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The Realism of Seeing the Text in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Ellen Truxaw Bistline

2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Realism of Seeing the Text in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

by

Ellen Truxaw Bistline

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Jonathan H. Grossman, Chair

"The Realism of Seeing the Text in Nineteenth-Century Fiction" investigates the way material features of nineteenth-century texts imagine the relationship between seeing and reading. It specifically examines literal illustrations, visual depictions of alphabetic textuality, that serve as both visual and verbal representations that engage readers in a self-conscious oscillation between seeing and reading. Nineteenth-century technological advances and aesthetic concerns made printing literal illustrations not only possible and commonplace but also essential to their respective fictions' experiments with realism. While an abundance of scholarship elaborates the many roles that conventional illustrations play in nineteenth-century fiction,

almost none of these studies explore literal illustrations' unique contributions. This dissertation fills this critical void and argues that seeing and reading these representationally complex components of nineteenth-century fiction reveals these fictions' preoccupation with the relationship between the material form of books and the fictional worlds these books make accessible.

Building on scholarship on the phenomenology of reading and book history, I examine the form and function of four varieties of literal illustrations as they appear in fiction by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, Bracebridge Hemyng, and Arthur Sketchley. Reading the material texts of nineteenth-century fiction from the inside out, I elucidate the representational abilities and narrative effects of interactive, typographic illustrations in Chapter 1, detail-driven pictorial initials in Chapter 2, voice-destabilizing illustration captions in Chapter 3, and metaleptic yellowback title lettering in Chapter 4. These chapters reveal the role that literal illustrations, and the material text more broadly, play in theorizing and producing experiences of interactivity and immersion, reality effects, narrative voice, and narrative dimensionality. In slowing readers down during the otherwise automatic reading process, literal illustrations offer glimpses into how some of the most central components of the experience of reading fiction materialize on the page and in our minds.

The dissertation of Ellen Truxaw Bistline is approved.

Johanna Drucker

Sarah Kareem

Anahid Nersessian

Jonathan H. Grossman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2021

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While we may see and read most texts by ourselves, my own seeing, reading, writing, and revising emerged out of an abundance of support. I have the utmost gratitude to my chair, Jonathan H. Grossman, who in my first year of graduate school introduced me to Dickens's use of pictorial initials, the seed for this project. I could not have written this dissertation without his attentive feedback, enthusiasm, and countless hours brainstorming on the whiteboard in his office. I am also deeply grateful to Johanna Drucker, who guided me through the world of book design and opened my eyes to the physical features of the book that became central to this work. I am thankful for Sarah Kareem, whose scholarly curiosity about the phenomenology of reading inspired my own and whose encouraging feedback tightened the argument of each chapter. My thanks also go to Anahid Nersessian, whose generous feedback has challenged me to make my claims more rigorous and has relentlessly believed in this project's scholarly significance.

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INTRODUCTION

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1871), one of the first things Alice finds in the world through the glass is a strange book whose words she cannot read. Carroll presents readers with an image of a passage from this book (Figure. 1).
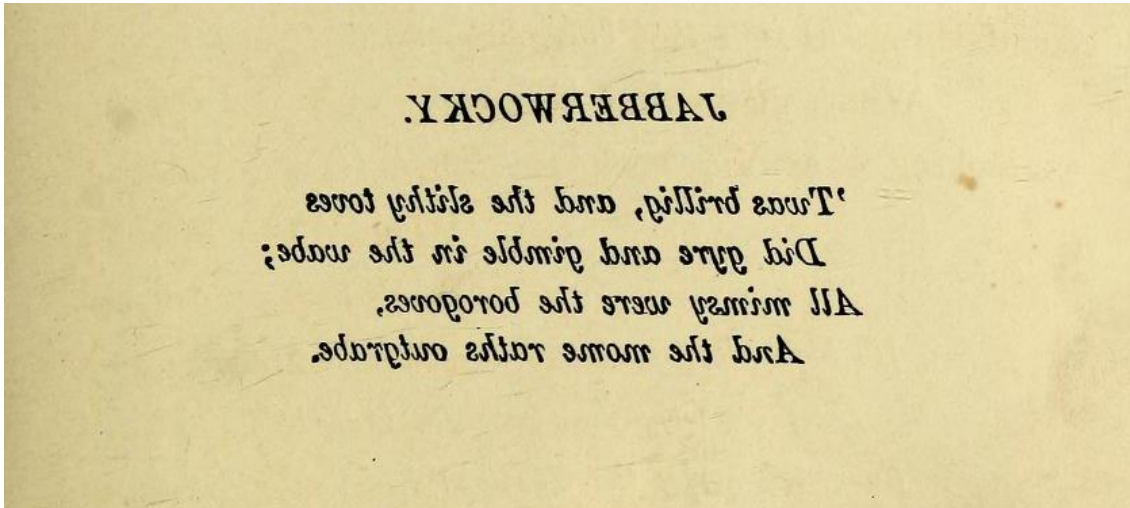
Figure 1. The looking-glass book, Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There (*Macmillian and Co., 1872*)* p. 21.[1]

Printed in reverse and barely legible, the first stanza of Carroll's nonsense poem "Jabberwocky" engages Alice and readers in a perceptual game. For Alice, reading can only commence when she learns to see her book differently. She discovers that it is a "looking-glass book." By holding the book up to a mirror, "the words … all go the right way again" (21). On the same page as the reversed stanza, readers then see what Alice sees in the mirror: the "right-way," readable, albeit nonsensical text of "Jabberwocky." Exemplary of this dissertation's objects of study, Carroll's

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1. The title page of *Through the Looking Glass* states that it was published in 1872; however, it was originally published in December 1871.

depiction of "Jabberwocky" is a variety of image-text known as a literal illustration. A literal illustration is a "graphic depiction of alphabetic textuality" that enlists readers in processes of both seeing and reading (Tucker 166).

Carroll's depiction of Alice's "looking-glass book" reflects nineteenth-century technological advances and aesthetic concerns that made printing literal illustrations not only possible and commonplace but also essential to their respective fictions' experiments in representing worlds and characters that seem real.[2] Although Carroll had originally hoped to print a larger section of *Through the Looking Glass* in mirror-image type, the process of printing even a small image of type that appears in reverse was costly and required extensive technological know-how.[3][4] Like all the examples in this study, this image-text reflects its author's (or in other cases artist's or publishers') commitment to its inclusion and the perceptual experiences it elicits. Scholars of the history of the book have long recounted the confluence of economic, demographic, political, social, and technological changes that occurred during the

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2. Literal illustrations became a standard part of mass-printing during the nineteenth century but have existed almost as long as books have. The decorated initials of illuminated manuscripts and *carmina figura* are early examples of this type of illustration.

3. In *The Letters of Lewis Carroll,* volume 1, Morton N. Cohen explains that there were considerable delays in printing *Through the Looking Glass*, in part, because of the high standards Carroll had for its visual appearance and graphic design. Cohen writes, "Time was lost … in deciding how to print 'Jabberwocky' [because] Dodgson first considered having the entire poem set in reverse type so that the reader would have to use a looking-glass to read it, but he finally agreed to print only the first stanza in reverse" (Cohen 124n4).

4. Thank you to Johanna Drucker for explaining that whatever process Carroll and his publishers used to print the "looking-glass book" in reverse, it would have been challenging and costly.

nineteenth century.[5] From the mechanization of the printing process to the invention of chromolithography, these changes transformed the material form of the book, its readership, and the way fiction appeared in it. An unprecedented mass readership consumed an unprecedented number of publications, and advances in printing technologies also meant that these publications could appeal to readers with exciting combinations of words and images. By the 1830s and 40s illustrations became common in periodicals, books of fiction, and newspapers; book covers with flashy titles and alluring scenes replaced plain bindings; and typographic or illustrative adornments within texts' printed letterpress proliferated.

Carroll's decision to include an image of the "looking-glass book" responded not only to the available technologies at his disposal, but also to aesthetic debates and readerly expectations of the time. The changing norms and possibilities of the nineteenth-century book led Victorian critics to ponder the representational and phenomenological implications of these changes. In "The Nature of the Gothic," John Ruskin at once critiques what he perceives as the mind-dulling properties of industrialization while at the same time, perhaps unwittingly, promoting books' inclusion of features that this industrialization made possible. He praises art that reveals its own imperfections as it reflects a certain "changefulness" and decorative accumulation, because this art reveals the presence of its human creators (6). Although he critiques books that include shoddy illustrations, he deems qualities that define literal illustrations—namely their ability to remind readers of authors, artists, and printers who created them along with the imaginative labor

5. Richard Altick tracks these changes in *The English Common Reader* (1857). Johanna Drucker's *The Alphabetic Labyrinth* (1995) tracks the specific technological advances that enabled mass printing and allowed for new experiments in the representation of the printed word.

they encourage—as necessary antidotes to experiences that may otherwise lead a reader's imagination to be "indolent" (139).

Other Victorian critics shared Ruskin's concerns with the way media modulates viewers' or readers' attention. Besides well-known accounts of William Morris's efforts to improve book design, lesser-known Victorian critics comment on the need for visually pleasant texts. In an 1875 address to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, artist and critic Henry Blackburn contends that better and more careful pictorial expression can ameliorate "these terrible hurrying days" and overcome the imaginative and communicative limitations of "the apparently inexorable necessity of running every word and thought into uniform lines" (373). He suggests that moving away from this "too neat and tidy" mode of printing and incorporating more facsimile-like reproductions will allow us to see "the hand-work of the author and the artist appearing on our pages… [and] infuse more character and originality into every publication that comes from the press" (373). Blackburn's desire for a greater awareness of the presence of the author and artist mirrors Ruskin's praise of imperfection. Both Ruskin's and Blackburn's concerns are relevant to the illustrated novels at the heart of my project. Literal illustrations, like the facsimiles Blackburn yearns for, gesture towards a more intimate relationship between reader and artist-author through an awareness of the artist's or writer's creating hand while also succeeding in reaching mass audiences through cheap printing. Blackburn's encouragement for readers to look beyond the "uniform lines" of printed text suggests that the nonlinear modes of reading in novels with literal illustrations offer an aesthetically pleasing and temporally retarding response to the "terrible hurrying days" that other texts visually parallel.

In his instructional book *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), Ruskin offers a more detailed theorization of the visual attention for which he advocates and which literal illustrations like Carroll's "looking-glass book" elicit. Ruskin encourages people to see the world in a more attentive, active way by pursuing an experience of what he calls the "innocence of the eye" (5-7). According to Ruskin, the innocence of the eye allows for a defamiliarization of perception, promoting a way of seeing the world in terms of flat blots of color as opposed to the more defined figures with which people are familiar. As an example of seeing with an innocence of the eye, Ruskin instructs his readers to look at letters of the alphabet as mere lines and shading, promising readers that by seeing letters as if they are intricately constructed visual things people can become better consumers and creators of these letters in their own work. Ruskin's promotion of improved perceptual and attentional strategies thus empowers viewers and readers to engage more closely and slowly with the art they consume and to become more imaginatively active in mentally (and sometimes physically) recreating the art they consume. The slowing attentional practices that Ruskin promotes serve as visually-oriented modes of close reading that intimate the significance of the perceptually defamiliarizing abilities that literal illustrations realize.

While literal illustrations may seem to be most at home within Carroll's depictions of the world through the looking glass or within the sort of artisanal books Ruskin idealizes, their regular appearances in nineteenth-century popular print intimates their formal relevance to a wide variety of literature. They appear in various typefaces printed among the pages of fiction's letterpress, take shape in the pictorial initials that so often begin installments of fiction, crop up in the form of what appear to be hand-scripted captions beneath traditional illustrations, and beckon buyers through their vivid integration into the scenes on books' covers. Each of this dissertation's chapters attends to the materiality of nineteenth-century print to mine the formal

and phenomenological possibilities of these literal illustrations which, for over a century, have disappeared or become displaced by the homogenizing demands of cheap printing and standardized critical editions. This taming and erasure of literal illustrations has left readers partially blind to nineteenth-century fiction's representational experimentation with its own materiality.

This dissertation argues that seeing and reading these common yet representationally complex components of nineteenth-century fiction reveal these fictions' preoccupation with the relationship between the material form of books and the fictional worlds these books make accessible. Among this dissertation's lines of inquiry, I investigate the following questions: What insights arise when we consider literal illustrations as part of the texts of nineteenth-century fiction, as keys that make the processes that undergird these text's instantiations of fictional persons and worlds perceptible and accessible? What is the status of material textuality in fiction in the nineteenth-century's increasingly textualized reality? In answering these questions this dissertation discovers that just as Alice's "looking-glass book" must be read with an attentive look in the mirror, literal illustrations like it encourage their readers to self-reflexively examine what they see as they read all the while enriching readers' real and imagined perceptions of the fictions they encounter. By attentively seeing and reading literal illustrations, this dissertation uncovers many ways in which nineteenth-century fiction understands, exploits, and justifies its existence within printed books.

I. Seeing Texts

Literal illustrations remind readers of the material book's visuality and that visuality's role in shaping imaginative experiences. They elicit processes of seeing and reading, which, if

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attended to, reveal how both literal illustrations and the material texts in which they appear

participate in creating fictional worlds that seem real. My work contributes to scholarship that

builds on what Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best describe as surface reading: the analysis of

"what is evident, perceptible, [and] apprehensible in texts; … what insists on being looked at

rather than what we must train ourselves to see through" (9). Practices of surface reading existed

far before Marcus and Best defined it, such as in textual criticism, book history, and

phenomenological criticism, all of which my work on literal illustrations builds. Best and

Marcus's inclusive term for these different kinds of reading encapsulates much of this project's

theoretical orientation.

By examining how literal illustrations comment on and help readers to self-consciously

enact the mental processes of imagining fictional worlds, my dissertation also contributes to the

body of criticism that sees the material, visual aspects of the novel—its bindings, frontispieces,

typography, and illustrations—as important constituents of its meaning. Scholars who pioneered

this mode of criticism like Gérard Genette,[6] Jerome McGann, Johanna Drucker, Margareta de

Grazia, and Peter Stallybrass called others to study paratexts' semantic contributions to the

verbal texts they accompany,[7] and several scholars, whose work informs my own, have answered

their call. Besides the useful descriptive book histories of paratexts (as in Anthony Rota's *Apart*

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6. See Genette's *Paratexts* (1997). Genette notably fails to discuss any nonverbal paratexts, but his discussion of

    paratextual material as a "threshold" to the text seems, especially in the case of novels, relevant to my own work.

    He writes, "More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold* … that offers the world

    at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (Genette 1-2).

7. See McGann's *Textual Condition* (1991), Johanna Drucker's *The Visible Word* (1994) and Margereta De Grazia

    and Peter Stallybrass's "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text" (1993).

from the Text (1998)), critics like Leah Price in *How to Do Thing with Books in Victorian Britain* (2012) have begun to spell out the ways in which the material form of the book contributes to, or, for Price, divorces readers from its verbal meaning within the context of nineteenth-century Britain.

Among the scholarship on paratexts, as would be expected, studies on the role of illustrations in nineteenth-century fiction inform my project's methodology. I align with critics like Stuart Sillars whose work sees the interplay of word, image, and the material form of books of fiction as mutually constructing their meanings. In *Visualization in Popular Fiction, 1860-1960* (1995), Sillars laments the fact that "there has been little interest" in theorizing what he calls "the unified discourse of word and image," and his work begins to correct this critical gap (Sillars 17). Scholars who pursue this unified discourse include Julia Thomas, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Mary Elizabeth Leighton, Lisa Surridge, J. Hillis Miller, and John Harvey. [8] While these critics' work serves as a model for my own, their conclusions serve more as case studies on particular works as opposed to broader or transferrable theories on the relationship between word and image in narrative. Most of these critics agree that more work needs to be done on word and image as a unified discourse. Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge emphasize this need: "Accepting illustrations as constitutive of plot (rather than supplemental to it) means no less than a reassessment of the narratological structures of Victorian serial fiction" and this reassessment has only just begun for illustrated fiction as a whole (97).

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8. See Thomas's *Pictorial Victorians* (2004), Janzen Kooistra's *Bitextuality* (1995), Leighton and Surridge's "The Plot Thickens: Toward a Narratological Analysis of Illustrated Serial Fiction in the 1860s" (2008), Miller's "The Fiction of Realism: Sketches by Boz, Oliver Twist, and Cruikshank's Illustrations" (1971), and Harvey's *Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators* (1971).

Despite the wide array of scholarship on paratexts and illustrations in nineteenth-century fiction, little scholarship exists on literal illustrations.[9] One of the only pieces that focuses exclusively on literal illustrations' contributions to fiction, and my source for the term literal illustration, is Herbert Tucker's "Literal Illustrations in Victorian Print" (2002). This essay illuminates the perceptual processes that literal illustrations stimulate and posits their purpose in Victorian fiction. Tucker explores several examples of literal illustrations in Victorian texts, from decorated initials and typographic renderings of characters' writing to words that appear within conventional illustrations. He concludes that because literal illustrations exist as both words to be read and as images to be seen, they produce "a reflux of signification, that washes back across the reader's experience to awaken and nourish something radically primal about the construal of textual meanings sentenced or sketched" (Tucker 167). As Tucker explains, literal illustrations engender perceptual processes that comprise and destabilize a text's meaning, promoting reflexivity about the way people see and read. This dissertation builds on Tucker's attention to the way readers see and read literal illustrations as more than just visual objects of study and expands on his preliminary discussion of the phenomenological effects this mode of seeing and

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9. To my knowledge, no other scholars of Victorian fiction (except Herbert Tucker) use the term literal illustration and instead use broader terms, such as "illustrations" or "imagetexts." As such, this scholarship rarely explores the specific representational affordances of the literal illustration, or it considers these affordances only within the context of single texts. For examples of thoughtful analyses of imagetexts within individual works of fiction, see Darcy Irvin's "Image-Texts in 'The Woman in White" (2009) and Lorraine Janzen Kooistra's "Charting Rocks in the Golden Stream: Or, Why Textual Ornaments Matter to Victorian Periodicals Studies" (2016).

reading produces. I begin where Tucker leaves off—how do the phenomenological implications of literal illustrations and their self-theorizing abilities affect the way readers understand a text's manifestation of its fictions, and how do different varieties of literal illustrations participate in this process?

Because of the reflexivity literal illustrations produce, I argue that they act as what W. J. T. Mitchell calls "metapictures." Metapictures are "pictures about pictures—that is, pictures that refer to themselves or to other pictures that are used to show what a picture is" (35). Because literal illustrations constitute both words and images within larger fictions, they not only theorize how they, as images, work, but also how the words on a page evoke fictional imaginings too. I argue that they achieve these effects because of the perceptual oscillation between seeing and reading that their dual properties as words and images generate. Mitchell describes metapictures with similar, albeit only visual, dual properties as "multistable" images. He explains that multistable images like the Jastrow-Wittgenstein duck-rabbit illustrate "the coexistence of contrary or simply different readings in the single image" by using "a single gestalt to shift from one reference to another" through which they "produce a kind of secondary auto-reference" (Mitchell 45, 48). Just as a viewer may tilt between seeing a rabbit and a duck in the single image of the duck-rabbit, a reader may see a word (or letter of the alphabet) and a picture in a single literal illustration. The oscillation between seeing and reading and the "autoreference" that results can produce an effect of defamiliarization.[10] Through a careful seeing then reading of

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10. In "Art as Technique" (1917), Viktor Shklovsky argues that all art should produce the effect of

defamiliarization. He explains, "The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and

not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase

literal illustrations readers can see fictional worlds and the textuality that produces them with fresh eyes while also achieving a self-awareness in how they participate in these fictional worlds' creation.

II. Reading Images

Akin to Genette who claims that a book's paratexts act as thresholds through which readers move between their reality and a fictional world, the book jacket designer and art director Peter Mendelsund distinguishes between experiences of the outward phenomenal world and the inward experience of a book. Mendelsund suggests that the technology of the book allows for imperceptible movements of the mind and a doubling of perspective:

> When I read, my retirement from the phenomenal world is undertaken too quickly to notice. The world in front of me and the world 'inside' me are not merely adjacent, but overlapping, superimposed. A book feels like the intersection of these two domains—or like a conduit; a bridge; a passage between them. … An open book acts as a blind—its boards and pages shut out the world's clamorous stimuli and encourage the imagination. (58)

While Mendelsund's writing is provocative rather than argumentative in its claims about the phenomenology of reading, it reveals a contradictory impulse in discussions of the reading experience—that is imagining the book as both a passage between and a part of the outward and inner experiences of reading. Where Mendelsund understands reading as a "retirement from the

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the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (Shklovsky 16).

phenomenal world," my project looks to books' "boards and pages" to discover the representational strategies as well as the perceptual and cognitive processes that readers might otherwise believe are "undertaken too quickly to notice."

Literal illustrations participate in and draw attention to these processes, some of which Wolfgang Iser's foundational "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" (1972) theorizes. He explains that when reading fiction, people participate in creating the "virtual dimension of the text" (Iser 284). For Iser, this virtual dimension exists as a composite of both the written text itself and the reader's imaginative construction of some consistent, configurative meaning, which he deems to be something like a fictional world or what he calls the text's "illusion" (290-1). Iser builds on Roman Ingarden's conception of flow and blockage during the reading experience.[11] Iser, via Ingarden, argues that when the flow, or the easy and expected movement of the reader from one sentence to the next, of a text is broken, readers must do the imaginative work of filling in the gaps between what has happened or been described and how that shapes their conception of fictive characters and settings. He argues that it is through this imaginative process "of anticipation and retrospection that leads to the formation of the virtual dimension, which in turn transforms the text into an experience for the reader" (Iser 286). Iser further claims that as readers work to "fit everything [in a text] in a consistent pattern" or "gestalt" they will inevitably oscillate between accepting the illusion of the gestalt and being jolted out of it only to recreate and redefine it anew (288-293). He explains,

> As we read, we oscillate to a greater or lesser extent between the building and the
> breaking of illusions. In a process of trial and error, we organize and reorganize the
> various data offered to use by the text [in constructing its virtual dimension] … We look

11. For more on "flow" and "blockage" see Ingarden's *Vom Erkennen des Literarischen Kunstwerks* (1968), p. 32.

forward, we look back, we decide, we change our decisions, we form expectations, we

are shocked by their nonfulfillment, we question, we muse, we accept, we reject; this is

the dynamic process of recreation. (Iser 293).

Iser views the virtual dimension of the text as one that relies on a reader's process of oscillating

between building and breaking illusion. By ushering readers through an oscillatory process of

seeing and reading, literal illustrations draw attention to the way the reading process entails

periods of flow and blockage. As they contribute to both this flow and blockage, literal

illustrations reveal some of the mechanics behind how this process works, exposing the

representational strategies that both they and their larger texts employ to make their fiction feel

real.

Elaine Auyoung's *When Fiction Feels Real* (2018) discovers and explains some of these

representational strategies and uses a critical methodology akin to my own. She investigates how

different literary techniques "invite readers to feel as though they have come to know unreal

persons, places, and incidents" and demonstrates that this sort of reading "can be an object of

study that repays serious critical attention" (3). Opening up a book of nineteenth-century fiction,

seeing its literal illustrations, and understanding these illustrations' representational abilities

offers a similarly rewarding pay off by revealing the usually imperceptible processes through

which readers translate seeing a material text into imagining a fictional world.

Similar to Auyoung's readings of verbal representational strategies, I read literal

illustrations and the perceptual and cognitive processes that they evoke as producing reality

effects related to but also distinct from the one Roland Barthes' discusses in "The Reality Effect"

(1968). Literal illustrations' reality effects are functionally similar to Barthes' in that the sense

that the realism they achieve arises not so much from the "imitation of reality" that Ian Watt

describes as "formal realism" in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) but rather from a sense of reality that emerges out of a combination of the limited cues a text provides and the cognitive processes these cues incite in readers. Some of these reality effects produce what Alison Byerly calls "behavioral realism." Byerly claims that Victorian novels, like virtual-reality video games, achieve an immersive sense of reality not only through "photographic realism" but also "behavioral realism," the real or imagined interactions a reader has with the book or within the virtual world of the text.[12] Although Byerly imagines most of these interactions as virtually evoked through tools like description, direct addresses to the reader, or similarities with other Victorian virtual reality technologies (such as the panorama and diorama),[13] the interactivity that she sees as mostly virtual is something that I see physically actualized through the processes through which readers understand literal illustrations.

Although my readings of literal illustrations sometimes, like readings by scholars of the phenomenology of reading, hypothesize how an ideal reader may experience the text, my methodology also aligns with Sarah Kareem's more distant approach to reader response in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder* (2014). Investigating experiences of wonder, Kareem explains that rather than being interested in reader response, she investigates how "texts imagine wonder as a reader response" (23). Literal illustrations both evoke reader responses and theorize how these responses emerge.

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12. Marie-Laure Ryan's "Immersion vs. Interactivity: Virtual Reality and Literary Theory" (1999), similarly defines realist experiences as immersive, involving what critics might call formal or photographic realism, or interactive, encouraging the behavioral realism Byerly describes.

13. Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) also comments on new observational technologies that changed people's ways of seeing throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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All of the literal illustrations I study involve readers in oscillatory processes of seeing and reading that contribute to their respective texts' realisms while also theorizing how these realisms emerge out of perceptual and cognitive processes. Different varieties of literal illustrations elicit distinct modes of reading and seeing and consequently evoke and imagine distinct processes through which fiction seems real. Each of this dissertation's chapters examines a different variety of literal illustration, analyzes each of these variety's representational characteristics and formal affordances, and considers the implications of these affordances within readings of nineteenth-century fiction.

My first chapter investigates the typographic illustration, a literal illustration that comprises printed type that represents the documents within a fictional world. Typographic illustrations engage in mimesis, imitating the appearance of the stone-inscriptions, hand-written letters, public placards, or printed forms with which fictional characters engage. Made physically present to readers through their appearances on the page, these representations at once attention to their artifice and materiality while also stimulating what I read as an interactive, behavioral realism that verges on an experience of telepresence, a sense of being present within a fictional world but at a distance. Besides conveying relevant verbal information about their respective fictional worlds, these representations elicit a mode of seeing that enables readers to experience fictional documents as if these documents transcend fictional boundaries to become present within the readers' world, or, alternatively as if readers' eyes or hands transcend fictional boundaries to become present with the documents within a fictional world. The potential for these kinds of interactive and immersive experiences when paired with typographic illustrations'

self-reflexive properties reveals how nineteenth-century fiction envisions the role of the physical book's print and page in facilitating interactive experiences of fiction that feel real.

In my second chapter, I explore the form and function of pictorial initials within nineteenth-century novels. A subset of the broader category of illuminated letters, pictorial initials comprise letters of the alphabet that either form from or appear within a picture. Such initials appear at the beginning of chapters within many Victorian novels, and, as I argue, participate in and theorize these novels' modes of realism. Initials' dual pictorial-alphabetic form elicits a perceptual experience in which a reader leaves behind the initial's illustrative image for sequential, alphabetic reading. By staging and facilitating this process, pictorial initials reveal the paradoxical meaningfulness of superfluous details in their respective novels' fictional worlds. I delve into how this process works in the initials of Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1864-6). By intimating extradiegetic character connections, the initials in *The Old Curiosity Shop* create a sense that its character network is horizonless. In *Wives and Daughters*, initials suggest an unlimited granularity of pertinent intradiegetic detail. Pictorial initials' contributions to Dickens's and Gaskell's distinct modes of realism reveal the ways in which reading fiction always involves readers in processes of imagining possibilities and leaving them behind as they progress through the words of a book.

My third chapter studies one of the least pictorial varieties of literal illustrations— illustration captions that appear to be hand-scripted by an author or artist or are visually distinct from a work of fiction's letterpress. Among these captions, I focus on a subset that are common during the mid-nineteenth century, what I call quotational captions. Quotational captions consist of the speech or thoughts of a character or narrator pulled directly from a novel's letterpress. I argue that because of these captions' extradiegetic placement beneath illustrations and their

hand-scripted appearance, they elicit oscillatory experiences in which a reader may imagine the words in each caption being voiced by an author or narrator, or, alternatively, as being voiced by one or more characters. Using the quotational captions in Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864-5) as a case study, I discover how quotational captions modulate narrative voice in ways akin to but also more expansive than free indirect discourse. In the single utterance of a quotational caption, readers can imagine multiple real or fictional persons speaking. Using a narratological approach, I taxonomize quotational captions' formal properties and describe the multiple fictional voices each variety of quotational caption can represent. This analysis uncovers the quotational caption as an as of yet unstudied narrative device that lays bare the processes through which readers translate the words they see on the page into imagining the voices of the fictional persons.

My fourth and final chapter looks to the title lettering that appears on the vividly illustrated covers of yellowback fiction. Yellowbacks were brightly colored, affordable books typically sold at railway stations from the 1850s to the early 1900s. For the first time in the history of the book, yellowbacks used colorful illustrations of scenes from their storyworlds to attract consumers, mirroring the graphic designs of the advertisements that flourished around them. Many yellowbacks enmesh their title lettering within their cover scenes, integrating the seemingly extradiegetic words or letters of the title into the diegetic visual contents of the scene. Readers move between reading these books' titles as superficial, extradiegetic indicators of a book's contents and seeing them as if they are three-dimensionally integrated into the fictional world the cover scene represents. I argue that these yellowback covers exhibit what I call dimensionality—a property of covers that stage their books' literal and figurative depth. By layering or integrating their title lettering into their cover scenes, these books achieve a three-

dimensional appearance that creates a sense of continuity between the paratextual, real world of the book and the diegetic, fictional world of the book's narrative. As a result, the covers gesture to their respective books' status as three-dimensional objects. These covers and their enmeshed title lettering also represent scenes that thwart easy seeing and reading, either that of characters or readers. They intimate depths of meaning that readers can only discern by reading the fiction within a book's covers. I argue that through the confluence of these experiences of literal and figurative depth, yellowback covers theorize and enact the physical, three-dimensional book's role in manifesting representations of capacious fictional worlds. At the same time, the yellowback covers' dimensionality offer readers perceptual guides through which readers might make sense of their own hard-to-read realities.

Moving from the typographic illustrations printed within fiction's letterpress, to the pictorial initials that begin a section of that letterpress, to the illustration captions that appear in the paratextual pages before or outside the letterpress, and, finally, to the covers that introduce and encompass fiction, this dissertation reads nineteenth-century fiction from the inside out. Each stage of this analysis reveals the ways in which literal illustrations serve as skeleton keys that unlock the mechanisms through which the material features of books contribute to the way we imagine fictional worlds and suggest that both seeing and reading play integral roles in these imaginative processes.

CHAPTER ONE:

Typing Fiction's Interactive Spaces

A. D. L. L

— Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary* (1816)
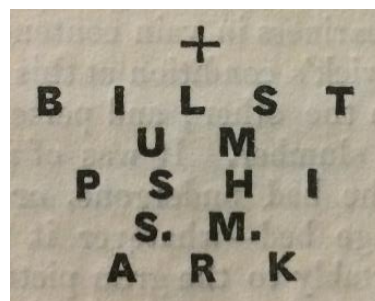
— Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836)[14]

This chapter's enigmatic and interrelated epigraphs represent similarly puzzling stone

inscriptions printed in Walter Scott's *The Antiquary* (1816) and Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick*

Papers (1836-7). Where Scott's depiction of his stone inscription appears transcribed within the

body of the text, Dickens's stands out, set off, centered, and in a different typeface than the rest

of the page. Both Scott's and Dickens's inscriptions represent a variety of literal illustration that I

call typographic illustrations. Typographic illustrations represent documents and other textual

objects like signs or inscriptions from fictional worlds by using printed type. Tracking

typographic illustrations from their experimental appearances in early novels to their more

standard uses during the Victorian period, this chapter investigates how this device impacts the

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14. See figures 2 and 8 for citations for the images in the epigraphs.

novel's modes of mimesis by bringing a small piece of a fictional world into readers' hands. I argue that typographic illustrations create a realist effect through their mimesis of fictional documents and, more importantly for this chapter, through the interactive reading experiences they encourage. These typographic renderings and their visual distinctions from the inscriptions, handwriting, or papers they represent promote an awareness of the fictionality of these mimetic representations, alerting readers to a fictional world's material and imaginative construction as well to the thematic implications of each document's presentation and inclusion in the narrative.[15] Beyond their visually mimetic properties through which they participate in a sort of photographic realism, typographic illustrations promote textual interactivity that produces an experience of behavioral realism. By holding, examining, carrying, and turning back to the documents that typographic illustrations represent, readers can adopt behaviors that mirror those of characters within the diegesis.

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As many scholars of textuality and the history of the book note, any study of the semiotics of typography runs counter to Beatrice Ward's famous claim that printing should be invisible, like a crystal goblet through which a person can easily see and enjoy a wine. According to Ward, print on the page should disappear in relation to the meanings and imaginative possibilities that print facilitates.[16] Despite the fact that many novels conform to Ward's standards, extensive scholarship has illuminated and celebrated the diverse semiotic possibilities

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15. In stressing their own materiality, typographic illustrations return their readers to a premodern mindset, in part erased by widespread printing in which "there is a non-distinction between what is seen and what is read" (Foucault 43). See Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966).

16. See Beatrice Ward's "Printing Should Be Invisible" (1951).

of typography.[17] The scholarship with which I engage in the pages that follow builds on the work of earlier textual criticism and specifically addresses the representational effects of typographic illustrations. This scholarship focuses on typographic illustrations' localized, visually realist effects within specific texts, leaving open the question, which this chapter works to answer, of what are the broader phenomenological implications of reading and interacting with typographic illustrations in novels. In other words, I investigate how typographic illustrations elicit readers' interactions with the text and envision these illustrations' reception.

The typographic illustrations that appear in genre-defining eighteenth-century novels reveal the mimetic and anti-mimetic possibilities of this device. Considering the effects of typographic illustrations within early novels, as well as exploring scholars' approaches to these devices, provides a foundation on which my study's focus on Victorian typographic illustrations builds. An iconic novel full of typographic anomalies, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), experiments with print and page design with ingenious effects that later novels imitate. Besides textual experiments like its marbled page, its illustrations of meandering plot lines, or its blank space for imagining the Widow Wadman, Sterne incorporates typographic illustrations like the use of a gothic font to represent the legal document of Tristram's mother's marriage settlement and the typographic depiction of the tombstone of Tristram's former servant, Yorick.

