

Plotting Friendship: Male Bonds in Early Nineteenth-Century  
British Fiction

by

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To Winifred Johnson

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## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Illustrations .....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One. Friend or Fiend in Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i> .....	24
Chapter Two. Picturing Friends in Pierce Egan's <i>Life in London</i> .....	69
Chapter Three. Mixing Genres in Edward Bulwer Lytton's <i>Paul Clifford</i> and William Ainsworth's <i>Jack Sheppard</i> .....	110
Chapter Four. Finding Friends in Charles Dickens's <i>Oliver Twist</i> .....	154
Conclusion .....	198
Works Cited .....	204

## Illustrations

2.1	Detail from frontispiece to <i>Life in London</i> .....	75
2.2	Tom and Jerry Larking at a Masquerade Supper, at the Opera House.....	83
2.3	Highest Life in London. Tom & Jerry “Sporting a Toe” among the Corinthians, at Almacks in the West.....	91
2.4	An Introduction. Gay Moments of Logic, Jerry, Tom and Corinthian Kate .....	97
2.5	Lowest “Life in London”. Tom, Jerry and Logic among the Unsophisticated Sons and Daughters of Nature at “All Max” in the East.....	100
2.6	The Wedding Day – All Happiness at Hawthorne Hall – Jerry and Mary Rosebud United .....	108
3.1	Jack Visits His Mother in Bedlam .....	119
3.2	The Vindictiveness of Jack Sheppard .....	121
3.3	The Audacity of Jack Sheppard .....	126
4.1	Oliver Plucks Up a Spirit .....	164
4.2	Oliver Introduced to the Respectable Old Gentleman .....	164
4.3	Master Bates Explains a Professional Technicality .....	172
4.4	Rose Maylie and Oliver (the hearth plate) .....	189
4.5	Rose Maylie and Oliver (the Agnes plate).....	189
5.1	The Drunkard’s Children. Plate III. ....	201

## Abstract

“Plotting Friendship: Male Bonds in Early Nineteenth-Century British Fiction” examines the prevalence of stories about male friendship and all-male community in British popular fiction written in the early nineteenth century. Writers in an exploding literary market created hybrid genres that imitated existing ones, but mixed generic attributes. Most of these novels remain critically neglected because of their so-called undeveloped styles and awkward mixed forms. This dissertation examines forgotten works like *Life in London*, *Finish to Life*, *Paul Clifford*, and *Jack Sheppard* to provide a fuller picture of the culture, the literary marketplace, and readers’ desires, but it also reads afresh canonized novels like *Frankenstein* and *Oliver Twist*. The illustrations by George and Robert Cruikshank bring whole other narratives of male friendship; while they ostensibly confirm the same stories, more often than not the visual possesses its own point of view. The illustrations are valuable for tracing what can and cannot be shown visually, as opposed to verbally. Each chapter traces historically specific types of male protagonists who prioritize friendship over marriage. Each features a different kind of all-male triangle. In Chapter One, it structures a cautionary tale of male friends who love too deeply. In Chapter Two, we find a celebrated trio who instruct young male readers urban life. Chapter Three shows us how authors used all-male triangles to invoke images of rogue story traditions within Regency settings. In Chapter Four, elderly bachelors rescue and adopt a workhouse orphan. The wide variety of homosociality and non-

connubial heterosexuality represented in these novels, considered in conjunction with their immediate popularity, and their redistribution in subsequent decades, exposes the critical limitations of historical and sexual models based on trajectories of increasing homosocial marginalization and homosexual repression and. Once we recognize the influence of these now mostly forgotten novels as sites for explorations of male homosociality in the period, we can also begin to consider how their novelistic conventions carried over into later literatures.



## Introduction

This dissertation is about writers who in the early nineteenth century, in a turbulent and unregulated literary market, filled with opportunity, wrote bestselling novels that explored alternative pictures of desire, affection, and family life. Authors' job descriptions were changing because publishers were learning that faster and less expensive fiction meant faster and bigger profits (St Clair19). There was a reading public waiting for cheaper fiction. The sharp increase in both the efficiency of publishing technologies and the number of people reading novels produced a rapid proliferation of genre types. Existing professional authors could not keep up with the demand from readers, so publishers' recruited writers from across gender and class lines. Novice writers fashioned new forms as they imitated previous ones, naively or purposefully, usually mixing the most salient attributes of one existing genre with those of another to help feed a burgeoning mass market. Critics at the time sorted, classified, and made generalizations about the throngs of newly published novels, but they always regarded them as forms of popular entertainment in the end, and not as new art forms. It seems reviewers were ill equipped to handle any critical stance related to the abundance of unique works because they had no traditions to draw from; these novels “swallowed all the formulas.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am taking from Tillotson's *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (17). She is quoting from Virginia Woolf's *The Moment: and Other Essays* (1947).

Many of these texts remain neglected today because of their seeming awkward forms and underdeveloped writing styles. Pierce Egan's *Life in London; or, The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, The Oxonian, in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis* (1820-21) (hereafter *Life in London*) and its sequel, *The Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry and Logic in their Pursuits through Life in and out of London* (1827-28) (hereafter *Finish to Life*), Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* (1830), and William Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839), tend to keep places in literary history today more for what they represented socially, and the contemporaneous criticism they drew, than for any literary value. I argue that it is crucial we close-read these problematic fictions for two reasons. First, an examination of these narratives gives us a fuller picture of what, how, and why readers were reading in these decades. The extraordinary popularity of these mixed-genre novels has been strangely neglected. Second, they each reveal an important counter-discourse to the growing dominance of the marriage plot. These texts present readers with, if only as fantasies, alternatives to marriage. If Jane Austen, in terms of Victorian courtship/marriage narratives, defines the beginning of an age, the fictions in this study are important because they provide evidence of a proliferation in the explosive literary market of fictions that spoke of the love between men and its all-male communities in the decades just after *Pride and Prejudice* (1813).

Six novels are examined in this dissertation; four were best sellers, and two are now canonical works read by most English majors. They all share similar qualities as mixed-genre novels that refuse the conventional marriage plot, but they differ in intriguing ways. Many bestsellers were not first written as novels. Though I typically

read these texts in first bound-novel editions, four of the six were written originally as magazine installments. The popularity of Pierce Egan's urban travelogues, wildly successful picaresque fare, brought an old tradition back in vogue. It soon became the "decade's bestseller" (Gatrell 548).<sup>2</sup> Egan's installments, however, while initially affordable in many households, were not originally designed to reach a plebian or mass market. But because stage adaptations of these episodes were launched not long after the first novel editions were published, his heroes quickly found other, broader audiences. Moreover, many of these novels were beginning to include narrative illustrations as regular features; pictures, often displayed in bookstore windows, made it possible for even those who did not read to identify with these heroes. *Oliver Twist* and *Jack Sheppard* appeared in a pricey gentlemen's magazine, but their novels also quickly found larger audiences by the same means. In fact, George Cruikshank's illustrations for Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*, coupled with its several adaptations, raised public passions for its hero to the level of "full-blown mania."<sup>3</sup>

I cannot define *Frankenstein*'s popularity strictly in terms of its ease of publication or the numbers it sold. The controversial subject matter made it difficult for Shelley to find a publisher, who in turn only published 500 expensive copies designed primarily to sell to circulating libraries. Not until the novel was adapted to the stage did its popularity begin to grow (St Clair 357-73). While *Frankenstein* falls a bit short of the above popular criteria, it still fits the category because of the connections it draws to the popular market rhetorically and ideologically. It does so, much like Dickens does for

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<sup>2</sup> Neither Pierce Egan nor *Life in London* appears in St Clair's *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*.

<sup>3</sup> See Buckley's "Sensations of Celebrity: Jack Sheppard and the Mass Audience" for an account of how the popularity of Ainsworth's novel depended greatly on the city's growing industrial labor force and how productions were stopped by the city in 1839 to help curb the mania (426-29).

*Oliver Twist*, by announcing its own higher ethical calling. We can call each a type of intervention text, seeking to redirect the market. Dickens says that he writes *Oliver Twist* and its authentic pictures of criminal life as a reaction to the number of romanticized criminals that had already appeared in fiction. Percy Shelley says in the preface he wrote for the 1818 edition that the tale is “limited to the avoiding the enervating effects of the novels of the present day” [Percy’s syntax] (12). Percy’s category of *novels of the present day* can include a variety of genres, but we can assume he had in mind Gothic forms standardized by Ann Radcliffe, author of wildly popular novels featuring nubile girls anxious to explore labyrinthine castles by candlelight. Jane Austen’s parody of the genre, *Northanger Abbey*, was also published, posthumously, in 1818. Aware of the critical consensus at the time that Gothic romances weakened the mental and moral constitutions of their readers, Percy celebrates *Frankenstein* for its “exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection” and “excellence of universal virtue” (12), elements critics saw lacking in the English Gothic tradition. Yet even as a “corrective,” Shelley’s novel still appeals to the same readers of other popular works, not more sophisticated ones.

These works at first seemed to critics to undercut the historiographical enterprise of developing a broad literary history of novel genres that connected the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mid-twentieth-century attempts to address the disorganization of these popular works also found the genre mixing and the quality of the writing problematic. Katherine Tillotson suggested in her 1954 study that scholars of Victorian literature ignore these early century texts altogether. She saw novelists of “the forties initiating rather than continuing, and [was] more aware of their legacy to succeeding novels than of their own inheritance from the novels past” (139). And Ellen Moers, in her

1960 seminal study of the Regency dandy, said that “[t]oday *Paul Clifford* is virtually unreadable” (83). Other critics have called the works degenerative, ill formed from their interbreeding.<sup>4</sup>

Fortunately, early nineteenth-century popular fiction’s legacy as literary fly over country has faded. More recent studies treat these works instead as seedbeds for Victorian genres. The earlier critical outcry for complete disavowal of these works has been replaced by voices arguing that we construct instead narratives of emergence. They look for genre and subgenre traits and garner for these works a sort of literary legitimacy because they can find discernable emergences, early signs of, later Victorian forms of convention. They place these novels on existing family trees, created by other literary historians; in some cases, however, they still need to create a new tree before any assignment can be made.<sup>5</sup> As David Perkins says in *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992), an enterprise of this type includes the discovery of a “diachronic modification of genres” where “change is the unfolding of an idea, principle, or suprapersonal entity” (12). For these critics, these changes typically serve to signal steps in literature’s chronological progression toward Victorian realism. We will see in the following chapters how authors have located literary values for the novels in this dissertation by describing them as early English apprenticeship fictions, early social problem literatures, early sensational, early

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<sup>4</sup> See Tompkins’s *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800*.

<sup>5</sup> Following are two examples that illustrate the forces at work in this revival of nineteenth-century subgenre identification. In her 2004 study “Gendering the Silver Fork Novel: Catherine Gore and the Society Novel,” April Kendra sees the silver-fork genre maintaining well into the 1800s the traditions of the eighteenth-century picaresque and the German apprentice novel from the 1700s (25). Richard Salmon’s 2004 article titled “The Genealogy of the Literary *Bildungsroman*: Edward Bulwer-Lytton and W. H. Thackeray” focuses on the history of the English *Bildungsroman*. He complains that literary histories to date study the form only in relation to its German progenitor, comparatively, without devising “a particular history of the development of the form in English” (42). In other words, the study of the English form is ahistorical, having no developmental narrative at all.

detective, and even Gothic-revival literatures. I am not making a case for the literary value of this type of fiction in this dissertation. For me it is productive to think of these new subgenres as a system of cross-genres, each with its familial underpinnings in earlier melodrama at the same time that each cultivates its own sets of literary characteristics, which, in turn, branch out, overlap, and intersect with the other subgenres.

The sheer numbers these novels sold (except for *Frankenstein*, initially), and the ways in which their heroes went on to live in the public imagination, suggests a different criteria for assessing these novels' values. Lee Erickson in *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing* (1996) uses a "Darwinian model of literary development" to show how genre is shaped by the economic pressure "to appeal to the common denominator of aggregated demand" – the most profitable for publishers is "no longer that which appeals to the most sophisticated and literary taste" (15). He says the "resulting range of products tends to stratify the reading market and so target particular segments of it more effectively than before. From this perspective, every literary work will be in some sense a mixed genre as writers seek to accommodate their writing to the demands of the market place and to suit part of it" (14). These mixed forms then compete with each other for survival in the marketplace. Successful genres, at least parts of them anyway, find new life in subsequent novels. Others seemingly disappear from the genetic pool. Novel genres represent what readers were craving at the time, and our point of view shifts from one of looking at literary legacies to one of looking at market patterns. From here, we can speculate as to the types of readerly desires that made these genres popular – demand over supply. Accordingly, genres become enabling elements for study of the period, as opposed to disabling, and

inquiries shift from ones of a work's literary legitimacy to ones of its generic, and historically specific, multiplicities. The readings that follow in this dissertation thrive on mixed (and, admittedly, often problematic) genre forms. And questions I ask are not related to the degrees of genre mixing and their historic intelligibility. Instead, I ask what mix-genre forms can enable within the story, and what these mixes may mean for understanding readers' desires and expectations. And only by close reading these popular pieces do we get a better appreciation for what else Victorians readers were consuming.

A new, promising direction is taken in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830* (2008), a recent collection of essays edited by Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman. It brings together little-read popular novels and re-reads canonical authors, such as Jane Austen, to recover "political and cultural contexts for Romantic-era fiction" (1). The editors make a plea to literary critics that they recognize the "Romantic novel as a field, not simply a heterogeneous mass of fictional forms" (15). I agree with their suggestion, even as I see, like earlier critics, important continuities into the mid and late nineteenth century. My dissertation supplements their work in two ways. While Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman note that the novel in this period "often ignores the plotting of heterosexual union altogether, and turns its attention to alternative social bonds, particularly to the vagaries of fraternity and sorority" (22), their collection does little to address the market's demand for representations of same-sex culture, which is my focus. In contrast, I also read critically neglected works like *Life in London*, *Finish to Life*, *Paul Clifford*, and *Jack Sheppard* to help provide a fuller picture of the culture, the literary marketplace, and readers' desires in the early nineteenth century. And I read afresh canonized novels like *Frankenstein* and *Oliver Twist* through

the context of what these forgotten novels teach us about that market, that culture, and their desires. I see their collection, like my dissertation, as an important beginning that change in our understanding of the critical importance of popular fiction in the early nineteenth century.

### **Critical Models**

The early nineteenth century was a time when traditional literary themes of paternal legacies were mixing with discourses of romantic love. Fiction was becoming more and more dependent on representations of heterosexual love and marriage for survival in the all-important marketplace. New literary conventions prioritized youthful heroes who fell in love only to encounter a series of obstacles, which for a period frustrate any forward movement toward a romantic union. Heterosexual love and its consummation was becoming the stuff of realism. Nancy Armstrong, focusing on this heterosexual plot, argues that we should consider late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century popular fictions as the foundation for Victorian love plots in which she “posits a causal theory of the production of desire that [. . .] was energetically sustained, not by high-minded ‘serious’ novelists, but by hack writers, booksellers, and publishers.”<sup>6</sup> For her, it was the cheap fiction that first began to normalize the love plot’s conventions of form. Joseph Boone goes on to tell us that this love fiction was also beginning to rearrange the basic literary family from one of a kin or extended system to an autonomous nuclear unit (63-4). Both, however, note how fragile romantic love and successful marriage could be in many realistic fictions. If we broaden our scope, beyond

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<sup>6</sup> I am quoting from Richard Kaye’s *The Flirt’s Tragedy*.



this increasingly dominant genre, we can see a counter-discourse to marriage and its responsibilities.

The novels in this dissertation set their stories in environments that are contingent on the exclusion of romantic female characters. This may not at first seem like a particularly fresh claim. After all, John Tosh tells us that in the nineteenth century full masculine status was a “gift of one’s peers; it builds on the foundation of boy-life outside the family, and is accomplished by economic or military achievements in the public sphere, often marked by a rite of collective, men-only initiation” (*Man’s Place* 3). The Victorians believed that “feminine absence conditioned [a man’s] emotional development during adolescence” (Roper 3), and a “fine balance is struck between competition and comradeship as young men learn how to become part of the collective (male) voice of the community” (Tosh *Man’s Place* 3). And some Victorian authors even selected this “boy-life outside the family” as their subject matter, frequently setting stories in all-male institutions – academic, militaristic, or religious – and filling them with scenes of boyhood initiations. Carolyn Oulton in *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* (2007) notes how these stories established their own conventions for closure as well. Protagonists, in the end, project their love for their “male friend onto his beloved sister” (34). While we may be tempted to label the male-centric texts in this dissertation as only early *masculine romances*, thereby lumping them together with later novels like *Coningsby* (1844) and *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857),<sup>7</sup> where love between boys and men also determines plot and character, the novels in this dissertation do not celebrate a boy’s all-male induction into the dominate heterosexual order but instead celebrate his

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<sup>7</sup> See Oulton’s Chapter Two: “Extraordinary Reserve: The Problem of Male Friendship” for a discussion of these later masculine romances (33-105).

rejection of it. They offer up scenes of different types of defining moments for young heroes who ultimately ignore normative mandates. If compulsory heterosexuality for young men means “giving up one’s male friends to marry,” then these narratives explore a path less taken. In other words, these heroes choose the guy, not the girl.

Male friendship as a social category in nineteenth-century literature has received a lot of attention from queer scholars in recent decades. Because of the codification of homosexual as a medical category toward the end of the century, and the very public Oscar Wilde trials afterward, these studies often themselves become narratives of emergence.<sup>8</sup> One of two classic models of male friendship usually informs these studies. The heroic relationship, a historical category for male pairs reaching back to ancient Greek culture, is one based, according to David Halperin, on “structural asymmetry, consisting in an unequal distribution of precedence among the members of the relationship and a differential treatment of them in the narrative: one of the friends has greater importance than the other; the later is subordinated – personally, socially, and narratologically – to the former” (Halperin *One* 77-8). It is imperative that the relationship be only two men: “Death is the climax of friendship, [. . .] and it weds them forever (in the memory of the survivor, at least)” (Halperin *One* 79). Permutations of the category can include patron-client relationships, hero-sidekick relationships, and a variety of pedagogical relationships. The other category, the sympathetic dyad, “emphasizes equality, mutuality, and reciprocity in love between men. Such an egalitarian relation can be obtained only between two men who occupy the same social rank, usually an elite one” (Halperin *How* 118). And it is easy to see how the platonic sameness of sympathetic

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<sup>8</sup> For example, see George E. Haggerty’s *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (1999) and *Queer Gothic* (2006). See also Andrew Elfenbein’s *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (1999).

bonds could all too easily be read as sexual.<sup>9</sup> Even within a friendship model that prioritizes mutuality and reciprocity, one finds much variation, including such familiar inequalities as age, class and wealth. Signs of power inequalities become easy targets for erotic readings, especially when speaking in pederastic and/or sodomitical terms. But as Halperin warns his readers, “[W]hat often looks to us nowadays like eroticism may have served in the past to constitute, to dramatize, and to identify as ‘friendships’ routine relationships of dependence between unequals” (Halperin *How* 118). For him, as well as many of gay critics, inequality remains a fundamental element in male-male friendship. He reminds us, however, of how studies that speculate as to what extent these men were sexual with each other “tend to conflate notions of friendship first with notions of erotic hierarchy, paederasty, or sodomy, and then with notions of homosexuality” (*How* 118). I agree with Halperin in that literary and sexual historians too often read male friendship as a “lesser” sexuality, and thus, bonds of male friendships that seemingly offer up too little in terms of erotic or sexual possibilities are left unexamined.

Eve Sedgwick’s model for male desire, which promulgates the violent loss of male friendship and the subordination of women, forced literary critics in the mid-80s to examine for the first time the crucial importance of male friendship as a key element in the heterosocialization of society. Her powerful paradigm of two male characters bonded through a third female character has also become a mainstay in studies of Victorian protagonists, and by extension, male elites of the nineteenth century. Her iconic erotic triangle is an elaboration of René Girard’s “schematization of the folk-wisdom of erotic

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<sup>9</sup> Crompton in *Byron and Greek Love* gives both Lord Byron’s and Percy Shelley’s views on romantic friendships. Daffron in “Male Bonding” does a close reading of Shelley’s anxieties about sexual feelings in his writings on the subject (422-4).

triangles” (20).<sup>10</sup> Within the novelistic traditions of male-centered European high culture, the triangles that Girard traced included men who were typically near equals in station: symmetrical angles in the erotic form. Sedgwick’s analysis in *Between Men* (1985), more than finding and exposing hidden triangulated forms of desire in Victorian narratives, also focuses on ways of reading hidden power asymmetries connected to issues of class, gender, and even sexual orientations within these arrangements.<sup>11</sup> She builds her paradigm on the upper-class tradition that expects boys to bond in “romantic friendships” with other boys, “a product of class and education” (Oulton 33). These boys first leave home and domestic ties at a young age and learn to live in an all-male environment. Throughout adolescence they are encouraged to bond with a special friend, but as they mature, they must break with their friend and marry. Sedgwick argues that men’s desires for each other are mediated through this system of compulsory and self-regulating bonds that enforce the subordination of women. Boys move from the heterosociality of childhood, where their father holds the power; to the homosociality of same-sex bonding, where power achieves a semblance of symmetry between equals; to finally, the heterosexuality of young adulthood, where patriarchal power then becomes their own. Becoming a husband and then a father symbolizes the achievement of this socially enforced male maturity. While I am indebted to Sedgwick for the ways she thinks about structuralism in gender, the novels in this dissertation expose the limitations of those Sedgwickian models that have become almost canonized as critical commonplaces in studies of genre, gender, and sexuality today.

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<sup>10</sup> See *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1972).

<sup>11</sup> Sedgwick cites other critics who do not treat the erotic triangle as “an ahistorical, Platonic form.” She includes Lacan, Chodorow, Dinnerstein, Rubin and Irigaray (*Between Men* 27).

The heroes in the texts I discuss do not follow the socially ascribed trajectory. They typically act out Sedgwick's triangle as children in pre-pubescent scenes of romantic love. Victor Frankenstein in Shelley's novel begins the narration of his own life with a description of how as a child his adopted sister Elizabeth Lavenza was given to him as a gift, and of how Henry Clerval, his boyhood friend, was always there, part of a trio. Victor, Henry, and Elizabeth act out triangulated scenes of adult gender function in the playroom. But when Victor grows, and it is time for him to leave school and return home to Elizabeth, he chooses not to. Henry joins him in Ingolstadt instead. Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* also opens with adult-like dramas being acted out by children. Jack Sheppard and his adopted brother Thames Darrell sever their childhood bonds with a duel. At the tender age of twelve, they fight for the love of their adopted sister, Winnie Wood. Jack loses the fight, and soon after he frames Thames for a crime he did not commit and goes to live among thieves and prostitutes. In this novel and others, scenes typical of normative heterosexuality, along with their romantic female leads, are quickly relegated to the margins as boys choose to live in homosocial worlds. The portrayal of heterosocial gender rivalry in children establishes a sequence of events that inverts Sedgwick's paradigm of homosociality first and heterosexuality second. The narratives in my novels shift away from scenes of heterosexual romance and focus instead on scenes of triangulated male friendship.

The successions of obstacles to heterosexual love that typically constitute the body of romances are ignored; the love plot is put on hold. Heterosexual romance either disappears altogether or reappears at the very end as a kind of add-on. These marital finales are inevitably compromised in some way. *Paul Clifford* ends with Paul finding

Lucy, his boyhood passion, but only after he escapes execution by fleeing to America. Jerry Hawthorne's marriage at the end of *Finish to Life* means that his friends, Corinthian Tom and Bob Logic, actually have to die. It seems the worlds that homosociality carves out for itself in these fictions are fragile places, often only temporary, but heterosexuality is equally difficult and so left to the imagination of the reader. If heteronormative culture demands foreclosure of the homoerotic bond, then heterosexual adult males are, as Sedgwick has correctly argued, subjects formed upon the loss of their homosocial/erotic/sexual friendships. When these male pairs do not let go and move on to the socially prescribed goal of marriage, according to Sedgwick, some violent act intervenes and adjusts the abnormality. While I agree with her about this point, I will argue throughout this dissertation that male homosociality is in and of itself characterized by a high degree of violence. It pervades these texts. On one hand, we can see that bad desires have bad consequences. On the other, we can see how these fictions also thrived on gratuitous scenes of violence, which critics were quick to point out, highlighting both their frequency and their graphicness.

Different from the classic dyadic hero-sidekick and sympathy models of friendship I noted earlier, these novels offer up pictures of all-male triangles of friends, held together by shared adventures. The critical solution for dealing with triangles of men in literature up to this point has been to feminize one of the characters, which then gives us a pair of men bonded through a "female." In Chapter One of this dissertation, I discuss how feminist critics in the 1970s feminized male characters in Shelley's *Frankenstein* so that they could read it as a heterosexual birthing story. Likewise, Sedgwick, in her 1985 reading of Hogg's *Confessions of Justified Sinner*, feminizes Robert Wringhim so that

her ostensibly universal two-gendered paradigm for a narrative of masculine maturation can be located in Robert, his brother, and the devil figure Gil-Martin. She says that Wringhim's "story condenses into a schema of desire and struggle between masculine and feminized men" (*Between* 108). Sedgwick, like earlier feminists, fails to see the significance of *all maleness* in these all-male triangles and dresses the men up in different genders. It may be that Sedgwick is too tied to finding these hidden women. She says, "[T]he whole question of arrangements between genders [. . .] is deeply and inescapably inscribed in the structure even of relationships that seem to exclude women – even in male homosocial/homosexual relationships" (*Between* 25). Her paradigm is problematical, however, because it perpetuates essentialized feminine attributes as the qualifiers for seemingly defective or non-standard men. In the absence of central romantic females, why feminize men? Seeing all-male triangles as all male will radically change how we comprehend narrative structures and narrative themes in these fictions.

Indeed, Sedgwick is not interested in finding triangles in *Frankenstein* as she argues for the genesis of the "paranoid Gothic," by which she means "Romantic novels in which a male hero is in a close, usually murderous relation to another male figure, in some respects his 'double,' to whom he seems to be mentally transparent" ("Beast" fn. 10, 266). She says *Frankenstein* is her primary example of the genre because of the way "two potent male figures [are] locked in an epistemologically indissoluble clench of will and desire" ("Beast" 246). According to her, because the homosexual as a figure is beginning to "crystallize" in the public's imagination, the customary period of romantic same-sex bonding required of young men presents them with a special challenge. Young men find themselves in a double bind, the "treacherous middle stretch of the modern

homosocial continuum” (“Beast” 247), where the intensity of homosocial bonds – “friendship, mentorship, admiring identification, bureaucratic subordination, and heterosexual rivalry” (“Beast” 246) – are “at once the most compulsory and the most prohibited of social bonds” (“Beast” 247). (And yet she neglects to read Victor Frankenstein’s friendship with Henry Clerval and how the monster disrupts and even destroys it.) It is her belief that the time-bound social phenomenon of these collective, yet secret, individual crises affects literature’s production. Sharon Marcus in *Between Women* (2007) says because of this, “Sedgwick identifies literature as a site of violent conflict between the homosocial and the homoerotic that can represent homosexuality only indirectly” (74).

Sedgwick goes on to say that as the figure of the homosexual becomes even more present in the public’s imagination, authors begin then to suppress literary representations of problematical male desires in Victorian literary realisms. But this dissertation calls into question the trajectory of Sedgwick’s description of *homosexual panic*, in which homophobia first appears embodied in “paranoid Gothic” fiction early in the century and then reappears, as she argues, later in the figure of the Victorian bachelor, exemplified by the novels of William Makepeace Thackeray. This, of course, is not to say that young men did not suffer from homosexual panic as Sedgwick described it and used to underpin her historical trajectories. While Sedgwick will go on to her readings of homosociality and homophobia in *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), it is the historical specificity of her account of these early decades, where she situates her account of homosexual panic and its resulting effect on contemporary literature that remains most relevant to this project.



When we consider the amount and types of non-connubial desire in circulation, literary, pictorial, or otherwise, and the numbers of people consuming these discourses, the fact that she sees a singularity in the literature in this period strong enough to define it as both a literary and a sexual *age* becomes difficult to accept.<sup>12</sup> The portrayal of masculine friendship, and unmarried men, in nineteenth-century fiction is more complicated than Sedgwick assumed. When we accept her trajectory of homosexual panic's effect on literature; that is, how it first manifests in the genre of the Gothic, with its obvious homophobic thematics, only then to resurface later in the character of the literary bachelor, we have to continue neglecting the proliferation of mixed genres and the number of hybrid masculinities they manufactured, formed as genres cross-pollinated and mixed attributes. The popularity of scenes of male bonding in the novels discussed here, filled with appealing heroes, as well as the long life they had in the public imagination, makes it difficult to imagine that they all could be compressed down into that one literary placeholder, the bachelor.

Her history also misses the fact that the homosocially inclined bachelor appears far earlier than she contends. By focusing so intently on homosexual panic, Sedgwick neglects the frequency with which the jolly, even comic, bachelor, starting with the likes of Sir John Blubber in Egan's *Life in London*, is presented as a positive figure. In my

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<sup>12</sup> In her introduction to *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Methuen, 1980), Sedgwick divides the nineteenth century into two epochs: *The Age of Frankenstein* and *The Time of Oscar Wilde*. For her, the first is a paranoid or homophobic age “*in the absence of a widely-available sense of the possible homosexual role or culture, and in the absence of any felt specificity of male homosexual desire in the culture at large*” (x). The second age held, to the contrary, the “knowledge or attribution of actual gay cultural possibilities and meanings [and] was [. . .] intensely stratified by class, so that what could be done, what couldn't be done, what looked like sexual activity or like friendship or like violence, what counted as feminizing or as virilizing, depended on extremely local cognitive maps” (x). The former age seems to be only about homosexuality, though none existed; the latter age knows of homosexuality, but each instance is isolated and mediated differently, according to social circumstance.

chapter on *Oliver Twist*, I examine this important figure, demonstrating how socially acceptable bachelor friendship was a model of early nineteenth-century all-male love. The heroes in this dissertation not only fill up the period Sedgwick lays out between the paranoid Gothic and Thackeray's invention of the literary man, but they also spill out through the Victorian period; many of these novels were printed in new editions throughout the century. The presence of these popular novels in later decades, along with any new genres created by authors who then copied them, calls into question the all-inclusive nature Sedgwick ascribes to her literary bachelor, using him for a representative of the societal conditions, as if these earlier stories were cleared from shelves when the newer ones were written. Popular pictures of non-connubial desires were in circulation, affecting the market. These mixed-genre, anti-bourgeois narratives do not remain bestsellers forever, but they do represent a century-long fascination with representations of male friendship and sites where a variety of discourses on male bonds (social connectedness) were made available to readers.

Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* (1976) famously argued, of course, that the so-called hypocritical Victorians, far from repressing sex, talked about it all the time. He posited that sexuality was a historically specific discursive strategy for "the organization of subjectivities, social relations, and knowledges," which all become linked together in the period, as Foucault himself described it, in a "great surface network" (*How* 88). Social historians, looking to disentangle our understandings of the sexual from the social, have begun to develop an understanding of desire different from the emergent one posited by literary sexual historians that I discuss in these pages. H. G. Cocks provides us with an account of moments when nameless sex crimes were described and

recorded in archival law records.[footnote] And Charles Upchurch, looking at newspapers written 1820-1870, says sex between men was part of the regular public discourse. [footnote] They both argue that there appears to be no historical moment of keen recognition in the early and middle nineteenth century, or a universal condemnation of the homosexual as a social type, but rather more of a relatively unremarkable folding in of him into public discourse.

Accounts can, however, take another path. Foucault had actually argued against positivist theories (generated by Lacan and his disciples) looking to discover “the truth” about sexuality. He argued this a decade before Sedgwick’s *Between Men*, but in an unusual turn of events, because Foucault’s writings had yet to gain critical traction in the U.S., Foucault’s and Sedgwick’s analyses often become historically and conceptually transposed, making his a critical voice that sounds after hers, and in essence, making Foucault then a counter-discourse to Sedgwick. Halperin insists that present-day theories, claiming they use Foucault as their foundation, most often miss the fact that his treatise never really put forward an alternative theory of human sexuality (*How* 44). According to him, critics mistake Foucault’s discursive analysis for a historical assertion, saying mainly that the sodomite transmogrifies into the homosexual in the nineteenth century. In other words, too invested in finding these pre-discursive homosexuals, they mix constructivist and essentialist paradigms in their readings. Oliver Buckton’s *Secret Selves: Confession and Same-Sex Desire in Victorian Autobiography* is one example of such scholarship. He correlates what he defines as the secrecy in autobiography with the emergence of a culturally recognizable same-sex desire. He picks up on Foucault’s

description of the modern imperative to the “‘incitement to speech,’ whereby the individual ‘will seek to transform desire. . . into discourse’” (7).<sup>13</sup>

Readings like these, Halperin says, give us a history of “‘categories or representations, a history of different ways that different historical cultures have put ‘sexuality’ (understood as some natural and timeless fact of life) into ‘discourse’ (understood as language, or articulate speech)’” (*How* 86). Working within a category of discursive analysis, one originally designed to undermine positivist accounts of sexuality, literary critics often still treat homosexuality as an eternal, mostly hidden, historical truth, only finding its voice in the nineteenth century, which, in turn, “has the unfortunate effect of situating desire outside the field of human history altogether” (*How* 88). I think it is important to highlight Halperin’s assessment of the current state of sexuality studies here because, as we will see in this dissertation, the recent bodies of scholarship focusing on male bonds in *Frankenstein* and *Oliver Twist* often fall into the same trap of looking, admittedly among a multiplicity of discourses, for early signs of an emerging sexuality. One goal of this project is to locate these narratives of emergence within this scholarship and disentangle them from understandings of how homosociality’s representation can shape these novels, both thematically and structurally.

I take a cue from Marcus and “just read”; that is, I intentionally do not do a symptomatic analysis, or look for hidden desires, but “account more fully for what texts present on their surface but critics have failed to notice” (75). I do not look for early signs

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<sup>13</sup> Buckton says that “Foucault’s formulation of the discursive function of ‘silence’ might, with some appropriate modifications, be usefully applied to secrecy” (ix). Depicting “‘secret selves’ often becomes a matter of exploring the interstices of literary texts – their silences, opacities, evasions, and omissions” (10-11). Buckton invests his energies in unearthing the erotics and the anxieties within individual autobiographies, but because he is dedicated to propping up Foucault as he explicates these individualized subjectivities, his study tends to resemble a group of psychoanalytic readings dressed up in Foucauldian phraseology.

of homosexuals, or for their stand-ins, or for other narratives of repression and emergence. I do not offer up a psychological model, in fact, because characterization is not a priority in these texts. They are plot and setting rich narratives that focus wholly on action to reveal character. We come to identify with the male characters through what they do, what they say, and how they perform in relation to other characters, rather than by any so-called character development. While this project refuses to look for hidden desires, the neglected erotics brilliantly described by recent critics, neither does it try either to undermine or validate those projects.

And I am, indeed, following Halperin's advice and distinguishing male friendship as the specific topic of this dissertation. We find very different uses for all-male triangles in the narratives discussed here. In Chapter One, Shelley's *Frankenstein* employs an all-male triangle consisting of Victor Frankenstein, Henry Clerval, and the monster to explore the natures of and penalties for boys who will not let go and marry. In Chapter Two, we see the trope of the triangle appear again in Egan's *Life in London*, only this time it, a trio of young rich bachelors living it up in London, becomes a central and even celebrated social arrangement. I also discuss how in its sequel, *Finish to Life*, the triangle of Corinthian Tom, Jerry Hawthorne, and Bob Logic, loses its salience. Only a decade later, London looks to be a much different place, and the options for male friendship are changing. I show in Chapter Three how Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* uses the triangle to invoke a romantic rogue tradition in highwaymen heroes Paul Clifford, Augustus Tomlinson, and Long Ned, even comparing young Paul and his friends to Robin Hood and his band of thieves. *Jack Sheppard*'s triangles rely on Ainsworth bringing together historical figures from the *Newgate Calendar*. Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild who

form two-thirds of a triangle, are actual men from criminal history. Ainsworth adds the figure of Blueskin, creating two rival men in young Jack's life, the former wanting Jack dead, and the latter helping to save him. Ainsworth also creates the fictional Thames Darrell, Jack's so-called adopted brother and childhood friend who becomes the measure of Jack's success as a fake aristocrat. My choice of *Oliver Twist* as the end piece for my study of pre-Victorian authors and their homosocial plots begs the following question: Why *Oliver Twist* for a study that looks at novels where "the boy picks the boy instead of the girl"? By novel's end, Oliver, only eleven years old, never reaches a point in the narrative where he makes a choice. He is a different hero from those I discuss in other chapters. In fact, he never really seems to function much as a hero at all. Oliver is not the boy who "chooses the boy" but rather the boy who is chosen by others, particularly male others. The story does end, however, with a picture of the young boy living in the country with a trio of bachelors and their friends.

As I will argue, Oliver surrounded by bachelor father-figures is oddly undercut by George Cruikshank's final illustration, which shows Oliver standing with his aunt in a church. When I began this dissertation, I did not realize how the illustrations in these fictions, or George and Robert Cruikshank for that matter, would become such a large part of it. George and his brother drew illustrations for *Life in London* and *Finish to Life*. George alone drew the illustrations for both *Jack Sheppard* and *Oliver Twist*. The drawings bring to these texts whole other narrative surfaces to read, ones that ostensibly tell the same stories, though more often than not the verbal and the visual registers each possess their own point of view on the various turns of events. The illustrations are especially valuable for tracing what can and cannot be shown visually, as opposed to

described or suggested in print. For the new, mass readership of the early nineteenth century, illustrations were an invaluable auxiliary to written word, providing guidance to important behavior. Thus, throughout this dissertation, I will also examine the purpose and impact of illustrations on these narratives of male friendship.

## Chapter One

### Friend or Fiend in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

I saw around me nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light but the glimmer of two eyes that glared upon me. Sometimes they were the expressive eyes of Henry, languishing in death, the dark orbs nearly covered by the lids and the long black lashes that fringed them; sometimes it was the watery, clouded eyes of the monster, as I first saw them in my chamber at Ingolstadt.

(Victor in *Frankenstein*, 186)

Some decades ago there was very little critical conversation pertaining to the Gothic novel. Then Robert D. Hume made a generically gendered distinction between *novels of terror* and *novels of horror* in a 1969 study of them. He argued that novels like Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1797) comprised the first category and novels like M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) the second; he then dismissed Radcliffe and her emulators as not serious authors. In reaction to such criticism, Ellen Moers gave Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) its critical debut in her 1976 study of the *female Gothic*.<sup>14</sup> Her now classic examination of Shelley's text not only cultivated discussions of it as a feminist text in scholarly dialogues, but it also legitimized the Gothic as worthy of further critical scrutiny. Since then, Gothic as a genre has become well-worn from the amount of academic foot traffic it gets, and *Frankenstein* appears to be one of its most highly contested sites. Some of its luster for critical inquiries has worn off in recent years,

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<sup>14</sup> She first coined the term *female Gothic* in *Literary Women* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976).



probably from over-exposure, but queer scholars are giving it new attention because they see it as an important text for the history of the homosexual.

Readings of male desire in *Frankenstein* engage generally in one of two methodologies. The first uses contemporaneous discourses, about *sympathy* and the *sublime*, to help better explicate Victor Frankenstein's desires and posit, in turn, how Romantic men must have felt for each other, or at least how Mary Shelley felt about how Romantic men felt for each other.<sup>15</sup> The second, relying on a hypothetical trajectory for the emergence of the modern homosexual, places Victor, because of his male-centered relations and their seemingly transgressive desires, in a prominent role in nineteenth-century homosexual history.<sup>16</sup> They see Shelley's hero as forging a link between the ambiguities and (possibly sexual) excesses of Romantic male psychologies and the later, seemingly more disambiguated, psychologies of the modern homosexual.

