pet, my darling, my love, my beauty, my dear girl—exposes Esther’s possessive attitude towards Ada (such terms of endearment are always preface by “my”) and solidifies Ada’s status as nothing but a perfect beauty. As Eldredge writes, “As a character, Ada is poorly developed; we know only that she is a beautiful golden girl” (270). Esther feels maddeningly uncomfortable when Guppy stares at her—both when he proposes and at the theatre—but that distress does not prevent Esther from constantly staring at and contemplating the beauty of Ada, even when Ada lies sleeping. A dose of fear, however, accompanies Esther’s fascination with Ada. As Esther edges towards recovery, she refuses to look out her sickroom window to sneak a peek at Ada walking in the garden. Even though Esther specifies she could have done so without Ada noticing, she refrains nonetheless. After all, it’s Ada’s magnetic beauty as much as her possible inheritance that pulls her into a doomed romance with Richard, a relationship that parallels the doomed romance between the beautiful Honoria (later, Lady Dedlock) and George Hawdon.73

Ada appears in eight of Bleak House’s illustrations. In every one of those illustrations her whole face (or nearly her whole face) is visible; this visibility marks a contrast with the illustrations of Esther and implies that Ada is more visually available than Esther, whose visual ________________

73 West also notes this parallel and suggests that with Richard and Ada “we are watching the re-enactment of the earlier tragedy” (37). West uses this parallel to infer that Lady Dedlock and Hawdon’s relationship fell apart because of Chancery (since Chancery causes the demise of Ada and Richard’s relationship). This idea, though far-fetched, is intriguing in its attempt to answer the question of why Lady Dedlock and Captain Hawdon didn’t marry if they were so in love.
unavailability aligns with her behavior in the text. A bonnet or escaping ribbon never hides Ada’s face; her dangling golden curls never obstruct her face either. By comparison, stray ribbons, oversized hats, and cascading hair frequently conceal Esther’s face when she doesn’t already have her back to the viewer. For example, “The family portraits at Mr Bayham Badger’s” (see Figure 2.4) presents the profiles of Mrs. Badger and Esther but showcases almost the entirety of Ada’s smiling countenance. In addition, Ada’s body faces the viewer instead of turning towards the paintings that the rest of the company is admiring. While “The visit at the Brickmaker’s” exhibits the whole of Ada’s plaintive face, the other females—Esther, Mrs. Pardiggle, and Jenny—are shown in profile. In several illustrations—in particular, “Sir Leicester Dedlock” (see Figure 2.8) and “Light” (see Figure 2.9)—Ada’s visual availability provides an even stronger contrast to Esther’s visual unavailability. In the former illustration, Esther’s back faces the viewer as she demurely looks down and away from Sir Leicester while Ada sits off to the side with an open book, her whole face visible. In the latter illustration, Ada—whose face is again completely visible—clings to a rakishly indifferent Richard while balancing herself on a messy pile of books. Esther looks on in profile while a strangely large and wide bonnet ribbon entirely conceals her face. Both illustrations divide Ada from the other characters and particularly from Esther. The illustration “Sir Leicester Dedlock” visually separates Ada from the rest of the company by placing her to the far right in a claustrophobic window seat; by positioning Ada in the cell-like space behind a partially closed curtain and directly underneath a caged bird, the illustration heightens the sense of imprisonment and division in the scene. In “Light,” the center bookcase becomes a visual chasm with Ada and Richard on one side and Esther on the other; although Ada looks pleadingly at Esther and Esther reaches out to Ada, the illustration movingly conveys how Ada’s marriage has severed her from Esther. Ada’s visual
availability contrasts with Esther’s visual unavailability and also seems to physically isolate her more and more from the others. Ada rests her knee on a stack of closed books in “Light”—a contrast to the open book she holds in “Sir Leicester Dedlock”—a physical position that suggests a finality to her isolation that is not present in the earlier illustration.

Ada, then, functions as Lady Dedlock’s “false daughter,” the girl who is posed to ascend and reign but who must ultimately fall so Esther can rise as the “true daughter” of Lady Dedlock. I’m not arguing that there is any possibility that Lady Dedlock is Ada’s mother or that either girl is like Lady Dedlock in personality; instead, I’m arguing that, in crucial ways, Ada’s story and choices resemble Lady Dedlock’s and that, in comparison to Esther, Ada is situated as aristocratic. Both Zwerdling and Elderedge note the reversal that happens by the end of the novel: Esther, who was seemingly destined for a less than desirable marriage with the fatherly Jarndyce, suddenly marries the young and handsome Woodcourt, while Ada, whose life and romance initially showed so much promise, is now a young widow with a child who returns to live with Jarndyce at Bleak House. Ada, whose beauty is always commented on, who marries a young man who tries out a military career, who has a stake in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and whose husband never meets their child, is in many ways similar to Lady Dedlock. Lady Dedlock too had a love affair with a military man, she too has a stake in Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and her lover also never meets their child (Esther). Just as Lady Dedlock falls, Ada must also fall to make room for the “true daughter” who can fulfill the generational contract by bringing about the social transition to the new type of domestic female.

One might argue that instead of emphasizing the difference between herself and Ada, Esther masks the social difference between herself and Ada. Esther does oftentimes portray herself and Ada as intimate friends, even as sisters, rather than as the socially-differentiated
positions of lady and lady’s companion. Esther legitimates herself through this portrayal, but she also uses it as leverage to reinscribe the difference between her and Ada; Esther reimagines the difference between a legitimate lady and illegitimate companion as the difference between the female of surface and the female of depth, a difference that works much more in Esther’s favor than the previous paradigm. From a young age, Esther understands how her illegitimacy overshadows her life and sets her apart from others. She longs, of course, not to be set apart, and so she often attempts to gloss over or minimize the difference in status between herself and others. For example, when Jarndyce sends her to school as a child, Esther learns that she eventually will need to earn her keep as a governess and will, unlike the other students, take on pupils at school: “Although I was treated in every respect like the rest of the school, this single difference was made in my case from the first” (BH 39). Esther then describes the many “proofs of love and kindness” that her peers and pupils present her with (41); she seems to hope that such proofs could erase the “single difference” (39). Similarly, beginning with her first meeting with Ada, Esther continually cites Ada’s cheerful compliments and affectionate embraces as if such compliments and embraces could again erase the difference in status that exists between Esther and Ada. As a result, one almost forgets that Esther has been, in effect, hired by Jarndyce to be a companion to Ada. Although Esther and her “darling…read together, and worked, and practiced; and found so much employment for our time” (137), it is Esther who is given the housekeeping and cellar keys “as soon as [she] was alone” (88). On the “day of the week on

74 For example: “Ada laughed; and put her arm about my neck, as I stood looking at the fire; and told me I was a quiet, dear, good creature, and had won her heart. ‘You are so thoughtful, Esther,’ she said, ‘and yet so cheerful! and you do so much, so unpretendingly!’” (BH 58).
which [Esther] paid the bills, and added up the books” (148), Jarndyce, Ada, and Richard “took advantage of a very fine day to make a little excursion” (148). Esther is left home working while the others go out and play. As Felber mentions, Ada receives the room with the best view, a benefit that “correspond[s] to her higher social status as a legitimate child and prospective legatee” (15). Furthermore, Ada is also presented with a maid and with a female companion. Esther tries to minimize the differences between her and Ada. For example, to my knowledge, Esther only mentions once that Ada has a maid, and we learn of it in a parenthetical aside (*BH* 88); however, in that same passage, another maid brings Esther the housekeeping keys, as if to emphasize that the social difference between Esther and Ada cannot be completely hidden. Esther tries to erase her own illegitimacy by portraying herself as the intimate—and much complimented—friend of Ada; however, Esther also channels their difference in status into a paradigm that is less favorable to Ada, aligning Ada with the obsolete aristocratic female and herself with the domestic ideal.

In comparison to Ada, the beautiful woman of surface, Esther simultaneously disowns a beautiful surface and embraces character depth. The portion of Esther’s narrative that recounts her sickbed experiences highlights Esther’s choices with regards to her self-representation. As she begins to fall ill, Esther’s descriptions imply that she is falling beneath and away from the surface of her normal life. She is “far away” from her own self (555); her normal life has “retired into a remote distance” “like an old remembrance” and remains at “a great distance, on the healthy shore” (555). She is both “falling ill” (emphasis added) and feels like she has “crossed a dark lake” (555, emphasis added). There is an increase in metaphoric space both horizontal and vertical between her normal life—her experiences, habits, chores, and duties—and her inner self. When she catches the smallpox she both *falls* and *crosses*, going both deeper and farther out. She
seems to reside in a hellish deep pit when she feels like she’s climbing up “colossal staircases, ever striving to reach the top” (555). Blindness is a rare symptom in cases of smallpox—neither Charley nor Jo experience a loss of sight during their bouts of the illness; however, Esther’s blindness during these sickbed hallucinations serves to emphasize that what is occurring during this passage is internal. No longer able to see what goes on around her or to focus on others, Esther turns her eye in on herself. The loss and restoration of Esther’s vision explicitly bookend her sickbed experiences. The last chapter of Esther’s previous section ends with Esther telling Charley: “I cannot see you, Charley; I am blind” (504); her odd fantasies and delirium end when she notices the “light as it twinkled…and knew with a boundless joy…that I should see again” (556). As soon as Esther’s sight strengthens to the point that she can read Ada’s letters, she turns her internal eye back outwards. While that eye is turned inwards, however, Esther goes out of her way (probably more out of her way than she does anywhere else in the novel) to reorient the reader’s interest from her normal life to her inner psychology, to these hellish depths:

Perhaps the less I say of these sick experiences, the less tedious and the more intelligible I shall be. I do not recall them to make others unhappy, or because I am not the least unhappy in remembering them. It may be that if we knew more of such strange afflictions, we might be better able to alleviate their intensity. (556)

She tantalizes the reader by suggesting that it takes courage both to write and to read these passages: “I am almost afraid to hint at that time in my disorder” (555), and “Dare I hint at that worse time…” (556). Although she admits that these incidents are secret, personal, and perhaps not appropriate for the public’s eyes, she nonetheless challenges the reader to understand her sensations of pain: “I suppose that few who have not been in such a condition can quite understand what I mean, or what painful unrest arose from this source” (555). She encourages
the reader to be voyeuristic in this section, but towards her psychological depth, not towards her surface.

During this illness, Esther also separates herself from the women of surface in her life—Ada and Lady Dedlock. Esther confesses her desire to be flung off “a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads” (556). Michie, who proposes that Esther becomes a viable self only after her illness visually differentiates her from her mother, perceives the necklace moment as Esther’s longing to separate herself in appearance from her mother, Lady Dedlock:

    it can also be seen as a prophetic separation from her mother whose association with jewelry begins with her introduction into the text as living in a world wrapped up in ‘jeweller’s cotton.’ … Esther seems to be resisting the novel’s apparent insistence that she, like Rosa, become one of her mother’s ‘beads.’ (“Who” 206)

I would add that both Ada and Lady Dedlock are specified as wearing bracelets, another type of circular jewelry. Esther notices Ada sleeping “with a little bracelet [Richard] had given her clasped upon her arm” (BH 273), and Weevle’s portrait of Lady Dedlock features her posed with a bulky fur “and a bracelet on her arm” (510). Ada’s bracelet, as a present from Richard, prefigures a wedding ring, and Lady Dedlock’s bracelet symbolizes her status and style. Esther’s wish to be “taken off from the rest” denotes her rejection of an identity that forces her to be a beautiful object.

The way Esther narrates her romance with Woodcourt also redirects the reader from Esther’s surface narrative to a “hidden” narrative, to a bits-and-pieces narrative that only occasionally pierces through to the main narrative. Esther figures this relationship as a “little
secret I have thus far tried to keep” (570). Critics have frequently mentioned Esther’s “coy” method of revealing the growing romance between her and Woodcourt; some critics find it annoying and clumsy, but some critics, like Zwerdling, argue that such a method fits Esther’s character: “she is being neither ‘insincere’ nor girlishly silly. She is so terrified of losing him that she can hardly bear to mention his existence” (434). I agree that Esther is hesitant, even in retrospect, to introduce a love story that proved to be so tortured and drawn out; however, I also think that Esther deliberately manipulates the narrative to turn reader desire away from the surface narrative (which features her relationship with Jarndyce) to her own narrative of “secret depths” (BH 573). Esther twice figures her romance with Woodcourt as a secret: first as a “secret I have thus far tried to keep” (570) and secondly when Woodcourt proposes: “I wished to be generous to him, even in the secret depths of my heart, which he would never know” (573). Of course, Esther hasn’t really kept this secret; the reader guesses and Jarndyce knows the truth long before she admits to it. Just as Esther’s comment about her “little body…fall[ing] into the back-ground” (40) emphasizes that body, Esther’s oblique presentation of the love story draws attention to it. Esther tends to disclose information about Woodcourt at the very end of chapters (see the end of chapters 13, 14, 17, and 35) and “out of order” with other aspects of the plot (“I have omitted to mention in its place…” [214]). Such techniques attract attention to this “secret” narrative because of their flashy attempts to marginalize and downplay it. Sawicki notes that Esther and Woodcourt’s relationship is “to a surprising degree…absent from her narrative” (217). Sawicki uses that evidence to conclude that Esther is revealing her unhappiness in her marriage to Woodcourt. Alternatively, I claim that the overtly manipulated romance narrative provides Esther with another opportunity to emphasize her personal depths in her writing. After all, the romance between Ada and Richard, which is almost immediately obvious to everyone,
ends poorly. After spending a few days at Bleak House, Esther watches Ada and Richard share a tender moment; Esther calls the scene a “picture,” and in a narrative that repeatedly shows the dangers of the image, that isn’t a positive term to attach to the budding romance (BH 93).

Critics have been drawn to Esther’s final chapter and particularly to her final sentence. I read Esther’s final scene as a reiteration of the themes already discussed: rejection of the image and endorsement of writing as the best method to create feminine depth. Anny Sadrin, Lynette Felber, and Judith Wilt revel in the openness of Esther’s final sentence and in its rejection of novelistic closure. Felber and Sadrin appreciate the feminist energy in the final chapter—the presence of the moon and Esther’s two daughters (not sons). Because I agree with such interpretations, I initially wondered why Esther would choose to return to the topic of her old looks in her concluding paragraphs. I’ve argued that Esther ultimately prefers “effacement.” And in these final paragraphs, I argue that Esther brings up her old looks not to express a desire to have them back but to actually express gratefulness to Woodcourt for loving her without them: “I have been thinking, that I thought it was impossible that you could have loved me any better, even if I had retained them” (BH 989). She recalls the “Esther is not her looks” motif that Ada and Richard reinforced directly after her illness. Just as they couldn’t love her more with her original appearance, neither can Woodcourt. Allan, however, misinterprets her comment by considering it to be motivated by low self-esteem (critics often make the same assumption). In manly fashion, he tries to fix the supposed problem by complimenting her, but she is not looking for a compliment. She immediately deflected attention from her looks and disowns the praise. To disown and to deflect seems to be Esther’s goal, as it has been all along. In fact, Allan tries to tell her not that she is “just as pretty as you ever were” but that she is “prettier than you ever were” (989, emphasis added). Esther will have none of that. She puts this arc of magically increased
beauty—where else?—onto Ada. It’s Ada, who after suffering through Richard’s death is “more beautiful than ever” (988). The grief has “purified” her face and “given it a diviner quality” (988). Beauty, therefore, is linked to suffering for both Lady Dedlock and Ada. And so Esther stubbornly claims her happiness by maintaining that she “did not know” that she was pretty again; thankfully, she implies, she can still avoid that fate! In her final paragraph, Esther disposes of the beauty Allan wants to assign her to everyone but herself. She distributes it left and right and leaves no amount of beauty to settle on her: “But I know that my dearest little pets are very pretty, and that my darling is very beautiful, and that my husband is very handsome, and that my guardian has the brightest and most benevolent face that ever was seen; and that they can very well do without much beauty in me—even supposing—” (989). Her final sentence articulates her hope that her “unknown friend” to whom she writes looks for a (more) adequate representation of herself in the pages of her narrative rather than in an image (985).

Conversely, the heterodiegetic narrator’s final chapter (the novel’s penultimate chapter) emphasizes the downfall of the Dedlocks and the decay of Chesney Wold by representing both as fallen and obsolete images. The “greater part” of the once-grand Chesney Wold “is shut up, and it is a show-house no longer” (983). Paralleling his residence, Sir Leicester is reduced to the “shrunken state” of being “invalided, bent, and almost blind” (981), and he sits by all that remains of his wife—her portrait. The “great old Dedlock family is breaking up” (889) as Mrs. Rouncewell laments, and Chesney Wold is, in effect, breaking up as well; unused and unkempt, it becomes a “vast blank of overgrown house” (984) “abandon[ing]” itself “to darkness and vacancy” (985). In his final paragraph, this narrator appeals to the reader’s eyes to discern the “changed aspect of the place” (984): “passion and pride, even to the stranger’s eye, have died away from the place in Lincolnshire” (985). To the last, relying on hearsay (“The story goes…”
and “The truth is said to be…” [981]) and on the external appearances of characters and of the house, the heterodiegetic narrator conveys that the aristocratic world of glamorized surface has failed and decayed. The failure and the decay, however, are tempered by the same values of compassion and community that prevail in Esther’s narrative; George (and Phil) tends to the ailing Sir Leicester instead of joining his brother’s steel factory—the middle class triumphs, but triumphs kindly.

Although Esther may be “effaced” in her avoidance of the image as an avenue of representation, Esther is far from being a disembodied narrator. Esther shows confusion and uneasiness when her “little body” appears in her narrative, and she claims that it “will soon fall into the back-ground now” (40); however, Michie appreciates that Esther’s admission actually “reminds us of [her body’s] presence” (“Who” 203). Taylor argues that Dickens “refus[es] to let [Esther] experience herself as a person of flesh and blood” (136), yet Esther repeatedly reminds us of her little body. Esther concludes that if she—a “tiresome little creature” (BH 137)—keeps appearing in her pages, then “it must be because I have really something to do with them, and can’t be kept out” (137). Similarly, by habitually narrating her crying fits, Esther creates a safe space in which to express a language of the body. She cries throughout the text, in all kinds of situations: she cries after Guppy’s proposal, when Jarndyce gives her Charley as a “present” (385), when she reads about Woodcourt’s heroism at sea, when she reads the proposal letter from Jarndyce, when she first sees her scarred face in the mirror, when Lady Dedlock confesses her identity, when she leaves Ada at Richard’s squalid apartment, when Woodcourt finally proposes, and when Jarndyce transfers her to Woodcourt in front of the new Bleak House (just to list a few examples). Uncontrollable, unstoppable, and labeled as “sobs,” Esther’s tears frequently express emotions and thoughts that she cannot openly articulate in words either because she fears being
improper or because she doesn’t yet comprehend those emotions or thoughts. Interestingly, many tears are triggered by Jarndyce. She cries when she first meets him (in the carriage on the way to Greenleaf), and her “tears will have their way” (987) as she writes about him in her final chapter. These Jarndyce-inspired tears often contain an implied critique of Jarndyce and indicate Esther’s concurrent fear and love of the man. Although Esther specifies that her tears represent “joy” and “pleasure” (386, 962), Esther herself sometimes discloses that even she can’t believe such positive interpretations of them: “I am bound to confess that I cried; but I hope it was with pleasure, though I am not quite sure it was with pleasure” (962). Esther considers herself “bound to confess” such sob sessions—the tearful language of her body cannot be ignored (962). Esther also sheds tears as she writes, which demonstrates how much the story affects her even at a distance of so many years. For example, in her first chapter, Esther writes, “I hope it is not self-indulgent to shed these tears as I think of it…I cannot quite help their coming to my eyes…There! I have wiped them away now, and can go on properly” (31). Similarly, in her final chapter, Esther finds herself crying again: “I try to write all this lightly, because my heart is full in drawing to an end; but when I write of him [Jarndyce], my tears will have their way” (987).

The other narrator doesn’t have a body; when Warhol mentions that this narrator is like Nemo in being “Nobody,” she doesn’t intend the pun that I want to call attention to (153). The narrator can see what Bucket does when he is alone and locked in Lady Dedlock’s room. Precisely because he is a nobody (with no body), the heterodiegetic narrator can see that “which nobody does see” (BH 861). Stanzel considers embodiment the primary difference between heterodiegetic narrators and homodiegetic narrators (which he refers to as authorial third-person and first-person narrators):
The first-person narrator is distinguished from the authorial third-person narrator by his physical and existential presence in the fictional world. In other words, the first-person narrator is ‘embodied’ in the world of the characters. The authorial third-person narrator may also say ‘I’ in reference to himself, but he is embodied neither inside nor outside the fictional world. Personal features can, of course, become visible in an authorial narrator, as well, that is why the criterion of credibility is applicable to him, too – but these personality features are not linked with the notion of his physical existence and corporeality. (90)

Because the heterodiegetic narrator is bodiless, he is inevitably safe from the “contagion” that emanates from Tom-all-Alone’s and infects the world of the novel: “But he has his revenge…There is not a drop of Tom’s corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere…There is not an atom of Tom’s slime…but shall work its retribution through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high” (BH 710).

Because Esther possesses a body, she is vulnerable to this contagion, and does, in fact, catch the smallpox. The contagion is indiscriminate and will attack everyone in “every order of society.” Having Esther, a narrator, be affected by this contagion removes the possible hypocrisy of the other narrator’s safe and untouchable viewpoint; without Esther, contagion would be something that only happens to other people.75

75 Infection is also mentioned elsewhere in Bleak House. On the first page of the novel, the Londoners are described as existing “in a general infection of ill-temper” (BH 13). Jarndyce observes that Richard’s “blood is infected” and “disease[d]” by the “subtle poison” of the Chancery case (560). Arac discusses how the “simultaneously scientific and moral” references to
disease in *Bleak House* “combin[e] the medical dangers of disease and the political dangers of revolution” (131).
Figure 2.2 “Shadow.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Figure 2.3 “Morning.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.4 “Family Portraits at Mr Bayham Badger’s.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.5 “In Re Guppy Extraordinary Proceedings.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.6 “Little Old Lady.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.7 “Miss Jellyby.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.8 “Sir Leicester Dedlock.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 2.9 “Light.” 78-1626, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
3.0 “POWER OF COMBINATION”: INVASIONS AND MULTIPLE-NARRATOR COUNTER-ATTACKS IN THE MOONSTONE, THE WOMAN IN WHITE, DRACULA, AND THE BEETLE

T. S. Eliot applauds Wilkie Collins’s “trick of passing the narration from one hand to another, and employing every device of letters and diaries” in *The Moonstone* (1868) because the “trick” “succeed[s], every time, in stimulating our interest afresh just at the moment when it was about to flag” (414). Eliot’s insight, however, shortchanges the significance of such a narrative structure; he demotes it to a “trick” and assigns its only purpose as a last-minute stimulant for the reader’s lagging attention. What, then, is the purpose of *The Moonstone*’s narrative structure? To answer this question, I will consider four novels that possess comparable narrative structures—*The Moonstone*, Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860), Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), and Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle* (1897)—and will contend that the narrative structure functions similarly in all four cases. All four of these novels feature more than two narrators; in this way, they are unlike every other multiple-narrator novel considered in this dissertation. The *back and forth* structure of *Bleak House*, the *frame narrative* in *Tenant and Heights*, and the *quick switch* in *Treasure Island* and *A Great Emergency* all utilize exactly two narrators. I label *The Moonstone*, *The Woman in White*, and *Dracula* as *hodgepodge* novels; such novels feature a multi-modal approach (including diaries, newspapers, letters, etc.) in which multiple narrators come and go in snippets. Narrators, therefore, can return many times to narrate; for example,
Blake narrates several separate, non-sequential sections of *The Moonstone*. *The Beetle* differs from the hodgepodge model on two counts: it features a higher uniformity of narrative medium and each of its narrators only narrates once. *Revolving door*, then, seems an apt designation for a structure in which narrators enter, one by one, take their turn at narration, and do not narrate again. Overall, a *hodgepodge* novel, as its appellation implies, is a continuous mishmash of medium and narrators, while a *revolving door* novel relies on a tidier and simpler presentation.

Since T. S. Eliot, many critics have gone beyond designating such multiple-narrative structures as a “trick.” Their interpretations often analyze the structures as exposing and representing the narrators’ struggle for narrative control; in such a formulation, certain narrators (generally a man or men) aim to become controlling “master” narrators, while other narrators (particularly women) are relegated to subservient narrative positions. Although I acknowledge (and will discuss) the presence of such tussles, I argue that such interpretations overlook the crucial *collaborative* impulse at work in both the plot and narrative of these novels despite such tensions. Using two main contexts—Victorian domesticity (the ideals of home and family) and the Victorian Empire—I claim that these novels indicate that strong groups (i.e. families) are the foundation for a strong empire.

These four novels are about the formation of strong homes, marriages, and families. They are also about the threats that destabilize, but ultimately fortify, those crucial aspects of Victorian life. In each novel, a foreign entity invades England, and the British respond with a similar multiple-narrator structure that opposes this foreign threat in many ways. The invader employs a tainted and monstrous omniscience in its attack, while the defenders rely on a collation of eyewitness accounts to protect themselves. The invader belongs to the highest echelon of society, whether as a titled aristocrat or as the top of a religious hierarchy, while the defenders lack titles.
and are usually members of the middle class or gentry. The invader lacks a conventional Victorian family and home, while the defenders are members of (or are closely associated with) such families and homes. The invader similarly lacks a balance between the individual and the community, while the defenders—both in their narrative structure and in their commitment to families—strike the balance between individual effort and communal welfare. The invaders attempt to violate the individual (often through hypnosis of some kind) and to divide the powerful group (by preventing or obliterating their writing) in order to weaken their opponents. But, in the end, the writing remains, the individual is freed, the families are bonded and fertile, and the homes are protected.

The home—and the family that lived in it—was central to Victorian culture:

When the Victorians sang ‘Home Sweet Home’, when they sagely repeated ‘Home is where the heart is’, and when they warmly commended the home life of their own dear Queen, it is clear that they were expressing more than their appreciation of food, shelter and rest; they were giving voice to their deep commitment to the idea of home. Comfort, privacy, and time spent in the home, more sought after by the Victorians than by any previous generation, were regarded not as ends in themselves, but as means of realizing a domestic vision. (Tosh, Man’s 27)

Though the middle class was the sector of Victorian society most identified with Victorian domesticity (see Tosh 27), domesticity was a such a pervasive and influential “cultural norm” that “those sections of the working class and the aristocracy which resisted it were often perceived to be at odds with the national character” (30). Each novel discussed in this chapter centers on a family/home unit that is either thoroughly middle class, a fusion of the middle class
and upper class, or an upper class that is detached from aristocratic connections and strongly aligned with middle-class values. In *Dracula*, Jonathan (a lawyer) and Mina (a schoolmistress) form the core of the middle-class professional force that surrounds them. In *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright (a visual artist and drawing teacher) marries Laura Fairlie (who brings an estate, though no fortune or title, to the marriage). In *The Beetle*, Paul Lessingham (a middle-class Whig politician) marries Marjorie Lindon (an heiress and only daughter to a title-less Tory politician). In *The Moonstone*, the wealthy Franklin Blake marries the wealthy Rachel Verinder. The cousins’ mutual grandfather was a peer; however, they hold no titles themselves.

The four novels this chapter covers were published in two distinct time periods: *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* were published in the 1860s, while *Dracula* and *The Beetle* were published in the same year—1897. The 1860s and the fin de siècle were points at which the British worried that their empire was in danger of declining. Though the 1860s have often been viewed as being “dominated by an aversion or an indifference to empire” (Eldridge 74), Eldridge qualifies that perception; rather, after recent events that “emphasize[d] the burdens of empire” (92), Victorians were left to wonder if current imperial ties would hold into the future. Several events in the 1850s and 1860s dealt blows to the British military and weakened its morale and prestige: the Crimean War (1853 to 1856), the Indian Mutiny (1857), and the Morant Bay Rebellion (1865). Rival powers (particularly the Russians, ever seen to be encroaching on pathways to India) and rebelling native populations helped inflame the fears of a weakening empire. Scholars widely consider the fin de siècle to be a period in which the people were deeply concerned about the impending decline of the British Empire (even, in fact, if the empire wasn’t yet declining): “During the empire of the New Imperialism the empire was widely perceived to be in danger” (Tosh, *Manliness* 94). John Tosh helpfully lists the “failures” that “came thick and
fast between 1879 and 1885” and helped support fears about the fading empire: “The Zulu, the Boers, the Afghans and the Sudanese all inflicted humiliating reverses on the British” (94). In this chapter, then, I argue that Collins, Stoker, and Marsh use these times of imperial anxiety to both validate empire and quell imperial fears. Threats to the hegemony of the British Empire serve to reinvigorate Victorian homes and establish strong marriages; once the home and family are strengthened, British citizens and forces can successfully reassert power abroad.

In these four novels, foreign—often Eastern—characters and creatures invade English cities and country houses, thereby threatening identities, lives, and the purity and innocence of English men and women. Each of these invading characters’ origins indicate a locale that suggested the tenuousness of empire (and particularly of the British Empire). In *The Woman in White*, the cool, calm, and calculating Count Fosco—an Italian—invades Sir Percival’s Blackwater Park along with his menagerie of pet animals and his cigarette-rolling automaton of a wife. Although Fosco is not properly from the “East” like the other novels’ villains, Frederick Fairlie associates Fosco with the British Empire’s holdings in the other direction: Fosco “was too yellow to be believed. He looked like a walking-West-Indian-epidemic” (*Woman* 351). Italy itself, originally a geographically close group of separate states, haltingly unified over the course of the nineteenth century; by “November 1860, almost the whole of Italy was brought under one ruler, King Victor Emanuel II of Sardinia” (Beales and Biagini 1). Unification was further achieved when “Italy gained Venice in 1866, and Rome in 1870” (Beales and Biagini 150). Albert Hutter explains that England was sympathetic to Italian unification and welcomed Italian revolutionary exiles (218–219). Hutter further surmises that in betraying the Brotherhood, Fosco has become a spy for France, and adds that, though initially supportive, “France became more and more invested in maintaining a divided Italy as a means of securing, even increasing, its own
power” (219). And, of course, “England found itself opposed to French interests” (219). Fosco, then, betrays an Italian cause that the English supported and likely spies for France, one of the British Empire’s main rivals. Furthermore, Walter’s paranoid description of the Great Exhibition imagines an England vulnerable to—and in fact, encouraging and encountering—massive invasion. Walter reinterprets legitimate visitors as potential foreign spies (like Fosco): “The year of which I am not writing, was the year of the famous Crystal Palace Exhibition in Hyde Park. Foreigners, in unusually large numbers, had arrived already, and were still arriving in England. Men were among us, by hundreds, whom the ceaseless distrustfulness of their governments had followed privately, by means of appointed agents, to our shores” (Woman 564). In The Moonstone, the “devilish Indian Diamond” “suddenly [invades]” (to use Betteredge’s phrase) the Verinder’s “quiet English house” and is trailed by three Indians who seek to retrieve their stolen sacred stone (Moonstone 67). Ian Duncan characterizes the novel’s “imperialist panic” as a response to the Indian Mutiny of 1857 (305). John Reed adds further historical context:

The main action of the novel takes place in the years 1848–49, at the time of the Second Anglo-Sikh War in India, which established British control over that country with great certainty through annexation of the vast areas of the Punjab. The Prologue, clearly described as ‘the Storming of Seringapatam,’ and dated

76 Ceraldi references the same quotation to argue that, for Collins, the Great Exhibition “is associated with fears of invasion by hordes of foreign spies” (174). Ceraldi also points out that Collins’s sentiments about the display differ from the public’s opinions. For the majority of the public, Ceraldi reports, the Great Exhibition “provoked an outpouring of British patriotism and self-congratulation; the various exhibits seemed to prove Britain’s racial, cultural, and industrial superiority to the rest of the world” (174).
1799, emphasizes the historical significance of the story...the victory at Seringapatam, as Collins knew, represented the establishment of England as the major power on the sub-continent...(286–287)

The Beetle sets up house in a dilapidated suburb of London, set on revenge against her former prisoner/lover Paul Lessingham and against Paul’s fiancée Marjorie Lindon. The Beetle’s gender causes much confusion; she is eventually identified as a female, but she is often mistaken for being a man. The Beetle hails from Cairo, but various characters describe her as generically and conflictingly “eastern.” She is labeled “oriental,” earns the frequently used epithet “the Arab,” and is also called the “Egypto-Arabian” (Marsh 97) and the “diabolical Asiatic” (248). Julian Wolfreys points out, “the British strengthened their position in Egypt throughout the Victorian period, through such acts as forcing Egypt in 1841 to limit the size of its army” (20). Although Egypt was not officially a colony in the British Empire, Britain basically occupied Egypt by the 1880s: “Great Britain effectively ruled Egypt (which remained part of the Ottoman Empire and retained a separate Egyptian government) through...the Consul-General in Cairo, after 1882. This position was not altered until 1914” (Eldridge 186). “Egyptian army officers

77 Out of all the invading foreign threats/villains that I list, the Beetle is the only one that is female; however, her gender causes a great deal of confusion in the novel. She is assumed to be male for a great deal of the novel (particularly because the characters, although sensing she might be female, can’t imagine a female acting so aggressively) until one of the characters sees her naked in her human form and realizes she’s a woman. Garnett (problematically) downplays the Beetle’s gender to claim that the Beetle is most terrifying as an “Oriental-African Other” (42). Hurley, on the other hand, downplays the Beetle’s race/ethnicity/origin to claim that the novel’s central fear is the monstrousness of female sexuality.
attempted uprisings against the British,” Wolfreys reminds us; thereby, the Egyptians marked their resistance against the British “occupation, domination, and westernization” of Egypt (21). Dracula trades his Transylvanian castle for a newly-bought estate in the outskirts of London. He intends the transaction to facilitate his goals of “invad[ing] a new land” (Stoker 363) and “shar[ing] [London’s] life, its change, its death” (363). The latter phrase provides a euphemism for vamping the unsuspecting London population (27). As Arata notes, “Transylvania was known primarily as part of the vexed ‘Eastern Question’ that so obsessed British foreign policy in the 1880s and 90s...Victorian readers knew the Carpathian Mountains region largely for its endemic cultural upheaval and its fostering a dizzying succession of empires” (113). According to Arata, Transylvania represented the “cycle of empire—rise, decay, collapse, displacement—...in a particularly compressed and vivid manner” (113). Egypt and India, then, where the Beetle and the Moonstone come from, were places that resisted the British Empire’s growing control. In spying for France, Fosco represents one of the British Empire’s main rivals in the increasingly competitive race to carve up the world. Dracula seeks to colonize London at a time when the British were particularly anxious about the weakening of their empire; furthermore, Dracula comes from a place that illustrates the potential ephemerality of empires.

3.1 THE INVADER

Omniscience, for many critics, is the key to the Victorian novel. J. Hills Miller refers to the omniscient narrator as the “standard convention of Victorian fiction” (Form 63) that “is so crucial...so inclusive in its implications, that it may be called the determining principle of its form” (63). Audrey Jaffe agrees that omniscience “dominates nineteenth-century narrative” (6) and observes that “[d]iscussions of the transition of the Victorian to the modern novel almost
always rely on the idea of the disappearance of the omniscient narrator, defined as absolute authority or knowledge” (4–5). Although she acknowledges the existence of Victorian first-person narrators, Jaffe argues that they too are implicated in the “fantasy” of “omniscience” (17) because they yearn for “superior knowledge and power similar to that which an omniscient narrator possesses” (19). D. A. Miller concurs that “the majority of Victorian novels” are told by an omniscient narrator who “assumes a fully panoptic view of the world it places under surveillance” (52, 23); Miller equates “panoptical narration,” then, with “omniscient narration” (24). Although the novels discussed in this chapter dispose of the Victorian period’s traditional omniscient narrator, traits of omniscience manifest in the unlikeliest of places: the foreign characters whose invasion prompts the narrative in the first place. Although an omniscient narrator may be personal or impersonal, taciturn or chatty, critics agree that the prized superpower of the omniscient narrator is the privilege of knowing “the minds and hearts of his characters…he makes his reader privy to their most secret thoughts, feelings and desires”

78 Although Jaffe specifically addresses the Brontës (who almost always use first-person narrators) in her formulation of omniscience, D. A. Miller and J. Hillis Miller exclude them. At the start of The Novel and the Police, D. A. Miller clarifies that, for him, the “‘nineteenth-century novel’…will mean these names: Dickens, Collins, Trollope, Eliot, Balzac, Stendhal, Zola; and these traditions: Newgate fiction, sensation fiction, detective fiction, realistic fiction” (2). It’s hard to ignore the maleness of his list and the exclusion of romance from his litany of included traditions. J. Hillis Miller limits his discussion to a list of authors (of which Eliot, again, is the only female): Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Eliot, Meredith, Hardy.
Jaffe concurs that omniscience “is at its most characteristic when demonstrating its knowledge of what … ‘no one’ knows: what goes on in private, within the family, and in the minds of characters…It requires an invasion of privacy” (9). Supernatural abilities—mesmerism, hypnosis, mind-reading—allow the foreign invaders to penetrate the minds and wills (and oftentimes bodies) of the Western characters. Such penetration mirrors their penetration of English soil. In these novels, due to its association with the invaders, omniscience grows to be splintered, perverted, and monstrous. Some critics, in fact, consider omniscience inherently aberrant. Henry James notoriously deemed some nineteenth-century novels “large loose baggy monsters” (“Tragic” 1107), and James’s contemporary W. D. Howells agreed that the omnisciently narrated novel (which he terms the “historical” form) is “almost shapeless…Left to itself, it is sprawling, splay-footed, gangling, proportionless and inchoate” (231). The distasteful, cumbersome creature Howells imagines resembles James’s fleshy beast. Howells declares that the omniscient narrator, with no justification for owning its x-ray vision and limitless knowledge, “involves a thousand contradictions, impossibilities. There is no point where it cannot be

79 Other critics discuss omniscience in a similar manner. Brooks and Warren write, “the story may be told by the omniscient author” who “undertake[s] to present the working of the mind of one, or more, of the characters, and who may investigate and interpret motives and feelings” (659). Chatman defines omniscience as “opposed to ‘limitation’ in terms of the capacity to enter characters’ consciousness” (212). Although admitting that “omniscience” may be “an exaggerated term,” Rimmon-Kenan writes that it denotes “familiarity, in principle, with the characters’ innermost thoughts and feelings; knowledge of past, present and future; presence in locations where characters are supposed to be unaccompanied…and knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time” (95).
convicted of the most grotesque absurdity” (230). Patrick Brantlinger grants that omniscient narration “begins to seem more artificial” in the broad canvas of “Dickens’s London…because the idea of a narrative persona knowing everything about such a vast place implied something close to supernatural authority” (17). And with its concomitant “invasion of privacy” and “element of aggression,” omniscience starts to resemble a foreign invasion not unlike the plots featured in these novels (Jaffe 9, 13). As J. Hillis Miller writes, an omniscient narrator both “penetrate[s]” and has “extraordinary powers” over the narrated world (Form 65). D. A. Miller, in his Foucault-inspired theory of the Victorian novel, equates omniscience with “social control” (27) and “policing power” (2). Determined not to become monsters, not to be won over or taken in by the smooth foreigner, and desperate to maintain difference at all costs, the Western characters respond to invasion in a form not tainted by its association with monstrous knowledge gathering. First-person narration becomes the dam of logic, rationality, and sane Britishness. I am not arguing that these invading foreign characters are actually omniscient; however, I am claiming that these villains possess traits that are typically associated with the omniscient narrator. Omniscience is often described as a god-like power. The upper-class omniscience portrayed in these novels, however, is monstrous and used for nefarious or murderous ends. These novels, then, manage a subtle critique of a deified aristocracy through its depiction of these invaders—their wicked omniscience is far from full and far from benevolent.

The foreign invaders in The Beetle, Dracula, The Moonstone, and The Woman in White all possess the omniscient narrator’s ability to access other characters’ minds. This ability, of course, doesn’t apply in all situations to all characters, but these foreigners can pass the boundaries separating their own minds from the minds of other characters. Once they have passed that boundary, they can read what is written there or even write a script for the character
to follow. Although Fosco is unmistakably human and lacks true paranormal powers, the
discerning and rational Marian nonetheless confesses to dreading his eyes and the ascendancy
over her that they grant him: “They are the most unfathomable gray eyes I ever saw…which
forces me to look at him, and yet causes me sensations when I do look, which I would rather not
feel…the extraordinary expression and extraordinary power of his eyes” (Woman 218). Marian
portrays Fosco as a talented mind-reader. His dreadful eyes give her the “unutterable suspicion
that his mind is prying into mine…” (256), and the gray eyes “seemed to reach my inmost soul
through the thickening obscurity of the twilight” (287).

Similarly, the Beetle’s glowing eyes are the predominant aspect of her appearance.
Richard Holt (her first victim in London) declares, “he was nothing but eyes” (Marsh 16). Holt
adds that the Beetle was “eyeing me as if he sought to read my inmost soul” (16) and “seemed to
experience not the slightest difficulty in deciphering what was passing through my mind” (47).
Holt erases the ambiguity of “as if” and “seemed to” when he assuredly states, “He read my
thoughts” (30). Beyond her mind-reading abilities—the central privilege of omniscience—the
Beetle possesses knowledge of spaces at which she is not present. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan
identifies “knowledge of what happens in several places at the same time” (95) as another key
trait of omniscience. From her run-down rented house in London, the Beetle is able to mentally
observe Paul Lessingham’s room, move around that room, and, even better, infiltrate a locked
box in that room to see what is hidden under its lock. When she instructs Holt how to break into
Paul’s house, she says, “I see it now, when you are there you shall see it too” (Marsh 30). She is,
presumably, able to witness Paul falling in love with Marjorie even though she is in Egypt at the
time of their London-based romance. “Hapless slave” of the Beetle’s “will” (25), Holt must do
whatever the Beetle wants him to do (which includes wandering the London streets almost naked
and breaking into a politician’s house to steal his personal letters); the Beetle seems to have immediately attacked Holt’s brain: “something in my mental organisation had been stricken by a sudden paralysis” (12). The line between access (mind reading) and control (turning Holt into “an automaton” [15]) is slippery.⁸⁰

Like Fosco’s and the Beetle’s eyes, Dracula’s eyes are piercing and memorable: “His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them” (Stoker 46). He easily entrances Lucy and Jonathan; once mesmerized, they do his will, whether that be to stand still (which Jonathan does when Dracula assails Mina) or to come to him (Lucy, on numerous occasions). Once Dracula and Mina drink each other’s blood, he has access to her mind, although she also earns access to his mind through the blood exchange; crucially, however, his power goes further: he can control her mind, while she can’t control his. Van Helsing hypothesizes that the blood exchange will allow Dracula to “compel [Mina’s] mind to disclose to him that which she know” (344). Mina herself seems to sense her mind’s potential

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⁸⁰ The way these villains are able to make British citizens into automatons reminds me of Thackeray’s digressions about controlling the characters in his stories (or Thackeray’s suggestion that his characters are merely puppets). In Vanity Fair’s opening chapter, “Before the Curtain,” the narrator (a.k.a., the “Manager of the Performance”) discusses the novel’s characters as dolls and puppets: “He is proud to think that his Puppets have given satisfaction to the very best company in this empire. The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire: the Amelia Doll, though it has a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist…” (6). The novel ends by returning to this theme, “Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out” (809).
disloyalty; therefore, she requests that her fellow team members excuse her from group meetings and asks her husband not to reveal any of the group’s plans to her lest “in some trance or dream [Dracula] may have used my knowledge for his ends” (364). Again, the line between mind reading (learning the group’s plans from Mina and, therefore, outmaneuvering them during his escape) and mind control is thin (he tells Mina she will be forced to come when she calls, and she later reiterates this threat: “I know that when the Count wills me I must go. I know that if he tells me to come in secret, I must come by wile” [347–348]).

Rimmon-Kenan lists “knowledge of the past, present and future” as another omniscient trait (97). In The Moonstone, the three Indian Brahmins hypnotize a British boy to learn of the present and the future:

The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy’s hand. The Indian – first touching the boy’s head, and making signs over it in the air – then said, ‘Look.’ The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand.

(So far, it seemed to me to be juggling, accomplished by a foolish waste of ink…)

The Indians looked up the road and down the road once more – and then the chief Indian said these words to the boy: ‘See the English gentleman from foreign parts.’

The boy said, ‘I see him.’ (Moonstone 50)

The Indians then ask the boy a series of questions about whether or not the English gentleman will be bringing the stone and if he will be arriving by a certain road; the boy first answers in the
affirmative before saying, “I can see no more to-day” (51). Importantly, the boy’s answers turn out to be correct. The hypnotized subject, additionally, is specifically identified as being English (rather than from India); he is described as a “light-haired English boy” and a “little English boy” who the Indians picked up in London (49, 50). Later on, the family solicitor, Bruff, discusses this same incident with India expert Mr. Murthwaite. Both men dismiss the event as “hocus-pocus” (51). Murthwaite attempts to explain the Indians’ reason for using such a knowledge-gaining technique:

the Indians look upon their boy as a Seer of things invisible to their eyes – and, I repeat, in that marvel they find the source of a new interest in the purpose that unites them. I only notice this as offering a curious view of the human character, which must be quite new to you. We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry that we are now pursuing. My object in following the Indian plot, step by step, is to trace results back, by rational means, to natural causes. (332–333)

The narrative structure of The Moonstone, on the other hand, is driven by a desire “not to present reports, but to produce witnesses” (233). Each narrator is to “keep strictly within the limits of [his] own experience” (233). The narrators, therefore, are not Seers of “things invisible to their eyes” but specifically seers of—and only of—things visible. “[I]n the inquiry we are now pursuing,” that is, the inquiry that is being pursued by this concatenation of narrators and narratives, “We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with
anything else that is hard of belief to a practical man” (332). In other words, they have nothing to do with an omniscient narrator.81

Furthermore, the hypnotized individual functioned as a metaphor for the crude crowd mind in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century accounts of the crowd. Gustave Le Bon’s “The Mind of Crowds” (1895) argues that when an individual joins a crowd, he “act[s] in a manner quite different from that in which each individual...would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation” (57). Once the “collective mind is formed” (55), the individual “lo[ses] his conscious personality” (59) and becomes vulnerable to the “suggestion” (60) of a leader or the “contagion” of other crowd members’ emotions (60). Le Bon frequently compares the mental state of the crowd to that of the hypnotized individual; the crowd “much resembles the state of fascination in which the hypnotised individual finds himself in the hands of the hypnotiser” (59), and a crowd member “is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will” (60). Sigmund Freud’s Group Psychology and an Analysis of the Ego (1921), which explicitly discusses Le Bon’s work, also employs the parallel between hypnosis and crowds (Freud adds a further comparison to being in love): both the crowd participant and the

81 George Eliot’s Adam Bede (1859) begins famously and oddly: “With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comper far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr Jonathan Burge…” (5). The narrator imagines realistic fiction (omnisciently narrated, as Adam Bede is) as a type of sorcery associated with the East (here, Egypt). The drop of ink that becomes a mirror to “reveal” “visions” sounds much like the drop of “ink” in the boy’s hand which, under the power of Eastern magic, also reveals visions. Adam Bede, then, also links omniscience with foreignness.
hypnotized person experience “subjection” to and “compliance” towards the leader or hypnotist (58). Freud concludes that the “principle phenomenon of group psychology” is “the individual’s lack of freedom in a group” (35). The groups—in plot and narrative—that spring up in response to the foreign threat, however, do not devolve into crowds even though individual members are hypnotized. The groups specifically use a narrative structure that simultaneously emphasizes the individual’s autonomy and devotion to a group.

These invading foreigners possess another striking commonality: high standing within the social hierarchy. Dracula and Fosco are both Counts. The characters in Dracula and The Woman in White frequently refer to each as “the Count”; the aristocratic title alone comes to represent the character.82 The Counts display typical aristocratic pride. Jonathan recounts Dracula’s pleased response at hearing his newly purchased London estate includes an ancient chapel: “We Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones may be amongst the common dead” (Stoker 30). In Transylvania, Dracula states, “I am noble; I am boyar” (27)—boyar denoting a high feudal ranking—and adds that “to a boyar the pride of his house and name is his own pride” (35). In her sycophantic biography of her dead husband, Countess Fosco provides a possible motivation for all his secret and treacherous doings: “His life was one long assertion of the rights of the aristocracy, and the sacred principles of Order – and he died a Martyr to his cause” (Woman 625). The three Indians of The Moonstone and the Beetle occupy the highest rank in

82 Bentley similarly discusses Dracula’s aristocratic identity: “Dracula himself…[is] a European nobleman with an ancestral home, a distinguished lineage, and a ‘courtly’ manner. On occasions he displays a thoroughly aristocratic contempt for his somewhat bourgeois antagonists, while they, with a proper sense of his rank, customarily refer to him in their diaries and journals as ‘the Count’” (32).
their respective religions and, therefore, represent the religious nobility (remember, many bishops sat in the House of Lords along with the peerage). Repeatedly deemed the “Oriental noblemen,” the Indians are Brahmins (the highest caste in India). Murthwaite, an Indian expert, repeatedly calls attention to their impressive status: “high caste Brahmins all of them,” and “those men are high-caste Brahmins” (Moonstone 330, 107). Similarly, as priestess of the cult of Isis and “guardian” of the cult’s temple, the Beetle occupies a primary position within her religion’s hierarchy (Marsh 200).

3.2 THE COMMUNAL RESPONSE

The invading foreign enemies are titled aristocrats or religious nobility; conversely, aristocrats rarely narrate in these novels—this emphasizes the democratic strain to the multiple-narrator

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83 Pool explains the high status enjoyed by the Church of England’s bishops: “in the House of Lords or not, the post of bishop was a grand one. The bishop was customarily addressed as ‘My Lord,’” and his primary residence was always known as a ‘palace.’ As garb emblematic of the office, he wore an apron and sleeves made of lawn, one of the finest varieties of linen” (115). Furthermore, the archbishop of Canterbury ranked very highly—“just below the monarch” (114).