Sterne's typographic representation of Yorick's tombstone, while engaging in representational practices specific to the eighteenth century, prefigures the mimetic and anti-

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17. For foundational texts on this topic see Margereta De Grazia and Peter Stallybrass's "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text" (1993), Jerome McGann's *Black Riders* (1993), and Johanna Drucker's *The Visible Word* (1994). For a collection of scholarship on this topic, see Paul A. Gutjahr and Megan L. Benton's *Illuminating Letters* (2001).

mimetic possibilities of similar typographic illustrations that appear in later novels. Within a rectangular box formed of black leadings, the inscription appears, echoing Shakespeare and reading, "Alas, poor Yorick!" *Tristram Shandy*'s visual and typographic depiction of a tombstone and its epitaph are a far cry from resembling an actual tombstone and its inscription, yet the inclusion of this typographic illustration offers readers a tenuous approximation of these things and, as Helen Williams argues, self-consciously participates in a clichéd iconography of mourning.[18] As such, readers bear witness (albeit comically) to the represented death as well as to the melodramatic black page that follows it. The facetiousness of the tombstone's representation paves the way for a comedic reception of the black page that follows it, which graphically performs mourning in a way that draws readers out of an immersive experience of Sterne's fiction and into an awareness of its presentation within a material text.

In a different, less comedic vein, the epistolary novel repeatedly presents typographic renditions of material documents whose seeming immediacy brings readers closer to characters' mental states. This practice becomes especially apparent when Samuel Richardson plays with type and page layout in *Clarissa*'s tenth "Mad Paper." In this letter, Richardson represents Clarissa's traumatized mental state through visually disorganized writing. Clarissa's thoughts appear in short passages printed at a slanted orientation that disorients the otherwise typographic regularity of page. Some scholars, like Steven R. Price, argue that this printing choice strengthens *Clarissa*'s formal realism by creating the sense that the printed letter mimics an authentic handwritten manuscript (119).[19] Frances Ferguson's reading of Clarissa's Mad Papers

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18. See Helen Williams, "'Alas, poor YORICK!':Sterne's Iconography of Mourning" in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 28, no. 2, Winter 2015-16.

19. Here Price refers specifically to the type of realism that Ian Watt theorizes in *The Rise of the Novel*.

complicates Price's account. She explains that while readers generally accept that each epistle in Richardson's novel serves to "write to the moment" (as Richardson famously says) by explaining events that have just happened, the Mad Papers draw attention to the fact that "the printer's orderly lines do not look like anyone's handwriting" (105). She explains, "To call attention to this stipulation … is to indicate the discrepancy between the handwriting that the printed page has been defined to be and the print that it so palpably is" (105). She explains that Mad Paper X is "both mimetic and anti-mimetic at the same time, for it calls attention to the fact that one has dutifully been reading for hundreds of pages as if the printed page counted as handwriting" (105). Ferguson ultimately concludes that this mimesis and anti-mimesis (what she terms a "mimesis of distinction") parallel the novel's plot and characterization in which Clarissa resolutely refuses to bend to Lovelace's insistent and violent pursuit. These accounts of early typographic illustrations rightly explore the way this form creates an oscillatory experience between immersive realism and awareness of the novel's material presence, yet they leave the phenomenological and narratological consequences of this oscillatory experience largely unexplored.

The few critics of Victorian instantiations of these devices draw similar conclusions to the critics of eighteenth-century novels. Monica F. Cohen, for instance, notes that the typographic illustrations in Dickens's *Bleak House* produce an "excess of verisimilitude" that achieves mimetic and anti-mimetic effects (831). Darcy Irvin comes to conclusion that typographic illustrations "negotiate readers' responses to the 'realism' of their narratives" (231). Herbert Tucker's more extensive account of literal illustrations, of which typographic illustrations are a subset, suggests that a typographic illustration "doubles our imaginative participation in the illusion" that these illustrations create (177). He explains that they achieve

this effect by "by *signifying* … not *depicting* it [a written document]—by giving us the sign of a sign" (177). For Tucker, literal illustrations like typographic illustrations produce a more intense imaginative engagement with the text; as I will explain further on, I read typographic illustrations' elicitation of a different sort of imaginative engagement than that of typical reading to be a central feature of the type of realism they engender. Tucker further emphasizes that literal illustrations produce a metatextual awareness of the way these illustrations signify the things they depict and their effects on readers. What he leaves unexplored, however, are the consequences of this awareness of the reading process for the interpretation of the texts in which things like typographic illustrations appear.

While the aforementioned critics make important contributions to an understanding of how typographic illustrations participate in their respective novels' realism and fictionality, they do little to interrogate the way these typographic oddities elicit certain modes of perception or behaviors that impact these novels' realisms. By focusing on the processual nature of the experience of these illustrations, I build on the work of Wolfgang Iser and Marie-Laure Ryan, who illuminate how aspects of the reading process lead readers to imagine a novel's narrative world.[20] Iser's "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" argues that the interactive relationship between reader and a fictional text produces that text's narrative world. He explains that this experience is processual: "As we read, we oscillate to a greater or lesser extent between

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20. It is worth noting that in *When Fiction Feels Real* (2018), Elaine Auyoung also considers the narrative devices novels use to engage their readers in cognitive processes that create a realist effect. Her approach of attending to the phenomenology of specific aspects of the novel is akin to my attention to the particular device of the typographic puzzle. Where Auyoung finds realist effects in the language and body of the text, I turn my argument's attention to how the material text fits into experiencing a sort of virtual reality.

the building and the breaking of illusions. In a process of trial and error, we organize and reorganize the various data offered by the text" (293). The building and breaking of illusions that Iser discusses relate to the contradictory immersion and self-reflexive awareness that typographic illustrations elicit. For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to suggest that the self-reflexive experience that typographic illustrations promote is one that not only leads readers to an awareness of the imaginative mechanics of the reading process but also to a greater interactivity with the imagined narrative world.

Ryan's account of the relationship between immersion and interactivity, which builds on Iser's conception of the reading process, informs my understanding of how this interactivity works. She explicitly builds on Iser's description of the interaction between reader and text in the construction of textual meaning and further notes that where many critics read moments of interactivity as antithetical to immersion in a text's narrative world, she sees these seemingly divergent textual experiences as compatible contributors to a text's realism. She explains, "While immersion in a textual world depends on the forward movement of a linear plot, interactivity involves (and creates) a spatial organization. … While immersion looks through the signs to the reference world, interactivity exploits the materiality of the medium" (132). The "spatial organization" of typographic illustrations as they appear on the page allows for small moments of interactivity like those that Ryan describes.

By drawing attention to their own materiality and the process through which readers may experience them, and, simultaneously, making space for experiences of interactivity, typographic illustrations offer readers an access to fictional worlds that extends beyond that of verbal description or conventional illustration. Typographic illustrations exploit the materiality of the novel's page and print to create an experience of metalepsis, a transgression of the boundaries

between narrative levels or worlds, by bringing small, spatial components of a novel's world—its paper documents and other textual matter—into a reader's hands. Unlike like any other novelistic device, typographic illustrations allow readers to feel immersed within a fictional world, as if they can see and sometimes feel the documents within it, while also granting an unparalleled ability to interact with these documents like characters do. The visual or physical disparities between typographic illustrations and the fictional documents they embody further alert readers to the way the material text produces these reality effects. The regular use of typographic illustrations throughout nineteenth-century fiction reflects this fiction's self-conscious reliance on modes of mimetic effects are inseparable from the materials of their construction.

<p align="center">*</p>

In their most basic form, typographic illustrations are indistinguishable from transcriptions. These illustrations, although they may not be deserving of the name, pave the way for the representation of the texts of a narrative world without instigating much awareness of that fictional text's presence on the page. Epistolary novels rely on this mode of representation in which they preserve some of the formatting of a letter, such as with headings and signatures, but otherwise appear in a standard typeface. The same is true with the representations of the various texts that appear in *The Antiquary*, one of which appears in this chapter's epigraph: "A. D. L. L.."

Like most early-nineteenth-century novels, Scott's *Antiquary* appeared in its first edition without illustrations, so its depictions of its narrative world relied almost exclusively on description and dialogue. A historical novel like Scott's earlier *Waverley* (1814) and *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* documents Scottish life during the 1790s and its plot focuses

on the influence of the past on the present. The adventures of its titular antiquary, Jonathan

Oldbuck, a beggar named Edie Ochiltree, and the lovers Lovel and Isabella transport readers into

the sights and language of Scottish life.[21] *The Antiquary* thus uses a mode of mimesis that asks

its readers to trust in its implied author's guidance in exploring the unfamiliar cultures and

dialects of Scottish people from an earlier moment in history. When Scott presents the "A. D. L.

L." inscription that Oldbuck discovers (Figure 2), readers must mostly rely on their minds' eyes

to conjure up the sights and artifacts Oldbuck describes and trust Scott's descriptions of them.

The Antiquary's verbal contents include repeated instances of bareboned typographic

illustrations. Representations of texts crop up as typographic approximations of their imagined

visual and material forms; readers catch a glimpse of a dream vision of a motto in a book (*The

Antiquary*, Oxford University Press 131), an unclear message on a treasure box (240-1), and my

epigraph's supposedly antiquarian inscription on a stone (41-2).

    In *The Antiquary*, typographic illustrations offer frequent and crucial reminders of how

Scott's novel engages thematically with issues of literacy as its typographic illustrations

phenomenologically enlist its audience in its particular brand of right reading, one which relies

more on authoritative textual descriptions than on independent interpretation.[22] When Oldbuck

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21. In *The Historical Novel* (1955), Georg Lukács explains that Scott innovated on the traditions of the eighteenth-
century's "great realist social novel" through his "broad delineation of manners and circumstances attendant
upon events, the dramatic character of action and, in close connection with this, the new and important role of
dialogue in the novel" (31).

22. The theme of right reading in *The Antiquary* shows up repeatedly in the transcribed texts that appear throughout
the novel. Besides Oldbuck's humorous wrong-reading of the inscription he discovers, the novel's protagonist,
Lovel struggles to make sense of a text he envisions in a dream, and the novel's antagonist, Dousterswivel
misinterprets the markings on a "treasure," much to his embarrassment.

discovers his supposedly antiquarian stone, he "appeal[s] to people's eye-sight" by noting the context in which that stone appears. He believes his antiquarian discovery confirms his theory that there was Roman encampment in Scotland, so he also more specifically appeals to people's sight in affirming that a stone's "A. D. L. L." is an ancient Roman acronym (Scott 41-2).

> sir, we found a stone, which I have transported to Monkbarns, in order to have the sculpture taken off with plaister of Paris; it bears a sacrificing vessel, and the letters A. D. L. L. which may stand, without much violence, for *Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*."

Figure 2. Oldbuck's Discovery, Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, vol. 1 (James Ballantyne and Co., 1816), p. 74.

Using his antiquarian expertise, Oldbuck interprets this inscription as standing "without much violence, for *Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*" or "dedicated willingly and heartily by Agricola" (*The Antiquary*, Oxford University Press 44), and his companion, Lovel, confirms that while it proves difficult to see the signs of an encampment, Oldbuck's conclusion about the inscription makes some sense. Oldbuck's discovery, however, is promptly called into question when Edie Ochiltree reveals that Oldbuck's inscription represents nothing more than a recent joke that locals played on a bridegroom. Ochiltree explains that Oldbuck's purported antiquarian discovery is merely "'a stane that ane o' the mason-callants cut ladle on to have a bourd at the bridegroom, and he put four letters on't, that's A. D. L. L.—Aiken Drum's Lang Ladle—for Aiken was ane o' the kale-suppers o' Fife'" (44). Given that readers cannot see the inscription (besides the typographic representation of its initials) or the stone on which it appears, they have no means of judging whether Oldbuck's or Ochiltree's account of the inscription's origin is

correct; instead, readers must rely on the contextual details the text provides: Lovel's initial inability to see any signs of antiquity, Ochiltree's extensive knowledge of the region and its history, and Oldbuck's embarrassment at Ochiltree's claims. These details assure readers that even though they cannot see the inscription, the landscape, or Oldbuck's face, they can (and must) passively trust the text to give us an accurate account of its reality.

Perhaps paradoxically, because *The Antiquary* fails to offer readers more immediate or detailed access to its textual world through something like a more detailed typographic illustration of Oldbuck's finding, it instead requires that readers rely on second-hand accounts of how to make sense of its textual objects. In lacking a graphic representation of the inscription, readers have less agency or involvement in ascertaining its meaning. Merely transcribed text, even with some supplementary description of how it appears, leaves readers reliant on whatever interpretations the narrator or characters offer, and while readers may not think about how a lack of information about textual materiality within the fictional world matters to how they experience and interpret that text, instances like that in *The Antiquary* reflect the limitations of these representations.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

With more, less expensive printing resources at authors' and publishers' disposal, novels from the mid-to-late nineteenth-century commonly moved past mere transcription of documents and textual objects and instead began to incorporate graphic depictions of these things using the typographic tools at their disposal.[23] Illustrations were common in the Victorian novel; however,

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23. See Johanna Drucker's "The Alphabet in the 19th Century: Advertising, Visible Speech, and Narratives of History" in *The Alphabetic Labyrinth* (1995) for an account of how the nineteenth-century mechanization of printing transformed the way words appeared on the page in mass printing (239-242).

the illustrators of novels rarely used their time or talent to depict the important documents or texts that appear in their respective novels' narrative worlds.[24] Typographic illustrations provided a means for graphically representing texts in the novel without requiring the work of an illustrator—this meant that typographic illustrations could appear in traditionally illustrated and unillustrated novels alike.[25] These typographic illustrations create the impression of the presence of the physical texts of the novel that allows for interactivity that enriches the reader's immersive experience of the narrative world; they enable readers to interact with the text as if readers can see or hold the texts of the fictional world in their hands—as if the material form of the novel, its verbal medium, and its pages metaleptically transports these fictional materials into the real world of the reader or, alternatively, as if the reader's hands or eyes metaleptically move into the realm of the text.

These illustrations produce a condensed experience of the narrative world as a virtual reality by creating what scholars call "telepresence." Alison Byerly describes this experience as a "perceived or simulated presence, a sensation of not just looking at something but *being* somewhere else" (15). She elaborates, "Although telepresence is now often shortened to simply presence, the term with its original prefix describes a paradox: being present at a distance, being both here and there" (16). Typographic illustrations may seem to function like typical

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24. Some exceptions to this would be in the late Victorian (or perhaps Edwardian) stories of Sherlock Holmes and *The Scarlet Amulet*.

25. Irvin notes that in *The Woman in White*, which appeared in the unillustrated periodical *All the Year Round*, typographic illustrations enriched the text by acting as illustrations in a medium that otherwise had limited visual appeal. Irvin's conclusions can apply to the many other unillustrated novels that similarly incorporate typographic illustrations.

illustrations, functioning as images that readers simply look *at*; however, their existence as documents that become physically embodied for readers through the media of print, paper, and book, creates an effect in which they seem to transcend the boundaries between fiction and reality, producing an experience akin to the telepresence Byerly describes. Similar to the experience of a video-game player who takes on the first-person role of a character who holds and investigates the maps or letters of a game's fictional world, readers can experience the documents embodied in typographic illustrations as if their eyes and hands are transported into those documents' world. Unlike video games, readers of typographic illustrations, particularly typographic illustrations of paper documents whose materiality convergences with the paper of the page, can literally touch what seems to be the fictive document. With this metaleptic interaction with a small part of a fictional world, readers experience these worlds as more tangible and playful places.

One novel that employs typographic illustrations in this way is Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5). Like many of the serialized novels of the 1860s, each installment of *Our Mutual Friend* boasted two realistic illustrations. The novel's illustrator, Marcus Stone, depicted scenes of important character interaction or plot development, few of which depicted fictional texts from the diegesis.[26] Within its letterpress, however, the novel includes a few typographic illustrations that make a selection of the documents of its narrative world tangible for readers. One such example appears relatively early in the novel when readers first meet the comical, literary, and ultimately villainous Silas Wegg. At his stall where he sells sweets and

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26. Some notable exceptions include "Pa's lodger and pa's daughter," which depicts reading, and "Better to be Cain than Abel," which portrays a print whose title is noticeably printed beneath it, reading, "Cain and Abel."

ballads, Wegg has a sale-board with a placard that, according to the novel's typographic

illustration, appears thus:
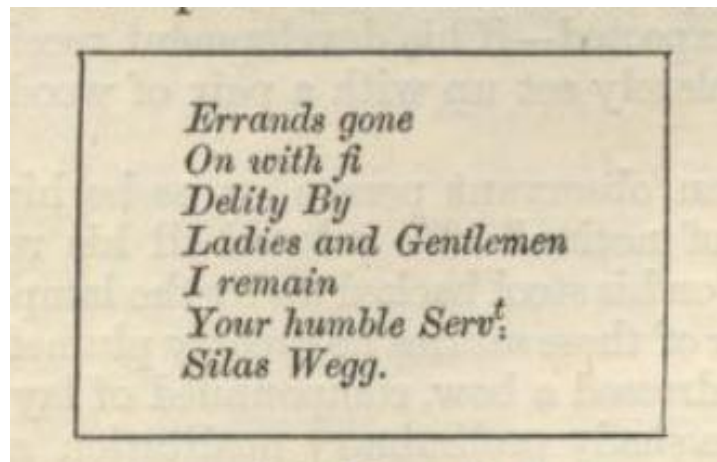
Figure 3. Wegg's Placard, Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, no. 2 (Chapman and Hall, June

1864), p. 33.

Centered on the page, in a box, and with a smaller italic typeface than the rest of the novel's

letterpress, *Our Mutual Friend*'s depiction of Wegg's placard encourages both reading and

seeing. Its typographic composition at once differentiates it from the letterpress that surrounds it

while also emphasizing the typographic illustration and letterpress's shared existence as material

texts. The italicized words represent Wegg's hand-made inscription on his sign while the box

represents the borders of the placard. Although readers may imagine the placard of the virtual

realm of the text as having greater detail with color, texture, and the natural irregularity of a

person's writing, the typographic illustration of this placard still does the work of making the

appearance of a placard coalesce with interface of the flat page. This coalescing of media

produces the effect of making a small space of the virtual realm of the text seem physically

present to readers. While readers can readily recognize a distance between their visual

experience of the typographic approximation of the placard and the picture of the placard in their

mind, the depiction of the placard produces an effect akin to telepresence in which readers have a

sense of being both "here and there"—connected to the materiality of the page in front of them and seeing through that materiality into a fictional world.

Unlike the more traditional illustrations of the Victorian novel that depict scenes with characters and settings, the zoomed-in focus on just the documentary presence of the placard offers readers the opportunity to engage with it with a sort of behavioral realism, as if they were characters in the novel. Reading and seeing the placard, with its confluence of horizontal and vertical demands, thus offers insight into Wegg's character as enjambed lines and words multiply its seemingly simple meaning. A superficial reading of the placard, if its text had appeared as just a transcription within the letterpress, would suggest that Wegg, besides selling things at his stall, goes on errands for the well-to-do. Seeing his placard with its unusual line breaks, however, might lead readers to question Wegg's motives as the world "fidelity" fractures between two lines. As readers continue with *Our Mutual Friend*, the plot confirms what this introduction to Wegg in his placard suggests, as his loyalty to his employers proves false. By being able to inspect the document of Wegg's placard as if it were in front of them and by simultaneously recognizing the artifice of this novelistic device, readers can experience it like characters do, as a manifestation of a textual object that in some sense seems real, and with a readerly detachment, as an object they can analyze as a part of a fictional text.

One of *Our Mutual Friend*'s later typographic illustrations further reflects the impact that the novel's creation of the real-world presence of fictional documents has on interactions with and interpretations of the novel. The following typographic illustration depicts the disabled, doll-dressmaker Jenny Wren's business card, which she uses introduce herself. Before her friend and guardian Riah formally introduces Jenny to an innkeeper, Jenny exclaims, "Stop a bit … I'll give

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the lady my card," and the innkeeper "with manifest tokens of astonishment, took the diminutive document, and found it to run conc'isely thus:--

"
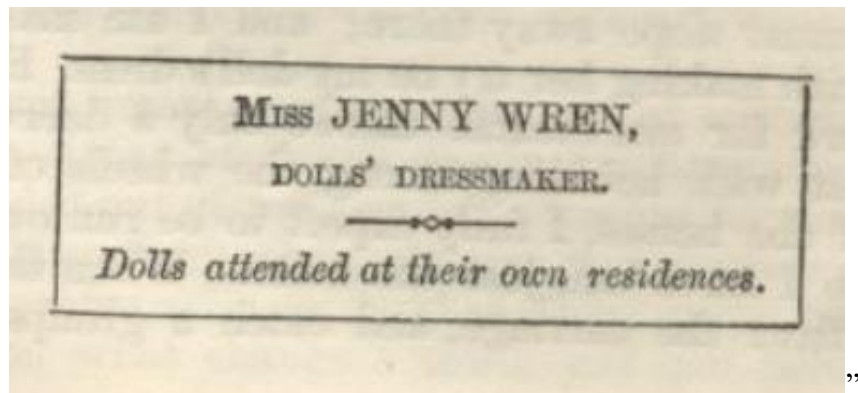
Figure 4. Jenny Wren's Card, Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, no. 11 (Chapman and Hall, April 1865), p. 14.

Rather than carefully considering Jenny's card, the innkeeper simply says "Lud" before dropping it as a piece of ephemera (14). Perhaps surprised by the incompatibility of there being a calling card from someone of Jenny's low social class, unusual profession, or young age, the innkeeper dismisses Jenny's card and puzzles at her identity. Readers may have a similar experience. While they would already know Jenny by this point in the novel, her presentation of her card may challenge their understandings and classifications of her character. The page's presentation of this business card mimics the size and printing of an actual business card, and its printing on paper, albeit perhaps not of the same weight or texture of a calling card, produces a convergence of the fictional medium of the card with the paper of the page. The typographic illustration of Jenny's card further encourages readers to engage with it in a way that stresses its ephemerality. Readers' experiences of the card may parallel the innkeeper's—although readers may attend to the details of how Jenny Wren represents herself and her profession within the small space of the card, they will also quickly flip the page and leave the business card behind as a piece of print ephemera, just a small piece of paper among so many others in each installment of the novel.

And while the novel's depiction of Jenny's business card may seem less ephemeral as it finds s

more permanent home among the pages of Dickens's novel, the forward drive of the narrative

and the seeming triviality of the document leave readers with little reason to hang onto or revisit

the document any more than the characters in the novel do. Readers' experience of the card thus

engages them in behavioral realism in which they experience the process of handling the printed

ephemera in the textual world as if they were participants in that world.

The contradictory experience of the card as a piece of ephemera from the novel's textual

world and as a representational device that demands special attention produces a self-reflexive

experience of interaction and interpretation that enriches an understanding of Jenny's character

and her place within *Our Mutual Friend*'s world. The very fact of the seeming triviality of

Jenny's card, which superficially does little more than present her identity and unusual

profession, runs counter to the necessarily different kind of attention that its form as a

typographic illustration elicits. Readers' awareness of their interaction with Jenny's card

parallels the bewildered and perhaps dismissive response of the innkeeper. Despite this

bewilderment, readers will recall how Jenny takes her doll-making profession seriously and

despite her youth and disability, takes on the responsibilities of an adult, including her quixotic

profession. When Jenny offers her card, authoritatively and unabashedly introducing herself, she

asserts her autonomy, the seriousness of her character, and the validity of her work. When

present within the pages of a novel, Jenny's seemingly ephemeral card challenges characters'

and readers' dismissiveness of her by commemorating her within the novel as if it were a calling

card case in which the sign of Jenny Wren's presence is forever preserved.

Besides appearing in standard realist novels, typographic illustrations also make frequent appearances as pieces of evidence within sensation novels and detective stories. Serving as objects of investigation for both characters and readers, these typographic illustrations enable additional interpretive dimensions and interactive possibilities. Notable instances of typographic illustrations appear in Wilkie Collins's *The Dead Secret* (1856), *The Woman in White* (1860), and *The Moonstone* (1868). Given Collins' affinity for sensational plots of detection, his typographic illustrations often act as clues or evidence in the mysteries his novels explore. His repeated use of typographic illustrations reflects the experiences of immersive and interactive realism that enlists readers in the perusal and revisiting of documents from each novel's narrative world. Collins's typographic illustrations thus situate the "present" materials of evidence as a means through which readers can access and take on the active role of investigators of both a text's mysteries and its mode of realism.

This chapter's analysis of Collins's typographic puzzles looks specifically at the typographic illustrations that appear in *The Woman in White* because of the transparent way in which the novel presents them as documents that serve as evidence readers might use to solve the novel's mysteries. Scholars have widely noted the importance of documents in constituting the form of Collins's *The Woman in White*.[27] The novel is comprised of the letters, testimonies, and journals that surround the novel's sensational plot of doppelgangers, stolen identity, and forgery.

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27. For instance, see D. A. Miller's "*Cage aux folles*: Sensation and Gender in *The Woman in White*" in *The Novel and the Police* (1988) and John Sutherland's "Wilkie Collins and the Origins of the Sensation Novel" in *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront: Some Reassessments*. Ed. Nelson Smith and R.C. Terry (1995).

Documents tell the novel's story—one which tracks the love story of Walter Hartright and Laura Fairlie, the unhappy marriage between Laura and the cruel Lord Percival Glyde, her supposed death in the company of Lord Percival and his conniving friend Count Fosco, the discovery that Laura's death was faked and her identity stolen, and the efforts to reclaim Laura's identity and property. The testimonies and documents collected in the novel seem to prove Laura Fairlie's death, reveal the invalidity of Lord Percival's title, and, eventually, restore Laura's identity as a living person. Most of the important documents in the novel exist on paper but others appear on different textualized objects, namely Laura's tombstone. While the novel exists as a compilation of documents, in its original publication in *All the Year Round*, Collins only emphasizes the material, visual textuality of a few of these documents—a few witnesses' signatures, a doctor's note, and a tombstone's engraving.

A few scholars have considered the importance of the interactive and puzzling nature of sensation novels along with the documents that either comprise or appear in them. Dehn Gilmore, for instance, argues that despite the derision sensation novels received from critics of their seemingly unsophisticated, puzzle-driven plots, many Victorian critics and readers understood these novels and the puzzle-solving they encouraged "to be an enlightening and imagination-firing pursuit" that enabled "a form of active, engaged, even morally and intellectually beneficial attention" in readers (303). The imaginative, active engagement Gilmore identifies relates to the effects typographic illustrations can have on readers' involvement in the puzzling plots of sensation novels. Focusing more on the realist properties of typographic illustrations in *The Woman in White*, Darcy Irvin considers how such illustrations' stimulating effects impact readers' awareness of and participation in the novel's realism. She writes that because of these typographic illustrations' innately self-reflexive properties, they enact the

paradox of fictional realism: "even as these narratives are constructed as image-texts so as to authorize and validate the fantastic events described, … they also seem to highlight precisely how inaccurate and fake such images or such a constructed reality can be" (230). Irvin rightly identifies the realist and antirealist properties of Collins's textual illustrations, revealing how these small devices involve readers in a self-conscious interaction with material text and the fictional world it represents; however, she leaves open the question of how this sort of interaction fits together with the "imagination-firing pursuit" that Gilmore describes. Given that Collins's typographic illustrations toggle readers back and forth between textual immersion and self-reflexive awareness of that text's material construction, what impact does this process have on the way readers make sense of and interact with Collins's narrative world and the sensational mystery it holds?

Even though *The Woman in White* consists entirely of documents and witness testimonies, only a restricted portion of the text, *All the Year Round*'s fifty-sixth installment, uses typographic illustrations to represent these documents. Collins labels each of these documents as a separate narratives, dispensing with traditional chapter divisions as he does with the rest of the testimonies that comprise his novel. The visual distinction of *The Woman in White*'s typographic illustrations in the fifty-sixth installment from the rest of its letterpress signals to readers that they must engage in a different mode of reading than the rest of the novel. At the beginning the novel, its evidence-collector, Walter Hartright promises readers that the novel's evidence will "present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect." For most of the novel the "most direct and intelligible aspect" of the story's truth exists in the narrative content of the letterpress of each character's testimony. *The Woman in White* appeared in the unillustrated periodical *All the Year Round*, so up until this installment, the testimonies and documents that

made it up appear as simple transcriptions. The more visual elements of the evidence in the fifty-sixth installment would thus signal that the appearance of these documents along with their contents should matter to readers in developing an informed interpretation of them. This installment and these typographic illustrations come to light just before readers learn that Walter Hartright discovers that his love interest, Laura Fairlie, is alive despite all public records and witness accounts attesting her death. *The Woman in White* provides a retrospective collection of the testimonies of witnesses and participants in the unfolding mystery of Laura's stolen identity and property, so the suspenseful appearance of seemingly convincing evidence of her death, followed by proof that she is alive, reflects the way the novel purposefully demands that its readers engage with its evidence in a repeated, increasingly critical way. This installment's collection of eye-witness accounts of Laura's departure to London and her death there support the case for her death, but characters' and readers' closer examination of this evidence—especially in the immersive, interactive mode that typographic illustrations enable—allows them to mine it for deficiencies that at first render the proof of Laura's death unsatisfactory and later help readers mentally participate in the work of restoring Laura's identity.

Presented as conclusive proof of Laura's death, *The Woman in White*'s typographic depiction of Laura's tombstone in "The Narrative of the Tombstone," includes readers in the critical and game-like process of examining a view of the narrative world for signs of its characters' deception. A depiction of the tombstone appears twice in the fifty-sixth installment and emphasizes how an interactive, critical engagement with it allows readers to take on a role that behaviorally parallels Walter Hartright's while also granting them perspectival and interpretive freedom to see past his potential limitations. The tombstone's first appearance in the "Narrative of the Tombstone" relies on typographic illustration to represent the space of the

tombstone and its inscription (Figure 5). Under the heading "The Narrative of the Tombstone,"

Collins situates this typographic illustration as narratively akin to the more extensive and

typographically uninteresting witness testimonies that surround it.
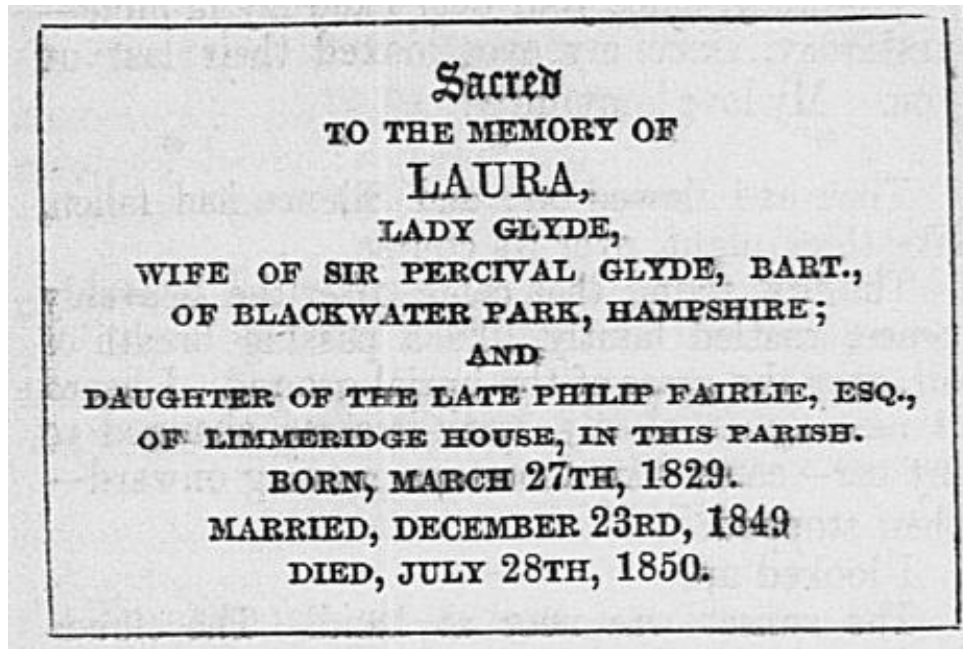
Figure 5. The Narrative of the Tombstone, Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, *All the Year Round*, no. 56 (May 19, 1860), p. 127.

The obvious difference between this "Narrative of the Tombstone," in which a typographic

illustration speaks for itself, and the elaborate verbal narratives from eye-witness testimonies

draws attention to the different mode of viewing and reading this piece of evidence requires of

readers. At first inspection, "The Narrative of the Tombstone" offers unambiguous proof of

Laura's death. A metonymy of Laura's death and buried body, readers might initially think that

the tombstone needs no narrative context or explanation—its very existence confirms Laura's

death. Even more than with Yorick's tombstone in *Tristram Shandy*, Laura's offers readers an

experience of telepresence in which the small space of the typographic illustration of the page

offers them spatial access to the diegetic tombstone and its inscription, enhancing its effect as

proof of Laura's death. Unlike Yorick's simple metatextual inscription, however, Laura's has more complex visual features and more detailed verbal information. With seemingly unmediated access to these details, readers can analyze the tombstone, filling in the gaps of and critiquing the narratives its contents and design promote.

When experiencing this typographic illustration as if it provides unmediated access to the tombstone and its inscription and, at the same time recognizing its fictionality, readers use visual and verbal cues to determine what Laura's executors valued about her as well as how the tombstone's limited portrayal of her life intimates the possibility of foul play. As a single image, "The Narrative of the Tombstone" alerts readers to pay special attention to its deceptively simple appearance. Contained within a rectangular box representing the physical space of the tombstone, the inscription on the tombstone begins with the world "Sacred" in a blackletter typeface that contrasts with the modern typeface of the rest of the inscription (and installment), drawing attention to the word and encouraging the contemplation of its meaning. Beginning the somewhat antiquated but predictable phrase "Sacred to the memory of Laura," the antiquated appearance of the word "Sacred" both evokes a greater sense of telepresence and alerts readers to the superficiality of this representation of Laura's supposed sacredness. In both the narrative world and on the printed page, the tombstone's minimalistic visual embellishment of only the word "Sacred" suggests the half-hearted, performative nature of the tombstone's appearance in its narrative world. Readers may wonder whether Laura's bereaved viewed her as "sacred" given the unadorned, visually homogenous appearance of the rest of the tombstone's inscription. The aberration of the appearance of "sacred" on the page may further alert readers to the relatively limited printing capabilities of *All the Year Round*. The decision to visually distinguish this single word reflects the tenuous realism the tombstone's telepresence upholds. Just as the

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typeface calls into question the sincerity of the word "sacred" on the tombstone, its appearance within the periodical highlights its unreality. With these paired experiences of incredulity, the reader can approach the tombstone's contents with the eyes of both an intradiegetic, skeptical detective who works to unravel the mystery of Laura's death and as an extradiegetic critic of the novel's creation of its intricately plotted narrative world.

