

Ecstasy and Solitude: Reading and Self-Loss in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Psychology

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ECSTASY AND SOLITUDE: READING AND SELF-LOSS IN NINETEENTH-
CENTURY LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY

a dissertation

by

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2013

Ecstasy and Solitude:

Reading and Self-Loss in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Psychology

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By focusing on the predominance of semi-conscious and unconscious states in both nineteenth-century British literature and psychology, this dissertation outlines the recognizable and multi-faceted relation existing between literature and psychology. Besides their obvious prevalence in sensation novels later in the period, these states, which I call ecstatic states, appeared in many of the most prominent, canonical novels of the nineteenth century. Prominent Victorian psychologists, such as Robert MacNish, John Abercrombie, James Cowles Prichard, and Forbes Winslow among others, connected ecstatic states, including fiction reading, to insanity, since these states exhibited an underlying component of self-loss in which the boundaries of the conscious self—time, will, and identity—dissolved. They were a troubling, yet common phenomenon of the mind that preoccupied the entire spectrum of middle class Victorian intellectual life—businessmen, novelists, literary critics, and psychologists—and these states are still fascinating neuroscientists today.

This study shows how the Victorian medical practice of moral management sought to control these states by calling for the regulation and often the confinement of the imagination. What began as a method used solely in the insane asylum came to undergird much of Victorian life, including the many hostile reactions to the addictive and class-leveling powers of the novel. My dissertation emphasizes how certain

Victorian novelists not only took up the role of psychologists themselves but also resisted and revised accepted psychology within their novels. Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot reacted in distinctive ways against the oppressive tenets of moral management. My readings of the novels *Jane Eyre*, *Villette*, *Hard Times*, *Our Mutual Friend*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Romola* show how it is the unrelenting regulation of the imagination that creates the various forms of mania and becomes ultimately devastating to the self. For these novelists, the dismantling of conscious thought and will, so alarming to the advocates of moral management, formed the crux of personal growth, moral choice, and ethical responsiveness.

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Acknowledgments

My dissertation is very much indebted to the inspiration and encouragement of my teachers, my friends, and my family. I want to first thank Rosemarie Bodenheimer, whose constant support, guidance, and invaluable as well as detailed criticism guided these chapters through some very rough waters. Her generosity in meticulously reading and commenting on multiple drafts knew no bounds, and without her wonderful and steadfast help this dissertation could not have been possible. I also want to sincerely thank Judith Wilt, whose questions and ideas continually opened up exciting new pathways of thought for me to consider. I greatly appreciate her enthusiastic support throughout this entire process. I am grateful to Kevin Ohi for his amazingly perceptive insight, which has greatly enriched my writing in its complexity and in its style. His comments have consistently deepened and sharpened my arguments. Maia McAleavey's kindness, encouragement, and astute writing advice have shaped each chapter in countless ways. Her sound advice has been an integral part of this dissertation, and I am indebted to her for becoming a reader and mentor. I am grateful also to Boston College's English Department, especially Laura Tanner and Robert Stanton, who have supported and cheered me throughout the years, as well as Mary Crane and James Najarian, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for financial support.

I am especially thankful to my friends and family, who have weathered these years and this process with me. Catherine Michna, whose brilliant scholarship attests to the ethical potential of the academy, has inspired me with her fierce and unwavering

determination and ambition. Her friendship has been a steady source of encouragement. The camaraderie of Dathalinn O’Dea and Joshua Olivier-Mason throughout the years has brightened and enlivened some of the hardest times. Among my family, I do not have the words to express my genuine gratitude to my parents, Lonnie and Carol Couch, who have supported me with their constant love and generosity. I also want to thank Sam Tressler for his thoughtful care and encouragement, and Penny Tressler, who I sincerely wish were here to celebrate with me the end of this long, and arduous journey. I must also thank Charlotte not only for her delightful stories and vigorous imagination but also for reminding me again and again how exquisitely wonderful it is to become lost in the pages of a book.

And lastly and most importantly, I must thank my husband Nik, who has sustained me and inspired me with his tireless and unfailing dedication to me and to this achievement. This dissertation is indebted to him in every possible way. For all the many hours I discussed my ideas, my frustrations, my disappointments, and my epiphanies, for the many wonderful days spent writing and sharing together at Athan’s, for making “one little room an everywhere,” I am so very grateful.

To Allison

“Spring would come, and she would not be there; summer, and she would not be there... Oh, the anguish of that thought that we can never atone to our dead for the stunted affection we gave them, for the light answers we returned to their plaints or their pleadings, for the little reverence we showed to that sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know.”

George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*

Chapter One. “Strange Fancy”:

The Ecstatic Mind and the Wayward Victorian Reader

“Oft o’er my brain does that strange fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash dost last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past...”

--Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Sonnet XVII”

“There are few things so strange in human life as the joy of ecstasy and trance in which consciousness is lost.”

--E.S. Dallas, *The Gay Science*

In his 1895 lecture, *On Dreamy Mental States*, Sir James Crichton-Browne describes “certain mental conditions that are encountered in daily life, that have a literary and philosophical interest, and that are not...without great medical significance” (3-4). Crichton-Browne calls these mental phenomena “dreamy mental states.” Reminiscence is the simplest form of these states, although the “victims,” often poets and authors, describe them in a variety of ways: “the feeling of being somewhere else—in double consciousness—in a loss of personal identity—in going back to childhood—in the vivid return of an old dream—in losing touch of the world—in a deprivation of corporeal substance...in momentary black despair” (*Dreamy* 9). What underlies his descriptions is the common experience of self-loss: the temporary dissolution of the boundaries which produce the conscious self—time, space, matter, will, and identity. This “cessation of being” ranges from an exaltation of consciousness to a frightening plunge into the “depths of outer mystery,” and for Crichton-Browne, the occurrence of dreamy mental states indicated a critical abnormality of the brain (*Dreamy* 8).

Crichton-Browne claims that dreamy mental states have been “described vaguely, but recognizably, in the writings of many of our most gifted authors” but largely ignored by the medical community (*Dreamy* 4). Besides the few case studies from his own practice, Crichton-Browne largely drew his evidence from the works of poets such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Alfred Lord Tennyson, as well as the works of the novelists Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, and Thomas Hardy. Evident by his choice of authors, who span the nineteenth century, Crichton-Browne highlights a recognizable group of mental states that have been observed and implemented throughout the century. Although previous psychologists did not categorize these states in the same way as Crichton-Browne, his work on dreamy mental states, in fact, re-enacts trends in physiological psychology and literature that had been dominant since the 1830s and 1840s.

In the nineteenth century, psychology and literature were often inextricably intertwined, continually referencing and employing one another in an intimate dance of theory and narrative. My focus on the psychology of the 1830s, 40s, and 50s will open up the theoretical complexities of the literature of the 1850s and 1860s, which powerfully responds to and reconceives the psychology of these earlier years. This chapter in particular will highlight the mutual dependence of psychology and literature by examining the literary underpinnings of physiological psychology in order to develop in my following chapters how Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot employed and reconsidered psychology as a continuation of an already ongoing dialogue. This chapter will not be a detailed study of the history of psychology, especially since

many scholars have already successfully accomplished this.¹ Instead I will be emphasizing the enigmatic mental states of self-loss that Crichton-Browne named dreamy and the predominant literary associations of these states even within psychological discourse. My emphasis on the discussions of the imagination and literature within psychological texts will expose the tangled knots binding these fields together, because these knots were especially visible when considering abnormal states of mind.

The physiological psychologists of the 1830s, 40s, and 50s viewed abnormal semi-conscious states as unstable alterations of dreaming and interpreted them as variations of somnambulism, including the states of mesmeric trance, double consciousness, reverie, trance, waking dreams, and even fiction-reading. As my discussion of the psychologists will show, the definitions of these various states did not always correlate, and sometimes a state such as “reverie” had multiple, even contradictory meanings. The looseness of these categories attests to the relative newness of physiological psychology as a scientific and medical field in the nineteenth century; it also indicates the lack of highly specialized and separate terminology. Gathered around these states were certain specific features, which centered on experiences of self-loss in varying intensity. For the early psychologists, these widespread mental states combined mental and bodily illness with a disruption of a Cartesian ontological system. Physiological psychologists were not Cartesians *per se*, but their materialist conceptions were undergirded with the Cartesian principle that being is synonymous with consciousness, since consciousness enabled volition, rationality, and morality.² These

psychologists accentuated consciousness and will as a bulwark against their underlying fear of self-loss.

States of self-loss present another problem that stems from their elusive nature: how to productively name them for critical examination. In part, this chapter works to disentangle the complexities of naming these states, which often occur as singular, inarticulable mental events. In *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders of the Mind* (1835), James Cowles Prichard, notes the similarities linking these enigmatic states and calls them “ecstatic affections.”³ Prichard describes ecstatic affections as “a suspension either perfect or incomplete, of external sense, while the imagination is in a state of activity, and the individual is not conscious of his real condition, but fancies himself to exist under different circumstances from those which actually surround him” (405). For the purposes of this project, I will borrow Prichard’s term “ecstatic” instead of Crichton-Browne’s late century term “dreamy.” “Ecstatic” continues to be associated with the state of being outside oneself in rapture, passion, anxiety or fear, and other states of unconsciousness, such as trance or swoon. The term “ecstatic” maintains the self-loss characteristic of these mental states and provides a working foundation to discuss the ethical potential that can be found in the experiences of self-loss occurring within the literature of Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot. The manifestations of these states often enables a transcendence of the self’s boundaries, which consequently uncovers the self’s relation to the other.

In addition to discussing somnambulism, the theoretical and mental foundation of ecstatic states, I will focus particularly on the lesser-discussed manifestations of

somnambulism—double consciousness, reverie, waking dreams, and abstraction—since these variations often occur within the literature of the 1850s and 1860s.⁴ In describing such states, the psychological writings of the 1830s, 40s, and 50s forged a tightly woven relation between the imagination, insanity, and unconscious and semi-conscious states.

In many of these psychological texts, the descriptions of and admonitions against ecstatic states overlapped with images of the absorbed reader. The novel criticism from the same period reveals another set of writers haunted by the same preoccupations. According to these critics, novels not only portrayed dangerous ecstatic states within their pages, but more seriously, novels produced a highly addictive ecstatic state in readers. The addictive and threatening state of reading altered the literary landscape as the number of readers and novelists dramatically increased, inducing many critics and novelists to compare the majority of novels to other highly addictive and pleasurable substances, such as opiates, liquor, and sumptuous food. Novel critics, who were often psychologists as well, located themselves in the psychologically charged position of regulating readers by trying to keep them at the moral end of a continually shifting spectrum. Thus the spectrum between the “good” and “bad” novel was much like the spectrum between dreaming and insanity. A novel could and often would shift, almost effortlessly, into its opposite. An imperceptible and often ephemeral line separated a common dream from an insane delusion or separated a morally respectable novel from its lascivious opposite. Waking at the end of a dream or fully embracing the moral at a novel’s close did not fully undo the phantasmatic ecstasy experienced in the height of absorption.

As a moral imperative, psychologists and literary critics found it necessary to redraw repeatedly the tenuous line between mental states and between types of novels, so that each distinction hinged upon a consciously active will. This attitude and the related emphasis on self-control became the particularly nineteenth-century practice of moral management, which undergirded faculty psychology. Taylor and Shuttleworth explain further: “[w]e all experience thoughts and feelings that are as frightful as those of any madman: the only difference between the sane and insane is that the sane man exerts a greater degree of self-control, and represses his desires” (228). The Victorian mental system of faculty psychology was predicated on conflicting forces and necessary regulation. Faculty psychology imagined the mind an entity divided into various faculties or organs, each of which corresponded to a mental state or activity. In each individual mind, faculties are in varying proportion to one another “and often require a material stimulus, a material process, or both in order to be made manifest” (Reed 28). Faculty psychology rendered the mind, and by extension the self, a site of multiple binaries produced through both mental and physical processes. Rick Rylance points out that faculty psychology is an inheritance from the eighteenth century’s discourse on the soul. He claims that “[b]y the nineteenth century, it had become so central a feature in the conceptual scenery...[that it] is the orthodoxy, the ‘common sense’, the ‘default position’, the ‘doxa’ of the psychology of the age. It is the background that shapes and establishes the foreground when other theories are under consideration” (27).

The overarching necessity of self-regulation associated with faculty psychology led to the rise of ‘moral management’ or ‘moral treatment,’ which became an integral

part of the mental sciences well until the advent of degenerationist or post-Darwinian theories in the late nineteenth century.⁵ Moral management was not a specific technique or formula but rather “a general pragmatic approach which recognized the lunatic’s sensibility and acknowledged (albeit in a highly limited and circumscribed sense) his status as a moral subject;” it advocated that the insane “should be treated as rational beings” (Scull 98).⁶ Moral management encouraged the patient to access and reassert his own powers of self-control, so that instead of merely controlling the outward actions of the insane, “moral treatment actively sought to *transform* the lunatic, to remodel him into something approximating the bourgeois ideal of the rational individual. The problem with external coercion was that it could force outward conformity, but never the essential internalization of moral standards” (Scull 99-100). From the mid to late 1830s on, psychologists began employing both medical and moral methods to treat those suffering from various forms of mental illness. The transition to moral management not only transformed medical treatment, but it also transformed medical theory. Besides physical illness, psychology began more and more associating mental aberration with a failure or lapse in personal morality and self-control. The popularity of moral management extended beyond the alienists’ treatment of patients to become the position each individual should take concerning his or her own mental states.

Ecstatic Sleep, Dreams, and Fiction

Faculty psychology and its dependence on moral management instigated a materialist reanimation of Descartes’ metaphysics, which extended to the binary most

psychologists also set up between waking and the derivatives of sleep: dreaming and somnambulism. The division between waking and sleeping continued the tenets of faculty psychology and heightened the necessity of one's own individual moral management as well as its use in treating patients. Physiological psychologists desired to associate waking with the implementation of will and the various derivatives of sleep with the overwrought imagination, illness, and insanity. Despite this binary, the lines between the two were constantly blurring and slipping into one another, so that the attributes of the waking state would interrupt the sleeping state and vice versa. This slippage is both what created ecstatic mental states and why they were so problematic. For these psychologists, ecstatic states represented an intractability and an infiltration of judgment and reason by another's rule—the imagination. At the same time, ecstatic states fascinated most psychologists. They were chiefly preoccupied with the power of the imagination to create such fantastic and encompassing delusions in which not only the will but also the physical body became the captive of the imagination.

Many physiological psychologists would come to advocate moral management as a powerful remedy to ecstatic states, but prior to the primacy of moral management, some physiological psychologists sought physical, medical remedies to what they deemed a medical dysfunction. The earlier work of Robert MacNish reveals his predominant interest in objectively observing and explaining the phenomena of the mind instead of moralizing it. MacNish, the Scottish physician, poet, and short story writer, is both a predecessor to later Victorian psychology and a transitional figure in the emergence of moral management.⁷ His two editions of *The Philosophy of Sleep* (1830 and 1834)

exhibit the growing adoption of moral management by nineteenth-century physiological psychologists. Immoral sources for ecstatic states are largely, though not entirely, absent from MacNish's first edition. He tends to seek physical causes and physical remedies for the majority of these states, although he does argue that immoral actions, such as murder, have damaging mental repercussions. MacNish, a psychologist romantically and artistically inclined, grounds his early work in both literary references and literary language. He opens each chapter with an excerpt from a poem, using poetry to portray various mental states,⁸ and many passages often read as if they were excerpts from a romantic tale: dreams are vampires that arise from "the abyss of slumber" and hover like "the furies that pursued the footsteps of Oedipus" (MacNish 94).

Strangely, the poetic epigraphs for each chapter are glaringly absent from the second edition. As striking as this omission is, what is more striking is the slight but noticeable alteration in MacNish's tone as moral management takes on a stronger role and sometimes supplants the romanticism and literariness of his earlier work. MacNish even states in his preface to the 1834 edition that "[t]he present edition of *The Philosophy of Sleep* is so different from its predecessor, that it may almost be regarded as a new treatise. The work has been, in a great measure, re-written" (vii). MacNish attributes part of this change to the larger place that Franz Joseph Gall's theory of phrenology occupies in his thinking. For MacNish, Gall's theory seems "the only one capable of affording a rational and easy explanation of the phenomena of the mind" (ix). Gall divided the mind into "many organs or capacities, from memory and reasoning to avarice and self love...the brains of people with different personalities took on different shapes

and sizes because the exercise of particular mental powers altered the physical organ and its form” (Reed 28). Phrenology, a derivative of faculty psychology, revealed how each faculty or organ could be overrun by its opposite, which accounts for the regularity of inner conflict and the importance of self-control. MacNish’s conversion to phrenology would seem to account for the greater emphasis on moral management in his later work. This moralism is often at odds with the imagination and literature, which dismantles self-control, and it seems to have compelled MacNish to include alongside his own romantic descriptions from the previous text a more Victorian emphasis on moral management. A transitional figure, MacNish never fully abandons the romantic, imaginative aspects of his earlier work, but he does seek to restrain these aspects through an inclusion of more obvious moral parameters.

The evolution of MacNish’s two editions illustrates the start of the growing prominence of moral management in the nineteenth century. From a method used solely in the insane asylum, moral management came to undergird much of Victorian life, including the many hostile reactions to ecstatic states and to the addictive and class-leveling powers of the novel.

In MacNish’s early edition, his view of the imagination and its role in ecstatic states, particularly dreaming, reflects his own romantic inclinations. He opens his chapter on dreaming with a passage from the poem, “The Complaint or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality” by Edward Young, which highlights certain characteristics of dreaming, such as sleep’s dominion in which “my soul phantastic” engages with the “wild natives of the brain” (qtd. in MacNish, 1830: 50). MacNish

himself defines a dream as “[a] suspension (almost always complete) of the judgment, and an active state of memory, imagination” in which “there is usually a torpor of the senses and of the powers of voluntary motion” (1830: 50-51). The imagination calls into existence thoughts, feelings, images, memories, and even narratives, which one’s judgment and other controlling mental powers are unable to restrain. Drawing upon his own artistic leanings, MacNish further describes dreams as if they were a rapturous encounter with literature written by the author the imagination:

Dreams are the media under which imagination unfolds the ample stores of its richly decorated empire; and in proportion to the vigour of that faculty in any individual, is the luxuriance of the visions which pass before his eyes in sleep. But even the most dull and passionless, while under their influence frequently enjoy a temporary inspiration; their torpid faculties are aroused from the benumbing spell which hung over them in the waking state, and lighted up with the Promethean fire of genius and romance; the prose of their frigid spirits is converted into magnificent poetry; the atmosphere around them peopled with new and unheard of imagery; and they walk in a region to which the proudest flights of their limited energies could never otherwise have attained. (1830: 96)

This passage indicates the predication of artistic creation on what is for many Victorian psychologists a troubling, uncontrollable suspension. Strangely, here, the waking state denotes the dullness, torpidity, and frigidity of a “benumbing spell.” The ecstatic condition of dreams, on the other hand, constitute “the Promethean fire of genius and romance,” “magnificent poetry,” and “unheard of imagery.” MacNish’s understanding and description of dreams in the 1830 text hinges upon both medical data and literature. In the above passage, MacNish moves from imperial to literary language and describes an ecstatic, spectacular, and *aesthetic* mental event, one that contrasts greatly with its general association with the danger of distempered reason and potential madness. For the romantic MacNish, ecstatic states were a site of an exciting, alluring, and uncontrollable

artistic encounter that attested to the imagination's immeasurable power. But on account of the growing implementation of moral management, psychologists, and MacNish himself, began to oscillate between their fascination with the thrilling throes of the imagination and their wariness at its danger. In his later text, he includes alongside his view that dreams exhibit a Promethean fire his agreement with Dr Rush, who "has, with great shrewdness remarked, that a dream may be considered a transient paroxysm of delirium, and delirium as a permanent dream" (MacNish, 1834: 44).

As with MacNish's own move towards moral management, the role of the imagination in dreams and its simultaneous suggestion of and correlation to literature began to occupy a more prominent position in the writings of psychologists who supported moral management. John Abercrombie, another Scottish physician of the same period as MacNish, also exhibited ambivalence regarding the faculty of the imagination and its ties to literature. Abercrombie was not an artist as well as a physician, so unlike the younger MacNish, Abercrombie was significantly less enthralled with the imagination's powerful ability. His work, *Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth* (1835), does exhibit fascination with dreams and ecstatic states, but he forcefully counters it with intense suspicion and cries for individual, moral regulation. He attempts to carve up the imagination into the same binary distinguishing waking from sleep. Abercrombie claims that the imagination's inventive power "may also be employed to the investigations of science...in the contrivance of experiments, calculated to aid an investigation, or to illustrate a doctrine" (162). Many of the most important scientific discoveries, according to Abercrombie, derive from imaginative invention; however, the

imagination must be regulated and controlled by reason for it to have any positive production. “There is certainly no power of the mind,” writes Abercrombie, “that requires more cautious management and stern control,” especially for the young (163). Besides scientific discovery and invention, the imagination also plays a significant role in cultivating sympathy and properly enacting the golden rule. Without imagination, we cannot “imagine ourselves in the situation of other men, and in their character, judge of our own conduct towards them” (163). Enacting sympathy as a proper use of the imagination necessitates judgment; it is another means by which to regulate and control one’s *own* conduct rather than enlarge one’s understanding of another. His discussion of regulated, imaginative sympathy quickly moves into a discussion of fiction.

Abercrombie views fiction as being analogous to dreams, particularly in the uncontrollability of the imagination and the ensuing self-loss that reading fiction often enables. But unlike the dreamer, who cannot control his dreams, the reader is able to regulate and control fiction by not reading it. Abercrombie points out the two evils which “are likely to arise from much indulgence in works of fiction” (164). The first is, of course, yielding to “the wild play of the imagination, a practice most deleterious both to the intellectual and moral habits,” and the second is disrupting the harmony “between the moral emotions and the conduct” (164). This second evil reveals Abercrombie’s more honest assessment of the imagination than his point that it has an occasional scientific or sympathetic use when under conscious control. Disrupting the continuum between the moral emotions and conduct is in fact a weakening of the efficacy of sympathy. In fiction he argues that readers feel sympathy, but it is not accompanied by any succeeding

moral action, and thus sympathy transforms into selfishness. Narrative sympathy produces “a cold and barren sentimentalism...instead of the habit of active benevolence” (165). Imaginative sympathy between actual individuals produces judgment and moral conduct, but in the medium of fiction, sympathy becomes its opposite. Fiction also enables a reader to imaginatively engage vicariously in vice, an engagement that cannot be undone by the story’s conclusion. As a proponent of moral management, Abercrombie claims that the medium of fiction does not lend itself to the proper management of the imagination, a “mental power of extensive influence,” which must “be kept under the strict control both of reason and of virtue. If it be allowed to wander at discretion, through scenes of imagined wealth, ambition, frivolity, or pleasure, it tends to withdraw the mind from the important pursuits of life, to weaken the habit of attention, and to impair the judgment” (165). The illusions of fiction alter behavior and produce a self-loss uncomfortably close in appearance to dreaming and somnambulism.

The correlation of dreams, the imagination, and fiction in the works of MacNish and Abercrombie illuminate the very troubling nature of somnambulism. On the spectrum of ecstatic states, somnambulism is a state precariously located between dreaming and insanity; unlike simple dreaming, somnambulism has the discomfiting ability to alter physical behavior, thus more closely resembling the actions of a mad delusion.

According to MacNish’s physiological argument, the partial working of parts of the brain in simple dreaming, as well as in the more elaborate throes of the imagination, bear a close resemblance to the brain’s activity in somnambulism. Where somnambulism

differs from dreaming is that “the dream [of the somnambulist] is of so forcible a nature as to stimulate into action the muscular system, as well as in most cases, one or more of the organs of the senses” (1834: 159). Somnambulism appears to the physician as an ill parody of the brain and body in the waking state, and as such, it is much more troubling than simple dreams alone, not to mention more disruptive and unstable. Even though the illusion of dreams “may extend itself to the waking state” (1830: 92), somnambulism mimics normal physiological action in disturbing ways, and MacNish later states that “[s]omnambulism bears a closer analogy than a common dream to madness” (1834: 163). He quotes the following from *Rush’s Medical Inquiries*: “[L]ike madness, it [somnambulism] is accompanied with muscular action, with coherent and incoherent conduct, and with that complete oblivion (in most cases) of both, which takes place in the worst grade of madness” (1834: 163). The complete oblivion or self-loss intrinsic to somnambulism coupled with its grotesque parody of waking consciousness renders somnambulism a state of multiple and troubling proportions.

In his formulation of somnambulism, Abercrombie maps out two mental conditions in which the mind believes “visions or impressions...have a real and present existence in the external world, and in which reason fails to correct this belief”; these two conditions, which are interrelated and overlapping, are *Insanity and Dreaming*” (255). Like MacNish, Abercrombie also establishes a continuum between dreaming and insanity. The only difference between the two is that the visions and impressions of insanity are permanent to the mind and affect outward conduct, whereas the dreamer awakens from his visions. Abercrombie locates somnambulism between these two poles,

since it exhibits characteristics of each; all three come under the heading, “Peculiar Conditions connected with the Suspension of [Reason]” (*xi*). Like the dreamer, the somnambulist awakens, but like the madman, somnambulism affects outward conduct and the mind is powerless in its grasp. The bodily organs of the somnambulist “are more under the control of the will, so that the individual acts under the influence of his erroneous conceptions, and holds conversations in regard to them” (Abercrombie 289). Despite the dissipation of the illusions upon waking, the state of the somnambulist’s mind and body more closely resembles the insane. The greater correspondence between somnambulism and insanity would account for how often, in Abercrombie’s text, somnambulists deteriorate into insanity.⁹ This mental deterioration directly correlates to Abercrombie’s discussion of fiction reading, since it, too, severs the mind from its proper duties, weakens the attention, and impairs moral judgment through “erroneous conceptions.”

Waking Illusions

For nineteenth-century psychologists, the waking forms of somnambulism—double consciousness, waking dreams, reverie, and abstraction—possess many of the same mental and physical characteristics as dreams, somnambulism, and reading fiction. In different though related ways, all of these states dismantle the will and attention by weakening self-control, generating self-loss, and thus problematizing sanity; furthermore, these waking forms of somnambulism are intimately connected to literature and aesthetics.

One of the most problematic of the waking phenomena and the closest to somnambulism is “double consciousness.” The term “double consciousness” indicates a mental phenomenon of the waking state, in which a person often exhibits two opposing waking personalities or consciousnesses. According to Abercrombie, “[i]t consists in the individual recollecting during a paroxysm, circumstances which occurred in a former attack, though there was no remembrance of them during the interval” (221-222). The individual’s consciousness during the paroxysm was often so different from its original that it appeared as if the sufferer had two opposing personalities. The memories and actions of each personality did not carry over into one another, so that after each paroxysm, the individual would continue seamlessly as if uninterrupted. In describing double consciousness, Hacking states “[d]ouble consciousness was closely connected to somnambulism,” since patients “often behaved or were perceived as behaving, as if they were in some sort of modified trance-state” (136).¹⁰ Prichard designates this phenomenon as “ecstatic somnambulism” which he divides into two categories: maniacal ecstasy (or ecstatic madness) and ecstatic vision (or trance). In ecstatic madness, “the mind of the individual is, during the paroxysm, in a condition different from that which the preceding relations display; it is more nearly in the state of mania and incoherence,” and in ecstatic vision, the patient retains his recollection of the vision “which afterwards appears to him as a vivid and impressive dream, or as an ideal scene, which he can scarcely distinguish from reality” (Prichard 452-453). Like Prichard, many psychologists viewed double consciousness as a severely troubling form of somnambulism, since the victim is in double, opposing waking states and not in a singular sleeping state.¹¹ But

even more than traditional somnambulism, these double waking states resemble “mania and incoherence,” because they more fully wreak havoc on waking reality and the victim’s ability to self-regulate and exhibit self-control.

The elder John Addington Symonds, a physician and the father of the poet and literary critic of the same name, published his 1851 lectures on sleep in a volume entitled *Sleep and Dreams*. An obvious proponent of the now widely accepted theory of moral management, Symonds discusses double consciousness in great depth, infusing it with a moralism similar to Abercrombie’s, but he more vigorously emphasizes its relation to aesthetic creation and fiction. Symonds notes that the ecstatic vision accompanying some forms of double consciousness replaces reality, and that behavior, which derives from illusory realities corresponds to insanity. Symonds claims that “[t]he healthy waking of the mind is the resumption of the form of consciousness which existed previously to sleep...But a man may wake up to the outer world, and that world is all changed to him” (23). Symonds’s move from sleeping to double consciousness reveals his claim that the same process governs how the dreams of the sleeper or the fancies of the morbid mind integrate outward sensations into new, imaginative scenes. Symonds colors his discussion of double consciousness with aesthetic undertones, writing,

He looks out on a new world projected from his own inner being. By a melancholy power, a fatal gift, of appropriating and assimilating the real objects perceived by his senses, he takes possession of them, nay disembodies them, and fuses them into his imaginary creation. And as for those beloved beings who fondly think themselves linked with all his strongest and most tender memories, he takes no more note of them than as they swell that strange fantastic pageant which floats before his bewildered fancy; they are mere *dramatis personae* in the mad farce or tragedy which his poor brain is weaving. They are all shadows; no more the dear flesh-and-blood realities of his heart; they are metamorphosed into the unsubstantial figments of a distempered imagination. (24-25)

Like his predecessors, Symonds implements fiction and literary language to illustrate medical claims, but unlike Abercrombie or MacNish, it is not simply a wild and disorderly imagination that aligns with fiction, but more clearly a mental debility. Symonds further develops the implications of the imagination and the mental aberration of double consciousness by associating this abnormal and aesthetic state with the unethical disregard of others. Double consciousness erases the consciousness and identities of others by disembodiment and reducing their human complexity to empty characters or figments. This “melancholy power” transforms flesh and blood realities into deceptive, ephemeral shadows on the wall of an imaginary construction. By creating characters and constructing imaginative illusions, double consciousness converts reality into a fictional narrative, like a drama or a novel.

In suggesting that double consciousness works like a novel, Symonds goes beyond his predecessors, who claimed that the habitually distempered imagination resembled and provided a pathway to insanity, which fiction only exacerbated. Like fiction, all things perceived by the mind of this new consciousness “*are as they seem...* objects are no longer viewed in their former associations; they are made subordinate, and mere appendages, as it were, to the internal changes” (Symonds 25). What happens in double consciousness is the subordination of outward objects to an internal state, which is also what happens when reading fiction or in the mind of the philosopher or the creative artist. Symonds claims that double consciousness

is a frightful excess of what, to a certain extent, is often taking place in healthy but powerful minds, which impress their own individuality on the external world. The speculative philosopher who views outward objects in relation to some

comprehensive theory elaborated in his own mind, to which he fits all that he sees and hears, is the subject of a somewhat like process of thought. So also is the creative artist, who does not content himself with barely imitating nature, but who looks at nature through the media of his peculiar faculties, and, having invested the objects with a beauty and sublimity derived from his own mind, represents them with those forms and colors...His own subjectivity is first thrown upon the outward world, and then by his art made objective to other eyes. (Symonds 26)

Although Symonds states in this passage that the mind of the philosopher and the artist are healthy and powerful, he notes that their process resembles the process of double consciousness, which is an excessive form of what is occurring in the minds of the philosopher and artist. The philosopher “fits all that he sees and hears” from the external world into a “theory [already] elaborated in his own mind”; likewise the creative artist views nature “through the media of his peculiar faculties” and invests nature with a beauty “derived from his own mind.” External reality should generate one’s internal thoughts, rather than external reality stemming from internal thoughts or affirming an already existing viewpoint. According to Symonds, the test for healthy consciousness “is the correspondence of his perceptions with our own, or with those which ordinary people receive from the external world” (26). It is a matter of receiving objectively, somewhat passively, perceptions from the natural world instead of imposing one’s own perceptions onto the natural world.¹²

Double consciousness resembles a waking somnambulism in its emptying out and replacement of the memories, emotions, relations and verifiable external reality of the healthy waking state. The false perceptions of double consciousness so radically alter perception “that they change for a time the mental identity” of the person (Symonds 26). Not only does Symonds’s claim reinforce the underlying insanity comprising such

powerful false perceptions, but he more intimately associates these false perceptions with art and literature and the dangerous experience of self-loss.

In Victorian psychology, the other waking derivatives of somnambulism besides double consciousness—waking dreams, reverie, and abstraction—also display a powerful association with fiction and reading. The first of these, waking dreams, enrapture the mind and locate it in an alternate reality, much like the imaginative absorption which follows opening the pages of a novel. Unlike the dreamer in sleep, the dreamer of waking dreams *voluntarily* allows the imagination complete rule and authority over reason, and the fantasies that erupt from the imagination are preferred or even at times mistaken for reality, resembling both insanity and reading.

In his first edition of *The Philosophy of Sleep*, MacNish begins his chapter on waking dreams with the statement “[t]hose gifted with much imagination, are most addicted to waking dreams” (196). He claims that some men are so practical of mind “that they seldom get beyond the boundaries of absolute reality; others are so ideal and excursive, that they have a perpetual tendency to transcend the limits of absolute truth...to soar away into the regions of poetry and romance” (MacNish, 1830: 196). MacNish’s early description of this mental state employs images of romanticism and imaginative absorption, whereas his second edition more clearly distinguishes practicality, reality, and truth from the imaginative fancies of waking dreams. In the 1834 text, MacNish drops the metaphor of soaring “into the regions of poetry and romance,” and instead he describes the waking dream as if it were a method of artistic production originating in youth and dissatisfaction. Rather than succumb to the “pinions

of fancy” (MacNish, 1830: 196), dissatisfied and imaginative youth use “the pencil of fancy” to create more satisfactory narratives to replace their reality (MacNish, 1834: 236). MacNish uses the language of literary production to describe the symptoms of a physiological condition of the mind that simultaneously establishes reading and writing as physiological states and often abnormal ones. This representation of waking dreams, in conjunction with MacNish’s own status as a reader, creative writer, and poet, illustrates the nuances in his gradual shift towards moral management and the ambivalence towards art that moral management frequently generates.

Unlike MacNish, Abercrombie tends to associate waking dreams entirely with an “ill regulated imagination” that occupies the mind with such “vain delusions, to the exclusion of all those high pursuits which ought to employ the faculties of a rational being” (163). Abercrombie argues that the mental state of waking dreams promotes the development of insanity because it is a voluntary suspension of reason. “Allowing the mind to wander away from the proper duties of life, or to luxuriate amid scenes of the imagination” creates a preference for illusion over and above reality, which means, “that maniacs of the more educated classes consist almost entirely of priests, artists, painters, sculptors, poets, and musicians” (327, 329). Abercrombie also employs literary language to articulate the symptoms of this abnormal mental state, which indicts the state of reading: “to luxuriate amid the scenes of the imagination” could refer to reading poetry or fiction as well as to entertaining daydreams. Furthermore, he claims that the insane who come out of the upper classes are predominantly creative artists, which prefigures the later, more blatant claims put forth by A.L. Wigan, Forbes Winslow, and the late century

post-Darwinian theorists: artistic production and aesthetic pleasure originate in mental debility or disease. What both MacNish's and Abercrombie's descriptions of waking dreams indicate is that abnormal, ecstatic mental states are complexly bound to literature and to experiences of self-loss.

Reverie, another of these waking phenomena, is often conflated with waking dreams both in criticism and in nineteenth-century psychology. The imprecision of the term stems from the various, differing definitions Victorian psychologists used to define it. For MacNish, reverie designates a different state in which the mind displays a vague, blank emptiness instead of imaginative absorption. As with all ecstatic states, in reverie “[t]here is the same want of balance in the faculties, which are almost equally ill regulated, and disposed to indulge in similar extravagancies” (MacNish, 1834: 276). Reverie is not heightened attention but a defective attention, “which instead of being fixed on one subject, wanders over a thousand, and even on these is feebly and ineffectively directed” (MacNish, 1834: 277). MacNish strangely oscillates in his chapter on reverie between reverie's appearance as imbecile and dangerous and his own occasions of it seated before the fire. It seems to be an after-effect of excessive attention, but allowing it to become a habit “is apt to injure the usefulness of the individual, and impair the whole fabric of his understanding;” for according to Dr. Good, it is “upon the faculty of attention that every other faculty is dependent for its vigor and expansion” (MacNish, 1834: 279).¹³

By the 1850s, William Benjamin Carpenter dramatically shifted the conception of ecstatic states by altering the theory of the unconscious in his 1855 fifth edition of

Human Physiology. The conflict for his predecessors had been a conflict between reason and the imagination, manifest in ecstatic states, but for Carpenter, the conflict centers on the will and its relation to the unconscious, or the automatic action of the mind, which he calls “unconscious cerebration.” Carpenter claims that we are aware of unconscious cerebration only after it has already occurred. Unconscious cerebration is independent of the will, producing what Carpenter calls ideo-motor actions, which are reflex actions that occur in the midst of an exaltation of thought or ideas, suspending the will. Carpenter designates the state of reverie as a suspension of the will in the midst of heightened intellectual activity, and as such reverie is a manifestation of the unconscious cerebration of the mind. Since reverie is an ideo-motor action, “it is in minds in which the emotional and imaginative elements predominate, that we usually find the greatest tendency to reverie; and the sequence of thought, if subsequently analyzed, will be found to have been chiefly determined by these tendencies” (*Human* 624). Though Carpenter shifts the debate surrounding ecstatic states into the realm of the unconscious, he still regards “minds in which the emotional and imaginative elements predominate” to be abnormal and problematic. For Carpenter, suspending human will is equivalent to suspending the nobility of man, for “it is in fact in virtue of the Will that we are *not* mere thinking Automata, mere puppets to be pulled by suggesting-strings” (Carpenter 554).

An anonymous 1859 article, “Reverie and Abstraction” from the conservative and erudite *Eclectic Review*, makes similar claims, stating that “attention and will are [the] most important elements in all serviceable thought” (598). An example of popular discourse, this article illustrates how the scientific preoccupations with these mental

states were also fascinating the public mind. This writer, obviously familiar with the debate, makes a somewhat different claim than MacNish or Carpenter concerning the characterization of reverie. He claims that reverie is a form of defective attention which characterizes “the feeblest and most inefficient intellects...and in a more than usually significant sense, trifles make up the sum of his existence” (600, 601). Reverie, in this author’s estimation, equals an idle frivolity of mind—an existence composed of trifles—that fosters potential insanity and prohibits economic, social, and moral efficiency. For those who engage in reverie, they “are in the most pitiable state of unfitness for all those high purposes of knowledge and reflection, for which our marvelous powers were bestowed upon us” (“Reverie” 601). What becomes clear in both psychological and popular writings is the common viewpoint that ecstatic states compose a spectrum in which each state exists on a continuum with insanity. An ecstatic state, no matter how innocuous it may seem, is always moving the mind closer to madness.

The other waking pathological state—abstraction—is one of these seemingly innocent or trivial states but one which receives equal scientific attention because it is still weakening the will and advancing the mind towards insanity. Abstraction is the opposite of reverie and appears more closely attuned to waking dreams. Psychologists generally agree on the definition of abstraction and often include the same characteristics and case studies to describe it. In abstraction attention is riveted to one thing and everything and everyone else diminishes. It is a less intense form of double consciousness, or it is a double consciousness minus the paroxysms. For the author of “Reverie and Abstraction,” abstraction “is generally found in the persons of men of

intellect the most exalted, of genius the most transcendent” (600). It is in this state of mind that Sir Isaac Newton apparently used a lady’s finger as a tobacco stopper (MacNish, 1834: 284). Abstraction exhibits an excessive attention that strangely appears to the observer as inattention: “all studies which require deep thinking are apt to produce mental absence,” and those who are subject to abstraction “are apt to commit a thousand ludicrous errors” (MacNish, 1834: 284). Carpenter explains this proclivity for errors as the mind interpreting external impressions through the ideas so profoundly preoccupying the mind at the time. The inherent danger and potential for insanity is found in the ability of the abstracted mind to so powerfully displace reality with the dominance of a single thought; the displacement temporarily dissolves identity by inducing self-loss and simultaneously composes an alternate reality.¹⁴ Although abstraction specifies an intensified attention—“the most valuable faculty of the mind, and that without which all the others, however brilliant, are worthless”—its excessiveness induces “absurd and troublesome dilemmas; and continually suggests the close association between great wit and madness” (“Reverie” 604). One must engage in constant vigilance to “guard sternly and strictly” against abstraction or any form of ecstatic states, because all of the manifestations “have a strong tendency...to terminate in literal and emphatic ‘*absence of mind*,’” *i.e.*, in annihilation of the power of thought,” which often tends toward madness (“Reverie” 609). For the popular reader, the article “Reverie and Abstraction” emphasizes and somewhat embellishes the danger of self-loss, and it also reveals the extent to which moral management, “guard[ing] sternly and strictly,” had become as central to popular discourse as it had become to psychological theory.

