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Omniscience Incarnate: Being in and of the World in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in English

by

Cristina Richieri Griffin

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Omniscience Incarnate: Being in and of the World in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

by

Cristina Richieri Griffin

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Jonathan H. Grossman, Chair

Current scholarship tends to understand omniscience as a point of view requiring disembodiment, clairvoyance, or omnipresence on the part of the omniscient narrator. In each of these paradigms, narrative omniscience circumvents the delimiting confines of a single character's perspective. By contrast, "Omniscience Incarnate" grapples with the perplexing fact that the panoramic and synoptic expanse of omniscience often embraces character—even with its accompanying limitations—rather than refusing it. I trace how Victorian authors known for crafting narrators with sweepingly limitless perspectives—George Eliot, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope—also repeatedly have these narrators materialize as characters within their storyworlds. Over and again, each narrator's stance as a character—however brief,

however delimited—paradoxically *enables* omniscient authority. These narrators reveal an epistemology that holds together the seeming contradiction of the embodied boundedness of character and the apparent unboundedness of narrative omniscience.

I historicize this formal technique of incarnated omniscience within the nineteenth century when the omnisciently narrated novel had become a dominant cultural form. When the narrator appears in the storyworld, he or she lays bare multiple capacities of the novel form, including its facility for representing both the vast scope of multinational and historical conflicts as well as the private inner life of the individual. I examine three major repeating effects that are thrown into relief by the appearance of an omniscient narrator: how the narrator roots his or her knowledge of the narrative universe in diegetic experiences rather than claims of divinity; how the narrator negotiates the authority (or lack thereof) over narrative time and the capacity to narrate the past; and how the narrator justifies rendering other characters' emotional and mental inner lives. By urging readers to make sense of an expansive omniscient point of view that roots itself within rather than outside the story space, incarnated narrators envision not only the characterological platform from which omniscience springs but also how one might negotiate and understand one's being both in and of the world.

The dissertation of Cristina Richieri Griffin is approved.

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2015

To Don Richieri Griffin,
who stood alongside this dissertation from its beginning,

and Vilette Rose Griffin,
who arrived for its end.

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INTRODUCTION

Across the Victorian novel we repeatedly encounter narrators who declare and perform a capacity for narrative omniscience—a capacity that Kent Puckett eloquently calls a “masterful view of a whole social world with the ability to be anywhere and everywhere at once.”¹ Many of these same narrators also, however, reveal their own presence within their novel’s narrative universe, exposing the fact that they also are inhabitants of their stories: each one a character among their characters. The omniscient narrator of William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), for instance, announces a mere five chapters from his novel’s finale that he “first saw Colonel Dobbin and his party” in “the little comfortable ducal town of Pumpnickel,” while George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) opens with a character ruminating on memories of “the broadening Floss” before this first-person point of view slips into third-person omniscient narration.² Some narrators’ appearances are less memorable but no less formative: in Eliot’s first fiction, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), the omniscient narrator recalls “smuggling bread-and-butter” into church as a boy growing up in the fictional town of Milby, while in Anthony Trollope’s *Barchester Towers* (1857) the omniscient narrator complains about the way Mr.

¹ Kent Puckett, *Bad Form: Social Mistakes and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 36.

² William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185; George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. Carol T. Christ (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 7. Hereafter, page references for *Vanity Fair* and *The Mill on the Floss* will be cited parenthetically within the text.

Slope's hands always secrete "cold, clammy perspiration."³ Time and again in moments such as these across the novels of Eliot, Thackeray, and Trollope, readers are asked to grapple with the perplexing fact of omniscience incarnated. What does it mean when an epistemologically expansive narrator materializes in the storyworld with the distinct and perceptually limited body of a spatiotemporally emplaced character who is present and visible to other characters within the story space? This materialization—its effects, its causes, its philosophical contexts and aesthetic possibilities, all that it embraces and provokes—is the subject of this dissertation.

We can begin to understand this materialization by looking at Thomas Cole's *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm* (1836), a landscape painting most commonly known as *The Oxbow* (Figure 1). With Cole widely considered the founder of the Hudson River School, it is perhaps unsurprising that scholarship on *The Oxbow* traditionally pinpoints its romantic overtones, particularly the apparent conflict between the dark and stormy wildness of untamed nature on the left and the antithetical placidity of the civilized pastoral scene on the right. Yet even with the differentials of weather and terrain, with shadow and light splicing the landscape diagonally in half as if the two sides may never reconcile, the perspective offered to the viewer is that of a panorama, a posture that even when it encompasses opposites promises the visual gratification of synthesis. The distance of the perspective, then, with the viewer positioned as if looking from above and across a canvas that stretches over six feet wide,

³ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. Thomas A. Noble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 6; Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, ed. Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1:129. Hereafter, page references to *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Barchester Towers* will be cited parenthetically within the text, and references to *Barchester Towers* will refer to volume and page number.



Figure 1. Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)*, 1836, oil on canvas. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908. www.metmuseum.org

provides the possibility of seeing both wilderness and pastoral at once, both the moving storm and the calm it leaves in its wake. This distant synthesis does not fade into abstraction, but instead maintains an acutely magnifying approach to small details from the boat to the fieldworkers. As Alex Wallach points out, the painting requires the viewer to experience a “visual dialectic” in encountering “a scene that is both panoramic and telescopic, vast and yet minutely rendered”: as a result, the perspective Cole generates allows for innovative and “hitherto unrepresentable views.”⁴ In confronting the viewer at once with a vast synthesis of simultaneous but distinct landscapes and a microscopic telescoping of otherwise distant details, *The Oxbow* accomplishes the work of the omniscient narrator.

What makes *The Oxbow* so remarkable in the history of landscape representations is its panoramic perspective—a perspective not previously common in landscape painting but which became extremely popular by the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵ Cole’s initial sketches of the oxbow were comparatively small in scale, primarily since they originated as tracings of the Scottish naval officer and author Basil Hall’s etchings, which Hall produced using camera lucida techniques during his American travels and which Cole then traced during his 1829 sojourn in London. By the time Cole had expanded these sketches in 1833, based on his own personal trip to the then famous vista from Mount Holyoke, a panoramic expanse had already begun to

⁴ Alex Wallach, “Making a Picture of the View from Mount Holyoke,” in *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, ed. David C. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 90.

⁵ For a comprehensive history of the panorama, see Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York: Zone Books, 1997). In particular, Oettermann considers the panorama as an invention that “coincides almost exactly with the nineteenth-century” (5).

supersede the early tracings' tighter frames. Seven years after these initial drawings, the final landscape painting pushes the panoramic perspective even further by hoisting up the viewer's vantage point, as if it is no longer possible to be standing on solid ground in the portrait but instead the beholder is now looking as if from above the landscape itself.⁶ The view, in other words, is impossible for anyone actually standing above the oxbow at Mount Holyoke. The panoramic perspective here—much like the first panoramas presented in London by Robert Barker in the late eighteenth-century—requires a manipulation of point of view so that the viewer's singular vantage point encompasses more than would otherwise be visible: as if, in Barker's phrase, "at a glance" one is all-seeing.⁷

At the same time as Cole's sketches become increasingly panoramic by *The Oxbow's* final oil painting, the finished 1836 canvas also includes a self-portrait of the artist as a character within this landscape. Positioned below the curve of the oxbow and between two stone arches, the artist pauses mid-stroke before his easel, where he is painting a panoramic view of the oxbow. Thus as the painting's perspective becomes more and more expansive, the origin of this perspective—the represented artist—becomes delineated and singular, situated undeniably in a particular moment and place within the picture's world. In representing himself painting within his painting, Cole captures an earlier instance of himself creating the artwork that the viewer beholds. This self-portrait thus distinguishes the moment of the painting's creation from the

⁶ On the history of these compositional changes, see David Bjelajac, "Thomas Cole's *Oxbow* and the American Zion Divided," *American Art* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 63–64; Wallach, "Making a Picture," 85–91.

⁷ Robert Barker, who patented his panoramic technique in 1787, originally called it by a French Title: "*La Nature à Coup d'Œil*," or "Nature at a Glance."

moment the viewer occupies, when the point of view has been raised far above where the artist within the painting stands. Turned toward the viewer and away from his landscape, the artist operates as both an agent who sees and an object that is seen. The oddity of how he looks to where the viewer is positioned—as if the artist is looking right at us—makes both his performed omniscient perspective and his carefully placed viewer visible. At once, this figure also looks up toward the perspective that he is painting from, as if the artist is imagining what it would look like to compose the picture from a loftier height. The artist's posture here seems contradictory: he assumes the embodied vantage point of a singularly seeing artist even as he projects and paints the all-seeing panorama of a perspective literally above his own. And yet in capturing this delicate balance between a clear singular vantage point and a performed synoptic perspective that eschews singularity, *The Oxbow* represents the posture of an omniscience that is incarnate.

This painting, exhibited at the beginning of the Victorian era, before the publication of all the novels that I discuss in this dissertation, furnishes a visual realization of what we encounter over and over again across nineteenth-century fiction: that an omniscient narrator's stance as a character paradoxically enables omniscient authority. And as this painting's perspectival innovations suggest, the ostensible epistemological conundrum of omniscience incarnate—the seeming contradiction between perceptually limited insights and a performance of a limitless point of view—was, we might say, a feature of the Victorian landscape.

In the nineteenth century, the omnisciently narrated novel rose to become a dominant cultural form, partly because of its facility for representing both the vast scope of multinational and historical conflicts as well as the private inner life of the individual. At base, omniscient narrators often know what would otherwise seem unknowable. Or as Wayne C. Booth puts it when discussing how “observers and narrator-agents . . . can be either privileged to know what

could not be learned by strictly natural means or limited to realistic vision and inference”: “Complete privilege is what we usually call omniscience.”⁸ Some of the techniques that constitute omniscient narration include an ability to relay events that occurred simultaneously in disparate places, to probe characters’ thoughts, and to be uninhibited by the constraints of temporality or materiality. Taken together, these elements perform an all-knowing narrative stance that, tautologically, declares—whether implicitly or explicitly—its own narrative authority. I approach omniscience throughout the following chapters not as a literal state of infinite knowledge, but as an authorized narrative performance of a capacious perspective, one that often appears limitless in its scope.⁹ I take the hallmark of omniscient narration to be not only its general adherence to a particular set or combination of techniques but also its performance of an expansive way of knowing: its capacity to embrace a totalizing and synthesizing point of view, to hold a spatially and socially panoramic perspective, and to push beyond any perceptual limitations in order to render characters’ thoughts transparent. I argue that this expansive epistemology also requires, rather than stands in opposition to, the foundational limitations of character.

As I discuss further below, some of the best scholarship on omniscience presumes that this phenomenon requires an inherent form of disembodiment, absence, or omnipresence on the

⁸ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 160.

⁹ For a convincing discussion of omniscience as a “rhetorical performance of narrative authority” that, even in its diversity, “must be named, and named as distinct from other modes of heterodiegetic narration,” see Paul Dawson, “The Return of Omniscience in Contemporary Fiction,” *Narrative* 17, no. 2 (May 2009): 136–38.

part of the omniscient narrator. As Audrey Jaffe succinctly puts it: “The omniscient narrator’s knowledge thus importantly depends on his immateriality or invisibility: the narrator remains indeterminate, exempt from the constructedness of character.”¹⁰ Or as Jonathan Culler states, paraphrasing Susan Lanser’s exploration of authorial narration: “The greater the presence, the less ‘omniscience,’ one might imagine.”¹¹ All such views must ignore or treat as aberrational the common moments in which omniscient narrators appear as characters, moments that recur across Victorian fiction.

In shifting between narrative levels and appearing within the diegesis, the incarnated narrator is said to enact what Gérard Genette terms *metalepsis*: “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe.”¹² As Genette’s term—which builds on the original Greek meanings of *meta* (signifying with or among) and *leps* (denoting a grasping

¹⁰ Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 13.

¹¹ Jonathan Culler, *The Literary in Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 198. See also Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 16–22.

¹² Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 234–35. See also Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). Within both *Narrative Discourse* (1972) and *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1983), Genette groups a variety of what he often terms “intrusions” between narrative levels under the heading *metalepsis*. This “transition from one level to another” thus includes “when an author (or his reader) introduces himself into the fictive action of the narrative or when a character in that fiction intrudes into the extradiegetic existence of the author or reader” (*Narrative Discourse*, 234; *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 88).

or seizing)—suggests, the narrator’s metalepsis potentially jars: it pitches the narrator into not only characterological embodiment but also a first-person storytelling posture that suddenly revises the incarnated narrator’s position in relation to the story she tells and the omniscience she claims. Hence, though the appearance of an omniscient narrator as a character is a commonplace in nineteenth-century novels, both Victorian and modern readers often register the narrator’s metalepsis for its surprising effect. The at-times abrupt revelation of the narrator’s embodiment brings the elements and effects of narrative omniscience into relief, requiring the audience to read—or, with a jolt and a retrospective glance, reread—claims of omniscience differently, to question the relationship between the narrator’s corporeality and his or her performance of illimitable knowledge.

Yet while the materialization of the omniscient narrator might appear to be, in Genette’s terms, a “transgression” or “disturbance” of the storyworld, I argue that the incarnated narrators of Victorian fiction repeatedly reveal their metalepsis to be undergirded by continuity and connection.¹³ The narrator’s materialization brings the delimited epistemological position of a character into contact with the endlessly expansive epistemological position of an omniscient narrator by marking them, I suggest, as one and the same. As a consequence, these novels contend that a part of their epistemology, a part of their meaning, lies in reminding readers that omniscience is never uncharacterized, that there is always a corporeal, authorial character behind the story. In nineteenth-century fiction, that is, the potential incongruity of revealing a first-person presence behind an omniscient perspective brings narrated character and omniscient narrator to their meeting point, and posits the productive reliance of the unboundedness of narrative omniscience on the boundedness of character.

¹³ Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 88.

The Victorian incarnated omniscient narrator alights on broader philosophical questions about what it means to inhabit the world (to be in it) and to look upon the world to which one belongs (to be of it). In the midst of a historically self-conscious period of rapid change and shifting political structures, an era in which being a person in a larger, increasingly global world is, especially after 1848, enormously and visibly complicated, the incarnated omniscient narrator queries how to understand one's place in the world and, even more, how to exert control over that inhabitation, how to be sovereign or autonomous. If metalepsis offers the narrator the possibility of being both in and of the world, then it at once enables the narrator to imagine herself both as herself (first-person) and as other to herself (third-person). This ontological impulse cannot be extracted from its existential, social, and ethical dimensions. With his or her appearance within the storyworld, the narrator offers up a moment of existential curiosity that grapples with the promises and limitations of persisting as a person, as a thinking, feeling, judging human—sometimes blundering, sometimes sympathizing, at times in the know and at others entirely in the dark. It is a moment in which even the imperfections of one's first-person vision yield something much larger than the self. And if the incarnated narrator, grounded in her firsthand experiences, might capture this expansive way of understanding the world and her place in it, then what, if any, her point of view begs, are the limits of the human?

I. The Origins of Omniscience

Given these philosophical concerns, it is no wonder that when an omniscient narrator turns up as a character in the storyworld, this appearance begs a crucial question: how does the narrator know what he or she knows? In other words, the materialization of the omniscient narrator interrogates the authority—or even the ability—to know the world and the narrative that

the novel's tale-teller both occupies and eludes. For Victorian incarnated narrators, omniscience is not an unremarked narrative convention allowing them to read clairvoyantly other characters' minds, nor is it an absolute disembodiment or invisibility. Instead, this dissertation argues that the incarnated narrators of nineteenth-century fiction reveal how expansive knowledge begins simply by being there: by being present and thus able to encounter both their fellow characters and the narrative universe they inhabit.

By ascribing their omniscient knowledge to their presence within the story, nineteenth-century narrators dramatically rewrite, even reverse, the theological roots of the term "omniscience." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first use of "omniscience" occurs in 1612 in a reference by clergyman Thomas Taylor to the Christian God who, in "his omniscience ... searcheth the heart, discovereth the thoughts."¹⁴ By taking up this theistic term, narrative omniscience is understood to trace out a presumed analogy between an omniscient narrator and an omniscient God—that is, between a storyworld-creating authorial narrator and a divine, world-creating God-as-Author. According to this premise, if an omniscient and omnipotent God created the world and thus knows everything about it, so too does the novelist (or the authorial narrator who self-consciously acts as novelist) know everything about the storyworld that she has created and over which she has control.¹⁵ It is this theological analogy

¹⁴ See the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* definition 1a for "omniscience, *n.*" The *OED Online* also notes a 1598 use of the adjective "omniscient" (see definition 1a for "omniscient, *adj.* and *n.*").

¹⁵ For variants of this analogy between an omniscient narrator or novelist and an omniscient God, see J. Hillis Miller, *The Form of Victorian Fiction: Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 64–65; Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 272–73.

that Culler objects most to in his 2004 article “Omniscience” and 2007 book, *The Literary in Theory*, which reinvigorated debates about the efficacy of the term. According to Culler, omniscience is “not a useful notion for the study of narration” both because it “conflates and confuses” a variety of narrative techniques and because it presumes divine omniscience as its faulty and ineffective prototype.¹⁶

“Omniscience Incarnate” argues that the embodied narrators of Victorian fiction envision a form of omniscience that is not theological. By at least the nineteenth century the term and notion of omniscience had expanded, now including hyperbolic uses (referring, for example, to a person with extensive knowledge) and, as I show, narrative ones (which figure omniscience as a specific privilege of authorship).¹⁷ And yet, despite the fact that it is a truism to note that the fullest expressions of narrative omniscience occur within Victorian novels—or, in Culler’s admission, that “the examples where the best case could be made for the notion [of omniscience] are those nineteenth-century novels, from George Eliot to Anthony Trollope, with extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrators”—literary-historical accounts of omniscience tend to elide the phenomenon’s nineteenth-century sources.¹⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* mistakenly identifies formative early twentieth-century novel criticism—Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction* (1921) and E. M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel* (1927)—as the first texts to assess and label narrative omniscience.¹⁹ These assignations resonate with the notion that narrative theories of omniscience only evolved in the twentieth century in response to what Robert Scholes and

¹⁶ Culler, *The Literary in Theory*, 184.

¹⁷ On the hyperbolic uses, see *OED Online* definition A1b for “omniscient, *adj.* and *n.*”

¹⁸ Culler, *The Literary in Theory*, 198.

¹⁹ See *OED Online* definition A2 for “omniscient, *adj.* and *n.*” and definition 2 for “omniscience, *n.*”

Robert Kellogg identify as “the great nineteenth-century realists” who were “so certain, so monistic in their omniscience.”²⁰ Nicholas Royle, who argues that omniscience cannot operate as a suitable means by which to examine narrative due to its implicit religiosity, makes a similar assumption that narrative omniscience is not theorized until the twentieth century when he claims that Charles Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) was published “forty years and more before the establishment of the conventions of ‘point of view’ and ‘omniscience’.”²¹ And yet, while nineteenth-century writers certainly did not invent the techniques of narrative omniscience, they did begin to explicitly characterize and theorize omniscience, and they did so not as a continuation of a theological premise, but as part of the purview of authorship, as a distinctly narrative point of view. All of the incarnated narrators that I examine in this dissertation undertake this inversion of omniscience away from a theological deity and into a novelistic narrator by locating the origin of their authority in their inhabitation of the storyworld and not in any claims of divinity. Eliot’s narrators (as we will see in the first chapter) do so the most emphatically: they not only secularize but also humanize their omniscience, locating the source of their authority not in otherworldly godliness but in their sensory and sympathetic experiences of their narrative world.

One striking early reference to omniscience in relation to novel writing occurs in the 1838 tract, *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, by the higher criticism philosopher and close friend of George Eliot, Charles C. Hennell. Much like his German higher critic contemporaries, David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach (whose conceptions of a material omniscience I discuss at length in chapter one), Hennell participates in burgeoning

²⁰ Scholes and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, 278.

²¹ Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 265.

nineteenth-century secularism debates.²² As a result, in *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* Hennell argues against the divinity of Christ. Within these debates about theological notions and their potential inaccuracies, Hennell's single use of "omniscience" is not only unreservedly secular, but is also exclusively in reference to a literary technique. In analyzing the narrative point of view taken up by two stories in the gospel of John, Hennell argues that John's narrator employs, to his discredit, "the omniscience of the novelist, instead of the one-sided or local knowledge which must belong to an eye-witness," whose position as a present and "active reporter" would, for Hennell, provide increased reliability.²³ According to this assessment, the narrator's assumption of an omniscient posture fails to identify a precise means of acquiring knowledge of the story's events, thus marking the relayed information as unverifiable and antithetical to—positioned "instead of"—the more trustworthy narration of an eyewitness to the incidents, of a character within the storyworld. Hennell's contention thereby at once adopts the nineteenth-century turn away from the theological toward the authorial but asserts (like modern critics) that narrative omniscience entirely lacks the imperfect but demonstrable knowledge that comes only from an in-person, eyewitness experience. That latter view is precisely what the incarnated omniscient narrator of Victorian fiction gainsays.

²² In his 1841 "Preface to the Second Edition" of *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, Hennell notes: "Since the first edition of this work was published, the writer has read and celebrated *Leben Jesu* of Dr. Strauss, which contains a most minute and searching analysis of the various stories, anecdotes, and sayings, which mainly make up the Gospels" (*An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, 2nd ed. [London: T. Allman, 1841], xi).

²³ Hennell, *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, 294.

Take, for instance, the narrator of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. This novel contains one of the earliest explicit references to authorial omniscience within a British novel, and some of the first references to omniscience as a specific purview of the novelist at all. Within *Vanity Fair*, the authorial narrator famously declares, with a self-conscious mixture of sincerity and playfulness, that "novelists have the privilege of knowing everything": "the present writer claimed the privilege of peeping into Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom, and understanding with the omniscience of the novelist all the gentle pains and passions which were tossing upon that innocent pillow," of discovering all those "private feelings of ... Mrs. Rebecca" (31, 185). Here the narrator stands rhetorically "present" at the threshold of "Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom," and later (as I discuss at length in my second chapter) he will be ontologically "present" when he encounters Amelia in Pumpnickel and serves as an eyewitness to her experiences in that German town. By the time Thackeray composed *Vanity Fair* in the 1840s, narratorial omniscience was not automatically the purview of a divine presence but of "the present writer," a "privilege" that the narrator can (and does) capitalize on—or, particularly for Thackeray's narrator, elide—as he chooses.

And thus, with the omniscience of the narrator tethered to the eyewitness experiences of a character, we arrive again at the answer to how the incarnated omniscient narrator has obtained what *Vanity Fair*'s narrator calls the "privilege" of knowing the story he tells in the first place. Or, as Hennell asks of the narrative posture in John: "Who is this narrator, and where could he have been that he knows so well the words and thoughts of so many actors in different places?"²⁴ According to the presumed likeness between God and the godlike novelist, two creators of worlds, invention begets knowledge. And yet, within nineteenth-century fiction, the appearance

²⁴ Hennell, *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity*, 294.

of the omniscient narrator repeatedly severs this causal connection, detaching limitless knowledge from an ordinary act of creation. Over and over again, incarnated narrators depict themselves not as creating a fictional world about which they know everything, but instead as writing about a world that they have inhabited and experienced part of, a world about which they have learned—and thus *now* know—everything. In the moment of metalepsis, the incarnated narrator positions himself as, in Hennell’s phrase, an “active reporter” who has experiential familiarity with the storyworld, such that cohabitation—though often brief—within the diegesis and among the characters marks the narrator’s momentary eyewitness account and the performance of illimitable knowledge not as oppositions, as Hennell suggests, but as productively—and even synonymously—interconnected.

II. Omniscience and Character

The scope of “Omniscience Incarnate,” I hope I have already suggested, extends far beyond seeing omniscience only as a narrative technique. And yet my discussions here also necessarily engage with a core body of fascinating scholarship on omniscience and, in particular, its relationship with character. While early twentieth-century critics often “saw omniscience,” as Rachel Sagner Buurma puts it, “as *overly* personal,” by the second half of the century we find J. Hillis Miller’s foundational criticism in *The Form of Victorian Fiction* (1968) to be less concerned with the narrator’s intrusive personality and more invested in this narrator’s “pervasive presence” such that this figure serves as an unobtrusive “spokesman for the general

consciousness of the community.”²⁵ According to Miller, the omniscient narrator takes on “the role not of a first person narrator who is an actor in the drama, and not even the role of an anonymous storyteller who may be identified with an individual consciousness, but the role of a collective mind.”²⁶ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth makes a similar claim: though her argument does not center on omniscience, Ermarth, like Miller, suggests that a perspective based on consensus defines the realist novel. To this end, Ermarth avoids “the assumption that the narrative consciousness ... is an individual matter” and argues instead: “It is precisely the narrator’s function in the realistic novel to be faceless and even to be without identity in the ordinary sense of that word.”²⁷ For D. A. Miller, who figures omniscient narration as “a fully panoptic view of the world it places under surveillance,” this posture’s authority functions not as a “faceless” form of collectivity or consensus but as a “faceless gaze [that] becomes an ideal of the power of regulation.”²⁸ And yet, when the omniscient narrator renders herself embodied within the

²⁵ Rachel Sagner Buurma, “Critical Histories of Omniscience,” in *New Directions in the History of the Novel*, ed. Patrick Parrinder, Andrew Nash, and Nicola Wilson (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 124 (emphasis in original); Miller, *Form of Victorian Fiction*, 72.

²⁶ Miller, *Form of Victorian Fiction*, 63.

²⁷ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 39.

²⁸ D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 23, 24.

Though D. A. Miller’s suspicious analysis of omniscient narration as a form of panoptic power distinguishes itself from, in Buurma’s phrase, the “positive revaluation of omniscience” undertaken by J. Hillis Miller alongside Wayne Booth, D. A. Miller (like J. Hillis Miller and Ermarth) also suggests that the “faceless” narration is “never identified with a *person*” (Buurma, “Critical Histories of Omniscience,” 127; D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 24 [emphasis in original]).

storyworld, she marks her presence as arrested within an individual consciousness with both face and identity. By not merely drawing attention to the humanized voice of the narrator, but pointedly figuring the narrator on a human scale—as a character with spatiotemporally emplaced personhood, and not just personality—Victorian instances of metalepsis thus do precisely what Culler asks literary critics not to do: naturalize the narrator, thereby “humanizing writing and making personality the focal point of the text.”²⁹

Two significant studies of omniscience have developed a critical discourse that theorizes the authority that omniscience incurs through its relationship with—and, in particular, against—character: Jaffe’s *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (1991) and Puckett’s *Bad Form: Social Mistakes and the Nineteenth-Century Novel* (2008). In *Vanishing Points*, Jaffe argues that within the nineteenth-century novel omniscience is a fantasy, one defined by a desire “of unlimited knowledge and mobility; of transcending the boundaries imposed by physical being.”³⁰ According to Jaffe, this transcendence—or desired transcendence—of materiality manifests through a relationship between narrator and character defined by negation: omniscient narration comes into being by identifying itself as what character is not. For Jaffe, if characters within the nineteenth-century novel are marked, material, “psychological entities, with identifiable patterns of speech and behavior,” then omniscient

²⁹ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 235. For pertinent discussions of the relationship between personhood and omniscience, see Richard Walsh, “Who Is the Narrator?” *Poetics Today* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1997); Culler, *The Literary in Theory*, 196–97; Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 116.

³⁰ Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 6.

narrators position themselves against “the constructedness of character,” or as “unmarked” and “indeterminate” in their “refusal of character.”³¹ Puckett, whose *Bad Form* follows Jaffe’s framework, similarly posits omniscience as a narrative structure of refusal, a rejection specifically of identifying with characters, their social mistakes, and their subsequent “bad form.” For Puckett, while characters are defined by their “necessarily limited epistemological position” and their susceptibility to commit a social mistake, narrative omniscience comes into being both through “an identification with good form” and through “a disidentification with the limitations of character, a negation that helps to produce what we recognize as narrative authority.”³² On this premise, it is omniscience’s “negation of all things we know about literary character” that authorizes this narrative stance.³³ Yet for the incarnated narrator who embraces the embodiment and even the limitations of character within—quite literally, in the midst of exercising—his omniscient point of view, the authority claimed by this panoramic posture insists not on a refusal of character, but on an incorporation of it.

While scholarship repeatedly remarks on the intrusions—often the imaginative ones—of omniscient narrators, the metalepsis that I argue is inherent to omniscience’s incorporation of

³¹ Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 13–14.

³² Puckett, *Bad Form*, 6, 51.

³³ Puckett, *Bad Form*, 47. According to Puckett, the distinction that narrative omniscience enforces against misbehaving characters breaks down occasionally and meaningfully when the omniscient narrator threatens to reproduce the very “bad form” it seeks to negate: “the novel’s efforts to differentiate structurally and socially between character and narration with the help of the mistake tend to collapse in an identification that gives omniscient narration its own threatened character” (7). “Omniscience Incarnate” suggests that one way to trace this identification is by turning to the corporeality repeatedly shared by the materialized narrator and the fellow characters he meets and narrates.

character has largely remained outside the purview of Victorian criticism. At least in part, we might account for this elision with the fact that studies concentrating on point of view traditionally classify storytellers into first-person or third-person narrators, two distinct categories that are at once useful and yet help shape what we often separate as either character or omniscience. This opposition takes various forms and has generated multiple terminologies for identifying narrative perspectives. For instance, while Genette coins the terms “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic” to avoid person-based terminology, Dorrit Cohn prefers retaining the use of “first-person” and “third-person” for their familiarity, and James Phelan similarly opts for a more user-friendly lexicon by differentiating between “character” and “noncharacter” narration.³⁴ Yet under any of these labels, the subtle grammatical and characterological distinctions between the two postures remain: rather than only identifying the narrator’s dominant grammatical stance, we must also discern the relationship of the narratorial “I” to the story being told, such that a homodiegetic narrator speaks as a character that is present within his tale, and a heterodiegetic narrator speaks from a noncharacter position and is absent from his narrative.

While the rubrics for identifying a narrator’s characterological and grammatical position usefully distinguish between the relative presence or absence of the narrator from the novel’s storyworld, the effect of these categories has been either to mark as aberrational and disruptive

³⁴ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 244–45; Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 272–73n; James Phelan, *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), x–xi. Notably, Cohn and Phelan both agree with Genette’s point that any narrator might use the first-person “I” and thus person-based terminology is not as useful; however Cohn and Phelan also find Genette’s terms to be too unfamiliar for most readers.

those narrators who speak from both within and outside the diegesis, or to elide entirely a critical discussion of those narrators who operate within both first- and third-person modes. For example, Cohn divides *Transparent Minds* (1978) into two parts: “consciousness in third-person context” and “consciousness in first-person texts.” By introducing *Vanity Fair*’s narrator as its first example of third-person narration, Cohn lets pass both the narrator’s first-hand interactions with the novel’s characters at Pumpnickel, and his first-person narration of this interaction wherein the narrator speaks with a homodiegetic voice as he reports an experience as a character within the novel’s storyworld.³⁵ As not only *Vanity Fair* but also Eliot’s and Trollope’s novels teach us, however, nineteenth-century narrators explore forms of consciousness that are metaleptic, able to bridge any divide between first- and third-person narration by bonding the immersion of character with the potential distance of omniscient narration.

Scholarship that takes up the nineteenth-century novel and its well-known practice of direct address actively resists this potentially strict division between first- and third-person narrators. Robyn Warhol’s influential study, *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (1989), for instance, tackles the common nineteenth-century narrative technique of direct address, when metaleptic narrators rhetorically reach out to “you” or the “dear reader.”³⁶ Warhol distinguishes not between character and noncharacter narration, but between modes of narration that employ “distancing” or “engaging” strategies in their use of direct

³⁵ See Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 21.

³⁶ See also Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Stewart does not explicitly consider metalepsis within his attention to direct address, though his work does follow Warhol’s investigation of narrators who manipulate narrative perspective in order to engage—or conscript—the reader.

address. According to Warhol, “distancing” narrators, such as those at the helm of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* or Trollope’s *Barchester Towers*, often take up sarcasm or humor when addressing the reader, a practice that Warhol argues “discourages the actual reader from identifying with the textual narratee.”³⁷ By contrast, “engaging” narrators, such as the narrator of Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859), employ “earnest” strategies of addressing “you, dear reader” in order “to evoke sympathy and identification from an actual reader.”³⁸ Within Warhol’s model, both “distancing” and “engaging” modes of intervention involve metalepsis, since the narrator’s direct address of the reader often places the narrator, at least imaginatively, “in the same room . . . with the extradiegetic narratee . . . and the character.”³⁹ Though the metaleptic moments that Warhol is most interested in remain rhetorical while I emphasize the repeated instances of ontological metalepsis that occur across the novels of Thackeray, Trollope, and Eliot, this dissertation similarly resists reifying a rigid opposition between first- and third-person narration by focusing on the narrative point of view that historically crops up over and over again within Victorian fiction: the incarnating omniscient narrator.

Again, this section has addressed the core scholarship on omniscience that is clearly relevant to an account of the Victorian incarnated omniscient narrator. Yet as we will see in this introduction’s next section, the practice of incarnating omniscience extends well beyond a narrative technique to major aspects of the nineteenth-century novel and its cultural discourses: to religion and secularism, to historiography, and to the rendering of the interiority of individuals

³⁷ Robyn R. Warhol, *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 35.

³⁸ Warhol, *Gendered Interventions*, 32–33.

³⁹ Warhol, *Gendered Interventions*, 35.

and its corollary in the autonomous liberal subject. Readers particularly interested in nineteenth-century religious and secular dialogues—including the recent wholesale re-theorization of religion and secularism by Charles Taylor and Talal Asad and the continued critical investigations of nineteenth-century scholars such as Charles LaPorte, Mark Canuel, and Christopher Lane—will encounter this critical context in my first chapter. Readers interested in historiography and the historical novel—as, for instance, taken up by Georg Lukács, Ruth Mack, and Elaine Scarry—will find that subject treated in my second chapter. Finally, my last chapter participates in critical discussions of interiority and consciousness, long an important topic in histories of the novel from Ian Watt onward, but here rooted in the theories of Dorrit Cohn and Ray Pascal, and branching out especially into more recent work by Nicholas Royle on clairvoyance and by Nancy Armstrong and Daniel Novak on photography.

III. Omniscience Incarnate: Secularism, History, Interiority

In the chapters that follow this introduction, I chart three major repeating effects that are thrown into relief by the appearance of an omniscient narrator. The first effect, which I have begun interrogating in this introduction, is that the narrator prompts us to query how he or she knows the narrative universe and its inhabitants. Without claims to absolute divinity, incarnated narrators reassign the source of their omniscient purview to their stance within their storyworld. Moreover, when narrators turn up in the diegesis, they call attention not only to the mode by which they originate this tale but also to the moment of this origination. This brings us to the second special effect of the incarnating narrator: that this figure negotiates his or her control (or lack thereof) over narrative time. When the metaleptic narrators of nineteenth-century novels instigate their materialization within the diegesis, they remind readers that they hold no control

over the chronological story (*fabula*) even as they flaunt their ownership over its narration (*sjuzet*), since they can accentuate their power over storytelling by asserting the authority to determine the moment to reveal their participation as characters within the storyworld to their readers. The third effect of incarnated omniscience is that the appearance of the narrator interrogates how he or she justifies rendering other characters' inner lives. In revealing an embodied form, the narrator often reminds readers that this stance as a character is accompanied by the same epistemological limitations that constrain other characters' points of view. And yet, these narrators frequently continue to present their characters private thoughts and feelings, often without inhibition.

Each chapter of this dissertation takes up one of these effects of incarnated omniscience within the work of a single author. Chapter one, "Eliot's Sympathetic Narrators: The Sensory Spectrum of Secular Omniscience," considers the omniscient narrator's diegetic origins by focusing on the way Eliot's fictions revise the materialist and secular philosophies of Ludwig Feuerbach. In his most influential work, *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), which Eliot translated into English in 1854, Feuerbach argues for a secularization of Christian theology that strips all claims of divinity down to what he sees as their immanently human roots. As a result, any previously divine capacity becomes, for Feuerbach, not defunct but humanized: omniscience, for instance, gains its force through what Eliot's translation terms the "limitless activity of the senses" that fuels a secular omniscience's expansive vision.⁴⁰ Across Eliot's oeuvre, from her first foray into fiction in *Scenes of Clerical Life* to her final experimental work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), we repeatedly encounter this "limitless activity of the

⁴⁰ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855), 275.

senses”: Eliot touts a sympathetic imagination that relies upon sensory familiarity, upon intradiegetic in-person experiences of a narrative universe over and above lofty abstractions or generalizations. In espousing—and, for her earliest metaleptic narrators in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, and *The Mill on the Floss*, enacting—a distinctly sensory sympathy, this ethos functions as a springboard for an expansive point of view. Rather than figuring omniscience as a source (or, as many critics have suggested, a hindrance) to fellow-feeling, the sensory sympathy realized by Eliot’s incarnated omniscient narrators holds the capacity to beget omniscience—and an omniscience that claims its authority not through divine otherworldliness but through the sensory storyworld.

From the sensory sympathy that authorizes omniscience for Eliot’s narrators, my second chapter, “Thackeray’s ‘Present’ Narrator: The Historical Experience of Omniscience,” turns to the authority claimed by the narrator of *Vanity Fair* over historical time. When Thackeray’s narrator reveals his presence as a character in the fictional German town of Pumpnickel just before *Vanity Fair* concludes, his materialization both offers the possibility that he will experience at least part of the storyworld in sync with his fellow characters and yet his arrival is so late that he misses out on being copresent with the majority of his narrative’s events. This intentional lateness trumpets the more general inability, which Thackeray insists upon, of people to experience or narrate history as it unfolds. Famously declining to represent the violent international conflict of the Battle of Waterloo, the narrator similarly emphasizes his inability to represent the domestic lives of his fellow characters when he first meets them in Pumpnickel. And yet, I argue that it is precisely the belatedness of the narrator’s incarnation that ultimately enables him to render history both narratable and experienceable. When the narrator encounters not the war itself as it transpires but the belated artistic revivifications of the Napoleonic wars as

they appear in *Pumpnickel*, or when he encounters not his characters' domestic lives as he first sees them in *Pumpnickel* but those lives as he experiences them through the stories that he weaves when self-consciously and retrospectively creating his novel, he encounters history while embodied in his present moment, an act that allows him to inhabit and represent the past. Rather than envisioning a historical perspective that entails a form of immateriality in order to traverse across time, *Vanity Fair*'s narrator exercises a historiography that requires the incarnated omniscience of belated and aestheticized historical experience.