With a skeptical yet immersed experience of Laura's tombstone, readers encounter the graphically condensed information on the remainder of it with an attentive, emotional responsiveness to the information it relays as well as a detached, critical curiosity about how this information misrepresents Laura's life and may belie the foul play behind her supposed death. Readers may note that over half of the printed lines of the tombstone's inscription either directly or indirectly refer to Laura's relationship to her husband, Lord Glyde. While tombstone conventions varied during the Victorian period, this inscription's emphasis on Laura's official and legal connection to Lord Glyde, despite her brief marriage to him, may lead readers to suspect that Glyde intentionally stresses his legal connection to Laura in the final narrative of her life. The attentive reader may notice that the tombstone's overemphasis on Laura's marriage to Glyde belies Glyde's insidious plot to steal Laura's property, which he can only access upon her death. The graphic arrangement of the final three lines of the tombstone's inscription may further involve readers in the seeming tragedy of Laura's supposed death while also fuel their suspicions about the circumstances or validity of this death. The three lines' repeated succession of dates stress the brevity of both Laura's life and of her marriage. When immersed in a diegetic reading of the tombstone, readers may think about how strange it is that Laura dies so young, when she has been seemingly healthy, as well as how the short duration of her marriage points to its potential unhappiness. Later in this installment, Hartright reaches such conclusions (128).

Recognizing, however, that this typographic illustration of the tombstone is a narrative device that encourages an interactive, critical reading of its contents, readers may be alert to the significance of dates in the unfolding of the mystery of Laura's faked death. Carrying this window into the textual world with them and aware of the fictionality of the information it contains, readers move forward into further details of Laura's story with clues about how Laura may prove Lord Glyde's crime.[28]

Just as "The Narrative of the Tombstone" and the artifact to which it gives access encourages readers to oscillate between immersed interactivity and critical analysis, the repeated appearance of the typographic illustration of this tombstone makes the unique perceptual and behavioral processes it enables transparent to readers, offering them a self-theorizing lens through which to understand this mode of realism. A few pages after "The Narrative of the Tombstone," Walter provides his own narrative of his grief at the discovery of Laura's death and his encounter with her tombstone. Within his narrative, readers again see an image of Laura's tombstone through a partial typographic illustration of it (Figure 6). This partial illustration appears as Hartright's line of sight moves between reading the stone's inscription and viewing a mysterious woman on the opposite side of it, who Hartright soon discovers is Laura. By following Walter's gaze from the stone to Laura, readers' perspective and behavior partially parallel his. Moving between the typographic illustration's physical proof of Laura's death, a grave and a tombstone with black letters engraved into it, and the spatially distinct description of

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28. Readers of *The Woman in White* know that information about the date of Laura's supposed travel to London serve as crucial evidence in reclaiming her identity. The purported date of Laura's death turns out to be one day earlier than her arrival in London.

Laura's physical presence, readers' perspectives counterintuitively shift from reading an illustration to imaginatively "seeing" via the text.
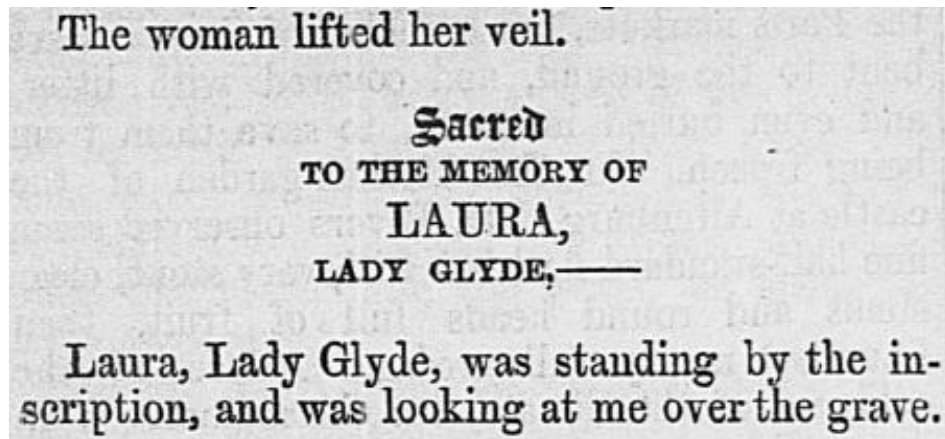
Figure 6. Reviewing the Tombstone, Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, *All the Year Round*, no. 56 (May 19, 1860), p. 129.

The visual words of the tombstone contrast with the comparatively invisible type of Laura's description. The long dash and white space on the page dramatize this shift in perspective. The dash ushers readers from the visual immediacy of the typographic illustration into a more distanced experience of the virtual realm of the text. This moment of representational transparency allows readers an awareness of how typographic illustrations create a different sort of realist experience than the rest of the novel. Unlike conventional illustrations which J. Hillis Miller argues hijack a text's realism by acting as representations of a fictional world, typographic illustrations exemplify how realism can operate via different modalities—through both the sort of photographic realism that comes from detailed descriptions and the behavioral realism engendered by typographic illustrations. Through their visual properties, typographic illustrations like Laura's tombstone offers the illusion of an unmediated experience of the virtual

realm of the text.[29] Laura's fictional physical body as the text represents it fails to create the same sense of reality as the documents that prove her death, a problem that follows her to the end of *The Woman in White*

Another typographic illustration from *The Woman in White*'s in *All the Year Round*'s fifty-sixth installment further reveals the interactive and self-reflexive experience that typographic illustrations allow in novels whose plots hinge on mysteries and the collection and reexamination of evidence. A doctor's account of Laura's illness and death in "The Narrative of the Doctor," encourages an interactive, repetitive experience of this piece of evidence (Figure 7). When readers encounter the typographic illustration of the doctor's note, they experience it in a way that exceeds an experience of mere transcription. As Irvin points out, *The Woman in White* focuses "on what documents look like… as much as what they say" (Irvin 228). Although the note retains some of the signs of a transcription, notably the quotation marks that begin it, it appears as a printed form that the doctor has filled in with his own handwriting. The standard typeface and rectangular table represent the standard portions of the form while the italics reflect the doctor's handwritten notes within it. With these visual markers, readers discern the formal limitations of the information that the doctor can provide as well as the unsatisfactory and suspicious nature of the information that he supplies. The relatively brief and uninformative content of the doctor's handwriting may lead readers to question the thoroughness of the doctor's evaluation or the validity of his findings. The italics in the note only give pithy information about

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29 . See Miller's "The Fiction of Realism" where he argues that "Illustrations establish a relation between elements within the work which short-circuits the apparent reference of the literary text to some real world" (Miller, 'The Fiction of Realism,' 45). Where typical illustrations move readers away from a realist fictional world, typographic illustrations enhance this realism.

Laura's name, age, the date of the doctor's visit and her death, the location of the death, and the purported cause of death. Although premature death was more common during the 19th-century, readers may find the death of a previously healthy twenty-one-year-old to be suspicious. They might also find the doctor's inconclusive note about the duration of her disease being "unknown" to indicate a need for further inquiry.
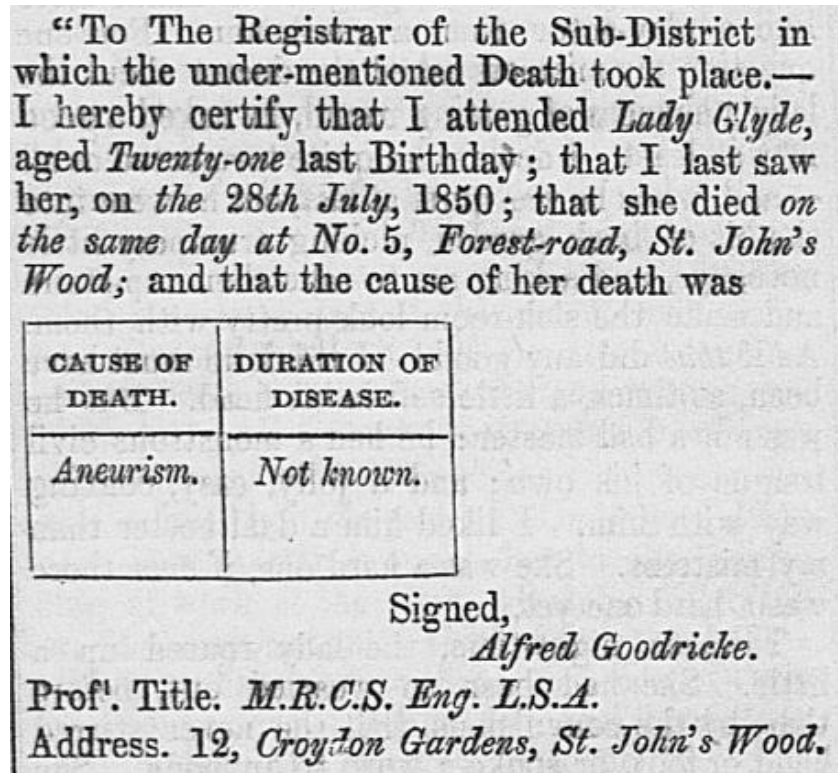
Figure 7. The Doctor's Narrative, Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, *All the Year Round*, no. 56 (May 19, 1860), p. 126.

As this document is made present to readers like other previously discussed typographic illustrations, readers experience the doctor's note in a way that differs from the present documents of *Our Mutual Friend*. Readers learn to refer to *The Woman in White*'s documents repeatedly as pieces of evidence that readers may revisit for clues of the criminal staging of Laura's supposed death. Because Walter collects the documents of *The Woman in White* after the

events they describe have already occurred, the reader surveys each document with a more distanced feeling from the events of the novel, knowing that each document will support Hartright's case for the wrongdoing Laura endures. The documents thus seem to float at once somewhere outside of the time of the narrative world and within the instances of their creation or collection. Moving through these different spatial and temporal registers, the documents then metaleptically converge with the paper of the text, at least superficially unmediated in their presence to the reader.

Building on this sense of immediacy but also relying on their more distanced relation to the events of the novel's narrative world, readers' interpretations and experiences of documents like the doctor's note allow them the freedom to treat documents like pieces of a puzzle. Like the "Narrative of the Tombstone," typographic illustrations like "The Narrative of the Doctor" allow readers to reach into the novel's narrative world at will—not just at the moment of their first appearance on the page—to assess, reconsider, and metaleptically retain evidence for their further consideration. The doctor's note, along with the other evidence like it, creates an experience like that which Walter Kendrick attributes to sensation fiction like *The Woman in White*, that this type of fiction functions more as a game than as mimesis (Kendrick 18-35).[30][31] Armed with the same evidence that characters inspect, readers may participate in solving the problem of how the doctor's account of Laura's death shows signs of the malfeasance of her stolen identity. Readers, then, could attend to the visual evidence of the doctor's note as much as

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30. See Kendrick's "The Sensationalism of The Woman in White" (1977).

31. In *Mimesis as Make Believe* (1990), Kendall Walton contends that the gamified realism that I identify in *The Woman in White*'s typographic illustrations underpins broader experiences of realism in which a work of art or literature facilitates an experience of "richness and vivacity" akin to a game of make-believe (329).

its content. Where Kendrick views the game-like properties of sensation novels to work against those novels' mimesis, I argue that the behavioral realism that these pieces of evidence elicit creates a different sort of mimetic encounter with the novel's fictional world. Playing the part of eyewitnesses of key documents and mute participants in solving the novel's mystery, readers both see and think like characters while also retaining the independence of reaching their own conclusions independent of what characters decide.

Besides these realist effects, the puzzling typographic illustrations in novels like *The Woman in White* also self-reflexively illuminate the participatory, interactive nature of their realisms. Toggled between viewing a text's documents as physically present and seeing them as typographically mediated representations of fictional texts, readers see a mechanism through which the novel achieves a sense of reality. The distinction between italics and actual handwriting and an actual doctor's note versus that rendered within the body of a novel makes clear the representational continuities between these typographic illustrations and the rest of the novel. Both elements of the novel represent features of a virtual world, but the graphically aberrant characteristics of the typographic puzzles highlight the way one of the most basic and seemingly invisible features of the novel, its typography, can be part of a novel's narrative world. Perhaps more importantly, these illustrations allow readers an awareness of participating in creating the narrative dynamism that comes from interacting with elements of the narrative world and a critical scrutiny that comes from assessing those documents as characters do and as self-aware critics of the novel's construction. While sensation fiction like *The Woman in White* bears many marks of the traditional mimetic realism of the Victorian novel, an experience of the typographic evidence suggests that realism need not always be mimetic of a world but rather mimetic of a perception, behavior, or cognitive process.

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Despite the novel's emphasis on the reader's participation in analyzing the narrative world's paper trail, the typographic evidence in *The Woman in White* ultimately fails to restore Laura's identity on its own. In *The Woman in White*, the presence and widespread interpretability of official documents offers a more convincing realism than the oral and written accounts of characters, suggesting the ways in which the novel both endorses and critiques the realist experiences the typographic illustrations of these documents encourage. The way the evidence appears and the inconclusive narratives it presents offer inconclusive proof of Laura's survival. Laura's lawyer, Mr. Kyrle explains,

> There is the testimony of the medical certificate to prove the death, and to show that it took place under natural circumstances. There is the fact of the funeral at Limmeridge, and there is the assertion of the inscription on the tomb. That is the case you want to overthrow. What evidence have you to support the declaration on your side that the person who died and was buried was not Lady Glyde? … When an English jury has to choose between a plain fact on the surface and a long explanation under the surface, it always takes the fact in preference to the explanation. ("The Third Epoch," IV)

Each of the typographic illustrations of the 56th installment, serve as "a plain fact on the surface" that could be visible to jury and reader alike. What readers know, however, is that the plain surface of these pieces of evidence belies their potential limitations. When Walter gets one of the novel's villains, Count Fosco, to confess how he and Glyde, stage Laura's death, paper documents reemerge as a means of restoring Laura's identity. Records of Laura's rail travel reveal the impossibility of her supposed time of death, and armed with this evidence along with Fosco's confession, Laura can move forward with her life. Surfaces win out as being the "most real" facts in *The Woman in White*, but because of the typographic illustrations' mimetic and

anti-mimetic properties, the novel also insists that facts never exist just "on the surface." The surfaces on which these facts appear, how they are presented, and how readers and characters interact with them are as much a part of what makes these things "real" as the verbal information these surfaces convey.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Among the many experiential possibilities enabled by typographic illustrations, their ability to challenge readers' literacy and push the limits of their interpretive capabilities offers readers an interactive autonomy within the virtual realm of the text that creates what may be the most immersive behavioral realism that such illustrations facilitate. The typographic illustrations that are most conducive to these experiences are what I call typographic puzzles. In typographic puzzles, the printing and letters of the text challenge readers' ability to read. Either through unusual layout, confusing orthography, or uninterpretable code, these illustrations encourage readers to not only look at a piece of a narrative world and to interact with it, but to use both visual and verbal reasoning to decipher a document, to essentially pause the reading experience in lieu of a gamified encounter with the fictional world that allows for a different sort of textual immersion than the forward progression of reading entails, one that mimics the sort of immersion and interaction that one might find in the virtual realities of twentieth- and twenty-first-century video games.

I end this chapter with a discussion of this variety of typographic illustration both because of the enhanced behaviorally realist experiences such illustrations enable but also because of the way they can self-consciously contrast with the graphically mundane encounters with representations of texts in earlier novels, like that in those in *The Antiquary*. Similar to the previously discussed episode in which Scott's antiquary makes an embarrassing

misinterpretation of a textual object, Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* depicts a scene of antiquarian discovery that other characters in the novel discredit. In this episode the eponymous Samuel Pickwick finds a stone with an inscription, he interprets the inscription as being of antiquarian significance, and a reliable source proves (at least to readers) that Pickwick misreads the stone. A major difference between the *Pickwick* and *Antiquary* episodes, however, is in their presentation of the textual artifacts at the heart of their antiquarian controversies. *The Pickwick Papers* emerged as a breakout publishing sensation as its serialized publication combined two detailed illustrations with Dickens's comedic telling of Pickwick's adventures. *The Antiquary*, published at once and without illustrations, provides only a transcription of the inscription on the stone, in the same font and on the same line as the rest of the narrative. In contrast, *Pickwick* presents a more detailed description of the artifact accompanied by a telling typographic illustration that engages readers in a game that challenges them to test their abilities to read and decipher, all with the possibility of leaving readers anxious that the puzzle may remain unresolved across installments.

Unlike the authoritative and uncomplicated description and interpretation of the inscription in *The Antiquary*, *Pickwick* provides readers with multiple descriptive and visual encounters with the stone inscription and thus multiple opportunities to make sense of its meanings on their own. Readers first follow Pickwick's process of visually deciphering the inscription's letters as Pickwick describes it: "'I can discern,' continued Mr. Pickwick, rubbing away with all his might, and gazing intently through his spectacles: 'I can discern a cross, and a B, and then a T. This is important'" (*Pickwick* 147). Following the unusual orthography of the inscription, Pickwick decides that it represents an important, albeit uncertain, antiquarian engraving. The narrator next describes the inscription from a more omniscient perspective,

calling its letters "straggling and irregular…but clearly to be deciphered" (147). *Pickwick* then

presents readers with a graphic reproduction of the layout of the letters on the stone, set off from

the rest of the verbal text through its centering on the page and the use of a larger, different font

(147-8) (Figure 8).
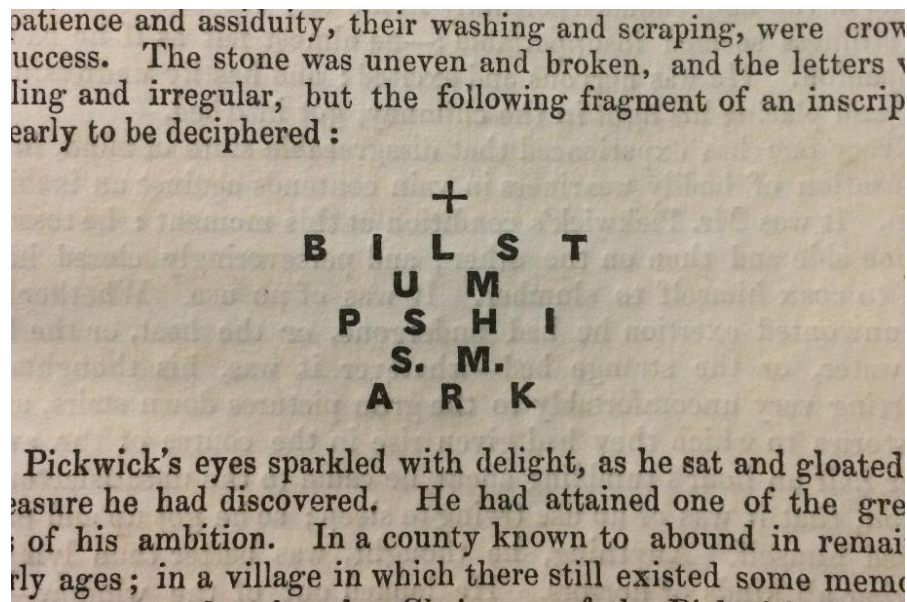
Figure 8. Pickwick's Discovery, Charles Dickens, *The Pickwick Papers*, no. 4 (Chapman and

Hall, June 1836), p. 105.

Even when readers discover that a character by the name of Mr. Blotton determines that the

inscription represents nothing more than the whimsical marking of a contemporary local man

("Bill Stumps, his mark" (157)), [32] *Pickwick* mockingly presents further debate about the

inscription's meaning—deferring any diegetic consensus. The narrator explains that rather than

accepting Blotton's theory, the Pickwick Club expels Blotton and gives Pickwick "a pair of gold

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32. As is common with Dickens, Blotton is fitting name for a character concerned with the meanings that arise in

   texts' messy materiality, but, of course, also a gesture to the way his claims are a potential blot on Pickwick's

   reputation as an antiquary.

spectacles, in token of their confidence and approbation" while Blotton and other antiquaries continue to publish pamphlets that hotly debate the meaning of the inscription in what the narrator calls "the Pickwick controversy" (158). *The Pickwick Papers* thus models the imaginative speculation and interactive immersion that its typographic illustration encourages of readers. Although readers leave this episode convinced of Blotton's interpretation of the stone, their initial encounter of it and the space of multiple pages in which they have no conclusive explanation of its meanings gives readers some leeway to use their own judgment and to enjoy the process of making meaning of it on their own. Unsure of whether the inscription represents the English language, a Latin acronym or phrase, or something else altogether, readers entertain multiple possible meanings of the inscription as they progress through the text's dramatization of its interpretation.

Besides offering readers multiple opportunities to decipher the stone's inscription, its typographic illustration further encourages readers' self-conscious participation in constructing the novel's fictional world. The different typeface and unusual layout of the represented inscription gesture inward into the textual world by distinguishing between the standard, printed words of the narrative and the letters of the inscription. The change in font and layout also signal a change in reading practice in which readers shift from a left-to-right, horizontal scanning of words across the page to a more vertical and pictorial way of seeing letters. The defamiliarization of the printed word and the reader's forced illiteracy also gestures outward into the reader's world.[33] The changes in typefaces and spacing intimates the more complicated typesetting the

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33 See Victor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique." Like the sort of art that creates an experience of defamiliarization, typographic illustrations like the inscription in *Pickwick* "make forms difficult" and "increase the difficulty of length and perception' that readers spend on the printed pages in which they appear (12).

novel's printer used, drawing attention to the printed page as a textual artifact. With the abundance of descriptions and physical presentation of the inscription initially failing to account for its meanings, it teaches readers that, as Tucker suggests, that in any experience of realism, "fiction[will] be not all there" (176). Aware of the interface through which they participate in constructing a fictional world and armed with a simulacrum of a piece of that fictional world, readers may recognize their role in both imagining and interpreting the text they read as well as the limitations of their imaginings given the limitations of textual and typographic representation.

The competing modes of viewing the inscription as a visual, textual artifact versus reading the inscription as verbal artifact further invite readers to treat it as a puzzle to be solved, not only for its significance to the fictional world in which it belongs but also for the pleasure of enacting and bringing to life the puzzle-solving process that this episode incites. Pickwick falls asleep after first encountering the inscription and the narrator whisks readers into one of the novel's interpolated tales, leaving them temporarily feeling illiterate. It is only after this tale, and at the very end of the installment, that readers learn of Mr. Blotton's discovery which counterintuitively confirms that a horizontal left-to-right reading (rather than viewing) of the inscription renders it readable. Readers might turn back several pages to see the inscription afresh with this mode of reading in mind, mentally testing their hypotheses or conclusions about the strange typographic illustration against Blotton's conclusions and taking pleasure in correctly predicting the trick the text plays or enjoying having a trick played on them. When Dickens resuscitates *The Antiquary*'s episode of puzzling and comedic discovery, he offers readers a window into the different possibilities of a realism that moves beyond traditional reading and

invites readers into perceptions and behaviors that mirror those in the novel but also gives them room for an independent experience of the textual world.

As they encourage readers to see and interact, rather than just read, typographic illustrations draw readers into experiences of forced illiteracy similar to that which happens with the *Pickwick* episode. By seeing the printed page as an interactive space of visual and tactile connection to fictional worlds, readers experience those worlds and imagine them as real in a way that transcends mere reading. Able to see these documents, and then, perhaps, to read them, readers discover how the printed page plays a role in realist reading. The tiny, interactive spaces that typographic illustrations open up within the uniform blocks of a novel's letterpress reveal the way novels create immersive realisms that depend on elements of their material form that so often seem invisible during the reading process. In common use almost a century earlier than the experimental typography of modernist literature that critics so often celebrate as the epitomizing the confluence between word and image, the unassuming Victorian typographic illustration reveals how this confluence becomes a standard and irreplicable realist device.

CHAPTER TWO:

Realism, Initially
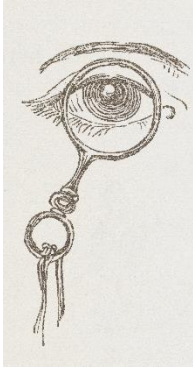
ur conviction has long been that everything curtailing space or time is
in the ascendant. ... high-pressure condensation is everywhere the rage.

— Albert Smith, *A Bowl of Punch* (1848)[34]

"They [pictorial initials] are little sketches apt to be passed over in carelessness, but on
examination found to be full of real art and poetical comprehension."

— Edward Burne-Jones, "Essay on *The Newcomes*" (1856)

"Apt to be passed over" in their original publications and now mostly forgotten, Victorian

pictorial initials occupy a seemingly superfluous place in the form and history of the novel. They

regularly begin the chapters or installments of early editions of Victorian novels, yet later

editions of these same novels typically exclude them. Looking back at these pictorial initials, one

discovers a form that while indebted to the illuminated letters of medieval manuscripts exudes a

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34. The following is the caption and citation for the pictorial initial in the epigraph: Figure 9: Pictorial Initial. Albert

   Smith, *A Bowl of Punch* (London: D. Bogue, 1848), p. 70. © Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, 2015. 48. 1625, p. 70

   (detail)

distinctly Victorian flair.[35] Their miniature depictions of characters and scenes that appear beside enlarged letters of the alphabet, or that sometimes form those letters, suit the already brimming content of the Victorian novel. This chapter argues that amid these novels' richly articulated narrative worlds and intricate illustrations, pictorial initials' seemingly redundant representational role epitomizes, partly through their superfluity, a defining element of these novels' detail-driven modes of realism. Of course, critics from Barthes to Brooks credit the Victorian novel's accumulation and deployment of superfluous details as central to the form's production of a reality effect in which a limited number of details intimate an immense reality.[36] But this chapter argues that the perceptual process so central to an experience of the pictorial initial's efficient dual pictorial-alphabetic form—the sequential shift from seeing to reading that leads readers to lose sight of pictorial details in favor of alphabetic reading—creates a different sort of reality effect, one which transcends the representational affordances of either picture or print to participate in and theorize the modes of realism of the Victorian novel.

The sparse scholarship on Victorian pictorial initials rarely treats them as formally distinct from other illustrations. With the exception of Lorraine Janzen Kooistra and Herbert

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35. Scholars use a variety of terms to refer to pictorial initials: decorated letters, historiated initials, figurative letters, pictorial capitals, illuminated letters, ornamented letters, etc. I use the term "pictorial initials" to encapsulate any configuration of picture and alphabetic letter(s) that occurs at the beginning of a segment of narrative, excluding those letters whose visual elements are predominantly ornamental as in some initials whose adornments consist only of geometric patterns or foliation.

36. See Roland Barthes's "The Reality Effect" (1968) and Peter Brooks's *Realist Vision* (2005). For an in-depth history of the detail's role in in art and literature, particularly in realist fiction, see Naomi Schor's *Reading Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (2007).

Tucker, who both attend to the specificity of the initials' pictorial alphabetic form,[37] this

scholarship considers only part of the initials' representational abilities, focusing on their

bibliographic or visual contributions to their narratives.[38] Kooistra's work on the initials

celebrates their representational variety as central to what she reads as the Gothic architecture of

the Victorian periodical page. She explains, "these marginal ornaments, by combining

representational and linguistic signs, carved a space for the fantastic, the grotesque, the playful,

and the subversive in a way that evoked the architectural ornaments prized by John Ruskin in

Stones of Venice" (400). Where Kooistra resists making narratological generalizations about

pictorial initials in their varied publications and forms, this chapter focuses on the initials' use in

novels and finds that initials make some generalizable formal contributions to their respective

narratives. Herbert Tucker's study of initials begins the work of examining initials' role in novels

and reads their use at narrative beginnings as a commentary on reading realist fiction. He

explains that as an initial opens a segment of narrative, it "hallows...the reader's passage into

alphabetic literacy, for the umpteenth time, from elsewhere," recalling "the realist novel's

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37. See Kooistra's "Wood-Engraved Borders in Strahan's Family Magazines: Toward a Grammar of Periodical

   Ornament" (2018) and 380-407, esp. pp. 400-1 and Tucker's "Literal Illustration in Victorian Print" (2002).

38. For attentive accounts of initials as illustrations, see: John R. Harvey's *Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators*

   (1971), Jane Cohen's *Dickens and His Original Illustrators* (1980), and Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa

   Surridge's "The Plot Thickens: Toward a Narratological Analysis of Illustrated Serial Fiction in the 1860s"

   (2008). For bibliographic readings of initials, see Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, "Charting Rocks in the Golden

   Stream: Or, Why Textual Ornaments Matter to Victorian Periodicals Studies" (2016), Aaron Donachuk's "After

   the Letter: Typographical Distraction and the Surface of Morris's Kelmscott Romances" (2017), and Joan

   Stevens's "'Woodcuts Dropped into the Text': The Illustrations in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*"

   (1967).

contractual undertaking to provide a richly, redundantly recognizable version of the reader's life" (171). He thus reads "the [initial's] unstable commerce of image with type" as "figur[ing] the exchange of life for art, the election of imaginative experience over its clamorous competitors" (171). While Tucker rightly, then, identifies some of the initials' realist features in suggesting that their form imitates the phenomenon of beginning to read a novel, he also suggests that unlike typical illustrations which hold a viewer's gaze in the moments they depict, pictorial initials exploit the sequential nature of literary experience by propelling readers' attention away from their pictured content and forward into alphabetic reading and the imaginative experience it evokes. This chapter picks up where Tucker leaves off. In the initials' "unstable commerce of image with type," a realist experience emerges not only in initials' mimesis of the imaginative, forward-moving process of reading but in a reciprocal effect: in the imagined possibilities this process leaves behind.

By focusing on this process of leaving behind and its resultant abandoned possibilities, I contend that pictorial initials provide a key to a cognitive process that underpins realism in the Victorian novel. Pictorial initials embody, enact, and ultimately theorize the way novels use seemingly superfluous content to conceptualize and expand readers' awareness of the potentially limitless detail of realist narrative worlds. First, on a general level, pictorial initials produce a reality effect through the indeterminacies of their proleptic narrative position and the affordances of their dual, sequentially experienced form. When the readers of a novel first see an initial's pictorial content, they cannot know how or whether it fits into a novel's diegesis. It momentarily conjures possible meanings and plot trajectories that expand or enrich a novel's narrative

world.[39] Beholden to the sequential nature of alphabetic reading, readers must then identify or

locate an initial's alphabetic content to begin reading the letterpress. They thus leave behind

these pictured details as a peripheral reminder of the world-enriching possibilities that scaffold

the limited representations of the letterpress. Second, and at the same time, these initials function

similarly to a class of images that W. J. T. Mitchell calls metapictures, they offer meta-lessons in

realism that are unique to the texts in which they appear, showing readers how a particular

novel's realism works. Just as multiple modes of realism emerge in and across Victorian novels,

so too do a novel's pictorial initials reveal how these texts construct their realism out of a

distinctive configuration of narrative possibilities implied by the meanings they consciously

abandon.

While almost every major novelist from the Victorian period originally published at least

one of their novels with pictorial initials, this chapter focuses on two novels and authors whose

style of initials and types of realism diverge: Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-

41)—mainly illustrated by Hablot Knight Browne and George Cattermole[40]—and Elizabeth

Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1864-66)—illustrated by George du Maurier. I turn to these

dissimilar novels to show the range of realist representations in which pictorial initials

participate. I begin by close-reading the narrative-world-expanding properties of the initials in

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39. For an account of how the reading experience involves imagining semantic possibilities that are "far richer than

   any configurative meaning" a fully-read text offers, see Wolgang Iser's "The Reading Process: A

   Phenomenological Approach" (1972).

40. Browne and Cattermole are responsible for the vast majority of the illustrations, but Samuel Williams and Daniel

   Maclise also contributed one illustration each. Browne and Cattermole are believed to be responsible for drawing

   the pictorial initials. For more on the illustrators of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, see Cohen, pp. 73-82.

Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* as it was first published in the serial *Master Humphrey's Clock*. These initials offer glimpses of characters and scenes whose counterfactual and extradiegetic relation to the novel's plot create the sense that its character network is interconnected and horizonless. In these initials, the pictorial contents that readers leave behind offer only glimmers of these potential connections so that more expansive notions of the novel's character network are largely unseen or abandoned as reading progresses. I then examine the narrative-world-enriching properties of the initials in *The Cornhill Magazine*'s serialization of Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*. These initials' portrayal of trifling moments and things whose meanings are at first irresolvable engenders the sense that the novel's world is inexhaustibly detailed and thereby infinitely narratable. Here the pictorial content that readers leave behind teaches them to look elsewhere and everywhere for narrative possibilities, because any trifle in the background could always become a foregrounded part of the story. Examining the initials in these two novels reveals how pictorial initials can operate on different ends of a spectrum of realist representation as they can generate both a zoomed-out sense of expansiveness and a zoomed-in sense of plenitude. As I show with each of these novels, the pictorial initial's unique formal properties facilitate experiences of realism that highlight its dependence on the media that instantiate it.

I.

