

Automatically Popular:
Exoticism and Mass Media in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction

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INTRODUCTION

The Familiar Face of Exoticism

Early nineteenth-century British fiction began supplementing the language of progress and civilization with another kind of image to describe the emerging mass media. Fiction began using imagery associated with oriental, uncivilized, barbaric, and savage motifs to narrate the foreign characteristics of its own reproducible print medium. This strategy emerged with the application of technologies like the steam engine that dramatically increased the scale of production and distribution of mechanically reproducible media. As Britain's industrializing economy expanded British imperialism, its fiction incorporated the resulting influx of foreign imagery as the parallel expansion of its cultural domain. Even as this material was used to reinforce a central national identity, the representation of mass media as foreign simultaneously invoked the power of fiction to destabilize cultural traditions as the condition of expansion.

The connection I propose between exoticism in fiction and the rise of mass media will appear less far-fetched from the outset if we recall how dramatically our present-day world is transformed by digital media; because of the internet, changes in the practices of reading and writing may be measured on an almost daily scale. In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the mechanization of the technologies for producing print and other types of media similarly changed so rapidly that a literary culture unlike anything that had ever existed before came into being as if by magic. Charles Knight was one of

many who believed that the mass production of print media afforded a unique opportunity for the advancement of civilization. Even if one agreed with Adam Smith that “all nobler parts of the human character may be, in a great measure, obliterated and extinguished in the great body of the people” as the nation’s division of labor increased, the sudden possibility of cheap mass produced periodicals appeared to offer the means of countering the “mutilating” effects of labor with education (736-7). Affordable print material seemed to promise a way of counter-balancing, if not altogether eliminating, “the gross ignorance and stupidity which, in a civilized society, seem so frequently to benumb the understandings of all the inferior ranks of people” (Smith 740). And indeed it is difficult to escape the similarity between the early nineteenth-century belief in the power of technology and industry to overcome ignorance and suffering and the late twentieth-century belief in the power of the Internet to overcome the social injustice and geography.¹

Beneficent forecasts about the educational reach of mass print culture appeared to remove Smith’s indictment of the division of labor and encouraged the unrestrained celebration of the economic growth it made possible. Knight’s response is characteristic in its optimism, but unique in its emphasis on the “copying” process of print media as the key that will make the good thing of education available to the laboring classes:

It has been said that the bent of civilization is to make good things cheap. [...] the more the ‘bent of civilization’ leads to an extension of demand, the more will scientific knowledge, and the division of labour, be called into employment. But this is peculiarly the case in all *copying* processes, among which printing is the foremost. (127)

The rhetoric of civilization and progress, illustrated in this passage, climaxed in The Great Exhibition of 1851.² Its purpose was to display Great Britain’s imperialism as the

greatest synthesis between technology and art ever achieved. Knight identifies the reproducibility of print media in particular as the vanguard of changing economies of scale that would advance all branches of civilization. His vision of knowledge increasing in proportion to the increasing divisions of labor also indirectly implies that print media will transform existing economic relationships from top to bottom. It is this transformative potential, I argue, that fiction engages more fully through exoticism. The marked popularity of the exotic in fiction is linked to its power as a device for generating suspense, melodrama, or sentiment provides; its popularity also points to the way fiction supplemented the rhetoric of civilization that was often overtly paternalistic. It is very much to this point that Knight's weekly Volume series of useful literature for the poor (1844-6) ultimately failed to compete successfully with more entertaining fiction. This was evidence enough for Q.D. Leavis that an anti-intellectual popular taste was by then well-established (162).

Thus far, critics have primarily discussed the transformations brought about by mass media through the categories of reader, audience, author, publisher, editor and technology. Relations between these constituents are variously summarized as print-capitalism, mass culture, and popular culture. Though I am in part referring to the same cultural content indicated by all of these terms, my use of "mass media" is most indebted to Kevin McLaughlin's term "mass mediacy" by which he refers to the matrix of material and ideological forces generated by the simultaneous relations among all of these components. My methodology is to trace the relationship between the exotic content of fiction and the larger cultural changes associated with mass media. From the outset, we can broadly observe that it made a kind of sense to exoticize a medium that was visibly

changing the culture from the inside in ways that were often difficult to fully understand or anticipate.

The exoticism in nineteenth-century literature, particularly orientalism, has its most influential roots in Romantic poetry, a point of discussion to which I will return later in the introduction and in chapter one. But the novel was quick to adapt exoticism as a means of authenticating its representation authority and maintaining its increasing popularity as entertainment. Austen tartly rejects Radcliffe's heady gothic mixtures of sensation, sentiment set in Europe not only through the romance-inspired misperceptions of Catherine in *Northanger Abbey*, but also through the realistic portrayal of the dark, corrupting influence of England's slave trade on the domestic center of *Mansfield Park*. Walter Scott's protagonist Waverly comes to desire the reproductively appropriate native English Rose through the ways in which she contrasts with the object of his first immature passion, the alluringly exotic Scottish Flora MacIvor; his affections transfer from the exotic to the domestic as his experiences commit him to a British version of civilization. The enduring popular success of the stories told in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* pivots, like the plots themselves, on the vengeful destruction wrought by the exotic characters, Bertha Mason and Heathcliff respectively. And these are, of course, only a small number of possible examples.

In the project at hand, I focus on the writing of Thomas De Quincey, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and Wilkie Collins. Works by these authors participate not only in the more general use of exoticism explained thus far, but also in a consistent pattern of representing mass media—their own medium—as the foreign substance opium. By arranging for certain characters to consume opium under circumstances

related to writing and mass production, these narratives achieve particularly striking enactments of the changes taking place in the production and consumption of fiction. The foreign connotation of opium's "outside" origins comes to stand in for the increasing role of "automatic" forces in determining both the form and content of fiction. The anonymity of collective influences, like popular taste, or new methods of sales and distribution, seemed to "automatically" produce the dominant trends in fiction outside the intention of any group or individual. The first entry under "automatic" in *The Oxford English Dictionary* is illustrated negatively by a passage in Sir Humphry Davy's *Elements of Chemical Philosophy* (1812) in a sentence that also reveals a strong Romantic belief that everything is the result of an intentional design.³ If nothing exists without agency, then "In the universe, nothing can be said to be automatic" (423). According to Davy, machinery would not be considered automatic because it would not be set in motion but for its human creators. The second entry is taken from Michael Forster's "The Import of Protoplasm" (1876) and shows how widely the concept of automaticity ranges over the next several decades. In a footnote, Forster clarifies his use of the term automatic:

This word has recently acquired a meaning almost exactly opposite to that which it originally bore, and an automatic action is now by many understood to mean nothing more than an action produced by some machinery or other. In this work I use it in the older sense, as denoting an action of a body, the causes of which appear to lie in the body itself. It seems preferable to "spontaneous," inasmuch as it does not necessarily carry with it the idea of irregularity, and bears no reference to a "will." (423)

Forster's use of the eighteenth-century concept of the body as a machine anticipates our contemporary understanding of somatic tissues such as the involuntary muscles operating the heart and lungs. Here the key point is that throughout the first three quarters of the

nineteenth-century, the varied definition of “automatic” reveals the tension operating in mass media as the confluence of human and machine, organic and mechanic aesthetic forms. The automatic way in which opium reproduces its exotic connotations in the writing of the one who consumes the drug makes it ideal for enacting fiction’s unfolding existence within this confluence.

In 1842, Malcolm Rymer, writing as editor of the *Queen’s Magazine*, understood very well why the novel, above all other print genres, would be eager to present its own medium as the simultaneously destructive and productive drug on which an artist has come to depend. Rymer notes that “It is, comparatively, but recently that the masses of the community have become pleased with works of fiction. To cultivate the imagination was for many ‘monkish years’ a grievous sin; and the printing press was a familiar object long before romance or novel issued from it” (171). Long after romance and novel issued from steam-powered printing presses in great numbers, the prejudice against fiction remained strongly associated with its more popular and controversial sub-genres. Lynne Pykett’s detailed analysis of the sensation novel a little later in the century, for example, shows that fiction’s cultural reputation remained mixed:

Some reviewers saw the sensation novel as an attempt to spice up a fiction market which had become a little dull and domestic or, alternatively, too preoccupied with social problems. Others such as Henry Mansel in his much-quoted 1863 review of twenty-four sensation novels in the *Quarterly Review*, attributed the rise of the sensation novel to contemporary cultural decline, of which it was both the cause and the effect; it both created and fed a diseased appetite. (51)

Pre-nineteenth-century perceptions of the novel as a corrupting influence never completely went away in large part because its content persisted in representing itself as a potentially degenerate influence. Patrick Brantlinger concludes that “the novel is the one literary genre that, ... acknowledges its status as a pharmakon, suggesting to the reader

that she or he might be reading something more significant, uplifting, or edifying—something less misleading, less addictive, less seductive, less toxic or, well, less fictional than a novel” (*Reading Lesson* 212). My contention is that when fiction exoticized its own mass produced medium, it added something unique to the logic of the pharmakon, which as Derrida has demonstrated, applies to all forms of writing. Fiction that exoticizes its own mass medium reproduces the historically ambivalent status of romance as a familiar point of access through which readers could gain access to the “foreign” version of British culture.

When we jump to mid-twentieth-century discussions of popular fiction, we find these ideas strengthened in Q. D. Leavis’s *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) as the warning that the “populist” taste of the reading-public threatens to destroy the cultural capacity to produce, let alone understand and appreciate, novels that are also great literary works. Her strategy is to recycle that century-old idea of fiction as harmful in a manner that prepares the way for F.R. Leavis’s *The Great Tradition* (1948). One did not need to agree precisely with F.R. Leavis’s opinion that Charlotte Brontë was a “minor” novelist or that Dickens was not a “mature” writer to be persuaded that literary culture was destroying itself from within and that the power of educational institutions should be harnessed to strengthen and propagate the authoritative standards determined by academics if not the *The Great Tradition*. A change in the prejudicial class rhetoric between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is worth noting in Q.D. Leavis’s case because it highlights the degree to which the degenerative powers attributed to fiction remained consistent. During the nineteenth century, it was feared that fiction would put readers too much “above” the limitations of their everyday lives. Pykett explains how a

writer for *Punch* accuses sensational fiction of “generally Unfitting the Public for the Prosaic Avocations of life” (51). In arguing the reverse, Q.D. Leavis replaces nineteenth-century optimism in the power of cheap print with views that renew the pessimism expressed by Adam Smith— that the “prosaic avocations of life have unfitted” the public for reading great novels by strengthening their preference for low-brow writing. These twin objections to the power of popular fiction to put consumer behavior at odds with the prevailing class hierarchy illustrate what will be politically at stake throughout my analysis: as fiction engages its mass medium through exoticism, it automatically produces something outside the previously established social order.

In her survey of nineteenth-century attitudes toward popular sensation novels, Pykett also describes the intimate relationship between the new printing technologies and new formats for marketing and selling fiction.

For many mid-nineteenth-century commentators (especially those writing in the middle-class quarterly reviews) the sensation phenomenon was a morbid symptom of modernity, the product of a commodified literary marketplace in which periodicals, serial publication, circulating libraries and the new railway bookstalls were the distribution chain for a factory-made, formulaic mode of literary production with an emphasis on the ‘frequent and rapid recurrence of piquant situation and startling incident.’ (51)

Even though Pykett focuses on the sensation novel, the way industrialization expands the territorial opportunities for marketing fiction applies to other kinds of fiction as well. Pykett helps us to see how the technology of the steam engine combines with new marketing strategies to form a new kind of medium—a matrix of ideological and material contingencies underwriting the economic success of serial novels, Mudie’s library, and the railway book market. The perception of the novel as both “good” and “bad” provides an analog for the perception that while mass media was creating new ways to access

fiction, it was simultaneously usurping the cultural exclusivity associated with the cost of the three volume formats. But if exoticism appears in fiction to present the character of new media, how are we to interpret the exoticism found in more traditional media such as poetry or painting? One might ask whether the medievalism in Tennyson's poems, the supernatural in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," or the related subject matter of so many Pre-Raphaelite paintings might constitute some other use for exoticism altogether. Whatever else may be signified by the exoticism in those works however, there is at least a sense that the exoticism is there in part to measure a cultural territory once occupied by traditional media that is now either disconnected from the world (like the Lady of Shallot), or subject to an invading foreign agency (as Laura and Lizzie are subject to the temptations of the addictive goblin fruit). In other words, the frequent appearance of exoticism outside popular fiction, and outside of print, gestures to a shared cultural iconography in which exotic imagery describes the position of a work of art relative to "the age of mechanical reproducibility." Exoticism allows a work of art to identify itself with both the creative and destructive influences of mass media. Both sides of exoticism's iconographic potential correspond with Walter Benjamin's thesis that mechanical reproducibility erodes the unique authority, the "aura," of an original work of art at the same time it intensifies it by making it less common.

Many of the changes in media technology that support Benjamin's thesis also provide Edward Said with evidence for his argument that the nineteenth-century novel, along with mass media in general, institutes Western imperialism. We see this particularly well in Said's analysis of the nineteenth-century "orient" as the material reality generated by literary representations that virtually stand in for the people and

cultures of the East. For Said, “that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the orient visible, clear, ‘there’ in discourse about it” (22). And though Said focuses on the reproduction of the Orientalist discourse that pre-dates the industrial revolution instead of how the emerging new relationship between mass media and exoticism might be changing that discourse, he and I are in agreement that “what mattered to Europe was the expanded scope and the much greater refinement given its techniques for receiving the orient” (22). We begin to see how and why an exotic motif such as opium might double as a signifier of both geopolitics and mass media given that the “techniques for receiving the orient” are synonymous with the techniques of mechanical reproducibility that Benjamin describes.

We consequently find luminous double meaning at points where the technical discourse of print culture intersects with the discourse of imperialism. As a prominent spokesperson of the most optimistic points of view in the discourse of technology, Knight’s discussion of expanding his print business provides another usefully typical example:

There is another advantage which stereotyping gives us, in allowing us to multiply casts to any extent. We can assist foreign nations in the production of ‘Penny Magazines;’ and we can thus not only obtain the high moral advantage of giving tone to the popular literature of other nations, which shall be favourable to peace, and a right understanding of our common interests, but we can improve our own ‘Penny Magazine’ out of the profit which accrues from the sale of these casts. (132)

Knight’s literal use of “stereotype” and “cast” to refer to the metal plates and the clay molds used in printing belies their pun-like resonance with the prominence of the caste system in India or the idea of classifying large populations according to racial “types.”

The history of the word “stereotype” in *The Oxford English Dictionary* is very instructive on this point. Though “stereotype” is not used in the way we most commonly use the word today until the beginning of the twentieth-century, we see the word detaching from the literal context of printing equipment by 1850 to describe repetitive or habitual conditions or activities. In this manner, language re-news the concept of mechanized reproducibility by transferring words from the discourse of technology to discourses used in the struggle for social power. Jon Klancher elaborates on the use of colonialism as a metaphor for expanding the industry in his discussion of another print-culture capitalist, James Anderson, editor of the journal *Bee*:

the periodical writer both names and colonizes the social group to whom he writes, drawing into the public those still unincorporated into the universe of public discourse. Every decision of style, topics, print size, page format, and above all the particular frame of its textual community is geared toward that discursive colonialism. That the periodical text can be both a discourse among equals and a colonizer of audiences presents no contradiction to Anderson’s *Bee*. (25)

This ability of the journal’s content to belong both inside and outside a group of equals becomes the hallmark of mass media, and in a work of fiction, this hallmark is exotic content. My project will ultimately show that as novels facilitate the movement of signifiers between material technology and the cultural dimensions of mass media, they produce an influential narrative of British mass culture.

In the example from Charles Knight, the concepts of the nation and nationality are the nodes of intersection between discourses of technology and imperialism, and as such, they rely on the logic of exoticism. “Exotic” is a categorical term for whatever is supposed to be outside the socially constructed boundaries of the national collective identity.⁴ The geographic boundary around England, for example, determines who is

British, who is at the periphery of Britishness, and who is an outsider. Benedict Anderson's thesis that print-capitalism's monoglot languages provided the material basis for creating the imagined communities that make national identification possible is one of the better known applications of this idea. He helps explain why readers would desire a narrative version of British mass culture:

As with modern persons, so it is with nations. Awareness of being imbedded in secular, serial time, with all its implications of continuity, yet of 'forgetting' the experience of this continuity—product of the ruptures of the late eighteenth century—engenders the need for a narrative of 'identity.' (205)

Narrative is particularly good at rehearsing and revising the boundaries of social identification by naming who and what is to be excluded from the sphere it represents: what signifies an insider identity, what signifies an outsider identity. These parameters of identification are particularly useful benchmarks for creating realism in fiction since realism is based on a hierarchy of values that often centers on the identity of the characters.⁵ But if collective identities depend to some extent on the repetition of such narratives, and this is precisely what the popularity of exoticism in the novel suggests, then the exotic is always a paradoxical classification. On the one hand, exoticism names the signifiers that constitute the alien, the foreign, the exterior. On the other hand, the practice of recognizing and interpreting exotic signifiers becomes one of the most familiar and shared tools for identifying oneself as an insider. Exoticism's dual position inside and outside British culture thus provides a narrative analog for mass media.

When we look closely at parts and pieces of orientalism, we see that what they have in common is that they are all signifiers of cultures outside Great Britain and are all reproduced on the inside of Great Britain in order to generate various kinds of consumer-oriented interior spaces.

The antiquities collected by the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt—hitherto regarded as too inhospitable a country for regular collectors—were confiscated by the British in 1801 and brought to England in 1802, to form the real basis of the collection of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum. The Chinese imagery, more generalized, seems to derive from the chinoiserie of eighteenth-century garden design and interior décor: pagodas, and tables and sofas ‘instinct with life’ because carved with the heads and feet of animals. (Barrell 7)

Once the industrial revolution kicks capitalism into high gear, social mobility and purchasing power determined the degree to which a consumer might mobilize exotic signifiers to establish and maintain a social position relative to other consumers. And this is why Nancy Armstrong argues that a differential system of images “supplanted writing as the grounding of fiction” since “the kind of visual description we associate with literary realism refers not to things, but to visual representations of things, representations that fiction helped to establish as identical to real things and people before readers actually began to look that way to one another and live within such stereotypes” (3). In *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity*, Margaret Russet details one example of how exotic images moved from fiction into the world in her chapter on the Princess Caraboo hoax, the story of how a lower-class English servant transformed herself into an Oriental Princess overnight by wearing clothes in an “oriental style” fashionable among the wealthiest classes and speaking in an oriental-sounding made-up tongue. The popularity of exotic information in both fiction and non-fiction could have easily provided every source she needed for her impersonation, and for a remarkable period of time, it was enough to sustain her apparent legitimacy. She was “adopted” by the upper classes as a pet heroine because she presented an image that matched their insider identification in the tidy, non-threatening shape of an aristocratic lady. But, as Marc Redfield explains, the repeatability of a “mark” is what allows it to “constitute its

identity” and splinter its identity at the same time because “proliferating acts of aestheticization necessarily repeat, of course, the instability at the origin of aesthetic effect” (Redfield 20, 23). In the case of Princess Caraboo, the insubstantiality of the origin of her disguise ultimately gave her away; eventually skeptics could prove that a copy of copies that never existed outside British culture was a fake exotic.

Romanticism’s Organic and Mechanic Forms

Romantic aesthetic discourse adopted the logic of exoticism to separate “mechanic” form from “organic” form during the first decades of the nineteenth century. The sudden interest in differentiating between organic and mechanic formal principles is particularly striking given how commonly the human body was itself looked on as a kind of machine, particularly from a medical perspective, during the eighteenth century. This earlier eighteenth-century account of the human body imagines that the interior workings of an organism rely on mechanical processes; organic and mechanic forms were found integrated in nature.⁶ It quickly becomes clear however, that the very discourse of aesthetics is constituted by a disavowal of the degree to which organic and mechanic forms are necessarily interconnected. Redfield summarizes the political “work” of aesthetics as both a cover-up and the reproduction of the connections between the mechanical and the organic, or “spiritual,” sides of artistic production:

The “enormous and costly educational machinery” that enables aesthetic education as political program is not an accidental appendage, prosthesis, or supplement to an essentially spiritual process of *Bildung*; rather, “machinery” (for all Mathew Arnold’s protests to the contrary) inheres within aesthetic culture as its most intimate condition of possibility. We may take a moment to recall the common root of our notions of art and technology in the complex Greek word *techne* (a work of art; a craft or trade; a skill or way of making something; cunning devices or wiles). Modern aesthetics comes into being by separating

itself from handicraft on the one hand and mass (or technically reproduced) culture on the other, but these acts of separation are endlessly inconclusive because a radical inconclusivity haunts the act of aesthetic formalization that would constitute aesthetics as a discipline or discourse (and would mark it off from, say, handicraft, or from process of mechanical reproduction). For aesthetics ... cannot afford and has no wish to cut itself off entirely from the world. (16)

The paradox of aesthetic discourse is also the paradox of the archive: without a perimeter that sets it apart, it does not exist; yet if it seals itself completely it loses its meaning.⁷

This is particularly significant since much of the writing on aesthetics that we consider to be part of the Romantic canon was also of course very influential in reproducing the national literary culture around principle figures like Milton and Shakespeare.

In his 1812 lecture on the difference between organic and mechanic aesthetic forms, Coleridge attempts to differentiate the mechanical process of making a copy from the more “natural” process of producing something original:

The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material, as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. (489)

The difference between these two forms depends on our willingness to go along with a distinction between external imposition marked by disconnection and internal generation marked by connection. But there is not really anything to guarantee that a mechanical copy might not be part of a larger interiority—part of a material social form that would technically coincide with Coleridge’s definition of organic form. William Keach shows that Coleridge’s wish to establish a non-arbitrary, organic connection between thoughts and words meant that “instead of going on to inquire into the production of linguistic meaning as a material social process, he identifies words-as-things with an originary

perceptual activity of the mind” (31). To sustain belief in the mind as an origin of meaning, Coleridge appears trapped by the idea that the reproduction of printed words taking place outside the realm of thought is a mechanical copy unrelated to the process of generating new social connections.

In chapter one I discuss the way opium in the preface of Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” enacts the impossibility of separating of interior and exterior sources in the production of writing. But for now I simply want to suggest why an interest in separating the two would occur at this particular historical moment. Although Coleridge’s idea of mechanic form is not literally tied to machines, the integration of steam engines in the manufacture of all kinds of products, including printed materials, greatly magnified the degree to which automated processes had the potential to shape social conditions outside any human intention. Indeed Mary Shelly’s novel represents this threat as the scientist who creates a monster: Frankenstein’s mechanical assemblage of human parts cannot reconnect to the whole of human society. What is new at this particular historical moment is not the technology of creating a mechanical copy but rather the technology for accelerating the copying process to the extent that the copies begin to function with something that looks a lot like human agency.

If we see in Frankenstein the prototype for the creatures of artificial intelligence like the Replicants of *Blade Runner*, the Cylons of *Battlestar Gallactica*, we recognize mass culture’s continued refusal to completely separate or integrate mechanic and organic forms. This incredible state of suspension is sustained by an illusion of disconnection, that as Derrida observes, “begins at the printer” (*Archive Fever* 18). When the mechanically automated pressure of the stereotype plate pulls away from the

graphic marks on a page, we tend to imagine that visual separation as the division between the machine and human source of the words on the page. But in fact, this repeated separation links the machine and the human because the ink left on the page gives form to human thought. Nineteenth-century fiction narrates this disavowed connection between human being and mechanical processes. When a character-writer consumes opium and it automatically comes out as writing, that character's experience provides an analogy for the way mass media moves inside and outside collective and individual entities.

The motivation to disavow the increasing connectivity between mind and machine by imposing an ambiguous separation between organic and mechanic forms appears clearly in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* (1800), where Wordsworth privileges organic form to protect writing as a "human" activity. As Keach points out, Wordsworth shares with Coleridge a tendency to create "curious textual transformations through which words-as-things come to testify not to language as a material process or product, but to the mind's privileged work in giving all things, including words, life" (30). Wordsworth defines a poet as a man "possessed of more than usual organic sensibility" who can retrace the connections between feelings and thoughts regarding "important subjects" based on the understanding that thoughts are feelings that were repeated so often that they have become habits of the mind (242). And yet poets only manage to externalize the connections between thought and feeling as a poem "by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits" (242). On the one hand, this account of poetry's organic form retains strong traces of the eighteenth-century understanding of organic and mechanic integration; on the other hand, it discovers that privileging the

mind as the model of organic form provides a powerful distraction from the ways mechanical technology conditions human feelings and thoughts.

Other critics have of course considered this paradox at length. Redfield's summary of the attempt to exclude the role of mechanical technology from the discourse of aesthetics neatly explains why it is impossible to eliminate traces of the mechanic from the organic: "Humanity, aestheticized, turns into machinery. The machine, which seems the opposite of the organic work of art, is in fact its double, and the elegant turns of this technopolis simultaneously reveal and ward off the inhumanity and incoherence of the process by which humanity is being affirmed " (Redfield 22). We see the mirror reversal of this in Coleridge's definition for mechanic form. He uses the word "impress," which simultaneously suggests both a physical imposition, like the mechanical process of stamping words, and a perceptual adjustment, like the mind recording an impression. By denying this ambiguity, organic form strengthens the idea of literature as the means of becoming more cultivated, "more human," by making its content appear disconnected from the process of its inscription.

Tension between organic and mechanic form frequently crops up in metaphors that compare popular writing to a parasitical plant through the assumption that this writing is overly formulaic—that it is too mechanical to be celebrated as an original work emerging from its own interior composition. Parasites are a popular metaphor with critics because they define the supplement as an entity capable of moving between the interior and exterior of a host; the parasite's foreign body colonizes and even replaces the host. But the definition of a parasitic entity can describe something relatively mechanic like a drug as well as the classic metaphor for organic form: the plant. Picking up on the

paradoxical tendencies of Coleridge's emphasis on organic form, Jon Klancher remarks that "The journals became agents of Coleridge's 'luxuriant misgrowth' when writers began using them, in the wake of the French Revolution, to divide audiences and guide them to compete for position in social and cultural space" (4). Because the same media that publishes Coleridge's "luxuriant misgrowth" is sustained economically by the sale of much less intellectually ambitious material, it is easy to label Coleridge's compositions as parasitically dependant on both the popular writing more directly linked to sales and to the mechanical reproducibility of the journals that made them affordable.

In his 1812 Lecture, Coleridge counters Voltaire's judgment that Shakespeare was a barbaric poet in order to illustrate the significance of organic form as the "power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination" (488). Not only does Coleridge attribute the misperception of Shakespeare to the outsider status of foreigners, but he goes on to illustrate Voltaire's foreign perspective with vivid, exoticized plant imagery.

Shakespeare's writing must appear as

a sort of African nature, fertile in beautiful monsters, as a wild heath where islands of fertility look greener from the surrounding waste, where the loveliest plants now shine out among unsightly weeds and now are choked by their parasitic growth, so intertwined that we cannot disentangle the weed without snapping the flower. (488)

Through the intricacies of exotic classification, Coleridge projects the inevitable confusion between organic and mechanic form into the eye of the foreign beholder. If the foreigner sees something rare and valuable in British literature, the inability to select and harvest the organic originality "without snapping the flower" betrays the overall judgment as uncultivated—as the origin of unsightly entanglement. And this despite the fact that Coleridge credits the "continental critic" August Wilhelm Schlegel for

highlighting the importance of distinguishing between organic and mechanic form in the first place.

Later in the nineteenth-century, the parasitic plant metaphor remains useful for describing mass media's continued multiplication of literary classifications. Rymer takes it up in his 1842 article:

What is popular writing? What constitutes its popularity? Let us be didactic. Imaginative literature is, after all, but of recent growth; it is a sort of parasitical plant, clinging around the huge oak of classicality. (171)

If the aggressive phallogentrism of classical literature's "huge oak" genders the recent growth of "popular writing" as feminine, we can guess that popular writing, in addition to any formulaic shortcomings it may have as the result of its overly mechanical production, also fails to reproduce the social hierarchies on which patriarchy depends.

Opium-Writing in the Novel

The opening of Charles Dickens's *Edwin Drood* is one of the most famous examples of opium in a novel because of its vivid reproduction of a stereotypical opium-dream, replete with excessive and confused oriental images. It is as powerful a demonstration as one could wish for the way opium signals something foreign and destructive on the inside, in this case the menacing John Jasper, who has been smoking opium in an opium den. The arrival of Edwin Drood from Ceylon to become John Jasper's rival continues to frame Jasper as the "real" outsider, the one who threatens domestic integrity. In the novels I consider in this project, however, opium does more than identify parasites. Opium becomes an analog for mass media's parasitical intrusion on traditional modes of writing as the thing that composes the novel. An encounter with

opium in these novels enacts a relationship to mass media in the sense that while mass media lowered production costs and increased profit potential, its expanded readership also destabilized the pre-industrial pace for producing and re-producing the criteria with which to judge fiction. As enactments of these conditions, the narrative's attitude toward its own exoticized mass media automatically becomes the cultural value attached to the changes in fiction that the novels perpetuate. It is no accident that nineteenth-century novels collectively present opium as a near perfect illustration of the *pharmakon*: both the cure-all medicine and the handiest death-dealing poison.

Opium compensates for the perceived disconnection between the form and content of the novel by expressing three features of its mass medium: first, the problematic of writing as the absence of presence; second, the position of its technology as both inside and outside culture; and third, a self-perpetuating dynamic most aptly referred to as addiction. It is the third of these features that I have yet to fully introduce. The word addiction poses a case similar to that of the word stereotype explored earlier. Though the contemporary use of the term "addict" to refer to a person with a treatable but incurable "disease" is a strictly twentieth-century affair, the etymology of the word reveals that addiction originally referred to the condition of enslavement (its Latin root meaning attached to a master) and was often used from the seventeenth century onward to describe any habitual behavior (habits like smoking, drinking and the pursuit of entertainments most associated with damaging consequences). Thus we can see that the use of addiction before the twentieth century is less concerned with questions of pathology than with the behavioral character of habits that make humans appear less rational and more like an unthinking mechanical process set in motion.

Opium Politics

The idea of a relationship between drugs and literature is of course nothing new to the twentieth century. Avital Ronell's thesis on drugs and literature, however, is partly a response to all the criticism interested in drugs as the means by which writers are able to access alternate modes of being: "Drugs, it turns out, are not so much about seeking an exterior, transcendental dimension—a fourth or fifth dimension—rather, they explore *fractal interiorities*" (15). The phrase "fractal interiorities" aptly describes the way mass media reconfigures the connections between organic and mechanic forms. The title of Ronell's book, *Crack Wars*, is meant to open the popular rhetoric of drugs to the idea that drugs and drug addiction are symptoms of a systemic instability inherent in the practice of capitalism:

Under the impacted signifier of drugs, America is fighting a war against a number of felt intrusions. They have to do mostly with the drift and contagion of a foreign substance, or of what is revealed as foreign (even if it should be homegrown). Like any good parasite, drugs travel both inside and outside of the boundaries of a narcissistically defended politics. They double for the values with which they are at odds, thus haunting and reproducing a lexicon of body control and a private property of self—all of which awaits review. (50-51)

The most urgent point reviewed here by Ronell is that as long as drugs are treated as a discrete problem, we remain vulnerable to political manipulation through the rhetoric of drugs. Q.D. Leavis for example, uses drug rhetoric to advance her interest in affirming the authority of a "minority culture" that came to be associated with her husband's book, the "Great Tradition": "What saved the lower middle-class public for some time from a drug addiction to fiction was the simple fact of the exorbitant price of novels" (152). This is simply another way of saying that, thanks to nineteenth-century mass media and

the ever cheapening price of fiction, today's novels automatically undermine the standards of an elite middle class culture by habituating readers to easy entertaining reading.⁸

Leavis's conservative intellectual agenda is what enables her to see, as Ronell sees for different reasons, that "Drugs are eccentric and depropriative" (Ronell 29). Ronell is careful to explain that she is not advocating drugs or "drug-literature" as either good or bad. She wants to call attention to evidence that drugs and literature often coincide in the desire to escape a "dead-end" existence that arises from consumerism given that popular rhetoric projects "dead-end" existence onto the drugs themselves instead recognizing the pursuit of drugs as a symptom of the culture of capitalism. Leavis rightly characterizes popular fiction as the kind of escape that might only guarantee the repetition of the life we were desperate to leave behind or worse. She quotes an employee of Mudie's lending library who remarked

that 'if a woman is taken up with a house all day, she doesn't want tales about married problems or misunderstood wives—she knows enough about these already; she can't be bothered with dialect after a day's work, and historical novels aren't alive enough. What she enjoys is something that is possible but outside her own experience.' (8)

Here then is the key to exoticism's popular longevity: many middle class readers besides the housewife actively seek reading that will supplement the sphere of their experience or even the sphere of plausible and possible experience. For Leavis, the problem is that because this fiction is designed for popular tastes and ease of consumption, its habitual use will have as destructive an impact on culture and the literary arts in particular as a drug like opium would have on a person.

These concerns have deep historic roots. Rymer's 1842 article on popular writing anticipates Q.D. Leavis's assertion that the preference for "'Sappers's' or other 'thrillers,' suggests that the reading habit is now often a form of the drug habit" (Leavis 7). Describing how the cheapening price of fiction increased the rate at which one popular style displaced another, Rymer also remarks that "the modern [versions of the fashionable novel] are *more narcotic* than the ancient, because we can read with greater complacency a flimsy record of vices and punctilios of another age than of our own" (emphasis added 171). It is the illusion of a disconnection between the present age and the narrative record that is "flimsy." Fashionable novels allow readers to see disconnection as that which connects readers to one another and the culture. Narcotic fiction, and even the complacency of readers, is thus available as a record of the illusions used to uphold social inequality and injustice. Taking up the question of addiction's impact on subjectivity in late capitalism, Janet Farrell Brodie and Marc Redfield describe the way mass production conditions consumers to become mechanical in their habits. As behavior becomes more "unthinking," more automatic, consumers become addicts:

The disciplined body becomes at times seductively, at times dangerously similar to constructed object or machine; desire becomes geared to the *seriality* of consumer society; and the subjects whose desires and bodies are so repetitively constructed suffer the possibility of a fundamental "leakiness" of the self, a leaking away of agency and identity. (emphasis added 6)

As the defining character of habit, serialization spreads by way of mass media to forms and practices of all kinds in a capitalist culture. But where there is desire to escape the experience of disconnection, there is also evidence of a crack in the cultural imperative to cultivate consumption as the medium of social connection.

The Chapters

Chapter one argues that in De Quincey's *Confessions of an English-Opium Eater* opium addiction characterizes the changes taking place in British print culture as a result of industrialization. Drawing on the depiction of opium in S.T. Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan," *Confessions* takes up the idea that when consumed, opium automatically reproduces its oriental associations as writing. For the Opium-eater character, it becomes necessary to consume opium in ever-increasing quantities of laudanum in order to be able to write, and this in turn illuminates the ever-accelerating automaticity of every step in the process of publication. To explain the link between *Confessions* and popular fiction, this chapter also examines *Noctes*, a serial published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Quasi-fictional parodies of leading writers and editors from *Blackwood's* and its competitors in each episode of *Noctes* comment on the latest developments in the literary industry. Appearances of the Opium-eater in *Noctes* reveal that *Confessions* consolidated a constellation of exotic signifiers for interpreting both the content and form of popular writing. Subsequent works of fiction would reproduce this signature constellation to introduce the character of their medium to the content of the narrative.

Chapter two explains how Dickens' *Bleak House* reproduces De Quincey's figure of the opium-eater to narrate the way mass media reproduces images by detaching them from their "origins" and moves them into circulation. Once again, the opium-eater is a writer, but one whose livelihood depends on reproducing mechanical copies to the point of death. While the automatic and destructive effects of mass media spread through Nemo's handwritten documents, his daughter, Esther, writes the journal that allows the novel to re-collect its serial format as a simultaneously productive contribution to the

cultural transformation that mass media also makes possible. The way in which Nemo's opium-writing produces the plot of *Bleak House* as it circulates through the novel mirrors the way in which advertising sections became standard components at the beginning and end of each number in the serial publication. The circulation of advertisements through the physical pages of the serial ensured its profitability would continue even beyond its initial publication in numbers. A majority of advertisements were for other books, novels, and journals, including future incarnations of the novel in three-volumes or collected work editions. In *Bleak House*, opium-writing incorporates mass media's self-expanding serial form as the force that shapes the culture from inside, the novel whereas the habit of using opium to write in *Confessions* demonstrates how the production of writing hinges on the external, material conditions of the medium.⁹

Chapter three interprets Brontë's *Villette* as a test of the limits of mass media's power to dictate the form and content of the novel. In this regard, *Villette* offers a direct counterpoint to the treatment of mass media in *Bleak House*. Opium appears in Brontë's novel as a singular event instead of as a habit. And though the same constellation of exotic signifiers frankly acknowledges the novel's mass medium, its narrative posture defies its own internal momentum of expansion. Lucy Snowe's first-person narrative struggles to withdraw the novel from the conditions of its mass medium about as successfully as the character withholds herself from the pleasure-seeking opportunities of French galleries, concerts, and theatre. The singular resistance of *Villette*'s narrative coincides with its publication in three volumes. Brontë completed each volume before submitting it to her far away London publisher. No style of producing fiction could provide a greater contrast to the way Dickens's serial numbers and magazines commit to

exposing writing in and through the dispersing forces of mass media as often as possible. But precisely because *Bleak House* rushes into mass media where *Villette* pulls back, it is all the more significant that both novels enact the mass medium they have in common as opium's capacity to move writing inside and outside the components culture.

In the fourth and final chapter of my project, I show how Collins's *The Moonstone* asserts the novel's role in the reproduction of mass culture. Alongside the continued representation of mass media as opium-writing, *The Moonstone* draws on evolutionary and national discourses to act out the means by which popular fiction participates in the generational displacement of cultural conventions. The mixed-race character Ezra Jennings figures the way in which *The Moonstone* inherits an interpretive key to popular writing from the exotic constellations reproduced by earlier works of fiction engaged with opium-writing. His mixed-race is one of several reproductive motifs calculated to show that the intersection between organic and mechanic form automatically shapes the culture outside the conscious designs of human intention.

CHAPTER 1

Mechanical Reproduction and De Quincey's Opium-writing

Opium consumption is the subject of Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. It is also, in another sense, the medium of the text. The idea of opium as a material that produces writing circulated at least from the time Samuel Taylor Coleridge published "Kubla Khan" in 1816. The accompanying preface to "Kubla Khan" claims that "The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines" (Norton 347).¹⁰ By combining opium, reading and reverie, "Kubla Khan" promotes a connection between opium and the automatic production of writing: opium produces an image that is already available in writing. De Quincey deliberately imitates this Coleridgean strategy. So well in fact does he reproduce the premise of "opium-writing" that at least one reviewer makes a compelling case for Coleridge to have been the most likely author of *Confessions*.¹¹ But if the first reaction to the opium in *The Confessions* is to link its oriental associations with the high lyric Romanticism of Coleridge and Wordsworth, the opium simultaneously links the text with a less celebrated thread in the literature of the period, the genre of romance.

Opium's connection with popular exoticism aligns *Confessions* with the forms of writing that begin to define the characteristics of popular writing in the early nineteenth

century. He picks up his opium habit as he acquires a taste for spending time among crowds of working classes; he goes where the working poor go to purchase opium and after taking it, he accompanies them at the opera and the market. Just as De Quincey participates in lower class culture by way of opium, he moves his writing into a wider public sphere by publishing a work about opium. Writing this work in prose instead of poetry seems likely to have increased the availability of De Quincey's opium-writer motif for Charles Dickens to reproduce as the character of serial novel production. We see further evidence of this when De Quincey capitalizes on the popular success of *Confessions* in his subsequent serial-like sequels, *Suspia de Profundis* (1845) and *The English Mail-Coach* (1849). These sequels retroactively affirm a connection between De Quincey's literary success and Dickens's strategy for expanding on the early success of *Sketches by Boz*.

