Spectator Narratives: Print Representations of Performance and Nineteenth-Century Audiences

by

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For the teachers who came before me, prepared my way,
and went before I was ready

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Patsy Yaeger
Barbara Hodgdon
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And most of all, my mother, Leigh Ann DeWolf Eriks

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ABSTRACT

Spectator Narratives: Print Representations of Performance and Nineteenth-Century Audiences examines print narratives about theatre events in letters, diaries, periodicals, and novels. Building an archive that recovers the productively loose relationship among genres in the nineteenth century, *Spectator Narratives* reads *historical* accounts of theatregoing in conversation with *fictional* representations of performance in contemporaneous novels. Such an inter-generic approach to theatre writing reveals, on the one hand, how Victorian actors and audience members use the techniques of nineteenth-century narrative to shape the meaning of performance events; and, on the other, how Victorian novelists incorporate scenes of theatregoing in their experiments with fictional form.

This dissertation presents the spectator narrative in three acts, each oriented around a current question in theatre history and performance studies and a specific nineteenth-century narrative technique. Act I examines the intersection between scenes of spectatorship and narrative point of view. In close readings of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, and theatre writing from Henry Crabb Robinson, Clement Scott, Fanny Kemble, Marie Bancroft, and Lady Maud Tree, Act I analyzes how spectator-narrators wield both the depersonalized authority of Victorian omniscience and a more embodied, partial perspective marked by the boundaries of gender, class, and disability. Act II moves from a narrator's point of view to a text's narrative mode, in order to ask what epistolarity reveals about the spatial and temporal presence of live performance. Two case studies examine the uses of "epistolary liveness" –Fanny Burney's *Evelina* and *Early Journals and Letters* in the late-eighteenth century and Wilkie Collins's *No Name* and Fanny Kemble's *Record of a Girlhood* in the mid-nineteenth century – with a specific focus on how the presence and precarity of epistolary narrative highlight the vulnerability of feminine performance. Act III steps back from scenes of performance to consider narrative structures. Focusing on the intersection between performance histories and serial plotting, this Act analyzes both how novels like George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*, and Wilkie Collins's

The Moonstone use scenes of performance to stage pivotal moments of connection and return and also on how theatre reviews and essays from Sir Theodore Martin, Henry Morley, George Henry Lewes, and Clement Scott draw on the dynamics of narrative seriality to plot changes in performance over time. This final act undertakes, in particular, a revision of Shakespeare performance history. While Victorian Shakespeare is often narrated as a story of inherited traditions and Darwinian evolution, Act III presents a more serial Shakespeare by reading across spectator narratives that use the plotting devices of contagion and ghosting.

By offering comparative analyses that draw together insights from performance theory, narrative theory, reception theory, and Shakespeare performance studies, *Spectator Narratives* offers not only new insights into the particular relationship between Victorian theatre and the Victorian novel, but also a useful method for performance scholars working in other historical periods. As it shifts from a focus on the reading practices of audiences to an examination of audience tactics for writing performance narratives, *Spectator Narratives* opens up new avenues of research for scholars interested in historical audiences and reception studies.

INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene

For Victorian audiences, crafting stories about theatrical events played a key role in the communal experience of spectatorship. By the early 1900s, better technologies for dimming auditorium lighting would combine with the dramatic conventions of fourth-wall realism to create a new expectation of audience silence during performance.[1] But before the rise modernist theatre and its attendant etiquettes, the pits and galleries of Victorian theatres were filled with whispered exchanges about the last time someone had seen Sarah Siddons perform or the first time someone else had seen a production of *The Lady of Lyons*. The sociability of the audience was partially a function of runtime. Bills of entertainment in the nineteenth century were extensive – often including two or three events in the same evening and lasting up to six hours. Even for single productions, performances were often stretched well into the night by long act breaks, necessary to accommodate the cumbersome scene changes and elaborate stage settings many Victorian actor-managers favored.[2] This made for frequent pauses in the action and plenty

[1] Willmar Sauter argues for a tipping point in these conventions around 1900, when the Marble Palace in Stockholm posted a notice "to refrain from the traditional end-of-scene applause and to restrict their clapping to the end of an act," "The Audience," in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, eds. David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 169. Michael Booth describes a more "leisurely" change in etiquette over a long turn of the century: when auditorium lights were dimmed for Wagner's *Ring* cycles in 1882 and 1892, he notes, many operagoers protested the change, and regular audience darkness did not become standard in London theatres until after World War I. See Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 62.

[2] The nineteenth century saw an explosion of new stage technologies, including gas lighting (which, by improving visibility, prompted actor-managers increasingly to favor three-dimensional over two-dimensional scenery), the box set (a realistically designed, three-walled and roofed set, designed to resemble the interior of a building), the moving

of time for theatregoers to consult with their neighbors about the evening's entertainment. After all, the large and crowded nature of many nineteenth-century theatres sometimes made it easier to see and hear fellow spectators than the actors on stage. Indeed, Michael Booth notes that some spectators complained of "the conversational zeal of many members of the audience and their habit of ignoring the stage for minutes on end in order to indulge in private chatter well above the level of a whisper."[3] An evening at the Victorian playhouse, in other words, involved not just absorbing the story being enacted under the spotlights, but also recounting and recirculating a multitude of narratives within the audience – some of which were undoubtedly about theatergoing itself.

Not content with trading tales during performances, actors and spectators also took advantage of a growing print market to further circulate anecdotes and origin stories through the post or in published diaries, memoirs, and letters.[4] By writing to a friend or consulting the papers, theatregoers could continue the process of narrativizing the performance event. Paul Prescott, in his study of theatrical reviews, opens with such a tableau of interactive print-performance representation, as he imagines the scene following the Victorian actress Ellen Terry's Jubilee performance in 1906:

> The performance was over, but the process of remembering had just begun: "the jaded pittites blinked as they emerged into daylight and bought evening papers that they might read about it all before going to bed." Gripped by an instant nostalgia for what they had witnessed, the pittites (and presumably other sections of the audience) resorted to the print media to prolong the experience a little further. When they woke up the next day they might have consulted the morning papers, which had a "more leisured say" on the

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panorama (in which a painted scene was slowly rolled between two spools), and stage hydraulics (which allowed scenery to be set and shifted in the basement). These new possibilities for display, combined with a growing interest in antiquarianism, led many theatres to invest heavily in elaborate stage designs and spectacular effects.

[3] Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, 62.

[4] Jacky Bratton notes that in the early nineteenth century, "there was already an eager readership for a range of published books and papers containing information, good stories about the theatre, or private details about individuals great and small," *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 95.

> event and the ability to reprint and comment on "the speeches which were delivered late in the afternoon" of the jubilee.[5]

Print media, according to Prescott, was a way of "prolonging" the social experience of theatregoing: "reprinting" as a mode of replaying or re-performing. These narrative accounts of performance not only provided readers with new information about the theatre world, but also offered them the chance to inhabit different perspectives, encounter familiar characters, revisit old scenes, and follow the progress of key relationships. The recounting of anecdotes, for example, was a key convention of theatrical memoirs, which often included not only the author's personal experiences but tales heard second- or third-hand. Beyond their documentary function, in other words, print narratives about theatregoing appealed to readers as stories.

Such narrative texts have been a boon to theatre historians of the nineteenth century; but until recently they had more often interested scholars in spite of their literary qualities than because of them. While the imbrication of historical writing and narrativity is a matter of general consensus after Hayden White and the post-structural turn,[6] traditional approaches to theatre history, as Jacky Bratton notes, often attempt to pick through the more constructed or conventional parts of first-person accounts in search of "'factual' information that can be extracted and corroborated from other documentary sources."[7] When the goal is to produce

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[5] Paul Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare: Journalism and Performance from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2013), 2.

[6] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), helped launch studies of historiographical narration by arguing that that history writing is inseparable from acts of narration. As Daniel Fulda describes it, historiographic narration "is an umbrella term encompassing the forms and functions of both narration (as an act) and narrative (as a structure) in historiography (both within and beyond the academic study of history) and in thinking about history. In the field of historiography…narration is primarily discussed as a means of lending coherence to the historiographic text or artefact (and to the narrated history) and interpreting a historical event. Narrative configuration is currently considered fundamental to history as a genetic cause and effect relationship between factual events at various moments in time," "Historiographic Narration," in *the living handbook of narratology*, eds. Peter Hühn, et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University): http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/historiographic-narration

[7] Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History*, 95. As a result, Bratton suggests, narrative accounts of theatregoing have been well mined for facts, but "have not often been read for what their writers or their subjects seem to stress, or what their contemporary readership might have understood of theatre history from them," 95. Richard Schoch, in

verifiable documentary evidence, a spectator's reproduction of generic conventions, manipulation of point of view, or attempt to impose a particular plot are likely to appear as unwelcome distortions: a feature that cannot be fully eliminated, but that ought to be minimized as much as possible.[8]

More recently, however, critics developing alternative approaches to autobiography or to dramatic criticism have been energized (rather than frustrated) by the possibility that writing about theatre does not simply document experiences of performance but in fact *helps produce* experiences of performance. In work on theatrical autobiographies, for example, scholars like Bratton and Charlotte Canning have developed new, feminist historiographical methods by analyzing the way theatrical women "produce and interpret" professional experiences through narrative self-presentation.[9] Richard Schoch makes a similar claim about texts written by Victorian reviewers and critics, as he advocates for treating accounts of theatrical performance as independent discursive formations rather than confirmations of primary sources.[10] The decisions that spectators make about what to centralize and what to exclude – what to describe and what to obscure – "do not express anterior assumptions about theatrical and popular culture," Schoch

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Writing the History of the British Stage: 1660-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), attributes this to the paradigm of modernist historiography, which tends to discount the hermeneutic values of pre-empiricist historical scholarship. Like Bratton, Schoch argues that theatre historians have often read the narratives produced by nineteenth-century spectators, "more as sources of facts than as interpretive interventions in their own right," 2.

[8] In their empirical study of audience demographics in Victorian London, for example, Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow attempt to rebalance critical accounts of audiences at minor theatres, which they believe have too often taken Victorian spectator narratives at face value. They use census data, police reports, and other historical archives to correct for spectator accounts that "conceal or even erase" the complexity of real audiences by recycling "moral truisms" in "formulaic" narratives. See *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing, 1840-1880* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2001), 43-44.

[9] Quotation from Charlotte Canning, "Constructing Experience: Theorizing a Feminist Theatre History," *Theatre Journal* 45.4 (1993): 529-40; citation 530. See also Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, "Introduction," in *Auto/biography and Identity: Women, Theatre, and Performance*, eds. Maggie Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), and Nina Auerbach, *Ellen Terry: Player in her Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

[10] In addition to Schoch, *Writing the History of the British Stage*, see also *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Stuart Sillars takes a similar stance in *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), where he suggests that a text about theatregoing is "better considered as an aesthetic object in its own right than respected as an impartial historical source," 67.

argues, but "constitute those very assumptions."[11] Approached from this perspective, spectators' strategies of representation might be considered not as barriers to objective knowledge but as objects of interest in their own right.

If these critics have helped transform textual mediation from an obstacle into an object, I want to move one step further: by transforming such narrative objects into sites of interdisciplinary opportunity. Focusing on both the literary elements of theatre writing and the theatrical qualities of fictional narratives, this dissertation resituates spectator narratives in a wider network of print texts, as I read *historical* accounts of Victorian theatregoing in conversation with *fictional* representations of performance in contemporaneous novels. Although first-person accounts of theatregoing have benefited from renewed critical attention in recent years, most of these studies have analyzed spectator narratives in the relative isolation of their most immediate generic contexts. Examinations of actress autobiography, for example, have produced important insights about women's strategies of self-presentation by reading their narratives in relation to the conventions of memoir and life writing.[12] Likewise, articles and monographs on theatrical reviews – or on the body of reviews produced by a particular reviewer – have explored what these texts can tell us about the changing nature of journalism or the history of dramatic criticism.[13] While there is much to be learned from these genre-specific

[11] Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, 7.

[12] Thomas Postlewait's essay "Autobiography and Theatre History," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), was influential in calling for new approaches to these texts. Since its publication, feminist critics in particular have explored how autobiography can form the basis for less masculinist historical narratives. In addition to Canning, see Mary Jean Corbett, *Representing Femininity: Middle-Class Subjectivity in Victorian and Edwardian Women's Autobiographies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and "Performing Identities: Actresses and Autobiography," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). In the past decade, there has also been significant work done on autobiographical narrative as a strategy of performance or of dramatic writing, as, for example, in Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, eds., *Auto/Biography and Identity: Women, Theatre and Performance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[13] Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare*, separates this work into two categories. First, there are critics who take particular writers as their focus, as in Stanley Wells's essays, "Shakespeare in Max Beerbohm's Theatre Criticism,"

studies, a more inter-generic approach allows me to reconfigure the intersection of spectatorship and narrative in a few important ways.

First, introducing fictional intertexts for historical theatre writing helps me leverage literary methods of analysis as a resource for performance historiography. In my comparative readings, I often begin with fiction: not in order to position the novel as an origin point for narrative strategies, but in order to benefit from the more sustained critical attention paid to the discursive techniques of the Victorian novel. While historiographers have examined the narrative structure of history writing in general terms, these studies, as Daniel Fulda notes, have been less attentive to the specific modes and tactics that narrative accounts employ. While literary narratology "has a wide array of systematically elaborated theories and concepts at its disposal," Fulda argues, "there is nothing comparable for historiography," which has yet to "systematically set out the formal repertoire of narrative techniques in historiography."[14] By taking literary narratives as my starting point, I address this imbalance by using the relatively extensive studies of point of view, narrative mode, and plot in fiction as groundwork for developing a repertoire of narrative techniques employed by Victorian spectators.

By treating fiction as a resource for enriching accounts of theatre history, I reverse the direction of much critical traffic between the two genres. Most studies examining interactions between theatre and novels have treated the former as a hermeneutic opportunity for the latter: they explore what eighteenth-century theatre publics or nineteenth-century ideas about

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Shakespeare Survey 29 (1976): 132-44, "Shakespeare in Leigh Hunt's Theatre Criticism," *Essays and Studies* (1980): 119-38, and "Shakespeare in Hazlitt's Theatre Criticism," *Shakespeare Survey* 35 (1982): 43-55 or Russell Jackson's essays, "J.F. Nisbit of *The Times*: Conservative Critic of the 'Eighties and 'Nineties," *Theatre Research International* 3 (1978): 114-35, "Shakespeare in the Theatrical Criticism of Henry Morley," *Shakespeare Survey* 38 (1985): 187-200, and "Shaw's Reviews of Daly's Shakespeare: The Wooing of Ada Rehan," *Theatre Research International* 19 (1994): 203-13. Second, there are those, like Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998) and Prescott himself, who analyze broader communities of reception and conventions of reviewing.

[14] Daniel Fulda, "Historiographic Narration."

theatricality can tell us about the market strategies of the novel or about the style and ideology of a particular novelist.[15] This work has usefully complicated historical narratives about the triumphant "rise of the novel" and its victory over the declining theatre; but in complicating the novelistic variables in the equation, studies of theatre and the novel have often held the theatre as a relatively stable constant. David Kurnick's influential *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel*, for example, troubles critical consensus about the novel's interiority by analyzing how Victorian fiction engaged in a melancholic incorporation of the exterior, collective public of the theatre.[16] Yet in order to produce such a nuanced version of novelistic interiority (in which writing about theatre – in the novel or elsewhere – is always a "bleaching" of the "color, heat, noise, and social contingency that properly constitute" live performance), Kurnick holds the essential exteriority of the theatre largely in place.[17] *Spectator Narratives* sees narrative less as

[15] These monographs have generally been written by critics whose primary interest is in fiction, and their case studies often center on prominent novels or novelists. See, for example, Joseph Litvak, *Caught in the Act: Theatricality in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), Emily Allen, *Theatre Figures: The Production of the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2003), David Marshall, *The Figure of Theatre: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) and *The Frame of Art: Fictions of Aesthetic Experience, 1750-1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), and David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Another important strand of scholarship for those interested in theatre and the novel is the study of melodrama as a cultural mode in the Victorian period – especially in its effects on popular novelists like Dickens. See especially Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Carolyn Williams, "Moving Pictures: George Eliot and Melodrama," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). I do not engage as closely with these studies, because of my own interest in spectator narratives rather than Victorian dramatic texts or acting styles. Nonetheless, these critics set a precedent for my project by analyzing productive aesthetic exchange across theatre and the novel.

[16] Kurnick studies the work of four novelists with aborted careers as dramatists – William Thackeray, George Eliot, Henry James and James Joyce – and reads in them a protest against (rather than a celebration of) the narrowing interior spaces of the novel. Kurnick analyzes "turn[s] to the theatre" and "formally encoded" theatrical energies that he argues index longing for embodied publics, *Empty Houses*, 4-5. These novels, in his view, do not triumph over their interiority but in many senses register their failure to convene a collective public.

[17] Kurnick, *Empty Houses*, 25.

an inevitable blanching of theatrical liveness than as one medium for shaping the colors and noises associated with performance. In my analyses, I complement existing studies of what theatricality can tell us about the novel by asking what narrative can tell us about Victorian spectators and performance historiography.

While my primary goal is to complicate understandings of the role narrative plays in theatre and performance, however, my reconfiguration of generic relations also facilitates a secondary aim: to offer new insights into how scenes of spectatorship and performance contribute to nineteenth-century experiments in fiction. By focusing on the practices of the novel and the theatre's shared nineteenth century audiences – rather than on the fictional works of failed playwrights (as Kurnick does) or on the strategies employed to differentiate competing markets (as Emily Allen does) – I provide a view of performance in the novel that focuses less on what is melancholic or antagonistic about the novel's relationship to theatre and more on what is generative.

The long nineteenth century offers a particularly rich period in which to pursue such a comparative study of theatre writing, in part because of the affordances of realist aesthetics. If historiography is, as Fulda suggests, "closest to the 19th-century Realist novel in its narrative technique" and "literary-historical location,"[18] those Victorian spectator narratives that aim to describe a particular performance, narrate a theatrical life, or chart the course of theatre history over time tend likewise to share in realism's broad aesthetic goals: the use of original plots, an interest in the limits of referentiality, a desire to construct individual characters rather than types, a rootedness in a temporal dimension, and an effort to present detailed environments.[19] Of course, historical spectator narratives are not fictional. As literary theorists Catherine Gallagher

[18] Fulda, "Historiographic Narration."
[19] Ian Watt's influential *Rise of the Novel*: *Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) names these features as characteristic of the novel's formal realism.

and Dorrit Cohn have pointed out, fictionality is separated from historical writing by its freedom to disregard geographic or embodied referents for the scenes and characters it represents.[20] Yet if spectator narratives are not non-referential, their referentiality is also more complex than in some other genres of historical writing. Theatrical performance as a form is famously double: characterized by the simultaneity of the real and not-real. Accordingly, representations of performing bodies in accounts of theatregoing often slip (whether deliberately or inadvertently) between referencing an actor, a dramatic character, or some combination of the two.[21] The focalizations of narrator-spectators, too, often join a singular first-person with ambiguous representations of collective consciousness – moving from the historical performance at hand to performances past or imagined.[22]

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[20] Catherine Gallagher theorizes fiction's distinctively non-referential relationship to bodies – its "no-body-ness" – in her influential essay, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, volume 1, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), and *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Dorrit Cohn's study *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) makes the case for three unique qualities of fictionality: its autonomy from a relationship to the historical record; its freedom of focalization; and its ability to produce unreliable narration.

[21] This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in reviews of new Shakespeare productions or in adaptations of well-known novels. A spectator's handwritten diary, for example, includes an account of a stage version of Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Adelphi in 1875 with real horses on stage. The presence of these animals – both real horses and representations of fictional horses – serves to highlight the confusing doubleness of other narrative markers, which simultaneously reference Newman Noggs the literary character, Newman Noggs the illustration, and George Belmore the actor, for example, or that refer both to the real stage scenery and to a fictional English courtyard on the way to Yorkshire: "Act I represented Nicholas Nickleby setting out to seek his fortunes as a tutor, and travelling down to Yorkshire with 'Squeers' on a coach with <u>real</u> horses! wh. scene provoked tremendous applause. The stage represented the courtyard of an old-fashioned inn, into wh. the coach was brought, and four living horses, who were harnessed to it in view of the audience, and the passengers having climbed up to their various seats (Nicholas and Squeers among them) — the vehicle was driven off in a most natural manner… Newman Noggs was one of the best characters in the play. Mr. G. Belmore 'made up' exactly in face and costume like one of [George] Cruikshanks' familiar illustrations of Dickens, and acted with the most minute attention to detail throughout," *Handwritten Diary of London Theatre Visits, Volume One* (1867-78), Victoria and Albert Collections, Nancy Adam Bequest of Theatrical Notebooks and Scrapbooks, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/archive/ARC50680, 43-44, 49.

[22] In a single review of Henry Irving's *Becket* at the Lyceum Theatre in 1892, for example, the influential theatre critic Clement Scott switches between "I," "we," and "one" pronouns, represents his narrator in both the scene of watching and the scene of writing, and interweaves his own personal recollections ("As I write, I can see his parting with Ophelia in 'Hamlet,' his superb individuality in 'Vanderdecken,' his exit as Shylock, his resignation as Dr. Primrose, Vicar of Wakefield, his picturesque devilry as Iago, and his combined comedy and tragedy as Louis") with larger claims about what the general audience feels ("but high above all stands that exquisite preparation for martyrdom in 'Becket'"), *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur": A Critical Record of the First-night Productions at the Lyceum Theatre From 1871 to 1895* (London: J. Macqueen, 1896), 359.

Accordingly, thinking realist fictionality alongside performance allows me to focus not only on how audiences use narrative to play creatively with the doubleness at the heart of theatrical representation but also on how novelists incorporate the duality of performance into fiction to experiment with a range of realist techniques. When following my primary line of inquiry, I draw on narrative theories to raise new questions about the representational goals and ideological effects of theatre writing. (Why might an actress adopt a different narrative perspective than a male reviewer, for example? If she chooses to interrupt a retrospective memoir with reprinted letters written by a younger narrating "I," how does this affect her representation of the live co-presence of performance?) At the same time, I also incorporate insights from performance theory to emphasize the embodied watching and repeated gestures that animate key scenes in nineteenth-century novels. (A focus on performance highlights the role that spectatorship plays in constructing a narrative point of view, for example, and makes visible the role that embodied repetition plays in the inventiveness of nineteenth-century plots.)

If the nineteenth century's dominant aesthetic enables particularly interesting comparisons of discursive technique, its intertwined print and theatre cultures reward inter-generic inquiry in other ways. Indeed, my decision to read across generic boundaries is motivated in part by the writing and reading habits of Victorians themselves, for whom "stories about theatre" was a more capacious category than our current generic boundaries might suggest. As theatre historiographer Thomas Postlewait argues, the histories of the novel and autobiography have often been intertwined, so that theatrical memoirs shared an audience with theatrical fiction.[23] Nineteenth-century scholars like Matthew Rubery have noted a similarly entangled relationship between Victorian novels and Victorian journalism: not only were many novels published serially in periodicals, but nearly every major Victorian novelist wrote pieces

[23] Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," 253-54.

for the press that would now be considered journalism or non-fiction.[24] And although epistolary fiction is more often associated with the eighteenth century, critics have also analyzed the numerous pathways through which letter writing entered the Victorian novel, as both a plot device and a formal structure.[25] Indeed, many nineteenth-century writers wrote broadly across all of these categories of text. Taken together, studies of Victorian print culture and readership challenge critics to think of memoirs, reviews, letters, and novels as forming a network of genres rather than developing in distinct genealogies.

An intertextual approach to reception may be particularly appropriate to the context of nineteenth-century theatre, which had a particularly anarchic approach to genre. In contrast to the eighteenth century's more prescriptive aesthetic hierarchies, Victorian theatre managers' interest in drawing a broad, popular audience often prompted them to mix and match performance styles in ways that make generic distinctions hard to distinguish.[26] Before 1843, theatres had been limited – at least in official practice – by the patent monopoly. Begun in 1660 and confirmed by Parliament with the Licensing Act of 1737, the patent monopoly officially gave the exclusive rights to produce spoken English drama to the Theatres Royal (Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket over the summer), so that minor or "illegitimate" theatres were limited to staging drama with music. In practice, many minor theatres devised creative ways to work around this

[24] Matthew Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also John M. L. Drew, *Dickens the Journalist* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003) and Alexis Easley, *First-Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830–70* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).
[25] I discuss analyses of the epistolary structures in Victorian novels in the introduction to Act II. On Victorian novels that incorporate diegetic letter writing, see also Laura Rotunno, *Postal Plots in British Fiction, 1840–1898: Readdressing Correspondence in Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and Daniel Hack, "Sympathy for the Begging Letter Writer," in *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005).
[26] In "What Is a Play? Drama and the Victorian Circus," in *The Performing Century: Nineteenth-Century's Theatre History,* eds. Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Jacky Bratton uses the circus as an example of nineteenth-century audience's relative indifference to stylistic and generic intermingling. For a full-length consideration of how the expanding business concerns of entertainment in the nineteenth century affected theatre managers' artistic decisions, see Tracy C. Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage, 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

problem, adding pantomimes or musical numbers to canonical plays to circumvent the prohibition on "spoken drama." The major theatres, for their part, had also begun to dip into melodrama to compete commercially with the more diverse fare at the so-called illegitimate theatres. When an Act of Parliament formally dissolved the patent monopoly in 1843, this decentralization and democratization of the theatre accelerated. Mixed bills that included two or three events (juxtaposing everything from Shakespearean comedies to pantomime, melodramas, farce, and burlesque) became popular, even as audiences and theatres became more numerous and diverse.[27]

This urge toward aesthetic intermingling has left scholars of the period with an archive that is both abundant and difficult. For literary scholars, the spectacular visual and auditory elements of nineteenth-century theatre have sometimes been hard to register in close analysis of Victorian dramatic texts, especially those written as burlesques, melodramas, pantomimes, or farces.[28] As Sharon Marcus notes, "most Victorianists prefer studying durable works by well-known authors to reconstructing the ephemeral work of acting, and have little interest in theater that elevated performers over authors."[29] Katherine Newey argues that for theatre historians, too, the archive of Victorian performance has necessitated new methods of research and analysis:

> it is extensive but fluid and almost unboundaried, and the sustained work required to make it productive in conventional ways for scholars has been patchy. Scholars working on the Victorian theatre have few of the resources taken for granted in other areas of cultural and literary history. The literary and archival materials available for the study of the Victorian theatre are like the theatre industry itself: profligate in the range of

[27] In *Reflecting the Audience*, Davis and Emeljanow devote much of their demographic analysis to demonstrating that theatrical spectators in London were diverse in terms of class, gender, and age.
[28] As Sharon Aronofsky Weltman observes in, "Theater, Exhibition, and Spectacle in the Nineteenth Century," in *A Companion to British Literature*, eds. Robert DeMaria, Jr, Heesok Chang, and Samantha Zacher (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), these genres of performance suffered a period of scholarly neglect after the scornful reaction of modernist theatre critics. Studies like Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) and Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* and *The Making of the West-End Stage: Marriage, Management, and the Mapping of Gender in London 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) have argued for and helped develop less text-centric models of theatre criticism.
[29] Sharon Marcus, "Victorian Theatrics: Response," *Victorian Studies* 54.3 (Spring 2012): 438-70; citation 439.

> performance texts, adaptations, and genres, replete with a myriad physical, visual, and textual traces of performance, and demonstrating the theatre's endless capacity to innovate and adapt, but chaotic and often contradictory. Serious historians of the Victorian theatre have had to invent or adapt research methodologies to explore the richness of the documents of Victorian performance available to us.[30]

This dissertation works with the "profligate" archive of Victorian theatre by assembling a similarly capacious network of spectator narratives: joining together texts that are often catalogued and analyzed separately in order to help visualize the "multiple, various, and scattered" sites where discursive representations of performance events were created and consumed.[31] The range of narrative techniques that I gather in this less generically boundaried network of spectator texts provides a complement to what Tracy C. Davis has called the "repertoires" of nineteenth century theatregoers: the "multiple circulating recombinative discourses of intelligibility" through which audience members learned how to read performance in the nineteenth century.[32] These repertoires are built not only through previous theatregoing experiences but also through consumption of other media. "Theatre audiences," as Newey points out, "could also be readers of novels and visitors to galleries,"[33] and some understanding of the conventions and techniques of representation in other cultural realms helps contemporary scholars understand how audiences made sense of performance. The repertoire of spectator narratives I assemble here broadens our sense of how theatregoers produced performance meanings – not only by making available some of the "discourses of intelligibility" that Victorians may have encountered in a range of fictional and historical texts, but also by revealing the discursive techniques spectators used to shape the significance of theatre events.

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[30] Katherine Newey, "Victorian Theatre: Research Problems and Progress," in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture*, ed. Juliet John (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 665.
[31] *Ibid*., 666.
[32] Tracy C. Davis, "Nineteenth-Century Repertoire," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 36.2 (Winter 2009): 6-28, citation 7.
[33] Newey, "Victorian Theatre," 674.

In this shift from audience reading practices to an examination of audience (and actor) tactics for writing performance narratives, I arrive at a third benefit of an inter-generic approach: the development of an analytical tool that will be adaptable to studies of theatre and performance in other contexts, especially in the subfield of performance studies focused on audience and reception studies. Spurred in part by feminist scholars interested in the political possibilities of a resistant spectator, critics studying theatre audiences have worked to position them not as passive receptacles but as active participants in the performance process. Intriguingly, they have often done so by invoking the figure of the reader or by drawing from literary models of reader response. In the late 1980s and 1990s, for example, Jill Dolan and Elin Diamond imagined the feminist spectator as engaged in the work of a "resistant reader" (Dolan), or a critic with a gestic "mode of reading" (Diamond).[34] Influential essays by Marvin Carlson and Barbara Hodgdon likewise approached spectators as readers, as they called for scholars to "situate spectators and their reading strategies as the primary objects of investigation."[35] Thanks to the work of these critics, studies of historical audiences now take into account how audience expectations – the layered history of viewing and performing that establishes the codes of interpretation in what Susan Bennett calls the "production-reception" contract – affect "what [the audience] sees and how they see" it.[36]

Building on these analyses of the codes through which audiences receive and interpret a performance's meaning, I shift my attention to what takes place one step further in the process, as I analyze how spectators use narrative to articulate and frame performance meaning for

[34] Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 2, and Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1997), ii.
[35] Citation from Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade*, 171. See also Marvin Carlson, "Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce A. McConachie (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1989).
[36] Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 107.

others.[37] This expansion of performance activity past the fall of the curtain pushes back against understandings of performance as constitutively ephemeral. While Peggy Phelan's early interventions in the field helped shape an understanding that the political power of a performance rested in its tendency to disappear,[38] I follow critics who see possibility in the continued meaning-making of the spectator.[39] Conceiving of a wider network of audience interactions that extends beyond the space and time of the theatre, I develop a narrative method for analyzing the interventions that spectators make in a performance's process of signification. The spectator acts, I seek to demonstrate, not only by reading, but also by writing.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation presents the spectator narrative in three acts, each oriented around a current question in theatre history or performance studies and a specific nineteenth-century narrative technique. Act I examines point of view, omniscience, embodiment, and the gendered construction of a spectator's narrative authority. Act II moves from a narrator's point of view to a text's narrative mode, in order to ask what epistolarity can tell us about the spatial and temporal presence of live performance. Act III steps back to consider narrative structures, as I analyze how theatre histories use the dynamics of seriality to plot changes in performance history.

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[37] Ric Knowles, *Reading the Material Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), both lay important groundwork for this project by investigating how "reviews and public discussions…shape response" to performance (Knowles 91) and by mining those places where audience reception seems in tension with performers' intention (Thompson 15).

[38] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993) influentially argued that the only life of performance "is in the present," 146.

[39] Especially important to my understanding of an extended performance process have been Rebecca Schneider, "Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6.2 (2001): 100-108, and Barbara Hodgdon, *Shakespeare, Performance, and the Archive* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). For Hodgdon, an extended theatrical event allows for the conception of a more active spectator, what she calls (borrowing from Augusto Boal) a "'spect-actor,' a participant engaged in re-imagining and re-animating performance," 6.

Act I beings with a feature of theatrical memoir that attracted many Victorian readers and that repulses scholarly desires for documentary evidence: their distinctive points of view. The personal, idiosyncratic perspectives offered by actor and spectator memoirs have often appeared as unwelcome distortions to theatre historians looking for more objective evidence. Reading first-person spectator accounts alongside novels, however, turns the relationship between spectatorship and subjective points of view into a central object of interest. Just as the fictional narrator's perspective directs and focalizes the reader's gaze, the historical spectator-narrator's point of view shapes the "horizon of expectations" for their contemporary readers and for future theatre historians.[40]

In order to explore what kinds of audience authority different points of view enable, I examine a trio of fictional heroines who are also avid spectators: Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, and Jane Eyre in Brontë's *Jane Eyre.* Staging scenes of spectatorship, I argue, allows Austen and Brontë to invest their narrators and focalized characters with two distinct forms of narrative authority: that wielded by the characteristically Victorian perspective of omniscience (or what Audrey Jaffe calls "semi-omniscience")[41] and a more subjective authority created by what I call embodied, partial perspective. These two points of view orient the two halves of Act I, which put Fanny, Jane, and Lucy in conversation with historical theatre writing from Henry Crabb Robinson, Clement Scott, Fanny Kemble, Marie Bancroft, and Lady Maud Tree. Bringing together feminist research on narrative point of view and on actress autobiography, I focus particularly on how a spectator's authority is shaped by gender, class, and disability.

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[40] Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*.

[41] Audrey Jaffe's *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991) is particularly central to my understanding of omniscience. As I discuss in more detail in Act I, Jaffe reads omniscience as a fantasy that is never quite achieved and focuses her analyses on the process through which narrators construct their "semi-omniscient" authority.

Act II moves from an individual focus on the spectator as narrator to an investigation of spectator community, as I explore how the circulation of letters about theatre events allowed audiences and novelists to represent experiences of performance liveness. Examining correspondence, epistolary novels, and the inclusion of letters in retrospective novels and memoirs, I analyze how the letter's ambivalent relationship to presence – both temporal and spatial – allows writers to construct live, collective scenes of performance. Epistolary discourses, in their efforts to write up to the present moment of narration and to bring an absent addressee into a collective conversation, offer an apt discursive tool for extending the liveness of a performance event through narrative. By demonstrating how late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors use epistolarity as a tool for reproducing the co-presence of the theatre, I bring a different historical context to performance studies' theorizations of liveness while also adding more epistolary texture to the history of the Victorian novel.

In order to develop a sense of how epistolarity functions in the spectator's repertoire of narrative tools, I devote Act II, Scene 1 to a close reading of letters by Adelaide Kemble, T.W. Robertson, Wilkie Collins, and Ellen Terry. Representations of performance in these letters, I suggest, create the effect of co-presence by employing some of epistolarity's constitutive tensions: those between past/present/future, present/absent, and finished/continuous. By unpacking these three qualities of the epistolary mode, I lay the groundwork for two more substantial case studies in Scenes 2 and 3. Act II, Scene 2 looks at epistolary novels in their traditional historical period, as I focus on Fanny Burney, who – as a novelist, would-be playwright, amateur performer, and prolific letter writer – sits at an intriguing intersection between the late-eighteenth-century epistolary novel and the theatre. Reading her epistolary novel *Evelina* in conversation with her *Early Journals and Letters*, I ask how Burney turned

epistolary narrative into a resource for her amateur performance writing. Act II, Scene 3 stretches forward to consider hybrid epistolary modes in the Victorian period, when third-person narration is thought to have superseded epistolary narrative. I complicate this historical narrative by analyzing how epistolary techniques helped two nineteenth-century writers narrativize performance events: Wilkie Collins in his theatrical novel *No Name* and Fanny Kemble in her memoir *Record of a Girlhood*. Across all three scenes, I examine how the presence and precarity generated by epistolary liveness highlights conditions of embodiment and relational insecurity.

Act III builds on my earlier analyses of discrete scenes of performance in order to analyze the structures that narrate the arc of theatre performance over time, with particular interest in how Victorians represent the changing place of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century theatre history. To understand how Victorians sequenced and situated Shakespeare, I examine the intersection between a particular narrative technique (plot) and a specific narrative form (the serial installment). As theatre historiographers like Postlewait and Canning have pointed out, typical plots from contemporary literary genres can provide patterns for both spectators and scholars to represent the progress of action in accounts of performance.[42] Many performance histories of Victorian Shakespeare, for example, imagine reception in the nineteenth century through the linear progress of the inheritance plot, wherein dominant interpretations are passed down through a successional line of Victorian actor-managers and stage technology evolves in Darwinian fashion. Yet the nineteenth century was also a period of widespread experimentation with plotting, as competing theories of temporality met with new innovations in periodical publishing. The dynamics of serial writing and reading, in particular, offered new ways of representing changes and repetitions in performance over time.

[42] Charlotte Canning and Thomas Postlewait, eds., *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 18.

Taking up two non-linear aspects of serial narrative – its imbrication in networks of other texts and its accumulation of repetitions over time – I use Scenes 1 and 2 to trace how seriality facilitated two non-inheritance-based structures: contagion plotting and ghost plotting. Across these scenes, I examine the troubled inheritances in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* to uncover alternative scenes of plotting that power narrative or connect characters either through the miasmas and unpredictable contact of contagion (in Scene 1) or the loops, repetitions, and layers of ghosting (in Scene 2). By putting these more traditionally serial, fictional narratives in conversation with Shakespeare reviews and essays by Henry Morley, Sir Theodore Martin, George Henry Lewes, and Clement Scott, I uncover what's periodical about the contagion and ghost plots of Shakespeare histories. At the same time, the more explicitly theatrical content of these historical spectator narratives helps highlight how many nineteenth-century plots make use of scenes of performance: from Mordecai's contagious mission in *Daniel Deronda* to Estella's ghostly gestures in *Great Expectations*.

As a culminating act, Act III thus demonstrates how *Spectator Narratives* seeks not only to widen the archive of performance history, but also to provide new avenues for performance historiography. The Epilogue lingers with these critical possibilities to consider in more detail how this dissertation's approach to narrative might serve as the basis for an adaptable methodology for future theatre histories. At the same time, I also draw out some performance potential for critics of the Victorian novel, as I point toward new ways of considering the centrality of theatre and spectatorship to nineteenth-century fiction.

1. ACT I: POINT OF VIEW

Introduction: "Mere Lookers-on at Life"

Stories about theatre in the nineteenth century found an eager audience, who sought out new perspectives on the leading actors and productions of the day not only at the playhouses of Victorian London but also through the capital's growing print market. These narrative accounts of performance offered readers not only new information about the theatre world but also the possibility of occupying a distinct point of view within that world – of swapping seats with other spectators or taking up a place at the center of the stage. The dramatic critic Edward Dutton Cook, for example, titled his collection of theatre reviews *Nights at the Play: A View of the English Stage*: an invitation to his readers to encounter the spatial and temporal experience of playgoing through the "view" of one particular spectator and narrator.[43] Whether written by a leading actor-manager or by an everyday audience member, texts about theatregoing offered personal, idiosyncratic perspectives on everything from the qualities of prominent actors to the contents of post-show dinners. As they turned from their own experiences of spectating to accounts of theatre focalized through other narrators, Victorian audiences explored how print narratives could recreate the embodied experience of seeing and being seen at the theatre.

Act I explores what this conjunction between spectatorship and narrative perspective affords for the representation of performance events. As the visual figuration of "point of view"

[43] Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play: A View of the English Stage* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1883).

suggests, observation plays a crucial role in consolidating a narrator's authority to make claims about the narrative world. Critics of Victorian fiction in particular have drawn on the work of Michel Foucault to theorize a generative link between narrative vision and narrative power. In the words of Mark Selzer, the "unlimited authority" of omniscient narration derives from a "panoptic 'eye'" that "thoroughly know[s] and thoroughly master[s]" the world of the novel through "providential vision."[44] Even for later scholars like Audrey Jaffe, who are less convinced of the effectiveness of the novel's panoptic strategies of control, visual observation still plays a key role in establishing narrative authority. In *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience*, Jaffe argues that Dickens and other nineteenth-century novelists deploy narrators who do not enter the text with their omniscience fully formed, but who must work to establish epistemological authority by circumscribing the perceptional limits of the characters, in opposition to which their own mobility makes itself felt as free and total access to knowledge. Particularly important to fictional narrators' claims to knowledge and power is their ability to see without being seen, as "unseen observation—the ability to read others without being read oneself—becomes an almost inescapable fantasy of experiencing power over others."[45]

So how did crafting a point of view in print narrative help Victorian actors and audience members exert power over a performance? Answering such a question, as feminist critics of performance and narrative have asserted, has much to do with gender. While women writers

[44] Mark Selzer, *Henry James and the Art of Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 54. D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), likewise uses observation to invest narrators with the disciplinary power of the police: through an omniscient observation of details, and through an ability to elaborate those details temporally and linearly into "minute networks of causality that inexorably connect one such trifle to another," the narrator functions as an unseen "micro-power" of social control, 30 and 2. For a thorough critical genealogy of omniscience, see Rachel Sagner Buurma, "Critical Histories of Omniscience," *New Directions in the History of the Novel*, eds., Patrick Parrinder, Andrew Nash, and Nicola Wilson (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillian, 2014).
[45] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points,* 17.

achieved considerable success in the nineteenth-century literary market,[46] social and literary conventions made it difficult for them to adopt certain authorial voices.[47] The omniscient voice theorized by Victorian literary critics, after all, requires a narrator to disappear from view; and this vanishing act proved especially difficult to achieve for women, whose bodies were often the object of particular scrutiny. Women on stage experienced this hyper-visibility in particularly pronounced ways, as their public displays occasioned social curiosity, scrutiny, and anxiety.

What alternative narrative perspectives were available for authors whose embodiment was so publicly visible? After first examining the more traditionally Victorian authority granted by omniscience, I go in search of less masculine forms of narration by drawing together several strands of feminist theory: on performance and spectatorship,[48] on narratology,[49] and on actress

[46] In *Nobody's Story*, Catherine Gallagher argues that many women writers actually emphasized their femaleness to succeed on the literary market in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Far from failing to conquer a patriarchal market, women writers who were "nobodies" had an advantage, because literature was transforming into a marketplace where anonymity, exchangeability, fungability, and fictional textuality were encouraged. In Scene 2 of this Act, I explore some alternative ways that women writers succeeded by emphasizing femaleness, but I focus not on anonymous nobodyness but on impaired bodyness. For another foundational study of women's role in the rise of the novel and the middle class, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[47] See especially Susan S. Lanser, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[48] Feminist film critics writing in the mid-70s and early 80s developed a psychoanalytic critique of the way that film activates particular identifications and desires in the spectator through the construction of a male gaze. See, for example, Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 (Fall 1975): 6-18, Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics. Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), and E. Ann Kaplan, *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983), especially "Is the Gaze Male?" Performance theorists like Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012) and Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1997) drew on these studies to theorize the feminist spectator as an alternative to traditional or anti-theatrical understandings of spectatorship as passive. While they are not primarily interested in analyzing texts produced by such feminist spectators, both Dolan and Diamond do figure spectatorship as reading: as a "resistant reader" who analyzes "against the grain" of the "performance text" (Dolan 2) and a gestic critic, whose "mode of reading" can transform an object into a "dialectical image" (Diamond ii).

[49] Susan Sniader Lanser helped articulate the shape of this field in, "Towards a Feminist Narratology," *Style* 20.3 (1986): 341-363. Many critics have since taken up this task, including Kathy Mezei, ed., *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Robyn Warhol, *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989) and Warhol and Lanser, eds., *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2015).

autobiography.[50] By analyzing objects at their intersection – that is, fictional and autobiographical spectator narratives – I integrate these fields' various visions of feminist method: to approach performances as processes of "feminist mimesis," which take "the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same," as Elin Diamond urges of performance scholars;[51] and to analyze narrative through a feminist narratology, which considers "gender, sexuality, and sex" as "narratologically significant elements," as Susan S. Lanser asks of narrative critics.[52]

In the scenes that follow, I examine the gendered intersection of performance and narrative point of view by investigating a trio of fictional heroines who are also avid spectators: Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, and Jane Eyre in Brontë's *Jane Eyre.* All three of these novels have attracted critical attention for their exploration of theatricality and for their representation of performance events like private theatricals, boarding-school burlesques, and drawing-room charades (respectively).[53] My analysis will focus in particular on how Austen and Brontë use scenes of spectatorship to construct Fanny, Lucy, and Jane as narrators that are both peculiarly disembodied – in their

[50] My engagement with actress autobiography in particular is outlined in the opening pages Act I, Scene 2.
[51] Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, xvi.
[52] Susan Sniader Lanser, "Sexing the Narrative: Propriety, Desire, and the Engendering of Narratology," *Narrative* 3.1 (1995): 85-94; citation 90.
[53] Many of these critics have been primarily interested in producing new insights in the ideologies of the novels or their authors: tracing the historical relationship between nineteenth-century dramatic and novelistic productions, examining contemporary attitudes toward "theatricality," or exploring the relationship of "performance" to identity and authentic feeling. Critics of Austen, for example, have analyzed the Mansfield theatricals to debate Austen's anti-theatricality – Paula Byrne, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (London and New York: Hambledon, 2002) and Penny Gay, *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) – to argue about how the presence of theatre affects our understanding of the novel's central moral statements and ideological bent –Litvak, *Caught in the Act*, Marshall, *The Frame of Art*, and Anna Lott, "Staging a Lesson: The Theatricals and Proper Conduct in *Mansfield Park*," *Studies in the Novel* 38.3 (2006): 275–287 – or to explore how the figure of the theatre helped novelists formulate "the novel" as a genre –Allen, *Theatre Figures*. For studies of theatre and theatricality in Brontë's novels, see Litvak, Terry Eagleton, *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), John Stokes, "Rachel's 'Terrible Beauty': An Actress Among the Novelists," *ELH* 51.4 (1984): 771-793, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 243–261, and Lynn M. Voskuil, "Acting Naturally: Brontë, Lewes, and the Problem of Gender Performance," *ELH* 62.2 (1995): 409-42.

ability to observe others while escaping observation themselves – and markedly embodied – in the narrative insistence on the weaknesses and illnesses that circumscribe their mobility. The novels poise them, in other words, between what Jaffe calls "the narrator's mobility and freedom and the character's bound and embodied condition."[54] Such a position allows them unique opportunities to frame events and to telegraph their own desires.

By putting Jane, Fanny, and Lucy in conversation with historical spectator narratives from Clement Scott, Henry Crabb Robinson, Fanny Kemble, Lady Maud Tree, and Marie Bancroft, I demonstrate that attention to the techniques used to represent these three fictional spectator/narrators can help critics analyze how historical actors and audience members shape the meaning of performances. Taking up the narrator's ability to direct the reader's gaze, the historical spectator-narrator's point of view shapes what Susan Bennett might call the "horizon of expectations" about performance events for their contemporary readers and for future theatre historians.[55] The studies pursued in Scenes 1 and 2 offer two contrasting views of how gendered embodiment affects a spectator's point of view, as well as her chosen strategies for delimiting horizons or stressing particular vantage points: first in the omniscient narration characteristic of many Victorian novels and second in a more subjective form of narration that I call embodied, partial perspective. In many of the accounts of theatregoing I explore here, narrative styles of self-presentation have been read more as a quirk of personality or an adherence to conventions of genre and gender than as an authorial strategy. Yet when these spectator narratives are placed in a broader network of performance representation, what might otherwise appear unobtrusive or merely conventional registers as significant – and ideologically weighted.

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[54] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 11.

[55] In *Theatre Audiences*, Susan Bennett explores how an audience's "horizon of expectations" affects "what [the audience] sees and how they see" it, 107. Spectator reception of a performance, according to Bennett, is not only determined by what is presented on stage but also by the audience's layered history of viewing, which shapes the codes available for interpreting new spectacles.

SCENE 1: Omniscience

"Where is Fanny?": Semi-Omniscient Spectating and the Disappearing Narrator

1. Invisible Spectators: Omniscience through Disappearance

Omniscience is often thought to be the purview of those narrators who appear to be everywhere at once because they are nowhere in particular: disappearing from the reader's view while mere characters become hypervisible. But how does the heroine of a novel go unobserved? One possible tactic is to cast herself as a spectator rather than an actor. Foregrounding the activity of watching, according to Jaffe, is a way for narrators to avoid being watched themselves.[56] Scenes of spectatorship are therefore central to a narrator's effort to achieve semi-omniscience. As the narrator demonstrates her ability to perceive and interpret an exhaustive catalogue of details about other characters, she also distracts the reader's attention from her position in the scene and seeks to prevent others from seeing her as thoroughly as she sees them. Such attempts at unseen seeing are not specific to third-person narrators, "but one whose epistemological implications transcend particular narrative modes, breaking down distinctions between first and third person…collapsing the difference between the supposed limitations of first-person narration and the unlimitedness of third-person narration."[57] Indeed, both first-person narrators like Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre and highly focalized characters like Fanny Price – whose importance to the narrative one might assume would put them center stage – in fact prove surprisingly adept at staying out of sight.[58]

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[56] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 18.
[57] *Ibid.,*17.
[58] A term coined by the narratologist Gérard Genette, "focalization" refers to the process by which narrative information is selected and restricted in relation to the narrator, characters, or other fictional entities. Focalized characters, then, are characters who determine what information the reader will access: most events and reflections are narrated through the lens of that character's perception and consciousness.

Take, for example, the perpetually unfindable Fanny. The third-person narrator of *Mansfield Park* rarely describes scenes that occur outside of Fanny's hearing or vision, but despite this close alignment between Fanny's vision and ours, it is quite possible for readers to advance many pages into a narrative incident without realizing Fanny is even there. "Where is Fanny? – Is she gone to bed?" asks Edmund Bertram of his cousin, who is in fact in the room at that moment, though she has gone unnoticed by her cousin Maria, her aunts Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris, and indeed the narrator, who at first announces the presence of only three ladies in the room.[59] Even after Fanny's "consequence" in the house increases after Maria's marriage (when, as the narrator notes, "it was impossible for her not to be more looked at, more thought of and attended to, than she had ever been before"), the sign of her increased prominence remains a marker of absence: "'Where is Fanny?' became no uncommon question, even without her being wanted for any one's convenience."[60] No matter how attended to and looked for, Fanny often cannot be found.

While Fanny's invisibility to characters and narrator alike is in some ways marks her marginalization within the social world of the novel (as a dependent taken in to alleviate the financial burden of her mother, Fanny is not treated as worthy of the same notice as her more affluent cousins), it also gives her access to a position akin to that of the semi-omniscient narrator. The narrator presents other characters – from the self-involved Maria to the self-important Mrs. Norris – as more seen than seeing, or as seeing only what most interests them in a scene. Fanny's ability to avoid observation, by contrast, is linked to her superior ability to take in the full stage of action and feeling. During the events following Sir Thomas Bertram's discovery that his children have taken advantage of his absence to mount a private theatrical production of

[59] Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park,* ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 51.
[60] *Ibid.*, 141.

Lover's Vows, for example, the narrator places characters at various levels of visibility and perceptivity:

> Mr. Yates…relating everything with so blind an interest as made him not only totally unconscious of the uneasy movements of many of his friends as they sat, the change of countenance, the fidget, the hem! of unquietness, but prevented him even from seeing the expression of the face on which his own eyes were fixed—from seeing Sir Thomas's dark brow contract as he looked with inquiring earnestness at his daughters and Edmund, dwelling particularly on the latter, and speaking a language, a remonstrance, a reproof, which *he* felt at his heart. Not less acutely was it felt by Fanny, who had edged back her chair behind her aunt's end of the sofa, and, screened from notice herself, saw all that was passing before her.[61]

The "language" of this scene is particularly stagey (one of expressions, movements, and significant looks), and not all characters present are attentive audience members. Mr. Yates, holding forth in the center of the action, is "blind," "totally unconscious," and "prevented from seeing." Edmund, here as in the rest of the novel, retains a little more clear-sightedness, as the emphasis on "he" marks his ability, at the least, to read body language aimed in his own direction. But the position closest to the narrator's is reserved for Fanny, the primary spectator of the theatricals, who, "screened from notice herself, saw all that was passing before her." Escaping becoming an object of "changing countenances" or "inquiring earnestness" from other characters or from the reader (as we receive no description of her own "fidgets" or "contracting brows") Fanny obtains to something like an omniscient perspective on the scene, one that tracks every "hem!" that Mr. Yates misses and feels other characters' feelings no less acutely than they do themselves.

Like Fanny, Jane Eyre often "screens herself from notice" in order to note physical details about others, and Brontë further distinguishes her heroine through an ability to see not

[61] *Ibid.*, 127-28.

only what passes across character's faces but also what lies beneath disguises.[62] Jane tucks herself away in window-seats or keeps in the "shade," and sometimes does both at once, as when she observes Mr. Rochester's visitors entering a room at Thornfield Hall:

> I sit in the shade—if any shade there be in this brilliantly-lit apartment; the window-curtain half hides me. Again the arch yawns; they come. The collective appearance of the gentlemen, like that of the ladies, is very imposing: they are all costumed in black; most of them are tall, some young. Henry and Frederick Lynn are very dashing sparks indeed; and Colonel Dent is a fine soldierly man. Mr. Eshton, the magistrate of the district, is gentleman-like: his hair is quite white, his eyebrows and whiskers still dark, which gives him something of the appearance of a "père noble de théâtre." Lord Ingram, like his sisters, is very tall; like them, also, he is handsome; but he shares Mary's apathetic and listless look: he seems to have more length of limb than vivacity of blood or vigour of brain.[63]

Even as she locates her body in the scene she observes, Jane obscures her position relative to the room's more visible occupants: she remains half-hidden in the shade, with the objects of her gaze "brilliantly lit." The dazzling lighting renders the entering gentlemen not only visible to Jane but gradually more transparent to her. Jane's narration takes the reader progressively deeper into psychic interiors as she provides more physical and emotional detail in each successive sentence, from the general observation that "most of the them are tall, some young" to a description of Lord Ingram that not only describes his "look" and "limb" but ascribes to them the moral qualities of "apathy," "listlessness," and a poverty in "vigour of brain." [64] If Fanny's ducking behind the sofa renders her capable of "seeing all" that passes across others' countenances,

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[62] Litvak similarly describes Jane as "prepared, even eager, to cast herself as the spectator par excellence," and as equally keen to "evade any interpretation of her spectatorship as a spectacle in itself," *Caught in the Act*, 42. While Litvak sees Jane's spectatorial inwardness as forwarding the conservative political claims of *Jane Eyre*, I focus specifically on how spectatorship enables Jane's epistemological claim to access the inwardness of others.