Several installments before exclusively publishing *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Dickens's *Master Humphrey's Clock* establishes a frame narrative, the conversations and ruminations of the members of a story-telling club led by the eponymous Master Humphrey. This frame narrative sets in motion the means through which the serial generates new stories, the club

members' respective tales, and sets a precedent for how its pictorial initials will connect and expand the worlds of these tales. The pictorial initials that begin the serial's first several installments reflect its diverse narrative content and graphically connect successive issues (Stevens 119). Characters make diegetic leaps both within the contents of its letterpress and in its initials: Samuel Pickwick and Samuel Weller travel beyond *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-38) to join Master Humphrey's story-telling club both in the initials and the letterpress; Master Humphrey and his club members reveal their own metaleptic connections to the stories they relate; and characters from these stories, like *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s Little Nell, hover on the verge of intruding in Master Humphrey's frame narrative through their appearance in the initials. Even when Dickens abandons the serial's frame narrative and tales to feature *The Old Curiosity Shop* as the serial's exclusive content, the serial's original interdiegetic energy persists. Throughout Little Nell's episodic journey away from London, the novel accumulates and connects characters from seemingly distinct spheres through representations of these characters in the letterpress, illustrations, and initials. Dickens cements the diegetic connectivity of his narrative worlds by concluding *The Old Curiosity Shop* with a return to the *Master Humphrey's* frame, revealing that Master Humphrey has been a character in the novel all along: the anonymous "single gentleman" who tries and fails to rescue Little Nell from privation. Although the serial's letterpress does not realize all the implied or intimated connections of its graphic content, the text as a whole establishes the idea that its community of characters exist within a cohesive and ever-expanding diegetic horizon that extends beyond the bounds of its discrete narratives.

The initials from the early issues of *Master Humphrey's* forge interdiegetic links between characters in disparate tales by emplacing familiar albeit diegetically out-of-place characters in

the initials' vignettes. These implied connections generate narrative possibilities and set a

precedent for further connection in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Often depicting characters from the

previous installment's tale, these initials challenge readers' memories of previous issues,

encourage predictions of how previous stories may further unfold, and act as thresholds into the

diegetic realm of their installment's letterpress. The initial from the third weekly installment

reflects this diegetic interplay (Figure 10).
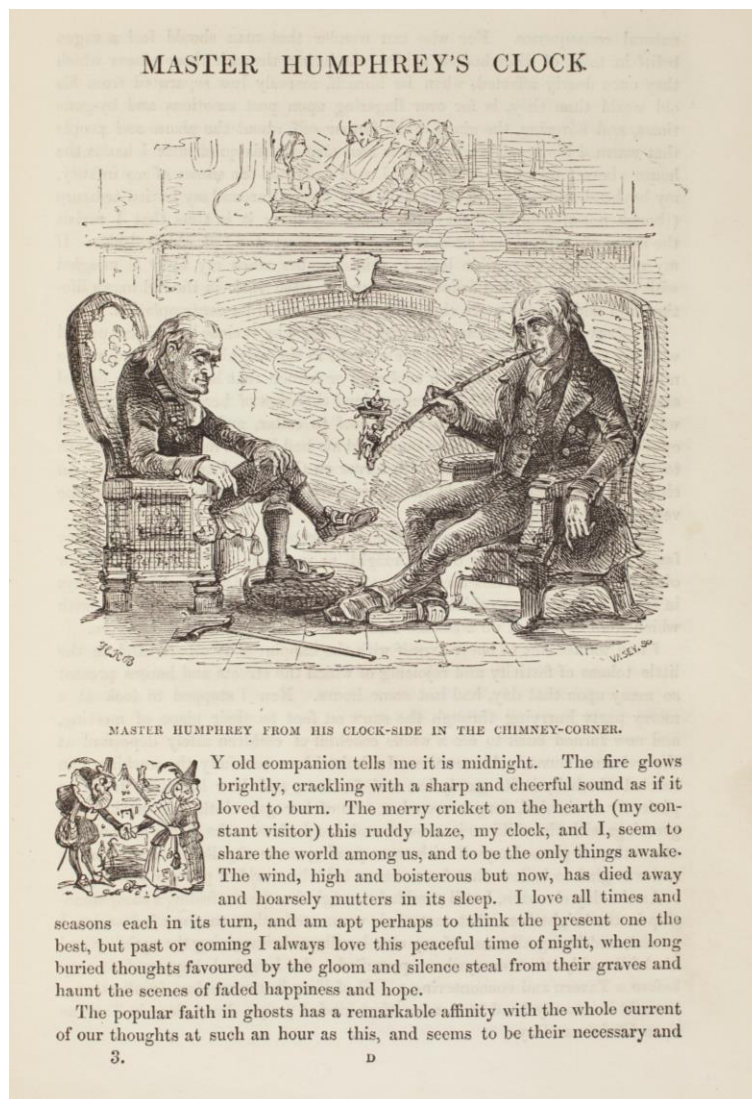
Figure 10. "M" Initial and Headpiece, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 1,

illustrated by H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), p. 25.

Forming the shape of an "M," a coquettish couple stands out amid the beginning's repeated

emphasis on depicting Master Humphrey's world. Readers may recognize this couple as the

characters Alice and her gaily-dressed lover from the preceding installment's tale (*Master*

Humphrey's Clock, vol. 1 17-18). An illustration from the previous issue supports this

identification (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The gaily-dressed stranger and Alice, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*,

vol. 1, illus. H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), p. 118.

Like the couple in the initial, the lover (on the horse) wears trunk hose and a feathered cap, and

Alice (at the window) wears a ruff. By forming the first letter of Master Humphrey's narration,

the couple literally figures into his storyworld. Reading this interdiegetic figuration implies what

may seem to be farfetched and decidedly antirealist scenarios in which the temporal barriers (not

to mention the diegetic) between the tales collapse to allow Master Humphrey and the

Elizabethan couple to meet.

A closer look at the initial's vignette clarifies how such interdiegetic mixing can conform

to and even define Dickens's creation of realist character networks. A diegetic interloper lurks in

the background of the "M," the same pear-shaped, feather-capped man from the serial's first

pictorial initial reappears (Figure 12).

Figure 12. The stout man in initials from no. 1 and 3, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 1, illustrated by H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), pp. 1, 25.

This stout man fits the description of a London mayor described in the serial's first issue. By

embedding the stout man within the couple's initial within Master Humphrey's narration,

Dickens not only embodies the narrative progression of the serial thus far, but he also depicts a

scene in which characters from seemingly disparate stories could cross paths. Given that the

couple's and stout man's tales feature similar historical periods, such a meeting would conform

to realistic representations of history and time. By illustrating such a meeting as possible, the

initial expands each tale's storyworld as well as its possible plot trajectories. This interdiegetic

connection further suggests that the storyworlds of the couple's and the stout man's tales also

intersects with Master Humphrey's. Although Master Humphrey does not appear within the same scene as the other figures, their embeddedness in his narrative suggests that they belong to his world and may thus serve as the historical past that shapes and generates his narrative situation. The initials' layering of diegeses and characters reveal that as more installments generate more stories, so too are there more possibilities for characters to connect, participate in, and expand on one another's tales—a familiar formal strategy that plays out in in Dickens's multi-plotted novels as well. Although the meetings intimated in the initial never materialize in the letterpress—the stout man and the couple never meet—the potential for connection expands each tale's narrative world as the initial's visual content glimmers into and out of view at the periphery of the page and the horizon of each narrative's diegetic world.

As the previous reading suggests, the potential connections that Dickens's pictorial initials envision often fail to materialize in the letterpress, so that the scenes they depict create the sense that Dickens's character-network is expansive because of readers' counterfactual thinking.[41] The initials that bridge the *Master Humphrey's* frame with *The Old Curiosity Shop* further facilitate this thinking by drawing what seem to be peripheral characters into what turn out to be unrealized possible futures of the serial's narratives. The "W" initial from the fifth weekly installment prompts imaginative speculation, and ultimately disappointment, regarding the proleptic narrative counterfactuals its contents imply. In this initial, a young woman standing among some trees forms the letter's shape and fittingly begins Master Humphrey's reflections about the "fanciful associations" he makes between his current situation and the stories he imagines (Figure 13).

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41. For more on counterfactual narratives, see Andrew Miller, "'A Case of Metaphysics': Counterfactuals, Realism, *Great Expectations*" (2012).

MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK.

MASTER HUMPHREY'S VISITOR.

WHEN I am in a thoughtful mood, I often succeed in diverting the current of some mournful reflections, by conjuring up a number of fanciful associations with the objects that surround me, and dwelling upon the scenes and characters they suggest.

I have been led by this habit to assign to every room in my house and every old staring portrait on its walls, a separate interest of its own. Thus, I am persuaded that a stately dame, terrible to behold in her rigid modesty, who hangs above the chimney-piece of my bed-room, is the former lady of the mansion. In the court-yard below, is a stone face of surpassing ugliness, which I have somehow—in a kind of jealousy, I am afraid—associated with her husband. Above my study, is a little room with ivy peeping through the lattice, from which I bring their daughter, a lovely girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age and dutiful in all respects save one, that one being her devoted attachment to a young gentle-man on the stairs, whose grandmother (degraded to a disused laundry in the garden) piques herself upon an old family quarrel and is the implacable enemy of their love. With such materials as these, I work out many a little drama, whose chief merit is, that I can bring it to a happy end at will; I

5.   F

Figure 13. Visits from Mr. Pickwick and Little Nell, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 1, illustrated by H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), p. 49.

Although readers may have to squint to see the initial's vignette, they might notice that the young woman's hat, light dress, and dark shawl resemble those of Little Nell—a character Master Humphrey introduces in the preceding week's installment. Illustrations of Little Nell support this reading (Figure 14). While the preceding week's tale about Little Nell operates as part of the *Master Humphrey's* miscellany, it also begins what turns out to be the novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Nell's appearance in the "W" occurs within a particularly obvious instance of interdiegetic connection. Along with Little Nell's initial, the installment begins with the heading, "Master Humphrey's Visitor," as well as a headpiece illustration of Master Humphrey meeting Mr. Pickwick, who here makes an interdiegetic leap into Master Humphrey's world.

Figure 14. Depictions of Little Nell, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 1, illus. H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), pp. 36, 109.

In the space of a few inches of page, three diegeses collide—Mr. Pickwick travels from the world of *The Pickwick Papers* into Master Humphrey's club, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s Little

Nell also promises to emerge from the trees in Master Humphrey's garden as the chapter's "visitor." Readers may thereby entertain multiple indeterminate narrative futures before the letterpress clarifies that only Pickwick's visit to Master Humphrey unfolds. The initial's depiction of Little Nell as Master Humphrey's visitor turns out to be a "fanciful association," or more specifically, a narrative counterfactual, whose failure to materialize in the letterpress underpins much of *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s tension—those who care for Little Nell cannot find and save her. The initial's staging of a possible reunion between Nell and Master Humphrey, along with its linking this possibility to connections with Pickwick, expands readers' notion of who belongs to *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s character network. It suggests that Master Humphrey and his club members along with the Pickwick gang could join the novel's group of concerned supporters and potential aids to Nell on her journey. Although readers leave behind the "W"'s depiction of Nell along with the narrative futures it implies, by even suggesting these futures the initial welds together distinct storyworlds and makes *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s character system more extensive than the novel's letterpress lets on.

Not every initial from *Master Humphrey's* depicts counterfactual content, and, in fact several of them portray scenes that readers can identify within the letterpress. Even through these initials, however, readers learn that Dickens's narrative worlds are broader and more interconnectedly populated than the letterpress alone represents. The "I" that begins *The Old Curiosity Shop*'s "Chapter the Forty-Sixth" depicts an identifiable scene in the novel, yet it still embodies indeterminacies of form and content that evoke counterfactual thinking. The initial depicts the backside of a traveler (Figure 15).

Figure 15. "I" initial, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 2, illus. H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841), p. 49.

Nell approaches this anonymous traveler at the end of the preceding installment:

> There appeared before them [Nell and her grandfather] ... a traveler on foot, who, with his portmanteau strapped to his back, leant upon a stout stick, as he walked, and read from a book which he held in his other hand.
>
> It was not an easy matter to come up with him, and beseech his aid, for he walked fast, and was a little distance in advance. At length he stopped to look more attentively at some passage in his book. Animated with a ray of hope…the child…began in a few faint words to implore his help. (*Master Humphrey's Clock*, vol. 2 48)

The letterpress at first obscures the traveler's identity. He seems to be a stranger, a new addition to the novel's already brimming cast. The pictorial initial, however, visually echoes depictions of several characters from the novel, thereby encouraging readers to make counterfactual predictions about who might reconnect with Nell. Besides echoing the countless faceless itinerants Nell encounters, the initial more directly echoes illustrations of Jerry, an itinerant dog

trainer, and Master Humphrey, the novel's perambulatory original narrator who recurs in the

novel as Nell's unsuccessful benefactor, the single gentleman (Figure 16).
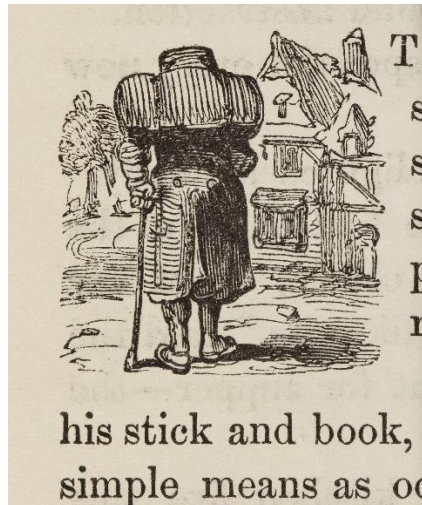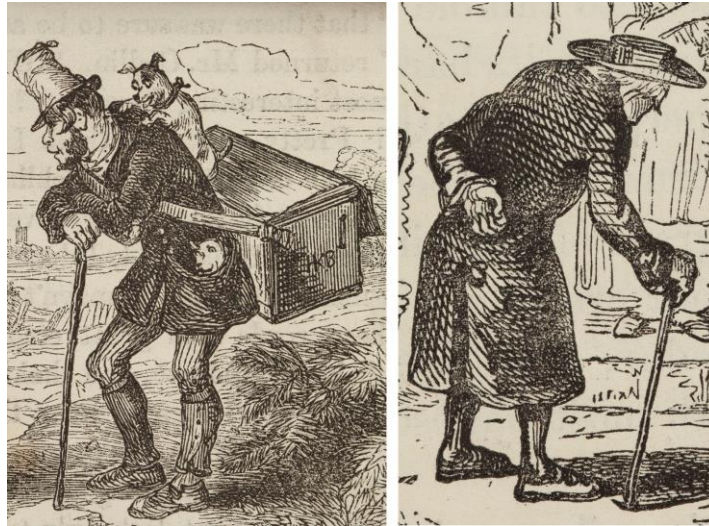

Figure 16. Jerry and Master Humphrey, Charles Dickens, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, vols.1 and

2, illustrated by H. K. Browne and George Cattermole (London: Chapman and Hall, 1841), pp.

306, 6.

Readers can imagine that for Nell, an encounter with either of these characters would be

welcome but could produce very different narrative futures given Jerry's itinerancy and Master

Humphrey's rootedness in London. The indeterminate plotting the initial instigates quickly stops

when readers shift from seeing to reading its contents. As an "I," the initial begins the chapter:

"It was the poor schoolmaster. No other than the poor schoolmaster" (*Master Humphrey's Clock*,

vol. 2 49). The initial's polysemous possibilities evaporate as the letterpress repeatedly asserts

that the initial depicts the friendly schoolmaster who aids Nell earlier in the novel, yet the phrase

"no other" acknowledges the multiple possible characters the traveler might have been. Despite

being able to place this initial and determinately identify who it depicts, its ambiguous visual

residue and the counterfactual thinking it engenders cast a wider net of possible character

connection than that which unfolds. Leaving behind the initial and all the indeterminate

possibilities it portends into the more limited narrative progression of the letterpress does not close off the possible connections the initial intimates but rather relegates them to the novel's network-expanding periphery.

The "I"'s participation in and commentary on Dickens's realism occurs not only in an engagement with its vignette but also in the process of seeing and then reading it within its narrative context. Dickens's description of the schoolmaster's immersed reading practice highlights the problematic perceptual losses that attend readings that move too rapidly or definitively through the letterpress—an experience for which pictorial initials may serve as a corrective. As readers shift from seeing the back of the traveler to reading its alphabetic identity as an "I," they pin down its pictorial relevance to the diegesis and uncover alphabetic meanings that reflect on their own experience of the novel. For a moment, before lexically integrating the "I" with the letters and words that follow, it exists as a word all its own. This "I" echoes Master Humphrey's first-person narration, abandoned after chapter three, and resonates with readers' self-identification in the reading process. The indefinite pronoun "it" quickly subsumes, delimits, and depersonalizes the "I"'s potential referents while the pictorial drama of the "I," the figure of a reading traveler, retains a commentary on the reading process directed at each individual who perceives it. The traveling figure in the "I" moves quickly and focuses so intently on reading that he ignores perceptions of the world beyond his reading. Only when the traveler halts to "look more attentively" at his book do he and Nell connect. Just as the figure of the traveling schoolmaster doubles as a self-reflexive "I," so too does Dickens's description of the schoolmaster's rapid reading offer a commentary on reading. Should readers move too quickly through a novel's letterpress (the sort of reading that, for instance, may lead someone to skip over a pictorial initial in favor of knowing what happens next), they may lose sight of what

makes the novel feel real. While it comes as no surprise that *The Old Curiosity Shop,* and

Dickens's novels more broadly, represents populous, interconnected character systems, the fact

that the seemingly marginal bibliographic details of the pictorial initials body forth this realist

sense of interconnectedness is a revelation. By experiencing and attending to pictorial initials

readers discern that a realist sense of horizonlessness emerges out of indeterminate and

counterfactual plotting that occurs not only within the letterpress of the novel but is also enacted

at its visual periphery through the process of leaving behind narrative possibilities that the

initials' visual details suggest.

  Far from merely affirming the critical commonplace that Dickens's realism hinges on his

interconnected character networks, the *Master Humphrey's* initials reveal this mode of realism's

dependence on the print media that instantiate it. Raymond Williams famously describes

Dickens's novels as achieving a realist effect through their gradual unveiling of their

interconnected character systems:

> There is first an absence of ordinary connection and development. … But then as
>
> the action develops, unknown and unacknowledged relationships, profound and
>
> decisive connections, definite and committing recognitions and avowals are as it
>
> were forced into consciousness. These are the real and inevitable relationships and
>
> connections, the necessary recognitions and avowals of any human society. But
>
> they are of a kind that are obscured, complicated, mystified, by the sheer rush and
>
> noise and miscellaneity of the new and complex social order. (155)

For Williams, Dickens realizes his realism through the verisimilitude of an interconnected and

seemingly horizonless society. How Dickens achieves this effect, however, Williams evades as

he claims that character connections are passively "forced into consciousness." The *Master*

Humphrey's initials fill this critical void. They reveal the media-dependent mechanisms through which such consciousness emerges. The initials make space for readers to envision the microscopic cognitive processes that attend reading a realist novel: readers imagine connections that only sometimes materialize and the unrealized connections, although—or, because—they are left behind, scaffold the reach of Dickens's expansive narrative worlds.

This reading of the pictorial initials' realist representation of, and commentary on, Dickens's boundless networks challenges Alex Woloch's understanding of the Victorian novel's character systems as closed, zero-sum economies. Where Woloch argues that characters "locked within the same story" compete for limited narrative attention or "character space" (2), the initials' representational expansiveness affirms the readings of critics like Aaron Kunin and Emily Steinlight. Akin to Kunin's claim that characters "bridge individual fictions and genres, as well as orders of reality" (315-6). Dickens's pictorial initials' hybrid existence both within and beyond the letterpress's verbal representations and the initials' visual representation of extradiegetic, interdiegetic, and counterfactual scenes expand Dickens's storyworld beyond the novel's dominant diegetic boundaries. The representational duality of the initials' form and content also builds on Steinlight's assertion that Dickens's novels represent characters whose "inclusion and exclusion [within the novel's character systems are] equally impossible" (109); the characters and scenes that appear in the initials' vignettes may not correlate to anything in the letterpress and may thereby indeterminately seem to expand the novel's storyworld or exist outside of it. Where each of these critics looks beyond the letterpress of Dickens's individual novels to account for the paradoxical expansiveness of his character systems, a turn to the pictorial initials in the print matter of the text itself reveals an otherwise critically unexamined means by which Dickens sustains and expands his realist character systems.

II.

Where *Master Humphrey's* pictorial initials teach readers the mechanics of Dickens's

zoomed-out narrative horizonlessness, the pictorial initials in *Wives and Daughters* activate and

theorize how readers experience Gaskell's zoomed-in, high-definition narrative world. Designed

by George Du Maurier, these initials appear across from full-page illustrations and are embedded

within letterpress at the beginning of each of the *Cornhill*'s installments of the novel. Instead of

portraying counterfactual or extradiegetic scenes, the initial's vignettes proleptically depict

seemingly mundane moments from their respective installments. The *Wives and Daughters*

initials are also larger and more pictorially complex than those in *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

Their letters of the alphabet occupy only a small part of their vignettes and typically hover in the

upper right-hand corner of each scene. They lightly masquerade as trifling background details;

their easily recognizable shapes vaguely resemble domestic decorations, architectural

adornments, natural outgrowths, and celestial bodies (Figure 17). These half-hearted attempts to

pass as part of each vignette's realist picture result in a representational rupture—foreground and

background collapse as the letters fail to fully assimilate into the scene's background. Both

belonging in their scenes and obviously out of place within them, the letters urge readers to

attend to the trifling background details of each vignette. As readers move into each installment's

letterpress, they leave behind the trifling moments and things of the initials, uncertain about how

these trifles figure into the installment's narrative yet aware of their narrative potential. The

irresolvable meanings of each pictorial initial's trifles thereby transform Gaskell's letterpress

narrative world, in which narrative foreground and background also collapse in her detail-filled

descriptions, so that narrative trifles both within and beyond the readers' ken seem always to

hold narrative promise.

Figure 17. A Sampling of Pictorial Initials, Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, illustrated

by George du Maurier, *The Cornhill Magazine* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1864-66)

While plenty or critics celebrate Gaskell's detail-oriented brand of realism, [42] they have

largely ignored, undervalued, or misunderstood the *Wives and Daughters* initials' relationship to

42. For accounts of the paradoxical significance of trivial details in Gaskell's fiction see: Catherine Gallagher's

"*North and South*: The Paradoxes of Metonymy," *The Industrial Revolution of English Fiction* (1980), Elaine

it.[43] Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge rightly note that the initials depict habitual, everyday activities that seem divorced from Gaskell's plot but that on closer examination belie sensational plot possibilities. I build on this reading by focusing not only on the pictorial contents of the initials but also their dual, processually-experienced form.

As Leighton and Surridge suggest, by identifying the moments in the novel to which the scenes in the initials correspond, readers discover that these everyday scenes refer to points of inflection in the plot in which everyday conversations or moments of reflection galvanize the characters' plot-defining actions. For instance, a seemingly mundane scene of the novel's protagonist, Molly Gibson, riding a pony alongside her father appears within the vignette of the "T" initial (Figure 9, top left). Although this scene of riding depicts what the installment reveals to be a habitual practice of the father and daughter, it leads into the installment's portrayal of a particular ride that has far-reaching consequences in the novel's plot. Riding with her father, Molly asks for permission to attend the open house at the local aristocrat's home and her father grants it. The ride and request are benign enough, yet because she attends the open house, Molly meets the woman who will later become her stepmother and begins the several-years'-long process of becoming a favorite among members of the town's most influential family—a position that later saves her reputation from ruin. In a similar vein, the "O" initial (Figure 9, top

Freedgood's "The Vicissitudes of Coziness: Checked Curtains and Global Cotton Markets in *Mary Barton*," *The Ideas in Things* (2006), and Talia Schaffer's "Ephemerality: The Cranford Papers," *Novel Craft* (2011).

43. In the few critical accounts of the initials in *Wives and Daughters* that exist, they are treated as illustrations rather than as unique formal entities. For the most attentive account of the *Wives and Daughters* illustrations, including the initials, see Leighton and Surridge's "The Plot Thickens: Toward a Narratological Analysis of Illustrated Serial Fiction in the 1860s." See also Alan Shelston, "Illustrating the Everyday: Illustration and Text in Gaskell's 'Wives and Daughters'" in *George du Maurier: Illustrator, Author, Critic* (2016).

middle) depicts an older Molly carrying a tray of food upstairs. The chore itself appears mundane; however, the installment reveals the moment to be one in which Molly comes to terms with her difficult relationship with her stepmother who has declined to come down for the dinner Molly has lovingly set out, leaving Molly to carry food up for her on a tray. In this moment, Molly's sense of rejection leads her to foreclose the possibility of openness or intimacy with her stepmother, which in part contributes to the secrets and miscommunications that fuel much of the novel's conflict. Similarly meaningful backstories underwrite each of the superficially quotidian scenes of the novel's initials, and when readers discover the pattern of these scenes' meaningfulness, they can interrogate them with an eye for the narrative possibilities they promise and leave behind. The scenes in the initials offer readers both a sense of the patterns of the characters' everyday lives and a promise that out of these seemingly narrative-resistant patterns, details of context, chance, or characters' attitudes can precipitate pattern-breaking, plot-progressing causal chains that upend the novel's thick depiction of predictable quotidian activities.

Through their realist depiction of trifling objects and collapsing of foreground and background, each *Wives and Daughters* initial thus bodies forth the narratively dense world of Gaskell's novel. The initial that appears at the beginning of the novel's third installment challenges its viewers and readers to question their visual and narrative practices of foregrounding and backgrounding narrative information, epitomizing the way Gaskell's realism generates narrative energy in the most mundane moments and things. At this juncture in the novel, Mr. Gibson, Molly's father, contemplates remarrying. Meanwhile, Gibson's future wife, Hyacinth, stays with the local aristocrats at Cumnor Towers, and Gaskell's narrator and several of the *Wives and Daughters* characters speculate about the marital prospects for the pair. In the

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installment's initial, an unidentifiable woman stands in front of a mirror (Figure 18). This woman has not appeared in any of the preceding illustrations or initials nor does she obviously correspond to a single character's verbal description. She thus remains a stranger until readers reach a corresponding description of her much later in the installment. Given the indeterminacy of whom the initial depicts and when she appears in the text, the initial reveals little of the upcoming plot and instead illuminates minute domestic details—curtains billow behind the mirror and a magnifying glass, along with other minor things, rests on the table around it. The interplay of black and white in the vignette draws viewers' attention to the woman's dark figure amid light fabrics and guides the eyes to see hers in the mirror. A simple reading of the scene might identify it as a classic metaphor, revealing this character's vanity or self-formation. However, readers may distrust such expected meanings as they move into the process of reading the initial. Camouflaged as if it were the dark shadows surrounding the mirror, a large letter "I" appears on the righthand side of the scene. For some readers, an inattentive viewing of the initial's vignette could render the "I" an invisible, trifling part of the scene's background;[44] however, readers must locate the initial's letter to proceed with reading, rendering the scene's backgrounded "I" an essential part of the foreground of the printed page. In the basic experience of leaving behind this initial, readers learn to question distinctions between narrative foreground and background.

44. In "Charting Rocks in the Golden Stream: Or, Why Textual Ornaments Matter to Victorian Periodicals Studies," Kooistra describes a similar encounter with a hard-to-read pictorial initial in which her students could not decipher its alphabetic content but that Victorian readers may have been more astute at reading (385).

Figure 18. Molly Gibson and Hyacinth. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, illustrated by George du Maurier, *The Cornhill Magazine*, 10, 58 (October 1864), pp. 385-6.

Besides its perceptual meta-lesson on where readers should expect to look for meaning in Gaskell's fiction, other clues about the initial's high definition narrativity emerge when readers think about it within its immediate print context. This initial appears on the page following a full-page illustration of Molly engaged in distracted reading. The illustration alerts readers to think about the reading process and its potential distractions or misadventures, as they transition into Gaskell's narrative world via the challenging form of the initial. The initial "I" then begins letterpress which reads,

If Squire Hamley had been unable to tell Molly who had ever been thought of as

her father's second wife, fate was all this time preparing an answer of a pretty

positive kind to her wondering curiosity. But fate is a cunning hussy, and builds

up her plans as imperceptibly as a bird builds her nest; and with much the same

kind of unconsidered trifles. (386)

The letterpress thus embeds the initial in narratorial contemplation about Mr. Gibson's second wife and the "unconsidered trifles" that precipitate this marriage. The unconsidered trifles of the background of the initial, what readers may see as mere shadows, prove essential to reading. Similarly, the picture of the unknown woman and the initial itself are the sort of unconsidered trifles that reveal what in retrospect seems like cruel fate or an inevitability, that is Mr. Gibson's and Hyacinth's marriage is only inevitable in so much as it arises out of interrelated causal chains connected to trifling moments and things. Hyacinth is the, at first, unidentifiable woman of the mirror initial. The incomplete information of the initial's pictorial content answers the question of who becomes Mr. Gibson's second wife, yet readers cannot know this with certainty until much further into the installment. By linking the ambiguous content of the initial with the idea of trifling things and events, Gaskell's narrator encourages readers to privilege the trifles in her narrative not as distractions from, or background to, the progressive process of reading narrative but rather as granularized keys to it. The seemingly distracted Molly of the full-page illustration across from the initial at once cautions against the sort of "distracted" reading that too carefully focuses on moving forward through a book as well as glorifies looking beyond this sequential reading as necessary for making sense of how narrative meaning emerges out of places we are habituated not to look, in the trifling routines and things of daily life.

By the time readers finish the third installment and uncover the mystery of who appears in its initial, they can better infer its narratively dense meanings. The initial depicts Hyacinth during a visit at Cumnor Towers, as she stands in front of a mirror and contemplates her financially tenuous existence as a schoolteacher. This moment in front of the mirror complicates the traditional meanings of mirror scenes by imbuing even its most trivial aspects with plot-generating power. As conventional readings of a mirror scene accompanied by a large letter "I" might suggest, the scene highlights Hyacinth's vanity and self-reflection, yet these meanings emerge in response to the way Hyacinth looks *at* rather than *into* the mirror. The decking around the mirror illuminates and sharpens her motivations. She thinks:

> 'One would think it was an easy enough thing to deck a looking-glass like that with muslin and pink ribbons; and yet how hard it is to keep it up! People don't know how hard it is till they've tried as I have. I made my own glass just as pretty…; but the muslin got dirty, and the pink ribbon faded, and it is so difficult to earn money to renew them; … Now here, money is like the air they breathe. … Ah! it would be different if they had to earn every penny as I have! … I wonder if I am to go all my life toiling and moiling for money? It's not natural. Marriage is the natural thing; then the husband has all that kind of dirty work to do, and his wife sits in the drawing-room like a lady.' (403)

For Hyacinth, the mirror's interest exists not within the depth of its reflections but in its carefully kept-up superficial details. The muslin and ribbons that deck the mirror are the very definition of superfluous trifles—nor, as Hyacinth suggests, do they effectively signal good taste given that few if any people see them within the private space of a bedroom. Despite their apparent triviality, the superfluous decking prompts Hyacinth to yearn for such trifles and to give up

"toiling and moiling for money" by becoming a wife. The scene from the initial reveals that attention to and desire for superfluities, in part, motivates Hyacinth to promptly marry the first appropriate suitor she meets. Her resulting ill-suited marriage to Mr. Gibson produces conflicts that carry the novel's plot forward. When readers at first leave behind the initial's perceptually and diegetically challenging content for the letterpress's verbal narrative, they cannot know how its meanings layer on top of and complicate the conventional ones it evokes. However, Gaskell's letterpress affirms the promise that the mirror initial makes, that the glimpses it offers of background details are full of the potential for unexpected meanings that generate narrative. As the scene from the initial flickers into and then out of focus as readers progress into the installment, a sense of high-resolution narrativity emerges—for Gaskell any everyday moment or any trifling detail, even the decking around a mirror, carries the potential for narrative propulsion.

In the story of *Wives and Daughters*, seemingly trivial details—things that are functionally similar to the pictorial initials themselves—move from the narrative background to foreground as they participate in Gaskell's narrative and determine its plot. Although readers may readily discover the same by reading the novel's letterpress, the pictorial initials lay bare and codify this representational strategy as a defining feature of Gaskell's realism. Critics have long recognized and debated the formal significance of Gaskell's abundant incorporation of seemingly trivial details into her fiction. Amid praising *Wives and Daughters* as a realist masterpiece, Henry James complains of what he saw as its major drawback: "[T]he details are so numerous and so minute that even a very well-disposed reader will be tempted to lay down the book and ask himself of what possible concern to him are the clean frocks and the French lessons of little Molly Gibson" (247). James concedes that while "as an end these modest domestic facts

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are valueless" (247), they shape readers' interest in the novel's characters and contribute to its realism. Situating Gaskell's details within their historical, literary, and material contexts, more recent critics argue for the narrative and formal value of Gaskell's minutiae. Most sharply, Emily Blair suggests that although the meanings of Gaskell's details may be difficult to determine, their implications for how readers determine the motivations and causes behind plot are far from "valueless" as James suggests.[45] Where James rejects the difficulty of reading Gaskell's details and more recent critics use contextualizations to resolve details' difficult meanings, I find these details' difficulty to be an inviting means of accounting for the plenitude of details with irreconcilable meanings in Gaskell's high-resolution narrative worlds. Pictorial initials make space for and define these details' difficult and sometimes structurally resistant meanings as contributing to *Wives and Daughters*' sense of the real. As readers leave behind their perceptions of initials, each detail's potential for meaningfulness momentarily sharpens the resolution of the narrative world without committing to a determinate meaning. The difficulty of Gaskell's details allows for a seemingly unlimited granularity of meaning that can paradoxically exist within the confines of the printed page, in part through the suggestive possibilities of verbal descriptions, but more explicitly in the flickering, indeterminate pictorial initials that usher readers into the letterpress's world.

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45. See Emily Blair's "'The Wrong Side of the Tapestry': Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Wives and Daughters'" (2005). Blair argues that "background detail becomes meaningful for what it suggests about the incomplete and unnarrated plots of *Wives and Daughters*" because "Gaskell uses detail to indicate motivations that she leaves unexplained, thereby inviting the reader to formulate a critique of the very plot she constructs" (585).

