Developing Character in the Nineteenth-Century Novel

by

Caroline Giordano


A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in The University of Michigan
2008


Doctoral Committee:

      Professor Martha J. Vicinus, Chair
      Professor Michèle A. Hannoosh
      Associate Professor Adela N. Pinch
      Professor John R. Kucich, Rutgers University

For Peggy and Michael Giordano

## Acknowledgements

I could not have asked for a better dissertation committee.  Martha Vicinus's diligence and wisdom—not to mention her cheerful willingness to field my innumerable concerns during the writing process—have benefited every aspect of this project.  Adela Pinch has given me the gift of her limitless energy and insight, and I am deeply grateful to her for having faith in my ideas and my writing even during those moments when I have struggled with both.  So too am I grateful to John Kucich for the considerable time he has devoted to reading this work and the remarkable analytic skill with which he has enriched it.  Finally, I have been lucky to work with Michèle Hannoosh, whose seemingly compendious understanding of nineteenth-century literature has helped shape my dissertation from its early stages.

I am indebted to both the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the University of Michigan's Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies for providing me with generous financial support

At Michigan, a number of people have helped me think about this project, whether through written comments or collegial discussion: I heartily thank Scott St. Pierre, Amy Rodgers, Mary-Catherine Harrison, La Mont Egle, Jackie George, Ji-Hyae Park, Joanna Patterson, Chad Thomas, Kentston Bauman, Lucy Hartley, and Gregg Crane.  I also want to thank the Nineteenth-Century Forum for attentively critiquing an

earlier draft of Chapter Two, and Jan Burgess in the English Department for her administrative expertise.

Above all, I thank my parents, Peggy and Michael Giordano, for being my most devoted readers ever since I have been able to write, and Brian Woodcock, for his ample stores of love and good humor.

**Table of Contents**

**Abstract**

This dissertation examines the intersection between narratological theories of character and moral understandings of character development in the nineteenth-century novel. Focusing on British and French *Bildungsromane*, which take character-building as their central conflict, I demonstrate how the novel's presentation of moral character is inextricable from the construction of character as a narrative form. This interpenetration between morality and form becomes manifest in character's multiple meanings: "character" denotes both a quality one possesses (e.g. "Joe has an unsavory character") and a constitutive element of narrative (along with story, point-of-view, etc.). My broadest goal is to make character a more fundamental concern within narratology, a discipline which tends to privilege the temporal (i.e. plot-centered) aspects of narrative texts.

I analyze represented thought—that is, the techniques through which narratives depict the mental lives of characters—to contest the critical assumption that nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*e figure character development as a portrait of increasing psychological "depth." Moreover, where scholars frequently note the *Bildungsroman*'s celebration of its protagonist's transformative growth, I demonstrate how *Bildungsromane* resist aligning morality with interior change, either by illustrating the losses that attend maturation or by endorsing stasis as a moral value.

Chapter One argues that development in Dickens's *David Copperfield* and

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* requires numerous characters to be "sacrificed" from the

narrative; the protagonists' alleged fulfillment relies less on increasing depth than on

formal techniques of diminishment.  Chapter Two considers how Eliot's *The Mill on the

Floss* and Staël's *Corinne* figure development not as transformation but as a resistance to

change that that can only resolve itself through the protagonist's death.  The next two

chapters analyze how the voice of a third-person narrator affects developmental

paradigms: Chapter Three examines the phenomenon of indecision in Trollope's Palliser

novels, illustrating how the narrator's valorization of his characters' refusal to choose

endorses a model of development that diverges from conventions of transformative

epiphany previously associated with novelistic maturation.  Chapter Four contends that

Gissing's *Born in Exile* and Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* estrange the narrators from

protagonists who develop surface qualities rather than inner consciences; both novels

thus satirize the representation of psychological depth.

**Introduction**

**Developing Character in the Nineteenth-Century Novel**

Until relatively recently, narrative theorists have left character curiously undertheorized. Despite the obvious prominence of characters themselves within narrative texts, there are comparatively few studies of what the concept of character itself might entail, or even of how character fits into broader models of narrative structure.  In fact, literary scholars have long highlighted narrative temporality at the expense of character. The critical focus on time in narrative goes as far back as Aristotle, who in his *Poetics* argues that plot—not character—is the defining element of tragedy.  For Aristotle, characters are simply agents who move the plot forward: "the imitation of character is not the purpose of what the agents do; character is included along with and on account of the actions" (11).  One reason that the concept of character does not figure prominently in narrative studies, then, is because characters themselves are not temporal constructs: they may exist *within* narrative time, but they are not "of" it in the same way as the events that advance the plot.  Accordingly, it becomes difficult to speak about character as a structural component of narrative despite the common sense observation that narratives simply do not exist without some form of character.

This dissertation's broadest goal is to formulate a set of theories that make character a more central concern for narrative studies, and it attempts to do so by examining the intersection between narratological theories of character and psychological

understandings of character development in the nineteenth-century European novel.  The

principal novels I examine— Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* (1807); Charlotte Brontë's

*Jane Eyre* (1847); Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850); George Eliot's *The Mill*

*on the Floss* (1860); Anthony Trollope's Palliser series (1864-79); Gustave Flaubert's

*Sentimental Education* (1869); and George Gissing's *Born in Exile* (1892)—all figure

character development as the central conflict of their narratives.  With the exception of

the Palliser series, each of these novels has been critically linked to the tradition of the

*Bildungsroman* (or "novel of formation") and each novel self-consciously positions itself

in relationship to this tradition.  I focus on *Bildungsromane* because they tend to highlight

the tension between two different registers of the term "character": they chart the

development of a formally produced character at the same time that they use the idea of

moral character to inform that production. My examination of the relationship between

formal and moral character across multiple novels will demonstrate how nineteenth-

century *Bildungsromane* use narrative form to create and uphold moral systems.  The

represented moral and psychological development of novelistic characters, I argue, is

inextricable from the way that novels formally construct characters through narrative

strategies.  At the same time that "Developing Character" reconfigures the concept of

character for narrative theory, then, it also reassesses the prose genre most closely linked

to the construction of moral character.

Attending to the interplay between morality and form that coalesces in the

concept of "character" reveals the often counterintuitive ways that *Bildungsromane*

theorize human development.  As I will go on to discuss in more detail, literary critics

traditionally read the character development novel as a genre that celebrates the

protagonist's advancement and improvement, his or her transformation from naïve youth to mature adult. While it is immediately evident that many development novels feature protagonists who fail to "progress" happily (think of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* or Honoré de Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, for example), the underlying assumption that character development is itself a desirable and morally obligatory process rarely seems at issue among novel critics. This dissertation's analysis of character's formal construction, by contrast, illustrates how even the most traditional development narratives trouble the link between development and morality that they are supposed to uphold. In fact, I argue that nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* frequently question the value of character development itself, either by illustrating the distortions and losses that attend developmental changes, or by suggesting that developmental transformation is a dubious ambition. Instead, many *Bildungsromane* actually endorse a lack of change—a kind of characterological stasis—that formally conflicts with both the temporal development of the narrative and the moral modifications that ostensibly accompany the story's progression.

My formal readings of character often concentrate on represented thought—that is, on how novels depict the mental functioning of their characters. As Alan Palmer has recently argued, the ubiquity of represented thought in fiction has ironically rendered it "an uninteresting and even invisible norm within narratology" (6); much like character, represented thought is only now beginning to receive the critical attention it deserves. I contribute to this emerging area of interest through an examination of what many have come to identify as the "depth"—or psychological complexity—of the developing protagonist. In the past, critics have figured the moral development of nineteenth-century

protagonists (Elizabeth Bennet, for example, or Maggie Tulliver) as coexistent with the

development of their exceptionally heterogeneous interiorities.  But such a conception of

depth, I will argue, is achieved through techniques of simplification and caricature,

techniques that prompt this dissertation to reconsider what depth *is* and to suggest that

development novels do not privilege depth as much as their readers and critics do. [1]

Along with my discussion of the *Bildungsroman*'s uneasiness with change, this new

understanding of "depth" refocuses some of the most common preconceptions about the

character development novel.

　　As "Developing Character" reinterprets both the place of character in narratology

and the status of development in the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*, it also illuminates

those narrative forms that help shape our ideas about character development more

generally—about how and whether or not human beings develop individual, moral

perspectives.  This work will offer a critical tool both for literary studies and for the

numerous fields (psychology, philosophy, and politics, for example) that approach human

development and moral character as theoretical terrain.  Indeed, character development

narratives remain as pervasive now as they were in the nineteenth century, infusing not

only contemporary fiction (Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*; Jeannette Walls's *The Glass

Castle*), but also, for example, the moral rhetoric of political memoirs (Mike Huckabee's

*Character Makes a Difference;* Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father*), the acquisition

of "well-roundedness" that institutions of higher education promise to deliver to their

students, and, as Joseph Slaughter has shown, the letter of international human rights law. [2]

　　The connections between nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* and contemporary

literature and culture are not accidental; instead, I argue that the largely canonical

tradition of novels I consider has had a wide and lasting impact on readers' conceptions

of character.   Moreover, I contend that the ongoing popularity of most of my primary

texts is a function of their treatment of character.  The latter half of this dissertation, in

particular, deals with the various sympathetic relationships that novels frequently

engender (between reader and character, for instance, or between character and narrator),

and landmark texts like *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre* and *The Mill on the Floss* continue

to be re-read in part because of the reader-character sympathy they persistently evoke.

Moreover, the very structure of the *Bildungsroman* suggests such a sympathetic

relationship since, as Slaughter points out, the development novel is "imagined to effect

in the reader the modernizing process of personality development that it narrates for the

protagonist" (1417).  Although "Developing Character" does not attempt to theorize "the

reader" as such, it draws on both individual readers' published responses to novels and

rhetorical analyses of narrative to establish how formal techniques of characterization

help motivate readerly sympathies.  And as we will see starkly with The Palliser novels

and *Sentimental Education*—both of which many readers dismiss as "boring"—narrative

techniques can work just as powerfully to estrange sympathy as they can to obtain it.


**A Note on Genre**

It is not this dissertation's aim to provide a genealogy of the *Bildungsroman*;

plenty of studies already exist that analyze the complexity of the term and its specific

links to eighteenth-century German thought.[3]  However, disagreement within genre

studies about what "*Bildungsroman*" has come to mean compels me to elaborate on my

own understanding of the term and, indeed, on my decision to use it at all.  I am

interested in the concept of the "character development novel" less as a material artifact than as a figure in the literary-critical imaginary. Whether or not we agree with the appropriateness of an arcane German word to describe the kind of novel whose plot focuses on growing up—on the development of a protagonist's moral and intellectual characteristics as well as his or her physical body —we cannot deny that *Bildungsroman* has become the most pervasive shorthand for such novels. The *Bildungsroman*, in short, spends the bulk of its energies on the depiction of character development as a significant, discernible process. While such a statement might seem innocuous enough, scholars like Marc Redfield and Susan Fraiman each problematize the alignment of character development novels with the term *Bildungsroman*. Redfield, who is interested in the *Bildungsroman*'s relationship to German aesthetic theory, insists that the genre is much more complicated than "a vague idea of individual growth," and that current scholarship seems to want to lump too many novels under its rubric (42). Fraiman, whose *Unbecoming Women* analyzes character development novels with female protagonists, insists that we "jettison once and for all the notion of a 'female *Bildungsroman*'" (13) because the term *Bildungsroman* itself is overly associated with the masculine values of "linear progress and coherent identity" (x). Judging by these accounts, "*Bildungsroman*" is at once too general and too specialized a designation. I argue, instead, that if "*Bildungsroman*" initially meant something more particularized than "character development novel," this is still not a persuasive enough reason to abandon a term that has formed part of our shared critical vocabulary for over a century. Neither does the observation that many *Bildungsromane* focus on traditionally "male" ideals necessitate a

6

new genre-designation for those numerous, and equally canonical, *Bildungsromane* with female protagonists.

The critical unease that surrounds discussions of the *Bildungsroman* is symptomatic of a broader atmosphere of anxiety among contemporary genre theorists. This year's special *PMLA* issue devoted to "Genre," for example, seems to throw the very notion of its subject matter into question, with the majority of contributors expressing distaste with genre's "prescriptive taxonomy and…constraint on textual energy" (Frow 1627). One featured essay—whose basic message is sounded throughout many other entries in the issue—claims that

> [I]f world literature is virtual, so too is every other genre. For virtuality…is the sum of the not yet realized, with no actualized shape, a kind of general solvent out of which particular entities can acquire particular features. This is what genres are (Dimock 1379).

But if too-rigid pronouncements upon genre indeed lead to banal taxonomies and oversimplifications of the subject matter they ostensibly elucidate, the insistence that genre can only be "virtual" risks depriving genre (or discussions of particular genres) of any meaning at all. In this project, for example, each individual novel I read as a *Bildungsroman* constructs character development in a noticeably different fashion, and reading novels as *Bildungsromane* is only one way to go about analyzing them. But it is also undeniable that certain sets of novels privilege certain topics and formal structures over others—that Wilkie Collins's sensation novels, for example, have markedly different thematic interests and aesthetic aims from *The Mill on the Floss* and *Corinne*— and that genre designations provide at least provisional ways of naming these interests so that they can be more easily compared and analyzed. As Jed Esty has recently argued, "it

remains true that bildung…has shaped not just literary criticism but also literary practice for generations, a fact not altered by the concept's nonfulfillment in any given text" (426).[4] Associating individual novels with a broad tradition of literary-critical work on the *Bildungsroman* can help us grasp the underlying value systems to which this tradition cumulatively gives voice, even if no novel will ever offer an exact prototype for the genre. But before I give my own account of the *Bildungsroman* in any more detail, I will return to the relationship between narrative theory and the figure of the character—a figure that centrally occupies the *Bildungsroman* as a genre.

**Narratology and the Concept of Character**

The way narrative theory has tended to conceive of itself as a discipline helps explain why narratologists have shied away from discussions of character in the past. The very name "narratology"—first proposed by Tzvetan Todorov—attests to the discipline's strong roots in both linguistics and structuralism, its desire to understand narrative as a signifying system with its own internal logic. Like Aristotle before them, many of the field's most celebrated scholars privilege the temporal aspect of narrative: that is, they focus on the idea that narratives all constitute a linear "whole" with a definite beginning and endpoint, and that most (if not all) narratives exhibit numerous stylistic strategies for the manipulation of time. Temporal structures of narrative provide their critics with a quasi-scientific area of inquiry, and it is no surprise that structuralist narratology, a field so captivated by refining its critical taxonomy, would prefer to bypass the comparative imprecision of character in favor of formal techniques that can be more easily codified.

Examples of "classic" studies of narrative theory include Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1983-85), which emphasizes the importance of narrative temporality for the construction of history and personal identity; Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot* (1984), which argues that plot is nothing less than narrative's logic, a dynamic and progressive "mode of human understanding," (7); and Gérard Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980), which uses Proust's *A la Recherche du temps perdu* as an illustration of narrative order, duration, and frequency (that is, of the ways in which the novel presents its own relationship to time). For Genette, as well as for other prominent structuralist critics like Roland Barthes and A.J. Greimas, characters become functional "participants" or "actors" with circumscribed roles to play throughout the overall composition of a given narrative.[5] In *Narrative Discourse Revisited,* Genette defends his decision to minimize discussions of character using this kind of markedly technical rhetoric: "I have no regrets about having refused to make the concession…for it seems to me that by allowing the study of characterization to have the privilege of shaping, and thereby governing, the analysis of narrative discourse, we make *too much* of a concession to what is only one "effect" among others" (136, emphasis in original). Genette thus implies that his vision of narrative discourse levels the playing field of narrative elements, with character garnering no more attention than effects such as focalization or paralipsis.

Although *Narrative Discourse* bears out its author's decision to put character in its proper place, the insistency with which Genette defends this decision suggests how, for most readers, character can never be just "one effect among others." The concept of character, as many have noted, poses a difficult problem for structuralist analyses because of the way in which character often seems to surpass its own functionality. In a

discussion of this "problem" with character, Mieke Bal writes that "the character is not a human being, but it resembles one" (115); in other words, readers tend to treat characters as mimetic psychological essences rather than as the "fabricated creatures" or semantic "effects" that critics like Bal and Genette insist they are. J. Hillis Miller has even more enthusiastically toed this party line, insisting that those readers who continue to pretend as if characters "had an independent psychological existence" have "caught a trick of the language of the text, as one catches a disease" (278). While literary narratives may seem to encourage their readers to respond to characters as if they were people with believable mental lives outside the text, Miller suggests that giving in to this "trick" reveals a pitiably naïve critical faculty.

Numerous scholars have cited the tension between the structural and mimetic qualities of character as a reason for narratology's relative reluctance to explore it, but fewer have acknowledged that the concept of character presents a second theoretical challenge insofar as our understanding of character is created in the very process of reading. Because narrative is a temporal form (that is, it is a represented account of time and its reading takes place in time), our attempts to discern characters from the novels we read occur while the narrative progresses. If we think of a narrative as a progression, then, we certainly read characters through the novel's plot. But character is unlike plot in one vital way: character is *elusive* insofar as its attachment to a plot that is by definition in motion prevents it from being "pinned down" by the reader. Narratologists have provided us with so many brilliant studies of plot but with so few of character, I would argue, because plot can be more easily delineated: *this happens, then this happens, then this*, etc. Critics can describe characters, but they are hard pressed to capture the

"essence" of character in a way that separates it from its construction in the dynamic

event of reading.

Rather than continuing to figure the theoretical challenges surrounding character

as insurmountable sticking points, newer generations of critics have begun, in various

ways, to embrace the "human" side of character so summarily maligned by structuralist

narratology. In the fast-growing field of cognitive studies of narrative, for example,

"character is seen as a mental model of a storyworld participant, constructed by the

reader incrementally in the course of reading" (Margolin, "Character"). Following such

an assumption, Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon have explored how humans' cognitive

responses to literary character closely resemble their responses to real people *despite* the

knowledge that characters are not "real," and Lisa Zunshine has suggested that

interaction with literary characters provides a valuable way to exercise and sharpen our

uniquely human awareness of other minds.[6] Taking a more historical approach, David A.

Brewer's *The Afterlife of Character* has recently examined how eighteenth-century

Britons used the literary text as "merely a starting point" for numerous  kinds of

"imaginative expansion" on character (including unauthorized sequels and role-playing

games), all of which served to position character as a kind of public property (2). In

addition, narrative theorist James Phelan has acknowledged the unavoidable

interconnection between character and narrative progression in his own work, which

moves away from structuralist narratology toward a more rhetorical stance on narrative

that posits a "feedback loop" between "authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader

response" (*Living to Tell*, 18-19). Phelan pays close attention to how character emerges

in particular narratives in order to help elucidate the ethical communications that those narratives suggest between implied author and implied reader.[7]

Of all the instances of this second wave of inquiry into literary character, Alex Woloch's *The One vs. The Many* (2003) stands out as especially crucial for narrative studies because of its author's commitment to celebrating the "human-like" aspect of character without surrendering too much of narratology's structuralist zeal. Woloch's book attempts to account for both the "functional" and the "representational" aspects of character by paying attention to how the spatial distribution of minor characters in the novels of Austen, Dickens, and Balzac affects the thematic status of those characters. His major contention is that the character-structure of the novel is "asymmetrical"; that is, that characterization itself results from forces of "competition" among literary characters. Minor characters thus become "the proletariat of the novel," a group of flattened personalities who both support the growth of the protagonist and threaten to destabilize her narrative position at every turn (27). *The One vs. The Many* is less interesting for its politics, however, than for the way in which it reframes the debate between structural and mimetic conceptions of character as a false one, arguing instead that structure and mimesis work together to produce character, and that this interpenetration constitutes "a dynamic process central to characterization itself" (307). Literary character is never solely a linguistic "trick," nor is it ever actually a lifelike human consciousness: its notoriously fraught status within narrative theory instead derives from its combination of these two registers.

**Moral and Formal Character**

This dissertation's focus on character development in the nineteenth-century novel necessitates its thorough engagement with Woloch's work on character, and my first chapter (about which more later) both utilizes and expands upon Woloch's theories. But while it would be impossible to ignore the major insights that *The One vs. The Many* offers to both narratologists and novel theorists, the book's magisterial fervor—not to mention its considerable heft—risks obscuring how Woloch's study raises as many questions as it attempts to answer. The most important of these questions, I argue, involves the relationship between the structural dimension of character and character's unavoidable moral connotations. Despite Woloch's conviction that the nineteenth-century novel is a rich site for character studies, *The One vs. The Many* has very little to say about the way in which nineteenth-century novels in particular posit different, meticulously rendered depictions of "character" as evaluative judgments about fictional individuals' orientation toward the good.[8]

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I address "character" as a concept with two interconnected meanings: first, I use the term *moral character* to describe the kind of essential, personal quality—be it positive, negative, or somewhere in between—which, in the nineteenth-century novel, one is said to possess (as in, for instance, the statement that Daniel Deronda "has the character of a benefactor" [DD 822]). Moral character helps us understand *formal character*, that is, "character" as a constitutive element of all narratives (along with story, point-of-view, etc.). It is worth emphasizing that neither Woloch's work nor my own is the first to note the distinction between "being" and "having" character.[9] Those critics who point out character's multiple meanings,

however, have only done so in passing.  In his chapter on *Pride and Prejudice*, Woloch

indeed parses what he calls "[t]he dual use of character" in a greater degree of detail than

previous studies:

> [There are] two different kinds of character that coexist in Jane
> Austen: character as social being (a person *is* a character) and
> character as inner quality (a person *has* a character).  The narrative
> structure that mediates between them is precisely
> asymmetry…Characters, in this light, quickly become transformed
> into characteristics: the social relation of *individuals* rendered as
> the dialectical relationship between discrepant interior states… The
> dual use of 'character' thus lies at the heart of the birelational
> process we have been looking at, where the nuanced adumbration
> of inner qualities emerges only through the social juxtaposition of
> different people (53-54).

For Woloch, then, character's multivalence plays directly into the novel's schema of

social competition, ensuring that a vast panorama of individual characters can be neatly

dehumanized into contending characteristics; Elizabeth Bennet, for example, has "more

quickness" than her sisters, and thus garners more space in Austen's novel (58).  The

novelistic protagonist, Woloch argues, arises out of this "asymmetrical" structure through

both her superior makeup of "characteristics" and her seeming inability to be subsumed

by them, as minor characters often are: we have the "sense that the protagonist's thoughts

exist outside the novel's range of description, that their intensity and complexity exceed

the narrative's finite parameters" (101).  But the overarching scheme of formal

asymmetry that Woloch's work so compellingly depicts leaves little room for exploring

what "having" character actually entails, or whether character's meaning changes

depending on the particular novelist who depicts it.  Though the word "character" had

overwhelmingly strong moral connotations in the nineteenth century,[10] *The One vs. The*

*Many* studiously avoids the phrase "moral character," referring instead to a vaguely

defined "inner quality" that only derives meaning through an oppressive economic

system.  Focusing more on how "having" character relates to the quantity of one

character's represented presence among many, Woloch does not acknowledge that the

formal construction of "inner" character (most importantly, the ostensibly

"heterogeneous" inner character of the protagonist) is an ineluctably moral affair.

 "Developing Character" argues, in contrast, that nineteenth-century novels

illustrate how the concept of character brings out the moral systems embedded within

narrative forms.  The narratological form of character is inextricably linked not just to the

desire for social mimesis we find in nineteenth-century realism (as Woloch suggests), but

more importantly, to novelistic constructions of morality—of a proper way of being and

thinking—which often conflict with the novel's commitment to illustrating "real life."[11]  I

therefore investigate the novel's particular value systems during a historical period in

which character's moral valence was equally as important as its structural status.

Nineteenth-century novels are far more explicit than their modern and contemporary

counterparts about the existence of moral character as an individual's relative virtue, and

they are far more confident that the development of moral character is a suitable subject

for fictional narrative. [12]  Moreover, the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* holds this

conviction in especially high regard, since its ostensible plotline revolves around a single

character's moral and psychological development as well as her exterior, physical growth

and her ultimate positioning within a social hierarchy.

 The development novels I analyze in the following chapters implicitly address the

connection between character's moral and narratological senses.  By continually insisting

that a given individual has a certain kind of character, and by stressing the way an

individual's moral character dictates how she will act in a given situation, the

*Bildungsroman* in one sense attempts to present the formal aspect of character as a

verifiable, recognizable whole.  Its trajectory traditionally moves toward the ultimate

moral "establishment" of a protagonist, figuring character's definitive condition as one of

stasis (i.e. "the fully-formed character").  However, the elusive aspect of character—the

way that characters are constructed in reading and constantly being modified both by the

reader and the novel's plot—calls into relief the way that characters can never be

contained in neat, one-word summations.

This dissertation examines the concept of character development in light of the

play of stasis and movement which nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* create around

literary characters.  The moral and formal dimensions of character exist both together and

in tension with each other, thus dramatizing the philosophical "problem of the self"—that

is, the centuries-old debate over whether or not a coherent identity can exist over time.[13]

As both contemporary philosophers and narratologists have noted, narrative proves a

crucial ground of investigation into the status of individual identity, since "the very

meaning of the term 'identity' is predicated on constancy, on the absence of change"

which the inherent temporality of narrative seems to resist (Ritivoi, 231).  I do not mean

to claim here that "character" and "self" should be considered identical terms; instead, I

accept philosopher Joel Kupperman's recent formulation that character is a subset of the

self which deals with moral issues.[14]  However, that *Bildungsromane* by definition invest

"character" with paramount plot significance makes them uniquely suited to an analysis

of narrative's role in the construction of moral development.  And as we will see,

attending to how character must, paradoxically, develop while remaining fixed reveals

the *Bildungsroman*'s ultimate anxiety with its own subject matter, its continual

questioning whether character development is a virtuous ambition after all.  But in order

to understand how even the most traditional *Bildungsromane* remain skeptical—if not

downright pessimistic—about their ostensible goals, we must initially explore long-

standing critical beliefs about the particular developmental processes that

*Bildungsromane* revere. In the following section, I sketch out two prevalent assumptions

about the character development novel—that it valorizes characterological transformation

and sanctifies psychological depth—before offering a reassessment of these assumptions

through my descriptions of this dissertation's four chapters.


**Character Development as Transformation and Depth**

Despite Esty's persuasive claim that no novel actually demonstrates the majority

of characteristics ascribed to the *Bildungsroman*, many critics have persisted in their

attempts to delineate a number of the genre's principal features.  Patricia Alden, for

instance, writes:

> [T]he Bildungsroman linked the individual's moral, spiritual, and
> psychological maturation with his economic and social
> advancement…Early examples of the genre ended with the
> individual's assimilation to an aristocratic or genteel elite which
> represented an ideal standard of cultivation.  Not only did the
> Bildungsroman legitimate the experience of upward mobility, it
> also instructed the middle class in how to accomplish it (2).

Maturation, advancement, assimilation, and cultivation: each of the characteristic

developmental processes that Alden describes is a transformative one, in which the

*Bildungsroman*'s protagonist experiences noticeable changes through time.  These

changes often entail reversals of status and fortune, as the protagonist goes from single to

married (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*); unemployed to professional (*The Red and the Black*, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*); poor to rich (*Great Expectations*, *Jane Eyre*); or all three (*David Copperfield*).  The form of the novel proves especially congenial for rendering character development as a process of change that unfolds through a series of narrative events.  M.M. Bakhtin, in fact, describes the history of the novel itself as a kind of *Bildungsroman*, with earlier novelistic subgenres (such as Richardson's "novel(s) of ordeal," or "biographical" novels like Fielding's *Tom Jones*) featuring "ready-made and predetermined" protagonists who remain the same throughout whatever circumstances they undergo.  Events in such novels, Bakhtin writes, "do not become formative experience for [the protagonist], they do not change him, and in that very immutability of the hero lies the entire point" (13).  In contrast, the *Bildungsroman* illustrates historical change through the figure of the developing protagonist, whom Bakhtin loftily construes as a figure of transition between different cultural eras: "[w]hat is happening here is precisely the emergence of a new man" and a new kind of novel to accommodate him (23). Decades later, Thomas Jeffers still agrees that the *Bildungsroman*'s "crucial theme is precisely change—physical, psychological, moral" (2).  All of these critics, in short, seem confident that the *Bildungsroman* conveys its protagonist's change through temporal events, and that this change itself constitutes both characterological and novelistic progress.

If the *Bildungsroman* chronicles a social, cultural, or historical change, it also promises that this social change will accompany the protagonist's salutary learning process, a passage from blindness to comparative insight that Alden, above, glosses as "moral, spiritual, and psychological" transformation.  Take, for instance, Austen's

Marianne Dashwood, who learns, through a courtship narrative, "to counteract, by her conduct, her most favourite maxims" (*Sense and Sensibility*, 333), or even Julien Sorel, whose imprisonment and death sentence actually prove the most edifying of events: "Never had that head been so poetic as at the moment when it was about to fall" (407).[15] In both of these examples, the protagonists come to think not only differently but *contrarily* to previous occasions: Marianne tempers her excessive sensibility, and Julien disavows the very ambitions that drove him to prison in the first place. These transformations manifest themselves in moments of moral epiphany, and character development thus appears less as a gradual, painstaking process than as a quick and dramatic change for the better.

This dissertation argues, however, that labeling the *Bildungsroman* as the "genre of change" fails to account for the way in which many well-known *Bildungsromane* devalue the characterological transformation that they supposedly uphold. If some *Bildungsromane* contain revelatory moments, many also equate moral character with a refusal to change that either questions or openly scorns the possibility of epiphanies like those of Marianne Dashwood and Julien Sorel.[16] Development narratives continually demonstrate this resistance to change through formal technique: as we will see, *The Mill on the Floss* orients Maggie Tulliver around a single, constant character trait, and Trollope's Palliser novels illustrate the value of indecision—rather than that of transformative decision-making—by highlighting the represented thought of a whole cast of characters who cannot make up their minds. This suspicion of change culminates in *Sentimental Education*, whose protagonist is so involved in his own thoughts that the possibility not only of transformation but of action itself becomes an object of parody.

19

And even when characters *do* seem to change for the better, such moral revelation takes a notable toll: novels as conventional as *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre* both predicate the development of their protagonists upon the multiple, untimely deaths of other characters.

As I question the critical elision between development and ameliorative change, I reframe a second assumption about development's effect on the interiority of the central character. Literary scholars often suggest that the most memorable nineteenth-century protagonists accrue inner "depth" over the course of the narratives that contain them. According to Deidre Lynch, readers' assessments of characterological depth help buttress a ubiquitous "rise of the novel" narrative that positions eighteenth-century novels as precursors to the novel's supposed fruition in nineteenth-century realism. "It is noteworthy," she writes,

> how often a concept of depth—a concept, more precisely, of *real* depth—provided nineteenth-century literary historians with their organizing and periodizing principle…In the nineteenth century, those divisions [between surface and depth]—and the concept of 'real' depth on which they were based—were productive mainly when they were harnessed to that emergent discourse of canon-making and criticism that contributed to the making of 'the' novel, the discourse that constructed that disciplinary object and made it literary (252).

Lynch's discussion suggests how nineteenth-century writers, readers, and critics aligned depth with good taste: depth helped clearly delineate the novel from other literary forms and, more importantly, the "deepest" novels came to be read as superior examples of the genre. Depth, in other words, is what renders Emma Woodhouse and Jane Eyre *better* characters than, say, the interchangeable heroines of Harlequin romances. "Developing Character" builds on this initial insight, illustrating how, for nineteenth-century novelists

and critics alike, the concept of depth allows aesthetic judgment to shade into morality. The character of the deep protagonist becomes an object to be emulated not only in formal terms but also in moral ones: she is an aesthetically sophisticated representation because she has an eminently admirable interiority. For many *Bildungsromane*, this positive valuation of depth helps position character development as the concomitant development of a moral consciousness—a consciousness that derives its morality from its depth. Further, that those protagonists most frequently cited as "deep" (Wilhelm Meister, Elizabeth Bennet, Emma Woodhouse, Jane Eyre, Pip, Isabel Archer) are central characters in development novels suggests a particular alliance between the *Bildungsroman* as a literary genre and interior depth as a narrative phenomenon.

But how, exactly, does "depth" become discernible across the pages of a novel? Although the idea of depth is more frequently invoked than explained—we know a deep character, apparently, when we read one—a cluster of critical remarks on the subject reveals several consistencies within descriptions of "deep" characters. First, explanations of "depth" often rely on metaphors of fullness; the most famous of these is E.M. Forster's enduring delineation of "round" characters (such as Thackeray's Becky Sharpe and Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe), whose psychological status conjures a plump, curvy image. Forster reinforces the visuality of round characters—words seemingly made into flesh—by contrasting them with a second type of character (e.g. Dickens's Mrs. Micawber) whose "construction round a single idea or quality" makes them as flat as the printed pages on which they are written (67-68). The alignment of developed character with figures of psychological plenitude, however, hardly began with Forster's distinction. In fact, such language of repleteness often appears in *Bildungsromane* themselves,

especially when protagonists think reflexively about their own character(s), from Wilhelm Meister's conviction that he will "develop [myself] more fully" (174) to Adam Bede's acknowledgement of "that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow" (574). These moments of reflection illustrate how numerous character development novels yoke physical growth to an equally crucial moral fulfillment.

Not only does represented depth ostensibly render these protagonists "whole," but it also promises that they will emerge from their development narratives with harmonious internal balance. Like the circular form to which she is likened, the round character is finally disabused of any sharp edges or protrusions that would threaten to disrupt the proportion of her interior landscape. As Michael Beddow writes, Wilhelm Meister's invocation of "harmonious" (*harmonisch*) development translates as "no more and no less than 'pleasingly proportioned', a requirement which appertains…to the arrangement of elements of the personality" (109). To grow up harmoniously according to Goethe's novel is to learn to streamline one's excessive traits, to "settle down" in a psychological as well as a social or domestic sense.

But if the character of the *Bildungsroman*'s deep protagonist finally resembles a proportionate "arrangement of elements," this sober proportioning hardly accords with her excessive effect on readers. Literary critics continually describe deep characters by gesturing toward depth's ultimate resistance to complete description. Returning to Woloch's remark that the "intensity and complexity" of nineteenth-century protagonists' thoughts often "exceed[s] the narrative's finite parameters," we can see how psychological depth appears both as *too much* for a single narrative to handle and as *too*

*intricate* for a single reader to untangle. As Lynch has argued, the combination of interior

inexhaustibility and convolution often compels novel readers to return continually to

those characters whose roundness eludes them: "No matter how sensitive it was," Lynch

writes, "no character reading could ever exhaust the meanings of an interiority…which, it

was understood, had slipped beneath the surfaces of words.  This postulate of a depth that

could never finally be sounded ensured that aesthetic dispositions would receive repeated

and regular workouts" (141-42).  The deepest characters therefore end up resembling

sympathetic "friends" with whom we become familiar through rereading, and whose

imagined lives outside the narrative text become objects of continuous, conflicting

speculation (think, for instance, of a convention of Janeites lovingly discussing what

Elizabeth's and Darcy's children might be like).  In fact, the coexistence of balance and

excess observable in discussions of characterological depth illustrates in particularly

broad strokes the larger tension I have attributed to the concept of literary character in

general: the deep character is both known by heart (because continually re-read) and

never fully known (because no amount of reading can ever exhaust her infinite potential).

 Finally, those critics who discuss depth tend to associate it with realism.   Deep

characters seem more believable as human beings than do their flat counterparts: we are

more likely to know (or to be) a person who resembles Elizabeth Bennet than Uriah

Heep.  That deep characters should appear as real as the people who read about them

reinforces the connection between depth and excess that leads readers to imagine

protagonists who cannot be contained by the narratives in which they originally appear.

But if no text can fully capture such depth, the realist novel's excessive length announces

its intention, at least, to come as close as possible.  As Ricoeur writes, "[n]arrative

technique in the golden age of the novel …[relied on] an old narrative formula which

consisted of deepening a character by narrating more and drawing from the richness of a

character the exigency of a greater episodic complexity.  In this sense, character and plot

mutually influence each other" (9).  If the plots of classic nineteenth-century novels are

Byzantine, all the better for the construction of those equally convoluted characters who

must traverse them.

      In her analysis of realism in the English novel, Elizabeth Ermarth expands on this

initial association between deepening character and elongated narration, claiming that

depth is "series dependent" (5) insofar as we understand deep characters by watching

them negotiate a succession of discrete, individual moments:

> The subjection of characters to various kinds of journeys, the
> proliferation of episodes and of sequences in realistic novels, are
> devices managed with the reader's developing depth-perception in
> mind.  The more the characters see of the world, the more we see
> of the characters and, consequently, the better able we are to
> identify in the variety those deep consistencies both within
> individuals and between them that temporal continuities gradually
> reveal (50-51).

The temporal scope of the novel, in which characters pass through a long sequence of

events, is tailor-made for presenting both individual, psychological depth as well as a

generalized depth of field in which those individual characters think and interact.

Ermarth and Ricoeur thus bring a temporal dimension to discussions that see deep

characters as spatially or pictorially round, and the convergence of these temporal and

spatial viewpoints seems, at last, to position "depth" as a kind of salutary accumulation,

an adding-on and filling out of character which becomes manifest through narrative

repetition and progression.

Since depth is an interior phenomenon, concerned with the quality of characters'

minds, my analysis of depth examines how novels use formal technique to create fictional

interiorities. The varieties of represented thought that I consider include well-known

narrative strategies such as interior monologue, free indirect discourse, and first-person

retrospection, and I also investigate the infrequently noted (but no less ubiquitous)

technique of "thought report," which Palmer has recently resuscitated for critical study.

I contend that the novel's distinctive ability to narrativize thought ensures that the

development of consciousness and character are mutually informing: like character, depth

is simultaneously a moral and a formal issue. However, "Developing Character" reveals

that the connections between depth and morality are nearly always less favorable than we

imagine. Many nineteenth-century novels actually demonstrate both an affinity for

simplicity of character and a concomitant warning about the moral consequences that

characterological depth imposes on the development narrative. This suspicion of depth

goes hand-in-hand with the resistance to change that I will illustrate across multiple

*Bildungsromane*, since development novels often value their protagonists' psychological

constancy rather than their willingness to modify established forms of thinking.


**Developing Character**

As part of this project's broader inquiry into the concept of character, the

following chapters use nineteenth-century development novels to re-evaluate the critical

assumptions that distinguish transformative change and psychological depth as defining

elements of the *Bildungsroman*. My principal concerns move roughly from a

concentration on the protagonists themselves (in Chapters One and Two), toward

readings that consider how the voice of the third-person narrator affects the novels'

developmental paradigms (Chapters Three and Four).  On a more local level, these

chapters provide new interpretations of several analytical questions (Why do Maggie and

Tom die in the end of *The Mill on the Floss*?  Why is Trollope's writing so tedious to so

many?) that have dogged these novels for generations.

Chapter One, "Development and the Sacrifice of Character in *David Copperfield*

and *Jane Eyre*," uses two well-known Victorian novels to challenge the assumption that

the *Bildungsroman* culminates in the formation of a morally and psychologically "well-

rounded" protagonist.  Despite the ostensibly happy endings of these novels, *Copperfield*

and *Eyre* both use first-person retrospective narration to tell development stories in which

many characters (parents, spouses, enemies, friends) inexplicably die along the way.

Referencing René Girard's writing about the "scapegoat" (a figure who is sacrificed for

the maintenance of social order), I illustrate how the collective phenomenon of sacrifice

operates on an internalized, psychological level in the *Bildungsroman*.  In other words,

the moral development of the protagonist actually happens at the expense of other

characters being killed off, as Dora's terminal illness frees up David to pursue Agnes

Wickfield, for example, or as Bertha Mason's death in the fire at Thornfield turns Mr.

Rochester into an eligible widower for Jane to marry.  Moreover, these sacrificial deaths

help David and Jane to let go of the excessive elements of their own characters

(Copperfield's naiveté, Eyre's unbridled passion) that would otherwise encumber their

narratives of maturation.  These two novels feature protagonists whose alleged fulfillment

relies less on steady gains than on numerous kinds of diminishment, thus illustrating how

even the most conventional Victorian *Bildungsromane* construe character development as

a tragic process. This chapter begins where Woloch leaves off, considering how the "asymmetrical" structure of characterization—in which many characters prove more expendable than one central figure—can help revise our understanding of the *Bildungsroman*'s representation of characterological growth.

In Chapter Two, "'Roots Deeper Than All Change': Constancy as Character Development in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Corinne*," I couple Germaine de Staël's influential early-nineteenth-century text with George Eliot's mid-century novel, which structurally and referentially alludes to the earlier work. In stark contrast to the movement toward happiness that we find in *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre*, *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* each chart the development of a central character who dies in the novel's end. While David and Jane reach "maturity" through the sacrifice and abandonment of minor characters, Corinne and Maggie Tulliver continually sacrifice themselves so that they can hold on to relationships that threaten to throw their development narratives off course. Building evidence for my initial claim that the *Bildungsroman* figures character development not principally as a process of enrichment but of loss, this chapter turns its focus toward the dramatic loss of the protagonist herself. Both Eliot's and Staël's novels attribute their protagonists' self-sacrificing behavior to what I call a "dominant characteristic"—an overriding character trait that consistently determines how the protagonists feel and act. As a result of this characteristic's dominance, neither Corinne nor Maggie learns (as David and Jane do) to temper their characters in service of well-roundedness and balance. Instead, Eliot and Staël both suggest that the protagonist's changelessness is itself a distinct—though tragically unsustainable—moral value. My analysis of *Corinne* and *The Mill* therefore begins to rewrite the traditional characterization of the *Bildungsroman* as the genre of change,

suggesting instead that moral character development exhibits a quality of inertia which critics have largely ignored. Finally, at the same time that this chapter attempts to clarify the morality of stasis, it also considers what Maggie's and Corinne's "dominant characteristics" might reveal about the formal construction of psychological "depth" that these protagonists supposedly exhibit. The inflation of a single, dominant characteristic has a "flattening" effect more akin to the ostensibly anti-realist medium of caricature than previous discussions of the *bildungsheld*'s roundness have admitted. Our perception of a character's "depth," I suggest, is actually sustained by formal techniques associated less with protagonists than with simpler, more "minor" characters.

Chapter Three, "Represented Thought and the Character of Indecision in Trollope's Palliser Series," considers how the form of Trollope's six-volume series affects its depiction of character development. Though the Palliser novels differ from *Bildungsromane* in the sense that the series follows numerous characters throughout multiple texts, Trollope himself repeatedly cited his abiding interest in character as a motivating factor for writing a series in the first place. But despite this preoccupation, numerous critics from the Victorian period to the present have failed to find the Palliser characters as sympathetic or as psychologically complex as Trollope claimed that they were. Drawing on recent narratological theories of represented thought in fiction, I attribute this lukewarm critical reception to the way Trollope depicts his characters' mental functioning. Specifically, the Palliser novels represent thought as a seemingly endless process of indecision: from over-cautious Prime Minister Plantagenet Palliser, to vacillating fiancé Alice Vavasor, to conflicted MP Phineas Finn, few of the series's central characters seem able, or even willing, to make up their minds. This process of indecision not only pervades Trollope's characters; it also distinguishes his third-person

narrator who, novel after novel, refuses to use the kind of omniscient rhetoric that other third-person narrators (such as Balzac's, Dickens's, Eliot's, or Thackeray's) tend to adopt.  Nor does the Palliser narrator rely heavily upon free indirect discourse, the most critically privileged mode of representing consciousness in fiction.  Trollope's circular, speculative variety of represented thought therefore diverges sharply from the forms of thought that characterize sympathetically "deep" characters like Austen's Emma Woodhouse or James's Isabel Archer, both of whom engage in introspection that leads to epiphanic self-knowledge. The narrator of the Palliser novels instead frequently figures indecision as a moral activity, suggesting that his characters' refusal to make choices stems from their extreme sensitivity to the difficult problems they face. And since the novel series formally resists the kind of closure that results from developmental epiphanies, vacillation also proves a more logical narrative enterprise for the series's multivolume structure.  The considerable length of Trollope's series, then, does not ensure the superior depth of character that critics like Ermarth and Ricoeur associate with bulky realist novels.  That Trollopian character development occurs as inevitably as time (and narrative) passes illustrates a connection between development and suspension which, along with Eliot's and Staël's novels, troubles the conception of literary *Bildung* as a transformative characterological change.

My fourth and final chapter, "Development's Failures: Unsympathetic Protagonists and Narrative Distance in *Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education*," reconsiders the narrative of character development in light of later nineteenth-century novels whose protagonists' endeavors to develop prove unsuccessful.  George Gissing's *Born in Exile* and Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* offer an ironic twist on the "upward" developmental trajectories and moralistic protagonists found in Dickens and

Brontë.  Instead of showcasing characters whose individuality singles them out for reader

sympathy, Flaubert and Gissing present glaringly unsympathetic protagonists who can

only conceive of development through the imitation of other characters.  Flaubert's

Frédéric Moreau, for example, wants to be "the Walter Scott of France" (26), while

Gissing's Godwin Peak becomes a religious scholar—despite his atheism—in order to

endear himself to his wealthy acquaintances.  Presenting protagonists who strive to

develop surface qualities rather than inner consciences, Gissing's and Flaubert's novels

alternately question and satirize the representation of psychological depth for which so

many *Bildungsromane* are known.

Chapter Four continues the previous chapter's focus on the relationship of the third-

person narrator to the development narrative's attempts to win readerly sympathy.  The

"developmental failure" of Gissing's and Flaubert's protagonists is, I argue, intimately linked

to the narrator's unconventional distance from them: defying the novelistic tradition in which

third-person narrators elicit sympathy for the protagonist's various foibles, the narrators of

*Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education* use distancing techniques to create a moral divide

between themselves and the central characters they depict.  While postmodern readings of

"the narrator" as a formal category (and of the Flaubertian narrator in particular) tend to

privilege narrators who become dispersed and "unlocatable" or "impersonal," my concept of

distance requires us to recognize how narrators, by virtue of their position relative to the

unfolding story, are always purveyors of moral judgment.  By examining how the

inescapably present and judgmental third-person narrator withholds sympathy along both

moral and formal dimensions of character in these two later *Bildungsromane*, I demonstrate

that the *Bildungsroman* requires the narrator's evocation of sympathy for the protagonist as a

precondition for development itself.  This chapter additionally examines how free indirect

discourse—a technique Flaubert and Gissing use liberally to differentiate the singular

narrator from the imitative protagonist—affects the construction of narrative distance.

Where the first-person narrator of *Bildungsromane* like *Copperfield* and *Eyre* cannot help but

identify with the protagonist because the two are literally one and the same, third-person

narrators are able to exploit the ironic and mimetic potential of free indirect discourse to

align themselves *against* the central character.

For some readers, the previous descriptions may signal this project's engagement

with a cluster of interpretive practices frequently collected under the banner of

"formalism."  In the current case, these practices include an attention to literary genres

(the novel, the *Bildungsroman*); to narrative techniques including represented thought,

narratorial distance, and point-of-view; and to the juxtaposition of texts which emerge

from similar aesthetic perspectives rather than from a single national tradition.

"Developing Character" therefore diverges from other recent work on character, the most

popular examples of which offer formal readings of novels in service of ostensibly

weightier historicizing claims.[17]  Though such work unquestionably contributes to a more

socially conscious body of literary criticism, it also risks suggesting that the study of

form is ahistorical when decoupled from an avowedly materialist line of argumentation.

In contrast, I offer this dissertation in enthusiastic agreement with a number of scholars

who have recently begun to suggest that the studies of "form" and "history" are less

opposed than our overworked institutional categorizations might lead us to believe.  As

Caroline Levine writes, formalism "is conceptual and abstract, generalizing and

transhistorical …But it is all about the social: it involves reading particular, historically

specific collisions among generalizing political, cultural, and social forms" (632).[18]  Any

invocation of genre, for example, must account for particular expectations about literary

form that both accrue and change over historical time.  "Developing Character" does not

approach form instead of history, but rather, approaches history *through* form; it speaks

not only to scholars of the nineteenth century, but also to a wider community of readers

interested in exploring the particular forms that bring character into being.

**Chapter One**

**Development and the Sacrifice of Character in *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre***

"Il y a des hommes n'ayant pour mission parmi les autres que de servir d'intermédiaires; on les franchait comme les ponts, et l'on va plus loin."

["There are some men whose only function in life is to act as intermediaries; one crosses them as if they were bridges, and leaves them behind."]
                                        -Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education* II.IV

Imagine for a moment that you stumble upon alternate versions of two well-known Victorian novels. In your newly discovered version of *Jane Eyre*, Mr. Rochester marries Blanche Ingram, Bertha Mason lives to a ripe old age up in the attic, and Jane courageously but unhappily accompanies St. John Rivers to India. And in *this David Copperfield*, the title character remains married to Dora Spenlow far into his maturity, forever wishing that he had kept his youthful desires in check and waited for Agnes (who is now, regrettably, Mrs. Uriah Heep).

The oddness or even absurdity of such possibilities reveals the degree to which we have come to identify these celebrated novels with the movement toward happiness that they chronicle. Even if we have no trouble imagining David Copperfield without his joyful family and successful writing career, or Jane Eyre without her "Reader, I married him," these alternate scenarios would drastically rewrite the generic current of the mid-Victorian development novel. For depictions of arrested development like those I have described contradict the central narrative strategy of what are arguably the two most

33

famous Victorian *Bildungsromane* we possess, a strategy by which the protagonists

develop what the novels call "character" by overcoming obstacles rather than by living

with their mistakes.  Moreover, these obstacles to character development almost always

take the form of *other* characters: Jane cannot marry Rochester with Bertha in the picture,

for example, and Dora prevents David from realizing his true happiness with Agnes.  As

such, the act of overcoming obstacles turns out in Brontë's and Dickens's novels to also

be the act of dramatically overturning those other people who stand in development's

way: developing "character" is the goal of these narratives, but characters themselves

make this goal harder to achieve.  More to the point, the happiness with which Jane Eyre

and David Copperfield notoriously conclude their narratives of character development

depends on the death and loss of other characters.  The combined death toll of

*Copperfield* and *Eyre* is staggeringly high: it includes not only the death of the

protagonists' real or potential lovers (Dora Spenlow, St. John Rivers), but of friends

(Helen Burns, Ham Peggotty, James Steerforth), foes (Bertha Mason, Mrs. Reed, Mr.

Spenlow) and both sets of parents.[19]

This chapter orients such deaths around the concept of *sacrifice*, arguing that we

can read the way in which the mid-Victorian *Bildungsroman* does away with "minor"

characters in order to depict the protagonist's development as evidence of a complex

structure of loss and gain.[20]  I use the term "character sacrifice" here in a highly mobile

sense, including three principal operations under its rubric: first and most importantly for

this chapter, "character sacrifice" refers to the formal expulsion of various characters

from the narrative.  This type of sacrifice helps novels represent character development

both by individuating the protagonist (making her consciousness appear "deeper" and her

actions more mature as she negotiates loss) and by streamlining the novel's plot so that

no character stands in the way of its linear trajectory toward the happy ending that

commemorates *Bildung*.

Second, even as they highlight her increasing development, these novels often

sacrifice the protagonist's particular characteristics: as Jane and David traverse their life-

plots, their own moral character (that is, the character they are said to "possess")

undergoes a process of limitation that corresponds with the ever-narrowing possibilities

of a plot that must end. Moreover, these two facets of character sacrifice frequently

reinforce each other, since every time a character dies, the protagonist can use the

experience of that loss as a way to explain the continued refashioning of her character.

After Dora's untimely death, for example, David Copperfield is able to put to rest what

he repeatedly calls his "undisciplined heart," and therefore to outgrow the boyish

infatuation that made him want to marry Dora in the first place (757). Dora's death thus

allows the protagonist to commit himself to Agnes (a second, more "practical" wife who

will help him fulfill his domestic and professional potential) while it also splits off the

"undisciplined" desire that threatened this developmental progress. It is as if, in the

*Bildungsroman*, the old adage that bereavement "builds character" (or that "anything

which doesn't kill you makes you stronger") becomes a narrative obligation.[21]

Finally, "character sacrifice" suggests the rhetoric of self-sacrifice central to

Victorian notions of character-building: both Brontë's and Dickens's novels devote a

considerable amount of pages to illustrating how the protagonists' increasing desire to

give of themselves betokens their developing morality. The general phenomenon I

explore in this chapter, then, does not always refer to human sacrifice (i.e., to an actual

represented death), or to an explicitly religious variety of sacrifice, but rather to several narrative techniques that are "sacrificial" in their structure insofar as they formalize a process of renunciation in service of a privileged developmental goal. By teasing out the ways in which two immensely popular *Bildungsromane* use sacrifice as a method of characterization, we can better understand how the structure of sacrifice knits together several seemingly disparate narratological and psychological processes. Specifically, Brontë's and Dickens's novels demonstrate how formal plot elaboration and characterization in the first-person *Bildungsroman* help shape the novel's construction of a developing individuality that results from sustained loss. This reliance on sacrifice for development's sake, in turn, prompts *Copperfield* and *Eyre* to deploy a wide range of strategies for neutralizing and deflecting the violence that underlies their presentation of character. Before analyzing these strategies in the primary texts, I will briefly discuss the critical material that underpins my readings, attending both to long-received scholarship on the *Bildungsroman* and to alternate interpretive paradigms that will help illustrate the structural interdependence between development and loss throughout the genre.

**Development's Sacrificial Depths**

Perhaps the most common critical gloss of the *Bildungsroman* claims that it figures its protagonist's growth as a process of acculturation, a movement from various forms of social alienation toward the possession of a comfortable role in society and an increasingly resolute moral compass.[22] Thomas Jeffers, for instance, characterizes the end of the traditional *Bildungsroman* as an established "harmony" between the

protagonist's self and the social order that he comes to inhabit (31).  To bring this point

home, one need only reflect on the notoriously—indeed, often eerily—happy endings of

many classic character development novels, in which the developed protagonist sits

swaddled in the midst of what Austen famously hails as "the perfect happiness of the

union" (*Emma*, 381).[23]  Moreover, as I discussed at greater length in the Introduction, the

kind of development that ends in the protagonist's acculturation frequently constructs the

*Bildungsroman*'s central character as dazzlingly "deep."  When it is applied to literary

character, "depth" usually refers to the way that a frequent and detailed rendering of a

character's represented consciousness creates the impression of a human being's

psychological complexity.  A deep character need not live through unusual

circumstances, but her inner evaluation of everyday situations often reveals an

extraordinary precision of thought; Thomas Mann aptly calls the *Bildungsroman* the

"sublimation and rendering inward of the novel of adventures" (qtd. in Swales, 32).