Following these aesthetic representations of history, my final chapter takes up Trollope's novel series *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* (1855–67) where the narrator presents aesthetic analogies for his ability to represent his characters' inner lives. "Trollope's Observing Narrator: Photography and the Intimate Interiorities of Omniscience" argues that the incarnated narrator of *Chronicles* never entirely explains his capacity for rendering other characters' mental states while situated as a character himself. What he does offer, however, is a series of photographic analogies wherein the possibility of illuminating the secrets of a darkened chamber parallels his own narrative potential for illuminating his characters' psychological and affective interiorities through free indirect discourse. Particularly in the series' first two novels, *The Warden* (1855) and *Barchester Towers*, the incarnated narrator presents both the promises and the pitfalls of his capacity for representing inner lives by likening his narration to a form of mental camerawork—producing what he calls a "mental method of daguerreotype or photography"—and to the camera obscura technique for peering into interior architectural spaces and correspondingly peering into a character's interiority (*Barchester Towers* 1:185). Across each of these analogies for gaining intimacy with a variety of interior spaces, Trollope's narrator realigns free indirect discourse

with his first-person narration, insisting that his position as a character functions not as an obstacle but rather as an opportunity for understanding the inner workings of fellow characters.

In the chapters that constitute this study, I thus offer a trio of ways for exploring omniscience incarnated in the nineteenth-century novel, for interrogating the simultaneously expansive and embodied posture that Thomas Cole realizes visually in *The Oxbow*. Yet in the novels of Eliot, Thackeray, and Trollope we also encounter something that does not find its equivalent in Cole's painting: a narrative, a story that represents the passing of time and the incremental disclosing of events. In depicting a thunderstorm just after it has crossed over the oxbow, this landscape painting offers a representation of narrative arrested, paused in a single moment with the plotting of the storm's continued passing implied but never visually fulfilled. In the novels we will encounter in the following chapters, however, the narrative unfolds and the revelation of the omniscient narrator's presence in the storyworld forms part of this temporal unfolding. The appearance of a narrator brings into focus, that is, not only his or her paradoxical reliance on character but also what narrative art can accomplish with omniscience incarnate.

CHAPTER ONE:
Eliot's Sympathetic Narrators: The Sensory Spectrum of Secular Omniscience

George Eliot's realist fiction repeatedly and explicitly declares its project to be one of cultivating sympathy, a theory nowhere more apparent than in the rhetorically metaleptic intrusions of the omniscient narrators of her earliest novels. In "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," the first of the three stories collected in Eliot's earliest fictional work, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), the male narrator both invites the reader to consider the eponymous and imperfect protagonist, Amos, and makes his objective for the reader quite clear: "Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones."¹ This metaleptic move repeats two years later in the novel that would make Eliot famous when the ungendered narrator of *Adam Bede* (1859) similarly provides an intrusive and extended discourse that addresses the aesthetic and moral merits of realistic representation and its promotion of "deep human sympathy" for even the commonest of characters: "I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence."² In these novels, the edict for readers and writers, artists and beholders, appears unambiguous: represent ordinary people with realism and you will exercise the highest ethical potential that fiction has to offer.

¹ George Eliot, *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. Thomas A. Noble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

² George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Carol A. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 162, 161. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

These pronouncements risk looking especially familiar within scholarship on Eliot's fiction. Her theories about sympathy as a dually aesthetic and ethical force are well-known and well-trodden by modern critics of Victorian fiction, and it is common to begin any discussion of Eliot's notion of sympathy with her 1856 essay, "The Natural History of German Life," where she famously asserts: "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies."³ Published just one year before *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Eliot's essay presages the clear assertions that her fiction will expand upon in the name of offering the best methods for cultivating this sympathy: represent "the life of our more heavily laden fellow-men"—"the people,' 'the masses,' 'the proletariat,' 'the peasantry'"—and do so realistically.⁴ For Eliot, art's realism should enable readers and viewers to feel alongside fictional characters and, by extension, to sympathize with—or, in the term that Vernon Lee would use by the turn of the twentieth century, empathize with—their fellow humans in the non-fictional world.⁵

³ George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," in *The Essays of "George Eliot,"* ed. Nathan Sheppard (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 144.

⁴ Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life," 142.

⁵ See, for instance, Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 68. In this comprehensive and complex work, Lee explains: "But although nowhere so fostered as in the contemplation of shapes, Empathy exists or tends to exist throughout our mental life. It is, indeed, one of our simpler, though far from absolutely elementary, psychological processes, entering into what is called imagination, sympathy, and also into that inference from our own inner experience which has shaped all our conceptions of an outer world, and given to the intermittent and heterogeneous sensations received from without the framework of our constant and highly unified inner experience." For an explanation of how Lee "didn't deny that this type of response

Yet what becomes apparent when we look beyond “The Natural History of German Life” to Eliot’s fiction is how the narrators who make these proclamations about sympathy do not limit their metaleptic engagements to the rhetorical realm: they do not solely peer into the storyworlds they narrate or directly address the reader from a disembodied vantage point. Instead, these narrators exercise their sympathetic ethos through appearing as characters within the diegesis, ontologically materializing alongside—or, as *Scenes*’ narrator phrases it, “on the level” of—their fellow characters for whom they profess sympathy (299). This chapter therefore takes its impetus from brief moments in Eliot’s early fiction when her narrators assume the same level of corporeality that they attribute to their characters. In “The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton” within *Scenes of Clerical Life*, for instance, the narrator briefly reminisces about how his nurse needed to bribe his good behavior in church “by smuggling bread-and-butter into the sacred edifice” when he was still “so crude a member of the congregation” (5–6). And in *Adam Bede*, the narrator remarks upon having “gathered” part of his story “from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age” (163). With each appearance, her narrators reveal how their embodiment serves as a foundation for participating in sympathetic relationships with their characters and their narrative universe.

This chapter traces how these and other early metaleptic moments both help us to frame later instances of sympathy when the narrators may not appear as characters, as well as cue us to the way Eliot’s sympathetic ethos entails a form of fellow feeling grounded in embodied sensory

could have something to do with feelings for other persons” even as she underscores empathy as a “formal, shape-oriented response,” see Benjamin Morgan, “Vernon Lee’s Aesthetics and the Origins of Close Reading,” *Victorian Studies* 55, no. 1 (Autumn 2012): 33.

experience.⁶ Scholarship on sympathy, both for George Eliot's fiction and for the novel more broadly, has suggested repeatedly that sympathy avoids the sensory realm. For instance, Catherine Gallagher, who focuses on the theories of David Hume in relation to the rise of fiction in the eighteenth century, distinguishes between experiencing sympathy for people in the non-fictional world and experiencing sympathy for fictional characters because characters do not have bodies, which, in the real world, serve as barriers to empathic exchange: "fiction actually facilitates the process of sympathy" for characters or "nobodies" because it presents "feelings that belong to no other body."⁷ For Audrey Jaffe, who attends to the well-known theories of Adam Smith in relation to Victorian fiction, sympathy is not just about the "tendency to ward off actual bodies in the sympathetic encounter" but also to "replac[e] them with cultural fictions and self-projections."⁸ Rae Greiner, most recently, has taken what she calls Smith's "methodological abstraction of feeling" furthest by suggesting that he theorizes a form of sympathy that

⁶ In treating Eliot's oeuvre tout court rather than making a developmental argument about her fictional works, this chapter aims to locate the productive intersections that persist across her earlier and later texts. In doing so, I take a cue from Eliot herself, who has a view to the continuity between her earlier and later fictions when she writes: "there has been no change in the point of view from which I regard our life since I wrote my first fiction—the 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' and thus the "principles which are at the root of my effort to paint Dinah Morris are equally at the root of my effort to paint Mordecai" (Eliot to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, December 16, 1876, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–1978], 6:318).

⁷ Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 171.

⁸ Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 7.

“dematerializes ... bodily sensations” and thus does not require a feeling body at all; Eliot, according to Greiner, follows in Smith’s incorporeal footsteps.⁹ Yet, as we shall see across Eliot’s fiction, she repeatedly privileges forms of fellow feeling that avoid abstraction and instead capitalize on the productive intimacy gleaned from proximate and embodied experiences within the narrative universe. Eliot thus envisions a sympathetic ideal in which fellow feeling never shakes off the centrality of sensory *feeling*.

Rather than attending to the eighteenth-century theories of Hume or Smith, in this chapter I approach Eliot’s notion of a distinctly sensory sympathy by concentrating on her intellectual relationship with one of the most influential philosophers of the nineteenth-century higher criticism movement, whose works inspired not only George Eliot but also Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud: the German theorist, Ludwig Feuerbach. We find in Feuerbach’s writings a German source for sympathy that predates “The Natural History of German Life” and whose materialist centering of the sensorium informed Eliot’s fictions. Feuerbach proposes a theory of sympathy that grounds fellow feeling unquestioningly in the senses and, in doing so, intersects with his wider philosophy, which locates religion’s origins and ends in humankind. As one of the foremost higher critics, Feuerbach proposed an analysis of religious belief that not only secularized the Christian mythos, but also—and more to the point—humanized it, inverting the Hegelian dialectic wherein God is realized in man (“the spirit of humanity ... is simply God’s spirit itself”) by suggesting that religion functions to reflect humanity onto God (“the divine

⁹ Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 18.

being is nothing else than the human being”).¹⁰ In 1854 Eliot completed the first English translation of Feuerbach’s path breaking work, *The Essence of Christianity* (*Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1841), when she was still translating and writing as Marian Evans and just three years prior to her first fictional ventures as George Eliot. Her translation is still considered the definitive edition of *The Essence of Christianity* today. Though *The Essence of Christianity* was not the first work of higher criticism that Eliot translated—she had completed an English edition of David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu*, 1835) in 1846—it was the text she most wholeheartedly endorsed. In a letter to Sara Sophia Hennell, her good friend and sister to Charles C. Hennell (who, as I addressed in the introduction, also authored a higher criticism tract), Eliot declares: “With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree.”¹¹

Within criticism on Eliot’s fictions and philosophies, there is no shortage of recognition that Feuerbach, in George Levine’s phrase, “so inspired George Eliot.”¹² Recent scholarship on Feuerbach and Eliot has underscored how both thinkers query the complex relationship between sympathy and knowledge. According to Suzy Anger, who looks at “Feuerbach’s picture” of sympathy alongside Leslie Stephen’s, “any knowledge depends on the recognition of other

¹⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* (1829) quoted in Peter C. Hodgson, “Hegel’s Proofs of the Existence of God,” in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011), 418; Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 34.

¹¹ George Eliot to Sara Sophia Hennell, April 29, 1854, in *George Eliot Letters*, 2:153. For a compelling reading of Charles Hennell’s influence on George Eliot, see E. S. Shaffer, *‘Kubla Khan’ and the Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 230–32.

¹² George Levine, *Realism, Ethics, and Secularism: Essays on Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 74.

minds. One cannot have a concept of an ‘I’ without the concept of an other.... On this account, entirely consistent with George Eliot’s, sympathy is essential to the ability to know anything at all.”¹³ In attending to Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871–72), Hina Nazar also focuses on the same dependence of “I” on “thou” within Feuerbach’s philosophy yet determines that he positions the social components of sympathy not only as essential to knowledge but also—more importantly—as privileged over and above knowledge: “Love assumes priority over knowledge because shared existence functions as the immanent context of abstraction.”¹⁴

The present chapter builds on this notion that sympathy provides a necessary foundation for knowledge by investigating the relationship between sympathy and the performed all-knowingness of narrative omniscience. Sympathy has long been entangled with omniscience due to an often tacit assumption that knowing results in feeling. By this logic, Eliot’s investment in exemplifying and evoking sympathy would seem to rely on unemplaced omniscient narration because this storytelling posture appears to avoid identifying any singular vantage point and instead provides an ability to know (and thus engage in sympathetic exchange with) a variety of

¹³ Suzy Anger, *Victorian Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 116. See also Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, “George Eliot’s Conception of Sympathy,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 40, no. 1 (June 1985): 25. In considering *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, and *Felix Holt*, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth also suggests that the conception of sympathy and individual difference that Feuerbach puts forth in *Essence of Christianity* “closely resembles George Eliot’s idea of sympathy.” According to Ermarth, where “Feuerbach cherishes the ‘qualitative, critical difference between men’” as a foundation for forging connections, Eliot suggests that “any constructive action must be preceded by the recognition of difference.”

¹⁴ Hina Nazar, “Philosophy in the Bedroom: *Middlemarch* and the Scandal of Sympathy,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 295.

character perspectives.¹⁵ Greiner's recent theorization of what she terms "sympathetic realism" sidesteps this presumed relationship between omniscience and sympathetic identification. In particular, Greiner laments how this traditional story of sympathy begins unquestioningly with omniscient narration, a posture that might seem to animate sympathy by "knowing more and seeing further into others," specifically through free indirect discourse; in Greiner's reading of Eliot, however, an omniscient perspective does not necessarily lead to increased fellow feeling.¹⁶ My discussion follows Greiner's skepticism, but shifts the source. Rather than figuring omniscience only as a catalyst for sympathetic exchange, Eliot's fiction repeatedly disrupts this chain of command on two fronts: first, by grounding sympathy in the body; and second, by figuring this sensory form of sympathy as a wellspring for (rather than only a product of or even a hindrance to) synoptic and intimate omniscience.

Focusing on Feuerbach's significance for Eliot prompts us not only to revise the relationship between sensory sympathy and narrative omniscience but also to place omniscience's narrative expansiveness in the context of nineteenth-century secularization debates. During this period when the omnisciently narrated novel rose as a dominant cultural

¹⁵ On Eliot's avoidance of singular perspectives, see J. Hillis Miller, "Optic and Semiotic in *Middlemarch*," in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*, ed. Jerome Hamilton Buckley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 125, 136. In discussing George Eliot's narration of "totalization," Miller suggests that her narrative techniques enable the narrator to "to share the points of view of all the characters, thereby transcending the limited vision of any single person." See also Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 161. In attending to George Eliot's famous metaphor in *Middlemarch* of diegesis-as-web, Beer also argues: "George Eliot seeks out ways beyond the single consciousness."

¹⁶ Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 125.

form, social and cultural shifts—industrialization, new scientific discoveries, Kantian rationalism—helped to stimulate a freshly suspicious perspective on Christianity, both as a theology and as what Charles Taylor calls a “lived experience” of faith.¹⁷ The result was, in Christopher Lane’s phrase, “a century of religious doubt.”¹⁸ Amidst this suspicion, Feuerbach is a particularly productive pairing for Eliot, who famously migrated from the Anglican and Evangelical influences of her youth to a more universal humanism as an adult.¹⁹ He at once positions himself at the forefront of continental secularization debates and yet also, much like Eliot throughout her life, argues for the potential social and ethical values of religion.²⁰ For all his debunking of Christian theology, for instance, Feuerbach credits religion with what he sees as a desirable expansion of the otherwise enclosed sensational self: while sensation can keep the individual “in his narrow confined dwelling-house,” the “beneficial influence of religion rests on this extension of the sensational consciousness.”²¹ Eliot’s translation of Feuerbach here—that religion serves as a “beneficial . . . extension of the sensational consciousness”—haunts her own

¹⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁸ Christopher Lane, *The Age of Doubt: Tracing the Roots of Our Religious Uncertainty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁹ For a recent perspective on Eliot’s religious background that emphasizes both her Anglican and Evangelical influences, see Avrom Fleishman, *George Eliot’s Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23.

²⁰ Eliot’s interest in the social and ethical values of religion thread throughout her literary career. For a recent exploration of how “Eliot remained deeply invested in poetry as a key to understanding religious expression and experience, if only as a cultural legacy,” see Charles LaPorte, *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 193.

²¹ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 276.

famous declaration in “The Natural History of German Life” that the artist’s “greatest benefit . . . is the extension of our sympathies.”²² Though the sources that Feuerbach and Eliot identify (religion, art) are distinct, their goals are the same: “extension” outward from the singular “sensational” self to ethically and aesthetically motivated sympathy with others. This reiterated notion of “extension” also undergirds both Feuerbach’s and Eliot’s respective understandings of omniscience not as a divine stance, but as one grounded in the human sensorium. In Eliot’s fiction, the “extension” provided by sensory sympathy not only functions as a platform for producing an omniscient perspective, but also saturates this synoptic narrative posture itself with the senses, cementing the rhetorical performance of omniscience as ultimately an extended and extending sensory act.

I. Sympathy and the Senses

In reading Feuerbach as the intellectual predecessor of Eliotian sympathy, my approach diverges from established discussions of sympathy, which—both for Eliot and for Victorian literature more broadly—tend to revolve, understandably, around Adam Smith’s much-reprinted paradigms of sympathetic exchange in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).²³ In introducing

²² Eliot reiterates this expansion from the individual outward when she claims, also in “The Natural History of German Life”: “Art . . . is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot” (145).

²³ See Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*; Ted Zenzinger, “Spinoza, *Adam Bede*, Knowledge, and Sympathy: A Reply to Atkins,” *Philosophy and Literature* 36 (2013): 437–38; T. H. Irwin, “Sympathy and the Basis of Morality,” in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons, Limited, 2013), 280–83.

sympathy as a crucial element of civility and sociability, Smith immediately alights upon the primary obstacle for sympathetic exchange:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy.²⁴

Although one might imagine that sympathy draws disparate individuals together in an act of fellow feeling, in actuality Smith articulates a theory in which the difficulties of solipsism—what Adela Pinch calls the “epistemological problem of knowing others”—become the cornerstones of sympathetic exchange.²⁵ For Smith, one person’s senses act as a barrier to accessing another individual’s sensorium. According to Smith, projections of what another might feel even function as sensory mimesis, since they constitute only a “copy” of “the impressions of our own senses”—a presumption of likeness necessitated by seemingly insurmountable difference.

For readers of Smith, this emphasis on solipsism poses a challenge to how—or if—sympathetic engagements might be fully realized between two disparate individuals. Because he

²⁴ Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

²⁵ Adela Pinch, *Thinking About Other People in Nineteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.

suggests that specific sensory encounters remain unavailable as sources of sympathy, readings of Smith's relationship with Victorian fellow feeling tend to focus on various modes of abstraction. For Jaffe, for instance, Smithian sympathy marks the centrality of representation to any sympathetic exchange. According to Jaffe, rather than experiencing sympathy through "actual bodies" we instead encounter how a "dynamic of projection, displacement, and imagined exchange . . . shapes the sympathetic scene."²⁶ In this model, sympathy becomes a circular act of spectatorship that requires seeing "the self as representation," since "imagining the self as occupying another's place is only a step away from imagining the self as merely occupying its own."²⁷ Yet some scholars, including Rebecca N. Mitchell, circumvent sympathetic paradigms that focus on identification or projection because these models tend to presume that empathy relies on likeness or "teaching readers what it is like to be another person"; for Mitchell, by contrast, authors including George Eliot champion difference and alterity as means of producing empathic engagements between two individuals.²⁸ In other words, by capitalizing on the solipsism inherent in Smithian sympathy rather than routing around it, Mitchell suggests that when characters recognize their distinction from one another—when *Adam Bede*'s Hetty Sorrel admits to Dinah Morris: "I can't feel anything like you" (404)—they learn to recognize "that the alienation that exists between the self and the other cannot be fully overcome, that the alterity of

²⁶ Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy*, 7–8.

²⁷ Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy*, 10.

²⁸ Rebecca N. Mitchell, *Victorian Lessons in Empathy and Difference* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), x.

the human other is infinite and permanent. But in that radical, inalterable alterity exists the possibility of ethical engagement.”²⁹

Since Smithian sympathy thus seems to require either the abstraction of the self or the “inalterable alterity” of the other, the position occupied by the body remains both problematically central and yet also nonessential. On the one hand, as Stefanie Markovits puts it, Smith acknowledges that “sympathy rests on one’s ability to imagine oneself bodily into another’s subject position.”³⁰ According to Smith:

When we see one man oppressed or injured by another, the sympathy which we feel with the distress of the sufferer seems to serve only to animate our fellow-feeling with his resentment against the offender. . . . If the injured should perish in the quarrel, we not only sympathize with the real resentment of his friends and relations, but with the imaginary resentment which in fancy we lend to the dead, who is no longer capable of feeling that or any other human sentiment. But as we put ourselves in his situation, as we enter, as it were, into his body, and in our imaginations, in some measure, animate anew the deformed and mangled carcass of the slain, . . . we feel upon this, as upon many other occasions, an emotion which the person principally concerned is incapable of feeling, and which yet we feel by an illusive sympathy with him.³¹

²⁹ Mitchell, *Victorian Lessons in Empathy and Difference*, 60, x.

³⁰ Stefanie Markovits, “*Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Silas Marner*: Moral Fables,” in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (West Sussex, England: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2013), 94.

³¹ Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 82–83.

Smith cannot avoid the centrality of the body here, since it is through imaginatively entering “into his body” and “animating anew” the “carcass” of the deceased individual that the sympathizer feels emotion. And yet, each engagement with the body is speculative and “illusive” rather than sensory. It is this admission that the sensorium need not be present—that the object of sympathy might be dead—that prompts Greiner to characterize Smithian sympathy as “contentless fellow-feeling,” a state that might arise from nothingness through a process of invention.³² The body, that is, becomes disposable, entirely severed from sympathetic exchange. As a result, Greiner divests sympathy of any sensory experience, arguing that if we follow Smith’s paradigm then we must read sympathy not as a feeling but as productive of a feeling—not an activity of the sensorium but strictly “an operation of the mind, fundamentally a cognitive process.”³³ When we turn from eighteenth-century moral philosophy to the higher criticism of the nineteenth century, however, we begin to find this possibility of non-sensory sympathy contradicted, especially in the work of Feuerbach. With his persistent emphasis on the authority of the senses over and above the cognitive powers of the mind, Feuerbach offers a fresh interpretation of sympathy that is deeply rooted in physiology.

Like the wider body of works that belong to the higher criticism, Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity* approaches Christian theology historically and philosophically, reading the Bible as a literary work compiled by an ancient people rather than as a divinely inspired text. In stripping notions of divinity and inspiration away from biblical interpretation, the higher criticism also adopted a skeptical perspective toward the supernatural assertions made within and depicted by the Bible; as Eliot’s translation of Strauss queries: “ought we not . . . become distrustful of the

³² Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 22.

³³ Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 16.

numerous histories of miracles in the gospels?”³⁴ By thus disputing the divinity of Christ and reading him at once as a historical personage and as a character symptomatic of human needs and desires, the higher criticism argues instead for what came to be known as the historical Jesus. As E. S. Shaffer’s work on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the higher critics reminds us, the movement did not begin in Germany with Strauss and Feuerbach nor did its first influences within England originate through Eliot; to the contrary, when the higher criticism began in the 1790s with the work of German biblical scholars including Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, Johann Salomo Selmer, and Ferdinand Christian Baur, it had a significant influence on Coleridge as well as “the radical Unitarian circles he moved in during the early 1790s.”³⁵ Yet Eliot, too, served as one of the most powerful conduits in bringing the ideas of the higher critics to England through her translations, without which, as Lane puts it, “the impact of higher criticism on Britain would

³⁴ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot, 2nd ed. (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), 415. As Victor Shea and William Whitla explain, according to the higher criticism “miracles are events in nature that cannot be explained according to other events in human experience, and so are relegated to misunderstood or misinterpreted natural occurrences, conditioned by the mental or moral superiority of the miracle-worker, or the credulous state of mind of the witnesses, or the rhetorical purposes of the gospel narrators” (Shea and Whitla, eds., *Essays and Reviews: The 1860 Text and Its Reading* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000], 68).

³⁵ Shaffer, ‘*Kubla Khan*’ and the *Fall of Jerusalem*, 7, 20–23. In addition to arguing for the influence of the higher critics on *Kubla Khan* (1816), Shaffer also notes its influence on Coleridge’s *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* (1840) when she asserts: “No one had been more successful than Coleridge as an apologist who adopted a wide range of the critics’ damaging findings or inferences while appearing to fend them off; the *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* is a masterpiece of the genre” (197). On Coleridge’s *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, see also Shea and Whitla, *Essays and Reviews*, 117.

surely have been slower and weaker.”³⁶ Feuerbach’s particular approach to the higher critics’ secularization of the Bible interprets theology not as doctrine but as what George Eliot’s translation terms “anthropology”: an excavation of religion’s “true object and substance, namely *man*.”³⁷ Repeatedly, throughout *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach argues for a negation of what he calls the “*unhuman*” elements of theology in order to uncover the fundamentally “human

³⁶ Lane, *Age of Doubt*, 119. Even as Lane argues for Eliot’s impact on the transmission of the higher criticism to England, he also eschews any earlier influences by arguing, “Higher criticism took several decades to reach Britain.” As influential as Eliot’s translation was, the ideas behind higher criticism still faced what Shea and Whitla term a “hostile reception in Britain” (*Essays and Reviews*, 55). We perhaps see this hostility most evidently in the reception in England to the publication of *Essays and Reviews* (1860), a collection of essays published one year after Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) and which presented the arguments of seven different essayists concerning rationalist Biblical criticism; the writers were consequently dubbed the “The Seven Against Christ.” The censure of *Essays and Reviews* often hinged on its association with higher criticism; as Shea and Whitla note: “By the mid-nineteenth century ‘German rationalism’ was a derogatory reference to all German higher criticism that sought to establish the interpretation of the Bible upon hermeneutical principles that had become normative for the classics; indeed, German rationalism was often used in condemning *Essays and Reviews* in the aftermath of its publication” (*Essays and Reviews*, 10).

³⁷ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 9 (emphasis in original). It is significant to note that the word “anthropology” is original to Eliot’s own translation of Feuerbach, and it is repeated numerous times throughout *Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach’s form of anthropology does not involve travel to and investigation of other cultures, as is common in modern anthropological fields, but rather engages with anthropology as a philosophical and Enlightenment-driven approach to studying humans. Eliot’s translation also includes some of the earlier uses of the term to refer to studies that focus on human behavior and beliefs.

elements of religion.”³⁸ By funneling abstracted religion down to the immanently human or, put differently, by raising up humankind as the only site of the sacred, Feuerbach repositions the “divine being” as inherently synonymous with “the human being”: “All the attributes of the divine nature are, therefore, attributes of the human nature.”³⁹

Certainly, part of Eliot’s endorsement of Feuerbach stems from her similar skepticism about the origins and progressions of Christian theology; in this sense, it is the content of her novels that scholars have suggested responds to Feuerbach’s anthropological—or what Eliot’s literary scholarship might call humanist—theories.⁴⁰ For instance, in a chapter in *Adam Bede* entitled “Church,” Adam experiences his spirituality primarily through the reflection of his emotions within a religious service:

And to Adam the church service was the best channel he could have found for his mingled regret, yearning, and resignation; its interchange of beseeching cries for help, with outbursts of faith and praise—its recurrent responses and the familiar rhythm of its collects, seemed to speak for him as no other form of worship could have done; as, to those early Christians who had worshipped from their childhood upward in catacombs, the torchlight and shadows must have seemed nearer the Divine presence than the heathenish daylight of the streets. (180)

³⁸ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 6 (emphasis in original).

³⁹ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 34.

⁴⁰ See, for instance, U. C. Knoepfelmacher, “George Eliot, Feuerbach, and the Question of Criticism,” *Victorian Studies* 7, no. 3 (March 1964): 306–9; U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 26, 53–59.

A moment like this invokes a Feuerbachian context because despite its setting (in a church) and its primary actor (a churchgoing believer), the narrator offers up a secular anthropology. The church, here, becomes a place not for Adam to learn about God but for us to learn about Adam. With Adam's presence at the church service functioning as "the best channel . . . for his mingled regret, yearning, and resignation," the narrator suggests that worship translates man outward and upward: Adam projects his humanity and sees this humanity reflected back through the service's "responses" and "rhythm." Much like Feuerbach never argues against the participatory value of religion—its ability to expand the singular self—the experience at church holds value for Adam at least in part because it affords him the opportunity to share his religious experience with others. The rituals of church connect Adam not only with the other Hayslope churchgoers whose "beseeching cries" ring out in the present moment alongside Adam's, but also with the generations unseen who worshipped not in the church but "in catacombs." With his experience in church both linking him to the trans-historical worship of other believers and projecting this collective act of worship upward, Adam does not find value in church by encountering "the divine presence" but by creating that presence through, in Feuerbach's terms, religion's "true object and substance, namely *man*"—or, in this case, intergenerational men.

Eliot's translation of Feuerbach does much more than simply explain the anthropological religiosity that threads throughout her fiction: Feuerbach's inquiries into the human origins and ends of religion elucidate a new way of reading not just the content of Eliot's novels but also their narrative form. I suggest that *Essence of Christianity* provides Eliot with a narrative theory of a relationship between the senses and sympathy. With his focus on embodied "feeling"—a term which Eliot's translation of *Essence of Christianity* uses synonymously and interchangeably with "sympathy"—Feuerbach's sympathetic ethos is deeply rooted in the material world; unlike

Smith's tendency toward abstraction, Feuerbachian sympathy, even at its most expansive points, never leaves the body behind.⁴¹ For Eliot, Feuerbach's materialism manifests both through her own account of sympathy as specifically sensory in nature, and through her cultivation of sympathy's narrative dimension as she endorses narrative perspectives that are intradiegetic— instantiated, corporeally, in the world they describe. Thus, we see Feuerbach's influence most strongly and most productively when it erupts through key moments of metalepsis in Eliot's fiction.

While Feuerbach insists on the authority of the senses throughout *Essence of Christianity*, we see the sensorium take center stage in his approach to sympathy, or what he terms “participated sensation.” While Greiner suggests that Smithian sympathy remains entirely an act of the mind rather than the body, Feuerbach's theory refuses to honor this separation and instead bridges any potential gap between senses and intellect by intertwining the two. Sympathy, that is, happens for him not in the body or the mind alone, but in their productive interplay:

Feeling is sympathy; feeling arises only in the love of man to man. Sensations man has in isolation; feelings only in community. Only in sympathy does sensation rise into feeling. Feeling is aesthetic, human sensation; only what is human, is the object of feeling. In feeling man is related to his fellow man as to himself; he is alive to the sorrows, the joys

⁴¹ In Eliot's translation, Feuerbach uses the terms “sympathy” and “feeling” synonymously and interchangeably because, according to Feuerbach, “feeling is sympathy” (*Essence of Christianity*, 353). Smith, too, points to the similar meanings captured by the terms “sympathy” and “fellow-feeling”; as he notes: “Sympathy ... may now ... denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever” (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 13). Greiner, in contrast, reads Smithian sympathy as one that does not require feeling—or even, in her terms, “begins *before* feeling”—and thus diverges from Feuerbach's equivalency (Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 18).

of another as his own. Thus only by communication does man rise above merely egoistic sensation into feeling;—participated sensation is feeling. He who has no need of participating has no feeling.⁴²

As this passage demonstrates, for Feuerbach sympathy is possible only through a duality of intense self-awareness and projection outward. The process begins with embodied solipsism—with the “sensations man has in isolation”—and is followed by perception of this embodiment: “To feel is to have a sense of sensations, to have emotion in the perception of emotion.”⁴³ Entrenched in the moment of sensing and sustained through cognition of this sense, Feuerbachian feeling is simultaneously lodged in ordinary sensations and produces a consciousness of one’s own sensorium—a higher order of thinking that cannot erase its embodied origins.

This sympathy (or feeling), according to Feuerbach, does not stop with the self: throughout *Essence of Christianity*, the body is unavoidably complicit not only in singular self-awareness but also in intersubjective sympathetic exchange. For Feuerbach, the sensory process that begins as an inward reflection turns outward, since, as he expounds, sympathy is a necessarily relational mode, a “participated sensation” by which “man is related to his fellow man as to himself.” By describing feeling as “participated sensation,” Feuerbach positions sympathy as, at once, deeply grounded in the body and expansively shared across multiple individuals. As a result, the sensational solipsism that Smith reads as a sympathetic dilemma, Feuerbach offers as its solution: sensations avoid the pitfalls of self-absorption when they “rise above merely egoistic sensation” into “participated sensation.” The movement here is about

⁴² Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 353–54.

⁴³ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 354.

negotiating a balance between being grounded in the body and rising above it: sympathy never leaves the body behind as it extends not only outward from the singular self but also upward, spatially panoramic and “above” the embodiment it still relies upon so heavily. In addition to its ethical import, Feuerbach also marks sympathy as an aesthetic force, claiming that “feeling is aesthetic, human sensation”—a combination that resonates clearly in Eliot’s own conception of sympathy as a simultaneously moral and artistic priority. Yet this definition also further roots even the artistic scope of sympathy in the body since, beginning with Immanuel Kant’s philosophy of the “transcendental aesthetic,” the term “aesthetic” encompasses not only an evaluation of artistic taste, but also the very sensory perceptions that enable these artistic evaluations.⁴⁴ Even the aesthetic priorities of sympathy, that is, remain fully embodied.

Eliot, too, repeatedly centers sympathy in the senses. Take, for instance, the current of sympathy in *Silas Marner* (1861), where the eponymous protagonist gains a renewed capacity for fellow feeling that finds both its origin and its progression in his successfully empathic sensorium. During his first fifteen years in the town of Raveloe and before his soon-to-be adopted daughter Eppie first appears on his hearth, Silas has distilled his life down to weaving at his loom and hoarding his gold, acts that have siphoned off “everything else but his immediate sensations.”⁴⁵ This solipsism has left Silas in a “cold narrow prison,” “deafened and blinded more and more” to the world (124)—a psychological space that enacts the sensory enclosure of what Feuerbach calls the “narrow confined dwelling-house” of the “sensational consciousness.”

⁴⁴ See *Oxford English Dictionary Online* definition for “aesthetic, *n.* and *adj.*” and, specifically, definition A1.

⁴⁵ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, ed. Terence Cave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 18. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

Yet Eppie's fortuitous appearance invigorates in Silas a "re-awakening [of] his senses": "as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupefied in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness" (124). In undergoing this transformation from relatively deadened or confined "immediate sensations" to a "trembling" and "re-awakening [of] his senses," Silas experiences a fresh and dynamic sympathy that remains rooted in his sensorium even as it furnishes him with opportunities to participate in the wider world, in the "ties and charities that bound together the families of his neighbours" (124). Silas's transformation enacts, that is, the conversion that Feuerbach theorizes in *The Essence of Christianity*, since Eppie prompts Silas, in Feuerbach's terms, to "rise above merely egoistic sensation into feeling;—participated sensation is feeling."

Eppie certainly rekindles Silas's sensory sympathy but, even more, she also rouses within him a freshly capacious form of fellow feeling, one that begins with her inclusive and eager viewpoint and then stretches progressively outward to include empathic participation with the world at large. In addition to fostering fellow feeling between Silas and herself, Eppie affords Silas with the promise of compassionate exchanges that extend beyond their new father-daughter bond when she stimulates sympathy between Silas and his neighbors: she "created fresh links between his life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk continually into narrower isolation" (123). Eppie unfolds Silas so far outside of himself that she provides sympathetic "links" not only to their neighbors in Raveloe but also to the wider world beyond:

for the little child had come to link him once more with the whole world. There was love between him and the child that blent them into one, and there was love between the child and the world—from men and women with parental looks and tones, to the red lady-birds and the round pebbles. (129)

The narrator here proposes a transitive property of sympathy: when Silas sympathizes with Eppie and Eppie sympathizes with the world, then Silas, as a consequence, stretches his own fellow feeling to include not only his daughter but “the whole world” as well, from people down to “pebbles.” In this way, Silas’s experience of sympathy operates as a form of “self-forgetfulness,” a term Eliot conjures as a synonym for sympathy in one of her rather infrequently cited but nonetheless important essays dealing with fellow feeling: “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young” (1857).⁴⁶ Saturated in “self-forgetfulness” and connected, via Eppie, with the entirety of the world, Silas therefore savors a form of sympathy that never denies the continued centrality of his senses even as it productively disregards the edges of the self and thus eschews the confines of his singularly embodied sensorium.⁴⁷

Throughout her writings, from the earliest essays onward, Eliot champions the sympathetic participation that Silas achieves with this “reawakening” of his senses. The

⁴⁶ George Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young,” in *The Essays of “George Eliot,”* ed. Nathan Sheppard (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 243. As I discuss later in this chapter, Eliot’s essay both celebrates and criticizes Edward Young, an eighteenth-century poet.

⁴⁷ See Ilana M. Blumberg, “Stealing the ‘Parson’s Surplice’ / the Person’s Surplus: Narratives of Abstraction and Exchange in *Silas Marner*,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 67, no. 4 (March 2013): 512. In arguing that Silas experiences deeply sensory sympathy with Eppie and, vicariously, the rest of the world, I differ from Blumberg’s recent argument that “Eliot’s characters in *Silas Marner* do not achieve deep sympathetic entrance into each other’s inner lives.” According to Blumberg, sympathy in *Silas Marner* is “approached through social, rather than individual, acts of abstraction,” even as “these acts of abstraction retain close ties to the concrete world whence they originate.” My chapter suggests, by contrast, that even when he is able to engage in empathic exchange with “the whole world,” Silas’s sympathy remains successfully sensory and never abstract.

“curiously sensational Eliot” that S. Pearl Brilmyer locates in Eliot’s final experimental work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), finds its roots in “The Natural History of German Life,” where Eliot favors the Feuerbachian “participated sensation” of embodied interactions—what she calls a “natural history of social bodies”—over the problematic distance of “abstract social science.”⁴⁸ Instead of preferring sweeping generalities, Eliot begins to focus on the necessity of the sensorium in “The Natural History of German Life” by calling for writers to take up an intimately proximate stance in relation to their subjects. Thus Eliot’s argument in this essay pushes well beyond her well-known suggestion that writers and artists should portray ordinary people realistically in order to cultivate sympathy, since she insists that an appropriately realistic portrait is impossible unless the artist or writer adopts an intradiegetic point of view. Within this early and formative essay, Eliot explicitly pits the problems of distance and abstraction against generative and immersive engagement. As a result, she suggests that writers must trade the distance of “books” and “spectacles” for “immediate intercourse with the people.”⁴⁹ Even when the writer has shifted from observing theoretical history to what she terms “incarnate history,” Eliot stipulates that only increased proximity can supply a realistic portrait:

Observe a company of haymakers. When you see them at a distance, tossing up the forkfuls of hay in the golden light, ... you pronounce the scene “smiling,” and you think these companions in labor must be as bright and cheerful as the picture to which they give animation. Approach nearer, and you will certainly find that ... the coarse laugh that

⁴⁸ S. Pearl Brilmyer, ““The Natural History of My Inward Self”: Sensing Character in George Eliot’s *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*,” *PMLA* 129, no. 1 (2014): 48; Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” 168.