Critics rightly probe the language of realist fiction for clues about how it evokes feelings of perceptual immediacy, expansiveness, and plenitude. Exemplary of this work is Elaine Auyoung, who in *When Fiction Feels Real* shows "how much nineteenth-century novelists have to tell us about the mechanics of mimetic representation ... how specific techniques in realist fiction can shape a reader's process of forming impressions of fictional persons, incidents, and experiences" (15-16). An examination of the Victorian novel's pictorial initials reveal that the reading process can also be shaped by realist techniques that emerge in the material features of the novel form. Pictorial initials' unique contributions to the Victorian novel highlight the powerful role that even the most ephemeral parts of printed texts can play in shaping readers' experience of realism. So effective in their ephemerality, they are now as obsolete as other Victorian technologies of perception such as the stereoscope or the diorama, and perhaps because of their forgettable form, or perhaps because of its anachronism, pictorial initials never factor into accounts of the Victorian period's representational advances. Their forgotten place in the history of the novel testifies to their formal efficiency, their high-pressure condensations of realist representation helping us to theorize the imagined immensities that Victorian realism leaves behind.

CHAPTER THREE:

A Legend for Voice in the Victorian Novel

On the page of an illustrated book, we seldom pay attention to the small space

running above the words and below the drawings, forever serving them as a

common frontier … these few millimeters of white, the calm sand of the page.

— Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe* (1973)

Do you hear what I'm saying?

If you **do**, have your **ears** checked because no one said a word.

— Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)

"Please, sir, I want some more." It is a line we have heard hundreds of times and one of

the most quoted and misquoted ones from all of Charles Dickens's oeuvre.[46] Many of Dickens's

readers associate the line with an illustration by George Cruikshank which appears in the first

installment of *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839). In the illustration, Oliver stands with bowl in hand,

ready to ask for more. Readers may be quick to guess this illustration's caption. Looking at the

illustration, we can almost hear Oliver saying his iconic words. This imagined caption and its

pleading voice, however, do not appear or emerge from the space beneath Cruikshank's

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46. A Google search of the phrase "Please, sir, I want some more" yields 608,000,000 results. Common variations

on this phrase also frequently appear. "Please, sir, may I have some more?" and "Please, sir, can I have some

more?" yield 599,000,000 and 572,000,000 results, respectively.

illustration. The caption evades representing Oliver's voice altogether and instead reads: "Oliver

asking for more" (Figure 19).

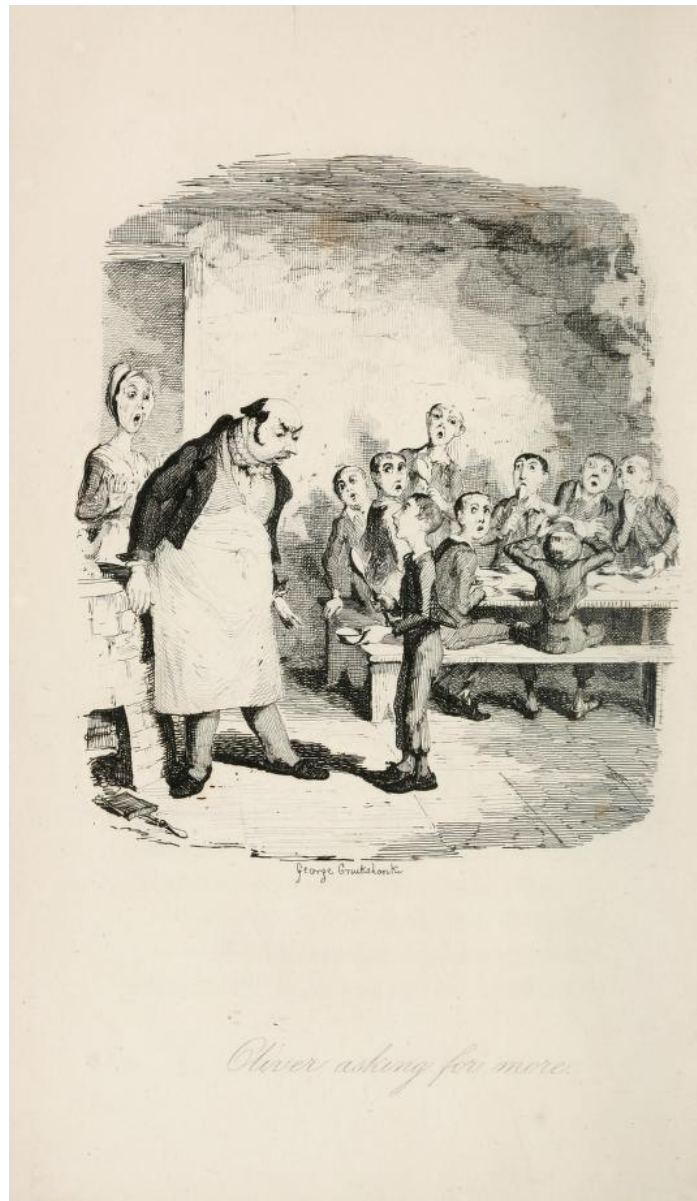Figure 19. Oliver asking for more, Charles Dickens, illustrated by George Cruikshank, *Oliver*

Twist, vol. 1 (R. Bentley, 1838).

More often than not, the illustration captions of early Victorian novels take the form of "Oliver

asking for more"; they serve as simple titles or commentary on an illustration, leaving

characters' voices for the letterpress. Both the conventions and formal inventions of the

illustration caption and of narrative voice evolved within the nineteenth-century novel. Scholars are well-versed in the familiar story of that great stylistic modulator of voice: free indirect discourse. These scholars discover free indirect discourse in Jane Austen's novels and from thence track its nearly ubiquitous use in the narration of the novels that follow.[47] They argue that free indirect discourse allows characters' and narrators' voices to blend within unspoken, internal monologues, producing effects ranging from intimacy to irony. In contrast, the Victorian novel's experiments with illustration captions remain a critically uncharted territory whose implications for narrative voice rival those of free indirect discourse. Illustration captions provide an additional means through which fiction modulates the voices that comprise it. By the mid-nineteenth century these captions regularly represent an interplay of the voices of characters, narrators, and implied authors, and, as I will show, reveal the way their respective fictions imagine the communication between fictional voices and the readers who experience them.

This chapter examines a type of literal illustration and caption, what I call the "quotational caption," whose formal features illuminate the way fiction encourages readers to enact cognitive processes that lead them to imagine and interpret the voices that fiction represents. A couple scholars of illustration, John Harvey and N. John Hall, note that by the heyday of the Victorian illustrated novel in the 1860s, quotational captions like our imaginary, "Please, sir, I want some more," come into prominence.[48] These captions consist of the speech or

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47. For foundational accounts of free indirect discourse, see Roy Pascal's *The Dual Voice* (1977), Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds* (1982), and Ann Banfield's *Unspeakable Sentences* (1982).

48. Neither Harvey nor Hall use the term "quotational caption," but both note how captions consisting of quotations from the letterpress become increasingly common. See Harvey's *Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators* (1971) and N. John Hall's *Trollope and His Illustrators* (1980).

thoughts of a character or narrator pulled directly from a novel's letterpress and, like other literal illustrations, appear visually distinct from a novel's letterpress. This chapter fills the critical void on how this variety of caption operates. Why, after all, would it matter if Oliver's voice appeared beneath Cruikshank's illustration? In a novel full of competing voices, what difference does a quotational caption make?

To answer these questions, I turn to Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?*, in which quotational captions abound, comprising more than half of the novel's illustrations—twenty-three out of forty, to be precise. Published by Chapman and Hall between 1864-1865, *Can You Forgive Her?* appeared during a time when the quotational caption became a regular feature of the illustrated novel. The lists of illustrations from major illustrated periodicals like *The Cornhill Magazine* support this claim: quotational captions appear with increasing frequency as the 1860s progress. While there are plenty of other novels that employ quotational captions, *Can You Forgive Her?* serves as a particularly illuminative case study of the quotational caption's formal affordances. Its contents complement and enrich the polyvocal possibilities of its quotational captions through its complex interplay of voices and perspectives. In it a self-conscious narrator repeatedly breaches narrative boundaries by making metaleptic addresses to readers both within the letterpress and in the novel's title;[49] Trollope relies on pages upon pages of free indirect

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49. In "Anthony Trollope and the Voicing of Victorian Fiction," Monica C. Lewis argues that Trollope uses an "intrusive yet … productive narrative technique in order to open the dialogue between author and audience" (142). Lewis argues that Trollope achieves this sense of dialogue through his narrator's frequent intrusive interruptions amid the narrative and his repeated posing of questions to his readers.

discourse; and two illustrators with distinct styles, Hablot Knight Browne and E. Taylor,[50] supply

an abundance of illustrated scenes whose relation to their captions and the letterpress creates

uncertainties and tensions regarding whose voice(s) a caption represents and toward whom that

voice is directed.

Trollope believed in the superiority of quotational captions and used them in his novels as

orienting devices for his readers' interpretations of the illustrations they accompanied and the

installments these illustrations began. When asked how to caption one of the illustrations to

Framley Parsonage (1860-1), Trollope's first serialized novel, he replied that "taking the words

from the text, is I should say the best legend for the picture" (qtd. in Hall 14). The term "caption"

not yet in regular use, Trollope uses the term "legend" to describe the words that appear beneath

his illustrations. "Legend" carries additional semantic significance in comparison to the term

"caption."[51] Like a legend to a map, an illustration's legend has connotations of orienting reader-

viewers and of telling a story. In many instances, Trollope had a say in which words would

appear in the space of an illustration caption. Through the act of selecting and excerpting lines of

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50. Trollope fired Browne midway through *Can You Forgive Her?*'s serialization and hired E. Taylor for its second

    half. The first twenty illustrations are Browne's and the second twenty are Taylor's. Browne is best known as

    one of Charles Dickens's main illustrators, but scholars know next to nothing about Taylor except that she was a

    woman from St. Leonards.

51. In this chapter I use the term "caption" instead of "legend" because of twenty-first-century readers' greater

    familiarity with the use of "caption" to describe the text that appears beneath an illustration. For me, the term

    "caption" also serves a broader category in which "legends" are a subset. In other words, an illustration may have

    a caption that describes or explains the contents of that illustration or figure without necessarily orienting readers

    to how that illustration or figure relates to a larger text. As a subset of captions, quotational captions introduce

    some of these orienting properties.

dialogue or narration from an ensuing installment, Trollope could meld his commentary on his writing with his narrator's and characters' voices, orienting readers to both the illustration and the letterpress as a whole.

If novels are, in Mikhail Bakhtin's famous assessment, comprised of heteroglossia or a "social diversity of speech types" including "authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters" (262-3), then quotational captions serve as both guideposts and challenges to developing coherent interpretations of these voices. Their role as guideposts stems from the fact that they often appear in the frontmatter of a serial installment. Like many other serialized novels of the time, *Can You Forgive Her?*'s illustrations and captions precede each installment's letterpress, allowing them to offer proleptic, counterfactual-stimulating glimpses into the narrative that followed them. They encourage readers to predict how the narrative will unfold and entertain multiple possible outcomes, including imagining multiple possible readings of whose voice a quotational caption represents. Because readers often cannot resolve the ambiguity of who voices a quotational caption until they reach the quoted passage in the letterpress, the contents of these captions allow readers to imagine an interplay of multiple potential voices that are temporally suspended, leaving readers in an interpretive limbo. These captions enable readers to imagine and interpret the many voices of the novel as interrelated utterances,[52] to attribute snippets of text to the voices of the implied author, the narrator, or to characters and, also, to ascertain whether the novel presents these voices in sympathetic, comedic, sardonic, or disapproving ways.

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52. Quotational captions' ability to reflect the way the voices in narrative are interrelated connects to the readings in Frances Ferguson's "Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form" (2000) and Casey Finch and Peter Bowen's Tittle-Tattle of Highbury': Gossip and the Free Indirect Style in *Emma*" (1990).

Like free indirect discourse, they create space for utterances that may be voiced by multiple characters, but the representational capaciousness of their seemingly simple form differs from and in some ways extends beyond that of free indirect discourse. Using a single phrase or sentence without any of the grammatical markers of free indirect discourse,[53] quotational captions function as ambiguous representations of not only multiple potential voices but also as utterances directed at multiple potential auditors. Quotational captions further exceed the representational abilities of free indirect discourse in that both the voices they represent and the auditors they imply may comprise fictional characters and the "real" implied author and reader; they thus allow for intradiegetic and metaleptic voicings and receptions. Quotational captions illuminate the metaphysics of voice in fictional narratives by serving as a means through which

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53. Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* defines the grammatical traits of free indirect discourse as baring grammatical markers that reflect its representation of "two discourse events, … two styles, two languages, two voices, two semantic and axiological systems" (34). Typical grammatical features of free indirect discourse include "a back shift of tenses," :conversion of personal and possessive pronouns" (from first person to third person), and "deictics referring to the character's spatial temporal frame" (35). At the same time, free indirect discourse appears free from the tags or quotation marks that would typically distinguish it from the direct quotations in which characters' speech usually appears (34). Quotational captions bypass these grammatical gymnastics by retaining all of the features of both a narrator or author's speech *and* a character's speech—their single utterances could represent either without any grammatical alteration. They frequently appear with quotation marks and speech tags which can signal not only that a character may be responsible for their contents but also may identify the speaker's gender or name. Other times, quotational captions appear without such markers of speech, muddling any clear sense of who voices them. As I will explain in the next paragraph, because of their appearance in the paratextual space beneath illustrations, quotational captions also take on the voice of a controlling author or narrator, enriching and complicating the sense of who voices them.

the novel ambiguates and theorizes the relationships between the voices of author, narrator, and character as well as implied auditors' "hearing" of these voices.

By virtue of their self-reflexive properties as literal illustrations, quotational captions lay bare the processes through which they elicit their own reception. The quotational caption's orienting properties emerge out of the multiple representational components of its form. In earlier Victorian novels and a few mid-to-late ones too, captions appear in a cursive script. As such, these captions seem to represent the hand of a controlling author—regardless of what a caption says, then, it seems to emanate from an implied author's hand or voice. Instead of cursive script, later novels often use all capitals, italics, or different typefaces to distinguish captions from the letterpress, creating a somewhat similar effect—where readers may take the typeface of the letterpress for granted in their reading of an installment, the typographically distinct appearance of a caption indicates that readers should attend to it differently. The orienting functions of the caption further emerge out of their traditional role as titles. As such, captions anchor the meanings of their illustrations.[54] As with the title of a novel, captions give readers a message that seems to come from a paratextual source (most often the author), and because these captions are excerpts from the letterpress, they further create the sense that an extradiegetic figure, like the author, selects and voices over them. Even in situations in which the boundaries between a novel's narrator and implied author seem to blur, as they do in much of Trollope's fiction, captions can "break the fourth wall" (or, perhaps, more aptly, reach outward beyond the bindings of the novel) to overtly engage with readers and guide their interpretations.

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54. Although quotational captions perform both the anchor and relay functions that Barthes describes in his "Rhetoric of the Image," their abilities far exceed these limited categories.

With *Can You Forgive Her?* as a case study, this chapter will enumerate the varieties of

vocal combinations and subsequent narratological functions the quotational caption contributes

to the novels in which it appears. To do this, I have created a typology of voice in the quotational

caption that guides my readings of the distinct roles these illustration captions can play in

orienting readers to the segment of narrative they accompany. I have identified five major types

of quotational captions, each with subtypes with their own distinct capabilities and contributions

to the orienting space of an illustration and its caption.[55] The major categories of quotational

captions distinguish who voices a caption, what other voices emerge, whether these voices

represent speech that is purely diegetic or also metaleptic, and who the potential auditors of the

caption are. In these instances and in the pages that follow, I conflate the figures of implied

author and extradiegetic narrator—in many instances, but particularly in *Can You Forgive Her?*,

these categories are difficult to disambiguate, but when such disambiguation is possible, I refer

to either the author or the narrator. With this disclaimer in mind, the five categories of

quotational captions and their variable modulation of the novel's voices are as follows:

Type 1

Most quotational captions are uttered by an easily identified character in the diegesis and

are directed toward another character within the diegesis. These captions often include quotation

marks and unambiguous speech tags. They also frequently incorporate conversational cues

indicating the presence of another diegetic character. As in the example above, readers recognize

that a character who is depicted in the illustration, Paul, utters the quoted speech, "What a dress,

55. For more on orienting spaces and their relationship to narratives, see Daniel Punday's "Space across Narrative

Media: Towards an Archaeology of Narratology" (2017).

Judy!," and directs that speech towards another character in the illustration, Judy. While these captions identify a clear character-speaker, this character speech's appearance in a caption also makes room for the sense that an author-narrator has selected and excerpted it. Indeed, the tag, "Paul said" stresses the presence of a narrating voice overlaying Paul's utterance. Given their selection and excerption, these captions further suggest that they epitomize or serve as an extradiegetic commentary on the ensuing installment.
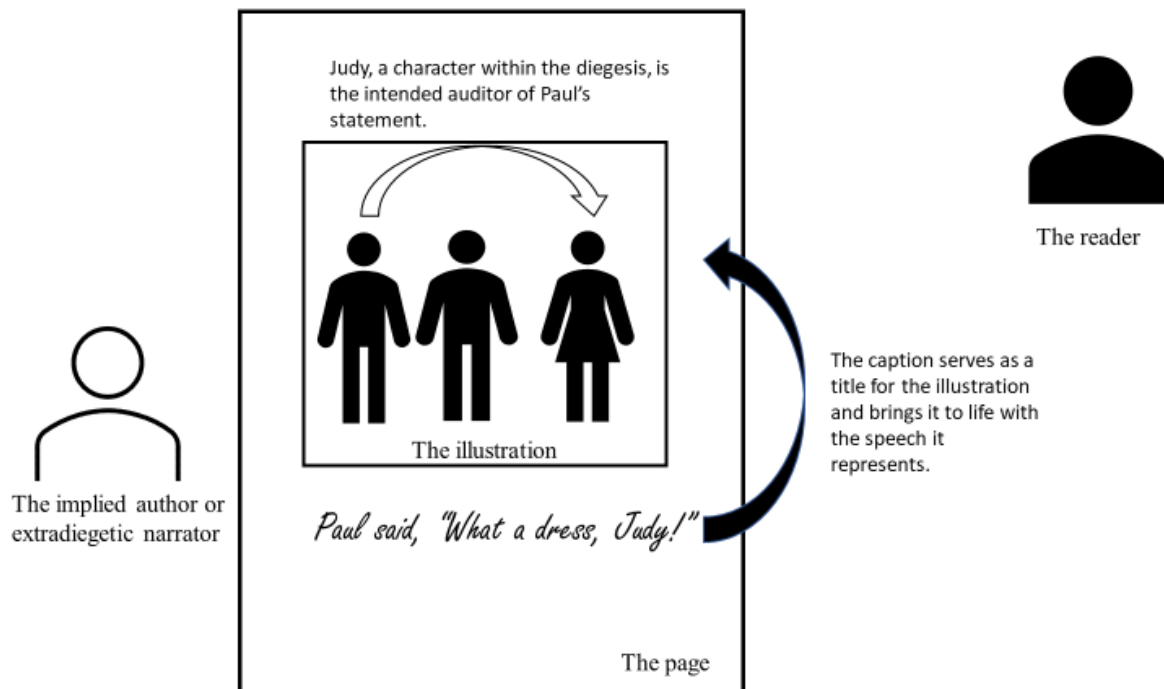
Figure 20. Type 1, Quotational captions uttered by an easily identified character in the diegesis that are directed toward another character within the diegesis.

Type 2

Many quotational captions are clearly uttered by a character within the diegesis, but this character's identity remains ambiguous or indeterminate because of the limited information provided by ambiguous speech tags or illustrations (for instance, in an illustration, a character's

back may be turned to the reader, rendering that character hard to identify). Like the first variety

of quotational caption, these captions are also directed toward another character in the diegesis.

Unlike the first variety, however, the uncertainty surrounding who speaks or in some cases who

hears the quotational caption generates an ambiguity that encourages readers to entertain

multiple possible configurations of who states and hears the phrase. This variety of caption may

produce suspense as readers must read through the installment to resolve the uncertainty of who

speaks. As in Type 1 quotational captions, Type 2 captions also create the sense that the author-

narrator has excerpted and selected them and thus the caption may serve as a commentary on the

ensuing installment.
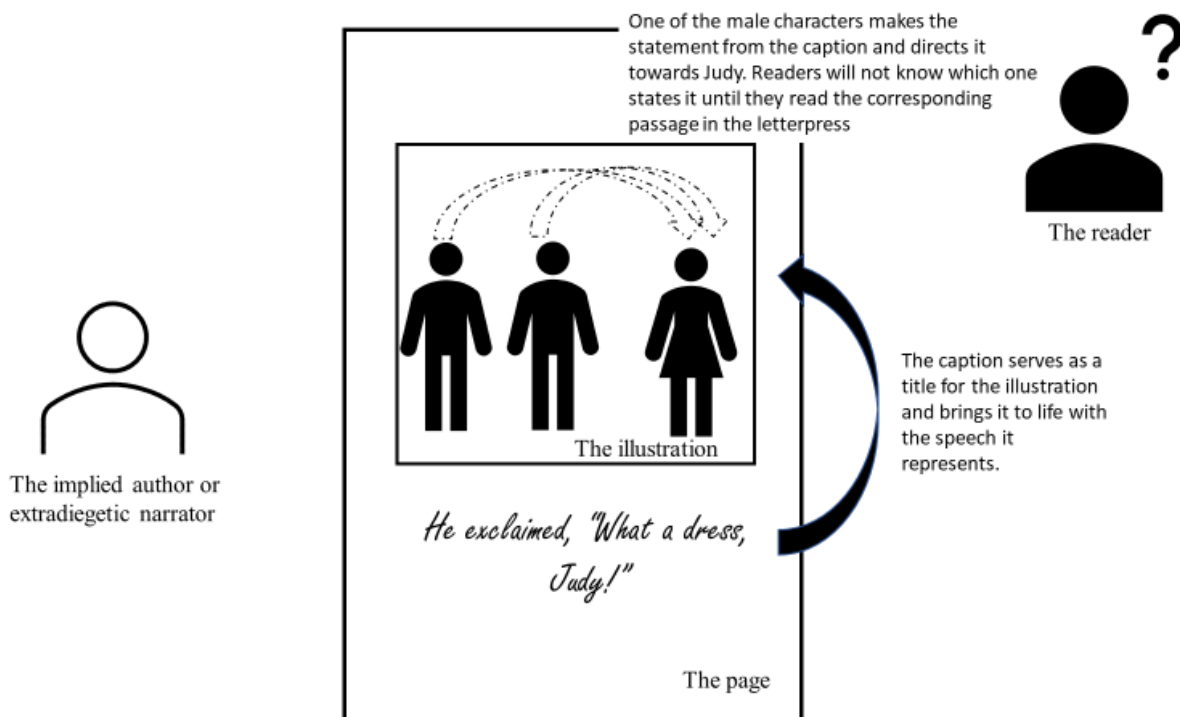
Figure 21. Type 2, Quotational captions uttered by a character in the diegesis whose identity is

ambiguous or indeterminate. The quoted speech is directed toward another character in the

diegesis.

Type 3

Several quotational captions appear without speech tags, and sometimes without quotation marks, rendering their attribution to a particular character difficult if not impossible. In these cases, they may be attributable to a character in the diegesis and/or the extradiegetic author-narrator. This quoted speech may be directed intradiegetically toward another character or outward toward readers, as in free indirect discourse. In the example above, readers may interpret the phrase "What a dress!" as coming from a character and/or the author-narrator. The layering of multiple possible voices functions like free indirect discourse, in this case aligning or distancing the author-narrator's judgment of the dress from the character's. As in the previous varieties of quotational captions, these captions also produce a sense of the author-narrator's commentary through the caption's excerption and selection.

Readers will recognize that an unidentified character in the diegesis voices the contents of the caption; however, because the caption lacks characterological ascription, they also may interpret it as the voice of the author-narrator.

The reader

The implied author or extradiegetic narrator

The illustration

The caption serves as a title for the illustration and brings it to life with the speech it represents. Because these captions act like FID, they may further promote irony or sympathy with the contents of the caption and its illustration.

"What a dress!"

The page

Figure 22. Type 3, Quotational captions that can be attributed to either/both a character in the diegesis or the extradiegetic author-narrator. This speech can be directed toward a character within the diegesis or toward readers as a sort of commentary on something within the diegesis.

Type 4

A small subset of quotational captions produce ambiguity about not only which character addresses another character within the diegesis but also whether the author-narrator may be addressing that character too. These captions appear without speech tags and sometimes without quotation marks and typically take the form of questions or commands. As in the example above, "What's with the dress, Judy?" may be read as uttered by a character, but depending on the nature of the author-narrator's relationship with his characters, it may also be read as that extradiegetic figure's metaleptic address to Judy. This form of quotational caption is most likely to appear in texts that, like *Can You Forgive Her?*, have chatty, self-conscious, and intrusive narrators. Again, these captions may also be read as a more general commentary or epitome of the installment that follows

Figure 23. Type 4, Quotational captions attributable to both a diegetic character and an extradiegetic author or narrator with speech that is directed intradiegetically and metaleptically from the author-narrator inward towards a character.

98

Type 5

The variety of quotational caption that allows for the greatest sense of metalepsis are those which can be attributed to both a diegetic character and the author-narrator with speech that can be read as directed intradiegetically or metaleptically outward to the reader. These captions often take the form of second person address with questions, commands, or commentary on the novel, and they often appear without quotation marks. Readers may be particularly apt to read these captions as directed towards them in instances when a novel's author-narrator regularly addresses readers, as is the case in *Can You Forgive Her?*.

A character within the diegesis utters the phrase from the caption, but it can also be read as uttered by the author-narrator. Because it is written in the second person, readers may also interpret it as directed towards them.

The caption serves as a title for the illustration and brings it to life with the speech it represents.

illustration

"What do you think of the dress?"

The page

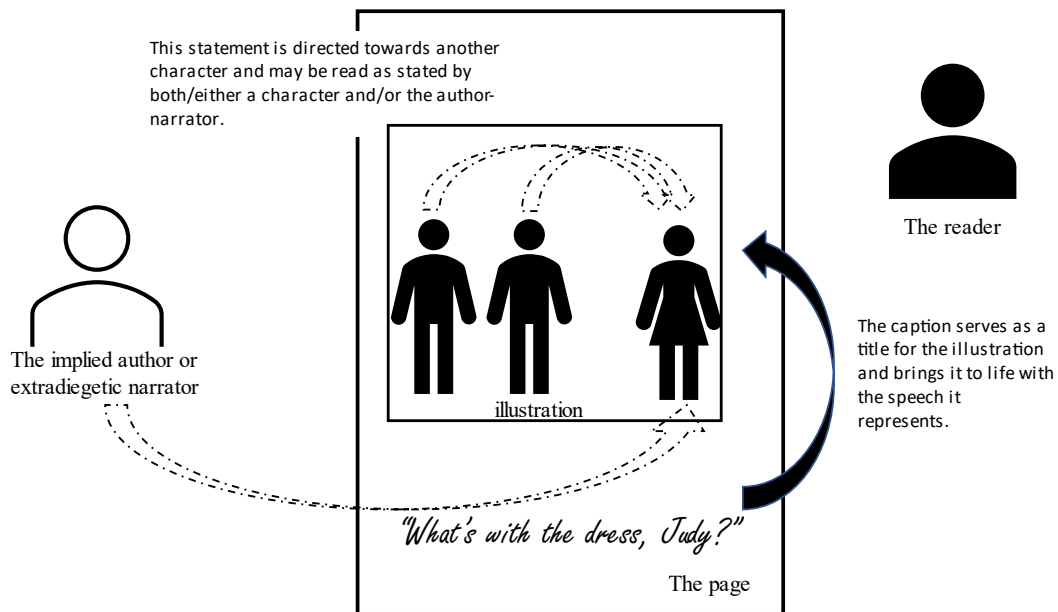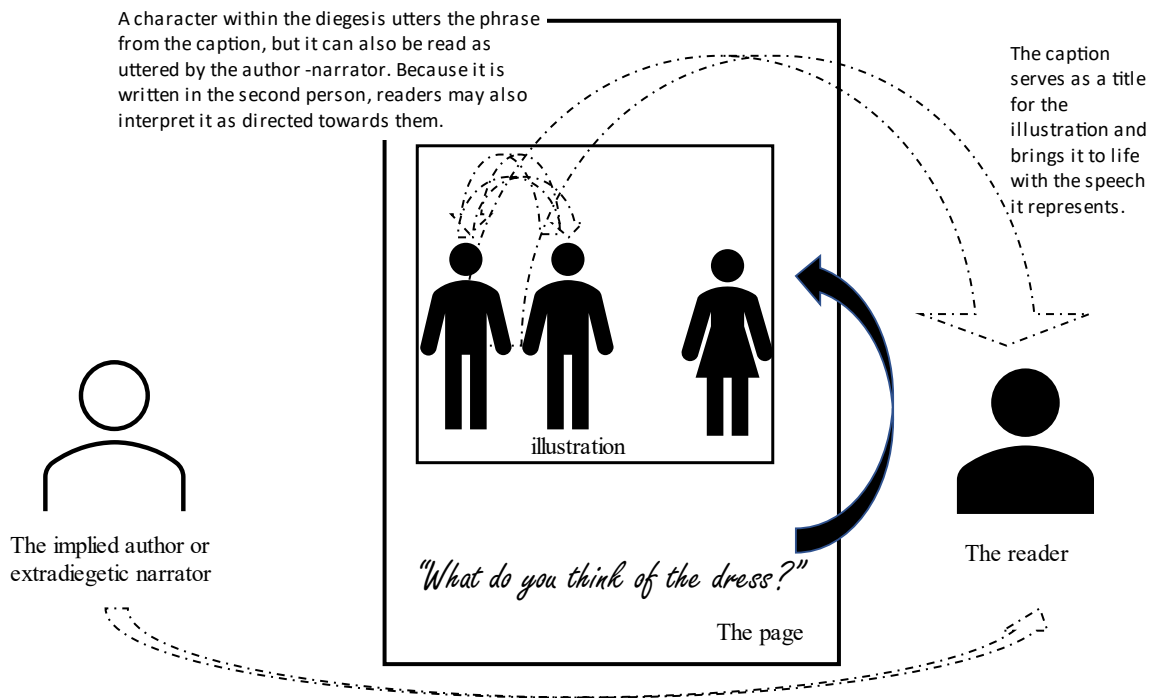The implied author or extradiegetic narrator

The reader

Figure 24. Type 5, Quotational captions attributable to both a diegetic character and an extradiegetic author or narrator with speech that is directed intradiegetically and metaleptically outward to the reader.

With these basic illustrations of how quotational captions work in the simplest of circumstances, we can now turn to their use in *Can You Forgive Her?*, in which the interactions of caption, illustration, and letterpress enrich the basic categories I identify. In what follows, I track how the flexibility of form and function of the quotational caption economically orchestrates the voices of characters, narrators, and authors and imparts characters' speech with the communicative power beyond the confines of their limited diegetic sphere.

I.

In their most straightforward form, quotational captions represent the utterance of an easily identifiable character-speaker that is directed to an easily identifiable intradiegetic auditor. These captions indexically refer to a specific quoted moment during a scene from the novel, thereby acting as titles to the illustrations they accompany, and these captions and their respective illustrations function similarly to conventional illustration captions in serialized novels. They serve as emblems of the installment to come and, at times, offer an abstract, sometimes symbolic commentary on the illustration, installment, or novel as a whole. A simple instance of this variety of caption appears at the beginning of the eleventh installment of *Can You Forgive Her?* and reads, "Friendships will not come by ordering, said Lady Glencora" (Figure 25). Although the caption appears without quotation marks, its unambiguous tagging, coupled with E. Taylor's clear depiction of Lady Glencora and her husband, Plantagenet Palliser, render identifying her as the caption's speaker straightforward. Because this scene and its respective caption appear before their installment, their selection and excerption suggest that the Palliser's marital conflict, namely Lady Glencora's independent resistance against her husband's domineering character, may play a major role in the pages to come.
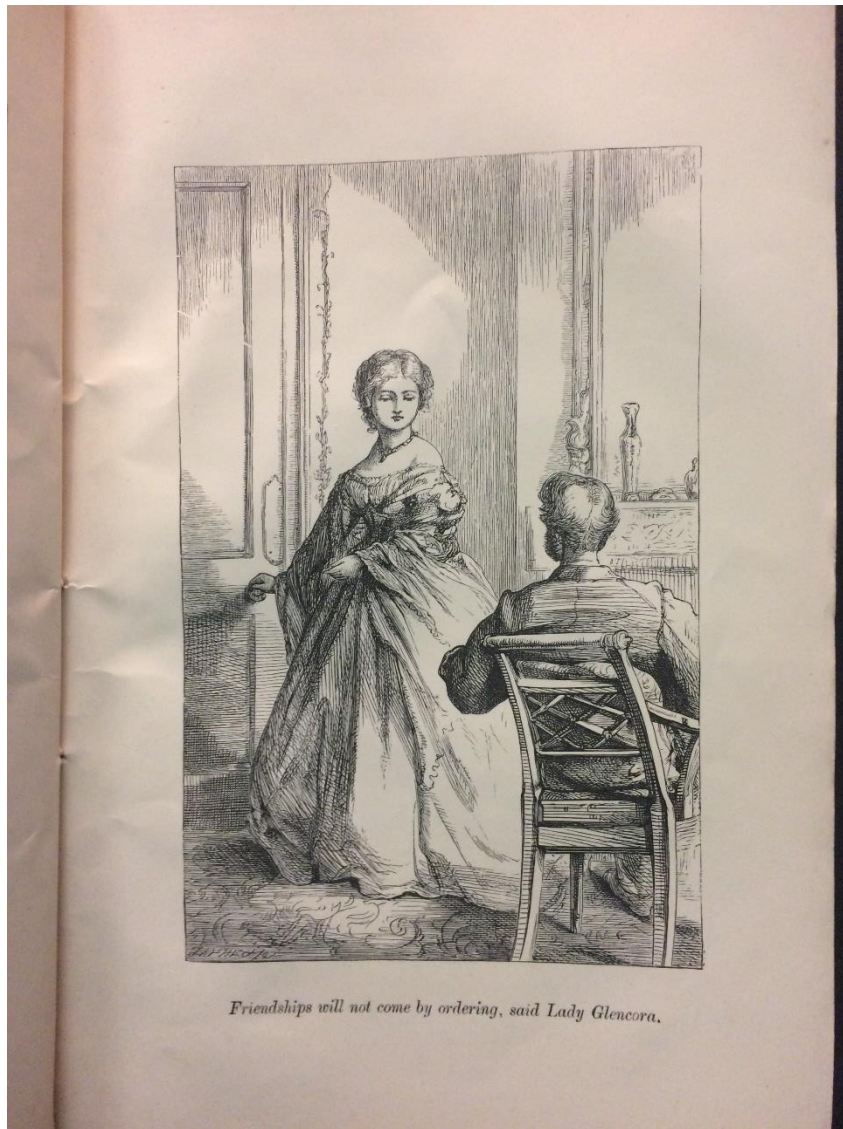
Figure 25. Friendships will not come by ordering, said Lady Glencora, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, (Chapman and Hall, November 1864)

A similar but slightly more complex caption appears with an illustration by Hablot K. Browne at the beginning of the sixth installment of *Can You Forgive Her?*. It reads, "'Baker, you must put Dandy in the bar'" and depicts the scene of Lady Glencora Palliser and her servant, Baker, picking up the novel's eponymous "her," Alice Vavasor, from the train station (Figure 26).