Dickens's and Brontë's novels figure development itself as a process of

deepening—of adding more—to the protagonist as she relates her life's narrative.  Since

decision-making is integral to the conventional *Bildungsroman*'s developmental model,

this "more" often manifests itself as a choice that the protagonist makes after interior

deliberation: as David's decision to quit his position as a proctor and become a

professional writer, for example, or as Jane's abrupt departure from Lowood school in

search of "a new servitude" (72).  Such choices indicate that the protagonist has taken on

a new way of thinking or behaving; she needs new experiences, just as the novel of her

life necessitates new turns of its plot.  In addition, the retrospective narration in which

these choices are narrated heightens the novels' depth-effect, figuring the protagonists'

represented thought as a layering of complexly interacting temporal dimensions. Indeed, first-person narration is an ideal mode in which to figure depth, since it captures both an adult and a childhood consciousness through a single narrating voice: both David and Jane's narratives appear to be infused with the wisdom of maturity looking back on youth.

But acknowledging that development involves a deepening of character brings us face to face with a contradiction within the schema of maturation that we find across many nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane*. For, according to the novel's alignment of development and acculturation, protagonists must also learn to give up those particular characteristics or proclivities that made them such fascinatingly deep characters in the first place. Franco Moretti addresses this paradox, arguing that the *Bildungsroman* seeks to reconcile the two opposing concepts of "self-determination" (or "individuality") and "socialization": "How," he asks, "can the tendency towards individuality, which is the necessary fruit of a culture of self-determination, be made to coexist with the opposing tendency to normality, the offspring, equally inevitable, of the mechanism of socialization?" (15-16). Similarly, Gillian Beer writes that the *Bildungsroman* "emphasises the full entry of individuality into social bonds—there is a sense always of reduction and appeasement in its conclusion" (*Darwin's Plots*, 102). A protagonist, in other words, cannot act out her every inner desire at the same time that she settles down to become a responsible citizen.[24] For all of its implied appeal, the actual state of "development" is less interesting than the process of acquiring it, as the relative brevity of *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*'s final chapters demonstrates.[25]

I contend that a narrative structure of sacrifice underpins the systems of acculturation long associated with the ideology of the *Bildungsroman*. Both *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre*, as I have noted, figure development as a process by which individualizing characteristics—such as Jane's quick temper and David's weakness for irresponsible women—become corrected or subdued through an experience of loss that is formally organized around the removal of minor characters from the storyline. The impression of psychological depth that David's and Jane's narratives align with moral progress actually relies on a curiously violent aesthetic principle. In these two *Bildungsromane*, development's project of "deepening" the protagonist, of her apprenticeship to life and projected fulfillment, figures as a kind of stripping away at the level of narrative form. The kind of *Bildung* depicted in *Copperfield* and *Eyre* therefore conflicts with the notion (widespread to this day) that development is an adding onto, or a deepening, of a germ that already exits. Character turns out to have been less "deep" than it makes itself out to be; what we call "depth"—the perceived "fullness" and articulate introspection of a character's psychological life—requires an isolation of character, an anti-sociability, that the densely populated Victorian novel hardly seems fit to endorse. By figuring the developing protagonists as socially poisonous (those who get too close to David or Jane often end up dead), these novels challenge stereotypes about the Victorians, who are often assumed to revere social interaction as a hallmark of moral character. Developmental education in *Copperfield* and *Eyre* comes instead to seem like the *survival* of the protagonist's character over other characters: if nothing else, the protagonist develops because she makes it through to the end of her own story.

Two critics in particular—Alex Woloch and René Girard—prove especially instructive participants in this chapter's discussion, since each critic's work offers clues about how represented deaths might influence the structural operations of narrative. In his analysis of the minor characters who provide the protagonist with social relationships, Woloch notes the way in which what I am calling "sacrificed characters" can take an emotional hold on the reader:

> The strange significance of minor characters…resides largely in the way that the character *disappears*, and in the tension or relief that results from this *vanishing*…We feel interest and outrage, painful concern or amused consent at what happens to minor characters: not simply their fate within the story (whether they marry *or die*, make their fortune or lose it, find a home or *become exiled*) but also in the narrative discourse itself (*how they are finally overshadowed or absorbed into someone else's story, swallowed within or expelled from another person's plot* (38, emphasis mine).

Though Woloch does not dilate specifically here on the phenomenon with which this chapter is concerned—that is, the represented deaths of so many characters in the *Bildungsroman*—the quotation cannot but reveal it. For to refer to a character's "fate" in a nineteenth-century novel is often the same thing as referring to his death. As Woloch points out, this "disappearance" happens on both the story and discourse levels of the novel, as death or an exile that is actually narrated, or as a gradual flattening of or decreased attention to a given character. Such flattening is easily discernable in *David Copperfield*'s major antagonist: Uriah Heep, in Woloch's estimation, offers no match for David's depth when it comes to character construction. Constantly harping on his "umbleness" throughout the novel, and constantly manifesting the same repulsive physical tics, Heep is "always already flat, eccentric, exaggerated, a parody of himself" (146). The same, I would add, goes for *Jane Eyre*'s Blanche Ingram, who appears a

veritable caricature of tediousness when dissected as she is within Jane's discerning

consciousness: "She was not good; she was not original: she used to repeat sounding

phrases from books: she never offered, nor had, an opinion of her own" (Brontë, 158).

For examples of "exiled" characters, we only need look as far as *Copperfield*'s Mr.

Micawber, who is always disappearing to various corners of England (and finally,

Australia), or to Miss Temple, a schoolteacher whose marriage in *Jane Eyre* efficiently

writes her out of the protagonist's story at the same time that it offers Jane an impetus to

leave her position at Lowood.  So while I will concentrate in this chapter on characters

who die (and on the circumstances surrounding those deaths), death is only the most

conspicuous way in which characters disappear from the development novel: it is the

supreme sacrifice.

In *Violence and the Sacred* and later in *The Scapegoat*, René Girard treats

sacrifice as one of the underlying principles of what he calls "human culture" (*Violence,*

10).  According to Girard, human "societies" commit a ritualized form of sacrificial

violence on a scapegoat figure in order to keep violence from spreading throughout the

entire community: "Society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a

'sacrificeable' victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members,

the people it most desires to protect" (*Violenc*e, 4).[26]  Because Girard's work on sacrifice

is more totalizing than the work of a contemporary literary critic like Woloch's, it is easy

to find fault with its sweeping generalizations.  But it is also easy to discern how *David*

*Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre* have strong affinities with the sacrificial paradigm Girard

describes: the killing-off of characters in both novels works in particular to ensure that

the central narrative of the developing protagonist appears to progress "harmoniously," at all costs.

The traditional development novel may sacrifice any of those auxiliary characters who threaten to harm the single, central character whose life story it treats as its "sacred" project. Such threatening, of course, occurs in the novel on a figurative plane; if Helen Burns threatens Jane Eyre's development, for example, it is not because she wants to do the protagonist physical harm. Rather, as Susan Derwin has noted, Jane's narrative must see Helen dead because the "alternative" life that Helen represents would effectively defeat the "imaginary autonomy" that Jane chronicles in her narrative (108).[27] According to this logic, almost any character could potentially be offered up for sacrifice. Indeed, the assortment of disparate characteristics (in terms of gender, race, age, or social standing) among *Copperfield* and *Eyre*'s sacrificial victims seems to imply that the greatest point of similarity between all of these characters is a negative one: the only thing they have in common is that they are *not* the protagonist. But in the *Bildungsroman*—when the protagonist's development is the focal point of the text—this negative distinction becomes more powerful than it might initially seem. For if the protagonist spends too much time lingering around any other character (in Woloch's terms, if a minor character takes up increasing "space" in the protagonist's story), then the mere presence of that other character could potentially blur the boundaries between "major" and "minor" characters upon which the development novel ostensibly relies. With its insistence that the "sacrificial crisis" occurs when distinctions cease to exist, Girard's theory speaks to this dynamic as well. "The cultural order," Girard writes, "is nothing more than a regulated system of distinctions in which the differences among

individuals are used to establish their 'identity' and their mutual relationships" (*Violence*, 49). And it is precisely in moments that the protagonist's "identity" comes into question (when David becomes unhappy as Dora's husband, for example, or when Jane weighs the pros and cons of becoming a missionary in India) that the protagonist's story tends to sacrifice characters.[28]

The various techniques of sacrifice I describe throughout this chapter build upon Girard's theories by illustrating how the *Bildungsroman* converts the social phenomenon of ritual sacrifice into both an internal (psychological) and a formal (narrative) process. In the novel, what needs protection via scapegoating is not the "social order," but, rather, the developing character of a single protagonist. And what Girard sees as a basic method of social maintenance—the purging of a violent element within society—in fact resembles the way in which individual members of the Victorian novel's exhaustively represented societies think about eradicating those elements of their own character that threaten to harm them from within. If characters must die in *Bildungsromane*, their deaths serve to simplify a life story whose potential to veer off in many different directions or to fall into premature decline becomes narratively unmanageable.

Another crucial divergence between Girard's concept of sacrifice and the *Bildungsroman*'s sacrifice of character is the novel's intermittent repression of its violent structure of characterization. Unlike many of the scapegoat-figures whom Girard discusses, the victims of sacrifice in nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* must not be labeled as such in order that "development" remain free of destructive connotations. *Copperfield* and *Eyre* thus attempt in numerous ways to keep the practice of sacrifice hidden from the reader, who is encouraged to see represented deaths less as instances of

scapegoating than as inevitable losses inherent to the developmental process.  Whether by

allowing death less space in the narrative discourse or by quickly employing instances of

death to highlight the enrichment of the protagonist who survives it, the *Bildungsroman*

continually conceals the sacrifices that hold it together.

Moreover, the protagonist's first-person narration both reinforces her survival and

legitimates it as a sign of development.[29] To narrate one's own story—as Jane and David

magisterially do—is to structure a narrative world according to one's own system of values

(and, therefore, be able to define "development" as "what I am telling you that I did").  As

we will see, self-narration allows Brontë's and Dickens's protagonists to position themselves

not as agents of sacrificial violence against other characters, but as zealous proponents of

self-sacrifice in their own right.  It is hardly coincidental that these two novels do not employ

the third-person narrative structure so popular in nineteenth-century fiction.  For, as I will

argue in Chapter 4, third-person narratives often highlight the tension that arises from an

outside adjudicator passing judgment on the characters he depicts.  Instead, as Audrey Jaffe

has noted, *Copperfield*'s first-person narration (and the childhood consciousness it conjures)

allows its practitioner to sidestep any responsibility for the  narrated events: "Identification

with the younger self is more than an attempt to create an effect of verisimilitude…rather,

such identification defines the narrator as unable to articulate the implications of what he

sees" (125).[30]  Though Jaffe does not specifically refer to *Copperfield*'s convenient

character-sacrifices in her analysis, her insight into the evasion of accountability fostered by

first-person narration can help us understand how David downplays the casualties of his

development narrative.  In what follows, I will both examine how Dickens's and Brontë's

novels construct narratives of moral development through the killing-off of multiple

characters and illustrate the formal strategies that the novels employ in their attempt to draw

the reader's attention away from the sacrificial character of these killings.

**Orphanhood: Development and Parents, Lost and Found**

David Copperfield and Jane Eyre are two of the Victorian period's most

memorable orphan protagonists, forming part of an illustrious novelistic family that

includes Dickens's Pip and Oliver Twist, Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe, Thackeray's

Becky Sharpe, Hardy's Jude Fawley, and Kipling's Kim.[31]  The pervasiveness of the

orphan's presence in the Victorian novel can be explained in any number of ways—as a

vehicle for social reform, for instance, that could benefit the thousands of actual English

orphans who were living and dying under deplorable conditions, or as the fictional

incarnation of the modern individual about whom political theorists like J.S. Mill and

Matthew Arnold were theorizing in roughly the same period.[32]

In terms of narrative structure, it is easy to discern the formal possibilities that

orphanhood offers to writers and readers of narrative fiction.  For to center a narrative

around an orphan child is inevitably to pose a question that will move the story forward:

what will become of this child?  Deprived of parents—of those characters who ostensibly

desire to look after their child's development—the orphan must take an agentic stance

toward her own life at an unusually young age.  Rather than inheriting a fortune or a post,

she must decide where she wants to go and whom she wants to become; such decisions in

turn promise that the narrative itself will be out of the ordinary, as it portrays the

unfolding of a life from a disenfranchised point-of-view.  Without familiar origins to

return to, the orphan seems, as Nina Auerbach has argued, to be a materialization of

"pure selfhood" unleashed (404). In first-person character development novels like *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, the orphan protagonist's agency appears not only through her represented actions, but in the very mode of representation itself, since the novel's formal organization relies upon the idea that the narrator has chosen to tell her life story in the first place. And while it is true that many nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* do not contain orphans, a great number of them depict an act of symbolic orphaning, as the protagonist breaks away from her family or the ideals it represents.[33] The prerequisite for centrality in a *Bildungsroman*, therefore, is usually some form of orphanhood, with actual orphans like David and Jane serving as especially efficient manifestations of a broader trend of characterization within the genre.

If orphanhood allows the developing protagonist to move forward, it does so by defining her through what I am arguing are two of development's preconditions: loss and survival. An orphan attains her orphan status precisely by what it is she has lost—she is, in fact, a walking, talking *symbol* of loss—and her characterization throughout the novel must therefore reflect her survival of the family who died before her narrative ever takes off.[34] Baruch Hochman and Ilja Wachs have argued that Charles Dickens's cultivation of what they call "the orphan imagination"—that is, the sense of loss that prompts the orphan to both seek out love and to harbor vengeful feelings of abandonment—is one reason that Dickens's novels continue to enjoy a broad readership. "Loss," they write, "is a primary condition of human life; orphanhood is the ultimate reach of our ineluctable sense of loss" (14). Dickens, then, is able to exercise such a powerful hold on his readers by depicting "the human condition" and "the orphan condition" as one and the same (12).[35]

This novelistic cultivation of a universal sense of loss in both characters and reading subjects, I would add, goes hand-in-hand with what might seem to be its opposite: the representation of successful character development, which is as good an answer as the nineteenth-century novel has to questions about what human growth actually looks like. Moving now to Dickens's text, we can see how even the opening pages of *David Copperfield* set up a reciprocal relationship between development and loss. The novel's first lines, in which David famously writes that "whether or not I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (4), let the reader know that this will be a narrative of development. For the mystery of whether or not the protagonist will turn out to be the hero of his own life (not really a mystery at all, since David's first-person narration effectively positions him as the hero), relies for its fulfillment in the narrative of the *Bildungsroman*. David begins, as predictably he might, with his birth, likening the beginning of his development narrative to the beginning of time ("the clock began to strike, and I began to cry" [3]). But this beginning of beginnings is almost instantly met with David's meditation on the loss of his caul, which is sold at auction for five shillings. "I remember," David writes," to have felt quite uncomfortable and confused, at a part of myself being disposed of in that way" (4). At the same time that the protagonist comes into being, then, the novel dramatizes David's sacrifice of a part of his physical body that nourished him before he was born. In fact, if we are to go by David's own words, then his confusion and discomfort at this loss constitute his earliest memory; the previous sentence marks the first time in the text that David actually says that he "remembers."[36]

The loss of the caul quickly segues into another loss, this time figured through the

death of an actual character: David's father and namesake. Here, the protagonist-narrator

tidily packages the narrative of his father's death—the first blow towards his orphanhood—

in the space of the following single paragraph in the novel's opening chapter:

> I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk, or 'thereby,' as they say in
> Scotland. I was a posthumous child. My father's eyes had closed
> upon the light of this world six months, when mine opened on it.
> There is something strange to me, even now, in the reflection that
> he never saw me; and something stranger yet in the shadowy
> remembrance that I have of my first childish associations with his
> white grave-stone in the churchyard, and of the indefinable
> compassion I used to feel for it lying out alone there in the dark
> night, when our little parlour was warm and bright with fire and
> candle, and the doors of our house were - almost cruelly, it seemed
> to me sometimes - bolted and locked against it (4).

That David Copperfield, Elder, should die before his son is ever born allows David-the-

protagonist/narrator a good deal of liberty in his own characterization of this death; since

he never knew his father, it becomes easier for him to fantasize about who he was and,

more importantly, how he becomes meaningful within the autobiographical framework

that David the Younger is building. Accordingly, this paragraph does not use David the

Elder's death to acquaint us with the man who died, but rather with the man who

survived him. David the Younger always remains the narrative's focal point: he

concentrates less on the fact that he never knew his father than he does on the "reflection

that he never saw me." Similarly, adult-David's reflective narration (heavily signaled

here by references to "reflection," "remembrance," and "even now") allows him to

manipulate the death in order to characterize his boyhood self in a favorable light, using

his bereavement to signal the "indefinable compassion" of which he is capable. It is as if

the conspicuous lack of David the Elder's character within his son's narrative actually

provides David the Younger with more room to evoke the intricacies of his own inner depth.

It also becomes easier for readers to forget this death—or at least to forgive David's hurried treatment of it—since we, like David, never "got to know" the dead character in question. Although David refers to his father as "he without whom I had never been" (13), the protagonist of this development narrative *must* in fact be without his father so that he has an excuse to leave the comfort of the warm, bright little parlor in which this paragraph sees him ensconced. Even David's writing style seems to acknowledge this trade-off; the parallel structure of the sentence "My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months, when mine opened on it" presents the father's death and the son's birth as a causal chain in which one pair of eyes must close before another opens. But if David's narration explains away David the Elder's death at many levels, the figurative violence behind this remembrance remains. The protagonist's treatment of his father's death thus provides us with a characteristic example of the way in which development novels both rationalize and apologize for the sacrifice of character. Within a single paragraph, David takes advantage of his father's loss as a springboard for self-characterization at the same time that his guilt over that loss (and its hasty depiction) emerges. David, we learn, is constantly reminded that his father is dead, since the gravestone in the churchyard is located right outside his window; just as loss is never far from his mind, loss's physical memorial forms part of David's daily life at Blunderstone. David's response to the gravestone is telling: he anthropomorphizes it to make it more like the human being who is buried under it, and, as we have seen, he proceeds to feel "cruelly" that he has shut it out from the scene of domestic bliss going on indoors.

49

As arresting as it is, this suffering is only momentary in Dickens's text; David

quickly gets on with his life and its narrative, and the novel leaves behind its first

sacrifice in order to introduce more characters whom the protagonist will love and lose on

the way to his happy ending. Indeed, the speed with which both Dickens's and Brontë's

protagonists move forward after each narrated death reflects Girard's ideas about what

scapegoating is meant to accomplish. "The process of finding a surrogate victim," Girard

writes, "constitutes a major means, perhaps the sole means, by which men expel from

their consciousness the truth about their violent nature—that knowledge of past violence

which, if not shifted to a single 'guilty' figure, would poison both the present and the

future" (83).[37] Though David does not render his father a "guilty figure," he obliquely

yokes the guilt of his narrative's own violence to a death that bears directly on the

"present and the future" of his development story. By rapidly passing by this death—by

fixing it as an event in his narrative past—he also glosses over its implication in the

sacrificial structure that struggles to keep the protagonist on a steady course. To focus for

too long on any one death would be counterproductive to the development process

whereby central characters must conspicuously survive in the apparently fatality-ridden

narrative worlds they inhabit. In narratological terms, Copperfield devotes little

*discourse time* to his father's narrated death. A term first proposed by Seymour

Chatman, "discourse time" indicates "the time it takes to peruse the discourse," as

opposed to the time the events supposedly take in the story (62). So while David's

bereavement experience might have lasted a long time in the diegetic world, it only lasts

a few pages in the novel. Spending little discourse time on characters who die proves one

of the *Bildungsroman*'s most effective strategies for diverting readerly attention away

from narrative sacrifices and toward the protagonist's manner of processing death and using it as a springboard for narrative progression.[38]

That David's mother—Clara Copperfield-Murdstone—dies on David's birthday further cements the novel's correlation between the elimination of secondary characters and the advancement of David's life, narrative, and maturity. Like Dora after her, David's mother predicts her own death: "I never shall see my pretty darling again. Something tells me so, that tells the truth, I know" (125). Clara's acceptance of her own death before it even occurs allows *Copperfield*'s disposal of the narrator's first protector to seem natural rather than formally conducive. David's infant brother can of course live only a few days longer; were he to remain alive, the protagonist would have a reason to remain anchored to his childhood home. The more characters that survive the narrative, the more the narrator must take on the various responsibilities he owes them at the cost of his own independence and mobility. And not only does this double-death prompt David's move to London, but it offers him yet another occasion to use his loss as fodder for his own development narrative. "The mother who lay in the grave," he remarks, "was the mother of my infancy; the little creature in her arms, was myself, as I had once been, hushed forever on her bosom" (126). Here, the narrator clearly equates the sacrifice of Mrs. Copperfield and her second son with the passage of an innocent stage in his life: David loses his childhood guilelessness by virtue of these two deaths. Measuring out stages of growth through the mechanism of character sacrifice allows the *Bildungsroman* to further underscore the protagonist's development through the loss of both formal characters (Clara and the baby) and moral characteristics (innocence). But what is most shocking about the previous passage is how David, through this explanation of what these

51

deaths mean for him, effaces his baby brother's identity altogether.  For the "creature" in his mother's arms is neither a "creature" nor "himself," but a represented human being who has died without ever being named.

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

Charlotte Brontë takes even less discourse time than Dickens to send her orphan protagonists' parents offstage.  Unlike *Copperfield*, in which the title character uses his father's death to illuminate his own depth, Brontë's two most influential works come as close as they can to doing away with birth parents altogether.  We may get halfway through *Villette* without even registering that Lucy Snowe never mentions her parents at all, and Jane Eyre sums up the circumstances of her parents' death in a single-sentence paragraph whose brevity under the circumstances provides an interesting counterpoint to the earlier paragraph from *Copperfield*:

> On that same occasion I learned, for the first time, from Miss
> Abbot's communications to Bessie, that my father had been a poor
> clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of
> her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my
> grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her
> off without a shilling; that after my mother and father had been
> married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever while visiting
> among the poor of a large manufacturing town where his curacy
> was situated, and where that disease was then prevalent; that my
> mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month
> of each other (21).

In contrast to the lengthy sections of dialogue that surround it, the previous account appears in indirect discourse, a mode of narration that lends itself well to economical summary.  The multiple clauses of the long sentence build up like a laundry list, as Jane ticks off the major events leading up to her orphanhood in a markedly unaffected tone.  Rather than present what is apparently a notable revelation through

direct dialogue—in which the reader could gauge Jane's reactions in her own childhood idiom, and in which Jane herself could pose questions to Bessie about the circumstances of her orphanhood—Jane-the-narrator provides us with a bare minimum of factual detail (neither of her parents is given a proper name; both are knocked out in a single blow by the same infectious disease). Moreover, that Jane should hear the story of her parents' deaths third-hand (through what Miss Abbot has told Bessie) provides her with an excuse to say as little about those deaths as possible: she can only know herself what Bessie has told her.

Though we might expect the pious Jane to find comfort in the fact that her father was a religious man who died helping the poor, or that her mother chose love over money, we are forced to either fill in these blanks for ourselves or to acknowledge that, for Jane, this particular moment of summary is less important than the circumstances that surround it. For the "occasion" to which Jane refers is a visit from Mr. Lloyd, the apothecary who suggests that she leave Gateshead and go to school, a move that Jane weightily foresees as "an entrance into a new life" (20). Placed as it is within the context of Jane's movement forward, the truncated narrative of her parents' death must not take up the amount of discourse time it seems to deserve. Bessie's disclosure (and the character sacrifice it enacts) therefore signals that the protagonist is definitively unencumbered by ties to her past. Jane is a sole survivor, whose lonely position actually makes possible the education she will receive at Lowood school.

Perhaps even more than *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre* is a novel of ostentatiously marked stages, as its movement from place to place (from Gateshead to Lowood, from Lowood to Thornfield, from Thornfield to Marsh End, and from Marsh End to Ferndean)

53

signals each step towards its culmination, at which Jane is self-consciously developed enough to narrate her own life.  But at the same time that Jane grows, both in age and in the "depth" of character that her narrative represents, these discrete stages necessitate that she leave other characters behind.  Brontë's narrative thus illustrates a process of development whereby Jane must lose in order to gain: it is not simply the addition of relationships to Jane's interpersonal repertoire that marks her development, but rather, her ultimate willingness to let those relationships go.  We need look no further than Jane herself to register the calculated risk behind these leave-takings; as she embarks on her journey toward Lowood, she remarks that "[t]hus was I severed from Bessie and Gateshead: thus whirled away to unknown, and, as I then deemed, remote and mysterious regions" (35).  Here, Jane cloaks her solitariness in an almost mythical quality, casting herself as the passive object of a providential "severance." However at the same time, the parting from Gateshead—a parting that Jane desires, since it helps her escape from the detestable Reeds—figures the protagonist as an unusually intrepid explorer.  (She is, after all, only ten years old).  As we have seen in *David Copperfield*, the manifold losses that Jane sustains allow her to showcase a remarkable strength of character.

It is fitting that Lowood—an asylum for orphan children—should be where Jane meets the novel's two most prominent mother-figures: the young teacher, Miss Temple, and the consumptive fourteen-year-old, Helen Burns.  Jane's orphanhood actually allows her to act out the fantasy of *choosing* her own parents, of actively constructing her own family.[39]  Between the two mother-figures, Miss Temple is a far more predictable choice, and Jane remarks as much when she reflects that her teacher "had stood me in the stead of mother, governess, and, latterly, companion" (71).  Brontë's portrait of Miss

Temple clearly positions her as the school's most compassionate employee, as one who nurtures her pupils with nighttime chats and contraband seedcake. Helen Burns, however, is another matter: that a fourteen-year-old girl should serve as a mother-figure at all is unusual, but Helen seems ready-made for the job, armed as she is with a sizable arsenal of homilies and common-sense for Jane to soak up. She is, as many modern readers have noted, a profoundly unrealistic character—more adult-like than most adults, and content to suffer abuse and illness in silence. The most ostentatiously didactic of Helen's lessons is what Jane calls her "doctrine of endurance": "It is far better," Helen reflects, "to endure patiently a smart which nobody feels but yourself, than to commit a hasty action whose evil consequences will extend to all connected with you; and besides, the Bible bids us return good for evil" (47). Rather than railing against "Brocklehurst, Reed & Co.," in other words, Helen urges Jane to take Christ as an example and to let go of her bitter impulses.

That Jane has internalized Helen's lesson becomes evident when Miss Temple asks her to "defend" herself against Brocklehurst's claim that she is a liar and ungrateful to her benefactress, Mrs. Reed:

> I resolved, in the depth of my heart, that I would be most moderate--
> most correct; and, having reflected a few minutes in order to arrange
> coherently what I had to say, I told her all the story of my sad
> childhood. Exhausted by emotion, my language was more subdued
> than it generally was when it developed that sad theme; and mindful
> of Helen's warnings against the indulgence of resentment, I infused
> into the narrative far less of gall and wormwood than ordinary. Thus
> restrained and simplified, it sounded more credible: I felt as I went
> on that Miss Temple fully believed me (60).

Here, Jane exploits Helen's "warnings" in order to depict her own growth. Notice how the protagonist's successful self-defense requires that she reach into the "depth" of her

heart: the doctrine of endurance becomes productive of a more introspective life for she who submits to it.  And the lesson Helen teaches Jane is not only about Christian endurance, but about narrative itself, since Jane's story is "developed" in concert with the character who tells it.  The passage—Jane's story of her own growing ability to tell "credible" stories that are "coherently arranged"—provides a concise example of the development novel's structural linkage between depth, development, and narrative: through self-narration, Jane becomes a deeper character.[40]

Yet while granting that Jane's adherence to the doctrine of endurance contributes to her developing depth, we must also pay attention to the particular shape that this depth takes.  Jane's credibility here rests, specifically, on techniques of limitation and self-editing—on "moderation," "simplification," and "restraint."  She must not, in other words, rely on the barrage of insults that she previously heaped on Mrs. Reed back at Gateshead; the novel requires that she sacrifice those elements of her personality which threaten to derail her journey from the character of impulsive child to that of circumspect wife and mother.  In an illustration of one of the *Bildungsroman*'s many contradictions, then, Jane's character is said to grow deeper through the renunciation of those characteristics that make her such a fascinating heroine (and hers such a singular novel) in the first place.  For it is hardly a controversial move among Brontë's contemporary readers to claim that Jane's amply justified displays of "gall and wormwood" toward the Reeds and Mr. Brocklehurst are the stuff of both pleasurable reading and skillful characterization.  How many of us have smiled in the name of just retribution when, after Mrs. Reed tells Brocklehurst of Jane's "bad character," the protagonist threatens her aunt with a counter-narrative of her own: "'If any one asks me how I liked you, and how you

treated me, I will say the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty'" (30)?[41] Though Jane, of course, never fully shakes off her passionate tendencies—by her own admission, she is "no Helen Burns" (55), and we probably wouldn't relish a novel about her if she were—her story is one of characterological restraint, of the continual wearing-down of her character.[42] By submitting herself to Helen's mandate, Jane's moral character becomes increasingly codified and predictable: she will not fly off the handle into an indulgent story of the abuses she suffered; she will instead present a watered-down version of the novel's opening chapter so as to appear "believable." And through the act of holding back her bitterness, the formal properties that comprise the presentation of Jane's moral character begin to change as well, as the novel's numerous passages of interior reflection illustrate her increasing ethic of moderation through correspondingly moderate nuggets of indirect discourse like the one quoted above.

The sacrifice of Helen Burns's character—in one of the most memorable death scenes in Victorian literature—follows close on the heels of this incident. After Jane crawls into bed with an ailing Helen, the latter dies a martyr's death of consumption and the former emerges uninfected. This death exemplifies character sacrifice at its most transparent, as Helen's life itself is turned into a lesson for Jane, whose "mind made its first effort to comprehend what had been infused into it concerning heaven and hell" (67). It is as if Helen has only existed to tutor Jane, and her death marks the point at which she has no further information to convey. The convenience of this premature death for the sake of Jane's narrative is clear: it allows Jane to appreciate mortality at the same time it guarantees that the depiction of Helen will not encroach upon the central story of Jane's

development. (After Helen's death, Jane only mentions her school friend once more, when she visits another dying character: Mrs. Reed). Just as Jane must take in Helen's lessons in order to augment her deepening character, so too must she leave Helen behind without seeming to do so. And, always ready to help when she can, Helen herself seems to sanction her own death from the very moment she and Jane meet, since she continually expresses not just an acceptance of death, but a desire for it to happen as soon as possible. "By dying young," Helen assures Jane, "I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world; I should have been continually at fault" (69). Through assurances like this, in which Helen acts joyful at the prospect of finally meeting her "mighty, universal Parent" (69), *Jane Eyre* shifts attention away from what amounts to a clearly functional death. It becomes simpler for both Jane and her readers to swallow this character sacrifice when the sacrificed character herself provides eloquent arguments in favor of our doing just that.

Though Miss Temple does not die in Jane's narrative, her departure from Lowood eight years later provides Jane with all the impetus she needs to become "restless" with her own position as a schoolteacher in the span of one day. Moreover, the loss of Miss Temple gives the protagonist an occasion to ruminate upon the "transforming process" she has undergone:

> From the day she left I was no longer the same: with her was gone
> every settled feeling, every association that had made Lowood in
> some degree a home to me. I had imbibed from her something of
> her nature and much of her habits: more harmonious
> thoughts: what seemed better regulated feelings had become the
> inmates of my mind. I had given in allegiance to duty and order; I
> was quiet; I believed I was content: to the eyes of others, usually
> even to my own, I appeared a disciplined and subdued character
> (71).

Here, Jane's internal self-assessment resembles the instance years before when she

managed to tell her Gateshead stories in a "restrained" manner to Helen and Miss

Temple. Again, Jane remarks that she has become more "disciplined and subdued" at the

same time that this avowal permits her to reference the inner recesses of her mind. That

Jane should "imbibe" Miss Temple's "nature" conjures up an image of physical and

mental expansion: where David's narrative used his mother's death to carry off his

innocent characteristics, Brontë's protagonist identifies with and introjects useful

elements of her mother-figure's character.[43] *Jane Eyre* is full of such moments, in which

the protagonist asks us to see how she has grown. The imminent death of Mrs. Reed later

on in the novel, for instance, prompts Jane to remark that "I experienced firmer trust in

myself and my own powers, and less withering dread of oppression" (194). But most

importantly, this transformative moment occurs as a direct result of Miss Temple's

disappearance from the development narrative. The endpoint of the "second" stage of

*Jane Eyre*—after which two figurative parents are sacrificed to Jane's narrative—thus

ensures that Jane is on her own again. Indeed, many of the deaths (or, in this case,

disappearances) in both Brontë's and Dickens's novels stimulate development by

returning their protagonists to a state of orphanhood.


**Character Sacrifice and Romantic Coupling**

Shortly after Jane alights at Thornfield, she asks Mrs. Fairfax in vain to describe

Mr. Rochester: "What, in short, is his character?". When the housekeeper replies that "it

is not easy to describe," Jane testily informs her reader that "there are people who seem

to have no notion of sketching a character" (89). Such exchanges, in which the

communication of character through verbal description is figured as a personal aptitude, occur habitually throughout nineteenth-century novels. And since so much of character development in the *Bildungsroman* involves the protagonist's interaction with many other characters, the increasing ability to quickly and correctly "assess" those characters in moral terms—to be a "good judge of character"— comes to signal one's own development. That Jane and David should be both the protagonists and the narrators of their own stories accentuates this imperative even further, as deft characterization (that is, the linguistic depiction of a memorable character, of what Jane cannily calls "a more definite notion of [his] identity" [89]) is a skill many of us expect from nineteenth-century narrators. But there is, of course, a difference between Jane and David's experience and its retelling in the form of the novel: namely, that the protagonists-as-narrators "know" much more about their fellow characters than they ostensibly did during many of the incidents their narration depicts. A retrospective narrative usually shows these two levels of represented consciousness working in tandem in various ways, as, for instance, when *Copperfield* couples David's initial torrent of admiration for Steerforth in their school-days with the narrator's ominous present-tense statement that "I look back on these trifles, now, with an aching heart" (89). The reason David's heart aches, of course, is that the Steerforth whose character the protagonist esteems in childhood turns out to be unworthy of such affection.

Both David and Jane fall in love with people whom they initially misjudge, the former with the beautiful but impractically childlike Dora Spenlow, and the latter with the charming but untrustworthy Edward Rochester. As readers of Jane's and David's retrospective narratives, we know long before the protagonists do that something is amiss

in these relationships: David makes sure that Dora's happy ignorance of adult responsibilities is less charming to us than it originally seems to him, while the fires, bloodshed, and mysterious laughter at Thornfield provide ample warning to *Jane Eyre*'s readers that Rochester has a guilty secret. In fact, we can assume that David's first marriage and Jane's first marriage attempt will prove disastrous if only because these events occur midway through narratives that they ought, according to the logic of the mid-Victorian novel, happily to end.

I am concerned less with the fact of Jane's and David's misreading of their love-interests, however, than with the means by which Brontë's and Dickens's narratives free the two protagonists from the potentially depressing consequences of this misreading. Dora dies from a vaguely defined illness just as her childishness is becoming unbearable for David; Bertha Mason—the human hindrance to Jane's legal marriage to Rochester—notoriously commits suicide by throwing herself off the roof of Thornfield Hall. While these deaths are discursively different in many ways (there are hardly two characters *less* similar than the babyish, frail Dora and the furious, vengeful Bertha), reading them side-by-side highlights a significant formal parallel between Brontë's and Dickens's novels. Dora and Bertha, that is, are sacrificed to the development of the protagonist and to the eventual marriage that rewards it—in *Jane Eyre*'s case, to a newly widowed Rochester, and in *Copperfield*'s, to the doggedly devoted Agnes Wickfield. And not only do the sacrifices of Dora and Bertha land David and Jane in happy marriages, but they also provide the protagonists with the experiential materials with which to become better judges of character than they were the first time around: the loss of a love interest allows the protagonists' resultant development to make itself conspicuous.

I will not spend a lot of time discussing the death of Bertha Mason, since it has

already been rigorously analyzed in influential works of feminist and postcolonial literary

criticism, many of which specifically refer to Bertha's suicide as a "sacrifice" of various

kinds. Perhaps the most well-known of these accounts is Gayatri Spivak's examination

of Bertha as the colonial "Other," the "woman from the colonies [who is] sacrificed like

an insane animal for her sister's consolation" (251). In Spivak's view, Jane cannot be a

true individual without killing off Bertha—the specter of imperialism that nonetheless

forms part of the protagonist's ostensibly coherent self. Many more feminist critics,

including Mary Poovey, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Nancy Armstrong, and Elaine

Showalter, see Bertha as a species of "double" for the protagonist who expresses the

violent sexual emotions that Jane, as a proper Victorian governess, must keep constantly

at bay.[44] According to this logic, sacrificing the "monstrous" double at the end of

Brontë's narrative figuratively purges Jane of the elements of her personality that would

threaten her ultimate domestic acculturation. Finally, Jean Rhys famously wrote *Wide

Sargasso Sea* (1966) in part because she admired *Jane Eyre* but saw Bertha Mason as a

sort of "'paper tiger' lunatic" whose perspective Brontë's novel utterly denied (Rhys,

139). Such work has valuably pointed out the manifold social inequalities that the

Victorian novel takes pains to naturalize, and the purpose of this chapter is hardly to

disagree with it or to ignore its eminence within the study of the novel. What I will add to

these convincing arguments, however, is my own sense of surprise—not that so many

critics have remarked upon the severity of what happens to Bertha Mason, but, rather,

that the analysis of *any* character's death as a functional strategy seems to begin and end

with Brontë's "madwoman." While it is certainly true that *Jane Eyre*'s quick disposal of

its protagonist's rival is a site at which many strands of Victorian ideology (domestic, imperial, feminist, psychological) unsettlingly converge, it is also true that Bertha's death is a particularly striking example of a much larger narrative trend in which, to borrow Woloch's terminology, the violent loss of many characters comes to assist the development of one.[45]

The death of *Copperfield*'s Dora Spenlow, for instance, is an equally compelling incarnation of this structural paradigm, yet few works in the vast annals of Dickens criticism examine it in detail.[46] David emphasizes from the beginning that his love for his boss's daughter is obsessive and instantaneous; after setting his eyes on Dora (who, it is worth noting, barely speaks at the time of this first meeting), the narrator gleefully admits that, "I was a captive and a slave. I loved Dora Spenlow to distraction!" (360). Love of Dora causes David to take several masochistic turns; he wears tighter boots and revels in his own loss of appetite: "I lived principally on Dora and coffee…it would have been an act of perfidy towards Dora to have a natural relish for my dinner" (379). The exaggerated humor of David's masochistic exercises contributes to our sense that the narrator is making light of his love at the same time that he assures us of its magnitude. Painfully obvious, too, is the comparison David draws between Dora and her earlier incarnation, the late Clara Copperfield-Murdstone; neither woman knows anything about housekeeping, and David relentlessly likens both to playthings, cute but ultimately disposable trifles that his narrative, in turn, will be able to fool around with and discard. (While Clara is a wax-doll, Dora totes around Jip, her own overdeterminedly juvenile appendage, in the literal form of a "toy" dog.) The narrator, in short, makes sure that the reader is able to identify David's "blissful delirium" (363) as a lapse in judgment on the

part of his younger self.  Again, the fictional autobiography's reflective narrative allows

its hero to enact a suspension of the knowledge that he must necessarily possess at the

time he is writing; while his feelings for Dora are unquestionably puerile, narrating-

David must tell this portion of his life story as if he doesn't realize the immaturity of his

attachment to a beautiful girl who will prove not to be his type.

David's and Dora's marriage itself hinges on the sacrifice of a character: it could

not take place without the swift death of Dora's father around one page after the latter

gentleman informs David that he opposes his daughter's engagement. Mr. Spenlow's

death, then, is a doubly effective tactic: it allows the protagonist to marry Dora with

impunity at the same time that it frees David from a job that hindered his novel writing.

David's dissolution of partnership with Spenlow establishes him as a free agent who now

relies principally on his narrative talent for survival.  Typically for Dickens's novel—in

which, as Alexander Welsh has noted, the deaths are narrated "so surely" that they hardly

register as deaths at all (148)—David spends very little discourse time mourning a death

that is so clearly advantageous to his purposes.   Rather, he casts this fatality as a possible

adversary: "in the innermost recesses of my heart, I had a lurking jealousy even of Death.

How I felt as if its might would push me from my ground in Dora's thoughts" (516).

David's purported jealousy of Death (here notably personified, as a character in itself)

deflects the narrative away from any suggestion that David and Death are actually on

good terms, since Death removed the obstacle of a disapproving father-in-law.

Once Dora and David are married, the protagonist begins to express a gloomy

emptiness where he thought Dora's presence would provide fulfillment: "the happiness I

had vaguely anticipated, once, was not the happiness I enjoyed, and there was always

64

something wanting" (646).  The marriage produces a generalized sense of lack in David's narrative because what he imagined about Dora's character—that she desired to assume the role of the dutiful housewife—turns out to have been inaccurate.  As Dora's distaste for household maintenance begins to irritate her new husband, David resolves to "form" Dora's mind—to make her, though readings of Shakespeare and lessons in domestic upkeep, develop into his proper, well-rounded counterpart.  However not only does David's attempt to develop his wife's character fail—"Dora's mind," he concludes, "was already formed" (645)—but the narrator also paints his fruitless effort at developmental tutelage in markedly violent language. At the mere mention of a cookbook, for example, David reflects that he "thought I had killed her" (503), and repeated attempts at prodding Dora into learning some element of housewivery prompt him to admit that "I had the conscience of an assassin, and was haunted by a vague sense of enormous wickedness" (592).  Trying to change Dora's character, then, turns out to be destroying it altogether: David's guilty language here prefigures the actual death that Dora will suffer in light of both his progress and the narrative progression that documents it.  As a last resort, the narrator chronicles a desperate misstep—the familiar eleventh-hour effort of the failing marriage.  He hopes, in other words, that "lighter hands than mine would help to mould her character, and that a baby-smile upon her breast might change my child-wife to a woman" (648).  But the couple loses their baby almost as soon as it is mentioned, with Dora and Jip following quick on its heels, and only David remains to make meaning out of this triple loss.

Learning and losing again prove complementary processes, as reflective narration allows David to turn tragic loss to the advantage of his character.  Dora and Jip both die

at the end of *Copperfield*'s third "Retrospect" chapter, and anyone who has read

Dickens's novel can attest to the slowed tempo that these chapters effect within David's

otherwise speedily paced narrative.  The narrator accomplishes this more lugubrious pace

most obviously through a shift in tense from past to present, a tonal movement that makes

it seem as if David is experiencing what he tells at the same time that he tells it.  The

slowing-down of the narrative additionally calls attention to this chapter as one

particularly laden with meaning; it encourages both David and his reader to dwell on the

events it depicts as important moments in the development narrative's formative process.

The events in question are three quasi-cinematic vignettes, each of which describes a

poignant stage in Dora's illness: here she sweetly arranges her hair on the pillow of her

sick bed, there she asks David if he is lonely without her to sit next to him while he

writes.  But what is most astounding about these ostentatiously weighty moments is the

way in which Dora's impending death allows her to assist in her husband's development

at the same time that she astutely lays bare the consequences of David's ultimate

happiness.  Here is an excerpt from Dora's final conversation with the protagonist:

> "I was very happy, very.  But as years went on, my dear boy would
> have wearied of his child-wife.  She would have been less and less a
> companion for him.  He would have been more and more sensible of
> what was wanting in his home.  She wouldn't have improved.  It is
> better as it is" (713).

In the context of the present-tense "Retrospect," David realizes that his wife "is

speaking of herself as past" (713); readers will note that she also uses the distancing idiom

of the third person to prematurely extract herself from a relationship she knows she will

soon be leaving.  Dora's easy acceptance of her fate recalls that of Helen Burns, whose

conviction that she was better off dead took some of the responsibility for Helen's sacrifice

away from Jane's development story.  But Dora—ostensibly more childish as a grown woman than Helen is at fourteen—infuses her desire for death with the mature knowledge of a woman who understands that her marriage is not working.  In an examination of the real and figurative "divorces" in *David Copperfield*, Kelly Hager thoughtfully interprets this passage as an instance in which Dora's desire for her own death is the closest she can come, in a Dickens novel, to "effect[ing] her own divorce."  "Embracing death," Hager writes, "allows [Dora] a way out of a marriage in which she is constantly made to feel like a failure" (1000).  Dora thus recoups some of the power she has lost through her marriage to David by forcing the responsibility for its breakdown (and, by extension, her death) back onto him; by articulating the necessity of her life's sacrifice for David's happiness, she proves not to be as foolish as her husband makes her out to be.[47]  Dora even brings Agnes to her sickbed during the last days of her illness, thus nudging David toward a second wife who will better suit his tastes. If David misjudges his first wife's character by marrying her and expecting her to become an obedient helpmeet, he also underestimates her own insight into this misjudgment.

While Dora's death sets David free, then, it also forces him to meditate on its consequences in the self-consciously significant form of the "Retrospect" chapter. It is clear from David's feeling that his "undisciplined heart is chastened heavily—heavily" that Dora's death teaches David about the folly of his first marriage (714).  What David could not say outright to his readers—that he wished he never married her—becomes possible for him to acknowledge once Dora so obligingly bows out of the narrative.  In the admission that he is chastened by Dora's lesson, David takes more responsibility than usual for the sacrifices his development incurs.  But, true to *Copperfield*'s furious push toward

"happiness," the protagonist's mourning period over Dora is very brief indeed.[48] The third "Retrospect" ends abruptly with David's insistence that "for a time, all things are blotted out of my remembrance" (714). Where we might expect David to spend at least several subsequent chapters dealing with his grief, he tells us at the beginning of the next chapter (titled "Mr. Micawber's Transactions," less than a page after Dora dies) that "this is not the time at which I am to enter on the state of my mind beneath its load of sorrow" (715).

Although the "Retrospect" seems like a shrine to David's deepest memories, Nicholas Dames argues that the way it deals with Dora's death actually enacts a *forgetting* that proves essential to the Victorian autobiographical novel's production of the protagonist as a "comprehensible" self. "The drama of remembrance that these texts enact," Dames writes, "is precisely *not* the drama of dispersed, diffuse, detail-rich memory. What these texts offer is the spectacle of a rigidly coherent memory that remembers only what it can *turn to account*" (127, emphasis in original). Accordingly, David does not wallow in the "Retrospect" so much as he uses it to concentrate on the elements of his past that will prove essential to his future: the lesson he learns by misjudging Dora and the benevolent presence of Agnes Wickfield, his "better angel." Based on Victorian theories of associative memory in which those traumatic events that threaten to sidetrack the "causal chain" of a narrative memory do not survive, Dames's model provides a useful corollary for thinking about the historical implications of the narrative strategy with which this chapter is concerned. By avoiding any substantive narration of a potentially traumatized reaction to Dora's sacrifice and instead focusing on what that death allows him to learn about himself, *Copperfield* figures David's loss as a developmental profit and David himself as a model of the coherent self that associative psychology sought to achieve.

Yet even as Dickens's novel uses Dora's death to render David's development as seamlessly as it can, the protagonist's quick extraction from a situation that threatens to bog his narrative down comes at the cost of a kind of negative potential that Copperfield does not allow us to explore. The sacrifice of Dora effectively prevents David—and his readers—from discovering what his life would have been like had he been forced for any length of time to deal with his own disappointment and bad choices. Like Dora, we can only speculate about how this alternate David would develop, but the very fact that his life would necessitate constant compromise suggests that he could have turned out very differently from the single-mindedly optimistic David Copperfield who has been handed down to us. Though he makes much of the lesson he learns from Dora's passing, there is an equally compelling way in which David is actually less changed because he is allowed so quickly and easily to move on: why change at all if life provides you with no stumbling blocks that you cannot easily write your way out of? Indeed, many of *Copperfield*'s critics seem frustrated that, despite the narrator's insistence that he was developing all the time, David himself does not undergo a palpable change.[49] While Dickens's novel enjoys canonization as *the* Victorian exemplar of an ostensibly transformative genre, its dismissal of characters like Dora allow the narrator/protagonist to simultaneously welcome and evade transformation, and therefore to dramatize the friction between stasis and movement that produces literary character.

As characters who sometimes seem not to change as much as they survive a journey through various narrative minefields, David and Jane open themselves up to charges that they aren't even as interesting as the minor characters who are sacrificed in various ways throughout their stories.[50] The following section deals with one of the strategies by which

Brontë's and Dickens's novels draw upon the rhetoric of self-sacrifice in order both to move readerly attention away from the violently sacrificed characters they contain and to characterize the protagonist less as an opportunist than as an individual who is capable of virtuous renunciation.

**The Self-Sacrificing Protagonist**

In a recent article, Ilana Blumberg discusses the ubiquity of the idea of self-sacrifice in the Victorian period.  While we might be tempted to read Victorian self-sacrifice principally as a religious tenet, Blumberg argues, it was actually a wide-ranging ideal that permeated social discourses from aesthetics to economics.  Novels, which contained and represented a vast interconnection of such discourses, were thus an especially powerful means of figuring self-sacrifice as a universal, secularized value (Blumberg 510).  The most common way for the Victorians to think about sacrifice in more secular language was as an action whereby "one party suffers so that another party need not suffer" (507-508).  Examples of this kind of behavior are legion in Victorian novels: Jane Eyre gives up three quarters of her inheritance, for instance, so that the Rivers siblings can be financially independent; David Copperfield shares Peggotty's care packages with the other boys at Salem House.  Blumberg goes on, however, to reveal that sacrifice is less asymmetrically selfless than it makes itself out to be: "From ancient Christianity onward," she writes, "the concept of sacrifice has been almost unintelligible without its balancing force of profit or gain toward some higher end…This logic, however much it might foil thoroughly self-sacrificial impulses, is inescapable.  For Victorians sacrifices sustained the sort of ideological reward that merited, for instance, their recording in novels" (524).  While self-

sacrifice may entail the loss of something material, then, this loss actually recoups itself in more abstract ways. To pick up on the previous examples: Jane becomes the savior of the Rivers family when she parcels out her money, and David endears himself to Steerforth by providing him with his nurse's oranges and cowslip wine. Both protagonists, in addition, appear morally virtuous to their readers through the narration of those instances in which they willingly give of themselves. What they lose in material possessions they therefore earn back in characterological terms.

This structure of explicit physical loss and covert moral profit plays itself out more extensively in a pair of *Copperfield* and *Eyre*'s notably similar episodes. Each narrative includes a sequence in which the protagonist decides to flee an undesirable situation by setting off alone on a journey that proves psychologically and physically perilous. For David, this moment occurs in childhood, when he can no longer endure his work at Murdstone and Grinby's bottling factory and resolves to travel to Dover in search of his Aunt Betsey. Jane, even more intrepidly, leaves Thornfield with no set destination in mind after she discovers that Rochester has lied about his past and is in fact married to a woman he hides in his attic. In both cases, the protagonist walks many miles of English countryside, loses what little money he or she possesses, and is forced to barter items of clothing in the hopes of gathering up enough food to stave off starvation. Both protagonists, additionally, come in contact with strangers who either refuse to help them (as in the proprietress of the bakeshop who will not trade a cake of bread for Jane's gloves) or who use them extremely ill (as in the long-legged young man who runs off with David's money and belongings before he even sets foot outside of London). Taken together, such episodes dramatize almost every kind of personal loss—of companions, of physical energy

and fleshly embodiment, of material possessions, and, after awhile, of the very hope with which the protagonists begin their journeys.

But by wresting Jane and David away from stagnant situations and plunging them instead into uncertainty and isolation, these solitary trials-by-fire allow the protagonists to dramatically build up the presentation of their own moral character. For both characters, severing ties with a knowable situation amounts to a conscious sacrifice of what is certain for a situation that is only potentially more livable. (Granted, David's abandonment of his position as a child-laborer is doubtless much less of a sacrifice than Jane's decision to leave the man she still loves, but that a young boy would forsake the known world altogether at such a young age suggests that David is drawing on a veritable wellspring of internal strength and determination). Brontë's protagonist repeatedly figures this sacrifice of security as a possible sacrifice of life itself, informing the reader, for instance, that "I had some fear—or hope—that I should die" (274). In order to show their intrepid individualism, then, David and Jane display a willingness to risk sacrificing themselves, and therefore to join the ranks of the many characters who die throughout their narratives; this self-sanctioned incursion of loss positions them alongside heroines of self-sacrifice like Helen Burns and Dora Spenlow.

Jane's and David's survival is of course inevitable, since both characters are telling their stories from a point far into the future. And survival itself comes to be put to developmental purpose, as the narration of such ostentatious aloneness provides the protagonists with the perfect opportunity for the kind of introspective engagement that cultivates an impression of psychological depth. Specifically, Jane and David reflect upon their orphanhood to both highlight their isolation and to provide a rationale for their

endurance of such treacherous situations.  At those points when he can almost walk no more, David keeps returning to a mental image of Clara: "I seemed to be sustained and led on," he remarks, "by my fanciful picture of my mother in her youth, before I came into the world" (177).  Such a statement not only reminds us (as if we needed reminding) that David's mother is dead, but it also figures this sacrificed character as productive of a survival tactic by which David is able to propel himself and his narrative forward toward Betsey Trotwood (another mother-figure).  Clara's death thus permits the novel to use her as a key element in the representation of its protagonist's consciousness; David's mother seems to be of more help to her son once she has taken up posthumous residence inside his mind.  And like Jane's "imbibing" of Miss Temple's nature, David's introjection of his dead mother's character illustrates how the *Bildungsroman* uses the loss of characters to buttress the moral development of the individual protagonist.