84 Manavalli points out that The Moonstone, along with the majority of Victorian writing on India, idealizes the Brahmins as the top caste. She, therefore, is troubled by how the novel doesn’t include lower-caste characters. Furthermore, the novel’s commitment to perceiving India predominately as a “Hindu-Brahminical” society (67), Manavalli argues, enables its portrayal of India’s Muslims as despotic invaders.
novel. In only two cases do actual aristocrats narrate: Count Fosco in *The Moonstone* and Champnell in *The Beetle*. Count Fosco, however, only narrates under Walter’s directive and in exchange for Walter not immediately handing Fosco over to the secret society Fosco has betrayed (a secret society that will surely assassinate him and do so quickly). Champnell, the final narrator of *The Beetle*, is the younger son of an earl and is not only unlikely to receive the title but also works a day job that requires actual work; his narration comes from his own “Case-Book” produced while working as a “Confidential Agent” (Marsh 189). Technically, Champnell is a commoner and the title applied to him—“the Honourable”—is merely a courtesy title rather than an indication that he belongs to the peerage. The three narrators who narrate most frequently and at most length in *Dracula* are young professional men and women. Jonathan Harker rises from a solicitor’s clerk to a master of his own law firm over the first half of the story. Dr. Jonathan Seward (who shares a first name with his fellow professional brother) oversees “an immense lunatic asylum” (Stoker 63). Mina works as an assistant schoolmistress, imitates the “lady journalists” in her writing-exercise book (62), and functions as “secretary” for the group’s counterattack against Dracula (251). Professional acumen and ambition, therefore, provides motivation for keeping such accurate journals. Initially, Harker must keep track of the business trip he makes in the stead of his gouty employer. Dr. Seward records the doings (or rather, the eatings) of his eccentric patient, Renfield, who Seward hopes will allow him to “advance my own branch of science” (80). And Mina hopes to assist her ever-more-professional husband with his work by keeping a diary, learning shorthand, and practicing typing (62). Of the many

85 Wicke makes much of “Mina’s...prowess with the typewriter” (467) because “Typewriting itself partakes of the vampire” (476): “her typewriter has a function called ‘Manifold’ that allows it to make multiple copies in threes. This function is positively vampiric”
narrators in *Dracula*, only Arthur Holmwood is a member of the aristocracy. Although his father passes away early in the novel, at which point Arthur inherits the title and becomes Lord Godalming, he *never* narrates once he inherits the title and only narrates one short letter and two two-line telegrams previous to becoming Lord Godalming. Although we read letters and telegrams addressed to Arthur later in the novel, we never see his written responses or initiations. Once Arthur becomes Lord Godalming, he’s exiled as a narrator (perhaps there’s no room for an obsolete “God”—an entity that his name evokes—in a democratic narrative of eyewitness accounts). In fact, Mina seems to correlate wealth with lesser writing skills; when detailing in her journal how Jonathan is now “rich,” she confesses, “I am rusty in shorthand – see what unexpected prosperity does for us – so it may be as well to freshen it up again with an exercise anyhow” (182, 183). Being a text of western collaboration, Quincey Morris (the American adventurer) and Van Helsing (Dutch doctor and lawyer) also narrate in *Dracula*, although infrequently: Morris pens only one letter early in the text (69), and Van Helsing authors a handful of letters, notes, and memorandum throughout the novel.86 The narrative duties are best handled by the growing and rising British middle class, and in *Dracula*, particularly by the strengthening professional classes (both Jonathans are particularly successful within their professions considering their youth) in which accurate and reliable writing is a necessary part of (476). In general, Wicke argues that the novel’s “technologies” (typewriting, phonograph recordings, stenography, Kodak camera) “underpin vampirism” (467) because both mass culture and vampirism rely on similar methods of reproduction and consumption.

86 Moretti incorrectly claims, “the narrative function proper…is reserved for the British alone…We never have access to Van Helsing’s point of view, or to Morris’s” (96). It is true, however, that Morris, Arthur, and Van Helsing do narrate infrequently.
the job. Other westerners and the aristocracy are useful—they provide money, guns, horses, and know-how—but they can’t be relied upon to produce or organize the narrative, the very narrative that, as many critics point out, is the prime weapon in the defeat of Dracula.

Again, in *The Moonstone*, no aristocrats narrate. Franklin Blake, who narrates twice, is certainly wealthy but crucially title-less; although his father unsuccessfully tried to prove that he was the legitimate successor to a Dukedom, Blake himself neither gives credence to such a possibility nor re-ignites the litigation once his father dies. His sweetheart and eventual wife, Rachel Verinder, is the daughter of Lady Verinder and Sir John Verinder, but she inherits no title after both parents are dead; nonetheless, Rachel famously never narrates and the first half of the story forms around the gaping hole of her impetuous silence. Gabriel Betteredge, the garrulous and digressive family steward, narrates the whole first section of the novel and returns towards the end of it. Many of the narrators are, as is the case with *Dracula*, professional men: Bruff is a solicitor, Ezra Jennings is a doctor, Cuff is a sergeant, Mr. Candy is a doctor, and Murthwaite is a professional traveler and expert on India.

In *The Woman in White*, the narrators are professionals (for example, the family solicitor Mr. Gilmore and the drawing instructor Walter Hartright), servants (Hester Pinhorn and Eliza Michelson), and women (Marian Halcombe and Mrs. Catherick). Frederick Fairlie adds the non-title “Esquire” to his name, but although the Fairlie family is rich and landed, they lack a title.87 In *The Beetle*, the order of narrators progresses up the social ladder: the novel begins with Holt,________________________

87 Pool provides a helpful elucidation of “esquire”: “By the nineteenth century, the term had become somewhat casual in application, although denoting in theory that one was a member of the gentry, ranking below a knight and above a mere ‘gentleman’...eventually it became merely a title of indeterminate respectability” (44).
an unemployed clerk; moves on to Atherton, a well-to-do scientist who nonetheless seems to lack the necessary funds for his experiments; continues with Marjorie Lindon, the daughter of a wealthy Tory politician; and finishes with Champnell, the younger son of an earl and in business as a confidential agent. Certainly, two of the four narrators are upper class and three rub shoulders with the aristocracy (Atherton and Marjorie attend the alliterative Duchess of Datchet’s ball, for example); however, aristocratic connections of three of the four narrators are tempered by Holt, Paul, and Marjorie defining themselves as political liberals. Additionally, in Victorian society, aristocrats did not work: “whatever fashion an aristocrat spent his time, that occupation did not constitute work” (Reynolds 21); however, these characters go out of their way to present themselves as workers. Although currently jobless and homeless, Holt represents himself as a poor and luckless laborer; we frequently see Atherton hard at work in his laboratory conducting dangerous experiments; Marjorie prides herself on attending working meetings; even Champnell comports himself as a professional man rather than an aristocrat. All in all, while the invading foreigners are aristocrats or noblemen, the British respond with narratives written by a representative swath of society. Allowing men and women, the whole gamut of household servants, and members of the middle, professional, and upper classes to narrate—while seldom allowing aristocrats to narrate, and even then, only under threat of death or while de-emphasizing such a status in the first place—makes this narrative structure appear democratic: the narrative is created by the people.

These communal narratives balance individual subjectivity (through first-person narration) and the democratic group cause (by tying the first-person narrations together into a
coherent narrative); such a balance presents an ideological counter to the invading characters, who lack (or who come to lack) such a balance. Dracula and the Beetle are specifically cast as solo monsters lacking a stable human identity and lacking the benefit of a group during their missions of invasion. Count Fosco and the Indians, although surrounded by supportive groups sympathetic to their causes, are solitary and dehumanized in their final moments, lacking both individual subjectivity and the group cause. And the novels portray all the invaders as lacking conventional families and homes. The multiple-narrator novel, on the other hand, allows for the Western narrators to simultaneously express individuality and devotion to a group (often a family), a balance that turns out being a winning concoction. Van Helsing declares, “we are strong, each in our purpose; and we are all more strong together” (Stoker 336).

Moretti contends that Dracula represents a certain kind of capital/capitalist: monopoly. Because Dracula, therefore, “threatens the freedom of the individual, the latter alone lacks the power to resist or defeat him…Individualism is not the weapon with which Dracula can be beaten” (93). Therefore, as Moretti argues, the narrative structure of Dracula is a compromise between the power of the individual and the inability of the individual to defeat Dracula:

Just as a system of perfect competition cannot do other than give way to monopoly, so a handful of isolated individuals cannot oppose the concentrated force of the vampire…The individuality of the narration must be preserved and at the same time its negative aspect – the doubt, impotence, ignorance and even mutual distrust and hostility of the protagonists – must be eliminated. Stoker’s solution is brilliant. It is to collate, to make a systematic integration of the different points of view. (97)
The invading threats, both in their own country and in England, lack typical Victorian families. Although Jonathan refers to the three female vampires as “sisters” (57), it remains unclear if they are actually related to one another. Dracula is never called (by any character, including himself) their father, sire, or maker (all now common terms in vampire literature), and the sisters are never christened his children. Although Dracula likely created the trio and certainly created vampire Lucy, the novel never indicates that Dracula creates male vampires, and Victorian England did not perceive daughters as the best way to continue the family line and name. Rather than creating children, the vampires destroy children: Dracula steals a child for the females to feed on, and vamped Lucy bites a series of children before the crew of light stakes and beheads her.89 The Beetle tells the captive Paul that she is one of the “children of Isis,” and she identifies Isis as “the mother of men” (Marsh 197); however, she never refers to herself as a mother or to Paul (or anyone else) as her husband. Additionally, she seemingly never reproduces (in any form). Fosco, though married, fathers no children (Marian frequently describes him in feminine terms, possibly suggesting that Fosco is homosexual); furthermore, Fosco brazenly betrays the secret society with the family-related nickname: the “Brotherhood.” The Moonstone portrays the Brahmin priests as celibate and origin-less—without parents, spouses, siblings, or children. Their loyalty and time are devoted to watching the Moonstone “night and day,” not to building a family (Moonstone 34).

89 I borrow this incredibly useful (and now commonly used) term from Christopher Craft; the crew includes the “good guys” sans females: Helsing, Seward, Holmwood, Morris, and Jonathan Harker. I will use it when I specifically want to refer to the male members of the “good” side.
Additionally, all of these characters lack homes or possess abodes that pervert the ideal Victorian domestic dwelling. Exiled from his home country of Italy, Fosco must live with his friend Sir Percival; Fosco doesn’t appear to have a home of his own. The Brahmins are nomads who must follow wherever the Moonstone leads. The closest the Beetle’s lair—an orgy hotspot and torture chamber—gets to being described as a “home” or “house” is when Paul inverts such terms by calling it a “slaughterhouse” (Marsh 200). Characters frequently refer to the Beetle’s residence as a “den”: “horrible den” (199), “den of horror” (251), and “den of demons” (275); however, as soon as Paul escapes from the Beetle’s clutches, he tellingly recovers in the “house” of two American missionaries (201). Although Dracula welcomes Jonathan to his castle with the phrase “Welcome to my house” (Stoker 22), Van Helsing defines a vampire’s “home” (a more emotionally and morally weighty term than “house”) as a coffin. Dracula’s home, therefore, is his “earth-home, his coffin-home, his hell-home, the place unhallowed” (255). Van Helsing also refers to Lucy’s coffin as her home: “‘Usually when the Un-Dead sleep at home’ – as [Van Helsing] spoke he made a comprehensive sweep of his arm to designate what to a vampire was ‘home’” (214). This inability to embody Victorian ideals of home and family aligns the invaders with the British aristocracy who was also represented as neglecting or rejecting such domestic values—after all, the invaders are also represented as upper class. These novels, then, also manage a critique of the aristocracy via its representation of the foreign entities invading England. Nancy Armstrong explains that through eighteenth-century conduct books, an aristocratic woman came to be understood as the opposite of a “good wife and mother” (68) and the “model household” came to be set “in opposition to the excess of aristocratic behavior” (72). In Victorian aristocratic families, “[m]arriage remained a matter of dynastic alliances” (Reynolds 27), while conversely, “[c]ompanionate marriage stood at the heart of the Victorian ideal of
domesticity” (27). Reynolds adds, the “land-owning classes were often criticized for absenteeism from their estates...and condemned for failing in their duties to their localities” (13). In short, for aristocratic families, “the the meanings of home and family antecedes and were radically different from the middle-class ideal” (Reynolds 26).

After enumerating Dracula’s staggering capabilities and strengths, Van Helsing encourages his merely human team by listing their own compensatory qualities: “we, too, are not without strength. We have on our side power of combination – a power denied to the vampire kind” (Stoker 254). Van Helsing later reiterates that Dracula has been denied this strength by emphasizing how the Count has acted “alone”: “He have done this alone; all alone! from a ruin tomb in a forgotten land” (341). But the master savant Van Helsing is actually incorrect; vampires aren’t denied the “power of combination.” The three (nameless) female vampires who also inhabit Castle Dracula are an inseparable, cackling threesome who never break ranks; together they gleefully seduce Jonathan, bit-by-bit appear in the mist out of a castle window, and taunt the almost-vampire Mina to join their sisterhood. Similarly, the Beetle arrives in London alone to wreck her vengeance on her run-away lover Paul Lessingham;90 however, while in Egypt, like Dracula at his castle, the Beetle lives with other creatures like herself. Paul discloses that he witnessed many group activities practiced by the plural “children of Isis” while he was immobilized and imprisoned in the cult’s underground temple (Marsh 197). Plural “worshippers” and “participants” engage in sadistic and cannibalistic rituals before his very eyes (200). Paul continually references a vague “they” who participate in the “orgies of nameless horrors” (199). At the end of the novel, Champnell states that the discovery of an exploded underground temple

90 Dracula similarly, but perplexingly, claims that his cause is revenge as well; see Stoker, page 326.
in the Egyptian desert revealed “fragments…of creatures of some monstrous growth” (274), another piece of evidence pointing to the existence of multiple beetle monsters. Both Dracula and the Beetle aren’t one-of-a-kind monsters who live and act alone; rather, in their native lands, they are surrounded by similar monsters. Yet, once they leave for England, they do so alone and without the helpful backup of other vampires and fellow Isis cult members. The novels provide no rationale for why these monsters travel and arrive in London sans their fellow monsters; however, the novel functions on this premise: the Western characters can (and must) collaborate—in story and in narrative—while the monsters are denied the “power of combination” with others of their kind— in story and in narrative—while in England.

In Victorian parlance, “combination” was a word applied to working-class unionization and demonstrations; for example, when the workers in Dickens’s Hard Times are “[u]niting,

91 Even Mina admits that since she’s been bitten, she’ll sometimes be “leagued with your enemy against” her friends and husband (Stoker 353). Yet Van Helsing continues to propagate the illusion that Dracula is working and must work alone, leaving the “power of combination” only to the Western crew of light. This illusion, however, blinds the men to asylum-patient Renfield’s collaboration with Dracula (which allows Dracula access to the asylum and results in Dracula’s ensuing attacks on Mina).

92 During the nineteenth century, combination had the common definition it continues to have today: “The action of combining or joining two or more separate things into a whole” ("combination"); however, it also had a specific political meaning: “The banding together or union of persons for the prosecution of a common object: formerly used almost always in a bad sense = conspiracy, self-interested or illegal confederacy; hence (later), the term applied to the
leaguing, and engaging to stand by one another” (88), the factory owner, Mr. Bounderby, repeatedly refers to their actions as “Combination” (111). Nicholas Daly notes that Van Helsing’s invocation of “combination” implies that the crew of light is “not above learning a lesson from the working class” (191) by “remodel[ing]” combination “as a useful tool for this enterprise” (192). In light of my previous discussion of the crowd mentality, however, I think it’s important to note that these novels’ versions of “combination” are specifically separated from the crowd mind. In *Hard Times*, for example, the combining workers are all portrayed as succumbing, hypnosis-like, to a demagogue; their combinations, therefore, devolve into the type of crowds that Le Bon and Freud discuss—the ones that prevent freedom and individuality.⁹³ The Hands almost immediately surrender to the sinister charisma of Slackbridge—the unions (formerly illegal) of employers or workmen to further their interests, affect the rate of wages, etc.”

⁹³ Though Charles Dickens expressed sympathy with the workers involved in the Preston strike (the supposed inspiration for the strike in *Hard Times*), and though the narrator of *Hard Times* expresses sympathy with the workers, Dickens and the narrator do not fully endorse the strike and the unionization. In the piece he wrote for *Household Words* on the Preston strike—“On Strike”—the narrator admits that the workers have a “perfect right to combine in any lawful manner” (287). When the Hands rally around Slackbridge, however, the narrator gently criticizes their choice: “every man felt his condition to be...worse than it might be...every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to the comrades by whom he was then surrounded; and that in his belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of that crowd were gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest” (*Hard* 105). Barnard clarifies, “At this period Dickens adopted the pusillanimous view that workers had a right to strike but were unwise to use that right” (368).
spokesperson for the United Aggregate Tribunal. Already described as a group rather than a collective of individuals (as the metonymic name Hands suggests), they are described as “the mass” (Hard 105), “the multitude” (109), and—four times—as the “crowd” while they listen to Slackbridge’s oratorical prowess. The “susceptible” (105) crowd “submissively resign[s] itself” to Slackbridge (105), and, therefore, it finds itself believing in “delusions” (105) and “misconceptions” (108). The Hands, like the “sea” they are described as, are portrayed as one entity (106).94 “Stupidity” (58) and “barbarity” (60), according to Le Bon, characterize the crowd. When Stephen’s friend Rachel plaintively asks, “Can a man have no soul of his own, no mind of his own?” (Hard 186), she is implicitly revealing the weakness of the crowd. According to Le Bon, a member of a crowd cannot have a soul and mind of his own; because Stephen has both, he cannot exist in the crowd. Nancy Armstrong argues that combination figures in domestic fiction of the 1840s as a madwoman: “these cultural materials are contained within the body of a deranged woman,” and, therefore, “all threats of social disruption suddenly lose their political meaning and are just as suddenly quelled” (183). Similarly, these novels co-opt combination as a middle-class and upper-class unity—sanitized of its working-class and crowd associations—that successfully defends England and strengthens the respectable family. The crowd appears (abroad) to engulf and depersonalize the Indians and Fosco at the ends of The Moonstone and

94 When Slackbridge encourages the Hands to denounce Stephen—a faithful worker who has declined to join the union—Slackbridge quickly mutes all signs of dissent within the crowd. Later, when Stephen is framed for robbing the local bank, Slackbridge again rallies the crowd to defame Stephen. The few voices of initial dissent are, again, quickly stifled; the dissenting voices are described as “pigmyes against an army; the general assemblage subscribed to the gospel according to Slackbridge” (Hard 183).
The Woman in White. Because crowd members are viewed as “primitive beings” (60)—Le Bon claimed that “a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation” when he joins a crowd (60)—these religious and secular aristocrats are taken down several class notches in their punishments or deaths.

Not only are these monsters denied the Western “power of combination,” they lack a stable identity and threaten the stable identities of the Western characters. Dracula himself possesses a fluid, often contradictory self: he is both dead and un-dead; he transitions between traditional gender roles from being a penetrating male to a nursing mother (and accomplishes both when he attacks Mina); he shows desire for females as well as for Jonathan Harker.95 By transforming into a bat, wolf, fog, or mist, he continually troubles the divides between humans and animals and between creatures and their environment. In much the same way, the Beetle evades a stable, simple identity. Possessing the genitalia of a female but frequently mistaken for being male, the Beetle also engages in intimate physical scenarios with men and women and shifts between her human and insect form at the drop of a hat. Both creatures, therefore, trouble the gender and sexual identities of the narrators. The Beetle emasculates and violates Robert Holt (and Paul, although he is not a narrator) and masculinizes Marjorie Lindon by cutting off her hair, dressing her in Holt’s old clothes, and parading her around London as a man. The vampires emasculate Jonathan and turn Lucy (and to a lesser extent, Mina) into hyper-sexualized and

95 Craft argues that the homosexual desire within the novel is “[a]lways postponed and never directly enacted” but “finds evasive fulfillment in an important series of heterosexual displacements” (170).
laughing femme fatales. As several critics have noted, many of the narrators turn to the sanctuary of writing to hold on to a stable self in the midst of the amorphous energy being directed at them.

The invading foreigners of Collins’s two novels differ from the monstrous creatures of *The Beetle* and *Dracula*: they are armed with groups of their own. The spy cohort or counter secret society that Fosco counts himself a member of allows him to “direct” the “exertions” of “persons…semi-officially connected with me…Monsieur and Madame Rubelle being among the number” (*Woman* 598). And the dependable Rubellos appear out of the woodwork to aid Fosco at certain points in the story. The Indians already derive benefit from working in a group of three, but they receive additional assistance from the “modest little Indian organization” with which they are associated (Moonstone 331). Murthwaite explains that the Indians

> have succeeded to the organization which their predecessors established in this country…The organization is a very trumpery affair, according to our ideas…I should reckon it up as including the command of money…and…the secret sympathy of such few men of their own country, and (formerly, at least) of their own religion. (Moonstone 330)

The organization, in particular, discovers that the moneylender Mr. Luker received the stone when it reached London. This small piece of information, carefully built upon by the Indians’

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96 Roth argues that Dracula sexualizes Lucy and then Mina. The friends are “the suddenly sexual woman” (58); “vampirism,” therefore, “is equivalent to sexuality” (59). Griffin concurs that Dracula’s “ultimate horror...for the male consciousness” is that “he turns their women into sexual predators” (141).
further investigations, allows the Indians to successfully track and eventually retrieve the stone; however, in the final pages of both books, Fosco and the Indians are severed from these advantageous networks, dehumanized, and absorbed by a looming crowd. These crowds represent the devolution of the efficient group. While visiting Paris for work, Walter Hartright espies Fosco’s dead, massive, naked body lying on a slab in the city’s morgue; in order to examine the body closer, he must thrust himself through the crowd swelling in front of Fosco’s corpse. Walter “pressed in with the crowd,” pushed in “behind the front row of spectators,” and overhears the “flippant curiosity of a French mob!” (Woman 623). As Fosco lies “unowned, unknown” (623), divested of clothing, and unidentified by name or rank, he becomes merely a dead body, dehumanized and exposed to the chattering of French girls who analyze him as if he were a slab of meat hanging in a butcher’s window. Beyond the characters recognizing one Indian as the “chief” of the group, the three Indians were never particularly individualized, as the text never grants them distinct names, appearances, or behaviors to enable the reader to separate one from the others. Like Fosco, in the end, the Indians find themselves separated from each other and from their shadowy organization and given up to a massive crowd. While exploring India, Murthwaite joins a pilgrimage to the site of the newly-restored Moonstone; in his letter back to England, he emphasizes the mass of people joining the journey: “the throng had swollen to thousands” (Moonstone 524), “the multitude was on its way” (524), and the “crowd detained us” (525). By the time the crowd arrives at the shrine, Murthwaite asks the reader to imagine “tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers” (525). The three Indian Brahmins appear at the shrine; in penance for breaking their caste, they must wander the world as pilgrims, alone. After they say goodbye to one another, “In three different directions,
[Murthwaite] saw the crowd part, at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand white mass of people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more” (526). The three Indian men are absorbed by the crowd, the “grand white mass” of undifferentiated people, and disappear, “obliterated.” Although the Indians triumphantly return the sacred stone to India and Fosco temporarily evades capture and death, these two communal enemies are punished through the erasure of their individuality and of their groups; they are dehumanized and robbed of their group ties at the hands of a group’s negative image, the crowd, and either die alone or are doomed to wander the world alone till death.

Why must the “good” characters be furnished with groups in the first place? Because in these novels the individual is not enough. The individual alone cannot successfully resist the forces opposed to it. When a sole individual is pitted against the enemy, he usually ends up giving in (Jonathan with the female vampires; Mina with Dracula), being controlled (Marjorie, Holt, Laura), or dying (Lucy, Holt). Individual virtue does little to make resistance effective (consider Lucy, Mina, and Marjorie, all virtuous characters whose virtue does nothing to prevent enemies successfully attacking them). Similarly, these books are not populated with master detectives who can successfully solve the mysteries and capture the criminals on their own. As Ian Ousby writes about The Moonstone’s Sergeant Cuff, he is not “a God like figure [who] has disappeared from the stage, leaving both audience and actor groping in the dark, but simply…another human being, intelligent but no less fallible than most humans” (124). The individual is incapable of perfect resistance or perfect understanding. The individual is vulnerable, fallible. Furthermore, each book centers on the attempted violation, eradication, or dissolution of the individual. Dracula and the Beetle obviously invade, control, and transform
bodies. Fosco’s magnum opus is violating the individual not through murder but through identity theft. Even in *The Moonstone*, Franklin Blake finds himself separated from his own self because he has forgotten the actions he performed while under the influence of an Eastern drug, opium (a drug inevitably associated with the invading Indians). To restore Marjorie’s femininity, remove Mina’s “unclean” sign, reconcile Blake’s actions with his character, and reverse Anne and Laura’s switched identities—these actions are precisely what the latter part of each novel strives to accomplish. The individual is worth saving and worth maintaining, but it cannot defend itself. As Moretti says about *Dracula*, “a handful of isolated individuals cannot oppose the concentrated force of the vampire” (97).

Additionally, the individual’s perception must be bolstered and corroborated by others to be validated. In *Dracula* and *The Beetle*, the narrators witness the unbelievable and the fantastical; the narrators worry that they’re seeing things, going crazy, dreaming. As Vicki Hill comments, “the fact is that each of them, taken individually, is powerless even to make sense of what is happening” (201). Van Helsing has to work hard against the consequences of “this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see,” and he rightly points out that disbelieving one’s senses would be Dracula’s “greatest strength. It would be at once his sheath and his armour” (Stoker 342). The narrators must all come to believe their senses, come to accept the authority of the eyewitness position, and they can only do that once someone else confirms that she has experienced the same thing. The multiple perspectives in these two monster tales, then, harden fantasy into reality. In one of *Dracula*’s climactic moments, Van Helsing addresses the assembled team and begins to delineate Dracula, power by power, tendency by tendency, weakness by weakness; all of his evidence is based on their own experiences as recorded in their narratives: “as again Jonathan observes…as Madam Mina saw him…as friend John saw him…as
my friend Quincey saw him…as again Jonathan saw…we ourselves saw Miss Lucy…” (255). Van Helsing powerfully and persuasively concludes, “We have seen it with our eyes” (256). Although the scene features no battle, no blood, and no victims, it feels climactic because it is not until it has occurred that Dracula becomes a real thing—brought from fantasy into reality through the corroborative effect of multiple narrations. And Dracula becoming a real thing in the minds of the characters is the precise turning point in their once-futile battle against him. It is not possible to fight Dracula while not believing in vampires, so bringing Dracula into the realm of reality and out of the realm of fantasy is crucial to the team’s success. As in Dracula, in The Beetle, characters are constantly doubting their senses, “[finding] it difficult to credit the evidence of his own eyes” (Marsh 215). The multiple narrators in The Beetle serve a similar function: the narrators must learn to trust their senses because everything unbelievable that they see, hear, and feel is real. Until they accept that the Beetle is a real threat with real powers, and not some mental illusion, talented charlatan, or mere odd foreigner, they cannot resist her and fight her.

Though narrators in these novels may disagree on the interpretation of characters or events, they concur on the facts. For example, in The Moonstone, Miss Clack and Franklin Blake clearly dislike one another and have almost nothing in common except family (they are distant cousins). In her unintentionally hilarious narrative, Miss Clack wildly misinterprets herself and Godfrey Ablewhite; however, Blake, nonetheless, makes a point of corroborating her reporting. In a move he makes at least five other times in the novel, Blake provides a note instructing the reader to cross-reference another narrative. Such cross-references either lead to confirmation of a presented fact or an illustration of how well a new fact complements the holes in previously presented information. In this particular case, the proposed cross referencing between Clack’s
and Betteredge’s narratives proves that Clack reports information that Betteredge had already reported. The information at stake—the romantic history of Godfrey’s parents—is inconsequential in the scheme of the book; however, I would argue that, in this case, the information verified is not the point so much as verifying Clack’s reporting reliability. As the book’s most unreliable narrator on the axes of interpretation and evaluation—she lacks self-awareness, deceives herself that her passion for Godfrey is merely a spiritual affection, misinterprets Godfrey’s theatricality as sincerity, and masks her own un-Christian prejudices and rudeness in mock religious meekness—and probably because she is unreliable in many ways, Blake goes out of his way to prove that she is still reliable on the axis of reporting. Furthermore, Blake endorses her reliability despite their personal animosity for and difference from one another; additionally, Blake connects Betteredge’s and Clack’s accounts even though the two narrators loathe one another. Betteredge warns the reader, “just do me the favour of not believing a word [Clack] says, if she speaks of your humble servant” (231), and Clack denigrates Betteredge as a “heathen” (236). And yet, Betteredge’s “heathen” words end up aligning, fact-wise, with the very account that Betteredge counsels us to be suspicious of.

3.3 ANTI-COMMUNICATION FORCE

These invading foreign characters sense that their enemies’ accumulation of knowledge endangers them. The more that the other characters discover about them, the less mysterious the invaders become and the more likely they will be thwarted or defeated. The collaborative nature of the resistance to the foreign threat—in story and in narrative—increases the exchange and collation of knowledge and fashions it into an imperial weapon. Dracula represents the epitome of the narrative-as-weapon strategy; Mina Harker’s collecting, transcribing, and ordering of
various written materials into a grand, chronologically ordered master narrative makes Dracula known and therefore vulnerable and therefore defeatable. Seed concurs, “Since understanding Dracula is a necessary precondition to defeating him, the exchange and accumulation of information literally is resistance to him” (203). In his study of how the British increasingly controlled their expanding empire by controlling information about it, Thomas Richards points out that Dracula realizes this strategy perfectly: “In Dracula, a monster is defeated by mastery of the means of information”; the novel “equates knowledge with national security” and “sees a British mastery of the means of knowledge as overpowering threats to empire” (5). According to Richards, the “knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire” was executed by “knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, the India Survey, and the universities” (6, 4). In these novels, however, the “paper empire” is created not by civil servants or the Foreign Office (4); the family (and its surrounding apparatus of servants, professional assistants, and friends) is the “administrative core of the Empire” and chief of the “knowledge-producing institutions” (4). The “knowledge collected and united” helps the family first and the “state and Empire” second. These novels, then, revise the identity of the knowledge gatherers and the aim of the knowledge gathering. The family-as-knowledge-institution paradigm also appears in The Woman in White. Walter and Marian’s requesting, amassing, and ordering of statements, letters, personal knowledge, and narratives

97 Leah Richards agrees with Seed and Thomas Richards: “To know everything about Dracula is to know how to destroy him. It is information, gathered and arranged into a collaborative and comprehensive account, that enables the group to defeat Dracula” (440). More specifically, Leah Richards contends, Dracula models itself off the late-Victorian newspaper, thereby earning a journalistic “authority for the fantastic events within the text” (441).
allows for the restoration of Laura’s identity, thereby reversing Fosco’s major crime against the characters in the novel. Since most of the narratives are written retrospectively in *The Beetle* and *The Moonstone*, the narratives themselves don’t quite function as real-time weapons against the foreign threats; however, in *The Beetle*, the imparting and exchanging of knowledge among characters during the course of the story makes possible the tracking of the fleeing Beetle and the rescuing of tranced Marjorie. Likewise, in *The Moonstone*, the sharing of information (and sometimes the exchange of narratives, particularly in the form of letters) allows Blake to be indicted and then cleared, Godfrey to be identified as the “true” criminal, and Blake and company to nearly intercept the Indians before they take off with the stone. Because the sharing and accumulation of knowledge—in the story and in the narrative—creates a strong resistance to the foreign threat, those foreign threats have a deep investment in preventing communication. The invading foreigners, therefore, frequently wield an “anti-communication force” that precludes characters from speaking, articulating their thoughts, and—at its strongest—writing; when characters still manage to speak or write, the invading characters’ influence perverts the speaking and writing being produced. Ideally, the foreign threats seek to silence narrators.

*The Woman in White*’s Count Fosco exerts an “anti-communication force” over the book’s female characters in particular. Previous to marrying him, Countess Fosco exhibited a brash and provocative personality; she was “always talking” (*Woman* 215) and “advocated the Rights of Women – and freedom of female opinion was one of them” (232). But Fosco tames and mutes this garrulous, opinionated woman. Marian’s descriptions of the Countess emphasize her pervasive silence: the Countess “sits for hours without saying a word” (216), “sits speechless in corners” (216), looks at Fosco with “mute submissive inquiry” (216), and even wears “quiet black or gray gowns” (216, emphasis added). When Fosco requests his wife’s opinion, she
tersely defers back to him (“I wait to be instructed” [232]); when she finally does speak, “her words were almost the echo of [Fosco’s]” (225). When she must speak, she does so through or in imitation of him. The Countess only produces significant writing once her husband has died, as if it were only possible to write at length once his presence was permanently removed; however, the significant writing produced—a flattering biography of her husband’s “domestic virtues” and “rare abilities”—still seems far from an independent production on the level of Marian’s diary (624). In addition to silencing his wife, Fosco also intercepts and invades Marian’s personal writing multiple times. Once, he opens and reads a sealed letter she addressed to her lawyer; another time, Fosco directs his wife (armed with drugs concocted by him) to intercept other letters sent by Marian; and lastly, Fosco reads Marian’s diary while she’s ill and chillingly adds his own entry at the end, a move that that many critics have read as textual rape.98 Significantly, once we reach Fosco’s postscript, no more of Marian’s diary appears in the novel; when Walter subsequently takes up the narration, he never mentions that Marian continues to write in her journal. We are led to believe, therefore, that Fosco successfully thwarts Marian’s writing initiative, particularly her once-strong devotion to writing in her journal. When Fosco dupes Laura into leaving Blackwater Park with the promise of being reunited with her sister Marian, he picks her up at the train station in London and deposits her at the insane asylum that evening.

98 D. A. Miller interprets Fosco’s reading of Marian’s diary as rape, a rape motivated by the fear that the masculine Marian will castrate the male characters. By successfully “raping” her, Miller argues, Fosco proves that she lacks that castrating power (181). Similarly, Case calls Fosco’s “violation of the diary” a “psychic rape” that “refeminizes” a masculine and threatening Marian (158). Sternlieb, on the other hand, warns us against “conflating Marian’s diary and virginal body” and encourages us to “abandon the notion of this scene as a rape” (59, 58)
under a different name. Once liberated by Marian, Laura is unable to craft a coherent and trustworthy explanation of her experiences. Although Marian and Walter have always treated Laura like a child possessed of lesser powers of communication, her inarticulateness is now total and her attempts at communication pitiful. Walter denies her the position of narrator (and instead chooses to narrate himself the fragmented memories she relates to him) precisely because Laura’s own words are “confused, fragmentary, and difficult to reconcile with any reasonable probability” (426). One by one, Fosco thwarts the household of British women by silencing them, violating their writing, and making them ill-suited to be narrators.

The Beetle’s tranced victims similarly experience an inability to articulate or communicate in speech and, at times, in writing. In his description of his encounter with the Beetle, Holt explains that his speech is forced or prevented by the Beetle’s will—he becomes the Beetle’s ventriloquist doll. Despite repeated questioning by Paul Lessingham (whose house he has broken into), Holt finds himself unable to answer: “As I stood speechless, motionless” (Marsh 38). Holt can only speak the words previously sanctioned by the Beetle (the words are “the Beetle”), can only voice them when the Beetle wills him to do so, and even then speaks in a voice distinctly not his own. Furthermore, the Beetle commands Holt to break into Paul’s house to steal a pack of ribbon-enclosed love letters from Marjorie to Paul, the letters themselves evidence of intimate communication between the affianced couple. Before “devouring” the epistles with rage, the Beetle muses on the value of the letters, hidden and locked up as they were in Paul’s house: “There should be something here worth having, worth seeing, worth knowing—yes, worth knowing!” (49, 48). The Beetle repeats “knowing” (as well as adding a mid-sentence exclamation mark) to emphasize that she considers the letters to contain precious knowledge. Just as Fosco goes to great lengths to intercept Marian’s letters and Dracula (as I will discuss)
intercepts Jonathan Harker’s letters before they leave the castle grounds, the Beetle lusts after Marjorie’s letters. Later, when the Beetle invades Marjorie’s bedroom and, then, her bed sheets, the usually articulate Marjorie finds herself unable to voice her concerns to her nurse, call for her maid, or pray: “I had even lost the control of my tongue – I stammered” (159); “I knelt down, and I prayed, but the words wouldn’t come. I tried to ask God to remove this burden from my brain, but my longings wouldn’t shape themselves into words, and my tongue was palsied” (124). Paul confesses to Champnell that he is unable to say or write “the Beetle” ever since his traumatic experience with the creature years before: “I cannot utter the words the stranger uttered, I cannot even write them down. For some inscrutable reason they have on me an effect similar to that which spells and incantations had on people in tales of witchcraft” (205). Notably, Paul Lessingham is a rising political star and a renowned public speaker; Marjorie’s interest in him begins when she reads one of his speeches in the paper. And Marjorie, to use her own phrase, considers herself a “speechifying woman” (146). She is not afraid to speak at a Working Women’s Club gathering or to speak back to her politician father. The Beetle stymies speech and communication in two characters specifically known for their speaking skills.

Even though Marjorie and Holt—both victims of the Beetle—each narrate in the novel (which could imply the lack of a strong “anti-communication force”), they are both strangely disassociated from their narrations; Marjorie writes her narrative in unconscious compulsion while recuperating from a bout of insanity, and Holt doesn’t directly produce the narration ascribed to him. At the end of the novel, Champnell reveals that Holt’s narration “was compiled from the statements which Holt made to Atherton, and to Miss Lindon” (275), statements made before he died from wounds inflicted on him by the Beetle. Victoria Margree also mentions that “Marjorie and Holt’s narratives are seriously decentered, in the sense that neither Holt nor
Margree can straightforwardly be said to be the origins of their narratives” (77). Margree argues that the novel hinges on the “conflation of Marjorie and Holt,” who, as masculine New Woman and the emasculated, unemployed worker, both represent fin de siècle fears of the instability of gender and class identities; therefore, Margree reads the decentered-ness of Marjorie and Holt’s narratives as one more way in which the novel undermines the authority of these characters. Margree continues, “both Holt and Marjorie are in important ways ‘dead’ to their texts…This undermining of their authorship also has implications for the authority of their narratives, neither of which is anchored by a consciousness that could be called upon to testify to its validity” (77–78). While agreeing with Margree’s argument, I find it fruitful to locate the cause of Holt and Marjorie’s alienation from their texts in the enduring “anti-communication force” of the invading villain as well as internally in British culture itself. The narrations Holt and Marjorie put forward are perversions that manifest the physical and psychical damage the narrators suffered during and after their contact with the Beetle.99 The novel’s other two narrators, Atherton and Champnell, never fall under the Beetle’s dreadful hypnosis—consequently, they are personally and consciously responsible for their own narratives and never find themselves unable to speak or clearly verbalize their thoughts.

99 Furthermore, even though Holt and Marjorie’s experiences make it into the novel, their narratives break down when some sort of sexual “invasion” of the victim is about to occur. Margree notes that Holt’s and Marjorie’s narrations “halt at similar places: in the terror of finding oneself face-to-face with the Beetle” (75). Hurley makes a similar observation: “Other characters besides Marjorie suffer from lapses of memory: their narratives are interrupted by insanity, or aphasia, or a fainting fit” (135).
From his influence on various characters to razing the group’s manuscript and Seward’s wax phonograph records, Dracula attempts to control, prevent, and discourage writing and communication between the characters. Jonathan Harker, naïve visitor to the castle, is the first victim of Dracula’s “anti-communication force.” When Jonathan first wanders around his room in the castle he “looked about for something to read” but “[t]here was absolutely nothing in the room, book, newspaper, or even writing materials” (Stoker 26). Eventually, Jonathan composes letters, but only at the command of and under the gaze of Dracula: “I understood as well as if he had spoken that I should be careful what I wrote, for he would be able to read it” (39). Jonathan attempts to circumvent Dracula’s control and foolishly writes secret letters to Mr. Hawkins and Mina (in shorthand) and intends to deliver them through the Szgany; however, Dracula quickly intercepts them. In fact, in an aggressive move he will repeat later with the group’s cherished manuscript, Dracula burns the stenographic letter to Mina. Understandably, the day following this debacle, Jonathan realizes that all of his personal writing materials have vanished. Furthermore, Dracula smoothly requests Jonathan to write three post-dated letters: “one saying that my work here was nearly done…another that I was starting on the next morning from the time of the letter, and the third that I had left the castle and arrived at Bistritz” (49). These letters, instead of being accurate signs of life to the recipients, become death omens: “Last night one of my post-dated letters went to post, the first of that fatal series which is to blot out the very traces of my existence from the earth” (54). Dracula transforms written communication from a sign of existence to that which will “blot out” Jonathan’s very existence.

Jonathan does have one respite from Dracula’s control: his journal that begins Dracula. Only luck and deep pant pockets prevent Dracula from finding and destroying this diary: “if it was the Count that carried me here and undressed me…I am sure this
diary would have been a mystery to him which he would not have brooked. He would have taken or destroyed it” (48). Jonathan’s diary ends before he attempts his daring escape from Castle Dracula. Next seen recovering from a mental and physical breakdown in a hospital, Jonathan never writes or verbally shares the details of his escape. Notably, Sister Agatha, not Jonathan himself, notifies Mina of Jonathan’s presence because Jonathan is “not strong enough to write” (109–110). Although the Sister’s comment implies a physical hindrance, her comment also reveals a mental inadequacy which continues, in fact, until Jonathan recovers his sense of “self” and is able to re-open his journal and write in it again. The anti-writing force of Dracula finally takes strong hold on Jonathan.

Dracula’s arrival in Whitby—the port town where Lucy and Mina are vacationing—is signaled by changes in Mina’s journaling. A week after Dracula attacks Lucy in the graveyard, Mina temporarily succumbs to Dracula’s anti-communication influence: “No diary for two whole days. I have not had the heart to write. Some sort of shadowy pall seems to be coming over our happiness” (106). Seeing as Dracula’s approach to Whitby occasioned fog and dark storm clouds, the “shadowy pall” that prevents her from writing can be associated with Dracula’s increasing presence in the area. Conversely, a few days later, when the earth-boxes have left Whitby and Dracula’s local influence has consequently lessened, Mina writes, “I am happy today, and write sitting on the seat in the churchyard. Lucy is ever so much better” (108). The removal of Dracula leads to Lucy’s improvement and to Mina’s enthusiastic return to her journal.

In both Lucy’s and Mina’s gradual, sexy slip into vampirism, the signs of such transformation include an aversion to writing. In a moment of nighttime determination, Lucy makes an “exact record of what took place” that evening (153); however, the next day the
doctors find a near-dead Lucy. After another blood transfusion, she barely survives but later falls into a doze: “[w]hilst still asleep she took the paper from her breast and tore it in two. Van Helsing stepped over and took the pieces from her. All the same, however, she went on with the action of tearing, as though the material were still in her hands; finally she lifted her hands and opened them as though scattering the fragments” (163). As Van Helsing and Seward notice that Lucy is more herself—if weaker—while awake, and stronger—but more vamp-like—while she sleeps, the ritual tearing of the “exact record” is carried out by her vampire self. The scene’s resemblance to Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking and ritual washing of hands to cleanse herself of guilt shows that Lucy’s vampire self feels similar, if ironic, guilt at engaging in non-vampire activities—writing down information would be a threat to Dracula. Similarly, when Mina and Van Helsing travel to Castle Dracula at the end of the novel, Van Helsing grows increasingly worried about the vampire characteristics manifesting in Mina: she won’t eat, she sleeps all day, she’s looking too pretty, and she stops writing. Van Helsing comments, “She, who is usual so alert, have done literally nothing all the day…She make no entry into her little diary, she who write so faithful at every pause” (386).

Just as Fosco’s and the Beetle’s presence inhibits characters from speaking, Dracula’s influence does the same. Drained of more and more blood, Lucy “lay motionless and did not seem to have strength to speak” (131). Holt “stood speechless, motionless” under the Beetle’s spell (Marsh 38). In a rare moment of self-control, Renfield tries to convince Dr. Seward to release him from the asylum (knowing that Dracula will use him to gain access to the building); however, Renfield can only vainly request release, not provide answers for why he desires it: “I have nothing to say…but if I were free to speak I should not hesitate a moment; but I am not my own master in the matter” (Stoker 262). Once Dracula has used and fatally wounded him, Renfield is
free to explain: “I couldn’t speak then, for I felt my tongue was tied” (297). Renfield’s words recall Marjorie’s flustered attempts to pray in the word-stifling presence of the Beetle: “my tongue was palsied” (Marsh 124). After her gruesome exchange of blood with Dracula, Mina uncharacteristically holds back in conversation with the others. Seward notes that “in some mysterious way poor Mrs Harker’s tongue is tied…she will not, or cannot, give [her conclusions] utterance…it is some of that horrid poison which has got into her veins beginning to work” (Stoker 343). Van Helsing compares Mina’s tongue-tied state to Lucy’s: “there is to [Mina] the silence now often; as so it was with Miss Lucy” (344). Even under hypnosis, Mina provides shorter answers to Van Helsing’s questions the more she changes into a vampire; eventually, “she made no response” when Van Helsing interrogates her under hypnosis (391). The termination of the brief windows of hypnotic opportunity are “quickly preceded only by a spell of warning silence” (350). Although Mina maintains a modicum of self-control during these windows and, therefore, is able to share information about Dracula, the transition back to her vampire-associated self is marked by silence. Lastly, comparable to how Paul Lessingham finds himself unable to write “the Beetle,” Mina visually stammers while writing “Vampire” in her journal: “the…the…Vampire. (Why did I hesitate to write the word?)” (377). Since the Beetle and Dracula represent anti-communication energy, it is fitting that the characters find themselves unable to articulate the monsters’ names—those names become a locus of inarticulateness.

The trio of Indians in *The Moonstone* do not wield the “anti-communication force” in the same way as the other invaders do; however, there is little need for them to do so, seeing as the characters don’t communicate much in the first place. In the first third of the novel, Rachel remains maddeningly silent, and the police investigation must shut down in the face of her utter
refusal to cooperate. Rachel’s mother, Lady Verinder, keeps her illness and impending death a secret. A maid in the Verinder household, Rosanna, stays close-lipped out of love for Blake and buries her information-filled missive in a watery sandpit called the Shivering Sands. Dr. Candy contracts amnesia and can’t confess to drugging Blake on the night of the theft. A lack of open communication and knowledge sharing among the main characters is precisely what prevents the case from moving forward towards resolution. The novel charts the slow clawing open of the knowledge gateways and the slow earning or regaining of trust that leads to productive communication between the characters. The Indians do, nonetheless, steal one piece of vital writing from Mr. Luker: a receipt that proves he had been in possession of the Moonstone before depositing it in a bank (Moonstone 243). As a variation on the “anti-communication” theme, however, the Indians use the common materials of communication—ink and manuscript—to hoodwink and hypnotize British characters. The Indians cart around a beautiful “ancient Oriental manuscript, richly illuminated with Indian figures and devices” (239). The Indians twice use this manuscript to, in effect, hypnotize Englishmen. Learning that Godfrey Ablewhite and Mr. Luker possess knowledge of the Moonstone’s whereabouts, the Indians invite the two men (on separate occasions) to a specific apartment; when the men arrive, they each find the manuscript “open to inspection on a table” (239). Both visitors become so “absorbed” in inspecting the manuscript that the Indians are able to attack the unsuspecting men before the visitors can even respond. The Indians seem to trust to the hypnotizing power of their manuscript to make their victims docile and vulnerable—in short, to entrance their victims. Upon looking at the manuscript, Mr. Luker’s “attention was absorbed, as Mr Godfrey’s attention had been absorbed, by this beautiful work of Indian art” (242); as if in a trance or dream, Mr. Luker is “aroused from his studies” by the assault at his back (242). Having invaded England and the Verinder country house, the Indians
now conduct an invasive “odious search” (240) of both persons, turning out their pockets and checking them to the skin. Hyperbolically and hypocritically devout Miss Clack can barely bring herself to discuss an “outrage” so indecent (240). And, as already discussed, the Indians use a black fluid, repeatedly called “ink,” to mesmerize a British boy.

Critics, understandably, get antsy whenever narrators within the novels start to exert a similar “anti-communication force” by commandeering stories, silencing narrators, or not allowing certain characters to narrate; therefore, many interpretations of the narrative structures of these novels, particularly of Dracula and The Woman in White, revolve around the largely gender-based struggle for narrative authority amongst the narrators. Alison Case contends that “Both novels…use their complex narrative structures to stage a gendered struggle for narrative mastery” (147). Generally, Walter is seen to attempt dominance and earn masculinity at the cost of Marian and Laura. Critics judge Blake similarly; they argue that he doesn’t allow Rachel to narrate, shows frustration with Miss Clack’s narrative, and shrugs off Rosanna’s buried

100 Gaylin and Heller claim that, in the way he treats the female characters, Walter resembles Fosco. Gaylin notes, “The Woman in White reveals a collusion of male narrative forces to limit female narrators and characters” (306). Heller contends that Walter, as the “male voice of authority…has as much at stake in controlling the novel’s female voices as Glyde and Fosco…have in taming the novel’s women” (15). Heller reads Fosco’s “colonization of Marian’s voice” as only the “more obvious version of Hartright’s own strategy for containing Marian’s narrative energy” (134). Perkins and Donaghy accuse Walter of “manipulating the narrative for his own ends” and of “repress[ing]…the unconventional Marian Halcombe” (392).
epistle.¹⁰¹ And the male members of the crew of light make every attempt to kick Mina out—and keep her out—of the group.¹⁰² In response to such readings, other critics have written counter arguments in which Marian, Rosanna, and Mina, to some extent, challenge such narrative belittlement.¹⁰³ And certainly, the male narrators’ strategies sometimes subtly mirror what the

¹⁰¹ Swartz offers an interesting rationale for why Rachel can’t narrate: when Blake walks into Rachel’s bedroom and steals the Moonstone (staining his nightgown in the process, only emphasizing the scene’s sexual overtones), Blake has effectively become Rachel’s husband and she has effectively become his wife. The Victorian wife was, legally, a silent and nonexistent entity. “Franklin creates a situation whereby Rachel essentially changes from a *feme sole* to a *feme covert*, and she must endure the silence of her chamber in order to fulfill the ‘wifely’ responsibility of not testifying against her ‘husband’” (Swartz 164–165).