"Baker you must put Dandy on the bar."
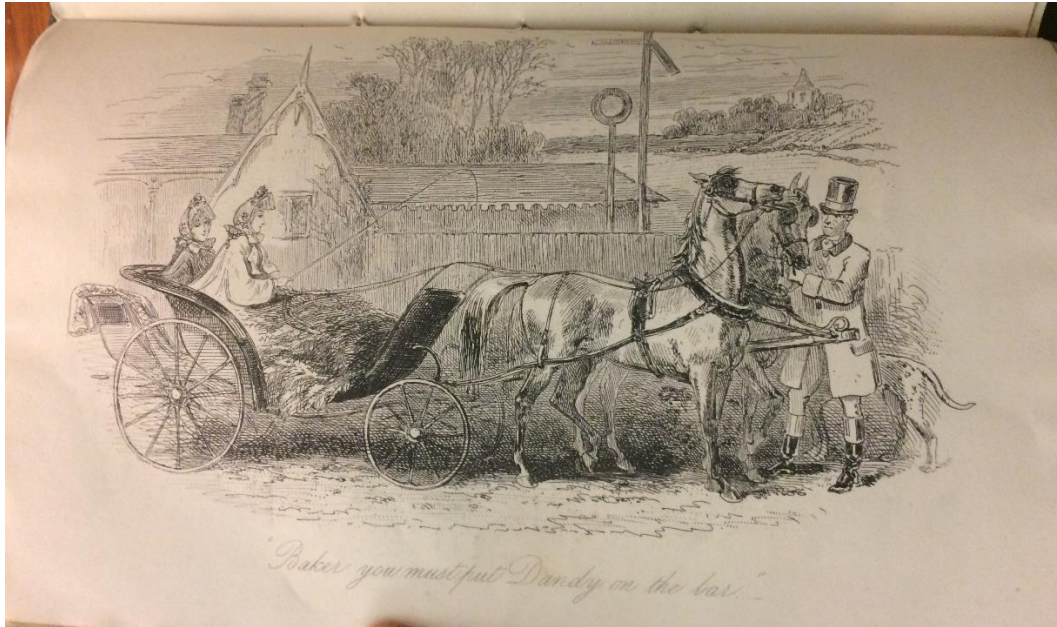
Figure 26. "Baker, you must put Dandy in the bar," Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, (Chapman and Hall, June 1864)

In the novel's original serialization readers will not have yet seen a visual depiction of Lady Glencora, but they may remember from the end of the preceding installment that Lady Glencora promises to pick up Alice from the station herself. Even though the caption lacks tags, the quotation marks that surround it and the reader's knowledge of the caption's most likely speaker make identifying Lady Glencora as speaker straightforward. The illustration and respective caption reveal Lady Glencora's assertiveness and self-assurance in the handling of her horses, one of which is named "Dandy." The reflective reader, however, may discover figurative layers of meaning in the scene. The narrator tells readers that Lady Glencora's forbidden love interest, Burgo Fitzgerald, is a handsome, fashionable spendthrift—the sort of man who might be described as a dandy. The fact that the caption states that the horse named Dandy must be restrained and managed intimates the conflict Lady Glencora will encounter in a nearly renewed

affair with this beau.[56] Although readers may easily imagine Lady Glencora voicing the contents

of this illustration's caption, they also apprehend an authorial hand at work in the symbolic heft

of its selection and the cursive script in which it appears.

II.

Unlike the relatively clear character attribution of the previous variety of quotational

captions, many quotational captions lack the specific speech tags or contextual clues necessary to

identify a speaker, leaving their speakers ambiguous or indeterminate. In *Can You Forgive Her?*,

these ambiguities abound with the distinct styles of its two illustrators, whose inconsistent

depictions of Trollope's characters renders their identification particularly difficult.[57]

Intentionally ambiguous or not, this variety of quotational caption and its respective illustration

can produce meaningful suspense as readers guess who speaks the caption's phrase. An example

of the sort of ambiguously voiced caption that produces suspense appears along with an

illustration for the twelfth installment of *Can You Forgive Her?*. The caption reads, "I asked you

for a kiss" and depicts Alice Vavasor with her fiancé and cousin, George Vavasor (Figure 27).

Without tags indicating whether Alice or George asks for a kiss, the illustration and caption

pairing leaves readers wondering whether the request for a kiss comes as a tender request from a

wounded-looking Alice or a domineering demand from the power-hungry George. With the

nature of their relationship weighing in the balance of who says the quotational caption, readers

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56. It is no coincidence that Lady Glencora's other horse's name is "Flirt," similarly reflecting (albeit over-

simplistically) her role in her relationship with Burgo Fitzgerald.

57. Not only did their styles and depictions differ, but for Hablot Browne, the illustrations sometimes did not match

the descriptions in the letterpress, much to Trollope's consternation and, likely, to readers' confusion.

who encounter this illustration may be eager to determine whether Alice, who has previously

been reluctant to accept George as a lover, has submitted to him and encouraged some necessary

tenderness in their interactions. Alternatively, readers may also presume that George pressures

Alice into unwanted physical intimacy.

I asked you for a kiss.

Figure 27. I asked you for a kiss, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*, (Chapman

and Hall, December 1864)

The uncertainty about who asks whom for the kiss encourages readers to entertain each of the alternatives and to look forward to a resolution of this uncertainty in the ensuing installment.

An additional effect that ambiguously voiced quotational captions can produce is a sense of polyvocality in which readers may imagine multiple characters uttering the caption's phrase as a sort of refrain of gossip.[58] These captions often take on ironic registers when readers get the sense that the phrase from a caption could be uttered sincerely as well as sarcastically. Trollope's readers discover such a caption at the beginning of the novel's sixteenth installment. The caption, which notably appears without quotation marks, appears along with an illustration of the feckless suitor of Alice's widowed aunt, Captain Bellfield. The caption reads, "A sniff of the rocks and valleys" (Figure 28). The phrase in the caption originates from an expression the novel's comedic widow, Mrs. Greenow, uses to justify her decision to marry the ostentatious spendthrift, Captain Bellfield. Greenow explains, "I do like a little romance about them [men],—just a sniff, as I call it, of the rocks and valleys. One knows it doesn't mean much; but it's like artificial flowers,—it gives a little colour, and takes off the dowdiness" (534). For Greenow, if a man has "a sniff of the rocks and valleys," he puts on a show of being romantic, even if that romantic behavior is artificial. Greenow uses the phrase with at least some degree of earnestness as she explains her choice of suitor. The illustration and caption, however, depict a moment and express the phrase with more irony than in Mrs. Greenow's original use of the expression. As the gauche Bellfield stands outside Vavasor Hall, the novel's heroine, Alice, and her cousin, Kate, survey him from a distance in the background.

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58. Finch and Bowen's "The Tittle-Tattle of Highbury" offers further discussion of why gossip provides a helpful lens through which to understand free indirect discourse, and their discussion may also inform the way quotational captions work here.

A sniff of the rocks and valleys.
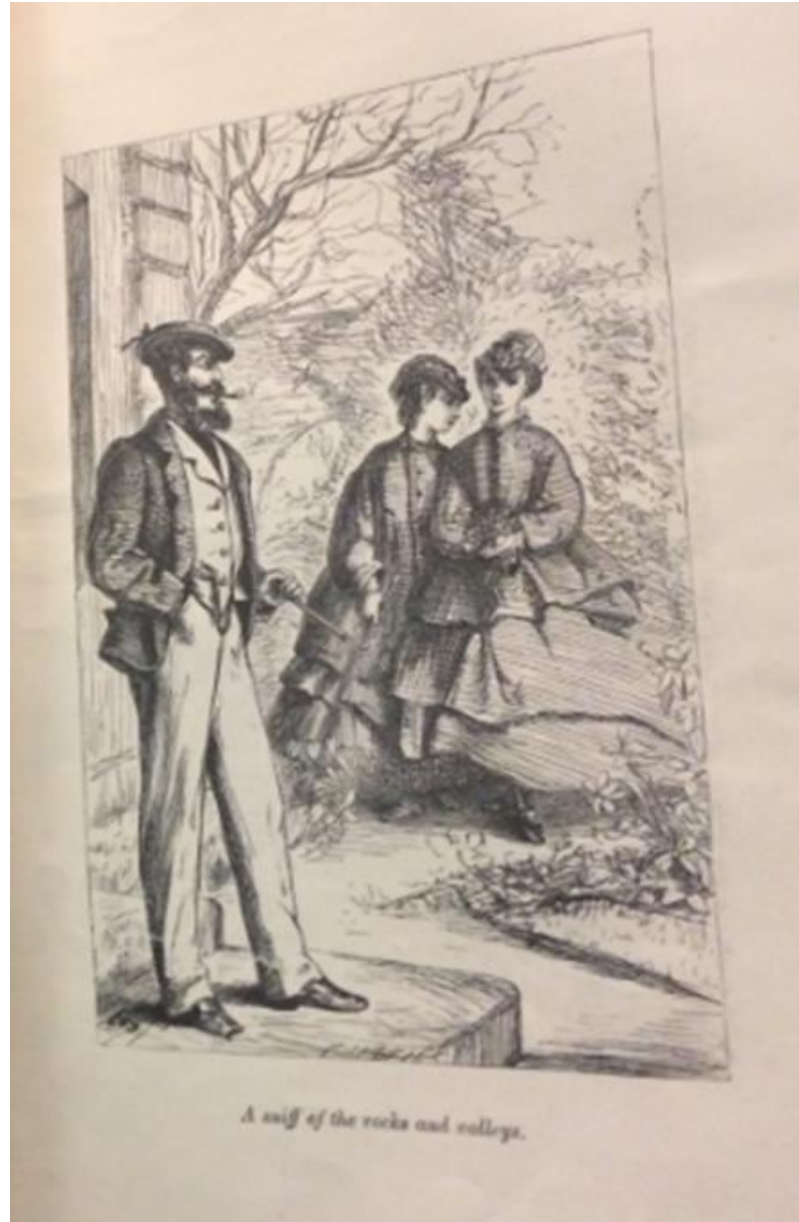
Figure 28. A sniff of the rocks and valleys, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*

(Chapman and Hall, April 1865)

The illustration portrays Kate whispering to her cousin, "Look at him. That's what aunt Greenow

calls a sniff of the rocks and valleys" (538). Without tags or even quotation marks, the

quotational caption's phrase achieves a disembodied, free-floating sense of belonging to a

situation or scene as a whole.[59] Through this quotational caption, readers may imagine Mrs.

Greenow earnestly describing Bellfield as having a "a sniff of the rocks and valleys"; they may

imagine Kate ironically repeating the description; and, as I will discuss further in the next section

of this chapter, readers may also imagine the narrator ironically labeling the scene of Bellfield's

awkward arrival by selecting and excerpting this same phrasing. In imagining the phrase uttered

from multiple perspectives, some of which are even indicated by the distanced perspective of

Kate and Alice in the illustration, the phrase's different registers of meaning resonate throughout

the scene and the installment that follows.

III.

As intimated in the previous example, quotational captions introduce the opportunity for

a narrator's voice to adopt the quoted language of a character. Such instances create an as of yet

unexamined medium for free indirect discourse, in which both the voice of a character and the

author-narrator coexist within the same expression. Where traditional free indirect discourse is

"indirect" by the very fact of its not being a direct quotation from a character's speech, namely

not appearing with quotation marks, quotational captions achieve their "indirectness" through the

sense they create of an author-narrator's speaking their contents in addition to any character's

expression of them and hence can sometimes appear within quotation marks. In *Can You Forgive

Her?*'s captions, this dual or multiple voicing most often happens when a quotational caption

appears without any tags and includes contents that may be read ironically. These quotational

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59. In *The System of Comics*, Thierry Groensteen agrees with this assessment, suggesting that all captions are

"equivalent to the voiceover" and serve as the speech of the "explicit narrator" (128).

captions' ironies emerge out of the distance between the character's utterance of the caption's phrase and the narrator's selecting and repeating of it.

In an illustration caption from *Can You Forgive Her?*'s second installment, a sense of irony overlays the caption's somber phrase "Peace be to his manes" (Figure 29). The phrase refers to the spirit (manes) of the deceased Mr. Greenow, who leaves behind his wealthy widow ever ready to perform her grief. Irony emerges out of the fact that the illustration depicts the widow Greenow proudly showing off her mourning attire with little sign of the reverence or grief of the caption's phrase. In the installment that follows, readers learn that Mrs. Greenow utters the phrase, "Peace be to his manes"; however, the caption's lack of ascription and pairing with this illustration create the sense that the author-narrator also may voice the phrase. When the quotation from the caption appears in the ensuing installment, Trollope affirms the ironic distance between the way readers receive the author-narrator's voicing of the caption and Mrs. Greenow's. In the letterpress, readers learn that the phrase not only creates a tonal discrepancy between the quotational caption and the scene it illustrates but also an aural discrepancy between the expected pronunciation of the phrase and the way Mrs. Greenow says it:

> The charm of the woman [Mrs. Greenow] was in this,—that she was not in the least ashamed of anything that she did. She turned over all her wardrobe of mourning, showing the richness of each article, the stiffness of the crape, the fineness of the cambric, the breadth of the frills,—telling the price of each to a shilling, while she explained how the whole had been amassed without any consideration of expense. This she did with all the pride of a young bride when she shows the glories of her trousseau to the friend of her bosom. … Now and again through the performance, Mrs. Greenow would rest a while from her employment, and address the shade of the departed one in terms of most

endearing affection. In the midst of this Mrs. Jones [the landlady from whom Mrs. Greenow rents] came in; but the widow was not a whit abashed by the presence of the stranger. 'Peace be to his manes!' she said at last, as she carefully folded up a huge black crape mantilla. She made, however, but one syllable of the classical word, and Mrs. Jones thought that her lodger had addressed herself to the mortal 'remains' of her deceased lord. (60-1)

The implied irony of the illustration and caption turn into overt mocking in the letterpress, as Trollope's depiction of Mrs. Greenow's performative mourning almost celebrates her shamelessness. The fact that Trollope sharpens his ironic focus on Mrs. Greenow's speech, however, spells out the way that the voices readers imagine in the quotational captions differ from and complicate those quotations when they eventually arise in the letterpress. Mrs. Greenow mispronounces the Latin "manes" (pronounced "mey-neez" or "mah-nes") and produces a subsequent aural catachresis, much to the confusion of her landlady and to the comedic benefit of the reader. Already primed to read the phrase and the scene with an ironic lens, readers gain the added pleasure of discovering an additional way in which the original caption's phrase exhibits vocal properties beyond those suggested within its initial appearance. Besides offering a quick characterization of the superficial performativity of Mrs. Greenow's mourning, the mispronunciation and Mrs. Jones's interpretation of its (likely) unintentional meaning irreverently reduces the deceased Mr. Greenow's presence to his physical remains, befitting the indecent materialism of the scene as a whole. On a more metatextual level, Trollope's treatment of "Peace be to his manes" highlights the imaginative limitations and capacities readers have when they first encounter quotational captions—the original free indirect

discourse of this quotational caption thus reverberates, playing into and against the moment of its eventual voicing in the letterpress.
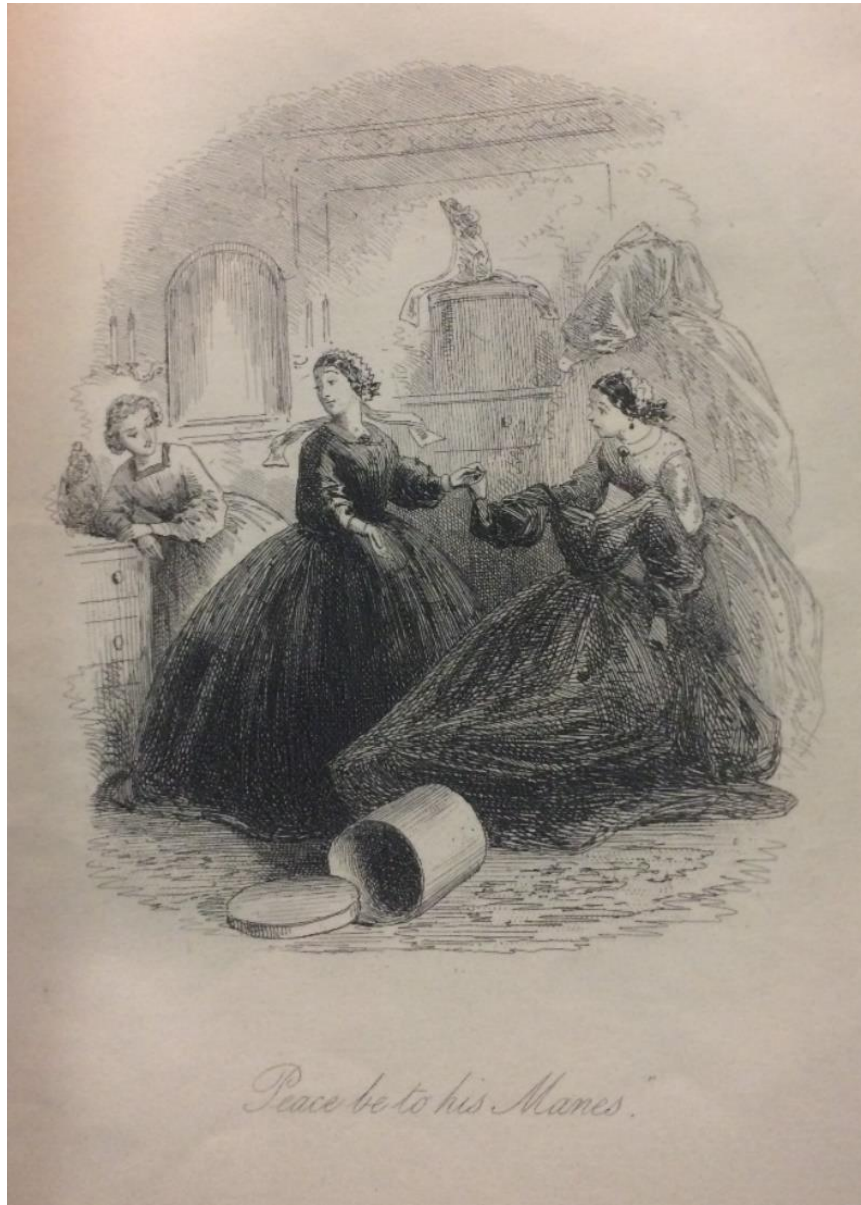

Figure 29. Peace be to his Manes, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?* (Chapman and Hall, February 1864)

IV.

Quotational captions exceed the vocal possibilities of traditional free indirect discourse in their ability to not only introduce multiple voices into a single utterance but also to allow for the possibility of that utterance being directed both intradiegetically and metaleptically—they anticipate and make room for multiple auditors. A handful of quotational captions in *Can You Forgive Her?* can be read as the extradiegetic author-narrator's metaleptic address to a character within the diegesis. These character-directed, authorially voiced quotational captions coopt the quoted speech of a character to achieve their effects. An instance of this variety of caption appears before the fourth installment of *Can You Forgive Her?*. Beneath an illustration of one of Mrs. Greenow's suitors, Mr. Cheesacre proudly showing off his farm, the caption reads, "Mrs. Greenow, look at that" (Figure 30). Although the quotational caption refers to Mr. Cheesacre's speech, like other captions, readers will be aware of that speech's paratextual and extradiegetic selection and excerption. With the sense of an extradiegetic presence inherent to the quotational caption's form along with this caption's lack of a speech tag and comical illustration, readers may interpret its speech as coming from the extradiegetic author-narrator, or in this case, perhaps even just the implied author. Read as such, the author-narrator's speech adopts the deictic cues of the quotational caption to poke fun at the piles of waste and blankness towards which the illustration of Mr. Cheesacre proudly gestures. When the reader looks beyond Mr. Cheesacre's hand towards the "that" to which the caption refers, she, like Mrs. Greenow, does not see much. Indeed, with the illustration in the form of a vignette whose boundaries fade into blankness, the remaining blank page of the material book becomes the "that" of the quotation's focus, suggesting the comedic awareness of an authorial presence that oversees the coordination of

caption and illustration. When ordered to "look at that" from an author who is aware of the blankness surrounding the illustration, Mrs. Greenow has little to see.

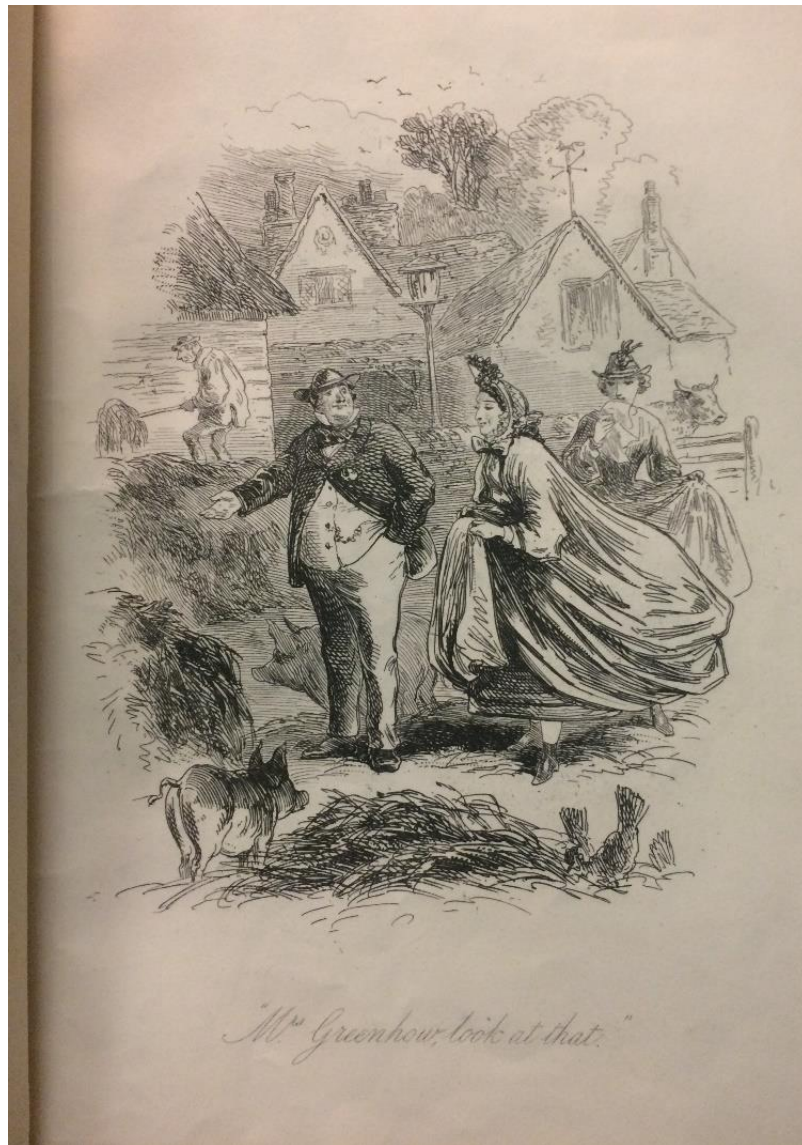

Figure 30. "Mrs. Greenow, look at that," Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*

(Chapman and Hall, April 1864)

More than just the disappointing drudgery of Mr. Cheesacre's successful farm, the blank "that" of an implied author's address to Mrs. Greenow lets her and the readers in on the joke of the empty promises of happiness in any union forged with Mr. Cheesacre. Much like the disgusted

and unimpressed Kate, who in the background partially covers her face to perhaps hide her disgust or perhaps to shield herself from the unpleasant smells of manure, the reader (and Mrs. Greenow) can see that despite any monetary advantages a woman might gain by marrying Mr. Cheesacre, what he has to offer otherwise is mostly a blank.

Where the "look at that" caption mockingly coopts Mr. Cheesacre's speech to metaleptically show Mrs. Greenow the whole lot of nothing he has to offer, other authorial, character-directed quotational captions use a character's speech to take on punning, different meanings than their intradiegetic character-speaker's intend. An instance of this sort of caption appears before the sixth installment of *Can You Forgive Her?*. Beneath an illustration of a group of characters playing billiards, a quotational caption without quotation marks reads, "Mr. Palliser, that was a cannon" (Figure 31). On a basic level, the caption refers to a moment when one of the Palliser's well-to-do guests alerts him that she has scored more points in their game of billiards. Given its missing quotation marks and the nature of its contents, readers may also read it as a metaleptic address from the author-narrator to Mr. Palliser. It is as if the author-narrator prods the inattentive Palliser with information that something alarming, a cannon, no less, has gone off within his midst. Readers may recognize this call for alarm for what it is—the ersatz romance between Lady Glencora and Burgo Fitzgerald threatens to upend the Pallisers' marriage, and Plantagenet Palliser remains aloof to his wife's dissatisfaction and distress. Unaware of his wife's struggle and deaf to the author's warning, this illustration of Palliser, when accompanied by this quotational caption, paints him as more culpable for his marital problems because of the very inattentiveness this caption highlights.

Mr. Palliser that was a Cannon!
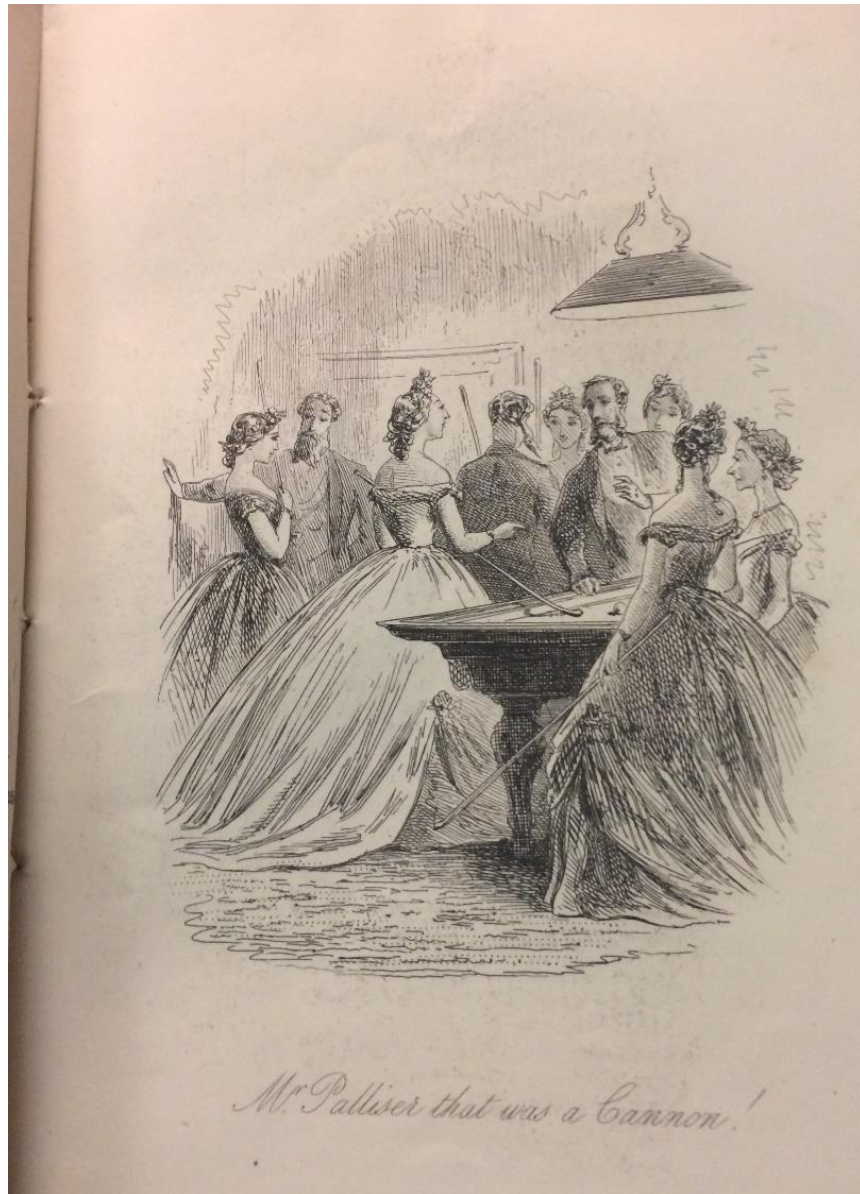
Figure 31. Mr. Palliser, that was a Cannon!, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*

(Chapman and Hall, June 1864)

Authorial, character-directed, quotational captions can also reflect an author's

commentary on the status of the novel and the future of his fictions. Readers may interpret the

caption that accompanies one of the final illustrations of the novel, a depiction of Lady Glencora

cradling her new baby boy as Alice tenderly looks at the baby over her shoulder, as coopted by

the author as a commentary on his writing to come. The caption reads, "Yes, my bonny boy—

you have made it all right for me" (Figure 32).

Figure 32. Yes, my bonny boy,—you have made it all right for me, Anthony Trollope,

Can You Forgive Her? (Chapman and Hall, August 1865)

It represents Lady Glencora's speech as she comments on how her personal insecurities about her marriage and previous infertility have been resolved by the fact that she has produced a male heir—a longed for child and future duke. Should readers imagine the speech as belonging to Trollope, however, another meaning emerges. With Palliser's ascending political career, his marriage now secure, and an heir in tow, Trollope can move forward with his new series of parliamentary novels, expanding on the Palliser family's influence and exploits as they navigate personal dramas amid high stakes political and social affairs.

V.

Quotational captions allow for an additional kind of metalepsis when they are read as the author-narrator's direct address to readers. In these captions, the author-narrator's voice coopts a character's speech, exploiting second-person questions or commands to engage readers in a dialogue about the novel. These quotational captions function similarly to a variant of free indirect discourse that also appears in Trollope's novel—Trollope's use of the second person in both characters' internal monologues and in his narration muddle moments when characters question themselves, creating the sense that the author-narrator may be posing the questions instead. Such a moment occurs in the scene in which Alice struggles to break off her engagement with her long-time fiancé John Grey. In this excerpt from the novel's letterpress, Trollope intersperses Alice's internal monologue with questions that double as the narrator's addresses to readers. As Alice resolves to tell John Grey "the whole truth" about her decision to end their engagement, she and the narrator wonder:

And what was the whole truth? Alice Vavasor, when she declared to herself that she must tell her lover the whole truth, was expressing to herself her intentions of putting an end to

her engagement with Mr. Grey. She was acknowledging that that which had to be told was not compatible with the love and perfect faith which she owed to the man who was her affianced husband. And yet, why should it be so? She did not intend to tell him that she had been false in her love to him. It was not that her heart had again veered itself round and given itself to that wild cousin of hers. ... George Vavasor could never be her husband. ... Nay, she went farther than that with herself, and pronounced a verdict against any marriage as possible to her if she now decided against this marriage which had for some months past been regarded as fixed by herself and all her friends.

Portions of this excerpt bear many of the grammatical and contextual markers of free indirect discourse. The passage is written in the third person and past tense as it reveals Alice's innermost thoughts as they would be expressed from her perspective. Most notably, the passage is full of the sorts of questions and answers that Alice might ask herself as she evaluates her decision to break off her engagement ("What was the whole truth?," "And yet, why should it be so?," "Nay, she went farther"). Although readers could easily interpret these questions as those that Alice poses to herself, readers might also read them as rhetorical questions that the narrator poses for them to consider. After all, Trollope frames the novel as an ongoing challenge for readers. "Can you forgive her?," he repeatedly asks and the novel's title reasserts on the cover of each of its serial installments. To read such statements as "What was the whole truth?" and "And yet, why should it be so?" as addressed to the reader, Trollope engages readers in the same sort of interrogation that Alice experiences, encouraging them not only to identify with the novel's heroine but also to weigh the evidence for or against forgiving her repeated jilting of her suitors. The possibility of having direct addresses to readers within a character's speech or thoughts creates the opportunity for a sort of metalepsis that Trollope's free indirect discourse

approximates and his direct-speech captions perfect in both their direct addresses to readers as well as to characters.

Moments of uncertain second-person addresses also recur in *Can You Forgive Her?*'s captions, in which the author-narrator seems to repeatedly coopt character speech to engage readers in a dialogue about the novel. One such instance occurs in a caption to an illustration for the third installment, and reads, "If it were your friend, what advice would you give me?" When read as coming from the author-narrator, this caption appears to be an appeal for readerly support regarding the problematic situation in which the novel's protagonist finds herself. With the repeated asking of "Can you forgive her?," a similar sort of questioning regarding how he might represent or address Alice's struggles is plausible enough. Trollope and his editors, however, must not have been satisfied with this caption, because in later editions of the novel, an amended version of it reads, "If it were your friend, what advice would you give her?" (not "me"). Still able to be read as a metaleptic address to the reader, the caption disambiguates where and with whom the reader might offer empathetic advice. In the former instance, the reader's imagined advice would be directed towards the author-narrator (a character in *Can You Forgive Her?* who metaleptically teeters into and out of the storyworld), and the caption's proposed question would flesh out the author-narrator's character to suggest that he struggles with how to represent and contend with his characters' problems in a way that will ultimately be forgivable (as the title repeatedly entreats). In the latter instance, the reader's imagined advice would remain more rhetorical and imaginatively directed toward Alice Vavasor. In the process of forgiving her for her social foibles, readers surely have advice they would like to give the character if they could. Either of these readings overlays and complicates the quotational caption's source within the body of the novel.

