Conspicuous Silences

Implicature and Fictionality in the Victorian Novel

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ABSTRACT

<u>Conspicuous Silences: Implicature and Fictionality in the Victorian Novel</u>

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This dissertation examines the central use of implicature within the Victorian novel. 'Implicature'

denotes a communicative strategy in which a reader must infer the primary meaning of an

utterance from that utterance's relationship to its context, rather than 'decode' explicitly presented

information. While all communications rely on implicature to an extent, the novels examined in

this thesis contain large gaps in their explicit narration and rely primarily on implicature to

communicate central elements of their plots. If readers do not recognise these texts' implicatures,

the texts will often appear incoherent: their implicatures must be acknowledged in order for the

text to be understood. Because little has been said about the central role implicature can play in

fictional narration, this thesis contributes to interpretations of these novels that are currently

being discussed in Victorian literary scholarship, as well as literary pragmatic debates about the

use of implicature within fictional texts.

     The dissertation's secondary aim is to examine the implicatures which may be generated

by the author's exploitation of certain reader assumptions. It focuses on the reader's potential

assumption of narratorial omniscience, and relates it to the reader assumption of the narrative's

fictionality. This secondary emphasis contributes to literary pragmatic conceptions of

fictionality, and contributes to narratological discussions of narratorial omniscience.

Chapter One examines represented illegitimate pregnancies in Victorian novels, and

illustrates implicature's use as a politeness strategy. It explains how this use of implicature is

called for by the novels' fictional and Victorian contexts. Chapter Two discusses implicatures

which communicate characters' semiconscious romantic desires, and relates these representations

to Victorian discourses on the unconscious and narratological scholarship on consciousness

representation. Chapter Three discusses the central use of implicature in sensation fiction to

create narrative 'puzzles', and connects the ensuing playful, sometimes offensive tone to these

implicatures' satire of the realist mode.

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My last thank you is to my family for their warm support and encouragement. I'd like to thank my sister Effie for being a wonderful friend, and my grandmother Toby Schuldiner for always having time to chat. Mom and Dad: thank you for everything, this dissertation is dedicated to you.

This dissertation uses the formatting and referencing style advised by the <u>MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers</u>, 7th ed. A few exceptions have been made: I have followed the quotation, spelling, and punctuation conventions of British English, both within the main text of the dissertation and in the Works Cited. I followed the guidelines set forth in the 6th edition of the <u>MLA Handbook</u> when the 7th did not address the issue at hand. The spacing advised in the <u>Faculty of English Language and Literature PRS/D.Phil. Handbook 2008-09</u> was adopted.

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Introduction

Pragmatics and Fictional Narrative

Chapter fourteen of William Thackeray's <u>Vanity Fair</u> begins with the aged Miss Crawley

returning home with a mystery guest. The guest is first referred to as 'a young lady' who

accompanies the elderly woman into the house, and the end of the first paragraph places

emphasis on the 'young companion' by detailing her actions instead of Miss Crawley's (167).

Soon after, the reader learns that Miss Briggs, Miss Crawley's devoted companion of decades, is

upset that a 'stranger was administering [Miss Crawley's] medicines—a stranger from the

country—an odious Miss . . .' (168, ellipses in original). From this point onwards, the passage

depicts the acts of the unidentified 'new companion', following her as she greets Rawdon

Crawley (Miss Crawley's nephew) and leads him downstairs for a private conversation in which

they talk 'for ten minutes, discussing, no doubt, the symptoms of the old invalid above

stairs' (168). For two pages more this mystery character is conspicuously referred to as 'the new

nurse', the 'young person', and 'the person' repeatedly (168-69), with the narrator asking 'Who

could this young woman be, I wonder?' (168).

The emphasis placed on this mystery guest's unknown identity is obtrusively salient,

transgressing many of the narrative rules the text has previously established. It is not only that

this lack of central narrative information (the main actor's identity) is repeatedly noted, or that

the omission of the information obtrusively breaks away from the focalisation code of the

passage (all other characters, even those not previously known to the reader, are named by the

narrator). The lack of narrative information is particularly conspicuous because it is out of

keeping with the focalisation code of the entire narrative. The preceding chapters have

established a context in which the (often intrusive) narrator is omniscient, cattily ridiculing the

innermost secrets and tendencies of a large roster of characters. It is, then, especially salient that

the narrator appears not to know the most basic elements of a character's identity, let alone those

of a character who is central to the passage.

The interest of this passage does not end with its salient lack of explicitly stated

information. Soon after, the identity of the 'young lady' is explicitly given as 'Miss Rebecca

Sharp (for such, astonishing to state, is the name of her who has been described ingeniously as

"the person" hitherto)' (170). The narrator's revelation is, of course, not a true revelation at all, in

that the reader is likely to have been certain of 'the person['s]' identity for the duration of the

narrator's evasiveness. Becky Sharp has been the narrative's protagonist for thirteen chapters,

and unmistakeable clues evidence Becky's identity even as the narrator explicitly withholds it.

Becky's perfect execution of tasks and trademark sarcasm are present in the actions attributed to

'the person', and she is, at that point in the narrative, the person most likely to be (and most

desirous of) holding private conversations with Rawdon Crawley. The context of the omniscient

narrator's 'gaps' of information communicates what is explicitly withheld, ironising the 'astonish

[ment]' over Becky's identity and rendering plainly disingenuous narratorial inquiries such as

'Who could this young woman be, I wonder?'. The narrator's blatant obfuscation provides an

implicit commentary on the obvious whereabouts of his protagonist, suggesting that they are

accompanied by transparently dubious intentions (just as the reader can detect Becky's presence,

he can detect the audacious motivations which spur it). This obfuscation also poses Becky's

identity as a puzzle, albeit one that is only facetiously posed: it allows the reader to 'guess'

correctly and creates an in-joke between narrator and reader.

The above reading highlights a deliberate refusal of explicitness that can be found in

many descriptions in fiction. This dissertation discusses the technique by which Thackeray and

other Victorian authors communicate narrative propositions without explicitly stating them, and

the various motives they had for doing so. This technique is most precisely denoted by the term

'implicature', which Laurence R. Horn and Gregory Ward define as

> a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is **meant** in a
> speaker's utterance without being part of what is **said**. What a speaker intends to
> communicate is characteristically far richer than what she directly expresses; linguistic
> meaning radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood. (3, emphasis
> in original)

The underdetermination inherent in linguistic communication forces much of the responsibility

for communication onto non-coded (that is, not figurative or explicit) methods: information is

inferred rather than decoded. Implicature is the term for a proposition which is communicated

without being encoded: it involves, as Roger Fowler characterises it, 'what is said "between the

lines"', a method of communication that relies heavily on the interaction between text and

context to generate meaning (135). Implicature is a central topic of study within the linguistic

field of pragmatics, which concentrates on the effect that context has on the interpretation of

utterances.

To date, literary criticism has paid a great deal of attention to the use of implicature in character dialogue but has largely neglected this aspect of linguistic communication in the narration of fictional plot. Linguistic criticism (literary pragmatics included) has explored this technique extensively but, as I shall show, has tended to neglect larger, more central instances of implicature and authors' exploitations of contexts of fictionality to generate implicatures. This is partly because most literary criticism (including linguistic criticism of fiction) has failed to look beyond explicit and figurative modes of communication in its analysis of fiction, and partly because literary pragmatics has largely failed to consider fictionality itself as a context, indicative of certain background assumptions that fiction writers can exploit to generate implicatures. A schema that refers to implicature and contexts of fictionality can more clearly explain how Thackeray communicates Becky's presence than most schemas currently available within literary and linguistic criticism.

This dissertation will discuss the previously underexamined role that implicatures can play in fictional narrative. I aim to illustrate how authors use implicature to communicate central elements of plot without stating them, and how narrative techniques using implicature often rely on the narrative's fictionality (that is, on the recognisable liberties and constraints associated with its being invented) for their effect. I also hope to show that, in addition to being motivated by such intuitive considerations as politeness and efficient characterisation, implicature may be used for its own sake because it is a source of reading pleasure.

The remaining sections of this introduction will trace the history of concepts that are central to my thesis through the evolving fields of narrative theory, pragmatics, and literary pragmatics. This overview will highlight some critical gaps that persist in many narratological

and literary pragmatic studies, and will suggest that the relevance theoretic approach which

follows offers the most revealing way of addressing these neglected areas.

Narratological Discussions of Gaps

While to date there has not been much literary criticism concerned with why authors use

implicature to communicate plot, there has been a great deal written on 'gaps' in the explicit

narration of plot. Pierre Macherey writes that what 'is important in [a literary] work is what it

does not say', but he clarifies that 'this is not the same as the careless notation "what it refuses to

say" . . . . what the work *cannot say* is important' (87). Geoffrey Wall explains that Macherey is

interested in the 'repressed presence of those ideological materials which are transformed in the

labour of literary production' (viii). Toni Morrison's concept of 'unspeakable things unspoken' is

similar, though as much psychological as political in emphasis: it refers to the narration of

traumatic experiences, or, as Abdellatif Khayati writes, it resonates 'with the silence surrounding

many things repressed in the African American unconsciousness, or distorted beyond recognition

in the American Africanist discourse' (318). Perhaps the best-known discussions of gaps within

literary theory occur within its psychoanalytic branch, in which Sigmund Freud's concept of

'repression' is applied to notable absences within narratives. Freud once defined repression as

'turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious' (569-70).   In applying

the concept of psychoanalytic repression to narratives, explicit language would roughly correlate

with 'the conscious'. While Macherey, Morrison, and Freud discuss narrative silences, then, their

work focuses more on the political, ideological, and psychological forces producing inevitable

literary silences than on the technical manipulation of strictly unnecessary silences within literary texts.

Narratologists have considered other types of gap in their analyses of fictional texts. Mieke Bal discusses a broader conceptualisation of narrative 'gaps'; her discussion of ellipses is useful in its reference to the potential motivations of authors in eliding narrative information. In Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (2nd ed 1997), (still a standard student introduction to narrative theory) Bal writes that

> An ellipsis cannot be perceived: according to the definition, nothing is indicated in the story about the amount of fabula-time involved. If nothing is indicated, we cannot know what should have been indicated either. All we can do, sometimes, is logically deduce on the basis of certain information that something has been omitted. . . . That which has been omitted—the contents of the ellipsis—need not be unimportant; on the contrary, the event about which nothing is said may have been so painful that it is being elided for precisely that reason. Or the event is so difficult to put into words that it is preferable to maintain complete silence about it. Another possibility . . . is the situation in which, though the event has taken place, the actor wants to deny that fact. By keeping silent about it, he attempts to undo it. Thus the ellipsis is used to magical purposes, as an exorcism. . . .
>   How are we to become aware of these ellipses, which can, apparently, be so important that it seems worth the trouble to look for them? To begin with, our attention is sometimes directed towards an elided event because of a retroversion. . . . Mention is made of the time that has been skipped. If a text reads:
>
> a When I was back in New York after two years.
>
> We know exactly how much time has been left out. . . . In fact, this is no longer an ellipsis, but could be called a minimal summary, or rather, a summary with maximum speed: two years in one sentence. (103)

Bal then designates such an ellipsis as a 'pseudo-ellipsis, or mini-summary' but explains that the 'borderline between these two tempi is flexible' (103-04). In effect she claims that detectable ellipses are both ellipses and summaries, and her definition of a true ellipsis as an undetectable ellipsis is maintained without further defence or analysis.

In discussing how an elision can be used to mirror a diegetic 'situation in which, though the event has taken place, the actor wants to deny that fact', Bal notes one of narrative language's most basic features: its capacity to mimic and consequently emphasise the psychology of its characters. This seemingly obvious function of narrative omissions plays little part in most discussions of omissions, despite its near ubiquity in classic realist fiction.[1] As the above analysis of the passage from <u>Vanity Fair</u> shows, ellipses can also be used to communicate character psychologies and intentions in less mimetic ways, highlighting, for instance, that a character's actions and intentions are not fully represented to the reader or the other characters. In the passage from <u>Vanity Fair</u>, these highlighted gaps indicate the immoral intentions which motivate Becky's seemingly benign presence in Miss Crawley's household.

The capacity that narrative gaps have to emphasise character psychology finds no place in Robyn R. Warhol's more recent discussion of narrative gaps. In her 2006 discussion of Gerald Prince's work, Warhol posited different categories into which Prince's concept of the 'unnarratable' could be divided. Warhol defines the 'unnarratable' in detail:

> Prince's <u>Dictionary of Narratology</u> defines 'the narratable' as 'that which is worthy of being told; that which is susceptible of or calls for narration' (Prince 1987: 56). If '*unnarratable*' (which Prince does not define in the dictionary) is to be the antonym for this term, then it would mean 'that which is unworthy of being told,' 'that which is not susceptible to narration,' and 'that which does not call for narration' or perhaps 'those circumstances under which narration is uncalled for.' Prince does define the 'unnarratable' as 'that which, *according to a given narrative*, cannot be narrated or is not worth narrating either because it transgresses a law (social, authorial, generic, formal) or because it defies the powers of the particular narrator (or those of any narrator) or because it falls below the so-called threshold of narratability (it is not sufficiently unusual or problematic)' (Prince 1988: 1). ('Neonarrative' 222, emphasis in original)

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[1] While a few narratologists (like Bal) have touched upon this use of narrative elisions, I have found none who discuss it at length. Patricia Ingham notes that, as with the representation of Arthur Clennam's love for Pet Meagles in <u>Little Dorrit</u>, Esther Summerson's refusal in <u>Bleak House</u> 'to allow Woodcourt to enter the text figures her inability to let him penetrate her life' (104). As will be discussed later, literary pragmaticists have been more thorough in their exploration of how novelists use narrative gaps to communicate character psychologies.

While Warhol's stated aim is to show 'How to Render the Unnarratable in Realist Fiction and Contemporary Film' ('Neonarrative'), her article focuses on expanding on Prince's statements, using his definition of 'unnarratable' as a starting point for discussion of different types of 'unnarratable' information. Warhol does not mean to provide 'an exhaustive list of all possible forms of the unnarratable' ('Neonarrative' 222), but instead focuses on the four categories of the unnarratable that are most closely indicated by Prince's definition. These categories are the 'subnarratable', the 'supranarratable', the 'antinarratable', and the 'paranarratable'.

The subnarratable refers to material that is inevitably omitted in consideration of the finite space available to any narrative. It is 'what needn't be told because it's "normal"', or, in context, generically or otherwise conventionally predictable ('Neonarrative' 222). The absence of much that is subnarratable from narrative is standard, and it is its inclusion that is unusual and that calls into question the reliability of the narration, alerting the reader that there is more to the story than what is being explicitly narrated.

Unlike the subnarratable, which 'is not worth narrating', the supranarratable 'can't be told' ('Neonarrative' 222). Warhol defines the supranarratable as 'what can't be told because it's "ineffable"', clarifying that it is comprised of 'those events that defy narrative, foregrounding the inadequacy of language or of visual image to achieve full representation, even of fictitious events' ('Neonarrative' 223). The supranarratable is never present in fiction because it is impossible to represent. Warhol points out that it is, however, possible to indicate the presence of the supranarratable by asserting the impossibility of narrating it. George Eliot uses this technique when communicating Hetty Sorrel's extraordinary beauty in Adam Bede:

It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty's cheek was like a rose-petal, that dimples played about her pouting lips, that her large dark eyes hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes, and that her curly hair, though all pushed back under her round cap while she was at work, stole back in dark delicate rings on her forehead, and about her white shell-like ears; it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink and white neckerchief, tucked into her low plum-coloured stuff bodice, or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines, or how her brown stockings and thick-soled buckled shoes lost all that clumsiness which they must have had when empty of her foot and ankle;—of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders, for otherwise, though you might conjure up the image of a lovely woman, she would not in the least resemble that distracting kitten-like maiden. (146)

While this passage presents lush and evocative detail of Hetty's physicality, Eliot's professed inability fully to communicate Hetty's attraction ('It is of little use for me to tell you . . . it is of little use for me to say . . . of little use') invalidates the description, displacing the burden of it from the text to the reader's imagination. The details given are characterised as insufficient, marking the extent of Hetty's beauty as both emphasised and withheld.

The 'antinarratable' is both worthy of being narrated and capable of being represented. Its unnarratability results from its 'transgress[ion] of social laws or taboos': it is 'what shouldn't be told because of social convention' ('Neonarrative' 224). Warhol points out that

Sex in realist Victorian novels, for instance, is always antinarratable, and can only be known by its results as they play themselves out in the plot (for instance in the presence of new babies, disillusioned hearts, or ruined reputations). As I have written elsewhere, Victorian narrative uses euphemism, allusion, metaphor, and especially metonymy to signify sexual connection between characters, but never narration. ('Neonarrative' 224)

Warhol's claim that sex 'can only be known by its results as they play themselves out in the plot' suggests that the audience's knowledge of the characters' sexual activities in these novels is necessary to the coherence of the narratives. However, many of the culture-specific, once-pervasive codes used to effect the mentioned tropes are now antiquated; current readers, for instance, may be unfamiliar with Victorian-era euphemisms. The continuing popularity of these

novels evidences the presence of some subtle means of communication that demarcates the

figurative language employed *as* figurative (that is, which alerts current readers that the

euphemism must be interpreted as a euphemism). Implicature is this 'subtle means'. Warhol's

discussion also shows the way in which the 'antinarratable' status of much sexual activity has

changed over time: while Victorian readers would have expected no direct narration of sexual

acts, modern readers might be occasionally surprised, or even confused, by the absence of a

diegetic occurrence that is central to the narrative and that is no longer considered indecent to

represent in fiction.[2]

Warhol is particularly interested in the 'paranarratable', or 'what wouldn't be told because

of formal convention' ('Neonarrative' 226). 'Formal conventions' are, briefly, those conventions

that are associated with the genre or medium in which the narrative is told (as opposed to 'social

conventions', which are associated with their social context). Surprisingly, she depicts the

paranarratable as more rigidly unnarratable than the antinarratable. Warhol writes that

> Laws of literary generic convention are more inflexible, I believe, than laws of social
> convention, and have led throughout literary history to more instances of unnarratability
> than even taboo has led. My students always look puzzled when I tell them that there
> were many more possibilities for the life-stories of real Victorian women than there were
> for Victorian heroines: it's counterintuitive, because fiction would seemingly be limited
> only by imagination, while 'real life,' as the students call it, is bound to follow the dictates
> of what undergraduates like to call 'society.' ('Neonarrative' 226)

While Warhol's description of the paranarratable rings true, the introduction of the concept

problematises her other categories of the unnarratable. For instance, Warhol discusses 'the visual

revelation' of the protagonist's penis in the film <u>Boogie Nights</u> (1997) as the introduction of

antinarratable material, but then notes that that 'moment in <u>Boogie Nights</u> functions as

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[2] The Victorian fiction author's use of implicature to convey sexual acts will be discussed in Chapter One.

neonarrative [a generic innovation] for Hollywood film, but it would be unremarkable in, for example, a porn film, as it would in a photograph by Robert Mapplethorpe' ('Neonarrative' 228). With the existence of porn films and sexually explicit art in mind, the protagonist's penis becomes visually paranarratable rather than antinarratable. And the same logic can be discovered in the representation of Victorian sexuality: as Warhol observes in her discussion of the antinarratable, it is in 'realist' Victorian novels that the representation of sex is omitted from the text. This statement is not at odds with the existence or the content of Victorian pornography. While Warhol does discuss the possibility of manipulating the unnarratable into instances of neonarrative, she does not address the implied tendency of the subnarratable and antinarratable to collapse into the paranarratable. In other words, the subnarratable and the antinarratable are only unnarratable within certain texts; within other texts, subnarratable and antinarratable material may be admissible information. In effect, her conclusions indicate that, apart from the supranarratable, all unnarratable information is a product of its generic context; of the subnarratable, antinarratable, and paranarratable, only the paranarratable is a verifiable concept. While Warhol's categories are critical to discussions of underlying authorial motivations for gaps, their collapsibility illustrates the necessity of acknowledging all gaps' contexts when analysing their narrative significance.

Warhol's taxonomy of the unnarratable uses authorial motivation to distinguish between different types of gap that appear in texts. While she focuses primarily on gaps in novels that are irrelevant to my critical aim (in that they represent the complete absence, rather than inexplicit presence, of information in texts), Warhol's emphasis on authorial motivation is relevant because an author's motives for omitting information from her text are likely to be similar to her motives

for employing implicature instead of explicit narration. The antinarratable, for instance, is often

a source of implicature, in that it is both 'worthy' and capable of being told, but is often not

explicitly mentioned. The author's ability to communicate occurrences that were at once integral

to his or her plot and unmentionable in polite society evidences implicature's strong presence in

Victorian fiction, and highlights the need for identification and analysis of implicature in literary

criticism.

Victorian uses of implicature highlight another way in which 'gaps' in narratives have not

been adequately differentiated in the critical literature. In her 2007 article, 'Narrative Refusals

and Generic Transformation in Austen and James: What Doesn't Happen in <u>Northanger Abbey</u>

and <u>The Spoils of Poynton</u>', Warhol asserts that the 'narrative refusal', or the explicit discussion

of unnarrated events, can be 'a strategy for addressing the unnarratable in fiction, rather than

simply keeping quiet about it' (259). She further defines 'narrative refusal' in terms of

'disnarration' and 'unnarration', the two particular strategies in question. 'Disnarration', as defined

by Gerald Prince in 1988, is made up of the 'terms, phrases, and passages that consider what did

not or does not take place' ('Disnarrated' 3). 'Unnarration' is Warhol's own term, and refers to

'asserting that what did happen cannot be retold in words, or explicitly indicating that what

happened will not be narrated because narrating it would be impossible' ('Neonarrative' 222).[3]

When discussing the nonfactual, and consequently ambiguous, portrayal of the beloved's

affection for the heroine in <u>The Spoils of Poynton</u>, Warhol notes that 'narrative refusal does not

block narrative transmission' ('Narrative Refusals' 259). However, she also claims that

'disnarration [is] responsible for readers' puzzlement over [<u>The Spoils of Poynton</u>'s] action

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[3] In the above example of supranarratability in <u>Adam Bede</u>, George Eliot uses unnarration to communicate Hetty's
beauty.

('Narrative Refusals' 263), and at other points characterises the novel as 'Obscured by James's

disnarration' ('Narrative Refusals' 262). Warhol seems to claim that narrative refusals both

communicate and obscure diegetic information simultaneously; however, she never explicitly

comments on this dual (and sometimes simultaneous) application of narrative refusals. A

discussion of implicature would clarify this ambiguity by showing how the language used to

construct some omissions functions simultaneously to communicate information inexplicitly, and

by differentiating omissions of this kind ('false' omissions) from those omissions which are

'true'.[4]

Warhol's discussion does not take into account the exploitation of narrative gaps for

psychological mimesis. She also does not address narrative gaps' potential uses in the creation of

narrative games or the communication of inexplicit plot lines. The narrative omission of Becky's

identity pertains to no content that could be classed as subnarratable, supranarratable,

antinarratable, or paranarratable; but it does further an inexplicit plot line in which Becky

continues to milk everyone she meets for as much money as possible (her kindness to Miss

Crawley is due to her large fortune, old age, and liking for Becky's secret fiancé Rawdon).

While Warhol states that her four categories were 'not meant to be an exhaustive list of all

possible forms of the unnarratable', the instances of omission (and accompanying implicature) in

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[4] A similar ambiguity is found in many narratological discussions of gaps. Above, Bal discusses the reader's ability
to discern an ellipsis, but not the information of which it is comprised. In The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative
(2nd ed. 2008) H. Porter Abbott identifies a crux as a 'critical point, often a gap, in a fictional narrative where there
is an insufficiency of cues, or where cues are sufficiently ambiguous, to create a major disagreement in the
intentional interpretation of the narrative' (231). Abbott does not differentiate between genuine omissions (those we
cannot fill in) and the 'false omissions' that implicatures fill, and consequently leaves unacknowledged 'gaps' in
which explicit narration is not used but narrative information is still unambiguously communicated to the reader.
This is not to say that a discussion of narrative ambiguity is not informative and necessary in its own right; as Abbott
points out, there are conspicuous narrative gaps that function to communicate ambiguity rather than unambiguous
narrative information. However, there are also gaps in explicit narration in which unambiguous, central narrative
information is nonetheless communicated; despite its pervasiveness this second possibility has been neglected by
narrative theory.

Vanity Fair are not even unnarratable: if we look back at Warhol's carefully detailed definition of

the unnarratable, we see that the motivation behind Thackeray's omissions is incongruent with

the types of motivation that Warhol discusses. While Warhol details motivations that have to do

with the author's interaction with real-life readers via the text, the motivation behind the

omissions drawn from Vanity Fair involves rather the author's desire to fashion a certain

narrative tone, and to communicate Becky's motives (and a derisive judgment on those motives)

by way of something other than explicit description.

Warhol does not discuss the potential exploitation of the concept of the unnarratable to

effect implicature, a topic which Wolfgang Iser peripherally touches on in The Implied Reader

(first published as Der Implizite Leser: Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis

Beckettwake, 1972; trans. 1974).[5] Iser limits his discussion to narrative gaps that are deliberate,

and is primarily concerned with showing that authors may have a didactic agenda in withholding

explicitly communicated information from readers. In a typical section of his analysis, Iser

discusses an episode from Henry Fielding's Joseph Andrews (1742). Joseph has just resisted the

sexual advances of Lady Booby, and her surprise at his resistance is described in terms of the

supranarratable (although of course neither Fielding nor Iser uses the technical term coined by

Warhol). Fielding makes it clear that through no artistic medium 'could you receive such an idea

of surprise as would have entered in at your eyes had they beheld the Lady Booby when those

last words issued out from the lips of Joseph' (qtd. in Implied 37). Iser writes that

> The nondescription of Lady Booby's surprise, and the insistence on its inconceivability,
> create a gap in the text. The narrative breaks off, so that the reader has room to enter
> it . . . . Thus the reader's imagination is left free to paint in the scene . . . . This is why the

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[5] The Implied Reader is a seminal text within reader-response theory, but has also influenced decades of narrative theory. While The Implied Reader has necessarily influenced my research, my thesis is situated squarely in literary pragmatics, which is more heavily stylistic than reader-response criticism.

character suddenly comes to life in the reader—he is creating instead of merely observing. And so the deliberate gaps in the narrative are the means by which the reader is enabled to bring both scenes and characters to life . . . . The technique mobilizes the reader's imagination, not only in order to bring the narrative itself to life but also—and even more essentially—to sharpen his sense of discernment. (38-39)

Iser's analysis shows an understanding of the greater empathy with characters that accompanies greater reader participation. It also describes how this reader participation comes about: it is because the reader 'is creating instead of merely observing' that he can more fully grasp the emotional nuances of the scene. Iser's emphasis on the psychological processes necessary to discern the meaning of Fielding's deliberate gaps is characteristic of reader-response criticism, and draws attention to how readers are likely to interpret Fielding's characterisation of Lady Booby's surprise as supranarratable. Unlike Hetty's beauty, Lady Booby's surprise is not particularly inexpressible or in the typical range of supranarratable diegetic information. To narrate Lady Booby's surprise by unnarration is to suggest that it is supranarratable, and to characterise Lady Booby's surprise as supranarratable is to employ hyperbole for satiric purposes. It is not that Fielding means to communicate that Lady Booby does not really appear surprised (that is, he does not mean to communicate the opposite of what he states) but that he exaggerates her surprise to ridicule her excessive self-satisfaction and confidence in seducing Joseph.

The author's motivation and the reader's interpretation play out in the following way: Fielding uses unnarration to imply that Lady Booby's surprise is supranarratable. The presentation of Lady Booby's surprise as supranarratable is hyperbolic because conventionally it would be well within the bounds of what can be narrated: neither Lady Booby nor the emotion of surprise is usually presented as supranarratable. Here the reader may detect a second 'gap'

lurking behind the more obvious unnarration of Lady Booby's surprise: the disjunction between text and context. As Iser writes in his analysis of <u>Vanity Fair</u>, 'empty spaces are bound to occur, spurring the reader's imagination to detect the assumption which might have motivated the narrator's attitude' (106). A similar reader-text interaction can be seen in Iser's example from <u>Joseph Andrews</u>: the disjunction between Fielding's unnarration and the rest of his characterisation of Lady Booby catches the reader's attention, 'spurring the reader's imagination' to attempt identification with the narratorial voice. Hyperbole and, consequentially, satire of Lady Booby are the authorial aims that most readers automatically detect. The passage is, in short, fully consistent with Fielding's sense that one of the primary purposes of comedy should be the exposure of folly and affectation.

Warhol does not address possible reversals of her formulae such as are suggested by the Fielding example: that is, the author's ability to use unnarration to claim a supranarratability that is obviously ironic. This use of unnarration (and other similar techniques) to communicate inexplicit propositions is little recognised in narrative theory. An illustration of the central role implicature sometimes plays in fiction would disambiguate both classic (Iser's) and contemporary (Bal's and Warhol's) conceptualisations of gaps.

<u>Literary Pragmatics</u>

Pragmatics acts as a counterweight in linguistics, providing a venue through which to discuss meaning that is not directly reliant on semantics. Originating in the 1960s with Searle's speech act theory and H.P. Grice's theories about implicature, pragmatics is now a prominent field

within linguistics. It is internationally studied, with watershed theories continuing to appear

today.

While literary pragmatics is not a large field, it is an established discipline within

stylistics, is recognised by pragmaticists, and is on the cusp of narrative studies. To date, literary

pragmatics has remained primarily the province of specialists, so it is necessary to provide a

short introduction to the field before addressing its contribution to discussions of narrative gaps

and implicature. In the process of covering this fairly general ground I will introduce concepts

and terminology that are relevant to my thesis, and will provide a foundation on which to

characterise the contribution of this dissertation to discussions in literary pragmatics, narrative

theory, and the Victorian novel.

In 1988 Gerald Prince wrote that

Perhaps the most striking difference between what might be called the classical
narratology of the 1960s and the 1970s and what might be designated as modern
narratology is the increased attention paid to pragmatics. During the past few years,
because of the repeated (sociolinguistic) reminders about the importance of
communicative contexts, because of the great interest among literary critics and theorists
in the receiver and his or her decoding strategies, because of the growing number of
cognition-oriented studies, and because of the (renewed) awareness that narrative must be
viewed not only as an object or product but also as an act or process, as a situation-bound
transaction between two parties, as an exchange resulting from the desire of at least one
of these parties, a number of narratologists have begun to develop a narrative pragmatics.
('Disnarrated' 7)

In her 2006 essay in Blackwell's <u>A Companion to Narrative Theory</u>, Warhol asserts that 'we are

still practicing Prince's "modern narratology," and the concerns he cites still motivate what has

evolved into a fundamentally pragmatic approach to texts' ('Neonarrative' 220). However, there

is little consensus about what 'literary pragmatics' (as I refer to it) should be termed, and the main strands of literary pragmatics can be quite disparate in their approaches.[6]

Unstable though the terminology is, all critics agree in situating literary pragmatics clearly within the larger literary subfield of stylistics. The varying terminology reflects varying characterisations of the field, sometimes within the work of a single critic: one leading practitioner, Jacob L. Mey, has characterised literary pragmatics as the study of the 'user's role in the societal production and consumption of texts' ('Literary Pragmatics' 256) and alternatively as the 'science of the unsaid' (Pragmatics 194). While these two definitions emphasise different aspects of the same field, they also represent an undecided primary aim within it. Roger D. Sell writes that

> Basically the aim [of literary pragmatics] is to relate the writing and reading of literary texts to the linguistic and sociocultural contexts in which those processes have taken place. This means that literary pragmatics is at one and the same time linguistic and literary, and its unifying emphasis on contextualization also gives it a strongly historical slant. ('Literary Gossip' 232)

Sell's definition of literary pragmatics does justice to how comprehensive the field is, describing pragmatics as concerned with both the sociocultural and textual contexts in which texts are manufactured and interpreted. Realistically, however, the wider scope of the field is usually neglected in favour of a more linguistic or sociological orientation. Literary pragmatics is

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[6] Elizabeth Black, who adopts the title Pragmatic Stylistics for her book, considers the term as synonymous with 'literary pragmatics', noting that 'stylistics has become increasingly interested in using the insights [pragmatics] can offer' (2). In Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding, Geoffrey Leech writes that 'A book edited by Carter and Simpson (1989), Language, Discourse and Literature, describes its subject as "discourse stylistics" . . . . Other terminological proposals—such as literary pragmatics (Sell 1991) and critical discourse stylistics (Weber 1992)—go further in carving out a new conception of the field. But these terms, like "poetics", have a habit of suggesting limitations' (2). Leech proposes his own definition of these terms: he writes that 'Just as pragmatics relates the propositional meaning of an utterance (its "sense") to its implicit meaning (its "force"), and just as discourse analysis relates the text to its discoursal functions, so the main business of stylistics is to relate the literary work, as a text, to its artistic function or significance—to its meaning in the fullest sense' (Language 96). In this thesis I have adopted what I gather to be the most common definitions of the terms, and use 'stylistics' to denote the linguistic study of literature, and 'literary pragmatics' to denote the subfield of stylistics in which the pragmatics of literature is discussed.

unified, however, by its emphasis on explaining existing interpretations of texts rather than generating new readings (Pilkington, MacMahon, and Clark 141; Furlong Modest Proposal 3).

The three main strands of literary pragmatics are those based on speech act theory, those focused on fictional worlds theory, and those that concentrate on individual pragmatic phenomena within texts and usually decline to comment on the ontological status of fictional entities.[7] All three strands tend to discount the fictionality of fictional texts, and usually deemphasise the distinction between fiction and nonfiction.

Mary Louise Pratt's Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse (1977) is still considered the seminal text on the incorporation of speech act theory into literary pragmatics, and is one of the most frequently discussed texts in the field. Although she uses speech act theory as her blueprint for a model of literary discourse, Pratt provides convincing analyses of how such a model may incorporate H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle as well.[8] Speech act theory was developed by J.L. Austin and John Searle in the 1960s. It famously includes the assertion that, when speaking, a person performs a 'locutionary act' ('producing a recognisable grammatical utterance in the given language'), an 'illocutionary act' (the act that is intended by the utterance, such as 'promising', 'commanding', or 'greeting') and a 'perlocutionary act' ('achieving certain intended effects in his hearer in addition to those achieved by the illocutionary act') (Pratt 80-81). However, Pratt concentrates more on the idea of 'appropriateness conditions' (otherwise known as 'felicity conditions'): the extralinguistic

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[7] There are, of course, many examples of each of these three strands. Some of Iser's later work is based on speech act theory, and Laura Hidalgo Downing's work relies heavily on fictional worlds theory. Black, Sell, and Mey are all theorists who concentrate on individual pragmatic phenomena. Richard Walsh develops a neo-Gricean approach to fiction after discounting approaches based on speech act theory and fictional worlds theory.

[8] The capitalisation of these terms varies from text to text. I have followed the advice of Billy Clark, who suggests that 'relevance theory' need not be capitalised but that associated principles should be (personal interview).

conditions which must be met in order for the speech act (the utterance) to be correctly or felicitously performed (81). Pratt believes that 'Literature itself is a speech context' that must be assumed in order for the reader to experience literature *as* literature: the assumption of literariness is the appropriateness condition that must be met in order to experience the literariness of a text (86).

This thesis has interesting implications. Importantly, it disassociates 'literariness' from the text itself and instead identifies 'literariness' versus 'non-literariness' as a schema which the reader imposes upon the text (87); Pratt writes that 'With a context-dependent linguistics, the essence of literariness or poeticality can be said to reside not in the message but in a particular disposition of speaker and audience with regard to the message' (87). Pratt's thesis also indicates that authors can manipulate the assumed literariness of their texts to generate implicatures, purposefully violating conventions of discourse to communicate unwritten information. When discussing passages from Laurence Sterne's <u>Tristram Shandy</u> and Jane Austen's <u>Pride and Prejudice</u>, Pratt writes:

> we know the violations in the Sterne and Austen passages are intentional because of what we know about the circumstances under which literary works are composed, edited, selected, published, and distributed. The literary pre-paration [sic] and preselection processes are designed to eliminate failures which result from carelessness or lack of skill. . . . The preparation and selection processes are designed to reduce the likelihood of there being any 'other way' in works of literature. Textual criticism is built on this assumption. This is not to say, of course, that we do or should assume all literary works to be somehow perfect. It means only that in literary works, the range of deviations which will be construed as unintentional is smaller than in many other speech contexts. Put the other way around, in literary works the range of deviations which will be construed as intentional is much larger. (170).

Pratt's conclusions are aligned with the primary theses proposed in this dissertation; however, her terminology is not. Pratt adamantly advocates that the 'fiction/nonfiction distinction is neither as

clear-cut nor as important as we might think' (143), and she uses the term 'literature' to indicate both fictional and nonfictional texts.[9] Pratt's inclusion of nonfiction in her definition of 'literature' does not make the conclusions glossed above any less valid; it does, however, render her conclusions no more than a starting point for my thesis. While Pratt successfully argues that 'literariness' is most usefully envisioned as a reader assumption rather than as a quality inherent to the text, and that readers' assumptions of literariness do equate an assumption of 'pre-paration and preselection', she does not comment on the effect that an assumed context of fictionality has on reader interpretation.

Pratt's demotion of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction is difficult to maintain. Many of the implicatures which she analyses rely on the fiction reader's assumption of the narrative's fictionality, and his or her familiarity with certain conventions specific to fiction. Pratt repeatedly, for instance, returns to the narrative meanderings and half-propositions of <u>Tristram Shandy</u>'s narrator (163-66, 169, 170, 174, 175, etc.). While she initially explains the reader's tolerance for (and active endeavour to interpret meaning from) superficially inept narration as a result of the text's having been 'composed, edited, selected, published, and distributed', she later acknowledges that the reader is able to make sense of (and not be annoyed by) this faulty narration because of the assumed fictionality of the narrator; Tristram Shandy may be a terrible narrator, but Sterne is not (174). The seemingly inept narration of the novel functions to display Tristram's 'naiveté or ignorance' without explicitly describing it; Tristram is showing his ignorance and confusion in spite of himself, adding a level of dramatic irony to Sterne's writing (174).

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[9] See also pages 91, 96, and 199-200 for Pratt's arguments against the importance of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in critical theory.

Pratt explains the role that fictionality plays in the creation of such implicatures by characterising all fiction as 'imitation speech acts' (173). In these imitation speech acts the real-life author mimetically portrays a fictional speaker, and it is the duality between the two 'sources' of text that makes many implicatures possible (173-74). Pratt resolves these implicatures' reliance on fictionality by reminding her readers that 'fictive or "imitation" speech acts are readily found in almost any realm of discourse, and our ability to produce and interpret them must be viewed as part of our normal linguistic and cognitive competence, and not some special by-product of it' (200). While Pratt's reasoning is sound, it is still the fictionality of these texts (or mimetic quality of the utterances) that allows these implicatures to occur. It is Tristram's status as 'invented' that triggers readers' background assumptions about fiction, and causes them to interpret the text differently from how they would interpret nonfiction ones. In this way, reading Tristram Shandy differs greatly from interpreting speech acts that are found in nonfiction 'realm[s] of discourse'; the reader's literary competence allows him or her to have complete faith in the earnestness of the narrator (Tristram), while attributing irony to the author (Sterne). Such a complete schism is impossible in nonfiction texts, and shows that there are greater differences in how fiction and nonfiction are interpreted than Pratt suggests. As illustrated above, these differences extend to the potential implicatures generated by and deduced from the text.

The second strand of literary pragmatics is based on fictional worlds theory, popularised by Marie-Laure Ryan. My own research is compatible with much of what this strand of literary pragmatics asserts, but resists some of its larger implications about the experience of reading fiction. Fictional worlds theory is based on the philosophical concept of possible worlds theory,

which discusses probability as a series of hypothetical alternate worlds. In possible worlds

theory our objective reality is discussed as the 'Actual World' ('AW'). Surrounding our AW is a

'universe of possibilities', which is constituted of all conceivable situations not found in our AW

(M. Ryan 18). These unactualised conceivable situations are 'Alternative Possible

Worlds' ('APW'), and are made up of hypotheticals, counterfactuals, and 'unactualized possible

worlds and . . . unactualized possibilities' (M. Ryan 18). An APW is itself surrounded by its own

specific 'universe of possibilities', and those in an APW conceive of their world as an AW, and

can only conceive of our AW as an APW of their own.

In her 1991 text Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory, Marie-

Laure Ryan discusses the ontological status of fictional objects; as she writes, the 'main legacy of

possible-world theory to textual semiotics is an interest in the problem of truth in fiction and in

the relations between semantic domains and reality—two questions considered heretic by

orthodox structuralism' (3). Like Pratt, she distinguishes between literature and fiction (1);

unlike Pratt, Ryan makes defining 'fictionality' one of her primary aims (3). As follows from the

basic tenets of fictional worlds theory, the 'problematic status of fiction as a nonexistent object is

tackled by possible world theories by defining fictional worlds as possible states of

affairs' (Downing 11). Ryan assigns the status of APW to all fictions, but it is not the APW-

status of a narrative that defines it as fiction; rather, it is the 'recentering' of our experience

around the APW. Ryan explains that

> For the duration of our immersion in a work of fiction, the realm of possibilities is thus
> recentered around the sphere which the narrator presents as the actual world. This
> recentering pushes the reader into a new system of actuality and possibility. As a traveler
> to this system, the reader of fiction discovers not only a new actual world, but a variety of
> APWs revolving around it. (22)

'Recentering' is intuitively appreciated as central to the activity of reading fiction; it is how readers identify with and are able to cognitively process the narrative, and how some readers even temporarily lose track of their AW in the fiction-reading process. Ryan insists that recentering is at the core of experiencing fictionality. She writes:

> The idea of a plurality of systems of reality makes it possible to use the notions of actual and possible world [sic] in the characterization of fiction without resorting to this tempting but fallacious generalization: nonfictional texts describe the actual world; fictional ones describe alternative possible worlds. This generalization is confounded by the presence of an actual world in the universe of fictional texts, and the presence of possible worlds in the universe of nonfictional ones. Because of the common modal structure of most textual universes, both fictional and nonfictional discourse may contain factual statements, referring to the actual world of the system, and nonfactual ones, representing its alternatives. In a nonfactual statement, the speaker describes an APW from an external point of view, while in fiction, the writer relocates to what is for us a mere possible world, and makes it the center of an alternative system of reality. If this recentering is indeed the gesture constitutive of fiction, the above generalization can be replaced by the following: nonfictional texts describe a system of reality whose center is occupied by the actually actual world; fictional ones refer to a system whose actual world is from an absolute point of view an APW. (24)

The prominence of recentering in Ryan's account of experiencing fictionality is much of what makes her theory a pragmatic one: while she devotes much of her book to streamlining Searle's and Pratt's earlier claims, she also differentiates fictional worlds theory from previous literary pragmatic theories based on speech act theory. For instance, she disagrees with Pratt about what can constitute a fiction: while Pratt believes that 'hyperbole, teasing, "kidding around," imitations, verbal play' and more qualify as fiction (63), Ryan points out that 'While the pretense of fiction lures the hearer into an alternative system of reality in order to contemplate it for its own sake, verbal play remains much more firmly rooted in the AW. The point of the devil's

advocate who argues for a cause he or she does not believe in is to address real issues', not those of a fictional world (63).[10]

Ryan's and Pratt's theories are similar in that they both believe in an assumed duality of sources in fictional texts: the implied author and narrator. Ryan writes that the 'referential divorce between the I of the actual world and the relocated I of the textual universe in fictional communication invites us to reconsider the problem of fictionality in terms of the relation between the two subjects and their respective discourse' (61). Although Ryan and Pratt arrive at this conclusion of communicator-duality through two different approaches to literary pragmatics, they agree that it is intrinsic to fictionality; it is one way in which 'the problem of fictionality' may be considered and articulated. Ryan builds on this proposition, claiming that one of the fundamental differences between fictional and nonfictional literature is that, in fiction, it is possible for the narrative voice to be overridden by perceived authorial intention. In nonfiction, where the narrator and the author are assumed to be the same person, such an override (with its accompanying irony-laden implicatures) is not possible (113). Both Pratt's and Ryan's theories, then, evidence the difference that the assumption of a fictional (as opposed to a nonfictional) context will make in text interpretation, but Ryan's writing addresses the fiction/nonfiction divide explicitly.

While Ryan's text is largely about readers' interpretations of fiction, her distinction between the author and narrator of fictional narratives is one of the few concrete discussions she provides of how a context of fictionality affects reader interpretation. In her schema, the AW reader is temporarily transported to the APW of the fiction—negating in many ways the APW *as*

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[10] While Ryan's assertions about recentering do not pertain only to realistic fiction, she does claim that the types of mental shifts that a reader performs when recentering are reflective of the mode of fiction that is being read (43-44).

an APW and correspondingly emphasising the aspects of a fiction reader's experience which allow him or her to interpret the fiction as a nonfiction. While fictional worlds theory posits a convincing argument about how readers rationalise the ontological status of fictional narratives, it deemphasises the reader's understanding of the text as a fiction, and in consequence pays little attention to how the fictionality of the text affects the reader's interpretation of it.