After its publication in the *London Magazine* met with distinct success among readers, *Confessions* was re-published as a single volume the following year. Its relative popularity, compared to De Quincey's other published work, signals the fact that his writing about opium not only introduced the "Opium-eater" to the literary scene, but also established one of the most successful strategies of the nineteenth-century novel for representing its relationship to emerging mass culture. Again, I call this strategy "opium-writing" since it involves both writing about opium and writing that is in some degree produced as the result of consuming opium. Opium consumption in *Confessions* creates a model for subsequent fiction-writers, including Dickens, to dramatize the paradoxically productive and destructive influence of mechanically produced literary mediums. By incorporating opium as the paradoxical destruction and production of certain types of

writing, De Quincey's text provides a crucial supplement to the progressive rhetoric of modernity surrounding emerging technologies. As novels reproduced the same drug as a supplement for increasing the popular appeal of their narratives, they also expanded mass culture as acts of opium-writing.

Romantic Orientalism

Confessions picks up a certain aspect of Romanticism that is not emphasized in traditional approaches to lyric poetry since the circulation of exotic, orientalist types that appeal to popular taste undermines "Romanticism" as an exclusively intellectual domain of high art. But of course even before the publication of "Kubla Khan" strengthened the connection between opium and oriental motifs by crystallizing the former as the means of automatically generating the latter, Byron realized that the reproduction of oriental types alone had tremendous popular currency. William Keach points out a significant contrast between Byron on one side, and Wordsworth and Coleridge on the other; Keach notes that their approaches to writing as a commodity differs because of their differing perspectives on the generation of language. On the one hand, "Most conspicuous in Wordsworth and Coleridge are the curious textual transformations through which words-as-things come to testify not to language as a material process or product, but to the mind's privileged work in giving all things, including words, life" (30). On the other hand, "If ever a writer appreciated the force of words-as -things in the full social, cultural, commercial meaning of this phrase, it was the Byron of *Don Juan* 3. And if he is astonished by the power of 'ink' to make 'thousands, perhaps millions, think,' he is also appalled by the economic dispersal of his own thinking, his own identity, on material

terms over which he has no control” (Keach 43). This difference in Byron’s perception of writing as a vehicle that disperses authorial identity even as it concentrates ideas through a commercial medium arises in conjunction leads to his understanding of how writing about exotic things accelerates both types of movement. Earlier in his career, Byron speculated that if one could extract the formulaic components of exoticism from Robert Southey’s unpopular political allegory and intellectual orientalism, one would automatically produce the popular success enjoyed by his *Eastern Tales* (1813-16).

Nigel Leask locates this insight of Byron’s in a letter to Thomas Moore in 1813 encouraging his friend to “stick to the East,” and explains Byron’s commercial savvy as the means of persuading Coleridge to publish “Kubla Khan”:

Byron, who was instrumental in the publication of another famous Romantic poem of the Orient in 1816, Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan*, obviously had a flair for predicting the market. Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, commissioned by Longman for the gargantuan sum of three thousand guineas, made its author a rich man. Byron’s advice that the two entrepreneurs [himself and Moore] could only benefit from the negative example of Robert Southey, would continue to pay off. *Kubla Khan* and *Lalla Rookh* enjoyed great popularity in the nineteenth century, whilst the poet Laureate was left with a warehouse of unsaleable fictions (the oriental epics *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama*), at once too spicy and indigestible for fastidious British appetites. (13-14)

“Kubla Khan” then represents an intersection between Byron’s conscious investment in the arbitrary value of the exotic as literary capital and Coleridge’s use of opium to disavow that same arbitrary, and therefore not entirely organic, relationship between words and things.

The oriental types that become common in popular fiction might be understood as the privileged vehicles for what Marilyn Butler identifies as the “narrative component” within Romantic oriental poetry, namely “the cunning juxtaposition of desire and terror, the exotic and the grotesque, a formula which in the next generation sold plenty of other

people's poems, if never enough of [Southey's] own" (415). The underlying premise of this insight is that circulation among readers increases as reproductions of this writing increasingly work through the conventions of popular fiction: the manner in which Southey's characters appear "in novel-like plots, in effect invents the modern-style genre of mid- to low-brow fantasy, in order to let the reader realize empathetically the horror of living under a system in which power is wielded through black magic or is indifferent to human life" (Butler 417). Oriental types often appear in relation to Romanticism's invitation to identify against the social power of the ancient regime because the writer's act of projection creates the space necessary for being able to visualize oneself in a less implicated time or place.¹² Butler emphasizes Byron's success at displacing Southey's space of political identification with a romantic space identification, noting how the "subordination of ... masculine power, in Byron's plots, to the hero's need, not for women in general but for one particular absent woman, seems to invite women, specifically, to appropriate the story," and links this narrative technique not to the popularity of *The Sheikh* as a "women's" romance (433). But to the extent that Byron's later writing belittles the formulaic use of exoticism in his own early work, and implies a withdrawal from his earlier market exploitation, he moves closer to the literary orientations of Coleridge and Wordsworth. In other words, oriental allegory in Byron's poems presents the risk of undermining their political significance. Byron himself was subjected, and subjected himself, to a series of literary personas; his success is owing to "the brilliant device of fictionally renewing himself as a series of surrogates" whose reproducibility gives them lives of their own and retroactively determines that his "persona is itself moulded by popular fiction and current scandal" (Butler 432). The

principle of the oriental type is its mechanical reproducibility and its automatic popular appeal.

The phenomenon of becoming personally identified with an oriental type supplies the mechanical, or automatic, reproducibility in the well known “two-part” segmentation in Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan.” In the second part, the speaker identifies himself with the Kubla Khan of the first part, proposing to “build that dome” for himself, and this in turn necessitates a new version of the initial garden paradise (line 46). The repetition of the Kubla Khan figure within the poem reproduces the poem outside itself by gesturing to a future audience: “And all who heard should see them there, / And all should cry, Beware! Beware! / His flashing eyes his floating hair! / Weave a circle round him thrice / And close your eyes with holy dread, / For he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drunk the milk of Paradise” (48-54). The anticipated audience of the poem is warned to “shut-out” the speaker because he has absorbed something that mechanically reproduces a contaminating foreign influence.¹³ It is this unfettered reproducibility of the exotic that makes it popular and compels nineteenth-century writers to adopt exoticism as a meaningful expression of automated reproducibility. Even as the opium-eater warns his reader of opium’s dangers, he anticipates a reader who is already strongly attracted to writing about exotic subjects, one who is likely to continue reading about opium.

De Quincey’s prose reproduces its own version of the novel-like formula for projection and identification lodged within the tradition of Romantic poetry as opium-writing. His peculiar syntax, his digressive and deferred style, and the narrative integration of a life before and after consuming opium, all invite the reader to identify intensely with the production of opium-writing. In this way, De Quincey’s imitation of

the opium-writing running through Romantic poetry shifts the exoticization of mechanical reproduction into a prose form that later novels will find useful to imitate themselves. In this chapter I argue that beyond the obvious fact that popular literature often contains exotic elements, the dialectic between writing and opium in De Quincey's text models the way that the novel will invent its place at the center of British mass culture.

Serial Production and Consumption

The enduring popularity of *The Confessions* suggests the continuing relevance of De Quincey's text to a mass print culture which had barely begun to take shape in 1821 when *Confessions* was published in *Blackwood's*. Publishers reprinted De Quincey's writing both in England and in the United States throughout the nineteenth century, as many as "thirteen editions and reissues of the *Confessions* between 1880 and 1910, more than in the first half of the century" (Berridge and Edwards 55). Instead of becoming obsolete, the text becomes more popular as a point of reference during subsequent controversies around opium and addiction in the twentieth century. At the same time, the increased understanding of a drug as an addictive substance informs the strategic classification of literature that would become the foundation of the canon and the twentieth-century English department. Q.D. Leavis's remarks in *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) rather pointedly confirm an association between mass culture, drugs and addiction: "novel-reading is now largely a drug habit" because they have become so cheap and "What saved the lower middle-class public for some time from a drug addiction to fiction was the simple fact of the exorbitant price of novels" (19, 152). What

De Quincey says of opium then is much what Leavis says about popular fiction:

“happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in waistcoat pocket: portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint bottle: and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail coach” (*Confessions* 44). From the repetitive encounter with serialized commodities, the modern subject learns to counter the specter of finitude that haunts daily habit with a unique illusion of infinity.¹⁴

We find an image of mass media’s serial modality in *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845), the follow-up installment of *Confessions*, in which the Opium-eater recalls, as a youth, subscribing to a history of Great Britain to be published in a projected sixty-eight serialized parts. Afterward, the youthful Eater reflects and decides that a serial sequence must, in principle, exceed the projected number of volumes since the nation’s history will continue to unfold indefinitely into the future: “there might be supplements to supplements—the work might positively *never* end” (138). Similarly, his engagement to write *Confessions* as an adult might positively never end, even after he does.¹⁵ The youthful Eater fears that when he proves unable to pay for the endless series he has ordered, the agency of the London publisher will hunt him down:

I saw by the imprint, and I heard, that this work emanated from London, a vast centre of mystery to me, and the more so, as a thing unseen at any time by my eyes, and nearly 200 miles distant. I felt the fatal truth, that here was a ghostly cobweb radiating into all the provinces from the mighty metropolis. I secretly had trodden upon the outer circumstances, had damaged or deranged the fine threads and links, --concealment or reparation there could be none. Slowly perhaps, but surely, the vibration would travel back to London. The ancient spider that sat there at the centre, would rush along the network through all longitudes and latitudes, until he found the responsible caitiff, author of so much mischief. (139)

In one sense, the youth’s desire to locate a national origin produces De Quincey as the origin of himself and his writing by an act of violent destruction that incorporates his

desire with the publishing center of the nation. In another sense, London is the location where, at the last minute, the Opium-eater decides to publish *Confessions* as an escape from his frustrations with *Blackwood's* coterie in Edinburgh. He is caught in flight by the reading public, struggling at the perimeter of print culture's web, and there he damages or deranges the threads and links of print culture's expanding archive. As Kevin McLaughlin points out, "the failure of mass mediacy to present itself substantially" means that "the image can be read only at points when and where the traditional sense of a self-consistent when and where is itself shaken" (114). The Opium-eater provides such an image in his description of print culture as an inhuman, automated archive. This cobweb radiating out of London characterizes the force of automaticity that catches hold of an individual author and absorbs him; in the context of such a collective medium, moving one's writing from one journal to another threatens to become a meaningless gesture. That De Quincey refers to the consolidating force in London as an "ancient spider" further deteriorates archival specificity by projecting the "design" of consumer habit onto a primitive, inhuman instinct.

De Quincey's writing designates its own production and consumption as the automated means by which it overrides the intentions of its author. Ronell describes the force of addiction in De Quincey's writing in terms of the closely related notion of perpetually displacing subjectivity: "Self-dissolving and regathering, the subject became linked to the possibility of a new autonomy, and opium illuminated in this case ... an individual who finally could not identify with his own most autonomy but found himself instead subjected to heroic humiliation in the regions of the sublime" (60). In other words, De Quincey "finds himself" circulating in a public confession, narrating the

means by which opium displaces and exceeds him as author-creator.¹⁶ Opium-writing similarly offers to supplement the reader's finitude, and her own entrapment in the limitations of a reading-drug habit, by offering narratives and images that signify the movement of a growing print culture outside individual intentions. In this vein, writing that imitates De Quincey's opium motif engages the possibility of a collective impulse to move somehow beyond the constraints of capitalism.

Many critics have examined the way De Quincey's opium-produced experiences are projections designed to relocate threats "outside" the individual and collective entities that De Quincey identified himself with.¹⁷ John Barrell, for example, has influentially argued that De Quincey's writing exoticizes the masses: "whatever is bad about [them] is characterized as exotic, as extrinsic, as not really them at all, with the effect that they are separated from, and contrasted with, their own representation as oriental" (11). De Quincey's projection is made possible by the imperialist perception of Asian populations in terms of uncontrolled reproducibility: "De Quincey like most other Europeans conceived of Asia beyond the Tigris as a place where people seemed to run into each other, to replicate each other, to compose one mass without divisions or features" (Barrell 5). Yet uncontrolled reproduction and a corresponding lack of individuality characterize entities besides the masses.¹⁸ These characteristics correlate as much, if not more so, with the proliferation of printed materials that would soon qualify as "mass" media. If the repetition that applies to the automatic reproduction of printed materials becomes "Asian," and an "oriental" drug produces writing that appeals to the masses, then the medium itself becomes exotic. Since it is the peculiar nature of automatic reproducibility to break down the distinction between inside and outside, particularly when these

designations are figured in terms of an opposition between organic and mechanic, exoticizing mass media becomes a strategy for disavowing the ways in which automatic reproducibility undermines the idea of the author as an organic source of creation.

Opium was familiar to almost everyone as a medicinal remedy but no one had written about its use as a habitual form of pleasurable entertainment before De Quincey. *Confessions* narrates at the absolute limit of an experience so common, that however foreign its account might appear, most readers would feel authorized to evaluate its merit as an aesthetic experience.¹⁹ In *Opium and the People*, Virginia Berridge and Griffith Edwards write that “Analysis of his untypical individual case was easier than an examination of the place of opium in nineteenth-century society as a whole” (50). Yet if what is singular about De Quincey’s case is his dramatization of automatic reproducibility through opium, then his writing is more relevant to society as a whole than his unusual opium habit might at first imply. Just as the atypical extremes of De Quincey’s drug habit exaggerate certain aspects of the commonplace use of laudanum, so too does his writing enlarge the commonplace encounter with automatic reproducibility in print media.²⁰

One unusually negative 1823 review of *Confessions* affirms a connection between print media and opium in proclaiming disgust for a “document” that amounts to “an abuse of the habit” (371 *Eclectic Review*). The same reviewer reveals how archival classification will support a stronger connection between opium-writing and the literary world of print than between opium-writing and scientific knowledge about drugs: “The work is written throughout in the tone of apology for secret, selfish, suicidal debauchery: it is the physical suffering consequent upon it that alone excites in the Writer a moment’s

regret. In a medical point of view, the work is quite worthless: in a moral point of view, it is truly affecting. Its literary merits we leave others to canvass” (371 *Eclectic Review*). This reviewer abandons whatever the Opium-eater has to say about his opium experiences to the sphere of “literature.” By contrast, the reviews that do canvass the work for literary merits are quite frank about its pleasures as an addictive substance, however ambivalent they may be about its aesthetic and moral vagaries. To introduce the last quotation of his article, one 1822 reviewer writes “we shake hands with our Opium-eater, almost sorry that his divorce from opium has terminated his dreams” (488 *British Review and London Critical Journal*). The reviewer for the *The United States Literary Gazette* (1825) who speculates that Coleridge probably wrote *Confessions*, wishes it were otherwise “because it is pleasant to have among the caterers for the luxuries and comforts of the reading public,’ not only S.T. Coleridge, but such an “*alter el idem*” as must have written this work if he did not” (38).²¹ To the extent that laudanum was viewed as the one luxury cheap enough for even the poorest workers, opium-writing reveals a contiguous mode of consumption applied to the increasing numbers of middle class periodicals.

In *The Making of English Reading Audiences 1790-1832*, Jon Klancher explains how the increased purchase of printed materials after 1800 begins to fragment the eighteenth-century journal readership into several different audiences. At the same time a growing middle class readership encountered De Quincey’s work, periodical production was experiencing a secondary growth spurt: “By the early 1820’s cheap periodicals like the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* or the *Hive* were to flood British bookstalls and coffeehouses with circulations of fifty thousand or more, dwarfing those

of the quarterly reviews and monthly magazines [an estimated twenty thousand]” (Klancher 49). In the competition for readers, the strategy of the latter was to offer a perspective capable of discerning among all types without descending among them—a reading position Klancher finds analogous to a panoramic or panoptic view that ranges over all readerships.

The sustainable success of *Blackwood's*, and especially the popular response to its reconfiguration in 1817, is according to Klancher owing to the success of the magazine in “managing” its readers’ preferences for a particular form and style that operated more or less independent of content. Management techniques generate a record of how the position it creates for readers comes into being. The magazine encouraged readers to become “intensely aware of moving between alternative vocabularies of social and intellectual order, of responding to the most varied, and at times extreme exercises of style, searching for privileged, nodal points at which to anchor a sense of cultural power” and ultimately to exalt in “the power of the mind itself” (Klancher 51, 55). Instead of trying to archive all the periodical material ever published, *Blackwood's* archives the perspectives, insights, and attitudes one might need in order to classify anything.

The Opium-eater and Blackwood's Magazine

In the twelfth installment of a popular series titled *Noctes Ambrosiannae* that appears in the October of 1823 issue of *Blackwood's* we can see the periodical at work creating such an impression by imaging the “addictiveness” of certain kinds of writing in foreign terms. This particular satiric dialogue, set like all the others in Ambrose Tavern in Edinburgh, allows us to see not only how *Blackwood's* exoticized its own magazine

medium but also how De Quincey's signature use of opium begins to designate a classification for writing that strikes a popular chord because of its exotic content rather than its aesthetic merit. An assembly of writers and editors, including John Wilson (who was De Quincey's particular friend and mentor), John Gibson Lockhart, and sometimes also William Maginn and William Blackwood, appear throughout the first twenty *Noctes* as the composite character, Christopher North, who was designated as the "fictional editor of *Blackwood's*" (Parker 111). There were other composite characters such as Timothy Tickler, "a waspish reviewer for the magazine" but also characters such as the Ettrick Shepherd, who is "loosely based on James Hogg," the other person in this set who became De Quincey's particular friend (Parker 111). The use of fictional characters that exhibit identifiable characteristics of known persons creates a flexible framework for the peculiar combination of literary criticism and political debate in the *Noctes*. By including the "Opium-eater" among the literary coterie at dinner, episode twelve is particularly linked to the *Confessions*.

Noctes Ambrosiannae, translated "Ambrosial Nights," not only echoes the well-known title "Arabian Nights" but also re-animates the path between opium and writing through its own representation of literary discourse as food and drink.²² In this parodic exercise, the nectar of the Gods socializing, not on Mount Olympus but the highlands of Great Britain, is common pub fair. At the supper table, an outburst from a character named Mullion introduces the Opium-eater into the conversation: "Never, never, never, in all my born days, did I eat such a glorious plateful of kidneys as that which Mr. Opium-Eater lately transmitted to me" (492). The Opium-eater quietly remarks to his own neighbor that he accidentally dropped "a few grains of opium" into the kidneys as he

passed them on (492). Mullion's subsequent conversation satirically imitates the digressions and fantastic associative leaps characteristic of *Confessions*. He muses out loud: "a glorious collection of wild beasts" makes "a perfect House o' Commons": "Mild, majestic, towzy-headed, big-pawed, lean-hurdied lion, saw ye ever Mungo Park? Tiger, tiger, royal tiger—jungle-jumping son-o'-Sir-hector-Munro-devouring tiger!" (492). These fragmented sentences leap from contemporary London politics, to one of Blake's revolutionary motif for political forces associated with the fire used in print-making, to De Quincey's phobic attitude toward things east of the Tigris, particularly "tigerish" Malays. One is hard pressed not to laugh at the ability to say so much while explaining so little. In contrast to Mullion's use of language, the Opium-eater's syntax is clear and concise (although he is made out to be rather odd in his eating habits, declining meat and drink for dinner in favor of coffee and muffins). Mullion's linguistic absurdity after consuming the opium thus aims to lampoon the reproducibility of the mechanical technique used to write the *Confessions*. *Blackwood's* affirms the authenticity of literary genius by showing a case where, in the absence of such genius, opium merely reproduces the tendency to be "overpowered with a power of words" and the power of reproducing them.

The presence of the Opium-eater at the table also occasions more direct remarks about the *Confessions* in a similar vein. The Shepherd comments how "It's perfectly dreadfu', yon pouring in upon you o' oriental imagery" and admits trying the effects of a large dose of laudanum for himself. He reports experiencing crudely similar sensations but objects to the metaphysical difficulties of opium writing, "for the sounds and sights were baith shadows; and whare are the words for expressing the distractions o' the

immaterial soul drowning in matter” (485-6). Here he pinpoints the paradoxical tension throughout the *Confessions* between the outer, material, mechanical source and the inner, organic, visionary source of the Opium-eater’s words. He nevertheless admires the Opium-eater, having “never doubted you wad come out wi’ some wark, ae day or ither, that wad gar the Gawpus glower,” meaning, as he explains, attract significant public favor (486).

Registering the commercial success of *Confessions* turns the conversation to speculations about the importance of genre in determining popularity if not the notoriety. After noting Wordsworth’s inadequacies as a popular writer, the Shepherd causes the introduction of the fictional editor of *Knight’s Quarterly Magazine*, Vivian Joyeuse, by demanding “Wha’s that glowering at me in the corner?”(487). Joyeuse’s “glowering” expression closely associates him with “garring the Gawpus glower,” or charming the reading public. His characterization of himself as “something of a non-descript” suggests why the public, reported to be occupied reading Joyeuse’s miscellany, might be attracted to the Opium-eater’s visionary representation of the “soul drowning in matter” (486-7). But while the *Noctes* affirms the addictive substance of opium-writing, it also records a competing notion of poetry as a drug. The reviewer Tickler cannot say enough to disparage the members of the Cockney school, and irritated by what he perceives as their unauthorized use of classic literary references, complains “There was John Keats enacting Apollar, because he believed that personage to been, like himself, an apothecary, and sickening, because the public was impatient of his drugs” (488).²³ From *Blackwood’s* perspective, prose has already won the contest to addict readers precisely

because while poetry may be prescribed, it is not automatically incorporated into the most daily of reading habits.²⁴

The concluding manifesto of “Noctes 12,” addressed to “the literary men of this age,” ends by reminding them of the losses they incur should they refuse the signifying power of “Christopher North”:

You have never so much as fortified yourself with the initials of our formidable name “C.N. the Editor of Blackwood.” Oh, that would have been worth P__r, A__, P__, G__n, and “the rest” all in a lump; better than “Four-and-twenty Fiddlers all in a row.” Or had you had the courage and the conscience to print, at full length, “Christopher North,” why these sixteen magical letters would have opened every door for you, like Sesame in the Arabian Tales. These four magical syllables, triumphant over the Laureate’s “ugly characters, standing in the very front of the notice, like some bug-bear, to frighten all good Christians from purchasing...” (505)

The magical power of “Christopher North” lies in the consolidation of the journal’s collective authorship under a single name. *Blackwood’s* grants an accessibility that is like “Sesame in the Arabian Tales” because of its singular capacity to enter into the discourse of any other publication in circulation without losing its own identity.²⁵ The gain however is purchased by a deficit, as De Quincey and Hogg knew only too well, by having had words put into their “mouths.” In contrast to the public access granted by the collective C.N., the Laureate, meaning Robert Southey, will frighten the public with his undomesticated orientalism. The future Laureate, “Wudsworth,” as the Shepherd calls him, “will never be popular” either given that his talents, however much domesticated, are confined to poetry (486). By representing its own medium as the most efficacious means of reproducing exotic substances (opium, ambrosia, the *Arabian Nights*), *Blackwood’s* is able to convey an unusually self-reflexive view of its production

technique, namely the consuming and consumed relationship it maintains with heterogeneous materials from other periodicals.

The *Noctes* also uses the exotic imprint of foreign languages. Scene one of episode twelve is titled “The Chaldee Closet,” invoking the title of the controversial but extremely popular “Chaldee Manuscript” published in the reconfigured 1817 issue of *Blackwood’s* as a Biblical parody describing the genesis of the magazine’s transformation in the hands of Lockhart, Wilson, and Hogg. The scene title suggests a more intimate, “closeted” version of the “Chaldee Manuscript,” in accordance with Blackwood’s intention to tone down the aggression toward competitors in the wake of the Scott-Christie duel (Parker 110). But the “Chaldee” reference also associates the genesis of literary magazines with studies in philology. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century philologists anticipated the emergence of ethnology in their efforts to interpret the contemporary geography of language and culture in the Biblical terms of the tower of Babel by merging Christian theology and the study of oriental languages.²⁶ Even earlier theological scholarship resulted in the polyglot Bible—editions of the Bible in which the text in different languages appears side by side in double columns. The first known instance of Arabic printed on an English press was a supplement to the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible alongside the English; polyglot editions also frequently included a Chaldee translation.²⁷ Just as the name Christopher North came to signify a whole set of people involved in the magazine’s production (before eventually becoming more or less the exclusive province of John Wilson), references to exotic languages came to signify *Blackwood’s* inclusion of many dialects and forms of the English language. Put more

simply, foreign language became a general signifier of *Blackwood's* self-consciousness of itself as a medium.

Automatic Reproducibility and Greek Letters

We see this again in *Blackwood's* use of the Greek language. A two-line epigraph printed in Greek letters appears under the title “Noctes Ambrosianae,” and underneath that, an explanation and translation appears by Christopher North:

This is a distich by wise old Phocyclides,
An ancient who wrote crabbed Greek in no silly days;
Meaning, “’Tis right for good winebibbing people,
Not to let the jug pace bound the board like a cripple
But gaily to chat while discussing their tippie.”
An excellent rule of the hearty old cock ‘tis—
And a very fit motto to put to our Noctes.
C.N. ap. Ambr. (484).

The inclusion of a framing explanation in addition to the translation clearly anticipates readers who cannot read or contextualize ancient Greek citations for themselves. But instead of mocking this inability, North makes the most of an opportunity to show that, thanks to *Blackwood's*, knowledge of “Greek” is no longer the exclusive domain of an aristocratic aesthetic.²⁸ “Greek,” especially the appearance of Greek letters, has become an aesthetic effect that covers over the gap between a privileged education and the habit of reading periodicals to appear knowledgeable. The translation of Greek in a popular magazine suggests that the patriarchal seat of power has shifted as well. *Blackwood's* archives its privileged interpretation of the letter of the law on the authority of Wise old Phocyclides who assures the reader that the ambrosia composing the “noctes” is for “good winebibbing people.” And while wine is common enough, *Blackwood's* middle

class reader might find it just as well if the magazine's medium is not quite as common as opium.

In the early 1820s, Greek was a particularly likely sign for a contested cultural space given that everywhere newspapers and journals were publishing articles that related to the struggle in Greece for independence from the Ottoman Empire. Since the rebellion against Turkish ruler Mahmud II in 1821, Greece regularly appeared in articles with titles like "Case of the Distressed Greeks," a short piece printed in the *Imperial Magazine* (1823) that includes the following eyewitness account:

We walked through the town, which was handsome, and built entirely of stone, and found the houses, the Churches, the hospitals, the extensive college, where a few months ago 600 or 700 youths were receiving their education, one mass of ruins. On every side were strewed fragments of half-burnt books, manuscripts, clothes, and furniture and, what was most shocking to the feelings, numerous human bodies mouldering in the spots where they fell. (189)

As different as this passage seems from the Greek epigraph of the *Noctes*, it too suggests that "Greek" is a fitting motto for this magazine since the "strewed fragments" of Greek culture correspond to the headlines that form the medium of its imperial perspective.

This image shows how the material destruction of one kind of archive, the Greek school, is involved in the production of another archive, that of the *Imperial Magazine*. Clearly even periodicals using a less ambitious meta-language thought of themselves as a particular kind of archive, namely one that recollected and organized its published material over time through the numerical and calendrical indices that automatically accompany serial form.

Since popular writing mediates between journalistic and literary forms of writing, literary magazines like *Blackwood's* and miscellanies like the *Imperial Magazine* describe their mechanically produced medium as Greek—as a place of formal

inconsistency, a place formally limited by its expanding capability. On the one hand Greek literature appears in literary collections all over Great Britain. Its traditional role in classical education fuels the philhellenism that associates the Greek rebellion with English ideals about the utopian potential of western civilization.²⁹ On the other hand, the geographical proximity of Greece to the East, and its centuries-old occupation by the Ottoman Empire, suggest that the exotic character of Eastern despotism and barbarism has made an indelible impression on Greek culture.³⁰ As a geographical zone that lies between the East and West, confusing rather than clarifying the line where one stops and the other begins, and as a political zone that belongs to both conservative and liberal symbolism, Greece is neither a reliable foundation of western identity nor can western identity be imagined without it. Periodical references to “Greece” and “Greek” point to the way industrialization will similarly fail as a founding principle of national identification at the same time it stands at the center of Great Britain’s emergence as a modern, civilized, nation.

Greek words, quotations and references appear throughout the *Confessions*. In the first few pages describing his education, the Opium-eater asserts that his mastery of Greek

was owing to the daily reading off the newspapers into the best Greek I could furnish *extempore*: for the necessity of ransacking my memory and invention, for all sorts and combinations of periphrastic expressions, as equivalents for modern ideas, images, relations of things, &c. gave me a compass of diction which would never have been called out by a dull translation of moral essays, &c. (9)

This passage gives the impression of describing the translation of English into a foreign language. But if Greek is a common signifier for periodicals to gesture to their mechanically reproduced medium, then the impression of newspapers being translated

into Greek is an illusion created by converting one mechanical medium into another. In other words, De Quincey's translation stages a moment of projection in which the newspaper's form turns into something that the reader recognizes as both foreign to Englishness and central to British civilization. At this moment, the mechanization of print media makes an impression on the reader as something "Greek" instead of directly presenting itself as the condition of both De Quincey's writing and the newspaper. When he enthusiastically reports discovering "all sorts and combinations of periphrastic expressions, as equivalents for modern ideas, images, relations of things," he describes something similar to the invention of meta-language in *Blackwood's Noctes*. Both cases point to corresponding accelerations in the mechanical production of print and the use of "Greek" to signify exotic content in printed texts (Klancher 49-50).

Having displayed his mastery of conjuring the mechanization of printed material, De Quincey cannot resist pointing out that his ability also has the power to transform the English readers into an Athenian mob. If his professors remark his ability to "harangue an Athenian mob, better than [they] could address an English one," it is because he practices a technique for changing the latter into the former (9). De Quincey offers a kind of footnote to his performance a few pages after exhibiting his skill at conjuring the mechanization of print in Greek. Describing his impoverished circumstances after running away from school, he admits that

As a corrector of Greek proofs (if in no other way), I might doubtless have gained enough for my slender wants. Such an office as this I could have discharged with an exemplary and punctual accuracy that would soon have gained me the confidence of my employers. But it must not be forgotten that, even for such an office as this, it was necessary that I should first of all have an introduction to some respectable publisher: and this I had no means of obtaining. (28)

The technique for correcting Greek proofs, “discharging” them with “punctual accuracy,” is a component in the mechanical process of producing a “copy.” He thus confirms the way in which Greek literature becomes a figure for the imprint of the mechanical media. Since the Opium-eater lacks the paternal sanction of a publishing house, he is cut off from the only testament to his character available, the “Greek proofs” themselves. Ronell asserts that “*The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* can be shown to perturb an entire ontology by having drugs participate in a movement or unveiling that is capable of discovering no prior or fundamental ground” (59-60). In other words, whatever variable stands in for opium-writing reveals that any ontology based on divine right or meritocracy is an illusion.

An exchange between this motif of the Greek imprint and the impression it creates of mechanical reproducibility forms the dynamic of the well-known Malay episode. As the Opium-eater sets up his description of the Malay in the kitchen of Dove Cottage, he observes, “What business a Malay could have to transact amongst the English mountains, I cannot conjecture,” but immediately he does conjecture: “possibly he was on his road to a sea-port about forty miles distant” (62). His conjecture is another act of conjuring not only the Malay but also the mystery of the Malay’s “business transaction” (62). The Malay’s business transaction might appear to be one and the same as the transmission of xenophobic stereotypes. The Opium-eater speaks to the Malay by reciting the *Iliad* in Greek: “I addressed him in some lines from the *Iliad*: considering that, of such languages as I possessed, Greek, in point of longitude, came geographically nearest to an Oriental one” (63). The lines from the *Iliad* supply the authority of the stereotype, the authority of the “Greek proof,” to differentiate between the Opium-eater’s

western origins and the Malay's eastern origins. But considering the earlier emphasis on De Quincey's mastery of Greek, it is likely that on some level, De Quincey understands the Malay as "his" copy, that is, a copy of himself.

The Opium-eater's description of the Malay's attitude and behavior very specifically reproduces the two archetypal motifs that Edward Said identifies as the foundation of all oriental stereotypes imprinted by "the west": "Asia is defeated and distant," and at the same time, full of "insinuating danger" (57). The "ferocious looking," "tiger-cat" Malay with "fiery eyes" menaces the girl; her up-standing English features and behavior contrast strongly "with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enameled or veneered with mahogany, by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations" (63). The "insinuated danger" of this scene is defeated or deferred by its elaborate theatricality, its "picturesque exhibition" of automatons that the Malay himself "assisted to frame" (64). It is this staging of eastern types that animates them. Except for the way the Opium-eater favorably compares the appearance of the Malay to exhibitions in "Ballets at the Opera House," there is no particular reason to think De Quincey had "seen an Asiatic dress of any sort" any more than the servant girl (62). Conjuring the Malay is a matter of reproducing a staged spectacle, specifically one that has escaped from the pages of the orientalist's archive by means of accelerated print production and consumption.

Said points out that Greek literature provides a kind of collective origin for "the demarcation between Orient and West" that "already seems bold by the time of the *Iliad*" (56).³¹ Reciting lines from the *Iliad* in Greek then is the mechanically conditioned response to the "type-face" that appears in "Opium-writing." It is significant that De

Quincey calls the Malay an Orientalist instead of an Oriental because such a word choice registers the Malay as the text and De Quincey's as the context of the orientalist archive: "To him, as an Orientalist, I concluded that opium must be familiar" (63). The Malay's presumed familiarity with opium makes him recognizable as a copy of De Quincey and thus all the more terrifying. Thus the Malay episode adds another internal layer within the *Confessions* text as a document within in the archive of "orientalism" that Said interprets as a textually produced lexicon, "fully formalized into a repeatedly produced copy of itself" (197). At the same time it shows how *Confessions* mobilizes the oriental archive the signature of automatic reproducibility as well as the potential of print culture to challenge and destroy British civilization from the inside out.

The Opium-eater's Archive and the Malay

When the Malay arrives at Dove Cottage, the servant girl also seems to understand him as an escapee from the sphere of the Opium-eater's intellectual pursuits: the servant girl "gave [the Opium-eater] to understand that there was a sort of demon below, whom she clearly imagined that [his] art could exercise from the house" (62). And while at first it appears that he succeeds in directing the Malay to vanish, it later becomes clear that the Opium-eater's reaction to the Malay has only further undermined his own claim to western authority. Barry Milligan similarly concludes that in De Quincey's writing, "both England and the Orient ultimately occupy the same body under the influence of opium" (45). My analysis extends from this idea to show that the "influence of opium" on their shared body is the automatic spread of mechanically reproduced print-images.³²

In nightmares following the incident, the Opium-eater occupies the position of the Malay-copy while the Malay occupies the Opium-eater's role as the magician who reproduces geopolitical power through a series of illusionary copies. The Opium-eater confesses that "the anxiety I connected with his image for some days" is justified by the manner in which the Malay "fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him worse than himself, that ran 'a-muck' at me" (64). As a mechanical reproduction of the traits that should mark the division between the east and the west, the Malay automatically usurps control from both the *Iliad* and the Opium-eater, a circumstance which the Opium-eater characterizes as "an *Iliad* of woes" (68). Through the animating motif of the Malay-copy, opium-writing transports the Opium-eater into "Asiatic scenes" every night for many months (80). The Opium-eater "escaped sometimes and found [himself] in Chinese houses," just as the Malay found himself in Dove cottage. When the opium-eater wakes, it is only to realize that the entire nightmarish Asian empire has been "put to rest" in his own home because of the way he has come to rely on opium in order to participate in print culture (82).

An episode published later in *Suspira de Profundis* (1845) recasts this collapse of "the home" as the source of archival stability through a boyhood encounter with the serial dimensions of print culture. He remembers that after subscribing to a history of England to be published in a series of volumes, he was very fearful of the public scene that would ensue at the door of his home upon the delivery of endless volumes that he would never be able to pay for. This memory is directly connected with his memory of a story from "the *Arabian Nights* which had particularly interested [the Opium-eater and his] sister" (140). The story is about a young porter caught by a powerful magician dallying with the

magician's bride and the porter's subsequent punishment. The Opium-eater identifies the angry unpaid publisher of the history of England as the same as the vengeful magician from *The Arabian Nights*. This equation automatically places him in the position of the helpless porter and leads him to recognize a story "that had once seemed so impressive to me in a mere fiction from a far-distant land, literally reproduced in myself" (141). The collapse between himself and the exotic character identifies the Opium-eater as the copy, as the one who "had been contemplated in types a thousand years before on the banks of the Tigris" (141).

Not only is Galland's first translation of *The Arabian Nights* an early example of a work able to take advantage of cheaper production costs to achieve greater circulation and popular notoriety, but the title itself of course references the increasing centrality of serialization within popular print culture.³³ Scheherazade, the central character in the narrative frame of *The Arabian Nights*, provides is a master of mobilizing the addictive properties inherent in serial story-telling on behalf of self-preservation. If it is at first unclear how the stationer became the magician from *The Arabian Nights*, we might recall Christopher North's claim to grant magical access to literary culture through the medium of the periodical. Or we might notice the way an admission of anxiety a few pages earlier about the collective force of stationers closely recalls the Opium-eater's inability to banish the Malay: he confesses, "I had some dim terrors, also, connected with the Stationers' Company. I had often observed them in popular works threatening unknown men with unknown chastisements, for offences equally unknown" (139). "Popular works" present a cycle of violation but the violations are all committed against imaginary, non-entities. And so the adult Opium-eater wonders: "For what did it matter

whether a magician dunned one with old ropes for his engines of torture, or Stationers' Hall with 15,000 volumes, (in rear of which there might also be ropes?)" (141). It matters that the serial character of "popular works" constitutes "ropes" connecting readers to the printed stereotypes, by means of repetition, to an "engine of torture." This engine of torture is the automatically produced threat that serial habits of consumption will undermine the projection of uncivilized behavior onto Eastern cultures and characters.

Detached Images and Transferable Surfaces

The Malay is a memorable image in part because of the strange way his visual appearance interfaces with the appearance of the interior of the cottage through alternating points of contrast and camouflage. His white clothes stand out against the dark wood on the one hand. On the other hand, the visual correspondence between the "wood-like" surface of the Malay's skin and the wall-paneling suggest that his exoticism may indicate a subtler mode of resemblance at work. The Malay's skin is "enamelled or veneered with mahogany," the appliqué of De Quincey's conjecture that the Malay is a sea-faring oriental (63). The wall paneling is similarly visualized, made from a "dark wood that from age and rubbing *resembled* oak" and made the room look "more *like* a rustic hall of entrance than a kitchen" (my italics 62). The skin and the wall, the interior and the exterior, the foreign and domestic surface—all come abruptly close together through a concentration of images made possible by typographical reproduction. Something interesting happens if we trace the archived use of the term "mahogany." As a sign for the image of a wooden medium, this word proves a particularly powerful

device for binding interior and exterior spaces in a manner surprisingly similar to that of opium.