¹⁰² Case makes a twin argument about Mina and Marian, the strong and masculine “M-women” whose initial narrative power is restricted by anxious males (149). In *Dracula*, the threat of vampirism, then, serves to displace Mina from her position of narrative mastery, converting her into (alternately) someone who can provide only the raw material of a plot, or someone whose potential plots are inherently dangerous. Mina, like Marian before her, is transformed by the novel’s end from a potential devil to a good angel, a transformation made possible by the refeminization of her narrative voice, and the renewed ‘resolution’ of the men enabled by it. (185)

¹⁰³ For example, Sternlieb argues that Marian carefully and consciously crafts a self-identity in her diary that challenges the identity Walter fashions for her in his own narrative. Pope presents Mina as resisting the males’ attempts to treat her as a text “to be marked and read” by other males (206). As part of such resistance, Mina compiles a manuscript that is “anti-
invading foreigners are doing more obviously to the British characters.\textsuperscript{104} And yet, it’s important to point out how those male narrators push against their own instincts and never directly profit from these techniques. The crew of light continually learns the lesson that excluding Mina from the group’s proceedings does no favors to anyone but Dracula; therefore, they eagerly reinstall her within the group and never cease to trust the vital information she provides. Even though Walter’s (yes, sexist) anger at Mrs. Catherick nearly causes him to rip her letter apart, he crucially restrains himself: “My first impulse, after reading Mrs. Catherick’s extraordinary narrative, was to destroy it. The hardened, shameless depravity of the whole composition, from beginning to end—the atrocious perversity of mind…so disgusted me, that I was on the point of tearing the letter, when a consideration suggested itself, which warned me to wait a little before I destroyed it” (\textit{Woman} 540). Rather than silencing her, it is Blake, who in Rachel’s own words “forced me to speak” (\textit{Moonstone} 393). Even though Rosanna’s letter—and her declaration of love—so (understandably) distresses Blake that he can’t finish reading it at the time, he takes Betteredge’s advice to “keep the letter in the cover till these present anxieties of yours have come patriarchal because it is not hierarchical. The structure does not privilege a single, unitary voice or one voice above a rank of others, but refuses to subordinate either discourses, or writers, one to another. Mina’s text has no master discourse” (Pope 213).

\textsuperscript{104} In \textit{The Moonstone}, The English characters resemble the Indian characters, Carens claims. “The irrational superstitions, idolatrous obsessions, and acquisitive desires that Victorians associated with the volatile colony come spilling back across the lines of demarcation arising within the ‘quiet English house’ itself” (258). This argument, however, defines the Indians as possessing nothing but horrible traits and positions them as being nothing more than a mirror for the seedy side of the English character.
to an end” (*Moonstone* 379). Blake also includes the entirety of Rosanna’s lengthy letter in the novel. These male narrators never destroy writing and generally learn that letting others, especially women, speak and write only helps their cause.

No wonder these novels’ characters sense and express that writing and narrating is a duty and a responsibility—collating perspectives and accruing evidence allows the English communities to defeat the villains or to solve the problems left in their wake. The sentiment of “I must write” flows throughout all these novels. As Geoffrey Wall writes of *Dracula*, “The writers recognise in their writing a compulsive, obsessional effort” (15). In *Dracula*, Lucy writes, “I must imitate Mina, and keep writing things down” (Stoker 119); after a particularly horrible evening she likewise writes, “this is an exact record of what took place tonight. I feel I am dying of weakness, and have barely strength to write, but it must be done if I die in the doing” (153). Seward complains, “To write diary with a pen is irksome to me; but Van Helsing says I must” (356), and Van Helsing similarly writes, “as Madam Mina write not in her stenography, I must, in my cumbrous old fashion, that so each day of us may not go unrecorded” (386). Jonathan reiterates, “I must keep writing at every chance… All, big and little, must go down” (308). And Mina, whose sense of writing as a duty drives herself and the other characters, writes in a diary entry dated 11 p.m., “Oh, but I am tired! If it were not that I have made my diary a duty I should not open it tonight” (99). Most of these characters convey the vexations and annoyances of this compulsion to write. Van Helsing and Seward complain about the physical annoyance whereas Lucy and Mina complain of exhaustion. Writing is hard work, and it is tiring. In *The Moonstone*, Blake tells Betteredge that he “must take the pen in hand, and start the story” (40), and Betteredge later tells the reader “things must be put down in their places, as things actually happened” (52). In *The Woman in White* Marian passionately writes, “This last day has been all
confusion and wretchedness. How can I write about it? – and yet, I must write” (192). Marian’s realization that “it is hard to say what future interests may not depend upon the regularity of the entries in my journal, and upon the reliability of my recollection at the time when I make them” (284) also relies upon the idea that her journaling is a duty, a must. And certainly this is why, despite fever and fatigue, she feels “the impulse that awakened in me to preserve those words in writing, exactly as they were spoken” (335) after she eavesdrops on Fosco and Percival.

Gilmore, too, invokes duty as the motivation for his narration: “It is my duty, therefore, to add these new links to the chain of events, and to take up the chain itself at the point where, for the present only, Mr. Hartright has dropped it” (127). Miss Clack, squirming against the limits imposed on her by Blake, writes, “I am not permitted to improve – I am condemned to narrate” (241). Miss Clack’s definition of “improve” would certainly be to instruct the audience on various moral themes; if she could, she would write us a religious tract. Critics so often assume that narrating is always an empowering privilege. The “must” language used throughout these novels, however, constructs writing as a painstaking obligation to self and family—as something they wouldn’t do unless they had to. Clack, after all, gets paid for her narrative labor.

3.4 PRIVATE WRITING

Because these invasions generate families and strengthen homes, the novels have publicized private stories and privileged private writing; however, because they are so dependent on private writing—often done by females or associated with female routines—these novels end by violently reaffirming the separation between the private and the public, particularly in regards to what qualifies as “proper” women’s work. Once the respectable family has been formed, strengthened, and made productive, it must be cordoned off and set apart from the “public”
world; after all, the family subsisted (in theory) on this division, on privacy, on the separation of the separate spheres. These novels depend on rupturing the division between private and public, between the family and the outside world, even while acknowledging the anxiety that such a rupture causes many characters. In *The Moonstone*, Franklin Blake tells Betteredge “that this strange family story of ours ought to be told” (39). In *The Woman in White*, Walter Hartright tells the reader that “the purpose of these pages” is “to unfold” this “strange family story” (11). *The Beetle* publicizes Paul’s private, youthful adventures, which, in discussion with Champnell, Paul argues should remain untouched: “I hold that the private life even of a public man should be held inviolate” (Marsh 192). As if to justify making such a “private life” public, Champnell rationalizes that he has waited an indeterminate amount of years since the events happened “or I should not have felt justified in giving them publicity” (273). To keep a shade of privacy over this now public story, Champnell declines to specify “Exactly how many years” have passed since the event occurred (273). Champnell also changes some, if not all, of the names of the persons concerned; Marjorie “is married to the individual who, in these pages, has been known as Paul Lessingham. Were his real name divulged…” (273). Similarly, Walter Hartright admits to “tell[ing] this story under feigned names” to protect Laura’s privacy (*Woman* 543). Lady Verinder worries about the public scandal surrounding her daughter and the theft of the Moonstone; in response, detective Cuff promises her, “I have kept the family secret within the family circle. I am the only outsider who knows it” (*Moonstone* 209). Fosco plays on common worries about public scandal to encourage Frederick Fairlie to allow Laura (unhappy in her marriage) to stay at Limmeridge House: “you risk the public scandal, which you, and I, and all of us, are bound, in the sacred interests of the Family, to avoid” (*Woman* 353). Of course, privacy must be betrayed for these stories to be told and for us to read them; furthermore, sensation
fiction, in particular, was known for exposing and dramatizing familial crime such as bigamy and adultery.\(^{105}\) Henry James famously wrote, “To Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors” (“Mary” 742). Even though the private nature of these stories must be publicized, however, the novels and the characters remain uneasy about what energies they may have unleashed by doing so and also face the problem of how to reassert the private/public divide at the close of each story.

*The Moonstone* begins by consciously rupturing the separation between private and public, family and wider world. The anonymous writer of the “family paper” that opens the novel specifically requests that the letter remain a family affair: “I beg it to be understood that what I write here about my cousin (unless some necessity should arise for making it public) is for the information for the family only” (*Moonstone* 37). The parenthetical comment, though giving Blake (and Collins) an easy and guilt-free “way out,” also emphasizes how the novel, in order to begin, must break faith with its own writers. Other characters in *The Moonstone* want their writing to remain private. For example, Penelope (Betteredge’s daughter and Rachel’s maid) refuses to narrate even though her meticulously kept and carefully dated diary would make her a reliable and helpful narrator. When Betteredge, unsure of how to organize and date the narrative, falters in beginning the story, Penelope assists him by referencing her own diary. Realizing his daughter’s potential as a narrator, Betteredge asks her to write the narrative instead of him, and,

\(^{105}\) Brantlinger’s article sets out to define the sensation novel; one crucial ingredient is subject matter: “The sensation novel was and is sensational partly because of content: it deals with crime, often murder as an outcome of adultery and sometimes of bigamy, in apparently proper, bourgeois, domestic settings” (1).
nettled, she declines: “In answer to an improvement on this notion, devised by myself, namely, that she should tell the story instead of me, out of her own diary, Penelope observes, with a fierce look and a red face, that her journal is for her own private eye, and that no living creature shall ever know what is in it but herself” (46). In a similar rejection of public narrative, Ezra asks Mr. Candy (his employer) to have all of his writings—a “bundle of old letters…his unfinished book…his Diary – in many locked volumes” (515)—buried in his coffin with him. The only exception to this mass textual burial is the pages of Ezra’s journal that are directly about the opium experiment tried on Blake—Ezra tears those pages out and asks that they be sent to Blake. Ezra remains a tragic, eccentric, and mysterious character with a tantalizingly vague back story (he has a mixed racial heritage; he suffered some sort of scandal; he was unjustly accused; he was separated from his family); however, instead of indulging the reader’s piqued interest, Ezra and Collins leave Ezra’s “story…a blank” (515). Such an ending follows through on Ezra’s earlier-stated commitment to silence: “I don’t profess, sir, to tell my story (as the phrase is) to any man. My story will die with me” (427). Ezra’s silence can (and has been) read as a powerful move, and indeed, I do not want to unqualifiedly render all silence as weakness and all speaking, conversely, as powerful expression; however, Ezra’s decision to bury his story seems, to me, to be profoundly connected to the private/public anxiety. Since the unexplained calamity occurred, Ezra’s past follows him wherever he goes; his life is a series of escapes from the persistent gossip. The “[e]vil report…travels patiently, and travels far” (429); the “slander…found me out” (429); and, even now, the “slander is as active as ever” (429). In this light, Ezra’s decision to bury his writing redefines the separation between public and private by resealing the private text—keeping it eternally buried, unused, and defiantly not public. Furthermore, Ezra associates himself with femininity; he admits to possessing a “female constitution” (442). By virtue of his
femininity and of the buried nature of his texts, Ezra’s choice echoes the choice of Rosanna, who buries her letter to Blake deep within the Shivering Sands.106

In addition to the internment of Ezra’s writings, the end of The Moonstone is concerned with the “closing up” of the private and with the separation of the private from the public. Directly after Candy’s narrative (which explains the fate of Ezra and his writings), Betteredge takes up the narrative for a few short pages (the last pages before the novel’s “epilogue”). Betteredge considers it his duty to both update the readers on “the history of the family” (which includes marriage and pregnancy) and to “shut up the story” for them (250). It becomes clear that to announce Rachel’s marriage and pregnancy is equivalent to “clos[ing] the story up” (518). Although Betteredge claims that with these announcements, “all is said” (520), several narratives (in the epilogue) follow Betteredge’s narrative. The existence of such narratives challenges the notion that “all is said” and that the story has been effectively sealed shut. The epilogue focuses

106 Heller observes that The Moonstone is

obsess[ed] with images of buried writing. Rosanna Spearman, the servant who sinks her love letter to Franklin Blake in the quicksand that is the site of her suicide, spectacularly introduces this theme, which culminates when Ezra Jennings requests that his writing…be buried with him. The buried writing of these outcasts…is a synecdoche for the novel’s tendency at once to diffuse its social criticism and to draw attention to its own self-censorship. (144)

Heller claims that in Collins’s novels, and in The Moonstone in particular, the female Gothic is present but repressed; Rosanna and Ezra’s buried writing are prime examples of the buried female Gothic text.
on the Indians’ and the Moonstone’s triumphant return to India. The organization of the narrative consciously attempts to separate the private family story from the larger public history—public history is relegated to the prologue and the epilogue, where it (presumably) cannot contaminate the happy little household in the English countryside. The household can be happy precisely because it’s free from the Moonstone and all its imperial baggage. Of course, it is impossible to truly separate the romance of Blake and Rachel from the romance of the diamond (the novel is subtitled “A Romance”). When, in the final paragraph of the final narrative of the book, Murthwaite records seeing the Moonstone in India, he recalls that he had previously seen the stone in the bosom of “a woman’s dress” in England (526). That woman, as he knows very well, is Rachel Verinder. But Rachel Verinder has no business showing up—by name—in the epilogue of this novel. The private country house and its mistress must be protected from the public display of the final pages.

That much of these novels’ private writing is accomplished by women (and if not, then is coded as female) only intensifies the problems inherent to publicizing private writing. These novels show that women write—more specifically, they write journals, the type of “simultaneous writing” known for being truer to reality since it doesn’t rely on easily-distorted memory. As the opening note to Dracula says, “There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary” (Stoker 6). In The Moonstone, Penelope keeps a diary, as does Miss Clack. Penelope’s careful writing helps her father organize and (more importantly) date his own retrospective narrative, while Clack specifically uses her diary, in which “Everything was entered (thanks to my early training) day by day as it happened,” to write the narrative that Blake requests of her (Moonstone 235). Actually, Blake asks her to write the narrative specifically because she has a journal to work from; he tells Clack
that she “is requested to limit herself to her own individual experience of persons and events, as recorded in her diary” (285). Marian’s diary—which forms nearly a third of The Woman in White—is the longest uninterrupted narrative in the novel, as well as the most “simultaneously” written. She prides herself on the “regularity” and the “reliability” of her entries (Woman 284). Mina’s journaling instincts form the backbone of Dracula; she inspires a sort of writing hyper-awareness among her compatriots. When Mina leaves Whitby, Lucy takes up journaling: “I must imitate Mina, and keep writing things down” (Stoker 119), and Jonathan rhetorically addresses his journal to her, “I shall enter here some of my notes, as they may refresh my memory when I talk over my travels with Mina” (8). Of course, men do write journals: Ezra does in The Moonstone, as do Jonathan and Dr. Seward in Dracula. However, as discussed, Ezra situates himself as feminine and his writing as feminine (by virtue of burying it). Jonathan links his own early journal (written in Castle Dracula) with female writing practices: “Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all that has happened since I closed it last” (43). On the next page he decides to sleep in the room because of its comforting feminine associations: “old ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives whilst their gentle breasts were sad for their menfolk away in the midst of remorseless wars” (44). Just as Ezra desires his “feminine” journal to be buried and unknown, Jonathan hands over his castle journal to Mina before they marry. Mina takes the journal, dresses it up in “white paper,” and ties it with “a little bit of pale blue ribbon which was round my neck, and sealed it over the knot with sealing-wax” (116). Mina feminizes the journal, making it into a chaste virgin: she dresses it in white, uses her own ribbon to decorate it, and forcefully seals it shut. Dr. Candy similarly visually codes Ezra’s written work as a chaste body of texts (including the “locked volumes” of
his diary [Moonstone 515]): Candy “enclosed them all in one wrapper, sealed with my own seal” (516–517). Ezra makes Dr. Candy promise that “no other hand touches it” (516).

Feminine private writing (or at least feminine writing practices), then, turns out to be very important to these novels and to Britain’s defense and identity. Having opened up the public possibilities for and importance of such writings (and the public possibilities for the writers), the ends of these novels shut down those very possibilities, re-inscribing the traditional notion of separate spheres, and concluding in unexpectedly conventional ways. For example, female narrators never close these novels.107 Mina narrates the final thrilling passage of Dracula—the sunset race to the staking of the Count—but Jonathan Harker steals her thunder by tagging on a brief “note” following her entry and officially closing out the novel. Professionally ambitious from the beginning of the novel, Mina was the driving force behind the collation and organization of the master narrative. Also, by undergoing hypnosis and applying her reading in criminality, Mina is able to know and anticipate Dracula’s movements. In several key ways, Mina makes Dracula easier to track and catch; however, despite her usefulness, in his final note, Jonathan takes a jab at the “authenticity” of the master narrative she created:

We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of typewriting, except the later notebooks of Mina and Seward and myself, and Van Helsing’s memorandum. We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. (402)

107 Bleak House is the only multiple-narrator novel covered in this dissertation that ends with a female narrator.
Since it was Mina who typed up all the diaries (and made copies), Jonathan here blames her for making the documents unreliable. Jonathan’s phrasing—that the manuscript is “nothing but a mass of typewriting”—belittles his wife’s accomplishment and tries to undercut its usefulness (after its usefulness has passed, of course). Jonathan, on the other hand, couldn’t be happier with Mina’s baby, since a child is the proper, domestic production for a female and a wife. The Beetle’s Marjorie, an outspoken New Woman character, shows little concern for upsetting or speaking back to her father or Atherton. She shows no fear in contradicting her father’s politics or in getting engaged to her father’s political rival. She also prides herself on speaking up at working class assemblies. Although the reader imagines she may continue to have a political career of her own, in the final pages of the novel she is only spoken of as the “popular and universally reverenced wife of one the greatest statesmen the age has seen” (Marsh 273). Now her only identity is as the “wife” of a public politician. All four of these novels end by sealing off

108 There was a very faint and short-lived hesitancy to accept a writing machine; there existed early varied reports of how “it was rude or disrespectful for a firm to type its correspondence” (M. Davies 30) and predictions that using the typewriter “would mean the end of man’s ability to write in his own hand” (Bliven 138); however, by the end of the century, when Dracula was written, the business world had overcome any rumored and negligible resistance to using typewritten documents with clients. There is no reason, therefore, for Jonathan to bring up such antiquated, non-existent worries now besides trying to belittle Mina’s accomplishments. As Seed acknowledges, however, this final challenge to the novel’s authenticity does little to alter the reader’s experience of the text: “Dracula demands no such leap [of faith] and demonstrates a considerable agility in manipulating the reader’s imagination” (205).
the public and professional opportunities for women and by saddling them with marriage and babies (the proper and private job for women). Goodbye to Mina’s teaching career and her desire to join the ranks of the “lady journalists” (Stoker 62); Marian’s intellectual capabilities (which, as Fosco notes, would make her an excellent spy and partner)\textsuperscript{109} are used in becoming the “good angel” of Limmeridge (\textit{Woman} 627); Marjorie’s political aspirations are unceremoniously dropped; and Clack, with the potential to be a lawyer, ends up in quiet, lonely, poor retirement.\textsuperscript{110} Interestingly, three of these novels end with \textit{procreation} rather than with marriage. Laura and Mina marry their husbands far before the novels’ conclusions. The final paragraphs of \textit{The Woman in White} relay that Laura and Walter’s baby is now the heir to the estate; the final paragraphs of \textit{Dracula} introduce Mina’s baby; the final narrative of \textit{The Moonstone} (before the epilogue) finds Betteredge correctly guessing that Rachel is pregnant.\textsuperscript{111} Now that the

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\textsuperscript{109} Fosco counsels Percival to watch out for Marian: “Can you look at Miss Halcombe, and not see that she has the foresight and the resolution of a man? With that woman for my friend, I would snap these fingers of mine at the world” (\textit{Woman} 324).
\textsuperscript{110} After out-maneuvering solicitor Bruff in a game of legal logic, Bruff tells her (and I think with sincerity), “allow me to congratulate you on the masterly manner in which you have opened the full fire of your batteries on me at the moment when I least expected it. You would have done great things in my profession, ma’am, if you had happened to be a man” (\textit{Moonstone} 263).
\textsuperscript{111} Garnett notes that Mina and Jonathan can only have a child once Dracula is destroyed because Dracula is represented as a “sexual superior” (45). Garnett also notices that both \textit{Dracula} and \textit{The Beetle} “make use of a mechanism of closure indispensable to the restabilisation
stimulating crisis is over, these female characters are expected to drop their public ambitions and return to the home.\footnote{112} Women’s private writings, made public, are never used to open or close any of these novels—their private writings are buffered by male narrations, as if to separate them from the “real world” that novels approach at their beginnings and endings. Furthermore, not only do these novels not end with female narrators, but they also don’t end with female words (in dialogue, for example). As discussed, 	extit{Dracula} almost ends with Mina’s narration, but Jonathan jumps in at the last minute. Van Helsing gets the last word within Jonathan’s final narrative. 	extit{The Moonstone} concludes with Murthwaite’s narrative. 	extit{The Beetle} finishes with Champnell’s narrative. The 	extit{Woman in White} almost ends with Marian, but again, doesn’t. The final, perplexing lines of 	extit{The Woman in White} dangle the possibility of ending with Marian; Walter writes, “In writing those last words, I have written all…Marian was the good angel of our lives—let Marian end our Story” (\textit{Woman} 627).\footnote{113} Walter’s words excite an expectation—that Marian of destabilised social groups in Victorian fiction: their multiple reintegration through marriages and the formation of totally harmonious micro-societies” (46).

\footnote{112} DuPlessis’s conception of endings of nineteenth-century fiction seems particularly applicable to the ends of these novels: “The contradiction between love and quest in plots dealing with women as a narrated group, acutely visible in nineteenth-century fiction, has, in my view, one main mode of resolution: an ending in which one part of that contradiction, usually quest or \textit{Bildung}, is set aside or repressed, whether by marriage or by death” (3–4). “Quest for women was thus finite; we learn that any plot of self-realization was at the service of the marriage plot and was subordinate to, or covered within, the magnetic power of that ending” (6).

\footnote{113} Other critics have commented on the oddness of these final sentences. The “narrator-scribe writes down for us Marian’s last words” Gaylin observes, but then he “encloses them in
will take over the narration or at least speak again—that is specifically not met. Walter’s promise to “let Marian end our Story” ends, tellingly, with silence.\textsuperscript{114}

3.5 HOME AND EMPIRE

Ultimately, these foreign invasions help create stronger, more productive, and more honorable families—the invasions invigorate Victorian domesticity. As just discussed, three of these novels end with births or pregnancies, events that solidify the marriages enacted in the novels. Certainly, the invasions disrupt households, divide families, and hinder relationships—at least initially; however, overcoming or ousting the invasions leads to complete households, united families, and committed relationships. For example, in \textit{The Moonstone}, the arrival of the cursed

his own conclusion, a narrative gesture which repeats earlier incarcerations” (321). Heller writes, “If…[Walter] expects Marian to speak further, the silence after this line emphasizes the irony of his expecting to speak through a woman who has been silenced” (141). Case reasonably asserts that “we might expect the expression ‘let Marian end our Story’ to mean that Marian was to conclude the narrative herself. Of course, it means nothing of the sort; it means that Hartright’s narrative, and with it the novel, is to end by placing the image of Marian before us” (161).

\textsuperscript{114} The four main novels I consider in this chapter are all by male authors. Margaret Oliphant’s \textit{A Beleaguered City} (1880), a multiple-narrator novel structured much like the four I am discussing in this chapter, ends with female dialogue, though not with a female narrator. The novel concludes with Dupin’s narrative, but his narrative ends with his wife Agnes’s words: “‘This was our brother,’ she said; ‘he will tell my Marie what use I made of her olive leaves’” (114).
gem temporarily throws the household into disarray, taints the Verinder’s Yorkshire home with scandal, and consigns the family to newspaper columns and gossip circles. The Moonstone messenger, Franklin Blake, also functions as a foreign invasion (he is the “English gentleman from foreign parts” [Moonstone 50] with years of “foreign training” [76]) and thereby interrupts the supposed courtship between Godfrey Ablewhite and Rachel Verinder. Betteredge initially portrays Blake as a stereotypical young aristocrat: a cosmopolitan, lazy, big-spending womanizer (his debts and continental sweethearts are frequently mentioned). Blake apparently contrasts with the honorable and hardworking Ablewhite—a lawyer, noted philanthropist, and famed speaker. But ultimately, the Moonstone’s (and Blake’s) invasion prevents Rachel from marrying the hypocritical Ablewhite, bonds Rachel and Blake, and even improves Blake; Blake’s initial dilettantish nature is replaced by a single-minded determination to resolve the Moonstone mystery, establish his innocence, and secure Rachel’s affections. The invasion of the Moonstone, then, reverses the positions held by Blake and Godfrey, exonerating the former (who turns out to be the hero) and punishing the later (who turns out to be a villain). Blake’s minor debts are explained, his youthful flings are minimized by his enduring love for Rachel, and the “many different sides” to his foreign-educated self are effectively erased (76). Godfrey, on the other hand, is revealed to be the actual free-spending womanizer with a life that has “two sides to it” (506). Blake’s original patina of foreignness is transferred to Godfrey as well; Godfrey is found dead with a painted “swarthy face” and “dark complexion” (500, 487). The household may have permanently lost a costly heirloom, but it was a cursed jewel haunted by the greed and brutality of the “wicked” John Herncastle (62); no one particularly mourns the absence of the man or of his misbegotten plunder. A happy, innocent, and private family rises once the Herncastle clan is cleansed of the aristocratic excesses of “one of the greatest blackguards that ever lived” (63).
The Beetle, The Woman in White, and The Moonstone follow a similar pattern. When the Beetle invades England (and various English homes), she’s poised to ruin Paul Lessingham’s promising political career and dash his marital chances with Marjorie Lindon; however, ultimately, the invasion frees Paul from his past and allows him to better move forward in both his public and private lives. Once the Beetle is destroyed, Paul marries Marjorie and becomes “one of the greatest statesmen the age has seen” (Marsh 273). Paul’s youthful (and rather unwise) escapades in Egypt make him a “haunted man” as an adult (274), but by the end of the novel, he “has ceased to be a haunted man” (274). The invasion, ultimately, has cleansed him of his past indiscretions. The path is now open for him to “carry through the great work of constitutional and social reform which he has set himself to do” (26). The advent of Fosco at Blackwater Park certainly breaks up Laura and Percival’s marriage, but, in effect, Fosco does Laura a huge favor by freeing her from a loveless marriage with a cruel fraud, a marriage she felt obligated to pursue in deference to her father’s wishes. By “killing” her (actually institutionalizing her under Anne’s name), Fosco actually allows Laura to marry the man she loves—Walter. The corrupt (and infertile) aristocracy passes away with Sir Percival’s and Count Fosco’s deaths, while Walter and Laura have a child, inherit an estate, and establish a respectable (and thoroughly middle class in tone) domesticity. A hanger on in the Percival-Laura household, Marian willingly becomes an integral and desired member of the Walter-Laura household. Dracula’s appearance in England does end the engagement between Lucy and Arthur Holmwood; yet, Dracula’s presence binds Mina, Jonathan, and Lucy’s three suitors together in a super professional family (their intimacy continues years after the vampire crisis). All the men, in name, become fathers to Mina’s son, and Arthur and Seward, rather than continuing to mourn Lucy’s death, are “both happily married” by the end of the novel (Stoker 402). Just as Lucy’s
remaining suitors are paired off, Marjorie’s two remaining suitors in The Beetle (Sydney Atherton and Percy Woodville) are also married off in the final pages of the novel. Jonathan Harker, in fact, constructs the group’s current domestic happiness as born of the pain of Dracula’s attack: “the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured” (Stoker 402). The “pain” of the invasion, then, was a necessary payment to attain the happy domestic situations they now possess.

When British men go abroad (particularly to colonial spaces) in the first half of these four novels, the voyages are characterized as dangerously feminizing or pointless; the domestic circle remains the proper path to attain manhood. John Tosh argues that domesticity played a crucial role in the construction of middle-class masculinity for much of the Victorian period (Man’s 4); however, Tosh also claims that, starting in the 1860s, “a much keener sense of the drawbacks of domestic life for men was articulated, and this coincided with a growing reluctance to marry” (172). Correspondingly, Tosh continues, empire became the non-domestic and manly alternative to an earlier home-focused masculinity: “Men set off into the unknown, to fulfill their destiny unencumbered by feminine constraint or by emotional ties with home” (174). Empire post-1860s, Tosh declares, “was actively embraced by young men as a means of evading or postponing the claims of domesticity” (177). Nonetheless, the four books discussed in this chapter—two written in the 1860s and two written in the 1890s—suggest that staying home and founding a family makes you a man. Once the happy households have been established at the end of these novels, the British Empire can successfully reassert its power abroad. In short, strong homes make the homeland strong.

In both The Beetle and Dracula, the male protagonists take solitary trips abroad with disastrous consequences—they become passive and are captured, controlled, and mentally
crushed. As a young man, Paul Lessingham gallivants about the world, ending up in an empty café on a dark Cairo street. Almost immediately, he finds himself in the powerful grip of a beautiful woman (the Beetle) who mesmerizes him, captures him, disrobes him, and “imprison[s]” him as her sex slave for several months (Marsh 199). His will and strength evaporate—he is made “powerless” (196). Although repulsed by his captor, he is “wholly incapable of offering even the faintest resistance to her caresses. I lay there like a log. She did with me as she would” (198). Tosh mentions that while men were on colonial land, “[s]exual relations with women of other races were of course comparatively commonplace” (Man’s 177); however, Tosh states that such incidents were viewed “as a personal gratification and a means of acquiring masculine kudos” (177). But Paul doesn’t register his interaction with the Beetle as personally gratifying or as an achievement of masculinity; she transforms him into the stereotypical female—mute, dominated, and “helpless” (Marsh 201). Similarly, Dracula imprisons Jonathan Harker in his castle. When Jonathan encounters the three female vampires, he cannot speak or move—he just “wait[s]” for their advance (Stoker 46). He becomes a female object to be penetrated by their “sharp teeth” (46). The females almost succeed in “hypnotiz[ing]” him (53), and a sleeping Dracula’s eyes are still powerful enough to “paralyse” Harker and prevent his attempted destruction of Dracula’s immobile body (60). When Mina convenes with a traumatized and convalescing Jonathan at a hospital in Budapest, he is “so thin and pale and weak-looking” (114). His “resolution” and “dignity” have “vanished”—he is, in short, a “wreck of himself” (114). Trips abroad and interactions with native women have incapacitated these men; they must be slowly nursed back to health and sanity.

In The Woman in White and The Moonstone, the male protagonists take trips to colonial locales to soothe their wounded hearts, but the voyages do little to assuage their heartbreak; they
must “fulfill their destiny” at home rather than abroad where they are “unencumbered by feminine constraint or by emotional ties with home” (Tosh, Man’s 174). Walter Hartright joins a “private expedition,” which starts in Honduras, to the “ruined cities of Central America” (Woman 178). As Sweet explains, “[f]or the Victorians, Central America was a proverbial place of political strife” (661). Additionally, the British founded British Honduras as a colony in 1862. Walter accepts the employment not to escape domestic ties and marriage but because the woman he loves is betrothed to someone else. Marian considers his departure a sad loss rather than the start to a triumphant adventure. While in Central America, Walter is constantly in danger—from illness, from native people, from shipwreck—and it’s not his own ability, strength, or intelligence that saves him. Rather, the cosmos intervenes again and again to save him for some future “Design that is yet unseen” (Woman 273). Instead of having a constitution that braves the pestilence, the disease will simply “pass” him; instead of using superior fighting skills to dodge the flying arrows, the projectiles will simply “spare” him; instead of swimming to shore, the sea will benevolently “spare” him (274). In fact, Walter later mentions that he “was among the few saved from the sea” (406, emphasis added). Like Walter, Blake goes abroad—“wandering in the East”—to numb his romantic anguish over Rachel’s sudden coldness (Moonstone 339). While Walter goes abroad for a much-needed job, Blake goes abroad for no reason but to “forget her,” which he fails to do (340). Aimless and purposeless, Blake only returns to England when his father’s death and the “responsibilities” (339) that accompany it force him to return to England. Though Walter and Blake claim that their travels have toughened them, these claims are quickly undermined. Walter seems no tougher when, once he returns, he must deal with the news of Laura’s (faked) death. When he approaches her tombstone, he explicitly downplays the expedition’s toughening influence on him: “The chances and changes, the wanderings and

217
dangers of months and months past, all shrank and shriveled to nothing in my mind” (*Woman* 408). He is so overwhelmed to learn that Laura is still alive that he confesses himself unable to narrate the events of the week following the shock; his explanation suggests that he is not strong and controlled enough to handle the narration: “My heart turns faint, my mind sinks in darkness and confusion when I think of it” (412). Blake admits that as soon as he turns “homeward,” Rachel’s “influence began to recover its hold on me” (*Moonstone* 340). Going abroad, then, either threatens your manhood or does nothing much to enhance it permanently. Going abroad is a temporary and ineffectual escape from spurned love. Home, in comparison to these experiences of foreign lands, becomes safe, comfortable, and desirable—it’s the proper place to become a man.

British forces or citizens can safely and confidently cover foreign ground *once* British homes and families have been firmly established. *The Moonstone* ends when the British Murthwaite successfully invades India. Critics generally interpret Murthwaite’s knowledge-gaining expedition as a positive contrast to John Herncastle’s brutal and avaricious presence in India (explained in the novel’s opening narrative). Murthwaite calls the Indians “a wonderful people” (109), enjoys the pilgrimage to the restored Moonstone in India, and oftentimes shows respect for and curiosity about India’s culture.115 It is seductive to think that Murthwaite’s goals in India are counter to the imperial force rather than part of it. Melissa Free admits that Murthwaite is “situated as privileged observer” in India (362); nonetheless, she claims that

115 Murthwaite, however, often seems to possess stereotypical or condescending ideas about Indian people: “no Indian...ever runs an unnecessary risk,” he asserts (*Moonstone* 333). He opines, “In the country those men came from, they care just as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe” (109).
Murthwaite is present in India “not to conquer, combat, or consume, but to learn. He partakes rather than takes, integrates rather than usurps” (362). Such a reading, however, assumes that Murthwaite’s research is neutral, altruistic, and altogether opposed to the actions of the British Empire in India (“to conquer, combat, or consume,” as Free writes). In fact, as Thomas Richards argues, the British Empire increasingly utilized knowledge about the colonies as a way to control its increasingly large and unwieldy empire. Victorian fiction “equates knowledge with national security. Each sees a British mastery of the means of knowledge as overpowering threats to empire” (T. Richards 5); therefore, “recording the Empire, making a vast record of it using the new knowledges, becomes tantamount to controlling it” (6). Murthwaite is repeatedly described as a “penetrator” of India, a word that associates him with the very foreign invasions that so trouble these books. Betteredge reports that Murthwaite, “at the risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before” (Moonstone 101). Later, Bruff states, Murthwaite “had now announced his intention of returning to the scene of his exploits, and of penetrating into regions left still unexplored” (328). Murthwaite travels “where no European had ever set foot before” (101), and he considers those parts of India to be “regions left still unexplored” (328), revealing a traditional colonial mindset in which foreign land is “unexplored” unless touched by European “f[ee]t.” Everyone knows that Murthwaite puts his life on the line in his dangerous travels. Bruff muses, “the news of [Murthwaite’s] murder [will be] the news that we hear of him next” (328), and Murthwaite admits that he has experienced many “narrow escapes” (108). Since the Indians have only threatened or taken the lives of Englishmen who possessed the Moonstone, Murthwaite’s expeditions must have something in common with John Herncatle’s and Godfrey Ablewhite’s more blatantly selfish ends. Murthwaite himself knows that the Indian people would not welcome him if they knew he was an Englishman, and he
therefore disguises himself as a native “Hindoo-Boodhist” (524) during his travels. Perhaps the Indian people sense that Murthwaite’s missions are not innocuous but will rather assist the British Empire in better understanding (and better ruling) India (necessary after the disaster of the Indian Mutiny). After all, Murthwaite shares his “superior knowledge of the Indian character” at every turn with his countrymen (334). At the request of the “governor of the prison,” he happily translates an intercepted letter that had been addressed to the briefly imprisoned Indians (334); later, he happily hands over the translation to Mr. Bruff; he advances the opposition to the Indian “conspiracy” (his term) on multiple occasions by imparting his wisdom to Bruff, Franklin, and Betteredge (330); he even twice advises that the Verinders “follow[] the Colonel’s plan” and “destroy[] the identity of the gem by having it cut into separate stones” (334). Furthermore, Murthwaite confesses that he “thought it a pity” that the three Indians’ “proceedings were not privately watched” (335) after they were released from prison (335). When Murthwaite, then, writes a letter to Bruff from an Indian district “little known to Europeans” (523), he effectively “privately watche[s]” (335) the Indians and makes these “little known” regions more known to England. Murthwaite isn’t just a traveler, he’s a traveler “who escape[s] to tell the tale” (328, emphasis added). The British people consider Murthwaite a “hero” and an “eminent public character” for a reason (328, 101)—his “celebrated” traveling serves the vital imperial purposes of entering and surveying India in order to better understand and counter their so-called “conspirac[ies]” (101, 330). Knowledge, not the Moonstone, is Murthwaite’s (and the book’s and the empire’s) ultimate goal. Murthwaite’s mission may separate itself from the base avarice and repulsive violence of Herncastle’s imperial plunders, but that doesn’t disqualify Murthwaite’s travels from serving an imperial purpose.
At the end of *The Beetle*, Champnell references current events in Egypt to validate the unbelievable story of the Beetle: “During the recent expeditionary advance towards Dongola, a body of native troops was encamped at a remote spot in the desert” (Marsh 274), and they find what appear to be the exploded remnants of the Isis den that Paul was held in. Marsh must have known that Sir Herbert Kitchener (a famous British army leader) was ordered to take his Egyptian army forces south to Dongola in 1896. Since *The Beetle* was published in 1897, Marsh could not yet have known that when Kitchener was subsequently ordered to go farther south to Khartoum in 1898, the Egyptian forces slaughtered thousands of Dervishes: “The ill-armed but heroic dervishes, in wave after wave, threw themselves at the British rifles and machine guns until some 11,000 of them lay dead on the battlefield. The carnage was terrible” (Eldridge 200). Champnell’s brief allusion to the successful British occupation of Egypt implies a power reversal between the countries; previously, Paul had been controlled in Egypt, and now, Egypt is controlled by British men (and the native forces willingly follow the British’s lead).

Jonathan Harker’s final note in *Dracula* mentions that he and Mina recently took a vacation to Transylvania:

> In the summer of this year we made a journey to Transylvania, and went over the old ground which was, and is, to us so full of vivid and terrible memories. It was almost impossible to believe that the things which we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears were living truths. Every trace of all that had been was blotted out. The castle stood as before, reared high above a waste of desolation. (Stoker 402)

Why would Jonathan purposefully travel to a place “so full of vivid and terrible memories”? Since Jonathan had initially visited Castle Dracula in the summer, this trip helpfully comes full
circle and seemingly cancels out the “vivid and terrible memories” associated with the previous visits. Evidence of the prior horror is “blotted out” and the landscape is a “waste of desolation.” Nothing remains and nothing is growing (as the redundant phrase “waste of desolation” implies).

Jonathan and Mina travel safely and unmolested; the journey does not ruin them; they can easily return “home” precisely when they want to (402). Although it does not follow this pattern as strongly as the other novels do, the conclusion to *The Woman in White* also presents the safety of the British tourist abroad. At the end of the novel, Walter makes a business trip to Paris to investigate French improvements in wood engraving. Pesca accompanies Walter. Once Walter’s work is concluded, he has time “to devote to sight-seeing and amusements” (*Woman* 621). On his way “to ascend the Cathedral of Notre Dame” because “[t]here was nothing in the French capital that I was more anxious to see,” he discovers Fosco’s body lying in the Paris morgue (622). Walter—as artist and as tourist—travels to Paris safely and successfully. The man who was a possible danger to him—Fosco—is conveniently disposed of with Pesca’s assistance.

Fosco, technically a tourist in Paris though dressed as a “French artisan” (624), doesn’t find safety in either role. Fosco dies as a tourist and artist; Walter lives as both.

Furthermore, the ends of these novels dispose of the British’s foreign friends. Just as needing, privileging, and publicizing private writing leads to a violent reestablishment of the demarcation between private and public, female and male, these novels’ conclusions strongly establish the demarcation between the British and non-British friends of the British. In *Dracula* and *The Moonstone*, the final deaths in the novels are not the villains, but those of the kind, sweet foreign men who sacrifice their lives for British characters, particularly to bestow innocence on the once-tainted English characters. In *Dracula*, as many critics have noted,
Quincey’s is the final death of the novel—he dies after Dracula has turned into dust. No critics have noted, to my knowledge, the fact that Ezra’s is the final death in *The Moonstone* (Godfrey, one of the villains, dies earlier than Ezra). Morris and Ezra both narrate (Morris in a few brief letters and Ezra in a short diary section) and are both foreign: Morris is an American and Ezra’s much-discussed lineage is ambiguous but certainly mixed. Ezra mentions that “My father was an Englishman; but my mother – We are straying away from our subject” (*Moonstone* 420). More to the point, both of these foreign men come from former or current British colonies. Ezra tells Blake that he “was born, and partly brought up, in one of our colonies” (420), and Quincey’s home country, America, also used to be a British colony. Both men die to bring innocence and purity back to a tainted English character. Morris fights to save Mina from her descent into vampirism, and as he dies, the imprint of the host on Mina’s forehead (which proved she was “unclean”) disappears, and Morris exclaims, “It was worth this to die! Look! look!” (Stoker 401). Ezra, through his knowledge, experimental acumen, and generosity, re-stages Blake’s theft of the Moonstone from Rachel’s room. He thereby proves Blake’s good intent in stealing the stone (for Rachel’s protection) and Blake’s unconsciousness in actually stealing it. As Betteredge admits, “You have done Franklin Blake an inestimable service” (*Moonstone* 481). Both men die, strikingly, in a similar manner. Both men are leaning upon the shoulder of another

116 Arata notes that Morris, like Dracula, represents a threat to Britain’s imperial prowess; hence, “we can say that Stoker’s attention to Dracula screens his anxiety at the threat represented by Morris and America…It is appropriate, then, that Morris’s death, not Dracula’s, closes the story proper” (129). Moretti agrees that Morris, and America by extension, is the real threat; he argues that Morris has “this mysterious connivance with the world of the vampires” (95). Moretti also mentions that “the killing of the American financier” is the “true ending” of the novel (96).
man (Jonathan, Dr. Candy), smiling and sighing, lifting themselves up despite their weakness in order to get a glance of the light of the rising or setting sun. Morris “struggl[es]” to sit up to catch sight of the sunset’s “red gleams” upon Mina’s face (Stoker 401), and Candy “lift[s]” Ezra so he can “see the sun rise through the window” (Moonstone 516). Ezra dies moments after the “sunlight touched his face” (516). Both men die with a complacent, silent end—Morris “with a smile and in silence” and Ezra with “an angelic expression” (Stoker 516; Moonstone 516). Both men are repeatedly described as “sweet” and “brave.” This is not to say that the men are perfect doubles; Morris is rich, has friends, and is strong and robust in body, while Ezra is poor, friendless, and weak and sickly in body. But they both fulfill a similar role—saving the day, recuperating the central young couple, restoring innocence and purity—and both are, ultimately, disposable. Just as Ezra’s story isn’t told, Morris is, as Moretti points out, a very shadowy figure without much of a past or a backstory. Just as Ezra reunited Blake and Rachel, Morris becomes a symbol of Mina and Jonathan’s union (their child is named after him). In a similar way, The Woman in White uses Pesca. The Italian expatriate’s sunny disposition is permanently clouded by the way Walter re-implicates him into the Brotherhood. The last time we see Pesca, having been “used” much by Walter, he is “crouched” in the “corner of a sofa” and “shrink[s]” from Walter (Woman 622). Pesca bemoans what has happened to him, and he “[turns] his face to the wall”—a common euphemism for a person giving up and accepting death (622). This kind, foreign man who has been sacrificed and used for the book’s common cause is never seen again in the novel after this moment; it is as if he has died. As Hutter discusses, Walter “has a trump card in Pesca and he means to use his friend in every sense of the word” (209). Foreigners (especially colonial figures) are accepted into these texts and communities, but their considerable
powers and resources are, in the end, *willingly* sacrificed, and they meet death with a smile and a sigh.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Free agrees that Jennings is “used”: “Franklin’s absolution and reunion with Rachel, both facilitated by Jennings, are in many ways the equivalent of a rise to manhood across his back—through the body of a colonial subject, for the cost of Jennings’s help is his own life” (360–361).
4.0 THE QUICK SWITCH: NARRATIVE AS PUNISHMENT IN TREASURE ISLAND AND A GREAT EMERGENCY

While reading Bleak House, the reader becomes accustomed to the frequent hand offs between the two narrators. She starts to expect the return of Esther’s self-deprecating pen once the other narrator has relayed several chapters in a row. Dracula, The Woman in White, and The Moonstone explicitly inform the reader, at the novel’s start, that the text will feature multiple first-person narratives and narrators; the reader in those cases, therefore, never expects to stay with one narrator for long. This chapter, however, covers a different type of multiple-narrator structure, one that I’ve named the quick switch. Such a structure consists of a sole, brief switch in narrators. Texts employing this structure, unlike the other texts I’ve discussed, retain the impression of possessing a main narrator, and the temporary substitution in narrators reads as a startling interruption rather than an as expected and necessary segue. The reader doesn’t know about the switch until it happens. The quick switch structure is anomalous among Victorian multiple-narrator structures, and its dissimilarity reveals much about how the Victorian multiple-narrator novel commonly functions. While most examples of the Victorian multiple-narrator novel do not exploit differences between narrators or narratives, the quick switch structure magnifies differences between the two narrators and their perceptions, heightening a power play, via punishment, that most multiple-narrator novels try to smooth and minimize in the grand name and aim of collaboration.
Two late-Victorian works of children’s literature—Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (*TI*) and Juliana Horatia Ewing’s *A Great Emergency*—use this structure in strikingly similar ways.\(^{118}\) Stevenson’s adventure romp premiered in the pages of *Young Folks* from

\(^{118}\) This is not to say that no other Victorian novels use the *quick switch*. For example, in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit*, Miss Wade writes a one-chapter self-account to explain to Arthur Clennam how she came to hate Pet and Gowan and came to sympathize with Pet’s maid Tattycoram. Temporally, it seems that most, if not all, of her account (which concerns her orphaned childhood and later romance with Gowan) occurs before the main plot of the novel does (Gowan is already courting Pet at the beginning of the novel); therefore, Miss Wade’s history occurs outside the time and main plot of the novel. I chose to focus on *Treasure Island* and *A Great Emergency* not just because they both belong to children’s literature and feature two homodiegetic narrators (conversely, *Little Dorrit*’s main narrator is heterodiegetic), but also because the second narrations occur *within* the time and main plot of the story rather than *outside* them. In this chapter, then, I am interested in cases in which the *quick switch* happens between two homodiegetic narrators who both cover the same general plot and do so within the normative temporal scheme of the story; such cases allow for an interesting focus on the *quick switch* as a challenge between two narrator-characters through narrative itself. Nonetheless, it’s important to note that Miss Wade’s chapter is memorably titled “The History of a Self Tormentor”—in other words, a history of a self-punisher.

Dickens also uses embedded narrations in *Pickwick Papers*, but since he does this a number of times (in stories told by random characters at bars and through old manuscripts hidden in drawers), the structure does not follow my definition of the *quick switch* as a *sole*, brief switch in narrators. Also, the interpolated tales of *Pickwick Papers* have ostensibly nothing to do with
October 1881 to January 1882 but didn’t earn widespread acclaim until it was published as a book in 1883. *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, a children’s literature magazine run by Ewing’s mother, Margaret Gatty, serialized *A Great Emergency* from June to October of 1874; in 1877, the long short story was published as a book bundled with other Ewing pieces. Plucky map finder, Jim Hawkins, narrates the majority of *Treasure Island*, but chapters 16 through 18 are narrated by Dr. Livesey, “a gentleman and a magistrate” (*TI* 29), who is one of those who organize the expedition to Treasure Island. The doctor recounts how the group of gentlemen relocates from the swamp-anchored *Hispaniola* to the rudimentary island stockade, a removal that happens after Jim has given them the slip and sneak ed onto the island with the exploring pirates. Charlie, the middle child in a group of adventure-loving siblings, narrates the majority of *A Great Emergency*, but chapter 15 consists of an excerpt from his older sister’s diary. Henrietta, the older sister, narrates her heroic involvement in the titular great emergency—their family’s house burns down and she and elder brother Rupert save their baby brother from the flames—that occurs in Charlie’s short absence. Driven by boredom and a desire for adventure, Charlie had hitchhiked to London on a canal barge, desperate to join a ship’s crew in the city. In both books, then, the switch in narrators follows the voluntary and impetuous desertion of the main narrator from his larger group (the gentlemen explorers; the family). Dr. Livesey and Henrietta, then, step in to narrate from first-hand experience the events that the primary narrators miss during their self-inflicted absences. For this reason (and others, as will be discussed), the switch in narrators reads as a punishment of the primary narrators: the “responsible” party is given power of narrative while the “guilty” absconder loses it. That the *quick switch* in both of these cases also

Pickwick’s wanderings and ramblings, and they connect to the main narrative on a symbolic, thematic, and tonal level rather than on a plot level.
happens along key power axes—age in *Treasure Island* and gender in *A Great Emergency*—heightens the sense of power reversal often present, I argue, to the *quick switch* structure. But both Jim and Charlie manipulate this power reversal to their own advantage, Jim to critique and resist the adulthood that Dr. Livesey represents, and Charlie to prove his own honor and masculinity against his sister’s femininity.