Jane's evocation of her orphanhood during the journey from Thornfield to Marsh End is significantly more complex, since Brontë's protagonist imagines mother-figures who both help her on her journey and who threaten to end it altogether.  Because Jane has never known or seen her actual mother, she is able instead to reconstruct her character in several different guises.  Sleeping alone on what she thought would have been her wedding night, Jane famously dreams of a "white human form" who addresses her as "My daughter" and instructs her to "flee temptation" at Thornfield (272).  This "mother," then, effectively carries Jane's narrative toward its next stage at the same time that its appearance in a "trance-like" dream illustrates how Jane's consciousness seems to be constantly overflowing with emotional stimulation.  As Jane continues on her journey away from Thornfield, the image of the white human mother gives way to a broader conception of

motherhood; the protagonist reflects that "I have no relative but the universal mother, Nature" (275). This second, abstracted mother proves far crueler than the first, as it is the allure of nature that prompts Jane's desire to die, to "mingle in peace with the soil of this wilderness" (277). Indeed, Margaret Homans has argued that in Brontë's novel motherhood itself—so bound up with the idea of "mother nature"—is tantamount to death: "Jane discovers here on the moor…that to become part of nature is to die. The solace nature offers is not just an illusion concealing death; that solace is itself death" (95). According to Homans, the feminization of nature in *Jane Eyre* prevents Jane from sacrificing her life to join her "mother," since such a sacrifice also entails Jane's "exclusion from what her culture defines as human"—i.e., Jane's authorship (99). Jane ostentatiously contemplates self-sacrifice, then, only to back off at the last minute because the price of communion with the dead mother would amount to the dissolution of the development narrative in progress.

So while Jane and David express a desire for the self-sacrifice that their walks through the wilderness require, they also manage to reap developmental benefit out of these journeys through pinpointed allusions to those dead maternal characters on whose sacrifice so much of the protagonists' character depends. But do the protagonists "grow" from these experiences as much as they simply live through them? For fictional autobiographies such as these, living through trials long enough to retrospectively narrate them becomes indistinguishable from the novels' construction of development. Survived experience will also always be developmental experience if it is narrated from the survivor's standpoint within the traditional *Bildungsroman*'s teleological framework. This convention, as we will see, stands in marked contrast to third-person development novels such as Flaubert's and

74

Gissing's, in which the protagonist's survival is not a structural given and when a heterodiegetic narrator can add an element of distance to the otherwise intimate relationship between the "developing" protagonist and the reader. For *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, survival betokens development simply because without it, the subject of the retrospective development narrative would no longer exist.

**Death and the Happy Ending**

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that Jane's and David's development stories push the protagonists toward "happy" endings that emphasize the completion of the novel and the culmination of *Bildung* . At first, such a claim seems obvious: both protagonists vociferously insist on their happiness at many points during the final pages of their narratives. Here is Jane:

> I have now been married ten years. I know what it is to live
> entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself
> supremely blest--blest beyond what language can express; because
> I am my husband's life as fully is he is mine. No woman was ever
> nearer to her mate than I am: ever more absolutely bone of his
> bone and flesh of his flesh…All my confidence is bestowed on
> him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in
> character—perfect concord is the result (383-84).

And David, upon his marriage to Agnes Wickfield:

> We were married within a fortnight…I held the source of every
> worthy aspiration I had ever had; the center of myself, the circle of
> my life, my own, my wife; my love of whom was founded on a
> rock! (808)

But to argue that *Copperfield* and *Eyre* end happily requires clarification, since many of the most prominent critics of both novels insist that the protagonists' ostensible happiness covers up a system of patriarchal, capitalist power relations inherent in the heterosexual

Victorian marriage.  In response to earlier feminist readings of *Jane Eyre* (notably those of

Gilbert and Gubar and Showalter) that saw Jane's happiness as a fulfillment of selfhood,

more recent feminist critics challenge readers not to take Jane's profession of happiness at

face value.  Fraiman, for example, urges us to see how the novel's ending illustrates "two

opposing images of the mature heroine: the happy, rich, and conventionally respectable lady

and the overworked, always potentially irate nurse.  While the story of gentrification and

heterosexual romance ostensibly prevails, it is interrogated to the end by the subtler,

homosocial story of Jane's continuing service" (120).[51]  Jane is not Rochester's "equal,"

since her marriage to him in his blinded, disabled state requires her to continue to assume the

governess's position.  Though *Copperfield*'s ending has provoked less commentary than *Jane

Eyre's*, Poovey argues that its protagonist's second marriage allows the novel to domesticate

and ahistoricize what is actually a gender- and class-specific model of development (121).  If

David is happy, in other words, then his narrative marginalizes the many others who

underwrite his happiness.

Such arguments are difficult to ignore: it is tough as a twenty-first-century woman to

swallow Jane's avowal of happiness with a man who systematically deceives her.  And while

it is easy to see why David himself is happy to be married to Agnes, it is less evident why

Agnes would decide that David is the only man who can make *her* happy.  However, we

must at least temporarily take Brontë's and Dickens's novels at their word in order to

understand the narrative system on which novelistic character development relies.  For

although development in the novel is made to resemble actual human development, it is

profoundly different from human development in the sense that it must always submit to

narrative closure.  These critics resist the endings of *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*, I

would argue, because they are novelistic endings; that is to say, they end totally, as if the last word on the subject has been definitively spoken. Novels will frequently seem less messily complex—and therefore more naïve—than whatever "real life" development the reader has experienced if only because the novel has to end. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider the critical anxiety around *Copperfield* and *Eyre*'s endings by shifting the point of emphasis onto a discussion of the narrative maneuvers that, I believe, help to produce this anxiety. I am interested less in disputing whether or not Jane and David can really be "happy" than in demonstrating how these novels both construct these happy endings and construe them as developmental evidence.

As Poovey and Fraiman suggest, a stifling of possibility often accompanies depictions of "happiness" like those we find in novels like *Copperfield* and *Eyre*. The act of getting married at the end of one's development novel illustrates how thoroughly acculturated the protagonists have become, since David and Jane have overcome the very conflicts—both inner and external—that have made their stories such consuming material. Though Jane's and David's development stories have ceaselessly endeavored to prove that their narrator-protagonists are complexly deep enough to merit entire novels, the "successful" ending insists, by contrast, that they have become just like everybody else. Indeed, the critical resistance to the neatness with which Jane and David surrender their desire for further development reflects how such a surrender itself resists critical interpretation. Where the unhappy endings of numerous development novels—say, the drowning of Tom and Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss* or the execution of Julien Sorel in *The Red and the Black*— seem to be points of departure for readerly discussion, the happy endings of *Copperfield* and *Eyre* leave some of us wanting to go back to these novels' beginnings. What many have

experienced as the end of readerly pleasure in *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*—when the

Jane and David we know fade from view—thus occurs when the title characters themselves

claim to experience the most pleasure.

But although we tend to remember the protagonists' excessive avowals of delight at

the end of their stories, we may forget the bulk of what these final chapters actually contain.

However much Jane and David may dilate upon their happiness, they spend far more time in

their conclusions stepping out of themselves and attending to those other characters who

remain.  Jane's conclusion informs us of the fates of the Rivers sisters (both married) and of

little Adèle (sent to a succession of boarding schools), while David focuses his "Last

Retrospect" on the current status of an even more impressive cast of characters, including

Aunt Betsey, Peggotty, Sophy and Traddles, Julia Mills, Rosa Dartle and Mrs. Steerforth,

Mr. Dick, Jack Maldon, and of course, his own children (two of whom are named after

Betsey Trotwood and Dora Spenlow).  This narrative technique—of rounding up various

characters and providing a mini-ending for each one—is common enough in Victorian

fiction, but its effect is more curious when we consider that the fates of these characters seem

to overtake the portrait of development toward which the novels that contain them have been

heading all along.  At the moment of ostensible "fulfillment," Brontë's and Dickens's novels

actually deemphasize and diminish the character of the protagonist, as David and Jane turn

interior self-reflection outward toward the narration of other lives and thereby retreat from

center stage.  The portrayal of happiness and development figures the developed character as

less substantial the more she develops, thereby solidifying the relationship that these novels

have established between developmental gain and characterological loss.

This contradictory portrait of development-as-loss is extraordinarily sustained not only in the final chapters of Jane's and David's narratives, but also in their parting lines. Where "happily ever after" might seem an appropriate capstone to two novels whose fairytale qualities critics have regularly noticed, *Copperfield* and *Eyre* leave their readers in darker territory. Both novels, that is, conclude with the explicit imagery of death. Jane saves the fate of St. John Rivers until the very end of her list:

> St. John is unmarried: he never will marry now. Himself has
> hitherto sufficed to the toil, and the toil draws near its close: his
> glorious sun hastens to its setting. The last letter I received from
> him drew from my eves human tears, and yet filled my heart with
> divine joy: he anticipated his sure reward, his incorruptible crown.
> I know that a stranger's hand will write to me next, to say that the
> good and faithful servant has been called at length into the joy of
> his Lord. And why weep for this? No fear of death will darken St.
> John's last hour: his mind will be unclouded, his heart will be
> undaunted, his hope will be sure, his faith steadfast. His own words
> are a pledge of this -
>
> "My Master," he says, "has forewarned me. Daily He announces
> more distinctly,--'Surely I come quickly!' and hourly I more
> eagerly respond,--'Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!'" (385).

Why should Jane choose to end her story this way? On the one hand, such an ending affirms her choice to marry Rochester and her earlier assertion that following St. John to India as his wife would be "almost equivalent to committing suicide" (352). Had she gone with St. John, Jane would have risked being obliterated by her own self-sacrifice and thereby becoming a character as functional as those her narrative depicts. (The statement that St. John "prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon" [345] clearly illustrates Jane's distaste at being rendered a mere instrument in her cousin's missionary scheme). On the other hand, this conclusion allows Jane to put a final spin on her relationship with St. John, lest her readers believe that she acted uncharitably toward the man who took her in at her most

vulnerable moment. For by making St. John's death the final episode in her own narrative, Brontë's protagonist implicitly acknowledges all of the deaths upon whom this development story has depended. In death, Jane is able to give St. John the credit that she could never afford him in life: she can raise him to the level of sainthood that his name always suggested he would one day deserve. Girard notes just such a strategy in his own model of sacrifice, in which the society who kills the scapegoated victim lionizes him as a "redeemer" after his sacrificial death has restored order to the community (87). We can read Jane's assurance that St. John gets and deserves his "incorruptible crown" as her way of paying off a debt of gratitude: she literally lets St. John have the last word in a story that does not belong to him.

Like so many of Jane's sacrificial gestures, this final one hides the protagonist's self-interest behind a veil of apparent generosity; while she appears to yield the floor to St. John, her manipulation of his fate contributes directly to the happiness—the "divine joy"—with which she closes her narrative. In a powerful reading of the novel's ending, Derwin points out the ambiguity surrounding Jane's narration of her cousin's demise. If we read closely, we can see that Brontë's novel does not end with St. John's death so much as it ends with its protagonist's conviction that this death will happen in the near future. Jane "is now *actively engaged*," Derwin writes, "in anticipating the death of someone who, to her knowledge, is still alive" (101, emphasis in original). More than any of the other deaths in *Jane Eyre*, this final one implicates Jane's agency in the process of sacrificing characters, an agency fostered by the first person point-of view-through which we read the novel. For in a first-person narrative, the line between fact and desire is notoriously difficult to distinguish: do we have faith in Jane's guarantee that St. John "will never marry now," or do we read it as something the protagonist says in the hope that it will turn out to be true? If we close the novel

mistakenly believing that St. John dies in its final pages, we do so at least in part because we

have confused Jane's desire for St. John's future death for her response to a death that has

already occurred. Moreover, Jane's admonishment to her readers, lest we unduly mourn St.

John's loss—"Why weep for this?"—lets us know that she wants us to take this death-ending

as a happy occurrence. (St. John, after all, awaits his place in heaven). The novel's final

moments thus highlight *Jane Eyre*'s sacrificial strategies at the same time that they use

character sacrifice to further cement the happiness that indicates both the protagonist's

development and the narrative's closure. It is hardly surprising, given the elision Jane makes

between her own joy and the future death of a loved one, that the ending of Brontë's novel

continues to sit uneasily with many of its readers and critics.

    *David Copperfield* ends in a rapturous apostrophe which resembles the final lines

of *Jane Eyre* in many respects:

> And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet,
> these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a Heavenly
> light by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond
> them all. And that remains.
>
> I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My
> lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear
> presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company.
>
> O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my
> life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me, like the
> shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing
> upward! (821).

Again, the *Bildungsroman* closes by joyously awaiting a future death, although this time

it is the protagonist's own; again, the protagonist seems to fade from view, to "melt"

away and "subdue" his desire as he insists upon the significance of another character

within the novel we are about to finish. But for David to insist that Agnes is the only one

who "remains" in the end is itself deceptive, since the protagonist's second wife has been figuratively dead ever since she entered *Copperfield*'s narrative. No matter that Agnes never literally dies: her very name connotes her status both as sacrificial "lamb" and virgin martyr (Agnes is the patron saint of chastity). Marrying Agnes is the next best thing to marrying nobody, and David's oft-touted veneration for Agnes is indeed often figured as a veneration of *himself*: Agnes is "my soul," and "without her I was not" (760).[52] Like Jane, David seems to award the responsibility for his own happiness to another character even as this acknowledgement of the other's help deflects the character sacrifice that it enacts. The connection David makes between death and Agnes Wickfield throughout the novel (she reminds him of church windows; she is always pointing upward) proves crucial enough to sustain him all the way to the conclusion of his narrated life: if David's development is "founded" on Agnes, it is also founded on the sacrificial loss that her character represents.

By understanding how these popular Victorian novels use sacrifice as an organizing principle of characterization, we can better appreciate the moral and psychological implications of a culturally pervasive narrative genre. Though *Copperfield* and *Eyre* work hard to depict their protagonists' ultimate happiness within a domestic community that provides joyful marriages, bouncing babies, and plenty of money, they cannot completely erase the violently individual model of character development that they construct. Sacrifice—both as a narratological mechanism for removing characters and characteristics, and as a thematic indicator of developing morality—serves particularly well to foster the mutually constitutive advancement of the novelistic protagonist and her plot. But this advancement, as we have seen, relies on a formal

system whose configuration of moral character—and the well-rounded consciousness that supposedly accompanies it—is considerably more ambiguous than Brontë's and Dickens's happy endings suggest. Through narrative strategies that alternately dramatize and conceal sacrifice, *Copperfield* and *Eyre* depict the development of a kind of character that, paradoxically, becomes deeper the more that it loses: even as it betokens fulfillment, the effect of psychological depth we glean from Jane's and David's narratives reveals emptiness at its core. In the following chapter, I turn to two novels whose methods of characterization reject the elision between developing character and increasing interior depth that we find in *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, suggesting instead that the most virtuous protagonists may be those who operate according to a single, unvarying principle.

**Chapter Two**

**"Roots Deeper Than All Change":**
**Constancy as Character Development in *The Mill on the Floss* and *Corinne***

"Et faut-il qu'un seul sentiment dépouille ainsi toute la vie?"

["Must a single feeling so despoil an entire life?"]
-Germaine de Staël, *Corinne*, XVII.VII


Both *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*, as we have seen, conclude with the

protagonist's affirmation of his or her own immense happiness and good fortune. This

happy ending, I would argue, forms part of the basic formal tradition through which the

narrative structure of other development novels will be refracted: in the conventional

*Bildungsroman*, character development and the socialization that signals it are difficult

but eventually gratifying processes. We can find similar variants on the "struggle toward

happiness" scenario in *Wilhelm Meister*, in which the protagonist is finally "initiated"

into the Society of the Tower and marries his newly-discovered soul-mate, or in Balzac's

*Le Père Goriot* (1835), as Rastignac, standing at the highest point of the Père-Lachaise,

confidently proclaims his intention to conquer Paris. The protagonists' extensive

fulfillment at the end of these *Bildungsromane* seems directly proportionate to the

hardships they have endured throughout the beginning and the middle.

But as soon as we remark that nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* figure

character development as a movement toward happiness, we have also to bear in mind

the considerable number of influential, disastrously-ending development novels

published during the same century.  There is little happiness, for example, surrounding the fates of Hardy's Tess Derbyfield and Jude Fawley, or of Balzac's Lucien de Rubempré, and the qualified success of characters like Stendhal's Julien Sorel and Fabrice del Dongo remains tinged with ambiguity and disappointment.  This chapter will explore two novels—Madame de Staël's *Corinne* (1807) and George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)—that culminate in the tragic death of the protagonists whose growth they endeavor to represent.  Though more than fifty years separates the publication of these novels, and though each emerges out of a different national literary tradition, their narrative structures illustrate remarkably similar models of character development. [53] Where *Copperfield* and *Eyre* predicate successful *Bildung* on the protagonist's ability to experience and narrate the death (or "sacrifice") of other characters as an enriching developmental experience, Eliot's and Staël's novels present central characters who refuse to distance themselves from the kinds of relationships that threaten their individuation.  Far fewer characters actually die in these novels than in *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, but more crucial than this relative dearth of sacrificed characters is the tenacity with which protagonists Corinne and Maggie Tulliver cling to precisely those characters who cause them the most psychological suffering.  Maggie systematically privileges her relationship with her older brother, Tom, despite the latter's increasing coldness toward her, and Corinne (born to a British father and an Italian mother) forsakes a life of artistic fulfillment and celebrity in Italy so that she can futilely pursue Oswald Nelvil, a Scottish lord who is duty-bound to marry a quiet, deferential Englishwoman named Lucile. Both protagonists, as I have mentioned, die in the novels' final pages: Maggie notoriously

drowns in a flood after trying unsuccessfully to save her brother's life, while Corinne slowly dies of heartbreak after she learns of Nelvil's marriage.[54]

Juxtaposing *Eyre* and *Copperfield* on the one hand and *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* on the other permits a comparison of two radically different kinds of character development: the kind that sacrifices anything *but* the protagonist's self (including other characters) in order for that self to become fully realized, and the kind that sacrifices the self to the exclusion of anything else, even to the point of death. What remains constant throughout each of these ostensibly opposed developmental models—the happily and the catastrophically ending alike—is that they demonstrate a correlation between characterological growth and different forms of loss (including death itself). While no theory of character development insists that the process is unproblematic, acknowledging the manifold ways in which many *Bildungsromane* actually seem to depend on narrated loss helps us discern how "developed character"—the *Bildungsroman*'s ostensible goal—is often only attainable through a series of tragic events. This symbiotic relationship between *Bildung* and tragedy, in turn, dampens the overwhelmingly positive connotations that surrounded the idea of character development in the nineteenth century and that continue to surround it.[55] Think, for instance, about the implication of progress behind the words *growth* and *development* in the twenty-first century, not only in reference to an individual's moral character and physical body ("She's really grown up"), but also to investment opportunities ("a growing stock"/ "grow your portfolio"), computer programs ("developing technology"), or exciting new "developments" in medical research.[56]

A self-conscious engagement with tragic forms is apparent both in Eliot's and Staël's novels themselves and in the long tradition of literary criticism that considers them.

Victorian critic E.S. Dallas, for example, wrote in an 1860 review of *The Mill* that "[t]he riddle of life as it is here expounded is more like a Greek tragedy than a modern novel" (135). And in the twentieth century, both Barbara Hardy's *The Novels of George Eliot* and Felicia Bonaparte's *Will and Destiny* each made sustained arguments about Eliot's desire to elevate common experience to a tragic pitch. Corinne's intimate acquaintance with the literature of tragedy is even more personal than Maggie's: not only does Staël's heroine converse at length with Oswald upon the comparative merits of Italian, French, and Greek tragedies, but she goes on actually to perform her own translation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Moreover, her talent for improvisation and her position as a poetess aligns her with both Sibyl (whose costume Corinne wears when she is famously crowned at the Capitol) and Sappho.[57]

Taking the well-documented tragic cast of Eliot's and Staël's novels as a starting point, this chapter will consider the part that formal techniques of characterization play in the depiction of Maggie's and Corinne's developmental tragedies. Specifically, I will argue that *The Mill*, like *Corinne*, locates the tragedy of its self-sacrificing heroine in what it takes to be the *dominating* elements of her character: Eliot's narrator tells us near the beginning of the novel that Maggie is governed by "the need of being loved, the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature" (*Mill* 37). This remark illustrates a characterological strategy that nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* continually employ: "the sense that," as Woloch explains, "human character can be neatly analyzed, categorized, divided" (54).[58] What Eliot's narrator generally describes here as the protagonist's "need of being loved," for instance, fights it out "in" the protagonist's character, an abstract area where her desire for affection is said to coexist with and subdue other, less prominent traits (prudence, for

example, or avarice). This "need," as we will see, manifests itself in the multiple self-sacrifices that have garnered Maggie so much literary-critical attention over the years. In Corinne's case, the penchant for self-sacrifice that stems from a dominant characteristic is even more pronounced, as the protagonist's oft-touted imagination, or *esprit* (also frequently described as her innate "genius," or *génie*) figures as both the source of her artistic power and the driving force of her hopeless attachment to Oswald Nelvil.

The ascription of character traits to individuals helps make the stubbornly elusive subject of moral character more manageable; it offers a kind of conceptual shorthand for defining human interiority that finds corollaries in nineteenth-century cultural practices such as the carving up of phrenological skulls into distinct, visually delineated faculties, or the organization of self-help books (such as Samuel Smiles's 1871 *Character*) into chapters that divide the subject into its isolated component parts ("Work," "Courage," "Self-Control," etc.). That both *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* should link the protagonists' dominant characteristic so closely with her tragedy suggests the novels' evocation of a "tragic flaw"—a concept that, I would argue, Eliot and Staël at least loosely associate with classical poetics.[59] However, the novels complicate conventional depictions of the tragic flaw as a kind of static, internal weakness by at once endorsing the persistence of Maggie's and Corinne's dominant traits on moral grounds and suggesting that it is nonetheless precisely this "unbalanced" characterological growth that dictates their deaths. My emphasis on the novels' connection between tragedy and development will therefore provide an occasion to reconsider the tradition of feminist criticism that has strained, since the 1970's, to read Maggie's and Corinne's stories as fables of female empowerment. Trying to redeem these protagonists' fates, I argue, denatures the paradoxical developmental model that Eliot and Staël construct,

a model in which the persistence of moral character necessitates the death of the protagonists as forms.  And while dramatic tragedies frequently stage a formal compatibility between self-knowledge and loss—think of Hamlet and Oedipus[60]—the grafting of this tragic structure onto the conventionally progressive narrative of the *Bildungsroman* throws the goal of its entire developmental enterprise into question.

By singling out Maggie's and Corinne's dominant characteristics, I do not mean to imply that other developing protagonists, like Jane Eyre and David Copperfield, possess no distinguishing traits—indeed a character must have some baseline of consistency in order to register as a character at all.  Rather, I contend that the characteristics of Dickens's and Brontë's central characters seem at once more various and more pliable than Maggie's or Corinne's.[61]  As we saw in the previous chapter, one of the techniques through which *Bildungsromane* illustrate their protagonists' growth is by "sacrificing" a minor character whose death often splits or carries off those character traits that endanger the plot's teleology toward success and happiness.  But such a fantasy structure of development is not possible for Maggie and Corinne, whose determination to hold onto Tom and Oswald despite the self-sacrifice and suffering these relationships cause only increases the growth of those passions that have always dominated the protagonists' characters.  Eliot's and Staël's novels therefore depict a model of development that is based less on the transformation of the protagonist than on the way in which her character remains the same despite the passage of chronological time.  As Marianne Hirsch notes, "structures of repetition rather than structures of progression come to dominate the plot": where previous protagonists move "forward," Maggie returns again and again to her childhood "origins" (*Voyage In*, 26).[62]  The development that does occur in *The Mill* and *Corinne* is not the streamlined growth of a

"whole," well-rounded individual, but the comparatively disproportionate ascendancy of one part of the protagonist's character.

Conceptualizing the development of Maggie's and Corinne's character(s) as the unequal development of parts helps us to continue to reevaluate the relationship between the *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist and the nineteenth-century novel's construction of psychological depth. While these novels—like most *Bildungsromane*—work hard to evoke what Woloch and others call the protagonist's "heterogeneous" consciousness, their parallel focus on a single aspect of the protagonists' character actually resembles a kind of psychological caricature. And literary critics have long associated caricature with the type of descriptive flatness that the nineteenth-century novel's famously "round" protagonists seem to formally oppose. The arrangement of Corinne's and Maggie's characters around one exaggerated characteristic thus demonstrates that these central literary figures actually come into being through techniques of minorness. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion about how the operation of dominant character traits in *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* can help us reconsider the opposition between flatness and depth (or minorness and majorness) that continues to endure in critical discussions about character. For if Corinne and Maggie can be read as psychologically complex, this complexity becomes manifest through a simplifying structure that neatly summarizes the protagonists' "nature" through repeated references to dominant characteristics.

Further, understanding Eliot's and Staël's deployment of the "dominant characteristic" will reorient our understanding of the *Bildungsroman* as a novelistic genre and of character development as a narrative phenomenon, while also contributing a critical tool to the emerging field within novel and narrative theory that investigates how literary character

90

works as constitutive element of fictional narratives.  Though numerous critics have read

*Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* as development novels, surprisingly few have noted the

way Eliot and Staël challenge the genre's implicit proposition that modifying one's character

leads to moral maturity. [63]  This preoccupation with dominant characteristics actually signals

a positive valuation of changelessness—of *not* reforming the configuration of one's

character—that implicitly questions the conventional *Bildungsroman*'s valorization of

change.  Maggie and Corinne develop by tenaciously denying change, even as material losses

inevitably overshadow their characterological gains in the novels' tragic conclusions.  The

novels' formal characterization therefore proves indissociable from their moral vision—a

claim that holds true not just for Eliot's or Staël's fiction, but for the vast number of novels

that attempt to impose a legible structure on the nebulous process of human development.


**Dominant Characteristics**

If the attribution of characteristics to characters offers nineteenth-century novels

an economical way to perform moral assessments, a similar process of examining

characters as collections of traits has proven productive for theorists interested in the

formal structure of character.  Perhaps the most well-known of such figures is Roland

Barthes, who famously likens the elements of characterization to the constituent parts of

the sentence.  "Character," he writes, "is an adjective, an attribute, a predicate (for

example: *unnatural, shadowy, star, composite, excessive, impious*, etc.)" (190).  Novels

pull together these adjectives, (or "semes") around a proper name ("Maggie," say), thus

inducing their readers to transform linguistic signifiers into the mental representation of a

person.[64]

More recent narrative theorists tend to categorize Barthes's remarks as overly restrictive. Woloch, for example, has analyzed the famous "collection of semes" passage as an indication of Barthes's avoidance of the dynamic ways in which many characters do not begin as adjectives but *become* them through the process of narrative progression (106). Like Woloch, narratologist Uri Margolin prefers to understand characterization as the construction of plausible individuals. Particularly pertinent to our exploration of the character "trait" is Margolin's enumeration of five "essential properties of literary characters as existents in a narrated domain" ("Introducing," 110).[65] Two of these five properties deal specifically with traits. First, Margolin defines what he calls the "*[i]dentity or intensional dimension*" of character, that is, the direct or indirect (contextual) ascription of characteristics to characters (113, emphasis in original). But more important than the seemingly common-sense notion that all characters are ascribed characteristics is a subsequent condition which Margolin calls the character's "*[p]aradigmatic unity of features*." Many narrative texts, he argues, configure "the inventory of features" surrounding each character through formal strategies including "rank ordering or hierarchization, into central and peripheral, dominant and subordinate, core and marginal, essential and accidental" traits (116). This short description emphasizes that the narrative organization—not just the existence—of character traits is a crucial component of literary character. If *The Mill*'s Mrs. Glegg, for example, espouses the Dodson family's traditional values once in the course of a narrative, it does not automatically follow that the narrative marks her as "provincial." However, because Mrs. Glegg consistently touts the pillars of the Dodson way (extreme thrift, cleanliness, proper observation of mourning) throughout the novel, and because the third-person narrator amply chronicles this bygone

conventionality whenever Mrs. Glegg appears, we can be reasonably sure that being

traditional is, as Margolin writes, an "essential" rather than an "accidental" part of who she

is.

Margolin then complicates the idea of "essential" character traits by indicating that

literary narratives also form hierarchical structures in which certain traits come to dominate

others: Mrs. Glegg's traditionality, might, for instance, take precedence over coexisting,

weaker desires.[66] This narrative trend—a kind of dominance hierarchy of characteristics—

informs the storyline of many novelistic narratives, as Emma Woodhouse's overweening

confidence in her own judgment, for example, directly affects the actions and represented

thoughts of Mr Elton and Harriet Smith, or as the indecisiveness of Flaubert's Frédéric

Moreau throws *Sentimental Education* into a holding-pattern of interior monologue.

*Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* are ideal narrative models through which to

examine and expand upon the idea of the dominant trait to which Margolin so briefly

alludes.  As Hirsch points out, "Maggie's inner life rests on one dominant feeling, her

strong attachment to her brother Tom, an attachment she never transcends" (*Voyage In*,

34).[67]  Though it begins and ends as an almost incestuous desire for Tom, this "need of

being loved," which the narrator first identifies in her descriptions of Maggie's childhood,

marks nearly all of the protagonist's relationships with male characters (such as her father,

Philip Wakem, and Stephen Guest). Maggie's desire for love wields immense explanatory

power within the novel's plot, as both the narrator and the protagonist herself repeatedly

cite it as evidence for Maggie's actions and behaviors.  Moreover, those actions which have

the most immediate effect on Maggie's developmental trajectory—including her decision

to break off her relationship with Philip, her (abandoned) elopement with Stephen, and her

failed attempt to save Tom from drowning—require the protagonist to sacrifice herself in various ways so that she can hang onto the love that she craves.

Corinne's dominant characteristic—her overabundant imagination—lands her in a comparable situation. "Of all my gifts," Corinne warns Oswald, "the most powerful is the gift for suffering" (75).[68] Fully subscribing to a romantic myth about the artist, Staël's novel suggests that, for all its aesthetic productivity, the ingenious imagination carries with it the burden of susceptibility to mental anguish. In *Corinne*, the protagonist regularly exercises her gift for suffering throughout her relationship to Nelvil, a man for whose love she is prepared to sacrifice both her artistic identity and her spiritual homeland: "[S]he was proud," the narrator remarks, "to sacrifice herself so that Oswald might be at peace with his country, with his family, with himself" (357).[69] Paradoxically, it is the dominating quality of Corinne's imagination that ultimately stunts her artistic productivity and even her sanity in the later chapters of Staël's novel. The narrator ruminates,

> If we can imagine how a person becomes mad, it is surely when a
> single thought takes hold of the mind, no longer permitting a series
> of objects to lend variety to thought. Moreover, Corinne was
> endowed with such a lively imagination that it ate itself up when
> there was no more nourishment for its faculties from outside
> (332).[70]

The singular authority of Corinne's imagination—an imagination, as we have seen, that is prone to suffering through its very strength—thus rockets her into a state of near-insanity. Unswervingly focused on Oswald's relationship with Lucile, Corinne's imagination destroys itself for lack of variety, its very dominance becoming more and more intensified as it metaphorically gobbles itself up and leaves the possibility of other "objects" behind. The image of Corinne's mind eating itself from within in fact provides a micro-example of the way in which the protagonist's character develops through loss: although suffering

makes Corinne's dominant trait more prominent, this prominence is figured through the physical absence that results from a devouring force.

Just as *Corinne* presents its protagonist's character as a collection of traits that are drowned out by the torturous promptings of genius, Oswald Nelvil himself is equally directed by a persistent injunction to duty. As Linda Lewis remarks, "*Duty* is in fact Nelvil's watchword in all things—duty being a patriot's relationship to his nation, a Christian's obligation to his God, a son's sacred trust to his father" (34). All three of these aspects of Oswald's dutifulness—that is, the male duties of patriotism, religion, and filial bonds—directly hinder his potential relationship with Corinne: Nelvil, who is traveling in Italy when he meets Corinne, will not live anywhere but England, the nation from which Corinne fled when she felt that its customs would stifle her genius. In addition, Nelvil is a Catholic while Corinne is Protestant, and, most importantly, a letter from Nelvil's dead father reveals (in a coincidence worthy of Dickens) that not only does Nelvil, Sr. want his son to marry Lucile Edgermond, but he specifically disapproves of a match between Nelvil and his original betrothed: Corinne herself, who turns out to be Lucile's half-sister. Though Oswald loves Corinne fanatically, "What he dreaded most for her," the narrator observes, "was England's disapproval" (109).[71] Yet for Oswald to dread England's disapproval of Corinne—in contrast to his own ostensible approval—is a questionable opposition, since "England" comes to stand in metonymically for the traditional values upon which Oswald's own character is built. (After returning to England later in the novel, for instance, Oswald feels that "he was himself again" [315]). The very act of worrying about whether or not the English will disapprove of Corinne is another indication of Oswald's "Englishness" insofar as nearly all of the English characters in Staël's novel

95

share a strong desire for social approval. And the self-imposed cultivation of this kind of approval, which values convention and uniformity above creativity and difference, is precisely the reason why Corinne originally feels that living in England for too long will stifle her character. When discussing with Oswald her decision to return to Italy despite her English relatives' condemnation of the idea, Corinne complains that, "To hear them, you would think that duty meant sacrificing one's superior abilities, and that having a mind is a fault to be expiated by leading exactly the same life as people do who have none" (255).[72] The sacrifice of "superior abilities" is of course what happens when Corinne returns to England and finds Oswald courting the thoroughly meek and traditional Lucile Edgermond: her mind becomes fixated on its own suffering, to the exclusion of those creative impulses that made the protagonist seem so un-English in the first place.

Much of *Corinne*'s narrative simply reiterates the clash between Corinne and Nelvil's dominant traits: Corinne's imagination cannot thrive in the oppressive environment to which Oswald feels bound, and Oswald's love for Corinne flies in the face of his sense of duty. Staël's preoccupation with opposing characteristics here recalls her earlier novel, *Delphine* (1802), whose free-spirited Protestant heroine finds herself in a similarly tragic bind with a Catholic soldier named Léonce who values public opinion above romantic love. It is partially due to this deadlock resulting from the opposing characteristics of the two leading characters that both novels can be tedious to read: almost every important scene seems tailor-made to amplify and repeat, rather than modify, this central dynamic. Numerous critics specifically cite the middle of *Corinne*, a capacious travelogue in which the protagonist escorts Oswald around Italy, lecturing him in detail on various aspects of Italian art and culture, as less interesting than the more story-driven

beginning and ending portions of the novel.[73] I would argue that one reason the travelogues seem like the slowest part of *Corinne* is that many of the conversations that ensue en route serve as pretexts to illustrate the impassable conflict between Corinne's imagination (coded as eminently Italian—hence the novel's full title, *Corinne, or Italy*) and Oswald's duty (coded as quintessentially British). As unnecessary as this repetition might seem to contemporary readers, its insistence works to establish *Corinne*'s conception of character traits so strong that their existence can override even the exigencies of a varied storyline. Staël herself, in the Preface to *Delphine*, presents an argument in favor of the kind of relentlessly characterization-centered narrative she has written, declaring that "[e]vents in novels must be simply the occasion to display the passions of the human heart" (4).[74] Note, in this statement, how it is not even characters *per se* with which Staël concerns herself, but rather with the abstract "passions" that come to define characters and, hence, influence the direction (or lack thereof) in which their actions will lead the novel's plot.

Though *The Mill on the Floss* has a considerably more complex plot and cast of characters than Staël's novel, its depiction of the relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver bears more than a passing formal resemblance to that between Nelvil and Corinne. Tom and Maggie share a fierce, protective love for one another in the novel's beginning, but this love becomes more and more distant on Tom's end as the two siblings grow older. *The Mill* specifically links Tom's increasing alienation from his sister to a Manichean sense of right and wrong that colors all of his actions and beliefs. "Tom," the narrator tells us, "was particularly clear and positive on one point—namely, that he would punish everybody who deserved it: why, he wouldn't have minded being punished himself, if he deserved it;

97

but then, he never *did* deserve it" (38). As Tom grows up and experiences the double loss of his father and the family's ownership of Dorlcote Mill, this stubbornness becomes more exaggerated and dominant, rather than becoming tempered—as it might in a novel like *David Copperfield*—by the wisdom of age. In the end of Eliot's novel, Tom's renunciation of Maggie when she most desperately desires his support occasions the narrator to remark again on how little Tom has changed: he "was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature, and his education had simply glided over him, leaving a slight deposit of polish" (500). Education—the very stock-in-trade of the traditional *Bildungsroman,* which Mr. Tulliver had hoped would turn his son into the intellectual equal of "the little wench"— proves ineffectual when faced with a moral character, such as Tom's, that is defined by its "superstitious repugnance to everything exceptional" (340).

In certain instances, however, Tom's characteristic sense of justice can be heroic, as in the scene in which he demands support from his mother's relatives (the Dodsons) because his father's financial straits have become crippling. Though *The Mill* (and its critics) make much more of Maggie's self-sacrifices, the novel also illustrates how Tom's desire to go into business and right his family's wrongs depends on "present abstinence and self-denial" (310). Tom "shunned comradeship" not because he does not desire it but because it might lead to spending money (309), and later, the narrator hints that a similar concern keeps Tom from pursuing a romantic interest in Lucy Deane. But even as this tenacity for what he believes to be fair-dealing works in the service of Tom's family, it works against any feelings of solidarity through which hardship might unite him with his loving sister:

> [I]t was a significant indication of Tom's character, that though he
> thought his aunts ought to do something more for his mother, he

felt nothing like Maggie's violent resentment against them for showing no eager tenderness and generosity…Tom saw some justice in severity; and all the more, because he had confidence in himself that he should never deserve that just severity (224-25).

Here, *The Mill*'s narrator presents the relationship between brother and sister as one of characters that remain at odds even when they are ostensibly concerned with the same goal (help for the increasingly destitute Tulliver family). Tom's character ("significantly indicated" through the form of narratorial summation) is borne out through its dissimilarity to Maggie's, for to desire more "eagerness and generosity" on the part of his relatives would be to demand less severity than his own sense of justice could permit. Moreover, Tom's confidence that he "should never deserve" the severity he metes out to others repeats in a different context his belief that "he never *did* deserve" the kind of punishments that Maggie routinely suffers.

*The Mill*'s use of events to repeatedly signal character's resistance to change over time here echoes Staël's methods of characterization in both its repetitious quality and its manipulation of contrast as a means of delineating the kinds of characters that embody dominant characteristics. Barbara Hardy has identified such methods of contrast as Eliot's "most conspicuous" formal strategy for the "moral classification" of character (80). *The Mill on the Floss*, I would add, uses the contrast between characters not only as a means of defining moral character, but also as an integral element of the process of novelistic character development. Though we tend to think of the novel as Maggie's story, it actually focuses on the growth of two protagonists: Maggie and Tom. *The Mill* is thus a double, or, as Jerome H. Buckley eloquently puts it, a "contrapuntal Bildungsroman" (97).[75] The same, of course, goes for *Corinne*, whose title disguises the considerable investment of discourse time it spends illustrating the development that Oswald Nelvil undergoes as a

99

result of his relationship with the title character. Both Eliot's and Staël's novels, in fact, begin with these male characters: we first meet the Tullivers as they are discussing plans for Tom's education, and the opening chapter of *Corinne* is titled, simply, "Oswald." It is only after Oswald sees Corinne crowned at the Capitol in Rome that Staël's narrator begins to penetrate the heroine's consciousness as well.

The development process, for each pair of characters, happens as a result of the dominant characteristics that become more pronounced through the "contrapuntal" structure. And this double structure reinscribes itself in the narrator's continual use of contrast in passages of direct characterization, such as the observation that "Maggie was strangely old for her years in everything except in her entire want of that prudence and self-command which were the qualities that made Tom manly in the midst of his intellectual boyishness" (276). Here, the form of the sentence makes it seem like these contrasts between characters actually engender one another: Maggie is unlike Tom because he is prudent, but Tom's prudence contrasts with his lack of the intellect that Maggie, in turn, enjoys. Though both characters exhibit what the narrator takes to be "mature" traits, each lacks the trait that the other possesses in spades. This type of characterization, in which the narrator not only enumerates various hierarchies of traits within each character, but comments upon which traits each character needs, implies that maturity—full development—exists as a kind of balanced mixture of various characteristics (including, in this instance, "prudence" as well as intellect). It is as if the hypothetical combination of Maggie's and Tom's mature traits would be able to produce one supremely developed character: the embodiment of that "unity" after which so many critics have argued that Eliot's novel is seeking.[76] In development novels with happier conclusions, characters do

in fact learn to streamline the dangerous characteristics (such as David Copperfield's romantic naïveté or Jane Eyre's quick temper) that threaten to spoil this kind of harmonious internal mix.  But if the structure of characterization in *Corinne* and *The Mill* implies the existence of such harmony, it is only as an impossible ideal against which individual characters, with their own peculiar hierarchies of characteristics, will always fall short. Instead of presenting protagonists who learn from each other and thereby become more "balanced" (a scenario that the double-protagonist structure might well be used to support), Eliot's and Staël's novels use doubleness and its resultant contrast to illustrate the steadily increasing hold that dominant characteristics take over the characters to whom they belong.

That the development of Maggie's and Corinne's dominant characteristics should stimulate these two heroines to commit greater and greater acts of self-sacrifice reveals another function that the double-protagonist narrative serves: the organization of the novels themselves cannot "sacrifice" Tom and Nelvil, no matter how much less interesting they might seem than their female counterparts.  Though these development narratives might belong principally to Maggie and Corinne, their investment of time on Tom and Nelvil actually mimics the female protagonists' affective investment in the relationships they hold most dear.  *The Mill* and *Corinne* cannot move Tom and Nelvil too far into the background because the development of the two female characters—and hence of their narratives – depends upon their own refusal to *experience* Tom and Nelvil as background.  Corinne and Maggie keep Nelvil and Tom at the forefront of their minds, quite literally until the day(s) that they die.  "To have no cloud between herself and Tom," *The Mill*'s narrator remarks of Maggie near the novel's end, "was still a perpetual yearning in her, that had its root deeper than all change" (454).

**Character Development as Paradox and Tragedy**

The idea that Maggie's dominant characteristic somehow preexists "all change" poses a particular problem for the *Bildungsroman*, a genre often assumed to take transformation as its central concern. In a discussion of how literary narratives structurally represent changes in character, Margolin specifically cites the *Bildungsroman* for its wide application of what he calls "*singular progressive* or *processural* change" (emphasis in original). According to Margolin, the type of change we see most often in the *Bildungsroman* necessitates that

> at least some of the essential properties of the agent in the initial
> and terminal states of the narrative display a marked difference and
> cannot be accommodated as mere varieties of a single paradigm of
> traits…This change occurs only once in the course of the narrative
> sequence, hence "singular," and its various stages point
> unexceptionally in the same direction…the sequence as a whole
> can be encompassed by one continuous path leading from initial to
> terminal state (118).

In other words, the character ("agent") who undergoes "singular progressive" change possesses a different mix of characteristics in the end of the narrative than she did in the beginning: she progresses through a series of stages that gradually and irrevocably alter her character as a whole. For all the narrative techniques that *The Mill* uses to align itself with the *Bildungsroman* (its focus on the protagonist's youth, its deliberate delineation of "stages" in her life, and its foregrounding of her conflicted relationship with family and social norms), Maggie's development narrative—in which her essential trait is repetitively broadcasted throughout—hardly fits the structure of gradual, transformative change that Margolin describes. Even if we bracket off the generic characteristics that align Eliot's novel with a tradition of *Bildungsromane*, the possibility of a character's change over time

is crucial to any novel insofar as novelistic narrative is a temporally unfolding process, one that changes from moment to moment. To base a novel, as both Eliot and Staël do, on protagonists who seem "change proof" can therefore come to seem like a self-defeating enterprise.

But even as *The Mill* and *Corinne* continually declaim the dominant characteristics that ostensibly mark their protagonists' essential identities, they also suggest that character can never be fully essentialized. More than most Victorian novelists of her stature, Eliot proves keenly aware of this paradox, even allowing *The Mill*'s narrator to pause the story and signal it in one of many asides to the reader:

> But you have known Maggie a long while, and need to be told, not
> her characteristics, but her history, which is a thing hardly to be
> predicted even from the completest knowledge of characteristics.
> For the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely from within.
> "Character," says Novalis, in one of his questionable aphorisms–
> "character is destiny." But not the whole of our destiny. Hamlet,
> Prince of Denmark, was speculative and irresolute, and we have a
> great tragedy in consequence. But if his father had lived to a good
> old age, and his uncle had died an early death, we can conceive
> Hamlet's having married Ophelia, and got through life with a
> reputation of sanity (401-402).

No matter what Maggie's "characteristics" happen to be, they do not exist in a vacuum; they are, rather, capable of the influence of history—i.e., of narrated events. These events, as the narrator's alternate version of Hamlet suggests, can affect the way we perceive character: had his father but lived, Hamlet would doubtless have been less tormented. It is only the father's death—and the series of events it occasions—that elevates the Prince's dominant characteristics (speculation, irresoluteness) to tragic proportions. This example, further, links Hamlet's (and, by extension, Maggie's) inability to change with the formal structure of tragedy: without the indecisiveness that comes to define his character, the

narrator implies that Hamlet's "great tragedy" would also never have existed. But what

Eliot's narrator neglects to mention here is that Hamlet's status as a tragic literary character

(not a human being, like the readers being addressed), necessitates those events that bring

his dominant characteristic to the fore. Literary characters, unlike the humans who read

about them, come into being through the narratives in which they are contained—they are

elements of a larger formal, linguistic structure whose very definition as a tragedy requires

them to undergo dramatic events like the death of a loved one. So while Eliot's narrator

can suggest that character is not destiny, her novel's self-definition as tragedy must always

prove that it is. *The Mill*'s plot, in other words, cannot afford to actually decrease the

prominence of Maggie's need for love and concomitant drive toward self-sacrifice.

Though scores of the novel's critics echo Harold Bloom's assertion that "[t]here is no

tragic necessity in Maggie's drowning" (5), few of them go on to offer suggestions about

what a more "appropriate" ending might look like. Death, in fact, is the final stage of

development toward which Maggie's and Tom's dominant traits have been pulling them all

along; its inevitability becomes manifest not only through overt instances of foreshadowing

such as Mrs. Tulliver's ominous prediction that her children will "be brought in dead and

drownded some day" (103), but through the novel's constant repetition of scenes in which

the central characters act according to a preordained characterological imperative.

The conception of character that emerges from both Madame de Staël's novels and

her philosophical essays is perhaps more ambitious than Eliot's insofar as it seeks to

identify and explain individuals (and individual artworks) in terms of the national

characteristics that Staël believes they embody. We see this concern reflected in the

novel's equation of Corinne with the artistic tradition of Italy and of Oswald with a

purportedly "British" reverence for duty and tradition.  In *Literature Considered in Its Relation to Social Institutions* (1800), Staël specifically puts forth a conception of character that echoes the valuation of dominant characteristics evident in *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss*: "In a nation, as in a man," she writes, "we need to find only the characteristic trait; all the others are the result of a thousand different accidents, but that one alone constitutes its being" (193).[77]  But such essentialist categorizations, implying a nation's innate, intractable identity, ultimately clash with the importance Staël places on what she feels, in unabashedly positivistic terms, is "the universal progress of enlightenment resulting simply from the succession of eras" (152).[78]  If political institutions improve throughout time, how can we speak of the "national character" that those institutions influence with any degree of finality?   We arrive back, then, at the impasse between character and history that *The Mill*'s narrator acknowledges with references to Novalis and Shakespeare.  And, like Maggie's ultimate self-sacrifice at the end of Eliot's novel, Corinne's death indicates that her overflowing imagination—so insistently and repetitively presented within Staël's novel as the hallmark of her moral character—overrides the power of circumstances to diminish it.

That Corinne's degeneration presents such a clear instance of the perils of female self-sacrifice might lead us to expect debates among feminist critics seeking to interrogate the novel's alignment of the protagonist's character development with suffering and death.  However, a number of *Corinne*'s readers tend downplay the wasting away of Corinne's artistic talent (and with it, her life) in favor of recuperating her status as a politically and aesthetically iconoclastic figure.  Susan Tennenbaum and Gayle Levy, for example, cite Corinne's multinational wisdom (which combines not only her British

and Italian upbringing(s) but also her vast knowledge of French, German, and classical

Greek artistic forms) as evidence of what Tenenbaum calls a new kind of "mutual

understanding through cross-cultural study and exchange"; that is, as a political

philosophy that is more empathetic because it is more accepting of cultural diversity

(161).[79] Levy goes even further than Tenenbaum, claiming that the novel's ending is not

tragic at all: "[a]lthough the end of *Corinne* might seem quite tragic, it actually affirms a

new world to come…[a world] in which the individual enjoys a life of republicanism and

equality and in which the true genius can create in a way that goes beyond the constraints

that gender and culture generally incite" (252). Such readings—in which Corinne

emerges as what Linda Lewis calls "the poet (the artist) [as] legislator of the world" (21)

dovetails with the sentiments of some of Corinne's most enthusiastic Victorian admirers:

a veritable Who's-Who of Victorian women writers, including Felicia Hemans, Elizabeth

Barrett Browning, Geraldine Jewsbury, and Laetitia Landon (who actually translated the

novel to English) claimed Staël's heroine as an artistic role-model.[80] In fact, the amount

of much-desired encouragement that Corinne provided these writers seems to have

blotted out any misgivings they may have had about the way in which Staël's heroine

ultimately sacrifices the very talent that made her so appealing an influence.

Readers of *The Mill on the Floss*, however, are far less likely to deemphasize the

famous double-death scene that occurs in the novel's penultimate chapter. Instead, Tom

and Maggie's drowning in the Floss has proven a literary-critical fetish. It fascinates

feminist critics in particular for obvious reasons, since the novel at once creates in Maggie

a stunningly intellectual and (to many readers) empathetic female figure only to kill her off

just at the beginning of her adulthood. As Fraiman notes in her analysis of the novel's

reception, many feminist critics of the 1970's "stressed Maggie's systematic

disempowerment and resignation to her plight" (137). The most representative of such

accounts comes from Elizabeth Ermarth, who argues that Maggie's need for love

"overthrows her integrity," rendering her pitiably dependent upon male acceptance

(Ermarth 594). Fraiman goes on to chronicle a second set of critics, including Hirsch and

Patricia Meyer Spacks, who attempt to map out Maggie's "compensatory path of spiritual

success" in response to those who see her untimely death as a symptom of weakness (137).

In other words, these readings tend to focus on the ways *The Mill*'s ending—so manifestly

bleak and discouraging—can be read as productive and affirmative. Though Fraiman does

not specifically include Mary Jacobus in the latter camp, Jacobus in fact produced one of

the most widely cited of the "compensatory" arguments:[81]

> [K]illing off this small apparatus of shallow quickness may have
> been the necessary sacrifice in order for Eliot herself to become an
> interpreter of the exotic possibilities contained in mysterious
> sentences. Maggie—unassimilable, incomprehensible, "fallen"—
> is her text, a "dead" language which thereby gives all the greater
> scope to authorial imaginings, making it possible for the writer to
> come into being (216).

According to this reading, then, Maggie's "sacrifice"—by which, I believe, Jacobus

indicates both the self-sacrifices Maggie makes throughout the novel and her ultimate

"sacrifice" at the hands of George Eliot's pen—is not in vain. Rather, it both frees

Maggie from the realm of patriarchal "maxims" in which she has been imprisoned and

allows Eliot to pursue a more fluid, metaphorical kind of writing in the final pages of her

novel, a writing that, for Jacobus, has affinities with Irigaray's emancipatory *écriture*

*feminine* insofar as it creates a place for the "thematics of female desire" to become

manifest (75). In a similar but less elliptical vain, Hirsch concludes that because Maggie

cannot survive in a world in which her "outer and inner life" (i.e., her actions and her desires) do not correspond, her death is actually "a renunciation in a limited sense only: in another, it emerges as a different kind of affirmation" (*Voyage In*, 28).  By writing Maggie's death, Eliot allows her heroine to return to the state of "pre-Oedipal fusion" with Tom, her parents, and her childhood home that has proven so elusive all along (37). Hirsch further supports this case by citing the curiously "positive" atmosphere that Eliot's narrator creates around this final reunion of brother and sister—a reunion in which Maggie and Tom, for one moment, relive "the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together" (*Mill* 521).[82]

Hirsch's argument helps illustrate how Maggie's early death (what she calls a "moral *Bildung* based on self-sacrifice and renunciation" [35] ) does not render her development null and void; in fact, it points to a version of character development that only comes into being through self-sacrifice which will also figure prominently in *Corinne*.  But while such concentration on the positive aspects of *The Mill*'s ending help tease out the novel's disagreement with the systems of gender inequality it depicts, it also risks obscuring the fairly obvious ways in which Maggie's death *is* a tragedy: it precipitously banishes the protagonist's formal character from the story in the very moment at which her moral character is at its most heroic.  To read the loss of Maggie's life as a kind of reward—as Nancy Armstrong has more recently done with her remark that Eliot's heroine is "better off dead" (96)—is to resist what I suspect is a prevailing reaction among the novel's readers: that Maggie deserved better than what she got, and that her momentary reconciliation with Tom, however joyful, is not enough to efface the tragedy of her death.[83]

In contradistinction to the previous studies, then, I want to suggest that the

protagonists' deaths in *The Mill and the Floss* and *Corinne*—deaths precipitated by

Maggie's and Corinne's dominant characteristics—both complicate and extend the more

general relationship between character development and loss that becomes manifest in so

many nineteenth-century development novels.  The very strength of character that results

from the repetition and enlargement of Maggie's dominant trait must, through its

imperviousness to change, lead to her death.   Claiming Maggie's story as a "successful"

one, as Hirsch and Jacobus suggest that we can, recreates the very progress narrative that

*The Mill* deems unachievable.


**Changelessness: The Value of Tenacity**

While the inevitability of the tragic ending (especially within the tradition of the

romance) provides one reason that dominant characteristics prove so resilient in Eliot's and

Staël's novels, these authors also recast their protagonists' unwillingness to change in

moral terms.  In *Character and the Novel*, W.J. Harvey notes that for Eliot, "moral

responsibility depends on a survival of personal identity."  One need not buy Harvey's

liberal-humanist ethics wholesale in order to appreciate his sharp formal readings of Eliot's

characterization.  He continues,

> [T]his is not to say that George Eliot—or any great classical
> novelist—denies the facts of change and development.  But change
> is still reconciled to the idea of a stable ego; one's identity lies
> precisely in the unique pattern of past changes which constitutes
> one's individuality.  And this pattern also involves the future to the
> extent that it allows for some possibilities of development and
> excludes others (120).