Figure 33. If it were your friend, what advice would you give me?, Anthony Trollope,

Can You Forgive Her? (Chapman and Hall, March 1864)

While readers may easily imagine Alice voicing the caption, seeking advice from John Grey,

beneath whom she supplicatingly kneels, Grey actually voices the question: unsure of how to

help Alice to express her concerns about whether to end their engagement, Grey encourages her

to role play, to imagine the advice she would give a friend in the same scenario and give that advice as a way to make her impenetrable thought process perceptible. Grey encourages Alice to do what readers have already done for her or the author-narrator, giving readers the chance, when they come to this moment in the novel, to compare notes, to see how their advice for Alice differs from the advice she might give herself. The opportunity for this comparison makes it easier for readers to determine how and whether Alice's behavior is forgivable, giving them the sense of greater autonomy over their judgment of Alice and a false sense of control over the course of the novel. In the hypothetical dialogue the author-narrator and John Grey invite, readers try on Alice's role and vice versa, creating an opportunity for readers to feel a sense of investment and control over the course of the novel, despite their relative powerlessness to shape it.

A related but rather different sort of reader-directed quotational caption appears near the end of the novel, which further imparts the notion that Trollope's author-narrator performatively cedes control of the novel to his readers. The caption appears beneath an illustration of Alice Vavasor and John Grey as the two reconcile after the prolonged suspension of their engagement (Figure 34). The caption reads, "How am I to thank you for forgiving me?" Unlike the previous example of an authorial, reader-directed caption, the authorial voice in this caption emerges in the form of a sort of ventriloquism as opposed to a more direct address. This quotational caption and its illustration refer to a moment when Alice and Grey stand on a balcony in Basel, Switzerland after Alice has finally submitted to Grey's renewed marriage proposal. During the scene, Alice notes the situational irony of their reconciliation in the place where she originally decides to end their engagement: "'It was here,' she said—'here, on this very balcony, that I first

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rebelled against you, and now you have brought me here that I should confess and submit on the same spot. I do confess. How am I to thank you for forgiving me?'" (629).
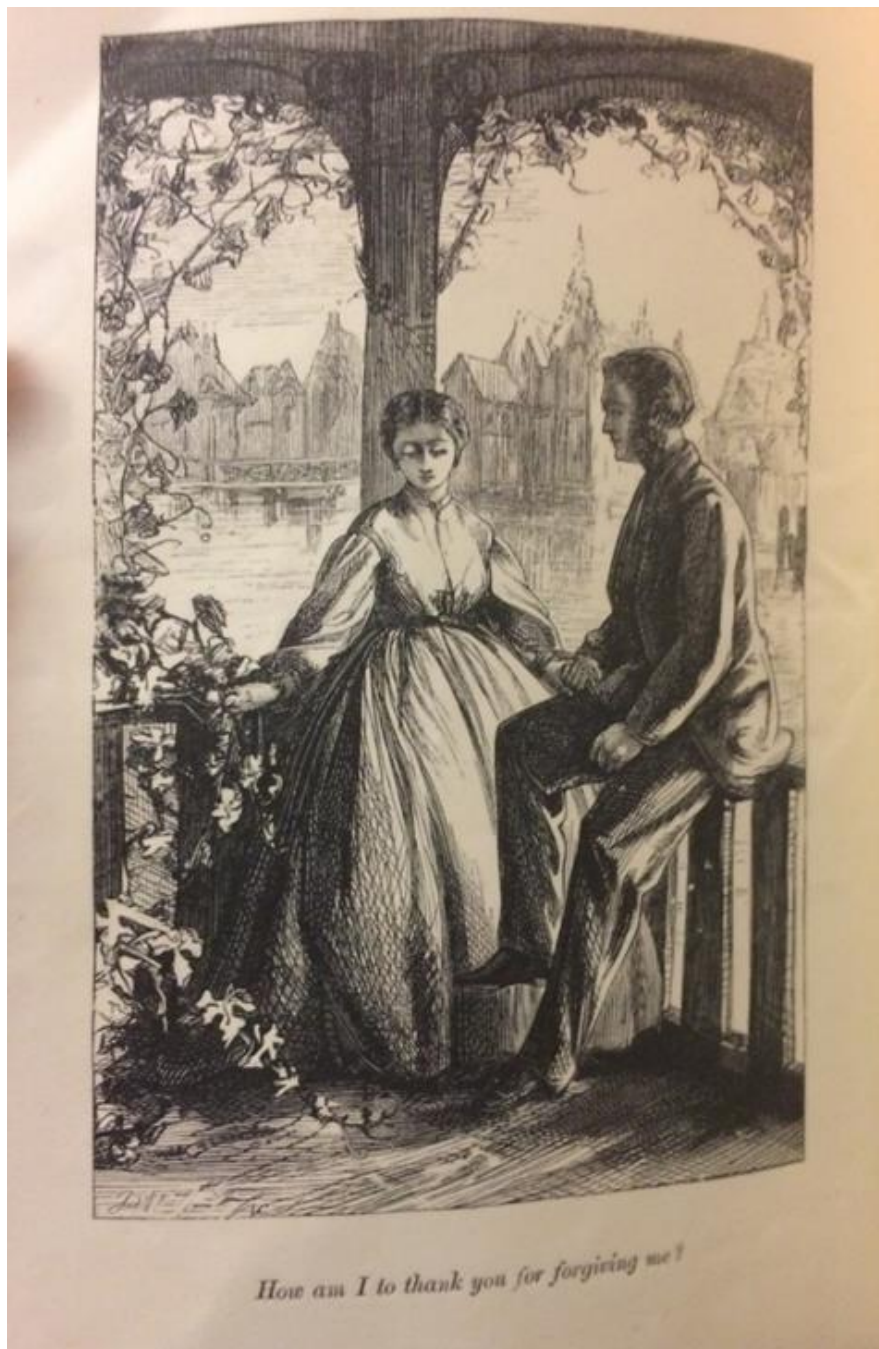

How am I to thank you for forgiving me?

Figure 34. How am I to thank you for forgiving me?, Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgiver Her?* (Chapman and Hall, August 1865)

Although the quotation's attribution and intended auditor are obvious when it appears in the novel's letterpress, both the caption's attribution and audience remain more ambiguous and flexible in their proleptic appearance at the beginning of the serial installment, resulting in multiple potential readings, one of which involves a direct address to readers. Because the caption appears without quotation marks, readers may be less inclined to immediately attribute it to a character; however, if they were to guess at which character uttered the caption, they might look to the postures of Alice and Grey. Alice stands with her body facing outward, her face turned downward, and her arms slightly outstretched, seemingly submissive and ready for forgiveness, while John Grey sits awkwardly on the balcony and faces Alice, holding her hand. Although readers may be quick to attribute the caption's quoted speech to Alice, particularly given the novel's repeated focus on her potential for forgiveness, the caption's visual disconnection from either of the depicted characters—neither opens their mouth as if speaking— allows for the possibility that John Grey is grateful for Alice's forgiveness. Alice's social circle may deem John Grey irreproachable, yet Trollope's readers could disagree with this assessment. Although he is a devoted suitor, Grey selfishly expects Alice to live a quiet life with him in the country when she wants nothing more than to support a partner with an active political life. Grey also denies Alice her financial independence and satisfaction of financing her cousin's political career by secretly paying for it himself. Readers may think, therefore, that John Grey could be grateful for Alice's forgiveness and change of heart.[60]

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60. Although reviews of the novel generally praised Grey for his good character, one notes that "John Grey has a touch of the absolute in him, which clashes with the same quality in Alice. He is always good and gentle, but he has overruled her in all things, and is always in the right. .... She [Alice] is chafing under this gentle supremacy.

Beyond these alternative voicings of the caption, readers will also recognize an echo of the author-narrator's voice and, because of the narrator's dialogic relationship with readers, an address to them. The caption's metaleptic potential gives voice to the anxieties of an author-narrator eager to please his readers. The selection and phrasing of the quotation in the caption contributes to this figure's long-expressed project of eliciting readers' forgiveness for Alice. Because Alice's body faces outward, the caption seems to emanate from her body towards her reader-viewers. As if making a metaleptic leap out of her diegesis and into the author-narrator's repeated conversation with readers about their forgiveness of Alice, Alice seems to ask readers how she could ever thank them. An obvious answer, of course, comes in the following installment as readers get the satisfaction of seeing Alice bedecked in her wedding attire and surrounded by her bridesmaids. Unlike the rather disappointing marriage plot of *The Small House at Allington* (1862-3), which appeared in *The Cornhill* not long before *Can You Forgive Her?*'s serialization and bears many similarities to it (Plantagenet Palliser is a character and its central plot revolves around jilting), *Can You Forgive Her?* rewards readers with what is by most accounts a happy ending. Alice submits to a happy resolution of her vacillating narrative and, as she does so, channels the narrator, creating a strange inverse of traditional free indirect discourse occurs. As the caption's dialogue creates a metaleptic leap, the author-narrator via Alice welcomes readers into her circle of social forgiveness and in her submissive stance, promises to do whatever this social circle deems necessary as proper recompense for the trials they have (albeit enjoyably) endured on her behalf. Through Alice's submissive subsuming of the author-

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... "The men are both of them [Grey and Palliser] much better men at the conclusion of the tale than at the commencement" (*The Athenaeum* 305-6). See "Can You Forgive Her?" *The Athenaeum;* Sep 2, 1865, p. 305.

narrator's longstanding questions and critique, Trollope masterfully brings Alice's emotional journey into alignment with the reader's.

Contemporary reviews of *Can You Forgive Her?* suggest that there may be some merit to the idea that Trollope questioned his success in convincing the readers of *Can You Forgive Her?* to not only forgive Alice but to also forgive the vagaries of a sloppily printed novel. As a reviewer from *The Saturday Review* notes, Trollope's readers had not forgotten the unforgiveable jilting that fills the plot of *The Small House at Allington* ("Nobody forgave Crosbie for his behaviour to Lily Dale" (*The Saturday Review* 240)), and would require considerable convincing to forgive another jilt. Trollope thus may have used the space of the caption to performatively apologize for his apparent lack of control over his problematic novel, suggesting that he owes his readers gratitude for supporting the vacillating heroine of a long and confusingly illustrated novel. The fact that "How am I to thank you for forgiving me?" appears without quotation marks supports such a reading. If Trollope's implied author-narrator can repeatedly ask, "Can you forgive her?," then there is little reason why he might not also ask, "How am I to thank you for forgiving me?" Such a reading of the caption is not farfetched given that most reviews of the novel criticize what they deem to be its over-lengthy and poorly structured plot. In *The Nation*, Henry James pans *Can You Forgive Her?*:

> "For so thick a book, there is certainly very little story. .... The question is, Can we forgive Miss Vavasor? Of course we can, and forget her, too, for that matter. What does Mr. Trollope mean by this question? It is a good instance of the superficial character of his work that he has been asking it once a month for so long a time without being struck by its flagrant impertinence. What are we to forgive?" (*The Nation* 409).

For Trollope's contemporaries as well as critics today, the illustrations to *Can You Forgive Her?* are among its most grievous offenses. A writer for *The Saturday Review* remarks,

> We can scarcely conclude without a word on the so-called illustrations with which these volumes are embellished. Those to the first volume have been executed by somebody who, in the first place, is a mere caricaturist, and is therefore emphatically unfitted to illustrate Mr. Trollope, who is as far removed as a writer can be from caricature. In the second place, the artist, has not paid the author the compliment of reading the book, and George Vavasor, for instance, who the author expressly says had a moustache and no whiskers, is drawn with whiskers and no moustache, and so on throughout. Though the illustrations to the second volume are not Cockney caricatures, they are rather vulgar, and intensely insipid and weak, to say nothing of the technical blunders with which they abound. For anybody who cares for illustrations, these sketches go some way to spoil the enjoyment of a most excellent Trollopian novel. (242)

With such harsh responses to his novel circulating, Trollope's caption's metaleptic expression of gratitude seems to bear some sympathy and a promised reward for what many contemporary reviewers deemed the trials of reading an imperfect novel. In expressing gratitude for his retained and continuing readership despite his seeming out of control novel, Trollope counterintuitively exercises even more control over his readers' reception of *Can You Forgive Her?*.[61] By giving readers the illusion of control through the novel's dialogical quotational

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61. In *The Form of Victorian Fiction* (1968), J. Hillis Miller suggests that Trollope allows his readers a greater sense of awareness than his characters, writing, "Individual minds in Trollope's world are never detached from the community, conscious of nothing but itself. They are bathed in the presence of other people, aware of themselves as they are aware of other people, seeking self-fulfillment in terms of their relations to other people. In many

captions, Trollope flatters his readers as a wise and forgiving community superior to the foibles of his characters and his novel's seemingly wayward course. He allows them the privilege of "seeing it all" before his narrator or characters can, and quotational captions are another means of his accomplishing this effect.

The five categories of quotational captions thus allow for a wide range of polyvocal effects. From the clearly character-voiced to the dual-character-narrator-voiced to the metaleptic author-narrator-voiced, the flexible form of the quotational caption invites multiple readings as it literally embodies textual material that the reader encounters in both caption and letterpress. As Wayne Booth argues, "In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader. Each of the four can range, in relation to each of the others, from identification to complete opposition, on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical" (Booth 155).

<div align="center">*</div>

Can You Forgive Her?'s use of quotational captions and the polyvocal, metaleptic properties they introduce to the novel refracts back into the novel's characters' repeated preoccupations with "having a voice," particularly a voice in politics. In *Can You Forgive Her?* readers learn that the Palliser novels' eponymous central political figure, Plantangent Palliser, pursues politics for nothing more than "to have an actual and acknowledged voice in the management of nations" (203). He cares little for the titles, the money, or the prestige but rather

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passages in Trollope's fiction these three layers of consciousness are present together, each with its own quality of opacity or clarity. The temporal structure of each novel moves toward a resolution in which the various layers come more or less to coincide, all opacity removed in a triumphant: 'They saw it all now." (Miller 87-88) I would add that Trollope allows his readers the upper hand over their author-narrator as well.

for the ability to be heard on a wide and world-encompassing scale. One might argue that, political successes aside, Palliser gets precisely what he wants as Trollope's mass readership returns time and again to depictions of his character in action. I would argue, however, that *Can You Forgive Her?*'s particular preoccupation with the way we hear characters' voices relates more to the way the novel's heroine seeks to be heard en masse but in a roundabout manner. The narrator ponders what Alice wants to do with her life, explaining:

> When she did contrive to find any answer to that question as to what she should do with her life,—or rather what she would wish to do with it if she were a free agent, it was generally of a political nature. She was not so far advanced as to think that women should be lawyers and doctors, or to wish that she might have the privilege of the franchise for herself; but she had undoubtedly a hankering after some second-hand political manœuvering. She would have liked, I think, to have been the wife of the leader of a Radical opposition, in the time when such men were put into prison, and to have kept up for him his seditious correspondence while he lay in the Tower. She would have carried the answers to him inside her stays,—and have made long journeys down into northern parts without any money, if the cause required it. She would have liked to have around her ardent spirits, male or female, who would have talked of "the cause," and have kept alive in her some flame of political fire. (93)

Rather than seeking to have a direct voice in politics or other matters, Alice seeks to have "second-hand … manœuvering," which, although she does not admit it to herself, for a disenfranchised woman could potentially allow her even greater political power than the vote. The narrator's account of Alice's romanticized vision of aiding a political husband—of secretly relaying letters, of keeping up "his seditious correspondence while he lay in the Tower," would

allow her to not only act as an intermediary through which these letters passed, but also potentially as a scribe or even a writer herself. Masked within the voice of her imaginary Radical spouse, Alice's voice and her "flame of political fire" could have power and effect change. Like the second-hand voicings of the quotational captions on *Can You Forgive Her?*, Alice's vocal aspirations remain mostly mute yet hold the promise for power in their potential parliamentary influence when John Grey finally pursues a political career.

The voicing over and voicing through of *Can You Forgive Her?*'s quotational captions reflect not only this novel's preoccupation with who gets a voice and how, but also the inherently flexible nature of voice in the novel more broadly. Quotational captions appear in many Victorian novels as well as in more contemporary graphic novels and, as such, they orient their reader-viewers to the illustrations these captions accompany and the narratives these captions support with more critical attention to how our sense of the novel's voices arises. Quotational captions teach readers about how narrative voices mingle and reverberate within a character's printed thoughts or speech across nearly all novels. Almost every reader can think of a time when they have read dialogue that through careless reading or confusing writing renders its speakers ambiguous. In such moments, readers may imagine the dialogue uttered by multiple possible speakers, trying on the lines to see how suited they are to this or that character. Sometimes this practice can only be resolved by looking back several paragraphs or pages to ascertain where the back and forth of the dialogue originates, and other times, it is irresolvable.[62] What these moments illuminate and the quotational captions affirm is that in a work of fiction,

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62. In "A 'Said He' or a 'Said She': Speech Attribution in Austen's Fiction," Anne Toner notes that Jane Austen's novels include moments of indeterminate speech attribution that "deny immediate apprehension of character" (148) and sometimes depict a "pluralized collective response" (147).

voices are never as fixed as their tags (or lack thereof) would have them seem. The voices

readers imagine are far more tentative and flexible than the more definitive voices spoken aloud.

As Scott McCloud suggests, the voices we see in comics and the voices we read in novels are

silent, but in this silence lies their formal power, which is highlighted and called forth from the

letterpress in the unassuming space of the quotational caption.

CHAPTER FOUR:

The Yellowback's Volume

Printing, having found in the book a refuge in which to lead an autonomous existence, is

pitilessly dragged out onto the street by advertisements and subjected to the brutal heteronomies

of economic chaos. … The newspaper is read more in the vertical than in the horizontal plane,

while film and advertisement force the printed word entirely into the dictatorial perpendicular. …

Locust swarms of print … will grow thicker with each succeeding year.

— Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings* (1979)

A print on the wall … has no volume, no shadows, little or no texture. It is not tangible. It is

almost non-physical. Whereas a book is three dimensional. It has volume (space), [and]

it is an object (volume).

— Keith A. Smith, *Structure of the Visual Book* (1984)

In Alfred Concanon's *Modern Advertising: A Railway Station in 1874*, advertisements

cover almost every inch of a railway station's walls (Figure 35). *Modern Advertising* highlights

the challenge of reading the visually and textually dense public spaces of the Victorian era. With

the 1837 invention of chromolithography, colorful posters proliferated into "locust swarms of

print" that, according to Benjamin, privileged textuality that obstructed or disoriented people's

vision in contrast to the more manageable perception of pages of the printed book (5). *Modern

Advertising* may seem to support Benjamin's assessment of advertising's ascendancy over and

erasure of books, yet a look at Concanon's whole picture, particularly at the bookstall in its

lower-right-hand corner, offers a different account of the book's place within its new visual

schema.[63] This bookstall appears disconnected and insignificant in relation to the station's overbearing wall of advertisements, yet the presence of tiny, brightly colored covers on the bookstall's shelves intimates those books' belonging amid the glaring designs of the advertisements around them.

Figure 35. Alfred Concanon, *Modern Advertising: A Railway Station in 1874*, approximately 1875, lithograph. The Jay T. Collection of Graphic Arts and Social History, Huntington Digital Library. https://hdl.huntington.org/

These books represent a common, eye-catching item sold at railway bookstalls, and this chapter's object of analysis, the yellowback novel. Yellowbacks paralleled the vivid colors and titillating images of two-dimensional advertisements, creating an experience of vertical reading

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63. While scholars typically imagine authors or artists doing the work of theorizing, this essay aligns with W. J. T. Mitchell's claims in *Picture Theory* (2004) that pictures, or things like them, can perform theoretical work independent of the intentions of their respective creators.

with their displayed covers while also offering an experience of more intimate horizontal reading within their pages. This essay argues that the portable, three-dimensional space of the yellowback, small yet visible within its perceptually vertiginous public spaces, affirmed and theorized the physical and imaginative space of fiction within the textual explosion of Victorian modernity captured by Concanon

What Richard Altick long ago called "the most inspired publishing invention of the era" (299), yellowbacks' innovative design made space for fiction within the visual overwhelm of advertising and, as I will argue, theorized how fiction could make experiences of this new reality more manageable. From the 1850s to the early 1900s, yellowbacks appeared on bookstall shelves where they became an advertising space of their own (Grove 92). Before yellowbacks became popular in the 1850s, standardized publishers' bindings had only recently become commonplace,[64] and books rarely used their covers to combine color text and illustrations to attract their readers. Even less frequently did these cover images give readers a sense of a book's narrative content.[65] Yellowbacks offered readers something new by using their covers' colorful title lettering and images not only to grant readers a glimpse into their narrative worlds but also, unlike traditional advertisements, to allow readers inexpensive and immediate access to the very

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64. Book historians like Jeffrey Groves, Anthony Rota, and Michael Sadleir track the history of publisher's bindings and the yellowback's innovations (Groves 75-6, Sadleir, "The Evolution of Publisher's Binding Styles" 13, Rota 104-8).

65. See the University of Rochester's "Beauty for Commerce: Publishers' Bindings, 1830-1910" for examples of book binding practices before yellowbacks: "Beauty for Commerce: Publishers' Bindings, 1830-1910." Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester. https://rbscp.lib.rochester.edu/3343

product for which their covers advertised.[66] As a Victorian journalist notes, yellowbacks "*materially* altered the whole publishing system in England" ("Literary Gossip from Abroad" 2; emphasis added). Within the yellowback's small, crown octavo (6 ⅝ by 4 ⅛ inches) covers, readers found a manageable space in which they could access a literal and imaginative depth that typical advertisements deny.

Without retreading the work of the many scholars who argue that book covers contribute to the overall meaning of a book, this chapter examines a selected subset of yellowback covers that theorize how this new physical form of fiction accommodates and makes sense of the hard-to-read, text-dense environments in which novels were sold and consumed.[67] I argue that by adopting the design strategies of advertising, particularly by using title lettering that intermingles with cover images, these yellowback covers enable readers to interact with and make meaning out of their new textual reality. These covers achieve this effect through what I call "dimensionality"— an experience that at once draws attention to and theorizes the role of the novel's status as a three-dimensional object. This definition builds on Gérard Genette's claim that all book covers invite readers to move from the three-dimensional experience of reality into an imagined three-dimensional world. In *Paratexts* he explains that covers, like other paratexts, act as "thresholds" that offer their viewers "the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (1). Where Genette reads paratexts as a flat or transparent interface that allows readers to

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66. Yellowbacks usually cost between one and two shillings because of their inclusion of advertisements and the cheap materials of their construction.

67. For scholarship of book covers' literary relevance, see David J. Alworth's "Paratextual Art" (2018) and Nicole Matthews and Nickianne Moody's *Judging a Book by Its Cover* (2007).

move between their three-dimensional experiences of reality and fiction, yellowbacks represent

the physical, three-dimensional space of the book as a necessary part of this process.

In my argument, book covers with dimensionality use their cover design to create the sense of a

three-dimensional depth and self-consciously stage scenes whose literal and figurative depth

defies easy reading. Covers exhibit dimensionality when they create the impression that their

paratextual cover lettering, like their title and author's name, metaleptically becomes a part of a

cover image by interacting with or existing within a scene from of the novel's narrative world.[68]

For instance, Horace Mayhew's *Letters Left at the Pastry Cook's* (1853) (Figure 36) depicts a

pile of unopened letters covered in envelopes, postal markings, and stamps, premising its

contents as the engaging stories within these letters' private contents, and the cover leads readers

into these contents by nestling one of its depicted envelopes between the "C" and "O"s of the

novel's title. This device creates an impression of three-dimensionality within the cover's

contents and suggests that the seemingly paratextual title occupies the same diegetic space as the

unopened letters. The covers I analyze all depict similarly self-reflexive scenes which represent

problems with two-dimensional reading that an experience of dimensionality might remediate.

These scenes present situations that reveal the limitations of a reader's perception while also

often depicting characters who struggle to participate in the new modes of reading and seeing

that the visual transformation of Victorian public spaces entailed. These scenes' objects,

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68. Book covers with dimensionality function similarly to tromp l'oeil: "Trompe l'oeil is a technique that deceives

or misleads the senses, such as in art or illustrations, into interpreting images as three-dimensional or real"

(Pantaleo 17). Tromp l'oeil produces a metatextual effect that allows viewers to reflect on the relationship

between representation and reality, an effect that the less-convincing faux three-dimensionality of the yellowback

cover also produces

characters, or settings reflect an interpretive impenetrability that only the "depth" of further

textual explanation can resolve.
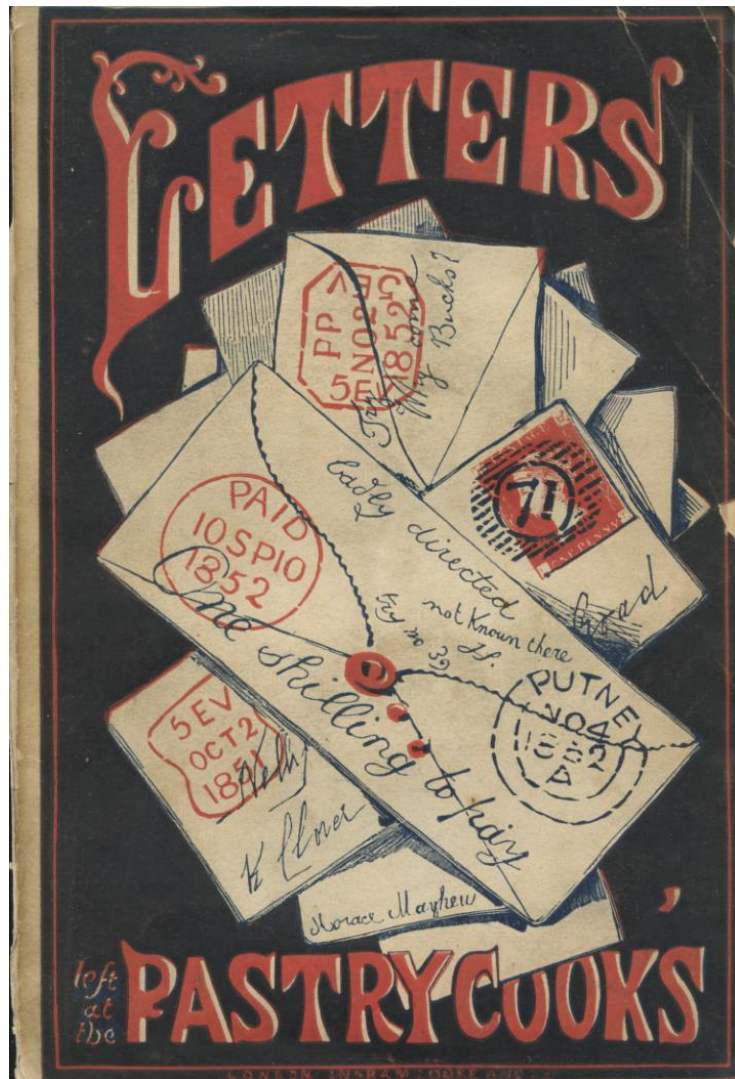
Figure 36. Cover, Horace Mayhew, *Letters Left as the Pastry Cook's* (Ingram, Cooke, and Co.,

1853)

I begin this chapter by further situating the yellowback within its advertising context and

providing perspectives on how some Victorians perceived yellowbacks as contributing to and

potentially remediating public spaces that could be at once overstimulating and partially

perceptually inaccessible. In contrast to the limited scholarship on yellowbacks that read them as

shields or diversions from Victorian modernity,[69] this first section asserts that the yellowback's

dimensionality reveals how novels could participate in and imagine their readers' engagement

with reality. The following sections close read the covers of three yellowbacks that exhibit

dimensionality. Each of these covers offers readers a sense of the book of fiction's place in

representing and making sense of different hard-to-read public spaces: Bracebridge Hemyng's

On the Line (1876) shows how fiction can penetrate and enliven readers' perceptions of the

otherwise blocked off and private experiences of railway travel; Arthur Sketchley's *Mrs. Brown*

on Cleopatra's Needle's (c. 1876) multidimensional cover aids the perceptual and narrative

assimilation of the strangeness of London's increasingly visible cosmopolitanism;[70] and the

cover of the anonymously authored *London by Night* (c. 1870) intermingles text and image to

guide readers through contradictory impulses of moralizing and voyeurism that reading the

London demimonde excites.

The covers and contents of each of these yellowbacks offer insight into how to read the

elided, indecipherable, or overcrowded textual environments in which they were sold and

consumed. Yellowbacks affirm that amid a mass of two-dimensional textuality, fiction's place in

the three-dimensional form of the book provides an experience of depth that is both literal and

physical as well as figurative and imaginative. Advertising posters promote fictions about

products or experiences that cannot be immediately supplied and have nothing but empty

surfaces behind them. In contrast, yellowbacks collapse the boundary between the fictions their

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69. For example, see Leah Price's "The Repellant Book" in *How to Do Things with Books* (2012) and Nicholas

   Daly's "Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernization of the Senses."

70. Note that Michael Sadleir tentatively dates this yellowback's publication in 1876; however, it may have been

   published later than that date given that the events it describes occurred in the following year.

covers advertise and the physical and imaginative substance of their contents. As a result of this contrast, yellowbacks, for the first time in book history and the history of the novel, self-referentially theorize novels and other fictions as material, three-dimensional spaces.[71]

I.

Accounts of the explosion of advertising expose the perceptual difficulties Victorians faced in their day-to-day experiences of public spaces as well as the need for a means to make mental space for this textual and visual oversaturation. As Concanon's *Modern Advertising* suggests, the textual landscape of the railway station exemplified the advertisement's visually dominating presence. Victorian descriptions of railway stations, both from the perspectives of W. H. Smith's ambitious advertising agents and a disgruntled public, clarify advertisements' intended and actual perceptual effects.

W. H. Smith, the primary purveyor of yellowbacks, monopolized railway advertising and sent out representatives to ensure that their company maximized advertisements' presence and thus the revenue their company would gain.[72] A W. H. Smith employee who surveyed the ads at a Nottingham station delightedly reported that twelve by six-foot ads covered the wall facing the station's street where "everyone going from either station to town must pass" (Newham). Other company notes praise the fact that so many advertisements, in the form of massive hoardings,

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71. Like. W. J. T. Mitchell's metapictures, which are "pictures that refer to themselves or to other pictures … [and] are used to show what a picture is" (35), I understand these books as metaobjects that teach readers about what books do.

72. W.H. Smith opened their first railway bookstall in 1848 and went on to dominate not only the print matter sold at such bookstalls but also the advertisements that appeared in railway stations.

face the train lines so that people can see them on the go.[73] These accounts suggest that companies like W. H. Smith strove to make their advertisements perceptually unavoidable. Whether walking along the street, waiting in a station, or riding in a train, Victorians moving through public spaces could expect a visual assault that attracted their eyes towards each advertisement and encouraged them to imagine the tempting possibilities that products or experiences promised.

Confronted with what they perceived as visual pollution, some Victorians complained about advertisements' incongruous and overbearing appearances within previously text-free public spaces. An 1888 letter to W. H. Smith complains,

> You can scarcely be aware how disfigured the Chesterfield station is becoming owing to the erection of a high 'hoarding' for advertisements this week which appears to quite surround and shut in the station yard.
>
> I know your Company encourage stations gardening &c… but all this is of little use, if such unsightly objects are to be allowed …
>
> There was not a displeasing view from the station doors towards the North West, but it is now blocked with advertisements of all sorts. (Carrington)

Another writer complains, "We have no desire that public thoroughfares should be disfigured by such hoarding, and … I trust you will at once give orders for [its] removal" ("Complaint"). Advertisements could transform aesthetically pleasing environments into ones that were difficult to visually integrate; they "surround[ed] and shut in" previously open spaces, creating feelings of claustrophobia as the two-dimensional textuality of the advertisement flattened and obscured

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73. The W. H. Smith Business Archive at The University of Reading holds several letters expressing similar sentiments.

what previously had been more expansive three-dimensional views. With thoroughfares "disfigured" and populated by "unsightly objects" and with little power to reduce this encroaching textuality, some Victorians struggled to navigate or reconcile themselves to these jarring perceptions.

At least superficially, the colorful scenes and lettering on yellowback covers contributed to the textual pollution of public spaces as they graphically mirrored the advertisements around them. Yellowback covers and Victorian advertisements rely on related modes of multimodal discourse that attract viewers' attention by linking certain words or phrases to the appealing images of products or experiences that they both sold their consumers. A comparison of yellowback covers and Victorian advertisements reveals the striking similarities in their graphic designs. The design of Coleman's tonic "Wincarnis" looks like that of a Zola novel (Figure 37). Yellowback covers relied on the same visual language as advertisements to compete for consumers' attention. In both advertisements and covers, a title or product's name appears in large lettering above or within a scene that represents that product. Advertisements and yellowbacks also depicted similarly eye-catching scenes that could generate narrative speculation. The scene of a police officer at night in an advertisement for Hudson's Dry Soap resembles a similar scene on the cover of the yellowback *London by Night* (Figure 38), both of which play with light and dark to attract their viewers' attention to the signs and figures central to their representations.

Figure 37. Advertisement for Coleman's Wincarnis. Folder 4 (44). Wines and Spirits. John Johnson Collection. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; with Cover. Zola, Emile. *His Masterpiece, or, Claude Lantier's Struggle for Fame*. Vizatelly, 1886.

Figure 38. Advertisement for Hudson's Soap. Folder 5 (4). Window Bills and Advertisements.

John Johnson Collection. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford; with Cover. *London by*

Night. W. Oliver, 1870.

While yellowbacks paralleled advertisements in their graphic design, their covers and

contents imparted passersby and readers with a sense that these books could serve as lenses or

guides that could navigate new and disorienting places, events, and perceptions. Michael Sadleir,

the foremost collector of yellowbacks, notes that besides sometimes giving readers an

inexpensive taste of the literature of the time, yellowbacks were largely topical, telling stories

related to current events, playing with "humour à la mode," and fictionalizing the experiences of

people in the new and changing professions of the time (Sadleir, "Yellowbacks" 157-9).[74] Amid

reprints of popular fiction by authors like Wilkie Collins, Mark Twain, Jules Verne, Mary

Elizabeth Braddon, Thomas Hardy, and Ouida viewers can find hundreds of lesser-known books

whose covers represent themes or events of Victorian topical relevance (Bistline and

Grossman).[75] By representing issues of topical importance on their covers, yellowbacks reflect

their engagement with issues relevant to the world around them while also beckoning readers

into experiencing these issues in the greater depth.