Mahogany is associated with more than one type of foreign wood but especially a species of tree from the West Indies. The trajectory of this material through literature anticipates Nancy Armstrong's description of fiction expanding its referential capacity in relation to photography's automatic reproduction of images:

The so-called material world to which Victorians were apparently so committed was one they knew chiefly through transparent images, images which seemed to bring them conceptual and even physical control over that world. It was to cash in on the giddy expansion of referential possibilities afforded by the reversal of the mimetic priority of the original over copy that fiction developed the repertoire of techniques most commonly associated with realism. (5)

Under the entry for mahogany in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the accumulation of literary references to the color or texture of something that is not actually "wood" offers a kind of shorthand demonstration of how the "copy" of an image gains mimetic priority over the original. Not only do we find De Quincey's sentence from this passage describing the Malay's complexion among the examples in the *OED*, but also a line from Byron's *Beppo* Ixx (1817): "He was a Turk, the colour of mahogany." The placement of De Quincey's writing, here in the dictionary, shows how he reproduces the vagueness of oriental stereotypes (Turkish skin looks the same as Malay skin) but more, it shows that this scene is catalogued in a sequence of literary reproductions. Byron's work is chronologically preceded by another racially charged reference from Tobias Smollet's *Peregrine Pickle* (1751): "Their natural colour ... degenerated into a mahogany tint" (II. Ixix). All of these examples refer to the capacity of exotic climates to reproduce the same impression on the image of a face. This thread continues in a citation from Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), "Travelling people usually get more or less mahogany"

(I. xxiv. 208), and another from Robert Louis Stephenson's *Catriona* (1893), "We saw he was a big fellow with a mahogany face" (xxx. 359). Numerous other citations from periodicals demonstrate that the use of the term mahogany is concentrated in popular writing that coincides with the popularity of mahogany furniture throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁴ As the visually striking surface of a popular type of furniture, the visual impression easily transfers to a popular image of exotic skin; juggling the valences of this signifier becomes a technique for imprinting racial classifications.³⁵

The *OED* entry offers an equally succinct illustration of the silent, invisible force of archive fever at work. As I have already mentioned, De Quincey's sentence describing the Malay's skin appears on equal footing with the other examples taken from literary works among the various definitions under the entry for "mahogany" in the *OED*. Unlike all the other literary references however, this one displaces the source of the quotation, failing to mention either De Quincey's name or the title, *Confessions of an English-Opium Eater*. The whole of the citation appears like this: "1822 in *N. Amer. Rev.* (1824) Jan. 96 A more striking figure could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl,..contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany, by marine air." The first date that appears in the *OED* citation, 1822, coincides with the publication date of the first volume addition of *The Confessions*, and it is this volume that forms the subject of a majority of the contemporary reviews. By some error or the application of an invisible logic, however, the *North American Review* is allowed to stand in, not as an origin, but as a point of reference for the text that it no doubt reproduces word for word. The reproducibility of the text as "pure copy"

suggested by the gap between the two dates must speak for itself. As Ronell points out, “The clarity which opium urges is not dependent upon a prior unveiling” (60). “Opium-writing” is thus defined by its power to detach from an “origin” and to interface with the mechanics of reproducing an archival principle.

Critics are drawn to *Confessions* as a document demanding recognition as a significant literary achievement but one that is fundamentally impossible to classify according to a single principle. It combines many generic characteristics with something never seen before. In her description of De Quincey’s “being on drugs” and its implications, Ronell credits him with inventing an aesthetic transparency that departs from realism’s mandates: “The most striking aspect of De Quincey’s decision resides in the fact that it resists regulation by a telos of knowledge. To this end his elaboration has uncovered for us a critical structure of decision to the extent that it has been tinctured by non-knowledge, based largely upon a state of anarchivization” (61). A reviewer from the *British Review and London Critical Journal* (1822) in particular anticipates Ronell in noting that the aesthetic technique of De Quincey’s work is to avoid the enclosure of any formal perimeter or categorizing logic:

A Brain morbidly affected by long excess of indulgence in opium cannot reasonably be expected to display a very consistent or connected series of thoughts and impressions. The work before us is accordingly a performance without any intelligible drift or design. It is, however, a sort of kaleidoscope, presenting to the eye a great variety of dazzling forms and colours, symmetrically and harmoniously disposed and blended, and yet expressing nothing, and resembling nothing. It is not easy to say what the author intends by his book, except its sale and circulation; whether he means what he says, or if not at all; whether he is serious, and if not always, when; whether he designs to deal in fact, or in fiction; whether he intends to praise, or to ridicule; to reverence, or to scoff; to laugh, or to cry; whether he is learned or unlearned; gloomy or gay; busy or idle; married or single. After all, however, the scene spread before us is a very elegant tissue of confusion, a rich piece of mosaic, on which the eye of fancy, if not of intelligence, reposes with delight; and upon the whole without much

danger; though we cannot say more for its morality, than that where it is lax or indecorous, it seems to be rather the effect of absence of thought, than want of principle. (474-5)

The one thing that remains certain among impressions of a “variety of dazzling forms and colours” cohering in a “tissue of confusion, a rich piece of mosaic” is that the work is principally intended for “its sale and circulation.” Its aesthetic illusions could therefore be said to be its archival truth-telling. Most other critics affirm the value of the work for telling the truth about the sufferings associated with an opium habit, *or* for telling the truth about what kind of prose narrative is most entertaining and, as I have attempted to demonstrate, these come to much the same thing.

After conjuring the Malay at the cottage, and before the Malay transports him to “an *Iliad* of woes,” the Opium-eater tries another experiment (68). He attempts to escape his narrative frame by enlisting the reader to conjure a realistically detailed painting of his cottage interior from a perspective outside the text. When he comes to his wife Margret, he begins to sketch instructions for the reader to picture her as an Aurora and a Hebe, before withdrawing in a sudden refusal to “put her down” to type; she appears blurry, semi-effaced. He then approaches a description of himself only to withdraw completely, and allow the image of opium to displace his specular dimension with public speculation:

Into this [glass decanter] you may put a quart of ruby-coloured laudanum: that, and a book of German metaphysics placed by its side, will sufficiently attest my being in the neighborhood; but, as to myself,—there I demur. I admit that, naturally, I ought to occupy the foreground of the picture; that being the hero of the piece, or (if you choose) the criminal at the bar, my body should be had into court. This seems reasonable: but why should I confess, on this point, to a painter? Or why confess at all? If the public (into whose private ear I am confidentially whispering my confessions, and not into any painter’s) should chance to have framed some agreeable picture for itself, of the Opium-eater’s exterior,—should have ascribed to him, romantically, an elegant person, or a

handsome face, why should I barbarously tear from it so pleasing a delusion—pleasing both to the public and to me? No: paint me, if at all, according to your own fancy: and, as a painter’s fancy should teem with beautiful creations, I cannot fail, in that way, to be a gainer. (68)

His interior secrets have been turned out for the public’s private ear; his exterior appearance has become the public’s fancy. The price for becoming one with the mind of the spectator, for leaving the kind of impression opium-writing leaves, is eliminating himself from the picture. Indeed, one critic reveals the mechanics behind this impression when he imagines the interior of “a mind,” the Opium-eater’s mind, as a tracing performed by the reader’s interest in the “mysterious operations” that produced this “powerful” imprint: “The pleasure which a reader is to derive from the perusal, will depend on the interest that he feels in tracing the mysterious operations of a deeply-cultivated mind, when unraveled and depicted by the hand of a most powerful master” (*Imperial Magazine* 93). But to the extent that Dove Cottage might be seen as a house belonging to a Romantic narrative, as the material property of Wordsworth, and as an archive of De Quincey’s past relations with Romanticism’s central figures, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Dorothy Wordsworth, etc., the Opium-eater’s departure from the painting *does* represent an escape from one narrative frame into another. His invisibility in the painting of Dove Cottage’s interior is an image of the movement of the text of *Confessions* from Romanticism into romance. The narrative frame of romance allows *Confessions* to open the suppressed contiguities between a changing collective of readers and the individual writer which in turn reconnects aesthetic discourse and the automated processes of mechanical reproduction. In the chapters that follow, we will see how other nineteenth-century narratives seeking to enact their own participation in mass media turn to De Quincey’s serial use of exotic images.

CHAPTER 2

Imperial Expansion:

The Serial Character of Mass Media and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*

In contrast to the attention critics have paid to the opium-dream at the beginning of *Edwin Drood* (1871), the exoticism in Dicken's earlier novels, particularly the opium overdose in *Bleak House* (1852-3), receives remarkably little notice.³⁶ It is through this scene however, that *Bleak House* ignites the plot's capacity to enact its serial participation in mass media. De Quincey's opium-eater narrates the possibility of turning an opium addiction into a successful publishing career. In a closely related gesture, *Bleak House* locates the key for connecting the pieces of its sprawling plot in the opium-addicted character Nemo. In *Confessions*, opium-addiction is a figure of mass reproducibility. In *Bleak House*, opium expands on the mass reproducibility of the serial novel as a means of imaging the spread of mass media. We can see this expansion very clearly when the first serial version of *Bleak House* is re-issued in three volumes and then again in cabinet editions and complete work series. Within the novel we see the force of its expanding mass medium in the outward movement of Nemo's opium-writing woven through the counter movement of his daughter's first-person journal. Esther's journal re-collects of the lost connection between herself and her father just as the re-issue of the serial in volume form re-collects the part-issues of the novel's earliest circulation.

Nemo's habitual use of opium to supplement his copying sets him apart from the rest of his "lot." His habit of taking enough opium "'to kill a dozen people'" (*Bleak House* 167) makes him seem more like a faded copy of De Quincey's opium-eater, and even more so of the Malay, who the opium-eater witnesses consuming enough opium "to kill three dragoons and their horses" (*Confessions* 63). Nemo would perhaps be indistinguishable from the other copyists except for the fact that his opium addiction accelerates his productivity: "The advantage of this particular man is that he never wants sleep. He'll go at it right on end, if you want him to, as long as ever you like" and since "he was a quick hand, and a hand not sparing of night-work," if you "[give] him out, say five-and-forty folio on the Wednesday night, you would have it brought in on the Thursday morning" (163, 170). Philip Gaskell explains that as early as 1811, paper-making machines motivated manufactures "to organize shift working and run the machine night and day, for a good machine could average 23 hours' production in the 24 for weeks on end" (220). The capacity of the machine to operate without stopping meant that production could be regulated according to much smaller units of time—not days, weeks, months, but seconds, minutes and hours. Opium replaces biological limits of production with this kind of precisely regulated calendrical time in Nemo.

Gaskell also explains that by the time Dickens's began publishing novels in the 1830s, steam-powered printing presses widely replaced the "common hand-press" for mass scale runs, making it possible to print writing almost as fast as the material it was printed on could be manufactured (189-200). Like the steam power accelerating the productivity of a hand-press, opium allows Nemo's copying to keep pace with the accelerating production of court documents. But opium also documents the fact that

profitable acceleration is matched by losses associated with disfiguration. In contrast to Benedict Anderson's claim that newspapers evolved in the eighteenth century by imitating the calendrical time of novel-plots, Dickens's novel argues for the reverse. Within the accelerating pace of mechanical reproducibility, the novel moves away from the book as a "distinct, self-contained object" in its imitation of the newspaper's uncontained serial format that, like any other commodity, is "measured in *mathematical* amounts," in lines, columns, pages, and numbered weekly or monthly parts (34).³⁷ Constrained by the market value of mechanically calculated units, the artistic value of writing is particularly susceptible to depletion; content becomes a matter of indifference in comparison with the rate of its production and reproduction.

Nemo's death links opium and writing to the depletion and disfiguration of content. When the attending surgeon testifies that Nemo "purchased opium ... for the last year and a half" and remembers "once thinking there was something in his manner, uncouth as it was, that denoted a fall in life," he traces the fall from Captain Hawdon to Nemo. Though the reader does not yet know who Captain Hawdon is, Woodcourt's recognition establishes Nemo's addiction as having a destructive effect on the signs of appearance traditionally used to maintain the integrity of an authoritative identity (167-8). Nemo's "uncouth" quality measures the distance of his fall through degenerative episodes of opium addiction. To the extent that an opium habit involves serial repetition, we can see how Nemo's addiction corresponds to the serial medium of the novel. Woodcourt also identifies Nemo— not by name, but by the observation that his repeated encounters with the now dead man increased his sense of the number of other things he did not know about him. The plot grows out of the interest in recovering from this state

of not-knowing and it is the newspaper that spreads that state to other characters in its reproduction of Nemo as a “man unknown, proved to have been in the habit of taking opium in larger quantities for a year and a half, found dead of too much opium” (177). Opium animates Nemo as a machine-copyist, but only on the condition that Nemo’s addiction gradually draws him closer to death. This condition comes from the fact that Nemo’s labor reproduces the Court’s tradition of authority which involves, among other things, reproducing an image of separation between man and machine. Nemo’s continued use of opium to write in a mechanical way disfigures him to the point of complete destruction—to the point of becoming “no one” in fact, as well as in name. The terrible disfiguration in which Nemo loses his human image-identity touches everyone involved in the property lawsuit Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce through the circulation of his hand-writing.³⁸

Chancery Court, and more specifically the Chancery lawsuit that occupies the plot of *Bleak House*, produces social equivalents of the letters left out of words in the specialized forms of abbreviation used in law-hand and shorthand: “The short-hand writers, the reporters of the court, and the reporters of the newspapers, invariably decamp with the rest of the regulars when Jarndyce and Jarndyce comes on. Their places are a blank” (15). The novel fills in mass media’s representation of the court case as a “blank” by moving to Nemo’s apartment where opium leaves mass media’s signature at the scene of Nemo’s death (not unlike the way serial killers in film and television today often mark their victims). In a room described as “a wilderness marked with a rain of ink,” we encounter the inhuman demand of the lawsuit for mechanically copied documents as “the bitter vapid taste of opium” (164-5). In this way, Chancery Court takes shape as the force

of destruction spreading the “wilderness” of mass media’s exotic culture through copies of its documents in Nemo’s opium-writing.

Bleak House reveals that opium consumption is simply an extreme figure for the way in which the expectations man-made copies were modified the production principles of the steam-press. Nemo is only one of many “law-writers, who live by job-work,” and are regarded as “a ‘queer lot,’ ‘a wild lot’” (163). Whatever else might make law-writers perceived as queer or wild, the abbreviated character of their law-hand gives their handwriting a distinctive, foreign look. Law-hand omits many letters of words in order to make it possible to write faster. Horizontal dashes just above each contraction to indicate missing letters make the writing look even stranger. Esther’s narrative underscores the unusual appearance of law writing when she reproduces a typical letter she has received from the law firm of Kenge and Carboy. In the copy she presents, the word client is spelled “clt,” about is spelled “abt,” Court of Chancery is spelled “Ct of Chy,” etc. The earlier reference to the reporters in the courtroom points to the connection between the abbreviations used for law-hand and the shorthand of newspaper reporters. Like his semi-autobiographical counterpart, David Copperfield, Dickens himself learned the hieroglyphic-looking characters of shorthand in order to cover trials when he began his writing career as a court reporter.³⁹ The expediency of using an abbreviated form of writing to generate writing for mass publication points to the evolution of the novel’s serial form in imitation of newspaper writing.

The growth of the serial market during the twenties and thirties established two conditions for mass market novels published during the subsequent three decades. First, it made it profitable for the novel to imitate, and in many cases merge with, periodical

forms like the newspaper, and second, by deviating from the conventional boundaries separating the consumption and production of the established three-volume novel format, serialization intensified the novel's cultural significance as a non-traditional work of art. By including opium addiction as shorthand for the destructive consequences of serialization on the traditional concept of literature, *Bleak House* enacts the mode in which mass media revises culture perhaps more dramatically than any of Dickens's other novels. Nemo's fate reveals that popular fiction is already in the habit of producing an estranged culture: the more mass media figures as a damaging if not deadly merger between human and machine production process, the more the culture appears unfamiliar. *Bleak House* targets Chancery Court's excessive documentation as evidence of a society no less barbaric than the one responsible for burning the libraries of Alexandria, but also reveals how this production-as-destruction is involved in liberating the present from the authority of the past.

Signs of Race

Once opium addiction stands in for the production and consumption of mass produced writing, racially charged descriptions of opium's effects on the body extend the impact of mechanical reproducibility to categories of identification such as class and nation. Nemo "has a yellow look," a look that combines physical degeneration with the stereotypical descriptions of Asiatic skin color. At first this may look like a straightforward example of the way the signs of racial degeneracy were often used to explain why there were lower classes. Later Tulkinghorn remarks that the dead man "had lived so wretchedly, and was so neglected, with his gipsy colour, and his wild black hair

and beard, that I should have considered him the commonest of the common” (195). Tulkington uses the phrase “commonest of the common” to tag the markings of an image of what Benjamin describes as “the race of those who possess no commodity but their labor power” (*The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire* 56). If racial degeneracy who will live by their labor and consequently, who will look like that, then the middle classes were relieved of any social responsibility: no need to fix or correct what happens organically in nature.

An illusion of organic determinacy in Nemo turns into a case for how the exotic undermines the propagation of social hierarchy. Because of Nemo’s known relationship to opium, his uncouth appearance and squalid living conditions are de-naturalized as excessive. When the omniscient narrator pronounces Nemo “as dead as Pharaoh” it preserves Woodcourt’s impression that he was once something more than this commonest of the common he appeared (168).⁴⁰ Instead of naturalizing class as race, Nemo’s degenerate appearance records the artificial imposition of mechanically reproduced social “types.” Superficially, we might take this to affirm the naturalness of whatever social status or position Nemo held before becoming exposed to opium. But the mutually constituting relationship between the opium-habit and law writing reveals that Nemo is simply a nodal point in the Chancery Court system of stationers, clerks and lawyers, plaintiffs, magistrates, etc. whose positions are composed and decomposed through the automated reproduction of court documents. Derrida explains the mechanical aspect of writing as the automating force of a supplemental system: “As soon as the supplementary outside is opened, its structure implies that the supplement itself can be “typed,” replaced by its double, and that a supplement to the supplement, a surrogate for

the surrogate, is possible and necessary” (*Dissemination* 109). In *Bleak House*, Nemo’s opium habit is what opens the narrative to this supplementary outside.

The color yellow, so closely associated with Nemo’s decay, becomes associated with the decay of authority in the Chancery Court.⁴¹ Deborah Epstein Nord describes the increasing references to gypsies in nineteenth-century literature as a sign of a growing awareness of and interest in lost origins of all kinds: “literary representation [of gypsies] was intimately connected to an obsession with origins of all kinds—linguistic, personal, and national. A people ‘without’ origins came to stand, paradoxically, for the question of origins itself and to be used as a trope to signify beginnings, primal ancestry, and the ultimate secret of individual identity” (8-9). By relying on techniques of mass reproduction to update its archival record of property and kinship, the Court begins to lose its status as an originary source of knowledge for where people belong, let alone what belongs to which people. We see this through the way Nemo connects “gipsy colouring” to images suggestive of decaying paper: “His hair is ragged, mingling with his whiskers and his beard—the latter ragged too, and grown, like the scum and mist around him, in neglect” (164). Between the images of raggedness, and an image of death not yet screened by a shroud, Nemo figures Chancery Court and an entire culture in the act of composing itself by way of decomposition.

Decomposition spreads outside the court’s archive where it feeds a struggle for establishing new positions of power. Nemo’s landlord Krook, the owner of a rag and bottle shop, is “cadaverous, and withered,” with a “yellow hand” (68). Esther reads him this way in the context of his shop where he collects, among other things, “a great many ink bottles,” “old volumes, outside the door, labeled ‘Law Books, all at 9d,’” a document

“announcing that a man ... wanted engrossing or copying to execute with neatness and dispatch: address to Nemo, care of Mr. Krook within,” and “heaps of old crackled parchment scrolls, and discoloured dog’s-eared law-papers”(68-9). Because Chancery Court consumes copies of documents exactly the same way Nemo consumes opium, court documents have been moving the inside of Chancery’s archive outside its traditional boundary. The parasitic reproductive life of mass media shows up in a set of characteristics that take the racialization of class a step further in signs of demonic possession and dispossession. Krook is compared to a vampire (168). And Richard’s lawyer Vholes is compared to a vampire and a cannibal; and Vholes too has a yellow face (696). These monster-bodies replicate the racialized symptoms of Nemo’s death because in a sense, they consume him. They consume the labor value of the mass-produced documents that grew out of the opium-concocted human machine called Nemo.

Foreign Expansion

Traditional literary form is tied to the traditional archival structure of Chancery Court. By showing how the mass reproducibility of its documents increases the serial scope of trials like Jarndyce and Jarndyce, *Bleak House* shows how its own expansion of the serial format impacts the established three-volume format of novels and the authority associated with traditional media in general. We have seen how the mass reproduction of Chancery Court papers breaks down the court’s authority by spreading court documents outside its official precincts where they are lost and found according to principles at odds with those of the court. The mass serialization of Dickens’s novel similarly moves an unfinished (unbound and thus structurally less like an archive than a traditional three-

volume set) narrative into circulation outside the traditional precincts of authorial composition. As with court documents in the narrative, the ongoing composition of the novel automatically receives the impression of myriad interests departing from those of the author and publisher. The more ephemeral looking numbers of a Dickens's serial erode the culturally significant gap between a bound book and a periodical because they precede the novel's volume publication.

The opium motifs we have focused on thus far contribute to images tracking the plot as a movement inside and outside the Court of Chancery. In answer to this purpose, the images connected with opium are characteristically a material substance that tends to float or flow across the barriers surrounding individual and collective entities. We encounter one such image in the "fog-bank" of proceedings, "mistily engaged," to describe Chancery Court's legal authority as a kind of smoke-screen for the mass exportation of documents in the first chapter (13). The foggy condition inside is explicitly exoticized when we learn that "waterside pollutions" picked up "among tiers of shipping" have "defiled" its domestic associations with meadows and marshes with something foreign coming from the water and the boats associated with London's mega metropolis (13-14). This fog mimics both the flow of mass media moving inside and outside of the country and the way it tends to concentrate, despite its foreign pollutants, in institutions like the Court of Chancery "at the very heart of the fog" where the nation's core principles are maintained (14). The degenerative and polluting effects evident in Nemo's opium overdose and in the court's lack of clarity reveal that mechanical reproduction is involved in dispersing the boundaries that traditionally identify self-contained entities. Smoke and fog denote substances that obscure the clarity of a visible

line precisely because the relative insubstantiality of their material makes it difficult to contain such a substance; they tend to spread and seep. If *Bleak House* gives the impression that pollutions from outside English culture blur Nemo's character or the court's authority, it also gives the impression that the proliferating formats of mass media have a dispersing effect on traditional, self-contained forms of literary publication.

Newspapers and periodicals spread mass media's effects into the collective imagination by providing the cheapest forms of information and entertainment available. Benjamin explains that as the mechanical reproducibility of information increases its value against the story, we "lose the ability to exchange experiences" and become "poorer in communicable experiences" (83-4). But in opposition to Q.D. Leavis's later negative assessment, Benjamin regards the prevention of any one aesthetic principle from becoming dominant as a neutral if not entirely positive thing. Mechanically reproduced texts and images create a lack of continuity between the experience of the present and the narrated experiences of earlier generations. Benjamin focuses on how bound volumes tend to be read in spaces like private bedrooms, libraries or window seats, where the reader concentrates in relative isolation and becomes absorbed into the narrative whereas ephemeral forms of mass media are consumed in spaces that encourage interruption and contend with content for the reader's attention. The point is that the movement of the novel toward the mass medium of the periodical encourages what we would call multi-tasking and, by extension, the transformations that might arise in the interstitial spaces of switching one's attention in and out of a novel. The degree to which mass media pulls against the concentrating forces associated with traditional media predicts the rate at

which culture will be able to move away from traditional social and cultural forms.

According to Benjamin,

Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished work of art. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to building. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. (239)

Published in serial parts, *Bleak House* invites itself to be consumed in a state of distraction.⁴² In contrast to a novel read in a traditional volume form, its ephemeral paper medium parsed out a few chapters at a time forcefully ejects readers outside the novel between episodes so that each return to the world inside the novel constitutes an altered point of view marked by forgetting and defamiliarization. To the extent that the novel is modeled on Chancery Court, its readers, particularly if addicted to the plot, are incorporated directly into the ebb and flow of the novel's medium whenever they exit or return to the novel.

Benjamin highlights architecture as a work of art most easily subjected to the unconscious impressions of the distracted masses. If we regard the part publication of *Bleak House* as a form akin to architecture in the way it structures the reader's entrances and exits, we might also compare it with the architectural spectacle of the Crystal Palace created to house the Great Exhibition (1851). Not unlike the Crystal Palace, *Bleak House* announces itself as a kind of archive documenting matters related to both domestic and foreign cultures. But while the objects on display as the "Great Exhibition" maintain the Crystal Palace as an "original" location to which all other associated reproduced images refer, the original *Bleak House* is scattered among the masses in serial pieces.⁴³ This is

not the only difference. Despite many interpretations of the Great Exhibition as a narrative structure for national identity and British Imperialism, Dickens accused the Exhibition of failing as a narrative. It lacked an appropriate conductor—a managerial force capable of presenting a single principle of meaning in this accumulation of things.⁴⁴ In one of the very few articles published in *Household Words* directly discussing the Great Exhibition, the complaint emerges.

Of these signs and tokens of the peaceful progress of the world, how numerous, how diversified are they!—and—let us honestly add—how impossible to be thoroughly singled out and examined amidst the crowding masses of men and things, raw materials and manufactured articles, machines and engines that surround you on every side! Where to begin, and how to advance with any prospect of concluding in a reasonable number of daily visits—is the difficulty. It is not much diminished by the great official Catalogue, (to say nothing of the “Synopsis,” the “Popular Guide,” &c.,) to which no index is attached, nor any compass-box—which is almost equally needed by the persevering navigator of all the “bays” and other intricacies below and above. (320)

The problem is that the exhibition absorbs visitors in a never-ending display that becomes prison-like for lack of a sequence or clearly marked opportunities to leave off and return. Strictly in terms of content, *Bleak House* would be subject to the same complaint but for the way the omniscient narrative is broken up internally by the first-person narrative of Esther’s journal.

Before pursuing the particulars of that journal as the compass-box of *Bleak House*, I first want to consider places where the narrative calls attention to material print culture and thus to its own existence as a text among other texts such as the advertisements that always accompanied each part publication. As counterpoint to the generalizing images of mass media in the fog and mud surrounding Chancery Court, the omniscient narrator uses the image of an Eastern desert landscape to describe a page of

copied law writing; this characterization in turn provides an exit strategy for responding to interruption from outside the text:

Mr. Snagsby is behind his counter in his grey coat sleeves, inspecting an Indenture of several skins which has just come from the engrosser's; an immense desert of law-hand and parchment, with here and there a resting-place of a few large letters, to break the awful monotony, and save the traveler from despair. Mr. Snagsby puts up at one of these inky wells, and greets the stranger with his cough of general preparation for business. (728)

As a stationer, it is Snagsby's job to look over documents one last time after they return from the copyist he commissions (the engrosser's) and before he turns them over to his customers (most often lawyers). The passage shows that Snagsby has learned to use the relative scale of written characters to return to work after an interruption. At the same time, the reader is made to see the text as a foreign landscape in which the stationer turns nomad; his chronic cough seems a natural enough response to the dried wells and the expanses of parchment. Snagsby avoids becoming like Nemo because his role in document production involves so much interruption. A passage like this not only "naturalizes" the interrupted experience of reading a serial novel but also encourages the reader's appreciation of visual diversions such as the illustrations by Hablot K. Browne and the advertisements at the beginning and end of each serial number. Advertising sections grew over the course of the part publications for Dickens's first novel *Pickwick* and became a staple component of Dickens's serial novels ever after. Though the ads are excluded from the narrative, they are also attached to it, framing the narrative of the novel just inside the paper binding of each part.

When we consider the content of the ads more closely, we find exotic references creating a bridge-like network of images between the interior narrative and the exterior world where the novel circulates as a print object. In the first numbered part of *Bleak*

House, for instance, one finds (on page eight of twenty-four pages of ads) an advertisement for books in “The Traveler’s Library,” including “Huc’s travels in Tartary, Thibet and China” as well as the title “African Wanderings.” These books, published as part of The Traveling Library Collection, were for sale in serialized one-schilling parts, as was *Bleak House*. On page nine, facing opposite The Traveling Library, is an advertisement for *Household Words*. There is more going on here than the simple fact that each of Dickens’s two biggest print projects, his current serial novel and his weekly periodical, were used to promote the other. This juxtaposition between ads for foreign and domestic reading material reproduces the juxtaposition between mass media and the concentrating force of Esther’s first-person narrative that creates the architecture of the novel’s structure. The parallel makes it more feasible to imagine images moving back and forth between the events inside the novel and the experiences lived outside it.

Interior Design by Chancery Court

Esther’s journal records the interior circumstances of other people’s homes in recognition of the destruction she witnesses as an extension or imitation of Chancery Court. Esther herself was born outside wedlock. Her unknown parentage means that her narrative consolidation of the novel’s fractal interiorities is already determined outside the patriarchal authority. From very early in the novel, the images presenting mass media in Esther’s journal automatically record clues to the origins of her existence because her hidden identity is rooted in the recognizability of Nemo’s hand-copied court documents. Esther’s journal thus provides a connective force capable of counter-balancing not only

the dispersing tendencies of the novel's mass medium, but also the founding premise of Chancery's Court's authority to oversee the transmission of property between men.

Esther's visit to Ms. Flight's home turns out to be an introduction to Krook's rag and bottle shop, the place where Nemo lives and where the letters that will resurrect his identity as her father have been kept hidden. This shop, located below Nemo's and Ms. Flight's apartments, constitutes a peculiar mirror reversal of the centrifugal forces at work in Chancery Court. Krook's shop, where "Everything seemed bought, and nothing to be sold there," warehouses the detritus of Chancery Court (67). Krook himself is called Lord Chancellor "among the neighbors" (69). Among the rags, parchment, law-books and other materials relating to document reproduction are "quantities of bottles" (67). So although there is no direct mention of opium or laudanum, the packaging for this commodity is well-represented. And though Esther has no way of knowing how relevant her words are to herself, she notices the "little particulars" that give this place "the air of being in a legal neighborhood, and of being, as it were, a dirty hanger-on and disowned relation of the law," like the flyer posted by her father to advertise his copying services (68). If the descriptions of paper and ink bottles are not enough to reproduce an impression of the opium-addicted law-writer living in the room above, a strange description of Krook himself is enough to remind readers of the exotic principle linking opium vapors to Chancery fog. Esther notices "the breath issuing in visible smoke from Krook's mouth, as if he were on fire within" (68). This bizarre phenomenon of course foreshadows Krook's infamous spontaneous combustion later on; the key is to realize that his fate is not random but a figure for how archival concentration can become addicted to itself and as destructive to its own reproducibility as mass media's forces of dispersal.⁴⁵

One of the novel's illustrations shows Krook tracing the character of "J" for Esther, "beginning at the ends and bottoms of letters," as though they were pictographs (76). Because he is illiterate, Krook tends to treat letters as pieces of a materially valuable puzzle instead of signifiers referring to an absent material. He erases each letter in the name "Jarndyce" before writing the next one, as if their external accumulation will automatically export them from his possession before he has the chance to collect on their full value. Krook's interest in having Esther verify that the letters he has written spell "Jarndyce" has to do with the connection he has made between the Jarndyce inheritance trial and "a quantity of packets of waste paper" that Esther sees him storing in a recess in the floor (75). In hindsight, there is every indication that these packets are the letters written by Lady Dedlock to a Captain Hawdon who now goes by Nemo. Esther's description of Krook handling "each separate package or bundle" turns the letters into a figure for the way the serial format of *Bleak House* places the composition of the novel outside the archival form of volume format. Unable to circulate his documents in a profitable manner according to the conventions of the court, these particular letters eventually escape from Krook's hoarding grasp when he implodes.

Chancery Court similarly dispossesses Richard Carstone of his life. Esther chronicles how repeated exposure to the lawsuit addicts Richard to the mystery of mystification that is the law: the need for more documents in name of clarification only perpetuates the great confusion among the elements of the inheritance case. Richard's mysterious consumptive malady figures the automatic process by which the case displaces Richard's private interests with its own perpetuation. Woodcourt diagnoses Richard's decline as a form of internalized circulation: "One cannot say that it is all

anxiety, or all weariness; yet it is both, and like ungrown despair” (707). Esther creates an image of Richard’s “ungrown despair” when she finds him “writing at a table, with a great confusion of clothes, tin cases, books, boots, brushes, and portmanteaus, strewn all about the floor. He was only half-dressed ... and his hair was unbrushed, and he looked as wild as his room” (700). The image of accumulating detritus surrounding a wild-looking Richard combines the opposite ways in which Chancery Court destroys Nemo and Krook. In other words, these deaths are linked by images showing how Chancery Court replaces these characters, in every sense, with its own inhuman characteristics.

Not all such replacements in the novel result in the death of a character. Mrs. Jellyby thrives as the inhuman replication of the court’s document production. In contrast to the correspondence with Chancery Court that diminishes Nemo, Krook and Richard, Mrs. Jellyby’s correspondence on the Booriaboolian project builds her up to a parody of monarchical enthronement. Boriaboolara and Jellyby’s home are equally subject to her distracted correspondence and threaten to become mirror images of savage anarchy. Like Nemo, Mrs. Jellyby depends on a foreign supplement to keep up her rate of productivity; Esther observes “Mrs. Jellyby, sitting in quite a nest of waste paper, [drinking] coffee all the evening” (58). But unlike Nemo, Jellyby has someone else, her daughter Caddy, to do the dehumanizing copy work: “nobody ever was in such a state of ink” (53). Before Caddy actually becomes “nobody” in the style of Nemo, Esther intervenes and gets Caddy to explain the chain of supplements responsible for rendering the domestic chaos of her home: “Ma and Africa, together, upset the whole house directly. We never have a servant who don’t drink. Ma’s ruinous to everything” (480). This is another way of explaining where the supposed lack of civilization in Africa comes

from.⁴⁶ The deterioration of civilized humanity is after all what Jellyby exports in her dictatorial rule. The African project must be abandoned when “the King of Boorioboola [wants] to sell everybody—who survived the climate—for Rum” (987). Caddy tells her siblings to “go play at Wild Beasts under the piano!” and later suggests that it might be best for everyone if the Jellyby children were “all Tomahawked together” since neglect has turned them into “Wild Indians” unfit for civilization anyway (218, 475). In her desperation, Caddy turns to exoticism to imagine how her siblings might escape the situation as type-cast, waste-paper exports.

Esther counters this desperate use of the exotic by using the connection between the primitive savagery of the children and the developments of popular taste to influence their behavior. She gathers and quiets them with fairy tales she know from translated editions of the Charles Perrault’s collected stories; the spreading popularity of these European stories parallels the way the stories of the *The Arabian Nights* also became the common reading material of school-age children in the middle classes. Both collections of stories migrated through revisions and new publications toward a younger audience, and in doing so, trace the movement of the fairy-tale genre from the oral story-telling tradition into print culture. Since even the stories translated from Perrault and the Grimm brothers come from parts of Europe that lie East of Great Britain, they, along side the tales from *The Arabian Nights*, automatically enact the position of mass media as exotic to the medium of oral story-telling.⁴⁷

Esther’s ability to reproduce mass mediated images makes her more powerful than many of the inmates of the homes she enters. When Jarndyce brings Esther to the miniature version of Bleak House he has created for her, Esther says: “without thinking

myself a Fatima, or you a Blue Beard, I am a little curious about [why you have brought me here]” (961).⁴⁸ This ready reference to one character from *Arabian Nights* and another character from Perrault’s French fairy-tales occurs at a significant moment where Jarndyce tries to preserve the integrity of patriarchal authority by giving Esther to Woodcourt.⁴⁹ The way Esther compares Jarndyce and herself to characters *they are not* hints that Jarndyce has already lost his power to give her away. In the next section I argue that as Esther changes Jarndyce’s house to suit herself and to correspond with the novel that shares its name, her interests gain power over his.

Turning Out Patriarchy

Esther’s increasing power is based on her ability to impose an illusion of hierarchical value that places domestic order over and against exotic disorder when in fact she herself must be capable of reproducing both in fairly equal proportions to sustain that illusion. She does this by classifying what belongs inside or outside “home.” The recent arrival of a “large Indiaman” attracts Esther and Charley along with a crowd of on-lookers, and prompts Esther to explain that the special appeal of this vessel is its recent return from the east. While Esther tries to focus her attention on the experience of “homecoming” she expects to find in the faces of the returning travelers, something else divides her attention.

Charley was curious, too, about the voyage, and about the heat in India, and the serpents and the tigers; and as she picked up such information much faster than grammar, I told her what I knew on those points. I told her too, how people in such voyages were sometimes wrecked and cast on rocks, where they were saved by the intrepidity and humanity of one man. And Charley asking how that could be, I told her how we knew at home of such a case. (700)

Esther is the opposite of one of the “British seamen and colonial soldiers” in whom Benjamin identifies some of the last remaining sources of communicable experience (101-2). Even though Charley is proof against the proper shape of the letter “O” in her copy book, let alone the rules of grammar, her desire for exotic information automatically transcends her illiteracy and unfolds the mass mediated images available to her through Esther’s literacy. Esther does not communicate experience; instead she mobilizes the exoticization of mass media, in this case through newspaper portrait of Woodcourt’s humanitarian bravery, to supplant the out-going principle of Chancery Court fog with the in-coming principle of returned hero. As Esther reproduces newspaper-information on Charley’s behalf, she simultaneously produces Woodcourt’s humanitarianism as a suitable principle around which to build a home—and thus she arranges for him to be her husband in the future.

In spite of her function to keep the novel balanced between extreme distraction and extreme concentration, Esther can no more avoid the harmful effects of circulating within the novel’s medium than British officers could avoid dying of malaria or the Chinese could prevent large numbers of their population from becoming addicted to opium. A deadly infectious disease passed to Esther by Jo comes from the pestilence of her father’s grave where the automatic reproducibility of his opium addiction transfers to the figure of contagion. Everything about Nemo’s opium addiction links the automatic character of mass media to the figure of opium writing. By sequentially linking the automatic character of addiction to the automatic character of a spreading contagion, the novel spreads Nemo’s opium-writing throughout its contents. This strategy depends on images. While Nemo’s death is unquestionably attributed to an opium-overdose, the

images of his body provided by the descriptions of other characters also link his demise to disease and disfiguration. The dramatic disfiguration of Esther's face further changes her relationship to patriarchy since her face in a sense becomes an image of her father as a machine-like agent of reproduction taking place outside the constraints of biology and biological reproduction. When Allen Woodcourt tells Esther that he finds Richard "changed," she is unable to escape the double reference of his words. They refer as much to the way the scars of her father's mass media contagion disfigure her face as to the way the mass mediated court case disfigures Richard's mental orientation (707). But the change in Esther's face also corresponds to the changes she makes to Bleak House. When Jarndyce reproduces all her arrangements and tastes in the second Bleak House, he automatically realizes that he must replace himself with Woodcourt.

Esther revises Jarndyce's domestic arrangements from the very beginning. For example, Jarndyce offers some pate to Esther when he anonymously accompanies her in the couch journey to school after her aunt's death. The situation faintly echoes Pluto tempting Persephone or the serpent tempting Eve, except that the grief-stricken Esther staunchly refuses, recognizing that it is "too rich" for one unaccustomed to eating such. Her authoritative assessment leaves Jarndyce "floored," and prompts him to toss the food out the window as she begins to displace his aristocratic tastes with preferences more appropriate to the middle classes. When Esther first arrives at Bleak House, there are "delightfully irregular" objects vaguely suggestive of Prince Albert's project to amass objects gathered from the Empire in the Crystal Palace including "three-cornered tables, and a Native-Hindoo chair, which was also a sofa, a box, and a bedstead, and looked, in every form, something between a bamboo skeleton and a great bird-cage, and had been

brought from India nobody knew by whom or when” (86). Arranged on the dispersing principle of imperialism, the foreign objects in the house are traces of the nation’s economic and geopolitical dependence on foreign people, places and materials.

The irregularity of the bamboo chair is a recurring aesthetic in the newly furnished apartments for Esther and Aida.