The third strand of literary pragmatic enquiry—which provides pragmatic analyses of various literary conventions—is predictably fragmented but is also unified to an extent by its neo-Gricean approach. H.P. Grice's 1967 lectures on the Cooperative Principle are generally considered as the 'landmark event in the development of a systematic framework for pragmatics' (Horn and Ward xi). In 1975 Grice published a condensed version of his lectures, in which he claimed that there is a principle by which all conversations are regulated: 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' (45). Grice named this general rule the Cooperative Principle. He divided the Principle into the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, all of which express conversational 'rules' that people unconsciously acknowledge when conversing (45-46).

Grice's most prominent legacy to the field of pragmatics is his coinage of the term 'implicature', which was briefly discussed earlier. Grice introduces this term in his discussion of the Cooperative Principle. Implicature occurs when a speaker 'flouts' a maxim by 'BLATANTLY fail[ing] to fulfill it' (49). Grice famously provides the following example of implicature:

A is writing a testimonial about a pupil who is a candidate for a philosophy job, and his letter readers as follows: 'Dear Sir, Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc.' (Gloss: A cannot be opting out, since if he wished to be uncooperative, why write at all? He cannot be unable, through ignorance, to say more, since the man is his pupil; moreover, he knows that more information than this was wanted. He must, therefore, be wishing to impart information that he is reluctant to write down. This supposition is tenable only on the assumption that he thinks Mr. X is no good at philosophy. This, then, is what he is implicating.) (52)

This passage discusses the thought process by which hearers, according to Grice's model, discern implicatures. As the example illustrates, the blatancy involved in 'flouting' maxims negates the seeming insincerity of it: as Grice explains, the blatancy involved in flouting a maxim itself often signals an (unarticulated) meaning that is not truly in violation of the Cooperative Principle. Moreover, the indirect quality of the speaker's utterance takes on a meaning in itself, and indicates the speaker's attitudes concerning the communicative act.[11]

Since Grice's introduction of the concept, several theorists have attempted to refine the idea of implicature, and to articulate more fully the aspects of language that allow speaker meaning to diverge from the semantic meaning of an utterance. One of the most influential neo-Gricean approaches is relevance theory. Developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson in their 1986 book Relevance: Communication and Cognition, the theory attempts to explain how humans communicate and the cognitive processes behind communication. Relevance theory does away with almost all of the maxims Grice postulates within his Cooperative Principle,

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[11] It is important to note that implicatures are defeasible. In other words, because implicatures are only partially due to the semantic meaning of utterances, they are capable of being negated (someone may state, for instance, that they do not possess peanut butter, after having implicated that they do). Conversely, communications that are primarily reliant on the semantic meaning of utterances are rarely capable of being negated (after a person explicitly states that they possess peanut butter, it is usually absurd for them to then claim that they do not possess it).

Although implicatures are often perceived as certain information, their logically defeasible quality adds an ambiguous element to them; implicatures *are* capable of being contradicted, whereas explicit language is not. As previously stated, however, this dissertation focuses on those instances of implicature that unambiguously communicate central narrative information. Such is the case with implicatures that are referred to throughout the remainder of a narrative, and on which the coherence of a plot relies. In an attempt to isolate implicatures that communicate information as a certainty, I have chosen to concentrate only on implicatures that are central to fictional plots.

claiming that the only true arbiter of communication is relevance. Sperber and Wilson posit two central principles to explain successful human communication: the 'Cognitive Principle', which claims that 'Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance', and the 'Communicative Principle', or 'Principle of Relevance' which claims that 'Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance' (260-61). 'Ostensive communication', or 'ostension' is shorthand for 'ostensive-inferential communication', with which 'the communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of this stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to the audience a set of assumptions' (63). The terms 'ostensive' and 'inferential' refer to the actions of the speaker and audience, respectively: the audience 'infers' what the speaker has made 'ostensive'. While Sperber and Wilson agree with previous theorists that there are two fundamental 'modes of communication: coded communication and ostensive-inferential communication', they argue that there is a degree of ostension and inference involved in all types of communication, primarily coded or not (63). 'Whereas ostensive-inferential communication can be used on its own,' they write, 'coded communication is only used as a means of strengthening ostensive-inferential communication. This is how language is used in verbal communication' (63).

Ostension plays such a large role in all communication because it focuses the hearer's attention on the most relevant aspects of the communication. In a schema in which meaning is synonymous with the speaker's intention in communicating (23), ostension is necessary because it 'makes manifest an intention to make something manifest' (49). Because 'to communicate is to

imply that the information communicated is relevant' (vii), ostension also 'comes with a tacit

guarantee of relevance' to the audience (49).

According to relevance theory, then, ostension and inference (and the speaker's associated

action, implicature) are a necessary part of all communication, and communication is only

divisible into 'coded' and 'non-coded' language to the extent that it relies on ostension to a greater

or lesser degree. This differs from the role of implicature in Grice's Cooperative Principle, where

implicature is a supplemental aspect of communication that is commonplace but not a necessary

aspect of every communication.   That being said, Sperber and Wilson do provide an (avowedly

problematic) differentiation between 'explicit' and 'implicit' language. They write that

> On the analogy of 'implicature' we will call an explicitly communicated assumption an
> *explicature*. . . . An explicature is a combination of linguistically encoded and
> contextually inferred conceptual features. The smaller the relative contribution of the
> contextual features, the more explicit the explicature will be, and inversely. Explicitness,
> so understood, is both classificatory and comparative: a communicated assumption is
> either an explicature or an implicature, but an explicature is explicit to a greater or lesser
> degree.
>   This is an unconventional way of drawing the distinction between the explicit and
> the implicit 'content' of an utterance. On a more traditional view, the explicit content of
> an utterance is a set of decoded assumptions, and the implicit content a set of inferred
> assumptions. Since we are claiming that no assumption is simply decoded, and that the
> recovery of any assumption requires an element of inference, we deny that the distinction
> between the explicit and the implicit can be drawn in this way. (182, emphasis in
> original)

While such definitions of explicit and implicit language might be more difficult to apply than

definitions that characterise them as simple antonyms, Sperber and Wilson's characterisations of

explicitness and implicitness are more valuable than less nuanced definitions that ignore the

inherent greyness of the explicit/implicit distinction. Moreover, Sperber and Wilson do provide

criteria by which the explicit versus the implicit nature of language can be measured: as they

write, the 'smaller the relative contribution of the contextual features, the more explicit the

explicature will be, and inversely'. This criterion acknowledges that there is such a thing as 'more explicit' and 'less explicit' language: that although the dividing line between the two categories may be unclear and even moveable, divisions can be argued for persuasively. A sentence, then, of which the primary meaning is evident when removed from its immediate context is explicit compared to a sentence for which it is necessary to know the context in order to comprehend its primary and intended meaning. Although this distinction may not always be so clearly made, it does indicate that implicature is a detectable and definable occurrence, and is useful in the analysis of specific implicatures.

Sperber and Wilson also discuss how the indirectness of an utterance communicates meaning in itself. Why would a speaker make her hearers work harder by having them infer an implicit meaning rather than explicitly tell it to them? Sperber and Wilson conclude that 'it follows from the principle of relevance that the surplus of information given in an indirect answer must achieve some relevance in its own right' (197). They detail their reasoning for this assertion by analysing the example below:

> (106)   (a) Bill is the nicest person there is.
>   (b) Bill is a very nice person.
> . . . .
> What exactly does (106a) convey? The speaker is certainly strongly implicating (106b). However, if this were all she had wanted to convey, she could have saved the hearer some processing effort by expressing (106b) directly. As always, the element of indirectness in an utterance must be offset by some increase in contextual effects. By expressing (106a), the speaker thus encourages the hearer to look for a range of further contextual implications not shared, or not equally strengthened, by (106b), and assume that within this range there are some she intends to implicate. He might thus begin running through the names of their common acquaintances and conclude that the speaker prefers Bill to each of these; he might conclude that Bill has behaved in ways that are so admirable that the speaker can find no words to describe them, and so on. (235)

The two possibilities posited here both relate to the inexplicit (because ostensively hyperbolic) nature of (106a). A preference for Bill entails a lack of preference for others and might then qualify as an impolite meaning most politely communicated by implicature; the supranarratable quality of the speaker's admiration posited in the second hypothesis would render the speaker's exact meaning incommunicable in explicit language, leaving implicature as her only option. There are many different intentions a speaker might have when causing information to be inferred rather than more explicitly communicating it; relevance theory is one approach towards discussing how the hearer correctly infers the information as well as the intention that motivates the indirect mode of the communication.

Implicature may also be adopted to effect mimicry. Sperber and Wilson comment on implicature's ability to communicate a more nuanced representation of a person's psychology in an analysis that is similar to Bal's discussion of gaps. When analysing the implicatures that sometimes communicate the missing information in gaps, Sperber and Wilson write that these 'utterances as it were exhibit rather than merely describe the speaker's mental or emotional state: they give rise to non-propositional effects which would be lost under paraphrase' (220).

One form of mimetic representation that relies on these implicatures is free indirect discourse, the use of a character's representative vocabulary and style in third-person, past tense narration. Free indirect discourse is entertaining largely because of its heavy reliance on irony, which Sperber and Wilson discuss in detail. They assert that ironical utterances are 'echoic': a 'speaker has in mind what so-and-so said, and has a certain attitude to it: the speaker's interpretation of so-and-so's thought is relevant in itself' (238). Sperber and Wilson go on to reject the

classical account of irony as saying one thing and meaning, or implicating, the opposite. The most obvious problem with the classical account—and with its modern variant, the Gricean account—is that it does not explain why a speaker who could, by hypothesis, have expressed her intended message directly should decide instead to say the opposite of what she meant. It cannot be too strongly emphasised what a bizarre practice this would be. . . . Genuine irony is echoic, and is primarily designed to ridicule the opinion echoed. (240-41)

Sperber and Wilson contend that, while an ironic utterance might express the opposite of what it explicitly states, the true intention (and, correspondingly, the meaning) of ironic utterances is to express the speaker's attitude towards the material rather than to mimic or provide an antithesis to that material. Relevance theory's contribution to our understanding of irony has significant implications for literary pragmatics: it allows for a more nuanced discussion of how and why authors use ironic utterances when straightforward ones are available and, more broadly, might reflect on how and why authors construct implicatures of all kinds when the explicit discussion of material is available. Relevance theory is also particularly appropriate for analysing the structure and motivations behind the use of free indirect discourse; it provides a conduit by which one may explore the cognitive effects of exposing character psychologies, with an emphasis on uncovering why mimetic character portrayal is generally considered more successful than descriptive character portrayal.

Implicature and Fictionality in Neo-Gricean Literary Pragmatics

Literary pragmaticists have written much about narrative gaps, but often concentrate on gaps that are inherent to all textual communication and the techniques writers employ to bridge them. In Discourse Analysis (1983), Gillian Brown and George Yule discuss the gaps that result from writing sentences, in that one sentence necessarily presents a separate piece of information from

another. They conclude (and others have built on their proposal) that 'human beings do not require formal textual markers before they are prepared to interpret a text. They naturally assume coherence, and interpret the text in the light of that assumption' (66). This concept is often termed the 'assumption of coherence' (67). They conclude further that a 'sequence of events in time, told as a narrative in English, will often be presented in the order in which they happened and often, with an unstated implication of a relationship in which the second event in some sense follows from the first (e.g. *was caused by*)' (144, emphasis in original). These conclusions have important ramifications for the study of literature: if Brown and Yule are right, authors do not have to spell out characters' actions in order for them to be implied, but can instead posit a minimal amount of information to convey much more. It is pragmatic phenomena such as these that provide building blocks for the inexplicit communication of concrete plot in fictional texts. However, Brown and Yule's conclusions do not help us understand how authors lead readers to infer character actions that are less visibly represented: how, for instance, a reader may infer the connection between a first and second event, without the second event itself being narrated.

Jacob L. Mey has written much on the inevitable role that textual gaps play in the reading of narrative. Following Brown and Yule, Mey acknowledges that readers automatically fill in narrative gaps; however, this also means that 'people always hear what they expect to hear; in other words, in the presence of any noise, they preferably hear old, familiar input rather than new, unfamiliar one; many popular stories and jokes capitalize on this' (When Voices Clash 303). In Pragmatics: An Introduction (2001) Mey stresses the author-reader cooperation necessary for

the 'construction' of literary texts, which stems partially from the author's awareness and manipulation of these inevitable gaps:

> The pragmatic act of reading implies an open-ended invitation to the reader to join the author in the co-creation of the story, by filling in the holes that the text leaves open. Just as the 'said', the speaker's explicit verbal act, in many cases is dispensable, given a sufficient backdrop and the listener's pragmatic act of understanding the 'unsaid', so the reader's act of understanding is not dependent on what is found in the actual text (or co-text) in so many words, but on the total context in which those words are found—and are found to make sense, through an active, pragmatic collaboration between author and reader. It is this spontaneous, mostly unconscious 'plugging' of the textual gaps that characterizes us as competent and 'versatile' readers (see Tsur 1992: Mey 1999:ch. 9.1.2); conversely, this characteristic carries with it an obligation on the part of the author to offer us a readable, 'pluggable' text. (Pragmatics 255)

Mey's characterisation of reading clearly owes much to Iser's, in which the reader's inferences 'create' the plot alongside the author's explicit guidance. In this schema, it is expected that the reader 'read between the lines', allowing for the creation of unarticulated plot to be the norm rather than the exception. However, Mey does not discuss the extent to which this practice can be extended, focusing on the setting of fictional scenes rather than on the reader's ability to correctly infer significant blocks of information that have not been articulated: no literary pragmaticist has yet discussed the reader's ability to make sense of fictional narratives which, if posed in a nonfictional context, would be far more ambiguous (and might be dismissed as unintelligible). While Mey rightly notes some of the heightened, publication-related constraints fiction authors must work with ('Literary Pragmatics' 257), he does not comment on how a reader's assumption of a text's fictionality may transform their perception of that text from an otherwise incoherent narrative into a display of ostensive communication. The passage from Vanity Fair, for instance, does not immediately make explicit Becky's identity. However, in the context of Thackeray's otherwise omniscient narration, the phrase 'the person' is so evasive that it

is out of place, causing it to be interpreted as ostensive. This ostension highlights the clues to

Becky's identity, allowing the reader to infer her presence in the passage. The same passage

would be interpreted differently if approached in a nonfiction context, in which the narrator truly

might or might not know the identity of 'the person' described, causing the phrase 'the person' to

be ambiguous.

As the preceding glosses have indicated, literary pragmaticists rarely distinguish between

fiction and nonfiction, possibly acknowledging a few distinctions between the two categories but

denying that there is any difference in the way proposed principles apply to fiction and

nonfiction. This tendency has a history as old as literary pragmatics: in 1975 Iser argued against

the previous antonymic characterisation of fiction and nonfiction, emphasising that 'fiction is a

means of telling us something about reality' ('Reality' 7). In his 1986 book Fictional Worlds,

Thomas G. Pavel argues that 'fictional texts employ the same referential and modal mechanisms

as nonfictional uses of language', and that 'the demarcation between fiction and nonfiction is a

variable element and that as an institution fiction cannot be attributed a set of constant

properties' (136). In 2000, Laura Hidalgo Downing used 'possible world theory as text theory' to

address the 'problems' associated with the non-real status of fiction (11). Downing uses fictional

worlds theory to represent the fictional world as a potential reality. As with Iser's more

functional, speech-act-based approach, Downing's theory deemphasises the distinction between

fiction and nonfiction, neglecting the ways in which fiction is read differently from nonfiction.

Literary pragmaticists who are less aligned with speech act theory or fictional worlds

theory have tended to follow suit. While portraying heteroglossia as a convention that holds only

for fictional narratives (a claim that is problematic in itself, considering all language's potential

for mimicry) Michael Kearns' article 'Relevance, Rhetoric, Narrative' (2001) focuses on conventions that apply to both fictional and 'factual' narratives (75) and explicitly 'discount[s] the distinction between literary and non-literary narrative' (88). In 'A Historical but Non-Determinist Pragmatics of Literary Communication' (2001), Roger D. Sell historicises the synonymity between 'literature' and 'fiction', differentiating between the two and adopting a view of 'literature' in his article that includes both fiction and nonfiction (6). In <u>Pragmatic Stylistics</u> (2006) Elizabeth Black emphasises 'that we follow roughly the same procedures whether we are listening to a friend, reading a newspaper, or reading a literary work' (1) but also claims that the 'same devices may be more effective in literary than in non-literary discourse' (3). Considering the redefinition the term 'literary' seems subject to, her lack of clarification concerning the term renders her distinction unclear.

There are, however, a few literary pragmaticists who believe that fictionality plays a large role in readers' interpretations of fictional texts. In <u>Narrative Comprehension: A Discourse Perspective</u> (1997), Catherine Emmott is concerned specifically with fictional texts, asserting that fictionality provides a 'lack' of real-life context, which must be rectified in the text itself. She writes that in 'real life we are always rooted in a specific physical context. . . . This book looks primarily at how the illusion of situatedness and embodiment in specific contexts within a fictional world is achieved' (58). While Emmott, then, distinguishes between fiction and nonfiction, her characterisation of fiction is rooted less in the special conventions that fiction brings to the context in which it is read, and more in those that it lacks.

In <u>The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction</u> (2007), Richard Walsh argues strongly for the impact fictionality has on the interpretation of fictional texts. His

theoretical orientation comes closest to the one adopted in this thesis. In an argument directed

against the ontological descriptions of fiction by speech act theory and fictional worlds theory,

Walsh proposes that

> fictionality is best understood as a communicative resource, rather than as an ontological
> category. Fictionality is neither a boundary between worlds, nor a frame dissociating the
> author from the discourse, but a contextual assumption by the reader, prompted by the
> manifest information that the authorial discourse is offered as fiction. (36)

Walsh also believes that fictionality is the dominant 'contextual assumption by the reader';

claiming that 'the generic marker of all fictional narrative, literary or cinematic, is that the

rhetoric of fictionality is the dominant framework for the communicative gesture being made,

and therefore defines the terms in which it solicits interpretation' (7). Walsh sees the current

tendency within literary pragmatics (and narrative theory as well) to conflate fiction and

nonfiction as detrimental to the articulation of a pragmatics of fiction; he explains that

> Modern accounts of fictionality generally turn on one or more of a small repertoire of
> theoretical gambits, which can be collectively understood as gestures of disavowal,
> achieved through several kinds of displacement. That is to say, these accounts variously
> respond to the problem of fictionality as a problem of truthfulness and resolve it by
> detaching the fictive act from the domain of truth, that is, language. The kinds of
> theoretical move I have in mind are: the institution of a narrator as the source of the
> fictive discourse; the redescription of fictional artifacts as props in a game of make-
> believe; the notion of pretended speech acts; and the recuperation of fictional reference as
> actual reference to fictional worlds. The first two moves place the language of fiction
> itself within the fictional frame; the third move disqualifies it, as nonserious language,
> from communicative accountability; and the fourth move allows the language of fiction
> to be literal and serious but not exactly fictive (that is, to the extent that fictive language
> does not make referential commitments), since fictionality has been redefined as a matter
> of ontological modality. The nub of fictionality always turns out to be elsewhere. . . .
> Fictionality, I want to suggest, functions within a communicative framework: it resides in
> a way of using language, and its distinctiveness consists in the recognizably distinct
> rhetorical set invoked by that use. I assume that narrative fictionality is worth
> distinguishing from narrativity in general. That is to say, I want to grant full force to the
> claim that all narrative is artifice, and in that very restricted sense fictive, but I maintain

nonetheless that fictional narrative has a coherently distinct cultural role, and that a distinct concept of fictionality is required to account for this role. (14-15)

In this passage Walsh discounts some of the approaches to describing fictionality that I responded to earlier in this introduction; he also confronts the 'disavowal' of the concept of fictionality, and ties this disavowal to a failure to 'pin down' fictionality's substance (and in effect articulate the distinction between fiction and nonfiction). Uniquely, among the critics treated here, he recognises a place for genre and convention (as aspects of a 'recognizably distinct rhetorical set') in helping to form the meaning of a text, but characterises them as things to be 'invoked' rather than only displayed; they are reader assumptions which may be reinforced by the text, not reinforced by the text, or otherwise manipulated.

This thesis is concerned with the distinction between fiction and nonfiction as it influences the way in which readers interpret fictional texts, and consequently influences how readers interpret implicatures in fictional texts. I define 'fictionality' in opposition to 'nonfictionality', using the term to concentrate on the text's assumed lack of literal truthfulness. While much of this dissertation discusses narratorial omniscience, I have opted to use the term 'fictionality' instead of the phrase 'conventions of fiction' because my ultimate intention is to illustrate authorial manipulation of these texts' assumed fictionality, and not manipulation of the various conventions according to which fiction is traditionally constructed. By this definition non-narrative, nonliterary texts such as sarcastic comments also qualify as fictional (Pratt 91): this thesis is concerned solely with the fictionality of literary prose. Like Walsh, I discuss

fictionality as 'a contextual assumption: that is to say in the comprehension of a fictive utterance, the assumption that it is fictive is itself manifest' (30).[12] Also like Walsh, I am concerned

> to establish the importance of a larger rhetorical perspective by insisting on the centrality of the idea of 'fictionality,' as something akin to a master-trope of fictional narrative, and to demonstrate the capacity of such a perspective to account for the *effects* of representation which dominate the experience of reading fiction (6).

However, my primary thesis differs from Walsh's; moreover, I discuss aspects of fictionality on which Walsh has not commented and which are fundamental to the way in which some implicatures are interpreted in fictional texts. Here, again, my point of departure may also be found in Walsh's work: while Walsh believes (as do I) that the 'rhetoric of fictionality is brought into play whenever a narrative is offered or taken as fiction, regardless of issues of form, style, or reference'; he also suggests that 'it is the case that most fictions do in fact exhibit characteristics indicative of their fictional status, in the form of transgressive narratorial situations such as omniscient narration or internal focalization, but these are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions of fictionality' (44). I disagree with Walsh in that I consider omniscient narration to be potentially a sufficient (although not a necessary) condition of fictionality: in this dissertation I argue not only that omniscient narration indicates fictionality, but also that (if not negated by other contextual factors) ostensive omniscience may create the context in which a narrative is

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[12] The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is sometimes characterised as problematic, largely because overlapping genres such as 'creative nonfiction' exist. There are scholars who argue that this 'in-betweenness' is not possible: Dorrit Cohn argues that the 'oxymoronic subtitles featured on the title pages of these newer crossbreeds . . . makes it clear that they were largely written and read for their transgressive shock value. . . . biographies that act like novels, far from erasing the borderline between the two genres, actually bring the lines that separates them more clearly into view' (Distinction of Fiction 29). The clarity with which fiction can be distinguished from nonfiction, then, is debatable. Regardless of the validity of these genres, however, there are narratives that are unreservedly assumed to be fictional, and it is this reader assumption of either fictionality, nonfictionality, or an in-betweenness that affects the reader's interpretation of the text and consequently must be considered in an analysis of that interpretation. It is the assumed *context* of fictionality that I am interested in, rather than whether or not a narrative can be unarguably categorised as one.

interpreted as a fiction.[13] This assertion is evidenced by the ways in which omniscient narration

is often manipulated by authors to create implicatures: these implicatures rely heavily on the

fictionality of the text in order to be effective (these implicatures would fail if interpreted in a

nonfictional context, where omniscient narration is unlikely to be assumed by the reader).

Clearly this assertion depends on how one defines 'omniscience'. The Oxford English

Dictionary's second definition applies specifically to literary theory: omniscience is 'an attribute

of the author or a third-person narrator: a full and complete knowledge concerning all the events

of a narrative, and the private motives, thoughts, etc., of all the characters'. It is this definition of

omniscience that is used in this dissertation. Omniscient narration can, for instance, imply that a

narrator is impartial or has a very large, if not infinite, knowledge of his subject matter. In

fiction, there are gradations of impartiality and distance that are evoked by third-person,

otherwise omniscient narrators: however, this distance is very often fluid and fluctuates

throughout a novel, resulting in narratives where a hardly-perceptible, objective narrative voice

will suddenly break into individuated, opinionated narration. I have chosen to focus primarily on

the epistemic connotations of 'omniscience', although I will at times comment on the narrative

voice's distance from the characters it discusses. I am also not concerned with instances in which

a narrator's knowledge is large, but limited: while there are nonfiction narrators who tell readers

more than they can be expected to have known previously (such as a specialised scientist

detailing his or her research to laypeople), these narrators are not truly 'omniscient', in that they

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[13] I concede that omniscience is rarely the defining characteristic of fiction; in this I agree with Walsh when he claims that omniscience is not 'necessary' to fictional texts. It is also the case that omniscience is largely limited to third-person narratives, and a definition of fictionality that would be characterised solely by omniscience would exclude all first- and second-person narratives.
       I am aware that I am in the realm of pure theory; it would be nearly impossible to prove that omniscience alone can cause a text to be interpreted as a fiction, given the infinite number of conventions that imply fictionality and that are usually present in fictional texts.

do not and cannot know everything. Conversely, a fictional narrator potentially is omniscient, and third-person omniscient narrators regularly do know the impossible (such as their characters' thoughts) and are perceived by readers as capable of communicating anything (unlike nonfiction narrators who, as Pratt and Ryan assert, are identified with the only-human implied author).[14]

I am not the first scholar to associate narratorial omniscience with fictionality. In her 1999 book, The Distinction of Fiction, Dorrit Cohn builds on a premise she first introduced in her 1978 book, Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction. One of the primary theses of Cohn's 1999 work is a definition of fiction that closely aligns itself with a potential for omniscience:

> In fiction cast in the third person, this presentation involves a distinctive epistemology that allows a narrator to know what cannot be known in the real world and in narratives that target representations of the real world: the inner life of his figures. . . . this fictional stamp, as one theorist proposes, makes such a text 'epistemologically illegitimate' to the point where its speaker must appear as 'insane' to someone who mistook it for a historical text. (16)

Cohn is also careful to point out that this aspect of her work follows propositions supplied earlier by Kate Hamburger (Distinction 23). Cohn's own work has been carried forward in other narratological texts: both Alan Palmer and Monika Fludernik have echoed her close alignment of fictionality with a potential narratorial omniscience in their respective writings (Palmer 5; Fludernik, Introduction 6). Cohn's use of the term 'fictional stamp' is telling, in that she (and the other narrative theorists named) tend to view omniscience as a convention potentially exhibited by fictional texts, rather than as a convention potentially assumed by readers of fictional texts.

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[14] Revered texts (such as the Bible and the Koran) might appear to be the one exception to this rule. However, they are revered precisely because they are considered to be omnisciently narrated. People who do not revere these texts usually consider them as fictions, disagreeing that the omniscient viewpoint is truly omniscient (that it is 'mistaken' [not of their personal religious beliefs] or impossible [because omniscience is impossible]). Nonfiction texts that attempt omniscience often lay themselves open to criticism for assuming fuller knowledge than their authors can possess.

This second (and, as far as I know, original) formulation of how assumed narratorial omniscience impacts the interpretation of fictional texts allows us to explore how authors are able to manipulate this reader assumption, exploiting the reader's expectations in order to effect implicatures. While previous associations of fictionality with narratorial omniscience have been groundbreaking and insightful in their own right, they have only addressed the fiction author's ability to exploit readers' expectations of narratorial omniscience in a limited way.

While the figure of the narrator is potentially useful in articulating the implicatures that arise out of omniscient narration, the concept is not endorsed by all literary scholars. Narration is, many times, carried out by no more than a narrative voice; because the narrative voice conveys minimal personal characteristics, it is not always appropriate to assign an owner to it. Pratt's and Ryan's reliance on the narrator as the performer of the fictional act is controversial, and forms part of a larger debate about how literary theory should view the concept of the narrator. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, for instance, argues against Seymour Chatman's claim that 'every text has an implied author and implied reader, but a narrator and a narratee are optional' (89). Instead, Rimmon-Kenan 'calls for the inclusion of the narrator and the narratee as constitutive, not just optional, factors in narrative communication. . . . In my view there is always a teller in the tale, at least in the sense that any utterance or record of an utterance presupposes someone who has uttered it' (89). The issue of the necessity (or redundancy) of the narrator takes on special significance in literary pragmaticist debates on fictionality. Walsh has argued that, in speech act theories that emphasise the role of a fictional narrator, 'the problem of fictionality is not accounted for, but merely displaced onto the (non-speech) act of pretending or imitating' (75). Walsh explains that

> To repudiate the narrator as a distinct narrative agent intrinsic to the structure of fiction is to repudiate the idea of a closed border between the products of representation and the real-world discourse of the author. The narrator, postulated simultaneously inside and outside representation, dissociates the author from the *act* of representation; the concept accordingly divides critical attention between the events and characters of the fictional world in their own right, and the literary ends they serve as representations. The former mode of criticism requires that critics suspend their awareness of the narrative's fictionality, this awareness being reserved for the latter activity. But when the narrator disappears, so does this division in critical attention. By insisting that fictional representation is an authorial activity, I keep the fictionality of the narrative always in view. (84-85)

Walsh believes, essentially, that a critical emphasis on narratorial discourse detracts from the fictional discourse being offered by the author, and allows scholars effectively to ignore the narrative's fictional status in their analysis of the text. Literary criticism too often adopts this fallacy, and it often describes fictional discourse as a report rather than as a creation (some of my responses to other theorists are loosely based on this assertion). However, I believe that a natural development of Walsh's proposal is an emphasis on the inherent tension between authors and their fictional narrators, one which Pratt and Ryan explore. While it is true that 'the reader is not obliged to hypothesize a narrator who really is omniscient in order to naturalize the authorial imaginative act' (Walsh 73), the reader's experience of the narrative as fictional motivates him or her to dissociate the narrative discourse from the author's other (fictional and nonfictional) discourses, keeping in mind that the narrative voice is definitively not representative of the author's. Although this debate is relevant to this dissertation, however, it is not my primary goal to weigh in on the scholarly disagreement over the necessity or redundancy of the narrator figure. As a compromise, I will be using the term 'narrative voice' for more distant, less conspicuous narrative voices, and will use the term 'narrator' only when the narrative voice becomes unambiguously individuated.

While critics are far from agreement on what constitutes fiction, few will dispute that omniscient narration is only present in fictional discourse.[15] Readers rarely read—nor are they expected to read—nonfictional discourse as if it were narrated omnisciently; the possibility of knowing everything as a certainty is a known fiction. The fictionality of omniscient narration translates into an overarching fictionality of discourse, making omniscient narration (as some narrative theorists would argue) perhaps the sole sufficient (but not necessary) marker of fictionality. By recognising the inherent fictionality of narratorial omniscience this dissertation sidesteps the controversy surrounding definitions of fictionality, and concentrates instead on the effect that assumed fictionality has on the fashioning and interpretation of texts.

When the author of an omniscient narrative chooses to communicate information through implicature rather than primarily through standard, coded language, the reader is faced with the puzzle of why an omniscient persona (the narrator) would opt to leave inexplicit or ambiguous material that is clearly integral to the rest of the narrative. It is this implicitly posed question that often motivates readers to attempt to decipher the vagueness surrounding implicatures; it also emphasises the relevance of the implicatures to their surrounding contexts. Because intentional vagueness or ellipsis is especially suspect in a context of omniscient narration, and because omniscient narration is only possible in a fictional context, the effect of many implicatures found in omniscient narration relies on that context. This aspect of implicature and omniscient narration has been neglected, resulting in questionable views of how readers interpret fictional statements (with most literary pragmaticists asserting that there is little difference between the interpretation of fictional and nonfictional texts) and even wider-spread inattentiveness to the

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[15] See footnote 14 for a discussion of religious texts.

question (with both literary pragmaticists and narrative theorists ignoring the significance granted ellipses and implicature in omnisciently narrated texts).

Aims and Methods of This Dissertation

My discussion of these topics is deliberately situated within literary pragmatics, which I take to be part of the larger literary (but linguistics-informed) field of stylistics. Literary pragmatic discussions necessarily bridge two, and sometimes several, disciplines, depending on the definition of 'context' adopted by the individual literary pragmatic scholar. (This interdisciplinarity will be particularly evident in my first chapter, which discusses historical influences on Victorian authors' representations of illegitimate pregnancy.) I hope to contribute to literary pragmatics in two ways. My primary aim is to analyse the use of salient implicatures: those that communicate central elements of plot. These implicatures are often notably sustained, forcing the reader to rely on them for hundreds of pages at a time. While the discussion of implicature is fundamental to the entire field of pragmatics, pragmaticists (literary pragmaticists included) usually concentrate on smaller, pervasive implicatures, in which the evasion or circumlocution of the speaker or author is less conspicuous. I am concerned with instances in which such less-explicit narration takes on a central role in communication, and specifically in the communication of fictional narratives: when it is necessary to communicate central antinarratable actions of the novel, when it is used to imitate the undefined intentions of the characters, or when the entertainment provided by inexplicitness itself is the overt effect intended by the author. In this last case (when the circumlocution itself is the effect intended by the author) implicature is granted an additional layer of salience that is not visible in implicatures

employed for other purposes. I am especially interested in the use of strictly unnecessary narrative implicatures to communicate actions central to fictional narratives (which is the topic of my third chapter). I am hoping that this discussion will be doubly original: as far as I have been able to discover, literary pragmaticists have not discussed narrative indirectness as a technique used for its own sake, and they have shied away from discussing how a narrative is affected by having its central action narrated through implicature.[16]

My secondary goal is to convince literary pragmaticists to consider fictionality as a context that should be acknowledged in analyses of how readers interpret fictional texts. My discussion of central, salient implicatures in fiction involves a discussion of conspicuous narrative gaps in a third-person-omniscient narration (and therefore a fictional) context. Fictionality affects the way readers interpret salient gaps of explicit communication in narratives: while readers are likely to be confused or angered by inexplicitness found in many kinds of nonfictional narrative, they are often amused when they encounter it in a fiction, even if it is centrally located. This phenomenon alone evidences the need to differentiate between fictional and nonfictional contexts when analysing how readers interpret implicatures.

Both of these discussions will contribute to the ongoing concerns of literary pragmatics and stylistics. I also believe that my thesis may contribute significantly to narratological discussions of gaps and omniscient narration in fictional novels. As this introduction has illustrated, literary pragmatics and narrative theory often overlap in the issues that they discuss; a literary pragmatic analysis of implicatures within fiction will inform many of the narratological

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[16] A notable exception is Billy Clark's article 'Salient Inferences: Pragmatics and The Inheritors'. Clark reconsiders previous interpretations of The Inheritors in light of the central, salient implicatures in the narrative. His aims are different from my own: his emphasis is on the inferences that the reader makes, rather than on the construction of the implicatures which spur those inferences. He is also largely uninterested in the range of authorial motivations behind constructing implicatures: those he discusses are all motivated by the author's desire to communicate the psychology of characters.

debates currently ongoing. Importantly, it will also provide a vocabulary for and means of analysing phenomena that, as far as I can tell, narrative theory is currently unable to articulate. This is especially true of my characterisation of narratorial omniscience as a reader's assumed context rather than as a convention overtly exhibited by the text. As noted above, omniscience has only been discussed as a potential marker of fiction, rather than as a potential reader assumption that authors of fiction can exploit. Discussing omniscience as an assumed context will allow me to articulate authorial exploitations of readers' expectations (stemming from the perceived fictionality of the text) that are currently neglected by narratological criticism.

I also hope that my discussion of Victorian fiction in its Victorian context will provide greater insight into the pragmatics of fiction from that period: this undertaking is intended to develop new perspectives for Victorian literary studies and to contribute to the burgeoning field of historically oriented literary pragmatics. As mentioned previously, pragmatic studies definitively concentrate on both the linguistic and social contexts of a text's production, but in practice these studies often examine one context more intently than the other. I have attempted to incorporate discussions of historical and generic contexts into my dissertation, focusing both on ideological trends of specific eras and the reader's assumption of a text's fictionality. Discussing fiction *as* fiction from another era highlights its particular historical contexts, providing a more unified pragmatic reading of it than would be possible by concentrating on its generic characteristics alone. By examining the manipulation of contemporary readers' background assumptions, I will add to the body of scholarship that focuses specifically on the creation and reception of Victorian fiction in the Victorian era, reaching conclusions that will hopefully be of interest to more mainstream Victorian literary scholars.

Lastly, my dissertation considers realist novels alongside works that more obviously draw on melodrama or were identified with the specific genre of 'sensation fiction'. As discussed in Chapter Three, many of the works conventionally identified as realist themselves use implicature to put realism under strain at certain points. Literary pragmatic readings of these novels need to consider ways in which conventions and expectations of genre and literary modes may affect the working of implicature. In turn, it is my hope that literary pragmatics has a contribution to make to a longstanding critical interest in refining how we describe the characteristic features of realism, and how we draw its limits.

The organisation of this dissertation reflects a goal of illustrating how the study of literary pragmatics and the study of Victorian novels can inform each other. Each chapter is centred on authorial motivations that underlie prominent uses of implicature in Victorian novels. It is hoped that the following case studies will further the claim that the pragmatics of fictional texts differs from that of nonfictional ones, in that fictionality presents a specific context which (alongside the other contexts in which the book is read) influences the reader's interpretation of the text.

While my dissertation benefits from concentrating on novels from a specific period (the mid-Victorian period), the novels discussed here were chosen primarily because they make exceptionally central use of implicature, rather than because of the historical moment at which they were written. Nevertheless, my choice of primary texts has some historical logic. My first chapter attempts to chart the evolving representation of a sensitive topic in early- to mid-Victorian England, discussing, in chronological order, three novels that span sixteen years (1843-1859). The texts considered in my second and third chapters were published within nine

years of each other (1857-1866). The short span of years within which these novels were published allows for a better understanding of the cultural context in which they were written and originally interpreted. This understanding allows me to comment on how contemporary readers might have been expected to interpret the implicatures with which this dissertation is concerned and why some types of implicatures were commonly used.

Chapter One will discuss pragmatic theories of politeness and the representation of illegitimate pregnancy in early- to mid-Victorian fiction. As a variable concept that is both defined and largely affected by its context, politeness is a central concern in pragmatic theory. While many pragmaticists have discussed politeness, however, few have attempted to relate politeness theories to written discourse. In the small amount of literature available on politeness within written discourse, there is a tendency to conflate fictional with nonfictional writing. This conflation obscures key differences in how the pragmatics of politeness functions in fictional and nonfictional texts.

This chapter relies heavily on historical pragmatics to account for how authors of polite fiction represented illegitimate pregnancy in the 1840s and 1850s. The New Poor Laws of 1834 introduced legislation that left unwed mothers with drastically less support than they had hitherto received. The legislation was perceived as the cause of a widespread increase in infanticide that was not to abate for several decades. Illegitimate pregnancy (how it would be best treated by the law and society) became a major topic of debate and, with Frances Trollope's 1843 novel <u>Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day</u>, was introduced into social problem fiction. Before the novel's publication, many thought discussion of illegitimate pregnancy inappropriate for polite fiction. Trollope explicitly challenged this assumption, and when further (if ineffective) reforms

were passed the year after her novel was published, other novelists followed suit. However, after

Trollope's watershed novel, some succeeding novelists felt it best to represent illegitimate

pregnancy in less direct ways, using more implicature as their works dealt more heavily with the

most negative consequence of illegitimate pregnancy: infanticide. Close readings of <u>Jessie</u>

<u>Phillips</u> (1843), Elizabeth Gaskell's <u>Ruth</u> (1853), and George Eliot's <u>Adam Bede</u> (1859) highlight

how the perceived 'impoliteness' of the fictional representation of illegitimate pregnancy

constrained authors in their writing, and show how implicature was used to circumvent mid-

Victorian politeness standards for fiction.

Chapter Two is concerned with authors' uses of implicature as a means of representing

characters' internal mental states and processes, both conscious and unconscious. Because

psychological representation is an inherent aspect of most fiction writing, this chapter will be

more psychological than historicist in its focus; however, it will still attempt to address some of

these novels' cultural contexts, and specifically the psychological debates and concepts of the

era. Authors often employ actions to delineate character psychologies, and the metonymic

function of these narrated actions often qualifies as implicature. However, there are yet other

instances of representation that more concretely shun explicit description in an effort to

communicate character psychology indirectly. These instances usually revolve around a

character's semiconsciousness of or denial of information. The lack of explicit reference to this

information in the description of a character's thoughts may mimetically illustrate the character's

lack of consciousness while also explicitly delineating other, competing aspects of it. These uses

of implicature are resonant of (and often are) free indirect discourse. However, the use of

implicature in these instances may not always be unproblematically categorised as free indirect

discourse: sometimes only a striking lack of information is present in a narrative, rather than the particular nuances of a given character's language that definitively make up free indirect discourse.

After a preliminary discussion of 'the unconscious' in mid-Victorian psychological debates, Chapter Two will take the representation of courtship in mid-Victorian novels as a case study through which to discuss authors' employment of implicature in portraying certain characters' lack of self-awareness. 'Falling in love' is often represented as a gradual and unconscious process in the Victorian novel, and one which reticent characters are likely to deny, even to themselves. In Charles Dickens's Little Dorrit (1857), Arthur Clennam is a reticent character, reluctant to admit his love for Pet Meagles. The representation of the reticent lover is in some respects curiously similar to that of the illicit lover: in Eliot's The Mill on the Floss (1860), Maggie Tulliver is dabbling in what she knows to be an illicit and hurtful courtship; her denial of the seriousness of her flirtation with Stephen eventually leads to the social crisis of the novel. In Orley Farm (1862), Mr. Furnival does not admit to himself that he is in love with his client, Lady Mason, and his feelings disproportionately influence his perceptions of and actions regarding her case.

Chapter Three turns to humorous 'meta-' narrative instances of salient implicature in sensation fiction. These uses of implicature encourage the reader not only to grasp unarticulated information but also to appreciate the opaque, sometimes teasing or riddle-like quality of the narrative language. The chapter will focus on the conspicuous omissions surrounded by implicatures in M.E. Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), Charles Dickens's Our Mutual Friend (1865), and Wilkie Collins's Armadale (1866). These uses of implicature satirise the

realist tendency towards limited omniscience and create an enjoyable reader experience that results from an assumption of reader knowledge rather than a lack of reader knowledge. These novels depend on dramatic irony to maintain the reader's interest: in <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> the author's use of implicatures creates a satirically 'polite' distance from Lady Audley's commission of murder, and in <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> and <u>Armadale</u> the reader is pulled into collaboration with characters whose true identities are secrets assumed to be shared with the reader for significant portions of the texts. In these novels, indirection is not a means towards acknowledging social convention, nor is it an aid to characterisation; it is rather an end in itself. Scholars have identified the usefulness of implicature in communicating otherwise inexpressible subject matter, but few have commented on the enjoyment readers derive from narrative indirection and the stylistic performativity it makes available to the author.   While pragmaticists have successfully articulated implicature's centrality in the creation of irony, they have rarely discussed the enjoyment to be derived from the use of implicature (as opposed to coded language) itself. This last chapter will attempt to show that the above texts rely, at times, on implicature for their effect, rather than solely on the commentary the implicature provides on 'hidden' diegetic facts. In doing so it aims to uncover a facet of reader entertainment that has not previously been articulated.

Chapter One

The Unarticulated Antinarratable: Illegitimate Pregnancy and the Pragmatics of Politeness

Authors' writings are likely to be affected by their perceptions of what they think their audience

will approve: if nothing else, the market in which the book trade is rooted demands this of them.

Those who do not take into account the constraints of public taste or audience appropriateness, or

are not capable of accommodating readers' expectations, suffer loss of sales or worse. This was

equally true in the Victorian era, with the advent of large circulating libraries that sought to

regulate the fiction that reached the public. William St Clair explains that

> The owner of Mudie's, the largest and dominant circulating library, which operated
> nation-wide in a highly monopolised market, read some novels personally before
> deciding whether to make a bulk purchase, and if his decision, or that of his managers,
> was negative, an author could find that his book remained uncirculated, little read, and
> unlikely to be reprinted at a less expensive price for a wider readership, and that his
> authorial career and future commercial prospects were severely set back. (725)

Mudie's impact on the publishing industry was enormous: in his history of the 'House of

Blackwood' David Finkelstein describes Charles Mudie as the 'Chief among trade buyers': his

circulating library, 'started in the 1840s, was by the early 1860s one of the biggest purchasers

and distributors of texts, accounting for up to 60 percent of sales of a print run' (43-44).

Moreover, Mudie notoriously 'insisted that his stock exclude trash and anything that would upset

family values': this commercial institution consciously imposed and responded to perceived

public taste, limiting the publication of what Mudie thought the public would dislike (Law and

Patten 152).

Lending libraries, however, were not the only institutions constraining authors.