Contrary to Leah Price's claim that yellowbacks, like other railway reading, shielded

their readers and repelled fellow passengers by thwarting unwelcome conversations (Price 45-

71), Victorians paid attention to one another's yellowback reading. Practically speaking,

yellowbacks make poor shields. The relatively small dimensions of the standard yellowback

could scarcely cover a reader's face and could easily be held open with a single hand. Moreover,

as their covers' similarities to advertisements suggest, a fundamental feature of yellowbacks as

material objects are their ability to attract the eyes and attentions of the people around them.

When people read yellowbacks, other people notice. An 1852 article from *The Illustrated*

Exhibitor, and Magazine of Art notes that early railway bookstalls sold "unmitigated rubbish"

which, on the train, led "young ladies" to read "books they would be ashamed to be seen reading

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74. In the 1864 article "Railway-Literature," a writer notes that topic yellowbacks that depicted the lives of people in
new professions were of particular importance: "Of the whole series [of yellowbacks], we gather that the police-
novels, the recollections of detective officers, the tales of crime and its punishment, are the most popular"
("Railway-Literature" 343).

75. Among its over 2000 cover images, "Yellowback Cover Art" includes hundreds of covers that either directly
relate to contemporary events or to contemporary concerns (like railway travel, imperialism, or the woman
question).

at home" ("The Railway Bookstall" 395). Even when fellow passengers approached railway

reading with a less critical and more curious perspective, they noticed the hard-to-ignore scenes

that appeared on yellowback covers as well as considered how yellowbacks affected everyone

who viewed or read them. The 1862 article "Railway Literature and the Demi-monde" describes

yellowbacks as:

> the most imaginative class of romances bound in covers indicating the exciting character
>
> of the contents … A young lady with dishevelled hair kneels at the feet of what is
>
> evidently a hard-hearted father, or is represented in the very act of leaping from a castle
>
> wall into a moat; or a terrific-looking bandit is dragging a body, which may be either
>
> dead or living, through a vault; ("Railway Literature and the Demi-monde" 719)

This article elaborates: "during the peculiar kind of locomotion to be undergone [on a railway

journey], the common mind requires a strong stimulant, as a chilled or sluggish circulation is

accelerated by a dram" (719).[76] Visually stimulating covers and narratively stimulating contents

not only provided an enriched and often sensationalized mimesis of Victorian modernity but

also, like an actual stimulant, provided readers with perceptual and cognitive clarity to make

sense of and enjoy their realities. As the following sections explore, this clarity emerges through

the yellowbacks' dimensionality—through the sense of depth created by the textual and visual

metalepsis of yellowback covers as well as through a narrative depth that demystifies and

enriches experiences of perceptually difficult realities.

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76. Nicholas Daly echoes these ideas in "Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernization of the Senses,"

    connecting stimulating, sensational railway reading to a Victorian need for a means of managing the sensory

    overload of rail travel. For him, railway reading diverted readers' attention from sensory overwhelm.

II.

 Given the environment of their promotion and consumption, yellowbacks were particularly well-suited to comment on their readers' perceptions of the experience of railway travel. Separated by the anonymity of fellow travelers and the barriers of separate railway compartments, Victorian travelers could discern the presence of imperceivable activities and impenetrable stories all around them but had little way to make meaning out of this potentially unsettling awareness amid the speed and compartmentalization of railway travel. Through its creation of an experience of dimensionality, Bracebridge Hemyng's collection of railway stories, *On the Line*, stakes the physical book's place within a person's experience of rail travel by imaginatively opening up and vivifying the spaces of this experience. It achieves these effects through its cover image's visually layered depiction of the physical world of the book that leads readers into the fictional world of its contents as well as through those contents' fictional stories about the private experiences of railway workers and travelers.[77]

 The dimensionality of *On the Line*'s cover (Figure 39) connects the physical object of the book to the inaccessible space of a private railway compartment. Its cover depicts a diorama-like view into a first-class carriage. In the carriage, a man points a dagger at a young woman while a railway guard clings to the top of their carriage, presumably listening in on their dramatic

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77. In Michael Sadleir's *XIX Century Fiction: A Bibliographical Record Based on His Own Collection* (1951), he classifies yellowbacks like *On the Line* under the category: "Detection, Criminology, Various Professional and Specialist 'Experiences.'" Sadleir explains that these books "must hold the record among novelties in publishing history for speed in attracting and holding public notice" (*XIX Fiction* 33). He argues that the achieved this popularity through the unprecedented subject matter and narrative perspectives of characters in new or underrepresented professions.

exchange. Small diagonal lines above the train represent rain indicating that the train is in

motion, speeding past railway signals and telegraph lines.
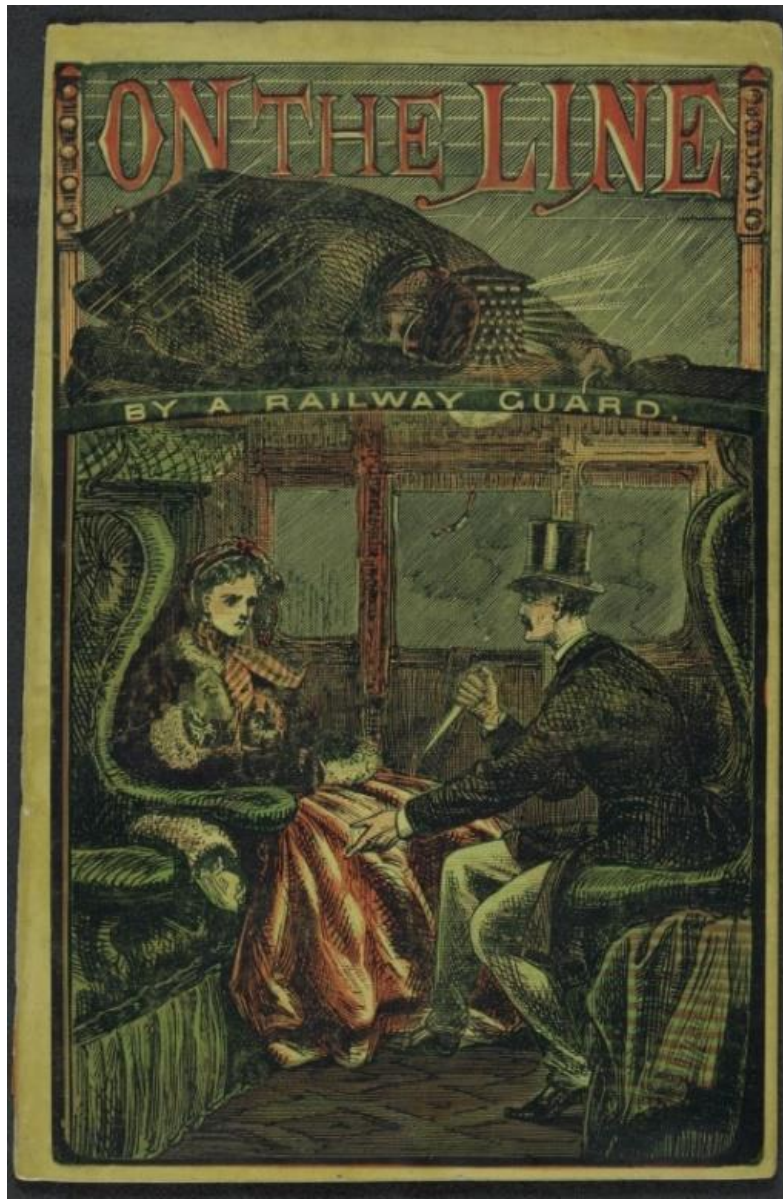

Figure 39. Cover, Bracebridge Hemyng, *On the Line and Danger Signal* (Chapman and Hall,

1876)

On the Line privileges interiors and interiorities whose stories happen during what other

depictions of rail travel would convey as a perceptually flattened, seemingly empty time.

Dimensionality also emerges through the metaleptic positioning of the book's title lettering. This

lettering mixes with the contents of the cover's illustrated scene as the railway guard's body partially blocks the letter "N" (from "On") and the phrase "by a railway guard" appears printed across the top of the railway carriage. This intermingling of paratextual lettering with illustrated textual world at once suggests that the 'real' world, which is also that of the title lettering and the book object, collides with that of the book's story, giving this storyworld visual depth that resists the discourse of foreshortened railway experiences.[78] The cover's dimensionality further reminds its viewer-readers of the three-dimensionality of the book as object itself—the cover fronts the stories within.

On the Line's cover thus acts as a metapicture for the book by representing the sort of interior glimpses of railway drama that its stories feature and by embodying and enriching the multisensory, multidimensional experiences railway readers could have when traveling. The cover's metaleptic mixing of title lettering and image provides further commentary on the yellowback's multimodal form. With the railway guard straddled between train, paratextual lettering, and telegraph lines, the cover literally positions its content as caught between different modes of communicating information. Between the three-dimensional, multi-sensory experiences of the real world of the reader looking at the book and the condensed, two-dimensional code of the telegraph, the cover of *On the Line* promises that its contents may offer a representational depth that exists somewhere in between.

The contents of *On the Line*, particularly its title story ("On the Line") reflect the representational tensions its cover depicts; "On the Line" emphasizes the way invisible but exciting stories lurk just out of sight within public and seemingly mundane environments, like

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78. For more on this discourse of foreshortened experiences, see Tina Young Choi's "The Railway Guide's Experiments in Cartography: Narrative, Information, Advertising" (2015).

railway stations and trains. The story's narrator, a railway guard, sets up this tension between the obfuscating mundane and the covertly sensational before introducing the story's main characters. He begins by describing a contrast between the undeviating regularity of his line's daily journey and the paradoxical sense of importance that daily journey occasions. He explains,

> The South Coast Express used to leave London at half-past eight; I believe it does so now. Occasionally we were a little late in starting, owing to the non-arrival of the mail from the post-office, and I have known it full 8:35 before I was able to sound my whistle.
>
> I don't know whether it is a feeling that has occurred to any one else, but I always am a little excited when travelling with the mail. There is more responsibility, more speed, more passengers, and an indescribable something. (1)

From the outset of the story, "On the Line's" narrator establishes that his train runs its expected route at its expected time. And yet every journey at half past eight elicits an "indescribable" feeling, a feeling linked to responsibility, speed, passengers, and the mail. The repetitive journey thus invites narrative possibilities, and the narrator suggests that these possibilities are salient to every similar journey the train makes. Perhaps sharing the same indescribable feeling the narrator describes on their own journeys and with many pages ahead of them, *On the Line*'s readers could look forward to seeing this feeling of an "indescribable something" substantiated and unfurled.

The main events of "On the Line" further emphasize that sensational stories simmer beneath the surface of the physical barriers and interpersonal facades of public transit. The narrator tracks the experience of a young woman who boards his train, asking for a private, first-class carriage. When a strange young man joins the young woman in her carriage, the narrator worries that the man may endanger the woman. Trusting his suspicions, the narrator fulfills the

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role he performs on the cover. He transgresses the boundaries that different railway carriages impose by climbing on top of the train and crawling his way over to the young woman's carriage. There he eavesdrops on the dramatic exchange happening beneath him. The narrator thus performs an act that verges on the metaleptic—he expands his narratorial purview to include the previously insular events of a separate railway carriage, his risky position on the top of the train embodying the liminal status of his narrative perspective.

"On the Line's" representation of both the overheard conversation and the narrator's eventual intrusion into it further highlight the contrast between the narrative obfuscation of the railway journey and the persistent narrative possibilities that lie behind these barriers. The narrator overhears the young man threatening to murder the woman if she refuses to marry him:

> 'A full hour will elapse before this train stops. It is impossible for you to communicate with or rouse the attention of the guard ('Is it,' thought I [the railway guard]); and if you refuse to be my wife there is nothing to prevent me from stabbing you to the heart, and afterwards throwing you out the window. All traces of crime would be obliterated.' (7)

This representation of the man's threats stylistically replicates the unexpected intrusion the railway guard makes in overhearing them with the parenthetical inclusion of the guard's thoughts. The fact that the guard transgresses the boundaries imposed by the distinct carriages and, fittingly, parenthetically inserts himself into the text's representation of the man's threats reveals the sort of intrusive access the yellowback vis a vis the railway guard narrator makes possible.

The conclusion of "On the Line," in which its characters suppress its sensational events, stresses the near impossibility for readers to uncover such a story in their real, lived experiences on the rail. At the same time, both the story and the book in which it appears invite readers to see

rail travel and its passengers with an enlivened sense of curiosity and possibility. After overhearing the harrowing confrontation within the railway carriage, the narrator jumps into the carriage, confronts the murderous man, and plans to report him to the police. However, rather than the story ending in an arrest, the man and woman in the carriage decide they would rather keep their encounter a secret to avoid scandal. The narrator notes that months after this experience an announcement about the woman's marriage to another man gets reported in the papers, highlighting the contrast between the uneventful story the newspaper tells and the sensational but hidden truth of the story on the train. Fittingly, hidden stories of the characters in "On the Line" appear within a book whose cover celebrates its own physical depth. Unlike the terse prose and flat papers of the news, *On the Line*'s cover and its titular story affirm the distinct work that a book of narrative fiction performs in adding figurative depth to a flattened reality.

On the Line's mode of storytelling counteracts what Tina Young Choi identifies as the condensed narratives of Victorian railway travel. Choi contends that most print matter having to do with rail travel, like railway guides and advertisements, created the illusion of instant gratification and elided the experience of time spent on a train. She explains that the railway guide

> demonstrates the continuities between a logic of virtuous forethought and the logic of consumerist desire: advertisements for life insurance and supportive braces, like timetables for Birmingham or Sandringham, cast the reader into a projected future. At the same time, they invited him or her to envision a potentially distanced outcome—whether in the form of a sudden accident, an improved self, or a desired destination—and to transplant that imagined future into the immediacy of the present. They encouraged … a

foreshortening of the temporal distance between departure and arrival, desire and

fulfillment, intention and realization (Choi 270).

Where other media reduces the experience of railway passengers into timetables and

immediately fulfilled desires, yellowbacks like *On the Line* offers an alternative. With a view

inside a railway compartment on its front cover and the three-dimensional thickness of pages

beneath, *On the Line* promises its readers narratives with the depth and duration to match their

lived experience of traveling.

III.

While *On the Line* explores the yellowback's ability to penetrate the inaccessible spaces

and experiences of rail travel, Arthur Sketchley's *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* presents a

different barrier: an encroaching and hard-to-read cosmopolitanism that resulted from England's

imperialism. Depicting the eponymous Mrs. Brown staring in bewilderment at the 1877 arrival

and bankside installation of the ancient Egyptian obelisk popularly known as Cleopatra's needle,

the cover represents a scene that, although caricatural, reflects on and works to assimilate the

process of reading the unfamiliar or foreign.

Each of the books of the *Mrs. Brown* series follows the escapades of Mrs. Brown, a

middle-aged, Cockney woman who is easily confused and often misinformed as she experiences

and comments on the timely topics of each book. The books consist of her extended Cockney-

inflected monologues and explore topics ranging from her interactions with major historical

figures like Benjamin Disraeli to her experiences with important places and issues like the

Crystal Palace and women's rights. Sadleir explains that Mrs. Brown's fictional escapades

occupied a central position within topical Victorian humor: "Mrs. Brown on the latest sensation

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or social event or popular scene was a compulsory part of up-to-date proficiency" (*XIX Century Fiction* 58). Although each of the issues the *Mrs. Brown* books explore would be widely familiar to Victorian readers, Mrs. Brown's misinterpretations of what she encounters and her general disorientation reveal the real-world topic of each book to be more confusing and less legible than everyday, superficial encounters with these topics might suggest. As Sadleir suggests, readers sought out these books to attain proficiency in understanding these topics. The *Mrs. Brown* series, and *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* in particular, reveals the novel as a physical object as uniquely suited to facilitating this proficiency. By depicting and narrating Mrs. Brown's haphazard encounters with these texts, *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* reveals that comedic distance, as it is embodied in the dimensionality of the novel, can assist readers in making cognitive space for unfamiliar textuality.

Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* first guides its readers through a process of assimilating an unfamiliar text through its cover scene's depiction of Mrs. Brown's misreading of the obelisk (Figure 40). Unlike the real obelisk, Sketchley's features familiar images masquerading as the hieroglyphics found on the actual historical artifact. As a viewer's gaze follows Mrs. Brown's up the obelisk, the hieroglyphic icons on it become increasingly familiar. Near the bottom of the obelisk are approximations of actual hieroglyphics, but just above them viewers find things like pipes, a teacup, Mrs. Brown's initials ("MB"), the caricatured profiles of Gladstone and Disraeli, and, at the top, the image of Mrs. Brown sitting at a sewing machine. The cover image provides an external perspective of Mrs. Brown's encounter with the obelisk

while also focalizing her internal perception of it—an instance of what Mieke Bal would call

"free indirect perception."[79]
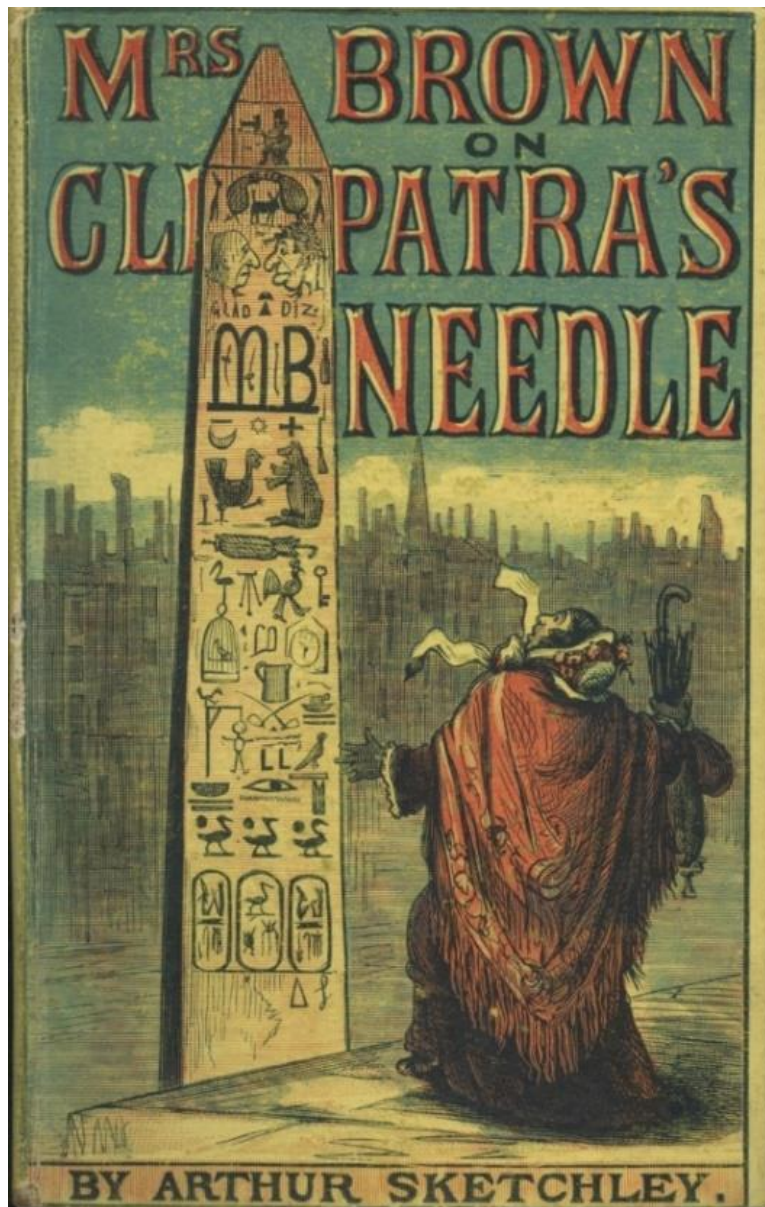

Figure 40. Cover, Arthur Sketchley, *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* (G. Routledge and Sons,

c. 1876)

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79. See Bal's chapter "Dispersing the gaze: focalization" in *looking in: the art of viewing* (2001), edited by Norman

Bryson.

Mrs. Brown's limited perspective allows her to integrate the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs into the nationally and personally domestic signs she understands. While Mrs. Brown's perception of the obelisk and her reading of its hieroglyphics are wrong, the cover of *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* realizes the process of cultural and historical assimilation that allows Mrs. Brown to accept the obelisk—a process that readers may mock but also reflect on in relation to their own understandings of unfamiliar texts.

 Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle's narrative affirms the cover's depiction of its eponymous narrator's misreading and perceptual assimilation of the obelisk and, while parodic, offers readers a model for making sense of and making space for the unfamiliar. The narrative follows Mrs. Brown's reflections on the discovery of the obelisk, its transportation to London, and her involvement in safely accompanying its journey up the Thames. It begins with her expressions of outright incredulity at the possibility of the obelisk's discovery and confusion at its being called a needle:

> As to Clearpatrer's Needle bein' found, … , did ever you 'ear sich rubbish in your life a-tryin' for to make anyone believe sich foolishness, as if it was easy for any one to find their own needle, let alone any one's elses, at the bottom of the sea, as there ain't a chance arter 'avin' been dropped all them years ago in the sand; (Sketchley 27)

Mrs. Brown's discussion of the obelisk reveals her misunderstanding of it as an object used for sewing as opposed to a foreign artifact. By imagining the "needle" as a familiar object like one that she might lose, Mrs. Brown embarks on her narrative's effort to domesticate it.

 Mrs. Brown's narrative further presents the obelisk as a threatening textual incursion that could upend the way she sees the world. The narrative thus suggests the need for a means of interpreting and domesticating the obelisk and its unfamiliar hieroglyphics. Once she

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understands that Cleopatra's Needle is "a nobbylisk" as opposed to a conventional needle, Mrs.

Brown's and one of her friend's attitudes towards the obelisk shift from incredulity to concern.

Mrs. Brown and her friends express anxiety about how a British acquisition of the obelisk and an

interpretation of its hieroglyphics might yield unwelcome and culturally disruptive foreign ideas.

Mrs. Brown's friend proposes that "'it [the obelisk] may be a Moerbite stone, and 'ave all the

'istory of the world rote on it.… I'm sure as our minister will make it all out, and will preach

about it'" (Sketchley 75-6).[80] Mrs. Brown and her friend worry that similar to the stir that the

1868 discovery of the Moabite stone caused, the obelisk may upend preconceived religious and

historical certainties. The possibility that the obelisk may contain a previously unknown "'istory

of the world rote on it" suggests that the obelisk's arrival could produce an unwelcome

epistemological shift and a challenge to their British identities.

Rather than stoking his contemporaries' anxieties, Sketchley creates comedic distance

from Mrs. Brown's concerns. Articulated by caricatures of lower-class Londoners who

repeatedly and extravagantly display their misreadings of the world, anxiety about the meaning

of the obelisk's hieroglyphics become a laughing matter, ensconced in a text that readers could

confidently understand. This readerly confidence is all the more significant given that Sketchley

writes *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* as a transcription of Mrs. Brown and her friends'

speech in Cockney dialect with many grammatical and orthographic irregularities. The

narrative's nested levels of potential indecipherability—the text's composition in Cockney

dialect and, within that text, the representation of the obelisk and its hieroglyphics within this

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80. The Moabite stone (c. 840 BC) was topically relevant. Discovered in 1868 and featuring an ancient script, it tells
   a story that prefigures ones from the Bible.

narrative—empower readers to master one kind of illegibility and thus to better accommodate an uncomfortable inability to overcome the other.[81]

The plot of *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle* resists integrating the obelisk into Mrs. Brown's London, stressing its physical and cultural incursion as an intractable problem. Mrs. Brown struggles to accept the obelisk's physical presence and the feelings of cultural threat it evokes. She concludes her reflections on the obelisk and Sketchley concludes his book with her discussion of the obelisk as only assimilable through its effacement. Mrs. Brown ponders:

> But as to where to put that Needle, I can't say, … so long as it ain't put too near the
>
> footpath, as might topple over on to them as was passin' by, … it's a pity it weren't left
>
> like a oyster in its native sanded bed, where it wasn't in nobody's ways, and parties could
>
> go and set on it…, as will be werry out of place in a November fog, and be werry soon
>
> begrimed with London sut, as it will pretty soon tarnish it, tho' it may be a deal more
>
> anshent than the British Isles themselves. (Sketchley 153-154)

Mrs. Brown's fears focus on the problem of the obelisk's spatial presence: Will it topple onto passersby? Will it be in the way or "out of place"? What purpose does it serve if not to provide people with a place to "set on"? Convincing herself of its uselessness in London, Mrs. Brown suppresses her vexation with its potential as a cultural threat. While she admits that the obelisk may be "more anshent than the British Isles themselves," an idea that intimates her anxieties about its ability upset her view of the world, she takes consolation in the fact that it will "werry

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81. They way Sketchley turns Mrs. Brown into an "other" corresponds with Saree Makdisi's discoveries in *Making England Western: Occidentalism, Race & Imperial Culture* (2014). Makdisi reveals that in nineteenth-century England, privileged people consolidated and confirmed their own national and cultural identity by distinguishing members of the lower or working classes as culturally and racially inferior.

soon [be] begrimed with London sut." Regardless of whatever cultural implications the obelisk might have, the physical fact of London's modernity, its industrial-pollutant-filled air, promises to assimilate the obelisk into its urban setting by obscuring its otherness.

Although Mrs. Brown cannot find a way to accept the obelisk except by anticipating its soot-covered erasure, Sketchley's narrative and its presentation within the metaleptic spaciousness of its yellowback cover suggest that readers can still make space for textual cosmopolitanism. Returning to the cover of *Mrs. Brown on Cleopatra's Needle*, readers find a scene whose intermingled title lettering and image invite them into the process of assimilating and domesticating the obelisk while still allowing space for its uncomfortable indecipherability. The obelisk's dimensional, metaleptic protrusion over some of the cover lettering defies what otherwise would be an uncomplicated comedic distancing in the scene and thwarts the process of domestication this scene presents. The title lettering uses the standardized spelling of Cleopatra's name rather than Mrs. Brown's dialect spelling "Clearpatrer," distancing readers from Mrs. Brown's perspective and her misguided beliefs about the obelisk; however, as the obelisk obscures the letters "E" and "O," it stages a representational coup against its own domestication as well as readers' belief in their superior literacy. The obelisk's position within the cover's layering of foreground, title-lettering, and background, suggests that it must be read before and perhaps in spite of the novel's attempts to domesticate it. The title lettering functions as a "real-world" paratextual element of the book that signals the book's identity and attracts the book's readers. As such, the cover scene reflects the way the book imagines its role in representing and participating in the reality on which it comments. The title lettering floats between the obelisk and a sooty, silhouetted cityscape background; nestled within the physical fact of the obelisk, Mrs. Brown's interpretation of it, and a hazy sense of the city, the lettering's position models the

position it imagines the book occupying in readers' navigation of the cosmopolitan city. It suggests that Sketchley's comedic novel envisions itself as a middle ground in which readers can take one step away from a disengaged perspective of the obelisk and one step closer to accepting its foreign presence.

IV.

A woman in a flashy gown stares coyly from the cover of the yellowback that in the bibliography of his collection Michael Sadleir calls his favorite: *London by Night* (see second image in Figure 38). The cover scene exemplifies both the yellowbacks' beautiful intermingling of text and image and their overt depictions of sexuality and socially problematic women. Tackling the issue of the burgeoning texts of urban spaces, *London by Night*'s cover and contents reflect on its and other public texts' abilities to lure readers into the spaces and situations fallen women occupied. Representing and participating in an accumulation of misleading verbal and visual icons, *London by Night* theorizes the space of the novel as one in which readers can entangle themselves in the pleasures and dangers of a world that, under the cover of darkness, mysteriously overlays their own.

London by Night belonged to a loosely organized group of books known as the Anonyma series. All published anonymously, these books claimed to be written by the author of one another's works and depicted accounts of socially deviant women. Rachel Sagner Buurma argues that through these novels' anonymous authorship and their connection to similar journalistic accounts supposedly written by or about fallen women, the Anonyma novels produce "a slippage between book title, author, and character" (841). *London by Night* and other books like it thus

operate through a tenuous fictionality that gives readers the sense of reading and taking pleasure in true accounts about the London demimonde.

*London by Night'*s cover image and metaleptic title lettering self-reflexively imagine readers' entanglement in this novel's plot of corruption and the role of the city's disorienting textuality in producing this entanglement. It depicts a London street scene in which a young woman stands on the threshold of the historic Argyle Rooms as she is illuminated by the lights within them. In the shadows behind her lurk a policeman and in the foreground sits what appears to be an embodiment of Death. Like the other dimensional yellowbacks' covers, the typically extradiegetic title lettering mixes with diegetic components of the cover image. One of the exaggerated serifs on the title's "L" stretches the letter almost beyond recognition as it wraps itself around a lamppost and the word "by" appears situated behind "London" and "Night." This wrapping, along with a layering of the title lettering, produces an illusion of depth within the cover scene and further suggests that the extradiegetic title lettering is not just floating but also caught within this depth. The entwined interaction of *London by Night*'s cover lettering prefigures the way the novel imagines readers' moral position in relation to its plot—both invested in the characters and events that unfold but also, like the title that the lamppost's glow illuminates, safe from the corruption that lurks in the night's shadows.

Just as the figures in the cover scene pay no heed to shadowy Death or to the ludicrously large title lettering above them, *London by Night*'s narrative reflects a preoccupation with a dangerous blindness that results from experiencing and potentially misreading the signs and spaces of the city. The cover scene stages the morally complicated experience readers face as the narrative involves them in the city's textual overwhelm while also offering them a perspective that transcends the blindness characters face. The novel follows the exploits of a young woman,

Louisa Reid a.k.a. Sybil Dudley, who adopts the life of a high-class prostitute and experiences London night life as a hard-to-read experience that leaves her blind to the social and personal consequences of her unconventional profession. Besides being a moralistic tale of a woman whose choices ultimately lead her to suicide, the novel also fulfills the promise of the subtitle that appears on its title page: "A Descriptive Novel." In telling Louisa's story, the novel serves as a guidebook to the various London haunts that high-class prostitutes frequent. The novel contains rich descriptions of several locations and incorporates a handful of color illustrations by William Gray which depict these locations and the people who occupy them. Like many other novels in the Anonyma Series, *London by Night* seduces readers with its detailed descriptions and titillating plot while moralizing against the very lives and places its details seem to celebrate. It thereby perches its readers in a tenuous moral middle ground in which they experience the discomfort of both passing and suspending judgment on its characters.

The narrative content of *London by Night* casts the textual world of the city as dangerous to characters and readers alike. It presents London as paradoxically legible yet impossible to comprehend because of the polysemous connotations that arise in the interplay of its various icons. Almost every page, including the covers, of *London by Night* reveals an overwhelming integration of different kinds of texts: illustrations appear and sometimes fold out beyond the boundaries of the book's small frame; different fonts creep into the narrative, signifying anything from the morbid seriousness of suicide to the typographic simulacrums of the scripts of dramas or of advertisements; indented quotations from popular verse and fiction also find their way into the story, offering unexplained commentary on the events that unfold. Louisa resists the textual overwhelm the novel encapsulates. The narrator explains that "London by night was to her [Louisa] a sealed book; nor did she wish to turn over its pages" (*London by Night* 25).

Comparing London to a "sealed book" that Louisa willfully refuses to read, the novel intimates the necessity of reading the city's textuality. It confirms this idea when Louisa, confronted with the sudden reality of her lover's murder, opens the "sealed book" of the city, as the reader of *London by Night* has already done, and gets lost in its convoluted meanings.

Besides using its coiled title lettering to intimate readers' enmeshment in the corrupting spaces of its fictional world, *London by Night*'s confusing projections of light and shadows create the possibility of imagining the reader's physical presence as a part of the scene. On the right side of the cover, an amorphous shadow appears above a partially visible sign. The fragmentary words on the sign reflect the mysterious, partial inaccessibility of the spaces the novel explores, all the while tempting readers into these spaces. Readers may attribute the shadow above the sign to the woman, likely Louisa, who prepares to enter the music hall; however, the way the light plays in the scene suggests that her shadow might fall in a different direction—the light from the Argyle Rooms, not the lamppost appears to illuminate her, meaning her shadow should fall behind her. Readers may then understandably imagine that the shadow belongs to an unseen occupant of the room; however, given that the cover already freely mixes diegetic and extradiegetic elements, readers may also see the shadow as belonging to themselves. Projected into the world of the novel from the light behind them, the light that allows them to see and read the novel in front of them, they become a shadow participant in that novel's narrative world. Envisioning its readers as projecting themselves into its physically compact but textually dense and imaginatively expansive space, *London by Night* presents the small vessel of the novel as something that invites readers into its disorienting textual and imagined spaces while containing the jumbled moralities that the experience of these spaces engenders.

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Writing on the books of the twentieth- and twenty-first century, David Alworth argues that covers "make novels visible in a world where there is simply too much to see" (1124). He explains that "there is a dialectical relation between media and history that plays out, in the case of paratextual art, as a drama of repetitious repackaging: an iterative process of recasting literature as a visual and tactile thing" (1129). Emerging during the nascence of mass advertising and the mass production of novel's cover art, yellowbacks asserted fiction's and the novel's place within a world in which there was and still is "too much to see." Visually echoing and commenting on their context, yellowbacks represent themselves as paradoxically public and private texts that could at once put private experiences on public display and penetrate public facades to reveal the fascinating stories beneath them. While Alworth rightly suggests that paratexts have almost always imagined literature's physical instantiation, yellowbacks were the first to regularly use their covers to envision themselves as "visual and tactile thing[s]." At the fringe of our cultural memory and yet central to pioneering the book cover's representational potential, yellowbacks' real and imagined spaces uncover the ways in which the book of fiction justifies its material presence amid masses of other print matter. Their flashy yet forgotten covers presage the concerns of twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics who, like me, understand the physical book as an inimitable and irrepressible medium for the experience of fiction.

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