I read *Frankenstein* with historical specificity as well. In other words, I am aware that there were discourses available at the time that could shape both Shelley's experience as a writer and the public's reception of her text. But I am more interested in aspects of male desire in her novel that do not seem to use any predictable, time-specific "erotic" language or follow any preexisting set of philosophical doctrines. Victor's relationship with Henry Clerval is one such relationship. These two men are bound together differently in a world that seems replete with sympathetic and sublime male experiences. And it is difficult to see Victor as the sole protagonist in this novel. Victor's life story includes a symbiotic union with his childhood friend Henry dependent on shared ambitions and imagination. As they mature, their love becomes embroiled, as

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<sup>15</sup> See Eric Daffron's "Male Bonding: Sympathy and Shelley's *Frankenstein*."

<sup>16</sup> See George Haggerty's *Queer Gothic*.

illustrated in my epigraph, in a unique type of all-male triangle and the plot veers away from the expected. Victor's adoptive sister Elizabeth, who he, according to his family, will marry, is part of this story too, but Victor's entanglement with Henry and its monstrous outcome derails their marriage plot.

In the chapter that follows I address four aspects of Shelley's novel. To begin, I discuss how *Frankenstein's* legacy as a feminist and "heterosexual" text has become a fixture in examinations of *Frankenstein* and narrows present-day understandings of it. Second, I address the equally influential category of the *Gothic* as it relates to *Frankenstein* and show how we can read it a self-aware series of dismissals, inversions, and re-castings of conventions. Third, most readers seem to come to the novel with the idea that Shelley's story is about heterosexual love and families, and more pointedly heterosexual reproduction, even when there is very little evidence to suggest so. I examine the so-called "birth" of the monster, a defining element for most of these readings, as well as other familial structures in the novel to see how they may or may not support this reproductive paradigm. And lastly, I treat Shelley's text as a story of a man whose unrestrained desires for the company of men causes him to build a man of his own. In doing so, I develop a divergent paradigm for male desire that not only sheds new light on Victor's love for Henry but also helps explain why Shelley's novel does not end like other *female Gothic* romances.

## Reproductive Legacies

*Frankenstein* seems to be, critically speaking, a novel difficult to grasp. Several analytic perspectives have surfaced in the critical conversation for Shelley's novel – feminist, psychoanalytic, biographical, historical, political, economic, scientific, (post)colonial and, very recently, queer<sup>17</sup> – but by the mid 1990s these conversations began to turn toward why it is that the novel never really satisfies. Marshall Brown in “*Frankenstein: A Child's Tale*” (2003) decides that its “unruliness,” which he attributes to the inexperience of an apprentice writer, is the chief problem and that a primary, logical meaning for the novel will always remain elusive because of its “contradictory nature” (145). In 1993, David Ketterer railed against what he saw as the disproportionate amount of “provocative interpretive criticism” for the novel that relied on the “construction” of meaning dependent “on arguments based ultimately on analogy and metaphor” (1173). To my mind, any interpretation of a tale where a man builds another man from dead body parts and imbues it with life can only be discussed in these terms, but he goes on to sum up the entirety of *Frankenstein's* critical legacy (and all deconstructive enterprises in general) when he says that “so long as the element of similarity appears to predominate over the element of difference that inheres in all such enterprises, the effect is generally persuasive” (1173). So it seems that from this untamed narrative (monstrous even), one built from a seeming mix of stock allusions, rather haphazard intertextuality, and Percy Shelley's editorial additions, almost any critical inquiry, especially those of a deductive nature, can find an argument for themselves in the story (as long as their evidence outweighs those elements that may be contradictory). But

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<sup>17</sup> See Brown for a very good overview of this criticism (145-6).

regardless of the novel's ability to resonate in nearly every school of literary thought over the past thirty years, there are three opinions of *Frankenstein* that I argue remain constant across schools, and they typically go unquestioned: first, it is a feminist text; second, it is a Gothic text, and third, it is a self-referential story about heterosexual (pro)creative processes.

*Frankenstein's* current legacy began when feminist scholars, starting in 1976, worked to carve out a place for the novel in feminist literary conversations.<sup>18</sup> Historically, Ann Radcliffe standardized the Gothic genre "invented" by Horace Walpole. While a work like Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* had a rather limited audience in 1764, Radcliffe gained notoriety when she successfully transformed the genre for popular fiction publication some thirty years later. Her widely read works, generally a mixture of horror and romance, were derided by critics prior to feminist recuperative strategies for being nothing more than sub-literary sensationalist works designed for female consumption, but these second-wave feminists, who renamed the tradition the *female Gothic*, found both historical and ideological value in them. But it appears Shelley's *Frankenstein* presented a special problem for these feminist scholars as they worked to find a place for it in this newly documented tradition. Granted, it is written by a woman, and had women readers, but the plot never manifests as a romance, at least not like those in novels like Radcliffe's, and its female characters rarely play a key role in its plot.

Shelley seems to undo the typical Gothic two-gendered romance. Today we generally consider works like Radcliffe's to be sites where authors used representations of family relations (typically referred to as the *Gothic family romance*, a microcosm

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<sup>18</sup> Here I am referring to scholars, beginning with Ellen Moers, who initiated the study of the female Gothic. See also Gilbert and Gubar, Ellis, Knoepfelmacher, Johnson, and Poovey.

representative of broader social patterns) to open spaces where they could experiment with aggressive acts (imprisonment, torture, and rape) and inappropriate sexual desires (cross-class, cross-age, and even same-sex). Regarded as subversive texts written “at the moment battle lines of cultural reorganization were being formed in the later eighteenth,” the Gothic “records the terror implicit in the increasingly dictatorial reign of those values” (Haggerty 10). In Gothic scenes, terror is almost always female terror, which is induced by despicable or demonic masculine figures who perpetrate violence against women and violate the bonds of affection that form the bourgeois family. But these works almost always end with rational order restored and a re-inscription of the status quo; supernatural occurrences are explained away with everyday truths, and the final scenes are most often filled with predictable marriages. In *Frankenstein*, however, traditional female sexual terror is replaced by male sexual terror, which is still induced by a demonic male figure (a trope that will be reworked in various ways in the late nineteenth-century “colonial” Gothic). And when it comes time for the novel to close up its so-called exploration and restore the status quo for its ending, Victor and Elizabeth, the novel’s newlywed couple, die, and the monster lives on to have the last word as he escapes beyond the limits of the narrative.

Therefore, because *Frankenstein*’s plot offers little in terms of a traditional two-gendered Gothic romance, feminists, concentrating on the novel’s editorial and publishing history, found other means for interpreting gender in the novel. Mary’s story was first published anonymously with a preface written by Percy (who signed it *Marlow*). When contemporary critics learned that the novel had been written by Mary, they doubted her ability to conjure such a tale. For her 1831 edition (after Percy’s death) Mary

wrote a new preface where she told readers that though Percy did play a role in editing the first edition, she was in fact the story's true author: "At first I thought of but a few pages – of a short tale; but [Percy] Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely of one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world" (10). She also says that any changes she made in the later edition "occur almost exclusively in the beginning of the first volume" and "are entirely confined to such parts as are mere adjuncts to the story, leaving the core and substance of it untouched" (10).<sup>19</sup> Hence, a great deal of the feminist discussion, relying on biographical information for both Mary and Percy (which includes not only them but their extended families as well), works to better identify intellectual ownership within the novel and build a case for Mary as a preeminent female Gothicism. These scholars treat *Frankenstein* as a symptom of or handbook for Mary's life, reading the novel as a story of females *in disguise*: "a hypothesis extended at least in part, in the interest of claiming female visibility" (London 256). When they read the novel this way, the monster's life typically becomes a metaphor for Mary's and Victor's for that of Percy's.<sup>20</sup> This construal of fact as fiction is crucial for the study of the novel as *female Gothic* because it reaffirms the centrality of the female sphere in today's criticism as the "traditional locus for 'the monstrous' and 'the body'" (London 256). And, so it seems, when scholars were not able to find a traditional Gothic family romance within Shelley's novel, they

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<sup>19</sup> For a detailed account of these changes, see Appendix I in the Penguin Classics edition (1992) with an introduction and notes by Maurice Hindle.

<sup>20</sup> London (255-6). See her discussion as to how Shelley's novel is frequently treated as a critical portrait of Percy (*Victor* was one of Percy's pseudonyms). Some critics believe that Shelley attaches to Percy a scandalous story of incest and illicit sexuality.

constructed one instead from her life story, thereby legitimizing her work for this newly configured Gothic tradition.

Percy Shelley, because of the popularity of Radcliffe and her imitators, would have been aware of the label of *Gothic* as a genre at the time of writing his 1818 preface, but, invoking a tradition different from these English predecessors, he says that the narrative is influenced only by “German stories of ghosts,” which “excited in [the author] a playful desire of imitation” (12). And its *mise en scene* lacks most of the predictable Gothic elements. Traditional works consistently include and almost always employ all the conventions first used by Walpole and then Radcliffe: medieval castles and churches, labyrinth-like catacombs, graveyards, untamed and oppressive landscapes, charnel houses and asylums, monastic institutions, Catholic and feudal societies, tyrannical patriarchs, trembling heroines, brooding (proto-Byronic) lovers, and supernatural or demonic figures, who usually function as doubles for other characters. And those few elements of Shelley’s novel that we might pick out as fundamental Gothicisms seem to be re-constructed by her or left with no descriptions. The charnel houses Victor explores when he builds his creation are nearest to classic structures the novel has to offer, but Shelley gives readers no picture of the horror and decay in these places. Though *Frankenstein*, because of its critical legacy, is most often regarded as a Gothic tale, it was never conspicuously written as one, at least not in the ways that early Gothicists like Walpole and Radcliffe understood the genre, or in the ways we generally characterize Gothic today.

Granted, a ruined castle will appear now and again in Victor’s descriptions of the vistas where he finds solace or enjoys time with his friend Henry Clerval: “[C]astles

[hang] on the precipices of piny mountains [. . .] and cottages every here and there [peep] forth from among the trees [and form] a scene of singular beauty, [. . .] augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps” (97), but these structures are not placed there to induce terror in him, or the novel’s readers for that matter (though one can argue that for Victor the pleasurable experience of the sublime is potentially another kind of terror in this novel). And in the valleys, feudal peasants toil in “flourishing vineyards with green sloping banks” where one can hear “the song of the labourers” (160). Shelley renders landscapes attached to the monster as oppressive, as he is forced to live at the edges of those places men dare to tread: “terrifically desolate. In a thousand spots the traces of the winter avalanche may be perceived, where trees lie broken and strewed on the ground” (100). And though he ultimately plays the part of the demonic figure who inhabits these regions, we know that he was in reality a nice guy who had “desired love and fellowship” (224) before all went horribly wrong with the De Laceys. He, in the end, much like Victor, is left alone with his blame and feelings of self-loathing.

Characters’ parallel fates, along with its legacy as a Gothic text, have shaped myriad studies that search for doubles in *Frankenstein*. And because the novel’s narrators, Robert Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and the fiend, share numerous characteristics and situations (ineffectual parents, isolation and want of friends, fertile imaginations, overreaching ambitions, and obsessive personalities), as do its female characters, Caroline Beaufort, Elizabeth Lavenza, and Justine Moritz, (origins in poverty, dead parents, selfless compassion, surrogate children, and early deaths), they beg to be read as doubles or mirror images of each other. These readings tend to breakdown, however, because combinations for finding reflections among each gendered group



seems both contradictory and infinite. Maybe Shelley, an inexperienced writer, could only imagine one sort of male character and one sort of female character. But, conversely, it is also possible to imagine that she, wanting to re-construct the Radcliffian convention of the typical romance, one protagonist and one anti-protagonist, saw fit to make all men and all women possible reflections of each other, thereby engendering a structure of supernatural relations – mirror upon mirror upon mirror – that figures characters as more complex than the works of her predecessors.

Bette London, whose 1991 study of Romantic masculinity in *Frankenstein* provoked Ketterer's aforementioned reaction, was the first to question the novel's inclusion in the female Gothic canon. Ketterer, distracted by London's uses of analogy and metaphor, misses the import of her investigation<sup>21</sup> and lumps it into the existing pool of criticism as another "construction." But London, instead of searching for yet more evidence to support the governing tenets of feminism, Gothicism, and self-referentiality, had shifted her focus to the often repeated image of a man viewing the prostrate body of another, which was "preeminently visible but persistently unseen" in earlier investigations (255). According to her, feminist critics "ignore the self-evident: *Frankenstein's* insistent specularization of masculinity [and] its story of the male creator making a spectacle of himself" (256). These critics instead see Shelley's biography as the necessary vehicle for making sense of her elusive novel, so a tale of a man building another man becomes a metaphor for Shelley's own anxieties around certain creative processes, whether these be literary or reproductive. And these readings that rely on

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<sup>21</sup> Or maybe *rejects* is a better term. I think it is important to note that he is a male critic discrediting a study formulated by a female scholar who works to show how the men in the novel represent the exhibitionistic or "masochistic," as Ketterer sees them in London's study, masculinities of the Romantic era.

“narrow determinants of a strictly biographical rendering” (255) and “conventional operations of gender [foreclose] access to *Frankenstein*’s exploration of masculinity—so much so that an approach to the subject now requires the dismantling of elaborate critical edifices” (256). London, resisting feminist recuperative strategies for the novel, looks for ways to upset gender-constrained readings. However, she never addresses the possibility of desire *between* the men in the scenes she analyzes, and instead uses them to subvert understandings of male-female gender hierarchies attached to the early nineteenth century. Her reading, therefore, never fully realizes just how pivotal these men’s relationships with each other are for, as I will argue, they construct a network of male bonds central to the novel. But her pioneering study opens the door for a question fundamental to my study: Why is the fact that *Frankenstein*’s narrative frame, which is comprised of the voices of three men who meet and tell stories to other men, not central to our understanding of the novel?

Two recent studies begin to address this question. Each explores structures of male bonds in *Frankenstein* and the emerging crisis of homosexuality in nineteenth-century London. George Haggerty and Eric Daffron, in separate studies,<sup>22</sup> diverge from the psychoanalytically-inflected biographical (and ultimately ahistorical) underpinnings of feminist readings and use Foucauldian paradigms to show how newspaper accounts of the public persecution of and virulent mob reaction to the Vere Street sodomites in 1810 shaped the popular imagination such that the monster becomes both evidence and emblem for changes in the social consciousness toward same-sex sex.<sup>23</sup> These critics

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<sup>22</sup> *Queer Gothic* (Chicago, U of Illinois P, 2006) & *Romantic Doubles: Sympathy in British Gothic Literature, 1790-1830* (New York, AMS Press, 2002) respectively.

<sup>23</sup> For a thorough discussion of publications related to the Vere Street scandal, see Haggerty’s *Queer Gothic* (44).

chronicle not only a growing repulsion toward ideas of transgressive male love but also growing anxieties that sodomites, masquerading as respectable members, were undetectable in day-to-day society. In Haggerty's analysis we have Victor as the sodomite who "reaches into the depths of nature to pull out a grotesque secret" (52) and makes manifest a "second self" built from "waste material": "The 'secret' that Frankenstein discovers is the secret of life, or the secret life, that haunts heteronormative culture with its misshapen horror" (55). Victor builds an incarnation of his hidden "deviant" desires, which in turn makes the seemingly invisible visible. Daffron, complicating the link Haggerty draws between the Vere Street scandal and *Frankenstein*, uses nineteenth-century discourses of male sympathetic relations that are concerned with the "precariousness of [such] bonds." Characterizing the ties of sympathetic men as "approaching or crossing the line of what constituted manliness" (417), these writings criticized, or celebrated, these friendships where men "share, rather than possess, sentiments and bodily properties" for their loss of masculine individuality (421).<sup>24</sup> He hypothesizes that Shelley created a homophobic Victor whose own anxieties about potentially transgressive bonds (sympathetic turned sexual) alter his reception of the manufactured man. According to Daffron, "[t]he mutual gaze of Frankenstein and the monster creates a reciprocity typical of sympathetic relations, and Victor turns in horror away from that gaze because he realizes that, rather than creating a child, he has created a

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<sup>24</sup> Daffron cites the following passages (422-3): Johan Caspar Lavatar's 1772 *Essay on Physiognomy* (Trans. Thomas Holcroft, London: William Tegg, 1869): "that similarity of features, between two sympathetic and affectionate men, increases with the development, and mutual communication, of their peculiar, individual, sensations." And William Godwin's 1976 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (Ed. F.E.L. Priestly, vol. 2, Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1946): "In society, no man possessing the genuine marks of a man can stand alone. Our opinions, our tempers and habits are modified by those of each other. [ . . . ] He that resigns himself wholly to sympathy and imitation can possess little of mental strength or accuracy . . . He lives forgetting and forgot."

double” where “nothing like an original can be located, and anything like a magnified, independent self evaporates”(421).<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, and contrary to the Gothic tradition of doubles, Victor and the monster are not entire, mimetic and competing individuals. Because Victor’s creation is the real-world materialization of his own homophobia and self-loathing, he and Victor become in fact nearly indistinguishable parts of a masculine whole. In Daffron’s final interpretive twist, however, the monster functions more traditionally when he grows to become a figure for the nineteenth-century blackmailer; someone in a position to spy on and profit from the inappropriate desires of men like Victor (and curiously enough also to reenact the life he lives in the hovel where he spies on the De Laceys).

Even though Haggerty and Daffron steer clear of the third dominant opinion for Shelley’s novel – that it is a self-referential story about heterosexual (pro)creative processes – and find fresh ways to read social-sexual dimensions in the monster, each is so attached to the idea of the hetero-normalizing function of *Frankenstein* as a Gothic text that they see Victor in a constant struggle with its presumed overriding expectations for familial and reproductive organization. Haggerty says that “Victor understands the secret he has created as a threat to the happiness of his prospective marriage and to the concept of family itself” (55). But as I argue in this chapter, family and marriage are rarely on Victor’s mind. He has concerns for the well-being of family members, and yet, either paralyzed by hysteria or lost in time with Henry, he does little to act on them and to

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<sup>25</sup> For Daffron, the fact that Victor gives the monster life using electricity – “infused a spark of being” (Shelley 58) – is important for his reading. Percy had read books on electricity and tried his own electrical experiments, and Daffron believes that his knowledge of such things played a hand in how Mary envisioned life for the monster. While scientists of the time, “like Frankenstein, were playing God in willing life back into the dead, they used a force that supposedly animated all life and was called variously light, magnetism, electricity, and sympathy” (Daffron is taking from Maria Tartar’s *Spellbound: Studies on Meserism and Literature I*, Princeton: Princeton U P, 1978: 45-60).

ensure the safety of those he loves; hence, they all die. And the more pressure his father or Elizabeth puts on him to marry, the more reasons he finds to delay the event. All these decisions mean more time spent with his friend Henry.

Daffron's reading conforms to Haggerty's when he says that by the early 1900s reproduction "had become a driving force in the way in which individuals were conceiving of their place in the world, their relations to others, and their moment within an unfolding narrative of generations of offspring"<sup>26</sup> and that *Frankenstein*, because of the lengths to which Victor goes to father a new species, "takes this goal seriously" (419). But Victor's potency is never tested with Elizabeth, and his scientific work has serious lacunae. He imagines a legacy of new creatures with no clear sense as to how they will propagate. As he says, "A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child as completely as I should deserve theirs" (55), but his own words illuminate a (pro)generative conundrum when he confuses the singular with the plural and speaks of his creature as "his child" but then uses the pronoun "theirs" when he talks of *its* gratitude. Victor never makes a plan for how his creature will mate. And furthermore, as he tells Walton, the processes for giving life he discovered in the charnel houses were obliterated from his mind when he witnessed the horror of soulless animation (which is why, when he does agree to build the monster's companion, he has to travel, with Henry, to England to gather new knowledge). It is not until the monster demands companionship that Victor plans to build another. Daffron's assertion that the

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<sup>26</sup> Daffron is paraphrasing Michael Warner here. See Warner's discussion of "repronarrativity" in "Introduction: Fear of a Queer Plant" (*Social Text*, 29, 1991: 3-17): It "involves more than reproducing, even more than compulsory heterosexuality; it involves a relation of self that finds its proper temporality and fulfillment in generational transmission" (9).

novel takes those burgeoning notions of generational transmission seriously, and even to their extremes, becomes less convincing when we set aside generally accepted precepts that Victor's monster is indeed a viable and potent beginning for Victor's legacy. And without Victor and his creation serving as the figureheads for the novel's commitment to the creation of future relations, we must turn to the actual families in the novel to examine representations of familial and reproductive structures.

### **Family Structures**

The Frankenstein family story seems to aspire to be normative, (or *proto-normative* if we think of Daffron's assertion about the budding reproductive ideologies at this time), and while it comes complete with all the appropriate roles, rigidly applied (husband, wife, son, daughter, etc.), very few people in these roles come to be there by conventional reproductive means. At the same time, each of these members readily moves about within the family hierarchical system to fill another or several roles simultaneously. Victor's father, Alphonse, a retired syndic who had "filled several stations with honour and reputation" (31), hardly plays the tyrannical patriarch. He takes in his good friend's surviving child, Caroline, but not as an adoptive daughter (who, according to traditional mores, he could potentially rape). He instead stows her away until she reaches marrying age and turns the adoptive daughter into wife and mother. Mothers die young in Shelley's story (a feature I find common to all the novels in this study and a trope that becomes a staple in later Victorian literature). In other literatures, this pretext usually gives us an orphaned protagonist, who is then often handed over to a lower-class surrogate and adopted into another family, but in Shelley's novel, the family

itself is a collection of orphans, who all have an ability to fill several roles. Before Caroline dies, she gives birth to three sons. Victor, much older than his brothers Ernest and William, comes first. And before these two are born, Caroline rescues from poverty Elizabeth Lavenza. She becomes Victor's sister and future bride, all-in-one, or, as Victor calls her, his *more-than-sister* (my italics). Henry Clerval also seemingly joins the family at this time. Victor says,

In th[e] description of our domestic circle I include Henry Clerval; for he was constantly with us. He went to school with me, and generally passed the afternoon at our house; for being an only child, and destitute of companions at home, his father was well pleased that he should find associates at our house; and we were never completely happy when Clerval was absent (Hindle 230-1).<sup>27</sup>

Victor's bonds with those children that the family "collects" are stronger than those with his blood-relations. We hear some of little William after he is murdered, and Ernest, who we learn later had become a soldier, is virtually non-existent in Victor's narration (and curiously the only member of the Frankenstein clan to survive, as if survival depends on one's exiting the plot.) After Caroline dies, just before Victor leaves for Ingolstadt, Elizabeth steps up and takes on the role of mother in the house. Soon after, she finds another girl to play daughter, Justine (who comes from circumstances much like Caroline's and Elizabeth's, and is regarded as Alphonse's new "favorite").

Where the Frankensteins are fashioned as a porous, polymorphous, and diminishing clan of mostly non-blood relations, the De Lacey's seem to be a group of blood relations in properly appointed roles "limited to marital and filial relations within a

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<sup>27</sup> Taken from the 1818 edition.

close-knit family” (Daffron 429).<sup>28</sup> But Shelley also attaches to the “amiable cottagers” (116) and their picture of familial bliss an important “other” story. Safie, the “sweet Arabian” (120) who joins the De Lacey family in Germany (and is often celebrated as the one strong, resourceful female in the text), plays a role with Felix in what appears to be a very Gothic romance. Safie’s mother, a Christian Arab who had been seized for her beauty and made a slave by the Turks, dies young. Safie’s father, a Turkish merchant named Mohometan (Gothic villain) moves with her to Paris. The De Lacey family, an affluent family, from which Felix is bred to serve his country and his sister Agatha as a lady of high distinction, live there at this time. Felix (brooding hero), outraged by injustices done by Mohometan, frees him from prison (gothic structure). Felix meets and falls in love with Safie (trembling heroine). Mohometan “allow[s] [their] intimacy to take place, and encourage[s] the hopes of the youthful lovers, while in his heart he ha[s] other plans” (127). Mohometan, not wanting his daughter to marry a Christian after he is free, betrays the De Lacey family.

The subplot of Safie and Felix, which satisfies the conditions of the typical Gothic plot far better than *Frankenstein*’s main one, complicates those readings of the De Lacey family that describe them solely as a proto-normative representation of burgeoning middle-class values. It appears they have their own hidden horrors, and although Shelley provides only a skeletal storyline for this romance (much in keeping with her minimalist approach to any conventional Gothic element in her text), she intertwines it with her rendering of the De Lacey family’s conventional cabin life. But even here, Shelley upsets Gothic conventions

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<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that even though the De Lacey family are aligned with contemporaneous discourses concerning the growing middle-class that they are in fact aristocrats who have fallen into lives of the peasantry – a common fictional plot device whereby the aristocracy are never seen as middle-class.



and reverses the structure. In the case of the De Laceys, we see their story's normative resolution first and hear the tale about Safie, the Bastille, and the deceit of Mohometan after. If tale and resolution were placed in the right sequence and elaborated upon, they could fill the pages of a classic Gothic novel.

I think it is also important for those critical conversations that focus on the De Lacey plot to see that it is not only a gesture Shelley makes toward the works of her predecessors, but also that she buries this supposed ideal representation of family deep in the novel's core, witnessed only by the monster. Thrice-removed from the "surface" of *Frankenstein*, we as readers learn about the De Laceys as part of the monster's tale, which is ventriloquized as part of Victor's tale, and then recorded again in letters that Walton writes to his sister. This process of telling and retelling creates an interlocking narrative frame built from the "autobiographies" of these three men, and each, as we will see, has his own set of dysfunctional desires. If we think in terms of the psychological models that are so often applied to the Gothic, with their examinations of exterior and interiors and unreasonable social-sexual desires trying to pass to the outside, it seems that *Frankenstein* then wears its interiority on the outside. And as we move more toward the novel's center, the narrative world-within-worlds, relations ostensibly become more rigid, more normative, and, oddly enough, because of the Safie and Felix's romance, even more conventionally Gothic.

Those wanting to discuss male doubles or transgressive male desires in *Frankenstein* look to the novel's narrators for reflective postures and problematic bonds. As I noted in section one, Haggerty sees the monster as a projection of Victor's inappropriate sodomitical desires, but he never addresses causality in his study. Why does

Victor build his monster? Is there something about him uncharacteristic of other men? Or, maybe this is Haggerty's point; all men have sodomitical desires, and the monster becomes a metaphor for them. It appears Haggerty argues that Victor's micro-practice of turning secrets into flesh serves as a means to illustrate a universal truth hidden in men and heteronormative macro-processes. Ultimately, Haggerty turns to proof external to the novel and finds in the early nineteenth-century reading public necessary evidence of homophobia from which he can make sense of the monster. But I argue for a different approach to explain Victor's desires that locates mechanisms internal to the novel to show why it is he builds his man. When we treat Henry as Victor's favorite, the monster, as the product of this union, becomes integral to the novel's plot bringing us closer to discovering what he means for the text, rather than what it means to write a text about a monster.

Henry's relationship with Victor flies under the radar for most literary critics, and in the few critical discussions that mention him, he is described as having the same attributes that I outline for the De Laceys above. On one hand, some scholars see him as representing "a perfect example of close friendship," (Daffron 424)<sup>29</sup> and on the other, some, because he writes "many a tale of enchantment and knightly adventure," characterize him as the most "Gothic" (read fanciful, irrational, and even feminine) boy

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<sup>29</sup> Daffron sees platonic sameness in Henry and Victor and a potentially sexualized sameness in Walton and Victor. He posits that Mary Shelley draws in her story a continuum for male desire that "moves in increasing degrees of sympathetic sameness from non-sexual to sexual male relations. In her version, the uneasy movement along this continuum towards more intense forms of intimacy and sexuality results in homophobia" (424). The idea of the continuum was first Percy's, according to Daffron. He uses Percy's writings to show where he "inadvertently creates a continuum of male-male sympathies through a number of discursive slippages" (423). There are two concerns I have with Daffron's reading. He never explains how it is that Percy's doctrines of male love become an integral part of Mary's story, and Percy's works from which he draws have publication dates the same or later than *Frankenstein's*.

in the text.<sup>30</sup> And like the De Laceys, his story is obscured by the narrative world-within-worlds. But where the De Laceys remain a nearly static, fixed representation thrice-removed from the novel's narrative surface, Henry's story remains just under it. Even though Victor recites the monster's story in a separate first-person account, which he says is a faithful recount of what the monster had said to him, he represents Henry only indirectly and rarely gives him any voice in those moments where he appears in the narrative.

As Victor's narration draws nearer to the events leading up to Henry's death, however, we do hear Henry's words spoken as if by Henry himself. When Victor reaches the point in his story where he has left Henry in Scotland so that he can go off and build the monster's mate, he ventriloquizes in direct discourse, much as he does when he tells the monster's story, the letters written him by a dejected Henry: "I had rather be with you, [ . . . ] in your solitary rambles, than with these Scotch people, whom I do not know; hasten, then, my dear friend, to return, that I may again feel myself somewhat at home, which I cannot do in your absence" (168). The fact that Victor gives Henry a voice here, shortly before he reaches the events of his death is striking. And we get only this one direct representation of the discourse of romantic friendship the young men shared. Nevertheless, Victor makes it known that, like the monster, a first-person account for Henry is imaginable. He tells Walton: "And you, my friend, would be far more amused with the journal of Clerval, who observed the scenery with an eye of feeling and delight, than in listening to my reflections" (159). But Henry's place as yet another "autobiographer" in *Frankenstein* is never realized.

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<sup>30</sup> Brown (149).

Victor never goes so far as to call Henry his *more-than-brother*, but there is room in the narration, well, actually room just outside the limits of its frame, for us to find ways of reading Victor's relationship with Henry as such. As I will show in the following two sections, Victor's love for Henry, a power that is both unspecified and uncontained in the limits of Victor's narration, is that which drives his story. Victor grows up with Henry, and when Victor leaves Geneva for Ingolstadt, Henry wants to travel with him, but Henry's father forbids it. Victor goes alone and builds another male companion while at school, but because of his hideousness, Victor rejects him. In retribution, the creature kills Victor's first beloved, Henry. Victor ultimately dies of grief. In other words, the story goes something like this: Victor loves boy. Victor is separated from boy. Victor builds alternate boy. Alternate boy kills first boy. Victor dies.

### **Folk-Wisdom Bonds**

Victor begins his life story with images of an idyllic childhood—"all seemed but one train of enjoyment to me" (35)—where his adoptive "pretty present" sister Elizabeth and boyhood friend Henry are always by his side. These early affections Victor feels for his surrogate siblings are durable over all other events in his tale: the death of his mother, his schooling in Ingolstadt, his creation of a man, the murders of William, Justine, and Henry, the death of his father, his marriage to and the murder of Elizabeth, and his rescue by Walton, and on his death bed his final utterances recall none but those bonds he shared with his childhood friends: "Can any man be to me as Clerval was, or any woman another Elizabeth? [. . .] [T]he companions of our childhood always possess a certain power over our minds which hardly any later friend can obtain. They know our infantine dispositions,

which, however they may be afterwards modified, are never eradicated” (215). But because critics come to *Frankenstein* looking for doubled, two-sided, or two-gendered relations, they miss or misread the implications of the power that these two relations have over Victor’s mind, a power strong enough that it fuses lasting bonds. And in elliptical fashion, after all the events of his adult life, Victor ends with memories of where he began.

The stories Victor, Henry, and Elizabeth read as children play a key role in how we are to interpret these bonds and identify with them as readers. I discuss in Chapter Three how Jack Sheppard and Thames Darrell in William Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* read criminal biographies and chivalrous romances respectively, which forecasts who they will become as adults. Similarly in *Frankenstein* the literary genre each child reads is meant to typify his or her character. Focused on two-gender readings, feminist scholars use Victor and Elizabeth’s genres of choice to develop a binary configuration of desire for them. Elizabeth is only said to enjoy “aerial creations of the poets” and finds like experiences in the “sublime shape of mountains; the changes of the seasons; tempest and calm; the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of [ . . . ] Alpine summers” near her home (38). Victor, who describes himself as being of a “more intense application” and “smitten with a thirst for knowledge” (38), reads a corpus of ancient scientific inquiries that include the works of Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), an astrologist, alchemist, and occult philosopher who advocated the use of dream talismans and wrote an essay on the superiority of women over men; Albertus Magnus (1206-1280), a friar and Christian mystic who advocated the peaceful coexistence of astrology and religion; and Paracelsus (1493-1541), an alchemist and physician who was one of the first to employ minerals and

chemicals in medicinal practices. Victor admits that the “diversity and contrast that subsisted in [his and Elizabeth’s] characters [evident from what they read] drew [them] nearer together” (39). In sum, she studied the “magnificent appearances of things” and he “delight[s] in investigating their causes” (38), and so examinations of their bonds tend to fall under “opposites attract,” “lock and key” or “slave and master” headings. But the binary configuration used to describe desires for Victor and his female friend become complicated by a third element when we continue to use literary choices as means to outline the children’s desires and calculate Henry’s presence as part of the equation (rarely done in these “heterosexual” readings of the novel).

*Frankenstein* begins with Girard’s triangle, but quickly sidelines the female, and Victor and Henry, rather than compete with each other, share common ground. The boys possess fantastic ambitions, and they create unreal worlds where together they can explore the illimitability of their desires, or in Victor’s words, seek “boundless grandeur” (48). Henry (like Thames) is “deeply read” (39) in books of chivalry and romance, and he even composes similar stories, plays, and heroic songs. His tastes for literature change between Shelley’s 1818 and 1831 editions. In the earlier one, he studies literary adventurers like Orlando, Robin Hood, Amadis, and St George (Hindle 230-1); in the later one he reads of the goodly men who defeated Charlemagne at Roncesvalles (c. 778), the legendary knights of King Arthur’s Round Table, and the “chivalrous train who shed their blood to redeem the holy sepulcher from the hands of the infidels” (39).<sup>31</sup> Victor

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<sup>31</sup> Victor’s young monster will read another set of works, described as a Romantic *cyclopedia universalis* (Peter Brook’s “‘Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts’: Language, Nature, and Monstrosity,” *The Endurance of Frankenstein*, eds. Levine and Knoepfelmacher): Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667), a story of an “omnipotent God warring with his creatures” that the monster reads as a “true history” (132); Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* (first translated into English in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), biographies of Greek and Roman heroes that, for him, illuminates the structures of laws and natures of societies;

says that Henry “occupied himself, so to speak, with the moral relations of things. The busy stage of life, the virtues of heroes, and the actions of men were his theme; and his hope and his dream was to become one among those whose names are recorded in history, as the gallant and adventurous benefactors of our species” (39). Through their studies, both boys want to be remembered for acts of creation that will guarantee their own immortalities, once young men they attempt to materialize these desires in an adult, “real” world. Victor looks to create a “[a] new species [that] would bless [him] as its creator” (55), and Henry pursues “negotiation[s] [he] had entered into for his Indian enterprise” (174). But as children their ambitions and imaginative commonalities place them in the worlds of the Middle Ages (medieval alchemy and medieval romance), and I believe that Shelley meant for her young heroes to be seen as alike in this way – near equals, and Elizabeth not as a complement for any one boy, but the balancing agent between the two. Victor tells Walton how Elizabeth had worked to steady the over-reaching ambitions of the two boys, which figuratively, completes the erotic triangle: “I might have become [. . .] rough through the ardour of my nature, but that she was there to subdue me to semblance of her own gentleness. And Clerval [, H]e might not have been so perfectly humane [. . .] amidst his passion for adventurous exploit, had she not unfolded to him the real loveliness of beneficence” (40). Elizabeth’s “calmer and more concentrated disposition” (38) tempers the ambitions of her two young friends, and through her the boys adopt the logic of the folk-wisdom bond.

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and Goethe’s *Sorrows of Werther* (1779), which possesses images of “domestic manners” and “lofty sentiments” and “disquisitions on death and suicide” (131).

Though he is still a key actor in Victor's childhood drama in the 1831 edition, the extent of Henry's role in it seems much less significant. In the 1818 edition Victor tells us,

“My brothers were considerably younger than myself; but I had a friend in one of my schoolfellows, who compensated for this deficiency. Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva, an intimate friend of my father. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. I remember, when he was nine years old, he wrote a fairy tale, which was the delight and amazement of all his companions. His favourite study consisted in books of chivalry and romance; and when very young, I can remember, that we used to act plays composed by him out of these favourite books [.]” (Hindle 230-231)

All Shelley tells in the later edition is that “Henry *tried* (my emphasis) to make [Victor and Elizabeth] act out plays and enter in masquerades” (39). It appears that most of the changes she makes to the text in 1831 are connected to Victor's childhood and his relationships with both his more-than-sister Elizabeth and his favorite boyhood friend, Henry. In the earlier edition, Victor's Elizabeth is his first cousin. But in the later edition, Victor and his mother instead bring her home after visiting the poor. It is likely this change between editions reflects changes in circulation and readership. In the previous decades, stories about marrying cousins had been the norm in the available genres, but now, as middle-class values begin to dominate the public consciousness, readers might see incest in this type of arrangement. I think it is also important to note that she diminishes Henry's role in Victor's childhood as well. She removes how Henry was “like family” for Victor and softens the apparent effect he had over Victor in their youths. But why change the seemingly symbiotic union of the two boys? Why show resistance from Victor? Are different types of potentially problematic desires being regulated here? If Shelley is “taming down” what could be construed as incest because of changes in public consciousness, is it possible that she is taming down intimacies of male friendships for



the same reason? Gothic scholars agree that these novels reflect conflicts during the cultural reappraisal of aristocratic and middle-class values, especially in terms of gender and sexuality. Even though Shelley reversed the expected masculine qualities of the young Victor and Henry in that the former may be a maturing boy of forward-thinking sciences and the latter a boy steeped in history and courtly manners, she still may have been responding to the growing “homophobia” of the middle class, especially in this case, where aristocratic Victor represents (often perceived as inappropriate) desires of the landed, fraternal old guard and Henry, son of a merchant, those of the new. If the Frankenstein's are in reality meant to be a normative representation of family and its reproductions, Shelley's “policing” of this instance between editions most likely reflects a priority given to middle-class values. Shelley also, in the later edition, makes Victor's parents more prominent figures in his early years.

Heterosexual culture, according to Sedgwick, “adjusts” abnormal male bonds that are too persistent. There are several instances where men in Victor's childhood attempt to intervene in what he and Henry share. These moments wrench Victor backward and forward between his bonds with Henry and the rational world of modern knowledge. But most of these men's reproaches only serve to strengthen Victor's ties to his childhood imaginary world and heighten his ambition. The writings of men like Agrippa produced a “new light” that “dawned upon [his] mind,” but when Victor tells his father of this illumination, he responds to his son's odd reading matter by calling such works “sad trash” (40). When Victor reflects on this event, he insists that if his father's interference had been more pointed, his ties to fantastic worlds of the past, those that he shares with Henry, would not have led to his ruin. Later, another man of “great research in natural

philosophy” (43), and more qualified than his father in such matters, makes a stronger intervention into Victor’s alchemist fantasies. He visits the Frankenstein estate where he sees a tree struck by lightning, and enthralled with the event explains to Victor the theories of electricity and galvanism, all of which throws “greatly into the shade [. . .] the lords of [Victor’s] imagination” (43). Victor vows to give up his childish pursuits in exchange for those of modern, empirical knowledge. But under Henry’s spell again, in their imaginative world, he exchanges those sciences built on solid modern foundations for the fantasies of ancient beliefs, evident in the fact that he enters school in Ingolstadt with his mind filled once again with “chimeras of boundless grandeur” (48).