Both Stevenson and Ewing frequently collaborated with others during their careers, which perhaps predisposed them to using collaborative narrative structures in their works. Stevenson and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, eventually co-authored several novels, but as Victoria Ford Smith reveals, *Treasure Island* was “the first widely published text generated by the Osbourne-Stevenson partnership” (37). As Smith notes, Stevenson dedicated the book edition to Osbourne (37), and in “My First Book,” Stevenson admits that an afternoon of mutual painting produced the first map of Treasure Island (though, as Smith points out, Stevenson and Osbourne disagreed on who precisely created that first map [40–41]). Smith argues that the “collaboration between Stevenson and Osbourne is the beginning of a series of adult-child collaborations inside and outside the text of *Treasure Island*” (42); however, although she expounds on the collaborations between Jim, the “able child,” and Silver, the “injured or handicapped pirate body,” she doesn’t mention the narrative collaboration between Jim and the doctor (45, 44). Marghanita Laski explains that Juliana Ewing also collaborated with various family members at different points in her career. Juliana’s mother, Margaret Gatty, was an author in her own right, and Juliana “was the chief contributor” to the family’s manuscript magazine (1862–1868) and later contributed stories (along with her siblings) to her mother’s children’s magazine (Laski 33). When Mrs. Gatty died in 1873, “Mrs. Ewing took on the joint editorship of the magazine with her sister Horatia” “for the next two years” (Laski 35). Juliana also
collaborated with famed illustrator Randolph Caldecott for several of her works. Although these authors’ artistic collaborations are well known, the narratorial collaborations within their works are barely discussed.

4.1 TREASURE ISLAND

Despite the legion of criticism on Treasure Island, very little refers to, discusses, or accounts for its quick switch in narrator. Such widespread critical neglect, I argue, arises from three main causes. Firstly, the quick switch can be easily excused as a solution to the “technical problem” of how to relay plot that occurs in Jim’s absence (Mann and Hardesty 378). P. Hardesty, W. Hardesty, and Mann employ such an explanation: “since Jim’s document is an official record, it requires an authoritative first-person account of how the loyal party abandoned the ship and moved to the stockade. Having Jim repeat another’s account would not do” (5). But when Jim abandons the gentlemen for a second time, Dr. Livesey does not intervene again to explain the important developments—including the gentlemen’s abandonment of the stockade and the pirates’ subsequent possession of it—that occur during Jim’s absence. Instead, Jim slowly understands—in bits and pieces—what occurred during his second absence. Though P. Hardesty, W. Hardesty, and Mann write that “[h]aving Jim repeat another’s account would not do,” Jim does repeat Silver’s explanation of how the pirates came into possession of the stockade. Later still, Jim summarizes, in his own words, Dr. Livesey’s account of the gentlemen’s desertion of the stockade and ensuing relocation to Ben Gunn’s mountain cave; therefore, the novel does not insist on first-hand testimony. Furthermore, rationalizing the temporary switch in narrators by
citing its necessity crucially ignores the implications of such a structural solution, no matter what Stevenson’s intentions were in employing it.\textsuperscript{119}

The second reason for the critical oversight of the quick switch is that it troubles the now common classification of \textit{Treasure Island} as a bildungsroman. For example, Alan Sandison’s foundational reading of \textit{Treasure Island} as a proto-modern text and serious bildungsroman overly relies on Jim’s position as the author-narrator of the text to prove Jim’s earned and

\textsuperscript{119} Although this reason is the first P. Hardesty, W. Hardesty, and Mann offer, they do suggest several other possibilities for the shift in narrators. The shift, they reason, makes the change in Jim’s character “more credible”: “In the early chapters he is a lucky boy who is on the spot through no particular doing of his own; whereas in the late chapters, having taken charge, he makes his own luck and forces the development of events” (5). I find this rationale doesn’t hold when one perceives that luck continues to play a part in Jim’s success throughout the novel and that Jim takes charge earlier in the novel as well. Thirdly, the three critics propose, “there is always the possibility that changing narrators was simply the easiest course for RLS, ill and in the process of moving from Scotland to Switzerland” (5). Presumably, these critics are working from the account Stevenson himself gives of writing \textit{Treasure Island} in the essay “My First Book” (written in 1894). The first fifteen chapters came easily, Stevenson recounts, but then he was crippled by writer’s block (the doctor’s narration starts in chapter 16). He wasn’t able to write again until he had travelled to Davos, Switzerland for the winter. It seems, therefore, that the switch in narrators aligned with Stevenson’s switch in locations. Katz, however, uses evidence from Stevenson’s letters to show that Stevenson had in fact “written beyond fifteen chapters when he was at Braemar, another example of the imprecision of certain details in ‘My First Book’” (xxi).
increased authority, maturity, and power: the “composition...signifies Jim Hawkins’ accession to authority via authorship” (48). Admitting, as Sandison never does, that the doctor interrupts Jim’s account and deems him incapable of narrating the entirety of the story on his own would heavily qualify Sandison’s favorite piece of evidence and, thereby, imperil his larger argument. Marah Gubar, one of the few critics of *Treasure Island* to acknowledge and discuss the *quick switch*, rightly points out, “Jim’s inability to maintain control over his own story presents a major challenge to the idea that he functions as the undisputed master of his fate” (88).

The third reason why critics haven’t thoroughly tackled the *quick switch* is because of their implied investment in the unity of the novel. For example, in *The Case of Peter Pan*, Jacqueline Rose only acknowledges *Treasure Island*’s *quick switch* in a brief, footnoted sentence: “The narration of *Treasure Island* shifts to the Doctor in the centre of the book, but this in no sense upsets the fundamental cohesion of its narrative voice” (148). Since Rose specifically argues that the existence of “disparate voices” in *Peter Pan* “set[s] [it] apart” from *Treasure Island*, she must find a way to mute the existence of “disparate voices” in *Treasure Island* itself.

120 Sandison repeatedly cites Jim’s position as narrator/author to prove his achieved maturity: Jim “establishes his maturity by becoming the author of the ship’s master” (62); “Jim is himself an author in command of his crew of characters” (73); “the adolescent *does* win through to transcend his condition; so much so that he is invested by his much older companions with responsibility for ‘authoring’ the text of their adventures” (51); “Jim does, however, get the last word – literally, for he becomes the author of the Captain in writing the account of their travels” (61).
W. W. Robson echoes Rose’s avoidance of the switch, arguing, quite inexplicably, that “the reader feels no sense of hiatus, since Doctor Livesey’s point of view is the same as Jim’s” (90). Robson seems to be worried that the change in narrator could challenge his belief that the novel showcases “Stevenson’s mastery of narrative” (81), particularly because Robson believes that the “change in narrator…appears to have held Stevenson up in the actual writing of the story” (90). If the “change in narrator” is as seamless and inconspicuous as Robson finds it to be, then Stevenson’s “mastery” remains intact. Conversely, I argue that the switch does upset the cohesion of narrative voice, that the reader does feel a sense of hiatus, and that the doctor’s point of view is crucially different from Jim’s.

121 It is particularly odd that Rose overlooks the implications of the quick switch since The Case of Peter Pan did much to problematize the child-adult relationship in children’s literature and this quick switch happens along that very binary. Rose argued that children’s literature revealed more about adults’ desires for what children should be than about children’s own desires. She famously characterized children’s literature as manifesting the hierarchy between adults and children:

Children’s fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child…Children’s fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space between…If children’s fiction builds an image of the child inside the book, it does so in order to secure the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp. (1–2)
The quick switch in Treasure Island, I argue, functions as one of a series of punishments that the adult doctor inflicts on the child Jim for disobeying him; it also embodies and furthers the dramatic stylistic and moral contrast between Jim and Dr. Livesey. The doctor represents an adulthood marked by cruelty, imperial greed, lack of emotion, and delight in punishing those deemed inferior. Jim, quick to sympathize and to emote, resists and critiques such a version of adulthood by taking refuge in an eternal and haunted childhood. I agree, therefore, with Gubar’s persuasive interpretation of Treasure Island as an “anti-adventure story” that “depicts the project of draining foreign lands of riches as terrifying, traumatizing, and ethically problematic” (70). Gubar, however, concludes that Jim “ultimately functions as a helpless parrot” (71) and that only the book’s readers “are invited to take a more active stance” (91). Instead, I maintain that Jim himself takes that active stance—Jim is aware of the danger in becoming the parrot and works hard to resist such a fate.

From the beginning of Treasure Island, Dr. Livesey is presented as calm and cool, decisive, and knowledgeable: the epitome of adulthood; however, though many of the book’s characters and critics idealize him for these traits, the flip side of such a construction of adulthood includes coldness, violence, and sadism. Jim’s introduction of Dr. Livesey indicates

122 Loman similarly argues that through its oblique references to the slavery, the novel “subverts the conventions and ideological underpinnings of imperial romance that in other respects it appears to uphold” (2).

123 For example, Sandison credits Livesey as the “ideal father” to the fatherless Jim who embodies a “quiet but confident authority” (55). Christopher Parks, pointing out that Dr. Livesey is both a doctor and a magistrate, casts him as the ideal civil servant who mentors Jim into becoming the late-Victorian “image of a heroic civil servant” (332). P. Hardesty, W. Hardesty,
the dark underbelly of his supposedly positive traits. Jim contrasts the “neat, bright doctor, with his powder as white as snow, and his bright, black eyes” with the inn’s “coltish” customers and “filthy” resident pirate (TI 5). The description’s internal rhyme (“bright” and “white”) and alliteration (“bright black”) emphasize the doctor’s poise and shrewdness, but the color contrast between a powdered face “white as snow” and “black eyes” suggests the piercing darkness underneath his veneer of decorum. The doctor, understandably, refuses to be quieted or bullied by drunk and feisty Billy Bones, who is accustomed to having the run of the easily cowed inn-goers. In his exchange with Billy, however, the “perfectly calm and steady” doctor thrice threatens Billy with death or other punishment (6); every piece of the doctor’s dialogue, in fact, includes a threat. Because the doctor points out, “I’m not a doctor only; I’m a magistrate,” his threats possess both medical and legal weight (6). The doctor first informs Billy, “if you keep on drinking rum, the world will soon be quit of a very dirty scoundrel!” (6); the doctor’s death-wish and accompanying name-calling parade as medical counsel. Next, when Billy wields a

and Mann call him “an appropriate role model for Jim” (10) who is “established as the voice of reason and education” (5). Although they find the doctor of the serial version to be “pompous, rather ineffectual, and self-righteous” (6), they concomitantly argue that “Stevenson carefully rewrote the doctor’s narrative to make him less stuffy, less moralistic, less rhetorical, and less didactic” (6). Silver gushes to the doctor that he had “never seen a better man” than Doctor Livesey (TI 166), but Silver is a notorious flatterer who, at the time he offers this compliment, is desperately bargaining for the doctor’s future help.

Sandison insightfully adds that Livesey’s professional duality “offers another instance of the imbrication of medicine, the father-figure and the law which is to be found elsewhere in Stevenson’s fiction (in particular in Jekyll and Hyde)” (56).
knife, the doctor retorts, “If you do not put that knife this instant in your pocket, I promise, upon my honour, you shall hang at the next assizes” (6). The doctor, therefore, bases his personal “honour” upon the certainty that, should he not acquiesce, Billy would be executed. Then the doctor institutes a continuous watch over Billy—a sort of panoptical punishment—when he promises to “have an eye upon [him] day and night” (6). Lastly, the doctor warns that if he hears “a breath of complaint against” Billy Bones, he will “take effectual means to have [Bones] hunted down and routed out of this” (6). The doctor requires neither evidence nor a substantial grievance—a mere “breath” of criticism would be enough for the doctor to justify violently “hunt[ing] down” Billy as if he were an animal. As a magistrate, Livesey threatens death; as a doctor, Livesey also threatens death. Livesey, therefore, resonates with Foucault’s category of the hybrid “doctor-judge” who is one of the “judges of normality” to which the individual “subjects...his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements” (304).

The same coolness and penchant for violence manifest in the style of the doctor’s three-chapter section. While Jim vacillates quickly between emotional extremes—indescribable horror and revulsion to joy bordering on ecstasy—the doctor narrates his portion with a level-headed calm, rarely expressing deep fear or overwhelming enthusiasm. This divergence explains a Victorian reviewer’s comment that the change in narrators functioned as a breather for the reader, a water break from the relentless fear and danger that constitutes Jim’s narration:

As we follow the narrative of the boy Jim Hawkins we hold our breath in his dangers, and breathe again at his escapes. The artifice is so well managed that when, for a few chapters, Jim disappears, and the story is taken up by a shrewd doctor, who is never in much danger, the change is felt as a sensible relief. (Butler 130)
The shrewd doctor, however, *is* in much danger during his section. In those three short chapters, the pirates aim cannons at his escape boat (successfully flooding the boat and forcing the gentlemen to flee it), meet the gentlemen with a volley of gunshot as they enter the wood, and let loose a lengthy cannonade at the gentlemen’s current shelter, the stockade. A bullet, additionally, “whistle[s] close past [the doctor’s] ear” and hits and kills the squire’s faithful servant, Tom Redruth (*TI* 93–94). But the doctor narrates the relocation from the ship to the stockade *as if* he weren’t in much danger. The doctor’s admissions of heightened feeling are rare and are generally expressed on behalf of a group rather than as an admission of personal feeling; he writes, “we were afraid to breathe” on the overloaded jolly boat (88, emphasis added), and the pirates, “to our horror,” prepared the long nine for use (90, emphasis added). The singular outburst of emotion narrated in the doctor’s section—the squire’s tearful response to the death of his old servant Tom—is described as childlike: “The squire dropped down beside him on his knees and kissed his hand, crying like a child” (94). By comparison, the doctor describes the squire’s behavior throughout the rest of his three-chapter section as “cool.” The squire is “cool as steel” as he “looked to the priming of his gun” (91) and “silent and cool” when inspecting his gun to confirm “that all was fit for service” (93). Squire Trelawney, who is “out and away” the “best shot” of the group (90), approaches the coolness, and hence, implied adult-ness, of Dr. Livesey’s “calm and steady” example particularly when dealing with weapons (6). Handling and shooting guns, and doing it well, are what make a “cool” adult man of the sometimes childish, blubbering, and comic figure of Squire Trelawney.

The doctor’s rare figurative and descriptive language also points to the violence and emotional vacuity of adulthood, while Jim’s more frequent figurative and descriptive language reveals curiosity and sensitivity to violence. The doctor only employs a handful of metaphors
and similes in his three-chapter section, and almost all of them depict the gentlemen’s violence. As quoted in the previous paragraph, “Trelawney was as cool as steel” as he prepares to shoot one of the pirates (91); he uses the gun successfully (he kills the man he shoots at) when he becomes machine-like himself, “cool as” the “steel” that his gun is presumably made of. The squire’s old and loyal servant, Tom Redruth, lies “like a Trojan behind his mattress in the gallery” (94) with “three or four loaded muskets” (86) to corner the on-board pirates; the description, therefore, compares Tom to a Trojan, the besieged people in the epic war that bears their name. The doctor decides to move the gentlemen to the stockade because, from its walled protection, they could “shot the others like partridges” (85). The imagining of his enemies, the pirates, as easily caught animals aligns with his earlier intention to “hunt down” Billy Bones.

The doctor’s and Jim’s diverging descriptions of the island stockade further prove their stylistic and personality differences. The doctor’s brief, one-paragraph description focuses on the stockade’s characteristics from a strategic point of view (85); once the doctor moves into the stockade, he doesn’t illustrate it further. The stockade, to the doctor, is a thing that he can potentially use, a tactical location from which to safely shoot others; it is advantageously, as he details, “loop-holed for musketry on every side” (85). On the other hand, Jim “began to look about me” as soon as he has a chance to do so (100). He spends many full, rich paragraphs describing the architecture of the stockade and the appearance of the surrounding environs. Like an arborist, Jim identifies the type of wood the stockade is made from (“unsquared trunks of pine” [100]) and the types of trees in the nearby woods: “all of fir on the land side, but towards the sea with a large admixture of live-oaks” (100–101). The doctor never offers such details because the varieties of wood don’t matter in assessing the stockade’s use. Jim’s continuing
description of the scene reveals his sensitivity to the environment and his love of painting a scene with words:

The slopes of the knoll and all the inside of the stockade had been cleared of timber to build the house, and we could see by the stumps what a fine and lofty grove had been destroyed. Most of the soil had been washed away or buried in drift after the removal of the trees; only where the streamlet ran down from the kettle a thick bed of moss and some ferns and little creeping bushes were still green among the sand. (100)

Jim’s use of the quaint “streamlet” instead of the more common “stream” shows his attention to detail, his desire to properly indicate the waterway’s size. The recurrent use of subtle personification—from the “bed of moss” to the “creeping bushes” to the “run[ning]” stream to the “buried” soil—implies that Jim views nature as alive and moving. Jim repeatedly acknowledges how nature had been violently sacrificed to construct the stockade: the trees had been “cleared,” “destroyed,” “remov[ed],” and reduced to “stumps.” The resulting soil had been “washed away and buried.” Jim’s awareness of the loss (and even death, as “buried” implies) that enables gain recurs when he imagines how much “it had cost”—in lives, ships, and “shame and lies and cruelty”—to first collect, later bury, and finally unearth the treasure (185). While the doctor describes the stockade only in terms of gain, Jim understands the loss that underwrites such gain. Jim, therefore, seems to be cognizant of and even in opposition to the colonial investments that Diana Loxley argues were uppermost at the time that Stevenson was writing *Treasure Island*: “as a consequence of British expansionism, colonial territory, rather than being settled, was rapidly carved up in the intoxicated pursuit of new sources of raw material that would yield financial profit” (167).
Furthermore, the illustrations within the doctor’s narrative in the first illustrated British edition of *Treasure Island* (published by the book’s original publisher, Cassell, in 1885) visually emphasize the construction of adulthood as cool and violent. Each chapter of the doctor’s section receives an illustration. The first one (see Figure 4.1), captioned “If any one of you six make a signal of any description, that man’s dead,” shows the squire and doctor in the foreground, backs facing the viewer, casually holding pistols in their right hands and aiming them at a group of sailors. The two gentlemen—similarly hatted, wigged, and coat bundled—mirror each other in outfit and stance. The threatened sailors are huddled together in the background, indistinctly drawn, and seemingly unarmed. The composition stresses the doctor and squire’s blasé threat of violence against such a ragtag looking group. The second illustration (see Figure 4.2), captioned “the squire raised his gun, the rowing ceased,” depicts the gentlemen party deserting the *Hispaniola* via an overloaded row boat; additionally, the squire stands (with his back to the viewer) and aims a long-barrel gun at the on-ship pirates. Captioned the “Death of Tom Redruth,” the third illustration (see Figure 4.3) portrays Tom dying of a pirate-inflicted gunshot wound; the doctor witnesses the consequences of gun violence while, like in the first illustration, grasping his own gun in his hand. Each caption, then, references guns or death; each illustration features the gentlemen wielding guns; each illustration represents violence (the threat, action, or consequence of it).

I argue that, as readers, we’re supposed to feel suspicious of the doctor and distanced from his attitude and intimate with Jim and sympathetic with the attitude he espouses. As Hardesty and Mann point out, “Stevenson’s most considerable achievement in the first part of the novel is, essentially, the creation of empathy with Jim” (98). As a narrator, Jim pulls the reader in, primarily by sharing intimate details about himself and by directly addressing the
reader through frequent use of “you” throughout his narrative.  

The doctor’s narration, however, lacks the personal revelations and direct addresses of Jim’s narration. Jim candidly shares his fears, fantasies, nightmares, dreams, and wonderings with the reader, from his famous “sea dreams” and amorphous one-legged-man “nightmares” to his quiet moment of musing over why rough Billy Bones treasured an assortment of West Indian shells “in his wandering, guilty, and hunted life” (TI 36, 3, 22). Over thirty times in Treasure Island, Jim directly addresses the reader as “you” (and never as “reader” as Ralph Rover does frequently in The Coral Island, a move that reaches out to the reader but only to reinscribe the writer/reader divide and hierarchy). Jim’s recurrent direct addresses are conducted casually and effortlessly and are, therefore, easily missed, as opposed to the more rhetorically charged and attention grabbing moments of direct address in, for example, Dickens’s Bleak House. The almost slang-like nature of Jim’s usage—“I tell you, but Silver was anxious to keep up with us” (182)—helps craft a loose, conversational style that gives the impression that we are Jim’s friend and confidant. Other uses of direct address reveal Jim’s investment in aiding the “you” to better imagine the story: “and I can give you no fairer idea of Ben Gunn’s boat than by saying it was like the first and the worst coracle ever made by man” (119). Occasionally, Jim positions the “you” in his own shoes, such as when, after hearing the nonstop screeching of Silver’s parrot, Jim writes that the parrot shrieked “till you wondered that it was not out of breath, or till John threw his handkerchief over the cage” (54). Such subtle substitutions of “you” for “I” help the reader identify with Jim’s perspective on

125 Barbara Wall’s comment that Jim “builds up no comfortable confiding relationship with his narratee” is, therefore, totally baffling to me (71). Wall seems to think that the very horribleness of the events that Jim relates prevents “friendly sharing” (72) with the narratee, but I argue that Jim comes across as friendly and confiding despite the terror his narrative conveys.
events. Jim smoothly trusts the reader to understand his own feelings by frequently using constructions like “as you may believe” and “you will readily believe.” Several times Jim reminds us that hard evidence exists to support his claims—you can still see Billy Bones’s sword dent in the Admiral Benbow sign, and Jim still possesses the cut-out-of-a-Bible black spot given to Silver at the stockade—but, overall, Jim does not belabor his credibility or doubt the reader’s harmony with his own perspective. When speaking of the people in the neighboring town who refuse to help his mother and him face the soon-to-return pirates, he notes, “you would have thought men would have been ashamed of themselves” (20). The direct address places Jim and the reader on the same moral plane, sharing a reasonable judgment of the neighbors’ attitude and behavior. Dr. Livesey, on the other hand, never uses direct address and never addresses the reader or narratee directly in his three chapters. Beyond offering a few more details on his backstory—he was a soldier, he was wounded—the doctor’s interiority is a mystery. He never pulls in the reader and never really tries to. We are not intimate with this narrator. And since the doctor almost always speaks on behalf of his group—frequently acting as the spokesperson for “us” and “we” and rarely offering anything from the viewpoint of “I” or “me”—the narration as a whole feels less like an intimate conversation and more like a communal report being spoken at us.

Livesey punishes others through his dual professions of magistrate and doctor. As already discussed, on his first entrance into the text, Dr. Livesey thrice threatens Billy Bones. When tending to the ill and wounded pirates on Treasure Island, the doctor again envisions himself as the dispenser of justice and punishment. When he arrives at the stockade, he reimagines the space as a prison and the pirates as prisoners by labeling himself the “prison doctor” rather than the “mutineers’ doctor” (164). Livesey, therefore, pictures the pirates as currently undergoing
punishment. Furthermore, he ironically constructs his medical care of the pirates as an additional punishment of them. He quips, “I make it a point of honour not to lose a man for King George...and the gallows” (164). Livesey, then, tends to the pirates so they can live long enough to be hanged later on. Similarly, the doctor sheds blood as a doctor and as a fighter. When he treats Billy Bones post-stroke, the doctor “open[s] a vein” and releases a “great deal of blood” (11); the doctor later explains to Jim that drawing so much blood was not required to save Billy’s life, but that it would helpfully “keep him quiet for a while” (12) so he wouldn’t be a nuisance to Jim or to Jim’s father. Furthermore, Jim witnesses the doctor brutally slay a pirate in a way that mirrors Silver’s murder of Tom. Silver knocks down Tom, pursues him, and then stabs him to death. The doctor similarly pursues, knocks down, and knifes a pirate: “the doctor was pursuing his assailant down the hill, and...beat down his guard, and sent him sprawling on his back, with a great slash across the face” (112). Jim twice confirms that the doctor killed the man, and when he reiterates that “the mutineer, indeed, died under the doctor’s knife,” the pun on “doctor’s knife” conflates the doctor’s medicinal knife and his fighting cutlass—they both result in death (115).

When other gentlemen (as opposed to pirates or children) make mistakes, however, all is quickly forgiven; they never punish themselves or each other. When Superintendant Dance admits to killing the pirate Pew by trampling him with his horse—and also admits to feeling no remorse for it—the squire and doctor absolutely absolve him of wrongdoing and repeatedly compliment him on his kill: “as for riding down that black, atrocious miscreant, I regard it as an act of virtue” (31). Though Dance had worried about possible punishment—“people will make it out against an officer of his Majesty’s revenue”—none occurs (29). The squire and doctor treat Silver similarly when Jim spies the pirate Black Dog patronizing Silver’s land establishment; at this point, the doctor and squire don’t know that Silver is a pirate and they consider him to be a
respectable business owner. Just as the squire and doctor “further complimented” Dance after his trampling of Pew (31), the squire and doctor “complimented” (46) Silver after deeming him innocent of knowingly allowing pirates in his bar.

Jim is quick to feel pity for others, especially for those fearing, experiencing, or awaiting punishment. On the island, Jim meets Ben Gunn, a pirate who had previously been marooned alone on the island. Jim reflects, “I had heard the word [marooned], and I knew it stood for a horrible kind of punishment common enough among the buccaneers, in which the offender is put ashore with a little powder and shot, and left behind on some desolate and distant island” (79). It’s unlikely that the reader doesn’t know the definition of the word “marooned,” so Jim’s explanation of the term serves to express his sympathy with Ben Gunn; the punishment is specifically deemed “horrible,” and the d alliteration in “desolate and distant island” emphasizes the sad and solitary nature of the punishment. Jim sympathizes with the effect such an extended and harsh punishment has had on Ben: “I now felt sure that the poor fellow had gone crazy in his solitude” (80). When the gentlemen, treasure in tow, leave the island, they doom three of the remaining pirate-mutineers to being marooned on the island. Jim labels the sentence “wretched” (189). The marooned pirates’ supplications elicit pity and sympathy from Jim: “they continued to call us by name, and appeal to us, for God’s sake, to be merciful, and not leave them to die in such a place” (189). This particular reportage includes free indirect discourse—the narrator’s incorporation of the characters’ language without tagging it as such. When Jim writes, “for God’s sake,” he is incorporating the blasphemous pirates’ phrasing within his own narration; Jim himself would never use such an oath. The use of free indirect discourse connects the narrator and the narrated and, thereby, stresses Jim’s identification with the marooned men and his susceptibility to their desperate pleas. Even at the end of the novel, after Silver has threatened
Jim’s life multiple times (and has changed sides multiple times), Jim still feels sympathy for the one-legged buccaneer: “my heart was sore for him, wicked as he was, to think on the dark perils that environed, and the shameful gibbet that awaited him” (162). Jim’s “heart was sore” that Silver is fated for the “shameful gibbet.” That Jim describes the gibbet—rather than Silver’s behavior—as “shameful” again shows Jim’s distrust of extreme punishment and his sympathy with the punished.

Even though the doctor does grudgingly admit that “Every step, it’s [Jim] that saves our lives,” the doctor nonetheless punishes and intensely chastises Jim several times (168). After Jim joins the others in a stockade-centered skirmish with the pirates following his first disappearance, Dr. Livesey “pulled [Jim’s] ears for [him] into the bargain” (115). The doctor provides no reason for the ear-pulling, but the act resembles a common ear-centered punishment: boxing one’s ears. When Jim returns to the stockade after a second disappearance, he’s stunned to find the pirates there instead of his friends, and the doctor is less than comforting when he arrives to treat the wounded pirates: “As you have brewed, so you shall drink, my boy…this much I will say, be it kind or unkind…by George, it was downright cowardly!” (167). This severe verbal chastisement makes Jim “weep,” an action that he only does occasionally in the story and never because of someone else’s words towards him (167). A few pages later, Dr. Livesey continues the guilt-tripping assault: “I did what I thought best for those who had stood by their duty; and if you were not one of these, whose fault was it?” (183). Though the reader and Jim are taught to distrust Silver, the doctor’s own words (as reported by Jim) validate what Silver tells Jim of the doctor’s irritation regarding Jim’s desertions. Silver explains that the “doctor himself is gone dead against you—‘ungrateful scamp’ was what he said” (150). Silver also reports that the doctor
purposefully left Jim out of the treaty the gentlemen made with the pirates: “As for that boy, I don’t know where he is, confound him...nor I don’t much care. We’re about sick of him” (151).

The doctor’s greatest punishment of Jim, however, is the quick switch itself; the quick switch allows the doctor to punish Jim in the story and, again, in the telling of the story. The doctor replaces Jim as narrator when Jim sneaks onto the island with the exploring pirates; during Jim’s absence, the doctor recounts how the remaining group of gentlemen relocates from the ship to the island stockade. In the story, the doctor punishes Jim’s mischievousness by re-interpreting Jim’s disobedient disappearance as Jim’s death. Almost as soon as the doctor’s narrative begins, he hears a distant blood-curdling yell and immediately interprets it as Jim’s swan-scream: “there came ringing over the island the cry of a man at the point of death...‘Jim Hawkins is gone' was my first thought” (85). Even though the doctor correctly identifies the death-yell as emanating from “a man” (the reader knows it comes from an adult sailor who refused to join the pirate mutiny), the doctor subsequently identifies that mannish voice as coming from a child—Jim. The doctor’s deduction, then, overrides the knowledge of his own senses; he pushes to interpret the “man’s” scream as hailing from the boyish Jim. Such a forced misinterpretation implies the doctor’s, perhaps unconscious, belief that Jim deserves such a fate for deserting the gentlemen. Until Jim actually appears several chapters later, nimbly scaling the wall of the stockade and interrupting the doctor’s “wondering over poor Jim Hawkins’s fate,” the doctor doesn’t spare one more thought on Jim, either of grief or guilt or relief (96). And the serialized version of Treasure Island states the doctor’s feelings even more bluntly: “But there was no time to cry over spilt milk; if they had begun the killing, it was plain enough they would go on—Hawkins now, the rest of us as soon as possible” (Letley 207). Jim’s death is reduced to the inconvenience and waste of “spilt milk,” something not worthy of making a man like the
doctor “cry.” By imagining Jim’s demise, Dr. Livesey suggests that Jim’s independence and resistance to authority should be severely punished. By hypothetically killing off Jim, the doctor only enacts what he keeps threatening the pirates with should they not be obedient: death.

In the telling of the story, which occurs at an indefinite length of time after the adventure, the doctor recreates this punishment by interrupting and silencing Jim at the exact moment when, in the story, the doctor believes Jim to be both disobedient and dead. The doctor’s intrusion into the narrative is deliberately constructed as the doctor’s choice (rather than as the implied author’s choice). Both Jim and the doctor are, to use Wayne Booth’s term, self-conscious narrators; they know they are composing and arranging the narrative of the treasure expedition. Several subtle details in the doctor’s narrative imply that the doctor has read or is reading Jim’s narrative, which is how the doctor knows the precise doubly punishing moment to step in as a narrator. For example, in one of his chapters, the doctor references Jim’s prior narrative: “The report fell in at the same instant of time. This was the first that Jim heard” (TI 92). The doctor, therefore, has read Jim’s account of hearing the cannonade while he was befriending Ben Gunn: “For just then, although the sun had still an hour or two to run, all the echoes of the island awoke and bellowed to the thunder of a cannon” (83).126 Furthermore, the reader is structurally distanced from the doctor’s misinterpretation of the scream as heralding the death of Jim. The doctor’s narrative is an analepsis (“any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the

126 Another detail in Jim’s narrative suggests that the doctor is reading Jim’s manuscript as Jim writes it. When admiring how Silver was able to keep up with the able-bodied gentlemen, Jim mentions that the doctor agrees—in the present tense—with Jim’s assessment: “The work that man went through, leaping on his crutch till the muscles of his chest were fit to burst, was work no sound man ever equaled; and so thinks the doctor” (TI 182, emphasis added).
story where we are at any given moment” [Genette 40]); therefore, the beginning of the doctor’s narrative goes back in time a few hours (to the time when chapter 13 of Jim’s narrative occurs). When the doctor hears “the cry of a man at the point of death,” Jim has already heard the same cry ten pages earlier (TI 85). Jim also heard Silver identify it as coming from the murdered Alan. The reader, therefore, knows that “the cry” does not come from Jim. When the doctor imagines Jim’s death, then, the reader is already assured of Jim’s safety; the reader, therefore, is separated from the doctor’s rash punishments and judgments.

The doctor’s temporary silencing of Jim metaphorically aligns the doctor with empire and Jim as a causality of it; looking closely at the one striking repetition in both Jim’s and the doctor’s narratives—Alan’s horrifying scream—presents such a binary.127 We first hear the scream from Jim’s viewpoint; Jim is hiding in the bushes and eavesdropping on Silver, who is trying to convince a sailor, Tom, to join the pirate mutiny. The piercing yell sharply interrupts the scene:

Far away in the marsh there arose, all of a sudden, a sound like the cry of anger, then another on the back of it; and then one horrid, long-drawn scream. The rocks of the Spy-glass re-echoed it a score of times; the whole troop of marsh-birds rose again, darkening heaven, with a simultaneous whirr; and long after that death yell was still ringing in my brain, silence had re-established its empire, and only the

127 Because of this “interference” between the two narratives, Genette would identify the doctor’s analeptic narrative as a homodiegetic analepsis. That type of analepsis is an “internal analeps[is] that deal[s] with the same line of action as the first narrative. Here the risk of interference is obvious, and apparently unavoidable” (51).
rustle of the redescending birds and the boom of the distant surges disturbed the languor of the afternoon. (75)

Jim’s response is a fusion of pathos and poetry. The phrase “one horrid, long-drawn scream” is beautiful and disturbing. The lengthening assonance of the “o” sounds in “one horrid long-drawn” and the off-rhyme of “long” and “drawn” emphasize the lengthy duration of the cry in a manner approaching onomatopoeia. The different vowel sound and harsh end consonant in “scream” heighten the sense of bleak horror in the word itself. Troy Boone, who also focuses on this passage, agrees that the “disturbance of the landscape rhymes with Jim’s disturbance, thus coding the young protagonist as appropriately (or ‘naturally’) shocked by violence” (78).

Interestingly, Jim narrates the scream as a narrative in and of itself: the initial quiet of the marsh followed by the sudden disturbance of the peace followed by the uneasy return of stillness and quiet. The moment has a narrative arc: the movement details a rebellion and the quick conquering of it. The quick succession of words containing the “re” prefix—re-echoed, re-established, and redescending—again suggests that things are returning to a prior state.

On the other hand, the doctor approaches the same scream with stoicism and a hint of indifference: “there came ringing over the island the cry of a man at the point of death. I was not new to violent death—I have served his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland…‘Jim Hawkins is gone’ was my first thought” (II 85). Dr. Livesey calmly specifies the scream as given by “a man at the point of death” (85), categorizing the scream as if he were categorizing butterflies. Although his medical training may contribute to his seemingly dispassionate diagnosis of the scream, he doesn’t imagine the scream as coming from a stranger but from the boy who he is responsible for, and, as many critics assume, cares deeply for. To the doctor, the scream is a fact. To Jim, the scream is a story. The two stances are emphasized by the length of
time spent describing the scream and its immediate aftermath. While Jim internalizes the echoing yell—“and long after that death yell was still ringing in my brain” (75)—Dr. Livesey does not appear affected by the horrific sound. Furthermore, as Sandison mentions, the Duke of Cumberland earned a reputation as a vicious general: “this able general acquired his notorious sobriquet ‘Butcher’ Cumberland for what were seen as his brutal tactics in the battle of Culloden which ensured the decimation of the Jacobite forces and the disfavour of romantic nationalists like Stevenson” (59). Dr. Livesey doesn’t criticize the Duke’s battle tactics or the man himself. Dr. Livesey also mentions that he received a wound at Fontenoy, a battle at which, according to Letley, the Duke “was narrowly defeated by the French” (207). The doctor, therefore, invokes “Butcher” Cumberland and recalls his own injury at a battle at which the “Butcher” is defeated. Because the doctor is not only aligned with brutality but also with the defeat of that brutality, Stevenson seems to suggest his aversion to such violence and to the characters who espouse it.

Most intriguingly, Jim implicates empire in the scene; after the yell has quieted and the birds have descended: “silence had re-established its empire” (TI 75). For a book that critics often describe as unambiguously pro-empire, it’s significant that this line marks the only occurrence of the word “empire” in the entirety of Treasure Island; the words imperial or imperialism never appear. Jim’s use of the term “troop” to describe the fluttering group of birds further emphasizes the military connotation of the passage. The use of the verb “re-established” implies that silence had reigned before the yell and reigns again afterwards. Silence is the empire. Jim’s phrasing subtly links empire with the action of silencing, of covering up resistance, of smothering death cries. In such a paradigm, unwanted struggle becomes nothing more than

128 See Loxley, Parkes, Ward, Boone, and Bristow (just to name a few).
unwanted noise.\textsuperscript{129} Perhaps, then, it is no accident that when Jim doesn’t narrate, even for a brief few chapters, he is figured as dead. If you don’t narrate, you are dead, you don’t exist. In this light, Dr. Livesey’s displacement and temporary replacement of Jim functions as both the doctor’s silencing and metaphorical murder of Jim. It’s worthwhile to note, as well, that the death yell came from Alan, who is murdered for resisting the pirates; in addition, this yell is directly followed by Long John Silver dishonorably and brutally stabbing Tom to death for resisting the pirates. Long John Silver and the pirates silence their detractors. Dr. Livesey silences Jim for being a disobedient boy. And Jim associates the act of silencing \textit{with} empire. Therefore, Stevenson suggests that empire functions by brutally silencing its detractors or those who resist its control. In the novel, such silencing is carried out by Dr. Livesey when he simultaneously transforms Jim into a non-narrator and envisions Jim’s death—again, such a parallel implies that becoming a non-narrator is a type of death. Stevenson makes the distasteful workings of empire clear by linking them to the violent struggle for control of the narrating situation in \textit{Treasure Island}.

\textsuperscript{129} Interestingly, Dr. Livesey’s description of Tom Redruth’s death calls attention to the man’s general silence. As he lies dying, Dr. Livesey comments that Tom “had not uttered one word of surprise, complaint, fear, or even acquiescence, from the very beginning of our troubles till now” (\textit{TI} 94); furthermore, Tom had “followed every order silently, doggedly, and well” (94). The doctor characterizes Tom as the ideal servant, somewhat redundantly but tellingly calling him a “serviceable servant” (94) who did whatever was asked of him. Tom only speaks a few words when prodded by the squire, then “without another word,” dies (94). Throughout the passage, Tom is defined by lack of sound: he “uttered not one word”; he “silently” followed orders; and in his last moments, he’s mute. He’s a perfect servant of empire.
The implied debate between Jim’s and the doctor’s imperial views reflects and integrates the political climate of the campaigns leading up to the 1880 election. Stevenson began writing *Treasure Island* in 1881 while at Braemar, Scotland, not long after the historic 1880 election in which Disraeli was defeated by and replaced by Gladstone as Prime Minister. The election was viewed as a public referendum on Disraeli’s imperial policies: “In 1880...the British electorate rejected what they conceived to be Disraeli’s grandiose and costly schemes” (Eldridge 118).

Because he was campaigning for a Scottish seat in Parliament (Midlothian), Gladstone travelled to Scotland in 1879 for a well-received lecture tour during which he endlessly battered Disraeli’s foreign policy as leading the United Kingdom into “all manner of gratuitous, dangerous, ambiguous, impractical, and impossible engagements...in all parts of the world” (Gladstone, *Political* 47–48). In Gladstone’s opinion, these Disraeli-effected entanglements included India, Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, and Cyprus. Gladstone repeatedly attacks the past and future cost—in money, manpower, and international respect—of Disraeli’s “impossible engagements”: “I can see no limit to these operations—everything of that kind means a necessity for more money, and means a necessity for more men” (64). The Cyprus and Afghanistan “enterprise[s] [were] undertaken,” Gladstone accuses, because of “great cupidity” (205). He presents unsparing pictures of British destruction and cruelty, particularly in the “willful, unjust, and destructive” war in Afghanistan (203): “We have gone up into the mountains; we have broken Afghanistan to pieces; we have driven mothers and children forth from their homes to perish in the snow; we have spent treasure” (204). In his famous 1878 essay “England’s Mission,” Gladstone continually characterizes Disraeli’s imperial policy as shallowly greedy and morally vacuous by using the following terms: “acquisitiveness” (569), “accumulation” (570), “multiplication of possessions” (572), and “the greed of an endless aggrandisement”(584). These new acquisitions,
Gladstone tallies, will continue to drain the British purse and taint its moral prestige. With regards to Cyprus, he imagines, “We shall probably lay out large sums, which will never be reimbursed” (567). Possessions near the Cape, he guesses, “have cost us probably twenty to thirty millions sterling in wars and military establishments” (572). Gladstone wasn’t completely against empire, but he was anti-expansionist, and he clung to moral rather than profit-driven justifications for the already existing empire. Gladstone’s awareness of and aversion to the greed and loss involved in imperialism, however, align him with Jim’s criticism of empire in Treasure Island. The adults (including the doctor), on the other hand, evoke Gladstone’s representation of Disraeli and his empire-happy policies. Gladstone, in fact, was a fan of Stevenson’s work. Treasure Island “fascinated” him (Hennessy 180), and he read Kidnapped in one sitting (Matthew 276).

Though the Scottish Stevenson was not in Scotland at the time of Gladstone’s lectures (he was in America preparing to marry Fanny Osborne), and though he was been reported to be “a solidly anti-Gladstonian Tory” (Harvie 115), Stevenson’s politics were interpreted—then and now—as being less rigidly conservative than his party-identification would imply. He went through a “socialist” phase in the early 1870s, and though the phase ended, the “religious unbelief” that accompanied it remained afterwards (Harvie 115). The Kailyarders, “political

130 Harvie provides evidence for why Stevenson “loathed” Gladstone: “Gladstone, the public exemplification of Christian high-minded politics, had in Stevenson’s eyes, allowed the murder at Khartoum of General Gordon, in 1885. He had also become, in 1885, the ally of the Irish political party, through his adoption of home rule. By this step, in Tory eyes, he was condoning the campaign of agrarian violence launched by adherents of the Land League and sanctioned by the Irish M.P.s at Westminster” (121).
Liberals,” believed that “Stevenson’s revolt against the old rigidities of mid-nineteenth-century religious politics, his sympathy for children, [and] his championing of effective values in education” “reinforced their own aims” (Harvie 114). Additionally, critics have started to discover evidence of Stevenson’s complicated stance towards empire, particularly in works written after his move to the South Seas in 1889. Julia Reid claims that the relocation helped him form a “perception of the savagery lurking at the heart of soi disant civilisation” and that, after he moves, Stevenson “condemns the effects of European imperialism in the Pacific” (55, 57). Katherine Linehan concurs that Stevenson’s experience in the South Seas encouraged Stevenson’s “critique of colonialism” in his later works (407). “The Beach of Falesá,” Linehan argues, should be viewed “as an antecedent to Conrad’s Heart of Darkness” (407). Gubar proposes that both Treasure Island’s “status as children’s literature” (80) and Stevenson’s “intensely self-deprecating stance” (80) on the novel have prevented critics from appreciating how Treasure Island “reflects and amplifies” “late Victorian anxieties about empire” (81).

Jim, though he may be an adult by the time he narrates, declines to identify himself as an adult narrator; rather, he positions himself as an eternal boy to better resist the adulthood of Dr. Livesey. Although Jim does narrate retrospectively about the treasure-hunting adventure, the distance between the narration and the adventure remains unspecified; that vagueness has allowed critics to variously claim Jim Hawkins the narrator (rather than Jim the character) as an adult and as a child. David Jackson refers to the “adult Jim’s narration” (29), and Wendy Katz describes the book as “adult Jim recalling his youthful adventures” (xxv) and mentions the “haunted adult narrator, who recollects the boy” (xxvi). Fiona McCulloch argues that Hawkins
the narrator is an adult but cunningly masquerades as a child to “lure the child reader” (71). On the other hand, Mary Louise McKenzie calls Jim a “boy-narrator” who possesses a “youthful point of view” (416).Rose similarly describes *Treasure Island* as “a story told by the child hero” (79–80). Alistair Fowler seems to indirectly identify Jim as a boy narrator: “The narrator, Jim Hawkins, is of an age that easily excuses amoral externality” (108). Kiely, too, indirectly identifies the narrator as a boy: “we are offered as our only authority the imperfect memory of a boy who assures us casually that he recalls past events as though they had all happened the previous day” (69, emphasis added). Where a critic falls on this particular question generally indicates whether or not the critic considers *Treasure Island* to be a bildungsroman or a pure adventure story. Because Sandison categorizes the novel as a bildungsroman, he characterizes Jim as a “matured,” “older” adult narrator (80, 78). Because Kiely argues that the book is nothing more than a “boy’s daydream” (81), it logically follows that Jim makes for a boyish narrator. Critics, however, rarely provide any evidence for their reasoning, and the novel does prove quite cagey on the topic of Jim’s age. The only sentence that positively identifies Jim’s age appeared in the serial version and was cut by Stevenson when he made extensive revisions for the book edition. The disclosure occurs during Jim’s haughty speech to the pirates, when he inadvertently hands himself over to them: “The laugh’s on my side. I’ve as good as hanged you, every man, and I’m not fifteen till my next birthday” (Letley 209). Jim, then, is fourteen years old. The book edition reads, “It is for you to choose. Kill another and do yourselves no good, or

131 McCulloch ultimately thinks this structure consciously critiques children’s literature “by addressing the inherent inequality between adult author and child recipient” (75).

McCulloch, then, links Jim and Silver, since both “play the “role of adult deceiver, tempting his own fledgling reader” (77).
spare me and keep a witness to save you from the gallows” (*TI* 152). In their discussion of the revision of this particular passage, P. Hardesty, W. Hardesty, and Mann note, “In the book text, Jim bargains, rather than brags,” but they offer no comment on the erased age of Jim (388). Interestingly, the revisions also remove Jim’s line, “I’ve as good as hanged you”; here, Jim constructs himself as an eager punisher and killer. His confidence mirrors Dr. Livesey’s assurance when threatening Billy Bones’s life at the Admiral Benbow. The revised line, however, transfers the killing and punishing to the pirates themselves (“Kill another and do yourselves no good”) and conceives of Jim as earnestly wanting to prevent their death (“a witness to save you from the gallows”). It is important, then, that the revisions in this passage clearly separate Jim from the example of Dr. Livesey. Back to the issue of time, the only date in the whole novel, the date at which Jim starts to write his tale, is partially obscured: “I take up my pen in the year of grace 17— ” (*TI* 1). And Jim never states when the treasure expedition took place or how much time has passed between the adventure and the telling of the adventure. Nonetheless, Jim repeatedly casts himself as a boy in comparison to the grown-up men surrounding him: “there were only seven out of the twenty-six on whom we knew we could rely; and out of these seven one was a boy, so that the grown men on our side were six to their nineteen” (67). In contrasting himself with Silver he writes, “he and I should have to fight for dear life—he, a cripple, and I, a boy—against five strong and active seamen!” (170). In the story itself, Jim identifies himself as and is identified by others as a boy. This lack of an age allows him to occupy the position of “boy” more generically.
The narrator of R. M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858) provides a useful contrast to Jim’s vagaries about time.\(^{132}\) *The Coral Island*, probably the most famous Robinsonade and certainly the most famous of Ballantyne’s many works, no doubt influenced *Treasure Island*; Stevenson even references Ballantyne in the poem “To the Hesitating Purchaser” that prefaces the book version of *Treasure Island*.\(^{133}\) Ralph Rover narrates (without interruption) his and his friends’ adventures shipwrecked on a South Seas island and the subsequent entanglements with pirates and island tribes. Ralph shares his own age—fifteen—in the first chapter of the book, and attaches ages to his friends—Jack, eighteen, and Peterkin, fourteen—as soon as he first describes them for the reader in the second chapter of the book. And from the preface onwards, Ralph makes clear that he has grown up and that the adventures he now narrates happened long ago. The preface reveals, “I was a boy when I went through the wonderful adventures herein set down. With the memory of my boyish feelings strong upon me, I present my book specifically to boys” (Ballantyne 5). Ralph, in fact, is so far grown up that he is now “retir[ed] from the stirring life of adventure which I have led so long in foreign climes” (106). In ruminating on the peace and joy he enjoys during his sojourn on the island, Ralph addresses the reader: “My reader must not suppose that I thought all this in the clear and methodical manner in which I have set it down here. These thoughts did indeed pass through my mind, but they did so in a very confused and indefinite manner, for I was young at that time, and not much given to deep reflection” (89). Ralph again reminds us that he is now old and was then young; he has grown more mature and

\(^{132}\) For more general comparison of *The Coral Island* and *Treasure Island* see Bristow, Gubar, and Loxley.