The Shade of Insanity

“[H]ow slight the line is, if line there be, which separates the healthy actions of the mind from those of a morbid nature.”

--Sir Henry Holland, *Chapters on Mental Physiology*

The blurring and intersection of conscious and unconscious states clearly extended to the contested borders between sanity and insanity. The work of A.L. Wigan, Henry Holland, and Forbes Winslow emphasized and developed this alliance in distinctive ways, which helped solidify the relation between ecstatic states, insanity, and literature.

In *A New View of Insanity* (1844), A.L. Wigan proposes a unique variation of faculty psychology which claims that the mind is physically divided into two opposing brains rather than competing faculties or forces. Wigan’s dual model requires an even more emphatic need for self-control and strict vigilance against any imaginative, ecstatic state. Wigan alters the field of battle within the human mind, creating two distinct selves which correlate to his two distinct physical and moral brains. He writes: “one of the cerebra is almost always superior in power to the other, and capable of exercising control over the volitions of its fellow” (26). The self-governing practice of vigilant self-control allows the moral cerebra to maintain the superior position and control its wayward counterpart. But the opposite possibility exists as well, that the immoral cerebrum might gain superior power and control the moral brain. For many other psychologists, the self merely contained the potential for mental debility if allowed to freely engage in ecstatic states. But Wigan introduces an immoral and disorderly second self, which generates every form of criminality, delusion, and insanity. Wigan’s apparatus becomes even more

troubling because the border between the two selves or brains is often indiscernible, destabilizing the human mind instead of fortifying it: “the line of demarcation between insanity and reason is like that between soberness and drunkenness. It requires no sagacity to distinguish the extremes, but the gradations are infinite, and the boundary evanescent or imperceptible” (279). Wigan describes an “evanescent” boundary separating reason and insanity, introducing an innate yet “imperceptible” immoral self. He finds that artists are especially predisposed to nourishing their wayward cerebrum, granting it superior power and falling prey to insanity. Artists and any others “who cultivate the fancy for professional purposes are more liable to insanity; they lay down the reins, in order to witness and profit by the gambols of the unrestrained imagination, and then find it difficult to resume them” (Wigan 282). Wigan indicts aesthetic pleasure as much as aesthetic production, because to experience either, one must lay down the reins governing the wayward cerebrum. Because artists employ an unrestrained imagination to create, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to transition back to the governance of the moral, rational, and controlled cerebrum. To fail to establish the “absolute tyranny of one brain over the other” is why the “fanciful delusions” of semi-conscious states such as reverie or waking dreams would “terminate in insanity” (Wigan 282). Thus for Wigan, cultivating the fancy is equivalent to cultivating insanity.

Henry Holland’s *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (1852) blatantly discounts Wigan’s work and his “theory of a real doubleness or duality of the mind,” stating he “can see no foundation for such a doctrine... Surrounded as we are by mysteries, many of them inseparable by human reason, it is right to seek for, and record, whatever we can

authenticate as facts” (note, 188). Holland, physician to Queen Victoria, George Eliot, George Henry Lewes, and many other eminent and influential patients, challenged divided models of consciousness and the mind, preferring a fluid model. Of insanity, he writes “[i]ts shapes and aspects are as various as those of the human mind in a sound state...[it] is not one thing, nor can it be treated as such. It differs in kind not less than in degree; and in each of its varieties we may often trace through different cases all the gradations between a sound an unsound understanding” (Holland 110-111). His description of insanity depicts mental states, even those of “a sound state,” in a continuous flux—the shapes and hues of insanity are as various as the mind itself. His fluid model is apparent in his discussion of the role of the imagination in dreaming: “the fancy works variously and boldly, creating images and impressions which are carried forwards into waking life, and blend themselves deeply and strongly with every part of our mental existence” (78). Holland affirms the vital nature of the imagination, which interweaves our dreams “with *every* part of our mental existence.” His inclusion of “every part,” designates all the variations of the sane and the moral just as much the insane and the depraved, decoupling the aesthetic from its usual depraved associations. Perhaps his continual association with literary and scientific minds, either as his patients, or his family and acquaintances, influenced Holland to unravel the strict binaries demarcating the works of so many other contemporary psychologists.¹⁵

Holland’s conception of insanity and his fluid model of consciousness belies the fear and suspicion plaguing other writers, including Forbes Winslow. Winslow, a follower of Wigan and Abercrombie, was a practicing physician and the editor of the

Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology. Writing in the wake of the novel's literary explosion and in the birth of the sensation novel, Winslow's study of insanity, *On Obscure Diseases of the Brain, and Disorders of the Mind* (1860), pays explicit attention to the novel, particularly the trashy novel. He adopts Abercrombie's iron-fisted emphasis on regulation, but Winslow integrates it into his own system of hidden, latent, and shared insanity, which ecstatic states, as well as novels, often rouse. The practice of self-regulation prohibits the already-existing, dormant presence of insanity from stirring and overwhelming the mind. Winslow asserts that

If we were to closely scrutinize into the fathomless mysteries of the inner mental life, and fearlessly analyze the nature of the terrible conceptions that occasionally throw their dark phantasmal shade across the anxious and troubled breast, what a melancholy, degrading and profoundly humiliating revelation most men would have to make, of the dark corners, secret recesses, and hidden crevices of the human heart! If this self-examination were faithfully and honestly executed, it would cause the best and fairest of God's creatures to shudder with terror. (225)

Not even "the best and fairest" are exempt from the "dark phantasmal shade" lurking within the most intimate depths of the mind, waiting to be unleashed through an ecstatic state. Honest self-regulation presents most men with the humiliation of their own propensity for immorality and insanity, for Winslow asks "[i]s not every bosom polluted by a dark leprous spot, corroding ulcer, or portion of moral gangrene?" (Winslow 226). Winslow's model makes rigorous self-examination more imperative than in previous ones, including Wigan's. In Winslow's model, the self is already compromised by its predisposition to insanity and immorality, and the influence of Wigan is most evident here. Winslow reintegrates Wigan's separate, dark cerebrum, which in Winslow's apparatus, becomes a horrific phantom continually lurking within the mind.

Winslow forcefully disparages any medium or mental state that would suspend self-examination, induce an ecstatic state, and thus jeopardize the supremacy of the will and self-control. He decries the “perusal of vicious books, sensational novels, sight of indecent prints...reading the details of gross acts of immorality” described in newspapers as “frightful records of vice and crime so palpably exposed, elaborately and artistically developed...and fatally destructive” (157). What preoccupies Winslow’s accusation are palpable *narratives* of vice and sensuality. His inclusion of “elaborately and artistically developed” narratives indicts more than newspaper stories, “penny dreadfuls,” and “shilling shockers,” or even sensation novels. He appears to be indicting any narrative, regardless of its artistic or popular appeal, that might induce “perhaps only temporary, paroxysmal, and evanescent conditions of unhealthy thought, and phases of passion which occasionally have been known to cast their withering influence and death-like shadow...crushing the best, kindest, and noblest of human natures” (143). The temporariness of the thought or passion or state is inconsequential compared to the space it opens up for the arousal of the “phantasmal shade” or “death-like shadow.” If any narrative, even temporarily, overwhelms the senses, induces feelings of passion, presents criminality, or engages in the depiction of any moral failing, then the reader risks awakening the dark shade of his own insanity. We can easily see in systems such as Wigan’s and Winslow’s the foundation for a late century tale like Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), as well as the growing sense that brain disease and degeneration produce ecstatic states of mind.¹⁶

As Winslow's work indicates, the well-established correlation between ecstatic states and insanity created a hostile, suspicious, sometimes even fearful response towards anything which might induce ecstatic self-loss or depict that self-loss, such as the novel. This marked coincidence of ecstatic states, novels, and insanity markedly appears in an 1845 article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* written by William Henry Smith, a Victorian bookseller and entrepreneur. Smith sets up the article, "The Novel and the Drama," as a letter of advice to a young author named "Eugenius." Towards the end of this letter, Smith remarks "there is one little request I cannot help making even to a novelist in embryo" (685):

I have been annoyed beyond measure at the habit our writers of fiction have fallen into, of throwing their heroes perpetually into a sort of swoon or delirium, or state of half consciousness...What I complain of is, that whenever the passions of the hero himself rise to a certain pitch; or whenever the necessities of the plot require him to do one thing, whilst both his reason and his feelings would plainly lead him to do another—he is immediately thrown into a state of half frenzy, has a "vague consciousness" of something or other, makes a complete nightmare of the business; is cast, in short, into a state of *coma*...In this sort of dream he raves and resolves, he fights or he flies...It is very interesting and edifying, truly, to watch the movements of an irrational puppet! I do beg of you, when you take up the functions of the novelist, not to distribute this species of intoxication amongst your *dramatis personae*...Keep them in a rational state as long as you can. Depend upon it they will not grow more interesting in proportion as they approximate to madmen or idiots. (685)

Smith's "letter" to the young Eugenius attests to the already recognizable relation between novels and ecstatic states, and it echoes the associations between these states and insanity that were circulating in psychological discourse. Like the psychologists, Smith sets the states of "half consciousness," "swoon," "delirium," and "frenzy"—the states designating the actions of an "irrational puppet"—against reason. He points out the ways in which these states influence and direct the actions of the hero, as he "raves, resolves,"

“fights or flies” on account of his ecstatic states rather than his use of reason, which are the very factors marking the insane. Smith’s article encapsulates the psychological debate regarding ecstatic states and their effect on personal action and alliance to insanity. His article centers this debate directly within the realm of the novel, and beyond indicting only the content of novels, Smith also indirectly suggests the half consciousness induced by reading and its detrimental effect on the action of the reader, who also can be “thrown into a state of half frenzy, ha[ve] a “vague consciousness” of something or other...[be] cast, in short, into a state of *coma*.” This excerpt from Smith’s article attests to what psychologists were already arguing—that ecstatic states are intimately bound to novels. Since many novel critics were also practicing psychologists, it should be no surprise that the debates surrounding the reading of novels sparked similar, almost identical fears and controversies.

“Something Rotten in the State”: The Trashy Novel

The aesthetic value of novels was often questioned in the nineteenth century, and novels were lambasted with accusations of moral indecency and idleness, particularly because of their mass cultural appeal and the overwhelming dominance of the circulating library.¹⁷ Novels in general, as well as certain subgenres, “came under attack for rotting the minds of their readers, promoting vice, and subverting cultural standards,” not to mention that they were often considered “addictive or seductive...a frivolous waste of time” (Brantlinger 2,3).

Within nineteenth-century critical discourse, the inflamed debates denoted more far-reaching social implications than the novel's aesthetic value. A writer for *The Athenaeum*, writing in the 1840s, avidly claims "the condition of a nation's literature...embraces no less than the whole round of their [the people's] moral existence, and throws a strong light on their institutions, their habits, their present capabilities, and their future prospects" ("The Dowager" 899). For this critic, a nation's future is inextricably bound to its literature, since its literature reflects the nation's moral status. Accordingly, he argues that the silver age of Roman literature contained within it that empire's eventual fall and destruction, just as eighteenth century French literature foreshadowed the French Revolution. "Everything," he writes, "in connection to literature, is significant; the style, the subjects, the pervading spirit, the moral condition, and even the pecuniary value, are each the exponents of some peculiarity in a nation's condition, exercising an influence on the destinies of the people" ("The Dowager" 899). He finds the rise of the novel to be a particularly troubling development, which indicates "the evil days upon which contemporary literature has fallen" ("The Dowager" 900), and in another piece for *The Athenaeum*, he claims "the present state of our English literature betokens something radically wrong in the actual condition of our civilization— 'something rotten in the state'" ("The Siege" 945). Without directly stating it, this critic foresees England's imminent downfall vividly reflected in the state of its novels, and many other critics shared his sentiments. The panic prevalent in mid-century Britain heightens the significance of the debate over the novel, since an entire Empire is at stake; ironically for its naysayers, this panic heightens the significance of the novel as a literary

genre. In the words of James Moncrieff, a contributor to *The North British Review* in 1844, “[n]o kind of writing has more influence over the daily and domestic thoughts of a people. They find their way everywhere...[novels] both form and reflect the social manners of their time” (“Recent Novels” 545).

Such critics grudgingly attributed extensive influence to novels because the predominant population of England appeared to be reading nothing else. A contributor to *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1844, writes “[t]here is a very large class of readers who delight in novels, and in novels only. They have no idea of a library beyond a circulating-library,” which brims with “[w]ell-thumbed volumes of horrors, and stories of crime and murder, of castle specters and churchyard ghosts, trap-doors and creaking vaults” (“Ainsworth’s *St. James*” 740). Many critics and novelists sought a reason for the seemingly insatiable popularity of the novel. For Moncrieff, the initial demand for the circulating library stems from idleness in the population, but the demand and the idleness together, he argues have created an enduring, yet insidious literary atmosphere. These novels were “intended merely to wile away a tedious or idle hour...yet the flood of nonsense, childishness, false morals, and infidelity” remains (Moncrieff 545). Anthony Trollope notes that men and women—old and young alike—read more novels than poetry because, “such reading is easier” (“Novel” 39). By 1869, the ease of reading a novel along with its increasing accessibility through the circulating library induces Richard Holt Hutton, writing for *The Spectator*, to claim

[f]iction has attained in England a kind of ‘empire,’ which enables it to overshadow for the time almost every other kind of non-political literature. Nothing except a successful journal is so much read as a successful novel, no man except a great orator has the audience of a great novelist, and no literary

production whatever, not even a first-class poem, is so sure to be minutely discussed as a first-class story... The religious world, which has frequently defied the Theatre, has been beaten by the Novel, and the masses who never open *In Memoriam* know *Nicholas Nickleby* by heart. ("Empire" 43)¹⁸

As a moral gauge for mid-century English society, the novel's overwhelming influence and literary imperialism became so troubling to critics because of the type of novel that was wielding unprecedented imaginative power. According to an earlier cited contributor to *Fraser's Magazine* and the critic Moncrief, it is the trashy volumes of horror, vice, and nonsense that are the "well-thumbed" volumes, avidly and repeatedly absorbing their readers.

Novel critics were clearly concerned with the elaborate, almost enthusiastic portrayals of dangerous ecstatic states within the pages of trashy novels, such as dreams, trances, delusions, and even insanity, but critics were also concerned with the highly addictive ecstatic state that trashy novels generated in readers themselves. Critical discourse on the trashy novel reveals how reading these novels outwardly resembled a state of trance so powerful that it produced waking delusions in readers. In what resembles Symonds's account of double consciousness, the delusions inspired by trashy novels so dramatically affected a reader's mind that the reader would not only act upon the delusion but also fail to distinguish the delusion from reality. Like the other ecstatic states, the reading state appeared dangerously close to insanity, but unlike other ecstatic states, this addictive and threatening state was increasing dramatically in the population due to the explosion in the writing and publication of novels.

Since trashy novels were becoming the imaginative centers for the nineteenth-century reading population, many novel critics, who were often practicing psychologists

as well, located themselves in the psychologically charged position of morally regulating their readers through their criticism of popular novels. The struggle between reading only “good” novels and succumbing to trashy ones resembled the inner psychological struggle between the will and ecstatic states. But just as ecstatic states could overpower and suspend the will, the line between the good and the bad novel was often hard to define and even harder to maintain. A “good” novel could easily and sometimes imperceptibly slip into the contrary. So while not every critic sweepingly dismissed the entire genre, most still found overwhelming fault and danger in the majority of novels.

George Henry Lewes, a novelist, a psychologist, and the partner of George Eliot, maintained in 1865, “the vast increase of novels, mostly worthless, is a serious danger to public culture, a danger which tends to become more and more imminent” (“Criticism” 354). Part of this vast increase in “mostly worthless” novels included novels written by women. Women writers were not excluded from harsh criticism and their works, for many, played an equally detrimental role in degrading public culture. Before becoming a novelist herself, George Eliot famously derided “the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic” dominating the majority of works by women novelists, which contain a “drivelling kind of dialogue, and equally drivelling narrative, which like a bad drawing, represents nothing, and barely indicates what is meant to be represented” (“Silly” 243, 252). A critic for *Fraser’s Magazine* makes a similar claim that male and female-authored trashy novels fail to represent recognizable reality, and he argues they should delude no one, since trashy novels have “nothing more in common with the actual scenes passing around us than the incoherent medley of a dream” (“On the Treatment” 405).

His words call attention to the common overlap between the imagery of the psychological and the literary. Just as psychologists used literary language and metaphors to describe ecstatic states, so critics often used ecstatic states to describe the effects of literature.

Critics argued that readers, like the sufferers of double consciousness, waking dreams, or reveries, have abandoned “simplicity and truth” for “the search after monstrous excitements from the most illegitimate sources”—the novel (“The Siege” 944). They located themselves in the space between author and reader in an attempt to rescue reading culture from the ecstatic states induced by the reading of bad novels, or for some, all novels. Lewes contends that the imminent danger worthless novels pose to culture could be “arrested by an energetic resolution on the part of the critics to do their duty with conscientious rigour. At present this duty is evaded, or performed fitfully...Even in the best journals poor novels are often praised in terms strictly applicable to works of genius alone” (“Criticism 354). Lewes believes the failure of critics to appraise novels honestly derives from their failure to see novels as literature; instead they relegate novels to the status of a pamphlet or a newspaper article. He champions the novel as a legitimate literary genre, but a genre which needed to have reasonable, formal guidelines and stylistic techniques.

In “Recent Novel Writing” (1866), Thomas Arnold takes up a similar, though perhaps harsher mode of argument, also blaming critics for the onslaught of bad novels but inciting critics to show critical violence upon these texts. “Instead of suffering itself to be deluged by the flood or silenced by the din that issues incessantly from all our literary workshops,” Arnold writes, criticism as an act of will “should assert its right and

its function more stiffly than ever, should lash what is carelessly, correct what is imperfectly done, and mercilessly decapitate what should never have been done at all” (“Recent” 202). Although Arnold does not relegate all novels to the status of “should never have been done at all,” his words, in suggesting the bloodbath of the French Revolution, echo the pervasive sentiment that novels, excepting the rare few, are largely harmful and the majority should be eliminated. Arnold reaffirms the words of a writer for *The Church of England Quarterly Review*, writing twenty years earlier, who states “[w]e have no hesitation in saying, that so much harm has been done by modern novels, and comparatively so little good, that we really wish there were no such things” (“Moral and Political” 286). Although many, like Lewes, advocated that “good” novels and trashy novels should be more diligently distinguished, this comment, despite seeming overstated and ridiculous, exposes the fear at the heart of the novel controversy: there is no real distinction between good and bad novels.

On rare occasions, a critic defended all novels, both good and bad; W. P. Scargill, writing in *The Athenaeum*, endorsed even bad novels and found the greatest fault to be with the haughty critic rather than the work itself. Scargill argues that

the poorest, weakest, sloppiest, trashy novel that ever was written, all about the Nevilles, and Bevilles, and Grevilles, and Devilles, will at least exhibit something of the mind, or mindlessness, or characteristics of the writer. So, while you are laughing at the utter ignorance and profound stupidity of the author, you are contemplating a certain variety in human character...if in the course of those pages you find nothing exciting your thoughts or furnishing you with materials for philosophy, I can only say, you have not a head worth a pin. (752)

Scargill’s defense of all novels was exceptional. Most critical attempts to defend common or popular novels would inadvertently acknowledge and validate arguments against the

vast majority of novels. For instance, in the article, “Common Novel Readers,” also written for *The Athenaeum*, the writer seeks to overturn the image of reading popular novels as that “promiscuous devouring of the trash of the circulating library,” arguing instead that the “charm of a common novel” is its ability “to bring us to an acquaintance more or less perfect with the passions and interests of the human heart” (618). He adopts a spirit similar to Scargill’s, quoting a line from the Roman playwright Terence: “*Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto*” [“I am a man: I consider nothing that is human alien to me”] (qtd. in “Common” 618). He even extends the definition of “fiction” to include histories and travel narratives and not simply the novel, claiming that we read each of these texts for our amusement. But alongside his openness to novels and all human feeling runs the traditional moral wariness of this genre, and he includes the characteristic warning: “the novel writer must stick to truth, or he sinks into neglect and oblivion—he must delineate nature truly, or he will provoke distaste and disgust” (“Common” 618).

Besides the “distaste and disgust” the content of trashy novels provoked, trashy novels also provoked critical distaste on the ground that they created a “mindless” or absorbed reading public. These novels are “got up for a bad public...[a] public satiated with vapid and languid insipidity, turned with a morbid appetite in search of strong excitement, to the coarse manners and vulgar crimes of low life” (“Jack Sheppard” 803, 804). Besides their “diseased passion for novelty,” readers were acquiring “a habit of reading with rapidity,—of reading without judgment” (“The Dowager” 899). Instead of the edification provided through thought-provoking, legitimate literature, critics claimed

that readers preferred overwhelming, mindless and “vicious excitement[s] to provoke a desire for perpetually increasing stimuli,” which in turn induced the writer “to make his murders more murderous, his desperadoes more desperate, his embroglios more embroiled, and his moving accidents by flood and field more moving, more unexpected, and more impossible” (“The Siege” 944).¹⁹ Readers’ taste for bodily sensation instead of mental activity drove a perpetually reinforcing cycle of the greater publication of trashy novels and the greater number of readers engaged in reading them.

Gingerbread and Goblins: The Novel as Food

On account of the unprecedented growth in the reading public, the content of novels was frequently compared to the effects and addictions of other suspending substances, such as opiates or the “morbid appetite” for the pleasurable enjoyment of food. Both metaphors capture the overwhelming and displacing sensation associated with absorbed reading and the thrilling or dangerous content that induced it. Reading becomes “a literary dram-drinking” encouraged by authors and publishers who exhibit a “corresponding eagerness to work the illegal still, and to serve the hot and poisonous product as much above proof, as the strength of their alembic will admit” (“The Siege” 944). Not only are novels a “hot and poisonous product” equivalent to liquor or laudanum, but writers are complicit by “pander[ing] to a depraved appetite for excitement...spread[ing] poison through the circle of their influence” (“Moral and Political” 286).²⁰ These converging preoccupations in psychological and critical literary thought over the dangers of ecstatic states and reading are dramatically staged and

personified in Christina Rossetti's narrative poem "Goblin Market" (1862), which I will discuss at the close of the chapter. Enacting the food-poison metaphor, the poem is located directly in the place of intersection between these two fields, seemingly taking both as its subject.

Metaphors of poison commonly overlapped with ones of food, since both suggested bodily desires, cravings, addictions, and pleasures. But unlike the poison metaphors, which clearly signified moral deterioration, food metaphors did not always, at least on the surface, denote the evils of novels, and they were often implemented as positive, pleasurable encounters. But underneath these pleasurable metaphors lurked the slippery binary between the "good" and the "bad" novel, which despite critics' and authors' intent, was rarely distinct.

An eighteenth-century literary critic likened good novels to "intellectual gingerbread," a provocative combination of sophistication and trifle (qtd. in Taylor, *Secret* 46). Trollope's essay "Novel-Reading" also describes the good, proper novel as a compelling mixture of intellect and edible pleasure. Trollope notes that men and women "read them [novels] as men eat pastry after dinner,—not without some inward conviction that the taste is vain if not vicious" (39). Trollope identifies a sense of guilt, discomfort, and perhaps even suspicion that accompanies the enjoyment of these literary pastries. He attempts to offset such feelings and render the novel as a "delight," since "[w]e think it is not vicious or vain,—unless indeed the employment be allowed to interfere with the graver duties of life" (39, 40). Ironically, his reassurance suggests the same taste of vanity and viciousness it attempts to dispel. He agrees that the novel can be both vicious

and vain if it interferes with “the graver duties of life,” a statement quite reminiscent of the warnings of literary critics and the physiological psychologists. Trollope also indicates that the novelist has a choice to make in regard to another site of potential vice in his art: how to make his characters alluring to his readers. “The regions of vice are foul and odious,” Trollope writes, “[t]he savour of them, till custom has hardened the palate and the nose, is disgusting. In these,” the proper novelist, “will hardly tread” (40). Trollope, perhaps inadvertently, here admits the possibility that custom, or the continuation of bad novels, *will* harden the palate and nose to the point that these novels will no longer be disgusting and the savoring of vice will become the preferable taste. Until then, he charges the proper novelist to choose instead to make his work pleasing and delightful to the palate—a pastry—but also beneficial: a pastry that is also a lesson. In this pastry/lesson metaphor, the novelist is caught between delighting and instructing, since he must “please or he will be nothing. And he must teach, whether he wishes to teach or not” (40). But if the novelist delights the reader too much, the novel becomes a vain and vicious dessert, interfering with the true duties of life and hardening the reader’s palate to enjoy foul and odious delights, and if the novel does not delight at all, it is not a novel—it is “nothing.”

The novel as food also appears in Thackeray’s boyhood reminiscence, “On a Peal of Bells,” but here the novel is solely a profound and enduring pleasure of the palate. Thackeray describes the novels, which permeated his boyhood, as “Oh delightful novels, well-remembered! Oh, novels, sweet and delicious as raspberry open-tarts of budding boyhood!” (296). Accounting for the use of such metaphors, Thackeray compellingly

describes the imagination and art in one of his letters in *Fraser's Magazine*, discussing Christmas books, which he writes under the pseudonym Michael Angelo Titmarsh. Thackeray writes, “[y]ou wander about and lose yourself amongst these pleasant labyrinths, and sit down to repose on the garden-bench of the fancy...And this is the queer power of Art; that when you wish to describe its effect upon you, you always fall to describing something else. I cannot answer for it that a picture is not a beautiful melody; that a grand sonnet by Tennyson is not in reality a landscape by Titian,” or regarding his boyhood reminiscence, that a novel is not a delicious raspberry tart (“About” 745). Not all of Thackeray’s food metaphors for fiction swell with the pleasure and delicious fancy of his boyhood novels, however. In another Titmarsh letter on Christmas books, Thackeray rails on what he finds to be fictional bits of nonsense, invoking more images of food in his tirade:

Had it been strong meat which you set before me for a Christmas feast...Beef might have invigorated the critic; but, ah, sir! what is that wretch to do who finds himself surfeited with mince-pies? I have read Christmas-books until I have reached a state of mind the most deplorable. “Curses on all fairies!” I gasp out; “I will never swallow another one as long as I live...Fling me every drop of the milk of human kindness out of the window!—horrible, curdling slops, away with them...By my soul, if any body offers me plum-pudding again this season, I’ll fling it in his face! (“A Grumble” 111)

Whereas Thackeray delights in the raspberry tarts of boyhood novels, here he derides fictional mince-pies and plum-puddings, preferring strong, invigorating meat, in his disgust with the empty frivolity he finds in fairies and Father Christmases. Like Trollope’s after-dinner pastries, a delicious novel can be the quintessential mental and imaginative pleasure and at the same time an empty, luxurious confection, sure to turn and curdle the stomach with its excessive sweetness.

Food metaphors for novels congregate around these conflicting images of desserts and trifles, reflecting the continuing ambivalence with which the literary community viewed the novel. These metaphors also suggest ecstatic states by their illustration of the same preference for bodily and mental pleasure over reason or the implementation of will. As if overcome by an opiate, the strictures of moral management dissipate in the wake of this all-absorbing pleasure. The fact that “good” and “bad” novels are both pleasurable desserts as well as poisons reveal overwhelming fascination and addictive pleasure just as much as repugnance. Like the psychologists’ conflicted fascination with ecstatic states and literature, the literary community experienced the same conflicted fascination, indulgence, and disgust in the pages of the novel.

Rossetti’s poem “Goblin Market” vividly performs the obliviousness and withdrawal that characterizes reading and ecstatic states, as it sets up and reflects the negative views of both. Rossetti’s poem starkly contrasts with the approbation of ecstatic states that marks the novelists I will discuss in the following chapters. Literarily, the poem finds itself caught in the dramatic tension between condemning ecstatic states and depending upon them for its effectiveness. “Goblin Market” fully enacts the psychological representation of ecstatic states and the critical representation of absorbed novel reading: sensuous, paralyzing isolation as opposed to will, morality and duty. The poem not only expresses these oppositions, but it also stages the dire repercussions of “allowing the mind to wander away from the proper duties of life, or to luxuriate amid scenes of the imagination” (Abercrombie 327). In the form of Laura, the poem echoes both psychological discourse and the amplified fears regarding the female reader; it

rebukes the self-loss associated with ecstatic states and a woman's over-wrought, absorbing interest in something such as a novel. Although many nineteenth-century critics believed the female reader was the most susceptible to the temptations of novels and other ecstatic states, the female reader is more accurately the intensified potentiality of any reader or any mind under the prolonged influence of ecstatic states.²¹ In contrast to Laura, Rossetti's poem instead appears to promote the virtues of Lizzie: an indomitable will, female sacrifice, domestic duty, and a heightened sense of self-awareness and regulation. As a struggle dividing two sisters or perhaps two parts of a single mind, "Goblin Market" visibly enacts this familiar binary between ecstatic absorption and the will, and yet, in the end, it struggles to maintain the binary.

Despite the temptation of the succulent fruit offered by the goblin men, Lizzie thrusts her fingers in her ears and flees from them: "'No,' said Lizzie: 'No, no, no; / Their offers should not charm us, / Their evil gifts would harm us'" (Rossetti 64-66). Lizzie's will and moral duty prevail, stopping her ears and eyes from being overcome and preserving the purity of her mouth, mind, and body. Laura boldly looks at the men, stretching her neck "Like a vessel at the launch / When its last restraint is gone" (Rossetti 85-86). She offers her mind and body as payment—a lock of golden hair and a tear—inviting the opulent sensuality of the goblin men by offering up symbols of her pure, feminine virtue. Then Laura "sucked and sucked and sucked the more... And knew not was it night or day" (Rossetti 134, 139). After feasting unreservedly, time is suspended, and Laura dwells in a heightened and isolated imaginative state; oblivious to her real condition, she fancies herself in an alternate and illusory reality, one that she prefers to

her ordinary life. In the midst of her regular household tasks, Laura's behavior is marked by the loitering and the passionate yearning of "an absent dream" (Rossetti 211). Her fantasies of the fruit and its overwhelming pleasure displace Laura's reality, and she viscerally longs for its repetition; she is absorbed in the fruit's illusion and severed from her sister. When the fruit and its pleasures are denied to her, Laura "gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept / As if her heart would break" (Rossetti 267-268). Addicted to the fruit's pleasure and starving for its return, Laura cannot exist in the real world of her sister. Instead of absently dreaming in the midst of her domestic duties, she eventually fails to do them all together, wasting into nothingness and the oblivion of looming death.

Lizzie's fears for her sister converge in the memories of another who was tempted and succumbed to the fruit of the goblin men:

Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime. (Rossetti 312-316)

Laura's death, like Jeanie's, would prohibit Laura from becoming a bride and mother: the pinnacle of female productivity and value. To save her sister from Jeanie's fate, Lizzie attempts to buy fruit for Laura but refuses to eat any herself. Her refusal incites the goblin's violence as they "Clawed with their nails / Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking" and force the fruit upon her (Rossetti 401-403). As Lizzie stands closed-mouthed and rigid before the goblin men and their erotic, lascivious, and brutal tirade, it is Jeanie whom she thinks of and not Laura. Jeanie's fate looms before her, and Lizzie's indomitable will prevents her from opening her mouth to the fruit smeared and dripping

on her face and body and from opening her mind to the absorptive pleasure it would bring. Her judgment remains intact, enabling her to retain her moral virtue and fulfill her duty; she is “Like a royal virgin town / Topped with gilded dome and spire / Close beleaguered by a fleet / Mad to tug her standard down” (Rossetti 418-421). Rossetti’s description of Lizzie here suggests the proper and crucial response of the mind towards ecstatic states as well as the vital necessity of choosing good, morally beneficial novels. When Lizzie returns, triumphant and dripping with the goblin fruit, it is Lizzie’s will, her heightened attention, and her self-awareness that Laura licks from her skin. It is not only Lizzie’s sacrifice of herself to the goblin men’s violence that transforms Laura’s absent dreaminess into bitterness, but it is what enabled Lizzie’s sacrifice, what enabled her to resist the temptation to absorptive, ecstatic pleasure. Lizzie’s “Eat me, drink me, love me; Laura, make much of me,” is an invitation for Laura to partake in a feast of Lizzie’s will, a feast that does not produce ecstasy but one that causes Laura to writhe “as one possessed,” to “rent all her robe, and wr[i]ng / Her hands in lamentable haste” (Rossetti 471-472, 496-498). Lizzie’s act gives Laura the self-judgment and self-regulation Laura needs to reject “evanescent conditions of unhealthy thought, and phases of passion which occasionally have been known to cast their withering influence and death-like shadow” (Winslow 143). Laura succeeds in becoming a wife and mother and warns her own daughters to beware “[t]he wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men, / Their fruits like honey to the throat / But poison in the blood” (Rossetti 553-555).

The poem’s coupling of oral sensuality with the isolation and withdrawal of ecstatic states suggests the absorption that plagues both the ecstatic Victorian mind and

the absorbed Victorian reader. Rossetti's comparison of the goblin fruit to honey and poison strikingly evokes Victorian novel discourse, in which critics note how the novel tastes like a sweet dessert but insinuate that beneath this pleasure lurks a harmful poison. Even in their warnings, psychologists, novelists, and critics alike attest to the absorbing power and pleasure novels offer. Like the goblin fruit, the descriptions of this pleasure often expose some danger, and the writers who either try to champion or deny this pleasure tend to expose their own fascinated and entangled ambivalence. Brantlinger provocatively argues that novelists themselves "often express opinions common to anti-novel discourse" frequently within the text of their own novels (3), essentially creating a double bind within their own texts in which their novels cure the very poison they contain.²² Rossetti's narrative poem could be indicted with the same accusation. Her use of erotic, succulent, and sensuous language threatens to sweep up her reader into not only Lizzie's moral action but more dangerously into Laura's ecstasy. The poem performs the identical path attributed to the novel: the poem cures the poison it contains. We along with Laura cling, and kiss, and lick the "Goblin pulp and goblin dew" (Rossetti 469), even though its sweetness might turn to wormwood as Abercrombie argues: "[f]or by the mere familiarity with vice, an injury is done to the youthful mind, which is in no degree compensated by the moral at the close" (165). Into ecstasy and solitude, reading simultaneously warns us and invites us to be swept up, like Laura, into the pleasurable opiate of delicious gingerbreads, pastries, and sticky-sweet raspberry tarts.

The Novelists: Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot

In light of this nineteenth-century psychological and critical discourse on the novel and its effects, the question remains, how did the major novelists of the nineteenth-century treat these issues, particularly ecstatic states, reading, and insanity, within their novels? The novelists Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot each respond to different emphases in the psychological discourse, and I will show in the following chapters how each of them, in a pair of novels, exhibits both fascination with and resistance to that discourse. In distinct ways, these canonical novelists react against the oppressive tenets of faculty psychology and moral management, which demand that the imagination be carefully managed to prevent mania and immorality. Their novels suggest that the opposite is in fact true: the unrelenting regulation of the imagination creates various forms of mania and is ultimately devastating to the self. The dismantling of conscious thought and will, so alarming to the advocates of moral management, forms the crux of moral growth, moral choice, and ethical responsiveness in their novels, depicting the cultivation of the imagination as a morally productive and fundamental component of the mind.

In chapter two, “The Luxury of Twilight and Solitude: The Psychology of Charlotte Brontë’s Infernal World,” I examine Brontë’s reaction against the fears of insanity in popular psychology, which were so intimately associated with the imagination and with indulgence in ecstatic states. As I explore Brontë’s journals, letters, and unpublished poetry, along with the novels *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), I foreground her critique of phrenology as a device of power in conjunction with her

intense preoccupation with the problematic, personal practice of moral management. In seeking to reconceive the traditional tenets of faculty psychology, Brontë constructs an alternative psychological and moral paradigm that she locates in ecstatic states: the paradigm of illegibility—a limitless, imaginative space, free from the gaze and intrusion of others.

Charles Dickens responds differently than Brontë to the same nineteenth-century emphasis on the regulation of the imagination. Dickens reconceives another popular psychological discourse, associationism, which I consider in the chapter “‘Come Up and Be Dead’: The Psychology of the Productive Imagination in Charles Dickens.” Drawing upon an early Kantian idea of the imagination that surfaces in the work of Dugald Stewart, Dickens implements the concept of a productive imagination to oppose the moral and mental destruction that comes from institutionalized mental confinement, namely occurring in schools, factories, and prisons. Dickens’s journalism, along with *Hard Times* (1854) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), depict his unique conception of a democratic, associative mindscape distinct from the middle class hierarchies imposed by institutionalized confinement. Dickens’s construction of associationism is a radical statement on the egalitarian composition of the mind and on the illusion of social class.

George Eliot reacts to similar issues by markedly dismantling in her fiction the moral management inherent in split psychological systems, such as that espoused by A.L. Wigan. In the chapter “Evanescent Frames of Mind: The Will, The Imagination, and the Psychology of Self-Loss in George Eliot,” I examine the ways in which Eliot decouples the hierarchical nature of the will from William Benjamin Carpenter’s theory of

unconscious cerebration to illustrate instead the necessary and potentially moral manifestation of the unconscious within a fluid mental system that hinges upon the imagination and its integral connection to the body. I claim that *Romola* (1863) continues the story of *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), exhibiting how intimately knit the conscious and the unconscious, the imagination and the will, as well as the body and the mind are in Eliot's psychological model. Rather than the will as the supreme governing component of the mind, Eliot advocates instead the temporary suspension of the will, particularly the reader's will through the reading state. The reader's suspension of will enables Eliot to temporarily suspend the reader's judgment and play upon the reader's sensations, revealing the natural, complex fluctuations in the reader's own consciousness and desire.

As Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot emphasize different aspects of psychological discourse, the following chapters will also demonstrate how they depict a necessary dialectic of self-loss and return, which constitutes a temporary inward doubling, whereby simultaneous realities coexist—the reality of the novel and the individual consciousness of the reader. This dialectic is represented in Brontë's notion of illegibility, Dickens's productive imagination, and Eliot's depiction of the fluidity of evanescent frames of mind. Such inward doubling is intimately tied to their understandings of the aesthetic and ethical act of sympathy. What will become apparent in my discussions of their work is what E.S. Dallas would claim later in his first volume of *The Gay Science* (1866):

[i]nstance, intuition, passion, sympathy—these are forces which we at once recognize as of themselves poetical, as for the most part indistinguishable from imagination, and as involved in the recesses of the mind. They are processes

which never fairly enter into consciousness, which we know at best only in a semi-consciousness, and less in themselves than in their results. (237)

The novelists explore in a variety of ways how in the aftermath of self-loss, in that altered affective space, the self is able to contemplate his or her own reality and the furtherance of the social good. For one's own consciousness to be swept up into the current of what is distinct from the self brings with it, however slight, the prospect of an alteration of the self. Despite the common indictments in psychology and anti-novel discourse that ecstatic states are evidence of solipsism and exclusion or even insanity, these authors sought to reformulate what they perceived as a misconception of fiction reading and ecstatic states, choosing instead to defend solitary, ecstatic absorption, and the return to conscious reality that would enable self-evaluation in light of other lives.

¹See Cohen; Hacking; Kearns; Jonathan Miller; Rylance; and Reed.

² Critics note the cessation of Cartesian metaphysics in the nineteenth century, but they miss its reinstatement into the materialist hierarchies distinguishing conscious and non-conscious states. Although the relation between them is much more tenuous in these psychological writings, the preference for conscious states and the threat unconsciousness poses to sanity, morality, and duty exposes the continuation of a Cartesian tradition in materialist trappings. For more on physiological psychology's loosening of Descartes's cogito, see Crary 57-58; Alison Winter 27-28; and Shuttleworth, Charlotte 51-56.

³ Prichard and Crichton-Browne appear to be the only two psychologists, who by concentrating on the underlying similarities linking these abnormal mental states, grouped them together and attempted to name them. Most psychologists discussed these states as single, isolated states, such as somnambulism or double consciousness; they loosely linked them as aberrations of sleep but did not group or name them as a single mental phenomena with multiple variations.

⁴ I will not be discussing mesmerism, since much has already been written on its relation to literature. The contested status of mesmerism within the medical and psychological community invokes a large field of controversy, which would distract from the goals of my project. For more on mesmerism, see Winter; and see Kaplan, who focuses particularly on mesmerism and the works of Dickens.