Victor’s imagination, fed on a distinctive mix of alchemy and chivalry, continues in Ingolstadt, even though he must separate from Henry, his necromancer. He at first has an “invincible repugnance to new countenances” (46), but here in the world of university life Victor seems to develop a budding attraction for the male form, ultimately shaping his education. He says that the first professor he meets, M. Krempe, was “a little squat man, with a gruff voice and a repulsive countenance; the teacher, therefore, did not prepossess me in favor of his pursuits” (47). And Krempe, calling the thousand-year-old imaginative worlds that Victor shared with Henry “deserts lands” (47), mocks Victor’s childhood ambitions. But, on the other hand, M. Waldman, who Victor later meets, was, according to him, “very unlike his colleague” (48). Entranced by his benevolent demeanor and “remarkably erect” stature, which was crowned with a “few grey hairs [that] covered his temples” (48), Victor deems his voice the “sweetest” (48) he has ever heard. He compares it to an instrument whose notes “formed the mechanism of [his] being” (49). It seems fitting that through his relationship with M. Waldman Victor

becomes enamored with the workings of the human frame, or, as he calls it, the “seat of beauty and strength” (52). Enough so that, when his education is complete, he does not return home to marry Elizabeth but chases after newer pursuits where charnel houses become his schoolrooms.

Through a series of dream (or dream-like) and waking states, the streets of Ingolstadt become a new location for the heterosocial triangle found in Victor’s childhood, but the form transmogrifies here. The inventive worlds that Victor visited as a boy are reinvented in these fantastic houses of death and decomposition. Instead of possessing an imagination fueled by the union of two minds here, however, like that he shared with Henry, Victor dreams alone; and his imagination turns to obsession: “I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination. I wished, as it were, to procrastinate all that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed” (56). Life becoming death and death becoming life, or more aptly put, beauty’s transformation to ugliness and ugliness’ transformation to beauty, become his fixation. As he methodically pieces together his creation, he models it as male. Even though Victor sees to it that his new companion’s “limbs [are] in proportion” and features “beautiful”<sup>32</sup> (58), in reality he is hideous. We know this is not simply Victor’s subjective response to what he has done after the fact because, as the monster tells Victor, everyone who encounters him sees his ugliness too. Ironically, years later when he sees the dead body of his beloved Henry, he imagines that his form, “so divinely wrought, and beaming with beauty,” transforms back to “decay” (162).

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<sup>32</sup> According to Hindle’s appendix, Shelley had originally called the features *handsome*. It was Percy who changed them to beautiful, and Shelley left the adjective as it was in her later edition (233).

Victor, seemingly enchanted during his creative process, sees something different from what lies on his worktable in front of him; he confesses to desiring life for his beautiful creation “with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart” (59). Victor sees his new “friend,” a pieced-together facsimile of a man, in a true light once he animates him. He was so convinced by his fantasy of transforming ugliness to beauty that when the monster, once animated, *is* ugly, he rejects him and flees in disgust. His so-called dream evaporates into the reality of what he has done.

Because there seems to be more going on here than repulsion for the hideousness of the monster, Victor’s reaction has generated numerous and varied interpretations, and his second dream (I call it a second dream because it comes on the heels of Victor’s first “dream-like” state prior to the monster’s animation), usually plays a key role in these readings, especially in psychoanalytic interpretations interested in explicating the intricacies of the novel’s “family romance.” Victor’s insomnia finally gives way to sleep, and he dreams:

I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms[.] [ . . . ] I started from my sleep with horror [ . . . ] [and] beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. (59)

Frequently scholars focus on the bond Victor has first with his more-than-sister Elizabeth (a seemingly appropriate object choice) and second with his dead mother (an incestuous object choice), who replaces Elizabeth in his arms. Victor desires his mother, and yet resists this desire (even though his father had performed ineffectually in his Oedipal role),

he essentially “kills” her (again) by usurping her power of creation when he produces a “child” of his own.<sup>33</sup>

But when we consider certain elements of this dream in conjunction with the homosocial logic of the novel, it takes on fresh meaning, not only for the dream itself but more importantly for the “waking” part of the story that directly follows. Victor says that he sees Elizabeth, geographically transported, “walking in the streets of Ingolstadt.” He awakens, comes face-to-face with his creation (again), and flees his apartment:

I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life. (59)

The next morning, worried that the monster may be loose in the city, he searches the same streets he saw in his dream. He says,

I paused, I knew not why; but I remained some minutes with my eyes fixed on a coach that was coming towards me from the other end of the street. As it drew nearer I observed that it was the Swiss diligence; it stopped just where I was standing, and on the door being opened, I perceived Henry Clerval, who, on seeing me, instantly sprung out. (60)

Victor first dreams that he builds a beautiful man. This fantasy ends when Victor sees, for the first time, the real-world hideousness of the creature he has constructed. Then Victor dreams (again) and sees Elizabeth in the streets of Ingolstadt. When he wakes, it is not Elizabeth but Henry who alights from a carriage stopped exactly where Victor stands. Three things are important to note related to this sequence. First, Elizabeth is the one in the streets of Ingolstadt (she exists here bodily in Victor’s dream and vocally in the letters

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<sup>33</sup> See Jacobus (116-8).

she writes), but it is actually Henry who stands there now. The dream becomes the agent by which Elizabeth surfaces in Ingolstadt, only then to be replaced by pictures of Henry. Second, there is a force at work on Victor here which binds him to Henry that remains a mystery to him; even as he retells his story to Walton, he says that he paused but “knew not why,” and the story becomes not one of Victor’s devotion to Elizabeth but instead one of his undying love for Henry. And third, following the arrival of Henry, Victor takes to his sick bed: “I dreaded to behold this monster, but I feared still more that Henry should see him” (61). He is certainly distraught after he rejects his hideous creation, but he falls ill only after Henry arrives. Having Henry and the monster in such close proximity of each other is more than he can bear. Victor seems to fear most that his two “friends” might meet.

### **The All- Male Triangle**

As I discussed in the first section of this chapter, queer scholars believe that early nineteenth-century cultural anxieties attached to the homosexual and his emergence as a social species gave birth to *Frankenstein’s* monster. Such an interpretation is plausible when we consider Shelley’s tale in light of events such as the Vere Street scandal, but I believe that it is also possible, especially when we keep to reasons internal to the novel, to see Victor’s secret creation as the product of and end to his love for Henry. Adult men in *Frankenstein*, such as Victor’s father and the professors at Ingolstadt, never seem able to intervene effectively in the bonds the boys share. Victor fails to understand the heterosexual mandate for adolescent males, and therefore does not give up his boyhood friend. The outcome is catastrophic for him. The monster’s acts of revenge on his creator serve as another set of intercessions, which temporarily break Victor’s bonds with Henry

and steer him toward the heterosexual life of marriage with the waiting Elizabeth. It is not until the monster kills Henry that Victor finally marries her. He does so only after destroying the female monster and bringing to an end the monster's own desires for a heterosexual union. Initially the monster is more "normal" than Victor, but after he kills Victor's bride, he is forever bonded to Victor. The surviving intimate relation in the Arctic is a male-male relation, though far different from the one Victor shared with Henry.

When we look to Victor and Henry, their *all-male* household, complete with its own romances and secrets, becomes another domicile that should be seen as central if not key to Shelley's tale. All-male households are central features in the novels in my study. Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* shows us domestic bliss in the bedrooms Paul Clifford, Augustus Tomlinson, and Long Ned share tucked away above a hairdresser's shop in Bath. In Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Fagin and his stable of young male pickpockets are among the best known images of the all-male domicile. These alternate familial structures, whether fraternal, as in the case for Paul and his friends, or patriarchal, like Fagin and his boys, are networks of males who typically share secret identities and secret occupations. For example, the men in *Paul Clifford* dress and act as aristocrats in order to rob "fellow" nobles on the highway and hunt their daughters' fortunes through marriage. Victor and Henry, albeit not a den of commerce-driven imposters like those in these other novels, set up household in Ingolstadt, where too they possess their own collection of concealments and secrets.

In fact, one of the most selfless and compassionate representations of domestic affection takes place in Victor and Henry's apartment after the monster flees and Victor

falls ill. Elizabeth writes in letters to them that she can only imagine that Victor's care has "devolved on some mercenary old nurse" when it should be her, the one who can guess his wishes and "minister to them with [. . .] care and affection" (65). But to the contrary it is Henry whose care and affection Victor receives, and, according to him, "nothing but the unbounded and unremitting attentions of [his] friend could have restored [him] to life" (62-63). Rivalled only by the selflessness we see in Victor's mother Caroline, who insists on caring personally for the young and ill Elizabeth (whereby she saves the girl but dies herself), Henry plays nurse and attentive companion to the hysterical Victor. Caroline, in her dying words, had told Victor and Elizabeth that her "firmest hopes of future happiness were placed on the prospect of [their] union" (44), but in its place, because of Henry's seemingly unprompted arrival in Ingolstadt, and Victor's consequent acute hysterics, we have instead a union between Victor and Henry. Henry, alone with Victor, and concerned for the feelings of the Frankenstein family, conceals from them the extent of Victor's illness and the nature of his own role at the apartment. Henry, in order to manage Victor's sickroom, gives up his opportunity to study at the university. And when Victor is finally well enough, he further delays his return to Geneva because of an unwillingness to leave Clerval in a strange place. Victor abandons his study of the sciences and becomes a fellow pupil with his friend; together they study the "works of the Orientalists" (70). Winter comes and goes, and the following spring Henry suggests they take a walking tour in the environs of Ingolstadt.

Two secrets become central to the life that Victor and Henry share. The great lengths to which the young men go to conceal the role Henry plays in Victor's life encompasses the first. The second occurs between Victor and Henry. Victor says,



“[Henry] never attempted to draw my secret from me; and although I loved him with a mixture of affection and reverence that knew no bounds, yet I could never persuade myself to confide in him that event which was so often present to my recollection” (69). Victor and Henry visit Victor’s professors, who laud him for his many accomplishments at the university, but Henry can sense, when others cannot, that these praises torment Victor. Victor and Henry, as children, had created make-believe worlds where they fantasized together about such scenes of admiration, but here, when fantasy becomes reality, the consequences change. And even though Henry can see that Victor’s anguish hides a frightful truth, he never asks to hear it. It is important to note that Victor speaks of the illimitable nature of their friendship in the same breath that he describes the monster as his secret. The “unbounded” bonds the boys share, those formative links from childhood, which Victor touches upon many times in the narration of his adult life, and which are such a necessary component for the logic of Shelley’s novel, become once again resistant to obligatory heterosexuality. But the boundlessness of unchecked male-male desire, now that the boys are grown, and Victor possesses his guilty secret, has its limit.

My goal in this examination of how the fearful bonds between Victor, Henry, and the monster shapes *Frankenstein*’s plot is not one meant to demystify the love between Victor and Henry. Victor has a secret, and Henry seems bound to him through it. If the monster is an incarnation for something literal between Victor and Henry, whatever this may be, Shelley never *literalizes* it in the text. We can find locations for their love, study how it manifests itself differently in Victor and Henry’s adult lives, and see how it interrupts and even derails the romance genre’s heterosexual imperative, but the best we

can do when trying to disambiguate it is to look comparatively at other scenes of male experience in Shelley's novel and discover what Victor and Henry's love is *not* rather than endeavor to describe exactly what it is.

Shelley is well versed in the contemporary languages of male pleasure, as they relate to both sympathetic and sublime experiences, which she invokes and then immediately undermines in her text. Men speak in terms of sympathy, but there are no scenes of sympathetic union in *Frankenstein*. In its opening pages, Walton writes his sister Margaret: "I desire the company of a man who could *sympathize* (my emphasis) with me; whose eyes could reply to mine" (19), and this lonely male figure's desires for a friend reach near desperate proportions. In a bit of irony, his isolation is set against the backdrop of an all-male population of sailors. But whatever cross-class relations Walton may have with these men are not part of Shelley's story. Surrounded by men, he is an elite male who seeks his reflection in other elite men. Walton, desperate for a male friend "who would sympathize and love" him while in the Arctic, finds Victor floating on an ice cap. Once Victor is brought aboard, Walton has the opportunity to find the seemingly symbiotic union he craves, but Shelley puts before him a man incapable of such affection. Victor, who agrees that we are "unfashioned creatures, but half made up" (31) has nothing to give. To Walton's advances, Victor can only thank him for his sympathy and tell him that it is useless. Though scholars typically find the greatest potential for any male erotics in the exchanges between these two men, the asymmetry of their feelings makes it difficult to see their desires as mutually sympathetic or even sustainable. Shelley's novel opens with a dysfunctional union between two Romantic men, and sympathy, so to speak, goes nowhere.

Although Shelley uses *sublime* to describe many objects in *Frankenstein*, the novel includes only one scene of the standardized sublime experience, which ultimately falls a little flat. Transcendent imagination, as it was understood by the Romantics, described a man's relationship to the exterior world. According to its doctrines, the imagination "recasts the objects of the exterior world into a new and more profoundly 'true' reality, giving materials with which it chooses to work a unity and meaning which they do not possess in their original form" (qtd. in Williams 10).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the experience takes place in isolation: another person in the scene dampens the experience. Shelley employs this standard representation of the sublime once Victor returns to Geneva, following the death of William, when he travels alone in the mountains near Chamounix. The "sublime and magnificent scenes" [. . .] "elevated [him] from all littleness of feeling"; he experiences "a tingling long-lost sense of pleasure" (98-9). And he even goes so far as to say that he is only able to achieve this "sublime ecstasy" because he is alone, as the "presence of another would destroy the solitary grandeur of the scene" (100). But the monster's approach, and his first meeting with Victor, thwarts the experience. This is the only time in Shelley's story that we see Victor alone in nature, and it seems fitting that the monster's silhouette spoils his experience. Victor, in Geneva and away from Henry, looks to recapture the effect nature had on him as a child. But Victor's imagination, *sans* Henry, forever turns to obsessive ambition, and the monster steps in as a reminder of the outcomes of life lived without his boyhood friend. Instead of sympathetic or sublime experiences, Victor's love for Henry and hatred for his creation confines him to an all-male triangle that comprises the narrative bulk of *Frankenstein*.

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<sup>34</sup> Anne Williams is quoting from Robert D. Humes 1969 essay "Gothic versus Romantic: A Re-evaluation of the Gothic" (PMLA 84 (1969): 282-290). Hume is referring specifically to Coleridge's poetry.

Movements between fiend and friend create an underlying organization for the novel different from the evident, interlocking “autobiographical” and outer arrangement dependent on the voices of Walton, Victor, and the fiend. The all-male triangle consists of a series of stark contrasts in settings that denote Victor’s emotional state as he moves between Henry and the monster.

The forces that fuel the triangle become most evident when Victor recalls the events leading to Henry’s death, which is the only occasion in his narration that causes an interruption in its sequential retelling. We as readers learn of others’ deaths when they happen in Victor’s “didactic” retelling of his life to Walton as mere plot points (as Victor says, there is no reason to dwell on emotions others feel), but in the case of Henry, because of his overwhelming grief, Victor breaks his narration and we learn of Henry’s death long before Victor reaches the incident. When he recalls the actions around his mother’s death, he intentionally foregoes any break in his narration to reflect on his grief. He tells Walton: “Yet from whom has not that rude hand rent away some dear connexion? and why should I describe a sorrow which all have felt, and must feel?” (45). But when he reaches those events that led to the death of Henry, a “being formed in the ‘very poetry of nature’” (161), he cannot continue. It requires all his “fortitude to recall the memory of the frightful events” (178). When he does carry on, he opens with an elegiac expression of grief for Henry and laments the loss of the imaginative bond the two shared as children:

Beloved friend! Even now it delights me to record your words. [. . .] [H]is friendship was of that devoted and wondrous nature that the world-minded teach us to look for only in the imagination. [. . .] Has this mind, so replete with ideas, imaginations fanciful and magnificent, which formed a world, whose existence depended on the life of its creator, – has this mind perished? Does it now only exist in my memory? (161-2)

In this anomalous moment, we also learn of those desires that lie in regions beyond narrative limits, ones that will remain mysterious throughout his story. Not only does Victor point up the other-worldliness of their bond, but he also illustrates how the imaginative world that Henry created, “fanciful and magnificent,” was part of his mind too. But he never goes so far as to detail these images or characterize what it is that he and his friend shared there.

What lies outside of *Frankenstein*'s narrative frame has always been as important as what keeps inside it. Because the monster only says he'll build a pyre and lie upon it, speculations as to the meaning of his likely escape in the end have become regular parts of *Frankenstein* criticism. Beth Newman instead turns our attention toward Margaret, to whom Walton addresses his letters in the novel's opening: “Unlike the narrative he transcribes, Walton's letters to his sister are addressed to someone absent from the narrative situation, someone removed in time and place” (144). We can see how Victor and Henry's make-believe locales become a third aspect of the novel that exists outside its frame. Shelley develops a divergent paradigm for inexplicable male desires. Boundlessness, as Victor describes it earlier, opens possibilities for feelings and actions inexplicable in his narration; Henry and Victor's shared imagination creates a setting where differing desires can reside. Their co-mingling of minds shades their excursions when they are grown, and those so-called travel episodes become stand-ins for their “off-stage” desires. When Henry dies, that world remains only half-formed in Victor. Shelley, in essence, treats their love spatially, or extra-spatially, by constructing an imaginative

and hidden world in the minds of the boys, a locale referenced and yet beyond the narrative's descriptive reach.

Despite the fact their love remains unspecified, it has a very particular structural function in *Frankenstein*. Victor moves between being a composed, social character with Henry and a troubled, isolated character without him. During his long residence alone in Ingolstadt, Victor's imagination becomes obsessive and ultimately destructive to all around him: "a selfish pursuit [. . .] cramped and narrowed" (71). These changes in Victor are first apparent in his appreciation for the natural world: "[M]y eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. [. . .] I could not tear my thoughts from my employment, loathsome in itself, but which had taken an irresistible hold of my imagination" (56-7). But when he is with Henry in Ingolstadt, following the successful achievement of his ambition, he says: "I remember the first time I became capable of observing outward objects with any kind of pleasure, I perceived that the fallen leaves had disappeared and that the young buds were shooting forth from the trees[.]" (63). When united with Henry, able to share again in their imaginative world, Victor paradoxically becomes whole again. Henry "elevates" Victor's mind until "it [is] on a level with [his] own" (71). Henry's love makes possible Victor's return to health and his ability to interact with the outside world; moreover, the imagination they share rescues him from the tormenting obsessions of his scientific work. It becomes a corrective to the effect that the monster has on Victor. It is Henry and his green vistas that carry Victor to new heights in health and happiness.

Victor's movement between friend and fiend and their respective environments takes place at four key moments in the text. First, when Victor rejects the

fiend in Ingolstadt, Henry appears there. Second, after Victor and Henry “ramble” the German countryside, Victor returns alone to Geneva when he learns William has been murdered. He finds and speaks with the fiend, who asks that Victor build him a companion. Third, Henry joins Victor again and they travel together so that Victor can regain the knowledge he needs to construct the fiend’s mate (another secret he keeps from Henry). Fourth, and after he is able to fulfill his promise, Victor again leaves Henry and travels to Ireland to complete the task. The fiend appears there to collect his mate but Victor destroys the female before he completes her. The monster murders Henry in retribution for Victor’s betrayal (though it is Elizabeth’s life he actually threatens in retribution).

Each of the key movements includes Victor, Henry, or the fiend, but never all three together. Shelley dedicates a great deal of Victor’s narration to descriptions of the vistas shared with Henry; enough so that the travel log-like interludes can seem unnecessary to and distracting from the novel’s plot. But we need to see that Henry is almost always present in these descriptions, and when we think of the novel in terms of Victor’s attachment to Henry and his unwillingness to let go of him, these seemingly distracting interludes take on a different force. Unlike the erotic triangles found in the novels that Sedgwick describes as heteronormative, where male characters’ desires for each other are mediated through a subordinated female, Victor struggles between two male figures, each of which symbolizes extremes of his adult-life experience, dividing the novel between friend and fiend:

friend

boundlessness  
beauty  
attraction  
recuperation and increase  
homoerotics

fiend

limits  
ugliness  
repulsion  
degeneration and death  
heterosociality

The repeated interventions of the monster drag Victor back down. It is striking how the terrain is always deficient when Victor and the monster converse. Forsaken woods and dreary glaciers are refuges for the guilty Victor and the monster. The scene in the Orkneys, where Victor works to build a companion, is also much like those with which the monster has become associated; “hardly more than a rock” (168). Henry becomes tied to redemptive vistas while the monster is tied to terrifying, barren wastelands (on the fringes of these beautiful landscapes).

Victor, another male hero who picks the boy instead of the girl, becomes, in his own right, a monster a loose. I mentioned earlier how in *Jack Sheppard* that it is not until after Jack is hanged that the story can find its way back to a conventional romance. In *Frankenstein*, death also seems to be the event needed to force the story back to one of marriage. Victor spends two lengthy periods of his young adult life with his friend Henry, and each is brought to an end by the death of a family member or a friend. That is to say, the choice for our young protagonist in *Frankenstein* is *marriage* or *murder*. William’s assassination cuts short Victor and Henry’s time together in Ingolstadt and breaks up their domicile. Once back in Geneva, Victor agrees to build the monster a companion, while at the same time his father puts pressure on him to marry Elizabeth. In a sense, the monster’s desire for a mate works to complete Victor’s original procreative plan for a



“new species,” one that he was not able to fully imagine when he dreamed of animating his creation, and who now, according to Victor, would be a father to a “race of devils” (170). Hence, not only does the obligatory heterosociality of Victor’s youth reassert itself, but his marriage gains its own double in the monster’s attempt at union with another. The monster demands a heterosexual union while Victor runs from it. Victor’s thought of his own union with Elizabeth is one of “horror and dismay” because he believes that he must first complete his promise and let the monster escape with a mate before he can “enjoy the delight of a union from which [he] expects peace” (157). Victor’s refuge in the heterosexual world, where he imagines a union not because of love for Elizabeth but as an alternative to the agonies of the extremes of male desire, becomes dependant on his monster finding a mate first. But Victor’s anxieties around marriage and procreation are too great, and as a result, he chooses to retreat into the freedoms of his shared imagination with Henry and buys time once again in travels with him. He tells his father that he must visit England before he marries Elizabeth and leaves home a second time.

Again, with scientific work filling his head, scenes of nature hold no sway over Victor: “Filled with dreary imaginations, I passed through many beautiful and majestic scenes, but my eyes were fixed and unobserving. [. . .] I waited [. . .] for Clerval” (Shelley 159). Henry, who contrastingly is “alive to every new scene” (159) works his imaginative magic on Victor. As they meander down the Rhine River, they admire the passing “willowy islands” and “beautiful towns” (160). And the further down the river they go, the more picturesque the scenes become for them. They see “many ruined castles standing on the edges of precipices, surrounded by black woods, high and inaccessible”

(160). Victor, changed, says, “I lay at the bottom of the boat, and as I gazed on the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquillity to which I had long been a stranger” (160). The specter of William and the threat to others seem forgotten. Some five months pass and Victor’s tranquil delirium finally comes to an end when he revisits his promises to build a mate for the fiend and marry Elizabeth. But because Victor vows to see the monster in a union before he will marry Elizabeth, the destruction of the female monster means that he may again wait to marry. Fittingly, because of Victor’s destruction of the fiend’s companion, the monster vows “to be with [Victor] on [his] wedding-night,” and then [ . . . ] “[murders] Clerval immediately after the enunciation of his threat” (193). Because Victor continually sidelines his relationship with Elizabeth as he moves back and forth between Henry and the fiend, it is the tension that builds between these three that is broken by Henry’s death. It serves as a resolution to the homosocial plot in *Frankenstein*. After months of hysterical grief, Victor resolves that if his “immediate union” with Elizabeth can lift the spirits of either her or his father, he will marry; the story heads toward its ostensibly heterosexual and normalizing end. But Victor’s compassion for Elizabeth dwindles in comparison to that he felt for Henry.

Deterioration and death plague those poised to bring forth the next generation. Victor had rejected the fiend in Ingolstadt for his hideousness; in Ireland he rejects the fiend a second time because he can imagine the hideousness of the fiend’s union to another. Victor sees in them an ugly, and even “savage,” heterosexuality unleashed on the world. He destroys the monster’s mate when he imagines the potential propagation of malignant creatures from a (most likely loveless) union between the two (at least to Victor’s mind, which means he can build them to be sexually reproductive). Ironically,

Victor and his companion Elizabeth begin to look the part of what he thought he was destroying:

The sweet girl [Elizabeth] welcomed me with warm affection, yet tears were in her eyes as she beheld my emaciated frame and feverish cheeks. I saw a change in her also. She was thinner and had lost much of that heavenly vivacity that had before charmed me; but her gentleness and soft looks of compassion made her a more fit companion for one blasted and miserable as I was. (194)

Formerly described as “handsome,” both become ugly from worry and responsibility. They transform and become what he feared the fiend and his mate would become – a monstrous pair brought together by circumstance and not necessarily desire. In the end we have a plotline where same-sex love is impossible and heterosexuality is desire-less and seemingly hideous.

Victor’s chase of the monster through the Arctic becomes Sedgwick’s best representation of the homophobic thematic at work in paranoid gothic fiction. Her model only recognizes amorous or murderous bonds in men. She says “in novel after novel, it is presented through the single, repeated image of the reversible male chase, culminating in various versions of anal rape of one man by the other” (*Coherence x*). And, accordingly, for her this single and central image of male threat “became accepted as the primal image of human nature” (x).<sup>35</sup> What goes missing in her mapping of the exemplary male desire in Shelley’s novel is how Henry and Victor’s love for his boyhood friend structures the greatest part of it. A closer examination of how Shelley treats amorous male bonds reveals that her subject matter is not actually a dyad but a triangle. Whereas Mary Shelley utilizes the all-male triangle in *Frankenstein* as a disabling form structuring her tale of the

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<sup>35</sup> In this description, Sedgwick is referring specifically to later Dickens novels that use this same Gothic motif.

tragic consequences for men who love too deeply, *Life in London* instead foregrounds it as a celebrated social arrangement: a public display of homosociality at its most enabling.

## Chapter Two

### Picturing Friends in Pierce Egan's *Life in London*

Corinthian Tom in Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1820-21) has access to aristocratic worlds that most readers could not possibly know. And his friend Bob Logic, who usually shuns the elite locales, has, on the other hand, knowledge of the lowest haunts in the city. Tom says of Logic: "You will not only find in him a complete map of the Metropolis, as to particular points and situations; but likewise a pocket-dictionary respecting many of the living characters it contains" (147). Both young men are streetwise, each in his own way, and it is through their combined mobility that Tom's cousin, Jerry Hawthorne, along with readers, gains entry to all of London. Their adventures are couched in terms of giving the country naïf, Jerry, an education in city life, and the knowledge Tom and Logic display in their rambles and sprees underwrites the all-access pass Egan's text alleges to give readers. Egan's texts fall into that same *realist* category, where authors were interested in realism of setting and not realism of character, and these men become the agents of authority on which this book's claim to realism relies.

Acting together as Jerry's instructors in the art of bachelorhood, the two urban sophisticates dress the boy up and take him around, exposing him to London's urban typography, its social typology, and its spoken vernaculars. As promised, the installments

open windows into the most prestigious of establishments, as well as the lowliest. The men visit Carleton Palace, view an exhibit at the Royal Academy, stop by the Royal Exchange, and look in at Newgate Prison. For sport they visit champion boxer Thomas Cribb at Cribb's Parlour, fence in the Rooms in St. James, practice self-defense with Mr. Jackson in Bond Street, or get into a street fight. When they gamble, they play Whist with other gentlemen, place bets on Jacco Maccacco the fighting monkey, and wager at the Royal Cockpit. Their nighttime sprees take them to the Masquerade, the Drury Lane Theatre, the Grand Carnival, and the black-slums of London, where they eventually land in All-Max, and other gins shops or "kens." Transported with these young protagonists, readers meet the who's who of London urban life. Of course, Egan's bountiful footnotes, which frequently allude to, if not name, real-life Londoners, adds to the sense that the text offers a true reflection of actual urban life. Readers learn the expectations locals have for visitors, and the possible dangers awaiting them there. There are lessons in betting, lessons in fighting, and even lessons in personal finances. The men arise at lunch and party until dawn. Descriptions of hangovers and blackouts become standard parts of the narrative. Jerry learns about different types of prostitutes, and where to meet them. And, of course, there is the sex. There is a lot of sex. The men are not infrequently out all night with women. We see them pursue mistresses, married women, waiting maids, *slaveys*, and prostitutes. Men seem able to drink as much as they want, and fuck as much as they want, only limited by their physical stamina.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), with its brilliantly plotted courtship narrative, anticipates the novel's future while *Life in London* looks back to the antiquated tradition of the spy text, those journalistic accounts of London vice designed to titillate

while they educated readers.<sup>36</sup> Yet in its time, it was wildly successful picaresque fare – the “decade’s bestseller” (Gatrell 548) – and certainly more popular than *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>37</sup> Its episodic format perfectly suited serial publication, and it was Egan’s idea to include along with each monthly installment the colored illustrations etched by the brothers Robert and George Cruikshank (Patten *Charles* 54). Middle-class households could afford the large format illustrations when purchased on a monthly basis. Egan’s urban travelogue generated a mass audience, and it enjoyed a very long afterlife – pirated by plagiarists, translated into French, adapted to the stage, and even emblazoned on merchandise.<sup>38</sup>

My next chapter addresses the *mixed-genre* tag attached to popular prison novels written in the next decade, texts described as overburdened because they read as too much of everything – too much genre, too much plot. *Life in London* can be seen, on the other hand, as not amounting to much of anything – that is, containing little discernable genre, little discernable plot. Jane Rendell (2002), in her reading of the episodes as both commodity forms and representative pictures of the very culture that consumed it, addresses this seeming lack and finds in the episodes the origin of a new genre, what she calls *rambling* fiction (31-32); the format is the same as the spy text, but the subject matter is different. Its focus is not necessarily one’s education in the dangers of city life, but instead a lesson on where and how one can find fun and pleasure in it. Prior to Rendell’s study, critics looking for evidence of plot in *Life in London* focused on significant heterosexual events, the stuff of romance, and found none (Reid 66). But as

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<sup>36</sup> Reid says Egan was familiar with the genre and most likely had prepared spy texts for the press (50-52).

<sup>37</sup> See St Clair for edition dates and numbers printed (579). Only two to three thousand were printed before the mid 1930s (222).

<sup>38</sup> See Reid for an impressive summary of the publishers, playhouses, and merchandisers that profited from *Life in London*’s success (74-92). See also Patten (*Life, Times* 229) and Gatrell (548).

Rendell says, if there is any plot in Egan's text, it lies in "Jerry's initiation into urban lifestyle and manhood" (33); in other words, in his training by his friends in bachelor city life. A concentration on Jerry's almost-story of maturation gives us some continuity across episodes. Tom worries a great deal about Jerry's introduction into the fashionable world that considers him the most elegant of their species, because any misstep by the swell-in-training could mean loss of face for Tom, and complete rejection for Jerry. Tom and Logic carefully pick venues according to how they imagine the yokel will fare in new environments. The description of events in each episode makes an effort to show the effects of experiential knowledge; we get markers of Jerry's progress. Rendell, a social historian, more interested in how Egan's text may reflect a real-life form of male urbanity, does not pursue how it is that the rural man's progress and his friendships with Tom and Logic ultimately organize Egan's text. At this juncture, *Life in London* seems to be of greater interest to historians than literary critics.

We know that George Cruikshank was not afraid to take credit for the subject matter and plotlines found in the serials he illustrated. Much as he would do later with Dickens and Ainsworth, George claimed that he was the originator of *Life in London*.<sup>39</sup> And Robert would make this same claim later about Egan's 1828 sequel *Finish to Life*.<sup>40</sup> In Chapters Three and Four I examine some of the ways the contentious relationships between Cruikshank and his authors create verbal and visual narratological registers that do not necessarily tell the same story. The narrator in *Life in London*, on the other hand, speaks openly, and frequently, about the harmonious relationship the narrative and its illustrations seem to enjoy. For example, he says that the image of the Pit is a "correct

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<sup>39</sup> See Patten *Life, Times* (221-31) and Reid (52-3).

<sup>40</sup> Reid (52-3) and Gatrell (551).



representation” (223). And at times it sounds as if the images, seemingly supporting the Cruikshanks’ claims, may have been drawn before the words were written. Concerning the one at Covent Garden, the narrator tells us “the Artist has been uncommonly happy in his delineation of the above characters, who made their appearance when the sketch was made” (177).<sup>41</sup>

David Kunzle has said the narrative was actually worthless, commercially speaking, without the illustrations (*Mr. Lambkin* 173). According to him, the artlessness of the prose relied heavily on the artfulness of the pictures to succeed in the marketplace. Dramatizers were said to throw away the text and work only from the illustrations when adapting the text to the stage (Gatrell 550). But when we put commercial value aside and assess the text for its narrative worth, the values of its visual and the verbal fields fall into balance. Illustrations, if they have any sequential or narrative force of their own, offer up a story, refracted through or even independent of the textual. This type of cohesiveness George will master by the time he illustrates *Jack Sheppard*, where there is not only a recognizable, repeating central protagonist in every illustration, but also progressive action (Patten *George* 108-12). The images tell a story sequentially, free standing, and ultimately different from the words. Jerry’s education is, however, not cumulative in the Cruikshanks’ pictures. They do not achieve narrative coherence. The first plate shows Tom’s tailor making clothes for Jerry, with the text’s premise included in the illustration’s caption: *Jerry in training for a “Swell.”* The rest of the pictures, except for the last in which he boards the carriage home, are of the various rambles and sprees constituting his so-called education, which can be taken apart and rearranged in any

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<sup>41</sup> Reid argues against the idea that Egan was ever deferential to the illustrator (52-3). Tracy (15) and Patten (*Life, Times* 173-74) and Gatrell (551) argue for it.

order, for the most part without it affecting the overall pictorial experience. Other than the appearance of the trio in the pictures, there is very little relationship between different frames. The visuals in *Life in London*, in terms of any logical narrative sequence, cannot stand alone when divided from the words. The pictures need the text.

This chapter takes representations of male friendship in *Life in London* as its starting point. Images of the cousins together may be the ones that live on in the public imagination, but it is in fact the image of a threesome that surfaces time and again in both the verbal and visual fields. The text says that the friends enjoy a reputation as “a TRIO (Egan’s emphasis) of intellect, talent, and humor of the richest quality – far superior to most gentlemen” (239). The Cruikshanks place an image of Corinthian Tom, Jerry Hawthorne, and Bob Logic united as the trio at the center of *Life in London*’s frontispiece (fig. 2.1).<sup>42</sup> In Egan’s theCruikshanks’ pictures of London, the non-conjugal bonds of friends take preference over all others. As I will demonstrate, not looking for

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<sup>42</sup> The Cruikshanks draw a Corinthian column and use a variety of London’s *types* as architectural elements. The *CORINTHIAN CAPITAL* – labeled the *ROSES*, *PINKS*, and *TULIPS* – forms the top tier. Standing under them, a *Noble* and a *Respectable* man stand. Below the emblematic image of Tom, Jerry, and Logic stand the *Mechanical* and the *Tag Rag Bobtail*. The figures below them, in *THE BASE*, are labeled *Bunches of Turn-ups*. Around the central emblem, the column reads: *INS & OUTS, UPS and DOWNS OF LIFE IN LONDON*. For more on the frontispiece, see Patten (*Life, Times* 224-5), Rendell (30-1), and Gatrell (549).



Detail from frontispiece to *Life in London*  
(fig. 2.1)

homoeroticisms, hidden or otherwise, that we can see instead a range of non-normative possibilities for male friendship with which readers could have identified. Granted, these pictures look to be those of aristocratic male culture, but readers of these pictures were plebian and middle-class, and Egan found a way to connect to the mass audience. As we will see, while they may appear immoral, Tom and his friends have a clear code of ethics built into this life as urban sophisticates that would have resonated with young male readers.

I address in the pages that follow the aesthetics of Egan's typographic style and how his use of sub-standard languages present a particular type of experience for readers, as if they are looking through the eyes of these urban sophisticates. I also argue that the Cruikshanks' illustrations, which place readers in a different stance, looking *at* the urban sophisticate, rather than *through* him, render a pictorial field usefully understood both with and apart from Egan. Their illustrations reveal the particular constraints placed on the visual representation of male intimacy. If fiction in these transitional decades was

beginning to shape a heterosexual and decidedly familial ethos, after which pictures of romantic love and marriage would mostly crowd out other representations of kinship, *Life in London* offers up an interesting counter-narrative; Tom has no siblings, and few relatives. There is not much opportunity to show traditional family relations. There is also essentially no central romantic female in Egan's text. She has been replaced by an elaborate representation of female prostitutes, workers in a trade that has its own hierarchal system and tacit rules, all of which a young urban man need learn about. And without a central romantic female figure, there appears to be no rivalry, no undercutting, no residual jealousy between the men. The camaraderie-mixed-with-competitiveness at the heart of Sedgwick's model for male homosociality gets recast in *Life in London*. When Egan writes about Jerry's love for Mary Rosebud and the respective families of this couple into the sequel, the picture changes. A decade later in *Finish to Life*, Egan tried to capitalize on the success of *Life in London* while also answering the demand for romantic narratives. If there is a visible frontline in the cultural war being waged in pre- and early-Victorian fiction, we can find it in Egan and the Cruikshanks' later rendering of London life.

### **Graphic Narratives**

The size and quality of the lively color illustrations (October 1820 - July 1821) in a serial publication was exceptional for the time, not to mention the sheer number of figures, their variety, and the amount of detail. And in keeping with the spy tradition, scattered among the 36 color plates lies yet another series of small black-and-white woodcuts illustrating additional textual moments. For example, the first one shows a group of genteel pickpockets robbing a gentleman, apparently in plain sight, the day the

cousins ride in Hyde Park. Readers who purchased the monthly installment could feel they were getting their money's worth. From the beginning to the present day, the Cruikshanks illustrations have been an endless source of amusement.

It may be that the multiple fonts and the intertextuality of sources in *Life in London* were all part of Egan's strategy for competing with the illustrations' florid style. His typeface is an assortment of typefaces, small caps and italics, all of which seem to work as signifiers within their own meaning system. And he writes in a multitude of vernaculars, slang and cant, which he employs with great dexterity. Reid notes how Egan, the "master of cant," was able to manipulate so many private languages with complete ease (69). And displays of his mastery mix with his unrelenting use of sexual pun and innuendo, allusions to classic literature, bits of anonymous poetry, presentations of song lyrics, and even an added score of sheet music. We find a good example of the multiplicity in Egan's typeface and his mastery of slang and cant vocabularies in Jerry's first lesson in public life on the "*Grand Strut*" where the cousins "[sport] their 'bits of blood' among the Pinks in Rotten Row" (153); that is, ride their horses among the elite in Hyde Park. And while we can appreciate Egan's mastery of these vernaculars in this scene, his use of these terms provides some contrast to the pictures of urban life. The Cruikshanks, who give us pictures of the sophisticate at play in the city, see mostly rich and poor folks, and they employ different visual languages depending on the class they are drawing. Egan, on the other hand, is able to differentiate within the classes, sort out the types within those who look rich, or those who look poor, as if we are seeing the landscape from the point-of-view of those men who possess carnal knowledge of the city and are authorities on its co-inhabitants. Egan wants his readers to be able to spot even

the subtle differences that set off the fashionable prig from the man of fashion. Perhaps to remind readers that Tom too can be a tourist, he includes the scene where Tom and Jerry, once out of Logic's company, get swindled at Whist by the Swell "Broad Coves." No one person, except Egan, can know all aspects of the city and its people.