Finkelstein notes that 'publishers act[ed] as filters', in 'attempts to impose an overarching

identity on [their] products' (19). The leading Edinburgh publishers of fiction, Blackwood's, for

example, 'took steps to mould, manipulate, and control work produced under the firm's imprint

in order to conform to particular cultural values and perceived tastes'; a practice which,

according to Finkelstein, should 'remind us that texts are inevitably products of a social

transaction between producers and readers' (152). As products of a social transaction, Victorian

fictional texts were obviously subject to and indicative of the social constraints placed upon them

by various (and differing) classes of Victorian readers.

This chapter will discuss narratives in which implicature is used to represent subject

matter to which these constraints applied: specifically, illegitimate pregnancy. This subject

matter is, due to social convention, usually incommunicable in narrative, or 'antinarratable';

social convention, or regard for politeness, may force writers to use implicature in their writing.

While previous literary pragmaticists have noted that considerations of politeness do play a role

in the creation of literary texts, they have not registered the impact that fictionality can have on

the way politeness is represented and incorporated into fictional texts. The analyses in this

chapter will attempt to address this critical gap.

This chapter, then, will draw on examples from early- and mid-Victorian fiction to

illustrate politeness-related implicature. As is indicated by the above discussion of unofficial

censors of Victorian texts, the Victorian era, as varied as it was, is particularly suitable for the study of how politeness considerations are incorporated into fictional texts. The early- and mid-Victorian eras are known for the strict sexual code by which they were ruled; regardless of this generalisation's disputable truth, it is popularly held and has formed a salient aspect of Victorian studies. The analysis of politeness strategies in mid-Victorian texts enriches pragmatic theories of politeness by using an established context of politeness-related contemporary thought to test its relevance to fiction, and it enriches Victorian studies by providing further nuance to the much-debated issue of mid-Victorian sexual morality and its representation in the mid-Victorian novel. Through a pragmatic analysis of key scenes in the novels <u>Jessie Phillips</u>, <u>Ruth</u>, and <u>Adam Bede</u>, I will demonstrate how Frances Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, and George Eliot respectively communicate their characters' seductions and illegitimate pregnancies through implicature. Implicature largely appeased the 'unofficial censors' (such as Mudie's) who disapproved of the explicit representation of pregnancy, much less illegitimate pregnancy, in 'polite' fiction.

The fictional modes of these three novels differ, and, in keeping with their different modes, they react to and exploit audience expectations of politeness in different ways. While both <u>Jessie Phillips</u> and <u>Ruth</u> are categorised as social problem novels, <u>Ruth</u> is the more 'literary' novel, and <u>Adam Bede</u> is usually discussed as an example of classical realism. These labels supposedly denote the different aims that the authors had when writing these novels. However, these labels also reflect the way these novels were received and the expectations readers had of them; they consequently reflect how constrained the novelists were by politeness ideologies that fluctuated from subculture to subculture and, correspondingly, in their application to different fictional modes. Trollope, Gaskell, and Eliot had similar (but not identical) socially-

oriented goals in writing Jessie Phillips, Ruth, and Adam Bede, but their specific aims, methods, and subcultures were somewhat different. While Eliot wrote Adam Bede, as well as her other novels, with the overarching aim of broadening readers' sympathies, Gaskell wrote Ruth in reaction to her encounters with unwed mothers, and hoped her novel would spur social reform. Trollope's aim was much the same as Gaskell's, but because the 'social problem' novel was a less-established fictional mode in Trollope's time, she was considerably more blunt in her appeals for reform. In accordance with their respective motivations, the amount of antinarratable content which Eliot and Gaskell convey is roughly the same as the amount Trollope conveys; however, in greater consideration for fictional boundaries, Eliot and Gaskell use more implicature to ease the presence of antinarratable content in their 'polite' literature. The implicature-related differences between Eliot's and Gaskell's writings are smaller; while their uses of implicature are similar, their differing immediate goals are reflected in the amount and type of antinarratable content that they are willing to include in their novels.

Early- and mid-Victorian attitudes towards illegitimate pregnancy will be discussed before examining how those attitudes are represented through implicature in the above three novels. The examination of these novels' historical contexts confirms illegitimate pregnancy's antinarratability, and illustrates the correlation between the degree of readerly offence and the degree of explicitness in illegitimate pregnancy's representation. That these pregnancies are truly 'communicated' before their explicatures is evident from these novels' coherence. Traditional close readings cannot adequately explain how it is that, for instance, for the first four hundred pages of Adam Bede the reader is not confused by the superficially unexplained, irrelevant phenomena that Eliot interjects. Rather, our understanding of what is inexplicit but nevertheless

plain is best explained by relevance theory. In the resulting readings of these novels I hope to

say as much about how we 'read between the lines' as about the historical context of these

novels' creation.

Historical Context

While illegitimate pregnancy was necessarily openly discussed by medical and social reformers,

a Victorian novelist hoping to establish a very public (because marketed) but unnecessary

(because fictional) literary discourse on the subject would do well to minimise explicit

discussion of it. In some newspapers, by contrast, factual reporting granted potentially lewd

material a moralistic, purposeful cover that fiction could not as easily assume. In his survey of

mid-nineteenth century newspaper articles Thomas F. Boyle writes that 'police reports of mid-

nineteenth-century newspapers consistently offer graphically detailed accounts of the sexual

misbehavior of all classes of the citizens of the "Age of Improvement"' (212). Eric Trudgill

observes that the 'novelist's freedom . . . was very restricted, but most of the respectable

newspapers throughout the century carried accounts of salacious sex crimes and crim. con. or

divorce actions' (137). The restrictions on fiction writers applied more to certain types of novels

than to others: Matthew Rubery reports, for instance, that the 'deprecating label "Newspaper

Novel" soon became synonymous with a subgenre of fiction derived from actual criminal reports

or, as the derogatory term would come to be used by critics, with all varieties of sensation

narrative' (48). The respectability of these novels was compromised by this association with

newspapers. The double standard concerning the subject matter allowed in newspapers and

'polite' fiction could be frustrating to those serious fiction writers who hoped to represent British society as realistically as possible and to effect social change through their novels.

In his work Boyle attempts to explain the prudery that middle-class Victorians are still (too generalisingly) known for. After glossing the story of a little girl who was stabbed while urinating over a grate (later realised to be an opening into a lower-class home) and a quack doctor who impregnated and then gave abortion pills to his patient, Boyle writes that 'one can only understand the deep-seated and evangelical nature of the Victorian ideology of respectability if one understands the gross reality which it set itself in opposition to. Indeed one can see the "official consciousness" in this light as a justifiable act of defensive self-preservation' (221-23). Boyle equates public (indiscreet) displays of sexuality with the disempowered status of the lower classes, whose children and women were perceived as (and often were) susceptible to seduction, rape, and abuse. The description of the Victorian middle classes as prudish, exaggerated as it may be in many subsequent historical accounts, allowed their members to identify themselves as unlike the disempowered lower classes and proudly to proclaim their bodies as private and safe.

Boyle's explication of this middle-class mentality (which had its many contradictions and exceptions) allows us to understand taboos that were, if not strictly followed in private life, part of polite 'official consciousness', forming easily accessible background assumptions on which fiction readers could draw. In a society where the body was carefully guarded from actual, physical intrusion, childbirth became indicative of sexuality and pregnancy a display of indecorous carnality (MacPike 56-57). Leigh Summers explains:

> Pregnancy was, of course, the most obvious demonstration of women's carnal animality, as well as a reminder of the female body's predilection for unseemly, squeamish and

occasionally painful bodily functions. Consequently, Victorian standards of decency demanded the concealment of the pregnant body and denied any public discussion of either the experience of pregnancy or its *accoutrements*. . . . Pregnancy taboos were implemented and obeyed for several reasons. They operated primarily to ensure that an image of womanly innocence was maintained despite evidence of sexual experience. They were essential too in perpetuating the illusion (and male fantasy) of the continued 'virginality' and 'innocence' of married women despite the somatic betrayal that revealed they had indulged in, and possibly enjoyed, sexual intercourse. (39, emphasis in original)

John Hawkins Miller also speculates as to why the 'Victorians were often excessively prudish about public discussion of the physiology of pregnancy and birth' (23). His reasoning echoes that of Summers; he notes that 'the process of birth—with its attendant pain and potential for death—was an unwanted reminder of the physical, barnyard facts of life from which many middle-class Victorians preferred to look away as if they were not there' (40). Miller claims that

The reluctance to discuss the indelicate subject of pregnancy and labour stems not only from ancient taboos about the ritual uncleanliness of women, but also from the transference to the woman of the dark and 'dirty' sexual drives of the male. . . . Perversely, however, women became tainted by the male sexual drive, and the only road to redemption was through the uncleanliness of childbirth to the temple of pure and undefiled motherhood. (41)

The pregnant body, here, is the sexual equivalent of used goods: a body that has been violated and is no longer wholly its own. With illegitimate pregnancy, however, this seemingly unconscious attitude is forced to the surface.

The situations of unwed mothers and unwed expectant mothers were considered among the worst in Victorian society. Unwed mothers faced a loss of respectability that was thought to dictate the rest of their lives: Ann Higginbotham writes that the unmarried mother 'was commonly assumed to have little future beyond prison, the streets, or the river. Her fall condemned her to a life of degradation and crime' (281). Josephine McDonagh notes that 'Extra-marital pregnancies often led a woman to the loss of regular employment, homelessness,

being disowned by family and friends, and being cast out of parishes that were unwilling to pay poor relief for illegitimate children' (2). It is no wonder, then, that the 'unmarried mother, it was assumed, would seek above all to conceal her fall from virtue by destroying the evidence of her sin, the illegitimate infant' (Higginbotham 260). Contemporary Victorian discussions often conflated the issues of illegitimate pregnancy and infanticide, positing ways in which 'fewer girls would be seduced; fewer children murdered' (Infanticide 2) in the hope of diminishing 'Bastardy, and its attendant Infanticide' (Brownlow 59).

This conflation had a long history, and was first legally represented by the 1624 'Act to Prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children'. McDonagh writes that the Act 'reflected the common supposition that the shame of the illegitimacy was motive enough to provoke a woman to commit the deed. . . . Towards the end of the eighteenth century . . . the concealment of a pregnancy had come to be taken as evidence of an intention to murder the child' (3). While the act was officially repealed in 1803, concealment continued to be a chargeable offence throughout the nineteenth century, with amendments concerning the application of the law being made as late as 1861 (McDonagh 4). The lesser charge of concealment was often invoked when a woman's infanticidal intentions were unproven, or when a jury was sympathetic with an obviously infanticidal mother (Krueger 274).

In 1834 the New Poor Laws were introduced, and with them the unpopular Bastardy Clause. The new laws placed the responsibility (and, correspondingly, the blame) for an illegitimate birth solely on the unmarried mother, and made it harder for her to access aid. It was not long before the press noticed that the 'entire exemption of the reputed father, not only from the costs of midwifery and maintenance (of the mother), but also from the costs of an application

to the justices for the maintenance of the child, operates as a premium upon seduction, and

inflicts a grievous burden upon the parish to which the woman belongs' ('Hints' 4). Other

newspapers directly blamed the perceived spike in infanticide on the 'bastardy law, which has

given such encouragement to profligacy and illegitimacy' ('Died').

There is limited truth in these representations of Victorian illegitimate pregnancy and

infanticide. Officially, illegitimate pregnancy was stigmatised but in reality premarital sex was

not uncommon. Michael Mason reports that, until 1860,

> between a third and a half of all brides were pregnant (at least in many parts of
> England) . . . courtship, or relations between the sexes—readily including full
> intercourse . . . were expected to lead to marriage . . . . illegitimate birth was usually the
> result of a disruption of marriage intentions, when a courtship involving intercourse and
> pregnancy issued in an unmarried mother rather than in a pregnant bride. (67-68)

Lionel Rose quotes an 1866 article from the Saturday Review which 'reminded its readers that

among the working classes sexual intercourse "is regarded as an incident of honourable courtship

and is—or at least used to be—followed by the solemnisation of marriage"' (20). Carolyn A.

Conley traces the stigma associated with premarital sex back to the Marriage Act of 1753, which

first added the legal component to the distinction between married and unmarried couples. In

agreement with Mason and Rose, however, Conley notes that although 'Such a distinction would

make bearing an illegitimate child considerably more shameful . . . the stigma would be

traumatic only for those who were concerned about respectability' (112). While illegitimate birth

was stigmatised, then, premarital sex was a pervasive and an understood (if hushed) part of

courtship culture. However, illegitimate childbirths comprised only about seven percent of mid-

century births, and these births were 'quite strongly associated with low social rank' (Mason

70-71). Although these births' association with low social rank might indicate that some higher-

class men (in accordance with press assertions) took advantage of lower-class women, it is

noteworthy that, in practice, premarital sex wholly unassociated with future marriage seems to

have been relatively infrequent.

Neither pregnancy nor abortion was considered as unambiguous as it is today. Summers

explains the mentality surrounding early- and mid-Victorian pregnancy:

> 'denial' was a particularly useful strategy in family limitation . . . at least until 1860 (and
> as late as 1880), women, rather than the medical profession, determined whether or not
> they were pregnant.
>   Pregnancy was determined by women upon the experience of 'quickening'.
> Quickening was the common nineteenth-century term to describe foetal movement. Until
> the foetus quickened (approximately four months after insemination), the woman's
> cessation of menstrual periods could be construed either as an 'unnatural obstruction' or a
> pregnancy, depending entirely on the woman's interpretation of the biological changes
> experienced by her own body. The removal of an 'unnatural blockage' was not a criminal
> offence. Until the woman herself declared she had experienced quickening, the foetus
> was not accorded legal or medical human status, and both the woman and her physician
> felt justified in using drugs or mechanical devices to remove the 'obstruction' and bring
> order to her menses. Recipes for the removal of obstructions were, at least until the
> 1880s, found in women's household advice manuals.[17] (50-51)

Summers is describing abortion rather than infanticide, but her description nonetheless

complicates a schema (accepted both in Victorian times and now) in which pregnancy is deemed

a categorical 'she is or is not' matter. Victorian ideas of infanticidal intention are also

complicated by a woman's perceived ability to influence her pregnancy (that is, to keep or

'unblock' a potential pregnancy): concealment is no longer a 'she did or did not' issue but rather

an ambiguous state in which a woman might truly have thought her pregnancy was something

else.

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[17] Jennifer Thorn echoes Summers's historical gloss, claiming that 'Though abortion after quickening (usually understood as the fifth month of pregnancy) remained officially a capital crime through the period, a wide variety of sources indicate [sic] that abortion at many stages of unwanted pregnancy was regularly practiced and that the killing of newborn bastards was understood as a kind of belated birth control, regrettable but nonetheless understandable' (Introduction 25).

As indicated above, illegitimate pregnancy and infanticide were often conflated in the Victorian press. That the 'first born of unmarried parents [should be] the class of infants most exposed to violent deaths' was common knowledge, and much commented on (qtd. in Higginbotham 257). The debate over how best to stop infanticide was present in public literature from the passing of the 1834 Poor Laws up through the 1860s. While pamphlets often provided a preemptive apology for 'details, that may, even by well meaning persons be considered indelicate' (Osborne 3) both pamphlets and newspapers usually provided direct, unambiguous discussions of 'pregnancy', 'illegitimate offspring', and the 'Bastardy Clauses' ('Hints' 4). Infanticide was not only explicitly named, but headlines such as 'Infanticide In The Metropolis', Infanticide and Its Cause, and 'Thoughts and Suggestions Having Reference to Infanticide' (Brownlow) were common. There was also explicit discussion of seduction as a pervasive practice largely responsible for both illegitimate childbirth and infanticide (Brownlow 47-48; 'Church' 4; Infanticide 5; Osborne 11).

It is important to recognise the close connection these concepts had. Today they are often discussed as wholly separate occurrences whereas in Victorian Britain infanticide was considered primarily as a consequence of illegitimate pregnancy. Similarly, illegitimate pregnancy could be said to represent the pregnancy that the middle classes hoped to keep invisible: illegitimate pregnancy was the public evidence that the woman had been violated or had allowed herself to fall. Infanticide hardened her image as solely sexual by repudiating the motherhood that was woman's 'natural' role and an unwed mother's only chance of partial redemption. Infanticidal mothers were the ultimate fallen women: having transgressed sexual (and by association, class)

boundaries, these infanticidal women murdered in an attempt to reclaim their station instead of publicly atoning by raising the illegitimate child.

While typically only hinted at or cursorily mentioned in the world of polite fiction, illegitimate pregnancy was actually 'paranarratable' rather than 'antinarratable' in the early- to mid-Victorian period: as mentioned previously, there was an explicit and vocal debate concerning illegitimate pregnancy in nonfictional literature. Although understood as a serious topic of reform debate, the sexual activity it represented made illegitimate pregnancy an inappropriate subject for polite entertainment. In understandable attempts to incorporate an intense national debate into their literature, later 'polite' fiction authors devised techniques by which to communicate the fact of illegitimate pregnancy, and reflect upon its causes and consequences, while minimising the risk of offending their readers.

These techniques can be articulated using relevance theory, and their explication can show how current pragmatic theory may helpfully inform the analysis of the inexplicit in Victorian fiction.

The Pragmatics of Politeness

As the Introduction showed, aspects of pragmatic theory, and especially relevance theory, may be readily adapted to inform literary criticism. While most pragmaticists aim their theories at real-life conversation, literary pragmaticists have adopted these theories as the basic tenets by which they analyse certain aspects of written discourse. Jacob L. Mey writes that 'Grice's notion of "implicature," as it is called, is of the utmost importance with regard to explaining how authors and readers go about "cocreating" the literary work . . . a text is not the exclusive work of the

individual author but always presupposes the active collaboration of an audience, the readers' ('Literary Pragmatics' 256-57). It is this necessary collaboration between author and readers that makes pragmatics applicable to fiction. Mey notes that 'This is, eventually, why books are bought and sold: not because they are indispensable for our material existence, but because they represent a personal communication from an author to a potential readership—a communication that, in order to be successful, will have to follow certain rules'—that is, implicit rules ('Literary Pragmatics' 257). It is this same dynamic that necessitates an author's observance of the antinarratable: it is important that an author acknowledge social constraints because the unfolding of the narrative involves an intimate collaboration of the reader with the author. The reader's outlook need not be the same as that of the author, but it must be sufficiently similar: the potential reader must, to at least a certain extent, be able to identify with the implied reader. Nonobservance of the conventional designation of certain topics as antinarratable would alienate 'decent' potential readers. This does not mean that the author may not create an ironic narrator who jocosely assigns ridiculous opinions to his or her narratees (as Thackeray, Dickens, and Eliot often do). It does, however, mean that the author's irony must be sufficiently clear and his or her good opinion of the implied reader evident (and, as in Thackeray, Dickens, and Eliot, narrators' obviously ironic assignations of narratee opinion create a fictional, stigmatised third party in reaction to which the author and the readers may bond.)

There is a long history within pragmatics of theorising politeness, and a few literary pragmaticists have used these theories to articulate the heightened cooperation that literary discourse necessitates. The remainder of this chapter's introductory section will provide brief discussions of relevant theories of politeness and how they have been applied to literary

pragmatics. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's 1978 <u>Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage</u> revolutionised linguistic conceptions of the phenomenon, and although Peter Grundy's (2000) discussion of politeness does not concentrate on written discourse, his definition of the concept can more easily be applied to analyses of texts. Roger D. Sell (1991) and Elizabeth Black (2006) are two literary pragmaticists who have applied politeness theories to literary discourse.

Brown and Levinson famously applied the sociological concept of 'face' to the politeness of linguistic interactions. 'Face' has two aspects: 'negative face' and 'positive face'. 'Negative face' denotes the 'want of every "competent adult member" that his actions be unimpeded by others' (62). Brown and Levinson define 'positive face' as referring to the 'want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others', and explain that this 'want' 'includes the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired' (62). 'Face' affects what speakers say when they perpetrate a face-threatening act ('FTA'); that is, when they are forced to communicate material that might be threatening to a listener's independence or self-esteem. The linguistic markers that speakers use to ameliorate FTAs are treated by Brown and Levinson as markers of politeness. Speakers may opt, for instance, to perform the FTA either 'on record' (unambiguously) or 'off record'; if they perform the FTA 'on record' they may choose to perform it either with or without redressive action, and that redressive action can seek to emphasise the hearer's positive or negative face (68-71). These strategies involve various effects like humour, heightened formality, apologies, ambiguous hints, and flattery. Employing implicatures while performing an FTA would be considered as executing it off record.

According to Peter Grundy, politeness is the 'exercise of language choice to create a

context intended to match the addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed' (145).

Although he does not discuss politeness in literary discourse, Grundy's pragmatic definition of

'politeness' highlights its relevance to the analysis of literature: no literature, fiction or

nonfiction, is capable of success (financial, persuasive, or even comprehension-wise) if it does

not 'create a context [that matches] the addressee's notion of how he or she should be addressed'.

This definition indicates why it is that we so often associate politeness with 'decorum' and

'etiquette', and in fact Grundy does characterise 'Politeness phenomena [as] one manifestation of

the wider concept of etiquette, or appropriate behavior' (146). This characterisation does not sit

well with previous pragmatic theories of politeness, all of which attempt to distance politeness

from its 'proper' connotations and emphasise its pivotal role in cooperative interaction.[18]

Grundy himself problematises the distinction, writing that the

> folk view of politeness as the speech style of the over-classes is strongly indicative of
> value for the speaker. Thus the value-neutral way in which 'politeness' is used as a term
> of pragmatic description applicable to all communicative instances of language use is
> easily confused with the quite different, but widely held, ideological attitude to politeness
> in society at large. (164)

Such a claim is complicated by the fact that politeness is implicated in different ways in different

cultures (including different class cultures). While the 'folk view of politeness as the speech

style of the over-classes' is not the only type of politeness, it is certainly a specimen of the

'exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match the addressee's notion of how

he or she should be addressed'. Moreover, it is one that would have been dominant and—if we

can trust literary representations of Victorian culture—influential for the Victorian middle

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[18] Geoffrey Leech notes that there 'is an unfortunate association of the term with superficially "nice", but ultimately insincere, forms of human behaviour, and it is therefore tempting to write off politeness . . . as being a trivial and dispensable factor which is no more than a "garnish" on the serious use of language' (Principles 83).

classes. While it would be wrong to conclude that the pragmatic definitions of politeness and 'decorum' are collapsable, they are certainly more compatible (at least in the domain of Victorian studies) than is assumed in current pragmaticist scholarship.

Roger D. Sell's discussion of politeness in literary discourse is marked by an ambiguity similar to Grundy's in regard to the possible distinction between politeness and decorum. Sell opens his discussion with an Augustan definition of politeness, associating it with 'mental cultivation and polished manner, elegant refinement and neo-classical good taste. Such qualities . . . were epitomized in a polite conversation that was well-informed and pleasurable— easy, free, natural, pliant, humorous' ('Politeness' 208). Sell does, however, treat his readers to a short history of 'politeness', noting the suspicion with which the concept came to be regarded throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ('Politeness' 210). Like Grundy, Sell mentions the shift in the primary meaning of the term (from 'decorum' to the value-neutral politeness discussed by Brown and Levinson) but, also like Grundy, he does not explain the shift or how the two concepts are related.

Sell explicitly points out the dearth of scholarship on politeness within literary discourse, writing that 'there is a major vacuum here in literary research' ('Politeness' 222). Moreover, he notes that critics concerned with politeness in literary discourse 'discuss, not the politeness *of* literary texts, which would have something to do with the relationship between the writer and the readers, but the politeness *in* literary texts, which is a question of relationships between personae and characters dramatized within the world of mimesis' ('Politeness' 217, emphasis in original). In attempting to partially fill the critical gap he has just identified, Sell helpfully differentiates between 'selectional' and 'presentational' politeness, identifying them as the two types of

politeness applicable to literary discourse. Selectional politeness entails the observance of 'taboos and conventions of social and moral decorum operative within [an author's] culture, never saying anything, and never using any words, which would be in the least way threatening the readers' positive or negative face' ('Politeness' 221). Sell's concept of presentational politeness entails the closest observance of Grice's Cooperative Principle possible ('Politeness' 221-22). However, while all of his examples are fictional, Sell is concerned with both fictional and nonfictional texts (that is, all literary discourse). Sell's lack of distinction between two different types of text conflates their respective qualities and for that reason lessens the degree of insight offered into the study of politeness in fiction. Fiction and nonfiction differ in many aspects, two of which are the certainty with which they may communicate information (an omniscient narrator, for instance, may be more certain of facts than a nonfictional narrator) and the planes in which the information they communicate will be significant (information in nonfiction texts relates to the reader's real-life world, while information in fictional texts does not). In light of these differences, it is notable that Sell does not, for instance, articulate how fictional content is capable of threatening real-life readers' faces.

In her book Pragmatic Stylistics, Elizabeth Black claims that the applicability of politeness theories to character dialogue is obvious, but that their relevance to the 'communicative flow between the narrator and reader is less clear' (72). Black believes that there 'is an inherent impoliteness in being invited to read a book. It is an imposition, which threatens our negative face. It makes demands on our time, and . . . it may seek to overturn our schemata, to change our minds about things we may hold dear' (74). This assertion seems to be in contradiction with a general characterisation of fiction as entertainment: readers, for the most

part, control what fiction they choose to read, and they read it because it is enjoyable, not because they feel obliged to. As noted in the initial segment of this chapter, the very concept of marketing a book is based on the book's attractiveness, and arguably it would be an FTA to prohibit people from reading books. While a novel does make demands on a reader's time, so does any activity, and (because fiction is often marketed as entertainment) it is generally time that a reader willingly opts to spend reading. While a novel must be interesting in order for this preference to occur, 'politeness', as defined above, seems less relevant to a person's general desire to read fiction. Similarly, while Black's assertion that novels 'may seek to overturn our schemata' is undoubtedly true, this is not an assumption with which most readers begin reading novels.

Black also notes that 'a very serious type of FTA that occurs on the authorial or narratorial level lies in the choice of topic' (75). However, Black does not suggest a possible explanation regarding why choice of topic can be inflammatory (like Sell, she does not articulate why fictional content is capable of offending readers personally). No critic to date appears to have questioned the applicability of the 'face' concept to the analysis of fictional discourse. The concepts of face and FTAs clearly can apply, in that it is necessary that an author not offend his actual readers in order to be read (and earn a paycheck). But the relationship between author and reader is more indirect and more complex than that in face-to-face dialogue: while a narrator (such as those of Thackeray, Fielding, or Sterne) may explicitly insult his narratee, such blatant FTAs often have the counterintuitive effect of flattering the actual reader by implicitly contrasting their behaviour with that of the narratee. Moreover, the tactic appeals to the reader's intelligent discrimination between author and narrator: the narrator has committed the FTA rather

than the (actual or implied) author.[19] This suggests that it would be much harder for an author to offend his readers than for a speaker to offend his hearers. Also suggestive of this conclusion is the reader's awareness of his or her own anonymity: in most cases the reader is aware that the author cannot personally attack his or her face, and that even if the author were to do so the offence would be registered privately (in the act of reading), rather than witnessed by the speaker. In this sense reading a novel resembles eavesdropping more than being in direct dialogue with a speaker.

All of this said, a reader may be offended by a novel. Overwhelmingly, that offence is a reaction to the subject matter and language used: a perceived transgression of 'selectional', rather than 'presentational', politeness. This perception of an impoliteness is possible because the actual author is exposing the actual reader to antinarratable information, and is (in many cases if not all cases) presumably conscious of doing so: subject matter transcends the relationship between narrator and narratee (and even the relationship between implied author and implied reader) because the offensiveness resulting from exposure does not depend on who it is explicitly addressed towards, and in consequence is usually perceived to be intended by the actual author for his or her actual audience. As far as narrative mannerisms and presentation are concerned, the actual reader is less likely to be offended by fictional works because taking offence would involve reacting, on a personal level, to a fictional persona. But the inclusion of antinarratable material is clearly a conscious decision by a real author, and it is a decision to expose the reader to that material. This is where the ambiguous distinction between paranarratability and

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[19] Because this dissertation discusses authorial cues that guide the reader's inferences, it focuses on the relationship between actual author and implied reader rather than on the relationship between implied author and actual reader. However, there are exceptions, as when discussing the historically documented reactions of real-life readers to authors' works. Similarly, it is often necessary to distinguish narrators and narratees from implied authors and implied readers. For a more thorough discussion and justification of my chosen terminology, please see the Introduction.

antinarratability yet again becomes an issue: there are genres in which antinarratable material would be welcomed. Modern readers seeking a highbrow literary experience might be offended, for instance, by Thackeray's racist characterisation of Miss Swartz in <u>Vanity Fair</u>; for contemporary readers of Victorian comic and satiric fiction, however, Thackeray's overt racism would have been relatively unremarkable.

This example shows that, despite our uncertain reactions to some of the politeness codes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, politeness in fiction is still an extant issue: there have been substantial shifts concerning what Western society regards as antinarratable, but the antinarratable is still a relevant category. With regard to Victorian literature, the above example illustrates how, despite a lack of articulation concerning how politeness theory relates to the analysis of fiction, previous pragmaticists' core intuitions are correct: politeness theory does apply. However, as with many other subjects of pragmatic study, the fictionality of these texts makes an unaltered application of pragmatics ineffective when analysing them. The fictionality of these texts allows too much leeway for Sell's concept of 'presentational politeness' because the reader is aware that it is a fictional persona with which he or she has interaction, and that, because of reader anonymity, the author is incapable of pointed insults towards most readers.[20] Conversely, Sell's concept of 'selectional politeness' is pivotal in that it is the only type of impoliteness that transcends the fictional barrier, and is therefore the only impoliteness that the actual reader can react to on a nonfictional, real-life level. In matters of offence stemming from fictional texts, it is the exposure to the reader of offensive material that counts, and not the manner in which the material is exposed.

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[20] There are obvious exceptions here, such as with Edward and Rosina Bulwer-Lyttton's, and Byron and Lady Caroline Lamb's literary spats.

Consequently even when a writer is conspicuously obfuscating narrative material we may be confused or, preferably, entertained, but we are rarely offended. Yet while presentational impoliteness does not often have the power of offending the actual reader, presentational politeness has the power to ameliorate selectional impoliteness. In contrast to Sell's theory of politeness, however, this is usually achieved by flouting the Cooperative Principle rather than observing it (or in Sperber and Wilson's terms, employing 'ostensive-inferential communication').[21]

As central as previous pragmaticists have made the Cooperative Principle in their politeness theories, it is relevance theory that best articulates the presentational politeness authors employ to hedge the communication of selectionally impolite (antinarratable) material. Relevance theory's greater ability to explain the workings of authors' politeness is a consequence of the way in which Sperber and Wilson imagine the principles of relevance are 'used': while Grice posits ostensive-inferential communication as the flouting (that is, the wilful disregard) of the Cooperative Principle, Sperber and Wilson characterise ostensive-inferential communication as the manipulation of the Principles of Relevance, which they hold are impossible to disturb (162).

The (im)politeness with which an author addresses her audience (her 'presentational politeness') will have a large impact on the audience's perception of the narrative voice and their identification with the narratee, but it is largely incapable of offending readers. The reader's ability to absorb impolite fictional narration without offence connects the possibility of offence solely to the inclusion of antinarratable material. How may an author communicate

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[21] As discussed in the Introduction, 'ostensive-inferential communication' refers to a speaker/writer making his or her communicative intent manifest to a hearer/reader (Sperber and Wilson 63).

antinarratable material without alienating readers? Strategies of presentational politeness must

rely heavily on implicature because explicit, cooperative strategies are often less polite.

Relevance theory is especially useful in analysing how authors communicate antinarratable

material, because it shows how readers may be guided towards understanding the relevant

meaning of superficially irrelevant scenes and details. The more novelists rely on implicature,

the greater relevance theory's ability to explain how we interpret the ideas that they indirectly

communicate. Relevance theory will provide considerably more insight into the communication

of narrative in Ruth and Adam Bede, then, than it will for a militantly reformist novel such as

Jessie Phillips.

Jessie Phillips: Trollope's Call for Change

Frances Trollope's 1843 serialised novel, Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present Day, unwittingly

provided later novelists with a blueprint for what to avoid when writing social problem novels.

While Trollope makes frequent use of implicature, she does so in the main to address less serious

subplots and the less antinarratable aspects of Jessie's 'fall'. While Trollope's novel achieved

something of the political impact she was seeking, her straightforward narration of Jessie's

seduction, pregnancy, and its consequences earned Trollope terrible reviews and solidified her

reputation for vulgarity.

   In the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition of women writers who wrote only

after exhausting other means of financial support, Frances Milton Trollope wrote her first novels

for money. At thirty she had married Thomas Anthony Trollope, a barrister who became more

likely to quarrel with clients as his chronic headaches became debilitating. After several failed

attempts to supplement the family income with various ventures, Frances Trollope began writing

novels. She quickly realised she had found a way to support her family, and her family moved

up several socioeconomic levels as she continued to write steadily throughout her life.

Trollope began writing social problem novels in 1836. By then, she was popular and

financially successful, and could branch out from the gothic romances and travel narratives that

she had made her name with early on. Trollope's first social problem novel, <u>The Life and</u>

<u>Adventures of Jonathan Jefferson Whitlaw</u>, was an anti-slavery narrative motivated by her

friendship with participants in the abolitionist movement and by the years she had spent in the

United States (1827-1831). Trollope went on to attack different institutions in her literature: she

satirised evangelical religion in her 1837 novel <u>The Vicar of Wrexhill</u>, spoke out against factory

conditions and child labour in <u>The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy</u>

(1840), and attacked the New Poor Law in her 1843 novel, <u>Jessie Phillips: A Tale of the Present</u>

<u>Day</u>. Critics were often unsympathetic to her blatant political aims. Helen Heineman writes that

Trollope's

> contemporaries were shocked by the harsh bitterness of these novels, and for her
> pioneering efforts Frances Trollope was much maligned by critics and reviewers. . . .
> Unable to dispute her facts, critics directed their venomous attacks to her personality and
> sex and greeted her unusual subject matter by labeling these novels low, coarse, and
> vulgar, and her characters hideous, revolting, and repulsive. (58)

While it is possible that Trollope chose controversial, 'ugly' subject matter to tap a largely

undiscovered market (some of her non-reform novels could be slightly bawdy) it is more likely

that she was attempting to have an impact on lawmaking in the most effective way she knew.

Kristin J. Brandser writes that Trollope 'had no access to the authoritative language of law.

Having much to say about legal issues, however, she entered the dialogue through literary

language' (181-82). As Ann-Barbara Graff notes, Trollope's literary popularity allowed her to

write 'purposefully to influence the consciousness of her readers, to enhance the social roles of

women, and, in novels like <u>The Life and Times of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy</u> (1840)

and <u>Jessie Phillips: a Tale of the Present Day</u> (1844), to affect the legislative agenda of the House

of Commons' ('"Fair"' 53-54).

    To a certain extent, Trollope's social problem novels can as easily be considered reform

documents as examples of early-Victorian fiction. This, at least, was what was intended by

Trollope: the advertisements for <u>Jessie Phillips</u> concentrate largely on its exposition of the New

Poor Law, neglecting its quality of writing and plot in favour of emphasising its political

importance. The prospectus extract that was most commonly provided in advertisements for the

book read:

> The object the author has had in view in the composition of this work has been to call the attention of her readers to the absolute necessity of some alteration in the law which at present regulates the maintenance and management of the poor. Her own conviction of its tyranny and injustice, of the impracticability of enforcing its provisions with uniformity, and of the cruel hardships which are inflicted on the poor by the attempt to enforce them, is strong, and she conscientiously believes well founded. She is also deeply impressed with the general impolicy and evil tendency of that system of administrative centralization, which seems of late to have been creeping into the practice of our Government. Above all, the author is anxious to declare her detestation of the newly broached doctrine that the poor have no *right* to a sufficiency of necessary food to sustain the life which God has given them; and she hopes and believes that there are still abundantly enough English hearts to join with her in scouting this doctrine as *unchristian*. ('Blasphemous Publications', emphasis in original)

Another advertisement for <u>Jessie Phillips</u> was entitled 'THE POOR LAW SYSTEM', and went

on to quote the prospectus extract ('Advertisements and Notices'). All early reviews

concentrated on the reform aspect of the novel, some defending Trollope's exposé and others

condemning it. The Spectator compared Mrs. Trollope's writing with that of Dickens (whose

early pseudonym was 'Boz'), writing that

> perhaps no greater proof of the artistical superiority of Boz to Mrs. TROLLOPE could be
> given than this, that in the works of Boz the fiction is always most prominent in the mind,
> whereas with Mrs. TROLLOPE the so-called philosophy attracts the attention of the
> critic. Her character and story are so obviously framed to forward some theory of the
> author, that they come to be considered less in the light of humanities than machines.
> ('New Fictions' 17, emphasis in original)

The novel's prospectus and critics' early reviews show that Jessie Phillips was intended and

considered primarily as a reform document. Correspondingly, Trollope opted to describe the

tragedies associated with the New Poor Law relatively directly, using implicature only for the

more lighthearted strands of the narrative. The result is a didactic narrative that is far more

explicit about seduction, illegitimate pregnancy, and infanticide than most other seduction

narratives of the period. This being said, the narration of Jessie's seduction and pregnancy is still

oblique by today's standards.

The novel is set in the rural town of Deepbrook, and, contrary to the 'Present Day' setting

indicated by the novel's subtitle, the events take place in 1834, the year the New Poor Law was

enacted and nine years before the novel's publication date. As Graff writes, 'the story is set in

the past to force a contrast between the ways in which dramatic social change is anticipated and

the present reality within which the author herself writes' (Introduction ix). (Eliot would use the

same device decades later for Adam Bede.) Because the New Poor Laws have just been passed,

the men of Deepbrook devote much of their time to debating how best to implement them.

Along with the didactic rendering of this discussion, two plots are narrated, both of which

illustrate the pitfalls of the New Poor Law.

The first plot contains the story of the respectable Mrs. Greenhill, who is impoverished by the debts of her well-meaning son. With her son in jail and her son's children starving, Mrs. Greenhill reluctantly approaches the Board of Guardians to petition for relief. After a lengthy discussion in which Mrs. Greenhill is denounced as 'a pestilent, factious, plausible, mischievous old hussy' by the predictably obtuse Board, she is granted relief only on condition that her family enters the workhouse (129). Mrs. Greenhill even more reluctantly agrees to a condition that will necessarily separate her young grandchildren from their mother and will subject them all to the company of convicts. Luckily, young and wealthy Ellen Dalton hears of Mrs. Greenhill's troubles and anonymously donates a sum of money that will tide the family over through the son's imprisonment.

This plot line is central to the first third of the novel and forms the reader's introduction to the New Poor Laws. Despite the relative absence of the novel's eponymous heroine, early reviews concentrated on this plot line, valuing the novel according to the reviewer's politics. While John Bull ('Monthly Publications'), New Monthly Magazine and Humorist ('Jessie Phillips' Feb.), and Caledonian Mercury ('Literature') applauded the novel's satirical attack on the New Poor Laws, The Spectator ('New Fictions') and Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle ('Literature') both characterised Trollope's portrayal as biased and exaggerated.

Despite her nonappearance in the 'Mrs. Greenhill' plot, Jessie Phillips is introduced early in the narrative as the industrious, virtuous, but only moderately bright village beauty. Unfortunately for Jessie, Ellen Dalton's brother Frederic, the rakish village beau and heir to the Dalton fortune, is determined to seduce her. When Frederic finally obtains Jessie's attention Trollope describes the incident as 'when the village beauty was beguiled into thus taking her first

downward step' (68). This characterisation of an otherwise innocent scene (the two have spoken

while gathering flowers with Frederic's sisters) alerts the reader to the tragic and antinarratable

nature of the subsequent seduction that occurs largely 'offscreen'. By this spare use of

foreshadowing, Trollope dramatically reduces the antinarratable content which she must

explicitly present.

Trollope is, however, explicit regarding Frederic's bad intentions. She writes that, in his

view, Frederic

> might indulge himself safely, and with assured impunity, in the gratification of all the
> wishes and inclinations which destiny, that is to say, his peculiar and individual destiny,
> suggested to him. In the case of Jessie Phillips, this principle of action was roused into
> more than ordinary activity by the consciousness that there were some rather strong
> objections to his pursuing the course his inclination pointed out. In his estimation, the
> strongest and most obvious of these was the possible obstacle which any discovery of a
> little *affaire de coeur* with her, might oppose to his views upon any other fair one. . . . Of
> this, however, he had little fear. The terror that formerly kept so many libertines of all
> classes in check was no longer before him, the legislature having, in its collective
> wisdom, deemed it 'discreetest, best' that the male part of the population should be
> guarded, protected, sheltered, and insured from all the pains and penalties arising from
> the crime he meditated. 'No, no,' thought Mr. Frederic Dalton, 'thanks to our noble law-
> givers, there is no more swearing away a gentleman's incognito now. It is just one of my
> bits of good luck that this blessed law should be passed precisely when it was likely to be
> most beneficial to me.'
> As to all secondary objections, such as the destruction of the pretty creature who
> was the object of his passionate admiration, he dismissed them all with a gay smile. (108,
> emphasis in original)

The French phrase '*affaire de coeur*' is the closest Trollope comes to naming 'the crime

[Frederic] meditated', but a physical seduction is implicated by the potential consequences

mentioned (including the legislation's affect on those consequences) and semantically indicated

by such terms as 'indulge', '*coeur*', 'libertines', 'crime', 'destruction', 'pretty', and 'passionate

admiration'. Trollope's didacticism regarding the legislation of the 'noble law-givers' also

functions as heavy-handed foreshadowing, rendering Frederic's seductive actions clearer. This

is, however, as explicit as Frederic's goals are made, and it is only with the revelation of Jessie's

pregnancy that the reader learns he has been successful in his aim of seduction.

Jessie's pregnancy is initially communicated through implicature, although that

implicature is soon rendered indefeasible by an explicit announcement of Jessie's being 'in the

way to present [Frederic] with AN HEIR!' (202). While even this announcement presupposes

Frederic's seduction of Jessie by concentrating on the expected issue of a child, the capital letters

and exclamation point used make conspicuous information that, in most narratives of the period,

would be more delicately and indirectly broached (if broached at all). Three pages earlier, the

reader learns that

> Instead of good will, [Jessie] must look for reprobation, and for indignation, and contempt, in the place of respect and esteem. Unhappy creature! . . . Yet, in the midst of all this anticipated degradation she fondly flattered herself that she was not in reality degraded; for truly did the deluded girl believe that the vows she had exchanged with Frederic Dalton were as sacred in his eyes as in her own, and that she was in spirit and in truth his wedded wife, although the ceremony which was to proclaim their union to the world was delayed till it could take place without injury to the interests of her betrothed husband. . . . Nevertheless, having once made up her mind to tell her devoted lover, her adoring Frederic, that all considerations of pecuniary interest must give way at once, not only for his sake, and her own, but for that of an unborn treasure more precious than either . . . her bosom now fluttered more from the anticipation of quickly coming happiness (more quickly coming than she had hitherto ventured to hope for) than from doubt or dread of any kind. (199-200)

While the most conspicuous indication of Jessie's pregnancy here is the mention of 'an unborn

treasure', that treasure is not identified as *Jessie's* 'unborn treasure', and the indefinite article

which introduces it emphasises the 'treasure['s]' independence and potentially abstract (rather

than strictly metaphorical) significance. The reader must seek out the relevance of the utterances

by considering the relationships between them; the lines opening the passage function more to

indicate communicative intent than they do to communicate concrete information (that is, they

function ostensively). Jessie's 'anticipated degradation' is the first piece of superficially unexplained information with which the reader is presented. It is the assumed link between Jessie's 'anticipated' degradation and the unofficial status of her relationship with Frederic Dalton that would have signalled illegitimate pregnancy to most Victorian readers. As noted in the historical section of this chapter, it was widely known that lower class couples often had intercourse before official marriage ceremonies. However, the implicature still functions clearly without this background knowledge. There are not many reasons to which one could attribute an unmarried girl's 'anticipated degradation', and illegitimate pregnancy is perhaps the most salient of these potential reasons even today. Jessie's superficially incoherent resolution to tell Frederic that they must marry immediately reinforces the previous utterance's assumed significance and indicates a situation in which immediate marriage would salvage Jessie's reputation. The anticipation of happiness versus the dread of degradation functions similarly. In this context, the word 'unborn' becomes salient, confirming what the previous sentences have implicated. It is the single word 'treasure' that is semantically irrelevant to the significance of the passage, and causes its meaning to be understood inferentially rather than denotatively.