⁴⁹ Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” 163.

bursts out every now and then, and expresses the triumphant taunt, is as far as possible from your conception of idyllic merriment.⁵⁰

With the portrait of the haymakers becoming increasingly accurate (if also less “idyllic”) with each step closer, Eliot insists that precision replaces the distance of representation with the proximity of embodied experience—swapping out the erroneous generalization provided by the “picture” for the sound of the “coarse laugh” itself. According to Eliot, the German sociologist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl (whose books on local life and customs in Germany occasion Eliot’s most famous essay) attains this ideal by wandering throughout Germany himself, substituting abstract theories for “gradually amassed observations” and marking himself as “first of all, a pedestrian, and only in the second place a political author.”⁵¹

Eliot’s insistence that a writer be present within the society and among the characters that he writes about resonates in her narrators’ repeated rejections of disembodied and “lofty” postures. In *Adam Bede*, when the metaleptic narrator discloses that some of his information was “gathered from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age,” he also scoffs at “lofty theories” and representations of ethereal “cloud-borne angels” who are “floating” with “face[s] paled” in favor of the grimy materialism of laboring, eating, and otherwise fully embodied characters with “rounded backs and stupid weather-beaten faces” (163, 162). The narrator of *Scenes* similarly rejects an aesthetics of the “lofty” when he asserts—at length and more than once—that he hopes to avoid what he derisively calls “the bird’s-eye glance of a critic” (229). This avoidance occurs in large part because the narrator of *Scenes of Clerical Life* reminds us of his characterological presence at least once in each of the three stories. In addition

⁵⁰ Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” 143–44

⁵¹ Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life,” 163.

to his reminiscences about “smuggling bread-and-butter” into church in “The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,” during the second narrative in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, “Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story,” he reveals that he has walked through Sir Christopher’s home, “Cheverel Manor as he bequeathed it to his heirs” (99). And in the third and final story, “Janet’s Repentance,” the narrator recalls both preparing for Confirmation in Milby church when he had “just assumed coat-tails” and subsequently misbehaving alongside his friend “Ned Phipps, who knelt against me” during the service (201, 205).⁵² In distinguishing between his narration and a critical mode that he suggests leads to dispassionate indifference, this narrator rebuffs the impersonal way the critic approaches character as if it were a “specimen” whose “anatomy and habits” he can best survey from a “lofty height” (229). With his material attention to character’s embodiment swinging far afield into the unsympathetic, this cautionary critic both warns against the dangers of grounding fellow feeling in the body and provides a productive point of comparison: though the narrator performs an omniscient stance and often physically distances himself from the storyworld and its characters, his occasional posture as a character in the diegesis also rejects the disinterest and distance of the critic’s “bird’s-eye station” (229).

⁵² It is important to note that while scholars have generally struggled over what gender to assign to Eliot’s narrators who are, for the most part, ambiguously sexed, the narrator of *Scenes of Clerical Life*, due to this reference to “coat-tails,” marks himself not only as a character but also as a man. Nonetheless, scholarship on *Scenes* often elides this explicit (and embodied) detail and opts instead for feminine pronouns to describe *Scenes*’ narrator. See, for instance, Harry Shaw’s *Narrating Reality* where Shaw misidentifies the narrator of *Scenes of Clerical Life* as feminine, despite having a chapter section entitled “Is Eliot’s Narrator Gendered?” (*Narrating Reality: Austen, Scott, Eliot* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999], 246).

This early investment in avoiding a “lofty” narrative perspective becomes a lasting preoccupation in Eliot’s oeuvre. In her penultimate fictional work, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the omniscient narrator never appears as a character within the storyworld but does, nonetheless, tout moments when characters eschew a “bird’s-eye glance” in favor of the embodied intimacy that physical interactions offer. When her protagonist, Daniel Deronda, discovers that he is Jewish and has no remaining barriers to admitting his love for Mirah, he moves from “the mazes of impartial sympathy” to “the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical—exchanging that bird’s-eye reasonableness which soars to avoid preference and loses all sense of quality, for the generous reasonableness of drawing shoulder to shoulder with men of like inheritance.”⁵³ The two perspectives here remain grounded in the same desire for a balanced point of view, since Deronda trades one form of “reasonableness” for another; yet where the detached perspective provides soaring loss, the other offers the “generous” embodiment of “drawing shoulder to shoulder” with his fellow Jews. Sympathy, in this instance, only becomes “practical” when it stops trying to be “impartial” and becomes corporeal, when Deronda trades the more abstract “bird’s-eye” posture for one that is grounded alongside his fellow characters—newly intradiegetic. Sympathy becomes “practical,” that is, when it becomes metaleptic.

From her earliest articulations of sympathy to her final major novel, avoiding problematically “lofty” postures thus requires the metalepsis of shifting from an abstract point of view that is impartially distinct from the storyworld, to one that is newly situated within the diegesis. As Deronda’s movement from “impartial sympathy” to “sympathy practical” makes clear, this metalepsis offers the incarnated character not only intradiegetic proximity but also the

⁵³ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Graham Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 638.

Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

intimacy of embodiment, of being “shoulder to shoulder.” In addition to her repeated rejections of a “bird’s-eye station,” Eliot also frequently addresses a poignant desire for the sensory—for embodying the otherwise abstract—both in her perceptions of her own writing and in her fiction.⁵⁴ As she explains in a letter to her friend, Frederic Harrison, who had written to her about his thoughts regarding the poetical form of *Felix Holt* (1866), she is invested in “trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit.”⁵⁵ The sequence that Eliot desires here recognizes that her ideas originate in the “spirit,” since her wish to incarnate her thoughts implies that the ideas move from the abstract to the embodied. At once, Eliot also elevates the performed primacy and comprehensiveness of the latter state, since she compels ideas to be so “thoroughly incarnate” that in her revised sequence it is the “flesh” that appears to be “first,” even if this primacy of the sensory remains dependent on the speculative (“as if”) beliefs bred by fiction.

⁵⁴ See also Catherine Gallagher, “George Eliot: Immanent Victorian,” *Representations* 90, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 72. As Gallagher argues: “Eliot was herself born along by a massive redirection of longing away from disembodied transcendence and toward embodied immanence.”

⁵⁵ George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, August 15, 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:300. In Harrison’s letter to Eliot he had explained his reaction to *Felix Holt*: “I find myself taking it up as I take up Tennyson or Shelley or Browning and thinking out the sequences of thought suggested by the undertones of the thought and the harmony of the lines. Can it be right to put the subtle finish of a poem into the language of a prose narrative? It is not a waste of toil? And yet whilst so many readers must miss all that, most of them even not consciously observing the fact, that they have a really new species of literature before them (a romance constructed in the artistic spirit and aim of a poem) yet it is not all lost” (Frederic Harrison to George Eliot, July 19, 1866, in *George Eliot Letters*, 4:284–85).

Feuerbach, for his part, allows even less latitude when imagining the embodied origin of his ideas. Just as Eliot begins to center the sensorium in “The Natural History of German Life” by rejecting “abstract social science” in favor of a “natural history of social bodies,” so too does Feuerbach open *Essence of Christianity* by insisting that his materialist philosophy entirely circumvents the “merely conceptional” abstractions that he sees in Kant and Hegel and that instead his philosophy originates “first through the senses”:

This philosophy has for its principle, not the Substance of Spinoza, not the *ego* of Kant and Fichte, not the Absolute Identity of Schelling, not the Absolute Mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptional being, but a *real* being, the true *Ens realissimum*—man; ... it has relation to its object first through the senses.⁵⁶

It is perhaps unsurprising that *Essence of Christianity* focuses so heavily on the sensorium, given the fact that Feuerbach’s primary criticisms of Kant and Hegel are that their philosophies allow for what Kant calls the noumenal world, where an object—a thing-in-itself—persists beyond the knowable realm of the senses. In cultivating a post-Kantian and post-Hegelian materialist tradition, Feuerbach thus nullifies any “abstract” source of his ideas in order to affirm, repeatedly and explicitly, the centrality of the human body.

What makes Feuerbach’s insistence on the necessity of the sensorium so remarkable is that what begins with the body—“for *my* thought I require the senses”—engenders a philosophy that must itself assume a sensed and embodied form, since Feuerbach avers that his tract “declares *that* alone to be the true philosophy which is converted *in succum et sanguinem* [into juice and blood], which is incarnate in Man.”⁵⁷ Here, Feuerbach’s anthropology is both based

⁵⁶ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 6 (emphasis in original).

⁵⁷ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 5 (emphasis in original).

upon and productive of the preeminence of the senses: he figures the creation of his philosophy as a generative feedback loop of materialism wherein his text requires senses for its production and this production generates the necessary centrality of the same sensorium. While Eliot recognizes that her ideas might start as “spirit” rather than as “flesh,” Feuerbach generates a materialist loop that absents any recognition that his ideas might be abstracted by figuring these ideas as incarnated through a kind of reverse transubstantiation. While the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation posits the conversion of the Eucharistic juice or wine into the actual blood of Christ, raising the earthly sacramental element into a divine one, Feuerbach incarnates his philosophy into bodily elements, converting any potentially abstract thoughts into a form of juice and blood that is not divine but rather “incarnate in Man.” By appropriating and secularizing the Eucharist as a human element, Feuerbach thus figures his philosophy as embodied in both the consumed and the consumer: at once the sacrament ingested as juice or blood and the incarnation of this sacrament in the recipient. The secularizing practice, that is, repeats across multiple embodiments, as Feuerbach’s Eucharistic philosophy is incarnated successively—humanized again and again. In doggedly resisting the intangible, Feuerbach insists, then, that the philosophy that is “true” is also, as Eliot’s letter to Harrison phrases it, “thoroughly incarnate,” thus yoking embodiment to philosophical authority.

The narrator of *Scenes of Clerical Life* evidences a similar proclivity toward the corporeal when he laments the immaterial transience of ideas only to offer the same solution as Eliot and Feuerbach—incarnate them:

Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at

us with sad sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power.

(263)

The mechanisms of embodiment are not clear here; its effects, however, are: the materialization of ideas is wished-for and welcome (since it is “warm,” “soft,” and “felt” after a long wait), and it is human (with the ability to “breathe,” “touch,” and “speak”). The narrator’s passive tone refuses to explain the impetus of incarnation: the ideas “are made flesh” without an agent or agency, and it thus remains unclear either who or what has the power to instigate this desired embodiment. At the same time, this void of agency serves to stress how, once they are materialized, these ideas become dynamic, brimming with a level of activity that stems from their freshly sensational state. Even more than their anthropomorphic humanity, these fleshly ideas have “power” in their newly acquired “presence.” In particular, they possess a power to be not merely sensory but also sympathetic. With their “appealing tones” and “responsive hands,” the incarnated ideas operate as both recipients and purveyors of an ever-reciprocated fellow feeling.

Eliot’s investment here in making ideas “felt” in the “flesh” also cues us to the ways in which both she and Feuerbach often locate sensational sympathy in one sense in particular: touch. As Feuerbach explains:

If the personal God has a true sympathy with distress, he must himself suffer distress.

Only in his suffering lies the assurance of his reality; only on this depends the impressiveness of the incarnation. To see God does not satisfy feeling; the eyes give no sufficient guarantee. The truth of vision is confirmed only by touch. But as subjectively

touch, so objectively the capability of being touched, palpability, passibility, is the last criterion of reality.⁵⁸

While Smith's paradigm of sympathy tends to focus on visuality and projection as sources of fellow feeling, the reciprocal sensation of touch—that one might touch and be touched—claims ascendancy here as the most authoritative sense. Feuerbach's emphasis on touch at once reiterates his view that sympathy is a distinctly active "participated sensation" and strengthens his claim that the intersubjectivity inherent to fellow feeling occurs "only in community." Yet he also upsets any idealization of this sympathetic reciprocity by suggesting that the authority of touch only finds its force in the reality of shared "passibility" or the capacity to experience suffering.

In *Adam Bede*, where the narrator hopes to harvest fellow feeling between his realistically represented characters and "real breathing men and women," we find Eliot revising Feuerbach's material sympathy even as she also grounds this corporeal compassion in the medium of touch (160). *Adam Bede* posits a clear methodology for evoking sympathy both through the novel's story of the imperfectly suffering Hetty and also through the narrative's metaleptic moments. When the narrator "pauses" his story at the opening of the second book for an entire chapter entitled "In Which the Story Pauses a Little," he explicitly requests—and even demands—the readers' sympathy for his "common, coarse," and defective characters (162). It is also in the midst of this discourse on the aesthetic and ethical responsibilities of sympathetic realism that the otherwise heterodiegetic narrator reveals his status as a character in the storyworld. The appearance of the incarnated narrator, newly proximate to his fellow characters, might appear unsurprising, particularly since the unsympathetic distance of "spectacles" that

⁵⁸ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 195.

Eliot derides in “The Natural History of German Life” finds renewed force in *Adam Bede*’s narrator, who complains that feelings elude “the unsympathizing observer, who might as well put on his spectacles to discern odours” (180). When *Adam Bede*’s narrator announces his presence within the storyworld, however, he enacts a similar repositioning as the one Eliot admires so much in Riehl: no longer abstractly theorizing outside the diegesis, he now renders himself as “first of all, a pedestrian,” who lives and walks alongside his characters, and only secondly as an author. Far from requiring an unemplaced or distanced posture to evoke sympathy, with his incarnation *Adam Bede*’s narrator insists that the “deep human sympathy” he hopes to evoke must draw not only on “the faithful representing of commonplace things” but also, in his phrase, on those “every-day fellow-men ... whose hands I touch” (162). Though suffering is not the nexus here of shared “participated sensation,” the narrator’s materialization within the storyworld accords him the necessary proximity to touch or be touched, to interact physically and reciprocally with his fellow characters. His metalepsis, that is, enacts ontologically the sympathetic exchange he asks readers to engage in rhetorically, and the medium of this sympathetic exchange is the senses, the touch.

In part, Eliot and Feuerbach realize their mutual desire for incarnating their ideas through the materiality of their books: with physical components—ink, paper, binding—that the reader can touch, these writers’ thoughts never manifest as flesh but their solid appearance on the material page allows for a tactile relationship with the reader. Yet touch also serves as a reminder of the novel’s fictional frame, of the boundary between the diegetic space of the characters and the non-fictional space of the reader. As much as *Adam Bede*’s narrator might evoke touch as part of his sympathetic ethos, the novel’s reliance on language to represent fictional characters—rather than the statue’s reliance on stone—also precludes the reader from ever engaging in tactile

sympathy with the characters themselves. Many scholars of narrative have suggested precisely the opposite: that the transgressive boundary crossing of metaleptic narrators indicates a porous barrier between the realm of the author and that of the story space, or that the fictional space of the narrative might, in fact, be the same as the not-so-separate space of the author and reader. Gérard Genette, for instance, argues in this vein: “The most troubling thing about metalepsis indeed lies in this unacceptable and insistent hypothesis, that the extradiegetic is perhaps always diegetic, and that the narrator and his narratees—you and I—perhaps belong to some narrative.”⁵⁹ Robyn Warhol maintains this porous boundary but flips Genette’s suggestion on its head; rather than metalepsis marking our potential part in a fictional narrative, for Warhol metalepsis—and, in her particular example, the metaleptic moment when Eliot’s narrator reveals that he conversed with Adam Bede—holds the possibility of pulling the characters into our reality: “Instead of distancing the actual reader from the characters by reminding the narratee that they are fictional, these metalepses are meant to reinforce the reader’s serious sense of the characters as, in some way, real.”⁶⁰ There are certainly many occasions of metalepsis in Eliot’s

⁵⁹ Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 236. Genette makes this point while discussing metalepsis in general and as part of his endorsement of Jorge Luis Borges’ suggestion, in *Other Inquisitions* (1964), that “Such inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious” (Borges quoted in Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 236).

⁶⁰ Warhol, *Gendered Interventions*, 40. It is interesting to note that Warhol makes this argument only for what she terms “engaging” narrators and not for “distancing” ones. In discussing the latter group—narrators who use direct address to mock or distance the reader rather than inviting her to identify as the addressed narratee—Warhol suggests that the distancing narrator’s invitations for a reader to join in a narrative scene only produce further distance: “The effect of metalepsis in distancing narrative is usually to affirm the fictionality of the story: when Hawthorne’s narrator pretends, for instance, that ‘you’ are

fiction when the narrator invites the reader to join him, imaginatively, in the storyworld. And much like the brief moments of ontological metalepsis in *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* when the narrator appears alongside his characters in the diegesis, these rhetorical invitations are expressly embodied. In the opening of “The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,” the narrator invites us to make ourselves “snug and warm with this little tea-party, while it is freezing with February bitterness outside” (9). In *Adam Bede* the narrator summons us to join him in Mr. Irwine’s home when he bids: “Let me take you into that dining-room.... We will enter softly, and stand still in the open doorway (49). Yet even though these narrators invite readers to join them, rhetorically, alongside their characters, the continued impossibility of readers touching these characters fortifies the unremitting separation between the storyworld and the real world. Tactile sympathy with the characters can only occur in the diegetic space of the novel.

As if to emphasize further that the metalepsis does not break down the boundary between the fictional world and the reader’s world, the episode where *Adam Bede*’s narrator is most metaleptic—both rhetorically (in speaking directly and extensively to his readers) and ontologically (in appearing as a character within the storyworld)—occurs in the chapter entitled, tellingly, “In Which the Story Pauses a Little.” Still situated in the diegesis alongside the present with him in the room with the dead judge, the fictionality of the scene becomes obvious. *You*, the actual reader, are not a ghostly presence in the Pyncheons’ house. You are a person holding a copy of *The House of Seven Gables*, reading it” (35). Yet the case is different when narrators like *Adam Bede*’s are what Warhol terms “engaging”—when they speak to readers more generally and with less irony so as to encourage the actual reader to identify with the addressed narratee. In these instances, Warhol suggests that the narrator’s rhetorical invitation to enter the storyworld “both beckons the reader into the fictional world and emphasizes the fact that he or she is not really part of it” (36).

fictional Adam Bede yet with the story halted for “a little” pause, even the narrator’s metalepsis into his own fiction—his ability to touch his fellow characters and to be touched—only occurs during a gap within the story. In *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), the ungendered narrator similarly appears incarnate within only a single chapter and then dissipates into a relatively uncharacterized omniscience. In this chapter, which opens the novel, the narrator seems to be standing, as the chapter title suggests, “Outside Dorlcote Mill” where the majority of the narrative will take place and where he can see a girl standing formidably at the “edge of the water” that “half-drowns” the land. By the end of this brief prefatory piece, however, the narrator realizes that he has, in actuality, been “dreaming” about “standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago” (7–8). In this instance of a dream intersecting with a memory, *Mill*’s narrator describes his view from the bridge as if he is just inside the frame of a landscape painting that has come to life. Situated inside the frame yet “outside” its central location (the mill), the narrator experiences an intimately sensory—and often tactile—relationship with the storyworld when he describes the view from the bridge and declares: “I am in love with moistness” (8). As Gillian Beer notes, here the “knowledge of a seeing eye is brought close through touch.”⁶¹ It is also the sense of touch that both establishes and blurs the divisions between the narrator’s past memory and present remembering, since he feels “the cold stone of this bridge” on his “arms” immediately before waking and having a realization: “my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair” (8). Touch here causes distinction and confusion between narrative levels: this sense draws the narrator further into his storyworld and pulls him back, suggesting that tactile intimacy is possible within a dream, and implying that the same sense of touch will terminate the

⁶¹ Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986), 96.

experience of that story space. Where *Bede*'s narrator emerges within his storyworld during a "pause," *Mill*'s narrator appears within his storyworld "outside" the mill while inside a dream. As a result, *Bede*'s "pause" and *Mill*'s preamble realize the paradox of tactile sympathy: embodied within the diegesis, the narrator at once experiences sensory sympathy with his storyworld and yet, as *Bede*'s chapter title and *Mill*'s dream recognize, the potential for touch here is only possible when the narrative itself is suspended.

This is not to say that sensory sympathy cannot operate across the diegetic and the real worlds. On the contrary, the translation across diegetic boundaries, for Eliot, is precisely the point: "the region of Art," *Adam Bede*'s narrator explains, should realistically represent "old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands" in order to "remind us of" the "common, coarse people" who persist "in this world" (162). The narrator here expects that our sympathy for fictional characters will foster our sympathy for real individuals, not because "the region of Art" is the same as "this world" but because sympathy itself is metaleptic, able to cross narrative levels with an agile and ethical didacticism. To this end, even as the moments of touch that happen within the novel reinforce the boundary between fictional and real spaces, the possibility of tactile sympathy within the diegesis also engenders a metaleptically sympathetic ethos—one that, for Eliot, transitions from the story space to that of the reader.

II. Sympathy and Omniscience: Feel to Know

If, as I have argued, Eliot's metaleptic narrators crave a specifically sensory sympathy, then it cannot go unnoticed that when these same narrators materialize, they seem to be present and embodied within their storyworlds for very brief moments. They narrate, that is, only a few occasions in which they experienced the storyworld and its characters with their senses. In

Scenes of Clerical Life, for instance, the narrator reveals his presence as a character at least once within each of the three stories but each event remains short-lived.⁶² The revelatory instances are distinctly embodied, as the narrator eats, walks, and even feels the touch of his fellow characters, whether he is “smuggling bread-and-butter” into church in “The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton,” strolling through Cheverel Manor in “Mr. Gilfil’s Love-Story,” or acting mischievously alongside “Ned Phipps, who knelt against me” during church service in “Janet’s Repentance.” Yet in comparison with these fleeting moments of corporeality, the narrator spends considerably more time reminding readers that the stories he recounts took place multiple generations earlier, either when he was a young boy in the Milby area (as with “Janet’s Repentance”), or long before the narrator was kneeling in church (as with “Mr. Gilfil’s Love-Story”). Even in *The Mill on the Floss*, where the narrator never entirely explains how he knows the tale of the “little girl” on the riverbank who forebodes of Maggie Tulliver’s watery demise, the narrator distinguishes between his present moment of narration and the time “many years ago” when the story takes place (8). *Adam Bede* also produces a temporal distance between the narrator’s brief appearance at the start of the second book when he converses with Adam “in his

⁶² Though these moments are brief, Janice Carlisle argues that the “narrator of the *Scenes* ... reveals an increasingly personal involvement in the stories he tells. In ‘Amos Barton’ he is the spectator.... By the time he tells the tale of ‘Janet’s Repentance,’ however, he has become a character, a young boy,” and by “the end of the series, George Eliot has moved from recounting hearsay to reporting his own first-hand observation of events” (*The Sense of an Audience* [Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1981], 172). I agree with the general arc of Carlisle’s suggested progression and her proposal that the narrator gains increased intimacy as the stories unfold; at the same time, I would emphasize that the narrator of *Scenes* remains a spectator throughout all three stories and has been a character from the start.

old age” and the time during which the majority of the narrative occurred.⁶³ Though the narrator implies that he has witnessed certain incidents concerning minor characters, including Mr. Irwine, he also intimates that much of his narrative stems either from information he gathered second-hand from Adam Bede or from scenes he never witnessed at all, all of which the narrator then imaginatively recreated from an omniscient posture.

In part, each of these conspicuously brief moments when the narrator experiences the storyworld as a character serves to remind readers that his first relationship with that diegesis, however fleeting, was through his senses. Thus even though the narrator’s revelation that he once inhabited the storyworld as a character often transpires in the midst of the narrative, his appearance indicates a sequential structure wherein the incarnated narrator’s delimited corporeal experiences occur first, and the expanse of omniscience follows. It is fitting, then, that *The Mill on the Floss* opens with an embodied character narrator before shifting into heterodiegetic omniscient narration: if Eliot’s desire, as she expressed it to Harrison, was “to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit,” then *The Mill on the Floss* avoids the hesitation implied by Eliot’s conditional “as if” and instead

⁶³ In discussing how *Scenes of Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede*, and *The Mill on the Floss* all combine “the presentation of the author as a character with the necessary historical exposition,” Barbara Hardy focuses on the narrators’ “voice of personal knowledge and recollection.” Memory of a personal past, for Hardy, marks a distinction between the “personal and dramatic,” on the one hand,” and the “sharply distinct voice of the author making his story,” on the other. As a result, memory here reminds readers that the “story is told as the thing remembered, not the thing invented” (*The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form* [London: University of London, The Athlone Press, 1959], 156–57). This section builds on Hardy’s discussion by suggesting that these incarnated, reminiscing narrators distinguish their tales from invention not only through their memories but also through their omniscient vantage points.

fully realizes the way the narrator's relationship with the storyworld begins not with any abstract form of omniscience but with his own incarnated stance. In *Mill*, that is, "flesh" comes "first." Omniscience, in this paradigm, functions as a consequence of embodiment.

At once, the narrators' acknowledgements that much of their narratives operate akin either to as-told-to tales or to tales that were never witnessed by anyone at all establish a tension between, on the one hand, their brief and originary sensory experiences as characters copresent within the storyworld, and, on the other hand, their physical distance from much of the plot that they will recreate omnisciently. This tension between initial embodiment and subsequent omniscience draws our attention to a crucial question for Eliot's fiction: While she repeatedly manifests an interest in grounding abstract disembodied ideas—or potentially disembodied narrators—in material forms, what mechanism prompts the extension from originary embodiment outward? How do Eliot's narrators explain the expansion from incarnated witnessing to a relatively unbounded gaze, or from the embodied experience of feeling with one's "fellow-men" to a more panoramic understanding of this feeling that is unlimited by the individual body? Or as Eliot's partner, George Henry Lewes, who struggles with this question in the first series of his ambitious multi-volume compendium on physiology and psychology, *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874–79), points out: "Since we have positive proof that the sensible World comprises only a portion, and an insignificant portion of Existence, we must ascertain how the vast outlying providence of the Invisible can be accessible, and how we can reconcile our knowledge of it with the principle of a sensible origin."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series: The Foundations of a Creed* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1874), 238.

Eliot's oeuvre begins to address this inquiry by positing the productive interconnections between the realm of feeling and the realm of thought.⁶⁵ Repeatedly, in her fiction we find characters suggesting that their sensory experiences furnish their psychological ones. This is the case when Adam Bede tries to convince Dinah, in his distinctive Midland speech, that their mutual love and happiness will increase her ability to sympathize with and know the feelings of those to whom she ministers: "for it seems to me it's the same with love and happiness as with sorrow—the more we know of it the better we can feel what other people's lives are or might be.... The more knowledge a man has, the better he'll do's work; and feeling's a sort o' knowledge" (456). The amorphous synonymy that Adam articulates here, Lewes spells out more explicitly: "Sense and Intellect so thoroughly interpenetrate each other that it is no less impossible to conceive Sensation which does not embody the *logical* processes supposed to be peculiar to Thought, than to conceive Thought which does not embody the *neural* processes specially named Feeling."⁶⁶ For Eliot, who edited the final two volumes of Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* but tends not to draw on the neurological language that informs Lewes's analysis,

⁶⁵ In arguing that feeling and knowing are intimately intertwined in Eliot's oeuvre, I depart from Brilmyer who disconnects knowledge from feeling in her analysis of Eliot's sensory descriptions: "the aim of literary description in Eliot's work, I hope to have shown, has to do less with the production of knowledge than with the production of new modes of feeling and perception, new ways of sensing human beings and the multifarious reality of which they are a part" (Brilmyer, "Sensing Character in *Theophrastus Such*," 48).

⁶⁶ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 192–93. For a discussion of how Lewes figures cognition and sensation as "higher and lower orders of consciousness on a continuum," see Kent Puckett, "Stupid Sensations: Henry James, Good Form, and Reading *Middlemarch* Without a Brain," *Henry James Review* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 295–96.

the interpenetration between the sensory and the intellectual not only synonymizes feeling as “a sort o’ knowledge” but also does so through the access point of proximity. As the narrator of *Scenes of Clerical Life* explains, in a moment of direct address: “if you stood beside that mother – if you knew her pang and shared it—it is probable you would be equally unable to see a ground of complacency in statistics” (270). In imagining a metaleptic moment of sympathy for the reader, the narrator suggests that knowing and sharing the mother’s pain function as synonymous actions. Even more, in this instance, Lewes’s perception that sense and intellect interpenetrate each other is linked with the hypothetical proximity of the sympathizing reader—a proximity that Eliot has already made clear in “The Natural History of German Life” is necessary for any accurate portrait—as if standing “beside” the mother, knowing her “pang,” and sharing this pain all function as tantamount deeds. The embodied sympathy of “shared” pain here thus cannot be disentangled from the knowledge of pain or the possibility of experiencing it simply by being nearby.

As scholarship on Eliot has repeatedly recognized, there are certainly dangers to this entangled relationship between feeling and thought. While feeling might be “a sort o’ knowledge” and Eliot’s preferred position of proximity might produce the fruitfully sympathetic duality of knowing and sharing in another’s experience, Eliot’s fictions attest to how even this productive interrelationship has its limits. In *The Lifted Veil* (1859), for instance, Latimer’s clairvoyant ability to know others’ thoughts famously fails to increase his sympathy for those around him. Instead, and to Latimer’s dismay, his omniscient scope—which includes his “diseased participation in other people’s consciousness” and his “hideous vision” of the future—drives him from loving others into loathing them, and from the possibilities of sympathetic exchange into a solipsistic state that isolates him until the final moments of his life which

coincide with the final words of his narrative.⁶⁷ Latimer's all-knowing—or, perhaps more aptly, all-hearing—vantage point is at once sensory and otherworldly, since he attests to the ways in which another individual's "stream of thought rushed upon" him "like a ringing in the ears not to be got rid of" (18). "It was," he continues, "like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness" (18). For Latimer, inhabiting another's perspective, or having that perspective "rushed" into his own, is problematic, at least in part, because it is unintentional, an "involuntary intrusion" that Latimer cannot control (18). Rather than experiencing a sensory sympathy in which he might productively know and feel his fellow characters' emotions, Latimer exists within a perpetual sensory overload that he cannot abate, an oversaturation of sensation that fails to foster fellow feeling.

As a result of Latimer's collapsed capacity for sympathy, the prevailing conclusion among scholars has been that he is sentenced to represent, in Thomas Albrecht's edict, "the potential failure of Eliot's ethical theory of art."⁶⁸ The narrator of *Middlemarch* cynically

⁶⁷ George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 17, 20.

Hereafter, page references to *The Lifted Veil* will be cited parenthetically within the text.

⁶⁸ Thomas Albrecht, "Sympathy and Telepathy: The Problem of Ethics in George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil*," *ELH* 73, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 439. This view that Latimer embodies a breakdown—indeed, a complete lack—of fellow feeling is, on the whole, a widely accepted critique of Eliot's sympathetic ethos. As Helen Small puts it: "It is a commonplace of George Eliot criticism that *The Lifted Veil* may be read as an admission, within limits, of skepticism about the viability of a humanism based on nondiscriminatory sympathy. (Given insight into other minds and hearts, would we really care more deeply and more equitably, for the rest of humanity?)" (Helen Small, "George Eliot and the Cosmopolitan Cynic,"

envisions a similar possibility of overwhelming sensations prohibiting fellow feeling when he memorably hypothesizes that there will be little sympathy for Dorothea's dejection after her marriage to Casaubon: "we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. . . . If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence."⁶⁹ As with Latimer's problematically heightened aural knowledge in *The Lifted Veil*, scholars have gravitated toward reading this moment with similar criticisms about the manner in which it reminds readers, as Neil Hertz puts it, "of the limits of those powers of sympathetic imagination."⁷⁰ Knowing and hearing too much again proves fatal to empathic exchange.

Victorian Studies 55, no. 1 [Autumn 2012]: 88). For a related critique that emphasizes how Latimer's omniscience, specifically, fails to produce sympathy, see Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, chapter 4.

⁶⁹ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 185. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

⁷⁰ Neil Hertz, *George Eliot's Pulse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 38. In addition to Hertz's reading, which situates this *Middlemarch* quote in the context of its echoes in *The Lifted Veil* and *Scenes of Clerical Life* as well as John Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1689), the most recent attention has been paid by S. Pearl Brilmyer and Rae Greiner. Brilmyer suggests that this moment is about inhabiting a perspective furnished with an "extrahuman range of faculties," about having the ability "to sense what a human being cannot sense, to feel more than the human body allows one to feel" (Brilmyer, "Sensing Character in *Theophrastus Such*," 36). According to Greiner, who also connects this passage in *Middlemarch* to Latimer's "preternaturally heightened sense of hearing," both *The Lifted Veil* and *Middlemarch* "make the argument for abstraction, portraying as excruciating anything close to unmediated (and immediate) access into other minds" (Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, 304). The present chapter, by contrast, argues for Eliot's avoidance of abstraction.

Seemingly far from the fertile duality of knowing and sharing the mother's "pang" in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, in each of these instances the message appears to be the inverse: knowing everything—hearing everything—and experiencing sympathy cannot always coincide.

And yet, while Eliot's sympathetic ethos suggests that representing ordinary people and things with realism should ideally produce aesthetically and ethically sound fellow feeling, she never insists that realistic representation must encompass a surfeit of the quotidian—knowing too much about others' minds, or hearing too much of the grass as it grows. To the contrary, Eliot distinguishes between, on the one hand, an unproductively excessive and thus indiscriminating degree of perception that impedes fellow feeling and, on the other hand, a productively proximate and discerning sensorium with which we might feel for ourselves the experiences of others in a way that ignites sympathy. In repeatedly focusing on the sensorium, Eliot inheres sympathy in humans' perceptual limitations. More to the point, she suggests that sympathy is a solution for these limitations that at once fruitfully expands the individual consciousness outwards and yet avoids the pitfalls of sensory overload. The problem that *The Lifted Veil's* Latimer and *Middlemarch's* narrator articulate is that knowledge—and, particularly, an excess of knowledge—can fail to produce sympathy; however, when we revise this formula and locate instances when it is not endless knowledge that serves as the origin point but sensory sympathy, then we encounter a different paradigm, one in which embodied fellow feeling yields an expansive breadth of knowledge. Feeling functions, that is, not only as "a sort o' knowledge" but also as a source of knowledge—and, even more, as a source of knowledge that beneficially surpasses the body's perceptual limitations.

In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, for instance, the narrator pitches his sensory sympathy as the most authoritative foundation for his omniscient point of view. Instead of beginning with

overwhelming levels of knowledge—too much sound, too many thoughts—in this paradigm the narrator productively intertwines thought and feeling, such that the “subtlest analysis” must always “be lit by . . . love”:

surely, surely, the only true knowledge of our fellow-man is that which enables us to feel with him – which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings. (266–67)

Situated “on the level” of his characters, the narrator experiences “true knowledge” through sympathetic exchange that is embodied, not only because he witnesses part of the narrative with his senses but also because his sensorium is shared by his fellow characters. As a consequence, the narrator can experience the storyworld alongside “our fellow-man” and hypothesizes that his readers might do the same, so that we “feel with him” because of our common corporeality. While touch arises frequently for Eliot as a site of sensory sympathy that both beckons and blocks tactile intimacy with characters, this passage reminds us that sound emerges repeatedly as a similarly fraught sensation, since it has the potential, as the “roars” in *The Lifted Veil* and *Middlemarch* suggest, to impede sympathy altogether. Yet in *Scenes of Clerical Life* the combination of “true knowledge” and an ability to “feel with” others produces a distinctly successful sensory acuity: a “fine ear for the heart-pulses” of others. This instance of keen hearing offers an early echo of what Latimer and *Middlemarch*’s narrator will eventually lament, except that in *Scenes of Clerical Life* this sensory sharpness is fruitful because it is “fine”: rather than an involuntarily received and overwhelming “roar” of sound, the narrator of *Scenes*

envisions “true knowledge” to be that “which gives us a fine ear” to hear others in a productively intimate way and thereby experience fellow feeling.

As the narrator’s “true knowledge” enables sympathetic exchange, this embodied fellow feeling also yields a heightened form of knowing that comprehends both separately singular interiorities and the synoptic interconnectedness of selves. In grounding his narrative posture in the intimate knowledge that “gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses” of fellow characters, the narrator seeks to hear a pulse that might more easily be felt and which cannot be heard with the unaccompanied human ear. With his ears nonetheless allowing him access to his character’s physiological interiors—their “heart-pulses”—the narrator not only pushes past the boundaries of a delimited sensorium, but also engages in a sympathetic exchange that makes the otherwise unknown knowable. In probing the inner organs, the narrator also enacts a vision that is at once intimate and synoptic—or, in the metaphors that Eliot makes so pervasive within *Middlemarch*, microscopic and telescopic—simultaneously attentive to “separate human beings” down to their very pulses and also able to synthesize these separate pulses into “schools and sects.” Just as much as “true knowledge of our fellow-man” produces fellow feeling here, so too does sensory sympathy—the ability “to feel with” others—thus enable omniscience’s totalizing yet intimate purview.⁷¹ Rather than unemplaced or overwhelming omniscience opening the door for sympathetic exchange, then, the narrator of *Scenes* instead envisions sympathy—conducted through the shared knowledge of embodied experience—as the platform for omniscience.

⁷¹ With this duality of knowledge enabling sympathy even as sympathy enables knowledge, Eliot seems to position sensory experience as both (impossibly, as in Feuerbach) *a priori* and *a posteriori*, since “true knowledge” precedes experience and “is that which enables us to feel with others” even as this knowledgeable posture also requires sympathetic experiences by which knowledge is “lit up.”

The narrator of *Scenes* is the first of Eliot's many characters to suggest that sympathy functions as a source of knowledge that spans both synoptically and intimately across individuals. At the simplest level, as *Silas Marner*'s narrator reminds us, sympathy involves inhabiting another's inner experiences, another's perspective—widening our own point of view to incorporate vantage points that are other to our own. When Nancy Cass attempts to understand her husband's sadness at not being able to raise children, she is, in the narrator's phrase, "trying, with predetermined sympathy, to see everything as Godfrey saw it" (151). Sympathy, for Nancy, holds the possibility of endowing her with the simultaneous specificity and scope of her husband's point of view, since she aims to inhabit Godfrey's perspective in particular yet with the blanket desire of using this perspective to see "everything." When Eliot published *Middlemarch* a decade after *Silas Marner*, Dorothea Brooke continues to insist that only complete sensory sympathy might generate profitably capacious incorporation of another's point of view. In one instance when her younger sister, Celia, asks her to clarify how her upcoming marriage to Will Ladislaw "came about," Dorothea maintains that there is no point in trying to impart knowledge alone; as she explains to Celia: "you would have to feel with me, else you would never know" (783).

In *Adam Bede*, Dinah takes the advice that Dorothea gives to her sister over twenty years later when she exercises, in the narrator's phrase, "sympathetic divination":

Dinah, with her sympathetic divination, knew quite well that Adam was longing to hear if Hetty had said anything about their trouble; she was too rigorously truthful for benevolent invention, but she had contrived to say something in which Hetty was tacitly included. (107)

While Adam keeps sympathy at least syntactically separate from knowledge when he suggests that “feeling’s a sort o’ knowledge,” the narrator absents any division between the two when he dubs Dinah’s knowledge-producing fellow feeling as “sympathetic divination.” With sympathy grammatically modifying her expansive knowledge, Dinah’s keen feelings here enable her extrasensory awareness of Adam’s inner troubles. She functions, in this manner, as a proxy for the incarnated narrator, who also brings together his limited sensory encounters and his “divination” of that which extends far beyond the sensorium.