More than just aristocratic types, the scene in Hyde Park offers up a diverse array of characters for Jerry to study – a mix of authentic social types and, as Tom warns him, their imposters. We become aware of just how new to city life Jerry is when Logic has to tell the country naïf to stop turning his head around to get a better look at people passing. Granted, each of them lacks any great individual detail in the narrative, but the Cruikshanks draw the scene as if one were watching from a much greater distance. The atmospheric quality makes the figures much less distinct, even impressionistic. From this vantage point, readers can barely make out the cousins among the other figures. It is Egan's catalogue-like rendering of character types that give this social landscape any detail, and the description is given as if seen through the eyes of the urban sophisticate:<sup>43</sup>

The NOBLEMAN and the *Yokel*—the DIVINE and the "*Family-man*"—the PLAYER and the *Poet*—the IMPURE and the *Modest Girl*—the GRAVE and the *Gay*—the FLASH COVE and the *Man of Sentiment*—the FLAT and the *Sharp*—the DANDY and the *Gentleman*—the out-and-out SWELL and the *Groom*—the real SPORTSMAN and the *Black Leg*—the HEAVY TODDLERS and the *Operators*—the dashing BUM TRAP and the *Shy Cove*—the MARCHIONESS and her *Cook*—the DUKE and the "*Dealer in Queer*"—the LADY and the *Scullion*—the PINK OF THE TON and his "*Rainbow*"—the *Whitechapel* KNIGHT OF THE CLEAVER and his fat *Rib*—the BARBER'S CLERK and the *Costard-Monger*—the SLAVEY and her *Master*—the SURGEON and *Resurrection Man*—the ardent LOVER to catch the smiling eye of his *Mistress*—the young BLOOD in search of adventures (154).

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<sup>43</sup> "The acquisition of *flash* puts many a man *fly* to what is going on, adversely or otherwise": Jon Bee, *A Dictionary of the Turf, the Ring, the Chase, the Pit, of Bon-Ton*, London, T. Hughs, 1823 (79).

The nobleman and the yokel listed first in this bit of social taxonomy would not have presented much of a challenge to readers. Several of the other pairings would have been self-evident, not requiring a reference aid. However, when it comes to the “family man” standing next to the “divine” one, a trip to Egan’s dictionary would have told readers that his use of the familial qualifier here may denote a man’s nefarious character. Those quotation marks around *family man* most likely reference a creature in keeping with the entry for *family man* (or *woman*): “belonging to the family.” Which falls directly under the entry for *family*: “Thieves and others who live upon the *cross*, are dominated “the family.”<sup>44</sup> A “flat” is an honest man, and a “sharp” a cheat. The “heavy toddler” is a staggering drunk. “Bum” means to arrest a debtor, and a “bump trap” is the bailiff who does the arresting. A “shy cove” (Egan’s dictionary has an entry for *shy cock*), in return, is one who has to keep in doors for fear of bailiffs. “Dealers in queer” pass counterfeit money, and the “resurrection man” steals cadavers for the surgeon.

Of course, if readers do not appreciate the vernaculars, then Egan’s whole enterprise is for naught. But improper diction already had a market when Egan wrote *Life in London*. Dictionaries of the so-called vulgar tongue were popular reading. Amateur lexicographers studied vocabulary-based societies. Egan would play lexicographer later himself when he edited and published the fifth edition of Grose’s *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* in 1823.<sup>45</sup> His use of the vulgar in *Life in London*, however, signals the beginning of its continued use as a novelistic commodity form. As if to assume his readers had such a dictionary in hand, Egan makes no attempt to educate them in usages

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<sup>44</sup> And readers could then look up *cross* and discover that it means “to cheat.” Egan’s dictionary, relying solely on an abecedarian arrangement, contains no page numbers. Hereafter, any materials quoted from *Egan’s Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* lack parenthetical page citations.

<sup>45</sup> See Reid for a detailed account of Egan’s job as publisher (98-102).

and their meanings. In other words, the text has no glossary; the narrator and other characters make few attempts to translate for readers, a feature common in later texts, including *Jack Sheppard* and *Oliver Twist*. We can imagine cross-textual moments where armchair tourists read Egan's descriptions of London life and looked up definitions to exotic terms in Egan's or a similar dictionary, one whose preface claims it records words and meanings as taken directly from their sources.<sup>46</sup>

Egan's heroes display different aptitudes for vernaculars spoken in the text. The Exclusives speak the language of *ton*, with all its French influences, while gentlemen of Tom and Logic's caliber mix their *ton* phrases with phrases from *flash* culture and *cant* speaking kens. Tom, fluent in the freshest of terms spoken by the elite, including the Prince Regent's court, has a cursory knowledge of urban slang and cant, as any avid "slummer" would. Logic, on the other hand, who typically steers clear of elite venues, such as Almacks, is fluent in a range of vocabularies, especially if they are rich in sexual connotation or spoken by London's criminal classes. Jerry is, of course, most often baffled by any of the exotic terms. He shows little sign of any linguistic acculturation by novel's end. This type of linguistic character mapping; that is, recording who speaks what terms, and which characters understand their meanings, becomes a popular critical method for understanding *Oliver Twist*. But where Egan, in his attempt to satisfy reader's desires for pictures of other realities, presents his readers with a virtual cacophony of vernaculars, later authors like Bulwer Lytton, Ainsworth, and Dickens prove to be more discriminating when it comes to representing languages. They choose to utilize

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<sup>46</sup> See the preface to John Bee's 1823 *Slang: A Dictionary of the Turf, The Ring, The Chase, The Pit, of Bon-Ton and the Varieties of Life* for an example of a prefatory certification of authenticity. I have discovered in my own cross-textual moments with Egan that some settings in his stories match, nearly verbatim, entries for these same places in his dictionary, for example the description of the *Cock and Hen* club in *Finish to Life* matches its definition in *The Vulgar Tongue*.



vernacular in order to enhance the low-life “realism” of their novels. I find it striking that in this literary culture, which craved authentic representations, these authors would also single out terms that deal mostly with the authenticity of criminal characters and the value of what they steal. I will return to these novelistic uses of slang and cant in my following chapters.

Of course, drawing full-page-sized, color compositions was not entirely new to the Cruikshanks; after all, George etched his popular and satirical caricature of fashionable life *Monstrosities* in 1821. But creating images with a cohesive visual narrative on a three-a-month schedule (the series came out in twelve installments) while not having the advantage of knowing the direction or end of the story was new to the brothers (Burton 94). Although it is impossible to distinguish, to any great extent, between George and Robert’s contributions (Patten *Life, Times* 228), the limited point of view illustrations of Egan’s text, supposedly taken by a *camera obscura*, appear to be George’s contribution. He proved to have an uncanny knack for matching pictorial moods to textual styles (Burton 93), as we will see again in the sharp-edged and exacting, multi-paned sequences in *Jack Sheppard*, or the crosshatched, atmospheric environs in *Oliver Twist*. After *Life in London*, Robert accepted the commission to do the illustrations for *The English Spy* (1825-6); he produced images very much like the ones in Egan’s publication, which seems to confirm the critical consensus that George was the more original artist.

His work in this period is usually examined by critics for signs of the so-called more modern illustrations he will do for Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard*, with their clean lines and highly contrasting compositions. His shift from the pointed and political to the

narrative and social marks an important milestone in the change between Georgian and Victorian pictorials (Patten *George* 249, Gatrell 547-8). It transforms “from the independent, irregular, and often violently scurrilous political broadsheet to magazine and serial illustration of regular periodicity, often subservient to a text and beholden to an editorial policy and mass taste not of the caricaturist’s choosing” (Kunzle 339). Critics have noted that because George would go on to work frequently under such circumstances, critical attempts to mine his illustrative opus for any consistent visual language, speaking any consistent political views or social tastes, prove fruitless (Patten “Politics of Humor” 84-5). These discussions, also looking for narratives of emergence, have provided us with rich readings of Cruikshank’s art. What often gets overlooked in these accounts, however, especially by critics who sort images only according to what is old and new in them, is the generic mixed-ness of Cruikshank’s images, and how that mixed-ness exists across decades. Seeming to pick up visually on the mixed-genre compositions of these fictions, Cruikshank mixes his visual genres. We will see throughout this dissertation how he adds neo-classical arrangements to compositions, recycles Gothic motifs, and even reinvents aspects of eighteenth-century pictorial satire. As public taste changed, favoring more realistic, perspectively correct illustrations, George may well have made exaggerated claims for his contributions to the work of writers. In doing so, he undermined his very valid claims to his artistic originality.

We do know that the Cruikshanks’ inherited the shape of the settings they used in this emerging graphic genre from their father, Isaac (Patten “Conventions” 335). To illustrate better the characters in a given scene, he would obscure or avoid the composition’s vanishing point, so that characters do not get smaller toward the center of



It was the Cruikshanks' job to give this trio a strong visual presence in *Life in London's* reportedly accurate pictures of urban life. I have marked the locations of the trio using oval frames – Logic left, Jerry center, and Tom right – in the illustration above. In the tradition of caricature drawing, so that they are easily identifiable, the figures are drawn almost always full-faced or in profile (Patten “Conventions” 336), which creates a particular challenge for the artist. And because readers would look for the same figures from print to print, the Cruikshanks also relied on their training as caricaturists and used iconic, bodily devices for identification purposes. In caricatures, these icons, located in facial features, bodily dispositions, and dress, would often be repeated and refined by other artists in an open market: “[C]aricaturists were trying not to draw *from* or *like* life but to replicate a vocabulary of physical signs that had been established by a process of graphic analysis, selection, reduction, and exchange among artist, subject, and audience” (Patten “Conventions” 336), but here in the self-enclosed world of serial installments, these symbols become vital identity markers used to set off the main characters from the extras, consistent from the first illustration to the last.

Even though we can find another figure who could be Tom, obviously a gentleman trying to vie for London's “Corinthian” label, regular readers would have known which figure was meant to represent Tom because of his large Roman nose and exaggerated chin (as if that really big feather in his cap was not enough). Logic, similarly, is always pictured in his eye-obscuring spectacles, and Jerry wears a green coat over his corn-fed physique. When the protagonist is but one figure, say in the case of Jack Sheppard or *Oliver Twist*, the constraints of identification is less of an issue, but when a

triangle of men is your protagonist; that is, three as one, where a display of their connection should be as important as the very settings the men travel through, something can go missing. As the Cruikshanks turn the triangle into a stamp for male bonds, a fixed and easily recognizable icon for masculine ties packaged and made available for public consumption, the heroes typically appear isolated from each other, situated in what can best be described as, and I dare use yet another contemporary term, *parallel play*. There is rarely interaction among them. It appears that though they most often appear as a trio, each is essentially detached from the others.

Egan's story of male friendship connected to this triangle grows even stronger after he pads out the first of the two volumes of the novel edition.<sup>47</sup> These curiously non-illustrated early chapters lend what can best be described, in modern terms, a Wizard-of-Oz effect to the bound volumes. The added expositional material creates a purely textual, black-and-white realm, delaying readers' entry into the seemingly Technicolor world of the Cruikshanks' London. They tell the story of two boys whose fathers were friends, and of Tom's rise to the top of the Corinthian set. We learn how Tom and Logic become close friends after their parents are dead, and the boys are rich. Tom's mother had wished him to become a respectable gentleman, and he was able to suppress his desire for a showy aristocratic lifestyle while she was alive; he was said to be accomplished but not excessive, but once orphaned, he forgets his mother's wish. His fortune becomes his calling card, and he slides rather easily into the position of London's premiere bachelor,

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<sup>47</sup> See Reid (59) for an explanation as to how Egan supplemented *Life in London*'s novel edition. This added material may also help explain some of the inconsistencies in Egan's descriptions of his heroes. As there is no evidence of when exactly the opening text is written, Patten speculates that Egan had already started writing the text before he asked the Cruikshanks to add the illustrations (*Life, Times* 227). Patten does not go on, however, to explain how this non-illustrated material would have been part of the original serialization.

known to all as *Corinthian Tom*. We even hear of the sprees that Tom and Logic share, the same outings that send Tom to Hawthorne Hall to rusticate, where he first meets his cousin Jerry. Logic, we are told, “received a *College Education*; but those persons who were well acquainted with him seemed to hint, that he had rather been sent to Oxford to have the *character* of the thing, than to *astonish* the world at an after period with any great works of intellectual profundity” (73). The narrator also tells us that Logic, though not the showy centerpiece Tom proves to be, is “looked up to as a complete hero in affairs of gallantry, and his companions endeavoured to imitate his manners and style” (77). The fantasy for readers in this case depends on two friends who meet after they are orphaned as young adults. Heroes in the novels in my dissertation are usually orphaned when babies, changelings from one class cast into another, given new names, and made to rely on the charity of others. But here the tale begins with two young men, previously trained by their parents to be respectable gentlemen, who have ready knowledge of the city. The fairytale element rests in how both Tom and Logic are rich and free from familial duties; they never even glance backward to suggest any mourning for lost parents or family ties.

When it comes to venues that include the *Pink* set, lessons in self-control are a priority for Jerry. Even though Logic had now been “so often at the elbow of HAWTHORNE, that the latter was rapidly getting *awake* to the tricks and fancies of London, and could appear at almost any place without showing the symptoms of a *Johnny Raw*” (192), Tom still chooses the masquerade pictured above as Jerry’s first contact with the elite. The reward here can be two-fold. Tom, on one hand, celebrates the event because it is “one of those luxurious moments when scarcely any thing but the

passions prevailed” (193). But he endorses their attendance, on the other, because it provides the trio with a venue peopled with “an *unsorted* class of society” (195). Costumes will obfuscate the social boundaries; there will be no obvious lines drawn in the social strata (Rendell 102). The trio puts a lot of consideration into “what *character* [Jerry] could *personify* to the most advantage and with ease to himself” (197). Since arriving in London, Jerry has worn the clothes of a swell, though Tom complains that Jerry’s country-fed physique, his large butt mostly, distracts from the cut of the new garments. Logic suggests that Jerry, to feel at ease, should go to the masquerade as a *huntsman*. In other words, Jerry should really just go as himself, which would make him essentially a country boy disguised as a swell disguised as a country boy. Jerry, in regular fashion, is first awestruck by the spectacle he sees upon entering. It is clear from Tom’s description of the event that some *Pinks* enjoy the thrill of mixing in the anonymous crowd, and this will give Jerry an opportunity to mingle closely without exposing enough of himself that anyone can make injurious judgments against him or his friends. Tom is soon relieved, however, because, as the narrator tells us, “Jerry looks more the *old-stager* than a *debutant*” (198). The ruse seems to be working.

But the Cruikshanks decide to capture a moment when Jerry acts exactly how Tom feared a country naïf would when first exposed to the pleasures of a spree of this magnitude. Jerry, with a *tally-ho* and a crack of his whip, chases after an *Arlecchino* figure who appears to have poached a chicken. We see at the head of the table Tom sitting with a woman on each knee. And his appearance is really not that far from his day-to-day costume either – dressed as the libertine *Don Giovanni*, his *ton* exquisite, attracting the best women. The artists use a *Commedia dell’Arte* motif when dressing up

Egan's description of the masquerade. Granted, there are touches of the Italian theater in the narrative, such as the mention of a Harlequin in attendance, and a great many people also, the narrator tells us, who have chosen to wear *dominos* (enveloping capes), instead of costumes; they participate then only as spectators, not as performers. The latter, on the other hand, are required not only to show great capacity for playing a character but also to engage those around them with their wit. For instance, when Jerry first meets Lady Wanton, she introduces herself with only a complex riddle, hiding her name, and the trio, especially Logic, make work of solving the mystery of her identity.<sup>48</sup> Logic, seated benignly near the back of the illustration in wig and robes, looks again oddly like himself in the Cruikshanks' drawing. But instead of acting the part of a judge, he reads as a *burla* figure, a jokester or creature of misrule, in the text. He arrives in his own domino, only then to sneak away and change his "black dress for a pink one" (198). When he returns to his friends, hidden in this new disguise, he distresses them by whispering anonymous untruths in their ears.

The Cruikshanks' composition leaves little room for hooded figures, but they do dress the partygoers in traditional Italian costumes – half-masks with protruding noses, human and animal – and pair them into what appear mostly to be male-female couples. The carnival motif at the masquerade, and its metaphors of misrule, openly display the sexuality of Egan's London. There is not much need to read below the surface, between the lines. The trio's appetites, their sexual conquests, are dealt with, for the most part, plainly. The Cruikshanks openly represent the unbridled, unsorted desires indicative of

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<sup>48</sup> In *Finish to Life*, Jerry's relationship with Lady Wanton, a seduction plot of sorts, grows to become one of the more cohesive narrative threads in the text. This plot thread ends with Jerry, whose indiscretions by this time have nearly reached the very level of infamy that Tom warns him about, escaping out the window of Lady Wanton's chambers as Lord Wanton is heard entering below.



Egan's masquerade; that is, they cleverly manage to signify more in a text that already shows nearly everything. The scene includes all the classic literary preambles to sex: food, drink, and music. They dress the crowd in sexually charged iconic costumes and arrange the furniture in an equally charged composition, set just at the conclusion of dinner. The ornately costumed band, crammed onto the narrow stage in the hollow, presses against the crowd. The participants appear perched along a thrust stage as they sit at the banquet table. The suggestive long, rigid line of the table meets the round, open proscenium of the musicians' stage. Because the table is not effectively grounded in perspective; it is difficult to image how it sits exactly in relation to the stage, tricking the eye. We can imagine the heaving crowd, whose exaggerated phallic noses point in all directions. The contrasting angles of the evenly dispersed bodies, combined with those figures on the floor, make it difficult again to rest the eye in any one place, adding to the destabilizing effect generated by the greater composition, including the chandelier swinging overhead. This *tableau* dresses its actors in costumes and postures that say "this is really all about sex," while doing so in a composition that provides, even though frieze-like, its own kind of frenetic energy. Though it may lack the sexual explicitness of Rowlandson's caricatures from earlier decades, if you were a horny young man in London at the time, the image would provide you with some readily available, nearly pornographic images for fantasy.

## Friends High

Jerry's most important lesson in self-control occurs during the cousin's visit to Almack's. The *Pinks*' nearly "codified rules for membership and elaborate sub-rules for the behavior of members" present a particular challenge to the yokel: "In no other society has the mechanism of exclusion been so prominent, elaborate and efficient. It was the universal, often the only, interest. Regency Society called itself *exclusive*, its members the *exclusives*, and its ruling principle *exclusivism*" (Moers 41). Jerry must bury away any thoughts of coarseness and vulgarity and suppress his knowledge of the underside of the city in order to pass here. Again Tom, wary of Jerry's performance, chooses LETHE as a signal word to use should his cousin falter and let potentially damaging aspects of his newly won urban sensibility shine through. The verbal and the visual again offer differing points of view. In the textual realm, readers have the opportunity to see the world described through the eyes of the sophisticate; in its pictorial counterpart, however, readers can only look at the sophisticate on the visual stage. While Egan tells us that the spectacle at the elite club dazzles Jerry into a temporary state of paralysis, much as it did when he entered the masquerade, the Cruikshanks' illustration of the event is one of the most unimaginative in *Life in London* (fig. 2.3). And when we search for any signs of the Cruikshanks' visual language, those indicators that they too see the overtly sexualized picture of London the cousins see, the illustrators appear to fall silent. The image lacks those fluid, bodily lines we find in the drawings of other locations; few of the characters' features show any signs



HIGHEST LIFE IN LONDON. Tom & Jerry “Sporting a Toe” among the Corinthians, at Almack’s in the West (fig. 2.3)

of exaggeration, and its composition inert. As they did when they drew the *pinks* in Hyde Park, the Cruikshanks choose to keep the viewer at a distance from the subject matter. In most ways, it shows the opposite of George’s aforementioned satirical drawing of the aristocracy, *MONSTROSITIES*, drawn the same year. In fact, of the 36 plates in *Life in London*, this one is drawn the most like actual life – most like a picture from the *camera obscura*.

Illustrated moments like this lead me to suggest that we read *Life in London* as more than simply a revitalization of the spy text, or even as only a time-bound derivation of it, and consider the ways in which it may lay some foundation for the popularity of silver fork novels at the end of the decade. Pre-Victorians want assurances that the locations they see are genuine (Moers 53) and Egan’s two volumes purport to give realistic descriptions of aristocratic life. Silver fork novels settings are the exclusive, well-hidden worlds of aristocratic high culture during the Regency and its aftermath: “No

self-respecting silver fork novel would be complete without its dueling scene, its gambling scene, its dinner scene, its dancing scene. Nor would it pass muster without its fashionable arranged marriage and at least the suspicion of an adulterous liaison” (Hughes 328). William Hazlitt, reacting to their popularity, coined the term *silver fork* in 1827 to derisively characterize this brand of text that detailed the cultivation of one’s *ton* and claimed to provide exact accounts of the aristocratic day-to-day and detailed descriptions of fancy dress and manners.<sup>49</sup> He also complained that these novels were merely nostalgic renditions of past elegance focusing only on the aesthetics of the life and not the obvious lack of morality underpinning it.

If silver forks had been illustrated, the Cruikshanks’ drawing of the *beau monde* above would have provided a fine representation. Granted, any complicity on their part in the rise of realistic representations of the elite most likely happened because when the brothers had nothing complementary to say about the text, it appears, they choose to say nothing at all. After all, Egan’s urban travelogue is dedicated to the Regent. Both Egan and the Cruikshanks make available a rather appealing representation of hidden worlds and give readers young men who show how to behave among those of a higher social class at a time when the public is hungry for advice about where and how to consume the array of new opportunities and products available in modern centers. The text and the images foster those burgeoning readerly desires similar to those in consumers who will read Bulwer Lytton’s *Pelham: The Adventures of a Gentleman* in 1828, a thinly-disguised real-life account of London’s dandies, celebrated at the time as England’s “hornbook of dandyism” (Moers 83). *Life in London*, a dandy’s hornbook of another, earlier variety serves as a type of user’s guide for a particular reader. In fact, critics see

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<sup>49</sup> William Hazlitt, “The Dandy School,” *Examiner*, November 18, 1827.

the power of this new buying class, coupled with instruction in where and what to buy, a threat to social order. They believed that “consumerism would ruin social hierarchy because it would let anyone with money become a fake aristocrat” (Elfenbein 41).<sup>50</sup>

While Egan’s text celebrates the same Corinthian culture that the silver fork novel presents, his stands apart from these later texts: first, his are mostly episodic narratives, not romances, and second, where silver fork draws Corinthian culture to the exclusion of everyone else, his picaresque urban travelogues strive intentionally to capture the heterogeneity of city life. Granted, the verisimilitude of Egan’s London, like the silver fork novels, has its obvious shortcomings. The bourgeoisie to a great extent lack representation, and the chosen geographical locations make for a rather circumscribed map of the city. Both the middle-class and the suburbs are mostly absent. Ironically, it was this very world that became the center of the Victorian realist novel. But this lack of an obvious bourgeois familial presence in Egan’s text does not mean we get only representations of the exclusivist aristocratic world.

Engel and King’s 1984 study of pre-Victorian genres sees the mistreatment of the middle-class in *Life in London* as intentionally offensive and full of contempt. According to them, “[T]he bourgeoisie are burlesqued from the perspective of an upper-class sneer. Tied as it was to a particular monarch and to an aristocracy whose power would soon erode irrevocably, the Regency spirit was doomed to obsolescence. Its hold on the British imagination was at best weak and faddish” (7). But this claim does not necessarily ring true. While it is important to acknowledge the text is dedicated to the Regent, and that it elides the middle-class in its representation of London, Tom and his friends stand apart

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<sup>50</sup> Elfenbein refers to critics who responded to the buying culture of the late eighteenth century at the time William Beckford wrote *Vathek* (1786).

from other aristocratic male figures because of their lack of contempt for the lower classes, or I would argue, Tom and Logic teach Jerry the benefits of a lack of contempt. Egan's heroes, self-indulgent, are not the self-absorbed men gracing silver fork pages (those figures exist in Egan's London too); indeed, they are campaigners for the uprightness of England's merchants who, like Tom's father, are "industrious, clever men" (283). Tom may celebrate his individual freedom dressing and acting the Corinthian, subjecting himself to the scrutiny of the social elite, but he proves to be a man of fashion of a different ilk. He saves his ire for prostitutes who steal, men who abandon pregnant lovers, and con artists. Honest dealings – a mercantile value – are his highest code of honor.

The Regency dandy, central to the later pictures of aristocratic life, however, becomes the figure contemporary critics love to hate. Elegance was the dandy's only recognizable distinction: "[H]is self-worship in self-adornment; his superiority to useful work in his tireless application of costume. His independence, assurance, originality, self-control and refinement should all be visible in the cut of his clothes" (Moers 21). Collar stiff, to the ear, and large collar and buttons diminished the scale of his silhouette; an attenuated waist and small foot finished his look. His objects of desire were pursued in this order: 1) playing cards, 2) horses, and 3) opera-girls, ballet-dancers, and courtesans (Moers 63). Pictures of a culture ruled by this embodiment of apolitical self-absorption would fly in the face of nascent bourgeois ideals of masculinity and familial duty (Sinfield 69).

The narrator in *Life in London* never openly criticizes this variety of dandy, and neither does Tom. It is the wide-eyed bumpkin who first speaks up. Jerry, while at

Almack's, says of Dick Trifle, "He is the completest *Dandy* I ever saw; I think LOGIC called him an EXQUISITE. He appears to me to be neither a man nor a woman. Such a thing would be of no *use* in Somersetshire, and I imagine of none either in the GREAT or *little* world in the Metropolis, except to mark for RIDICULE – to shoot at." Tom can only reply, "LETHE!" (309). Effeminate men are raised as a subject in *Life in London* and then silenced. It appears that par to Jerry's training is that he learn to accept men like Trifle. He has his place. Strikingly, while the Cruikshanks opt out of using their satirizing pen when drawing Almack's, they do apply a bit of caricature to the figure of Trifle. Here we can see central figures from potentially two very different genres of texts, urban travelogue and nostalgic Regency fiction. We see Trifle dancing a Quadrille, seemingly frozen mid demi-plié. He possesses all the visual markers of the Exquisite, positioned directly across from Tom, as if they are there so that viewers can make the comparison. (The Trifle-like figure and his exaggerated form is one that George returns to again in later satirical representations of so-called elitists, for example, when he includes the three arm-in-arm dandies in *Beauties of Brighton*, 1826.) The dandy figure here is not yet imbued with notions of perversity, social, sexual, and otherwise, that he will be by the end of the century. As we see in the next section, it is Logic who the Cruikshanks select instead as a visual repository of any perversities in Egan's London.

### **Friends Low**

If it is Tom who instructs Jerry in the rites of the most esteemed men about town, then it is Logic who shows him the ways of the underworld. The narrator tells us that Logic is "considered an *out-and-outer*, for continually scouring the *black-slums*, both in

town and country, in search of something new” (288). Not the showy social centerpiece Tom proves to be, Logic uses his intellect and wit to draw people’s attention to his distinct form of urban sophistication. He enjoys playing a figure of misrule, a practical joker. The only clues the text gives us concerning his physical appearance, however, are that friends consider him a man of fashion. He carries an umbrella, wears green-colored glasses, and suffers, when he drinks, from his “old complaint, the *hiccough*” (288). Logic would be welcomed, according to the text, in the elite public venues, but he finds time spent in more democratic venues to his liking. There is really little reason to picture him as figure much different in stature and appearance from Tom and Jerry; however, the Cruikshanks draw him as another creature entirely.

And that harmonious relationship between the visual and the verbal is not quite so in tune when it comes to representations of Logic. Of the three, he can be the one difficult to locate, easily lost in the crowd. He sometimes appears when there is no evidence of him in the text. For example, it looks like he receives an elbow to the face in *Tom & Jerry in Trouble after a Spree*, and in *Tom & Jerry in the Salon at Covent Garden*, he appears to be climbing the stairs, leaving the party early, though there is no mention of him being there. The Cruikshanks frequently draw Logic near a composition’s edge, seemingly poised to crossover and travel into environments outside it. He wears a fedora, while other men wear top hats.

A good representation of the how the Cruikshanks see the men in their triangular emblem for male bonds, surfaces when the men arrive at Kate’s parlor. Egan found a way to introduce Tom’s mistress, *Corinthian* Kate, early in chapter five as part of the supplemented narrative – she says good-bye to him before he boards his carriage for



Hawthorne Hall. In the present scene, which is the thirteenth plate in the series, Tom arrives with his friends to deliver a diamond necklace because he has been neglecting Kate in favor of showing Jerry the town. The Cruikshanks' drawing of the event marks her first appearance in *Life in London's* visual world (fig. 2.4). The illustration is unusual compared to the number in which throngs of anonymous figures fill the scene. The



AN INTRODUCTION. *Gay moments of Logic, Jerry, Tom and Corinthian Kate*  
(fig. 2.4)

distanced and seemingly objective lens of the *camera obscura* gives way to a more intimate and academic composition. The general, even anonymous, sexuality displayed in the public scenes becomes more personal, more directed, in a private one. Granted, we still have a shallow-box set; large architectural doors block any need for conventional perspective, but the arrangement of figures reinforces a set of implied diagonal lines that run from the chandelier, top and center, to the lower corners of the composition, suggesting a classical triangular configuration. There develops a fascinating tension between the composition's use of a classical format and its contemporary subject matter,

especially when we remember that these are women and rooms Tom pays for. There are again those characteristic preambles to sex: food, drink, and music, but instead of Greek gods and goddesses, young men divert themselves. The chairs are thrown asunder, and Jerry's leg is up on one of them, his arm akimbo, fist to his groin. She, leaning on Jerry, looks to be exposing her breasts. And as if to mock the illicit desires displayed here; after all, the text tells us the Kate does not love Tom but is merely attracted by his *ton*, the Cruikshanks draw the central figures in such a way that their arms creates a heart-shaped frame around their profiles.

The Cruikshanks seem always able to find numerous figurative representations for the hetero sex in Egan's Regency London, but at the same time they seem unwilling to find ways to signify any bonds shared by our three male protagonists. Earlier I argued that the constraints of this new visual medium might have presented some challenges for the Cruikshanks when it came time to signify male-male desire in their urban *tableaux*, but here in this more intimate setting, where they have an opportunity, they still rely on a composition that divides our heroes from each other. The etching of the "gay moment" divides itself into three vignettes, forming a triptych, of sorts. Tom, the figure readers should want to emulate, dances center with Kate. Like Jerry, whom Tom educates, Sue is Kate's protégée. She was drawn to London for love, but was betrayed, and now she is, in essence, a courtesan *in training*. This is another way in which the well-to-do urban bachelor and the high-end prostitute reflect each other in Egan's rendering of London life.<sup>51</sup>

Those moments that typically characterize Egan's text; that is, ramblers looking at the city, and readers looking at ramblers looking at the city, gets redirected here through

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<sup>51</sup> See Rendell (40) for another discussion of this pairing in Egan's representation of London life.

Logic's gaze. He plays the accompaniment, banging away on the piano, leering grin, while he watches the excitement, eyes masked by his colored glasses. He looks across the triptych, voyeuristically watching his friends. Logics mysterious outings, his stints at the Fleet, and his frequent hiccoughing give the Cruikshanks evidence enough to draw him as a figure in steady decline. Corinthian Tom and Jerry can party and womanize without any lasting effects. They rusticate, recover their health, and go on again. Logic, on the other hand, never is shown as having this option. He is typically a sickly looking character – prematurely aged, stature small, figure bent and subjected to the same processes of caricature that the Cruikshanks often apply to low-class characters. The Cruikshanks frequently draw him with a pockmarked face, seeming to hint of syphilis. He operates as the canvas onto which the Cruikshanks draw the evidence of the trio's excesses. His looking and leering makes the scene decidedly more pornographic, and readers uncomfortable. His image may mirror ours too much as we read the text and illustrations.

When Tom's friend from the Royal Exchange asks the trio to slum with him by joining him at All-Max on London's east side, it is a new experience for all three of our heroes, and yet we can see how well traveled our figure of misrule actually is. Tom says, confirming his perpetual tourist status, that the place is having more of an effect on him than did Carlton Palace. And though it is Logic's first time to this gin shop, pictured seated in the back, he fits right in. The narrator tells us he is immediately *at home* in these low establishments. While we get good pictures of the interiors of Tom's and Jerry's homes, and see where they live, we never get to look into Logic's actual domiciles. The Cruikshanks turn these slum establishments and the inside of the Fleet into raffish images of home life for him. A similar scene to the one at All-Max appears in *Finish to Life*, at

the *Cock and Hen* club, where Logic fits right in and speaks the language of another alternative familial setting. This other group has regular meetings, though it migrates for precautionary reasons because many of its members are wanted criminals. Our trio, on Logic's command, leaves the scene early for fear that the club is going to be raided. The Cruikshanks' dressing of Logic in judge's robes in the illustration of the masquerade seems ironic when it is he who lives on the fringes of decent society and always comes so close to breaking the law. Tom and Jerry have their run-ins with the law, sure, but these confrontations all happen in the name of good fun, or for a noble cause. The extreme of their criminality appears in the image of them tipping the *Charlie* (a guard) out of his watch box. It was also the most popular of all the Cruikshanks' illustrations (*Patten Life, Times* 228).

The more democratic "*flash* part of mankind" the trio encounters at All-Max (fig. 2.5) stands in sharp contrast to the social elitists Jerry meets at Almack's. The sign above



LOWEST "LIFE IN LONDON" \_ Tom, Jerry and Logic among the unsophisticated Sons and Daughters of Nature at "All Max" in the East (fig. 2.5)

this hearth reads ALL LICKERS TO BEE PAED FOR ON DELIVERY, and it requires no card of admission. The text tells us any *cove* putting in an appearance is welcome; “colour or country considered no obstacle; and dress and ADDRESS completely out of the question. [. . .] The parties *paired off* according to *fancy*; the eye was pleased in the choice, and nothing thought about birth and distinction. Lascars, blacks, jack tars, coal-heavers, dustmen, women of colour, old and young, and a sprinkling of the remnants of once fine girls, &c. were all *jigging* together” (286). Reid says that Egan did “not hesitate to show destitution, although for him it is circumstances or character that is to blame rather than society. He is all the time certain that the poor at least have as much fun as the rich” (68). Gatrell concurs, but adds that pictures of low life were becoming less and less funny: “[S]ome key low-life prints produced by the Cruikshank brothers present themselves as the last unapologetic flings in our great, louche, comic tradition” (547). The Cruikshanks’ illustration certainly supports *Life in London*’s rosy picture of slum life. But we can see how the brothers, as George will do again in *Oliver Twist*, treat the figures’ features differently according to class and race. Aristocrats, however stereotyped, are most often drawn in fine relief. Lower class characters often look distorted, cartoonish, harkening back to their earlier caricature drawings. The Cruikshanks, displacing the typical representation of their triangle, include a picture of the nameless man in their illustration of the event, left and to the back (fig. 2.5). Logic, more of an eighteenth-century-style rogue, in their visual field anyway, gets absorbed into the Cruikshanks’ treatment of London’s lower classes and Tom, Jerry, and the nameless man seemingly become a new trio.

There are emerging signs of the trademark compositional economy that will become a recognizable and regular feature in George's graphics in *Jack Sheppard* and *Oliver Twist*, which I discuss further in Chapter Three and Four of this project and show how the artist noticeably recycles visual motifs and structural elements in his art. We can see here how the Cruikshanks recycled the composition of the trio in Kate's parlor, though now with its own interracial set of characters. A gas lamp hangs in place of Kate's chandelier, and a couple dances front, where Tom and Kate were in the parlor. We see those same preambles to sex—food, drink, and music. The succession of fluid lines found in relaxed postures and round shapes lie in sharp contrast to the linear, sexually anesthetized shapes of Almack's. Large breasts are always prominent features on lower-class women and prostitutes in the Cruikshanks' drawings, and their clothing hugs their bodies in ways that place greater emphasis on their hips and loins. The Cruikshank brothers even include, in this case, a suggestive open tankard poised between Tom and the proprietress. Mrs. Mace. Where Logic had sat at the piano in Kate's, Jerry now pours drink down the Fiddler's throat, keeping him lubricated and the music flowing.

Though it is usually Tom who is surrounded by women, this time Logic has two women on his knees this time. The text tells us that *Black SALL* gives him chaste salutes in the local vernacular while *Flashy NANCE*, said to have the guile of twenty other prostitutes, sits and laughs at the loud talk “of the ‘lady in *black*,’ as she term[s] her” (289). And at All-Max the verbal and visual, as the narrator points out, sound once again a harmonious cord: “Logic, (as the Plate represents,) appeared as happy as the *sand-boy*, who had unexpectedly met with good luck in disposing of his hampers full of the above household commodity in a short time, which had given him a holiday” (289). Logic's

*slavey* fetish and his constant pursuit of them is a running joke among the trio in Egan's London. The Cruikshanks always make sure that Logic is surrounded by females of this class, but Egan's text is not as particular on this point. The gender of the servant is not always made clear in these exchanges. *Slavey*, according to Egan's edition of Grose's dictionary of vulgar tongue, is a cant term denoting a servant of either sex. Logic and his friends typically reunite the morning after a spree, and they ask Logic for details about his escape the night before, he gives none. This brings to the text another ambiguity concerning the little man of misrule. We see or hear about all of the cousin's various indiscretions; little is left to the imagination. Logic, however, moves between the represented and unrepresented; he opens avenues into both pictorial and textual environments unseen but not entirely unknown. As Reid says, "Whatever Logic gets up to whenever he is separated from the cousins Egan leaves to the imagination of his readers" (71). We saw Shelley in *Frankenstein* use a similar form of convention in her treatment of Victor and Henry's shared imaginative world, putting it outside narrative time and place. We are told about these locales, but the settings in them, and the events happening in them, are never revealed.

The narrative Egan adds concerning Logic in the early chapters of the novel edition comes with an admonition that while it is a fact that "Logic possessed numerous good qualities[.][. . .] his mode of life caused him to be considered by many persons as a dangerous companion for youth" (77). This reflects a change in Egan's view of Logic when we remember that this is likely a qualification he makes after the success of the monthly installments. The Cruikshanks' pictorial renderings of Logic suggest aspects of his character not necessarily present in the serial text, and it may be that the Cruikshanks'

interpretation of the *Oxonian* led Egan to see his urban traveler in a new light. He even felt compelled to add that “CORINTHIAN TOM and LOGIC not only became intimately acquainted, but something like friendship cemented their attachment” (74). His ambivalence about their bond, that it is “something like” friendship, shows he may have reconsidered, because of the Cruikshanks’ visual interpretation of Egan’s character, what it was these men shared when he wrote at this later date.

### **Picturing Romance**

Literary taste was shifting away from the eighteenth-century rogue tradition by the 1830s and readers expected at least some romance in every tale. These pressures point us to reasons why Egan’s sequel is bizarrely different from its predecessor. Egan opens *Finish to Life* (1828) with traditional elements of the love plot; the urban sophistication Jerry acquired while in London quickly disappears, and he falls again for Miss Mary Rosebud, his next door neighbor’s daughter. He asks Mary’s father for the country girl’s hand, but Mr. Rosebud, because he has heard Jerry can be “a bit of a *rattler*, a *gay* sort of chap, and rather a general lover among the girls,” puts Jerry on a type of pre-marriage probation (Reid 141). Jerry needs to prove he is worthy of the union, a test repeatedly used in courtship narratives. But as soon as Logic and Tom arrive at Hawthorne Hall, Jerry and Mary’s love, and all its narrative potential, are pushed again to the periphery. Jerry’s parents insist that because of Mary, instead of returning to London with his friends, Jerry must stay in Hawthorne. But business soon calls him to the city, and he finds himself back there ready for more sprees with his friends. Not unlike



Elizabeth in *Frankenstein*, Mary Rosebud becomes the neglected female figure – the victim of a marriage plot put on hold.