\(^{133}\) “If studious youth no longer crave, / His ancient appetites forgot, / Kingston, or Ballantyne the brave” (*TI* n. p.).
meditative over the years. His stance to the commonly addressed “reader”—identified in the preface as “boys”—slants to the instructive, stressing his maturity and wisdom. In a digression on the benefits of bathing in cold water, Ralph writes, “My readers will forgive me for asking whether they are in the habit of bathing thus every morning; and if they answer ‘No,’ they will pardon me for recommending them to begin at once” (106). And in chastising people’s disinclination to observe the world around him, he “recommend[s]” to such people “a course of conduct which I have now for a long time myself adopted—namely, the habit of forcing my attention upon all things that go on around me” (141). Jim, on the other hand, never presumes to instruct the reader. He never positions himself as the wizened, wise seaman. Jim occasionally calls attention to information he learned post-adventure—the snake he crossed paths with was actually a dangerous rattlesnake and the barking monsters on the cliffs were merely harmless sea lions—but such information, a meager collection of natural facts, teaches the readers only indirectly and never causes Jim to present himself as naïve then and learned now. Jim offers almost no indication about how much time has passed between story and narration, while we know that significant time—decades—have passed for Ralph. As Rose comments about Ralph, “This is a narrator who knows, absolutely, who he is and from where he is speaking” (79). At the close of the story, Jim does narrate what some of his fellow shipmen are doing “now”; however, the reader only knows that Ben Gunn wasted his share of the fortune in nineteen days and was “back to begging on the twentieth” day after their return (TI 191). Gray’s “rise” to ship owner and family man probably took some time (at least a year), but we really have no sense of how much. So, during the story, Jim identifies himself as and is identified by others as a boy; in the narrating situation, Jim declines to identify himself by age or age category or to provide information about the date or about the time that has passed. Clearly, Stevenson considers it
important that Jim, unlike Ralph, never identifies as an adult in his position as narrator. Remaining in the position of a child (even if one is not a child in age) allows Jim to mark his continuing resistance to the greed of the adult world.

Jim’s lack of interest in finding and possessing the treasure further distinguishes Jim from the adult greed that surrounds him. When W. W. Robson wonders, “why does the treasure count so little, emotionally, in the tale?”, he is really wondering why it counts so little for Jim (81).

When the pirates, with Jim in tow, finally near the supposed treasure site, the pirates, but not Jim, are overcome with the desire to acquire the wealth: “The thought of the money, as they drew nearer, swallowed up their previous terrors. Their eyes burned in their heads; their feet grew speedier and lighter; their whole soul was bound up in that fortune” (TI 179). The lure of money aggressively entraps and injures them, “burn[ing]” their bodies, binding their souls, and “swallow[ing]” their caution. Silver, too, is like “one possessed” (180), and his soul, like his fellow pirates’, is intensely perverted by the riches: “Every thought of his soul had been set full-stretch, like a racer, on that money” (181). Multiple times Jim refers to the “treasure-hunters” and does not include himself in that category: “before the arrival of the treasure-hunters” (184); “it was hard for me to keep up with the rapid pace of the treasure-hunters” (179). In the aforementioned quotation about the avaricious pirates, Jim repeatedly uses the pronouns “they” and “their” to separate himself from their greedy desires. As he approaches the treasure site, Jim reveals no joy or excitement at the prospect of discovery. Instead, he imagines being haunted by the violence involved in the infamous treasure: “I was haunted by the thought of the tragedy that had once been acted on that plateau, when that ungodly buccaneer with the blue face...had there, with his own hand, cut down his six accomplices. This grove, that was now so peaceful, must
then have rung with cries” (179). When Jim finally sees the piles of coin, the sense of being haunted by the treasure’s violent history returns:

That was Flint’s treasure that we had come so far to seek, and that had cost already the lives of seventeen men from the Hispaniola. How many it had cost in the amassing, what blood and sorrow, what good ships scuttled on the deep, what brave men walking the plank blindfold, what shot of cannon, what shame and lies and cruelty, perhaps no man alive could tell. (185)

The only aspect of the march to the treasure site that Jim enjoys is the scenic landscape: “It was, indeed, a most pleasant portion of the island that we were now approaching” (172). Otherwise, the trip is a literally painful one for Jim, as Silver “plucked furiously” and “plucked so roughly at the rope” that encircles Jim and ties him to the pirate leader (179). Sorting the treasure is also a painful activity, as Jim reports, “my back aches with stooping and my fingers with sorting them up” (187). Christopher Parkes, however, interprets this scene as Jim’s “emerge[nce] [as] an image of a heroic civil servant” (332); the “great pleasure” (342) Jim takes, Parkes argues, in “counting the treasure” (342) positions Jim as an eager “clerk in the treasury office” (342). In truth, Jim is not counting but sorting the coins, and Jim’s expressed pleasure is in the activity of sorting: “I think I never had more pleasure than in sorting them” (TI 341). Ever alive to detail, Jim is specifically impressed by the “diversity of coinage” before him (rather than in the sheer amount of money), just as he was interested in the diversity of tree species on the island. But he still expresses no desire to possess, save, spend, or calculate the money. Wood summarizes, “Jim...tells of no personal gain except nightmare” (80). Even earlier in the novel, Jim doesn’t include the treasure in his much-cited “sea-dreams” passage in which he lists his hopes for the upcoming adventure (TI 36). The one time he does mention the treasure with some level of
enthusiasm occurs the day before the ship sets sail from Bristol and for the island. The reference comes at end of a long sentence listing all the other things Jim is excited about, which suggests that the treasure is not of the utmost importance to him; additionally, Jim seems more interested, even in this instance, in the fun of looking for the treasure (which the words “seek” and “buried” imply) rather than in discovering or possessing the plunder: “And I was going to sea myself; to sea in a schooner, with a piping boatswain, and pig-tailed singing seamen; to sea, bound for an unknown island, and to seek for buried treasures!” (40). By comparison, as soon as the doctor and squire realize the importance of the map, they anticipate having ownership of the treasure: “We’ll have...money to eat—to roll in—to play duck and drake with ever after” (34).

134 These two wealthy men don’t even need the money; the excess of money is the entire point, as shown by the squire’s flippant comment.

Jim continues his resistance to adult greed by refusing to label himself the “hero” of the treasure’s acquisition and by refusing to apply a typical bildungsroman arc to his experience (which would make the fortune an important linchpin to his development). Though various critics interpret Jim as the hero and interpret his narrative as a bildungsroman, Jim specifically gifts the label of “hero” to another character—Ben Gunn—and foists the bildungsroman arc onto another character as well—Abraham Gray. When the doctor relays to Silver and Jim how the

134 The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that “duck and drake” is a “pastime consisting in throwing a flat stone or the like over the surface of water so as to cause it to rebound or skip as many times as possible before sinking” (“duck and drake”). The phrase “to play duck and drake with” means “to throw away idly or carelessly; to play idly with; to handle or use recklessly; to squander.” In fact, the squire’s usage is one of the provided quotations in the *OED*. 

261
gentlemen managed to get their hands on the treasure, Jim writes, “Ben Gunn, the half-idiot maroon, was the hero from beginning to end” (183). The word “hero” recurs one other time in Treasure Island; Jim applies to it to Tom after Tom refuses Silver’s invitation to join the pirate crew and then realizes that the pirates have killed Alan for a similar resistance: “at this poor Tom flashed out like a hero” (75). This use of the term, however, is narrower and weaker than when Jim attaches it to Ben. While Ben is the hero, Jim employs simile in stating that Tom is “like a hero” (75, emphasis added). And while Ben is the hero “from beginning to end,” Tom is “like a hero” only in a specific action and specific moment: as he “flashe[s] out” at Silver. And Jim deems Ben the novel’s hero for good reason; Jim points out that Ben alone finds and transports the treasure (without a treasure map!), but Ben also survives being marooned for years and hand carves a boat that allows Jim to rescue the Hispaniola. Though Jim calls him a “half-idiot,” Ben is wise enough to befriend Jim and to later negotiate with the doctor (Ben offers to share the treasure if the gentlemen take Ben off the island with them). Furthermore, Ben’s impromptu mimicking of Captain Flint’s voice late in the novel successfully slows and spooks the pirates precisely when the gentlemen party must gain some extra time. Many characters try to resist or defeat Silver, but it’s Ben Gunn, as Silver himself admits, that ultimately gets the job done: “‘Ben, Ben’ murmured Silver, ‘to think as you’ve done me!’” (183).

Abraham Gray develops from a lowly “carpenter’s mate” and pirate conspirator to a loyal member of the gentlemen-party and finally to a respectable and moneyed ship owner (96). When the gentlemen desert the Hispaniola for the island stockade, the captain senses Gray’s wavering loyalty to the pirate cadre and asks Gray to join the gentlemen’s side. Gray is given a moment to legitimately choose his fate; much like God asked the biblical Abraham to leave his home, Gray listens when the captain tells him to “Come” (88). From then on, he repeatedly impresses the
gentlemen with his devotion. His cutlass-wielding skill proves that he “was worth his salt” in the doctor’s eyes (93). In another scene, Gray is the only one who remains at his stockade post (both Jim and the doctor desert their posts), thereby earning a mention by the captain in the ship’s log book: “I’ll put your name in the log; you’ve stood by your duty like a seaman” (109). By “cut[ting] down” one of the pirates in an early skirmish and later giving “strong approval” to leaving the remaining pirates on the island, Gray proves that his allegiance has totally shifted, physically and morally, to the gentlemen party (113, 189). On the final page of the novel, Jim spends some time detailing Gray’s continued improvement after the treasure expedition: “Gray not only saved his money, but, being suddenly smit with the desire to rise, also studied his profession; and he is now mate and part owner of a fine full-rigged ship; married besides, and the father of a family” (191). Once Gray returns home, he progresses in every aspect of his life. In the end, he has money, a career, a ship, a wife, and children. Jim specifically casts Gray’s story as a “rise” in both status and knowledge (after all, he “studied his profession”). Just as the biblical Abraham is rewarded for obeying God’s request, Gray is rewarded for following the captain’s request. In a different novel (perhaps in a more conventional one), Gray’s story would have been Jim’s story—Jim, inspired by his time on the island, intoxicated with the sea life, would have used his portion of the treasure as a material or educational foundation to a flourishing career at sea. Crucially, Gray’s story is not Jim’s story. And Jim’s story is not Ralph’s either.

Silver’s parrot, who haunts Jim’s dreams at the end of the novel, represents Jim’s fear that he has not successfully separated himself from the treasure, imperial greed, and adulthood. Jim and the parrot have much in common. Both Jim and the parrot are named after pirates. Silver names his pet parrot Captain Flint (though female) “after the famous buccaneer” (54).
McCulloch reports that Jim Hawkins was also named “after a notorious historical pirate” (74). As if to reference this particular parallel between Jim and the parrot, Silver twice calls Jim “Hawkins” when he introduces Jim to the parrot, even though Silver generally refers to Jim by his first name (II 54). Jim and the parrot are both coddled and flattered by Silver. Silver would “give [the parrot] sugar from his pocket” (55) and would give Jim the verbal equivalent in the form of compliments. In one instance, Jim similarly feeds Jim: “you just ask old John, and he’ll put up a snack for you to take along” (64). The parrot and Jim share a caged-like existence. As Gubar points out, the squire basically “draft[s]” Hawkins as a (presumably unpaid) employee on his ship without even asking his opinion on the matter (83): “Hawkins shall come as cabin-boy” (II 34). Then, while the adults prepare for the voyage, Jim lives at the squire’s hall “almost a prisoner” and even guarded by the squire’s most loyal servant, Tom Redruth (36). During this time, Jim is apparently not allowed to return to his mother’s inn. The squire adds in a note addressed to both Tom and Jim that “Hawkins may stay one night with his mother” (39) as if Jim is being offered a prisoner’s limited visiting privileges. When Jim (and the reader) first meet the garrulous Cap’n Flint, Silver keeps her “in a cage in one corner” of the galley (54). Adults also attempt to control and use the parrot’s voice and Jim’s voice. Silver silences the parrot by “thr[owing] his handkerchief over the cage” when he wearies of her refrain (54). Jim writes the narrative because the squire and doctor ask him to; furthermore, he abides by their request that he not release “the bearings of the island...because there is still treasure not yet lifted” (1). And, as discussed, the doctor interrupts Jim’s narrative.

135 Loman provides more details on the historical Sir John Hawkins; however, Loman does not explicitly classify Hawkins as a pirate.
The parrot, as Silver puts it, has been “mucked” by her travels (55); the “wickedness” (54) she has “seen” has caused her, in turn, to exhibit “wickedness” (55) herself. Accompanying the pirate Captain England to Africa, New Zealand, India, and South America, she picked up a habit for swearing and for repeating “pieces of eight.” To explain her unbelievable tongue, Silver tells Jim, “you can’t touch pitch and not be mucked, lad. Here’s this poor old innocent bird o’ mine swearing blue fire, and none the wiser” (55). Her screaming refrain later wakes up the sleeping pirates when Jim unknowingly walks into the pirate camp; the parrot’s capacity to watch and repeat, therefore, wakes the pirates and enables them to capture Jim. As Jim writes, “it was she, keeping better watch than any human being, who thus announced my arrival with her wearisome refrain” (148). The parrot’s evolution into a profane guard-bird reveals the tenuous line between being innocent and being mucked. This is why it is the parrot, I argue, rather than Silver, that haunts Jim’s dreams by the end of the novel: “the worst dreams that ever I have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts, or start upright in bed, with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: ‘Pieces of eight! pieces of eight!’ ” (191). In the beginning of the novel, it is Silver (who Jim only knows, at that point, as the one-legged pirate) who haunts Jim’s dreams: “How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you...To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of my nightmares” (3). It is Silver’s “diabolical expressions,” “monstrous” body, and brute strength and aggressiveness (“leap and run and pursue me”) that terrify Jim. What’s so terrifying about the avian Captain Flint? Both named after pirates, both witnesses to imperial greed, and both flattered by Silver, Jim had risked becoming as naively greedy as she, had risked becoming a witness irreversibly “mucked” by what is witnessed. It is his very compulsion to repeat these dreams, then, that shows his fear of becoming Cap’n Flint: a parrot. After all, though the parrot may looks like “she
was a babby” (55), she’s “two hundred years old” (54). She’s Silver’s “old” bird (55): the parrot is an adult—mucked by experience and relentlessly greedy.136

Why do the squire and doctor ask Jim to write this story? Perhaps, at least partially, because he has a proven capacity for memory. In the second paragraph he writes, “I remember [Billy Bones] as if it were yesterday,” and a few sentences later, he reiterates, “I remember him looking round the cove” (1). Jim continues to use this “I remember” phrase: “I remember the appearance of his coat” (4); “the last rays, I remember, falling through a glade of the wood” (145). The doctor never uses the phrase “I remember” in his section, never calls attention to his memory. Jim has a susceptibility to be haunted, to be affected. Earlier in the novel, as already

136 Sandison also wonders why “a parrot gets the last word” and “why Jim should be frightened by a parrot” (48, 51). Sandison assumes that because the parrot is Silver’s pet, the parrot actually stands in for Silver. Silver “demonstrates his permanence by invading Jim’s dreams as a mocking echo in the voice of the parrot” (79), and Jim is “honest enough to allow that [Silver] has not disappeared from his dreams” by the end of the novel (79–80). Sandison further argues that the “gabbling of [the] parrot...burlesques the fundamentals of language and meaning” just as Silver “derides the notion of inalienable verbal truth” (78). Gubar also considers the parrot’s significance and concludes that Jim has already become the parrot:

If Jim’s suspicious stance at the end of the novel represents the best attitude to take toward silver-tongued storytellers, the bird’s habit of mindless reiteration signifies the worst. The parrot serves as a haunting symbol of voicelessness and an utter lack of autonomy, and the fact that he gets the last word confirms that Treasure Island is not a story about achieving maturity and mastery. For Jim, skepticism comes too late; he has already played the parrot’s part. (90)
mentioned, Silver “haunted my dreams” (3), and, late in the novel, Jim is “haunted by the thought of the tragedy that had once been acted on that plateau” (179). Jim imagines the bloody scene: “This grove, that was now so peaceful, must then have rung with cries, I thought; and even with the thought I could believe I heard it ringing still” (179). To have cries “ringing still” (179) or “still ringing” (191) in one’s ears is to be the haunted child, refusing to grow up and forget. Barrie’s Peter and Wendy will rework these same issues, but the adult will be the haunted one, while the child will be unable to remember.137 Bradley Deane, conversely, considers Jim Hawkins’s and Peter Pan’s “evergreen boyishness” (701) as both being part of “a fantasy that enabled and sustained the new imperialist imagination” (690). But though Jim has his moments of play on the island, he ultimately does not “[escape]” “moral laws,” but becomes the only one to embrace them (Deane 697). In his final paragraph, Jim asserts that the “bar silver” remains buried and that “certainly [it] shall lie there for me” (TI 191). He passionately continues, “Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island” (191). With those powerful and firm words, Jim is ostensibly speaking to the squire and the doctor, who have requested this account and who are, presumably, reading it over his shoulder. After all, they have asked him not to reveal “the bearings of the island...because there is still treasure not yet lifted” (1); presumably, they intend to return to the island in order to lift that remaining treasure. But

137 Barrie writes of the children’s Neverlands, “On these magic shores children at play are for ever beaching their coracles. We too have been there; we can still hear the sound of the surf, through we shall land no more” (9). Throughout Peter and Wendy, Barrie writes that the Darling children are forgetting their parents slowly. Peter himself forgets people as soon as he kills them and sometimes even forgets who the Darling children are. The child has little capacity for memory; the adult is haunted by the past, by the “sound of the surf.”
Jim will not be the parrot who acquiesces to such a desire. Because being an adult means being cool, cold, emotionless, and greedy: it means moving to the beat of “pieces of eight.”

4.2 A GREAT EMERGENCY

Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841–1885) earned the nickname “Aunt Judy,” and her mother named the children’s magazine she started in 1866 after the young storyteller’s epithet. Much of Ewing’s writing was published within the pages of the very respectable Aunt Judy’s Magazine, a publication which Green deems “perhaps the most famous children’s periodical of the century” (100). Ewing wrote steadily throughout her life: throughout her marriage to Major Alexander Ewing (which occurred in 1867) and through the many relocations necessitated by her husband’s military career. Ewing was prolific, popular, and esteemed. Some of her most famous stories include A Flat-Iron for a Farthing, Jan of the Windmill, Jackanapes, and The Story of a Short Life. After her death, her fellow children’s literature authoress Mrs. Molesworth wrote that Ewing’s “writings have had a great and lasting influence on our juvenile literature” (503). Although some critics find her works to be dated or too difficult for the child reader to completely understand,138 she is nonetheless praised for the “excellence of [her] style and

138 Townsend writes that Ewing “was an able writer, properly respected in her day and for some time after it, but I doubt whether she will strike many sparks from the modern reader” (70) because her works are “basically period-pieces” (69). Green suggests that it is the “very excellence of Mrs Ewing’s style and character-drawing” that makes “the majority of her books too difficult for the average child” (102). Mrs. Molesworth agrees that although “in no respect can Mrs Ewing’s books be found wanting,” “they are sometimes beyond an average child’s full comprehension” (506). Carpenter and Prichard concur: “the diction of her narratives is so

268
character-drawing” (Green 102), her “refinements of artistry” (Thwaite 150), and her “realism of detail” (Darton 291).

As in *Treasure Island*, the quick switch in *A Great Emergency* functions as a punishment of the primary narrator, but in *A Great Emergency*, Charlie initiates and accepts the punishment and thereby makes it self-punishment. Dr. Livesey barges into Jim’s narration, unexpected, unannounced, and un-asked for, while Charlie chooses to include Henrietta’s diary entry in his own narrative. Charlie himself introduces and hence, softens, Henrietta’s incursion into his text. Henrietta hands over her diary to him voluntarily because she knows it will satisfy his curiosity: “she knew I wanted to know” (Ewing 124). And then Charlie chooses to reproduce the diary entry rather than reading the diary and just summarizing its contents. Henrietta’s text, therefore, becomes an embedded narration (her diary entry is entirely in italics and is bracketed by quotation marks), and she narrates on a different level than Charlie. Using Genette’s terms to describe narrative levels, Charlie is a first-degree narrator—an extradiegetic narrator—while Henrietta is a second-level narrator—an intradiegetic narrator (whose narrative is a metanarrative). In the case of *Treasure Island*, Jim and Dr. Livesey (in my opinion) narrate at the same level: they are both intradiegetic narrators (Dr. Livesey’s narration is not marked in any way as existing “within” Jim’s text). Dr. Livesey’s narration, then, feels like a direct challenge to Jim’s, while Henrietta’s narration, in essence, submits to Charlie’s narration. As far as we know, neither Henrietta nor Rupert chastise or overtly punish Charlie for his behavior, but the act of including Henrietta’s diary entry allows Henrietta to share her own undoubted heroics without any awareness that she is, in fact, heroic. The demure, almost unconscious, relation of her own sophisticated that at times she seems to be writing a novel about childhood for an adult readership, rather than a book for children” (171).
bravery is really what shames Charlie—humiliating his tendency to brag and his desire to win glory. Missing the “chance of distinguishing [himself] in the only Great Emergency which has yet occurred in our family” (Ewing 134), particularly because of his “vain, jealous, wild-goose chase after adventures” (134), is punishment in and of itself. Allowing Henrietta to manifest her superiority to Charlie—in both deed and attitude—in her own words only deepens that punishment. But in this very punishment Charlie proves his honor and achieves the masculinity he is always struggling to achieve: he shows that he can correctly and authoritatively interpret the feminine text and give credit where credit is due. Charlie repeatedly stresses that Henrietta and Rupert showed “real bravery” and “had been a credit to the family” (133, 131), while Charlie admits that he “deserved nothing. I had only run away in the mean hope of outshining them, and had made a fool of myself” (131). He further confesses that “that there was something rather mean in my desertion of” his sister and mother (117). Charlie uses Henrietta’s diary simultaneously as self-punishment and as self-congratulation: he was wrong, he’s willing to atone, and yet, he knows to value Henrietta’s actions in a way that even she doesn’t value them.

Early in *A Great Emergency*, a fellow student punishes Charlie by hijacking his narrative, an act which sets up the book’s pattern of equating punishment with loss of narrative power or control. As the new boy at school, Charlie eagerly and uncontrollably brags about the honor and bravery of his father and family to anyone who will listen. Not only does Weston, an older student and the school clown, invite Charlie into a painfully long fit of bragging, but Charlie also admits that even in his dreams he “retold the family tale at even greater length than before” (25). He apparently even performed the so-called “family chronicle” (28) for the maids as well: “And the nursemaids had always listened so willingly” (26). Weston takes Charlie’s familial narrative and “twist[s] [it] into a comic ballad, which he had composed overnight” and performs it “with a
mock heroic air and voice” in front of all the boys at the school (28). Because Charlie broke the “code of honor” drawn up by and followed by the schoolboys—the code specifically lists bragging as one of many forbidden acts—Weston, one of the school leaders, must punish Charlie for the infraction. Charlie characterizes Weston’s “comic ballad” as a lesson and a punishment: “I had got my lesson well by heart. Fifty thousand preachers in fifty thousand pulpits could never have taught me so effectually as Weston’s ballad” (29). With “burning cheeks and downcast eyes,” Charlie tries to “bear” his punishment without complaint and without running away; after all, he knows he was wrong, that “it was my own fault” (29). In fact, later on in the story, Charlie frames this event specifically as a punishment: Charlie’s boasting “had furnished [Weston’s] ready pen with matter for a comic ballad to punish my bragging” (132, emphasis added). Just as Weston’s narrative, the comic ballad, punishes Charlie’s own narrative, the puffed up family chronicle, Charlie turns to Henrietta’s narrative, her demure diary entry, to punish his own narrative of egotism.

The quick switch occurs along gender lines with the consequence of hardening gender identities: properly masculinizing the boy and feminizing the tomboy. The proper performing of gender identities is a fraught issue throughout A Great Emergency. Eldest brother Rupert is presented as a ruggedly handsome boy who is very invested in maintaining the gender binary in line with the Victorian conception of separate spheres. He prefers to keep Henrietta out of games, and he instructs her on what girls should and shouldn’t do (e.g. “girls oughtn’t to dispute or discuss” [16]). He forces Charlie to quit playing cricket with Henrietta because it “encouraged her in being unladylike” (18), and the proper Victorian girl’s “bodily movements had to be constrained by the conventions of ladylike behaviour” (Burstyn 36). Charlie sometimes proves accepting of Henrietta as a boyish companion, but when the barge-master Mr. Rowe tells him
that “women and children’s best ashore,” Charlie merely assents, “Of course they are” (Ewing 89), apparently ignoring his own sister’s desire and aptitude for adventure. And Charlie proves anxious over his own performance of masculinity. He overtly practices masculinity by imitating Rupert: “Rupert came into the nursery, holding up his handsome head with the dignified air which became him so well that I had more than once tried to put it on myself before the nursery looking-glass” (9–10). Rupert, in fact, seems threatened by Henrietta’s success in being masculine; Rupert is “vexed” (17) that she successfully plays the boy in a family theatrical and is “vexed” again when she “rode the pony bare-backed which had kicked him off” (18). She refuses to admit, as a proper Victorian girl was taught to do, that though her “brothers might often take expeditions, she seldom did; they might climb trees, run and wrestle, she was not allowed to do so” (Burstyn 36–37). She writes “Henry” in her books, wear boys’ boots, boxes, plays cricket, and argues—even her hair naturally parts in a boyish way. This litany of boyish activities and guises marks Henrietta as a tomboy. The “active, intelligent, playful, and loving tomboy,” Lynne Vallone explains, was a “popular conception of nineteenth-century girlhood” (119). Like the typical tomboy, Henrietta “plays at being a boy” (Vallone 120)—she writes a play in which she performs a male part. And also like the typical tomboy, Henrietta “prefers boyish games and pursuits to the duties of the domestic girl” (Vallone 119).

139 Juliana Ewing, like her character Henrietta, enjoyed private theatricals. Darton tells us that, “as a girl in her home she had acted Miss Corner’s popular plays for children, and often took part in private theatricals in later life. She contributed ‘Hints for Private Theatricals’ to Aunt Judy’s Magazine in 1875–6” (291). Avery adds that Ewing “usually played a man’s part” in such productions, just as Henrietta does in the story (19). Maxwell writes that “Not only was she
When Rupert is lamed through a cricket accident, however, Henrietta begins to embrace a more traditional femininity. Such a transformation, as Vallone and Abate remark, is routine for tomboys. They were “expected to slough off tomboyish traits when they reached a specific age or stage in life” (Abate xix), and, therefore, “most nineteenth-century tomboys do grow into some form or other of the conventional woman” (Vallone 121). Henrietta becomes determined to care for the injured Rupert—she wins Rupert’s approval of her nursing skills through her soft way of dressing his wounds—and the position seems to domesticate and tame her. She’s now only described by Charlie as tending to and reading to Rupert. As she leaves her tomboy ways behind, she turns into the Victorian “good daughter” who was “gentle, loving, self-sacrificing and innocent” (Gorham 37). One day, Henrietta visibly converts herself into more of a conventional girl, apparently just for Rupert, as previously “[n]othing made Rupert angrier” than her boyish hairstyle (Ewing 17): “she came down to breakfast with her hair all done up in the way that was in fashion then, like a grown-up young lady, and I think Rupert was pleased, though she looked rather funny and very red. And so Henrietta nursed him altogether” (41–42). Rupert’s pleasure and Henrietta’s shy blushing (very out of character) suggest that their relationship, as brother-sister relationships in the Victorian period ideally did, modeled for them how to act with future spouses without the presence of a complicating sexual aspect (Gorham 47). The romanticized sibling relationship in the Victorian period, as Deborah Gorham explains, helpfully inculcated the sister with proper feminine traits: “The woman’s mission of self-sacrifice was meant to be a girl’s guiding principle in [the brother-sister] relationship, just as it would in future be the guiding principle of her relationship with her husband” (47). Sanders also herself a capable actress, but she had had plenty of experience in painting scenery and contriving effects” (201).
notes that the “romantic loyalty and devotion surrounding siblings” cherished by the Victorian family included “sisters playing the role of nurturers and carers” (4). Henrietta performs that role with gusto as soon as her elder brother needs that nurture and care.

The “great emergency”—both in terms of the house fire and the diary entry which earns the chapter the title—furthers Henrietta’s makeover from a tomboy into a young lady and increases Henrietta’s resemblance to her invalid mother. Charlie portrays his mother as frail, silly, and delicate. On one occasion, Rupert asks her a question while she is, characteristically, lying on the sofa, and she responds, “Why can’t you just amuse yourselves in the nursery? It is very hard you should come and disturb me for such a nonsensical question” (Ewing 43). The smell of flowers and the sound of bells makes her “feel very ill” (54), and she’s easily “alarmed” (59). The mother is also “very delicate, and...had a horror of accidents” (41). Additionally, she “was took with dreadful fainting fits” when she escapes the burning house (125). The house-destroying blaze silences and infects Henrietta, who was previously an outspoken and physically robust tomboy. As Abate explains in her history of tomboys, literary tomboys’ “gender-bending behavior” is often terminated by a “life-threatening illness or injury” (xx); although Rupert’s injury initiates Henrietta’s change, her own life-threatening experience and injury finalize it. The diary entry is bracketed by Henrietta’s feelings of illness—she feels ill right before and right after the fire; in addition to narrating the events of the fire, therefore, the diary entry narrates a descent into sickness. The night of the fire, Henrietta writes, “I had got rather a headache and gone to bed. The pain kept me awake a good bit” (Ewing 124). While she’s crawling through the smoky house with Rupert in search of baby Cecil, she mentions that the air is “suffocating,” and even though Rupert is able to speak to Henrietta, she “couldn’t speak, my throat was so sore” (127). This moment oddly fulfills Rupert’s maxim that she had previously bucked: “girls
oughtn’t to dispute or discuss” (16). Directly after the fire, the doctor diagnoses Henrietta as
generically “ill” and instructs her to not talk about the fire (124). Henrietta admits that post-fire,
her “head got so bad” (124). Just as the sound of the town’s church bells ringing makes their
mother “feel very ill” (54), Henrietta emits a similar distress as she emerges from the burning
building to the tune of the bells employed in emergencies: “the people began to shout and to
cheer…It made me very giddy, and so did the clanging of those dreadful bells” (128).\footnote{Just as Alan’s death scream strikingly recurs in both Jim and the doctor’s narrations, the ringing church bells similarly sound in both Charlie and Henrietta’s narrations. Of course, this is possible because sounds travel, and narrators in different spaces can hear the same sound even though they don’t see the same surroundings; however, there might be more to say on the ability of sound to link separate narratives together.} And Henrietta describes the bell-induced infliction not as a temporary symptom but as a permanent
condition: “I think I shall always feel sick when I hear hurrahing now” (128). Furthermore,
although Henrietta had previously longed for adventure for adventure’s sake, her diary reveals
that her motivation to enter the burning building is not the challenge of saving the baby or the
opportunity to prove her mettle in a true emergency, but rather the conviction that the baby dying
would kill Rupert. Saving Rupert (not Cecil!) is her primary motivation. The inspiration,
therefore, is selfless, aimed at protecting her brother/model spouse; the impetus is not her
previously-voiced pleasure in dangerous circumstances themselves: “Some people seem to like
dangers and adventures whilst the dangers are going on; Henrietta always seemed to think that
the pleasantest part” (59). So, ironically, the event that allows Henrietta to prove her masculinity
(Rupert previously says that “women are not expected to do things when there’s danger” [10])
also silences and feminizes her.

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Although Henrietta has a penchant for being outspoken and theatrical, she narrates through her diary, a private literary form; the private nature of her narrative contrasts with the more public outlets available to the boys in the story. Both Henrietta and Charlie emphasize the private nature of her diary. When she hands the diary to her brother, she reminds him that it is her diary and that she is trusting him to read only the pages that she’s marked as being related to the fire: “It’s my diary, Charlie, so I know you won’t look. But I’ve put in two marks for the beginning and end of the bit about the fire” (124). Respecting her pleas to privacy, Charlie double checks with her which pages he’s allowed to read even though she’s already marked them. Only male curiosity can trump the sacredness of female privacy: “she knew I wanted to know, so one day…she gave me a manuscript book” (124). Ostensibly, Henrietta writes her diary for no audience beyond herself. Although Charlie is a relatively unconscious narrator, only obliquely referencing his reader and the narrative he’s writing, he still has a direct line of communication with his readers. Weston’s narrative version of the fire is published in the local newspaper. Although Weston’s “greatest ambition was to get something of his own invention printed” (36), the newspaper rejects his many previous attempts. But the “great emergency” becomes the means by which Weston achieves his goals of being published (on the front page, no less!) and being read by a large audience: “the fire that burned down our house finally got Weston into print at last…It was not a common letter either…It was a leading article, printed big, and it was about the fire and Rupert and Henrietta” (132). The barge master Rowe (who brings Charlie and Fred back home from London) refuses to change his notion of the events of the story even when Henrietta contradicts him on a key detail: she and Rupert ascended via the back stairs of the house, which were not on fire, and they didn’t go up the front stairs, which were on fire. Rowe merely “smiled in reply” when Henrietta corrects his version, but Charlie writes that
Rowe’s smile “was with the affability of superior knowledge, and I feel quite sure that he always told the story (and believed it) according to the impossible version” (130). Charlie, Weston, and Rowe disseminate Henrietta’s story to the public. And, because of such public dissemination, the family’s wealthy and titled male cousin who has previously snubbed his relatives invites the family to stay in his castle for several months. The castled peer subsequently sends Rupert to therapeutic baths for his injured knee and then to a fancy school and sets Charlie up on a naval training ship. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we hear almost nothing from Henrietta once we read her diary, and we never learn what becomes of her.

Henrietta’s narrative, in general, fulfills Alison’s Case rubric for feminine narration. Alison Case argues that feminine narration “is characterized by the restriction of the female narrator to the role of narrative witness” (4); the feminine narrator, therefore, “typically provides only the raw material of narrative, which is usually shaped and given meaning by a male ‘master-narrator’ within the text” (13). Feminine narrators “embody” “moral truth” (15), but they don’t claim to possess it, and they don’t preach it. As already discussed, Henrietta provides the “raw material” of the fire incident and unconsciously reveals her virtue, but it’s up to Charlie (Case’s male “master-narrator”) to interpret her actions and to identify Henrietta as good and virtuous. Christabel Maxwell considers Henrietta’s diary account “genuinely affecting” because “of its skill in understatement” (197). Henrietta herself never acknowledges her bravery or selflessness but leaves it to the reader and the cheering crowd to manifest admiration for her behavior. She has no thought for the danger she is putting herself in. Rupert also throws out a few backhanded compliments that also allow the praise to register: “Oh, Henny, you good girl” (Ewing 127), and “You’re the bravest girl I ever knew” (128). Such girl-oriented compliments take the masculine edge off her heroics. If Henrietta praised herself, it would come off as
unladylike and egotistical. She can’t be anything but humble. Praise must come from outside herself—especially from her brothers—and it does.

Furthermore, early in the story, Charlie proved to be an inadequate reader. He drastically misreads his friend Fred’s fanciful adventure stories by taking them to be fact rather than fiction. Charlie uses Henrietta’s diary, therefore, to redeem himself as a reader. When he shows himself able to read beyond the surface of Henrietta’s diary account—he sees through her humility to uncover her unspoken yet implied audacity—he redefines himself as an authoritative, rather than foolish, reader. Although Fred’s “wonderful stories” (54) are perhaps based on the life of Fred’s grandfather, a captain in the navy, their utter preposterousness and exaggerated parallels to Robinsonade conventions mark them as fiction. Nonetheless, Charlie admits that he “certainly did believe in [Fred’s] stories” (51). Charlie seems to treat Fred’s stories as he treats the instruction manual that provides “Directions how to act with presence of mind in any emergency” (9). Charlie makes his own instruction manual (seemingly inspired by the former one) based on Fred’s stories: “I made a handbook for adventure-seekers, too...showing what might be expected and should be prepared for in a career like the captain’s...I got all my information from Fred” (63). Charlie makes the mistake of taking Fred’s stories at face value, imagining them to be entirely true and factual. He even bases his own behavior on the captain’s supposed actions. For example, since the “captain had run away” as a child (58), Charlie believes that the “only way for people at our age, and in our position, to begin a life of adventure is to run away” (58). Although Charlie knows that Fred “liked telling things” (50), Charlie doesn’t use his awareness of Fred’s personality to better judge the credibility of Fred’s stories. Conversely, by the end of the story, Charlie learns that he must take Henrietta’s new reserved personality into account when he reads into her diary for the evidence of her heroics. By the end of A Great
Emergency, Charlie seems truly embarrassed about his previous gullibility with regards to Fred’s stories. He tells the reader over and over again that he no longer believes in Fred’s stories: “I know now that all the marvels were [Fred’s] own invention” (47); “I have long ago found out that Fred’s stories of the captain’s adventures were not true stories” (76); “I think the strongest tie between us was his splendid stories of the captain, and I do not believe in them now” (131). In the final pages of the story, when Charlie is living in Dartmouth, the same place where Fred’s grandfather supposedly lived and the place that Fred’s stories made beloved to Charlie, Charlie is still insisting (this time to his friend Weston) that he doesn’t believe in Fred’s stories anymore. Weston calls Charlie “a prig for saying so often that I did not believe it now” (133), “it” being Fred’s story about a lion that guards Dartmouth at night. The “so often” emphasizes what the reader already knows, that Charlie won’t stop telling us that he no longer believes in the stories. Correctly reading Henrietta’s diary and correctly interpreting her behavior as heroic and brave, despite Henrietta’s disavowals, provides Charlie with the necessary means of proving that his reading ability has markedly improved since he naively believed in the authenticity of Fred’s phony stories.

However, analyzing the style and content of Henrietta’s diary offers some possibility for its subtle critique of society and adults. Lisa Sternlieb offers an alternative view of female narrators, in which their presumed “artlessness, naturalness, and directness” (1) actually mask the artfulness of such narrators. Sternlieb focuses on how these narrators tell, how they “exploit the dissimilarities between plot and narration” (5). Charlie’s narrow interpretation of Henrietta’s diary as finding her and Rupert to be good and brave, and as finding himself, in comparison, to be cowardly and foolish, misses some of the more subversive elements in Henrietta’s diary. First of all, there is a wry social awareness and sarcasm evident in her diary. Although Henrietta wants
to help save some of the household items from the flames, the men shoo her and Rupert away and say they’ll take care of it; Henrietta adds, “The people who were saving our things saved them all alike. They threw them out of the window, and as I had seen the big blue china jar smashed to shivers, I felt a longing to go and show them what to do” (Ewing 125). Later on, when she decides to enter the burning house, she wets her handkerchief with water overflowing from the broken hose. She uses this opportunity to provide some commentary on the dangerous frugality of the town leaders: “The town burgesses wouldn’t buy a new hose when we got the new steam fire-engine, and when they used the old one it burst in five places, so that everything was swimming, for the water was laid on from the canal” (126). In general, the adults are portrayed as inept in her diary entry. First of all, they act poorly under distress: no one thought to save the baby from the house. Secondly, they are badly informed: initially, no one knows where the baby is. The “men” refuse Henrietta and Rupert’s help, saying they aren’t “strong enough to be of no great use, miss; you’re only in the way” (125), when in fact, Henrietta and Rupert are the only ones that are of any use in the first place. Their mother is suffering from “fainting fits” (125). And Jane, one of the servants, looks “quite wild” and is paralyzed about the missing baby Cecil (126). Various “men” come out of the burning house saying there is no way to save the baby. The “town burgesses,” probably adult men, put short term financial savings in front of the general welfare and safety of the town’s inhabitants. The male and female adults are useless, inept, or cowardly. Two children put them all to shame. When Henrietta and Rupert are carried off in a chair to the Crown (a local inn), it’s as if the adults have crowned Rupert and Henrietta as their king and queen and provided them with a fitting throne. Although Charlie correctly recognizes Henrietta and Rupert’s bravery, he misses this subtle criticism of adult society at work in Henrietta’s diary. Gillian Avery notes that such a view of adults was an attitude common
to Mrs. Ewing’s writing: “Mrs. Ewing’s real achievement was in representing the adults as fallible human beings” (46); “Mrs. Ewing puts her children against a background of adults, but she treats her readers as equals, and freely makes fun of the adult’s behaviour” (67). That Henrietta becomes the subtle, yet primary, voice of such a stance suggests that Ewing intended for Henrietta’s diary to have some critical agency.

Unlike *Treasure Island*, in which I argued the reader is supposed to feel more identified with Jim than with Dr. Livesey, the reader is encouraged to identify and sympathize with both Henrietta and Charlie at different points and in different ways. While Jim is certainly not faultless, his acts of disobedience occur within a larger narrative of obeying adults in his general trusting, genial, open way. Charlie is a boy with faults. Charlie’s insufferable class-snobbism, for example, is never really eradicated, as in the final pages of the story he is still rejoicing in the fact that his best friend is now Weston, “a fellow of good family,” while he is merely good friends with Fred, his former travel companion whose “father is only a canal-carrier” (Ewing 132). Charlie’s tastes are ever of the gentleman. In fact, the moral of the story, to Charlie, seems not to be that it’s bad to want to be a sailor, but rather that he should accomplish that goal in a class-appropriate way. Mr. Rowe’s following comment makes a big impression on him: “But of course, sir, it’s the Royal Navy you’ll begin in, as a midshipman…Your father’s son would be a good deal out of place, sir, as a cabin-boy in a common trading vessel” (116). As Gubar argues as part of her larger argument that child readers are not always supposed to identify wholeheartedly with child narrators, “the humor of Ewing’s tale often depends on child readers picking up on the limitations or blind spots of her child narrator, rather than accepting whatever he says as the gospel truth” (61). I’m not arguing that Charlie’s punishments, therefore, are undeserved or overly harsh. Rather, I’m arguing that Charlie manipulates the process of
punishment to use his sister’s diary to further his own masculinity and harden the gender binary. But Henrietta’s diary, as I’ve suggested, is not just used, but includes a subtle pulse of criticism, all the more subtle because her brother Charlie doesn’t notice it.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Nineteenth-century childrearing and parenting instruction construct the parent as an authoritative punisher who must demand (or inspire) obedience and the child as a rebellious tyrant whose ever-rising will must be squashed. An article entitled “Spoiling a Child” warns that when a parent doesn’t “reduc[e]...the little rebel to a proper condition of obedience” via punishment, that parent is “strengthening [the child’s] self-will and leading him to be obstinate, headstrong and rebellious” (Reilly 84). Advice from The British Mothers’ Magazine strikes a similar note: “The proper mode...is to punish the disobedience,” and the parent must use the type of punishment by which the child’s “spirit is most speedily brought into subjection” (“On the Home”). In her self-help memoirs, Mrs. Warren concludes, “Above all things, I first taught my children obedience” (33). She continues, “not that signs of rebellion did not sometimes appear, but I never allowed a child to become master. This obedience was not of spontaneous growth, but the result of constant though gentle drilling” (33). The child, then, is characterized as the punished, and the adult is characterized as the punisher. A child’s self-punishment, then, marks the child’s growing maturity. In “The Moral Discipline of Children,” the author explains that the “aim of [a parent’s] discipline should be to produce a self-governing being”; a parent, therefore, should “diminish the amount of parental government as fast as you can substitute for it in your child’s mind that self-government arising from a foresight of results.”
Since Charlie has no father and an inept mother, it falls to barge-master Mr. Rowe to chastise Charlie’s selfishness in so suddenly and utterly abandoning his family. Mr. Rowe successfully guilts Charlie by framing the boy’s conduct as ungentlemanlike—“he touched a sore point on my conscience,” Charlie admits (Ewing 117). Mr. Rowe also chastises Charlie for wanting to start out as a cabin boy—a class-inappropriate beginning for Charlie. Mr. Rowe, a former member of the Royal Navy himself, thereby convinces Charlie to return home and to pursue his sea-dreams in a proper fashion: by joining the Royal Navy as a midshipman (i.e. an officer). It is when Mr. Rowe brings Charlie back home that they are both greeted with the fire. Charlie, then, continues the punishment started by Mr. Rowe by allowing Henrietta’s incursion into his text. By the time the story has ended, Charlie is at Dartmouth (home of the Royal Navy) on his training-ship. He’s on his way to fulfilling his dream: “I’ll be a captain some day, and give orders instead of taking them” (115). Though he has aged and matured since the “great emergency”—“I have read and learned more about the world than I knew at that time” (76)—he still holds onto his boyish dreams of going to sea and attaining greatness and “renown” (131). Charlie, therefore, follows in the steps of his punisher, joining the navy so he can rise through the ranks and eventually “give orders.” Charlie’s other childhood punisher, Weston, eventually becomes his best friend. Charlie’s act of self-punishment, then, starts his movement towards maturity and masculinity.

One might argue that Jim tries on the punisher role at several points in Treasure Island, particularly in his treatment of his mother’s new apprentice and in his interaction with Israel Hands; however, these brief efforts cause Jim shame and pain. The squire arranges for a “boy” to stay with Jim’s mother, and when Jim visits her before departing for the expedition, he meets the boy “who was to stay here in my place beside my mother” (TI 39). Jim owns up to unnecessarily
penalizing the new worker: “I had my first attack of tears. I am afraid I led that boy a dog’s life; for as he was new to the work, I had a hundred opportunities of setting him right and putting him down, and I was not slow to profit by them” (39). Jim, however, softens this act by portraying it as being motivated by grief (it follows “my first attack of tears”), by proleptic homesickness, and by a doubled loss (he’s losing “my place” and “my mother”). Additionally, Jim admits that his behavior was shameful; he is “afraid” to reveal his cruel treatment, treatment which was purposefully unpleasant (“a dog’s life”). Tellingly, the language of money enters the passage—Jim “profit[s]” from his punishing manner (the mention of “a hundred opportunities” heightens the sense of gain). Jim, then, acts as a punisher when symbolically ousted from the position of child (in effect, his mother has been given a replacement son), and adult profits are linguistically linked to the act of unnecessary and excessive punishing. Unlike the adults in the text, however, Jim feels guilty about his temporary, minor, and emotionally contextualized conduct. Jim’s later cat-and-mouse game with Israel Hands leads to Jim’s accidental killing of the pirate. Adult characters often show pride in their kills, but Jim’s slaying of Hands is oddly disassociated from him. He shoots his weapons without “my own volition” and “without a conscious aim” (142). As Boone writes, “the scene is constructed such that only Hands is guilty of intended violence and such that he is killed not by Jim but by his own malicious action” (80). Jim’s “conceited” manner before the involuntary shooting is reminiscent of Dance’s and the squire’s glee in Pew’s gruesome demise (TI 142). In fact, this on-deck scene is the one in which Jim is truly a parrot; he laughingly repeats Hands’s comment that “Dead men don’t bite” (142). When Jim’s cocky threats to shoot Hands actually and accidentally come true, however, Jim is horrified. He feels “sick, faint, and terrified” (143), must close his eyes to avoid the sight of Israel’s dead body, and
loses “possession” and “master[y]” of his own self (143). Jim, then, quickly retreats from his experiments with the more adult punisher role.

At the end of *A Great Emergency*, Charlie remains “too apt to dream!” (Ewing 133). He still yearns for the maritime adventures that he will soon undertake: “the harbor’s mouth is now only the beginning of my visions, which stretch far over the sea beyond, and over the darker line of that horizon where the ships come and go” (133–134). In his reverie, he imagines his future journeys as expansive—going “over” and “beyond.” He’s grown older. He’s started a career that he enjoys. He will help support and expand the empire as a member of the navy; such a position might help him attain his earlier ambition of “claim[ing]” an island and “found[ing] a settlement” on its land (80). But Jim’s dreams are nightmares. He dreads and refuses to take more oceanic voyages. In his final visions, the sea is rough and loud. He’s rejected the imperial project, the role of punisher, and adulthood—he’s rejected everything that Charlie has willingly accepted.
Figure 4.1 “If any one of you six make a signal of any description, that man’s dead.” 10.11.2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 4.2 “the squire raised his gun, the rowing ceased.” 10.11.2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
Figure 4.3 “Death of Tom Redruth.” 10.11.2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
5.0 “HAPPILY COINCIDING”: FRAME NARRATIVES IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS AND THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL

5.1 ART FRAMES AND NARRATIVE FRAMES

Victorian critics, finding themselves both revolted and awed, gave both harsh and complimentary words to Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights (WH) (1847) and Anne Brontë’s The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (Tenant) (1848). With regards to Heights, they were impressed by its “power” and “originality,” intrigued by its “strangeness,” and yet were “disgusted” and “sickened” by it (see Allott). “Revolted,” they criticized Tenant for being “coarse” and “perverted,” and yet still discerned evidence of its “genius” and “vigor” (see Allott 249–274). Perhaps it’s no surprise that most reviewers assumed that these two novels were written by the same author. In addition to overtly objecting to the “coarse” content and language of the novels, I think the reviewers were, probably unconsciously, judging the novels based on the reviewers’ own conceptions of and assumptions about frame narratives. By considering nineteenth-century perceptions of art frames and the art of framing, I will argue that the two Brontë frame narratives, Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, both effectively use and misuse such conventions for very different ends: to emphasize the unsustainable neutrality and ultimate ineffectiveness of the frame in the former, and to stress the necessary balance and equality between the frame and the framed in the latter. Each set of narrators—Lockwood and Nelly, Gilbert and Helen—differ in gender, status, wealth, and (presumably) age. Sharing narratives bonds these pairs; Lockwood and Nelly
become close, and Gilbert and Helen fall deeper in love. Sharing narratives also equalizes the
duos, as the employee-employer relationship literally breaks down in *Heights*, and Gilbert and
Helen marry despite their “distinctions and discrepancies of rank, birth, and fortune” (*Tenant*
485). Furthermore, Lockwood’s and Nelly’s perspective on the main story—of Cathy,
Heathcliff, and their descendents—coincides. They both take refuge in a safe distance from the
story, and yet they both desire to integrate themselves into it nonetheless. During certain
narrative changeovers, Nelly’s and Lockwood’s identities even start to fuse. Similarly, Helen and
Gilbert possess like values—especially those of openness, exchange, and friendship—despite
their separation on the social ladder. The narrative exchange in *Heights* and *Tenant*, therefore,
both illustrates and further enables unity and harmony between characters, but while Helen and
Gilbert embrace such closeness, Nelly and Lockwood run from it.