Harvey's argument about the morality of the "stable ego" in Eliot's work has particularly interesting implications for *The Mill on the Floss* as a development novel. *Bildungsromane*, as we have seen, often seem to take change as an undisputed moral good: protagonists from Austen's Elizabeth Bennet to Thackeray's Arthur Pendennis receive more narratorial sympathy when they learn to become different from the way they originally were. But by imagining that changing one's character is always a step in the right moral direction, such novels also implicitly devalue the kind of "stable ego" that Harvey rightly cites as an indicator of moral compass in Eliot's work. In Brontë's and Dickens's *Bildungsromane*, the stable ego actually hinders development insofar as its very stability keeps protagonists from overcoming or balancing out their character traits. But the formal presentation of Corinne's and Maggie's character(s) is stubborn, repeatedly referring the protagonists' actions back to the characteristic that defines them. In Maggie and Corinne, Eliot and Staël focus on developing moral characters for which, to use Harvey's formulation, certain "possibilities" (Maggie choosing to save herself rather than her brother; Corinne deciding that her artistic career is more important than her love life) are simply impossible. Indeed, George Levine has remarked that "[o]ne of George Eliot's primary insights, dramatized in the curious passivity of her characters at their moments of choice, is that 'character' as it has been formed over a lifetime finally determines how one will behave in a crisis" (406). And while other novels, like Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, might see the protagonist's predictability as ironic or limiting when read according to the *Bildungsroman*'s more familiar course of developmental changes, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Corinne* both suggest that it is precisely the immutability of that which is dominant in their protagonists that makes them worthy subjects of their own

110

development narratives. This resistance to creating a developing protagonist whose character is open to a vast field of possibilities and modulations—to taking the world as her oyster—questions the critical assumption that aligns character development with transformation in the *Bildungsroman*. Writing within a novelistic genre whose protagonists often change for the better, both Eliot and Staël demonstrate the morality of staying the same.

*Corinne*'s fascination with its heroine's immutable character comes through clearly in Book XIV, "Corinne's Story" (*Histoire de Corinne*). Here, an embedded first-person narrative, in the form of a letter from Corinne to Oswald, momentarily moves the novel's third-person narrator to the background. "Corinne's Story" is an especially pivotal section of Staël's novel, not only because it allows the protagonist to speak for a prolonged period in her own voice, but because it promises to reveal the personal history that both Corinne and the narrator have persistently withheld from both Oswald and the reader. It purports, in other words, to act as a mini-*Bildungsroman*, explaining how Corinne spent the early years of her life and how she became an Italian celebrity. And indeed, Book XIV offers many of the development novel's structural trappings, including the early onset of the developing character's orphanhood and her acute sense of alienation from the environment in which she grows up. Specifically, the death of the protagonist's Italian mother precipitates Corinne's voyage to Northumberland, where her father, Lord Edgermond, lives with his new wife and daughter, Lucile. Corinne unwittingly falls under the care of Lady Edgermond, who attempts to tone down her stepdaughter's spontaneous, loquacious qualities by encouraging her only to take part in those domestic practices (preparing tea, playing whist) that she believes ought to comprise a young Englishwoman's education:

"[E]verything about me surprised her," Corinne writes, and "she planned to make changes if she could" (252).[84]  But what begins as a fairly straightforward coming-of-age story that might, in another novel, depict the heroine's eventual, if conditional, acceptance of her new surroundings (as, for instance, happens to the heroine of Barrett Browning's *Bildungsroman*-poem *Aurora Leigh* [1856]), instead ends up as a story of the ideological impasse between Corinne and the world that her stepmother represents.

In fact, Corinne's assertion that "[m]y talents, my tastes, my character itself were formed by the time my father sent for me" (251) precludes the possibility of developmental change that the scenario of being orphaned and moving to a foreign country seems to offer.[85]  This preformed character, as we have seen, thrives on the exercise of the imagination, through activities such as acting and poetry that are anathema to Lady Edgermond and her circle: "it was always the pleasures of the mind," she tells Oswald, "that got sacrificed" (258).  The novel's immensely unsympathetic portrait of Lady Edgermond, and indeed of English life in general, leaves little doubt that we are meant to take Corinne's period of English acculturation as both artificial (insofar as the protagonist internally rejects it) and detrimental to her natural, imaginative character.  Though *Corinne* rather lamely tries to mitigate its protagonist's moral polarization between a free-thinking, emotionally vigorous Italy and a staid, creatively desiccated Britain through Oswald's defense of English duty as the highest moral imperative, England still comes off, to quote Naomi Schor, as "the evil empire of patriarchy" (120).

For Corinne, to "change" according to Lady Edgermond's wishes—to become more accustomed to what she calls "the parching breath of malicious mediocrity" (265) in rural England—is tantamount to death itself.[86]  Shortly after her own father dies, Corinne hears

Italian musicians playing under her window. The experience of even this little taste of the country she left behind is enough to precipitate her decision to return to Italy despite Lady Edgermond's categorical disapproval of such a plan. Corinne writes:

> In a kind of ecstasy, I felt for Italy everything that love inspires—
> desire, enthusiasm, longing. I was no longer in control: everything
> in me was swept off toward my native land…Were life offered to
> the dead in their graves, they would not lift off their tombstones
> with greater impatience than I felt to cast off my shrouds, and
> repossess nature, my imagination, and my genius! (268).[87]

It is the stirring of Corinne's dominant characteristic—her imagination—that brings her long-stifled character back to life. This passage linguistically performs the imagination's dominance, as the abstract trait takes "control" of the protagonist's psyche and effectively dictates her subsequent behavior. More than that, Corinne's elaborate metaphor of the shrouds and tombstones signals the reawakening of that verbal talent which years of English living have beaten into submission. The language in this passage is typical of Corinne's improvisational bravado: where one word might do (say, "desire"), she piles up three somewhat synonymous words ("desire, enthusiasm, longing"). (Similarly, we see here how Corinne's imagination becomes interchangeable, in her own mind, with the concepts of her "genius" and "nature."). If the time she spends in England causes Corinne to develop, it is a kind of development that forsakes change for its own sake; Lady Edgermond's attempt to instill Corinne with "traditional" English values has ultimately intensified that element of the protagonist's character (*génie*) that opposes those values. What Corinne calls the "shrouds" of submission to her stepmother's will have not altered Corinne's character so much as they have kept it under cover. Corinne's departure for Italy thus causes not only a geographic, but also a characterological return.

Eliot's valorization of characterological persistence is more marked in *The Mill on the Floss* than it is elsewhere in her novels, which famously depict the moderate, "organic" process of change that protagonists undergo as they gradually struggle with issues such as negotiating an unfamiliar community (Tertius Lydgate), late-blooming, unforeseen love (Adam Bede) or personal and professional aimlessness (Daniel Deronda). In her work on Eliot's organicism, Sally Shuttleworth has argued that the novel's privileging of the "unconscious" realm of Tom's and Maggie's childhood indicates an alternative, "cyclical" view of history that throws organicism's ostensibly positivistic interpretations of social development into question (60-77). And *The Mill*'s departure from the model of slow but sure social change that Eliot often espouses attends its simultaneous resistance to the "linear progression" of individual development we find in traditional *Bildungsromane* (66).[88] Because *Bildungsromane* frequently represent both the possibility and the desirability of transformative growth, Eliot's struggle against these values informs a kind of backlash response in which Maggie's unwillingness to change (rather than her submission to the "realistic" pace of organic change) shows itself to unexpected and unusual moral advantage.

Essays published both near the beginning and the end of Eliot's artistic career help to explain her admiration, however elegiac, for persistence of character in the face of pressure to change. "The Natural History of German Life" (1856), for example, respects the adherence to custom that Wilhelm Riehl sees as the "most predominant characteristic" of the German peasantry (*Essays*, 120). The peasant's wariness toward modernization, Eliot argues, is not mere pigheadedness but rather a passionate "tenacity" (115) or "unreasoning persistency, which has its important function in the development of the race"

(118).  And in "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" (1879), Eliot resurrects her defense of the

tenacity that defines a particular national character as she describes the Jews' "sublime type

of steadfastness" in the face of widespread English anti-Semitism.  In fact, Eliot contends

that the "forcible character—*i.e.* of strongly marked characteristics" of the Jews actually

resembles the characteristic adamancy (the "exceptional" nature) of the English themselves

(*Theophrastus*, 148-50).[89]  In both of these essays, the author takes a defensive position

against those individuals (whether industrialists in the first case or anti-Semites in the

second) who insist that the group in question (whether German peasants or Jews) requires a

kind of characterological overhaul.  The author's valorization of changelessness becomes

more pronounced to the degree that transformation is demanded of her subject(s): like

Eliot's wariness of change in the face of the *Bildungsroman*, these essays most fervently

emphasize the value of persistence when its merit as a character trait comes under attack.

Maggie's resistance to the changes we might expect from a *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist

thus situates her within a pantheon of tenacious, real-world individuals for whom Eliot

movingly advocates.

　　　To demonstrate the way in which Staël's and Eliot's novels question the

relationship between character development and change, however, is not to claim that

either work simply equates morality with changelessness.  Certainly both novelists have

created many characters (Featherstone, Grandcourt, d'Erfeuil, and even Tom Tulliver and

Oswald Nelvil) whose lack of palpable change does not automatically mark them as

possessors "of good character."  Rather, I want to suggest that *The Mill* and *Corinne*

illustrate how the developing protagonist's resistance to change—and hence, seemingly, to

the very change-oriented narrative in which she stars—sets in motion a different kind of

development that derives its value from its unwillingness to submit to the demands that the *Bildungsroman* traditionally makes on its central character(s). Such demands, as we have seen, include forgetting one's past (and the characters who populated it) in order to finally arrive at one's new-and-improved self. Though Staël's novel of course chronologically precedes "classic" nineteenth-century English *Bildungsromane* by authors like Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Dickens, it presents an alternative course of character development that Eliot quite pointedly chooses to adopt, both by drawing on the narrative structure of the romance in general and by referencing *Corinne* in particular. The attention that *The Mill* pays to the persistence (and, indeed, ascendancy) of Maggie's dominant characteristic implicitly questions the equation of successful character development with the kind of reorganization and addition of characteristics that we see in earlier *Bildungsromane*. If Maggie dies, as Elizabeth Abel et al. remind us in their work on the female development novel, her death is not a failure, but rather a "[refusal] to accept an adulthood that denies profound convictions and desires (*Voyage In*, 11). *The Mill*'s tragedy, I would add, is also an indictment of the model of development that sees self-preservation as a goal to be achieved at any cost, whether it is the sacrificial loss of minor characters or the streamlining of the protagonist's threateningly disproportionate character traits. Maggie's virtue stems from the way in which the inflexibility of her character renders these traditional markers of *Bildung* unworkable.

Eliot's refiguring of the techniques of characterization we find in conventional *Bildungsromane* shows up starkly in *The Mill*'s fourth and fifth Books. Book IV is titled "The Valley of Humiliation," a reference to the section of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which the lead character, Christian, successfully negotiates a dangerous encounter with the

116

Satanic figure Apollyon in order to continue on his journey toward the Celestial City.  At

this point in Eliot's novel, Maggie is becoming increasingly despondent about her family's

financial hardship and her once-ebullient father's continual state of melancholy.  Adopting

a vocabulary beloved to the traditional *Bildungsroman*'s structure of forward-moving life

"stages," the narrator specifically marks this as a moment of crisis: "[t]his time of utmost

need was come to Maggie, with her short span of thirteen years" (276).  Tulliver himself

begins to display a desire to pay off his debts that the narrator codes as a monomaniacal

submission to "this all-compelling demand of his nature" (278).  Likewise, Tom—who, as

we have seen, already acts according to a black-and-white sense of justice—takes on his

father's monomania along with his own, his "interest in life…concentrating itself into the

one channel of ambitious resistance to misfortune" (276).  Like the tragic events that bring

out Hamlet's prevailing characteristics, the Tulliver family's loss of money and self-respect

creates an atmosphere especially conducive to the expansion of those characteristic

tendencies that the narrator has already begun to establish.

In one sense, Book IV's allusive title sets the reader up for Maggie to make her own

kind of progress: it is here, in an exceedingly difficult time, that her resolve will be tested

and that she, like Christian, will make it on to the next "stage" of the development

narrative.  And indeed, it is in "The Valley of Humiliation" that Maggie stumbles upon a

copy of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* in a bundle of books that Bob Jakin brings

her on one especially lonely day.  Taking the devotional's self-sacrificing message to heart,

Maggie memorably decides to purge herself of the "inordinate love" (i.e. self-love or

earthly love) that Thomas à Kempis sees as the cause of great suffering (290).  The

protagonist approaches this moment with all the gravity due to revelation:

Maggie drew a long breath and pushed her heavy hair back, as if to see a sudden vision more clearly. Here, then, was a secret of life that would enable her to renounce all other secrets…It flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasure, as if that were the central necessity of the universe; and for the first time she saw the possibility of shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of her own desires–of taking her stand out of herself, and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely-guided whole (290).

On the surface, this passage resembles similar moments of clarity that feature prominently in earlier development novels: think, for example, of Jane Eyre's breathless decision to undertake "a new servitude" or young David's decision to walk from London to Dover in search of his long-lost Aunt Betsey. But at the same time that Eliot's narrator dramatizes both the educational and the narrative value of the moment's "suddenly apprehended solution," she also uses free indirect discourse ("Here, then…") to gently distance herself from Maggie's conviction that she has fortuitously stumbled upon "the secret of life." For the protagonist's hyperbolically rendered revelation is that she must reverse precisely that characteristic—"fixing her heart on her own pleasure"—that has guided her since childhood. It is not enough that Maggie incorporate *The Imitation*'s lesson into the way she already thinks and behaves; in order to develop according to these newfound tenets, Maggie must drastically alter her character by trading in one monomania (the desire to be loved) for another (the renunciation of worldly love). And although the *Imitation of Christ* preaches self-sacrifice—an ethic with which Maggie is already familiar—it is an ascetic variety of sacrifice from which she can receive no human love in return.

Throughout the remainder of Book IV, the narrator plays up the way in which Maggie's revelation seems like it has altered the make-up of her character. The protagonist

forsakes her volumes of "Virgil, Euclid, and Aldrich" in order to take up plain sewing and help pay the family's mounting expenses. Even Mrs. Tulliver—by far the least insightful character in the novel—"felt the change in her with a sort of puzzled wonder that Maggie should be 'growing up so good'" (294). But this conversion is fleeting, as Eliot compresses the four years it supposedly spans into a paltry three pages. Book V, in which Maggie begins to have secret meetings with her admirer Philip Wakem, quickly occasions "the rising again of her innate delight in admiration and love" (301). Maggie's dominant characteristic has not been changed so much as it has been imperfectly and opportunistically repressed, and not even the admonitions of Thomas à Kempis can keep her from borrowing the romantic novels, and feeding off the tender sentiments, that Philip so eagerly proffers. The period of asceticism that Maggie passes through does not lead to an even further or more marked change of character, but rather to a reappearance of what Philip calls the "real self" that has remained hidden all along (335).

As the novel progresses, the degree to which Maggie's desire to be loved and her penchant for renunciation actually attend each other becomes evident. When Tom discovers that Maggie has been seeing Philip, he compels her to either swear on the Bible that she will end the relationship, or to endure the fallout that would unquestionably occur if Tom were to tell Mr. Tulliver that Maggie is romantically involved with the son of his nemesis. Threatened with the loss of her father and Tom—"the two idols of her life" (280)—Maggie grudgingly agrees to sacrifice her relationship with Philip even as she resents Tom's implication that she cares more about herself than about the Tulliver family's good name. But this sacrifice is categorically different than those we saw in *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, since it does not move Maggie conveniently "forward" toward

happiness and socialization, but rather thrusts her back toward the state of loneliness and

isolation to which she had previously been accustomed.  Like Corinne's movement from

England back to Italy, Maggie's ascetic conversion actually prompts a *re*version—a change

back—which frustrates the model of "unidirectional" character development that Margolin

ascribes to the *Bildungsroman* (118).

As we might expect, Tom and Maggie's disagreement over Philip instantiates another

clash between the moral qualities (love and duty) that *The Mill*'s sister and brother embody;

it allows Maggie to repeat, and in repeating, intensify, the central characterological conflict

between the novel's two principal characters:

> If *you* were in fault ever—if you had done anything very wrong, I
> should be sorry for the pain it brought you; I should not want
> punishment to be heaped on you.  But you have always enjoyed
> punishing me—you have always been hard and cruel to me: even
> when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than any one
> else in the world (347).

Maggie's "character" of her brother employs those structures of repetition and contrast of

which we have seen that *The Mill*'s narrator is particularly fond.  Volleying back and forth

repetitively between the subjects "you," "I," and "me," the protagonist defines Tom's

disciplinary fervor against her own desire that he should never feel pain, even if he has

been "in fault."  But what is different about this confrontation of characters is Maggie's

realization and verbalization of the inflexible nature of this divide, as her repetitive

language testifies: Tom has "*always* been hard and cruel" and "*always* enjoyed punishing"

while she has "always" loved him best.  (Despite her suggestion to the contrary, Maggie's

continuing preference for Tom is amply illustrated by her obedience to his will even in this

instance, when she is convinced that he is, again, "in fault").  Maggie specifically brings

the discussion back to childhood, thus signaling the considerable lapse of time over which

both she and her brother have been driven by the same contrasting imperatives. The stakes, however, are higher than they used to be, since brother and sister now bring the same fundamental conflict to bear on issues of family duty and sexual desire as they once did on pet rabbits and fresh-baked jam puffs.

The protagonist's reversion back to her old self, then, is accompanied by a hard-won self awareness. Once the fight with Tom is over, Maggie returns to her room to reflect: "She used to think in that time that she had made great conquests, and won a lasting stand on serene heights above worldly temptations and conflict. And here she was down again in the thick of a hot strife with her own and others' passions" (348). Paradoxically, the "development" that occurs in this scene is Maggie's realization of the inauthenticity of the traditional development narrative: if a change happens here, it is a change that pushes the immutability of Maggie's dominant characteristic even further to the fore. Recognizing the impossibility of transformation (such as that she had hoped to accomplish through asceticism) is a kind of development that retains rather than renovates what the novel calls Maggie's "nature." The protagonist's quiet self-realization, unlike the "suddenly apprehended solution" offered by à Kempis, is her true revelation, since it is born not out of a moment's desperation but culled from a lifetime of similar, recurring experiences in which the "hot strife" of her passions has taken precedent.

While passages like those I have just cited highlight Maggie's increasing recognition of her own tenacity, the novel everywhere emphasizes the losses that underpin even the most modest manifestations of development. Ironically, Maggie's capitulation to her brother's demand that she sacrifice Philip's love actually alienates her even more from Tom as well, since her stark depiction of Tom's character convinces him that "you need

121

say no more to show me what a wide distance there is between us. Let us remember that in the future and be silent" (348). Maggie's need for love actually damages those relationships that she most desires to protect, thus supporting Christopher Lane's claim that George Eliot's famous injunctions to sympathy and fellowship disguise a coexisting current of skepticism about the "psychic cost" of putting such values into practice (112). "Eliot," he writes, "presents aspects of social conflict as insoluble and participation in communities as sometimes irreparably damaging to individuals" (116). I would extend Lane's argument (which, while analyzing *The Mill*, does not focus primarily on Maggie) by noting that the problems character development poses for protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* often stem from the interpersonal relationships demanded by the vastly populated social panoramas we find throughout Victorian fiction. Though *The Mill* indicates that Maggie's refusal to sacrifice her relationship with Tom (and hence to temper her dominant characteristic) is the same impulse that drives her development, the cost of this development is not only "psychic," but ultimately bodily—that is, the cost of her physical life.

This, of course, is where the tragedy implicit in *The Mill*'s model of character development comes into play: if continuous suffering (here, in the form of self-sacrifice) enhances the protagonist's moral character, then it seems to follow that the finest moral characters will also be those whose development, through self-sacrifice, carries them to the point of death. Maggie dies because, not in spite, of the constancy of what I have called her "dominant characteristic," a constancy which Eliot's novel has after all taken pains to defend. So while the novel in many ways positions itself in tonic opposition to the more far-fetched, fantasylike models of novelistic character development we see in *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, its death-ending recalls the multiple fatalities that occur within them. Indeed,

Gillian Beer has argued that part of the ending's jarring quality results from the way its narrative seems to abandon the realm of realistic "social critique," of "social mores which are *capable of being changed*" in favor of an ending that unrealistically removes the possibility of social change, and of Maggie's personal choice, from the equation (100, emphasis in original). But I would argue that *The Mill*'s ending is less a bait-and-switch than a continued challenge of the readerly expectations we bring to the development narrative. That Maggie should die in the midst of a benevolent act in which her unwavering character becomes spectacularly manifest exemplifies *The Mill*'s rejection of traditional narrative models that yoke moral character development to success, happiness and longevity. Maggie's death may not seem realistic, but the message behind it is grimly so: that tenacity itself, however morally superior to transformative development in Eliot's account, offers no special dispensation for those characters who possess it. Where Brontë and Dickens depict character development as an enviable achievement, Eliot insists that it is often an unbearable one.

We can, further, read both *The Mill*'s and *Corinne*'s tragic finales are as a consequence of the dominant trait's poetics. As we have seen, Maggie's need to be loved takes on increasing importance within her development story as she begins to acknowledge and feed it; indeed, it is the acceptance of this trait's persistence that marks her moral maturity. But for Maggie to remain heroic, *The Mill* must end with a precipitous tragedy because it cannot finally sustain the growth of Maggie's dominant trait, a growth that shows no sign of slowing down: The very dominion of one trait over all others threatens to render Eliot's protagonist into a caricature. This movement from heroism toward caricature is precisely what occurs in the end of *Corinne*, as the protagonist's

123

monomaniacal focus on Oswald—a monomania the novel attributes to her active imagination—saps her of all her former creativity before ultimately killing her.  In the final section of this chapter, I will tease out the affinities between the technique of characterization I have been describing in *Corinne* and *The Mill*—whereby one characteristic becomes dominant—and the ostensibly "flattening" medium of caricature.  This discussion will re-evaluate the prevailing assumption (evident not only among literary critics but explicitly stated within the novels themselves) that Corinne and Maggie exemplify the phenomenon of characterological depth.  Moreover, it will continue my first chapter's project of revising our general understanding of how depth is formally constructed in those nineteenth-century novels which are so well-known for developing it.

**Caricature and Depth**

  *Corinne*'s ending is tragic not only because the protagonist dies, but also because she becomes so artistically vitiated in the period leading up to her death.  After she learns of Oswald's attachment to Lucile, Corinne flees Rome (the city that saw her greatest success) and goes into seclusion in Florence, where her former friends and admirers cannot bear witness to her reduced state.  The novel spends many pages documenting this creative decline, citing Corinne's inability to engage in the kind of improvisations that made her famous; the very intractability of Corinne's attachment to Oswald stands in ironic conflict with the spontaneity and adaptability that characterize the *improvisatrice*.  Corinne is now only able to pen fragmented thoughts, among which she concedes that "the source of everything is dried up" (369).[90]

But while Corinne's lost talent might suggest the retreat of her characteristic genius, the novel insists, instead, that it is the particular force of this genius that marks her for death. The protagonist remarks that "my genius, if it still survives, can be sensed only through the strength of my sorrow" (416).[91] She repeatedly argues, in other words, that the magnification of her suffering is the inevitable flipside of her magnified imagination: "I am an exception to the universal order of things…[t]here is happiness for everyone, and the dreadful power to suffer that kills me is a way of feeling peculiar to me alone" (364).[92] Though Corinne is more articulate about her own situation than Maggie, both novels illustrate a similar Catch-22: that characteristic which supports the protagonist's development can also kill her if it goes unchecked.

Rather than trying to overcome her love for Oswald—a love she perfectly understands to be destructive and futile—Corinne throws the same kind of vigor into her sorrow as she previously channeled into her improvisations. Most strikingly (and most creepily for many readers), Corinne attempts at the end of her life to teach Lucile (her ostensible rival) and Oswald's daughter, Juliette, how to become more like herself. These lessons in Corrinean character, which include practicing the art of conversation and learning Scottish airs on the harp, are apparently devised for Oswald's benefit: Corinne informs Lucile that "[y]ou will have to be you and me at the same time" because "my only personal desire is that Oswald find some traces of my influence in you and your daughter, and that at least he can never enjoy feeling without remembering Corinne" (413).[93] Despite the fact that Corinne believes Oswald has ruined her life, she continues to commit herself to the line of self-sacrifice which she has been following throughout Staël's entire novel.

The change that Corinne goes through as the novel catalogs her physical and mental downfall occurs, paradoxically, because the protagonist's characterological makeup remains relatively static: her dominant characteristic becomes more and more exaggerated through repetition, and its dominion over her actions (or inability to act) gradually increases as well. That every aspect of Corinne's life must be filtered through her once-sublime genius eventually morphs her into a kind of grotesque, verbal caricature of her former self. Though we might not initially recognize the affinities between caricature (known foremost as pictorial and a comic medium) and Staël's or Eliot's resolutely tragic literary projects, caricature's focus on, and inflation of, an individual's single physical feature (a gigantic chin, say) repeats, in corporeal terms, the poetics of the dominant characteristic that we see in *Corinne* and *The Mill*'s developing characters. As Michèle Hannoosh has explained in her work on nineteenth-century French and British caricature, "the deformations" of pictorial caricature typically "locate the subject's characteristic traits" (76); and in the act of "location," caricaturists also define their subjects according to those traits, or characteristics, that their portraiture renders prominent. In caricature, a nose is never just a nose: it also makes some kind of statement about the moral character of its bearer. Moreover, this disproportionate attention to one characteristic implies the same kind of hierarchy of moral characteristics that operates not only in Staël's and Eliot's novels, but throughout the countless verbal depictions of character—both fictional and non-fictional—throughout nineteenth-century texts. Just as the protrusion of a gigantic chin threatens to obscure the coexistence of a more streamlined nose and mouth, so too does Corinne's prominent imagination, for example, manifest its prominence to the exclusion or diminution of other character traits.

Along with Hannoosh, Deidre Lynch has meticulously analyzed the ways in which eighteenth-and nineteenth-century audiences thought about caricature in relationship to the more streamlined media of "character" drawing and neoclassical portraiture. Despite—and also because—of caricature's appeal to a wide reading public, many visual artists (most notably those connected with the Royal Academy and the teachings of Joshua Reynolds) attempted to deride caricature as an inferior or lower-class enterprise: "High art set about defining itself in contradistinction to popular and amateur art by identifying itself with an ideal of 'pictorial abstemiousness' and identifying others with excess" (Lynch 59). This dichotomy between the "high art" of portraiture (which represented "character") and the popular activity of caricature was reinforced in works such as William Hogarth's engraving "Characters and Caricaturas" (1743) and Francis Grose's *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas* (1788). Each of these works sees caricature as the exaggeration of the more moderately rendered *character*, which displays natural and recognizable "types" (Lynch 61; Hannoosh 80-81). An underlying assumption of such accounts is that caricature illustrates the unnatural or disproportionately deviant traits of human subjects, thereby rendering those subjects more monstrous (and *less* human) than their counterparts in the realm of character.

Theories of novelistic character have frequently drawn upon the language of caricature to make distinctions between the structural configuration of major and minor characters. The most famous of these theories, as we have seen, is E.M. Forster's delineation of "flat" and "round" characters, in which the author specifically likens flat characters to "caricatures" and asserts that the mark of a flat characters is that they are "constructed round a single idea or quality" and do not change over time (67-69). And though Forster admits the humorous, "comforting quality" of flat characters, he clearly

127

subordinates the latter group to "round" characters (like Lucy Snowe and Becky Sharpe) who are defined according to their ability to surprise the reader—that is, their changeability (78). In a contemporary account Woloch describes what he calls "compression," a technique for rendering minor characters which bears an especially strong similarity to the visual strategies of caricature that Hannoosh and Lynch discuss. Woloch writes:

> We can think of these minor or flat characters as synecdoches, as their outstanding quality is substituted for their entire personality, part for whole...[but] Between the minor character and the synecdoche into which she is absorbed is a narrative process that I will term compression. Compression underlies the distortion behind both 'flatness' and the 'synecdoche': just as the whole gets filtered through the essential part, so the full person is squeezed into the flat character, a flatness motivated and sustained by the *characteristic* that gets derived from the individual only to subsume her (69).

Like pictorial caricatures, Woloch's "compressed" minor characters are defined according to a single, exceptional "quality" or "characteristic." Where the defining characteristics contained in visual caricatures are rendered spatially (as in the big nose threatening to swallow the face of its possessor), Woloch argues that the caricature born of novelistic "compression" occurs not only through the depiction of a character who is subsumed by a characteristic, but through the repetition over time of a single gesture that signals this subsuming process. (Woloch here cites *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mary Bennet, whom Austen comically reduces to a mouthpiece of banal homilies). Echoing and extending Forster's division between flat and round, this model of compression assumes that the compressed character will be positioned "in functional relationship to the protagonist's depth" (71). Mary's caricatured quality, for example, serves to highlight the comparatively unpredictable and psychologically complex portrait of her sister Elizabeth.

While both Forster's and Woloch's work ties together minor character and caricature, however, I want to argue that Eliot's and Staël's novels complicate these models insofar as they create *protagonists* through the use of those narrative techniques that literary critics tend to associate with flatness. As I have shown throughout this chapter, both novels construct the character of the protagonist around a single dominant characteristic whose importance within Maggie's and Corinne's characterological hierarchies is repetitively announced and implied. This characteristic does not slowly recede with maturity (as it might in the more portrait-style protagonists of *Copperfield* and *Eyre*), but grows more prominent until, like a caricatured physical feature, it consumes its subject altogether. Moreover, the incessant and ultimately predictable manifestations of Maggie's and Corinne's dominant traits illustrate how poorly these characters fit into a model of roundness, like Forster's, that depends on a character's ability to surprise. Structurally, Maggie and Corinne turn out to resemble Mary Bennet and Mrs. Micawber more than any of us might have supposed.

To claim the formal affinity between these two famous protagonists and the minor characters from whom they are often assumed to categorically differ is also to qualify the critical orthodoxy regarding both Maggie and Corinne in particular and the nineteenth-century protagonist more generally. Many of *The Mill*'s most eminent critics, for example, focus on Maggie's internal heterogeneity—that is, on the conflict between her different character traits. Along with Woloch (whose investment in the protagonist's depth I have already cited), John Kucich writes that Maggie embodies a larger trend of "mixedness" or internal self-division that marks many of Eliot's major characters: "Eliot's characters," he argues, "often come to display an inner confusion that appears to be innate" (*Repression*,

125).  The insistence upon Maggie's internal mixture—and the depth that results from it—

appears more recently in Armstrong's assertion that Maggie combines the characteristics of

"femaleness" and "femininity" which previous novels tended to split between two different

characters altogether (Bertha Mason and Jane Eyre, for example).  In this argument,

Maggie illustrates the "internal struggle between self-expression and self-discipline within

a consequently complex and layered individual" (*How Novels Think*, 92).  Critical readings

of *Corinne*, too, tend to highlight its protagonist's internal multiplicity.  In an essay

claiming that Corinne's heterogeneity "emblematizes" the possible achievements of the

republican state, Levy contends that "Corinne unites elements that are not customarily

combined, traits that are not necessarily gendered but that are composed of oppositional

elements" (243-44).  Each of these discussions, then, not only foregrounds the depth of

Eliot's or Staël's protagonists, but also affirms depth's productive qualities for a variety of

literary-critical paradigms.

To be sure, there is much in both *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss* to support such

readings.  Eliot's narrator does often refer to Maggie's interiority as a kind of psychological

jumble; her "thoughts" amounting to "the oddest mixture of clear-eyed acumen and blind

dreams" (112).  Corinne, too, whom Oswald remarks "combines charms of many different

countries" (96) and whom Staël's narrator warns is "gifted in too many directions" (125)

can be convincingly read as heterogeneous.  By emphasizing the way in which a single

character trait comes to dominate these ostensibly diverse consciousnesses, then, I do not

mean to suggest that the previous critics have got it "wrong" when it comes to Eliot's and

Staël's methods of characterization.  Rather, I want to call attention to the duality inherent

in these methods: Eliot's and Staël's protagonists come into being not simply through

markers of heterogeneity, but through the coexistence of these markers with those that posit the protagonists' characters as illustrative of a single, dominant trait. *Corinne* and *The Mill*, that is, toggle back-and-forth between narrative illustrations of diversity (which posit that the protagonist possesses a vast, almost infinite multiplicity of internal character traits) and those of singularity (which define her, like a flat character or caricature, according to an overdetermined characteristic).

Though this continual volley between diversity and singularity occurs in broad strokes across *The Mill*, it shows up more succinctly in *Corinne*, whose character is at once assumed to incorporate the virtues of multiple nationalities (English, Italian, German, French) at the same time that it represents the particular qualities of one country alone (evidenced by the title's contention that Corinne *is* Italy). In a statement about Mme de Staël that might apply just as well to Corinne, C.A. Sainte-Beuve provides a clear elaboration of this kind of characterization, in which diversity and singularity play off of one another:

> The predominant characteristic of Mme. de Staël, the main unity of
> all the contrasts of her character, the swift, keen spirit which
> circulated through every member of that vast assemblage, and
> vivified the whole, was, beyond a doubt, a genius for conversation,
> for sudden improvisation, springing, all divine, from the unfailing
> fountain of her soul (155).[94]

Here, Sainte-Beuve singles out Staël's improvisational talent as that "predominant characteristic" which seems to rise above the multifarious "assemblage" of her characteristics. He presents Staël's character as a product of the dual presence, the juxtaposition, of these expansive and restrictive techniques. The very designation of Staël (and indeed, of Corinne) as an *improvisatrice* contains within it this same duality: Staël is defined "predominantly" by a single characteristic—the ability to improvise—which itself

131

refers to its possessor's spontaneity, to her facility to escape easy definition.  Hence Sainte-Beuve's seemingly paradoxical statement that Staël's unpredictable qualities are part of a character that is eminently predictable—"beyond a doubt."  Staël's complexity, or depth, is built upon the simplicity of a direct characterological label.

Further, the duality of simple and complex tendencies within Staël's and Eliot's protagonists can help clarify the broader narrative construction of literary character in the nineteenth-century.  For "character"—as I have argued explicitly in the Introduction and contend throughout this dissertation—relies upon a tension between excess and precision, mutability and permanence.  Because formal character's existence throughout time, as a complexly "humanlike" construct within the reader's mind, renders it stubbornly fugitive, nineteenth-century novels frequently use succinct moral epithets to suspend it at various moments throughout their narratives. This larger tension plays itself out through particular strategies such those we have seen in *Corinne* and *The Mill*, in which the seeming infinitude of the protagonists' heterogeneous characteristics is countered by a narrative's concomitant assertion that the protagonist can be contained in a trait whose dominance renders it (and, by extension, her) easily identifiable.  Perhaps unsurprisingly, the coexistence of stasis and movement thus figured proves especially stark in the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, which, as these novels illustrate, concerns itself as much with the repetition of fixed characterological categories as it does with the transformation of character throughout time.  Where Forster and Woloch both see the dynamics of character depth becoming manifest through what Forster calls the "collision" *between* major and minor characters (71), I wish finally to suggest that techniques of majorness and minorness work together *within* nineteenth-century protagonists as well.  *Corinne* and *The Mill* show

us how character functions less an either/or proposition—a choice between depth and surface—than it does as a continual evocation of both.

My next chapter will begin to explore how third-person narratorial strategy intersects with and influences the processes of character construction that I have discussed in Chapters One and Two.  To this end, I move away from well-loved *Bildungsromane* toward Anthony Trollope's Palliser novels, whose developing characters often face charges of repetitious tediousness—rather than accolades of lifelike depth—from Trollope's readers and critics.  This comparatively tepid reception of Trollope's characters, as we will see, relates directly to the third-person narrator's role as both mediator and representative of the Palliser characters' represented thoughts.

## Chapter Three

### Represented Thought and the Character of Indecision in Trollope's Palliser Series

"Everything valuable in the novel is centered in its portrayal of character: character gives the novelist his pleasure and the reader his instruction; character elicits sympathy and recognition, which are the distinctive effects of the novel as a genre."
-Walter M. Kendrick, *Trollope: The Novel Machine* (27)

"The essence of [Trollope's] love of reality was his extreme interest in character."
-Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (104)


Even in a literary-critical climate as intent on deflating clichés as the present one, Anthony Trollope's preference for character over plot is seldom disputed. The categorical fervor of pronouncements like James's and Kendrick's seems to brook any argument to the contrary, especially for those of us who have followed Trollope and his characters through one or more series of imposing volumes. But even if we assume that the relative consensus about what Nicholas Dames has called Trollope's "well-known aesthetic priority" ("Career," 259) is an accurate one, its status *as* a consensus threatens to foreclose on discussions about what an allegiance to character actually entails. What does it mean to value character over plot, anyway? How does such an authorial valuation look and feel to Trollope's readers?

One way to begin to answer these questions is by noting that while Trollope's novels are notoriously long, they are hardly potboilers. The six Palliser novels do not gradually reveal, for example, that Alice Vavasor bore an illegitimate child, or that Plantagenet Palliser harbors a secret love for Madame Max Goesler. Instead of focusing

on dramatic outcomes or physical action, Trollope's novels invariably present us with a lot of people sitting around thinking: Trollope lavishes a vast amount of time representing the thought of characters who cannot make up their minds, and many of the most important events he depicts are, therefore, mental ones.  Indeed, numerous critics tout Trollope's meticulous illustration of his characters' interior lives as his greatest strength.  W.J. Overton, for instance, writes that the author's "specialty is to recreate mental rhythms" (489), and Stephen Wall praises Trollope's "extraordinarily secure command of psychological process," claiming that "[o]ne reads Trollope not to find out simply what happened in the end, but to understand the stages by which it came to happen and was bound to happen, given the individual personalities involved" (245).  Such readings assume that the apparent complexity of Trollope's characters functions as a kind of aesthetic compensation for the novels' lack of suspenseful plotting. And to say that Trollope excels at representing the "psychological process" is another way of saying that he excels at creating "deep" characters whose fictionalized interiorities seem almost lifelike in their contradictions and convolutions.  Trollope's celebrated preference for character, then, amounts to his heightened attentiveness to characters' thought—in particular, to a variety of thought continually plagued by vacillation and uncertainty. This attention to characters' mental processes over and above their actions in turn contributes to the larger solicitation of reader sympathy that the author once called "the great and only aim of my work" (ED 356), as well as to a commitment to realism that remains even less contested than his reverence for character.  Which of us, Trollope incessantly asks, has not had trouble making decisions?

But despite the consistency with which Trollope relies on represented thought to create fictional characters who register both as sympathetic and psychologically complex, plenty of readers have suggested that he fails on both counts.   Many of those critics who readily admit the author's privileging of "character" are less eager to concede that this privileging automatically results in a showcase of interior profundity.  Kendrick, for example, writes that "Trollope's novels, because they describe the workings of the mind, might be called psychological.  But though they are very much concerned with mental processes, they give no attention to the structure of the mind as such.  Nor do they recognize any fundamental difference between internal thought processes and external events" (86).  Trollope's characters may think a lot, in other words, but their thinking does not have a particular quality that distinguishes itself from the rest of the discourse; the result, Kendrick implies, is a fairly lackluster rendition of the cognitive process.  D.A. Miller similarly acknowledges a certain complexity of character in Trollope's novels insofar as their author pushes his characters' internal conflicts to the forefront ("the heterogeneity of the subject invariably triumphs over every effort to purify it" [*Novel*, 126]), but he quickly retreats from this reading, suggesting instead that the omnipresence of Trollope's narrator actually detracts from the novels' ostensible depiction of characterological depth. "Whatever diversity appears in the characters' lives," he writes, "never exceeds the ordinating power of the far more consistent perspective from which they are viewed" (137).  For Miller—who admits that it is "all [he] can do not to be bored" when reading Trollope (145)—this monolithic narratorial perspective arouses a stifling sense of dullness which seems to preclude any sympathetic engagement with the characters who populate Trollope's world.

In fact, we hardly need to rely on twentieth-century literary criticism for suggestions that many of Trollope's characters seem less complex than the author's preoccupation with represented thought might indicate.  A similar sentiment can be found in an unsigned review of *Phineas Finn* (1869) from the 20 March, 1869 edition of *The Spectator*:

> What we do think Mr. Trollope sometimes fails in, is in perceiving that there is, for most men at least, a depth of private character which barely gets to the surface of society at all, and which Mr. Trollope rarely ever indicates.  Here, for instance, is Phineas Finn, who is an ambitious man and a warm politician, who is always in love with some lady or other, though the reader is always a little in doubt as to which…Yet we never see for a moment either the roots of his ambition, or the roots of his passions and affections, or the roots of his faith.  We never see him as he would see himself even for a chapter…He does what is wrong and what is right alike without giving us any idea that such a thing as deep moral struggle can go on in the heart of man (qtd. in Smalley, 310-11).

This review clearly takes "depth" as an interior quality—it is "private" and "in the heart," revealing the "moral struggle" that ensues inside the fictional minds of novelistic characters.  In this formulation as in so many others, represented depth emerges as both a formal, narrative condition and a moral good; depth's structural presence "indicates" a character's contemplation of "what is wrong and what is right."  But despite the fact that *Phineas Finn* offers many scenes in which its hero vacillates over problems romantic and political, Phineas's depth is, apparently, nowhere in evidence.  The numerous, repetitive instances of "moral struggle" that Phineas encounters (including, for instance, his indecision about whether to abandon an ill-chosen fiancé for a more desirable match, or over voting against his political party and in favor of his personal opinions) do not come off as such, and Trollope's focus on thought rather than story fails to create the impression of internal intricacy on which this reviewer's conception of depth appears to

be based.  Further, Phineas's apparent lack of depth here amounts to a concomitant deficit of reader sympathy: Trollope's Irish Member does not exhibit the kind of private torment to which the reviewer believes "most men" are prone, nor does the reviewer feel that Trollope makes the "roots" behind Phineas's motives sufficiently clear.[95]

In this chapter, I suggest why not only Phineas, but Trollope's characters more generally, often seem deficient in the very psychological complexity that the author's extensive attention to interiority ostensibly promises. Specifically, I use the Palliser novels to explore what recent scholarship on the representation of thought in narrative reveals about the intersections between reader sympathy, character depth, and the form of the novel series.  Discovering which types of represented thought are most likely to register as "deep" to readers will continue this dissertation's broader examination of the effect(s) of different structures of interiority on the construction of character.  And while the series form indeed differs starkly from that of the *Bildungsroman*—dividing its focus between multiple volumes, storylines, and characters rather than concentrating on a single subject—both genres prioritize the representation of character as it develops over time.  The series can therefore be read both as a diametric opposition to the single-volume *Bildungsroman* and as a supreme extension of its concerns, since its plurality of focus demonstrates how character works in general rather than how it comes to life in specific incarnations.  This commitment to character as a general concept, I will argue, infuses the form of Trollopian thought, unwittingly creating particular characters who do not seem particularly deep.

Drawing principally on the work of narratologist Alan Palmer in his recent book, *Fictional Minds* (2004), and expanding the implications of this work for the study of

"character" in nineteenth-century fiction, my reexamination of interiority in the Palliser novels suggests that readers and critics often respond unfavorably to Trollope's particular brand of heavily narratorial thought representation in part because of a deep-seated preference for what Palmer calls "subjective first" interiority (most often narrativized through techniques of "inner speech"). This preference, as Palmer argues, dominates in contemporary narrative studies, and I contend that it also reaches at least as far back as the nineteenth century, many of whose most enduring novels (by writers such as Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and James) are *Bildungsromane* that depict the development of ostentatiously introspective protagonists through the manipulation of inner speech. Such novels, as we will see, frequently imply that the introspective process—depicted in the kind of subjective first language that reveals the developing character's eloquent inner voice—will dramatically increase one's self-knowledge and thereby perfect one's moral character.

In contrast, the Palliser novels present a less immediately flattering portrait of fictional cognition insofar as many of the series's characters, as I have suggested, practice a kind of indecisive thinking that leads one in circles rather than promising new revelations about the self. That Trollope compounds his characters' sense of internal traction by using the technique of *thought report*—which allows the third-person narrator to interweave his own and others' thinking into passages of a given character's represented thought—further destabilizes the traditional *Bildungsroman*'s construction of thinking as an isolated activity best suited to a single, intellectual young protagonist. Trollope's famous preference for character over plot therefore involves a concomitant valuation of thinking over knowing, since vacillating characters, by definition, have

trouble turning aimless thought into the kind of focused resolutions that drive the comparatively fast-paced storylines of *Bildungsromane* like *Jane Eyre* or *The Red and the Black*. But while the Palliser novels' lengthy depiction of inner conflict—the ostensible hallmark of psychological depth—might appear to facilitate their readers' impression of sympathetically deep characters, I argue that both Trollope's preoccupation with vacillation (rather than its ends) and his refusal to privilege subjective first introspection as a vehicle for represented thought help explain the halfhearted sympathies of so many of his critics.

In the following sections, I begin by clarifying several ways in which the *Bildungsroman* tradition tends to represent thought before placing this tradition in dialogue with the technique of thought report that brings so many of Trollope's indecisive characters into being. My analysis of Trollopian indecision will subsequently inform a discussion of the novel series as a narrative genre by illustrating how the series reshapes the concept of character development to comply with its particular demands. The refusal to decide that is reiterated over and over in the Palliser series, across characters and novels alike, has obvious affinities with the refusal to embrace characterological change that we observed in the previous chapter with the protagonists of *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss*. In all these cases, the novels present development styles based not on forward progress or gradual transformation, but on a non-movement that highlights the difficulty of progressive character development. But Trollope's focus on the interior suspension that results from endlessly repetitive thinking finds an especially congenial home in the novel series, whose extensive scope resists the kind of quick decision-making that would prematurely conclude it. The series renders character

development coterminous with the extensive temporal development that its multiple volumes represent, its massive length allowing less for "deeper" characters than for increasingly older ones.

**Varieties of Interiority: Introspection, Thought Report, Indecision**

Drawing his terminology from the field of cognitive science, Palmer differentiates between "subjective first" and "intersubjective first" theories of mind. The former approach takes the mind as a discrete entity that interacts with other self-governing minds in social contexts. The latter—which Palmer himself favors in *Fictional Minds*—sees the mind as an infinitely more amorphous quantity which both shapes and is shaped by its interpenetration with other minds (5).[96] While proponents of the subjective first attitude are more likely to see the individual mind as distinct from the environment in which it moves, those who see cognition as "intersubjective first" believe that the environment is inseparable from consciousness: the two are, in fact, embedded (131). *Fictional Minds* argues that the subjective first theory has informally infused contemporary narratological discourse for a long time, but that, with the notable exception of Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds* (1978), narrative theorists have paid little systematic attention to fictional mental processing.

Narratologists like Cohn endorse the subjective first approach to consciousness, Palmer contends, by equating fictional thought presentation with the kind of "private and heavily introspective thinking" we associate with "highly verbalized, self-conscious" characters like Emma Woodhouse and Isabel Archer (9).[97] This equation, in turn, results in "*[t]he privileging of some novels over others, and some scenes in novels over others*"

141

(58, emphasis in original).  Take, for example, the following two passages, each of which

comes from one of the nineteenth century's most critically "privileged" novels and

depicts the cognition of a legendarily deep protagonist:

> Emma's eyes were instantly withdrawn; and she sat silently
> meditating, in a fixed attitude, for a few minutes. A few minutes
> were sufficient for making her acquainted with her own heart. A
> mind like hers, once opening to suspicion, made rapid progress.
> She touched-- she admitted--she acknowledged the whole truth.
> Why was it so much worse that Harriet should be in love with Mr.
> Knightley, than with Frank Churchill? Why was the evil so
> dreadfully increased by Harriet's having some hope of a return? It
> darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley
> must marry no one but herself! (Jane Austen, *Emma*, 335).

> It often seemed to her [Isabel] that she thought too much about
> herself; you could have made her blush, any day in the year, by
> telling her that she was selfish. She was always planning out her
> own development, desiring her own perfection, observing her own
> progress. Her nature had for her own imagination a certain garden-
> like quality, a suggestion of perfume and murmuring boughs, of
> shady bowers and lengthening vistas, which made her feel that
> introspection was, after all, an exercise in the open air, and that a
> visit to the recesses of one's mind was harmless when one returned
> from it with a lapful of roses (Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*,
> 44).

These excerpts exemplify subjective first interiority, in part because of the way in which each

characterizes the heroine's thought process as a kind of mental cocooning: Emma literally

"withdraws" her eyes and "silently meditates," while Isabel makes a figurative "visit" to the

"recesses" of her mind.  Both passages therefore perform a retreat from outside contexts in

order to depict the protagonist's elevated level of psychological depth.  Both passages, in

addition, paint these protagonists (not just the narrators) as verbally articulate: Austen's

famous use of free indirect discourse gives us the flavor of Emma's particular diction, and

*The Portrait*'s elaborate metaphor—figuring Isabel's imagination as an expansive, fecund

garden—seems to be created and focalized through the same eloquent consciousness it portrays. Finally, each extract depicts the thinking subject's introspection as a means of discovering a truth about the self; Emma and Isabel do not engage in introspection simply to work out particular problems. Rather, Austen's and James's protagonists repeatedly engage in such interior self-searching in order to cultivate their own moral characters. Hence, for example, the novels' apparent alignment of introspection with "progress": the process of solitary thinking promises the security of knowing, since what begins as unmoored speculation yields a valuable epistemological end once subjected to inward scrutiny. [98] Here, Emma discovers the "whole truth" by becoming "acquainted with her own heart," and Isabel need only contemplate "her nature" to garner "a lapful of roses." The precision of Austen's represented thought, along with the spectacular imagery that suffuses James's, make it easy to understand why critics might favor these novels in discussions about literary "thinking." *Emma* and *The Portrait of a Lady* transform introspection into a gorgeous verbal art while at the same time suggesting that frequent self-examination is less an antisocial indulgence than a moral imperative.

Palmer argues, however, that one of the problems with limiting the category of represented thought to instances of private introspection is that such a move favors narrative presentations of "inner speech"—most notably direct and free indirect discourse—which assume a strong correlation between speech and thought (13).[99] Palmer's work attempts to redress this undue emphasis on inner speech by highlighting the critically neglected yet textually omnipresent mode of thought report, which the author defines as "the equivalent of indirect speech, in which narrators present characters' thoughts in the narrative" (54) (as in the statement, "Jane thought she would like to take a walk"). This type of fictionally

represented consciousness has appeared less interesting to narrative theorists insofar as it is supposedly less mimetic than direct discourse ("Jane thought, 'I would like to take a walk'") or free indirect discourse ("Jane would take a walk"). In contradistinction to these primarily speech-centric modes of thought presentation, thought report has seemed dull to the degree that it is the novel's most ubiquitous form of fictional cognition, and it has seemed overly mediated insofar as its structure invites the third-person narrator to take on an explicit moral stance toward the narrative's characters (77).

But to see thought report as so much narratological filler, Palmer maintains, is to deny its "positive linking role in presenting characters' social engaged mental functioning" (16). Though thought report may not boast the verbal precision or the sense of intimacy between reader and character that direct or free indirect discourse provide, it facilitates the presentation of innumerable "states of mind [such] as emotions, sensations, dispositions, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motives, and reasons for action" (13). Thought report, in other words, can portray a broad spectrum of fictional characters' nonverbal mental functions, covering statements as diverse as "Barbara was craving a martini;" "Larry meant to take the laundry to the cleaners;" and "David bought Maria a necklace to show that he was sorry." In addition to its ability to depict those mental states that diverge from strictly verbal "thinking," thought report foregrounds the intersubjective nature of consciousness through its seemingly effortless depiction of multiple minds—including the narrator's—functioning together ("Claire thought Mary felt as if Bob had been cheating on her").[100]

Though direct and free indirect discourse do play significant roles in Trollope's novels, it is thought report—with its clear narratorial presence and summative dexterity— that dominates the presentation of consciousness in the Palliser series. In order to begin

to pinpoint how the novels' use of thought report embodies many of the principal

functions Palmer ascribes to the technique, I offer the following pair of passages.  The

first occurs midway through *Phineas Finn*, and relates Phineas's decision to tell Lady

Laura Kennedy (whom he used to love) that he is now in love with her friend Violet

Effingham; the second comes from the beginning of *The Duke's Children* (1880)*,* in

which the narrator describes Plantagenet Palliser's reaction to his wife's recent death.

Note that the represented thought we find here immediately differs from *Emma*'s insofar

as it is delivered through a folksy narratorial voice which deemphasizes the particular

verbal cadence of the thinking character:

> At last he resolved that he would tell Lady Laura the whole truth,--
> not the truth about the duel, but the truth about Violet Effingham,
> and ask for her assistance.  When making this resolution, I think
> that he must have forgotten much that he had learned of his
> friend's character; and by making it, I think that he showed also
> that he had not learned as much as his opportunities might have
> taught him.  He knew Lady Laura's obstinacy of purpose, he knew
> her devotion to her brother, and he knew also how desirous she had
> been that her brother should win Violet Effingham for himself.
> This knowledge should, I think, have sufficed to show him how
> improbable it was that Lady Laura should assist him in his
> enterprise (PF II.10).[101]

> For it may be said of this man that, though throughout his life he
> had had many Honourable and Right Honourable friends, and that
> though he had entertained guests by the score, and though he had
> achieved for himself the respect of all good men and the thorough
> admiration of some few who knew him, he had hardly made for
> himself a single intimate friend—except that one who had now
> passed away from him. To her he had been able to say what he
> thought, even though she would occasionally ridicule him while he
> was declaring his feelings. But there had been no other human soul
> to whom he could open himself. There were one or two whom he
> loved, and perhaps liked; but his loving and his liking had been
> exclusively political. He had so habituated himself to devote his
> mind and his heart to the service of his country, that he had almost
> risen above or sunk below humanity. But she, who had been

essentially human, had been a link between him and the world
(TDC 3).