But London is a now more dangerous place. Tom's and Logic's didactic anecdotes, which include Diamond Nancy – the husband murderer, Sinnivating Peg – the robber prostitute, and Doublehead – the dandy conman turned Regent's sheriff, are all more in line with accounts found in a traditional spy text format, instructing readers in whom one need watch out for when in the city. It is Logic, not Tom, who Jerry first calls upon when he arrives a second time in London. The male bonds central to *Finish to Life* are configured differently from those in *Life in London*. We meet the likes of Sir John Blubber, Old Mordecai, and Mr. Splinter, who not only surface repeatedly in various episodes, but they also act as Jerry's guides at times. Those seemingly juvenile bonds of the trio in the first text turn into a more randomized collection of adult associations in the second. This happens, in part, because Tom, over burdened with the story of Corinthian Kate's downfall and suicide, frequently slips out of the limelight and out of the illustrations.<sup>52</sup> We lose Tom as the shining beacon at the center of London life. Logic, in turn, is transformed from his role as the seemingly liminal figure, always poised at composition's edge ready to pursue desires outside the text, into the most necessary

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<sup>52</sup> *Finish to Life* shows a familiar fate for the fallen woman. Tom, after he returns to London with Jerry, neglects her, and Kate, in return, accepts more lovers. He, incensed when he discovers this, cuts her off. Kate, not as young and bright as she used to be, fails to find other habitual support. But the story of Kate's fall from the top of the Corinthian capital – from *Cyprian* to *lazy bitch* – becomes far more compelling than the one of Tom and Jerry together. Rendell gives an excellent reading of Kate's downward fall and suicide and the type of architecture the Cyprian brings to the structure of the text's verbal and visual registers. See Chapter Six of *The Pursuit of Pleasure*: "Life in and out of London" (126-141). I think it is important to note how the break into two storylines is similar to the one in *Oliver Twist* involving Oliver and Nancy. Egan's ability to report catalogue-like details, combined with his appreciation for the finer distinctions within every social type, gives readers an exacting and thorough lesson in the *types* of prostitutes Kate has to become in order to survive as she slides down the hierarchy. She also takes readers to places the male heroes do not.

figure in it. He becomes the one responsible for Jerry's social-sexual maturation and ultimately gains a stronger influence over Jerry than Tom ever had. As Jerry's rambles and sprees become more harrowing, and potentially more public, scandalous even, it is always Logic he turns to for assistance.

Jerry's sexual escapades become the subject matter for several of the Cruikshanks' illustrations, which creates an even greater contrast between their scenes of city life and those of the families in the country. Jerry "hits bottom," so to speak, when he finally gets caught in a hotel fire with a prostitute, which the Cruikshanks chose to illustrate. She turns out to be a girl from a village near where Jerry grew up, led to the city for love and then betrayed. Egan repeatedly returns to this trope where love, not economic necessity, is an acceptable reason for a woman to lose her character. Jerry sets the girl up in a convent and filled with remorse returns home to Mary. Egan's spy-romance hybrid novel, if we can go so far as to attribute enough narrative structure to talk in such terms, is not contingent on any obstacles working to keep true love from finding its happy resolution. Instead heterosexual closure remains uncertain because Jerry may not actually survive his own follies. *Life in London* shows that the best gentlemanly pleasures and experience can be found in a modified libertine ethos, but *Finish to Life* shows that men, however much they enjoy these pleasures, still must marry.

*Finish to Life* makes for an interesting contradiction in terms of genre, carrying traces of older spy texts and of more traditional love stories at once. It tries to align itself with the cultural legacy left by its predecessor and, wanting to profit from it, panders to readers, selling the male adventure fantasy while trying to tackle the requirements of romance. The narrator repeats the promise: "We shall soon have Tom and Jerry going to

go again!’” (104). As much as Egan may try to resuscitate Tom and Jerry’s place in this text, however, they never really seem to quite come together as a couple again, meaning the triangle so prominent in *Life in London* never forms. But as much as *Finish to Life* wants to indulge in a romantic structuring, it effectively reads as another urban travelogue sandwiched between a betrothal scene in its opening pages and a marriage scene in the closing. The imposition of the marriage frame on the text contorts Jerry into a type of Tom Jones figure, *ad hoc*. The message changes for now the ramblers – and Egan – are more critical of city life.<sup>53</sup> Tom had told Jerry that he would be the *perfect country gentleman* once he has had toured London the first time. But the sequel gives us something more akin to a collection of episodes in a young man’s social-sexual experiences that scare a man into marriage.

The Cruikshank brothers saw the cousins as immoral and believed they should have been killed off in the last installment of *Life in London* (Kunzle 173). After all, earlier novels opened up narrative spaces where characters could do sinful things, as long as they died or were maimed or punished in the end. Robert Patten says that Egan, however, most likely opposed the moralistic ending the Cruikshanks had envisioned, the two rakes killed off, because he thought it would be profitable to have a sequel where he could marry off his two heroes instead (173). *Finish to Life* does punish its wicked, but it manages to put a final twist on this ending. Jerry becomes the chief focus for displays of masculine transgressive desire, but he survives. It is Tom and Logic, the complicit facilitators of his so-called education, who die instead.

It appears male friendships like these also cannot survive into adulthood. A man must give up his same-sex friends. THE WEDDING DAY (fig 2.6) becomes contingent on

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<sup>53</sup> See Reid (139) and Rendell (126).

*Finish to Life* also ending as a tragic tale of loss. After Logic dies of his excesses in the city, Tom returns to the country with Jerry. The cousins' plan is that Tom will give Mary



THE WEDDING DAY – all happiness at Hawthorne Hall – JERRY and MARY ROSEBUD united (fig. 2.6)

away at the wedding. But Tom dies before the happy occasion. He takes on the wrong role when he presumptively steps in and tries to take Mr. Rosebud's place in the final scene. The penultimate illustration is that of Tom's deadly fall from his horse. Egan and the Cruikshanks work together to render pictures of dead urban sophisticates before this final one of marital bliss. And the wedding scene the Cruikshanks draw speaks a visual language different from the anesthetized composition of *Almacks*, or the overt sexual fluidity of *All-Max*. Everyone appears coupled, except the musicians, the men who mind the tap, and the innkeeper at the window. We have those same preambles to sex we saw in the city: food, drink, and dance, but here they become the setting for a country gentry wedding, social classes mixed, and no masks required. The line, though fluid, lacks the

sexual and even grotesque aspects it can carry in the city, and we see a visible horizon line. We will see at the end of *Oliver Twist* how urban characters relocate to the country, a reorganization that, though it still favors country over city, blends city and country elements together; *Finish to Life*, on the other hand, opts instead for complete erasure of the city. We get country life with its original cast of characters. There is nothing modern about it. The only member to cross over from the urban episodes to this final one of heterosexual union is Sir John Blubber, seated in the foreground, bottom right corner. The narrator tells us that Jerry, once back home, has lost all his sophistication, but Sir John, the story's kindly old bachelor, sits at the wedding table, a visual reminder of Jerry's escapades.

Although Egan manages to close his sequel with a marital scene, the so-called feeble hold the Regency has on the public imagination will prove to have considerable staying power, especially in terms of its literary life. Representations of reinvented aristocratic masculinities are at the center of these non-normative plots. *Life in London's* trio and their movements through different venues in London, with their attention to the costumes and languages necessary for one to pass, denaturalizes the aristocracy. One need only dress the part and learn the lingo. Tom, having learned the act of dressing and passing in different scenes in order to gain his Corinthian status now teaches Jerry how to do the same. In the next chapter I argue prison novels will find their inspiration in literary dandy figures like Tom and the descriptive settings and romances of silver fork novels. Tom displays the type of stature, mobility, and ethics the heroes of 1830s prison novels will try to emulate. Through the streetwise and yet fashionable prig, we get another view into hidden worlds from an outsider/insider position.

## Chapter Three

### Mixing Genres in Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* and William Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard*

The genres created in the first decades of the nineteenth century had a certain currency with later Victorians, and authors took advantage of the reading public's knowledge of these forms. For example in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Blanche Ingram says to Mr. Rochester following a game of charades, "“Did you know [. . .] that of the three characters, I liked you in the last best? Oh, had you but lived a few years earlier, what a gallant gentlemen-highwayman you would have made!”" (209). She speaks to a man from the world of aristocracy about her fantasies of gentlemen robbers, juxtaposing these two near forms of masculinity. And later in the novel, Brontë's hero tells us of her return to Gateshead and the time spent with the grown Georgiana, "[H]ints were enlarged on: [. . .] sentimental scenes represented; and, in short, a volume of a novel of fashionable life was that day improvised by her for my benefit" (263). A day's worth of activities are condensed into but a handful of sentences because readers of the time, familiar with the genre, could imagine the scenes, and thereby do some of the author's creative work for her. Like the intimate portraits readers saw of the aristocracy in silver-fork fiction, Newgate stories would again privilege readers with admittance into another exclusive world, what Blanche saw in her mind – the criminal world of *flash*. Both worlds, aristocratic and criminal, exist in Newgate fiction. (These novels also give glimpses into

the worlds of the hard-working bourgeoisie, or utilitarian middle class, and the rough but worthy peasantry.) Scenes for the aristocracy come right out of the pages of silver-fork novels, and renditions of flash society are taken straight from the Newgate Calendar; a combination essential to my reading of Newgate plots.

Writers of Newgate novels set their stories in all-male criminal networks, where the men are usually differentiated by age and station. These novels' protagonists are gifted imposters who pass in high society, essentially stealing their new social positions. Because these novels place the lives of highwaymen at their centers, thereby shifting the central focus from aristocratic life – images which filled the pages of books just a few years earlier – these novels become sites for exploring a newer generation of representations of non-normative men circulating at the time. And where the middle class aspired to ascend into the ranks of those they read about in stories of aristocratic life, these highway men circumvent ascension and through the powers of self-transformation produce personae and make kin that give them direct entry into this exclusive world. This chapter takes the idea of the fake aristocrat as its starting point. I am interested in how he, as a literary figure, surfaces in Newgate novels in the 1830s. I concentrate on two representative novels, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton's *Paul Clifford* (1830) and William Harrison Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* (1839).

Silver-fork novels painted portraits of the highest ranks in British society and gave audiences a glimpse into a world deliberately hidden from them. Readers gained the power to see through dense hedges and club walls designed to keep them out, and all the while a qualified narrator, one who claimed to be part of the aristocracy, would explain to them what they saw. Because silver-fork novels were reported to give authentic and

detailed descriptions of high society's furnishings, foods, and fashions, readers studied their pages in order to imitate the lives of the characters within, a phenomenon that led upper-class critics to say that the power of a new buying class, coupled with instructions in where and what to buy, posed a threat to social order.

I argue that Newgate novels capitalized on pseudo-aristocratic aspirations and provided readers with an even more evolved form of social fantasy. Whereas the readers of silver-fork novels had aspired to emulate those they saw in that exclusive aristocratic world, in these texts they become attached to pseudo-aristocrats and are carried into those same worlds. Readers were not necessarily on the outside anymore peering in through the hedges, so to speak. Instead they identified with these new underclass heroes, who themselves were also on the outside looking in, and, along with them, found themselves eventually existing side-by-side, or even surpassing, aristocratic figures. Class function was not necessarily always a vertical construction, where one rose or fell. Newgate men instead used powers of self-transformation, circumvented ascension, and, through a type of social larceny, gained entry into exclusive worlds.

In the end these new heroes become indistinguishable from their fashionable counterparts. These Newgate fictions show us that the dandy and the criminal could appear, in fiction anyway, as one and the same. It is not, however, enough to say that dandies and criminals can be confused. These mixed-genre men are socially mobile facsimiles of the aristocracy, imitations problematic and destabilizing within an otherwise rigid class system. Where the men of silver-fork are the naturalized "lords of the social system" (Moers 50), Newgate men are of a different class, one outside conventional class lines. They are not constrained by categories such as *peasantry* and *aristocracy*; they



move through and function effectively within all of them. In the pages that follow, I show how these narratives tell stories where the man of fashion and the fashionable prig grow to become dissimilar social types, with the story's conclusion being a contest between the two.

### **Illustrating Genre**

Newgate boys are raised in clandestine communities like those Corinthian Tom, Jerry Hawthorne, and Bob Logic visit and expose readers to in *Life in London*. Where Tom and Logic are upper-class boys who suddenly find themselves with money and no family ties, the boys in *Paul Clifford* and *Jack Sheppard*, like many male child protagonists in later Victorian fiction, are born to wealthy parents but orphaned as babies and forced to live otherwise. *Jack Sheppard* opens as Mr. Owen Wood, a journeyman carpenter, and friend of the Sheppard family, carries provisions to Jack's destitute mother (Jack's mother had given birth to him in the women's ward in Newgate prison). The innocent Mr. Wood mistakenly becomes involved in a plot to kill a baby. He fishes the infant from the Thames, but only after he witnesses the murder of the baby's well-to-do father, Darrell. Wood names the boy Thames Darrell. He also takes in Mrs. Sheppard's boy Jack as an apprentice. The boys, the same age, but from apparently different classes, are raised together. In *Paul Clifford*, Paul is stolen away from his mother and given to a *flash ken* (or safe house) owner and raised there. He grows up in the company of gentlemen rogues and would be "[f]riendless, homeless, nameless – an orphan, worse than an orphan – the son of a harlot, [his] father even unknown" if it had not been for the highwaymen (Bulwer Lytton 353). Jack Sheppard, when he reaches boyhood, returns to the "fraternity of debtors" (Ainsworth v1, 52) known as the Mint – "grand receptacle of

the superfluous villainy of the metropolis” (v1, 28). Paul Clifford as a teenager becomes a flash ken patron himself. Each boy develops his own cross-age and cross-class network of male friends. And each will achieve “Newgate celebrity” (Bulwer Lytton 140).

The episodes that constitute the boys’ adolescences and young adulthoods can conjure readerly expectations for an apprenticeship format. Related to my study, Salmon claims that Bulwer Lytton played a significant role in the early development of the English *Bildungsroman* in England (1830s-50s).<sup>54</sup> The Newgate fictions can get caught up in discussions about the evolution of the apprenticeship narratives, and any subsequent discussion about anti-*bildungs* – tales of “thwarted” acculturation (Arnds 224) – because the protagonists seemingly flail when it comes time to man up and complete a successful transversal from homosocial boyhood to heterosexual adulthood.

These new literary male heroes share many traits with their literary predecessors, the silver-fork dandy. Like the dandies, criminals in Newgate fiction frequently have nicknames. Ellen Moers gives a long list of actual dandy men and their nicknames in her book *The Dandy* and says “Regency dandies have come down to us intact with nickname, the label of their individual eccentricities” (21). For example, Mr. Edward Pepper goes by the name Long Ned in *Paul Clifford*, seemingly because of the attention paid his brunet tresses. Dandies speak a coded language, as do the men on the highway, and both parties spend a great deal of time perfecting their appearance, stance, and social performance. The men of silver-fork fiction, when redesigned to be the men of Newgate fiction, grow no fonder of the female sex either. Women are means to an end for these heroes as they

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<sup>54</sup> The English *Bildungsroman* has, for Salmon, one of two identifiable generic characteristics. These are found either in its “iconic inscription of the meaningfulness of youth,” or in its “assimilation of real historical time in the form of the novel” (41).

seek their fortunes heiress-hunting. If there is any outward difference, however, it lies in their aggressiveness. Dandies never fight, but perhaps in a duel. The newer literary men, to the contrary, come from relatively violent environs and are, much like those in the biographies from where they sprang, capable of murder. In *Paul Clifford*, this propensity for violence becomes fodder for comedy, however. The men, in shows of affection, joke about doing such harm to each other. And there is even some talk about killing a guard by Augustus Tomlinson when he and Paul plan their escape from prison, though both are horrified by the idea, making it is obvious to the reader that nothing will come of it. On the other hand, Ainsworth's novel is replete with bloody, graphic (and typically slow) deaths (though Jack kills no one), not to mention various forms of assault, housebreaking, and whoring.

Newgate, like most of the fiction in this period, is characterized by a prominence of action and adventure, where external events take a priority over character development. *Jack Sheppard* is different from Lytton's *Paul Clifford* in that Jack Sheppard, and his archenemy Jonathan Wild, are actual historical figures (along with several other minor characters in Ainsworth's story), leaving contemporaneous critics to focus primarily on his novel's lack of deference for the conventions for the historical novel set out by Scott just a decade earlier (Tillotson 140-1). Ainsworth spends a great deal of time in his novel also describing setting and costume. His detailed description of actual streets and buildings, especially Newgate prison and Wild's home (named the Castle), read like technical writing taken directly from a map, and the costume details are catalogued as if listed straight from the illustrations he was using as source material. Because the novel's presentation seems a great deal like stage directions at times, it is no

wonder that it moved into the theater so quickly, only adding to the sensation it made in London.

Prisons become central structures in these novels, and a necessary component for the Newgate hero's celebrity. Paul Clifford escapes in his adolescence from Bridewell, which turns him toward adulthood and symbolizes for him a rite of passage as a criminal. He leaves behind the identity of his youth and emerges a leader of highwaymen. Jack Sheppard, in his short life, escapes from Newgate not once but multiple times. Ainsworth meticulously recreates the environment of the actual prison for his readers, along with particulars for each of Jack's prison breaks, but because his novel is as much popular myth as it is historical fact, he is able to turn every break into its own episode, its own theater of escape, that involves a large supporting cast, many of whom are not historically accurate. The lengths gone to by the thief-taker Jonathan Wild and his bailiffs to secure Jack at Newgate reach absurd and near-comical proportions as they work to thwart his repeated escapes. Every time they house him deeper in the recesses of the prison and increase the number and size of his fetters exponentially. News of his escapes fuels his celebrity: "Jack Sheppard is the talk and terror of the whole town. The ladies can't sleep in their beds for him; and as to the men, they daren't go to bed at all. [. . .] His exploits and escapes are in every body's mouth. He has been lodged in every roundhouse in the metropolis, and has broken out of them all, and boasts that no prison can hold him" (v2, 114). His prison breaks become a highly theatrical reenactment of the crossing and re-crossing of boundaries in these fictions.

*Paul Clifford* and *Jack Sheppard*, along with their fundamental use of historical and fashionable genres, mix other generic elements: episodic adventure, apprenticeship

and education, costume romance, farce, and Gothic. There is nothing “painterly” about the application of these forms. Seemingly dissimilar genres are poured directly onto the pages. The boundaries between genres may bleed together at times, but each component, for the most part, remains relatively discrete as a unit. The pastiche nature of these works does not result in a blend or hybrid but more of a patchwork of forms, inflexible enough that when several of their boundaries touch, the storyline becomes overburdened with the weight of the mix. This is most likely why critics then, and today, condemn them for being *mixed-genre* forms, not because of their blend of genres, as any novel will be, but because the mix is heavy, clumsy, and frequently done to the detriment of the evenness in the narration. Regardless, a focus on the genre mixing gets us closer to developing a formal method for reading these problematic texts, in contrast to the disabling effect of previous genre studies that attempt to reduce any work to the singular form of an emerging genre.

Once we consider mixes of genres collectively, structurally, we can also see how these new literary heroes are constituted differently from the minor characters in their novels. The latter, like Mrs. Wood, keep to their genre from scene to scene, seeming to adhere to the inflexibility of these genres I discussed earlier. For example, Lord Mauleverer’s coterie in *Paul Clifford* – Lady Simper, Mr. Nabbem, and Mr. Shrewd – snatched directly from the pages of Restoration drama, are unflinching in character, even as the environments change around them, and make a most striking contrast when they come up against a character like the novel’s romance heroine Lucy Brandon. In *Jack Sheppard*, Jack’s Gothic mother stays so to the very end, first struggling in the Mint, and then dying a madwoman at Bedlam, while Mr. Wood’s family remains in its rustic

adventure (and burgeoning bourgeois) world. But where these casts of characters originate in one genre, and stay in that form, the heroes in these novels grow to be elastic mixes of attributes drawn from all genres. They move through the *mélange* that comprise each novel, and take on any generic bodily manifestations needed for their development. They are not simply masters of disguise. In his youth, Jack may merely dress the role; in other words, a man from the Gothic Mint costumed in order to impersonate a man of the fashionable genre. But by way of impersonation, he grows and becomes the embodiment of the affects and behaviors that he perfects for his craft, or, borrowing a word from the dandies, he develops his own, albeit criminal, *ton*.

Cruikshank's illustration "Jack visits his Mother in Bedlam" (fig. 3.1) shows us not only Jack sporting his characteristic broad-footed stance and steely reserve, transformed into this new literary hero, but it also shows how mixed styles, mixed genres even, can remain discrete in the illustrations. Cruikshank drew a few illustrations for the fourth edition of Ainsworth's *Rookwood* in 1834, but *Jack Sheppard* was his first full collaboration with this author, one who had complained earlier that Cruikshank's illustrations were too "sketchy" (Patten *Cruikshank* 109). Matthew Buckley notes how Cruikshank masters a newer, cleaner form, how "the churning, unstable vignettes" (440) that had characterized Cruikshank's Regency pieces turned into "scenes with the poise and stillness of neoclassical tableau illustration" (439). They offer "the viewer a stable, balanced, often immobile position within the action of the scene, drawing the viewer's eye repeatedly to the strongly delineated figure and defiant, composed profile of Sheppard himself" (440). As I showed in Chapter Two, Cruikshank was already using classical compositions in his Regency drawings; not all were unstable and churning. And

in this instance, we have Cruikshank drawing using a mixture of aesthetic styles. The implied line running along the configuration of Jack and his mother reaching



(fig. 3.1)

up to him divides the composition diagonally. Cruikshank, as he draws the triangular section of the composition that includes Jack, keeps to the general textual aesthetic, well ordered and lines drawn sharply. There is precise articulation in his visual language here. Cruikshank shows that he can be as meticulous in his drawing as Ainsworth is in his writing. Even the characteristic scratchiness of his crosshatching transforms into grids of perfectly perpendicular horizontal and vertical lines. But we can see a distinct change between styles, especially where they converge in the patterns on the floor. The aesthetic

on the mother's side of the composition looks much more like the Gothic atmosphere Cruikshank draws for *Oliver Twist's* penultimate illustration, *Fagin in the condemned Cell*. Again, a room fills with shadows because of light shining in through a grated window. The line and movement within the shadows looks turbulent and menacing. Jack's mother's facial features are similar to Fagin's as well. Cruikshank is careful to draw his deranged figures in half profile so that both frantic eyes are visible to the viewer. Cruikshank mixes stylistic genres in his images in a fashion that mirrors the mix of textual genres in *Jack Sheppard*.

*Jack Sheppard's* romantic love scene, acted out by children, coming early in the novel, and is set against the backdrop of the boys' playroom, one designed to symbolically represent the differing generic origins of the boys – criminal and gentleman. Jack's character, as we can see in Cruikshank's "The Vindictiveness of Jack Sheppard" (fig. 3.2) seems destined to be the hero of the prison novel, and Thames that of a





(fig. 3.2)

fashionable story. Ainsworth's description of the boys' playroom says as much, as a list of their belongings begin to tell their stories. Cruikshank's illustration is an exact representation of Ainsworth's textual description:

Darrell's peculiar bent of mind was exemplified in a rusty broadsword, a tall grenadier's cap, a musket without lock or ramrod, a belt and cartouch-box, with other matters, evincing a decided military taste. Among his books, Plutarch's Lives, and the Histories of Great Commanders, appeared to have been frequently consulted[.] [. . .] Jack Sheppard's library consisted of a few ragged and well-thumbed volumes abstracted from the tremendous chronicles bequeathed to the world by those Froissarts and Holinsheds of crime—the Ordinaries of Newgate. His vocal collection comprised a couple of flash songs pasted against the wall, entitled 'The Thief-Catcher's Prophecy,' and the 'Life and Death of the Darkman's Budge'[.] (239-41)

Cruikshank fills the back wall with the boy's representative possessions, each collection of goods visually separated and framed by shelves. A vertical line divides the boys and their things, emphasizing further the distinction the text draws between the boys and their respective genres. A ready response for the description of the boys' playthings in Ainsworth's text could be one that sees the differences as symbolic of their blood, their natures. Ainsworth paints Jack as a roguish criminal in the making, because of bad blood, and Thames, on the other hand, is drawn of chivalrous, good blood, and naturally a gentleman. But he undermines a reductive reading of this sort by making the boys cousins, both of aristocratic blood; even though the boys, like us, are unaware of this until very late in the story.

Any balance in representing the boys' generic characteristics – prison and silver-fork forms – reaches its breaking point when the boys turn twelve years old. The Woods' natural daughter, Winnie Wood, is in love with Thames; Jack is in love with her. The scene opens as Winnie, because of her love, attempts to draw a miniature of Thames. She is unhappy with the outcome, and he enters the playroom just as she throws it down in frustration. Following an exchange of affections between the two, as Thames tries to console her, an eavesdropping Jack bursts into the room and sings a flash song:

“Aha!” exclaim[s] Jack, with a roguish wink, “I’ve caught you—, have I?”

The carpenter's daughter was fair and free—  
Fair, and fickle, and false was she!  
She slighted the journeyman, (meaning *me!*)  
And smiled on a gallant of high degree.  
Degree! Degree!  
She smiled on a gallant of high degree.  
Ha! ha! ha!”

[. . .]

“When years were gone by, she began to rue

Her love for the gentleman (meaning *you!*)  
'I slighted the journeyman fond, 'quoth she,  
'But where is my gallant of high degree?  
'Where! where!  
'Oh! where is my gallant of high degree?'

Ho! ho! ho!" (v.1, 245)

Jack's song touches upon the classic trope in romance fiction where the young girl is tempted away from the chivalrous gentleman by the romantic rogue. Readers of the time could have expected such a plot twist, but because Jack's history is already written, many would have realized, because he is hanged young, that such an outcome was unlikely. Most Newgate heroes have rather short lives. But Jack's song also highlights the interchangeability of aristocratic and Newgate men in these novels. Both, at least according to Jack, are of a "high degree," and much like Blanche Ingram in *Jane Eyre*, Winnie's desire unites the two. Jack tells Winnie that he will desist if he can have a "smack of her sweet lips" (v.1, 246). She smacks him with an open hand instead. He follows with a roguish comeback. Thames thrashes him just as a child gentleman should: "'That'll teach you to keep a civil tongue in your head for the future,' observe[s] Thames, as he help[s] Jack to his feet" (v1, 247). It is worth noting how Cruikshank capture a moment here when a single woman stands at the intersection where these two generally all-male worlds meet (again, Blanche Ingram's fantasy). The gender configuration in this childhood scene seems a characteristic representation of the "folk-wisdom" of Girard's triangle, similar to the one Shelley described between Victor, Henry, and Elizabeth in *Frankenstein*. Winnie is also the only romantic female character in this story, and once the conventions of romance are established, Bulwer Lytton supplants any romantic storyline that would include her with the all-male social world of Jack's adolescence.

Not only does the playroom become the backdrop for Jack's hyperbolic outburst, this scene is also over-burdened with the mix of its genres. Winnie, our middle-class heroine, is poised for a story of upward social mobility, with Thames playing her gentleman suitor. Jack, on the other hand, plays the part of a highway robber, which is not strange material for him; the story has been setting him up as such all along. But here Jack, for the first time, acts the part of the rogue. He intrudes upon the conventional lovers' scene and brings the romance to an abrupt stop. His dancing, singing, and grimacing are highly theatrical. If any behavior connected to his Newgate predisposition were withheld in the early parts of the novel, he makes up for it here and becomes what appears to be a frenzied, hyperbolic caricature of the highwayman, still in child form, and creates a cataclysmic rupture in the bond between the boys. They separate: first as individuated embodiments for the two predominant genres in the novel, and second as brothers. This moment is pivotal in Jack's development as a gentleman robber, but it signals a different movement for Thames. Sir Trenchard and Jonathan Wild see to his removal from the story when they have him "transported" (they put Thames on a ship to the Netherlands and instruct the captain to throw him overboard while at sea), and, in effect, Ainsworth carries this fledgling gentleman's story off-stage. Thames' chivalrous maturation is unnecessary for the plot, and one that readers already know, rehearsed again and again in the early fashionable novels. Once grown, Jack will refer back to this key moment several times as he tells his friends and family that it was Winnie's choice of Thames over him that made him choose the society of the Mint and its life of crime.

Thames always acts the gentleman and grows to become the stock character that fills Regency and silver-fork fiction. Gallantry and allegiance to his social standing are a

large part of his imagination as a child, and, once returned to London grown, he looks what everyone expects him to be, a “well-proportioned figure of a young man” (v. 2, 133). Because images for Thames exist already in the popular imagination, the novel lacks any full description of him. Contrastingly, the novel gives the reader a much more descriptive picture of Jack, our newer literary hero. At age of twelve, his

cheekbone were prominent: the nose slightly depressed, with rather wide nostrils; the chin narrow, but well-formed; the forehead broad and lofty; and he possessed such an extraordinary flexibility of muscle in this region, that he could elevate his eye-brows at pleasure up to the very verge of his sleek and shining black hair, which, being closely cropped, to admit of his occasionally wearing a wig, gave a singular bullet-shape to his head. [. . .] [He had one of those] faces that almost makes one in love with roguery. (v. 1,154-5)

Jack is a dangerous and yet attractive figure, dark and misshapen compared to what we imagine to be the tall, fair, and classically featured Thames. As the boys grow up, apart from each other, the dissimilarity between their appearances, at least on the surface, falls away.

The boys meet again as young men, when Thames returns to London, looking for the adoptive family from which he was taken. Jack is still there, a working criminal of celebrity status, and disowned by the same family that Thames seeks. “The Audacity of Jack Sheppard” (fig. 3.3) shows not only how the Wood family does not recognize Jack once he is grown but also how it is that he is no longer the misshapen, yet attractive,



(fig. 3.3)

villain from earlier. Cruikshank draws their faces now as more similar than different. It is important to recognize how reminiscent this scene is of Cruikshank's illustration of the boys fighting for Winnie's love in the playroom, but the visual catalogues of possessions, designed originally to set off the differences between the boys, has by replaced the bourgeois setting of the Woods' parlor. The Woods first guess that Jack is some "young gentleman," even perhaps a lord, richly attired (v. 2, 216): "Jack had an excessive passion for finery. [. . .] His apparel was sumptuous in the extreme, and such as was only worn by persons of the highest distinction" (v. 3, 59). Through the boys, the two worlds, criminal and aristocratic, become metonymical in appearance. Even though the boys travel different paths, when standing side-by-side as men they are nearly indistinguishable, Jack

the same as his gentlemanly “sibling.” Cruikshank humorously draws Winnie in the same posture as she was in the earlier childhood romantic love scene, only this time she is running away from the boys instead of toward them. But where Thames Darrell, Jack’s adoptive, upper-class brother, is constrained and excluded by the limitations attached to his genre, Jack is able to move between this world and the Gothic environs of the Mint, a place where the likes of Thames, or even their “father” Mr. Wood, would be an outsider.

Thames stands in for the seemingly naturalized dandy that appeared in sliver-fork novels a decade earlier. He represents that man who was a product of birth, a temperament fully realized rather than merely an act developed. Jack, on the other hand, with his growth as a Newgate hero tied to his talent for imitation, takes on the characteristics of and performs as the man of fashion, transforming himself as the story progresses (even though he remains some version of a criminal underneath). If the dandy, while not overly concerned with matters below the surface, lives in a world of outward perfection, Jack functions much the same way. But his character undermines the perceived essentialism for the dandy. As Moers tells us, the outward pretensions of the dandy were believed to be the natural and intrinsically linked expression of his innate inner-constitution: His *refinement* was “temperament, [a genetic predisposition], rather than a social gloss, a gift (or penalty) from birth rather than an accomplishment (20). By comparison, our Newgate hero is instead a multi-layered construction, where exterior(s) and the interior(s) can function independently of each other. Jack’s social mobility becomes contingent on outward facsimile. The mobility that he enjoys in the novel is based on his ability to match Thames, though he is of a much different configuration. In Jack, readers identified with a literary hero that was quite the opposite of those found in

silver-fork novels just a decade earlier. It is important that Newgate and silver-fork heroes look the same on the page, but where the silver-fork hero serves as a testament to the naturalness of birth and social order, readers saw instead in the Newgate hero a separation of inner-constitution and outward affect that was both elastic and productive.

### **The Mixed-Genre Hero**

Paul Clifford is an even better example for this type of mobility in the Newgate novel. He is a man for all genres and, therefore, all classes, as each class in Bulwer Lytton's novel is rendered in a different genre. As the hero, his manliness and mobility increases as the genres in the novel multiply. He becomes the naïve changeling, the rustic and gallant adventurer, the comedic and yet potentially dangerous highwayman, the quick-tongued and well-dressed dandy, and the young romance lover all rolled into one, and the novel's climax finds opportunity for Paul to function as such.

Much like Jack Sheppard's youth, spent working and sleeping in a woodshop, Paul Clifford spends his younger years living in a tavern. When Paul is an infant, his dying mother, a woman abused and abandoned by an aristocratic man, gives him to the proprietress of a *flash* ken, where he grows up, unaware, in the company of highwaymen. But at sixteen, he is introduced to pseudo-dandy society at the house of Bachelor Bill, a person of great notoriety among the *flash* underclass. Paul, however, finds himself "no match for [this] finished, or, rather, finishing gentleman with whom he [begins] to associate" and incurs a great amount of debt trying to act the part. He soon finds himself penniless and on the streets. Mr. Edward Pepper, Long Ned, an earlier acquaintance from the Mug, rescues the boy. He dresses Paul in fashionable attire and takes him to the



theater. Bulwer Lytton makes a gesture toward heterosexual romance when Paul becomes suddenly entranced with a beautiful young girl there; Long Ned, on the other hand, lusts for a beautiful old watch. Paul unwittingly serves as an accomplice to a robbery and, of course, lands in prison. The all-male triangle central to *Paul Clifford* forms after Paul's stay at Bridewell. He becomes reacquainted with yet another fake aristocrat, Augustus Tomlinson. The two form a fast friendship, escape from prison, and quickly find themselves back in company with Long Ned. Much like Oliver does in Dickens's tale, Paul becomes friends again with the same young man who tricked him into a life of crime in the first place.

Egan's edition of Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* says that Newgate prison was also called "City College" because of the friends boys made and what they would learn from them. Bulwer Lytton tells us how Ned and Augustus were instrumental in Paul's formation as a criminal:

There was this difference between Augustus Tomlinson and Long Ned: Ned was the acting knave; Augustus, the reasoning one; and we may see, therefore, by a little reflection, that Tomlinson was a far more perilous companion than [Ned], for showy theories are always more seductive to the young and clever than suasive examples, and the vanity of the youthful makes them better pleased by being convinced of a thing, than by being enticed to it. (279)

Long Ned brings to the relationship the sheer pleasure in stealing from others—not because one is getting something for nothing but because of the amount of theater involved. The actions themselves give pleasure, and Paul's joy shows as he works. He banters with his "victims," makes puns in the exchange, and even offers to return some of their belongings if they can answer one of his riddles. He is fond of wearing his mask, and occasionally refers to himself as *Robin*, pretending to be the Robin Hood who robs

from the rich to give to the poor (though Paul never manages to execute the latter part of this exchange). Augustus' influence is less practical and more cognitive. He strengthens the boy's propensity for stealing by lending philosophical insights to the mechanisms of criminal life, which helps Paul put stealing into its proper perspective: "All crime and all excellence depend upon a good choice of words" (282). The narrator tells us regarding Paul's mentors that it "was Rabelais against Voltaire" (386).

Once Paul is grown into this new and celebrated figure, Lytton changes the sets in his novel from the seedbeds for Newgate fraternities in urban London to those of the silver-fork aristocrats removed to Bath. And as he moves readers from one world to the other, he tells them that they will be accustomed to the scenes he is about to present to them because they are the very ones that filled the pages of silver-fork stories earlier. He says,

Pausing for a moment to glance over the divisions of our story, which lie before us like a map, we feel the we may promise in the future to conduct thee among aspects of society more familiar to thy habits; – where events flow to their allotted gulf through landscapes of more pleasing variety, and among tribes of a more luxurious civilization. (288)

Lytton, in this moment, capitalizes on images already in the public imagination and lets them do his creative work for him. He admits that his story is divided. What came before this point in the narrative was all new terrain for readers, but here he reassures them that they are now back on familiar ground – those scenes found in fashionable fiction. In Lytton's picture of Bath, however, fake aristocrats and the real deal mingle on common ground; Lytton in effect transplants the former, along with readers, into the world of the latter. Newgate heroes not only fashion their own identities, but they also build their own

families. Once in Bath, the trio enjoys one of the few scenes we see of domestic bliss in *Paul Clifford*. While they heiress-hunt, they threesome spends quiet evenings at home:

Captain Clifford had been dining with his two friends; the cloth was removed, and conversation was flowing over a table graced by two bottles of port, a bowl of punch for Mr. Pepper's especial discussion, two dishes of filberts, another of devilled biscuits [. . .]

The hearth was swept clean, the fire burned high and clear, the curtains were let down, and the light excluded. Our three adventurers and their rooms seemed the picture of comfort. So thought Mr. Pepper; for, glancing round the chamber and putting his feet upon the fender, he said, – “Were my portrait to be taken, gentlemen, it is just as I am now that I would be drawn!”

“And,” said Tomlinson, cracking his filberts, – Tomlinson was fond of filberts, – “were I to choose a home, it is in such a home as this that I would be always quartered.” (350)

Tied to their birthright, both Paul and Jack discover that they have a place waiting for them in the higher echelons of society, but instead they remain loyal to the substitute families they had created. The bonds in these alternative all-male families that they form early are stronger than those of blood.

Paul and his friends, once in Bath, are rewarded for the efforts they have put into their development as pseudo-dandies; they pass, at first anyway, without too much difficulty. Paul finds Lucy Brandon there, the girl he had seen that night at the theater before he went to Bridewell. He learns that she is now the sole heiress to sixty thousand pounds. At first, she seems the ideal target for heiress-hunting, that preferred trade of the fake aristocrat, but Paul soon falls in love with her, and his intentions turn honorable;<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Lynn Pykett is the only scholar to date that I have found who uses genre as means to analyze individuated components within the text. She says that when Paul Clifford falls in love with Lucy Brandon that Bulwer Lytton’s “plot becomes complicated in the manner typical of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novel” (22). In other words, the story is Newgate fiction for the first half and conventional romance for the second, with her complaint being then that the novel is not a fully realized Newgate novel (since it is the first of its kind, it is understandably underdeveloped). There is some truth to Pykett’s claim of halves, as the novel moves from London to Bath, but her glossing of genre misses, first, the richness of its other genre elements and, second, any potential

however, it seems that Paul did not leave his so-called celebrity on the highway. All of Bath becomes besotted with the new captain in town, and they begin to inquire as to the “family of this beautiful Mr. Clifford” (356). Lucy’s uncle (who turns out to be Paul’s father) has plans other than those contrived by the newly arrived and highly esteemed Captain Clifford. Since he cannot marry his own niece (and he would if he could), he wants to make sure his good friend Lord Mauleverer does, thereby keeping all that money in the family, so to speak. The uncle convinces Mauleverer to throw a grand ball, the likes of which Bath has never seen, in Lucy’s honor, hoping that this will help persuade her that Mauleverer is the perfect match for a soon-to-be heiress. It looks like Paul’s famous beauty and well-trained aristocratic demeanor could well be his and his friends’ undoing. In order to guarantee their survival, however, and avoid any tarnish on Lucy’s reputation, should his lack of family lineage be discovered, he decides it is time for them to quit Bath. But Paul wants to see Lucy one last time before he goes, and Mauleverer’s ball is the only place he can do it.