The description of the child's birth is predictably minimal: only the 'feeble cry of a new-born babe' communicates that the currently unconscious mother has given birth (403). Conversely, the narration of infanticide is surprisingly direct. When communicating a farmer's suspicion that the newly-awakened Jessie has killed and hidden the body of her baby, Trollope writes that the 'very darkest suspicions against the unhappy Jessie had taken possession of his mind; he felt not the shadow of a doubt that she had given birth to a child, destroyed, and concealed it' (409). The narration of the baby's actual murder by Frederic is even less delicate

and is clearly intended to shock the reader. In a series of tragic coincidences Frederic has come

across the baby.[22] Trollope writes that

> in an instant the thought suggested itself to Frederic Dalton that Jessie had abandoned her
> child, with the certainty that a few hours of such abandonment would cause its wished-for
> death. . . . 'Confound her idiot folly!' he exclaimed; 'if she had common sense enough to
> determine that it should perish, why could she not silence this confounded cry?' He had
> turned as he muttered these words, and was again standing over the spot where the child
> lay. Again it uttered a sharp piercing cry. He raised his booted foot, and made a
> movement as in sudden rage, and the piercing cry was heard no more.
>
> Frederic Dalton stood alone in the dark shed, trembling in every limb. He was perfectly
> aware of the horror that had been perpetrated, yet, with a strangely vehement attempt at
> self-delusion, he blended the word ACCIDENT with his muttered curses. (434-35,
> emphasis in original)

While the words 'kill' or 'murder' are not used in the above passage, the narration of Frederic's

villainous motivations directly before his violent action shock the reader by emphasising, rather

than deemphasising, the antinarratable action. The unusual line break between the paragraphs

accentuates the gravity of the action, as does Frederic's unexpectedly vulnerable appreciation of

'the horror' of it. Trollope does not let us mistake his vulnerability for innocence, however, and

reasserts Frederic's villainy by characterising his denial of blameworthiness as 'self-delusion'.

It would be wrong to assume that Trollope was unaware of the etiquette prohibiting the

narration of such topics; she carefully addresses and defends her shock tactics as an exposition of

true practices that could be remedied—that is, as transcending the nonfiction-fiction barrier and

making the material relevant to her audience's 'real' lives. In the novel, the workhouse is

characterised as having the same effect that negative reviewers characterised Jessie Phillips as

having: both expose decent audiences to indecent material. This characterisation of the

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[22] The baby has been taken from Jessie by a minor character while she is unconscious, and later forgotten in an
abandoned barn.

workhouse plays a large role in Mrs. Greenhill's reluctance to enter it, and is one of Trollope's

main arguments against the New Poor Laws: by shutting away the impoverished with the

criminal in workhouses, the 'decent' poor are contaminated with the immorality of the 'indecent'

poor. Trollope returns to this thread in the Jessie Phillips plot, subjecting Jessie to such exposure

during her time in the workhouse. In the passage below, the prostitute Caroline Watts embodies

the exposure to immorality that Trollope is protesting against but also enacting:

> But the terrible lore of Caroline was not now offered in a way to profit her hearers—the old were shocked and disgusted, while the young, though appalled, were contaminated. To whichever class the reader may belong, the language of the reprobate shall not be recorded to offend him; yet was there one observation made by this same Caroline which had enough of truth and practical wisdom to redeem it from oblivion. 'They pretend to think,' said she, with a bitter sneer, 'that they will save some of their precious parish money by making a poor girl's bad luck too hard for her to bear, and that they shall keep her, that way, from bringing babies to them (kind tender creters!) to be nursed. But they are fools for their pains, and so they will find, whether they are honest enough to say so or no. In the old times, when a boy and a girl wasn't too bad, and too miserable, to be past caring for any thing, both the one and the other had something they were afraid of, that, in two cases out of three, maybe, kept 'em out of mischief. But now our precious gentlefolks have been clever enough to find out that by leaving one to suffer for both, and letting the t'other go free, they have made the girl's share too bad to bear, and so they shall get quit of the paying, either by the poor wench killing herself or her child, or both. A nice charity scheme, isn't it?' (326)

In this passage Trollope signals that she is obeying decorum: she will not expose her audience to

what 'shocked and disgusted . . . appalled [and] contaminated' her fictional characters. But she

defends her own narration of antinarratable content when describing Caroline's similar tirade as

having 'enough of truth and practical wisdom to redeem it from oblivion'. The use of Caroline

as a mouthpiece allows Trollope to once again offer a didactic condemnation of the bastardy

clause but it also, because someone other than the narrator is delivering the condemnation,

allows the narrator to comment on why the tirade is permissible.

Jessie Phillips was serialised in monthly parts before being published in three volumes. As a monthly serial the novel received some positive (if short) reviews, but upon volume publication in late 1843 the reviews became lengthier and more negative. While it was overwhelmingly the blatantly political end of the fiction that most irritated reviewers, the antinarratable element of the political problem was also attacked. These reviews echoed the worries first articulated by The Spectator, which had rightly predicted the remaining plot of the novel in their early review ('New Fictions' 17). In an attack that anticipated those later made on sensation novels, The Spectator depicted Trollope as 'taking advantage of attractive temporary circumstances, and so working them as to produce their greatest effect at the time of production. . . . she treats her subject cleverly, no doubt, but coarsely, literally, and vulgarly—not so much with vulgarity of manner, but by an appeal to the vulgar prejudices and vulgar cant which animate the ignorant and narrow-minded' ('New Fictions' 17). The Spectator's acknowledgment that there is no presentational impoliteness on Trollope's part is significant: it is the only positive comment on her work. The same thread is carried on in later reviews: a milder review in The Examiner notes that 'where a subject is forced and painful in itself, its failings are not likely to be less apparent in Mrs. Trollope's hands. That is the defect of the book before us. There is no relief' ('Literary Examiner' 675). It is not presentational impoliteness that angered reviewers, but Trollope's lack of overt presentational politeness when communicating antinarratable subject matter.

While The Athenaeum concentrates primarily on denouncing the reform aspect of Jessie Phillips (956) it also notes that the novel's 'faults are flagrant and numberless', using as an example Trollope's inability to 'turn away from so tempting a subject as [the law's] dealings with

Woman and her Seducer' ('Jessie Phillips: a Tale' 956). <u>John Bull</u>, having published a positive

review shortly after <u>Jessie Phillips</u> began serialisation, later published a second review

denouncing the antinarratable content of the novel:

> But for the sake of thus having a Poor Law story with which to bleed heavy accusations against the Poor Law itself, Mrs. TROLLOPE has sinned grievously against good taste and decorum. The particular clause of the Act which she has selected for reprobation is the *bastardy clause*—not perhaps the very best subject for a female pen. And then, in order to give dramatic effect to this subject, we have the seduction of Jessie Phillips, her pregnancy, the birth of the child, and its supposed murder by the guilty mother, discussed by two young ladies (Ellen Dalton and Martha Maxwell), of which discussion, the discovery of the body, the probabilities of Jessie being in a condition, just after parturition, to be able to destroy the child, and the enormity of the crime, are the prominent points. We admit that Mrs. TROLLOPE manages these details with as much delicacy and reserve as their nature would admit of, but they are essentially unfit materials. ('Literature' 732, emphasis in original)

Again, the manner in which the 'unfit materials' are treated is excused, but the materials

themselves pose the problem of audience exposure. In this review illegitimate pregnancy's

antinarratable status is complicated by its inherent paranarratability in yet another way: it is not

only that Jessie's illegitimate pregnancy is communicated, but that it is communicated by 'a

female pen' and 'discussed by two young ladies' in the novel. The content of the narrative is

antinarratable, but it is posed as antinarratable specifically with respect to discussion by women.

The contextual dependency of the material's antinarratable status effectively renders it

paranarratable. The reviewer's assertion of the material's paranarratability rather than

antinarratability evidences the variable nature of literary 'decorum': <u>John Bull</u>'s specification of

the context in which illegitimate pregnancy is antinarratable implies that it would not be

antinarratable if, for instance, written by a male author (and consequently approached in a

different context). The inherent paranarratability of all antinarratable material (like that

presented here) also evidences the selectional character of literary passages which offend: <u>Jessie</u>

Phillips's female author and female characters suggest that the novel is likely to command a largely female audience, and the inclusion of illegitimate pregnancy entails that it is a subject not only known to the female author, but deliberately exposed to her female audience. A male-authored text would not convey the same breach of decorum on the writer's part (although of course a similar audience is likely).

It is perhaps even more indicative of Jessie Phillips's offensiveness that, in one of the few positive reviews of the novel, the New Monthly Magazine and Humorist felt the need to avoid mention of the 'single incident' that motivates the plot, writing only that the novel 'triumphs over difficulties which perhaps no other female writer would have dared even encounter' ('Jessie Phillips' Nov. 429). The review goes further, protesting against the exposure which Trollope's blunt handling of antinarratable information results in: the novel is said to busy 'itself with the lowest, the vilest, and the weakest of mankind, and will nevertheless leave the wisest wiser than it finds them, the purest more pure, and the loftiest more fitted for the duties of their lofty sphere' ('Jessie Phillips' Nov. 429-30).

Most critics believe that, despite negative reviews, Trollope largely accomplished her political goal.[23] While it is difficult to find concrete evidence that illustrates a direct link between the publication of Jessie Phillips and subsequent legislation, the first reforms of the bastardy clause of the New Poor Law were passed in 1844, within a year of Jessie Phillips's publication. Considering that Trollope was 'the only novelist who dramatized the disastrous implications of this law for women', and that she was already an established and popular novelist, it is likely that Jessie Phillips was partially responsible for the new legislation (Helen

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[23] Graff, 'Introduction' xviii; Ayres 4; Brandser 202.

Heineman qtd. in Brandser 202). Unfortunately, the new legislation was inadequate. According

to Lionel Rose, women were now allowed to petition for child support, but

> the Poor Law was expressly prohibited from assisting in any action. . . . the government's
> real objective was not humanitarian at all, but designed really to dissociate a heartily
> detested Poor Law from one of its most reviled aspects at a sensitive time: for the Act, if
> anything, made the woman's position worse.
>   Poor ignorant girls were now left entirely to their own devices to start
> proceedings. The 'corroborative evidence' rule remained. . . . Allegations of an increase
> in infanticide, now blamed on the 1844 Act, were to mount sporadically but noticeably
> into the 1850s, and then reached a crescendo in the 1860s. (28-29).

If anything, the situation for unwed mothers was made worse by the reforms Trollope had hoped

for. It would be decades before their situation improved, and in the meantime more authors felt

drawn to protest against unfair laws.

Ruth: Gaskell's Careful Protest

Elizabeth Gaskell had motivations similar to Trollope's when writing Ruth (1853). Gaskell had

contemplated the novel since 1849, when she helped a young woman emigrate. The girl,

'Pasley', had been seduced by her doctor, and incarcerated when (designated 'fallen' and

consequently unable to find employment) she had committed theft (Gérin 127-28). Gaskell was

moved by the girl's story, and determined to urge people to reconsider the condemnation with

which unwed mothers were treated. Gaskell especially hoped she could move people to consider

the negative effect such shame could have on not only the mother, but the infant.

Unlike Trollope, Gaskell was wary of the strong conventional constraints upon handling

such a topic in fiction. However, Gaskell was also planning on traversing territory that Trollope

had not attempted. While, as Angus Easson writes, the 'fallen woman was a familiar enough

character in novels . . . Ruth is not only placed centrally, she is also rehabilitated, and both the

sexual treatment and the working out of her redemption gave offence' (26). The 'working out of [Ruth's] redemption' was capable of giving offence on several grounds: not only does it involve the growing idealisation of a onetime sinner, but it necessitates the narration of the unwed mother's life, not just her pregnancy. While there is little in the representation of unwed motherhood that would seem to be more offensive than the representation of illegitimate pregnancy (considering, especially, the supposed redemptive qualities of motherhood), the subject's extreme rarity suggests its paranarratability. Jessie Phillips, Esther Barton (<u>Mary Barton</u>), Hetty Sorrel (<u>Adam Bede</u>), Lady Dedlock (<u>Bleak House</u>), and Sarah Leeson (<u>The Dead Secret</u>) all disappear from their respective narratives shortly after becoming or being revealed as unwed mothers, and almost all of these disappearances are deaths (the death of Hetty, the only exception, is one of the few things reported of her after her disappearance). While Ruth also dies, she does so a decade later in narrative time. With two thirds of the narrative dedicated to her subsequent life, emphasis is placed on her dedication as a mother and her unfailing piety. Instead of assuming that an unwed (if pious) mother will be unacceptable to her audience, Gaskell's chosen task is one of reconciling the unwed mother to her fictional acquaintances and, simultaneously, to the actual reading public.

Gaskell worried over her novel's public reception from the first. 'An unfit subject for fiction', as Gaskell wrote about it, 'is *the* thing to say about it; I knew all this before; but I determined notwithstanding to speak my mind out about it' (Easson 202). Many felt that such a subject should not form the central plot of a story written in the 'novel form, which, notoriously, being for amusement in moments of idleness, could not hope to treat seriously a topic suited to

morals or theology' (Easson 26).[24] While the centrality of such an issue was an objection in

itself, it would also pose other narrative problems: the seduction of a young girl, an

antinarratable topic, would seemingly compose a prominent part of the story. These two

problems aside, Gaskell's main objective would be to elicit as much sympathy for her heroine as

possible—a goal she could depend on at least some readers to be hostile towards. As Easson

writes, 'Ruth was a "problem" novel' and Gaskell's aim in writing was to work towards a

solution (26).

The use of implicature alleviated many of the narrative problems Gaskell faced.

Implicature allowed Gaskell to narrate implicitly rather than explicitly, to maintain presentational

politeness while discussing an impolite topic. Implicature's ability to portray various states of

awareness is also made heavy use of: Gaskell uses implicature to mimic Ruth's sexual ignorance,

emphasising her vulnerability and making it nearly impossible for readers' sympathies to lie

elsewhere.

The first quarter of the novel is dedicated to Ruth's seduction, and, in keeping with

Ruth's unawareness, the relationship into which she is entering is never explicitly portrayed as a

seduction. However, Gaskell slowly builds a dynamic between Ruth and her seducer,

Bellingham, in which Bellingham's unethical sexual intentions and Ruth's innocence are

emphasised. This dynamic is introduced with their first interaction, in which Bellingham

encounters Ruth working as a seamstress at a local ball. His supposed fiancee's dress is torn, and

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[24] Margaret Ganz believes that 'a real effort of critical imagination is required nowadays to do justice to Mrs. Gaskell's intentions and artistic execution in Ruth. For our attitudes toward the "fallen woman" have so greatly evolved that we might minimize Mrs. Gaskell's courage and broad-mindedness in making a then proscribed topic the main subject of a novel' (105-06). Similarly, Hilary Schor writes that 'Gaskell could be sure of enraging much of her audience through her choice of subject matter alone: in telling the story of an unwed mother, speaking openly of female sexuality and exploited young women, she was challenging accepted notions not just of female behaviour but of what belonged in decent fiction' (159).

Mr. Bellingham presents Ruth with a camellia by way of thanks for her good work in mending

the gown. After an extended passage of free indirect discourse in which Ruth's observations on

the ball and on Mr. Bellingham are presented, Gaskell writes

> Ruth, then, had been watching him.
>   Yet she had no idea that any association made her camellia precious to her. She
> believed it was solely on account of its exquisite beauty that she tended it so carefully.
> She told [her friend] Jenny every particular of its presentation, with open, straight-
> looking eye, and without the deepening of a shade of colour. (17-18)

The first sentence, offset in a paragraph by itself, emphasises the interest that Ruth takes in

Bellingham from the beginning. The proposition that Ruth had 'no idea that any association

made her camellia precious to her' presupposes that an association does make it precious to her,

and the gap between the two propositions licenses the reader to infer Ruth's innocence and the

danger she is accordingly in. The context of the preceding sentence and the omniscient narration

cause the reader to interpret the verb 'believed' as counterfactual, indicating that, although Ruth

may be unaware of the fact, it is not 'solely' because of its beauty that she prizes the flower.

The 'deepening of colour' disnarrated in the last sentence signifies Ruth's unawareness of

the romantic import of Bellingham's gift. This signification is one that most readers

automatically discern, although the romantic connotations of Bellingham's gift are never

explicitly alluded to in the passage. In many ways the 'blush' is a perfect trope through which to

discuss implicatures. Always denoting self-consciousness, but varying widely in the origin it

designates for that self-consciousness (communicating, for instance, everything between shame

and romantic interest), the blush is an ambiguous signal, relying on implicatures to communicate

its meaning. Conventionally, it functions as a synecdochic trick, standing in for the

embarrassment characters might feel, hidden knowledge they might possess, or, as in Ruth, their

growing romantic and sexual awareness. In all instances, the blush signifies feelings that are less likely to be explicitly stated in empathetic narration because they are illicit or not fully realised by the character experiencing them (the character may be 'innocent', or experiencing denial, for instance). Because, conventionally, blushes are ambiguous in the type of self-awareness they express, implicatures are often needed to communicate the origin of characters' blushes. In this case, the romantic import of the scene Ruth is describing (men giving women flowers at balls) provides the context for the described—but disnarrated—blush. That Ruth does *not* blush indicates that she is not aware of these romantic imports, and this achieves Gaskell's aim of portraying Ruth's unusual innocence.

The danger which is introduced into the text with Bellingham is, notably, not made explicit. A sociopathic outlook is indicated in both Bellingham and his mother when the reader is told that his 'boyish tricks annoyed and irritated [his mother] far more than the accounts which reached her of more serious misdoings at college and in town. Of these grave offences she never spoke; of the smaller misdeeds she hardly ever ceased speaking' (32). This passage also qualifies as disnarration, in that it isolates what Bellingham's mother does not discuss. Bellingham's mother's silence mimics that of Gaskell.[25] It is implied that Bellingham's mother subscribes to the hypocritical school of politeness that Sell sees being satirised by Victorian authors. This impression is a result of the generally negative characterisation of Mrs. Bellingham: she 'hardly ever' stops complaining about her son, but then, as we soon learn, she

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[25] As is indicated by the use of her name, I am referring to Gaskell as the actual author who employs presentational politeness, rather than her narrator. Whereas the presentational impoliteness of narrators has no real-life object, the presentational politeness of actual authors (which often translates into the presentational politeness of the narrator, as well) is in reaction to the presence of selectionally impolite material. Because selectional impoliteness is attributed to the actual author, it follows that presentational politeness used to mitigate selectional impoliteness would be as well. This distinction has less relevance to an analysis of Jessie Phillips, in which comparatively little presentational politeness is used to ameliorate the novel's selectional impoliteness.

also rescues him from situations in which he has acted immorally (condemning the victims of his immoral behaviour). And yet Gaskell repeats the pattern of suppressing knowledge of Bellingham's errors: like Mrs. Bellingham she is explicitly vocal about everything except overtly immoral actions. It is the situation in which the reader encounters these figures that dictates whether their silence is perceived as a positive or a negative attribute. Bellingham's mother is a natural guide for her son, and it is disastrous that she does not chastise him for his immoral actions, or attempt in some way to stem them.

Gaskell, on the other hand, is excused for her silence by the fictionality of the text. Like the pamphleteers and agitators against the bastardy clause of the New Poor Law, Bellingham's mother is responsible for speaking out against her son's immoralities because that vocalisation will have 'real' consequences (that is, consequences on the same fictional plane). Because she is communicating a fiction (and therefore material that is strictly unnecessary) Gaskell is not only exempt from this responsibility, but denied it. Gaskell is addressing implied readers, and so the explicit articulation of antinarratable content would not be capable of having a positive impact, but only the negative one of exposure (as Trollope's explicit narration did). While Bellingham's mother's silence is condemned, then, Gaskell's indirectness is read as presentational politeness, as an act undertaken specifically for the benefit of the audience. Context affects the significance of silence: in this case, what has been shown as immoral within the fiction is rendered thoughtfully polite when transcending the fictional plane. This element of thoughtful politeness is precisely what The Examiner complained was missing from Jessie Phillips.

Bellingham's intentions concerning Ruth are introduced through implicature. Employing free indirect discourse, Gaskell narrates that by 'no over-bold admiration, or rash, passionate

word, would [Bellingham] startle her; and, surely, in time [Ruth] might be induced to look upon him as a friend, if not something nearer and dearer still' (33). The first half of this quotation makes Bellingham's awareness of Ruth's ignorance clear—his unwillingness to 'startle' her with his 'rashness' evokes a human/animal interaction in the wilderness, portraying Ruth as almost a 'wild child' in her timidity.[26] The second half of the quote substitutes for the word 'lover' the descriptive phrase 'something nearer and dearer still'. Gaskell's obvious obfuscation ('lover' replaced with 'something', and emphasised by the drawn-out phrase 'nearer and dearer' which follows) qualifies as 'ostensive-inferential communication' in that it relies more on communicating communicative intent rather than the actual proposition intended. The ostensive-inferential nature of the statement emphasises that the meaning intended by the utterance is not made explicit, and must be inferred (Sperber and Wilson 49-54). The omniscient narrative voice of Ruth is capable of specifying the exact relationship that Bellingham hopes to form with Ruth. Gaskell's unnecessary use of ostensive-inferential communication alerts the reader that the information communicated is better left inexplicit, and correspondingly is illicit. The relationship which the narrative voice is specifying is characterised as 'near' and 'dear' yet also illicit: two positive concepts that are unusually collocated with a negative one ('near' and 'dear' with 'illicit'). The unusualness of this description isolates Bellingham's hopes as those of seduction.

A key scene in the narrative follows, and it is one that relies heavily on implicature. Gaskell writes:

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[26] Some of Gaskell's early critics speculated that Ruth was inspired by one of Wordsworth's poems in his Lyrical Ballads (Easson 208, 219, 235). The poem is about a child, Ruth, who runs away to the forest after suffering neglect from her father. There, she meets a Native American (recently arrived from America) whom she falls in love with and marries. Soon, however, the Native American grows restless and deserts her.

The third [Sunday] he walked by her side a little way, and, seeing her annoyance, he left her; and then she wished for him back again, and found the day very dreary, and wondered why a strange undefined feeling had made her imagine she was doing wrong in walking alongside of one so kind and good as Mr. Bellingham; it had been very foolish of her to be self-conscious all the time, and if ever he spoke to her again she would not think of what people might say, but enjoy the pleasure which his kind words and evident interest in her might give. Then she thought it was very likely he never would notice her again, for she knew she had been very rude with her short answers; it was very provoking that she had behaved so rudely. She should be sixteen in another month, and she was still childish and awkward. Thus she lectured herself, after parting with Mr. Bellingham; and the consequence was, that on the following Sunday she was ten times as blushing and conscious, and (Mr. Bellingham thought) ten times more beautiful than ever. He suggested, that . . . she should take the round by the Leasowes; at first she declined, but then, suddenly wondering and questioning herself why she refused a thing which was, as far as reason and knowledge (*her* knowledge) went, so innocent, and which was certainly so tempting and pleasant, she agreed to go the round; and when she was once in the meadows that skirted the town, she forgot all doubt and awkwardness—nay, almost forgot the presence of Mr. Bellingham—in her delight at the new tender beauty of an early spring day in February. Among the last year's brown ruins, heaped together by the wind in the hedgerows, she found the fresh green crinkled leaves and pale star-like flowers of the primroses. Here and there a golden celandine made brilliant the sides of the little brook that (full of water in 'February fill-dyke') bubbled along by the side of the path. . . . Ruth turned to thank Mr. Bellingham for his kindness in taking her home by this beautiful way, but his look of admiration at her glowing, animated face, made her suddenly silent; and, hardly wishing him good-bye, she quickly entered the house with a beating, happy, agitated heart. . . .

       She was not conscious, as yet, that Mr. Bellingham's presence had added any more charm to the ramble. . . . (39-41)

The free indirect discourse with which this passage begins emphasises Ruth's childish innocence.

It also makes Ruth more sympathetic, inviting readers to follow her train of thought while

functioning to contrast her innocence and immaturity with their greater knowledge. The

awkwardness of Ruth's reasoning as well as the narrative voice's direct communication informs

the reader that Ruth is only fifteen; her youth characterises her unequivocally as a 'victim' and

'innocent'.

Free indirect discourse functions by way of implicature, in that the primary meaning it communicates is a result of the content's interaction with its context, rather than the denotation of a semantically coherent utterance. Specifically, free indirect discourse usually functions by the use of 'foreign words' which articulate a character bias that clashes with the more-neutral language of typical third-person omniscient narration (Ginsburg 551). The meaning of passages using free indirect discourse is not found in the 'foreign words' or in the neutral language of omniscient narration, but in the difference that is often evident between the two. In the passage above, for instance, the third-person pronouns used to designate Ruth and the lack of any quotation marks alert the reader that it is the narrative voice that is communicating information. However, because the narrative voice has previously portrayed Mr. Bellingham as dangerously immoral, the characterisation of Mr. Bellingham as 'so kind and good' shows that an opinion at odds with the narrator's is being communicated. On an explicit, superficial level, this characterisation of Mr. Bellingham is clearly wrong. The only way to resolve the relevance of the characterisation to its context (and its coherence) is to understand that the narrative voice is mimicking Ruth's thought process. This conclusion is also evidenced by other 'foreign' phrases that suggest thoughts similarly dissonant with those the audience would associate with the omniscient narrative voice (such as the assertion that 'it had been very foolish of [Ruth] to be self-conscious' when she was walking with Bellingham, and the prediction that 'it was very likely he never would notice her again'). What Gaskell evidently intends to communicate is not that Mr. Bellingham is 'so kind and good', or that Ruth should not be self-conscious when taking secrets walks with a bachelor of a higher station, but rather the disconnect between Ruth's worldview and that of the narrator. That this can be communicated inexplicitly shows that

Gaskell assumes the reader is able to identify with the narrator's worldview, and that Ruth's

differing worldview is, in perspective, less informed.

Because of its predominantly mimetic character, free indirect discourse qualifies as

echoic discourse.[27] While Sperber and Wilson explain that 'a speaker can use an echoic

utterance to convey a whole range of attitudes and emotions, ranging from outright acceptance

and endorsement to outright rejection and dissociation' (240) they also specify that the 'attitude

expressed by an ironical utterance is invariably of the rejecting or disapproving kind' (239).

While Dorrit Cohn has rightly described the empathetic capacities of free indirect discourse

(Transparent Minds 117), it is generally accepted that free indirect discourse functions more

commonly as irony, with the true meaning of the utterance lying in the attitude expressed

towards the mimicked language. While Gaskell is clearly not 'disapproving' of Ruth, her use of

free indirect discourse distances the narrator's opinions from those Ruth espouses, and guides the

reader to reject them.

The blush that is disnarrated earlier in Ruth and Bellingham's courtship is enacted in the

passage above. However, Gaskell is very thorough in her explanation of Ruth's 'blushing and

conscious[ness]', and it is the hefty passage of preceding free indirect discourse that excuses it.

While Ruth's previous self-consciousness around Bellingham is explicitly mentioned, it is Ruth's

lack of understanding concerning that self-consciousness that is dwelt on. By delineating Ruth's

train of thought leading up to her and Bellingham's next meeting, Gaskell aligns Ruth's

consciousness and blushing with shame and youthful awkwardness rather than with sexual

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[27] Echoic utterances are those that 'achieve relevance by informing the hearer of the fact that the speaker has in mind what so-and-so said, and has a certain attitude to it' (Sperber and Wilson 238).

knowledge. Bellingham, on the other hand, responds to the sexual connotations of Ruth's blush, noting how it enhances her beauty rather than the discomfort it signifies.

Many of the text's implicatures effect dramatic irony by highlighting the implied reader's knowledge of concepts that Ruth is ignorant of. The italicised, typographically foregrounded '*her*' in the passage above functions in this way, characterising Ruth's knowledge as different from that of the other characters and the reader. When followed by the characterisation 'innocent', the phrase '*her* knowledge' communicates that the reader has knowledge which Ruth does not possess. Gaskell's use of dramatic irony here does double duty, creating a suspenseful narrative effect and emphasising the blamelessness which Ruth's ignorance gives her. She is, in short, a victim of her ignorance.

The following imagery symbolises the sexuality that previous implicatures have also communicated. The description of blossoming flowers is especially appropriate in a passage that succeeds free indirect discourse concentrated on Ruth's thoughts, in that it points to the unconscious sexuality of an ignorant girl. These arise among 'last year's brown ruins', which could be related to the death of Ruth's parents the previous year. The passage's spring imagery, then, is symbolic of Ruth's 'budding' sexuality and of her unconscious hopes for a new life, a new source of happiness.

The narrative voice notes that, at the end of their walk, Bellingham's 'look of admiration at [Ruth's] glowing, animated face, made her suddenly silent; and, hardly wishing him good-bye, she quickly entered the house with a beating, happy, agitated heart' (40). The equivalent of this passage is found in many narratives of courtship; while Ruth may be ignorant of what her body language expresses, the reader is not. This typical scene functions by use of implicature. The

awkwardness of Ruth's goodbye silently (and, for her, unconsciously) acknowledges the

unspoken romantic element between the two characters. Romantic inclinations often remain

inexplicit for an extended period in literary depictions of Victorian courtship (as will be

discussed in more detail in Chapter Two). While this is partially due to authors' exploitations of

a natural source of narrative suspense, it also reflects the hesitancy with which, in real life as in

fiction, many people broach a topic that is potentially face threatening. If nothing unspoken

existed between Ruth and Bellingham, there would be no awkwardness. Instead, Bellingham's

'look of admiration' hints at his sexual feelings, and Ruth's consciousness of his gaze results in

behaviour that, outside a romantic context, would be incoherent. While my own close reading

has worked forward through the sentence (from Bellingham's 'look' to Ruth's ensuing

awkwardness), the reader would be expected to work backwards: Ruth's awkwardness alerts the

reader that Bellingham's look made her (if unconsciously) uncomfortable. The scene is

reminiscent of many found in less illicit, more encouraging courtship narratives; it alerts the

reader to the sexual tension between Bellingham and Ruth.

     The narrative voice alludes most conspicuously to the sexual component of Bellingham

and Ruth's relationship when explicitly discussing Ruth's innocence. The reader is told that

Ruth

> was too young when her mother died to have received any cautions or words of advice respecting *the* subject of a woman's life—if, indeed, wise parents ever directly speak of what, in its depth and power, cannot be put into words—which is a brooding spirit with no definite form or shape that men should know it, but which is there, and present before we have recognized and realized its existence. Ruth was innocent and snow-pure. She had heard of falling in love, but did not know the signs and symptoms thereof. . . . (44, emphasis in original)

'[*T*]*he*' subject of the story, 'love', is first explicitly broached here. However, the negative

implication of 'love' on which the plot really centres—the seduction Ruth is at risk of because of

an absence of 'any cautions or words of advice'—is not made explicit until much later. The

above passage is nevertheless clear in its communication. Gaskell imbues the word 'the' with

special significance when she foregrounds it by typographical deviation. 'The', in itself,

communicates hardly any meaning, in that it is only a definite article (although, importantly, its

definiteness isolates 'the' issue that Gaskell means to discuss). Gaskell typographically

foregrounds a word that is without explicit content, implicating that '*the* subject of a woman's

life' should not be put into words. It is explicitly stated that this 'subject' 'cannot be put into

words'; that, like many other concepts which have 'no definite shape or form', this subject is

supranarratable and therefore only capable of being narrated indirectly. While this may be true,

it is doubtless the case that '*the* subject of a woman's life' is, in this context, antinarratable as

well. Gaskell's conspicuously vague terminology and lack of recourse to semantically

appropriate words (such as 'seduction', 'sexuality', 'pregnancy', and 'birth') indicate that while

her topic may be supranarratable, its articulation is not being attempted. Instead, the reader is

left to relate '*the* subject of a woman's life' to 'falling in love'.

Gaskell makes extensive use of foreshadowing when narrating Ruth's seduction,

presupposing the reader's understanding of the relationship between Ruth and Bellingham as an

illicit one. Old Thomas, an acquaintance from Ruth's childhood, is filled with a 'tender anxiety'

when he witnesses the growing relationship between Bellingham and Ruth (50). Gaskell's

narrative voice is too polite to articulate the nature of Ruth and Bellingham's relationship, but

she reports Old Thomas's telling thoughts:

> 'I misdoubt that young fellow [Bellingham] though, for all [Ruth] called him a real
> gentleman, and checked me when I asked if he was her sweetheart. If his are not
> sweetheart's looks, I've forgotten all my young days. . . .' (50)

Old Thomas's articulated suspicions, while not as explicit as the circulating pamphlets condemning the New Poor Law, confirm the reader's interpretation of countless implicatures and further evidence Ruth's ignorance. However, as with Mrs. Bellingham and Gaskell herself, Old Thomas is kept from giving Ruth 'a [direct] warning of the danger that he thought she was in' by the restrictions that make up polite conduct (50). His eventual recourse to a quotation from the Bible is so indirect that it gives Ruth 'no definite idea' (51)—an occurrence which implies Gaskell's criticism of the politeness conventions that her own manner of narration embraces.[28] In this context, Thomas's ineffectual effort to warn Ruth not only foreshadows the future state of Ruth and Bellingham's relationship but also clarifies the present state of it.

The rest of Gaskell's foreshadowing also implicates the present state of Ruth and Bellingham's relationship. As Ruth and Bellingham return from their encounter with Old Thomas, Ruth is described as 'all unconscious of the dark phantoms of the future that were gathering around her' (51). A little while later, it is noted that Bellingham and Ruth stand 'together at the top of a steep ascent'—an image that is reminiscent of the terminology used in the Victorian era to denote a woman's impending 'fall' (51). While both of these images are straightforward instances of foreshadowing, they also presuppose the danger and illicitness that necessarily accompany Ruth's actions, but are not explicitly narrated before this point.

The sexual nature of Ruth's relationship with Bellingham is explicitly stated sometime later, when the narrative voice notes that Ruth 'and her lover had rambled in sun and in

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[28] Old Thomas warns Ruth that 'the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5:8).

gladness' (83). But the one word 'lover' is the only explicit acknowledgment given to the main

subject of the book until the explicit presentation of Ruth's pregnancy a few chapters later. The

scene of Ruth's actual, physical seduction by Bellingham is omitted. When an abrupt chapter

ending is preceded with the information that Ruth 'entered the carriage, and drove towards

London', Gaskell implicitly evokes the eighteenth-century perception of London as the British

centre of immorality, and communicates that it would be impolite to articulate the London-based

part of the narrative—that it is antinarratable (61). Gaskell begins the next chapter with a date,

'The June of 18—' and the unusual reference to calendar time compounded with a new,

previously unmentioned setting (Wales) alerts the reader that much time has passed (61). The

emphatic silence concerning the activities in the ellipsis foregrounds them, and the reader's

background assumptions concerning London implicate the unnarrated activities' antinarratability.

The gap in the text that Gaskell makes conspicuous is not representative only of a lapse of time:

it signals the illicit, antinarratable activities that occurred during that time.

Ruth and Bellingham's activities are more explicitly referred to later in the text. Ruth's

situation is presented by two characters other than herself, with one of them adopting the

narratorial role of informant. Mr. Benson and his sister, Faith, have been vacationing in Wales

when Mr. Benson discovers Ruth shortly after she has been abandoned by Mr. Bellingham. Ruth

is mentally and physically ill with shock, and Mr. Benson takes her home for Faith to nurse her.

Soon after, they learn that Ruth is pregnant. Gaskell's hesitancy concerning her topic is reflected

through her characters' dialogue:

> 'Why, Thurstan, there is something so shocking the matter, that I cannot tell you.'
>   Mr. Benson changed colour with affright. All things possible and impossible
> crossed his mind, but the right one. I said 'all things possible;' I made a mistake. He
> never believed Ruth to be more guilty than she seemed. . . .

'I beg your pardon; but something so shocking has just been discovered—I don't know how to word it—She will have a child. The doctor says so.' (117)

Gaskell's timidity in broaching illegitimate pregnancy, and the immoral sexual act it entails, is evident in her characters' 'shock[ed]' treatment of the information. Because Gaskell momentarily gives over the role of narrator to Faith, her announcement of shock prepares the reader (as it does Mr. Benson) for the news of Ruth's pregnancy. One event (the future birth of a child) entails another event that remains unnarrated but becomes clear by inference (that Ruth and Mr. Bellingham have engaged in premarital sex). In <u>Ruth</u>, then, implicature in character dialogue (that is, implicature 'shown' to us by means of characters' dialogue) is used to bypass the restrictions that social convention places on the communication of antinarratable content.

Gaskell further eases the explicit presence of antinarratable content in her novel by immediately reminding her readers of the content's purpose, and that that purpose is one other than entertainment. In the text succeeding Faith's communication of Ruth's pregnancy, Gaskell uses Mr. Benson as a mouthpiece to didactically state her thoughts on the reception of illegitimate children in Britain:

> 'The world has, indeed, made such children miserable, innocent as they are; but I doubt if this be according to the will of God, unless it be His punishment for the parents' guilt; and even then the world's way of treatment is too apt to harden the mother's natural love into something like hatred. Shame, and the terror of friends' displeasure, turn her mad— defile her holiest instincts; and, as for the fathers—God forgive them!' (120)

The text preceding and succeeding this passage make Gaskell's biographically evidenced views clear: as implied in the above passage, Gaskell believes that the shame people inspire in unwed mothers is the greatest motivator towards infanticide, and that, rather than a 'badge of [an unwed mother's] shame', an illegitimate child should be considered 'God's messenger to lead [the unwed mother] back to Him' (119). This passage functions primarily to communicate Gaskell's

central thesis; however, the didactic explication of her thesis also helps her maintain

presentational politeness. As with similar passages in <u>Jessie Phillips</u>, the blatant didacticism

ostensively acts as an excuse for the presence of the novel's antinarratable content.

      <u>Ruth</u> directly portrays Ruth's affair and her subsequent pregnancy as a 'problem': as

Faith says, 'there is something so shocking the matter . . . '. Mr. Benson and Faith's consequent

chapter-long discussion of what to do with the pregnant Ruth emphasises the approach that

Gaskell's novel takes to the 'issue' of the fallen woman. Unlike other Victorian narratives of

unwed mothers, <u>Ruth</u> depicts a solution to this problem: the ideal rehabilitation of the fallen

woman, primarily effected through the characters' (and the narrator's) sympathy for her.

Gaskell's solution at work is glimpsed in a late passage of the novel, depicting an unavoidable

meeting between Ruth (now known as 'Mrs. Denbigh') and Mr. Bellingham, about ten years

after her seduction:

> Suddenly Ruth felt that his attention was caught by her. Until now, seeing his short-sightedness, she had believed herself safe; now her face flushed with a painful, miserable blush. . . . He thought this Mrs. Denbigh was certainly like poor Ruth; but this woman was far handsomer. . . . Poor Ruth! And, for the first time for several years, he wondered what had become of her; though, of course, there was but one thing that could have happened, and perhaps it was as well he did not know her end, for most likely it would have made him very uncomfortable. (277-78)

This passage has another of Ruth's blushes in it, denoting her self-consciousness and discomfort.

Here, Gaskell does not excuse Ruth's blush with alternative explanations (such as the

unnecessary social awkwardness Ruth believes has characterised her first interactions with Mr.

Bellingham), but instead indicates Ruth's lack of control over her blush by characterising it as

'painful' and 'miserable'. The blush's undesirability signifies Gaskell's 'solution' to the problem

of illegitimate pregnancies: acceptance and motherhood create a pious and knowing woman, one

who is aware of what a blush signifies and who does not wish to be blushing. An adult woman

would not want her sexuality recognised, and would not wish to signal her awareness of it. The

remainder of the passage is free indirect discourse of Mr. Bellingham's thoughts, but his selfish

reason for being glad that he does 'not know [Ruth's] end' vilifies him rather than causing the

reader to empathise with him: his flinching away from emotional discomfort is plainly

inadequate as a moral reaction. This passage also refers, somewhat obliquely, to the 'one thing

that could have happened' to a seduced woman—not indicating prostitution necessarily, but

portraying Ruth's probable history as unhappy enough to make most people 'very

uncomfortable'. It is exactly this discomfort that makes the topic of illegitimate pregnancy a

face-threatening, and therefore an impolite, one.

The critical reaction to Gaskell's work was overwhelmingly positive. The animosity

which Gaskell had predicted was almost unrealised: Bentley's Miscellany wrote that Ruth was

'better than any sermon'(Easson 241) and Charles Kingsley reported 'that among all my large

acquaintance I never hear, or have heard, but one unanimous opinion as to the beauty, &

righteousness of the book. . . . English people in general have but one opinion of Ruth, & that is,

one of utter satisfaction' (Easson 313).

This is not to say that critics did not respond to the 'delicate' subject matter of the book.

There were (a very few) negative reviews of the book, all of which objected to its subject matter,

and one of which condemned the sympathetic manner in which Ruth is treated (Easson 208, 212,

232, 313). As a minister's wife, Gaskell perhaps felt the relatively little condemnation more than

she otherwise would have: she repeatedly mentioned to acquaintances that she had heard of the

book being burnt, and reported the disapproval with which some members of her congregation

now regarded her (Easson 203, 246; Gérin 138-39). Some reviews of <u>Ruth</u>, although applauding Gaskell's motives, protested 'against such a book being received into families[;] it would be the certain uprooting of the very *innocence* which is so frequently dwelt upon by the author with pleasure and delight' (Easson 211, emphasis in original).[29] Gérin reports that Bell's Library withdrew <u>Ruth</u> from circulation (139).

It is undeniable, however, that <u>Ruth</u> achieved Gaskell's aim of raising awareness of the plight of unmarried mothers. Jenny Uglow reports that '[a]ll over the country <u>Ruth</u> was debated in drawing-rooms, clubs, churches, chapels—even Oxford colleges' (qtd. in Hughes and Lund, 82). Moreover, some reviewers caught on to Gaskell's larger aim of criticising 'the traditional opprobrium visited by society on illegitimate children' and explicitly tied Ruth's plight to the occurrence of infanticide (Ganz 121). One reviewer wrote 'let us remember that infanticide . . . is frequent in England to an extent which few are aware of. . . . But what has poor Ruth to do with all this vileness? Simply this,—that there is a cant, a notion or a prejudice, false as it is cruel, which, because she once did wrong, would drive her among the outcast' (Easson 259-60).[30] Gaskell's novel sparked a national conversation that was in the main sympathetic towards the unwed mother. The prominent use of implicature is largely responsible for Gaskell's success in that it politely communicated impolite subject matter, making <u>Ruth</u> as authoritative a text as any 'sermon'.

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[29] See also Easson 202, 253.

[30] See also Easson 276.

Adam Bede: Eliot's Appeal for Sympathy

George Eliot was a major proponent—arguably *the* major proponent—of classical literary realism, and <u>Adam Bede</u> was her first full-length exercise in it.[31] As with all generic categorisations, however, this label is problematically reductive. Eliot believed that there was a strong moral effect to be achieved by realism, and this perceived moral benefit overwhelmingly motivated her writing of fiction (Waldron, 'Appendix A' 577, 578, 580). To Eliot, fiction was attractive primarily because of its ability to broaden the reader's sympathy towards those who might initially seem undeserving of it. A background of Evangelicalism had resulted in the young Eliot's 'wholesale condemnation' of fiction, but the idea that 'in the right hands fiction could teach a moral lesson more effectively than any sermon' later attracted her back to it (Waldron, Introduction 15, 18). By the time she began writing fiction Eliot 'thought that novelists must finally accept that the representation of a hard line between "the virtuous and the vicious" should be abandoned in favour of what she saw as more important—human sympathy' (Waldron, Introduction 19). A fictional unwed (and even an infanticidal) mother should evoke sympathy rather than antagonism, so that the sympathy could then be extended to real-life unwed mothers.

The degree of Eliot's sympathy for <u>Adam Bede</u>'s infanticidal mother, Hetty, has been debated since the initial reception of the novel (Waldron, 'Appendix D' 610-12; Marck 448; Jones 315-16). Eliot's ambiguous attitude towards Hetty is frustrating in part because it departs from the fierce sympathy recently extended to unwed mothers in fiction and so problematises Eliot's otherwise obvious aim of promoting sympathy. Frances Trollope's Jessie Phillips and

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[31] Chapter Seventeen, specifically, is widely regarded 'as the locus classicus of Victorian realism' (C. Levine 104).

Elizabeth Gaskell's Ruth are idealised, both novels actively urging the reader's sympathy with a (hardly) faulty human being. This sympathy is understood as an obvious moral good, creating greater tolerance for society's victims and, ideally, spurring those with power into effecting social reform. Hetty, however, is vain, selfish, and 'as unsympathetic as butterflies sipping nectar' (Eliot, <u>Adam Bede</u> 163-64). And yet, as Mason Harris notes, 'Despite Hetty's lack of sympathy and intelligence, we respond more to the nightmare confusion of her aimless journey than to the morally lucid experience of Adam and Dinah' (191). When it becomes clear that the most sensational passages of <u>Adam Bede</u> will follow Hetty rather than the eponymous hero, the nature of the narrative is changed, focusing the reader's attention on Hetty's scenes as consisting of more than just secondary character portraits. In other words, the inclusion of substantial (both in length and content) passages that depart from (and are, in a strict sense, irrelevant to) the novel's eponymous protagonist readjusts the reader's sense of what is most 'relevant' to the story and who, in turn, is the novel's true centre of interest. The narrative prominence created by the extremity of the events depicted leads the reader to identify with the passages' protagonist, creating stronger sympathy with her than would have been generated if the events had not formed so crucial a part of the narrative. The bleakness of Hetty's journey makes her the most pitiable character in <u>Adam Bede</u>, and through that pity Eliot manoeuvres the reader into sympathy with someone she has depicted as an unimaginative, materialistic coquette. Hetty's psychological turmoil dominates the description of her plight, and, despite her guilt, it is this turmoil rather than Hetty's blameworthiness that remains uppermost in the reader's mind.