⁵ Moral management interconnects with the larger social change towards the medical treatment of insanity, most obviously reflected by the Lunacy Acts of 1845. According to Shuttleworth, moral management “assumed not only that the patient could be cured, but that the personal influence of the doctor was a crucial factor in effecting a recovery” (Charlotte 44). Beforehand, the insane were often treated cruelly and inhumanely, but the advent of moral management transformed them into curable, potentially rational patients. The Lunacy Acts led to the set up of legitimate, regulated public asylums. This legislative, scientific and social transformation meant, “for the first time the insane were to be radically distinguished from the criminal or indigent” in conjunction with their potential for recovery and reintroduction into normalized society (Shuttleworth, Charlotte 34). Although the physiological psychologists believed in the reversing effects of moral management, the degenerationists, considered the insane to be almost a separate race produced through physical and mental degeneration. They reinstated the insane as not just a separate social category but as a separate racial one marked physically by brain disease and other physically measured characteristics. Shuttleworth claims that the shift from criminal to patient to separate race “can be plotted directly against the changing patterns of industrial prosperity. The brash confidence of early Victorian optimism which gave rise to theories of moral management and the infinite malleability of the human psyche, gradually shades into the increasingly pessimistic values of inherited brain disease and social degeneration [theorists]...writing in the ear of economic decline in the latter part of the century” (Charlotte 37). For more on this history of moral management, see Scull.

⁶ Moral management began with the York Retreat, established in 1792 by William Tuke to treat the insane in a Quaker community. Many in the medical community initially felt hostility for Tuke’s unscientific method of treating the insane and believed Tuke’s moral treatment was an attempt to usurp the traditional medicine. However, by the 1830s, “moral therapy could be (and was) absorbed into the realm of ordinary medical techniques. Moral treatment now became just one weapon among many...which the skillful physician used in his battle against mental illness” (Scull 224). By 1835 a text such as Prichard’s *A Treatise on Insanity* included a chapter on moral management. For more on the York Retreat and the Tuke family, see Scull 96-103; for the initial backlash against moral management and its eventual acceptance, see Scull 188-231.

⁷ Elliotson as well as many other later psychologists often used passages and case studies from MacNish’s work, particularly the 1830 edition of *The Philosophy of Sleep*. For MacNish’s literary writings, see Moir. The first volume includes a biography of MacNish along with his letters and poetry. His short stories are included in volume 2, which he published in *Blackwood’s Magazine*.

⁸ For example, to explain the mind’s captivity by the imagination and its illusionary creations, he quotes Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Recollections of Love”: “you stood before me like a thought, / a dream remembered in a dream” (qtd. in MacNish, 1830: 80).

⁹ See Abercrombie 288-306.

¹⁰ In his article, “Double Consciousness in Britain,” Ian Hacking discusses this nineteenth century predecessor to multiple personality disorder. Hacking provides a helpful history of double consciousness in this article, which he also includes in his book, *Rewriting the*

Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory (1995). He traces it back to its original usage and early association with the dual personalities of Mary Reynolds, an American woman, whose case was originally published in the *Medical Repository* in 1816 by Dr. S. L. Mitchell (qtd. in Taylor and Shuttleworth 123). Apparently after a very deep sleep, she awoke as a completely different personality with absolutely no previous conception of her other self or anything or anyone in relation to that other self.

Throughout her life, she continued to oscillate between these two personalities. Either personality did not seem to have any knowledge of its counterpart. She became the central figure in discussions over double or divided consciousness and appeared unnamed in MacNish's second edition of *The Philosophy of Sleep* (note, 185) and also in Elliotson as Miss R (note, 367).

¹¹ On account of its close resemblance to somnambulism, the usage of double consciousness varied somewhat according to individual psychologist; many preferred to categorize it as a form of somnambulism. Abercrombie rejects the term "double consciousness", believing it has been applied incorrectly (although he does use "double consciousness" in his table of contents); see Abercrombie 288-306. Prichard does not use the term at all and neither does Elliotson. Despite the resistance to the term, double consciousness became the designated medical term for this particular mental aberration.

¹² Symonds makes the concession that it is possible for one man to be wiser than all the world, but "if a person sees the outward world in an entirely different aspect from that of other people, he is unsound" (27).

¹³ For a provocative discussion of distraction or reverie as both the antithesis of attention and an integral component of self-making, see Dames, *Physiology* 73-122. He argues that these blank moments of reverie are "the ground of any interiority, while attention is the abdication of that set of mental processes—choice, self-communion, even the idle desire to have a desire—upon which the liberal individual bases his right to autonomy" (*Physiology* 102). Dames sets up a hierarchy between attention and distraction, and he seems to fall into the same pattern as faculty psychology, only turning the tables. What I intend to argue throughout the course of this project is the necessity of both—attention or absorption and distraction—to the self, since, as I will argue, they are a continuum rather than a binary and a manifestation of the larger category of ecstatic states. Also Crary argues that attention came to be a major component of late nineteenth century psychology; however, as this chapter will show, attention and its absence dominated discussions of ecstatic states of mind and only grew in prominence by the end of the century. See Crary 11-79.

¹⁴ MacNish refers to the case of Dr. Robert Hamilton, a notable member of parliament, which appeared in volume XIII of the *New Monthly Magazine*. Dr. Robert Hamilton, in a fit of abstraction, did not recognize his own wife when he passed her on the street, and on another occasion, he doffed his hat as he addressed a nearby cow as "Madam" (1830: 205). His case denotes how in abstraction one may become so absorbed in one's own reflections as to lose perception of external things, even to the point of one's own identity and existence (MacNish, 1830: 205). Carpenter also discusses Dr. Hamilton as well, stating, "[n]othing seems too strange for the individual to believe, nothing too strange for him to do under the influence of that belief" (*Mental* 624).

¹⁵ Holland was a cousin of Elizabeth Gaskell's, related to the Wedgwoods and thus the Darwins; he was also an acquaintance of Lord Byron, Abraham Lincoln, and Sir Walter Scott, among many other esteemed persons of the nineteenth century. See Rylance 127.

¹⁶ Winslow oddly combines a religious metaphysics of "the innate corruption and natural depravity of the human heart" with the physical state of brain disease; both act as generators of insanity (155). His work anticipates the claims made by post-Darwinian, degeneration theorists. Although early physiological psychologists believed in the reversing effects of moral management, the degeneration theorists, considered the insane to be almost a separate race produced through physical and mental degeneration. Furthermore ecstatic states were considered a symptom of brain disease. Shutte worth claims that this shift "can be plotted directly against the changing patterns of industrial prosperity. The brash confidence of early Victorian optimism which gave rise to theories of moral management and the infinite malleability of the human psyche, gradually shades into the increasingly pessimistic values of inherited brain disease and social degeneration [theorists]...writing in the ear of economic decline in the latter part of the century" (Charlotte 37).

¹⁷ There is a great wealth of scholarship devoted to the reading masses, which uncovers the very politicized atmosphere surrounding these readers. I am aware of the claims coming out of this scholarship, but debates and concerns regarding ecstatic states and reading cluster around the ideal reader rather than the mass reader. The "promiscuous devouring of the trash of the circulating library" was also a center of controversy associated with mass reading ("Common" 618). The Victorian novelist Catherine Gore called circulating libraries "the monster-misery of literature" for reducing novels to a state of commonness, no longer only for the few and privileged (556). For more on the political undertones and history of mass reading, see Brantlinger; see Simon Eliot; see Jordan and Pattern; see Price; see Rose; see Sutherland. For nineteenth-century theories of reading devoted to the singular, ideal reader, see Dames, *The Physiology of Reading*; and see Stewart, *Dear Reader and Novel Violence*.

¹⁸ Hutton believes the novel's literary dominance depends upon England's underlying narcissism, its desire to "look at itself in the glass, and to see itself, as it were, under analysis" ("Empire" 44). He claims this narcissism is merely a stage in England's development, and he argues that another, more fruitful, literary form, will eventually replace the novel.

¹⁹ Although these comments would seem to refer to the "sensation novel" of the 1860s, these articles range from the 1830s through the end of the 1850s, prior to the rise of the sensation novel as a new literary genre. This attests to the fact that arguments against sensation novels were primarily extensions of pre-existing anti-novel discourse. For more on criticism and the reading of sensation novels and their link to mesmerism, see Winter.

²⁰ The comparison to liquor and narcotics calls to mind the diseased sleep and dreams or trances of ecstatic states and the suspension of will and reason that they also induce. Psychologists often compared ecstatic states to states produced by narcotics and drunkenness. Ecstatic states like "mania and drunkenness...afford the most decisive proof of the inactive or distempered state of judgment" in these states (MacNish, 1830:

94). Opium use gives rise to the most extraordinary flights of the imagination in which “beautiful sights pass before the eye; the ear is filled with delightful sounds; and the whole spirit wrapped up in the ecstasies of Elysium. Nor are these states confined to the slumbering state, for they pervade the mind even when awake, and fill it with intense pleasure...the fancy is invested with extraordinary power” (MacNish: 1830, 91).

²¹ The female reader has been much discussed in literary criticism. The nineteenth-century literary community unequivocally considered the woman reader to be the reader most susceptible to the novel’s dangerous and addictive absorption. As Kate Flint writes, “[n]o body was perceived as being more vulnerable to impure mental foods as that of the young woman” (53). Women were often considered the largest audience and the most regular consumers of the circulating library. The previously mentioned critic from *The Church of England Quarterly Review* states “[t]he great bulk of novel readers are females; and to them such impressions are peculiarly mischievous: for, first, they are naturally more sensitive, more impressible, than the other sex; and, secondly, their engagements are of a less engrossing character—they have more time as well as more inclination to indulge in the reveries of fiction” (“Moral and Political” 287-288). These reveries, made possible by the circulating library, were generally romantic reveries induced through novels of love. A critic for *Fraser’s Magazine* laments how “[y]oung ladies bewilder their brains with novels of love; they read and never think,” and these novels are “tasteless stuff for girls to grow into women from” (“Ainsworth’s *St. James*” 740). Flint points out what is so troubling about women readers and often readers in general: their self-absorption, their vulnerability to textual influence, and their isolation or obliviousness to the external world. According to Flint, this obliviousness is particularly troubling in regard to the female reader, since her solitary absorption and fantasy ironically imply the growing independence of her mind from proper male or moral influence. Female absorption, and absorption in general, appears to unravel moral management, creating the greater potentiality for moral, particularly sexual danger. See Flint for an extensive historical, theoretical, and psychological examination of women readers during the years 1837-1914. For a look at women readers during the years previous to Flint’s work, 1750-1835, see Jacqueline Pearson.

²² Brantlinger moves away from the novel as *pharmakon*, and he ultimately argues “novels and novel-reading were viewed, especially by novelists themselves, as both causes and symptoms of the rotting of minds and the decay of culture and society” (24)

Chapter 2. “The Luxury of Twilight and Solitude”:

The Psychology of Charlotte Brontë’s Infernal World

“How few would believe that from sources purely imaginary such happiness could be derived...What a treasure is thought! What a privilege is reverie—I am thankful that I have the power of solacing myself with the dream of creations whose reality I shall never behold—May I never lose that power may I never feel it growing weaker.”

(Charlotte Brontë, *Roe Head Journal*, March 1837)

The work of Charlotte Brontë intersects with two fundamental elements in nineteenth-century psychological thought: moral management and phrenology.¹ Both moral management and phrenology were bound up with faculty psychology. Faculty psychology defined the mind as a site of competing faculties or organs, each of which accorded to a different mental state or physical activity. Whereas phrenology is a materialist derivative of faculty psychology, moral management stems from the overarching necessity of self-regulation implicit to all forms of faculty psychology. Placing herself in dialogue with both phrenology and moral management, Brontë resisted and revised popular psychology within her fiction, wholly re-imagining these conventional psychological premises.

Recent criticism, such as Sally Shuttleworth’s *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996) and Nicholas Dames’s *Amnesiac Selves* (2001), emphasizes the role of phrenology in the psychological construction of Brontë’s novels. Shuttleworth writes that “Brontë’s work is permeated by the language and assumptions of phrenology” (57), and Dames laments how often critics ignore “the visible behavior and legible bodies” of phrenology that populate Brontë’s novels (85). While the critical alliance of Brontë’s novels with phrenology is illuminating, it is ultimately misleading. By examining

Brontë's unpublished poetry, journals, and letters along with *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853), I argue that her awareness and engagement with phrenology stems from her resistance to moral management. Examining her early writings in conjunction with her novels exposes Brontë's critique of phrenology as a device of power, as well as her intense preoccupation with moral management. Deflating the primacy of phrenology as the fundamental psychological framework for Brontë's work opens up the uniquely constructed mindscape of Brontë's novels, which not only confronts and undercuts the prevailing psychological hierarchies but also wholly re-imagines the traditional underpinnings of faculty psychology.

Rather than a precise medical procedure, moral management was a widespread perception that emphasized the morality and rationality inherent within the insane. Moral management began with the York Retreat, established in 1792 by William Tuke to treat the insane in a Quaker community. Many in the medical community initially felt hostility for Tuke's unscientific method of treating the insane and believed Tuke's moral treatment was an attempt to usurp the traditional medicine. However, by the 1830s, "moral therapy could be (and was) absorbed into the realm of ordinary medical techniques. Moral treatment now became just one weapon among many...which the skillful physician used in his battle against mental illness" (Scull 224). By 1835 a well-known psychological text such as James Cowles Prichard's *A Treatise on Insanity* included a chapter on moral management.² By the mid 1830s, many psychologists implemented moral management in their medical practices to treat individuals afflicted with various forms of mental illness. But moral management evolved from a method once used solely in the insane

asylum to a mindset that undergirded much of Victorian life, including individual conduct. We see this in the works of nineteenth century psychologists such as Robert MacNish, John Abercrombie, James Prichard, and Forbes Winslow, among several others. The personal assimilation of moral management divided the self into psychologist and patient, so that individuals were expected to diagnose and treat themselves. This internal relation hinged upon the legibility of the psyche. Whereas moral management depended upon the legibility of the self to the self as well as to the penetrating gaze and interpretation of the psychologist, phrenology assumed an externally legible self in which the psyche is clearly manifest in the physical body: “in a phrenological world, everything is visible, and therefore visibility is everything...nothing in mental life is truly hidden from [the] view” of others (Dames 81-82).

Prevalent in early to mid nineteenth-century England, phrenology hinged upon the theory of opposing faculties and was established by the Austrian Franz Joseph Gall in the 1790s. In Gall’s estimation, phrenology meant a materialist mapping of the brain into externally legible cranial divisions. Dividing the skull into various, competing organs meant that the “brains of people with different personalities took on different shapes and sizes because the exercise of particular mental powers altered the physical organ and its form” (Reed 28). George Combe, who popularized phrenology in England during the early 1820s, altered Gall’s material determinism governing the dispensation of faculties, emphasizing “their potentiality for development through exercise” (Shuttleworth 63).³ Combe combined the increasingly popular tenets of moral management with phrenology, claiming that one could experience moral improvement through the exercise and

development of particular faculties. Self-control was, of course, tantamount to the development of one set of faculties over the other. Since phrenology was a “conception of the mind [that] was based, like contemporary models of the economy, on the idea of fiercely competing energies” (Shuttleworth 62), only self-control enabled the exercise of the morally superior faculties over their degenerative opposites. Although Combe attributed to phrenology the possibility of such advancement, the theory of phrenology was in practice caught between advocating an already determined self and a self of moral potentiality and development. This inherent tension rendered phrenology a psychological theory as internally divided and unresolved as the self it constituted.⁴

The decipherability of the inner self through outward physical properties constituted a large part of the appeal of phrenology. The cranial divisions of amativeness or individuality or destructiveness were fully legible to the perceptive and skilled phrenological reader, but more significantly, becoming such a skilled reader was not a difficult achievement. The specialized knowledge and language of phrenology was readily available to the intellectual layman and common reader through publications like Combe’s and the many hundreds of phrenological handbooks also published during this time. Basically anyone literate could become a competent interpreter of the brain and moral condition of anyone else.⁵

Both moral management and phrenology presented the mindscape as one in which interiority could not be hidden. These underlying assumptions hinged upon the false assertion underlying faculty psychology: nothing in mental life could be fundamentally illegible to the knowledgeable and able reader/observer. Ecstatic states conflicted with

these assumptions and occurred as singular, inarticulable mental events. Physiological psychologists provided descriptions and explanations of the outward manifestations and probable causes of ecstatic states, but they were shut out from the particulars of the individual's inner experience. Ecstatic states thwarted a decipherable and thus controllable interiority.

The various stages of Brontë's writing, beginning with her early journals and letters, are permeated with illegible ecstatic states and their problematic relation to her self-regulation. Through her growing awareness that the personal practice of moral management divided the self into physician and patient, Brontë ultimately critiques the division by showing through her work how this type of splitting creates incredible internal torment. In her view, this internal struggle becomes one of self-imposed mental tyranny that leads to insanity, inverting the construction espoused by psychologists. She implements ecstatic states within *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* to oppose and overturn traditional understandings of moral management and phrenology.

The illegibility associated with ecstatic states in Brontë's novels offers the reader what Brontë herself so ardently desired and what the practices of popular psychology prohibited: a potentially limitless imaginative space. *Jane Eyre* presents the various conflicts surrounding ecstatic states, highlighting the conflict over their attempted regulation and prevention. *Villette* thoroughly explores the natural progression of the various psychological implications intimated in *Jane Eyre*. *Villette* fully submerges itself into these conflicts and works to resolve them by presenting Brontë's more fully developed psychological alternative to moral management: illegibility. Brontë's

preference for illegibility intersects with the intentionally misleading, elusive, and inscrutable Lucy Snowe, who paradoxically incites the reader's imaginative fancies. Both novels together illustrate Brontë's ongoing quest for a non-tyrannical psychological paradigm that would incorporate ecstatic states.

The Ongoings of the Infernal World: Brontë's Journals and Letters

Sally Shuttleworth has successfully shown Brontë's avid intellectual engagement and access to the psychological ideas and writings of her time.⁶ Besides the Brontës' subscription to *Blackwood's Magazine*, the family also utilized the library holdings of the Keighly Mechanics' Institute, which was "primarily devoted to the natural sciences and philosophy" (Shuttleworth 26). Phrenology manuals and guides for self-improvement lined the shelves alongside works on electricity, as well as the psychological work of the French physician, Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol, who wrote extensively on insanity. According to Shuttleworth, "lectures at the institute seem to have followed [this] common pattern: exhortations to self-development alternated with more practical lectures on magnetism and geology" (26). From the library's various holdings and lectures, Brontë would undoubtedly have been aware of the growing popularity and implementation of moral management in addition to her knowledge of phrenology.

Part of this early context also includes Brontë's father, Patrick Brontë, who fastidiously wove Thomas John Graham's medical encyclopedia, *Modern Domestic Medicine* (1827), into the daily ritual and fabric of the Haworth household. According to Shuttleworth, Graham's work, "held the place of secular Bible" for Brontë's father, and

“[v]irtually every page of this work has been annotated... offering a moving testimonial to the rigid regimen which governed the life of the household. Patrick records not only his family’s physical ailments and the remedies employed, but also his preoccupation with the threat of nervous disease and insanity” (Shuttleworth 10-11). This threat included those states in which conscious reason and the will are suspended. His recording of his family’s mental and physical ailments within Graham’s medical text performs his rigorous and thorough enactment of the medical gaze upon his family, uncovering the interiority of his children for both diagnosis and control. His preoccupation with these particular states, their underlying threat of insanity, and the necessity of their management surely affected Brontë, who notably experienced a variety of these states herself.

Brontë’s journals and letters attest to how intrinsically ecstatic states make up her imaginative life and how inextricably they are bound up with her writing. From her time as a teacher at Roe Head through her years in Brussels, the parameters of Brontë’s conflict deepened into more intricate and problematical configurations. Her intimate familiarity with ecstatic states during these emotionally and mentally turbulent years would come to inform both her resistance to and her revision of the traditional and oppressive tenets of popular psychological premises.

At the age of nineteen, as a teacher at Roe Head, Brontë often finds herself sneaking around the school to indulge in the ecstasies of her imagination: “[t]he Ladies went into the school-room to do their exercises and I crept up in to the bed-room to be alone for the first time that day. Delicious was the sensation I experienced as I laid down

on the spare-bed and resigned myself to the Luxury of twilight and Solitude” (qtd. in Barker 236). Brontë describes her secret, imaginative sojourns as delicious luxuries occurring in solitary shadows far from the gaze and demands of others.⁷ Brontë is constantly torn between her mundane and hated duties as a teacher and her overwhelming desire to escape into the alternate realities of her fantasies.⁸ Her journal describes one of her particular, recurring fantasies:

Never shall I Charlotte Brontë forget what a voice of wild and wailing music now came thrillingly to my mind’s almost to my body’s ear or how distinctly I saw sitting in the schoolroom at Roe Head the Duke of Zamorna...the moonlight so mild and so exquisitely tranquil sleeping upon that vast and vacant road...I was quite gone I had really utterly forgot where I was and all the gloom and cheerlessness of my situation [and] I felt myself breathing quick and short.⁹

The wild, thrilling nature of Brontë’s illusion removes her from the grueling reality of the schoolroom and relocates her in an alternate, imaginative reality. Despite the ecstatic nature of being “quite gone,” Brontë experiences a multi-sensory, multi-layered corporeal vision. The corporeality of the vision exists both on the level of the dream’s narrative—the Duke sitting in the schoolroom—and on the level of her physical bodily experience. The dream begins as an almost auditory “wild and wailing music” in her mind that translates into labored, excited breathing. The schoolroom transforms, combining elements of her actual Roe Head reality and her imagination: the Duke himself is in the schoolroom “leaning against the obelisk with the mute marble Victory above him, the fern waving at his feet” (qtd. in Barker 238). The schoolroom does not disappear, but her imagination converts it into a highly fantastic space in which the Duke’s horse is grazing among the heather growing within it, and the moon is shining on a “vast and vacant road” that extends out of the schoolroom’s transformed present into unknown, phantasmatic

space. The reality of Roe Head, in the shape of a student, inevitably intrudes and painfully interrupts: “‘Miss Bronte what are you thinking about?’ said a voice that dissipated all the charm and Miss Lister thrust her little rough black head into my face” (qtd. in Barker 239).

Brontë’s waking dreams are continually interrupted and obstructed by her students and fellow teachers at Roe Head. Her visions are contingent upon a doubled withdrawal that is essential for her imaginative absorption. Her fancies require her physical withdrawal from others—the vast and *vacant* road—as well as her mental withdrawal from her tedious, external duties. Brontë becomes increasingly resentful about interruptions, and her reactions become increasingly infuriated. She writes “[a]ll this day I have been in a dream half-miserable and half ecstatic [...] Miserable because I could not follow it out uninterruptedly, ecstatic because it shewed almost in the vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world” (qtd. in Barker 254). What creates misery for Brontë here is the continual interruption of the ecstasy, which *almost* unlocks “the ongoings of the infernal world” to admit her entrance into its fantastic realms. The relation Brontë envisions between her ecstasy and the “infernal world” becomes increasingly significant in her conceptualization of the psychological mindscape. Her ecstasy enables her to access the hidden, latent spaces of her interiority—her infernal world. She writes in another journal entry that her waking dreams “wake sensations which lie dormant elsewhere” (qtd. in Barker 249). Brontë also associates her access to her infernal world with her writing. So as she sits, “sinking from irritation and weariness into a kind of lethargy,” and lamenting her “wretched bondage” to the “asinine stupidity

of these fat headed oafs...then came on me rushing impetuously all the mighty phantasm...as strong as some religious creed. I felt as if I could have written gloriously—I longed to write... But just then a Dolt came up with a lesson. I thought I should have vomited” (qtd. in Barker 254). This interruption, so detrimental to her imagination and artistry, provokes a stronger response from Brontë than simple irritation: a mental revolt consisting in physically sickening, violent disgust. Her position as a teacher has become a “wretched bondage,” hardening within her mind a continual frustration and conflict between her duty and her imagination.

In April of 1838, Brontë experiences a mental collapse while staying alone at Dewsbury-Moor, the new site of the school, which previously had been located at Roe Head. On the surface, her physical and mental collapse frighteningly embodies the fears and warnings of her father and contemporary psychologists. Her distempered, sickly imagination makes her real world “gloomy and insupportable.” Her attempts to regulate her desire for that “single, absorbing, exquisite gratification” on account of her duties becomes undeniably perilous for Brontë (*Letters I* 170). Her waking dreams are a form of mental and physical rest. They enable her to “resume my own thoughts [as] my mind relaxes from the stretch on which it has been...and falls back onto the rest which no-body in this house knows of but myself;” as if she were escaping to the tranquility of Haworth and home, these dreams “engross all my living feelings [and] all my energies which are not merely mechanical” (qtd. in Barker 249). Preventing the ecstatic tendencies of her mind prevents her from “going home” and imprisons her within an unrelenting, mechanical existence. Brontë realizes that this is a form of mental imprisonment, and she

experiences first-hand how self-regulation can lead to the different forms of insanity, transforming the ecstasies of her infernal world into something hellish and frightening.

Psychologists claimed that the hellish, hallucinatory imagination comes from a patient's lack of moral management over an extended period of time. James Cowles Prichard in *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (1835) writes that the long influence of circumstances on an individual, which call into play the morbid tendencies of his constitution" results in the intensification of "his gloom and despondency" so that "his imagination fixes upon some particular circumstance of a distressing nature" (26). The mind, becoming imaginatively fixated, haunts itself with unreal illusions. In 1846 when Brontë retrospectively describes her collapse to her friend Margaret Wooley, one of the proprietors of the school, Brontë, too, emphasizes the role of her imagination in the creation of haunting, hellish illusions. She writes, "I can never forget the concentrated anguish of certain insufferable moments and the heavy gloom of many long hours—besides the preternatural horror which seemed to clothe existence and Nature—and which made Life a continual waking Night-mare—Under such circumstances the morbid Nerves can know neither peace nor enjoyment" (*Letters I* 506). Psychological and medical works such as Graham's *A Modern Domestic Medicine* and Prichard's *A Treatise on Insanity* emphasize the strict moral management of the self to prevent, combat, and ultimately overcome these unruly forces within the mind. To a certain extent and for a time, the young Brontë accepts this viewpoint and seeks to implement, though she comes to realize that it only creates unyielding, untenable binaries within the self.

We see this struggle in another context—that of Brontë’s unrequited love—in her letters to Monsieur Heger during 1845. Monsieur Heger, the master of the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels where both Brontë and Emily were students from 1842-44, was “possibly the greatest single influence on Charlotte, both as a person and as a writer” (Barker 412). The exact nature of Brontë’s relationship with Heger has fascinated and eluded Brontë scholars for more than a century.¹⁰ Heger is one of the few who recognized and cultivated Brontë’s intellect, yet her high regard for Heger appears to have become “an unhealthy and obsessive dependency on [him] for every expression of approval” (Barker 419). We do know that her passionate admiration and dependency transformed into an ardent longing and unrequited desire for correspondence after she left Brussels. The loss of Heger’s presence and his long silence sends Brontë hurtling into dark places of passionate mental anguish. The language she uses in her letters suggests a struggle between her passionate, ecstatic, and sometimes morbid imagination and her reason and self-control:

when one wants to master oneself with a tyrant's grip—one's faculties rise in revolt—and one pays for outward calm by an almost unbearable inner struggle. Day and night I find neither rest nor peace—if I sleep I have tormenting dreams in which I see you always severe, always saturnine and angry with me... You will say that I am over-excited—that I have black thoughts etc. So be it Monsieur.
(*Letters I* 380)

Brontë attempts to master herself and her desire for Heger with a “tyrant’s grip,” but she admits that her outward appearance of a calmly, managed self only covers over her “unbearable inner struggle.” She seems to be aware that the revolt of one’s faculties against the unyielding grip of reason indicates that there is something problematic in the attempt. As John Maynard writes in *Charlotte Brontë and Sexuality*, “[w]hen one

dominates oneself 'en tyran' the faculties revolt... The entire process leads, she realizes, to the appearance of derangement or minor insanity" (24).

In laying bare her struggle to Heger's gaze, she anticipates his response; he will respond as a psychological text would respond—that she is over-excited and having black thoughts. As she sees it, exposure, making her interiority legible to the gaze of others, invites indifferent and contemptuous diagnoses: “there are some cold and rational people who would say on reading it [the letter]—‘she is raving’—My sole revenge is to wish these people—a single day of the torments that I have suffered for eight months—then we should see whether they wouldn't be raving too” (*Letters I* 381). The issue of her mind's visibility to others haunts Brontë. She finds that the kind of legibility associated with moral management actually promotes a continually divided and conflicted self, which can never be free from the omnipresent, omniscient medical gaze or the necessity of vigilant self-regulation. By trying to supplant the tyranny of her desire with the tyranny of reason, Brontë traps herself in a futile conflict in which she has become the “slave of a dominant and fixed idea which has become a tyrant over one's mind” (*Letters I* 437). Brontë reveals that she finds herself in the either/or paradigm characteristic of moral management: either she is a slave to the tyrant of her morbid thoughts or she is the tyrant in mastery over her thoughts.

The unpublished poem “Reason,” dated around 1845, dramatically performs Brontë's attempt to enthrone Reason as the rightful tyrant of her mind and her perverse unwillingness to do so. “Reason” is believed to have been written in response to Brontë's

conflict and despair over Heger, but more importantly, it illustrates the beginnings of a significant shift in her views of self-management.¹¹

Come Reason—Science—Learning—Thought—
 To you my heart I dedicate;
 I have a faithful subject brought:
 Faithful because most desolate.

Fear not a wandering, feeble mind:
 Stern Sovereign, it is all your own
 To crush, to cheer, to loose to bind:
 Unclaimed, unshared, it seeks your throne. (Brontë, “Reason” 21-28)

Brontë assures her “Stern Sovereign,” Reason, that he should not fear her “wandering, feeble mind” because “it is all your own” (Brontë, “Reason” 25, 26). Despite her declaration that her offering is an unclaimed, unshared, and thus “faithful subject” (Brontë, “Reason” 23), her admission that she offers “a wandering, feeble mind” immediately undermines it. A wandering mind cannot be a faithful subject—it is insubordinate and certainly not unshared—just as a feeble mind is a weak and sickly, perhaps even offensive, sacrificial offering. Defiantly, she views the so-called weakness of her mind as paradoxically a strength. She writes that “the fire” of her “spirit’s trampled yearning,” “[t]hough smothered, slacked, repelled” burns “stronger, higher” than her obedience to the stern, disapproving god (Brontë, “Reason” 33-34, 36).

Brontë further undercuts Reason’s mastery by ending the poem in uncertainty, invoking an undefined future state instead of a state of submission. She writes, “doubt not I shall be strong tomorrow. / Have I not fled that I may conquer? / Crost the dark sea in firmest faith / That I at last might plant my anchor” (Brontë, “Reason” 41-43). Her imperative “doubt not” achieves the opposite, suggesting doubt, especially in the context

of a wandering mind. The “may” and the “might” also undercut her claims. Brontë refuses to end the poem with her obedience and chooses the illegibility of an open-ended question instead. This refusal expresses her own doubt about the efficacy of a single master-tyrant, even if that tyrant is reason, and her quest for some other non-tyrannical paradigm, a paradigm marked by obscurity, by which to negotiate rather than eradicate “the flame / I still feel inly, deeply burn” (Brontë, “Reason” 10). In the poem’s conclusion, Brontë does not depict Reason as firmly enthroned, sitting in judgment over wandering thoughts and passions. She envisions instead, a dark sea, a freely imaginative, illegible space in which the ebb and flow of thought is imperceptible to the outside observer.

The obscured ending of “Reason” also offers this illegible space to the reader. She leaves the reader in a state of limitless dreaming, as another wandering mind, fleeing and crossing the dark sea along with her into the unknown. This imaginative, illegible space is the early foundation for her psychological theory, which would not divide the self into conflicting forces or rely upon strict moral management. Though exactly what Reason fears, her command, “fear not a wandering, feeble mind,” becomes the cornerstone of her psychological theory, which embraces the wandering, ecstatic mind.

“A trifle beside myself; or rather out of myself”: Jane Eyre

Within the first few pages of the novel, *Jane Eyre* unapologetically plunges its reader into various ecstatic states, such as waking dreams, unregulated passion, and madness.¹² These unruly moments in the novel are often understood as Brontë’s own

acknowledgment and attempt to prevent the dangers found in the unregulated and excessive imagination.¹³ But I contend that *Jane Eyre*, like Brontë's poem "Reason," illustrates Brontë's continuing quest for an alternative psychological paradigm that would incorporate the uncontrollable imaginings of the wandering, excessive mind. *Jane Eyre* illustrates how disavowing the ecstatic mind, hiding it, or mastering it "with a tyrant's grip" only incites revolt and inner turmoil. The novel makes the reader complicit in Jane's ecstatic states in order to induce the reader's own imaginative wanderings. Through the repeated occurrence of ecstatic states, Brontë develops a dialectic of intimacy and distance to locate the reader in a consistently aroused but thwarted position, which paradoxically enables the reader to access the ecstatic nature of his or her own mind.¹⁴ Because ecstatic states punctuate the most crucial moments in *Jane Eyre*, my examination of these moments will illustrate the emergence of Brontë's psychological theory, which privileges the ethical and imaginative potential of these states.

As the novel opens, Jane is in the midst of retreating from her obnoxious cousins, the Reeds, into the scarlet confines of a window-seat within which she is "shrined in double retirement" (Brontë, *JE* 8). Her "double retirement" is her double-layered escape from the Reeds: the red curtained window-seat and within that, the book: Bewick's *History of British Birds*. Jane's absorbed perusal of Bewick in the window-seat positions her in an obscured, imaginative in-between space that resembles her physical position between the scarlet curtain and the window. Her mind, like her body, moves between Bewick's dreary, cold landscapes and her own highly intense imaginings. Jane retrospectively explains the activity of her mind: "Of these death-white realms I formed

an idea of my own; shadowy, like all the half-comprehended notions that float dim through children's brains, but strangely impressive. The words in these introductory pages connected themselves with the succeeding vignettes, and gave significance to the rock standing up alone in a sea of billow and spray" (Brontë, *JE* 8). Both the words and the pictures produce singular, imaginatively wrought fancies in Jane's mind. Like the young Brontë hiding and dreaming in twilight and solitude, Jane's state in the window seat resembles the same mental phenomenon of waking dreams or ecstatic vision. While Jane is not "reading" in the traditional sense, her mind is representative of the ecstatic possibilities that Brontë envisions within the act of reading.¹⁵ "Each picture told a story," she says, "mysterious often to my undeveloped mind and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting" (Brontë, *JE* 9). Brontë does not give the reader access to Jane's stories, but her use of "mysterious" and "profoundly interesting" arouses the reader's interest just as the "strangely impressive" images arouse Jane's, creating the doubled, simultaneous states of Jane's and the reader's waking dream.¹⁶ The images and stories of Jane's waking dream produce a temporary pleasure even though the images portray terror and death. It is from the "death-white realms" in Bewick's *Birds* that Jane forms these shadowy fancies, which are strangely haunted by an unnamable, indefinable sentiment as well as fiends, thieves, and "a black horned thing seated aloof on a rock, surveying a distant crowd surrounding a gallows" (Brontë *JE* 9). She feels terror, but it is the thrilling, pleasurable terror that comes from stories of her own making, so "[w]ith Bewick on my knee, I was then happy...I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon" (Brontë *JE* 9).

The dreaded interruption comes in the cruel, malignant form of John Reed, and violence quickly follows this first glimpse into Jane's ecstatic mind. This scene of interrupted reading, as well as the rage and violence that follow, is an intensification of the visceral, resentful reaction Brontë herself felt when interrupted by her students. When John Reed throws Bewick's *Birds* at Jane's head, he punishes Jane for her solitary pleasure, transforming Jane's impetus toward absorbed happiness into one of pain and retribution. This punishment signifies one of the many ways the novel sets up and reflects the punitive response ecstatic states often incited in the medical community. By situating ecstatic states on a continuum with insanity, psychologists were in effect throwing Jane's book back at her head—transforming the source of an illegible, ungovernable pleasure into a punishment. Jane calls John a “slave-driver”; “I really saw in him a tyrant” (Brontë, *JE* 11). Here Brontë locates the source of tyranny that she associates with the practice of moral management outside Jane in the form of John. His vicious attack in order to control and prevent Jane's waking dream incites Jane's mania, showing how Brontë sets up Jane's struggle with John to act out the internal struggle that traditional moral management incites. Translating Jean-Étienne Esquirol's description of the maniac, the psychologist Prichard writes

everything irritates them, distracts them, and excites their aversion. In constant opposition to all that surrounds them, they soon persuade themselves that persons are combined to injure them...the regimen and prohibitions which are called for by their situation, and to which their attendants wish to subject them, appear to them cruel persecutions...the heart of the insane cherishes no feeling but mistrust...he is troubled as soon as anyone approaches him” (282).

Like Esquirol's maniac, Jane finds herself in opposition to the Reed household, particularly John. She distrusts him; he irritates and cruelly persecutes her, exciting her

anger, fear, and hatred. And from an outside perspective, Jane does not disappoint: “my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded...I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering: these sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort. I don’t very well know what I did with my hands” (Brontë, *JE* 11). Jane is overcome with mania, obviously not conscious of her physical violence towards John; she is caught up in overwhelming sensations that displace her conscious self. She is acting devoid of reason or will, retrospectively saying as much herself: “I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out of myself*” (Brontë, *JE* 12).

Prichard claims that under such strong excitement, the maniac “during paroxysms of raving madness, require[s] personal coercion and even strict confinement of body and limbs...[this] abstracts them from the morbid impressions and associations which may have excited and foster their mental disease” (279). The Reed household acts out Prichard’s treatment—locking Jane in the red room—but the imprisonment Prichard prescribes only creates further mania rather than preventing it.¹⁷

Jane’s description of the room’s interior alters the pleasurable feelings of terror previously evoked by the “death-white realms” of Bewick’s *Birds* into abject terror and colors of blood. “The carpet was red,” she says, “the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth...the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly polished mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows...the cushioned easy-chair near the head of the bed, also white...and looking as I thought like a pale throne” (Brontë, *JE* 13-14). Images of

red and white, blood and bone, surround Jane in their coldly silent, terrifying shades. It is almost as if Brontë inserts Jane into an intensified, horrifying version of one the stories conjured in her mind by Bewick's *Birds*. Once again, Jane resides in a liminal space; various glass and mirrored surfaces trap her between the room's physical reality and its phantasmatic doublings of it. The "subdued, broken reflections" of the wardrobe, the "muffled windows," and the "great looking glass between them" enfold Jane into their distorted images to the point that she no longer recognizes her own reflection: "all looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality; and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and the glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought *it* looked like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp" (Brontë, *JE* 14, emphasis mine). This complex, ecstatic doubling transforms Jane's image into something unrecognizable as herself—an "it," a "phantom, half fairy, half imp."

But unlike the ecstatic, pleasurable visions she finds in Bewick's *Birds*, Jane's self-loss in the red room becomes frightening rather than absorbed. Her own conscious self becomes unrecognizable; it is the horrifying perversion of the waking dream, created by the proper treatment moral management prescribes. Her imprisonment transforms the images in the room into involuntary mental horror. The light on the wall becomes a more terrifying phantom than the one formerly inhabiting her reflection: "my heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings: something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down—I uttered a wild, involuntary cry" (Brontë, *JE* 17). Confinement, an externalized, corporeal

form of self-regulation, distorts her daydreams in the window-seat into involuntary nightmare and mania.

As she reveals the common association in nineteenth-century psychology of ecstatic states with insanity, Brontë ultimately overturns this perspective and rejects it, showing how Jane's waking dream does not cause her mania: John Reed's attack and Jane's confinement does. Jane's terror and her "wild, involuntary cry" in the red room reassert and substantiate the household's belief in her madness, particularly Miss Abbot's and Mrs. Reed's. Miss Abbot has long looked "darkly and doubtfully on my face, as incredulous of my sanity," just as Mrs. Reed "looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity" (Brontë, *JE* 12, 18). The typical psychological position, which the Reed household represents, is the overwhelming need for legibility and control when these states occur. When John Reed finds Jane in the window seat, he interrogates her, demanding to know "[w]hat you [were] doing behind the curtain" (Brontë, *JE* 8). The immediate reaction of the household when Jane attacks John is to name her response—"she's like a mad cat"—and to punish it—"take her away to the red room and lock her in there" (Brontë, *JE* 11, 12). The outward unruly appearance of Jane's mental states incites fear in the household, so identifying those states provides a semblance of control and assuages that fear. That Brontë would associate the diagnosis of madness with the Reeds undermines its reliability for the reader, since the reader, located in tandem with Jane, is already positioned in opposition to them. Jane's own description of these terrifying moments refuses a legible explanation and the suggestion of madness: "I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed

the scene” (Brontë, *JE* 18). Even retrospectively, Jane rejects any kind of self-diagnosis, preferring to leave the moment in the darkness of illegibility. Her refusal to grant legibility even to the reader—“I don’t very well know what I did with my hands,” “I suppose I had a species of fit”—mirrors Jane’s own experience. Brontë frees Jane from the reader’s participation in the Reed’s erroneous diagnosis, aligning the reader with Jane. Not only does the reader thus become complicit in actions befitting a “mad cat” or an “uncongenial alien” (Brontë, *JE* 16), but Brontë also shrouds the events and their ecstatic manifestations, expertly arousing the reader, who like Jane is left to “suppose” what has happened.