[63] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. Richard J. Dunn (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 148.

[64] Much of Jane's particular ability to transform physical features into moral qualities comes from the novel's engagement with the science of physiognomy. In a passage of particular interest for readers of *Jane Eyre*, Jaffe explores the effect of physiognomy on nineteenth-century fantasies of omniscience: "If everyone can be 'read,'" Jaffe suggests, "individuals become vulnerable to one another's reading, and unseen observation—the ability to read others without being read oneself—becomes an almost inescapable fantasy of experiencing power over others," *Vanishing Points*, 17. Jane often calls on the science of physiognomy to underwrite her claims of character insight, as when she first "reads" Mr. Rochester's features by the firelight and discerns his "mass of intellectual organs, but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen," Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 112.

Jane's feinting in and out of window-seats in order to "gaze without being observed" allows her to penetrate into the interior of scenes and persons.

Villette's Lucy Snowe displays her own cryptic interest in keeping "rather in the shade and out of sight," and for Lucy, social marginalization enables a particularly passive, almost involuntary form of spectatorship.[65] Though not above seizing opportunities for covert observation by pretending to be asleep or by hiding behind doors, Lucy often finds that she is able to watch while hiding in plain sight, as she does when puzzling out the motivations of Dr. John, who has begun to make frequent visits to the boarding school where she teaches:

> It was not perhaps my business to observe the mystery of his bearing, or search out its origin or aim; but, placed as I was, I could hardly help it. He laid himself open to my observation, according to my presence in the room just that degree of notice and consequence a person of my exterior habitually expects: that is to say, about what is given to unobtrusive articles of furniture, chairs of ordinary joiner's work, and carpets of no striking pattern. Often, while waiting for Madame, he would muse, smile, watch, or listen like a man who thinks himself alone. I, meantime, was free to puzzle over his countenance and movements, and wonder what could be the meaning of that peculiar interest and attachment—all mixed up with doubt and strangeness, and inexplicably ruled by some presiding spell—which wedded him to this demi-convent, secluded in the built-up core of a capital. He, I believe, never remembered that I had eyes in my head, much less a brain behind them.[66]

Lucy displays her characteristic knack for presenting her actions as involuntary responses to stimuli, as she transforms her purposeful inspection of Dr. John – aimed at "search[ing] out" the "origin or aim" of his behaviors – into something she "could hardly help." Not Lucy's active "brain" but her furniture-like invisibility motivates her spectatorship. That being an object should make her more perceptive is not necessarily an intuitive claim; but Lucy uses her gendered and

[65] Focusing on how the passivity of Lucy's spectatorship illuminates Brontë's exploration of gender roles, Lynn Voskuil notes that, "If Lucy Snowe's passivity seems 'typically' female…her calm detachment exudes a strength and authority that forbids such a naturalized reading…Though she depicts herself as passive, Lucy's position as spectator gives her an authority that sometimes seems masculine… Lucy Snowe's surveillance, in contrast, denaturalizes gender roles not only by insisting that spinsters can be authoritative spectators but also by unsentimentally acknowledging that the powers of observation are never innocent, even when practiced by female eyes," "Acting Naturally," 425-26. Citation from Brontë, *Villette*, ed. Helen M. Cooper (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 240.

[66] *Ibid.*, 107-08.

classed "place[ment]" in the domestic sphere as an unexpected resource for semi-omniscience. It is not the hyper-mobile, invisible awareness of a god for which Lucy reaches, but the unremarkable ubiquity of the household chair. Jaffe notes that narrators aspiring to omniscience often pride themselves on watching characters in locations where they are supposed to be unaccompanied.[67] Here, however, Lucy presents her ability to share a room with "a man who thinks himself alone" not as the activity of a narrator invading private space but as the receptivity of an object, reflexively searching for "meaning" in a world "laid open to her observation."

2. Superior Sight: Constructing Omniscience through Limited Subjects

As *Mansfield Park*'s usefully clueless Mr. Yates demonstrates in the passage above, the narrator hoping to claim omniscience establishes the reach of her observation by setting it beside the more circumscribed vision allowed to ordinary mortals. As Audrey Jaffe puts it, "In order to be omniscient, the narrator must have something to be omniscient about; he must define himself in opposition to those more limited than himself. In effect, he must create limited subjects."[68] Thus, Fanny, Jane, and Lucy stand out as superior observers thanks to those limited characters, like Yates and Edmund, who surround them; and to this end, gathering an inattentive audience is a helpful strategy.

Jane, for example, often sets off her own adeptness at penetrating bodily exteriors by placing her insights next to less expert "surface readings" of character. The affable but simple Mrs. Fairfax makes a serviceable foil,[69] but for Jane's particular purposes, the fashionable ladies

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[67] "If omniscience is linked to scientific objectivity and public knowledge, however, it is at its most characteristic when demonstrating its knowledge of what (as Dickens's narrators frequently comment) 'no one' knows: what goes on in private, within the family, and in the minds of characters. Unseen observation grants narrators a power and mobility that characters do not possess. It requires an invasion of privacy best accomplished if the narrator is present, as Rimmon-Kenan put it in the definition cited above, 'in locations where characters are supposed to be unaccompanied,'" Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 9.

[68] *Ibid.*, 25.

[69] Of Mrs. Fairfax's insights into Mr. Rochester, for example, Jane has this to say: "This was all the account I got from Mrs. Fairfax of her employer and mine. There are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character,

of the visiting party prove even more useful. When the mysterious Mr. Mason turns up unannounced during their visit, the introduction of a new character to Thornfield allows Jane to measure her insight against that of Louisa Eshton and Mary Ingram. Jane occupies her characteristic position as spectator, sitting "in [her] usual nook," half out of sight, with Mr. Mason, the object of her observation, center stage, "with the light of the girandoles on the mantelpiece beaming full over him."[70] From this semi-obscured position, she launches her investigation:

> I liked his physiognomy even less than before: it struck me as being at the same time unsettled and inanimate. His eye wandered, and had no meaning in its wandering: this gave him an odd look, such as I never remembered to have seen. For a handsome and not an unamiable-looking man, he repelled me exceedingly: there was no power in that smooth-skinned face of a full oval shape: no firmness in that aquiline nose and small cherry mouth; there was no thought on the low, even forehead; no command in that blank, brown eye.[71]

The reason that Jane narrates such a detailed catalogue of Mr. Mason's physical and moral features becomes clear soon afterward, when she records an overheard dialogue between Louisa and Mary:

> Two or three of the gentlemen sat near him, and I caught at times scraps of their conversation across the room. At first I could not make much sense of what I heard; for the discourse of Louisa Eshton and Mary Ingram, who sat nearer to me, confused the fragmentary sentences that reached me at intervals. These last were discussing the stranger; they both called him "a beautiful man." Louisa said he was "a love of a creature," and she "adored him"; and Mary instanced his "pretty little mouth, and nice nose," as her ideal of the charming. "And what a sweet-tempered forehead he has!" cried Louisa, "so smooth — none of those frowning irregularities I dislike so much; and such a placid eye and smile!" And then, to my great relief, Mr. Henry Lynn summoned them to the other side of the room, to settle some point about the deferred excursion to Hay Common. I was now able to concentrate my attention on the group by the fire.[72]

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or observing and describing salient points, either in persons or things: the good lady evidently belonged to this class; my queries puzzled, but did not draw her out. Mr. Rochester was Mr. Rochester in her eyes; a gentleman, a landed proprietor—nothing more: she inquired and searched no further," Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 89.

[70] *Ibid.*, 162.

[71] *Ibid.*, 162.

[72] *Ibid.*, 162-63.

Jane sets her judgments side-by-side, an "eye" for an "eye," with those of the more fashionable ladies. On each point of feature – eyes, forehead, nose, mouth – Jane demonstrates her greater skills as a spectator, penetrating deeper into interior character traits, discerning the lack of inner qualities like "command," "power," "firmness," and "thought," while Louisa and Mary stick generally with exterior "beauty" and "smoothness," reaching no further beneath the surface than the suggestion of "sweet temper" and "placidity." She also presents her own observation as a cohesive account while fragmenting Louisa and Mary's into "confusing" intervals. Presented as if they were incidental distractions from Jane's true focus, these overheard snippets bounce from impression to impression without Jane's orderly progression from exterior feature to interior trait, so that, in form as well as in content, the reflections of the higher-class women appear to swirl aimlessly on the surface while Jane's more penetrating vision cuts to Mason's heart. Mason's later behavior will, of course, further bear out the truthfulness of Jane's assessment of his character, but even before showing us his cowardice in action, Jane has staged a scene of orderly, probing spectatorship to claim omniscience relative to the characters around her.

Fanny, too, attains to a narrator-like discernment in part because of the cluelessness and self-opacity of the characters around her; and in the world of *Mansfield Park* this discernment, joined with sympathy, grants her a unique ability to step outside the embodied limits imposed on more self-centered characters. During the chaotic erotic events of the novel's first two volumes, the narrator takes care to present the Bertrams and Crawfords as in a state of more or less willful ignorance about their feelings: "Maria's notions on the subject" of the dashing Henry Crawford are "confused and indistinct. She d[oes] not want to see or understand" that she is becoming attached to him; Miss Crawford can "hardly understand" her attraction to Edmund and so she "d[oes] not think very much about it"; and Edmund, who at first appeared to share Fanny's quick

eye for a foible, finds "he c[an] spend so many hours with Miss Crawford, and not see more of the sort of fault which he had already observed."[73] Indeed, it does not require much in the way of self-awareness and empathy for Fanny to appear insightful by contrast.

Yet the novel pushes the point even further by suggesting that Fanny's perceptivity as a spectator allows her to access some of the narrator's extra-bodily mobility. Take, for example, the narrator's account of Fanny watching her cousin Julia:

> Julia *did* suffer, however, though Mrs. Grant discerned it not, and though it escaped the notice of many of her own family likewise. She had loved, she did love still, and she had all the suffering which a warm temper and a high spirit were likely to endure under the disappointment of a dear, though irrational hope, with a strong sense of ill-usage… Maria felt her triumph, and pursued her purpose, careless of Julia; and Julia could never see Maria distinguished by Henry Crawford without trusting that it would create jealousy, and bring a public disturbance at last. Fanny saw and pitied much of this in Julia; but there was no outward fellowship between them. Julia made no communication, and Fanny took no liberties. They were two solitary sufferers, or connected only by Fanny's consciousness.[74]

The narrator establishes Fanny's relative omniscience by extending her perception to include insight that Mrs. Grant "discerns not," of which Maria is "careless," and which "escapes the notice of many" in the family. Even more tellingly, the narrator links that extended sympathy and sight with his/her own ability to move across the boundary of a character's circumscribed consciousness: indeed, by describing Julia and Fanny as "connected *only* by Fanny's consciousness," the narrator seems to yield to Fanny the narratorial function of linking individuals to create the fabric of a wider social world. While other characters exist within the limits of their own embodied suffering and personal purposes, Fanny's ability to feel with others grants her a unique ability to observe a web of social consciousness and create "connections" between otherwise discrete characters.

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[73] Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 33, 47, and 48.
[74] *Ibid.*, 113-14.

Jane and Fanny's strategies for establishing their superior discernment have already pointed toward a second way that narrators can claim the epistemological high ground: the tactic, perfected by Lucy Snowe, of stigmatizing other kinds of spectatorship as morally suspect and personally interested. Such is the strategy that Lucy turns on Madame Beck and her boarding school, which she presents as a world collectively aspiring toward omniscience: "a strange house, where no corner was sacred from intrusion, where not a tear could be shed, nor a thought pondered, but a spy was at hand to note and to divine."[75] The functions Lucy attributes here to Madame Beck and her surveillance network are strikingly similar to those D.A. Miller attributes to the police functions of the novel, as it "intrudes" into thoughts and feelings to "note" details and "divine" networks of causality. As a narrator of a novel herself, Lucy is sometimes at pains to uphold the distinction between her own activities and Madame Beck's, and must rely on careful distinctions between intrusive inquiry and the observations produced by her more disinterested, depersonalized receptivity. During her first night in the house at Rue Fossette, for example, Lucy narrates a scene of competitive spectatorship:

> I was a light sleeper; in the dead of night I suddenly awoke. All was hushed, but a white figure stood in the room—Madame in her night-dress. Moving without perceptible sound, she visited the three children in the three beds; she approached me: I feigned sleep, and she studied me long. A small pantomime ensued, curious enough. I daresay she sat a quarter of an hour on the edge of my bed, gazing at my face. She then drew nearer, bent close over me; slightly raised my cap, and turned back the border so as to expose my hair; she looked at my hand lying on the bedclothes. This done, she turned to the chair where my clothes lay: it was at the foot of the bed. Hearing her touch and lift them, I opened my eyes with precaution, for I own I felt curious to see how far her taste for research would lead her. It led her a good way: every article did she inspect. I divined her motive for this proceeding, viz. the wish to form from the garments a judgment respecting the wearer, her station, means, neatness, &c. The end was not bad, but the means were hardly fair or justifiable…she withdrew a moment to her own room. I softly rose in my bed and followed her with my eye…Of what nature were the conclusions deduced from this scrutiny?[76]

[75] Brontë, *Villette,* 258.
[76] Brontë, *Villette,* 76-77.

In order to present her covert inspection of Madame as less interested than Madame's covert inspection of her, Lucy relies again on a depiction of her own passivity: as involuntarily as a "light sleeper" wakes at an interesting noise, Lucy's naturally "curious" eye "follows" the more active movements that Madame has initiated through her deliberate "research" and "study." And while Madame "deduces conclusions" from her purposeful "scrutiny," Lucy "divines" motivations as if arriving at knowledge through involuntary inspiration. By showing us Madame in deceitful and deliberate motion, Lucy highlights her relatively disinterested mode of spectatorship. Like a "carpet of no striking pattern," she merely absorbs the impressions of others' footsteps.[77]

In fact, Lucy turns Madame Beck's illicit attempts to surveille her to further strategic advantage: by positioning herself as a blind spot in other characters' attempts to spectate and interpret. Of course, Fanny and Jane also benefit from the inscrutability of their inner lives. Fanny triumphs over her rival in reading character, Miss Crawford – as well as her rival in moral judgment, Edmund – by seeing clearly that she could not be happy with Henry Crawford.[78] And Jane overpowers St. John Rivers, who at first appeared a formidable match for Jane's skill in physiognomy, by knowing that she would not survive becoming his wife.[79] Indeed, even with Rochester, Jane's commitment to "gazing on his behalf" and becoming "his vision" after his

[77] Brontë, *Villette*, 108.
[78] Edmund remarks once of Mary Crawford that, "She has great discernment. I know nobody who distinguishes characters better. For so young a woman it is remarkable! She certainly understands *you* better than you are understood by the greater part of those who have known you so long; and with regard to some others, I can perceive, from occasional lively hints, the unguarded expressions of the moment, that she could define *many* as accurately, did not delicacy forbid it,'" Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 136-37, emphasis in original. Fanny's clear-sightedness about Henry, Maria, and Mary herself, however, repeatedly prove that Fanny distinguishes character better, not in the least because Mary fails ever to understand the motivation at the core of Fanny's behavior: the secret of Fanny's attachment to Edmund.
[79] Having begun by having her own countenance mercilessly read by St. John as "an unusual physiognomy… sensible, but not at all handsome," Jane eventually asserts her own ability to "comprehend…all at once" his suitability as a husband, to "underst[and], as by inspiration, the nature of his love" and to "s[ee]" the "material" of which he was "hewn," Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 289 and 334-35. A more detailed analysis of the contest with St. John will follow in Act I, Scene 2.

blinding reveals a competitive pleasure in *seeing for* someone who once *saw her* more clearly than any other character in the novel.[80] Yet among these three little-understood heroines, Lucy stands out as an expert in leveraging her own opacity.

Not content to be misunderstood by one or two rivals in discernment, Lucy painstakingly records the misconceptions of her inner nature held by nearly all of the characters who know her:

> The light in which M. de Bassompierre evidently regarded "Miss Snowe," used to occasion me much inward edification. What contradictory attributes of character we sometimes find ascribed to us, according to the eye with which we are viewed! Madame Beck esteemed me learned and blue; Miss Fanshawe, caustic, ironic, and cynical; Mr. Home, a model teacher, the essence of the sedate and discreet: somewhat conventional, perhaps, too strict, limited, and scrupulous, but still the pink and pattern of governess-correctness; whilst another person, Professor Paul Emanuel, to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine was rather a fiery and rash nature—adventurous, indocile, and audacious. I smiled at them all. If any one knew me it was little Paulina Mary.[81]

Lucy uses the embodied language of sight not only to demonstrate the limited perceptivity of these less omniscient characters' "eyes," but also to construct her own vision as necessarily reaching further than the embodied limits of eyesight: she is able to see and record what each character sees and gains in knowledge, or "inward edification," to the extent that other characters fail to know her. The structure of the passage, which offers amusement about what Lucy is *not* rather than insight into what she *is*, leaves the reader to question whether she too might be subject to Lucy's "smile." Lucy withholds certainty about her nature from reader and characters alike, allowing only conditionally that "*If* any one kn[ows her] it [i]s little Paulina Mary." If Paulina doesn't know her, no one does; and Paulina herself tends to incline toward the latter

[80] "Mr. Rochester continued blind the first two years of our union; perhaps it was that circumstance that drew us so very near—that knit us so very close: for I was then his vision, as I am still his right hand. Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye. He saw nature—he saw books through me; and never did I weary of gazing for his behalf, and of putting into words the effect of field, tree, town, river, cloud, sunbeam—of the landscape before us; of the weather round us—and impressing by sound on his ear what light could no longer stamp on his eye," *Ibid.*, 384.
[81] Brontë, *Villette*, 334.

possibility, musing: "Lucy, I wonder if anybody will ever comprehend you altogether."[82] By thus positioning the "altogether" of her own consciousness as outside the embodied vision of other characters, Lucy ensures herself the limited audience she needs to render her own observations relatively omniscient.

3. Focalizing our Gaze and Telegraphing Desires

Recent theories of narratorial knowledge, which display less confidence than New Historicist theories about the effectiveness of panoptic strategies, present us with a world where omniscience falls apart. As narrators keep out of sight in order to render others more visible, they inevitably engage in what Jaffe refers to as "projective reading": "As they watch others, they also reveal, to those who read them, their own concerns and desires."[83] While narrators and focalized characters take on the function of seeing for the reader by selecting certain scenes, dialogues, and characters for representation, the reader also sees these figures' own desires displayed through their criteria for selection. Spectators who attempt to obscure their own place in the scenes they observe may nonetheless reveal their desires through the techniques they use to attract a reader's attention elsewhere.

The centralization of particular characters, for example, is largely responsible for the fact that Fanny's love for her cousin Edmund, which remains entirely unsuspected by any other character in the book, is surely no secret to the reader, who seizes on it quickly despite the absence of a direct avowal. Fanny's desires become apparent in the selective process through which her focalized consciousness centers some scenes and sidelines others. During a walk with Edmund, Mary Crawford, and Mrs. Grant, for example, Fanny focuses on a delicate conversation between Edmund and Mary:

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[82] *Ibid.,* 471.
[83] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 19.

> A look of consciousness as he spoke, and what seemed a consciousness of manner on Miss Crawford's side as she made some laughing answer, was sorrowful food for Fanny's observation; and finding herself quite unable to attend as she ought to Mrs. Grant, by whose side she was now following the others…[84]

Here, Austen uses the fixation of an absorbed spectator to telegraph Fanny's unspoken desire. Despite her physical proximity to Mrs. Grant, Fanny has so thoroughly selected Edmund and Mary's conversation as the main event that, while these two lovers' dialogue is produced in full, Mrs. Grant's words and actions are entirely erased from the narrative. The narrator's focalization of Fanny means that readers, too, are "quite unable to attend" to Mrs. Grant (whose words we miss), or to anything other than the pair of lovers that distract the focal spectator of the scene.

This link between spectating and centralizing becomes particularly pronounced during the Mansfield private theatricals. Fanny attempts to stay out of the spotlight by refusing to play a part, but in her role as spectator, she reveals quite as much of her romantic desires as Maria Bertram does in her acting. From the Crawfords and Bertrams' first artistic meeting, Fanny's attachment to Edmund places his actions and reactions center stage in a field of vision that aspires toward omniscient, disembodied totality while also shaping reader experience through partiality. As she "hear[s] it all," she bears "Edmund company in every feeling throughout the whole."[85] A tension between the "all" or the "whole," on the one hand, and the particular feelings of Edmund, on the other, point toward the particular balancing act required of narrative positions that rely on disembodiment. While Fanny's semi-omniscient authority relies on her ability to provide readers with a panoramic shot of the full company, the desires that inform her focalization lead her to use that same authority to engage in selective visual editing of the theatrical plot. Because the declaration of love between Amelia and Anhalt, for example, "interested [Fanny] most particularly," this scene dominates the reader's experience of *Lovers'*

[84] Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 147.
[85] *Ibid.*, 91.

Vows as well: it is the only scene whose rehearsal we see narrated in its entirety.[86] In the selective practices of an absorbed spectator, Austen and her readers register Fanny's attachment to Edmund.

Brontë, too, fashions Jane as an audience member whose penetration outlines her purposes. Her gaze not only centralizes of objects of desire like Mr. Rochester and rivals like Blanche Ingram, but also flattens characters whom Jane wishes to present as marginal. The introduction of the Dowager Lady Ingram, for example, is a carefully choreographed demonstration of relative character depth. After a theatrical *mise-en-scène* ("the curtain was swept back from the arch…a band of ladies stood in the opening; they entered, and the curtain fell behind them"), Jane stages an especially marked entrance for the Dowager:

> The Dowager might be between forty and fifty: her shape was still fine; her hair (by candle-light at least) still black; her teeth, too, were still apparently perfect. Most people would have termed her a splendid woman of her age: and so she was, no doubt, physically speaking; but then there was an expression of almost insupportable haughtiness in her bearing and countenance. She had Roman features and a double chin, disappearing into a throat like a pillar: these features appeared to me not only inflated and darkened, but even furrowed with pride; and the chin was sustained by the same principle, in a position of almost preternatural erectness. She had, likewise, a fierce and a hard eye: it reminded me of Mrs. Reed's; she mouthed her words in speaking; her voice was deep, its inflections very pompous, very dogmatical,—very intolerable, in short. A crimson velvet robe, and a shawl turban of some gold-wrought Indian fabric, invested her (I suppose she thought) with a truly imperial dignity.[87]

Jane first offers a surface reading of the Dowager, attributed to "most people," whose penetration does not reach beyond the "*apparently* perfect." She then asserts the superiority of her own gaze by observing characteristics that push progressively deeper into the Dowager's interiority: from a haughtiness in Lady Ingram's "bearing and countenance" all the way to Jane's ability to "suppose" what the other woman "thought." The speed with which Jane arrives at this full catalogue of Lady Ingram's "pride," "fierceness," and "pompousness," when compared to the

[86] *Ibid.*, 116.
[87] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 146.

amount of time needed to study Mr. Rochester, constructs the Dowager as a relatively shallow, knowable character. And Jane manages to set off her own comparative depth when she records the Dowager's failed attempt to "read" her: "'Tant pis!" said her Ladyship, "I hope it may do her good!' Then, in a lower tone, but still loud enough for me to hear, 'I noticed her; I am a judge of physiognomy, and in hers I see all the faults of her class.'"[88]

While on the one hand this overheard comment secures the superiority of Jane as "judge of physiognomy" and asserts her greater ability to avoid penetrating "notice" and "sight" (as readers are likely to believe that Jane does *not* share "all the faults of her class"), it also flags Jane's narrative interference in the scene she describes. Jane has already opened up the possibility of reading this scene backwards as well as forwards by admitting that she has retrospectively given names to characters whose identity she did not know at the time – an epistemological tension she attempts to juggle casually by noting that, "I knew their names afterwards, and may as well mention them now."[89] Given the charged first descriptions both characters offer of the other, however, the reader may find herself wondering whether Jane or the Dowager "noticed" the other first. In recording impressions of the Dowager, does Jane construct the object of her observation as that object appeared to her at first glance? Or has she, in her retelling, added not only names she learned later but also impressions formed later? The move to connect the Dowager to Mrs. Reed – another character whose misconstructions of Jane's nature Jane devotes much effort to discrediting – creates another recursive pattern in the narrative and fuels suspicions that Jane may be manipulating the timeline of her spectator narrative in a way that reveals deep investments beneath apparently objective observation. Though she represents herself as able to take in the whole of the Dowager's character at first glance through superior

[88] *Ibid.*, 151.
[89] *Ibid.*, 146.

spectatorship, Jane also lays herself open to suspicion: she reveals reasons for antipathy toward certain characters and points toward the narratorial apparatus that would allow her to retrospectively redress wrongs done against her. Like Fanny, Jane not only demonstrates the power of spectator-narrators to shape what readers see but also reveals, through the contours of her shaping, her own involvement in the scenes she spectates.

A View of the Stage: Semi-Omniscience, Historical Spectators, and the Horizon of Expectations

When would staying out of sight be a helpful strategy for a historical spectator? Why might a theatregoer attempt to present their viewing experience as the disembodied and depersonalized reflections of an omniscient narrator? Analyses of *Mansfield Park*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Villette* have revealed the power omniscience grants a narrator to frame and delimit the scope of meaning that will be available to future readers. For aspiring theatre critics or actors managing their own publicity, making one's narrator into a "vanishing point" (Jaffe) could translate into an ability to shape the "horizon of expectations" (Bennett) for print and theatre audiences. By reaching for a semi-omniscient mode of narration, authors might provide a lens through which their own contemporaries would see particular playhouses, actors, or productions. Recognizing the techniques at work in crafting spectator authority is thus critical for theatre historians, particularly because the accounts such authors produced have continued to shape our own expectations about what kinds of meanings were possible or probable for events of a certain period.

1. Invisible Spectators: Omniscience through Disappearance

One tactic available to historical spectators is the vanishing act: a narrator "'disappear[s]' from their narrative in order to focus on others…or may seem to disappear as a result of their focus on others."[90] Spectators who adopt this approach often (like Fanny Price) obscure their own physical position in the scene they narrate, so that their observations seem to encompass the whole of the scene rather than emanating from a particular, partial angle of vision. Others employ first-person narration in order to place themselves within the scene, but manage to maintain a position of seeing without being seen: either by directing the reader's focus deep into the interior of the event described (in the style of Jane Eyre), or by presenting their observations as involuntary reactions to external stimuli (in a technique displayed to perfection by Lucy Snowe).

The influential Victorian theatre critic Clement Scott often takes the first approach. As a drama critic at *The Daily Telegraph* (and later the editor of his own monthly magazine, *The Theatre*), Scott helped pioneer a longer form and more detailed style of journalistic reporting on theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century. Controversial with theatre practitioners for the strength of his critical opinions,[91] Scott nonetheless gained a devoted following among theatregoers, who turned to his first-night reviews (another innovation) as authoritative guides to new stage offerings. Semi-omniscient narration, I argue, helped bolster Scott's spectatorial authority while also distracting some attention from his polarizing personality. By obscuring the location of his body, Scott represents his views as those of a spectator-narrator who sees more expansively and less partially than other audience members.

[90] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 17.
[91] Indeed, Scott eventually fell from theatrical grace after some journalistic feuding with William Archer and a particularly unpopular interview he gave to the evangelical periodical *Great Thoughts* on January 1, 1898, in which he criticized the morality of theatre practitioners.

In his largely positive review of Henry Irving's "The Bells" at the Lyceum Theatre in 1871, for example, Scott nonetheless places Irving and his spectators in delimited positions within the scene, so as to render his narrator's own location indeterminate: "Mr. Irving's strength also failed him more than once. The monologue in the dream act is far too long, and Mr. Irving has not the power to carry it through to the entire satisfaction of those in front. The light and shade disappear when the actor has overtaxed his strength."[92] Scott attaches limitation and deprivation to Irving (who fails in strength and has insufficient power to carry out his intentions) and the localized audience members "in front" (who remain unsatisfied by the performance, unable to see light and shade). By measuring these shortcomings, the narrator of this scene implies his own ability to see and imagine what is missing: the sufficiently powered monologue unattainable for Irving and the disappearing light and shade invisible to the spectators in front. As Fanny Price attains to an omniscient perspective by placing herself at an obscure distance from the action and constructing those closer as less able to see the full range of fidgets, feelings, and expressions being performed, Scott too mystifies his own location in the scene and secures the superiority of his observations by tracking the possibilities and impressions missed by others. This construction of himself as semi-omniscient narrator, poised to observe Irving from all angles, helps establish Scott's authority to interpret the actor for his age and beyond. Theatre historian David Mayer's studies of Irving, for example, cite Scott's review of this particular performance of *The Bells* as a pivotal moment for the Lyceum theatre, when Scott's narratives helped make Irving's success.[93]

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[92] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur"*, 6.

[93] See David Mayer, "Introduction" to *Henry Irving And The Bells: Irving's Personal Script of the Play by Leopold Lewis*, ed. David Mayer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 3, and "*The Bells*: A Case Study; a Bare-Ribbed Skeleton in a Chest," in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2 1660-1895*, ed. Joseph Donahue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 390.

While Scott masks his embodied position within the scene through the use of third-person narration, other narrators position themselves as subjects in the scene in order to manage particular acts of focalization. The actress Fanny Kemble performs such a feat in some of her accounts of her father, Charles Kemble. Not only did Fanny Kemble and her father often perform and tour together, her autobiographical writing often presents her own career in relation to the limitations of her father's. As I explore in greater detail in Act II, Scene 3, Kemble narrates her decision to become an actress as an act of self-sacrifice, necessitated by her father's troubled finances during his tenure as actor-manager of Covent Garden. While she does not have Scott's interest in disappearing entirely from view (her person and personality being a central draw for her readers and her bodily vulnerability being a key part of her strategy of self-narration), she does have Jane Eyre's interest in making the bodies and performances of others more available to scrutiny than her own.

Kemble takes up a Brontian tactic, for example, in her account of her father as *Hamlet*:

> I watched my father narrowly through his part tonight with great attention, and the conclusion I have come to is this; though his workmanship may be far finer than that of any other artist I ever saw, yet its very minute accuracy and refinement renders it unfit for the frame in which it is exhibited. Whoever should paint a scene calculated for so large a space as a theatre, and destined to be viewed at the distance from which an audience beholds it, with the laborious finish and fine detail of a miniature, would commit a great error of judgment. The great beauty of all my father's performances, but particularly of Hamlet, is a wonderful accuracy in the detail of the character he represents. But the result is not such as he expects, as the reward of so much labour. Few persons are able to follow such a performance with the necessary attention, and it is almost as great an exertion to *see* it understandingly as to *act* it. The amazing study of it requires a study in those who are to appreciate it, and this is far from being what the majority of spectators are either capable of or desirous of doing.[94]

Kemble crafts a more localized narratorial position than Scott's. She describes her vision as "narrow" rather than wide-angle, and as requiring focused "attention" to fix its objects rather

[94] Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a Young Actress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 55-56.

than taking in the entire scene seemingly without effort. As in *Jane Eyre*, however, the actual position of the "I" narrator becomes obscure, as her remarks narrow the reader's attention to an observational trajectory that reaches progressively deeper into the "fine details" of Kemble's object of study. At the same time, Kemble maintains a double vision that allows her to see her father's performance both up close, in "minute accuracy," and far away, "at the distance from which an audience beholds it." Kemble locates herself in this audience but as an extraordinary member of it, capable of "necessary attention" that eludes "the majority of spectators." Where Scott constructs Irving's performance as one of missed potential, so as to assert the necessity of Scott himself as interpreter of the event, Kemble constructs her father's performance as one of unrecognized meaning: a move that simultaneously establishes her authority as narrator and "frames" her father's acting as a type of miniature work.[95] The emphasis on the "labour" of his acting highlights the "exertion" involved in her watching while also distracting from her own more embodied work as an actress.

While Fanny Kemble disappears through her focused attention on another object, other spectators may choose to downplay their observation by presenting themselves, like Lucy Snowe, as an almost involuntary receptacle of impressions created by the scene. This depersonalized mode of semi-omniscience is particularly characteristic of the English diarist Henry Crabb Robinson. Robinson's autobiographical writings have been most often studied for their representation of better-known historical personages; they have been described (much as

[95] Fanny Kemble was certainly a much more prolific writer of theatrical accounts than her father, and her representations of her father's work have been picked up by some later critics. Fanny Kemble's latest biographer, Deidre David, for example echoes Fanny's construction of Charles's Hamlet, writing that, "like Kemble himself, it lacked fire." See Deidre David, *Fanny Kemble: A Performed Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 92.

Lucy Snowe's autobiographical narrative might be) as "uniquely self-effacing."[96] In his introduction to "The Henry Crabb Robinson Project" at Queen Mary's University, for example, James Vigus notes that "Robinson arranges the account of his life around his descriptions of the people he encountered and befriended," so that he becomes a particularly "unobtrusive" narrator.[97] Reading his diaries alongside *Villette*, I argue that Robinson often achieves this "unobtrusiveness" by casting his artistic judgments as a passive failure to receive particular sensations: a performance "excited no merriment in [him]," "was lost upon [him]," "gave [him] no pleasure," or "gratified [him] less than usual."[98] While his body often appears in the scenes he narrates, that body features, like Lucy Snowe's, as an object that absorbs information from its surroundings. Just as Lucy claims she can "hardly help" scrutinizing the "bearing," "countenance," and "movement" of those around her, Robinson positions himself as one whose "sensib[ility] to impressions" forces him to notice – as he does of an aging Sarah Siddons – when neither the "person nor countenance" of an actress "correspond with the impression she is supposed to make on the characters of the drama."[99]

As this last entry demonstrates, Robinson's impersonal narrative persona allows him to pay particular attention to scrutinizing the bodies of actresses; and his inspection of Siddons differs importantly from Lucy's puzzling over Dr. John. Lucy too observes faces and bearings, but she does so in order to stake knowledge claims that are largely interior and provisional (in the passage above, she ponders "meaning," "origin[s]," and "aim[s]"). Robinson, on the other hand, uses his male object-ivity to pass judgment on the exterior of performing bodies. This

[96] James Vigus, "The Henry Crabb Robinson Project," *All Things SED: Blogging from Queen Mary's School of English and Drama*, November 13, 2015, http://www.blogs.sed.qmul.ac.uk/2015/11/13/the-henry-crabb-robinson-project/
[97] Vigus, "The Henry Crabb Robinson Project."
[98] Vigus, "The Henry Crabb Robinson Project," and Henry Crabb Robinson, *The London Theatre 1811-1866, Selections from the Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson,* ed. Eluned Brown (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1966), 33, 33, 34, and 73.
[99] Robinson, *The London Theatre,* 33 and 41.

regard is frequently turned toward Sarah Siddons; and later critics have to some extent continued to observe Siddons through Robinson's eyes, as they make use of what Judith Pascoe calls Robinson's "excrutiating[ly] detail[ed]" chronicle of the actress's "decline" in order to narrate the arc of her career.[100] Robinson claims the authority to outline the trajectory of Siddons' bodily degeneration by positioning himself, like Lucy, as a powerfully receptive object. In his first accounts of seeing Siddons act, for example, Robinson reports having an involuntary reaction to the visual and auditory stimuli of her body:

> In Mrs Siddons tone and in her look there was an anticipation of the murder which was to take place. I burst into a loud laugh – which occasioned a cry of Turn him out – I was in the pit with Naylor – This frightened me but I could not refrain – A good natured woman near me cried out 'Poor young man he cannot help it' – She gave me a smelling bottle which recovered me, but I was quite shaken and could not relish the little comedy of 'The Deuce is in Him.' I thought her humor forced, and every expression overdone.[101]

Just as Robinson "cannot refrain" and "cannot help" the violent responses provoked by Siddons' first performance, he "cannot relish" the performance that follows. This initial story of almost hysterical susceptibility to Siddons' powers not only reinforces wider audience narratives about the actress's affecting stage presence but also positions Robinson as especially sensitive to her abilities, so that he is well placed to characterize other performances as relative failures of power.[102] Having started by placing himself among the most receptive of her appreciators, he constructs for himself the epistemological authority to narrate her later failure.

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[100] Judith Pascoe, *The Sarah Siddons Audio Files: Romanticism And the Lost Voice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 114. See also John Fyvie, *Tragedy Queens of the Georgian Era* (London: Methuen & Co, 1908), 251, and Philip H. Highfill and Kalman A Burnim, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel In London, 1660-1800*, Volume 14 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 30.

[101] Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondences,* ed. Thomas Sadler (London: Macmillan and Co., 1869), 39.

[102] As Jim Davis and Shearer West note, spectator narratives often emphasize the embodied responses her acting provokes. "[A]udiences were enthralled not only by her interpretation of a role, but also by the visceral and emotionally charged responses she engendered," Davis argues; and according to West, "[c]ontemporary accounts give us a picture of audiences not only suffering to the point of illness also but taking a masochistic pleasure in that suffering. . . . [They] sobbed, fainted, hyperventilated, developed headaches—and loved every minute of it."

Thus, as Siddons' career progresses, Robinson's receptivity makes it appear as if his reports of her waning ability are generated against his own will:

> *Comus* gave me no pleasure And for the first time in my life I saw Mrs Siddons without any pleasure. She was dressed most unbecomingly with a low gipsy hat and feathers hanging down the side — She looked old and I had almost said ugly — her fine features were lost in the distance And her disadvantages of years and bulk made as prominent as possible. Her declamation itself did not please me. She spoke in too tragic a tone without any reality in the character or situation, it was even unpleasant to hear her otherwise incomparable emphasis.[103]

When Mrs. Siddons earlier expressed intensity, Robinson reacted intensely. By an extension of that logic, readers are encouraged to believe that Robinson's failure to be pleased results from Mrs. Siddons's failure to be pleasing. The "almost" attribution of ugliness becomes a reflex response to an environment where "fine features…were lost" and "disadvantages of years and bulk made as prominent as possible." While Lucy Snowe distracts attention from her invasion of private space by presenting herself as a naturally responsive object faced with a compelling mystery, Robinson reframes his scrutiny of Siddons's appearance as the involuntary repugnance of a natural admirer confronted with an "ugly" spectacle. While their strategies are similar, a crucial difference in application thus occurs. For if this tactic allows Lucy to construct the knowledge she gleans as authentic access to unguarded *selves*, Robinson's similar techniques help him claim an impersonal authority on the aesthetic and dramatic value of Siddons's *body*.

2. Superior Sight: Constructing Omniscience through Limited Subjects

A narrator who seeks to claim relative omniscience must create other, more epistemologically hampered subjects, relative to whom her mobility and perceptivity registers as

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Robinson thus uses a tradition of hysterical Siddons spectator narratives to build his authority as narrator of her later decline. See Jim Davis, "Looking and Being Looked At: Visualizing the Nineteenth-Century Spectator," *Theatre Journal* 69.4 (2017): 515-534, citation 523, and Shearer West, "The Public and Private Roles of Sarah Siddons," in *A Passion for Performance: Sarah Siddons and Her Portraitists*, ed. Robyn Asleson (Los Angeles: Paul Getty Museum, 1999), 18.

[103] Robinson, *The London Theatre,* 46.

superior. Historical spectators wishing to claim a power to shape the meanings of performances may employ any number of techniques observed in spectator fiction: contrasting the cohesive nature of their own narrative with others' fragmented and superficial readings; deflecting attention from the interestedness of their own spectatorship by constructing others' as more interested; or positioning themselves as outside the limit of others' comprehension, so as to create a hard limit for what others can perceive.

Particularly when the historical spectator in question is a professional theatre critic, the first strategy enables him construct his own omniscience in relation to a more general audience, whose accolades can be represented as scattered, impulsive foils to the critic's own careful criticisms. In his review of Henry Irving's "Richelieu" in 1873, Clement Scott adopts such an approach:

> Let us then out with it honestly, and own that the long-expected, anxiously awaited performance of "Richelieu," at one of the best of all our theatres was but very slightly to our liking. We are not afraid of our opinion, for we shall state the why and the wherefore…We own at once we are in a serious minority. The old play went as it has probably never gone before. The principal actor was cheered and feted with such a triumph as has fallen to few actors in our time. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved; the pit and gallery leaped upon the benches; the house shook and rang with the applause, but the excitement was unwholesome, and the cheers were forced. It was the wild delirium of a revival meeting, an excited, earnest enthusiast having previously created slaves, bent them all to his imperious will. The greater the shouting on the stage, the more the cheering of the audience. It was a triumph of din, an apotheosis of incoherence.[104]

Scott enhances the clear-sightedness of his spectatorship by contrasting the "why and the wherefore" of his own account with the "din," "incoherence," and "wild delirium" of the general audience. Through this representation of chaotic noise – meddlesome and distracting like the scattered commentary of Louisa Eshton and Mary Ingram – Scott follows the semi-omniscient

[104] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur"*, 37.

narrator in "assert[ing]" his own "coherence in opposition to the idea of incoherence, illegibility, or simply the failure or inability to pay attention."[105]

Scott localizes these incoherent responses and pins them to the "pit," "gallery," and the "house," so that his own dissenting opinion seems to emanate from none of these concrete locations. By constructing the audience's responses as reactive (replies that "were forced" and "bent" out of "slaves") and embodied ("leaping," "waving," and "applauding"), Scott suggests that these spectators exist only within the limit of their own embodied experience: they can only return "cheering" for "shouting," as they are only what Jaffe would call "physical" characters, "distinguished by bodily features and details of clothing" like hands, hats, and handkerchiefs.[106] This insistence on the audience's embodiment allows Scott's own reflections to appear as immaterial perceptions, capable of moving, like Fanny Price's consciousness, across a wider and more intricate web of stage effects:

> Nice points and rare graces of thought were absolutely smothered and crushed out by this intemperate, leather-lunged audience, and of interesting examples of refined and thoughtful acting there were not a few…The excitement and triumph of the evening were, we regret to say, reserved for coarser effects.[107]

Scott's narration gains its character as pure, "refined" thought by exceeding the limits it imposes on the "coarser," more embodied audience. With other audience members presented as existing within the limits of physical locations in the "pit" and expressing their interpretations through bodily organs like "leather-lungs," Scott presents himself – as the narrator of *Mansfield Park* presents Fanny Price – as able to "connect" "nice points" and observe a wider, more refined network of action.

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[105] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 29.
[106] *Ibid.*, 13.
[107] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur",* 38.

Scott's use of morally charged words like "refined" and "coarse" indicates a second technique for establishing relative omniscience: distracting readers from the motivations behind one's own watching by constructing the watching of others as obviously interested or unethical. In many of his spectator narratives, for example, Henry Crabb Robinson finds it useful to attribute to the general audience a vulgar favoritism that makes his own impressions appear impartial by comparison. An account of an 1814 production of *Othello* at Drury Lane is characteristic, as Robinson attempts to distinguish his own qualified assessment from the partiality of other audience responses:

> …After an hasty dinner went to Drury Lane to see Kean's Iago — It was a capital performance but the character does not afford the opportunities for display when Richard does — And the pleasure was disturbed by want of keeping — The other characters were not well played — nevertheless Pope by dint of mere lungs got his full share of applause in Othello — Indeed it is too clear that violent gesticulation and loud bawling is a pretty sure road to success. Witness Mrs Glover's success as Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III* who is even become a favorite. Mrs Smith offended less than usual as Desdemona. Kean's delivery of the dialogue in which he excited Othello to jealousy was admirable. Yet once or twice he seemed to me to owe his success rather to the strength than the propriety of his expression….[108]

The audience at large, according to Robinson, rewards the embodied, material production of "lungs," "gesticulation," and "bawling"; and the adjectives that attach to these actions – "mere," "violent," and "loud" – cast them as both insufficient and excessive causes for such success. As further evidence for the audience's crude favoritism, he calls upon the reader to "witness" the general success of Mrs. Glover, whose acting Robinson has described in a previous diary entry as "most coarse and void of all beauty and grace."[109] All of this serves as an attempt to divert readers from "witness[ing]" the potential moral content of Robinson's own "offense" at Sarah Smith, as well as his interest in the "propriety" of Edmund Kean's expression.

[108] Robinson, *The London Theatre,* 57.
[109] *Ibid.*, 57.

With Lucy's relationship to Madame Beck in mind, it is easier to recognize Robinson's narrative as an attempt to displace onto the partial, embodied audience the interestedness of his own observation. It is also easier to see the difference that gender and class make to the particular kinds of impersonality that Brontë crafts for Lucy Snowe and that Henry Crabb Robinson crafts for himself. In her claims of passive perceptivity, Lucy is careful to stay within the bounds of feminine propriety by avoiding not only the appearance of activity but also of taking marked pleasure in her watching. Robinson, on the other hand, uses his pleasure (or his failure to be pleased) as a measure of his authority: it is the gratification of a natural aesthete that shores up his authority to judge value, decorum, and attractiveness. The detached, impersonal authority of the semi-omniscient narrator allows Robinson to shape the contours of how future readers will see performing bodies – especially those of women – while it grants him the appearance of an impartial observational instrument.

Robinson's pleasure principal further illustrates that historical spectators may choose to claim a measure of semi-omniscience by placing themselves in the scene rather than abstracting themselves from it. This move allows spectators to make their own consciousness part of the epistemological terrain in order to forbid other would-be narrators any access to it. Fanny Kemble, who takes turns as both actor and spectator in her autobiographies, is particularly well positioned to take advantage of this strategy, as when she mystifies scrutiny of her interiority:

> At half past five went to the theatre. The play was *The Hunchback* — the house was crowded. Mr. Everett and Washington Irving came in after the play. We had a discussion as to how far real feeling enters into our scenic performances. 'Tis hard to say; the general question it would be impossible to answer, for acting is altogether a monstrous anomaly. John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were always in earnest in what they were about; Miss O'Neill used to cry bitterly in all her tragic parts; whilst Garrick could be making faces and playing tricks in the middle of his finest points, and Kean would talk gibberish while the people were in an uproar of applause at his. In my own individual instance, I know that sometimes I could turn every word I am saying into burlesque, (*never*

> Shakespeare, by the bye), and at others my heart aches, and I cry real, bitter, warm tears, as earnestly as if I was in earnest.[110]

Kemble initially constructs the question at hand as one whose answer is "impossible" to know in a "general" way: barriers to totalization exist in the form of "anomalies" and idiosyncrasies. This passage reads at first like a retreat from omniscience, or a refusal of absolute knowledge; but in fact this first step allows Kemble to move across the barriers she has just constructed for other spectators. As she moves from her uncle Kemble and aunt Siddons to Miss O'Neil, Garrick, and Kean, she demonstrates her own ability to navigate anomalies that would stymie the mobility of other interpreters. What's more, she ensures that other narrators could not move into the interiority of her own acting in a similar way: Kemble "know[s]" that at times her acting gives access to "earnest" feelings and at others it does not, but she withholds from readers and would-be narrators the ability to discern which instances are which. Though Kemble does not follow Scott and Robinson in presenting her fellow spectators Mr. Everett and Washington Irving as incoherent or partial, she does limit their perception to establish the reach of her own. And it is possible that her choice of the more refined private audience over the leather-lunged, general public is in service of Kemble's particularly gendered and classed navigations of semi-omniscience. Like Lucy Snowe, she gains the upper hand by holding something back from her readers, leveraging the domestic sphere and the privacy of her interiority rather than claiming superiority over the collective bodies of others.

3. Focalizing our Gaze and Telegraphing Desires

As our readings of fictional spectatorship have demonstrated, where semi-omniscience appears, so too do the frames and outlines of implicit attachments. Historical spectators may, like Fanny Price, reveal particular investments through the objects and actors they choose to

[110] Kemble, *Journal of a Young Actress*, 141-42.

centralize or marginalize. Or else they may manipulate a reader's sense of sequence, through the use of retrospective narration in the style of Jane Eyre.

Professional and amateur theatre critics alike often center prominent actor-managers of their day, and in doing so reveal their investment in maintaining a particular, asymmetrical distribution of narrative space. Clement Scott, as we have seen, devoted a large portion of his critical energies to covering the theatrical activities of Henry Irving, and many of his reviews focalize Irving so as to make that actor the center of the reader's vision as well. In accounts of the Lyceum's *Hamlet, Ravenswood*, and *Louis XI*, Scott represents Irving as an object of universal interest, the "dominant figure" in the visual field at large: "every eye is firmly fixed upon the centre figure"; the audience's eyes "will never be removed from his absorbing figure. They may wander, but they will soon return."[111] And, in fact, the readers of these accounts will often find that the nature of Scott's writing makes this observation necessarily true. As Scott provides detailed catalogues of Irving's attire and performance choices, and often omits all but the most cursory descriptions of the play's supporting actors, the reader finds their eyes "fixed upon the centre figure" by force of narrative focalization. Just as readers of *Mansfield Park* watch a version of *Lover's Vows* that has been abridged according to Fanny's investment in Edmund, the readers of Clement Scott are shown a Lyceum theatre where the figure of Irving occupies center stage.

Occasionally, however, Scott's narrative centering of Irving hits a snag, and in these moments a reader can perceive what desires might motivate the author to cast Irving as eternal protagonist. In his review of Dion Boucicault's melodrama *The Corsican Brothers* in 1880, for example, Scott sets out to construct a narrative focalized according to the pattern explored above: "Mr. Irving is at once, as ever, the keynote of the composition — the front of the picture," Scott

[111] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur",* 123 and 61.

claims. "The eyes of the audience never wander…from Mr. Irving — he command[s] their attention and rivet[s] it."[112] In practice, however, the narrator has difficulty keeping Irving front and center. First, a bizarre moment of identity confusion threatens to double the "keynote of the composition":

> Everyone, as usual, is expectant for the entrance of Mr. Henry Irving, as Fabien dei Franchi…Mr. Pinero, who comes on the scene as Alfred Meynard, is mistaken for the hero of the play; young actors who follow in Mr. Irving's footsteps acquire something of his manner, and imitate, unconsciously, the master. But it was momentary; the costumes of modern Paris in 1840 ought to have disarmed any suspicion, and there can be no mistaking the true entrance, as the gorgeously attired Corsican strides the full length of this enormous stage.[113]

A seemingly paradoxical moment of false recognition, when Arthur Wing Pinero "is mistaken" even though "there can be no mistaking," threatens the narrator's ability to "rivet" our attention to Irving. Pinero, one of the Lyceum's supporting actors, has "acquired something of Irving's manner," and seems poised to take his place as "hero" of the play and of Scott's narrative; and the manner in which Scott attempts to resolve the difficulty and put Pinero back in his rightful place is instructive. First, the passive construction of "is mistaken" allows Scott to distance himself from the misidentification. He can then assert a sartorial logic that "ought" to guide a discerning observer to distinguish between the "imitator" and the "true entrance" of the "master." While the general, uncareful audience may be mistaken, for the semi-omniscient narrator there can be no mistaking. And by parsing this claim to knowledge, we can see what is at stake for this narrator in maintaining Irving's centrality: the authority to characterize actors as either "imitators" or "masters." In other words, the narrator of these accounts claims authority to make actors into flat or round characters, whose space in the narrative can then be expanded or curtailed in ways that bolster the narrator's fantasy of omniscient escape from characterization.

[112] *Ibid.*, 185-86.
[113] *Ibid.*, 185.

Scott's review of *The Corsican Brothers* also models some of the possibilities of manipulating the narrator's temporal perspective on the scene. The strange shift in tenses – from the predominate present tense ("is mistaken") to the use of past tense ("But it was momentary") and back again ("there can be no mistaking") – abruptly reminds the reader that the events Scott narrates as unfolding in the present actually occurred in the past. In the temporal knot created by the snarling of "is…was…cannot be," Scott reveals he has an interest in limiting the duration of the audience's mistake and in using retrospective knowledge to present himself as always, already in the know.

In his account of the Lyceum's *Romeo and Juliet* in 1882, he develops retrospection into an even more comprehensive narrative strategy. Encouraging readers to approach his narrative cyclically by invoking their memories of previous Juliets ("We cannot forget what we have seen, or how our pulses have been stirred; we cannot fail to remember how one Juliet succeeded here and another failed there"[114]), Scott then uses his own retrospectives to construct elements of actress Ellen Terry's particular Juliet as flat:

> The midnight hour in Juliet's chamber was at least consistent with what had gone before in its want of animation and inspiration. There have been Juliets—and not accounted good ones either—who have here thrilled their audience, who, by the mere force of art have brought before the imagination of their listeners the horrors of the charnel-house and tomb, who have obliterated the silent sleeping-room, and have actually, as it were, made their audience participate in Juliet's vision. This drinking of the potion has been played in various ways, but always attacked for good or ill. Miss Ellen Terry's playing of the scene was consistently graceful, but singularly incomplete. The imagination was not stirred.[115]

Scott's shift from the past tense to the past perfect alters the temporal direction of the narrative from a linear description of Terry's Juliet to a cyclical return to the ghosts of Juliets past: a sort

[114] *Ibid*., 239.
[115] *Ibid*., 242.

of performance history analepsis.[116] As when Jane Eyre returns to Mrs. Reed characterize the Dowager Lady Ingram, Scott constructs for the reader a category of previous Juliets – who have "thrilled," "brought…horrors" before the imagination, "obliterated" scenery, and "made their audience participate" in visions – which allows him to represent the "gracefulness" of Terry's performance as "incomplete" next to these more powerful conjurings. Scott casts Terry, like Lady Ingram, as lacking imaginative depth. Having scrutinized the way retrospection allows him to craft this representation, a reader may recognize that alongside Scott's passive-voiced claim that "the imagination was not stirred" – or, that Terry's spectators experienced *a passive failure to be stirred* – is also an *active effort to stir* his own audience through a construction of past imaginaries. In these moments of disrupted chronology, Scott manipulates the horizon of expectations within which readers will attach meaning to Terry's performance.