The fact that Dinah, the novel’s fiery Methodist preacher, functions as the purveyor of “sympathetic divination,” in many ways, is predictable. She both holds the position of the novel’s most sympathizing character and, from the start of *Adam Bede*, preaches about a version of Jesus that focuses on the relationship between his corporeal feelings and God’s divine perspective. In presenting a theology that directly requires the Incarnation, Dinah capitalizes on Jesus’ embodiment from the first sermon we see her deliver in Hayslope:

We can understand what Jesus felt, because he came in a body like ours, and spoke words such as we speak to each other. We were afraid to think what God was before—the God who made the world and the sky and the thunder and lightning. We could never see him.... But our blessed Saviour has showed us what God is ... he has showed us what God’s heart is, what are his feelings towards us. (24-25)

In the midst of this sermon in which Dinah focuses more generally on God’s attitude toward the poor, she envisions Jesus’ embodiment as the avenue through which a believer might stand in God’s shoes. The first step on this path is rather simple: to “understand what Jesus felt” because of our mutual humanity. Dinah’s propositions become more radical, however, when she suggests that this shared feeling between the believer and Jesus also makes God’s perspective knowable

and inhabitable: the believer's sensory sympathy with Jesus allows her to understand not only her feelings toward God but also God's "feelings towards us." In this formula, Jesus' incarnation functions as a springboard for enabling the believer to cultivate a more expansive understanding of an otherwise unseen and unknown vantage point, one that witnesses the self from the position of a divine other. The sympathetic "participated sensation" common to the believer and Jesus, that is, allows her to inhabit God's omniscient point of view.

Reading Dinah's sermon alongside Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* reveals how his secularization of Christian theology intersects with ongoing discourses of religious faith. In many ways, Feuerbach participates in what Max Weber famously dubbed the "disenchantment of the world," a process in which the Protestant Reformation, industrial revolution, and transformations in scientific thought led to a shift from a pre-Enlightenment belief in magic and myth to a modern adherence to the precepts of rationalism.⁷² Yet even as Feuerbach secularizes Christian theology, he also preserves enchanted representational nodes that nurse the value of belief.⁷³ Take, for instance, his claim that the "beneficial influence of religion rests on this extension of the sensational consciousness." To a certain extent, with this admission Feuerbach confines the favorable impact of religion to a very narrow form of faith: "only in its origin is it [religion] something holy, true, pure and good," he declares.⁷⁴ At once, Feuerbach intimates that

⁷² Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2004), 13.

⁷³ In this sense, Charles Taylor's recent account of secularization, which focuses less on "belief and unbelief ... as rival *theories*" and more on the "lived experience" of belief or unbelief, provides a more fruitful backdrop for understanding Feuerbach's non-stadial secularization (*A Secular Age*, 4–5).

⁷⁴ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 276.

religion harbors the “beneficial” potential to instigate “the setting aside of the limits of sense,” freeing individuals from the “narrow confined dwelling-house” of the “sensational consciousness.”⁷⁵ Religion, in this idealized formulation, has the potential to function like Feuerbachian sympathy or feeling, since it might urge “man [to] rise above merely egoistic” impulses. Thus while Feuerbach undoubtedly stands at the helm of the modern process of secularization, he also resists a stadial secularism that proceeds neatly from pre-Enlightenment enchantment to Weberian disenchantment. As Van A. Harvey makes clear when he compares Feuerbach’s particular brand of secularism to that of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud:

even though he was as savage in his criticism of Christianity as these other masters of suspicion, he differed from them in one crucial respect: he believed that the new age of which he was the prophet would only emerge if the deepest values of Christianity were preserved.... Feuerbach wanted to preserve the content of Christianity, but not its form. If he criticized Christianity, it was in the service of the same human values Christianity itself recognized and fostered.⁷⁶

Given Feuerbach’s investment in preserving certain values of the Christian faith, it is no wonder that the philosophies of Dinah and Feuerbach intersect, particularly through their mutual

⁷⁵ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 276.

⁷⁶ Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 101–2. Harvey also notes: “there are passages in *Christianity* that support the view that religion does serve a positive function, that it is ‘man’s earliest and indirect form of knowledge.’ He wrote that every advance in religion is an advance in humanity’s conception of itself. To the degree that this is true, religion does have a positive function. Even Christianity can be given a positive evaluation because it has encapsulated the most adequate picture of essential human predicates: reason, will, and love” (110).

emphasis on the ways in which embodied “feelings” expand the singular human standpoint. Dinah’s sermon, in many respects, functions as a Feuerbachian case study: while Dinah never abandons her conviction of God’s divinity even as she implies that the believer might occupy God’s omniscient perspective, we can imagine that Feuerbach might claim that the believer, in Dinah’s formulation, has simply self-alienated her human desires onto a fabricated God. Nonetheless, for both Feuerbach and Dinah religion begins with humanity: both thinkers mine the potential abstractions of a religion based on a God who, as Dinah laments, “we could never see” in order to center divinity in the immanently human or, as Dinah puts it, in “a body like ours.” What is more, both Feuerbach and Dinah suggest that even the expansive point of view generated by religion remains grounded in embodiment: Feuerbach’s concession that the “beneficial influence of religion rests on this extension of the sensational consciousness” becomes Dinah’s conviction that the singular human perspective expands when religion allows the believer to assume God’s point of view. Rather than exemplifying a contrast between the enchantment of religious faith and the disenchantment of its absence, then, Feuerbach’s secularization narrative instead runs parallel to Dinah’s incarnation narrative: both of them enchant religion with the possibility of sensational extension, suggesting that understanding the divine stance—whether projected or actual—is ultimately predicated on knowing the embodied human standpoint.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Barry V. Qualls argues for the continuity between secular and religious realms when he notes “how much common ground religious and secular literature share,” and particularly marks this overlap as the purview of “the novelist” who “would have us see how religious our secular language is” (*The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The Novel as Book of Life* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982], 15). Shaffer also argues: “The men who were prepared to apply the methods of secular literary criticism

The figure on which these sensationally charged narratives diverge is Jesus: while Dinah's conception of an expansive divine perspective requires Jesus' shared embodiment with the believer, Feuerbach's theory of sensational extension, by contrast, requires only the believer herself, projecting and self-alienating her humanity onto God. Thus while Dinah relies on an incarnated God-as-man to serve as the hinge between the human and the divine, Feuerbach envisions a paradigm in which the human senses generate their own boundlessness—in which the individual might construct the “divine reality” of “omniscience” without ever leaving her own body behind:

But what is the imagination?—limitless activity of the senses.... I extend the horizon of my senses by the imagination; I form to myself a confused conception of the whole of things: and this conception, which exalts me above the limited stand-point of the senses, and therefore affects me agreeably, I posit as a divine reality. I feel the fact that my knowledge is tied to a local stand-point, to sensation experience, as a limitation; what I feel as a limitation I do away with in my imagination, which furnishes free space for the play of my feelings. This negating of limits by the imagination is the position of omniscience.⁷⁸

According to Feuerbach, the result of sensory expansion is the posture of omniscience—and an omniscience that is, quite clearly, not divine in nature. Nor is this omniscience an idealized point

to the Bible were naturally quick to carry the results of their Biblical criticism back into secular literature. The intricate interrelationship between *critica sacra* and *critica profana* in this period has never been traced. Yet its overwhelming importance for nineteenth-century literature has never ceased to be proclaimed” (“*Kubla Khan*” and the *Fall of Jerusalem*, 63).

⁷⁸ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 275–76.

of view. No matter how “agreeably” affecting it might be, the synoptic perspective also remains “a confused conception of the whole of things.” Positioned as an imperfect but pleasurable “divine reality,” Feuerbach’s notion of omniscience thus underscores its own religious realism.

Feuerbach replaces divinity here—or, in relation to Dinah’s formulation, replaces Jesus—with the faculty of the imagination. One point clearly emerges from Feuerbach’s statement: “I extend the horizon of my senses by the imagination.” Here, Feuerbach supplants the generality of “religion” as the impetus for “extension of the sensational consciousness” with a more specific emphasis on the imagination as the faculty necessary for sensory extension. With the felt “limitation” of sensation pitted against imagination’s “limitless activity” and “free space,” sensation holds a problematically isolated role in both perception and knowledge creation. And yet, even the expansive abandon of imagination here never casts off the “sensational consciousness,” since the imagination’s “limitless activity” is of “the senses” and the desired “free space” is for “the play of . . . feelings.” The same mechanisms that activate sympathy—wherein sensation transitions from embodied solipsism to participation—galvanize a more expansive form of knowing, since when imagination is brought to bear on sensory knowledge, otherwise isolating experiences of embodiment operate less as an obstructive fence and more as a fertile foundation for breaking free from a delimited “local stand-point.” Evoking the senses even as it generates a limitless point of view, Feuerbach’s theory of omniscience thus requires a body and the imagination to produce panoramic and sympathetic expansiveness. And yet even as it expands from the “local” to the “limitless,” an omniscient posture here also functions as a productive negation—a “negating of limits”—that generates boundlessness through erasure.

My analysis thus far has prepared us to see how Eliot follows Feuerbach’s lead in centering the imagination as the catalyst that transforms a “limited” perspective into one that is

“limitless.” Yet while Feuerbach considers the imagination primarily in the context of religion, Eliot expands this context to include art more generally—whether religiously focused or not. Still, for both writers the imagination enables expansion from the singular self to a sympathetic self that is newly panoramic in perspective. Much like the broader synonymy that she draws between embodied feeling and cognitive thought, Eliot’s conception of the imagination similarly requires a sustained and symbiotic relationship with the sensory. Eliot pairs feeling and imagining as two faculties equally vital to her overarching project of evoking sympathetic knowledge when she declares in a letter that she wants readers to “be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves.”⁷⁹ We see this interplay again in Amos Barton within his story in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, where the narrator laments the possibility of Amos parting with his wife Millie’s grave because Amos has “clung to . . . material links”: “His imagination was not vivid, and required the stimulus of actual perception” (62). Without the “actual perception” of the senses, Amos’s imagination is naught; and without his sustained imagination, Amos’s “material” memory is lost. In the second narrative in *Scenes*, “Mr. Gilfil’s Love-Story,” the narrator presents as a cruelty Captain Wybrow’s failure to interpenetrate his imagination with his senses. When the oft-unfeeling Wybrow refuses this connection, he precludes the woman with whom he has recklessly flirted, Caterina Sarti, from having sympathetic effects on him. Due to his “calm passions” toward Caterina, she “touched the imagination and the affections rather than the senses” and Wybrow thus remains relatively insensible and emotionless—a circumstance that ultimately proves fatal (120).

In contrast to Wybrow’s insensitivity, Eliot’s contemporaneous essay “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young” suggests that substantiating the imagination in sensory

⁷⁹ George Eliot to Charles Bray, July 5, 1859, in *George Eliot Letters*, 3:111.

sympathy transforms a singular existence into a panoramic one. Here, Eliot conducts a frank assessment of the eighteenth-century poet Edward Young, celebrating his “occasional flash of genius” even as she criticizes his “adherence to abstractions” and thus how “we never find him dwelling on virtue or religion as it really exists—in the emotions of a man dressed in an ordinary coat.”⁸⁰ While Young “and other theological advocates” pride themselves on the “loftiness of their doctrine,” Eliot argues that this absence of attention to the ordinary leads directly to a lack of fellow feeling in Young’s poems, where “there is hardly a trace of human sympathy, of self-forgetfulness in the joy or sorrow of a fellow-being.”⁸¹ Eliot’s essay thus reiterates her antipathy to the abstract by pairing the realm of feeling with that of thought: “Generalities,” she laments, “are the refuge at once of deficient intellectual activity and deficient feeling.”⁸² And yet, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness” also theorizes how the interrelationship between actual sensory encounters and imagined ones might allow for a more inclusively general view of society that does not dissolve into intolerable “generalities.”

Eliot makes this interrelationship particularly clear when disparaging how one of Young’s poems criticizes a man who “denies his soul immortal.”⁸³ According to Young’s poem, disavowing the possibility of living in “another world” makes this man a “knave” who entirely

⁸⁰ Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness,” 232, 242.

⁸¹ Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness,” 243.

⁸² Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness,” 243.

⁸³ Edward Young, “Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality,” in *The Complete Works, Poetry and Prose, of the Rev. Edward Young, LL.D.*, 2 vols. (London: William Tegg and Co., 1854), 1:144.

lacks sympathy because his “duty ’tis to love himself alone.”⁸⁴ Eliot responds by envisioning this censured individual’s impassioned and empathic reply to his insensitive poet:

The fact is, I do *not* love myself alone, whatever logical necessity there may be for that in your mind.... Through my union and fellowship with the men and women I *have* seen, I feel a like, though a fainter, sympathy with those I have *not* seen; and I am able so to live in imagination with the generations to come.⁸⁵

In delineating this man’s relationship between those “I *have* seen” and “those I have *not*,” Eliot evokes a similar notion of sympathy-as-springboard that she later conjures in *Silas Marner*. In much the same way that Silas’s sympathetic “link” with Eppie goads a connection with the “whole world,” here Eliot suggests that the man’s “union” with those he encounters with his senses spurs a similar (albeit “fainter”) comingling with those he will never sense. His projected “union and fellowship” here do not require a Christian doctrine of immortality because his sensory sympathy itself pushes past not only material and spatial delimitations but temporal ones as well, creating an empathic expanse that stretches into the future and “the generations to come.” Even the way Eliot expresses this trans-historical sympathy enacts the very sentiment she espouses. By ventriloquizing a poetic character conceived by an eighteenth-century writer—by inhabiting his fictional point of view—she is “able to live in imagination” across historical epochs, not with “the generations to come” but with those that have come before. In proclaiming and personifying how sensory experiences enable a capacity to imagine that which can never be experienced with the sensorium—whether due to a material constraint or a temporal one—Eliot thus intimates that the sympathetic imagination has the power to generate a more comprehensive

⁸⁴ Young, “Night Thoughts,” 1:144.

⁸⁵ Eliot, “Worldliness and Other-Worldliness,” 245 (emphasis in original).

perspective across that which can never be seen with bodily eyes. And Eliot's incarnated narrators embody this ethos, flaunting how their delimited encounters with the storyworld and its characters do not hinder or contradict omniscient narration, but instead facilitate a sympathetic perspective that extends, via the imagination, far beyond the body.

Nearly two decades after Eliot published "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness," Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* also theorized the possibilities for a transition between what he terms the "sensible world" and the "extra-sensible world."⁸⁶ Attending to Lewes and his "philosophy of science" reinforces the codependent sequence by which sensation underpins an expansive epistemology. Lewes's work also underscores how Eliot's attention to the imagination connects with more explicitly scientific and even empiricist discourses.⁸⁷ In the section of *Problems of Life and Mind* where he considers "Problem I: The Limitations of Knowledge," Lewes's project, in part, is to articulate a useful middle ground between two dominant schools of thought regarding knowledge: on the one hand, the experiential or sensational school, which holds that all knowledge stems from experience and is commonly associated with the philosophy of John Locke, and, on the other hand, the *a priori* school, which is associated with Kant and "maintains that, although Experience may be necessary to call the latent truths into emergent consciousness, it only calls them out, it does not originate them, for Experience itself is only rendered possible

⁸⁶ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 238.

⁸⁷ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, viii. George Levine observes that experience is so central to Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* that it is apt to characterize Lewes, as well as Eliot, "as empiricists and materialists, although they would have rejected the latter label." Even more, Levine suggests: "Lewes's empiricism is almost Berkeleyan in its insistence on the perceiver or 'feeler' of experience" (*The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981], 263, 269).

by their pre-existence.”⁸⁸ In particular, Lewes positions himself in dialogue with Kantian thought by arguing that “Kant’s fundamental mistake” is to land too solidly in the *a priori* school of thought when he assumes that “there is a Knowledge which is anterior to all excitation, independent of all Experience.”⁸⁹ Lewes’s standpoint in the Kantian legacy is uniquely contradictory. To begin with, he understands Kant to be positioning knowledge as “independent” of experience, an idea with which Lewes finds a “fundamental” fault. Yet Lewes cannot help but agree with Kant that “we may reasonably admit that there must be *a priori* conditions which render Knowledge possible.”⁹⁰ In situating himself firmly in neither camp—or, perhaps more aptly, in straddling the two—Lewes maintains that neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori* knowledge “can be supposed to have originated independently of Experience.”⁹¹ In other words, contradictory as it might seem, for Lewes even *a priori* knowledge requires “experience.”

While Lewes gravitates toward the fundamental necessity of sensational experience, he never denies that which lies—to all appearances—beyond the sensorium. To the contrary, Lewes insists that our knowledge includes elements that spring from “the reactions of our Sensibility” as well as those “which never were presented to Sense”:

That we only know things in their effects on us, and through the reactions of our Sensibility, may now be taken for granted. Nevertheless it is indisputable that in our

⁸⁸ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 226.

⁸⁹ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 221–22.

⁹⁰ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 222.

⁹¹ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 222.

conceptions of external things there are elements which cannot be reduced to mere sensation, elements which never were presented to Sense.⁹²

At once, according to Lewes, sensation's essential nature in the creation of knowledge can "be taken for granted" and reduced to the relative dispensability of "mere sensation." Yet repeatedly when considering the relationship between the "sensible world" of embodied experiences and the "extra-sensible world" that extends beyond the body's perceptual limitations, Lewes never entirely absents the sensorium from its role in producing knowledge about phenomenon that lie beyond the senses. Instead, in insisting that "there is a knowledge of the Extra-sensible,—a mental vision of the sensibly invisible" Lewes parses the paradox of a "sensibly invisible" realm.⁹³ While both Feuerbach and Eliot take up the term imagination in order to explain the hinge where a limited sensory standpoint enables all that lies beyond the senses—to explain the hinge, in other words, between "sensibly" and "invisible"—Lewes dubs this pivot point "inference."

Much like the ways in which Feuerbach and Eliot conceive of the imagination, Lewes theorizes that inference at once relies on sensory experience and yet is not confined to it. He positions sensation as both the springboard and the litmus test—both the point of origin and the sign of verification—for inferring the "extra-sensible world." In figuring sensation as a necessary catalyst for inference, Lewes explains how even knowledge that appears to subsist thanks to inference rather than sense perception actually relies on the foundation provided by embodiment: "the Extra-sensible World, though resting mainly on Inference, ... necessarily implies the

⁹² Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 233.

⁹³ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 239.

presence of a sensible basis.”⁹⁴ Situated as a “basis” for understanding the extra-sensible world, the senses thus allow the individual to persist in two realms at once: the realm of embodied sensory experiences and the realm in which embodied sensory experiences are impossible, where knowledge exists about elements that “no bodily eye could discern: molecules and waves having their precise measurements and laws, planets and their stages of evolution before man was.”⁹⁵ As the Irish physicist John Tyndall concurs, in a footnote included by Lewes: “by means of data furnished in the narrow world of the senses, we make ourselves at home in other and wider worlds, which can be traversed by the intellect alone.”⁹⁶ Yet for Lewes the role of sensation for inferring “other and wider worlds” also serves as the basis of epistemological verification, since “[w]henever an Inference is in agreement with the positive data of Sense, whenever the Invisible is only an extension of the Visible, we pronounce it rationally certain.”⁹⁷ Even more than suggesting that the invisible inferred world is “rationally certain” when verified against sense, Lewes allows for this world to become equal with the world of the senses, because “[a]n inference, once verified, becomes equally valid with a sensation.”⁹⁸ Thus, just as Lewes insists

⁹⁴ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 239.

⁹⁵ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 239.

⁹⁶ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 240n. John Tyndall discusses this dynamic between “the narrow world of the senses” and “wider worlds” of that which cannot be sensed in his lecture “On Radiant Heat” delivered on January 19, 1866 at the Royal Institution of Great Britain (Tyndall, “On Radiant Heat in Relation to the Colour and Chemical Constitution of Bodies,” in *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People: A Series of Detached Essays, Addresses, and Reviews* [New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871], 213).

⁹⁷ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 240.

⁹⁸ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 242 (emphasis in original).

that even *a priori* knowledge paradoxically requires experience, he also maintains that, through inference, we might perceive a “sensibly invisible” world. Inference, that is, generates a world that persists both within and beyond the senses, at once acknowledging the limitations of experiential knowledge and denying any limitations because the senses validate an expansive point of view.

Throughout Feuerbach’s higher criticism, Eliot’s critical and fictional prose, and Lewes’s “philosophy of science,” the imagination (or, in Lewes’s term, inference) enables what Lewes calls an “extension of the Visible,” which is to say that the imagination both requires and expands upon the incarnated individual’s sensory experiences. Yet despite these generative possibilities for extension of the singular self, Eliot and Lewes, in particular, articulate how the imagination meets its downfall when it verges on invention. In Eliot’s final fictional work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, for instance, Theophrastus criticizes how imagination is often deemed to be equivalent to inventive inaccuracy rather than grounded in “discriminating perception.”⁹⁹ Much like Lewes’s concept of inference, Theophrastus touts a form of imagination that finds its roots in sensory experience, since “a fine imagination . . . is always based on a keen vision, a keen consciousness of what *is*”:

it is worth repeating that powerful imagination is not false outward vision, but intense inward representation, and a creative energy constantly fed by susceptibility to the veriest minutiae of experience, which it reproduces and constructs in fresh and fresh wholes; not the habitual confusion of provable fact with the fictions of fancy and transient inclination, but a breadth of ideal association which informs every material object, every incidental

⁹⁹ George Eliot, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such: Essays & Leaves from a Note-Book* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1900), 111. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

fact with far-reaching memories and stored residues of passion, bringing into new light the less obvious relations of human existence. (111, 112)

In identifying how a “fine” and “powerful” imagination functions heuristically, Theophrastus champions a form of imagination that constitutes embodied omniscience: both “constantly fed by ... experience” and constantly synthesizing this experience into unitary aggregates or “fresh and fresh wholes,” Theophrastus positively revises Feuerbach’s suggestion that the imagination yields an omniscient albeit “confused conception of the whole of things.” Yet Theophrastus also dreads the potential falsity of imagination that turns “outward.” The problem, as Theophrastus explains it, occurs when an imaginative person is presumed to be adept at “fabricating extravagances,” and thus this individual’s imagination would also “warrant ... exclusion” of such a person “from the class of acceptable witnesses in a court of justice” (110). The boasts of *Adam Bede*’s narrator who hopes to tell his story with as much accuracy as possible, “as if I were in the witness-box narrating my experience on oath,” thus remain forceful in Eliot’s last fictional work, where the narrator laments the loss of the “witness-box” level realism that *Bede*’s narrator claims to exemplify (159). In this way, Theophrastus seeks to distinguish between the unproductive falsity of fabrication and the productive power of an imagination that is simultaneously embodied and expansive.

In *Silas Marner*, it is precisely this potential pitfall of fabrication—even if unintended—that deters the inhabitants of Raveloe from correctly ascertaining who stole Silas’s gold. After his gold goes missing, Silas’s neighbors collectively invent possible scenarios to explain the theft and, in doing so, they fall into two groups, neither of which is able to imagine fruitfully an accurate account of the event. The first group—the “advocates of the tinder-box-and-pedlar view”—has rationally but erroneously connected a tinder-box found by Silas’s home to a pedlar

who recently visited the town, and concluded that this traveling salesman must be the culprit; this faction's downfall lies in truncating their imagination too quickly, in being "mere skimming-dishes in point of depth" and not imagining possibilities beyond this singular story which, it turns out, is incorrect (73). The second grouping of neighbors—who advocate a "theory of an impenetrable mystery that mocked investigation"—commits the opposite fallacy by pressing so far beyond the evidence that the imagination conjures only impossible inventions (73). These two groups map out the spectrum of potential mishaps that occur when the imagination fails to function both heuristically and expansively: either underdeveloped or overwrought, the ineffective imagination constrains itself to one story and reduces all other possibilities, or verges on unproductive fabrication by straying too far from the evidence at hand.

Godfrey Cass—the one character who might have been able to imagine the accurate story that his brother, Dunstan, who had since disappeared, was the thief who filched Silas's gold—has an imagination that both stops too short and goes too far: he, at once, is unable to see the evidence clearly and also extrapolates beyond what this evidence suggests. Godfrey fails to "connect the fact of Dunsey's disappearance with that of the robbery occurring on the same day," despite the fact that he "had better reason than any one else to know what his brother was capable of"; instead, Godfrey's "imagination constantly created an *alibi* for Dunstan: he saw him continually in some congenial haunt, to which he had walked off on leaving Wildfire—saw him sponging on chance acquaintances, and meditating a return home" (72–3, emphasis in original). Rather than presciently following the guidelines of Theophrastus Such, who denounces unproductive fabrication, Godfrey uses his imagination to contrive a detailed but false narrative that fails to identify his brother as the thief or—with even more dire consequences—to realize that this thieving brother is dead. Unfortunately for Godfrey, having an imagination with too

little grounding in experience or too much speculative invention returns only a grim and even fatal outcome.

Were the fictional Godfrey Cass or Theophrastus Such to turn to the pages of *Adam Bede*, they would find that Dinah Morris attains the ideal imagination that the latter espouses and the former fails to achieve. Dinah, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, exercises her capacity for what the narrator terms “sympathetic divination” in order to discern Adam’s inner turmoil in relation to Hetty. Much like Riehl’s position as “first of all, a pedestrian” in “The Natural History of German Life” or the narrator of *Adam Bede*’s insistence that he must “give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind,” Dinah—ever “rigorously truthful”—never credits herself with even “benevolent invention” (159). Instead, in employing her “sympathetic divination” to imagine accurately what Adam must feel in relation to Hetty, Dinah distinguishes between fabrication and expansion: her capacity for sympathy allows her to expand her current knowledge to include what Adam already feels but which, until divined, remains as yet unknown. She accomplishes the same goal that Feuerbach sets out in *The Essence of Christianity*: “Not to invent, but to discover; ‘to unveil existence’ has been my sole object; to see correctly, my sole endeavor.”¹⁰⁰ Dinah’s imagination, that is, negotiates the fine line between allowing her sympathy to generate its own boundlessness and keeping this boundlessness distinct from the “false outward vision” that Theophrastus dreads.

By disentangling imagination from invention, Eliot envisions a form of fiction that places its emphasis not on originality but on sympathetic accuracy—an act that revises the long history of conflating fiction with invention that threads from the eighteenth century to today.

Inventiveness, as Gallagher reminds us, was a foundational precept for the emergent category of

¹⁰⁰ Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 6 (emphasis in original).

fiction in the eighteenth century: courts operating under the 1710 Statute of Anne emphasized “‘invention’ or ‘originality’ as the definitive characteristic of authorship,” and invention “in turn found its apotheosis in the idea of pure fabulation, or original fiction writing.”¹⁰¹ Still today, in an issue of the journal *Narrative* in which Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh propose “Ten Theses about Fictionality,” the authors’ first thesis—“Fictionality is founded upon a basic human ability to imagine”—conceives of inventiveness as integral to imagination: “The use of fictionality depends on a capacity to invent which offers its audience an invitation to imagine and interpret.”¹⁰² Yet in aligning inventiveness with fabrication, Eliot proposes a form of fiction that inheres not in originality but, as the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* puts it, in “solid fact”: “Here undoubtedly lies the chief poetic energy:—in the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact, instead of floating among cloud-pictures” (322). By elevating empirical “solid fact” rather than “cloud-pictures”—or, in the words of Theophrastus, by not confusing “provable fact with the fictions of fancy and transient inclination” but instead activating “a breadth of ideal association which informs . . . every incidental fact”—Eliot’s fictions claim to offer what Lewes calls “fictions of Science.”¹⁰³ Fiction, according to Lewes, becomes effective when we distinguish between “the fictions of Science and the fictions of Poetry” because the “fictions of the thinker differ from the fictions of the poet in not being wayward caprices; they are constructed in obedience to rigorous canons, and moulded by the pressures of Reality; two conditions absent in the fictions both of Fairyland

¹⁰¹ Gallagher, *Nobody’s Story*, 157, 159.

¹⁰² Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh, “Ten Theses about Fictionality,” *Narrative* 23, no. 1 (January 2015): 63–64.

¹⁰³ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 272.

and of Metempirics.”¹⁰⁴ When thus substantiated in “the pressures of Reality,” fiction, like the imagination, becomes an effective form of vision:

Fictions are potent; and all are welcome if they can justify themselves by bringing speculative insight within the range of positive vision.... We must submit it to all the tests by which hypotheses are controlled,—tests which, while allowing the freest scope to the energy of Imagination, prevent that energy from degenerating into license.¹⁰⁵

Much like the way the narrator of *Daniel Deronda* calls for a “poetic energy” rooted in “solid fact” or the way Theophrastus Such demands that a “powerful imagination” be grounded in “creative energy” that never dissolves into unproductive invention, Lewes positions “the energy of Imagination” here as the force that both keeps “speculative insight within the range of positive vision” and gives fiction its “freest scope.” Fiction functions best, to borrow Feuerbach’s phrase, when its object is “[n]ot to invent, but to discover.”

Centered on “solid fact” even as it harnesses a “poetic energy” that refuses to limit itself only to what is known, fiction for Lewes and Eliot thus requires a limitlessly sensory imagination. Fiction, in other words, requires omniscience—and a secular omniscience that never declares divinity as it inheres paradoxically in the limitations of a human perspective. Yet no matter how inherent these perceptual constraints may be, for Eliot secular omniscience is never an act of reduction or disenchantment. By contrast, in her writing the panoramic expanse of incarnated omniscience is shaped by a sympathetic imagination that magnifies the singular

¹⁰⁴ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 272, 266. The *OED Online* gives Lewes’s *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series* as the first text to use the word “metempirics,” which the *OED* defines as: “The philosophy of things beyond the reach of empirical knowledge; transcendental metaphysics.”

¹⁰⁵ Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind, First Series*, 42.

sensory self and galvanizes perceptual limitations into the impossibly “limitless activity of the senses”: the “union and fellowship with the men and women” one has “seen” into an ability “to live in imagination with the generations to come,” or the sensory sympathy of feeling with others into the omniscience of hearing their “heart-pulses.” We thus see in Eliot's writing what Vincent Pecora describes as a shift (rather than a loss) of enchantment in relation to secularism: “the emotional and psychological energies formerly exercised in religious activity simply migrated elsewhere”—into, in Eliot’s case, the human.¹⁰⁶ Far from a simple form of secularization that entirely sidesteps the enchantments of faith, Eliot’s humanized omniscience requires a sensorium that cleaves itself to the possibilities of enchantment offered by the imagination. Narrative omniscience, in this particular secular form inspired through Feuerbach, does not function as an ontological state of being nor is it something Eliot’s narrators ever possess; omniscience does not even require that the narrator know everything. Instead, omniscient narration compels Eliot’s narrators to embrace the potential for sensing and imagining everything, for tapping into the “limitless activity of the senses” that is the imagination. Omniscience, as a consequence, becomes a vantage point that Eliot’s narrators can gain in time and at moments, not by exercising a wholesale capacity for all-knowingness nor by indulging in a knack for fabrication or invention, but rather by cultivating a facility for carrying out a sympathetic imagination that is all-sensing—or a sympathetic sensorium that is all-imagining—in its scope.

¹⁰⁶ Vincent P. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 26.

CHAPTER TWO: Thackeray's "Present" Narrator: The Historical Experience of Omniscience

Five chapters from the end of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), in the fictional "little comfortable ducal town of Pumpnickel," the narrator sidesteps the potential distance of a disembodied omniscient vantage point to take up an omniscience embodied in and by a character who is visiting the town, and he thus embraces a stance that promises the possibility of unmatched intimacy with the storyworld he occupies and the historical events he recounts.¹ The narrator's appearance in Pumpnickel raises a broad critical question: What is the relationship between omniscient narration and historical experience?

As a historical novel, *Vanity Fair* at once revolves around the Napoleonic wars and its aftermaths even as the omniscient narrator famously avoids directly recounting this military history, particularly the 1815 Battle of Waterloo. Fifteen years later, however, this stalemate between the omniscient narrator and a seemingly unnarratable world historical event begins to breakdown, as I will show, when the newly embodied narrator and his fellow characters visit the fictional town of Pumpnickel from 1830 to 1831. Even amid the episodic expanse of *Vanity Fair*, the Pumpnickel portions are significant in scope (since the narrator spends six detailed chapters on the locale) and in event (since, in addition to the narrator's appearance, the duchy hosts Becky Sharp's revelation of George Osborne's infidelity to Amelia Sedley as well as Colonel Dobbin's long-awaited betrothal to the same), and, as I will argue, Pumpnickel functions most crucially as the aestheticized space for rehearsing the Napoleonic wars: with his

¹ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 185. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

appearance in this town, the narrator is able, finally, to encounter history in a way that he can both narrate and experience.

Pumpnickel has long occupied a curious place both in *Vanity Fair* and in scholarship on Thackeray's novel, perhaps in large part because the German tour to Pumpnickel occurs, as David Kurnick shrugs, "for no discernible reason."² Though the prospect of a holiday is well received—"all jumped for joy when a foreign tour was proposed"—the suggestion crops up quite out of the blue and from an unidentified source (783). The narrator, too, arrives in Pumpnickel for similarly oblique reasons, as if he, along with "all the good company in London," randomly finds himself visiting the principality (783). While the novel provides little reason for the characters' journey, scholarship that attends to this section of *Vanity Fair* often gravitates toward an autobiographical explanation.³ Readers from Anne Thackeray Ritchie (the author's eldest

² David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 35.

³ It has not been uncommon among Thackeray's readers to conflate *Vanity Fair*'s narrator with its author. This trend begins with nineteenth-century readers' reactions to and reviews of the novel, and continues into twentieth-century scholarship, which repeatedly discusses the many intrusions of the author, the authorial commentary that takes place throughout the text, or dubs the acquaintanceship broached in Pumpnickel as between Thackeray or "the author" and his characters rather than between the narrator and his characters. Yet beyond the conflation of author and narrator here, this analytic avenue becomes less useful when we recognize, as Anne Thackeray Ritchie puts it, that the "author of 'Vanity Fair' was born in 1811, and must therefore have been four years old at the time of the battle of Waterloo," which takes center stage in the novel ("Introduction to *Vanity Fair*," in *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray, Special Biographical Edition*, 25 vols. [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899], 1:xviii). Moreover, as Franz Karl Stanzel reminds us: "we must not forget that Thackeray makes his

daughter and literary executor) to John Sutherland (one of the author's most recent editors) have been struck by the clear correlations between these chapters of *Vanity Fair* and Thackeray's own travels in the German ducal capital of Weimar between 1830 and 1831: the same years when Thackeray's narrator finds himself in the German duchy of Pumpernickel alongside his fellow characters.⁴ In Ritchie's words, one of her father's letters from Weimar "might almost be a page out of 'Vanity Fair' itself, so absolutely does it reproduce the atmosphere of Pumpernickel and the echoes of that time."⁵ Certainly, the letters Thackeray wrote during his months in Weimar detail the city's fashionable society, courtly life, and the reigning duke's family, elements which echo in *Vanity Fair*'s Pumpernickel chapters where the narrator, too, accounts for all the "trivial details" of the town's society and politics (806).

When critical attention on Pumpernickel shifts away from autobiographical explanations centered on Thackeray's personal history, this duchy becomes, for some critics, a duchy without any historicity at all. Though no reader misses the import of the Napoleonic wars to this novel, it is easy to see how Pumpernickel could seem merely symptomatic of the latter half of the novel's relative ahistoricism. In attending to the temporal markers in *Vanity Fair*, Kurnick has recently argued that by the second half of the novel time becomes "dehistoricized," eradicating any

authorial narrator at the time of the narrative act older than he, the author Thackeray, was at the actual writing of the novel," thus providing "a further argument against the identification of author and authorial narrator" (*A Theory of Narrative*, trans. Charlotte Goedsche [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 204).

⁴ See Ritchie, "Introduction to *Vanity Fair*," xviii; John Sutherland, introduction to *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, by William Makepeace Thackeray, ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xxi, 944n.

⁵ Ritchie, "Introduction to *Vanity Fair*," xviii.

distinctions between, for instance, the characters' experiences in early 1830s *Pumpnickel* and the "blurry, empty temporality" of the mid nineteenth-century present when the novel was first serialized in *Punch*.⁶ As a result, Kurnick concludes that the time spent in *Pumpnickel* "might as well be contiguous with the 'now'" of Thackeray's original readership.⁷ Sutherland has made a similar observation about the erasure of history at the end of the serialized *Vanity Fair*: "The novel's last numbers feature many fewer historical markers than their early counterparts. Imperceptibly, the historical texture merges if not into the 'now' of 1847-8, then into the Victorian reader's well-remembered yesterday."⁸

Against this view, I argue that *Pumpnickel* resuscitates history through a series of artistic projects—skirmishing singers, combatting artworks, and especially a war-reproducing orchestral performance—that revivify the earlier battles between the British and the French. As we will see, by reprocessing the violent events of history through the double remove of belatedness and aestheticization, the omniscient narrator's representation of the German town generates the possibility of radical contemporaneity between the early 1830s diegetic present and the not-so-distant past of the Napoleonic wars of the mid-1810s. The town's artistic iterations of the Napoleonic wars might occur over a decade and a half late, but they also transform this past into an ongoing and copresent mental experience of history.⁹ *Pumpnickel*'s visitors, including

⁶ Kurnick, *Empty Houses*, 35.

⁷ Kurnick, *Empty Houses*, 35.

⁸ Sutherland, introduction to *Vanity Fair*, xix–xx.

⁹ In attending to historical experience, this chapter builds on Ruth Mack's recent study of eighteenth-century novels and the way they theorize engagements with history or what she terms "a phenomenology of history" (*Literary Historicity: Literature and Historical Experience in Eighteenth-Century Britain* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009], 19). According to Mack, writers including Henry Fielding,

the narrator, thus inhabit the past by residing in its present fictionalizations. With this productive collusion between Napoleonic wartime and the characters' German tour fifteen years later—in which the past serves as the aesthetic condition for the present and, in turn, the present's aestheticization makes the past comprehensible—Pumpnickel is anything but ahistorical. Instead, the town's fictional space not only resuscitates history but also reveals the novel's potential for representing the complicities between past and present. *Vanity Fair* lays bare the historical capacity of the novel as a fictional form that emerges out of a history of national violence and produces its own belated aestheticization of this past, and Pumpnickel realizes this ability of the novel to make the unnarratable past narratable, to resuscitate violent historical events as a copresent experience.

The omniscient narrator's appearance as a character in this duchy accomplishes this historical work.¹⁰ *Vanity Fair*'s narrator tells a story that can only be divulged through what he

Charlotte Lennox, Horace Walpole, and Laurence Sterne “remain interested in how we might have knowledge of the past” but “are less interested in proving that an accurate description of the past is possible or impossible than they are in analyzing their experience of the past, especially as it remains part of their current world” (19). On a phenomenological approach to history, see also David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl's Transcendental Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009); “On the Phenomenology of History,” in *The Reach of Reflection: Issues for Phenomenology's Second Century*, ed. Steven Crowell, Lester Embree, and Samuel J. Julian (Electron Press, 2001).