If Trollope does not render either Phineas's or Palliser's language as mimetically as Austen does Emma's, neither does he describe his characters' interiority by invoking the kind of virtuosic metaphors James devotes to Isabel's introspection.  But if we grant that Phineas and Palliser appear less articulate and imaginative than Emma and Isabel, what else might Trollope's narrative stand to gain in exchange for the relative suspension of his characters' inner speech?  First, these passages demonstrate thought report's unique capacity to adapt represented time for the narrative's own purposes: thought report can be used to condense time, as in Trollope's paragraph-long précis of Plantagenet and Glencora's relationship, and it can pause the narration of the story in order for the narrator to register his own reaction (here, to Phineas's ignorance of Laura's character).  While direct discourse might permit Palliser's thoughts to seem less mediated and more "in the moment," thought report allows for the economical summary of years of events.[102]  This synoptic function proves especially useful in the novel series, whose extensive sequence of events Trollope often uses thought report to recapitulate for the benefit of newer or more forgetful readers.  In the passage from *Phineas Finn*, for instance, the narrator's multiple suppositions that Phineas's past experiences with Laura "should have sufficed" to predict her reaction to his new suit provide both a interpretation of the protagonist's thoughts and a reminder of what the protagonist—and the reader—ought to "know" about Lady Laura's character by this point in the narrative.[103]

Further, these passages highlight thought report's deftness at portraying the intersection of multiple fictional minds: Phineas's and Palliser's represented thoughts spring from projections and recollections about Lady Laura and Lady Glencora's mental

146

states.  We therefore find ample evidence here of what Overton identifies as Trollope's commitment to illustrating "the individual mind…bathed in the vision of the community" ("Interior View," 497).  Not only does Trollope show us what Phineas or Palliser thinks, but he also characterizes their thinking processes as inseparable from whatever thoughts or feelings other characters (Glencora or Laura, society at large, the narrator's "I") might have *in reference to them*.  The second passage's allusion to "the respect of all good men" points up this collective aspect of thought report by evoking what Palmer calls an "[e]xpression of consensus" operating within Palliser's social circles, at the same time that the narrator's "it may be said" confers an additional layer of judgment on Palliser's character (83).

Insofar as the illustration of fictional minds through thought report is inherently multiple, it seems to follow that those novels, like Trollope's, which foreground thought report ought to create a distinctly heterogeneous and multi-vocal depth-effect.  But the lukewarm critical reception to Trollope's formal achievement suggests, instead, that those novels which foreground a "social" conception of thinking by relying heavily on the reported thought of many characters often register as thinner or more trivial than those which privilege the "subjective first" interiority of a single, verbally sophisticated character.  As I discussed in the Introduction, Deidre Lynch has shown how fictional attention to the inner self (rather than the visible, public self) became the hallmark not only of deep characters, but also of the deep human beings who read about them (*Economy*, 142).  One result of this shift in readerly focus, therefore, is the canonization of those novels that enshrine the contemplative character: in particular, subjective first presentation of consciousness remains a common element among many canonical nineteenth-century development novels (*Emma*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Mill on the*

147

*Floss*, *The Red and the Black*, and so on), since *Bildungsromane* tend to orient themselves around individual, "intellectual" protagonists. While contemporary readers and literary critics have by no means neglected Trollope, very few, it appears, would claim for his novels the classic status that is regularly conferred upon the latter works.[104]

The relative intensification of social thinking throughout the Palliser novels underpins the common designation of Trollope as a respectable but nonetheless second-tier Victorian novelist at the same time that it helps explain the lack of reader sympathy we find in reference to some of the series's most prominent characters. We are now in an even better position to observe how the *The Spectator*'s sympathy for Phineas is contingent upon the "depth" that springs from a kind of individual, "private," and subjective first introspection that Phineas's represented thought conspicuously lacks, and we can also see how Trollope's reliance upon thought report contributes to Miller's suspicion of the "ordinating" narrator whose conspicuousness seems to sap the novels' characters of their interior "diversity." But while many such readers—both Victorian and contemporary—form sympathetic associations with subjective first interiority and thereby construe free indirect discourse or inner speech as the highest and "deepest" aesthetic representations of consciousness, it is less evident that Trollope's work illustrates such a bias. Instead, Trollope's recurrent failure to get sympathy for his characters is due in part to his novels' formal and moral devaluing of this dominant, individually restricted, and verbally articulate type of fictional thought.

While I do not mean to suggest that Trollope's work portrays some kind of one-to-one correspondence between subjective first interiority and moral turpitude, I do want to draw attention to how the Palliser series presents thought report less as an inferior

148

version of introspection than as a narrative alternative to private self-consciousness which yields its own unexpected benefits. In particular, thought report provides Trollope with a formal vehicle through which to express the interior indecision that befalls so many of his characters. In the Palliser series alone, Phineas struggles for hundreds of pages both over deciding which of his female admirers (Lady Laura Standish, Violet Effingham, Madame Max Goesler or Mary Flood Jones) would best suit his nuptial purposes, and over whether or not he should side with his party or his individual conscience in Parliamentary debates. Madame Goesler herself undergoes a drawn-out period of indecision after the aging Duke of Omnium proposes marriage, and, in *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873), Frank Greystock dithers for the length of the entire novel about whether to stick to his engagement to Lucy Morris or to throw his fiancé over for Lizzie Eustace and her riches. While it would certainly be possible to depict these vacillations through subjective first renderings of isolated self-searching, the illustration of indecision through thought report helps distinguish the intersubjectivity underlying Trollope's represented thought. In Trollope's novels, interior indecision arises when one character's thoughts become entangled with the thoughts of another, whether that "other" is the abstracted mentality of society, the heterodiegetic narrator, one or more particular, intradiegetic characters, or all of these mental "thinkers" operating at once. Thought report's capacity for embedding multiple thinkers and multiple lines of thought offers an ideal formal channel through which to narrate the push and pull of numerous, divergent mental forces.

Indecision (or any of its companion expressions: vacillation, irresolution, suspension) is far from just a convenient plot template Trollope imposes upon his characters. Rather, we can construe indecision as a broad discursive practice that

permeates the behavioral norm of many individual characters, the form and content of the narrator's rhetoric, and the unfolding of storylines throughout the Palliser novels. Most importantly, indecision offers Trollope a mode of narratively presenting the process of thinking which diverges not only from the typical form of subjective first introspection, but also from the moral luster it acquires in "deeper" novels like Austen's or James's. Stephen Wall discusses the phenomenon of Trollope's "vacillating" characters in detail, arguing that "[d]oubt, hesitation and changeableness seemed to Trollope so fundamental to human nature" (282) that his characters' indecision "often seems to function as the guarantee of their authenticity" (147).[105] It follows, I contend, that Trollope's novels construe the interior certainty that other, more critically acclaimed novels hold out as the goal of introspection as less realistic than the comparatively messy, protracted, and uncertain process of indecision. Though thought report—the form Trollopian indecision most often takes—might initially seem less "authentic" than introspection because it emanates from the mediating voice of a third-person narrator rather than from the character's "own words," its authenticity lies in its suggestion that all mental functions are, in fact, socially mediated. The reality of socially mediated thought, in turn, promises that few, if any, solitary epiphanies (like Emma's discovery of "the whole truth" about her love for Mr. Knightley) can ever occur, since lasting epiphanies about one's own character become difficult when the thoughts and feelings of others immediately qualify and conflict with whatever conclusions one draws. Trollope's attention to indecision therefore demonstrates a kind of mental functioning that is based less on knowing and mastery and more on speculation and guessing, on a process of thinking that, while persistent, does not always offer the means toward a desired end. Further, Trollope's

suspicion of conclusive "knowing" finds support in the unhappy fates of precipitously

decisive characters such as Emily Lopez and Laura Kennedy, whose determination to

wed questionable suitors winds up landing them in disastrous marriages.  Trollope's most

blatant portrayal of "knowing" gone awry occurs outside the Palliser series, when, in *He*

*Knew He Was Right* (1869) Louis Trevelyan's unwavering—and unfounded—conviction

that his wife is cheating amplifies the irony of the novel's title.[106]  In the latter case,

Trollope suggests that a little less self-assurance may have ended up preserving

Trevelyan's sanity, as well as his life.

On the other side of the coin, the most supremely indecisive character in

Trollope's oeuvre is Alice Vavasor, to whose romantic hesitation and false starts Trollope

devotes the principal storyline as well as the titular plea of *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865).

The following section will illustrate how Trollope's poetics of narrative indecision

frustrates the novel's vigorous evocation of sympathy for its characteristically uncertain

protagonist.  And, as we will see, Trollope's focus on thinking over knowing does not

spare the narrator himself, who frequently proves just as indecisive as the characters he

depicts.  Exploring the particular style of thought report that dominates *Can You Forgive*

*Her?* will therefore continue to offer a portrait of Trollope that challenges his reputation

for sympathetic characterization, a reputation that Trollope himself helped to create.  But

while Trollopian indecision compromises the author's avowed sympathetic aims, it

nevertheless wields an immensely productive force within the larger formal context of the

long novel series that *Can You Forgive Her?* begins.

***Can You Forgive Her?*: Indecision and the Sympathy Plea**

"Poor Alice!" cries the narrator of *Can You Forgive Her?*, "I hope that she may

be forgiven.  It was her special fault, that when at Rome she longed for Tibur, and when

at Tibur she regretted Rome" (I.149).  The Tibur and Rome in question are two suitors:

John Grey, an older, established gentleman from Cambridgeshire, and George Vavasor, a

selfish, roué cousin with whom Alice had previously carried on a youthful romance.  At

the time the novel opens, Alice is engaged to Grey, much to the satisfaction of everyone

in her family but George himself and his sister, Kate.  After taking a trip abroad with the

aforementioned cousins, the protagonist breaks off the engagement entirely and, soon

after that, she becomes engaged to George.  But, as George gradually shows himself to be

even more of a "wild man" than she had imagined, Alice jilts him in turn and her feelings

for Grey begin to blossom again.  At the very end of the novel, after eight hundred or so

pages of hemming and hawing, Alice finally marries the gentleman from

Cambridgeshire, for whom she had been intended since the very beginning.  In addition,

the narrative of Alice's indecision is flanked by subplots about other women—Arabella

Greenow and Lady Glencora Palliser—who, like Alice, are each engaged in a painstaking

negotiation between the appeals of two different suitors.

The narrator of *Can You Forgive Her?* is exceptionally opinionated, even within

the already vociferous pantheon of Trollopian narrators.  The novel's title gives a good

indication of the legalistic appeals that will follow throughout its pages: Alice Vavasor

has done an "offence against the world," (I.1) which the narrator attempts over and over

to redress.  This first Palliser installment does not simply ask the reader to forgive the

impertinence or supposed immorality with which Alice jilts John Grey and George

Vavasor by turns, but, more importantly, begs forgiveness for her profuse and often

inscrutable indecision itself. The following entreaty, one of many such, is representative

of the narrator's defensive strategy:

> But can you forgive her, delicate reader? Or am I asking the
> question too early in my story? For myself, I have forgiven her.
> The story of the struggle has been present to my mind for many
> years,--and I have learned to think that even this offence against
> womanhood may, with deep repentance, be forgiven. And you
> also must forgive her before we close the book, or else my story
> will have been told amiss. (I.384).

The narrator goes after sympathy in this passage by creating a relationship with the reader

through direct address: one effect of this tactic is to position reader, narrator, and

character on equal footing—"we're all people here"—and to thereby gain the same

forgiveness for Alice that we might grant to ourselves or one of our friends. Where

novels with less ostentatious narrators might pretend to leave the question of sympathy

up to us, it becomes more difficult here, as a reader, to refuse sympathy when the issue is

pushed so ceremoniously to the fore. But even within a few lines, the tenor of the

reader/narrator relationship changes, as the narrator alternately morphs from a flattering

supplicant ("delicate reader") into an anxious dictator ("you must also forgive her"): we

are asked if we can forgive Alice, then told that we have to.[107] Lest we arrive too

precipitously at our judgment of Alice, however, the narrator assures us that forgiveness,

in the current case, takes ample time. Indeed, he himself has struggled "many years"

before coming to his own conclusion, and our own sympathy will only be demanded after

we spend the amount it of time it takes to read Trollope's novel (considerable indeed)

considering Alice's predicament. The novel draws a structural parallel between the

reader and the protagonist, since both are granted a lengthy period of indecisiveness. *Can*

*You Forgive Her?* therefore guarantees the proliferation of several different levels of thinking: its narrator concludes, after much thinking, that his reader will have to think extensively about Alice's own extensive thinking in order feel the sympathy for the ways in which thinking has gotten Alice into trouble. Compare this Byzantine configuration of internal vacillation—structurally underwritten by thought report's quality of cognitive multiplicity—to the solitary, introspective thinking we found in *Emma*, whose protagonist needs but "a few minutes" for the decision she must make to "[dart] through her, with the speed of an arrow." *Can You Forgive Her?* does not claim that we owe Alice sympathy because she finally finds the "correct" solution to her problems, but rather, suggests that vacillating along with Alice will teach us to realize the difficulty—and even the undesirability—of reaching tidy conclusions.

Despite the substantial efforts to evoke sympathy in *Can You Forgive Her?*—efforts that this small passage can only begin to suggest—there is abundant evidence that many of the novel's readers, throughout both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, could not bring themselves to forgive Alice Vavasor. In a famously catty review of the novel, Henry James quips, "Can we forgive Miss Vavasor? Of course we can, and forget her, too, for that matter" (qtd. in Smalley, 249). And even later, in what is ostensibly a memorial portrait of Trollope's writerly achievements, James singles out the novel's protagonist for derision: where characters from *The Warden* (1855) such as Septimus Harding and Archdeacon Grantly are "admirable" (112), "Alice Vavasor," he writes, "does not command herself particularly to our affections" (128). Mary Hamer echoes this sentiment nearly a hundred years later, writing that when it comes to Alice, "our sympathy is baffled" (121). Interestingly, Hamer attributes her indifference to Alice's

plight to the one-sidedness of the narrator's sympathy pleas; we might be more willing to

identify with Alice if Trollope "had been able to present her difficulties in such a way

that more ambivalence of response was encouraged" (121).  But, Hamer suggests, the

overwhelming demand for our forgiveness—and consequent refusal to seriously entertain

the possibility that forgiveness might not be granted—ends up leaving modern readers

cold.

No one, perhaps, was harder on Alice Vavasor than Trollope himself.  *The*

*Eustace Diamonds*, published nearly a decade after *Can You Forgive Her?*, contains a

scene in which Lizzie Eustace, Lucinda Roanoke, and Mrs. Carbuncle attend a play

called *The Noble Jilt* at the Haymarket.  As many of Trollope's original readers might

have known, *The Noble Jilt* was the title of an unsuccessful play that Trollope himself

had written in 1850.  While its characters' names were different (the heroine was called

Margaret, not Alice) and its action was set in the 1790's, *The Noble Jilt* would later

provide the storyline upon which *Can You Forgive Her?* was based.  Far from name-

dropping his own work to get free publicity, however, Trollope references *The Noble Jilt*

only to deride it, in what seems like an apology for his characters.  The narrator remarks:

"The play, as a play, was a failure…On their way home Mrs. Carbuncle declared that

Minnie Talbot had done her very best with such a part as Margaret, but that the character

afforded no scope for sympathy" (ED 504).  Years later, Trollope's implication that the

failure of *The Noble Jilt* was tied to the less-than-agreeable character of its protagonist

reappears, albeit softened, in reference to his characterization of Alice Vavasor.  While

the author claimed that *Can You Forgive Her?* was one of his finest works overall, he

regretted in his *Autobiography* (1883) that "[t]he character of the girl is carried through

with considerable strength, but is not attractive" (110). More telling even than this admission, however, is the lack of prominence that Trollope affords to Alice within his comments on the novel. He focuses instead on his love for the characters of Plantagenet and Glencora Palliser, hardly referring to the novel's central character except as "the girl."

Trollope never exactly explains why Alice is "not attractive" to him, though perhaps he ultimately favored Mrs. Carbuncle's position that "[t]he delicacy of the female character should not admit of hesitation between two men" (ED 506). Focusing less on the expectations placed on female character in the Victorian period (which, as Kate Flint has suggested, are unlikely to deter the sympathy of the novel's current readers),[108] or on James's contrasting assertion that Alice is forgettable because she has committed no crime at all, I propose that we think of the failure of Trollope's sympathy pleas as the result of the overall discursive preoccupation with indecision that informs *Can You Forgive Her?* at the level of character (Alice, Glencora, Mrs. Greenow) and of third-person narration. Where Trollope's more recent critics have yet to hypothesize any sort of link between indecision and sympathy—two of the author's most ubiquitous topics—we can find the germ of such a connection in the following unfavorable evaluation of *Can You Forgive Her?*, published anonymously in *The Saturday Review* on August 19, 1865:

> If some of the pains which the author bestows on writing out
> endless little items and details were given to the careful conception
> of a plot and a story, his novels would have more pretension to art,
> and would therefore be more likely to live. Even if nothing were
> sacrificed for it, this infinite particularity of description is
> sometimes carried to a tedious extreme. Alice's vacillations, and
> the way in which she argued out all sorts of little points in her own
> mind, and the way in which John Grey and George Vavasor argued

out little points in their own minds, are treated with a minuteness
which at times becomes downright tedious (qtd. in Smalley, 242).

The well-worn critical complaint about the relative plotlessness of Trollope's novels here becomes more incisive than usual insofar as its author does not seek to counterbalance this negative point about plot with a positive one about character. *The Saturday Review*'s critic argues instead that the very "endless little items and details" which ostensibly contribute to Trollope's characterological realism are a "tedious" detriment to the author's art. Internal "vacillation" in particular, on Alice's part as well as the part of more minor characters, grates on the reviewer's nerves enough to bear the brunt of his irony: the dilatory internal process that Trollope uses to reveal the sympathetic motivations behind character actually ends up estranging those readers it is meant to draw in. One assumption behind *The Saturday Review*'s critique, therefore, is that the sympathetic effect which represented thought produces is proportional not simply to the novel's focus or preoccupation with characters' mental states, but to the particular formal quality of its presentation. Trollopian interiority is "tedious" because, despite its nearly unparalleled proliferation, it hardly goes anywhere: represented thought is not deployed to propel a decision that would advance the plot (as it often does in classic Victorian development novels like *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre*), but to ostentatiously defer one.[109] Characterological indecision thus contributes to this reviewer's sense of tedium because it doesn't seem to be working toward anything other than its own repetition.

The following passage of thought report from *Can You Forgive Her?*, in which Alice argues "all sorts of little points in her own mind," showcases several specific ways in which indecision renders aimless both the protagonist and her story:

> She was not quite pleased with herself in having accepted John
> Grey,—or rather perhaps was not satisfied with herself in having
> loved him. In her many thoughts on the subject, she always
> admitted to herself that she had accepted him simply because she
> loved him;—that she had given her quick assent to his quick
> proposal simply because he had won her heart. But she was
> sometimes almost angry with herself that she had permitted her
> heart to be thus easily taken from her, and had rebuked herself for
> her girlish facility. But the marriage would be at any rate
> respectable (I.13-14).

Like the characteristic excerpt of Trollope's third-person narration I cited previously, this selection from *Can You Forgive Her?* is illustrative of Alice's represented thought insofar as it can be found, with predictable variation as to names and contexts, throughout the entire text. Trollope depicts Alice's vacillation even at the level of syntax, inserting hyphens in order to mimic the pauses that precede her multiple reconsiderations and requalifications of her own feelings. Though she loves Grey, Alice is "not quite pleased" with her behavior, and though the marriage will be "respectable," she admits to herself, in a typically hesitant formulation, that she is "sometimes almost angry" when she thinks about her betrothal. Just as Alice's train of thought seems to be moving in one direction, it abruptly heads in another, as the clumsy "But" that begins final two sentences attests.

While such a demonstration of Alice's questionable decision-making skills provides ample evidence for *The Saturday Review*'s charge of descriptive monotony, it nonetheless emphasizes the value which both the protagonist as a character and Trollope's narrative discourse more generally accord to the expenditure of time through dilatory thinking. Alice here chides herself less for accepting Grey than for accepting him too precipitously, her "quick assent" acting as a testament to her "girlish facility." Prefiguring the modern-day proponents of romantic "Rules" who advise marriageable women not to seem overeager in the face of male desire, she wonders whether she

shouldn't have spent a little longer playing hard to get. That Alice's initially prompt

acquiescence to Grey's proposal should indicate her immaturity—her girlishness—

further accentuates one of the many ways in which *Can You Forgive Her?* equates

maturity with the suspension of choice. It is not action, but the long passage of waiting

time in which vacillation makes action impossible, that marks the development of the

central character.

But however much Alice's inability to make up her mind might "mature" her

within Trollope's novel, it also discourages Trollope's readers from making up their

mind(s) about her. Because Alice constantly volleys between one choice and another, the

sympathetic connection between reader and character that the novel insists is crucial to its

own success becomes difficult to sustain. It is hard to understand the very character with

whom we are told to sympathize when the object of our sympathy is, in the words of

another 1860 review, such a "faint and misty centre" (qtd. in Smalley, 245). Just as Alice

cannot make up her mind whether to accept Grey or Vavasor, the very motivations

behind Alice's vacillation are constantly shifting, even with regard to the same suitor. In

the case of John Grey, we are told first that Alice resents the engagement because she

feels she accepted him too fast, only to later learn that it is her "ambition" that holds her

back from settling down. But lest the protagonist's ambition help steer her toward a more

definite course, the narrator insists that this ambition itself is "undefined": though she

fears that life in Cambridgeshire will offer her "no scope for action," Alice "did not

herself know what she meant by action" (I.110).

It might be argued that we do not need to "know" Alice's motivations entirely

because the aim of the novel, as its narrator stresses so clearly in its opening, is to have

sympathy for the condition of Alice's vacillation itself.  I do not mean to suggest that no

reader has ever been sympathetic to Alice's tendency to waver.  Instead, I wish to

emphasize how our sympathy for Alice, if it does exist, must endure in spite of the

techniques of indecision through which the narrator repeatedly derails his own sympathy-

getting project   Where the novel at once uses the moralizing voice to position indecision

as a value, it quickly disrupts this advocacy by arguing the opposite point.  Take, for

instance, the following narratorial claim that Alice was "over-prudent in calculating the

chances of her happiness and of [Grey's]" (I.112):

> I am not sure, however, that marriage may not be pondered over
> too much; nor do I feel certain that the leisurely repentance does
> not as often follow the leisurely marriages as it does the rapid
> ones…That Alice Vavasor had thought too much about it, I feel
> quite sure. She had gone on thinking of it till she had filled herself
> with a cloud of doubts which even the sunshine of love was unable
> to drive from her heavens…But she had gone on thinking of the
> matter till her mind had become filled with some undefined idea of
> the importance to her of her own life. What should a woman do
> with her life? There had arisen round her a flock of learned ladies
> asking that question, to whom it seems that the proper answer has
> never yet occurred. Fall in love, marry the man, have two children,
> and live happy ever afterwards. I maintain that answer has as much
> wisdom in it as any other that can be given;—or perhaps more
> (I.109-110).

Again the primarily third-person narrator brings in the first-person pronoun to solidify his

friendly confidence with the reader, but instead of evoking this relationship to bolster our

sympathy for Alice's plight, he uses it to repeatedly criticize Alice's indecision.  The

protagonist's major fault, it turns out, is her tendency to think "too much" and for too

long rather than settling down with the first decent man who comes along. This

prescription for happiness obviously illustrates Trollope's attachment to conventional

gender roles, and has justifiably tested the sympathy of feminist critics who attempt to

understand how the author's stated aversion to intellectual women could differ so markedly from his sensitive portraits of the free-thinking female characters (such as Alice, Mrs. Greenow, or Madame Goesler).[110]  In addition, the narrator's remarks contradict the prescription for character development we often find in nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane*, which dictates that protagonists must use their superior intellects to defy received traditions and to carve out their own unique spaces in the world of the story.  But even if we allow Trollope's narrator his stereotypically Victorian notions about which behaviors should make women happy or his divergence from the novelistic paradigms that link character development with convention-challenging thought, his remarks here, which suggest that Alice's vacillation is unwise, directly oppose his earlier suggestions that vacillation characterizes mature, sympathetic individuals. The novel's use of the same tone of moralistic imperative both to praise vacillation as a value and to disparage it as an unproductive practice works to confuse our sympathies, since it emphatically encourages us to respond both positively and negatively to Alice's characteristic behavior.  This tension between opposing conceptions of vacillation itself produces a kind of higher-level indecision within the rhetorical background structured by the narrator's third-person voice: the narrator, in short, vacillates on the subject of vacillation.  He therefore effectively criticizes Alice for employing his own narrative strategy of taking up a large amount of time by repeatedly deferring decisions.  And the passage's reliance on thought report, which allows the unresolved ambitions of a whole "flock of learned ladies" to conflict with the narrator's command that Alice live "happily ever after," underscores the fact that his is only one amidst a cacophony of opinions. While such a mise en abyme advances the production of the series insofar as it puts off

narrative closure as well, it also risks deferring—or even defusing—both the conventional character development that results from enduring irrevocable decisions and the sympathy of those readers who are willing to wait for Alice to eventually undergo this revelatory development process.

As might be expected, Trollope addresses the tension between valuing and devaluing indecision less through moments of resolution than through the multiplication of various operations of irresolution throughout his texts. Take, for example, the contrast produced in the previous passage by its juxtaposition of moral imperatives ("Fall in love, marry the man"; "I feel quite sure") with assertions of not knowing ("I am not sure"). The Trollopian narrator's frequent, almost characteristic assertion of his own imperfect knowledge show up everywhere throughout the Palliser novels, often playing on some variation of the statement "I think": in the first volume of *Can You Forgive Her?* alone, the narrator declares that "I am disposed to think" (I.87); "I believe" (I.123); "I think very probable" (I.128-29); "I am inclined to think" (I.155); and "I am, however, inclined to believe" (I.345). While Wall has argued that such formulations "imply the achievement of that familiarity with a character's interior life which it is the overriding purpose of Trollope's art to promote" (375), I read Trollope's "I think," on the contrary, as an indication that the "achievement" of total familiarity between narrator and characters is far from certain. To the degree that Alice's internal disposition remains perpetually undecided—full of what this passage calls "undefined idea[s]"—it can never be fully known, though it can be the subject of endless speculation. This commitment to uncertainty becomes clearer when we contrast it with the rhetoric of those nineteenth-century narrators who demonstrate pretensions to omniscience, such as the narrator of

Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, whose system of characterization is built upon categorical maxims that showcase his interpretive dexterity. That Trollope's narrator should harp on his own partial knowledge about different characters—rather than simply sticking to knowing, declarative statements that define character in one or another way—reaffirms the novel's structural reliance on indecision to avoid the both the fantasy of epistemological certitude and the temporal economy of snap judgments. "Thinking" about character over the course of a novel (or in the case of the Palliser series, over many novels) takes up more deliberative time than simply knowing and cataloguing characteristics from the beginning, and it thereby emphasizes the difficult process of cognition rather than focusing on cognition's end result or reward. So where he might provide a resolute counterpoint to his characters' vacillations, the Palliser series' third-person narrator more often relies on thought report to add his own waffling into the mix.

Along with the narrator's refusal to directly characterize his central characters, his occasional avowals of *not* being able to fully depict a given situation further contribute to the atmosphere of indecision that permeates the Palliser novels. Of *The Eustace Diamonds*' Sir Griffin, for example, the narrator remarks, "[w]hat could have been the man's own idea of his future married life, how can any reader be made to understand, or any writer adequately describe!" (489), and he performs similar rhetorical hand-wringing with regard to Alice Vavasor: "How am I to analyse her mind, and make her thoughts and feelings intelligible to those who may care to trouble themselves with the study? (I.383). The latter admission of descriptive weakness throws the stated purpose of the novel (i.e., acquiring forgiveness for its protagonist) into suspense, as the narrator questions his fitness to take on the role of persuasive storyteller that he elsewhere so imperiously

assumes.  By bringing his own apparent anxieties to the fore and thereby suggesting that

we, whom he addresses, should have sympathy for his narratorial inadequacy, he risks

creating a competition in which he vies for reader sympathy with Alice.  Such a narrative

maneuver leaves the reader herself ample opportunity to vacillate not only over whether

to trust a narrator who doubts his own abilities, but also over who (narrator or character)

is the proper object of sympathy in the first place.  Further, the narrator's professed

inability to narrate effectively highlights the novel's suspicion of verbal lucidity.  As

Kendrick points out, Trollope's novels continually imply that passionate feeling is

stronger than any turn of phrase which would attempt to express it: "the truth of feeling is

always described as resistant to the articulate analyses and deductions that characterize

'thinking'" (92).  Where novels with a primarily subjective first perspective might

consider the meticulous analysis of feeling as indispensable to the evocation of

characterological depth, Trollope suggests that the deepest feelings actually resist such

verbal inventory.

The form of each of the previous two narratorial apologies—the rhetorical

question—is one of Trollope's favorite persuasive techniques, since it allows him that

direct address to the reader that I have suggested is integral to his sympathetic mission.

The rhetorical question is the structural medium through which Trollope frames his

habitual performance of what Miller calls "tolerance" through variations on the question

"Which of us has not…?," thus "assimilating individual delinquencies to the general

ways of humankind" (*Novel*, 135).  But far from merely functioning as a sympathetic

device, the rhetorical question exhibits its tactical versatility throughout all of the Palliser

novels.  Though it features most prominently in *Can You Forgive Her?*, whose very title

bears its imprint, Trollope uses the rhetorical question, for example, to emphasize

Phineas's uncertainty about the morality of his relationship to Lady Laura Kennedy ("On

which side lay strength of character and on which side weakness?  Was he strong or was

she?"[PR I.176]), and to convey the collective voice of society gossip ("Of what nature

would be the meeting between Lord Fawn and his promised bride?" [ED 160]).  What

binds together these disparate uses of the rhetorical question, I contend, is its miniature,

sentence-level rendering of the overall mood of vacillation that pervades Trollope's novel

series.  As Randall Craig explains, "the rhetorical question engenders contradiction, for it

is subject to mutually exclusive interpretations—one literal and one figurative" (219).[111]

The rhetorical question, functioning as both query and statement, enacts the tension

between decision and indecision that characterizes figures like Alice Vavasor, Phineas

Finn, and Frank Greystock, as well as structuring the discourse of a third-person narrator

who struggles to be at once convincingly decisive and realistically insecure about the

story he tells.  Pointing in two different directions, eternally yes and no at the same time,

the rhetorical question suggests an answer but never definitively delivers one, thus yet

again allowing Trollope's narrative to moralize while ostensibly refusing the confidence

of moral declaration.  So while the rhetorical question works to procure sympathy, it also

necessarily estranges it, leaving sympathetic judgment up to the reader, on the one hand,

but also demanding our assent to the judgment it tacitly supports.  The rhetorical question

is, finally, a trope that answers perfectly to the poetics of the novel series, which must

enforce closure (in the form of installment endings) only to defy it once again in

subsequent installments.

The formal strategy of indecision we find throughout *Can You Forgive Her?*—in which the narrative continually volleys between sympathetic and critical assessments of vacillation itself—resists not only the tidy closure we might expect from conventional nineteenth-century plotlines, but also the type of change-centered character development with which such closures classically coincide. Like Plantagenet Palliser, Alice Vavasor does not change so much as she simply gives up in the end of Trollope's novel: "Of course she had no choice but to yield. He, possessed of power and force infinitely greater than hers, had left her no alternative but to be happy" (II.355). That Alice must be forced into happiness proves that this is no happiness at all; as Sharon Marcus writes, "[t]he marriage that promises to liberate Alice from the circular indecision in which she has trapped herself encloses her even more thoroughly in John's power" (248). The state of nuptial elation that finalizes character development in novels like *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre* thus becomes what *Can You Forgive Her?* calls an "enforced necessity" (II.361), serving as a provisional finish to both the heroine's developmental trajectory and the ending of this part of the Palliser series. Further, Alice's final assent to Grey's proposal illustrates yet another figuration of literary character development as loss insofar as it eliminates the power of "choice" which manifests itself through her resistance to decision making. Choosing to marry Grey effectively ensures that the potential for choice on which vacillation is based is no longer an option. Hence Glencora's remark to the protagonist—"I know that it is quite a misery to you that you should be made a happy woman of at last" (II.359)—seems more discerning than playful. The depiction of Alice's submission to forces beyond her control only awkwardly passes for the kind of characterological change it purports to represent.

But if Alice's loss of recourse to an "alternative" renders her happiness lukewarm, neither does it incite the kind of tragic crescendo we saw in the finales of *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss,* in which both Staël's and Eliot's protagonists were formally sacrificed so that their moral character(s) could remain untainted by the compromise of change. That Alice's final feelings lie somewhere in the middle of the already abbreviated emotional continuum available to Trollope's characters ("She was happy, though she was slow to confess her happiness to herself" [II.358]) indicates that the choice into which she is pushed at the end of *Can You Forgive Her?* only dulls—but does not destroy—the internal tension that keeps this particular novel going.  If we view it as the inaugural installment in a novel series rather than a free-standing novel, *Can You Forgive Her?* holds out the possibility of Alice's further development in the five substantial novels that follow it.  Alice's role as Lady Glencora's foremost confidante, in fact, suggests that she, like Glencora, will play a substantial part in the Palliser series. But, unlike any of the novels' other protagonists, Alice hardly shows up ever again, and when she does appear, it is merely in passing, as "Mrs. Grey."  Instead, Madame Max Goesler, whom Trollope introduces midway through *Phineas Finn*, takes the place that seemed, in the previous novel, to be carved out for Alice: she becomes both Glencora's closest friend, and acts as Palliser's counselor after Glencora dies (not to mention marrying Phineas in the process).

So why, after spending so many pages detailing Alice's vacillating conscience, and after suggesting that her marriage is only an artificial kind of closure, does Trollope proceed to make Alice vanish into near-anonymity upon marrying?  While any definite answer to this question is obviously unknowable, I want to suggest that Alice's

disappearance relates, on several different levels, to her propensity for indecision. First, as we have seen, Alice's extended refusal to choose between two suitors, coupled with the narrator's own refusal to commit to one or another moral stance relative to Alice's vacillating behavior, rendered her unsympathetic to many documented readers (and, I would imagine, to many undocumented ones as well). Trollope's own agreement that Alice was not drawn as sympathetically as she might have been therefore provides one compelling reason for his relative excision of her character from the series after its first volume. But bringing back Alice as a major character in subsequent narratives would not only risk further alienating the sympathies of the Palliser novels' readers. Were Trollope to depict Alice after she surrenders to Grey, he would have to illustrate her as so *changed* as to be unrecognizable, since her character, throughout *Can You Forgive Her?*, is built upon her resistance to the developmental changes that her ultimate decision-making incurs. Making a choice effectively brings Alice to a dead end, especially since, as a female protagonist in a Victorian novel, choosing whom (or whether or not) to marry is characterized as the most important and self-defining of actions. Any substantial depiction of Alice as "Mrs. Grey" would compromise the inertia of character that her indecision ensured throughout *Can You Forgive Her?* Ever respectful of his characters, Trollope remains faithful to Alice's desire to suspend choice by refusing to depict the inevitable changes that her decision implies—not the least of which is ultimate submission to another's will and the concomitant removal of indecision as a characterological possibility.

**Indecision and Serial Development**

If indecision, as both a theme and a formal practice, allows Trollope a way to narrativize the aimless machinations of his characters' thinking, it also provides an organizing concept for the novel series, which formally refuses closure until its last possible moment. Trollopian indecision is thus encompassed by the narrative phenomenon Miller calls the "narratable," that is, "the instances of disequilibrium, suspense, and general insufficiency from which a given narrative appears to arise" (*Narrative*, ix). The narratable, according to Miller, seeks to avoid narrative closure despite its operation within the teleological confines of the nineteenth-century novel: "narrative attention," he writes, "is distracted from what logically and culturally 'ought' to happen; and it is instead focused on what retards or frustrates the articulation of the scenario" (261). If, as Robyn Warhol suggests, the novel series exaggerates the primary characteristics of the novel—that "the feelings that come with following a serial are the feelings associated with all narratives, only 'more so'," (72)—then the Palliser series's panorama of indecision ought to offer an example of narratability writ exceptionally large.[112]

The Palliser novels' formal resistance to closure results in a construction of moral character development that, similarly, resists resolution: though vacillation allows Trollope to dedicate ample time to interior exposition, it actually lends a curious quality of inertia to his characters. Character development, as Trollope's novel series often presents it, is the result not of individual decision or action but simply of sustaining a state of cognitive paralysis that, paradoxically, throws narrative production and its representation of passing time into overdrive. As Trollope spins out pages, his characters

seem forever to be spinning their wheels, only arriving at decisions when the end of a

given novel dictates that something, anything, must be done.  This tendency of Trollope's

focus on characterological suspension to turn many of his characters into passive

creatures is strikingly demonstrated, for example, in Alice's reluctant submission at the

ending of *Can You Forgive Her?*

The characterological stasis of Trollope's vacillators becomes most apparent

when the narrator insists that they have, in fact, endured transformative changes.  Phineas

Finn, whose namesake novels several critics have likened to a *Bildungsroman* despite the

title character's absence from a significant portion of the narrative, offers perhaps the

most obvious example of this process.[113]  *Phineas Redux* (1874) sees Finn go through the

ordeal of being locked in jail and very publicly tried for the murder of his adversary, Mr.

Bonteen.  Once acquitted of the false accusations against him, Phineas reflects on the

meaning of the experience:

> And now what should be his own future life?  One thing seemed
> certain to him.  He could never again go into the House of
> Commons, and sit there, an ordinary man of business, with other
> ordinary men.  He had been so hacked and hewn about, so exposed
> to the gaze of the vulgar, so mauled by the public, that he could
> never more be anything but the wretched being who had been tried
> for the murder of his enemy (II.244).

Note here how Phineas focuses not on what kind of person he has become, or on what he

has learned, but rather on what he can no longer do and on what has been done to him.

The trial, and the enforced opportunities for introspection that his jail time offers, do not

galvanize Phineas into reformatory action but, rather, convince him that he must forsake

his political career.  Note also how Trollope's language ("hacked and hewn

about…mauled by the public") positions Phineas as the inert object of those more active

forces of others. Even the trial itself is based on something that Phineas *didn't* do.

Compare Finn's legal proceedings to those of Julien Sorel, who shares many superficial

qualities (physical beauty, political ambition, provincial origins) with Trollope's Irish

MP: where Julien is tried and executed for a deliberate, ostentatious action (shooting

Mme de Rênal in the middle of a church), Phineas is simply in the wrong place at the

wrong time and gets swept up in a dispute that hardly concerns him. If Phineas changes

at all from this experience, those changes are unwittingly thrust on him; he does not turn

at the end of the novel, like Julien, into someone "strong and resolute, like a man who has

seen clearly into his own soul"[114] (*Red and Black*, 403), but rather devolves into a

psychological and physical shadow of his former self.

Though its scope is much grander, Plantagenet Palliser's political trajectory

resembles that of Phineas in terms of its concentration on a characterological change

alleged to result from forces outside the control of a passive individual. Palliser does not

try to become Prime Minister of the Coalition government: he is essentially browbeaten

into the position by the tripartite forces of his Liberal colleagues, his wife's ambition, and

his aristocratic pedigree. The first words out of the Duchess's mouth in *The Prime*

*Minister* (1876)—"And what are they going to make you now?" (I.54)—attest to her

husband's docile position relative to the more dynamic figures that surround him. No

wonder that Palliser's greatest fear is of being a "fainéant"—literally, a do-nothing, Prime

Minister "from whom no real ministration was demanded" (I.303-304). Though Palliser

ostensibly occupies the position most disposed to action in all of Britain, his

characteristic prudence causes an inability to act and a consequent portrait of indecision

which occupies the bulk of the development story that *The Prime Minister* purports to

tell.[115]  The Duke is so frightened of making unwise political moves that he ends up

making very few moves at all.  Palliser's confidante, the Duke of St. Bungay, wisely

remarks of his friend that "[t]here is such a thing as a conscience with so fine an edge that

it will allow a man to do nothing" (I.75).  And Palliser's eventual resignation from office

prompts not a marked augmentation of the Duke's character, but a gradual petering-out of

all that potential for which he had previously been known: "[t]here could be nothing for

him now till the insipidity of life should gradually fade away into the grave" (II.365).  As

Overton notes, "[t]he central acts of both Phineas Finn and Plantagenet Palliser are

resignations"(14); the characters' most overt actions therefore serve to bring all other

actions to a halt.

   The series's placement of characters like Alice, Phineas and Palliser in a state of

developmental suspension helps account for the relatively sober quality of Trollope's

prose in comparison with the vast affective spectrum we find throughout the

*Bildungsromane* of Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Eliot and Staël.  The length of the series—

its promise of continuation—effectively strips character development of both its exultant,

revelatory quality (as in *Jane Eyre* or *David Copperfield*) or its tragic climax (as in

*Corinne* or *The Mill on the Floss*).  Trollope's ample use of thought report throughout

contributes to this evenhanded tone, since thought report's depiction of multiple,

conflicting centers of consciousness prevents a single character's interiority from running

into unchecked excess.  But while this characteristically subdued affect might seem

monotonous to some—most famously, as we have seen, to D.A. Miller—at least one

critic has praised Trollope's middling tone as an aesthetic asset when positioned within

the context of the novel series.  Robyn Warhol argues that "[b]oredom is built into the

serial form.  It is a product of the familiarity, the formulaic nature, the predictability, and especially the repetitiveness of Trollope's texts" (80). In this reading, the "boring" elements of Trollope's prose create a tonal "counterbalance" to the suspense that would have originally accrued between the Palliser novels' serial installments.  Boredom works, in other words, to pull serial readers back from emotional extremes to an affective middle, a state in which they will be primed for yet more ups and downs.  Warhol's comments thus suggest another way that the serial cultivates a vacillating reader, whose "alternating and oscillating feelings" (81) resemble the internal tug-of-war that I have been describing with regard to Trollope's indecisive characters.

If formulaic prose helps facilitate the series's habitual re-establishment of its readers' affective equilibrium, so too does the static (and therefore, potentially "boring") nature of recurring, serialized characters contribute to a sense of readerly comfort.  The device of recurring characters depends on our ability to recognize those characters as familiar presences across and between novels—that is, as figural beings who remain plausibly continuous with those we have met in previous installments.  Indeed, this familiarity with characters is one of the serial novel's principal appeals: those who enjoy Trollope's portrait of the irrepressible Lady Glencora, I strongly suspect, read on not so much to see whether or not she becomes more pious or restrained, but to delight in the fact that her character remains impervious to the various impediments it encounters.  She can only change minutely, insofar as she must remain, unquestionably, "our" Lady Glen: "Nothing," Trollope's narrator remarks reassuringly in the last line of *Phineas Redux*, "will ever change the Duchess" (360).  In the series, popularity and believability is built on this kind of stability, a stability which, as Laurie Langbauer argues, is bound up with

readers' sense of the reliability and the rhythm—if also the banality—of everyday life itself.[116] We read serials not so much to challenge our expectations, but to confirm and re-experience the same narrative elements that we already know we enjoy.[117]

The comforting repetitiousness we find at both the level of plot and the level of character in the novel series, however, remains at odds with the series's ostensible goal of chronicling the changes that a group of characters encounters as they interact and grow older: the form welcomes change, but many of the characters never seem to do it. Here the difference in stances on character development between Trollope's texts and Eliot's and Staël's *Bildungsromane* becomes apparent, insofar as the Palliser novels assert that change is precisely what they exhibit. When discussing his methods of characterization, Trollope insists that the illustration of character development is especially important:

> In conducting these characters from one story to another I realized the necessity, not only of consistency,--which, had it been maintained by a hard exactitude, would have been untrue to nature,--but also of those changes which time always produces. There are, perhaps, but few of us who, after the lapse of ten years, will be found to have changed our chief characteristics. The selfish man will still be selfish, and the false man false. But our manner of showing or hiding these characteristics will be changed,--as also our power of adding to or diminishing their intensity. It was my study that these people, as they grew in years, should encounter the changes which come upon us all; and I think that I have succeeded (*Autobiography*, 114).

> In writing *Phineas Finn* I had constantly before me the necessity of progression in character,--of marking the changes in men and women which would naturally be produced by the lapse of years. In most novels the writer can have no such duty, as the period occupied is not long enough to allow of the change of which I speak (ibid., 197).

The sheer number of times Trollope uses various forms of the verb "change" in these two statements to describe what he wants to happen to his characters illustrates the strong

correlation the author sees between character development and transformation: to be a character in one of Trollope's series novels, it seems, is to be susceptible to "the changes which come upon us all." Moreover, Trollope maintains in no uncertain terms that the progressive change he champions is the special province of the novel series: "most novels" do not attempt to cover a comparable "lapse of years," nor do they follow characters "from one story to another" and so allow themselves to travel past the Victorian novel's (and indeed, the *Bildungsroman*'s) typical endpoint at marriage in young adulthood.[118] The novel series's accommodation of a broader canvas on which to depict character therefore challenges the tighter focus on youth that scholars like Moretti cite as one of the defining elements of the *Bildungsroman* and, by extension, of the dominant method of dealing with developing characters in nineteenth-century literature.

The progression Trollope describes, it would seem, is meant to produce the opposite effect of characterological indecision, which suspends any conclusive understanding of character in its perpetual back-and-forth. However, at the same time that the previous passages show Trollope's insistence upon the importance of change within his overall conception of character, they also reveal his almost regretful admission that his characters hardly change at all. Like the majority of "us" whom they are supposed to represent, Trollope's characters retain a "consistency" insofar as they rarely change "their chief characteristics," (they just alter how much those consistent characteristics become externally manifest). So while Trollope certainly emphasizes his characters' inevitable changes, we would do well to look closer at the manner of "change" he actually portrays here. On three separate occasions within a relatively brief amount of text, the author refers to "the lapse of years" as the agent of character

175

development in his novels.  In his work on serialization, Umberto Eco has fleshed out a

serial category he calls "the saga," which speaks to the Palliser novels' focus on its

characters' passage through an extended time period.  "The saga," Eco writes, "concerns

the story of a family and is interested in the 'historical' lapse of time.  It is genealogical.

In the saga, the actors do age; the saga is a history of aging of individuals, families,

people, groups" (87).[119]   To grow, according to Eco's paradigm as well as to Trollope's,

is to grow "in years," that is, quite simply, to get older; time itself, regardless of the

experiences it may or may not demarcate, becomes the major means through which

development is chronicled.[120]

      Dames usefully summarizes this emphasis on time—what he calls "gradualism"—in

an essay on Trollope's stories of professional ambition:

> What replaces the aesthetic appeal of forward propulsion (suspense,
> surprise, the denouement), all the rage in the sensationalistic 1860s
> and 1870s, is an aesthetics of slow accumulation.  Unlike narratives
> of 'vocation,' where sudden epiphanies of devotion or failure are the
> norm, the career-narrative presents a sequence of tutelary examples
> whose full meaning can only be known once the entire sequence has
> been consumed and all the examples are present to compare to one
> another.  The aesthetic appeal of the career narrative, aside from its
> deep familiarity to a middle-class readership, is perhaps the savoring
> of *tactical time*: the dilated, elongated temporality of careful choice,
> where each new piece of information slightly adjusts our sense of the
> previous choices made... Such a narrative aesthetic would of course
> demand a wholly new size: the series (253-54, emphasis in original).

While Dames is more interested in Trollope's depiction of the systematized nature of the

career itself than in the author's representations of *bildung*, the contrast he makes between

the "forward propulsion" of "narratives of vocation" and the "elongated temporality" of

Trollope's oeuvre also speaks to a major difference between the novel series and those

nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* for whom the process of finding one's vocation is

synonymous with character development.  In the *Bildungsroman*, character development is always revealed in time, but not usually *because* of it, in a predetermined causal sequence. Many of the experiences that memorably mark development in the *Bildungsroman* (and its masculine subgenre, the "novel of vocation") partake of the temporal process but cannot be reduced to it: Julien Sorel's sexual education begins when he decides, at age nineteen, to seduce Mme de Rênal, and Jane Eyre's decision to leave her governess post at Lowood catapults her into new relationships that see her morph from hesitant governess, to erstwhile schoolteacher, to self-assured wife/caretaker over a relatively brief period.  The most well-known nineteenth-century development novels stress the individual power of the developing character to shape what he or she becomes (or, in Maggie's and Corinne's case, to refuse becoming something new altogether).  But the novel series, as Dames points out, is more interested in the painstaking temporality of the decision-making process than in the epiphanic nature of the decisions themselves.  This attention to "gradualism" throughout Trollope's work turns time's inevitable physical progression into the driving force of development, and therefore deemphasizes the characters' agentic relationship to their own growth.  It is not only the career that, as Dames writes, "has a melancholy ability to hollow out agency," (263), but also the serial structure Trollope uses to lengthily chronicle both careers and characters. Trollopian character is always "developing" in time, but the series's very dependence on temporal development—and on the complex choices that temporal development continually presents—discourages its characters from ever being definitively "developed."  By contrast, character development in Julien's or Jane's cases ends concurrently with the protagonists' youth and the concomitant end of narrated time:  "A *Bildung*," Moretti writes, "is truly such only if, at a certain point, it can be seen as

177

*concluded*: only if youth passes into maturity, and comes there to stop there" (26, emphasis in original).

We can view Trollope's association of character development with the slow, inevitable process of aging as a final corollary of the Palliser series's poetics of indecision. Where the series's attention to its characters' internal vacillations foregrounds the dilation of the thought process rather than the product of decision, so too does its focus on the protracted quality of the developmental process diverge from the *Bildungsroman*'s conventional emphasis on a definable characterological product. Hence Trollope's refusal to figure thought as it so often appears in nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane*: that is, as an introspective practice that instantiates internal transformation insofar as its subjects frequently emerge from contemplation with life-lessons learned. For Trollope, development is neither a goal to be reached nor an object to be obtained, but, rather, a progression that simply *happens* whether one likes it or not, as time goes by. The formal constraints of the novel series—most importantly, its commitment to self-continuance and consequent resistance to closure—therefore underwrite moral propositions about character. In the Palliser novels, the mental activity involved in refusing to make a decision is preferable to the ontological state of decisiveness that would foreclose on both the process of thinking and the progression of the narrative that depicts it. The suggestion that the protracted form of character development matters as much or more than its content (which in Trollope's case is difficult to define, since vacillation renders it terminally in flux) thus destabilizes an assumption that so many nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* teach us to cherish: that private, self-conscious thinking will grant us the gift of morally ameliorative self-knowledge.

Instead, Trollope's novel series presents a version of character development that, while more modest than the developmental trajectories we find in contemporaneous *Bildungsromane*, remains infinitely more accessible. The series's focus on multiple characters over many years—rather than on a single protagonist within a comparatively short, tumultuous period of life—suggests that moral character development is not only the province of the sensitive young genius possessed of acute psychological depth. Rather, it is open to all those individuals (boring or unsympathetic as they might seem) who, together, negotiate the vast social field and the broad swathe of time that the novel series represents. Trollope's preference for the socially inflected, temporally malleable technique of thought report provides abundant structural support for such a democratized notion of character development. But, as I have argued, this same commitment social thinking risks rendering Trollope's characters less likeable to those readers who are used to sympathizing with verbally "mimetic" thought and minimally invasive third-person narrators. Trollope's divergence from the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*'s more individually focused models of character development consequently threatens to diffuse the sympathy that he claims so often to cultivate. In the following chapter, I turn to two development novels that profess no such lofty aims, depicting instead a pair of protagonists whose utter lack of sympathetic qualities bring out the ironies attendant on the *Bildungsroman*'s project.

**Chapter Four**

**Development's Failures:**
**Unsympathetic Protagonists and Narrative Distance**
**in *Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education***

"Godwin Peak appears to us the most unlovable creation that ever appealed to the misdirected sympathies of a reader."
                    -Anonymous review of *Born in Exile*, *Saturday Review* (1852)

"Frédéric is positively too poor for his part, too scant for his charge; and we feel with a kind of embarrassment, certainly with a kind of compassion, that it is somehow the business of the protagonist to prevent in his designer an excessive waste of faith."
                    -Henry James, "Gustave Flaubert" (1902)[121]


        With its focus on a single character's developmental struggle, the conventional

*Bildungsroman* offers an especially clear-cut arena for novels to distinguish where our

sympathies should lie.  Reader-protagonist sympathy seems coded into its very structure,

as the character development within the novel happens concurrently with the story's

reading: *Bildungsromane* famously seem to offer their own consumption as a character-

building endeavor in itself.  This formal association between reader and protagonist, as

we have seen, helps explain many readers' lack of sympathy for the Palliser characters,

since Trollope's series focuses on the development of an entire social network rather than

on any particular individual who takes part in it.  We have also seen—in contrast to

Trollope's preference for thought report—how *Bildungsromane* attempt to inspire reader

sympathy by showcasing the eloquence of their protagonists' speech and thought.

Forming a sympathetic attachment to characters like Lucy Snowe, Corinne, or Elizabeth

Bennet through our special access to their preternaturally clever thoughts is one of the greatest payoffs of reading a *Bildungsroman*. And while the varying proclivities of particular readers ensure that such fellow-feeling for a given protagonist will not always occur, sympathy for the central character of nineteenth-century development narratives remains a generic expectation.

It is with understandable frustration, then, that even the most discerning readers of George Gissing's *Born in Exile* (1892) and Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (1869) approach these novels' protagonists. This chapter's epigraphs offer particularly eloquent illustrations of a specific complaint that undergirds the reception of both *Bildungsromane*: even readers mindful of Gissing's and Flaubert's literary achievements protest that protagonists Godwin Peak and Frédéric Moreau are simply not sympathetic enough for the kind of narratives in which they appear. Both the anonymous writer for the *Saturday Review* and the illustrious Henry James seem prepared by the generic markers of the *Bildungsroman* to identify with its central character, but they find that to read Flaubert's and Gissing's *Bildungsromane* is to follow closely the story of protagonists for whom they are prompted *not* to feel compassion. Unlike the Trollopian narrator's relative failure to awaken readers' sympathy for his characters, the narrators of *Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education* actively encourage us to withhold the sympathy we customarily afford to developing protagonists.