Reading semi-omniscient novels alongside theatre writing thus allows critics to recognize the nexus of spectatorship and narrative in the nineteenth century. Placing their heroines in the audience allowed Austen and Brontë to craft novels that turned social marginalization into a source of epistemological authority. At the same time, for those historical writers actually occupying the stages and stalls of Victorian theatres, taking up the narrative techniques of semi-omniscience helped them gather the authority to extend and naturalize their own point of view on the theatrical performances of the day.

[116] In narratological terms, "analepsis" refers to a "flash back" to an earlier narrative moment.

SCENE 2: Embodied, Partial Perspective

"Bound…to that poor frame": Marginal Heroines and Embodied Authority

So far, I have concentrated on the techniques of narrative spectatorship that make Fanny, Jane, and Lucy difficult to see. But how to account for the scenes where the physical characteristics of their bodies seem to thrust themselves insistently into view? For these three heroines are markedly embodied, as well as strangely disembodied, spectators of the world around them. Fanny Price is knocked up, as other characters frequently note, by remarkably little activity. Her persistent headaches, fatigue, and weakness insist on the materiality of her body and locate her otherwise panoptic gazing and listening within one corporeal site, delimited by lack of vigor. Her boundaries, moreover, are often the reader's as well: when an exhausted Fanny is left behind on a bench overlooking the ha-ha at Sotherton, the wayward Bertram-Crawford lovers wander not only out of the range of her gaze but also out of the novel's narrated space. Early in her narrative, Jane Eyre suffers under the "consciousness of [her] physical inferiority" to her cousins, undergoes physical privations at Lowood that may limit her physical growth, and eventually stages a scene of extreme fatigue, exhaustion, and hampered mobility as she wanders the English countryside, "gnawed with nature's cravings."[117] Lucy Snowe, after a feverish illness that left her "weak" and "powerless," experiences her return to consciousness as an act of being "*bound*…once more, all shuddering and unwilling, to that poor frame, cold and wasted, of whose companionship she was grown more than weary." [118] Describing her body as a "prison," re-

[117] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 5 and 279.
[118] Brontë, *Villette*, 181 and 185, emphasis mine.

entered with "pain," Lucy often stresses, rather than attempting to deny, her occupation of what Jaffe calls the "character's *bound* and embodied condition."[119]

In what follows, I examine how particular conditions of limited or inhibited spectatorship allow Fanny, Jane, and Lucy to leverage qualities usually thought to be the *opposite of omniscience* – embodied limitations and boundaries to sight and participation – to produce an alternative form of narrative authority. Whereas Jaffe reads self-effacement and an emphasis on a narrator's limitations as participating in the same project that produces fantasies of omniscience – so that the self-denial of a narrator like Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* actually serves the narrative strategy of attaining omniscience – I argue that Fanny, Jane, and Lucy use their "bound and embodied condition" to craft a form of narrative authority importantly different from semi-omniscience.[120] Placing their heroines in spectatorial positions that highlight embodied limits allows Austen and Brontë to craft narrative authorities that both derive from and comment on these narrators and focalized characters' positions at the intersection of gender, class, and disability.[121] This alternative authority, which does not flee but rather embraces the conditions of being a character, allows Fanny, Jane, and Lucy to manage their own acting and narration, to register protests of social boundaries, and to telegraph forbidden desires and ambitions.

1. Management of Their Own Acting and Narrating

[119] Brontë, *Villette*, 185, and Jaffe 11, emphasis mine.

[120] Jaffe argues in *Vanishing Points* that Esther's effacing of her own knowledge and insistence on her own limitations allow her to serve as a counterpart for the novel's third-person narrator, who then takes on the status as the all-knowing narrator. Rather than approaching Esther's narrative authority as an alternative to the third-person narrator's, Jaffe sees it as aspiring after semi-omniscience in its own way, as Esther's self-abnegation becomes an attempt to become invisible and avoid the constructedness of character. While I find Jaffe's reading adept, especially in its treatment of Esther's cagy manipulation of her knowledge, I think scenes of embodied impairment sometimes reach *for* the constructedness of character, in order to make the construction of gender and class boundaries apparent.

[121] Lanser argues that the field of feminist narratology is in need of intersectional approaches that "examine narratives within the specificities of multiple social vectors" rather than "isolating the presumptive implications of gender." See Lanser, "Gender and Narrative," in *The Living Handbook of Narratology,* ed. Peter Huhn, et. al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University, 2013), http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/gender-and-narrative

In the course of their novels, all three of our spectator-heroines receive an invitation to step out of the audience and on to the stage. Fanny's is called upon to understudy for her cousin Julia during the private theatrical performance of *Lovers' Vows*; Jane has the chance to join in a series of tableaux performances during a game of charades with the Thornfield visitors; and Lucy is fairly dragged on stage by the domineering M. Paul, who presses her into theatrical service for a vaudeville play performed by the students at her boarding school. By analyzing the way each would-be actress responds to this casting call, I analyze how narration and observation allow Fanny, Jane, and Lucy to manage how and when their own experiences will be centralized. A narrator who refuses to play a role – or who plays one on her own terms – may free herself up to act in other ways.

In the case of Fanny Price, the insistence on one kind of bodily limitation – an inability to act – allows her to claim another kind of narrative significance – a place of prominence as the performance's central spectator, prompter, and critic. From the first appeal to join the cast, Fanny articulates her refusal to act by constructing herself as a character with absolute limits:

> "Indeed you must excuse me. I could not act anything if you were to give me the world. No, indeed, I cannot act…It is not that I am afraid of learning by heart," said Fanny, shocked to find herself at that moment the only speaker in the room, and to feel that almost every eye was upon her; "but I really cannot act…You cannot have an idea. It would be absolutely impossible for me."[122]

This apparent self-effacement, an insistence that Fanny is bound by her own subjectivity and cannot "act anything" beyond it, in fact leverages what Fanny "cannot" do into an uncharacteristically assertive utterance: she makes demands on others ("you must excuse me"), stakes a claim for her own abilities ("It is not that I am afraid of learning by heart"), and explicitly insists on the epistemological limits of other characters ("You cannot have an idea"). In this brief statement, Fanny has refused to take a place on the stage and laid the groundwork

[122] Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 102-03.

for an occupation of significant narrative territory elsewhere. As the rehearsals for *Lover's Vows* progress, Fanny will come to occupy a position of superior pleasure, discernment, observation, and knowledge:

> Fanny believed herself to derive as much innocent enjoyment from the play as any of them; Henry Crawford acted well, and it was a pleasure to *her* to creep into the theatre, and attend the rehearsal of the first act, in spite of the feelings it excited in some speeches for Maria. Maria, she also thought, acted well, too well; and after the first rehearsal or two, Fanny began to be their only audience; and sometimes as prompter, sometimes as spectator, was often very useful.[123]

By turning down one supporting role of little significance ("Cottager's Wife"), Fanny has secured for herself a much more central role as spectator and critic. Fanny is the only character who knows the full text of the play and who sees each rehearsal, and the slight confusion in this passage about which aesthetic judgments might be attributed to the narrator's absolute authority ("Henry Crawford acted well") and Fanny's personal authority ("Maria, she also thought, acted well") increases the reader's sense of Fanny's critical discernment. Fanny's insistence on her theatrical limits has in fact widened the field of her participation in the play.

Jane Eyre, too, refuses to "play," instead "return[ing] quietly to [her] usual seat" in the darkened window: a position that allows her to resist being read by others and, even more significantly, narrated by others.[124] From her painful "dread" under Mrs. Reed's narrative "transformation" of her character into one of an "artful, noxious child" to her "fear" of hearing "[her] own story" from the lips of a former butler at Thornfield, Jane displays throughout her novel a marked aversion to hearing her character and experiences narrated by others.[125] Perhaps the most powerful opponent she faces in this regard is her rival physiognomist, St. John Rivers. After declaring her features wanting in harmony and "leisurely [reading her] face, as if its

[123] *Ibid.*, 115.
[124] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 155.
[125] *Ibid.*, 28 and 363.

features and lines were characters on a page," St. John endeavors to make the leap from critic and spectator of Jane's features to narrator of her story: "'Half-an-hour ago,' he pursued, 'I spoke of my impatience to hear the sequel of a tale: on reflection, I find the matter will be better managed by my assuming the narrator's part, and converting you into a listener.'"[126] This attempted "conversion" takes on higher and higher stakes, as St. John stakes "claims" that Jane is "intended" and "formed" for conversion work.[127] Like Fanny, Jane resists this attempted casting into the role of missionary wife in part through an insistence on the limits of her subjectivity, her knowledge, and her physical power: "I was no apostle,—I could not behold the herald,—I could not receive his call"; "I do not understand a missionary life: I have never studied missionary labours"; "mine is not the existence to be long protracted under an Indian sun."[128]

But her final victory over St. John is gained not through an insistence on bodily limits but through a claim to a particular embodied force. In the moment she experiences her own "call," Jane describes not merely a spiritual but a full-body experience:

> My heart beat fast and thick: I heard its throb. Suddenly it stood still to an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my head and extremities. The feeling was not like an electric shock, but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor, from which they were now summoned and forced to wake. They rose expectant: eye and ear waited while the flesh quivered on my bones.[129]

Jane's narration of her response insists on the full involvement of every limb and organ capable of receiving sensation, from "head" to "heart," "bones" to "flesh," and "eye and ear" to "extremities." This embodied receptivity she contrasts with St. John's more cerebral observation. And it is through the "sharp," "thrilling" "activity" of embodied spectatorship that Jane stages her claim to continued control of her narrative: "It was *my* time to assume

[126] *Ibid.*, 302 and 323.
[127] *Ibid.,* 343.
[128] *Ibid*., 342-44.
[129] *Ibid*., 357.

ascendency. *My* powers were in play and in force. I told him to forbear question or remark."[130] Jane denies St. John the power to "remark" on her actions and character, thus employing the particularly embodied "powers" that allow her to stay "in play" as narrator while refusing to "play" a role in charades – of the theatrical or the matrimonial variety.

Unlike Fanny and Jane, who carve out space to narrate by refusing to act, Lucy Snowe agrees to take the stage; she scripts her own act of resistance, however, by constructing the pleasure of acting as something she must sacrifice because of her position as a socially marginalized "looker-on at life." Lucy Snowe's "reckless" pleasure and dramatic "yearn[ing]" – as well as her decision to repress them – assert themselves in the moment she first becomes an actress.[131] Particularly striking is the embodied language of limitation and disability that Lucy employs to describe both her satisfaction and its renunciation:

> I acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer. Ginevra seconded me; between us we half-changed the nature of the *rôle*, gilding it from top to toe…Without heart, without interest, I could not play it at all. It must be played—in went the yearned-for seasoning—thus flavoured, I played it with relish. What I felt that night, and what I did, I no more expected to feel and do, than to be lifted in a trance to the seventh heaven. Cold, reluctant, apprehensive, I had accepted a part to please another: ere long, warming, becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself. Yet the next day, when I thought it over, I quite disapproved of these amateur performances; and though glad that I had obliged M. Paul, and tried my own strength for once, I took a firm resolution, never to be drawn into a similar affair. A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life: the strength and longing must be put by; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked.[132]

In "fasten[ing]" herself to the "bound" condition of a character, Lucy figures her lack of socio-economic access to acting as a series of embodied limitations: she must make herself unable to taste "relish" and "seasoning" or to "exercise" her "facult[ies]" and "strength." As in her

[130] *Ibid*., 358, emphasis in original.
[131] Brontë, *Villette*, 155.
[132] *Ibid*., 156.

observations of Dr. John and Madame Beck, Lucy takes up the point of view of an involuntary spectator; but in these passages, I read not a fantasy of escaping the limits of personhood but rather a strategic deployment of those limits:

> it was time I retired into myself and my ordinary life. My dun-coloured dress did well enough under a paletôt on the stage, but would not suit a waltz or a quadrille. Withdrawing to a quiet nook, whence unobserved I could observe—the ball, its splendours and its pleasures, passed before me as a spectacle.[133]

While in previous passages Lucy used the spectator's position to reveal the thoughts and movements of others, here she emphasizes not only her own "self" but her own body, wrapped in a "dun-coloured dress" and placed in a "quiet nook." In the contrast between her quiescent retirement into the social role of dun-colored bystander and her warm embrace of the stage role of lover, Lucy stresses a repression of pleasure that is both the proper mark of femininity and the forced lot of a dependent woman. Taking up the position of a "mere looker-on" at "spectacle[s]" becomes not a way of experiencing impersonal power over others, but a way to play the "*role*" of dutiful teacher while also altering it – "gilding" it with the "splendours" she has been forced to renounce.

2. Protest of Boundaries

Analysis of Lucy's tactical engagement with acting lays the groundwork for exploring how an emphasis on embodiment enables a protest of the limits imposed on these spectator-heroines' gendered and classed bodies. While semi-omniscient narration constructs barriers between worlds in order to cross them in a demonstration of immaterial mobility, embodied, partial perspective emphasizes the limits of vision in order to signal socially imposed constraint. Taking on the bound condition of a character, I argue, can allow spectators to stage a sort of

[133] *Ibid.*, 156.

narratorial sit-in at the edge of the visual, physical, and epistemological limits imposed by class and gender ideologies.

Jane, for example, uses horizons to connect "looking" not with confident knowledge but with "longing" for mobility and access. While a teacher at Lowood school, she uses a mountain vista to construct herself as someone denied physical, as well as social upward mobility:

> I went to my window, opened it, and looked out. There were the two wings of the building; there was the garden; there were the skirts of Lowood; there was the hilly horizon. My eye passed all other objects to rest on those most remote, the blue peaks; it was those I longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground, exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two; how I longed to follow it farther!…I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayer; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus: that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space: "Then," I cried, half desperate, "grant me at least a new servitude!"[134]

The road winding into the horizon – "remote" and "vanishing" from view – serves as a vanishing point that positions the reader within Jane's perspective at the window. Jane *describes* that perspective as one of privation (of unfulfilled "desire" and unanswered "prayers" and petitions") and also *imposes it on the reader* as a limitation on the reader's own field of vision: because Jane cannot "follow" the road "farther," neither can we. The "boundary" of Lowood does not prove selectively permeable to Jane, as would a boundary constructed to help a narrator demonstrate relative mobility. Instead, the boundary proves "[in]surmount[able]" to both Jane and the reader, thanks to Jane's insistence on placing the reader within the fixed visual perspective of one denied exit (from a "prison ground"), entry (as an "exile" from other lands), and upward mobility (as one denied the "blue peaks" on the horizon). As when, from the top of Thornfield Hall, she looks "out afar over sequestered field and hill, and along dim sky-line" and longs "for a power of vision which might overpass that limit," Jane employs a decidedly non-omniscient, embodied

[134] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 72.

point of view to "petition" for "more than [she] possesse[s]; more…than was here within [her] reach."[135]

Jane's more overt protest about feminine immobility helps highlight the complaints implicit in Lucy Snowe's occasional bursts of activity and longing. On the surface, Lucy appears willing and even content to have her mobility circumscribed. Upon agreeing to become a caretaker for Miss Marchmont, Lucy remarks:

> Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman, my mistress, my friend, my all. Her service was my duty—her pain, my suffering—her relief, my hope—her anger, my punishment—her regard, my reward. I forgot that there were fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky outside the steam-dimmed lattice of this sick chamber; I was almost content to forget it. All within me became narrowed to my lot. Tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air; my appetite needed no more than the tiny messes served for the invalid. In addition, she gave me the originality of her character to study.[136]

"Tame" and "disciplined," Lucy positions herself as devoid of Jane's "longing" and "desire": she "demands no walks" to follow vanishing roads and seems content to accept one "character to study" in place of the "variety of character" that Jane desires.[137] Or, perhaps I should say that she seems "almost content." For if, in this passage, Lucy professes herself "disciplined" enough to let her character be "narrowed" to her social "lot" of "service," in her later exploration of London she reveals a taste for mobility every bit as keen as Jane's:

> Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning. Finding myself before St. Paul's, I went in; I mounted to the dome: I saw thence London, with its river, and its bridges, and its churches; I saw antique Westminster, and the green Temple Gardens, with sun upon them, and a glad, blue sky, of early spring above; and between them and it, not too dense, a cloud of haze. Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings.[138]

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[135] *Ibid*., 93.
[136] Brontë, *Villette*, 42.
[137] Brontë, *Jane Eyre,* 93.
[138] Brontë, *Villette*, 54.

The sharp contrast created here – between the "almost content" Lucy professes to feel when shut out from "fields, woods, rivers, seas, an ever-changing sky" and the actual "ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment" she experiences when free to "mount" and see "river," "green," and "sky" – alerts the reader that many of Lucy's acts of self-denial conceal complaints about the social "destiny" that hems in her life with boundaries and makes "crossing" these limits "perilous."

In fact, constructing mobility and immobility as the result of unknown forces operating on a particularly susceptible body (as when in London Lucy "know[s] not how" she gains mobility) allows otherwise "conservative" characters like Lucy and Fanny to telegraph protests that might risk censure if issued too directly. In key moments of distress or neglect, Lucy often engages in fits of furious activity that she attributes to evocative storms ("the tempest took hold of me with tyranny: I was roughly roused and obliged to live…too resistless was the delight"[139]), to illness ("A goad thrust me on, a fever forbade me to rest"[140]), or to medication ("The drug wrought…she made the glimmering gloom, the narrow limits, the oppressive heat of the dormitory, intolerable"[141]). The narrator of *Mansfield Park* likewise creates the circumstances for Fanny's protests through an emphasis on illness and fatigue. When Fanny is left on the bench at Sotherton while others explore "the very avenue which Fanny had been hoping the whole morning to reach at last," readers are invited to interpret her inner "disappointment and depression" at being fixed by physical *fatigue* as parallel to the "feeling of restraint and hardship" that Maria expresses more openly when she feels trapped in the same spot by social "*prohibition*."[142] In Fanny's "astonishment" at Miss Bertram's hopping over the ha-ha lies a

[139] *Ibid*., 121.
[140] *Ibid*., 175.
[141] *Ibid*., 496-97.
[142] Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 73-74 and 71; emphasis added.

"pain" at unfulfilled "hoping" and "curiosity."[143] For both Fanny and Lucy, the construction of vulnerable bodies and external forces allows for a protest against social marginalization that still maintains a compliant, "disciplined" surface.

3. Telegraphing Desires, Take Two: Forbidden Fantasies

Although (and perhaps because) she often appears to distinguish herself through the strength of her repression, Lucy Snowe also makes use of her position as a spectator to telegraph intense, passionate responses otherwise deemed inappropriate by her own standards of conduct. In the regular course of the narrative, she rarely admits to strong emotions, especially of a positive nature, and so when she discloses that she is "thrilled" to be seeing a play, which fills her with "peculiar anticipations" and "strange curiosity," the reader prepares for an unusual event.[144] And indeed from the first moments, the actress "Vashti" excites in Lucy a decidedly un-furniture-like response, as she speaks openly of the embodied reaction Vashti provokes in her "heart," "soul," and "nerves."[145] On one level, Lucy uses biblically fraught language to express disapproval of the agency Vashti displays. Lucy sees a devil seated in each of Vashti's eyes and attributes her unnatural energy to "evil" and "unholy" forces.[146] A Mary Magdalene "torn by the seven devils" or a "fallen" angel, Vashti is, in Lucy's rendering, fairly predictably "wicked."[147] Yet Lucy also conveys fascination through spiritual language evocative of pagan worship. She describes Vashti alternately as "a great and new planet," a "star," an "orb" and a "cometary light," whose celestial gravity "drew [her] heart out of its wonted orbit."[148] Vashti's "maenad movement" calls to mind the deities of Greek mythology, who lend their power to the "Pythian

[143] *Ibid.*, 71 and 74.
[144] Brontë, *Villette*, 284-85.
[145] *Ibid.*, 286-87.
[146] *Ibid.*, 286-87.
[147] *Ibid.*, 286-87.
[148] *Ibid.*, 286-87.

inspiration of the night."[149] In a mood reminiscent of religious ecstasy, Lucy even attempts her own resurrection of the dead: "Let Paul Peter Rubens wake from the dead, let him rise out of his cerements."[150] As these two registers of Christian and pagan practice record Lucy's entangled horror of, and attraction to, the rebellious potential Vashti represents, Lucy, perhaps uncharacteristically, refuses to repress either response. She does not fear to juxtapose her impressions of Vashti as a "marvelous sight: a mighty revelation" and "a spectacle low, horrible, immoral."[151] In this space of contradiction, Lucy maintains the appearance of Christian respectability while also representing desires wholly incompatible with such prim religious feeling. By adopting the position of a devotional worshipper, swept away by "disclosed power like a deep, swollen winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steelly sweep of its descent,"[152] she carves out a space of resistance to her normal scheme of repression.[153]

Trading the godlike authority of omniscience for the embodied susceptibility of a worshipper thus allows Lucy to circumvent her own censorship by projecting onto Vashti her own otherwise inexpressible desire to "attack," "tear in shreds," and "rend."[154] By constructing Vashti as both circumscribed "frail," "feeble," and "scarcely a substance herself") and resistant to circumscription ("strong," "rigid," and "a tigress"), Lucy invests the actress with her own limitations, along with the strength to attack them.[155] Through her reading of Vashti Lucy projects a desire for rebellion that she does not permit herself to realize and plays out a fantasy of victory over the physical limitations under which she suffers. Most significantly, Lucy imagines

[149] *Ibid.*, 287-88.
[150] *Ibid.*, 287.
[151] *Ibid*., 286.
[152] *Ibid*., 288.
[153] *Ibid*., 288.
[154] *Ibid*., 286-87.
[155] *Ibid.*, 286-87.

Vashti defeating female beauty. This spectacle of the transgressively assertive woman invokes for Lucy a comparison between the actress, "Vashti" – whose namesake refused to parade her beauty before the male court – and the voluptuously painted Cleopatra – who exposes herself without scruple to the hungry male gaze at Villette's art museum. In her "plain" but forceful presence, Vashti represents for Lucy a triumph over the male-imagined, "full-fed" Cleopatra, or "any other slug" drawn like Rubens' "army of his fat women," as a portrait of ample, available female flesh.[156] Vashti has "conquered Beauty, has overcome Grace," and Lucy – who suffers painfully under the apprehension of her own unattractiveness – shows herself glad to be rid of these "captives peerlessly fair, and docile as fair." Through Vashti, Lucy telegraphs a vindictive fantasy: not of evading conventional beauty standards (as through semi-omniscient disembodiment) but of physically destroying them (as she imagines how a scimitar might "cut through the pulpy mass" of plump women and the seas might drown "the heavy host" in their powerful swell.)[157]

The worshipful spectatorship of Vashti further allows Lucy to stage a momentary resistance to the judgments of Dr. Bretton. During the course of the performance, Lucy constructs the "strong magnetism" and "fierce light" of Vashti's performance as sufficient to draw her heart out of its "wonted orbit" around the feelings and thoughts of Graham Bretton: "For long intervals I forgot to look how he demeaned himself, or to question what he thought."[158] Quick observation informs her that Dr. Bretton has not shared her aesthetic experience of the play. Unmoved by theatrical skill, Dr. Bretton fails to worship: "Her agony did not pain him, her wild moan—worse than a shriek—did not much move him; her fury revolted him somewhat, but

[156] *Ibid.*, 286-87.
[157] *Ibid.,* 287.
[158] *Ibid*., 287.

not to the point of horror. Cool young Briton!"[159] On the one hand, Lucy's recourse to Dr. Bretton's judgment signals her own complicity in attaching immoral mutiny to female artistic expression. She herself, after all, has engaged in acts of self-censorship after experiencing too much pleasure in performing or after writing letters too full of feeling. Yet the intense rebellious pleasure Lucy derives from Vashti's performance also marks the narrator's attempts to carve out a space for resistance to that scheme of repression, and her own embodied response to the heat of "star," an "orb" and a "cometary light," gives her leverage to construct the "coolness" of Dr. Bretton as an unsatisfying and repressive response.

Staging the Spectator Self: Actress Autobiographies and Embodied, Partial Narration

The disembodied authority of omniscience was particularly hard to achieve for at least one significant group of theatre writers in the nineteenth century: professional actresses. This is not only because literary conventions made it difficult for women writers to adopt public voices, but also because of pervasive fear of the sexual energies of the stage. Fanny and Edmund's sense that Maria Bertram risks her reputation by participating in amateur theatricals points to a wider worry in the nineteenth century about the ethical implications of becoming a "public" woman – a phrase that could name either an actress or a prostitute. Not only were the working conditions of the Victorian theatre sexist and classist,[160] the "working women" of the theatre, as Tracy C. Davis explains, posed particular threats to Victorian ideals of middle-class femininity through

[159] *Ibid*., 288.

[160] While certain members of the theatre community's middle- and upper-classes benefited from a general rise in professional respectability over the course of the nineteenth century, many working-class and middle-class actors were excluded from this theatrical aristocracy. Women faced even more difficulties obtaining to social respectability and financial independence, because public performance often led to their sexual objectification and stigmatization and because the dearth of other professional opportunities for women made the market for actresses particularly glutted and competitive. For more analysis, see Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, Gail Marshall, *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance and the Galatea Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Kerry Powell, *Women and Victorian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

their defiance of socio-economic prescriptions about the "Good Woman"; and the "conspicuousness of the actress at work and at home" endangered the all-important bourgeois binary between public and private space.[161] This preoccupation with female sexuality is visible not only in anti-theatrical tracts from the period but also in much of the period's dramatic literature, which asked actresses to risk representing (and possibly being conflated with) the "fallen woman" of melodrama and domestic tragedy.[162] The bodies of professional actresses, then, were objects of anxious scrutiny, difficult to obscure behind an impersonal narrative voice.

Yet many Victorian actresses did turn to autobiographical narrative in order to frame public appearances on their own terms. While the conventions of expression for such memoirs imposed formal constraints of their own,[163] the theatrical memoir could be a site of *strategic* role-play as well. In fact, I argue that many actresses, bound by ethical and generic conventions, turned to embodied narrative strategies in order to "half-change," as Lucy Snowe does, "the nature of the *role*" scripted for them.[164] By constructing themselves as spectators whose own actions and movements are circumscribed by and bound to others', actress-narrators painted two apparently contradictory self-portraits: one, a tableau of the actress as theatrical subordinate to powerful patriarchs; the other, a more audacious performance of autonomy as critic, narrator, and frustrated artist. In what follows, I explore how actresses like Marie Bancroft, Fanny Kemble,

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[161] Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 69-71.

[162] For feminist analyses of female sexuality in Victorian melodrama, for example, see Powell, *Women and the Victorian Theatre*, Daniel Duffy, "Feminist Discourse in Popular Drama of the Early- and Mid-Victorian Period," in *Feminist Readings of Victorian Popular Texts: Divergent Femininities,* eds. Emma Liggins and Daniel Duffy (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), and Sos Eltis, *Acts of Desire: Women and Sex on Stage 1800–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[163] As Mary Jean Corbett notes, "the actress's autobiography not only tells the story of her theatrical performances, but requires her to enact a role given in advance, a role she has not herself created – that of 'a woman writing memoirs.'" "Performing Identities: Actresses and Autobiography," 114. Anne Russell, for example, argues in "Tragedy, Gender, Performance: Women as Tragic Heroes on the Nineteenth-Century Stage," *Comparative Drama* 30.2 (1996): 135-157 that actresses often created rhetorical distance between their stage appearances and their private personas by presenting their home lives as irreproachably orthodox.

[164] Brontë, *Villette*, 155.

and Lady Maud Tree used narratives of spectatorship and performance to maintain a surface compliance with traditional gender roles while also resisting the limits of these roles: by managing their position as critic and narrator, by protesting boundaries and barriers, and by telegraphing illicit desires.

1. Management of Their Own Acting and Narrating

In certain cases, taking up the position of an embodied spectator may allow an actress to follow Fanny Price and Lucy Snowe in deflecting attention from her role as actor while also claiming an alternative authority as audience and critic. When the Victorian actress Lady Tree, for example, writes a tribute to her late husband and more celebrated theatrical partner, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, she initially represents herself not as a performer but as a crucial spectator of her husband's performances. In her account of Beerbohm Tree's production of *The Private Secretary*, she places herself in virtually every physical position a spectator could occupy:

> On the first night of the play I was in the wings, waiting with him till he went on the stage. "Quick, quick! I must have a bit of blue ribbon in my button-hole," he cried, with sudden inspiration. No one had anything of the desired colour, so I quickly tore something white from my sleeve, rushed to the painting room, and returned with the badge, duly blued, just in time for his entrance. Of course, that blue ribbon became historic. The play was a failure at first, and I used to sit in the stalls nearby every night to help conceal their emptiness. I remember the last time that the "free list" was thus open to me (about the fourteenth night of the play). The scanty audience rocked with laughter throughout, but we all became hysterical when Mrs. Leigh Murray, having accidentally shed an underskirt, which she blushingly threw away, in the sight of the audience, Herbert put his head in at the door through which it had been hurled (it was his entrance in the second act), saying in modest trepidation, "I beg your pardon, but I thought I met a Petticoat on the stairs." …I thought the audience would never cease their laughter. From that night onwards *The Private Secretary* was the talk of the town, and there were no more vacant stalls for me.[165]

By occupying the wings and stalls of failing performances "to help conceal their emptiness,"[166] Lady Tree carves out for herself Fanny's station as "the…only audience" for her husband's early

[165] Maud Tree, "Herbert and I," in *Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and His Art*, ed. Max Beerbohm (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1920), 22.
[166] *Ibid*., 22.

career.[167] Over the course of her narrative, Lady Tree registers her eviction from that place of pride by moving her body progressively further from the center of action: from the wings to the painting room to the stalls and finally out of the theatre, as the "empty," "open," and "vacant" space she once occupied fills with other audience members. Yet just as Lucy's "dun-coloured dress" remains as a sartorial reminder of her time on stage, the blue ribbon that Lady Tree has torn off her sleeve continues to play a part in the success of the play. That "badge" of her husband's triumph marks the complex place Lady Tree claims in the scene: both dutifully and "duly" dyed to Beerbohm Tree's "desired colour" and more daringly "historic," as central to the performance as the Petticoat on the stairs.

Lady Tree articulates her desire to stand center stage, in other words, by forcing herself to the margins; and she often does so by constructing physical barriers to her mobility. She describes herself as vulnerable to illness, bouts of which often limit her ability to accompany her husband on tours or to the theatre. In the first week of Beerbohm Tree's *The Dancing Girl*, for example, she presents herself as confined by sickness while, on the other hand:

> nothing would induce Herbert to give way to his illness, or to surrender his part, in which he made one of the greatest successes of his life. So he was taken away from The Grange in a brougham, wrapped in blankets, and accompanied by nurse and doctor, I weepingly watching him from the window of my sick-room…He was put in hospital at the hotel next door to the theatre, nursed all day, and permitted (because he insisted) to act every night. This was the only actual illness he ever had. Mine was a much longer one—and it was many weeks before I could leave my room—so that I did not see *The Dancing Girl* until it had been filling the theatre for about two months, though I had been at all the rehearsals, and had seen beautiful Julia Neilson grow into her wonderful performance, Fred Terry into his, Lionel Brough, Rose Leclercq and Rose Norreys into theirs.[168]

By imbuing Herbert with a strong volition to act (he "acts" because he "insists" on it), Lady Tree lays the groundwork for painting her own theatrical efforts as less willful: when she does record her acting debut, she represents it as so incidental as to be completely forgettable, even to

[167] Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 115.
[168] Tree, "Herbert and I," 57.

herself.[169] Yet here again she uses the position of the "mere looker-on" ("watching him from the window of [her] sick-room") to claim a paradoxical centrality to "one of the greatest successes" of her husband's career. Having been a part of "all the rehearsals," she has "seen" each actor "grow into her…performance." The point of view generated by her weeping confinement both quarantines her from the difficulties of her husband's masculine ambition and also marks out her position as an authority on his artistic endeavors.

If spectatorship allows Lady Tree to retain the right to narrate her husband's career, the position of observer allows other actresses, like Fanny Kemble, to control the narration of her own career through apparent acts of self-effacement. While she does not, like Fanny Price or Jane Eyre, *refuse* to play, Fanny Kemble expresses profound ambivalence and occasional disgust at her own acting. Of an American performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, she laments:

> I acted like a wretch, of course, how could I do otherwise? ... What a mass of wretched mumming mimicry acting is. Pasteboard and paint for the thick breathing orange groves of the south; rouge, for the startled life-blood in the cheek of that young passionate woman; an actress, a mimicker, a sham creature, me, in fact, or any other one, for that loveliest and most wonderful conception, in which all that is true in nature, and all that is exquisite in fancy, are moulded into a living form. To *act* this! to *act Romeo and Juliet!* — horror! horror! how I do loathe my most impotent and unpoetical craft![170]

Kemble constructs acting as limited by the material: the "pasteboard," "paint," and "rouge" that bind a performance to the physical and corporeal.[171] In a move that is apparently even more deprecating of her art, she later transitions into the position of spectator and lauds her father's acting as less circumscribed by such bodily constraints: "when I see him act I have none of the absolute feeling of contempt for the profession that I have when I am acting myself. What he

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[169] "The play had a long run, and I often saw it; indeed, to my astonishment, I find, from an old press-cutting, that I actually appeared in a little curtain-raiser to it — a play called *Elsie* — though why Elsie, whence Elsie, and with whom Elsie, I have not the slightest recollection. I imagine it was a sort of preparation to my first real professional engagement, which was at the Court Theatre in October," "Herbert and I," 20.

[170] Kemble, *Journal of a Young Actress,* 109.

[171] A gown that does not fit an actress's body, she claims later, imposes the strictest limits on theatrical performance: "A tight armhole shall mar the grandest passage in Queen Constance, and too long or too short a skirt keep one's heart cold in the balcony scene in Juliet," *Ibid.*, 151.

does appears indeed like the work of an artist."[172] On the surface, this shift from stage to stalls allows Kemble to disavow a potentially unfeminine claim to a "profession" or "the work of an artist." At the same time, it allows her to construct her father's acting as more knowable than her own undecidable mimicry, so that no one but Kemble herself can successfully tell her authentic performances from her "wretched mumming." While Kemble can hear her father read the part of Hamlet and seize on his "whole conception of the part," the interiority behind her own actions is more opaque: "sometimes" she speaks in "burlesque" and at others she "cr[ies] real, bitter, warm tears."[173] By describing her own acting as potentially "shamming," Kemble hides a self-determining strategy in self-criticism. Like Jane Eyre, she insists on her material limits in order to resist being cast and described by others.

Taking another cue from Jane, actress-narrators might also claim the right to narrate through a display of embodied force (rather than an insistence on embodied limits). The burlesque actress Marie Wilton, later the respectable actress-manager Marie Bancroft, manages this sort of resistant narration through a careful act of editing. The Bancrofts had jointly produced a set of memoirs entitled *Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft On And Off the Stage*, which proceeds chronologically from "Marie Wilton's Narrative" to "Mr. Bancroft's Narrative" and finally to "Our Joint Narrative." This structure allows Squire Bancroft to supersede the narrative of his wife's unmarried life. Marie Bancroft, for example, ends her own narrative by opening the door to a counterfactual scenario regarding an earlier marriage proposal: "I frequently reflect how largely life is made up of accidents. Had I accepted the offer of my young sailor friend, how, I wonder, would my doing so have affected both my own and my husband's fate."[174] Immediately

[172] *Ibid.*, 158.
[173] *Ibid*., 25 and 142.
[174] Squire Bancroft and Marie Bancroft, *Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft On And Off the Stage*, 2nd ed. (London: R. Bentley, 1888), 116.

afterward, Squire Bancroft opens his own account by breaking with linear chronology in order to foreclose the possibility his wife seemed to open: "The surmise which ends the preceding chapter can never be solved, for I have to thank my good fortune that when, later on, I ventured to repeat to Marie Wilton the question asked in vain by the young sailor, I met with an assent."[175] Yet Marie takes back the right to the last word in her later collection, *Gleanings from "On and Off the Stage"*, which selects from the couple's joint autobiography those passages and anecdotes particularly involving herself. This selection process itself tends to re-center Marie's experience through the erasure of the Squire's commentary, but Marie takes the project a step further by reordering her *Gleanings*, so as to end, not with "Our Joint Narrative" but with the story of a "Mad Admirer" from her youth: a narrative of young love in which Marie, like Jane Eyre, hears voices and experiences embodied "thrills" and "chills."[176] This revised chronology results in an anti-teleological insistence on a moment when Marie Bancroft, like Brontë's fictional heroine, "assume[s] ascendency," when "[her] powers were in play and in force," and when Mr. Bancroft must "forbear question or remark."[177]

2. Protest of Boundaries

If an emphasis on embodied spectatorship allows certain actresses to take up positions of importance as critics and narrators, embodied watching may also create opportunities for covert protest against patriarchal and classist working conditions. Like Austen and Brontë's fictional spectator-narrators, who look with longing from Lowood window-sills and Sotherton benches, certain historical spectators also insist on the limits of their gaze in order to mark the restraints on their movement. Scholars who examine the autobiographical narratives of Victorian actresses

[175] *Ibid.*, 119.
[176] Marie Bancroft, *Gleanings from "On and Off the Stage"* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1892), 317 and 318.
[177] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 358.

often describe these memoirs as cultivating an image of conventionality and contentment.[178] A comparative analysis of spectatorship and embodied, partial perspective, however, reveals how these authors also communicate critiques of the conventions they are required to uphold and register a protest at the social barriers that prevent full self-expression.

For Marie Bancroft, who had to work hard to achieve social respectability after an early career in burlesques, scenes of gazing can express mourning for the autonomy lost after marriage. Though her husband characterizes her as willing to "cheerfully s[i]nk her own importance as an actress" and admirable for her "self-abnegation," Marie's narrative often renders self-restraint as a physical constraint.[179] When her husband asks her to resign her post as manager of the Prince of Wales's Theatre so that he can manage the Haymarket, for example, Marie represents her sacrifice as anything but "cheerful": "There was a thick fog," she writes, "and everything seemed to be in mourning."[180] The fog imposes on the scene both a sense of longing and conditions of limited visibility. Like Jane, Marie Bancroft creates a visual barrier she cannot penetrate in order to mark her constrained position as one of externally imposed, rather than cheerfully self-chosen, limitations. Vision also allows for an expression of grief when Marie visits her old theatre later in her career:

> Whenever opportunity offers, I walk through Tottenham Street to have a look at the dear old Prince of Wales's Theatre. I gaze with mingled feelings at the now dingy building; and think of the wonderful triumphs we achieved there. It is a poor, broken-down place now, but while a brick of it remains I shall cling to the memory of the house that was my stepping-stone to fortune, and in which I passed the happiest years of my life. I often grieve to see it so neglected and forsaken, and the past seems to me like a strange dream.[181]

[178] See, for example, Russell, "Tragedy, Gender, Performance," and Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," 260.
[179] Marie Bancroft, *Gleanings*, 304-05.
[180] *Ibid*., 239.
[181] *Ibid*., 305-06.

As in the case of her "Mad Admirer," Marie seems determined to revisit the past as a site of non-linear "strangeness." Here, however, the past functions less as a site of counterfactual possibilities and more as a "broken-down…memory" of lost "happy" years. By adopting a "gaze" limited by "thick fog" and "grieved" by "neglect," Marie Bancroft expresses a desire to "cling" to her past, much as Jane longs to reach out for "more than [she] possesse[s]; more…than was here within [her] reach."[182] Marie uses an embodied spectatorship to signal her "mingled feelings" at the gendered conventions that require her to "sink" her "wonderful triumphs" into dingy disrepair.

Obstructed spectatorship is a key narratorial technique for actresses with even more conventional stage careers, as their embrace of propriety often forbids more direct expressions of mourning. Lady Tree, as we have observed, positions herself as someone poised at the boundary between actor and spectator. Unlike the would-be omniscient narrator, however, Lady Tree makes no effort to represent herself as one who moves easily between these two worlds. In fact, she frequently narrates episodes in which she is "shut out" of a particular performance, as when she tries unsuccessfully to join the cast of her husband's *Hypatia*:

> There was naturally no part for me in *Hypatia*, although I pleaded with tears for that of Ruth. It would not have suited me, and Olga Brandon acted it to perfection. But it used to please me to make my moan by emerging from my disused dressing-room, which was kept sacred to me, and by sitting on a certain bridge connecting Suffolk Street house with the stage. There I used to exult in my grief by watching the lovely play, and by greeting (with careful traces of recent weeping) Herbert, always genial, always sympathetic, as he returned between the acts. How kind he was! How indulgent to my grievances! How eager to atone when in reality I had nothing whatever to grumble about![183]

On one level, Lady Tree makes her "grief" an object of ridicule by presenting herself as performing the role of grumbler, complete with a dressing room and staged "traces of recent weeping." While she seems in this sense to distance herself from any real protest at her exclusion

[182] Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 93.
[183] Tree, "Herbert and I," 79.

– since "in reality" she "had nothing whatever to grumble about" – her more earnest grievances come through in her representation of external impediments. Earlier confined behind the window of a sick room, here distanced from the spectacle on a bridge, she later describes her experience of not being cast in her husband's celebrated production of *Twelfth Night* as the feeling of being shut out by "a gate…a gate that closed behind one while one was idly examining its lock."[184] While Lucy fastens the "lock of resolution" that keeps her from acting through an act of self-repression, Lady Tree suggests that her own locked gate has been closed by another agent. Her use of a particularly embodied narratorial position – confined by weakness, illness, and weeping and barred by doors, locks, and gates – allows her to "make…her moan" against her husband's ability to exclude her from leading roles.

3. Telegraphing Desires, Take Two: Forbidden Fantasies

If some actresses, like Fanny Kemble, managed ambivalence about their professional role by representing themselves as acting almost against their own will – filled with an "absolute feeling of contempt for the profession"[185] – others take up a dual position as actor/spectator in order to express a potentially unladylike desire to act. Thomas Postlewait notes as a generic convention of actress autobiographies the tendency to suppress rather than insist on ambition and self-interest. Instead, these authors "have characterized themselves…as existing in relation to – in service to, in fulfillment of – another person or idea or purpose" in order to "hide or deny aspects of self that the actress, as professional woman and private person, feels cannot be reported without negative consequences."[186] Taking up the narrative position of a subservient or a bound spectator could thus provide a useful angle of approach for an actress autobiography that

[184] Tree, "Herbert and I,"117.
[185] Kemble, *Journal of a Young Actress*, 158.
[186] Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," 267.

expresses, as I argue Lady Tree's does, an ambition and artistic pleasure that was very risky for a nineteenth-century actress to claim.

In her account of her and her husband's production of *Hamlet*, for example, Lady Tree crafts a rhetoric of reverence similar to Lucy Snowe's. She sacralizes the production as "a divine time" in which she and Herbert "reverently, so almost religiously, gloried in their parts" of Hamlet and Ophelia.[187] Just as Lucy claims that Vashti was a "cometary light" that "drew [her] heart out of its wonted orbit,"[188] Lady Tree represents her own and Herbert's "thoughts and hearts" as "fixed" on the "glowing adventure" of *Hamlet*, next to which "*The Dancing Girl* paled in its ineffectual fire."[189] These attributions of agency and force to *Hamlet*, whose glories Lady Tree reverently reflects, allow for a construction of herself as spectator as well as actor:

> it was my delight to sit in the wings and watch Herbert's Hamlet — which was so far more beautiful, more scholarly, more 'Royal Dane' than was allowed him, even by the most enthusiastic of his critics. It was indeed a thing of beauty and the remembrance of it a joy for ever. With what passionate delight he merged his individuality (not so unlike Hamlet's own) into that of the sweet Prince! — A sweeter never was sung by flights of angels to his rest.[190]

Rather than claim for herself the "delight" of "merging" with a role, Lady Tree cedes that more masculine pleasure to her husband and takes as her own the quieter "delight" of a spectator. Herbert, too, becomes an object of devotion – a "thing of beauty," to whom "angels" pay tribute in song. As a worshipful watcher, Lady Tree can lay a claim to some measure of embodied pleasure while projecting the more "passionate" and active joy onto her husband.

In one sense, this wifely adoration is solidly conventional; and Lady Tree's choice of religious language remains more comfortably Christian than the pagan register of Lucy's encounter with Vashti. Yet Lucy worships Vashti to express anger as well as delight, and this

[187] Tree, "Herbert and I," 64.
[188] Brontë, *Villette*, 286-87.
[189] Tree, "Herbert and I," 63.
[190] *Ibid.*, 64.

suggests that another reading of Lady Tree's devotion is possible. Lucy marks her theatre-going in the book of her life, "not with white, but with a deep-red cross" – an ambiguous sign of both passion and censorship.[191] Lady Tree's recourse to her own diary records of *Hamlet* signify with equal complexity: "I find only one entry in my Diary for all that autumn: 'A great day in our lives — Herbert plays Hamlet for the first time and with enormous success.' Would that I had recorded more!" While the original entry appears to center Herbert by recording only his "success" in an otherwise collective endeavor (the work of "our lives"), Lady Tree's later regret at not having "recorded more" gestures toward one element left out of the narrative: her own debut. And, in fact, Lady Tree does now "record more" on that subject. In this account of the performance written at a greater distance, she adds her own "success" to Herbert's:

> The three months that followed were surely the happiest of my life, for I had more than my share of praise and applause. I seem to have lived only "to strut and fret my hour upon the stage," and that hour as Ophelia was Heaven. The only duty I set myself, as far as I can remember, was to take care that the flowers I used in the Mad Scene were duly chosen and delivered day by day—for nothing but real flowers would content me, and the more beautiful they were, the more it pleased me to toss them and tear them.[192]

By insisting on her position as a reverent spectator, delighting in the performances of others, Lady Tree has slipped in a claim to a less conventional "Heaven" – one of "praise," "applause," and freedom from "duties" – that is hardly compatible with Victorian ideals of femininity.

More importantly, the surprisingly violent impulse with which Lady Tree ends her reflection opens up the possibility that she, like Lucy Snowe, is telegraphing not only illicit pleasures but also inexpressible anger. Just as Lucy revels in Vashti's ability to "rend" and "tear in shreds," Lady Tree takes pleasure in "tossing" and "tearing" flowers.[193] Both women, moreover, fantasize about destroying beauty: Lucy's fantasy of Vashti "cut[ting] through the

[191] Brontë, *Villette*, 289.
[192] Tree, "Herbert and I," 72-73.
[193] Brontë, *Villette*, 286-87.

pulpy mass" of Rubens' women draws attention to the particular delight Lady Tree takes in tearing the most beautiful species of flowers. In fact, one of the only episodes in which Lady Tree represents herself as angry occurs when her husband explains that he cast Marion Terry instead of his wife in *Partners* because of Terry's "superior suitability, personality, and appearance."[194] Though Lady Tree declines to narrate her actions during the "ungovernable rage" she experiences at this announcement, she admits to a fierce anger against this arbiter of her "suitability" and "appearance." If acting is "Heaven" to her, her husband has often "cast" her out of that paradise.

To call Lady Tree's spectator narrative subversive or progressive would be to oversimplify the case. Insofar as she describes her Victorian career through the perspective of the devoted subordinate, Lady Tree reproduces many strictures of Victorian femininity (and does so at a time when she might have turned to the relatively independent role of the New Woman). Yet in presenting her view from the wings, Lady Tree also registers longing for artistic fulfillment and anger at her marginalization. Like Lucy Snowe, the autobiographical narrators crafted by Maud Tree, Marie Bancroft, and Fanny Kemble choose occasionally to step out of the role of actress and to style themselves as "mere lookers-on at life": taking up an obstructed perspective that renders social barriers to action visible (if not directly objectionable). Indeed, Act I's attentiveness to the techniques of point of view may be particularly crucial in reading autobiographical narratives produced by subjects forced to the wings of their own historical moments. As Maggie Gale and Viv Gardner note, "where women's voices have been historically denied or undervalued it is important to recognize patterns of self-representation in

[194] Tree, "Herbet and I," 32.

autobiographic writing by theatre women."[195] Not only the story these actress-spectators tell – the content-level expression of devotion and subordination – but also the distinct contours of their points of view – the narrative techniques they employ to shape, frame, and stress that content – inform how contemporary readers would have understood the cultural meaning of their performances.

What frustrates some traditional approaches thus facilitates alternative readings. Resituating historical accounts of theatregoing in a wider network of spectator narratives provides a broader view of how (dis)embodied observation enables different forms of audience authority: the disinterested interpretive claims of the receptive critic, as well as the partial longings of the marginal spectator. One's point of view in the playhouse might be assigned by actor-managers, who cast the parts set the price point for more desirable seats; but perspective in narrative can be fixed or unfixed. Playing with point of view allows actresses and audience members to renegotiate the significance of their position in the theatrical scene.

[195] Maggie B. Gale and Viv Gardner, "Introduction," in *Auto/biography and Identity: Women, Theatre, and Performance*, eds. Maggie Gale and Viv Gardner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

2. ACT II: EPISTOLARITY

Introduction: Performance History in Letters

Before dramatic realism and dimmed auditorium lighting solidified the "fourth wall" separating actors from audience, spectators exerted a particular force on the space and pace of a theatrical event. In the popular playhouses of Victorian London, interactions among audience members were often as noisy and as visually distracting as the spectacle on stage. Theatregoers swapped stories about famous actors, shared their impressions of the present performance, and engaged in collective responses that could halt or delay the progress of the play, as actors responded to applause, hisses, or projectile orange peels (in particularly bad cases). Willmar Sauter sets a typical scene:

> When a star actress — be it Sarah Bernhardt on her extensive tours or just a local celebrity — entered the stage, she would immediately be welcomed with long, warm applause. Even when the applause faded, there were still whispers in the audience, one spectator telling another when she saw the actress last, a father explaining to his daughter who she was, and so forth. The actress waited for complete silence before she spoke her first lines. The excitement in the audience was tangible, and when she finished her monologue, a gratifying applause would accompany her exit and, depending on its length, she would return to the stage, approach the footlights and bow deeply to the crowd. A dialogue might provoke similar reactions and, in this case, all the actors would come forward and express their gratitude at the front of the stage before the action of the play resumed.[196]

Sauter presents nineteenth-century audiences as present: both spatially (as spectators shape each other's experience through sidebar conversations and shared sensations) and temporally (as the

[196] Willmar Sauter, "The Audience," 169-70.

interruptions of whispers and applause continually pause the forward motion of the play by soliciting "waiting" and "approach").

Such interactive playhouses typify what performance theorists call the "liveness" of a theatrical event. The temporal and spatial presence of actors and spectators, and their dispersal after the fall of the curtain, puts performance in a particularly charged relationship to processes of disappearance and reappearance.[197] While it was a theoretical boon for scholars carving out the field of performance studies, the "here and now" quality of the theatrical event has, for scholars of theatre history, largely appeared as a limit value – the co-present "real" that historical reconstructions can only asymptotically approach.[198] For historians, as Rebecca Schneider points out:

> studying a medium in its liveness, its "nowness," may seem against the grain of the project of history — a project that, by most accounts, seeks to analyze the "then" in some distinction to the "now." Even if a history brings us "up to the minute," few historians would claim it's the minute shared by the reader in a "co-presence" akin to theatre.[199]

Sauter's description of nineteenth-century audience practices gives a sense of why archival records of Bernhardt's performances might seem doomed to disappoint: the fugitive "whispers" so crucial to shaping the audience's experience are only partially documented, and the intervals of action and pause are often left to educated guesswork, "depending" on what "might" happen

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[197] Rebecca Schneider's "Performance Remains" articulates an influential theory of performance as a form that "both 'becomes itself through disappearance' (as [Peggy] Phelan writes) and that…remains, but remains differently," 105-06. While early performance theorists insisted more heavily on the disappearance of live performance events, recent studies (especially those of digital and media performance) have suggested that efforts to parse "'live' media from 'nonlive' or 'technological' media" become "entangled in assumptions about what constitutes presence and absence, what recording and what replaying. Despite best efforts to nail down distinctions into solid, non-traversable binaries, the borders between live and nonlive media forms are bloodied if not completely blurred," Schneider, "Slough Media: Performance, Media Object, and the Production of Obsolescence," forthcoming.

[198] Erika Fischer-Lichte defines the "bodily co-presence of actor(s) and spectators" as both the physical act of "'being here,' before the gaze of an other" and the cognitive awareness of being present as an embodied mind in an unusually intense way. See Fischer-Lichte, "Appearing as an Embodied Mind – Defining a Weak, a Strong, and a Radical Concept of Presence," in *Archaeologies of Presence: Art, Performance, and the Persistence of Being*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London: Routledge, 2012), citation 106.

[199] Schneider, *Theatre & History* (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

"in this case" or that.[200] The documents that a performance leaves behind, as the productions of individual spectators recording their impressions in isolation and after the fact, seem to capture the personal and the past rather than the collective and the present.

Yet the practices of Victorian spectators suggest that they were invested in a performance whose liveliness was ongoing. Many of the theatrical materials that modern scholars might consider "ephemera," for example, were carefully preserved and curated by Victorian audiences. Nineteenth-century theatre enthusiasts saved autographs, programs, and newspaper clippings in scrapbooks.[201] They sent each other cabinet photos of famous actors to keep in albums and to display for visitors.[202] Most significantly, for the purposes of this Act, they constructed extended networks of audience interaction by circulating letters about performance experiences. Epistolary performance narratives were vital to nineteenth-century theatregoers. This is not only because the postal reforms and the establishment of the national Post Office made the letter a vastly more accessible form of media in the nineteenth century, but also because the formal qualities of letters offered spectators a medium through which to represent and reconstruct the embodied, communal presence experienced at the opera and the playhouse. While few contemporary historians, according to Schneider, claim to write "up to the minute" of live co-presence, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century epistolary authors did attempt what Samuel Richardson called "writing to the moment" of production and reception. As a mode preoccupied with its vexed

[200] Reconstructing an event in this provisional way involves what Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson call "a re-presentation of the past" that works across "fundamentally unbridgeable" "gap[s]," as even those spectators who could "bear live witness" would do so through a "mediating…interpersonal and intertextual exchange" that makes the "constructedness of the historian's representation… obstinately incontrovertible." Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson, eds., *Theatre History and Historiography: Ethics, Evidence and Truth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

[201] Sharon Marcus provides both a guide to theatrical scrapbooks and an argument for taking them seriously as an archive in "The Theatrical Scrapbook," *Theatre Survey* 54.2 (2013): 283–307.