Caroline Levine's reflections on the sympathy Hetty draws are an attractive solution to the seeming disruption of narrative style created by her blameworthiness. Drawing on Chapter

Seventeen of <u>Adam Bede</u>, Levine reminds us that Eliot's aim is to represent the true rather than

the idealised. How is Eliot's characterisation of Hetty's extreme faultiness—even her criminal

self-absorption—reconciled with Eliot's greater aim of evoking the reader's sympathy? Levine

writes that

> Eliot deliberately prevents us from identifying too closely . . . if realism's most urgent
> aim is to teach us to build responsible relationships with the alterity of the world, then
> surely we readers should not learn to assume a perfect identity between our own felt
> experience and that of the characters we encounter. Rather, we must keep our distance so
> that we may fashion a relationship of forgiveness and understanding across the gap that
> necessarily divides us from the other. (108-09)

In other words, it is Hetty's faultiness that allows us to generalise the sympathy we have felt for

her to other real (and equally faulty) human beings outside of fiction. Eliot's narrative teaches us

to see past Hetty's reprehensible actions and to focus on the pain Hetty has felt, and to feel the

sympathy for her that we would more readily feel for more likeable characters and human

beings. <u>Adam Bede</u> may be classified accurately as realist fiction, but for Eliot, realism is

effectively a 'social problem' mode of fiction, in that it exists primarily to effect social change.

To Eliot, moreover, realism is also the superior mode because it teaches sympathy for an

individual where empathy might not be possible.

As the discussion above shows, interpretation of <u>Adam Bede</u>'s narrative style affects the

way literary scholars treat the representation of Hetty and the plot that revolves around her.

While social problem novels aim to alert the reader to the ideal social treatment of (potentially)

infanticidal mothers, <u>Adam Bede</u> provides a psychologically probing and plausible

representation of illegitimate pregnancy. The novel's historic setting (the story takes place sixty

years before the novel was published) supports the conservative aspect of Eliot's representation:

instead of highlighting the ideal social climate which the author hopes to urge us towards, it

shows a distantly reactionary society, but with aspects that are, embarrassingly, still present in

Eliot's day. As discussed above, there was widespread feeling that the lack of provision for

unwed mothers (such as Hetty) in the 1834 New Poor Law had resulted in a nationwide increase

in infanticide. Infanticide was 'punishable by death', but juries' reluctance to convict made these

laws difficult to implement and indicated that the villainy assigned to mothers by these laws was

viewed as archaic ('Increase' 8). In 1859, when Adam Bede was published, the New Poor Law

had yet to be effectively remedied and the rate of infanticide was still high (Brownlow 19,

'Died', 'Poor Law' 6). The historic setting of the novel implicitly invites the reader to compare

archaic actions and ideologies with those heavily publicised and debated in contemporary media.

The sixty years' difference between the novel's setting and its publication both distances the

story from present-day politics and assists its force as social commentary, providing a perfect

platform from which to launch a discreet social problem novel.

In order to make her discussion of an unpleasant topic (one not widely considered

appropriate matter for fiction) palatable to polite audiences, Eliot uses implicature to broach the

topic of illegitimate pregnancy gradually and indirectly. This indirectness also allows her to

mirror Hetty's gradual realisation of her physical condition and its social consequences. Eliot's

narration is first notably indirect when describing the growing attraction between Hetty and her

seducer, Arthur. Arthur's interest in Hetty is introduced by what is explicitly presented as his

interest in dairies:

> 'By the by, I've never seen your dairy: I must see your dairy, Mrs. Poyser.'
> 'Indeed, sir, it's not fit for you to go in, for Hetty's in the middle o'making the butter, for
> the churning was thrown late, and I'm quite ashamed.' This Mrs. Poyser said blushing,
> and believing that [Arthur] was really interested in her milk-pans. . . . (144)

The unnecessary (and therefore subnarratable) emphasis of the word 'really', coupled with the nonfactual verb 'believing', indicates an ulterior motive to Arthur's eagerness to inspect the dairy. The sentence acts as implicature by foregrounding irrelevant, because already stated, information (Arthur's interest in the dairy), and then again by negating the information that it foregrounds. At this point in the narrative, there is no reason to suppose that Arthur is not interested in Mrs. Poyser's dairy when he explicitly indicates his wish to see it (as he just has) and so the further reference to Arthur's interest appears redundant. The word 'really' foregrounds this redundancy.

In this context, the narration of nonfactual information (signalled by the verb 'believing') ironises the semantic import of the sentence. Eliot's use of a particularly intrusive omniscient narrative voice (conspicuous well before this point in the novel) alerts the reader that the focus on Mrs. Poyser's beliefs is not the result of limited perspective narration, but is rather a conspicuous selection of information more notable for what it does not articulate than what it does. The narrative voice is pointedly *not* addressing whether Arthur is 'really interested in [Mrs. Poyser's] milk-pans'; it is not providing the reader with information that, because it is omniscient, it is capable of communicating. Although 'believe' is officially categorised as a nonfactive, its use within otherwise omniscient narration could arguably be considered counterfactual.[32]

By both highlighting information as relevant and then pointedly not providing the information signalled as relevant, the narrative defies coded communication, suggesting a correlated reliance on ostensive-inferential communication. In relevance theoretic terms, an

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[32] The fluctuating significance of the verb 'believe' outlined above should be considered an example of how the fictionality of texts affects utterance meaning (and why literary pragmatics needs to take into account the nonfictionality or fictionality of texts when analysing them).

intention to communicate is signalled by the physical text on the page, and here the specific intention that drives the communication is denoted by words that semantically relate to it: Arthur's 'interest . . . in [Mrs. Poyser's] milk-pans'. Through the use of the nonfactive 'believing', however, the narrative voice withholds the very information it has signalled a wish to communicate. Because, according to the Communicative Principle, hearers assume the relevance of all information that a speaker wishes to communicate, both the explicit reference to the information (Arthur's 'interest') and the withholding of the information are assigned relevance. In this context, the question of Arthur's interest in the dairy is foregrounded, and the most accessible inference for the reader to make is that Arthur is *not* interested in Mrs. Poyser's milk-pans. The narrative therefore communicates not that Arthur is interested in Mrs. Poyser's dairy, but that he is pretending to be interested in her dairy, and that his motivation for pretending to be so is better left unstated.

As with all implicature, the audience is expected to infer the intended meaning of the communication from its context. In this regard the narrative voice is not subtle, and Arthur's real motivation is easily discerned to be the 'distractingly pretty girl of seventeen' standing in the middle of Mrs. Poyser's dairy (145). The inexplicit representation of Arthur's attraction lends it an illicit air. Throughout this initial scene between Arthur and Hetty their mutual attraction is never stated, but Hetty's 'self-possessed, coquettish air' is reported as if it had no direct object (145) and Arthur is inexplicably 'determined to make Hetty look at him and speak to him' (147). The lack of explicit motivation for these actions is enough to communicate to the reader that his motivations are at best suspicious: as relevance theory shows us, readers will actively seek out relevance where it is not explicitly stated, searching for an unwritten connection between two

seemingly disparate pieces of information. When Arthur leaves, the narrator makes no reference

to his leave-taking of Hetty, only commenting that Arthur had 'exhausted all plausible pretexts

for remaining among the milk-pans': this time explicitly stating that he has been employing

pretexts, and presupposing that he has reason to do so (155). Eliot's presupposition renders her

presentational politeness more conspicuous, further ingratiating her narrative voice with the

reader and characterising Arthur's motivations as clandestine.

The next two chapters provide a franker depiction of Hetty and Arthur's mutual

attraction.   Eliot writes that 'for the last few weeks a new influence had come over Hetty—

vague, atmospheric, shaping itself into no self-confessed hopes or prospects. . . . Hetty had

become aware that Mr. Arthur Donnithorne would take a good deal of trouble for the chance of

seeing her' (162). Meanwhile Arthur has 'also certain indistinct anticipations, running as an

under-current in his mind' (164). These two passages articulate the 'vague, atmospheric' feelings

that implicature has communicated in the last scene; implicature lets us understand Arthur's

motives, but it also allows Eliot to mimic the 'indistinct', inarticulate feelings of her characters.

Just after the above passage, Arthur confesses his feelings to Mr. Irwine:

> 'What fascinated you so in Mrs. Poyser's dairy, Arthur? Have you become an amateur of
> damp quarries and skimming-dishes?'
>   Arthur knew the Rector too well to suppose that a clever invention would be of
> any use, so he said, with his accustomed frankness,
>   'No, I went to look at the pretty butter-maker, Hetty Sorrel. She's a perfect Hebe;
> and if I were an artist, I would paint her. . . .'
>   'Well, I have no objection to your contemplating Hetty in an artistic light, but I
> must not have you feeding her vanity. . . . You needn't look quite so much at Hetty Sorrel
> then. When I've made up my mind that I can't afford to buy a tempting dog, I take no
> notice of him, because if he took a strong fancy to me, and looked lovingly at me, the
> struggle between arithmetic and inclination might become unpleasantly severe. I pique
> myself on my wisdom there, Arthur, and as an old fellow to whom wisdom has become
> cheap, I bestow it upon you.' (164-65)

Despite Arthur's explicit admiration of Hetty, the overall dynamic presented in this dialogue

concretises the illicitness of the attentions he has paid her. In a footnote, Mary Waldron

characterises Mr. Irwine's opening as an 'amused, gently sarcastic enquiry. "Amateur"

betokened a gentlemanly dilettantism at this date; Arthur might be an amateur in one of the arts,

but not in dairying. Here the text suggests that Mr. Irwine knows perfectly well what Arthur

finds so fascinating' (Eliot, <u>Adam Bede</u> 164). Arthur's seemingly direct response to his friend's

veiled confrontation (which in itself introduces the topic as delicate) is tempered by his

dishonesty about the effect Hetty has on him. Arthur downplays his attraction to Hetty by

portraying it as purely aesthetic; he does not mention his repeated attempts to interact with the

girl he admires, or the lasting, 'indistinct' but palpable effect she has had on him. Mr. Irwine

sees through Arthur's explanation and conveys a clear warning, couched in terms that

superficially belittle the issue. The delicacy with which Mr. Irwine treats Arthur's attraction is

indicative of the delicacy of the issue: Mr. Irwine's comparison of Hetty to a 'tempting dog'

might seem lightheartedly derisive, but by substituting the content of his warning with less

antinarratable material he tactfully acknowledges the potential gravity of the situation. The

entire exchange is marked by a jocular presentational politeness that conveys Mr. Irwine's

concerns to Arthur while minimising the necessarily condescending and forbidding nature of the

advice-giving. Mr. Irwine is, here, perpetrating an FTA, attempting to curb Arthur's ability to

flirt with Hetty by reminding him that it is unethical and potentially disastrous. Their dialogue

serves as a model of the presentational politeness that Eliot uses throughout the text (which

echoes, for instance, Mr. Irwine's facetious obtuseness) and introduces Eliot's reasons for treating

her topic so carefully: while cross-class romance is not necessarily an antinarratable topic, it can

quickly veer into topics that are.

The narration becomes more obscure when communicating Hetty's pregnancy. The first

communication of Hetty's pregnancy is made in a seeming digression bookended by

straightforwardly narrated plot. In a chapter conspicuously named 'The Hidden Dread', Eliot

writes that

> It was about ten o'clock when Hetty set off. . . . What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries . . . I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross. It has stood perhaps by the clustering apple-blossoms, or in the broad sunshine by the cornfield, or at a turning by the wood where a clear brook was gurgling below; and surely, if there came a traveler to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish: perhaps a young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame. . . .
>
> Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards; and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. . . .
>
> Hetty, in her red cloak and warm bonnet. . . . (414-15)

The above excerpt is only half of the narrator's ostensible digression, which protrudes abruptly in

between Hetty 'setting off' and Hetty 'turning towards a gate': that is, continuing her journey

(415). The narrator separates the core narrative from the digression by switching tenses (Hetty

'set' off but the narrator 'drives' along valleys) and moving from the third to the first person

voice, officially entering into extradiegetic territory. This has the effect of generalising the

subject matter to encompass hypothetical situations outside of the narrative scope. The narrator

then narrows the narrative discourse to a specific narrative trajectory outside of Hetty's narrative

plane by explicitly moving his discussion away from Loamshire. This distances the reader even

further from the immediacy of Hetty's narrative, and when conditional markers such as 'perhaps', 'if', 'would', and 'might' indicate that the described scene is hypothetical, the reader is not only focused on a different narrative trajectory but is also not required to suspend disbelief towards that new narrative trajectory. The narrator is no longer addressing the reader as if she or he were reading a fictional text.

Symbolism communicates the pregnancy that Eliot cannot state in this non-narrative. The repetitive listing of beautiful fertile landscapes ('clustering apple-blossoms', 'golden corn', and 'blossoming orchards') echoes past characterisations of Hetty's nubile beauty while the 'hidden' nature of the sorrow 'under' and 'behind' that beauty conveys a source of sorrow that is physically both inside Hetty's body and at the source of all things fertile. The imagery can simultaneously be read as depicting Hetty, herself 'under the shrouding boughs of the wood,' both a probable source of 'a despairing human sob' and a future source of sorrow to others. In this way the 'human heart beating heavily with anguish' can be interpreted as Hetty's, her future baby's, or (in the more superficial, generalised reading of the passage) anyone's. Lastly, the figuration of the 'agony' as that 'of the Cross' calls to mind a burden physically to be borne as well as the humiliation that the cross was intended to inflict upon Jesus, and that Hetty can expect from public revelation of her condition. However, Eliot's narrative technique of triple displacement (through the diegetic plane, the narrative trajectory, and the crossing of the nonfiction/fiction boundary discussed above) carefully claims no direct link between this humiliation and Hetty.

The passage's implicit importance is marked most effectively by its lack of introduction. Besides the chapter heading (which occurs two pages earlier) there is no explicit transition into

this indirect communication of Hetty's pregnancy. It is the absence of any explanation for the passage's presence that attracts the reader's attention to how the passage relates to the narrative around it.

As discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation, the tendency of readers to assume coherence between closely situated passages has been termed the 'assumption of coherence'.[33] Thanks to the 'principles of analogy' ('things will tend to be as they were before') and 'local interpretation' ('if there is a change, assume it is minimal') Brown and Yule conclude that collocation signals coherence: that is, if two sentences are near each other, it is likely that they will relate to each other (65-67). By not commenting on the relationship between 'the image of agony' and Hetty, Eliot relates the two to each other implicitly. In turn, the explicit relationship between the two subjects is, superficially, irrelevant, which leads the reader to infer that a relationship is not being directly stated because it would violate social convention, offending the reader. In this way the seeming irrelevance of the passage lends the topic of its communication an illicit air, and the sense that fertility is a source of socially disruptive 'agony' is reinforced.

Hetty's subsequent suicidal thoughts and her resolution to run away are inexplicable without the necessary but inexplicit information of her illegitimate pregnancy. Hetty's motivation is at no point explicitly mentioned, and instead the reader's assumption of coherence leads him or her to draw a connection between two adjacent but superficially distinct paragraphs. Eliot writes that

> No, [Hetty] had not the courage to jump into that cold watery bed, and if she had, they might find her—they might find out why she had drowned herself. There is but one thing left to her: she must go away, go away where they can't find her.

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[33] Gillian Brown and George Yule explain that 'human beings do not require formal textual markers before they are prepared to interpret a text. They naturally assume coherence, and interpret the text in the light of that assumption' (66).

> After the first on-coming of the great dread, some weeks after her betrothal to Adam, she had waited and waited, in the blind vague hope that something would happen to set her free from her terror; but she could wait no longer. All the force of her nature had been concentrated on the one effort of concealment, and she had shrunk with irresistible dread from every course that could tend towards a betrayal of her miserable secret. (416)

The narrative's pointedly obscure references to Hetty's reasons for contemplating suicide and leaving home communicate Hetty's motivation as socially inappropriate to communicate—which, in turn, further evidences Hetty's shameful state of pregnancy. The description of Hetty's 'great dread' reinforces that impression: we learn that 'all the force of her nature had been concentrated on the one effort of concealment,' and that she is terrified of 'a betrayal of her miserable secret'. The use of the term 'concealment' (so strongly related to current laws concerning infanticide), coupled with the characterisation of Hetty's unhappiness as 'dread'—as expectancy—lends greater weight to the reader's impression that Hetty is pregnant.[34] Eliot draws on the connotations of words current in her time to relay the unarticulated meaning of her passage: these connotations alert the reader to the text's implicatures, guiding him or her to look beyond the strict denotations of the text.

In the segment detailing Hetty's desperate search for Arthur and her recurrent thoughts of suicide (418-38), Hetty encounters a character who takes special note of Hetty's 'figure', but is reluctant to articulate that awareness. Eliot writes that

> the good woman's eyes presently wandered to [Hetty's] figure, which in her hurried dressing on her journey she had taken no pains to conceal; moreover, the stranger's eye detects what the familiar unsuspecting eye leaves unnoticed.
> 'Why, you're not very fit for travelling,' she said, glancing while she spoke at Hetty's ringless hand. (425)

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[34] As discussed on page 66, the term 'concealment' denoted the lesser charge of which an ambiguously infanticidal woman could be convicted.

The landlady's observations have a transparent object. The emphasis on Hetty's 'figure', which she has wished to 'conceal' and which has changed so gradually that her condition is only obvious to a stranger, are even today the most established signs of a secret pregnancy. According to Summers, however, concealment of all pregnant bodies (not just those secretly pregnant) was expected in the Victorian era, so the report of the landlady's thoughts not only presuppose Hetty's pregnancy but highlight an abnormality that signals her distress to both the landlady and the contemporary reader. The glance 'at Hetty's ringless hand' communicates the landlady's prompt deduction that the pregnancy is illegitimate (i.e. that Hetty possesses no wedding ring). The narrative voice excuses the landlady's suppression of her observations: the landlady is reluctant 'to make a remark that might seem like prying into other people's affairs' (430). Hetty has also just suffered a physical breakdown in the landlady's house; delicacy is understandable. Because the landlady's explicit remarks would constitute an FTA towards an obviously vulnerable person, the continuing inexplicitness of Hetty's pregnancy is justified even in a scene in which all characters, and the implied reader, are aware of it. The reason given for the landlady's silence is identical with the reason Eliot herself has for not articulating Hetty's pregnancy (and that Blackwood, Eliot's publisher, had for being concerned): the delicate handling of a controversial and face-threatening topic. Just as Hetty is expected to conceal her pregnant body, both the landlady and Eliot are expected to avoid explicit reference to her pregnancy. In this scene Eliot forgoes explicit narration of Hetty's pregnancy (and maintains a veneer of delicacy) by her ostensive neglect of relevant information: Eliot highlights the landlady's 'detect[ion]', but conspicuously does not articulate what the landlady detects. The

disjunction between the landlady's reaction and (on the explicit, semantically bound plane of the narrative) the apparent lack of stimulus yet again alerts the reader that something more than what has been explicitly narrated is occurring, spurring the reader to seek out the passage's implicatures.

Hetty's pregnancy eventually is made explicit, although through the dialogue of characters who have heard of Hetty's already-passed pregnancy secondhand. Mr. Irwine tersely alerts Adam Bede that the magistrate from a neighbouring town has just arrested Hetty 'for a great crime—the murder of her child' (455). Eliot communicates the culmination of Hetty's pregnancy through another character's testimony at Hetty's trial, although emphasis is placed on whether or not Hetty committed infanticide. The witness merely mentions Hetty's 'condition' at the time of their encounter, and the narrative voice notes that the 'witness then stated that in the night a child was born', describing a speech act rather than the speech, or the birth, itself (476). The statement of the witness has an effect similar to Mr. Irwine's communication a few chapters earlier. In both communications, the effect of the information is diminished in comparison to the probable infanticide, and, more importantly, the information is given by someone other than the omniscient narrator, weakening the communication's authority. The trial becomes a narrative tactic by which not only the jury but also the reader must decide whether Hetty committed infanticide. While this debate presupposes Hetty's past pregnancy, it also supplies the reader with little explicit information, requiring that the pregnancy be inferred rather than directly communicating it.

Hetty eventually confesses. However, as with Mr. Irwine's communication, Hetty's confession assumes understanding of her illegitimate pregnancy, bypassing an impolite topic to

address its unambiguously criminal outcome. And as Nancy Anne Marck notes, 'Hetty's confession creates the largest "gap" in the narrative as her representation of her experience is marked by uncertainty . . . the fact that she hears [the dead baby's] cry at all suggests that she is still suffering from delusions; her view of this crisis must be moderated . . .' (466). Even the dispelling 'confession' that acts as the novel's climax fails to directly, unambiguously address the diegetic actions which it concerns.

Eliot's use of implicatures presumably had a dual motive. Implicature communicates through both form and content characters' various states of consciousness concerning Hetty's condition; Eliot's preference for psychological realism led her to mimic what could only otherwise be achieved through lengthy third-person description. It is also doubtless the case, however, that Eliot felt social pressure to represent Hetty's pregnancy as obliquely as possible. While reviews of Adam Bede were overwhelmingly favourable, one contemporary response in The Saturday Review illustrates a reaction Eliot must have been wary of:

> The author of Adam Bede has given in his adhesion to a very curious practice that is now becoming common among novelists, and it is a practice that we consider most objectionable [sic]. It is that of dating and discussing the several stages that precede the birth of a child. . . . Hetty's feelings and changes are indicated with punctual sequence that makes the account of her misfortunes read like the rough notes of a man-midwife's conversations with a bride. This is intolerable. (Waldron, 'Appendix D' 615)

That the indirect representation of Hetty's pregnancy could be likened to 'the rough notes of a man-midwife's conversations with a bride' shows how great the risk of offence was in handling the topic at all. The distaste pointedly expressed for the material indicates the extremity of the double standard by which Victorian media was judged: while Eliot's writing would have been less controversial if found in a text marketed as political or, for instance, in 'a man-midwife's' communication, it was considered out of place in a novel. In this literary environment it is likely

that Eliot would have considered impossible any more explicit representation of Hetty's illegitimate pregnancy than the one she authored. Implicature allowed Eliot not only to avoid impolite language in her novel, but also to highlight this avoidance as a mark of respect for her audience; a mark of respect which most of her readers accepted. The publication of <u>Adam Bede</u> spurred Eliot's overwhelmingly successful career: from 1860-1869, Eliot's works made up 22.2% of the Blackwood titles that generated more that £1,000, and 24.8% of the total profits generated from major titles (Finkelstein 35).

Although Eliot necessarily employed implicatures to discreetly convey Hetty's illegitimate pregnancy to Mudie's subscribers, a desire for the realistic portrayal of individual and collective psychologies remained at the heart of her work. Without it, readers would have far less motivation to transfer the sympathy inspired by fiction to the world around them. While the mid-Victorian ideas of politeness Eliot faced limited her use of explicit description, her less transparent, more covert methods of narrative are arguably more efficient in portraying character psychologies that are only semi-apparent even to their own agents. Authors' uses of implicature as an efficient method of characterisation will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Unspoken Desires: Representations of Semiconsciousness and Control

There were momentous developments in the study of the human mind during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, and many Victorian-era novelists were engaged critically with ideas that

were being reported alongside their fiction.[35] Among the most important aspects of the evolution

of psychology was the elaboration of the idea of the 'unconscious' during the period. Many

novelists capitalised on elements of its contemporary conceptualisation in depicting the

psychology of their characters. Of course, representations of unconscious thought processes

predate the formal theorisation of the unconscious in the nineteenth century, and fiction from this

period often relies more on popular beliefs about the unconscious than on scientific theorisations

of it. Nevertheless, how the idea of the unconscious was publicly debated also affected how

fictional psychologies were interpreted. The extent of public interest in the subject makes the

examination of fictional representations of unconscious processes from the mid-nineteenth

century a particularly fruitful area for literary pragmatics. Because the unconscious was

identified with unawareness, and consequently with sub-verbal states of mind, Victorian fiction

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[35] Many magazines that famously published fiction, such as <u>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</u> and <u>Household Words</u>, also published popular accounts of current psychological theories and debates. (Taylor and Shuttleworth xv, Taylor 29).

authors sometimes use implicature to communicate feelings and perceptions that the characters themselves are not fully conscious of. Discussing these implicatures within the context of relevance theory allows for greater insight into how the authors are able to construct representations of their characters' unacknowledged feelings, while also allowing us to connect those representations to the contemporary context of psychological debate in which readers would have interpreted them.

This chapter discusses some of the strategies Victorian authors adopted to implicate romantic feelings or sexual desires of which a character is in denial or only partially aware. I have chosen novels that use characters' semiconscious feelings and thoughts as central aspects of their plots, and have examined different styles of novel in an attempt to explore the variety of purpose, style, and tone with which these implicatures may be used. Because narratives of romantic attachment often portray character feeling and thought as plot, I concentrate on romantic plot developments within these novels. In Dickens's Little Dorrit (1857), Arthur Clennam's denial of his love for Pet Meagles is evident in the heavily repetitive passages that assign his feelings to 'Nobody'; these representations of Clennam's thoughts illustrate his infatuation, and the contrast between his desires and his failure to take action implicates his feelings of inadequacy. In George Eliot's The Mill On the Floss (1860), Stephen and Maggie's illicit feelings for each other are slowly communicated to the reader through narrated actions and occurrences that would otherwise be subnarratable, disjointed from other representations of them, and irrelevant to the overall narrative. As with other conspicuously subnarratable information in fiction, the expected subnarratability of the information in The Mill on the Floss foregrounds its presence, emphasising the information's disjunction from the more obviously

significant material that surrounds it and drawing attention to its implicated relevance and significance. In <u>Orley Farm</u> (1862) Anthony Trollope concentrates on characters' interpretations of a crime that is communicated through implicature—namely, Lady Mason's forgery of a codicil to her late husband's will. Implicatures also communicate that Lady Mason's lawyer, Mr. Furnival, is unconsciously attracted to her, and in turn his transparently biased and vacillating views implicate Lady Mason's guilt.

After an introductory discussion of mid-Victorian discourses concerning the unconscious I will discuss some current narrative theory on intersubjectivity and consciousness representation in fiction. I will then provide analyses of these fictional narratives of romantic attachment to examine how implicature's role in consciousness representations informs current literary scholarship.

<u>Victorian Discourses on the Unconscious</u>

From the eighteenth century many philosophers interested themselves in the idea of a reservoir of psychological experience that was inaccessible from conscious states. Henri F. Ellenberger claims that the concept originated with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz in 1704 (329), writing that it 'was Leibniz who proposed the first theory of the unconscious mind supported by purely psychological arguments. He pointed to the small perceptions, that is, those that are under the threshold of perception even though they play a great part in our mental life' (312). Conversely, Edwin G. Boring, 'Psychology's most influential historian' (Richards 25), aligns the origination of the concept with Johann Friedrich Herbart's 1816 proposal of a 'limen' model of consciousness (Boring 257). It was Herbart's studies that had a greater impact on the Victorian

conceptualisation of the unconscious, and made the concept a locus of contention throughout the

century. Jerome Bruner and Carol Fleisher Feldman explain that, for Herbart,

> forms of knowing or awareness were held to exist at some level below consciousness and
> to need some kind of impetus to be boosted above the threshold. . . . the force that impels
> content from the unconscious 'apperceptive mass' over the threshold into awareness is the
> strength of an 'associative connection' with something already in consciousness, which is
> an accident of the historical circumstances that have led particular ideas to be contiguous
> in time or space. (232)

The role of the unconscious in cognition—namely, as an unquantified store of information that

may be only haphazardly tapped into—would reappear throughout the nineteenth century as one

of the primary hypotheses of associationism. Associationism developed from the writings of

John Locke, David Hume and others, and was prominently carried on into the nineteenth century

by James and John Stuart Mill. According to Graham Richards, the 'central tenet of this school

was that all psychological phenomena originated in atom-like or "corpuscular" sensations which

were built up into complex ideas by a few simple "laws of association"' (13). In these theories

emphasis is placed on the ways in which 'psychological phenomena' become associated with

each other (hence 'associationism'). Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth add that

associationism includes the 'idea that the mind spontaneously links ideas in chains of thought—

that it was the mental representations themselves which somehow recognized their affinity with

each other' (67). Herbart expanded the role that the unconscious played in associationist

theories, emphasising the dynamic upheavals that routinely occur in our thought. Ellenberger

writes that

> Herbart thought of the threshold as a surface where an everchanging multitude of
> perceptions and representations constantly fight against one another. The stronger ones
> push the weaker ones down under the threshold, the repressed representations strive to
> reemerge, and for that reason often associate themselves with other representations.

> Under the threshold, the obscure representations constitute a kind of chorus that
> accompanies the drama being played on the conscious stage. (312)

Herbart hypothesised an unconscious which affected and was affected by the conscious mind.

While Jenny Bourne Taylor has explained that Victorian concepts of the unconscious did not

include the repression associated with psychoanalytic models (256) there was believed to be

'repression' occurring of a different sort. This repression centred on our finite attention span and

the consequent need to be conscious only of what is relevant to our immediate situation. Above,

Ellenberger outlines a model of consciousness in which unconscious perceptions are competing

with others, actively associating themselves with other perceptions and 'striv[ing]' to gain our

attention. This model of consciousness foregrounds the role of the unconscious, positing it as

powerful and a largely unknown repository of responses.

By the mid-nineteenth century the idea of unconscious cerebration had become widely

accepted in England (Richards 18), with experiments designed as early as 1850 to detect and

analyse unconscious states of activity (Ellenberger 312-13). Throughout the rest of the century

debates centred on the nature of the unconscious rather than the existence of it. For instance, the

completeness of 'perceptions and representations' within the unconscious was contested. While

the term 'perceptions' may be extended to include other inexpressible phenomena such as

unconscious impulses, the term 'representations' indicates value-laden (if unconscious) reactions

to perceptions and urges. William Benjamin Carpenter believed that only perceptions could be

housed in the unconscious, writing that 'since, in the systems of Philosophy long prevalent in this

country, *consciousness* has been almost uniformly taken as the basis of all strictly *mental*

activity, it seems convenient to designate as Functions of the Nervous System all those

operations which lie below that level' (99). However, other philosophers had different views. In

her book <u>Shock, Memory, and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction</u>, Jill L. Matus claims that

'[George Henry] Lewes had long disputed the idea that all conscious behaviour was mental, and

all unconscious physical. That is, he understood "unconscious" as a term to be applied to far

more than reflex action' (145). Lewes's stance can be observed in his determination to discuss

both sensations and thoughts in a section of <u>The Physiology of Common Life</u>. After discussing

the automatic return of habits learned by rote (an occurrence analogous to the more physiological

concept of 'muscle memory'), Lewes turns his attention to 'Old associations, old beliefs, [which]

are not to be displaced. A man may be thoroughly convinced to-day by the logic of his opponent,

and yet to-morrow he will be heard uttering his old convictions, as if no one had ever doubted

them. His mind cannot move except in the old paths' (88).

Most nineteenth-century debates about the unconscious centred on the degree to which it

affects one's conscious mind and behaviour, and the possibility of controlling the influence of

unconscious processes on both. Herbart's writing had changed the way philosophers

conceptualised not only the unconscious mind, but the origin of the conscious mind as well;

scholars were understandably disconcerted by the possibility that the known, seemingly

controllable sphere of the conscious was only the visible output of the uncontrollable

unconscious. Taylor writes that the debates on 'consciousness were marked by an extraordinary

ambivalence, and mid-century psychology continually wavered between a fascination with the

apparently irrational workings of the mind, and the urge to regulate and control them' (46). This

discourse of control developed over the century, growing in reaction to the idea of the mind as a

source of potential irrationality.

William Carpenter and Herbert Spencer were two philosophers who helped popularise,

from the 1840s through to the 1870s, the idea of the unconscious as an uncontrollable source of

impulse (to which later philosophers would respond with theories of control).[36] Although

Carpenter eventually revised his position, his stance prior to the 1840s indicated that it was

impossible to control the formation of unconscious urges, so that 'an individual committing a

crime reflexively or automatically could not be held responsible . . .' (Matus, Shock 36). Spencer

propounded similar views in 1855, claiming

> That every one [sic] is at liberty to do what he desires to do (supposing there are no
> external hindrances), all admit; though people of confused conceptions commonly
> suppose this to be the thing denied. But that every one is at liberty to desire or not to
> desire, which is the real proposition involved in the dogma of free-will, is negatived as
> much by the internal perception of every one as by the contents of the preceding
> chapters. . . . Thus it is natural enough that the subject of such psychical changes should
> say that he wills the action; seeing that, psychically considered, he is at that moment
> nothing more than the composite state of consciousness by which the action is excited.
> But to say that the performance of the action is, therefore, the result of his free-will, is to
> say that he determines the cohesions of psychical states by which the action is aroused;
> and as these psychical states constitute himself at that moment, this is to say that these
> psychical states determine their own cohesions: which is absurd. (85-86)

Herbert Spencer is remembered primarily for his prominent role in the popularisation of

evolutionary psychology. The semi-determinism inherent in his understanding of evolution is

evident in the above passage (Richards 21-23). He posits, in effect, a universal characteristic that

would be reflected in many of the psychological dilemmas presented in Victorian fiction: an

inability to control what we desire. Within the context of romantic fictional plots this hypothesis

often manifests itself as characters' frustrations over being attracted to and in love with those

they know they should not or do not want to be attracted to. While these issues predate Victorian

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[36] I concentrate on Carpenter and Spencer because they were both active and highly influential during the timeframe
in which the novels under discussion were published (1857-1862). The views I discuss here were also held by
others, and were partially developed by earlier scholars. Helen Small notes that James Ferrier, for instance, assigned
a discriminatory and controlling function to the conscious mind in the late 1830s (491).

fiction, their depiction in Victorian fiction draws from the uniquely Victorian discourse concerning the unconscious and one's inability to control what originates in it. Importantly, Spencer's writing distinguishes between the will to act (or desire) and the act itself. Although the overall tenor of the passage is deterministic (in accordance with his main thesis concerning the origin of desires in the unconscious), Spencer supplies an implicit loophole by which the will to act may be resisted by the reacting, conscious mind and therefore controlled.

Many other psychologists debated this point. Sir William Hamilton, working within the 'Common Sense school of Scottish Enlightenment Philosophy', posited a wholly-deterministic unconscious (Rylance 44).[37] His posthumous 1859 publication posited 'three degrees of . . . mental latency', each of which performs different functions and consequently illustrates different levels of unawareness and power over the conscious mind (W. Hamilton 81). The first degree of latency consists of all a person's 'acquired habits' and knowledge that he is not consciously thinking of at the moment; as Hamilton explains, 'I know a science, or language, not merely while I make temporary use of it, but inasmuch as I can apply it when and how I will' (81). The second degree of mental latency is made up of

> certain systems of knowledge, or certain habits of action, which [the mind] is wholly unconscious of possessing in its ordinary state, but which are revealed to consciousness in certain extraordinary exaltations of its powers. The evidence on this point shows that the mind frequently contains whole systems of knowledge, which . . . may [show themselves] in certain abnormal states, as madness, febrile delirium, somnambulism, catalepsy, &c . . . . (81)

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[37] The term 'Common Sense' in Rylance's quotation is used more literally than it is often used today: it denotes ways of thinking that Hamilton and the school's founder, Thomas Reid, considered universal. Reid posited a 'universal predictability of the faculties of the human mind' (Rylance 44). Hamilton combined Reid's propositions with insights from Immanuel Kant, concluding that humans are 'compelled to believe that we possess free will, that the soul is immortal, and that God exists' (A. Ryan). During the period with which this chapter is concerned, Hamilton was considered the main proponent of this school, known as 'intuitionism'. In 1865 John Stuart Mill successfully discredited Hamilton's theories, causing his popularity to dwindle (A. Ryan). Previous to this, however, Hamilton was one of the 'most celebrated philosophical thinkers in Britain' (A. Hamilton 142).

This conceptualisation of the unconscious depends heavily on contemporary experiments concerning 'double consciousness'. While Taylor and Shuttleworth more generally refer to 'double consciousness' as the 'notion that the dreaming and waking state might correspond to two parallel mental worlds, each separate from the other . . .', they report that it was 'discussed through the second half of the nineteenth century as an extreme state of disordered association and disrupted memory', probably approaching what we would now term Dissociative Identity Disorder (70). Several cases were documented throughout the nineteenth century, exhibiting the mind's ability to retain skill sets that the conscious mind was unaware of (Taylor and Shuttleworth 123-40).

Hamilton believed that his third degree of mental latency would be controversial, and it was in fact more extreme than Carpenter's or Spencer's hypotheses. In his argument, Hamilton does not limit the role of the unconscious to only the origin of urges, but claims that it is the source of all knowledge. Hamilton 'affirm[s]' that there are 'mental activities and passivities, of which we are unconscious, but which manifest their existence by effects of which we are conscious . . .' (82). Hamilton goes on to specify 'that our whole knowledge, in fact, is made up of the unknown and the incognisable [sic]' (82). While aspects of Hamilton's other writings lessened the superlative nature of the hypothesis presented here, Taylor and Shuttleworth report that this 'theory of latent mental modification remained a central influence on later psychological writing' (80). However, it influenced later scholars by propelling both agreements and disagreements with the views expressed above.

Frances Power Cobbe was among those who disagreed. While she was primarily interested in positing the 'entire *separability* of the conscious self from its thinking organ, the

physical brain', she characterises the difference between self-awareness and more automatic

knowledge as evidence of an external 'Conscious Self' which oversees our behaviour (93,

emphasis in original). In her 1870 text, 'On Unconscious Cerebration', she wrote:

> there are two kinds of action of the brain, the one Automatic, and the other subject to the will of the Conscious Self; just as the actions of a horse are some of them spontaneous and some done under the compulsion of his rider. The first order of actions tend to indicate that the brain 'secretes thought;' [sic] the second order (strongly contrasting with the first) show that, beside that automatically working brain, there is another agency in the field under whose control the brain performs a wholly different class of labours. (95)

While Cobbe acknowledges that unconscious processes do occur, she argues for a 'meta' level of

cognition that regulates the Self's reaction to the conscious output of these processes. The idea

of inner regulation of the unconscious has important consequences for how one conceives of will

and responsibility for one's actions. Cobbe points out that people only take responsibility for

conscious actions:

> When our brains perform acts of unconscious cerebration (such as dreams), they act just as our hearts do, *i.e.* involuntarily; and we ought to speak of them as we always do of our hearts, as of organs of our frame, but not our Selves. When our brains obey our wills, then they act as our hands do when we voluntarily strike a blow; and then we do right to speak as if 'we' performed the act accomplished by their means. (94, emphasis in original)

While Cobbe assigns the unconscious an active, creative role (as opposed to a passive and

merely receptive one), she also understands it as something to be reacted against rather than

irresistibly obeyed.

In his later career William Carpenter agreed with Cobbe's assignment of limited power to

the unconscious. Carpenter famously retracted some of the views he proposed in the 1840s, and

in their stead claimed that self-discipline could control otherwise destructive unconscious

tendencies (Matus, Shock 36). His 1875 writing seemingly doubles as a how-to manual:[38]

> In regard to every kind of Mental activity that does *not* involve origination, the power of
> the Will, though limited to *selection*, is almost unbounded. For although it cannot
> directly bring objects before the consciousness which are not present to it, yet, by
> concentrating the Mental gaze (so to speak) upon any object that may be within its reach,
> it can make use of this to bring in other objects by associative Suggestion. And,
> moreover, it can virtually determine what shall *not* be regarded by the Mind, through its
> power of keeping the Attention fixed *in some other direction*; and thus it can subdue the
> force of violent impulse, and give to the conflict of opposing motives a result quite
> different from that which would ensue without its interference. (97, emphasis in original)

In this passage, Carpenter moves beyond telling his audience that control of unconscious output

is possible into telling them how they might practice it themselves. It is Carpenter's explanation

of how to 'determine what shall *not* be regarded by the Mind' that is most relevant to this chapter.

Carpenter appears to be advocating denial as a method of quashing undesired thoughts and

impulses. Carpenter implies that those lacking the necessary self-control should still be held

accountable for their actions, adding a moral component to the scientific discussion.

Victorian discussions concerning the unconscious and how best to control its output were

vigorous and widely publicised, and the considerable influence of contemporary psychological

theories on the writing of many Victorian fiction authors is well documented (Taylor 29; Taylor

and Shuttleworth 22; Matus, Shock 36). Authors engaged these models of unconsciously

developing desire and conscious attempts at control, reflecting and sometimes providing implicit

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[38] The timeline given for this section's publications is somewhat less clear than it appears. I have quoted the original
dates of documents as they appear in Taylor and Shuttleworth's Embodied Selves; however, much of the information
contained in these documents was published earlier in circumstances less relevant to this dissertation. Hamilton's
papers were published posthumously, and presumably reached their largest audience at that time; however, he had
previously presented them as lectures from 1836 onwards at University of Edinburgh (Taylor and Shuttleworth 80).
Carpenter's 1875 writing is an extensive revision of his 1852 publication, Human Physiology, which also made a
considerable impact on the wide audience it reached (Taylor and Shuttleworth 95). As noted, however, Carpenter's
views changed considerably over this period, and the 1875 edition may be read as the most reliable source of his
later (although still extremely influential) views.

arguments against them in their representations of characters' romantic dilemmas. At times, this resulted in the communication of psychological processes through implicature.

Narratological Discussions of Represented Intersubjectivity and Consciousness

Narratives of romantic desire often represent consciousness as profoundly intersubjective—that is, as 'existing between conscious minds' (OED). In other words, consciousness is seen as involving an interplay between awareness of others and awareness of the self in relation to others. As used here, 'intersubjectivity' denotes the impact that the awareness of one's immediate social context has on one's thoughts and actions. The ensuing close readings of romantic plot developments are designed to show that intersubjectivity may be represented (and perceived) as occurring on semiconscious levels. Fiction and literary criticism have long assumed this aspect of intersubjectivity, but relatively little has been written about it. Instead, literary criticism often describes represented semiconscious intersubjectivity as if it indicated fully conscious intersubjectivity.[39] The criticism on represented intersubjectivity discussed below offers little on the various levels of consciousness at which intersubjectivity can take place; however, the narratological discussion of how intersubjectivity is represented in fiction is relatively rare, and the critics acknowledged here have made important contributions upon which I hope to build.

There has been a recent surge of scholarship on the fictional representation of intersubjectivity, although its prevalence in the novel has been commented on for decades. In his

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[39] George Butte's opening discussion of characters' mutual glances is one example. In the first chapter of his book, I Know That You Know That I Know (2004), Butte characterises Jane Austen's use of 'the gaze' as a 'form of . . . articulation' (25). Later he describes these moments as 'perceptions of perception' (99) notably using the terms 'consciousness' and 'consciousnes*es*' to describe what I read as characters' semiconscious thoughts and interactions that are, sometimes, unarticulated by the author (24-27, emphasis in original). While Alan Palmer does provide discussion of represented 'Non-consciousness' (104-08), he neglects less-conscious aspects of represented intersubjectivity.

classic 1977 study of free indirect discourse, Roy Pascal comments on the deeply intersubjective nature of Jane Austen's plots, tying the emergence of free indirect discourse to plots that consist 'almost entirely of the changing attitudes of the characters to one another, so that their thoughts and feelings are the structural elements of the story' (45). More recently, Alan Palmer introduces his intersubjective approach to the analysis of fictional minds by explaining that the study of separate, unique subjectivities 'has become the dominant paradigm for the study of consciousness within narrative theory,' so that the bias contained in his book 'is intended to redress the balance a little' (5). Palmer believes that an emphasis on the intersubjectivity of fictional consciousnesses captures a pervasive phenomenon that explains much about the way authors represent and readers perceive characters. It would, in effect, shed light on the amount of textual space that is dedicated to showing 'when a character is anticipating, speculating on, reconstructing, misunderstanding, evaluating, reacting to, and acting upon the thought of another' (174).

Like Alan Palmer, George Butte was one of the first narrative theorists to emphasise the force of represented intersubjectivity. Tracing scholarly commentary on fictional intersubjectivity to Bakhtin (27), Butte's <u>I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from *Moll Flanders* to *Marnie*</u> (2004) articulates a history 'not only of consciousness, but also of consciouness*es*, of a newly framed intersubjectivity, which Jane Austen's novels are among the first in English to speak of clearly . . .' (26, emphasis in original). For Butte, it is 'Austen's ability to articulate the frightening interiority of the intersubjective' that distinguishes her from her predecessors, creating a fictional emphasis on interiority that would change how the representation of consciousness functioned within fictional narratives (25). Austen's emphasis on character interiority and the intersubjectivity that frames it is part of her legacy to the fiction

discussed in this dissertation. The nineteenth century added to that legacy by creating a

discourse which observed the less conscious aspects of interiority and intersubjectivity.