Like the Reeds, Rochester also desires full legibility and control but for different reasons. For Rochester, the legibility of others empowers him to more effectively spin his fantasies, facades, and delusions in order to evade reality and conceal his secret: his mad wife Bertha who is imprisoned in the third floor attic. He uses the language of phrenology and moral management as his principal means of interrogation and control. The tyranny of power and knowledge that underlie both seemingly provide the perfect means for Rochester to achieve his clandestine purposes.

Since a phrenological reading supposedly makes the truth of a person’s character readily available to the observer, the initial head-reading scene between Jane and Rochester exposes and plays upon this misconception, as Rochester attempts to control how he is known so as to maintain his mastery. Rochester expects Jane to be an able phrenological reader just as he assumes her to adopt the popular psychological viewpoint.¹⁸ But though Jane appears to conduct a phrenological reading of Rochester’s

head, she is more accurately a passive spectator to what Rochester himself induces and insinuates: “Criticize me: does my forehead not please you?” (Brontë, *JE* 131).

Rochester lifts “up the sable waves of hair which lay horizontally over his brow, and showed a solid enough mass of intellectual organs; but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen” (Brontë, *JE* 131). In a move that replicates the phrenologist conducting a reading, Rochester lifts up his hair so that Jane, who has only recently met him, can ascertain what lies beneath. Jane, illustrating her awareness, but not necessarily her acceptance, of phrenology, notes that he appears to have a deficiency of benevolence.¹⁹ Jane then narrates how in answering her subsequent and sardonic question, “whether you are a philanthropist,” Rochester points to “the prominences which are said to indicate” the faculty of conscientiousness, “which fortunately for him, were sufficiently conspicuous” (Brontë, *JE* 131). In this scene, Rochester uses phrenology to draw Jane out, but he also uses phrenology to control Jane’s interpretation of his character by directing how she should know him. Jane’s wry responses indicate her awareness of his schemes and suggest that her judgment of his character will not lie with his cranial composition. She mockingly dismisses the phrenological reading, remarking, “Decidedly, he has had too much wine” (Brontë, *JE* 132).²⁰

The supposed truth-telling ability granted by phrenology provides the perfect guise for Rochester’s duplicity, fully expressed by his gypsy costume and charade later on in the novel. Garbed as a gypsy, Rochester uses his *already acquired* knowledge of Jane to feign an objective phrenological reading of her skull.²¹ He lulls Jane into “a kind

of dream. One unexpected sentence came from her [Rochester's] lips after another, till I got involved in a web of mystification; and wondered what unseen spirit had been sitting for weeks by my heart, watching its workings, and taking record of every pulse" (Brontë, *JE* 199). The initial part of Rochester's reading originates not in the lines or shape of Jane's face or forehead but in his observations and interactions with her over the many weeks she has been governess in Thornfield. His artifice undercuts the reliability of the reading as an unequivocally accurate and objective physiological/phrenological reading or as uncontested evidence of Brontë's psychological inclinations.²²

Jane warns the gypsy, "I have no faith" and "I'm not silly," making her skepticism for the gypsy's "art" immediately apparent (Brontë, *JE* 196). Jane also notices the gypsy's "feigned voice" and "her anxiety to conceal her features" (Brontë, *JE* 202-203), so Jane, too, plays her part. Although unaware that Rochester hides beneath the costume, Jane notes afterward she "had been on my guard almost from the beginning of the interview. Something of the masquerade I suspected...[but] I had never thought of Mr. Rochester" (Brontë, *JE* 202-203). Upon entering the room, Jane almost immediately realizes that she is playing a part in some kind of masquerade, not so unlike the charades she has previously watched Rochester and his guests perform.²³ As the gypsy moves from reading Jane's hand to her head, Jane's lines "Ah! now you are coming to reality...I shall begin to put some faith in you presently" cannot be extracted from Jane's awareness of the charade or her previous mockery (Brontë, *JE* 197). She realizes that Rochester has "been trying to draw me out—or in: you have been talking nonsense to make me talk

nonsense” (Brontë, *JE* 202-203). Jane associates the reading, and not simply Rochester’s costume, with the nonsense of a charade they have both performed.

The content of the reading that we are privy to further refutes the indisputable accuracy of Rochester’s reading. The predominant purpose of the reading is to inflame Jane’s jealousy and incite her desire, but Rochester also misreads Jane. According to Rochester: “the forehead declares, ‘Reason sits firm and holds the reigns, and she will not let the feelings burst away and hurry her to wild chasms. The passions may rage furiously, like true heathens, as they are; and the desires may imagine all sorts of vain things: but judgment shall still have the last word in *every* argument, and the casting vote in *every* decision” (Brontë, *JE* 201, emphasis mine). Rochester’s “reading” along with his repeated use of “every” sets up Jane’s mind into rigidly opposed and unbending tyrannical forces—Reason and the passions—with Reason the undeniable victor, crushing its foes in every battle. His reading suggests Brontë’s poem, “Reason,” as it replicates the language of moral management, projecting a Prichardian self-regulation onto Jane’s forehead and by extension into her psyche. Despite Rochester’s personal knowledge of Jane and his knowledge of phrenology, he has misread her interiority. Jane’s mind is a wandering mind, as she says herself, “restlessness was in my nature; it agitated me to pain sometimes...my sole relief was to walk along the corridor of the third story...safe in the silence and solitude of the spot, and allow my mind’s eye to dwell on whatever bright visions rose before it—and certainly they were many and glowing” (Brontë, *JE* 109).

Rochester's alignment with the traditional tenets of faculty psychology is exceedingly obvious later in the novel when he diagnoses Jane after her preternatural and prophetic dreams and her first sight of Bertha Mason. Jane describes that after dreaming she awoke to a "fearful and ghastly" sight, "a discoloured face—it was a savage face," that reminded her of "the German spectre—The Vampyre" (Brontë, *JE* 283-284). Rochester, knowing the savage face belongs to his wife Bertha, claims that the woman is "[t]he creature of an over-stimulated brain...nerves like yours were not made for rough handling" (Brontë, *JE* 284). He attempts to cloak Bertha in the guise of Jane's "over-stimulated brain" as if Bertha were a figment of a nervous disorder or a hallucination rather than his living and imprisoned, mad wife. In doing so, he assumes Jane's mental frailty, which if were true, would mean that Jane hovers on the edges of insanity; the insane, even upon waking, mistake hallucinations for reality. It is a quite disturbing insinuation for Rochester to make, particularly since he has imprisoned his first wife within Thornfield for that very reason, but also because he introduces doubt into Jane's own view of her sanity.

Like the Reeds, Rochester implements the theory of moral management to enable his mastery of others, especially Bertha. In confining Bertha to her attic room, despite her having "lucid intervals of days—sometimes weeks—which she filled up with abuse of me" (Brontë, *JE* 309), Rochester enacts, just as the Reeds have previously, the proper moral treatment of a maniac. Bertha's confinement and madness have often suggested Jane's own confinement in the red room, simultaneously humanizing Bertha and demonizing Jane. In addition to being a commentary on excessive, uncontrolled

sexuality, the parallel confinements of Bertha and Jane also act as a critique of the confinement intrinsic to moral treatment. Bertha, the picture of the correctly treated maniac, “groveled, seemingly on all fours...[she] snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (Brontë, *JE* 293). Warning Jane, Bertha’s confinement implicates and disparages the early Rochester, aligning his treatment of Bertha with the Reeds’ previous treatment of Jane.²⁴

Jane refuses to believe Rochester’s assessment that Bertha derives from the “mental terrors” of her “over-stimulated brain,” proclaiming, “Mental terrors, sir! I wish I could believe them to be only such: I wish it now more than ever; since even you cannot explain to me the mystery of that awful visitant” (Brontë, *JE* 284). Her staunch refusal to doubt her own mind and her production of the torn wedding veil causes Rochester to modify his diagnosis. He blames the innocent Grace Poole, ascribing to her the “goblin appearance” that he claims Jane must have seen in the fevered delirium of her dreams (Brontë, *JE* 285). Rochester uses medical language to deceive Jane and to create the false reality of Jane’s mental frailty and Grace Poole’s guilt in order to evade the truth of Bertha and his ill-fated marriage. Rochester’s alignment with moral management prefigures Dr. John’s various misinterpretations of Lucy Snowe and the figure of the nun in *Villette*. But unlike Dr. John, Rochester implements both phrenology and moral management to conceal the truth from Jane: that Bertha is a person and not a figment and, more importantly, that Jane does not suffer from frail nerves and an over-stimulated brain.

In opposition to the model of Rochester and the Reeds, Brontë employs ecstatic states as the rightful indicators of truth and moral choice within the novel, and these liberating states are strangely bound up with the reappearance of the red room. In its first reappearance, the red room reenacts the psychological terror from Jane's childhood imprisonment. After Jane's prophetic dreams prior to the wedding, she becomes "insensible from terror" at the sight of the unknown Bertha before her, thrusting "up her candle close to my face, and extinguish[ing] it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage flamed over mine, and I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life—only the second time" (Brontë, *JE* 284). Bertha's looming visage evokes the moment in the red room preceding Jane's first loss of consciousness in which "something seemed near me: I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down" (Brontë, *JE* 17). Bertha's appearance foreshadows the disruption of the wedding and Bertha's coming revelation, but her appearance coupled with the red room also signifies her embodiment of the ramifications of imprisonment. Here the ecstatic state of Jane's terror enables Jane to access the latent places in her mind, where truth and foreknowledge reside. Jane's ecstatic states reveal the reality of Rochester's deceit, fraud, and oppression prior to their actual revelation two days later.

After Bertha's revelation, Jane's consciousness alters the red room from its association with regulation and confinement. Jane's terror transforms into a fantastical, beneficent moon figure:

I dreamt I lay in the red-room at Gateshead; that the night was dark, and my mind impressed with strange fears. The light that long ago had struck me into syncope, recalled in this vision, seemed glidingly to mount the wall, and tremblingly to pause in the centre of the obscured ceiling...the gleam was such as the moon

imparts to vapours she is about to sever. I watched her come—watched with the strangest anticipation. . . then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—

‘My daughter, flee temptation!’ (Brontë, *JE* 319)

In her dream, the red room does not incite involuntary mental horror. The transition of “the light that long ago had struck me into syncope” into the “white human form” of the moon mother illustrates how Jane’s consciousness has dramatically altered the terror of the red room into a powerful imaginative force.²⁵ By the time she writes *Jane Eyre*, Brontë has significantly developed her earlier conception of the infernal world. In *Jane Eyre*, the infernal world is not merely a repository of creative force; truth and moral choice actually originate out of the infernal world rather than the conscious one, which is associated with reason and self-control. Jane answers the moon mother’s command to flee “*after* I had waked from the trance-like dream” (Brontë, *JE* 319, emphasis mine). Instead of truth coming from outside, supernatural forces, or from an inaccessible unconscious, it originates out of the ecstatic places within Jane’s own mind. Thus the prophetic nature of Jane’s dreams prior to the wedding do not illustrate a supernatural influence as much as the latent awareness of her mind continually working, noticing, and formulating what Jane can only access ecstatically. Brontë portrays ecstatic states as mental states in which thought is experienced devoid of reason and self-regulation, which enable the self to contemplate his or her own reality in the aftermath of the “trance-like dream.” The divine, pagan figure of the moon enables Brontë to perform her psychological paradigm in opposition to moral management. She replaces the terrifying image of confinement and potential madness—the red room—with a truth-telling ecstatic

vision.²⁶ In such scenes, Brontë overturns the conflict triggered by traditional moral treatment and its personal practice and challenges the overwhelming fear that governed representations and diagnoses of ecstatic states. By illustrating the overwhelming imaginative power of Jane's infernal world and the truth resident therein, Brontë not only confronts the erroneous claims of popular psychology but also encourages her reader to access the ecstatic nature of his or her own mind.

The mindscape depicted by this novel lays the foundation for Brontë's psychological theory, which she envisions as dependent upon facilities of growth rather than faculties in perpetual conflict. In a letter that Brontë writes to her publisher and friend, George Smith, in 1851, she addresses her concept of facilities of growth. Brontë writes

Whatever your present self may be—resolve with all your strength of resolution—never to degenerate thence—. Be jealous of a shadow of falling off. Determine rather to look above that standard and strive beyond it...*if there were but facilities allowed for cultivation and space given for growth*. It seems to me that even should such space and facilities be denied by stringent circumstances and a rigid Fate—still it should do you good fully to know and tenaciously to remember that you have such a capacity. (*Letters II* 664, emphasis mine)

Her words to Smith seek to overturn the traditional tenets undergirding faculty psychology and its derivatives. Faculty psychology, and by extension, phrenology does not in fact possess facilities for personal cultivation or growth; it is locked in fiercely competing forces and faculties that prohibit such expansion. Here Brontë seeks to supplant faculties with facilities, a concept suggestive of an intrinsic freedom, opportunity, and capability for development and change. She is in fact creating her own psychological terminology to replace the traditional phrenological one.²⁷ She exhorts

Smith, “[w]hatever your present self may be—resolve with all your strength of resolution—never to degenerate thence—. Be jealous of a shadow of falling off. Determine rather to look above that standard and strive beyond it.” Brontë reformulates moral management so that it is not a stringent mastery that seeks to uphold a pre-formulated standard but a striving beyond that standard, an expansion of the self into unknown, unfettered, and illegible spaces. This capacity of the self, unlike the traditional faculties of popular psychology, is not written on the face or on the skull but is an invisible, internal component of the psyche that enables the self to strive and expand beyond its current state.

By 1851 Brontë articulates a psychological model of facilities of growth that works in tandem with her concept of illegibility. This model incorporates the ecstatic, wandering mind so strikingly portrayed in *Jane Eyre*, making it inextricable from Brontë’s notion of moral cultivation and growth. *Villette*, published two years after this letter, powerfully performs the evolution of Brontë’s theory, offering her dramatic and radical reconfiguration of faculty psychology. This reconfiguration offers a significant rereading of Lucy Snowe herself, which frees Lucy from the ultimately unproductive and limiting bonds of psychological maladies and sexual repression.

“What belonged to storm”: *Villette*

Villette thoroughly explores the natural progression of the various psychological and readerly implications of *Jane Eyre*, articulating Brontë’s inversion of the traditional practice and belief system that underlies moral management.²⁸ Throughout much of the

novel, Lucy Snowe divides herself into warring faculties, often the opposing binaries of Reason and Imagination. What for Jane is externalized in the form of the Reeds and the red room becomes internalized within Lucy. Lucy enacts upon herself what the Reeds perform for Jane; thus the horrors of the red room exist within Lucy's own mind and Lucy locks herself within it. More fully than Jane, Lucy is a richly imagined example of the problematic and excessive culmination of personal moral management—the reading, diagnosis, and treatment of the self by the self. Running parallel to Lucy's own extreme implementation of moral management is the strange and elusive relationship Lucy has with her reader. Her evasions as a narrator develop over the course of the novel into an exceedingly complex and imaginative illegibility; her mode of narration at the beginning of the novel is distinct from her narration at the end. The issue of interior legibility and control links these two seemingly unrelated strands of the novel. Lucy's development as a narrator corresponds to her eventual rejection of traditional moral management, mirroring Lucy's dramatic shift from the necessity of enacting control to her preference for limitless, imaginative space (for herself as well as for her reader). Both strands powerfully culminate in the ecstatic midnight carnival, making the novel's enigmatic conclusion both possible and desirable.

Villette has often been identified as a novel overtly concerned with gaze, specularity, and surveillance.²⁹ The simultaneously spying/prying eyes of Madame Beck, Monsieur Paul, Dr. John, and even at times, Lucy herself, betray the novel's preoccupation with forms and methods of legibility. This legibility often seeks to access the interiority of another for the knowledge as well as the power that access brings. As

Dames writes, “the technique of seeing... is a technique that promises mastery, and it promises mastery because it forcefully places limits on the psyche” (82).³⁰ “Limits on the psyche” are precisely what enable moral management to work in theory: moral management provides control by limiting mental states.

From the onset of the novel, Brontë links Lucy’s narration with troubling evasions. These early evasions do not signify the concept of illegibility or imaginative space so much as they represent Lucy’s excessive fixation with maintaining control and limiting the knowledge of her reader. When narrating her early tragedy, Lucy refuses to divulge details, responding instead that she “will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass” (Brontë, *V* 35).³¹ Lucy says that she “will *permit* the reader to picture her,” and then she proceeds to dictate what that picture will be. Her use of “I will permit” and her determination to fill in the contours of the image with “[p]icture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft,” signifies her early need to implement control over what cannot in fact be controlled (Brontë, *V* 35).³² Lucy admits that she cannot entirely conceal the contents of her past, confessing to the reader, “I must have somehow fallen over-board, or there must have been a wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs” (Brontë, *V* 35). By linking her narration of the mostly, but not entirely, concealed traumatic events of her past with her recurring nightmare, Lucy in fact betrays the link

between her elusive, yet controlling narration and her early dependence on self-regulation. For Lucy both her role as a narrator and her psyche require and yet refuse such unrelenting control. This recurring nightmare erupts throughout the novel and signifies “the being I was always lulling” who refuses to be managed and assuaged (Brontë, *V* 109). Rather than representing only the return of unspoken or repressed childhood trauma, Lucy’s various mental storms also convey the terrible psychological torment that the rigid management of consciousness brings.

In her solitary seat within the garden of the Pensionnat, Lucy falls into “catalepsy and a dead trance,” recalling how “certain accidents of the weather...were almost dreaded by me, because they woke the being I was always lulling and stirred up a craving I could not satisfy” (Brontë, *V* 109). She associates accidents of the weather, particularly storms, with her unregulated self and her unsatisfied desires, and recollects how she succumbs to the storm’s ecstatic delight “too resistless” to keep her from “the wild hour, black and full of thunder, pealing out such an ode as language never delivered to man—too terribly glorious, the spectacle of clouds, split and pierced by white and blinding bolts” (Brontë, *V* 109). Sitting on a ledge, dangling her feet out of the window, Lucy lets the storm sweep her up into the ecstasy of its black wildness. While John Reed punishes Jane for such pleasure by throwing a book at her head, Lucy later punishes herself in a similar way. But Lucy’s form of self-punishment is a violent elaboration upon John’s punishment of Jane. Lucy “knock[s] [her longings] on the head...after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples. Unlike Sisera, they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench;

then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core” (Brontë, *V* 110). The personal practice of moral management for Lucy is a disturbingly violent one. Lucy deliberately divides herself into characters caught in a dramatically violent, but perpetually ongoing conflict. Her unruly, ecstatic nature is only stunned by her actions, and each time upon awaking, it rebelliously “turn[s] on the nail” to gaze back at her through the bloody gore. She cannot fully prevent it or fully quell it, so by dividing herself into Jael and Sisera, Lucy takes on the role of tyrant to herself, continually taking mallet and tent peg to her own temple.

Lucy aligns her sense of her imagination and feeling with Sisera and her understanding of reason and self-control with the hard, and merciless Jael, “the stern woman,” who often keeps a fervent watch over her captive (Brontë, *V* 110). But as Lucy must repeatedly subdue and impale the waking dreams and uncontrollable desires associated with her imagination, she only ends up inciting her own insanity. Lucy’s collapse, so similar to Brontë’s own, vividly and painfully portrays the natural progression of mental tyranny into the various forms of insanity, transforming the ecstasies of Lucy’s infernal world into something hellish and frightening. Unlike Jane, who experiences mania when punished and then imprisoned, Lucy has long been imprisoning herself and thus falls into a melancholy that entraps her in a continual waking nightmare. Her solitary confinement within the walls of the *Pensionnat* brings her already-occurring internal torment to its breaking point.

Alone for several days in the midst of growing delusions, Lucy believes “my nerves are getting overstretched: my mind has suffered somewhat too much; a malady is

growing upon it—what shall I do? How shall I keep well” (Brontë, *V* 159). Despite her knowledge that she should keep well by managing her delusions, Lucy is aware that she cannot, in fact, keep well in her present circumstances. Illustrating the natural development of Lucy’s mental turmoil, Brontë alters the storms clustering around Lucy’s breakdown into darker and more terrifying ones than what Lucy watches so eagerly from her windowsill. These storms do not incite the unruly Sisera to only turn on the nail, but here he has pulled the nail from his own temple and brutally thrust it into Jael’s. Lucy’s attempt at self-management creates a violent, nightmarish mental collapse. Like young Brontë, who suffers “the concentrated anguish of certain insufferable moments and the heavy gloom of many long hours,” preternatural horror clothes Lucy’s existence making life “a continual waking Night-mare” (*Letters I* 506).

The storms during the vacation overlap with a nightmare that wrings Lucy’s “whole frame with unknown anguish;” the dream “confer[s] a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity...that night a black cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea” (Brontë, *V* 159). The nightmare confronts Lucy with an “unknown anguish,” a “nameless experience,” the “strange,” “bottomless and boundless” spaces within her mind. Through the dream, Lucy ecstatically accesses her infernal world, but it has transformed into something truly hellish, a bottomless and boundless red room. What exists as a physical light external to Jane’s interiority Brontë portrays as a blackness within Lucy’s mind that originates from her long enacted, rigid self-regulation and her already tumultuous, divided psyche.

Since the red room is an external source of punishment and imprisonment, its terrors abate when Jane awakens.³³ When Lucy awakens, the aftermath of her dream truly paints her reality as a waking, spectral horror. The nameless, bottomless, and boundless from her dream extend into her waking consciousness: “indescribably was I torn, racked and oppressed in mind. Amidst the horrors of the dream I think the worst lay here” (Brontë, *V* 160). The boundaries so fastidiously constructed between Lucy’s sane/Jael mind and the insane/Sisera mind have broken down. Lucy can no longer regulate and control her haunting illusions. For even days after when Lucy feels she is in “her sane mind,” the “ghostly white beds” in the dormitory “were turning into spectres—the coronal of each became a death’s head, huge, and snow-bleached—dead dreams of an elder world and mightier race lay frozen in their wide gaping eyeholes” (Brontë, *V* 160). Not only has Lucy constructed and imprisoned herself within an internalized red room, but its delusions last for days rather than hours, changing the contours of the furniture into ghastly specters and corpses, who follow Lucy with their eyeless gaze.

Early in the novel, Lucy “permits” the reader to imagine an obviously false reality created by her; although this reality is punctuated by a storm she cannot control, she still maintains distance from her reader. Rather than residing in tandem with Lucy, the reader remains separate and perhaps even suspect. The details of her childhood shipwreck and her nightmare are minimal at best, but by the time of Lucy’s mental collapse, the reader intimately shares in Lucy’s waking and dreaming illusions. Lucy vividly describes “the black, strong, strange” drink forced to her lips from the waters of a seething and bottomless sea. The reader shares in the waking horrors that haunt and terrorize Lucy

and the storm that finally engulfs her consciousness. Whereas Lucy initially refuses details to maintain a distance and a semblance of control, here, her admission, “I seemed to pitch headlong down an abyss. I remember no more,” aligns the reader’s experience with Lucy’s own (Brontë, *V* 164). The stormy abyss that engulfs Lucy into darkness engulfs the reader as well. Both Lucy and the reader are left to suppose what happens: “where my soul went during that swoon I cannot tell. Whatever she saw, or wherever she travelled in her trance on that strange night, she kept her own secret; never whispering a word to Memory, and baffling Imagination by an indissoluble silence” (Brontë, *V* 165). Rather than self-diagnosing her loss of consciousness as some kind of malady of nerves, Lucy casts it metaphysically, a flight of the soul. In a move that once again mirrors the obscured ending of “Reason,” but more strikingly mirrors the imaginative work of the reader, Lucy fills in that dark, illegible space of consciousness with an imaginative fancy. “She,” Lucy’s soul, “*may* have gone upward,” Lucy shares with the reader, “and come in sight of her eternal home, hoping for leave to rest now, and deeming that her painful union with matter was at last dissolved. While she so deemed, an angel *may* have warned her away from heaven’s threshold, and, . . . have bound her, once more, all shuddering and unwilling, to that poor frame” (Brontë, *V* 165, emphasis mine). As with “Reason,” her repeated use of “*may*” calls attention to the imaginative contours of the fantasy and opens up a freely imaginative space that she shares with the reader. In this passage, there is an obvious omission of the imperative “I will permit” marking the novel’s opening. Her doubled use of “*may*” invites the reader to participate in Lucy’s fantasy as well as create possible others.

What Lucy does “know” about the return of her consciousness is that her soul “re-entered her prison with pain, with reluctance, with a moan and a long shiver. The divorced mates, Spirit and Substance, were hard to re-unite; they greeted each other, not in an embrace, but a racking sort of struggle” (Brontë, *V* 165). What is apparent in Lucy’s narrative and in her revival of consciousness is the incredible torment caused by this painful union that is “a racking sort of struggle.” Once again, Lucy imagines her self composed of warring faculties; here she divides herself into Spirit and Substance, but as with Jael and Sisera, the relation is one of pain and conflict. Lucy’s attempt to become a fully managed self results in her mental and physical breakdown, the end of which is not the respite she desires but only the continuation of her agonizing divisions.

Lucy again personifies her divided consciousness after she returns to the *Pensionnat*. Having enjoyed the attentions and presence of Dr. John, who attends Lucy after her collapse, Reason comes, “stealthily up to me through the twilight of that long, dim chamber” (Brontë, *V* 228). Lucy, fraught over whether Dr. John will write her, imagines her inner conflict through the warring characters of Reason and Imagination. Reason, an old hag, resembles the brutally stern woman, Jael, laying “a withered hand, and frostily touching my ear with the chill blue lips of eld” (Brontë, *V* 229). Though the personified Reason should not be collapsed into moral management or conflated with all forms of self-control, what Reason requires of Lucy and the descriptions Lucy gives of Reason suggest the extreme viewpoint undergirding moral management, the prominence and necessity of rationality and strict self-control, without exception.

The conflict between Reason and Imagination in this scene clusters around Dr. John, as it does later in chapter twenty-three when Lucy writes two letters to him, one dictated by Reason and one by Feeling or Imagination. In these two scenes, the association of this personified conflict with Lucy's feelings for Dr. John often leads critics to connect the conflict with Lucy's sexual repression. Reason, an old hag, withered and cold, dramatically opposes the beautiful, soft white angel, Imagination. Sexual repression does play a role in Lucy's drama, because sexual repression is part of the personal practice of moral management. Controlling unruly feelings or states of mind includes sexual feelings and desire. However, the entirety of Lucy's mental torment cannot be reduced to sexual repression alone. Reason requires the regulation of *any* feeling or mental state—sexual, imaginative, or otherwise—that would interfere or prohibit self-control: thus Lucy's anguish at Reason, “ ‘if I feel, may I *never* express?’ ‘Never!’ declared Reason” (Brontë, *V* 229). Lucy vividly and painfully describes the requirements Reason demands, suggesting Lucy's own previous mental and physical collapse:

This hag, this Reason, would *not* let me look up, or smile, or hope: she could not rest unless I were altogether crushed, cowed, broken-in, and broken-down. According to her, I was born only to work for a piece of bread, to await the pains of death, and steadily through life to despond...Reason is vindictive as a devil: for me, she was always envenomed as a step-mother. If I have obeyed her it has chiefly been with the obedience of fear, not of love. (Brontë, *V* 229)

This hag, vindictive devil, and envenomed step-mother are also akin to the stern, disapproving god in Brontë's poem, “Reason,” and Lucy shares in the anguish of the poem's speaker: “[g]rief I restrain, hope I repress” (2). Lucy's acknowledgment that “I should have died of her [Reason's] ill-usage: her stint, her chill, her barren board, her icy

bed, her savage, ceaseless blows,” portrays the terrible outcome of the rigid, bitter sternness with which Reason seeks to rule and control (Brontë, *V* 229). In the height of her anguish, Lucy turns from Reason to “[a] spirit, softer and better than Human Reason...tenderly has she assuaged the insufferable tears which weep away life itself—kindly given rest to deadly weariness—generously lent hope and impulse to paralyzed despair;” Lucy turns to Imagination, a daughter of Heaven, who gilds her dreams (Brontë, *V* 230).

Lucy does not renounce Reason entirely, but in the aftermath of her collapse, the conflict has shifted from the repetitive and gruesome battle between Jael and Sisera to a conflict of wills between Reason and Imagination. Following the collapse, Brontë begins to subtly undercut the unquestioned authority substantiating Reason’s tyranny. Lucy reveals her awareness not only of what Reason dictates, but also of the outcome of her unquestioned obedience to Reason’s commands. Her description of Imagination, her admission that it is “better than Human Reason,” the only divine being besides God to whom she will “bend the knee,” further destabilizes Reason’s complete sovereignty (Brontë, *V* 230). Later when writing her response to Dr. John, Lucy and Feeling together “turn Reason out of doors, drew against her bar and bolt, then we sat down, spread our paper, dipped in the ink an eager pen, and, with deep enjoyment, poured out our sincere heart” (Brontë, *V* 253). She re-admits the stern, unrelenting Reason and destroys the first letter, but doubt and disobedience are weakening the hag’s frosty grip.

In a sense, what Reason requires is that Lucy must bury her feelings within herself to the “pains of death.” The necessity of burying her feelings alive conjures not

only the ghostly figure of the nun, who begins “haunting” Lucy, but also the story of the nun’s horrific death. Early after Lucy’s arrival at the Rue Fossette, she narrates the ghost story that supposedly haunts this part of the city. A tree within the school’s garden stands above “the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive, for some sin against her vow” (Brontë, *V* 106).³⁴ The nature of the sin is much less significant than the fact the nun succumbed to feeling and abandoned her self-control. Her abandonment of self-control is so appalling that the monks have no choice but to entomb her. Their reaction to the nun’s transgression suggests Lucy’s depiction of Reason, who cannot tolerate unregulated feeling and requires Lucy to entomb it. The ghostly nun suggests the image of the fully, perfectly morally managed self, a self in which feeling has been successfully buried alive to the point of death. Her repeated appearance to Lucy acts as a continual, disturbing reminder of what Reason both demands and enacts. In gazing at the nun, Lucy is in fact gazing at herself ruled solely by Reason’s harsh tyranny.³⁵

Dr. John, on the other hand, views the nun as evidence of Lucy’s lack of moral management. The contemporaneous medical community is largely represented in the person of Dr. John, as Shuttleworth writes, “Dr. John directs onto Lucy the gaze of medical authority, calmly confident of his ability to define inner experience from outer signs” (220). Dr. John tells Lucy that he does not look on her as a friend or relation, but “I look on you now from a professional point of view, and I read, perhaps all you would conceal—in your eye, which is curiously vivid and restless; in your cheek, which the blood has forsaken; in your hand, which you cannot steady” (Brontë, *V* 248). As a true

physician of faculty psychology and advocate of moral management, Dr. John assesses her external symptoms, which enable him to penetrate and know “all” that Lucy conceals. Her restless eye, her pale cheek, and her shaking hands lay bare Lucy’s interiority, making her, he thinks, entirely legible. Despite Lucy’s belief in a corporeal nun, Dr. John asserts that the nun “is all a matter of nerves... a case of spectral illusion: I fear following on and resulting from long-continued mental conflict” (Brontë, *V* 249). According to Dr. John, Lucy’s inability to fully manage her inner life has led to her melancholy and her collapse and now to the spectral illusion of a nun. Dr. John’s remedy is a remedy aligned with the tenets of moral management—“Happiness is the cure—a cheerful mind the preventive: cultivate both” (Brontë, *V* 250). Dr. John cannot understand “why, Lucy, can’t you look and feel as I do—buoyant, courageous and fit to defy all the nuns and flirts in Christendom?” (Brontë, *V* 250). If Lucy were truly managing her mental states and her desires by cultivating happiness instead of melancholy, as Dr. John is able to do, then no nun would appear to her, and if a nun did appear, Lucy would snap her fingers and defy her.³⁶

The ghostly nun stands in stark contrast to the demonic Vashti, who embodies deliberately unrestrained feeling. Shuttleworth writes that “Vashti reveals a true union between the worlds of mind and body: abstractions, the experiential details of mental life which physiology cannot describe, are given material form” (239). As Vashti takes the stage before a teeming, hushed multitude, Lucy is confronted with an inscrutable being, “neither of woman nor of man,” in whom role and actress, fantasy and reality, spirit and substance are indistinguishable (Brontë, *V* 257).³⁷ Viscerally enthralled, Lucy observes

“a mighty revelation” in the spectacle of Vashti’s impassioned, infernal performance: “To her, what hurts becomes immediately embodied...Pain, for her, has no result in good; tears water no harvest of wisdom: on sickness, on death itself, she looks with the eye of a rebel. Wicked, perhaps, she is, but also strong; and her strength has conquered Beauty, has overcome Grace” (Brontë, *V* 258). For Vashti pain and tears are not the instruments of goodness or wisdom. To the Victorians, who were notably devoted to self-cultivation and moral growth through moral management, Vashti would truly be an inhuman devil with “HELL on her straight, haughty brow” (Brontë, *V* 258). But Vashti’s performance creates an ecstatic experience for Lucy, one that, like Vashti herself, rebels against the mandates for the managed, controlled self, producing Lucy’s communion with “what belonged to storm, what was wild and intense, dangerous, sudden, and flaming” (Brontë, *V* 259). Dr. John’s response to Vashti models the proper response of a physician of faculty psychology, for he “judged her as a woman, not an artist” (Brontë, *V* 260). As in his analysis of Lucy, Dr. John looks on Vashti’s performance as a conglomerate of symptoms and faculties to be diagnosed. Vashti’s “agony did not pain him, her wild moan—worse than a shriek—did not much move him; her fury revolted him somewhat, but not to the point of horror” (Brontë, *V* 260).

Although Lucy recognizes herself to a certain extent in Vashti, Vashti remains an ultimately questionable and unknowable other. Vashti represents an infinite space within which Lucy is able to imaginatively create a being whose regal face is a demonic mask portraying “Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate” (Brontë, *V* 257). What is important is not whether Vashti is such a being but that Vashti enables such imaginative

acts on the part of Lucy. Refusing to make a pronouncement on Vashti's character, "Vashti was not good, I was told; and I have said she did not look good" (Brontë, *V* 259), Lucy leaves Vashti essentially open. This openness enables Lucy to be consciously and bodily swept up into the current Vashti creates: "I had seen acting before, but never anything like this: never anything which astonished Hope and hushed Desire; which outstripped Impulse and paled Conception...[it] disclosed power like a deep, swollen, winter river, thundering in cataract and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steely sweep of its descent" (Brontë, *V* 259).

Lucy's opium-induced reverie during the midnight carnival is quite similar to Lucy's response to Vashti, but in this midnight reverie, Lucy finds her soul even more powerfully captivated by the luminous power of Imagination. In the theatre, Vashti is the center of Lucy's reverie, and despite her feelings of imaginative ecstasy, Lucy remains in her seat. Here the reverie bathes her in an electrifying golden light, through which Lucy "became alive to new thought—to reverie peculiar in coloring" (Brontë, *V* 449). No longer shackled by Reason, "Imagination was roused from her rest, and she came forth impetuous and venturous," luring Lucy out into "dew, coolness, and glory" (Brontë, *V* 450). Imagination leads Lucy into a Villette of limitless possibility, a blaze of light, color, and life stranger than any dream.³⁸ Instead of shunning the blazing, exuberant Villette, Lucy intertwines her self with the imaginative possibility of its vast illumination and power; she "mixed with the crowd where it was deepest. To be still was not in my power, nor quietly to observe. I took a revel of the scene; I drank the elastic night-air—the swell of sound, the dubious light, now flashing, now fading. As to Happiness or

Hope, they and I had shaken hands...I scorned Despair” (Brontë, *V* 454). In this moment, Lucy is doing exactly what Dr. John has urged her to do, but it is not the morally managed mind that empowers Lucy to scorn despair. Imagination, finally freed from her bonds by the opium, has led Lucy into her limitless, glorious temple.

Empowered by Imagination, Lucy is able to refuse Dr. John’s insistent, oppressive eye when she happens upon him during the carnival: “he could not see my face, I held it down; surely, he *could* not recognize me; I stooped, I turned, I *would* not be known” (Brontë, *V* 457). Without negating her heightened, ecstatic state, she is able to cloak herself in illegibility as if it were her hat and shawl. Extracting herself from his gaze, refusing his desire for knowledge and mastery, Lucy destabilizes the gaze that would know “all” that she might conceal: “[h]e might think, he might even believe that Lucy was contained within that shawl, and sheltered under that hat; he could never be certain, for he did not see my face” (Brontë, *V* 457-458). When Lucy destroys the nun costume after her return from the midnight carnival, Brontë presents an even more striking refutation of faculty psychology and moral management associated with Dr. John. Coming upon the nun, Lucy is confronted not only with the symbol of her own mental malady, the specter hiding within her brain, as Dr. John believes, but she is also confronted with her possible future self: a self fully managed by Reason, a self who shuns desire and the imaginative wonders Lucy has recently encountered. Standing before the nun, Lucy does not scream; she is not overcome. “Late incidents,” she states have tempered her nerves, thus “warm from illuminations, and music, and thronging thousands, thoroughly lashed up by a new scourge, I defied spectra...I tore her up”

(Brontë *V* 470). As Dr. John has advised, Lucy defies the nun, and taking her by the hand, Lucy tears her up. What enables Lucy's powerful act over the nun is what previously enabled her triumph over Dr. John himself—the imagination. The morally managed mind, guided by Reason, should have been the impetus for her actions to defy the imaginative spectra haunting her brain. However, for Lucy “illuminations, and music, and [the] thronging thousands” of an enchanted Villette enable her to hold “her [the nun] on high—the goblin! I shook her loose—the mystery! And down she fell—down all around me—down in shreds and fragments—and I trode upon her” (Brontë, *V* 470). In both her refusal of Dr. John's gaze and her triumph over the nun, Lucy achieves a moral triumph as well, realigning the powers of her imagination with her own self-cultivation.

In the theatre, Lucy associates herself with Vashti and with “what belonged to storm” rather than with Dr. John. By doing so, Brontë presents a potentially radical psychological alternative to moral management that culminates in the midnight carnival and Lucy's destruction of the nun. As Dr. John makes clear, the prevention of ecstatic, unregulated states of mind calls for a cultivation of happiness. In his terms, happiness is a regulated mental state free from the “wild and intense, dangerous, sudden, and flaming”—the very same states marking Lucy's experiences of Vashti, the carnival, and her destruction of the nun. Lucy recoils at Dr. John's notion of cultivating happiness as if it were “a potato, to be planted in mould and tilled with manure,” stating instead that “[h]appiness is a glory shining far down upon us... She is a divine dew” (Brontë, *V* 250). Her description of happiness suggests her previous portrayal of Imagination, the divine

angel who “descend[s] with quiet flight...bringing all around her a sphere of air borrowed of eternal summer” (Brontë, *V* 230).³⁹ It also looks forward to the midnight carnival when Imagination descends upon Lucy in all her glory, stating “this night I will have *my* will” (Brontë, *V* 450).

In constituting happiness as the free embrace of the imagination, Brontë reveals the intrinsic nature of the imagination to her conception of facilities of growth. Facilities of growth designate a limitless space for the self, a vast vacant road, which allows the self to expand beyond an already determined moral standard into indefinite and unrestricted space. In Lucy’s early description of Imagination, Brontë aligns the imagination with these spaces: “A dwelling thou hast, too wide for walls, too high for dome—a temple whose floors are space—rites whose mysteries transpire in presence, to the kindling, the harmony of worlds” (Brontë, *V* 230). In this limitless temple whose contours are only empty space, indefinable mysteries transpire that both generate whole worlds and create harmonies between those disparate worlds. Brontë’s description of the space and mystery inherent within the imagination reveals how inextricable illegibility is from her conception of the imagination and also the necessity of both for her model of facilities of growth.