[202] In a conference paper presented at NAVSA 2017, entitled "The Preservation Practices of the Victorian Spectator," Victoria Wiet analyzed how such scrapbook and photographic archives allowed spectators and actors to build networks of erotic exchange.

relationship to temporal and spatial presence, epistolary narrative – or the set of features that Janet Altman calls "epistolarity" – is well suited for representing a liveness that outlives and extends beyond a discrete moment of performance.[203]

In this Act, I ask what the relationship between epistolarity and co-presence enabled for writers representing theatrical performance. Scene 1 sets the stage by analyzing a series of theatrical letters to unpack how epistolarity allows historical spectators to construct flexible versions of theatrical liveness. Scenes 2 and 3 pursue larger case studies of epistolary narratives: one situated in the epistolary novel's traditional heyday in the late eighteenth century and one in the supposed decline of epistolary fiction in the mid-nineteenth. In Scene 2, I read Fanny Burney's *Evelina* in conversation with her *Early Journals and Letters* to investigate how extensions of epistolary liveness allow both fictional heroine and historical author to carve out individual character between the pull of public collectivity and private absorption. Moving forward to the more hybrid epistolary texts of the Victorian period, I then use Scene 3 to analyze Wilkie Collins's *No Name* in conversation with Fanny Kemble's *Record of a Girlhood*. Both of these texts are framed as continuous, retrospective narratives, but they nonetheless use letters to represent key performance events. Epistolarity's vexed investment in presence, I argue, allows these authors to imbue turning points in their narratives with theatrical liveness, oriented toward a precarious future and an insecure collective.

By providing Act II with a bridge across fictional and historical narratives of performance, epistolary liveness offers new insights into both genres. In the first case, analyzing epistolarity as a resource for theatrical fictions adds a new chapter to the role of letter-writing in the history of the novel. Usually associated with prose fiction before the rise of the realist novel, epistolary narrative has sometimes been viewed as a formal dead end or a curious *cul-de-sac* on

[203] Janet Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 4.

the novel's road toward third-person realism. Recently, however, scholars like Joe Bray and Kate Thomas have pushed back against the critical tendency to treat epistolary fiction (or what Thomas distinguishes as "postal plots")[204] as "an isolated, digressive episode in the history of the novel as a whole."[205] Looking at narratives of performance and spectatorship, I argue, reveals one of the reasons that epistolary narrative not only enabled eighteenth-century experiments with representing time and space but also persisted throughout the Victorian period as a particular resource for representing live events. Especially when they appear as supplements to otherwise non-epistolary texts, epistolary interludes allow authors to capture the suspenseful precarity and the relational inter-subjectivity of performance. For Collins, for example, who claims to write *No Name* as an anti-sensation novel in which all events are foreseen, the epistolary segments "between the scenes" of the novel allow him to position Magdalen's performances as moments of narrative uncertainty.

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[204] In *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal, and Victorian Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kate Thomas argues that Victorian "postal plots" differ from earlier epistolary fictions in that "[t]hings that were ancillary to the letter – envelopes, stamps, postmarks, and even postmen's thumbprints – became narratively all consuming…Rather than thrilling the reader with intimate access to the contents of Clarissa's or Pamela's letters, postal plots found excitement in the distance, separation, delays, and precipitous deliveries that could skew the trajectory of a communication, or reveal how skewed any communicative trajectory always is," 2. The nineteenth-century examples of epistolarity that I consider here confirm elements of this distinction while also complicating it. While the epistolary liveness I investigate is certainly characterized by precarity and distance, for example, I also argue that Collins and Kemble use the formal strategies within their letters to create a sense of immediacy and intimacy.

[205] Joe Bray, *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1. As Bray notes, the epistolary novel is limited to the long eighteenth century, or "the 120 years from Roger L'Estrange's first translation of *Les Lettres portugaises* in 1678 to Jane Austen's decision in late 1797 or early 1798 to transform the probably epistolary 'Elinor and Marianne' into the third-person narrative of *Sense and Sensibility*," 1. Bray attempts to raise epistolary narrative's profile by positioning it as an important precursor for explorations of consciousness in the Victorian novel. Other influential studies of epistolary fiction that extend into the nineteenth century include Linda S. Kauffman's *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), which includes chapters on *Jane Eyre* and *Turn of the Screw*; Mary Favret's *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), which includes analyses of Jane Austen and Mary Shelley; Nicola J. Watson's *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825: Intercepted Letters, Interrupted Seductions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), which analyzes the tension between first-person epistolary and third-person historical narration in Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott (as well as less canonical authors); and Richard Hardack's "Bodies in Pieces, Texts Entwined: Correspondence and Intertextuality in Melville and Hawthorne," in *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, eds. Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000).

In the second case, asking what epistolary narrative affords for nineteenth-century actors and spectators allows me to leverage literary methods of analysis to uncover the spatial and temporal complexity of theatre writing.[206] Taking literally Thomas Postlewait's call to interrogate, "to what extent autobiographies" like Fanny Burney and Fanny Kemble's "exist not only as historical records but as epistolary fictions," I argue that Burney and Kemble's careful use of the techniques of epistolary fiction plays a crucial role in how they narrate their identity as author and actress, respectively. Of course, these writers' decisions to include letters among their memoirs are not unusual; yet the moments when they choose to turn to epistolary narration are striking. Building on arguments by literary critics about epistolary fiction's historical relationship to middle-class femininity, I investigate Burney and Kemble's deployment of the letter form through lenses of gender, class, and disability.[207] The embodied and relational qualities of epistolary liveness, I argue, allow these authors to animate their histories with moments of public pressure, financial precarity, and physical vulnerability. For scholars of performance, reading their autobiographical writing through the lens of epistolary liveness reveals how both Burney and Kemble participate in a representational project championed by many contemporary theorists: to imagine how records of performance themselves remain "live after th[e] event."[208]

[206] Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," 253.
[207] In their introduction to *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), editors Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven describe a dominant strand of criticism that associates epistolary narrative with the rise of middle-class ideologies of feminine domesticity in the eighteenth century. Studies like Favret's *Romantic Correspondence* have helped complicate this narrative by drawing attention to a wider archive of epistolary fictions, in which the letter form is not always associated with interiority and the private. By investigating the intersection between epistolary modes and nineteenth-century theatre – a medium often associated with exteriority and the public – I contribute to the project of theorizing a more complex epistolarity.
[208] Citation from a 2007 interview with Schneider in *What is Performance Studies?*, eds. Diana Taylor and Marcos Steuernagel (Duke University Press: 2015), where she expresses an interest in "troubling liveness or live engagement as only being delimited to a kind of 'now.'" I share Schneider's conviction that "you can have cross-temporal" (and, I would add, long-distance) "liveness."

SCENE 1: Epistolarity and Theatrical Co-Presence

Epistolary narratives, made possible by distance and absence, are heavily invested in presence and the present. Epistolary discourse, Altman explains:

> is a discourse marked by hiatuses of all sorts: time lags between event and recording, between message transmission and reception; spatial separation between writer and addressee; blank spaces and lacunae in the manuscript. Yet it is also a language of gap closing, of writing to the moment, of speaking to the addressee as if he were present.[209]

The epistolary urge to write "to the moment" and "as if…present" may help explain why the exchange of letters was such an important part of theatregoing in the nineteenth century. Letters offered Victorian spectators and actors a medium not only to represent the liveness of a communal theatre event but also to reenact it, by prolonging the swapping of stories and sharing of affects that Sauter describes as vital to pre-twentieth-century audience experience. Examining a series of theatrical letters, I argue that three particular tensions inherent in epistolary narrative allowed nineteenth-century spectators to construct performance as both live and open-ended: tensions between past/present/future, present/absent, and finished/continuous.

1. Past/Present/Future: The "Unseizable" Now

Many epistolary narratives reach toward a present tense at which they can never quite arrive. The opening lines of an 1839 letter from the singer Adelaide Kemble to her friend Therese Maria Anna van Thun are characteristic in their approach to a shared "now": "[Y]our kind letter has this instant been brought to me," Kemble begins, "and as you perceive I lose no time in answering it."[210] Kemble's opening lines claim that the two correspondents share the same "instant" of reception and perception. Yet Kemble cannot actually avoid "los[ing] time"

[209] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 140.
[210] Adelaide Kemble to Therese Maria Anna van Thun (née van Brühl), May, 1839. Garrick Club Library Collection, BOOK13389.

between the multiple live instants she narrates. The instant she receives her friend's letter is, of course, distinct from the instant in which she narrates receiving it; and the instant in which the Countess van Thun will "perceive" that Kemble has lost no time in answering lags far behind the moment of Kemble's writing.

This syncopated "instant" of reading and writing serves a particular turn for Kemble's representation of her performances in Milan, which she will present not as a discrete event but as a protracted series of trials and tribulations. If, as performance theorist Alice Rayner notes, theatrical time is "almost always 'out of joint,'" Kemble uses the pauses and breaks in epistolary performance time to render that disjointedness as an embodied experience of chronic pain:[211]

> don't think I did not write before because I am too vain to be able to speak of my failure here — that was not the reason — but because I was then working all day that I might fight well at night and that I was suffering too much…to dare write or speak about difficulties from which there was no escape and which I went through better in silence and alone than if I had had too much sympathy and pity bestowed on me — the Puritani has just been brought out and I have been getting a day or two's rest — but now that the necessity for being strong is over — I feel quite exhausted and incapable of any exertion mental or bodily.[212]

This segment of the letter is nominally still written in the same "instant" as the opening – the moment in which she received her friend's letter. Yet rather than writing to that moment, Kemble creates a more complex temporality, during which a performance event – Kemble's "working," "fight[ing]," and "suffering" on stage – is out of synch with its shared reception and perception – as Kemble is "silent," "alone," and "d[oes] not write." Though the narrative of her artistic struggles does position her in the midst of a performing present ("now" that "the Puritani has *just* been brought out"), an inevitable interval ("a day or two's rest") syncopates both epistolary and theatrical time. Kemble calls her performance a failure; but the letter's embodied

[211] Alice Rayner, *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 2.
[212] Adelaide Kemble, BOOK13389.

point of view and weary, disjointed temporality also claim for her singing a particularly material stage presence.[213] The liveness her narrative reenacts is not only the synchronicity of one moment, but also the lingering intervals of a chronically present corporeality.

2. Absent/Present: The Extended Collective

In epistolary narratives, audience reception is both discursively immediate – with the narrative "I" depending in unique ways on the "you" being addressed – and spatially distant – with physical separation a necessary precondition of address by letter.[214] Epistolarity's investment in creating collectivity at a distance makes it a helpful tool for spectators looking to narrativize experiences of co-presence while also widening the reach of a performance's "audience." The actor-managers Marie and Squire Bancroft, for example, include audience letters in their memoir, *Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft On and Off the Stage*, and these epistolary segments both construct the Bancrofts' performances as vital (generating live, shared experiences for their spectators) and invite their present readers into the extended audience community made up by their admirers.

A letter from T.W. Robertson helps accomplish the former goal, as it injects into the Bancrofts' account of their 1870 production of *Ours* a scene of live interaction:

> *Ours* was acted so excellently last night that, as I may not see you for the next few days, I write to express the great gratification it gave me to see that the "light troupe" had distinguished themselves more than ever. You know that I am not given to flattery, and that my standard of taste for comedy is somewhat high. I was really *charmed*, and I was very ill the whole night, in discomfort and annoyance. The remark of every one I heard was, "What wonderfully good acting!" and I was pleased to find Boucicault descanting on it to a chosen few. He said that not only was the general acting of the piece equally admirable, but that he had never — including Paris — seen such refinement and effect combined as in the performance of the second act. He said, too, that the actors who had played in this piece before acted better than ever. I mention this because the same thing struck me. Bancroft was most excellent, and I have never seen him succeed in sinking his

[213] This scene recalls the embodied, partial narrative perspective explored in Act I, Scene 2.
[214] See Altman, *Epistolarity,* especially 118 and 135.

> own identity so much as in the last act. For the first time in my life I felt grateful to the folks on the stage-side of the foot-lights, and I am not given to that sort of gratitude.[215]

Robertson's letter is a narrative of co-presence, both in form (as a discourse generated by the *I-you* relationship of his assertion "You know that I am") and in content (as a representation of the co-presence between the "folks on the stage-side of the foot-lights" and the audience). What begins in a one-on-one reciprocal exchange, through which Robertson "express[es]" to Bancroft his personal responses, soon widens to include a larger audience, as Robertson mimics the formal collectivity of the live audience. The collective processing that originated in the theatre – as "The remark of every one [he] heard" agreed with his own impression, and as Dion Boucicault, "descanting…to a chosen few," said "the same thing [that] struck [Robertson]" – extends into Robertson's epistolary conversation with the Bancrofts. The Bancrofts' inclusion of such letters accordingly links the circulation of epistolary narratives about performance with interactive audience behaviors in the space of performance.

At the same time, Robertson's opening line also captures the spatial separation that necessitates letter writing: "as I may not see you for the next few days, I write." These spaces of absence function not as rifts in which the co-presence of the theatrical event vanishes, but as openings that help generate additional liveness. The Bancrofts include a letter from Wilkie Collins about their 1874 production of *School for Scandal*, for example, that names spatial "distance" as its point of inception:

> I tried to call at Pleydell House yesterday, but the London distances — I was obliged to go first to South Kensington — were too much for me. The get-up of the piece is simply wonderful; I never before saw anything, with the space, so beautiful and so complete: but the splendid costumes and scenery did not live in my memory as Mrs. Bancroft's acting does. I don't know when I have seen anything so fine as her playing of the great scene with Joseph; the truth and beauty of it, the marvellous play of expression in her face, the quiet and beautiful dignity of her repentance, are beyond all praise. I cannot tell *you* or tell *her* how it delighted and affected me. You, too, played admirably. The "key" was,

[215] Bancroft and Bancroft, *Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft On And Off the Stage*, 311.

> perhaps, a little too low; but the conception of the man's character I thought most excellent. I left my seat in a red-hot fever of enthusiasm. I have all sorts of things to say about the acting — which cannot be said here — when we next meet. I heartily congratulate you in the meantime.[216]

The unbridgeability of "London distances" motivates Collins to use his letter as a bridge – as a communication "in the meantime" and in between "meet[ings]." Although the letter marks spatial and temporal limits to communication, it simultaneously attempts to communicate past them. "[T]he splendid costumes and scenery did not live in [Collins's] memory" past the time of performance, and yet he can still say that "[t]he get-up of the piece is simply wonderful." The spatial limitations of a letter leave Collins with "all sorts of things to say about the acting — which cannot be said here," and yet he has filled the letter with descriptions of the acting. The "London distances" that prevent meeting in person thus enable a wider theatrical collective, extended through the circulation of letters.

3. Liveness and the Continuous Event

The epistolary text is never fully closed: although any letter might potentially be the last, every letter also seems to invite a continuation of the exchange.[217] This ambivalent orientation toward closure makes epistolary narrative a particularly expansive medium for representing performance as process. A series of letters from the actress Ellen Terry to her friend Edith Craig, for example, includes a narrative of *Macbeth* that encompasses not just one discrete performance event but an extended cycle of rehearsal, public performance, and audience reception. The relation of events concerning the Lyceum production of *Macbeth* stretches across four of Terry's letters, dating from November 23, 1888 to January 3, 1889; but the time of performance stretches even beyond the scope of these communications. The first letter, dated November 23, 1888, announces *Macbeth* as already in progress: "We are hard at Macbeth and I suppose it will be all

[216] Bancroft and Bancroft, *Mr. & Mrs. Bancroft On and Off the Stage,* 416-17.
[217] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 148.

right in the end — but I don't like myself at all so far — it's so hard to be sincere, from the time when the murder is done, on to the end of the act."[218] Although almost every verb is in the present tense, the letter also extends the performance forward (to what "will be…in the end," and "on to the end of the act") and backward ("from the time when the murder is done," the "so far" with which Terry is unsatisfied). Terry's language, in other words, leans into the unfinished form of the letter. Because it is a piece of a larger, always potentially ongoing communication, a letter is particularly equipped to place its audience in the middle of *Macbeth*.

The temporality of Terry's *Macbeth* becomes even more complicated as spatial distances introduce gaps in reception. In the next letter in the series, dated December 9, Terry acknowledges that she is writing from within a network of circulation that includes occasional lag times: "Your last letter written you sent on Saturday when the Hollanders were writing, only reached me on Friday night," she tells Craig, "although their's came to me on Tuesday morning." This pause in Terry's relation of and Craig's reception of *Macbeth* mirrors and reenacts the diegetic pauses in the long, periodic *Macbeth* she narrates. The cast is hard at work on the performance, Terry writes in the same letter, "every day — every night —." It is not a discrete or a continuous performance, as Terry might have suggested with phrases like "all at once" or "all the time." Instead, it is a process of repetitions and pauses, as Terry emphasizes through the use of "every" (which marks each individual period in a set, or something happening at particular intervals) and the inclusion of long dashes (which both create pauses and bridge gaps). Rebecca Schneider suggests that performance is made of gaps: between "one instance in the theatre and the next" and between "one night before one audience and the next night before another

[218] All of Terry's letters are cited from the collection of handwritten letters collected in the Victoria and Albert Theatre and Performance Archive. Ellen Terry, "Correspondence from Ellen Terry to Edith Craig," Victoria and Albert Collections, http://collections.vam.ac.uk/archive/ARC73663. Emphasis in original.

audience."[219] In its account of performance happening "— every night —," Terry's letter both *represents* this syncopated liveness and *reenacts* it, as Craig might pause her reading in the instants marked by the long m-dashes and as Terry waits for letters "sent on Saturday" that "only reached [her] on Friday night."

Terry's epistolary *Macbeth* seems, in other words, to have neither a clear beginning nor a continuous middle; and the end of the performance is no more definite. In her December 9 letter, Terry seems momentarily to suggest that *Macbeth* will be over after opening night, as she laments Craig's inability to be present for that particular live event: "I wish with all my heart that you were here for Macbeth, but that is quite impossible." Yet in the very next sentence, she erases the end stop. "I'll surely send you the programme and all the papers," she writes, "and of course you'll see it later on." In the conjunction between the post and performance, Terry entertains an implicit connection between the persistence of *Macbeth* (which allows spectators to "see it later on") over multiple performances and the recirculating activity of audience members (who extend the network of participants by "send[ing]…programme[s]" and "papers"). This suggestion is further developed in Terry's letter describing opening night, which she dates January 3, 1889:

> I sent you yesterday a bundle of critiques upon Macbeth — It is a most tremendous success and the last 8 days booking forward has been greater than ever was known, even at the Lyceum…the critics differ, and discuss it hotly, which, in itself, is my best success of all!!! Those who don't like me in it, are those who don't want, and don't like to read it fresh from Shakespeare, and who hold by the fiend reading of the character — the very best thing ever written on the subject I think is an essay I send you by Joe Carr — that is as hotly discussed as 'the new Lady Macbeth,' all the best people agreeing with it — Oh, dear it is an exciting time at the Lyceum I tell you! How I wish you had been there!

Macbeth continues to unfold, not only in the work of the actors but also in that of its audience members: the piece is a success because it is being "book[ed] forward" by future spectators and

[219] Schneider, *Theatre & History*, 68.

circulated through the ongoing "discuss[ions]" of its past spectators. Craig, who will see the piece "later on" is also made part of the present audience network, as Terry loops her into the circulation of the spectator narratives produced in "critiques" and "essay[s]." Terry's letter thus uses epistolarity's ambivalent closures to stretch the boundaries of the performance event – this "exciting time at the Lyceum" – to include repeat performances as well as ongoing reception by spatially and temporally dispersed audience members.

In these theatrical letters, actors and spectators use epistolary narrative's constitutive tensions to construct a collective "liveness" that extends beyond the time and space of staged performance. At the same time, the letter writer's refrain – "I wish you were here" – captures something of the complexity and difficulty of spectatorial copresence. "If performance is always in the present," Rayner points out, "it is not so easy for an audience to be in the present."[220] Turning now to a more sustained case study, I examine how such moments of epistolary liveness – those places where the open-ended spatio-temporality of epistolarity meets a narrative representation of performance events – enable live interruptions of otherwise retrospective texts. The insights generated in readings of Adelaide Kemble (and her embodied, painful temporal presence), the Bancrofts (with their extended and attenuated communities of circulation), and Ellen Terry (in her prolonged time of performance) will continue to permeate my more in-depth analysis of Fanny Burney, Wilkie Collins, and Fanny Kemble's efforts to represent liveness in relationship to gendered, classed, and disabled bodies.

[220] Rayner, *Ghosts*, 2.

SCENE 2: Extended Liveness

As a novelist, would-be playwright, amateur performer, and prolific letter writer, Fanny Burney sits at an intriguing intersection between the novel and the theatre in the late eighteenth century. Scholars have been drawn to her strategic responses to the difficulties of female authorship in general and of female dramatic authorship particularly; and they have tended to seize either on her use of epistolary techniques or on her staging of theatrical scenes as key tactics in her negotiation of her own identity.[221] Here, I put pressure on the places where these two strategies meet. Faced with the difficulties of navigating publicity as a female author, why might Burney have found it to her advantage to put epistolarity and liveness together? In considering the relationship between performance and epistolary narrative as one of co-constitution rather than succession, I resist a tendency to read her career (and the history of the

[221] Critics interested in Burney as a writer of epistolary fiction, for example, have often read them as a feminist manipulation of patriarchal standards of authorship and property. See Julia Epstein, "Fanny Burney's Epistolary Voices," *The Eighteenth Century* 27.2 (1986): 162-79, and *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), who sees Burney's use of epistolary techniques as a way to take retrospective control over her early writings; and Irene Tucker, "Writing Home: *Evelina*, the Epistolary Novel and the Paradox of Property," *ELH* 60.2 (Summer, 1993): 419-439, who contextualizes Burney's choice of a epistolary fiction within historical "contradictions regarding property and identity" (424). For scholars interested in the relationship of her novels to her theatrical ambitions, the chief interest has been Burney's frequent representation of stage fright in both her novels and her autobiographical writing. Emily Hodgson Anderson, *Eighteenth-Century Authorship and the Play of Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2009) refers to these moments as scenes of "staged insensibility," or a strategic unconsciousness that allows heroines to be on display without sacrificing their femininity. See also Emily Allen, *Theatre Figures*, who reads the stage fright in Burney's early journals as presaging what she sees as the anti-theatricality of *Evelina*. The study that most closely aligns with my own interest in a co-constitutive relationship between spectatorship, performance, and narrative is Francesca Saggini, *Backstage in the Novel: Frances Burney and the Theatre Arts*, trans. Laura Kopp (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012). Saggini examines how the late-eighteenth-century "rise of the novel" involved a "transmodal adaptation" of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century plays and undertakes close analyses of *Evelina*, *The Witlings*, and *Cecilia* in order to demonstrate three sorts of "transtextual" connections inscribed in these works: (1) the tragic and comedic plots that novels shared with contemporary dramas; (2) a narrative discourse that acts as a "semiotic score" for scripting stage-like *mises-en-scene*; and (3) a hybrid context of cultural reception, demonstrated particularly by the practice of giving private dramatic readings of novels. While I share Saggini's interest in how novels made use of theatrical spatio-temporality and shared audiences, I choose not to privilege the Barthesian "intersemiotic" nature of the novel, as I argue that Burney's *Early Journals and Letters* deploy similarly sophisticated notions of epistolary liveness.

novel) as becoming inevitably more novelistic and less theatrical over time.[222] Instead of seeing thwarted theatricality as a stopping point on the way to more successful novel writing, I investigate the productive relationship between epistolary narrative and theatrical liveness across the genres of Burney's work. Resisting the pull of teleology, I read out of historical sequence, examining first how the intersection of spectatorship and epistolarity in *Evelina* slows down the forward momentum of the marriage plot and makes space for the titular heroine to exist both within and apart from the public, social world she inhabits. Next I turn to Burney's *Early Journals and Letters*, where I argue that Burney constructs an attenuated and ambivalently collective "liveness" that allows her to animate the amateur and domestic scene of production.

Evelina

No sooner does the young heroine of *Evelina* arrive in London for the first time than she writes a letter telling her guardian, Reverend Villars, that she is going to the theatre. Indeed, Evelina's anticipation of watching David Garrick perform at Drury Lane is perhaps the most urgently live scene in the novel:

> This moment arrived. Just going to Drury Lane Theatre. The celebrated Mr. Garrick performs Ranger. I am quite in ecstasy… We would not let Mrs. Mirvan rest till she consented to go. Her chief objection was to our dress, for we have had no time to *Londonize* ourselves; but we teased her into compliance, and so we are to sit in some obscure place that she may not be seen. As to me, I should be alike unknown in the most conspicuous or most private part of the house. I can write no more now. I have hardly time to breathe – only just this, the houses and streets are not quite so superb as I expected. However, I have seen nothing yet, so I ought not to judge. Well; adieu, my

[222] Rachael Scarborough King, for example, reads epistolary narrative as a form particular engaged with ephemeral forms of print and with the social media of the "world" (claims that chime with my own sense of letter writing as an apt medium for representing theatrical liveness), but argues that novelists "abandoned the letter" toward the end of the eighteenth century, "because it connected them to a heterogeneous media history they now sought to shed," "The Pleasures of the 'World': Rewriting Epistolarity in Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 29.1 (Fall 2016): 67-89; citation 72. I am interested, by contrast, in how and why epistolarity remained a feature of much late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature, and I argue that a desire to draw on theatrical media is precisely what motivated many late epistolary narratives.

> dearest Sir, for the present; I could not forbear writing a few words instantly on my arrival, though I suppose my letter of thanks for your consent is still on the road.[223]

The letter places Evelina's movement at the temporal juncture between past and future: between "arrived" and "[j]ust going." To exist in such a pivotal "moment" is to feel short on time: Mrs. Mirvan cannot "rest," the party has "had no time," and Evelina has "hardly time to breathe" and "can write no more now." To "write more," Burney implies, would be to overflow the bounds of the "now" – to rush past the breathless present in which Evelina is poised. Yet this shortness of breath and time also dilates "the present," as the abundance of Evelina's "ecstasy" allows her paragraph-long effusion to feel "instant[aneous]." In this letter – perhaps more so than any other passage of the novel – event ("Just going to Drury Lane Theatre") and expression ("writing a few words instantly on my arrival") are represented as contemporaneous.

Nor is it an accident that this particularly near approach to the unseizable present is also an arrival at the theatre, as becomes clear in the temporal and spatial dynamics of Evelina's post-performance narrative:

> O, my dear Sir, in what raptures am I returned! Well may Mr. Garrick be so celebrated, so universally admired – I had not any idea of so great a performer. Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes! – I could hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every word seemed to be uttered from the impulse of the moment. His action – at once so graceful and so free! – his voice – so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones! – Such animation! – every look *speaks!* I would have given the world to have had the whole play acted over again. And when he danced – O, how I envied Clarinda! I almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined them. I am afraid you will think me mad, so I won't say any more; yet, I really believe Mr. Garrick would make you mad too if you could see him. I intend to ask Mrs. Mirvan to go to the play every night while we stay in town…I shall write to you every evening all that passes in the day, and that in the same manner as, if I could see, I should tell you.[224]

Evelina left in "ecstasy" and she returns in "raptures," her exclamations continuing the "restless" and "breathless" temporality of her earlier anticipation. Almost no time appears to have passed –

[223] Frances Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.
[224] Burney, *Evelina*, 27-28.

and Burney reiterates this sense of immediacy in Evelina's representation of Garrick's stage presence: "every word seemed to be uttered from the impulse of the moment…every look *speaks!*" The instantaneity of the performance makes Evelina long to get closer spatially as well, not only to the actors onstage (whom she "almost wished to have jumped on the stage and joined") but to the extended audience created by her correspondence (promising Villars that she will "write to [him] every evening all that passes in the day, and that in the same manner as, if [she] could see, [she] should tell [him]"). Burney thus launches Evelina's London season with a key conjunction: the liveness of a play and the liveness of epistolary narratives written in the present, from the scene of action.

This highly epistolary mode of writing, as critics have noticed, becomes less pronounced as the novel proceeds. If, as Altman suggests, epistolary authors choose to emphasize either the "discontinuity inherent in the letter form" or the "creation of a compensatory continuity," Burney appears to swing increasingly toward the latter pole, as Evelina's letters become longer, more narrative, and more oriented toward writing "in continuation" rather than "for the present."[225] These larger delays between event and expression might tempt us to read Burney as abandoning the conjunction of epistolary and theatrical liveness with which she launches Evelina's London career. One might conclude that liveness disappears as Evelina abandons immersion in the public theatre for the forward trajectory of the domestic marriage plot. Yet scenes of spectatorship continue to fill many of the longer letters that Evelina writes later in the novel, and in these passages Burney crafts a different, more complicated liveness. By exploring the tensions

[225] Altman, *Epistolarity*, 169. See also Tucker, who notes that, "While the letters at the opening of the novel are relatively short and 'letter-like,; as the novel progresses and Evelina begins to establish a social world for herself apart from the one that had been defined for her by her guardian, the letters lose much of their letter-like quality, becoming considerably longer than the early examples and taking on many of the characteristics of non-epistolary narrative forms. (Many of these later letters are labeled, confusing if tellingly, 'Evelina in continuation')," "Writing Home," 427.

between a collective audience and an individual spectator, and by warping the epistolary boundaries of the performance event, Burney creates longer and more spatially complex theatrical scenes that stage – both diegetically and formally – her heroine's continual struggle to absorb the social spectacles around her without being absorbed into them.

1. Personal Immersion and "General Diversion"

Evelina's greater volubility in later letters is caused in part by her increasing visibility, which involves her in extended interactions with other spectators. Like the heroines analyzed in Act I of this dissertation, Evelina expresses a desire to "sit in some obscure place that she may not be seen," or else to be "alike unknown in the most conspicuous or most private part of the house."[226] The narrative forces her to abandon anonymity, however, in ways that are particularly gendered and classed. As her clear beauty and uncertain social status attract an audience, Evelina finds herself balancing between two kinds of presence: the absorbing stage presence of performers and the diverting co-presence of her fellow spectators. On her second outing to the opera, for example, Evelina records not only the "action," "music," and "songs" on stage,[227] but also the sights and sounds of the company around her:

> We have been to the opera, and I am still more pleased than I was on Tuesday. I could have thought myself in Paradise, but for the continual talking of the company around me. We sat in the pit, where every body was dressed in so high a style, that if I had been less delighted with the performance, my eyes would have found me sufficient entertainment from looking at the ladies.[228]

While Evelina claims that the strength of her aesthetic delight fixed her eyes and ears fixed on the stage, the conditional tenses are not quite able to separate the performance from the pit. Her sentences conjoin the pleasures of both, opposing them through "ifs" and "buts," while at the

[226] Burney, *Evelina*, 27.
[227] *Ibid.*, 27 and 38.
[228] *Ibid.*, 40.

same time reinforcing the sense that they have a shared relationship to the space of the opera house and the time of performance.

Across the repertoire of performance scenes that follow, the opposing pulls of absorption and distraction seem to suspend Evelina in a thick medium of co-presence. In her narrative of watching *Love for Love*, she represents herself in a double state of attention and distraction due to the close proximity of both the sexually suggestive performance and of her fellow spectator, Lord Orville. She notices the play's "wit and entertainment" and yet she is also so "perpetually out of countenance" that she "kn[o]ws not where even to look."[229] She is charmed by the "exceedingly entertaining" observations of Lord Orville, even though she could not "venture to listen" to them in her embarrassment.[230]

Audience interaction exerts an even more forceful pull as her parties grow more mixed, and in her next account of the opera, which she is forced to attend with Madame Duval and her lower-class cousins, the Branghtons, Evelina has begun to experience the general public as a physical barrier to immersion in her chosen scenes. The extended length of this episode (which she refers to as "a volume") derives from its unparalleled integration of onstage and offstage events.[231] The exchanges among the Branghton family punctuate the entirety of Evelina's account: not only "till the curtain drew up," but also "[a]t the end of the first act," "before the conclusion of the third act," "[d]uring the symphony…in the second act," "[w]hen the curtain dropt," and "[a]s the seats cleared."[232] As in her earlier letter, Evelina presents these audience interactions as distractions that prevent her immersion in aesthetic pleasure: "would they have suffered me to listen," she writes, "I should have forgotten every thing unpleasant, and felt

[229] *Ibid.*, 79-80.
[230] *Ibid.*, 80.
[231] *Ibid.*, 85.
[232] *Ibid.*, 93-95.

nothing but delight in hearing the sweet voice of Signor Millico, the first singer; but they tormented me with continual talking."[233] The embodied language of Evelina's "suffer[ing]" and "torment" signals the degree to which the "entertainment" of looking at fashionable company has turned torturous in the lower-class regions of the upper galleries.

Within this undesirable collective, Evelina is almost physically torn between absorption in the presence of the singers and the satirical pleasure of observing her cousins' uncouth behavior. Burney represents co-presence as a contest between the "torment[ing]" chatter of the audience and the absorbing attraction of the performance:

> This song, which was slow and pathetic, caught all my attention, and I leaned my head forward to avoid hearing their observations, that I might listen without interruption: but, upon turning round, when the song was over, I found that I was the object of general diversion to the whole party; for the Miss Branghtons were tittering, and the two gentlemen making signs and faces at me, implying their contempt of my affectation. This discovery determined me to appear as inattentive as themselves; but I was very much provoked at being thus prevented enjoying the only pleasure, which, in such a party, was within my power.[234]

Evelina pictures herself as the object of a sensational tug-of-war, in which onstage and offstage events compete for the "hearing," "listen[ing]," and "observation" of the audience. Evelina is "caught" and pulled toward the stage by the effectiveness of the music, but the opposing tug exerted by her party of fellow spectators prevents the pleasure of paying uninterrupted attention to the performance. Particularly provoking is the discovery that her own presence has become a spectacle – an "object of general diversion" – to her family. Denied the unseen observation of a semi-omniscient narrator, Evelina resigns herself to being in a collective of characters. Yet here, too, mingling with the general audience is itself an entertaining diversion: "If I had not been too much chagrined to laugh," she acknowledges, "I should have been extremely diverted at their

[233] *Ibid.*, 93.
[234] *Ibid.*, 94.

ignorance of whatever belongs to an opera."[235] Cued by the repetition of "ifs" and "buts" during her report of the last opera ("if I had been less delighted with the performance, my eyes would have found me sufficient entertainment from looking at the ladies"),[236] the reader might reasonably conclude that Evelina has, indeed, been diverted – at least enough to record her cousins' antics with the sharp wit of a canny spectator.

2. The Current of Events

Through the representation of this integral but vexed audience interaction, Burney asks a question of great importance for Evelina's *bildungsroman*: how can her heroine enter the collective scene of society without losing her individual character? As she keeps company with Madame Duval and her cousins, Evelina's personally refined nature risks becoming absorbed by the coarse family spirit, as she is diverted down a different narrative and class trajectory than that promised by her meetings with Lord Orville. While some critics have read Evelina's fairly predictable movement toward genteel family life as a sign of Burney's alliance with the domestic interiors of the middle-class novel over the collective, public energies of the theatre,[237] I see a more complex struggle at play in the epistolary patterns and breaks in Evelina's narratives of spectatorship. Far from quarantining spectacle and performance, Burney seems determined to suffuse it through more narrative space and time than seems, strictly speaking, necessary.

Burney achieves this diffusion of performance, first, by dividing the narration of many performance events across more than one letter. At the end of Letter XIX, in which Evelina relates her impressions of the spectacle of mechanical music at Cox's museum, Madame Duval declines an invitation to accompany the Mirvans to Drury Lane Theatre, where, as we learn, the

[235] *Ibid.*, 90.
[236] *Ibid.*, 40.
[237] Allen, for example, reads *Evelina* as enacting a "theatrophobia" by gradually "displacing and colonizing the visual world of theatrical entertainment through elaborately staged scenes of reading" as Evelina becomes more interior and less public, *Theatre Figures*, 23.

rest of the party is bound that evening.[238] The next letter, which provides Evelina's narrative of the Drury Lane production of *Love for Love*, ends with the announcement that: "To-night we go to the opera, where I expect very great pleasure. We shall have the same party as at the play, for Lord Orville said he should be there, and would look for us."[239] The gaps between letters thus separate performances taking place on the same day and link performances happening on different days, so that the temporal boundaries between events do not match the formal breaks between narrative segments.

These disjunctions enforce a similar tension between absorption and diversion on both the novel reader and on Evelina's absent correspondent, Reverend Villars, whose immersion in her narrative of events is interrupted by the pause between letters. Letter XXII presents a particularly striking example of how these epistolary discontinuities can disrupt the current of the narrative while simultaneously making multiple scenes feel current:

> To-night we go to the Pantheon, which is the last diversion we shall partake of in London; for to-morrow- * * * * * This moment, my dearest Sir, I have received your kind letter. If you thought us too dissipated the first week, I almost fear to know what you will think of us this second;-however, the Pantheon this evening will probably be the last public place which I shall ever see…You are already displeased with Sir Clement: to be sure, then, his behaviour after the opera will not make his peace with you. Indeed the more I reflect upon it, the more angry I am…I greatly fear you will find me, now that I am out of the reach of your assisting prudence, more weak and imperfect than you could have expected. I have not now time to write another word, for I must immediately hasten to dress for the evening.[240]

Villars' letter reorients the various temporalities unfolded in the letter (the opera, the play, the Pantheon "tonight," and the unfinished promise of "tomorrow") toward "this moment" of Evelina's writing. Performances past, present, and future – "first," "second," and "last" – are equally invigorated by the "liveness" of Evelina's response. Yet the timing of reception also

[238] Burney, *Evelina*, 78.
[239] *Ibid.*, 84.
[240] *Ibid.*, 105.

draws out some of these live moments to great lengths. While the Pantheon intrudes as an "immediate" demand that diverts attention and limits narrative ("I have not now time to write another word"), the opera exists in a state of suspension: Evelina has already narrativized it, but Reverend Villars has not yet read her account, and we as the readers are unsure whose temporality we occupy.[241] Indeed, the event seems to be still unfolding, as Evelina continues to "reflect upon it" and accumulate affects connected to it. The persistence of the performance beyond its prescribed temporal limits is made possible by the extended spatio-temporality of her dialogue with Villars. It is only "now that [Evelina is] out of the reach of [Villars's] assisting prudence" that her narratives of performance can travel between their places and times, using the rhythms of that travel to twist together and spin out her narration of the events she witnesses.

In addition to allowing for temporal reorientation and suspension, the extended present/absent network of epistolary spectatorship also allows Burney to make use of narrative ellipses. When, after parting with the Mirvans, Evelina begins writing to them as well as to her guardian, Burney introduces several concurrent lines of correspondence that, significantly, do not overlap or duplicate each other. The first letter Evelina writes from London to Maria Mirvan begins with a refusal to generate such repetition:

> I have no words, my sweet friend, to express the thankfulness I feel for the unbounded kindness which you, your dear mother, and the much-honoured Lady Howard, have shown me; and still less can I find language to tell you with what reluctance I parted from such dear and generous friends…But I will not repeat what I have already written to the kind Mrs. Mirvan; I will remember your admonitions, and confine to my own breast that gratitude with which you have filled it, and teach my pen to dwell upon subjects less painful to my generous correspondent.[242]

[241] As Tucker notes, "The temporal doubleness implicit in the form of the letter is further complicated by the doubleness of the epistolary novel's author/reader structure. As readers of the novel, we can never be certain whether we are reading the letters as they are written, as they are being read by their recipient within the novel, or at some moment entirely independent of either of the two events," "Writing Home," 423.
[242] Burney, *Evelina*, 173.

The letter ends in a similar vein: "I have no news for you, my dear Miss Mirvan; for all that I could venture to say of Madame Duval I have already written to your sweet mother; and as to adventures, I have none to record."[243] The reference to Evelina's letters to Mrs. Mirvan, which are not included in the novel, creates a new lacuna in the narrative structure. Previously, Evelina's promise to Villars to craft a narrative that exhausts experience (including "all that passes in the day") had not encouraged readers to look for events occurring outside of the narrated space created by her letters.[244] Now, we are asked to examine the gaps between and within letters: not only in search of the "already written" but unread events Evelina has chronicled to other correspondents, but also in the inexpressible scenes on which her pen does not dwell (those events and feelings that she "ha[s] no words," or "language" to "express"), and the happenings that Evelina classes as below the threshold of eventness (the quotidian adventures that, as nonentities, Evelina does not "record").[245]

These unrecorded or unread events create a vanishing point that allows Burney to alter readers' temporal perspective of other events. In this same letter, for example, Evelina asks Maria: "do you never retrace in your memory the time we passed here when together? to mine it recurs for ever!"[246] Positioned between the two poles of absence at the letter's beginning and closing ("I have no words" and "I have none to record"), the past "time" that Evelina and Maria passed in London with Lord Orville becomes more present by contrast. The process of "retrac[ing]" past events – which prefigures the cyclical modes of plotting that I will examine in

[243] *Ibid.*, 174.
[244] *Ibid.*, 28.
[245] Altman points out that gaps within and between letters can represent several types of ellipses simultaneously, "each with its own implications: (1) a certain interval during which the correspondent does not write, (2) intervening events that have been omitted from the narrative, (3) the interval during which the internal reader awaits the letter, which differs temporally and psychologically from (4) the interval during which the external reader anticipates the following letter," *Epistolarity,* 182. It is with the introduction of multiple correspondents that Burney begins explicitly marking these possibilities.
[246] Burney, *Evelina*, 173.

Act III – takes on a sort of liveness in relation to present events that are not traced at all. Although Evelina has chosen not to "repeat" the thanks and "news" that she has "already written to the kind Mrs. Mirvan," she does "record," "retrace," and "recur" the time she spent with Lord Orville attending performances and dancing at balls. As the reader too is invited to "retrace" and see anew the line of continuity connecting these events to each other and to the present, their temporal presence appears not to be delimited by the fall of a curtain, but to persist "for ever" in the memory and narratives of their spectators. Though the later letters of *Evelina* are never again as breathlessly alive as they are at the doors of Drury Lane Theatre, echoes of epistolary liveness thus continue to permeate the heroine's representation of her journey, immersing Evelina in private experience and then diverting her into the social world she must enter.

Fanny Burney's *Early Journals and Letters*

As young as fifteen, Fanny Burney had begun to write about her experiences of London literary, musical, and theatrical life in both a personal journal and in letters to her second father figure, Samuel "Daddy" Crisp. If in *Evelina,* it is live at first sight for the heroine and David Garrick, in Burney's autobiographical writing it is the sound of a prima donna that cues one of the most traditionally "to the moment" letters. On June 10, 1775, she writes to Samuel Crisp her impressions of hearing the opera singer Lucrezia Agujari give a private performance in the Burney home:

> At length — we have heard Agujari! — We wished for you! — I cannot tell you how *much* we wished for you! the great singers of former years, whom I have heard you so emphatically speak of seem to have all their Talents revived in this wonderful singer. I could compare her to nothing *I* ever *heard* but only to what I have heard of — Your Carestino — Farinelli — Senesino — alone are worthy to be ranked with the Bastardini. Such a powerful voice! — so astonishing a Compass. In short — whether she most astonished, or most delighted us, I cannot say — but she is really a *sublime* singer. We had not a soul here but our own Family, which was her particular desire. She gave us

> some hopes of coming once more before she quits England — if she does — & if we know it in Time — could you resist coming to Town for one Night? Papa could introduce *You* to her as one who desired to be admitted, because you Health would not permit you to hear her in the Pantheon. Indeed, it would *greatly* answer to you.[247]

As in Evelina's description of Garrick ("Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes!"), Burney's exclamatory, punctuated style ("Such a powerful voice! — so astonishing a Compass") increases the reader's sense of being rushed into a breathless present of "astonish[ment]" and "delight."[248] Here, too, shortness of breath is abundance of matter, as Burney both contracts the span of the present ("[i]n short") and stretches it ("[a]t length"). Cutting a temporal segment and enlarging it, she highlights the motion of the temporal present as it pivots from past (the singers of bygone days whose talents appear again and are "revived" in Agujari's voice) to future (the "hopes" of that once and future voice "coming once more").

The temporal presence of Agujari's voice, like the instantaneous quality of Garrick's acting, creates a longing for greater spatial proximity, as Burney both "wish[es]" for Crisp and suggests that he is already present. The prior circulation of spectator narratives (performances Burney has "*heard of*" from Crisp) has conditioned Burney's reception of Agujari; now, she imagines that this letter – as her own narrative contribution to that circulation – will bring Crisp again into the shared space of Agujari's performance. When she represents her wish to "join" Garrick on stage, Evelina grants precedence to the embodied co-presence within the theatre: Villars will only "think [Evelina] mad" when he reads her letter, but would be "ma[de]…mad too if [he] could see" Garrick in person.[249] Yet in her letter to Crisp, Burney imagines the epistolary co-presence of circulating narratives as having their own power to create shared spectator desires

[247] Frances Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, ed. Lars E. Troide (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 154-55. Italics are used in Troide's printing to mark Burney's emphasis.
[248] Burney, *Evelina*, 27.
[249] *Ibid.*, 28.

and to assemble audiences past and present, near and far. This collective gathering occurs in space (in "Town") and "in Time": it is an Agujari performance live at the Burney household, "for one Night" only.

Of course, these "live" letters are often written at length and after the fact. Like the "volumes" Evelina writes to Villars about her adventures in London, the epistles that Fanny Burney writes to Samuel Crisp can grow to impressive length: "compared to what I write to *you*," she assures him in a letter dated November 13, 1775, "all my other Letters are mere *Notes*."[250] While the "occasional" correspondence she maintains with other friends might seem to allow for a greater degree of "to the moment," live action, the longer performance narratives she writes to Crisp draw on techniques of tension and extension like those in *Evelina* to insist on more complicated experiences of liveness.[251] In these autobiographical narratives, I argue, Burney explores the difficulties of a public collective and attempts to resolve them through the extended liveness possible in domestic performance.

1. Public Violence and "Crowd"-Sourced Reactions

In Burney's autobiographical letters as in her fictional ones, public spaces can initiate overwhelming audience interactions. In the long November 13 letter to Samuel Crisp, she follows her account of the private performance from Agujari with a narrative of the London debut of the soprano Caterina Gabrielli. This account stretches over almost a full week and fills numerous pages, beginning with the cancellation of the singer's first performance on Tuesday:

> So *you* are angry with Gabrielli for making Signor Onofrio Ill? — what would you have been had you gone last Tuesday to the opera House, [XXXXX 1 word] after seeing Didone advertised in all the papers, & then been told there was no Opera? Every one of the Family, but my mother, went. The Crowd was prodigious. They gave us Hand Bills on which were written *There can be no Opera this Evening on account of the Indisposition of the 2 Capital Serious Singers*. People were in horrid passions. Some said

[250] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 163.
[251] *Ibid.*, 163.

> it was scandalous; — others that it was a shame; — others called for the managers; — one gentleman blustered furiously, Vowing he had come 20 miles since Dinner on purpose to hear her.[252]

Like Evelina's submersion in the "the continual talking of the company around [her],"[253] Burney's representation of her fellow spectators places her in the midst of an auditory hubbub: "[t]he Crowd" "call" out and "bluster" in "horrid passions." This Crowd mentality certainly heightens the affects of spectators (Burney suggests that Crisp's "ang[er]" would have been amplified if he had been present with them), but there is even less room for "pleasure" here than in *Evelina.* Despite the attempt to form distinct groups with separating dashes, individual characters tend to dissolve into the collective ire of "[e]very one," "[p]eople," "some," and "others." In fact, it is only those marked by distance ("*you*," Burney's mother, and the "one gentleman" who had "come 20 miles since Dinner") who retain an individual subject position.

This association between the public theatre and collective bluster continues later in the letter during her account of the rescheduled performance on Saturday night, where the presence of fellow spectators becomes violent:

> Now for Saturday. My mother, partly from fear of the Crowd, & partly from indifference to music, would not go. My Father went in the Pit. Mr Burney, Hetty, Sukey, Charles, Charlotte, Bessy Allen & me all sat in the Front Row of the 2nd Gallery. We went before 5 o'clock, & were the first at the Door, else we should have been crushed to Death, for the *mob* reached through the Hall, stairs, & all the pavement of the Haymarket before the Doors opened. There was a prodigious House, such a one as *November* can scarce ever have seen before.[254]

Burney's representation of the "prodigious House" as a "*mob*" that threatens to "crush" the differentiated family party renders the force of the collective more intensely than Evelina's claim

[252] *Ibid.*, 163. Troide uses brackets to indicate words that are indistinguishable in the manuscript copy. He notes the number of words and uses Xs to indicate the presumed number of letters in that word. So, for example, "[XXXXX 1 word]," indicates the presence of indistinguishable word with five letters.
[253] Burney, *Evelina*, 40.
[254] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 167.

that the "company" of the Branghtons induces physical "suffer[ing]" and "torment."[255] This rhetoric of embodied violence continues in Burney's account of Gabrielli's first appearance on stage:

> Nothing could be more Noble than her Entrance. She took a *sweep* from the full length of the stage, amidst peels of Applause, which seemed as if they would shake the foundation of the Theatre. She Walked with great majesty…Though the Applause was so violent, she never deigned to make the slightest acknowledgment, till she had finished her Career, & marched from the furthest extremity of the stage, which was open to the End, quite up to the Orchestra, when, finding the Applause drowned the music, not a Note of which could be heard, she made an *Italian Curtsie*; alias a *Bow*. They continued to Clap, however, & made her make *2 more* Bows whether she would or not before they were silent enough to listen to her Voice.[256]

The "violen[ce]" of the audience's contributions threatens to make performance impossible by "shak[ing] the foundations of the Theatre" and "drown[ing] the music." Seated with the Branghtons, Evelina leans forward to "avoid hearing" her fellow spectators and "listen without interruption" to the action on stage. In Burney's narrative of her own opera gallery, however, the noise created by audience interaction is so pronounced that it controls action not only offstage but onstage, "ma[king]" Gabrielli "make *2 more* Bows whether she would or not before they were silent enough to listen to her Voice." Burney describes her "[e]xpectation" as "kept on the Rack," an embodied torment that seems of a piece with the "violent" passions agitating the theatre.[257] "[O]verborne by the torrent," she figures herself as drowning in the wave of enthusiasm that swells the audience.[258]

Yet even as she struggles not to sink in its undertow, Burney nonetheless represents collective co-presence as integral to performance experience. Like her heroine Evelina, Burney chooses to Crowd-source her interpretations of Gabrielli's performance, as she intercuts onstage

[255] Burney, *Evelina*, 93
[256] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 167.
[257] *Ibid.*, 168.
[258] *Ibid.*, 168.

and offstage action in a way that makes them not only thematically but structurally interdependent:

> And now, I know not what to write. Opinions vary so much, that I would to Heaven you would come & hear & Judge for your self. In the Case of Agujari, I spoke boldly of her talents, because there was but one mind among us; at present, I think I must speak separately of every one's sentiments, & leave you to suppose what you Can. The *first* song was the *only* one of any consequence that she sang, all the rest being mere *bits…Mr. Burney* said he was prodigiously *let down* that she was not within 10 degrees of Agujari. Hetty, because she was not an Agujari, would allow her *Nothing*…Disappointed as we were, there is no possibility, as yet, of knowing whether she *would* not, or *could* not do more, for she was most *impertinantly* easy, visibly took no pains, & never in the least exerted herself. All that can excuse her, is that she had really a bad Cold, Coughed often & was even *hoarse* at Times. She has very *little* voice, though *sweetly* toned, & *polished*. She never gave us one shake, nor a [XXXXX 1 word] *idea* of one, though I have heard she has a very fine one…Nothing could be more flattering than her reception, & she had the most striking applause the whole Night.[259]

Just as Evelina punctuates each stage of the opera with the Branghtons' interpretations, Burney continues to oscillate between a narrative assessment of talent and a record of spectator reception. Opinions of individual spectators (Mr. Burney, Hetty, and – in the full passage – Sukey, Fanny, and her father) or groups of spectators (the collective "we" and "us") interweave almost seamlessly with assessments of the action onstage. Audience interaction helps complete the meaning of the performance. When Burney "know[s] not what to write" or how to narrativize the performance itself, she turns to the "[o]pinions" of the audience. If she cannot "sp[eak] boldly" of the singer's talents, she "speak[s] separately of every one's sentiments."

Burney's narrative of performance at the opera house thus struggles over the problem of the public audience. While she represents collective processing as necessary to making performance meanings, she also worries over the potential for individual spectators to drown in the violent passions of so large a crowd. She links this tension between the individual and the collective specifically with the architecture of the opera house:

[259] *Ibid.*, 168-69.

> She [Gabrielli] is the universal subject of Conversation, & no 2 people think alike of her. In the Gallery, every one seemed to think that she gave herself Airs, & *would* not sing: in the Pit, near my Father, every body was *delighted* with her. So you see you must come & hear her yourself.[260]

Burney gives us an audience that is united (around a "universal subject of Conversation") while divided (with "no 2 people think[ing] alike"). And despite the variations that her earlier catalogue revealed among her family members (who, with the exception of her father, were all in the gallery), Burney ends by grouping together responses shared by "every one" and "every body" according to their location in the room. Public theatrical space seems to collapse individual spectator responses in a pull toward collective passions.

For both Evelina and Burney, the opera house is the setting for vital but fractious audience interactions that make participation in a collective public feel fraught with difficulty. As in her novel, Burney seeks in her letters to make a space for herself to spectate by changing the spatiotemporal dynamics of liveness. As she worries over the problem of the public audience, Burney repeatedly beckons Crisp toward closer presence: "would to Heaven you would come & hear & Judge for your self," she writes. And to conclude: "So you see you must come & hear her yourself." The greater immediacy she desires, as her letters will soon reveal, is made possible in the intimacy of domestic performance.