Since early critics oftentimes deemed these novels’ structures cumbersome and
confusing, I will briefly summarize their workings. In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood, a London
gentleman and the frame narrator, rents Thrushcross Grange from Heathcliff in a fit of
misanthropy. Understandably intrigued by his unusual landlord and bedridden from a long walk
in the snow, he encourages his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to “tell [him] something of [his]
neighbors,” and she complies (*WH* 35). Turning narrator, she regales him with the story of
Heathcliff and Cathy’s ill-fated love and the later ill-fated marriage between Heathcliff’s son
Linton and Cathy’s daughter Cathy 2 (I will call Cathy and Edgar’s daughter Cathy 2). Once
able-bodied, Lockwood leaves the Grange and returns months later to pay his rent; at this point,
Nelly catches him up on the events that have transpired in his absence: Heathcliff’s bizarre death
and the successful romance of once-feuding cousins Cathy 2 and Hareton. In *The Tenant of
Wildfell Hall*, the frame narrative consists of Gilbert’s letter to his brother-in-law Halford. The
letter describes Gilbert’s initial dislike of and growing affection for Helen, the mysterious woman who has recently moved to the neighborhood with her son Arthur. In the middle of his letter, Gilbert recopies Helen’s diary, which Helen had previously given to Gilbert to explain her past. The diary details her disastrous marriage to Arthur Huntingdon and her decision to leave him and flee to Wildfell Hall with the help of her brother Frederick Lawrence. Once Helen’s diary concludes, Gilbert narrates Helen’s return to Arthur Huntingdon on his deathbed. After Arthur’s death, Helen and Gilbert are finally free to marry, and they do.

Although neither the reviewers nor the Brontës themselves explicitly refer to these novels’ structures as “frame narratives” (or some variant thereof), making my link between “frame narratives” and physical “art frames” potentially tenuous, the Oxford English Dictionary’s examples of “frame” in a narrative sense go back to 1810 in England (“Frame, n.”). Furthermore, the way one reviewer explains how Tenant’s outer narrative “forms a sort of setting to the main story” suggests his frame-like understanding of the novel’s structure even though he doesn’t explicitly call it a frame (Allott 249). In fact, the word “setting” is used as a synonym for “frame” by art frame scholars. Additionally, the name of Wuthering Heights’s first narrator—Lockwood—slyly indicates a frame, for what else is a frame but locked together pieces of wood? Also, reviewers often stressed the pictorial elements of these two novels. In using the language of visual art to applaud and criticize the Brontës’ written productions, the

141 The OED defines “frame” (in a narrative sense) as “A (section of) narrative which encloses or introduces the main narrative (or narratives) of a text.” The OED also offers several examples of that definition. The 1810 example comes from A. L. Barbauld’s British Novelists: “The frame is very well managed”; the next example, from 1883, comes from H. M. Kennedy’s History of English Literature: “This led, of itself, to the idea of the vision as the poetic frame.”
reviewers themselves consciously blur the line between the written and the visual, the word and the image, and thereby better justify my comparison between narrative frames and visual frames.

In the Victorian period (and before), “frame” was a word with many different meanings. For example, Anne uses the word twenty-six times in Tenant (twenty-eight if you count “framed” and “frames”): several times to mean “frame of mind” (“I was in such a melancholy frame” [Tenant 200]); several times as a verb meaning to form (“the trouble I was at to frame excuses” [204]); the majority of the time as a reference to the physical human body (“her whole frame trembled” [128]); and twice as an art frame for a painting (“The frame, however, is handsome enough” [393]). By later in the century, periodicals were freely exploiting the multiple meanings of “frame” in jokey one-liners that played off the slippage between different definitions of “frame.” For example, Judy quips in 1879, “It is impossible to gild a frame of mind” (“It is impossible”). The comic aphorism joins the common practice of gilding frames with the idea of a “frame of mind.” In 1899, the boys’ periodical Chums jokes, “A Picture-Dealer, who has quite as much business as he can attend to, says the hardest work he has to do is to ‘frame excuses’” (“Picture Dealer”).

A brief history of nineteenth-century frames will help show the place they held within the field of visual art. The conventional nineteenth-century frame was a heavy, wide, gilded frame, and was ornamented with molded composition (a mixture of various ingredients) rather than with carved woodwork. As Jacob Simon writes, “it was not until the early nineteenth century that wide, rich frames became almost universal” (18). As the Pall Mall Gazette comments, “The solid Britisher...likes something massive” (“Frames”). Gold was seen as a neutral color, light gatherer, and painting enhancer; in 1847 the Royal Academy did what the Royal Scottish Academy had done the previous decade—admit only gold frames. There were, however, constantly notes of
dissent against wide frames, against the monopoly of gold frames, and against the widespread use of compo (cheap, available, and quick) instead of more expensive and time-consuming woodwork. For example, The *Pall Mall Gazette* blamed the Royal Academy’s frame strictures for “the commonplace, inartistic character of English picture frames,” saying that “pictures are condemned oftentimes to hurt themselves by a frame which may by its glitter and tone detract 10 per cent. from the effect” (“Picture Frames”). Contemporary art scholar Lynn Roberts summarizes the early-nineteenth century frame as “a very low point in the history of picture-framing” because the field was winnowed down to a “small number of well-worn conventionalized forms” (“Pre-Raphaelites” 155).

But the nineteenth century also saw a flourishing of artist-designed and associated frames; by 1891, the *Pall Mall Gazette* can easily state, “The artist naturally has his own ideas as to the style of frame which will best suit his picture” and “Many of our leading artists provide their own designs, and these are worked out by the maker” (“Frames”). The same article includes captioned drawings of the “Ruskin Frame,” “Whistler Frame,” and the “Watts Frame” and singles out Whistler as “So much...treat[ing] the frame as part and parcel of his picture that he has at times placed his signature on the wood and not on the canvas” (3). And indeed, Whistler himself concurred, writing to a friend, “my frames I have designed as carefully as my pictures – and thus they form as important a part as any of the rest of the work – carrying on the particular harmony throughout” (qtd. in Simon 106). Lynn Roberts situates the beginning of the flourishing of the artist-designed frame in England in the 1840s (and even earlier on the continent). She explains that the movement gained steam with the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates (Rossetti,
Ford Madox Brown, Millais, Holman Hunt), whose frames often symbolically, artistically, or linguistically (via poems painted on the frames) connected to, echoed, enhanced, or informed the painting. These frames, therefore, aimed towards “a complete unity of the frame with the painting it surrounds” (Roberts, “Pre-Raphaelites” 170). Paul Mitchell and Lynn Roberts cast the Pre-Raphaelites (like Rossetti) as rebels and saviors who “fought back” against “repetitious, standardized” frames “by generating individually designed and carved frames” (11) and by initiating “half a century of innovative frame design” (68). Emily and Anne’s inventive iterations of the conventional frame narrative (particularly the “found text” tradition of gothic

142 As Lynn Roberts notes, even artists considered more traditional and better associated with the Royal Academy, such as Leighton, Alma-Tadema, and Burne-Jones, were influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite focus on frame design, so it became a “custom for English artists to design their own picture-frames” (“Victorian” 290).

143 Simon also similarly narrates artists’ increasing interest in frames:

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the increasing interest taken by artists in the framing of their work is very evident from surviving correspondence. The practice of using one or more special frame patterns was widespread, almost as if it were a necessary part of the artist’s relationship with his public to have a style of his own to offer. (103)

He continues, “most distinctive nineteenth-century frames are those used by the Pre-Raphaelites, who were among the earliest artists to take a controlling interest in the design of their frames. In the early years many of their frames were one-offs, designed for specific pictures, and often inscribed with verses or decorated with ornament relating to the subject matter” (104).
literature) can perhaps be viewed alongside the growing trends for visual artists to take a greater role in designing their frames, to reject the conventional frame patterns, to invent a frame well-suited to the picture, and to think of the frame and picture as “a complete unity.”

Therefore, although there was a convention of mass-produced, heavy, thick, gilt, compo frames, by mid-century there was also a powerful countercurrent of artist-designed frames (either one-offs or specific patterns) that stressed the importance of fashioning a unique frame to “suit” or “fit” a particular painting. But there was still often a consensus about a frame’s key functions: a frame should harmonize with the painting, call attention to the painting and not to itself, act as a border, isolate the painting from its surroundings, and enhance the painting. As *The Art Amateur* succinctly states, “Never forget that the first purpose of the frame is to show the picture to the best advantage” (“Picture-Framing”). The frame was also responsible for separating the picture from those cluttered Victorian houses and crowded exhibition walls. The frame is “something to distinguish [the painting] from its surroundings and force it out” (“Hints”), and “It should isolate the picture and thereby increase its effect” (“Artistic”). In short, the “frame is a decorated border” between the painting and its surroundings (Pitman). The goal of isolating the artwork helps attain another major function of the frame, focusing the viewer’s attention solely on the painting: the frame should “separate [the painting] from surrounding objects, so that the eye and the mind can, for a time, be wholly given to it” (“Artistic”). But the frame, in accomplishing these aims, must also be aesthetically suited to the painting: “Frame each picture on its merits, by all means” (“Picture-Framing”). Acting primarily as the transition (from surroundings) and access point (for the viewer’s eyes and focus), the frame must not grab attention for itself. One article laments when the frame “attract[s] attention to itself, which it should not do” (“Artistic”). The article reiterates that the frame should emphatically do “No
more” than “isolate the picture” (15). Although believing that the ideal frame would be “beautiful” and add “beauty to the picture,” the *Pall Mall Gazette* recoils at the possible consequence of the frame thereby overtaking the picture in importance: “No artist worthy of the name would care to make his frame more conspicuous than his picture” (“Picture Frames”). Frames that consciously continue or echo the picture receive mixed responses. The *Art Amateur* rants: “This fancy-frame mania is bad enough when adopted by artists who understand what they are doing, but who still, in our opinion, do wrong to draw away attention from a painting for the sake of the frame, which should be ignored as much as possible after it has served its purpose of isolating the picture” (“Hints”). The *Birmingham Daily Post*, conversely, records the “fancy-frame” trend more objectively, noting that frames which echo, either with color or embellishments, the content or tints of the painting have become “almost as clever as the pictures” (“Realism”). The article notes, however, that it is “the most radical of all steps” to have the frame “actually [continue] the picture” such as when the country lane depicted in a painting “runs directly towards you, projects on the frame, and is carved without a break.” Even though the article doesn’t condemn such a technique—which calls attention to the frame, more ostentatiously connects the frame and the painting, and makes the frame an important conveyer and extender of the artistic scene—it’s important to note that the article finds such a practice to be “radical.”

Although it’s impossible to know what exactly each Brontë sibling knew or thought of art frames, we do know much about their knowledge of and attitudes to visual art. All the Brontë siblings received instruction in visual art: there were lessons from art teacher John Bradley at the parsonage, Charlotte and Anne received further instruction and practice at Roe Head, and according to Charlotte’s letters (Emily is “making rapid progresse in...Drawing” [Margaret
Smith, *One* 289), Emily (and probably Charlotte) was continuing her art education while at Heger’s school in Brussels.\textsuperscript{144} Branwell, who contemplated (but never succeeding in having) a career as a professional artist, received lessons from William Robinson at the parsonage and at Robinson’s studio in Leeds. According to her friend Ellen Nussey, Charlotte also desired an artistic career—as a miniaturist—but “did not succeed to her own approval” (Margaret Smith, *One* 603). Ellen also sheds some light on the artistic inclinations of Charlotte’s two younger sisters:

> About this time [around 1833] Charlotte passed a great part of almost every day in drawing or painting; she would do one or the other, for nine hours with scarcely an interval...Emily and Anne were fond of the pencil, but chiefly as a recreation, or for the sake of acquiring the art so as to be ‘able to’ teach others when the need should arise. (Margaret Smith, *One* 603–604)\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{144} In addition, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, a favorite in the Brontë household (and which Charlotte lovingly imitated in her *Blackwood’s Young Men’s Magazine*), featured articles that discussed past and present visual artists. The “Ignoramus on the Fine Arts” series (part I debuted in February 1831) and “The Sketcher” series (first seen in April of 1833) were two of the recurring features to describe artists and to discuss theories of art.

\textsuperscript{145} Given the importance art had in the Brontë children’s lives, it’s no great surprise that Charlotte’s first letter (written when she was thirteen years old), written to her father while on vacation with her siblings at her great uncle’s house, relates the recent artistic activities of the family: “Branwell has taken two sketches from nature, & Emily Anne & myself have likewise each of us drawn a piece from some views of the lakes which Mr Fenell brought with him from Westmoreland” (Margaret Smith, *One* 105).
Christine Alexander and Jane Sellars collect and catalogue the existing productions (including sketches, paintings, drawings, illustrations, and copies of prints and engravings) of the four Brontë siblings in *The Art of the Brontës*. Even a quick perusal of the collection shows the impressive (if amateurish) and distinct artistic talents of each member of the family.

To some extent, we can reconstruct where and when the Brontës would have seen frames. Framed engravings hung on the walls of the parsonage (see Alexander and Sellars 21), and it is likely that framed pieces of Emily’s art were also displayed: “Certainly Patrick Brontë, after the deaths of his children, and later Arthur Bell Nicholls (Charlotte’s widower), had at least one of Emily’s works framed on the walls on their homes; and it seems likely that Emily’s pictures of the favourite family pets…were also displayed in the parsonage during her lifetime” (102). A Haworth carpenter, William Wood, would trade frames for the Brontës’ drawings:

he never tired of telling how the Vicar’s children were in the habit of coming to his workshop to obtain frames for their drawings; they were too proud to accept them as presents, and they were accustomed to give him a drawing in exchange for a frame, which he usually made from the odds and ends of his larger picture frames. (Chadwick 111)

We know, therefore, that the Brontë children cared about framing their own work and lived in a house that displayed framed pictures on its walls. The Brontës would have likely seen professionally framed art when they traveled to Leeds in 1834 for the Royal Northern Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in which Charlotte had drawings on exhibition (see Alexander and Sellars 25–26). According to Charlotte’s friend Mary Taylor, when Emily and Charlotte passed through London en route to Brussels in 1842, Charlotte “seemed to think our business was and ought to be, to see all the pictures and statues we could” (Margaret Smith, *One
Furthermore, when Charlotte and Anne went to London in July of 1848 to meet with their publishers and reveal their true identities, they took time out of their short trip to visit the Royal Academy Exhibition and the National Gallery (see Margaret Smith, Two pages 85 and 113). Such examples show that the Brontë sisters were not only very much interested in seeing professional art but were also familiar with classic and contemporary art (which surely would have been framed in accordance with the norms of the day). Although Charlotte’s letters don’t specify what museums she and Emily attended while living in Brussels, Lucy Snowe details her museum-going experiences at length in Villette, the novel based on Charlotte’s experiences in Brussels.

Furthermore, the few references to art frames in Charlotte’s and Anne’s writings imply that they had a solid understanding of current frame conventions (which could have been picked up from their brother’s botched career, from their own art instruction, or from their reading). The heroine of Tenant, Helen Huntingdon, becomes a professional painter to support herself and her son when they flee Mr. Huntingdon’s estate. When the novel’s hero, Gilbert, visits Wildfell to check the progress of one of Helen’s paintings, she announces, “It is finished and framed, all ready for sending away” (Tenant 74). Helen (and hence, Anne) clearly knows that a framed picture would likely sell better than an unframed picture. Art dealer William Buchanan writes in 1804: “It is wonderful how much better pictures sell by being in handsome, rich, deep frames” (qtd. in Simon 19). When inspecting her paintings, Helen finds an old portrait of her husband; she puts the painting out of sight but holds on to its frame: “The frame, however, is handsome enough; it will serve for another painting” (Tenant 393). As the Pall Mall Gazette highlights in its article “The Cost of Painting a Picture,” “That canvas must have a frame, and that frame is often a very costly article” (4). As Helen is trying to make money both to live on and to repay
her brother for supporting her, it would be unwise to waste a perfectly “handsome” frame on an unwanted picture. Furthermore, the conventional frames already described (heavy, gilt, compo) were so similar in style as to make them easily interchangeable. The artist Sir William Etty is featured in Charlotte’s juvenilia, and she notes that his studio includes “Numerous pictures, some in heavy gilt frames, others as yet unfinished, leant against the walls...” (qtd. in Alexander and Sellars 27). The compendium displays Charlotte’s knowledge of the current fashion for “heavy gilt frames.” It’s worth noting and admitting that much of the evidence about the Brontës’ artistic knowledge and experience comes from Charlotte or from Charlotte’s friends. Charlotte left, by far, the most extensive paper trail of the whole Brontë family; besides a few odds and ends from Emily and Anne (several diary papers, a few short letters) we have so little of their writing besides what they published. Conversely, we have Charlotte’s letters, juvenilia, drafts of many of her works, much more visual artwork, and accounts from friends (which she had more of than her sisters).

Alexander and Sellars claim that the all three Brontë sisters “transpose[d] the subjects and language of pictures into their literary work” (9), so perhaps it’s no surprise that Wuthering Heights’s befuddled reviewers treated the novel more like a bizarre painting than a text. The reviews are littered (much more than an average Victorian review) with the language of visual art and drawing: “singular power in his portraiture of strong passion” (Allott 225); “presents such shocking pictures” (227); “a vividness and graphic power in her sketches” (298); “The reality of unreality has never been so aptly illustrated” (231). In two separate reviews, the novel’s author (at this point only known as Ellis Bell) was compared to the seventeenth-century Italian painter Salvator Rosa, who was known for his romantic, brooding paintings (see 224, 232). One reviewer accused the novel of trying to be too much like a painting in how it focused on the “one
positive idea” of “passionate ferocity” (224). The reviewer, therefore, suggests that Wuthering Heights’s focus of purpose/content would have been more suited to the canvas than it is to the page. Two other reviewers similarly articulate the novel’s excess in metaphors of an overly crowded and tainted canvas: “The brutal master of the lonely house…has doubtless had his prototype in those uncongenial and remote districts…but he might have been indicated with far fewer touches, in place of so entirely filling the canvas that there is hardly a scene untainted by his presence” (218). The second review echoes the first: “a creature in whom every evil passion seems to have reached a gigantic excess – form a group of deformities such as we have rarely seen gathered together on the same canvas” (232). Another reviewer, impressed with the realistic depictions in the novel, applauded “the general mounting of the entire piece” (231); the reviewer’s words implicitly treat the novel as a species of visual art (either the “mounting” of a play or the “hanging” of a painting). So, in short, the reviewers agreed that they were looking at talent—at genius, even—but that the work had a “too much” quality.

Reviewers uniformly found the novel displeasing and disagreeable (not to be confused with not liking the book) and accused it of violating the (generally assumed and therefore unspoken) rule that “The aim of fiction is to afford some sensation of delight” (Allott 225). Not only did the reviewers describe the novel itself as displeasing and disagreeable, but they also described themselves as mentally and physically affected by those qualities, as if there was a process of transference or infection happening during the reading experience: “his narrative leaves an unpleasant effect on the mind” (224) and “casts a gloom over the mind not easily to be dispelled” (231). The frame is not only supposed to create a border to the artwork but is also supposed to use “a wide boundary of gold leaf as an area of quarantine” (Mitchell and Roberts 71, emphasis added) and (particularly in reference to Rossetti’s paintings) to provide “a bold,
heavy frame to contain” the paintings’ “brooding eroticism” (69). The painting of *Wuthering Heights* was neither sanitized by the narrative frame nor contained by it, as “the reader is shocked, disgusted, almost sickened by details” (Allott 228). The story, far from being contained, is described frequently in terms of excess or boundary-breaking: it is “a sprawling story” (231). Another reviewer picks up on this “sickened” idea at length: “all agree that it affects them somewhat unpleasantly. It is written in a morbid phase of the mind, and is sustained so admirably that it communicates this sickliness to the reader” (241).

Although that particular critic doesn’t mention Lockwood, it is important that Lockwood, our frame narrator, is sick for most of the novel. And this is no minor cold; he describes already having passed “Four weeks’ torture, tossing and sickness!” long before he completely improves (*WH* 91). Within days of arriving at the Grange, he’s bed-ridden. Far from being the place of refuge that he hopes it will be (he had anticipated “Heaven” [3]), the countryside quickly infects and demobilizes him via an unwelcoming snowstorm. Being bed-ridden and sick are the conditions that allow Lockwood to seek out Nelly’s story and to continue listening to it unfold as the weeks pass. A “sick” frame of mind, therefore, seems to be the frame of mind conducive to hearing the story. Sentences before Nelly begins her tale, Lockwood describes his desire to hear the story as if such desire were a symptom of his ailment: “my head felt hot, and the rest of me chill: moreover I was excited, almost to a pitch of foolishness, through my nerves and brain” (35). It’s as if Lockwood’s physical malady enables him to feel thoroughly “excited” for the story Nelly is about to tell. Furthermore, Lockwood hears at least part of Nelly’s tale while lying in a room that was specifically fitted up for Cathy in her final illness. Nelly explains, “To obviate the fatigue of mounting and descending the stairs, we fitted up this, where you lie at present, on the same floor with the parlour: and [Cathy] was soon strong enough to move from one to the
other, leaning on Edgar’s arm” (135). Even spatially, then, Lockwood is linked with illness.

Lockwood’s recuperation also corresponds to the reader’s increasing distance from him. On the final page of volume 1, Nelly says that she’ll report to Kenneth “how much better” Lockwood looks (153), and the beginning of volume 2 marks, as I’ll soon discuss, the structural point at which the novel’s reader is distinctly separated from Lockwood as listener. The return of Lockwood’s health, the coming of spring, and the conclusion of Nelly’s tale all coincide; as soon as Lockwood feels well enough to travel to the Heights and inform Heathcliff that he’s leaving, he does it. Lockwood’s illness forces him to stay at the Grange long enough to hear Nelly’s story through to the end. As a frame, then, Lockwood doesn’t serve as an effectual “border” to the story, as he immediately catches what’s going around (characters are constantly falling deathly sick in the novel, with Kenneth scuttling among them all) and then passes it on to the reader, a transmission that had many reviewers complaining of getting “sick” while reading the novel. In discussing the frame-narrative of Balzac’s “Facino Cane,” Peter Brooks writes, “the movement of reference is one of ‘contamination’: the passing-on of the virus of narrative” (221); Wuthering Heights exemplifies the conception of narrative as virus.

But review after review pointedly doesn’t reference Lockwood, just as reviews of new art exhibitions almost never mention the paintings’ frames (I could find one exception).146 Victorian

146 A description of Holman Hunt’s painting “May Day: Magdalen Tower” printed in Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper mentions the painting’s artist-designed frame in the last three sentences of the review: “A noticeable feature is the frame of the painting, at once original and beautiful. It is of repoussé copper, designed by Mr. Hunt, and made by the Guild of Handicrafts under the supervision of Mr. Ashbee at Toyubee hall. The colour is most rich, the birds and flowers...and other objects introduced, all symbolising the sun as the source of spontaneous and
reviews are strangely uninterested in identifying narrators or explaining narrative structure. Readers of the reviews would have no idea that the enthralling story of Heathcliff was narrated by his sometime friend/servant Nelly and by his temporary tenant Lockwood. The structure earns no direct explanation in the reviews. The reviewers give the novel implicit structural criticisms, however, calling *Heights* a “disjointed tale” (Allott 231), again “disjointed” (220), and “very unskillfully constructed” (224). One reviewer complains, “It is not easy to disentangle the incidents and set them forth in chronological order. The tale is confused” (221). Though certainly used unconsciously, the repeated term “disjointed” does point to faulty frame construction (in a frame, wood planks must be joined; mitre or butt joints were the most commonly used at the time). The reviewers, therefore, are implicitly criticizing the inefficiency of the frame to contain, quarantine, effectively border and mark off the story—the story is too powerful and overflows its weak and “disjointed” frame. As I’ll argue, the frequent ineffectiveness of the frame, and hence, of Lockwood, to contain and impose closure on the story—and to avoid the story’s temptation and contagion—are central to Emily Brontë’s misuse of frame conventions.

Reviewers criticized *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* for being displeasing and disagreeable as well, and they were more pointed both in their discussion of and criticism of the novel’s narrative structure. Just as they found the structure of *Wuthering Heights* to be “confused” and “disjointed,” they found *Tenant’s* structure to be similarly wanting. It was “very inartificially constructed” (Allott 255), and its “construction” was “faulty” (256). One astute writer noted its similarities to *Wuthering Heights*: “it resembles it in the excessive clumsiness with which the joyous life” (“Holman” 9). I will note that this frame is particularly noticeable because of its color, shape (a circle frame around a rectangular painting), and large size; the painting itself was quite big at five by six-and-a-half feet.
plot is arranged” (261). Two separate reviewers complained of the bigness and supposed dullness of Gilbert’s frame narrative (an objection that contemporary scholars also voice): “Nearly one half of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*...forms a sort of setting to the main story...The daily life of a young and self-sufficient gentleman farmer and his family, with the characters and gossip of his neighbourhood, are scarcely enough to sustain the reader for a volume” (249). The other critic grumbles,

The main part of the tale consists of a recital or journal made by a certain Mrs Graham...Just at the time when we begin to feel some interest about Markham and the lady, we are thrown back upon her previous history, which occupies a full half of the three volumes before us. This is a fatal error: for, after so long and minute a history, we cannot go back and recover the enthusiasm which we have been obliged to dismiss a volume and a half before. (255)

Both of these critics identify Helen’s diary as the “main” part/story in the novel and, therefore, were frustrated with the sheer length of Gilbert’s “setting” (“nearly half”!); it’s awkward, the second reviewer suggests, to discover that the story one has been following for hundreds of pages is not the book’s “main” story. Readers don’t discover that *Tenant* is a frame structure until one-third of the novel has been completed. Even during the heyday of artist-designed frames, as discussed, critics balked when the frame outshone the painting, the “main” part of the artwork. The frame’s primary responsibility was to focus attention on the painting and not on itself: “who still, in our opinion, do wrong to draw away attention from a painting for the sake of the frame, which should be ignored as much as possible after it has served its purpose of isolating the picture” (“Hints”). But the novel’s “faulty construction,” I argue, is precisely the point. *Tenant* is an incredibly balanced and symmetrical frame novel. Gilbert narrates for
approximately 100 pages before and 100 pages after Helen’s diary (120 before and 92 after to be
precise); Helen’s diary, therefore, occurs almost exactly in the middle of the novel and lasts for
266 pages, slightly more than Gilbert’s total of 212. Gilbert’s narrative is about 80% the length
of Helen’s. In comparison to Frankenstein, Heart of Darkness, Wuthering Heights, and The Turn
of the Screw, then, Tenant’s frame is quite massive. In light of Victorian attitudes towards
framing, Tenant’s frame commits the primary sins of stealing too much attention and of not
channeling most attention to the framed artwork. I argue, however, that The Tenant of Wildfell
Hall purposefully champions the equality between narrators and their narratives; the novel
pursues a balanced system of exchange between friends and lovers. The ways in which the two
novels, therefore, resist the conventions of Victorian art framing illustrate the differences
between these two novels. As critics such as Jan Gordon and Edward Chitham have discussed,
Wuthering Heights and Tenant share much: a W. H. habitat, a host of H-characters, and a central
love triangle (consisting of a married couple and an outsider male). Percy Lubbock states in The
Craft of Fiction, “The subject dictates the method” (253); method, to Lubbock, is “governed by
the question of the point of view—the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the
story” (251). The variations in how Heights and Tenant handle their subjects are aptly showcased
by the differences in their use of a similar method.

147 Getzler and I agree, then, that “Emily and Anne Brontë both revise the traditional
frame structure, but they do so in opposite ways” (29). Getzler comes to this conclusion through
frame theory, while I reach it by reflecting on Victorian framing conventions. She focuses on the
fact that Nelly and Lockwood don’t tell their own story, while Helen and Gilbert do.
5.2 WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Lockwood is the novel’s frame narrator in the typical sense, but Nelly Dean, though more “in” the story than Lockwood is, functions as a sort of second frame narrator because she maintains distance from the story and the characters at the novel’s core. In comparison to Tenant, in which both of the narrators are main characters, Heights’s two narrators are not the main characters; this is not to say that Lockwood and Nelly are unimportant characters but is to say that, overwhelmingly, the story they tell is not theirs, even though they become, in various ways and to different extents, implicated in it. To use Norman Friedman’s terminology, the narrators in Tenant are “‘I’ as Protagonist” narrators, and the narrators in Heights are “‘I’ as Witness” narrators. The structure of Wuthering Heights, therefore, relies on distance from the central characters and their stories, and as Lockwood and Nelly both show, maintaining that distance is a fundamentally self-protective move. Nonetheless, as Lockwood’s and Nelly’s experiences reveal, distance also creates desire: desire to know, to understand, to get closer. J. Hillis Miller identifies the novel’s inevitably unachievable desire—shared by Lockwood, the reader, and the critic looking for the “single secret truth” about the novel (Fiction 51)—as the longing to go “further” (43) and “deeper,” to reach the “center” (60), and to “penetrate, to get inside the events, rather than seeing them safely from the outside” (71). I agree with Miller, but he doesn’t acknowledge the equally powerful counter desire: to stay distant and safe, to remain on the outside and in the frame. I will argue, therefore, that the novel’s narrative structure concomitantly creates distance and the desire to bridge that distance. Nelly and Lockwood, then, maintain that distance and yearn to close it, Lockwood through romantic yearnings for Cathy 2, and Nelly, platonically, by insinuating herself into everyone’s family as a necessary confidant, sister, and mother. Lockwood and Nelly still desperately try to impose closure on Cathy and
Heathcliff’s story, try to effectively contain it as a frame should, but their very narratorial handling of the story undermines their frequent attempts at closure. The novel’s structure exemplifies both the ambition and breakdown of the frame, the establishment and crossing of the boundary between the frame and the framed.

Much of the scholarly response to *Wuthering Heights* circles on ideas of both metaphoric and literal space. Elizabeth Napier identifies “movement or passage” as “one of the novel’s most prominent themes” (96), and Frank Kermode, Terry Eagleton, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (just to name a few examples) focus on the novel’s general movement from the Heights to the Grange.148 Gilbert and Gubar, for example, read this movement as the “fall from ‘hell’ into ‘heaven,’ not a fall from grace...but a fall into grace” (255). Kermode, Napier, Robert McKibben, and Dorothy Van Ghent call attention to the novel’s proliferation of portals—particularly doorways and windows—that serve as another manifestation of the novel’s investment in “movement or passage.”149 Additionally, Heathcliff’s oxymoronic position as the novel’s inscrutable center and perennial outsider invites an analytic language of space and movement. Kermode discusses Heathcliff’s “betweenness” (123): he is “between names” and “between

148 Kermode writes, “this is an account of the movement of the book: away from Earnshaw and back, like the movement of the house itself. And all the movement must be through Heathcliff” (122).

149 For example, Kermode observes that Heathcliff is “often introduced...standing outside, or entering, or leaving, a door” (123), and McKibben notes that the “window figure is primarily identified with” Cathy and Heathcliff (160). Van Ghent claims that the “windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the ‘inside’ from the ‘outside,’ the ‘human’ from the alien and terrible ‘other’” (161).
families.” Heathcliff and Nelly, as Lisa Sternlieb classifies them, are the “two liminal figures in
the novel, neither insiders nor outsiders” (45). Terry Eagleton spatially describes Heathcliff’s
“superfluous” position at the Heights (106): “he has no defined place within its biological and
economic system” (106). Using a similar spatial image, Van Ghent depicts Heathcliff as
existing on the “edge of the human” (154). Critics also illustrate Cathy and Heathcliff’s eccentric
love in terms of place. Eagleton explains how it is “pushed to the periphery by society itself”
(109); McKibben positions it “outside the framework of manners and codes” (160); and Bersani
characterizes it as a mutual desire for a “radical open-endedness of being” (212). Additionally,
the novel itself exhibits a paradoxical closeness and openness. The tightness of the novel’s
setting (limited to the Heights, the Grange, and the moors connecting them), its repetition of
names and scenarios, the paucity of choice (the second Cathy marries two of her cousins), and
the difficulty of escape all enable the claustrophobic feel of the novel. As Melvin Watson writes,
“The reader never leaves the moors...never does he follow that road to the outside world” (100),
and Bersani adds that the “affiliations and resemblances” in the novel (200) “tend to enclose
experience within a circle of repetitions” (201). And yet, Kermode and J. Hillis Miller speak of
the novel’s distinct “openness” to interpretation. Wuthering Heights, to Kermode, counts as a
classic because of this “openness” (121); because it features a “series of indeterminacies which
the text will not resolve” (128), it is “patient of interpretation” (134). The passing of time since

150 Bersani’s analysis of Heathcliff’s vengeance on the second generation also utilizes
spatial language: “Heathcliff places himself at the center of the family, which is to say that he
subverts its very essence by making it revolve around an unrecognizable ‘other’ who has no
origins. His perverse strategy is to exaggerate the family’s natural tendency to exclude
everything foreign to itself” (221).
the book’s publication and the passing of the book’s original audience has amplified the text’s inherent “plurality” (133): “time opens [it] up” (130). Miller, too, reviews the criticism that seeks to “close off the novel by explaining it” (Fiction 51) rather than accepting its “openness” (52) and “heterogeneity” (51). My discussion of the novel’s use of the frame narrative, then, enters this spatially oriented critical conversation by exploring the novel’s use of boundaries, distance, and desire as it relates to the novel’s two “I as witness” narrators.

*Wuthering Heights*, as J. Hillis Miller accurately observes, possesses “an inexhaustible power to call forth commentary and more commentary” (Fiction 50), and Nelly and Lockwood have, unsurprisingly, received a fair amount of critical attention. Though Miller subsequently detects an “unusual degree of incoherence among the various explanations” (50), I’ve divided the Nelly/Lockwood criticism into three main camps. The first group claims that Nelly and Lockwood are relatively normal and relatively reliable; therefore, they function as approximate surrogates for the reader as she navigates the strange and disorienting world of the novel.\(^{151}\) The narrators, according to this reasoning, are oases of ordinariness in a landscape of the abnormal, excessive, and mythic. Q. D. Leavis labels Nelly a “normal woman” (208), while George Worth brands Lockwood an “ordinary observant man” (320) who “view[s] an extraordinary situation much as any of us might view it” (320).\(^{152}\) Again aligning the reader and Lockwood, Carl Woodring proposes that Lockwood “shares the reader’s wonder at the characters and events”

\(^{151}\)Nestor and J. Hillis Miller also espouse this view. Nestor writes that Lockwood’s “position as an outsider and an auditor links him most closely with the reader” (xxix). Miller categorizes Lockwood as the “reader’s vicarious representative in the novel” (Fiction 58).
\(^{152}\) Watson also identifies Lockwood as an “ordinary person” who “represent[s]...normal humanity” and acts just “as confused, as shocked, and as mystified as any reader could be” (95).
(299) and “reacts for the normal skeptical reader in appropriate ways” (301). The second variety of critical response concurs that Nelly and Lockwood are conventional but departs from the first camp by arguing that the reader must reject rather than side with such conventionality. According to this line of criticism, the reader must see past these narrators’ limited worldviews and unreliable narrations in order to correctly value the passion at the core of the novel. Nelly and Lockwood’s continual failures of understanding and imagination, therefore, mold them as negative role models for the reader. Terence McCarthy claims that Lockwood proves “incapable of appreciating things that are so important” in the world of the book (50). Such incapacity makes him “an object lesson in how not to read Wuthering Heights” (52).\footnote{Similarly, according to Napier, Lockwood “fail[s] to understand the world of complexity and passion at the Heights” (97).} John Mathison presents a parallel argument about Nelly; he describes her conservative point of view as “inadequa[te]” (107) and “futil[e]” (129) because she “fails to understand the other characters” (109) who are “less wholesome, physically and emotionally” (112) than she considers herself to be. These critics also point out that Nelly and Lockwood’s lack of sympathy for Cathy and Heathcliff ingeniously throws the reader’s sympathy with (the often unsympathetic) Cathy and Heathcliff.\footnote{Hagan declares that “[o]ne of Emily Brontë major achievements in Wuthering Heights is to keep alive the reader’s sympathy for both Catherine and Heathcliff” (305); the readers perceive Cathy and Heathcliff as “tragic” rather than as “distasteful” (305). Mathison contends that Nelly’s persistent misunderstanding of Cathy and Heathcliff “gives our total sympathy to Cathy and Heathcliff” (123). If Heathcliff had “told his story,” Mathison continues, “the reader would excuse the adults and blame Heathcliff” (122).} Other canonical examples of the “I as witness” narrator—such as Nick Carraway,
Ishmael, and Marlow—also have the useful effect of creating interest in and sympathy for arguably unlikeable and narcissistic main characters (Gatsby, Ahab, Kurtz). Nick, Ishmael, and Marlow can appear, as Nelly and Lockwood appear to some critics, common or even boring in the flashy shadow of the larger-than-life protagonists. In fact, the narrative distance maintained by using the “I as witness” narrator mythologizes those ambitious and obsessive central characters; Gatsby, Ahab, Kurtz, and Heathcliff remain unapproachable, mysterious, remote. The third category inflates the narrators’ unreliability, which the second camp insists on, and transforms it into the narrators’ villainy. James Hafley, who Kermode refers to as the critic “deplored by all” (136), transforms Nelly into “the villain of the piece” (Hafley 199) who impressively “outdoes Iago” (209) in her malicious and upstart attempts to vanquish Heathcliff and Cathy, to emerge as mistress of the two houses, and to manipulate Lockwood. Hafley’s argument ignores the crucial point that Nelly, though not strictly a technical device, is, like most “I as witness” narrators, partially a technical device. Hafley interprets Nelly’s lingering at doors, frequent eavesdropping, and occasional contradictory behavior as revealing her true character as a “plain-and-simple spy” (205). As Watson writes, however, “to have Ellen Dean as narrator, we must accept the fact that a servant can be in many places where she would not ordinarily be and hear many things that she would not ordinarily hear” (96). I agree with Watson that “the

155 Woodring similarly acknowledges the exigency of Nelly’s somewhat “amorphous” character (302):

In Nelly, Emily Brontë ingeniously produced the exactly needed combination of servant, companion, and saucy antagonist. With personal dignity, she keeps secrets; as a respected nurse, she tattles; she intercepts letters between young culprits; she scolds; she watches pots; she dances with the ungentle gentlefolk

312
advantages gained by having the story told by an eyewitness are weighty enough to balance all these disadvantages” (96). Hafley’s argument is an exaggerated version of Mathison’s more reasoned, and therefore more convincing, article; Mathison argues that although “admirable” Nelly means well (107), she nonetheless “fails in her behavior” (109), “advises [the other characters] poorly” (112), and performs “harmful” “actions” towards others (118). With a similar mix of admiration for Nelly’s agency and condemnation for her transgressions, Sternlieb asserts that Nelly proves “well practiced at all forms of deceit” (41) and judges that Nelly is as “responsible for the destruction of the Earnshaw and Linton families” as Heathcliff is (45). Since I expect that Nelly and Lockwood, like most first-person narrators, will be unreliable to some degree along some axis, and like most human characters, will have their share of bad decisions, I am not interested in claiming that either narrator is reliable, unreliable, the hero of the story, or the villain of the story. Rather, I do what almost no critic has done (and no one has done at length)—I treat Nelly and Lockwood as a team. I am interested in how they approach the story in similar ways and in how that ultimately affects the way in which they relate to one another.

As discussed above, it’s now a critical commonplace that Lockwood, awkward invader of the moors and disaffected city man, stands in for the reader: a stranger in a strange place. In true readerly spirit, Lockwood instantaneously and continuously finds himself deeply interested in these strangers, despite of and because of their strangeness. In line with the expected functions of an art frame, therefore, Lockwood throws light and attention and focus on the main characters when needed...As witness and chorus, she must take part in nearly every scene in the book. We become accustomed to her inference” (303). Likewise, Gilbert and Gubar comment, “like a wall, [Nelly] is related to both sides. Consequently, as the artist must, she can go anywhere and hear everything. (290)
and their stories. Although Lockwood’s “heart warm[s]” toward Heathcliff when he imagines them as “such a suitable pair” of crabby misanthropes, he “felt interested” in his landlord only when he senses a gap between them, when Heathcliff “seem[s] more exaggeratedly reserved than myself” (WH 4). The next night, tucked away in the haunted walled-in couch of the Heights, “an immediate interest kindled within me for the unknown Catherine” (20); it’s her very status as “unknown” and potentially knowable (he’s just about to start reading her marginalia diary when he makes this comment) that again makes her interesting to him. His desire “to know [the] history” of “that pretty girl-widow” (33) and to know “something of my neighbours” models the ideal reader’s stance of interest in the unknown and strange (35). When, to his delight, Nelly Dean agrees to wile away his sick hours with the tale, he admits feeling “excited, almost to a pitch of foolishness” (35). As midnight approaches, Lockwood guilts Nelly into continuing the story past her own bedtime by reminding her that he is “interested in every character you have mentioned” (62). Additionally, he qualifies his own interest (and hence, the reader’s too) as evidence not of a “lazy mood” but rather of “a tiresomely active one” that is attentive and focused on minutiae (62). Lockwood, therefore, helps channel the reader’s attention, just as a frame was supposed to make it so the “eye and mind can, for a time, be wholly given to” the picture (“Artistic”).

But Lockwood, although he provides the raw and easily ignitable fuel of interest, is not the ideal reader of the tale he hears or of the world he has tried to enter. His routine, comical mistakes of reading show that his understanding of certain signs (of class, of weather, of family)
are ridiculously ineffective here.\textsuperscript{156} Nearly every person he meets fails or confuses his expectations, expectations based on characters’ gender and class status and on Lockwood’s own sense of the world as ordered and hierarchical, as a place where signs mean what they appear to signify. Instead of calling Lockwood a “born misreader” (Sternlieb 47) or “an example of how not...to do things with signs” (J. Miller, \textit{Fiction} 58), however, I think Lockwood is the sign-reading martyr: Wuthering Heights is a place born to be misread, and Lockwood’s set of reading skills would serve him somewhat better in a different place, in a different novel. In short, Lockwood is “us,” the traveler to a world that seems set apart from place and time and who shows un-doubtable interest, and yet we increasingly distance ourselves from his misreading and misinterpretations (no matter how understandable his missteps are), and we must be willing, like Heathcliff, to have some fun at his expense.\textsuperscript{157} Lockwood is both the positive and negative model reader. As McCarthy summarizes, “If, as a stranger to the world of Wuthering Heights, Lockwood mirrors our incredulity and lack of ease, we soon see through him and leave him far behind” (50). That Lockwood’s interest in both hearing and interpreting Nelly’s tale increasingly focuses on Cathy 2 reveals to the reader his inability to take in the whole story and his impulse to

\textsuperscript{156} Because of this “incongruity between the way [Lockwood] regards himself and the way he is regarded by others,” Worth stamps Lockwood as “the only genuine comic figure in \textit{Wuthering Heights}” (319).

\textsuperscript{157} We never see Heathcliff laugh and smile—in short, have such genuine fun—as much as when Lockwood is around, blundering and blustering: “Heathcliff smiled again” when Lockwood misreads the family relationships (\textit{WH} 14); Heathcliff “laughed” when his dogs attack Lockwood and cause his nose to bleed (17); and Heathcliff’s “countenance relaxed into a grin” when Lockwood gets sulky over Heathcliff’s inhospitality (7).
impose a more conventional romance (between him and Cathy 2) onto the unconventional romance between Cathy and Heathcliff. About midway through the novel, Lockwood tries to reinvent the story as an instructive one since its dreariness has somewhat failed at amusing him, and he centers such forced didacticism on the two Cathys: “I’ll extract wholesome medicines from Mrs Dean’s bitter herbs; and firstly, let me beware of the fascination that lurks in Catherine Heathcliff’s eyes” in case “the daughter turned out a second edition of the mother!” (WH 153). Further on in her recitation of the story, Nelly teases the now-infatuated Lockwood, who has requested that Cathy 2’s portrait be hung over his fireplace and who “look[s] so lively and interested, when [Nelly] talk[s] about her” (256). Lockwood’s previous omni-interest in all of his neighbors gives way to a more narrow romantic interest in Cathy 2, and he’s particularly “lively and interested” when the story touches on her. No wonder critics label him a “humdrum sentimentalist” (Worth 319) and a “sentimental prig” (Woodring 301), as he becomes increasingly concerned with the “sentimental” aspect of Nelly’s story. As if to stress our increasing distance from Lockwood, the novel takes an interesting structural turn at the very beginning of volume two. Lockwood informs us that he has “now heard all my neighbour’s history, at different sittings,” and so he shall “continue it in her own words” (WH 157). For the first volume, Lockwood and the reader were hearing the story for the first time at the same time. For most of the second volume (until Lockwood leaves and then returns and hears of Heathcliff’s death), Lockwood recounts the story he has already heard from Nelly; the reader, therefore, no longer learns simultaneously with Lockwood, and Lockwood is placed apart from us because of the knowledge he has and that we lack.

Lockwood experiences a complicated relationship with the world he visits and the story he hears: he feels the pull of this world, and yet, ultimately, resists it and escapes it. He
experiences one of the elemental paradoxes of this world: the longing to “get in” or to “let in” quickly becomes or is countered by the desperate desire to “get out” or be “let out.” In short, as Cathy eloquently explains, to be “really with it, and in it” (it being “that glorious world”) she needs to die: only death can break open the “shattered prison” that “enclose[s]” her (162). The desire to “get in” “it,” necessitates the ultimate “getting out.” Similarly, when Lockwood calls at the Heights for a second time, he jumps the chain, runs up the path, and knocks until “my knuckles tingled, and the dogs howled,” so much does he want to “get in” (9). Once Lockwood’s desire is fulfilled and he is in the Heights, his bizarre and frightening “dream” changes that desire: he now longs to escape the room and the house: “I’ll walk in the yard till daylight, and then I’ll be off: and you need not dread a repetition of my intrusion. I am now quite cured of seeking pleasure in society” (28). And in the final chapters of the book, as soon as Lockwood gets what he always wanted—easy access to an open and welcoming Heights—he seems uncomfortable and “escape[s]” as soon as he has the chance, rushing out of the cozy house and into the night air (337). Consider Isabella, who madly wishes to be “let in” to Heathcliff’s life and confidence (as she enviously considers Cathy being) and yet desperately attempts escapes as soon as she gets her desire. And Cathy 2, who pleads and cries and begs to visit and aid her cousin Linton, then pleads and cries and begs to leave the Heights and visit her dying father once she is married to Linton (like Isabella, she manages a daring escape from the Heights; unlike Isabella, she is recaptured and must return to the Heights). Not only does the

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158 Napier alleges that Lockwood projects his fervent desire for admittance onto Cathy’s ghost, who repeats “Let me in – let me in!” (WH 25). “Lockwood’s laceration of the ghost-child’s wrist,” Napier argues, functions as “a final imaginary revenge for the mistreatment he has sustained from Heathcliff” (97).
book seem to suggest “be careful what you wish for” and “you want what you can’t have” (with the implication that you’ll stop wanting it once you have it), but it also suggests that individuals have the competing, impossible, paradoxical desire for communion and distance, for admittance and escape, and maybe, if we push the paradigm to its limits, as Cathy experiences it, for life and death at the same time.

The problem is that Lockwood’s interest, concentration, and focus lead him to wanting in: he wants to marry Cathy 2. His very ability to focus his own (and, therefore, our) attentions on the story makes it difficult for him to stay in an emotionally neutral place of interest—makes it hard, I would say, for him to stay in the frame—because he (unlike us) is in the unique position of being able to act on the desire that the story creates in him. And when presented again with that desire, he runs away, trying to protect himself from it, trying to keep his distance, trying to keep his “through a window” perspective. The frame is a place of safety, of protection, and yet is a place that, because of its closeness to the framed, and its inherent function of focusing attention, focus, and light on the framed, is in danger of falling prey, of being seduced, of crossing the boundary it so markedly and yet tenuously creates. Similarly, Napier recognizes how the proliferation of crossed and penetrated “boundaries and barriers” in the novel highlights the “instability of the boundary...and...the ineffectuality of systems of constraint” (95, 97).

And the novel’s central relationship is the ultimate manifestation of unstable boundaries and ineffectual constraints. The relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy is many things: a metaphysical oneness (“Nelly, I am Heathcliff” [WH 82]); a yearning for physical oneness (Heathcliff arranges for their dead bodies to dissolve together); an intense sibling bond (they are raised as brother and sister; Edgar refers to Heathcliff as Cathy’s brother); and romantic love (Cathy chooses to marry Edgar over Heathcliff because of Edgar’s status and money, but she
seems to consider Heathcliff a possible romantic partner otherwise). Their relationship mocks
convention and breaks boundaries by invoking incest, necrophilia, and a misalliance; by
literalizing the “we are one” language of marriage; and by seemingly only being fulfilled in/after
death. Van Ghent envisions a happy Cathy and Heathcliff relationship as “asocial, savagely
irresponsible, widely impulsive: it would be the enthusiastic, experimental, quite random activity
of childhood, occult to the socialized adult” (158–159). Lockwood and Nelly, who prefer things
to be pleasant, comfortable, customary, and sociable are understandably terrified and confounded
by the possibilities that Cathy and Heathcliff’s attachment present.

Lockwood and Nelly are the border police, so to speak, continually trying to shut down,
contain, and keep their distance from the terrifying boundary-breaking prospects of Cathy and
Heathcliff’s relationship. One main example of their attempts to enact closure, to effectively
contain the un-containable love of Cathy and Heathcliff, is Lockwood’s and Nelly’s continually
offered reading of death as a peaceful finality. When Cathy dies, Nelly characterizes Cathy’s
dead body as overwhelmingly peaceful: “hers of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids
closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile. No angel in heaven could be more beautiful
than she appeared; and I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay. My mind was never in a
holier frame, than while I gazed on that untroubled image of Divine rest” (WH 166). Nelly’s
statement is rife with exaggeration, restating, and overstating: the “peace” is alliteratively
“perfect,” the “calm” is unassailably “infinite,” and the “rest” is nothing less than “Divine.”
Perfect, infinite, and Divine: these are absolutes, extremes. Importantly, Nelly identifies her role
as the framer here, imbuing what she sees with her own desires, when she says that her “mind
was never in a holier frame” (166). Nelly continues by stating that Cathy’s corpse “asserted its
own tranquility” (167); however, the very idea of a dead body “asserting” anything seems to
undermine Nelly’s interpretation of Cathy’s body as passively resting. Heathcliff’s dead body doesn’t conform as easily to Nelly’s desire for closure. It refuses to settle into the image of peace and repose that Cathy’s seemingly does. His eyes won’t close, his smirk won’t dampen, and his face just won’t look dead; instead, his face wears a “frightful, life-like gaze of exultation” (335). No wonder Nelly is terrified of Heathcliff’s dead body and must cry out for help when she encounters it. Despite the openness and liveliness of Heathcliff’s dead body, and despite all of the local evidence of Heathcliff’s ghost wandering the moors, Nelly insists that “the dead are at peace” (337). She tries to shut down Heathcliff’s body’s own resistance to the discourse of closure, death, and peace.