Lucy’s response to Vashti and her experience during the midnight carnival also models the imaginative position and action of Brontë’s reader, fully realized in the novel’s enigmatic conclusion. In the final pages of the novel, M. Paul is returning by ship to Lucy, and a storm has ravaged the Atlantic for a week’s time:

Oh! a thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered—not uttered till, when the hush came, some could

not feel it: till when the sun returned, his light was night to some! Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quiet, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life. (Brontë, *V* 495-496)

Unlike her opening narrative of her own shipwreck, here Lucy replaces “I will permit the reader to picture me” with “Let it be theirs to conceive.” Instead of filling in the contours of the reader’s imaginative vision herself, Lucy prefers to give the reader the space suggested in both “leave sunny imaginations hope” and “let it be theirs.” Even in her statement, “Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life,” her repeated use of “let” still hands control over to the reader’s imagination. Lucy is no longer speaking in imperatives but in the subjunctive. The other dreaded alternative is still present, but Lucy’s ending enables the reader to simultaneously entertain two contradictory realities—the reality of M. Paul’s death and the reality of his enraptured reunion with Lucy. These two contradictory realities ultimately leave the reader in uncertainty about M. Paul, but this uncertainty carves out a space for the reader that continually opens outward into the reader’s own imaginings. The conclusion leaves the reader in a state of limitless dreaming, imagining the rapture of M. Paul’s rescue and the happily-ever-after he will have with Lucy, while at the same time imagining Lucy’s untold grief and her life as a teacher, filling a landscape of endless days with limitless untold stories. This conclusion is made possible by Lucy’s development as a narrator, which corresponds to her triumphant rejection of unrelenting self-control and her preference for illegible, imaginative space—for herself as well as for her reader.

¹ Critics have long associated the work of Charlotte Brontë with psychological theory. Recent criticism oscillates between Brontë as an enthusiastic and unquestioning promoter of phrenology, an unequivocally repressed, nineteenth-century woman, abandoning sexual desire and independence (expressed through figures like Bertha Mason and Vashti), and “an intuitive genius who seems to belong more to the Freudian than to the Victorian era” (Shuttleworth 2). See Dames, Elliott, and Shuttleworth for current examples of phrenologically-based criticism. See Maynard, Showalter, and Gilbert and Gubar for examples of Freudian-influenced criticism, and Kucich 35-38 for a history of criticism that focuses on a traditional approach to repression in Brontë’s novels, “with its supposed appeasement of social duty at the expenses of emotional expression” (38). Kucich argues that repression or “eroticized self-negation can be an effective instrument of mastery over others” (39).

² For more on the York Retreat and the Tuke family, see Scull’s *Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain 1700-1900*, 96-103; for the initial backlash against moral management and its eventual acceptance, see Scull 188-231.

³ Combe helped establish the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in 1820; he was influenced by Gall’s student and follower, Johann Spurzheim, during the 1810s, and became an avid proponent of phrenology.

⁴ Despite the overwhelming popularity of phrenology in the early to mid nineteenth century, its status as a legitimate medical practice and its place within the medical establishment was often contested and never wholly accepted by the medical and psychological community. By 1851 Combe’s 1829 publication of *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects* “had sold 90,000 copies and according to Harriet Martineau was outstripped in all time readership only by the Bible, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and *Robinson Crusoe*” (Taylor and Shuttleworth 4). For more on the history of phrenology in England, see Reed; Elliott; Shuttleworth 57-70; Taylor and Shuttleworth 3-48; and Dames 80-102.

⁵ Many of these phrenological handbooks dealt with a variety of social and domestic issues, such as the hiring of servants and the choosing of a spouse. See Taylor and Shuttleworth 44-45’s.

⁶ See Shuttleworth 19-33.

⁷ The various states that Brontë portrays in her journal mostly resemble the waking phenomena of waking dreams or ecstatic visions. As the psychologist MacNish points out, the dreamer of waking dreams voluntarily allows the imagination complete rule and authority over reason, “transcend[ing] the limits of absolute truth...to soar away into the regions of poetry and romance” (MacNish 196). The psychologist James Cowles Prichard notes that the waking dreamer is also vividly able to recollect this ecstatic vision in its aftermath, “which afterwards appears to him as a vivid and impressive dream, or as an ideal scene, which he can scarcely distinguish from reality” (452-453). MacNish and Prichard both indicate the waking dreamer’s preference for the dream and the adversarial relation between waking dreams and reality.

⁸ Brontë and her brother Branwell wrote numerous, fantastic, somewhat Byronic stories about the mythic country of Angria. Many of Brontë’s fantasies during her time at Roe

Head revolve around her desire to compose more Angrian narratives, and the fantasies sometimes involve Angrian characters.

⁹ This passage comes from the entry, “All this day I have been in a dream,” 11 August 1836, MS Bon 98, page 2, Brontë Parsonage Museum, qtd. in Barker 238-239. All quotations from Brontë’s journals come from Barker’s biography, and from here afterward will be abbreviated in the citation as qtd. in Barker.

¹⁰ On account of Brontë’s estrangement from Madame Heger, there has been some suggestion of an adulterous affair between Brontë and Heger, but their relationship appeared in all likelihood an intense though not illicit one between master and pupil. Elizabeth Gaskell attributes Brontë’s estrangement from Madame Heger to a religious divide between Brontë’s Protestantism and Madame Heger’s Romanism. See Gaskell 194-196.

¹¹ See Maynard 25. Also see Gérin 279-285. Although unpublished and undated, Gérin dates these unpublished poems to 1845. She bases this theory on the writing and publication of Brontë’s poem, “Frances,” published in 1846 in *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* and also present in *The Professor*. Gérin notes that the language in “Frances” bears many similarities to the letters written to Heger, but the most significant evidence she points out is that “Reason”—a poem “far more revealing of its authors sentiments”—forms part of “Frances” (280).

¹² Brontë notes in her preface to the novel that those who find the book “an insult to piety” ought to remember “certain simple truths,” namely that “[t]o pluck the mask from the face of the Pharisee, is not to lift an impious hand to the Crown of thorns” (JE 3). Concerning this statement, Shuttleworth notes that Brontë “significantly aligns her own authorial stance with the act of unmasking” (149), and part of Brontë’s act of unmasking is to rip the veil off of “conventionality” not to expose vice but “truth” (JE 3). Brontë was often quite incensed when the depictions of passion and other ecstatic states in *Jane Eyre* were relegated to the typical contents of “a naughty book”—a description which George Henry Lewes had the misfortune to use: “there ought to be a bond of sympathy between us, Miss Brontë, for we have both written naughty books!” (qtd. in Barker 641).

¹³ Debra Gettelman interestingly argues that Brontë’s construction of the reveries in *Jane Eyre*, incites the related but also unregulated and potentially excessive daydreaming in the reader. Gettelman views the “uncontrollable daydreams” in the novel “to intrude upon reading itself, resulting in a struggle for control in which the book becomes a space of contest between the author’s and the reader’s imaginings” (559). Also see Dames; see Showalter; see Shuttleworth

¹⁴ John Kucich argues that the arousal and obscurity or intimate distance in Brontë’s work signifies the Victorian act of repression, an intensified inner experience, which constitutes a doubling of the self that “disturbs stable identity and acquires an uncontrollable life of its own” (69). For Kucich this intensified inner experience “is to be cherished more than any kind of passionate openness others” (71). Although an “uncontrollable life of its own” undoubtedly marks ecstatic states in Brontë’s work, I find that she attempts to extend that uncontrollable, imaginative life to the reader.

¹⁵ Gettelman argues, “the narrative of Jane’s mind is antecedent to the book rather than generated by it, and the book itself is meant (but fails) to be the source of distraction”

(568). Gettelman calls this “punctuated reading,” deriving the idea from Roland Barthes who suggests that distracted reading is in fact a sign of the deepest engagement: “in a word, haven’t you ever happened to read while looking up from your book” (qtd. 568).

¹⁶ Jane Kromm observes that in scenes such as this one Brontë “concentrates on the visual impact such scenes have for a viewer identifying with the depicted solitary spectator whose limitless gaze is a trope for mental freedom experienced by the viewer... Brontë equates this kind of viewing with the freedom to engage in private, unconstrained imaginative reverie” (370). Kromm focuses on paintings and the gaze within Brontë’s novels, and she similarly argues that characters’ and readers’ mutual experience with the gaze enables the same illegible, imaginative space that I find in ecstatic states and reading.

¹⁷ John Maynard notes “the centerpiece of Brontë’s analysis of Jane in childhood is, of course, the stunning episode in the red-room” (100). As such, critics have interpreted the psychological import of the red-room in a variety of ways. For Maynard, who invokes a Freudian reading, the red-room conjures “the threat of too strong emotions in the Electra attraction of father and daughter. The uncle/father figure ought to be a strong attractive support to her; but she experiences him only as a danger” (103). In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Elaine Showalter interprets the “deadly and bloody connotations” of the room with the adult female body and “a strain of intense female sexual fantasy and eroticism” (114-115). More recently, Sally Shuttleworth expands upon Showalter’s claims, arguing that the red room functions “as a spatialized configuration of Victorian notions of female interiority” suggesting both Jane’s entrance into puberty “and the polluting effects of suppression within the female frame” (154). Most of these interpretations use the red-room to link Jane to Bertha and by extension to illicit female sexuality. While these issues do indeed inform our understanding of this scene and Jane’s development, I seek to examine Brontë’s representation of the mind in confinement, a typical prescription of moral management.

¹⁸ Nathan Elliott posits the familiar argument that “Jane’s initial phrenological encounter with Rochester is, in keeping with the more generalized approach, quick and roughly accurate” (46). But Elliott, who ultimately argues that Brontë distances herself from phrenology, overlooks the subtlety through which Brontë portrays phrenology in *Jane Eyre*. Elliott remarks that “I am convinced that it [phrenology] operated with fewer difficulties in her earlier novels. Brontë had yet to dismiss phrenology’s epistemic claims to definitive knowledge, and as a result, *Jane Eyre* does not display the same disdain for the materialist side of the discipline” (43).

¹⁹ George Combe published *Essays on Phrenology*, which later became *Systems of Phrenology*, in 1819, a year possibly contemporaneous with the setting of the novel. This scene illustrates the popularity of phrenology for the intellectual layperson, which Combe’s publication made possible.

²⁰ Caldwell, too, observes the irony in this scene, focusing particularly on the humor. She writes “Jane’s teasing irony is effective because Rochester’s capacity for loving people is infinitely more complicated, unpredictable, alternately stingy and extravagant, than the presence or absence of a smooth, “suave” sign could possibly communicate” (109).

²¹ The reading in this scene is more accurately a compilation of physiology and phrenology rather than phrenology alone. Brontë often uses these two interchangeably or in tandem. Physiology, originating in the works of Johann Lavater, maintained that “outer form directly expressed, or embodied, inner quality...the moral character of an individual was imprinted unambiguously on the face for all, who were able, to see. Phrenology, however, treated the external only as a system of signs to be decoded to determine what lay below: the sign itself was not directly expressive of inner quality, but was only an indicator of quantity” (Shuttleworth 61). Yet the quantity of each faculty that the external form indicates enables the reader to ascertain “inner quality.” Although divided along idealist/materialist lines, physiology like phrenology attempted to provide methods of accurately reading and assessing a person’s moral character.

²² Shuttleworth claims that in this scene Rochester “enjoys free access to Jane’s unprotected interiority” and the “gypsy’s ventriloquizing of the ‘speech’ of Jane’s forehead is set in dialogue with her inner self” (171). The unveiling of Rochester at the end of the scene does not undermine the accuracy of the reading for Shuttleworth, but it does signal Jane’s act of self-betrayal to Rochester’s power, allowing him “both to penetrate and control the articulation of her psyche” (171). Other critics besides Shuttleworth view Rochester’s reading as accurate. See Armstrong, Dames, and Elliott.

²³ When Rochester and his guests begin to play charades, Rochester asks Jane, “Will you play?” (Brontë, JE 182). Refusing, she soon overhears Lady Ingram state, “she looks too stupid for any game of the sort” (Brontë, JE 182). Not knowing who hid under the costume, Jane’s willing performance here refutes such judgments of her intelligence.

²⁴ Even when Rochester assures Jane that “every atom of your flesh is as dear to me as my own: in pain and sickness it would still be dear,” his words still reflect the terminology of moral management (Brontë, JE 301). Despite being his “treasure,” if Jane were mad, Rochester says he would still confine Jane “in an embrace, at least as fond as it is restrictive” (Brontë, JE 301). He mixes words of passionate love with words that suggest confinement and imprisonment, exposing the possible imprisonment Jane herself might have in his embrace.

²⁵ The “white human form” also suggests Jane’s phantasmatic reflection in the red room as well as the wildly lovely Evening Star and the other white figure of mourning in her paintings.

²⁶ Even Jane’s decisions not to marry St. John and to return to Rochester late in the novel do not originate out of reasonable, conscious resolutions but out of an ecstatic vision and encounter with Rochester’s disembodied voice. See Brontë, JE 419

²⁷ As Elaine Showalter claims in *The Female Malady* (1985), “out of her [Brontë’s] own ‘buried life’ and her own psychosomatic afflictions, she generated a symbolic lexicon that sometimes borrows from earlier conventions but always reinvests these conventions with authenticity, immediacy, and imaginative force” (66).

²⁸ Unlike in *Jane Eyre*, Brontë minimizes the use of phrenological terms and scenes in *Villette*. *Villette* reveals her more intense preoccupation with conflicting faculties, moral management, and her quest to articulate facilities of growth. For discussions of phrenology in *Villette*, see Caldwell and Elliott, who both seek to overturn its predominance in the novel; see also Dames and Shuttleworth.

²⁹ Joseph Boone is not the first to state that *Villette* “foreshadows, more than a century in advance, Michel Foucault’s theories of nineteenth century social discipline” (20). Although basing his argument on Foucaultian grounds, Boone ultimately argues that the novel “may create a space—however minimal, comprised, or imaginary—for dissent, self-interrogation, and subversive dialogue with those totalizing systems of power which inculcate the values of a disciplinary social order” (42). D.A. Miller’s seminal work, *The Novel and the Police* (1987), helped establish this overwhelming critical preoccupation with Foucaultian surveillance and disciplinary power. The novel’s own seeming preoccupation with modes of surveillance would appear to validate “the complete entanglement of the Victorian novel in the disciplinary measures it represents” (Boone 21).

³⁰ Dames pinpoints the result that legibility, whether in phrenology or in moral management, affords the reader. Though Dames focuses primarily on Brontë’s use of phrenology in *Villette*, I find that *Villette* ultimately puts itself against this kind of masterful seeing, which is an intrinsic component of traditional faculty psychology.

³¹ Maureen Peck notes that “at this early point in the novel it is clear that Lucy has little faith in the reader’s capacity, or desire, to understand her situation, and more or less disclaims any responsibility towards that reader” (225).

³² Gretchen Braun reads Lucy’s evasive behavior, particularly her “silences, repetitions, and obfuscations” through the trauma created by Lucy’s early traumatic experience of the shipwreck and argues that “a complex understanding of trauma can significantly explain *Villette*’s narrative structure as well as its subject matter” (190). Braun implements the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth and Ann Cvetkovich to open up the relation between the narrative structure of the realist novel and trauma theory.

³³ Jane’s experience in the red room does alter her pleasure in books: “all was eerie and dreary; the giants were goblins, the pigmies malevolent and fearful imps, Gulliver a most desolate wanderer in most dread and dangerous regions” (Brontë JE 21). But the “eerie and dreary” does not extend and continually alter Jane’s waking reality as it does Lucy’s.

³⁴ The previously mentioned conflict between Reason and Imagination in conjunction with the story of the nun acts as a further rationale for arguments centering on Lucy’s sexual repression. Many read the nun’s breaking of her vow as breaking a vow of chastity, a transgression equal to such a horrific death. Toni Wein argues that the Gothic features of Brontë’s bildungsroman “bears a canny resemblance to one of the most scandalous Gothic texts of the previous century, Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796),” which is a similar tale of substitutions and possessions (734). Wein claims that Brontë struggled “to gain possession of herself as a woman, as an author, and as an heir to literary conventions...to form the self...one must strive to ensure that the self one possesses is not formed or possessed by others” (734).

³⁵ Lucy enacts the role of the monks later in the novel when she buries Dr. John’s letters in a metal casket at the foot of the nun’s tree. Regulating her tumultuous feelings, Lucy states, “I was not only going to hide a treasure—I meant also to bury a grief. That grief over which I had lately been weeping as I wrapped it in its winding-sheet, must be interred... This done, I rested, leaning against the tree; lingering, like any other mourner, beside a newly sodden grave” (Brontë, *Villette* 296). Despite replicating the monks,

Lucy's feelings for Dr. John are not fully entombed. Lucy acknowledges this later in the novel: "I kept a place for him, too,—a place of which I never took the measure... All my life long I carried it folded in the hollow of my hand" (Brontë, *Villette* 296). Lucy's actions also suggest Brontë's own. She apparently destroyed George Smith's letters to her like she destroyed Heger's letters. Ellen Nussey remarks to Elizabeth Gaskell after Brontë's death that "C. told me before her marriage that she had destroyed all correspondence [with Heger]" (Wise, Vol. 4 204). We can only assume that Smith's were also destroyed, since they, too, disappeared.

³⁶ Shuttleworth argues "Lucy's resistance to Dr. John stems less from the actual content of his medical verdicts, than from his reduction of her to a bundle of symptoms, open to his professional definition and control" (234). But I find that the content of his medical verdict stems precisely from his reduction of her to an entirely legible and therefore controllable bundle of symptoms and faculties.

³⁷ "I have seen Rachel—her acting was something apart from any other acting it has come in my way to witness—her soul was in it—and a strange soul she has" (Brontë, *Letters* 635). In early June of 1851, Charlotte Brontë went to see the famous French tragedienne, Rachel, an inhuman being, who would become inspiration for Vashti. Two weeks later, she went to see Rachel again, writing, "On Saturday I went to hear '& see' Rachel—a wonderful sight—terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet and revealed a glimpse of hell—I shall never forget it—she made me shudder to the marrow of my bones" (Brontë, *Letters* 649). Rachel's fascinating, horrific performances intertwined deeply with Brontë's imagination—"she will come to me in sleepless nights again and yet again" (Brontë, *Letters* 653).

³⁸ Although Brontë never took opium, this scene originates out of one of her own ecstatic states, dreaming. Elizabeth Gaskell relates that Brontë had a particular imaginative process when she "had to describe anything which had not fallen within her own experience; she had thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep... [until] she wakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience" (419-420). Although Lucy's ecstatic state is induced by opium in the novel, it in fact stems from one of Brontë's own dreams in which Imagination led her, too, out into a blazing, glorious *Villette*.

³⁹ In Lucy's encounter with Vashti, she realizes that "if so much of unholy force can arise from below, may not an equal efflux of sacred essence descend one day from above," further linking the imagination with Lucy's experience of Vashti and potential happiness (Brontë, *V* 259).

Chapter 3. “Come Up and Be Dead”:

The Psychology of the Productive Imagination in Charles Dickens

“ ‘Fact, fact, fact!’ said the gentleman... ‘You are to be in all things regulated and governed...by fact’” (Dickens, *HT* 12). Mr. M‘Choakumchild’s zealous mantra in the opening chapters of Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1854) is echoed later in the narrator’s description of the dreary uniformity that is Coketown, a town that produces, houses, and celebrates people of fact: “Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact everywhere in the immaterial...everything was fact” (*HT* 27). In Coketown, fact composes the very fabric of the inhabitants’ being, reflected in the town’s uniform construction in which “[t]he jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else” (Dickens, *HT* 27). Fact has advanced beyond the epistemological dictates of the schoolroom and has become a horrific ontology, regulating and confining the intimate and the immaterial nature of the Coketown residents to the point of generating a “morally stark death” (Dickens, *HT* 274).

Dickens’s depiction of “fact” in *Hard Times* is representative of the problematic nature of the institutionalized confinement of the mind. Whereas Brontë seeks to overturn traditional forms of personal moral management by depicting its troubling psychological manifestations, Dickens illustrates the perverse and corrupting outcomes of an institutionalization that becomes internalized. Predicated upon a theoretical foundation similar to moral management, societal forms of mental regulation, such as schools, factories, and prisons (which in Dickens, tend metaphorically to refer to one another),

create stagnation within the individual mind and cause that mind to collapse in upon itself, as it does when a prisoner is kept in solitary confinement.¹ Dickens depicts the ramifications of institutionalization in *Hard Times*, which resurface with greater complexity and horror in his novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). The character of Bradley Headstone embodies and complicates the Gradgrindian philosophy: his violent self-destruction is the natural progression of a condition Dickens discovers in the schoolrooms and factories of *Hard Times*.

To oppose the social and mental hierarchies imposed by forms of institutionalized confinement, Dickens sets up his own refashioning of the associative mind and its dependence upon the imagination. His conception of the mind relies upon an early Kantian idea of the imagination as a productive and governing feature of the mind, which surfaces in the works of the Scottish philosopher Dugald Stewart and John Elliotson, a physician, a psychologist, and a friend of Dickens. Dickens expands upon this early Kantian view of the imagination by portraying its democratic nature and its interdependence with the external world. The productive imagination, independent of class, enables the development of moral self-awareness and the recognition of how this moral consciousness bears upon the other. As such, Dickens's associative mindscape is a radical statement on the egalitarian composition of the mind and on the illusory moral construct of social class. He envisions a democratic, imaginative potential that is distinct from democratic institutions, particularly state-funded schools. His equalized, imaginative mental structure enables him to locate the dynamic and cultivated imagination in characters who have not been institutionalized: Sissy Jupe, Lizzie Hexam,

and Jenny Wren. Dickens's psychological theory also dismantles critical assertions that Headstone is a villain simply because of his lower class beginnings. Dickens's construction of Sissy, Lizzie, and Jenny works to overturn traditional middle class morality by depicting a morality contingent upon intertwining the imagination with the larger world.

The Association of Ideas and the Productive Imagination:

Dugald Stewart and Immanuel Kant

George Henry Lewes famously comments that thought and “delicate psychological observation” are strangely absent from Dickens's novels (152, 155). The critical history marking Dickens's relation to psychology and to associationism has not greatly altered since Lewes's pronouncement. Michael Kearns seeks to expand Dickens's relation to psychology by reading his novels through the lens of associationism, yet even with this expansion in Dickens criticism, Kearns notes that Dickens's use of associationism lacks the psychological sophistication resonating within the works of George Eliot (*Metaphors* 136, 159). Kearns's interpretation of associationism hinges upon the image of the mind as “a blank slate or piece of clay shaped by external forces” (“Associationism” 112). This view relegates the mind to a passive entity, precluding anything prior to external impressions and experiences. Nicholas Dames argues that associationism similarly limits the psychological complexities of Dickens's works. The mind must simply make sense of external impressions and produce a coherent self; thus nothing “will be mysterious or enigmatic” (Dames 131). Dames claims that the strong

binding of the self that associationism requires creates “a self that continually produces closure, resolution, concordance, fixity” (138). Along similar lines, Tyson Stolte denigrates association psychology to a “body of psychology that denies innate gifts” (56) and seeks to dismiss Dickens’s use of it entirely. However, Sarah Winter’s recent work *The Pleasures of Memory* (2011) works to overturn this critical orthodoxy, elucidating the psychological complexity that is intrinsic to association psychology and to Dickens’s own perception of it.² Building on Winter’s endeavor, I claim that this theoretical intricacy surfaces in Dickens’s formulation of the imagination as the most fundamental as well as the primary component of the mind, productive of being and moral consciousness. My line of inquiry begins by tracing the imagination through the work of Dugald Stewart and Immanuel Kant in order to challenge the view that the associative mind is simply a passive receptacle that is unable to process what is mysterious or enigmatic. This examination allows me to then overturn the view of Dickens as an author who does not compose works of psychological density.

Associationists, influenced by the philosophy of John Locke and David Hume, presented the mind as an entity formed through sensory impression. In association psychology, ideas, the kernels of knowledge, originate out of the impressions experienced through external sensations, combining and connecting in various ways, sometimes dependent upon similarity, sometimes upon causality. Locke first used the term “association of ideas,” which became synonymous with association psychology, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1700).³ As Sarah Winter explains, “[a]ssociationist doctrine emphasized sensations produced by the immediate environment

as the source of the mind's content and defined as associative processes such essential mental functions as the connection between sense impressions and ideas, the train of thought, volition, memory, and imagination" (42). Associationism depicted a freely wandering mind, continually moving between various ideas, linking them in countless and inexplicable combinations. What determines these inexplicable combinations is the imagination; as David Hume contends, the imagination has an "unlimited power" to mix our ideas: "[n]othing is more free than the imagination...it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision" (47). Years later, John Elliotson, too, emphasizes this power: "[t]he mere recurrence of former impressions, without regard to their recognition, is termed imagination or fancy: and innumerable combinations of past impressions may occur, in such form and order as they did not occur before; and it is to this, strictly, that the term imagination or fancy is generally applied" (346).

Dugald Stewart, who is partly responsible for the popularization of associationism, distinguishes among imagination, associationism, and fancy. Whereas Elliotson uses "imagination" and "fancy" interchangeably, Stewart asserts that the two are in fact different from each other and from associationism. Stewart claims "the tendency in the human mind to associate or connect its thoughts together, is sometimes called (improperly so) the imagination. Between these two parts of our constitution, there is indeed, a very intimate relation; and it is probably owing to this relation, that they have been so generally confounded under the same name" (209).⁴ The imagination is not another term describing the associative quality of the mind; the imagination is the

necessary condition for which the association of ideas can occur, preceding sensory experience, making human consciousness possible. Stewart writes, “[t]he association of ideas, therefore, although perfectly distinct from the power of the imagination, is immediately and essentially subservient to all its exertions” (209). “Fancy,” according to Stewart, “supplies the poet with metaphorical language and with all the analogies which are the foundation of his allusions; but it is the power of the imagination that creates the complex scenes he describes, and the fictitious characters he delineates” (211). Fancy derives from the cultivated imagination and works creatively and morally because of it. The imagination determines the infinite mixture, the innumerable combination of impressions and sensations, producing new orders and forms that constitute knowledge and artistic creativity.

The concept of a productive or transcendental imagination originally comes out of the philosophical writings of Immanuel Kant and the German Idealists. Richard Kearney describes “the productive imagination” as an imagination that is “no longer viewed as an intermediary agency—at best imitating some truth beyond man—the imagination becomes in modern times, the immediate source of its own truth...[meaning] is now hailed as a transcendental product of the human mind” (155).⁵ Kearney traces the productive imagination to the first edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) in which Kant

startled his contemporaries by announcing that imagination was the common ‘unknown root’ of the two stems of human cognition—understanding and sensation. This extraordinary admission turned the entire hierarchy of traditional epistemology on its head...Kant rescued imagination from its servile role as the intermediary faculty between our sensible and intelligible experience, declaring it to be the primary and indispensable precondition of all knowledge. (157)

Kant's radical assertion, which he would later withdraw from the second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787), transformed the ontological understanding of the imagination. The imagination was no longer a product of being but the origin of being (Kearney 158). Kant writes "being is not a *real* predicate...but only the *positing* of a thing" (A 598).⁶ Since the imagination is the necessary condition for the association of ideas, it is the necessary condition for being as well. Being is not a separate entity existing unconnectedly from the imagination but because of the imagination.

Though Kant alarmed himself with his own claims in his first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, this is the edition that Stewart would have read.⁷ I find that Stewart's writings suggest a deeper engagement with Kant's philosophy than he is generally given credit for. Stewart adapts Kant's productive imagination to include a heavy emphasis on the importance and moral necessity of cultivating the imagination, which seems to have especially influenced Dickens. For Stewart, imaginative cultivation—or morality—is intellectual development intertwined with direct, social involvement. Stewart argues that one's sensibility to human suffering significantly depends upon the degree to which the imagination is cultivated. He writes that "the apparent coldness and selfishness of mankind may be traced, in a great measure, to a want of attention and a want of imagination...without an uncommon degree of both, it is impossible for any man to comprehend completely the situation of his neighbor or to have an idea of a great part of the distress which exists in the world" (378). Other ethical sentiments (such as benevolence) depend upon the imagination as well. The imagination, claims Stewart, "gives us a double share in the prosperity of others, and enables us to partake, with a

more lively interest, in every fortunate incident that occurs either to individuals or to communities” (377).

In theory, the reason the associative imagination is able to produce and develop ethical sensibility is because of its capacity to combine sensations or impressions to create ideas. Cultivating the imagination gives it a more nuanced power to combine the sensations produced by others’ suffering or fortune with the sensations of the self’s own suffering or fortune. The productive imagination mingles various elements from simultaneous realities to constitute moral awareness. The novel, which Stewart mentions, clearly depicts this, because “the picture is completely finished in all its parts; and we are made acquainted not only with every circumstance on which the distress turns, but with the sentiments and feelings of every character” (377). What Stewart suggests is that the novel works so profoundly because it gives the associative imagination a greater reservoir of more specifically defined sensations of another’s reality, which combine with the reader’s own, producing a moral knowledge—sympathy. It is a reworking of Kant’s statement: “[moral] being is not a *real* predicate...but only the *positing* of [morality].” Moral being is equivalent to the imagining of morality.

In “Thinking of Me Thinking of You,” Rae Greiner claims that, for Victorians, the realist novel is the ideal medium for generating sympathy. Victorian realists viewed sympathy not as a feeling but as a complex mental process that enables “an awareness that the other *is* other,” while prohibiting a fusion of the self and other; she observes it is a kind of metonymy, “*feeling ourselves thinking* with real people and fictional ones” (419). Though Greiner does not mention associationism, her emphasis on sympathetic

metonymy in realist fiction parallels Stewart's conception of reading a novel: a complex mental function that hinges upon recognizing the similarity of the sensations and realities of the other and feeling *with* the other without collapsing *into* the other. Stewart specifies that a person of a weak, uncultivated imagination will borrow imaginative visions "completely from the genius of another," a collapse which leads to an "ungovernable imagination that produces something like a temporary insanity" (381). The imagination is no longer combining sensations to produce knowledge and moral awareness; it is drawing upon the fantasy reality only: one does not feel with the imaginative visions of another but one becomes overtaken by those visions. Thus the ideas produced are distorted.

For Stewart, continued mental and physical seclusion, like imaginative "borrowing," also distempers the imagination, preventing the mind from distinguishing between reality and fantasy. Merely engaging in imaginative acts, such as various forms of fiction, poetry, or reverie, does not damage the imagination and thus the mind in this way, but an engagement wholly and perpetually separate from "the bustle of the world" (382) is dangerous:

those intellectual and moral habits, which ought to be formed by actual experience of the world, may be gradually so accommodated to the dreams of poetry and romance, so as to disqualify us for the scene in which we are destined to act. Such a distempered state of mind is an endless source of error; more particularly when we are placed in those critical situations in which our conduct determines our future happiness or misery; and which, of this extensive influence on human life, form the principal groundwork of fictitious composition. (385)

Because fictitious composition illustrates "those critical situations" that determine one's "future happiness or misery," it can cultivate an ethical sensibility, but it can just as easily

be “an endless source of error,” if the fantasy subsumes the mind entirely. The error comes when the imagination and reality are no longer interdependent, and one becomes subservient to the other. Stewart writes, “[a]s we can withdraw the attention at pleasure from objects of sense, and transport ourselves into a world of our own, so when we wish to moderate our enthusiasm, we can dismiss the objects of imagination” (381). Stewart describes the relationship between “objects of sense” and “objects of imagination” as an alternating movement between states of consciousness. In this associative mindscape, the imagination and the experience of the world cannot be disconnected; they are mutually dependent, and the mind can seamlessly move between them. Consciousness depends upon the productive imagination to combine external and internal sensory impressions and experiences into knowledge and moral awareness; if those external experiences are removed, the imagination turns inward and feeds upon itself, replacing knowledge with delusion.

Stewart’s delineation of the distempered imagination as a mind secluded from the world physically as well as mentally seems to have appealed to Dickens. But Dickens expands upon Stewart’s theory and develops it further. He explores the mental and moral repercussions of current institutions that isolate the mind, such as prisons, factories, and schools. As the first two chapters of *Hard Times* lay out explicitly, the language synonymous with an education system built upon “cram” positions itself as antithetical to the development of the imagination.⁸ M’Choakumchild’s mantra of “fact, fact, fact” in opposition to “fancy” supposedly prepares primary school children for participation in the world of “proof and demonstration,” a world contingent upon the mathematical aspect

of one's crockery, carpets, and wallpaper (Dickens, *HT* 12). These practices rely upon a strict binary set up between fact, or the reality of the world, and fancy, in which the colors of fact and fancy cannot be mixed and horses cannot walk upon walls (in the form of wallpaper). Dickens does not simply invert this binary and position fancy as the new "fact," but he draws upon Stewart's emphasis on the necessity of mingling actuality and imagination, so that horses can indeed be a proper subject for wallpaper.

But Dickens intertwines the world more profoundly with the productive imagination than Stewart by highlighting the mind's penchant for either adaptability or stagnation. Winter points out this feature in Dickens's formulation of associationism, calling it a "critique of the associationist tradition" because it relies upon the "model of mind as infinitely adaptable or revisable" (254).⁹ I claim that Dickens's understanding of imaginative adaptability stems from his conception of the productive imagination as constitutive of being. This formulation resists traditional views of associationism as a psychology advancing a stagnant, closed mind, reliant only upon already-formed, pre-conscious impressions.¹⁰ The mind's adaptability enables moral awareness, because it allows the self to alter through its connection to external experience and the other.

Certain pieces of Dickens's journalism depict the interiority of his own mind and perform the seamless movement between "objects of sense" and "objects of imagination" by illustrating the active, wandering Dickensian mind. These pieces mark Dickens's conception of associationism as a democratic as well as a psychological formulation. By portraying the theoretical underpinnings of Dickens's own mind so distinctly, the journalism enables a more comprehensive understanding of associationism and acts as a

profound entry point for Dickens's portrayal of the imagination and institutionalized confinement in the novels *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*.

Dickens's Journalism: The Creature and the Pudding Eater

"Lying Awake," published in *Household Words* in 1852, and "Night Walks," published in *All the Year Round* in 1860, apparently depict a single narrative of the state of Dickens's own sleepless, wandering mind. Despite the eight year difference between their publication dates, "Night Walks" picks up where "Lying Awake" ends, dramatizing one stretch of insomnia and an ensuing late night walk. These two pieces work together to provide a full, vivid picture of Dickens's unique, democratic perception of associationism.

In "Lying Awake," Dickens dramatically performs his attempts to "manage" his thoughts and his obvious, even humorous, failures to do so. His mind perversely refuses to obey his commands and instead wanders off uncontrollably throughout. Rather than focusing on how the mind wanders during half-conscious or unconscious states of mind, Dickens represents the unruly nature of the waking mind, which is integral to his progressive claims in "Lying Awake" and "Night Walks" concerning the psychology of dreaming and waking states.¹¹

"Lying Awake" demonstrates two separate, but intertwining, associative trains of thought, two realms of Dickens's mind. The conscious one consists of his "choices" and a progression of associations between Washington Irving, Niagara Falls, Sleep, the Swiss mountains, and balloons. The apparently unconscious one erupts within the other,

consisting of another, intruding and separate progression of murderous, dark figures and corpses. “Lying Awake” illustrates Dickens’s striking failure to consciously control either train of association. His mind wanders uncontrollably on both levels, portraying the seamless though complex movement of the mind between these two associative trains and destabilizing the role of the will in the waking state.

Since Dickens cannot sleep, he decides to will himself to think about sleep, attempting consciously to choose the path of his mind:

I made up my mind to think a little about Sleep; which I no sooner did than I whirled off in spite of myself to Drury Lane Theatre...But, Sleep. I *will* think about Sleep. I am determined to think (this is the way I went on) about Sleep. I must hold the word Sleep tight and fast, or I shall be off at a tangent in half a second. I feel myself unaccountably straying, already, into Clare Market. Sleep. (Dickens, “Lying” 25)

Phrases such as “I made up,” “I *will* think,” “I am determined to think,” and “I must hold” convey the narrator’s mental efforts to dictate and control the subject of his thoughts. Dickens often repeats the idea he has decided to contemplate as if something in the repetition will give him the control he seeks. But the very word “sleep” itself slides into disconnected images and people in Drury Lane Theatre or Clare Market. Dickens cannot will his mind; even as he pursues control of his thoughts, he feels his mind already straying in inexplicable ways into inexplicable places. This performance suggests that straying is an inseparable part of the act of thinking.

But Dickens’s mind does not merely stray in the conscious realm, where he is aware of its unruly actions; it also strays on a path wholly unbeknownst to him. He is clearly mindful that “for no reason on earth that I can find out, and drawn by no links that are visible to me” his conscious thoughts move from a speculation on dreaming to the

Great Saint Bernard mountain pass on the Swiss-Italian border to memories of a summer day in the Swiss mountains (Dickens, “Lying” 26). Erupting within that lovely summer day is a horrifying figure from his childhood, stalking “into my mind on the top of the Swiss mountain” (Dickens, “Lying” 26). Momentarily, the two trains of thought merge. This first figure in a whole host of frightening figures “smokes a pipe, and has a big hat with each of its ears sticking out in a horizontal line under a pair of goggle eyes, and hands like two bunches of carrots (Dickens, “Lying” 26). This figure, sitting in a church graveyard, is an alarming personage, who may have been resurrected as Magwitch in *Great Expectations*. The narrator reminisces of how the figure frightened his younger self, who ran home, fearful and in horror, constantly looking behind him for the pursing danger. The narrator calls this startling disruption of his sunny Swiss mountain scene a “disagreeable train. I must resolve to think of something on the voluntary principle”—balloons (“Lying” 26).

Even as Dickens commands his mind to *voluntarily* think of the balloon ascents, the other realm of his mind moves from the Magwitch-like figure to other gruesome, intruding figures. The next to appear in the narrative are the Mannings, a husband and wife who committed a grisly murder, and whose public execution Dickens witnessed prior to this sleepless night. He recollects how after their dangling, disfigured bodies mentally pursued him for weeks, his fancy eventually did take their bodies down from the haunted scaffold and bury them. Dickens shows surprise to see them once again dangling from the scaffold and seeks to move his mind back to the balloon ascents only to have another “disagreeable intrusion! Here is a man with his throat cut, dashing towards me as

I lie awake...a very unpleasant creature indeed, to come into my mind unbidden as I lie awake” (“Lying” 27-28). While Dickens consciously thinks of the balloon exhibition and other related matters, the Mannings’s hanging bodies slide into an image from one of his relative’s stories of a man from a madhouse running down the road with his throat slashed. Dickens attempts to will his mind back to the balloons: “the balloon ascents of last season. I must return to the balloons. Why did the bleeding man start out of them? Never mind; if I inquire, he will be back again. The balloons,” (“Lying” 28). Despite “choosing” not to dwell on the bleeding man and thus invite his ghastly return, the bleeding man still returns, now as corpse from the Morgue in Paris “with its ghastly beds, and the swollen saturated clothes hanging up, and the water dripping, dripping all day long, upon that other swollen saturated something in the corner” (Dickens, “Lying” 28). While consciously involved in an entirely different train of thought, another realm of Dickens’s mind actively and inexplicably moves between multiple, horrifying figures from separate and disconnected origins. Dickens’s attempt to “manage” this train of thought and prohibit its occurrence turns each image into an increasingly darker and more threatening form than the one before it.

Though Dickens devotes “Lying Awake” to portraying the unruly nature of the waking mind, his two disconnected trains of thought, continually sliding in and out of each other, shows how little difference he sees between the waking and the dreaming state. It is quite a radical suggestion to make, since it undercuts the binary that many contemporary psychologists, including Stewart, set up between waking and dreaming states. Waking is the realm of fact and reality, while dreaming is that unruly realm of

fancy that conjures delusional images and feelings. Though Stewart notes that the same associative laws are at work in the waking and dreaming mind, in the latter, “the will loses its influence over those faculties of the mind, and those members of the body, which during our waking hours, are subject to its authority” (242). Dickens’s depiction of the failure of his will in the waking state, whereby horrific figures unexpectedly and uncontrollably prowl upon the Swiss mountainside or erupt out of a balloon exhibition, shows just how false and obviously constructed he deems this psychological binary to be.