¹⁰ In suggesting that the narrator's stance as a character enables his omniscient rendering of history, I read the narrator's first-person posture to be a counterpart to his omniscient purview. In making this claim, my argument diverges from that of Cynthia Griffin Wolff, who figures the materialization of the narrator in Pumpnickel as a demotion, thereby raising a heterodiegetic point of view as hierarchically above a

explicitly calls “the omniscience of the novelist” (185). Seemingly free from the constraints of temporality or materiality, he peers across equal oceanic expanses (from England to the Continent), reports multiple plots as they occur simultaneously to the two female protagonists (Amelia Sedley and Becky Sharp), and peeps into private bedrooms and even more private minds (or mock-humbly declines “to repeat or to overhear [Amelia’s] prayers” even as his free indirect discourse reminds readers that he has this capacity) (321). As we saw in chapter one, George Eliot’s narrators repeatedly harness the panoramic potential furnished by an intradiegetic point of view, such that their metaleptic sympathy yields an expansive and synoptic perspective. In *Vanity Fair*, the narrator and his omniscient rendering of history necessarily begin with—even require—his position as a historical character who exists alongside the characters that he has been describing: “It was at the little comfortable ducal town of Pumpnickel . . . that I first saw Colonel Dobbin and his party,” he seemingly casually announces (793).¹¹ In this moment of

characterological one: “To such levels is our once-exalted narrator reduced,” “his status” now “diminished” (“Who Is the Narrator of ‘Vanity Fair’ and Where Is He Standing?” *College Literature* 1, no. 3 [Fall 1974]: 202).

¹¹ On the intrusiveness of omniscient narration both in *Vanity Fair* and in general, see Paul Dawson, “Real Authors and Real Readers: Omniscient Narration and a Discursive Approach to the Narrative Communication Model,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 42, no. 1 (2012): 93. In discussing *Vanity Fair*, Dawson submits: “the key feature of literary omniscience” is “the performance of narrative authority through intrusive narratorial commentary, which ‘personalizes’ the narrator as an extra-diegetic character.” My claims here build on Dawson’s point by taking the narrator’s characterological intrusiveness one step further, since in *Vanity Fair* the narrator’s status as a character is instantiated within—and not outside—the diegesis. See also Paul Dawson, *The Return of the Omniscient Narrator:*

metalepsis, we encounter omniscience incarnated within history. By folding his characterological historical experience into his panoramic stance, the narrator's appearance in *Pumpnickel* presents a history of his narrative perspective—that not only the military past but also the personal pasts, the domestic histories, he recounts are also impenetrable except through their belated aestheticization—and helps us to understand how this perspective becomes necessary for the novel's narration of an otherwise unnarratable history.

I. The Napoleonic Wars “Am Rhein”

Set one generation prior to Thackeray's 1848 readership, *Vanity Fair* is often considered, in Kathleen Tillotson's phrase, a novel of the “recent past.”¹² Whether or not critics categorize *Vanity Fair* as a historical novel, Thackeray's narrator is, undoubtedly, obsessed with the past in his diegesis's “little world of history” (7). In charting the rise, close, and aftermaths of the

Authorship and Authority in Twenty-First Century Fiction (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), 25–28.

¹² Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 93. Tillotson suggests two ways in which *Vanity Fair* comprehends the past: “that the past, being past, can be possessed, hovered and brooded over, with the story-teller's supposed omniscience; and that the past, being not the present, is stable, untouchable by the winds and waves which rock the present” (94). While this chapter addresses, in accordance with Tillotson's first point, how *Vanity Fair* conceives of possessing the past, it does so by diverging from Tillotson's second observation. With the repeated upsurges of history through *Pumpnickel*'s aesthetic projects, the past in this novel is never confined to the past, nor is it ever distinctly “not the present.” Rather than positing past and present as inviolably discrete, *Pumpnickel*'s resuscitation of history generates the opposite: a palimpsest of past history and the diegetic present moment.

Napoleonic wars, the Battle of Waterloo—which the narrator dubs “the greatest event of history”—impacts every character in the narrative and reverberates to its final scenes in *Pumpnickel* (339). As Avrom Fleishman puts it, in *Vanity Fair* “events are dated from Waterloo as though it were the turn of an era: Before Waterloo, After Waterloo.”¹³ Even the most oblivious of the novel’s characters, Amelia Sedley, finds her domestic existence entangled within Napoleon’s “fateful rush,” such that “Napoleon is flinging his last stake, and poor little Emmy Sedley’s happiness forms, somehow, part of it” (211, 212).

And yet, though Waterloo stands as the novel’s historical centerpiece, Thackeray’s narrator famously declines to detail the battle itself, making it at once the most resounding catalyst and most conspicuous elision within the narrative.¹⁴ For an author whose oeuvre addresses the Napoleonic wars repeatedly, this void is eye-catching. Prior to composing *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray had already displayed his interest in narrating Napoleonic history and its aftermaths. Under his oft-used pseudonym, Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Thackeray published both

¹³ Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 146.

¹⁴ There have been numerous scholarly accounts of this empty space that Sutherland calls a “frustrating vacancy” at the core of *Vanity Fair*’s history (Introduction to *Vanity Fair*, xv). For an account of the avoidance of Waterloo as complicit in the novel’s avoidance of Peterloo, see John Schad, “Reading the Long Way Round: Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 26: Strategies of Reading: Dickens and After Special Number (1996): 25–33. For a recent analysis of Waterloo as central to *Vanity Fair* despite “the battle’s resistance to mimesis,” see Julian Jimenez Heffernan, “Lying Epitaphs: *Vanity Fair*, Waterloo, and the Cult of the Dead,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 40 (2012): 25. On the novel as an “unreliable witness” to Waterloo, see Mary Hammond, “Thackeray’s Waterloo: History and War in *Vanity Fair*,” *Literature and History* 11, no. 2 (2002): 36.

The Second Funeral of Napoleon in 1841 (an account of Napoleon's 1840 funeral procession in Paris that Thackeray dubbed in a letter the "best book I ever wrote") and an article in *Fraser's Magazine* entitled "Little Travels and Road-side Sketches" in 1845 (a report of Titmarsh's visit to Waterloo over two dozen years after Napoleon's defeat).¹⁵ Just before embarking on the *Vanity Fair* chapters that take place in Brussels, Thackeray wrote to his editor to ask for an advance copy of G. R. Gleig's soon-to-be bestseller *Story of the Battle of Waterloo* (1847), and the only footnote Thackeray includes within *Vanity Fair*—a novel littered with historical references and events that are not bolstered by footnotes—is to Gleig, as if Thackeray is proving his extensive research into the battle even if his narrator refuses to narrate it. This absence is all the more conspicuous since, in the same letter, Thackeray outlines his plans to place *Vanity Fair*'s narrator (here figured as Titmarsh) specifically "at Waterloo": "If the book is ready (and only awaiting the 18th for publication) would you kindly let me have a copy? Titmarsh at Waterloo will be a very remarkable and brilliant performance, doubtless."¹⁶

However, when *Vanity Fair*'s narrator dodges the battlefield, he signals that experiencing this violent history and narrating it in "brilliant performance" are at odds. When Dobbin, George, and Becky's husband, Rawdon Crawley, head into battle, the narrator plainly declines to advance with them, suggesting that his hypothetical presence at Waterloo would place him "in the way": "When the decks are cleared for action we go below and wait meekly. We should only be in the way of the manœuvres that the gallant fellows are performing overhead. We shall go no farther

¹⁵ Thackeray to Richard Bedingfield, December 21, 1843, in *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1945), 2:136.

¹⁶ Thackeray to John Murray, June 3, 1847, in *Letters and Private Papers of Thackeray*, 2:294.

with the —th than to the city gate” (361).¹⁷ The narrator has visited the “field of Waterloo,” however, long after the fighting has ceased: “When the present writer went to survey with eagle glance the field of Waterloo, we asked the conductor of the diligence, a portly warlike-looking veteran, whether he had been at the battle. ‘*Pas si bête*’ [‘I’m not a complete idiot’] . . . was his reply” (336).¹⁸ Even as the narrator volleys from the distanced “eagle glance” of projected omniscience to the characterological viewpoint of a war reporter, he still refuses to recount the battle. Instead, he echoes the reticent footsteps of the conductor, a man who, as his reply “*Pas si bête*” implies, is smart enough to stay out of the way. While the narrator of Thackeray’s *The*

¹⁷ See William Makepeace Thackeray, “The Second Funeral of Napoleon, in Three Letters to Miss Smith, of London, by Mr. M. A. Titmarsh,” in *Catherine; a Shabby Genteel Story; the Second Funeral of Napoleon; and Miscellanies, 1840-1*, ed. George Saintsbury (London: Oxford University Press, 1908): 420. This last phrase—“We shall go no farther with the —th than to the city gate”—echoes and revises a similar sentiment expressed in Thackeray’s *Second Funeral of Napoleon*. In recounting Napoleon’s funereal procession in *Second Funeral of Napoleon*, Titmarsh notes: “And, now having conducted our hero almost to the gates of Paris, I must tell you what preparations were made in the capital to receive him.” During the remainder of the text, Titmarsh articulates not only the Parisian preparations, but also the minute details of Napoleon’s body’s advancement through the city. Yet while Titmarsh joins his principal character in going up to and then past “the gates of Paris,” *Vanity Fair*’s narrator goes up to the gates of Waterloo and stops.

¹⁸ This passage in *Vanity Fair* echoes quite closely Thackeray’s 1845 *Fraser’s Magazine* article, “Little Travels and Road-side Sketches.” In this piece, Titmarsh relays a trip to Waterloo taken, according to the article, “this morning,” where Titmarsh has a nearly identical conversation and interaction with the conductor as *Vanity Fair*’s metaleptic narrator (“Little Travels and Road-Side Sketches. Waterloo. No. III,” *Fraser’s Magazine* 31 [January 1845]: 94).

History of Henry Esmond (1852) occasionally cuts through the distance of his third-person perspective to recount his wartime experiences with a first-person posture, *Vanity Fair*'s narrator stays on the outskirts of the Napoleonic wars: with his visit to the "field of Waterloo" postdating the battle and the narration of this visit preceding it, even his engagements with Waterloo bookend but omit the battle itself.¹⁹ The title of Gleig's book suggests the battle's narratability—it is not just *Battle of Waterloo* but *Story of the Battle of Waterloo*—yet in *Vanity Fair* the

¹⁹ Across the entirety of *Henry Esmond*, the eponymous protagonist and narrator switches between first- and third-person postures. For instance, Henry narrates the experiences of his boyhood self in the third-person, referring to events that occurred to "Henry Esmond," and yet he also uses the first-person posture and persona of "I" to present his thoughts and experiences from the initial chapter of the novel onward. Similarly, many of the chapter titles present a first-person posture (the title for chapter four, for example, includes: "I am placed under Popish priest and bred to that religion") while the chapters take up a third-person stance (chapter four's opening sentence includes: "Henry Esmond had been a Jesuit priest ere he was a dozen years") (William Makepeace Thackeray, *The History of Henry Esmond, Esq.*, ed. Donald Hawes [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 39). In narrating the history of "Queen Anne's time" (to use the words of Thackeray's dedication) with this mix of first- and third-person points of view, the narrator of *Henry Esmond* declares that his aesthetic objective is to give history a "natural posture": "In a word, I would have History familiar rather than heroic" (5, 14). This familiar representation of history includes narrating some of the novel's war scenes from a first-person posture. According to Terry Tierney, who sees Esmond's first-person narration in the war scenes as a sign that his identity is "timeless" and "enduring," the "most common usage of the first person in the fictive present occurs during the descriptions of Esmond's [military] campaigns" ("Henry Esmond's Double Vision," *Studies in the Novel* 24, no. 4 [Winter 1992]: 359).

narrator's avoidance suggests that this moment of the world historical event, on the contrary, is unnarratable.

The impasse generated by Waterloo's unnarratable history begins to shift when the characters journey to Pumpernickel. When the narrator visits this German town on holiday and first sees Dobbin, Amelia, her brother Jos Sedley, and her son little Georgy Osborne, nearly fifteen years have passed since the Battle of Waterloo and the end of the Napoleonic wars. Nonetheless, the leisurely German tour is littered with remnants of the Napoleonic battlefield. This link is indicated by the very first mention of a tour "am Rhein," which transforms the earlier invasion of British soldiers onto the Continent into the now "stout trim old veterans" who "have invaded Europe any time since the conclusion of the war" (783). On board their packet steamer, a couple of the novel's minor characters from the Waterloo chapters crop up in this return to the Continent: Jos recognizes Earl and Lady Bareacres whom he remembers seeing in Brussels "in the eventful year '15," though remarkably they now look "rather younger" than a decade and a half earlier (786). The Dobbin-Osborne-Sedley party only finds its way through the Rhineland to Pumpernickel thanks to Dobbin "having a good military knowledge of the German language" (787). In such a context, the narrator reports that, where fifteen years ago Amelia had joined her "regiment" prior to Waterloo, she is now "attended by her two aides de camp," Dobbin and Georgy, as they travel through Germany (325, 787). What was once an invasion for a war that Amelia assumed required travel "not so much to a war as to a fashionable tour" is now not so much a fashionable tour as a figurative war (322).

The characters' German tour begins to overlay two temporalities together: the early 1830s post-war Europe of the characters' diegetic present and the past war-torn Europe circa Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. As a result, the characters experience their diegetic present in the

Rhineland principally in relation to a resuscitated history, to the ineradicable past events of Waterloo and the Napoleonic wars. This return suffuses the present moment with more than a Lukácsian “felt relationship” with that past.²⁰ Instead, the present moment threatens to disappear into a resurrection of the past. Take, for instance, Amelia’s two “aides de camp” for whom the German holiday proves to be not only a literal vacation but also a metaphorical military operation since, in touring the Continent, Dobbin and “the delighted George fought the campaigns of the Rhine and the Palatinate” (787). The figurative fighting here goes beyond merely sustaining the vestiges of the Napoleonic wars fifteen years later. In playing the part of the soldier alongside Colonel Dobbin, our youngest “aide de camp” stops being little “Georgy” (the nickname he is given throughout the majority of the novel, including while in Germany) and becomes “George” (the name of his deceased father, who fought alongside Dobbin and was killed in the Battle of Waterloo). With name and place at variance, the omniscient narration here makes it momentarily difficult to discern which George Osborne this Colonel Dobbin fights alongside in his “campaign”: the George of Waterloo or the Georgy of Pumpnickel. This reverberation of the Napoleonic wars at once swallows its youngest participant into a previous age, subsuming son into father, and also resurrects a past moment of battle, reinvigorating father within son. Moving in either direction, the German tour collapses Napoleonic wartime and the amorphous “any time since”: Georgy into George, or Germany-touring Earl and Lady Bareacres into appearances impossibly “younger than in the eventful year ’15.”

Once the characters reach Pumpnickel, where the omniscient narrator will first become acquainted with them and begin to formulate the histories he will tell, his recapitulations of the

²⁰ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 53.

past diverge from the metaphors of war to its aesthetic representations. Throughout the Pumpernickel chapters, this fictional town flaunts its almost obsessive attention to the arts, a defining feature that echoes in the town's real historical corollary: the German ducal capital of Weimar. Due in no small part to the influence of the Duchess Regent Anna Amalia (a composer herself) alongside the lure of Weimar's celebrities and longtime residents, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, this continental cultural hub grew into its reputation as the so-called Athens on the Ilm beginning in the late eighteenth century, and attracted innumerable art-hungry tourists, including Thackeray, well into the nineteenth century. Known as a "court of the muses," in nineteenth-century German painter Theobald von Oer's phrase, Weimar thus served as a tourist destination where well educated travelers or less experienced individuals like Amelia Sedley (who, as yet, "has not fallen in the way of means to educate her tastes or her intelligence") might enjoy the edification of the German court and theater (791).²¹ The narrator never mentions Weimar explicitly and avoids giving the famous appellations of Weimar's present and past rulers when he labels the late Anna Amalia as the widowed "Barbara" and christens her reigning grandson, Duke Karl Frederick, as "Victor Aurelius XVII." Yet the astute Victorian reader did not need to be familiar with Thackeray's travels in order to gather that Pumpernickel parallels the famous tourist destination, since this fictional duchy reproduces some of Weimar's most well-known landmarks, from the "Erbrinz' Hotel" and "Elephant' Hotel" to the "Hof—or Court—Theatre" (793, 830).²²

²¹ Theobald von Oer, *Der Weimarer Musenhof*, 1860.

²² As Amelia von Ende notes: "So Thackeray goes on to tell us that the party of Major Dobbin put up at the Erbprinz and that Becky stopped at the Elephant, and if anybody doubted what little duchy was meant,

Within this artistically charged space, the Napoleonic battlefield is transformed into warring singers and battling artworks—and, as I discuss in detail in this chapter’s next section, a Beethoven orchestral performance—that echo the battles fought fifteen years earlier by rehashing the unrelenting *mêlées* between the French and the British in an international space. These artistic standoffs surface in Pumpernickel’s daily political milieu, since inhabitants must pledge fidelity to either the French-supported singer or her English-supported counterpart: “these two women were the two flags of the French and the English party at Pumpernickel, and the society was divided in its allegiance to those two great nations” (805). In honor of a royal Pumpernickel wedding, the English and French factions also create a form of illuminated painting, called transparencies, that places lamps behind dyed gauze to generate a stained glass effect. The British transparency for this event is particularly combative: it not only represents France as the allegorical “Discord” in hasty retreat but also, according to the admittedly biased narrator, “beat the French picture hollow” (808). With a defeated France depicted in a piece of artwork that “beat” its French foe, Pumpernickel’s artistic projects envelop one British victory within another.

The omniscient narrator predicts earlier in the novel that though Waterloo and the Napoleonic wars appear to draw to a close, “you and I . . . are never tired of hearing and recounting the history of that famous action. . . . Centuries hence, we Frenchmen and Englishmen might be boasting and killing each other still” (405). These unending artistic battles in Pumpernickel incline toward boasting and away from killing, but nonetheless they encapsulate the “still”-ness of the Napoleonic wars. In the German town, the wars are present and

the names of these two hostelries, famous in Weimar’s palmy days, set these doubts at rest” (“Literary Weimar,” *The Bookman: A Magazine of Literature and Life* 38 [February 1914]: 631).

unchangingly “still” even as they are ever-returning and enduring, “still” surfacing decades later in their aesthetic reverberations. The future’s relation to history is thus conditionally framed in the eternal present tense of the aesthetic and the literary: as imagined actors who “might be boasting and killing each other still.” In the context of this aesthetic perpetuity, Pumpernickel functions as an omniscient lens on history: though the ducal town is, according to the narrator, “in a time of profound peace,” Pumpernickel nonetheless provides a platform for reprocessing wartime Brussels within post-Napoleonic Germany, allowing its inhabitants to actively know and re-know history in a recurrent present (804).²³ As a consequence, war is at once everywhere and nowhere, all the time and long gone in the duchy.

In part, one might conclude that Pumpernickel’s repeated aestheticizations diminish the vast scale of the Napoleonic wars by reducing the battles to comparatively minor squabbles in what the omniscient narrator refers to repeatedly as the “little” ducal town (793, 797, 800). As an aesthetic project itself, even this fictional duchy’s name appears ripe for satire. Though the town is based, undoubtedly, on Weimar, Pumpernickel’s evidently imaginative name absents it from the ranks of the otherwise real cities that permeate this novel: London and Brighton, Brussels and

²³ In arguing for Pumpernickel’s facility in revivifying the Napoleonic wars fifteen years after the Battle of Waterloo, my argument diverges from Dehn Gilmore’s attention to Thackeray’s historical novel practices in relation to midcentury museums. According to Gilmore, who attends primarily to Thackeray’s *Henry Esmond* and *The Newcomes* (1855) alongside the National Gallery and British Museum, Thackeray considers ways to restore the past and, at once, suggests “that the possibility of history’s revivification is a fallacy”; thus, “[t]hrough a turn to the museum, Thackeray find a new and usefully ambivalent way to consider the questions of historical progress and recreation” (*The Victorian Novel and the Space of Art: Fictional Form on Display* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013], 76, 75).

Chatham, Waterloo and Paris. Pumpernickel is, of course, most commonly known as a hard, dense, sour bread, or, according to the more obscure French etymology, a bread that is *bon pour Nicol* or good only for Nicol (a familiar term for a horse). With these humorously pejorative implications, dubbing the town Pumpernickel clearly satirizes the fictional duchy.²⁴ Moreover, the narrator's parody of Pumpernickel's opulence cannot be denied; we might note the Swiftian "spittoons," for instance, "at the doors of all the innumerable chambers" in the pleasure-filled "Monplaisir" or the ironic lament at this palace's size, since it is "not more than ten times big enough to accommodate the Court of the reigning sovereign" (803, 800). Yet in *Vanity Fair*, to focus solely on the satire is always to miss more than half the story, and, like much of the novel, the narrator's attitude toward Pumpernickel and its inhabitants is replete not only with satire, but also with sincere praise.²⁵ To this end, *Vanity Fair*'s Pumpernickel follows Thackeray's *The*

²⁴ The scant scholarship that attends to the role of the theater in the Pumpernickel chapters of *Vanity Fair* has focused on how Thackeray's artistic tableau of Germany satirizes English taste by comparing the novel's tourists to nineteenth-century German aesthetic ideals. According to John K. Mathison, who attends to *Vanity Fair*'s productions of *Don Giovanni*, *Fidelio*, and *Battle of Vitoria*, Thackeray "communicat[es] to the reader the absence of both art and intellect in Amelia's England" in contrast with the aesthetic ideals embodied by the more sophisticated Pumpernickel ("The German Sections of *Vanity Fair*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 18, no. 3 [December 1963]: 242). In responding to Mathison, George J. Worth argues that Thackeray satirizes English and German society equally in *Vanity Fair*:

"Pumpernickel is richly endowed with pettinesses and shallownesses of its own—not so very different, when one comes right down to it, from some of the laughable aspects of English life" ("More on the German Sections of *Vanity Fair*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no. 4 (March 1965): 403).

²⁵ The narrator's evident admiration of Pumpernickel in *Vanity Fair* certainly echoes Thackeray's private letters in which he speaks highly of "the friendly little Saxon capital" of Weimar: "I think I have never

Fitz-Boodle Papers (1842–43), where Thackeray first creates the town that originally he calls “Kalbsbraten-Pumpnickel,” by deriving the town’s name from a more pleasant etymological source: “the fertilizing stream” of “the Pump river” that “sparkles” through Pumpnickel, a fictionalization of the Ilm River that borders Weimar (*Vanity Fair* 800).²⁶ The fictionalization of Pumpnickel therefore generates a productive artistic locale that holds two vantage points at once, where satirical humor and sincere aestheticizations produce both a degree of distance from the imaginatively authored duchy and a fruitfully credible reconstruction of a Napoleonic history that the narrator previously found impenetrable. Within a novel that traces the struggles of narrating an unnarratable military past, Pumpnickel’s fictionality provides the crucial opportunity for the omniscient narrator, newly embedded within this storyworld, to experience

seen a society more simple, charitable, courteous, gentlemanlike than that of the dear little Saxon city.”

The “Grand Duke and Duchess received us with the kindest hospitality”; the “Court was splendid”; and, in particular, the “theatre admirably conducted” with “noble intelligence and order” (Thackeray to George Henry Lewes, April 28, 1855, in *Letters and Private Papers of Thackeray*, 3:442–45).

²⁶ See William Makepeace Thackeray, “The Fitz-Boodle Papers,” in *The Great Hoggarty Diamond, Fitz-Boodle Papers, Men’s Wives, Etc.*, ed. George Saintsbury (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), 286–87. In the fourth book of *The Fitz-Boodle Papers*, entitled “Dorothea,” Thackeray first creates the town he calls “Kalbsbraten-Pumpnickel” (known in this text primarily by solely “Kalbsbraten” rather than “Pumpnickel”) as a fictionalization of Weimar. Kalbsbraten-Pumpnickel also derives its name from “the celebrated pump,” which, in *The Fitz-Boodle Papers*, references both a river and an actual pump in the marketplace. Like *Vanity Fair*’s Pumpnickel, *The Fitz-Boodle Papers*’ Kalbsbraten-Pumpnickel stands as the target of some satire that is more humorous than harsh, and the town is also shot through with Napoleonic history, since “[o]nly three of the contingent of soldiers returned from the battle of Waterloo.”

history in an embodied present. It is in this duchy—where the past emerges through aesthetic forms in a fictional town centered on the arts—that history becomes narratable.

II. *Battle of Vitoria at the Hoftheater*

We encounter the upsurge of Napoleonic history most fully in the artistic center of this “court of the muses”: the “Hof—or Court—Theatre” in Pumpernickel. While theatrical figurations run throughout the entirety of *Vanity Fair*, nowhere does the stage—in its literal and figurative forms—become more prominent than in the German tour that culminates in this little ducal town. While on tour in “that beautiful Rhineland,” the time not spent on excursions to satisfy Amelia’s sketchbook is occupied by the theater (788). Dobbin, Amelia, Jos, and Georgy, attend the opera in the evenings, hear Cimarosa and Mozart, and Amelia is especially entranced by the latter’s *Don Giovanni* (1787), which the narrator terms *Don Juan*. Once in Pumpernickel, the characters attend the *Hoftheater* to watch Madame Schroeder Devrient (a real 1830s actress who, according to the narrator, was “then in the bloom of her beauty and genius”) perform in Ludwig van Beethoven’s acclaimed opera *Fidelio* (1805) and, Dobbin, Amelia, Jos, Georgy, and their narrator also celebrate a performance of Beethoven’s *Battle of Vitoria* (1813) (793).²⁷ With society and politics in the German duchy revolving around the court and its *Hoftheater*, Pumpernickel particularly echoes Weimar’s status not only as a European cultural center, but specifically as a city built upon the musical and theatrical arts, a reputation solidified by Goethe’s and Schiller’s influence on Weimar’s national theater. As Annie Janeiro Randall

²⁷ Thackeray, too, recalls seeing “the beautiful Schröder in *Fidelio*” during his 1830–31 sojourn in Weimar (Thackeray to George Henry Lewes, April 28, 1855, in *Letters and Private Papers of Thackeray*, 3:443).

argues, the “carefully cultivated image of Weimar as an intellectually elite court of creative, enlightened polymaths owes much to its reputation for music making.”²⁸ Or as Thackeray’s narrator puts it, the “theatre of Pumpernickel is known and famous in that quarter of Germany” (803).

In *Vanity Fair*, the Pumpernickel *Hoftheater* participates, alongside the duchy’s warring singers and battling transparencies, in the town’s larger creative venture of aestheticizing history—and, in particular, a violent military history.²⁹ Inside this theater the incarnated narrator and his fellow characters encounter the fictionalization of the Napoleonic wars most intimately with the performance and reception of Beethoven’s *Battle of Vitoria*. The *Battle of Vitoria*—known by its full German title *Wellington’s Sieg oder die Schlacht bei Vittoria*, in English as *Wellington’s Victory or Battle of Vitoria*, or simply as “Battle Symphony”—celebrates, as its

²⁸ Annie Janeiro Randall, “Music in Weimar Circa 1780: Decentering Text, Decentering Goethe,” in *Unwrapping Weimar: Essays in Cultural Studies and Local Knowledge*, ed. Burkhard Henke, Susanne Kord, and Simon Richter (New York: Camden House, 2000), 98.

²⁹ The *Hoftheater* is a particularly ripe space for representing military conflicts artistically since Pumpernickel’s theater hosts the army’s “magnificent band that also did duty on the stage” (804). As Karin Schutjer has argued, in nineteenth-century Weimar “the structural and causal links between the theater and the military were clear enough. Goethe was both theater intendant and court minister; his duke, Carl August, was both an involved theater patron and commander of his own troops as well as, with interruptions, an officer in the Prussian army. From the beginning of Goethe’s Weimar tenure in 1791, the Weimar theater evolved in the shadow of military concerns” (“War and Dramaturgy: Goethe’s Command of the Weimar Theater,” in *Unwrapping Goethe’s Weimar: Essays in Cultural Studies and Local Knowledge*, ed. Burkhard Henke, Susanne Kord, and Simon Richter [New York: Camden House, 2000], 147).

various titles suggest, the Duke of Wellington's victory over French armies at Vitoria, Spain, on June 21, 1813, almost exactly two years before the Battle of Waterloo.³⁰ *Wellington's Sieg* or *Battle of Vitoria* functions, as Nicholas Mathew has argued, as "Beethoven's musical monument" to Wellington in particular.³¹ Yet when *Vanity Fair's* incarnated omniscient narrator explains the movements of the orchestration, it becomes clear that he sees *Battle of Vitoria* as not only representing the Wellington-led advancement of the English and defeat of the French but as also recreating an account of the Napoleonic battlefield at large.³² The piece commences with an

³⁰ See Barry Cooper et al., *The Beethoven Compendium: A Guide to Beethoven's Life and Music*, ed. Barry Cooper (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 220. Concerning the title, Coldicott notes: "The title 'symphony,' which derives from the original English edition (1816) of the piano arrangement, is totally misplaced, but no doubt contributed to the work's popularity."

³¹ Nicholas Mathew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38.

³² According to Mathew, "[i]t is primarily the title of *Wellington's Sieg* that prescribes that one hears the music as a depiction of a specific hero rather than the 'universal aspects of heroism'" (*Political Beethoven*, 39). By contrast, the narrator of *Vanity Fair* uses the title, "*Die Schlacht bei Vittoria*" (or the Battle of Vitoria), a symbolic reminder that his rendition of Beethoven's composition primarily emphasizes not Wellington but the battle—and its victorious finale—as a whole (794). Prior to composing *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray also repeatedly refers to the piece not with the title *Wellington's Sieg* but with variations on *Battle of Vitoria*. For instance, when Thackeray sees a performance of this piece in Weimar, he writes to his mother and calls it "Beethovens Battle of Victoria [*sic*]" (Thackeray to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, November 17, 1830, *Letters and Private Papers of Thackeray*, 1:133). And when he includes a recollection of this performance in a pseudonymously authored Titmarsh article, he again refers to the piece as "Beethoven's 'Battle of Vittoria' [*sic*]" ("A Second Lecture on the Fine Arts," *Fraser's Magazine* 19 [June 1839]: 744).

introduction of the warring nations, with England represented by a rendition of *Rule Britannia* and France emblemized by the folk song “Marlborough Has Left for the War,” or what today we would recognize as the tune to “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” This latter melody, as *Vanity Fair*’s narrator explains, is “indicative of the brisk advance of the French Army” (794).³³ The composition then proceeds to use a “battery of military and Turkish percussion instruments, including cannons and muskets” to render, in the narrator’s phrase, the “drums, trumpets, thunder of artillery, and groans of the dying” during the battle (794).³⁴ And in its victorious finale, *Battle of Vitoria* concludes with what *Vanity Fair*’s narrator terms a “triumphal swell” of the national anthem “God Save the King” (794).

This swell is met with an equally triumphant response from the British in the Pumpnickel *Hoftheater*’s captive audience:

There may have been a score of Englishmen in the house, but at the burst of that beloved and well-known music, every one of them, we young fellows in the stalls, Sir John and Lady Bullminster (who had taken a house at Pumpnickel for the education of their nine children), the fat gentleman with the moustachios, the long major in white duck trousers, and the lady with the little boy upon whom he was so sweet: even Kirsch, the courier in the gallery, stood bolt upright in their places and proclaimed themselves to be members of the dear old British nation. (794)

³³ Thackeray’s narrator and traditional English translations of the French folk song often render “Marlborough” as “Malbrook.”

³⁴ For details on the artillery percussion instruments, see Cooper, et. al., *The Beethoven Compendium*, 221.

As this standing ovation suggests, *Battle of Vitoria* was a huge success in the early nineteenth century. After its introduction on December 8, 1813 (less than six months after the battle it celebrates), the piece was performed repeatedly by popular demand, with nine additional performances between Vienna and Munich by the end of 1814. Upon its first performance at the Drury Theater in London in February 1815, *Wellington's Victory* was, in Beethoven's words, "received with extraordinary applause."³⁵ With what composer and musicologist Barry Cooper calls the "enormous success" of this piece, "Beethoven's popularity soared to unprecedented heights, especially amongst those who had found his music too learned and difficult but could readily grasp the direct appeal of *Wellingtons Sieg*."³⁶ Perhaps because it was designed, as Cooper notes, "to be entertaining rather than serious and sophisticated," the few literary critics who mention the production of Beethoven's *Battle of Vitoria* in Pumpernickel read it negatively, presuming that the piece is "preposterous" (in John Mathison's phrase) or "queasy-making tourist whimsy" (in Kurnick's).³⁷ Today the piece has become, as Anne-Louise Coldicott observes, "one of Beethoven's most notorious compositions."³⁸ And yet *Battle of Vitoria* was

³⁵ Ludwig van Beethoven, Letter 1142 "To King George IV of England, London," in *The Letters of Beethoven*, ed. Emily Anderson, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1961), 3:1005.

³⁶ Barry Cooper, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 245.

³⁷ Cooper, *Beethoven*, 244; Mathison, "German Sections of *Vanity Fair*," 242; Kurnick, *Empty Houses*, 35. It is also interesting to note that Beethoven's *Battle of Vitoria* is often misidentified (as in Kurnick's reading) as "commemorating Waterloo" rather than the Battle of Vitoria.

³⁸ Cooper et al., *The Beethoven Compendium*, 220.

both well-liked and oft-performed in early nineteenth-century Europe, and some musical scholars still deem it worthy of attention in the twenty-first century.³⁹

Thackeray, for his part, relishes the affective power of what he calls Beethoven's "glorious" orchestration. While in Weimar, Thackeray attended a benefit performance of *Battle of Vitoria* in November 1830, an experience that he first recalls in a letter to his mother: "I never saw half a dozen men so excited as the English were, when Rule Britannia was played — I was amused with this celebrated piece of music."⁴⁰ Nine years later, Thackeray, writing pseudonymously as Titmarsh, includes another recollection of this performance in his "Second Lecture on the Fine Arts" (1839) published in *Fraser's Magazine*. Amid a frank review of the paintings on exhibit in London's galleries, this latter piece uses a performance of *Battle of Vitoria* to offer a theory of affective experience:

But herein surely lies the power of the great artist. He makes you see and think of a good deal more than the objects before you; he knows how to soothe or intoxicate, to fire or to depress, by a few notes, or forms, or colours, of which we cannot trace the effects to the source, but only acknowledge the power. I recollect some years ago, at the theatre at Weimar, hearing Beethoven's "Battle of Vittoria," [*sic*] in which, amidst a storm of glorious music, the air of "God save the King" was introduced. The very instant it began, every Englishman in the house was bolt upright, and so stood reverently until the air was

³⁹ See Leon Botstein, "The Search for Meaning in Beethoven: Popularity, Intimacy, and Politics in Historical Perspective," in *Beethoven and His World*, ed. Scott Burnham and Michael P. Steinberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 340–41; Cooper, *Beethoven*, 244.

⁴⁰ Thackeray to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, November 17, 1830, *Letters and Private Papers of Thackeray*, 1:133.

played out. Why so? From some such thrill of excitement as makes us glow and rejoice over Mr. Turner and his “Fighting Téméraire,” which I am sure, when the art of translating colours into music or poetry shall be discovered, will be found to be a magnificent natural ode or piece of music.⁴¹

By pairing *Battle of Vitoria* and “Fighting Téméraire” (the famed painting that depicts a ship from the victorious Battle of Trafalgar and which figures prominently in John Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (1843–60)), Titmarsh reminds us that the Napoleonic wars were an occasion for an extraordinary amount of affectively charged aesthetic work. Taking a cue from Titmarsh’s theory that the audience’s “thrill of excitement” occurs across aesthetic mediums from “forms, or colours” to “music or poetry,” *Vanity Fair*’s representation of *Battle of Vitoria* translates violent national history from music to prose, staging two acts of fictionalization: through his orchestration, Beethoven transforms the Napoleonic battlefield into a performed art object, a historical event characterized under the sign of the aesthetic; with his written rendition of this musical opus, the narrator performs this aestheticized historical narrative again through yet another fictional medium, the novel.⁴² According to Titmarsh, this “art of translating” from one medium to another does not dilute the “magnificent natural” aesthetic project. Nonetheless, in refashioning his media *Vanity Fair*’s narrator carries out a fictionalization of a fictionalization of a historical event, which might seem to remove the reader increasingly away from the original historical experience. In fact, it is this very act of removal through repeated aestheticizations that

⁴¹ Thackeray, “A Second Lecture on the Fine Arts,” 744.

⁴² In translating the Napoleonic battlefield from music to prose, *Vanity Fair*’s narrator builds on his previously declared adeptness in both forms, since this storyteller, with the trappings of a musician, refers to his novel as “the tune I am piping” (60).

resuscitates the past as accessible through these same fictional mediums. Without the “art of translating,” the historical events remain impenetrable, a battlefield that cannot be narrated. Yet with his transmuted engagement with the Napoleonic wars through his narration of Beethoven’s *Battle of Vitoria*, *Vanity Fair*’s narrator communes not only with the past military event, but also with its narrative—not only with the Battle of Vitoria but also, as Gleig’s title might phrase it, with the story of the Battle of Vitoria.

Insofar as in *Vanity Fair* turning the violence of history into fiction makes it narratable, one significant upshot generated by both Beethoven’s and the narrator’s fictionalizations of history is their construction of a seemingly comprehensive but nonetheless comprehensible tale with illusory narrative closure. Beethoven’s *Battle of Vitoria* has an evident plot or, in conductor and musical historian Leon Botstein’s phrase, “a clearly narrative intent.”⁴³ Its teleology is unambiguous and digestible, simplifying the chaos of a war fought among multiple nations and under various leaders for over a decade into a conclusive conflict between two countries, England and France, with a single clear victor. *Vanity Fair*’s narrator emphasizes this unfussy teleology, turning the musical composition into a written narrative that reiterates the historical plot points at the center of this novel (the rise and fall of the French empire) as if they were finite causes and effects: “Malbrook is introduced at the beginning of the performance, as indicative of the brisk advance of the French Army. Then come drums, trumpets, thunder of artillery, and groans of the dying, and at last in a grand triumphal swell, ‘God save the King’ is performed” (794). The flat affect of the narrator here—made even flatter by his insistent use of the passive voice—scores the Napoleonic war narrative with an unnerving degree of tripartite minimalism: the French arrive, “then” fighting ensues, “and at last” victory reigns. Not despite but because of

⁴³ Botstein, “The Search for Meaning in Beethoven,” 340.

the narrator's earlier avoidance of the complex war narrative that catalyzes this entire novel, in Pumpernickel's *Hoftheater* the narrator's account draws attention to its own unassuming effortlessness. In *Vanity Fair*, history's aestheticization means that the past may remain outside of representation, irreducible to cause and effect, while in the present encounters with history combine, like realism itself, the effect of a phenomenological and narratable re-experiencing with the distancing knowledge that the effect is produced, controlled—imaginatively authored.