At the points in Nelly’s narrative where she relates Cathy’s and Heathcliff’s deaths, she and Lockwood enter into a quick, digressive discussion that unsettles the very closure Nelly proffers. After Nelly discourses at length on the beauty of Cathy’s dead body and the joy of the hereafter, she poses a question to Lockwood that reveals that she’s not quite convinced of her own logic: “Do you believe people are happy in the other world, sir? I’d give a great deal to know” (167). Lockwood chooses not to answer and mentally considers the question “heterodox” (167). Thereafter, Nelly continues on with her story, leaving her earnest question hanging and unanswered (167). At the end of the novel, when Nelly explains that the Heights will soon be shut up, Lockwood jokily interrupts that the Heights will still be available “For the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it” (337). Lockwood’s comment unsettles a conception of death as ending one’s earthly existence and momentarily gives credence to the “[i]dle tales” of Heathcliff and Cathy’s moor-promenading ghosts that Nelly both recounts and discounts in the same breath (336). Nelly and Lockwood, therefore, take turns questioning the closure they both offer and take turns chiding the other for, more or less, being “heterodox.” Nelly answers Lockwood’s ghoulish
quip with a firm “No, Mr Lockwood” (337) while “shaking her head,” both verbally and bodily trying to board up against such terrifying possibilities. But, as McCarthy notes, Nelly’s “denial is unconvincing...She has an inkling of a visionary world which must be kept at bay—for sanity’s sake” (63).

And in the final paragraphs of the novel, Lockwood visits the three graves and closes out the novel and closes off its anarchic and terrifying possibilities at the same time. His description of the headstone triumvirate mirrors Nelly’s earlier attempts to impose quietness and rest—in short, closure—on the very dead who seem to resist both: “I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched the moths fluttering among the heath, and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth” (WH 337). At every turn of phrase, Lockwood softens, tames, and beautifies the scene: the very moths “flutter,” the already “soft wind” gets softer by “breathing” rather than blowing, the sky is “benign,” and even Lockwood’s own actions—“lingered” and “listened”—are calm, stationary, and softened by those opening l’s and ending ed’s. The dropped “a” from “round” adds a pastoral veneer to the description, a gentle nod to a country vernacular. The pervasive silence of the scene is only heighted by the one intimation of sound, the mention of the purple flower hare-bells, which, of course, are only shaped like bells and come with none of their clanging ringing. Lockwood, teasingly, nearly seems to call out to Heathcliff by evoking “the heath,” but cuts himself off, and, after all, no specter answers the partial call. Lockwood’s certainly not up to the task of being the “any one” who could imagine the scene any other way.159 But again, just as Nelly gave herself away

159 In reference to the novel’s final passage, J. Hillis Miller writes, “The naïveté of Lockwood, even at the end of the novel, is imaged in his inability to imagine unquiet slumbers
through the very length and exaggeration of her response to Cathy’s dead body (and even more by the question that followed it), Lockwood’s exaggeration here is similar, and particularly manifest in the final section, which is comprised of a striking, loose chiasmus. The sequence of “unquiet” and “slumbers” is reversed into “sleepers” and “quiet” which structurally compels the conventional, restful “quiet” to counter and dissipate the potentiality of “unquiet.”

Another one of Lockwood’s attempts to enact closure is his decision to leave the neighborhood before his lease is out and the decision not to renew that same lease. As soon as he is physically able, he leaves for London. He only returns at the end of the novel by accident, “unexpectedly” finding himself near Gimmerton on the way to visit a friend’s house in the North and then deciding to settle financial matters with the landlord and spend the night at the Grange (305). Shockingly, Lockwood barely recalls the name of Gimmerton when it’s mentioned to him, and he seems to barely remember his memorable stay in the area: “‘Gimmerton?’ I repeated, my residence in that locality had already grown dim and dreamy” (305). Like, perhaps, an experience with a novel, his experience of staying at the Grange has already become “dim and dreamy”: past, separate, and developing the patina of unreality. His return to the environs surrounding Gimmerton reads like a seduction, a temptation, a spell: a “sudden impulse seized me to visit Thrushcross Grange” (305), Lockwood recounts. As soon as he reaches the valley, the land pulls out all its beautiful summer stops to “tempt” Lockwood: “It was sweet, warm weather… the heat did not hinder me from enjoying the delightful scenery above and below; had I seen it nearer August, I’m sure it would have tempted me to waste a month among its

for the sleepers in the quiet earth” (Fiction 59). Although I agree that Lockwood reveals innocence in this passage, I interpret Lockwood’s idyllic reaction as a willed refusal of the imagination (and a willed act of closure) rather than as unconscious and unknowing naïveté.
solitudes” (305). During his walk to the Heights he’s met with “the mild glory of a rising moon in front” of him (307), and the “mild glory,” quickly improves into a “splendid moon” (307).

Everything at the Heights is open and lovely; the gate “yielded to my hand”; he smells the “fragrance of stocks and wall flowers” (307); the “doors and lattices were open” (307); through the window, he espies a “comfort[ing]” fire (307); and when he goes to the back of the house, “There was unobstructed admittance on that side also” (308). He’s finally met with the hospitality that he always wanted and yet never got at the Heights. Nelly asks him to “step in,” “sit down, and let me take your hat, and I’ll tell you all about it,” and she offers to get him some of their “old ale” (309). Even here and now, in the seat of comfort, he “felt irresistibly impelled to escape” (337) once Cathy and Hareton return from their walk. Nelly’s “expostulations at [his] rudeness” do nothing (337) and Lockwood “vanished” (337).

Lockwood’s conscious attempt to novelize Nelly’s oral tale is another effort of control, containment, and closure. Fashioning the history into a novel makes it separate, distant, fanciful (rather than real)—it makes it something that can’t knock on Lockwood’s own door (hence the odd feeling whenever a character from the story, like Heathcliff and Kenneth, does just that).

Lockwood twice refers to the “sequel” of Nelly’s story (90, 309). He worries that Cathy Linton may prove to be a “second edition of the mother” (153); he uses a publishing metaphor to describe issues of character and inheritance. While enduring his prescribed bed rest, Lockwood calls Nelly up to “finish her tale. I can recollect its chief incidents, as far as she had gone. Yes, I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years; and the heroine was married” (91). Lockwood gives the story a “hero” and a “heroine,” transforming it into something structured and literary. A novel, after all, can always be closed and finished (and even
burned, as Hareton illustrates): “I’ll put my trash away, because you can make me, if I refuse,’ answered the young lady, closing her book, and throwing it on a chair” (30).

Even at the end of the novel, Lockwood takes care to separate himself from the person he most desires—Cathy 2. As he approaches the Heights, he spies on Cathy and Hareton’s cute reading lesson through a window: “what inmates there were had stationed themselves not far from one of the windows. I could both see them and hear them talk before I entered; and, looked and listened in consequence, being moved thereto by a mingled sense of curiosity, and envy that grew as I lingered” (307). Again, Lockwood’s interest (neutral “curiosity”) soon becomes affection-driven “envy” as he realizes that Cathy and Hareton are romantically involved. He rushes around the house to enter by the back door as they prepare to walk through the front door so he doesn’t have to meet the couple face-to-face. Later, when he hears them returning from their walk, he “grumbled, watching their approach through the window” (337). Again, he runs out the back door while they linger at the front door so he doesn’t have to meet them face-to-face. His whole encounter with them, therefore, on this return trip to the Heights, is mediated by windows. In addition, in his previous encounter with Cathy 2, which occurs when he comes to the Heights to tell Heathcliff that he’s leaving the Grange, Lockwood again views Cathy through a frame-like structure, a doorway. After Lockwood awkwardly chats with a grumpy Cathy, the conversation is hijacked by a spat between Cathy and Hareton over the books he stole from her, an argument that culminates with Hareton throwing the books into the fire. Once Cathy no longer seems interested in conversing with Lockwood, Lockwood moves and “took up my station in the door-way, surveying the external prospect, as I stood” (302). It is from this position that he watches the quarrel and book burning. And, after all, Lockwood has Cathy’s (presumably framed) picture relocated in the Grange so it hangs over his fireplace (256). Since Lockwood
views pursuing Cathy as “running into temptation” (256), it makes sense that he views his two latter visits to the Heights as scenes of temptation and tries to distance himself from Cathy by “framing” her.

But for all the closure bravura, Nelly and Lockwood’s very narratorial handling of *Wuthering Heights* mimics rather than counters the loss of clear identity and boundaries displayed by Cathy and Heathcliff’s relationship. For example, in the last two pages of the novel, it’s near impossible to pinpoint when exactly Lockwood becomes the narrator again, as he certainly is for the last four paragraphs of the novel. The movement between Nelly’s oral narrative (which, when she is the narrator, is NOT in quotation marks) and Lockwood’s narrative (in which Nelly’s verbal comments ARE encased in quotation marks) is frequent, subtle, and often imperceptible and ambiguous. These transitions do not happen as they do in other novels I’ve discussed in this dissertation. In *Bleak House* and *Treasure Island*, for example, the narrator changes at the start of a new chapter, and the narrator never changes within a chapter. In *Dracula*, Collins’s novels, *Treasure Island*, *A Great Emergency*, and much of *Bleak House*, the chapter titles explicitly or implicitly identify the chapter’s narrator. In *A Great Emergency* and *Heart of Darkness*, the inset narrative is typographically marked: the text of Henrietta’s diary entry is italicized and in quotation marks, and Marlow’s narrative is bracketed by quotation marks throughout the novel. In *Wuthering Heights*, on the other hand, the narrative handoffs happen within chapters and even within single sentences and without the expected textual markers. And the novel will switch to the other narrator for incredibly short periods of time: within the context of Nelly’s oral story, a four sentence interchange on page 167 is narrated by Lockwood and a less than ten-sentence interchange on page 67 is again narrated by Lockwood. Within one sentence, the point of view can switch from one narrator, to the other, and back.
again. The first time Nelly takes up the narrator position shows this phenomenon: “Before I came
to live here [Nelly], she commenced, waiting no further invitation to her story [Lockwood], I was
almost always at Wuthering Heights [Nelly]” (35). The switches between the two narrators are

not marked by quotation marks, and the novel seems to rely on the reader’s adept reading of
pronouns (Lockwood’s use of “she” informs us that he is now narrating) and context (“I was
almost always at Wuthering Heights” could not be said by Lockwood) to identify which
character is narrating at any particular moment. This tactic of transition recurs throughout the
novel. For example: “In the evening [Nelly], she said [Lockwood], the evening of my visit to the
Heights, I knew as well as if I saw him [Nelly]” (157); “I was summoned to Wuthering Heights,
within a fortnight of your leaving us [Nelly], she said [Lockwood]; and I obeyed joyfully, for
Catherine’s sake [Nelly]” (310). The question about who exactly is narrating when becomes only
more mired when Lockwood announces, about mid-way through the novel, that he has now
heard Nelly’s whole story (pre-Heathcliff’s death), and that he will now be repeating her story: “I
have now heard all my neighbour’s history, at different sittings, as the housekeeper could spare
time from more important occupations. I’ll continue it in her own words, only a little condensed.
She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator, and I don’t think I could improve her style” (157). So,
technically, from chapter 1 of volume 2 through chapter 16 of volume 2, whenever we hear
Nelly’s narration, it is actually Lockwood’s repetition of her narration. As discussed in the
introduction, I consider it a convention in reproducing a narrative to indicate that the
reproduction has been slightly edited or shortened. As with Hartright in The Woman in White and
Gilbert in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Lockwood never gives any hint about what material has
been cut or shortened from Nelly’s original narrative. But Lockwood’s various ambiguous
qualifiers regarding what he has cut (“only a little condensed”) and his judgment of Nelly’s
narration (“I don’t think I could improve her style”; “She is, on the whole, a very fair narrator”) leave the reader even more unsure of who is narrating when and whose words we are hearing. Nelly’s narrative, even after Lockwood’s disclaimer, continues to not be encased by quotation marks (which is usually the marker that shows the reader that we are “in” Lockwood’s narrative), which further blurs the lines between the two narrators and their narratives.

The fluid and flexible pronoun game that occurs at points of narrative transition reminds me of Cathy’s mental breakdown, in which her mind starts, as Nelly puts it, “wandering” (123). Standing at the open window and staring towards the Heights (which isn’t even visible from the Grange), she starts verbally rambling into the frosty air:

Joseph sits up late, doesn’t he? He’s waiting till I come home that he may lock the gate…Well, he’ll wait a while yet. It’s a rough journey, and a sad heart to travel it; and we must pass by Gimmerton Kirk, to go that journey! We’ve braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves and ask them to come…But Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I’ll keep you. I’ll not lie there by myself…but I won’t rest till you are with me…I never will!...He’s considering…he’d rather I come to him! Find a way, then! not through that Kirkyard…You are slow! Be content, you always followed me! (126)

The identity of the speaker fluctuates from an “I” (Cathy herself) to a “we” (Cathy and Heathcliff), and the identity of the narratee fluctuates from Nelly, to Heathcliff (by name), to Heathcliff with direct address (“you”). Then, Cathy seems to be repeating (or translating) Heathcliff’s words for Nelly’s ears (“He’s considering…he’d rather I come to him!”). Similarly, within the narrative structure, the narrator changes (Lockwood, Nelly, and other metadiegetic narrators such as Isabella via letter), the narratee changes (from Lockwood to Lockwood’s
undefined narratee), and Lockwood sometimes is repeating/translating Nelly’s words to the reader.

And although Nelly and Lockwood’s narrative handoffs reveal the very fluidity of identity they try to guard against, the reader is sympathetic to Nelly and Lockwood’s avoidance of romantic relationships because of their fears that it would, in some way, erase or distort their identities. A servant girl brings Nelly the news of Hareton’s birth and Frances’s inevitable death in the same breath: “The finest lad that ever breathed! But the doctor says missis must go” (64); Nelly both cares for the newborn and tends to the sickroom, actually witnessing Frances’s death. Later, Nelly relates Cathy’s death and Cathy’s birth in the same sentence (another event that she was probably actually present for): “that night, was born the Catherine you saw…a puny, seven months’ child; and two hours after the mother died” (166). Romantic love, for women, leads to marriage, which leads to childbirth, which leads to premature death. Although Sternlieb incorrectly identifies Nelly as “the only woman in the novel who successfully avoids motherhood” (41), as, to our knowledge, neither Zillah nor Cathy 2 has (yet) had a child, Sternlieb accurately explains that via “spinsterhood, celibacy, and childlessness,” Nelly “becomes the only survivor of her generation” (42). Furthermore, Nelly recounts how Mrs. Linton insists that Cathy, recovering from the serious illness that results from waiting in the rain for Heathcliff’s return, be moved to the Grange to finish her convalescence; when Cathy is transferred, unfortunately, both Mrs. Linton “and her husband both took the fever, and died within a few days of each other” (WH 8). Children, it seems, kill parents. It’s not for nothing that Nelly warns Cathy 2 that continuing her bourgeoning romance with Linton “might kill” her father (231); and, indeed, Cathy 2’s romance with Linton and Edgar’s own fatal sickness parallel each other, and Cathy 2 and Linton’s marriage nearly coincides with Edgar’s death. The women
prove particularly vulnerable, as no mother outlives a father: Mrs. Earnshaw dies four years before Mr. Earnshaw; Frances dies four years before Hindley; Cathy dies seventeen years before Edgar; and Isabella dies five years before Heathcliff (Cathy 2 does outlive Linton, but importantly, their union produces no children). And from a male perspective, say that of Lockwood, although the men might outlive the women, the men are left behind, heartbroken. Hindley descends into alcoholism, gambling, and tyrannical sorrow; Edgar plateaus into lifeless tranquility; and Heathcliff suffers through a “life” less and “soul” less existence before dying from a seemingly Cathy-imposed regimen of starvation and sleep deprivation (169). Just as children kill parents, lovers seem to kill each other, as both Heathcliff and Cathy are repeatedly referred to as each other’s “murderers” (see 163), Heathcliff and Isabella continually threaten to kill each other (Heathcliff going so far as to throw a dinner knife at her head [182–183]), and Catherine contemplates killing herself if it would kill her husband Edgar (121). The two characters who live long, healthy, and robust lives are Nelly and Joseph, the sparring servants and adamant singles who have shown little to no interest in romantic attachments for themselves.

Lockwood mentions that although Joseph is “an elderly man, nay, an old man, very old, perhaps,” he is still remarkably “hale and sinewy,” and indeed, Joseph does his part in running the estate despite his age (4). Nelly prides herself on her “stirring active body” and hearty genetic stock (her mother lived to be 80!), and we see her constantly running back and forth across the moors with or after Cathy 2 (243). If we construe Nelly’s avoidance of marriage and motherhood as survival tactics (as several critics do), then why shouldn’t we construe Lockwood’s similar avoidances (running away from the pretty girl at the resort town; running away from Cathy 2 at

160 To obtain these numbers, I’ve used the helpful and thorough chronology that C. P. Sanger constructs of the novel.
the Heights) as also motivated by self-preservation and protection? Critics seem more willing to applaud Nelly’s strength and mock Lockwood’s cowardice, while I would like to present both characters as being driven by similar desires and fears.

So Lockwood and Nelly are always on the outsides of families, yet longing to be connected to those families in a safe way that doesn’t threaten or destroy the self. Lockwood’s desires and fears have always been in conflict. In the first chapter of *Wuthering Heights*, we learn of Lockwood’s failed romance with a girl at a sea resort (importantly, it’s probably the only piece of extended information we receive about Lockwood’s past). When the “real goddess” whom he adores finally returns his affection with “the sweetest of all imaginable looks,” he “shrunk icily into myself, like a snail, at every glance retired colder and father” until the girl, befuddled, leaves the resort with her mother (6). I’ve often wondered if Lockwood’s botched courtship was literally nothing but a series of passionate glances, or if he uses the terms of “looking” as an allegory for a more normal courtship. Since Lockwood proves to be both unselfconscious *and* overblown in regards to love (he falls in love with Cathy having seen her once) the question seems valid. Lockwood veers between being misanthropic and being needy, desiring isolation and then socialization. He declares himself a misanthrope and rents a remote house on the moors, yet immediately insinuates himself into his neighbor’s lives and wants to befriend Heathcliff and marry Cathy. Lockwood is desirous of forming and evading relationships at quick turns. His relationship with Cathy somewhat parallels and inverts his relationship with the sea-resort goddess; in the second case, however, it’s the girl’s inability to return the look of love that prompts *him* to “decamp” (6). Just as Lockwood describes the first love as “a real goddess” (6), he deems Cathy a similarly fanciful, supernatural creature: a “beneficent fairy” (14). Just as the relationship between the goddess and Lockwood is a saga of glances, Lockwood
narrates the interactions between him and Cathy in a comparable way; when he first meets the “pretty girl-widow,” “I stared – she stared also. At any rate, she kept her eyes on me, in a cool, regardless manner” (33, 10). Lockwood continually comments on Cathy’s eyes: “and eyes – had they been agreeable in expression, they would have been irresistible” (11). Just as the goddess was a “fascinating creature” (6), “fascination…lurks in” Cathy’s “brilliant eyes” (153). But the intensity of Cathy’s eyes and the steadiness of her stare suggest that she holds the power in this battle of the looks rather than Lockwood—she never, as the prior girl did, sends “the sweetest of all imaginable looks” his way (6). Beth Newman concurs that this scene exhibits “Lockwood’s fear of the returning female gaze” (1031). As Nelly surmises, “no one could see Catherine Linton, and not love her” (WH 256). Lockwood seems enthralled by Cathy’s eyes and becomes love-struck just by looking at her. In the end, Cathy proves unreceptive, and Lockwood admits that he did nothing to win her but “staring at its smiting beauty” (308). Just as Lockwood’s looks drew out the goddess’s affection, Cathy’s looks—both her appearance and her way of looking with her eyes—draw out Lockwood’s affections, and both the goddess and Lockwood are left out in the cold. Significantly, the passage that describes the mixed signals by the sea is bracketed with mother references, implying a possible logic behind Lockwood’s bizarre actions. The only mention of “my dear mother” happens directly before the passage, and the “canine mother” of the Heights makes her growling appearance directly afterwards. The only thing we know about Lockwood’s mother is that she “used to say I should never have a comfortable home” (8), which doesn’t sound like something a “dear mother” would say to her (possibly only, as Lockwood doesn’t mention any siblings) son. Not only does her supposedly frequent comment imply that Lockwood will never land a wife (since only a wife could make a home comfortable) but also implies that he is not welcome in her home either. Her remark, therefore, sounds both like
premonition and punishment. Then, we see Lockwood, sitting on the hearthstone no less, that architectural symbol of (and even synonym for) the home, when one of Heathcliff’s dogs approaches him: Lockwood was “attempting to caress the canine mother, who had left her nursery, and was sneaking wolfishly to the back of my legs, her lip curled up, and her white teeth watering for a snatch” (6). But Lockwood’s “caress” produces nothing but “a long, guttural gnarl” (6). On the next page, the “madam” (she is later named “Juno,” that mother of the gods) “broke into a fury, and leapt on my knees,” at which point, Lockwood “flung her back” (7). The animal’s maternity is further stressed by Lockwood’s observation that the dog has just left the “nursery” (6). The mother is now a vicious and aggressive wolf-dog. In a horrific reversal of the mother breastfeeding the nursing infant, the dog’s “curled” lip reveals “white teeth” that are “watering for a snatch” of Lockwood (6). The “canine mother” rejects Lockwood’s misplaced caresses and then attacks him, all which justifies Lockwood in hating and attacking her.

Lockwood’s subtle issue with the mother figure echoes his fears about women (the resort girl’s looks of affection are interpreted as weapons, which force Lockwood to retreat, like a snail into his protective shell).161

Lockwood’s mother’s presentiment—that Lockwood is doomed to never have a home—actually is borne out by Lockwood’s story. He is often described in home-less terms—he’s a “stranger” (16), a “visitor” (16), an “unwelcome apparition” (306), who “intrudes” (8, 28) and “invades” (305), and even a visitor at his friend’s home or at the sea coast. We meet him when he rents out the Grange, a domicile he only inhabits for a portion of his lease (he does call it his

161 Newman links the female gaze in this scene to Freud’s “‘Medusa’s Head,’ the direct sight of which evokes the terror of castration in the male spectator, a terror that turns him to stone” (1030–1031).
“home” but it is clearly not the “comfortable home” his mother refers to and that Lockwood
desires). As Lockwood says bluntly to Nelly, “my home is not here” (256). But when he
subsequently adds, “I’m of the busy world, and to its arms I must return” (257), he doesn’t say
his “home” is in the busy world, and he had, just a few months earlier, run away from that busy
world because he felt it didn’t suit him. More than anything, Lockwood is a perennial wanderer,
searching for a place to plant his roots, yet never finding quite the right soil.162 Although Nelly
briefly mentions a childhood home and dreams about a “cottage” of her own (297), the former is
never visited in the novel and the latter never materializes. Like Lockwood, then, Nelly is a
homeless wanderer who shuttles between the Grange and the Heights in following the whims and
dictates of her various employers.

Like Lockwood, Nelly is on the outside looking in, longing to be connected to these two
families in a way that is fulfilling but not threatening (i.e. not romantic). Nelly insinuates herself
into these families as a ubiquitous servant/family member. Gilbert and Gubar point out that, “like
Heathcliff, Nelly seems to have been a sort of stepchild at the Heights” (290). Nelly rarely
mentions her birth family, although her mother is still living (for part of the story) and probably
lives nearby.163 Nelly’s connection with the Earnshaws grows from her mother’s connection with

162 Shannon offers a similar reading of Cathy as itinerant based on Cathy’s self-
identification as a “waif” when her girlish ghost haunts Lockwood: “In early English law ‘waif’
(ME waive) was the term for a female outlaw, and the suggestion immediately arises that, like
the Wandering Jew, Cathy has been condemned to wander the earth, homeless and friendless, an
outcast from society, for some heinous crime committed during her lifetime” (99).

163 Nelly is raised, it seems, more at Wuthering Heights than at her own home. But the
latter must exist since, when Mr. Earnshaw “sent [Nelly] out of the house” for not finding
the family: “I was almost always at Wuthering Heights; because my mother had nursed Mr Hindley Earnshaw, that was Hareton’s father, and I got used to playing with the children – I ran errands too, and helped to make hay” (WH 36). From the beginning then, Nelly and Hindley share, in effect, a mother, and Nelly both romps with the children and serves them. Nelly never mentions her father, however, but just as Nelly’s mother mothers Hindley, Hindley’s father fathers Nelly, offering to bring her gifts from Liverpool just as he does for his own children.

When Cathy follows up her discovery of her father’s death with a “heart-breaking cry,” Nelly immediately “joined my wail to theirs, loud and bitter,” and hours later she “sobbed” still, as if, indeed, she were mourning a father figure (44). Her intimacy with Hindley (they even have a “favourite spot” where they stored “snail-shells and pebbles” [108]) encourages her to identify herself as Hindley’s “foster sister” (66) and to identify Hindley, comparably, as her “foster brother” (186). Even though, during his alcoholic and depressive nadir, he tries to shove knives down her throat, she “wept as for a blood relation” when she learns of his death (186). We never see Nelly weep for an actual blood relation. Even though we know her mother must have died—she tells Cathy 2 that her “mother lived till eighty, a canty dame to the last” (231)—Nelly offers no more information other than the two brief references to her mother and one implied allusion to her family’s house. This absence of Nelly’s birth family only makes her integration into the Earnshaw and Linton families seem more effective, more absolute. Even when Nelly thinks about “leav[ing] my situation” and “tak[ing] a cottage,” it would be to live with her foster Heathcliff a room to sleep in the night he arrives, she returns to the Heights “a few days afterwards, for I did not consider my banishment perpetual” (WH 37). Although Nelly does not specify where she went during the interval, we can assume she had returned home for a few days.
daughter, Catherine (297). Hareton too is treated like Nelly’s foster child. As soon as Frances gives birth, another servant tells Nelly that the newly born child “will be all yours when there is no misses” (64). When Frances dies a few months later, “the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands” (66). Nelly “nurse[s]” Hareton just as her mother nursed Hindley (64), and once she is transplanted to the Grange and thereby separated from Hareton, she still thinks of Hareton as “my Hareton” (109). No wonder the “crown of all my wishes will be the union” of Cathy and Hareton—“my children” as she calls them at one point (321)—since it will legitimize her makeshift family. Nelly’s role as everyone’s mother¹⁶⁴ and everyone’s sister and everyone’s confidante is, of course, structurally necessary: as an “observer” first person narrator, Nelly must be liked, confided in, and always present so she can narrate from her own experience of what she sees and hears. But, in addition to being the omnipresent sister and mother, Nelly is also a dependent—she’s everyone’s servant (Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley, Frances, Heathcliff, both Cathys, Edgar, and Linton all give her orders; perhaps only Hareton is exempt). In crying over Hindley’s death, Nelly calls Hindley “my old master and foster brother” (186); the more egalitarian relationship of siblings must uneasily coexist with the more hierarchal relationship of master and servant. And although she acts as a mother and companion to both Cathys (who both lose their

¹⁶⁴ See Sternlieb, Gilbert and Gubar, and Q. D. Leavis for discussions of Nelly’s motherliness. Sternlieb considers how Nelly “is imbricated in [the novel’s] catastrophic motherlessness. For she is responsible at various times for six orphaned children” (41). In the same vein, Gilbert and Gubar note that Nelly is a benevolent “nurse” and “foster-mother” who raises many of the children in the book (291). Leavis speaks of Nelly’s “spontaneous maternal impulses” (208) and argues that Nelly’s “truly feminine nature satisfies itself in nurturing all the children in the book in turn” (208).
mothers at a young age), they don’t hesitate to put her in her place when necessary, as when Cathy 1 tells Nelly, “people might think you were the mistress…You want setting down in your right place!” (111). The first Cathy punishes Nelly by treating her like “a mere servant” rather than as the sister/mother/confidante of other times (88). When characters can’t convince or persuade Nelly to do what they want done, they always have the option to force her hand or to ignore her advice. When she prefers to stay at the Heights to continue raising and teaching young Hareton, Earnshaw fires her so Edgar can fulfill Cathy’s desire and have Nelly work at the Grange: “I had but one choice left, to do as I was ordered” (89). And, at the end of the novel, even though Nelly is calm and happy, glowing over the upcoming nuptials, she still inhabits the odd mother/servant position as she enacts Cathy’s business for her: “She has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her; there’s nobody else” (309). Nelly, therefore, to some extent, achieves her desires: she both inhabits and transcends the “servant” category; she is linked with all of the novel’s main characters though affective, familial-like bonds; and yet, she remains independent, single, content, financially solvent, and crucially—alive—into her middle age.

Unsurprisingly, since Lockwood and Nelly coincide in approach about and attitude towards the central story, the storytelling sessions enable the two narrators to become close; however, for the majority of the novel, Lockwood and Nelly take refuge in the platonic and prescribed relationship of master and servant. In so doing, they both get what they want. Lockwood gets close to a non-threatening (because so much lower than him in status) female. She gets to be a gossip (finally having an outlet for all those confidences), yet a gossip drained of its erotic potential. They consistently direct all romantic feelings to Cathy 2 to better drain their own relationship of any erotic potential (these storytelling sessions often take place at
Lockwood’s bedside). Nelly plays matchmaker, prodding Lockwood with romantic possibilities: “Yet, who knows how long you’ll be a stranger?...and I some way fancy, no one could see Catherine Linton and not love her” (256). Nelly’s quotation, by the way, also suggests her own love for Cathy, who she admittedly likes much better than she liked Cathy’s mother. And Lockwood latches on to such a possibility, which he specifically links back to Nelly: “What a realization of something more than a fairy tale it would have been for Mrs Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment, as her good nurse desired” (304).¹⁶⁵

And so they both play their necessary social roles; as master, Lockwood kindly orders Nelly about, and as a servant, Nelly spiritedly submits. For example, when Nelly is exhausted by telling the story for hours and to a late hour (for her, 11 p.m.), Lockwood tells her to “Sit sill” and “resume your chair” (62). When Lockwood first asks for information, Nelly complies: “Oh, certainly, sir! I’ll just fetch a little sewing, and then I’ll sit as long as you please; but you’ve caught cold, I saw you shivering, and you must have some gruel to drive it out” (35). Nelly continuously uses the deferential word “sir” throughout her conversation with Lockwood, mostly keeps herself to answering his questions for information, but when she finally puts a question to

¹⁶⁵ Hafley and Sternlieb bring up Nelly’s matchmaking intentions, but only as evidence of Nelly’s scheming, manipulative nature. Hafley and Sternlieb belong to the aforementioned “Nelly as villain” camp. To Sternlieb, Nelly’s “pressing agenda” includes “a new husband for Cathy, a new employer for herself” (41). Hafley concurs with Sternlieb on Nelly’s to-do list: “She has, of course, not told this long story to Lockwood without very good reason: he is gullible, he is weak, he is disposed to like her. He would, in short, make a very good ‘master’ for her should he marry Cathy now that young Linton has died; it is her purpose to arrange his desiring such a marriage” (212).
him (had he been to Wuthering Heights), she adds, “I beg pardon for asking” (35). She places her acquiescence to tell the story (“I’ll sit as long as you please”) alongside other housekeeper duties, in this case, doing some sewing and attending to Lockwood’s sickness. Bringing “a basket of work” back with her, Nelly makes clear, by working while she talks, that her talk is also work; hours later, she is still doing such work because Lockwood comments that, when Nelly pauses in the story, she also put “aside her sewing” (62). At another point, when weeks have passed and Lockwood is recovering, he asks for Nelly to resume the tale, or rather, he orders her to: “Don’t interrupt me. Come and take your seat here…Draw your knitting out of your pocket – that will do – now continue the history of Mr Heathcliff” (91). Again, Nelly’s work of telling is linked with working with her hands, her knitting. Lockwood then, acts the employer, and Nelly acts the servant.

When Lockwood returns at the end of the novel, however, the situation has changed: Heathcliff is dead, there’s new help at the Grange, and Nelly is living at the Heights as a kind of surrogate mother/business partner to Cathy 2; in fact, Nelly is now effectively Lockwood’s landlord because she informs Lockwood that it’s with her that he “must settle” because Cathy 2 “has not learnt to manage her affairs yet, and I act for her” (309). Lockwood and Nelly, therefore, are suddenly equalized. This time, as befits her position, Nelly precipitates the storytelling: “but, sit down, and let me take your hat, and I’ll tell you about it. Stop, you have had nothing to eat, have you?” (309). Nelly is now, in a reversal of their customary interactions, ordering Lockwood around (“sit down,” “stop”) and initiating the storytelling (“I’ll tell you about it”). Rather than giving Lockwood his medicine (via Kenneth’s orders) as she previously had done, Nelly plays hostess and gives Lockwood a “reaming, silver pint” of the house’s “old ale” (309) (despite Joseph’s comments that she shouldn’t do so). Lockwood seems to feel a bit
ordered around as he quickly counters with “I want nothing. I have ordered supper at home. You sit down too...Let me hear how it came to pass” (309); however, Nelly goes off for the beverage “before [he] could refuse” (309). In response, therefore, Lockwood turns down her request for food and wants to turn down her offer of a drink; he shoots back her order for him to sit down; and he re-constructs her desire to tell the story of Heathcliff’s death into his desire to hear it.

When the circumscribed master-servant relationship disintegrates towards the end of the novel, Nelly and Lockwood must permanently part. As soon as their relationship becomes more equal, the novel gently hints at a possible romantic connection between the two. In Tenant, closeness and narrative exchange between a man and a woman leads to marriage, but as patrons of distance and avoiders of personal romance, Nelly and Lockwood reject such an end. The night during which Nelly and Lockwood have their final meeting is already beautiful and dreamy. The moon glows. Cathy and Hareton depart on a lovers’ stroll. Within such a romantic ambiance, Joseph brings up the possible impropriety of Lockwood and Nelly’s nocturnal rendezvous: “and I heard Joseph asking, whether ‘it warn’t a crying scandal that [Nelly] should have fellies at her time of life?’” (309). Nelly “did not stay to retaliate” Joseph’s innuendos (309), and although Lockwood doesn’t seem to pay them any mind at the time, he clearly ruminates enough on Joseph’s accusation to attempt to refute it as he runs out of the Heights. He hopes that Joseph “recognized me for a respectable character” rather than a party in “his fellow-servant’s gay indiscretions” by throwing a “sovereign at his feet” (337). Interestingly, and (to our knowledge) for the first time, Lockwood pays Nelly; he runs off suddenly, but not before “pressing a remembrance into the hand of Mrs Dean” (337). Eager to escape a potential romantic partner and eager to disprove Joseph’s snide comments, Lockwood tries to re-establish the economic dimension to his and Nelly’s relationship by paying her for telling him the story.
“remembrance” he gives her is precisely what a master would give a servant (after all, Lockwood gives a similar gift to Joseph). Nelly and Lockwood have, from the beginning, clearly liked one another. Lockwood “unhesitatingly” tells Cathy 2 that Nelly likes him “very well” (300), and they both seem rather joyous to see each other again towards the end of the novel. Ironically, therefore, the same storytelling that brings Nelly and Lockwood together is what ultimately drives them apart again, as Lockwood no longer finds Nelly safe. After all, Nelly and Lockwood have lost their helpful romantic focuser—Nelly is “glad [Lockwood] did not try” to win Cathy’s heart (316), and Lockwood admits that his attraction to Cathy 2 is now futile since she’s happily engaged to Hareton.

And finally, I’m interested in the very ambiguousness of Lockwood’s narrative. What exactly is Lockwood’s narrative? Scholars of Wuthering Heights evade this question, and their scholarship little concerns itself with the materiality of the narrative he creates; I argue, however, that the ambiguous status of Lockwood’s narrative—the difficulty in categorizing it—is crucial to understanding Lockwood’s perspective as a narrator. His narrative lacks the common textual and linguistic markings that would identify it as a journal, diary, or other written document, and that lack emphasizes and correlates to Lockwood’s perennial fear of relationships, his tendency to isolate himself, and his continued desire to enact closure on the wild story that Nelly tells him. Though many scholars use the neutral term “narrative” (as I do) to describe Lockwood’s account, other scholars—like Carl Woodring, Gérard Genette, Leo Bersani, and Garrett Stewart—actively classify it as a journal or diary.\(^{166}\) In every case, however, these critics do not

\(^{166}\) In Narrative Discourse, Gérard Genette categorizes Wuthering Heights as a “narrative in the form of a journal”; Carl Woodring identifies Lockwood as an “educated diarist”; Garrett Stewart agrees by referring to Lockwood’s “private diary”; and Leo Bersani similarly refers to
provide evidence or justification for why it earns such a classification. J. Hillis Miller, the critic who has most thoroughly and imaginatively considered the ontological oddness of Lockwood’s narrative, suggests two possibilities for explaining what Lockwood’s narrative is:

Ellis Bell is a male name veiling the female author, but it is also the name of a character in the book: someone who has survived Lockwood, an “editor” into whose hands Lockwood diary has fallen and who presents it to the public, or, more likely, the consciousness surrounding Lockwood’s consciousness, overhearing what he says to himself, what he thinks, feels, sees, and presenting it again to the reader as though it were entirely the words of Lockwood…The name Ellis Bell functions to name a spectator outside Lockwood, who is the primary spectator. (Fiction 71)

Miller’s second proposal touches on the vague feeling that Lockwood’s narrative is somehow not written by him, even though other scholars, like Terence McCarthy, specifically claim that Lockwood is indeed “writing the book” (48).

There are a few hints that Lockwood’s narrative may be written. Firstly, at the beginning of chapter 2, Lockwood uses the notation “N.B.,” which means “note well” in Latin: “(N.B. I dine between twelve and one o’clock…)” (WH 9). Such parenthetical self-memoranda also appear in Dracula when Jonathan inserts notes to himself in his journal: “(Mem., get recipe for Mina)” (Stoker 7). Secondly, a potential, oblique, and rather playful reference of the narrative’s

“Lockwood’s journal.” Beth Newman, as other critics also do, contrasts the writteness of Lockwood’s narrative with the orality of Nelly’s narrative; she describes the structure of the novel as a “series of diary entries recording an orally told tale.”
writtenness occurs in chapter 3 when Heathcliff greets Cathy with an expletive: “‘And you, you worthless—’ he broke out as I entered…employing an epithet as harmless as duck, or sheep, but generally represented by a dash” (WH 30). Here, Lockwood seems to call attention to his own use of written punctuation (his use of a dash instead of the offensive word). Thirdly, Lockwood’s narrative is generally written in the past tense, but it often switches to the present tense for short passages, as if Lockwood has just written or recalled what has happened up to that point. For example, chapter 3 ends with this transition between tenses: “I dragged upstairs, whence, after putting on dry clothes, and pacing to and fro thirty or forty minutes, to restore the animal heat, I am adjourned to my study, feeble as a kitten” (32). Besides these tiny inklings of writtenness, Lockwood’s narrative possesses almost none of the textual markings commonly found in journals and diaries in other Victorian novels. These conventional diary markings, as I call them, are found in Helen’s diary in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Jonathan’s and Mina’s diaries in Dracula, Ezra Jennings’s journal in The Moonstone and Marian’s diary in The Woman in White.

The first of these diary markings is the clear use of specific dates to mark each new entry. The first word of Wuthering Heights and of Lockwood’s narrative is a date (1801), and a second date (1802) is mentioned at the beginning of chapter 18 of volume two; however, journals include dates much more frequently than Lockwood’s narrative does, and the dates specified generally indicate the month, the day of the month, and the year. For example, Helen’s diary in Tenant starts on and with a specific date: “June 1st, 1821” (130). Two chapters later, the date of August 25th is provided. And then September 1st. And so on and so forth. The second diary marking is an authorial, editorial, or character identification of the narrative as a journal. Usually, journals are labeled as such in chapter or section titles (such is the case in Dracula and The
*Woman in White*). Furthermore, in the original British edition of *Dracula*, running headers at the top of each page also identify what narrative we are currently reading; therefore, while we are reading Jonathan’s Harker’s journal, the top of each page reminds us of the fact. Lockwood’s narrative receives no such designation either by himself or by Brontë. No one labels Lockwood’s narrative as a diary in chapter titles, section titles, page headers, or in dialogue. The third *diary marking* is a reference, by the journalist, to the physical act of writing. In *The Moonstone*, Ezra Jennings repeatedly mentions the fact that he is writing; for example, “I turned to my Journal for relief, and wrote in it what is written here” (*Moonstone* 482). Lockwood never mentions the act of writing. He never, as others do, discusses the painful, necessary, exhausting, or calming need or desire to write. He does not, as others do, characterize his narrative as a product of his body. The fourth *diary marking* complements the third: the diarist imagines an audience (either a specific reader or the diarist herself at a future time). Some diarists, such as Helen in *Tenant* and Marian in *The Woman in White*, write about re-reading their own diaries; some diarists read or hand over their diaries to other characters, such as Helen giving her diary to Gilbert in *Tenant* and Jonathan Harker giving his diary to his wife Mina in *Dracula*. Helen often directly addresses other people in her diary, something Lockwood never does.¹⁶⁷ Realizing that her husband Arthur

¹⁶⁷ Lockwood almost *never* uses “you” in the non-dialogue parts of his narrative; in fact, he only uses the word once, and the way it is used suggests not a specific “you” to which he is writing or speaking but creates a hypothetical “you” for a hypothetical situation: “Such an individual, seated in his armchair, his mug of ale frothing on the round table before him, is to be seen in any circuit of five or six miles among these hills, if you go at the right time, after dinner” (*WH* 5). Lockwood is more likely to use the “one” construction (although this is used rarely as well): “one may guess the power of the north wind” (4).
is probably irredeemable, Helen seems to speak directly to him with her words: “Yes, poor
Arthur, I will still hope and pray for you...though I write as if you were some abandoned wretch”
( Tenant 262). Unlike Gilbert in Tenant and the cast of writers in Dracula, Lockwood makes no
claims about his own truthfulness, and he doesn’t seem to care about convincing a possible
reader of his journal’s accuracy. In short, Lockwood can’t imagine a possible reader of his
journal (even himself) and makes no attempts to share his journal with others. In typical
Lockwood fashion, therefore, he continues to isolate himself and to fear reaching out, even
hypothetically, to others. He can’t even imagine a reader. Therefore, Lockwood is oddly
separated from his narrative production, as he voices no intention to re-read it, shows no
evidence of having re-read it, and presents the narrative as produced without physical exertion or
mental reflection.

Nelly too, though literate (we know she reads, and she writes letters to Cathy 2 and
Isabella), doesn’t write down her story in a more permanent medium (such as a diary); instead,
she tells it orally to an itinerant and short-term renter. In telling the story to Lockwood, she
shows no concern over whether or not he is writing it down, and if he is transcribing it, she
shows no concern over whether or not he is doing so accurately. Conversely, when Frankenstein
speaks his story to Walton, Frankenstein later demands to review Walton’s dictation and then
revises it himself. Neither Nelly nor Lockwood, then, shows the investment that Franklin Blake
does in the durability and usefulness of a specifically written document: “the whole story ought,
in the interests of truth, to be placed on record in writing – and the sooner the better” (Moonstone
39). In a final act of closure, therefore, Lockwood and Nelly separate themselves from the story
they have told and heard, a story of terrifying desire. The novel, and Lockwood’s narrative, ends
with Lockwood planning to leave the area (presumably never to return); however, as with
Lockwood’s previous absence (between chapters 17 and 18 of volume 2), the narrative, apparently space-bound, doesn’t travel away with Lockwood, and only starts up again when he’s within a few miles of Gimmerton. The novel, therefore, ends with the anticipation of closure—allowing escape, but the reader, along with Lockwood, is stuck by a makeshift cemetery on a hill—stuck, dare I say, in the picture.

5.3 THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL

Unlike Lockwood, who seemingly writes, speaks, or thinks his narrative to no one in particular, Gilbert Markham, Tenant’s frame narrator, very specifically writes a letter to a specific recipient, his brother-in-law, Jack Halford, who’s married to Gilbert’s sister Rose. From the outset, then, Gilbert’s narrative is consciously communicative; as in Nelly’s oral relation to Lockwood, Gilbert frequently addresses his narratee by name and direct address (“you”) and asks Halford questions. Lockwood, by contrast, doesn’t display either consciousness of his narrative’s communicative function or the desire to highlight such a function by reaching out to the narratee. Since the beginning of Gilbert’s letter to Halford occurs before chapter 1 (like a preface), the whole novel is structurally set up as the direct result of the communicative impulse. And Gilbert possesses his own journal account of the events he relates to Halford, but rather than just reproducing his journal in the letter (or sending the journal itself), Gilbert only uses it as a check on his memory. He writes this epistolary version of the narrative specifically to and for Halford and, therefore, tailors it to Halford’s professed love of detail and elaboration: “I know you like a long story, and are as great a stickler for particularities and circumstantial details as my grandmother” (Tenant 10); “but for your satisfaction, I will add a few words more” (487). Because the novel, therefore, is purposefully directed outwards—tailored to, trusting in,
questioning, and hoping to influence Halford—the epistolary frame stresses the novel’s interest in genuine, communicative openness, an openness best manifested by acts of exchange.

The novel provides a specific reason for why Gilbert writes this lengthy letter to Halford, and the rationale heightens the novel’s investment in exchange. On a prior occasion, Halford shared a personal story with Gilbert, but Gilbert declined to fulfill Halford’s request for “a return of confidence,” and the friendship had been strained ever since (9). Gilbert, therefore, writes Halford “to atone” by providing “a full and faithful account” of his courtship of Helen (9, 10). As Garrett Stewart has discussed, Gilbert’s employment of economic terminology to describe this textual atonement—such as Gilbert’s reference to his first letter as “the first installment of my debt” (Tenant 21)—emphasizes the exchange aspect of Gilbert and Halford’s communication (see Stewart 85–87).168 There are concrete stakes to the success or failure to this communication (something else lacking in Lockwood’s narrative). Since Halford is presented as Gilbert’s best friend—“we have known each other so intimately and so long” (Tenant 9)—the letter is furnished with the task of rectifying a broken friendship, of restarting the flow of confidential exchanges.169 And the book continually promotes true friendship as worth saving and worth maintaining. Early on, confidence is aligned with friendliness—as the phrase “friendly

168 Stewart uses the novel’s economic terminology to argue that the novel presents Halford as “a representation of the urban(e) book-buyer” (85) and “a proxy for the Victorian public at large” (86). “Brontë’s story works overtime,” Stewart ultimately claims, “to sketch the parameters of its own public consumption as novel” (87).

169 Carnell believes that we should thank Helen’s instruction of Gilbert for his acquisition of the “ability to bond rationally and sensitively with other men,” an ability which allows him to “be a better participant in the public sphere” (17).
confidence” (9) suggests—and reserve is aligned with the opposite—“unfriendly reserve” (19). Friendship corresponds with “proofs of frankness and confidence” (9); therefore, the structure of *Tenant* connects and underscores the novel’s thematic validation of friendship, equal exchange, and open communication.

Arthur Huntingdon, Helen’s first husband, is seemingly the novel’s “open” character par excellence, but his deceiving strain of “openness” lacks accompanying interests in equality and communication; Arthur’s openness, therefore, functions as a veil for his love of power. As the novel’s villain, Arthur flat-out shocked disbelieving readers with his coarseness, drunkenness, and licentiousness.170 Importantly, the novel’s villain functions as the negative mirror of many of the novel’s valued character qualities. Initially, Arthur’s refreshing openness and charming lightness of manner contrasts with the stodginess of Helen’s other suitor (appropriately called Mr Boarham) and immediately disarm and enchants Helen: “There was a certain graceful ease and freedom about all he said and did, that gave a sense of repose and expansion to the mind, after so much constraint and formality as I had been doomed to suffer” (135).171 Helen continually

170 For example, see this appalled review in the *Rambler*: “She is married to a man...who speedily turns out a sensual brute of the most intolerable kind, and treats her with every indignity, insult, and ill-usage which can be conceived of...Her diary...details with offensive minuteness the disgusting scenes of debauchery, blasphemy, and profaneness...” (Allott 268).

171 McMaster interprets Arthur’s character as Brontë’s critique of rakish Regency masculinity. Because Arthur is continually “characterized by his smiles and laughter” (358), McMaster argues that we “increasingly...see him as incapable of being moved to anything but laughter, in any situation” (359). His “laugher and cheerfulness” are really “marks of a congenital inability to be serious about anything” (359).
describes Arthur in the positive terms of “freedom” and “openness”: she forgives his “freedom” in calling her by her first name (146) and acquiesces to the “freedom and openness” of his talk (158). But, as Arthur increasingly uses this directness to entrap Helen—encouraging declarations and demanding kisses from her long before he has earned the right to do so—Arthur’s “freedom and openness” turn out to be euphemistic spins on his careless, forward, tactless behavior. His “openness” leads him, eventually, to flaunt his various mistresses in front of his wife (he even hires one as his son’s governess). His “freedom” motivates him to invade Helen’s portfolio of sketches and, later on, Helen’s diary, without permission and despite her pleas that he not do so. Arthur, however, doesn’t recognize that Helen might possess anything that he shouldn’t have free access to. In short, Arthur’s freedom and openness are driven by a desire to fulfill his own desires rather than driven by the desire to enter into a full and balanced exchange with Helen, which would admit her as an individual equal to him. When he does share stories from his past with his new wife, those stories focus on “his intrigue with Lady F—” (209) and are explicitly meant to shock Helen, highlight his sexual experience, and call attention to her innocence and inexperience (she has no like stories to recount in return). His storytelling, therefore, creates rather than dismantles a hierarchy in their marriage. Arthur, furthermore, prevents Helen from entering into other types of exchange. He prohibits her, for example, from staying in any city for long (even on their honeymoon!) for fear that she would “lose [her] country freshness and originality by too much intercourse with the ladies of the world” (216).