Dismantling the cognitive binary between sleep and waking works concurrently with Dickens’s related social claim that all individuals, regardless of class or educational conditioning, are subject to the same multiplicitous, complex functioning of the associative mind. As Catherine Bernard observes, “[s]ensing that dreams were psychological in origin, rather than supernatural or physiological, Dickens offered a strikingly independent view of dreams that challenged many conventional beliefs of his day” (197). In “Lying Awake” Dickens conjectures, “[i]t would be curious, as illustrating the equality of sleep, to inquire how many of its phenomena are common to all classes to all degrees of wealth and poverty, to every grade of education and ignorance” (Dickens, “Lying 25). He goes on to speculate that Queen Victoria may be subject to the same dreams of scanty dress and improprieties as Dickens himself or even Winking Charley, a fictitious vagrant residing in one of her majesty’s jails. As he describes the various kinds of dreams, Dickens states that it is probable that he, The Queen, and Winking Charley “have all three committed murders and hidden bodies. It is pretty certain that we have all desperately wanted to cry out, and have had no voice; that

we have all gone to the play and not been able to get in” (“Lying” 26). By scandalously claiming that Queen Victoria may have committed murders in her sleep, not to mention publicly cavorting in her nightdress, Dickens negates the persistent Victorian belief that class is equivalent to moral standing, since many believed dreams “reflected moral character” (Bernard 201). If Queen Victoria and Winking Charley share the same dreams, then social equality truly resides within the realm of the mind and not in established views of class. Establishing this fact opens up the possibility for Dickens’s development of characters such as Sissy Jupe or Jenny Wren. The correspondence Dickens establishes between the mind’s activities in dreaming and waking, in conjunction with the democratic underpinnings of dreams, enables him to make a dramatic statement regarding class and moral character, which he continues in “Night Walks.”

“Night Walks” seems to pick up precisely where “Lying Awake” ended eight years previously: “I resolved to lie awake no more, but to get up and go out for a night walk” (Dickens, “Lying” 29). In “Night Walks,” Dickens’s term “houselessness” performs and adapts Stewart’s belief that the imagination should mingle with the bustle of the world. Here Dickens likens his physical body to the restless city of London, which parallels the state of his mind in “Lying Awake.” He pretends to be houseless in order to align his mind with those who are truly houseless, inhabiting the dark streets of nighttime London. “Houselessness” represents the fictionalized, wandering narrator, whose restlessness mirrors “the restlessness of a great city, and the way in which it tumbles and tosses before it can get to sleep, formed one of the entertainments offered to the contemplation of us houseless people...it was always the case that London, as if in

imitation of individual citizens belonging to it, had expiring fits and starts of restlessness” (“Night” 73). Houselessness blurs the lines between the minds and bodies of the countless night-walkers: “us houseless people.” By aligning his own mental state with his fellow night-walkers, Dickens is able to establish what he views as the underlying fundamental nature of the mind. His concept of Houselessness further develops his earlier statement on consciousness and class in “Lying Awake.”

During his walk, Dickens visits the many institutions constituting Victorian life, such as a theatre, prisons (including Newgate), the bank, Bethlehem Hospital, Parliament, and Westminster Abbey. His restless, wandering body links the bodies of actors, debtors, murderers, and the insane with bankers and members of Parliament. Expanding upon his speculations in “Lying Awake,” here he goes on to bridge the psychological states of the sane and the insane: “[a]re not the sane and the insane equal at night as the sane lie a dreaming? Are not all of us outside this hospital, who dream, more or less in the condition of those inside it, every night of our lives?” (Dickens, “Night” 77). He paints an even more unsettling, democratic mindscape, disconcertingly equalizing the sane with the insane in the space of dreams. He asks, “[a]re we not sometimes troubled by our own sleeping inconsistencies, and do we not vexedly try to account for them or excuse them, just as these do sometimes in respect of their waking delusions?” (Dickens, “Night” 77). If the mind functions in waking as it does in sleeping, then are not “dreams the insanity of each day’s sanity?” (Dickens, “Night” 77).

Even as Dickens asks unnerving questions about dreamers and insanity, he pushes this line of inquiry even further. He narrates his own encounters and strange affinity with

dreamlike, houseless, and delusional figures. These encounters blur social and psychological boundaries and markedly dismantle the binary that keeps the sane and upper classes safe and separate from their houseless or insane counterparts. Besides personally identifying with the patients locked up in Bethlehem hospital, the narrator identifies himself with a nameless “creature” he happens upon in the street. His identification with the creature complicates his musings outside the hospital. The sane supposedly wake from their delusions, severing their temporary resemblance to the insane, but the minds of the houseless are awake and this shared resemblance does not fade with the coming of the dawn. Dickens sets his reader up for his unsettling encounter with the creature in his personified description of “Houselessness” wandering through the city:

Walking the streets under the pattering rain, Houselessness would walk and walk and walk, seeing nothing but the interminable tangle of streets, save at a corner, here and there, two policemen in conversation. . . Now and then in the night—but rarely—Houselessness would become aware of a furtive head peering out of a doorway a few yards before him. . . Under a kind of fascination, and in a ghostly silence suitable to the time, Houselessness and this gentleman would eye one another from head to foot, and so without exchange of speech, part mutually suspicious. (Dickens, “Night” 74)

Suggesting the workings of the associative mind, Houselessness wanders in and out of the “interminable tangle of streets and doorways,” eventually happening upon “a furtive head” lingering in a doorway. Recognizing something of their shared houselessness in each other, the narrator and the gentleman stare, mutually fascinated and yet mutually suspicious, so suspicious that they part without any verbal or other kind of exchange.

When Dickens replicates this scene, he alters it by adding in a troubling dimension. Instead of a gentleman meeting a gentleman, Dickens plays with the

boundaries of mind and identity in the realm of social class. In the second rendition, Dickens meets and again recognizes another houseless walker, but it is a “creature,” an “it.” Dickens almost treads upon “it,” when the creature starts up, and “[w]e then stood face to face looking at one another, frightened by one another. The creature was like a beetle-browed hair-lipped youth of twenty, and *it* had a loose bundle of rags on...*it* stared at me—persecutor, devil, ghost, whatever *it* thought me” (“Night” 78, emphasis mine). Dickens repeats his assessment of the creature as an “it,” likening it to a “youth of twenty,” though any human resemblance is only to be found in the comparison. What is striking is Dickens’s emphasis on his connection with this dehumanized creature. He speaks of a collective “we” who, face to face, mutually look and mutually frighten. Dickens recognizes that the creature sees Dickens himself as something non-human, a “devil” or a “ghost.” Dickens’s affinity with the creature induces him to reach out, but the creature flees. Instead of parting mutually suspicious and without any exchange, Dickens reaches out; he attempts to make some kind of connection, some kind of contact. Though Dickens is left alone, the creature seems to transfer something of itself to Dickens, leaving him “standing alone with its rags in my hand” (“Night” 78), marking Dickens as a related creature who is not so very different from the one who fled.¹²

Dickens’s desire to blur the distinctions between his mind and position and the creature’s also evokes the patients in Bethlehem hospital, whose delusions Dickens shares through his dreaming: “[s]aid an afflicted man to me... ‘Sir, I can frequently fly.’ I was half ashamed to reflect that so could I—by night” (“Night” 77). Dickens’s identification in both cases is a moral awareness that comes from mingling mentally and

physically with the world—in this case, mental patients and others who are actually houseless—which allows his imagination to combine the sensations of their existence with his own. His wandering enables the recognition of likeness in the face of stark difference—the democratic potentiality and empathy signified by the creature’s rags left in his hand.

The narrator’s encounter with the creature portrays how the cultivation of the imagination depends upon interacting with the world. It cannot occur solely in seclusion. In seclusion, the mind closes in upon itself in repetition and stagnation. As the end of “Lying Awake” makes clear, Dickens himself cannot remain physically secluded in the stagnant throes of his own mind, since “I had been lying awake so long that the very dead began to wake too, and to crowd into my thoughts most sorrowfully” (29). Not to be confused with the problematic management of his mind, here he finds himself subject to the possibility of his own mania and the moral necessity of social interaction.

The pudding-eater, whom Dickens encounters in a coffee shop in Covent-garden Market, illustrates the outcome of a physically and mentally confined mind. The man takes a pudding out of his hat, “and, instead of cutting it, stabbed it overhand, with the knife, like a mortal enemy...tore the pudding asunder with his fingers, and ate it all up” (Dickens, “Night” 79). The fact that the pudding is taken out of the man’s hat suggests the man’s “head or his brain,” or his own mind (Bodenheimer 194). That the man engages in a repetitive self-devouring of his own brain (for the man is a noted regular at the shop) at the same coffee shop day after day represents the self-destruction Dickens sees in a mind bound and caught in stagnation. The pudding-eater represents the

antithesis of adaptability. It is not just the stabbed, dismembered, and repeatedly devoured pudding that is so disquieting and indicative of a distempered mind, but it is this act in conjunction with the man's red face, signifying another endless repetition, devoid of adaptation. The pudding-eater absorbs his red face from staring "hard" at the red face of his dead, alcoholic mother lying in her coffin. He repeats not just his mother's countenance but also her dissipation, confining him in an endless circling, diseased state of mind, so that "the pudding seemed an unwholesome pudding after that, and I put myself in its way no more" (Dickens, "Night" 79). Dickens's horror and repudiation of the man is in some ways a fear of Dickens's own kinship with the possibility of such mental stagnation, as in his recognition at the end of "Lying Awake." By never returning to the shop, Dickens rejects the mental state represented by the repeatedly devoured, self-cannibalizing pudding.

Some of the most disturbing examples of stagnant, bound minds are the minds of prisoners in solitary confinement. Dickens's depiction of institutionalized solitary confinement vividly shows the mental and moral damage created by this system of punishment. As Bodenheimer writes, it "is the nightmare antithesis of walking, because it causes the mind to rebound only on itself" (197). Visiting a prison in Philadelphia in 1842, Dickens describes his response to this form of institutionalized "moral reform" in *American Notes*. This "slow and daily tampering with the mysteries of the brain [is] immeasurably worse than any torture of the body" (*American* 90). Unlike physical wounds, which are detectable, the mental wounds inflicted by the "secret punishment" of solitary confinement "are not upon the surface," eliciting mental cries of anguish that

human ears cannot hear (*American* 90). Dickens describes solitary confinement as the psychological form of being “buried alive...dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair” (91). He vividly imagines the various psychological effects of solitary confinement. One would be the temptation to beat one’s “brains out on the wall,” or the horrifying sense that an ordinary corner in a plain, bare cell has transformed into a “hateful corner which torments him [the prisoner]...the terrors of that hateful corner swell until they beset him at all times; invade his rest, make his dreams hideous and his nights dreadful...it is every night the lurking place of a ghost: a shadow: a silent something” (97-98).

The conjunction of its horrendous mental torments with its secret, undetectable nature is what makes it so particularly horrifying and dangerous and yet simultaneously so fascinating to Dickens. Unlike the pudding-eater, who wears his degeneracy upon his face and in his hat, these prisoners conceal a *secret*, moral degeneracy. Solitary confinement, Dickens writes, “wears the mind into a morbid state, which renders it unfit for the rough contact and busy action of the world...those who have undergone this punishment MUST pass into society again morally unhealthy and diseased...such extreme depression and despair [will] change the whole character, and beat down all its powers of elasticity and self-resistance” (*American* 99). Solitary confinement is a disciplinary measure of control and supposed moral reform that results in its opposite: a “morally unhealthy and diseased” person, who is unfit to re-enter and interact with the world. Dickens suggests that the unfitness to re-enter society stems from the prisoner having lost his humanity: “[b]etter to have hanged him in the beginning than bring him to

this pass, and send him forth to mingle with his kind, who are his kind no more” (*American* 98). The human exterior of these prisoners covers over something non-human and dangerous, illustrating how being itself becomes distorted through this kind of confinement. Unlike the creature in rags, with whom Dickens shares a recognizable affinity, the prisoner of solitary confinement appears as a human but has become a monstrous phantom, “stalk[ing] upon the earth, making creation ugly, and darkening the face of Heaven,” (*American* 99).

Dickens’s narration of the horrific degeneration of these prisoners represents the most extreme consequences of a mind kept within rigid, institutionalized confinement. Because of these terrible effects, solitary confinement becomes a shaping, psychological metaphor for mental confinement in much of Dickens’s fiction.¹³ In *Hard Times* and in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens depicts the mental and moral ramifications of the institutionalized mind as it develops in schools and factories. He counters this with the cultivated, productive imagination, found in Sissy Jupe, Lizzie Hexam, and Jenny Wren, who remain outside existing social and economic institutions.¹⁴ Dickens’s particular conception of the productive imagination at the heart of associationism opens up the powerful psychological landscapes of his novels, providing another means to articulate the potential moral change he envisions when his readers wander through his novels’ pages.

Morgiana's Jars: Hard Times

“‘I’ll explain it to you, then,’ said the gentleman... ‘why you wouldn’t paper a room with representations of horses. Do you ever see horses walking up and down the sides of rooms in reality—in fact? Do you?...Would you use a carpet having a representation of flowers upon it?’” (Dickens, *HT* 11). The opening classroom scene in *Hard Times* opposes Sissy’s “fanciful,” albeit normal, responses to questions of horses and flowers adorning wall-paper and carpets to the Gradgrindian philosophy of fact. Sissy struggles to “never fancy,” but as she tells Louisa later on, “I am—O so stupid!” (Dickens, *HT* 58). Whereas in the early chapter Sissy’s fancy finds horses a proper subject for wallpaper, the mistakes she relays to Louisa are more telling of the moral dimension of her imagination. M’Choakumchild inquires, “ ‘[t]his schoolroom is an immense town, and in it there are a million of inhabitants, and only five-and-twenty are starved to death in the streets, in the course of the year. What is your remark on that proportion?’ And my remark was...that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million” (Dickens, *HT* 59). Though many critics view this scene as Dickens’s denunciation of utilitarianism, it also illustrates the qualities of the productive imagination. In this example and the other two concerning “Natural Prosperity” and shipwrecks, Sissy’s imagination enables her to intertwine her sensations with the world, producing moral knowledge. By positioning herself within the scenarios, as if she were reading a novel, her imagination is able to draw upon her own sensations of suffering and loss and combine those with the lives represented by the “stutterings” in M’Choakumchild’s statistics.

The opposition between Sissy and the Gradgrindian philosophy is traditionally viewed as the opposition between “machinery and the forms of psychic depth” (Ketabgian 650). From this perspective, *Hard Times* often appears as an allegory illustrating the tragedy of industrialization, which eradicates psychic depth, by depleting emotion as it destroys the imagination.¹⁵ But Dickens’s depiction of the mechanistic underpinnings of the Gradgrindian philosophy shows that it does not destroy psychic depth. Rather, through confinement and restriction, it perverts the psyche, rendering it unwholesome: the pudding-eater cannibalizing his own mind or the monstrous phantom lurking in solitary confinement.

The narrator’s allusion to *Arabian Nights*, which concludes the opening chapter, indicates the confinement and distortion inherent within the Gradgrindian philosophy. He likens M’Choakumchild’s lesson to Morgiana filling the jars with burning oil, as in “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,” but the narrator alters the story, asking “[w]hen from thy [M’Choakumchild’s] boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by-and-by, dost thou think thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within—or sometimes only maim and distort him?” (Dickens, *HT* 13). The narrator’s rhetorical question for M’Choakumchild indicates that the “murder” conducted by M’Choakumchild is not the extinction of Fancy, but the maiming and distortion of Fancy, perfectly embodied in the character of Bitzer.¹⁶ M’Choakumchild’s own education resembles that of his present students: “[h]e and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs” (Dickens, *HT* 12).¹⁷ In describing M’Choakumchild’s education,

Dickens likens the institution of the classroom to another, albeit, different institution—the factory. M'Choakumchild's similarity to a multitude of mechanically-formed, identical pieces of wood, evokes Bitzer's own wooden, formulaic answers to M'Choakumchild's questioning, especially when he defines a horse: “[q]uadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth...Sheds coat in the spring...Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth” (Dickens, *HT* 9-10). Like the pianoforte factory, M'Choakumchild's classroom is structured around his vision to produce a multitude of Bitzers, formed and controlled as he himself has been by institutionalized and internalized fact. The narrator's choice to alter “The Forty Thieves,” so as to liken the students to jars, suggests how the inundation of fact fundamentally relies upon this controlled environment of confinement—having “imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim,” producing identical M'Choakumchilds and Bitzers in bulk (Dickens, *HT* 7).

“The Key-Note” chapter in *Hard Times* describes the disturbing and inherently dangerous nature of a town composed of M'Choakumchild's brimming jars. The indistinguishable red brick buildings of Coketown, smothered in smoke and ash, replace the jars from *Arabian Nights*: “it was a town of *unnatural* red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled” (Dickens, *HT* 26, emphasis mine). Monotony and stagnation coil around the inhabitants like serpents, perpetually strangling the townspeople, producing “deranged and brutish tendencies” (Ketabgian 657). The buildings and the machines of Coketown

exhibit the resulting deranged feelings of the workers: “vast piles of buildings...rattling and trembling all day long...the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness” (Dickens, *HT* 26).¹⁸ Reflecting the state of Coketown’s workers, “the engines of Coketown assume the figurative guise of mad, disordered animals” (Ketabgian 657). Dickens’s metaphor claims that mechanistic confinement does not destroy human feeling but turns it into a disturbing form of mania, trembling below a rigid surface. Coketown “fact” has produced these identical, rattling, trembling bodies, within which a melancholic phantom seethes and threatens to escape.

Such a melancholy picture occurs in Dickens’s representation of Louisa’s mind in *Hard Times*. In an often-repeated use of fire, he characterizes Louisa’s mind as a fireside, but a fireside that is a blank canvas into which she continually stares and continually sees nothing.¹⁹ When Tom asks what she sees in the fire, Louisa states, “I don’t see anything in it, Tom, particularly. But since I have been looking at it, I have been wondering...I have such unmanageable thoughts...that they *will* wonder” (Dickens, *HT* 55). Following the Gradgrindian philosophy dictated to her by her father, she attempts to never wonder and confine herself to only fact. But like the narrator of “Lying Awake,” Louisa is aware that her thoughts are essentially unmanageable: “they *will* wonder.” Her mind is by nature active and confining it within a Gradgrindian system renders this activity unproductive; the sparks produce nothing, but the sparks still seek something to burn. When Louisa is first introduced, the narrator describes a quality in her face, “a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved

imagination” (Dickens, *HT* 17). This description conjures the image of a light continually, frantically moving and searching, always in motion. Finding nothing to burn, it becomes dangerous and sullen, apt to burst into flames at the slightest provocation. Louisa points this out to her father when he presents her with a potential marriage to Bounderby. Taking her eyes off her father, Louisa

sat so long looking silently towards the town, that he said at length: “Are you consulting the chimneys of the Coketown works, Louisa?”

“There seems to be nothing there but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire burst out, father!” she answered, turning quickly. (Dickens, *HT* 96)

Recognizing she has become “dust and ash” herself (Dickens, *HT* 98), Louisa knows underneath her own appearance of “languid and monotonous smoke” an active fire smolders, waiting to ignite. Her face, which had once reflected the continuous moving light of her struggling dissatisfaction, soon comes to reflect the dangerous vacancy she so often encounters in the fire: “[s]he was so constrained. . . Her features were handsome; but their natural play was so locked up, that it seemed impossible to guess at their genuine expression” (Dickens, *HT* 121).

Tom, too, shows some awareness of their mental imprisonment, but unlike Louisa, Tom deteriorates into revenge, greed, selfishness, and pettiness. He tells Louisa “I wish I could collect all the Facts we hear so much about. . . and all the people who found them out: and I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them, and blow them all up together! However when I go to live with old Bounderby, I’ll have my revenge” (Dickens, *HT* 53). Tom’s revenge upon “Facts” is not focused on facts, rather his revenge focuses on harming innocent others: he intensifies Louisa’s confinement and

entraps Stephen Blackpool in false accusations of robbery. In encouraging Louisa to marry Bounderby, Tom seeks to free himself by further imprisoning Louisa. His actions show a horrifying display of his blatant disregard for his sister's well-being. Tom does not inundate his sister with "Fact," like his father or Bounderby, but he tightens the lid of his sister's already brimming jar, manipulating her and managing her for his own gain. His treatment of Louisa in conjunction with his framing of Stephen for theft indicates the extent of Tom's moral deterioration. His Gradgrindian upbringing plays upon and heightens his inherent personal weaknesses, leading to his exile from Coketown and his sad, lonely death.

Unlike Louisa and Tom, Sissy embodies the ideal of the cultivated, moral imagination. This cultivation does not stem from her Gradgrindian education, which fails miserably; it begins with Sissy's early upbringing in the circus, a place notoriously devoid of Coketown "fact."²⁰ Sissy horrifies Gradgrind by informing him that she grew up reading her father tales "[a]bout the Fairies, Sir, and the Dwarf, and the Hunch-back, and the Genies" (Dickens, *HT* 50). Sissy's failure to adapt to a Gradgrindian education ultimately rescues her from its indoctrination and preserves her. She remains in the Gradgrind household but outside Coketown's educational institutions.

Preserved from Coketown's insidious distortion, Sissy's inclination for reading fairy stories and exercising her fancy elicit the growth of her imagination, evident in the final words of the novel. The narrator states, "she [Sissy], grown learned in childish lore; thinking no innocent and pretty fancy ever to be despised; trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those

imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up, the sturdiest physical manhood will be morally stark death” (Dickens, *HT* 274). This passage also suggests Dickens’s vision for *Household Words*, to “show to all that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellant on the surface, there is Romance enough if we will find it—to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of the imagination” (Dickens, “Preliminary” 1). In these similar passages, Dickens emphasizes the active “imaginative graces and delights” that derive from reading—Sissy’s reading of “childish lore” and the workers’ reading of *Household Words*. Starkly differing from the Gradgrinds, Sissy signifies reading and fancy, two components of the moral imagination that anticipate Lizzie Hexam and Jenny Wren in *Our Mutual Friend*.

Dickens contrasts what derives from Sissy and from reading with the sterility, exile, and sadness that derive from the Gradgrinds. Dickens’s use of “morally stark death” to describe the consequence of the Gradgrindian system suggests Tom’s actions and eventual death, and it evokes Dickens’s similar claim concerning the outcome of solitary confinement: an outcome viscerally reconceived in *Our Mutual Friend* in the form of Bradley Headstone. As David Paroissien observes, “[s]tifle the imagination, crush fancy, and reduce life to measurement and quantification, and Bitzers and Headstones will flourish” (278). Though created in the same educational system or “factory” as M’Choakumchild or Bitzer or even Tom, Headstone is a singular character in Dickens’s writing. Tom and Louisa set up the pathology for Headstone, but unlike Headstone, they are solidly within the middle class. Their education is not an issue of

class mobility. Headstone exhibits a much more violent psychopathology than Tom because Dickens infuses Headstone's moral and mental deterioration with a social class dimension. The characterization of Headstone enables Dickens to explore the repercussions of a society that infuses the institution of education with class difference and the myth of acquiring social equality through its mechanical practices.

On the roof of Pubsey and Co.: Our Mutual Friend

The secret, deranged danger produced by institutionalized confinement culminates in the extraordinary downfall of Bradley Headstone.²¹ Headstone's obsession with social class adds a more powerful, captivating dimension to his mechanical nature and the violent process of his mental breakdown. Democracy and social opportunity are supposed to be intrinsic to the equalizing educational system that has formed Headstone and that he practices as one of its teachers. But the institutionalized democracy represented in the state-funded schools in *Our Mutual Friend* occludes the imagination and impedes moral growth. The mental confinement necessary for social mobility in this schema rigidifies the mind and re-routes the path to mania and murder through the pages "the Adventures of Little Margery" or "the experiences of Thomas Twopence" (Dickens, *OMF* 215).

Originally a "pauper lad," Headstone appears as a respectable teacher in one of the state-funded schools in which Charley Hexam, Lizzie's younger brother, is currently his pupil (Dickens, *OMF* 218).²² The narrator describes Headstone's respectable, "thoroughly decent" dress in much detail: "his decent black coat and waistcoat, and

decent white shirt, and decent formal black tie, and decent pantaloons of pepper and salt, with his decent silver watch in his pocket and its decent hair-guard round his neck” (Dickens, *OMF* 218). The narrator’s multiple repetitions of “decent” in this passage paradoxically suggest something indecent about Headstone. The repetitions, like Headstone’s dress, are meant to cover over a disreputable quality but draw attention to it instead: “there was a certain stiffness in his manner of wearing [his clothes], as if there were a want of adaptation between him and it, recalling some mechanics in their holiday clothes” (Dickens, *OMF* 218).

It is not simply Headstone’s disavowed, lower class origin that creates the disjunction between his exterior appearance and his distempered interiority. Dickens emphasizes that the disjunction stems from the manner in which Headstone has developed within the “oppressive and disagreeable” educational system, mechanically internalizing the “facts” undergirding false middle class values and then seeking to implement them (Dickens, *OMF* 215).²³ Even more than in the case of Tom Gradgrind, Headstone’s education has not counteracted his shortcomings and weaknesses of character but severely heightened them. The type of school responsible for Headstone’s training was “pervaded by a grimly ludicrous pretense that every pupil was childish and innocent. This pretense...led to ghastly absurdities” (Dickens, *OMF* 215). Like Morgiana’s jars, suppressing the specificities of individual character, whether good or ill, ultimately perverts that character; in the case of Headstone, it renders morality another piece of outward adornment that composes his “decent” outward attire. Early on, the narrator alerts the reader to the deeply troubling outcome of the rigid system “of

questioning and being questioned” in the state-funded schools; Headstone possesses “a suspicious manner, or a manner that would be better described as one of lying in wait...Suppression of so much to make room for so much, had given him a constrained manner, over and above. Yet there was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smoldering), still visible in him” (Dickens, *OMF* 218). The narrator’s repetition of “decent” to describe Headstone’s dress in conjunction with Headstone’s smoldering, suspicious, and constrained manner indicates the perversion of Headstone’s interiority through his pursuit of middle class respectability by means of the “monotonous droning noise” of the current educational system (Dickens, *OMF* 215).

Playing on the droning noise of the schoolroom, Dickens transitions from his droning repetition of “decent” to a droning repetition of “mechanical” to describe the nature of Headstone’s mind: “[h]e [Headstone] had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher’s knowledge. He could do mental arithmetic mechanically, sing at sight mechanically, blow various wind instruments mechanically, even play the great church organ mechanically. From his early childhood up, his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage” (*OMF* 218). Dickens relegates Headstone’s mind to a warehouse holding bits of knowledge that Headstone can access and perform in a perfunctory, “decent” manner. As with this dress, Headstone believes mentally managing himself in this manner is equivalent to morality and will prevent the loss of what he has toiled so laboriously to achieve: “[h]e always seemed to be uneasy lest anything should be missing from his mental warehouse” (Dickens, *OMF* 218).²⁴ In depicting Headstone’s mental interior, Dickens plays on another image of rigid confinement, especially pertinent to *Our*

Mutual Friend: Headstone hoards the contents of his mind, indicative of his status, like a miser hoarding his gold, fearful and suspicious of anything that would dislodge him from his painstakingly wrought position.

The fundamentally mechanical nature of learning and teaching through the repetition of facts hinges upon the preclusion of imaginative acts. This suppression stifles the imagination and creates the “inability or refusal [of the mind] to synthesize information and experience into morally relevant knowledge” (Winter 242).²⁵ In a Kantian-based associationism, the productive imagination is responsible for synthesizing understanding and sensation. The stifling of the imagination through rote learning and internalized confinement prevents the imagination from doing its essential function. As Kearney explains, “[w]ithout the imaginative synthesis of our sensible intuition (of temporal and spatial objects) on the one hand, and of our intellect (or an abiding transcendental ego) on the other, the so-called ‘objective’ world would be bereft of coherence...Imagination is thus hailed as the common ‘root’ of both sensation and understanding” (171). Headstone’s mental warehouse consists of haphazard facts strewn about, “history here, geography there, astronomy to the right, political economy to the left—natural history, the physical sciences, figures, music, the lower mathematics, and what not all in their several places” (Dickens, *OMF* 218). But devoid of a cultivated imagination, Headstone’s mind cannot synthesize these facts into a morally relevant whole, which renders him a “plain, bare, monotonous vault” and constitutes the connotations of his name (Dickens, *HT* 7).

Headstone's terrifying obsession with Lizzie and dark jealousy of Eugene Wrayburn makes visible the intersection of the schoolroom with a mechanical class mobility and acquired social status. For Headstone, the institutionalized, democratic equality falsely touted by public education crumbles in the face of the bored, upper-class Wrayburn and in the height of Headstone's sexual desire for Lizzie. Lizzie signifies Headstone's low origins, what he has shunned and repressed to become a schoolmaster, whereas the person of Wrayburn signifies the bitter knowledge of what Headstone cannot achieve—the love of Lizzie and Wrayburn's social position. Wrayburn's awareness of Headstone's desire for Lizzie, which Headstone interprets as a personal slight, reveals both of these factors: "You [Wrayburn] reproach me with my origin...you cast insinuations at my bringing-up. But I tell you sir, I have worked my way onward, out of both and in spite of both, and have a right to be considered a better man than you, with better reasons for being proud" (Dickens, *OMF* 291).

Thus Headstone's compulsory pursuit of Lizzie is violently entangled in his bitter resentment and envy of Wrayburn. His impassioned and disturbing marriage proposal to Lizzie is overshadowed with the presence of Wrayburn and the language of obsession and social class. Headstone begins by telling her, "[y]ou are the ruin of me...Yes! You are the ruin—the ruin—the ruin—of me. I have no resources in myself, I have no confidence in myself. I have no government of myself when you are near me or in my thoughts. And you are always in my thoughts now" (Dickens, *OMF* 388). By repetitively calling her his ruin, Headstone equates Lizzie with the cause of his deterioration; she undeniably threatens his carefully wrought morality and social position.

He admits to her that if he were already married to someone of his own class, another teacher trained as he has been, “I know I should have broken that tie asunder as if it had been thread...I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction which I have resisted in vain, and which overmasters me...you could draw me to anything I have most avoided, you could draw me to any exposure and disgrace” (Dickens, *OMF* 389).

Entangled in a volatile pathology of sexual desire, jealousy, and class consciousness, Headstone’s mind begins to break apart like the mortar from the gravestones he breaks and crumbles with his bare, bloody hands when Lizzie refuses his offer: “ ‘[t]hen,’ said he, suddenly changing his tone and turning to her, and bringing his clenched hand down upon the stone with a force that laid the knuckles raw and bleeding; ‘then I hope that I may never kill him!’” (Dickens, *OMF* 390).

Resembling the prisoners that so disturbed Dickens, Headstone begins his own monstrous “stalking” of Wrayburn. Whereas during the day, he retains his “decent” demeanor, at night, the secret phantom lurking within Headstone breaks free. Headstone

consumed the lonely hours, and consumed himself, in haunting the spot where his careless rival lay a dreaming...The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More; he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body. Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks...he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal. (Dickens, *OMF* 535)

Dickens illustrates that the secret, nighttime pleasure that Headstone relishes is the outcome of a mind “tied up all day” in a “disciplined show,” subdued through “educational tricks.” Caught in the continual repetition of a sick man irritating his own festering wound, Headstone’s self-consumption evokes the disturbing image of the self-

cannibalizing pudding eater. Like the pudding-eater with his pudding, Headstone shows a “perverse pleasure” in irritating his darkly desirous, obsessive state. His stalking alludes to Dickens’s own night walks, but unlike Dickens’s walks, Headstone’s stalking is stagnant, a festering wound. “Morally unhealthy and diseased,” he compulsively pursues Wrayburn, fanatically and repetitively fantasizing over the pleasure of his murderous plot.

The nighttime, fanatical Headstone and the “decent,” disciplined schoolteacher evoke the two dissociated trains of thought from Dickens’s “Lying Awake.” In that essay, Dickens attempts to manage and obstruct the darker figures from his mind, prohibiting the man with a slashed throat from appearing amid the balloon exhibitions. But each prohibition only results in darker, more threatening variations, ending with the dank, swollen corpse in the Paris morgue. Whereas “Lying Awake” is ultimately playful, Dickens revisits and more seriously reconceives what “success” might look like. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Headstone’s educational training and mechanically acquired social status has unnaturally codified his mind, perverting any imaginative tendencies or actions. When these restraints eventually crumble, the character of Headstone actualizes the dark figures from Dickens’s unconscious train in “Lying Awake.” These threatening, macabre images come into being, murderers and corpses, stalking upon the earth and culminating in Headstone’s brutal attack on Wrayburn and in his violent, entangled death with Rogue Riderhood.

In opposition to Headstone, Lizzie Hexam and Jenny Wren, like Sissy from *Hard Times*, illustrate the engaged, moral imagination. Rather than merely rewriting a second

Sissy-type character in *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens recreates a more complex variation of her in pairing Lizzie and Jenny. His development of Lizzie and Jenny depicts a more nuanced manifestation of the imagination, allowing him to show moral development in two harsh situations that are not conducive to imaginative thought. For Stewart, the most perfect scenario to create a moral individual is a good education that cultivates the imagination and the heart and attends to “early impressions and associations [to] give support to those principles which are connected to human happiness” (29). Although one can argue Sissy experienced an education similar to this in Sleary’s Circus, the upbringings of Lizzie and Jenny do not essentially support human happiness. The personal and familial situation for Lizzie, and especially Jenny—her physical ailments and childhood abuse—seemingly stand at odds with human happiness, and yet these two characters represent and embody the moral imagination.

By establishing the moral imagination within these lower class, “uneducated” characters, Dickens again diverges from the viewpoint of Stewart. Stewart ascribes to a more negative view of the lower classes than Dickens: “the lower animals, as far as we are able to judge, are entirely occupied with the objects of their present perceptions: and the case is nearly the same with the inferior orders of our own species” (375). Although Stewart relegates the poor to “the lower orders” of our human species, who cannot perceive objects of imagination, Dickens’s depiction of Lizzie and Jenny contradict Stewart’s view entirely. Irrespective of their social and financial circumstances, both avidly and powerfully perceive objects of imagination, objects which intertwine with and powerfully influence the objects of their present perceptions. Rather than poverty or

illiteracy, what becomes problematic for the development of the imagination are the institutions which stunt the imagination.

In *Lizzie Hexam*, Dickens reimagines a very different Louisa Gradgrind. Lizzie often stares into the fire, much in the same way as Louisa, but where Louisa sees nothing, Lizzie sees living, moving pictures: “as I sit a-looking at the fire, I seem to see in the burning coal—like where that glow is now...It’s that dull glow...coming and going...When I look at it of an evening, it comes like pictures to me, Charley” (Dickens, *OMF* 37). Lizzie’s fire-gazing, associated with glowing light, burning coals, and “coming and going,” create a living narrative that starkly contrasts the ash and smoke and emptiness of Louisa’s vacant gazing. What Lizzie reads in the fire speaks to the past as well as to the future, combining past, present, and future possibilities into a readable, knowable narrative. Lizzie’s brother Charley states that “[y]ou said you couldn’t read a book, Lizzie. Your library of books is the hollow down by the flare, I think” (Dickens, *OMF* 39). Despite her inability to read and her lack of schooling, Lizzie has been able to engage her imagination in the midst of her dreary circumstances; even Charley admits “Lizzie has as much thought as the best...Too much, perhaps without teaching...she was always full of fancies—sometimes quite wise fancies” (Dickens, *OMF* 230).²⁶

By being outside the state-funded schools, Lizzie is able to read the stories in “the hollow down by the flare.” Her brother Charley, quickly becoming another churned out pianoforte leg, cannot read in Lizzie’s way and soon comes to disdain Lizzie’s fancies. Calling Lizzie “such a dreamer,” he asks her to control her “fancies a little,” rudely imploring her to stop her fancies and to discontinue living so close to the Thames: “it was

all very well when we sat before the fire—when we looked into the hollow down by the flare—but we are looking into the real world, now” (Dickens, *OMF* 227, 228). Charley’s “real world” practicality parallels the droning system of the public schools and conflicts with Lizzie’s fantastic dreaming. His disgust and aversion for the Thames stems from its signification of their poor and illiterate father. Lizzie’s fire-gazing, like the Thames, is indicative of life with their father, a life and living predicated upon collecting corpses from the murky depths of the river.

In the face of her ambiguous social position and illiteracy, Lizzie’s fire-fancies depict her engaged, moral imagination. Though not a fire-gazer, the same manifestations of the moral imagination are apparent in Jenny Wren. Marginal socially as well as physically, Jenny’s ecstatic, lyrical refrain to “come up and be dead” depicts the unique nature of her imaginative visions. In a ramshackle garden on the roof of Fascination Fledgeby’s Pubsey and Co., Jenny explains to Fledgeby what it means to be dead. In the midst of “the City’s roar” and smoke, one feels “so peaceful and so thankful! And you hear the people who are alive, crying, and working, and calling to one another down in the close dark streets, and you seem to pity them so! And such a chain has fallen from you, and such a strange good sorrowful happiness comes upon you!” (Dickens, *OMF* 279). Being dead keeps the narrow streets and the crying, calling people in sight as it simultaneously positions Jenny temporarily above and outside the “close dark streets,” letting the chain fall away and making the people’s pain visible. Jenny’s language contrasts images of confinement—the streets, the chain, the smoke—with the peace and tranquility and freedom of clouds, mountains, and wind (Dickens *OMF* 279). The images

of confinement in this passage center upon the city and the people caught in its dark, tight grip, signifying that the plight of the masses is also a kind of confinement, the kind of confinement pathologized in *Headstone*. If Jenny were confined in the dark streets along with the crying masses, their pain would be invisible to her, because she would be crying and in pain along with them, just as she is when the children in white come to her and say, “ ‘Who is this in pain! Who is this in pain!...Come and play with us!’ When I [Jenny] said ‘I never play! I can’t play!’ they swept about me and took me up, and made me light” (Dickens, *OMF* 238).

Being dead acts as a more complex rendition of this romantic, childhood fantasy of the children in white. Jenny tells Lizzie and Wrayburn how these children “were not like me; they were not chilled, anxious, ragged, or beaten; they were never in pain...they never made me tremble all over, by setting up shrill noises, and they never mocked me;” the children in white “swept about me and took me up, and made me light. Then it was all delicious ease and rest till they laid me down” (Dickens, *OMF* 238). In this passage, Dickens highlights the mental and physical separation this ecstatic state provides Jenny’s mind—the glorious, ethereal height of “delicious ease and rest”—by opposing it to images of physical and mental confinement—Jenny’s pain, her twisted, cold, and beaten body, her violent, drunken father, and the children who mock her. Her distorted body and her personal pain are a physical form of confinement that could produce a distorting mental confinement as well. But her fancies of the children in white prohibit her distorted body and abusive father from corrupting her interior, from allowing her body to become a prison. Jenny can exist within her present situation without becoming morally

and mentally corrupt because of her fancies. Without them, she would be where the masses are, where the children in white found her, crying and in pain. Being dead elicits an imaginative, ecstatic state, similar to Lizzie's fire-reading that makes the plight of others, the narrative of others, distinctly visible. Jenny's being dead hinges upon the mental freedom created by giving way to imaginative phantasmagoria while still remaining connected to and responsive to the world. The children in white return Jenny just as she comes down from the heights of Fledgeby's roof to the dark streets below.

Though Dickens locates the engaged and cultivated imagination in Lizzie and Jenny, he does not simply celebrate their illiteracy or elevate them to idealized, illiterate paragons. Their acquired literacy becomes the signifying image of an adaptation of the imagination that in turn strengthens it. When Fledgeby happens upon Lizzie and Jenny on the rooftop, they are reading together, prospering from Riah's tutelage: "they both pored over one book; both with attentive faces; Jenny with the sharper; Lizzie with the more perplexed" (Dickens, *OMF* 276). The attentive faces they display depict the absorption produced by their reading as well as their differing experiences of the same book. In this scene, Dickens links their reading to Jenny's description of the visionary experience of being dead. The act of reading strengthens their imaginations as it simultaneously strengthens their connection to the world. Analogous to being dead, imaginative reading, rather than cram or rote learning, allows adaptation and revision and is another means by which one can temporarily transcend personal experience to engage with the plight of another.

Dickens remedies Lizzie's and Jenny's illiteracy, but in doing so, he illustrates a more complete, morally and imaginatively successful education than the one currently existing in the state-funded schools. The newly literate Lizzie and Jenny, who still retain their "street smarts," also "serve as a prototype for popular literature's ability to reshape social rote learning," and to undo "the limitations and exclusions associated with gender and social class in the context of a democratic cultural politics" (Winter 265). Through characters such as Lizzie and Jenny, as well as Sissy, Dickens remedies the fact/fancy binary that plagues rote learning and produces mechanical Bitzers and violently pathological Headstones. Dickens does not simply replace education with illiteracy and romantic visions, but through the characterization of Sissy, Lizzie, and Jenny, Dickens allows fact and fancy to freely intermingle, letting horses walk upon walls and fires tell stories.