This chapter will consider the connection between the textual construction of Peak and Moreau as unsympathetic characters and the failure of both to "develop" according to the terms set forth by the ostensible growth narratives in which they appear. (Peak dies of humiliation at the end of Gissing's novel, while Moreau loses most of his

fortune and remains as naïve as when we first meet him).  I argue that what I am calling

the "developmental failure" of Gissing's and Flaubert's protagonists is intimately linked

to the narrator's unconventional distance from them.  While postmodern readings of "the

narrator" as a formal category (and of the Flaubertian narrator in particular) tend to

privilege the way in which narrators are dispersed and "unlocatable" or "impersonal," my

concept of distance requires us to recognize how narrators, by virtue of their position

relative to the unfolding story, are always purveyors of moral judgment.  By examining

how the inescapably judgmental third-person narrator withholds sympathy along both

moral and formal dimensions of character in these two late *Bildungsromane*, I will

demonstrate that the *Bildungsroman* requires the narrator's evocation of sympathy for the

protagonist as a precondition for development itself.  The identification of this narrator-

character exchange will, in turn, help clarify how the novel's conception of development

is contingent upon the narrative voice: character development is not an external "given,"

but a process shaped by the moral systems that take shape in narrative form.

Using Gissing's novel as a case text to explain my understanding of narrative

distance, I will begin by looking at Godwin Peak's failure to develop the kind of

transparent moral character that previous *Bildungsromane* teach us to expect from

protagonists.  Though Gissing's narrator pays a great deal of attention to Peak's thoughts

and feelings, he vocally admonishes the protagonist with a vigor unmatched in more

canonical nineteenth-century novels.  The most striking of these narratorial rebukes

occur when Peak attempts to "perform" a kind of moral character that is inconsistent with

what the narrator figures as his "inner nature": Peak becomes an object of narrative

distance because his inside and outside do not correspond.

I subsequently build on *Born in Exile*'s apparent distaste for Peak's concealment of his interior landscape by examining the formal construction of Frédéric Moreau as excessively, ironically interiorized. Moreau's character becomes formally incoherent as the narrator silently allows his protagonist's interior monologues to overtake the novel's storyline. Questioning to the critical consensus that sees Flaubert as the creator of the "modern" narrator whose impersonality resists communicating the kind of moral judgments for which earlier nineteenth-century novelists are famous, I will argue that the Flaubertian narrator's distance from Moreau actually amounts to a moral judgment in itself. Specifically, the narrator's conspicuous refusal to authorize Moreau's countless interior digressions is a strategy for presenting his central character as a failed *bildungsheld.* Moreau cannot reconcile his outer appearance with his "inner nature" because the narrative presentation renders both the former and the latter indiscernible.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the protagonists' conception of development diverges from the paradigm that the narrators' distance implies. Both Peak and Moreau view development as indistinguishable from the possession of female love objects; they see their own growth as contingent upon romantic relationships with Sidwell Warricombe (in Peak's case) and Mme Arnoux (in Moreau's). Such a scheme drives Peak and Moreau to abstract these two female figures into fixed character types whose exceptional qualities can be incorporated into the protagonists' selves. The narrators clearly mark this generalization of Sidwell's and Mme Arnoux's particular characters as a kind of faulty characterization, indicating to the reader where abstraction of others turns into fantasy about oneself. But despite this injunction on Peak and

Moreau, the narrators betray an affinity for the kind of abstraction they condemn, an affinity that their distancing tactics allow them to conceal.

### *Born in Exile*: The Failure of Moral Character Development

In a letter to his correspondent Edouard Bertz, George Gissing provided as conclusive a statement about the sympathetic orientation of *Born in Exile* as we are likely to find. "It seems to me," he wrote to Bertz, "that the tone of the whole book is by no means identical with that of Peak's personality; certainly I did not mean it to be so" (qtd. in Grylls, 135). This statement repeats, in miniature, what I want to argue is the central tension of the novel: the disjunction between its object of focus ("Peak's personality") and the "tone" it uses to explore that object. That Gissing should feel the need to address the difference—the misidentification—between the character of his protagonist and the overall stance of the narrative illustrates a cultural assumption that attended contemporaneous novels about "personality." If we read "personality" here for the broader rubric of "character" under which the nineteenth-century novel habitually subsumes it, we can make out Gissing's anxiety about an imagined readership that would automatically assume an affinity between the third-person narrator (for who else is the arbiter of "tone" in *Born in Exile*?) and the moral character of Godwin Peak. But what is different about Gissing's version of the *Bildungsroman*—what Gissing himself cannot help but point out about it—is that *Born in Exile* devalues, rather than lionizes, the central character who nevertheless forms its subject.

Critics frequently explain Gissing's position on the fringes of the Victorian canon by characterizing the author as old-fashioned. Gissing, the story goes, was "too Victorian" for the late Victorian period; he refused to listen to the voice of modernity that was quickly redefining the poetics of the novel. Indeed, Gissing still seems to be remembered more

often for his social concerns (the plight of poor intellectuals or odd women, for example)

than for the formal originality of his prose.[122] But the exploration of character development

in *Born in Exile* tells another story: the novel is not retrograde, but rather is strikingly

innovative in the way it presents a protagonist to whom the narrator ultimately stands in

opposition. The conventionally sympathetic relationship between the teller and the "told"

in the *Bildungsroman* breaks down as Godwin Peak pretends to develop a kind of moral

character that he actually finds repugnant in the hopes of securing material and social gains.

Gissing's apparently unsentimental attitude toward his protagonist therefore has a lot more

in common with Flaubertian poetics (whose "modernity," as we will see, is practically

undisputed) than critics of nineteenth-century literature seem to have noticed.

Because Gissing's novels are less widely read than many of the other texts that this

dissertation examines, I want to offer a brief plot summary for those readers who may not

be familiar with the story of Godwin Peak. Born to a working-class family and sent to

Whitelaw College as a scholarship boy, Peak dreams of pursuing an intellectual career that

will win him social prestige. Though he has little money and few connections, Gissing's

protagonist is convinced that he is, nevertheless, "an aristocrat of nature's own making"

(41). His future plans are cut short, however, when his Cockney uncle Andrew —a man

whom Peak considers part of the "detestable tie of [his] kindred" (56-57) –endeavors to set

up an eating-house near Whitelaw. The shame of association with a member the working

classes is enough to make Peak decide to leave the school altogether. *Born in Exile*

proceeds to pass silently over the next several years, and we find out that Peak has taken up

work as a laboratory scientist in London. On a vacation in Exeter, he runs into Buckland

Warricombe, a former Whitelaw acquaintance; the two young men rekindle their friendship and Peak becomes a frequent visitor at the Warricombes' comfortable table.

Though Peak is a steadfast atheist, he finds the Warricombes' genteel lifestyle attractive despite the family's Christianity.  He becomes increasingly enamored with Buckland's sister Sidwell, whom he feels shares his "aristocratic temperament" (270).  Accordingly, Peak decides to pretend he is studying for religious orders so that he can curry favor with Sidwell and her father, Martin.  But Peak's ultimate goal—to marry Sidwell and become part of her circle—falls through once the Warricombes discover the duplicitous nature of his "religious conversion."  An anonymous article in *The Critical* denouncing liberal Christianity's project of reconciling scientific and spiritual principles— a project that the protagonist enthusiastically endorses in the Warricombes' presence— turns out to have been Peak's handiwork.  Buckland and his parents immediately excommunicate Peak, and, despite her growing sympathy for Peak's intellectual point-of-view, Sidwell eventually follows suit.  The novel ends after Peak travels to Vienna and suddenly dies there, "in exile" (506).

*Born in Exile*'s interest for this study lies in the way its narrator refuses to grant Peak the kind of sympathy that would turn his lie into a developmental experience.  It is not uncommon for protagonists of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroma*n to take wrong turns before they are able to recognize those that end up leading to developmental fulfillment; indeed, Jeffers asserts that "there will be no *Bildung* without a measure of folly along the way" (18) and Michael Beddow claims that *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the *Bildungsroman* to which all others seem to be traced, is a veritable "chronicle of errors" on the protagonist's part (82).   However, Gissing's narrator does not rationalize or apologize

186

for Peak's behavior in a way that would dismiss it as so much youthful caprice; rather, he dilates upon Peak's "false" (impersonated) development from a comparatively aloof distance. Instead of being identificatory or compassionate, the relationship between the narrator and the ostensible subject of development here is palpably divided. And it is precisely the distance between the narrator's conception of moral character and the mockery that the protagonist makes of this conception that predestines Peak's ultimate failure to "develop" morally according to the novel's own terms.[123]

In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette provides us with the most famous, and perhaps the most detailed, examination of narrative "distance." For Genette, distance is intimately related to how often a narrative employs direct, "mimetic" discourse—that is, the degree to which it presents "discourse fictively *reported* as it supposedly was uttered by the character" (170, emphasis in original). The most direct form of narrative discourse would thus be what Genette calls "reported speech," as in the statement "Amy said, 'I must go'" (172). Here we have Amy's speech without the "distancing" influence of the narrator's voice. Conversely, the *most* distanced form of narrative discourse takes shape through "narrated speech," as in "Mary said she had to go" (171). Narrated speech is "distant," according to Genette, because it paraphrases a character's words rather than letting those words speak for themselves. Genette's hypothesis that the most "emancipated" novels focus on "obliterating the last traces of the narrating instance and giving the floor to the character right away" does not leave much doubt as to his suspicion of the "narrative patronage" that narrated discourse requires.[124] Such privileging of direct discourse amply illustrates the widespread devaluation of thought report that we saw reflected in the critical reception to Trollope's prose: for Genette, the blending of a character's intention with a

narrator's speech prevents the character from being presented with the greatest possible "immediacy" (173-74).

But since I am concerned specifically with the kind of narrative intervention that Genette finds so clumsy in nineteenth-century novels, I want at the outset to distinguish my own understanding of distance from the one popularized by *Narrative Discourse*. Where Genette would equate a narrator's obvious presence with a greater degree of "distance," I would make the opposite claim: "distance" obtains when a narrator *does not* intervene sympathetically on the part of a character—when he refuses compassion for that character despite her ostensible shortcomings. Drawing on Wayne Booth's discussion of narrative distance in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, my use of the term centers on the narrator's sympathetic orientation toward a given character.[125] Booth's conception of "distance" famously takes account of the communicative situation inherent in the act of novel-reading. "In any reading experience," he writes, "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" (155).[126] Although such distance manifests itself formally—through a benevolently charged instance of free indirect discourse, for example, or a long section of the narrator's direct address to the reader—distance's relationship to sympathy highlights its unquestionably moral inflection. Moreover, the concept of moral distance between narrator and character requires that we conceive of the narrator as an entity who can be characterized through his judgments.[127] These judgments may of course be more or less overt (compare the embodied "I" of the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* to the quasi-scientific objectivity of the voice behind *Sentimental Education*), but the very designation of The Narrator as an agent with a speaking voice and a moral

sensibility—if not with a moving body—reveals our reliance, as readers and critics of narrative, upon the characterization of the narrative function. Booth's communicative model of narrative thus helps us rethink criticism's persistent overinvestment in the "impersonal narrator"—an overinvestment whose continuing prevalence seems odd considering, for instance, the numerous cognitive studies that suggest our instinctive tendency to attribute personalities to narrative voices. [128] For my purposes, understanding distance as a morally inflected narrative technique illuminates both the *Bildungsroman's* generic conventions and the developing narratological figure of the character.

We can begin to examine distance and its effects in *Born in Exile* by looking at instances of direct characterization that crop up throughout the novel. These moments—in which a narrator stops the unfolding of events to label a character's moral, intellectual, or emotional qualities—show that narrator's judgment of character at its most overt. (Think back to the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss*, who confidently apprises readers that the "need of being loved" is "the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature"). And while modern and contemporary novels may prefer to sidestep this kind of definition in favor of narrative techniques that reveal character more obliquely, the nineteenth-century realist novel simply cannot do without them. For, as Barthes reminds us, the concept of "realism" depends on a shared system of meaning in which definable character traits point to some unnamed truth that "passes through" a given character (*S/Z*, 62).

Although the nature of Gissing's realism remains a subject of literary-critical debate,[129] it is hardly arguable that *Born in Exile* belongs to a tradition of novels in which the narrator's assessment of the moral character of his subject will be reaffirmed throughout the narrative discourse. So when Gissing's narrator introduces Godwin Peak in the following manner

early in the novel, he immediately establishes the color of the lens through which we glean information about Peak's character:

> No common lad.  A youth whose brain glowed like a furnace, whose heart throbbed with tumult of high ambitions, of inchoate desires; endowed with knowledge altogether exceptional for his years; a nature essentially militant, displaying itself in innumerable forms of callow intolerance— apt, assuredly, for some vigorous part in life, but as likely as not to rush headlong on traverse roads if no judicious mind assumed control of him. What is to be done with the boy? (38).

This set-piece of direct characterization takes a new spin on a familiar narrative tactic.  We learn here that Peak has something in common with the hero of the traditional *Bildungsroman*: he paradoxically resembles characters like David Copperfield and Wilhelm Meister insofar as he, like them, is *uncommon*.  Jeffers reminds us that the genre's hero is typically an individual who is able and desires to be "different" from those around him (different from his family, primarily, but also different enough from his peers and any other character in the novel) (19).  The ordinary condition of many nineteenth-century protagonists is to be out of the ordinary on the level of moral sensitivity.  With its emphasis on the way narrative events shape a protagonist's personal notion of ethical conduct, the *Bildungsroman* traditionally feature heroes who are acutely receptive to the moral import of their own thoughts and feelings.  (This receptiveness becomes manifest in the novels' liberal presentation of the protagonist's represented thought as she scrupulously assesses her own reactions to the struggles she encounters).

But if the *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist is uncommon within her own milieu, she is never so different that she becomes inscrutable to readers.  Gissing's repeated use of the kind of direct characterization we see in this passage—in which the narrator refers to characteristics such as "uncommon" and "exceptional" that describe Peak's moral

190

character—suggests a consensus between reader and narrator as to the kind of individual who might be described in such a manner. What is generically original in Gissing's work is not the strategy its narrator uses to label the social categories from which direct characterization draws its meaning, but is rather the moral disparagement of the novel's protagonist *within* the familiar context of direct characterization. The character of Peak's predictable singularity markedly differs from the characters of those crowned with sympathetic epithets: Peak is unique due to the way his character combines the traditional nineteenth-century protagonist's requisite "uncommon stores of knowledge" with a militant, egotistical nature that "[displays] itself in innumerable forms of callow intolerance." His exceptional intellect does not inform the kind of exceptional moral sensitivity that is virtually indispensable to other central characters of the *Bildungsroman* during its most important historical period.

In Godwin Peak, then, Gissing presents a protagonist who is not the narrator's pet so much as his whipping-boy. The previous passage shows us how a narrative voice can employ direct characterization to distance narrator from character rather than solidifying an affinity between them. Moreover, the narrator's descriptive aside here works to relate the tension between Peak's moral character and the narrator's own implicit moral standards directly to the problematic development that this tension occasions. The admission that Peak is "apt, assuredly, for some vigorous part in life" invokes the literary genre in which it appears. For finding one's "part in life"—whether that "part" is an emotional fulfillment, a professional vocation, a romantic relationship, or some combination thereof—is the *Bildungsroman's* thematic territory. But what will become clear about Peak's character later on in the novel is that he, unlike the narrator, will not consider this "playing" in

metaphoric terms. The denouement of *Born in Exile* occurs when Buckland Warricombe discovers what its reader has known all along: Peak's development from radical atheist to liberal Christian is self-consciously theatrical. The protagonist ingratiates himself into the Warricombe family's genteel circle by *acting the part* of a young man whose moral sensitivity resembles the self-searching of a Jane Eyre or a David Copperfield, thus ironizing the possibility of transformative epiphany that *Bildungsromane* ostensibly promise.

The tone in which the narrator relates these metaphors of performance further clarifies the novel's position relative to traditional structures of narrator-character sympathy. Like previous nineteenth-century "omniscient" narrators, Gissing's narrator provides us with a quick look into Peak's future: we learn that Peak is "as likely as not to rush headlong on traverse roads if no judicious mind assumed control of him." And it is precisely the "mind" of Gissing's narrator—that is, the portrait of a "mind" that his narrative maneuvers help to shape—that fits this rather cryptic description. Judiciousness, after all, is one of the qualities that the nineteenth-century narrator historically enacts; it frequently wields authority by exercising moral judgments about character that are nonetheless tempered with forgiveness. (Think, for example, of the *Middlemarch* narrator's infamous contention that Edward Casaubon is not as unsympathetic as he seems, or of the way that the worldly narrator of *The Charterhouse of Parma* perennially excuses Fabrice del Dongo of his youthful follies). If we acknowledge a relationship between the narrator's judiciousness and his sympathy, then Gissing's narrator becomes an inconsistent figure in comparison with his historical peers. The narrator's judiciousness—exemplified in the previous passage by his numerous assessments of Peak's character—does not flow

into a demonstration of compensatory compassion that would "assume control" over Peak

by vigorously insisting upon the sympathetic properties of his apparent "intolerance."

Rather, the narrator's refusal to figure the position of the protagonist as one that is

necessarily worthy of sympathetic presentation reveals a tacit assumption behind the

nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*'s notion of character development.  That Peak's

imitation of moral character development leads directly to his demise (not to mention the

narrative's end) illustrates how a character's "maturation" relies upon the help of the

narrator that constructs and oversees it, how the *Bildungsroman* traditionally structures

development as a process of agreement between narrator and character.

 *Born in Exile*'s narrator highlights the protagonist's isolation from this agreement by

frequently allowing Peak to speak in his own words.  Direct discourse—the presentation of a

character's speech "just as she said it," without the aid of narrative summary or

commentary—offers the narrator an opportunity to formally separate himself from the

numerous points-of-view that he presents.  In such a reported discussion with his school

friend John Edward Earwaker, Peak continues to defend his duplicity toward the Warricombe

family even after they have severed ties with him:

> "You know that I have only followed my convictions to their logical issue.
> An opportunity offered of achieving the supreme end to which my life is
> directed, and what scruple could stand in my way?  We have nothing to do
> with names and epithets.  *Here* are the facts of life as I had known it; *there*
> is the existence promised as the reward of successful artifice.  To live was
> to pursue the object of my being.  I could not feel otherwise; therefore
> could not act otherwise"
>
> […]"M—m—m," muttered Earwaker, slowly.  Then you have never been
> troubled with a twinge of conscience?'
>
> "With a thousand!  I have been wracked, martyred.  What has that to do
> with it?  Do you suppose I attach any final significance to those torments?

> Conscience is the same in my view as an inherited disease which may
> possibly break out on any most innocent physical indulgence" (439-40).

The only indications of the narrator's presence here are the quotation marks that separate the characters' discourse from his own and the information that he provides about the tone of Earwaker's voice; it is as if the narrator has momentarily stepped aside to allow the reader to get closer to the action. And the narrator's disappearance from the scene allows Peak to recount his own version of the events that took place at Exeter. The protagonist is, as always, utterly self-conscious about his own development, referring explicitly to the experience with the Warricombes as one that might contribute to his life's "supreme end." But what we discover from listening to Peak's self-justification is not remorse for his previous behavior but rather an alarmingly eloquent confidence that his development actually depended upon it. According to Peak, the object toward which he was searching (i.e. marriage to Sidwell Warricombe) required that he jettison both his "conscience" and the moral "scruples" that inform it, and the decision to feign a conversion from vociferous atheism to devoted Christianity was simply a logical solution to the problems that his intellectual and financial exile imposed upon him.

Such feigned morality works to detach Gissing's protagonist from the sympathies of the narrator who describes him. For while Peak himself alleges that he has nothing to do with "names and epithets," *Born in Exile*'s narrator is markedly fond of them. As we have seen through his employment of direct characterization, the narrator of Gissing's novel is explicitly concerned with the codification of moral character through descriptive epithets like "militant egotism." Peak's refusal to label himself with the kind of moral epithet in which the narrator traffics actually reinforces the narrator's earlier pronouncements about Peak's "difficult" character without requiring him to step in. Earwaker's wary interjection, of

course, makes clearer the novel's distinction between the narrator's characterization of Peak and Peak's own reluctance to characterize himself according to the same abstract model. And while Peak's profession that conscience is a disease to be overcome is exceptional for the way it breaks with the tradition of the incessantly self-monitoring protagonist of many a Victorian *Bildungsroman*, *Born in Exile*'s narrator stops short of granting his central character the "supreme end" that Peak proposes to obtain through moral relativism.

The narrator-character sympathy that *Born in Exile* withholds from Godwin Peak becomes visible not only through morally summative strategies like direct characterization, but also through the way that the novel configures its protagonist in terms of textual space. According to Woloch, not only do *Bildungsromane* use minor characters as models for the protagonist to follow, but they juxtapose the protagonist against minor characters in order to individuate her. The protagonist, Woloch argues, "needs a contrast" (47); her identity *as* protagonist is shaped according to the narrative system that measures her against those characters who do not garner as much space. What might this "asymmetrical structure of characterization" tell us about the uneven sympathetic involvement between narrators and the various characters they depict? *The One vs. The Many* suggests that the amount of narrative space a character receives is tantamount to the amount of social power she wields: "the reality of social privilege is embedded into, indissociable from, the construction of narrated centrality: power is earned through attention" (117). And though Woloch does not specifically discuss sympathy as such, the "power" of which he writes ultimately seems to encompass the sympathetic interest—the identification—of the novelistic narrator, with whom the cadence of the protagonist's interior monologues increasingly dovetails (78). Narrative

195

sympathy (or the vaguer category of "affective presence" under which it falls in *The One vs. The Many*) thus seems to figure in Woloch's model as a by-product of a character's "narrated centrality."

*Born in Exile*, a novel that is ostensibly part of the literary corpus to which Woloch's study refers, provides an interesting counterpoint to *The One vs. The Many*'s alignment of a character's social (and, by extension, sympathetic) presentation with the amount of textual space she garners. Here, minor characters do not buttress the development of the protagonist so much as they indicate his developmental shortcomings. Gissing's narrator continues to manifest his distance from the protagonist by the way in which he distinguishes Peak from his closest acquaintance, John Edward Earwaker. We first meet both characters in Chapter One, after learning that each is the recipient of one of the sought-after end-of-the-year prizes at Whitelaw College. Earwaker, who wins the prizes for the best poem and essay, is a young man whom the narrator promptly tells us "bore a certain generic resemblance to Peak, for his face was thin and the fashion of his clothing indicated narrow means" (18). The suggestion that Earwaker generically resembles the protagonist seems at first to stipulate that this might just as well be his story, that both characters are representative of a whole class of scholarship boys who are about to embark upon their adult lives. But the narrator marks this similarity only to exaggerate the ultimate difference between Earwaker and Peak, a difference that comes to define the character of each. Near the end of the novel, after the discovery that Peak's professed desire to join the clergy was a ruse, the disgraced protagonist visits his college acquaintance at the latter's newly purchased London flat. The narrator remarks here of Earwaker that

> [h]e was fortunate in his temper, moral and intellectual; partly
> directing circumstances, partly guided by their pressure, he advanced
> on the way of harmonious development. Nothing great would come of
> his endeavours, but what he aimed at he steadily perfected. And this
> in spite of the adverse conditions under which he began his course
> (443).

This quick moral portrait of *Born in Exile*'s most successful character thus reiterates a familiar narrative, in which an individual from humble beginnings ultimately obtains, after long struggle, the mark of "harmonious development" and the material goods (like a new flat) that generally accompany it. But while Gissing's novel includes this oft-told tale, it receives a comparative lack of narrative fanfare. For though Earwaker is a sympathetic character—he is, after all, the only one of the protagonist's male friends who continues to speak to him after the revelation of his elaborate lie—he is hardly a central one. It is Peak, with all the "difficulties inherent in his character," whom the novel rigorously tracks (260). That *Born in Exile* preoccupies itself with the character who does not develop rather than the one for whom development is conclusively professed allows us to see how its narrative is an exception to Woloch's assumptions about the connections between "affective presence" and narrative centrality in nineteenth-century fiction. The character that *Born in Exile* encourages us to pursue, in other words, is not the same one it encourages us to like. Following a pattern we have seen in development narratives from *David Copperfield* to *Can You Forgive Her?*, Gissing's narrator shows more interest in those characterological distortions that trouble, rather than safeguard, developmental harmony.

Though Earwaker remains peripheral to *Born in Exile*'s narrative, his character helps to illustrate the connection between development and sympathy that inheres in the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman*. Never formally developed as much as the protagonist, Earwaker instead pops up in the narrative at certain definitive moments in Peak's story. It is

197

Earwaker who prints Peak's radical article in *The Critical,* and it is also Earwaker to whom

Peak goes to explain his behavior once the Warricombes banish him.  Most importantly,

Earwaker is the only character (out of Peak's five or six acquaintances) who elucidates the

protagonist's imitation of a character not his own.  In a conversation with a mutual

acquaintance, Earwaker wonders whether Peak "has found it necessary to assume a character

wholly fictitious—or, let us say, quite inconsistent with his life and opinions as known to

us?" (284). The "harmoniously developed" character here shows a marked rhetorical

alignment with the narrator, who, as we have seen, uses similar theatrical metaphors to sum

up Peak's conduct at Exeter ("Now for the first time was [Peak] taking count of the character

he had played" [178]).  In a sense, then, the narrator himself could be said to play a theatrical

role, as he "hides" behind the voice of a character he resembles.  And the apparent

identification between Earwaker and the narrator becomes most striking in the last line of the

novel, as it is Earwaker who gives voice to the full import of Gissing's title once he hears of

Peak's lonely death in Vienna: "Dead, too, in exile!" was his [Earwaker's] thought.  "Poor

old fellow!" (506). That the last comment the novel makes about Peak is through Earwaker's

expression of sympathy leaves us with a compelling portrait of both those characters who

survive in the *Bildungsroman* and those who fail to meet its developmental standard.  For

while the narrator focuses on the foibles of a protagonist whose moral character it finds

problematic, it gives the last word to the novel's most morally "fortunate" individual.  Small

wonder that this last word efficiently combines Earwaker's sympathy for Peak with an

aptitude for narrative summation that Peak's "lack of self-possession" never allows him to

achieve (96).

*Sentimental Education*: **Formal Character and Interior Overload**

After Buckland Warricombe discovers the truth behind Godwin Peak's hasty religious conversion, he remarks to Sidwell that Peak "has somehow got the exterior of a gentleman; you could not believe that one who behaved so agreeably and talked so well was concealing an essentially base nature" (380). Peak's actions were so reprehensible, according to Warricombe, because they actively concealed the true character that was inside him. And the assumption with which Buckland is working—that character is truest "on the inside"— suggests how character and interiority are mutually constitutive. This figuration of moral character as interior belongs to a larger debate about how novelists and their readers deal with the unwieldy concept of "selfhood." In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor argues that the modern notion of being "a human agent"—a self—depends on one's sense of an "orientation toward the good" (toward being a "moral" individual) (68).[130]   According to Taylor, the *Bildungsroman* in particular reflects a "new" conception of the self that is bound up with reflexive narration: one way that we come to know ourselves and to give our lives meaning is by internalizing our life stories.[131] We become possessed of a status endemic to modern selfhood that Taylor calls our "radical reflexivity." "Radical reflexivity," Taylor writes, "brings to the fore a kind of presence to oneself which is inseparable from one's being the agent of experience." We therefore no longer define our identities relative to preordained structures or archetypes that are external to our experience; rather, we come to privilege the "inward" reflection that allows us to self-narrate (111).

Though not all, or even most, *Bildungsromane* use first-person narration, the overwhelming amount of interior discourse in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels still supports Taylor's explanation of our sense that the most authentic self is located "inside"

the mind. The inclusion of interior passages within novels of character development purportedly works to create a sympathetic relationship between the reader and the developing protagonist with whom the novel encourages us to identify. And the development of interior discourse, in which novels dramatize the turn inward, is crucial for the larger development of nineteenth-century understandings of moral character. The search for the good begins with a search inside oneself, an examination of one's proper feelings through self-interlocution. While sacrificing the kind of undiluted examples of "radical reflexivity" that first-person novels provide, novels in the third person often stage another kind of devotion to the "turn inward" by aligning their own moral values with those that the reflexive central character develops through her represented thought. We saw in the Palliser series, for example, how Trollope's narrator defended his characters' psychological indecision by structurally mirroring it in his own vacillating asides to the reader, and in *Corinne* and *The Mill on the Floss*, both narrators justified the protagonists' refusal to "balance out" their internal characteristics as evidence of moral tenacity.

Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, on the other hand, reverses the development novel's conventionally sympathetic stance toward the cultivation of the inner nature by illustrating what happens when a character's self-consciousness threatens to engulf the novel's plot. Like the Palliser novels, *Sentimental Education* diffuses the developmental force of interiority not by ignoring interior discourse as a formal technique, but by presenting its protagonist, Frédéric Moreau, as excessively, indeed stultifyingly, interior. However Flaubert's novel diverges crucially from Trollope's series insofar as *Sentimental Education*'s third-person narrator seems unwilling to sanction the protagonist's aimless thoughts as moral contemplation. So transported by his own imagination that he refuses to live outside it,

200

Moreau becomes unsympathetic when Flaubert's narrator cloaks his immoderate reflection in an ironic silence.

If the narrator of *Born in Exile* is comparatively transparent (and unabashedly vocal) about the gap between Peak's character and the character of harmonious development, the lack of identification between narrator and protagonist in *Sentimental Education* depends on the narrator's apparent disengagement and on the textual effects this disengagement produces when we situate it within the generic context of the *Bildungsroman*. The voice that narrates Flaubert's novel refuses to step in and sanction Moreau's dependence, *as* a character, on the interior monologue; Moreau's problematic self-understanding is not overtly mediated by another, narrating "self" who would assign it developmental import. At the end of *Sentimental Education*, the protagonist remains exactly where he started, elaborating relationships and scenarios in his mind far more articulately than he does in his waking life. The statement at the end of the novel that Moreau's life (along with that of his friend Deslauriers) has failed ["Ils l'avaient manqué tous les deux" (517)] demonstrates the stunted course of a development narrative whose teller makes himself conspicuously absent.[132] And the protagonist's failure ultimately reveals how close he is to slipping into the realm of non-character, how the absence of a sympathetic narrator can prevent character from forming what Jonathan Culler has elsewhere called "a centre of coherence" (89). Where *Born in Exile* focuses on the protagonist's failure to develop moral character, *Sentimental Education* illustrates how the distancing of narrator from protagonist makes it more difficult to distinguish the protagonist as a consistent literary form.

*Sentimental Education* says as much about character development through what it does not do as through what it does. The novel does not strictly "open" with Moreau, but with the setting in which he subsequently appears:

> On the 15th of September 1840, at six o'clock in the morning, the *Ville-de-Montereau* was lying alongside the Quai Saint-Bernard, ready to sail, with clouds of smoke pouring from its funnel.
>
> People came hurrying up, out of breath; barrels, ropes and baskets of washing lay about in everybody's way; the sailors ignored all inquiries; people bumped into one another; the pile of baggage between the two paddle-wheels grew higher and higher; and the din merged into the hissing of the steam, which, escaping through some iron plates, wrapped the whole scene in a whitish mist, while the bell in the bows went on clanging incessantly (15). [133]

It is only once the boat leaves the dock, once the jostling of nameless people and sailors settles down, that the narrative voice zeroes in on anyone in particular:

> At last the boat moved off; and the two banks, lined with warehouses, yards, and factories, slipped past like two wide ribbons being unwound.
>
> A long-haired man of eighteen, holding a sketchbook under his arm, stood motionless beside the tiller. He gazed through the mist at spires and buildings whose names he did not know, and took a last look at the Île Saint-Louis, the Cité, and Notre-Dame; and soon, as Paris was lost to view, he heaved a deep sigh.
>
> Monsieur Frédéric Moreau, who had just matriculated, was returning to Nogent-sur-Seine, where he would have to hang about for two months before going to read for the Bar (15). [134]

The passage is long, but its length is part of the point. That the introduction of Frédéric Moreau—whose education it promises to chronicle—occurs not in its opening sentence but seemingly as the narrator's afterthought reverses the structure of narrative attention that Woloch describes as a central feature of our conceptual notion of "the protagonist." This is not to argue, however, that Woloch's model is mistaken: a great many nineteenth-century novels begin with a marked emphasis on the protagonist's voice and

point-of-view.  Like Gissing's novel, *Sentimental Education* is crucial for a study of character development because it evokes the *Bildungsroman*'s generic conventions in the very act of subverting them.  A case in point is the direction of the boat trip itself: William Paulson astutely notes that, unlike the traditional nineteenth-century French protagonist who initially makes his way to the city from comparatively humble beginnings in the provinces, Moreau begins by leaving Paris to go back to his mother's country home (26).

The odd chronology of the novel's opening paragraphs, in which "objects and impersonal groupings take precedence over human individuals" (Paulson 25),[135] contributes to the narrator's depiction of Moreau as a character who doesn't necessarily deserve his own story, who ranks below paddle wheels and warehouses as a subject of immediate narrative interest.  The narrator underscores the protagonist's ordinariness by presenting him first through external focalization, in a technique Genette identifies as a kind of "enigmatic *introit*…where the hero is described and followed for a long time as an unknown person whose identity is problematic (190-91).[136]  The statement that "a long haired man of eighteen" is holding a sketchbook does not do a lot of work to align this man with the focus—much less with the sympathy—of the voice describing him.  That the narrator does not begin his portrait of Moreau by descending into the latter's consciousness, but rather chooses to relate his more or less banal external mannerisms (gazing, sighing) illustrates how Moreau is, first and last, a member of a crowd.  The presentation of the protagonist is as straightforwardly descriptive as the depiction of the very boat on which he is traveling.  And the novel's continued implication that its protagonist is *not* special, that he may as well be anyone, will come to inform Moreau's failed development directly.  Moreau is a kind of protagonist *manqué*, neither aspiring enough to merit a rags-to-riches success story like

Eugène de Rastignac nor subversive enough to be labeled an anti-hero like Julien Sorel.[137] Moreover, the historical specificity of the novel's first sentence emphasizes the protagonist's membership (like Flaubert's) in the generation of 1848, whose political conflict struck figures from Tocqueville to Marx as a deflated imitation of the more romanticized revolutions of 1789 and 1830 (Paulson 114).

*Sentimental Education*'s point of entry into Frédéric's life continues the project of disturbing the developmental trajectory that often attends the *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist. Like *Born in Exile*, Flaubert's novel begins with an absence: we first encounter Moreau at the age of eighteen, and the narrator provides very few backward glances into his past. *Sentimental Education*'s failure to treat its protagonist's childhood in any detail becomes a strategy for the blockage of Moreau's growth once we situate the text within the generic framework of the character development narrative. Because the novel begins *in medias res*, during the young adulthood of an already established central character, Flaubert's narrator does not allow its readers to discover whether or not and how the protagonist's childhood shaped the conception of him that the novel's first pages present. We do not have the privilege, for example, of the causal link between David Copperfield's adoration of the capricious Dora and his earlier worship of a mother whose lack of practicality clearly prefigured that of his first wife, nor are we afforded the parallel between Jane Eyre's voluntary seclusion in the window-seat at Gateshead and her later recapitulation of this isolating practice in her bedroom at Thornfield. Though it is true that the nineteenth-century French novel is in general far less concerned with the protagonist's childhood than is its English counterpart, *Sentimental Education* never offers a portrait of Frédéric Moreau that is markedly different from the one we encounter

in its first chapter.[138] By frustrating the reader's access to its protagonist's formative

years, Flaubert's *Bildungsroman* dispenses with a novelistic practice that figures

development as a temporal trajectory whose earliest moments help shape the character

whom the protagonist will become by the end of the narrative.

     Doubtless related to the lack of narrated childhood in these two novels is the

minor role they accord to nostalgia.[139]  Culler's discussion of character in Flaubert's work

claims that the author refused to offer the reader stable meanings through which to

interpret his novels.  One way to prevent communicating the sense that the protagonist

was a fully-formed individual was to "avoid the retrospective structure which transforms

time into intelligible history as viewed by one who has lived through it" (31).  Because

Flaubert's novel is told through a heterodiegetic narrator—that is, through a narrator who

does not participate in the story's events—it cannot take the form of a reflexive first-

person narrative in which the protagonist delivers up his or her life history as a nostalgic

memory.  When characters like Jane Eyre and David Copperfield recuperate their past

into nostalgic narratives, they offer their lives as histories that they implicitly believe are

worth telling.  Narrating from the standpoint of the happy and "successful" formation of

the self, they are able to use nostalgia to shape their life-narratives into equally

meaningful wholes.  First-person nostalgic narration thus offers a mode through which to

exemplify the development not only of moral character, but also of the formal

construction that equates self-narration with well-roundedness and sympathy.[140]

     Flaubert's protagonist lacks the comfort of an already-determined path before

him, and the degree of commentary that *Sentimental Education* provides about Moreau's

eventual development therefore falls, in large degree, upon the stance of the narrator.

Third-person narrators often wield an extraordinary degree of discursive power because they are able to point us in the direction of meaning. Think, for instance of the narrator of Dickens's *Bleak House*, whose numerous apostrophes challenge us to recognize London's appalling treatment of its poor, or of the grandiose social maxims with which Balzac's narrators so notoriously summarize Parisian social convention. Indeed, the popularity not only of Dickens and Balzac, but of novelists from Eliot to Stendhal to Trollope helped to conflate the tradition of opinionated third-person narrators with nineteenth-century novelistic practice itself. Flaubert's narrators become especially striking in the wake of this convention: since the publication of Flaubert's major works, literary scholars such as Marcel Proust, Erich Auerbach, Genette and Culler have variously noted the ways that novels like *Sentimental Education* and *Mme Bovary* (1857) seem almost to narrate themselves. The Balzacian-style narrator whose opinions orient the story has totally disappeared in favor of what Auerbach calls Flaubert's "objective seriousness": "His opinion of his characters and events remains unspoken; and when the characters express themselves it is never in such a manner that the writer identifies himself with their opinion, or seeks to make the reader identify himself with it" (486). Flaubert's narrator does not tell us that Frédéric Moreau thinks in lavishly elaborated clichés, for example; he instead provides us with enough of Moreau's thought to allow us to come more independently to this conclusion. If it is nearly impossible to pick up a Balzac or a Dickens novel without setting one's eyes upon an episode of pedagogical fervor, then it is equally difficult to find passages in Flaubert which do not illustrate the narrator's refusal to comment explicitly on what his subject matter suggests. The direct characterization we find throughout *Born in Exile* would likely have seemed odious to

Flaubert, who considered summary character analysis to be "a blemish in any work of fiction and a confession of weakness in any author" (Steegmuller 307).

The sober eye with which Flaubert's narrator passes over his characters has prompted numerous critics to rapturously claim that Flaubert's work marks the end of the third-person narrator's tyranny and ushers in the comparatively liberating advent of modernism that follows it. Received criticism about Flaubert puts an almost priceless value on the author's endeavor to create what he called "pure art" (qtd. in Steegmuller, 147). Such style, according to Flaubert, necessitated that the writer (and the narrator whose voice Flaubert often equates with that of the writer) excise his own opinions from a text.[141] Genette's comment in *Narrative Discourse* about the "emancipation" of the novel from "narrative patronage," for example, echoes an earlier essay he wrote on Flaubert which claims that "ce refus d'expression …inaugure l'experience littéraire moderne" ("Silences de Flaubert" 242). Culler does Genette one better by claiming Flaubert as a figurehead for postmodernist literature, arguing that the anti-pedagogical style of the Flaubertian text renders it "a text in which no one speaks; a text which is simply *written*" rather than situating it as the apparent record of a narrator's speech (15, emphasis in original).[142] Culler's interest in Flaubert stems from the novelist's alleged talent for "incorporating the problems of self-consciousness in the writing itself rather than in a persona" (69); Flaubert's particular achievement lies in "[rendering] irrelevant the process of identifying narrators and attributing themes to them" (72). According to this argument, *Sentimental Education* is an original text because it allows its reader to do away with the notion that novel reading is an exchange between a real human being who reads and an illusory human being who tells her what to feel. To understand

Flaubert in Culler's model is to avoid the kind of epistemological "optic" that "denatures strangeness by personalizing it" (113).

But however distant the presence of Flaubert's narrator may seem, and however ardently Flaubert himself may have hoped that personal opinion would remain outside his work, it is equally productive to think about the way his novel—indeed, most novels—rely on the humanlike qualities of the narrative voice.[143] The very idea that Flaubert's work contains a "refusal" of expression assumes a speaker who could be expressing himself if he chose; to refer, as Genette famously does, to Flaubert's narrator as "silent" presupposes the existence of a voice (or "persona") that is not speaking. Though I agree with Culler that Flaubert's narrator is not "characterizable" in the same, ostentatious way that the Balzacian narrator often is (110), I argue that the seeming absence of *Sentimental Education*'s narrator can also be a lens through which we can discern the reliance of novelistic character development upon an identification or collusion between narrator and character. The aloof attitude that Flaubert's narrators often take represents a particular strategy—that is, the withholding of sympathy that might otherwise be given—in the service of a characterization whose lack of pedagogical loquacity actually exploits the narrator's potential position as an affective center.

As I have already suggested, the narrator's depiction of Moreau's consciousness illuminates how narrative sympathy bears upon the construction of the protagonist's formal character. Flaubert's presentation of Frédéric uses interior monologues not to bring the narrator in line with the protagonist (a maneuver the *Bildungsroman* habitually employs), but to exaggerate the distance between them. Such estrangement of the protagonist's thought from the ostensibly sympathetic project of represented

consciousness occurs most frequently when Moreau daydreams about capturing the

affections of Mme Arnoux:

> He envied pianists their talent and soldiers their scars. He longed for a
> dangerous illness, hoping that he might arouse her interest in this way.
>
> One thing astonished him, and that was that he did not feel jealous of
> Arnoux. Again, he could not imagine her otherwise than clothed, her
> modesty seemed so natural, hiding her sex in a mysterious darkness.
> All the same he dreamt of the happiness of living with her, of talking
> familiarly with her, of passing his hand slowly over her hair, or of
> kneeling before her with both arms round her waist, gazing into her eyes
> and drinking in her soul. To bring this about he would have to conquer
> Fate; and so, incapable of action, cursing God, and accusing himself of
> cowardice, he turned restlessly about in his desire, like a prisoner in his
> dungeon. A perpetual anguish stifled him. He would remain motionless
> for hours at a time, or else he would burst into tears (79).[144]

Taken on its own, this passage seems at first to recreate the very structures of

sympathetic interiority that abound in nineteenth-century character development novels.

What is more stereotypically sympathetic, after all, than a character's inner torment over

a love for whom he knows he is inadequate? We might just as easily come across such

romantic agonizing during certain sections of *David Copperfield* or *The Red and the

Black*. But when we place the passage in the context of *Sentimental Education*, we must

first keep in mind its proximity to pages upon pages of other passages that are similar in

tone and subject matter. Moreau's desire for Mme Arnoux perennially exhibits itself

through imaginary scenarios such as the one I've just cited; in fact, Frédéric's very

facility for prolonged and detailed fantasy is as dominant a characteristic as Maggie

Tulliver's need for love. Never does Moreau diverge from his strictly interiorized

romantic relationship with Mme Arnoux. Despite the novel's indication in its final

chapters that she would be happy to oblige (415), Moreau avoids externalizing his desires

by acting on them.

What is similar here to earlier *Bildungsromane* in tone is thus radically dissimilar in frequency: Copperfield, Sorel, and the majority of their contemporaneous counterparts eventually turn their internalized desires outward rather than keeping them "hidden" from other characters within the realm of represented thought. While the presentation of interiorized, frustrated desire is a familiar maneuver within the traditional narrative of character development, the ultimate externalization of this desire nearly always attends it. (Isn't it enough for us to witness the way David silently pines after Dora to be sure that he will ultimately marry her?). Located within the developmental trajectory that the *Bildungsroman*'s narrative continually signals, the illustration of interior desire figures as only the first step in a series of actions—as the catalyst *to* a series of actions—that will ensure that the protagonist ends up far from where he began. But, as Georg Lukàcs writes, *Sentimental Education*'s sacrifice of action for interiority dramatizes not "a sensuously meaningful story," but instead "the disintegration of form in a nebulous and unstructured sequence of moods and reflections about moods" (113). Because Moreau is unwilling or unable to consummate the longing that holds dominion over his consciousness, the novel cannot turn that longing into an event that marks a stage in its protagonist's development. The repetitive quality with which Flaubert's narrator presents Frédéric's interiority effectively divests it of the sympathetic valence that would attend it were it not so consistently reiterated. And although Frédéric's inaction resembles that of Trollope's serial vacillators, the distance from which Flaubert's narrator portrays his protagonist diverges from Trollope's chatty insistence that inaction possesses its own characterological virtues.

On a localized level, this passage illustrates the way that Moreau dreams, bizarrely, of *imitating* the kind of individual whom he imagines Mme Arnoux will notice. He longs not for her to see through to some idiosyncratic "inner self" that he is afraid to put on view, but rather to take on the identity of other categories of men (pianists, soldiers) because of the stereotypical merits he assigns to them (talent, scars). And if Moreau chooses to covet a character not his own, it is because *Sentimental Education* consistently questions the very notion of individualized character that the discourse of earlier nineteenth-century growth narratives takes pains to evoke. Literary critics, of course, have long reminded us that the notion of the "true self" that appears so central in nineteenth-century literature inevitably breaks down when we try to put pressure on it.[145] But Flaubert's novel differs from other nineteenth-century fiction by suggesting that there is very little to break down in the first place. Moreau's belief that the only way to win Mme Arnoux's affection is through impersonation pushes to the fore a tension between original and what we might call "imitative" character that recalls Godwin Peak's false conversion. Both protagonists, that is, predicate the idea of development on a kind of performance. However, Peak is hiding his atheism—a specific moral stance that renders him unsympathetic to the Warricombes—in order to ingratiate himself further into the bourgeois circles that he idealizes. He impersonates the stock characteristics of a kind of moral character that *Born in Exile* insists is not his own. What lies beneath Moreau's envy for other categories of men is simply more envy and more desiring, as the snapshot-paced imagery of the Flaubertian sentence makes clear. Moreau's formal character becomes difficult to assess because it consists in fleeting and fragmented desires (here,

talking with her, kneeling before her, gazing at her) that repeat themselves throughout the

novel's representation of its protagonist's thought.

One of Flaubert's most famous statements about *Sentimental Education* appears

in an 1864 letter to a frequent correspondent, Mlle Leroyer de Chantepie.  The letter,

quite typically for Flaubert, describes the author's misgivings about the future reception

of his work: "It's a book about love, about passion; but passion such as can exist

nowadays—that is to say, inactive.  The subject as I have conceived it is, I believe,

profoundly true—but for that very reason probably not very entertaining" (*Letters*, 80).[146]

When we read this statement in light of passages from the novel like the one I have

quoted above, it becomes clear how much the construction of Moreau's character

contributes to the overall effect that *Sentimental Education* was apparently intended to

produce in its audience.  For if we want to understand Moreau as a character, we must do

so through a narrative mode—represented consciousness—that is "inactive" in its very

nature.  Interior discourse does not advance the narrative's plot so much as it insists that

reader and character linger together in a moment of contemplation.  Typically, such a

moment will provide us with new information about a character's feelings or motivations,

and (as I have stated above) it often acts as a catalyst toward a narrative's action.  (Julien

Sorel, for example, imagines in detail what it would be like to seize Mme de Rênal's

hand, and he proceeds actually to seize it).  But since Moreau follows up his internal

desires not with action but only with variations on an internal theme, the novel effectively

severs the relationship between thought and action that typically underpins the

characterization of the *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist.  It is this division between what

Moreau thinks and what he does not do that Flaubert assumes will render his novel "not

212

very entertaining." Though the author does not specifically equate the projected boredom

of his audience with the presentation of Moreau as a central character, it would be

difficult to avoid this conclusion. Moreau's character embodies the inactive passion that

Flaubert's novel recapitulates as one of its major themes, so boredom with the novel

would necessarily amount to boredom with he whose ostensible "education" supplies its

title.

*Sentimental Education* dilates upon the inaction that characterizes Moreau's

thought through Flaubert's now infamous use of free indirect discourse (FID), the deft

manipulation of which, as we have seen, contributes to the sense of psychological depth

that readers often attribute to characters.[147] The narrator liberally intersperses Moreau's

interior monologues with FID, thus intensifying the already parodic excessiveness of the

protagonist's reveries. Not only do Moreau's interior monologues occur one after

another, but the narrator doubly accentuates the pointlessness of each by aping Moreau's

language patterns. The following passage occurs during a walk home that Moreau takes

after visiting the Arnoux household:

> He had been endowed with an extraordinary talent, the object of which he
> did not know. He asked himself in all seriousness whether he was to be a
> great painter or a great poet; and he decided in favour of painting, for the
> demands of this profession would bring him closer to Mme Arnoux. So he
> had found his vocation! The object of his existence was now clear, and
> there could be no doubt about the future.
>
> When he had shut his door, he heard somebody snoring in the dark closet
> next to his bedroom. It was his friend. He had forgotten all about him.
>
> His own face presented itself to him in the mirror. He liked the look of it,
> and remained there for a minute gazing at himself (61).[148]

Moreau admires himself in the mirror: so ends the fourth chapter of the first volume of

Flaubert's novel. In his book on Jane Austen—probably the only novelist whose use of

FID has prompted more critical analysis than Flaubert's—D.A. Miller eloquently compares the technique of the chapter break to a kind of narrative "hurdle… which, like a fade-to-black in film, executes as strong an internal disconnect as the Novel has at its disposal" (64).[149] The chapter break here allows us to meditate on the sheer deflation of the moment, as the protagonist's reflection *on* his reflection (and on his friend's noisy slumber) easily distracts him from what seconds earlier seemed a revelation about his life course. Not simply questioning the value of the epiphany (as do *The Mill on the Floss* and the Palliser novels), *Sentimental Education* joins *Born in Exile* in openly mocking it. Where in a *Bildungsroman* like *Emma*, Austen uses FID to signal and sympathize with the protagonist's revelation, Flaubert's employs the same narrative technique to contrary ends, turning the very possibility of Frédéric's revelation into a parody. The time for a reader's laughter at Moreau's inanities seems literally built into the narrative's form, and the absence of any verbal commentary by the narrator—the distance at which he places himself from Moreau's complacency at the end of this chapter—becomes a strategy of derision that is all the more forceful for its linguistic silence.

But if we feel the narrator's distance at the end of the previous passage and the chapter that it concludes, the FID that precedes the chapter break underscores a moment when the narrator is unquestionably present. The jumbled quality of free indirect discourse, in which the narrator's and character's voices become confused, here heightens the absurdity of Moreau's impromptu career choices by disingenuously infusing them with the narratorial brio to which the protagonist's idiom must submit itself ("So he had found his vocation!"). The passage is crucial to *Sentimental Education*'s project of charting its protagonist's failed development in formal terms; it illustrates how

the narrator uses such linguistic mimicry as a space of commentary on Moreau's

(un)developing character. Not only does Moreau here move indiscriminately from

reverie to reverie (as he does in his more detailed fantasies about Mme Arnoux), but the

content of his reflections directly addresses the novel's commitment to gesturing toward

structural aspects of the *Bildungsroman*. The discovery of a life's object, for example,

could hardly be a more pervasive plot point in the coming-of-age narrative. What

diverges from the *Bildungsroman*'s conventional structure here, though, is not the

inclusion of the life-object's discovery, but the alacrity with which it is discovered and

discarded. Moreau does not, like Wilhelm Meister or David Copperfield, find vocational

satisfaction at the end of a long journey (and a long narrative that would relate it). We

must keep in mind that this revelation occurs in the first volume of a three-volume novel,

that it is only one in a veritable procession of similarly structured "breakthroughs." That

the narrator should ironically imitate the protagonist's voice at the same time that Moreau

imagines he has found "the object of his existence," and that this "object" goes from

Moreau's mind as quickly as it comes, reveals the narrator's investment in refashioning

the developing protagonist into a character who *never learns*. (The irony of the novel's

title, of course, depends on our understanding of the resistance to education that

Moreau's excessive, clichéd interiority—his extreme *sentiment*—brings about).

Though Moreau's "talent" lies if anything in moving quickly from one imagined

vocation to the next, the image of him that the narrator ultimately presents is a

comparatively static one. Insofar as Flaubert constructs his protagonist through

techniques of repetition and exaggeration, Frédéric's character resembles those of

Maggie Tulliver and Corinne, each of whom demonstrates a persistent characterological

215

intransigence.  But Frédéric's tenacity, paradoxically, lies in his refusal to govern himself according to any one characteristic, or to settle on any principle that would orient his psychological meanderings morally.   Unable to act upon the dreams he constructs for himself before new dreams begin to accrue, the protagonist finally finds himself unable to even dream: the imagination that tenuously holds his character together gradually recedes.  Toward the end of the novel, the narrator informs us that even Moreau's love for Mme Arnoux has cooled: "the violence of desire, the very flower of feeling, had gone. His intellectual ambitions had also dwindled.  Years went by; and he endured the idleness of his mind and the inertia of his heart" (411).[150]  Although this diminishment of feeling does represent a change for Moreau, it is essential for Flaubert's narrative of failed development that this change be figured as a loss: Moreau does not mature as a result of his mental idleness, but rather loses the imaginative power of which his character has largely consisted.