While some believe that literature in general 'is a record of human consciousness, the

richest and most comprehensive we have' (Lodge 10), other theorists differentiate more

'psychological' novels from other fiction genres and date their emergence to the beginning of the

nineteenth century, aligning an emphasis on character interiority with the Romantic and Victorian

eras. Many theorists attribute the first substantial use of free indirect discourse in the English

language to Jane Austen, and cite specifically her interest in character interiority as reason for its

deployment (Cohn, Transparent Minds 113; Lodge 46; Pascal 34). Dorrit Cohn believes that the

growth of free indirect discourse is tied to 'the moment when third-person fiction enters the

domain previously reserved for first-person (epistolary or confessional) fiction, and begins to

focus on the mental and emotional life of its characters' (113). Butte writes that a 'sea of change

in the representation of consciousness in narratives in English becomes visible in the time of

Jane Austen' (25). It is interesting that Austen was active directly before Herbart's theories of the

unconscious were first introduced into Britain: the new fictional emphasis on interiority

anticipates the newly-discovered level of interiority depicted in contemporary psychological

theory. The analysis of consciousness representation, then, may be considered as especially

appropriate for the fiction of an age in which theories of interiority were influential to an

unprecedented degree, although the emphasis on interiority in Austen's writing evidences how

little of both readers' and writers' thinking about the psyche need be explicitly formalised.

The early nineteenth-century's newfound emphasis on interiority may be witnessed in the

representation of characters' thoughts as action affecting the development of plot. Pascal writes

that, in Austen, the 'main issue is the establishment or dislocation of true, sincere, personal

relationships; what [characters] do is only important in relation to the intentions and feelings that

promote and accompany the actions' (45). Pascal's comments also apply to later narratives of

romance in which desires, conceptions of others, and (both failed and successful) schemes are in

themselves noteworthy and are considered plot even if they result in no physical action by the

characters.[40] Characters' desires and emotions may act as plot in other ways: Palmer points out

that represented emotions and thoughts can be regarded as 'action tendencies', or potentials for

character actions that are then either carried out or resisted (174).

Character thought and character action are further blurred by fiction authors' tendencies

to indicate the former by mention of the latter. Many critics note the frequency with which

authors use character actions to communicate character psychology: in describing the third-

person novel of the nineteenth century, Cohn writes that they 'dwelt on manifest behavior, with

the characters' inner selves revealed only indirectly through spoken language and telling

gesture' (Transparent Minds 21). Palmer writes that 'Just as in real life the individual constructs

the minds of others from their behavior and speech, so the reader infers the workings of fictional

minds and sees these minds in action from observation of characters' behavior and speech' (11).

Palmer further institutionalises this common authorial practice, coining the term 'indicative

description' to denote authorial 'descriptions of actions that appear to indicate an accompanying

state of mind' (172). In Language and Characterisation: People in Plays and Other Texts (2001),

Jonathan Culpeper invokes Sperber and Wilson on relevance theory in order to explain why

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[40] This characterisation is dependent on one's definition of 'plot'. Because the issue of what constitutes 'plot' is not
central to this dissertation I am using, somewhat uncritically, David Herman's cursory distinction between what can
and cannot be considered plot in his introduction to The Cambridge Companion to Narrative. 'Delete or add to the
kernel events of a story and you no longer have the same story;' Herman explains, 'delete or add to the [satellite
events] and you have the same story told in a different way' (13). In a courtship plot, the difference in a lover's
desire would change the story: it is a 'kernel' event in the courtship.

character actions are interpreted as relevant to the rest of the narrative, and often as

representative of the character:

> As a result of the fact that character interaction may be described as a discourse level
> embedded within that of the author and reader . . . we are in a position to make a much
> stronger assumption that [character] behaviour will be interpretatively significant. Any
> character behaviour is part of an act of communication between the playwright and the
> audience/reader, and as such we can assume that character behaviour has additional
> significance or relevance. . . . In relevance theory terms, any character behaviour is part
> of an ostensive act of communication between the author and the reader, and as such
> 'communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance' (1986: 158). (145-46)

Although his discussion concentrates on drama, Culpeper makes explicit the pragmatics of

textual representation here: just as all information that is included in a text 'communicates the

presumption of its own optimal relevance' simply because of the 'ostensive act of communication

between the author and the reader', so any action on the part of a character will be deemed

particularly significant to the development of the narrative, and also to how we view the

individual character (who constitutes part of the narrative). The same is true of thought

representation: just as any narrated action of a character will be interpreted as relevant to the

overall plot, so any narrated thought will be interpreted as relevant. It is this assumed relevance

that allows seemingly incongruous character actions and thoughts to be read as implicatures of

inexplicit, possibly unconscious character thoughts and desires.

The omniscience exhibited in some narratives generates perhaps the most significant

aspect of the reader's interpretations of fictional characters: the belief that he or she can know

them completely. As Cohn notes, in fiction there are characters that 'we know most intimately,

precisely in ways we could never know people in real life' (Transparent Minds 5). Culpeper

phrases the same concept somewhat differently: 'character behaviours are complete . . . . by

reading the whole text we have access to that character's whole life—complete and finite' (145).

Culpeper's phrasing highlights a further difference between the interpretation of fictional and nonfictional (or real-life) people: when reading fiction readers 'have access to [a] character's whole life'—they can be sure that the character thoughts they have access to are representative of the character. Several theorists rightly add the qualifying claim that only characterisations and thoughts reported by a third-person omniscient narrator are perceived as unqualified assertions rather than as probabilities; Margolin, for instance, writes that 'only individuation claims made by an authoritative narrating voice are universally valid, and they too can be weakened by modifying them as "possibly" or through an ironic tone' (73).[41] Readers' assured access to the character's 'action tendencies' (Palmer's concept denoting perceived potentials for character action) allows them to witness either the congruity or the incongruity with which that action tendency is carried out. A character such as William Dobbin in <u>Vanity Fair</u>, for instance, is shown to be excessively reticent by the extreme disjunction between his narrated action tendencies and his narrated actions. It is disjunctions such as these that allow readers to infer character thoughts and desires without any explicit, textual representation of them. Because they are not explicitly represented, such disjunctions are commonly used to communicate sub-verbal or latent character states. Such implicatures are possible without the aid of third-person description of character thoughts: just as action tendencies may be inferred, so may be the psychologies that either allow or restrain characters from following through with them. By exploiting the reader's assumption of narratorial omniscience, then, Victorian fiction authors were also able to communicate their characters' less conscious psychological states. Contemporary readers' interpretations of these implicatures would have been informed by their

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[41] Culpeper (114) and Palmer (33) make similar points.

background assumptions concerning popular discourses about control and the unconscious; both the discourse techniques and social contexts of these novels would have guided readers towards graduated understandings of characters' consciousnesses and desires.

An examination of the implicature used to represent sub-verbal psychological states would be of benefit to narrative studies. Monika Fludernik and Alan Palmer have both expressed the belief that the 'more unaware a character is of the thought content described, the more [an author] reverts to an external description of that consciousness' (Fludernik, Fictions 431). This chapter's examination of the use of implicatures in representations of unconsciousness and semiconsciousness will show that this is not always the case. While the verbally mimetic quality of quoted thought and free indirect discourse often pose problems in the representation of thoughts that are not themselves articulated in a character's mind (Palmer 13, 56), implicature is often heavily mimetic as well, reflecting a character's inability to verbalise the thoughts and emotions that are implied in the text. By incorporating implicatures into their mimetic representations of character consciousness, authors were able to expose latent feelings and thoughts that must otherwise be narrated through third-person omniscient report of thoughts. By implicating rather than explicating these feelings authors were offering more sympathetic portrayals of character consciousnesses, as well as avoiding didactic or unduly technical discourses concerning their own and other contemporary ideas about human psychology.

Narratives of romantic attachment are primarily records of intense intersubjectivity; by definition they chronicle the developing relationship between two characters. Fictional representations of these intersubjective experiences both influenced and were influenced by mid-

Victorian philosophical discourses on the unconscious; to differing extents they engaged with

popular discourses in their representations of the unconscious and semiconscious processes that

affect, motivate, and result from these interactions. A further complication of these narratives is

produced by the discourse of moral or social control that often enters when, for reasons of

modesty or illicitness, a potential lover is torn between semiconscious urges and the perceived

need to maintain an appropriate distance from the loved one. The vocabulary which a literary

pragmatic analysis provides is capable of articulating how contemporary discourses influenced

these uniquely Victorian emphases on the unconscious origination of desires and issues of

control. A pragmatic analysis of these narratives also allows us to isolate implicatures that mimic

and communicate semiconscious character states: states that propel and result from actions that

in themselves are often minute, inexplicit, and only semiconsciously performed. Relevance

theory provides a terminology with which to explicate the strategies authors use to communicate

actions and psychological processes that remain inexplicit throughout large portions of narrative,

allowing us to discuss how it is that readers infer psychological states that are not explicitly

narrated.

Little Dorrit and the Construction of 'Nobody'

There are several narratives of romantic attraction in Charles Dickens's Little Dorrit, some of

which concern characters who appear in more than one potential romantic pairing. Surprisingly,

the romantic plot to which Dickens dedicates the most textual space does not involve the

reciprocated love of the central protagonists; instead, it describes the unreciprocated love of

Arthur Clennam for a largely unindividuated character, Pet Meagles. Dickens's emphasis on

failed romance is, for my purposes, particularly useful to a discussion of how repressed romantic desire may be implicated in fictional narratives.

As discussed above, the representation of sub- and semi-verbal mental states is in the main relegated to the domain of reported thought (third-person descriptions of character consciousness) by most current narrative theory. This has not always been the case: unlike most current discussions of narrative, Pascal's writing in the 1970s argued that sub-verbal thought can be particularly well captured through free indirect discourse (2, 59). Free indirect discourse communicates information primarily through the implicatures generated when an utterance is infused with the viewpoint of both a character and an overarching narrative voice. While free indirect discourse is not the sole preserve of fiction, many of the implicatures it generates are reliant on its fictional context. Often, this is a result of a narrative voice's omniscience, and a corresponding ability of the narrative to depict fictional characters better than they know themselves. The effect is a psychology-based dramatic irony which is impossible to effect in nonfictional texts.

Many of the ways in which an author may communicate the mimetic quality of his or her writing are unique to fiction: the heightened assumptions of relevance with which readers read fictional texts allow authors to employ structures which would be impermissible in nonfiction texts. In Little Dorrit, Dickens employs repetition to communicate the mimetic nature of certain passages. While the extent to which the repetition is employed would be interpreted as a structural failing (that is, as a redundancy) in many works of nonfiction, it functions ostensively and as mimetic communication within its fictional context, signalling the passage's status as free indirect discourse. Repetition has previously been listed as a potential marker of free indirect

discourse (Fludernik, <u>Fictions</u> 236-37); however, little has been said about how and why it

functions as a marker. By applying concepts from relevance theory to the analysis of passages in

<u>Little Dorrit</u>, I will show why it is that readers interpret the repetition in these passages as

mimetic, and why the free indirect discourse in these passages is consequently understood as

communicating characters' sub-verbal mental states.

In <u>Little Dorrit</u>, the narrative voice's assumed omniscience also effects implicatures

which are independent of Dickens's use of repetition. The passages examined contain a large

amount of what Robyn Warhol, following Gerald Prince, labels 'disnarration'.[42] The concept of

'disnarration' has contributed to narrative studies by emphasising the significance that

counterfactual narratives have on the shaping of the factual narrative. In <u>Little Dorrit</u>, however,

many passages intended to be interpreted as factual are explicitly posited as counterfactual; that

is, they are narrated in either the hypothetical or the counterfactual conditional but are clearly

meant to be interpreted as though they were narrated in the indicative mood. This phenomenon

results in what I will term 'ironic disnarration', the implicated factuality and pertinence of

propositions that have been explicitly presented as hypothetical and superfluous.

Little has been said about irony in literary pragmatics, although the nature of irony—and

specifically why it is interpreted as ironic—is part of a lively debate in pragmatics generally.

While arguing that verbal irony is primarily an outcome of its echoic nature and derisive tone,

Deirdre Wilson reports that there are generally considered to be two pragmatic explanations for

how irony functions: the first is Wilson's own 'echoic' explanation, and the second is a 'pretence'

explanation in which the speaker 'pretends' to assert a statement while 'expecting her audience to

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[42] Disnarration, or 'terms, phrases, and passages that consider what did not or does not take place', is discussed in the Introduction, as a concept originated by Gerald Prince and perpetuated by Robyn Warhol in her larger discussion of narrative refusals (Prince 3).

see through the pretence and recognise the critical or mocking attitude behind it' (1724). The

ironic disnarration discussed in this chapter displays elements that support both theories: the

narrative voice clearly 'pretends' to believe that the feelings it is disnarrating do not occur, while

the content and form of these passages are notably echoic of what the reader knows of Clennam's

consciousness. The passages communicate a sympathetic but ultimately dismissive view of the

disnarration they express. By either pragmatic account of irony, the disnarration of Clennam's

feelings qualifies as ironic.

This segment will take the form of close readings of passages as they occur,

chronologically, throughout the text. It is necessary to provide close readings of fairly similar

passages to illustrate the extremity of Dickens's reliance on repetition. The implicatures

communicated build on one another, creating a context in which otherwise incoherent sentences

communicate Clennam's love for Pet. These sentences both reenact previous implicatures and

illustrate the certainty with which the implicatures have been communicated: without the

information these implicatures have provided, the sentences would be either unintelligible or

subnarratable. The potential unintelligibility of sentences such as these provides the strongest

material evidence for the primary thesis of this dissertation: it is the recognition by readers that

these utterances are only superficially incoherent that shows those readers to be following the

cognitive processes described by relevance theory and previous literary pragmaticists.

Little Dorrit was published serially between 1855 and 1857, when it was issued in a

single volume. It is now among Dickens's most highly regarded works but contemporary

reviews of the novel were often negative. Philip Collins writes that for 'many critics Little Dorrit

became a by-word for bad Dickens. Even his defenders tended to be somewhat apologetic about

it' (356). It is possible that the negativity of these reviews reflects what some critics considered to be Dickens's disproportionate criticism of government in the novel (P. Collins 356). <u>Little Dorrit</u> follows several lower- and middle-class characters as they are manipulated by the obfuscatory procedures and protective self-interest of government and its civil servants. Much of the story centres on the Marshalsea, a prison for debtors. The eponymous heroine, Little Dorrit, is the youngest daughter of William Dorrit, who, at the time the novel starts, has been incarcerated there for twenty-two years. Arthur Clennam, who has lately returned from twenty years in China, notices Little Dorrit working in his mother's house. He befriends her and attempts to solve the Dorrits' financial difficulties. In so doing he repeatedly visits the Circumlocution Office, which, in a chapter titled 'Containing the Whole Science of Government' (87), is described as specialising in 'How not to do' 'Whatever was required to be done' (88). With perseverance on the part of Clennam's friends, William Dorrit is found to be heir to a large fortune, and his family is elevated from the debtor's prison to the highest ranks of society. William Dorrit's first financial transaction is to entrust all of his money to Mr. Merdle, whose swindling practices soon leave the family yet again impoverished. In the end, the newly-impoverished Clennam (also swindled by Merdle) realises he is in love with Little Dorrit, and the two marry. Overall, the tone of the novel is dark, and the circumlocutory practices to which the Circumlocution Office owes its name appear as a reoccurring motif, seen in certain characters' speech towards each other and in aspects of the narration itself. Thematically, the novel concentrates on the atmosphere of imprisonment, weariness and oppression that internally and externally, publicly and privately pervades Britain.

The passages of the novel with which this dissertation is concerned appear within four chapters, 'Nobody's Weakness', 'Nobody's Rival', 'Nobody's State of Mind', and 'Nobody's Disappearance'. They detail Clennam's infatuation with Pet Meagles, the daughter of friends he has made while travelling back to England from China. While 'Nobody's Fault' was the original title of the novel (Ingham 147), Dickens's use of the title for his first three numbers is not as closely thematically related to the 'Nobody' in these chapter headings as one might assume. The first three numbers of the novel do not contain any of the aforementioned chapters (and no later chapter title contains the word 'Nobody'). More importantly, the 'Nobody' indicated in the original title of the novel is distinct from the 'Nobody' indicated in the surviving chapter headings: the original title seems to refer to the lack of public agency and failure of social responsibility that are depicted throughout the novel; the 'Nobody' in the chapter headings refers specifically to Clennam, and to his feelings for Pet.[43] While Clennam's attempts to quash his desire and his lack of initiative translate into forms of self-denial and psychological self-imprisonment that can be related to the public themes of the novel, they are also portrayed as a pitiable reaction to unreciprocated desire rather than as the culpable 'fault' which negatively characterises the state of the novel's social institutions.[44] The text's implicatures do not belittle Clennam's attempt to police his actions, but rather reflect a sad attempt to police his desires.

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[43] John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson reject Forster's assertion that the original title reflects Dickens's idea of a leading man who refuses to accept responsibility for the mischief he has created (223-24). While Butt and Tillotson do not provide an authoritative alternative reading of the original title, they do point out that Dickens reused the figure of 'Nobody' in an article in Household Worlds, which blames 'Nobody' for various governmental mishaps (229-30).

[44] Patricia Ingham believes that Clennam's pessimism regarding his chances with Pet 'completes his negative self-construction'; that his pessimism is predetermined by his internalisation of the negativity with which he is educated (149). There is much evidence for this, such as Arthur's first multiple-sentence utterance in the novel, in which he tells Pet's father 'I have no will' (17). However, Ingham's conclusion does not account for the cautious but relatively optimistic thoughts with which he initially contemplates his love for Pet, and his reasonable grounds for initially attempting to abandon the romance (165). It is only with the introduction of Clennam's favoured rival, Henry Gowan, that Clennam's thoughts become unrelentingly pessimistic.

Clennam's attempt at self-policing can be likened to Carpenter's proposed method of inner thought-control. However, Clennam's inability fully to control his thoughts and desires, to 'determine what shall *not* be regarded by the Mind', suggests a psychology more in line with Spencer's conception of uncontrollable desires but controllable actions. I am not suggesting that Dickens was consciously promoting Spencer's theories; it has often been pointed out that Dickens's literary interest in psychological debates was typically focused on its more sensational aspects, such as mesmerism and lunacy reform (Taylor and Shuttleworth xvii, 22; Taylor 29).[45] It is possible that Dickens expected his readers to interpret his characterisation of Clennam in light of then-popular conceptions of the unconscious, but more likely that these conceptions were only indirectly influential, colouring 'common-sense' conceptions of the time and inadvertently filtering into Dickens's writing and his audiences' reading. Vague background assumptions are, in short, probably more relevant here than the author's traceable interests in psychology.[46]

While it is unclear when Clennam's desire for Pet begins, it is clear when Clennam decides to repress that desire. Dickens does not portray Clennam as ultimately ignorant of his feelings for Pet, but rather as naive about his ability to suppress those feelings. There is one hint of Clennam's feelings before they are explicitly broached in free indirect discourse: in the chapter entitled 'Nobody's Weakness', the reader is told that 'If there were a last subject in [Clennam's] thoughts, and it lay towards Twickenham [the Meagleses' town], its form was so indefinite that it was little more than the pervading atmosphere in which these other subjects floated before

[45] Taylor notes that Dickens and Spencer were acquaintances; however, this does not mean that Dickens had read Spencer (29).

[46] It should also be noted that Dickens's representation of Clennam's repression aligns with Taylor's description of the Victorian concept of repression (noted in the introductory segment of this chapter). 'Repression' and 'unconsciousness', here, do not refer to the psychoanalytic concepts of the same name; instead, they refer to concepts more in line with Carpenter's writings, in which 'repressed' thoughts are those that are kept out of immediate consciousness.

him' (159). Because Dickens portrays the Meagles family as the only connection that Clennam

(or, in fact, the entire narrative) has with Twickenham, the place functions as a kind of metonymy

by which the Meagles family is indirectly referred to. This sentence is more significant for the

information that it holds back rather than for what it explicitly communicates; it calls attention to

a 'subject' without communicating to the reader what that subject is, mimicking the 'indefinite

[ness]' by which it is characterised.

Soon after, the 'subject' is explicitly broached in language that communicates Clennam's

consciousness of his desire, and a corresponding need to act in accordance with propriety as he

follows his impulses. It is revealed that Clennam has a 'question to consider', and that it is

> No less a question than this: Whether he should allow himself to fall in love with Pet?
> He was twice her age. (He changed the leg he had crossed over the other, and tried the calculation again, but could not bring out the total at less.) He was twice her age. Well! He was young in appearance, young in health and strength, young in heart. A man was certainly not old at forty; and many men were not in circumstances to marry, or did not marry, until they attained that time of life. On the other hand, the question was, not what he thought of the point, but what she thought of it. . . .
> When he had got so far, it came again into his head, that the question was, not what they thought of it but what she thought of it.
> Arthur Clennam was a retiring man, with a sense of many deficiences [sic], and he so exalted the merits of the beautiful Minnie [Pet] in his mind, and depressed his own, that when he pinned himself to this point, his hopes began to fail him. He came to the final resolution, as he made himself ready for dinner, that he would *not* allow himself to fall in love with Pet. (165, emphasis in original)

These reflections are clearly conscious on Clennam's part: his less conscious anxieties (indicated

by the crossing of legs and the repetition of calculations) are communicated in parentheses,

highlighting their subliminal quality. The rest of the passage is filled with classic markers of free

indirect discourse: there is an exclamation ('Well!'), italics that signal informal emphasis, and a

wandering from the point that would signal irrelevant information if interpreted as the narrator's,

but that signals psychological portrayal when interpreted as Clennam's (the ellipses in the

quotation demarcate a passage which speculates on what Pet's parents would think of the marriage, rather than 'what she thought of it'). Because readers will assign the utterance its most relevant interpretation (Sperber and Wilson 167) they will automatically attribute the structure of the thoughts to Clennam. The distinctive style found in the free indirect discourse indicates Clennam's articulation of the issues he is considering; Clennam's ability to articulate his thoughts indicates that they are conscious. The function of free indirect discourse in this passage comfortably aligns itself with its description in the writings of Fludernik and Palmer: it highlights the verbal, conscious quality of Clennam's decision to '*not* allow himself to fall in love with Pet.'

After this point, the free indirect discourse used to portray Clennam's thoughts about Pet also portrays the thoughts he is desperately trying to repress. While the text explicitly contains only Clennam's conscious thoughts, the disjunctions and internal contradictions of these thoughts implicate a desire that is antithetical to what is textually represented. The presence of the free indirect discourse itself functions in this way; although Clennam has promised himself that he will no longer think of Pet romantically, his tendency to dwell obsessively on the restraint he has imposed upon himself implicates his inability to repress those desires altogether. The first in a series of obsessive reflections is presented a few pages after Clennam adopts his 'final resolution'. Dickens writes that Clennam

> made up his mind that he was glad he had resolved not to fall in love with Pet. She was so beautiful, so amiable, so apt to receive any true impression given to her gentle nature and her innocent heart, and make the man who should be so happy as to communicate it, the most fortunate and enviable of all men, that he was very glad indeed he had come to that conclusion.
>   But, as this might have been a reason for coming to the opposite conclusion, he followed out the theme again a little way in his mind. To justify himself, perhaps.

      'Suppose that a man,' so his thoughts ran, 'who had been of age some twenty years or so; who was a diffident man, from the circumstances of his youth; who was rather a grave man, from the tenor of his life; who knew himself to be deficient in many little engaging qualities which he admired in others, from having been long in a distant region, with nothing softening near him; who had no kind sisters to present to her; who had no congenial home to make her known in; who was a stranger in the land; who had not a fortune to compensate, in any measure, for these defects; who had nothing in his favor but his honest love and his general wish to do right—suppose such a man were to come to this house, and were to yield to the captivation of this charming girl and were to persuade himself that he could hope to win her; what a weakness it would be!' . . .

      Why should he be vexed or sore at heart? It was not his weakness that he had imagined. It was nobody's, nobody's within his knowledge, why should it trouble him? And yet it did trouble him. (169)

The above passage introduces narrative and psychological tics that will reoccur in future passages detailing Clennam's thoughts about Pet. Like the previous excerpt, it begins with a conscious reflection: by making 'up his mind' that he is glad, Clennam is consciously categorising his emotions as satisfactorily resolved. The next sentence, however, implicitly undoes this assertion by lingering on Pet's attractions and virtues in such detail that the reiterated conclusion, 'he was very glad indeed', rings false. Instead, the echoic nature of the phrase communicates the psychology of a man who is trying to convince himself into happiness. This interpretation is reinforced by the superficially unnecessary emphasis of 'very' and 'indeed', which renders the phrase ostensive (that is, saliently posed to communicate information which must be inferred).

This reiteration, like others within the passage and between passages, marks the paragraph as free indirect discourse. Relevance theory can explain why it is that repetition is often perceived as a marker of free indirect discourse in fictional prose texts. Repetition is intended redundancy. Redundancy is, according to the <u>Oxford English Dictionary</u>, 'superfluity; (esp. in later use) unnecessariness'. In the case of redundancy, the 'superfluous' or 'unnecessary'

information would be perceived as such because, in a context in which the information has already been given, the communication is irrelevant. That is not to say that the information itself is irrelevant, but rather that the act of imparting it again is. This can be explained with Sperber and Wilson's schema of 'contextual effects', in which information's relevance is gauged by the extent to which it modifies its context (109). In the case of redundancy (and, by extension, repetition), the context has already been modified by the information when it was previously given, making the reiteration of the information irrelevant.

In accordance with Sperber and Wilson's description of ostensive stimuli, Dickens's repetition 'is irrelevant unless treated as evidence about the communicator's intentions' (163). The functional irrelevance of repetition causes it to function ostensively, consequently providing a medium through which to effect implicatures. Although Sperber and Wilson discuss repetition as a stylistic effect that often results in 'weak' implicatures called 'poetic effects' (222), they also claim that some instances of repetition 'exhibit rather than merely describe the speaker's mental or emotional state: they give rise to non-propositional effects which would be lost under paraphrase' (220).[47] Their analysis of repetition, however, does not take into account the potential assignment of the expressed 'mental or emotional state' to someone other than the speaker. Because, in fiction, the mental state of a character is often more saliently relevant to the narrative than that of the narrative voice, repetition is often interpreted as indicative of the character's mental state. This means that the inclusion of repetition in a sentence uttered by an

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[47] Sperber and Wilson use the term 'weak' to describe implicatures whose meanings are vague and whose presences are not strongly evidenced. They write that the 'strongest possible implicatures are those fully determinate premises or conclusions . . . which must actually be supplied if the interpretation is to be consistent with the principle of relevance, and for which the speaker takes full responsibility. . . . The weaker the encouragement, and the wider the range of possibilities among which the hearer can choose, the weaker the implicatures' (199). Used on its own, 'implicature' usually suggests stronger implicatures. As noted in the Introduction, this dissertation discusses only strong implicatures.

omniscient, reliable narrative voice often results in a communicated mixture of both the narrative

voice's and the character's viewpoints—or in other words, free indirect discourse.

Repetition is used extensively in this fashion in Little Dorrit, both within passages and at

longer intervals. The 'nobody' repeated near the end of the passage above yet again introduces a

redundancy that breaks up the formality expected of omniscient, reliable narrative voices; it also

functions more saliently to draw the reader's attention to a word which has already been

introduced in the chapter title 'Nobody's Weakness'. The word 'nobody' is complicated by the

previous paragraph, which is narrated in quotation marks (and consequently narrated as

Clennam's conscious thought). The paragraph in quotation marks does not make use of the word

'nobody', and the link between the two instances of the word is the 'weakness' mentioned in the

title chapter, linked again with 'nobody' in the last paragraph, and hypothetically attributed to 'a

man' in the middle paragraph. The hypothetical man described in the quoted paragraph shares all

of his characteristics with Clennam; characteristics of Clennam that have previously been

introduced in the indicative are now being re-narrated as hypothetical. The long, unnecessarily

detailed list of identical characteristics complicates the use of counterfactual conditionals in the

paragraph, which in turn problematises the conditional used to introduce the man 'yield[ing] to

the captivation of this charming girl'. Although the connection between Clennam and the man is

not explicitly made, the emphasised similarities between Clennam and the unnamed, abruptly

introduced man indicate a projection of Clennam's desires onto the hypothetical experiences of

another person. The attribution of 'weakness' to both the unnamed man and 'nobody' establishes

a lexical connection that reflects back onto Clennam. The last paragraph of the passage

concretises the conflation of Clennam and 'nobody' when it first presupposes a vexation (by

asking the question 'why should he be vexed or sore at heart?') and then admits a feeling of 'trouble' on Clennam's behalf that has resulted from the 'weakness' of 'nobod[y]'.

While the use of 'Nobody' in the chapter title 'Nobody's Weakness' emphasises the repeated use of the word in the last paragraph, it is only when the next chapter, 'Nobody's Rival', is introduced on the next page that the word becomes an appellation for somewhat of an alter ego onto whom Clennam projects his repressed desires and distress (the chapters appeared in the same number in the original serialisation of the novel). The title gathers previously mentioned characteristics into an entity that experiences the emotions Clennam will not allow himself to feel. 'Nobody's Rival' also introduces Henry Gowan, the unworthy object of Pet's affections (whom she eventually marries).[48] While no other reference is made to 'Nobody' throughout the chapter, the problematic disnarration of courtship activities that ensues, and the careless assumption by Gowan of a right to pursue them, clearly portrays Gowan as Clennam's actual rival, again conflating Clennam and 'Nobody'.

The use of disnarration commences here in earnest, far surpassing that used in Clennam's quoted thoughts the chapter before. At times the disnarration is explicitly attributed to Clennam, as when Clennam 'thought, that if he had not made that decided resolution to avoid falling in love with Pet, he would have taken a dislike to Henry Gowan' (171). The 'resolution' is repeatedly referred to throughout this paragraph and those following, and always with accompanying disnarration: 'But for that resolution so often recalled,' Dickens writes, 'Clennam might have wished [Gowan] in the crater of Mount Etna . . .' (171). A sentence later, Dickens

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[48] Clennam's relationship with Pet is again doubled when the novel's villain, Rigaud alias Blandois, joins the Gowans on their marriage tour. While Blandois does not show any romantic interest in Pet, he poses as the dangerous interloper that Clennam might have figured as (in regards to the marriage) if he did not identify with 'Nobody'.

facetiously corrects the indicative mood by providing accompanying counterfactual conditional, parenthetical clauses: 'It was (at least it might have been, always excepting for that wise resolution) like [Gowan's] dexterous impudence . . .' (171). In this passage the ironic disnarration is not explicitly linked to the portrayal of Clennam's conscious thoughts, resulting in an effect of free indirect discourse which communicates both newly presented information that has been repressed from Clennam's consciousness and his obsessive preoccupation with (and consciousness of) his 'resolution'.

Sentences of 'corrected' indicatives and disnarration continue to occur throughout the text: Pet makes 'far too much of [Gowan's] dog, far, far too much—that is to say, supposing there had been any third person looking on who loved her' (171). The next day 'Clennam had been a little reserved since breakfast—that is to say, would have been if he had loved [Pet]' (176). In the next paragraph it is mentioned that Gowan 'would have run in [Clennam's] head a good deal, if he had been his rival' (176). All of these utterances (and similar ones after them) seemingly replace indicative descriptions of Clennam's emotions; in some cases, counterfactual conditionals explicitly substitute for the previous indicative assertion (as in the first two examples directly above). The assumed omniscience of the narration problematises the hypothetical quality of the narrative voice's description: just as an omniscient narrative voice may be expected to omit irrelevant information, it is expected to privilege the communication of relevant information over that which explicitly posits itself as irrelevant (hypothetical, in this case). Designating these passages as free indirect discourse does not in itself grant the passages a relevance that makes their inclusion worthwhile; the sheer number of passages warrants searching for a motive for the inclusion of so much free indirect discourse. Besides functioning as free indirect discourse, then,

these passages function as ironic disnarration: the persistence with which they appear in the text

evidences their immediate relevance, despite the narrative voice's explicit assurance otherwise.

These utterances become significant not only for their relevance (which results from the

interpreted dismissal of their counterfactual tags) but also for their counterfactual posturing. As

Sperber and Wilson write, 'the surplus of information given in an indirect [statement] must

achieve some relevance in its own right': in Little Dorrit, the counterfactual posturing mimics

Clennam's denial of his emotions and his consequent obsession with what would have happened

'if'—that is, if he had been younger, if he had been a man with a greater sense of self-worth and

happier family circumstance, if Gowan had not been present (197). While the narrative's free

indirect discourse explicitly communicates Clennam's conscious thoughts, then, it also implicates

Clennam's subconscious, sub-verbal impulses.

The chapter ends with a passage of disnarration, similar to the repetitive phrases with

which the previous chapter ended:

> The rain fell heavily on the roof, and pattered on the ground, and dripped among the evergreens, and the leafless branches of the trees. The rain fell heavily, drearily. It was a night of tears.
> If Clennam had not decided against falling in love with Pet; if he had had the weakness to do it; if he had, little by little, persuaded himself to set all the earnestness of his nature, all the might of his hope, and all the wealth of his matured character, on that cast; if he had done this, and found that all was lost; he would have been, that night, unutterably miserable. As it was—
> As it was, the rain fell heavily, drearily. (177)

This passage illustrates how symbolism may be effected by the implicated relationship between

superficially disparate topics. Here, that relationship is created by the close proximity of

Dickens's pathetic fallacy ('a night of tears') and Clennam's thought process: as Brown and Yule

have observed, readers assume coherence when interpreting texts, assigning a continuity to even

those sentences which do not make their continuity explicit.[49] The unstated thread of continuity

between these sentences amounts to implicature; and, in this case, the relationship between the

pathetic fallacy and Clennam's feelings amounts to symbolism. The first paragraph of this

passage relates strictly to the weather; however, the sentence 'it was a night of tears' indicates

clearly the emotions that have been implicated throughout the chapter, while still preserving

Clennam's self-abnegating distance from his own feelings. The next paragraph repeats the ironic

disnarration (and the repetitive structure of which it is made up) found in other passages. Like

those other passages, the ostensive irrelevance of the overly detailed hypothetical situation

causes it to be interpreted as free indirect discourse which communicates not only Clennam's

conscious restraint but also his self-abnegation, even to the extent of denying his right to

'unutterable miser[y]'. The conventionally dismissive phrase 'As it was' is foregrounded by

repetition, and further emphasised by the abrupt dash that separates the two sentences. The

phrase is especially significant in a passage which communicates Clennam's self-denial, claiming

to narrate the state of things 'As it was', or how things *really* were. In this context, the dash takes

on extra significance, standing in for Clennam's inability to own his grief; the fragment ends a

paragraph of free indirect discourse, and this pause abruptly halts the representation of

Clennam's thought. The next sentence abruptly transitions to a description of the weather,

extending a line of imagery that has previously been linked with 'tears'. The ostensibly non

sequitur quality of the transition, as well as the repetition of the phrase 'As it was', causes this

imagery to be read as a stand-in for the information withheld in the previous sentence. In other

words, readers are encouraged to interpret 'the rain fell heavily, drearily' as a substitution for the

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[49] The 'assumption of coherence' is discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter One (39, 122).

relevant information withheld from the first and second paragraphs, causing the imagery to take

on symbolic value.

Several passages similar to those analysed above are found in later chapters of the novel.

The first sentence of the chapter 'Nobody's State of Mind', for instance, begins with 'If Arthur

Clennam had not arrived at that wise decision firmly to restrain himself from loving Pet, he

would have lived on in a state of much perplexity, involving difficult struggles with his own

heart' (257). The speciousness of this disnarration is pushed further, and the disnarration of

thoughts is juxtaposed with a narration of actions that contradicts the counterfactual quality of

the disnarrated statements. Clennam is described as speaking 'almost in the tone of a man in

pain' when discussing Gowan (258) in a passage after one in which his 'notable resolution' is

mentioned three times (257). Later in the text, Clennam's 'sagacious course' is noted (260) a

page before his introduction to Gowan's mother is described as 'a dreaded day . . . on his part,

and a very unwelcome day when it came' (261). The pain and dread Clennam experiences are

suitable accompaniments to the thoughts that are faithfully disnarrated; if the disnarration is

taken literally the pain and dread lack causality. A few pages later, this uneasy relationship

between the factual and counterfactual is pushed to an extreme: when visiting Gowan's mother,

Clennam is asked

> "now is she really pretty?"
>   In nobody's difficulties, he would have found it very difficult to answer; very
> difficult indeed to smile, and say "Who?"
>   "Oh! You know!" [Mrs. Gowan] returned. "This flame of Henry's. . . ." (264)

In the middle sentence of this passage, disnarrated emotions (specifically, feelings of difficulty)

and actions (an answer and a smile) are conflated to the extent that, superficially, they are

disnarrated. There is no indicative description of Clennam's answer, but in the next line there is

an indicative description of Mrs. Gowan's response to it. The middle sentence would be

unintelligible without the understood implicatures that 'nobody' is in fact Clennam, and that he

did answer Mrs. Gowan; a coherent reading of the text requires the audience to understand that

Clennam *did* 'find it very difficult to answer; very difficult indeed to smile, and say "Who?"'.

While this interpretation emphasises Clennam's feelings over his actions, it also allows him to

perform the actions necessary to making the passage coherent.

A similar understanding of Dickens's ironic disnarration is necessary when reading the

description of Clennam's acceptance of Pet's marriage to Gowan. 'At that time,' Dickens writes,

Clennam 'first finally resigned the dying hope that had flickered in nobody's heart, so much to its

pain and trouble . . .' (281). Disnarration is not explicitly used in this sentence; however, the

conflation of Clennam and 'nobody' that has been a marked aspect of the text's disnarration is

exploited. 'Nobody', appearing outside his frame of disnarration, is exposed as a functioning

entity in which 'dying hope' is capable of 'flickering'; moreover, Clennam is described as

'resigning' 'nobody's' 'hope'—that is, illogically carrying out the personal action of a nonexistent

other. The sentence fails to be coherent on an explicit level, and it is only the implicatures

garnered from previous discussions of 'nobody' that allow it to be perceived as significant. That

significance is a mimetic representation of Clennam's mental state, by which he is shown finally

accepting the feelings he has attempted and failed to keep out of mind.

It is important to keep in mind the effect that these implicatures have on the reader's

overall evaluation of Clennam's character. Although he is portrayed as self-abnegating to a fault,

this self-abnegation is simultaneously a marker of a generalizable Victorian morality in tune with

Spencer's and Carpenter's views of psychological control. While the influence of these

background assumptions on the interpretation of local passages is often inconspicuous, their

influence on what these implicatures, taken together, communicate about Clennam's moral

character is plain. It is only within the context of the contemporary psychological theories

discussed above that Clennam's detrimental level of self-control takes on a rigorously moral

tenor, characterising him as the male equivalent of the narrative's moral exemplar and his

eventual bride, Little Dorrit.

The Mill on the Floss: Eliot's Narration of Resisted Attraction

On a first reading of George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss, the passages that communicate

Maggie Tulliver and Stephen Guest's mutual attraction may seem too straightforward to contain

much implicature. Unlike the language that communicates Clennam's infatuation with Pet in

Little Dorrit, the narration of The Mill on the Floss does not call attention to its implicatures by

ironically posing them as incongruous; there are very few utterances that explicitly contradict

their context. Instead, the relative inconspicuousness of the implicatures creates an effect of

narratorial frankness. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that Maggie and

Stephen's attraction is made explicit only belatedly; before this explication, only indicative and

conventionally subnarratable behaviour is narrated, leading the reader gradually to perceive the

attraction as it is gradually perceived, and then resisted, by Maggie and Stephen themselves. The

text's implicatures, then, communicate the intense but semiconscious intersubjective activity that

results from and further impels Maggie and Stephen's growing mutual attraction.

The Mill on the Floss follows the short life of Maggie Tulliver, the daughter of a miller in

rural, early-nineteenth century England. The early portions of the novel concentrate on Maggie's

childhood, with emphasis on her early waywardness, her intelligence, and her love for her older

brother, Tom. The family encounters immense hardship when Maggie's father is suddenly

bankrupted. During this period, Tom begins to work (and eventually recovers his father's debts)

while Maggie turns first to religion and then to literature to quell her dissatisfaction with her life.

Maggie's love of literature is encouraged by Philip Wakem, the hunchbacked son of a lawyer

who has played a key role in bankrupting Maggie's father. Tom eventually puts a stop to their

clandestine meetings, but not before Philip persuades Maggie to return his love for her. Upon

her father's death, Maggie leaves her hometown, St Ogg's, to become a schoolteacher.

The portion of the narrative with which this dissertation is concerned occurs two years

later, when Maggie comes back to St Ogg's in an interval between teaching jobs. While staying

with her cousin, Lucy Deane, she meets Stephen Guest, the young man with whom Lucy is 'in

that stage of courtship which makes the most exquisite moment of youth, the freshest blossom-

time of passion—when each is sure of the other's love, but no formal declaration has been

made . . .' (296). Maggie and Stephen are instantly attracted to each other, and despite the

reluctance both feel to hurt Lucy, their attraction grows and ultimately results in the start of an

elopement that is, on Maggie's side, only semiconsciously performed. At the first opportunity,

Maggie leaves Stephen and returns to St Ogg's. Soon after her return there is a flood, and

Maggie dangerously steers a boat through the disaster to rescue Tom from their childhood home.

They both drown while attempting to join the rest of their family.

The attraction between Maggie and Stephen may be considered more than just a romantic

subplot of the novel. While contemporary critics (and modern-day scholars) are almost

unanimous in deploring Eliot's choice of a love object in the egotistical and shallow Stephen

Guest, many readers see Maggie's illicit attraction to him as the central venue through which

Eliot explores the primary themes of the novel. Eliot herself wrote that

> Maggie's position towards Stephen—is too vital a part of my whole conception and purpose for me to be converted to the condemnation of it. . . . If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of a character essentially noble but liable to great error—error that is anguish to its own nobleness—*then*, it seems to me, the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology. ('George Eliot' 430-31, emphasis in original)

The extent of Eliot's informed engagement with Victorian psychology has been well

documented. Besides being widely read in her own right, Eliot was the long-term partner of

George Henry Lewes, who wrote extensively on the subject.[50] She was also a good friend of

Herbert Spencer, whose unpublished work she sometimes discussed with him (Paxton 8; Eliot,

Journals 83) and who was close enough to her to know her pseudonym before her real identity

was made public (Paxton 69). In her book George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism,

Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender, Nancy L. Paxton shows that elements of The

Mill on the Floss reflect Eliot's engagement with Spencer's writing, concentrating on aspects of

the novel that, she argues, pointedly repudiate some of Spencer's postulations about sex and

gender (70). However, while Eliot was often critical of Spencer's work, it is also undeniable that

it greatly influenced her. Michael Davis notes that 'Eliot's writing suggests parallels with, and

criticisms of, Spencer . . .', and bases this fluctuating relationship on the writers' sometimes

similar and sometimes differentiated views on human psychology (70).

As was discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Spencer's belief in the controlling

power of the conscious mind was widely shared. While Eliot was very familiar with his work

(Spencer repeatedly dined with her and Lewes during the period in which she was writing The

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[50] See Chapter Two for a discussion of some of Lewes's contributions (133).

Mill on the Floss [Eliot, Journals 81, 83]), she was equally well versed in William Carpenter's work, whose later writing comes closer to Spencer's view of the relationship between the unconscious and the conscious mind (Shuttleworth 75, Davis 121). Sally Shuttleworth attributes much of Eliot's characterisation of the unconscious in The Mill on the Floss to Lewes and Carpenter, rather than to Spencer—although the characterisations of the unconscious that she attributes to Carpenter's writing are sufficiently general that they could also be attributed to Spencer's. These characterisations concern the manner in which the unconscious might act as a potential 'threat and possible source of moral weakness' (Shuttleworth 75). In this section I claim that implicatures in The Mill on the Floss cause the novel to be interpreted as gesturing towards celebrating the general terrain of Carpenter's and Spencer's accounts of unconsciousness and conscious control, rather than contesting the details of their theories. However, I believe that Eliot's engagement with contemporary psychology is, in this instance, only gestural; Eliot's representations of character consciousnesses and unconsciousnesses are far more nuanced than a simple application of contemporary psychological theories will allow. The 'unconscious', the 'conscious', the 'will', and 'desire' are not completely discrete categories in The Mill on the Floss; instead, there is a complex rendering of them in which consciousness and unconsciousness are shown as both antagonistic and cooperative.