2. Filling Out and "Trac[ing] Back"

In the second half of the letter to Crisp that describes Gabrielli's performance, Burney approaches the problem of audience community from a new angle: she moves her correspondent closer to "hear[ing]…for [him] self" by bringing him into her home. Inside the smaller confines of the household, Burney suggests that she will be able to provide a more satisfactory performance narrative:

[260] *Ibid.*, 169.

> Upon the whole, there is no knowing what to say. So I will say no more, but change the subject, & *come* to *Yesterday*, to give you an Account of a *little Concert* we had, at which *Assisted* a most superb party of company…We had no performers but Mr Burney & Hetty, but a good deal of Company. I will Introduce them to you as they Entered, & hope to make my peace with You in relation to Indolence, by being as minute as I can.[261]

The combined intimacy of the home and distance from the event allows Burney to be more "minute" – a word that registers the diminutive on both a temporal and spatial scale. In her descriptions of this suitably "*little Concert*" and of its audience, which has now transformed from the "Crowd" of the opera house to a smaller "Company" that can be "Introduce[d]" individually, "as they Entered," Burney can both slow down and extend her descriptions. It is these immediate relations and domestic temporalities – along with the epistolary "change[s]" and continuities that she employs in *Evelina* – that allow her to fashion an expansive, flexible liveness and give her performance writings both relational vitality and individuality.

Though she claims in the passage quoted above to be turning toward home to change the subject, Burney does not actually end her account of Gabrielli's performance but rather carries it into the domestic "minute[ness]" of the next performance narrative (that of the little Concert) by regathering the same audience. Indeed, almost every member of the Company at the Burney home turns out to have been a member of the previous night's Crowd, and as they enter, each is asked his or her opinion of the "universal subject of Conversation," Gabrielli:

> Tat, Tat, Tat, Tat, Tat Two! Enter Lady Edgecumbe...Dr. Burney. Your Ladyship was doubtless at the Opera last Night? Ly Edge. O yes! But I have not *heard* the Gabrielli! that is all I can say, I have not *heard* her! I won't allow that I have….Tat, Tat, Tat, — Enter Mr. Charles Boone. Salutations over, — *Dr. B.* You were at the Opera last Night? *Mr. Boone*. — No, my Cold was too bad. But I am told, by Mr Cooper, an excellent Judge, that he heard enough to pronounce her the greatest singer in the World!... Tat, Tat, Tat Tat. Enter Mr. & Mrs. Brudenal….The Introduction over, the *Question of the Night* was repeated. How do you like Gabrielli? Mrs. Brudenal, O, Lady Edgecumbe & I are exactly of one mind; we both agree that she has not sung yet.[262]

[261] *Ibid.*, 169-70.
[262] *Ibid.*, 171-73.

As the audience "enter[s]" the space of the home, they do not become, like the opera-goers, a "*mob*" of people threatening to "crush" individual bodies and sentiments. Instead, Burney mimics dramatic structures to present each speaker under her own character heading and in her own words. In structure and content, their conversations thus make "the Opera last Night" copresent with the "little Concert" of this night; the present tense "[h]ow do you like Gabrielli?" emphasizes that "lik[ing] Gabrielli" (or not liking her) is a continuous process. At the same time, some spectators also defer the opera into the future, insisting that they are "exactly of one mind…that she has not sung yet." In their conversations, the Company at the Burneys treat the opera not as complete, but as a "repeated," temporally present "*Question of the Night*." And by delaying the moment in which Gabrielli will truly have "sung" and been "*heard*," Burney claims for her domestic audience not only the power to prolong performance but also to "pronounce" on the state of its liveness.

In her most extended entrance scene (that of the financier Anthony Charmier), Burney uses the repetition of spectator practices to present the opera as renewed by its domestic circulation:

> Tat, Tat, Tat, Tat. Enter Mr. Charmier. Mr. Charmier, who is the most gallant of men, immediately seated himself by Sukey & me, & began a most lively & agreeable Conversation. & from this Time, the Company being large, divided into parties, — but I am resolved you shall hear *every body's* opinion of Gabrielli. Mr. Charmier. Well, Ladies, I hope you were Entertained at the opera? I had the happiness of sitting next Dr. Burney. Susy — I believe I saw you. Mr. Charmier. I was very sorry I could not see *you*. I looked for you. Fanny. O, we were at a humble distance! — in the Gallery. Susy. I rather think we were at an *exalted* distance. Mr. Charmier. I hear *where* you were, for though I had not the pleasure of seeing you, I enquired of the Doctor where you were. Was not the Gabrilli charming? Susy. O, y_e_s. Fanny. I never *expected* so much in my life — I was really in an *agitation* — I could not listen to the Overture — I could hardly *Breathe* till I had heard her. Mr. Charmier. Well, & I am sure she did not disappoint you! — Fanny — I must confess my Expectations were too high raised to be answered. Mr Charmier. O, she was not in Voice; — you must regard this as a mere *echantillon*. Hetty. A very feeble & bad one! N.B. between her Teeth. Mr. Charmier. I was kept at the Theatre a full Hour after the last Dance before I could get a Chair, for the Crowd.

> However, we got into a party in the Coffee Room, & settled the *affairs of the opera*. Fanny. Then I am sure there could be no dearth of Conversation, for the opinions of every one concerning Gabrielli are so various — Mr. Cham. — O, I beg your pardon! I find it is the *ton* to be dissatisfied — '*C'est peu de chose*,' was echoed & reechoed *partout*![263]

In the "immedia[cy]" of the home, they relate how they "looked for," "saw," and "hear[d]" each other in the opera house, creating a new proximity out of the former "distance" between them. All three Burney sisters then rehearse the reactions already attributed to them, with Fanny recreating, in microcosm, the expectation ("I never *expected* so much in my life… I must confess my Expectations were too high raised"), violent "shaking" ("I was really in an *agitation*") and "drowning" ("I could hardly *Breathe* till I had heard her") of her earlier narrative. With this repetition of opinions and affects, Burney positions domestic dialogue as an extension and completion of the collective responses audiences share during the performance event. Mr. Charmier's narrative reinforces this extension of the audience: he inhabits the space of the theatre past the close of performance, and joins a smaller "party" of spectators who "echo & reecho" the performance through their ongoing "Conversation." Liveness, according to this process of "echo[ing]," becomes a renewable resource that profits particularly from "minute" refreshing in intimate companies.

By embedding previous performances within her account of an amateur concert, Burney constructs the home as a place where liveness continues to grow. In Lady Edgecumbe's dialogue, for example, we see Agujari's concerts blooming anew:

> *Ly Edge*…But, Dr. Burney, I *have* also heard Agujari — & I shall never hear *Her* again! *Hetty Fanny, Sukey.* O, Agujari! *Dr. B.* Your Ladyship wins all their Hearts by naming Agujari. But I hope you *will* hear her again. *Ly Edge*. Do pray, Dr. Burney, speak about her to Mrs. Yates. Let her know that Agujari *wishes* to sing at the Theatre. *Dr. B.* Their present Engagements with the Gabrielli must be first over; & then, I hope we shall bring Agujari back again. *Ly Edge*. O! then I shall be quite crazy! *Dean of W.* But, Lady Edgcumbe, may not Gabrielli have great powers, & yet not sufficient voice to fill a Theatre? *Ly Edge.* O, Mr Dean, our Theatre is nothing to what she has been used to

[263] *Ibid.*, 173-74.

> abroad. Agujari would *greatly* fill the Theatre — Indeed *she* could fill the Pantheon. By *Gabrielli,* Rauzzini seemed to have a great Voice; — by *Agujari* he appeared a Child.[264]

These spectator conversations construct Agujari's performance as not only past (the guests "*have*…heard" her) but also future (they "*will* hear her again"). Her singing shares space and time with Gabrielli's in the extended period of audience interaction. Efforts to keep their performances separate (by suggesting that "present Engagements with the Gabrielli must be first over" before they can "bring Agujari back again") fail to maintain the boundaries between events, as Lady Edgecumbe draws them together through a transitive relation: "By *Gabrielli,* Rauzzini seemed to have a great Voice; — by *Agujari* he appeared a Child." Instead of abiding within their frames, embedded performances continue to swell to fill both narrative space ("Gabrielli so fills up this Letter," as Burney says in a postscript) and theatrical space ("*Agujari* would *greatly* fill the Theatre — Indeed *she* could fill the Pantheon").[265]

The "swelling" of Burney's accounts with the extended, renewable liveness of the performances she relates takes on an even greater significance when we factor in the role played by her correspondent, Samuel Crisp. Due to Gabrielli's "fill[ing]" of her letter, she breaks off her account of the evening concert and offers the "remnant" of the evening to Crisp at a later date.[266] At this juncture, she inserts a letter of his dated November 19. As Burney rarely includes letters from her correspondents, the inclusion of this letter is striking for its different sense of live temporality. Crisp writes:

> That I wish for the remnant of your Evening Concert, is saying nothing — you have learn'd from that R[ogue] your Father (by so long serving as Amaneunsis, I suppose) to

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[264] *Ibid.*, 171-72.
[265] *Ibid.*, 177.
[266] "I have filled my 3 sheets before my Time," she writes, "but if you wish for the remnant of this evening, you have but to say so. I have not been able to finish this scrawl till to Day, & will not keep it longer," *Ibid.* 177. Burney describes her filling of narrative space ("3 sheets") as out of synch with her completion of narrative "Time" – the narrative has filled out both "before my Time," and thus premature, and unfinished "till to Day," and thus belated. It is this syncopation that creates a "remnant" of the evening, for which her correspondent must wait, joining her in a state of temporal indeterminacy – both before and after the completion of the event.

> make your Descriptions alive — send the remainder therefore without a moments delay, while breathing & Warm. — I am now convinc'd, I had entertain'd a true & clear Idea of Mrs Gabriel' & form'd a just Estimate of the Comparative merits of her & Bastardini; for which I claim nothing of myself, but readily give it all to your faithful Portraits of both; the Pen, as well as the Pencil, sometimes exhibits Pictures with such strong marks of Nature that one instantly pronounces them like, without ever having seen the Originals.[267]

Crisp constructs Burney's accounts of performance as both alive and perishable, with the suggestion that "a moments delay" in their correspondence could be fatal to the liveness of the performance she narrates.

In her November 21 reply, however, Burney claims a longer shelf life for her "Descriptions" and makes her case through the conditions of domestic performance writing. Her opening line pins the temporality of her writing to the present: "Dear Dada, I have this moment received your Letter —& being most conveniently alone, the family being in the City at the Sympsons, I obey your Commands of Writing immediately."[268] Here as in *Evelina* Burney uses the rhythms of epistolary exchange to inject her "remnant" of the concert with liveness. In her "immediate" pivot around "this moment," Burney initially suggests that she will "obey" Crisp and bring the evening to completion "without a moments delay." She also makes explicit the domestic conditions that would allow her to do so: her being alone in the home. Yet these same material circumstances make it possible for her to depart from the "immediate" liveness that Crisp recommends and to embrace the more extended temporality she pursues in *Evelina*:

> I have received your last Letter…I had begun to Write the moment I received your first Letter, but was interrupted, & have had no opportunity since; for at this Cold season, when there is no Writing in a *Fireless* Room, it is by no means easy to find Times for Letter Writing, where 3 or 4 sheets are to be filled.[269]

The household's restricted time and space (or "Times" and "Room") create "interrupt[ions]" and asychronicities in the production and exchange of spectator narratives. By allowing these

[267] *Ibid.*, 178.
[268] *Ibid.*, 179.
[269] *Ibid.*, 180.

interruptions to break along different lines than the more traditional endpoints suggested by dates or events, Burney turns restriction into narrative plenitude, as she allows sheets "to be filled" by performance events that outlive their apparent endings.

When she turns, finally, to the promised "remnant" of the concert, she does so in a "now" that contains both present and past: "So now, back to our first Concert, — I must trace back the circumstances in my memory, to the best of my power. — I left off before the arrival of the Prince. — So now, Enter his Highness, attended by a Russian Nobleman, & followed by General Bawr."[270] Burney's "trace[s] back the circumstances" of the concert in her "memory," just as Evelina "retrace[d] in…memory" her time in London; and just as Evelina's "retracing" makes past diversions "recur" in a temporally indeterminate "for ever," Burney's "tracing back" uses the breaks of interruption and discontinuity to bring past performances back to the repeated "So now," that is at once the time of the event and the syncopated time of her writing.[271] Burney thus claims for her writing a more complex "liveness" than the one allowed to her by Crisp: rather than the fragile span of the "breathing & Warm," Burney's long "now's" draw on the intimacy of the domestic sphere to build in the "interrupt[ions]" of "*fireless* Rooms" and "Cold season[s]."

Using the intimacies and interruptions of domestic life, Burney constructs liveness not only as both present and past but also as both present and absent – with ellipses generated by the correspondence of other family members. Crisp, for example, writes not only to Burney but also to her father and sisters. And Burney, it turns out, shares her fictional heroine's distaste for reproducing "already written," "[in]express[able]," and "[un]record[ed]" events. [272] In a letter to Crisp dated December 2, 1776, for example, Burney creates patchworks of presence and absence that resemble those of her epistolary fiction:

[270] *Ibid.*, 180.
[271] Burney, *Evelina*, 173.
[272] *Ibid.*, 173-74.

> Now, as the Pantheon, — in regard to the *Business* & *Main Chance* of the story, my Father has given you all the particulars, so I say Nothing: — Again, as to the Evening when we all went, Hetty has already made you master of all I could have said as to our Entertainment — however, as, in regard to yesterday Evening, my Father has only given you the *Sum Total* of the performance, I shall enlarge a little upon that subject.[273]

Just as Evelina's use of framing absences ("I have no words" and "I have none to record") creates vanishing points that foreground the presence of narrated events, Burney's construction of negative spaces (places where she "say[s] Nothing") allows her to thrust other performances into greater prominence (places where she "enlarge[s]" on certain "subject[s]").[274] In this case, the subject whose presence Burney enlarges is none other than a private concert by Agujari, whose ability to "fill" rooms Burney reinforces, swelling the opera singer to a size greater than the "*Sum Total*" of her father's account of the performance:

> O how we all wished for our Daddy, when the Divine Agujari said she would sing! — she was all good humour & sweetness — she sung — O Sir! — what words can I use? — Could I write what she deserves, you *would* come to hear her, let what would be the consequence. O Mr Crisp, she would heal all your complains, — her voice would restore you to Health & spirits, — I think it almost greater than ever, — & then, when softened, so sweet, so mellow, so affecting! — she has every thing! — every requisite to accomplish a singer, in every style & manner! — the Sublime & the Beautiful, equally at command! — I tremble not lest she should not answer to you, for she cannot, cannot fail! — she astonishes & she affects at pleasure — O that you could come & hear her![275]

Burney plays on a constitutive tension between absence and presence: the "wish" for co-presence that generates epistolary narratives, designed to draw the correspondent into the community of spectators who "come & hear." Though she laments Crisp's distance, she also suggests that by appropriately narrating the plenitude of Agujari's performance – with its superlative "all" and "every" set against the "Nothing" of the Pantheon – she could make Crisp "hear her" along with the spectators sharing physical space in the Burney home.

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[273] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 210.
[274] Burney, *Evelina*, 173-74.
[275] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 212.

Burney thus draws on the techniques of epistolarity and the intimacies of domestic space to construct a more complex version of theatrical co-presence than Crisp would allow for her narratives. Faced with the potentially turbulent difficulties of female authorship in a public collective, Burney turns her position as an amateur into a tool for preserving theatrical liveness past its expiration date.

SCENE 3: Precarious Liveness

My consideration of epistolarity has so far followed the traditional historical narrative about the epistolary novel, which would locate the form as peaking in the eighteenth century and falling off at the beginning of the nineteenth. In this section, I pursue a revision of this narrative by tracking the continued presence of epistolarity into the Victorian period. Specifically, I examine how epistolary techniques helped two nineteenth-century writers narrativize performance events in Wilkie Collins's *No Name* and Fanny Kemble's *Record of a Girlhood*. While Collins and Kemble ostensibly frame these texts as retrospective narratives whose teleological continuity contrasts with the hiatuses and lacunae of epistolary mosaic, both authors also include segments composed entirely of letters. Analyzing how Collins uses both diegetic letter writing and the extended epistolary segments "between the scenes" of *No Name*, I demonstrate how epistolarity's precarity and complex closural strategies endow Magdalen's performances with a form of disabled liveness. Understanding the mechanics of these sections helps me uncover how Kemble's belatedly composed *Record of a Girlhood* uses letters to represent her decision to go on stage as a live event, fraught with financial and relational precarity.

Wilkie Collins's *No Name*

Having caused a sensation with the epistolarity of *The Woman in White*, Wilkie Collins seems anxious in his next novel to prove he is not a one-hit wonder. In his preface to *No Name*, Collins frames the novel as abandoning the suspense of *The Woman in White* for the pleasures of teleology: "all the main events of the story are purposely foreshadowed before they take place—

my present design being to rouse the reader's interest in following the train of circumstances by which these foreseen events are brought about."[276] The general trajectory of *No Name*'s plot – which involves Magdalen Vanstone's quest to avenge her own and her sister's disinheritance at the hands of her uncle; her moral decline into a life of deception through elaborate performances; and her eventual redemption through illness and romance – does not involve the plot twists or surprise reveals for which Collins is known. It is perhaps for this reason that *No Name* has seemed, in the words of Mark Ford, "the least characteristic of the four great novels published by Wilkie Collins during the 1860s."[277]

Indeed, many of the events represented in *No Name* appear decidedly un-epistolary. Collins's account of the rehearsals and performance for a private theatrical performance of Sheridan's *The Rivals*, for example, stands in contrast to Ellen Terry's episodic unfolding of *Macbeth*. While Terry, narrating from a series of present moments within the production of *Macbeth*, must "suppose it will be all right in the end," Collins's third-person narrator displays the knowledge of future events made possible by retrospection:

> the nominal master and mistress of the house fondly believed that their chief troubles were over. Innocent and fatal delusion! It is one thing in private society to set up the stage and choose the play—it is another thing altogether to find the actors. Hitherto, only the small preliminary annoyances proper to the occasion had shown themselves at Evergreen Lodge. The sound and serious troubles were all to come.[278]

Terry's letters keep time for *Macbeth* like a percussion instrument, with periodic, discrete beats of the present tense. The operation of Collins's narrator, on the other hand, is more like a bow across strings, as he saws back and forth across a chain of continuous events that link the "[h]itherto" and the "all to come." From first rehearsal to the fall of the curtain, Collins creates a performance narrative that is not as much live as it is "foreseen." The narrator continually points

[276] Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, ed. Mark Ford (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), xxvii-xxviii.
[277] Mark Ford, "Introduction," in *No Name*, vii.
[278] Collins, *No Name*, 35.

backward and forward, letting us know when "the event of the evening was still to come," that Magdalen's talent "threatened serious future difficulties," and that the narrator, at least, has already "seen the consequences in their true light."[279]

Yet the form of the novel is not nearly as continuous a "train of circumstances" as Collins's preface suggests. Instead, the author splits the narrative into eight "scenes," each separated by segments "between the scenes," which are narrated through diaries or letters. Why, then, is this theatrical novel also so epistolary? I suggest that, despite his claim to have abandoned suspense, Collins uses *No Name*'s epistolary interludes to stage "live" events, narrated by characters who do not share the more omniscient narrator's foreknowledge of events and which are thus oriented toward an unknown future.

1. Spectators "Take[n] Unawares"

Part of the interest in following *No Name*'s "train of circumstances," according to Collins's prefatory logic, is the felt inertia of Magdalen's descent from innocent mimicry into deceptive disguise. In fact, this progress seems to be one of which Magdalen herself is painfully aware, as she plots the developments that put her increasingly beyond the pale. Many of these definitive moments involve the receiving or rereading of key documents and letters. On the eve of Magdalen's debut on the public stage, for example, Captain Wragge delivers her a letter from Norah and, knowing that hearing from her sister might cause Magdalen to lose hope, asks the would-be actress to make sure of her courage before reading the epistle. "Captain Wragge," she responds, when you met me on the Walls of York I had not gone too far to go back. I have gone too far now."[280]

[279] *Ibid.*, 48, 44, 50.
[280] *Ibid.*, 192.

Yet the pivotal event – the performance from which and to which she cannot "go back" – proves harder to establish than Magdalen's reply would suggest. Indeed, Collins formally disrupts such teleology, in part through the epistolary segments that both connect and disconnect the novel's retrospective "scenes." Composed by narrators who do not know the future, the letters and diary entries that stand "between" continuous narrative segments open up the kinds of gaps and uncertainties that are possible without the authority of an omniscient narrator. Significantly, Magdalen's time on the public stage takes place within the second of these interstitial sections and is given to the reader in the daily "chronicles" of Captain Wragge. Not only are these entries epistolary in form, they also record the exchange of diegetic letters to create moments of insecurity. In the fortnight before Magdalen's first performance, for example, Captain Wragge reports: "all my anxieties center in the fair performer. I have not the least doubt she will do wonders if she is only left to herself on the first night. But if the day's post is mischievous enough to upset her by a letter from her sister, I tremble for the consequences."[281] Wragge's entry ends on this "anxiety" about the future intersection of post and performance, so that the reader does not follow an omniscient narrator smoothly to the foreshadowed conclusion but instead pauses with Wragge in anticipation of unforeseeable consequences. The future orientation of Wragge's performance narrative thus puts the reader in the position of a spectator, for whom watching a live performance always includes the possibility of witnessing missed cues or dropped lines.

Collins heightens this spectatorial uncertainty by emphasizing the temporal and spatial gaps of epistolary narrative. The process begins with the account of Magdalen's first performance, which Collins divides into two entries: one, quoted above, that looks forward to the

[281] *Ibid.*, 194.

debut and a second that narrates its success, so that Wragge's "trembl[ing]" anticipation spans the gap between them. Such waiting periods become increasingly pronounced as Magdalen's willingness to keep performing becomes uncertain. In fact, the future of her stage career ends up hinging on the contents of a letter. She has written to her cousin, Noel, to see if he is more amenable than his uncle to redistributing the family fortune. If he will return her and her sister's portions willingly, Magdalen will have no further need to fund her revenge project and can quit the stage. In a series of dated entries, Captain Wragge waits to see whether Noel's generosity will spell the end of Magdalen's one-woman show:

> 21st.—She has written by to-day's post. A long letter, apparently—for she put two stamps on the envelope. (Private memorandum, addressed to myself. Wait for the answer.)
> 22d, 23d, 24th.—(Private memorandum continued. Wait for the answer.)
> 25th.—The answer has come.[282]

Here, Wragge's chronicle appears particularly epistolary. Dates mark the temporal hiatuses created by the spatial distance between Magdalen and Noel and suspend the reader in a period of "waiting." And the curiously separate "private memorandum, addressed" to the "self" introduces (for the first time) the possibility that Wragge himself addresses portions of his chronicle to an outside interlocutor, thus deepening the *I-you* relationship fundamental to epistolary discourse. The heightened epistolarity of this entry alerts readers to a turning point in the narrative. While in other places Collins may use continuity to lead the reader toward "foreshadowed" events, here he crafts a temporally suspended narrative that emphasizes the epistolary narrator's uncertainty about the future. Wragge is stuck, as he writes in a later entry, in "the time being": a live spectator, "helpless" before the "[un]expected."[283]

[282] *Ibid.*, 204.
[283] *Ibid.*, 204-05.

For Wragge, as for many other characters, this helplessness is also financial. Collins emphasizes his character's economic precarity toward the end of Wragge's chronicle, when Wragge discovers Magdalen has taken with her the costume she wore as Miss Garth: "Three o'clock.—I open these pages again to record a discovery which has taken me entirely by surprise."[284] Collins uses unusual temporal specificity ("Three o'clock") to emphasize the live moment of Wragge's writing. The entry itself is epistolary in form and theatrical in content, as it contains Wragge's musings about the consequences of Magdalen's powers of mimicry:

> What course am I to take under these circumstances? Having got her secret, what am I to do with it? These are awkward considerations; I am rather puzzled how to deal with them…She has a natural gift for assuming characters which I have never seen equaled by a woman; and she has performed in public until she has felt her own power, and trained her talent for disguising herself to the highest pitch. A girl who takes the sharpest people unawares by using such a capacity…is a girl who tries an experiment in deception, new enough and dangerous enough to lead, one way or the other, to very serious results. This is my conviction, founded on a large experience in the art of imposing on my fellow-creatures. I say of my fair relative's enterprise what I never said or thought of it till I introduced myself to the inside of her box. The chances for and against her winning the fight for her lost fortune are now so evenly balanced that I cannot for the life of me see on which side the scale inclines. All I can discern is, that it will, to a dead certainty, turn one way or the other on the day when she passes Noel Vanstone's doors in disguise. Which way do my interests point now? Upon my honor, I don't know.[285]

As Magdalen's performance is "experiment[al]" in nature, its liveness is "new" and "dangerous." Interrogatives litter the passage, which turns apprehensively toward an unknown future. And Wragge's economic rhetoric ("enterprise," "fortune," "interest") gestures toward the financial register of his speculation about Magdalen's success. The uncertainty of his future interests is tied to the unpredictability of the live moment of performance, "on the day when she passes Noel Vanstone's doors in disguise." Thus, in the most epistolary places in the novel, Collins uses the temporal precarity of "to the moment" writing to construct a theatrical liveness that "takes the sharpest people unawares."

[284] *Ibid.*, 206.
[285] *Ibid.*, 207-08.

2. Performance Fever

The immediacy of *No Name*'s epistolary performance narratives derives not only from their orientation toward uncertain futures, but also toward insecure relational networks. Magdalen's acts of mimicry are developed in the presence of family members (amusing her father with an imitation of an opera singer or mimicking her sister's mannerisms while acting in a family theatrical) and they are escalated by the absence of family members and family property. The dispersal of the household unit is also responsible for the epistolary segments that chronicle Magdalen's acts "between the scenes," as others seek to restore Magdalen's presence in the family circle. Collins uses epistolarity's preoccupation with presence/absence to place Magdalen's performances in the precarious collective that produces their feverish liveness.

When Captain Wragge asks Magdalen about how she decided to go on stage, he poses the question relationally: "How came you to think of the theatre at all? I see the sacred fire burning in you; tell me, who lit it?"[286] Magdalen responds with a collective performance narrative ("the story of her first step toward the stage") that emphasizes the family party at Evergreen Lodge and her "[a]udiences of friends."[287] While she begins, according to the narrator, by claiming that this collective belongs to "days that were gone forever," her performance blurs the line between absence and presence:

> She tried hard to control herself; she forced back the sorrow—the innocent, natural, human sorrow for the absent and the dead—pleading hard with her for the tears that she refused. Resolutely, with cold, clinched hands, she tried to begin. As the first familiar words passed her lips, Frank came back to her from the sea, and the face of her dead father looked at her with the smile of happy old times. The voices of her mother and her sister talked gently in the fragrant country stillness, and the garden-walks at Combe-Raven opened once more on her view. With a faint, wailing cry, she dropped into a chair; her head fell forward on the table, and she burst passionately into tears. Captain Wragge was on his feet in a moment. She shuddered as he came near her, and waved him back vehemently with her hand. "Leave me!" she said; "leave me a minute by myself!" The

[286] *Ibid.*, 182.
[287] *Ibid.*, 182.

> compliant Wragge retired to the front room; looked out of the window; and whistled under his breath. "The family spirit again!" he said. "Complicated by hysterics."[288]

In the pivotal moment when "the first familiar words passed her lips," "the absent and the dead" become the present and the live. Magdalen's acting conjures an audience with all the markers of physical co-presence – convening bodies, communal space, and shared "view[s]." The energy created by this performance is a specifically "family spirit," which links bodies present ("cold, clenched hands" and a falling "head") with bodies past/absent (the "face[s]" and "voices" of the dead and the missing). Magdalen's performances, Collins suggests, are fundamentally relational. Yet unlike the wider networks of spatially distributed spectators imagined by Burney in her journals or by the Bancrofts in their memoirs, Collins charges this present/absent collective with vulnerability: "sorrow," "wailing," "faint[ness]," and a loss of "control."

This volatile "family spirit," according to Wragge, is also "accompanied by hysterics": a diagnosis that signals the important role that illness and disability play in Collins's construction of precarious liveness.[289] In the "happy old times," Magdalen's experiences of performance are painless. A late-night symphony that lays up the rest of the family with headaches, for example, leaves Magdalen almost excessively able-bodied:

> "Suffering!" repeated Magdalen, recovering her breath, and the use of her tongue with it. "I don't know the meaning of the word: if there's anything the matter with me, I'm too well. Suffering! I'm ready for another concert to-night, and a ball to-morrow, and a play the day after."[290]

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[288] *Ibid.*, 183.

[289] Scholars of Wilkie Collins's fiction have noted the frequency with which he represents disabled characters. As Kate Flint notes in "Disability and Difference," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, ed. Jenny Bourne Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Collins's fiction "repeatedly foregrounds a number of individuals who are challenged in their relationship to the material world," with a particular interest in the intersection between disability and female sexuality (153). See also Martha Stoddard Holmes, "'Bolder with her Lover in the Dark': Collins and Disabled Women's Sexuality," in *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins*, eds. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003) and *Fictions of Affliction: Physical Disability in Victorian Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

[290] Collins, *No Name*, 10.

Collins constructs Magdalen's youthful innocence, much as Burney constructs Evelina's, by representing her as longing for unceasing liveness, "wish[ing] the opera was every night."[291] The future, here, is not uncertain but filled with "well[ness]" and "read[iness]," "concert[s]" and play[s]." It is at this very breakfast, however, that Magdalen's imitation of a London postman will elicit a very different response from her father, as she delivers the fatal letter from New Orleans that reveals the insecurity of this apparently wholesome family scene. Mr. Vanstone's "face change[s] color the instant he read[s] the first lines; his cheeks fading to a dull, yellow-brown hue, which would have been ashy paleness in a less florid man; and his expression become[s] saddened and overclouded in a moment."[292] This first collision of Magdalen's mimicry and epistolary exchange represents liveness as the transformation from "florid" health to "ashy paleness": much as Adelaide Kemble's exhausting liveness causes her to lapse in correspondence, Mr. Vanstone's color "fad[es]" "the instant he read[s] the first lines," and Magdalen herself will grow "faint" "[a]s the first familiar words pass…her lips."

Epistolarity allows Collins to use this association between liveness and illness to give Magdalen's performances of loss and absence a paradoxical presence and immediacy. On the one hand, Collins uses Magdalen's illness to differentiate her public stage performances from her "better," more "girlish" performances:

> She dashed at it, with a mad defiance of herself—with a raised voice, and a glow like fever in her cheeks. All the artless, girlish charm of the performance in happier and better days was gone. The native dramatic capacity that was in her came, hard and bold, to the surface, stripped of every softening allurement which had once adorned it. She would have saddened and disappointed a man with any delicacy of feeling. She absolutely electrified Captain Wragge.[293]

[291] Burney, *Evelina*, 36.
[292] Collins, *No Name*, 12.
[293] *Ibid.*, 183.

Collins appears to set Magdalen's later acting in opposition to the open, "artless" spontaneity of her appearance in the private theatrical production of *The Rivals*. Yet he also characterizes her "hysterical" acting as, in its own way, "[un]adorned," "stripped" down, and "electrif[ying]": all adjectives that point toward the performance's immediacy.

Indeed, in the novel's most epistolary representations of Magdalen's acting, these "mad," "fever[ish]" performances, disabled by loss, have the power to affect the temporality of narration and reception. In Wragge's account of Magdalen's public debut, for example, Collins uses the uneven rhythm of the Captain's dispatches to signal the collective tug of her theatrical "mad dash[es]." Wragge has earlier explained to Magdalen that it is his "nature" to be "orderly":

> I must have everything down in black and white, or I should go mad! Here is my commercial library: Daybook, Ledger, Book of Districts, Book of Letters, Book of Remarks, and so on. Kindly throw your eye over any one of them. I flatter myself there is no such thing as a blot, or a careless entry in it, from the first page to the last. Look at this room—is there a chair out of place? Not if I know it! Look at me. Am I dusty? am I dirty? am I half shaved? Am I, in brief, a speckless pauper, or am I not? Mind! I take no credit to myself; the nature of the man, my dear girl—the nature of the man![294]

Accordingly, Wragge begins his chronicle by keeping regular time, with an entry for each month. He finds increasingly it difficult to maintain a steady record, however, as Magdalen's own correspondence about her interests makes her continued performance uncertain. As her threat "to leave off at a week's notice" becomes more pronounced, Wragge begins to represent the future as itself unwell, writing that Magdalen's changeability "looks ill for the future; it looks infernally ill for the future."[295] The shared "ill[ness]" of Magdalen's future soon becomes manifest in the uneven tempo of the Captain's entries. They shift from once a month to once a fortnight, back to once a month, then to once every two months (with one subheading for April 31st alone), then to an entry for June that contains separate headings for individual dates and

[294] *Ibid.*, 172.
[295] *Ibid.*, 191 and 195.

even some individual times of day. The entry for June 29th, for example, is three times as long as many month-long entries and contains separate sections for "Three o'clock" and "Five o'clock."[296] Collins uses the disorder of Wragge's chronicle as a sort of irregular heart beat, signaling the reader that Magdalen's unpredictable performances have disabled the Captain's ability to keep time. The Captain has gone "mad," just as Magdalen dashes at her acting "with a mad defiance of herself."

This collective temporal uncertainty becomes particularly clear in the entry detailing Magadalen's first appearance on stage. Collins suspends Wragge's anticipation of this performance across the formal gap between two entries for the first and second fortnights of December. In fact, these are the first entries to break the previously regular, once-a-month pattern. This fresh subdivision of time, which brings readers up to the present faster than expected, heightens the sense that Wragge narrates from a live moment charged with the insecurity of Magdalen's unstable body:

> As good luck would have it, no letter addressed to Miss Vanstone came that day. She was in full possession of herself until she got the first dress on and heard the bell ring for the music. At that critical moment she suddenly broke down…We strung her up in no time to concert pitch; set her eyes in a blaze; and made her out-blush her own rouge. The curtain rose when we had got her at a red heat. She dashed at it exactly as she dashed at it in the back drawing-room at Rosemary Lane…She rushed full gallop through her changes of character, her songs, and her dialogue; making mistakes by the dozen, and never stopping to set them right; carrying the people along with her in a perfect whirlwind, and never waiting for the applause. The whole thing was over twenty minutes sooner than the time we had calculated on. She carried it through to the end, and fainted on the waiting-room sofa a minute after the curtain was down. The music-seller having taken leave of his senses from sheer astonishment, and I having no evening costume to appear in, we sent the doctor to make the necessary apology to the public, who were calling for her till the place rang again. I prompted our medical orator with a neat speech from behind the curtain; and I never heard such applause, from such a comparatively small audience, before in my life.[297]

[296] *Ibid.*, 206 and 208.
[297] *Ibid.*, 194-95.

Wragge's account presents Magdalen as vulnerable both physically (her body can "br[eak] down") and financially (she can lose "possession of herself"). Two forces, he suggests, have the power to disable her: the arrival of a letter and the "critical moment" immediately before a live performance. Losing her self-possession here to the latter cause, Magdalen is discovered in a state of absence and temporal retrogression: "*alone* in the *waiting*-room, sobbing" in grief, and "talking like a *child*" to lost figures from bygone times. Wragge's employment of the collective "[w]e" transforms this solo grief into a live, collective fever: the ambiguous "we" "str[ing] her up *in no time*" to the "blaze" and "blush" of a fever so timely that its "red heat" coincides perfectly with the rise of the curtain. Having arrived at the edge of the present, Magdalen then lunges toward the uncertain future, "rush[ing] full gallop," "never stopping" to correct her unpredictable "mistakes," and "never waiting" for the interactive responses through which the audience might create a different tempo.

Magdalen's acting makes the liveness of future precarity into a shared state that she dominates, as she "carr[ies] the people along with her," so that the performance ends "twenty minutes sooner than the time [they] had calculated on." Unlike the robust, passionate crowds of Burney's opera house, this audience appears to share the threats of dispersal and loss that disable Magdalen's performances. The music seller "take[s] leave of his senses from sheer astonishment" and cannot participate in the end of the performance. The spectators, for whose applause Magdalen made no time during the performance, call for her in her absence, "till the place rang again" with attempts at interactive audience behavior that Magdalen – lost to consciousness – cannot return. The substitution of the "medical orator" for the performer or producer signals the reader that illness has disrupted the reciprocality of the audience collective, as it did the temporality of the live show.

Yet the epistolary mode through which the performance is narrated allows Collins to represent this disordering of collectivity as a paradoxical intensification its immediacy. Although reciprocity is crucial in epistolary discourse, it is also subject to disruption: letters can be lost, cross each other in the mail, or be stolen. Indeed, many of the letters in *No Name*'s epistolary sections have such vexed "I-you" relations. A warning letter to Noel Vanstone is intercepted by Captain Wragge, who also forges a letter to Mrs. Lecount faking her brother's death. A letter from Noel Vanstone to Admiral Bartram concerning the details of his will is hidden by the Admiral and then uncovered and read by a disguised Magdalen. Relationships between interlocutors thus become both vital to the "progress of the story" and vulnerable to disruption. The narratives contained in each letter appear more intimate and urgent precisely because they could be lost, stolen, left unread, or read by different interlocutors than the ones the writer imagined. If performance and its narratives are fundamentally relational, the vitality of the collective is made visible partly through the threat of its disruption and disappearance. Situating Wragge and Magdalen at the precipice of this unknown future, Collins endows his ostensibly un-sensation novel with scenes of epistolary liveness and spectacular uncertainty.

Fanny Kemble's *Record of a Girlhood*

Among the many actors and stage-managers whose lives interested the Victorian public, Fanny Kemble is notable for the extent to which she took the representation of her career into her own hands.[298] Her decision to write *Record of a Girlhood* at the age of 70 (published from 1878 to 1879), has received particular critical attention as an exercise in retrospective

[298] As Alison Booth notes, "Few women's lives have been so public, so published, before the rise of a twentieth-century style of stardom," "From Miranda to Prospero: The Works of Fanny Kemble," *Victorian Studies* 38.2 (1995): 227-54, citation 227.

reconstruction.[299] Kemble's prefatory remarks situate her narrating self in "the garrulous time of life…the remembering days," in which she has leisure to look back on "years of labour often severe and sad enough"[300]

Kemble makes a display of this retrospective position in many places thoughout the memoir that follows, often using it to provide closure at a point where the young, narrated Kemble could not. During her account of her early childhood, for example, Kemble narrates her visits from the actor Charles Young:

> one of his great diversions was to make me fold my little fat arms…and with a portentous frown, which puckered up my mouth even more than my eyebrows, receive from him certain awfully unintelligible passages from Macbeth; replying to them, with a lisp that must have greatly heightened the tragic effect of this terrible dialogue, "My handth are of oo tolour" (My hands are of your colour).[301]

Rather than continuing to move chronologically through her own "early intercourse," Kemble next follows the thread of her interactions with Charles Young, using shared words and images to create, like Collins, a "train of circumstances" leading to foreshadowed ends. Thus, after her juvenile reading of *Macbeth*, she moves to an anecdote from her professional career:

> Years— how many!—after this first lesson in declamation, dear Charles Young was acting Macbeth for the last time in London, and I was his "wicked wife"; and while I stood at the side scenes, painting my hands and, arms with the vile red stuff that

[299] In her biography of the actress, *Fanny Kemble: A Performed Life*, Deidre David writes of *Record of a Girlhood* that, "Anyone who writes about Fanny Kemble must acknowledge that what *she* wrote about *herself* was, for the most part, written a long time after the events described…The memoirs are based almost entirely on a notably voluminous correspondence conducted over a period of fifty years between Kemble and her dearest friend, an Anglo-Irish woman named Harriet St. Leger; when Leger was close to death (in 1878), she returned to Kemble all the letters she had received from her. After editing and assembling the letters for her memoirs, Kemble destroyed them all…their seductive vitality has led some of Kemble's biographers to ground their interpretations of her life in an unexamined acceptance of the memoirs as though they were the 'facts' of the story. For me, however, the complex textual nature of the letters has provided compelling evidence of the 'fact' that Kemble wanted to perform her life in her memoirs as she had aimed to perform it in actuality. She edited the letters, arranged them so that they formed a dramatic narrative, and interpolated commentary that is both about the events described in the letters and about her own feelings at the time she is, in actuality, editing them," xv. My reading of Kemble's hybrid epistolary techniques focuses on how the letter form allows her to "perform" earlier experiences "live," as David suggests she does, with an impression of immediacy (that which is happening "in actuality") not possible in a purely retrospective narrative.

[300] Frances Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1878), 1-2.

[301] *Ibid*., 16-17.

> confirmed the bloody-minded woman's words, he said to me with a smile, "Ah ha! My handth are of oo tolour."[302]

As Collins bows backward and forward to link the "[h]itherto" with the "all to come," Kemble moves from her "first lesson" to Charles Young's "last time" acting Macbeth.[303] Exercising the benefits of retrospection, she gives a synopsis of Young's entire career, right up until their last interaction:[304]

> The last time I saw him in his drawing-room, he made me sit on a little stool by his sofa—it was not long after my father, his lifelong friend and contemporary's death—and he kept stroking my hair, and saying to me, "You look so like a child—a good child." I saw him but once more after this.[305]

While Kemble's narrated self remains more or less in "child[hood]" throughout the span of these memories ("made" to "sit on a little stool" here, as she is "ma[de] to "fold [her] little fat arms" in the nursery), her narrating self displays the foresight of Collins's omniscient narrator – using retrospective techniques like foreshadowing to signal her knowledge of coming events.

Yet if the temporality of the text as a whole is that of memory, letters are Kemble's *aide de memoire*. She draws on letters to reconstruct earlier events and occasionally reprints them in their entirety. Most strikingly, when she explains how she decided to become a professional actress, she lets letters do almost all of the talking. Facing the cultural stigma that threatened women in the theatre, Kemble was famously equivocal about her career in much of her autobiographical writing, taking care to present herself as someone who acted out of duty rather than pleasure.[306] Reading Kemble's epistolary representation of her professional debut in conversation with the precarious liveness Collins constructs for Magdalen's acting, I reveal how

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[302] *Ibid.,* vol. 1, 17.
[303] Collins, *No Name*, 35.
[304] *Ibid*., 28.
[305] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 18-19.
[306] Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*, has detailed the Victorian anxiety about actresses, who posed a threat to ideals of middle-class femininity and endangered the bourgeois binary between public and private space. Many actresses responded to this pressure in their autobiographical writing, often by emphasizing the conventionality of their home lives. See also David, *Fanny Kemble*, xi-xix and Russell, "Tragedy, Gender, Performance."

Kemble uses epistolarity to highlight the uncertainty and precarity that forced her on the stage and to claim a particularly nervous, spirited immediacy for her performances.

1. An Actress in "Considerable Anxiety"

While Kemble fills her *Record of a Girlhood* with stories of her early talent for performance, she also attempts to construct a girlish turning point at which her pleasure in the pursuit definitively vanished – long before she reached the sexual maturity that would have complicated any delight in physical display. Employing the retrospective authority that helps Collins bolster his teleological narrative of Magdalen's fall and redemption, Kemble points to a schoolgirl performance of *Andromaque* as a "point of no return" for her theatrical innocence. The natural talent that she displayed on this occasion – like Magdalen's "electrifying," "unadorned" performance – "electrified the audience, my companions, and, still more, myself."[307] Yet while she invites us to read this "general electrification" of the theatrical collective as a foreshadowing of her future theatrical success, Kemble is careful to delimit the still greater electrification of "[her]self" to that evening:

> Mrs. Rowden thought it wise and well to say to me, as she bade me good night, "Ah, my dear, I don't think your parents need ever anticipate your going on the stage; you would make but a poor actress." And she was right enough. I did make but a poor actress, certainly, though that was not for want of natural talent for the purpose, but for want of cultivating it with due care and industry. At the time she made that comment upon my acting I felt very well convinced, and have since had good reason to know, that my school-mistress thought my performance a threat…of decided dramatic power, as I believe it was. With this performance of "Andromaque," however, all such taste, if it ever existed, evaporated, and though a few years afterward the stage became my profession, it was the very reverse of my inclination. I adopted the career of an actress with as strong a dislike to it as was compatible with my exercising it at all.[308]

While Mrs. Rowden fails to read perfectly the ends immanent in Kemble's performance "[a]t the time," Kemble herself can leverage the retrospective authority of the narrator who has "since had

[307] Collins, *No Name*, 183, and Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 113.
[308] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 113-14.

good reason to know." From her position "afterward," she pronounces that the "purpose" signaled by her "natural talent" for acting has been fulfilled, while her "taste" for it has "evaporated." These carefully constructed, "reverse" trajectories allow Kemble to claim the "promise" of "decided dramatic skill," while keeping her distance from the "threat" made against those who enjoy the "career of an actress."

Yet Kemble curiously abandons her retrospective authority when it comes time to discuss the period "a few years afterward" when "the stage became [her] profession," choosing instead to narrate the progression of these events through the letters of a younger self who could not know the future. In her letters chronicling the fortunes of a juvenile play, for example, the younger Kemble exists in a state of suspended uncertainty. "I should like to tell you something about my play," she writes to her friend, "but unluckily have nothing to tell":

> everything about it is as undecided as when last I wrote to you. It is in the hands of the copyist of Covent Garden, but what its ultimate fate is to be I know not. If it is decided that it is to be brought out on the stage before publication, that will not take place at present, because this is a very unfavourable time of year. If I can send it to Ireland, tell me how I can get it conveyed to you, and I will endeavour to do so. I should like you to read it, but oh, how I should like to go and see it acted with you![309]

Collins uses epistolarity to evoke the live spectator's nervous anticipation of gaffes, and Kemble's precariously "undecided" epistolary time creates a liveness similarly charged with the possibility of the "unfavourable." Wragge cannot foresee "consequences" for Magdalen's debut, and Kemble does not know her play's "ultimate fate."[310] The conditional tense of her performance desires highlights the gap between the retrospective Kemble who has "since had good reason to know" and the epistolary Kemble who "know[s] not."

This uncertainty, shared by the epistolary narrator and the live spectator, can be prolonged and intensified by the gaps and hiatuses of an epistolary performance narrative. In *No*

[309] *Ibid*., 193.
[310] Collins, *No Name*, 194.

Name's chronicle of Magdalen's career, Collins builds in waiting periods to disrupt the continuity of the novel's "foreseen" events. Kemble, too, includes letters that make explicit the lags and delays in her correspondence. The letters discussing her play, for example, begin with apologies for and explanations of her belatedness:

> I do not think you would have been surprised at my delay in answering your last, when I told you that on arriving here I found that all my goods and chattels had been (according to my own desire) only removed hither, and that their arrangement and bestowal still remained to be effected by myself; and when I tell you that I have settled all these matters, and moreover finished my play, I think you will excuse my not having answered you sooner.[311]

In her representation of Charles Young, Kemble moved the reader quickly from "first" meeting to "last," connecting each vignette smoothly through repeated lines and shared scenes. By contrast, this epistolary story of the progress of her play encounters unforeseen "circumstances" and "delay[s]." The arranging of the play itself postpones the resolution of the performance narrative Kemble writes about it. As readers wait for the next news – as when Captain Wragge "[w]ait[s] for the answer" – they experience the train of "circumstances" from the liveness of the epistolary moment (in which they "have latterly arisen") rather than from the "leisure" of greater hindsight (many "[y]ears— how many!" later).[312]

In fact, the most remarkable delay of narrative resolution in these epistolary segments occurs not around the question of whether her dramatic composition will be staged, but in the possibility that Kemble might go on stage herself. Though later readers of the memoir would of course have known the outcome of that uncertainty in advance, Kemble cultivates suspense about how and when the decision will occur by using her original letters instead of retrospective narration. This earlier correspondence leaves details in doubt by drawing the question out over

[311] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, vol. 1, 189.
[312] Collins, *No Name*, 204, and Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 17.

several letters. She first introduces the idea as an aside, inserted before it has time or space to be fully explained:

> The theatre is, I believe, doing very well just now, and we go pretty often to the play, which I like…They are in sad want of a woman at both the theatres. I've half a mind to give Covent Garden one. Don't be surprised. I have something to say to you on this subject, but have not room for it in this letter.[313]

Though she cautions her friend not to be "surprised," the cultivation of suspense seems one of the intended effects of narrating these developments through the younger Kemble's letters rather than in the more omniscient voice of the wider memoir. Just as Collins uses epistolary waiting periods to approximate the live spectator's "helpless[ness]" before the "[un]expected," Kemble lengthens the period during which the start of her stage career feels insecure, as readers wait for her to follow up almost twenty pages later:[314]

> I confess I am disappointed, as far as I can be with a letter of yours, at finding you had not yet received my parcel, for my vanity has been in considerable anxiety respecting your judgment on my production…Dearest H——, in my last letter want of time and room prevented my enlarging on my hint about the stage, but as far as my own determination goes at present, I think it is the course that I shall most likely pursue.[315]

The "disappoint[ment]" and "anxiety" caused by the epistolary performance narrative's delayed moment of "recep[tion]" highlights the insecurity of liveness, in which there is only "time and room" for what and who is present. By thus choosing a narrator who only knows how the story "goes at present," Kemble heightens the immediacy of this turning point in her narrative.

This uncertainty about the future direction of her narrative "course" allows Kemble to construct herself rather as a spectator to her father's struggling career than as the principle actor in her own. The epistolary sections of Kemble's narrative put emphasis on the spectator and reader's moment of reception, so that Kemble appears to be not so much actively pursuing a train

[313] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, vol. 1, 201.
[314] Collins, *No Name*, 204-05.
[315] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, vol. 1, 219-20.

of circumstances toward her debut but rather waiting, like Wragge, for the receipt of letters and the outcome of performances beyond her control. This spectatorial posture lends a particular sense of urgency to her speculation about her financial future:

> I do not think I am fit to marry, to make an obedient wife or affectionate mother; my imagination is paramount with me, and would disqualify me, I think, for the everyday, matter-of-fact cares and duties of the mistress of a household…Now, if I do not marry, what is to become of me in the event of anything happening to my father? His property is almost all gone; I doubt if we shall ever *receive* one pound from it.[316]

As she watches her father's failing fortunes at Covent Garden, Kemble presents herself as once again anxious about the timing of reception. And here, the uncertainty she experiences while waiting for the progress of live "event[s]" is specifically gendered. Kemble's speculation about the "cares and duties of the mistress of a household," expresses a feminine precarity more akin to Magdalen's than Wragge's. Where the Captain wonders how to exploit Magdalen's performances, Kemble worries about how to survive without her father's. The letter form, which aids Kemble's efforts to position herself as one waiting to receive rather than resolving to act, also heightens the reader's sense of her uncertain, unresolved position.

At the same, the representation of her youthful preference for a life of independent "imagination" over "everyday" feminine duties leads some of these epistolary passages to pull against the memoir's wider narrative. As with her earlier account of *Andromaque*, Kemble turns to her retrospective voice, which tries to contain the immediacy of her letters by limiting their representational reach to the specific time and space in which they are written and read:

> My own former fancy about going on the stage, and passionate desire for a lonely, independent life in which it had originated, had died away with the sort of moral and mental effervescence which had subsided during my year's residence in Edinburgh. Although all my sympathy with the anxieties of my parents tended to make the theatre an object of painful interest to me…the idea of making the stage my profession had entirely passed from my mind, which was absorbed with the wish and endeavour to produce a good dramatic composition. The turn I had exhibited for acting at school appeared to

[316] *Ibid.*, 220-21, emphasis mine.

> have evaporated, and Covent Garden itself never occurred to me as a great institution for purposes of art or enlightened public recreation, but only as my father's disastrous property, to which his life was being sacrificed; and every thought connected with it gradually became more and more distasteful to me.[317]

The "passion" with which her younger self longed for "independence," Kemble suggests, was spatially and temporally specific. By constructing her earlier epistolary expression as "effervescen[t]," Kemble claims that its liveness is one that that "subsid[es]" and "die[s] away," as its only life is in the present.[318] Yet this same passage also demonstrates that Kemble's epistolary performances have actually changed elements of the larger memoir frame. Her earlier claim that, "all [her] taste" for acting, "if it ever existed, evaporated" after the performance of *Andromaque* has by now become the more cautious observation that the "turn [she] had exhibited for acting at school *appeared* to have evaporated."[319] The choice of "appeared" makes explicit the role of narrative representation in constructing the presence and absence of Kemble's pleasure in performance. While the retrospective narrator may seek to present this pleasure as finished, the epistolary narratives open up spaces of surprise, immediacy, and precarity that fight against this closure.

2. "Seiz[ures]" by the Spirit of Performance

In Kemble's claim that Covent Garden "never occurred to [her]" but as her "father's disastrous property, to which his life was being sacrificed," we recognize the insecure family networks similar to those that Collins uses to create additional immediacy for the live performance narratives of *No Name*. Indeed, Kemble's letters about her plays and performance ambitions are often interspersed with references to her own and her family's illnesses. She describes her mother as "recovering" from an "illness" "by the aid of a blister and [Fanny's]

[317] *Ibid.*, 275-76.
[318] Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146.
[319] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 113-14.

play," though "still…in a state of great suffering," and in the next sentence writes that the family has been "going to the play pretty regularly twice a week for the last three weeks, and shall continue to do so during the whole winter; which is a plan [she] much approve[s] of."[320] In a later letter, she reinforces this connection between the unpredictable "suffering" of "illness" and the pleasure of playgoing:

> I am at present not very well. I do not mean that I have any specific illness, but head-aches and side-aches, so that I am one moment in a state of feverish excitement and the next nervous and low-spirited; this is not a good account, but a true one… The theatre is, I believe, doing very well just now, and we go pretty often to the play, which I like.[321]

It is in this very letter that Kemble first drops her hint about going on stage, so that her "nervous" and "feverish" states become connected to both her playgoing and her acting. Illness, while it threatens the collectivity of family relations, seems to heighten the experience of participating in the collective audiences at the theatre.