Hard Times and *Our Mutual Friend* exhibit Dickens's demechanization and democratization of association psychology through his view of a productive imagination. Dickens illustrates the associative mind as a mind, irrespective of class, that is capable of revision and change just as it is capable of degeneration and demise. Moral awareness stems from the ability of the imagination to synthesize simultaneous realities, allowing the sensations of another's existence to combine with one's own—which the reading of novels possibly affords. An act which contributes to the cultivation of the imagination and adaptation, imaginative reading bears with it the potentiality to free the reader from mental confinement and locate the reader on Fledgby's roof along with Jenny, or in the street along with Dickens, holding the creature's rags in his hand. Emphasizing the

democratic nature of the productive imagination, Dickens's writing calls his readers to "come up and be dead," so that as they look into the burning embers of the hollow down by the flare, they do not look into emptiness and smoke but into the innumerable stories and living faces glowing in the red-hot coals.

¹ Moral management has often been associated with Foucaultian discipline and subject formation. Many critics view moral management as a tool Dickens employed to regulate his own readers, an argument that tends to collapse moral management with Dickens's view of moral growth and relegate the novel to an asylum. See Dransfield; see Lamb.

² Winter's work emphasizes the relation between associationism and Dickens's serialization of his novels. She examines how the practice of reading a serial novel resembles the activity of the mind postulated by association psychology.

³ See Kearns 111; see Warren 3.

⁴ Dickens owned a copy of Stewart's seminal work *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1843) and Elliotson's *Human Physiology* (1840). The first volume of Stewart's *Elements* appeared in 1792, the second volume in 1814, and the third not until 1827. Although we cannot know for certain that Dickens read his copy of Stewart's work, Stewart definitely influenced Elliotson and popularized association psychology in Britain. In addition, there are many similarities between Stewart's writings and Dickens's writings.

⁵ Kearney calls this imagination "the productive imagination" and "the transcendental imagination," generally preferring the use of transcendental imagination, since he only refers to it as the productive imagination once. I've adopted Kearney's term "productive imagination" in this chapter, because I believe it encapsulates Dickens's understanding and implementation of the imagination in his writing.

⁶ David Hume profoundly influenced Kant's early view of the imagination despite the fundamental difference between Kant's philosophy and Hume's.

⁷ Despite Stewart being "the first British philosopher of any significance to discuss Kant," he is typically not associated with a very sophisticated understanding of the German philosopher (Friday 265). See Friday 264-265.

⁸ John Stewart Mill famously states in his 1832 essay "On Genius," "[m]odern education is all cram—Latin cram, mathematical cram, literary cram, political cram, theological cram, moral cram. The world already knows everything, and has only to tell it to its children, who, on their part, have only to hear and lay it to rote (not to *heart*)."

⁹ Though Winter observes this characteristic of Dickensian associationism, her emphasis is on Dickens's critique of the use of memory in the Victorian education system—learning by rote—and not on Dickens's productive imagination and the effect of institutionalized confinement on the imagination. She provides Dickens's alternative,

learning by heart, as his view of the proper role of memory and the foundation for his conception of associationism. See 226-229.

¹⁰ Both Dames and Kearns point out this feature of traditional associationism, which does seem to preclude “original thought or free action,” though Kearns notes that Dickens “went far beyond his contemporaries’ use of associationism by...allowing a person’s mind to be *re-formed* through the agency of the heart” (Kearns 112). Dames observes that associationism “is a strong *binding* of mental operations; whether the memories elicited by a given sensation are contiguous (in original time) or similar (in thematic contour)” (131). Dames interprets Dickens’s use of associationism through this traditional lens. See Dames 125-148.

¹¹ Dickens begins this article with a quotation from Washington Irving in which Irving’s uncle, “lay with his eyes half closed...His fancy was already wandering...he was just falling asleep” (“Lying” 24). Dickens explains that this same phenomenon occurs for him “with my eyes wide open” (“Lying” 24).

¹² For a discussion of the relation between Dickens’s night walking and his writing process, see Bodenheimer 179-182. The blurring of Dickens and the creature here speaks to Bodenheimer’s point that Dickens often felt himself to be one of his own “images of insomniac self-destruction” (181).

¹³ Dickens writes to John Forster after his visit, describing the prison as “a dreadful, fearful place,” and stating, I never shall be able to dismiss from my mind the impressions of that day...for they are written, beyond all power of erasure, in my brain” (*Letters* 3. 123-124).

¹⁴ Winter observes that “*Our Mutual Friend* inverts a liberal theory of knowledge diffusion from the cultural elites down to the masses...[Lizzie and Jenny Wren] represent a resurgence of moral influence, originality, and productive economic activity...from the “bottom” up (261-262). I would extend this “bottom up” moral influence to Sissy Jupe as well, who is the precursor to Lizzie and Jenny.

¹⁵ Along with Sissy, Sleary’s circus is often viewed as the antithesis of Gradgrind’s classroom. According to Margeret Simpson, the circus contained a specific ingredient, “termed ‘spontaneity, ‘fancy,’ ‘imagination,’ ‘romance,’ [and] was to Dickens the imperative, inherent human attribute which impels and nurtures creativity and happiness. Without it, you may as well be a machine” (131). For Simpson, Gradgrind’s classroom exhibits those “soul-denying systems of thought [which] could infiltrate all aspects of life, from the education of children to work on the factory-floor” (131).

¹⁶ Bitzer’s “correct” definitions and repulsive character throughout the novel “suggest that the regulation and socialization of emotion may indeed be horribly successful” (Matus 17).

¹⁷ Paroissien notes “The rhetorical effect of the repeated clauses heightens the fanciful idea that England’s Normal Schools operated on the same principles as factories, mechanically producing teachers...Yet the comparison is historically accurate...the total in fact is low in comparison with figures supplied by the Newcastle Commission in 1861...the number of certified teachers employed in Britain rose from 2,836 in 1854 to 6,878 in 1859” (272-273).

¹⁸ For a discussion of Dickens on elephants, see Ketabgian 660-666.

¹⁹ Dickens often implements the metaphor of fire in his fiction to represent the features of the productive imagination. He uses this metaphor in his opening piece for *Household Words*, “A Preliminary Word,” stating, “we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which according to its nurture burns with an inspiring flame or sinks into a sullen glare” (Dickens, “Preliminary” 1). In this famous line, Dickens uses fire to attest to the essential, innate nature of the imagination, irrespective of social class. Like a spark in a fireside, the imagination, depending upon its cultivation, can either become “an inspiring flame” or something dangerous, a “sullen glare.” Dickens’s use of fire for the imagination also suggests the adaptability of the imagination and its underlying active rather than passive nature. Fire is not a stagnant object; it is a kind of living entity able to modify and adapt depending upon its cultivation. It can either warm a hearth or destroy an entire estate home, which Dickens witnessed when he attended the burned ruins of the Hatfield House. Ever fascinated with fire, his report on the fire at the Hatfield House, “The Late Calamitous Event at Hatfield House,” describes the smoking ruins and metaphorically suggests the devastating effects of a corrupted imagination: “[t]hey [the ruins] are still smoking, and the whole of the west wing of the mansion (to which the ravages of the fire were fortunately confined) presents a melancholy picture of ruin and desolation” (24).

²⁰ The circus exemplifies Dickens’s rendition of an education that cultivates the imagination and the heart. For a discussion of the circus as an embodiment of the healthy imagination and the importance of the circus to Dickens, see Simpson. Gallagher complicates the traditional view of the circus by examining its relation to types of labor and theories of political economy, showing how even a clown, “like the metaphorical elephant in the factory, goes ‘melancholy mad’” (80).

²¹ Paroissien argues that “the intensity of Bradley’s pathology” indicts pupil-teachers trained at the Battersea Training College, displaying the “dubious educational priorities [of] Normal Schools” (272). Paroissien suggests that Dickens expressed doubts concerning the induction of “pupils into the profession from backgrounds similar to those of Headstone and [Charley] Hexam” (272). Whereas I argue that Dickens’s doubts stem from the problematic content and practice of the schools, in which class mobility derives from mechanically implementing and internalizing a false middle class value system that stunts the imagination.

²² For a discussion of Dickens’s relation to the history of state-funded schools, see Paroissien; see Winter 231-254.

²³ Winter claims that the educational system in England created a “socially ambiguous class” in the production of its teachers from lower class backgrounds. Teachers like Headstone are caught between their origins and their aspirations towards middle class, which their education and position seems to afford them but which they cannot attain. However, like the narrator’s description of Headstone’s clothes, many were aware of how the education of these teachers could not “compensate for the lack of ‘general cultivation of mind’ typical of a middle- or upper-class upbringing” (Winter 247). See Winter 243-354.

²⁴ Dickens’s use of “mental warehouse” to describe Headstone’s mind resembles his description of M’Choakumchild’s mind, showing them to both be products of the same

system: “The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s hair, which bristled on the skirts of the bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface...as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside” (*HT* 7).

²⁵ Winter compares Headstone’s form of learning and teaching to Podsnappery. See Winter 242.

²⁶ Lizzie’s library of fancy and fire evokes the nameless man from *The Old Curiosity Shop*, who gives Nell and her grandfather lodging one night in a factory. Also illiterate, he is another precursor to Lizzie, telling Nell,

“See yonder there—that’s *my* friend.”

“The fire!” said the child.

“It has been alive as long as I have...We talk and think together all night long...It’s like a book to me,” he said—“the only book I ever learned to read; and many an old story it tells me...It has its pictures, too. You don’t know how many strange faces and different scenes I trace in the red-hot coals. It’s my memory, that fire, and shows me all my life.” (Dickens, *OCS* 41).

Chapter 4. Evanescent Frames of Mind:

The Will, The Imagination, and the Psychology of Self-Loss in George Eliot

As it is commonly known, Eliot became avidly engaged with both the philosophical and the scientific discourse of her time, reading widely and voraciously the works of her contemporaries, including many writers in the mental sciences.¹ On account of her deep and consistent intellectual engagement, Eliot's views concerning human consciousness evolved from her early evangelical moralism to a view that tended to fall between idealism and more materialist, evolutionary theories. Knowing firsthand the painful burden of seeing oneself defined by the dictates of a divided consciousness, Eliot rejected the moralistic, split systems advocated by certain physiological psychologists of her time, such as A.L. Wigan, who subscribed to moral management. Instead she aligned herself more closely to theories commonly associated with Sir Henry Holland and Herbert Spencer, who both viewed consciousness as a fluidity in which various states interpenetrated one another. Their preoccupation suggests an issue in physiological psychology largely in the air during Eliot's time, which she developed in her novels *The Mill on the Floss* and *Romola*.

Like Charlotte Brontë and Charles Dickens, Eliot was particularly interested in the boundaries between waking states and semi-conscious states, and she very often employed these states and explored their blurred parameters within her fiction. Even prior to Lewes's use of "stream of sensation" to describe consciousness in the second volume of his final work *The Problems of Life and Mind* (1877), Eliot depicts an underlying and fundamental fluidity in which waking states and semi-conscious states

shift continually, and often imperceptibly, into one another. Her representation of the natural evanescence of mental states undermines the binaries that frequently characterized their categorization, including the binary that separated and distinguished the mind from the body. Examining Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Romola* (1863) in the context of nineteenth-century theories of consciousness reveals how Eliot connects the intrinsic fluidity of the mind to the physical body. As she challenges current espousals of dualism, Eliot also complicates materialist conceptions of the mind, presenting a more complex theory of the multifaceted conglomeration of physiological and psychological factors that constitute individual consciousness. In doing so, Eliot destabilizes popular beliefs that claim a governing human volition is essential for morality; in her display of the physicality inherent in self-loss and textual transmission, she presents the necessity of a fully integrated imagination, mind, and body for morality and sympathy.

In an 1839 letter to her childhood governess and religious mentor Maria Lewis, a young George Eliot describes a pervading and distressful mental anxiety — one that would come to influence her fiction. Still within the throes of her evangelical ardor, Eliot laments to Lewis that the “disjointed specimens” of history, poetry, science, and philosophy have become “all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast thickening every day accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations” (Eliot, *Letters* 1 29). This early letter illustrates Eliot's fears of the disjointed nature of her mind as much or perhaps more than the disjointed nature of the many things occupying it. Apparently feeling the weight of religious guilt for such a confession, she

retracts her complaint and apologizes to Lewis for it; but, then she immediately contradicts her retraction and defends her mental struggle by shifting her focus from her individual moral failure to a universal psychological failure:

How deplorably and unaccountably evanescent are our frames of mind, as various as the forms and hues of the summer clouds. A single word is sometimes enough to give an entirely new mould to our thoughts; at least I find myself so constituted, and therefore to me it is pre-eminently important to be anchored within the veil, so that outward things may only act as winds to agitating sails, and be unable to send me adrift. (*Letters I 30*)

Possibly fearing a rebuke from the devoutly religious Lewis, Eliot finds it necessary to call upon the evanescence of “*our frames of mind*” to characterize her early struggle with the painful inconsistency of her own conscious states and the failure of her will to properly regulate them. On the one hand, Eliot seems to feel a sense of guilt that her consciousness can be so influenced by “a single word” that her household duties and her spiritual life suffer. She equates this aspect of her mind with a deplorable moral failing that threatens to set her adrift from her religious and domestic foundation. But on the other hand, Eliot exposes her resentment at the household anxieties and everyday vexations that are able to smother and petrify the extraordinary workings of her mind. To prevent herself from “saying anything still more discreditable to my head and heart,” she imagines herself as a child “wand’ring far alone,/ That none might rouse me from my waking dream” (*Letters I 30*). In the midst of her momentary defiance and imaginative solitude, Eliot awakes from her dream to the disheartening and painful revelation of “life’s dull path and earth’s deceitful hope” (*Letters I 30*). This seemingly irreconcilable split between her waking dreams and “life’s dull path” induce her to remain within the

confines of her duty and faith, but this split also begins to unravel her belief in a moralized, bifurcated mind.

The will and unconscious cerebration

By the 1850s, William Benjamin Carpenter, one of the most influential figures in physiological psychology, had significantly altered the terms of the discussion surrounding ecstatic states, and he also altered the entire conception and role of the unconscious in Victorian physiological psychology. For Carpenter the tension is between the will and his conception of the unconscious, or the automatic action of the mind. In his 1855 fifth edition of *Human Physiology*, he develops his concept of “unconscious cerebration.” He defines this as “the *automatic* action of the cerebrum...*without any consciousness* on our own part,” an action one only becomes aware of once it has taken place (*Human* 607). He argues that unconscious cerebration is not produced by the will, since unconscious cerebration produces reflex actions occurring in the midst of imaginative or intellectual rapture, which he names ideo-motor actions. Ideo-motor actions exist completely independent of volition or emotion and are in fact, suspensions of will.

When in a state of unconscious cerebration in which “the influence of the Will over the current of thought is suspended,” Carpenter argues, “the individual becomes a thinking automaton, destitute of the power to withdraw his attention from any idea or feeling by which his mind may be possessed” and is compelled to act “as the lower animals are to act in obedience to their instincts” (*Human* 627). Carpenter’s claim

capitalizes on the fear of self-loss already resonant within physiological psychology, but he claims self-loss has a dehumanizing effect, reducing the individual to a “thinking automaton” or an animal. For Carpenter the will constitutes the nobility of man, “which does not depend for its existence on any play of Physical or Vital forces, but which makes these forces subservient to its determinations. It is in fact in virtue of the Will that we are *not* mere thinking Automata, mere puppets to be pulled by suggesting-strings, capable of being played-upon by every one who shall have made himself master of our springs of action” (Carpenter 554). It is only through the will’s predominance over the other vital forces that one is not “a mere puppet” and suspended in a state lower than that of animals. Eliot’s fiction conveys her fascination with Carpenter’s description of unconscious cerebration, but it also illustrates her dispute with and divergence from his elevation of the will, which still categorizes the mind in hierarchical terms. This hierarchy correlates to Carpenter’s promotion of a much more dualistic model of the mind, in which mind and body are in relation but “the Mind may have an existence altogether independent of the Material body” (554), a view that Eliot’s novels question and seek to overturn.

Unlike the evangelical Mary Ann Evans, the author George Eliot recognizes that the human mind exhibits the interpenetration of conscious and unconscious states, which are not separable or always controllable entities, and are indivisible from the physical body. Eliot’s writing shows her preference for fluid models of consciousness, such as those of her physician Sir Henry Holland and her friend Herbert Spencer. Holland challenged split views of consciousness that made firm divisions between sleeping and

waking, sanity and insanity, and the healthy and the ill, advocating instead a fluid, multiplicitous model of consciousness and the body.³ For Holland mental states are in a continuous flux—constantly moving, fluctuating, and parodying one another. Rick Rylance notes how “Holland is interested in the intersections of different states of consciousness...as the blurring that can occur between dream and fully attentive wakefulness” (131). Unlike many of Holland’s predecessors and some of his contemporaries, Holland refuses to reduce the various shapes and hues of consciousness to a split moralized system.

Herbert Spencer’s model of consciousness, which works in quite a similar way to this particular aspect of Holland’s, also seems to have attracted Eliot. Spencer examines consciousness from an evolutionary standpoint in which the many variations of unconscious states underpin consciousness itself. He claims in *The Principles of Psychology* that “consciousness can neither arise nor be maintained without the occurrence of differences in its state. It must ever be passing from some one state into a different state. In other words — there must be a *continuous differentiation* of its states” (300). For Spencer, the integration and classification of these states becomes the key to understanding human existence.

Eliot decouples the hierarchical nature of will from Carpenter’s theory of unconscious cerebration and demonstrates unconscious cerebration within a fluid mental system of continuous differentiation that hinges upon the imagination and its inseparable relation to the body. Years after Eliot writes *The Mill on the Floss* and *Romola*, her partner George Henry Lewes writes in *Problems of Life and Mind*: “actions, sensations,

emotions, and thoughts are subject to causal determination no less rigorously than the movements of the planets or the fluctuations of the waves. Indeed, no modern thinker of any worth would affirm that our volitions are uncaused,—are freed from the inexorable subjection to conditions” (102). Eliot’s novels prefigure Lewes’s claim, and she explores the many complex and even paradoxical conditions that determine human action, sensation, emotion, and thought, envisioning human consciousness as a holistic mind-body amalgamation. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie illustrates Eliot’s fluid model, particularly the intrinsic physical pleasure that permeates Maggie’s various ecstatic states and experiences of self-loss, as well as the naturally fluctuating and contradictory nature of her consciousness. In *Romola*, Eliot exhibits how the suspension of Romola’s will enables the development and practice of sympathy and carves out a space for the potentiality of moral action. She explicitly links this suspension with textual transmission, which impacts the physical body as it alters states of mind. The weakened body and damaged mind of Baldassarre in *Romola* displays the literal horror of a mind severed from the imagination and sympathy but with a heightened faculty of will that forces the subservience of the other vital forces. Together these novels exhibit a full and yet multifaceted picture of Eliot’s physiological system and the many factors that constitute human consciousness.

Jam and Idleness: The Mill on the Floss

The Mill on the Floss is marked by Eliot’s exploration of the relation between semi-conscious states, the imagination, and the will. Critics have often noted Eliot’s

engagement with scientific discourse and her descriptions of imaginative absorption. In *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology*, Michael Davis focuses on “the problematic relationships between society, heredity, and the self,” emphasizing the novel’s engagement with Darwinian theories of instinct and heredity (56). Delia da Sousa Correa takes into account Darwinian evolutionary theory in conjunction with Spencer’s theory. She discusses Maggie’s psychological movement between consciousness and oblivion within the schema of musical memory. For da Sousa Correa, “musical memory conspicuously dissolves categories of time and individuality” in its erosion of the distinctions dividing consciousness from oblivion (542). Besides evolutionary discourse, Maggie’s semi-conscious states are often associated with problematic ways of reading. Karen Hottle writes that Maggie’s incomplete knowledge and flights of fancy are Eliot’s exploration of “the relationship between ‘book learning,’ knowledge drawn from experience, and creative intelligence” (37). Similarly, Henry Alley discusses the problematic nature of Maggie’s propensity to absorb texts “without assimilation” (190). Debra Gettelman views Maggie’s habit of reading and day-dreaming as an example of the practice of forecasting, fantasizing and predicting one’s own ideas of a novel’s ending, which Gettelman connects to novel serialization (29).⁴ I find that *The Mill on the Floss* illuminates Eliot’s development of her psychological system, predicated upon the natural flux of conscious and unconscious states, which she visibly links to suspended states of imaginative sympathy and reading. This approach circumvents the endless critical debates surrounding the morality in Maggie’s elopement

with and renunciation of Stephen. I will argue that these actions suggest Eliot's own endeavor to prevent her reader from engaging in the practice of rigid moralizations.

The sensorial reverie that opens *The Mill on the Floss* is imbued with a complexity that blurs the distinctions between the body, sense perception, semi-consciousness, and dreaming espoused by many of Eliot's contemporaries, including George Henry Lewes. Lewes wrote *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859-1860) while Eliot was writing *The Mill on the Floss*. Eliot and Lewes were both clearly invested in one another's work and often engaged in similar theoretical endeavors. Lewes accompanied Eliot on her trip to Dorsetshire to study mills, and he also addresses the sound of the mill-wheel, a central image in Eliot's novel and in this opening chapter. Despite their often mutual interests and preoccupations, Eliot's theory and representations of the mind are not simply duplications in narrative form of Lewes's theories. But Lewes's formulations do offer a thought-provoking contrast and addition to Eliot's, providing a fuller picture of the complexity and distinctiveness of Eliot's depictions of the mind in her novels.

Depicting the narrator's reminiscent, dreamy state, the opening chapter in *The Mill on the Floss* moves between scenes of the river, an unknown waggoner and his horses crossing the bridge, and images of a young Maggie Tulliver. Eliot explores the way in which a distinctive, recalled sound transforms into other sounds as the content of the narrator's dream shifts. Lewes's discussion of sense perception in *The Physiology of Common Life* also focuses on sound, but Lewes concentrates on currently heard sounds and does not depict the layered complexity conveyed by Eliot in this opening chapter.

Lewes notes that while listening to an unmistakable sound, such as that of a mill-wheel, we often cease to “hear” it as if it has actually ceased. He argues that the sound, after influencing our thoughts in a certain way, stops being noticeable or ceases to stimulate what he calls “reflex-feelings” (*Physiology* 57-58). The state of Eliot’s narrator models the multiple variations that often occur within a reverie or dream, but instead of the sound becoming unnoticeable, the dream hinges upon the medium of remembered sound within which various images imperceptibly combine and shift, creating a complex amalgamation of sensation and memory within the space of the narrator’s dream.⁵ Eliot returns to reconceive her exploration of sound and reverie later in the novel when Maggie listens to Stephen singing, and even after the song is over and she returns to her bedroom, “the music was vibrating in her still” (*MF* 385).

The sound of the river in the narrator’s reverie mirrors the effect on the mind produced by a dreaming or reverie state; the great sound of the river paradoxically creates a luxurious silence. But it is not an aural silence; it is rather a kind of solitude, a self-loss, that derives from ecstatic states: “[t]he rush of the water, and the booming of the mill, bring a dreamy deafness, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They are like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world beyond” (Eliot, *MF* 8). Eliot’s narrator experiences the “dreamy deafness” characteristic of suspended states of semi-consciousness, which serves to intensify the content of her dream by excluding any reality external to it. The river’s “great curtain of sound” then transforms into “the thunder of the huge covered waggon coming home with sacks of grain” (Eliot, *MF* 8). The remembered sound of the river produces another remembered sound, the sound of a

wagon and horses coming over the bridge, which shifts the narrator's focus into a new narrative direction: "That honest waggoner is thinking of his dinner, getting sadly dry in the oven at this late hour; but he will not touch it till he has fed his horses,—the strong, submissive, meek-eyed beasts, who I fancy, are looking mild reproach at him from between their blinkers, that he should crack his whip at them in that awful manner, as if they needed that hint!" (Eliot *MF* 8). The sound of the river not only transitions into another sound, the wagon and horses, but this external, physical sense transforms into the interiority of the driver thinking of his dinner, drying out in the oven, and into the interiority of the horses, who look upon the driver in reproach as he cracks his whip at them to hurry home. Within the dream, the materiality of one sense becomes the immateriality of thought. As the waggoner and his horses disappear and their sound is no longer heard, the narrator "can turn my eyes towards the mill again, and watch the unresting wheel sending out its diamond jets of water. That little girl is watching it too" (Eliot, *MF* 8). As the narrator becomes aware of the sound of the water on the mill wheel, she at last sees the young form of Maggie Tulliver and her barking dog, who inspire further imaginative conjectures on the part of the narrator.

The shifting and multi-layered dream of Eliot's narrator marks the natural movement of the mind between various and distinct, remembered sensations and images, which culminate when the narrator presses her arms into the stone bridge, watching Maggie, and simultaneously returning to the story she has been telling:

[i]t is time, too, for me to leave off resting my arms on the cold stone of this bridge...

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote

Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago. Before I dozed off, I was going to tell you what Mr and Mrs Tulliver were talking about...on that very afternoon I have been dreaming of. (*MF* 8-9)

Just as remembered physical senses transform into the immateriality of thought, Eliot depicts how the physicality of the body, the growing numbness of the narrator's arms pressed into the bridge that is in fact her chair, is indivisible from the narrator's imaginative state. Within the opening chapter, Eliot exhibits the fluidity of consciousness, designated by its propensity to continual mental wanderings in conjunction with a model of integrated imaginative and physical sense perception. Through her characterization of the narrator's reverie, she also links these same states to artistic production: the imagined narrative of the waggoner and his horses, Maggie and her dog, and the narrator's framing story of the Tullivers.

In Eliot's final work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, she clearly connects semi-conscious states to the act of writing. The author Theophrastus "imagine[s] a far-off, hazy, multitudinous assemblage, as in a picture of Paradise, making an approving chorus to the sentences and paragraphs of which I myself particularly enjoy the writing. The haze is a necessary condition. If any physiognomy becomes distinct in the foreground, it is fatal" (*Impressions* 12). The link between the necessary haze of semi-consciousness and aesthetic production does suggest Carpenter's claim that reveries occur in minds tending toward excessive emotion and imagination. Eliot even states something similar in her 1857 essay "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young," writing, "wherever abstractions appear to excite strong emotion, this occurs in men of active intellect and imagination" (47). Maggie Tulliver, especially prone to states

of reverie and abstraction, certainly displays both excessive emotion and imagination. Though not a writer, Maggie is an avid reader, and narratives comprise an essential part of her consciousness as well as her understanding of the world. But Eliot's clear indication of the narrator's engagement in these states decouples them from the moralism inherent in Eliot's own early discomfort and in Maggie's fear of them, showing these states to be natural states of consciousness—fluid, complicated, and vital.⁶ Within the novel, the young Maggie Tulliver continually oscillates between trance-like states and states of acute, painful consciousness. Like the young Mary Ann Evans, Maggie struggles between her evanescent frames of mind, which mentally and physically set her adrift, and her overwhelming need to be firmly and mindfully anchored.

An almost unbearable emotional upheaval underpins one of Maggie's earliest, most violent shifts in consciousness. When Mrs. Tulliver declares that no one will love Maggie anymore, Maggie is hurled into the throes of uncontrollable impulse, and she punishes a wooden doll—the Fetish—with all the ferocity her thunderous passions can muster. Maggie soothes “herself by alternately grinding and beating the wooden head against the rough brick of the great chimneys” (Eliot *MF* 28). The initial sensation of such intense, heart-wrenching pain fuses into the furious passion by which she grinds the doll into the hard surfaces of the attic. This repetitive, phantasmatic punishment creates a semi-conscious state that, Eliot writes, “expelled every other form of consciousness—even the memory of the grievance that had caused it” (*MF* 28).⁷ Maggie's punishment of the Fetish reenacts and adapts “the picture of Jael destroying Sisera in the old Bible” (*MF* 28), exhibiting Eliot's link of Maggie's fetish-reverie to narrative. For after a previous

punishment, Maggie “reflected that if she drove many nails in, she would not be so well able to fancy that the head was hurt when she knocked it against the wall, nor to comfort it, and make believe to poultice it, when the fury was abated” (*MF* 28). Thus Maggie modifies the Jael and Sisera narrative and her own physical actions to suit her emotional and imaginative needs. Eliot confines Maggie’s self-loss to the ecstatic state and allows her to retrieve both the content of the reverie and her physical behavior within it, so that she may alter the narrative to achieve the utmost affective intensity. The violent, erotic physicality of grinding and beating the doll instead of driving nails into its head still enables Maggie to enter a semi-conscious state whose content consists of a layered, imaginative narrative in which Maggie becomes Jael and the doll transforms into the form of Aunt Glegg or Mrs. Tulliver who then transforms into Sisera. The pleasurable self-loss induced by Maggie’s physical embodiment of narrative within her trance-like state enables her to negotiate her pain and fury, providing an emotional recovery from the harsh words of her mother.⁸ For soon afterwards, she “throw[s] away the Fetish and run[s] to the window. The sun was really breaking out: the sound of the mill seemed cheerful again” (*MF* 28). Rather than being indicative of a moral or even a mental debility, Maggie’s dramatic shifts from dark rage to cheerfulness and from furious punishment to comfort exhibit the natural and dynamic, even pleasurable, fluctuations that are intrinsic to consciousness.

Maggie’s troubled and painful conflicts throughout the novel do not necessarily derive from the reverie states themselves but from her own growing misinterpretation and fear of them. One of the most telling scenes occurs when Maggie shares unequal halves

of a jam puff with her brother Tom. Tom commands Maggie to choose a half with her eyes shut or “else you shan’t have any” (*MF* 45). Blindly, Maggie chooses the bigger half and then begs Tom to take it, but he refuses: “Maggie, thinking it was no use to contend further, began too, and ate her half puff with considerable relish as well as rapidity...Maggie didn’t know Tom was looking at her; she was seesawing on the elder bough, lost to almost everything but a vague sense of jam and idleness” (*MF* 46). Eliot highlights the intense, delicious pleasure of the puff that creates Maggie’s sensorial reverie as she is swept up and lost in this pleasing tide of “jam and idleness.” The sensory pleasure of the jam both constitutes and becomes coextensive with a semi-conscious, sugary sweet idleness that shuts out both Tom and external reality. The “dreamy deafness” of her absorption is hindered by Tom’s assertion that Maggie has committed a transgression: “O you greedy thing!” (*MF* 46). Tom reads Maggie’s half-conscious, jam-filled reverie as the mirror image of his own greed and selfishness. Overcome with his own covetous desire in the face of her sated pleasure, Tom interprets it as an all-encompassing, narcissistic, depraved, and greedy exclusion; it is as if Tom divides Maggie’s consciousness into the unequal halves of the jam puff itself, quite analogous to Wigan’s double cerebrum. Tom’s moralistic interpretation of Maggie’s ecstasy intrudes upon her ability to contemplate the experience for herself. Desiring Tom’s approval above all else, Maggie begins to view her own consciousness and related experience of physical pleasure through the guilt and fear that Tom’s judgment constructs. Maggie’s surrender to jam and idleness and her immediate punishment for it mark a turning point for Maggie. She begins to see the pleasure produced by these states,

and by extension her own natural shifts in consciousness, through the lens of the divided puff. Misperceiving the natural fluidity of her own consciousness, Maggie divides herself into two irreconcilable and conflicted selves, thus Maggie's growing sense of a moralized, bifurcated mind is illustrated by the novel to be a painfully mistaken perception.

Needing a narrative by which to prevent her mental lapses and their link to her troubling aesthetic desires, impulses and ensuing physical pleasure, Maggie misinterprets the beautiful, poignant writings of Thomas à Kempis. She believes his philosophy of renunciation will satisfy her and act as a surrogate for the wayward nature of her unruly consciousness. Instead of reading his writings as a chronicle of deep "human needs and human consolations...the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness" of all humankind (Eliot, *MF* 291), Maggie comes to view his writing as a flawless key by which to interpret her present circumstances and tribulations. Maggie views à Kempis's philosophy of renunciation as "the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain...Maggie was still panting for happiness and was *in ecstasy* because she had found the key to it...this voice out of the far-off middle ages was the direct communication of a human soul's belief and experience, and came to Maggie as *an unquestioned message* (Eliot, *MF* 291, emphasis mind). Initially, Maggie's reading of à Kempis paradoxically produces the ecstasy she seeks to prevent, which sates her desire and enacts the pleasurable self-loss characteristic of Maggie's reading and reverie experiences. Her will disappears into the height of her

ecstatic absorption, but following her ecstasy is her problematic embrace of willed renunciation as an unquestioned message.

Maggie's implementation of renunciation as an imaginative and aesthetic substitute along with her adoption of these writings as an "unquestioned message" renders the text inflexible and static. The altered, static nature of the text prevents the transmission that initially produced her ecstasy, and this inflexibility becomes a destructive kind of mental restraint, which is unmitigated by the flux of consciousness and circumstance. Maggie must desperately cling to privation as the only key to her happiness, depriving herself of the imaginative beauty of any aesthetic pleasure, such as fiction, poetry, and music, in hopes that privation will prevent her mental wanderings. "The old books, Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich" Maggie flings away "with a sort of triumph that she had risen above the need of them; and if they had been her own, she would have burned them, believing that she would never repent" (Eliot, *MF* 293).

Despite her mantra to "never repent," the abundance of music that Maggie finds during her stay in her cousin Lucy's house "could hardly be without some intoxicating effect on her, after years of privation; and even in the first week Maggie began to be less haunted by her sad memories and anticipations" (*MF* 401). An aural form of jam and idleness, music has an intoxicating, consuming power over Maggie. The narrator distinguishes between a simple "enjoyment of music" that "indicates a great specific talent" and Maggie's overwhelming "sensibility to the supreme excitement of music [which] was only one form of that passionate sensibility which belonged to her whole nature, and made her faults and virtues all merge in each other" (*MF* 401). Eliot's

description of the effect of music on Maggie is a powerful depiction of the integrated nature of physical sensation and aesthetics for Maggie. Music forces Maggie to involuntarily experience the sheer, ecstatic, physical and imaginative pleasure it offers, sweeping her into a kind of self-loss in which she and music merge and become coextensive aspects of a single aesthetic temporality.⁹

Maggie also connects Stephen Guest's voice and her impassioned attraction to him with the pleasurable self-loss she experiences through music. One passage in particular calls attention to this deeply knotted association of mind, body, and aesthetics. Still within the throes of the music she has been hearing in Lucy's home:

Her eyes and cheeks had an almost feverish brilliancy; her head was thrown backward, and her hands were clasped with the palms outward, and with that tension of the arms which is apt to accompany mental absorption... She had been hearing some fine music sung by a fine bass voice... It was not that she thought distinctly of Mr. Stephen Guest, or dwelt on the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather that she felt the half-remote presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries. (*MF* 384)

Stephen's "fine bass voice" ignites Maggie's desire as it intertwines with the music, initiating an almost frenzied rapture for Maggie that extends beyond her actual hearing of his voice or her awareness of his person. Her head is thrown back, her face blooms with color, and long after the singing and playing has stopped, "[t]he music was vibrating in her still" (*MF* 385). Eliot considers the full extent of the power wielded by these many different physical sensations and what it means for them to merge and constitute "the general sum of sensations which make up our total Consciousness" (Lewes, *Physiology* 57). Eliot demonstrates how the intensity of an aesthetically charged reverie is fully

integrated with bodily pleasure as well as how the reverie can move beyond the boundaries of the material object, emotion, or sound inducing it, becoming an inseparable, internal component of one's consciousness. The music and Stephen's voice mingle and merge with every aesthetic image or dreamy reverie lodged within Maggie's consciousness, enrapturing her with "a brighter aerial world" (*MF* 385).

Maggie's desire for Stephen continues to dismantle her self-imposed restraints and pushes her to experience even more uncontrolled sensations and strong passions. Maggie's mental state when Stephen steers her into the boat, a trip resulting in their elopement, parallels many of Maggie's earlier reverie states. Maggie feels as if she were being led "by this stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic—and she felt nothing else. Memory was excluded" (*MF* 464). Memory is again temporarily excluded, and her conscious will is suspended. Existing only within an exalted semi-consciousness, Stephen's quiet, entreating murmurs, coupled with their mutual erotic passion forms a powerful elixir. Maggie plunges into the intensity of

[t]he breath of the young, unwearied day, the delicious rhythmic dip of the oars, the fragmentary song of a passing bird heard now and then, as if it were only the overflowing of brim-full gladness, the sweet solitude of a twofold consciousness that was mingled into one by that grave untiring gaze which need not be averted...they spoke no word; for what could words have been but an inlet to thought? and thought did not belong to that enchanted haze in which they were enveloped—it belonged to the past and the future that lay outside the haze. (*MF* 464)

Unlike Tom's intrusive, judgmental gaze after eating the jam puff, Stephen's gaze is not external to Maggie's trance; rather, it is internal to it, and thus it "need not be averted."

The sensations he produces within her initiate an overwhelming ecstasy in which even

the external sound of the birds or the dip of the oars becomes internal to the haze itself. Maggie temporarily experiences her consciousness as a natural, dreamy fluidity—“the sweet solitude of a twofold consciousness that was mingled into one”—rather than a ragged division. This scene enacts Maggie’s earlier sense that her passion for Stephen is a “current, soft and yet strong as the summer stream,” a current that she longs to “no longer beat and struggle against” (Eliot, *MF* 448).

The obvious, passionate excess in Maggie’s response to music and to Stephen could very possibly develop out of her previous adherence to privation and her attempts to essentially dam up the fluidity of her consciousness. Her responses could also simply be the natural manifestations of her mind, which constitute her individual nature and her physical desire. But Maggie continues to misinterpret these states as mental and moral lapses, and she vigorously seeks to prevent them and the pleasure they induce.

During the elopement, the dream Maggie has of the Virgin in St. Ogg’s boat exhibits the deep-rooted fears that have been shaped by Tom’s moralism, which echoes the writings of nineteenth-century moralists such as Wigan. The myth of St. Ogg centers upon St. Ogg’s willingness to row a poor woman and child across the tumultuous Floss when everyone else refuses in the face of high winds. After being rowed across, the woman transforms into the Virgin Mary, blessing Ogg for not questioning “and wrangl[ing] with the heart’s need” but for being “smitten with pity” and willing (Eliot, *MF* 117). In the beginning of Maggie’s dream version of the myth, she and Stephen encounter a boat on the river, which contains St. Ogg and the Virgin, but the Virgin becomes Lucy and the boatman becomes Philip. Philip then transforms into Tom, “who

rowed past without looking at her; and she rose to stretch out her arms and call to him, and their own boat turned over with the movement and they began to sink, till with one spasm of dread she seemed to awake, and find she was a child again...and Tom was not really angry” (Eliot, *MF* 470). Maggie views the boat’s overturning and her near drowning as her elopement with Stephen. Reaching out to Tom and dreaming he “was not really angry” becomes prophetic in Maggie’s mind. She believes that if she abandons Stephen and returns to Tom, then Tom will forgive her; they will be innocent children again, and he will be “smitten with pity” like the figure of St. Ogg. In the dream, Tom, Lucy, and Philip—duty, faith, and loyalty—are separate and irreconcilable with Stephen, passion, and her own aesthetic sensibility. Instead of allowing the space for duty, faith, loyalty, and passion to coexist as part of the same fluid and dynamic mental system, Maggie views them in painful opposition to one another. Unlike Jane Eyre’s useful dreams, which erupt out of her infernal world, Maggie’s dream is saturated with Tom’s moralism and Maggie’s fear of her own strong passions.

Corresponding to Maggie’s dream, Maggie’s reaction to the elopement and her ensuing renunciation of Stephen exhibit this same anxiety, an anxiety that Eliot forces the reader to feel deeply but not to assume. For Maggie her reverie states consistently overwhelm her will and benumb her conscious mind, which she believes causes irrevocable harm to others. Waking from her dream, Maggie experiences “horror at her own possible failure, the dread lest her conscience should be benumbed again, and not rise to energy till it was too late.—Too late! it was already too late not to have caused misery: too late for everything, perhaps but to rush away from the last act of baseness—

the tasting of joys that were wrung from crushed hearts” (Eliot, *MF* 471-472). Despite Stephen’s agonizing pleadings as well the apparent pragmatism in his arguments from “natural law” that they should in fact marry, “Maggie’s will was fixed unswervingly on the coming wrench. She had made up her mind to suffer” (Eliot, *MF* 474).