The furniture, old-fashioned rather than old, like the house, was as pleasantly irregular. Ada’s sleeping-room was all flowers—in chintz and paper, in velvet, in needle-work, in the brocade of two stiff courtly chairs, which stood, each attended by a little page of a stool for greater state, on either side of the fire-place. Our sitting room was green; and had, framed and glazed, upon the walls, numbers of surprising and surprised birds, staring out of pictures at a real trout in a case, as brown and shining as if it had been served with gravy’ at the death of Captain Cook; and at the whole process of preparing tea in China, as depicted by Chinese artists. (86)

Almost everything is covered, glazed, framed or encased, as if the layering of surfaces within frameworks and frameworks within surfaces is meant to compensate the surprising and surprised birds for their lack of connection with the other things in the room. Within the grateful and appreciative good-humor of Esther’s inventory there is also a note of criticism. If anything, the excess of framing and surfacing has re-instated some of the distance (the distance between the process of making tea in China and an English sitting room for instance) that it was meant to overcome. Esther makes a position for herself in *Bleak House* by imposing the order that will overcome such a distance. Because other characters single out the imposing stamp of her domestic order so frequently, readers may be inclined to suspicion when she claims to reproduce her guardian’s preferences in preparation for the marriage between them that will not occur: “Regulating my purchases by my guardian’s taste, which I knew very well of course, I arranged my wardrobe to please him, and hoped I should be highly successful” (959). Long before arranging this

wardrobe, she has been at work re-arranging her guardian's taste in imitation of her own and it is in this that she hopes for success. This moment in the plot builds on Jane Eyre's struggles with Rochester over her trousseau, and even Pamela's struggles with Mr. B, as cases where the lowly ranked wife-to-be conforms her husband's taste to her own by way of her wardrobe.

Esther's visit to Boythorn's retreat after recovering from her illness provides a strong indicator of how successfully Jarndyce has adopted her taste so far, not to mention how far he has already been removed from an image of traditional masculinity: "If a good fairy had built the house for me with a wave of her wand, and I had been a princess and her favoured godchild, I could not have been more considered in it" (571). This is much more distinct praise than she had for the sitting room at Bleak House and yet we do not hear overmuch about what has been changed out of consideration for her with one crucial exception: all the mirrors have been covered or removed so that she will not have to see the change on her own face until she decides to. The disfigurement that hides the resemblance between Esther and Lady Dedlock calls attention to the difference between the middle class images associated with Esther's taste and the aristocratic taste associated with her mother's residence at Chesney Wold. On an earlier visit there, before discovering the identity of her mother, Esther appreciates "the smooth green slopes, the glittering water, the garden where the flowers were so symmetrically arranged in clusters of the richest colours" (287). But her classification of her mother's home as a "picturesque old house" suggests an old-fashioned style, interesting primarily as a measure of what constitutes the modernity of a new house.

Esther's description of the home that Jarndyce gives her at the end of the novel, the "second" Bleak House, is totally free from the level of detail used in presenting the first Bleak House and the other domestic spaces throughout the novel. Despite numerous indications that the second Bleak House changes the formal aspects of the first one, the novel reveals next to nothing about the changes themselves. For example we learn that this much smaller house leaves off a growlery because Esther adds one later. We know that "the beds and flowers were all laid out according to the manner of [her] beds and flowers at home" while the size of the house itself is downsized to "a cottage, quite a rustic cottage of doll's rooms" (962). Esther also acknowledges that the interior similarly replicates "in the papering on the walls, in the colours of the furniture, in the arrangement of all the pretty objects, my little tastes and fancies" (963). Since Esther has indeed been quite successful in reproducing her tastes and fancies as those of Jarndyce, she automatically finds herself married to Woodcourt.

Esther's successful usurpation of Bleak House capitalizes on the destabilizing movement of the nation's cultural import and export in order to make the most of the microcosmic world-images found among wallpaper, gardening and dressing. In other words, Jarndyce's deteriorating relationship to patriarchy is much more the rule in this novel than the exception. Having worked so long on the expansion of Britain's imperial power abroad, George and Phil find themselves unable to settle again. For awhile however, they devise a kind of "home" in a shooting gallery around the familiar comfort of military and maritime routines. George agrees to let Jo stay at the shooting gallery because of his "being naturally in the vagabond way [himself]," which is perhaps even more true of his man, Phil, "who was found, when a baby, in the gutter" and is therefore

equipped to supervise the more intimate details of Jo's physical restoration (724-5). All along, George conceived of the shooting gallery as a place to camp "gipsy fashion" rather than as "a family home" (444). The strange paradox dictating that their military habits have unfitted them for conventional family life, and at the same time turned them into more effective care-takers than Esther in the case of Jo, shows that empire-building ultimately inverts the nation's patriarchal foundation.

When George's brother offers him a new home and a job at his steam-powered steel mill, he refuses, preferring to wait on Sir Leicester at Chesney Wold where family legacy is forever contaminated by the "part" Lady Dedlock played. George asks his brother to explain his decision to the rest of the family by mentioning that he is "a vagabond of the harum scarum order, and not of the mean sort" (956). He will feel more at home at Chesney Wold because it will never belong to him and it has lost its own moorings to society. Explaining his long absence to his mother, George recalls, "There was I, a dragoon, roving unsettled, not self-made, but self-unmade" (845). George is self-unmade because for all his orderly military manners, his habits are not calculated to produce an image of domestic stability. And Phil, who without doubt found more of a home on board a ship than he had in the streets of London, doesn't move without reproducing the tactics for keeping one's balance on the deck of a rolling vessel. George's military manners ultimately find a second "home" of sorts, propping up Sir Dedlock's spirit as a supplement to his mother's housekeeping duties at Chesney Wold. Meanwhile his brother's iron production props up the nation's image of itself as a strong Imperial center just as the novel iron construction of the Crystal Palace does so by exhibiting a greatness that exists largely outside the nation (952).

The Foreign Character of Mass Media

In stark contrast to Charley's image-literacy, the street-sweeper Jo knows none of the images for knowing nothing provided in the narrative, let alone that he himself is among the most powerful. While other characters in the novel see Jo as a momentary distraction from the business at hand if they see him at all, the novel insists that the reader see what Jo sees when the omniscient narrator wonders what it would be like to move "through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows!" (257). Jo's position outside the meaning of English words is difficult for readers of a novel to keep before them. It is this circumstance that makes one of the ads to appear in the serial numbers particularly striking. In the end-ad pages of nearly every single *Bleak House* part publication, a company called Waterlow and Sons Manufacturing Stationers runs at least one of several advertisements for all manner of paper and printing-related products. One of the most common of these, the "Waterlow's Patent Improved Autographic Press," uses the following text under a simple line-drawing illustration of the press itself:

The attention of MERCHANTS and SHIPPERS is particularly called to the importance of this invention, for the Colonies and foreign countries: and when it is considered that in many places no printer is to be found, and that in some countries, especially in the East, the complication of the numerous oriental characters renders it necessary for all documents to be multiplied by the tedious process of transcribing, the peculiar advantages of the Autographic Press become manifest.

The purpose of the device advertised is to transfer an image of the text with the same lithographic technology used to reproduce illustrations and elaborate fonts that are

beyond the capabilities of standard typesetting. Even if a copyist was not literate in Arabic or Chinese, he could recreate the unfamiliar “oriental characters” one time in wax on the imprinting stone and then make the copies. In the scenario suggested by the ad, the accumulation of foreign characters would tend to reveal and even emphasize that writing exists as a series of figures external to the meaning and images they conjure for a literate person. Confronted with writing in one’s own language, the meaning of signified content distracts one from seeing that what presents itself is a series of differential shapes and not the content signified: “While we remain attentive, fascinated, glued to what presents itself, we are unable to see presence as such, since presence does not present itself, no more than does the visibility of the visible, the audibility of the audible, the medium or ‘air,’ which disappears in the act of allowing to appear” (Derrida *Disseminations* 314). Like the copyist in the ad who reproduces exotic characters he cannot read, Jo sees how the mass proliferation of print media intensifies the alienating effects already inherent in writing.

The newspaper description of Jo at the inquest enables others to pick up his image to further their own interests. At the same time, Jo’s total illiteracy makes him uniquely capable of distinguishing one character from another (though Krook’s pictographic approach to writing is similar, even he has learned to associate the distinctive look of the words Jarndyce and Bleak House with the total implication of the court case). When Jo encounters two different women who appear the same to others under the cover of the same veil, Jo easily distinguishes between Lady Dedlock and her maid Hortense as different people. His inability to be distracted from the form that presents itself by automatically shifting to the total form of the characters presented makes it easy for him

to see the differences between the women like the difference between the same word written by two different hands. The same principle allows him to recognize with great certainty that Esther is a copy of her mother.

The repetition of those two women, along with the serial regularity of Inspector Bucket appearing at all manner of times and places, terrifies Jo because while his meaning clearly increases to them, his meaning to himself proportionally decreases. Because he cannot be distracted from the formal consequences of mass reproducibility, Jo's form begins to replicate Nemo's deterioration into a "ragged no one." Jo instinctually withdraws from most people because in knowing "nothink" he knows that "He is not of the same order of thing, not of the same place in creation. He of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity" (724). The humanity that Jo does not belong to is an image of the middle classes as a civilized nation. Jo's perpetual exile from this interior identification makes him part of "Tom's revenge," the name given in the novel for mass media's inhuman capacity to spread death and destruction. In the interval between the newspaper representation of Nemo's non-identity and Jo's disregarded recollection of Nemo as the only man who ever regarded Jo as a fellow human, Jo automatically spreads the contagion from Nemo's grave.⁵⁰

It is no coincidence that when Bucket and Snagsby search for Jo in the worst part of the East End, the narrator aligns their observation of contagion and poverty with the qualities of De Quincey's most repetitive and unremitting opium dreams (dreams that, according to De Quincey, may be explained by his prolonged exposure to crowded London streets): "As the unseen [fever victim] 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” (emphasis added 358).⁵¹ Dematerializing—hovering, flitting, dream-like—the slum dwellers refuse to present a familiar reality; in contrast to the photographs of E.P. Thompson the passage uses exotic associations to enhance rather than decrease their threatening aspect. As the passage develops, it becomes apparent that it is the image of a crowd, rather than the crowd itself, that the novel exoticizes as an image one would experience while dreaming. As the crowd-image withdraws from the slum-visitors, Bucket and Snagsby find that between the two of them “there are conflicting opinions respecting the original of [Jo’s] picture” (359). This is because Jo never had an original picture through which to trace an index of presence—only an image that defers to the types from a crowd that refused to come into focus.

Mayhew’s photography-based illustrations, famous for classifying urban street-dwellers as so many exotic tribes, are the likely point of reference for readers when Jo is elsewhere described standing “after the manner of his tribe ... sideways against the hoarding, resting one of his high shoulders against it, and covertly rubbing his right hand over his left, and his left foot over his right” (716). Just as Mayhew does in his illustrations, Woodcourt makes Jo stand up and take this image-specific position, but Jo only does so “in a difficulty,” as though the reproduction of his own character had become unclear to him as it turns into an image (716). Thomas Prasch explains that the photographs Mayhew uses to make his illustrations, including those of E.P. Thompson, were always transcriptions of “a pre-existing set of assumptions imbedded in the already established pictorial genres and compositional conventions” (182). The net result of this

representational archive however, was to support the illusion that the class of the represented person was predetermined by racial constitution; their exclusion from the social class to which Mayhew and Thompson belonged was thus considered an organic, natural circumstance. Prasch explains:

If class is race and race is character, the condition of the poor becomes their nature. As photography created in images of types the terms through which these racial characteristics are fixed, it contributed to that 'natural' condition. The "naturalism" of the photographic medium, established by the discourse about the photograph as "transcript of nature," reinforced this conclusion. The emphasis in accompanying texts on the racial distinctiveness of the London "nomads" further underlined the point. (190)

But if Mayhew's strategy was to use photography to make poverty appear as natural as race, Dickens points to the reproducibility of photography as well as print to show that a differential system of images makes "nature" a suspect category. The narrator uses "tribe" to describe Jo's attempts to conform to the perceptions of those in power over him whereas Snagsby uses "lot" to describe the group of law-writers designated as a collective by their "wildness." The difference calls attention to the way in which images rather than nature dictate one's lot in life.⁵² If Charley's access to images other than things immediately surrounding her distances her from the mechanical reproducibility of her own image, Jo's inability to distract himself with the images posed behind the character of writing is fatal. At his death, Jo's comfort is not the image of a heavenly father that Woodcourt tries to give him through the words of the Lord's prayer, but the image of the very large script Snagsby promises to have put on his tombstone apologizing for his unintentional spread of disease and disfiguration. It is a comfort to Jo that some other "characters" will take up his struggle of being without images. Jo cannot know of course that the proposed largeness of his apologetic script will replicate the relative scale

on which the image of his death is made to present its mechanical reproducibility as lively humanity.

Irresolution: Novel and Empire

The scene of Jo's recovery opens through the eyes of an anonymous "brown sunburnt gentleman," telling readers that the images they are about to see will bear the impression of images recently created in more tropical climates than that of Great Britain. When the narrator identifies the gentleman as Allan Woodcourt a few paragraphs later, the novel confirms that like Esther, Woodcourt has been marked by his encounter with an outside; instead of Esther's socially illegitimate position, Woodcourt's outsider position occurs relative to the geographical boundary of the nation.⁵³ Even before this recent trip abroad, Woodcourt does not exactly square with Great Britain's geography: his mother, supposedly descended of high-ranking family, is Welsh, and his father, also supposedly descended of a high-ranking family, is Scottish. The process of national consolidation has apparently displaced any previous social rank of the Woodcourt family with the peripheral, secondary status of Wales and Scotland in relation to England's primary core status. In her wish to regain the significance of family rank, Mrs. Woodcourt views her son's medical career abroad as an opportunity to find a match for his peripheral rank in some colonialist's peripheral wealth. At Nemo's deathbed, before Woodcourt travels abroad, the omniscient narrator even then notices Woodcourt's "dark complexion" in the same passages where Tulkinghorn comments on Nemo's gypsy darkness. In this way the novel anticipates a peripheral union, not with a colonist's daughter living outside England as Woodcourt's mother imagines, but with the offspring of Nemo's exiled life.

Woodcourt's recovery of Jo involves the recovery of an image of the boy who appears in earlier illustrations of the novel. This process begins in the illustration of the dark slum neighborhood Tom-all-alone's near the beginning of the chapter titled "Stop Him!" In this darkly shadowed illustration, a large beam-like structure dominates the center of the page; the structure is propping up or buttressing two buildings facing one another across the street that, as the chapter explains, are liable to collapse any time in explosive imitation of Krook's spontaneous demise. This illustration also includes an odd doll-like figure dangling from the corner of porch overhang that appears similar to a rag doll hanging on the far right margin of the illustration for Krook's Rag and Bottle shop. The replication marks a recurring scene of illiteracy and the manner in which the court's similarity to Jellyby's "telescopic philanthropy" spreads its barbarism and savagery: "The day begins to break now; and in truth it might be better for the national glory even that the sun should sometimes set on upon the British dominions, than that it should ever rise upon so vile a wonder as Tom" (710). Allan walks forward, and, "as he looks here and there, he seems to understand such wretchedness and to have studied it before" with his "bright" yet "dark" eye (711). He looks both "here," at the slum that presents itself, and "there," at the British dominions where what presents itself here as "Tom" is repeated under an unknown name. His face also reflects the fatigue caused by a night of remembering the sight of Richard's decline and Esther's disfigurement. Whether the destruction takes place in the expanding British Empire, the expanding documents of a Chancery lawsuit, or an expanding contagion, "Tom's" automatic reproducibility is to blame (710).

Each figure Woodcourt encounters in the slum is disfigured by having been repeatedly exposed to systemic brutality and it is this repetition that Woodcourt reads, even when he fails, as in the case of Jo, to identify or even avoid repeating the form of the brutality that has harmed him. More proto-Sherlock Holmes than police-Inspector, Woodcourt guesses the experiences of the Brickmaker's wife by "the colour of the clay" on her clothes and other signs on her person that make her stand out more starkly against the doorstep where she sits. Jo on the other hand, is so disfigured that he remains nearly invisible next to the clear resolution of the woman. Besides being "intent on getting along unseen," Jo is covered by "Clothes made for what purpose, or of what material, it would be impossible to say. The look, in colour and in substance, like a bundle of rank leaves of swampy growth, that rotted long ago" (713). Jo's advancing invisibility as an image of organic decay, and as the break-down of the organic layering of mechanically produced images, signals that he is close to disappearing as a consequence of his overexposure to mechanically reproduced images.

His figure is so closely aligned with the "soiled walls" he creeps along, that at first Allan simply doesn't see him. But the very shadowy nature of his visibility, strikes Woodcourt "with a shadowy belief that he has seen the boy before. He cannot recall how, or where; but there is some association in his mind with such a form. He imagines that he may have seen it in some hospital or refuge" (713). Not knowing why he connects "raggedness" to an image of consequence, Woodcourt temporarily classifies Jo with characters who live at home and abroad in exile from institutional empowerment. His notice reconnects Jo with the disfigured images Esther records throughout her journal. Later Woodcourt remembers seeing Jo at the inquest for Nemo's death, and

couched within the document associations of that memory is the form of Nemo's ragged condition in death reproduced in the form of Jo's ragged condition now.

Tom-all-Alone's supports Jo's replication of Nemo's ragged appearance by replicating the wildness of Nemo's room. As Woodcourt chases Jo, a wilderness of "decaying timber" provides the background through which Jo "curves, ducks and dives" like a hunted animal until he is "hard-pressed" against the dead end of "a narrow passage" (714). Jo takes the dead-end passage in an attempt to escape without any more or less consideration than Nemo is likely to have given to his decision to supplement the speed of his writing with opium (714). Without Jo having had anything to do with it, his character has become increasingly haunted by his reproduction as an image of the boy in the paper. Between his exposure to the man Nemo used to be and his own lack of images to supplement the rate at which he himself is moved along, Jo gets caught up in the newspaper's expanding circulation marked by the spread of contagious disease.⁵⁴ The image of Jo's organic deterioration under the pressure of mass media's automated, mechanical force is also an image of the irresolution between the narrative and its serial medium, between Dickens and his readers, and between the nation and empire. By giving Jo the appearance of existing further outside human civilization the more he circulates through mass media, *Bleak House* presents an image of its own unresolved circulation outside the traditional boundaries of print culture.

Falling Out of Fashion

Sir Leister Dedlock has learned, long ago apparently, to rely on the newspaper as a technique for reproducing the significance of his aristocratic birth. By representing to

him the opinions and agendas of the rising middle classes that continue to gain political power, the newspaper guides Dedlock's manufacture of opinions and agendas the traction of opposition. Through such opposition, he is able to project an image of aristocratic difference in an era no longer capable of recognizing any authority but that of the images dominating the media. It is the necessity of reproducing an image of aristocratic exclusivity, whether conscious or not, that prompts Dedlock's decision to marry Lady Dedlock. Her interest in manufacturing herself as an image in imitation of aristocratic authority makes her a natural ally to Sir Leister Dedlock. What Benjamin says of fashion's special power to cross the boundary between organic and mechanic forms also explains the significance of Lady Dedlock fashionable image to the novel's medium: it "couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, it defends the rights of the corpse. The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. The cult of the commodity presses such fetishism into its service" (*The Arcades Project* 8). Like Lady Dedlock, the novel exists by answering the fetishistic need of flesh and blood readers to renew their purchase on mechanically contrived life-images. And like the note Lady Dedlock leaves for Esther just before she dies of exposure, *Bleak House* has "been written in portions at different times" (909).

Tulkinghorn resists this fetishistic disavowal of organic authenticity. His strategy of resistance is to fetishize the purity of bloodline on which his own degree of privilege is theoretically founded. His refusal to change his clothes dating back to a fashion now decades-old marks his commitment to an embattled position against the rising tide of mass produced images in which fashion moves at more rapid pace than ever. Tulkinghorn expresses the same logic that Dickens attributes to Chinese culture in a

comparison between Chinese reproductive technology at the “Little Exhibition” and England’s mass print technology on display next door at the Great Exhibition. In Dickens’s estimation, the most striking thing about pre-industrial Chinese print technology is that it never exceeds the rate at which it reproduces its own tradition; it never moves fast enough to forget its limitations. The ceremonial pace of the Chinese culture closes down the future as a dimension of unknown possibility. Tulkinghorn’s commitment to the theatrics of ceremonial authenticity destroys Dedlock when the lawyer insists on protecting the foundation of his client’s rank as pure bloodline instead of an image of aristocratic taste. Once Tulkinghorn’s threats of exposure force Lady Dedlock to leave, Sir Leister’s separation from his principle image-maker deprives him from the stature of his rank.

Lady Dedlock’s circulation through “fashion” habituates her to a perpetually unmoored state reminiscent of the way George and Phil become immune to illusions of domestic stability. In order to maintain the image of being superior to everyone and everything, Lady Dedlock must circulate back and forth between country-estate and city-residence, between London and Paris: her image as the leader of the fashion world depends on her ability to appear perpetually outside well-imitated conventions. While Lady Dedlock’s image as an outsider provides a distraction from the deteriorating Aristocratic culture of her husband’s family, her exposure to their deterioration automatically inclines her toward her own hidden, scandalous past. The demands of keeping up a fashionable image by appearing divorced from all flesh and blood has consequences much like those of keeping up a pace of copying law-writing all night and day by replacing oneself with an addiction to opium. Derrida explains how an image-

based phenomenon like Lady Dedlock operates according to the same principle as writing: “What takes place, what there is, is writing, i.e. a machination in which the present is no longer anything but a whirligig,” a constant “movement that is at once uninterrupted and broken, a continuity of rifts that would nevertheless not flatten out along the surface of a homogeneous, obvious present” (310-11). Lady Dedlock’s fashion must be copied and distributed outside Chesney Wold. But each copy and imitation automatically recovers more territory of the past that allows Tulkinghorn to prove the inauthenticity of her hymen by overcoming her image of fashion with the image of a fallen woman who gave birth to another man’s child before she married Sir Leister.

The degree to which both the members of the aristocracy and the masses accept Lady Dedlock’s reproduction of aristocratic images suggests that even without Tulkinghorn leading the hunt for her fallen image, the copies of her fashionable image would eventually overcome the uniqueness of her position. On a visit to Chesney Wold, Guppy and his friend Weevle are assured that a particular portrait of Lady Dedlock, “over the chimney-piece, painted by the fashionable artist of the day,” has never been copied for mass production, “has never been engraved” (110). And while this may literally be true, the image of her that nevertheless appears on a “copper plate impression” in Mr. Weevle’s decorative collection of portraits representing fashion’s leading figures makes the two believe they have seen the painting before (330). Lady Dedlock’s image is among several figures included in the “Galaxy rumours” Mr. Weevle likes to follow. Together these images make up the “Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty, representing ladies of title and fashion in every variety of smirk that art, combined with capital, is

capable of producing” (330-1). These omniscient remarks about the way art, combined with capital, both elevate Lady’s Dedlock’s success and accelerate her fall show total awareness of the degree to which novels owe their own success as much to the technologies of mass media as to the flesh and blood existence of a genius author.

On an even deeper level it shows the degree to which the success of the serial novel depends on techniques developed largely through a consumer culture more focused on gaining access to a world of fashion than a world of literature. Benjamin gives us a sense of how the early version of the tabloid that Weevle reads became characteristic of French newspapers after 1839:

They and not the political editorials or the serialized novels, enabled a newspaper to have a different look every day—an appearance that was cleverly varied when the pages were made up and constituted part of the paper’s attractiveness. These items had to be constantly replenished. City gossip, theatrical intrigues, and ‘things worth knowing’ were their most popular sources. Their intrinsic cheap elegance, a quality that became so characteristic of the feuilleton section, was in evidence from the beginning. (*The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire* 60)

Weevle “seems to know the originals, and to be known of them,” simply through the proximity of their images to his daily routines (331). A description of Weevle’s copper plate Lady Dedlock placed “over the mantel-shelf” in Nemo’s old room where Weevle now lives and where it frequently attracts Guppy’s attention seems to have an uncanny power over earlier images (510): “‘That’s very like Lady Dedlock,’ says Mr. Guppy. ‘It’s a speaking likeness’” (510). The unmistakable likeness of Lady Dedlock’s copper face is already imprinted on Guppy’s heart, or as he always says, his “art,” in the shape of Esther’s face. Guppy’s pronunciation is significant because it refers to the way mechanical reproducibility facilitates his desire to bring objects closer to himself and even allows him to participate in mass media as one who takes and reproduces the

imprint of images. Noticing this reproductive accuracy again at Chesney Wold inspires Guppy to become very familiar not only with Lady Dedlock's speaking self, but also with her most intimate and unspeakable secret.

The distasteful way in which Weevle and Guppy presume on their familiarity with Lady Dedlock's face to intrude themselves on Lady Dedlock and later Esther, implicates readers in the production of a culture forgetful of "character" as anything other than surface appearance. Guppy and Tulkinghorn trap Lady Dedlock through the perceived crosshairs of her fashion-plate image and fallen past. But the secret of her illegitimate daughter ultimately becomes the opening through which Lady Dedlock escapes, not with her life, but with an image of Esther's face that does not reproduce her mother's fallen image. Because Nemo embodies the automaticity of mechanical reproduction, the spread of his contagion to Esther's face replaces her illegitimacy with the revelation that patriarchal power now depends on the reproduction of a particular image. When the British Empire expands itself through the spread of hierarchical images of race and class, it also generates concentrated opportunities for demonstrating the illegitimacy of these mechanical reproductions. The serial composition of *Bleak House* thus "gives away" the technology not only for reproducing the British Empire, but also for rearranging the hierarchies that reflect middle class values.

CHAPTER 3

Choosing the Unpopular:

Mass Media, Realism, and Romance in *Villette*

About one third into Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, the blond-haired, blue-eyed Ginevra Fanshawe drags the first-person narrator Lucy Snow in front of a mirror to see how Lucy's plain appearance enhances her own. Lucy's reaction is one she repeats throughout the novel as she examines the image of herself in contrast with each figure in a series of characters. She allows Ginevra's self-indulgent comparison "Without resistance, remonstrance, or remark," but when Ginevra asks Lucy what she would give to be her, Lucy replies "Not a bad sixpence" because "You are but a poor creature" (159-60). In more general terms, Lucy looks at Ginevra's popular good looks in contrast with her own implicitly deficient reflection, and then shapes herself into a third identity, closer to a voice than an image, by rejecting both of the initial two images. Even though the initial two images seem to present a contrast, both images are really interpretations that correspond with or reflect a single point of view. When Lucy withdraws from both images by voicing her alternative inward perspective on herself and others, she offers what appears to be a more authentic contrast to the popular interpretation of the image. The important thing throughout the novel however, is that this second perspective only appears more authoritative, more compelling, as long as it remains adjacent to a popular perspective to which it can be contrasted.

The novel's succession of correspondences and contrasts is similar in some way to the movement in *Bleak House* between the omniscient third person narrative and Esther's first person narrative. In fact, Esther is also looking in a mirror at her scar-ravaged face in the scene that dramatically merges her narrative and her father's non-narrative. As we saw in the previous chapter, Esther's scarred face reflects the touch of Nemo's hand, or rather his signature handwriting that comes to spread throughout the novel as a contagious disease. The difference is that Esther automatically moves into a new image of herself created by the spread of mass media whereas Lucy consciously tries to move out of mass media in order to constitute a traditional authorial ground from which to judge popular images. While *Bleak House* enacts its own mass medium through both its narrative and its material form, both the form and content of *Villette*'s resist the momentum of its mass medium. While exotic images in *Bleak House* explore the novel's mass medium most closely in terms of mechanical reproducibility and the automatic spread of mass culture, the exoticism in *Villette* gives the narrative the traction it needs to articulate an ethical principle of literary authenticity.

Villette's counterpoint perspective reproduces the bias toward the work of the mind discussed earlier in my introduction. Instead of reproducing and reinforcing the distracting qualities of mass media like *Bleak House* does, *Villette* affirms that the value of a novel is its power of absorbing the minds of readers as a path to reflective thinking. Because *Villette* (1853) and *Bleak House* (1852-1853) were written and published at the same time, and because both novels use exotic motifs to create narratives about mass media, the ways in which *Villette* differs from *Bleak House* are particularly significant. On top of the concentrating effect of Lucy's uninterrupted first-person narrative from

beginning to end, Lucy's signature withdrawal from the popular point of view reproduces the signature move that much of the writing in *Blackwood's Magazine* encouraged in its readers. Jon Klancher attributes *Blackwood's* success with the upper middle class reading market to a technique he calls "antithesis," or the use of "hyperbolic, overblown language in melodramatic antitheses that mark off experiential boundaries no one can pass beyond" (Klancher 53). Writers developed the technique of presenting pairs of extremes only to withdraw from both to provide readers with a vigorously reflective reading experience:

Even as the writer recoils from them, such pairings of opposites signify a suggestive realm in between, its implicit richness defined by the "unendurable" extremity of these outer limits. Opposites must be named in the most drastic language so that we can withdraw from them, yet still feel their experiential resonance. Declaring everything to be neither this nor that, the writer invites the reader to step outside the circle of opposites—often layered upon other opposites—into a sense of ineffable but ubiquitous "meaning." (Klancher 54)

Perpetually presenting and then withdrawing from opposite pairs of terms made reading a kind of mental treadmill.⁵⁵ Klancher's characterization of *Blackwood's Magazine* is significantly compatible with the way Coleridge and Wordsworth present the labor of the mind as the original organic form as well as with the way Q.D. Leavis insists that literary value is determined by an intellectually rigorous relationship between form and content. Perhaps most striking of all, Klancher's description of writing that "declares everything to be neither this nor that" resonates with John Barrell's theory about the structure that belongs to the kind of orientalism we see at work in *Confessions* and, as I have suggested, in *Bleak House* as well.

Barrell argues that orientalism provides a third term that transforms the traditional opposition of self and other:

The terms self and other can be thought of as superseded by ‘this’ and ‘that,’ in a narrative which now says, there is this here, and it is different from that there, but the difference between them, though in its own way important, is as nothing compared with the difference between the two of them considered together, and that third thing, way over there, which is truly other to them both. (10)

This structure makes it possible for any given class or nation-based perspective to shift its alliance to an entity or perspective to which it was previously opposed by showing a third perspective or entity to which both are more firmly opposed. *Villette* achieves its foreign setting by following this pattern. When Lucy travels to London, she experiences the dense urban culture as quite foreign. But once she travels to France where she is surrounded by Catholicism as well as the expanding opportunities for popular entertainment, all of England becomes the single root of her Protestant-English identity by contrast. Once Lucy makes a place for herself at Madame Beck’s school in *Villette*, this triadic structure shifts again. Neither England nor France is as foreign as “the island of Guadeloupe, a French colony in the [...] Antilles,” where Paul Emmanuel goes to manage his family’s plantation holdings (Helen Cooper, Introduction, xl).

As the serial novel became increasingly popular, all the ways in which this format differed from the established custom of publishing the novel in three volumes come to constitute an older, more traditional version of the novel. *Villette* leans hard on this impression of the three-volume novel as the more traditional novel format, an impression created by the contrasting form of the serial novel; even though both formats belong to the growth of mass media, the contrast between the old-expensive and new-cheap forms grant the three-volume novel the possibility of claiming something we might call the illusion of aura. By presenting this illusion of a more unique, singular, format as a property of itself, Brontë’s novel performs the same signature move we see Lucy repeat in

relation to images of other characters: the novel's popular foreign imagery corresponds with its mass medium and at the same time, these images create opportunities for the narrator to withdraw from mass media. The fact that Lucy both participates and criticizes mass media suspends the novel in the tension between inclusion and exclusion. The series of contrasts throughout the narrative ultimately compose a "correspondence" between *Villette* and its mass medium in the sense of looking in the mirror at a corresponding reflection from which mind can withdraw— and in the sense of writing an epistle to a correspondent for the purpose of bridging a gap of space or time.

The advantage of making Lucy's stay in London brief is that while the crowds and transformations made possible through mechanical reproducibility leave a tremendous impression, her exposure to London's popular culture is very limited. Through this maneuver, *Villette*'s foreign environment becomes the exclusive domain of popular entertainment in the novel despite the fact that its version would be provincial in comparison with London in the world outside the novel. Given the now commonplace references to Brontë's business trips from Haworth to London and her comments in letters about visiting the Great Exhibition, it is significant that these are more typical of Lucy's experience in *Villette* than in London. Lucy does remark that being in London is "thrilling" like the content of cheaply produced mass literature: "to walk alone in London seemed of itself an adventure" as it is a place where "you are deeply excited" (54). And Lucy's observations about the urban fashions worn by a chambermaid, "a pattern of town prettiness and smartness," show that the mass production of consumer items like clothing have a Genii-like power to detach a person from her "natural" image: "So trim her waist,

her cap, her dress—I wondered how they had all been manufactured” (51). But the focus of Lucy’s encounter with print culture in London is a single volume book.

In contrast to the excitement Lucy associates with urban novelty, she seeks out the “classic ground” found in the publishing district of “Paternoster-row” where Lucy buys “a little book—a piece of extravagance [she] could ill afford” (54). The contrast between this “little piece of extravagance” and the cheaper feuilletons and pamphlets that Lucy reads later on in France makes “the book” valuable in nostalgic terms. It is as if on quitting England, Lucy buys the book as a souvenir of a phase in print culture now coming to a close. Two historical points lend weight to such an interpretation. The first is the fact that the Great Exhibition did a great deal to establish and promote the idea of the souvenir in the context of mechanical reproducibility: you visited the Crystal Palace and before leaving, perhaps purchased a tea cup or some other small china item with a small painted picture of the Crystal Palace to take home. The second is the way in which the increasing use of photography during this period was often dedicated to ethnographic ambition to record images that no longer corresponded to the way anyone lived anymore.⁵⁶ The book that Lucy buys in London gestures toward the ways in which the three-volume format of *Villette* is more “classic,” if not more original, than the un-bound serial parts of a novel.

The name of the boat that carries Lucy away from London, the “Vivid,” suggests the quality of contrast that makes exotic images popular as representation in and of mass media. If an image of a foreign culture is valuable because it stands out against the backdrop of British culture, it makes sense to dress or disguise the popular aspects of British culture in foreign costume as the means of presenting a study of its character to

the public. Having placed herself on board the *Vivid* for her journey to France, Lucy describes the Thames River as being black “as a torrent of ink” and thus equates the expanding production of writing with an eastward movement into foreign, if not altogether exotic, territory (56). The fact that Lucy goes to a foreign country for most of the plot concedes the necessity of imagining the novel’s mass medium in and as a foreign climate; but by choosing a foreign climate that is nearly as “temperate” as England when compared with “hotter” places like India and Africa, *Villette* pulls back from the most popular strategy. *Villette* enacts itself as a “go-between,” a correspondent of both the idea of a traditional aesthetic principle and the serial dimensions of popular culture. This notion that exotic images in the narrative correspond with a medium that the narrative tries to present outside itself curiously anticipates the outcome of the novel’s publication. As Helen Cooper explains in her introduction, “The stretch of Britain’s imperial interests by 1853 resulted in the first edition of *Villette* being simultaneously published in London and Bombay in an attempt to boost the dwindling fortunes of Smith, Elder & Co. in London” (xx).

Imitating *Blackwood’s Magazine*

Villette’s mode of withdrawing from mass media in general and the serial novel in particular is predicated on a history of reproducing writing—not only in the strictest mechanical sense of Nemo’s copy work, but in stylistic terms. As children, the Brontë siblings participated in the vogue for exoticizing new developments in print media by imitating the style of fiction they read in *Blackwood’s*, particularly Charlotte and Branwell. A large part of their project was to reproduce the type of exotic content they

found in *Blackwood's* and other periodicals. Carol Bock shows, for example, that the Brontë children's collectively authored *Glass Town Saga* takes into consideration "detailed knowledge of actual military campaigns and scientific expeditions," and patterns itself after "narrative accounts of imaginary imperialistic expeditions into foreign lands, of the founding of new nations and the growth of new cultural centres" (34, 39-40). But beyond this, their imitation echoes the way in which *Blackwood's* represents changes in the production of print media through exotic content. In the process of reproducing the exoticized caricatures of the literary world in *Blackwood's*, Charlotte and Branwell explored the idea of representation as a projection rather than a mirror reflection.

The precision with which their tiny manuscripts imitate the material form and textual content of contemporary publications suggests that the dream-like kingdoms which the Brontës imagined were inspired by actual literary life, or rather by the 'real' culture of print as the children knew it. Drawing on the representations of that culture in periodicals from the 1820's and 30's, Charlotte and Branwell appropriated the personae, places, plots, and controversies of contemporary literary life into narratives that were, in no inconsequential way, about the problems of authorship, professional recognition and earning a living. (Bock 38)

Brock's study of the juvenilia confirms repeatedly that Angria's African-like climate refers as much to the "hot" climate of literary production in an unknown and expanding market territory as it does to Africa itself. This projection of literary production onto semi-imaginary exotic worlds is an imitation of writings like the *Noctes*. Through such imitation, it appears that exotic content comes to signify the copied aspects of Brontë's earliest medium. In light of Bock's observations about Charlotte Brontë's earliest writing, it is not surprising that Brontë would consciously describe her adult writing in terms that dissociate it from the imaginary exoticism of Angria.

In the short scrap of prose known to critics as “Farewell to Angria,” Brontë describes the reinvention of her writing by distancing it from the form and content of her juvenilia. As is the case in *Villette*, the “Farewell” narrates the experience of relocating in a foreign country and of contrasting the familiar perspective left behind with the faces and the characters one finds there:

It is no easy thing to dismiss from my imagination the images which have filled it so long. They were my friends and my intimate acquaintance, and I could with little labour describe to you the faces, the voices, the actions of those who peopled my thoughts by day and not seldom stole strangely even into my dreams by night. When I depart from these I feel almost as if I stood on the threshold of a home and were bidding farewell to its inmates. When I strive to conjure up new inmates, I feel as if I had got into a distant country where every face was unknown and the character of all the population an enigma which it would take much study to comprehend and much talent to expound. Still, I long to quit for a while that burning clime where we have sojourned too long—its skies flame; the glow of sunset is always upon it. The mind would cease from excitement and turn now to a cooler region, where the dawn breaks grey and sober and the coming day, for a time at least, is subdued in clouds. (*Norton Critical Edition*, 426-7)

The first thing we might notice about the relationship between this passage and the setting of *Villette* is that the idea of leaving “home” to travel to a foreign region is exactly what Lucy does in leaving England to go to France. But there is a significant difference too in that the stylistic shift that the “Farewell” describes through the figures of hot and cool climates is if anything reversed in *Villette*. Though as previously noted, the French climate of *Villette* is cool in comparison with India or Africa, it is nevertheless East and South of England. If, as I have suggested, imaginary foreign settings have come to signify a projected representation of the realities surrounding publication and authorship, then *Villette* is in some sense a measured return to the style of writing that the “Farewell” leaves behind. In the “Farewell” the foreign place where the speaker is going sounds like a version of realism based on a decision to try to accurately mirror what is nearest at hand

and hence the description of a climate that sounds like England. One could even further simplify the pronouncement in the “Farewell” as the decision to write a little less like *Blackwood’s* and a little more like William Thackeray or even Jane Austen.

Another less obvious, but no less important, factor in the “Farewell” is that the changes it describes automatically include both the mode of authorship and publication format. Instead of writing serial collaborations with her siblings much as the staff of *Blackwood’s* writers might have done, the “Farewell” indicates Brontë’s anticipation of becoming the single author of novels intended for publication in volume form. The framework for reversing this direction in *Villette* is consistent given that in the “Farewell,” the production of writing is conceived as a movement of withdrawing from a place grown too familiar. Because Brontë imagines the writer as a traveler, she reserves the right to retrace her steps, as well as the assumption that the place one returns to might not be exactly the same as the place it was when one was there before. This is certainly the implication of any interpretation of *Villette* that begins by citing the similarities and differences between Lucy’s experiences in *Villette* and Brontë’s experiences in Brussels.