The maneuverings of these two men, seeking to woo the same woman, set the stage for a decisive confrontation between the man of fashion and the fake aristocrat – a fight of words and decorum between, what I argue are, these two near and competing forms of masculinity in the novel. As I said earlier, the varied and discreet generic components in any one of these novels become the most obvious when they rub up against each other (or, as in the case of *Jack Sheppard*, hyperbolically collide). The party shines a light on the mix of genres in the entire novel: the Newgate story imbedded in costume romance drama with elements of Restoration comedy divided like an episodic

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for reading the changes in our hero, related to both gender and class, and dependent on the various arrangements for the mixed forms.

adventure tale, mixed with Gothic conventions, that at times reads more like satirized silver-fork fiction. Frustrated love in our hero, as in Ainsworth's novel, signals the moment in the text when these multiple genres will overburden the narration. But Bulwer Lytton's novel does not necessarily collapse from the weight; the meeting of genres manifests itself differently. The novel instead takes a turn toward its own theatricality, and turns Mauleverer's party into its own stage(d) production, a play within the play so to speak. In this case, several dissimilar actors, each representative of the differing genres in the novel, dressed in his or her own costuming, following his or her own stage direction, converge simultaneously onto one stage.

Paul hides in a hedge waiting to say goodbye to Lucy, but he is discovered. Mauleverer, with all guests watching, questions Paul's presence there. He initiates the confrontation with a "bow of tranquil insult," saying, "'Pardon me, sir, but is it at *my* invitation, or that of one of my *servants*, that you have honored me with your company this day?'" (359). Paul counters with no "embarrassment in reply, but bowing with an air of respect, and taking no notice of the affront implied in Mauleverer's speech" (and much to the disappointment of his party guests): "Your Lordship has to feign a glance at my dress, to see that I have not intruded myself on your grounds with the intention of claiming your hospitality" (359). Lytton tells us that Paul then excuses himself in a "quietly respectful and really gentlemanlike" way (360). Mauleverer, not backing down, stops him and asks for the name of the guest he had come to see. Paul refuses, claiming that the question implies "a doubt, and, consequently, an affront" (360). The tenor of their exchange escalates and a series of well-coded insults are exchanged. Mauleverer, shocked that anyone would want to "bandy words" with the likes of him, must admit that

he admires Paul's skill, only then to add that it "must be the result of a profound experience in these [types of] affairs" (360). Paul, a "man who had seen in a short time a great deal of the world, and [knows] tolerably well the theories of society, if not the practice if its minutiae," understands that he is in "a situation in which it had become more necessary to defy than to conciliate" (360). He walks calculatingly up to Mauleverer and says: "My Lord, I shall leave it to the judgment of your guests to decide whether you have acted the part of a nobleman and a gentleman[.] [. . .] But I shall take it upon *myself*, my lord, to demand from *you* an immediate explanation of your last speech" (360). The exchange quickens again, and Lytton tells us that "almost for the first time in his life, [Mauleverer] los[es] absolute command over his temper" (360). In essence, his dandified perfection cracks. He is the one humiliated.

We are left with Paul after the contest in the same characteristic heroic stance that we see Jack don in the illustrations in *Jack Sheppard*. When Mauleverer threatens to have Paul thrown from the estate, Paul stands his ground and "gaz[es] around with a look of angry and defying contempt, which, joined to his athletic frame, his dark fierce eye, and a heavy riding-whip, which as if mechanically, he half raise[s]" (360). Paul replies,

'Poor pretender to breeding and sense, [. . .] with one touch of this whip I could shame you for ever, or compel you to descend from the level of your rank to that of mine, and the action would be but a mild return to your language. But I love rather to teach than correct. According to my creed, my lord, he conquers most in good breeding who forbears the most – *scorn* enables me to *forbear*! – Adieu!'

(360)

His choice of the word "pretender" to describe Mauleverer does double duty. It points up Mauleverer's inability to carry on their exchange in accordance with the explicit rules of his society. Paul functions within the constraints of decorum more effectively than

Mauleverer. But the word also carries allusions to James III, pretender to the throne, and the Jacobite movement that was growing in England at the time. Bulwer Lytton reminds his nineteenth-century readers that Mauleverer's loyalties lay somewhere other than home, and he wants them to see that our hero is more "English" than his silver-fork cousin. Paul strengthens the implication when he makes a gesture toward silver-fork cant and leaves Mauleverer with a satirical "Adieu."

The "level of rank" that Paul refers to in his final words to Mauleverer is ambiguous. It is not clear whether he is referring to the class attached to his alias, Captain Paul Clifford, or if perhaps he is imagining life at Thames Court. Paul comes in through the hedge and steps directly into the world of Lord Mauleverer's party; he symbolically crosses that barrier designed to keep his (and the reader's) kind out. It is no coincidence that Paul's life as a highwayman began with him hiding in hedges and finishes with him doing the same. Only this time he wears no mask and has matured into a man of his own making, the Newgate hero. Bulwer Lytton highlights the fortitude of Paul's social mobility by putting him toe-to-toe with the likes of Mauleverer. Paul, dressed to match the dandy, defeats him, in posture, performance, and quality. In the end it is Mauleverer's character as a gentleman that is questioned, not Paul's. The extraordinary quality in *Paul Clifford*, and fodder for fantasy in the reader, is that Paul can go anywhere and be anyone: he is a pre-Victorian superhero.

*Paul Clifford* has a different ending than *Jack Sheppard*. Because Paul is Bulwer Lytton's own creation, and not part of history, he is able to give him a long life. In Bath, after leaving Lucy, Paul is found out and Ned and Augustus captured. He helps his comrades escape in a daylight rescue as they head to the gallows. Paul is captured this

time, essentially trading his life for theirs. In court he stands before his father William Brandon, the newly appointed judge. Brandon has learned of Paul's relation to him (Dummie and Long Ned discover the truth and tell him so), but condemns him to hang just the same. Afterward, in the privacy of his office, Brandon commutes the sentence to one of transportation for life, only to then die of a stroke in his carriage on his way to meet Mauleverer. At the end of the novel, Bulwer Lytton tells us that the highwaymen, in order to save their lives, disbanded and fled. Lucy and Paul live happily with a baby in the Americas. Lucy Brandon, unlike Winnie Wood, gets her romantic rogue in the end, but only because he leaves London. Augustus opens in Germany "a school of morals on the Grecian model, taught in the French tongue" (450). He writes a folio against Locke which proves that men do have innate feelings. Long Ned is captured again and transported, where he makes an "excellent match, build[s] himself an excellent house, and remain[s] in the 'land of the blest' to the end of his days" (450).

*Paul Clifford* enables a form of masculinity derived from a composite male figure created by mixing multiple genres. That is not to say that maleness in these novels is shaped only in these terms. But our hero's mobility, dependent on this mix of genres, functions independently of highly structured discourse for gender in the novel, one built on the sexualized binaries of *male* and *female*. Paul possesses the fundamentals of the dandy highway robber, the fashionable man of Regency romances, and the youth of an adventure tale, but he also can have a woman's features. Our seemingly hyper-masculine hero is frequently noted for his feminine, even girlish countenance and mannerisms. Paul even fantasizes about being a woman. After he finds himself homeless in his youth, he stands on London Bridge and gazes into the gloomy waters, putting himself in the place



of “numerous charming young ladies who have thought proper to drown themselves [. . .] depriving many a good mistress of an excellent housemaid” and leaving behind letters “ending with ‘Your affection not but molancolly Molly’” (259). In fact, cross-gendered identifications play heavily in the characterizations of several of the men in Bulwer Lytton’s novel. Paul’s accomplice, Long Ned, is repeatedly said to have the face of a woman. Long Ned finds Paul kicked out of the Mug and on the streets: Paul

was suddenly accosted by a gentleman in boots and spurs, having a riding-whip in one hand, and the other hand stuck in the pocket of his inexpressibles. The hat of the gallant was gracefully and carefully put on, so as to derange as little as possible a profusion of dark curls which, streaming with unguents, fell low not on either side of the face, but on the neck, and even the shoulders of the owner. [. . .] There was a mixture of frippery and sternness in his expression,—something between Madam Vestris and T. P. Cooke, or between ‘Lovely Sally’ and ‘a captain Bold of Halifax.’<sup>56</sup>

For the criminal fraternity, womanly beauty is used to describe positive attributes for the male heroes. For the aristocratic fraternity however, these feminine attributes turn to negatively charged *effeminate* qualifiers. Where Long Ned is the womanly rogue; Lord Mauleverer is the effeminate rake, known for his “effeminate appetite” (301). And William Brandon, because of his friendship with Mauleverer, fears being perceived as an “effeminate idler” (316). Gender used this way reinforces class lines. Effeminacy colors the aristocracy while womanly beauty denotes the newly created and ostensibly free agents of Newgate fiction.

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<sup>56</sup> These are contemporary theater references. Madame Vestris (1797-1856) was a British actress, opera singer, and stage manager noted for inaugurating the use of tasteful set design as well as setting a high standard for stage costumes. Thomas Potter (T. P.) Cooke (1786-1864) was a stage actor for 56 years and best known for numerous roles as a sailor, or “Jolly Jack Tar,” in melodramas of the 1820s and 1830s. These characteristics became attached in the popular imagination to Cooke himself. He also played roles in horror stories, including the Monster in the 1823 stage adaptation of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

Newgate fiction, an even more evolved form of social fantasy, functions differently from its predecessor. Readers were not on the outside peering through the hedge, so to speak, but instead they identified and evolved with the novels' protagonists. These men were first situated in the lower echelons of society, very much like those reading (the newly literate lower and rising-middle classes), and, along with their readers, would eventually find themselves existing side-by-side with the aristocracy. As adults, Paul Clifford and Jack Sheppard are able to move about through all walks of life, from the underground culture of the Mint in London to the salons and ballrooms of high society in Bath. They speak multiple lingo and enjoy wide celebrity. Just a decade earlier, readers studied silver-fork novels hoping to learn all that was necessary to mimic the lives of the aristocracy. These new literary heroes did just that, though they were not mere copy-cats. They grew into new literary characters that not only met the aristocracy but also surpassed them. Attached to the pseudo-dandy, readers were carried directly into the restricted worlds of London's wealthiest citizens.

Later sensational novels, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1863), tie social mobility to criminal activity as well. I think it is important to draw a distinction between these early novels and the later ones. In Braddon's book, class is rigid, stratified, and contiguous; social mobility moves upward (or downward). Lucy Talboys takes the name of a dead woman in order to conceal her previous marriage and child. She starts as an impoverished teacher, who achieves "success" by becoming a governess to a country doctor's family. An aristocratic man falls in love with and marries her. She moves up in society one rank at a time – climbing tier to tier – until she is finally named Lady Audley. Once she reaches the top of the ranks, she cannot fall back down,

even after she is discovered a bigamist. The family name of Audley is at stake. Instead, she is sent to an asylum in France. This is not even a lateral move. Lucy is taken off the game board altogether. Men in earlier crime fiction function differently. Because these novels begin as changeling stories, the men in them could potentially move through the classes because of a hidden birthright, or even possibly marry up in station, but they choose instead to steal places among the higher ranks. In this case, social strata are not something one climbs. The playing field flattens out, and places in the class structure are taken by force. These men, equally capable in any station, move horizontally through the social strata, instead of vertically, between spheres and, for these mixed-genre forms, between genres. For these novels, pastiche masculinities, dependent on mixed-genre forms, enable a different social mobility, and readers of the time saw a masculinity that could go anywhere.

Bulwer Lytton and Ainsworth, in the tradition of Egan's *Life in London*, use cant vernaculars in their dialogue. There are moments in these novels when the two worlds of men, aristocrat and criminal, look similar enough, or overlap in ways, that this insider language is the only means for telling one class from the other. Ainsworth shows readers that some characters understand the vernacular, and others do not. In *Jack Sheppard*, Mr. Wood, wanting to save baby Jack from the men that seek to murder him, sounds the bailiff alarm in the Mint. As debtors and criminals alike come to his aid, "Mr. Wood trembled":

He felt he had raised a storm which it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to allay. He knew not what to say, or what to do[.] [. . .]  
"I don't understand you, gentlemen," stammered he, at length.  
"What does he say?" roared the long drover.  
"He says he don't understand flash," replied the lady in gentleman's attire. [. . .]  
"It's plain he don't understand our lingo; as how should he?" (Ainsworth 46)

Middle class readers at the time, like Mr. Wood, didn't understand the language. Earlier, while reading silver-fork fiction, they had been educated in a different tongue, that of *ton*, which was spoken by the elite. The men of the criminal underworld, counterparts to the aristocracy in these novels, spoke this other language, a new experience for readers, which frequently meant the novel included a glossary. For the silver-fork dandy, his coded language meant even greater separation from lower classes. For the dandy highwayman, the language was not necessarily designed to exclude but instead conceal. The language, like that of dandy *ton*, did have geographical and sociological underpinnings. The people in the Mint spoke *flash*, whether they were highway robbers or not, but this new generation of male heroes needed to walk among the aristocracy because near proximity was a crucial part of their trade, and this new language obfuscated meaning or intent as they walked in spheres other than their own. Readers learned the language along with their heroes, and a language of concealment became one of inclusion. Where silver-fork novels often worked as a testament to a reader's outsider status, prison novels, in their use of cant, turned the tables on the aristocracy. Readers had a privileged view into these worlds and, in a bit of dramatic irony, understood more than those men in these novels who had been their instructors in fashion just a decade earlier.

**queer bitch**, ‘ an odd out of the way fellow’  
(Grose, 1785) : not c. but s. Here, *queer* bears  
its s. sense ( ‘ odd, uncommon ’), not its c. sense  
( ‘ of the underworld ’, ‘ inferior ’).

(Partridge 546)

Highwaymen in these novels are both *different from* the aristocracy in that they form a class of person that performs outside the predictable class structure and the *same as* the aristocracy because they are indistinguishable from them in appearance. There is something rather queer about this imitation, at once *different from* and *same as*, and Bulwer Lytton, early in his novel, is careful to draw the distinction. When Paul first meets his friends Augustus and Long Ned, Bulwer Lytton never says the two are in fact dandy gentlemen. He sets them apart, however subtly, from the genuine article: “Mr. Augustus Tomlinson, which captivated the senses of our young hero [Paul] [. . .] was exceedingly smartly attired; [wearing] red heels and a bag; [he] had what seemed to Paul quite the air of a ‘man of fashion’”(245). And Long Ned, when Paul meets him, is said to have the “air of a dandy about to be impertinent” (249). These men “seem to” have the makings of gentlemen; there is an “air” about them that suggests it may be so, but Bulwer Lytton never labels them the genuine article. On the surface they appear the same, but it is by way of Paul’s admittance into this secret world that readers began to see the differences between the real and fake aristocratic species.

The majority of the semi-secret words spoken by fake aristocrats in these novels describes the business of cheating others and sorting out the real from the fake. And at the center of these crooked vocabularies is the word *queer*. I argue that these novels produce different connotations for the word *queer*. Where the word historically means odd or differing from the norm, in these early novels it takes on the force of objects made

as imitation or facsimile, which is key to these highwaymen's ability to transform themselves and move about through all levels of society. Because of this, *queer* plays an important role in this chapter's exploration not only of non-normative masculinities but also of these men's extraordinary social mobility. Early nineteenth century prison novels contain two usages for the word *queer*, slang and cant, each of which has its own semantic history.<sup>57</sup> Eric Partridge's 1949 dictionary *A Dictionary of the Underworld* makes this important distinction in its entry above for *queer bitch* – the “odd out of the way fellow” – so named in slang (s.), not cant (c.). Partridge cites Pierce Francis Grose's 1785 *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* for his definitional source, which gives the phrase a usage date very near the time in which Bulwer Lytton and Ainsworth place their stories. Bulwer Lytton employs far more cant in his novel than Ainsworth does, but both authors use the two extractions for *queer* outlined above in ways that could potentially shade modern-day appreciations for the word that queer scholarship has yet to consider.

Contemporary un-queer scholars have devised a seemingly unilateral and relatively uncomplicated history for *queer*. The word, in its earliest dealings, was used to describe things that were “odd,” out of the ordinary. A first semantic shift takes place as the twentieth century approaches. Around this time, people began to employ the word as a derogatory synonym for *homosexual*. And now, some eighty years later, another semantic shift has occurred as the injurious word is reclaimed by a community of sexual

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<sup>57</sup> Victorian lexicographers believed that *queer* in English started as a Romany derivation. The entry for *queer* in J. C. Hotten's 1887 *The Slang Dictionary* reads: “[A]n old cant word, once in continual use as a prefix, signifying base, roguish, or worthless – the opposite of RUM, which signified good and genuine. QUEER, in all probability, is immediately derived from the cant language. It has been mooted that it came into use from a *quare* (?) being set before a man's name; but it is more than probable that it was brought into this country, by the gypsies, from Germany, where QUER signifies “cross” or “crooked.” At all events it is believed to have been first used in English as a cant word” (264). But this idea has fallen out of favor with today's lexicographers.

outlaws as a politically charged self-identifier, thereby diminishing its potency in hate speech. In the introduction to his 2003 book *Henry James and Queer Modernity*, Eric Haralson, wanting to rebuff a static history of this type, gives an animated reading for the uses of the word and its shift in meaning in 1870-1930 American Victorian and Modernist literature. Haralson's study reacts to scholars like Alfred Habegger who believe "the queer studies meaning of *queer* has so 'overwhelm[ed]' the conventional Victorian sense of *queerness* – in his gloss, 'an oddness. . .not felt to be desirable and . . .surpass[ing] harmless eccentricity' – that this older usage seems 'obsolescent and . . .definitely unsmart'" (7).<sup>58</sup> Habegger that an author such as James could not have been thinking of *homosexual* when he wrote *queer*. He would have been using the "language of his time, not ours" (7).<sup>59</sup> Habegger goes on to argue that "the earliest use of the word in its latter-day sense, according to the *OED*, occurred 'six years after James's death'" (7).<sup>60</sup> But Haralson contends that Victorian and Modernist writers had an appreciation, as queers do today, for *queer*'s "referentiality [as] mobile and contingent rather than fixed" (1).

But at some point in history the practice of searching for *queer* in a text and then "reading it queerly" turned into just plain finding the word and spotting the queer behind it. In other words, the word lost its power as an imprecise adjective and became instead a disambiguated substantive noun. Haralson contends that the time commonly accepted in history for this change, suggested in the *OED*, is too late. His project takes specific usages and complicates their meanings in ways that undercut the existing historical date

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<sup>58</sup> Haralson quotes Habegger in "What Maisie Knew: Henry James's Bildungsroman of the artist as queer moralist" (*Enacting History in Henry James: Narrative, Power, and Ethics*, editor Gert Buelens, Cambridge UP, 1997: 93-4).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

for the semantic shift. He finds that even earlier sightings of the word in texts may actually be pointing at queers, or persons at least close in spirit to the modern-day homosexual. According to him, the “recurrent recourse to *queer* to evoke an uncanny emotion or a densely homosocial environment indicates the term’s adaptability or inclination to its evolving sexual meaning” (6). He relies on instances outside the pages of fiction, such as court transcripts (for their “street” language), to augment his reading of signification and homosexual desire in literature, by which he is more able to see “the broad contours of [queer’s] lexical evolution,’ rather than ‘reconstructing a lineage of static meanings’[.]”<sup>61</sup> For this reason, relying on forms of popular name-calling for his historical markers, he can locate evidence for queer desires even earlier in history than what authoritative texts say regarding the matter.<sup>62</sup> Like me, Haralson has special interests in historic uses for *queer*. His include its cultural development and the possible changes it undergoes as it shifts from a signifier for things out of the ordinary to one that identifies the “homosexual.” I examine *queer*’s semantic history as well, and track changes over time, but I focus instead on disparate meanings attached to the word that come from alien sources.

Haralson, as he reconfigures his semantic/sexual history, seems to bring to light only slang uses for *queer*. In his introduction, he notes briefly an entry in the *OED* that points to two possible cant derivations for the word. He says,

If manners or bodies or faces became “queer” *enough*, the person exhibiting them were set down as queer fellows, chaps, or creatures, or sometimes evoked more colloquially as queer birds or fish. Extreme manifestations aroused suspicions that a person might be “queer in head” or possibly residing in “Queer Street,” that populous thoroughfare, running through the pages of especially English

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<sup>61</sup> Haralson (7). He is quoting George Chauncey’s *Gay New York* (New York, Columbia UP, 1999: 14-16).

<sup>62</sup> Here I am referring to Haralson’s use of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.



literature from Charles Dickens to Robert Louis Stevenson to Evelyn Waugh, where residents suffered from unspecified but unseemly “difficulties”; some of these unfortunates were probably “on the queer,” as well, or living by forgery and theft, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* clarifies. (5)

According to his assessment, cant *queer* lies in “extreme manifestations” of queerness, which means “possibly residing in ‘Queer Street’” or living “on the queer.”<sup>63</sup> In these usages, the preposition makes all the difference. Being called queer is not the same as being *on* it, or *in* it, and, used in this fashion, it invokes a meaning with a very different historical and far-reaching use; one that, instead of labeling people and objects at odds with the norm, denotes people and objects in near facsimile, counterfeit copies. This ostensibly peripheral form developed from the semi-secret “street” vernacular used by another clandestine community, the society called *flash*. Because of this, the well-trodden cobbles of Queer Street in later English fiction that Haralson notes above—the “imaginary street where people in difficulties are supposed to reside; hence, any difficulty, fix, or trouble, bad circumstances, debt, illness”<sup>64</sup> – have for their point of origin the neighborhoods of Newgate fiction.

Prison novels were published prior to the instances of *queer* studied by Haralson, and I do not want to suggest that the *queer* as cant used in them possesses the beginnings of or even directly influences the ambiguous referentiality that Haralson attempts to re-harness, but I do find, however, significant the fact that *queer* as cant seems to always sit just at its periphery. My study focuses on origins for *queer* other than slang and, in doing

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<sup>63</sup> When Jerry Hawthorne returns to London in *Finish to Life*, he first calls upon Logic. Jerry has only the names of cross streets for Logic’s address, one of which is *Queer Street*. According to the OED, this is the first usage of the phrase in English literature. The term also appears in *Grose’s Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* that Egan edited and published in 1823. The entry reads: “Wrong. Improper. Contrary to one’s wish. It is queer-street, a cant phrase, to signify that it is wrong or different to our wish.” The Cruikshank brothers draw a scene of Jerry Hawthorne standing on Queer Street in *Finish to Life*.

<sup>64</sup> This definition is taken from the OED (slang).

so, tries not to remap an evolution of signification for *queer* but instead call up unexpected undertones that could still shade meanings for the word today.

The British underworld first spoke cant in the early 1700s. One of the first records for its usage is found in *A new canting dictionary: comprehending all the terms, ancient and modern, used in the several tribes of gypsies, beggars, ...To which is added, a complete collection of songs in the canting dialect* (1725),<sup>65</sup> which lists nearly two dozen hyphenated entries for QUEERE (also spelled quire). A handful of these entries display meanings consistent with the cant vernacular used in early Victorian fiction, for instance: Queere-Birds, “such as having got loose, return to their old Trade of Roguing and Thieving”; “clip’d counterfeit, or Brass Money” is called Queere –Cole; and a Queere-Cole-fencer is a “Receiver and Putter-off of false Money.” Several other entries, however, display meanings which take on a much different connotation: a “coarse, ordinary, or old Handkerchief, not worth *Nimming*,” is called a Queere-Clout; Queere-Drawers are “Yarn, or coarse Worsted, ordinary or old Stockings”; a Queere-Nab is a “Felt, Carolina, Cloth, or ordinary Hat, not worth whipping off a Man’s Head”; and “old-fashion’d, ordinary, black-framed, or common Look-glasses” are called Queere-Peepers.”<sup>66</sup> *Queer* as cant used this way, with definitions that seem the inverse for early slang uses of the word, denotes an object out-dated and “ordinary” enough in appearance that it merits little consideration; in other words, it is not worth pilfering. In its early days, cant did not include terms for those who impersonated the rich in order to steal from them.

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<sup>65</sup> Found in the *English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group <<http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/servlet/ECCO>>. An earlier source is *BE’s Dictionary of the Canting Crew* (1699).

<sup>66</sup> All listings for *Queere* appear on documents numbered CW3311642456 and CW3311642459 in the *English Short Title Catalogue*.

Definitions of this sort, such as *high-toby man*<sup>67</sup> and *the swell mob*,<sup>68</sup> surfaced in later dictionaries, between 1810 and 1830.

Authors took license and ignored any historical inaccuracies in their application of these terms as part history. Class strata among thieves are important features in Bulwer Lytton's new-fangled world. Even though Newgate men achieve the freedom to overstep the class lines of "legitimate" society, their hero status is dependent on their own rise to the top of the illegitimate thieving sort. In fact, Bulwer Lytton has enough interest in establishing class stratification among the thieves that he includes a scene where criminals from a higher station show animosity toward those presumably from a lower one. Once Paul escapes prison, Long Ned and Augustus take him to a safe-house called *The Jolly Angler* to introduce him to Gentleman George and his band of highway men (the same lot that Paul will soon lead), and one of the men there "mutter[s] something about 'upstart and vulgar clyfakers (pickpockets) being admitted to the company of swell Tobymen'" (285).

A *queer* was first a counterfeit coin. Later, uses for the term grew, and it took on the vigor of a multi-utility adjective, noun, and verb, readily attached to numerous persons, objects, and actions, all describing elements of the London underworld. Flash men did *queering*. To *queer a lad* was to corrupt a boy, and turn him to a life of crime. A *queer plunger* was someone who jumped into the Thames and pretended to nearly drown (thereby receiving charities given those who suffered such a fate). *Queer rum* was

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<sup>67</sup> Also known as a *high-toby gloak*: "A highway robber, well mounted." *High Tobymen* has an origin date of 1811, from Francis Grose's 4<sup>th</sup> edition *Lexicon Balatronicum*. *High-toby gloak* has an origin date of 1812, from J.H. Vaux's *The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux*" (Partridge 332).

<sup>68</sup> This usage is taken from *Session Papers of the Old Bailey, 1824-1833*, VI, trial of John Hemmings (1830): "Such pickpockets as, to escape detection, dress and behave like respectable people" (Partridge 707).

double-talk. *Rum* means “good” or “genuine,” the opposite of *queer*. *Queer rum* means literally “bad good” or “false genuine.” If someone was *queered*, he or she was befuddled. To *tip the queer* was to put a person in prison; a *queer ken* the prison house. A *queer thimble* was a valueless watch, and *queer lambs* were falsified dice.<sup>69</sup>

Ainsworth’s *Jack Sheppard* contains only four *queer* occurrences: the first three are slang, and the last one cant, but this latter one signals an important plot twist. All walks of people in the novels speak *queer* as slang. When baby Thames and baby Jack are switched in order to hide Thames from the party that wants him dead, Jonathan Wild admires the “queer business” (v1, 58) (though we could say this use does double duty as it comes from the likes of Wild). Mr. Wood, after bearing false witness in the Mint in order to distract the group of villains from obtaining their prey, hides in an alehouse where his friend tells says that he looks to have suffered a “queer plight” (v1, 107). And when Jonathan Wild, disguised as a Frenchman, stumbles upon young Thames at Wood’s house, even our story’s narrator tells us that Wild’s mouth had a “queer twist” (v1, 196). But the final usage for *queer* Ainsworth reserves for Jack, and it marks an important moment for him in his progression as a Newgate hero. Shortly after the scene in which Winnie rejects Jack, he and Thames leave the Woods looking for Thames’ biological mother. They quickly find themselves at the Trenchard estate, and back in the hands of Sir Rowland Trenchard and Jonathan Wild (just before Thames is “transported”). Here Jack plays the part of the rogue a second time, though this time it is more than mere mimicry. Jack wants to show the men in the room that he is not afraid of them, so he saunters about the room and “fix[es] his eyes upon a portrait of the Earl of Mar; he asks

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<sup>69</sup> These terms come from Eric Partridge’s dictionary with usage dates between 1770 and 1870. His dictionary contains over 125 entries that contain the cant word.

nonchalantly, ‘Who's that queer cove in the full-bottomed wig?’” (v1, 303). Jack utters cant for the first time here, which he will then speak fluently for the remainder of the novel. Before he had mimicked a rogue in song, but here mimicry turns to actuality and his new power to speak the queer language marks the shift. It was Jack who grabbed the miniature that resembled Thames from the Trenchard estate that leads the two boys back there, but Jack blames Thames for the theft, agrees to bear witness against him, and leaves young Thames in the hands of those who want him dead. Meanwhile, Wild dispatches Jack to the Mint, and, at age twelve, begins his life of Newgate fame.

Bulwer Lytton’s *Paul Clifford*, on the other hand, uses *queer* numerous times, all employed as part of the cant vernacular. Demonstrations of the term’s multi-utility become a big part of the language in *Paul Clifford*. Early in the novel, the narrator uses a variety of cant terms to better describe and educate his readers in the ways of *flash* society, the culture into which Paul is born. But Peggy Lob is the first character in the story to speak cant when she utters the phrase “in Queer Street.” (She is also one of the first characters to utter the phrase in English literature.) Peggy Lob admonishes the sixteen year old, seemingly wayward Paul: “‘Look you, my kinchin cove,’ [. . .] and in order to give peculiar dignity to her aspect, she put[s] on while she [speaks] a huge pair of tin spectacles, – ‘if so be as how you goes for to think as how I shall go for to supply your wicious necessities, you will find yourself planted in Queer Street. Blow me tight, if I gives you another mag’” (251). She then continues, giving additional warning to Paul’s accomplice Dummie, “What! you'll lend my Paul three crowns, will you, when you knows as how you told me you could not pay me a pitiful tizzy? Oh, you're a queer one, I warrants; but you won't queer Margery Lobkins. Out of my ken, you cur of the mange!”

(252). After Peggy Lob speaks *queer*, the term resurfaces several more times in the story. When Dummie meets Paul in prison, he exclaims, ““Queer my glims, if that ben’t little Paul!”” (265). Once Paul is older, escaped from prison, and a fellow highwayman, his mates seek to capitalize on the traffic going to and from a ball and “think to play the queer on some straggler” (361). When Augustus and Long Ned are finally apprehended by the bailiff Mr. Nabbem, he reminds the two men of the fate of those who have come before them: “I say, has you heard as how Bill Fang went to Scratchland [Scotland] and was stretched for smashing queer screens [that is, hung for uttering forged notes]?” (404). (Lytton includes the bracketed translations here. He takes the second one directly from Francis Grose’s 1811 dictionary *Lexicon Balatronicum*.) And near the end of the novel, when Dummie informs Long Ned that it was Paul’s tutor Peter Mac Grawler, newspaper man turned thief, that ratted out Paul and his friends, he says, ““Do you know, he used to be at the Mug many’s a day, a teaching our little Paul, and says I to Piggy Lob, says I, ‘Blow me tight, but that cove is a queer one! and if he does not come to be scragged,’ says I, ‘it vill only be because he’ll turn a rusty, and scrag one of his pals!’””(431).

Bulwer Lytton, in these few passages, is able to use *queer* for several parts of speech: adjective, verb, and noun. When used as an adjective or verb, the word seemingly retains the sense of those words that he would have found in contemporaneous dictionaries—meaning “counterfeit” and “cheat,” generally and respectively. But when Bulwer Lytton invokes *queer* in the proper noun “Queer Street,”<sup>70</sup> his purpose in meaning is not quite so straightforward. Partridge’s 1949 dictionary gives the phrase an

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<sup>70</sup> According to the *OED*, This is one of the first recorded usages for this phrase in English literature, predated only by an occurrence in Pierce Egan’s *Life in London*. The opposite of *queer street* is *swell street*: “A *family man* who appears to have plenty of money, and makes a genteel figure, is said by his associates to be *in swell street*,” J.H Vaux, 1812; [. . .] by 1864 it was low s.” (Partridge 707).

origin date of 1811, which cites Grose's *Lexicon Balatronicum* as its only historical source:

'Wrong. Improper. Contrary to one's wish. It is queer street, a cant phrase, to signify that it is wrong or different to our wish,' *Lexicon Balatronicum*, 1811; app. the sole record. This phrase (see *queer*, adj.) seems to have been c. of the period 1800-1840 (or so); the derivative *to be in Queer Street* is s., and seems to have arisen in the early 1830s. (549)

The phrase came into being very near other cant phrases that depended on a stratification of wealth among thieves, such as the *high-toby man* and the *swell mob* I mention above, and was comparatively new to the cant vernacular when Bulwer Lytton chose it for his story. Partridge tells us that the phrase began its cant days near the beginning of the century, and some thirty years later it became slang, but he fails to explain what this distinction means exactly; there appears to be no difference in their definitions. It seems likely then, according to what Partridge lists, that the difference between cant and slang usages lies in their circulation. Prior to Bulwer Lytton's novel, the phrase was part of a semi-secret language spoken only by a small, rather particular segment of the population. After publication, and because of the popularity of novels like Bulwer Lytton's, the phrase found a place in the imaginations of popular fiction readers, from where it would eventually make its way onto the streets as slang.

We can image a cross-textual moment for Bulwer Lytton, looking at a dictionary entry for *Queer Street* when he wrote *Paul Clifford*. But because it had little to offer him in terms of his story and its manufacture of fashionable prigs, coupled with his panache for invention, I propose the phrase used by Peggy Lob is meant to mean more than what contemporaneous dictionaries had to offer, or even what dictionaries today tell us about it. Peggy Lob speaks the cant language as well as any clyfaker in Bulwer Lytton's novel.

When she utters the phrase, she warns Paul that he is going to be out of her house, out of her care, and, quite literally, out on the street (which does happen), but because of her knowledge of *flash* culture, and the range of meanings attached to *queer* in her lingo, the phrase takes on a different, more-totalizing sense better-fitted to Bulwer Lytton's fictional world. Peggy Lob sees through the men who frequent her establishment, and the men with which Paul has come to socialize. They are the same men that Peggy Lob has been trying to steer the young Paul away from since he was a child and she financed his so-called "classical" education. She may be pointing Paul to the street, but as she does so she invokes the multiple meanings for *queer* when she utters "Queer Street," making it much more than a figurative geographic location signifying unfulfilled expectations. She also characterizes and labels the whole environment of Newgate heroes – a world of counterfeits and fraud – that Bulwer Lytton gives birth to in his novel.

Newgate novels make but a brief appearance in literary history. It seems that Charles Dickens, in reaction to the types of popularity Newgate men enjoyed, wrote *Oliver Twist* as a corrective Newgate novel, and it proved to be, arguably, the last of the genre. Dickens, in his 1841 preface, says, that "associates in crime" are portrayed "as really do exist" and not as "seductive fellows (amiable for the most part), faultless in dress, plump in pocket, choice in horseflesh, bold in bearing, fortunate in gallantry, great at song, a bottle, pack of cards or dice-box, and fit companions for the bravest."<sup>71</sup>

Dickens, as he rejects the singularity of literary heroes created by Ainsworth and Bulwer

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<sup>71</sup> Taken from Appendix A in the Penguin Classics edition, 457. William Thackeray, who first grew to fame with *Catherine* (1839), a parody of Newgate, saw that Dickens had clearly created a criminal world where vice and virtue seemingly keep to their respective spheres, where the good are rewarded while the bad are punished, but could not forgive Dickens for *Oliver Twist*. His contention was that Dickens's portrayal of criminal life, though admittedly different from its predecessors, was unrealistic (in style and conception) and therefore still immoral. (John, *Rethinking Victorian Culture* 128).



Lytton, supplies readers with a more heterogeneous and ultimately more realistic representation of criminal life – an array of “dreadful creatures that are born to be murderers and robbers from their very cradle” (50), which include juvenile pickpockets, prostitutes, housebreakers and fencers of stolen goods. Dickens, because his interests lie ultimately in dismantling the power popular pictures of pinchbeck aristocratic criminals, had over readers’ imaginations, never seeks an opportunity to draw a representation of the all-male triangle central to his picture of criminal life. Dickens constructs in its place a picture of masculine triangulation in his trio of bachelors who finds and rescues Oliver.

## Chapter Four

### Finding Friends in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*

George Cruikshank's treatment of the parish boy's progress in his twenty-four illustrations for *Oliver Twist* (1839) is dissimilar enough from Charles Dickens's that Henry James, when he commented on the novel, said he found Cruikshank's story to be more compelling than Dickens's (Golden 17). Because Dickens was writing right up to deadlines and frequently had no copy text ready when the two men met to decide the subject matter for any one illustration, Cruikshank supposedly used this as an opportunity to have more of a say in the content of the illustrations (Tracy 9). Catherine Golden has more recently examined the ways in which Cruikshank's pictorial realm recasts certain aspects of Dickens's textual one. According to her, the verbal and the visual each have different appreciations for lower-class characters. She says Dickens was sympathetic to characters like the Dodger, Fagin, and Nancy, Fagin at least initially and Nancy more so as the novel progresses. Cruikshank, on the other hand, was not. It appears that he treats all lower-class characters in the same way. Where Dickens may have wanted readers to see Fagin, that "merry old gentleman," as a (though arguably perverted or grossly misdirected) compassionate maternal figure, Cruikshank draws him as a demonic one.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Golden contends that Dickens's sympathies, even though he dresses them in lower-class clothes, led him to develop these characters as having more middle-class-like sensibilities. She goes on to say that Cruikshank draws Fagin as an ironic complement to the benevolent Brownlow. His creation of parallel compositions, where he contrasts these men's wardrobes, postures, and home decors,

Regarding Nancy, scholars frequently mention that Cruikshank could not draw attractive women (nor men, in my opinion), but his pictures of her defy mere inability. Golden says that Dickens had meant for Rose and Nancy to resemble each other, sister-like, but with the first girl colored by nurturance and compassion, and the second colored by vice and infamy. Regardless, Cruikshank neutralizes the significance of Dickens's parallelism by drawing Rose slender, youthful, and angelic and Nancy squat, common, and prematurely aged. Not merely visual redundancies of Dickens's verbal world, Cruikshank's drawings create alternate meanings and divide the story of the parish boy's progress between two divergent and often-competing registers.

We have seen how Cruikshank applies different drawing styles to different social classes in earlier novels, but the distinction Golden draws here is an important one. In novels before *Oliver Twist*, and in *Jack Sheppard* after, Cruikshank's influences are mostly achieved through nuances in his style, the visual language he speaks through the thickness and curve of line. But in Dickens's novel we see how he can change characters wholly, bodily. I argued, of course, that Cruikshank in *Life in London* was able to persuasively reinterpret Egan's vision of Logic enough that even Egan himself began to believe Cruickshank's picture of his figure of misrule. In *Oliver Twist*, however, Cruikshank takes even greater creative license and redesigns many of Dickens's characters. And these changes reach beyond simply highlighting class differences. Cruikshank, as we will see in this chapter, draws very different pictures from what Dickens's imagined for his scenes of male friends and their bonds.

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crystallizes a melodramatic and ultimately one-dimensional struggle between a wholly evil man and a wholly good one.