This scene reflects many of her earlier responses to Stephen and to her own passion. When Stephen fervently kisses her arm in the conservatory, Maggie believes “a horrible punishment was come upon her for the sin of allowing a moment’s happiness that was treachery to Lucy, to Philip—to her own better soul. That momentary happiness had been smitten with a blight—a leprosy” (Eliot, *MF* 442). Even as Maggie’s face becomes “flushed and her eyes fuller and fuller of appealing love,” as she is overcome by her feeling for Stephen, Maggie prophetically tells him that she would rather die than fall into the temptation of marriage to him (Eliot, *MF* 450). Eliot makes Maggie’s responses to Stephen seem especially punitive in the light of the seeming logic in Stephen’s arguments that their mutual desire should lead to marriage. Eliot demonstrates Maggie’s painful misinterpretation of the inherent fluctuations in her consciousness as she unnaturally divides her own mind between the “tremulous delights of [Stephen’s] presence with her that made existence an easy floating in a stream of joy” and an existence of “a quiet resolved endurance and effort” (*MF* 480). But at the same time, Eliot allows the reader to feel the full force and anguish of Maggie’s convictions and her sympathy for Lucy and Philip in conjunction with Stephen’s attempted manipulation. Stephen’s manipulation of Maggie parallels the many earlier urgings of Philip and Tom, who each seek to pressure Maggie’s complex interiority for his own benefit.

Maggie's tendency to fall into a "dim dreamy state" in Stephen's presence (Eliot, *MF* 408), resembles the response of Carpenter's puppet, who is "played-upon by every one who shall have made himself master of our springs of action" (Carpenter 554). Eliot even uses similar language to describe Maggie when she is listening to Stephen singing: "she looked very beautiful when her soul was being played on in this way by the inexorable power of sound" (*MF* 416). In many of the scenes with Stephen, as in the elopement and renunciation scenes, Maggie's dreamy state is followed by her harsh awakening and her re-adherence to her will. She even tells Stephen "it has never been my will to marry you: if you were to win consent from the momentary triumph of my feeling for you, you would not have my whole soul...I would choose to be true to my calmer affections, and live without love" (Eliot, *MF* 476-477). Maggie clings to her will, which is in strict opposition to her dreamy states and the pleasure they induce. But despite Maggie's close resemblance to Carpenter's automaton or puppet, Eliot problematizes the hierarchy inherent in this split system. Maggie attempts to stop up the natural flow of her consciousness through the exercise of her will, but it is an impossible act, creating unbearable sorrow. This agonizing impasse in which Maggie is consistently caught moves the narrator to comment that it is "[n]o wonder" that when there is such a "contrast between the outward and the inward, that painful collisions come of it" (Eliot, *MF* 235). Eliot pinpoints that the problem is not Maggie's will or the pleasure inherent in Maggie's ecstatic states but the act of separating them out from one another as if the will and unconscious cerebration, along with the imagination and the body, were not inextricably intertwined, continually and imperceptibly influencing one another. *Romola*

continues this story of *The Mill on the Floss*, exhibiting how intimately knit conscious and unconscious, imagination and will, and body and mind are for Eliot, as well as the horror that follows when they become irrevocably severed.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot thwarts a clear, moralized interpretation of Maggie's choices by presenting consciousness as a continuous differentiation, a vital stream of complex, fluid sensation. Eliot's narrator says as much when she asserts that "[t]he great problem of the shifting relation between passion and duty is clear to no man who is capable of apprehending it...the mysterious complexity of our life is not to be embraced by maxims, and that to lace ourselves up in formulas of that sort is to repress all the divine promptings and inspirations that spring from growing insight and sympathy" (Eliot, *MF* 497-498). Aesthetic inspiration and sympathy, necessary components of Eliot's poetics, proceed from her view of the complex fluidity of consciousness. Eliot locates the potential for the reader's sympathy in the reader's willingness to forgo the moralizing of Tom Tulliver and the inhabitants of St. Ogg's and instead become engaged in "the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling, erring human creatures" (Eliot, *Letters* 3 111). For the reader to engage in these pains and joys, Eliot seeks to temporarily suspend the reader's will through the reading state in order to temporarily suspend the reader's judgment and play upon the reader's sensations. The reader then, too, resembles Carpenter's automaton, and Eliot becomes the "master of our springs of action," so that she may reveal the natural and pleasurable shifts in the reader's own consciousness and desire and create the space for readerly sympathy. In the same way that the materiality of

sound in the novel's opening chapter transforms into the immateriality of thought, on the level of reading and transmission, the immateriality of self-loss produced by the novel transforms into the materiality of the reader's own fluctuating sensations and pleasure.

The hospitality of the human soul: Romola

In *Romola* Eliot continues to highlight the many, varied, and often contradictory, conditions that form and affect an individual consciousness. Doing so enables Eliot to explore the repercussions of a hierarchical mental system that privileges will as the necessary governing faculty, managing the other mental and physical forces. Through her characterization of Baldassarre's strange mental disorder, she questions Carpenter's claim that the nobility of man stems from the exercise of such a will. Baldassarre's condition results in a heightened, governing will and the murder of his adopted son Tito, whereas Romola's drifting mental states show how suspensions of the will can be vital fluctuations of the mind that enable sympathy and moral actions.

Baldassarre is an enigmatic character in *Romola*. His mental infirmity is a dysfunction that is separate and distinct from the dim, dreamy states exhibited by Maggie or by Romola. Baldassarre, the adoptive father of Tito Melema, is an Italian scholar forced into slavery in Antioch; he experiences a severe illness in Corinth that leads to a strange mental disorder that deprives him of his ability to read, write, and even remember imaginative narratives. The illness leaves Baldassarre "with body and mind so shattered that he was worse than worthless to his owners" (Eliot, *R* 268). Critics often diagnose Baldassarre's condition under the heading of amnesia, since his illness does temporarily

deprive him of his memory.¹⁰ But as Baldassarre recovers his physical health after the illness, he also recovers “the memory of all part of his life which was closely inwrought with his emotions; and he had felt more and more constantly and painfully the uneasy sense of lost knowledge” (Eliot, *R* 267). Baldassarre retains an aspect of his memory, fixedly centered on Tito. For upon his recovery, Baldassarre immediately despairs over the possibility of his loss of Tito, who may be imprisoned or drowned. Rather than amnesia, Baldassarre suffers from aphasia, literally meaning “speechlessness” in Greek. Aphasia is a complex language disorder consisting of alexia (the inability to read), agraphia (the inability to write), and oftentimes the inability to speak.¹¹ Descriptions of the existence of aphasia date back to the ancient Egyptians, but it received prominence in the nineteenth century, when it was “explicitly linked to specific parts of the brain and the concept of cerebral dominance for language” (Prins and Bastiaanse 762). Eliot does not elaborate on the specific nature of the illness that causes Baldassarre’s aphasia; she only tells us that it leaves him mentally broken and severs him from written and spoken forms of narrative.¹²

Baldassarre’s continued enslavement and time aboard a Genoese merchant ship renews his “bodily strength, but on landing at Genoa he had so weary a sense of his desolateness that he almost wished he had died of that illness at Corinth...there was still a hope for Baldassarre—faint, perhaps, and likely to be long deferred, but still a hope, that he might find his child, his cherished son again...the one being who remembered him as he had been before his mind was broken” (Eliot, *R* 269). As he clings desperately to the hope that “I am not alone in the world” (Eliot, *R* 269), Baldassarre’s aphasia provides a

devastating picture of the continuing deterioration of the mind after such an illness into debility and dark impulse. For when Baldassarre finally arrives in Florence and discovers Tito, Tito refuses to acknowledge him, betraying him deeply and unforgivably with the words, “*some madman, surely*” (Eliot, *R* 220).

Baldassarre is publicly humiliated and irrevocably devastated by Tito’s denunciation, a denunciation that furthers rather than alleviates Baldassarre’s estranged and fragile mental state, imprisoning him within “strong currents...the energies of hatred and vengeance” (Eliot, *R* 266). The deep, familial bond Baldassarre once felt for Tito empties out and transforms into an obsessive, sinister, and brooding desire for retribution coupled with an overwhelming desire to commit violence. Baldassarre’s obsession with destroying Tito is a perversion of fatherly affection that stems from Tito’s betrayal, and Baldassarre’s damaged mind fills the empty space once occupied by “his cherished son” with another cherished being: “I shall never be alone, for my revenge is with me” (Eliot, *R* 269).

Following Tito’s denial, Baldassarre exists in a concentrated state of bodily sensation and will: “there are deep draughts in this world for hatred and revenge. I have memory left for that, and there is strength in my arm—there is strength in my will” (Eliot, *R* 270). Eliot frequently depicts states of unconscious cerebration as temporary suspensions of conscious will or conscious choice; but in this case Baldassarre’s will comes to assume governance over his other faculties and his physical body, problematizing the traditional relation of will to morality and rationality. In her characterization of Baldassarre, Eliot links his will to his body, to sensation and to

impulse—“there is strength in my arm—there is strength in my will”—depicting the complex nature of volition. But his will demands that his body enact revenge, thus it is not an integrated relation but a hierarchical one in which Baldassarre “was reduced to a sort of mad consciousness that he was a solitary pulse of just rage in a world filled with defiant baseness...his mind narrowed to one image, and the dream of one sensation—the sensation of plunging that dagger into a base heart, which he was unable to pierce in any other way” (Eliot, *R* 307). Baldassarre’s body and the other aspects of his mind eventually become subservient to his tyrannical will, which seeks to attain the one dream of his mad consciousness: the destruction of Tito.

In Baldassarre Eliot portrays the construction of his will as a complex mixture of physiological and psychological factors and circumstances, resisting easy definitions of the will as resulting entirely from any one source. She attacks materialist and Cartesian certainties of subject formation, producing a more complicated notion of what constitutes the individual subject and the formation of human volition. In her creation of Baldassarre, Eliot explores not only the diverse conditions constituting the source of his dark volitions, but also what it means for a human subject to become reduced to governing will and corresponding impulse, devoid of imagination. In severing him from his imagination, Baldassarre’s aphasia also severs him from human connectivity. In Baldassarre’s aphasic condition, he shrinks from others, fearful, and suffering from “a palsy of distrust. It was this distrust, this determination to take no step which might betray anything concerning himself, that had made Baldassarre reject Piero di Cosimo’s friendly advances” (Eliot, *R* 265). His volition, cut off from his imagination, leads him

further down an isolated path of darkness and oblivion, rendering him incapable of moral action in his obsession with vengeance.

Tito's brief recognition and validation of Baldassarre as his adoptive father enables Baldassarre temporarily to recover his imaginative capability and the ability to read. Tito pays Baldassarre an unexpected visit during which Baldassarre acts upon his desire to murder Tito—"the old man, with preternatural force of rage in his limbs, had sprung forward"—but the dagger breaks, and he is unable to harm Tito (Eliot, *R* 307). Feeling relief and power at Baldassarre's helplessness, Tito easily greets Baldassarre's violent response with "*Padre mio!*," spoken in "soft tones, just as they had sounded before the last parting on the shores of Greece" (Eliot, *R* 308). As Kucich writes, "Baldassarre's temporary recovery of his memory occurs immediately after Tito verbally recognizes him" (187).¹³ Despite Tito's feigned attempt at reconciliation, Baldassarre refuses and cleaves more tightly to his desire for vengeance. Even so, this brief exchange with Tito produces a tremendous change in Baldassarre: "[a]t the moment when the shadow of Tito passed in front of the hovel as he departed," Baldassarre no longer sits in the darkness of his mad consciousness and bleak helplessness, surrounded "by the habitual dimness and vanishing shadows," but now he is surrounded "by the clear images of the past; he was living again in an unbroken course" (Eliot, *R* 333). Once more letters are transformed into "the magic signs that conjure up a world... The words arose within him, and stirred innumerable vibrations of memory. He forgot that he was old; he could almost have shouted. The light was come again, mother of knowledge and joy!" (Eliot, *R* 334). As the one person who knew Baldassarre before his illness, Tito's confirmation of

Baldassarre's past identity as a scholar and as his adoptive father mingles with Baldassarre's sense of injustice and willed vengeance, strengthening his mind and opening up those mental channels previously closed to him. Baldassarre relishes in his newly acquired "mental empire," whereby the city of Florence, "which had been a weary labyrinth, was material that he could subdue to his purposes now" (Eliot, *R* 334). Neil Hertz notes how Eliot's language describing Baldassarre in this moment is "thoroughly imperialistic, an emblem of the willed integrity of the wrathful father" (33). Baldassarre's willed integrity is "a dark deity" of vengeance, who resides in "the inmost cell" of Baldassarre's mind and to whom his various faculties submit (Eliot, *R* 335).

Baldassarre's hatred and revenge now occupy the space of the once cherished Tito and also the space once overflowing with the many worlds and voices of his imagination. Baldassarre has become so possessed by vengeance that the temporary retrieval of his reading ability cannot fully re-conquer his mental empire. In his brief respite from his aphasia, sympathy or any kind of recognition of human commonality remains glaringly absent. Other people exist only as part of Baldassarre's plot, exhibiting his irretrievable loss of sympathy, for Baldassarre determines to use his reacquired powers solely for the purpose of devastating Tito. Thus Baldassarre's fleeting transition from mad consciousness to scholar is fragile and incomplete because it centers fixedly and unrelentingly on Tito's destruction and death, showing how Eliot links Baldassarre's sympathy with his reading ability.

When Tito again denies Baldassarre's identity at the dinner in the Rucellai Gardens, bestowing upon him the false identity of an old servant with an unhinged mind,

“thought gave way to a dizzy horror, as if the earth were slipping away from under him [Baldassarre]” (Eliot, *R* 351). Baldassarre is overcome once more by the old mental confusion and helplessness, losing again his ability to read and write as he falls back into the grasp of his aphasia. Tito commits a cruelty that Eliot compares to Tito’s temporary capability at that moment to “trea[d] the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety” (*R* 350). He does not again renounce Baldassarre as an unknown madman, but he substitutes a fabricated, lowly character for Baldassarre’s own, dismantling Baldassarre’s revived past identity and putting it entirely out of his reach. Baldassarre the scholar along with the many, rich worlds of his imagination disappear entirely into the obscurity of the false persona that Tito supplies. Baldassarre spirals further and further into the darkness of a nonself, severed from his imagination, from human interaction, and from sympathy, but with his dark will and his vengeance intact.

The image of Baldassarre and Tito’s entangled and unidentifiable dead bodies metaphorically represents the horrific outcome of a mind and body governed entirely by will, unmediated by the imagination and existing within a “palsy of distrust.” In the description of their dead bodies, Eliot revisits and reconceives the claspings, entangled deaths of Maggie and Tom in *The Mill on the Floss*, who “had gone down in an embrace never to be parted” (521), but in *Romola*, “the aged man had fallen forward, and his dead clutch was on the garment of the other. It was not possible to separate them...No one knew the bodies for a long while” (Eliot, *R* 548).¹⁴ In their final moments Maggie and Tom grasp each other willingly as a sign of forgiveness and reconciliation, returning in death to a past “when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied

fields together (Eliot, *MF* 521). In the deaths of Baldassarre and Tito, Eliot imagines the physically entangled deaths of a father and son who remain eternally un-reconciled and a son who is eternally un-forgiven. For Baldassarre desires “to die with his hold on this body, and follow the traitor to hell that he might clutch him there” (Eliot, *R* 548). The dark deity of Baldassarre’s will governs him to the grave and beyond, perpetually locking him in the act of murder, clutching Tito’s damned body and separating him forever from the light of his imagination, that “mother of knowledge and joy.”

Baldassarre’s severance from reality signifies the opposite of Romola’s severance, which comes in her second successful flight from Florence. Critics have read Romola’s drifting and her subsequent time in the plague-ridden village in a variety of ways. Michael Davis observes, “Romola becomes totally passive, symbolically submitting to destiny by giving herself to the power of the sea...abandoning independent thought and emotion for ‘mere sensation’ and consciousness in favour of sleep...Romola’s original renunciation of self, which is motivated by faith, has now seemingly been replaced by the selfish nihilism which characterizes Tito” (133). Davis goes on to note that “Romola’s sleep in the boat which leads her to the plague-stricken village [is] an incident which seems at odds with Eliot’s detailed psychological realism” (145). These scenes seem to him a strange, jarring disjunction in an otherwise meticulously researched historical novel. Rather than dismissing Romola’s flight from Florence and time in the village as too romantic and too idyllic, Dames suggests that this seeming disjunction in Eliot’s realist narrative is a manifestation of “the Victorian preference for nostalgic dilution or fading at closural moments...turn[ing] back to the nostalgic solutions of Austen, to the

language-formations we have learned to identify with nostalgic vagueness” (230-231). Kucich finds that Romola’s flight is a “libidinal necessity” that opens up “an instinctual resource of self-negating energy...Romola is able to fulfill the two dialectical needs of her nature without disruption: the need for self-expression and the need for self-negation” (176). I agree with Kucich that this strange interlude in the novel is a psychological necessity for Romola, but I would add that something else is at issue here as well. On the surface, Romola’s flight might seem egoistic and the antithesis of an ethical act, as Davis ultimately suggests, but Eliot includes the village to invert this interpretation and redeem Romola’s abandonment of Florence. Furthermore, in choosing to connect the village to the flux in Romola’s consciousness, Eliot illustrates the many, even contradictory, conditions that determine the ethics of a specific situation.

Romola first attempts to flee Florence after her father’s death and Tito’s first betrayal of her trust when he secretly sells her father’s library. She flees with the sense of “freedom and solitude...with no human presence imposing and making a law for her” (Eliot, *R* 355). But a presence does interfere; Savonarola, commanded by God, stops Romola from fleeing and admonishes her for rebelling and relinquishing her civil and domestic duties. Savonarola is a stalwart, authoritative moral figure, who has an “immense personal influence” upon Romola (Eliot, *R* 360). His influence resembles that of a Kempis upon Maggie, but Romola wrestles with Savonarola’s personal call to her to assume a life of renunciation. Eliot reimagines the religious mentor from *The Mill on the Floss*, but here the relation is not one of text and reader. In *Romola* the relation between text and reader later suggests how Romola might flee Florence, drifting along the

Mediterranean in a boat. But despite Romola's misgivings and her inward struggles with Savonarola's command, Romola does eventually feel "herself surrounded and possessed by the glow of his [Savonarola's] passionate faith," and she agrees to return to Florence and to Tito (Eliot, *R* 362).

Romola's second flight differs from her first because it is steeped in her inconsolable grief and her disillusionment over her godfather's death at the hands of Savonarola and the further betrayal of Tito, who has another wife, Tessa, with whom he fathered children. Eliot's narrator notes that "[w]ith the sinking of high human trust, the dignity of life sinks too" (*R* 501). Instead of a sense of rebellious freedom and the hope of a high future purpose, Romola is now overcome with despair "and the sense of a confusion in human things which made all effort a mere dragging at tangled threads, all fellowship...mere unfairness and exclusiveness" (Eliot, *R* 501). She longs to be free from the burden of choice and the demands of others. Surrendering to her despair and leaving Florence, she longs for "that repose in mere sensation which she had sometimes dreamed of in the sultry afternoons of her early girlhood, when she had fancied herself floating naïad-like in the waters. The clear waves seemed to invite her; she wished she could lie down to sleep on them and pass from sleep into death" (Eliot, *R* 502). Eliot reconsiders the image of Maggie and Stephen aimlessly drifting in a boat, altering it to encompass the set of conditions and longings that lead Romola to the shores of the Mediterranean. Whereas Maggie abhors the relinquishment of her will and her ability to choose, Romola welcomes the freedom from "that burden of choice which presses with heavier and heavier weight when claims have loosed their guiding hold" (Eliot, *R* 504).

Eliot's conception of the text-reader relation and the process of transmission is what inspires Romola's particular method of flight and leads her to the village. Romola is influenced by a story from Boccaccio, ironically one of those burned in Savonarola's bonfire of the vanities. It is the story of the "fair Gostanza who in her love-lornness desired to live no longer, but not having the courage to attack her young life, had put herself into a boat and pushed off to sea" (Eliot, *R* 502). Eliot underlies Romola's flight with this story, linking even Romola's despairing state of mind to the enabling capacity of narrative on her imagination and her actions. Envisioning herself as Gostanza, Romola imagines "herself gliding away in that boat on the darkening waters...commit[ting] herself, sleeping, to destiny which would either bring death or else new necessities that might rouse a new life in her!—it was a thought that beckoned her the more because the soft evening air made her long to rest in the still solitude" (Eliot, *R* 503). The scene evokes the young Maggie's adaptive performance of narrative, particularly Jael and Sisera, but whereas Maggie ultimately distances herself from this aesthetic power, here it is what enables Romola to yield to self-loss. Furthermore, similar to the effect of Maggie's punishment of the fetish, textual transmission induces a profound physical influence upon Romola's body. Imitating Gostanza, Romola refuses to take her own life directly, so she drifts in the waters of the Mediterranean, untethered, open to whatever destiny the sea might bring, either death or new life. But lying in the boat under the stars, Romola does not initially find in her narrative "anything like the dream of her girlhood" or the happy ending Boccaccio affords Gostanza, reuniting her with her lost lover (Eliot, *R* 504). Rather the weight of memories and Romola's sense of

abandonment and loss envelop her mind and body until she passes “from dreaming into long deep sleep” (Eliot, *R* 550).

The enabling capacities of reading and narrative lead Romola to the boat, to sleep, and to the village. As Romola awakes from her long sleep, “she lay motionless, hardly watching the scene; rather, feeling simply the presence of peace and beauty. While we are still in our youth there can always come, in our early waking, moments when mere passive existence is itself a Lethe, when the exquisiteness of subtle indefinite sensation creates a bliss which is without memory and without desire” (Eliot, *R* 550). Romola’s state evokes Maggie’s childhood bliss of jam and idleness, itself a childhood manifestation of the profoundly pleasurable “exquisiteness of subtle indefinite sensation.” But Romola’s Lethe on the shores of the Mediterranean is only temporarily marked by this passive state of exquisite, physical sensation. It is interrupted by the cries of an orphaned Jewish child and the needs of the many in the village who are greatly suffering. The greater part of Romola’s flight from Florence consists of her exhaustive physical care and rebuilding of the village which follows her sensual, amnesiac repose. In leading Romola out of Florence on the winds and waves of narrative into Lethe and finally to the village, Eliot sets up the underlying nature of the text-reader relation and the reading experience: reading leads to the exquisite, subtle experience of self-loss, which in turn leads to the moral potentiality and sympathy symbolized by the village.

Although Romola’s flight provides a necessary reprieve from her despair, she initially begins “to condemn her flight: after all, it had been cowardly self-care; the grounds on which Savonarola had once taken her back were truer, deeper than the

grounds she had had for her second flight...But then came reaction against such self-reproach...that flight had been her only resource” (Eliot, *R* 561). The narrator defends both Romola’s flight and her conflict over it: “All minds, except such as are delivered from doubt by dullness of sensibility, must be subject to this recurring conflict where the many-twisted conditions of life have forbidden the fulfillment of a bond” (Eliot, *R* 561). Eliot depicts Romola’s transition from self-doubt and self-reproach to her awareness of the moral justification of her own singular position and the circumstances producing it. The narrator observes that the aftermath of Romola’s flight and time in the village have offered “that rare possibility of self-contemplation which comes in any complete severance from our wonted life [which] made her judge herself as she had never done before: the compunction which is inseparable from a sympathetic nature keenly alive to the possible experience of others, began to stir in her with growing force” (Eliot, *R* 561). Despite Romola’s previous service to the suffering in Florence, instigated by Savonarola, this sympathetic stirring derives from Romola’s own self-contemplation in the aftermath of the affective experience of her despair, self-loss, and moral action rather than her adoption of Savonarola’s faith. Romola realizes the very human fact that “the many-twisted conditions of life,” not so unlike the natural fluctuations of consciousness, sometimes render temporary severance necessary. Because Romola’s severance is marked by her time in the village, Eliot distinguishes it from Baldassarre’s severance, which is marked by destruction and vengeance.

Romola’s severance from Florence evokes the novel’s opening in which Eliot resurrects a Shade, “the spirit of a Florentine citizen” from the Italian Renaissance to look

upon a nineteenth-century Florence (*R* 2). The resuscitation of this spirit creates an alternative temporality within the space of the novel that is neither past nor present but a conglomeration of both, a merging of the past and present into a new temporality. Eliot's use of the Shade to open *Romola* also evokes the opening of *The Mill on the Floss* and the dreaming narrator, who begins her story in the midst of a similar temporality. The temporality which opens *Romola* seems to be analogous to the temporality of the novel itself as well as to the position of Eliot's reader, who is a reversal of the Shade: the fifteenth-century Shade looks forward upon a nineteenth-century Florence just as the nineteenth-century reader looks back at a fifteenth-century Florence. In describing the Shade and his vision of this "other" Florence, Eliot emphasizes the seeming contradiction between "the broad sameness of the human lot" and the "flux of human things"; of universal sameness in the midst of fluctuating difference; of the strange hospitality in the human soul to "entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality" (*R* 1, 5).

Eliot's description of this hospitable soul caught in the impasse of contradictory feelings and opinions parallels her integrated, fluid mental system and the state of reading. All minds are subject to the evanescent flux of conflicting sentiments and sensations; reading, like the Shade, replicates this natural action of the conscious mind. David Kurnick writes that Eliot's reader is always both "(erotically) entranced" and "(intellectually) edified," a mode of detachment which the reader is able to access "through submission" (491). For Eliot the state of readerly trance, like *Romola*'s drifting, is the necessary condition for edification, the salvation of the village. Without readerly

absorption, without the reader resurrected into the space of the novel, the reader is unable to encounter the inconsistencies and complexities which also make up the reader's consciousness, an encounter which precludes the act of moralizing and makes sympathy and edification possible.

By the close of the novel, Eliot brings Romola to the place of the Shade. Marking the anniversary of Savonarola's death, the story of Romola ends where the Shade begins, exemplifying the hospitality inherent within the human soul. It is encapsulated in Romola living peaceably with Tessa and the children of Tessa and Tito, and in the amazement of Tito's son, Lillo, who cannot understand the strangeness of Piero di Cosimo, who "abuses you [Romola] for dressing the altar, and thinking so much of Fra Girolamo [Savonarola], and yet he brings you the flowers" (Eliot, *R* 583). Piero attacks Romola for her remembrance of Savonarola but his act of bringing Romola flowers for the altar reflects Piero's tender care for Romola, which he entertains simultaneously with his intense dislike of Savonarola. Eliot suspects her reader's surprise over Romola's strange living arrangements and exposes that reaction in Lillo's response to the actions of Piero. Incredulous, the reader may wonder at how Romola can live in such a seemingly contradictory way; this contradiction quite possibly evokes a similar incredulity or distress marking the reader's response to the ending of *The Mill on the Floss*. In both novels, Eliot's reader, comparable to the reader of *Villette*, is left in the midst of a surprising, even contradictory, state of astonishment, perhaps disbelief or skepticism, and acquiescence. But the reader is also left with the potential recognition and insight that Eliot gives Romola after she flees Florence. Eliot's depiction and provocation of the

mysterious but naturally multiplicitous nature of consciousness and sensation seeks to preclude moralizing and open the possibility for sympathy. For Eliot it is not the will that constitutes the nobility of man, but sympathy, that strange imaginative hospitality.

The Mill on the Floss and *Romola* become a two-fold rewriting of Eliot's early letter to Maria Lewis that highlight the aesthetic and the moral potentiality enabled by the intense, exquisite pleasure of the ecstatic states that Eliot once sought to prevent:

How marvelous and powerfully evanescent are our frames of mind, as various as the forms and hues of the summer clouds. A single word is enough to give an entirely new mould to our thoughts; at least I find myself so constituted... outward things act as winds to my sails and set me adrift in the reverie of my waking dream.

Eliot's fluid model exemplifies her conception of a fully integrated physiological and psychological system in which the will, the imagination, and the body along with states of self-loss work concurrently to shape the mysterious complexity and the many-twisted conditions of human life.

¹ In addition to George Henry Lewes's own psychological writings and what Eliot would have read during her time as editor for the *Westminster Review*, Baker's annotated catalogue, *The George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Library*, lists Eliot's and Lewes's ownership of various texts by contemporaneous physiological psychologists. They owned William Benjamin Carpenter's *Principles of Human Physiology*, with their chief applications to pathology, hygiene and forensic medicine, (1844). Sir Henry Holland was their personal physician, and they owned the third edition of his *Medical Notes and Reflections* (1855), with the following inscription: "G. H. Lewes Esq. With the Author's best regards" (Baker 98). Earlier editions of this work by Holland included much of the same discussion of double consciousness as Holland's *Chapters on Mental Physiology*. The catalogue also lists their ownership of a lecture by the elder John Addington Symonds, "Habit — Physiologically Considered," dated 1853. These holdings suggest their familiarity with these contemporaries as well as a possible intellectual discourse.

² "That when the disease or disorder of one cerebrum becomes sufficiently aggravated to defy the control of the other, the case is then one of the commonest forms of mental

derangement or insanity; and that a lesser degree of discrepancy between the functions of the two cerebra constitutes the state of conscious delusion” (Wigan 26).

³ For a detailed look at the work of Holland and its relation to the novels of George Eliot, see Rylance 127-143.

⁴ See Hottle’s “THOU SHALT NOT READ: Maggie’s Arrested Development in *The Mill on the Floss*,” see also Alley’s “The Complete and Incomplete Educations of *The Mill on the Floss*,” see also Gettelman’s “Reading Ahead in George Eliot.”

⁵ Lewes discusses the similarities between reverie and dreaming, noting how the incoherent train of thought within both “results from this train being interrupted or diverted from its course by the suggestion of some other train, either arising by the laws of association, or from the stimulus of some new sensation” (Physiology 310). We accept the new sensations in dreams, he argues, and quite contentedly go on with them, “just as in reverie the mind passes instantaneously from London to India, and the persons vanish to give place to very different persons, without once interrupting the imaginative story” (Physiology 311).

⁶ Dwight Purdy sees Maggie “in a thoroughly rational psychology,” but he finds that it is thwarted by Maggie’s romanticism, a response “to the sexual realities of nineteenth century England” (126). For Purdy Maggie’s ecstatic states produce a romantic egoism in what is an otherwise rational psychology. I think that these states are more exemplary of consciousness itself in all its many contradictions and complexities.

⁷ Lewes makes a similar theoretical claim, stating “[d]uring reverie we are not only ‘unconscious’ of the presence of external objects, but of our own state” (Physiology 169).

⁸ In Maggie’s childhood, narrative is intrinsic to her understanding of the world and her ability to negotiate it. Shortly after this scene in the attic, for example, Maggie goes inside the mill and observes the spiders, which are a favorite “subject of speculation with her. She wondered if they had any relatives outside the mill, for in that case there must be a painful difficulty in their family intercourse — a fat floury spider, accustomed to take his fly well dusted with meal, must suffer a little at a cousin’s table where the fly was *au naturel*, and the lady-spiders must be mutually shocked at each other’s appearance” (MF 29). On one level, the spiders here represent Maggie’s awareness of the conflict existing between her own immediate family and her mother’s relations — the floury, bourgeoisie spider suffering the “*au naturel*” fare when dining at the Tullivers’ table. Maggie intelligently creates a narrative for the spiders that re-enacts the class tensions plaguing her family, allowing her to both perceive the conflict as well as to see its inherent ridiculousness.

⁹ Da Sousa Correa notes that [m]usic’s power over Maggie’s memory is highly ambivalent: a transcendent yet perilous influence” (544). She asserts that music erases consciousness in a combination of “Romantic exaltation, magnetism, physiology, and physics,” and it is this erasure, which for her becomes perilous to Maggie’s moral position (544).

¹⁰ Henry Alley compares Baldassarre’s condition to Hetty Sorrel’s state after the birth of her baby in *Adam Bede*, stating Baldassarre “suffers from amnesia and dyslexia and wars over words” (62). Nicholas Dames also calls Baldassarre’s disorder amnesia, writing that “[m]emory and the body it seems, are in direct opposition, each emerging as a result of

the other's feebleness" (216); see Dames 206-235. Kucich, too, designates Baldassarre's condition as amnesia, which "coincides with his experience of being forsaken" by Tito (187); see Kucich 186-188. Dames also notes the tendency in critical discourse to diminish the presence of Baldassarre and regard his condition as an "unusually clinical" rendering of a mental disorder (213).

¹¹ In a sense, Baldassarre's illness and aphasia could be thought of as a reconception of the stroke and subsequent illness of Maggie's father, Mr. Tulliver. Mr. Tulliver's illness is integrally connected to his loss of the mill and his bankruptcy, causing an obsessive hatred and desire for retribution upon Philip Wakem's father, leading to a similar derangement in which Mr. Tulliver demands Tom write a curse on Wakem in the family Bible.

¹² David Carroll maintains that Baldassarre's enslavement and resulting loss of knowledge stems from Baldassarre's risk of his life during his travels in which he attempts to "discover the roots of classical antiquity" (173). His ironic loss of knowledge is for Carroll "a dramatic version of the dangers of the unilateral, singleminded attempt to resurrect the past in an unmediated form. Baldassarre puts aside his humanity in the present to resuscitate a past which becomes a charming monster, embodying everything he has rejected, which then rejects him in turn" (174).

¹³ By memory, Kucich means Baldassarre's ability to read and write. Kucich goes on to note that "the narrator does tell us that Baldassarre had recovered his memory twice before, both on the occasion of 'sudden excitation' (38) in which the old man had to fight for his life. But in those cases, the instinct for survival only weakly restored Baldassarre's memory, as if to stress the inadequacy of his own will. The return of Baldassarre's memory after his confrontation with Tito is more lasting, and more vivid" (187).

¹⁴ As Hertz points out, Tito's murder is often read by critics as wish fulfillment on the part of Eliot "to see justice done," which Hertz revises, maintaining that "if the narrative dramatizes the precariousness of Baldassarre's mental 'grasp,' it will compensate him for this failure by allowing him one final and fatal 'clutch.' And therein lies its real wishfulness. For George Eliot, violently doing away with Tito represents the only satisfying resolution possible, once she had chosen to imagine him as beyond the grasp of any verbal claim" (144).

Conclusion: Second Lives

My project's title, "Ecstasy and Solitude," pinpoints the main two attributes of ecstatic states that frightened and threatened many psychologists and novel critics during this period of the nineteenth century. Implicit in my discussions of Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot is the intrinsic nature of solitude to the narrativity of their novels as well as to their individual formulations of ecstatic states. In different ways, the moral, ethical, and aesthetic basis of their novels is predicated upon the experience of ecstasy and solitude, enabling their conception of textual transmission as well as artistic production.

Solitude is a vital necessity for Brontë's descent into the infernal world of her imagination and for the development of a moral consciousness. Her psychological theory, which overturns the traditional views of phrenology and moral management, depends upon the imaginative, psychical solitude granted by illegibility. For Brontë a relation to the other depends upon the self maintaining this interior freedom and separateness from the gaze and psychological intrusion of the other. Illegibility, the psychological form of Jane hiding and dreaming in the window seat, enables the self to recognize and act upon the truth that originates from within the infernal world, a process that is also inherent within the imaginative, ecstatic, and solitary act of reading.

In reconceiving associationism and largely focusing on the cultivation of the imagination for the social good, the solitude of the Dickensian mind is paradoxically an openness and an inclusion of the other. The wandering Dickensian mind integrates simultaneous and at times contradictory realities, mingling the external reality of the

other with one's own. This process is signified by Dickens's encounter with the creature in rags as well as in Jenny Wren's call to join her and "come up and be dead," a call to join with her in a transcendent, solitary, and yet also shared experience, which still keeps in sight those suffering in the dark streets below. The wandering and egalitarian nature of Dickens's associative mind is a solitary mind, but a solitary mind that reaches, hand held out, toward the other.

Eliot, like Brontë, emphasizes the necessity of solitude for the self, which she conceives as the "severance from our wonted life." And similar to Dickens, Eliot also demonstrates how this severance empowers the self to act on the part of the other and to embrace, without judgment, the inconsistencies and difficulties that mark all human consciousness. Solitude is inherent within the evanescent states of mind and physical sensations which together set consciousness adrift: Maggie's many ecstatic moments along with Romola's second flight from Florence. What imaginative, ecstatic solitude gives the mind is instrumental and vital, but more so than Brontë or Dickens, Eliot exhibits the exquisite physical pleasure that is intrinsic to these states of self-loss.

It is not only the concept of solitude that these novelists share and simultaneously treat differently. There are also smaller examples linking their conceptions of the imagination to one another. Brontë and Eliot both employ the biblical tale of Jael and Sisera. This tale in which Jael drives a tent peg into Sisera's head is integral to Brontë's construction of the the imagination and mind of Lucy in *Villette* as well as Eliot's early construction of Maggie's imagination in *The Mill on the Floss*. Jael and Sisera represent Lucy's own violently conflicted consciousness, and their bloody struggle locks Lucy

further within the confines of her divided mind. But Maggie implements this narrative in a complex way into her imaginative play with her doll. Mimicking and adapting the tale of Jael and Sisera liberates Maggie rather than entraps her, illustrating how powerfully and pleasurably reading and narrative intertwine with her consciousness.

Dickens's characterization of Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend* strikingly resembles Eliot's earlier characterization of Baldassarre in *Romola*. Headstone and Baldassarre share a very similar destructive obsession with another person, Eugene Wrayburn for Headstone and Tito Melema for Baldassarre. Eugene, a rival, and Tito, a betrayer, devastate and dismantle Headstone's and Baldassarre's sense of self. Each dies forever gripping and intertwined with another, though Headstone dies clutching the surrogate Rogue Riderhood rather than his rival Eugene. But both characters illustrate the moral devastation that comes about from the implementation of traditional psychological practices.

Headstone, the prisoners in solitary confinement, and Baldassarre, along with Bertha Mason, represent a different kind of self-loss, a negative, perverse ecstatic state and solitude that signify an involute imagination. These states do not originate from an unrestrained imagination as so many nineteenth-century psychologists feared. Rather this perverse self-loss comes out of the confinements placed upon the imagination to prevent these states from occurring in the first place, or in the case of Baldassarre, the tyrannical governance of the will. The involute imagination is an imagination that turns inward and becomes solipsistic, collapsing in upon itself. Through these characters, we see that Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot do not champion all forms of self-loss but rather illustrate how

the severe confinement of the imagination or the severance of the imagination produce a destructive mania in which the self seeks the annihilation of the other. Reading allows the solitary freedom and the enrichment of the imagination that the mind so desperately needs, and for these novelists, reading works to prevent Headstones and Baldassarres from occurring.

A current novelist, Orhan Pamuk, describes the experience of reading novels in such a way that he seems to echo Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot. Pamuk also celebrates the ecstatic, imaginative self-loss that marks their works and so vividly disturbed many nineteenth-century psychologists and critics. He views this kind of self-loss as constitutive rather than destructive, and his term for this same outcome is “second lives.”

He writes,

when we read novels we are sometimes so powerfully struck by the extraordinary nature of the things we encounter that we forget where we are and envision ourselves in the midst of the imaginary events and people we are witnessing. At such times, we feel that the fictional world we encounter is more real than the real world itself. That these second lives can appear more real to us than reality often means that we substitute novels for reality, or at least that we confuse them with real life...the art of the novel relies on our ability to believe simultaneously in contradictory states. (3-4)

According to Pamuk, the mind voluntarily abandons itself to the ecstatic state of absorbed reading, preferring the illusion to reality and yet paradoxically existing in both.¹

Although he is not discussing insanity or nineteenth-century psychology, his description of second lives and the state of the reading mind strangely resembles the state of insanity described in Victorian psychology in which the impressions of “a dream or ecstatic reverie” or a novel become “so blended with the creations of fancy as to form one mysterious vision, in which the true and imaginary were afterwards inseparable”

(Prichard 459). Pamuk's modern vision of second lives pulsates with the ecstasy and solitude and imaginative visions that vividly mark the works and psychological theories of Brontë, Dickens, and Eliot. As Pamuk writes, reading gives us "[t]he dream of attaining the deepest, dearest, knowledge of the world and of life" so that we may "construct [ourselves] and shape [our] souls" for a greater, richer life and awareness (Pamuk 27). Reading then is not an isolated, exclusory event or a venture into insanity and possible immorality but an inward doubling in which the self imaginatively exists as self and other: the willing and ecstatic embrace of second lives.

¹ Garrett Stewart makes a similar argument regarding the doubleness of subjectivity in novel reading. Referring to act of reading within the novel, Stewart states it "provides not a strict *mise en abyme* of reception but a regression with a difference. The difference is foundational. Classic realist fiction requires for effect a double realization: our activated sense, first, of the rendered social and physical world of the narrative and then, second and simultaneously, of that world as focused upon and filtered through the credible interior representation of characters' mental lives" (Dear 17). Thus instead of seeing an infinite repetition of one's own image in the text, the self sees in the reflection an infinite repetition of otherness, since the book the character reads would most likely include another character engaged in the act of reading and so forth. See Stewart, *Dear* 4-24.

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