Even more than transforming history into an episode that is narratable, then, *Vanity Fair*'s rendition of *Battle of Vitoria* animates history as, finally, experienceable. For Thackeray's mid-Victorian readership engaging with the narrator's early 1830s experience in Pumpernickel of a reconstituted battle fought in 1813, the persistently present historical event consistently reasserts itself. Both Beethoven's orchestration and the novel's narration hoist the past into the present, generating an emotionally charged experience of contemporaneity with history. When *Vanity Fair*'s narrator stands to salute the rendition of "God save the King," he trades in his flat affect from retelling the *Battle of Vitoria* narrative for a kinetic enthusiasm matched by the triumphant crowd, since he rises alongside "a score of Englishmen in the house," including "the fat gentleman with the moustachios" (Jos), "the long major in white duck trousers" (Dobbin), and "the lady with the little boy upon whom he was so sweet" (Amelia and Georgy) who all "proclaimed themselves to be members of the dear old British nation" (794).⁴⁴ For Thackeray's narrator and his fellow characters, this copresence of the past and the diegetic present is at once temporal (as if the characters are celebrating with the "old" and victorious British nation of

⁴⁴ Corporeally copresent as citizens, this plurality of theatergoers embodies what Benedict Anderson terms the "deep, horizontal comradeship" that underpins the nation (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. [London: Verso, 2006], 7).

1813) and geopolitical (as the national allegiance exhibited during this anthem reaches across an international expanse). Even identifying *Battle of Vitoria*'s finale anthem as "God Save the King" offers the possibility that the narrator and his characters salute both during the diegetic present of William IV's 1830s reign and the historical past of George III's reign when the Battles of Vitoria and later Waterloo were won. Instead of simply folding an ahistorical Pumpernickel into a vacuous mid-nineteenth-century present over which Victoria (and thus "God Save the Queen") had been reigning for over a decade, this overlay of wartime Europe and post-Napoleonic Pumpernickel plays out the unending "still"-ness of the past when resuscitated in the aesthetic and literary perpetual present.

III. Domestic History at the *Hoftheater*

This belated experience of a copresent history suddenly makes sense of what has long been obscure to *Vanity Fair*'s readers: how and why the omniscient narrator reveals his incarnation within Pumpernickel and its *Hoftheater*. Part of what is at stake in the narrator's metalepsis is the authority he holds over and within the storyworld by inhabiting two simultaneous vantage points, since he is situated, on the one hand, as a heterodiegetic omniscient narrator, and, on the other hand, as an immersed character who is not just rhetorically but also ontologically a discrete member of "we young fellows in the stalls" at the *Hoftheater* (794).⁴⁵ In

⁴⁵ The narrator's sovereignty is complicated by the fact that he and his characters at once affirm the existence of a sovereign over their home nation with their rendition, in unison, of "God Save the King," and also sing this song within a duchy state that is not a nation and has no king or queen to speak of. By similar strokes, the residue of Napoleon and his wars persists within this principality, but as *Battle of Vitoria* celebrates (albeit preemptively), the Napoleonic empire has been overthrown. Even in

participating in the same lineage as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) and Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) where the narrative veers toward the characters' domestic lives over and against the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, *Vanity Fair*'s omniscient narrator positions himself as an authority within his diegesis by claiming as his purview not the violent national history of the Napoleonic wars but the domestic histories of his characters. As he reminds his readers before the start of Waterloo: "We do not claim to rank among the military novelists. Our place is with the non-combatants" (361). Scholarship on *Vanity Fair* repeatedly follows the narrator's lead in generating a binary opposition between military and domestic histories—between the combatants and the "non-combatants"—with the narrator shirking the former in preference to the latter and thus rendering military history only through its echoes in the characters' private lives.⁴⁶ And yet,

Pumpernickel, where courtly life reigns supreme, the presence of a sovereign, in nearly every way, remains invisible: Thackeray's narrator dubs the reigning duke "his transparency," a humorously literal translation of the Germanic "his Highness" and a figurative indication that the duke's single authority may as well be nonexistent in this town (788). The contrast between the narrator's materiality as a character and the duke's flimsy insubstantiality is all the more apparent since Thackeray's narrator reveals his incarnation at the theater in Pumpernickel only three paragraphs after introducing the diaphanous duke as a fellow theatergoer. In this space—where the seat potentially held by a sovereign is left either vacant by an absent English monarch, empty by a defeated and deceased Napoleon, or clear by "his transparency"—the narrator declares sovereignty not only over but also within the history of his storyworld.

⁴⁶ Fleishman argues in the following vein: "We feel history in *Vanity Fair* not when the point-of-view shifts to the troops (as it does only after the event), but when it breaks in upon the man-in-the-street" (*English Historical Novel*, 148). Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth also argues for the novel's overarching focus on domestic over military history: "The Napoleonic wars in *Vanity Fair* are a distant echo in the

with the omniscient narrator's metalepsis in *Pumpnickel*, this gap between narrating military and domestic histories breaks down: the narrator's attempts to penetrate the characters' private, domestic histories suffer the same problems of false presentism as the initially impenetrable military history of the Napoleonic wars.⁴⁷ Once in *Pumpnickel*, that is, the narrator finds the ongoing personal histories of the *Hoftheater's* "non-combatants" to be, like Waterloo, impenetrable during their enactment. As a result, he only encounters his characters' personal pasts when he presents the retrospectively reconstituted history of his own omniscient vantage point.

From the moment of his metalepsis, the omniscient narrator not only reorients his relationship with political historical experience, but also forces attention on how he grapples with narrating the personal past experiences of his newly proximate fellow characters. This struggle is clear from the outset, since the narrator enters the storyworld only to distance himself, repeatedly, from its inhabitants. Though he is incarnated in the theatrical space where his first-person stance enables his engagement with military history, this same materialized posture also distinguishes *Vanity Fair's* narrator from his fellow characters, since he at once situates himself on the figurative stage that is *Pumpnickel* and yet remains isolated both from the "table d'hôte"

background of domestic wars between the sexes, between old and young, between rich and poor" (*The English Novel in History, 1840–1895* [London: Routledge, 1997], 19).

⁴⁷ In arguing for a breakdown in the distinction between military and personal histories in *Vanity Fair*, my argument dovetails with Elaine Scarry's argument about "subjective history" and "objective history" in *Henry Esmond*, as she argues that "Esmond's narrative ... offers subjective truth as an alternative to objective truth, subjective history as an alternative to objective history" even as Thackeray ultimately "disables the narrative to demonstrate that personal truths are as elusive and illusory as the objective truths Esmond rejects" (*Resisting Representation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 103).

where Dobbin, Amelia, Jos, and little Georgy dine and from the honored “loge” reserved for these “best guests” of the *Hoftheater* (793). By observing, from the stalls, the Dobbin-Osborne-Sedley party while they attend to the opera, the narrator removes himself increasingly away from the central performance—now a witness to the witnesses of theater. Even when the narrator participates in *Battle of Vitoria*’s finale standing ovation, he at once joins with and distinguishes himself from the other theatergoers’ national camaraderie, since he refers to the “score of Englishmen in the house” as not only “we young fellows in the stalls” but also “every one of them” (794). This remoteness from his compatriots rewrites an important metaleptic moment in Goethe’s famous *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795–1796) when, during a puppet show, the young eponymous protagonist reaches his hand inside his small theater to rescue a fallen puppet.⁴⁸ Scholarship often revels in the opportunity to call Thackeray’s narrators out as puppet masters who poke their hands in to rearrange the dolls and control the set, and *Vanity Fair*, where the preface expressly dubs the characters “puppets,” appears to be no exception (2). Yet very late in this novel, the narrator’s metalepsis does quite the opposite of Wilhelm Meister’s: the presence of Thackeray’s narrator negates his potential position as a controlling authorial narrator or even as an accidental actor upon the stage. Instead, his appearance sets him down firmly as a distanced onlooker: a witness to characters and events that he initially neither impacts nor understands.

This degree of distance between the narrator and his characters becomes even more protracted when we consider how the narrator’s late entrance into the diegesis precludes his ability to witness the majority of the narrative he tells. He arrives on the scene and meets his

⁴⁸ Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, trans. Thomas Carlyle, 2 vols. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1930), 1:23.

characters for the first time so late that nearly all of the events in the personal histories he will record have already taken place. In entering so belatedly into the story, the narrator must piece the previous events together by gathering information from characters as wide-ranging as Dobbin (who informs him that Amelia's wedding dress was "a brown silk pelisse") (263), Dr. Pestler (who reports on how Amelia's "sensibilities were so weak" as she mourned George's death) (489), the eavesdropping servant Tom Eaves (who informs the narrator of Lord and Lady Steyne's personal affairs), and the diplomat Tapeworm (who dines with the narrator in Pumpnickel and relates "everything connected with Becky and her previous life") (849). The narrator's posture as an *histor* or investigator serves as an intermittent reminder that prior to this point he cannot experience his characters' personal histories synchronically, leaving their pasts as-yet unknown.

Take, for instance, the narrator's vantage point from the *Hoftheater* stalls, which repeatedly supplies only what he can see or hear—these details are charged—of his fellow characters' facial expressions, what they ate, what they said. In watching his characters—for example Amelia, who is first the "lady in black" and eventually "Mrs. Osborne, for so we had heard the stout gentleman in the moustachios call her" (793–94)—the narrator defamiliarizes his readers from characters we have been encountering for sixty-two chapters or, for Thackeray's original serial readers, for a lengthy eighteen months. This proves particularly true for Amelia, whose defamiliarizing descriptors include the "lady in black," "the boy's mamma," "the English lady," "this particular lady," "the lady with the little boy," and "that nice-looking woman" (793–94, 797). The omniscient narrator is physically present at the *Hoftheater*—something he refuses to be at Waterloo—yet his detachment generates a paradox of perspectives; in pulling away, in these moments, from the intimacy he has already demonstrated with "little Georgy" and "Dobbin

of ours,” he incarnates himself only to see his fellow characters from the distance of a third person.⁴⁹ In the very moment when the narrator finally and belatedly experiences the Napoleonic wars at the Pumpnickel *Hoftheater*, then, the narrator also fails to fully process his characters’ domestic histories.

Vanity Fair adds a final level of belated, distanced witnessing to this series of narrative postures within the *Hoftheater*: if there is one individual watching the incarnated narrator, then it is the omniscient narrator who looks back on his intradiegetic experience, seeing himself from the outside, as other. We have encountered a similar moment of temporal distinction in Thomas Cole’s *The Oxbow* (1836), where the artist crafts a panoramically expansive point of view over his landscape even as he represents an earlier version of himself painting this landscape within his painting. In *The Oxbow*, the artist without and the artist within the painting generate an echo chamber across time: as the represented artist looks toward the painter’s projected (or the viewer’s actual) point of view, their gazes intersect moving both forward and backward in time, as if the represented artist is watching the future painter watching himself. In *Vanity Fair* the effect of the artist witnessing his own figure is less like an echo chamber and more akin to a set of nested theaters, with stage enveloped within stage: when the incarnated narrator watches “the lady in black” and her entourage while they view an opera, and as the omniscient narrator retrospectively watches his incarnated self at the theater as he scrutinizes his characters, Thackeray’s narrator becomes a guest at multiple performances enveloped within one another. How fitting, then, that the evening when the heterodiegetic narrator shifts into homodiegetic

⁴⁹ For a compelling analysis of how mirrors in *Vanity Fair* permit “an observer to be both within and beyond what he sees,” see Heather Brink-Roby, “Psyche: Mirror and Mind in *Vanity Fair*,” *ELH* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 142.

narration among the stalls of the Pumpernickel theater is the night of “*Gast-rolle*”—or the guest role (793). Both a guest at the theater in Pumpernickel and a guest within the diegetic theater of *Vanity Fair*, the omniscient narrator, incarnated as a character, remains a spectator and an outsider, only belatedly and retrospectively intimate with the storyworld he inhabits and, ultimately, recreates.

We see this retroactive reprocessing when the narrator interleaves an omniscient vantage point within his posture as a character in the *Hoftheater*, and thus occasionally performs a level of knowledge that his originary first-person perspective cannot yet articulate. Amid reminders that Amelia is still “that nice-looking woman”—a character without a name, let alone a long transnational story—whom the incarnated narrator still does not know, he also, on one occasion, dubs Amelia with the intimate appellation “Emmy” (795). Though situated in the diegesis during the first days of his acquaintance with his fellow characters, the narrator’s first-person posture speaks of “Emmy” as only his retrospective omniscience could. This momentary shift between present character narration and backward-looking omniscient narration—between the “lady in black” and “Emmy”—produces the necessary distance between the narrator’s complete instantiation within his story and his initial experience of this history. While the omniscient narrator only grasps a historical experience of the Napoleonic wars through his retrospective engagement with a fictionalization of that historical narrative, the embodied narrator only participates fully in his characters’ personal histories through his retrospective construction of a projected omniscient point of view. The logic of Waterloo’s transition from an unnarratable world historical event to one belatedly and aesthetically reprocessed in Pumpernickel thus alerts us to how the narrator’s account of his characters’ domestic histories, which he observes remotely or not at all, will also require the distance and belatedness of fiction. For Waterloo, the

narrator gains productive intimacy with the narratable past through the fictional duchy and its theater; for the character's domestic histories, this intimacy only occurs with the narration of the novel itself.

This intimacy, that is, has everything to do with the distance garnered by history's aestheticization. In Thackeray's lecture series *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth-Century* (1851), he suggests that engaging with "the fictitious book" allows for the ceaseless contemporaneity of aesthetically experiencing the past not only in but also as the present moment.⁵⁰ Through reading, he submits, "the old times live again" and the reader can "travel in the old country of England" but with actions decidedly in the eternal present tense of literature: "the beaux are gathering...; the gentry are going...; the ladies are thronging."⁵¹ With fiction, then, history becomes not just, in Lukács' phrase, a "concrete precondition of the present"; instead, history becomes an aesthetic condition of the present.⁵² Yet even as fiction revivifies history, the narrator's experiences also recognize that this contemporaneity can only occur after the fact—with a retrospective and imaginatively authored glance. According to this logic, neither the violent national history nor the domestic histories can ever be experienced synchronically; to the contrary, by privileging an engagement with the past that is necessarily out of sync with the historical event, the belated fictional form yields the firmest grasp on a phenomenology of history. Insofar as Pumpernickel's aesthetic resuscitations of the Napoleonic wars mark the unnarratability of these violent national events during their enactment and show that they can

⁵⁰ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Thackeray's English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J. W. Cunliffe and H. A. Watt (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1911), 94.

⁵¹ Thackeray, *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*, 94.

⁵² Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 21.

only be realized belatedly under the sign of fiction, the narrator also elevates the domestic lives of the characters to the force of history-making, exposing the characters' personal pasts to be similarly impenetrable in the moments of their unfolding but, as the reader knows, ultimately recovered in their aesthetic resuscitation by the novel. For *Vanity Fair*'s narrator, then, the experience of history can only ever be behindhand—not just a phenomenology of history but also, at best, a necessarily tardy one. At the juncture of imaginative mediums in Pumpernickel's fictional locale, the narrator finds himself at once aesthetically and temporally distanced from, yet still immersed in, history made present.

The paradox of this distant intimacy returns us to the question with which I began: What is the relationship between omniscient narration and historical experience? In looking back at and reconstituting his incarnation in Pumpernickel, *Vanity Fair*'s narrator begins to answer this inquiry by seeing himself historically, both through his participation in the town's reprocessing of the Napoleonic wars and through the development of his projected omniscient point of view of the characters' domestic lives. His narrative provides, that is, a double history of his omniscient stance, of his ability to exercise, in his own phrase, "understanding with the omniscience of the novelist" (185). In single volume editions of *Vanity Fair* from 1848 onward, this account of his narrative perspective begins with the novel's famous preface, "Before the Curtain," which establishes the figurations of novel-as-theater that infiltrate the narrative and force fresh attention on Thackeray's theorization of narrative perspective. In this opening section, the narrator presents the acknowledgements of the "Manager of the Performance" who will soon make play with the "Amelia Doll," the "Becky Puppet," and the "Dobbin Figure" (2). This prefatory piece, although familiar in the literary canon, has nonetheless been notoriously difficult to dissect. In large part, this difficulty stems from the ambiguities of the preface's

narrative points of view, since the narrator sometimes refers to himself as “I” and sometimes speaks of the “Manager of the Performance” or the “Author” in the third person (1–2). Unwilling to be pinned down either as a character within the fair or as a “Manager” who sits just outside it, his perspective volleys between roughly homodiegetic and heterodiegetic levels. The preface’s opening paragraphs map these narrative levels onto the spatial geography of the stage and stalls. In the first paragraph, the “Manager of the Performance” acts as omniscient and synoptic *histor*. Sitting “before the curtain,” he “looks into the Fair” from his perch “on the boards” and presents a “survey” of what he sees within, producing a bird’s-eye synthesis of the goings-on within the fair:

There is a great quantity of eating and drinking, making love and jilting, laughing and the contrary, smoking, cheating, fighting, dancing, and fiddling: there are bullies pushing about, bucks ogling the women, knaves picking pockets, policemen on the look-out, quacks (*other* quacks, plague take them!) bawling in front of their booths, and yokels looking up at the tinsel dancers and poor old rouged tumblers, while the light-fingered folk are operating upon their pockets behind. (1)

By the second paragraph, however, this narrative level has shifted: the surveying “Manager” is now a “man with a reflective turn of mind” who meanders through the fair where “[a]n episode of humor or kindness touches and amuses him here and there;—a pretty child looking at a gingerbread stall; a pretty girl blushing whilst her lover talks to her and chooses her fairing” (1).

Given our findings thus far, we can see that what at first glance might appear to be two distinct narrative perspectives actually operate here with synonymy. Within these prefatory paragraphs, the manager’s synoptic point of view cannot be severed from the reflective man’s; on the contrary, the managerial “Author” adopts a standpoint that is always already incarnate,

never truly outside the fair that he narrates or separate from the engagement of a character. Though lacking the implied distance of the manager's posture when he "looks into the Fair" rather than inhabiting it, the reflective man's position as a character still provides a "general impression" of the fair from within its insular world (1). What the manager summarizes as a jumble of various indiscriminate groupings ("bullies," "bucks," "women"), the reflective man renders as one singular "episode" after another, ("a pretty child," "a pretty girl," "her lover"). Yet each man's summation resonates in the echo chamber created by these alloyed postures: both the manager's "survey" and the reflective man's "general impression" result in "melancholy" (1). Down among the people, the reflective man does the work of an omniscient narrator; settled above as he "looks into the Fair," the panoramic posture of the manager still engages with the submersion of a character.

The shared perspective of manager and reflective man in "Before the Curtain" cues us to the far more complex narrative metalepsis that occurs at Pumpnickel's *Hoftheater*, where the narrator's appearance folds his historical experience into his omniscient posture, averring that this narrative perspective can never be uncharacterized.⁵³ Thus, in addition to cueing us to the interleaving of omniscience and character in Pumpnickel, "Before the Curtain" operates as a belated theorization of what happens in this duchy, an interjection that helps us to understand the necessary retrospection of this incarnated omniscience. In opening the novel from the 1848 single volume edition onward, this preface's present and future verb tenses suggest that the

⁵³ Though not in reference to a relationship between "Before the Curtain" and Pumpnickel or the narrator's metalepsis, Juliet McMaster describes the prologue as "a kind of epitome of the whole novel: a concentrated statement of the content as well as the technique." (*Thackeray: The Major Novels* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971], 13).

synoptic manager or the strolling reflective man might experience the narrative synchronically. For *Vanity Fair*'s original serial readers, however, "Before the Curtain" came after the fact, since Thackeray first composed the preface in June 1848, just one month prior to serialization of the last monthly number in *Punch*. The preface's imaginative narrative posture of appearing late while also performing presentism realizes the temporal structure of *Vanity Fair*'s incarnated omniscient narrator—a narrator who is always behindhand and yet, through his metalepsis, paradoxically contemporaneous with his narrative. And this temporal structure allows the narrator to recount a history that he can only access belatedly, when Pumpernickel resuscitates the past in the diegetic present. The narrator functions, that is, not only as a "belated historian" (the memorable self-designation of *Middlemarch*'s omniscient narrator), but also as the "present writer" (the appellation that *Vanity Fair*'s narrator gives himself no fewer than seven times).⁵⁴ Far from dodging history's violent cataclysms or dissolving into a vacuous mid-nineteenth-century present, the narrator's simultaneously omniscient and incarnated posture—whether as a backward-looking narrator outside the diegesis or a character immersed in the storyworld, whether as surveying manager or reflective man—enables him to craft a tour-de-force that animates the radical contemporaneity with history produced by encountering fiction.

⁵⁴ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 133.

CHAPTER THREE: Trollope's Observing Narrator: Photography and the Intimate Interiorities of Omniscience

One of the defining features of omniscient narration is its attempt to render transparent a character's innermost thoughts and feelings.¹ In this chapter, I attend to selected novels of Anthony Trollope and the photographic analogies—of dark chambers, illuminated spaces, and hidden interiorities—that lay bare the ways in which a narrator might attempt to represent a character's inner life. In his novel series, *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* (1855–67), the omniscient narrator both comments on the potential difficulties of revealing characters' mental states and yet never offers a definitive solution to this potential quandary. Instead, he presents a series of analogies for rendering his characters' internal states of mind that draw upon Victorian photographic technologies and meet with varying degrees of success: first, taking a picture of his characters' inner lives; and secondly, in the tradition of the camera obscura, inhabiting his characters' homes and, correspondingly, their minds. The extensive debates about photography that took hold of Victorians during the latter half of the nineteenth century thus offered a technological analogy with which Trollope could represent the possibilities for a narrator to be able to see—or, equally important, to fail to see—aspects of character in fiction.

¹ Dorrit Cohn argues that it is the very narrative representation of “transparent minds” that distinguishes between “the real world” and “fiction,” as “the real world becomes fiction only by revealing the hidden side of the human beings who inhabit it” (*Transparent Minds*, 5). Cohn extends this argument when she claims that the representation of consciousness is a defining hallmark of fiction as distinct from nonfictional narratives, such as biographies. See *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 21–29.

Over the past twenty years, scholarship on the Victorian novel has focused on photography as central to discussions of realistic representation and, in particular, the realistic representation of bodies. As a technology whose common use was to capture a subject's physicality, Victorian photography negotiated the relationship between an individual's corporeality and the image of this corporeal form. According to Nancy Armstrong, who takes nineteenth-century realism to be "dependent on images," the proliferation of photographed faces by the middle of the nineteenth century resulted in a taxonomy of "generic images" ("a family portrait," for instance, or "a mug shot") that did not need "to receive validation from the bodies themselves" in order to acquire "rhetorical force."² Daniel Novak, more recently, has argued that the task of representing a subject's physical form realistically often involved, according to the practices of Victorian photographers, a set of manipulations.³ Given photography's ability for representing physicality, it may appear to be an odd medium for Trollope's novels to invoke, especially since representations of a subject's interiority often appear to elide a form of realism centered primarily on the image, whether "generic" or manipulated. I argue that Trollope capitalizes on the perspectival questions that photography raised: not only how the photograph might render, as the narrator of *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* puts it, an individual's "full character" but also what perspective—what relationship with the represented world—the artist

² Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 70, 19.

³ Daniel A. Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See, in particular, the introduction and chapter 1.

should uphold in order to make this representation possible.⁴ Ultimately, Trollope's photographic analogies expose both the technology's possibilities and its shortcomings. As we shall see, in the second novel of the *Chronicles* series, *Barchester Towers* (1857), the narrator's ideal of a form of photography that captures an individual's "full character" can only ever be partially realized. In the first novel of the series, *The Warden* (1855), however, the correspondence that the narrator proposes between dwelling in his characters' private architectural spaces and dwelling in their private emotional and mental states yields a productive intimacy with his characters.

By turning to photographic analogies, Trollope's narrator thus self-consciously gauges the point of view necessary for representing others' internal psychological and affective worlds. For many narrators, an aptitude for representing another's consciousness goes unremarked: the omniscient narrator often lays bare a character's feelings or renders her thoughts through free indirect discourse without commentary or justification. This is, however, not the case for the infamously intrusive and self-referential omniscient narrators that populate Trollope's novels. In *The Chronicles of Barsetshire*, Trollope's narrator repeatedly "interrupts his characters to introduce himself to our notice," as one Victorian critic for the *National Review* complained.⁵ In *The Warden*, for instance, the narrator both depicts the thoughts of one of his single female characters, Eleanor Harding, and admits to his readers: "I have fears for my heroine."⁶ Or in

⁴ Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*, ed. Michael Sadleir and Frederick Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1:186. Hereafter, volume and page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

⁵ "'Mr. Trollope's Novels,' *National Review*, October 1858," in *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Donald Smalley (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1969), 83

⁶ Anthony Trollope, *The Warden*, ed. David Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 139. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

Barchester Towers the narrator once again attends to the same character, the now-widowed Eleanor Bold, when he reveals who will not become her second husband: “I would not for the value of this chapter have it be believed by a single reader that my Eleanor could bring herself to marry Mr. Slope, or that she should be sacrificed to a Bertie Stanhope” (1:144). Across the series, the narrator has a difficult time making himself scarce, a fact repeatedly lamented by Victorian reviewers who would have preferred it if Trollope had “refrained from frequently and somewhat offensively coming forward as author to remind us that we are reading a fiction.”⁷ Henry James, at the end of the nineteenth century, famously complained that Trollope “took a suicidal satisfaction in reminding the reader that the story he was telling was only, after all, a make-believe.”⁸ Or as one review for *The Warden* published in the *Leader* put it: “The ‘illusion of the scene’ is invariably perilled, or lost altogether, when the writer harangues in his own person on the behaviour of his characters, or gives us, with an intrusive ‘I,’ his own experiences of the houses in which he describes those characters as living. This is a fault in Art.”⁹

⁷ “‘Mr. Trollope’s Novels,’ *National Review*,” 83.

⁸ Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1899), 116. Elsie Michie points out that “James is much kinder to Trollope in the assessment included in *Partial Portraits*” than in “the vitriolic reviews of Trollope’s work that James published in the *Nation* in 1865 and 1866 just as he was beginning his own career as a writer of fiction” (“The Odd Couple: Anthony Trollope and Henry James,” *Henry James Review* 27, no. 1 [Winter 2006]: 13, 10).

⁹ “[Unsigned notice], *Leader*, 17 February 1855,” in *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, 37. See also Mary Poovey, “Trollope’s Barchester Series,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Anthony Trollope*, ed. Carolyn Dever and Lisa Niles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 33–35. In discussing Trollope’s narrators as part of a trend that moved from the “self-conscious aesthetic epitomized by *Tom Jones* and *The Prelude*” to, “as early as the end of the nineteenth-century, the notion that self-effacing artifice was

As this last commentary suggests, the narrator of *Chronicles* not only interrupts his narrative with rhetorical intrusions into the storyworld but also reveals his presence as a character within that narrative universe, situating himself alongside his fellow characters and inside “the houses in which he describes those characters as living.” Trollope’s narrator first remarks on his materialization within *The Warden* when he accounts for his experiences as a corporeal character at Plumstead Episcopi (home of Eleanor’s older sister Susan Grantly, her archdeacon husband Reverend Dr. Theophilus Grantly, and their five children) with a declaration of dissatisfaction: “I have never found the rectory a pleasant house” (104). The discontents of physical presence continue in *Barchester Towers*, where the narrator complains that he “never could endure to shake hands with Mr. Slope” because Slope’s hands always exuded “cold, clammy perspiration” (1:29). By emerging intermittently within some of the novels in the *Chronicles*, the narrator’s presence within the storyworld comes and goes much like his characters do.¹⁰ Across the series’ six novels, published over the course of a dozen years from

more ‘artistic’ (as well as more appealing) than the alternative,” Poovey points out that reviews of Trollope’s Barsetshire novels express an “opinion that the highest form of novelistic art effaces all signs of craft.”

¹⁰ In making this argument that Trollope’s narrator not only occupies the position of a character but also does so in a manner that echoes his intermittently present fellow characters, my discussion diverges from Roy Pascal’s analysis of Trollope and free indirect speech. Though Pascal notes that Trollope employs an “intrusive author-narrator” in his novels, including *Barchester Towers* where the narrator “openly acknowledges his sympathy with Eleanor ... and his distaste for Mr Slope,” Pascal ultimately concludes: “the narrator does not thereby become a fictional person with a defined perspective” (*The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and its Functioning in the Nineteenth-Century European Novel* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977], 89).

The Warden to *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867), the characters appear, disappear, and reappear: Eleanor is a major character in *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*, for example, but merely a minor character within an anecdote in the fifth book in the series, *The Small House at Allington* (1864). By surfacing within the diegesis either rhetorically or ontologically in each novel—as a minor character within *The Warden*, for instance, and a characterized yet extradiegetic persona in the fourth novel, *Framley Parsonage* (1861)—the narrator of *Chronicles* similarly remains an irregular but recurrent presence.¹¹

The narrator's sporadic incarnations prompt a crucial question: Given his occasional first-person perspective within the storyworld, how does the narrator of *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* explain his omniscient rendering of other characters' emotional and mental experiences? After all, the narrator's first-person posture confronts a potential predicament when it comes to narrating others' consciousness. At the time when Trollope was writing, this had been long well established. To give one of the best known examples, the eponymous first-person narrator of

¹¹ With the narrator reappearing throughout the *Barsetshire* series, he is perhaps equally responsible for generating what Poovey calls the novels' "unity as a series." In discussing the *Barsetshire* series' recurrent characters, Poovey points out: "The reviewer for the *Examiner* clearly identifies what he considered the most important feature of these novels, in terms of both their value and their unity as a series: the reappearance of noteworthy characters. By 1867, most reviewers agreed that when an author carried a character over from one novel to another, he or she was not simply borrowing from earlier work but 'realiz[ing these characters] more and more completely,' so that 'their shadowy forms,' to quote another review, seemed 'to take equal substance with that of our living neighbors.'" And yet, Poovey also positions this lifelike nature of Trollope's characters against the intrusiveness of the narrator, which "reviewers were tacitly agreeing to overlook" when "(retrospectively) viewing the novels set in Barset as parts of a single whole" (Poovey, "Trollope's Barsetshire Series," 32–33).

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) perceptively articulates the limitations of embodiment when rendering other characters' mental states when he laments: "our minds shine not through the body, but are wrapt up here in a dark covering of uncrystalized flesh and blood."¹² According to Tristram's logic, in a first-person text—where narrator and characters are marked by a shared materiality—flesh becomes a form of obstruction, concealing the interiority that hides underneath. By contrast, omniscient narrators exercise an ability to bypass the body's "dark covering," with a frequency that traditionally aligns techniques such as free indirect discourse with the potential disembodiment of third-person narration.¹³ Narrators who persist in a third-person mode—thus remaining invisible and immaterial—rely on a unique ability, provided by the fictional framework, to enter into and represent the private emotional and mental world of a character. In other words, so long as an extradiegetic personality and not intradiegetic personhood delineates the disembodied narrator, the task of representing—or even imitating—characters' private thoughts and affective states is not necessarily problematic.

The narrator of Trollope's *Chronicles*, however, turns this division on its head, since he both positions himself as a character narrator with a limited perceptual capacity and still justifies his ability to render, omnisciently, other characters' thoughts. In some ways, the progression of *Chronicles* recognizes that the stations of character and omniscient narrator might defy each

¹² Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. Howard Anderson (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1980), 53. We might even assume that Trollope's narrator is familiar with the novel *Tristram Shandy*, since he mentions in *Barchester Towers* that he has "heard it asserted that [Mr. Slope] is lineally descended from that eminent physician who assisted at the birth of Mr. T Shandy" (1:25).

¹³ In *Transparent Minds*, for instance, Dorrit Cohn analyzes what she terms "narrated monologue" as one of three modes for representing "consciousness in third-person context."

other since, in general, the narrator becomes increasingly more disembodied and strictly heterodiegetic by *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867); at once, as Mary Poovey notes, “free indirect discourse appears more frequently in *The Last Chronicle* than in the earlier novels.”¹⁴ And yet no matter how many times the narrator of *The Warden* or *Barchester Towers* remarks on his physical coexistence alongside the characters he meets, he also reminds us that he has the capacity to enter not only into his characters’ storyworld but also into their inner worlds as well. Repeatedly, he narrates the thoughts of his fellow Barchester inhabitants, either by describing their mental states (a technique Dorrit Cohn has termed “psycho-narration”) or by presenting characters’ thoughts through free indirect discourse (where the narrator maintains a third-person grammatical stance while reproducing “verbatim,” in Cohn’s phrase, “the character’s own mental language”).¹⁵ The narrator thus holds together, on the one hand, his position as a character with a distinct (and, at times, perceptually limiting) material presence that allows him to interact with the people and places that populate his story, and, on the other hand, his omniscient ability to probe his characters’ thoughts and represent them for his readers.¹⁶ With

¹⁴ Poovey, “Trollope’s Barsetshire Series,” 40.

¹⁵ Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 11, 14. Cohn does not use the term free indirect discourse but instead opts for the tag “narrated monologue.” I have chosen to maintain free indirect discourse as the more commonly used expression.

¹⁶ Trollope’s narrator is not the first to engage in a form of first-person omniscience. For an analysis of how in William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794) “the adoption of first-person narration licenses the rendering not only of Caleb’s mind but also of Caleb’s crossings into other minds,” particularly through free indirect discourse, see Jonathan H. Grossman, *The Art of Alibi: English Law Courts and the Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 58–61. Though not in relation to first-person omniscience, Andrew Miller suggests that the novel (both in the nineteenth century in general and for

each instance of psycho-narration or free indirect discourse, Trollope's narrator reveals that his bounded perspective as a first-person character-narrator does not preclude his narration of his fellow characters' consciousness. His shifts, that is, between first-person narrator and heterodiegetic narrator begin to corrode the distinction between a character's epistemological position and that of an omniscient narrator.

I. Unwelcome Intrusions

The idea that making others' minds transparent requires a negotiation of the narrator's presence is hardly singular to Trollope. According to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *On Art in Fiction* (1838), the "description of *feelings* is ... the property of the novelist" who "goes at once to the human heart, and calmly scrutinises, assorts, and dissects them."¹⁷ What Bulwer-Lytton theorizes as a seemingly detached and even scientific process of dissection, the incarnated omniscient narrator of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–48) characterizes as both "out of the domain ... in which our story lies" and, at times, a voyeuristic license: "the present writer claimed the privilege of peeping into Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom, and understanding with the omniscience of the novelist all the gentle pains and passions which were tossing upon that

Trollope in particular) "came to accommodate first- and third-person perspectives" both "through the development of free indirect discourse" and through "the display of casuistry, whereby the individual lot and those maxims generated from a third-person perspective are openly negotiated" (*The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008], 99).

¹⁷ Edward Bulwer-Lytton, "On Art in Fiction," in *Victorian Criticism of the Novel*, ed. Edwin M. Eigner and George J. Worth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 31 (emphasis in original).

innocent pillow.”¹⁸ In each text, the writer justifies his voyeuristic acts because they remain the “property of the novelist” (according to Bulwer-Lytton) or a “privilege” of the “the omniscience of the novelist” (according to *Vanity Fair*’s narrator). And yet, both sets of remarks intimate that probing a character’s interiority can also occasionally border on interloping: the authorial and narratorial pen threatens to become the perpetrator of either the physical violations of dissection or the intrusions of privacy of a “peeping Tom.”¹⁹ In *On Art in Fiction* and *Vanity Fair*, then,

¹⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*, ed. John Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 321, 185. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

¹⁹ This metaphor of “dissection” takes on particular scientific and often violent resonance by the early nineteenth century, by which time dissection and cultural representations of dissected bodies had become significantly more common in Britain. See Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989). As Ludmilla Jordanova argues, a preoccupation with what she calls “depth”—with probing deeper into and through the “organic layering” of the body—had infiltrated the life sciences and cultural discourses surrounding dissection beginning in the eighteenth century (55–57). Far from romanticizing this practice, Jordanova also points out: “In the popular imagination the dissection of any body was perceived as a massive violation” (60). The act of “peeping” had also taken on an especially charged valence by the late eighteenth-century, when references to a “peeping Tom” were added to renditions of the famous Lady Godiva tale. In the story, the “peeping Tom” sees Lady Godiva as she rides naked through the streets of Coventry, and, depending on the version, is struck either blind or dead due to his voyeuristic act. In particular, Alfred, Lord Tennyson invokes the self-destructive violence of this act of peeping in his 1842 poem “Godiva” where “one low churl ... / Peeped – but his eyes, before they had their will, / Were shriveled into darkness in his head” (Tennyson, “Godiva,” in *The Poems of Tennyson*,

accurately representing a character's emotional and cognitive state requires a potentially invasive form of first-person presence in a private space, whether the metaphoric presence of Bulwer-Lytton in a character's "heart" or the more ontological presence of *Vanity Fair*'s narrator on the threshold of Amelia's "bedroom."

Recent theorists and detractors of omniscience, including Nicholas Royle, William Nelles, and Jonathan Culler, have taken up the analogy of clairvoyance or telepathy as a means of explaining how an omniscient narrator might inhabit and discern the thoughts of his characters. For each of these critics, clairvoyance offers, in Royle's estimation, a "more accurate" and "more precise" narrative approach than omniscience because it resists the latter's implied theistic associations.²⁰ According to Royle, clairvoyance is "[c]oncerned with seeing or

2nd ed., ed. Christopher Ricks, 3 vols. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], 2:175–76, lines 66, 69–70).