Dickens's name has become synonymous with sentimentalized representations of Victorian family life. This chapter also reconsiders the utility of family as an organizing principle in contemporary readings of *Oliver Twist*, arguing against a critical preference for understanding the novel's social groups—including groups of all-male pickpockets and cultures of rustic gentlemen—as “familial” in nature. Dominant critical perspectives for *Oliver Twist* see it as the prototype for future Victorian plots where an orphan dispossessed eventually finds a heterosexual family. Granted, Dickens experiments with traditional family structures in his novel, disrupting and reconstituting them again and again, but I argue that these patterns are merely episodic in design, and that the novel's narrative coherence relies on young Oliver's movement through a succession of all-male communities that resist and even undermine family's authority.

This chapter recognizes Oliver's search as one for friendship and not family. When Oliver oversteps his bounds and “asks for more,” members of the parish board try to sell Oliver to the chimney sweep Mr. Gamfield, but the magistrate, because of Oliver's pleading, says the boy can remain in the workhouse. The plans the board had for Oliver to die quietly somewhere in a smokestack are thwarted. But soon after they settle on a new plan—a life at sea is what the boy really needs. But Oliver instead becomes Sowerberry the undertaker's apprentice, only then to be transported to Fagin's self-styled “school” for pickpockets. The novel repeatedly places young Oliver (or nearly places him) into several apprenticeships where male friends can be found, and it is Oliver's interactions with these friends that work to propel the narrative forward. In other words, if a series of all-male communities provides the novel's form, then scenes of male bonding become its content. Oliver as protagonist becomes the vehicle who carries

readers into and through Dickens's textual tableaux of masculine love. Oliver functions much like a blank canvas on to which other boys and men, who each repeatedly ask him, "Who do you want to be?", aim to imprint aspects of their own social statuses upon him. And when we recognize that Dickens's underworld is not meant to be an alternative family environment but instead one more possible setting for male initiation, we can have a fresh context in which to examine Oliver so-called progression toward full masculine status.

Talking in terms of sheer narrative bulk, Dickens's text, above all, concentrates on the relations between boys and boys and men and men. In contrast to the outwardly chaotic heterosexual arrangements, all-male communities and their relations bring an organization to the narrative missed in readings dependent on finding family units. Dickens's individualized treatment of groups of men seems significant enough that to generalize and say that they inevitably speak only to some growing consciousness concerning middle-class familial ideals, whether it be Dickens's or the culture's at large, seems to miss those fundamental moments of male intimacy.

Any events that signal a forward momentum for our protagonist in Dickens's textual world – such as finding a job, getting an education, or even making a friend – become repeatedly frustrated because members of other fraternities frequently undermine attempts to induct him into any all-male culture. Oliver is beaten at the Sowerberry's, chased and beaten by a mob on the streets of London, kidnapped off those same streets and locked in a room, and shot and left for dead. Caught in an elliptical thematic loop, violently torn between widely different male cultures, Oliver, besides sustaining physical injury, never really matures as a boy, as a character. The divergent arrangement of social-

sexual spheres in *Oliver Twist* is dependent on Oliver's being and remaining a child, trapped in a play of the first two phases of heterosexual maturity and never reaching the third. *Oliver Twist* is different from the other novels in this dissertation in that its plot unfolds in both overtly homosocial and heterosexual arrangements, juxtaposed to each other. This in effect becomes *mutual inscription* of another kind. Sedgwick had looked for homosocial bonds subsumed in and yet necessary to diverse heterosexual social arrangements. Dickens creates instead environments where the homosocial and the heterosexual function as separate, recognizable and only sometimes overlapping spheres.

The attempts to initiate Oliver as a member in any one community animate him for a period, but they ultimately fail; that is until he settles in with Mr. Brownlow and his bachelor friends. Scholars generally regard them as a benign group of one-dimensional characters, but I will argue that the novel's resolution and Oliver's vitality are dependent on Mr. Brownlow's development from an old soul dwelling in the past to a contemporary man of action. Dickens purposely designed these men to be not only their own literary social species but also his novel's plot enablers and conflict solvers. The narrative, after the entirety of family dramas and all-male scenes Oliver encounters, essentially ends where it begins. The textually indicative homosocial world of bachelors and the conditional heterosexual world of Harry and Rose exist in near proximity to each another without coalescing into a heterosexual text, and the young Oliver can happily have a foot in each.

## All-Male Stabilities

*Oliver Twist* keeps a critical legacy similar to *Frankenstein*, which I examined in my opening chapter. Both novels are generally understood to be historically important because they underwrite contemporaneous cultural shifts in family structures and family values. And if scholars can find a mixture of genders and/or ages among a group of characters at any one point, then it seems they have found some meaningful representation of family. David Parker in fact sees *Oliver Twist* as an “experiment in anarchy at the expense of family order” (137), which, according to him, produces “surface patterns of family dysfunctions” (142). Three particular near-family structures actually demonstrate how unimportant heterosexuality is for Oliver’s traversal through the novel’s masculine landscape. There is an intact family: Mr. Sowerberry and his wife, the apprentice Noah Claypole, and the housemaid Charlotte, which first appears to be a rather normative arrangement, at least for Dickens. Afterward, the two households that foil Fagin’s and Monks’s attempts to ruin Oliver defy any representation of ideal bourgeois domesticity. Mr. Brownlow is a single man loyal to his friend Mr. Grimwig and lives in a private home where Mrs. Bedwin cares for Oliver. Rose Maylie, Dickens’s nearest representation of the Victorian Angel in the House, lives with her adoptive mother and male servants. Mr. and Mrs. Bumble – that childless, and even dangerous couple – are characteristic of the numerous fractured, non-nuclear, and non-reproductive families that Oliver briefly encounters. There are unmarried couples who live together: Noah Claypole and Charlotte live as the “The Boltors,” though Noah sells Charlotte into prostitution; Bill Sikes and Nancy live in a common-law marriage, until Sikes murders her for turning traitor. There are numerous orphaned children who have no parents, such

as Dick and the boys who sleep in the Commons. And there are families with only one parent, like the Bedwins (Mr. Brownlow's widowed housekeeper who has several grown children), or the Baytons (the pauper family whose mother dies).

Governed by a critical preference for seeing Dickens's novel as a dynamic heterosexual matrix of social relations, built from both literal and figurative representations of *family*, scholars tend to reimagine its all-male venues as simply more family structures. For example, the Poor Law Board, the group of eight to ten "fat gentlemen" that includes the red-faced man in the high chair and his co-conspirator in the white waistcoat, who first provide for Oliver become a "parody of family solicitude" (Parker 131). Scholars often characterize them collectively as a single father figure because Mr. Bumble says to Mrs. Mann, the woman who oversees the baby farm near the workhouse, that she must "feel like a mother" in regard to her charges (9). But it is the narrator who reminds us that the parish system is in actuality antithetical to family life. He tells readers that its members "divorced poor married people" and "took [a man's] family away from him, and made him a bachelor!" (13). Fagin also often gets cast as a paternal or maternal figurehead, only in a secret heteroglossic society where cant language serves as the glue that ensures kindred connectedness, said to be the "closest [Oliver] has ever come, at that stage of the story, to admission into a family" (Parker 132).<sup>73</sup> Brownlow and the Maylies then get recast as correctives to these other all-male "family" groups. In turn, Brownlow's community of bachelors becomes part of a larger

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<sup>73</sup> Parker, in his defense of all things family in *Oliver Twist*, says that if Dickens did first think of the story in 1833, as Tillotson suggests in her 1966 Clarendon edition (a heavily debated claim), then it coincides with the break up with his first true love Maria Beadnell and happened at a time Dickens was reconsidering "hopes of marriage" and "prospects of fatherhood" (121). He goes on to explain that in 1837, when Dickens begins to write *Oliver Twist*, he was married to Catherine and his son Charlie was just born. And his daughter Mamie arrived in March of 1838. The volume edition of the novel was published that November. Parker believes the novel's familial discords reflect Dickens's anxieties about marriage, birth, and the responsibilities of family.



family that critics need for a “happy” ending. For example, F. S. Schwarzbach (1990) says that it is important to note that while those who conspire to steal Oliver’s inheritance are hanged or transported, Oliver himself ends up in “genteel rustic seclusion, surrounded by his happy family” (235). And David Hirsch (2003) concludes on this same familial note, although he points up possible problems when he uses scare quotes to discuss Oliver’s “real” family in *Brownlow and the Maylies* (316). According to them, Dickens, though he is willing to experiment with non-traditional family structures, wants the later quasi-nuclear, potentially reproductive (and obviously heterosexual) family to prevail.

Critical enterprises of this type seem to forget that Dickens borrowed heavily from Gothic literary conventions. The Gothic opens up literary spaces where gender and sexual norms could be transgressed at a time when rapid shifts in the cultural organization were making these categories and expectations about them more rigid. But as much as these authors experimented with anti-bourgeois sentiments in their novels, they (almost) always managed to set things back to rights with their happy conclusions, which tended to reify gender and sexual imperatives and solidify the newly emerging status quo they ostensibly sought to subvert. The conversation for *Oliver Twist*, especially when it comes to matters of the nineteenth-century middle-class family, sounds very much the same. It says that at a time when the middle-class, nuclear, reproductive family was becoming the representative social arrangement for newly emerging domestic and moral codes, Dickens found in Oliver, that migrating orphan, a means to move between and experiment with various dangerous familial structures, only then to conclude his story with the boy as part of a (near) exemplary middle-class, heterosexual family in the *Brownlow/Maylie* collective. Readings that locate stability for Oliver, or the novel’s

structure for that matter, only in a near “real” family diminish the value that Dickens places on male love and his all-male communities.

The word *family*, oddly enough, plays but a small role in Dickens’s descriptions of interpersonal relations. It appears only some ten times in his novel. Oliver is orphaned and knows nothing of his parents, but Mr. Bumble tells the Sowerberrys that he comes from a bad *family*. Bumble also takes an opportunity to comment on Mrs. Corney’s *family* of cats. Oliver, during the burglary at the Maylies, moves to alert those in the house, the *family* that he imagines lives there. The narrator at one time calls the Maylie’s small group of relations a *family*. When Nancy goes to see her in London the first time, the narrator tells us she looks out of place in the *family* hotel. And Brownlow speaks of Monk’s *family* when he captures and interrogates him; after this, uses of the word fall away. *Family* as qualifier never appears for the parish board member or the workhouse, Fagin and his underlings,<sup>74</sup> or the bachelor’s community.<sup>75</sup>

Studies that argue a familial *telos* organizes, or disorganizes, *Oliver Twist* do not consider the actual language Dickens uses to characterize relations between his male characters. For the members of these communities, Dickens employs a series of specialized terms, which sets them apart from the characters found in the family arrangements. In the beginning of the novel, the parish *board* looks to have Oliver apprenticed; at the novel’s center, *companions* and *friends* become the dominant signifiers for relations in Fagin’s ken; and at novel’s end we have, of course, those bucolic *bachelors* who secure Oliver’s financial independence. When we read *Oliver*

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<sup>74</sup> Sikes at one time says that Oliver presents more problems for him than a “whole family of Dodgers” (178), but this one instance is particular to the boy and conjures images of what today we might call cloning, a collection of replicas.

<sup>75</sup> *Family* as a qualifier does not appear even in those scenes that include Harry and Rose at novel’s end.

*Twist* not as the story of a boy finding family but instead of a boy traveling into these worlds of men, very much like the other protagonists in this study, its arrangement of all-male communities found in them make for a cohesive narrative frame.<sup>76</sup> I talked earlier about how Parker has pointed out the episodic and even anarchic arrangement for representations of family; these other groups, however, display an ordered pattern – a masculine scaffolding, if you will – that delineates three narrative realms: workhouse orphanage, den of pickpockets, and a community of bachelors.

Cruikshank's representations of divergent family arrangements and all-male communities have compositional elements that sometimes reflect Dickens's treatment of them. I suggested earlier in this dissertation that it was likely Cruikshank recycled existing compositions as he set out to draw a new plate. I also suggested that these recycled arrangements can be grouped together according to the plot threads they illustrate, whether they be, in this case, the story of Noah Claypole and Charlotte's downfall, or the marriage of the Bumbles. It seems equally significant that the image of home life at the Sowerberrys' (fig. 4.1) and the one that follows it, which shows Oliver's arrival at Fagin's ken (fig. 4.2), share the similar quality. Cruikshank places both venues

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<sup>76</sup> Plotlines have been one means by which literary scholars have customarily tried to make some sense of the structure in *Oliver Twist*. The accepted arrangement for these looks something like this: 1) the melodrama of the parish boy's progress and its workhouse theme, introduced in the novel's opening pages; 2) the story, said to be a reaction to previous Newgate novels, about the reality of vice and infamy of criminal life, which begins once Oliver meets the Artful Dodger; 3) the family romance and its dispossession plot, started when Oliver's half-brother Monks arrives on the scene; 4) and the social problem story of Nancy, the prostitute, who overhears Fagin and Monks make their plan to ruin Oliver, contacts Rose Maylie in order to rescue him, and is murdered by Sikes for it. The critical consensus regarding Oliver and Nancy says that though Dickens had intended that his call for social reform be heard in the story of the parish boy's progress that his infatuation with Nancy as a character diminished attentions paid the boy orphan. Accordingly, the novel's real message comes in Nancy's death in the slums and not Oliver's discovery of his inheritance and transportation to the countryside. Therefore, some scholars see the novel as having two prevailing parts: Oliver's initiation into criminal life and rescue and Nancy's selflessness and murder.

on the same pictorial stage, so to speak, with the latter symbolically mirroring as it displaces the former. When we



*Oliver plucks up a spirit*  
fig. 4.1



*Oliver introduced to the respectable Old Gentleman*  
fig. 4.2

superimpose the illustration of Fagin's household onto that of the Sowerberrys', the cross of diagonal implied lines [X] in each composition aligns, as does much of the architecture. Cruikshank situates each of his groups of characters around the door. At the Sowerberrys', Mrs. Sowerberry bursts across the threshold onto the scene. In Fagin's world, however, the door remains hidden behind a curtain, seeming to erase the once admitted female figure, while Fagin's shadow fills the spot where she had stood. His stove stands in for the Sowerberrys' hearth. A plaster advertising Newgate hangings replaces their window. A line heavy with stolen handkerchiefs hangs where a pair of

stockings once hung at the Sowerberrys'. And a gallery of round boys' faces now occupies the side of the illustration that had been filled with a cupboard of plate. Fagin stands exactly where Charlotte had stood, and the sly Dodger takes the spot once filled by the spirited Oliver. The most significant difference across the images, however, is that young Oliver has moved, and he is not only in a new location, but he also seems to have grown rigid. A timorous boy stands in the exact spot where the cowering Noah had once lain. From one image to the next, in his movement from supposed family life (though still as an apprentice) to homosocial society, Oliver has transformed from central actor to peripheral onlooker.

Oliver's passivity has always presented interpretive challenges. Scholars tend to see Oliver as always inert, except for this anomalous moment when he strikes down Noah Claypole, but when we concentrate solely on Cruikshank's illustrations, we can see that his lack of agency has a slightly different trajectory. In his first three plates, Cruikshank draws scenes that seem to rely on some action on Oliver's part. In the first, "Oliver *asking* for more," we see the young boy standing before the kitchen master doing just that, asking. In the next plate, "Oliver *escapes* being bound apprentice to the sweep," we see Oliver on his knees begging the board to reconsider. And then the third, "Oliver *plucks up* the spirit," where Oliver throttles Claypole, represents Oliver's last action before Cruikshank transforms him into a mere state of being. Active verbs instead turn to passive constructions: "Oliver *introduced*. . .," Oliver *amazed*. . .," "Oliver *claimed*. . .", and all of these states come at the hands of others (all italics above are mine). It seems fitting that Cruikshank's last image of Oliver, before he resurfaces again finally in the Agnes plate discussed above, is one of him in fact sleeping in a chair. And there are

eleven plates after this one where Oliver does not appear at all: action turns to paralysis, paralysis turns to sleep, and sleep turns to invisibility. Robert Tracy in “‘The Old Story’ and Inside Stories: Modish Fiction and Fictional Modes in *Oliver Twist*” suggests the young Oliver stands in for the female and her predicament in classic Gothic plots—a youthful, pretty, and passive captive. According to him, Oliver is “a potential victim of sexual exploitation, though Dickens cannot say so” (23). But Oliver is never seen in flight like those women in Gothic stories. He tends to stand, that is when he is not lying drunk, exhausted with fever, or sleeping prostrate (those moments when some critics claim adults molest him), fixed and staring only to be retrieved and re-retrieved by groups of men who work to possess him.

Critics are right to see the change in Oliver’s subject position after he leaves the Sowerberry household, but what has remained unexamined has been the precise textual moment Oliver shifts from player to bystander and how the events surrounding this shift signal a change in the narrative subject matter of Dickens’s world. Oliver, striking out to find his fortune, comes upon Dick, his “former companion,” who says good-bye with a “‘God bless you!’” (57). The narrator tells us that “it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through all the struggles and sufferings of his after life [. . .] he never once forgot it” (57). It appears that Dickens could not let Oliver leave his first home without one last reminder of the plight of forgotten Poor Law boys, but this scene is also important thematically for another reason: Oliver’s discovery of his friend in Mudfrog initiates a sequence of scenes centered on male friendship.

Dawkins, also called the Artful Dodger, finds Oliver after his final meeting with Dick and transports him to the London underworld. Studies that focus on Oliver’s

movement as a character usually overlook how it is that Oliver moves from his baby farm friend Dick to the Dodger; instead, following Cruikshank's powerful illustrations, they turn their eyes directly from the Sowerberry household, a family-like arrangement, to Fagin's ken, a supposed second one. When Oliver meets the "peculiar pet and protégé of the elderly gentleman" Fagin (62), the Dodger, obviously accustomed to procuring new charges for Fagin, speaks in the thieves' vernacular and calls out to his new "flash compan-i-on" saying, "Hullo, my covey, what's the row?" (60-61). Oliver, in one of the novel's many incongruent linguistic moments where it appears he may actually be more streetwise than naive, replies, "I am very hungry and tired" (60). Thinking that Oliver understands, the Dodger continues in cant, only then to discover that Oliver does not. This linguistically charged exchange between boys surfaces in studies that strive to map the various settings and describe the various functions of cant language in Dickens's text,<sup>77</sup> but I think it is also important to see the repetition of the word *companion* in the Dodger scene and the one that includes Dick preceding it. A series of syllabic hyphens mark the Dodger's deliberate and seemingly derisive re-pronunciation of the word, which sets it off from both the Standard English words used by the narrator and the seemingly foreign (to both Oliver and the reader) cant words use by the Dodger.

A sharp contrast in the intentions behind each of the speakers uses of the word marks Oliver's loss of agency. Prior to his introduction to the Dodger, we watched Oliver

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<sup>77</sup> Discussions of cant usage traditionally concentrate on how the language functions in the novel and who speaks it with little consideration for the actual words spoken. See Michael's "Criminal Slang in *Oliver Twist*: Dickens's Survival Code" (1993) for a discussion of how cant stands in for things "not said." It shows that some non-criminal persons are familiar with and may admire criminal life. But more so, those who "translate" for others (characters and the narrator) alter perceptions of respectability. Schor in *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (1999) goes on to say that the story's lack of "technical aids," such as glossaries and maps, proves a type of mastery on the part of Dickens. *Oliver Twist*, the "boy" character, becomes the means by which readers navigate this foreign world.

act in his varied environments. Oliver's subject position changes at this moment when the Dodger entices the boy to join him in London. The use of the word *companion* in the scene with Dick signifies an empathetic bond for Oliver, but the Dodger's use of the word signals ironically Oliver's separation from his one true friend and his imminent subjugation by others. Oliver is set adrift friendless in a landscape of other male friends where, as he is pulled into each community, he comes in contact with an array of male couples. Through the eyes of Oliver, we as readers encounter these unions and their intimacies – Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimwig, Jack Dawkins and Charles Bates, and Mr. Giles and Brittles.<sup>78</sup> Oliver is not just an inactive hero; he is transformed into a type of narrative device. From this point forward, Oliver becomes a fixed point of view through which readers come to see various regions of Dickens's homo-textual world – a lens into regions not meant to be read as family environments. For the most part, he remains inert in these newer locations, but rather than concentrating on Oliver's lack of agency in these worlds and what this means for the success of Dickens's narrative, let us instead alter our own perspectives, shift our gazes so to speak, and examine what it is we see from where Oliver stands. In the following section I address two of those mutually sustained and lasting male friendships Oliver encounters, that between the Dodger and Bates and Brownlow and Grimwig, where Dickens's theme of initiation surfaces time and again. We will also see how Oliver's participation in these scenes of male intimacy reanimates him as a character.

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<sup>78</sup> Dickens stages a central male friendship in each of the classes in his novel. Dick and Oliver's love, though they are never reunited, closes Dickens's representation of working-class orphans. Dawkins and Bates' friendship foregrounds scenes in an even "lower" class, that of the *lumpenproletariat* [see Dellamora's *Friendship's Bonds* for a discussion of this as a class of persons in *Oliver Twist* (30)]. Servants Giles and Brittles become central characters in the Maylie household, and the friendship between Brownlow and Grimwig becomes representative of middle-class domesticity.



## **“This is him. . .my friend Oliver Twist”**

Recent studies that examine the importance of male-male bonds in Dickens’s narrative work mainly to support the general hypothesis that a growing awareness of homosexuals as a social species began to inform early nineteenth-century plots and show mostly how particular authors explored and/or suppressed the possible presence of these queer men in their novels. Supported by Cruickshank’s preference for drawing scenes of cross-age desire,<sup>79</sup> these readings, which have begun to chip away at the foundations of hetero-centric critical apparatuses that dominate readings of *Oliver Twist*, place a great deal of emphasis on pederasty. This means we see primarily sexualized images of children and their superiors in the workhouse or evidence that Fagin was a pederast and his boys doubled as prostitutes.<sup>80</sup> In the queer canon then, *Oliver Twist* becomes a dark novel colored by fear and the sexual exploitation of children. Readings of this nature treat

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<sup>79</sup> There is very little representation of same-age male desire in Cruickshank’s drawings, whether between boys or between men – the visual and the verbal are at odds in this regard. Granted, two images of Giles and Brittles together appear in Cruickshank’s drawings, as do some of Dawkins and Bates, which includes one showing Oliver’s so-called initiation in the underworld, which I address below, but little Dick never appears in Cruickshank’s cast of characters. Brownlow seems only to appear in a mix of characters on the streets of London or in the company of Mrs. Bedwin, his housekeeper, and Grimwig goes missing altogether.

<sup>80</sup> Larry Wolff in his study (1996) illustrates how Dickens, supposedly aware of a contemporaneous real-world culture of boy prostitutes, drew his world of young men in its image, though he could never make it explicit (228). He also says that we as readers are to infer that Monks is a homosexual figure because he takes a boy who is “hidden down below” up to his room with him (242). David Hirsch (2003) argues that Fagin, a “perverse parody of the middle-class capitalist” (316), both Jew and pederast (which he says were historically often the same), posed for Dickens a threat to Home, Church, and Nation. And later, Richard Dellamora (2004), who returns to the idea that Fagin sexually abuses Oliver, also finds in Cruickshank’s workhouse image means for reading the contemporary political debate about conditions for the working class. Dellamora thinks because “the threat of working class insurgency in the 1830s was real” (29), Cruickshank registered his anxieties about this threat in his illustration. According to him, Cruickshank sexualizes scenes of “male mentorship” (27) in the workhouse as he employs chiaroscuro to highlight phallic and orifice-like shapes he deliberately formed in his drawing of orphans and their keepers. By bringing into the light certain “sexual impurities implicit in the verbal text” (28), he is able to make Oliver’s fictional sexual-victim status and his lack of agency synonymous with “real world” male working-class social status and their lack of agency (the child’s body = the social body), important because these illustrations then underwrite working-class men’s struggle for suffrage and greater democratization in the early Victorian era.

adult male characters as reflections of possible types in contemporaneous “real-world” Victorian culture without considering necessarily scenes of desire between boys and boys and men and men integral to the novel’s narrative logic. I redirect the examination away from a reading of male-male desire influenced only by Cruikshank’s images and/or our understandings of Victorian sexual culture and examine Dickens’s attention to same-age male bonds rendered in his textual world, which have been for the most part overlooked and gone unexamined. While I agree that Dickens very well could have coded his text consciously or even unconsciously to signal to readers that illicit male-male desires lie below the surface, I think it is equally important to examine these surface desires as ones that are not automatically exploitive, or sinister. My reading is not symptomatic but topological, aimed not at finding what hides below but instead describing precisely how the terrain is shaped.

Dickens’s male friends possess subjectivities not necessarily relational to female ones. In other words, these intimacies seem to resist easy readings of the erotic (heterosexual) triangle because there are no obvious female characters working as conduits for their desires. I do not think, however, we can go so far as to say Dickens’s male friendships wholly undermine Girard’s and Sedgwick’s interpretations. The love between the Dodger and Bates, because of their ages, may predate heterosexual identification as explained by theorists. And it may also be that Brownlow and Grimwig, who I discuss in the following section, are, for that matter, too old for sexually-charged comradeship and competitiveness centered on a female, which in effect then turns the nature of their bonds into something near that of the boys. I do think it imperative,

however, to recognize that these types of male friendships are those Dickens chooses to foreground in a narrative about male initiation and masculine love.

Critics may have neglected the importance of same-age male friends in *Oliver Twist* because their friendships are most often portrayed as comic. But there is more to these male dyads than just farce. Dickens constructs in these relationships a type of psychic schism between what appears to be the real/rational and the comedic/irrational, a divide that becomes the standard psychological model for Dickens's male friends. The Dodger and Bates' bond is central enough to those scenes in the underworld that Cruikshank includes an early representation of them in his illustration of Oliver's introduction to Fagin, which I discussed above (fig. 4.2). In the image, the Dodger stands between Fagin and Oliver on the left, and to the right, flanking Oliver, sits another prominent figure who we still have yet to meet in the narrative, Bates. Cruikshank, wanting to signify the strong connection Dickens draws between these two, renders Bates more sharply than the other boys and cocks on his head a dark-colored hat similar to that of the Dodger's. The two boys stand apart from the anonymous faces that make up Fagin's workforce. Throughout the text, the Dodger displays a celebrated cunning and tenacity for self-preservation – Fagin even tells Oliver that the Dodger “will be a great man himself, and make [Oliver] one too, if [he] take pattern by him” (72) – while Bates colors each scene that involves these boys with his illogical, boisterous outbursts. In the textual world they complement each other in this way in every scene that involves them, and they are rarely seen apart or interacting with other boys, that is except when Oliver is in their presence.

Undoubtedly the most famous of Oliver’s encounters with the Dodger and Bates occurs after Nancy snatches him off the street and returns him to Fagin. The Dodger, attending to the “decoration of his person,” “command[s] Oliver to assist him in his toilet” (146), a scene Cruikshank chooses to draw (fig. 4.3). In the opening section I argued the importance of recognizing how Cruikshank’s final plates portray scenes not fully realized in *Oliver Twist*’s conclusion. The image of the Dodger and Bates, on the other hand, functions not as an amendment to Dickens’s textual world, but rather simultaneously conflates, alters, and suppresses aspects of it. And my claim that



*Master Bates explains a professional technicality*  
fig. 4.3

Dickens’s scenes of same-age male friendship are decidedly less dark than current readings of cross-age relations allow is somewhat problematic when we look only at Cruikshank’s illustration.<sup>81</sup> He draws figures that seem mature in body as well as dress;

<sup>81</sup> Robert Tracy, not necessarily interested in mapping aspects of boyhood initiation, points to Pierce Egan’s Corinthian Tom as the literary prototype for the Dodger in this scene and sees him as a meaningful reinvention of the dandy figure. He says that the dandy was a man “who prided himself on his knowledge of London low life and on his ability to converse in the “flash” language of the

he fashions his collection of juvenile pickpockets to resemble little men. The Dodger and Bates look here more like those same figures who possibly molest Oliver. But without question Dickens meant for his pickpockets to be seen as *boys* dressed in men's clothes. When Oliver first meets the Dodger, the narrator describes him as "the dirty juvenile with the manners of a man" (60). He says that he was "one of the queerest looking boys that Oliver had ever seen" [. . .]: a "roistering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood three foot six, or something less, in his bluchers" (60). And when we look to other boys in the text, it appears Dickens wanted to play up the incongruity between the boys' considerable youth and their men's costumes too, for around a table sit "four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits with all the air of middle-aged men" (64).<sup>82</sup>

Dickens's boys are not prematurely-aged, tragic figures but instead mediums for comedy, even clown-like in their too-big clothes acting out hyper-masculine behaviors. Cruikshank, however, treats Fagin's pickpockets much like he does Nancy. If Fagin's boys were meant to mirror possibilities for Oliver, after a life of vice and infamy, just as Nancy does for Rose, Cruikshank again undermines Dickens's intentions. Oliver appears

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underworld" (15). According to him, the Dodger's mannerisms and attention he pays his appearance makes him so, "while his dirt and rags simultaneously mock the very type – literary and social – that he represents" (16). It seems that Tracy may rely too heavily on Cruikshank's rendering of the Dodger's age and costume of turned-up collar, tails, and top hat when making his claim because there is little evidence in Dickens's textual world that suggests the Dodger is meant to be seen as a parody. Dandies in the public's imagination were seen as effeminate and idle while middle-class men were seen as manly and useful, and the Dodger is one of the hardest working "men" in Dickens's text.

<sup>82</sup> Noah Claypole's adolescence, on the other hand, seems to be expressed in different terms. When he and Charlotte enter London late in the novel, the narrator tells us that Noah is "one of those long-limbed, knocked-kneed, shambling, bony figures, to whom it is difficult to assign any precise age, – looking as they do, when they are yet boys, like under-grown men, and when they are almost men, like over-grown boys" (349).

young while the other boys are prematurely aged.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the boys are not only unattractive like Nancy, but they also look downright fiendish. Through the position of Oliver's gaze and the words used in his caption, which includes *Master Bates*, Cruikshank emphasizes Oliver's subjugation at the same time he invokes notions of manual genital stimulation and foregrounds the threat of public execution ever present in Dickens's narrative.<sup>84</sup> The confluence of an asymmetrical power dynamic, a not-so-veiled reference to sexual activity, and a murderous gesture make for a highly charged source for discussions of sex as always negative in *Oliver Twist*.

William Cohen, resisting the power of Cruikshank's illustration, investigates the text on its own merits and argues that *Oliver Twist* is the only one of Dickens's novels to deal with sexuality on its surface. He shows how the sexual pun in Bates' name is revealed to readers over time. The text first introduces him as *Charlie Bates*; later it refers to him as *Master Charles Bates*; and finally it calls him *Master Bates* (*Sex Scandal* 28). But because the Dodger and Bates also play the "what is a *prig*" guessing game, just prior to the moment Cruikshank illustrates above, he finds an opportunity to delve below the textual surface. Because *prig* rhymes with *frig*, Cohen believes that Dickens intentionally invokes a sexually-charged linguistic subtext through word association that brings to

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<sup>83</sup> Cruikshank was disgruntled because Dickens would not let him draw a "prettier" Oliver, which would create an even greater contrast between him and the criminal boys. His argument was that a pretty Oliver would sell more copies.

<sup>84</sup> Because young boys are so plentiful – as Bill Sikes says, there are always another fifty sleeping in Common Garden, and we can imagine that he was once such a boy – Fagin enjoys a luxury in boys as a disposable commodity. When he takes issue with any, typically when he fears for his safety, he "peaches," that is informs, on them, and they are subsequently collared and executed. Oliver, the morning after he arrives, overhears the "the merry old gentleman" reflect on the comfort he finds in Newgate hangings: "'Dead men never repent. [. . .] Ah, it's a fine thing for the trade. Five of them strung up in a row, and none left to play booty or turn white-livered!'" (68). When the Dodger and Bates, obviously regular spectators at the every-Monday-morning event, return to the ken, Fagin asks them how the executions went that day. What the boys see at Newgate gets reenacted here through dumb-show gestures; the yank of an imaginary rope around the neck becomes the standard communication for the fate that supposedly awaits them.

mind pubescent group masturbation: “Dickens raises the issue of masturbation by referring to it in such a way as to announce the impossibility of articulating it as such” (29). It appears then that *Oliver Twist* plays it both ways. On one hand it openly summons images of sexual activity in Bates’ name; on the other, it invokes as it suppresses the possibility of this same activity in a play of rhyming words.<sup>85</sup>

This apparent duality in literal and sublimated signification can also point us to another representation of boyhood initiation: prig sounds like frig, and *scragged* sounds like *fagged*. When Oliver hears the word prig, it seems that its usual translation is one that he knows, though he stops himself short of saying it – *thief*. But the Dodger and Bates reduce their “conversation to the level of Oliver’s capacity” (150), and Oliver learns from them that to be scragged means to be hanged, which Bates enthusiastically demonstrates. It is striking that Bates acts out scragging in Cruikshank’s illustration at the same time that Oliver is on his knees and polishing the Dodger’s boots, especially as the boys discuss Oliver’s want of an education and how it will allow him to some day “retire on [his] property, and do the genteel” (149). Fagin, who acts the master, walks in on the scene later to hear the Dodger’s lecture and admire “his pupil’s [meaning the Dodger’s] proficiency” in his recitation of the axioms and benefits of thievery to a newer student (151).<sup>86</sup> In this exchange of signifiers and their translations, the text on its surface devises

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<sup>85</sup> Cohen also conjectures that the boys’ smoking of pipes while they talk of priggings may even symbolize fellatio.

<sup>86</sup> Dellamora in *Friendship’s Bonds* touches upon Cohen’s reading in his own assessment of this scene of supposed boyhood sexuality (40-43). He says that it centers around a lecture the Dodger and Bates give Oliver on how important it is “not to ‘peach’ on one’s fellows.” The scene involves more so the boys attempt to convince Oliver that picking pockets is not only a reasonable occupation for Oliver but that it would also be a very lucrative one: “Master Bates backed this advice with sundry moral admonitions of his own, which being exhausted, he and his friend Mr Dawkins launched into a glowing description of the numerous pleasures incidental to the life they led, interspersed with a variety of hints to Oliver that the best thing he could do, would be to secure Fagin’s favour without more delay by the means which they had employed to gain it” (*Oliver Twist* 150).

a certain link between prigging and scragging while, because of Bates' name and the description of Oliver's labor, though Dickens never names it directly, it also devises one between frigging and fagging.<sup>87</sup> There is little reason to look for sexual meaning beneath the text in this case. What lies below directly reflects what is on the surface. This image's mimicry of the possible dimensions of the homosocial dynamics of school life seem to get lost in visions that look only for hidden homosexual possibilities in the scene.

Victorian boys as young as ten left their families to enter the all-male worlds of the English public school. Many young men reading *Oliver Twist*, remembering their own days at public school, would have identified with Oliver's role as the underclass fag, shoe in hand, at the feet of the Dodger.<sup>88</sup> Victorians regarded the move from the heterosexual family setting to the temporary homosocial community of school and its system of fagging an important formative stage in a young boy's life as he grew to become yet another power-holding member of patriarchal England. Education was also becoming important in a boy's life because it helped to resolve the dilemma over who was to be considered a gentleman "at a time when traditional patterns of deference were in question and new kinds of wealth were being created in the business and industrial sector" (Sinfield 64). School life, because it was seen as removing a boy from the potentially dangerous excessive influences of his mother, helped to guarantee he would

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<sup>87</sup> See Cohen's *Sex Scandal* for a discussion of the interchangeability of prigging and frigging as wasteful enterprises. According to him, Dickens's later *Great Expectations* thematically parallels *Oliver Twist* in that it draws an analogy between masturbation and theft, only this time in a heavily coded representation when Pip steals and then conceals a buttered slice of bread down his pants leg in order to carry it later to Magwich (29-32).

<sup>88</sup> See John Chandos's chapter "Fags and Their Masters" in *Boys Together: English Public Schools 1800-1864* (London: Hutchinson, 1984). Fagging, a type of "informal" apprenticeship was a regular practice in these institutions. Because students lacked adult supervision while at school, younger pupils, often blackening shoes, brushing clothes, carrying wood, and preparing breakfast and tea, became servants to the senior ones. In return, senior students provided protection for their young charges in what proved to be a harsh and hostile environment. Senior students were also expected to discipline their unproductive and disobedient boys, a practice that usually involved some form of corporeal punishment.



have masculine ties as he matured: “Parents believed that the capacity to endure physical and psychological hardship with a stiff upper lip was the best thing one could bestow upon a boy-child” (65). This “systematic brutalization” [. . .] “might develop a man-to-man loyalty, and an insensitivity, suitable for the prevailing pattern of [later] cross-sex relations” (65). Masculine privilege was sustained by friendships, often violent, made in institutions like public school. And at the time *Oliver Twist* was published, sexual activity among peers, especially masturbation, was most likely overlooked to some degree because it was imagined to be a temporary behavior, dependent on an environment devoid of women. This hiatus in the all-male world, important for the socialization of England’s new gentlemen, would grow to present its own set of cultural anxieties a decade or two after the publication of Dickens’s novel.<sup>89</sup> Authorities began to think that this period of forced homosociality, coupled with its teachings of Greek and Latin, could too easily become a seedbed for long-term same-sex sexual activities. In other words, teaching literature filled with same-sex passions to a same-sex population was dangerous, especially at a time when adult men who loved other men were beginning to form subcultures outside of school to which the public was growing aware. Sex between schoolmates was beginning to seem not so temporary. These fears gave rise to the public

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas Hughes in the later *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857) describes a scene in which Tom and East, “noted as some of the toughest fags in school” (235), destroy Jones’ fag roster and harass the boy compiling it. He writes, “The youth was seized, and dragged struggling out of the quadrangle into the School-house hall. He was one of the miserable pretty white-handed curly-headed boys, petted and pampered by some of the big fellows, who wrote their verses for them, taught them to drink and use bad language, and did all they could to spoil them for everything in this world and the next” (233). Hughes footnotes his use of the word *everything* thusly: “A kind and wise critic, an old Rugbœan, notes here in the margin: ‘The small friend system was not so utterly bad from 1841-1847.’ Before that, too, were many noble friendships between big and little boys, but I can’t strike out the passage; many boys will know why it is left in.” Hughes, relying on readers’ insider knowledge, can draw a not-so-veiled association between frigging (among other things) and fagging at the same time he distances his protagonist from such behavior.

school scandal of the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>90</sup> But I argue here, in his parody of academic socialization, boyhood desires remain untouched by such scandal.

And if Dickens has yet to become the master of sentimentalized pictures of family life, here in *Oliver Twist* it is scenes of masculine love that receive his sentimental touch. I suggest that while we can read this scene of Oliver fagging for the Dodger for its supporting linguistic subtexts that we keep in mind Dickens's textual representation of these boys. Here they are dressed in men's clothes acting out a familiar scene from school life. It seems Dickens wants to romanticize possible ties between frigging and fagging in his textual world, making it a moment decidedly less sinister than how Cruikshank or even critics today interpret it. *Oliver Twist's* dirty little secret, tied to school life in this case, becomes not so dirty, and not so secret.