The lack of exchange in Arthur and Helen’s relationship—evidenced by their dwindling written correspondence and their lackluster conversations—dooms their marriage. When separated during their engagement, Arthur does write Helen several short, insouciant letters, but Helen already worries about their lack of gravitas: “I cannot get him to write or speak in real,
solid earnest” (201). Furthermore, Arthur requests (as he does throughout their marriage) that Helen “write still oftener” than he does because although he’s busy, she should “have nothing better to do” than frequently write him long epistles (200). Helen already senses that such shallow, unequal correspondence neglects her more reflective nature: “what shall I do with the serious part of myself?” (201). When Arthur makes a multi-month stay in London without his wife, he quickly abandons his letter writing and when he writes at all, he only composes “hastily scribbled returns” (219). Arthur constantly reminds Helen, however, that it’s her duty to write him long and loving letters whether or not he returns such efforts. Arthur proves similarly deficient at conversation. Before his drawn-out mortal illness, we rarely see Arthur and Helen discussing topics or ideas. We see them nitpick, argue, smirk, and smolder. Flirting and coy declarations constitute their speedy courtship. One evening, an already besotted Helen hovers over the possible realization that Arthur is incapable of her kind of conversation: “I afterwards discovered, when I came to analyze [his conversation], it was chiefly confined to quizzing the different members of the company present...I do not think the whole would appear anything very particular, if written here, without the adventitious aids of look, and tone, and gesture” (145). On another occasion during their courtship, Arthur saves Helen from the unwanted attentions of another man on the pretense of wanting to show her a painting. Helen, a painter herself, silently appraises the picture before “beginning to comment on its beauties and peculiarities,” but Arthur brusquely occludes legitimate intellectual conversation about the artwork: “Never mind the picture” (146). It quickly becomes clear that the relationship is dreadfully one-sided. All the work resides on one side and all the freedom exists on the other, and no mutually desired exchange flourishes to bridge the gap.
Once married and often regretful of her rash choice of husband, Helen learns that Arthur’s avoidance of exchange links to his conception of marriage, which takes the notion of separate spheres to its own ridiculous limit: the woman will stay home, be constant and true (as befits her nature), and will be wholly devoted to her husband. The husband will do whatever he wants with whomever he wants where he wants. He will expect an accepting hearth and wife whenever he chooses to return home. She must do everything to earn and preserve his affection and esteem (since nature dictates that men stray), and as the domestic deity, she has the challenging (i.e. impossible) task of saving her husband’s soul without chastising him, judging him, dictating to him, or even influencing him. She is the angel in the house, charged with all her improving tasks but robbed of all her traditional motherly and spiritual power. Helen and Arthur’s relationship is devoid of “sympathy,” the emotional stance mentioned throughout Tenant and evident in every positive, healthy relationship in the novel (it really functions as a gloss on “equality”): “how little real sympathy there exists between us; how many of my thoughts and feelings are gloomily cloistered within my own mind; how much of my higher and better self is indeed unmarried” (243). Because Helen’s “thoughts and feelings” are, nun-like, “cloistered”—just as Arthur forces Helen to be cloistered within Grassdale—they cannot be exchanged with Arthur’s own “thoughts and feelings”; open communication and exchange are so important to Helen’s idea of marriage that their lack, in her mind, nullifies the marriage.

While Gilbert’s flirty courtship with the bewitching Eliza parallels Helen’s relationship with Arthur, Gilbert and Helen’s relationship proceeds by various forms of exchange. As Juliet McMaster notes, “Eliza—lively, attractive, and utterly frivolous—represents for Gilbert, on a small scale, what Arthur was for Helen” (364). We see Gilbert and Eliza dance, flirt in corners, and steal kisses, but the only talking Eliza does is to spread the local gossip. By contrast, the
focus of Gilbert and Helen’s rocky court/friendship is conversation. Overcoming his initial strong dislike to the haughty and reserved Helen, Gilbert realizes that he had come to like “see[ing] Mrs Graham, and to talk to her, and I decidedly liked to talk to her little companion [her son]” (Tenant 51). One day in particular, while walking on the moors, Helen “fairly entered into conversation with me [Gilbert], discoursing with so much eloquence, and depth of thought and feeling, on a subject, happily coinciding with my own ideas, and looking so beautiful withal, that I went home enchanted” (52). Helen and Gilbert have “conversations,” and their talk is labeled “discourse.” But Eliza merely “chatted” with Gilbert, a verb that suggests informal and light talk. Eliza’s chatter, therefore, comes off as “frivolous, and even a little insipid” (53) in contrast to the “eloquence” and “depth” of Helen’s effusions. At another point, Helen makes a similar distinction between small talk and true conversation. After suffering through a party at which many of the attendees openly gossip about her, Helen escapes to the house’s back garden and confesses to Gilbert, “I was wearied to death with small-talk – nothing wears me out like that. I cannot imagine how they can go on as they do” (85). Helen elaborates, “I hate talking where there is no exchange of ideas of sentiments, and no good given or received” (85). She directly emphasizes that the kind of “talk” she enjoys is one of genuine “exchange.”

Gilbert and Helen discuss ideas and intellectual topics rather than indulging in local gossip and scandal: “We sauntered through the garden, and talked of the flowers, the trees, and the book, - and then of other things…” (91); “So we talked about painting, poetry, and music, theology, geology, and philosophy” (73). Eliza, on the other hand, starts two rumors—that Lawrence is Helen’s lover (he’s really her brother) and that Helen is marrying Hargrave (in fact, Lawrence is marrying

172 Gordon also notes that this quotation confirms that “Helen always demands the ‘exchange’ of discourse” (726).
Hargrave’s sister)—and both rumors prove false and even destructive. Conversely, Gilbert dedicates a whole chapter (“A Controversy”) to the contentious debate between Helen, Gilbert, and Gilbert’s mother about the appropriateness of the divergent education of boys and girls. The debate shows off Helen’s striking and persuasive argumentative skills. Just as Gilbert falls for Helen’s conversational agility (that she “looked so beautiful” while she talked is only mentioned secondarily [52]), Helen values the same quality in Gilbert: “your conversation pleases me more than that of any other person” (91).

From her first diary entry, it’s evident how central visual art is to Helen’s identity—“My drawing suits me best” (130)—and Gilbert offers and Helen accepts his opinions about her work, making her painting another site of conversation and exchange. When a group goes on an excursion, Helen sneaks off to paint the view and asks Gilbert for his “taste and judgment about some doubtful matter in her drawing. My opinion, happily, met her approbation, and the improvement I suggested was adopted without hesitation” (68). Helen appreciates that a second perspective sharpens her own artistic perspective: “‘I have often wished in vain,’ said she, ‘for another’s judgment to appeal to when I could scarcely trust the direction of my own eye and head, they having been so long occupied with the contemplation of a single object, as to become almost incapable of forming a proper idea respecting it” (68). Only the convergence of two different perspectives enables one to form “a proper idea respecting” the issue at hand. Crucially, the whole novel follows this plan, using Gilbert’s narrative and Helen’s diary to give the reader “a proper idea respecting” Gilbert and Helen’s character and courtship. It’s important to note that Gilbert’s advice-giving isn’t a shallow formality or a one-time event. Helen continues to elicit his judgments and to act on them when he offers them: Helen “admitted [him] into the studio, and asked my opinion or advice respecting its progress” (73). This exchange of perspectives
regarding her painting is, as Jan Gordon points out, matched by the exchange of books that also marks their deepening friendship: “once or twice I lent her a book, and once she lent me one in return” (*Tenant* 73). And, the exchange of books, cyclically, leads to more conversational exchanges, with both sides taking turns to speak and listen: “for whenever she did condescend to converse, I liked to listen…” (65).

When Helen’s diary has revealed to Gilbert that she is still married and therefore cannot continue her growing romantic relationship with Gilbert, Gilbert pleads that they still be allowed to engage in the mutual exchange that formed the basis of their relationship: “is it a crime to exchange our thoughts by letter? May not kindred spirits meet, and mingle in communion whatever be the fate and circumstance of their earthly tenements?” (403). Helen, of course, responds passionately to his questions: “They may, they may!” (403). When Arthur meets his inevitable death, Helen wants to postpone her marriage to Gilbert (even though she’s the one who proposed) and desires to buoy their elongated engagement with letters: “It would not be a separation: we will write every day” (484). Perhaps reminded of Arthur’s disappointing epistolary performance, she makes sure to test Gilbert’s fidelity and constancy through his ability to continue a meaningful exchange with her without physical presence. Exchange engenders sympathy and is therefore the basis for a good friendship and a good marriage.

In *Tenant*, true exchange, and hence, equality and sympathy between individuals, can exist in person (through genuine conversation) and can exist without physical presence (through exchange of written material). However, because the materials of the novel—Helen’s diary, and Gilbert’s and Helen’s letters—are *written* documents and are specifically read in the absence of their authors, critics such as Garrett Stewart and Jan Gordon have proposed that the novel privileges the written over the oral. The consequence of such an interpretation is that it becomes
vital that Helen writes rather than speaks her story. Critics often find themselves wrestling with George Moore’s oft-quoted wish that Helen had done the opposite:

You must not let your heroine give her diary to the young farmer, saying, ‘Here is my story; go home and read it.’ Your heroine must tell the young farmer her story, and an entrancing scene you will make of the telling. Moreover, the presence of your heroine, her voice, her gestures...would preserve the atmosphere of a passionate and original love story. (253–254)

As Losano rightly points out, “almost all recent criticism [of Tenant] has concerned itself with justifying” Anne’s structural choices in light of Moore’s enduring piece of criticism. Losano herself brilliantly deflates Moore’s critique by illuminating how Moore’s sexist perspective of women painters probably inspired his comment. Moore was both an art critic who looked down on women painters and a member of an art culture that focused on the body of the female painter rather than on her paintings. Moore, Losano argues, would have preferred Helen to tell Gilbert of her past because such a scene would have allowed for the extended “embodiment of the female figure, the gendered presence of a visually available woman” (23) rather than portraying Helen as “a creative producer whose artworks...are necessarily separate from her own body” (23). I agree with Losano’s reasoning except in how she presents writing as easily separate from the

173 For example, Gordon claims that Helen must entrust her diary to Gilbert rather than communicating with him orally, which would align her with the neighborhood’s oral gossip: “The community’s gossip serves to give Helen Huntington a past which her diary/ms. attempts to counteract” (728). Stewart reaches a similar conclusion by way of a different rationale: “In the Victorian circuits of narrative consumption, it goes without saying. Orality is secondary...This secondarizing of orality is...what constitutes (and institutes) the genre of the realist novel” (78).
body: “for women, painting...is more dangerous than writing, which can be exercised in private and presented as something apart from the body” (39). As feminists from Virginia Woolf to Hélène Cixous would protest, female writing is intimately tied to the female body.\textsuperscript{174}

Furthermore, \textit{Tenant} does present writing as connected to and reflective of the body; writing (and reading) is no safe haven from physicality. The scene in which Helen excitedly “thrust[s]” her diary into Gilbert’s hands—full of gleaming eyes, heaving bosoms, burning cheeks, and passionate declarations—is quite steamy (\textit{Tenant} 129). Finding herself increasingly physically and emotionally overcome by Gilbert’s presence, Helen makes the snap decision to hand over her diary (if she had planned all along to give Gilbert her diary, she surely would have removed the pages about Gilbert earlier rather than on the spot). So, although ordering Gilbert to depart and peruse her diary at home is a desperate attempt to prevent their mutual attraction from being acted upon, Gilbert’s vigil of solitary reading, nonetheless, illustrates the erotic potential of Helen’s manuscript.

First of all, the way Gilbert’s actions after leaving Wildfell mirrors Helen’s actions before he left creates a link between the two scenes, suggesting that the heightened eroticism of the earlier scene continues even when Gilbert is alone with the diary. Just as Helen “hurried” away from Gilbert, Gilbert “hurried home, and rushed upstairs to my room”; just as Helen “hastily tore away a few leaves” from the diary, Gilbert is soon “hastily turning over the leaves”; and just as

\textsuperscript{174} In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Cixous appeals, “Write your self. Your body must be heard” (323). In \textit{A Room of One’s Own}, Woolf contends that the “book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women’s books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work” (77).
Helen “cast herself back in the old oak chair” as Gilbert departs, Gilbert immediately “sit[s] down before the table” to read the journal (129). When Gilbert returns to Wildfell the next morning, diary in hand, Helen’s eyes “were fixed on mine with a gaze so intensely earnest that they bound me like a spell (399). Gilbert experiences a similar sensation when face-to-face with the diary; he “delivered himself up to its perusal,” a phrase which constructs Gilbert as willingly submitting to its lure (129). As if under a spell, Gilbert reads through the night, only letting an absolute lack of light temporarily interrupt him. Once he finishes reading by the dawn’s first light, Gilbert seems so aroused that he has to crack his bedroom window to get some air: “I opened the window and put out my head to catch the cooling breeze, and imbibe draughts of the pure morning air” (398). When Gilbert returns with the diary, Helen similarly turns to the window when overcome with emotion. While looking out his bedroom window, his mind preoccupied with the diary, nature itself seems to become a representative of Helen. Gilbert mentions that he “gazed abstractedly on the lovely face of nature” (resembling Helen’s “sweet, pale face” [29]), and he comments that, through her diary, Helen’s “character shone bright, and clear, and stainless as that sun I could not bear to look on” (398). Helen still seems present in the scene and in nature, via her diary, even though she’s physically separate from Gilbert at the time he reads it.

The physical potential of written material is similarly evident in the epistolary portion of the novel. After Gilbert sends Halford the first letter, Halford presumably writes back and indicates that he would like to hear more of Gilbert’s narrative; the reader doesn’t see the letter, but Gilbert alludes to it in the subsequent letter to his brother-in-law: “I perceive...that the cloud of your displeasure has passed away; the light of your countenance blesses me once more, and you desire the continuation of my story” (22). The language here recalls Gilbert’s recollection of
the last time Gilbert and Halford saw each other in person: “it was with the air of an uncomplaining, but deeply injured man, and your face was overshadowed with a cloud which darkened it to the end of our interview, and, for what I know, darkens it still” (9). Halford’s letter, therefore, seems to physically stand in for Halford. Halford’s writing presents a cloud-less face; Halford’s face had been “darkened” in person, but Gilbert can now discern—just by reading the letter—that Halford’s “countenance” is “light” again. Physical distance may be routine (as it is between Halford and Gilbert, who live far away from one another) or temporarily desirable (as it is between Gilbert and Helen, when their interactions become too intimate), but writing (and reading that writing) is no way around physicality; rather, it provides a safer space to encounter it.

*Tenant*, throughout, uses the rhetoric of “friendship” rather than the language of love, attraction, or marriage to describe the ideal relationship of exchange, sympathy, and equality. The narrative structure is marked by confidences between friends, as Helen opens up to her friend Gilbert, who, in turn, extends that trust by opening up to his friend Halford. Although Gilbert and Halford are brothers-in-law, they never use that term (or the terms “family” or “relative”); instead, they consistently use the word “friend” to define their relationship. Gilbert calls Halford “my crusty old friend” (10), “my most valued friend” (22), and “a closer friend” than his own sister and brother (12). Gilbert values their “deep and solid friendship” (40). Gilbert and Helen are more often described as “friends” than as anything else, and their romance is based on friendship. From the day that they finally “parted good friends for once” (50) instead of as bickering enemies, Gilbert becomes “excellent friends” with her son Arthur (51), and his aim of becoming “the sober, solid, plain-dealing friend” of Helen (73) is fulfilled when he and Helen become “now established friends” (94). Although they both seem to sometimes use the language
of friendship as a platonic refuge from their romantic feelings or intentions (at this point, Helen is still married to Arthur), it’s also clear that for Gilbert and Helen, a romantic involvement is an expansion of friendship. In fact, Helen is displeased by Arthur’s excessive fondness after their honeymoon; she claims that she would “like to be less of a pet and more of a friend, if I might choose... I am only afraid his affection loses in depth where it gains in ardour” (202). Her language, therefore, describes romantic infatuation as a surface affection (“loses in depth”) that is transient (she likens it to a fire that “should burn itself out and leave nothing but ashes behind” [203]). Friendship, by comparison, is implied to be a more profound and more lasting—if less showy—emotion. Friendship and romantic attachment are not mutually exclusive for Helen. Helen lists “love, friendship, [and] sympathy” as the qualities lacking from her marriage in its latter days (320). She finds “friendship” just as integral as “love” to the makings of a good marriage. Arthur, on the other hand, draws a distinction between his friends (all male) and his wife; he is not able to imagine that he could also think of his wife as a friend. When his friend Lowborough discovers that Arthur has been carrying on a years long affair with his wife Annabella, Arthur remains unruffled and can’t comprehend why Lowborough refuses Arthur’s continued attempts at friendliness. Arthur tells him, “I call that an unchristian spirit now...But I’d never give up an old friend for the sake of a wife. You may have mine if you like, and I call that handsome – I can do no more than offer restitution, can I?” (347-348). While an “old friend” is something to keep, a “wife” is something easily exchangeable, something willingly relinquished if it would restore the “old friend” to his old place. Strikingly, Arthur and Helen never once refer to each other as friends, and their courtship/marriage is never once described as a “friendship.”

Although Arthur’s band of merry friends (Grimsby, Hattersley, Hargrave, and sometimes Lowborough) frequently visit Grassdale, they don’t qualify as true friends for the same reason
that Arthur’s brand of openness is not the exchange-based communication that the novel endorses. Helen’s aunt sets the distinction between her definition of friend and Arthur’s definition, calling his coterie “a set of loose, profligate young men, whom he calls his friends—his jolly companions” (150). Helen takes up her aunt’s viewpoint, more than once encasing the term in quotation marks to indicate her sarcastic use of the term in relation to her husband: “The word ‘friend,’ in [Arthur’s] mouth makes me shudder: I know it was some of his ‘friends’ that induced him to stay behind me in London” (226). From sending him curses when he announces his engagement to deserting him on his deathbed, Arthur’s group of “friends” serve to egg each other on to various flights and lows of dissipation and to block all personal attempts at improvement (Lowborough’s story is a case in point). Kemp goes so far as to argue that, because they obviate rather than encourage personal reform, Arthur and his circle of friends are a travesty of a Methodist group.

Helen’s smaller circle of friends, however, supports her as her marriage deteriorates. Helen is buoyed by exchange (oral and written) with her best friend throughout the novel, Milicent Hargrave (later Hattersley), and with Milicent’s younger sister Esther. Helen frequently discusses reading and writing letters to/from Milicent, and the two share a series of discussions about love, marriage, and the importance of personal happiness and choice. Milicent and Helen—both in less-than-ideal marriages with puerile men—honestly discuss their husbands. When Milicent, at Helen’s prompting, admits that she thinks her husband far better than Helen’s, Milicent adds, “But you mustn’t be offended, Helen, for you know I always speak my mind; and you may speak yours too” (Tenant 283). Helen affectionately answers, “I am not offended, love” (285), and Milicent kisses Helen on the cheek in an expression of “sympathy” (283). Honest conversation, in which both parties are equal (they may both speak their minds), goes hand in
hand with terms of endearment and a friendly kiss. Friendship has a potential for equality between its constituents that marriage, in the common conception of the time lacks (a conception voiced, at turns, by Arthur, Gilbert’s mother, Hargrave, and Milicent’s husband Hattersley).

Gilbert and Helen’s courtship and marriage is drenched in the language of friendship (even when such language is erotically charged), which shows their use of a more egalitarian paradigm to relate to one another.

When she lacks a friend, Helen constructs her diary as a much needed friendly companion: “This paper will serve instead of a confidential friend into whose ear I might pour forth the overflowing of my heart. It will not sympathize with my distresses, but then, it will not laugh at them, and, if I keep it close, it cannot tell again; so it is, perhaps, the best friend I could have for the purpose” (154). When, much later, Arthur steals and reads her diary, he also constructs it as Helen’s “friend”: “these women must be blabbing – if they haven’t a friend to talk to, they must whisper their secrets to the fishes, or write them on the sand or something” (367). Even though the diary is a “silent paper” (243), it becomes a way for Helen to, in effect, become her own best friend (and indeed, putting herself first, before her husband, is exactly what gets him so upset). She often re-reads what she has written to instruct herself. The diary becomes a friend of sorts, calming her down, reminding her of past issues, and teaching her what she has trouble acknowledging without the performance of exchange between her and her diary: “I must have recourse to my diary again; I will commit it to paper tonight, and see what I shall think of it tomorrow” (164). Helen is glad she has her diary to remind her of Hargrave’s insinuating and distrustful behavior: “let me remember the game of chess…I have done well to record them so minutely” (309). When Gilbert reads the diary overnight and finishes it by the light of sunrise, he describes the experience of understanding everything as if a “friend” had woken him up: “The
effect of the whole, however, in spite of all my sympathy for her and my fury against [Arthur], was to relieve my mind of an intolerable burden and fill my heart with joy, as if some friend has roused me from a dreadful nightmare” (397). Gilbert had never quite gotten along with Helen’s maid Rachel because Rachel had seemed to not want the romance between Helen and Gilbert to happen; however, after seeing how heroically and loyally she has acted in Helen’s diary account, when he sees her next, he looks to her as “an old friend” (398). Reading Helen’s diary has made him intimate with a former enemy.

The novel stresses the importance of a communicating network of friends via the novel’s structure and via the novel’s conclusion. At the end of the novel, Helen and Gilbert are affectionately surrounded by a whole network of friends, a fantasy reversal from the days when Helen has to pick her rival Annabella to be her second bridesmaid because “I have not another friend” (181) to fill the position. In fact, Helen’s second marriage seems to be the opposite of her first, which was defined by a paucity of real friends, an incredible isolation, and a separation from her “first” family; Helen’s second marriage is defined by an extraordinary network of friends and alignment with her “first” family. Arthur limits her contact with her surrogate parents (her aunt and uncle) and only allows her to visit them once so he can surreptitiously travel to London; he even prevents her from attending her father’s funeral. And, as Arthur himself admits, “there’s such a repulsion between the good lady [Helen’s aunt] and me” (263), and there’s no closeness between Arthur and Lawrence (Helen’s brother) either, as Helen specifies that the latter only visits her when Arthur is absent. Over and over again, Helen laments how Arthur leaves her “pining in solitude” for months at a time: “Oh, it is cruel to leave me so long alone!” (220, 219). He habitually travels to London without her; on the rare occasion he asks for her to accompany him, he sends her home early. Esther Hargrave observes that Helen, “spend[s] half
her life alone at Grassdale” (375), and Helen herself describes her existence as “a period of seclusions, dreary indeed” (340). As the marriage deteriorates, Helen locks herself in the library (her makeshift atelier) to escape the raucous behavior of her husband and his cronies, preferring self-seclusion to mingling with the available company. As both Ruth Perry and Helena Michie discuss, by the end of the eighteenth century, there was a switch in kinship-identification from spouses’ “birth families” (also called “first families” or “families of origin”) to the “conjugal” family. Perry succinctly explains that “the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage” (2). Michie’s *Victorian Honeymoons* looks at how the cultural ritual of the honeymoon served the purpose of transitioning the spouses from their families of origin to their new conjugal unit “that was to become their primary source of social and emotional identification” (2). Both Perry and Michie argue that the transition to kinship being centered on the conjugal family was tougher on women than it was on men. From her archive of honeymoon letters and diaries, Michie discovers that the “tension between [honeymooners’] birth and conjugal identifications” “were more acute for the women in my sample than for the men” (58). Perry agrees that although the idea of “making one’s own family” was a kind of democratic impulse, the change “probably resulted in a net loss of social power for women” (35). “Women lost power as sisters and daughters” (35), Perry continues, and widows and spinsters were increasingly undervalued in a system that privileged marriage as the main way to make one’s home and family. Arthur and Helen’s marriage, therefore, showcases the negative consequences the shift to a conjugal-centered kinship system has on women.

In her second marriage, however, Helen is close with friends, close with her family of origin, and free to leave home when she desires. Helen and Gilbert live at Staningley (he writes
his letter to Halford from there), Helen’s aunt and uncle’s home that she grew up in (which her uncle bequeaths to her). She considers it her own “dear old home” that is rich with “old familiar scenes” (*Tenant* 263). Gilbert, therefore, leaves his birth family, his farm, and his hometown to go and live with Helen and her family of origin, and he must “reconcile” his own mother “to the idea of my leaving Linden-Car and living so far away” (488). And now it’s Gilbert rather than Helen who sits “alone in the library,” writing letters to far-away best friends while “the family is out” (10). And just as Helen’s aunt and uncle “adopted” her and treated her like a daughter, Gilbert, in turn, “adopts” Helen’s son by Arthur and regards him as “mine” (486). Anne’s first novel, *Agnes Grey*, offers a similar (if less drastic) fantasy reversal. Agnes’s mother’s marriage to a clergyman disappoints the mother’s father, who locks her out of the family and its fortune, finally leaving “all his worldly possessions...to [Agnes’s]...unknown cousins” (215). But while Agnes’s mother’s marriage severs her completely from her birth family (she doesn’t even communicate with them via letters), Agnes’s marriage to the pastor Edward Weston enables Agnes to balance her loyalty to her mother and to her new husband. Not only does Edward desire Agnes’s mother to live with them, but when the mother refuses his offer, they arrange that Agnes’s mother “would spend her vacations alternately with [Agnes and Edward] and [Agnes’s] sister” (250). Furthermore, Edward and Agnes live only about two miles away from the town in which Agnes’s mother’s school is situated, a distance making frequent meetings possible (see 175 The will of Agnes’s grandfather resembles John Eyre’s bequest of “every penny” to his niece Jane Eyre, “with the exception of thirty guineas, to be divided between St John, Diana, and Mary Rivers, for the purchase of three mourning rings” (C. Brontë 400). The Rivers siblings, of course, turn out to be Jane’s cousins, just as Agnes and her sister are overlooked in favor of their “unknown cousins” (A. Brontë, *Agnes* 215).
Before Helen will marry Gilbert, he must become friends with or solidify his friendships with everyone who is important to her, most particularly, with her son and her aunt. Before they are married, Helen roundly integrates him into her life as a friend; Helen introduces Gilbert to her aunt as an “old friend” of her own, as her son’s “friend” (Tenant 476), and as “my brother’s close friend” (479). Even faithful servant Rachel gives Gilbert a “friendly smile of recognition” (478). Although Helen decides, of her own will, to marry Gilbert, she insists on “consult[ing] my friends” as to the time of the marriage (485). She insists on making her friends (which, in this case, can only mean her aunt, brother, and maybe Milicent) part of the foundation to her and Gilbert’s marriage. Helen also insists that Gilbert and her aunt become friends, and so Gilbert tries his best, and he and his effective mother-in-law “got on marvelously well together” (487). When the aunt finally dies, she is surrounded by the “few loving friends” she left behind; since these people could be no other than actual relatives—Helen, Gilbert, and little Arthur—relatives have become friends yet again. No wonder they all lived in the same house for years “in the greatest harmony” (488). And so, at Staningley, we have a house of friends, not just a house of family.

I’m arguing, therefore, that Gilbert and Helen, by virtue of sympathy, friendship, and a relationship founded on acts of exchange are able to achieve a stronger, more equal relationship than many other relationships presented in the novel. Most scholars, however, find Gilbert incredibly flawed, disappointing, and no match for the saintly, mature Helen. Such critics relish listing his deficiencies: he’s foppish, he’s violent (the attack on Lawrence), he’s cruel (in how he dumps Eliza for Helen), and he’s immature and moody. Even his well-wishers, such as Carol

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176 For example, O’Toole voices her dissatisfaction with the “undeniably disappointing Gilbert, so curiously less mature than his bride” (723). Although Jacobs finds Gilbert somewhat
Senf and Arlene Jackson, defend him by claiming either that he’s not as bad as the despicable Arthur or that Gilbert’s weaknesses make him a more realistic—rather than idealized—male hero. 177 With some exceptions (McMaster, Chitham, A. Jackson, and Scott), most critics imagine Helen as having always been as clear-headed, mature, controlled, and decisive as she can be during her stay at Wildfell Hall; in fact, Edith Kostka states, “Helen is always mature in assessment, word and deed” (42). But as Arlene Jackson rightly points out, “young Helen” was an “impulsive, headstrong girl” (204) when she flouted her aunt’s reasonable advice, when she believed herself powerful and persuasive enough to reform Arthur. Chitham agrees that Helen “is no flawless saint” (103). And McMaster thoroughly examines how Helen’s disastrous marriage, as Helen herself repeatedly admits in her diary, overly toughens her character and ruins her ability to trust and laugh; by the time she meets Gilbert, “Hard and easily offended, she is that reformed after reading Helen’s diary, she initially considers him “childish, vain, competitive with other men even to the point of violence, and unable to control or manage his emotions; and he tends to evaluate women almost entirely according to their willingness to flatter and conciliate him” (208–209).

177 Chitham suggests that Anne was reacting against the male heroes of Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights when she had Helen attach herself not to “a demonic Heathcliff, nor even a Romantic Rochester, but to a yeoman farmer with few pretensions to gentility, even though he does read Marmion” (104). Westcott comes to a similar conclusion: “Brontë presents Gilbert Markham as a flawed hero not because she cannot conceive of an ideal (in her youth Anne was as steeped in the Byronic hero as her sisters), but because she is too faithful to her own experience, to what she sees in society around her” (213). Westcott figures that Anne attempted to “create a believable portrait” of a man when she created the character of Gilbert (217).
stern exaggeration of herself that her marriage has developed” (McMaster 363). The early interactions between Gilbert and Helen—personal flaws quickly flaring up—show that neither character is perfect. They first lock eyes in church, where Helen blesses Gilbert with a look of “quiet scorn,” and Gilbert’s easily bruised ego promises that “she shall change her mind [about him] before long, if I think it worthwhile” (Tenant 17). Helen is haughty—despising all male attention—and Gilbert is at turns hurt and conceited—showing both his moodiness and pompous belief in his own attractions. Their first face-to-face meeting occurs when Gilbert catches Helen’s son Arthur as he tumbles out of tree towards the ground. Finding her beloved child inexplicably in Gilbert’s arms, Helen rushes from her house and demands: “Give me the child!” with a voice of “startling vehemence” (25). Believing most men to be like her husband, she ridiculously assumes that Gilbert is attempting to kidnap her son; being both quick to judge and thinking the worst of people blinds Helen to Gilbert’s kind act, and during the scene she never thanks him for his quick catch. Gilbert’s vanity is offended by Helen’s comment that he very much resembles his sister; furthermore, Gilbert seems frustrated that his smiles can’t soften the stern Helen, and with his typical petulance, he leaves the scene “angry and dissatisfied” (26).

Much like Pride and Prejudice, a novel that I see as having many parallels with Tenant (although it’s unlikely that Anne read it before writing the draft of Tenant 178), the young lovers

178 Charlotte Brontë writes to G. H. Lewes on January 12, 1848, “I had not seen ‘Pride & Prejudice’ till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book and studied it” (Margaret Smith, Two 10). Since Stevie Davies deduces that “the first draft of Wildfell Hall was completed on 10 June 1847, the date which is given at the conclusion of the narrator Markham’s correspondence with Halford” (xxxi), and Tenant was published in June 1848, it’s unlikely that Anne had read Austen’s novel before drafting (and possibly before finishing) her own.
are noticeably flawed (flawed and not just misunderstood—a crucial point) and must be mutually improved and enlightened before they can happily marry one another. I certainly agree with McMaster, therefore, that Helen and Gilbert “are capable of mutual accommodation and beneficial modification” (363). Gilbert’s genuine passion reinvigorates Helen, and his persistent benevolence to her son calms her; Helen’s intellectual and artistic sophistication challenge and impress Gilbert, and her steadiness inspires him to greater self-control.179

Taken to its extreme, the Gilbert-bashing brand of criticism argues that Arthur and Gilbert, rather than being “pointed contrasts” (A. Jackson 202), are parallel male monsters; my argument, however, relies on Gilbert being the better (though certainly far from perfect) man in his ability to enter and sustain a relationship with Helen based on communication and exchange. Elizabeth Signorotti, for example, argues that Gilbert’s divulgence of Helen’s diary to Halford (as well as his editing of it, an issue I discussed in the introduction) marks Gilbert’s “attempt to contain and control” Helen and manifests his “predatory desire to master and manipulate her-

179 I’m not arguing, as Kostka, Kemp, and A. Jackson have done, that Gilbert is matured and reformed specifically by reading Helen’s diary. Kemp credits Gilbert’s reading of the diary with the subsequent “transformation” in him (208). Jackson concurs that “it is primarily the journal itself that account for the change” in Gilbert (201). I agree that Gilbert’s devouring of Helen’s diary helps facilitate Gilbert’s maturation. Once he concludes his reading, he feels “shame and deep remorse for [his] own conduct” and resolves to apologize to Lawrence for his previous behavior (Tenant 398). These are not the first indications of Gilbert’s improvement, however. Gilbert matures slowly, over time, due to his growing friendship with Helen; similarly, Helen slowly thaws because of her growing friendship with Gilbert (in this latter point, I am very much in agreement with McMaster).
story at any cost” (22). But no critic takes issue with the instances when Helen and Frederick share with others the writing and private details entrusted to them. Although Helen does refuse to let her husband see Milicent’s letters to herself “without [Milicent’s] consent,” she does summarize their contents to her husband to prove to him that Milicent’s husband “makes her life a curse to her” despite Milicent’s veneer of contentedness with her husband’s unpredictable behavior (Tenant 258). And later on, in an effort to reform Milicent’s irresponsible and changeable husband Hattersley, Helen “put into his hands two of Milicent’s letters,” hoping that she is not enacting a “breach of [Milicent’s] confidence” (380). Signorotti contends that Gilbert “breaches his wife’s trust, appropriates her history, makes light of her previous marriage...boasts of her pain,” and shows little interest in “remaining faithful to her as a friend” by reproducing Helen’s diary for Halford (22). But Signorotti says nothing of Helen’s use of her best friend’s letters, although Helen’s actions could certainly be construed as Helen breaching Milicent’s trust, boasting of her pain, and being unfaithful to her friend. When Hattersley reads the letters, his mingled blushes and cries seem to indicate shame and inspire a desire to change; rather than feeling betrayed, Milicent, “overflowing with gratitude,” thanks Helen for the intervention that has made her husband promise to reform (Tenant 381). Later on, Frederick Lawrence lets Gilbert read and often keep many of Helen’s detailed and lengthy letters to Frederick even though the letters do not explicitly give Frederick the permission to let Gilbert either read or retain the letters. The novel’s characters never disparage these occurrences and neither do critics; therefore, the act of handing over private writing is not, in itself, horrible, ill-spirited, or a sign of feeling power over or possession of the writings’ authors. Intent and consequence seem to matter as well. Helen seeks to correct Arthur’s and Hattersley’s stubborn misconceptions about Milicent’s happiness in her marriage; Arthur may not be persuaded (as he rarely is of anything), but
Hattersley carries through on his desire to reform. Frederick sympathizes with Gilbert’s missing of Helen and with Gilbert’s anxiety for her wellbeing and implicitly agrees with Gilbert’s assertion that since the letter neither mentions nor alludes to Gilbert, “there can be no impropriety or harm in” allowing Gilbert to keep and cherish the letter (430). Tess O’Toole, who champions Frederick as Gilbert’s superior and the novel’s “only exemplar of manly domestic virtue” (727), questions Gilbert’s copying of Helen’s diary for Halford: “It strikes the reader as curious at best that Gilbert would transcribe for another man the contents of his wife’s intimate diary, and disturbing at worst that Helen’s hellish experience is used for a homosocial end” (720). But O’Toole neither finds it “curious” nor “disturbing” that Frederick similarly hands over the “contents” of his sister’s letters that detail her “hellish experience” nursing the dying, manipulative, and spiritually-conflicted Arthur. Furthermore, Frederick surrenders the letters partially out of friendship for Gilbert, a “homosocial end” indeed. As Helen’s and Frederick’s own actions have suggested, sharing private written material with others has its place, especially when the intent and result is to strengthen ties between family and friends. When Gilbert reproduces Helen’s diary for Halford, which happens about twenty years after Arthur has died and Helen has married Gilbert (so, Gilbert kept the secret of Helen’s past from his best friend for a very long time), the secrets confessed within the diary can no longer harm Helen in any tangible way. Furthermore, when Gilbert asks Helen (via Frederick, as she’s currently at the ill Arthur’s bedside) if he can clear her name to family and friends in the neighborhood, she consents to allowing Gilbert to “mak[ing] such revelations concerning me as he judges necessary” (Tenant 432). Finally, we should also not forget to consider the sheer narrative necessity of Gilbert possessing Helen’s diary and letters so that we, the reader of Tenant, can read them via a narrative structure that’s aiming for verisimilitude. Similarly, the necessity for
Heights’s Nelly to see and hear much more than an ordinary person (let alone a servant) could see and hear is, rather than evidence of Nelly’s pervasive “spying,” a relatively common expansion of the witness narrator’s narrative privileges.

Although both Gilbert and Arthur gain access to Helen’s diary, the way they gain access, their attitudes towards the diary, and the consequences of reading it differ widely, again showing that a surface parallel between Helen’s two husbands does not equate them. In a scene that several critics interpret as “rape,” Arthur takes Helen’s diary without her permission and despite her many physical and verbal attempts to prevent him from reading it. Once he peruses it, he immediately asks her for “The keys of your cabinet, desk, drawers, and whatever else you possess” (365). First, he walks to the library and razes most of her art materials and orders the rest taken away. Secondly, he ascends to her room and confiscates her “money, and the jewels—and a few other trifles I thought it advisable to take into my own possession” (366). Afterwards, he mocks her and congratulates himself on his resolute and ruthless—to him, manly—behavior in the face of his wife’s insubordination. Once he takes her diary, he takes her keys, her art materials, her paintings, her money, her jewels, and her trifles; his commandeering of her diary is

180 Just as critics read Fosco’s invasion of Marian’s diary in The Woman in White as rape, critics read Arthur’s invasion of Helen’s diary in a similar way. Of the occurrence Losano writes, “The sexual innuendo of this scene should be noted: rifling Helen’s desk can be read as a form of physical or sexual assault upon a woman’s ‘private spaces’” (32–33). Stewart also interprets Arthur’s “invasion of Helen’s privacy” as a “veritable rape...of her diary” (99). Although neither of these critics makes the connection to Fosco’s deed, I think it’s important to note that Fosco both writes in Marian’s diary and reads it without her knowledge, while Arthur doesn’t write in Helen’s diary and reads it with her knowledge (though not with her permission).
not the initiation of an exchange of confidences or even the start of a conversation. The taking is all on his side and the divesting is all on hers. Furthermore, Arthur doesn’t even read the diary completely or carefully; he merely skims it for pertinent information. After reading it for a few short minutes (we readers know how long it would take to read the whole diary up to that point), he comments, “It seems very interesting...but it’s rather long. I’ll look at it some other time” (364). When possessed of the opportunity to learn more about his wife’s thoughts and feelings, he uses it only as a strict reconnaissance mission; he’s no more interested in her diary than he is “with a book he could not force himself to read” (211). When Gilbert obtains Helen’s diary it’s because Helen gives it to him, excitedly, of her own volition; Gilbert doesn’t even ask to see it. As N. M. Jacobs writes, “It is thus highly significant that she offers this diary to Gilbert, for in so doing, she admits him to a knowledge of her self and her experience more intimate than that of any other person in her world” (213). Unlike Arthur who takes and takes, Gilbert accepts the diary and, in return, repays her trust in him by renewing his trust in her; he completely believes her (oftentimes unbelievable) diary.\footnote{Kemp offers another possibility for how Helen profits by this transaction; “the ‘return’ that Helen gets when she ‘invests’ her narrative in Gilbert” Kemp writes, is “an increase in his own value as a husband and an increase in the virtue with which she is credited” (206).} Arlene Jackson notes, “Gilbert’s acceptance of Helen’s story with no reservation or doubt of its accuracy is a means through which Anne Brontë increases credibility” (201). As Helen gives him the manuscript as an aid to “restore [his] former opinion of [her],” he responds with “joy unspeakable that my adored Helen was all I wished to think her” (Tenant 128, 398). When he visits her the next day he immediately asks “if you can forgive me” (399), and she, in return, requests, “Can you forgive me?” (399). And so, by turns,
forgiveness is asked for and given; in fact, Helen explicitly characterizes the exchange as the opportunity to “severally ask and receive each other’s pardon for the past” (400).

Furthermore, Gilbert’s “devour[ing]” of the diary strongly contrasts with Arthur’s careless skimming (397). Helen tells Gilbert “You needn’t read it all” (129) and, the next day, asks “Have you looked it over?” (399), both times not daring to hope for a response more thorough than her husband’s quick scanning. Gilbert, like the good reader he is, has read it all: “I’ve read it through” (399). Arthur, also, barely reveals any emotions during or after reading Helen’s diary; he just methodically robs her of her possible paths to freedom and praises himself for having “the power to carry my point like man” (367). Even though the pages directly concerning him have been removed by Helen, Gilbert still proves a far more receptive and absorbed reader (a positive result of his passionate nature) than Arthur did. Gilbert admits to feeling a range of emotions during and after his night of reading: “selfish gratification,” “sympathy,” “fury,” “joy,” “confusion,” and “shame and deep remorse for my own conduct” (398). Gilbert is a reflective reader, portioning out some judgment to himself (“shame and deep remorse”), something that Arthur doesn’t do after reading a narrative that details his horrid treatment of Helen. Gilbert even revels in being emotionally overpowered by Helen’s narrative. He describes how “a confusion of countless thoughts and varied emotions crowded upon me” after his reading experience (398); his reaction is quite different from Arthur’s presumably “manly” and disaffected response to reading Helen’s diary. Furthermore, although Gilbert initially admits that he wished he could have seen the expurgated passages, he immediately decides that he “had no right to see it: all this was too sacred for any eyes but her own, and she had done well to keep it from me” (396). As far as we know, Gilbert never solicits those detached pages, and twenty years later, when he writes Halford this letter, Gilbert can still not...
specify the pages’ contents, suggesting that Gilbert maintained their “sacred[ness]” long after he married Helen and long after he would actually have the “right,” in the marriage law of the day, to see them. Gilbert’s invocation and respect of Helen’s “right” echoes Helen’s earlier plea to Arthur to return a portrait of him that he stumbled on while invading her portfolio against her wishes: “I insist upon having that back! It is mine, and you have no right to take it” (161).

Slightly earlier, when Arthur had pressed her for a declaration of love before he had offered one to her, she thinks about how “he had no right to extort a confession of attachment from me when he had made no correspondent avowal himself” (146). Gilbert respects Helen’s wishes and rights: he returns Helen’s manuscript to her just as she had requested, and, again, as she had demanded, he doesn’t reveal its contents to anyone until later, when, as discussed, Helen gives him permission to do so.

Although I’ve argued that Tenant’s frame structure is quite balanced, giving nearly equal time to Gilbert’s narrative and to Helen’s narrative, critics worry that the position of Helen’s narrative traps it within Gilbert’s frame narrative, and they point out Helen’s silence at the end of the novel. Again, such interpretations would undermine my argument that the novel’s structure illustrates that strong relationships are based on communication (rather than silence) and equality (rather than the positioning of the narratives in a hierarchy). And it’s true, we must trust to Gilbert’s final assertions to Halford, “I need not tell you how happily my Helen and I have lived and loved together, and how blessed we still are in each other’s society” (488). Gilbert’s phrasing (“I need not tell you”), however, implies that Halford has thoroughly witnessed and already been convinced of Helen and Gilbert’s conjugal joy. But Helen doesn’t appear at the very close of the novel (either as a narrator or via dialogue in Gilbert’s narrative), and she is therefore unable to either reaffirm or weaken Gilbert’s protestations of happiness and oneness.
But, silence is a tricky signifier, and critics have presented widely diverging interpretations of what Helen’s silence means and whether or not Helen is silent by choice or has been silenced by her husband. Arlene Jackson suggests that we “rightly” “hear nothing of the later Helen” since she has been too traumatized by the “sufferings of her earlier life” (206) to narrate again. Signorotti spins Helen’s silence into evidence that she has “finally achieved not only independence but dominance” in her second marriage (24). And Senf finds the silence unsettling but still judges “the Markham marriage...far less oppressive to women” than are the other marriages presented in the text (“Tenant” 452). Furthermore, as Elizabeth Langland wisely points out, the second half of Gilbert’s frame narrative is frequently interrupted with Helen’s letters to Frederick. Gilbert either recopies them verbatim (when they are in his possession) or copies them from his journal (where he had transcribed them from memory after reading them). Langland writes, Gilbert’s

narrative contains frequent letters from Helen, and she is as often the focalizer of the events as he is; indeed, it is often impossible to distinguish who is the focalizer. Gilbert’s perspectives merge with Helen’s as he incorporates her letters into his narrative—sometimes the literal words, sometimes a paraphrase—until the reader cannot distinguish between them. Once narrative transgresses the other, distinctions between narrators collapse. (119)

In fact, then, O’Toole’s claim that “Helen’s narrative itself is ‘locked,’ for once her diary is turned over to Gilbert, she never again narrates” (728), is countered by Langland’s insightful analysis.

Critics are fond of speculating about Gilbert and Helen’s marriage when, in truth, the narrative includes less than one page of summary about it, giving readers almost nothing
concrete to go on beyond Gilbert’s palpable contentedness. Critics yearning to make conclusions about the marriage and Helen’s silence on it, however, should remember a few practical considerations. Let us not forget that Gilbert is writing a letter to his best friend Halford; it seems natural that Gilbert would close out his letter without corroboration from his wife, especially since his wife is, at present, not even at home, and couldn’t add something even if Gilbert wanted her to. Furthermore, the same critics who are wary of Gilbert’s use of Helen’s diary seem to be frustrated that we don’t see more of Helen’s diary, particularly the contents that describe her second marriage. Gilbert, however, has continually suggested that it would be improper of him to read her private writings (either her diary or her letters to Frederick) that directly mentioned him. In fact, we don’t even know that Helen continues to write in her diary once she marries Frederick. She, admittedly, only started a diary because she lacked a confidant and continued it because her couldn’t share her “serious side” with her husband; although some critics might want to see Helen as a self-identified author, a stand-in, perhaps, for Anne Brontë herself, Helen repeatedly identifies herself as a painter and never as an author.

Overall, the undercurrent of much Tenant criticism deals with identifying the way in which Helen’s diary is the “center” of the novel. Is it the “center” because it is entrapped and enclosed within Gilbert’s overarching frame narrative? Or is it the “center” because it’s the novel’s heart and soul, its primary narrative in power and content? Eagleton, for example, appraises the novel’s structure at length; he wishes that Helen’s diary had qualified for the first definition, but concludes that the second definition better applies. The diary’s length and fascination gain the upper hand, pushing into the background the considerably less interesting formal structure of Romantic courtship within which it is set. Helen is so obviously morally and artistically superior to Gilbert, and the
Grassdale episode so much more gripping than the context in which it is set, that some odd structural inversion seems to have occurred. What is officially an interlude becomes the guts of the book, displacing the framework which surrounds it. (136)

Eagleton presents two options: Helen’s diary can be an “interlude” or the “guts of the book,” and Gilbert’s narrative can be, accordingly, either in the foreground or in the “background.” But, unlike one of the inset stories in Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers*, Helen’s diary is not, as Eagleton affirms, “officially an interlude,” and, therefore, we shouldn’t be so surprised at its “length and fascination.” In a more neutral comment, Carnell accedes that “it ultimately remains impossible to determine whether it is Helen or her future husband who claims the most powerful narrative position,” but Carnell seems to wish it were possible to determine which was “the most powerful” (24). Carnell interprets the novel’s “structural indeterminacy” (24) as resulting from Anne’s “double-edged message to women” (23) on the necessity of both disrupting and conforming to Victorian gender roles. I view the novel’s “structural indeterminacy” (24) as obviating the need to even ask or answer the question of “which narrative is primary?” The whole novel, by its symmetry and balance, by its focus on exchange structurally and thematically, destabilizes the binaries of frame/framed, center/outside, and primary/secondary. Even Gilbert consciously frames his own frame narrative within the story of his and Halford’s friendship. Gilbert particularly frames his narrative within two specific events: Halford and Gilbert’s last in-person contact (which precipitates Gilbert’s letters) and Halford and Rose’s upcoming visit (which Gilbert anticipates at the ending of his letter). Each story and narrative, therefore, opens out to another story and narrative in a proliferation of framing motions, not in an attempt to encase stories or to control their authors, but to foreground the ability of various types
of exchange to reaffirm the ties between family, friends, and lovers. Like the sequence of oxymorons that close the novel, exchange yokes together difference. Halford and Gilbert, though such good friends, possess contrary personalities. Halford is “not naturally communicative” while Gilbert had “already given [Halford] so many proofs of frankness and confidence, and never resented [Halford’s] comparative closeness and taciturnity” (Tenant 9). Helen is a painter, an estate-owner, and a rich woman, while Gilbert is a farmer, a farm-owner, and of the middle class; exchange brings them together as well. The last full sentence of Gilbert’s letter to Halford highlights how exchange (this time, in the form of a visit) attracts and integrates opposites: “We are just now looking forward to the advent of you and Rose...when you must leave your dusty, smoky, noisy, toiling, striving city for a season of invigorating relaxation and social retirement with us” (488–489). The visit will bring together the city dwellers and the country dwellers. It will bring together the naturally social (Gilbert) and the naturally taciturn (Halford). It will also integrate “invigorati[on]” (which stresses motion and activity) with “relaxation” (implying rest and stillness) and integrate the “social” (suggesting conversation and people) and “retirement” (suggesting seclusion and solitude).
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387


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