Like Magdalen's "story of her first step toward the stage," Kemble's narrative of how she finally became a professional actress centers on her family life.[322] After the "effervescence" of her earlier thoughts about going on stage, Kemble takes a long hiatus from the subject, which might initially create the impression that her performances have indeed "died away," as Magdalen believes hers to belong to "days that [a]re gone forever."[323] Yet when the idea reappears, at the start of volume two of the memoir, it does so with a sort of "family spirit," which, like Magdalen's, blurs presence and absence into a collective charged with vulnerability:

> My life was rather sad at this time: my brother's failure at college was a source of disappointment and distress to my parents; and I, who admired him extremely, and believed in him implicitly, was grieved at his miscarriage and his absence from England; while the darkening prospects of the theatre threw a gloom over us all. My hitherto

[320] *Ibid*., 193.
[321] *Ibid*., 200-01. Fanny Kemble struggled throughout her life with what she refers to as the "Blue Devils" and what might now be considered clinical depression.
[322] Collins, *No Name*, 182.
[323] *Ibid*., 182.

> frequent interchange of letters with my dear friend H – S – , had become interrupted and almost suspended by the prolonged and dangerous illness of her brother; and I was thrown almost entirely upon myself, and was finding my life monotonously dreary, when events occurred that changed its whole tenor almost suddenly, and determined my future career with less of deliberation than would probably have satisfied either my parents or myself under less stringent circumstances.[324]

The "absence" of family members, the "gloom" of unknown future "prospects," and the "illness" of friends combine to create difficulties for epistolary presence: "interrupt[tion]," "suspen[sion]," and "prolonged" states of time that disrupt interpersonal relations and "throw" Kemble "almost entirely upon [her]self."

Yet these absences in fact make possible unusually live "events" that occur "almost suddenly" with an immediacy not possible "under less stringent circumstances." The uncertainty and loss threatening her family – constructed through absence and sickness – become the forces that propel Kemble into a precarious present:

> It was in the autumn of 1829, my father being then absent on a professional tour in Ireland, that my mother, coming in from walking one day, threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. She had been evidently much depressed for some time past, and I was alarmed at her distress, of which I begged her to tell me the cause. 'Oh, it has come at last,' she answered; 'our property is to be sold. I have seen that fine building all covered with placards and bills of sale; the theatre must be closed, and I know not how many hundred poor people will be turned adrift without employment!'…Seized with a sort of terror, like the Lady of Shallott, that 'the curse had come upon me,' I comforted my mother with expressions of pity and affection, and, as soon as I left her, wrote a most urgent entreaty to my father that he would allow me to act for myself, and seek employment as a governess, so as to relieve him at once at least of the burden of my maintenance. I brought this letter to my mother, and begged her permission to send it, to which she consented; but, as I afterwards learnt, she wrote by the same post to my father, requesting him not to give a positive answer to my letter until his return to town.[325]

A heightened threat of dissolution (the possibility that "property" will be "sold," "closed," and "people" "turned adrift") generates collective communications – both Kemble's embodied "expressions of pity and affection" to her mother and both women's epistolary expressions to the

[324] Frances Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 2, 5.
[325] *Ibid*., 5-6.

absent father. In the unanswered letter that closes the passage, Kemble, like Collins, creates the intensity of co-presence through the possibility of more permanent absences, marked here by "depression," "tears," and being "seized with…terror," just as Magdalen's performances generate "sorrow," "wailing," "faint[ness]," and loss of "control."[326]

Kemble's "seiz[ures]," moreover, operate like Magdalen's "hysterics": a disability that gives her performances a precarious liveness. Her first performance in front of her family, for example, triggers a return of the terror and tears elicited by her conversation with her mother:

> Meantime my father returned to town and my letter remained unanswered, and I was wondering in my mind what reply I should receive to my urgent entreaty, when one morning my mother told me she wished me to recite Juliet to my father; and so in the evening I stood up before them both, and with indescribable trepidation repeated my first lesson in tragedy. They neither of them said anything beyond, "Very well,—very nice, my dear," with many kisses and caresses, from which I escaped to sit down on the stairs half-way between the drawing-room and my bed-room, and get rid of the repressed nervous fear I had struggled with while reciting, in floods of tears.[327]

Here we see a collision of performance and letter writing like the pivotal scene at the Vanstone breakfast table. In the case of Kemble's memoir, a performance of Juliet serves as the "reply" to Kemble's "unanswered" letter and gains "urgen[cy]" in the process. If Collins's liveness is a moment when health "fad[es]" to vulnerable "faint[ness]," Kemble's is a period of "trepidation" and "repressed nervous fear."[328] This is not, in fact, Kemble's "first lesson in tragedy," as we have already seen her learn to declaim from *Macbeth* and act in a scholastic production of *Andromaque*. Yet Kemble's illness – her "state of feverish excitement" in "one moment" and her "nervous…low-spirited" tears in "the next" – increases the sense of an immediate, temporally specific performance.[329] When, in her first reading on stage, she is "seized with the spirit of the

[326] Collins, *No Name*, 183.
[327] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 2, 6-7.
[328] Collins, *No Name*, 12 and 183.
[329] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 200-01.

thing," this seizure, too, leads Kemble to "act…Juliet as [she] do[es] not believe [she] ever acted it again."[330]

If the urgency of an unanswered letter helps give Kemble's performances as Juliet a live, "nervous" quality, it is in this sense a microcosm of *Record of a Girlhood*, which consistently uses letters to connect performance and disability. The pattern begins with Kemble's irregular build toward her artistic debut. With an elongated and arrhythmic pace reminiscent of the uneven dispatches from Captain Wragge, Kemble draws out the narrative of her interest in the stage over 105 pages and two volumes, during which time she switches back and forth between epistolary and retrospective narration seven times. These transitions between narrative modes all occur when Kemble discusses her thoughts about becoming an actress (a topic that is almost always represented through letters), with the one notable exception: a letter that serves as "record" of when she "fell ill of the measles."[331] By using letters to represent both her sicknesses and her uncertain steps toward the stage, Kemble suggests that disability and performance have a similar relationship to the live presence highlighted by epistolary narrative.

Read in light of this configuration of epistolarity, performance, and disability, the letter in which Kemble announces her official debut betrays a more complicated, embodied investment in performance than Kemble's professed disinterest in her career would suggest. In her retrospective voice, Kemble reflects that:

> My frame of mind under the preparations that were going forward for my debut appears to me now curious enough. Though I had found out that I could act, and had acted with a sort of frenzy of passion and entire self-forgetfulness the first time I ever uttered the wonderful conception I had undertaken to represent, my going on the stage was absolutely an act of duty and conformity to the will of my parents, strengthened by my own conviction that I was bound to help them by every means in my power.[332]

[330] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 2, 7-8.
[331] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 214.
[332] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 2, 13.

From her relatively omniscient position "now," Kemble claims "absolutely" to be guided by the kind of familial "restraints" she earlier feared: she is "bound" to "conform" to the pressures threatening her family unit. Yet she also evokes the "frenzy of passion and entire self-forgetfulness" that makes her earlier "repressed nerv[es]" and "seiz[ures]" so immediately present. This disabled performance present complicates the "absolute[ness]" of the retrospective, as becomes clear when she turns, just a page later, to a "letter written *at this time*."[333] She claims this letter "shows how comparatively small a part [her] approaching ordeal engrossed of [her] thoughts," since the passage discussing her debut takes up little space relative to discussions of family illnesses.[334] As Kemble has worked to connect illness and performance through the "anxiety" of a precarious liveness, however, the letter also represents a collective temporal uncertainty like the one convened by Magdalen's professional coming out. In the first part of the letter, Kemble establishes a synchronicity between her correspondent's "terrible anxiety" for her "brother's serious illness" and her parents' "bodily suffering and mental anxiety" after having been "very unwell."[335] This mutual "anxiety," like the "we" collected by Magdalen's disordered performances, translates the liveness of future precarity into a shared state.

It is within this collective illness that the reader encounters the account of her upcoming Juliet, which, framed by reciprocal anxiety about the future, seems more urgent than Kemble's frame would allow. After a report on the family, Kemble announces:

> My dear H —, I am going on the stage: the nearest period talked of for my debut is the first of October, at the opening of the theatre; the furthest, November; but I almost think I should prefer the nearest, for it is a very serious trial to look forward to, and I wish it were over…I do not enter more fully upon this, because I know how few things can be of interest to you in your present state of feeling, but I wished you not to find the first notice of my entrance on the stage of life in a newspaper.[336]

[333] *Ibid*., 14, emphasis mine.
[334] *Ibid*., 14.
[335] *Ibid*., 16.
[336] *Ibid*., 16.

The anxiety of liveness – a "present state of feeling" "look[ing] forward" to an uncertain future – refers now both to the precarity of serious illness and the "serious trial" of "entrance of the stage of life." And just as Magdalen, in the "red heat" of her feverish performance, "rush[es] full gallop," toward an earlier-than-anticipated curtain call, Kemble's nerves lead her to reach toward the "nearest" future, "wish[ing] it were over."[337] The desire to narrativize her debut through a letter (rather than through the third-person report of the newspaper) marks this stage fright into a temporality that, like the anxiety of illness, is relational. The immediacy and reciprocity of epistolary narrative thus represent a Kemble more "engrossed" in the live anticipation of "[her] approaching ordeal" than her framing material would suggest.

As this last letter demonstrates, Kemble's correspondent plays a key role in her construction of liveness; and it is perhaps the loss of her correspondent's letters that renders Kemble's own letters so precariously present. If Collins uses asymmetrical relationships and stolen letters to both disorder collectivity and render it more palpable, Kemble's account of reluctantly destroying her friend's letters disrupts the balance of reciprocity to similar purpose. She chooses to introduce the subject, significantly, with a letter:

> MY DEAREST H——, I have been thinking what you have been thinking of my long silence, about which, however, perhaps you have not been thinking at all. What you say in one of your last about my destroying your letters troubles me a good deal, dearest H ... I really cannot bear to think of it; why, those letters are one of my very few precious possessions. When I am unhappy (as I sometimes am), I read them over, and I feel strengthened and comforted.[338]

The epistle opens with a relationship already unbalanced: Kemble's silence has made their correspondence lopsided and disrupted its reciprocal "thinking" and feeling. The destruction of Harriet St. Leger's letters threatens to make this collective epistolary narrative even more one-

[337] Collins, *No Name*, 195.
[338] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 1, 224.

sided. Kemble highlights this asymmetry by representing Leger's letters as durable ("possessions" that stand up to frequent "read[ing]…over"), while her own letters are disposable: "As for my own scrawls, I do not desire that you should keep them. I write, as I speak, on the impulse of the moment, and I should be sorry that the incoherent and often contradictory thoughts that I pour forth daily should be preserved against me by anybody."[339] In this seemingly self-deprecating construction of her letters' spontaneity, Kemble actually stakes a claim for their affinity to a live performance (written "as [she] speak[s], on the impulse of the moment"). When Kemble does finally consent to destroy Leger's solid letters, she also renders her own ephemeral "scrawls" more present, so that they can be "preserved" in the memoir without losing their relationship to the "daily" and the "moment[ary]."

This last maneuver reveals one of the great advantages of epistolary liveness to Kemble's self-presentation: by constructing the performances and performance narratives of her youth as embodied and vulnerable, she charges them with vitality even while seeming to deny their seriousness:

> This is the reason why, with an unusual gift and many unusual advantages for it, I did really so little; why my performances were always uneven in themselves and perfectly unequal with each other, never complete as a whole, however striking in occasional parts, and never at the same level two nights together; depending for their effect upon the state of my nerves and spirits, instead of being the result of deliberate thought and consideration,—study, in short, carefully and conscientiously applied to my work; the permanent element which preserves the artist, however inevitably he must feel the influence of moods of mind and body, from ever being at their mercy.[340]

Epistolarity allows Kemble to disavow the deliberate career of an actress while still claiming for her performances a "striking" liveness produced by insecurity and disability – "uneven," "occasional," and "at the…mercy" of "nerves" and seizure by "spirits." Constructing a narrative that is not "complete as a whole" but rather "in occasional parts…never at the same level two

[339] *Ibid*., 224.
[340] Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood,* vol. 2, 14.

nights together," Kemble uses the patchwork qualities of epistolary mosaic to claim a feminine power produced by vulnerability rather than control.

For the writers analyzed here, the particular relationship of performance to presence was not a limit value but a representational opportunity. Their narratives reveal not a doomed approximation of co-presence but a canny construction of it – a strategic use of epistolary tools that renders liveness visible. While Philip Auslander might call this "a historically variable effect of mediatization," I call it a historically specific quality of narrative mediation.[341] Rebecca Schneider describes the work of performance theory as an articulation of "the ways in which performance…begins again and again" – as something repeated "in the ears of a confidante, an audience member, a witness."[342] Such confidential repetitions – rendered in narrative, circulated and recirculated through networks of print – are revealed in the letters that I've read, not as records of past liveness but as a way to begin the shared reception of performance again and elsewhere.

Furthermore, while discursive texts may sometimes figure as conceptual opposites to the embodied presence of performance, these epistolary narratives lean into rather than away from the contingencies of bodily difference. Weary disjointedness, hysterics, seizures, and the particular financial and relational vulnerability of women who perform in public in the face of the marriage plot: these are the qualities of liveness that emerge from engaging with the specific narrative strategies of epistolary theatre writing. Paying attention to epistolary modes of audience participation may thus also offer a way to complicate the largely patriarchal scene of many theatre histories and to privilege alternative strands of performance practice. A feminist theatre

[341] Philip Auslander, "Digital Liveness: A Historico-Philosophical Perspective," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34.3 (2012): 3-11.
[342] Schneider, "Performance Remains," 106.

history, in other words, may turn out to be a tale told, “between the scenes,” in the “progress of the story through the post.”

3. ACT III: SERIAL PLOTTING

Introduction: Serial Shakespeare

In nineteenth-century Britain, theatregoers had a sense that they were witnessing history. The end of the patent monopolies in 1843 helped usher in decades of rapid shifts in theatrical practice. As performances of Shakespeare and the "spoken drama" became officially available to the minor and provincial theatres, new playhouses proliferated, performance bills became increasingly mixed, and innovations in technologies for lighting, scenery, and stage effects encouraged new acting and dramaturgical styles.[343] These changes felt historic: not only because modes of cultural production like the theatre were swept up in the period's burgeoning sense of historicism, but also because many theatre practitioners and theatregoers were embracing performance itself as a mode of sharpening historical consciousness.[344] Coming home from the theatre after such encounters with the past, how did these nineteenth-century spectators tell the

[343] The patent monopoly, begun in 1660 and confirmed by the Licensing Act of 1737, restricted performances of spoken English drama to the Theatres Royal (Drury Lane and Covent Garden), so that minor theatres could only stage drama with music. While practices had already begun to shift before the official dissolution of the monopoly, the 1843 act still serves as a turning point in theatre histories. As Stuart Sillars writes in *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, while "[a]t the beginning of Victoria's reign, theatres and the performance styles they encouraged had changed little since the middle of the preceding century…[t]he six decades between the 1843 Act and the end of Victoria's reign saw radical changes in every aspect of Shakespearean performance," 52.

[344] Sillars argues in *Shakespeare, Time, and the Victorians: A Pictorial Exploration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) that Victorian spectators experienced a growing "awareness of the workings of time," through the "pursuit of authenticity" in historical staging and through "the actuality of the plays as temporal progresses," 3. Both Sillars and Richard Schoch, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, explore the particular affordances of thinking history through Shakespeare performance.

story of performance history? What shape did they give to the past, present, and future of the English drama, and where did they situate Shakespeare, its chief protagonist?[345]

Reception histories of the period often choose to answer these questions through the contours of an inheritance plot, especially when describing the progress of Shakespearean performance. Drawing concepts from what Deleuze and Guattari might call a system of "arborescence," reception histories of Shakespeare frequently posit a genealogical root structure, wherein a dominant interpretation is handed down from leading actor to leading actor.[346] And as Kathryn Prince notes, many studies of Shakespeare reception give this genealogical narrative an evolutionary bent, developing a story of gradual progress that "recall[s] the Victorian figure of Charles Darwin."[347] A recurring cast of (largely white, male) characters "inherits" theatrical materials and performance styles from their predecessors,[348] and the dominant interpretation of a

[345] Shakespeare scholars generally agree that Shakespeare's rise to the status of national Bard began in the long eighteenth century, in part through shifts in the practice of rewriting his plays to suit current theatrical tastes. By the nineteenth century, he was both a monumental figure and an everyday cultural touchstone. For studies of Shakespeare's rise to national status, see Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship 1660-1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Peter Sabor and Paul Yachnin, eds., *Shakespeare and the Eighteenth Century* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008); and Michael Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1990). For analyses of Shakespeare's place in nineteenth century literary and popular culture, see Gail Marshall's summary of existing scholarship in her introduction to *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Marshall highlights contributions to both Victorian Shakespeare – as in Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Arden/Thompson Learning, 2004); and Gail Marshall and Adrian Poole, eds., *Victorian Shakespeare*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) – and to studies of Shakespeare's increasingly global present – as in Richard Foulkes, *Performing Shakespeare in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney and John M. Mercer, eds., *The Globalization of Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003). See also Sillars, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* and *Shakespeare, Time, and the Victorians*, which postdate Marshall's collection and which draw special attention to the intersection between Shakespeare reception and visual culture.

[346] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). My understanding of "inheritance plots" as structuring change through heredity, kingship, and binary reproduction often harmonizes with Deleuzian arborescence, insofar as I see efforts to trace genealogical lineages (tracing vertically) or to establish likeness based on kinship (tracing horizontally) as instances of inheritance plotting.

[347] Kathryn Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

[348] Schoch suggests that Henry Irving "inherited" from Charles Kean his repertoire, his taste for history, and his leading lady, Ellen Terry, *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage*, 3-4. Russell Jackson includes both these theatrical heirs in his own narrative of the "interrupted succession of prominent managements," from "the classical dignity of John Philip Kemble's stagecraft; Charles Kemble's scenic and costume innovations in the 1820s; and Macready's achievements at Covent Garden and Drury Lane in 1837-9 and 1841-3 respectively. Subsequent managements were

play undergoes a process of incremental change as performances adapt to their historical surroundings and incorporate new theatrical technologies.[349] This plot has proven a popular structure for narrating Victorian theatre history in part because it rhymes with the critical consensus that Victorians themselves saw the changing scenes around them as a story of evolutionary progress.[350] That critical histories of the period often reproduce the same cast of characters to fill out the "great tradition" of a particular Shakespearean role – as in John A. Mills's *Hamlet on Stage: The Great Tradition* – seems to accord with the Victorians' own sense that Shakespeare performance was evolving as it underwent improvements or degenerations at the hands of the greater or lesser sons in a recognizable theatrical family: "Richard Burbage, Thomas Betterton, David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, Edmund Kean, William Charles Macready, Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Johnston Forbes-Robertson – one calls the role with little fear of contradiction."[351]

Yet inheritance was only one of many theories of temporality and change in the nineteenth century, as is evidenced by the period's narrative experiments with plot. In his study of narrative design, Peter Brooks suggests that the "emergence of narrative plot as a dominant mode of ordering and explanation" in the nineteenth century arises from "the loss of providential

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considered (or claimed) to be Macready's inheritors: Samuel Phelps's at Sadler's Wells from 1844 to 1962; Charles Kean's at the Princess's from 1850 go 1859; Irving's at the Lyceum from 1878 to 1899; and Tree's at the Haymarket from 1887 go 1897 and Her (later His) Majesty's Theatre from 1897 to 1915," "Shakespeare in London," in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gail Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 154.

[349] Many theorists of adaptation studies themselves take up an explicitly Darwinian language of inheritance and evolution. Linda Hutcheon and Julie Sanders, in their influential studies of adaptation, both invoke the Darwinian "biological process by which something is fitted to a given environment" as a useful analogue for literary adaptation. Citation from Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 31. See also Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 12.

[350] Nineteenth-century actors and spectators are characterized in theatre histories as being particularly aware of a "heritage" of "points" (or embodied behaviors whose critical success led to their induction into a tradition by which future actors would be judged) and by what Sillars calls "the notion of progress, the inference always that current means of presentation excel over earlier ones, that Shakespeare would have used nineteenth-century technology had it been available," *Shakespeare, Time, and the Victorians*, 24.

[351] John A. Mills, *Hamlet on Stage: The Great Tradition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), xiii-xiv.

plots," which "may explain the nineteenth century's obsession with questions of origin, evolution, progress, genealogy."[352] Indeed, the picture is even more complex than that. Waning providential and eschatological narratives competed not only with Darwinian theories of evolution and genealogy,[353] but also with geological concepts of "deep time,"[354] philosophical and literary theories of accelerated, metamorphic "modern time,"[355] attempts to consolidate a simultaneous "national time,"[356] and – particularly relevant for the purposes of this chapter – a sort of "serial time" encouraged by the practice of publishing daily, weekly, or monthly installments of longer narratives. Serialization, as Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund note, was not new to the nineteenth century, and so its rise to prominence during that period suggests that the dynamics of serial reading resonate in some particular way with nineteenth-century experiences of time as simultaneously expanding, contracting, and undergoing historical transitions.[357]

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[352] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Invention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 6-7.

[353] This is not to mention that Darwinian theories themselves were very much in flux in the nineteenth century. In the latter half of the century – after Darwin's first publications but before the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics – the mechanics of heredity became crucial, controversial, and imaginatively fluid. Melissa Jeanne Anderson notes that "The developments in biology and medicine in the period 1858-1890 generated a great deal of discussion, controversy, and debate among both scientific and lay audiences, which later included writers of various degrees of literary distinction. During these years, very few scientific "facts" of heredity were determined beyond doubt, and therefore the imaginative possibilities of heredity were greater than they were in, say, the mid-twentieth century." Anderson, "Pathological Relations: Heredity, Sexual Selection, and Family in the Victorian Novel" (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2012), 4. For studies of heredity and genealogy in Victorian fiction (and especially in the novels analyzed here), see Goldie Morgentaler, *Dickens and Heredity: When Like Begets Like* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), which explores heredity and individuals in *Great Expectations* and *Bleak House*, and Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), which analyzes descent, development, and race in *Daniel Deronda*.

[354] Prominent conceptions of "deep time" appeared in Thomas Hutton, *Theory of the Earth* (Edinburgh, Printed for Messrs Cadell, junior, and Davies, London; and W. Creech, 1795) and Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology; or The Modern Changes of the Earth and its Inhabitants as Illustrative of Geology* (London: 1830).

[355] As in Charles Baudelaire's 1863 essay "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964).

[356] In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), Benedict Anderson claims that the creation of simultaneity aided the growth of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and associates the development with the rise of the realist novel.

[357] Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 4. Seriality has been a hot topic lately for scholars of the nineteenth century. At the 2018 Interdisciplinary Nineteenth

In this chapter, I examine the intersection of plot as a narrative technique and seriality as a narrative medium, in order to uncover two structural alternatives to inheritance-centered Shakespeare histories: contagion plotting and ghost plotting. Functioning as what Brooks calls "motor devices" for propelling narrative; "devices of interconnectedness" for linking characters; and "structural repetitions that allow [readers] to construct a whole," contagion and ghosting allow authors to sequence and situate performance along different paths than those offered by likeness, filiation, and heredity.[358] Equally crucial to my analysis are the possibilities that each mode of plotting offers to readers. What sorts of readerly practices do models of contagion and ghosting provide? I study scenes of fictional plotting – or scenes where the figures of contagion or ghosting allow readers to "seize the active work of structuring revealed or dramatized in the text" – in four serial novels in order to reveal how contagion allows for transversal and miasmic change in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, while ghosting creates recursive loops and sedimented layers in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* and Dickens's *Great Expectations*.[359]

At the same time, I analyze the narrative structures of a group of spectator narratives that partake, in various ways, in the dynamics of serial plotting: collections of Shakespeare essays and reviews by Theodore Martin, Henry Morley, George Henry Lewes, and Clement Scott. These theatrical texts, which contemporary readers could have encountered both as individual

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Century Studies conference on Seriality, for example, panels approached seriality as a lens not only for novel reader but also for understanding topics as various as Victorian poetry, visual culture, scientific discovery, criminology, and the history of sports.

[358] Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, xiii-xiv and 5. As Brooks notes, the conceptual territory covered by "plot" is vast (and sometimes contentious). My understanding of narrative plots – developed through engagement with Brooks and narratologists like Karin Kukkonen – is that they are formed by the interaction between story (the order of events as they happened chronologically) and discourse (the order of events as they are presented in the text): plot is how an author structures the relationship between story and discourse, as well as how a reader interprets that relationship. See also Karin Kukkonen, "Plot," in *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University) http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/plot.

[359] Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 34-35.

entries written on discrete dates (as serial installments) and as a cohesive narrative (as a single-volume anthology), offer particularly interesting sites to examine how seriality interacts with performance plotting. Scholars of Shakespeare reception often analyze theatre reviews or critical essays in the synchronic context of a particular production (i.e., gathering all the reactions to Edmund Kean's Othello) or in the diachronic progress of a specific play (i.e., tracing changing views of *Hamlet* over time). In contrast, I am interested in the experience of readers who followed the narratives of a particular *spectator* over time. What textual and material cues would such readers use to follow a narrative arc of theatre history across individual installments? While critics have often read serial publication as promoting narratives of suspense and linear progress,[360] I analyze scenes of performance to foreground two non-linear aspects of serial narrative – its imbrication in networks of other texts and its accumulation of repetitions over time – that move narrative transversally (through contagion) or cyclically (through ghosting) rather than horizontally or vertically. By reading spectator narratives and serial novels together, I ask not only how more traditionally serial texts like *Daniel Deronda* and *Great Expectations* can draw out the seriality of nineteenth-century theatre writing; but also how the more traditionally theatrical narratives of texts by George Henry Lewes and Clement Scott can highlight the role of performance in crafting non-linear plots in Victorian novels.

My interest in decentering linear plots in studies of both seriality and performance history advances a wider, historiographical goal, which is to diversify the repertoire of narrative

[360] Paul Rooney, "Readers and the Steamship Press: *Home News for India, China, and the Colonies* and the Serialization of Arthur Griffiths's *Fast and Loose*, 1883–84," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47.1 (2014): 31–49, argues that the "success of a serial narrative is predicated chiefly on its capacity to secure a commitment from its audience that they will return repeatedly to the medium…Suspense-laden installment conclusions are the characteristic means of achieving this loyalty," 42. For further analysis of the serial novel's relationship to suspense, see Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial*, 7, Sean O'Sullivan, "Broken on Purpose: Poetry, Serial Narrative Television, and the Season," *Storyworlds* 2 (2010): 59–77, and Erica Haugtvedt, "The Sympathy of Suspense: Gaskell and Braddon's Slow and Fast Sensation Fiction in Family Magazines," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 49.1 (2016): 149-170.

structures and motor devices that scholars can use to plot the course of Shakespeare performance over time and space. While following a tradition through its progressive evolutions tends to center a consistent set of objects, thinking with contagion and ghosting highlights the importance of intertexts and traces that might end up on the margins of inheritance-based theatre histories. While Mills shapes his "tradition" of Hamlet by excluding the "exotic but peripheral figures" of women Hamlets, for example, contagion plotting makes proximity a key motor device, so that the juxtaposition of particular "peripheries" becomes more meaningful.[361] Ghost plotting, on the other hand, makes use of persistence and disappearance, which does not so much make marginal figures more central as it does imbue their vanishing acts with a new significance. Across both plots, I ask how the specific dynamics of periodical and serial reading re-situate Shakespeare and draw new connections among plays, people, places, and practices.[362]

[361] Mills, *Hamlet on Stage*, xiii-xiv.
[362] As Prince notes, periodicals are regular sources for theatre historians of the nineteenth century, but have been less frequently mined by scholars of Shakespeare. See Prince, *Shakespeare in the Victorian Periodicals*, 108.

SCENE 1: Contagion

"Mere Contagion" and "Corrupted Blood" in *Daniel Deronda* and *Bleak House*

In neither *Daniel Deronda* nor *Bleak House* does the course of inheritance run smooth. Gwendolen Harleth's character development is bookended by inheritances that fail to materialize (from her bankrupt parents to her morally bankrupt husband, Mallinger Grandcourt) and punctuated by a dilemma about disinheriting others (Grandcourt's children by his mistress Lydia Glasher), while Daniel Deronda and Mordecai Cohen's search for unknown parents, missing siblings, and mysterious heirs drives much of the action in *Daniel Deronda*'s so-called "Jewish plot." *Bleak House* likewise puts inheritance at the heart of the dramatic action: both inheritances indefinitely postponed – as in the eternally adjudicated *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*, whose tortuous meanderings through the Chancery system ruin Richard Carstone – and inheritances too visibly accomplished – as in the illicit familial link between Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson, the discovery or denial of which eventually involves almost every character in the novel. These breakdowns in heredity, I argue, open up spaces of suspension and dispersion, where forces of contagion threaten to redirect the narrative: toward the possibility of accidental, person-to-person contact between Daniel and Mordecai, or toward the miasmic, anti-hierarchical force of fever in Tom-all-Alone's.[363]

[363] As a concept, "contagion" has traveled across a variety of fields of study, including new historicism, ecocriticism, cognitive ecology, and studies of digital networks. My understanding of contagion as a plot device derives both from Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, and from studies of the nineteenth century's changing models of disease and epidemic, which included both a theory of infectious "miasmas" located in particular environments and the beginnings of a germ theory for understanding the spread of disease through person-to-person contact. Debates over competing theories – prompted by epidemics of cholera, typhus, and typhoid in the first half of the nineteenth century – often included discussions about "sickness" as a trait of women or the lower classes, especially in the controversy surrounding the Contagious Diseases Act of 1860. For work on fictional representations of epidemic, see Graham Benton, "'And Dying thus Around Us Every Day': Pathology, Ontology and the Discourse of the Diseased Body. A Study of Illness and Contagion in *Bleak House*," *Dickens Quarterly* 11.2 (1994): 69-80; Allan Conrad Christensen, *Nineteenth-Century Narratives of Contagion: "Our Feverish Contact"*

Analyzing scenes where Eliot and Dickens bring contagion plotting to the discursive surface of the text, I also draw attention to places where diegetic plot interacts with material form. An examination of the serial structure of these novels highlights what Mark W. Turner calls the temporal "dynamics of periodicity" (or, a socially shared experience of time created by the rhythms of the periodical press), [364] as well as the spatial, intertextual networks that contagion serials construct.[365] Building on analyses of lateral or tessellated reading articulated by Linda Hughes and Katie Lanning, I read the interruptions, suspensions, and redirections in Eliot and Dickens's narratives as forces of contagion, which propel transversal movements on the level of both plot and form.[366] Contagion, in other words, is not only a device for representing the forces changing performance over time, but also a way of thinking about the intertextual and environmental affordances of serial performance narrative.[367]

Before analyzing contagion plotting, though, it may be necessary to provide some explanation for including these two novels in a category of serial *performance* narratives. While

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(London and New York: Routledge, 2005); Emily Waples, "Self-Health: The Politics of Care in American Literature, 1793-1873" (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016); and Pamela K. Gilbert, *The Citizen's Body: Desire, Health, and the Social in Victorian England* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2007) and *Cholera and Nation: Doctoring the Social Body in Victorian England* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

[364] Mark W. Turner, "'Telling of my weekly doings': The Material Culture of the Victorian Novel," in *A Concise Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Francis O'Gorman (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 122.

[365] Anna Gibson and Nathan Hensley assess the usefulness of discussing serial narrative in terms of "network" in "*Our Mutual Friend* and Network Form," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 48.1 (2015): 63-84 and "Network: Andrew Lang and the Distributed Agencies of Literary Production," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 48.3 (2015): 359-82, respectively. While my own use of the term is not as specifically engaged in network theory or the Victorian science of networks as are Gibson and Hensley's, I share the latter's interest in thinking about the inter-generic assemblages enabled by Victorian periodical culture and the former's sense that the serial form allowed authors like Dickens "to perform a net-work that put the elements of a social system in motion," ""*Our Mutual Friend* and Network Form," 72; and I add a particular emphasis to the word "perform."

[366] Linda K. Hughes tracks the possibilities for lateral, intertextual reading across the discursive web of Victorian print culture in "*SIDEWAYS!*: Navigating the Material(ity) of Print Culture," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 1 (2014): 1-30, while Katie Lanning analyzes the possibilities for tessellated reading in the serial publication of *The Moonstone* in "Tessellating Texts: Reading *The Moonstone* in *All the Year Round*," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45.1 (2012): 1-22.

[367] I follow Daniel Hack, *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005) in reading nineteenth-century fiction as deliberately engaging with the materiality of the form rather than attempting to obscure it. Exploring how serial novels cue the reader's awareness of these less linear possibilities thus brings out the less apparent appeals to seriality in spectator narratives.

Acts I and II analyzed the representational strategies at work in individual scenes of spectatorship and performance, Act III explores wider narrative structures for representing histories of performance; and it is as performance histories that *Bleak House* and *Daniel Deronda* interest me. Both novels, in their efforts to structure plots in which key characteristics, ideas, and materials are passed on, imagine transmission as happening in part through performance – through gestures, movements, and spectatorial visions. Critics have remarked the insistence with which *Bleak House*, for example, meditates on the materiality of textual reproduction.[368] Key to the novel's plot is a crucial scene of doubling, in which the opium addict Captain Hawdon (known to many characters as Nemo) copies law briefs above a London rag-and-bottle shop. While there has been a tendency in some work on theatre and the novel to treat scenes of print reproduction as in competition with scenes of embodied performance (as the novel staging its own scene of victory over the theatre),[369] other readings alert us to the need to approach the scene of writing as itself corporeal.[370]

Indeed, I would argue that Dickens invites the latter reading. The scene above Krook's shop, in which Hawdon copies legal documents ostensibly destined for the textual "archive" – mythologically constructed, in Diana Taylor's sense of the word, as that which endures unchanged and unmediated in documents, CDs, bones, videos and maps – in fact prompts acts of recovery that have much in common with Taylor's idea of the performance "repertoire": "ephemeral" enactments of embodied memory through performances, gestures, orality,

[368] See especially Daniel Hack, "Reading Matter in *Bleak House* and the 'Bleak House Advertiser,'" in *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005) and Emily Steinlight, "'Anti-Bleak House': Advertising and the Victorian Novel," *Narrative* 14.2 (May 2006): 132-62.
[369] Joseph Litvak makes the argument that scenes of writing and private reading are opposed to scenes of performance in *Caught in the Act*.
[370] See, for example, Hack, *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel*, which reads linguistic, physical, and corporeal materialities together; Juliet John, *Dickens's Villains*, which traces the influence of melodramatic stage characters on Dickens' villains like Lady Dedlock; and Malcolm Andrews, *Charles Dickens and His Performing Selves: Dickens and the Public Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), which analyzes the blend of acting and reading Dickens created for public performances of his novels.

movement, dance, singing.[371] The key feature of interest in Nemo's acts of doubling will be his "hand": an imprint left on the production that links it to a particular body and the idiosyncrasies of its gestures in performance.[372] It is not the content of Nemo's text that powers the plot, in other words, but the trace of his idiosyncratic movements. Sleuthing out this connection between gesture and performer, Tulkinghorn conducts research into performance history, as he searches for fugitive "fragment[s] in Captain Hawdon's writing" that will allow him to construct a link from one embodied action (the reproductions of a signature "hand") to another (the illicit reproduction of Captain Hawdon and Lady Dedlock).[373]

Considering *Daniel Deronda* in the context of performance history likewise reveals the novel's theatricality as not only a thematic or ideological concern but also a structural feature of the plot.[374] Central to what many readers called the "Jewish half" of the plot is Mordecai's "yearning for transmission," which must take place through acts of embodied reproduction.[375] He begins the process in his room above Ezra Cohen's pawn shop, passing on his Hebrew poetry through the hybrid print-performance of recitation: "The boy will get them engraved within him…it is a way of printing."[376] In this scene Eliot imagines a form of transmission that again hybridizes archive and repertoire, with the durability normally reserved for the former – for

[371] In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), Taylor argues that these two titular repositories operate as different but interrelated systems for transmitting knowledge and creating meaning.
[372] Peter Capuano, *Changing Hands: Industry, Evolution, and the Reconfiguration of the Victorian Body* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015) likewise highlights the importance of the embodied hand and handwriting, which he situates in the context of Victorian anxieties about the growth of mechanized reproduction and resulting homogeneity.
[373] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 429.
[374] Litvak engages similarly with concepts of contagion to analyze theatricality as both a (partially failed) homeopathic cure in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and as a force that threatens to "infect" *Daniel Deronda*, 162. While Litvak sees Eliot's novel as largely anti-theatrical – in its favoring of poetry over the theatricality of female characters like Gwendolen Harleth – I argue that the novel embraces performance as a medium of transmission. For other considerations of theatricality in *Daniel Deronda*, see also J. Jeffrey Franklin, *Serious Play: The Cultural Form of the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); and David Kurnick, *Empty Houses*.
[375] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 405.
[376] *Ibid.*, 408.

textual "printing" and "engraving" – but with the embodied techniques of the latter – employing a one-to-one replication through recitation. The body provides both the instrument for engraving and the material on which to engrave, as becomes clear when Mordecai refuses Daniel's offer to publish his work. Mordecai needs Daniel to be "not only a hand to me, but a soul – believing my beliefs – being moved by my reasons – hoping my hopes – seeing the vision I point to – beholding a glory where I behold it."[377] He imagines passing on his vision in the way that some dancers pass on choreography: the "immediate re-enacting" of a series of movements, gestures, and affects "in order to corporeally archive it."[378] Not only by repeating Mordecai's words, but by positioning himself as a body double "moving," "seeing," and "beholding" as Mordecai does, Daniel will "take the sacred inheritance of the Jew" as he learns to mimic Mordecai's embodied performances.

If both these novels are interested in how hands, bodies, and movements get doubled, they also feature characters who believe that such reproduction is most likely to happen through processes of inheritance. Numerous observers in *Bleak House*, for example, use the logic of likeness and family resemblance to recognize Esther as a double of Lady Dedlock – another of the copies reproduced by Captain Hawdon.[379] Lady Dedlock recognizes a likeness between the law hand of an affidavit and the handwriting of her lover, and Tulkinghorn establishes the identity of this lover by comparing the likeness between the Jarndyce document and a letter of Captain Hawdon's. Reading faces "imprinted" on his heart rather than printed handwriting, Mr. Guppy also begins to piece together the mystery of Esther's parentage when he notices the incredible likeness between his "angel" and the portrait of Lady Dedlock hanging in Chesney

[377] *Ibid.*, 428.
[378] Quotation taken from André Lepecki, "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dances," *Dance Research Journal* 42.2 (2010): 28-48; citation 34.
[379] Deleuze and Guattari also consider filiation and kinship as linked by the logic of mimetic resemblance and likeness.

Wold.[380] Dickens thus presents a parallel between two kinds of material, embodied reproduction – Captain Hawdon's reproduction of his own handwriting and Lady Dedlock's reproduction of herself in Esther – in which the original is discoverable through likeness as a sign of kinship. That likeness proves common origin seems, in fact, to be a shared epistemological assumption of many of the novel's sleuths: Mr. Guppy claims to Lady Dedlock that the "resemblance" and "the undoubted strong likeness" of Esther and herself is "a positive fact for a jury"; and Mr. Bucket remarks to Quebec and Malta that there is "No occasion to inquire who *your* father and mother is. Never saw such a likeness in my life!"[381]

Like Mr. Bucket, *Daniel Deronda*'s Mordecai is on the hunt for hidden family relations. He needs to pass on his mission and is determined that what Joseph Roach might call the "surrogation" of this life's work can only happen through the kinship of the Jewish people,[382] as the "heritage of Israel" is reserved for the Jew who has stayed "kindred" and maintained "brotherhood with his own race."[383] Despite apparent dispersal, the Jewish "multitude of souls…know themselves to be one,"[384] and Mordecai imagines "reviv[ing]" their "organic center," the arborescent taproot of Jewish identity, as a nation-state that could reterritorialize the Jewish people around "the unity of Israel."[385] To transmit his believing, being, and beholding would revive this unity, but such a transmission also requires unity as a starting condition. And Mordecai has lost his next of kin – lost them, in fact, to a form of environmental contagion. The "poisonous" influence of his father, Lapidoth, has snipped Mirah off the family tree, left their

[380] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 464, 465.
[381] *Ibid.*, 468, 760.
[382] Joseph Roach theorizes the performance practice of "surrogation" in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). In surrogation, staged and improvised performances audition candidates to fill the cultural roles left vacant by deaths and retirements, so that a transmission of cultural memory is accomplished through acts of repetition and substitution.
[383] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda,* 457, 450.
[384] *Ibid.,* 449.
[385] *Ibid.,* 454.

mother with the "lurking disease" that killed her, and "poisoned" Mordecai with the illness that necessitates his urgent, but now seemingly impossible surrogation.[386]

Nor is Mordecai the only character whose inheritance plot momentarily dead-ends in illness. While the apparently indisputable evidentiary value of likeness in *Bleak House* might lead us to expect a fulfillment of inheritance in that novel – that Esther, like Daniel, would have only to discover her bloodline to take her place in a rightful lineage – in fact the revelation of the protagonist's relationship to Lady Dedlock does not lead to the restoration of a lost heritage. Esther's only inheritance from her mother, the strong family likeness that marks their filiation, gets *destroyed* in the course of the novel by a near-fatal illness. After the sweeper boy, Jo, carries a dangerous fever from London to Bleak House, "the contagion of [the] illness" passes from Jo to Charley to Esther.[387] Though Charley "grow[s] into her old childish likeness again," the illness scrambles Esther's likeness to her mother. Indeed, when Esther learns the identity of her mother for the first time, she rejoices in the disappearance of this "positive fact" of their affiliation: she feels "a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us."[388] Without a trace of likeness, in other words, a near tie – or a link of reproductive kinship – will seem impossible to all observers. In this scene of plotting, an illness is the motor device that moves the fulfillment of Esther's relationship with Lady Dedlock from a "near" certainty to a "remote" possibility.[389]

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[386] *Ibid.,* 463.
[387] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 502.
[388] *Ibid.*, 579.
[389] Indeed, illnesses seem to propagate precisely where inheritance fails. Esther's illness, for example, passes first through the bodies of a foundling and an orphan, as if to emphasize the association of this particular contagion with the unmaking of kinship units. Richard's illness, too, arises from interaction with *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*, so that a stagnant tangle of incomplete inheritances becomes part of the etiology of Richard's disease.

In the case of *Daniel Deronda*'s contagion plot twist, Eliot eventually clears the way for a re-establishment of inheritance by revealing that Daniel shares spiritual and racial roots with Mordecai after all. Yet the duration between the publication of *Daniel Deronda*'s serial installments suspends the period during which Daniel's Jewishness remains in doubt, as Eliot seems deliberately to hold out the possibility that the (re)performance of Mordecai's vision will be effected by forces other than inheritance. Book V ends with such a deferral. Mordecai articulates his desire to "plant" his life "afresh" in Daniel through embodied doubling, and Daniel repeats his claim that they are not of the same race.[390] The two men part – Mordecai still convinced of their "soul's brotherhood" and Daniel still in doubt about the nature of the force attempting to pull them together – and original readers would have had a month to speculate about who was right.[391] When, at the start of Book VI, Eliot draws her readers back into the stream of the narrative, she does so by directing them to "imagine" the state of Daniel's mind as he contemplates this same question, a day (in the time of narration) or a month (in the time of reading) since he last spoke with Mordecai:

> Imagine the conflict in a mind like Deronda's given not only to feel strongly but to question actively, on the evening after the interview with Mordecai…It was his characteristic bias to shrink from the moral stupidity of valuing lightly what had come close to him, and of missing blindly in his own life of to-day the crisis which he recognized as momentous and sacred in the historic life of men. If he had read of this incident as having happened centuries ago in Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine, Cairo, to some man young as himself, dissatisfied with his neutral life, and wanting some closer fellowship, some more special duty to give him ardor for the possible consequences of his work, it would have appeared to him quite natural that the incident should have created a deep impression on that far-off man, whose clothing and action would have been seen in his imagination as part of an age chiefly known to us through its more serious effects. Why should he be ashamed of his own agitated feeling merely

[390] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda,* 429.

[391] Reader commentary between the serial parts was indeed extensive, as Carol A. Martin documents in *George Eliot's Serial Fiction* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1994): twenty-nine newspapers published reviews within the first two weeks of publication. Martin notes in particular that reviews of *Daniel Deronda*, published as installments were released, testify to a "perceptible change" in some readers' reactions, "when the so-called Jewish portion begins late in the fifth book, titled 'Mordecai,'" "Contemporary Critics and Judaism in *Daniel Deronda*," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 21.3 (Fall 1988): 90-107.

> because he dressed for dinner, wore a white tie, and lived among people who might laugh at his owning any conscience in the matter, as the solemn folly of taking himself too seriously?—that bugbear of circles in which the lack of grave emotion passes for wit. From such cowardice before modish ignorance and obtuseness, Deronda shrank. But he also shrank from having his course determined by mere contagion, without consent of reason; or from allowing a reverential pity for spiritual struggle to hurry him along a dimly-seen path.[392]

As the free indirect discourse facilitates the command for readers to "imagine" the workings of Daniel's mind, the passage draws narrator, character, and reader into a shared contemplation of the possibility that Daniel's narrative path may be redirected by the plot device of "mere contagion": by the agitating influence of what "come[s]…close" rather than by a more developmental, linear progression. Serial pauses open up time for this threat of infection to linger by thwarting any readerly desire to look forward, to "hurry…along [the] dimly-seen path" toward the "revelation" that Book VI's title promises.

Instead, Eliot encourages readers to follow Daniel in looking around them, at other collections of texts that make up the historical middle in which reader and character find themselves. *Daniel Deronda* is the only novel Eliot set in her own time period, and the opening passage of Book VI, placed at the point where readers would be transitioning from their own "life of to-day" back into the "crisis" of the narrative, invites them to place Daniel in the historical time and space of their own experiences in the interim between installments: "dress[ing] for dinner, w[earing] a white tie, and liv[ing] among people" of the Victorian age. As Daniel Deronda historicizes his own experience through the lens of other texts, readers might also connect *Daniel Deronda* to the stories, poems, and essays that surrounded it. The American edition of *Harper's Magazine* in which Book VI appeared, for example, also housed chapters from Julian Hawthorne's novel *Garth*, about a hereditary curse, along with a short story by

[392] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda,* 434-35.

Albert Rhodes called "A Sentimental Journey to the Jordan," which contains descriptions of geographic locations similar to those in the speculative histories Daniel imagines here: Jerusalem, Syria, Egypt, and Malta. The plotting within the novel, wherein Daniel turns from his imagined forward trajectory to the possible "contagion" that has "come close to him," mirrors a kind of intertextual reading supported by the serial format, through which readers are prevented from progressing linearly through the unity of a novelistic plot but can with ease move transversally across proximate paths and nearby narrative middles.[393]

This method of reading by proximity is one that interests Daniel Hack and Emily Steinlight in their analysis of *Bleak House*'s serial installments. Dickens published many of his novels, including *Bleak House*, not in periodical magazines but in monthly installments, in which the text of the novel was sandwiched by pages of advertisements. Reading the novel in the context that its original audience would have encountered it, Steinlight argues, critics can uncover how the more ephemeral texts and images on the periphery of *Bleak House* "speak of (and to) the text from within its own green paper covers."[394] While Steinlight focuses on how seriality reveals the novel's co-imbrication in industrial commodity culture, I am interested in highlighting how the serial format facilitates contagion plotting and transversal connections. Thus, I examine additional sites where *Bleak House* was serially re-circulated in order to track how contagion plots might have traveled into new environments of transmission.

When contagion plotting comes close to the discursive surface of *Bleak House*, it is often in proximity to one key character – the street-sweeper Jo – and one associated setting – the dirty streets of Tom-all-Alone's. A character whose movements bring many of the novel's separate

[393] Hack explores the possibilities of such intertextual reading in his chapter on *Daniel Deronda* in *The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel*, which reads the novel's engagement with material commodities alongside advertisements that accompanied its serial publication.
[394] Steinlight, "'The Anti-Bleak House,'" 145.

plots into contact, Jo is also a key vector of contagion, as he leads characters into or carries diseases out of the novel's most noxious neighborhood.[395] Intriguingly, these interactions often occur at the end of installments. Lady Dedlock enters Tom-all-Alone's in search of Jo in Chapter 16, "Tom-all-Alone's," which ends the fifth installment of the novel, published in July of 1852. Mr. Snagsby and Mr. Bucket again brave the neighborhood in pursuit of Jo in Chapter 22, "Mr. Bucket," which ends installment seven, published in September of 1852. In this chapter, the motor devices of miasma are particularly explicit:

> Mr. Snagsby passes along the middle of a villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water – though the roads are dry everywhere – and reeking with such smells and sights that he, who has lived in London all his life, can scarce believe his senses. Branching from this street and its heaps of ruins, are other streets and courts so infamous that Mr. Snagsby sickens in body and mind. "Draw off a bit here, Mr. Snagsby," says Bucket, as a kind of shabby palanquin is borne toward them, surrounded by a noisy crowd. "Here's the fever coming up the street." As the unseen wretch goes by, the crowd, leaving that object of attraction, hovers round the three visitors like a dream of horrible faces and fades away up alleys and into ruins and behind walls, and with occasional cries and shrill whistles of warning, thenceforth flits about them until they leave the place.[396]

Not only is the street itself diseased – "villainous," "corrupt," "reeking," and "infamous" – but its smells and sights are contagious: Mr. Snagsby, having passed through them, "sickens in body and mind." The fever that comes up the street spreads through both the environmental contamination of miasma (the "branching" extension of the unventilated streets, alleys, and ruins) and the chance proximity of person-to-person contact (the crowd that "hovers round" the sick and the sickening).

Though this imagery might initially appear to evoke stagnation (with its emphasis on "undrained" and "unventilated" as markers of inaction), the novel actually uses the corruption of

[395] Benton uses the example of Tom-all-Alone's to support his argument that, "Disease, in *Bleak House*, transcends the textual representations of disease to include a metaphorically diseased society." While Benton reads illness as creating a "state of suspension," however, I read it as an agent of an alternative form of change and reproduction. See Benton, "And Dying Thus Around Us Every Day," 71 and 76.
[396] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 358.

Tom-All-Alone's as a motor device for connecting characters, structuring story, and provoking narrative change, as becomes clear in a third installment-ending chapter. In Chapter 46, "Stop Him!", which concludes installment fourteen (April 1853), Tom enters, personified, as the driver of an alternative "bloodline" plot:

> There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream (in which chemists on analysis would find the genuine nobility) of a Norman house, and his Grace shall not be able to say nay to the infamous alliance. There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution through every order of society up to the proudest of the proud and to the highest of the high.[397]

Propagating through contagion, tainting and spoiling, the "pestilential gas" of social disease burrows across social orders, creating "infamous alliances" of proximity and shared environment in place of hereditary connections. Tom embodies a transversal, contaminating "blood" whose pattern of circulation Dickens explicitly contrasts with the "blood" that might order society hierarchically.

If the novel's detective plot invites readers to follow Mr. Bucket in making filial and linear connections between characters and events, passages like the one cited above invite the reader to make a different sort of "pass": following fever up the street, out along "branch[es]," and across the boundaries of class and category. The placement of these Tom-all-Alone's sections at the end of *Bleak House* installments encourages readers to carry the fever with them into contiguous routes, moving transversally like the crowd in Tom-all-Alone's or like Tom himself. "Flitting about" the "Bleak House advertiser," for example, readers would have encountered announcements for an upcoming serial edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: a novel

[397] *Ibid.*, 710.

whose runaway popularity brought it into frequent contact with Dickens's bestsellers.[398] Frederick Douglass's abolitionist newspaper also puts these two texts in proximity. Chapter 8 of *Bleak House* follows directly after a song about "Little Eva," Chapter 14 is preceded by a poem entitled "Eva's Parting," and the installment containing the end of the chapter titled "Tom-all-Alone's" is printed just after a poem called "Lines to the Lowly, written upon reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*."[399]

Such juxtapositions offer a non-linear readerly vector that is enabled by serial printing. Spatially, the intertextual pages of the serial *Bleak House* allow readers' eyes to "hover round" the material boundaries between texts and the conceptual boundaries between the two forms of "pestilence," "wickedness," and "brutality" they represent. And temporally, the extended timespan of serial printing and reading allowed readers to dwell with these coincidences, indulging connections that might seem rather like contradictions to those who had the whole plot before them. As Daniel Hack details in *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature*, Douglass made the decision to being reprinting *Bleak House* when only the first part of the novel had appeared in London and New York.[400] Indeed, Hack suggests, it's possible that Douglass might have had more qualms about printing the novel if he had read the full extent of Dickens's satire on Mrs. Jellyby and her philanthropic efforts in the fictional African nation of Borrioboola-gha.[401] In the portrait of the Jellybys, *Bleak House*

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[398] For a discussion of Dickens's complicated relationship to Harriet Beacher Stowe and his treatments of her work in *Bleak House* and other novels, see Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

[399] "Little Eva," in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York): July 23, 1852, Mary H. Collier, "Eva's Parting," in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York): August 13, 1852, and A. N. Cole, "Lines to the Lowly," in *Frederick Douglass' Paper* (Rochester, New York): Sept. 10, 1852.

[400] Daniel Hack, *Reaping Something New: African American Transformations of Victorian Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[401] The potentially anti-abolitionist tone of these passages were, as Hack describes, a matter of comment for contemporary readers, including Lord Thomas Denman, who published several articles in the *Standard* critiquing Dickens's position on slavery in *Household Words* and *Bleak House*. Particularly interesting (though not unique to

uses proximity to foreclose connections – to delimit the boundaries of sympathy to the nation close at hand – in ways that seem to exclude Douglass and his readers from the novel's circle of concern. Yet the novel's scenes of contagion plotting, as I have emphasized, offer a different model of proximity – one driven by the infectious force of mixed environments and accidental contact – that might encourage serial readers to entertain such intertextual, international paths.

When contagion plotting meets the deferrals, gaps, and networks of serial printing, it offers both authors and readers ways of moving transversally rather than linearly. While I would stop short of claiming that the possible connections I have traced are intended by the author as prescribed ways of reading, I do suggest that these serial novels stage scenes of "mere contagion" that, especially given their frequent placement on the borders of serial installments, might encourage infectious reception. As Daniel considers his own potential role as Mordecai's embodied surrogate through the lens of intertexts, or as Jo is pushed to "move on" from site to site, replicating the behaviors of "the fever" as he goes, readers would see contagion modeled not only as a motor device for propelling performance plots but also as a possible vector for navigating serial narratives.