Previous readers, including some of the earliest, have discovered similar themes in Eliot's novel. The Saturday Review, for instance, believed that, in writing The Mill on the Floss, Eliot 'set herself to describe the triumph of principle over feeling . . .' ('From Saturday Review', 447). This general proposition can be seen throughout the historical evolution of critical reactions to Eliot's work: George Levine, for instance, proposes that while '[a]ll the major themes of The Mill

on the Floss . . . are related to determinism', Eliot argues 'that determinism does not entail belief

in inefficacy of the will' ('Intelligence' 490). U.C. Knoepflmacher interprets the narrative as

illustrating the struggle between 'inner' and 'outside' forces (515), and Hao Li argues that the

novel explores the universal struggle between 'internalized communal feelings' and those that are

more innate (50). In her reading of how Eliot repudiates Spencer's postulations in her novels,

Paxton switches the 'inner' and 'outside' forces which Knoeplfmacher discusses, claiming that, in

giving up Stephen, 'Maggie acts on particular inward commands of the "mind and heart," which

are dictated by the "divine voice within." This "divine voice" authorizes Maggie's resistance to

the demands of a passion that, Stephen insists, are determined by "outward law"' (91).

Shuttleworth believes that 'the central moral issue of the novel' concerns the clash between 'the

promptings of egoism' and a socially influenced memory of the 'past' or, put another way, 'the

disjunction between the prompting of Maggie's unconscious and her social conscience' (52).

These theses pursue different aspects of the same theme, namely the socially sanctioned, rational

resistance to biologically rooted and irrational desires. The fact of resistance is what makes these

desires particularly amenable to communication through implicature: through implicature,

unconscious, and indeed unwanted, desires are shown to slowly fight their way into characters'

consciousnesses. Eliot's use of implicature, then, allows her to enact the central themes of her

novel. More importantly for this dissertation, Eliot's use of implicature allows her to represent

mimetically psychological processes that culminate in one of the text's climaxes (the elopement).

Without the reader's recognition of the text's implicatures, the climax appears abrupt and

inexplicable.

Maggie and Stephen's mutual attraction is introduced by the narration of their extreme reactions to each other. Although their attraction is clear, it is not explicitly stated and is partly obfuscated by a playful trick that Lucy has played on Stephen: when Stephen incorrectly surmises that Lucy's cousin will be 'a fat, blonde girl, with round blue eyes, who will stare at us silently', Lucy agrees, laughing at the surprise which Stephen is bound to endure (296). This context provides an 'excuse' for the strong reactions which ensue and which more conventionally signal immediate attraction. Eliot writes that

> For one instance Stephen could not conceal his astonishment at the sight of this tall dark-eyed nymph with her jet-black coronet of hair; the next, Maggie felt herself, for the first time in her life, receiving the tribute of a very deep blush and a very deep bow from a person towards whom she herself was conscious of timidity. This new experience was very agreeable to her—so agreeable, that it almost effaced her previous emotion about Philip. There was a new brightness in her eyes, and a very becoming flush on her cheek, as she seated herself. (304)

The surprise that the reader expects Stephen to experience does much to explain Stephen's 'astonishment', and the 'very deep blush' that could, potentially, be associated with it. Similarly, although timidity does not usually characterise Maggie, it is fitting that she would feel so when first introduced to the wealthiest, most influential young man in town.

The exchange of blushes is the most conventionally telling sign of Maggie and Stephen's mutual attraction. However, although the blush is commonly considered in association with romantic self-consciousness, in fiction it is often more complexly context-dependent, causing the reader to infer the self-conscious character emotion which is most relevant and suitable to the passage. Blushing as a fictional occurrence was briefly discussed in Chapter One, where its potential for implicated significance was suggested. Although narrated blushes almost uniformly represent some form of self-awareness, that self-awareness varies greatly from, for instance,

embarrassment to romantic interest to indignation. The ambiguity of this image makes it

especially suitable for communicating implicatures: although the blush may be said to function

as code for self-awareness, its ambiguity regarding the type of self-awareness it poses

foregrounds the blush's context. As with all implicatures, the metonymic substitution of a blush

for the narration of the feelings from which it originates implies a need to keep the non-narrated

information hidden.

Margaret Homans and Caroline Levine have noted the use of the blush to communicate

self-conscious sexuality, but in The Mill on the Floss, as in other fictional works, it is used to

indicate a wide spectrum of emotion (Homans 168; C. Levine 115). Two pages after the above

quote, for instance, the blush is used to signal unambiguously Lucy's embarrassment at Maggie's

allusion to her own poverty (306). In light of the ambiguity inherent in represented blushes,

then, Maggie's and Stephen's 'blush[es]' and 'flush[es]' imply sexual attraction, but do not

communicate it as a certainty. Instead, it is the context in which the blushes occur that dictates

their significance.

It is implicature that securely communicates the romantic nature of Maggie's and

Stephen's reactions, and provides the context in which the reader can decode the blushes'

significance. Maggie's new, blush-worthy encounter is only vaguely termed an 'experience'.

This vagueness is foregrounded by the repetition with which it is described as 'agreeable', and is

only dispelled by its association with 'her previous emotion about Philip'. This is a

straightforward case of implicature—so straightforward, in fact, that the passage might easily be

mistaken as explicitly expressing Maggie's attraction to Stephen. However, it is only because of

the passage's context (a section which details Maggie's romantic relationship with Philip, placed

one hundred and fifty pages previously) that the reader associates romance with Philip, and can, in consequence, associate that romance with Maggie's current feelings.

The passage may also be said to implicate, rather than explicate, Maggie's romantic feelings because the communication of that romantic quality is defeasible. As noted in the Introduction, implicatures are uniquely defeasible; more explicit language may not be contradicted with the coherence of the utterance maintained. While it is assumed that the 'previous emotion' mentioned refers to Maggie's romantic feelings for Philip, it would not lower the coherence of the passage if another aspect of Maggie and Philip's relationship was later specified. However, Maggie only becomes self-conscious with Philip when their relationship becomes a romantic one; prior to his confession of love, her behaviour is consistently 'unconstrained and indifferent' (271-72). In this way various contexts coalesce to form an implicature: in the passage above, the emphasis on self-consciousness (indicated by Maggie's 'flush') combines with information concerning her 'previous emotion about Philip' to communicate her attraction to Stephen.

Stephen's attraction to Maggie is reinforced by the direct report of a conscious thought which, like those found in Little Dorrit, functions primarily to implicate the inexplicit feelings which motivate it. After Maggie and Stephen have exchanged their first introductory (and somewhat combative) statements, Stephen's conscious reaction is provided: "'An alarming amount of the devil there," was Stephen's first thought. The second, when [Maggie] had bent over her work, was, "I wish she would look at me again"' (304). Stephen's two represented thoughts oppose each other: the first provides a negative assessment of Maggie, and the second implicates a disjointed wish to further attract Maggie's attention. The disjunction between these

two narrated thoughts implicates a further emotion of which Stephen is not yet conscious; his desire to gain Maggie's attention, coupled with his previous blushes, indicates that this unknown emotion may be identified as sexual attraction. This interpretation suggests that not just narrated actions but also narrated thought quotations are capable of functioning as a deeper kind of indicative description. Here, it is a 'state of mind' that is narrated, but it is narrated only to indicate another, semiconscious state of mind. By limiting her text to the narration of only verbalised thoughts, Eliot creates a temporary appearance of limited omniscience for her narrative voice, simultaneously shielding Stephen's attraction while communicating it through the disjunction of Stephen's conscious thoughts. As in Little Dorrit, the temporary nature of this limited omniscience indicates that the limitation (and the narration's consequent reliance on implicature rather than on explicit language) is intended, rather than an insignificant byproduct of the generic limitations of the narrative. In fact, it is the text's assumed fictionality (and specifically the assumed potential for omniscient narration) that permits the intent behind the temporary limitation to be discerned by the reader, and communicates the second-order implicature concerning the illicitness of Stephen's attraction to Maggie (the first-order, more local implicatures act to establish Stephen's attraction to Maggie).

The significant contribution of implicature in these passages is attested to by Lucy's continued obliviousness to Maggie and Stephen's mutual attraction. Lucy is present and attentive for both of the above passages; aside from the second half of Stephen's conscious thought ('I wish she would look at me again'), Lucy is aware of all that is narrated in these passages. Lucy is presented as a fairly intelligent character, and is adept at reading people (she later effects a chain of manipulations that restores the mill to the Tullivers). However, the

narrative voice notes that, far from registering the sudden attraction building between Maggie and Stephen, 'Lucy was rather alarmed: she thought Stephen and Maggie were not going to like each other' (305). This dramatic irony evidences the use of implicature in the text: if an astute character who is privy to the same information as the reader cannot interpret that information correctly, it is clear that the real meaning of the information is communicated through its relationship with a narrative context that the character (Lucy) is not privy to. It is only the reader who is urged to compare Maggie's present experience with her previous one with Philip, and is subject to Stephen's conflicting thoughts; it is the context of Maggie and Stephen's actions which causes them to be read as indicative description, signifying a semiconscious attraction.

Telling, but superficially incoherent, utterances continue to appear throughout the text. Later in the same scene, the reader is notified that Stephen 'was so fascinated by [Maggie's] clear, large gaze, that at last he forgot to look away from it occasionally towards Lucy' (308). While 'fascinat[ion]' does not necessarily equate with sexual attraction, it does often imply it. A few paragraphs later, however, Eliot writes

> 'And you *will* like Maggie, shan't you?' [Lucy] added, in a beseeching tone. 'Isn't she a dear, noble-looking creature?'
> 'Too tall,' said Stephen, smiling down upon her, 'and a little too fiery. She is not my type of woman, you know.'
> Gentlemen, you are aware, are apt to impart these imprudent confidences to ladies concerning their unfavourable opinion of sister fair ones. That is why so many women have the advantage of knowing that they are secretly repulsive to men who have self-denyingly made ardent love to them. And hardly anything could be more distinctively characteristic of Lucy, than that she both implicitly believed what Stephen said, and was determined that Maggie should not know it. But you, who have a higher logic than the verbal to guide you, have already foreseen, as the direct sequence to that unfavourable opinion of Stephen's, that he walked down to the boat-house calculating, by the aid of a vivid imagination, that Maggie must give him her hand at least twice in consequence of this pleasant boating plan, and that a gentleman who wishes ladies to look at him is advantageously situated when he is rowing them in a boat. What then? Had he fallen in love with this surprising daughter of Mrs Tulliver at first sight? Certainly not. Such

passions are never heard of in real life. Besides, he was in love already, and half-engaged to the dearest little creature in the world; and he was not a man to make a fool of himself in any way. . . . It was perfectly natural and safe to admire beauty and enjoy looking at it—at least under such circumstances as the present. And there was really something very interesting about this girl, with her poverty and troubles: it was gratifying to see the friendship between the two cousins. Generally, Stephen admitted, he was not fond of women who had any peculiarity of character—but here the peculiarity seemed really of a superior kind; and provided one is not obliged to marry such women, why, they certainly make a variety in social intercourse. (308-09, emphasis in original)

The spirit of Stephen's response to Lucy is, of course, in contradiction to the 'fascinat[ion]' narrated so shortly beforehand. Eliot takes the opportunity to interject one of her famous narratorial commentaries, matching Stephen's 'impruden[ce]' with the narrator's own equally disingenuous discussion of 'that unfavourable opinion of Stephen's'. The sentence beginning 'That is why . . .' introduces a heavily sarcastic tone in which the narrator communicates a meaning other than what is explicitly stated (that is, not that the women are 'secretly repulsive', but that the gentlemen are often hypocrites), implicitly providing a commentary that derides Stephen's behaviour. As discussed in the Introduction, this type of utterance is described as 'echoic' by Daniel Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, and more specifically as ironic. The irony of the utterance continues to function significantly throughout the paragraph: two sentences later, it is only by attributing an ironic tone to the narrator that the reader is able to reconcile Stephen's 'unfavourable opinion' of Maggie and the characterisation of the 'boating plan' (with its attendant contact with Maggie) as 'pleasant'. Importantly, this sentence explicates its use of implicature, in that the narrator baldly recognises that the attraction he is communicating is discerned only through 'a higher logic than the verbal'. This comment further foregrounds the text's previous implicatures by pointing out the method through which they have been effected—the narrator, here, is commenting on the pragmatic inferences expected of his readers. The reader is in need

of this pragmatic inference to understand the rest of the sentence, as well as the significance of the paragraph as a whole.

While the first half of the paragraph presents a heavily sarcastic commentary on Stephen's fickleness, the second half functions as free indirect discourse concerning Stephen's thoughts. The shift occurs between the previous ironised sentence and the short ejaculation, 'What then?'. Mixed in with the numerous clauses of the narrator's self-reflexive sentence is a thought report of Stephen's 'calculating'. This thought report segues between utterances that function as pure commentary and the free indirect discourse signalled by 'What then?', in which psychological representation takes precedence over the now-backgrounded commentary. With the transition into free indirect discourse, the paragraph begins to resemble those communicating Clennam's infatuation with Pet in <u>Little Dorrit</u>: the 'certainly not' (now attributed to Stephen) is partially voided by Stephen's lengthy attempt to excuse his (unarticulated) attraction. Stephen quiets his conscience by characterising the indulgence of his attraction as 'natural and safe', then displacing his interest in Maggie's looks onto an interest in her 'poverty and troubles', and then by assuming a charmed amusement at 'the friendship between the two cousins'. These non sequiturs emphasise Stephen's lack of reliance on his one previously mentioned and uniquely valid excuse: that 'he was in love already, and half-engaged to the dearest little creature in the world'. Stephen's last 'excuse' proves most effective, by locating the source of his interest in a 'peculiarity' that he characterises as negating Maggie's marriage potential. The sheer number of excuses that Stephen invokes resembles Clennam's obsessive displacement in <u>Little Dorrit</u>: it is the unnecessary repetition of explanations regarding why Stephen's interest in Maggie is 'safe' that indicates a semiconscious awareness on his part that it might not be. The free indirect

discourse of Stephen's thoughts does not explicitly communicate the extremity of Stephen's

attraction to Maggie, then, but implicates it through the unnecessary repetition of disjointed

verbalised thoughts that, together, function as indicative description.

While Eliot continues to rely primarily on implicature to communicate Maggie and

Stephen's growing mutual attraction, she soon introduces a nominal element of explicitness.

Although the growing romance is semantically represented in the text, it is fashioned so that it

does not provide indicative, factual descriptions of Maggie's and Stephen's emotional states. The

narrator carefully precedes the introduction of this semantic dimension by commenting

> Had anything remarkable happened?
> Nothing that you are not likely to consider in the highest degree unimportant.
> (311)

After unravelling the triple negation of the narrator's answer to his own question, it becomes

clear that the narrator is posing the subnarratability of what he is about to communicate. With

that, he narrates that 'It was not that [Maggie] thought distinctly of Mr Stephen Guest, or dwelt

on the indications that he looked at her with admiration; it was rather that she felt the half-remote

presence of a world of love and beauty and delight, made up of vague, mingled images from all

the poetry and romance she had ever read, or had ever woven in her dreamy reveries' (311).

Importantly, this quotation communicates Maggie's lack of consciousness of a carefully

distanced, 'half-remote world' beneath its lexical associations with conventional narratives of

romance ('admiration', 'love', 'beauty' 'romance')—for all of the utterance's seeming explicitness,

it repeats and plays out the triple negation of Eliot's warning, communicating only that Maggie is

not fully conscious of a romantic world that she is not explicitly included in. While the text's

implicatures portray romantic developments that include Maggie, the message implicit in the

above quote is significant in a context in which Maggie is only a visitor in a house filled with

material 'beauty and delight', and the onlooker to her cousin's unspoken engagement.

From this point onward the implicated narrative of Maggie and Stephen's growing love is

replaced by an explicit narrative of Maggie and Stephen's growing consciousness of each other.

Semantic indications of the romantic character of this self-consciousness are rarely invoked;

instead, these passages function as didactic substitutions for narrative blushes, foregrounding the

context that their self-consciousness must result from. It is the consciousness of each other's

physical presence that is narrated; the significance of this spatial consciousness (Maggie and

Stephen's attraction to each other) remains unarticulated. In a chapter whose title, 'Illustrating

the Laws of Attraction', is one the of few available semantic clues, Eliot writes that Stephen's

> personal attentions to Maggie were comparatively slight, and there had even sprung up an apparent distance between them. . . . If Stephen came in when Lucy was out of the room—if Lucy left them together, they never spoke to each other: Stephen, perhaps, seemed to be examining books on music, and Maggie bent her head assiduously over her work. Each was oppressively conscious of the other's presence, even to the finger-ends. Yet each looked and longed for the same thing to happen the next day. Neither of them had begun to reflect on the matter, or silently to ask, 'To what does all this tend?' Maggie only felt that life was revealing something quite new to her, and she was absorbed in the direct, immediate experience, without any energy left for taking account of it and reasoning about it. Stephen wilfully abstained from self-questioning, and would not admit to himself that he felt an influence which was to have any determining effect on his conduct. And when Lucy came into the room again, they were once more unconstrained. . . . (326)

This passage effectively acts as disnarration: Maggie and Stephen do *not* speak to each other,

they do *not* look at each other. These narrative actions are more than subnarratable, they are

disnarrated: they do not happen. However, it is not their nonexistence that is significant (non-

action could be considered the springboard from which narratable actions are produced) but the

studied nonexistence of these actions—the consciousness with which they are avoided. Stephen

'seem[s]' to be examining books, and Maggie has her head bent over her work—the otherwise omniscient narrative voice refuses to comment on whether or not Stephen is actually examining, or Maggie is actually working. Quintessentially subnarratable elements are manipulated into expressing the romantic drama that is developing between Maggie and Stephen.

Instead of narrating through relevant thought report or through conventional indicative description, the narrative concentrates on the thought report of feelings that have only limited relevance: as has been stated, Maggie and Stephen's self-consciousness is relevant only because it results from a semiconscious desire that is not explicitly indicated. Eliot further highlights this unexplained self-consciousness by problematising its significance; just as it is emphasised that Maggie and Stephen do *not* engage in narratable behaviour when Lucy is away, it is also emphasised that Maggie and Stephen do *not* reflect on what their self-consciousness means.[51] Eliot is making explicit the semiconsciousness which her implicatures mimic; however, those implicatures are held in place by the evasiveness concerning what it is that Maggie and Stephen are semiconscious of. Here again, then, Eliot's thought report (or, in this case, lack-of-thought report) is more significant for what it implicates that the character is experiencing than what it directly tells the reader the character is experiencing. By temporarily employing a limited omniscience that is perceived as ironic, Eliot transforms thought report into indicative description, implicating rather than explicitly reporting the contextual effects (i.e. the meaning) of her characters' consciousnesses. These implicatures, in turn, communicate the information of which these characters are only semiconscious, and the result is a multilayered presentation of Maggie's and Stephen's psychologies.

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[51] As noted in the Introduction, one of the conditions of narratability is that the information 'is worthy of being told' (Warhol, 'Neonarrative' 22).

As indicated above, many scholars have discussed Eliot's use of Maggie and Stephen's mutual attraction as a platform on which to discuss self-control and the power of unconscious drives. Almost all scholars focus on the climactic scene between Maggie and Stephen, in which Maggie exhibits a (to most critics) highly suspect passivity and lack of consciousness while Stephen effects their elopement. This occurs when circumstances unexpectedly leave only Maggie and Stephen free to partake in a boating trip that has been planned. Maggie has had 'fits of absence' while Stephen purposely rows too far to allow them to return home within the expected timeframe (376-77). Maggie is only able to return home the next day, but is so flustered that she accidentally boards a coach going in the wrong direction (388). It takes Maggie five days to return home, by which time word has spread about her elopement with Stephen (391).

It is the initial scene on the river, in which Stephen is rowing and Maggie is daydreaming, that scholars often concentrate on. This scene occurs after both the narrative voice and the characters have articulated the characters' love, and draws comparatively little on implicature to communicate Maggie's and Stephen's inner lives. Both, however, have remarkably little conscious inner life to communicate. Unlike in the passages marked by the multilayered, semiconscious thoughts and emotions that have propelled the narrative to this point, Maggie, here, experiences a lull in which her passivity within her own situation allows for little narrative information that is worth telling: there is simply no narratable information to communicate.[52] As Eliot later writes, 'All yielding is attended with a less vivid consciousness than resistance; it is the partial sleep of thought' (378). The reader is told that

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[52] With the primary conflict of the narrative (Maggie and Stephen's mutual attraction) momentarily resolved (they have temporarily and—as far as Maggie knows—harmlessly given in to their feelings), there is little that is 'worthy of being told'.

> Some low, subdued, languid exclamation of love came from Stephen from time to time, as he went on rowing idly, half automatically: otherwise, they spoke no word; for what could words have been but an inlet to thought? and thought did not belong to that enchanted haze in which they were enveloped—it belonged to the past and the future that lay outside the haze. Maggie was only dimly conscious of the banks, as they passed them, and dwelt with no recognition on the villages: she knew there were several to be passed before they reached Luckreth, where they always stopped and left the boat. At all times she was so liable to fits of absence, that she was likely enough to let her way-marks pass unnoticed. (376)

The thought report that describes Maggie as 'dimly conscious' indicates that the previous sentences are not free indirect discourse, but earnest narratorial commentary: Maggie really is in a haze, and has few articulated thoughts. The remark which ends the passage justifies her passivity, characterising 'fits of absence' as characteristic of her. She has, as she thinks, harmlessly given in to her attraction, and the emphasis placed on her unconsciousness seems less an ironic assertion of denial (regarding feelings of guilt towards Lucy), and more a straightforward account of her dreamlike state. The passage straightforwardly presents the lack of conscious self-control that is enacted by her physically accompanying Stephen into the boat; both instances present a lapse from the self-control advocated by Carpenter and Spencer.

With respect to the aims of this dissertation, the passage is structurally significant, functioning as the climax of the novel. The climactic force of the scene evidences the centrality of Maggie and Stephen's evolving emotions, and specifically their attempts to resist their mutual attraction; the scene temporarily resolves the narrative 'problem' of their attraction. Implicature, rather than more explicit narration, is used to communicate this central drama of the narrative. Eliot's heavy reliance on implicature illustrates its ability to withstand significant narrative responsibility, and the enduring popularity of the text evidences the modern reader's ability to interpret appropriately texts that rely heavily on implicatures. The novel's trans-generational

popularity also serves to isolate the effectiveness of the text's implicatures, as opposed to its other techniques of discreet narration: current readers may be less likely to recognise era-bound codes such as euphemism and the symbolism of the period. The continued success of the novel is, partly, the continued success of its implicatures.

Orley Farm: Interpretations, Infatuations, and Crime

Slightly more than halfway through the eight hundred pages of <u>Orley Farm</u>, Anthony Trollope provides one of his famous narratorial intrusions:

> I venture to think, I may almost say to hope, that Lady Mason's confession at the end of the last chapter will not have taken anybody by surprise. If such surprise be felt I must have told my tale badly. I do not like such revulsions of feeling with regard to my characters as surprises of this nature must generate. That Lady Mason had committed the terrible deed for which she was about to be tried, that Mr. Furnival's suspicion of her guilt was only too well founded, that Mr. Dockwrath with his wicked ingenuity had discovered no more than the truth, will, in its open revelation, have caused no surprise to the reader;—but it did cause terrible surprise to Sir Peregrine Orme. (2: 42-43)

The narrator's comments on the expectation with which he hopes readers will have viewed Lady Mason's confession refer to the heavy use of implicature within the text. For the first half of the novel, Lady Mason's guilt—the narrative fact around which the plot revolves—is communicated through implicature, and Trollope fashions the surrounding novel into a discourse on the vagaries of interpretation.

Complicating characters' skewed understandings of Lady Mason's guilt is the attraction she holds to both the reader and other characters in the novel; two of the novel's central characters, Sir Peregrine and Mr. Furnival, have romantic feelings for her. Mr. Furnival's feelings are of especial interest to this chapter: his thought processes concerning the likelihood of Lady Mason's guilt are much of what causes the reader to infer that she is guilty, and they are

coloured by his unconscious attraction to her. These two facets of Mr. Furnival's presentation reinforce each other: just as his obvious bias towards Lady Mason allows the reader to interpret his hesitant suspicions as obvious truths, the hesitancy with which he accepts Lady Mason's blatant guilt indicates his unconscious inclination towards her. These indications work to advance earlier implicatures in the text: the articulated suspicions of other characters function as nonfactual reports of Mr. Furnival's attraction, simultaneously communicating the unconscious character of his attraction by verbalising it only in other characters' words. The nonfactiveness of these passages is rendered salient by an absence of clarifying narratorial commentary. With these narrative possibilities highlighted for the reader, succeeding passages function to establish the truth of the otherwise nonfactive assertions regarding Mr. Furnival's attraction to Lady Mason. In these passages Mr. Furnival's attraction is portrayed through indicative behaviour that is often focalised through Lady Mason's perception, superficially rendering the implicated conclusions concerning his behaviour nonfactual as well. Together, these narrative occurrences remove much of the uncertainty that each one would communicate alone.

As indicated in the preceding discussion, the novel centres on the beautiful Lady Mason, the young second wife of the established and elderly Sir Joseph Mason. When Sir Joseph refuses to leave his newborn son an adequate inheritance (leaving all to his older son, Mr. Mason), Lady Mason forges a codicil to Sir Joseph's will, claiming his lesser property, Orley Farm, as her son's. When Sir Joseph dies Lady Mason is taken to court by his older son and found innocent.

Twenty years later, Lady Mason's son Lucius upsets their tenant, Mr. Dockwrath, by abruptly revoking his right to use their land. In revenge Mr. Dockwrath unearths papers implicating Lady Mason's guilt, and, on presenting them to Mr. Mason, a new accusation of

perjury is levelled against Lady Mason. Lady Mason relies heavily on her lawyer, Mr. Furnival, who secured her acquittal twenty years earlier and, at the time, strongly believed in her innocence. Lady Mason is presented as having lived a mostly solitary life: her guilt has caused her to isolate herself from close friendships with others. Her closest friends are Sir Peregrine Orme and his widowed stepdaughter, Mrs. Orme. When Lady Mason's legal troubles recommence the Ormes offer closer friendship as support, and Sir Peregrine soon proposes to her. Lady Mason initially accepts out of respect, but is soon convinced by Mr. Furnival and others that the match would be inappropriate and harmful to both their reputations. In her successful attempt to break off the engagement, Lady Mason resorts to confessing her crime to Sir Peregrine, devastating him with the revelation of her immoral activities. Lady Mason's confession introduces the first factive, explicit discussion of her guilt. As the opening quotation shows, however, her guilt has previously been communicated through the persistent use of salient and sustained implicatures. Despite his own growing misgivings concerning Lady Mason's innocence, Mr. Furnival does his best to secure a second acquittal, and she is eventually found not guilty.

Mrs. Furnival is introduced into the narrative in the context of the Furnivals' marital problems. While little of the marriage's status is discussed in relation to Mr. Furnival, the first the reader learns of Mrs. Furnival is that she is 'not quite so happy as she had been when watching beside [Mr. Furnival] in the [early] days of their poverty' (1: 99). Her unhappiness is largely attributed to the assertion that Mr. Furnival, 'at the age of fifty-five, was now running after strange goddesses! The member of the Essex Marshes, in these his latter days, was obtaining for himself among other successes the character of a Lothario . . .' (1: 99). However,

an assertion that initially (if ambiguously) is attributed to the omniscient narrative voice is soon

characterised as 'supposed' and pointedly attributed to Mrs. Furnival (1: 100).[53] 'That he did

wander afield', the narrator notes, 'poor Mrs. Furnival felt in her agony convinced; and among

those ladies whom on this account she most thoroughly detested was our friend Lady Mason of

Orley Farm' (1: 100). It is noteworthy that it is a character, rather than the omniscient narrative

voice, who is 'convinced' of Mr. Furnival's affairs: the attribution of the feeling to a character

rather than the narrator designates the information as nonfactive. The uncertainty of the

information discussed is further highlighted by the addition of the word 'felt', which conveys less

certainty and a greater dependence on emotional, rather than rational bases for the conclusion

reached. A similar emphasis on emotions is carried through to the next sentence, in which Lady

Mason is not 'detected' so much as she is 'detested'. Nonetheless, although Mr. Furnival's

romantic feelings are not indicated, the possibility of their existence is made salient, and these

emphatically nonfactive statements create a context in which Mr. Furnival's interactions with and

thoughts concerning Lady Mason are rendered ostensive. In other words, the backdrop against

which Mr. Furnival and Lady Mason's interactions are placed (Mrs. Furnival's suspicions)

foregrounds the possibility that Mr. Furnival's actions will act as indicative behaviour with

regard to whether or not he has romantic feelings for Lady Mason. With Mrs. Furnival's

suspicions in mind, the reader is likely to pay attention to what Mr. Furnival's recorded thoughts

and actions indicate about his feelings for Lady Mason, rather than any other narrative fact they

might communicate either about him or the other conditions under which the characters meet.

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[53] Although the passage is dedicated to the portrayal of Mrs. Furnival's reflections, its tone and vocabulary are consistent with those adopted by the narrator generally, diminishing the likelihood that Trollope intended the assertion to act as free indirect discourse. The exclamation point placed after 'goddesses' is the one exception to this tonal homogeneity, communicating an exasperation unlikely to be portrayed by a worldly narrator, but potentially attributable to an adulterer's wife.

It is significant that the possibility of Mr. Furnival's attraction to Lady Mason is verbalised only in the free indirect discourse of another character, rather than in any passage where the assertions could be attributed to him. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, many narratological theories of the representation of character psychologies are somewhat limited in that they tend to focus on techniques, such as free indirect discourse, which depict only the articulated thoughts of characters. Less-articulated character states (including those that are less conscious) are often neglected by these narratological frameworks, and when they are discussed it is often assumed that they must be depicted through third-person narration. Implicature provides a mimetic alternative for the presentation of less-conscious character states, and the accumulation of Mrs. Furnival's suspicions, Mr. Furnival's indicative behaviour, and the narration of his (non-romantic) thoughts implicates his romantic attachment to Lady Mason. Because his attraction is only verbalised through other characters, it retains the possibility of being unconscious. The indicative behaviour and third-person report of conscious thoughts (which themselves function as indicative behaviour) further implicate Mr. Furnival's attraction and cement the unconscious status of his desires.

The narration of Mrs. Furnival's suspicions runs throughout most of the novel, and culminates in a meeting between Mrs. Orme and Mrs. Furnival that quiets her jealousy permanently (2: 115). Trollope foregrounds Mrs. Furnival's suspicions, however, by applying them explicitly to the first meeting narrated between Mr. Furnival and Lady Mason. After being alerted that her husband will unexpectedly return to London that evening, Mrs. Furnival learns, by chance, that Lady Mason will be shopping in London the next day. Trollope writes that

> Now if it were an ascertained fact that he was coming to London merely with the view of meeting Lady Mason, the wife of his bosom would not think it necessary to provide for

him the warmest welcome. This of course was not an ascertained fact; but were there not terrible grounds of suspicion? Mr. Furnival's law chambers were in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, close to Chancery Lane, and Lady Mason had made her appointment with her son within five minutes' walk of that locality. And was it not in itself a strange coincidence that Lady Mason, who came to town so seldom, should now do so on the very day of Mr. Furnival's sudden return? She felt sure that they were to meet on the morrow, but yet she could not declare even to herself that it was an ascertained fact. (1:107)

Because this passage is narrated in free indirect discourse (as is evident from the use of question marks, repeated phrases, and redundant phrases such as 'of his bosom') the narrative information meditated upon—Mr. Furnival's appointment with Lady Mason—is presented as uncertain; the passage narrates a character's thoughts, rather than what is happening or will happen within the narrative. The uncertainty of this information is emphasised by the repeated phrases in this passage, which depict the narrative information as 'not an ascertained fact': even within Mrs. Furnival's mind, the information is uncertain.

Nonetheless, the passage is the text's first indication that Lady Mason has indeed made an appointment to see Mr. Furnival (she is shown considering the necessity of it earlier in the novel) and Mrs. Furnival's general suspicions remain relevant when it is shown that the specific ones presented in the passage are correct. Both Mr. Furnival and Lady Mason have traveled to London solely with the purpose of meeting each other (1: 111). Mrs. Furnival's more general suspicions, however, remain unconfirmed: Mr. Furnival is incapable of informing his wife of their intended meeting, and the narrative voice clarifies that 'this deceit was practised, not as between husband and wife with reference to an assignation with a lady, but between the lawyer and the outer world with reference to a private meeting with a client' (1: 111-112).

The neutrality implied in this last observation by the narrative voice is negated by a parallel observation which opens the narration of the meeting. 'Had [Lady Mason] given way to

dowdiness,' the narrator claims, 'or suffered herself to be, as it were, washed out, Mr. Furnival,

we may say, would not have been there to meet her;—of which fact Lady Mason was perhaps

aware' (1: 117). This narratorial statement asserts a certain element of appearance-related

interest Mr. Furnival has in Lady Mason, and implicates Lady Mason's awareness and

manipulation of that interest. However, the interest asserted here is little more than the

intangible effect Lady Mason's appearance has on her attractiveness as an acquaintance

generally, and one which she is previously shown to be conscious of in front of all acquaintances

(1: 46). As the passage develops, however, the romantic tenor of Mr. Furnival's interest is

emphasised by indicative behaviour, and a series of em dashes (like the one in the quote above)

communicates that an unspoken affection might motivate his eagerness to help his client. The

em dash, here, characterises the comment that succeeds it as a hesitant aside, portraying its

content as suspect (which the use of 'perhaps' reinforces) and, more importantly, illicit. In the

context of Mrs. Furnival's suspicions and the emphasis on Lady Mason's pleasing appearance,

this illicitness implicates the adulterous feelings which Mrs. Furnival attributes to Mr. Furnival

and which his succeeding indicative behaviour communicates.

At the opening of their interview Mr. Furnival is shown to sit 'rather close to [Lady

Mason],—much closer to her than he ever now seated himself to Mrs. F' (1:117). The

implication of illicit motivations enacted by the em dash recalls the jealousy attributed to 'Mrs. F'

in earlier passages, and characterises Mr. Furnival's proximity to Lady Mason as indicative

behaviour, specifically indicating the romantic feelings Mrs. Furnival attributes to him. In the

next paragraph the narrator notes that Mr. Furnival 'again took [Lady Mason's] hand,—that he

might encourage her. Lady Mason let him keep her hand for a minute or so, as though she did

not notice it; and yet as she turned her eyes to him it might appear that his tenderness had encouraged her' (1:117). As with the previous two em dashes employed, the one used here renders the narratorial commentary which follows it suspect. It is not that it ironises the commentary (although, in the last example, that claim is arguable),[54] but that it functions as a salient ellipsis, drawing the reader's attention to the possibility that the narrator is only narrating Mr. Furnival's more professional motivations, and is not disclosing his more illicit ones.

The indicative behaviour outlined here affects the reader's interpretations of succeeding passages which detail Mr. Furnival's thoughts, and specifically those concerned with the possibility of Lady Mason's guilt. As mentioned previously, however, the hesitancy and idealisation of Lady Mason that are evident in these succeeding passages also reinforce the reader's conclusions regarding Mr. Furnival's attraction to her. The narration of his suspicions begins during his first conversation with her about the possibility of a new trial. Lady Mason's main object is to learn how likely it is that she will be taken to court. Trollope writes that

> She was trying to gather from his face whether he had seen signs of danger, and he was
> trying to gather from her words whether there might really be cause to apprehend danger.
> How was he to know what was really inside her mind; what were her actual thoughts and
> inward reasonings on this subject; what private knowledge she might have which was
> still kept back from him? . . . Could it be possible that anything had been kept back from
> him? Were there facts unknown to him, but known to her, which would be terrible, fatal,
> damning to his sweet friend if proved before all the world? He could not bring himself to
> ask her, but yet it was so material that he should know! . . . he sat, thinking, not so much
> whether or no she had been in any way guilty with reference to that will, as whether the
> counsel he should give her ought in any way to be based on the possibility of her having
> been thus guilty. Nothing might be so damning to her cause as that he should make sure

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[54] When followed by the pause that the em dash indicates, the phrase 'that he might encourage her' could be read as echoic of Mr. Furnival's thoughts: the utterance could be interpreted as free indirect discourse, and, in a denial similar to that practiced by the characters in <u>Little Dorrit</u> and <u>The Mill on the Floss,</u> Mr. Furnival could be excusing his inappropriate actions with inadequate justifications. In order to be categorised as 'ironic' a derogatory attitude towards the utterance must also be detectable; in 'that he might encourage her', this derogatory attitude results from the excuse's apparent inadequacy. However, the end of the quote shows that Mr. Furnival's actions do indeed 'encourage' Lady Mason when she is hesitant and troubled; this outcome problematises the characterisation of Mr. Furnival's excuse as 'inadequate' and, consequently, the categorisation of the utterance as ironic.

of her innocence, if she were not innocent; and yet he would not ask her the question. If innocent, why was it that she was now so much moved, after twenty years of quiet possession? (1: 118-19).

Trollope delicately balances Mr. Furnival's willed disbelief in the possibility of Lady Mason's guilt with his professional acknowledgment of suspicious circumstances. The intense intersubjectivity with which the passage opens is immediately backgrounded as the narrative voice slips into free indirect narration of Mr. Furnival's thoughts. Lady Mason is attempting to 'read' Mr. Furnival's mind, but he unconsciously retreats from intersubjective engagement as he attempts to reconcile her as she presents herself with the Lady Mason he idealises. His explicit characterisation of a probable criminal as a 'sweet friend' and his unwillingness to question her illustrate the influence that she has over him; it is an influence that causes his line of questioning to concentrate on her relationship with him ('Could it be possible that anything had been kept back from him?') and on how best he may help her, rather than on whether or not she is guilty. The perceptible influence of his admiration on his line of thought creates a narrative irony in which Lady Mason's actions indicate her guilt to the reader but not to Mr. Furnival: for the reader, Lady Mason's agitation 'after twenty years of quiet possession' is paramount, while for Mr. Furnival it is an afterthought. The discrepancy between Mr. Furnival's thoughts and his failure to reach the same conclusions as the reader implicates the influence of his romantic feelings on his reasoning.

Mr. Furnival's suspicion deepens as Lady Mason unwittingly further suggests her guilt. When Mr. Furnival resumes questioning her, he is struck by how quickly she recalls incidents that occurred twenty years prior: 'how was it that she knew so accurately things which had occurred before the trial,—when no trial could have been expected? But as to this he said

nothing' (1:121). Occurrences that would not be suspicious if narrated differently are portrayed

as indicative of Lady Mason's guilt: it could be argued that, having gone through a traumatic

trial, it is only natural that Lady Mason would remember details she had dwelt on excessively

twenty years prior. Mr. Furnival's suspicions are shown, here, and guide the reader to a deeper

suspicion of Lady Mason's guilt. The last sentence, however, indicates a willing passivity in

response to raised suspicions: a deliberate semi-awareness indicates Mr. Furnival's professional

acuity as well as his attempts to ignore it.

Despite Mr. Furnival's conclusion, the passage encourages the reader to infer Lady

Mason's guilt by echoing his or her possible deductions in the text. The novel contains many

lengthy passages of free indirect discourse communicating Mr. Furnival's ruminations, most of

them regarding the possibility of the omitted action that is central to the narrative:

> What was the real truth of all this? . . . Nothing could be more natural than her anxiety, supposing her to be aware of some secret which would condemn her if discovered;—but nothing more unnatural if there were no such secret. And she must know! In her bosom, if in no other, must exist the knowledge whether or no that will were just. If that will were just, was it possible that she should now tremble so violently, seeing that its justice had been substantially proved in various courts of law? But if it were not just—if it were a forgery, a forgery made by her, or with her cognizance—and that now this truth was to be made known! How terrible would that be! But terrible is not the word which best describes the idea as it entered Mr. Furnival's mind. How wonderful would it be; how wonderful would it all have been! . . . Had not she been a woman worthy of wonder! . . . But it was impossible. So said Mr. Furnival to himself, out loud . . . . (1: 130-31)

The beginning of the above excerpt isolates the 'truth' as its object of inquiry, and echoes many

of the novel's primary themes. The trial that ensues interests not only the neighbouring gentility

but also 'the London world, especially the world of lawyers' (2: 207). Trollope writes that men

'about the Inns of Court speculated as to the verdict, offering to each other very confident

opinions as to the result, and offering, on some occasions, bets as well as opinions' (2: 207).

<u>Orley Farm</u> is emphatically more concerned with interpretation than with narrative fact; its sustained omission of the narrative's central act foregrounds the various interpretations offered concerning the likelihood of the act having taken place (and almost every character within the novel does offer a view, however cursory). As minute and lengthy as Mr. Furnival's interpretations are, however, they are only interpretations: the defeasible nature of all inferences allows Mr. Furnival to maintain his illogical conclusions concerning Lady Mason's innocence. Mr. Furnival's feelings for his client skew an interpretation that otherwise mirrors the reader's own inferences, reinforcing the novel's message concerning both the fickleness and primacy of interpretation (it is, after all, the court's mistaken interpretation of past events that leads it to conclude that Lady Mason is not guilty).

The passage also self-reflexively echoes the suspended omniscience of the narrative voice. Mr. Furnival's evident preoccupation with Lady Mason's evasiveness mirrors the reader's reaction to the narrative voice's conspicuously selective silence. The passage moves from exclamations of Lady Mason's sure knowledge ('she must know!'), to a rehearsal of deductions the reader is likely to have made, to conclusions of her guilt. Mr. Furnival's repetition of the reader's likely inferences legitimises them, as does the implicit acknowledgment of the narrative voice's conspicuous omissions. Unlike the reader, however, Mr. Furnival is driven back from his conclusions, and his characterisation of Lady Mason's probable criminal activities as 'wonderful', making her 'a woman worthy of wonder!' adds to the accumulating evidence of his infatuation with her. Although readers' views of Lady Mason have generally been sympathetic, the extremity of Mr. Furnival's enthusiasm further distances his conclusions from the reader's, adding to the general impression of his romantic regard for her. The free indirect discourse

detailing Mr. Furnival's deductions further implicates the unconscious status of his romantic

feelings because they are perceived as having a decisive effect on Mr. Furnival's thoughts. Mr.

Furnival is incapable of recognising the emotion which controls his inferences, and it is this lack

of recognition which grants his feelings for Lady Mason control over his perceptions of her.

An analysis of these passages of free indirect discourse benefits from a comparison with

those depicting Clennam's infatuation with Pet in <u>Little Dorrit</u>. The disnarration in <u>Little Dorrit</u>

portrays a character at some level conscious of (and desperately attempting to suppress) his

infatuation; conversely, romance's complete absence from textual representation in these

passages from <u>Orley Farm</u>, coupled with the implicatures communicating it in preceding

passages, leads the reader to infer that Mr. Furnival's romantic interest has not been consciously

realised on any psychological level. The wholly unconscious status of Mr. Furnival's attachment

is eventually made explicit alongside the explication of the attachment itself. The articulation of

this previously implicated information appears after Mr. Furnival finally concludes what the

reader has concluded long before him: 'that that codicil had been fraudulently manufactured by

his friend and client, Lady Mason' (1: 340). In describing Mr. Furnival's extended reaction to

Lady Mason's engagement with Sir Peregrine, Trollope writes

> he thought of the woman herself, and his spirit within him became very bitter. Had any
> one told him that he was jealous of the preference shown by his client to Sir Peregrine, he
> would have fumed with anger, and thought that he was fuming justly. But such was in
> truth the case. Though he believed her to have been guilty of this thing, though he
> believed her to be now guilty of the worse offence of dragging the baronet to his ruin,
> still he was jealous of her regard. . . . And what reward did he expect? None. He had
> formed no idea that the woman would become his mistress. All that was as obscure
> before his mind's eye, as though she had been nineteen and he five-and-twenty. (1: 405)

Trollope pointedly negates the immorality of a married man's infatuation with a client by

positing it as unconscious: Mr. Furnival can honestly show outrage (he can 'fume justly') at the

imputation of adulterous feelings because he is, despite their existence, innocent of them.

Accordingly, he cannot attempt control of his desires because he is unaware of them. Trollope's

complete exclusion of the generally pervasive discourse of control is motivated: even a portrayal

of the psychological control on the terms suggested by Carpenter and Spencer would have

repelled readers, and would have dictated that Mr. Furnival be viewed as an antagonist (because

of the implied indifference towards his wife) rather than the sympathetic protagonist's primary

support. By posing Mr. Furnival's romantic attachment as wholly unrealised, Trollope creates a

realistic basis for the otherwise-shrewd lawyer's skewed interpretation of his client's past, while

maintaining his sympathetic standing within the novel. Trollope's portrayal echoes Cobbe's

claim that humans intuitively are not blamed for acts of 'unconscious cerebration', but only those

in which 'our brains obey our wills' (94). As in the Victorian schemas discussed in this chapter's

introduction, however, these unconscious drives affect Mr. Furnival's conscious thoughts and

actions: his unceasing appreciation of Lady Mason's better qualities, and his illogical

determination to have her acquitted of a crime he believes she has committed. The unconscious

status of Mr. Furnival's infatuation is just as necessary to the conveyance of the novel's primary

theme as the infatuation itself: it is Mr. Furnival's lack of of awareness that allows the infatuation

to cloud his judgment, skewing the novel's primary example of fallible deductive processes.