²⁰ Royle, *The Uncanny*, 259. According to Royle, "[t]o propose 'clairvoyance' as a more accurate term than 'omniscience' is not to advocate that narrative theory hurry up and become a branch of parapsychology. Rather it is to attempt to move away from uncritical, religious and other dogmatic assumptions about the nature of narrative fiction, while acknowledging and critically elaborating on what is uncanny, even 'magical' about such fiction" (259). In denouncing omniscience as a tool for literary inquiry, Culler largely agrees with Royle's preference for the concept of telepathy. In particular, Culler suggests that "telepathy seems especially apposite—much more so than omniscience—for cases where an extradiegetic homodiegetic narrator displays special knowledge" (*The Literary in Theory*, 196). William Nelles identifies "telepathy" as one of four techniques undertaken by Jane Austen's narrators and, further, suggests that "Austen keeps her use of authorial telepathy under the radar by naturalizing and motivating mind reading as a human rather than divine pursuit" (Nelles, "Omniscience for Atheists: Or, Jane Austen's Infallible Narrator," *Narrative* 14 no. 2 [May 2006]: 124).

feeling what is in the distance,” including perceiving the future and other characters’ thoughts; as a result, Royle argues that these narratorial capacities should “be linked to a logic, not of omniscience, but of telepathy.”²¹ This appeal to the supernatural offers one possibility for thinking about the representation of other characters’ minds in first-person narratives because it breaks down or ignores the barriers raised, in Tristram Shandy’s phrase, by the body’s “uncrystalized flesh and blood.” In this sense, the possibility of using clairvoyance to explain omniscience’s mind-revealing capacity gains particular traction when we consider a mid-Victorian fiction such as George Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil* (1859). In this novella, Latimer, the first-person narrator, claims what he calls a “cursed” capacity for telepathy that enables him to know and render the thoughts of his fellow characters within the storyworld, since—in terms that echo Bulwer-Lytton’s language—he relays how he “saw into the heart” of those around him.²²

Certainly, the narrator of *Chronicles of Barsetshire* evidences a wandering mind that echoes Latimer’s clairvoyance, since he meanders into other characters’ thoughts with little restraint. However, Trollope’s narrator never implies that his knowledge stems from telepathic capabilities, nor does he indicate that his instances of narrating other characters’ consciousness are matters of physical invasion or speculation. And while he frequently—and, according to

²¹ Royle, *The Uncanny*, 259.

²² George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3, 20. Hereafter, page references to *The Lifted Veil* will be cited parenthetically within the text. For Royle’s discussion of *The Lifted Veil* as offering an example of a clairvoyant and telepathic narrator, see Royle, *The Uncanny*, 259–60. In a particularly useful reading of Latimer’s telepathy, Jill Galvan brings Latimer’s position as a narrator to the fore, emphasizing his role as a “mediating figure” in the tale he tells. See Jill Galvan, “The Narrator as Medium in George Eliot’s ‘The Lifted Veil,’” *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 240–41.

many of his contemporary reviewers, “somewhat offensively”—remarks on his mastery over how he presents his story’s plot, he also never suggests that he is entirely manufacturing his characters’ thoughts. Instead, as I explore in the next sections, the narrator theorizes his intradiegetic but expansive point of view by demonstrating how his narration functions akin to a long history of photographic technologies, from the camera obscura evoked in John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) to the nineteenth-century technologies developed by Louis Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot. With these analogies, Trollope’s narrator takes a potential predicament of first-person omniscience and aligns it with a technology that, by the mid-1850s, had quickly become part of the Victorian experience of the world. As a result, for Trollope’s narrator, rendering characters’ minds requires neither the dissection of Bulwer-Lytton nor the illicit “peeping” of Thackeray’s narrator, nor even the clairvoyant mind-reading capacities of Latimer. To the contrary, by aligning his representation of others’ minds—and, in particular, his use of free indirect discourse—with his first-person observations, Trollope’s narrator insists that his embodied presence functions as an avenue rather than a hindrance to representing the inner workings of fellow characters.

II. Photographing the Mind

In *Barchester Towers*, the narrator seeks out—and, in doing so, also laments the absence of—a technological ideal that he calls a “mental method of daguerreotype or photography” (1:185). When introducing Francis Arabin, the vicar who will eventually marry Eleanor Bold, the narrator strives to provide what he terms “an interior view of Mr. Arabin at the time when he accepted the living of St. Ewold,” a portrait of the “inner man” at a particular moment in his life (1:191). In considering photography as a potential means of representing interiority, the narrator

envisions both the possibilities and the overwhelming shortcomings of a medium that aims to render physical forms realistically—a medium, that is, which is often figured as antithetical to representations of an inner life that might remain hidden from the camera lens. “The fixed surface of the photograph,” as Scott Hess puts it, was “often identified at the time with science rather than art and with physical reality as opposed to human consciousness.”²³ Donald Smalley makes a similar comparison when he suggests that Trollope’s contemporaries at once praised his characters for seeming as real “as if they were living people” and yet denigrated these characters as unimaginatively photographic “copies from life” that lacked depth: “To many of the reviewers, Trollope’s achievement seemed only a sort of photography. It produced faithful likenesses of living people, but gave little idea of what went on inside them.”²⁴ Yet in evoking a “mental method of daguerreotype or photography,” the narrator of *Barchester Towers* imagines a technological mechanism for exposing not only the fullness of a character’s inner life but also the inner workings of the narrator’s point of view.

Trollope’s writing career commenced and flourished alongside the burgeoning medium of photography. During the same decades in which Trollope composed forty-seven novels, photography was quickly becoming a dominant visual form in Victorian England. In 1839, the French physicist and painter Louis Daguerre publicized his production of the first daguerreotype, which presented an image on a silver-plated piece of copper by treating the copper plate with light-sensitive iodine and then exposing it to light within a camera. Shortly after, in 1841, William Henry Fox Talbot, an English chemist, patented the calotype photographic process that

²³ Scott Hess, “William Wordsworth and Photographic Subjectivity,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 63, no. 3 (December 2008): 283.

²⁴ Donald Smalley, introduction to *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, 11.

he had begun experimenting with a few years earlier and which produced an image on paper that had been coated with light-sensitive silver iodide before being exposed in a camera.²⁵ During the 1840s, when Trollope began his fiction writing career alongside his work at the post office, both photographic processes were spreading in popularity across England, with the distinctions between the two mediums becoming increasingly significant. Talbot's paper photographs would ultimately surpass the daguerreotype in popularity, due in large part to the fact that calotype photographs on paper could be endlessly reproduced while the daguerreotype image remained a unique and rather fragile original, unable to be copied. Just before 1845 when Trollope finished writing his first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847), the calotype process received, in photographer Lady Elizabeth Eastlake's phrase, "the fresh stimulus that was needed" to catalyze its rise to photographic prominence.²⁶ In 1844, George Cundell, an early British calotypist, published an essay entitled "Philosophical Transactions" that provided, in his phrase, "plain directions, from my own experience, by which calotype pictures may be produced, without much difficulty and with tolerable certainty and success."²⁷ "What followed," as photography historian

²⁵ On the coterminous development of Daguerre's techniques and Talbot's, see [Lady Elizabeth Eastlake], "Photography," *London Quarterly Review*, 101 (April 1857): 450–51. As Eastlake explains: "All we know is that the French success on metal and the English success on paper were, strange to say, perfectly coincident in date. Daguerre's discovery was made known in Paris in January, 1839; and in the same month Mr. Fox Talbot sent a paper to the Royal Society, giving an account of a method by which he obtained pictures on paper, rendered them unalterable by light, and by a second and simple process, which admitted of repetition to any extent, restored the lights and shadows to their right conditions."

²⁶ [Eastlake], "Photography," 452.

²⁷ Quoted in Roger Taylor, *Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840–1860* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art: 2007), 27.

Roger Taylor points out, “was the first practical set of instructions for making a calotype to be published in Britain”; alongside the new chemical and mechanical improvements to photographic technologies that flourished in the later 1840s, Cundell’s essay constituted “a turning point for the practice of the calotype.”²⁸

By the 1850s, when Trollope began writing *The Chronicles of Barsetshire*, photographs—over and above daguerreotypes—had become the dominant medium, yet both forms had contributed to a widespread desire for photography that stretched from Buckingham Palace to the private family home. Queen Victoria became an avid collector of the new medium, as she and her husband, Prince Albert, began compiling a collection that would grow to 20,000 daguerreotypes and photographs by her death in 1901. Throughout her reign, Victoria also positioned herself as photographic subject, with multiple portraits of the queen—both official and more personal, of Victoria on her own and with her husband and children—circulated during her lifetime. At once, as Eastlake declares in her essay, “Photography,” which was published the same year as *Barchester Towers*: “photography has become a household word and a household want.”²⁹ In Trollope’s novels, it becomes clear that the collecting and exchanging of personal portraits was not confined to the monarchy. To the contrary, in *Phineas Finn* (1867–68), one of the novels in Trollope’s Palliser series, the narrator complains at length about how the “bringing

²⁸ Taylor, *Impressed by Light*, 27–28. On the importance of Cundell’s essay, Eastlake notes: “The world was full of the praise of the daguerreotype, but Mr. Cundell stood forth as the advocate of the calotype or paper process, pointed out its greater simplicity and inexpensiveness of apparatus, its infinite superiority in the power of multiplying its productions, and then proceeded to give those careful directions for the practice, which, though containing no absolutely new element, yet suggested many a minute correction where every minutia is important.” [Eastlake], “Photography,” 452.

²⁹ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 443.

out and giving of photographs, with the demand for counter photographs, is the most absurd practice of the day.”³⁰

Given the narrator’s explicit denigration here, it is perhaps unsurprising that Trollope himself disliked multiple aspects of the photographic medium, from the time it required to sit for pictures (he likens the experience to a hanging) to the way they portrayed his appearance.³¹

“No;—the photograph is not good; but it is the best I have or ever had,” Trollope maintains in one letter: “Some people wont come out well. Mine are always wretched.”³² Part of Trollope’s objection to photography’s representation of his visage is that the picture, if anything, is too true, too deeply penetrating. After sitting for a photograph by Herbert Watkins, for instance, Trollope complained: “It looks uncommon feirce [*sic*], as that of a dog about to bite; but that I fear is the nature of the animal portrayed.”³³ In exposing a brutish and unrestrained—even violent—“nature,” photography here both resists idealization and lays bare the sitter’s essence. And yet while Trollope perceived his picture to be unflattering but accurate, other viewers determined that photographs of Trollope served not to unmask the man’s true “nature” but to conceal it. As Trollope’s biographer N. John Hall observes: “Photographs captured Trollope’s bluff, aggressive

³⁰ Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Finn: The Irish Member*, ed. Jacques Berthoud (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 173.

³¹ Trollope expresses his hatred in a brief letter to an unknown recipient: “I *hate* sitting for a photograph. I will, however, look in some day when I am near you. I wont fix a day as I should have it before me, for execution,—as though I were then to be hanged.” See Trollope, Letter, March 1, 1876, in *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*, ed. N. John Hall, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 2:682 (emphasis in original).

³² Trollope to Jane Dulaney, December 19, 1875, in Hall, *Letters of Anthony Trollope*, 2:675.

³³ Trollope to Herbert Watkins, April 13, 1860, in *Letters of Anthony Trollope*, 1:101.

mask, but nothing of his other side, something Charles Kent remarked in writing of a later photograph that the ‘bearded leonine face of the man, with its bold front-look, is but a mask before a nature intensely sympathetic.’”³⁴ As these responses to Trollope’s picture make clear, photography holds the potential both to expose and cover up.

This duality sits at the heart of photography’s long and complex relationship with realism. In turning not to the otherworldliness of clairvoyance but to photography as a presently flawed but theoretically promising form for rendering interiority, the narrator of *Barchester Towers* focuses on the possible psychological and emotional insights offered by a modern, real-world technology. What is more, he also celebrates the potential of a technology that, from its inception, was often desired for its facility in generating mimetic representations. According to Eastlake, whose essay on photography deliberates on the relationship between this medium and—or as—art, photography’s capacity for mimesis sits at the center of the debate: “Our chief object at present is to investigate the connexion of photography with art—to decide how far the sun may be considered an artist, and to what branch of imitation his powers are best adapted.”³⁵ Eastlake’s decision is that to fret over how photography might compete with art is ultimately useless; due to photography’s unique capacity for “imitation,” the two forms comprise different functions. For Eastlake, “that mystery called Art” encompasses “the power of selection and rejection, the living application of that language which lies dead in his paint-box,” and “whatever

³⁴ N. John Hall, *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 269.

³⁵ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 445.

appertains to the free-will of the intelligent being.”³⁶ Photography, by contrast, calls upon only “the obedience of the machine.”³⁷

In part, Eastlake’s contrast here between photography’s mechanistic, submissive nature and the comparatively vibrant, “living” form of art appears to position photography as the defective medium. This hierarchy is only reinforced when Eastlake claims:

For everything for which Art, so-called, has hitherto been the means but not the end, photography is the allotted agent—for all that requires mere manual correctness, and mere manual slavery, without any employment of the artistic feeling, she is the proper and therefore the perfect medium.³⁸

Here, by repeatedly aligning photography with the “machine” that produces its images rather than the photographer framing or staging such pictures, Eastlake almost entirely evacuates human agency (or “any employment of artistic feeling”) from the photographic medium. Instead, with the mechanistic impulse of photography constricted to the realm of “obedience” and “slavery,” photography’s “proper” function is to produce—or reproduce—“mere manual correctness.” Alongside references to photographers throughout her essay, Eastlake also repeatedly absents the photographer from the photographic process altogether when she figures the “sun” or the “solar pencil” as the forces behind photographic images, which rely on capturing

³⁶ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 466.

³⁷ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 466.

³⁸ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 465.

light.³⁹ The sun's power to enable "imitation" thus provides the clearest distinction between art and photography: for Eastlake the former comprehends the "living" and interpretive "free-will of the intelligent being," while the latter strives, at most, for "mere manual correctness."

Yet Eastlake suggests at once that it is this imitative "obedience of the machine" that furnishes photography with its legitimacy. Even as Eastlake's comparisons appear to place photography's mimetic form at a distinct disadvantage in relation to art, she also contends that this very capacity for "copying nature in all her stationary forms" raises photography up as a useful medium for producing factual visual images: "Here, therefore, the much-lauded and much-abused agent called Photography takes her legitimate stand. Her business is to give evidence of facts, as minutely and as impartially as, to our shame, only an unreasoning machine can give."⁴⁰ Eastlake's potential denigration of the slavish "obedience of the machine" transforms here into her glorification of the "unreasoning machine" that can embody a fruitfully detached perspective. The evacuation of the photographer from this formulation, in other words, yields an "unreasoning" point of view that is, "to our shame," something the individual artist with the subjectivity and "free-will of the intelligent being" can never achieve. In this sense, for Eastlake photography performs a degree of objectivity only possible from a de-personalized third-person point of view.

In this more celebratory account of photography's mechanistic nature, the camera's capacity for creating a mimetic image—for supplying the "evidence of facts"—relies on its

³⁹ [Eastlake], "Photography," 445. For a discussion of the "gradual erosion of the photographer's creative significance" and the "metaphor of the nature-authored photograph," see Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 59–64.

⁴⁰ [Eastlake], "Photography," 449, 466.

facility for representing such facts not only “impartially” but also “minutely.” This minuteness, according to Eastlake, is key to photography’s aptitude for imitation. As much as photography is “capable of copying nature in all her stationary forms,” the copy that the photograph produces is rarely entirely accurate because, as Eastlake explains, the play of lights and shadows often leads to “certain distortions and deficiencies for which there is no remedy.”⁴¹ Yet due to its capacity for “minutely” copied “facts,” photography’s strength lies in the imitation of details:

There is no doubt that the forte of the camera lies in the imitation of one surface only, and that of a rough and broken kind. Minute light and shade, cognizant to the eye, but unattainable by hand, is its greatest and easiest triumph – the mere texture of stone, whether rough in the quarry or hewn on the wall, its especial delight. Thus a face of rugged rock, and the front of a carved and fretted building, are alike treated with a perfection which no human skill can approach; and if asked to say what photography has hitherto best succeeded in rendering, we should point to everything near and rough –

⁴¹ [Eastlake], “Photography,” 449, 460. As Eastlake explains further: “It is obvious, therefore, that however successful photography may be in the closest imitation of light and shadow, it fails, and must fail, in the rendering of true chiaroscuro, or the true imitation of light and dark. And even if the world we inhabit, instead of being spread out with every variety of palette, were constituted but of two colours—black and white and all their intermediate grades—if every figure were seen in monochrome like those that visited the perturbed vision of the Berlin Nicolai—photography could still not copy them correctly. Nature, we must remember, is not made up only of actual lights and shadows; besides these more elementary masses, she possesses innumerable reflected lights and half-tones, which play around every object, rounding the hardest edges, and illuminating the blackest breadths, and making sunshine in a shady place, which it is the delight of the practised painter to render. But of all these photography gives comparatively no account” (458–59).

from the texture of the sea-worn shell, of the rusted armour, and the fustian jacket, to those glorious architectural pictures of French, English, and Italian subjects, which, whether in quality, tone, detail, or drawing, leave nothing to be desired.⁴²

Rather than suggest that photography holds widespread facility in generating mimetic images, Eastlake stresses that this medium is best suited to copying material imperfections: textures of a “rough or broken kind.” And despite the camera’s potential for an “impartially” detached perspective, Eastlake also asserts that it is in the proximate representation of “one surface only” (“the mere texture of stone,” for example) rather than the depiction of a distanced panorama (a landscape, for instance) that photography most clearly excels.⁴³ As a consequence, for Eastlake photography cannot render the vast multi-surfaced panorama as precisely as a painting can. Instead of embodying the all-seeing eye of a panoramic landscape such as Thomas Cole’s *The Oxbow* (1836), which—as I discussed in the introduction—brings together the telescopic and the microscopic, photography for Eastlake effectively renders the microscopic alone. With its ability to capture the details of a single “near” and imperfect surface, photography here surpasses human skill but not human perception, since the “minute light and shade” effortlessly captured by the camera is “cognizant to the eye, but unattainable by hand.” The most successful mimetic photography, according to Eastlake, thus requires the proximity of the human eye as well as the objective detachment of the impersonal camera, but an objectivity that never slips into distanced panorama.

⁴² [Eastlake], “Photography,” 464.

⁴³ For Eastlake’s discussion of the failures of photography in representing landscapes, see “Photography,” 462–64. In particular, Eastlake notes about photographing landscapes: “The photograph seems embarrassed with the treatment of several gradations of distance” (464).

Despite Eastlake's insistence that photography's capacity for imitation is ultimately imperfect, the narrator of *Barchester Towers* still yearns for a "mental method of daguerreotype or photography" precisely because he desires a means "by which the characters of men can be reduced to writing and put into grammatical language with an unerring precision of truthful description" (1:185–86). Though the distinctions between daguerreotypes and photographs were quite significant, Trollope's narrator does not pay them any mind; rather, he brings the two forms together by articulating his desire for the imitative realism—"the unerring precision of truthful description"—that both the daguerreotype and the photograph potentially offer. Much like Eastlake, who repeatedly admits that photography can and does err in its representations of reality, the narrator of *Barchester Towers* also laments photography's shortcomings. Yet even Eastlake occasionally suggests that photography has the capacity for creating infallibly accurate accounts when she insists that the "facts" provided by photography constitute "unerring records," both without fault and without fluctuation in their unwavering truthfulness: "What are her [photography's] unerring records in the service of mechanics, engineering, geology, and natural history, but facts of the most sterling and stubborn kind?"⁴⁴ By envisioning an ideal form of photography that achieves "unerring precision," Trollope's narrator thus at least temporarily eschews Eastlake's attention to the possible misleading imperfections of photography and, instead, echoes her admission that photography has the capacity to be not only "unerring" but also obstinately so.

Over twenty years after the publication of *Barchester Towers*, Trollope's legal novel, *John Caldigate* (1878–79), fully realizes—and, more to the point, celebrates—photography's

⁴⁴ [Eastlake], "Photography," 465.

potential for accurate mimesis.⁴⁵ In this novel, the eponymous protagonist is on trial for bigamy and the key piece of evidence against him is an envelope that he once addressed to “Mrs. Caldigate” and gave, along with an enclosed letter, to his mistress, Euphemia Smith, while they lived together in Australia. Since his time in Australia, John Caldigate has returned to England and married Hester Bolton, “the dream of his life.”⁴⁶ Unfortunately for the innocent Caldigate, his fate appears to hang on this nonetheless incriminating envelope. Sir John Joram, Caldigate’s lawyer, claims that though his client addressed Euphemia as “Mrs. Caldigate” on the envelope, this moniker was used in “a moment of soft and foolish confidence, when they two together were talking of a future marriage” that never occurred (401). Euphemia, by contrast, avers that the envelope, postmarked May 1873, is a sign that they had been legally married in Australia by that date, and thus that she is his first and only lawful wife. This piece of evidence is so compelling that the innocent Caldigate is found guilty and sent to prison. Fortunately for this protagonist, the envelope—or, rather, a photograph of the envelope—also ultimately furnishes his lawyers with indisputable evidence of his true innocence, since they are able to use this photograph to prove that the postmark is, in fact, a forgery. Though Euphemia and her lawyers emphasize Caldigate’s

⁴⁵ Despite the disparity in their publication dates, *John Caldigate* was compared to *Barchester Towers*: “The same strength and the same weakness distinguish ‘John Caldigate’ and ‘Barchester Towers.’ The same characters with which we have so long been familiar reappear in the later story, though under different names. We meet once more with almost the identical scenes, illustrations, and turns of expression, which made Mr. Trollope’s first efforts so racy and so successful. . . . ‘John Caldigate’ is an interesting story, but its art is neither specially elaborate nor very well sustained” (“[Unsigned Notice], *Athenaeum*, 14 June 1879,” in *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*, 450).

⁴⁶ Anthony Trollope, *John Caldigate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 125. Hereafter, page references will be cited parenthetically within the text.

guilt because he wrote “Mrs. Caldigate” on an envelope with an 1873 postmark, Samuel Bagwax (the indefatigable if “absurdly energetic” post-office clerk enlisted by Sir John Joram) points to the more convincing evidence of the 1874 stamp upon which a fraudulently postdated postmark for 1873 was impressed (481). Thanks to the photograph of the envelope—and the assumption that it constitutes an accurate representation of reality—Bagwax is able to discover this falsified evidence, nullify Euphemia’s supposed proof of marriage, and contribute to Caldigate’s eventual exoneration and release.

As Bagwax pores over the photographs of the initially incriminating but ultimately vindicating envelope, one thing becomes particularly clear: everyone presumes that the photographs replicate “exactly” the envelope in question:

The envelope itself was still preserved among the sacred archives of the trial. That had not been bodily confided to Samuel Bagwax. But various photographs had been made of the document, which no doubt reproduced exactly every letter, every mark, and every line which was to be seen upon it by the closest inspection. There was the direction, which was admitted to be in Caldigate’s handwriting, the postage-stamp, with its obliterating lines,—and the impression of the Sydney postmark. That was nearly all. The paper of the envelope had no water-marks. Bagwax thought that if he could get hold of the envelope itself something might be done even with that; but here Sir John could not go along with him, as it had been fully acknowledged that the envelope had passed from the possession of Caldigate into the hands of the woman bearing the written address. (450)

In part, the narrator’s description here distinguishes between original and copy, or between “the envelope itself” and the “various photographs” of the envelope. Bagwax, who scours the photographs “morning, noon, and night,” seeks to “get hold of the envelope itself” in case it

might offer further verification of Caldigate's innocence (450). Yet the distinction between original and copy becomes so negligible that even Sir John Joram sees no reason to procure the primary piece of evidence from the trial archives. Instead, the photographs function as true facsimiles of “the envelope itself” because they are presumed to be unflinchingly accurate in their imitation. Though the narrator reminds us that Bagwax has never physically seen nor touched the original (since it “had not been bodily confided to” him), he also suggests that the photographs, themselves, are more than enough. With “every letter, every mark, and every line” available for “the closest inspection,” the various photographs provide a productive surfeit of minutia: the multiple photos serve to anatomize each detail of the envelope, parsing it into increasingly miniscule yet significant features, some of which turn out to substantiate Caldigate’s blamelessness. These photographs thus approach Eastlake’s ideal use of mimetic photography: capturing the imperfect minutia of “one surface only.” Though not as rough in texture as the “rugged rock,” “sea-worn shell,” or “rusted armour” that Eastlake extols as photography’s ideal purview, the “lines” and “impressions” of the envelope as it appears in the photograph bear witness to the imperfections of the forged postmark—imperfections that ultimately corroborate that Caldigate is innocent.

In positioning the forged postmark as the key piece of evidence on which Caldigate’s fate depends, the photographs of the envelope thus function as more than minutely specific copies of the original document. These photographs, that is, do not just imitate the envelope: they substitute for it. They enact what Jennifer Green-Lewis describes as the “fantasy of perfect representation, a mirroring of the object which surpasses mimesis” such that the “photograph, in theory, can more than replicate appearance. It can duplicate it.”⁴⁷ *John Caldigate* realizes this

⁴⁷ Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians*, 25.

fantasy when Bagwax discovers the proof of Caldigate's innocence while studying photographs of the envelopes. As he explains to his fellow post-office clerk, Mr. Curlydown:

“You see that postage-stamp?” Bagwax stretched out the envelope,—or rather the photograph of the envelope, for it was no more. But the Queen's head, with all its obliterating smudges, and all its marks and peculiarities, was to be seen quite as plainly as on the original, which was tied up carefully among the archives of the trial ... “Those two P's in the two bottom corners tell me that that stamp wasn't printed before '74. It was all explained to me not long ago. Now the postmark is dated '73.” (501)

Though the original envelope is unavailable for scrutiny, “the photograph of the envelope” here functions as if it were the singular and primary document in this case. The distinction between “the envelope” and “the photograph of the envelope” becomes an aside, an afterthought: when Bagwax holds “out the envelope,—or rather the photograph of the envelope,” the two documents have merged into one.

As both Eastlake's essay and Trollope's *Barchester Towers* reveal through their own references to photography's “unerring” ways, the fantasy of impeccable photographic duplication presented by *John Caldigate* is not singular. Yet this novel's portrait of photography as unquestioningly mimetic is, if anything, too unproblematic. None of the characters doubts the accuracy of the photographs and the narrator never suggests that the original envelope is ever used to verify the photos of the falsified postmark. Despite this indiscriminate trust in photography's truthfulness, however, nineteenth-century photographers were attuned to the potential for photographic manipulations, from Eastlake's attention to the “distortions and deficiencies” caused by lights and shadows to British Photographic Society debates, in Andrea Henderson's terms, about “the artistic merits of composite photography, multiple exposures, and

retouching.”⁴⁸ While in *John Caldigate* the infallible accuracy of photography alerts Bagwax to the forged inaccuracies of the postmarks, Victorian photographic practices often capitalized on the possibilities for modifying or fine-tuning an image by removing imperfections, a process that resulted in pictures that Novak has recently termed “photographic fictions.”⁴⁹ Scholars have tended to read the Victorian interest in artistic manipulations of the photographic medium as a means of pushing against the form’s presumed production of a purely realist aesthetic. Green-Lewis, for instance, argues that Victorian photographers often sought after both realism and romance, with early practitioners capitalizing not only on photography’s “ability to reproduce detail with startling clarity” but also on its capacity to manipulate an image—with a subject that is out of focus, for instance—so that the “resulting photographs would be somehow closer to ‘the true character of nature.’”⁵⁰ In Novak’s recent investigations into nineteenth-century practices of “composition photography,” he exposes the methods by which “figures were transposed from one scene to another, bodies from different images juxtaposed in new (and often compromising) contexts, and single bodies even sutured together from different models.”⁵¹ According to Novak,

⁴⁸ Andrea Henderson, “Magic Mirrors: Formalist Realism in Victorian Physics and Photography,” *Representations* 117, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 143.

⁴⁹ Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.

⁵⁰ Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians*, 56–57. In discussing photography’s relationship with realism and romance, Green-Lewis also aims to avoid polarizing these two nodes as antithetical: “one of my aims in this book is to suggest reasons for ... discussing realism and romance not as polarized or even distinct entities but as variants of each other in a wider culture of realism” (25).

⁵¹ Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 1–3.

the resultant “photographic fictions” exercised “the technology of realism” yet “produced what appears to be its opposite: the non-existent, the fictional, and the abstract.”⁵²

When the narrator of *Barchester Towers* intimates that a “mental method of daguerreotype or photography” might aspire to the “unerring precision” of exact imitation that *John Caldigate* later champions, he never suggests creating a composite photograph from various parts; he does recognize, however, the distortions inherent in the photographic medium. In introducing Francis Arabin, the narrator suggests that photography distorts just as much—if not more—than it mimics:

It is to be regretted that no mental method of daguerreotype or photography has yet been discovered, by which the characters of men can be reduced to writing and put into grammatical language with an unerring precision of truthful description. How often does the novelist feel, ay, and the historian also, and the biographer, that he has conceived within his mind and accurately depicted on the tablet of his brain the full character and personage of a man, and that nevertheless, when he flies to pen and ink to perpetuate the portrait, his words forsake, elude, disappoint, and play the deuce with him, till at the end of a dozen pages the man described has no more resemblance to the man conceived than the sign-board at the corner of the street has to the Duke of Cambridge?

And yet such mechanical descriptive skill would hardly give more satisfaction to the reader than the skill of the photograph does to the anxious mother desirous to possess an absolute duplicate of her beloved child. The likeness is indeed true; but it is a dull, dead, unfeeling, inauspicious likeness. The face is indeed there, and those looking at it

⁵² Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3.

will know at once whose image it is; but the owner of the face will not be proud of the resemblance. (1:185–86)

Here Trollope's narrator bemoans the crisis of representation that persists for both photography and the "mechanical descriptive skill" of writing that aspires to photography's ideal of "an absolute duplicate." Writing about a character with "pen and ink," the narrator explains, yields a conspicuous disparity between "the man described" and "the man conceived," or between the inert flatness of a "sign-board" and the dynamic roundness of "the full character and personage of a man." In constructing this comparison, Trollope's narrator presages E. M. Forster's distinction in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) between flat characters—which Forster, on one occasion, describes as being "as flat as a photograph"—and round ones.⁵³ In Forster's analogy, the photograph clearly smacks of characterological flatness. In contrast, the narrator of *Barchester Towers* desires a "mental method of daguerreotype or photography" precisely because it might evade this flattening effect by creating "an absolute duplicate" of an individual's "full character." Yet even photography, according to Trollope's narrator, ultimately becomes a distorting medium, complicit in degenerating a character from round to flat. The narrator criticizes how photography's potential for the "unerring precision of truthful description" yields only a two-dimensional or even lifeless mimesis, since photography depicts a "likeness" of a "full" and feeling individual that is at once "true" and yet "dull, dead, unfeeling." With this warping of character, photography's capacity for imitation takes a grotesque turn, as the camera begets likeness without likeness.

Within this formulation in which mimesis cedes to reductive oversimplification, the greatest loss is of the potential for a photographic representation of "the full character,"

⁵³ E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954), 110.

encompassing not only this character's physicality but also his inner life. Victorian photographers sought out various methods of representing a subject's interiority, often by cultivating a connection between outward appearances and inward experiences. "With the development of photography," as Armstrong points out, "a significant number of physiognomists looked to the new technology ... to provide a scientific basis for reading faces."⁵⁴ In attending to the genre of psychiatric photography, for instance, Green-Lewis has argued that nineteenth-century photographs of asylum inmates sought to align the subject's physiognomy with their internal mental state.⁵⁵ According to the logic of nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, photography could reveal its subject's interiority because "the outer man is a graphic reproduction of the inner"; as a result, Schopenhauer applauds how "Daguerre's invention, so highly valued" for the "graphic reproduction" it provides, "affords the most

⁵⁴ Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 126. Armstrong points out that this search for a "scientific basis for reading faces" fails: "Frustrated by photography's failure to prove empirically that the precise nature of a mental condition could be read on the subject's face, some doctored their evidence; to get the desired result, they used composite photographs, photographed plaster masks, and electrically stimulated the subject's face" (126). According to Armstrong, who argues that reading faces becomes a much more salient method for understanding a character's interiority beginning in the 1850s, while "phrenology and physiognomy continued to rely on the principle of resemblance to determine an individual's identity, photography banked on difference" because "while it could not reveal all that much about the object represented, a photograph was uniquely capable of distinguishing itself—and only by implication its object—from all others of its type" (130, 126).

⁵⁵ Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians*, 153–59.

complete satisfaction of that need” to see not only a man’s face but also “his whole nature.”⁵⁶ In addition to capitalizing on the potential physical representations of interiority offered by faces, Victorian photographers also used the presence of various objects—books, lockets, and chests of drawers—to evoke the hidden interior depths of the depicted individual. As Henderson points out, in attending to an early 1860s photograph by Clementina, Lady Hawarden of her daughter standing against a cabinet with “many small drawers” and topped by a book: “the image would seem to be not just about display—the display of wealth and beauty—but also about secrets, about what is withheld” or “of inner worlds, of meaning within.”⁵⁷

We see this outward representation of objects conjuring the presence of inner depths in an early 1860s photograph of Queen Victoria taken shortly after the death of Prince Albert in 1861 (Figure 2). In the image, Victoria is seated at a table, her arm resting on books and her hand holding a portrait of her late husband. This photograph, on its simplest level, bespeaks of Victoria’s mourning, implying that her grief penetrates beyond her wardrobe and to an internal emotional experience. The “mechanical descriptive skill” of the camera here offers the viewer a privy vantage point, as if she is witnessing a private moment of loss. With the locket photograph of Prince Albert open so that Victoria can look at it, this image reveals what might otherwise remain enclosed or hidden: a widow’s personal sorrow alongside her lingering attachment to that which is gone. At once, the image evokes Victoria’s inner life without delineating its precise

⁵⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: Short Philosophical Essays*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 2:634. For Green-Lewis’s discussion of how “Schopenhauer provided both the premise and the figurative terms of photography’s relations with the human sciences,” see *Framing the Victorians*, 153–54.

⁵⁷ Henderson, “Magic Mirrors,” 136.



Ghémard Frères, Photographes du Roi, Bruxelles.

Figure 2. Ghémard Frères (active 1860s), [*Portrait of Queen Victoria seated, gazing at a photograph of Prince Albert*], about 1862, Albumen silver print, 8.4 x 5.4 cm (3 5/16 x 2 1/8 in.). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

contours: amidst its intimation of Victoria's mingled sorrow and attachment in relation to the portrait of Prince Albert, the photograph does not define comprehensively what Victoria feels. Nonetheless, far from displaying only surfaces, here it is the miniature photograph of Prince Albert that serves as the key signifier of the queen's inner depths. The presence of a photograph within a photograph, that is, pushes past providing "evidence of facts" in order to draw out the ambiguities of inner life.

Given this context, it is no wonder that even as the narrator of *Barchester Towers* insists on the shortcomings of photographic technologies, he also evidences a desire for a method of representation that does not deny embodiment. To the contrary, both photographic and daguerreotype images, despite their distinct methods of capturing and fixing light, portray a subject's physicality. And yet when the narrator finally renders an extensive "interior view" of Mr. Arabin, he explicitly distinguishes between the psychological and emotional complexities of the "inner man" and the way he appears in "outward matters" (1:191). After bemoaning the impossibility for "characters of men" to be "reduced to writing" accurately over the course of even "a dozen pages," the narrator attempts to furnish an "interior view" of Mr. Arabin's past experiences and emotional challenges, sometimes through free indirect discourse. Only after this extensive look at the complexities of the "inner man" does the narrator provide an exterior view of this character—and an exterior view that bespeaks nothing of the inner turmoil that Mr. Arabin has endured, since "[e]xteriorly, he was not a remarkable person" (1:191). In this sense, Arabin's physicality fails to serve as an access point for his interiority. And yet, the most poignant inner struggle that the narrator recounts is of how Arabin fights his tremendous physical desire for "the ceremonies and pomps of the Church of Rome" as he struggles to stay with his "mother church," the Church of England:

His flesh was against him: how great an aid would it be to a poor, weak, wavering man to be constrained to high moral duties, self-denial, obedience, and chastity by laws which were certain in their enactments, and not to be broken without loud, palpable, unmistakable sin! (1:189)

In this moment of free indirect discourse, the narrator figures Arabin's struggle to combat his longing for the apparent freedom to be found in Catholicism's "high moral duties" as an internal fray wherein "flesh" is the enemy. Not only do Arabin's "outward" appearances run contra to his "inner man," but his private experiences also catalog this antagonism between his internal and physical self. Rather than locating Arabin's interiority in "outward matters," the narrator ventriloquizes Arabin's struggles against his "flesh" by accessing and representing his interiority.

In thus exhibiting a portrait of Arabin's inner life, the narrator of *Barchester Towers* begins to enact a "mental method of daguerreotype or photography," despite having complained previously about its problematic nonexistence. And he does so not by scavenging for interiority by way of mimetic physicality but by isolating and representing the "inner man" alone, as if the photograph is not of the body as an access point to the mind but of the mind—of that which is "mental"—itself. Even more, the narrator's failure to distinguish between the physical and chemical properties of daguerreotypes and photographs serves to remind readers that the ideal photographic technology relies not on a material method but a "mental method." For Trollope's narrator, both the photographic process and its product ideally elide physicality in favor of a method and an image that is "mental."

Trollope was not alone in applying this term to photography. Beginning the same year in which Talbot patented his calotype process, the emergent discourse on photography already included references to the ways in which this new technology might represent the inner recesses

of the mind not through physical appearances but through a “mental photograph.” In Mark Lemon’s 1841 comedy, *What Will the World Say?* the opening scene includes two characters—Pye Hilary and Captain Tarradiddle—chatting in St. James’s Park when Hilary declares to Tarradiddle: “Tarra, my boy, you are a genius—a mental photograph.... for in the short space of five minutes you have traced the cause of my presence in this metropolitan Eden of nursery-maids—very nearly.”⁵⁸ Even in this moment, when a “mental photograph” of another’s mind is “very nearly” accurate, the image still contains alterations, since Tarradiddle admits that he has “overcharged the picture” because he has included elements that, as Hilary puts it, are “imaginary.”⁵⁹ With this photographic blend of the “very nearly” accurate and the “imaginary”—of, in Eastlake’s terms, “copying nature” as well as including “certain distortions”—Tarradiddle imparts a “photographic fiction” of Hilary’s mind. At once, this psychological portrait is also embodied through its source, since Hilary declares: “Tarra, my boy, you are ... a mental photograph.” With the mind of one character thus mapped onto another, Tarradiddle’s “mental photograph” of Hilary’s mind comes into being through the overlay of multiple characters’ consciousness.

We encounter this layering again in *Barchester Towers*. In envisioning a “mental method of daguerreotype or photography,” Trollope’s narrator imagines a form that effectively represents two mental states at once: the mind of the “full character” (who is to be truthfully portrayed) and the mind of the narrator (who “has conceived” this “full character” “within his mind and accurately depicted [him] on the tablet of his brain”). Put differently, instead of

⁵⁸ Mark Lemon, *What Will the World Say? A Comedy in Five Acts*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Bryant, 1841), 9–10.

⁵⁹ Lemon, *What Will the World Say?* 10.

suggesting that a “mental” photograph might capture only the mind of the character, the narrator also implies that this technology would capture the mind of the character as it is imprinted on the mind of the narrator. With this overlay of one consciousness upon another, mental photography ideally functions as the narrator’s tool for both accessing and depicting a character’s inner life, for furnishing what Pascal has famously dubbed a “dual voice” that encompasses two minds at their intersection. Mental photography therefore ideally functions as a form of free indirect discourse.