Sickly Turns and Successions of Symptoms: Contagion Plotting in Spectator Narratives

Having examined contagion plotting in two nineteenth-century serial novels, I now consider how seriality affected representations of contagion in narratives of theatrical change crafted by Victorian theatregoers. Victorian audiences, as I have suggested, often appear in

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this author) is the insistence with which Denman puts *Bleak House* in conversation with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In the seven articles that he published in a series and then collected in *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Bleak House, Slavery and Slave Trade* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), he makes connections between the two novels on the level of theme, subject, and character, at one point suggesting (sarcastically) that, "Mrs. Stowe might have learned a more judicious mode of treating a subject from the pictures of Mrs. Dombey and Carker, of Lady Dedlock and Joe [sic], of the Smallweeds—above all, of Mrs. and Miss Jellaby," 18. Itself a kind of serial narrative, Lord Denman's critical response thus offers additional pathways between the plots and characters of two frequently juxtaposed novels.

theatre histories as spectators particularly given to processing performance through the logic of theatrical heredity; and indeed, an arborescent logic makes frequent appearances in their narratives, in the form of contested "traditions," relationships to "predecessors," and processes for "inheriting" dominant modes of performance.[402] Yet, as with the missing heirs in *Bleak House* and *Daniel Deronda*, invocations of inheritance sometimes signal uncertainties about its power to account for theatrical change and reproduction. The dramatic critic Edward Dutton Cook, for example, investigates the "the heritage of the house of Kemble" in part to express a fear that this heritage has failed to reproduce itself, and that the "severity of demeanour, the majestic repose, the classicality of attitude, the studied elocution, the stately declamation which distinguished the Kemble school" has in fact "found its last exponent" and "departed from the stage for ever."[403] In the face of mid-century fears of degradation and the possible decline of British drama, some spectators stage scenes of contagion plotting to describe the popular, often lower-class forces shaping the course of theatre history in the absence of inheritance structures.

How would the temporality and intertextuality of periodical printing have affected a reader's engagement with these narratives of growing infection in the Shakespearean theatre? I provide one answer to this question by examining essays and reviews by Sir Theodore Martin and Henry Morley, which were published in newspapers and magazines over an extended period of time. While a series of essays or reviews is not serial in the same way as *Bleak House* or *Daniel Deronda*, which were designed and marketed as stories in parts, their structure is not entirely dissimilar from that of the first major serial success, Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*,

[402] The Victorian scholar W.L. Courtney, for example, writes of Herbert Beerbohm Tree that he "inherited a great tradition from Henry Irving, who had set a magnificent example of stage-production at the Lyceum. Tree was at first content to carry on the tradition on similar lines. He produced plays with extreme care for detail and many appeals to the eye…Gradually Tree bettered the examples of his predecessors." See Courtney, "An Open Letter to an American Friend," in *Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and His Art,* ed. Max Beerbohm (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1920), 260.
[403] Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play*, 1-2.

whose parts centered around a recurring cast of characters but did not proceed according to a premeditated narrative sequence.[404] Whether or not Morley and Martin conceived their texts as installments in a larger narrative of theatre history, their eventual decision to anthologize them (and to reprint them in chronological order) gives readers the possibility of reading each piece as either a self-contained discourse or as a chapter in a larger historical narrative. Resituating these spectator accounts in the context of Eliot and Dickens's more traditionally serial novels highlights how the spatio-temporal dynamics of Victorian publishing render performance history as potentially contagious and miasmic – just as prone to travel through unexpected contact as through linear progress.

Scottish poet and biographer Sir Theodore Martin, for example, shares Mordecai's concern with how surrogation will take place in the absence of organizing centers. If in *Daniel Deronda*, Mordecai seeks a spiritual heir to complete his mission of rebuilding a Jewish homeland, in Martin's *Essays*, the narrator searches for the next great actors to carry on the Shakespearean traditions after the end of the patent monopoly has diffused artistic talent and disrupted the transfer of Shakespearean traditions. In an essay originally published in *Dublin University Magazine* in 1846, Martin reflects on the state of the dramatic arts in "the nation that produced Shakespeare."[405] "So long as dramatic performances were limited to a few theatres," Martin writes:

> the leading actors were concentrated within their walls…The ideas of the great performers of former times were handed down, and the genius of the actor availed itself of the conceptions and experience of his predecessor. The whole resources of art were then brought in aid of the original powers of the actors. In the provinces, again, the theatres of Edinburgh and other places were considered as schools for the training of young actors. The same high standard of excellence was there placed before them by

[404] Turner notes that, "While Dickens began writing the linked narratives around the idea of the Pickwick Club, he certainly did not begin Pickwick with any sense of an entire narrative whole. In other words, the overall shape of Pickwick was haphazard and unplanned," "'Telling of My Weekly Doings,'" 116.
[405] Sir Theodore Martin, *Essays on the Drama* (London: Printed for Private Circulation, 1874), 3.

> the managers, and maintained by the occasional visits of the great actors, who kept alive within their younger brethren the ambition of distinction, while they illustrated the means by which it was to be obtained.[406]

After the fall of these "temple[s] of national literature," which had allowed for "concentrated," lineal transmission, the great actors have scattered to minor theatres and far-flung provinces. Martin laments their dispersal as Mordecai laments the diaspora of the Jews: understood as a people who have lost their "organic center,"[407] actors are now "united by no common bond," with no "centre to which they can rally."[408] As in *Daniel Deronda*, the cure for this decentralization presents a kind of Catch-22. The establishment of a national theatre, which might provide a place for actors of quality to gather, is impossible to imagine precisely because actors are now spread so thin.

Amidst these diffused conditions, in which "predecessors" and "brethren" no longer meet to pass down traditions through embodied emulation, a new kind of theatrical process has asserted itself:

> companies are perpetually changing — habits of patient perseverance and mutual emulation are lost…Then, too, managers find that they cannot get up the sterling plays and comedies that filled their theatres of old, and seek a fitter occupation for the abilities of their performers in melo-drama and burlesque. Matters grow worse and worse. The better class of playgoers desert the theatre; attractions of coarser grain must be found for those who remain. The powers of the actors themselves degenerate, because they have neither the ambition nor the scope to improve; and thus the majority of our provincial theatres threaten in the long run to fall under the control of the galleries, which, as matters now stand, have become their chief support.[409]

Like the "poison" that makes Mordecai's family home a miasma of disease, "perpetual…chang[e]" has taken the place of "mutual emulation": a "degeneration" that is not lineal but environmental and anti-genealogical. Melodramas and burlesques colonize the place

[406] *Ibid.*, 8-9.
[407] *Ibid*, 5 and Eliot, *Daniel Deronda,* 454.
[408] Martin, *Essays on the Drama*, 322.
[409] *Ibid*, 10-11.

once filled by traditional drama, and the coarser desires of the galleries impose themselves in the absence of their betters in the boxes. The "threat" does not lie in the decline of dramatic literature, or in any diminishing desire of the most educated spectators for finely wrought performances of Shakespeare, but in the diffused, anti-hierarchical ecology of the playhouses themselves, which have changed the relations of proximity among bodies and performance styles.

This sense that minor theatres might become a miasma of class contagion also appears in the narratives of Henry Morley,[410] where contagion plotting represents the theatre as a site of what Dickens calls "infamous alliances."[411] Morley, who is best known today as a literary editor but who also wrote as a theatre critic for the London-based *Examiner* from 1851 to 1866, gathered many of the reviews that he wrote during this period in a collection entitled *Journal of a London Playgoer*, published in 1866.[412] In the preface to this new collection, Morley represents his narrator as a doctor watching for signs of health or infection and his narrative as a series of notes from the patient's bedside:

> During the last fourteen or fifteen years, while studying our literature, I have been in professional attendance at the bedside of our modern Drama, seeing nearly every piece produced, with or without music, at the chief London theatres. At first now and then as a supernumerary clinical clerk, and afterwards more regularly, I have furnished the

[410] Anxieties about the possibility of cross-class contagion were also characteristic of Shakespeare's own early modern theatre. Spectator narratives figured these contagions as both physical (the possibility of catching the plague at tightly packed, open-air theatres) and cognitive or emotional (the idea that affects and states of feeling might be contracted from actors or other spectators). Victorian anxieties about the infection of Shakespeare thus represent an intriguing (re)version of these early modern discourses. For more on early modern theatre and contagion, see Keir Elam, "'I'll Plague Thee for that Word': Language, Performance, and Communicable Disease," *Shakespeare Survey* 50 (1997): 19, Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), Allison Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and the forthcoming collection edited by Mary Floyd-Wilson and Darryl Chalk, *Contagion and the Shakespearean Stage* (Palgrave, forthcoming).

[411] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 710.

[412] Russell Jackson reads Henry Morley's dramatic criticism as illuminating of Victorian "orthodoxies" and habits of attention in his essay, "Shakespeare in the Theatrical Criticism of Henry Morley." By reading his essays as narratives of Shakespeare performance history (in addition to expressions of a particular ideology about Shakespeare) I add to Jackson's account some of the particular discursive techniques that Morley might have picked up in his literary reading.

> "Examiner" with notes from my casebook upon the succession of symptoms. A warm interest in the patient never affected the determination to set down precisely what I took for truth. Always, also, I have watched the case from the same point of view; desiring to see our Drama, with a clean tongue and a steady pulse, able to resume its place in society as a chief form of Literature, with a stage fitly interpreting its thoughts and in wide honour as one of the strongest of all secular aids towards the intellectual refinement of the people. From the occasional notes thus made, I have wished to collect into this volume only as much as will sketch faithfully an individual impression of our stage as it now is, the indications of health in it and the remedies for its disease.[413]

Morley represents the plot structure of his narrative as a "succession of symptoms": the possibility of infection is represented as the primary motor device producing any changes over the course of the performances Morley narrates. The desired end of the plot, accordingly, is not a restored tradition but restored health: "a clean tongue and a steady pulse" for dramatic literature and a theatrical stage in a good state of "fit[ness]." Disability and sickness are not only metaphors for performance practices that Morley finds un-fit for a properly literary drama; they are also devices for propelling change and development in the narrative, as they drive *Journal of a London Theatregoer* forward through patterns of health, disease, and remedy.

What symptoms, then, does Morley's preface outline for the health of those most literary of dramas, the plays of Shakespeare? While Morley, like Martin, notes the loss of great actors to carry on the stage inheritance of Shakespeare, his preface devotes less time to a diffusion of tradition than it does to the relative health or illness of audiences.[414] On the one hand, the robust traffic in spectators is a sign that theatres have the power to keep drama healthy:

> There are in London twenty-five theatres. Her Majesty's Theatre will hold 3000 persons; the Pavilion, in Whitechapel, holds even 3500; the Marylebone 2000; the new Adelphi 1400; and others in proportion. Except during the autumn holidays, and after all allowance for thin houses, and the London public must be going in daily detachments, averaging at least 15,000 persons, to the play for recreation; and the audiences are

[413] Henry Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer from 1851-1866* (London: George Routledge, 1866), 10-11.
[414] "As it was said in Garrick's day that there were no more Booths and Bettertons," Morley writes, "so in our day it may be said that there are no more Kembles, no more Listons and Farrens, no more of any of the actors who have become traditions of perfection since they were no more. This strain of lamentation I have no wish to take up," *Journal of a London Playgoer*, 20-21.

> changed every night. What is accounted in London good entertainment is adopted by provincial and colonial theatres. Add all their audiences to such an estimate, and we shall hardly ask again, Why care for what it is that the stage offers to the daily renewed army of playgoers? Our theatre is able to maintain in health a noble branch of English literature, and the literature is able in return to make the stage partaker of its health.[415]

Morley's calculations of the theatre market construct a concentration of theatrical activity rather than a diffusion of it, and it is audience members rather than actors who are the primary agents of reproduction. The rate at which crowds make contact with the London theatres allows the examples set there to spread through the performance networks of provincial England and the wider British Empire. In this ideal state of healthy circulation, theatre and literature live symbiotically, and the circulation of audiences encourages the "old wholesome alliance between good wit and good acting."[416]

On the other hand, the tendency of audiences to "change every night" opens up the possibility that theatrical reproduction might be skewed out of a healthy "proportion." While melodrama and farce are, according to Morley, "as legitimate as the soliloquies of *Hamlet*," when put "in their place," theatre managers might choose a less properly proportioned form of reproduction, in which "servile copies of the humour of the music halls" attract the wrong sort of crowd:[417]

> There is a large half-intelligent population now in London that by bold puffing can be got into a theatre. It numbers golden lads and lasses as well as chimney-sweeps. The population is, indeed, so large that it takes many nights to pass it through a theatre, each night's theatre-full being as a bucket-full dipped out of a big stagnant pond. Any manager may, if he will, set his face against intelligent opinion, and, falling back upon the half-intelligent, go the right way to that pond, bale patiently, and send nearly the whole of it through his house. But its credit will not be the cleaner for that process, though it may secure the speculator against loss by misplaced costliness of scenery, and may enable him to set against the condemnation of his piece by every educated man the advertisement that Duchesses and Viscounts have been to see it, and that it is being acted for its

[415] *Ibid.*, 16-17.
[416] *Ibid.*, 17.
[417] *Ibid.*, 25.

millionth night.[418]

In this passage, the size of London's "daily detachment" of spectators has become the "night[ly]" "bucket[s]-full" of lower-class chimney-sweeps and vapid Duchesses. Like the "villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water" of Tom-all-Alone's,[419] the "big stagnant pond" populated by this "half-intelligent" crowd is one that leaves the spaces and people with which it comes into contact sicker and less "clean." If, in *Bleak House*, contagion powers plot by "tainting, plundering, and spoiling" as it runs "through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high,"[420] here the cultivation of corrupt theatrical tastes knits together "golden lads and lasses as well as chimney-sweeps" in an unhealthy circulation that leads to out-of-proportion replication: pieces "being acted for [the] millionth night."

The possible remedy for this contagious growth of music-hall Shakespeare lies, for Theodore Martin, in the restoration of an inheritance plot. Martin holds out hope for a gradual revival of the old traditions through evolution in "slow degrees, perhaps…in another generation," so that "a better race of performers may yet arise."[421] Yet reading histories of Shakespeare performance like Martin's in a serial context brings out some decidedly un-teleological elements in his spectator plotting. At the end of his *Dublin University Magazine* article in 1846, for example, Martin expressed his hope that traditions would eventually regain their centrality in English theatres. By the time he publishes "A Word About Our Theatres" in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1858, however, he picks up at a different place in the narrative. Though enough time has passed that readers might reasonably expect to see the newest members of the "next generation"

[418] *Ibid.*, 23 and 24.
[419] Dickens, *Bleak House*, 358.
[420] *Ibid.*, 710.
[421] Martin, *Essays on the Drama*, 13 and 14.

whose coming Martin had anticipated, it turns out that their inheritance of the great traditions must be deferred:

> The palate which has been ruined by stimulants, will turn for a time with sickly indifference from wholesome fare. So thoroughly imbued has a large section of the public become with the appetite for costly scenic effects, that it is all but impossible, even if the actors were at hand, that the plays of Shakspeare or any other great dramatist could now be properly represented.[422]

The forces of change that Martin described in his earlier essay are now explicitly represented as devices that "sick[en]." This contagion plotting works through the spatiality of "imbue[ing]" (just as Daniel "shr[inks] from having his course determined by mere contagion," Martin recoils at the fate of Shakespeare performance being dictated by too close a contact with the diseased tastes of the lower classes) and, more subtly, through a stalled performance time. Martin's characterization of scenic devices as "sickening" agents reveals his distaste for a dramaturgical development that – while it might have "stimula[ted]" the visual appetite – had rather a sedative effect on the temporality of Shakespeare performance. Elaborate spectacles, as Sillars notes, "demanded extensive delays between scenes, enforcing fractures in the plays' continuity," and necessitated cuts to the text that "often wholly altered the dramatic procession of the plays."[423] This "sickening" interruption of Shakespeare's linear continuity is not only *referred to in the essay* but also *enacted by gaps between the essays*, as Martin repeats the "to be continued" formula of his previous essay. He expresses a hope that "a new cluster of artists" will "spring up" to revive the unity of tradition, while also admitting that the moment of their entrance is "impossible to foresee."[424] In the meantime, Martin's audience will have to wait for the scene change.

[422] *Ibid.*, 83. "Shakspeare" is Martin's chosen spelling of "Shakespeare" throughout.
[423] Sillars, *Shakespeare, Time, and the Victorians*, 29.
[424] Martin, *Essays on the Drama,* 88 and 89.

Like Eliot, Martin crafts conclusions that both point toward a desired end and defer its arrival, opening up a period of disunity and dispersion in the performance narrative that is extended by the duration between publications. When regular readers of *Fraser's Magazine* received the December 1861 issue, for example, they would have found a new essay by Martin, entitled "Shakspeare, and His Latest Stage Interpreters." Three years after he had expressed his hope for new actors to arise from the roots of the great traditions, Martin reports in his newest narrative that the theatres are "flourishing" – but not with the arborescent growth for which he had hoped.[425] Instead, audiences continue to be infected, "work[ed]…up into a fever of physical excitement," by a love of show that has "turn[ed] the plays of Shakspeare into mere vehicles for scenic effects."[426] The patient zero responsible for this spectacle fever, according to Martin, is actor-manager Charles Kean:

> His example, applauded as it was by reckless critics and a credulous public, had spread through every provincial theatre. Good acting was at a discount. The player was elbowed out of sight by the scene-shifter. The art of declamation was being rapidly lost, and the consequences were miserably apparent whenever an attempt was made to represent a Shakspearian play on a London stage. The merest pretenders, who at no very remote period would not have been admitted, even as subordinates, to any of the principal theatres, rushed into the leading places. The old standards of excellence were forgotten, and no new ones had arisen.[427]

The language of physical proximity that Martin favors throughout his narratives – of forces "elbowing" out and "shouldering" over the proper heirs – meet here with an indefinite temporality that makes "what comes close" or "what comes in between" a more potent force than "what comes next." How would readers have understood, for example, Martin's claim that spectacle fever has "for a considerable period pervaded all the houses"?[428] Like Eliot's opening of Book VI on both "the evening after" and a month after the events of Book V, Martin's

[425] *Ibid.*, 90.
[426] *Ibid.*, 92 and 93.
[427] *Ibid.*, 93.
[428] *Ibid.*, 92.

invocation of a "considerable period" can be considered periodically.[429] Readers who had encountered Martin's essay in the same magazine in 1858, and some who had perhaps read his piece in *Dublin University Magazine* 1848, might be prompted to integrate the theatrical experiences they had accumulated over these years into the gaps in Martin's serial narrative. As they re-witnessed past scenes through the lens of Martin's contagion plotting, his language of spreading and anti-hierarchical mixing would encourage them to adopt an analytic of proximity, interruption, and intertextuality to interpret these performance experiences. Instead of looking toward a great future, they might look toward who and what was at their "elbow," or at Shakespeare's.[430]

Indeed, in this same essay, Martin's objection to the French actor Charles Fechter's elbows leads him to make an intertextual leap from Fechter's Othello to Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. Criticizing Fechter for his close, undignified proximity to other actors, "lean[ing] now on Iago's arm, now on Cassio's shoulder," Martin also reads Fechter's suggestions for the murder of Desdemona through its tendency to evoke less lofty scenes of slaughter:[431]

> This is but one of a series of monstrous perversions introduced by Mr. Fechter into this scene. According to his book, for example, Desdemona springs out of bed, and makes repeated attempts to escape. Othello 'whirls his sword over her head, and she falls to the ground as if struck by the lightning of his blade.' Again she makes for the door, 'but he stops her passage, carries her to the bed, on which he throws her; then stifles her cries with the pillow,' &c. These stage directions make one think rather of the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes, than of Othello and Desdemona.[432]

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[429] Eliot, *Daniel Deronda,* 434.
[430] Martin will in fact suggest, in a later essay on David Garrick, that Shakespeare has been "elbow[ed] out of his own pieces by overdone scenic splendor," *Essays on the Drama*, 267.
[431] Martin makes a similar critique of Fechter's Hamlet, whom he faults for being "on too easy terms with his friends and fellow-students. There was a little too much resting on the arm of one, of hanging on the shoulder of another, which dragged the play somewhat too much down into common life, and took from the dignity of the young prince," *Essays on the Drama*, 101 and 121.
[432] *Ibid.*, 116. These actions were not performed on stage but are indicated in the stage directions of Fechter's published version of the play.

While Martin introduces the transversal link between Shakespeare's characters and Dickens's in order to foreclose it (suggesting it is not an appropriate parallel for the murder of Desdemona), the dynamics of seriality offer readers the opportunity to pursue it. Not only is Martin's "Shakspeare, and His Latest Stage Interpreters" printed in a magazine known for producing criticism of novels, for its analysis of "Newgate novels," and its attention to Dickens,[433] but the proliferation of stage adaptations of *Oliver Twist* in the 1850s and 1860s meant that it was highly possible readers had themselves experienced the close temporal or geographic proximity of Othello and Bill Sykes on London theatre bills.[434] Indeed, Martin's is not the only nineteenth-century spectator account to make the connection. As John Glavin notes in "Othellos, Dickenses, and Dombeys," the nineteenth-century actress Dame Madge Kendal, who starred opposite the African American Ira Aldridge in later performances of *Othello*, wrote in her memoirs that Aldridge, "used to take Desdemona out of bed by her hair and drag her around the stage before he smothered her … I remember very distinctly this dragging Desdemona about by the hair was considered so brutal that it was loudly hissed."[435] As no other accounts of the performance describe this particular detail, however, Aldridge's biographer Errol Hill speculates that Kendal "may somehow be conflating her *Othello* memories with those of a contemporary *Oliver Twist*,

[433] Rebecca Edwards Newman explores the role of *Fraser's Magazine* in delineating the contours of the Victorian novel in "'Prosecuting the Onus Criminus': Early Criticism of the Novel in 'Fraser's Magazine,'" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 35.4 (Winter, 2002): 401-419.

[434] H. Philip Bolton. *Dickens Dramatized* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1987) records fifty different stagings in Britian and the United States by 1850 and forty more in London alone by 1860. These adaptations had begun appearing before Dickens had finished publishing *Oliver Twist*, with the earliest versions taking the stage before Nancy's murder had been accomplished. It's possible, therefore, that the proliferation of these performances would have been particularly suggestive of seriality.

[435] John Glavin, "Othellos, Dickenses, and Dombeys," *SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 52.4 (Autumn 2012): 819-41; citation 831-32. Glavin engages with some contagion plotting in this essay, as he approaches burlesques of *Othello* as "antidotes" generated to "inoculate" audiences against *Othello*'s "power to harm," 830.

whose Bill Sykes dragged Nancy around the stage by the hair twice before dashing her brains out on the floor."[436]

If attention to the serial dynamics of Martin's essays tends to enhance their deferrals of Shakespearean progress, thinking about Henry Morley's pieces for the *Examiner* as serial installments (what he calls "occasional notes" only later "collect[ed] into [a] volume") heightens the extent to which Morley's Shakespeare is enmeshed in other narrative networks.[437] Morley's reviews would have appeared even less unitary than Martin's essays to readers of *The Examiner*: Morley was only one of the critics writing for the "Theatrical Examiner," and his reviews appear without attribution, side-by-side with those of other writers. While this in some ways makes his narratives quite different from those produced by Dickens (whose notoriety as an author played perhaps a larger role in the reception of his works than those of any other nineteenth-century writer), the material conditions under which Dickens's work was printed and reprinted provide new ways of thinking about the intertextual dynamics of periodical theatre writing. In their original serial numbers or reprinted in subsequent magazines and newspapers, the narrative episodes of *Bleak House* appeared and reappeared in a shifting range of representational networks. Theatre reviews, too, were texts with a brisk circulation, and which might be read in the newspaper, in cutouts passed between theatregoers, in memoirs or letter collections, or in republished anthologies like Morley's.[438] Moreover, both *Bleak House* and *Journal of a London Playgoer* contain scenes of contagion plotting that might encourage readers to make new connections or see new sequences of events based on the texts' recontextualizations. Just as

[436] Cited in Glavin, "Othellos, Dickenses, and Dombeys," 832.
[437] Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, 11.
[438] As Act II details, it was not uncommon for actors and spectators to include reviews in their correspondences or to reprint them in memoirs. As Paul Prescott writes in *Reviewing Shakespeare*, "Of all the textual inscriptions of performance, journalistic reviews are both the most widely circulated and the most influentially constitutive of memory and value. Reviews have been the primary vehicle through which vicarious experience, opinion and reputation are propagated," 4.

Dickens prompts readers to imagine moves of proximity through the contagion plotting of Tom-all-Alone's, Morley invites his audience to see his narrative as a "bitter streamlet" that has contracted its foul taste from the theatrical ground (with its "weed[y]" overgrowth of "burlesques and bad French translations"): "A little bitterness of flavour my small stream must needs take from the soil through which it flows."[439]

Readers of Morley's narratives of Shakespeare performance, in other words, would receive prompts to read for contagion that a serial format would facilitate. Take, for example, two reviews that appear directly juxtaposed in Morley's *Journal* but that would have been separated from each other by several months and several issues for those reading *The Examiner*. On December 7, 1861, Morley published a review that describes the reproduction of two plays by Dion Boucicault:

> At the minor houses, including, alas! Drury Lane, the "Colleen Bawn," in licensed reproduction or unlicensed burlesque, is to be seen in all directions. Drury Lane and the Surrey give it in burlesque; the Drury Lane version, enriched with a version of the water-cave scene by Mr. Beverley and the acting of Miss Louisa Keeley, has attractions. The burlesque acting by the company is also more welcome now that Mr. H. J. Byron, instead of Shakespeare, furnishes the text… Meanwhile the "Octoroon" at the Adelphi, though the public does not greatly care for it, is clever enough to earn an ordinary run.[440]

The network of minor theatres, which runs "in all directions" as the streets of Tom's-all-Alone "branch" from one infamous street to another, peoples the stages with *Colleen Bawn*s and generates endless multiplicity, where "the playgoer is apt to recreate himself more than once" and every play is translated for at least the "fourth or fifth time."[441] Morley's scene of contagion plotting stages a particular nineteenth-century anxiety about the catchiness of adaptations.[442] Yet

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[439] Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, 10 and 14-15.
[440] *Ibid.*, 281-82.
[441] *Ibid.*, 282.
[442] Janice Norwood cites this *Times* review of a stage version of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* as characteristic of the critical association between adaptation and contagion: "If once a tale becomes generally popular, a desire to see it in a dramatic form immediately spreads like an epidemic." While Norwood reads "epidemic" as a "simile," I am interested in its more active role as a plotting device. See Janice Norwood,

while the passage might seem at first to set up an opposition between the "unlicensed" and out-of-proportion copies at minor theatres and the more orderly, "ordinary" production of plays like *The Octoroon* at the Adelphi, two key points of contact suggest that this bifurcation is not quite stable: burlesque has infiltrated the more educated environment of Drury Lane and it has come into contact with Shakespearean texts.

These contact zones appear even more crucial to Morley's overall narrative of performance history when readers arrive at the next narrative downstream. On March 8, 1862, Morley published a review of Charles Fechter's performance of Iago in *Othello* at the Princess's Theatre, which begins with a narrative of two competing lines of inheritance:

> There are as to the main idea two ways of representing on the stage Shakespeare's Iago. Both have been in use probably since Shakespeare's time. One is that obtrusive presentment of a diabolical villany which caused it to be objected against the Iago of Cibber that it made an idiot of the Othello who was blind to so much patent rascality; the other is that presentment of an accomplished hypocrite—a gay, light-hearted monster, a careless, cordial, comfortable villain—which Hazlitt found in the Iago of Edmund Kean. Mr. Fechter follows in his view of Iago the sense of Edmund Kean, and, what is far more to the purpose, that of Shakespeare.[443]

Morley's narrative suggests two "main" lines of descent (one inherited through Colley Cibber and the other through Edmund Kean), one of which can be used to trace a direct line from Fechter to Shakespeare. Yet given the mention in the previous review of burlesque Shakespeares, the reader may be reminded that this tidy family tree has in fact been infiltrated by more anarchic ideas about Iago and Othello, generated by the multiplicity of minor theatres. Indeed, "main" stage *Othello*s coexisted throughout the nineteenth century with a host of *Othello* burlesques,[444]

"Adaptation and the Stage in the Nineteenth Century," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 42.1 (2015): 3-8; citation 4.

[443] *Ibid.*, 282-83.

[444] This is not to mention that the texts performed as *Othello* in the nineteenth century often differed substantially from one another. As Glavin explains, Modern editions, the ones that furnish the texts we study, derive from the Cambridge edition of 1866…But before 1866 there were not only strikingly wide variants in the printed texts but also even much wider variants in the promptbooks from which the play was staged. Nineteenth-century acting texts of the play, Inchbald's (1808), Oxberry's (1819 and 1822), and Dolby's (1823), omitted roughly 1,000 lines of what

including *Othello, The Moor of Fleet Street*, *Othello Travestie*, and Dickens's own offering, *O'Thello, The Irish Moor of Venice*.[445] These burlesque *Othello*s shared authors, actors, and audience members with more "legitimate" reproductions of the play, as well as with the epidemic of *Colleen Bawn*s that Morley narrated months earlier. In the three-month period in between Morley's December 7 and March 8 narratives, for example, readers could have seen H.J. Byron's burlesque of *The Colleen Bawn* at Drury Lane ("Miss Eiley O'Connor") and the same author's burlesque of *Othello* (*The Rival Othellos*) at the Strand. *The Illustrated London News* prints reviews of these two productions side by side, in a periodical proximity that would have mirrored the geographical proximity of the performances in London's West End.[446]

These print and stage imbrications of *Othello* and its "travesties" highlight the extent to which nineteenth-century audience interactions with Shakespeare's Moor depended on contact with the representation of racism in burlesque and popular performance. Fully understanding Victorian engagements with anti-blackness, Jennifer DeVere Brody argues, requires moving outside of canonical literature into the more ephemeral world of performance and popular culture.[447] The stereotypes and patterns of "black" speech that circulated through burlesque and minstrelsy practices were often parodic: exaggerated imitations of broken speech, broad gesture, and hilarious malapropism that managed anxieties about the black body and the lower classes while also commodifying the idea of a particularly African American kind of "fun" and

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is now the standard print text. In performance, even this truncated text was further cut to fit the demands of a typical playhouse bill that included longer intermissions, after pieces, and curtain raisers. As a result, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, *Othello* had become, in print, and more egregiously in performance, astonishingly different from the play we read and see today," "Othellos, Dickenses, and Dombeys," 824-25.

[445] As Richard Schoch has demonstrated in *Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), burlesque played a major role in the "dissemination of Shakespeare within nineteenth century popular culture," 29.

[446] "The Theatres," in *Illustrated London News* (London, England): 7 Dec. 1861.

[447] Jennifer DeVere Brody, *Impossible Purities: Blackness, Femininity, and Victorian Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 10.

foolery.[448] These were catchy caricatures, and the gaps and networks of Morley's narrative expose Shakespeare to their energies. Insofar as the serial structure of Morley's reviews create points of contact between the burlesque world of popular excess and the more staid tradition of mainstage Shakespeare, the opportunities for readers to follow alternative vectors – not from Kean to Fechter but from Fechter to *Rival Othellos* – works against the author's claim that the less "obtrusive" and "patent" representations of *Othello* are the true ones. While his review tries to maintain two clean lines of inheritance for Shakespearean characters, the print network in which that review appeared would have exposed his audience's to the more infectious vectors of burlesque performance.

Morley's scenes of contagion plotting, which prompt readers to look for "unlicensed" and unwholesome proliferation "in all directions," might also encourage readers to entertain connections between the treatment of blackness in *Othello* and the other Boucicault play mentioned in his December 7 narrative, *The Octoroon*. Such connections could be made not only through the shared performance traditions of blackface, melodrama, and minstrelsy but also through *The Examiner*'s periodical intertexts, many of which related to the United States Civil

[448] See Joyce Green MacDonald, "Acting Black: 'Othello,' 'Othello' Burlesques, and the Performance of Blackness," *Theatre Journal* 46.2 (May, 1994): 231- 249, which analyzes how theatrical practices like blackface and minstrelsy would have conditioned the reception of African American actor Ira Aldridge's Othello in the context of early 1830s *Othello* burlesques; Hazel Waters, *Racism on the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), which argues that the tendency of nineteenth-century burlesques of *Othello* to "lampoon…the character as a thick black in thick black make-up" would have "troubled the notion of a dignified but unmistakably black-skinned Othello" on the main stage, 71; Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), which outlines British engagement with and commodification of American minstrelsy traditions in the introduction to "Minstrel Trouble: Racial Travesty in the Circum-Atlantic Fold"; Robert Hornback, "Black Shakespeareans vs. Minstrel Burlesques: 'Proper' English, Racist Blackface Dialect, and the Contest for Representing 'Blackness,' 1821-1844," *Shakespeare Studies* 38 (2010): 125-160, which analyzes minstrelsy and blackface burlesque as responses to African American actors performing Shakespearean roles on the public stage; and Tracy C. Davis, "Acting Black, 1824: Charles Mathews's 'Trip to America,'" *Theatre Journal* 63.2 (2011): 163-89, which discusses the British comedian Charles Mathews's "Kentucky Roscius" character as a precursor for Shakespearean burlesques in blackface minstrelsy while also analyzing how Mathews's other African American characters reveal his interest in class (as well as racial) difference. For a foundational text on the history of minstrelsy and blackface in the American context, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

War. *The Octoroon*, of course, is a play explicitly about American chattel slavery: a historical context for Morley's narrative of its reception that would have been made even more mistakable by the December 7 coverage of the progress of the war and of Britain's potential involvement after the *Trent* affair.[449] By March 8, when Morley's narrative of *Othello* appears, coverage of the Civil War has tapered off considerably. If contemporary theatre historians were to analyze the review of Fechter's *Othello* in this issue alone, they might conclude that Victorian readers would not have seen Morley's narrative as particularly connected to discussions of American slavery. Yet reading serially in the way that Morley's contagion plotting suggests – as a narrative stream that picks up the contaminants of its surroundings – it is possible to imagine a more extensive network of connections both branching out and moving downstream, so that his reviews share a "succession of symptoms" with the texts around them. When readers encounter Morley's narrative of *Othello* through these serial vectors, they might see the narrator's two main lines of descent as intercut by a greater multiplicity of options for representing racial tension and anti-blackness, from the burlesque stages of the minor theatres and the texts of other plays to the representations of slavery and Civil War across the Atlantic.

Reading Martin's essays and Morley's reviews as serial installments in a larger narrative thus highlights the extent to which the teleological evolution of Shakespeare performance is disrupted by the force and proximity of other performance practices. Though Martin, piqued by Fechter's call for actors to erode the constraints of "tradition," claims that "an art transmitted down from Shakspeare's time through an unbroken series of able men" has allowed the English

[449] The issue devotes almost its entire political section to articles on the *Trent* affair, "The American Character," the progress of the war in Missouri, and letters from or reports on American military figures. The literary section extends this concern over the war more directly into issues of race: it includes notices for a work of fiction titled *White and Black: A Story of the Southern States*, as well as for pamphlets with titles like "The South. Its Products, Commerce, and Resources," and it devotes several columns to a lengthy review of the *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, which includes debates over the causes of phenotypic blackness.

to "accumulate traditions as to the rendering of the master-pieces of the stage," which no foreign "performer, however gifted, should despise, and on which he certainly could not improve,"[450] this attempt to re-impose an "unbroken" inheritance plot line is undermined by the starts and stops of the serial form and the diffusion of the diegetic narrative, in which traditional emulation breaks down in favor of spreading fevers and sickened tastes. Likewise, Morley's attempts to prescribe remedies seem less certain of success in the context of their serial reproduction. Any attempt to quarantine the bitter tastes and the unsteady reproductive rhythms that the minor theatres might impose on the "main" traditions of Shakespeare production is complicated by the text's place in a stream running "in all directions." Read together (as some Victorians may have read them), Martin and Morley's treatments of *Othello* offer non-lineal vectors linking the play to texts like *Oliver Twist*, *The Colleen Bawn*, and *The Octoroon*, as well as to the performance behaviors of lower-class burlesque, minstrelsy, and the music hall. At this intersection of seriality and contagion plotting, Victorian readers thus encounter an invitation to place Shakespeare in non-linear networks, drawing connections between events and actors that do not seem to be related by resemblance or tradition.

[450] Martin, *Essays on the Drama*, 108.

SCENE 2: Ghosting

Conjuring Tricks and Ghost Play in *The Moonstone* and *Great Expectations*

If contagion plotting combines with serial deferrals and juxtapositions to narrate a history that is networked, the intersection between serial reading and ghost plotting allows for a performance history of loops and layers. The figure of the ghost is one of special significance to performance scholarship. Contemporary performance theorists have made heavy use of the concept of "ghosting" to theorize the semiotics and phenomenology of theatre's reliance on recycling, repetition, and uncanny recognition. Drawing from the encounter with the Ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Herbert Blau claims that the question performance repetition raises is a ghostly one: "What, has this thing appeared again tonight?"[451] The Victorians, too, had an investment in the affordances of ghost representation. Mid-century interest in spiritualism and mesmerism combined with new technologies to prompt experiments with spirit photography, spirit rapping, and phantasmagoria shows.[452] I argue here that these visual representations of ghosts – which involved technologies like mirrored images, double exposure, and layered panes of glass – have a corollary in the narrative structuring of plots, and especially of serial plots. Analyzing scenes of plotting in Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*, I analyze how ghosting – what performance scholars would call acts of reenactment or twice-behaved behavior and what Peter Brooks would call "structural repetitions" – loops

[451] Herbert Blau, *Take Up the Bodies: Theatre at the Vanishing Point* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Gina Bloom, Anston Bosman, and William N. West point out that this quotation has become a touchstone for performance theorists. It is requoted by Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), xi, 6; by Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 7; and finally their own "Ophelia's Intertheatricality, or, How Performance is History," *Theatre Journal* 65.2 (2013): 165-182.

[452] My understanding of the complexity of these performance practices is particularly indebted to Daphne Brooks's analysis of spirit rapping and séances in the context of racial liminality. See *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

linear narrative back toward a more layered and folded representation of performance time. Working at sites where plot interacts with seriality, I also suggest some of the ways that the temporality of serial reading heightens the sense that characters' behaviors, gestures, and movements are accretive and recursive.

Great Expectations and *The Moonstone* provide interesting case studies for this exploration, because, in both novels, a troubled inheritance plot is interwoven with acts of loss and return. In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham's loss of a fiancé and of future children diverts her inheritance from the pathways of lineal descent at the same time that it turns her into a ghost. Unable to pass down her wealth to a biological child, she uses the adopted Estella to haunt her betrayers and replay her scene of betrayal. *The Moonstone* likewise makes lost inheritance its central structure. After the disappearance of a diamond (the titular Moonstone) that was willed to Rachel Verinder by her vengeful uncle, characters in the novel provide witness, engage in conjuring, and stage a series of performance reenactments to trace its path. In both novels, failures of inheritance make way for an alternative mode of plotting through the folds and cycles of the ghost.

In *The Moonstone*, ghosts are conjured by gathering performance materials – bodies, props, gestures, and language – that prompt a material return of past behaviors. The novel seeks, in the words of the steward Gabriel Betteridge, "not to present reports, but to produce witnesses," and this blueprint alerts readers to the text's structural reliance on acts of spectatorship.[453] Not only does the novel treat spectator narratives (or "eye-witness" accounts) as of the highest evidentiary value, providing nine different accounts from seven narrators, it repeatedly stages theatrical demonstrations as a way of reenacting and recovering lost events. The three Brahmin priests entrusted with the care of the Moonstone set the stage for these performances: using an

[453] Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 190.

English boy and a material resembling ink, they conjure visions of the missing diamond. This act itself is re-conjured by Penelope Betteridge, who watched the performance and who narrates it to Betteridge, who again "witnesses" it for the reader as a "rehearsing" of "hocus-pocus, like actors rehearsing a play."[454] These layered acts of spectatorship are the first of many such theatrical "conjuring acts." Later in the story, Franklin Blake reveals their usefulness in terms of plot when the discovery of a stain on a nightgown conjures a past scene:

> My eyes remained riveted on the stain, and my mind took me back at a leap from present to past. The very words of Sergeant Cuff recurred to me, as if the man himself was at my side again, pointing to the unanswerable inference which he drew from the smear on the door. "Find out whether there is any article of dress in this house with the stain of paint on it. Find out who that dress belongs to. Find out how the person can account for having been in the room, and smeared the paint between midnight and three in the morning. If the person can't satisfy you, you haven't far to look for the hand that took the Diamond." One after another those words travelled over my memory, repeating themselves again and again with a wearisome, mechanical reiteration. I was roused from what felt like a trance of many hours—from what was really, no doubt, the pause of a few moments only—by a voice calling to me.[455]

The plotting in this scene is one of witnessing and reappearance, and it allows Collins to fold his story, to halt forward momentum in order to go "back at a leap from present to past." Forward time is doubled (into both "a trance of many hours" and "the pause of a few moments"), in order to allow "[t]he very words of Sergeant Cuff" to recur to both Franklin and the readers, while present action is replaced by language and behaviors "repeating themselves again and again with a wearisome, mechanical reiteration." This scene does not just represent Cuff's words, it re-presents them, makes them present again, "as if the man himself was at my side again."

The Moonstone's "production of witnesses" allows for not only returns and repetitions but also for disappearances and loss. These two movements – the paradoxical movements of the ghost – appear spectacularly in the novel's final scene of performance. A crowd of "spectators,"

[454] *Ibid.*, 19.
[455] *Ibid.*, 306.

including the English traveler Mr. Murthwaite, watches the three Brahmins perform sacred rites before a curtain in India:

> The three men prostrated themselves on the rock, before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose—they looked on one another—they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd part, at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand white mass of the people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more. A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered, and pressed together. The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view…there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond, whose splendour had last shone on me in England, from the bosom of a woman's dress! Yes! after the lapse of eight centuries, the Moonstone looks forth once more, over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it has found its way back to its wild native land—by what accident, or by what crime, the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever. So the years pass, and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?

A live crowd of witnesses sacralizes the recovery of the Moonstone, which "looks forth once more, over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began." Yet the performance also marks loss and disappearance: for every "new strain of music" presented and object "regained," there are tracks "obliterated," men seen "no more." The diamond that "gleams" again in one place must necessarily be "lost sight of" in the place where it "last shone." In the final moments of the narrative, Collins stages a theatrical ceremony that signals the intertwining "cycles" and "repetitions" of presence, loss, and recovery involved in performance "ghosting." This "cycl[ical]" ending points toward a wider plot stretching before and after the narrative's diegesis and looping the novel's otherwise linear movement toward discovery back to the point where the "story first began."

In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham experiments with a similar method of making ghosts appear, conjuring the memories evoked by recycled performance technologies – recurring

gestures, props, and sets – to stage a meeting of past and present. Supervising episodes of "play," Miss Havisham guides Estella and Pip in reenacting her romantic betrayal. These play dates depend on the live presence of spectators and the staging of performing bodies. Miss Havisham must be there to "watch…all the time," as well as to "direct" Pip's watching, as she "ma[kes him] notice" Estella's beauty through costume design, "trying her jewels on Estella's breast and hair."[456] Miss Havisham orders their movements ("O, look at her, look at her!") and motivations ("Break their hearts my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy") the way a director blocks the bodies of her actors.[457] Props and set design, too, fold past events onto the present scene. As Pip pushes Miss Havisham "round her own room…Over and over and over again,"[458] the objects of the home are reset like props:

> I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing-table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud. So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards.[459]

The replacement of performance materials – the "jewel," "shoe," "bridal dress," and "veil" – allows for the temporal state of the "grave" and the "corpse." While time progresses (is yellowed and "trodden ragged"), it also "stands…still." Props, according to Andrew Sofer, pull temporally in two directions: retrospective (ghosted by their previous incarnations) and unidirectional (moving through time and space in front of a historically specific audience).[460] Accordingly, objects like "old wintry branches of chandeliers" and a "mouldering table" allow Pip to move

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[456] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002), 123. All citations are from this edition.
[457] *Ibid.*, 331 and 129.
[458] *Ibid.*, 128.
[459] *Ibid.*, 95.
[460] Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

backward, "pushing the chair itself back into the past, when we began the old slow circuit round about the ashes of the bridal feast," and forward, watching "Estella look…more bright and beautiful than before…under stronger enchantment," so that the "time…melted away."[461] The "play" at Satis House propels events by forcing repetitions and repeat cycles: the longer Estella and Pip act, the more the past "ruin" of Miss Havisham also becomes "an alarming fancy that Estella and [Pip] might presently begin to decay."[462]

These first episodes of play provide a key for rereading more famous scenes of performance in Dickens's novel. While Mr. Wopsle's disastrous turns on the stage are, according to Pip's tastes, unequivocal dramatic failures, their badness turns out to be good for the plot. In Pip's spectator account of *Hamlet*, for example, Dickens again uses repetition and recycled performance materials to recall Pip's own past settings and costumes:

> On our arrival in Denmark, we found the king and queen of that country elevated in two arm-chairs on a kitchen-table, holding a Court. The whole of the Danish nobility were in attendance; consisting of a noble boy in the wash-leather boots of a gigantic ancestor, a venerable Peer with a dirty face who seemed to have risen from the people late in life, and the Danish chivalry with a comb in its hair and a pair of white silk legs, and presenting on the whole a feminine appearance. My gifted townsman stood gloomily apart, with folded arms, and I could have wished that his curls and forehead had been more probable. Several curious little circumstances transpired as the action proceeded. The late king of the country not only appeared to have been troubled with a cough at the time of his decease, but to have taken it with him to the tomb, and to have brought it back. The royal phantom also carried a ghostly manuscript round its truncheon, to which it had the appearance of occasionally referring, and that too, with an air of anxiety and a tendency to lose the place of reference which were suggestive of a state of mortality. It was this, I conceive, which led to the Shade's being advised by the gallery to 'turn over!'—a recommendation which it took extremely ill. It was likewise to be noted of this majestic spirit, that whereas it always appeared with an air of having been out a long time and walked an immense distance, it perceptibly came from a closely contiguous wall.[463]

As Pip pushed Miss Havisham through space and time that seemed both to stretch and stall, the bodies on stage have "an air of having been out a long time and walked an immense distance"

[461] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 268.
[462] *Ibid.*, 123.
[463] *Ibid.*, 281-82.

while also "perceptibly c[oming] from a closely contiguous wall." Within this pleated spatio-temporality, Pip notes the presence of props appearing to belong to other times and places: the "dirty face" and the "wash-leather boots of a gigantic ancestor" acting like Miss Havisham's yellowed "silk stockings" as a sign of the previous appearances ghosting these stage objects. And if the props and behaviors in Satis House reenact Miss Havisham's aborted wedding, Mr. Wopsle's stage career tends to "reference" Pip's past life as a "townsman." The wash-leather clothing and the smudged faces of gentlemen who "have risen from the people late in life" point toward Pip's own humble beginnings and great expectations.

In Wopsle's later appearance in a Christmas pantomime, the ghostly return of past events is even more literal. Wopsle, looking out into the audience, sees the convict Compeyson sitting behind Pip "like a ghost."[464] When Pip meets him after the performance, Wopsle narrates the apparition as a series of calls to memory:

> "No, indeed. Mr. Pip, you remember in old times a certain Christmas Day, when you were quite a child, and I dined at Gargery's, and some soldiers came to the door to get a pair of handcuffs mended?"
>
> "I remember it very well."
>
> "And you remember that there was a chase after two convicts, and that we joined in it, and that Gargery took you on his back, and that I took the lead, and you kept up with me as well as you could?"
>
> "I remember it all very well." Better than he thought,—except the last clause.
>
> "And you remember that we came up with the two in a ditch, and that there was a scuffle between them, and that one of them had been severely handled and much mauled about the face by the other?"
>
> "I see it all before me."
>
> "And that the soldiers lighted torches, and put the two in the centre, and that we went on to see the last of them, over the black marshes, with the torchlight shining on their faces,—I am particular about that,—with the torchlight shining on their faces, when there was an outer ring of dark night all about us?"
>
> "Yes," said I. "I remember all that."
>
> "Then, Mr. Pip, one of those two prisoners sat behind you tonight. I saw him over your shoulder."[465]

[464] *Ibid.*, 408.
[465] *Ibid.*, 408-09.

The litany of "you remember?" and "I remember" involves Wopsle and Pip in a shared rehearsal of earlier events. This is not just a retelling but a re-witnessing, as the scene triggered by Compeyson's ghostly appearance in the audience leads to a reenactment of earlier spectatorship: what Wopsle "saw" leads Pip to "see" past events "before" him in the present.

A considerable amount of time has passed since these early events, not only for Pip but also for readers of the serial novel. The two "nights" that this scene folds together – one narrated in Chapter V and another in Chapter XLVII – span a narrative period of seventeen years in Pip's life and a serial reading period stretching from December 15, 1860 to June 5, 1861 in Dickens's weekly magazine, *All The Year Round*. As the ghost plotting within the novel leads Pip to contract the intervening period and relive the events of Chapter V, readers might also return to scenes of earlier reading, "seeing before them" the postures and objects that accompanied their first encounters with Compeyson and Magwitch six months previously. The title of the magazine encourages readers to see themselves, like Pip, pushing "round…Over and over and over again," moving through time but also in a circle, returning to scenes of past performance that illuminate and shape the meaning of present events.

The layered time allowed for by the ghost serial allows both Dickens and Collins to represent key revelations in the plot as moments of reenactment or return. In *The Moonstone*, this includes a remarkable attempt at what contemporary scholars might call "performance as research."[466] It is key for the suspense of the novel that the diamond's initial theft (when it is taken from Rachel's closet by Franklin Blake during his opium-induced sleepwalking) is unnarrated, and it is equally key for the progression of the story that readers eventually see what

[466] PaR (performance as research), or PARIP (practice as research in performance) refers to the use of performance practice as a method for studying performance. For recent articulations of this practice, see Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007) and Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter, *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research: Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

the accidental thief does not remember doing. A ghost performance allows Collins to solve this narrative problem, as Ezra Jennings directs a restaging of the events of Rachel's birthday:

> "If the same consequences follow, which followed last June," said Ezra Jennings—"if you suffer once more as you suffered then, from sleepless nights, we shall have gained our first step. We shall have put you back again into something assimilating to your nervous condition on the birthday night. If we can next revive, or nearly revive, the domestic circumstances which surrounded you; and if we can occupy your mind again with the various questions concerning the Diamond which formerly agitated it, we shall have replaced you, as nearly as possible in the same position, physically and morally, in which the opium found you last year. In that case we may fairly hope that a repetition of the dose will lead, in a greater or lesser degree, to a repetition of the result."[467]

This is a true reenactment, in Rebecca Schneider's sense of the word: "The effort to 'redo' a performance-based piece *exactly* the same as a precedent piece — that is, not to interpret it anew, but (impossibly?) to stand again in its footprint, in its precise place."[468] Jennings attempts to stage Franklin's body in the same "position" in order to "revive, or nearly revive" the "questions" and "result[s]" produced by a previous performance. Props are also "essential to the success of the experiment," as Franklin must "see the same objects about [him] which had surrounded [him] when [he] was last in the house."[469] The "stairs, the corridors, and Miss Verinder's sitting-room" work together with Franklin's sleep-deprived and opium-filled body to produce a ghost version of Franklin's first performance as unwitting thief and to allow Collins to narrate a scene from the story's past in the discourse's present.[470] Betteridge links this reenactment to the novel's previous acts of repeated witnessing when he calls it, "a conjuring trick being performed on Mr. Franklin Blake, by a doctor's assistant with a bottle of laudanum—and by the living jingo, I'm appointed, in my old age, to be conjurer's boy!"[471] Through such

[467] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 385.
[468] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), 16-17.
[469] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 390.
[470] *Ibid,*, 390.
[471] *Ibid,*, 398.

conjurings, Collins uses ghost performance to create suspenseful pleats in the novel's plot, where the present folds back to recover (and, in the way of performance, to cover for the first time) a previously hidden event.

For readers, no less than for Franklin Blake, this reenactment would be a re-presentation of behaviors that had occurred months previously. *The Moonstone*, like *Great Expectations*, first appeared in England in *All the Year Round*, where it came out in thirty-two installments from January 4 to August 8 of 1868. The diamond disappears in Chapter 11, which is split between two installments, published on February 8 and 15. Rehearsals for the reenactment of this event are likewise spread across two installments, published on July 18 and 25. These two pivotal, mirrored scenes thus contain gaps in reception that split up an otherwise cohesive unit of narrative time. The break between the July parts (parts 29 and 30) makes this disrupted temporality particularly pronounced, as Part 29 announces that a new day has begun – the day of the reenactment itself – and then immediately breaks off:

> June 25th, Monday.—The day of the experiment! It is five o'clock in the afternoon. We have just arrived at the house.
> [Break between installments]
> The first and foremost question, is the question of Mr. Blake's health.[472]

Given the week's gap between reading the information before and after the break, one can imagine some readers feeling disoriented by the beginning of Part 30. Though "first and foremost" seems to mark the beginning of a narrative, Part 30 is in fact taking up segment of narration that is already in progress, as it is the end of Part 29 that provides the temporal and spatial setting for the consideration of Franklin's health.

[472] *Ibid,*, 406-07.