The tension between imaginary exoticism and reflective realism expressed in the “Farewell” through the motif of contrasting climate extremes reappears even more clearly in *Villette* through Lucy’s struggle to protect herself against false hopes as she approaches France. During her voyage across the English channel, Lucy’s drifting thoughts begin to imagine France through the reproduction of an explicitly stereotypical image of a promised land filled with gold:

I saw the continent of Europe, like a wide dream-land, far away. Sunshine lay on it, making the long coast one line of gold; tiniest tracery of clustered town and snow-gleaming, woods deep-massed, of heights serrated, of smooth pasturage and veiny stream, embossed metal-bright prospect. For background, spread a sky,

solemn and dark-blue, and –grand with imperial promise, soft with tints of enchantment—strode from north to south a God-bent bow, an arch of hope. (63)

Highlighted with “gold,” “embossed metal-bright prospect” and “soft tints,” the overwrought surface of Lucy’s day-dream image calls attention to itself as a mechanical copy. She immediately withdraws from this image by re-envisioning its source in the context of the mechanical copying exercises used by school children to practice handwriting: “Cancel the whole of that, if you please, reader—or rather let it stand, and draw thence a moral—an alliterative, text-hand copy— ... ’Day-dreams are the delusions of the demon’” (63). By aggressively withdrawing from the intoxicating pleasure of the day-dream, the narrative asserts its authority to transcend the stereotypical motifs and plots found in the most cheaply produced fiction. This is more than a struggle between imagination and reality. It is the struggle of the mind to gain independence from the ideas with which, of necessity, it must begin. At the same time, it repeats the Romantic contention that the mind is responsible for generating original productions. The tension between original thought and the necessity of drawing on pre-existing templates to imagine an unknown future sets the stage for the strategy borrowed from *Blackwood’s*: to Lucy, France is neither an “arch of hope” nor “the delusions of the demon.” By rejecting both alternatives she sustains the movement of withdrawal that supports the impression of authenticity.

Another school-related instance of withdrawal later in the novel further develops the case for *Villette* as a literary production that both reproduces and differentiates itself from the Romantic concept of organic form. In the following passage, Lucy defends herself to the reader against accusations of plagiarism:

The incapables! Could they not see at once the crude hand of a novice in that composition they called a forgery? The subject was classical. When M. Paul dictated the trait on which the essay was to turn, I heard it for the first time; the matter was new to me, and I had no material for its treatment. But I got books, read up the facts, laboriously constructed a skeleton of the dry bones of the real, and then clothed them, and tried to breathe into them life, and in this last aim I had pleasure. With me it was a difficult and anxious time till my facts were found, selected, and properly jointed; nor could I rest from research and effort till I was satisfied of correct anatomy; the strength of my inward repugnance to the idea of flaw or falsity sometimes enabled me to shun egregious blunders; but the knowledge was not there in my head, ready and mellow; it had not been sown in Spring, grown in Summer, harvested in Autumn, and garnered through winter; whatever I wanted I must go out and gather fresh; glean of wild herbs my lap full, and shred them green into the pot. (444)

The final image Lucy creates for her composition still involves not only the organic plant motif, but also the trope often identified with the preface Charlotte wrote for Emily's *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte Brontë's added preface famously packaged her sister's novel as a photograph-like souvenir of a rustic way of life grown wild and exotic to modern industrial Britain. Like the authoress of *Wuthering Heights*, Lucy collects her sources from outside the boundaries of "cultivated" gardens and intellectual "orchards." The art that makes use of wild-grown material aligns itself with the uniqueness of mental production rather than with the diminishing uniqueness of the work of art in the same gesture we see Coleridge make in his remarks on Shakespeare. Lucy thus tries to resolve the paradoxical idea that like a photograph, even original writing is derived by reproducing pre-existing materials by differentiating between fruit that ripens automatically, like a photographic image, and the mental labor involved in "a difficult and anxious" synthesis among multiple sources.

The same paradox we noted in the Romanic notion of organic form begins to assert itself here however, when the "properly jointed facts" construct "a skeleton of the dry bones of the real" that Lucy then clothes and breathes life into much as Victor

Frankenstein finds himself giving form to an inhuman monster. Further evidence for the degree to which the novel is caught in the act of trying to withdraw from its own entanglements in the mechanical reproducibility of its medium appears in the form of Lucy's activity just before her mentor and tutor M. Paul calls her to defend the integrity of her mental ability. M. Paul catches and physically interrupts her in the process of making a meticulous mechanical copy of a Chinese print, an act that corresponds to the visiting professors' doubt that Lucy's composition is really her own work any more than a photograph could be said to be the work of the photographer. As he wrests Lucy to her feet, her supplies, hand-drawn copy, and the print are swept unceremoniously away as equally insignificant compared to the question of the written composition now looming:

I sat bent over my desk, drawing—that is, copying an elaborate line engraving, tediously working up my copy to the finish of the original, for that was my practical notion of art; and, strange to say, I took extreme pleasure in the labour, and could even produce curiously finical Chinese facsimiles of steel or mezzotint plates—things about as valuable as so many achievements in worsted-work, but I thought pretty well of them in those days. (442)

Organizing the doubling motif of copied material (Lucy's drawing is a copy of a copy) around a Chinese genre picture represents reproducibility itself as oriental. The connection between "the copy" and a Chinese "type" appears arbitrary unless we understand this moment as an allusion to the Malay who for De Quincey figures the way the mechanical reproducibility of writing automatically asserts its agency outside the author's control. Lucy associates her copying with stitching because both mechanical activities lend themselves to machines that displace the human hand with better guarantees of uniformity and rapidity. Lucy's "practical notion of art" is set aside like needlework when she is summoned as a writer.

Re-assigning Male Parts: Muses and Mentors

Critics of *Villette* like to point out that Dr. John Graham Bretton's character bears resemblance to the charismatic John Smith, Brontë's publisher. To whatever extent this may be an accurate comparison, the plot of *Villette* is largely structured around Lucy gradually re-assigning her feelings for Dr. John to the French Professor M. Paul. Both Dr. John and M. Paul have important roles to play in exposing Lucy to popular culture so the way in which M. Paul differs from Dr. John corresponds to a shift in Lucy's relationship with popular culture. I will develop my discussion of Dr. John later in the chapter. For the present, let it suffice to point out that as a doctor and a member of the professional classes, Dr. John is a more or less fixed spectator in relation to popular entertainment whereas M. Paul agitates between a position as spectator and as director-dictator. When playing the latter role, as he is in situations like the one already described above, Lucy often compares him to Napoleon. This might seem like a passing joke except for the fact that the most important character to Brontë in the Angrian chronicles was a male character based on Napoleon's nemesis, the Duke of Wellington. M. Paul suggests the return of this Angrian-style figure, disguised perhaps as his foreign counterpart. While Dr. John remains the kind of muse for Lucy that male-writers had long associated with un-requited love, M. Paul's adversarial and sympathetic engagement with Lucy has a tendency to push and pull her into a character that resembles the Duke of Wellington more than anything else. It is M. Paul after all, who eventually assures Lucy that he prefers her more than any other person because even their extreme differences contribute to the way they tend to correspond with one another inside and out.

Pushing Lucy onto the stage for the school play in the eleventh hour, M. Paul is directly responsible for not only for Lucy's one and only experience as part of a theatrical entertainment but also for her playing the part of a man. The gender-bending requirements of Lucy's part provide a significant counterpoint to M. Paul's aggressive dictatorial behavior that day up until the costume arrangements. When Lucy wishes to limit her male costume to a hat and vest worn over her dress, M. Paul takes her side against another female character's objections. This taking and giving comes to characterize all of their interactions. In having assigned Lucy the unlikable role of the "fop" suitor, he also creates the circumstances under which Lucy begins to discover the pleasure of transforming a scripted part into something all her own. Eventually Lucy applies this power of transformation to M. Paul himself, finding that "a nature so restless, chafing, thorny as that of M. Paul absorbed all feverish and unsettling influences like a magnet" (367). The watchguard she makes for him further signifies that his "despotism" becomes something like the reassuring architectural dominance of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. And from the moment he overtly offers her the truce of friendship, his "very complexion seemed clearer and fresher; that swart, sallow, southern darkness which spoke his Spanish blood, became displaced by a lighter hue" (355).

Brontë's depiction of Lucy's relationship with M. Paul is likely to have had more than one source. Among these may have been any number of letter-writing exchanges with men intending to guide her development as an author. Earlier I suggested that one possible interpretation of the "Farewell to Angria" is as a statement of an intention to write more like Jane Austen. Much of what Brontë says about Austen's style appears in letters to George Henry Lewes who was apparently bent on advising Brontë about the

direction she should take in her writing. Having recently read *Pride and Prejudice*, Brontë challenges Lewes' unequivocal enthusiasm for Austen's style:

And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a common-place face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden with neat borders and delicate flowers—but no glance of a bright vivid physiognomy—no open country—no fresh air—no blue hill—no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen in their elegant but confined houses. (99)

Brontë employs the same opposition we see between the Chinese facsimile and her own composition to critique Austen's style of realism as too mechanical in creation, too much like the automated creations of photography. Lucy's image of gathering wild herbs to describe the process of using outside sources for her composition parallels the open country and fresh air that Brontë misses in Austen's mechanical style. By making Austen's style sound like the mechanical precision involved in producing a daguerreotype, "only shrewd and observant," Brontë implies that the content of her own writing could no more be confined to a "carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden" than Lucy's composition would appear ripe and mellow on its own (Letters 98-99). Brontë tells Lewes that although she will try to emulate Austen's ability to "finish more, and be more subdued," her loyalty is to "new moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones" (Letters 98-99).

In a letter to her literary advisor W. S. Williams two years later, Brontë again rehearses her characterization of Austen's style as too mechanically contrived. But this time the reference to daguerreotyping is replaced by an "oriental" version of mechanical precision that matches the description of Lucy's copy of the Chinese print: "[Austen] does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English People

curiously well; there is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting; she ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound: the Passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy Sisterhood” (161). Brontë makes her encounter with Austen’s writing sound something like De Quincey’s encounter with the Malay who visits Dove Cottage. Just as De Quincey disavows the rather obvious connection between himself and the Malay, Brontë disavows the connection between her version of realism and Austen’s strategy of withdrawing from sensational novel writing. Behind Brontë’s image of Austen rejecting “the sisterhood of passions” is a tacit recognition of the kinship she shares with Austen—a recognition that comes at the very moment Brontë makes their similarity into a self-serving opportunity for differentiating between Austen’s “Chinese fidelity” and her own passionate realism.

In a letter responding to George Henry Lewes’s complaint that *Jane Eyre* is based too little on actual observation and experience, Brontë concedes that, ideally, fiction should be less overtly melodramatic. But she also justifies the composition of *Jane Eyre* in terms of her recent experiences with the realities of the fiction market and the necessity of conforming to the demands of the circulating libraries in order to make volume publication profitable:

You warn me to beware of Melodrama and you exhort me to adhere to the real. When I first began to write, so impressed was I with the truth of the principles you advocate that I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides and to follow in their very footprints; I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement: over-bright colouring too I avoided, and sought to produce something that should be soft, grave and true. ... My work (a tale in 1 vol.) being completed, I offered it to a publisher. He said it was original, faithful to Nature, but did not feel warranted in accepting it, such a work would not sell. I tried six publishers in succession; they all told me it was deficient in “startling incident” and “thrilling excitement,” that it would never suit

the circulating libraries, and as it was on those libraries the success of works of fiction mainly depended they could not undertake to publish what would be overlooked there—"Jane Eyre" was rather objected to at first [on] the same grounds—but finally found acceptance. (90)

The response of publishers to *The Professor*, the tale in one volume referred to above, shows Brontë that the fiction market will not tolerate her "faithfulness to Nature" in its purest possible form. So Brontë "exhorts" Lewes to do more himself to influence the taste of the reading public if he wants to see more fiction produced according to the literary standard they share: "if you would bestow a few words of enlightenment on the public who support the circulating libraries, you might, with your powers, do some good" (90). But the position of melodramatic romance and exotic content in *Jane Eyre* already communicates something of this idea to the public that supports the circulating libraries. Jane's power of attracting Rochester, a man weary of foreign adventures and debauched women in turn seduces readers into identifying with the plain grave temperament that comes to overrule Jane's own passionate nature.⁵⁷

As if the bestseller success of *Jane Eyre*, spurred by the strategic incorporation of exotic elements and barely suppressed scandal, was enough of a concession to have won credit with her publishers, Brontë renewed her petition to publish *The Professor*. When no such credit was granted, and Smith still refused to risk publishing *The Professor*, Brontë wrote *Shirely*, opening with this dour disclaimer:

If you think, from this prelude, that anything like a romance is preparing for you, reader, you never were more mistaken. Do you anticipate sentiment, and poetry, and reverie? Do you expect passion, and stimulus, and melodrama? Calm your expectations; reduce them to a lowly standard. Something real, cool, and solid lies before you; something unromantic as Monday morning when all who have work wake with the consciousness that they must rise and betake themselves thereto. It is not positively affirmed that you shall not have a taste of the exciting, perhaps towards the middle and close of the meal, but it is resolved that the first dish set upon the table shall be one that a Catholic—ay, even an Anglo-catholic—

might eat on Good Friday in Passion Week: it shall be cold lentils and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs and no roast lamb. (5)

The aesthetic principle is the “lowly standard” that Brontë so often repeats in the preference for aesthetic simplicity in her protagonists. Her protagonists argue that if purity of passion and purpose are to take aesthetic form, that form must be dedicated to withdrawing from the distracting features of popular fiction. It is as if the narrator of *Shirley* were summarizing the aesthetic principle of *The Professor*. But this passage also responds to reader expectations like a letter acknowledging the receipt of the readers’ views and opinions on the subject of novel consumption and the narrator hints that later excitement will reward readers who manage to postpone their taste for instant stimulation, and submit for the present to a sober, grey, narrative. This sort of correspondence between author and reader is replicated as the correspondence between narrative and mass media in *Villette*. Whatever is published must correspond in some manner with the principles instituted by reading markets.

In contrast to *Bleak House*, which capitalizes on serialization to maximize its participation in mass media, *Villette* capitalizes on the form of the bound volume to minimize the influence of mass media. As we have already seen, this strategy begins to emerge long before Brontë actually writes *Villette*. In a letter to her publisher, Brontë rejects his suggestion that she write a serial novel after the “bestseller” success of *Jane Eyre*:

Of course a second work has occupied my thoughts much. I think it would be premature in me to undertake a serial now; I am not yet qualified for the task: I have neither gained a sufficiently firm footing with the public, nor do I possess sufficient confidence in myself, nor can I boast those unflagging animal spirits, that even command of the faculty of composition, which as you say and I am persuaded, most justly, is an indispensable requisite to success in serial literature.

I decidedly feel that ere I change my ground, I had better make another venture in the 3 vol. novel form. (93)

Brontë implies that “another venture in the 3 vol novel form” will supplement the lack of her solid footing with the public. This is a clever, calculating move that draws on the ways in which the culture tends to gender public and private spheres in order to keep the production of her novels as far removed from mass media as possible. Claiming to lack the masculine sounding “unflagging animal spirits” and “even command” required for producing serial novels in the public eye, Brontë justifies the increased control she will have over composition as a properly modest retreat to a more private, feminine domain of authorship. John Sutherland observes that Brontë was not alone in using the feminization of privacy to maintain greater control over her writing:

George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë had longer associations with single publishers than their male counterparts but all seem to have been able to dig their heels in and be eminently unbiddable on occasions. Charlotte Brontë, for example, while writing *Shirley* forbade any ‘consultation about plan, subject, characters or incidents.’ These ladies prohibited publishers from entering the privacy of their writing processes as they might have banned a man from their boudoir. (84)

But Brontë alone seems to have been able to consistently extend this “heel-digging” practice to the form in which her writing was to be published. While both Eliot and Gaskell made significant forays into the serial market during their careers, Brontë never strayed from the three volume format. Her publisher read and responded to *Villette* one volume at a time after she completed each one in succession. It is as if Brontë understands that some archetypes of the domestic women exist because, to the extent that women try to imitate them, they make themselves more like the veiled women in Eastern cultures and thereby more exciting to the male gaze.

Norman Feltes puts forward a related interpretation of the way gender influenced the production of Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Feltes emphasizes the fact that no amount of kind attention or regard from Blackwood could allay the struggle Eliot would have experienced to establish her authority to negotiate not only the terms of her compensation, but also the terms of its physical production. In fact it is Lewes who convinces Blackwood to publish the unusually long *Middlemarch* as an "exotically" different eight volume series constituting four instead of the usual three volumes (36-8). The association between the serial and the public domain on the one hand, and the bound volume with a private domain on the other, reappears in *Villette* as the contrast between two types of female characters: those who cultivate themselves as an object of the public eye and those who cultivate themselves according to the preferences of a private patron.

Opposing Femininities in *Villette*'s Aesthetic Discourse

By the early twentieth century it had become standard practice to feminize low-brow culture in contrast to the masculinity of high-brow culture. But Kathy Psomiades has convincingly demonstrated that mid-nineteenth century practice was to gender all art, high and low, as feminine. Psomiades shows that during this period, aesthetic discourse distinguishes between high and low culture through the conventions used to distinguish between "good" and "bad" feminine characteristics, between angels and fallen women. In *Villette*, images of women do indeed contribute very explicitly to the novel's aesthetic argument. In this case however, the two most vividly contrasting women are also characterized in terms of a traditional aesthetic associated with self-containment and a patron-based mode of production on the one hand, and a popular aesthetic associated with

public circulation and mass media on the other. Paulina's character shows that cultivating the favor of select patrons, and limiting one's accessibility, as the non-popular work of literature does, increases her value to certain men. Ginervra's character shows that conforming to popular taste, and making oneself accessible through the public sphere, as the serial novel does, increases her overall popularity. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of characters like Paulina is to provide images against which Lucy compares and differentiates herself, thus claiming a new aesthetic standard for Brontë's novel.

In order to explain how mechanical reproducibility changes the work of art during the nineteenth century, Benjamin groups aesthetic characteristics into the extreme possibilities on a continuum that are strikingly similar to the contrasting characteristics in the portraits in *Villette*. He maintains that although "Works of art are received and valued on different planes," we can nevertheless recognize that "Two polar types stand out: with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work" (*Illuminations* 224). Cult value for Benjamin is associated with works of art that are carefully guarded, preserved and prevented from circulating, whereas exhibition value is associated with the degree to which exposure to mechanical reproducibility and the technologies of stagecraft increase the circulation of and access to a work of art out in the world. Benjamin shows that the increasing exhibition value and decreasing cult value among works of art caused the aura of the work of art, its unique existence in space and time, to erode precipitously. One of his conclusions goes pretty far to illuminate the almost obsessive attention to character studies in *Villette*. Under the pressure of emerging mass culture, the aura "retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human

countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography” (225-6). Brontë’s well-known interest in phrenology, thanks partly to the scene early in *Villette* where M. Paul reads Lucy’s skull at the request of Madame Beck, also pinpoints “the human countenance” as the ground least likely to be displaced by the copy. Even though it was the most common subject of photography and (supposedly) subject to common rules of interpretation, the human head foregrounds the photographic index as a copy of a more primary, organic index of individual character.

In the prologue of *Villette*, the temporary absence of Paulina’s childhood patron, her father, gives Lucy ample opportunity to delineate this character in terms “accented” by something very like Benjamin’s cult value. When a servant first carries Paulina into the Bretton house, Lucy “would have opened the shawl, and tried to get a peep at the face but it was hastily turned from me to Warren’s shoulder.” Paulina must be allowed dignified self-presentation if presentation cannot be avoided, for as soon as she is set on her own feet, she removes “the clumsy wrapping” with “fastidious haste” (10). Although Paulina respectfully defers to Mrs. Bretton’s position of authority over her, she avoids prolonging contact with her or anyone else and finds “a corner where the shade was deep, and there seated herself” (11). In short, by limiting her accessibility to others, Paulina defends the exclusive authority of her father.

Benjamin illustrates cult value with reference to works of art created in the context of religious worship. Limiting their exposure similarly defends the exclusive authority of the priesthood and the deity: “Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden. Certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain Madonnas remain covered nearly all year round; certain

sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on the ground level” (*Illuminations* 225). Lucy creates one image that particularly captures Paulina’s affiliation with this kind of cult value: “when on moonlight nights, on waking, I beheld her figure, white and conspicuous in its night-dress, kneeling upright in bed, and praying like some Catholic or Methodist enthusiast—some precocious fanatic or untimely saint—I scarcely know what thoughts I had” (15). Even in more secular terms, Paulina’s self-determined toilette routines and her “unspeakable seriousness,” make her an object of interest to Lucy and thus to the reader (20). Paulina’s portrait adds cult value to the association between the figure of the domestic angel and the oriental woman as the ultimate sight of the male gaze. Barrell notes that “British travelers to Islamic countries,” such as the writer Kinglake, who he quotes in particular, are “desperate to *see* women—to see behind their veils, to see into the harem” (191, author’s emphasis). The key here of course, is that Lucy is not a man, and when she withdraws from the cult value modeled by Paulina, she also withdraws from the veil and the harem as unwanted constraints.

Lucy’s withdrawal from and critique of cult value is ultimately predicated on the degree to which an exclusive relationship with a male patron limits the resources for self-sufficiency that might be available outside such constraints. Lucy observes Paulina “growing old and unearthly” in her father’s absence and how in her desperation to avoid destruction, she accepts Graham Bretton as his replacement (15). Graham is acceptable in a pinch because his status as the “man” of the house reproduces her father’s position. Granting patron status to Graham, a mere teenage boy, is a costly proposal however; Paulina ends up sacrificing the very rituals of dignity she seeks to preserve in order to gain his protection. First Graham announces his intention to make her his own “popular”

entertainment: “I reckon on being able to get out of you a little of that precious commodity called amusement, which mamma and Mistress Snowe there fail to yield to me” (20). Though he will amuse her with “no end of books with pictures,” this is no equal exchange (20). Graham threatens to destroy a favorite print of Paulina’s— of a boy with a dog—unless Paulina pays for its protection with a kiss. Paulina’s fate anticipates what happens to Lucy as an adult when she remains alone at the school over the vacation and ends by collapsing on the streets of Villette, starving for want of sympathetic companionship. The only recourse open to Paulina for survival runs parallel to the steps Lucy finds herself taking during her convalescence. Though the Bretton home provides the companionship she needs, she is placed at the mercy of Graham’s (who has by then become Dr. John) whims and fancies.

Print objects often provide the medium through which Paulina and Graham negotiate their relationship as one between guardian patron and serving angel. Almost as if revising the memorable opening scene of *Jane Eyre* in which Jane’s cousin John tyrannically denies her access to the books in the house, Graham and Paulina spend a great deal of time together over a book that reminds one of the imaginary exoticism Jane would have been reading in *Gulliver’s Travels* when John calls her out of the window seat. The book in question is somewhat hybrid in nature. Its object status as a beautiful cabinet edition corresponds to the upper middle class wealth of the Bretton family but at the same time, it contains exactly the kind of miscellaneous “exotica” most typically to be found in the cheaper formats of monthly and weekly periodicals. If the weighty exclusivity of the book corresponds to Paulina’s cult value, its distracted and distracting content corresponds to Graham’s enthusiasm for exhibition as entertainment. When

Paulina shows this book to Lucy while Graham is at school, a strikingly exoticized image of Lucy's relationship to Graham and Paulina appears in its pages. Paulina explains that one part

‘tells about distant countries a long, long way from England, which no traveler can reach without sailing thousands of miles over the sea. Wild men live in these countries, Miss Snowe, who wear clothes different from ours: indeed, some of them wear scarcely any clothes, for the sake of being cool, you know; for they have very hot weather. Here is a picture of thousands gathered in a desolate place—a plain, spread with sand—round a man in black,—a good, good Englishman, --a missionary, who is preaching to them under a palm-tree.’ (She showed me a little coloured cut to that effect.) ‘And here are pictures (she went on) ‘more stranger; (grammar was occasionally forgotten) ‘than that. (34)

In the Penguin edition introduction, Helen Cooper argues that the English missionary foreshadows Lucy's future life in France: “Lucy the traveler, who herself sailed over the seas and is now surrounded by the wild Labasscouriennes, can be seen as analogous to the ‘good, good Englishman,’ the Protestant missionary surrounded by a landscape suggestive of Africa” (Penguin introduction xliii). But if we do see this analogy, it is not simply another piece of evidence that Brontë wrote in a culture influenced by the practices of British imperialism.

The missionary outsider, the one who wears clothes in spite of the heat, is analogous to Lucy's own position at the moment she sees the image. She is outside the playful relations between of Graham and Paulina. To whatever extent Lucy might be identified with the missionary, Graham and Paulina are the wild men who tend to succumb to “the very hot weather.” In a manner very reminiscent of the Brontë children creating the “hot climate” of their shared imaginary Angrian world, Paulina creates an imaginary world through which she visualizes her future with Graham: “We intend going to Switzerland, and climbing Mount Blanc; and some day we shall sail over to South

America, and walk to the top of Kim-kim-borazo” (34). By using the pictures to concentrate on what “Graham told [her],” Paulina conjures Graham’s presence as an extension of the exotic book world.

There is the wonderful Great Wall of China; here is a Chinese lady, with a foot littler than mine. There is a wild horse of Tartary; and here—most strange of all— is a land of ice and snow, without green fields, woods, or gardens. In this land, they found some mammoth bones: there are no mammoths now. You don’t know what it was; but I can tell you because Graham told me. A mighty goblin creature, as high as this room, and as long as the hall; but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing, Graham thinks. He believes, if I met one in a forest, it would not kill me, unless I came quite in its way; when it would trample me down amongst the bushes, as I might tread on a grasshopper in a hay-field without knowing it. (34)

Instead of being disoriented by this miscellaneous range of content, Paulina orients herself through narrative concentration on her patron figure.

Only the uncanny appearance of the entire Bretton household, bag and baggage, in the town of Villette seems like a greater coincidence than the way the novel justifies Paulina’s child-confidence in the power of her cult value to secure a future with John Graham. Paulina and Graham are reunited as adults in Villette on the night Dr. John, in the capacity of a plutonic well-wisher, has taken Lucy to see the opera. A fire breaks out on stage and Dr. John rushes to rescue the tiny, delicate Paulina from the threat of the stampeding crowds, leaving Lucy to fend for herself. Graham rescues Paulina from the crowd as though she had indeed become the grasshopper she imagined herself as a child in the passage above, endangered by the trampling foot of a mammoth. It is precisely the extreme way in which Paulina is unfit for too much public exposure that attracts Graham to her, just as Ginevra’s extreme fitness for such exposure attracts him earlier. The adult version of Graham becoming Paulina’s patron in place of her father is just as text-based as the childhood version. Their relationship unfolds according to a series of well-

established scripts: knight and damsel in distress, doctor and patient, letter-writing lovers, husband and wife. From Lucy's perspective, Paulina's dependence on a single male patron is too seriously limiting to deserve envy.⁵⁸

In stark contrast to Paulina, Ginevra is unserious and lacking in devotion to any person; her habit of harassing Lucy is as close an expression of devotion as she seems capable of. Benjamin observes that "With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products" (*The Work of Art* 225). No other character in the novel practices her arts of exhibition over and against the traditional arts of ritual with greater enthusiasm than Ginevra Fanshawe. Ginevra makes herself accessible to anyone likely to increase her material value; the climax of this forward strategy occurs when Graham realizes that she has been carrying on an intimate flirtation with De Hammel the entire time he was courting her himself. Ginevra's initial appearance strikes Lucy as promising. Her dress is neat and simple and she shuns the company of the vulgar, newly-moneyed passengers. Their first conversation reveals, however, that her foreign education has completely eroded any sense of belonging to the protestant-British culture that Lucy values more with each passing second that she travels further away from her native home:

Oh the number of foreign schools I have been at in my life! And yet I am quite an ignoramus. I know nothing—nothing in the world—I assure you; except that I play and dance beautifully,—and French and German of course I know, to speak; but I can't read or write them very well. [...] and I write English so badly—such spelling and grammar, they tell me. Into the bargain I have quite forgotten my religion; they call me a Protestant, you know, but really I am sure whether I am one or not: I don't well know the difference between Romanism and Protestantism. However, I don't in the least care for that. I was a Lutheran once at Bonn—dear Bonn!—charming Bonn!—where there were so many handsome students. Every nice girl in our school had an admirer; they knew our hours for walking out, and almost always passed on the promenade: '[beautiful young woman],' we used to hear them say. I was excessively happy at Bonn! (60)

Overexposure abroad makes Ginevra prize her exhibition value over any unique knowledge, character, or purpose; her single intention is to appear attractive to as many people as possible wherever she happens to go.

At Madame Beck's school attended by Ginevra, Lucy discovers the mode of education responsible for this kind of character. Lucy is hired to replace a perpetually drunk Irish woman, who, up until now, passed without contest as an "English" person qualified to look after Madame Beck's children. For all her polish, and regard for disciplinary regiments and rules, Madame Beck's indifference to the particularity of most people and things apart from their utility gives Lucy the opening she needs to enter into employment and rise through the ranks of the school. While Lucy withdraws from Madame Beck by disparaging her materialism and her spying habits much as she disparages Ginevra, it is significant that she remains a correspondent of both characters in one way or another. No matter how deliberately English Lucy might make the style of teaching used in her own school, she cannot avoid the fact that her career automatically corresponds to Beck's own profession. And Ginevra ends up surpassing even M. Paul as a faithful writer of letters to Lucy.

The aesthetic binary created between Ginevra and Paulina with which Lucy continues to correspond even after refusing to adopt the aesthetic standard of either becomes even more significant if we recall the purpose of portraits in *Jane Eyre*. If the fantastic paintings Jane shows Rochester soon after arriving at Thornfield visually narrate her past struggles to master herself as a conventional subject, then the realistic, representational portraits she later produces of Blanch Ingram and Rosamond Oliver are part of Jane's on-going strategy for differentially visualizing the position she will come to

occupy by the end of the novel. In *Villette*, the portraits of Ginevra and Paulina are supplemented further with the images of women Lucy encounters at an exhibition of paintings.

Galleries of Women

Lucy's visit to an art gallery in *Villette* provides the occasion for interpreting works of art as either excessively commercial or overly constrained with hypocritical moralizing. And she is very explicit here about comparing the style of painting to the style of writing novels: "It seemed to me that an original and good picture was just as scarce as an original and good book" (222). She even concludes that the stature of an artist's popular reputation seems to predict a corresponding lack of original or pleasing aesthetic qualities: "nor did I, in the end, tremble to say to myself, standing before certain *chef d'oeuvres* bearing great names, 'These are not a whit like nature'" (222). Such an assertion consciously withdraws from the popular institution of "great names" and "chief works." The novel's redaction of authentic "greatness" from works marked by popular recognition is linked to Benjamin's notion that nineteenth-century reproductive technologies, particularly photography, tend to erode the unique status of a work of art by greatly increasing public access to any representation. As Lucy begins to describe and react to the paintings, it becomes abundantly clear that in the world of this novel, the first rule of good art is to reject popular exoticism.

After examining a large painting titled "Cleopatra," Lucy pronounces it to be "an enormous piece of claptrap" (324). The punning here between Cleopatra and claptrap pokes fun of Dickens's habit of exercising phonetic satire in his character's names and

argues that the imitation of popular stereotypes, automatically implied by an exotic signifier like Cleopatra, undermines the originality of an image. In addition to Lucy's objection that the painted female figure embodies physical excess, her complaint that "Pots and pans ... were rolled here and there on the foreground; a perfect rubbish of flowers was mixed amongst them, and an absurd and disorderly mass of curtain upholstery smothered the couch and cumbered the floor" points to Dickens's over-abundant style of writing (223-4). But for all Lucy's expression of unilateral withdrawal from the Cleopatra's popular reception, the move here to exoticize Dickensian excess as a painting within Brontë's novel in the first place concedes *Villette*'s participation, however reluctant, in the mechanically expanding serial market.

In a letter written to George Henry Lewes in January of 1848, Brontë reacts to another Egyptian-inspired representation, first by contrasting it with Austen's style of novel-writing and then by comparing it to Bulwer Lytton's style of serial-writing. Brontë writes

You mention the authoress of "Azeth the Egyptian": you say you think I should sympathize with "her daring imagination and pictorial fancy." Permit me to undeceive you: with infinitely more relish can I sympathize with Miss Austen's clear common sense and subtle shrewdness. If you find no inspiration in Miss Austen's page, neither do you find there windy wordiness: to use your words once again, she exquisitely adapts her means to her end: both are very subdued, a little contracted, but never absurd. I have not read "Azeth," but I did read or begin to read a tale in the "New Monthly" from the same pen, and harsh as the opinion may sound to you, I must candidly avow that I thought it both turgid and feeble: it reminded me of some the most inflated and emptiest parts of Bulwer's novels: I found in it neither strength, sense, nor originality. (100-101)

What could be worse than the overly cultivated and constrained version of realism Austen favors? The answer given in this letter matches the characteristics Lucy finds in the painting of Cleopatra almost word for word. In addition, it is interesting to note that

Azeth, the Egyptian is a three-volume novel published by T.C. Newby, who was also the publisher of *Wuthering Heights* and the *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. It is almost as if Brontë shifts the discussion from Linton's three-volume novel to a more recent "tale" published in a periodical, "The Priest of Isis," in order to deflect the contaminating association of a common publisher and a common format away from her sisters' novels. The idea of a contaminating association with style spreading through a publisher and a publication format seems far-fetched unless we keep in mind that, as Klancher points out, in journals of the 20s and 30s "Style becomes a sign, a marker of the (always inferred) relation of the audience to the writer hidden behind the corporate text" (51). This was also true to a certain extent, and continues to be so, of the reputations associated with different publishing houses; the reading public often comes to expect a certain consistency in the type of material published under the same roof.

In the same gallery where the "Cleopatra" hangs on display, Lucy describes a second, opposite, style of painting. Still in the early phases of his acquaintance with Lucy, M. Paul foolishly dictates that she should turn her attention away from the Cleopatra (a scandalous subject for women to view he thinks) and sit in the chair he places for her in front of a four-painting series representing "the life of a woman" (225). There is a similarity between Lucy's descriptions of the two painting styles and Brontë's sharp replies to Henry Lewes's attempts to recommend *Azeth, the Egyptian* or to Jane Austen's novels. Lucy does not hesitate to judge these four stereotypical images of women to be "As bad in their way as the indolent gypsy-giantess, the Cleopatra, in hers" (225). The first three are described accordingly:

They were painted in a remarkable style—flat, dead, pale and formal. The first represented a "Jeune Fille," coming out of a church-door, a missal in her hand,

her dress very prim, her eyes cast down, her mouth pursed up—the image of a most villainous little precocious she-hypocrite. The second, a “Mariee” with a long white veil, kneeling at a prie-dieu in her chamber, holding her hands plastered together, finger to finger, and showing the whites of her eyes in a most exasperating manner. The third, a “Jeune Mere,” hanging disconsolate over a clayey and puffy baby with a face like an unwholesome full moon. (225-6)

Lucy highlights their similarity to religious art, finding them similar to statuettes, cast and separated from a mold (eyes *cast* down, hands *plastered* together, showing the *whites* of her eyes, *clayey* baby). Such language relies on a strong association between arcane religious rituals and French Catholicism to criticize the way hyper-constrained images of women propagated through popular culture end up masquerading as the virtuous aesthetic model of self-containment. For all Lucy’s implicit jealousy over the popular advantages of Paulina and Ginevra, the contemptuous tone of this critique is aimed at the fact that both of those characters live lives constrained as copies of these images whereas Lucy knows better. She compensates for her lack of popular appeal by pointing out how the possession of such an appeal tends to diminish rather than increase freedoms associated with individual desires and intentions. And also by pointing out that the frigidity of these four images simply adds to the momentum of the enthusiasm to be observed in the men clustering around the Cleopatra: “All these four ‘Anges’ were grim and grey as burglars, and cold and vapid as ghosts. What women to live with! Insincere, ill-humoured, bloodless, brainless nonentities!”(225-6). In anticipation of the feminist critique that recognizes the complicity of the virgin and whore in the reproduction of patriarchy, Lucy recognizes the Cleopatra and the four “Angels” as synonymous translations of patriarchal ideology into popular imagery. And it is this insight that prepares us to understand the fourth painting in the series.

Unlike the first three images of white women, the fourth depicts a black woman in a cemetery, a widow: a “‘Veuve,’ being a black woman, holding by the hand a black girl, and the twain studiously surveying an elegant French monument, set up in a corner of some Pere la Chaise” (225-6). At least one critic has suggested a foreshadowing correspondence between Lucy and this “black widow” because M. Paul’s death at sea would not have occurred but for his family’s interests in a slave plantation. Within the terms of my analysis of the four-image series however, the black widow seems to associate the depth of dispossession that occurs in slavery with the other reproducible images of women. The “elegant French monument” serves equally as a tombstone for men and women who would take popular mass reproduced images as instruction for how to live.

In the process of turning away from the Cleopatra, before being set to contemplate the four stages of womanhood, Lucy expresses a much more favorable response to “some exquisite little pictures of still life”: “wild-flowers, wild-fruit, mossy wood-nests, casketing eggs that looked like pearls seen through clear green sea-water; all hung modestly together beneath that course and preposterous canvass” (224). Although they depict nature instead of women, the fact that “nature” also tends to be gendered feminine indicates that these images are hardly a departure from the aesthetic discourse debated through the images of women. These images challenge the perspective that maps ritual and exhibition value onto angels and Cleopatras; they offer an alternative to these opposing feminine aesthetics by associating nature with organic form. When Lucy approves of these paintings, she not only advocates organic form as the alternative to mechanical form, but also usurps the masculine presumption behind the Romantic gaze.

The still life paintings are modest and “wild” in contrast to the over-cultivated, exhibitionary images of women. Compared to the drawings Jane shows Rochester soon after arriving at Thornfield, these paintings are strikingly more realistic. At the same time, as the lexicon of wild and cultivated has already demonstrated, they are *not* typical of the realism found in Jane Austen. Instead, the language Lucy uses to describe them is similar to the language Jane Eyre uses to describe the look of the wardrobe she defends against Rochester’s garish selections or even that of George Eliot’s narrator in describing the aesthetic appeal of Dinah’s Quaker appearance.

Serial Nuns: Poison and Antidote

Lucy’s aesthetic preference for simplicity in the gallery paintings bears an important relationship to the protestant principle of renunciation. Renunciation is valued in Lucy’s choices of food, dress and study habits. It also comes up in odd situations; Lucy abruptly announces she will never again perform on stage when she finds it pleasurable just as she has already renounced playing chess. Lucy has a habit of renunciation that facilitates the novel’s pattern of withdrawal. But as much as this habit appears linked to Lucy’s Protestant orientation, the ultimate depictions of renouncing the world lie in the stereotype of the Catholic nun as a kind flesh and blood version of ritualistically cloistered statuary or yet another western variant of the veiled Eastern woman. So Lucy’s encounters with the ghostly nun in the garret of Madame Beck’s school turn out to matter as much as illustrations of Lucy’s character as they do in relation to the eventual revelation that the nun is De Hammel disguised for trysting with Ginevra. Apart from the sham itself is Lucy’s interpretation of the nun as part of a

succession of imaginary images beginning with the Radcliffe-worthy legend that one of the nuns at the convent before it became Beck's school was buried alive in the courtyard. This legendary rumor is followed by the story of M. Paul's one-time fiancé, whose family, in an effort to prevent their marriage, was forced to join a convent; she rapidly declined and died. This circumstance puts M. Paul in a position similar to that of Miss Marchmont: he too is suddenly bereft of a partner in a nearly consummated marriage. Lucy too will find herself in this position at the end of the novel. The forced renunciation of romance links this repeated position to the nun motif.