And yet, within *Barchester Towers* this ideal of a dual-voiced photography of consciousness is never entirely actualized: even though the narrator discloses an “interior view” of Arabin’s mind as it is “accurately depicted on the tablet of [the narrator’s] brain,” he also suggest that this mental portrait is, at best, a “not untrue resemblance” since Arabin’s “full character” can never be fully replicated either by the “pen and ink” of the novel or by the “inauspicious likeness” of a material photograph (1:186). If not always the characters’ true inner lives, however, then what this attempt at mental photography does reveal is the inner machinery of the novel itself. Earlier in *Barchester Towers* when the narrator introduces Mr. Slope, he both provides a psychological portrait of Slope’s private power-hungry thoughts through free indirect discourse (“He, therefore, he, Mr. Slope, would in effect be bishop of Barchester”) and supplies an exterior portrait of Slope’s physical form (“I myself should have liked it [his nose] better did it not possess a somewhat spongy, porous appearance”) (1:27, 29). At the same time as he infiltrates to the inner recesses and dwells on the outer aspects of this character, the narrator also reminds readers of his own physical form as a fellow character within the Barchester storyworld, since he complains “I never could endure to shake hands with Mr. Slope.” In similar manner, when the narrator furnishes both an “interior view” and an exterior assessment of Mr. Arabin, he

again exposes his own singular point of view, as he pleads: “And here, may I beg the reader not to be hard in his judgment upon this man” (1:196). Across these two cases, the narrator lays bare the ontologically and rhetorically metaleptic perspective that at once can attempt the accuracy of mental photography even if it can only ever produce a physical and cognitive likeness that is “not untrue.”

In another early 1860s photograph by Lady Hawarden, we encounter the reflection of the photographer’s camera in a mirror—a metaleptic moment that visually encapsulates *Barchester Towers*’ dynamic wherein the narrator’s desire for a “mental method of daguerreotype or photography” exposes the novel’s metaleptic machinery. In Hawarden’s photograph, her daughter, Clementina Maude, stands against a long mirror called a cheval glass or psyche (Figure 3). Centered within the image, she is, ostensibly, the picture’s primary subject. With Clementina Maude leaning against the psyche, we might read the presence of this mirror as a gesture toward her own psyche or mind, since the mirror, as Henderson puts it, “could be understood metaphorically as a space of reflection akin to the mind itself.”⁶⁰ Yet, given that Clementina Maude does not look into the cheval glass, Henderson contends that the mirror ultimately “fails to reveal inner depths, either in Clementina . . . or in the picture’s viewers.”⁶¹ In much the same way that the narrator of *Barchester Towers* both unmask an “interior view” of Arabin and bemoans the impossibility of this mental photography, the mirror in this picture at once holds up

⁶⁰ Henderson, “Magic Mirrors,” 136. For a recent exploration of the relationship between mirrors and the mind, see Brink-Roby, “Psyche: Mirror and Mind in *Vanity Fair*,” 125–47.

⁶¹ Henderson, “Magic Mirrors,” 136. According to Henderson, “there is no ‘essence’ for the artist to discover ‘beyond’ appearances” and this photograph thus revels in the mirror’s formal surfaces and reflections that constitute photography’s true content.



Figure 3. Clementina, Lady Hawarden, *Clementina Maude*, 5 Princes Gardens, ca. 1862–1863, photograph. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Given by Lady Clementina Tottenham.

the possibility of evoking Clementina Maude's interiority and yet fails to do so. In capturing this photograph of Clementina Maude posing against the glass, the camera may never reveal her own inner mind; it does, however, reveal itself, exposing the otherwise hidden and unseen camera to be always already present and embodied within the world of the picture. While photographs appear to be rendered by the "impartially" detached third-person perspective of what Eastlake calls "an unreasoning machine," here that machine becomes visible and internal: an intradiegetic lens with a first-person point of view. Seated on its tripod and reflected in Clementina Maude's psyche, the camera's first-person perspective is not personified—the photographer, in fact, seems to be nonexistent—yet the camera does reveal its own interiority by virtue of the photograph it has produced.⁶² Whether or not the camera brings us inside Clementina Maude's inner life, then, it does bring us inside the inner workings of the photograph, as the camera records its presence as a witness within rather than outside the photograph's frame.

III. Observing Interior Spaces and Interior Lives

In Talbot's photography book, *The Pencil of Nature* (1844–46), he indulges in a fantasy that is not unlike that delineated by the narrator of *Barchester Towers*: Talbot outlines a method by which a photographer might disclose "the secrets of the darkened chamber."⁶³ According to Talbot, it is conceivable that a camera could take a picture of an interior space—in his example, an unlit library—which, if inhabited, would be so dark that "no one would see the other: and yet

⁶² While Henderson argues that in this photograph the camera "does have depths, but ... this little black box is empty, 'filled' only with traces of light," I suggest that the camera discloses its own depths by revealing the picture itself ("Magic Mirrors," 136).

⁶³ William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature* (Chicago: KWS Publishers, 2011), Plate VIII.

nevertheless if a *camera* were so placed as to point in the direction in which any one were standing, it would take his portrait, and reveal his actions.”⁶⁴ Whereas for Eastlake the camera’s ability to perceive minute details mimics the human eye, for Talbot the camera’s capacity to discern the depths of darkness far surpasses human physiology since, as he points out, “the eye of the camera would see plainly where the human eye would find nothing but darkness.”⁶⁵ In imagining this hypothetical photographic feat, Talbot articulates one possible method for depicting an enclosed space such that “the secrets of the darkened chamber” might “be revealed by the testimony of the imprinted paper.” Through its presence in the room and its ability to record that room’s contents on “the imprinted” page, the camera thus becomes a productively revelatory technology: able to peer through the darkness and disclose that which is within, able to unmask both an otherwise unobservable interior architectural space and its otherwise obscured inhabitants.

Trollope also considers this correlation between unveiling interior spaces and the characters that reside within them. If, according to *Barchester Towers*, the camera’s presence provides a fruitful but deeply flawed “mental” portrait, then *The Warden* considers what representation of consciousness can be achieved when it is not a camera but the narrator himself who enters a room and assesses its inhabitants. Within *The Warden*, Trollope’s narrator visits his characters’ homes—and, in particular, Plumstead Episcopi—with notable familiarity; in doing so, his narration is able, to borrow Talbot’s phrase, to make “the secrets of the darkened chamber . . . revealed by the testimony of the imprinted paper.” Being inside his characters’ homes, that is, corresponds with an ability to render his characters’ innermost thoughts, frequently through free

⁶⁴ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Plate VIII (emphasis in original).

⁶⁵ Talbot, *Pencil of Nature*, Plate VIII.

indirect discourse. Thus one way the narrator approaches the dilemma of overcoming—but not ignoring—his fellow characters’ corporeality and rendering their internal emotional and mental states lies in the analogy he poses between inhabiting some of the characters’ homes and, by extension, their minds.

In suggesting an intimate and productive link between peering into an interior architectural space and peering into a character’s inner life, Trollope participates in a long history of analogizing structural and psychological interiorities. In many ways, this analogy finds its roots in the history of the camera obscura (the literal Latin translation is “dark chamber”): a technology discussed by Aristotle and Euclid and which is often considered the first camera, far predating the photographic machineries developed by Daguerre and Talbot in the nineteenth century. In a camera obscura, a pinhole or lens in the side of a dark room or box allows light to pass into the darkened chamber; an image of an external object then appears upside-down on the wall of the chamber or, with the aid of mirrors, is reoriented to appear right-side-up. An artist could either enter a room-sized camera obscura to trace an image projected onto the interior wall or remain outside of a box-sized camera obscura to trace an image projected onto the overhead surface from within. In both cases, the artist encounters an image through the mediation of a darkened and enclosed chamber.

In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), within a chapter concerned with “discerning, and other operations of mind,” John Locke equates the “dark room” of the camera obscura with the “closet wholly shut from light” that is human understanding:

I pretend not to teach, but to enquire; and therefore cannot but confess here again, That external and internal Sensation, are the only passages that I can find, of Knowledge, to the Understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover, are the Windows by which light

is let into this *dark Room*. For, methinks, the *Understanding* is not much unlike a Closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible Resemblances, or *Ideas* of things without; would the Pictures coming into such a dark Room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the Understanding of a Man, in reference to all Objects of sight, and the *Ideas* of them.⁶⁶

According to Locke's staunch empiricism—which, as we saw in chapter one, sets the stage for George Henry Lewes's own empiricist leanings—sensory experience provides the only authoritative source of knowledge. In synonymizing the “dark room” and human understanding, Locke thus turns the hole or lens in the wall of a camera obscura into a metaphor for the human senses: the “windows by which light is let into this dark room.” The result, as Lee Worth Bailey puts it, is that “Locke elevates the image of the blank screen to imaginatively symbolize his view of the understanding as a *tabula rasa*, an empty tablet that needs no innate principles to explain knowledge.”⁶⁷ With the dark chambers of the camera obscura and of the human understanding

⁶⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Book II, Ch. XI, §17, pp. 162–63 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁷ Lee Worth Bailey, *The Enchantments of Technology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 74. Furthermore, Bailey notes that while Locke takes “the representations of external bodies on the blank screen” “to indicate the reliability of visual perception,” René Descartes insists “that despite their apparent reliability, the images on the screen [in the camera obscura] do not overcome the problem of delusion” (73). As a result, Bailey suggests: “The camera obscura is not a neutral tool revealing a supposedly objective truth about perception or epistemology. It is an enchanting metaphor, map, or model for a way of imagining the psyche as if it were held in a container” (73). For Jonathan Crary, who suggests that Locke's camera obscura supplies “a means of visualizing spatially the operations of the

both serving as recipients of sensory information, perhaps the only distinction between these two forms of knowledge containment is their differing abilities for making the received information permanent and retrievable. Before the advent of Victorian photographic technologies that could fix an external image on copper plates or paper, any “pictures coming into such a dark room” as the camera obscura were not necessarily captured and permanent. By contrast, according to Locke, “the understanding of man” is capable of receiving “all objects of sight, and the *ideas* of them” into its “closet” and retaining these ideas for future use. This equivalency between the mind and a “dark room” emerges again in Locke’s *Essay* when he considers ideas “which come into our minds *by one Sense* only”: here he once more synonymizes mind and room as he refers to “the Brain, the mind’s Presence-room (as I may so call it).”⁶⁸ In this instance, the solitude that is often implied by the camera obscura’s dark chamber becomes distinctly social, since the brain functions not only as an interior architectural space—a “closet wholly shut from light” in the first example—but also as a place for receiving visitors.⁶⁹

Within nineteenth-century fiction writing, this social dimension to the analogy between interior structural spaces and interior psychological spaces persists. Time and again, we encounter instances when a character’s mind functions as a metaphorical room to be perused or intellect,” this apparatus holds “a more self-legislative and authoritative function” because it “allows the subject to guarantee and police the correspondence between exterior world and interior representation” (*Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995], 42).

⁶⁸ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Ch. III, §1, p. 121 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁹ See the *OED Online* definition C2 for “presence room, *n.*” within the entry for “presence, *n.*” See also the entry for “presence chamber, *n.*” which defines this space as: “A room, especially one in a palace, in which a monarch or other distinguished person receives visitors.”

inhabited by another character or narrator. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), for instance, Rochester likens Jane's "head" to a room populated by her drawings when he asks: "Has it ["that head"] other furniture of the same kind within?"⁷⁰ Trollope, an avid reader of Thackeray, takes his cue, in particular, from *Vanity Fair* where, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, the narrator justifies how his rhetorical act of "peeping" begets omniscient "understanding": "the present writer claimed the privilege of peeping into Miss Amelia Sedley's bedroom, and understanding with the omniscience of the novelist all the gentle pains and passions which were tossing upon that innocent pillow." Here the sequential acts of looking followed by knowing become synonymous, such that "peeping" both enables and is marked as equivalent to "understanding" the character's inner world. In *On Art in Fiction*, Bulwer-Lytton's metaphors for dissecting and thus revealing characters' interior experiences also transform from scientific into structural. After decreeing that "the novelist goes at once to the human heart, and calmly scrutinizes, assort, and dissects" feelings, Bulwer-Lytton turns the heart into an architectural hollow: "Conduct us to the cavern, light the torch, and startle and awe us by what you reveal; but if you keep us all day in the cavern the effect is lost, and our only feeling is that of impatience and desire to get away."⁷¹ According to Bulwer-Lytton, accessing characters' feelings requires a

⁷⁰ Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard, J. Dunn (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 106. For an examination of how the "contents of rooms in *Jane Eyre* move in flux with Jane's consciousness, and her fears, hopes, intentions, and regrets often seem to be embodied in the objects that surround her," see Michael Klotz, "Rearranging Furniture in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*," *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 31, no. 1 (March 2005): 12–15.

⁷¹ Bulwer-Lytton, "On Art in Fiction," 31.

combination of proximity and brevity, a spatially and temporally calibrated blend of residing inside the characters' interior self or "cavern" but not for too long.

Even Latimer's telepathic and involuntary acts of mind reading in *The Lifted Veil* often require a combination of physical sight and at least brief copresence in the same space. In fact, Latimer's two omniscient faculties—his visions of his "own solitary future" and his "abnormal cognizance of any other consciousness" besides his own—are distinguished by whether they rely on the proximity of others (36). When Latimer "lived apart from society," then "the more frequent and vivid" were his visions of the future including, as Latimer puts it, "the vision of my death" (36). Yet when he is around other individuals and, in particular, when he occupies their interior spaces, Latimer's physiological sight often begets "cursed" and "incessant insight" into others' minds (3). Take, for instance, Latimer's inability to avoid seeing into his wife Bertha's formerly "mysterious inner self" once he joins her "in her private sitting-room" (26, 31):

I joined Bertha in her private sitting room.... I remember, as I closed the door behind me, a cold tremulousness seizing me, and a vague sense of being hated and lonely—vague and strong, like a presentiment. I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me.... The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through the sickening years which followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul—saw petty artifice and mere negation where I had delighted to believe in coy sensibilities. (31–32)

In the instant when Latimer is enclosed in Bertha's "private" space, he gains a far too personal knowledge of her private thoughts. Here Latimer's presence in Bertha's parlor becomes a

nightmarish version of Talbot's fantasy of a camera within a library: both Latimer and the camera are able to surpass human perception by seeing through the "darkness" because the space is newly lit with "illumination" (in Latimer's phrase) or "filled (we must not call it *illuminated*) with invisible rays" (in Talbot's). Yet Latimer's inhabitation of interior architectural spaces penetrates further than Talbot's, since occupying Bertha's "sitting-room" becomes synonymous with occupying her "soul." Even more, by dwelling simultaneously within Bertha's personal chamber and her psyche, Latimer reveals that her inner self is itself another apartment—a "narrow room"—newly visible to him. In *The Lifted Veil*, then, the echo chamber generated by the analogy between interior spaces and interior minds—between the "private sitting-room" and the private "soul"—reverberates, since inhabiting Bertha's room begets insight into Bertha's interiority, which reveals itself to be a "narrow room" where Latimer can witness his wife's true interior motives of "petty artifice."

Within the *Chronicles of Barsetshire*, Trollope's omniscient narrator enacts Bulwer-Lytton's directive and presciently follows Latimer's example, since he not only peers into private rooms but also bodily inhabits them. When considered in the context of the analogy between engaging with others' homes and engaging with their minds, it is perhaps unsurprising that in *The Warden* the omniscient narrator registers his incarnation within the diegesis while he is in the midst of taking the reader on a tour of the rooms at Plumstead Episcopi. At the start of this domestic excursion and prior to the narrator's revelation of himself as an embodied character, the narrator marks his engagements with the home as apparently imaginative and disembodied: he requests that the reader "ascend again with us" in order "to visit the rectory of Plumstead Episcopi" and meet its inhabitants (96). In introducing readers to "the bedroom of the archdeacon," the "well-furnished breakfast-parlour," and Dr. Grantly's study, the narrator fails to

sojourn within even these interior rooms (96, 102). Instead, he pointedly penetrates into increasingly private corners: inside the bedroom into “a small inner room, where the doctor dressed and kept his boots and sermons” (96).

In the midst of this tour—between the breakfast-parlor and the study—the narrator reveals his stance as a character who has visited Plumstead Episcopi and, moreover, found the rectory and its inhabitants wanting. Trollope’s narrator never regrets his inhabitation to the extent that Latimer does, and while Latimer’s entrance into the rooms and minds of others is painfully “involuntary,” the narrator of *The Warden* appears to infiltrate interior architectural and psychological spaces willingly and with ease. Nonetheless when he remarks upon his stance as a character who has been at the Grantly home, the narrator of *The Warden* also records the many dissatisfactions of his physical presence within Plumstead Episcopi. The primary source of the narrator’s discontent concerns the banality of that house. He bookends his description of his encounters with each of the Grantly family members with reminders of his distaste for their home, as he opens with, “I have never found the rectory a pleasant house,” and echoes this sentiment again when he concludes, “On the whole, therefore, I found the rectory a dull house, though it must be admitted that everything there was of the very best” (104, 105). Between these two pillars of displeasure, the narrator registers over and over again his boredom and irritation with the characters that occupy much of his tale, since he does not care to inquire after where Mrs. Grantly “disappeared” to after breakfast, “quarrelled” with one son, and “gets tired” of the youngest boy’s “gentle speeches” (104–5). The Grantly daughters—“two little girls Florinda and Grizzel”—only compound the rectory’s tedium since they are “nice enough” yet “little noticed by the archdeacon’s visitors” including, it seems, the narrator (101).

In this incarnated posture of an oft-displeased character, the narrator never gives any indication that his first-person stance will interfere with his penetration of the home's most private spaces or its inhabitants' most private thoughts. To the contrary, during his tour of the rectory the narrator presents the undisclosed sentiments and unarticulated thoughts of Plumstead's residents, particularly Dr. Grantly. After relaying a bedroom quarrel between Susan and her husband about Eleanor's relationship with John Bold, for instance, the narrator explains the intricacies of Grantly's defenselessness: "Dr. Grantly felt keenly the injustice of this attack; but what could he say? He certainly had huffed John Bold" (97). Just as he penetrates from the rectory's master bedroom into the even more submerged "inner room," here the narrator similarly infiltrates his character's consciousness with increasing intimacy. Across the colon, the narrator glides from psycho-narration ("Dr. Grantly felt keenly") into free indirect discourse ("but what could he say?"), or from describing Dr. Grantly's thoughts to ventriloquizing them with the intimate yet indirect speech of a "dual voice." In this moment, Trollope's narrator aligns his brief access to what he repeatedly calls the "inner" spaces of his character's home with an ability to experience and relay a fellow character's "inner man" (*Barchester Towers* 1:57). With this architectural analogy in play, Trollope's narrator encounters his characters' most secret, private spaces with the same license with which he renders their private thoughts. This license reveals that part of the epistemology of *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* is to suggest that even brief corporeal cohabitation begets unparalleled insight, that an omniscient narrator's unrestricted access to fellow characters' mental states cannot be divorced from his material and delimited—if also dissatisfied—experiences within the characters' homes.

This license becomes particularly apparent in *The Warden* with the narrator's representation of Dr. Grantly in his study. In much the same manner in which the narrator does

not stop in the Grantly bedroom but proceeds to the even more private and removed “inner room,” once inside Dr. Grantly’s study the narrator again rhetorically peers into the space’s deeper recesses: into the “secret drawer beneath his table” where the archdeacon stashes a scurrilous volume of Rabelais that he peruses while behind his closed and locked door so as to “amuse himself with the witty mischief of Panurge” (105). Not despite but because this book—*The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532–64), a humorous and often crude narrative that relays the adventures of father-son giants—is interred in this clandestine space, its mere existence opens up a window into the inner life of the otherwise rather fastidious and pretentious Dr. Grantly. Beneath the grave industriousness of both the archdeacon’s persona and his study, we thus encounter an inner life identified by its investment in coarse comedy. In attending to “Trollope’s comedies of manners,” Leah Price has recently argued that they “abdicate any attempt to plumb psychological depths” by “coding the handling of books as authentic and the reading of texts as a front.”⁷² Yet here both Grantly’s reading of his book and his handling (and hiding) of this book offer up an “interior view” of a private life wherein the stern archdeacon is tickled by the exploits of a libertine.

When Mr. Chadwick (steward to Grantly’s father, the Bishop of Barchester) comes to the study door with confidential documents, the narrator’s infiltration into Dr. Grantly’s secrets only deepens, as he probes multiple interior spaces nearly simultaneously. When Chadwick reveals that John Bold’s suspicions of clerical financial misuse are, according to their London lawyer, unfounded, the narrator presents Dr. Grantly’s triumphant mental processes through free indirect discourse: “How wrong his wife was to wish that Bold should marry Eleanor! Bold! why, if he

⁷² Leah Price, *How To Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 71.

should be ass enough to persevere, he would be a beggar before he knew whom he was at law with!" (107).⁷³ By "imitating the language a character uses" and thus, as Cohn puts it, "superimposing two voices" together, the narrator here provides an inverse of the free indirect discourse that he presented in the Grantly bedroom's "inner room."⁷⁴ As the archdeacon's defenselessness against Susan during their bedroom squabble is thus replaced in the study by triumph over her, the narrator's "identification" with his character allows for a representation of the otherwise unarticulated fickleness of Grantly's ever-changing emotions.⁷⁵ Even more, in this moment of free indirect discourse we witness not only the narrator incorporating Dr. Grantly's voice into his own, but also Dr. Grantly incorporating the speech patterns of the book he peruses in secret: *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*. In speculating on what will happen if John Bold "should be ass enough to persevere" in his suit, the narrator's free indirect discourse thus adopts the crude language of the comic stories as it has been folded into the voice of the otherwise stern and pious archdeacon, and offers a glimpse of increasingly interior depths. Just after this exultant moment of free indirect discourse, Dr. Grantly adds Chadwick's confidential documents to his secret desk drawer "and showed to Mr. Chadwick the nature of the key which guarded these hidden treasures" (108). As these documents join the undisclosed copy of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in the locked drawer immediately after the narrator has

⁷³ This moment of free indirect discourse is sandwiched between psycho-narration and quoted monologue. As a result, it enacts the progression that Cohn predicts when she notes, "The clearest, most standard sequence is the triad psycho-narration-narrated monologue-quoted monologue" (*Transparent Minds*, 134).

⁷⁴ Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 105.

⁷⁵ Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 112.

not only told us of the presence of the Rabelais but also ventriloquized Grantly's inner emotions through the language of Rabelais, the narrator reminds readers that he knows what resides inside. The presence of drawers in Hawarden's photograph indicates, in Henderson's phrase, "secrets" that are "withheld" or an undisclosed "inner world"; yet when the narrator of *The Warden* encounters Dr. Grantly's secret drawer, he reveals its contents, disclosing for the reader the "hidden treasures" both material and psychological.

Alongside the narrator's infiltration of clandestine drawers and confidential thoughts, he also notes that everything he has presented to his readers about the inside of the Grantly home is information that neither he nor anyone should be able to witness. More to the point, the narrator avers that many of the incidents and thoughts that he recounts took place precisely because the characters were alone. In relating this particular "morning of which we are writing," for instance, when Dr. Grantly is unaccompanied, locked snugly in his study with his secret book, the narrator underscores that he is describing a scene of interior life that could never be witnessed had another individual been present. When Mr. Chadwick comes to the study door, Dr. Grantly hides his Rabelais and thus the archdeacon "was discovered by the steward working, as usual" (105, 106). The narrator similarly draws attention to the manner in which Dr. Grantly and Susan's interactions in their bedroom conversations differ from the relations that "strangers" or a "third person" in the breakfast-parlor would witness:

Whatever of submissive humility may have appeared in the gait and visage of the archdeacon during his colloquy with his wife in the sanctum of their dressing-rooms was dispelled as he entered his breakfast-parlour with erect head and powerful step. In the presence of a third person he assumed the lord and master; and that wise and talented lady too well knew the man to whom her lot for life was bound, to stretch her authority

beyond the point at which it would be borne. Strangers at Plumstead Episcopi, when they saw the imperious brow with which he commanded silence from the large circle of visitors, children, and servants who came together in the morning to hear him read the word of God, and watched how meekly that wife seated herself behind her basket of keys with a little girl on each side, as she caught that commanding glance; strangers, I say, seeing this, could little guess that some fifteen minutes since she had stoutly held her ground against him, hardly allowing him to open his mouth in his own defence. (102)

An accurate portrait of the Grantly marriage is, according to the narrator, unable to be witnessed by a “third person.” In recognizing that the presence of a witness impacts what is witnessed, the narrator makes a case here for the necessity of disembodied omniscient narration. Yet with the narrator’s revelation of embodiment at Plumstead Episcopi just one paragraph after this discussion, he marks himself as a “third person” in the Grantly home and literalizes his posture as a third-person narrator now within the diegesis. According to the narrator’s logic, his position as a “third person” in the breakfast-parlor should prevent him from knowing the genuine relations between Dr. Grantly and Susan; nor could he know their mental states if situated as a “person” with a delimiting sensorium and without any claims for otherworldly clairvoyance.

Nonetheless, even though the narrator stands as a “third person” within the rectory, he manages to elide this pitfall by insisting that he is familiar with his surroundings and its inhabitants—that he may be a “third person,” in other words, but he is not a “stranger.” In *An Autobiography* (1883), Trollope theorizes the necessary level of intimacy that allows a writer to accurately represent his characters and, as a result, to “make his readers so intimately acquainted with his characters that the creatures of his brain should be to them speaking, moving, living, human creatures”:

This he can never do unless he know those fictitious personages himself, and he can never know them well unless he can live with them in the full reality of established intimacy. They must be with him as he lies down to sleep, and as he wakes from his dreams. He must learn to hate them and to love them. He must argue with them, quarrel with them, forgive them, and even submit to them.⁷⁶

The narrator of *The Warden* achieves this intimacy, but not by becoming overtly friendly with the Grantly family. After all, he does not seem to care where Susan goes off to when “she disappeared” after breakfast and “never could make companions of the boys” who he “quarrelled with” and “gets tired of” (104–5). Instead, his intimacy arises primarily through antagonism, through “the full reality of established intimacy” that comes when the narrator can spend enough time with his characters to “argue with them, quarrel with them,” and “hate them.” In this sense, the narrator of *Chronicles of Barsetshire* suggests that he has the license to know and narrate his fellow characters’ inner thoughts not only because he has inhabited their inner architectural spaces, but also because his presence was always as an insider and never as a stranger.

To this effect, the narrator likens his ability to infiltrate the inner recesses of Plumstead Episcopi to Mrs. Grantly’s overwhelming power over that domestic space. In gaining access to the contents of the secret desk drawer in Grantly’s study, for instance, the narrator finds his echo in Susan, the “mistress” of the house, since Dr. Grantly:

could fasten up his Rabelais, and other things secret, with all the skill of Bramah or of Chubb; but where could he fasten up the key which solved these mechanical mysteries? It

⁷⁶ Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1883), 2:49–50.

is probable to us that the contents of no drawer in that house were unknown to its mistress, and we think, moreover, that she was entitled to all such knowledge. (108–9)

Susan need not be present in the study alongside her husband to infiltrate into his inner life. She functions, in this manner, as a proxy for the omniscient narrator, since she has access to her husband's most interior, locked-up, secret spaces and, by extension, his secrets. Susan's dominant grasp on this intimate knowledge only goes so far, however, since she might know all the secrets of her home and its inhabitants, but is inhibited from disclosing her knowledge of them. After her bedroom squabble with her husband, the narrator notes that Susan knows better than "to stretch her authority beyond the point at which it would be borne," and thus she lets Dr. Grantly appear to be "the lord and master" once they enter the breakfast-parlour, keeping their actual relations a secret known only to herself and the narrator. And yet, with her literal and metaphorical "key" with which she can access each "drawer in that house," Susan holds a premium on the secrets of the rectory.

In penetrating those interior spaces with the same license as Susan, who is "entitled" to know all the inner contents, the narrator exercises and empowers her distinctly (and, at times, unproductively) feminine authority. What is more, by marking his presence inside the interior rooms of Plumstead Episcopi as correlated with his ability to represent an "interior view" of its inhabitants, the narrator locates the source of his own authoritative intimacy with his characters in a domestic space. And yet, the narrator at once inhabits the domestic space of Plumstead Episcopi with the same intimacy and authority as Susan Grantly but also pushes these domestic spaces away, since he repeatedly reminds readers how "dull" and displeasing he finds the Grantly home. In both aligning himself with (and within) the family home and keeping himself unsentimentally detached from it, the narrator manages to harness the feminine authority that

Susan yields over her domestic enclosures for his own narratorial ends, even as he also avoids becoming feminized himself. With each peek inside an “inner room” or secret drawer, or each moment of free indirect discourse, then, we encounter the narrator not only embodying Susan Grantly’s intimacy with the contents and inhabitants of her home but also reveling in his ability to remain productively detached as he discloses these interior contents onto the “imprinted page.”

In this posture of fruitfully intimate detachment, the narrator risks likening himself to another indifferent presence that lurks behind the plot of *The Warden*: the newspaper pundit, Tom Towers. Tom has never met Eleanor and Susan’s father, Mr. Harding, the man who serves as the warden of Hiram’s Hospital in Barchester at the start of *The Warden* and resigns this post by the novel’s close. And yet thanks to his “intimate alliance” with John Bold, Tom Towers becomes the force behind an article that maligns Mr. Harding for the income he receives as warden, is published in the widely circulating fictional newspaper, *The Jupiter*, and ultimately contributes to Harding’s resignation (147). Tom Towers, as his lofty name suggests, is the epitome of unproductively aloof, disengaged omniscience. Consider the narrator’s portrait of this newspaper magnate:

Has not Tom Towers an all-seeing eye? From the diggings of Australia to those of California, right round the habitable globe, does he not know, watch, and chronicle the doings of every one? ... Britons have but to read, obey, and be blessed. None but the fools doubt the wisdom of the *Jupiter*; none but the mad dispute its facts. (182)

Though the narrator, like Tom Towers, is critical of the many financial deficiencies of the clergymen who populate *The Warden*, the narrator also remains largely sympathetic to the well-meaning (albeit at-times unmindful) Mr. Harding. This aging warden is occasionally the

recipient of the narrator's light satire but also, equally, of his sentiment. By contrast, the narrator's acerbic irony in his hyperbolic reverence toward Tom Towers is impossible to miss. In suggesting that Tom Towers positions himself as a godlike figure upon his "Mount Olympus," the narrator maligns Tom's panoramic "all-seeing eye" and his claims to "know, watch, and chronicle the doings of every one" around the globe (183). In much the same way that Eliot's narrator in *Scenes of Clerical Life* remains critical of "the bird's-eye glance of a critic," here Trollope's narrator evinces skepticism that such a lofty posture can ever accurately "know, watch, and chronicle" its subject accurately (229). For Tom Towers, then, his embodiment as a character fails to relieve him of this lofty inaccuracy because he never obtains intimacy with those he represents. And yet, though the narrator of *Chronicles of Barsetshire* similarly narrates with, at times, a sweepingly "all-seeing" perspective, he avoids the inaccuracies of a post on "Mount Olympus" by locating himself between the immersed intimacy of Susan Grantly and the inexact detachment of Tom Towers.

With his photographic analogies, the narrator of *Chronicles of Barsetshire* makes visible and accessible for his readers his own search for a productive intimacy with the interior spaces of his storyworld. In many ways, photography seems to offer up Trollope's representational ideal: when the narrator of *Barchester Towers* attempts to enact a "mental method of daguerreotype or photography" so that he can precisely render for the reader the "full character" that is "depicted on the tablet of his brain," he seeks out a technology that will fulfill the desire Trollope registers in his *Autobiography* for characters to be translated accurately from the writer's "brain" to the reader's perception.⁷⁷ In a similar manner, when the narrator of *The Warden* visits Plumstead

⁷⁷ Walter Kendrick attends to a similar relationship of the author to his reader when he notes that Trollope conceptualizes an ideal wherein writing functions as "complete transparency": "It is the sole purpose of

Episcopi, he strives if not to “live with [his characters] in the full reality of established intimacy,” then at least to spend considerable time in their home. And yet, these analogies chronicle not only the aspirations of a photographic ideal but also its epistemological and representational challenges, not only that the camera may not always illuminate what Locke evokes as the “dark room” of a character’s mind but also, perhaps even more discomfiting, that whatever intimacy is gained may not always be agreeable. For as the presence of Trollope’s narrator in the storyworld of *The Chronicles of Barsetshire* reminds his readers, residing in characters’ interior spaces and interior lives might also coincide with finding out that these characters are ones you will—much like Victorian readers’ reactions to Trollope’s incarnated narrator himself—“argue with,” “quarrel with,” and “hate.”

realistic writing to recreate in the reader’s mind exactly the condition that existed in the novelist’s before he sat down to write” (*The Novel-Machine: The Theory and Fiction of Anthony Trollope* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980], 6).

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“Omniscience Incarnate” began with a nineteenth-century landscape painting and it concludes with a twenty-first century television show: the quirky, irreverent, self-consciously metafictional comedy, *Arrested Development* (2003–2013). In many ways, it may seem odd that my chapters on the realist novels of George Eliot, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope would culminate in a discussion of a television show that chronicles the fictional Bluth family during their always absurd and barely credible mishaps in Orange County, California. And yet I am hardly the first to note that the various forms of serialization that produced the nineteenth-century novel—the eight installments of *Middlemarch*, the twenty monthly parts of *Vanity Fair*, or the weekly parts of *The Last Chronicle of Barset*—reverberate today in the serialized television show: two episodic formats that require enough suspense or intrigue in the plot and enough affective investment in the characters to generate the audience’s interest in the next segment.

Yet perhaps the more unexpected intersection between the nineteenth-century novel and *Arrested Development* comes in the form of the show’s narrator. For the entirety of *Arrested Development*’s four seasons, which span across ten years, the show is propelled by the voiceover narration delivered by the uncredited but distinctive voice of the show’s executive producer, Ron Howard. This voiceover narrator is a Victorian narrator reincarnated, Thackerayan in his playful irony and apparent personality. Uninhibited by any constraints of time, place, or decorum, the voiceover narration explains each episode’s plot points, provides backstory, and accounts for meanwhile structures as the various members of the Bluth family often engage in separate plotlines (a facet of the narration that is increasingly necessary by the initial release of the fourth

season, when individual characters' plotlines are separated out into discrete episodes). Always one step ahead of his characters and seemingly far savvier, the narrator comments on the actions of his storyworld's inhabitants: poking fun at the Bluth family members, judging them, even insulting them. He discloses his characters' thoughts, reveals information that the characters cannot know, and gestures toward plot points that have yet to occur. Much like the narrators of nineteenth-century serialized fiction, this voiceover narrator is aware that he is telling a story, as he responds self-consciously to the reactions and concerns expressed by the show's viewership, and yet he never claims to be the creator of his story but only the tale-teller. The point of view, as all of these details suggest, is panoramic and expansive, self-authorizing in its scope: it is the work of an omniscient narrator. And even though the voice has personality, the fact that the narrator's voiceover stands in contrast to the clear embodiment of the characters who move through each episode makes this narration appear to be, if anything, all the more disembodied and omnipresent: the voice of a character without the body of a character.

This disembodied nature of the voiceover narration begins to shift in the epilogue for the season three finale when Ron Howard appears as himself within the storyworld: a "Hollywood icon," as the narrator introduces him, who meets with one of the characters, teenager Maeby Bluth, as she pitches him the idea of making a show about her family.¹ In *Arrested Development's* fourth season, Ron Howard reprises this role in six episodes, and again his character of Ron Howard, the executive producer, is interested in making a movie about the Bluth family, this time centered around *Arrested Development's* protagonist and Maeby's uncle, Michael Bluth. The movie Ron wants to make, it is impossible to ignore, is the story of the show

¹ *Arrested Development*, Episode no. 53, first broadcast 10 Feb 2006 by Fox, directed by John Fortenberry, story by Mitchell Hurwitz and Richard Day, and teleplay by Chuch Tatham and Jim Vallely.

that viewers have been watching across ten years. By showing interest in a Bluth-centered movie that is dubbed “The Untitled Michael B. Project,” Ron-the-character would seem, metafictionally, to supply Ron-the-narrator with an origin story for *Arrested Development*: the voiceover narration knows what he knows because he met first Maeby Bluth and then Michael Bluth himself. And yet, if we take the word of the narrator, this is not the case: when Ron Howard’s character appears, the voiceover treats him as a separate entity, as if the voiceover by Ron Howard and the character of Ron Howard are not one and the same.

And then, in a fourth season episode entitled “The B. Team,” this separation dissolves momentarily and meaningfully.² When Michael, who has been made a producer on the movie, is riding the elevator at IMAGINE Entertainment up to the restricted level that houses Ron Howard’s office, the elevator stops one-half floor too early. When the doors ding their way open, Michael and the team of misfit writers and actors he has assembled are stuck inside the elevator, unable to get out and unable to see more than the lower half of Ron’s office floor or the lower half of the bodies—including Ron’s—that walk by. The elevator, partially sunken beneath the floor Michael is trying to reach, plays with the formal distinctions of narrative levels: between the storyworld of the proposed movie that is contained inside the elevator along with Michael and his “B. Team,” and the level of narration, where Ron Howard stands, always (as Genette reminds us) one level above the storyworld it narrates. With the elevator arrested in the middle, Michael peering up and Ron peering down, Ron’s stance one level above Michael plays out the authority he claims over “The Untitled Michael B. Project” and, by extension, the authority the voiceover narrator claims over the story of *Arrested Development*. Though Ron and Michael

² *Arrested Development*, Episode no. 57, first released May 26, 2013 by Netflix, directed by Mitchell Hurwitz and Troy Miller, and written by Mitchell Hurwitz and Jim Vallely.

meet within the storyworld outside of IMAGINE Entertainment on multiple occasions, in this instance, with Ron unwilling to let Michael fully up to his floor, he reminds us that he holds the authority to decide when to move into Michael's world or when to let Michael into his.

And yet even with these hierarchical distinctions, through the elevator's open doors the audience is also offered a revelation of continuity, one that remains tacit but undeniable: the narrator and Ron Howard are, in fact, one and the same. Whether the camera's point of view is positioned inside the elevator looking up or outside the elevator looking in, the vast majority of Ron's lines are delivered when it is impossible to see him speaking, when his head is outside of the frame and it is only his legs that are visible. In these moments, the fact that the voice that emanates from the character Ron Howard has always been indistinguishable from the voice that supplies the voiceover of the narrator Ron Howard rings out: unable to see Ron speaking, the voice we hear reveals its synonymy with the voiceover. And yet, there are Ron's legs, a declaration of voiceover embodied, omniscience incarnate: a moment—like a narrator's revelation of materialization within the nineteenth-century novel—that urges its audience to fuse character with narrator, to recognize how the omnisciently expansive narration finds its foothold within—instead of outside—the storyworld.

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