Indeed, some readers may have returned to the previous part and reread the closing lines in order to resituate themselves in the plot – a possibility that is suggested by Jennings's own diegetic rereading a few lines later:

> While I write these lines, Mr. Blake is amusing himself at the billiard table in the inner hall, practising different strokes in the game, as he was accustomed to practise them when he was a guest in this house in June last. I have brought my journal here, partly with a view to occupying the idle hours which I am sure to have on my hands between this and to-morrow morning; partly in the hope that something may happen which it may be worth my while to place on record at the time. Have I omitted anything, thus far? A glance at yesterday's entry shows me that I have forgotten to note the arrival of the morning's post. Let me set this right before I close these leaves for the present, and join Mr. Blake.[473]

Collins makes use of the complex temporalities of epistolary liveness explored in Act II: the "present" moment of writing "at the time" in fact includes layers of yesterday, this morning, tomorrow morning, and last June. Within this past-present-future, Jennings' practice of reviewing his previous entries models a readerly practice of moving deliberately through layers of time, returning to past installments of his narrative to remind himself of what he has "forgotten." This narrative rereading and overwriting is synchronized with Franklin's embodied reenactments. Franklin is "practising different strokes in the game, as he was accustomed to practise them when he was a guest in this house in June last," so that he, like Jennings, can return to a previous performance and rediscover behaviors that he has forgotten. These scenes of plotting provide a pattern for how serial readers could engage with the novel – a suggestion that events can be read not only forward but also backward, as readers occupy the "idle hours" between installments of the narrative by returning to earlier passages and practices in order to follow the plot.

The repetitions and echoes involved in serial ghost plotting thus allow writers and readers to make cross-temporal connections, as readers of *Great Expectations* would have discovered in

[473] *Ibid.*, 407.

the novel's accumulation of "ghost" gestures. This embodied accretion happens across a long period of time, both within the narration and in the time of reading. In Chapter XXIX, published on March 30, 1861, Pip witnesses in Estella's expressions and gestures the uncanny return of a previous performance that he cannot place:

> What *was* it that was borne in upon my mind when she stood still and looked attentively at me? Anything that I had seen in Miss Havisham? No. In some of her looks and gestures there was that tinge of resemblance to Miss Havisham which may often be noticed to have been acquired by children, from the grown person with whom they have been much associated and secluded, and which, when childhood is passed, will produce a remarkable occasional likeness of expression between faces that are otherwise quite different. And yet I could not trace this to Miss Havisham. I looked again, and though she was still looking at me, the suggestion was gone. What *was* it?...In another moment we were in the brewery, so long disused, and she pointed to the high gallery where I had seen her going out on that same first day, and told me she remembered to have been up there, and to have seen me standing scared below. As my eyes followed her white hand, again the same dim suggestion that I could not possibly grasp crossed me. My involuntary start occasioned her to lay her hand upon my arm. Instantly the ghost passed once more and was gone. What *was* it?[474]

Initially, he attempts to "trace" this "ghost" to the "spectre" and adopted parent of Miss Havisham, to whom he has also attributed his own inheritance. This tracing, based on "resemblance" and "likeness," follows the lines of kinship as best they can be assembled in light of Estella and Miss Havisham's truncated family trees. This filiative connection fails, however, for its movements are not linear in the way Pip assumes. The "dim suggestions" of Estella's gestures "cross" or "pass" over time as something that emphatically "*was*" and is "again." They reappear again from a stagecoach window and in a carriage, each time prompting Pip to wonder, "What *was* the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed?"[475]

It is not until Chapter XLVIII (published in the same installment as Compeyson's ghostly theatrical return on June 5, 1861), that Pip is able to follow the looping motions of Estella's ghost gestures into the past. Through both a sedimentation of Estella's performances and a serial

[474] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 267-68, emphasis in original.
[475] *Ibid.,* emphasis in original.

proximity to the reenactment of the convict chase, the ghost plotting of this installment allows Pip to map a hidden connection between Estella and Mr. Jaggers's housekeeper, Molly:

> Surely, I had seen exactly such eyes and such hands on a memorable occasion very lately! He dismissed her, and she glided out of the room. But she remained before me as plainly as if she were still there. I looked at those hands, I looked at those eyes, I looked at that flowing hair; and I compared them with other hands, other eyes, other hair, that I knew of, and with what those might be after twenty years of a brutal husband and a stormy life. I looked again at those hands and eyes of the housekeeper, and thought of the inexplicable feeling that had come over me when I last walked—not alone—in the ruined garden, and through the deserted brewery. I thought how the same feeling had come back when I saw a face looking at me, and a hand waving to me from a stage-coach window; and how it had come back again and had flashed about me like lightning, when I had passed in a carriage—not alone—through a sudden glare of light in a dark street. I thought how one link of association had helped that identification in the theatre, and how such a link, wanting before, had been riveted for me now, when I had passed by a chance swift from Estella's name to the fingers with their knitting action, and the attentive eyes. And I felt absolutely certain that this woman was Estella's mother…her hands were Estella's hands, and her eyes were Estella's eyes, and if she had reappeared a hundred times I could have been neither more sure nor less sure that my conviction was the truth.[476]

Though they are kin, Estella's mother does not "resemble" Estella, nor is she "like" Estella. Instead, Molly uncannily *is* Estella: "her hands *were* Estella's hands, and her eyes *were* Estella's eyes," which Pip knows because he has "seen *exactly* such eyes and such hands" perform before.[477] The performance of the housekeeper's "fingers with their knitting action" "link[s]" together and makes present a succession of other "ghost" moments: the walk in the garden, the face in the stage-coach window, the ride in the carriage, and the meeting in a theatre with Compeyson, "like a ghost." An accumulation of Estella's gestures and behaviors over time has allowed Dickens to stage this moment, when Estella's mother connects characters and events

[476] *Ibid,*, 413-14.
[477] In *Changing Hands*, Capuano reads in these same scenes a demonstration of Pip's inability to make connections between low (Molly's working-class, Irish hands) and high (Estella's refined, white hands) and thus of a cultural anxiety about the entanglement of nature and culture in theories of Darwinian evolution. I see the plotting energies generated by "ghosts," "shadows," and repeated repertoires as more active in forging the connection between Molly and Estella than are those of likeness or filiation, but I am compelled by Capuano's attention to the racialization and class markers of Molly's hands.

across time. Even when she disappears from the room, she "remain[s]" present, and her power is not only to "reappear" but to make the past "come back again."

Performance – in Miss Havisham's play and Ezra Jennings's conjuring – thus becomes a key player in scenes of serial ghost plotting. By resetting props, repositioning bodies, and recalling witnesses, authors are able to create moments where multiple temporalities coexist – or, put another way, where multiple story events share the same space in discourse. In these scenes of ghost plotting, events move forward, or "gain" momentum, by moving "back again." The story changes by "repetition" of the "same," which is nonetheless only to "a greater or lesser degree," "nearly" the same. For, as we know of performance, the practice of repetition is already a practice of reinvention and change. On the linear axis of the novel's plot, stockings yellow and are trodden ragged. The stuffed buzzard bursts, the man who laid the carpet dies, and so Gabriel Betteridge finds it "Impossible to furnish" the house "as it was furnished last year."[478] At the same time, ghosting processes of doubling and reenactment allow for "partially reproduced…conditions" to "push" us "back into the past."[479] The gaps, lags, and repetitions of seriality encourage the reader to follow these scenes of plotting in opening up cyclical loops and entertaining cross-temporal connections, which complicate the linear, progressive structure of inheritance models.

"Ghastly Apparitions" and "Lingering Remains" in Spectator Accounts

Given the ties between theories of performance "ghosting" and a key question from *Hamlet* ("What, has this thing appeared again tonight?"), one might not be surprised to find how often the history of writing about Shakespeare performance involves the retelling of ghost

[478] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 399.
[479] *Ibid,*, 424, and Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 268.

stories. These are not only tales of loss and disappearance but also of recovery and reappearance, as critics like William N. West point out how early modern reproductions complicate investments in ephemerality as the ontological essence of performance. West advocates for a critical practice that "understand[s] performance as a potential for replaying rather than as a disappearance," which will allow critics to "discover how each performance unfolds already scored by previous performances, which are recalled in part by props, scripts, recordings, and other mediations, but foremost through the memories of the producers of theatre, the actors, and spectators."[480] This theory of "replaying" echoes many narratives produced by nineteenth-century audiences, who often turned to ghosts to explain how past performances affected the experience of present viewing. Writing in the *Saturday Review* in 1898, for example, Max Beerbohm announced his sense that, for *fin-de-siècle* spectators of Shakespeare, "The play is dead. The stage is crowded with ghosts. Every head in the audience is a heavy casket of reminiscence."[481]

If the tendency of ghosts to stall, crowd, and recall makes them a valuable motor device for plotting performance histories that are not only linear but also cyclical and recursive – so that present developments are always, already "scored by previous performances" – the temporality of serial narratives can encourage readers to approach plot as a palimpsest. While Victorian spectators do to some degree share Peggy Phelan's sense that theatrical arts are defined by their tendency to disappear (thus, George Henry Lewes writes that while "[t]he painter leaves behind him pictures to attest his power" and "the author leaves behind him books," when the "curtain falls," the actor "is annihilated. Succeeding generations may be told of his genius; none can test

[480] William N. West, "Replaying Early Modern Performances," in *New Directions in Renaissance Drama and Performance Studies*, ed. Sarah Werner (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 34-35.
[481] Max Beerbohm, *Around Theatres* (London, 1953), 8-9.

it"),[482] they are also interested in tracking the persistence of particular performances in memory (undoing Lewes's opposition between painter and actor, Morley writes of Samuel Phelps's 1857 Malvolio that, "Like a quaint portrait, in which there are master-strokes, his figure may dwell in the mind for years").[483] In what follows, I put the seriality of *The Moonstone* and *Great Expectations* in conversation with scenes of ghost plotting in two anthologies of periodical reviews: George Henry Lewes's *On Actors and the Art of Acting* and Clement Scott's *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur": A Critical Record of First-Night Productions at the Lyceum Theatre from 1871 to 1895*. In these texts, I argue, serial ghost plotting facilitates the "insistent…intertextual[ity]" and "constant…recycl[ing]" that Paul Prescott describes as characteristic of Shakespeare theatre reviewing.[484] In their "effort to resurrect the fallen, make visible the vanished, and endow the present with shape and meaning," spectators use seriality to represent Shakespeare performance as an act that both "is annihilated" and "dwell[s] in the mind for years."[485]

Such a tension between disappearance and re-presentation is on clear display in George Henry Lewes's account of Edmund Kean. Lewes began writing for the London-based *Leader*, which he co-founded with Leigh Hunt, in 1851 under the pseudonym of "Vivian." The pieces he produced under this name include reviews of particular productions, surveys of the current stage offerings, and more playfully narrative pieces about "Vivian's" adventures. In one of his earliest pieces under this name, however, Lewes writes from a much greater temporal distance about his memories of seeing Kean act as Othello decades earlier. Lewes begins his discussion of one the actor's signature roles with the suggestion that the electricity of Kean's mercurial acting has

[482] George Henry Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1880), 49.
[483] Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, 165.
[484] Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare*, 4.
[485] Prescott, *Reviewing Shakespeare*, 4; Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, 49; and Morley, *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, 165.

vanished with his death. Kean's "imitators" have "reproduced the manner and the mannerism" of his performances, "but could not reproduce the power which made these endurable."[486] If he is pessimistic about the revival of Kean's force on the stage, however, Lewes is much more optimistic about the possibilities for re-presenting his "qualities" in memory and in narrative:

> Although I was a little boy when I first saw Kean, in 1825, and but a youth when, in 1832, he quitted the stage for ever, yet so ineffaceable are the impressions his acting produced, that I feel far more at ease in speaking of his excellences and defects than I should feel in speaking of many actors seen only a dozen years ago. It will be understood that I was in no condition then to form an estimate of his qualities, and that I criticise from memory. Yet my memory of him is so vivid that I see his looks and gestures and hear his thrilling voice as if these were sensations of yesterday.[487]

While Kean's acting may be inimitable – leaving a gap in surrogation like the one lamented by Sir Theodore Martin – the impressions of his acting are "ineffaceable." This permanence boosts Lewes's authority as a narrator-witness, as he claims the point of view of one who can re-present the lost Kean's looks, gestures, and voice for the reader. Just as repeated acts of witnessing in *The Moonstone* allow "[t]he very words of Sergeant Cuff" to "recur" to Franklin Blake, "as if the man himself was at [his] side again," Lewes's past spectatorship moves long-gone performances forward in time, so that he sees and hears Kean's Othello "as if these were sensations of yesterday."[488] Using memory as a motor device for plotting, Lewes moves, like Wilkie Collins, "back at a leap from present to past," and conjures Kean's performance of the Moor as something both lost and un-losable.[489]

This opening act of re-witnessing, like similar scenes in *The Moonstone*, complicates what might otherwise appear to be linear narratives of loss or disappearance. In a later account of the French actress Rachel Félix, for example, Lewes at first seems to structure a trajectory of

[486] Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, 14-15.
[487] *Ibid.*, 15.
[488] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 306.
[489] *Ibid.*, 306.

degradation: from the "early days," when "nothing more exquisite could be heard than her elocution" to "[l]ater in her career," she when "came at last to gabble."[490] The announced end of the plot is that of a spectator who, like Mr. Murthwaite, has "lost sight of" something precious:[491] "Whoever saw Rachel play Phedre may be pardoned if he doubt whether he will ever see such acting again."[492] Yet the same "thrill" of recovered memory that animates his account of Kean also permeates Lewes's narrative of Rachel:

> In what I have to say of her, I shall speak only of her acting in its better days, for it is that to which memory naturally recurs. The finest of her performances was of Phedre. Nothing I have ever seen surpassed this picture of a soul torn by the conflicts of incestuous passion and struggling conscience; the unutterable mournfulness of her look and tone as she recognized the guilt of her desires, yet felt herself so possessed by them that escape was impossible, are things never to be forgotten. What a picture she was as she entered! You felt that she was wasting away under the fire within, that she was standing on the verge of the grave with pallid face, hot eyes, emaciated frame—an awful ghastly apparition. The slow, deep, mournful toning of her apostrophe to the sun, especially that close— *Soleil! je te viens voir pour la dernière fois*— produced a thrill which vibrates still in memory.[493]

Within a story of decline, Lewes constructs small cycles of presence, loss, and recovery similar to those Collins weaves through the ending of *The Moonstone*. While on one level Lewes paints a "picture" of forceful behaviors and powerful affects meant to contrast with her later "careless…hurry" – and thus to give us a young Rachel comparably more present and alive – the narrative of this earlier, more vital performance already contains her ghostly vanishings. Like the spectacle of the three "doomed" Brahmin priests about to be "obliterated," Rachel's very presence affects insofar as it appears to be "wasting away," "emaciated," and "standing on the verge of the grave" as a "ghastly apparition." Though the performance may disappear from the

[490] Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting,* 32.
[491] Collins, *The Moonstone*, 466.
[492] Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting,* 35.
[493] *Ibid.,* 32-33.

repertoire, the ghost plotting of this performance insists on its persistence in memory. A twice-behaved behavior, it "recurs" and "vibrates" still.

While Lewes's ghost plotting represents performing bodies through cycles of loss and recurrence, Clement Scott calls on similar motor devices to situate theatrical innovations within a palimpsest of prior iterations. Scott, like Dickens, wrote at a fast pace for an expectant audience, and ghost plotting helped both authors create consistency across layers of narrative "dashed off," in Scott's words, "at high speed and pressure."[494] While his "first-night" reviews were influential for their critiques of a new production's innovations and improvements on tradition, reading them in conversation with *Great Expectations*, as a serial history of Shakespeare performance, highlights the role repetition plays in his spectator narratives. His review of Henry Irving's *Hamlet* in 1874, for example, sets the performance in a pleated temporality similar to that of Satis House play. On the one hand, the unidirectional duration of the performance is insistently emphasized in the embodied wear and tear on actors and spectators. "Crowded" in the theatre from "half-past three in the afternoon, prepared to struggle for a performance which could not close before midnight," those on and offstage suffer from the "nervousness and paralysing excitement occasioned by such an evening" and by the "fear of being shut out from a glass of beer before midnight."[495] As Estella and Pip seem likely to decay the longer they play among the aging objects of Satis House, the long duration of the performance makes its "mark" on the audience and actors of Irving's *Hamlet*.

Yet Scott also folds the performance back, looping it through previous productions and spectator narratives. The opening paragraphs frame Irving's Hamlet through William Hazlitt's criticisms of Edmund Kean and John Phillip Kemble: "Such criticisms as these are of the highest

[494] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur"*, v.
[495] *Ibid.*, 60 and 65.

value," Scott writes, "as guides to the consideration of the Hamlet of Henry Irving, and to the previous history of the actor."[496] From this point, Hazlitt serves as a plotting device. References to his earlier narrative allow Scott to bring "previous history" to bear on the present performance:

> When we come to think of it, is it not true that the study, the experiences and the peculiar influence of Mr. Irving's art tend in the direction of such a Hamlet as was pictured by Goethe, William Hazlitt, and M. Taine? The actor who harrowed our feelings with the agonies of the conscience-stricken Mathias, conquering many prejudices by the power of his intelligence and the minute detail of his art; the poet — for it was with the inspiration of a poet that the sorrows of Charles I were realized — who expressed the exquisite influence of home life, the crushed heart on the discovery of a false friend, the distressing agony of an everlasting farewell; the artistic dreamer, who, with consummate daring, thought an English audience could be appalled — and it nearly was — by the mental terrors of Eugene Aram, the schoolmaster of Lynn — was not this the actor for an ideal Hamlet, was not this the adequate and faithful representative of the effects of moral poison? It was thus that Mr. Irving's admirers reasoned, when, considering his antecedents, they instinctively felt that his Hamlet would be the true one.[497]

The "direction" of Hazlitt's Hamlet provides the final steps of a pathway, which Scott backfills with previous performances. His adoption of the first-person plural invites readers to "remember" with him, "seeing before them" the past scenes of Mathias, Charles I, and Eugene Aram and layering them onto performances of Hamlet. In order to understand what will be effective about Irving's Hamlet, Scott suggests that reader-spectators must proceed backward, through intertextual "antecedents."

Using Hazlitt's representation of Hamlet as a touchstone, Scott emphasizes Irving's defiance of tradition while also representing his performance as familiar – as the uncanny return of something we are seeing for the first time but have somehow always known. Scott gathers a collection of repeat spectators ("those who have seen other Hamlets") who are "aghast" at Irving's eschewal of past costumes and props and his failure to repeat the behavior of previous

[496] *Ibid.*, 59.
[497] *Ibid.*, 60.

stars, particularly in the scene with the Ghost: "Mr. Irving is missing his points, he is neglecting his opportunities. Betterton's face turned as white as his neck-cloth, when he saw the Ghost. Garrick thrilled the house when he followed the spirit."[498] But as the performance progresses, Irving casts a "spell" on these "Kemble lovers," "Kean admirers," and "Fechter rhapsodists" through his ability to recall Hazlitt's vision of a Hamlet "thinking aloud."[499] The audience sees and recognizes Irvin's mind as he "look[s] into a glass, into 'his mind's eye, Horatio!' His eyes are fixed apparently on nothing, though ever eloquent. He gazes on vacancy and communes with his conscience."[500] Scott thus crafts a narrative of a performance that is transitional, tradition-defying and also familiar, citational:

> The actor of the evening had, in the teeth of tradition, in the most unselfish manner, and in the most highly artistic fashion convinced his hearers. William Hazlitt, the critic, was right. Here was the Hamlet who thinks aloud; here was the scholar, and so little of the actor. So they threw crowns, and wreaths, and bouquets, at the artist, and the good people felt that this artistic assistance had come at a turning point in the history of English dramatic art. "A pensive air of sadness should sit reluctantly on his brow, but no appearance of fixed and sullen gloom. He is full of weakness and melancholy; but there is no harshness in his nature. He is the most amiable of misanthropes." So wrote William Hazlitt of Hamlet. It might have been written to-day of Henry Irving. "I have acted Ophelia three times with my father, and each time, in that beautiful scene where his madness and his love gush forth together, like a torrent swollen with storms, that bears a thousand blossoms on its troubled waters, I have experienced such deep emotion, as hardly to be able to speak. The letter and jewel cases I was tendering him, were wet with tears." So wrote Fanny Kemble of her father, Charles Kemble. The words might have been spoken of Henry Irving, whose scene with Ophelia will never be forgotten.[501]

Scott attributes to Irving the same persuasive tool that Scott himself uses to plot the actor's performance: that of "convincing…hearers" by aligning a present performance with the narratives of previous spectators. The repetition of "So wrote…" and "it might have been

[498] *Ibid.*, 61-62.
[499] *Ibid.*, 62.
[500] *Ibid.*, 62.
[501] *Ibid.*, 66-67.

written/spoken to-day" – like Dickens's litany of "you remember?" and "I remember" – represents Irving's performance as the return of a shared vision.

The temporal and intertextual complexities of these returns become even more pronounced if Scott's narratives are approached serially. Seriality provides a particularly illuminating lens for understanding the periodical production of an author like Scott, whose status as a dramatic critic attracted a regular readership and whose habit of publishing reviews the day after opening night generated a predictable rhythm of publication. Published at a brisk pace analogous to Dickens's weekly serials, Scott's pieces for the *Daily Telegraph* not only narrativized new developments in the unfolding history of Shakespeare performance but also invited readers to make connections to previous reviews. A review of Henry Irving's production of *Othello* in 1876, for example, ghosts his review of *Hamlet* both explicitly and implicitly:

> How are we all impressed by Mr. Irving's Othello? What kind of man is he in appearance, in temperament, in balance? To his appearance very little exception can be taken, and it can be commended as well for its artistic accuracy as its daring unconventionality. No turban, no white burnouse, no sooty face, no 'thick lips,' and no curled hair! It is an Othello in scarlet, with just a suggestion of Mephistophelian glow, and the bare hint of a Zamiel-like gloom. The face is slightly tinged with walnut-brown — according to the Edmund Kean precedent, so much applauded by Coleridge — whilst the long black hair of the recent Hamlet and Macbeth waves down the Moor's back, and tumbles in masses over his temples.[502]

In one sense, Scott represents Irving's Othello as a product of heredity: this performance both follows a recognizable "precedent" and adapts it in a way that is "unconventional" without being "inaccurate." Yet this space of difference from convention also opens a void in Scott's narrative: the reiterated negative space ("No turban, no white burnouse, no sooty face, no 'thick lips,' and no curled hair!") where Irving's ancestors fail to explain what Irving does to *Othello*. The references that fill this space move readers out of a purely vertical line of descent (from Kean to Irving; from Coleridge to Scott) and into directions that are potentially more contagious and

[502] *Ibid.*, 83-84.

transversal (the connections across categories, from Irving's Othello to his impersonation of seemingly unrelated characters like Mephistopheles and Zamiel) or recursive (the theatrical material of "the long black hair" that recalls recent incarnations of Hamlet and Macbeth).

Following the ghost plotting initiated by this latter possibility, Scott's regular readers might be reminded of his earlier narratives of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* in 1874 and 1875 and feel invited to bring those scenes to bear on the present performance of *Othello*. Such a reading would turn particular moments in Scott's review into performance palimpsests. He describes Irving, for example, as "paralyse[d]" by the idea of Desdemona's betrayal: "It transfixes him with horror. He gazes into vacancy, open-mouthed, and in a daze."[503] Having been previously cued to think of Irving's Hamlet by the repeat appearance of his long black hair, readers and spectators might hear in the description of Othello "gaz[ing] into vacancy, open-mouthed, and in a daze" a close echo of Scott's earlier narrative, where he pictures Irving as "looking in a glass," his "eyes…fixed apparently on nothing," "gaz[ing] on vacancy and commun[ing] with his conscience."[504] Scott recycles his own narrative material to suggest that Irving is recycling his performance material – returning to a persistent "mannerism." This repeated set of behaviors pointed him in the right "direction" for Hamlet but derail his Othello, as Scott uses his layering of Irving's past and present behaviors to conclude that, "the physical necessities required for a Hamlet and an Othello are not to be compared."[505]

As in Scott's reviews, the repetition of key phrases and behaviors creates a large-scale, cyclical plot structure for Lewes's performance narratives, as he consistently routes new performances through the narrative of Edmund Kean with which he began. The pattern is initiated across the essays on Kean and Rachel, which open with parallel comparisons. Kean

[503] *Ibid.*, 85.
[504] *Ibid.*, 62.
[505] *Ibid.*, 86.

"was an actor of such splendid endowments in the highest departments of the art, that no one in our day can be named of equal rank, unless it be Rachel, who was as a woman what he was as a man,"[506] while Rachel:

> was the panther of the stage; with a panther's terrible beauty and undulating grace she moved and stood, glared and sprang…Those who never saw Edmund Kean may form a very good conception of him if they have seen Rachel. She was very much as a woman what he was as a man. If he was a lion, she was a panther.[507]

Lewes does not quite suggest here that to see Rachel is to see Kean: their movements are analogous enough to allow spectators to form a good "conception" of a past performance through a present one, but not to recreate the same conditions of reception. Yet Lewes's repeated construction of Rachel as "a woman" who was what Kean was "as a man" creates a discursive echo that is even closer than the similarity he attributes to the two actors' performances. Like Scott's repeated gazing, this recurring analogy invites readers to read back and forth between the two narratives, filling in their understanding of Kean's "thrilling" voice through the re-presentation of Rachel's "thrill[ing]" memory, and vice versa.

Such returns become a repeated plotting mechanism across the long arc of Lewes's essays, with the cycle of recurrence coming to circle particularly around Edmund Kean's Othello. Lewes's account of William Macready opens by repeating the pairing of Kean and Rachel ("In Edmund Kean and Rachel we recognize types of genius; in Macready I see only a man of talent"),[508] before zeroing in on Kean and his ineffaceable impressions ("he gave the stamp of his own great power to Shylock, Othello, Sir Giles Overreach, and Richard; but he could not infuse life into Virginius or Tell, nor would he, perhaps, have succeeded…the fifty

[506] Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, 13-14.
[507] *Ibid.*, 31.
[508] *Ibid.*, 39.

other parts which Macready created").[509] The callback to Kean is even more explicit and repeated in Lewes's essay "Foreign Actors on Our Stage," in which he discusses Charles Fechter's Othello:

> Kean's tones, 'O my fair warrior!' are still ringing in my ears, though a quarter of a century must have elapsed since I heard them; but I cannot recall Fechter's tones, heard only the other night…To think of what Edmund Kean was in this act! When shall we see again that lion-like power and lion-like grace—that dreadful culmination of wrath, alternating with bursts of agony—that Oriental and yet most natural gesture, which even in its naturalness preserved a grand ideal propriety (for example, when his joined uplifted hands, the palms being upwards, were lowered upon his head, as if to keep his poor brain from bursting)—that exquisitely touching pathos, and that lurid flame of vengeance flashing from his eye? When shall we hear again those tones: 'Not a jot, not a jot'—'Blood, Iago, blood' — 'But oh, the pity of it, Iago! the pity of it'?[510]

Lewes echoes his earlier claim that he can "hear [Kean's] thrilling voice as if these were sensations of yesterday" with the claim that "Kean's tones…are still ringing in [his] ears," as his reference to Kean's "lion-like" gestures recalls his suggestion that "[i]f [Kean] was a lion, [Rachel] was a panther."[511] Like *The Moonstone*, Lewes's narrative of theatre history insistently restages a pivotal scene of performance, re-presenting its sounds and movements while also adding the sediment of new details in his narration of additional "tones" and "gestures." At the same time, references to Rachel become less frequent, so that what was initially a twin echo sounds increasingly like a solo voice.

In his introductory epistle (addressed to Anthony Trollope), Lewes marks these patterns of incompletion and sedimentation as a plot structure for the republished collection of his individual essays. Addressing his misgivings and justifications for the anthology, Lewes names

[509] *Ibid.*, 39-40.
[510] *Ibid.*, 132-34.
[511] *Ibid.*, 15 and 31.

repetition and accumulation as the principles that "weave together several detached papers into a small volume":[512]

> You will understand how there must necessarily be repetitions, in articles written on the same subject at widely different periods; and how the treatment of each subject can never pretend to be exhaustive in periodical papers. Let me, in conclusion, add that they were written during a period of dramatic degradation. The poetic drama had vanished with Macready and Helen Faucit, and its day seemed, to many, a day which would never recur. With 'Hamlet' and 'Othello' drawing enthusiastic crowds during a long season, and with a play by Tennyson promised for the next, the day, let us hope, has once more dawned![513]

According to Lewes's framing, repetition and incompletion are linked qualities of periodical publication: the spectator returns to the same narratives over time as a way of filling in what has been lost or forgotten in previous installments. These smaller cycles of reiteration are part of a larger arc of reappearance charted by this republication, as Lewes renarrates the course of theatre history as a process of "vanish[ing]" and "recur[ring]," with only periodical "degradation." The seriality of Lewes's narrative, like that of *The Moonstone*, includes both implicit and explicit invitations to read Shakespeare performance backwards as well as forwards. The incantatory questions that punctuate Lewes's essay on Fechter ("When shall we see again?" and "When shall we hear again?") appear not only as a rhetorical marker of embodied disappearance but also as a cue for a reading (and rereading) practice aimed at cyclical accrual. In the waiting time between serial installments, readers of Lewes's essays, like readers of Collins's novel, had the option of returning to previous essays that re-present Kean's performance as a way of "seeing again" and "hearing again" the gestures and tones that have ostensibly vanished. Though these acts of rereading might be aimed at a recovery of Kean, they could also pick up other voices along the way, as they are reminded that seeing the panther, Rachel, was another way of experiencing the "thrill" of the lion, Kean. Although Lewes does not re-invoke her name as often as he does

[512] *Ibid.*, 5-6
[513] *Ibid.*, 9.

Kean's (indeed, in his introductory epistle he has swapped in the English actress Helen Faucit), the fugitive echo of her French tones is already built into the structure of repetitions Lewes has built.

Read in the context of such sedimentary serial structures, Scott's own theatre history appears increasingly preoccupied with the memories triggered by re-witnessing the same actors, plays, and theatrical spaces. For it is in his account of *King Arthur* in 1895, the last in the series of reviews, that Scott puts the ghost plot into its fullest effect. The layering begins in Scott's representation of the audience. After listing several categories of attendees, from royalty to musicians, Scott turns his attention to the long-time spectators:

> As to old playgoers, steady, loyal, consistent old playgoers, who shall count them? Some there were who knew the Lyceum and its history long before Henry Irving and Ellen Terry were names to venerate. One, at least, had sat in this very theatre, which has remained the same except in decoration and modern detail, during every change of stress and circumstances, and on every important first night, whether it was under Charles Dillon, or Charles Fechter, or E.T. Smith, ever since the year 1848, when Madame Vestris was playing in Planché's extravaganzas, and Charles Mathews was acting "Used Up." Prominent in the stalls was a retired actress, who had been in this very theatre — Fechter's incomparable heroine in "The Duke's Motto," and "Bel Demonio," and who is to devote her daughter to the stage next Thursday.[514]

In his quest to represent the accumulated experiences of these "old playgoers," Scott creates a temporal layering similar to that of Satis House, where time stands still (stays "steady" and "consistent" as the theatre "remained the same" and saw repeated "first night[s]") and moves forward (modernizing "decoration" and "detail" and undergoing "change[s] of stress and circumstance"). The passage recovers 1848 through the persistence of its performance materials and theatrical décor (the same bodies that have "sat" and acted in the same "theatre") while also marking implicitly the dissonance between that moment and this one: the aging of "old"

[514] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur"*, 373.

spectators and "retire[ment]" of actors signaling, like the trodden and yellowed props of Satis House, the passage of time.

The temporal loops and layers that structure this opening section develop as the account continues, and draw the narrative into ghostly cycles of disappearance and reappearance. Directly after his reflection on old playgoers, Scott attempts to shift into forward gear:

> But enough of recollections started by that remarkable Lyceum audience. They would fill a bulky volume. The curtain is about to rise on "King Arthur," a drama by James Comyns Carr. At last "King Arthur" is to be acted at the Lyceum; at last Henry Irving is to be the 'half-divine' ruler and founder of the Table Round! At last Ellen Terry is to be the Queen Guinevere we have pictured in our imaginations these countless years.[515]

But despite this resolution to look forward to a "curtain…about to rise," a drama "about to be acted at the Lyceum," and actors who "at last" are "to be" Arthur and Guinevere, the plot that follows refuses to retain the future infinitive tense. The "Queen Guinevere we have pictured in our imaginations these countless years" moves Scott into a negative future infinitive: a reflection on the hopes and desires spectators have had for an Arthurian play, and the disappearance of many of those expectations, as things that "were not to be."[516] Once King Arthur enters the scene, these ghosts of performances never seen are joined by the ghosts of performances once seen. As Scott introduces a "a Merlin swathed like one of the old witches in 'Macbeth'" and an Arthur in black armor who "suggest[s]" "Marcellus or Bernardo waiting for the ghost outside the turrets of Elsinore in 'Hamlet,'" readers who have already been primed to read the Lyceum's present through its past might recall Scott's narratives of the *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* twenty years ago.[517]

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[515] *Ibid.*, 373.
[516] *Ibid.*, 374.
[517] *Ibid.*, 375 and 376.

As the narrative progresses, these past "suggestions" and "recollections of Shakespeare" become even more identical with the present performances.[518] During the description of the scenery for a garden scene, the ghosts of Arden appear so present as to provoke a momentary confusion of identities:

> The winding forest ways, the peeps of sky-line through the old trees, the masses of May and hawthorn blossom, that seem to scent the very air, make an enchanting picture. Of course, here the love-sick Queen brings her white-robed attendants to sing and talk of love. Where are we? At Camelot, or in the Forest of Arden? What is it? The play of "King Arthur," or "As You Like It?" Who are these? Guinevere, or Rosalind; Clarissant, or Celia? What does it all mean? Is not Dagonet Touchstone? and do we not here perceive a Touchstone in Dagonet? and an Orlando in Lancelot?[519]

Dickens, as I observed earlier, repositions props in order to re-present past affects and behaviors.[520] For Scott, the materials of the scene – the "winding forest ways, the peeps of sky-line through the old trees, the masses of May and hawthorn blossom" – conjure a past performance of the Forest of Arden, so that multiple characters, plays, and places momentarily coexist. Scott attempts to move away from the temporal and spatial complexity of this moment ("However, let that pass"), but only to pursue an even more complex haunting. As Dickens uses the housekeeper's knitting to conjure Estella's waving, Scott uses the present stage behaviors of Mordred's "accus[ing] Lancelot of his disloyalty" and "pour[ing] poison into the ear of the blameless King" to summon Othello's jealous rages: "We have left 'Faust,' and 'Hamlet,' and 'As You Like It,' and now we are plunged into the fierce passions of 'Othello.' There they are all — Othello, and Iago, and Desdemona, and Emilia, and Cassio, and the rest of them."[521]

The stage of the Lyceum is so filled with ghosts as the curtain falls on Scott's final narrative that it seems as if time has curled back onto itself so that all of the accumulated

[518] *Ibid.*, 377.
[519] *Ibid.*, 379.
[520] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 95, and Collins, *The Moonstone*, 391.
[521] Scott, *From "The Bells" to "King Arthur"*, 379.

gestures, bodies, and materials of his life of theatre-going appear again together. This moment is not only a culmination of Scott's narrative – where a lifetime's worth of theatrical experience and attendant change is capped by a massive performance séance – but also as an expression of what serial ghost plotting can enable. By employing structural repetitions and devices of connectedness across his reviews, Scott uses ghosting to produce a narrative of Shakespeare that stalls and moves backward in other directions than those suggested by the linear development of one particular play. Herbert Blau asks of the ghosts of performance, "What, has this thing appeared again tonight?" And Clement Scott answers, "There they are all."

EPILOGUE

After the Curtain

> The triumphs of dead actors live for us only in pictures, in half-obliterated tradition, and in the pages of the few dramatic critics who happen to be still readable on account of their style. We believe in the dignity of Kemble's declamation, in the power of Macready's pathos, in the thrilling fury of the elder Kean and the marvel of his voice, because critics like Hazlitt and Lewes have described them.
>
> -- Desmond MacCarthy, "From the Stalls" (1920)

One of the ways performance becomes meaningful is through the stories we tell about it. This is true not only for the print and stage audiences of the nineteenth century – a period, as I have argued, in which spectators and novelists made the synergy between narrative and performance particularly productive – but also for contemporary critics. Scholars of the performance past, after all, often look through the lens of audience narratives to learn what happened on history's stages and what it meant to those who witnessed it. While our relationship to this textual mediation might appear in some ways to be a regrettable obstacle to empirical accuracy, recent performance historiographers have urged scholars to see it as an opportunity to ask a different set of questions. How do the set of representational strategies in circulation at a specific historical moment affect how audiences shape the meaning of performances and frame their own participation in the spectacle? How might the techniques that an actor or spectator has used – of point of view, address, or emplotment – affect how later theatre historians will understand the performances they narrate? What is needed to explore these questions may not be

tools for filtering out spectator interventions and literary conventions but rather methods of enhancing them – of making such discursive features more meaningful.

In *Spectator Narratives*, I have turned the spotlight on three parituclar features of nineteenth-century theatre writing. Act I examines point of view: both the depersonalized perspective of what Audrey Jaffe calls "semi-omniscience" and an embodied, partial perspective that marks narrators through the immobilities and boundaries of class, gender, and disability. First analyzing fictional passages where Fanny Price, Jane Eyre, and Lucy Snowe appear peculiarly disembodied – able to observe others while escaping observation themselves – I highlight how impersonal, penetrating spectatorship bolsters the authority of a would-be omniscient narrator or focalized protagonist. These investigations of novelistic semi-omniscience open up readings of spectator narratives in which diarists and reviewers like Henry Crabb Robinson and Clement Scott present their theatrical viewing as depersonalized reflections of performance meaning. Semi-omniscient spectatorship, I argue, allows these spectators to delimit horizons and stress particular vantage points while maintaining a pose of narrative objectivity. Act I, Scene 2 revisits the same novels as Scene 1 but with a difference, as I examine moments where Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë present Fanny, Jane, and Lucy as insistently embodied, circumscribed, or immobilized. I argue that these qualities, usually thought to be opposite of those demanded by omniscience, facilitate an alternative form of narrative authority derived from an embodied, partial perspective. While anxieties about the public bodies of Victorian actresses made it difficult for them to disappear from view in the way that omniscience demanded, memoirs by actresses like Marie Bancroft, Fanny Kemble, and Lady Maud Tree use embodied, partial perspective to stage scenes of spectatorship that leverage their narrators' limitation, sensation, and immobility. This less panoptic point of view allows actresses to

maintain compliance with conventions of gender and genre while also telegraphing less feminine desires and ambitions.

Act II takes up epistolarity to consider how late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century audiences circulated letters, reprinted them in memoirs and diaries of theatregoing, or used them as the basis for fictional narratives about performance. After an explication of the spatiotemporality of "epistolary liveness" in Scene 1, Act II, Scene 2 explores Fanny Burney's attenuated and ambivalently collective liveness as a quality particular to her domestic and amateur performance narratives. Faced with the difficulties of female authorship in a public collective, I argue that Burney turns her position as an amateur into a tool for preserving theatrical liveness in the domestic spaces of the home. Act II, Scene 3 moves to the Victorian period to analyze how epistolary techniques helped Wilkie Collins and Fanny Kemble interject scenes of live performance into retrospective narratives. Both authors, I argue, make use of episolatrity's orientation toward future insecurity and bodily vulnerability to endow representations of performance with particular urgency. For Collins, diegetic letter writing and epistolary segments endow Magdalen's acting with a charged, unpredictable liveness that creates moments of narrative uncertainty. A similarly vulnerable presence permeates Kemble's representations of her acting in the belatedly composed memoir of her girlhood. Breaking from the retrospective voice of her mature narrator into the younger narrating self who composed the letters, Kemble represents her decision to go on stage as a live event, fraught with financial and relational precarity. In both Scenes, epistolary performance narratives lean into the contingencies of embodiment and emphasize a narrator or character's presence in structures of gender, class, and disability.

Act III asks how the conditions of serial publication and reception affected the way Victorians plotted Shakespeare performance history. Scene 1 examines serial contagion plotting by putting pressure on intersections between diegetic structures of performance contagion (scenes where behaviors, gestures, or movements are transmitted through person-to-person contact or miasmic infection) and the gaps and networks of serial publication. After reading performance histories in *Daniel Deronda* and *Bleak House*, I analyze spectator narratives from Henry Morley and Sir Theodore Martin, in which scenes of contagion allow spectators to imagine a Shakespearean performance that moves laterally through embodied and environmental contact rather than progressing forward through theatrical innovation and improvement. Scene 2 takes up a second plot figure – and one with which Shakespeare performance scholars have often engaged and struggled – in the appearance of the ghost. Examining those moments in which scenes of play and reenactment meet gaps and repetitions in serial structure, I argue that ghost plotting allows authors to fold chronological time back on itself, creating recursive cycles and layered scenes of performance. For Dickens and Collins, I suggest that repetition and reenactment allows for the connective layering of character behaviors and events, while for George Henry Lewes and Clement Scott, ghost plots enable reflection and nostalgia for a performance past. Attention to the serial layers in these texts, I suggest, offers a way of tracking how theatre events we might normally think of as non-Shakespearean – like the production of J. Comyns Carr's *King Arthur* reviewed by Scott – nonetheless reanimate and restage Shakespeare performance meanings.

As a way of drawing this particular story of performance to a close, I address my curtain call to future researchers who might work at the intersections of spectatorship, performance, and narrative in the nineteenth century and beyond. Returning to each of my three acts to play out

some implications of the methods and objects they develop, I offer possible stage directions for blocking new critical movements in theatre, fiction, and autobiography.

Act I

What can a spectator's point of view tell us about how to read their narratives? Analysis in Act I revealed some of the ways that an author's choice of perspective sets the stage for future readings of the performances they represent: by focalizing particular actors or by eliding their own role in a performance, theatre writers frame and block the discursive scenes that later critics will encounter. Critiquing a historical spectator's point of view thus facilitates reflection about the replication of their perspectives in our own histories. Clement Scott and Henry Crabb Robinson, as we have seen, position themselves as authorities on Henry Irving and Sarah Siddons in ways that later theatre histories have often echoed. Extrapolating from these case-specific observations, how might performance scholars use spectator narrative and point of view as a starting point for sustained historiographical studies?

One realm of possibility lies in a "suspicious" mode of reading attuned to the way contemporary theatre histories may reproduce the authority of certain would-be omniscient critics. What might it look like, for example, to consider spectator narratives – the Victorians' as well as our own – through the lens of what Alex Woloch calls "character-space" and "character-system"? In *The One vs. the Many*, Woloch redefines literary characterization in terms of a distributional matrix in which the narrative unequally apportions attention to different characters, who jostle for space in the fictional world.[522] In accounts of Victorian theatre history, the

[522] Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Woloch defines "character-space" as the intersection of an implied, infinitely complex human personality and the finite, circumscribed narrative form and "character-system" as the arrangement of multiple character-spaces into a unified narrative structure.

narrator often stages a comparable jostling: the theatrical protagonist (Garrick, Kean, Irving, Olivier) vs. the many of the supporting casts and provincial theatres. By training critical attention on the strategies spectator-narrators use to centralize some figures, performance historiographers could track the techniques used to marginalize or flatten other figures – as Jane Eyre flattens the Dowager and Clement Scott sets aside Arthur Pinero. This shift in framing turns the biases and mediation that appear to be obstacles to one kind of knowledge (access to the "real" event) into tools for producing another sort of knowledge: insight into the investments that led spectators to apportion unequal significance to various performers and performances, in ways that often parallel the asymmetrical system of class, gender, race, and nationality in Victorian England. This demystifying tactic still has much political utility in studies of Victorian theatre: an arena in which, as Katherine Newey points out, the authority of (predominately white male) critics and reviewers has succeeded in relegating many women and artists of color to the wings of theatre history.[523]

Another, more "reparative" historiography might begin with an examination of embodied points of view, which embrace rather than attempt to flee the limitations of character. Looking to autobiographical writing by spectators and performers who occupied tenuous positions in the Victorian theatre, critics may see uses of embodied, partial perspective that register fantasies, desires, and protests not through overt critique but through apparent narrative compliance with social restrictions. As they construct a gaze marked by longing and limits rather than penetration and mobility, nineteenth-century actresses often use the spectator's point of view to bring into view the thwarted ambitions they could only claim at great social risk. In these accounts, self-marginalization is a strategy. Narrators – like the one in Maud Tree's "Herbert and I" – may

[523] Newey makes this point in her study of women playwrights during the Victorian era, *Women's Theatre Writing in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

place themselves on the wings rather than center stage in order to draw the reader's gaze to the pillars, walls, and locked gates that obstruct the actress's view and hinder her movement. Analyzing embodied, partial perspective as tactical thus allows critics to visualize the loss and anger that such spectator narratives telegraph while also registering the subjects' own desire to remain out of the spotlight.

This second possibility also opens doors for new studies of the nineteenth-century novel, where critics might consider how scenes of spectatorship help construct forms of narrative authority that less panoptic and immaterial in nature than omniscience: forms that derive not from "a fantasy…of unlimited knowledge and mobility; of transcending the boundaries imposed by physical being" but precisely from the character's "bound and embodied condition."[524] For scholars particularly interested in the intersection of theatre and the novel, this angle of approach reveals that many of the spectatorial elements that enter the novel with performance – during the Mansfield theatricals, the Thornfield charades, or the Rue Fossette burlesque – do not so much swing the politics of the novel in one direction or another but enable particular claims to narrative authority that can be wielded for a variety of ends.

Act II

If performance scholars can learn from narrative how individual spectators craft discursive points of view, what might come of thinking about the collective stories that audiences tell as performance histories in letters? Epistolary liveness, as I suggested in Act II, may provide some avenues for reevaluating representations of presence and precarity, particularly in women's theatre writing in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It may

[524] Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*, 6 and 11.

also help performance scholars and editors reflect on their analytical framing of women's theatre writing.

Consider, for example, how a value for a certain kind of "liveness" affects the editorial choices made by Lars Troide in his recent editions of Burney's early journals and letters, published in five volumes from 1988 to 2012. Framed as restoration projects, these editions attempt to dig back through Burney's own emendations of the journals later in her life, as well as through the interventions of subsequent editors, in order to "recover, as far as possible, [Burney's] original text."[525] *Early Journals and Letters* is itself, therefore, an edited epistolary text – and a text, like Burney's own, that is invested in the authenticity that liveness can confer on amateur, domestic performances. Briefly considering Troide's editorial choices through the comparative method of analysis developed in Act II, I find that, in his preference for earlier, less edited and revised versions of her accounts, Troide attempts to offer his readers a particular, "live" version of Burney.

As Troide selects and annotates individual letters and diary entries to create a narrative whole, he creates his own play of absence and presence by following Burney's refusal to repeat narrative details. In places where letters and journal entries describe the same events, Troide does not include both narratives. Appended to the 1775 letters describing performances of Agujari and Gabrielli are several editorial comments notifying the reader that "FB repeats the contents of this letter in the Journal" and that "FB's journal account of Agujari has been omitted."[526] Troide thus emulates Burney's preference in *Evelina* for a principle of non-duplication. In its aversion to reproducing the same performance twice, this principle seeks to imbue narrated events with a

[525] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 1, xxix. Troide tracks these revisions and editorial changes in his "History of the Manuscripts and Earlier Editions," xxv-xxviii.
[526] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 163 and 156.

certain liveness created by unitary presence. As opposed to the mediation involved in a recorded performance or a recirculated anecdote, these events are present for one passage only.

Yet if the effect of this unitary presence is created by elision and absence, Troide in many ways works against Burney's desire to use absence as a way of retracing and redirecting her narrative. In Troide's editorial notes, readers are not invited to consider the absence of any narrative differences that Troide has omitted between Burney's letter and journal accounts, but rather the many performances torn out of the narrative by Burney's earlier editorial purge. Troide explains in his preface to the first volume that:

> The entire journal for 1776 and half or more of 1772 and 1777 have been destroyed totally. The pages remaining from these years, about 800, contain 4,000 lines heavily obliterated by Madame d'Arblay. On the other hand, she has retraced the writing on many pages where the original ink has faded to near-illegibility. In some instances it is evident that the "retracing" is in fact a substitution for the original writing, which has virtually disappeared. (The present editor has tried to be alert to these deceptive passages, reading beneath the substitutions where possible.)[527]

Whereas Troide emulated Burney's refusal to repeat, here he resists her attempts to retrace and replace. An older Madame d'Arblay, like her fictional heroine Evelina, attempts to retrospectively highlight particular lines of narrative continuity and to cause key performances to "recur…for ever!" while others become obliterated "Nothing[s]."[528] Troide, on the other hand, favors the "original writing" of Burney's younger self. As he declines to make the later author's retracing visible to a reader by noting which passages she chose to emphasize, and as he subverts her later "substitutions" by "reading beneath" accumulated layers in search of earlier articulations, Troide argues for the superior authenticity of the unmediated, amateur Fanny Burney of 1776 over the "deceptive," professional Madame d'Arblay of later years. His own

[527] Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 1, xxiii.
[528] Burney, *Evelina*, 173-74, and Burney, *Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney*, Volume 2, 210.

"present" editions and editing, he claims, offer the reader Burney not only restored to her amateur state but also live in her unitary presence.

In other words, while Troide's construction of the "present" of performance narrative makes use of many of the same patterns of presence and absence that Burney favors in her epistolary construction, he resists her more flexible understanding of liveness as extendable and retraceable. Like Burney, he seeks to make domestic space and amateur time a particularly rich site for experiencing live performance; and yet, like Samuel Crisp, he prefers Burney's descriptions of these events to be without "delay" or "substitution." This critical example suggests that critical readings of spectator narratives may help clarify differences in historical understandings of the live and prompt contemporary performance theorists to historicize their own investments in co-presence.

If such a meta-critical goal for performance historiography gets an assist from the tools of literary studies, the pass is not without some benefit for critics of the novel. Victorian epistolarity, Act II demonstrates, is not an evolutionary curiosity – a vestige of earlier, less sophisticated narrative forms. Epistolary narrative persists in Victorian fiction because it is well adapted for particular narrative tasks, especially for complicating presence and closure. In *Evelina* and *No Name*, epistolarity allows authors to push the plot forward through scenes of convergence (as Burney does) or to pause the plot in moments of divergence and uncertainty (as Collins does). By reading out of chronological sequence and across traditional period divides, Act II experimented with how an interest in theatre and performance suggests different trajectories and even period divides than might be generated by looking at the novel in generic isolation.

Act III

Just as epistolarity gives spectators and scholars new ways of thinking about the spatio-temporality of a particular performance event, seriality provides structures and plots for tracking the spatio-temporality of performance history. Seriality may often be associated with narrative suspense and forward momentum, but, as Act III reveals, the Victorian desire for stories of linear progress is not an exclusive one. While nineteenth-century spectators engaged with Darwinian evolution as a way of understanding the changes they witnessed from the galleries, pits, and stalls of London theatres, they also tested such concepts of inheritance against other devices for sequencing and situating the history of Shakespearean performance. Seriality not only propels plots onward through the forward-looking reading practices generated by suspense, but also encourages the less linear patterns of intertextual reading and rereading.

What new ways of plotting performance history does this broader nineteenth-century repertoire make available? For Shakespeare performance scholars, contagion and ghosting offer motor devices for propelling histories through other vectors than those provided by the vertical line of Shakespeare plays (as in a study of *Hamlet* across the ages) or the horizontal line of a particular period (as in studies of Victorian Shakespeare). This is a possibility for which Schoch advocates: though "institutional practices and conceptual biases" make it difficult, he argues, it is nonetheless "possible to imagine performance histories that do not cling to periodization and that do not regard theatrical performances as performances of *plays*."[529] Scholars might imagine such alternative histories by following spectators who link *Othello* with *Oliver Twist*, *The Octoroon*, and a proliferation of stage burlesques. This contagion history could explore how issues of gender, race, and class within Shakespeare's play get taken up in spectator narratives about the

[529] Schoch, *Writing the History of the British Stage*, 7.

mixed, miasmatic spaces of minor theatres or the promiscuous print and performance cultures that juxtaposed Shakespearean tragic heroes with comic, low-class villains and stage minstrelsy. Or else they might take a cue from Clement Scott and fold *As You Like It* onto works like J. Comyns Carr's *King Arthur*, in order to excavate how spectators see the layered temporalities of medieval, early modern, and Victorian performance through the return of performance roles and settings. These ghost histories might analyze how spectators' use of narrative repetition is both a technique for preserving some memories over others and also a device that echoes less cited figures in Shakespeare history: like the voice of Rachel Félix as Phèdre vibrating across Lewes's invocations of Edmund Kean.

It is even possible to imagine studies of Shakespeare plays in performance that self-consciously make use of serial form: putting other visual and textual materials in proximity to segments of the play text, rather than sequestering reception histories in the critical introduction. Anita Gonzalez's web project *19th Century Acts!* offers one model of what these non-linear performance histories might look like.[530] Navigable through categories of "People," "Contexts," "Reconstructions," and "Mapping," the website's archive is a resource for generating non-chronological arrays of photos, texts, and links. Such a platform might allow readers to create new performance paths through contagious juxtaposition (as the algorithm creates new vectors of contact between actors and images) or ghostlike looping (as the same images or texts pop up again and against across different viewing pathways).

Experiences of theatregoing in the nineteenth century harmonized with both these types of serial viewing: spectators not only sought out mixed playbills that juxtaposed what would now appear to be wildly different theatrical genres but also returned to see the same productions many times over, much as contemporary viewers might see the same movie several times, whether at

[530] Anita Gonzalez, *19th Century Acts!*, Accessed April 2, 2018, http://19thcenturyacts.com/

the cinema or at home. This may help account for why many Victorian serial novels have an interest in plotting the transmission of behaviors, gestures, words, and bodies. Act III opens up some new modes of reading performance histories in such novels – from the clearly theatrical scenes in *Great Expectations* to less obvious moments of surrogation and reenactment in a range of nineteenth-century fictions.

These particular historiographical possibilities have arisen from a consideration of nineteenth-century texts; but it is likely that analyses of narrative modes and forms in other periods would yield an even wider repertoire of spectator narrative strategies. How do Gothic modes of narration turn up in audience representations of stage melodrama, for example? How might spectators draw on stream of consciousness and pastiche to shape the meaning of twentieth- and twenty-first-century performance? In tracing how audiences represented performance through omniscience, epistolarity, and serial plotting, *Spectator Narratives* thus aims more broadly at developing an adaptable analytical tool for studying performance and narrative. To learn new ways of telling the story of historical stages, we can look to – and look with – spectators.

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