Lucy projects her own habit of renunciation onto the figure of the nun because she is afraid of being "like" a nun, particularly a nun like the one in the legend. She is afraid she is already a ghost or a shadow, a being whose material consequence is in essence no longer visible to the world. The irony of this is that nothing drives Lucy toward insubstantiality more rapidly than the connection between her own withdrawn habits and the figure of the nun. Lucy's desperation to possess a visible, material measure of her value to the world leaves her open to becoming addicted to whatever might seem to serve this purpose. Under this circumstance, the figure of the nun connects Dr. John and his letter-writing to the otherwise unrelated opera performance of Vashti. Having diagnosed Lucy's first collapse as the want of companionship, Dr. John's follow-up care after Lucy returns to Madam Beck's school is to promise that he will write her letters. Because of their material status as documents that Lucy can preserve, Dr. John's letters provide an irresistible substitute for the recognition Lucy is looking for: "I held in my hand a morsel of real solid joy: not a dream, not an image of the brain, not one of those shadowy chance imagination pictures, and on which humanity starves but cannot live" (266). A reason for

doubting the solidity of this joy appears however in the fact that “a shadowy chance imagination” version of the letter precedes this “morsel of joy.” As she approaches Dr. John’s first letter, Lucy confesses that “The shape of a letter ... had haunted [her] brain for seven days past. [She] had dreamed of a letter last night. Strong magnetism drew [her] to that letter now” (264). The urgency of replacing her “haunting” dream-image with material substantiality of a real letter guarantees that Lucy will succumb to the structure of addiction—that she will need the letters as proof of her place in the world. Dr. John’s letters become “like the blood in [her] veins” (275). Precisely because its materiality makes the letter seem “full, pure, perfect,” connected with “no pain, no blot, no want,” it acts on Lucy like the poisoned fruit in temptation stories; it isn’t long before Lucy is made painfully aware that “happiness of such a shallow origin could be but brief” (273-2).

The appearance of the nun in the garret is the means by which Dr. John discovers Lucy’s excessive dependence on his letters. Frightened by the sudden appearance of the nun, Lucy drops the letter she took to the garret to read. Dr. John is the first to reach the attic after Lucy reports an “intruder”; seeing his letter on the floor, he recovers and temporarily hides it from Lucy: Graham “might practice as a conjuror if [he] liked” (276). In her frantic search for the letter, Lucy forgets about the nun and even Dr. John himself as he stands right beside her. Knowing that Lucy is afraid for some reason to state exactly what she saw, Graham manipulates Lucy in a manner strikingly reminiscent of the way he manipulates the child-Paulina in order to “conjure” entertainment for himself. Just as the boy Graham threatened to burn Paulina’s favorite print of a dog and boy, Graham tells Lucy, ““If you don’t tell me [what you saw] you shall have no more

letters” (276). Lucy finds herself in the compromised position of child-Paulina who had to violate the integrity of a sacred principle in order to preserve herself. Lucy’s reasons for wishing to keep the nun a secret are validated by Graham’s readiness to believe that the nun is a shadow of Lucy’s imagination, equally a symptom of an unsound mind and a work of fiction that indulges the reader’s taste for fantasy.

Now Lucy is perpetually confronted with the knowledge that the only reason Dr. John continues to write her letters is “to keep away the nun” in fulfillment of his professional obligations (282). To everyone but Graham, Lucy “took care not to breathe the word ‘nun,’ certain this word would at once suggest to Madam Beck’s mind an idea of romance and unreality” (280). But Dr. John’s skepticism alone is enough to cast real doubt on the power of Lucy’s character to avoid re-producing the kind of popular fiction this novel attempts not to be. He is in essence making the same accusation of plagiarism that Lucy confronted earlier. If the nun really is the result of Lucy’s unstable mind, her first-person narrative copies Radcliffian romance in spite of her opposition to overt melodrama and popular images.

Three points connect Lucy’s addiction to Graham’s letters with Vashti’s opera performance and work to counteract her dependence on them: corresponding descriptions of red and white imagery; language borrowed from Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan”; and the association of the nun with Lucy’s habit of renunciation. The novel establishes red as a sign for the ominous capacity of the letters to imprint themselves on Lucy’s mind—a an image of the internalized male gaze: “The letter whose face of enameled white and single cyclop’s-eye of vermillion-red had printed themselves so clear and perfect on the retina of an inward vision” (266). But Lucy invokes this color again to characterize her reaction to

Vashti's singing: "The strong magnetism of genius drew my heart out of its wonted orbit; the sunflower turned from the south to a fierce light, not solar—a rushing, red, cemetery light—hot on vision and to sensation" (287). The "red, cemetery light" of Vashti's performance competes with the cyclop's-eye of vermillion-red on the retina of Lucy's inward vision. Vashti's gender interrupts Lucy's habit of automatically submitting to the order of the real sanctioned by the masculine authority of the letters and Graham's medical profession. Now the letter's vivid appearance, "that white envelope, with the spot of red wax in the middle," visibly illustrates Lucy's life-blood congealing under the stamp of Graham's seal and a male-centered version of the world. Vashti's white figure thrown into relief by a red backdrop inverts the image of his letter: "A background and entourage and flooring of deepest crimson threw her out, white like alabaster—like silver: rather be it said like death" (265, 286). As an inversion of the letter's red wax seal, Vashti's figure, "wasted like wax in a flame," compels Lucy to see her own fate if Dr. John's letters continue to stand in for the blood in her veins (286).

Since Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" critically initiates the use of opium as a figure for writing automated by an exotic supplement, it is particularly striking in *Villette* when echoes of Coleridge's language mark romantic fantasy as an exotic supplement to the standards of realism. Lucy describes her happiness at holding an unread letter from Graham as "genuine and exquisite: a bubble—but a sweet bubble—of real honey-dew" (272). The emphasis on the happiness as "genuine" and "real" is directly linked to the materiality of the letters that allows Lucy to verify the evidence of Graham's notice over and over; she interprets their indexical quality as evidence similar to the presence of a person in a photograph. At the same time, the "bubble" form of the happiness brought by

this evidence not only suggests something transient, but also a reference to Kubla's "pleasure dome," especially given the way the term "honey-dew" appears at the end of Coleridge's poem. The speaker in his poem anticipates that his poetry will automatically make others recognize that "he on honey-dew hath fed" (line 53). The implication is that Lucy's narrative hind-sight brings the recognition that realism has fed on Romanticism's idea of representation and Romantic vision continues to feed on mass media's technologies of reproducibility.

When Lucy applies intuition instead of indexical objectivity to Vashti's performance, Romantic vision rearranges the order of the male gaze. Lucy's "vision" of Vashti's performance appears to smash her imagined happiness through language that echoes the creation of the pleasure dome in "Kubla Khan." The opera singer's performance "disclosed power like a deep, swollen, winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steely sweep of its descent" (288). In Coleridge's poem, we recall that critics tend to interpret the infamous imagery of a fountain exploding from a "romantic chasm" before it "sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean" as a description of the link between the creative process and the vicissitudes of masculine potency (12-28). Such a reading takes into account the two figures of orientalist women. The first, "wailing for her demon-lover," describes the kind of figure that *might* appear next to the "romantic chasm," and the second, "an Abyssinian maid" a figure the speaker-poet envisions to revive his "song" with music that becomes more or less interchangeable with the honey-dew. The image of Vashti's soul swept out of control on the force of its own power suggests that gendering art and soul feminine to correspond with the male artist and masculine act of creation will tend to banish rather than summon

the power of the female artist in the ordering of the world. Up until this point in the novel, the “art” in question has been the way Lucy lives her life; but Lucy suggests that it is the revelation of Vashti’s performance that steers her in the direction of writing.

Vashti’s visual capacity to disrupt the pattern of Lucy’s addiction to a masculine version of the real also has to do with the performer’s unexpected relationship with renunciation—and thus with the nun. Like the nun who gives up the ordinary pleasures of life, Vashti’s performance gives up herself to be judged by the order of a masculine world. But of course unlike a nun, she is doing this publically instead of the privacy of the cloister. She exposes the idea of renunciation as an act of self-destruction: “To [Vashti], what hurts becomes immediately embodied: she looks on it as a thing that can be attacked, worried down, torn in shreds. Scarcely a substance herself, she grapples to conflict with abstractions” (287). This image further reveals to Lucy that “what hurts” is not only the loss of a material source of happiness but the loss of interior coherence that results from her habit of renunciation. Vashti’s performance style destroys the singer because, like Lucy, she is only too willing to grapple with abstractions that negate her substance: “that star verged already on its judgment-day. Seen near, it was chaos—hollow, half-consumed: an orb perished or perishing” (286). On the one hand, Lucy glories in a mental image she creates of Vashti’s stark exhibition slashing “through the pulpy mass” of the Cleopatra figure like the “scimitar of Saladin” (287). But Lucy is also deeply disturbed by the “low, horrible, immoral” exhibition of renunciation as self-destruction for the sake of providing entertainment to others (288). Though she rejects Vashti’s image for herself as she does Ginevra and Paulina, the deep tensions Vashti

embodies help Lucy grasp the life narrative she is trying to articulate as a freedom of movement between her inward vision and the order of the real.

Like she did in the gallery, Lucy looks at Graham to see how he reacts to the spectacle of Vashti “torn by seven devils” (286). Lucy’s admiration for Graham is partly predicated on his cool, unimpressed reaction to the Cleopatra painting in contrast to the reactions of the other young men of Villette; he seemed willing to withdraw from popular images. But when Lucy sees that Graham “judged [Vashti] as a woman, not as an artist,” she sees that he can never recognize Lucy’s authority to represent the order of the real. Suddenly Dr. John’s unilateral perception of women undermines his earlier diagnosis of the nun as an impression of Lucy’s mind. By the end of Vashti’s performance, the value of Graham’s letters no longer outweighs the value of Lucy’s own narrative configuration, including the substantiality of the nun she has seen. Lucy’s judgment of Graham is as “branding” as his is of women: “That night was already marked in my book of life, not with white, but with a deep-red cross” (289). As she ceases to undermine herself, she undermines Graham’s authority over her reality instead, and vows to materialize this lesson through her own “letters”: “But I had not done with it yet; and other memoranda where destined to be set down in characters of tint indelible” (289). Here then Lucy articulates her goal of becoming a writer of the real.

Lucy explains that eventually the narcotic influence of Graham’s letters diminishes: “Time dear reader, mellowed [the letters] to a beverage of this mild quality; but when I first tasted their elixir, fresh from the font so honoured, its seemed juice of a divine vintage: a drought which Hebe might fill, and the very gods approve” (381). The diminished appreciation of Graham’s letters might as well describe an increasingly

tempered regard for the heavily masculine opinions expressed in *Blackwood's Noctes Ambrosianae* and other popular literary reviews. While M. Paul theoretically subscribes to many stereotypes about women, Lucy turns to him in turning away from Graham because, unlike Graham and the others who see or want to see her as an “inoffensive shadow,” the French Professor sees her as an “obtrusive ray,” as a spotlight on a reality he cannot turn from (370-1). He attracts her attention because he envies her relative freedom from the familial and religious institutions that limit him in pursuing her life-narrative. And M. Paul is with Lucy one evening when they together witness the something that looks like a nun roaming around the school. With this shared perception, the novel signals that unlike Graham, M. Paul is willing and able to see the world according to the order Lucy's narrative puts forth.

Opium Habits

Brontë wrote a letter to De Quincey in 1847 which she sent along with a copy of the book of poetry she had just published with her sisters. In it, she suggests that the unpopularity of the volume makes it a “drug”:

My relatives ... and myself, heedless of the repeated warnings of various respectable publishers, have committed the rash act of printing a volume of poems. ... The consequences predicted have of course overtaken us; our book is found to be a drug; no man needs it or heeds it; in the space of a year our publisher has disposed but of two copies, and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of those two, himself only knows. (Letters 84)

The association of an unpopular book with a drug in a letter to De Quincey is striking since it is precisely the association with opium that made *Confessions* instantly more popular than anything else De Quincey wrote. Brontë suggests a contradictory meaning: on the one hand, this characterization of their volume works with the rhetoric of modesty

to apologize for “prescribing” something to De Quincey that no one else wanted. On the other hand, this works with the rhetoric of suggestion to imply that what is currently unpopular may become so in time and someone like De Quincey may see why. Not only had De Quincey’s own writing increased in reputation over time, but passages from Brontë’s Roe Head journal that coincide with her authorship of the Angrian writings reveal that, like De Quincey, she imitated Coleridge’s model of opium-writing from an early age (only without the use of real opium). Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar quote these journal passages at length in order to compare Brontë’s writing practice to the Romantic ideal of “inward vision” (312). After the “wretched bondage” of a “parsing lesson,” the school-aged Brontë describes what happens when she finds herself “alone for the first time that day”:

The stream of thought, checked all day, came flowing free & calm along its channel...the toil of the day, succeeded by this moment of divine leisure had acted on me like opium & was coiling about me a disturbed but fascinating spell such as I never felt before. What I imagined grew morbidly vivid. (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 312)

This passage recalls the narrative opening of “Kubla Khan” in that an outside force stimulates an inward vision, a series of images recognized as ready-made writing. That the opium in this case is the cessation of work rather than the substance opium confirms that the drug has become a shorthand explanation for the way any outside force, such as the withdrawal of concentrated labor, might interact with the writer’s physiology to produce writing. And like the speaker in the poem’s preface, Brontë emphasizes the frustration of being interrupted before having “time to work out the vision” (313). It is difficult to ignore the further similarity between Brontë’s description of how writing came to her and the day-dream vision of France that Lucy so harshly dismisses from her

mind precisely by summoning back to her mind the disciplined constraint of classroom exercises.

Lucy's corrupted images of Graham's letters clarify the difficulty of resolving a representational aesthetic based on "the toil of the day" that is also true to the inward visions it stimulates. While Lucy finds an antidote for her addiction to Graham's letters in Vashti's performance and M. Paul's compatible perspective, the single outstanding opium incident in the novel shows how the novel, if not the character, remains addicted to its movement against mass media. The narrative finds itself repeating the motif of withdrawing from mass media because it can never completely separate itself from its medium. Before discussing the key instance of this struggle on the night Madame Beck drugs Lucy with opium, however, I want to look again briefly at the critical and historical discussions of the Angrian writings. These discussions have recourse to a rhetoric of drugs and addiction, in imitation I believe, of the rhetoric they find in Brontë's own writing, beginning particularly with the movement of withdrawal described in her "Farewell to Angria."

Recalling the earlier connection we saw between the Angrian writing and the imitation of exotic motifs typical of *Blackwood's*, Ratchford's characterization of the whole collection of juvenilia as drug-like, a "Brontë dream world," projects its imitative and fantastic use of the exotic as a state of being-on-drugs, specifically perhaps opium (54). For Gilbert and Gubar, "Charlotte Brontë was essentially a trance-writer" (311). Gordon's biography implies that opium came to stand in for an imitative, addictive mode of writing—from collective authorship to the use of exoticism as a vehicle for presenting a narrative of emerging literary culture. Evaluating Charlotte at a later stage in her life,

Gordon credits her unrequited passion for the Brussels professor with saving her from an addiction to writing that was based more on fantasy than on real life. He writes that “While Branwell remained addicted to Angria in his continued identity as Northangerland, it was part of the cure of the Angrian drug for Charlotte to continue to experience genuine passion, genuine pain” (114-5). But in striking contrast to the representations of the opium-eater I discuss in chapter one, Gordon’s characterization of Branwell’s dependence on his Angrian persona is connected to his assessment of Branwell’s failure to establish a successful literary career.

Gordon traces the earliest period of Branwell’s infamous physical decline to the time he “was introduced to opium, and began to admire the addicted Romantics, Coleridge ...and De Quincey ... above Wordsworth,” as well as to suffer from nightmares (71). Charlotte, on the other hand, “never took one grain of opium at a time when it was widely used” (Gordon 223). While Branwell took opium in deliberate imitation of what must have seemed like a fool-proof formula for popular writing because it worked so well for Coleridge and De Quincey, Charlotte appears focused on strategies like her “Farewell to Angria” to depart from a writing style of the past. Branwell’s continued practice of Angrian-style writing, and his failure to secure any kind of professional success, were simultaneous circumstances that Charlotte would have observed in conjunction with his use of opium and alcohol. The irony of Branwell’s fate is that in one of the Angrian chronicles, *The Glass Town Saga*, a character named Henry Hastings provides a melodramatic portrait of the young artist destroyed by the success that exposes him to a culture of writers. As Bock notes, “Perhaps the most interesting depiction of an unknown author in the juvenilia is that of Henry Hastings, a young

‘unknown’ who achieves celebrity early in life only to degenerate suddenly into a murderous drunkard, apparently having been corrupted by the very milieu into which his literary fame has brought him” (41). Bock’s description of Hastings as an “unknown” connects his demise to that of Nemo in *Bleak House*.

In turning to the relationship between the opium incident in *Villette* and the novel’s habit of withdrawal, we should begin by noting its double and paradoxical implications. As a reaction against the addicting qualities of mass media, *Villette*’s use of withdrawal corresponds to the symptoms conventionally associated with cravings and the lack of the drug-supplement. But at the same time, I argue that it is precisely this feeling of the missing supplement that Brontë’s novel becomes addicted to. The serial nun expresses an addiction to renouncing the experience of being-on-drugs. In order to continue this habit after Lucy succeeds in withdrawing from the power of the letters to make the nun a symbol of her own dematerialization, the narrative returns her to a state of being-on-drugs through the plotting hand of Madame Beck in order to compel her regression. Lucy’s encounter with the opium is singular, and thus already a withdrawal from the drug habits associated with the mechanical reproducibility that drives the representations of mass media in both *Confessions* and *Bleak House*. Madame Beck secretly administers a dose of opium to Lucy, hoping that Lucy’s drugged sleep will keep her away from M. Paul as he prepares to depart for Guadalupe. It is at this point however, that the oriental motifs previously borrowed from Coleridge’s dream-reverie poem begin to merge with De Quincey’s urban crowd motifs of oceanic anonymity. Because it defines itself in juxtaposition with popular images spread through mass media,

Lucy's narrative remains open to the effects of the opium-writing inherited through the Romantic discourse of organic and mechanic form.

Stronger references at this point in the novel to De Quincey correspond with the opium-eater's description of the first phase of opium intoxication as restless, alert, activity rather than sleep or stupor. Instead of remaining indoors as Madame Beck intends, Lucy leaves the school and ends up at the city park where crowds of people are converging to listen to a public concert: "The effect was as a sea breaking into song with all its waves," and "the swaying tide swept this way, and then it fell back" (502). If the urban crowds alone were not enough to recall De Quincey, the park itself is decorated for the festival with opium-dream-worthy Egyptian images. Lucy finds herself

In a land of enchantment, a garden most gorgeous, a plain sprinkled with coloured meteors, a forest with sparks of purple and ruby and golden fire gemming the foliage; a region, not of trees and shadow, but of strangest architectural wealth—of altar and of temple, of pyramid, obelisk, and sphinx; incredible to say, the wonders and the symbols of Egypt teemed throughout the park of Vilette. (500)

The opening of this passage from an Asiatic "garden most gorgeous," evoking the opening stanza of "Kubla Khan," to Egyptian sculptural motifs typical of De Quincey. In *Suspiria*, the opium-eater makes clear that "strangest architectural wealth" is a common opium dream motif. Repeating these originary opium-writing motifs in conjunction with the concert in the park shows how the habit of connecting popular media with exoticism shapes Lucy's perception from outside the intention of her own narrative trajectory. Exotic images spread through the Romantic discourse of aesthetic form as a kind of "contagion" because they are automatically reproduced by reproductions like those used to decorate the park. Thus as in *Bleak House*, we see mass media as a force moving through individual consumers in a movement from individual addiction to collective

contagion. Besides strengthening the connection between Lucy's intoxication and the experiences of De Quincey's opium-eater, this passage invokes a larger contextual chain of association: because of the British victory at Waterloo, British museums acquired a huge collection of Egyptian artifacts that Napoleon's army plundered earlier. Barrell notes that "The antiquities collected by the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt—hitherto regarded as too inhospitable a country for regular collectors—were confiscated by the British in 1801 and brought to England in 1802, to form the real basis of the collection of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum"(7). The imitation of French imperialism inherent in British museum displays parallels the way in which the novel understands the spread of mass media through the imitation of exotic motifs.

Like *Confessions* and *Bleak House*, *Villette* relies on descriptions of a crowd to suggest that the self-sustaining popularity of exotic images is understandable through narrative motifs of contagion. As the opium episode in *Villette* progresses to the first of many De Quincey-like crowd descriptions, we also note the way this particular description resonates with the crowds that Inspector Bucket and Snagsby witness in the disease-ridden East-end neighborhoods of *Bleak House*:

While looking up at the image of a white ibis, fixed on a column—while fathoming the deep, torch-lit perspective of an avenue, at the close of which was couched a sphinx—I lost sight of the party which, from the middle of the great square, I had followed—or, rather, they vanished like a group of apparitions. On this whole scene was impressed a dream-like character; every shape was wavering, every movement floating, every voice echo-like—half-mocking, half-uncertain. (500-1)

The mocking, echoing, dream-like quality "impressed" over this scene invokes the manner in which orientalism in *Confessions* and *Bleak House* is also an infection spread by exposure to crowds on the streets. The automaticity in the spread of infection parallels

the model that explains collective habits as a collective addiction. And here the narrative also resurrects the problematic Lucy encountered earlier when she confesses seeing a nun to Graham. Knowing that Lucy's perception is influenced by an opiate that mechanically reproduces oriental motifs and imagery, the reader is forced to question Lucy's descriptions of the festival.

The set up in which Lucy's intoxicated mind encounters elements of popular entertainment forces her into a series of withdrawals that accumulate and undo the self-controlling narrative power she acquired in the wake of Vashti's performance. As "the swaying tide swept this way, and then it fell back," Lucy "followed its retreat" (502). After being swept forward, Lucy withdraws to the periphery: "Having neither wish nor power to force my way through a mass so close-packed, my station was on the farthest confines, where, indeed, I might hear, but could see little" (502). Lucy's position as part of the crowd yet not fully a participant in the event re-enacts the novel's favorite triadic motion as the withdrawal from a consumer of images to the voice of authority over among images. When other characters known to Lucy try to get near to verify their suspicions about her identity, she withdraws from their gaze, and refuses to place herself "among friends." A chapter break, however, seems to decrease her self-control as though she is beginning to withdraw from herself: "I clung to whatever would distract thought" (505). And "Straying at random, obeying the push of every chance elbow," Lucy unintentionally and automatically moves toward Madame Beck's party. Lucy's distracted state is the opposite of the inward concentration of the opium-dream reverie described in Brontë's *Roe Head* journal. And yet in both instances, opium stands for an external force shaping her internal perception.

Eavesdropping on this group resurrects the nun motif and aligns it with the opiate's capacity to stimulate repetition. Lucy's movement from the dense crowd to more scattered groups of individuals instigates the illusion of re-collecting herself at the precise moment she comes face-to-face with the individual behind the opium now usurping her self-control: "I was brought to a quarter where trees planted in clusters, or towering singly, broke up somewhat the dense packing of the crowd, and gave it a more scattered character" and stumbled on "Madam Walravens, Madame Beck, Pere Silas—the whole conjuration, the secret junta" (506). Lucy has come to see this threesome as a "secret junta" because it is this little group that forced M. Paul's fiancée, Justine Marie, to become a nun and is now similarly trying to separate Lucy from M. Paul by forcing him to go take care of their plantation in Guadeloupe. Because their wealth depends on slave ownership, there is more at stake in Lucy's misperception of this moment than her relationship with M. Paul. If Lucy cannot withdraw from these opium perceptions, her authority to reject the images of women in the museum (including the black slave in mourning) as ideals according to which to live one's life will disappear.

When Lucy overhears them discussing M. Paul's recent absence in connection with someone named "Justine Marie" she cannot stop the opium from reproducing the entire nun mythology she has come to automatically associate with the Justine Marie who was Paul's fiancée. The logic of this particular opium-authored version of the myth dictates that if the Justine Marie who was "buried," like the nun in the school courtyard, has somehow returned to M. Paul, then it must be because Lucy has taken her place as the one who is buried and ghostly. The images constituting the narrative of the nun mythology become infected with one another with the supernatural motifs of popular

fiction in Lucy's imagination. Her authority to name the order of the real consequently sinks to a new low point. The narrative goes out of its way to point this out when the "Justine Marie" in question appears with M. Paul, and Lucy is surprised to observe that this Justine is of too small a stature to have been the ghostly nun she has seen at Madame Beck's school.

The novel's later revelation of the harmless flesh and blood reality behind this new Justine Marie, along with the juvenile explanation behind the school-garret nun, repeats the moment of withdrawal from popular images to which the novel is addicted. The novel achieves its most overt and final withdrawal from romance and the supernatural in its conclusion where the narrative denies the kind of marital-reunion image that proved so popular at the end of *Jane Eyre*. Instead of gratifying the reader with a reunion of M. Paul and Lucy like that of Jane and Rochester, the ending of this novel implies that M. Paul dies in a shipwreck on his return voyage.

On the other hand, this final withdrawal restores Lucy's authority to name the order of the real. This can include her negative portrait of the wealth associated with slave ownership, particularly that of Madame Walravens. Had the novel ended with M. Paul's return, the scripts associated with romantic love would have made it difficult for the novel to promote its choice of realism over popular fiction as the moral high ground that constitutes the cultural value of literature that deliberately resists the popular images promoted by the spread of mass media.

From the beginning, however, the novel frames this withdrawal from popular romance as a movement toward death. Miss Marchmont's story of her fiancé falling off his horse and dying one Christmas Eve revises the melodramatic scene in *Jane Eyre*

where Rochester falls from his horse and Jane introduces herself to him as his rescuer. It is as if this story warns the reader that Lucy's story will make a similar shift away from such unrealistic depictions. Just as in Marchmont's story, the waiting bride Lucy listens to the "long-lamenting East wind" known to signal death associated with "Epidemic diseases" through "the legend of the Banshee" the night of her beloved's expected return (42-3). Not only does the Banshee Legend connect Marchmont's story to Lucy's, but it also connects the transition of Brontë's career as a writer from popular romance to realism with the thematic transition from addiction to contagion that connects *Villette* and *Bleak House*. Dickens also uses this Banshee figure at the scene of Nemo's deathbed to suggest how Nemo's addiction to opium is about to spread throughout the novel as a contagion of opium-writing. In the context of *Villette*'s three-volume embodiment of resistance to the mass media friendly serial novel, we find a different significance in the movement from addiction to contagion. Brontë's novel suggests that the authority of literature to create the order of the real comes from its power to displace popular images, even if the condition for sustaining that authority is the reproduction of more popular images. In the next chapter I examine the way Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* reconnects the motif reproduction to popular fiction in the wake of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.

CHAPTER 4

Exile and Evolution:

Cultural Inheritance in *The Moonstone*

A critical shift from the images of contagion and correspondence we explored in earlier chapters occurs in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*. Its exotic figures transition from contagion and correspondence to images of cultural inheritance influenced by the discourse of evolution. This is partly due to the fact that the motifs of opium and India in *The Moonstone* expand to show how an exoticized mass media in popular fiction formulates the reproduction of mass culture. Between the 1853 publication of *Bleak House* and *Villette*, and the 1868 publication of *The Moonstone*, Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) made evolutionary discourse a critical component of the popular imagination. When we survey the criticism of *The Moonstone*, we find more focus on how empire and race in the novel are connected to the Indian Mutiny of 1857 than on the possibility that the novel's exoticism, including these connections, is part of a larger paradigm about the role of popular writing in the evolution of culture. In this chapter I will show how the novel enacts a theory of cultural reproduction based on the images of an exoticized mass media that it inherits from the preceding generation of popular writing. *The Moonstone* is both an archive of its own inherited cultural medium and a diagnosis of mass media as the vehicle of cultural reproduction.

Collins's serial novels were produced in an environment particularly attuned to the way mechanical reproduction intensified competition not only among different periodicals and print formats, but between individual writers and the clock. Contributors to Dickens's *All the Year Round* knew that the more their writing increased the weekly sales of the miscellany, the better their chances were of sustaining their careers. The single greatest determinant of sales was the popularity of the featured serial novel which created tremendous pressure on the serial's author to write quickly and to write well. Sutherland regards Dickens's magazine as "the epitome of the furnace-like condition in which much of the best Victorian fiction was created" (172):

It raised to the highest pitch what Thackeray called the 'Life & Death' struggle with the unwritten number. At the same time it was, when handled properly, a superb instrument for fiction. No writer in *All the Year Round* could forget for a moment the mechanics of publication. The pace, narrowness of need for 'incessant condensation' cut away all fat; the responsiveness of sales to any slackening tension kept the novelist nervous and alert. Weekly intervals meant that a reader came to every installment primed, which was not the case with monthly serialization where the plot had that much longer to fade in the memory. (172-173)

From Thackeray's overt "life and death struggle," to Sutherland's more subtle description of the novelist "kept nervous and alert," these descriptions of weekly serial production share a keen sensitivity to parallel concepts between cultural and biological evolution: survival depends entirely on reproducibility. The popularity of the serial novel, the periodical's profitability, and the author's reputation, all depend on whether or not the writing reproduces the novel's popular appeal for readers each week.

The more readers a weekly serial could claim, the more volume editions could be expected after the serial run had finished. When Sutherland uses the sales figures for *The Woman in White* to demonstrate the increasing scale of novel production, we glimpse a

cross-section of how the novel evolved in a symbiotic relationship with techniques for mechanically reproducing photographic as well as print media:

After the journal serialization Collins sold the first three-volume edition of 1,000 on the day of publication and 350 copies of the second edition within five days. Seven editions went in six months. This pace kept up until the end of the year. Six months later in April 1861 10,000 cheap copies at 6s. were in production with plans for 40,000 to follow. Collins positively tired of sitting for photographs for new edition frontispiece portraits, so many were there. All this represented a quite different scale of operation from what had been achieved earlier. (42)

The sheer variety of print formats made it possible for the novel to reach a new scale of reproduction. The increasing cheapness of reproducing photographic images helps to align the author-image with the novel's new range of cultural influence. Photography's ability to merge an image of the author with the format of the novel presents yet another case where the desire to distinguish clearly between mechanic and organic form meets frustration.

Collins famously acknowledged that the idea of centering his novel's plot on a Hindoo diamond is partly inspired by the Koh-i-Noor diamond on display at the Great Exhibition in 1851. This alone reveals one way in which the novel inherits the Great Exhibition as a historical shift in exhibition media; the controversial placement of photography at the exhibition in the section on industry and technology instead of among the arts is typical of the way mechanical reproducibility began to register this change in aesthetic discourse. We might say that as a collection of first-person narratives, the novel's composition is like both a multi-faceted cut stone and a series of flat, daguerreotype-type, portraits. This flat quality in the characters compares to the flaw at the center of the novel's namesake. While critics admire the precision of Collins's plot, they often link its tightly crafted mystery to the flat psychology of most of the characters.

It may not be by accident, however, that the novel denies the reader the kind of intimate relationship with Rachel—or even Franklin—that was so much a part of the reader’s enthusiastic reception of *The Woman in White*. In resembling cut facets or photographic portraits, the characters foreground the novel’s interest in re-assessing the mechanical dimensions of mass media. Such an interest in mechanical form would also explain why opium plays such an important role since exoticism in general, and opium in particular, have come to stand in for precisely the automatic, inhuman character of mechanical reproduction after De Quincey.

When Franklin Blake steals the diamond under the influence of opium, it appears to ruin his chances of marriage with Rachel. Only through the assistance of the opium-addicted Ezra Jennings is this situation resolved so that the marriage between Rachel and Franklin comes to pass. But why does it matter if Rachel marries Franklin? The novel suggests that Rachel should marry her cousin Franklin, and not his rival, the business man Godfrey Ablewhite, for reasons largely tied to cultural inheritance. Rachel embodies an idea of modern femininity; her ideal mate is someone who will accept her self-assertiveness without “bringing down” her social status—a position dependant on safeguarding her reputation. Franklin’s modern cosmopolitanism appears an ideal fit until Rachel witnesses him entering her private rooms and stealing the diamond. Franklin will only regain Rachel’s favor after Ezra Jennings proves to a party of witnesses how Franklin could have stolen the diamond under the automatic influence of an agency other than his own.

The real dramatic interest of the novel therefore lies in uncovering the relationship between opium and the missing diamond. This in turn shows that the question of

marriage between the protagonists stands in for mass media's role in the reproduction of culture. If the motifs used to enact the novel's mechanically inherited media (opium and exotic diamond) threaten the marriage of Franklin and Rachel, they are also shown to threaten the continued production of the cultural signifiers used to produce middle class political power. If a related motif (a mixed-race opium addict) is able to neutralize the threat, it shows that mass media's mechanical reproducibility both undermines and promotes middle class interests in a culture constituted by heterogeneous interests of the middle classes.

As the plot works to undo, and then restore, the marriage prospects of Franklin and Rachel, it elaborates on the dynamics through which writers and readers become part of mass media and the reproduction of culture. Readers and especially writers in *The Moonstone* discover that the price of steering the direction of culture one moment is to be completely exiled from all cultural power the next. At the end of this chapter, I discuss the exile of Ezra Jennings and the Brahmin priests in particular as figures for the sacrifices required to protect middle class culture from fracturing under the pressures of its own diversity as it reproduces.

Correspondence as Inheritance

The first sentence of the novel exoticizes both the origins of the story and the novel's print medium: "I address these lines—written in India—to my relatives in England" (11). Years before the main action of the novel that commences in 1848, the writer in India composes "these lines" to record his eyewitness account of how his cousin, Colonel Herncastle, murdered and stole the Moonstone during "The Storming of

Seringapatam” in 1799. This first line of the novel also exoticizes the “the relatives in England” through the overlapping motifs of correspondence and inheritance. The relatives in England inherit not only the lines written like a letter in India through the family archive, but also the character traits associated with the familial bloodline that produces Colonel Herncastle’s uncivilized behavior. The dark, immoral character of Colonel Herncastle occurs in the context of the family’s broader cultural inheritance—British India, the family document, and the rank of his sister Julia Herncastle before and after she became Lady Verinder and acquired the wealth and title of her deceased husband, Sir John Verinder.

The novel makes a point of emphasizing Lady Verinder’s efforts to dissociate herself from her brother, Colonel Herncastle, in every way possible. But the novel also stresses that the signs of the family “temper” that Lady Verinder, her daughter Rachel, and even her nephew Franklin Blake, have all apparently inherited from Lord Herncastle. According to Gabriel Betteredge, the oldest family servant, Lord Herncastle “had the longest tongue and the shortest temper of any man, high or low” (23). And Betteredge, notices how “The family temper appeared in [Franklin’s] face that evening for the first time” as it does repeatedly in the faces of Lady Verinder and Rachel (45, 127).

Descriptions of the family temper overtly conjure evolutionary discourse because they hinge on an inherited trait connected by the family bloodline. At precisely this point at which the family lines are traced for the reader however, Betteredge also mentions that the oldest Herncastle child, Arthur, inherits his father’s estate and title according to the custom of primogeniture.

Neither Arthur nor his household is mentioned again, and he apparently holds no intercourse with the Verinder household whatsoever. This is significant for two reasons. First, it makes way for this upper class household to appear closer to the middle classes. Even though Lady Verinder's husband was a member of the aristocracy, he is dead and his wealth matters more in determining Rachel's fate than her title. Many of the family friends appear to be members of the professional classes rather than landed gentry. All of these factors help to make the narrative environment an ideal space of identification for upwardly mobile novel-readers.⁵⁹ Second, it suggests the possibility that the conflict between the capitalist-protestant work ethic and inherited wealth contributes to cultural decline. Such an idea colors the circumstances under which Colonel Herncastle joins the military force sent to strengthen British domination in India. The pursuit of England's economic interests, particularly in India and China, gave highborn sons something to do just as the crusades had done. Even without knowledge of Disraeli's infamous assertion in *The Tancred* that "the East is a career," this part of the family history references the period of the Crusades by identifying the name of Colonel John Herncastle's older brother as Arthur (5 Said). Herncastle's military career would have been interpreted in the context of careers abroad designed to launch the professional wealth and status of middle class men. Besides the example of Woodcourt's medical career in *Bleak House*, we might think of Thackeray's Joss in *Vanity Fair* (1847-8), Dickens's Walter in *Dombey and Sons* (1844-46) and John Rokesmith in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5), and Collins's Frank Clare in *No Name* (1862-3). Because Herncastle so poorly represents the civilized ideals used to "sell" the righteousness of the British Empire, Collins's novel implies that

the same mass media responsible for the growth of power in the middle classes may also paradoxically contribute to the decline of that power.

When Colonel Herncastle leaves the Moonstone to Rachel on her eighteenth birthday, Lady Verinder takes it for granted that her unsavory brother must be using traditional inheritance laws to provoke some sort of mischief after his death. But at this point in time, the lines written in India are forgotten somewhere in the family archives and it will take more than one professional expert to reveal how the Moonstone undermines Lady Verinder's family, let alone the solution for its restoration. A crucial reason that the problems created by the diamond are difficult to diagnose is that at first they look more like a case of foreign contamination than a case of clashing interests in a web of inheritance and cultural reproduction. Betteredge in particular makes it seem as if having exposed himself to consequences associated with his crimes in India, Herncastle accidentally contracted a foreign vehicle for spreading misfortune on like an infection:

[I]t was a fact that his life had been twice threatened in India; and it was firmly believed that the Moonstone was at the bottom of it. When he came back to England and found himself avoided by everybody, the Moonstone was thought to be at the bottom of it again. The mystery of the Colonel's life got in the Colonel's way, and outlawed him, as you may say among his own people. The men wouldn't let him into their clubs; the women—more than one—whom he wanted to marry, refused him; friends and relations got too near-sighted to see him in the street. (44)

Yet the description of Herncastle's character before committing murder or stealing the Moonstone in the family document written by his cousin reveals that Herncastle's misfortune is as much a consequence of his biologically and socially inherited character as it is a consequence of becoming infected by an Indian curse. And in fact when the cousin explains that Herncastle believes the story of the Moonstone because of his innate

love of romance, the novel suggests that the Indian curse is an expression of a corrupting appetite among British readers for supernatural and sensational entertainment.

Inherited Opium-Writing

Opium plays an underhanded role in creating the path for Colonel Herncastle's stolen diamond to reach Rachel on her eighteenth birthday. We find out that Herncastle was a heavy opium-user in the course of Franklin Blake's explanation of how the diamond came to his father (the husband of Lady Verinder's sister). In order to avoid theft and assassination at the hands of the Brahmin priests who followed the diamond to England, Herncastle trades some family documents desired by Franklin's father in exchange for the diamond's safe-keeping. Franklin Blake's commercially wealthy father wants these papers for a lawsuit that will "turn out the Duke in possession and ... put himself in the Duke's place" by proving the necessary evidence to legalize his own claims through family lines (28). Franklin's father does not believe that the diamond is cursed or hunted by Brahmin priests, let alone that the stone is valuable, because he interprets all such information as the delusion of opium: "The Colonel had been a notorious opium-eater for years past; and, if the only way of getting at the valuable papers he possessed was by accepting a matter of opium as a matter of fact, [my father] was quite willing to take the ridiculous responsibility imposed on him" (48). Opium not only guards Herncastle's plan against suspicion from the Brahmins and Franklin's father, but also begins to suggest how an inheritance of opium-writing accelerates both the production and destruction of middle class power.