The Flaubertian narrator's unsympathetic treatment of his protagonist—the way that the narrator exaggerates, repeats, and mimics Moreau's self-reflection to the point at which that reflection serves no ostensible goal but to further itself—thus contributes largely to Moreau's failure to develop as a formal character.   The protagonist's interiority comes across not as a productive "search within" that leads to characterological transformation, but as an incessant hindrance to his life-plot's unfolding. And since we are dealing with a *Bildungsroman*, this life-plot is also the plot of Flaubert's novel itself.  Given both the frequency of the interior passages and the narrator's refusal to provide either a tongue-in-cheek apology for or an analytic evaluation of them, it is hardly surprising that certain reviews of *Sentimental Education*

did not warm to the structure of its storyline. Flaubert himself complained to George Sand that [some critics of the novel] "are of the opinion that what I have written is merely a series of scenes, and that composition and pattern are completely lacking" (*Letters*, 136).[151] What such negative views are responding to, I would argue, is the way that Moreau's interiority—copious enough to be confused with the novel's plot itself—seems episodic without a narrator who underwrites its importance for the protagonist's "education." The revelation of consciousness that should turn Moreau into a "deep" character instead turns him into a comical portrait of depth as Flaubert's narrator alternates between withholding sympathy (through silent "distance" from Moreau's reflection) and actively undermining it (by infusing that reflection with the mocking language of FID). And even though it does take place over many years, the "journey-like" quality toward which *Sentimental Education*'s structure might gesture collapses as the insistent multiplication of Moreau's interior monologues decelerates the forward movement upon which earlier *Bildungsromane* rely for the formation of plot and protagonist alike. Henry James's contention about Flaubert's own development—that "no life was ever simpler or straighter in the sense of being a case of growth without change…the Flaubert of fifty differs from the Flaubert of twenty only in size" (*Literary Criticism*, 299)—thus provides an eerily appropriate description not only of Frédéric Moreau, but also of those numerous other protagonists (Maggie Tulliver, Corinne, Alice Vavasor) whose development manifests itself as resistance to change.[152]

**Development and the Character Type**

If Frédéric Moreau and Godwin Peak do not develop according to the *Bildungsroman*'s conventional schema, it is not for their own lack of engagement with the idea of character development itself. David Grylls's observation that "Gissing's people take their self-improvement seriously, [including] cultural and mental as well as moral and psychological development" (109) might also be applied to *Sentimental Education*'s hero, whom the narrator tells us "[plans his life] like an architect designing a palace" (109). In both novels, this desire for character development becomes indistinguishable from the protagonists' fixation upon an abstracted female love-object. Moreau and Peak think about their loves (that is, Mme Arnoux and Sidwell Warricombe) as if the possession of each was a veritable *raison d'être*: Peak remarks that "my one desire is to marry a perfectly refined woman" (140) and, as we have already seen, Moreau specifically describes Mme Arnoux as the "object of his existence." Further, this conflation of the possession of a woman with the development of character ensures each protagonist's developmental failure. Peak's determination to marry Sidwell allows him to rationalize a feigned moral conversion, and the persistence of Moreau's fascination with Mme Arnoux attenuates both his crippling self-reflection and the incoherent formal character that results from it.

That a *Bildungsroman*'s protagonist should construct a love-object as a center of desirable abstract qualities is not in itself a structural or thematic innovation for the character development narrative: almost any *Bildungsroman* could be said to effect a similar maneuver, from Wilhelm Meister's worship of Natalie, to David Copperfield's idealization of Dora, to Corinne's tragic fixation on Oswald. In Flaubert's and Gissing's

218

novels, however, the quality of this abstraction differs from more conventional models

through the protagonists' imagination of Sidwell and Mme Arnoux as *types*. I use the

latter term in its more familiar sense of anatomizing these characters according to

particular social and characterological distinctions (Sidwell is, for Godwin, the very type

of the genteel Victorian lady, and Mme Arnoux strikes Frédéric as the living incarnation

of a virtuous, romantic heroine). But more importantly, "typologizing" describes the way

in which Godwin's and Frédéric's desire for these women renders Sidwell and Mme

Arnoux into static mental portraits. Both *Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education*

present their central "romantic" relationships as more psychological than actual, since

Godwin and Frédéric spend more time with their imagined lovers than they ever do with

the "real" women themselves. The novels' narrators ultimately illustrate not only how

this typology of character is inaccurate—since it does not allow Sidwell and Mme

Arnoux room to develop *themselves*—but also how its inaccuracy reflects the

protagonists' larger developmental failures. For if Godwin and Frederic are permitted to

pursue their own ideals of development at a distance from the vigorous verbal intrusion

that occurs in earlier *Bildungsromane*, this distance also permits the narrators to

showcase the protagonists' inability to successfully "read" the female characters on

whom they focus..

The statement that Frédéric Moreau typologizes Mme Arnoux might at first seem

counterintuitive. After all, Moreau reflects constantly upon her utter singularity:

> Every morning he swore that he was going to be bold. An invincible
> sense of decency restrained him; and he could not find any example to
> follow, since *she was different from other women. His dreams had raised
> her to a position outside the human condition.* Beside her, he felt less
> important on earth than the scraps of silk which fell from her scissors"
> (174, emphasis added).[153]

But Moreau's elevation of Mme Arnoux to the status of goddess—a woman who is "outside the human condition"—actually turns her into a type.  To Moreau, everything Mme Arnoux does is morally unshakeable, and every item she touches becomes a kind of holy relic.  Moreover, the protagonist's inaction (what he assumes here to be his "invincible sense of decency") indicates how invested he is in keeping Mme Arnoux's faultless image untainted with the dull realities that an actual sexual encounter with her might occasion.  Moreau's unwillingness to seduce Mme Arnoux thus allows his fantasies about her as a type of character he desires to be sustained.  And these desires, in turn, permit the protagonist to make structural sense of his own story: in the end of the novel, Moreau actually tells Mme Arnoux that "in the depths of myself I always had the music of your voice and the splendour of your eyes" (414).[154]  What Mme Arnoux means to Moreau is what she means *for* him, in terms of his self-construction as a character: she is the organizing principle of his reveries.

Because *Sentimental Education*'s narrator is so focused on the elaboration and ridicule of its protagonist's interiority, it seldom allows Mme Arnoux a role that is independent from Moreau's abstracted conception of her: we as readers get to know Mme Arnoux principally through the protagonist's thoughts.  However it would be a mistake to interpret the narrator's sparse treatment of Mme Arnoux's own feelings and actions as his tacit agreement with Moreau's typologies.  Like the chronicler of *Born in Exile*, Flaubert's narrator provides the protagonist with more space than sympathy; the focus on Moreau's presentation of Mme Arnoux inside monologues that the narrator sardonically inflects suggests that readers should give as little credence to the accuracy of Moreau's characterization as they should faith to his musical or literary aspirations.  As Diana

Knight notes, "Madame Arnoux is real but Moreau perceives her as if she were an image" (86). And it is this conception of the "real" love-object as an aestheticized image—as a mental picture that can be elaborated and embellished interminably—that allows the protagonist to depict Mme Arnoux internally as "the substance of his feelings, the very essence of his life" (SE 397).[155] That the novel's narrator dilates not upon Mme Arnoux, but rather on how Moreau conceives of her, in fact further establishes his characterization of the protagonist as no more than the sum of his own imaginings.

Most readers of *Sentimental Education* will remember that its narrator finally allows Mme Arnoux to speak for herself in the novel's closing pages. The scene in which an elderly Mme Arnoux, now widowed, pays an unexpected visit to a middle-aged and comparatively dispassionate Frédéric, has captivated critics from Henry James to Jonathan Culler, not least because it presents a more detailed version of the "real" woman behind the goddess than the novel has previously allowed. In addition, Mme Arnoux's widowhood makes her more available to Moreau than ever before: there is, in this scene that follows so many of the protagonist's romantic dreams, at least the potential for the couple to get together after all. But such an ending, however ardently even the most cynical of critics might secretly desire it, proves impossible because of the strictly internal world to which Moreau must relegate Mme Arnoux if he is to make sense of the self he has created around her image.

Mme Arnoux reveals herself, in fact, to possess a capacity for dreaming that resembles Moreau's own. We learn, in particularly florid dialogue, that she has pined after the protagonist all along: "Sometimes," she confesses, "your words come back to me like a distant echo, like the sound of a bell carried by the wind; and when I read about

221

love in a book, I feel that you are there beside me" (413).[156] But although this confession inspires Moreau with "a frenzied, rabid lust such as he had never known before," he proceeds to restrain himself from what he perceives as its speaker's sexual advances because of an equally powerful "fear of being disgusted later. Besides, what a nuisance it would be!" (415).[157] We see here how Mme Arnoux's revelation of her own emotions— regardless of how congenial they may seem to Moreau's desires—complicates his reliance on an image of his beloved as a static type. To finally make love to Mme Arnoux would cause him "disgust" because it would curtail the abstraction of her by which he lives. Hence also the protagonist's feeling that the first sight of Mme Arnoux's white hair "was like a blow full in the chest" (414).[158] The revelation of white hair that was once black is such a shock to Moreau because it is a visual marker of change: Mme Arnoux's aging body threatens Moreau with the knowledge that she is not "outside the human condition" but is manifestly a part of it. And if Moreau acknowledges that Mme Arnoux's external beauty has faded, he must also become aware of the breakdown of what he takes to be "the very essence of his life."

Born in Exile explores its protagonist's confusion of his own development with the possession of a female "essence" much more explicitly than does Sentimental Education. The character Christian Moxey once remarks that "a woman's influence takes one out of oneself" (197), and it is this influence that Godwin Peak finds so attractive in his abstraction of Sidwell Warricombe as "no individual, but the type of an order" (216). We have seen how Peak's decision to feign the development of moral character at Exeter is contingent upon his refusal to come to terms with what the narrator figures as his "inner nature." That Peak should locate "the supreme end to which my life

is directed" (439) not in himself but in the possession of a woman he styles as representative of the level of gentility he desires thus sets the stage for his development to fail. The following passage, which closes Part III of the novel and serves as a transition into Peak's phony conversion, provides a spectacular example of the protagonist's reliance upon the typologization of Sidwell as a way both to figure his own development and to rationalize the performance of moral conversion that he hopes will draw Sidwell's attention:

> It was Sidwell or death. Into what a void of hideous futility would his life be cast, if this desire proved vain, and he were left to combat alone with the memory of his dishonour! With Sidwell the reproach could be outlived. She would understand him, pardon him—and thereafter a glorified existence, rivaling that of whosoever has been most exultant among the sons of men! (274).

Peak's use of the term "Sidwell" here slides almost comically into abstraction: paired with "death," the "Sidwell" of which the protagonist conceives stands in for Peak's life itself. Like Moreau's canonization of Mme Arnoux in *Sentimental Education*, Peak's idea of Sidwell as a love-object necessitates that the particularities of her character be subordinated to the type of woman about whom Peak fantasizes. Moreover, the delivery of this self-given ultimatum in a frenzy of FID points up the mock heroics of Peak's project, the way that Peak throws down the gauntlet and challenges himself to face the "combat" with "dishonour" that will follow if he fails to achieve the existence that his notion of Sidwell seems to promise. As in *Sentimental Education*, the vocal proximity that FID makes available between Gissing's narrator and central character actually amplifies the ironic tone in which the interior monologue is delivered.

*Born in Exile*'s narrator can give no better evidence of its own distance from Peak than by allowing the reader to glimpse aspects of Sidwell's character to which Peak himself

223

is not privy.  That the protagonist's focus on Sidwell's representative qualities deprives both him and the reader of a more nuanced look at her character becomes evident in scenes when Sidwell interrogates her family members about their own moral compunctions.  She responds to Buckland's complaints about the "ridiculous education" of women, for example, with a statement that puts the substance of her own education into practice: "This generalising is so easy…and so worthless…there's no longer such a thing as *woman* in the abstract.  We are individuals" (238, emphasis in original).  And though Sidwell eventually capitulates to her father's wishes that she discontinue her contact with Peak, her refusal to scorn the protagonist after discovering his elaborate lie illustrates her exceptionality rather than her adherence to the kinds of actions that both Peak and her family expect from her.  Where Peak's conception of his own development depends on possessing a woman who is "the type of an order," then, Sidwell is struggling to differentiate herself from such an assessment.  Though the character type with which Peak associates her by definition cannot grow (it remains static, in a knowable place), *Born in Exile*'s narrator shows us what Peak fails to grasp: that Sidwell is, in fact, moving through the very process of character development that the protagonist himself only pretends to undergo.

Gissing's novel thus offers alternate views of the abstracted female character, whereas *Sentimental Education* withholds such a view until its final scenes.   But even though the two narrators' techniques for showing the protagonists' problematic readings of character are structurally dissimilar, the effect of those techniques is comparable.  Both narrators demonstrate their affective distance from Peak and Moreau by illustrating the way that the protagonists' conception of development relies on the false assumption that their abstracted love-objects cannot or will not develop themselves.  Moreover, narrative

distance links Peak's and Moreau's failures (one to develop the harmonious "moral" character that his narrator describes, the other to develop formally, outside the depiction of his interior monologues) to the characters' reliance on the simplification and abstraction of female character. Flaubert's and Gissing's narrators ultimately suggest, then, that typologizing character is a practice for which they have little sympathy.

Nevertheless, it is worth asking how such skepticism of the protagonists' affinity for typologizing character reflects back on the narrators' own methods of characterization. For—as this dissertation has repeatedly pointed out—the ability to make generalizations about moral character is the very modus operandi of the nineteenth-century novel's narrator. (Recall the confident assessment of Godwin Peak as a "militant egotist," or Flaubert's own statement that his "desire was to portray types" rather than individuals in his novels [qtd. in Steegmuller 339]). If narrators themselves offer little sympathy for a strategy of characterization so common to their practice, how is it that they escape the moral judgments that descriptive abstractions attach to characters? If the narrator is a center of judgment, why do we, as readers and critics, tend not measure him by the same standards by which he organizes the sympathetic orientation of the narrative?

The answer, I would argue, involves the narrator's ability to hide himself from the reader through distancing techniques: literary critics rarely recognize any persona behind the narration of novels whose narrators are not also characters within the world of the story. Though characters in third-person novels are no more "real people" than are the narrators who describe them, they do not have the same ability to retreat into the seemingly impersonal language that the novelistic narrator often adopts. The whole notion of the objective voice—that is, the image of the Flaubertian narrator that critics like Culler and

Miller figure as a kind of linguistic liberation—helps avoid discussions of the narrator as a

moral agent.  And "disembodied language," too, is an attractive idea for novel theorists

because it turns the novel into a site of linguistic indeterminacy that is purportedly

unencumbered by the eternally tendentious arena of human value systems.

But there is a point at which the decision to see a narrator as impersonal risks

turning meaninglessness into the highest value.  Booth reminds us that "to write is to affirm

at the very least the superiority of *this* order over *that* order" (298, emphasis in original).

Though neither Flaubert nor Gissing desired to espouse a particular order in his work,[159]

the way that both *Born in Exile* and *Sentimental Education* figure a character's lack of

sympathetic qualities as a cause of developmental failure helps us understand how the

construction of development in the novel also attempts to structure the sympathy that

readers can give or withhold.  A narrator's distance can mask his attempt to collude with

his audience, but the very act of telling a story will always refigure this collusion.  If we,

like the narrators who speak to us through novels, come to withhold sympathy from certain

characters, we have learned to do so in part by sympathizing with the voice—however

distant—that fixes those characters as types.

## Conclusion

## Character Beyond the Novel

I began this dissertation by stressing the value of genre as a tool to demarcate my area of inquiry. The genre of the *Bildungsroman*, I argued, offered an ideal discursive field in which to examine literary character, since *Bildungsromane* traditionally treat character development as a central thematic and formal subject. Further, my analysis of character through the *Bildungsroman* was period-specific: while character development novels continue to flourish in our own day, their nineteenth-century ancestors were more overtly concerned with character's moral component. Though many of the novels I treat in this study illustrate different understandings of moral character—from Dickens's and Charlotte Brontë's alignment of morality with introspection, for example, to Flaubert's refusal, through narrative distance, to sanction introspection as a moral practice—all of them appear comfortable, and many even eager, to make value judgments about their protagonists' relative virtues.

But if nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* demonstrate particularly stark manifestations of character's marriage of morality with form, it surely does not follow that the *Bildungsroman* is the only genre in which such a marriage becomes legible. Is "character" as I have described it exclusive to narrative, for example? How might the construction of character in lyric poetry complicate or extend our understandings of psychological depth throughout nineteenth-century literature? And what, exactly, is the

status of the term "literature" in this or any inquiry into narratological character: does character function differently in historical texts than it does in the novel's imagined histories?  As I bring this study to a close, I want to briefly approach the latter question by exploring a prose genre—the non-fictional autobiography—that closely resembles *David Copperfield* and *Jane Eyre*, the two fictional autobiographies I considered in Chapter One.  By looking at Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) and John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873) with the previous four chapters in mind, I will suggest a direction in which my analysis of character might move in the future.  I have chosen these two texts not only because of their formal affinity with first-person *Bildungsromane*, but also because of the enormous impact of both Rousseau's and Mill's writings on nineteenth-century discourses about character (whether in its philosophical, political, educational or literary guises).

Asking whether fictional and non-fictional versions of character function similarly involves epistemological questions whose theoretical and historical complexity deserves far more space than the current study can provide.  In the interest of a preliminary sketch, however, I want at least to signal that these questions implicate what Dorrit Cohn has called the "distinction of fiction"—that is, the general, underlying differences (or lack of such differences) between narratives imagined by authors and narratives based on actual historical events.[160]  Bracketing Cohn's own take on this issue for the moment, suffice it to say that the majority of narratologists make very little, if any, distinction between fiction and nonfiction in their generalizations about narrative discourse.[161]  Indeed, both Rousseau's and Mill's autobiographies seem in numerous ways to support such a conclusion: Rousseau's steady rise from the bucolic Swiss

countryside to the chic salons of Paris prefigures many a similar installment in the *Comédie Humaine*, for example, and Mill's emphasis on the benefits and traumas of his childhood education reflects the comparable fictions of child development we find in Brontë's and Dickens's *Bildungsromane*. Both works, in addition, are structured around the kind of dramatic epiphanies we saw in *Emma* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, from Rousseau's youthful realization of "violence and injustice" when he is unfairly punished for a theft he did not commit,[162] to the reading of Étienne Dumont's *Traité de Législation* that Mill claims "gave unity to my conception of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion" (68). In each case, the autobiographer ascribes transformative value to these youthful events; not only were both writers forever changed after undergoing a flash of insight, but these changes directly informed the philosophical beliefs for which they would later become famous. By figuring characterological change as both the focal point and the justification for each work, and Rousseau's and Mill's autobiographies support the tradition of progressive *Bildung* which writers like Eliot, Staël and Trollope resisted through their own development novels.

Mill's *Autobiography* in particular bears a striking similarity to *David Copperfield*, exhibiting variations on the techniques of "character sacrifice" that we have seen at work in Dickens's novel. When discussing his debating society years, for example, Mill casts several of his colleagues in plainly functional roles, remarking that "both Maurice and Sterling were of considerable use to my development" (145). This construction of his own character through others becomes most elaborately wrought in

Mill's reflections on Harriet Taylor, his longtime friend and, later, wife. Take for instance, the first sentence of Chapter VI:

> It was at the period of my mental progress which I have now reached that I formed the friendship which has been the honour and chief blessing of my existence, as well as the source of a great part of all I have attempted to do, or hope to effect hereafter, for human improvement (145).

Here, Mill refigures the conventional *Bildungsroman*'s stage-based trajectory both by carving up his life story into discrete "periods" and by defining this specific period in terms of a person who had an ameliorative effect on his moral development. Compare this paean to Taylor with David's confident assertion that Agnes is "the source of every worthy aspiration I had ever had; the centre of myself, the circle of my life" (808). Not only do both Mill the man and David the character implicitly showcase their belief in individual progress, but their similar positioning of a female love-object as the origin of this progress allows them to seem selfless at the same time that it builds up their own self-narratives. Moreover, Mill's subsequent remark that "[i]n this third period…of my mental progress, which now went hand-in-hand with hers, my opinions gained equally in breadth and depth" (174) illustrates how his introjection of his wife's character renders his own character fuller, more changed, and finally, morally superior to its earlier incarnations in pre-Harriet "periods." Finally, Harriet becomes an increasingly powerful guiding force for Mill after she dies, as he is left to try to derive moral benefit from the loss: "Her memory is to me a religion," he writes, "and her approbation the standard by which…I endeavour to regulate my life" (183). Mill's formulation here recalls Copperfield's narrative of being "sustained and led on" in hard times by the memory of his dead mother (177). In the fictional and the non-fictional passage alike, the death of

another gives the narrator an occasion to comment on his own character's forward trajectory.

While such parallels appear to substantiate a theoretical reading that positions fictional and non-fictional autobiographies on the same discursive plane, Cohn insists that the relationship between non-fictional narrative and real historical events obliges critics to approach them differently. "The fact is," she writes, "that a text-oriented poetics of fiction excludes on principle a realm that is at the very center of the historiographer's concern: the more or less reliably documented evidence of past events out of which the historian fashions his story" (*Distinction*, 112). In particular, Cohn has suggested that narratology's traditional, bi-level story/discourse model—which divides narrative into a sequence of events (the "story") and the fashion in which those events are presented (the "discourse")—is "insufficient and incomplete" when analyzing historical narratives, which latter necessitate a third tier of "reference" inapplicable to narrative fiction (111). And although Cohn readily admits that that non-fictional autobiographers are notoriously inaccurate self-historians (citing Rousseau here in particular), she maintains that the crucial distinction between a book like *Confessions* and a book like *Jane Eyre* is one of generic convention: Rousseau professes to tell his story as accurately as he can, and implied readers intend to take this profession in good faith (30-35). Brontë's implied readers, on the other hand, recognize from the beginning that the first-person narrator is not the author, and that her truth claims function in an imagined and therefore unverifiable world.

Somewhat paradoxically, Cohn goes on to assert that although non-fictional autobiographies possess a relationship to real events that separates them from their

fictional counterparts, at least one aspect of narrative technique allows fictional first-person narratives to appear more real than the real historical narratives they implicitly impersonate. This technique—or rather, constellation of techniques—is none other than represented thought, i.e. narrative's mode of illustrating cognitive functioning. While the reflective quality of *any* first-person narrative emphasizes its status as introspective thought, Cohn explains that "the minds of imaginary figures can be known in ways that those of real persons can not" insofar as readers of first-person fiction have complete, unlimited access to the fictional mind of the narrating character (118).[163] When dealing with non-fictional autobiographers, on the other hand, just as when dealing with other people in the actual world, readers can never totally "know" the minds of others, since these minds contain an infinitude of abstract material that, if not intentionally withheld by the thinker, is nonetheless constantly shifting, quickly forgotten, and largely non-linguistic.[164] Novelistic autobiographers seem more real than actual autobiographers, then, because their entire mental "existence" is, by contrast, offered up to us as a material artifact whose discreteness allows it to become common knowledge among readers and critics.

If Cohn's work focuses principally on how the presentation of fictional thought makes characters come to seem real, I propose to explore how the inverse side of this argument might help us better understand the construction of non-fictional, autobiographical characters and thereby sharpen our understanding of narratological character in general. For while the "full" mental lives of novelistic autobiographers help them to appear genuine, the formal, "constructed" aspect of character becomes more overt in autobiographies written by flesh-and-blood human beings. Indeed, both Mill's

and Rousseau's autobiographies—each of which transparently concerns itself with the construction of moral character—carry the formal tendencies of the traditional *Bildungsroman* to comparative excess.  In this light, Mill's and Rousseau's works do not resemble the *Bildungsroman* so much as they exaggerate many of the structural properties for which it is known.  Or—to put it another way—the fictional *Bildungsroman* offers a more streamlined version of the "real" character development process it imitates.

Take, for instance, what is perhaps the most infamous passage of *Confessions*: its lengthy epigraph (often called the "premier préambule").  Rousseau writes:

> This is the only portrait of a man, painted exactly according to nature and in all its truth, that exists and will probably ever exist. Whoever you may be, whom destiny or my trust has made the arbiter of the fate of these notebooks, I entreat you, in the name of my misfortunes, of your compassion, and of all human kind, not to destroy a unique and useful work, which may serve as a first point of comparison in the study of man that certainly is yet to be begun, and not to take away from the honour of my memory the only sure monument to my character that has not been disfigured by my enemies.  Finally, were you yourself to be one of those implacable enemies, cease to be so towards my ashes, and do not pursue your cruel injustice beyond the term both of my life and yours; so that you might do yourself the credit of having been, once at least, generous and good, when you might have been wicked and vindictive; if, that is, the evil directed at a man who has never himself done nor wanted to do any could properly bear the name of vengeance (3).[165]

The author's claim to his work's—and, by extension, his character's—own uniqueness makes explicit what the first-person *Bildungsroman* only suggests.  In the simplest terms, the distinction between the fictional and the non-fictional text is one of showing versus telling: where the self-narratives of characters like David Copperfield and Jane Eyre convince us, over time, of the protagonist's extraordinary qualities, Rousseau's narrative

instead commands us, before providing any corroborating evidence, to take its author's

singularity on faith. The *Confessions*' précis of what we are about to read therefore

echoes what Cohn identifies as "the massive prevalence of summary over scene in

historical narration" (*Distinction*, 121), but unlike most historical writing, which tends to

generalize about groups of individuals, Rousseau's text here uses summative language to

introduce the life of a single, specific individual. In an attempt to prematurely justify his

project's importance to the reader, Rousseau's story therefore risks seeming finished

before it has even begun. Compare, on the other hand, the first sentence of *David*

*Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that

station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (3). Though we have

already registered the disingenuousness of this sentence insofar as the title of Dickens's

novel proves that David is indeed "the hero of [his] own life," its narrator's performance

of uncertainty about his own worthiness affords the reader considerably more judgmental

power than do Rousseau's opening lines: in the latter case, we are instructed to respect

the author's character, and in the former, we are asked to judge for ourselves whether or

not the narrator will deserve respect after his story has been told. So while both the

fictional and the non-fictional autobiography both try from the beginning to win

sympathy from their readers, Rousseau's overt positioning of his book as a massive

solicitation of sympathy ("I entreat you, in the name of my misfortunes…") amplifies the

goals—and therefore, the rhetorical constructedness—of the autobiographical enterprise.

Unlike a fictional autobiographer, who is by definition unencumbered by real-world

"enemies," Rousseau's actual history (and relationship with actual political adversaries)

in fact obliges him to erect a formal armature of self-justification that appears antithetical

to the "natural" self-portrait he claims to be painting.  By contrast, David's and Jane's

comparatively sparing addresses to the reader work to efface the reality that their "lives"

are in fact wholly semantic creations, painstakingly imagined by professional novelists.

I do not mean to suggest that Brontë's and Dickens's fictional autobiographies

never engage in meta-commentary, but rather that Rousseau's and Mill's non-fictional

autobiographies render many formal techniques of novelistic character development

considerably more visible and therefore—ironically—more novelistic for all their

referential validity.  Consider, for example, the *Confessions*' insistence (in yet another of

its narrator's imperative asides to the reader) on telling everything:

> Before going any further, I owe the reader some excuse or
> justification, both for the minute details into which I have just
> gone, and for those into which I will be going later on, and which
> are of no particular interest to him.  But the undertaking I have
> embarked on, to reveal myself to him in my entirety, requires that
> nothing about me should remain hidden or obscure; I must be
> continually present to his gaze; he must follow me into all the
> aberrations of my heart, into every recess of my life; he must not
> lose sight of me for a moment, for fear that, finding in my story the
> least lacuna, the least void, and wondering to himself what I did
> during that time, he should accuse me of not wanting to reveal
> everything (58).[166]

More than any other single text, Rousseau's *Confessions* is renowned for

pioneering the use of first-person narration not only to plumb the private depths of

character (what Rousseau here calls the hidden "recesses" and aberrations of [his]

heart"), but to suggest that those depths provide the lens through which one's moral

compass can truly be discerned.  This attempt to defend the first-person narrator's

character by granting readers unrestricted access to his mind, of course, will play a

crucial role in the numerous fictional autobiographies, including *Copperfield* and *Eyre*,

that followed Rousseau's non-fictional one.  However, as we look back from Dickens's

and Brontë's *Bildungsromane* toward what is arguably modern autobiography's inaugural text, we can see how Rousseau's emphasis on intimacy is more magnified than anything we find in these two similarly foundational novels. For instance, centuries before Elizabeth Ermarth suggested that the long duration of the novel cultivates an impression of characterological depth by allowing readers to follow characters throughout numerous, connected episodes, Rousseau made a similar proposition explicit in his own autobiography. The previous passage illustrates Rousseau's insistence that we will know him better (and, presumably, know him to *be* better) the more the more he tells. Consequently, as readers of the *Confessions* can verify, his story keeps on going and going, including not only a bevy of "novelistic" episodes (reading romances with his father; the theft of Madame de Vercelli's ribbon), but a seemingly innumerable array of digressions and rationalizations as well. But despite Rousseau's insistence that he has left "nothing hidden," representing a "whole life" remains an impossible task for the flesh-and-blood autobiographer: Rousseau's avowal of painting his entire character could only be true if the *Confessions* were a fictional account whose characters did not exist outside the covers of a book. A fictional autobiography, by contrast, actually does "tell everything" at the same time that it suggests that it has been deliberately and thoughtfully pieced together out of the unnarratable multiplicity of real-life experience.

If the *Confessions* prefigures, in an ostentatious manner, the novel's ability to evoke deep character through extended duration, Mill's *Autobiography* lands far on the opposite side the narrative spectrum. At around 200 pages, the *Autobiography* is as short as the *Confessions* is long; indeed, it is far shorter than any of the nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* I mention in this dissertation. Rather than defending his project through

a proposal to tell all, Mill insists, with stereotypically Victorian modesty, that he will tell as little as possible. When studying the St. Simonians, for example, he writes that "[i]n giving an account of this period of my life, I have only specified such of my new impressions as appeared to me, both at the time and since, to be a kind of turning points [sic], marking a definite progress in my mode of thought" (134). This statement exaggerates, by diminution, the relentlessly advancing plot-trajectory we find in fictional autobiographies like *Copperfield* and *Eyre*: Mill's commitment to chronicling the "definite progress" of his character requires any anecdote that threatens this progress to be swiftly edited out. While even more peremptory in tone, Mill's narrative self-restrictions therefore structurally resemble Dickens's and Brontë's poetics of character sacrifice by only retaining narrative elements (whether characters like Agnes or episodes like Mill's philosophical epiphany) that are positively saturated in characterological significance. Mill, David, and Jane all suggest that the crucial parts of a life are those from which lessons can ultimately be derived, but the *Autobiography* carries this belief to the point at which its author's self-portrait seems curiously incomplete. Readers can find far more information on John Stuart Mill in any number of biographies, for example, than they can in his own life-narration, which ends as totally and as tidily as the most conventional of realist novels: "I have no further mental changes to tell of, but only, as I hope, a continued mental progress" (169). When Mill's transformation stops, in other words, so too does the narrative that depicts it.

At this point, I can only speculate about why elements of character's formal construction appear far more palpable in the autobiographies of real individuals than they do in autobiographical fictions. Certainly the inability of real human beings to ever "tell

237

all" about themselves contributes to a sense of artifice surrounding Rousseau's and Mill's works, but this explanation hardly tells the whole story about autobiographical character. Another reason for this seemingly contradictory phenomenon—of real characters who seem fake and fake characters who seem real—may be related to the avowed concern with moral character development for which both Rousseau and Mill were known long before the publication of either autobiography. While the *Confessions* and the *Autobiography* purport to relate their authors' own specific development narratives, each book also serves to advance its author's particular philosophy about character in general; each, therefore, does double-duty as a kind of how-to manual for the reader's character development, ostentatiously gleaning moral principles from disparate narrative events.

While this dissertation should leave little doubt that first-person *Bildungsromane* can also be laced with characterological pedagogy, its readings nonetheless suggest that a significant number of such novels are less confident than either Rousseau's or Mill's texts that character development—however figured—can favorably transform the developing subject. Despite the *Bildungsroman*'s preoccupation with chronicling an individual's growth, the novel is not obliged, as the *Confessions* and the *Autobiography* both are, to characterize developmental change as a virtue. Instead, from the overweening constancy of Maggie Tulliver's and Corinne's dominant characteristics, to the Palliser characters' interminable indecision, to Godwin Peak's and Frédéric Moreau's impersonation of authentic conversions, we have seen how nineteenth-century novels that focus on character often highlight the various ways in which its development is static rather than progressive. But if Rousseau's and Mill's texts paint a more dynamic picture

of character development than does any of these novels, their exaggerations of the

*Bildungsroman*'s structural techniques provide yet another example of the distortions that

attend character's presentation in narrative.  Whether through the *Confessions'* proposal

to reveal its author's character down to the most mundane detail, or the *Autobiography*'s

refusal to divulge a single unnecessary episode, these non-fictional autobiographies join

the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* in suggesting that character's formal

embeddedness in narrative will always disrupt the ideal of harmonious balance to which

the concept of character development remains stubbornly attached.

**Notes**

[1] My attention to the narrative losses that attend the construction of psychological depth shares key conceptual concerns with Carolyn Steedman's *Strange Dislocations*: *Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930.* Steedman's remarkably interdisciplinary work traces uses the numerous historical appearances of Goethe's Mignon figure—in contexts as diverse as literature, parenting manuals, amateur acrobatics, and psychoanalysis—to illustrate how the body of the child comes to represent "the depths of historicity within individuals" (12). Part of Steedman's argument suggests that interiority develops out of our sense of childhood as a lost realm, which becomes newly located—or rather, uncannily dislocated—in helpless child characters like Mignon.

[2] Slaughter's "Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects" explores both the history and theory of the *Bildungsroman* and the text of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, suggesting that "normative human rights law and the idealist *Bildungsroman* manifest themselves in a common conceptual vocabulary, humanist social vision, and narrative grammar of free and full human personality development" (1406).

[3] See, for example, Michael Beddow's *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the* Bildungsroman *from Wieland to Thomas Mann*; Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (esp. 3-13); Marc Redfield's *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the* Bildungsroman*; and Martin Swales's *The German* Bildungsroman *from Wieland to Hesse*.

[4] These remarks come from a recent article in which Esty reads Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* as a "Colonial *Bildungsroman*" that gestures toward the genre's conventional structure while also "break[ing] apart the entwined narrative *telê* of personal maturity and social modernization" (410). Though I agree with Esty's claim that *African Farm* distorts the *Bildungsroman*'s alleged narrative of progress, it is important to consider—as Esty only briefly does—how the "conventional" development narratives that preceded Schreiner's novel also rejected any easy elision between development and self-amelioration.

[5] In his early essay, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," Barthes adopts "the definition of [the] character according to participation in a sphere of actions" (107). Greimas outlines the structure of narrative characterization according to what he calls *acteurs* and *actants*: where an *acteur* is a specific character with particular traits (Lucy Snowe, Fanny Price, Edward Casaubon), an *actant* is a more generalized category that readers recognize across different narratives. Greimas divides actantial roles into six categories: subject, object, sender, helper, receiver and opponent, and he

\
constructs an "actantial model" that configures how these roles tend to play out according to a character's desire in narrative fiction:

**Sender**                  **Receiver**
         ↘         ↗
      **Subject→Object**
        ↗           ↖
**Helper**               **Opponent**
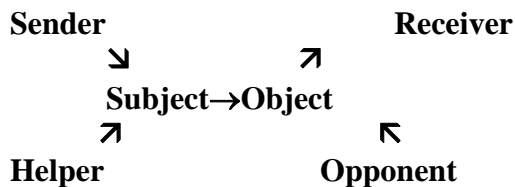
Note how the actantial model refers to what characters do rather than what they are or (or how they are conceived). For Greimas's own "Reflections on Actantial Models," see *Structural* Semantics, 57-75.

[6] In *Why We Read Fiction*, Zunshine contends that our predisposition for imagining other minds—and the practice of reading that helps us to imagine them—are evolved social behaviors (8).

[7] One of Phelan's greatest contributions to the rhetorical study of character is his delineation of character's three primary "dimensions": the *mimetic* dimension presents character as a "real" human being; the *synthetic* dimension deals with character's constructedness in language; and the *thematic* dimension uses character as a representative of abstract ideas. According to Phelan, implied authors tend to privilege certain dimensions over others depending on the message they want to communicate to their readers (*Reading People, Reading Plots* 1-23).

[8] The phrase "orientation toward the good" comes from Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*; I return to both the phrase and Taylor's book in Chapter 4.

[9] The distinction shows up, for example, in Uri Margolin's entry on *Character* in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (52). In *The Economy of Character*, Deidre Lynch provides an extended discussion of character's multiple meanings, referring not only to the difference between being a character and having a character, but also to the eighteenth-century understanding of character as an imprint—an image reproducible upon "legible faces, minted money, and imprinted texts" (35).

[10] In French, the "division" within the concept of character does not manifest itself linguistically: the French word for what I call "formal character" (i.e. a character as a structural element within a narrative) is not *caractère* (which refers both to the sum of an individual's qualities and to the printed letter) but *personnage*.

[11] Speculation on what exactly "moral character," might entail, of course, has a long and various philosophical history, with writers such as Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau wielding particular influence on the some of the moral discourses in circulation during the broad historical period "Developing Character" covers.

[12] While contemporary novels are concerned with the moral valence of character, they are much cagier about their projects: where nineteenth-century novelists as various

\

as Germaine de Staël, Charlotte Brontë and Anthony Trollope relentlessly dissect and comment on character, it would be difficult to find a twenty-first century novelist who uses the word (unironically) to describe an individual's moral compass.

[13] Perhaps the most famous opponent to the idea of the self as a stable identity across time is David Hume, who, in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1740) claims that although we may feel as if we possess a coherent "self," what we have is no more than a "bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (300). For a succinct discussion of the history of this problem—which is also sometimes called the "problem of personal identity" in philosophical study—see Searle's *Mind: An Introduction* (279-304).

[14] In *Character*, Kupperman writes, "The major difference between what we would call the nature of someone's self and what we would call that person's character is that we might include in what pertains to our self characteristic ways of thinking and acting in matters not normally considered important (e.g., tastes in food or clothing styles), whereas our ordinary use of *character* emphasizes matters of importance" (44, emphasis in original).

[15] "Jamais cette tête n'avait été aussi poétique qu'au moment où elle allait tomber" (554).

[16] Stefanie Markovits's recent book, *The Crisis of Action in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*, offers evidence congenial to this dissertation's claim that nineteenth-century *Bildungsromane* resist characterological change. Markovits argues that although we traditionally associate the nineteenth century with prodigious action (most notably the action demanded by political and industrial revolutions), the period's literature reveals how such action forms "the crux of nineteenth-century anxieties," leading writers from William Wordsworth to Henry James to explore practices of "inaction" in great detail (9). What Markovits calls "inaction," I would argue, forms part of the "changelessness" that I identify as a moral imperative in many *Bildungsromane*. But while Markovits indeed alludes to the *Bildungsroman* in her introduction, suggesting that "[f]rustrated action—inaction—is character building" (6), her actual readings focus not on the genre of the *Bildungsroman* or its concept of character, but rather on the historical circumstances which contributed to the wide variety of abortive plot structures (including stories of stagnant marriages and unsuccessful revolutions) that we find throughout nineteenth-century literature.

[17] I have in mind here principally the "economic" aspect of Woloch's book; his Marxist readings feel forced into an otherwise impressive and original formal analysis of character. In addition, the title of Lynch's *Economy of Character* illustrates its author's desire to emphasize how the construction of character in particular texts reflects the "market culture" of eighteenth-century England.

[18] See also Marjorie Levinson's "What is New Formalism?," which, in its sharp synthesis of current discussions surrounding formalism, remarks that "[w]ith remarkable regularity, one reads that New Criticism was more historical and more activist in its notions of form than reputation has had it and that new historicism's notion of form was both more formalist and more agential in its working ideas of form than current practice suggests" (563). And for a more pointed defense of formal close reading in the face of a

\
perceived institutional bias toward historicism, see Jane Gallop's "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading."

[19]*David Copperfield*'s multiple representations of death are hardly anomalous within Dickens's fiction, though critics have often read them as sociological evidence rather than as functional narrative maneuvers. The deaths strewn throughout *Bleak House*, for instance, famously offered John Ruskin an occasion to lament the depraved state of contemporary fiction in general; the novel, according to Ruskin, uses death "not in a tragic, adventurous, or military story, but merely as the further enlivenment of a narrative intended to be amusing" (*Fiction, Fair and Foul*, 159).

[20] While few *Bildungsromane* relate quite as many improbable deaths as *Copperfield* and *Eyre*, the latter two novels offer prominent examples of a structural trend that is spread more diffusely throughout the nineteenth-century's most famous narratives of fictional development. A few characters who I would argue fit into a "sacrificial" character structure include *Middlemarch*'s Edward Casaubon; *Daniel Deronda*'s Henleigh Grandcourt; *Born in Exile*'s Marcella Moxey; *Wilhelm Meister*'s Aurelie; *Phineas Finn*'s Mary Flood Jones, and the title character of *Le Père Goriot*.

[21] Charlotte Brontë rivaled Jane Eyre for the number of deaths to which she bore witness: not only did Brontë's mother and sister (both named Maria) die when she was young, but she famously lost her brother Branwell and two more sisters (Anne and Emily) all within the span of a single year in 1848-49. Interestingly, Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) depicts its heroine as one who believed in the character-building properties of traumatic loss. In one letter, Brontë writes that "the loss of what we possess nearest and dearest to us in this world, produces an effect upon the character" (383). Elsewhere, Brontë explicitly refers to this "effect" as a positive one: "burdens, if well borne, benefit the character" (382). Gaskell herself seems to have agreed, as the *Life*'s narrative uses Brontë's bravery in the face of death as a way of emphasizing her (Brontë's) exemplary moral character.

[22] For various formulations of the development-as-acculturation argument, see also M.M. Bakhtin, "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)"; Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*; and Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations*.

[23] For an interesting interpretation of how this passage from *Emma* illustrates the difference between the marriage-endings in Austen's and the Brontës' domestic fiction, see Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 192-94.

[24] In his work on literary character in the Victorian novel, Baruch Hochman similarly remarks that Victorian protagonists are "figures who do not discover their largest potentialities, but rather undergo an education and an initiation that teaches them their limits" (*Test of Character*, 16), and Lorna Ellis concurs that "maturation comes at the expense of adventure and some personal autonomy" (*Appearing to Diminish*, 19).

[25] According to D.A. Miller, the "happiness" at the end of nineteenth-century novels is never itself narratable; though novels may seem to propel themselves in search of happiness, happiness itself can only be an ending (*Narrative and Its Discontents*, 3). It is as if, once the central character of a novel receives what she has been wanting, then it is time for her to quickly exit her own story. Ermarth, too, seems to register a connection between happiness and decreased character depth in her discussion of *Our Mutual*

\
*Friend*'s Bella Wilfer: "Bella's contradictory nature is most realistic, that is, has most depth, when she is giving herself penitential pokes, and it is a pity she has to lose her depth and interest in order to succeed, as it appears she does in the episodes after marriage.  Once wrestling with 'contradictory'…impulses, Bella suddenly seems lobotomized, no longer thinking of a self or even appearing to have one" (207-208).

[26] Girard was not the first scholar to posit a relationship between individual sacrifice and social cohesion.  Sociologists Émile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead, for example, had both previously explored how the "collective rejection" of social deviants actually works to consolidate "normal" social groups (Coser 173).  I focus on Girard's work, however, because it examines the phenomenon of sacrifice through readings of literature rather than through empirical study, therefore emphasizing how narrative structures mirror real-world social phenomena.  While this chapter quotes principally from *Violence and the Sacred*, *The Scapegoat* provides a more extended look at Girard's general theory of sacrifice as it pertains specifically to medieval writing, classical mythology, and the Christian gospels.

[27]Susan Derwin's chapter on *Jane Eyre* in *The Ambivalence of Form* provides a thoughtful analysis of death in Brontë's novel.  Derwin specifically relates these deaths to Jane's authorship: "killing" characters through narrative becomes a way for the protagonist to exercise control over language (and the life it creates in the novel form).

[28] Derwin comes close to making this point in relation to Jane Eyre and St. John Rivers, arguing that the moment at which Brontë's protagonist hears the mysterious call that beckons her back from Marsh End to Thornfield is the "inaugural moment of Jane's literary imagination," and hence of her autonomous subjectivity (106).  But it is also in this moment that Jane forsakes St. John ("her namesake" and rival), and must accordingly cordon him off from her happy ending by imagining that he has died: "Her anticipation of his death thus attests to her desire to emphasize her otherness, to establish a vital difference between herself and her namesake in face of the possibility that such a difference might not in reality exist" (*Ambivalence of Form*, 108).

[29]In their work on orphans, Auerbach and Hochman and Wachs mention survival as one of the orphan's characteristics, but neither text focuses specifically on survival's narrative poetics within the nineteenth-century novel.  In this chapter, I build on what these writers have to say about literary orphanhood through an extended look at characterological survival and sacrifice.

[30] Poovey makes a similar assertion, arguing that the first-person narrative allows David to "split agency from knowledge in such a way as to detach responsibility from action" (*Uneven Developments*, 119).

[31] Hochman and Wachs present a comparable list, including eighteenth-century orphan characters Tom Jones and Moll Flanders (*Orphan Condition*, 12).

[32] Hochman and Wachs note that the actual "orphan condition" in Victorian England was no less dismal than Dickens made it out to be: "Among the children of the poor, those who survived faced an average mortality age of twenty-two.  The abandoned child typically lived by casual labor, as a prisoner in jails, or as an inmate of the brutal system of workhouse incarceration instituted by the Poor Law of 1834" (206).  For more on the orphan in nineteenth-century England, see Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt's

\
*Children in English Society* and Laura Peters's *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire*.

[33] A few well-known examples of novels that use this narrative maneuver are Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795); James's *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881); and Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830).

[34] Steedman is instructive on this point, as she argues that not just orphans, but children in general came in romanticist writing to evoke a sense of loss: "The child within was always both immanent—ready to be drawn on in various ways—and, at the same time, always representative of a lost realm, lost in the individual past, and in the past of the culture" (*Strange Dislocations*, 10).

[35] Nina Auerbach claims that orphanhood provides an apt metaphor for the modern self: "Although we are now 'all orphans,' alone and free and dispossessed of our past, we yearn for origins, for cultural continuity. In our continual achievement of paradox, we have made of the orphan himself our archetypal and perhaps only ancestor" ("Incarnations of the Orphan," 416).

[36] Jaffe interestingly reads the sale of David's caul as "a dispersal or fragmentation of self" that helps the protagonist seem "undefined" in relationship to the other characters he depicts (*Vanishing Points*, 117-18).

[37] Derwin remarks on the lack of affect with which Jane seems to pass over the deaths in her narrative: "Not only does [Jane] display no outward remorse; even her private reflections betray no sense of loss" (*Ambivalence of Form*, 98).

[38] For two excellent discussions about the different ways narratives manipulate story time (e.g. summary, ellipsis, stretching), see Chatman's *Story and Discourse* (62-84) and Genette's chapter on "Duration" in *Narrative Discourse* (86-112).

[39] Gayatri Spivak also notes the family-like nature of the Eyre-Temple-Burns triumvirate in her suggestion that "Jane, Miss Temple, and Helen Burns [are] a counter-family that falls short because it is only a community of women" ("Three Women's Texts," 247).

[40] Critics have suggested that the Brontës in particular were instrumental in the "deep" character's ascendancy over the nineteenth-century novel. According to Armstrong, novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* sought to make desirable "[women] who possessed psychological depth rather than a physically attractive surface" as a way to elevate middle-class women over their aristocratic counterparts. Depth itself, in this argument, becomes not just a moral value but a new way of looking at artistic practice: "It was Charlotte Brontë who turned the demonstration of emotional power into an aesthetic imperative when she criticized Jane Austen for failing to plumb the depths of her characters" (*Desire*, 20; 45).

[41] Discussing what she calls *Jane Eyre*'s "erotics of talk," Cora Kaplan uses this and other passages of Jane's memorable dialogue to illustrate what feminist critics such as Gilbert and Gubar, Poovey, and Showalter take to be evidence of Jane's liberation as a speaking subject and her quest for an "ideal listener" ("Girl Talk," 5-6).

[42] My argument about the restraint that Jane must master in order to tell her story has obvious affinities with other scholarly work that examines this restraint in terms of psychosexual "repression." For two of the most influential of such works, see Nancy

\
Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* and John Kucich's *Repression in Victorian Fiction*.

[43] Although I am not using the terms "identification" and "introjection" here in a strict psychoanalytic sense (that is, as evidence of the protagonist's regression to the oral stage of libidinal development), I do believe that many of the psychic processes represented in Brontë's and Dickens's novels resemble more inclusive descriptions of identification and introjection put forth by contemporary psychologists. Nancy McWilliams, for example, describes a broad process of "identification" as "a natural developmental line from the earliest infantile forms of introjection, which have the quality of swallowing the other person whole, to more subtle, discriminating, and subjectively voluntary processes of selectively taking on another person's characteristics" (135).

[44] Poovey's work on *Jane Eyre* uses Brontë's novel to illustrate the contradictions that inhered within the construction of the governess in the mid-Victorian era. *Uneven Developments* specifically claims that the governess was imperiled by a public image that painted her as both a figure of motherly influence and one of potentially unrestrainable sexual energy. In this view, Brontë embodies Jane's angry sexuality (and also kills it off) in the character of Bertha Mason. (Poovey 126-63). Gilbert and Gubar, Armstrong, and Showalter all put forth various formulations of the argument that Bertha is an incarnation of Jane's dangerous physicality and therefore must die to facilitate the sexual domestication inherent in the novel's traditional marriage-ending.

[45] Woloch's spatial model does not treat death or sacrifice as such; rather, it focuses on how the differential attention given to different novelistic characters reflects socioeconomic inequalities within nineteenth-century European culture. However, Woloch's statement that "derealized" minor characters "en masse, facilitate the development of the protagonist" (55-56) certainly supports my own conclusion that character development in the nineteenth-century novel often structures itself around loss.

[46] Among Dickens's most prominent critics of the past twenty years, Welsh is one of the few who registers both the considerable amount of death in *David Copperfield* as well as the fact that "the main action of [the novel] might be described as the replacement of one wife by another" (*From Copyright to Copperfield*, 125).

[47] Hager's work is part of a larger trend in Victorian studies that seeks to recuperate the "angel of the house" as a subversive figure. Jaffe's discussion of Esther Summerson's narration in *Bleak House* (*Vanishing Points*, 128-49) offers another excellent example of such work.

[48] While it is true that Dickens sends David off to Italy and Switzerland to take stock of his life later on in the novel, this self-searching voyage occurs in a single chapter some time after the actual narration of Dora's death (as well as Ham's and Steerforth's). Moreover, the Switzerland chapter (titled "Absence") focuses less on David's suffering than on his continued correspondence with, and admiration of, Agnes Wickfield.

[49] The feeling that the protagonist does not change as much as he ought is due in part to the structure of first-person retrospection in which both *Copperfield* and *Eyre* are written: David and Jane narrate from the point-of-view of one whose development has already "happened." Two analyses of *Copperfield* that question whether or not David

\
actually changes as a character can be found in Miller's in *The Novel and the Police* (192-220) and Moretti's *The Way of the World* (181-228).

[50] This, in fact, is one of Woloch's central points in his chapter on Dickens: "Above all, centrality in Dickens has become (epistemologically and psychologically) *passive*, posterior to the characters—and characteristics—it observes" (144). Colorful minor characters like Heep and Wemmick, in other words, actually wrest the narrative away from comparatively bland protagonists like David and Pip. For a reading that openly discusses the Dickens protagonist as "on the whole shallow, uninteresting, and unconvincing," see Hochman's *Character in Literature*, 163.

[51] Kaplan and Sharon Marcus both agree with Fraiman that *Jane Eyre*'s "happy ending" isn't actually as happy as earlier critics have suggested. See Kaplan's "Girl Talk" and Marcus's "The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and *Jane Eyre*."

[52] Poovey provides an excellent discussion of Agnes as the "key" to contradictions the novel sets up around cross-class desire and female sexuality. See *Uneven Developments*, 99-101.

[53] The fact that Maggie actually reads *Corinne* (albeit without enjoying or finishing it) in Eliot's novel would seem to invite critics to comparatively analyze the two texts, but the available work pairing Staël's work with Eliot's is surprisingly sparse. To my knowledge, only a handful of critics have written jointly about these two novels, and the focus of existing work—most notably by Ellen Moers and Linda Lewis—falls squarely on the historical significance of Eliot's and Staël's heroines within discussions about the construction of fictional and real-world women artists throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Both Moers's *Literary Women* and Lewis's *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist* exhibit strong biographical strains, making explicit comparisons between Maggie and Eliot (whose beloved brother, Isaac Evans, denounced her relationship with G.H. Lewes) or Corinne and Staël. The latter association—on which almost everyone who writes on Staël comments—seems particularly apt, since Staël and her heroine share a kind of respect in artistic circles that was uncommon for French female writers during the late-eighteenth and early- nineteenth centuries. Moreover, Corinne's role as an *improvisatrice* clearly resembles the gift for intellectual conversation that Staël cultivated as a lifelong *salonnière*.

[54] The tragic fate that results from a refusal to see other characters as expendable or sacrificial aligns Maggie and Corinne with a number of nineteenth-century protagonists who famously cannot "let go," including Henry James's Isabel Archer and Emily Brontë's Heathcliff and Cathy.

[55] Aside from the conventional development novels I have mentioned, many of the Victorian period's most well-read nonfiction texts, such as J.S. Mill's *Autobiography* (1873) and Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) exhibit the development-as-progress paradigm. The success of contemporary *Bildungsromane* based on similar, meliorist understandings of character development, such as Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex* (2002) and Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* (1997), proves how influential this nineteenth-century prototype remains.

\

[56] Granted that "growth" and "development" can of course have negative connotations ("growing threat of terrorism"; "developing tension among citizens"), but I would argue that the words more frequently function as positive concepts when applied to the individual—growth, development, and change in the abstract are all processes that human beings are supposed to desire.

[57] For a detailed exposition of Corinne's relationship to Sibylline figures, see Lewis,13-63.

[58]My discussion of "the dominant characteristic" expands upon Woloch's examination of how novels transform characters into abstract characteristics (see esp. *The One vs. the Many*, 50-56). Our interests diverge, however, insofar as Woloch is principally concerned with the part that minor characters play in what he calls the "asymmetrical" characterological structure of the novel. In contrast, this essay attends particularly to the moral imperatives that Eliot suggests through her illustration of the protagonist's character development.

[59] When I refer to the "tragic flaw," I am aware that such a concept does not actually appear in Aristotle's *Poetics*, the work to which its origins are often ascribed. As Isabel Hyde argues, the idea of "tragic flaw"—an innate characteristic that drives a character toward tragic actions—most likely came into being as a mistranslation of the term *hamartia*, which Aristotle uses in Chapter 13 of the *Poetics* to refer to a tragic *error*, i.e. to an action that leads to tragedy and not to a characterological trait (321). But even though "tragic flaw" is a mistranslation, it is a concept which was already associated with classicism when Eliot was writing. Indeed, Michael Hancher's discussion of the term reveals that J.M. Bremer speculatively dates the idea (rather than the actual expression) of the "tragic flaw" as far back as far as Lorenzo Valla's 1498 translation of the *Poetics* (Hancher, "Tragic Flaw").