Oliver desires to ingratiate himself to the Dodger and Bates in this parody of school life. Oliver's reanimation through the attention he receives from these boys mirrors structurally the life breathed into him during time spent with Brownlow and Grimwig; the mute paralysis common to his person prior to this scene wanes, and he speaks and acts: "Oliver was but too glad to make himself useful, too happy to have some faces, however bad, to look upon, and too desirous to conciliate those about him when he could honestly do so" (148). The two boys operate in their typical combined mode of delivery, where the former is rational and cunning, while the latter comedic and absurd. The Dodger questions Oliver as to why he would not choose to make a "fortun' out of

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<sup>90</sup> See Morris B. Kaplan's chapter "Love Stories" in *Sodom on the Thames* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), which highlights life at Eton College. Linda Dowling's chapters "The Socratic Eros" and "The Higher Sodomy" in *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) addresses life at Oxford. See also John Chandos's chapter "A Demon Hovering" in *Boys Together: English Public Schools 1800-1864* (London: Hutchinson, 1984).

hand” instead of running away and becoming dependent on others. Bates then blurts out, ““Oh, blow that. [. . .] [T]hat’s too mean, that is!”” (149). Oliver, remembering that the boys had let him take the rap for stealing Brownlow’s handkerchief, responds, with a half-smile none-the-less, ““You can leave your friends, though, [. . .] and let them be punished for what you did”” (149). And of course the “recollection of Oliver’s flight” leaves Bates laughing, “coughing and stamping about five minutes long” (149). I am not suggesting that Oliver’s position here is meant to represent a lack of exploitation; Cruikshank’s illustration clearly foregrounds the power over Oliver enjoyed by the Dodger and Bates. But as they put Oliver through his initiatory paces, it seems that they, like Brownlow, honestly want him to succeed. They can imagine that one day he will have his own boy at his feet. Not only does Oliver come to life again at this moment, but this is also the first time we see him engaged in a conversation where it seems that he talks to equals; his tone has changed, he shows an ease in discourse that he has lacked to this point, except when with Brownlow, and he even tries his hand at a bit of mockery. This is a big step for Oliver.

Master Bates and the Artful Dodger, bonded as opposites, represent part of the larger pattern shaping Dickens’s depictions of male friendship. Middle-class men Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimwig, and household servants Mr. Giles and Brittles, are also represented as polarized pairs. And while we can certainly use a traditional hero-sidekick model to describe these male couples, I think we can better view them in terms of two-gendered literary archetypes for married couples. Joseph Boone reminds us of those cultural models built from “rich folklore treating husband and wife as opposing species” (10). He cites examples like the Bennet parents in *Pride and Prejudice* and the Tullivers

in *Mill on the Floss*, married couples who are “polar antagonists” (11). Dickens’s Mr. and Mrs. Bumble can be described in similar terms, certainly, but even more striking, Dickens’s male dyads, where one is introspective and rational and the other emotional and irrational, begin to look like these marital archetypes. The comedy in scenes like that in which Giles and Brittles bicker in the dark field, after shooting Oliver, take on a different hue when seen as a recasting of two-gendered folklore icons.

And these male dyads work to invoke a certain type of sympathy in readers.<sup>91</sup>

Nancy is usually the only character talked about, because of her story of self-sacrifice, in sympathetic terms, but I think it is also possible for one to be moved by the Dodger and Bates and their plight. In fact, it seems that Dickens himself was moved as he constructed them. As I have argued, same-age friendships enjoy narrative longevity and read as steadfast and lasting unions when compared to those unstable, unpredictable, and even volatile family structures outlined in the previous sections. And the Dodger and Bates represent a masculine camaraderie that Dickens seems to value more than those intimacies found even in heterosexual pairs, whose unions end typically in misery and/or death. Of all the characters in the underworld, it is the Dodger and Bates who survive. In one of the more intimate scenes of male friendship in *Oliver Twist*, the boys’ bond is made poignantly, if comically apparent. At the trial of the Dodger, Bates wants to be

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<sup>91</sup> So how important is it that another set of male friends carries Oliver into the Maylie Household? After his brief moment of animation in the company of the young friends, Oliver, stricken with renescent paralysis, is shot and left for dead in a field (The burglary plate). Mr. Giles and Mr. Brittles, the couple who not only wound Oliver but also deliver him back into the Maylie household, and their love for each other appears to be shaped by Brittle’s developmental challenges. Dickens seems to experiment with different bodily tropes that highlight the strangeness of that transformative period between boyhood and manhood, especially important to note in a text that seems possessed with scenes of apprenticeship and boyhood initiation. Readers of the first volume find boys dressed and behaving as men. Here we have a man trapped in a type of everlasting apprenticeship “treated as a promising young boy still, though he was something past thirty” (227). When the Maylies send him to fetch Dr. Losberne, Giles comments that Brittles has always been a “slow boy,” and Mrs. Maylie counters that it would be ““very inexcusable in him if he stops to play with any other boys”” (235).

assured that his mate's "glorious reputation" (369) remains intact. Bates convinces Fagin to send his new spy, Claypole, to sit in the courtroom and see if those who judge the Dodger treat him "as a gentleman and not a common prig" (362); he is elated to hear the report of the Dodger's antics in the courtroom. The Dodger, reputation intact, is not hung like other boys from the Commons but is instead transported to Australia. And Bates, who in the end assists the mob that pursues Sikes, lands, like Oliver, in manly rustication in a new occupation as a shepherd. And as we will see in the next section, Brownlow and Grimwig must also separate before the novel can achieve its resolution.

### **The Bachelor Plot**

Cruikshank for the most part overlooked the value Dickens placed on male friendships. Though some of these male couples show up in his illustrations, they rarely appear as central figures. His plate of Oliver fagging for the Dodger and Bates is the one exception. Scholars today tend to treat these friendships in kind, but in recent studies members of the bucolic bachelor collective, especially Brownlow, have made some appearances; however, the consensus seems to be that this group of well-heeled, professional men, both as individuals and as a group, lack the complexity needed to merit much critical scrutiny. Philip Horne says that Dickens capitalized on the popularity of Pickwick<sup>92</sup> and that the nearest equivalent to him in *Oliver Twist*, Mr Brownlow, a well-

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<sup>92</sup> For a discussion of how it was that Dickens may have drawn from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century male literary figures when creating Mr. Pickwick in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), see James Kinsley's introduction to the Clarendon Press's 1986 edition (xl). Also concerning the genesis of Dickens's bachelor figure, J.C. Reid in his biographical study of Pierce Egan's works suggests that it lies in *Egan's Finish to Life in London* (1827). Jerry Hawthorne befriends Sir John Blubber on the road to Pickwick: "Sir John, a jovial bachelor, proves to be a wealthy, retired citizen" (140). Reid notes that he is a "self-made man, who had risen from being a workhouse orphan by his business skill and industry, he had a benevolent heart and was always ready to help

meaning old gentlemen and Oliver's benefactor, is hardly among the book's half-dozen most memorable or artistically successful characters."<sup>93</sup> According to David Parker, the criminal characters "are more vital than the honest ones": "Mr. Brownlow, Mr. Grimwig and Mr. Losberne, between them, constitute a kind of Pickwick Club composed entirely of Samuel Pickwick – advanced in years, prosperous, benevolent, willful, reconciled to celibacy" (136).<sup>94</sup> They apparently can resolve the conflict in the novel because they are collectively "strong solitary bulwarks, unencumbered by family" (137).

I argue, however, that all elderly, unattached men in *Oliver Twist* are not necessarily created equal. Mr. Brownlow is first a friend to Mr. Grimwig, and later, as he comes closer to solving the mystery of Oliver's heritage, he befriends the Maylies' family doctor, Mr. Losberne. Brownlow makes a rather abrupt switch between his bachelor counterparts. And when we look more closely at Brownlow himself, we find a much-changed man at novel's end, and a figure more complex than current readings that rely only on his benevolence allow. Oliver does end up on his property, doing the "genteel," just as the Dodger and Bates prophesized he would, if he were to swear loyalty to Fagin

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the poor and unfortunate" (140). In Sir John, Reid finds "the crude original of Dickens's Pickwick" (141).

<sup>93</sup> This is taken from his introduction to the Penguin Classics edition (2003) of *Oliver Twist*. The rest of the passage reads: "The genial adventures of the plump accident prone, comfortably-off Mr Pickwick and his cockney servant Sam Weller had caught the public imagination, and the circulation of the monthly parts had swollen forty-fold to 20,000. But Dickens was now deliberately shifting social and moral focus: [ . . . ] The new work would take its public off the mainly cheerful coaching highways of Pickwick into some darker and more dangerous dens and alleys" (xiii).

<sup>94</sup> Earlier I argued the importance of seeing how Dickens deals with sex "on the surface" in the scenes that include the Dodger and Bates. When it comes to bachelors, Dickens does the same, but in their case it seems he de-sexualizes them instead, which gives them a particular freedom with the young Rose. Losberne tells Rose that if he were a younger man, he would consider himself a suitor. He says, "I only hope, for the sake of the rising male sex generally, that you may be found in this vulnerable and soft-hearted a mood by the very first eligible young fellow who appeals to your compassion; and I wish I were a young fellow that I might avail myself on the spot of such a favorable opportunity" (240). Rose can only respond that Losberne is "as great a boy as poor Brittles himself" (240). Grimwig, alternatively, after Rose returns Oliver to Brownlow, kisses the young girl "without the slightest preface" (344). Rose appears alarmed by the advances of this "strange creature" (347); he counters, aware that she may have perceived it as a sexual advance, with a reminder that he is old enough to be her grandfather and calls her a "sweet girl" (344).

and pick pockets as a trade, but this ending, instead of picking pockets, becomes dependent on Brownlow's emotional growth. It is difficult to imagine that the unimpressive powdered-hair man from the bookstall in the first volume, who had worried that he might catch a fever from a napkin, is the same man who in the third sails to the West Indies, returns and captures Monks, and then incites a riot on horseback in the slums of London that brings Sikes' life to an end.

When critics lump Brownlow into the bachelor collective, they characterize him as an erudite gentleman who like Pickwick is a natural-born leader. But when we first see Brownlow, he is an "absent old gentleman" seemingly from another time (85). His metamorphosis begins in the courtroom once he gets a good look at Oliver's face; it calls up before his "mind's eye a vast amphitheatre of faces over which a dusky curtain had hung for many years" (80). His glimpse of these shadowy figures encourages him to defend the boy, but his efforts still prove ineffectual. As much as Brownlow might try to persuade the judge that Oliver is most likely not a criminal, the boy is sentenced to hard labor. It is not until the bookseller appears to corroborate Brownlow's story that Oliver is saved from a trip to the workhouse and left in his care. Through a sort of instinctive recognition, figures from Brownlow's past begin to move into the light, and they stir in him a desire to befriend Oliver. And, indeed, this hidden cast of players will become known to Brownlow, Oliver, and readers in time.

Much like the Dodger, who transports Oliver into the underworld, Brownlow carries him into a world of middle-class domesticity, and we find here more manifestations of Dickens's themes of initiation. Oliver's admittance to Brownlow's study, that "little back room, quite full of books, with a window looking into some

pleasant little gardens,” where he finds the man reading (107), typically surfaces in studies of authorial self-referentiality because of the setting and ensuing pessimistic discussion of book writing and book selling, which ends with Brownlow saying to Oliver, “[D]on’t be afraid; we won’t make an author of you, while there’s an honest trade to be learnt, or brick-making to turn to” (108).<sup>95</sup> More than an autobiographical moment for Dickens, however, Brownlow and Oliver’s exchange echoes those many other discussions in the text about what Oliver should become and how he will make his way in the world. Brownlow’s *we* in the passage above still seems to speak collectively for all the male voices in *Oliver Twist*. But there is an important divergence in Brownlow from other male figures because he does not imagine Oliver’s future as a mirror of his own life. Brownlow then makes a pact with the Oliver that if he can tell the elderly gentleman the story of his life without any deceit, they will remain friends forever.

But Brownlow’s irrational counterpart, Grimwig, who has a “strong appetite for contradiction” (112) enters and interrupts the two before Oliver can orate his history. Cruikshank draws no picture of Grimwig, from whom “the variety of shapes into which his countenance was twisted defy description” (109). He instead shows us a picture of Brownlow’s parlor that includes Mrs. Bedwin, which becomes yet another scene of mock familial heterosexuality, reminiscent of his final plates. In the text, however, another principal example of Dickens’s bi-polar paradigm for male friendship surfaces: the Dodger has his Bates, and Brownlow has his Grimwig. Grimwig’s rants about the boy who seemingly plants orange peels on the steps outside to trip people in order to drum up business for the neighboring surgeon, and his claims that he’ll “eat his head” if he is

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<sup>95</sup> For more on Dickens’s dispute with Bentley about the disproportion between publishers’ and authors’ profits, see Horne in the Penguin Classics edition. (501 n. 14. 3).



mistaken, match in fortitude the repeated hyperbolic and even bizarre behavior we witness from Bates. In fact, the Brownlow/Grimwig encounter matches the Dodger/Bates encounter on many points. Brownlow envisions a future for Oliver, stresses the importance of an apprenticeship, and offers the bond of male intimacy. Oliver, during this scene, again becomes curiously reanimated and offers to return the parcel that was to go back to the bookstall that day. But as we know, the trip lands him back in the grasp of Fagin and his accomplices.<sup>96</sup>

Granted, most of Brownlow's growth from feeble man to the leader of Oliver's advocates happens off stage. His change is nearly complete when he returns from the West Indies. It is striking, however, that as Brownlow's story moves off the pages, Dickens introduces readers to Losberne, a man much the type Brownlow will become in order to right the wrongs done Oliver. Readers first see the impassioned Losberne in the Maylie household work schemes of his own to protect the wounded boy; for instance, when the Bow Street officers arrive there to take Oliver away. When Brownlow returns and meets Losberne, the latter hears an account of the men who have plotted against Oliver. Losberne's wrath brings forth "mingled threats and execrations" (346); he wants to hang or transport the lot immediately. Brownlow, transformed into the determined leader of Oliver's advocates, foils Losberne's plan. He convinces the excitable doctor to consider another course; even though it is slower in administering punishment, it will serve better to assure that Oliver will gain his inheritance. Losberne's temperament,

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<sup>96</sup> The illustration Cruikshank draws of Oliver fagging for the Dodger adopts an uncanny characteristic because it follows Dickens's description of Oliver in the company of Brownlow and Grimwig (which Cruikshank chooses not to draw). Prematurely aged and wearing men's clothes, the Dodger and Bates appear much older compared to the fair Oliver, which is reminiscent of the textual scene with Brownlow and Grimwig, but the "men" in Cruikshank's (re)staging of male initiation display seemingly malevolent temperaments.

which is now matched, according to the narrator, by the “irascible temperament of Brownlow” (347), creates a bond in the men different from the bi-polar model.

Mr. Losberne replaces Grimwig as Brownlow’s counterpart. It appears Grimwig is too oppositional to play collaborator to the transformed activist Brownlow. Dickens shifts the focus away from him, but it turns out that Losberne as a replacement is really no more dimensional than Grimwig was, but where Grimwig is Brownlow’s contradictory other half, Losberne works more like a mirror for Brownlow’s new found strength. Brownlow and Losberne work together as a *detective* couple. Their labor divided, they manage both the information collected and the steps taken to reclaim Oliver’s birthright. And as these men’s ambition heads towards its fruition back in Mudfrog, each representatively oversees passengers in separate carriages. Losberne keeps Oliver and the women in one vehicle, and Brownlow retains Monks in the other.

We hear Brownlow’s account of his time away from London at Monk’s interrogation, a scene that is as much about Brownlow telling his story as it is about him getting Monks to confess. Those actors who left him a “solitary, lonely man” (408) have stepped fully into the light. Oliver’s biological father, Mr. Leeford, was Brownlow’s closest friend when they were young men. Brownlow’s love, Leeford’s sister, dies on the day she and Brownlow are to marry. Leeford’s parents some time afterward force Leeford into a loveless, “wretched marriage” (409), which, according to Brownlow, produces a “sole and most unnatural issue” (409), Edward. Later, Leeford meets and falls in love with Agnes Fleming. Leeford dies, but before he does, he rewrites his will to include Edward and his unborn son. Agnes, unmarried, gives birth. Edward’s mother destroys the will, and Edward, now Monks, tries to destroy Oliver. The impassioned

Brownlow makes frequent calls for people to take action “upon his authority.” Memories of Leeford give him this sense of power. He says he realized, after the fact, that it was his face he first saw in Oliver’s; he says that it looked to him like that “of an old friend” (413). He also says that when he returned to London and saw Monks’s face for the first time, it conjured “old thoughts” of Leeford (409). Brownlow sees to it that Sikes and Fagin pay for their crimes with their lives, but Monks he handles differently—stepping in as father figure and resolving the sibling rivalry. He even convinces Oliver to give his older brother half of his legacy for a fresh start. Brownlow adopts Oliver as his son.

Dickens begins to restructure aspects of his narrative when Brownlow returns a new man and looks to find a new intimacy with the boy. His growth signals a rupture in the thematic loop that shapes the bulk of Dickens’s textual world. Brownlow reshapes scenes of male friendship, and his ability to envision a future Oliver as someone different from himself leaves open the question of that future. We have somewhat vague assertions from the narrator that Brownlow endows his charge with “stores of knowledge,” and that Oliver will grow to be “all [Brownlow] could wish him to become,” but *Oliver Twist* never approaches again the topics of apprenticeship or formal schooling for Oliver. No longer a passive figure, he remains animated with his elderly counterparts. He starts to become a bachelor-like figure himself, taking on more of the passionate characteristics of his keepers. The narrator tells us that at times Oliver “flutter[s] with agitation.”

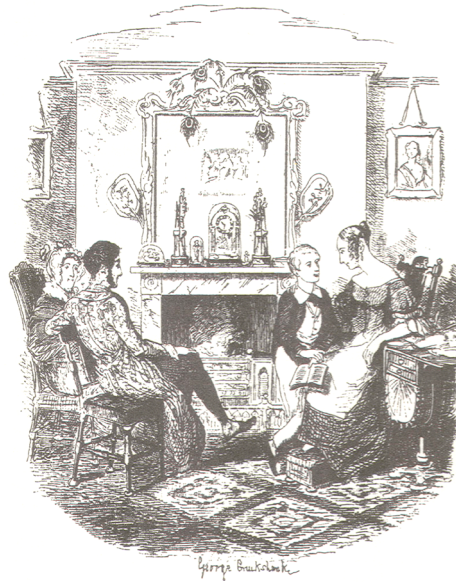
The conclusion of the bachelor plot has the last word on heterosexuality in *Oliver Twist*. Earlier in this chapter I argued that critics may be too ready to read the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow together as a reconstituted family at novel’s end. The extradiegetic events found in Brownlow’s narration of history bring forth even more representations of

family. We also find the best, if not only, picture of the archetypal erotic triangle that informs a great deal of my study of homosocial novels. Brownlow and Leeford are bonded through Leeford's sister, and it is, as we discover, Brownlow's ties to this friend that underwrite his authority and bring Oliver's troubles to an end. Monks's malignancy represents the failure of heterosexuality. He is the living proof that Leeford's forced marriage to a woman he did not love has evil consequences. Brownlow, on the other hand, who has always remained true to his first love, even if this meant he never married, becomes the greatest opposite to Oliver's half-brother and to the dire effects of forced heterosexuality. Thus, *Oliver Twist* ends with Oliver residing with the most ideal representation of heterosexuality in the novel.

### **Bachelor Endings**

Dickens scholarship, especially any that touches upon *Oliver Twist*'s publishing history, or Dickens's and Cruikshank's contentious work relationship as co-creators, often note how it is that *Oliver Twist* has two pictorial endings. Although Dickens was not able to control all aspects of Cruikshank's art, he did intervene in a significant way near the end of the project. Dickens could not inspect five or six of the last plates that Cruikshank drew for the third volume of *Oliver Twist* before they went to press. When Dickens finally did see them, he stopped production and asked that Cruikshank redraw the final one. The first plate was published, however, for a brief period; Dickens even sent inscribed copies to friends (Tillotson "Intro" xxiv). This replacement plate appeared in subsequent volumes with the same caption as the first, *Rose Maylie and Oliver*, so

among those who study *Oliver Twist*, the first plate has come to be called the *hearth plate* (fig. 4.4) and the second the *Agnes plate* (fig. 4.5).



*Rose Maylie and Oliver*  
fig. 4.4



*Rose Maylie and Oliver*  
fig. 4.5

Dickens insisted that the new composition should include only a contemplative Rose and Oliver standing in church before a memorial tablet displaying the name AGNES. Speculations as to why Dickens rejected the first one, a few days after publication began, include the possibilities that the home environment shown was not rustic enough for Dickens, the fashions of the inhabitants were too lower-middle-class, the composition resembled too much a well-known “frontispiece to a six-penny book of forfeits,”<sup>97</sup> or that Dickens saw enough of himself in Harry Maylie that a marriage to

<sup>97</sup> This charge was made by Dickens’s colleague and eventual biographer John Forster. See Parker (139).

Rose (a substitute for his dead sister-in-law Mary Hogarth) made him uncomfortable.<sup>98</sup> If any of these were the case, however, then why did Dickens not simply ask to have aspects of the image refashioned or the cast of characters reduced instead of requesting a new location? Only recently has David Parker suggested that perhaps the familial content in the first plate was too stereotypical and Dickens “chose to leave readers with an image of transgression rather than of normal and normative” (139). The hearth plate’s collection of family members, according to him, could be any “Mum, Dad, the nipper, and Gran around the fireside” (142).<sup>99</sup> The second piece is not only more transgressive because it memorializes a fallen woman, but it may also be that we as readers can imagine Nancy, “scarcely less crucial in Oliver’s life than Agnes or Rose” (142), memorialized in that church.

In the hearth plate, Oliver stands, book in hand, at Rose’s knee while Mrs. Maylie and Harry, seated across from them, look on. Above Rose’s head hangs a portrait of a woman, reminiscent of the picture of Oliver’s mother and Rose’s sister, which Oliver first sees in Mr. Brownlow’s parlor. It seems Cruikshank may have meant for readers to see Agnes hanging there because if we superimpose the composition of the Agnes plate over the hearth plate, the picture and the memorial occupy the same position, a place reserved for Agnes.<sup>100</sup> In fact, many of the features of the middle-class home parallel those in the church. The wall adjacent to the memorial tablet shows the same vertical lines as the fireplace. The wainscoting that intersects the church wall matches up with the

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, (142). He discusses how Nancy could be another name displayed in that church alcove.

<sup>100</sup> If this portrait is meant to be Agnes, it seems she has landed, all things considered, in a rather odd place. The portrait belonged to Brownlow and is the mother of Oliver, who is Brownlow’s adopted son. I find it striking that Oliver and the portrait end up in the Maylie’s parlor while Brownlow is nowhere to be seen.

line of the mantel above the Maylie hearth, and the church's leaded-glass window becomes reminiscent of the mirror above the fireplace. The diagonal grout lines on the church floor match the pattern in the rug, and even the balustrade at the right in the church lines up with the table at Rose's side in the Maylie house.<sup>101</sup> But where the occupants of the Maylie house seem at ease in their country home, Rose's and Oliver's postures are much different in the Agnes plate. In each instance, the "mutual love" that Rose and Oliver share seems a central feature, but in the Agnes plate they stand transfixed before the memorial, as if they are as surprised to be there as we are to see them. The narrator tells us in the final line that he believes that Agnes's "shade [. . .] often hovers about that solemn nook [. . .], though it *is* a church, and she was weak and erring" (455). In Dickens's textual world ghost and reader are left alone in that nook, but in the final visual image, Rose and Oliver stand there as well.

Dickens's redesign of Cruikshank's final plate does not get much closer to representing his textual world. Where the twenty-three prior images in *Oliver Twist* depict events as the narrator chronicles them, these last images instead give us glimpses into worlds that exist only in a *conditional* state. The narrator says that, married in the village, "which was henceforth to be the scene of the young clergyman's labours," Harry and Rose "entered into possession of their new and happy home" (450). But instead of detailing their histories in his usual indicative mode, the narrator, blaming a faltering hand, truncates accounts only then to tell us that *if* circumstances were better, he *would*

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<sup>101</sup> It is possible that Cruikshank, working to meet publication deadlines, recycled basic compositions. But also, when we look at other scenes drawn by Cruickshank, those that deal with any one plotline from the novel have their own distinct and often repeating designs. For example, if we lay next to each other those images that deal with Noah Claypole and Charlotte's downfall into criminal life, they too can be superimposed over each other and matched on many points. The story of Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney does the same, though its repeating composition is different from Noah and Charlotte's.

draw them textually: he “*would* paint [Rose’s] life and joy of the fireside circle and the lively summer group” (part of which Cruikshank chose to illustrate in his final plate); and he *would* “paint her and her dead sister’s child happy in their mutual love” (the scene Dickens insisted be drawn in the church) (453). Scholars typically read these final scenes as the correctives to the illicit bonds that Dickens explores in his representations of dysfunctional families and urban lowlife. The most striking element in each final plate is that it represents, even as a corrective, a conditional scenario brought about because the narrator’s hand grows weary. In other words, where all of Cruikshank’s other images more or less keep to the diegesis of the narrator’s textual world, these final plates, both in Cruikshank’s design and Dickens’s redesign, depict worlds that have only slight textual footholds. They exist in some conditional other-narrative glimpsed only when the narrator describes what it is he *would* narrate.

These conditional worlds also exist in a light different from that in the diegetic ones. Cruikshank, in contrast to the heavy hand he uses when he draws the dark and shadowy environs of London, which support Dickens’s use of Gothic literary devices, bathes the fireside circle in a light that reminds readers of the “sunny place” where Oliver finally lands. When Cruikshank first drew the Agnes plate, it was, as Dickens saw it, too dark, which may have reflected Cruikshank’s mood when he drew it. Cruikshank complained at the time that he could not believe that Dickens had wanted to conclude with “merely a lady and a boy standing inside of a church looking at a stone wall (qtd. in Tracy 11). Dickens asked that Cruikshank make more changes and eliminate shadows in the church. The lighter atmosphere keeps to the geographical relocation of the group and even helps to eliminate any Gothic implications in the end, if there were any elements



that could be construed as such. A reader left alone with a ghost in a dark church marks the potentially negative impact of what purports to be a happy ending. A bit of sunshine and the insertion of a small cast of characters dresses it differently.

In keeping with the visualization of the conditional, there is another so-called family that could have appeared here at the end. If it had not been the fireside circle or Agnes and Oliver in a church together, then we might have seen Mr. Brownlow and his newly-adopted son, another representation of a reconstituted family. On the heels of the paragraph in which the narrator describes what he *would* tell us of Rose, if his hand did not fail, comes another sentence, again in the conditional tense, that gives the most insight into the life Brownlow now shares with Oliver. The narrator tells us he *would* show us how Brownlow filled Oliver's mind with stores of knowledge and became "attached to him more and more as his nature developed itself." In return, Oliver *would* show "the thriving seeds of all he could wish him to become" (453). These final pictures are not reiterations of but amendments to the novel's textual conclusion, but when we set aside the conditional here and turn to the indicative, or the diegetic, what do we see instead at the end of *Oliver Twist*? And if we were to design a plate that reflects that world, what would it look like?

Picture well-tended village cottages, a quaint parsonage's house, and a country church. Picture manicured gardens and a fish-filled stream nearby. Picture a "little society" of predominately elderly gentlemen, bachelors, if you will, "linked together" (451). Three households complete the collective. Harry, Rose, and Mrs. Maylie live at the vicarage, where Mr. Giles and the boy Brittles "remain in their old posts" "but divide their attentions [. . .] equally between" (452) the three houses. Brownlow, who adopted

“Oliver as his own son,” settles within a mile of the church with his long-time housekeeper Mrs. Bedwin. Mr. Losberne, who claims that London air now disagrees with him, gives up his practice and likewise takes “a bachelor’s cottage” nearby:

[Losberne] took to gardening, planting, fishing, carpentering, and various other pursuits of a similar kind, all undertaken with his characteristic impetuosity; and in each and all, he has since become famous throughout the neighborhood as a most profound authority. [. . .] [H]e had managed to contract a strong friendship for Mr. Grimwig, which that eccentric gentleman cordially reciprocated. He is accordingly visited by him a great many times in the course of the year, and on all such occasions Mr Grimwig plants, fishes, and carpenters with great adour, doing everything in a very singular and unprecedented manner; but always maintaining, with his favourite asseveration, that his mode is the right one. On Sundays he never fails to criticise the sermon to the young clergyman’s face, always informing Mr Losberne in strict confidence afterwards, that he considers it an excellent performance, but thinks it as well not to say so. (452)

Mr. Losberne’s cottage, where his newly contracted and “strong friendship” with Mr. Grimwig brings him there a “great many times in the course of the year” (451) exists in the indicative mode at novel’s end. This cottage and Grimwig’s visits there take textual center stage; the novel ends on a decidedly masculine and comic note, but neither final plate contains any imagery of these old gentlemen, which are so central to the novel’s closing bucolic scene, an omission that seems to reinforce the heterosocial/familial imperatives that dominate critical readings of *Oliver Twist*.

In Cruikshank’s pictorial realm, on the other hand, a seemingly normative (though Parker argues transgressive) representation of a mother-figure and her child dominates. The narrator even tells us that he “*would* summon [. . .] again those little faces that clustered around [Rose’s] knee” (453). Scholars typically regard this additional statement as evidence that the birth of children compound the happiness in Harry and Rose’s home, though it is Oliver that stands in for these children here. Part of the critical legacy for Dickens’s novels says they are filled with “questions to do with domestic affections and

domestic authority” that underwrite the cultural shifts from aristocratic to middle-class ideas of kinship and reproduction in England (*Man’s Place*, 1). And as middle-class ideas about family become widespread cultural ideals, Dickens learned to capitalize on the Victorian reading public’s desire for such scenes; he notoriously became the master of sentimentalized representations of Victorian family life. It is important to note, however, that here, in one of his early novels, predictable marriage patterns and their potential reproduction, which also includes Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Bedwin, and Oliver’s household, are all relegated to the conditional.

Cruikshank’s images erode the value Dickens places on the interactions of male friends, especially that of the bachelors, as does the criticism generated for *Oliver Twist* today. When we leave Oliver, he has become one member in a little society where elderly cottagers Mr. Brownlow, Mr. Losberne, and Mr. Grimwig now reside. Here we can picture Oliver “ranging the meadow after botanical phenomena of all kinds” (292), much like Losberne had fantasized for the boy when they still lived in the city. Granted Dickens, at the same time, points to Rose and Harry Maylie in this new location and tells readers that they become key figures in Oliver’s new life. But Harry and Rose’s union takes place off stage. Dickens managed to include this conventional marriage plot in his story, just outside its narrative limits. In similar fashion, those events leading up to the union appear only in glimpses. We learn that the orphaned Rose and Harry Maylie are in effect siblings. We learn that Rose at first refuses to marry Harry because she worries that her family history, once learned, will ruin his professional life. Harry then leaves his mother’s home [only after he asks Oliver to write secretly and keep him abreast of Rose’s affairs] in order to withdraw from the public sphere and become a clergyman. He returns

to Rose, proposes again, and she agrees finally to marry him. We can imagine that the Victorians were as uninterested in these events and their outcome as we are, and the narrator's use of indirect discourse confirms their marginality. Cruikshank's final plates, however, change our perceptions and the extent to which Dickens meant for the newlyweds to be present in readers' minds; his illustrations leave us with more of a "the-child-finds-a-family" ending than the text allows.

I noted early in this project that Sedgwick's trajectory for describing the advent of repressive forms of novelistic conventions overlooks a long tradition of likeable elderly bachelor figures in popular fiction. Granted, Cruikshank's and Dickens's choices for their final illustrations certainly obscure the centrality of the bachelor collective in *Oliver Twist*. And Sedgwick never claimed she was a literary historian, so it is likely she was not aware in 1985 of the number of unattached men portrayed in popular novels. But as more recent critics have begun to examine these representations of male friendship, the bonds of these elderly men, and the desires they bring to a text, remain, for the most part, unread. Studies of friendship today often situate themselves as subsets of sexuality studies, and elderly bachelor friendships apparently fall into a category of friendship similar to the one Victor Frankenstein and Henry Clerval have traditionally shared – the non-homoerotic and, because of it, the not very interesting.

One goal of this project has been to close read representations of male friendship that other critics ignore. While doing so, it has not only shown us how necessary Victor's love for Henry is to *Frankenstein's* narrative structure but also how Shelley's understanding of their friendship was anything but conventional. Sir John Blubber in Egan's *Finish to Life*, unlike Corinthian Tom and Bob Logic, actually lives to appear in

the text's final scene. In the Cruikshank brother's illustration, he sits just at the margin, acting the jolly protector of the newly married Jerry and Mary Hawthorne. But readers know that this optimistic image of Hawthorne's kindly friend has another side. Blubber is the keeper of the secrets of Jerry's urban education, and he keeps a few secrets of his own as well. Readers will remember the scene where Tom and Jerry come upon what looks to be Logic and Blubber fighting with a guard as they are being tossed from a brothel. We get more than one worldly unattached man at the end of *Oliver Twist*, and when we focus on the bonds between these men, and how they eventually grow to become that brood of country bachelors nested in the countryside, we see, and arguably for the first time, the importance of Brownlow's transformation as a character in Dickens's novel and just how dependent it becomes on him for closure.

## Conclusion

I have argued throughout this dissertation that mapping representations of male friendship in the popular literature of the first decades of the nineteenth century challenges us to rethink our ideas about both genre and desire in the period. This project investigated the critical usefulness in seeing friendship as a non-sexual category at the same time that it argued representations of non-connubial heterosexuality are important for homosexual history. The wide variety of non-connubial heterosexuality that is represented in the novels I have discussed, considered in conjunction with their immediate popularity, and redistribution in subsequent decades, lead me to question the effectiveness of Eve Sedgwick's powerfully argued paradigm for explaining the advent of the classic Victorian realistic repressive novel and its marriage plot. When we shift our focus to the historical specificity of the generative literary tropes produced in popular fiction, we can see how there were plots circulating that provide vivid pictures of exciting, albeit dangerous, alternatives to marriage, and to ways of thinking about desire and self that could open up possibilities for potentially transgressive identifications, and transgressive behaviors.

I have also argued throughout this dissertation that these novels are textual and pictorial sites of resistance; that is, they serve as counter-narratives to the growing dominance of the marriage plot. Of course, this only makes sense when we talk about these texts within the marriage plot's long history. These texts present readers with, if

only as fantasies, options for social behaviors different from those mandated by heterosexual romance; indeed, as I have argued throughout the dissertation, these fictions effectively normalized non-traditional options. After all, these pictures of male bonds were best sellers. It was not the genres that were normalizing because they were often oddly, even bizarrely, constructed hybrid texts, but across these mixed platforms, narratives of homosociality emerged, seeming to establish their own structures and conventions. Representations of all-male communities, providing particular discourses about gender, sex, and ethics circulated widely and could be better known than heterosexual ones.

Once we begin to recognize the influence of these novels as sites for explorations of male homosociality, we can begin to see how the novelistic conventions of non-normative heterosexuality can inform how we read later literature. These novels mark an anti-marriage literary tradition, continuing past the 1830s. They, along with their socially transgressive heroes, continue throughout the decades in the nineteenth century, but largely as either minor characters and plots or in less popular fiction. Sedgwick had said that the novels in her study were “specifically not meant to begin to delineate a separate male-homosocial canon” (*Between Men* 17). I too have not created a separate homosocial canon, for my argument here rests on demonstrating how very common and popular the reckless, free-spirited male, with his marginalization of family ties and convention was in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, without wholly agreeing with Sedgwick, she is surely right when she argues that “the European canon as it exists is already [a homosocial] canon and most so when it is most heterosexual” (17).

I highlighted in the introduction to this project one tradition of masculine romance that Sedgwick does not include in her canon, texts like *Tom Brown's School Days*, which celebrate a boy bonded with another boy as part of a his natural journey toward marriage and family. This dissertation offers up sets of conventions for another type of masculine romance. It is striking that while the young Dickens in 1839 did not place a homosocial narrative at the center of *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* (1861) looks remarkably like the non-normative fiction I have discussed here. Young Pip aspires to become a gentleman, to be a sophisticate. His boyhood friend, Herbert Pocket, dreams of working for the East India Trading Company (like Henry Clerval in *Frankenstein*). Magwitch becomes the third in their all-male triangle, and Miss Havisham Dickens's Gothic reimagining of the Monster as rejected romantic female. The story ends with Pip disfigured, and unmarried, but still tied to Pocket. While there may be perceptible shifts in genres and their forms of convention, Victorian novels continue to make use of the all-male triangle to explore homosocial conventions, male desire, and the difficulties of marriage.

And illustrations from the mid-century, seen from our new vantage point read differently when we take into account the fuller picture of the market and its desires that this dissertation has delineated. Details in George Cruikshank's illustration *The Drunkard's Children*, Plate III (1848), for example, take on fresh meaning (fig. 5.1). The scene presents us with a representation of swells of a much different variety from those Cruikshank drew for earlier novels. His style has changed again; like fiction of the time,





*The Drunkard's Children. Plate III. From the Gin shop to the Dancing Rooms, from the Dancing Rooms to the Gin Shop, the Poor Girl is Driven on in The Course Which Ends in Misery.*  
(fig. 5.1)

he appears to be moving toward greater realism. The illustration is also part of a pictorial narrative without any text. Cruikshank is the sole storyteller here. The figures around the periphery of the composition seem to lean away from the couples dancing center. The light in the image shines brightest on the central, forward couple and the man, legs crossed, leaning on the bar. The woman, the drunkard's daughter, looks back at him from the dance floor. We can remember how Cruikshank often positioned Bob Logic similarly as the voyeuristic figure watching illicit desires in others. And if we picture Dickens's pickpockets, *sans* his romantic touch, this figure could be someone like the Artful Dodger, all grown up.

But it is a good representation of the subtle ways in which signifiers of non-normative desire went on to appear in the day-to-day. Richard Vogler tells us the man

leaning on the counter in the illustration, the drunkard's daughter's pimp, watches her dance as a man caresses her fingers in a way that signals, to the pimp, and readers, his sexual desire for her (161 n. 230). Around the dancing room are signs that better characterize the establishment's patrons: an announcement for a masquerade, a billboard for *POSES PLASTIC—Every Evening before LE BAL*, and a list of rules of the assembly that include that no gent is to dance with his hat on, with another gent, or smoke during refreshments. Strikingly, nearly all the men in the room are smoking and wearing hats. Vogler points out, "it is clear that these rules, along with the general more significant principles of Victorian morality, are not being observed" (161 n. 230). Male-female desire becomes represented in both the textuality of the sign announcing the *poses plastic* and the figurative use of gesture in those provocatively caressing fingers. Indeed, a closer examination of the picture reveals (left rear and right front) two other assignations, signaled by the curled fingers of the women and men. Even in a moralizing illustration, the allure of the transgressive is brilliantly pictured.

Vogler fails to mention in his assessment of the behaviors shown in the image that the one offense Cruikshank does not include in his picture is two men dancing together. It is striking that while male-male desire is articulated in this scene textually, the image of men dancing together goes missing figuratively, invoked and yet visually prohibited. Cruikshank was a master of implying more than could be illustrated. In this case, we are asked not to "just read" but instead to visualize. His play between the textual and the figurative registers raises some questions about visual literacy and visual vocabularies in the period. It may be there are illustrative social and sexual signifiers lost to us today. But more important, it shows the illustrator's willingness, in a temperance narrative, to let his

readers visualize a scene of male desire. This dissertation, looking at earlier illustrations, focused on how Cruikshank's communicates thorough a different visual language, found in his application of the thickness and curve of line, which distorts figures. Here, in this more realistic setting, his communication with readers, and what he asks of them, becomes necessarily more complicated. An image like this can certainly confirm Sedgwick's idea that as the idea of the homosexual became more cogent, actual representations of him were suppressed. But it also raises further more important questions about the prominent role of how illustration shaped publication and reception in this period as well as our understanding of these texts in literary history. I conclude on a speculative note, to suggest that both Victorian realistic fiction and realistic illustrations deserve a closer look. But so too does the great wealth of fiction published during the early years of the nineteenth century.

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