Herncastle's use of opium also points directly to the novel's literary line of inheritance. The family papers that Franklin Blake's father desires for his lawsuit are reminiscent of the opium-writing that precipitates *Bleak House* in and through the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit regarding a similar dispute. There is no further mention of opium in *The Moonstone* until Franklin Blake meets Ezra Jennings. Ezra Jennings is a local doctor's assistant, a medical researcher, a man of mixed race, and an opium addict. He requires opium to be able to do his research in much the same way that De Quincey's opium-eater and Dickens's Nemo rely on opium to accomplish their writing intensive-work. Among the objects in Ezra's room, Franklin describes "a large deal table copiously splashed with ink," that recalls the description of the desk in *Bleak House* where Nemo copied law documents by hand (381). Like a court-reporter, Ezra makes shorthand notes of Dr. Candy's ramblings. He then copies his shorthand notes to create a transcript of Dr. Candy's exact words, leaving blanks where his thoughts became grammatically disconnected. Yet another copy of Dr. Candy's words follows, this time filling the blanks with whatever words create the most consistent remarks (374). Presented with this triple-tiered copy process, Franklin makes his own copy of Ezra's final transcript where "Mr. Candy's wanderings appear, copied in black ink" and Ezra's additions appear "in red ink" (387). Finally, in the interest of incorporating the reader into the copying process, Franklin later goes on to "reproduce the result here, in one plain form; the original language and the interpretation of it coming close enough together in these pages to be easily compared and verified" (387). By generating so many copies, Ezra Jennings reproduces Dr. Candy's ramblings as a coherent and persuasive account of how Franklin ingested opium and stole the diamond without remembering.

Here it is worth pausing to note how critics often treat Ezra Jennings as an author-figure, or even more directly as a figure for Collins himself, since Collins famously described taking heavy doses laudanum while dictating *The Moonstone*, and even is supposed to have claimed not to remember writing parts of it. Like Collins, Ezra Jennings takes opium in order to be able to work in spite of an affliction of great bodily pain. He explains to Franklin Blake: “I am, at this moment, exerting my intelligence (such as it is) in your service, under the influence of a dose of laudanum, some ten times larger than the dose Mr. Candy administered to you” (391). Ezra Jennings directs Franklin Blake to “the far-famed *Confessions of an English-Opium Eater*” to further persuade him of the accuracy of the hypothesis (392). In this way, De Quincey’s book supplies a kind of second preface to the novel. Just as the prologue “family paper” supplies the cultural inheritance of the Verinder family’s connection with India and the Moonstone, De Quincey’s *Confessions* supplies the novel’s connection with opium-writing and the reproduction of culture through popular writing.

The literal purpose for citing De Quincey’s book is to persuade Franklin Blake that, taken under the right circumstances, opium enhances rather than diminishes active movement. But as Ezra Jennings highlights De Quincey’s use of opium to supplement encounters with the masses and popular entertainment, we are also reminded how De Quincey uses opium to link writing with exhibition media:

Take the book away with you and read it. At the passages which I have marked, you will find that, when De Quincey had committed what he calls “a debauch of opium,” he either went to the gallery at the Opera to enjoy music, or he wandered about the London markets on Saturday night, and interested himself in observing all the little shifts and bargainings of the poor in providing their Sunday’s dinner. (392)

This passage helps to support Ezra Jennings's hypothesis because it documents opium's pharmacological property of acting as a stimulant as well as a sedative. And De Quincey's use of opium to supplement his lack of an entertainment befitting the upper middle class paradoxically increases (stimulates) and diminishes (slows) his sympathetic reach at the same time. He is interested in the poor, but only at the distance of an outside observer. Opium contrives for him a strange middle cultural territory where he sustains his class identity despite his poverty.

Ezra Jennings's revelation that Dr. Candy doses Franklin without Franklin's knowledge suggests another important thread of literary inheritance. If Ezra Jennings's addiction to opium puts him in line with De Quincey's Opium-eater and Dickens's Nemo, then Franklin Blake's singular, unintended dose of opium puts him in line with Brontë's Lucy. In the preceding chapter, I argue that Brontë's representation of a singular encounter with opium in contrast to more infamous representations of habitual opium use is part of a calculated strategy to explore the possibility of resisting the forces of mass media. In *The Moonstone*, Ezra Jennings's repeated opium-use follows and helps set to right the damage caused by Franklin Blake's single encounter. *The Moonstone* thus appears to argue that fiction should allow mass media's destructive influence to automatically provide the developments that will allow it to survive the vicissitudes of culture.

Secondary Foreign Influences

The night Candy put opium in his drink, Franklin's actions are influenced by his worry about the unknown influence of the foreign diamond and the possibility that the

Brahmin priests might try to retrieve it. But there are other tensions over foreign invasion in the house that night that also contribute to the diamond's power of suggestion. When Franklin first arrives bearing the diamond from London, Betteredge immediately laments the "foreign varnish" of the French, Italian and German education that makes Franklin almost unrecognizable to Betteredge. And even the Brahmins refer to Franklin as "the English gentleman from foreign parts" (31). Betteredge objects as much to the disconnection between the parts Franklin has absorbed as he does to their disconnection from English culture:

Troubling shifts and transformations in Mr. Franklin were due to the effect on him of his foreign training. At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, he had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. As a consequence of this, he had come back with so many different sides to his character, all more or less jarring with each other, that he seemed to pass his life in a state of perpetual contradiction with himself. (55)

The old servant describes Franklin as though he were a badly written serial novel.

Franklin's "foreign colouring" also recalls Ginevra's forthright denial of alliance with any country or culture because her varied foreign education exclusively reinforces the value of exhibition. Franklin's contradicting "sides" echo the heterogeneous characters whose narratives compose *The Moonstone*. Franklin's exposure to Western Europe ultimately acts as a powerful secondary force, urging along the exotic influence of opium and the diamond.

Conversation at the birthday dinner leading up to the exchange that prompts Candy to give Franklin opium showcases the degree to which his foreign education makes *him* foreign to the established bourgeois culture. Betteredge grimly asks the reader: "What do think, for instance, of his discussing the lengths to which a married

woman might let her admiration go for a man who was not her husband, and putting it in his clear-headed witty French way to the maiden aunt of the Vicar of Frizinghall?” (80). Franklin’s openly cavalier attitude toward social conventions originally designed to safeguard primogeniture threaten to undermine his middle class respectability. His attitude lays the groundwork for opium to prompt a violation of the sanctity of his own future marriage. Then Franklin’s problematic notions about relations between men and women shifts to an equally disconcerting take on livestock reproduction. When a Lord begins to talk about “his experience in the breeding of bulls,” Franklin interjects “that experience properly understood, counted for nothing and that the proper way to breed bulls was to look deep into your own mind, evolve out of it the idea of the perfect bull, and produce him” (80). Franklin suggests replacing the organic logic of experience built up over time with the possibility of mechanically imposing an image from the mind onto creatures of flesh and blood.⁶⁰

The notion of plastic images applied to flesh and blood is uncomfortable because it is too close to the way in which the present company has come together. Social mobility puts everyone at the dinner table under pressure to justify his or her social position by reproducing the images traditionally associated with that position. But if anyone can theoretically occupy any position by reproducing the correct appearance, a kind of chaotic chess game is always in progress.⁶¹ Everyone was “nearly as provoking in their different ways as the doctor himself” and “When they ought to have spoken, they didn’t speak; or when they did speak they were perpetually at cross purposes” (79). Instead establishing a unifying principle among them, the party reveals to itself that its constituents lack any a common ground though which to orient their differential

positions. Because it concentrates the company in a single social unit, the birthday dinner also resembles the composition of the diamond: “The flawed Diamond, cut up, would actually fetch more than the Diamond as it now is; for this plain reason—that from four to six perfect brilliants might be cut from it, which would be, collectively, worth more money than the large—but imperfect—single stone” (51). As a collective, the party unexpectedly generates less cultural value than the guests would be expected to produce as individuals.

Betteredge testifies that Franklin’s imitation of positions from non-English cultures is particularly damaging to the group’s cohesion:

When our county member, growing hot, at cheese and salad time, about the spread of democracy in England, burst out as follows: “if we once lose out ancient safeguards, Mr. Blake, I beg to ask you, what have we got left?” –what do say to Mr. Franklin answering, from the Italian point of view: “We have got three things left, sir—Love, Music, and Salad!” He not only terrified the company with such outbreaks as these, but, when the English side of him turned up in due course, he lost his foreign smoothness; and, getting on the subject of the medical profession, said such downright things in ridicule of doctors, that he actually put good-humored little Mr. Candy in a rage. (81)

It is Franklin’s skepticism about the medical profession that provokes Dr. Candy to dose him with opium. As Ezra later explains to Franklin, “The ignorant distrust of opium (in England) is by no means confined to the lower and less cultivated classes. Every doctor in large practice finds himself, every now and then, obliged to deceive his patients, as Mr. Candy deceived you” (386). When Franklin asserts that relying on opium to treat patients is no better than “groping in the dark,” he gestures to the social “blindness” that necessitates the performance or consumption of mechanical reproducibility to establish one’s social position (81). All doctors who prescribe opium for patients in particular are

“in the dark,” or without a clear social position themselves, because opium’s ubiquitous dispensation fails to distinguish between patients of different classes.

The Antidote: Sympathetic Exile

Between Franklin’s efforts to find out for himself what happened to him on the night of Rachel’s birthday, and Ezra Jennings’s discovery of what did happen, an interaction between Franklin and Dr. Candy further exposes the way mass culture and popular writing work together to increase distraction. In the hope of discovering clues about the night of the Moonstone’s disappearance, Franklin talks to Dr. Candy. Things do not go well, however, since Dr. Candy’s memory remains in a deteriorated condition as a result of the fever he contracted on his way home that same night.⁶² Franklin interprets Candy’s faulty memory specifically as a failure to concentrate: “The one thing clearly visible was that I had failed, after the first two or three words, in fixing his attention. The only chance of recalling him to himself appeared to lie in changing the subject so I tried a new topic immediately” (366). Franklin finds himself in the odd position of trying to turn Candy’s attention toward the diamond by moving away from the subjects most obviously related to it—that is, by distracting him. This in fact duplicates Candy’s strategy for winning Franklin’s belief in the scientific legitimacy of opium by an underhanded trick. Franklin misses the connection between his own lack of patience and Candy’s inability to concentrate because his cosmopolitan attention span expires:

[Mr. Candy] chattered on, with something of the smooth gossiping fluency of former times. But there were moments, even in the full flow of his talkativeness, when he suddenly hesitated—looked at me for a moment with the vacant inquiry once more in his eyes—controlled himself—and went on again. I submitted patiently to my martyrdom (it is surely nothing less than martyrdom to a man of cosmopolitan sympathies, to absorb in silent resignation the news of a country

town?) until the clock on the chimney-piece told me that my visit had been prolonged beyond half an hour...(368)

Franklin Blake's hyperbolic claim to martyrdom illustrates habits synchronized with the pace of urban mass media. His impatient disregard for the possible connection between Candy's faulty memory and his own lack of memory on the same night reveals how his exposure to mass media has automatically conditioned him to interrupt his own "reading" under the pressure of a distraction like the measure of time.

Later in the novel, Ezra Jennings explains that in a state of distraction, the brain absorbs a great deal more than the mind is conscious of.

There seems to be much ground for the belief that every sensory impression which has once been recognized by the perceptive consciousness, is registered (so to speak) in the brain, and may be reproduced at some subsequent time, although there may be no consciousness of its existence in the mind during the whole intermediate period. (390)

The possibility that the brain automatically registers sensory information, and may reproduce that information in another form without becoming conscious of it, is similar to the perceptual state that Walter Benjamin refers to as distraction. For Benjamin, distraction is a mode of perception omitting connection and continuity from the sensory information absorbed. Misalignment between perception and comprehension fractures our ability to concentrate, not only on what we read but also on what we experience. The greater degree to which we are distracted, the more sensory information impresses itself without being consciously processed. It follows that environments structured by disconnection nurture the propensity of the senses to absorb information in a distracted way.

Franklin Blake is drawn to Ezra Jennings because Jennings's external appearance makes an unconscious impression on Franklin that resonates with his own internal

incongruities. Like Franklin, Ezra Jennings is a product of too many contradicting foreign “sides.” But in contrast to Franklin’s outward varnished smoothness, Ezra Jennings’s appearance is a clash of incongruous features.

It was impossible to dispute Betteredge’s assertion that the appearance of Ezra Jennings, speaking from the popular point of view was against him. His gipsy-complexion, his fleshless cheeks, his gaunt facial bones, his dreamy-eyes, his extraordinary parti-coloured hair, the puzzling contradiction between his face and figure which made him look old and young both together—were all more or less calculated to produce an unfavourable impression of him on a stranger’s mind. (369)

Though Ezra Jennings makes an unfavorable impression on most, the impression is an instantaneous one. Assigning himself “the unpopular point of view” of being “for” Ezra Jennings, Franklin befriends the strange-looking doctor’s assistant to distinguish his education, class and urbanity from those around him. But he also befriends him because in a single instant, Ezra’s uncanny appearance mesmerizes Franklin with a vague sense of connection to his own reproductive difficulties.

Ezra Jennings’s physical description is similar to Dickens’s portrayal of Nemo in *Bleak House*, and like Nemo, Ezra is shunned because people interpret the lack of cohesion in his surface features as the presence of something inhuman. Even though Ezra Jennings is devoted to humanitarian interests, and works tirelessly to care for the poorest classes in the neighborhood, he produces an unfavourable impression on them because it is easier to project inhuman characteristics onto the image of an outsider than to recognize in oneself the increasing symptoms of cultural rupture. Franklin does, however, immediately recognize that Ezra Jennings’s outward appearance corresponds with his interior: “it is not to be denied that Ezra Jennings made some inscrutable appeal to my sympathies, which I found impossible to resist” (369). He seems to interpret

Ezra's discomposing appearance as an inside-out version of the "cosmopolitan" mixture that measures the dubious value of his own education: "He had what I may venture to describe as the unsought self-possession, which is a sure sign of good breeding, not in England only, but everywhere else in the civilized world" (370).

Ezra reciprocates Franklin's recognition of a sympathetic link between them by explaining to Franklin the origins of his mixed race background: "I was born and partly brought up in one of our colonies. My father was an Englishman; but my mother—we are straying away from our subject, Mr. Blake; and it is my fault" (371). Franklin is able to concentrate on this limited version of Ezra's story because Ezra's words perfectly match what his face already communicates in the instant of a first-impression:

Connecting the few words about himself which thus reluctantly escaped him, with the melancholy view of life which led him to place the conditions of the story which I had read in his face was, in two particulars at least, the story that it really told. He had suffered as few men suffer; and there was the mixture of some foreign race in his English blood. (371)

Ezra Jennings's exile from the sympathy of most people ultimately provides the antidote to Franklin's impotence. Even though Franklin is not exactly a specimen of manly virility at the best of times, his distracted habits saddle him with a crisis of sympathy. Ezra's overdeveloped and largely un-utilized capacity for sympathy enables him to fill in all the gaps between the perspectives of the different characters involved—from Dr. Candy, to Franklin, to Rachel. Ezra Jennings cries over Rachel's letter of appreciation to him and overwhelmed during his first conversation with Franklin, remarks, "Physiology says, and says truly, that some men are born with female constitutions—and I am one of them!" (373). Sympathy requires patience, or the discipline to concentrate in spite of a distracting environment. It is this concentration that allows one to become absorbed, one

could even say mesmerized, in other points of view as one generally does when reading fiction in seclusion. We clearly see the implications for reading if we compare the careful manner in which Ezra Jennings reads and re-reads the transcripts of Dr. Candy's ramblings to the manner in which Franklin Blake leaves off reading the letter left for him by the servant Rosanna Spearman even though he knows it explains how she came to preserve his most important clue.

Ezra Jennings's most obvious predecessor, the mixed race Ozias Midwinter in Collins's novel *Armadale*, has a very similarly empire-influenced parentage, and is actually raised by a gypsy. The significance of this is that even the biological similarity between Collins's two characters of mixed race serves to highlight the cultural lineage of modern mass culture. It traces this figure of sympathetic exile to an earlier phase of the relationship between mechanical reproducibility and imperialism. One of the most striking things about Ozias Midwinter's miserable childhood is the way it resonates with the early years of De Quincey's opium-eater; both seem to survive particularly difficult periods of near starvation through their relationship with books. In this context, Ozias Midwinter and Ezra Jennings are the literary offspring of Frankenstein's exile from humanity. Like Frankenstein, the experience of being treated as something only half-human drives them to connect with a literary world that gives them an unusual capacity for sympathy. Sympathy is then paradoxically denied them above all things because their cultural heterogeneity is too extreme for the compass of common perspectives.

Reproducibility as Agency

After a few unexpected sightings, Ezra's black and white hair imprints itself on Franklin Blake's mind for no obviously apparent reason. The repetition of this image inside and outside Franklin's head eventually claims his "cosmopolitan sympathies" under protest. On his way back to London on the train, Franklin finds himself surprised to realize that he has "seen the man with the piebald hair twice in one day!" (338). Opening a letter from Betteredge, Franklin finds that "the everlasting Ezra Jennings appeared again!" (343). For a while, Franklin appears to be able to will himself to concentrate on something else: "I crumpled up the letter in my pocket, and forgot it the moment after, in the all-absorbing interest of my coming interview with Rachel" (343). But once his conscious thoughts focus on Rachel, his unconscious mind immediately sets about reproducing the impression Ezra, his hair in particular, made on him:

I sat idly drawing likenesses from memory of Mr. Candy's remarkable-looking assistant, on the sheet of paper which I had vowed to dedicate to Betteredge—until it suddenly occurred to me that here was the irrepressible Ezra Jennings getting in my way again! I threw a dozen portraits, at least, of the man with piebald hair (the hair in every case remarkably like), into the waste-paper basket—and then and there, wrote my answer to Betteredge. (361)

Franklin's first reaction is to automatically—that is unconsciously—set to work creating copies of the impression made on his memory (328). When it comes to his conscious attention that he has unsuccessfully forgotten the man's strange appearance, he attempts to act out his intended classification of Ezra Jennings as a throw-away scrap of waste-paper. But the fact that Franklin's effort to reproduce his memory of the events of the birthday dinner is precisely concerned with throw-away details previously overlooked or deemed unimportant ultimately connects Ezra Jennings to the information he needs.

Ezra Jennings first "occurs" to Franklin as a significant repetition at the train station in connection with print media, to words printed in black and white like Ezra's

strange hair: “I happened to glance towards the book-and-newspaper stall. There was Mr. Candy’s remarkable-looking assistant again, speaking to the keeper of the stall! Our eyes met at the same moment. Ezra Jennings took his hat off to me. I returned the salute, and got into a carriage just as the train started” (337). The train station brackets Ezra Jennings’s existence in the lives of the other characters. As Rachel and Franklin prepare to return to London after resolving the theft of the diamond, they say goodbye to him at the same train station. Franklin correctly senses that this is the last time they will see Ezra: “There was every prospect of our meeting again in a few months—and yet there was something very sad in seeing our best and dearest friend left standing alone on the platform, as the train moved out of the station” (432). Ezra Jennings begins and ends on the train platform, next to the book-and-newspaper stall, as if marking the newspapers and popular fiction sold here as a privileged vehicle for cultural reproduction. At the same time, using the train station to frame Ezra Jennings’s existence in Franklin’s life acknowledges rail technology as the critical cultural framework for the novel’s literary inheritance.

The development of train travel and the train station opened a vast new market for printed material, and in doing so, revealed mass print as a part of the environmental support for advances in science and technology. John Sutherland touches on this when he explains that the mid-century enthusiasm for progress and novelty “was not simply the outcome of steam presses and machine-made paper” but also “the centre of a confluence of factors transforming English life in what *The Times* called ‘our marvelous Railway era’” (Novelists and Publishers 66-67). From 1848 on, the steam-locomotive provided an image of power, of forward movement and, from a certain perspective, connectivity.

Steam-rail technology also offers a powerful image for the justification of British imperial rule. A nation capable of so much raw connectivity within its own boundaries might be seen as a justification for ruling over colonies around the globe. But the train station is also an image of violent disconnection. The possibility of rapidly moving people and things from one place to another enabled individuals to break off a relationship with a place more completely than before—to displace one environment with another.⁶³ The platform of the train station was itself a new cultural environment where the chaotic proximity of people from different classes further undermined traditional class distinctions. In short, train travel continuously reproduced and reinforced the fractured concentration symptomatic of reading serial fiction and other periodical print.

Impure Media and the Yellowback Edition

If Brontë could rely on volume format to add cultural heft to her novels, Collins relied more often on rhetoric, since *All the Year Round* was much closer in price and physical appearance to the penny journal than its closest competitor. The *Cornhill* justified its higher price to readers partly by including illustrations in its more expensive format that visually identified it as more expensive. Like a penny journal, the cost of Dickens's miscellany was two pennies and its text was printed on cheap paper without any illustrations. Dickens used a private letter to Collins as an opportunity to reinforce the superior content of Collin's fiction compared to other cheap fiction, as though fulfilling an obligation to compensate for the fact that Collins's published writing was so similar to hack writing in other ways.

In an 1862 letter, in reference to the second volume of *No Name*, Dickens wrote, “It is as far before and beyond *The Woman in White* as that was beyond the wretched common level of fiction-writing. There are some touches in the Captain which no one but a born (and cultivated) writer could get near—could draw within hail of” (Dickens-Collins Letters, 112). Dickens describes the fiction of his protégé as if verifying the pedigree of a carefully cultivated bloodline, backing Collins’s writing with the assertion that Collins himself has inherited what it takes to be a great writer both biologically and culturally. So even though Dickens and Collins are deeply invested in the serial as a medium for fiction, their concern with differentiating their novels from “the wretched common level of fiction-writing” turns out to be as much a factor for them as it was for Brontë a few decades earlier. Much as Brontë leverages the cultural legitimacy of her volume novels against the democratizing power of the serial novel, a few decades later Collins tries to employ a similar strategy in his competition with newspaper fiction and penny journals by refusing to publish yellowback editions of his novel.

The yellowback novel reveals the degree to which Collins was conflicted about adapting the publication format of his novels to the expanding railway fiction market. This mid-price range publication format emerged in railway stalls to impinge on the territory already contested between the three-volume novel circulated by Mudie’s lending library and monthly and weekly serial publications. Graham Law explains:

Collins was never entirely comfortable with the most obvious solution to the Mudie monopoly—to sell cheap books to the mass of the population rather than loan luxury editions to the select few. If he always disliked the sumptuous library edition, he also became suspicious of the glossy yellowback. This was aimed principally at the railway market and sold typically at two shilling, not a small sum, but the cheapest format in which fiction was issued until the gaudy sixpenny paperback appeared shortly before his death. Collins believed that Sampson Low had damaged his long-term interests by flooding the market with yellowback

copies of *The Woman in White* in 1865, and thereafter insisted on a clause in his publishing agreements significantly delaying issues in railway format. Collins remained fondest throughout of the solid cloth-bound reprint, but his constant switching of publishers effectively prevented the creation of a uniform edition until late in his career. Such editions, it should be remembered, encouraged repeat purchases and customer loyalty in a similar way to serial publication. (“The Professional Writer and the Literary Marketplace” Cambridge 103)

Instead of embracing the yellowback as a market advantage, Collins regarded it as having a degrading effect on the literary distinction he sought to cultivate. The possibility of multiple formats for republishing ruptured the appearance of continuity between its market value and cultural value. Yellowback publication usurps the reproduction and marketing strategy of *The Woman in White* much as the yellow diamond usurps control of middle class courtship and reproduction in *The Moonstone*.

Collins’s believed that yellowback reproductions of his novel damaged the value of his literary legacy by surrendering to the power of a commodity designed to “call out” to train passengers. But an interesting pattern of contradiction emerges in that the degrading associations with yellowback novels in Collin’s fiction are also integral to the sensational appeal of their content. In *Armadale* (1864), an inquiry after Lydia Guilt’s reference leads Allen and his lawyer to knock on the door of a suspicious looking building: “A lean and yellow young woman, with a tattered French novel in her hand, opened it” (409). Instead of vouching for Lydia Guilt’s character, the appearance of the woman at the door confirms that Guilt’s past is shadowed by people and businesses generally excluded from association with the respectable classes. The importance of this example is also to show that when “yellowness” is projected directly onto the reader as a sign of print media’s corrupting social influence, the associated “French novel” becomes

available on its own as another way to refer to any sensational and potentially corrupting novel like those typically published as yellowbacks and sold in the railway station.

In *The Moonstone*, the color yellow alone signifies the spread of degradation when Rachel wears a yellow dress as she departs from her home in anger and shame after the theft of the diamond (shame for having trusted Franklin when he seems to have violated that trust). The strategic emphasis on the color yellow suggests that the influence of the diamond is just as bad as the influence of the yellowback. Later, a reference to French novels turns up in the context of Franklin's objectionable European habits of fashionable disarray. When Franklin and Ezra Jennings order Betteredge to restore everything in the house to its condition the night of the birthday dinner, Betteredge wants to know "who is responsible for keeping it in a perpetual state of litter, no matter how often it may be set right—his trousers here, his towels there, and his French novels everywhere" (405). For Betteredge, the connection between Franklin's unfortunate "foreign parts" and the influence of French novels is obvious. While Ezra Jennings holds nothing like Betteredge's prejudice against foreign cultures in general, his attitude about novels on this occasion proves surprisingly resonant with Betteredge's dogged promotion *Robinson Crusoe's* classic literary status. Ezra Jennings takes special care that Franklin Blake's French novels are all replaced by works of "Standard Literature" trusted for their "composing influence" before he attempts to reproduce Franklin's actions the night he stole the diamond (418). His choices include

The Guardian; the Tatler; Richardson's Pamela; Mackenzie's Man of Feeling; Roscoe's Lorenzo de' Medici; and Roberson's Charles the Fifth—all classical works; all (of course) immeasurably superior to anything produced in later times; and all (from my present point of view) possessing the one great merit of enchaining nobody's interest, and exciting nobody's brain. (418)

Even though Ezra Jennings maintains that these “classics” are all “superior” to contemporary works of literature, he banks on the fact that none of them will be the least bit exciting to read. He recognizes that books able to “enchain” the reader’s interest have a narcotic effect that would contaminate Franklin’s carefully measured dose of opium. Ezra Jennings also implies that readers would have been attracted to French novels for the same reasons they would have read *The Moonstone*. This passage thus plays with the idea that *Man of Feeling* or *Pamela* were considered narcotic enough when first published; by emphasizing the rapid shifts in popular taste, we find something in this passage like a hopeful prediction that if *The Moonstone* ceases to excite the brains of readers, it will gain a proportional reputation for cultural dignity.

Rymer’s essay on popular taste in fiction anticipates Ezra Jennings in its observation that “The principal singularity about the whole subject, consists in the rapidity with which the bulk of the nation has at different times altered its taste. The arbitrary changes of fashion garments are mild and gradual in comparison with the sudden popular freaks with regard to popular writing” (171). Rymer also attributes the increasing drug-like quality of modern popular fiction to an increasing disconnection between the content of novels and the experience of readers: “The fashionable novel of the present day comes nearest to the old style of any, only the modern are more narcotic than the ancient, because we read with greater complacency a flimsy record of vices and punctilios of another age than of our own” (171). In this sense, we might understand the act of replacing Franklin Blake’s “French novels” as the effort to guard against the possibility that “a flimsy record of vices and punctilios of another age” might

prompt Franklin to reproduce any act of “low behavior” he may have committed since stealing the Moonstone.

Signs of Class: Born and Bred to the Value of Organic Form

The Moonstone approaches class through more direct channels than the literary cultural status of the yellowback alone would suggest. Sergeant Cuff is a reader of class in much the same way Ezra Jennings is a reader of distraction. Cuff uncovers the full extent of Godfrey Ablewhite’s character after investigating the possessions of Godfrey’s mistress, including “jewels which are worthy to take rank” with “the rarest flowers” and “carriages and horses which have (deservedly) produced a sensation in Park, among persons well qualified to judge of the build of the one and the breed of the others” (452). Cuff’s detective expertise lies in knowing how the “familiar objects of London” are “bred” and “built” to cultivate a higher social rank than one was born to inherit (452-3). Cuff’s detection of an overly contrived display of wealth uncovers a “cheap” and “mean” character underneath Godfrey’s surface appearance of manly social consciousness.

Betteredge’s argument for believing that Rachel will choose to marry Godfrey Ablewhite over Franklin Blake is that before Franklin arrives with the diamond, Rachel keeps Godfrey’s photograph on her dressing table. This suggests that Godfrey was already relying on the medium of the photograph as a “cheap” strategy for gaining intimate access to Rachel. When Franklin’s door-painting project distracts Rachel from everything else including Godfrey, it shows that competition for Rachel will unfold through different modalities of mechanical reproducibility. Since Godfrey has squandered his fortune on a mistress, and lives a life of hypocrisy, the possibility of

marrying Godfrey poses a potential social disaster for Rachel. The fact that Rachel's sexual attraction to Franklin saves her from Godfrey suggests that she, like Cuff, has a "bred," if not "born," ability to distinguish between Godfrey's mechanical relationship to modern culture and Franklin's organic one. Cuff's personal opinion that "a rose [is] much better worth looking at than a diamond" suggests that his ability to distinguish between organically and mechanically made forms in the context of class builds the novel's case for being both popular and respectable (179).

The novel elaborates Cuff's apparently instinctive capacity to distinguish between mechanical copies and organic reproductions of social status through the motif of his green thumb. He argues passionately against the gardener's belief that the proper way to bud a moss rose is to graft a cutting onto another rose species, the dog-rose. The distinction between the two methods is that allowing the white moss rose to bud itself is a more organic approach than the mechanical imposition involved in grafting. When Franklin Blake wants to contact Cuff about the smear of paint he finds on his night-shirt, Betteredge reports that Cuff is retired and "has grown the white moss rose, without budding it on the dog-rose first. And Mr. Begbie the gardener is to go to Dorking, and own that the Sergeant has beaten him at last" (304). This thread of distracting information is tied to Cuff's ability to correctly interpret the clues related to the smeared paint on Rachel's door. Cuff knows that for the same reason the moss rose buds with more success when allowed to develop out of its own plant structure, the mystery of the diamond's disappearance will come to light eventually when the owner of an article of clothing smeared by the paint from Rachel's door emerges.

When Rachel volunteers the doorway of her boudoir as a trial surface for the decorative advantages of Franklin Blake's Italian paint preparation, we learn that the "vehicle" remains wet for 12 hours. This keeps the painted surface wet and movable much longer than it would be with ordinary paint. Presumably the extended wetness of the paint permits greater manipulation and alteration as the work progresses; perhaps it also facilitates the initial application. In print, serial publication similarly allows narrative to remain fluid and dynamic for a longer period of time—to remain alive to the influence of reader reception. But it is very unclear how this feature improves the door-painting project since they use stencils to apply the paint in pre-cut patterns. The way in which the stencil limits the application of paint, and limits the advantage of its drying-time, corresponds with the way in which the compositional form of the novel limits the influence of readers on an author, even the case of *The Moontsone's* special vehicle: the weekly serial.

In contrast to the way the Franklin Blake, Rachel and the professional detective respond to the painted door, Betteredge's servant class seems to make him susceptible to the designs as a mesmeric influence over his mind. Betteredge complains that Franklin's and Rachel's painted "griffins, cupids, and so on [were] ... so entangled in flowers and devices, and so topsy-turvy in their actions and attitudes, that you felt them unpleasantly in your head for hours after you had done with the pleasure of looking at them" (72-1). His description of his impression of the painted door anticipates Miss Clack's description of an "Oriental manuscript, richly illuminated with Indian figures and devices" (205). And we hear about another similar impression that the shivering sands, described as a writhing surface, make on the servant girl Rosanna: "I think the place has laid a spell on

me I dream of it night after night; I think of it when I sit stitching at my work” (38). The shivering sands and the painted door seem to leave an impression on members of the servant class that is similar to the impression Ezra Jennings leaves on Franklin Blake. The brain, it appears, automatically tends to reproduce impressions connected with certain associations in the mind. What these impressions are connected to, however, and the nature of one’s interpretation of that connection, appears determined by a class perspective. *The Moonstone* thus implies that its own accurately portrayed connections between a class perspective and a character’s interpretation of a particular medium is the organic form at its center that makes it culturally superior to its rivals. From this, the novel claims its authority to combine mass media and class perspective in its reproduction of the culture.

Zone of Contact: Exhibitions and Experiments

The Brahmin priests and the diamond illustrate the power of mass media forms like Collins’s novel to make magic appear real. As Franklin Blake remarks, “Nothing in this world ... is probable unless it appeals to our own trumpery experience; and we only believe in a romance when we see it in a newspaper” (49). As I suggest in the preceding section, Collins’s novel shows an uncanny awareness of mass media’s increasing power to classify romance and reality and to differentiate between the believable and unbelievable in ways that determine the direction of cultural reproduction. Entertainment from dioramas and stage scenery, to ethnographic re-enactments at world fairs and exhibitions, depended on science and technology to create illusions of magical reproduction, or at least to sustain a photographically real illusion. Like so many later

Sherlock Holmes stories, the suspenseful urgency of Collins's mystery is linked to an ambivalent willing suspension of disbelief in the readers. The plot of *The Moonstone* heightens its own suspenseful and sensational effects through the techniques common to exhibitionary entertainment and scientific experiments. We see this particularly well in the mesmeric rituals of the Brahmin priests and the experimental reproduction of Franklin's actions under the influence of opium.

In the company of another servant, the housemaid Penelope spies on the Brahmin priests loitering in the neighborhood of the Verinder home disguised as Indian jugglers. As the girls watch, the Indians appear to use magic to locate the diamond. Their ceremonial spell involves a "little English boy" picked up from the streets of London where the Indians found him living as a homeless vagrant:

The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that, the Indian took a bottle from his bosom, and poured out of it some black stuff, like ink, into the palm of the boy's hand. The Indian—first touching the boy's head and making signs over it in the air—then said, 'Look.' The boy became quite stiff, and stood like a statue looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand. (31).

Mesmerized or hypnotized, the boy is able to accurately answer their questions about the whereabouts of the diamond. The appearance of "ink in the hollow of his hand" suggests the influence not only of writing in general, but specifically of opium-writing and its inherited depictions of automatic reproducibility and mass media.

Later in the novel, the Orientalist Murthwaite explains his interpretation of the Brahmin's apparent use of magic on this occasion. He suggests that both the ink-like substance and the English boy are more or less props in a conjuring trick. But oddly, Murthwaite insists that the illusion of their magic is for the benefit of the Brahmins

themselves; and since there is no evidence that Indians knew they were being observed, there is no reason to doubt him.

The clairvoyance in this case is simply a development of the romantic side of the Indian character. It would be a refreshment and an encouragement to those men—quite inconceivable, I grant you, to the English mind—to surround their wearisome and perilous errand in this country with a certain halo of the marvelous and the supernatural. Their boy is unquestionably a sensitive subject to the mesmeric influence—and, under that influence, he has no doubt reflected what was already in the mind of the person mesmerizing him. (290-91)

According to Murthwaite, the boy's "magical" answers only reflect his ability to automatically reproduce facts that he perceives the Brahmins already suspect to be true. Traveling in a land foreign to their own culture, the Indians are analogous to the English characters navigating a British culture transformed by mass media. The Brahmin's desire for the refreshment and stimulation of "the marvelous and the supernatural" describes the English appetite for the "romance" of "cheap" fiction. Murthwaite continues his scientifically minded explanation:

I have tested the theory of clairvoyance—and I have never found the manifestations get beyond that point. The Indians don't investigate the matter in this way; the Indians look upon their boy as a Seer of things invisible to their eyes—and, I repeat, in that marvel they find the source of a new interest in the purpose that unites them. I only notice this as offering a curious view of human character, which must be quite new to you. We have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or with anything else that hard of belief to a practical man, in the inquiry that we are now pursuing. My object in following the Indian plot, step by step, is to trace results back, by rational means, to natural causes. (290-291)

Murthwaite's aggressive denials of any correspondence between the rational "English mind" and the romantic "Indian character" have remarkable explanatory power. The necessity of projecting the developments of mass culture onto foreign characters is a testimony to the strength of British commitment to science, presumably founded on reason, as the means of becoming the most dominant culture. But as the solution to the

novel's mystery demonstrates, to trace the Indian plot "by rational means, to natural causes" is to trace "the development of the romantic side" of the English "character" as mass culture's influence on shaping the direction of science and technology.

Ezra's opium experiment reproduces many of the zones of contact between science and entertainment that come to bear on the interpretation of the Brahmin's alleged powers of clairvoyance. When Franklin wants to know why they can't simply present Ezra Jennings's transcripts of Mr. Candy's "confession" as scientific proof of Franklin's innocence, Ezra remarks that "In the first place, those notes have been taken under circumstances entirely out of the experience of the mass of mankind" (388). As someone who once asserted that "Nothing in this world ... is probable unless it appeals to our own trumpery experience; and we only believe in a romance when we see it in a newspaper," Franklin accepts the validity of Ezra Jennings's assessment (49). The solution is to re-present the scientific logic behind Ezra Jennings's diagnosis as an experiment that will entertain the witnesses. Through an entertaining medium, the logic of the experiment will automatically reproduce itself as the logic of their experience.

Mr. Bruff, the family lawyer, participates in "the scene of, what he will venture to call, the proposed exhibition" only under protest (412). His elevated skepticism of science as anything other than an attempt to put on an entertaining farce positions his class perspective as above Mrs. Merridew's belief that all scientific experiments entail no more and no less than an explosion, and below Ezra Jennings's understanding that the utility of science is limited by social acceptance. In his 1842 article on popular writing, Rymer would "say to a young author who pants for 'popularity,' 'if you sicken at pointless dialogue and silly adventures, do a little of the haunted castle and midnight

murder business, and you will attain your object. Never mind the ridicule; the ridicule of a fastidious minority” (173). The trouble is that if, as in the case of Ezra Jennings’s, the “novel-experiment” is produced by one of the “writers who are themselves some degree removed above the multitude,” it is very unlikely that the ridicule of the fastidious minority can or will be ignored (Rymer 172).

Ezra is therefore careful never to directly contradict Bruff’s view of the proposed experiment as “mischievous—for it excited hopes that might never be realized” (402). And Ezra understands that from such a perspective, “it looked like a piece of trickery, akin to the trickery of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and the like” (402). Instead, he builds on the idea of a sensational display implied in the word “exhibition” over a period of several days while Franklin quits smoking and re-enacts the timeline of his activities the previous summer leading up to the theft of the diamond:

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. (389)

While Betteredge and Bruff are initially very reluctant to go along, “the strong dramatic interest” in repeating as many details as possible eventually coaxes them to invest their attention in the proceedings (421-2). Betteredge’s daily recourse to the prophetic powers of *Robinson Crusoe*, and his well-established susceptibility to “detective fever,” predicts that he will be easily drawn into the idea of the experiment as a drama once he himself has been assigned a part to play. When Ezra Jennings soothes Betteredge’s suspicions by allowing that he should be the one to measure and administer the dose of laudanum to

Franklin, Betteredge has a kind of epiphany and casts himself in a role similar to that played by the English boy used by the Brahmin's in their conjuring ceremony: "It ends, Mr. Ezra Jennings, in 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 conjuror's boy" (403). From this point forward, it seems probable that the success of the experiment is due to the same principle of suggestion Murthwaite uses to explain how the Brahmin's appear to have mesmeric powers.