[60] I am grateful to Michèle Hannoosh for suggesting this particular connection between Eliot's and Staël's novels and the structure of classical tragedy.

[61] Though most literary characters are "consistent" enough for us to discern them as characters, Margolin brings up the interesting counterexample of the characters in novels by authors such as Le Clézio and Robbe-Grillet, for whom "the possession of any stable property set, identity, or definition is continuously being undermined" (120). One of the difficulties these postmodern novels present is, precisely, the lack of that structural consistency which traditionally allows readers to distinguish one character from another.

[62]While my argument here depends on a similar understanding of Maggie's character, Hirsch and I cite Maggie's "dominant feeling" (what I call the "dominant characteristic") to support different—but not mutually exclusive—arguments about the *Bildungsroman*. Hirsch specifically reads Maggie's continual returns to her past as the result of a female-gendered inwardness from which she has no means of escape (*Voyage In*, 26). My focus on Maggie's lack of change differs from Hirsch's insofar as I use the examples of Maggie and Corinne to illustrate the broader structure of loss that underpins conceptions of development in both "male" and "female' *Bildungsromane*.

[63] This essay takes part in a more recent movement among *The Mill*'s critics, including Joshua Esty and Susan Fraiman, which suggests that Eliot uses the *Bildungsroman* form to challenge the very terms it is assumed to employ. In contrast to earlier feminist readings of the novel, Fraiman urges us to see *The Mill* not as a "failed"

\
or "successful" *Bildungsroman*, but rather as a critique of the development novel's traditional focus on a single (male) individual (137-38). In "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of *Bildung*," Esty relates Maggie's development story to the conventions of nation-building narratives, which he argues that *The Mill* both utilizes and critiques.

[64] For a related discussion of "traits" as they operate in fictional narratives, see Chatman 122. There are, of course, critics who disagree with trait-centered theories of character altogether. Recent philosophical studies of character, for example, showcase debates between those who find it productive to think about human beings as possessors of moral "traits" (sometimes called "personologists"), and those "situationists" who believe that character is determined not by interior traits but by contextual factors. For a discussion of the conflict between these two models of character, see Kupperman's "The Indispensability of Character."

[65] Margolin points out that this cluster of properties only holds true for narrative texts which feature "a chronologically related, third-person, past tense story with a single global narrator who makes explicit characterization statements" (121); *The Mill on the Floss* and *Corinne* clearly correspond with this set of conditions.

[66] In *Psychonarratology,* Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon use empirical data to illustrate how readers' cognitive reception of literary character mirrors the kind of trait-collecting that Margolin and others describe: "As a working hypothesis," they write, "we suggest that readers' prior knowledge determines *naïve personality theories*. The essential notion is that people assume that other people's personality can be described by a list of traits (such as friendly, morose, or domineering) and that readers expect such traits to be related to how people behave in a variety of contexts" (154, emphasis in original).

[67] The first critics of *The Mill on the Floss* were quick to point out Maggie's dominant characteristic; E.S. Dallas, for example, wrote in 1860 of "Maggie, [who] is full of affection, and whose affection is continually leading her into blunders and misfortunes" (qtd. in Carroll, 134). The same year, an anonymous writer for the *Saturday Review* interestingly used Maggie's characterization as a springboard for a more general assessment of contemporary women's fiction: "[T]here is a kind of love-making which seems to possess a strange fascination for the modern female novelist. Currer Bell and George Eliot, and we may add George Sand, all like to dwell on love as a strange overmastering force which, through the senses, captivates and enthralls the soul" (ibid., 118). While I argue here that "passion" in Charlotte Brontë (Bell) is not ultimately an "overmastering force" the way it is in *The Mill* (Jane Eyre, after all, does not die like Maggie does, as a result of her passion), the statement indicates how *The Mill* prompted even its earliest readers to compare its thematic preoccupations with those of Sand—and, by extension, with other female novelists we now call 'romantic,' like Staël.

[68] "[D]e toutes mes facultés la plus puissante, c'est la faculté de souffrir" (126). Citations from *Corinne* in the body of the chapter are from Avriel H. Goldberger's English translation. I provide the original French text in endnotes.

[69] "[E]lle était, un moment du moins, fière de s'immoler pour qu'Oswald fût en paix avec son pays, avec sa famille, avec lui-même" (504).

[70] "Si l'on peut deviner comment on arrive à la folie, c'est sûrement lorsqu'une seule pensée s'empare de l'esprit, et ne permet plus à la succession des objets de varier

\
les idées. Corinne était d'ailleurs une personne d'une imagination si vive, qu'elle se consumait elle-même quand ses facultés n'avaient plus d'aliment au dehors" (470).

[71] "[C]e qu'il redoutait le plus pour elle, c'était la désapprobation de l'Angleterre" (171).

[72] "On dirait, à les entendre, que le devoir consiste dans le sacrifice des facultés distinguées que l'on possède, et que l'esprit est un tort qu'il faut expier, en menant précisément la même vie que ceux qui en manquent" (366).

[73] Naomi Schor, for example, remarks, "[O]ften classified as a guidebook, *Corinne* has bewildered, not to say dismayed, many readers by its seemingly aberrant generalization of description" (123). More than a decade earlier, Ellen Moers gives Staël's novel the following backhanded compliment: "Let us try to take *Corinne* seriously; it was *the* book of the woman of genius. At least a few chapters and scattered passages, as well as the complex scheme of the novel that Mme de Staël had the brilliance but not the talent to write, should be familiar to anyone pretending to an interest in the traditions of women's literature" (173).

[74] The structural similarities between Staël's two novels and Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* (1816) are remarkable. Long interpreted as reflecting his relationship with Mme de Staël, Constant's novel tells the story of Adolphe, a noble young Frenchman, and Ellénore, the older Polish countess with whom he falls in—and quickly out—of love. The entire novel consists of scenes that depict Adolphe's crippling indecision about whether to end the relationship, on the one hand, and Ellénore's intense desire to continue it, on the other. Constant's statement in the Preface that "the characters are reduced to two, and the situation is always the same" might just as well describe *Corinne* (3). And like Corinne and Oswald, both Ellénore and Adolphe die in the end.

[75] For a more systematized (and more gender-conscious) look at this "Male-Female Double *Bildungsroman*" genre as it manifests itself throughout key nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels, see Goodman.

[76] As Buckley points out, the epigraph of Eliot's novel ("In their death they were not divided") is enough to signal *The Mill*'s interest in the problem of how it could possibly unify its two central characters (96-97). For more on the issue of "unity," see also George Levine 402-09. In contrast, Fraiman specifically criticizes Buckley's *Season of Youth* (1974), claiming that its individualist paradigm "can only make sense of *The Mill on the Floss* by hitching Maggie's moral stamina to Tom's commercial success, as if sister and brother were the inseparable halves of a single, battle-worthy character" (145).

[77] "Il ne faut chercher dans un people, comme dans un homme, que son trait caractéristique: tous les autres sont l'effet de mille hazards différents; celui-la seul constitue son être" (206). The English translations/citations of *On Literature* in the body of this chapter are Morroe Berger's.

[78] "le progrès universel des lumières par le simple effet de la succession des temps" (86).

[79] Additionally, both Tenenbaum and Levy link Corinne's multicultural imagination to the influence of Montesquieuian comparativism on Staël's thought. After Montesquieu, Staël believed that "The 'general spirit' of a nation was the product of the totality of its physical and moral causes. It accounted for the unique character of each

\

society and undergirded Staël's defense of national independence and cultural heterogeneity" (Tenenbaum, 159).

[80] For literary manifestations of Staël's influence on these writers, see, for instance, Landon's *The Improvisatrice and Other Poems* (1824), and Hemans's poem "Corinne at the Capitol" (1827). Elizabeth Barrett Browning memorably remarked that *Corinne* "is an immortal book, and deserves to be read three score and ten times—that is once every year in the age of man" (qtd. in Moers, 173). Barrett Browning's Aurora Leigh—a half-British, half-Italian poetess—bears obvious resemblances to Staël's protagonist.

[81] Fraiman claims that Jacobus's critical stance falls somewhere in the middle of those who condemn and those who "romanticize Maggie's fate" (138), but Jacobus's assertion that the act of killing off Maggie somehow allowed Eliot to be reborn as a writer strikes this reader as romantic indeed.

[82] Beer has also argued that *The Mill*'s ending is redemptive insofar as it reunites Maggie and Tom and therefore puts forth "a claim for a profound reconstitution of the self as split between the permitted potentialities of male and female" (*George Eliot*, 101). However, she quickly complicates this "positive" reading by noting how the siblings' union is *only* possible in death.

[83] Armstrong's wording here and throughout *How Novels Think* seems tailor-made to provoke. Her larger argument uses *The Mill*'s ending to illustrate a more general point about the Victorian novel's construction of the modern individual, a movement which allegedly "kills off the robust individualism of an earlier epoch in favor of homogeneous normativity and realism" (97).

[84] "[T]oute ma manière la surprenait, [et qu']elle se proposait de la changer, si elle le pouvait" (362).

[85] "Mes talents, mes gouts, mon caractère même étaient formés, quand la mort de ma tante décida mon père à me rappeler près de lui" (361). N.B. Goldberger's translation leaves the information about Corinne's aunt dying until the end of the sentence, which I have not quoted in the body of the text.

[86] "[L]e souffle desséchant de la mediocrité malveillante" (380).

[87] "J'étais dans une sorte d'ivresse, je sentais pour l'Italie tout ce que l'amour fait éprouver, désir, enthousiasme, regrets; je n'étais plus maîtresse de moi-même, toute mon âme était entraînée vers ma patrie…Si la vie était offerte aux morts dans les tombeaux, ils ne soulèveraient pas la Pierre qui les couvre avec plus d'impatience que je n'en éprouvais pour écarter de moi tous mes linceuls, et reprendre possession de mon imagination, de mon génie, de la nature!" (384-85).

[88] While my argument dovetails with Shuttleworth's claim that *The Mill* questions whether change is always "progress," Shuttleworth is much more concerned with the impact of Victorian science on Eliot's view of social duty than with the author's narrative construction of character.

[89] That Eliot's last published work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, should be a collection of character sketches in the style of Theophrastus (and his seventeenth-century translator/imitator, La Bruyère), further exemplifies the author's interest in formally cataloguing the various characteristics that comprise moral character.

[90] "[L]a source de tout est tarie" (521).

\

[91] "[M]on génie, s'il subsiste encore, se fait sentir seulement par la force de ma douleur" (583).

[92] "Je suis une exception à l'ordre universel…il y a du bonheur pour tous, et cette terrible faculté de souffrir, qui me tue, c'est une manière de sentir particulière à moi seule" (514).

[93] "Il faut que vous soyez vous et moi tout à la fois...mon seul désir personnel est encore qu'Oswald retrouve dans vous et dans sa fille quelques traces de mon influence, et que jamais du moins il ne puisse avoir une jouissance de sentiment sans se rappeler Corinne" (578-79).

[94] "Le caractère dominant de Mme de Staël, l'unité principale de tous les contrastes qu'elle embrassait, l'esprit rapide et pénétrant qui ciruculait de l'un à l'autre et soutenait cet assemblage merveilleux, c'était à coup sûr la conversation, la parole improvisée, soudaine, au moment où elle jaillissait tout divine de la source perpétuelle de son âme" (*Portraits de Femmes*) 84-85.

[95] *Phineas Finn* therefore demonstrates, by negative example, the connection between sympathy and "depth" we find in *Jane Eyre* and *David Copperfield*, both of which depend on sympathetically complex narrators to conceal what I have called "sacrificial" narrative techniques.

[96] Two important works from the cognitive science perspective on which Palmer draws in this discussion are Antonio Damasio's *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion, and the Making of Consciousness* and John R. Searle's *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. For a more detailed rendering of what Palmer means by "the social mind," see *Fictional Minds* 130-69.

[97] Palmer also cites Chatman's *Story and Discourse* and Genette's *Narrative Discourse* as examples of narratological studies that privilege subjective first accounts of represented thought (*Fictional Minds*, 63). Though neither Chatman nor Genette focuses as closely on represented thought as Cohn, Palmer suggests that both of the former authors have been so influential in the field of narrative theory that subsequent narratologists have inherited their particular critical bias in favor of inner speech.

[98] The depiction of introspection as a tool for self-revelation, of course, has a long and illustrious history throughout western literature, from St. Augustine's garden conversion scene in Book VIII of *Confessions*, to Proust's infamous encounter with the madeleine near the beginning of *Swann's Way*. My goal in outlining the way in which novels like *Emma* and *The Portrait of a Lady* privilege introspective thinking is not to suggest that the alignment of introspection and character development is specific to nineteenth-century English fiction, but rather to establish the particular narrative techniques that dominate the discursive field from which Trollope's represented thought diverges.

[99] In *Unspeakable Sentences*, Ann Banfield presents an interesting exception to the majority of work on free indirect discourse, which tends to single out the technique's unique capacity to represent the internal idiom of the thinking subject. Although Banfield joins fellow narratologists in celebrating the aesthetic potential of free indirect discourse, she claims that its distinction lies not in its ability to heighten the representation of a character's subjectivity, but rather in its verbal presentation of a kind

\
of language that is expressive but non-communicative, and therefore "empty of all subjectivity" (10).

[100] This "presentation of intermental thinking," Palmer contends, is crucial to the eminently dialogic project which, since the influence of Bakhtin, has been celebrated as one of the novel's most powerful aesthetic and political qualities (83). Bakhtin's collection of essays titled *The Dialogic Imagination*, in which the author discusses the novel's special ability to present a wide range of viewpoints and voices in dialogue with one another, has become a staple of contemporary literary criticism. For Palmer's excellent discussion of Bakhtin and the larger circle of Russian discourse theorists to which he belonged, see *Fictional Minds* 147-57.

[101] Many editions of the Palliser novels—including several that I cite here—retain the two-volume structure of the texts as they were originally published in novel format. Accordingly, the pagination of these volumes re-starts at "1" in the beginning of Volume II. To avoid confusion, I have included both volume and page numbers when I cite these editions in the body text.

[102] Both Cohn and Palmer discuss the various presentations of narrative temporality that thought report (which Cohn calls "psycho-narration") can accomplish. As Cohn writes, "[P]sycho-narration has almost unlimited temporal flexibility. It can as readily summarize an inner development over a long period of time as it can render the flow of successive thoughts and feelings, or expand and elaborate a mental instant" (*Transparent Minds*, 34). For Palmer's contribution to Cohn's discussion on thought report, see *Fictional Minds* 82.

[103] Umberto Eco and Robyn Warhol each note that one of the series's most distinctive factors is its fashion of catering to many different kinds of readers at once. As Warhol writes, "[a]t any given moment in the serialized text, the narrator is speaking to a range of possible audiences, from the devoted readers who remember every detail from parts that were published weeks, months, and even years earlier, to those whose first entry into the novel is the present installment" (78). Eco, somewhat differently, claims that the series attempts to satisfy two different levels of readerly competence, that is, it "presupposes and constructs always a double Model Reader—a naïve and a 'smart' one, a semantic reader and a semiotic or critical reader" (92).

[104] Instead, much influential scholarship on Trollope focuses on what his novels reveal about a particular aspect of Victorian culture. In this vein, John Kucich's *The Power of Lies* argues that Trollope "reappropriates" the ostensibly transgressive and "antibourgeois" practice of lying in order to consolidate middle-class ideology (41); in *Between Women*, Sharon Marcus uses *Can You Forgive Her?* to illustrate the surprisingly widespread Victorian phenomenon of "female marriage" (228); and Dames's "Trollope and the Career" suggests that the Palliser novels' chronicles of political careers reflect an increasingly regimented, hierarchical structure of professionalism that, in the later Victorian period, served to harness "the disruptive energies unleashed by the spread of professionalism itself in the early and mid-nineteenth century" (248).

[105] While Wall gives the fullest account of Trollope's vacillating characters that I have found, numerous critics comment on the phenomenon in passing. See, for example, Kendrick (78) and Miller (124-26).

\

[106]Wall (333-61) usefully examines the recurrence of this phenomenon of "Obstinacy and Insanity" throughout six of Trollope's novels.

[107] Marcus reads the tonal fluctuation in this passage according to a larger argument that sees Alice Vavasor moving from a "contractual" marriage with her cousin Kate to a "hierarchical" marriage with Grey: "The shift within the narrator's direct address from a question ('can you forgive her?') to an order ('you must forgive her'), she writes, "reproduces at the level of metanarrative the plot of contract giving way to force, autonomous individuals coalescing into one person" (250).

[108] In her 1982 Introduction to the Oxford *Can You Forgive Her?*, Flint speculates on the difference in responses between Trollope's original and his present-day readers: "In an age when obedience can safely be omitted from the marriage vows, the text has a far harder task in convincing the reader that Alice's capitulation is worthwhile, despite Grey's handsomeness and tediously indefatigable sense of honour" (xxvi).

[109] Such a proffered alliance between quick decision making and good character does not stop with the form of the novel, but rather, suffuses some of the most conventional Victorian thought. Take, for instance, Samuel Smiles, who makes clear to his readers that "the power of exercising the will promptly…is of essential importance in moral discipline, and absolutely necessary for the development of character in its best forms" (198).

[110] See, for instance, Flint and Marcus.

[111] Craig's work on *Can You Forgive Her?* provides a detailed explanation of Trollope's use of the rhetorical question (as well as the oxymoron) in scenes of courtship.

[112] Lynette Felber, like Warhol, sees the novel series as an extended amplification of the novel form: "[t]he exaggerated characteristics of the subgenre illuminate, by magnifying, features of the novel itself" (*Gender and Genre*, 2).

[113] In *Trollope and the Magazines,* Mark W. Turner sees *Phineas Finn* as "a male *Bildungsroman*" within the context of the Victorians' increased attention to the category of "manliness" (5; 150). apRoberts notes that the two Phineas novels "might be classified structurally as a loose sort of *Bildungsroman,*" though she admittedly prefers to see them as "situation structured" (51). In a similar move, Jane Elizabeth Dougherty agrees with Felber that *Phineas Finn* is "ostensibly a Bildungsroman" (136), then proceeds to explain how the novel concerns itself with "rupturing its own Bildungsroman narrative" by chronicling Phineas's political and nuptial failures (140). Aside from withholding complete perspectival centrality from the title character, the two Phineas novels differ formally from more traditional *Bildungsromane* in important ways: they pay very little attention to Phineas's childhood, for example, and they comprise multiple volumes (rather than a single, conclusive one).

[114] "Julien se sentait fort et résolu comme l'homme qui voit clair dans son âme" (550).

[115] For a related comment on *The Prime Minister*, see Kincaid, who claims that "the Duke is frustrated because he is not only denied the opportunity to act but is shown that all action is meaningless" (223).

[116] Langbauer's work on Trollope explores how the formal aspects of novel series like Trollope's helped construct (rather than simply reflect) their readers' sense of everyday life. "'[T]he everyday,'" she writes, "was the special province of a particular

\
form—that precisely because of their expansiveness, their repetitiveness, their complication of closure, those linked novels that are part of extended series seem to mirror and carry properties often defined as essential to everyday life: that it's just one thing after another, going quietly but inexhaustibly on and on" (2).

[117]James offers further evidence supporting these arguments about the serial novel's affective comforts, famously claiming that "[t]here are two kinds of taste in the appreciation of imaginative literature: the taste for emotions of surprise and the taste for emotions of recognition. It is the latter that Trollope gratifies" (*Partial Portraits*, 133).

[118] Trollope comments explicitly on this difference between the developmental trajectory of his own novels and those of his contemporaries. "Novelists who have undertaken to write the life of a hero or heroine," he opines, "have generally considered their work completed at the interesting period of marriage, and have contented themselves with the advance in taste and manners which are common to all boys and girls as they become men and women" (*Autobiography*, 197).

[119] Though Trollope's work has many affinities with Eco's "saga," Eco himself does not mention the Palliser novels. Instead, his principal example of a "saga" is a more recent one: the 1980's television series, *Dallas*.

[120] While Kincaid's claim that Trollope's "emphasis on education" propagates "certain rational notions of progressive development" contrasts with my own reading of Trollopian character development as relatively static, I agree with Kincaid that Trollope "was consistently strong on the superiority of age to youth" (54-55). Rather than seeing age in Trollope as a richness of experience, I argue that the author's reverence for age centers on the series's larger dependence on a drawn-out time scheme.

[121] I quote the first epigraph from Coustillas's *Gissing: The Critical Heritage*, 202; the second appears in James's *Literary Criticism*, 327.

[122] Because Gissing's own obsession with social class suffuses his oeuvre, it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of Gissing critics focus on class in their interpretations of his novels. A recent addition to such studies is Simon J. James's *Unsettled Accounts* (2003), which sees the figure of "money" as singularly productive of Gissing's aesthetic idiosyncrasies. Though I do not disagree with those who seize on what is obviously a key theme in Gissing's work, this chapter shifts its focus away from these well-worn money issues, illustrating how "class" need not be taken as the defining element either of Gissing's aesthetic or of his interest for contemporary criticism.

[123] Although this chapter examines "distance" primarily as a novelistic technique, it bears emphasizing that nineteenth-century practices of narrative distance informed a wide variety of philosophical and political agendas. On this topic, see especially Amanda Anderson's *The Powers of Distance*, which links the Victorian "cultivation of detachment" to practices as diverse as moral character development, aesthetic perspective-making, and cosmopolitanism.

[124] Genette's "emancipated" novels include masterpieces of high modernism such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, as well as those novels collectively known as *nouveaux romans* (most famously written by Nathalie Sarraute and Alain Robbe-Grillet).

[125] My readers may argue that I would do better to examine Genette's concept of "voice," a term the author defines as "a set of signs characterizing the narrative instance"

\
(*Narrative Discourse*, 213). But it is striking how little time Genette spends discussing "voice" in relation to character (and, by extension, how little Genette discusses character at all). I make the distinction between Genette's "distance" and my own for two reasons. First, simply because Genette's name has become associated with the term as narrative theorists tend to use it; and second, because the "distance" of *Narrative Discourse* provides a good example of the ways in which certain critics figure the absence of a narrator's mediation as a less didactic (and hence more salutary) narrative technique than is its overt presence (in the novels of Dickens or Eliot, for example).

[126] Although this chapter examines other works that question the equation of narration with communication (notably Jonathan Culler's), Genette himself does not disagree with Booth on this particular point. Like Booth, Genette believes that "In the most unobtrusive narrative, someone is speaking to me, is telling me a story, is inviting me to listen to it as he tells it, and this invitation—confiding or urging—constitutes an undeniable stance of narrating, and therefore a narrator" (*Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 101). The difference I am delineating between Booth and Genette deals, rather, with how each of the authors conceives of the term "distance."

[127] As I explained in the Introduction, structuralist narratologists such as Genette and Bal tend to emphasize the ability of the narrative voice to transcend the allegedly problematic "humanization" that makes character so difficult to describe. More recently, D.A. Miller's *Jane Austen, Or the Secret of Style* argues that Austen's narrative voice (which Miller pointedly calls "narration" rather than "narrator") acquires its exemplary style through acting out the kind of impersonality that a character could never achieve. But as compelling an argument as Miller makes, I want to question whether or not novels can ever escape the connection between a narrative voice and a humanlike, subjective narrator. Simply because a narrator does not say "I" does not mean that it contains none of the qualities we associate with a speaking subject. For more on this point, see *Vanishing Points,* in which Audrey Jaffe analyzes how narrative voice actually characterizes itself in the very act of evading characterization.

[128] Zunshine, for example, argues that our anthropomorphic assessment of the narrator actually fuels our desire to read and, thus, exercises our theory of mind: "it is our awareness that there is a source behind the representation," she writes, "that legitimates a variety of personal and institutional endeavors to resituate, reinterpret, and reweigh every aspect of a literary text" (66). Such research helps position Booth less as an old-fashioned belletrist than as a critic who was deservedly attentive to narrative's inherently subjective overtones. See also Bortolussi and Dixon, whose studies demonstrate that "[r]eaders treat their representation of the narrator much as they would a representation of a conversational participant" (16). Even granting the case of "impersonal" narrators, the authors insist "it is still possible to draw inferences concerning the narrator based on indirect signs. In general, such indirect features derive from the logic that the narrator must select information from the story world and decide to present it in a particular manner" (65).

[129] For a recent overview of Gissing's relationship to the realist novel, see Aaron Matz's essay, "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism."

\

[130] *Sources of the Self* attempts to reclaim morality as the primary source of human identity from what it takes to be the prevailing trend of contemporary philosophy to regard the sense of "what it is good to be" with a kind of clinical disdain (3-4).

[131] "New" is of course a relative term in philosophical studies. Taylor's concept of the self as an object of narration dates as least as far back as St. Augustine.

[132] The full statement appears in free indirect discourse: "Ils l'avaient manqué tous les deux, celui qui avait rêvé de l'amour, celui qui avait rêvé le pouvoir" (517).

[133] This chapter's English citations of Flaubert's novel come from Robert Baldick's translation. I provide the original text here in the footnotes:

"Le 15 septembre 1840, vers six heures du matin, la Ville-de-Montereau, près de partir, fumait à gros tourbillons devant le quai Saint-Bernard.

Des gens arrivaient hors d'haleine; des barriques, des cables, des corbeilles de linge gênaient la circulation; les matelots ne répondaient à personne; on se heurtait; les colis montaient entre les deux tambours, et le tapage s'absorbait dans le bruissement de la vapeur, qui, s'échappant par les plaques de tôle, enveloppait tout d'une nuée blanchâtre, tandis que la cloche, à l'avant, tintait sans discontinuer" (19).

[134] "Enfin le navire partit; et les deux berges, peuplées de magasins, de chantiers et d'usines, filèrent comme deux larges rubans que l'on déroule.

Un jeune homme de dix-huit ans, à longs cheveux et qui tenait un album sous son bras, restait auprès du gouvernail, immobile. A travers le brouillard, il contemplait des clochers, des édifices dont il ne savait pas les noms; puis il embrassa, dans un dernier coup d'œuil, l'île Saint-Louis, la Cité, Notre-Dame: et bientôt, Paris disparaissant, il poussa un grand soupir.

M. Frédéric Moreau, nouvellement reçu bachelier, s'en retournait à Nogent-sur-Seine, où il devait languir pendant deux mois, avant d'aller *faire son droit*" (19).

[135] Genette also cites Flaubert's apparent preference for material objects over characters as a technique that contributes to the novelist's larger cultivation of narrative "silence" in his novels ("Silences de Flaubert," 242).

[136] Genette brings up the technique in reference to Balzac, many of whose novels and short stories (including *Ferragus*, *Le Cousin Pons*, and *La Peau de chagrin*) begin with it. But where Balzac tends to use this "introit" to single out his protagonists as individuals worthy of exceptional comment, both *Sentimental Education* and *Born in Exile* begin with external focalization to mark the way in which the protagonist is unremarkable, how he is generic rather than enigmatic.

[137] William Paulson provides an elegant encapsulation of the way that Frédéric frustrates our expectations of the novelistic protagonist: "A sense of distinction, or a distance from conventional norms, contributes to the interest of many a novelistic hero, for it enables the character to incarnate a conflict between the actual social order and some real or imagined alternative. The problem with Frédéric is that no such alternative emerges: he neither adopts conventional beliefs and modes of action nor possesses any strong and self-coherent position of his own" (37). Contrasts between Flaubert's protagonists and Julien Sorel—a nineteenth-century protagonist who fits Paulson's description of the "novelistic hero" to a tee—are particularly striking to novel theorists. One such reader is Diana Knight, who in *Flaubert's Characters* specifically contrasts Sorel's "moral superiority" to Emma Bovary's apparent moral emptiness (85).

\

[138] Franco Moretti notes how nineteenth-century French and German *Bildungsromane* not only contain very few children, but also how children do not seem to be the implied readers of such texts: "Can you picture a child reading *Wilhelm Meister*, *The Red and the Black*, *Lost Illusions*? Impossible. But *Waverley* and *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*: here we have the 'great tradition' of children's literature" (185).

[139] It will perhaps be argued that the ending of *Sentimental Education* contradicts my contention that the novel ignores Frédéric's childhood and the nostalgia that we might expect to attend it. The novel famously closes as Moreau and Deslauriers, now middle-aged "failures" (*manqués*), reminisce about a trip to a notorious brothel that occurred during their teenage years. Although locals see the two youths emerging from the establishment and the whole episode becomes a minor scandal, it turns out that Moreau is actually too embarrassed to go through with the act and that Deslauriers is forced to follow him out. The two characters nevertheless agree, in the last line of the novel, that the bungled tryst was "the happiest time we ever had" (419). While almost every critic of Flaubert has a different interpretation of this strange scene, I believe its presentation of Moreau's and Deslauriers' nostalgia acts as the narrator's final comment upon the kind of imagination that leads not to action but to more imagining. That the boys (now men) cite an abortive action as the happiest one they have ever known reaffirms the narrator's depiction of Moreau as a character whose reflection *becomes* his primary action. And it is this desire to cling to imaginary possibilities—a desire that the narrator emphasizes by using it for the novel's ending—that obstructs the protagonist's character development throughout the preceding pages.

[140] For more on the relationship between nostalgia and the first-person fictional autobiography, see Dames, *Amnesiac Selves*, 125-66.

[141] Flaubert's contention that artists should not showcase their own opinions could hardly be plainer throughout his correspondence. In a letter to Emile Zola on the latter's early work, for example, Flaubert writes, "you express your opinion, something which in my poetics a novelist hasn't the right to do" (*Letters*, 188). The author makes an almost identical claim in his correspondence with George Sand: "a novelist *hasn't the right to express his opinion* on anything whatsoever" (*Letters*, 94).

[142] Other contemporary works of criticism that see Flaubert as a forefather of modernism include Culler's *Flaubert: Uses of Uncertainty*, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, and Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*.

[143] For a discussion of the theoretical pros and cons of adopting the "narratorless" model of fiction, see Cohn's *Distinction of Fiction*, 126-31. Though Cohn ultimately refuses to do away with the narrator as a concept because of its "pragmatic" function for readers and critics, she concedes that the idea of an impersonal or nonexistent narrator usefully characterizes many readers' *perceptions* of distant narrators such as Flaubert's.

[144] "Il enviait le talent des pianistes, les balafres des soldats. Il souhaitait une maladie dangereuse, espérant de cette façon l'intéresser.

Une chose l'etonnait, c'est qu'il n'était pas jaloux d'Arnoux; et il ne pouvait se figurer autrement que vêtue, - tant sa pudeur semblait naturelle, et reculait son sexe dans une ombre mystérieuse.

\

Cependant, il songeait au bonheur de vivre avec elle, de la tutoyer, de lui passer la main sur les bandeaux longuement, ou de se tenir par terre, à genoux, les deux bras autour de sa taille, à boire son âme dans ses yeux! Il aurait fallu, pour cela, subvertir la destine; et, incapable d'action, maudissant Dieu et s'accusant d'être lâche, il tournait dans son désir, comme un prisonnier dans son cachot. Une angoisse permanente l'etouffait. Il restait pendant des heures immobile, ou bien il éclatait en larmes" (98).

[145] Leo Bersani's *A Future for Astyanax,* for example, deals specifically with this issue. Bersani argues that the form of the realist novel "serves the cause of significant, coherently structured character" (55), but that this character is only a denial of the "incoherence from which all our fragmented experience ultimately derives" (61).

[146] "C'est un livre d'amour, de passion; mais de passion telle qu'elle peut exister maintenant, c'est-à-dire inactive. Le sujet tel que je l'ai conçu, est, je crois, profondément vrai, mais, à cause de cela même, peu amusant" (*Correspondance*, 233).

[147] The term itself is a site of contestation among narrative theorists; I have heuristically chosen its most common English name. Though Cohn prefers to call it "narrated monologue," I offer her definition of the technique as the one I find most helpful. "[Narrated monologue] may be most succinctly defined as the technique for rendering a character's thought in his own idiom while maintaining the third-person reference and the basic tense of narration" (100). For two markedly different accounts of this narrative phenomenon, see Ann Banfield's *Unspeakable Sentences* and D.A. Miller's *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style*. For a valuable synopsis of the angles that various schools of criticism tend to take vis-à-vis free indirect discourse (and for its author's own interesting assertion that free indirect discourse is less a model of speech than a model of listening) see Gilbert D. Chaitlin's "Listening Power: Flaubert, Zola, and the Politics of *style indirect libre*."

[148] "Une faculté extraordinaire, dont il ne savait pas l'objet, lui était venue. Il se demanda, sérieusement, s'il serait un grand peintre ou un grand poète; - et il se décida pour la peinture, car les exigences de ce métier le rapprocheraient de M$^{me}$ Arnoux. Il avait donc trouvé sa vocation! Le but de son existence était clair maintenant, et l'avenir infaillible.

Quand il eut refermé sa porte, il entendit quelqu'un qui ronflait, dans le cabinet noir, près de la chambre. C'était l'autre. Il n'y pensait plus.

Son visage s'offrait à lui dans la glace. Il se trouva beau, - et resta une minute à se regarder" (76).

[149] Proust refers to such lack of overt commentary—in which blank space can render the passage of time without "the parasitism of anecdote and the dross of history"—as one of Flaubert's finest and most original achievements (269-70).

[150] "[L]a véhémence du désir, la fleur même de la sensation était perdue. Ses ambitions d'esprit avaient également diminué. Des années passèrent; et il supportait le désœuvrement de son intelligence et l'inertie de son cœur" (509).

[151] "Les plus indulgents trouvent que je n'ai fait que des tableaux et que la composition, le dessein manque absolument!" (*Flaubert-Sand*, 256).

[152] Critics have spent a good deal of time noting possible similarities between Flaubert and Frédéric Moreau. Flaubert famously wished for *Sentimental Education* to be a chronicle of "the moral history of the men of my generation" ("Je veux faire

\
l'histoire morale des hommes de ma génération" [*Letters*, 80] ). Frédéric is, therefore, the same age that Flaubert would have been when the novel begins in 1841.  For more detailed connections between *Sentimental Education* and Flaubert's own life—including comparisons of Frédéric's obsession with Mme Arnoux and Flaubert's fascination with Elisa Schlesinger—see the volume of essays titled *Analyses & Réflexions sur Flaubert:* L'Éducation sentimentale and Claudine Gothot-Mersch's *Préface* to the 2001 Folio Classique edition of *Les Mémoires d'un fou* (7-43)

[153] "Chaque matin, il se jurait d'être hardi.  Une invincible pudeur l'en empêchait; et il ne pouvait se guider d'après aucun exemple, puisque celle-là différait des autres.  Par la force de ses rêves, il l'avait posée en dehors des conditions humaines.  Il se sentait, à côté d'elle, moins important sur la terre que les brindilles de soie s'échappant de ses cisaux" (218-19).

[154] "[J]'avais toujours au fond de moi-même la musique de votre voix et la splendeur de vos yeux!" (512).

[155] "la substance de son cœur, le fond même de sa vie" (491).

[156] "Quelquefois, vos paroles me reviennent comme un écho lointain, comme le son d'une cloche apporté par le vent; et il me semble que vous êtes là, quand je lis des passages d'amour dans les livres" (511).

[157] "une convoitise plus forte que jamais, furieuse, enragée…Une autre crainte l'arrêta, celle d'en avoir dégoût plus tard.  D'ailleurs, quel embarras ce serait!" (513).

[158] "Ce fut comme un heurt en pleine poitrine" (512).

[159] Flaubert's correspondence continually demonstrates its author's distaste for moralizing; the author's famous wish to write a work with no subject but style, for instance, shows us how he wanted to locate morality in aesthetic beauty rather than in human conduct (see Steegmuller's *Flaubert and Mme Bovary*, 307).  Gissing's relationship to moral teaching through his novels was more complex: as we see in *Born in Exile*, the unfortunate circumstances of Peak's upbringing are not necessarily enough to redeem him in the eyes of the narrator.  In "Division of Purpose in George Gissing," Jacob Korg discusses how the author's desire for reform (obvious in "social problem" novels like *The Odd Women* and *The Unclassed*) stands at odds with his belief that art should be an end in itself.

[160] This problem of fictionality, in turn, gives rise to questions about the "reliability" of historical vs. fictional narrators that go back to Wayne Booth's discussion of the "unreliable narrator" and continue to interest narrative theorists.  For a recent account of the poetics of unreliability across first-person novels and nonfiction memoirs, see Phelan's *Living to Tell About It*.

[161] For Cohn's analysis of the status of "fiction" as a term within contemporary narratology, see *The Distinction of Fiction*, 109-131.

[162] I refer here to the incident in which the young Jean-Jacques is falsely accused of, and disciplined for, breaking Mlle de Lambercier's comb: "[t]his first experience of violence and injustice," he writes, "has remained so deeply engraved in my heart that any idea that is at all associated with it brings back the emotions I felt at the time" (19).

[163] Cohn makes this point years earlier, though with less elaboration, in *Transparent Minds* (5).

\

[164] This analysis of the comparative mental representation of fictional and non-fictional characters demonstrates another intersection between narrative theory and philosophy, specifically, to what philosophers often refer to as the "problem of other minds." How, that is, can we be sure of the existence—much less the qualitative feel—of minds other than our own? For a concise discussion of this problem as it relates to contemporary philosophy of mind, see Searle 18-21.

[165] "Voici le seul portrait d'homme, peint exactement d'après nature et dans toute sa vérité, qui existe et qui probablement existera jamais. Qui que vous soyez, que ma destinée ou ma confiance ont fait l'arbitre du sort de ce cahier, je vous conjure par mes malheurs, par vos entrailles, et au nom de toute l'espèce humaine, de ne pas anéantir un ouvrage unique et utile, lequel peut servir de première pièce de comparaison pour l'étude des hommes, qui certainement est encore à commencer, et de ne pas ôter à l'honneur de ma mémoire le seul monument sûr de mon caractère qui n'ait pas été défiguré par mes ennemis. Enfin, fussiez-vous, vous-même, un de ces ennemis implacables, cessez de l'être envers ma cendre, et ne portez pas votre cruelle injustice jusqu'au temps où ni vous ni moi ne vivrons plus, afin que vous puissiez vous rendre au moins une fois le noble témoignage d'avoir été généreux et bon quand vous pouviez être malfaiteur et vindicatif : si tant est que le mal qui s'adresse à un homme qui n'en a jamais fait ou voulu faire, puisse porter le nom de vengeance" (23).

[166] "Avant que d'aller plus loin, je dois au lecteur mon excuse ou ma justification tant sur les menus détails où je viens d'entrer que sur ceux où j'entrerai dans la suite, et qui n'ont rien d'intéressant à ses yeux. Dans l'entreprise que j'ai faite de me montrer tout entier au public, il faut que rien de moi ne lui reste obscur ou caché ; il faut que je me tienne incessamment sous ses yeux ; qu'il me suive dans tous les égarements de mon coeur, dans tous les recoins de ma vie ; qu'il ne me perde pas de vue un seul instant, de peur que, trouvant dans mon récit la moindre lacune, le moindre vide, et se demandant : Qu'a-t-il fait durant ce temps-là ? il ne m'accuse de n'avoir pas voulu tout dire" (82).

\

## Works Cited

apRoberts, Ruth.  *The Moral Trollope*.  Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1971.

Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, eds. Introduction.  *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*.  Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983.

Alden, Patricia.  *Social Mobility in the English Bildungsroman: Gissing, Hardy, Bennett, and Lawrence*.  Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986.

Anderson, Amanda.  *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*.  Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Aristotle.  *Poetics*.  Trans. Malcolm Heath.  New York: Penguin, 1996.

Armstrong, Nancy.  *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*.  New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

_____.  *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900.*  New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Auerbach, Erich.  *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*.  1946.  Trans. Ralph Manheim.  Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Auerbach, Nina.  "Incarnations of the Orphan."  *ELH* 42 (1975): 395-419.

Austen, Jane.  *Emma*.  1816.  New York: Penguin, 1996.

_____.  *Pride and Prejudice*.  1813.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

_____.  *Sense and Sensibility*.  1811.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Bakhtin, M.M.  *The Dialogic Imagination*.  Trans. Michael Holquist.  Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

_____.  *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*.  Trans. Vern W. McGee.  Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.

Bal, Mieke.  *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*.  Trans. Christine van Boheemen.  Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

Balzac, Honoré de.  *Le Père Goriot*.  1835.  Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

Banfield, Ann.  *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*.  Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.

Barthes, Roland.  *Image-Music-Text*.  Trans. Stephen Heath.  New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

_____.  *S/Z*.  Trans. Richard Miller.  New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

Beddow, Michael.  *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann*.  Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Beer, Gillian.  *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.  London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.

_____.  *George Eliot*.  Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986.

Bersani, Leo.  *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*.  Boston: Little, Brown, 1976.

\
Bloom, Harold, ed.  *George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss*.  New York: Chelsea House, 1988.

Blumberg, Ilana M.  "'Unnatural Self-Sacrifice': Trollope's Ethic of Mutual Benefit".  *NCL* 58 (2004): 506-46.

Bonaparte, Felicia.  *Will and Destiny: Morality and Tragedy in George Eliot's Novels*.  New York: New York University Press, 1975.

Booth, Wayne.  *The Rhetoric of Fiction*.  1961.  Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Brewer, David A.  *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825*.  Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Brontë, Charlotte.  *Jane Eyre*.  1848.  New York: Norton, 2001.

_____.  *Villette*.  1853.  New York: Penguin, 1985.

Brooks, Peter.  *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*.  New York: Knopf, 1984.

Buckley, Jerome Hamilton.  *Season of Youth: the Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*.  Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Carroll, David, ed.  *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*.  London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.

Chaitlin, Gilbert D.  "Listening Power: Flaubert, Zola, and the Politics of *style indirect libre*."  *French Review* 72 (1999): 1023-37.

Chatman, Seymour.  *Story and Discourse*.  Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Cohn, Dorrit.  *The Distinction of Fiction*.  Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

_____.  *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*.  Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Constant, Benjamin.  *Adolphe*.  1816.  Trans. Margaret Mauldon.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Coser, Lewis A.  "Some Functions of Deviant Behavior and Normative Flexibility."  *The American Journal of Sociology* 68 (1962): 172-81.

Coustillas, Pierre, and Colin Partridge.  *George Gissing: The Critical Heritage*.  London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

Craig, Randall.  "Rhetoric and Courtship in *Can You Forgive Her?*" *ELH* 62 (1995): 217-35.

Culler, Jonathan.  *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty*.  Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Damasio, Antonio.  *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion, and the Making of Consciousness*.  London: Heinemann, 2000.

Dames, Nicholas.  *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870*.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

_____.  "Trollope and the Career: Vocational Trajectories and the Management of Ambition."  *Victorian Studies*  45 (2003): 247-78.

Derwin, Susan.  *The Ambivalence of Form: Lukács, Freud, and the Novel*.  Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Dickens, Charles.  *Bleak House*.  1853.  London: Penguin, 1985.

_____.  *David Copperfield*.  1850.  London: Penguin, 1985.

\
_____. *Great Expectations*. 1861. New York: Norton, 1999.

Dixon, Peter, and Marisa Bortolussi. *Psychonarratology: Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Dougherty, Elizabeth Jane. "An Angel in the House: The Act of Union and Trollope's Irish Hero." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32 (2004): 133-45.

Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Eliot, George. *Adam Bede*. 1859. New York: Penguin, 1980.

_____. *Daniel Deronda*. 1876. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977.

_____. *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. 1879. Ed. Nancy Henry. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994.

_____. *Middlemarch*. 1872. London: Penguin, 1994.

_____. *The Mill on the Floss*. 1860. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

_____. *Selected Essays, Poems, and Other Writings*. Ed. A.S. Byatt and Nicholas Warren. New York: Penguin, 1990.

Ellipses. *Analyses & reflections sur Flaubert,* L'Éducation sentimentale. Poitiers: Aubin Imprimeur, 1989.

Ermarth, Elizabeth Deeds. *George Eliot*. Boston: Twayne, 1985.

_____. *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

Esty, Jed (Joshua D.). "The Colonial *Bildungsroman*: *The Story of an African Farm* and the Ghost of Goethe." *Victorian Studies* 49 (2007) 407-30.

_____. "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of *Bildung*: Arresting Development in *The Mill on the Floss*." *Narrative* 4 (1996): 142-60.

Felber, Lynette. *Gender and Genre in Novels Without End: The British* Roman-Fleuve. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.

Flaubert, Gustave. *L'Éducation sentimentale*. 1869. Paris: Gallimard, 1965.

_____. *Extraits de la Correspondance ou Préface de la vie d'écrivain*. Ed. Geneviève Bollème. Paris: Seuil, 1963.

_____. *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1850-1870*. Ed. and Trans. Francis Steegmuller. Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard, 1982.

_____. *Sentimental Education*. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Penguin, 1964.

Flint, Kate. "Trollope and Sexual Politics." Introduction. *Can You Forgive Her?* By Anthony Trollope. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. xv-xxx.

Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. 1927. London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1958.

Fraiman, Susan. "*The Mill on the Floss*, the Critics, and the *Bildungsroman*." *PMLA* 108 (1993): 136-50.

_____. *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Gallagher, Catherine. *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Gallop, Jane. "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading." *Profession 2007*. New York: MLA (2007):181-86.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. 1857. New York: Penguin, 1975.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin.

\
Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.

_____. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.

_____. "Silences de Flaubert." *Figures*. Paris: Seuil, 1966. 223-43.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965.

_____. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

_____. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Gissing, George. *Born in Exile*. 1892. London: A&C Black, 1894.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. 1796. Trans. Eric A. Blackall. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Goodman, Charlotte. "The Lost Brother, The Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double *Bildungsroman*." *NOVEL* 17 (1983): 28-43.

Gothot-Mersch, Claudine. Préface. *Les Mémoires d'un fou. Novembre. Pyrénées-Corse. Voyage en Italie*. By Gustave Flaubert. Paris: Gallimard, 2001.

Greimas, A.J. *Structural Semantics*. Trans. H.S. Gill. New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 1989.

Grylls, David. *The Paradox of Gissing*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Hager, Kelly. "Estranging *David Copperfield*: Reading the Novel of Divorce." *ELH* 63 (1996): 989-1019.

Hamer, Mary. *Writing by Numbers: Trollope's Serial Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Hancher, Michael. "Tragic Flaw." Online posting. 6 Jan. 1995. Shaksper: The Global Electronic Shakespeare Conf. 25 May 2007. <http://www.shaksper.net/archives/1995/0014.html>.

Hannoosh, Michèle. *Baudelaire and Caricature: From the Comic to an Art of Modernity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992.

Hardy, Barbara. *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form*. London: Athlone Press, 1963.

Harvey, W.J. *Character and the Novel*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965.

Hemans, Felicia. *The Poetical Works of Felicia Dorothea Hemans*. London: Oxford University Press, 1914.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Spiritual *Bildung*: The Beautiful Soul as Paradigm." Abel, Hirsch, and Langland, *Voyage In* 23-48.

Hochman, Baruch. *Character in Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.

_____. *The Test of Character: From the Victorian Novel to the Modern*. New Brunswick: Associated University Presses, 1983.

_____. and Ilja Wachs. *Dickens: The Orphan Condition*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1999.

Homans, Margaret. *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-*

\

  *Century Women's Writing*.  Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Hume, David.  *A Treatise of Human Nature*.  1740.  New York: Penguin, 1985.

Hyde, Isabel.  "The Tragic Flaw: Is it a Tragic Error?".  *MLR* 58 (1963): 321-25.

Jacobs, Alphonse, ed.  *Gustave Flaubert-George Sand: Correspondance*.  Paris: Flammarion, 1981.

Jacobus, Mary.  "The Question of Language: Men of Maxims and *The Mill on the Floss*." *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981): 207-22.

Jaffe, Audrey.  *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991.

James, Henry.  *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, Prefaces to the New York Edition*.  New York: Library of America, 1984.

_____.  *Partial Portraits*.  1888.  Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970.

_____.  *The Portrait of a Lady*.  1881.  New York: Bantam, 1987.

James, Simon J.  *Unsettled Accounts: Money and Narrative in the Novels of George Gissing*.  London: Anthem, 2003.

Jameson, Fredric.  *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Jeffers, Thomas.  *Apprenticeships: The* Bildungsroman *from Goethe to Santayana*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Kaplan, Cora.  "Girl Talk: *Jane Eyre* and the Romance of Women's Narration."  *Novel* 30 (1996): 5-31.

Kendrick, Walter M.  *The Novel-Machine: The Theory and Fiction of Anthony Trollope*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Knight, Diana.  *Flaubert's Characters: The Language of Illusion*.  Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Korg, Jacob.  "Division of Purpose in George Gissing."  *PMLA* 70 (1955): 323-36.

Kucich, John.  *The Power of Lies: Transgression in Victorian Fiction*.  Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

_____.  *Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens*.  Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.

Kupperman, Joel J.  *Character*.  New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

_____.  "The Indispensability of Character." *Philosophy* 76 (2001): 239-50.

Landon, Letitia Elizabeth.  *The Improvisatrice and Other Poems*. London: Hurst, Robinson & Co, 1824.

Lane, Christopher.  *Hatred & Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England*.  New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Langbauer, Laurie.  *Novels of Everyday Life: The Series in English Fiction, 1850-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.

Levine, Caroline.  "Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies." *Victorian Studies* 48 (2006) 625-57.

Levine, George.  "Intelligence as Deception: *The Mill on the Floss*."  *PMLA* 80 (1965): 402-409.

Levinson, Marjorie.  "What is New Formalism?".  *PMLA* 122 (2007): 558-69.

\
Levy, Gayle A. "A Genius for the Modern Era: Madame de Staël's *Corinne*." *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30 (2002): 243-54.

Lewis, Linda M. *Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and the Victorian Woman Artist*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.

Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*. Trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1971.

Lynch, Deidre Shauna. *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

_____. "The Profession of the Author: Abstraction, Advertising, and *Jane Eyre*." *PMLA* 110 (1995): 206-19.

Margolin, Uri. "Character." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2005.

_____. "Introducing and Sustaining Characters in Literary Narrative: A Set of Conditions." *Style* 21 (1987): 107-24.

Markovits, Stefanie. *The Crisis of Action in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.

Matz, Aaron. "George Gissing's Ambivalent Realism." *NCL* 59 (2004): 212-48.

McWilliams, Nancy. *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis: Understanding Personality Structure in the Clinical Process*. New York: The Guildford Press, 1994.

Mill, John Stuart. *Autobiography*. 1873. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Miller, D.A. *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

_____. *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

_____. *The Novel and the Police*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988.

Miller, J. Hillis. "Character in the Novel: A 'Real' Illusion." *From Smollett to James: Studies in the Novel and Other Essays Presented to Edgar Johnson*. Ed. Samuel I. Mintz, Alice Chandler and Christopher Mulvey. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981. 277-85.

Moers, Ellen. *Literary Women*. New York: Doubleday, 1976.

Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. London: Verso, 1987.

Palmer, Alan. *Fictional Minds*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Paulson, William. Sentimental Education*: The Complexity of Disenchantment*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

Peters, Laura. *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

Phelan, James. *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression and the Interpretation of Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

_____. *Living to Tell About It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*. Ithaca:

\
       Cornell University Press, 2005.

Pinchbeck, Ivy and Margaret Hewitt. *Children in English Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973.

Poovey, Mary. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Proust, Marcel. *Against Sainte-Beuve*. Trans. John Sturrock. New York: Penguin, 1988.

Redfield, Marc. *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. 1966. New York: Norton, 1999.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Time and Narrative, Vol. II*. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Routledge, 1983.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. 1782. Trans. Angela Scholar. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

_____. *Les Confessions: Tome I*. Ed. Joseph Ducarre. Paris: Hachette, 1956.

Ruskin, John. *Fiction, Fair and Foul* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., n.d.

Sainte-Beuve, C.A. *Portraits of Celebrated Women*. Trans. H.W. Preston. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1868.

_____. *Portraits de Femmes*. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1869.

Schor, Naomi. "The Portrait of a Gentleman: Representing Men in (French) Women's Writing." *Representations* 20 (1987): 113-33.

Searle, John R. *Mind: A Brief Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

_____. *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

Shuttleworth, Sally. *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Slaughter, Joseph R. "Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: *The Bildungsroman* and International Human Rights Law." *PMLA* 121 (2006): 1405-23.

Smalley, Donald, Ed. *Trollope: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969.

Smiles, Samuel. *Character*. 1871. New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 243-61.

Staël, Germaine de. *Corinne, or Italy*. 1807. Trans. Avriel H. Goldberger. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

_____. *Corinne ou l'Italie*. 1807. Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

_____. *Delphine*. 1802. Trans. Avriel H. Goldberger. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995.

_____. *De la littérature*. Ed. Gérard Gengembre and Jean Goldzink. Paris: Flammarion, 1991.

_____. *Madame de Staël on Politics, Literature, and National Character*. Ed. Morroe Berger. New York: Doubleday, 1964.

Steedman, Carolyn. *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority,*

\

  *1780-1930*.  Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Steegmuller, Francis.  *Flaubert and Madame Bovary: A Double Portrait*.  New York: New York Review Books, 2005.

Stendhal.  *Red and Black*.  1830.  Trans. Robert M. Adams.  New York: Norton, 1969.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *Le Rouge et le Noir*.  1830.  Paris: Flammarion, 1964.

Swales, Martin.  *The German Bildungsroman From Wieland to Hesse*.  Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Taylor, Charles.  *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*.  Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Tenenbaum, Susan.  "*Corinne*: Political Polemics and the Theory of the Novel."  *The Novel's Seductions: Staël's* Corinne *in Critical Inquiry*.  Ed. Karyna Szmurlo. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999. 154-62.

Trollope, Anthony.  *An Autobiography*.  1883.  London: Trollope Society, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *Can You Forgive Her?*  1865.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *The Duke's Children*.  1880.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *The Eustace Diamonds*.  1873.  London: Penguin, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *He Knew He Was Right.*  1869.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *Phineas Finn*.  1869.  New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *Phineas Redux*.  1874.  Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

\_\_\_\_\_.  *The Prime Minister*.  1876.  London: Penguin, 1993.

Turner, Mark W.  *Trollope and the Magazines: Gendered Issues in Mid-Victorian Britain.*  New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

Wall, Stephen.  *Trollope: Living with Character*.  New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1988.

Warhol, Robyn.  *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel*. New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Welsh, Alexander.  *From Copyright to Copperfield: The Identity of Dickens*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Woloch, Alex.  *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*.  Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Zunshine, Lisa.  *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*.  Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.