The Moonstone is not exactly without a precedent for the idea that experiments and exhibitions are mirror images of cultural reproduction. The public readings that Dickens became famous for were both a kind of experiment and exhibition. Alluding to Dickens's recent use of public readings to stimulate and renew interest his *past* publications, Margaret Oliphant, a frequent contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, suggests that Dickens should use his dramatic readings to present his novels-in-progress instead of those already published. Her idea is that face-to-face immediacy with readers during the composition process might recreate the enthusiasm that monthly serial novels first enjoyed—and not least because it would allow the readers to shape the narrative content even more directly:

[T]his might be the 'something new' after which this fatigued capital toils with perseverance so praiseworthy. Suppose Mr. Thackery or Mr. Dickens, instead of monthly numbers yellow and green, had a monthly assembly, and gave forth the story to a visible public, moved by all the visible emotions over which these magicians exercise their subtle power, --would not that be an experiment sufficient to reinvigorate with all its pristine force the flagging serial—possibly even by the prompt criticism of the audience to bestow a certain benefit upon the tale? (201)

Oliphant perceives a lackluster enthusiasm for a fictional medium losing its novel edge like a drug to which one builds up a tolerance. She assumes that even the greatest

magician-authors would welcome the means of “reinvigorating” their powers by drawing on the semi-conscious collective response of their readers. Oliphant in fact classifies her proposal to present new fiction at such readings as an “experiment” because she takes for granted that both experiments and exhibitions are tied to evolutionary changes in mass media. One of the strangest of these developments is that even as photography helps to lionize the individual identities of popular writers, authors in general are increasingly under pressure to produce writing that will satisfy the “romantic character” of their readers.

The Lost Tribe of Readers

In his frequently cited 1859 essay, “The Unknown Public,” Collins scrutinizes a class of publications called “penny journals.” The reading public designated in the title as “unknown” is of course, as we have just seen, only one component of print culture’s foreign landscape. The invasive penny journals are too ubiquitous a print form for a fiction writer like Collins to ignore: “From looking in at the windows of the shops, I got to entering the shops themselves, to buying specimens of this locust-flight of small publications, to making strict examination of them from the first page to the last, and finally, to instituting inquiries about them in all sorts of well-informed quarters” (208). Collins implies that the spread of the penny journal is an ominous sign for the survival of the current environmental relationship between cultivated literature and the primitive character of mass culture.

We know, if we are at all conversant with literary matters, even the very districts of London in which certain classes of people live who are to be depended upon beforehand as the picked readers for certain kinds of books. But what do we

know of the enormous outlawed majority—of the lost literary tribe—of the prodigious, the overwhelming three millions? Absolutely nothing. (210)

The tone of the passage is ambivalent. In part, Collins sneers at the possibility that the masses have something to offer the production of serious literature. At the same time, this passage prophesizes that the unknown identity of the masses will constitute the literary production of the future. For better or worse, the “lost literary tribe” will reshape England’s cultural environment as it might rearrange “the very districts of London.” This biblical allusion is consistent with pre-Darwinian attempts, most notably by James Cowles Prichard, to explain how all the differences among the civilizations of the world “could have been produced in the descendants of a single family” after “the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel and the subsequent dispersion of the descendants of Noah” (Stocking 50). This tribe implicitly became lost when, like Franklin’s actions under the influence of opium, it began using a medium different than that of the ruling class. As a “lost literary tribe,” the masses represent a parallel to Franklin’s missing memory. A connection between the masses and English literature is only “discovered” after the reproduction of culture began taking place mechanically on a mass scale just as a connection between Franklin’s lost memory and opium is only discovered after Jennings translates and reproduces the events of the night.

In “The Unknown Public,” Collins attributes a magical and seductive power to penny journals, the cheapest and most prolific source of fiction at the time. He dramatizes the commodity-voice of the penny-journal, and in doing so, makes them sound like the Goblins hawking their exotic, habit-forming fruit in Christina Rossetti’s 1854 poem *Goblin Market*: “Buy me, borrow me, stare at me, steal me,—do anything, O inattentive stranger, except contemptuously pass me by!” (208). Though we might read

Collins's tone as satirical or mocking, there is also palpable admiration for the power of the penny journals themselves. His characterization of the journals is similar to Marx's characterization of the table evolving its own "grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will" (Marx was making fun of the vogue for mesmerism while seriously characterizing the demonic power of the commodity to possess a person's identity) (163-4). In this case, the penny journal specifically hails an "inattentive stranger" because it is perfectly adapted to attract the distracted millions who constitute the unknown public.

I have already interpreted Franklin Blake as a character whose inattentiveness increases disconnection but he is not the portrait of a distracted reader. Between Franklin's urban distraction and the disciplined concentration of Ezra Jennings and Sargent Cuff, a number of other characters are in constant pursuit of exaggerated, supernatural entertainment like Godfrey Ablewhite's two sisters in attendance at Rachel's birthday dinner. These ladies, whom Betteredge refers to as "the bouncers," don't seem to believe anything is either real or unreal; they "dropped their knives and forks with a crash" in delight at learning that the diamond Rachel wears on her dress would cost her life in India, and then "whizzed out on to the terrace like a couple of skyrockets" when the Brahmin priests come looking for the diamond disguised as jugglers (78, 82). In her 1859 article, Margaret Oliphant explained her characteristically elite opinion that the desire for reading to consist as much of entertainment, or "romance," as possible, is typical of "primitive minds" that, like those of "savages and children," have a "natural appetite" for story without appreciation for "the probabilities of fiction, for the wit of

dialogue, or the grace of style” (199-200). But the bouncers, and even Miss Clack, only supplement the pattern of primitive readership at the foundation of the novel’s plot.

At the beginning of *The Moonstone*, we learn that the Herncastle family temper includes an inclination toward romance; the opening “family paper” reveals that Colonel Herncastle’s “love of the marvelous induced him to believe [the story of the Moonstone]” in the first place (13). Here Herncastle’s character refers not only to Oliphant’s characterization of primitive readers but also to Rymer’s history of “the taste which maintained so long for works of terror and blood” belonging to the “millions of minds that have no resource between vapid sentimentality, and the ridiculous spectra of the nursery” (172-3). In an important sense, Herncastle models both the reader and the content low-brow fiction. His presumed defect— his primitive, animalistic character type— makes him an “outlaw,” unfit to marry and raise a family. But at the same time it makes the plot of *The Moonstone* fit for so many more readers than the plot of *Villette*: “In the matter of bravery (to give him his due), he was a mixture of bull-dog and game-cock, with a dash of the savage” (43). *The Moonstone* gambles that its sensational mystery plot can reproduce culture without making it more savage by replacing a story about murder and a cursed Indian diamond with a story about recognizing and reproducing opium-writing.

Lines Written from India: Outlaws as In-laws

The final scene in the novel creates an exotic image of the “unknown public” though the pretext of a ceremony in India to return the Moonstone to its place on a religious shrine as witnessed by the Orientalist Murthwaite. The description of “tens of

thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white” exoticizes the masses not only as “foreigners” and “natives,” but as participants in the distracting medium of mass culture. Having returned the diamond to India, the Brahmin priests are the “authors” of this ceremony. But in contrast to Oliphant’s image of Dickens communing face to face with readers as part of his composition process, the Brahmin priests walk directly into the masses where they are absorbed—almost consumed. Because the Brahmins have broken the laws of their caste in order to get the diamond back, “The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage” and that after the ceremonial farewell, “Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from that day which witnessed their separation, to the day which witnessed their death” (471). Instead of living according to the social position of their birthright, above the masses, the Brahmins sacrifice their membership in society in order to reproduce the religion of the masses.

In *The Moonstone*, the “religion of the masses” becomes the novel’s exotic-mythic device for showing how popular writing will replace the cultural exile of “the enormous outlawed majority—of the lost literary tribe” with the exile of the author (“The Unknown Public” 210). Whether the author of the future sacrifices himself by restoring cultural property, or is himself the thief, he will find himself “outlawed ... among his own people” for transgressions that ensure the survival of the culture (44). Ezra Jennings sacrifices the last days of his life to supplement the reproductive prospects of an upper class couple, and like the priests, he departs from society once his purpose is served. When the Brahmins walk off into the gathered spectators, “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” (471). Ezra Jennings similarly disappears from the

novel's train station into an unmarked grave as soon as his restorative work is done. Ezra tells Candy "that he would die as he had lived, forgotten and unknown" (460). This pattern of exiled authorship even extends as far back as Rosanna Spearman's suicide in the shivering sands after writing and preserving the letter that explains the evidence of Franklin's crime.

In stark contrast with Nemo, whose death is merely the beginning of his influence on the characters and events in the novel, Ezra's death appears to seal off the shadowy details of his biography. As Candy puts it, "He maintained that resolution to the last. There is no hope now of making any discoveries concerning him. His story is a blank" (460). And yet the absence of writing on Ezra Jennings's grave is also precisely what makes his resting place so similar to Nemo's common grave and his life so similar to the life of "no one." Candy respects Ezra's wish that "no monument of any sort –not even the commonest tombstone" mark his grave so that now "Nothing but a little grass mound, marks the place of his rest" (461). The exile and homelessness that for a time threatened Franklin is pushed off onto Ezra. Ezra's exotic identity and unpopularity disavow his embodiment of mass media as the catalyst of culture's vitality and variation. Both Ezra's character and the Brahmin priests contain the revolutionary energy of mass media in their exiled social status in order to stabilize cultural reproduction. But just as the novel implies that the diamond will be stolen once again, it also prophesizes the return of these foreign characters in the vigilante outlaw archetypes of popular culture.

CONCLUSION

Mass Media and Cultural Reproduction

“Opium-writing” became a recognized and imitated motif for the mechanical reproduction of writing after De Quincey’s *Confessions of English Opium-Eater* imitated Coleridge’s use of opium in “Kubla Khan.” By expanding the way Coleridge makes opium consumption a motif for automating the production of writing, *Confessions* defines opium-writing as the exotic, mechanized alternative to the “traditional” writing produced before steam-powered printing presses became the norm. In the decades following the publication of *Confessions*, opium-writing became a way for fiction to narrate the dynamics of mass media. While De Quincey did not himself write for a mass readership, popular British fiction published over the course of the nineteenth century picked up his use of exoticism to further its own position in debates about how mass media was related to the cultural influence of the literary work of art. The opium-writing motif provides a way of visualizing mass media’s powerful but diffuse influence on traditional methods for producing and consuming fiction. When a narrative presents a character whose production of writing depends on consuming an exotic supplement, and that supplement is interchangeable with automated reproducibility, it enacts what Benjamin calls the “decline of the aura.” As the character increases opium consumption in proportion to the economic pressure to produce more writing at an accelerated rate, the opium’s automatic

association with stereotypical foreign images increasingly detaches that writing from the specificity of an individual origin.

My broader intent has been to supplement our historical understanding of British fiction as an agent of imperialism. Critiques following Said have shown that British media reproduced a specifically British idea of the foreign rather than anything accurately coinciding with places and people outside British culture. I similarly assume that exotic signifiers, whether perceived as fantasy or representations of “the real,” are in fact primarily present to affirm the increasing degree to which images refer to other images instead of corresponding to anything outside of British culture. But my interpretation of exotic motifs in popular fiction does not assume that they are more or less exclusively connected with British Imperialism. Because so much criticism is devoted to uncovering ways in which literature critiques as well as perpetuates imperialism, it is crucial to recognize that mass media became the vehicle of the British Empire at the same time it colonized Britain’s interior culture. I believe one important reason that nineteenth-century narrative often incorporates critical attitudes toward British Imperialism is that fiction itself experienced mass media as a hostile force of domination as well as an opportunity for expanding profitability. As British culture changed in ways that the rhetoric of civilization and progress could not account for, exoticism provided fictional narratives with the increasingly familiar foreign “face” of automatic reproducibility. In this face-to-face encounter with mass media’s colonizing force, a reader automatically possessed a visual interpretation of the way their own consumption of writing fueled the export of traditional cultural forms into mass media’s differential system of images.

The nineteenth-century novel develops the opium-writing motif through the Romantic contentions about organic and mechanic form to negotiate the relative high or low cultural significance of new publication formats. Opium-writing in *Bleak House* leverages the intimacy between its monthly serial format and other cheap periodicals to assert its superior ability among these to narrate mechanical reproducibility as a series of coherent opportunities for social revision. Such a move raises the cultural value of the cheap serial novel and stakes out a middle-brow territory of print culture by providing respectable entertainment through an aesthetically ambitious narrative. Exoticism in *Villette* takes advantage of that same intimacy between serial publication and cheap popular fiction to imply a connection between the exclusive attitude of the narrator and the novel's more traditional three-volume format. This is the novel's strategy for claiming a more organic, more artistically valuable cultural status than serial novels, whose value is automatically measured by sales directly tied to popular appeal. Such a move anticipates the twentieth-century project of F.R. Leavis to raise the cultural value of the "serious" and "mature" English novel to high art. As two contemporaneous and distinct points of view, *Bleak House* and *Villette* illustrate how the nineteenth-century novel used opium-writing's exotic connotations to formulate the framework for calculating literary value that remains prominent today.

Opium consumption became the most consistent motif among exotic stereotypes because it captures the idea of an additive that accelerates, or in other ways changes, a process that already existed. A figure that produces writing "automatically" because of his or her opium consumption could stand in for the way an existing print culture suddenly found itself expanding automatically in proportion to its use of steam-powered

reproductive technology. The known degree to which the cheapness of laudanum increased its habit-forming potential gives it further power to express the way in which the producers of literature could hardly reject mass media without losing profitability no matter how much they might fear the deteriorating effects of mass markets on the aesthetic quality of literature. Long before the rhetoric of drug addiction asserted itself as a medical discourse, the novel combined opium-writing with the rhetoric of evolution to describe culture's dependency on mass media for cultural survival. *The Moonstone* makes a case for the possibility that some fiction might exceed the limitations of this inherited dependency by threatening and then rescuing the middle class hierarchy of value. Such a character offers something like Darwin's idea of a mutation, or in this case, the idea of atavism, applied to inherited formulaic tendencies of popular fiction instead of inherited biological characteristics of a species. In Collins's novel, it is a significantly *unpopular* intellectual who reestablishes the reproductive potential of the middle class characters by recalling the role of De Quincey's opium-writing in the production of the missing Moonstone's exotic appeal.

My literary approach to nineteenth-century mass media points to what I hope will prove a useful methodology in the analysis of the cultural narratives surrounding today's electronic media and social networking. It has become relatively common for literary and cultural criticism of the nineteenth century to claim that Victorians lived in a virtual world of images or that their relationship to mass media culture technically coincides with the definition of a cyborg. My project sheds new light on the narrative trends that make such claims remotely possible. It also suggests that we continue to look to figures

of the exotic in narrative to understand the cultural outcomes already associated with the way digital media has subsumed print culture.

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¹ See Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat* and Goldsmith's and Wu's response, *Who Controls the Internet?*

² See George Stocking's "Prologue: A Precipice in Time," in *Victorian Anthropology*.

³ Sir Humphry Davy was close friends with Coleridge and Southey.

⁴ See See Michael Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* and Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism* for more detailed analysis of the historic developments in the emergence of British national identity.

⁵ Here I am thinking of Susan Stewart's analysis of the "hierarchy of detail" one finds in nineteenth-century realism in *On Longing*.

⁶ See Allison Muri's "Enlightenment Cybernetics: Communications and Control in the Man-Machine."

⁷ Here I am thinking of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* in which he argues that the process of building the archive is also the very active process of determining how the archived documents will be interpreted (16-17).

⁸ For a detailed historical account of the relationship between Q.D. Leavis and the publication of literature and its criticism, see Ross Alloway's "Selling the Great Tradition: Resistance and Conformity in the Publishing Practices of F.R. Leavis."

⁹ John Sutherland's analysis of the serial novel shows the historical basis for an ongoing association between the "lower classes" and serially published writing: "Serialization of fiction, in numbers and magazines, dated back to the eighteenth century and survived unbroken in the slum publishing of G.W.M. Reynolds who is supposed to have sold 40,000 a week of his lurid *Mysteries of London*. The numerous journals Colburn and Bentley spawned in the thirties and forties (especially the *Miscellany*) were in many ways the pattern for the later quality periodicals like the *Cornhill*" (41).

¹⁰ The second half of this sentence continues after a semicolon: "if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or any or consciousness of effort" (*Norton* 439). Opium allows the mind to write more spontaneously by circumventing the senses altogether. Coleridge's qualification is symptomatic of his resistance to John Locke's theory articulated in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that the relationship between sense perception and words is

arbitrary. William Keach compares Coleridge's anti-Lockean, organicist position to a neo-platonic "order of things": "Coleridge develops a notion that words become things because they correspond to them, not according to older Adamic or Cratylean theories of linguistic mimesis, but according to principles of harmony simultaneously and congruently at work in the physical world and in language. Words are things in this sense because they operate according to principles of order that also govern things, principles that ultimately derive from the structure of the creative mind" (*Arbitrary Power* 32).

¹¹ Anonymous Reviewer. "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," *United States Literary Gazette*, 1(1825): 38-40.

¹² The oriental tale, along with oriental types and objects, serves a similar function even between quite different aesthetic agendas. Eugenia Zuroski argues that in rewriting Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) in *Northanger Abbey* (1798, 1818) Austen uses the fact that "Chinese objects indicated a level of luxury associated with aristocratic culture and yet were commercially available to an increasingly broad consumer public" to promote what would eventually be recognized as the nineteenth century aesthetic of realism (255-6). In their introduction to Elizabeth Hamilton's *Translations of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) Pamela Perkins and Shannon Russell observe that a rationalist approach to orientalism promotes a related literary aesthetic: "Hamilton's presentation of the romantic East is complicated by the demands of her genre, in which she uses the commentary of a naïve or inadequate observer to defamiliarize English society. Specifically the *Hindoo Rajah* belongs with the relatively small but significant body of work focusing on the reactions of imaginary oriental travelers in Western Europe" (20). In contrast to the empirical aesthetic of Austen and Hamilton, gothic literature, of course, continued to flourish. See Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya, or the Moor* (1806).

¹³ I am thinking of Jacques Derrida's famous claim that writing is a drug in Plato's sense of the *pharmakon*. Both poison and medicine, the *pharmakon* "does not mix together two previously separate elements; it refers back to a *same* that is not the identical, to the common element or medium of any possible dissociation. ... If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes once side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.)" (*Dissemination* 127).

¹⁴ Avital Ronell's *Crack Wars* explains the perceived danger of addiction in terms of repeated but disconnected acts that form a kind of serialized behavior subject to concerns similar to those Leavis expresses about reading and writing fiction according to journalistic principles. For Ronell, such an act "desired and projected possibilities that have not gradually grown from a ground of concern and whose fulfillment has not been submitted to the patient tapping of thought" (41). Because the experience of this "act" is not tied to a self-consistent narrative structure, "addiction dumps understanding" and intensifies one's dependency on the act since "You can only be addicted to what is

available, which is what traps you in a circle without futurity” (41-2). Addiction is “bad” when it closes off future possibilities that “make sense” sequentially in relation to a particular past. But if the structure of addiction allows for a present that does not depend on a particular past, it opens up another category of possibility altogether.

¹⁵ In his biography, Grevel Lindop is alert to the relationship between De Quincey’s difficulty in finishing by the date promised to publishers and his fascination with the serial dimensions of infinity: “De Quincey may well have been teasing [James] Hogg when he proposed, for example, to write a History of England in twelve volumes, or an historical novel, or a volume of Arabian tales, or a ‘book on the Idea of the Infinite’” (377).

¹⁶ Josephine McDonagh connects exotic excess in De Quincey’s writing with the paradoxes of the “book dream” in *Suspiria*: “The dream explores the troubling notion of the 1840’s, that the European subject is at risk of losing itself in a dangerous and unprotected world, the same issue that is discussed in the political writings on the relations between Britain and China. De Quincey’s anxieties concerning his own loss of self through over-consumption of books presents an analogy with his anxieties of loss of self in opium addiction; but they are also analogous with the threat to national power he perceived in the venture into trade with distant and alien societies” (182). McDonagh’s emphasis on imperialism and international trade downplays the relationship between emerging mass media and mechanical reproducibility. Alina Clej similarly argues that “De Quincey’s addiction mirrors the imperialist fantasy of combining reckless expansion with control and containment. His emphasis on ‘the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony’ brought by the opium rapture is an attempt to preempt any danger dissemination and dissipation of the self through the contagious influence of the (feminine, proletarian, or oriental) Other” (xi). While I share many of the founding assumptions of Clej and McDonagh, my primary concern is the degree to which the structure of addiction allows De Quincy to interface with the dynamics of an automated print medium. For an account of empire and addiction in relation to the Opium Wars, see Schmitt.

¹⁷ John Plotz argues that De Quincey makes Ann “into a figure for all that is lost when he experiences the world through crowds. Because the crowds have already called into existence the dream-like state of half-responsibility toward those around him, Ann is fated to return to his dreams as the embodiment of all their intangible promise” (90). In another chapter, Plotz argues that the English mail coach similarly transforms individual sentiment into a physical ground of national unity; it represents “the moment of serial diffusion along a single line, with each English citizen corporally connected to the projected joy of the citizen next down the line, or one hundreds of miles away, who will receive the same tidings and rejoice in the same manner because of the same mail coach” (107). Anne Frey argues even more explicitly that “[i]n ‘The English Mail-Coach’ ... nationalism descends onto the English people rather than from arising from them” because De Quincey recognizes the degree to which national bureaucratic institutions determine “the very categories with which people identify” (2). McDonagh argues that

“[i]nfant death in De Quincey’s late work,” and the young girl generally, “is a motif of arrested development, and the sign of his being out of time, the insignia of an anachronistic identity,” in the context of Thomas Malthus’s thesis on the modern conditions of scarcity (3). Also see Milligan’s chapter on De Quincey.

¹⁸ This projection appears historically as a rhetorical strategy for promoting political agendas. By ascribing current conditions in England to China, authors could make a compelling case for doing things differently. In *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus stages several key points as responses to observations Adam Smith made about China’s population. To introduce the idea that Great Britain must curtail its population by promoting chastity, especially among the lower classes, he writes “It is said that early marriages very generally prevail through all ranks of the Chinese. Yet Dr. Adam Smith supposes that population in China is stationary. These two circumstances appear to be irreconcilable” (88). When John Stuart Mill uses China to “warn” against mismanaging consumer enthusiasm for progressive “inventions in mechanical things” in his essay “On Liberty,” however, he not only performs this kind of projection but also anticipates Ronell’s analysis of both the dangers and opportunities represented by the structure of addiction: “we should think we had done wonders if we had made ourselves all alike, forgetting that the unlikeness of one person to another is generally the first thing which draws the attention of either to the imperfection of his own type and the superiority of another, or the possibility, by combining the advantages of both, of producing something better than either” (137). Although the Chinese “discovered the secret of human progressiveness and must have kept them-selves steadily at the head of the movement of the world” they have nevertheless “become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are to be further improved, it must be by foreigners” (137).

¹⁹ See Hayter, 34.

²⁰ Russet cites an observation De Quincey makes about Scott’s novels to demonstrate his understanding that “[s]erial production, the temporalization of textual space through ‘plays upon variations and differences,’ induces the ‘craving’ supplied by periodicals” (*De Quincey’s Romanticism* 102): “After the author of Waverly had for a considerable succession of years delighted the world with one or two novels annually,” De Quincey recalls, “the demand for Waverly novels came to be felt as a periodical craving all over Europe” (M 14:132)” (*De Quincey’s Romanticism* 102).

²¹ Clej also notes the association between these two authors in terms of a writing habit: Coleridge is a rival “with whom De Quincey shared so much, including the habit of extensive and often unauthorized quotation” (259). McDonagh emphasizes that De Quincey himself provokes a series of literary imitations, including *Noctes Ambrosianae*, and a series of medical studies. But whereas she reads this phenomenon as “a realm of aesthetic discourse that exists explicitly outside history” rather than part of the Romantic tradition, I would argue that this aesthetic discourse is situated within history and the emergence of mass culture (172).

²² De Quincey explicitly compares opium to ambrosia as a similarly mysterious foreign substance: “Opium! Dread agent of unimaginable pleasure and pain! I had heard of it as I had of manna or Ambrosia” (*Confessions* 42).

²³ For an extended analysis of *Blackwood's* attitude in the broader political context of Keats's poetry, see Keach, pages 46-59.

²⁴ After the 1820's, poetry grew less dominant in the book market. As Parker puts it, “There were no sensations like the previous decade's *Lalla Rookh*, *Childe Harold*, or *Corsair*” and at the same time, even though “Periodicals achieved greater circulations later in the century, ... they never dominated the literary market as they did in the 1820's” (110).

²⁵ Margaret Russet reads collective authorship as the feature of literary magazines that distinguishes them from “higher” aesthetic enterprises: “Lacking a surname, De Quincey's prostitute-heroine Ann is effectively anonymous, so that her Christian name comes to resemble a pun or abbreviation like the *London's* “Noemon” or “L'Anonyme Litteraire.” Ann's association with ‘numbers’ and serial encounters suggests the threat to ‘high’ literary ambitions by their submersion in the ‘low’ medium of ‘what could only appear to be an essentially authorless text.’ If text cannot be ‘found,’ how may it be valued?” (*De Quincey's Romanticism* 98).

²⁶ For a more comprehensive discussion of nineteenth-century philology and ethnology, see George Stocking, 20-5. Also see Anderson, 70-2.

²⁷ Sue Zemka discusses the Bible Society's translation and publication of the Bible in an unprecedented number of foreign languages during the early nineteenth century: “The Bible Society contributed to nineteenth-century imperial ideology by textualizing the world as a Protestant and British totality. The histories that it produced were books that tried to “write” an empire inspired by, structured by and comprised of the Bible” (128).

²⁸ Parker notes a similar example. In March of 1821, Horace Smith publishes an article in the *London* on the Elgin Marbles on display at the British Museum. Parker's point in describing this piece is to illustrate how instead of aesthetic analysis that assumed a knowledge of Greek culture, Smith describes his feelings in response to the sculpture and “unobtrusively yet carefully identifies each Greek character” so that “the article does not elicit a response by naming certain classical figures; it provides the proper response” (75).

²⁹ Mark Kipperman cites an example of this kind of idealism in Shelly's *Hellas*, “a work that in one sense is historically myopic, even deluded by it is liberal philhellenism; and yet in another sense it is precise, even radically visionary in its opposition to Ottoman imperialism and its support for a people struggling toward identity in a modern constitutional state—in 1821 a progressive idea” (86).

³⁰ A concise example of this divided regard for all things Greek appears in Kinglake's *Eothen*, a prose work he published himself in 1844 based on his travels in the East during the mid-1830's: "My comrade was a capital Grecian; it is true that his singular mind so disordered and disposed his classic lore as to impress it with something of an original and barbarous character—with an almost Gothic quaintness more properly belonging to a rich native ballad than to the poetry of Hellas. There was a certain impropriety in his knowing so much Greek—an unfitness in the idea of marble fauns and satyrs, and even Olympian gods, lugged under the oaken roof and the painted light of odd old Norman hall. But Methley, abounding in Homer, really loved him (as I believe) in all truth, without whim or fancy" (31). Throughout the text, the narrator uses Homer and his own "unscholarly" love of him as a framing device to comment on his experiences and observations.

³¹ The importance of Said's critique is the fact that it contains, and is contained within, an archive called orientalism. The implication is similar to Nancy Armstrong's summary of how the archive of exotic nineteenth-century images provides an analogy to the tautological construct that supports realism: "If the archive is a house within the Empire, and the empire is an archive contained within a house, then realism is at once a text that reproduces its context and a context that reproduces its text" (16).

³² A related instance of "conjuring" the orient as a "shared" space takes place while De Quincey is working as an editor for Wordsworth's *Gazette*. Believing his copy leaves much to be improved, De Quincey publishes a message for his readers, explaining that "he has fervently wished that some Eastern magician would, a few hours before publication, loosen the 'Gazette' Office from that rock on which we trust it is built—raise it into the air with all it's live and dead stock—and would transport it for one week,—not (as angry people are apt to say) into the Red Sea, but to some comfortable place on its shore, Arabia Felix for instance..."(quoted in Lindop, 236-7). Any faults of the text, omissions that were necessary to get it published and distributed, will be replaced by the image of its place of origin displaced so far away that the editors will have all the time in the world to include everything before it returns. The conjuring mechanism is to collapse the authorial producers and the content of the gazette's print archive through a series of evacuations. The unhappy paper comes out of the Gazette office, the office goes out of the country, and felicity returns to the text of the paper in an exotic image. Given this dynamic of an image that is both inside and outside a perimeter imagined to be stable, we are in a position to profit from another look at the Malay episode.

³³ For more on Galland's translation and the context of the *Arabian Nights* in the early nineteenth century, see Judith Plotz, especially 120-22.

³⁴ For a more detailed cultural analysis of the decorative material object in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Zuroski.

³⁵ For a closely related analysis of Mahogany in literature, see Elaine Freedgood's chapter on *Jane Eyre* in *The Ideas in Things*. Because Mahogany signifies the role of slave

trafficking and deforestation in British Imperialism, it presents the kind of souvenir that grants the power of social mobility to subjects like Jane. Because Jane's furniture remembers the material conditions of her empowerment, she is able to forget that the price of her "mastery" is the enslavement of others.

³⁶ Barry Milligan's analysis of literary representations of the East End excludes any acknowledgement of Nemo's opium-smoking or the purpose of the East End in *Bleak House*. This oversight leads to the assertion that "none of the accounts published before *Edwin Drood* feature opium-smoking men" (94). The fact that a man is depicted as an opium-smoker in *Bleak House* in imitation of De Quincey's laudanum-drinking Opium-eater actually reinforces Milligan's argument that literature wanted to paint the nation as a female victim of oriental corruption who needed defending. Nemo's labor demonstrates that mechanical reproduction has deteriorated and largely displaced the significance of biological reproduction, and thereby threatens to discompose the most traditional definitions of femininity.

³⁷ J. Hillis Miller argues that the novel empowers readers to comprehend the "big picture": "Metaphor and metonymy together make up the deep grammatical armature by which the reader of *Bleak House* is led to make a whole out of discontinuous parts" (180, 182). Arac similarly finds that *Bleak House* avoids "the 'medley' that often resulted from agglomeration of periodical writing into longer forms" and underscores the way the novel "absorbs a great variety of narrative perspectives that the full worlds of the books combine and comprehend in one whole" (120, 122). Raymond Williams associates the novel's unifying character with its presentation of invisible relations in a panorama-style landscape: "[Dickens] is able to dramatise those social institutions and consequences which are not accessible to ordinary physical observation. He takes them and presents them as if they were persons or natural phenomena" so that "The city is shown as at once a social fact and a human landscape" (*Country and City* 34, 37). On the other hand, Terry Eagleton asserts that "the aesthetic unity of [Dickens's] mature work is founded not on a mythology of 'organic community,' but on exactly the opposite: on the historical self-divisions of bourgeois society" (129). The novel's capacity to generate an "overview" makes "systemic contradiction" appear to be the objective circumstance of history unfolding in time (127, 129). D.A. Miller takes Eagleton's reading of the novel's divided structure further in arguing that *Bleak House* eliminates the possibility of differentiating anything outside its own representational order: "What Chancery produces, or threatens to produce, is an organization of power that, ceasing entirely to be a topic, has become topography itself: a system of control that can be all-encompassing because it cannot be compassed in turn" (61). More recent interpretations of *Bleak House* have recourse to the model of contagion that acknowledges the automatic replication of an entire system as well as the disfiguration brought about by its circulation produces difference in its necessary impact on whatever tradition precedes it. Nancy Armstrong shows for example how contagion in *Bleak House* supports photography's dislocation of the body as a stable source of identity. Kevin McLaughlin also examines contagion in *Bleak House*, arguing that it is linked to the spread of mass produced paper through the novel's dramatization of materiality withdrawing from the medium of mass culture: "In *Bleak House* the

individual, the collective, and the novelistic medium become involved in a movement that defies the conventional metaphor of the home as a self-contained state” and together these elements form “a collective whose very condition of possibility is a state of scattered receptivity, a collective that exists only when it has yet actually to take shape” (80, 115).

³⁸ See McLaughlin’s take on “The Hand of Nemo” for a detailed account of how Nemo’s hand-written copies relate to the novel and mass mediacy (81-92).

³⁹ See Pitman’s 1837 work on the technique of writing in shorthand; the first known instance of shorthand were abbreviations for ancient hieroglyphic scripts.

⁴⁰ Milligan points out more than one occasion in literature when the “‘smoke-dried’” appearance of female opium addicts is compared to a “pharaoh” in deference to “the Oriental archetype of life-in-death, the indefinitely preserved corpse of the Egyptian mummy” (90). Milligan is interested in the way London’s East End was “repeatedly figured as a miniature Orient within the heart of the empire” (85). His interest however, lies in following Barrell’s idea of an oriental infection through Victorian literary representations of “Chineseness” as a threat to the racial constitution of the British through the spread of opium: “From its inception, the genre was intensely formulaic, and the formulae all point to anxieties about an Oriental infection as insidious invasion ... It is not surprising that the fear is most closely associated with the Chinese, who had especially charged historical ties to both England and Opium. Indeed opium smoking was assumed to be so essentially Chinese that the practice is portrayed in the narratives as having the capacity gradually to render Britons more Chinese in their customs, attitudes, and physical appearance” (84).

⁴¹ The novel also gives notice of the court’s spreading fever in the way Nemo’s opium-induced yellowness reproduces the resonance between John Jarndyce’s name and the characteristic feature of jaundice, “a morbid condition caused by obstruction of the bile and characterized by yellowness” (*OED*). One of Jarndyce’s distinctive habits is to acknowledge troubling information with the phrase, “the wind is in the East,” as though he were intimately, even physiologically, acquainted with the fact that he automatically contributes to these troubles through his name no matter how much he tries to set things right or remain aloof altogether. Richard informs Jarndyce that the Jellyby children are “in a devil of a state” to which Jarndyce responds, “‘She means well [...] The wind’s in the east’” (84). When Richard denies the literal truth of this, he repeats himself: “‘I’ll take an oath it’s either in the east, or going to be. I am always conscious of an uncomfortable sensation now and then when the wind is blowing in the east’” (84).

⁴² See McLaughlin for a compelling reading of how distracted and absorbed reading habits reading habits figure in Poe’s “The Man of the Crowd” (29).

⁴³ During the fall of 1850, Dickens objected to the possibility that shilling visitors would not be allowed to visit the Exhibition for three weeks after it opened. A short time later,

he joined the Central Working Classes Committee (CWCC) headed by Henry Cole. When it became clear, however, that fear of radicalized chartists would prevent the committee from gaining official recognition from the Royal commission, Dickens appears to have been the one to initiate its dissolution, “knowing that “the CWCC would be unable to either to render efficiently the services it sought to perform or to command the confidence of the working classes” (Auerbach 130).

⁴⁴ During the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, “conductor” was more commonly used the way we would use the word manager in reference to business leaders. But the term also designates “A medium which transmits or conveys any disease or other condition” (*OED*). By labeling himself as the “conductor” of *Household Words*, Dickens uses his name to vouch for a common standard of quality, tone and opinion in the works of many different writers. As the conductor he promises that each piece of writing will spread and reproduce the standard of entertainment he has become known for.

⁴⁵ Derrida’s *Archive Fever* informs my understanding of *Bleak House* as both an archive and an enactment of disfiguring, forgetting and destroying archival content.

⁴⁶ Another article in *Household Words*, “The Noble Savage,” is similar in tone to the portrayal of Jellyby in *Bleak House*.

⁴⁷ See the introductory chapter of John Barrell’s *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey* for a more extensive explanation of this geopolitical logic.

⁴⁸ Jarndyce gives Esther the set of keys to his house, just as Blue Beard does to tempt his latest wife into disobedience, although in this instance the disobedience would have been to the authority of Esther’s own original aesthetic. And Fatima refers to another character in the story of Aladdin.

⁴⁹ See McLaughlin’s related interpretation of Jarndyce’s paternal disenfranchisement (91).

⁵⁰ A famous passage in *Bleak House* explains the allegory of Tom’s Revenge: “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 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 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. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge” (710). The passage further illustrates Dickens’s use of archive fever to map the destructive capacity of mass media.

⁵¹ Mary Burgan cites Jo as an important figure in “the literary representation of the East End as an exotic heart of darkness” that encouraged social reform agendas and ensured

that “the East End was mapped as the seat of typhus and consumption, the most virulent and wasting social diseases of the nineteenth-century” (45, 49). Burgan argues that the social critique in representations of the exoticized representation of East End like the one in *Bleak House* had the opposite than the one their authors may have wished for; they led to more rigorous quarantines and effectively strengthened the exclusion of the poorest class.

⁵² An article from *Household Words* further demonstrates Dickens’s belief in and frustration with the power of images to determine the appearance of reality. It maintains that Harriet Beecher Stowe’s creation of new slave types in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is motivated, not by the desire to “preserve” the historical moment, but to change mass perception. If it is to be objected that “Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe, George Harris, and the negroes with whom Mrs. Stowe has by this time made most of us acquainted, are, no doubt, rare specimens of slaves” they are valued for having “been carefully collected” and for making new details “generally accepted as remarkable pictures of the every day truth” (Stone 434). The article implies that in order to counter the fact that “the great mass of the negro population has become infected with the universal feeling, and has fallen so low as to accept and share the prejudice against itself” it will be necessary to advance “the infection of slaveholders with the epidemic of a very prevalent opinion” to the contrary (Stone 439, 434). It is also worth noting that the clarity with which Dickens distinguishes between the repetition of “image” and “innate nature” loses some of its edge after the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion in India and the racist media blitz that followed.

⁵³ My interpretation of the significance of Woodcourt’s national origins is informed by Katie Trumpener’s work in *Bardic Nationalism*.

⁵⁴ The representation of containment as a source of contagion spreads from *Bleak House* to Dickens’s miscellany in connection with cycles of neglected ungrowth. In 1853, *Household Words* included a section called “Another Round of Stories—By the Christmas Fire,” a short narrative appears, titled “Nobody’s Story” (35-6). Its generalized, almost cartoonish, plot and characters make it similar to the allegorical shorthand of the Tom’s-all-Alone passage in *Bleak House*. The story features a laborer who calls himself Nobody. The narrator amends, “let us call him legion,” and concludes that “the story of Nobody is the story of the rank and file of the earth ... they leave no name but in the mass” (36).

⁵⁵ In “George Eliot: Immanent Victorian,” Catherine Gallagher introduces a related analysis of nineteenth-century realism as the movement toward embodiment, or “immanence,” that occurs as readers move back and forth between categorically labeled types and the specificity of a fictional character.

⁵⁶ See Armstrong’s “The World as Image,” chapter two of *Fiction in the Age of Photography*.

⁵⁷ A similar strategy appears in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1854) where the character Dinah makes the aesthetic tenets of the Quaker religion attractive enough to seduce Adam away from his attraction to the physical beauty of Hetty Sorrel.

⁵⁸ In *Daniel Deronda*, Mira is very similarly set apart, and then set aside, by her marriage to Daniel Deronda in the name of preserving the uniqueness of her religious affiliations and by the limiting weakness of Mira's voice that bars her from large-scale performances.

⁵⁹ For a broader sense of the media environment in which this makes sense, see Richards's *The commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914*, especially his chapter on the way the royal family and Queen Victoria in particular were represented through increasingly middle class iconography.

⁶⁰ Dog breeding took off as an upper middle class pastime after photographs circulated of a lap dog brought back from a raid on the Chinese royal palace and given to Queen Victoria. This breed of dog had been engineered to look like Chinese sculptures of lions. See Corinna Faith's *Dogs that Changed the World: Dogs by Design*.

⁶¹ See Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 169-70.

⁶² By creating the basis of the mystery in the novel's archive of characters, the fever that leads to Mr. Candy's memory loss in turn shows how *The Moonstone* anticipates the principle of Derrida's *Archive Fever*.

⁶³ Collins uses train travel in precisely this manner in both *The Woman in White* (1860) and *Armadale* (1864-66). Evalyn Waugh's *Handful of Dust* (1934) demonstrates how enduring the role of the train and train station is in British fiction in addition to its inclusion of Dickens's novels as the surprisingly durable medium of British culture.