In January 1863 National Magazine printed an appreciative discussion of Orley Farm's realist

cast:

> Here, for once, we have a break in the smooth landscape, a cloud on the calm horizon: a
> lady forger, and a perjurer to boot, is a character which might well become a 'sensational'
> feature in other hands; but the author, who disdains all clap-trap or stage-trickery, softens
> even this down . . . . ('Unsigned Notice' 164)

Trollope's reputation as a 'realist' fiction writer was widely recognised. Nonetheless the reviewer's comparison of Orley Farm with sensation fiction is apt, although most scholars today would argue that this (always fuzzy) generic categorisation relies more on the narrative's discursive presentation than on its content. Orley Farm, begun in 1860 and initially serialised in 1861, was written as the sensation movement was gaining nationwide recognition (Hamer 90). The salient, sustained use of implicature played a role in distinguishing sensation from other fiction modes at the time, and its inherent emphasis on information kept secret could have played a role in National Magazine's ability to identify similarities of content between Orley Farm and the sensation mode. The central use of implicature in the sensation novel forms the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The Narrative Tease: Open Secrets in Sensation Fiction

The Dead Secret, an 1857 novel by Wilkie Collins, begins with a conspicuous discussion of an

event that is not explicitly communicated until near the end of the novel (and then only through

character dialogue). The event is 'not narrated' in a way that foregrounds its importance:

> 'Have you told my master?'
>   'No,' was the answer. 'I sent for him, to tell him—I tried hard to speak the
> words—it shook me to my very soul, only to think how I should best break it to him. . . .
> But I should have spoken in spite of that, if he had not talked of the child. . . . and that
> silenced me. . . . Get my writing-case, and the pen and ink. . . .'
>   Sarah peered anxiously over her shoulder, and saw the pen slowly and feebly
> form these three words:—*To My Husband*.
>   'O, no! no! For God's sake, don't write it!' she cried. . . .
>   'Don't!' reiterated Sarah, dropping on her knees at the bedside. 'Don't write it to
> him if you can't tell it to him. Let me go on bearing what I have borne so long already.
> Let the Secret die with you and die with me, and be never known in this world—never,
> never, never!'
>   'The Secret must be told,' answered Mrs. Treverton. 'My husband ought to know
> it, and must know it. I tried to tell him, and my courage failed me. I cannot trust you to
> tell him, after I am gone. It must be written. Take you the pen; my sight is failing. . . .
> Take the pen, and write what I tell you.' (15-18)

The 'Secret' under discussion is, of course, the 'Secret' of the title, foregrounded before the

narrative itself begins. Emphasised by nonstandard capitalisation, the word is also repeated

numerous times throughout the passage. More salient than even this, however, is the characters'

discussion of an occurrence that is consistently left unidentified: the repeated references to communication ('tell[ing]' and 'writ[ing]') presuppose that there is information to communicate. The explicit discussion of a secret foregrounds the narrator's refusal to communicate the 'Secret' information, emphasising both the omission of the information and the information's probable antinarratability. This practice differs from instances of ostensive-inferential communication in Jessie Phillips, Ruth, and Adam Bede, in which more earnest narrators concentrate on communicating antinarratable information (illegitimate pregnancy and illegitimate birth) politely rather than teasingly withholding and thereby emphasising it. The 'Secret' of the novel is that Mrs. Treverton's supposed daughter Rosamond is actually the illegitimate daughter of the maid Sarah. The melodramatic exclamations Mrs. Treverton and Sarah's discussion produces ('For God's Sake!') and the contention surrounding even the mode in which the 'Secret' should be communicated elevate its perceived antinarratability. While Mrs. Trollope, Gaskell, and Eliot seek to minimise the effect their antinarratable subject has, Collins maximises it.[55]

The above excerpt from The Dead Secret functions primarily to foreground the presence of a mystery, but clues regarding the character of that mystery are also present. It is revealed that the 'Secret' is relevant to the husband and to the child—both of whom, we learn, are ignorant of the secret's existence. Collins conspicuously avoids explaining the relevance of succeeding,

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[55] The content of The Dead Secret is unlikely to have been as inflammatory as that of Jessie Phillips, Ruth, or Adam Bede. The Dead Secret focuses far less on illegitimate pregnancy (which it excuses by way of the mother's formal engagement to the father) and instead emphasises what was popularly recognised as a less controversial topic: the stigma attached to bastardy. When Collins wrote The Dead Secret in 1857, bastardy was a far from original topic in literature: Jessica Cox writes that 'Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist (1838) heralded a new wave of illegitimate children in literature. . . . Dickens's attitude to Oliver is typical of that of many Victorian writers. The narrative condemns the illicit relationship that led to the child's birth, but sympathises with the child himself' (151). The conspicuous presentational politeness that communicates Rosamond's illegitimacy, then, appears to enlarge the presence of its borderline antinarratable content, rather than minimise it. Not only does Collins appear to be exploiting the antinarratability of illegitimate pregnancy for entertainment purposes, but (unlike Trollope, Gaskell, and Eliot) he does not truly tackle what his readers might be too offended to read. While Collins's conspicuously muted narration is also characteristic of these earlier renditions of illegitimacy, then, in The Dead Secret Collins renders the unstated more conspicuous, using implicature to not only communicate the antinarratable, but to exploit it as a source of suspense.

superficially irrelevant scenes (such as Sarah's overwhelming emotion when she sees 'Little

Rosamond'[27-28]), and the narrator's manifest abdication of omniscience alerts the reader that

they must primarily infer rather than 'decode' the significance of the narrative information that

Collins does present. These incongruous scenes guide the reader's inferences so heavily that, as

The Saturday Review noted, the secret is 'plainly discernible in the very opening of the book

[and] the interest of the story hangs not upon the nature of the secret, but upon the mode in which

it is discovered' ('Dead Secret' 188). 'The secret', The Athenaeum archly noted, 'is buried (not

dead), but its coffin is of crystal' ('New Novels' 788). Assumptions of relevance force the reader

to search out the narrative significance of the communicated material, implicating an unwritten

plot in which all ostensively superfluous material is formed into a coherent storyline.

The effect of Collins's plot communication through unnecessary implicatures was debated

in contemporary reviews, but there is no doubt that The Dead Secret, and specifically its style of

narration, was a success. While the transparency of the 'secret' brought Collins's skill as a writer

into question (The Athenaeum noted that 'it is doubtful how far the intentions of a novelist

should be impenetrable' ['New Novels' 788]) all critics agreed that it was the style of narration

that saved the novel. The success of the novel, if not as great as that of The Woman in White, is

undisputed: popular as a serial in Household Words, the volume form of the novel did not sell as

well as Collins had hoped, but a new edition was proposed by 1860 (W. Collins, Letters 163,

190).[56] In the preface to the 1861 edition of the novel Collins directly addressed the perceived

'critical objection' to his 'construction of the narrative' (5). He wrote:

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[56] Collins's use of implicature should be considered partially responsible for The Dead Secret's success as a serial. The serial form naturally depends on almost immediate plot development, so as to attract the reader's attention. By immediately communicating the presence of a 'secret' to his reader, Collins catches the reader's attention without exhausting his dramatic resources; instead, his narrative indirectness provides a resolution that the story can work towards.

I was blamed for allowing the 'Secret' to glimmer on the reader at an early period of the story, instead of keeping it in total darkness till the end. If this was a mistake (which I venture to doubt), I committed it with both eyes open. After careful consideration, and after trying the experiment both ways, I thought it most desirable to let the effect of the story depend on expectation rather than surprise; believing that the reader would be all the more interested in watching the progress of 'Rosamond' and her husband towards the discovery of the Secret, if he previously held some clue to the mystery in his own hand. So far as I am enabled to judge, from the opinions which reached me through various channels, this peculiar treatment of the narrative presented one of the special attractions of the book to a large variety of readers. (Dead Secret 5-6)

This passage is one of the few explicit references to the purposeful construction of inexplicit 'glimmer[s]' in Victorian fiction. It evidences the presence of implicature in Collins's novels as an entertaining end in itself, rather than, as in the previous novels discussed, a means of communicating information more politely and efficiently. The Dead Secret's publication precedes the vogue for sensation fiction which would result from Collins's 1860 publication, The Woman in White. The 'peculiar treatment of the narrative' detailed above, however, echoes the heavy use of implicature that would appear in many of the era's iconic sensation novels.

This third chapter discusses implicatures that are intentionally central to mid-Victorian texts, concentrating on those in the 'sensation' school of fiction. These implicatures are, superficially, unmotivated: unlike those discussed in Chapter One, they do not seem to be motivated by social considerations such as propriety and politeness. In fact, these implicatures often exaggerate, rather than diminish, the disreputable quality of the actions which they communicate. Moreover, while supplementary characterisation is sometimes effected by the implicatures discussed in this chapter, their salience and the amount of textual space devoted to them is not warranted by their relatively slight impact on characterisation.

These implicatures often have a metafictional function, drawing attention to the narrative voice and, many times, foregrounding its assumed omniscience (and, in conjunction, its fictionality). In these cases, the 'trick' of the narrative's subversiveness is almost more salient than the content that is being communicated subversively: the narrator is providing the reader with a puzzle to be solved, and the inferential processes involved in solving that puzzle are highlighted. While literary pragmaticists have noted the resulting sense of readerly collaboration in creating the story, there has been little discussion of the manner of entertainment that these salient implicatures (themselves the blueprints of the reader's expected collaboration) provide.

While the puzzles that these implicatures afford are entertaining in themselves,[57] the echoic nature of the fictional prose that tends to adopt them complicates the nature of the entertainment that the reader is experiencing. As has been discussed in previous sections of this dissertation, echoic utterances are not always ironic, but may be used for various reasons. Sensation fiction is known for plots that rely heavily on events that had previously been uncovered in newspapers (Pykett 52); sensation authors' mimicry of newspaper-style objectivity is, in the novels discussed, often carried to a humorous extreme that results in the implicatures that the reader is called upon to piece together. In the above passage from The Dead Secret, the primary information is implicated through character dialogue, rather than communicated through narratorial commentary. The communication of the 'secret' information's antinarratability results largely from this lack of narratorial commentary, which persists despite the vagueness of Mrs. Treverton and Sarah's discussion. Because it is antithetical to communicative norms (and, more specifically, repeatedly flouts Grice's maxims of quantity and manner) the extent to which this

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[57] Furlong notes that 'successful interpretations of witty utterances flatter the reader in much the same way that puzzle-solving does: the more quickly he arrives at the intended interpretation and resolves the momentary quandary posed by the text, the more highly he rates his intellectual powers'. ('Soul of Wit' 7)

vagueness dominates the passage takes on humorous overtones. The question is, primarily, whether this humour is intentional or simply bathetic. If it is intentional the echoic nature of the passage then reads as ironic: the ignorance pretended to by the otherwise omniscient author becomes a transparent act, as does the ease with which the reader can infer information that the omniscient narrator 'cannot' provide. However, it is necessary to identify the teasing quality of these narratives before their authors' ironical intentions can be assumed. Literary pragmatics provides a vocabulary with which to articulate a kind of narrative tease that scholars on sensation fiction have mostly neglected: a tease dependent on salient implicatures that are only made explicit midway, or sometimes near the end, of the novels. A discussion of specific examples of such implicatures will help to define the distinctively tongue-in-cheek manner of the genre.

After a preliminary discussion of sensation fiction, this chapter's introduction will examine the historical context of literary realism (broadly conceived) within which scholars usually situate the sensation movement, and which is often considered to have been the default mode of mid-nineteenth-century literature. Specifically, the relationship between these two movements will be discussed. It is not a new observation that they are interrelated; however, pragmatic analyses of these texts provide conclusions that are not common in scholarship on the sensation mode, and it is consequently hoped that literary pragmatics may be able to provide a more nuanced account of sensation's relationship with realism. In particular, the arguments presented in the introduction to this chapter (and evidenced by the case studies) will build on Patrick Brantlinger's and George Levine's conceptualisations of narration in the sensation novel. Brantlinger's (1982) 'What Is "Sensational" About the "Sensation Novel"?' is now a classic piece

of scholarship, providing definitive characterisations of sensationalism that are still valid for

Levine's How to Read the Victorian Novel (2008). Both authors provide nuanced discussions of

sensation fiction, but their analyses do not articulate the role that implicatures play in some

iconic sensation narratives. In accordance with Levine's proposals, this dissertation adopts a

definition of sensation fiction that characterises it as a subgenre of nineteenth-century realism:

sensation fiction both participates in and self-consciously distinguishes itself from the more

dominant realist mode. A discussion of the implicatures in these novels illustrates one previously

unarticulated way in which sensation fiction self-consciously sets itself apart from the dominant

realist mode: the obtrusive use of implicatures places an emphasis on the act of narration, calling

attention to exaggerated realist conventions and so 'echoing' and exposing realist conventions *as*

conventions. The metafictional emphasis on narration (often when detailing borderline

antinarratable content) is the source of many narrative 'puzzles' in sensation fiction and causes

the narrative to be perceived as non-serious and, at times, irreverent. These last characteristics of

sensation fiction were commonly noted in contemporary reviews, and it is hoped that literary

pragmatic analyses of these texts will shed light on this popular view of them.

The three case studies that form the remaining sections of this chapter are designed to

provide evidence for these claims. As with the case studies that make up the previous chapters,

those offered here are intended to evidence the inferential processes involved in reading these

novels. More specifically, they are meant to offer evidence concerning how salient implicatures

are interpreted within fictional contexts. The three novels focused on are Mary Elizabeth

Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret, Charles Dickens's Our Mutual Friend, and Wilkie Collins's

Armadale. These novels have been chosen as representative texts of the sensation movement

that make salient, sustained use of implicature in referring to the principal activities on which

their plots centre. As noted previously, the salience of the implicatures in these novels disrupts

the 'transparent' feeling of much classical realist narration, calling attention to the narration and

encouraging metafictional readings of key passages in their narratives.

Sensation Fiction and Literary Realism

The 1860s tradition of sensation fiction is known for having placed significantly more emphasis

on detection than the fiction that preceded it. Stephen Knight notes that 'detection was a

recurrent element in these first major sensational novels, and in some it can dominate' (43).

Brantlinger provides an extended analysis of the extent to which sensation fiction relies on

secrets and their detection, claiming that the

> best sensation novels are also, as Kathleen Tillotson points out, "novels with a secret," or
> sometimes several secrets, in which new narrative strategies were developed to tantalize
> the reader by withholding information rather than divulging it. The forthright declarative
> statements of realistic fiction are, in a sense, now punctuated with question marks. (1-2)

In Victorian Sensation Fiction, Andrew Radford agrees with Knight's and Brantlinger's emphases

on detection, noting that 'the typical sensation narrative has been assessed as a "novel with a

secret" in which the solving of puzzles becomes a principal ingredient in its extraordinary

commercial impact' (6). The element of detection which pervades sensation fiction, then, is

perceived as one of the characteristics that differentiate it from more 'realistic fiction'.

While the sensation mode's emphasis on detection has been described as one of its

definitive components, there is generally more scholarly attention paid to its content (which was,

historically, perceived as far more 'sensational' than that of realist fiction) and to the conditions

of its historical emergence. There are notable precursors that blur the exact 'era' to which

sensation fiction belongs (such as <u>The Dead Secret</u>), but it is primarily identified with the 1860s.[58] <u>The Woman in White</u> (1860) is often described as the watershed novel of the movement (Levine, <u>How to Read</u> 100; Knight 40, Law 97; Pykett 50). It was followed closely by <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> (1861) and Mrs. Henry Wood's <u>East Lynne</u> (1861) (Knight 41-42, Radford 19). Together, these three novels were perceived as defining and leading the sensation movement.

Although sensation fiction was hugely popular it was regularly criticised for its perceived deviations from realism. This criticism tended to concentrate on sensation novels' content, claiming that much of it (such as representations of multiple murders, bigamous marriages, and hidden identities) was both immoral to depict and depicted unrealistically (Radford 2; Levine, <u>How to Read</u> 102). Sensation fiction became derogatorily associated with the lower reaches of the press;[59] however, sensation authors often rebelled against the association and against the implication that the novels were lurid reading for the working classes (Knight 31, Radford 1). On the contrary, sensation authors claimed that the similarities between their stories and those in the press evidenced sensation fiction's faithful representation of reality (Brantlinger 10). The mode declined in popularity near the end of the decade (and critics perhaps lost interest in disparaging certain fictions as 'sensational') but it is thought to have been an important precursor to the more 'decadent' literary movements that would characterise the end of the nineteenth century.

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[58] After Radford writes, for instance, that 'the sensation novel burst onto the literary scene at the start of the 1860s', he notes that Winifred Hughes's <u>The Maniac in the Cellar</u> (1980) provided a 'seminal construction of a seemingly self-contained sensational decade', and that John Sutherland later perpetuated Hughes's claim (18-19). George Levine's historical blurb claims that it 'all began—the story goes—in 1860 . . . when Wilkie Collins' [sic] <u>The Woman in White</u> began weekly serialization . . .' (<u>How to Read</u> 100).

[59] Brantlinger notes that 'disparagingly, Henry Mansel complained about the emergence of "the criminal variety of the Newspaper Novel, a class of fiction having about the same relation to the genuine historical novel that the police reports of the 'Times' have to the pages of Thucydides or Clarendon"' (10).

That the sensation mode was heavily reliant on narrative secrets is generally accepted by literary scholars. However, scholars often fail to differentiate between characters' secrets that are nonetheless communicated to the reader (those which create dramatic irony, for example) and narrative secrets that keep information from the reader for a significant portion of the narrative (true omissions). Narratives of the former kind may employ the type of salient implicature that has been discussed in this dissertation; the presence of implicatures naturally emphasises information's secret status by communicating it inexplicitly. The novels discussed in this chapter use implicatures in this manner.

These sensation novels readily lend themselves to pragmatic analysis; that is, an analysis of how readers interpret the texts, and what cues authors may provide to trigger specific interpretations of them. Literary pragmatics is, essentially, the study of reader inference, and it is fitting that it should be used to analyse a narrative mode in which detection is known to play a key role. Such analyses are less especially suited to the study of detective narratives that do not make salient use of implicature. In novels where information is omitted rather than implicated, the reader's inferences do not usually parallel, and are not as salient as, those of the narrative's detective (who, like Sherlock Holmes, is often designed to impress the reader with his unusually powerful skills of deduction). When 'novels with a secret' make salient use of implicature, however, the narrative is often designed to encourage the reader's inferences to parallel those of a protagonist or detective; in the absence of a detective figure, it is the reader's inferences which may be said to form the detection with which the narrative mode is closely aligned. Although he does not comment on how the presence of salient implicatures affects readers' interpretations of

sensation's detection motif, Brantlinger notes the narrative responsibility acquired by the

'detective' character in many sensation novels, writing that

> The detective—in the sensation novel, often the protagonist . . . appears to fill the
> vacuum created by the at least partial abdication of authority by the narrator. Even when
> the conventions of third-person omniscient narration are maintained, as in <u>Armadale</u> and
> <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>, once detection begins the information supplied to the reader tends
> to be reduced to the information possessed or discovered by the detective. (18)

While Brantlinger's discussion identifies the narrative role that detectives often fill in tales that

rely heavily on omission of salient information, his analysis does not acknowledge the possibility

of the reader's 'detection' without the straightforward guidance of a detective figure to guide him;

Brantlinger describes only narration that is focalised through a character. This is not what occurs

in either <u>Armadale</u> or <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>. In <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>, the narrator's reliance on

implicature to convey the primary elements of the plot begins before the reader is introduced to

Robert Audley (the protagonist and eventual 'detective figure' of the narrative). Moreover,

Brantlinger's comment implies that the detective figure's reflection on 'information supplied' is

necessary to the coherence of the plot, in that it is needed to articulate the significance of the

'information' presented; in <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>, the narration of Robert's reflections is in fact

kept to a minimum, yet the significance of the 'information supplied' is clear to the reader.

Salient implicatures are responsible for many of these narrative effects: without their articulation,

it is difficult to explain how 'detection' results from the narrator's 'partial abdication of authority'.

Sensation fiction's emphasis on detection also allows it to be the perfect mode through

which to explore, more generally, readers' interpretations of salient implicatures in fictional texts.

In the three novels discussed in this chapter, the 'secrets' which form the key to the novels' plots

are communicated only through implicature for hundreds of pages at a time. As with the

implicatures explored in other chapters, readers must recognise them in order to interpret the text as coherent. Because of this, the novels (and generations of readers' interpretations of the novels) provide evidence that readers are able to follow narratives in which the central actions of the plot are communicated through implicature.

By contrast with the implicatures explored in other chapters, those discussed in this chapter call more attention to the narration of the texts than to the nature of the content which they communicate. The implicatures discussed in Chapter One, for instance, are used to ameliorate the offensiveness of the content that they communicate, and those discussed in Chapter Two emphasise the character psychology that is often also communicated in explicit language. Uniquely, the implicatures discussed here seem to function primarily as tools to emphasise the art of the text's narration. In the above excerpt from The Dead Secret, for instance, the characters' dialogue creates an implicature communicating the familial importance and antinarratability of the undisclosed 'Secret', both of which relate to the content of that 'Secret'. But the more salient implicature that the passage creates concerns the persistence with which it does not communicate what Mrs. Treverton has not told Sarah's 'master', does not communicate what Sarah has 'borne so long already', and does not communicate what Mrs. Treverton dictates in her letter to her husband: while the passage narrates the act of dictating (and Sarah's writing of) the letter, it does not communicate the information within it. Everything about the characters' discussion is recorded except for the subject of the discussion, and the persistence with which this omission is repeated implicates an emphasis on narrative reticence that differs from the less-salient politeness implicatures discussed in Chapter One and the passages which approach free indirect discourse discussed in Chapter Two. The implicatures

discussed in this dissertation's previous two chapters are not communicated in so saliently inexplicit a way as the implicature which drives <u>The Dead Secret</u>; while perceived authorial intentions form a component of all recognised implicatures, the implicatures discussed here function more to illustrate the author's control of the narrative, and less so other, content-related intentions the author might have for employing implicature. This teasingly, ostensively withheld information draws attention to the author's ultimate control of what is communicated, and how it is communicated. In <u>The Dead Secret</u>, the emphasis put on the text's narration calls attention to the exaggerated use of realist conventions, highlighting the fact that the ideal objectivity of realist narration has, in the sensation mode, been transmogrified into incongruous abdications of omniscience.

This discussion is partially inspired by the connection that scholars have made between what is often taken to be sensation fiction's non-serious tone and its poor moral standing. While the classic definition of sensation fiction concentrated on its 'sensational' content (Brantlinger 1, Radford 1-2), scholars have long remarked that it was more authors' treatment of this content, rather than the presence of it, that was controversial (Brantlinger 7). The discussion of impolite material in Chapter One might seem antithetical to these scholars' claims, in that it argues that it is the presence of impolite material, rather than the manner in which it is communicated, that is potentially offensive to readers. However, the two claims go hand in hand: it is the silent commentary on the conventionality of face-saving implicatures that characterises sensation authors' treatments of serious topics as offensive. The exposure of these implicatures as conventional undermines the 'realist' objective of the works in which they are found, and implicitly satirises previous authors' attempts at presentational politeness.

The content of sensation fiction is, in practice, often hard to differentiate from that of

decisively 'realist' fiction from the same era. George Levine notes that the 'sensation/realism

distinction doesn't hold because the central qualities of the sensation novel—its emphasis on

intrigue, its focus on behaviour beyond the bounds of ostensibly decent social order, its

revelation of dirty secrets, its suspenseful registration of mysteries—are virtually always also

aspects of the realist novel' (How to Read 102). He goes on to note that self-defined realist

author Anthony Trollope's novel, The Eustace Diamonds, 'could easily pass for a sensation

novel' (104)[60] and that Elizabeth Gaskell's famously realist (and social problem fiction) novel

Ruth

> is the story of an illegitimate sexual relationship, and an illegitimate child, and while
> Gaskell relentlessly pursues Ruth, most particularly for allowing herself to lie about her
> past, the book once again depends on material that would become grist for sensation
> fiction.
>
> Yet even the great Victorian theorist and exemplar of moral realism, George Eliot,
> who criticized silly women novelists for filling their books with romance and the
> extraordinary, filled her novels with sensational material. We have illicit sex and baby
> murder in Adam Bede (1859), violent death and quasi-adulterous behavior in Mill on the
> Floss (1860). . . . (How to Read 105)

Levine's discussion exposes the content-based definition of 'sensation fiction' as problematic: as

we have seen, the realist novels discussed by Levine do in fact contain 'sensational' content, so

much so that the authors named used implicatures to ameliorate the offensiveness of their novels'

contents. The obvious content-based similarities between the two modes also spur questions

about why sensation fiction was considered fodder for criticism when more realist fiction

generally was not.

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[60] Other scholars believe that The Eustace Diamonds may be a parody of the sensation mode in general, and The
Moonstone in particular (Brantlinger 15, Radford 152).

Partly in recognition of the above similarities, scholars today often attribute sensation fiction's 'immoral' reputation to its non-serious tone, specifically in relation to its serious, and even controversial, subject matter. Radford notes that 'reviewers frequently branded sensation fiction the genre of emotional excess, not only for its dependency on heightened incident and unbalanced protagonists, but also for its stylistic mannerisms' (3). Brantlinger discusses how the manner of these novels fed their reputation; he explains that 'subjects were broached in sensation novels that many good Victorians thought inappropriate, and the fact that these subjects seemed not to be addressed seriously but merely "sensationally" made them all the more disreputable' (7). This perceived lack of seriousness is, essentially, what differentiated sensation fiction from more realist fiction in contemporary readers' eyes. The same failing is perceived by scholars today: Knight ascribes the 'inherent stasis of sensation' to the fact that 'the overall domain of [these writers'] work remains politically conservative, however personally liberating some of its excitements might seem to be' (47). Brantlinger notes that 'rather than striking forthright blows in favor of divorce law reform and greater sexual freedom, sensation novels usually tend merely to exploit public interest in these issues' (6). Sensation fiction's perceived lack of political and moral responsibility appears to translate into a purely 'entertaining' experience, and is both the source of much of the pleasure it gives readers and the source of sensation fiction's historically disreputable status.

As this dissertation argues, both mainstream realist and sensation fiction authors made central, salient uses of implicatures in their texts. In Jessie Phillips, Ruth, and Adam Bede, however, implicatures are used to introduce potentially offensive material indirectly, ameliorating (or intending to ameliorate) any offence given. In the novels discussed in this

chapter, the uses of implicatures are as salient but more varied: while implicatures are used to communicate uncomfortable subject material such as bigamy and murder, they are also used to communicate characters' social identities ('who' they are, without referring to their names), girlish crushes, petty grudges, and the performance of mundane tasks (such as sending telegrams and reading newspapers). In effect, the same technique used to communicate mundane actions is also used to communicate serious and controversial issues, complicating implicatures' face-saving qualities by employing them when not required. The sensation novels discussed here echo the realist convention of face-saving implicatures, consequently ironising them and highlighting their conventionality.

The unnecessary use of implicatures may be interpreted as metafictional commentary, but many of these implicatures also function as dysphemism, causing otherwise 'innocent' events and activities to be interpreted with suspicion. In consequence, the implicatures used to communicate central issues are often communicated through the presence of several, less central implicatures that build upon one another. These high-order implicatures emphasise a narrative technique (implicature) that usually functions invisibly (that is, with readers automatically inferring the information that the implicatures are meant to communicate). In other words, implicatures which build upon one another call attention to the reader's inferential process in deducing the implicatures, highlighting the relative absence of explicit communication. This salience effectively puts a premium on the author's method of communication, emphasising the 'style' (i.e. the techniques used) in which the narrative has been written. It is the unusual salience and number of these implicatures that lead readers to consider sensation fiction as excessive in

its 'stylistic mannerisms', and to note especially the entertaining 'feeling of narrative wilfulness'

and 'narrative hide-and-seek' that results (Brantlinger 14).

While Brantlinger's discussion of sensation fiction is especially articulate about the

'feeling of narrative wilfulness' that arises in readers, he only cursorily speculates as to its source.

Much of Brantlinger's analysis of 'narrative wilfulness' focuses on sensation authors' uses of

third-person omniscience, and specifically the temporary renunciation of it in some sensation

texts. His discussion informs the one presented here, but I argue that it underestimates the

pivotal role that implicatures play in these sensation narratives. Brantlinger does not distinguish

between narratives that omit central information and those that use implicature to communicate it

inexplicitly. His articulation of 'Braddon's narrative hide-and-seek' in <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> is

sharp: he notes that one passage of the novel's early foreshadowing seems 'abrupt, gratuitous,

shocking, like its subject matter' (13), so articulating the passage's salience but not commenting

on the ostensive quality of the passage, and specifically its ostensive communication of a

narrative mystery. Brantlinger goes on to describe the general tenor of Braddon's implicatures,

although without acknowledging that they are implicatures:

> Sensation novels involve not radically new techniques but manneristic extensions of
> features from earlier novels. Braddon's key jingling is a case in point. Without any
> consciously experimental intention, she pushes third-person omniscient narration to its
> logical limits. The narrator, even while foreshadowing with fatalistic implications, ceases
> to convey all information and begins to disguise much of it as hints, clues, hiatuses. . . .
> The central mystery, the disappearance of George Talboys, involves the same pattern. We
> sense that the narrator is being willful and even capricious when George and Robert view
> Lady Audley's portrait, but George—and the narrator—give no sign of recognition. (14)

> At the same time that the narrator of a sensation novel seems to acquire authority by
> withholding the solution to a mystery, he or she also loses authority or at least innocence,
> becoming a figure no longer to be trusted. . . . From a presiding mentor, sage, or worldly
> wise ironist guiding us through the story as in <u>Middlemarch</u> or <u>Barchester Towers</u>, the
> narrative persona must now become either secretive or something less than omniscient,

perhaps slipping back into the interstices of the story as unobtrusively as possible. . . . (15-16)

This chapter's discussion of <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> will endorse, and build on, Brantlinger's characterisations of the narrative voice's indirect style of communication in the first paragraph. However, I disagree with some of Brantlinger's other characterisations of the narrative voice. Brantlinger believes that the narrative voice 'disguise[s]' information when, in contrast, it shares that information with the reader. Information may be only partially given in a fictional text, but it may not be 'disguise[d]': it is either (perhaps partially) on display for the reader to perceive, or is nonexistent. Characterising the narrative voice as 'secretive' is equally problematic because it detracts from its sly and playful undertone, and (again) erroneously characterises the indirectly communicative narrative voice as withholding. If a narrative voice truly 'cease[d] to convey all information' there would be no narrative. Far from being secretive, the narrative voice echoes the cant of obtuse yet hyperbolically 'objective' report; if anything, the narrator is a 'figure no longer to be trusted' because it does not recognise secrets *as* secrets.

Brantlinger believes that sensation fiction's problematic use of omniscience 'marks a crisis in the history of literary realism' (27). He believes that the 'early, naïve development of omniscient narration in fiction breaks down partly from the intrusion of mystery into it, but partly also from the recognition of the conventional—and logically preposterous—nature of omniscience' (17). Despite Brantlinger's doubts concerning 'the secretive or somehow remiss narrator-author' in <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> (which stem largely from his conflation of narrative omission and implicature), he characterises sensation fiction as a subversive subgenre of the dominant realist mode, and its 'undoing [of] narrative omniscience' as indicative of this subversion (26).

In How to Read the Victorian Novel, George Levine characterises sensation fiction similarly, as 'not so much an aberration from as it was a particular inflection of the dominant realist mode' (101). While his discussion of the similarities between sensation and realist fiction's content (given above) is integral to his argument, he also notes, like Brantlinger, that the 'sensation novel, particularly in Collins' [sic] hands, calls into question the epistemological authority that the omniscient narrator of most Victorian novels implies' (How to Read 122). Both Brantlinger and Levine, then, characterise sensation fiction as a short-lived evolution of the realist novel, claiming that narrative omniscience is perceived somewhat ironically in the sensation mode, but not articulating why.

Levine's own characterisations of realist fiction recount narrative omniscience's historical alliance with it, and point towards possible explanations for the perceived differences and similarities between the way omniscience is presented in the sensation and realist mode. According to Levine, both realism and omniscient narration are dominant features of Victorian fiction, although the exact natures of both concepts are controversial and variable from author to author (How to Read ix, 33). Levine believes that realism 'aspires, above all, to truth-telling' (Realism viii). This objective necessarily complicates processes of representation: realism, Levine writes, 'makes the difficulties of the work of representation inescapably obvious to the writer; it makes inevitable an intense self-consciousness, sometimes explicit, sometimes not' (Realism 189). That self-consciousness motivates but also complicates 'objective' modes of writing, such as those which employ omniscient narration. Levine explains that the

> "objective," third-person mode of writing novels that tended to dominate in the
> nineteenth century would seem to be a way of ducking the epistemological problem. But
> there are inescapable authorial "intrusions" even in the most objective and apparently
> unselfconscious rendering of narratives, and a great part of the history of Victorian fiction

relates to the various efforts and devices by which narrators registered their self-consciousness about the partialness of *any* representation, about the threatened opacity (of the writing self) blocking real entrance into otherness. (Realism 8, emphasis in original)

Levine's discussion of Victorian realist fiction emphasises authors' attempts at objectivity, and equates objectivity with 'truth-telling' (adding a moral urgency to the pursuit). However, because authors, unlike their narrative voices, are never omniscient, it is a pursuit that sets standards for itself which it cannot meet; at least not within the framework of an earnestly narrated fiction. 'Ironically', Levine writes,

> realism, the Victorian novel's primary method, whose determination to get at the truth entailed at least an overt rejection of merely literary forms, is thoroughly literary. It is so in two ways, primarily: first, it sets itself up as rejecting earlier literary representations and thus frequently re-enacts satirically aspects of more traditional literature. Satire is intrinsic to realism, and satire depends in part on knowledge of that earlier literature. (How to Read 12)

Following and expanding upon an influential claim by Ian Watt, Levine asserts that realist fiction must continuously break previous literary conventions in order to evoke an objective reality.[61] That 'objective reality' can be, simply, the exposure of previous literary conventions as subjective cants. Whether or not 'objective', or even new, information is presented, this effect is simulated by the reader's realisation that the debunked conventions are merely conventions. Essentially, irony effects the revelation with which the realist mode is ideally associated. As Levine notes

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[61] In his classic study, The Rise of the Novel, Ian Watt notes that

> it is surely very damaging for a novel to be in any sense an imitation of another literary work: and the reason for this seems to be that since the novelist's primary task is to convey the impression of fidelity to human experience, attention to any pre-established formal conventions can only endanger his success. What is often felt as the formlessness of the novel, as compared, say, with the tragedy or the ode, probably follows from this: the poverty of the novel's formal conventions would seem to be the price it must pay for its realism. (13)

One of Watt's claims is that the rise of the novel correlated with the rise of literary realism; the 'fidelity to human experience' that novels are preoccupied with is also a main objective of realist fiction. While his examples include only structural conventions, his overall discussion indicates that it is the perceived lack of literary convention that allows a work to be considered more 'realistic'.

elsewhere of <u>Vanity Fair</u>, 'it creates its reality by satirizing conventional literary form' (<u>Realism</u> 195).

While both Brantlinger and Levine characterise sensation fiction as an evolution of, rather than a separate school from, realist fiction, neither considers the possibility that sensation fiction's problematic relationship with more realistic fiction might be explained by ironic elements in sensation fiction's narration. Similarly, while they both note the subversive use of omniscient narration in sensation novels, they do not specify why the 'fluid' omniscience found in sensation fiction seems subversive.

A relevance theoretical discussion of the omniscient narration found in sensation novels might help clarify these issues. While 'fluid' omniscient narration (or, the occasional abdication of narratorial omniscience) is not found in all sensation fiction, its acknowledgment could enrich the ongoing debate concerning sensation fiction's relation to more realist fiction. The concepts provided by relevance theory allow us to articulate the implicatures which communicate the central narrative acts of these novels. These implicatures are what identify these novels' narrative omniscience as echoic: it is only with the inconsistent, incongruent use of a literary convention that it may be recognised as ironic, and consequently as both participating in and building on the realist conventions of the past.

Reading for Subversive Messages: Tonal Ambiguity in *Lady Audley's Secret*

It is only in the last few decades that much non-contemporary, critical attention has been given to <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>.[62] This attention was largely shaped by new historicism, and the resulting

[62] Braddon's immense success during the latter half of the nineteenth century begged critical attention, and many literary critics (including Henry James) published essays on her writing.

scholarship concentrates almost exclusively on the cultural discourses which would have motivated Braddon's depictions of gender dynamics, insanity, class boundaries, and homosocial relations. In each case, subversive messages are often attributed to the novel.

Whether or not they attribute conscious intentions to Braddon, these readings often begin by articulating authorial intentions (however weak) that are then bolstered by biographical, cultural, and textual evidence. In effect, these readings view Braddon as a communicator and her text as a communication, and attempt to explicate various views of hers made manifest in the text. The narratorial manner of Lady Audley's Secret is sometimes drawn upon, in passing, as evidence of her subversive intentions.[63] In general, the emphasis on plot-related issues in Lady Audley's Secret has resulted in relatively little attention to the novel's narratorial style (with Brantlinger's analysis being an important exception). While Braddon's ability to represent Lady Audley 'subtly and incrementally as a crazed killer' (Knight 41) is almost universally noted, little has been said about how Braddon achieves the narrative effect of 'subtl[e] and incrementa[l]' communication. Still less has been written about how this means of communication might be tied to the (as yet unevidenced) subversive intent that scholars often detect.

Lady Audley's Secret is often described as one of 'the' iconic sensation novels, helping to found the mode it participated in. The novel brought Braddon literary fame and defined the rest of her career: although she wrote over eighty novels, she continued to be known as 'the author of Lady Audley's Secret' for the rest of her life (Taylor and Crofts vii, xi). The work was an early success: when its serialisation halted with the folding of its journal, Robin Goodfellow, readers

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[63] In his exposition of homosocial dynamics in the novel Richard Nemesvari, for instance, describes the final reinstatement of the status quo as 'so overdetermined that it can only be read as an ironic statement' (526). In her examination of 'The Discourse of Madness in Lady Audley's Secret', Jill L. Matus is more hesitant, writing that at 'times the narrator seems to favour Robert Audley and appears to look upon his final marriage and assumption of career with approval, but the narrative tone also encourages us to see him as misogynistic and self-righteous' (336).

protested until the remainder of the serialisation appeared in the <u>Sixpenny Magazine</u> (Taylor and

Crofts vii). As has been indicated in the above discussion, the narrative has an unusually strong

reliance on non-coded communication, using implicature to convey much of the narrative

information that motivates the plot. Much of this implicature is achieved through the distanced

report of narrative details, the relevance of which is uniformly unexplained. Together these

details implicate a plot in which a deserted wife ('Helen Talboys', née 'Maldon') has changed her

name (to 'Lucy Graham') and bigamously married the established and wealthy Sir Michael

Audley (becoming 'Lucy Audley'). When her estranged first husband, George Talboys, returns

from Australia, his chance encounter with his schoolmate and close friend Robert Audley (Sir

Michael's nephew) places George within the social sphere of his bigamous wife, whom he has

been told is dead. Lady Audley is intent on avoiding exposure and subsequently pushes George

down a well with the intention of killing him. Upon the disappearance of his friend, Robert

actively occupies the role of amateur detective, following various leads until 'circumstantial

evidence' leads him to confront Lady Audley about her guilt. As Jill L. Matus notes, one 'true'

secret of the novel, one of the few narrative twists not hinted at in advance, is the madness Lady

Audley confesses to at the end, blaming her criminal actions on hereditary insanity ('Disclosure'

334). In an attempt to deal with her humanely (and to save his family from scandal) Robert has

Lady Audley committed to a Belgian asylum. In a last narrative twist, George suddenly

reappears, having fled to New York after his wife's murderous attempt. As this synopsis

suggests, the novel rewards the new historicist slants with which current critics often approach it.

This section will discuss some of the most implicature-heavy passages of the novel,

although the context described is built up steadily through seemingly 'irrelevant' details

mentioned on almost every page. After the title of the narrative (which entails that Lady Audley

has or will develop a 'Secret') the existence of Lady Audley's 'hidden' identity is first suggested to

the reader in her own soliloquy: after Lady Audley ruminates about 'every clue to identity buried

and forgotten—except these, except these', the reader is told that she keeps 'a ring wrapped in an

oblong piece of paper' hidden under her dress (17). Lucy's rumination is in reaction to Sir

Michael's marriage proposal, which is narrated on the same page. In this context, the ring

(defeasibly) signals a prior marriage and, correspondingly, her bigamous intentions towards Sir

Michael (she has accepted his proposal). How the reader is meant to detect that Lady Audley is

George Talboys's deserted wife is less easy to articulate, partly because the communication of the

information spans most of the novel, until Lady Audley confesses to having pushed him down a

well. The information is partly communicated through persistent alternations between scenes

which primarily follow Lady Audley and scenes which primarily follow George Talboys: these

alternations are in place before any explicit connection has been made between their social

spheres, so that the ostensive lack of narrative coherence between the passages implicates an

inexplicit connection between the two characters. In this context, Braddon employs

foreshadowing to cement the reader's expectations of the mystery that is already forming: after

Robert receives a letter from Sir Michael's daughter by his first marriage, Alicia, the reader is

informed that

> If any one could at that moment have told the young barrister that so simple a thing as his
> cousin's brief letter would one day come to be a link in that terrible chain of evidence
> afterwards to be slowly forged in the one only criminal case in which he was ever to be
> concerned, perhaps Mr. Robert Audley would have lifted his eyebrows a little higher than
> usual. (54-55)

Although the criminal nature of the ensuing plot is made explicit, it is telling that it is framed

within a conjecture based on the mention of the future crime, the discussion of which is itself

hypothetical: the narration of the future 'criminal case' is at several removes from factual report.

It is not only that the information is found within a counterfactual conditional, but that it is the

nonfactual information (the presence of a 'criminal case') on which the counterfactual (telling the

'young barrister' about it) of the conditional operates. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the crime

already communicated through implicature (bigamy) is unmentioned, with only the mention of a

'criminal case' to indicate the serious and mysterious quality of the unfolding plot. Like the

'Secret' that is present in the novel's title (and much like the 'Secret' mentioned in the title of <u>The</u>

<u>Dead Secret</u>), the foreshadowing explicitly communicates the mysterious quality of the plot; this

emphasis on mystery alerts the reader that the narrative's incoherence is indicative of as yet

'secret' information. In effect, it acts to turn otherwise irrelevant, incongruous narrative details

into ostensive communicators of the inexplicit storyline.

      While narrating the 'gradual discovery—or, better, recovery—of knowledge' of Lady

Audley's crime, Braddon simultaneously employs implicature to communicate Alicia Audley's

attempts to ensnare her cousin Robert (Brantlinger 19). Alicia's attempts are comically

transparent, and similar narrative strategies are used to communicate 'serious' and this relatively

'light' subject matter. While similar nonfactive statements are used to communicate certain

events, the tone adopted is less formal, and echoes the insincerity of a gossip who communicates

delicate facts but, out of mock politeness, refuses to verify their truth:

> I am afraid, if the real truth is to be told, there was, perhaps, something of affectation in
> the anxiety [Alicia] expressed in making George's acquaintance; but if poor Alicia for a
> moment calculated upon arousing any latent spark of jealousy lurking in her [cousin

Robert's] breast by this exhibition of interest, she was not so well acquainted with Robert Audley's disposition as she might have been. (63)

The first sentence in this passage implicates Alicia's romantic feelings for her cousin Robert: the feigned interest shown in another man is conventionally linked with coquetry, and the 'latent spark of jealousy' that she hopes to arouse is explicitly mentioned. This information's factuality is initially asserted by being linked with the tautologically insistent phrase 'real truth'. However, the individuated narrator introduces this information with a hedge ('perhaps'), and the modality of the latter half of the sentence only presupposes Alicia's attachment to Robert. The phrase 'I am afraid' is also telling, although ambiguous: while it would normally act as narratorial commentary on the 'real truth' that the sentence communicates, when used in conjunction with 'perhaps' it can be read as further hedging the information presented: the narrator is only *afraid* that Alicia may be attempting to make Robert jealous, not sure of it. In this passage, the narrator seems truly individuated, employing the first-person 'I' and exhibiting an archness foreign to the ideal neutrality found in third-person narration. The perception of that archness, however, depends on the reader's recognition of the passage's implicatures, which themselves rely on their ironic echoing of 'objective' report.

A similar mockery of the ideal of objectivity is discernible in the unexplained details which, together, implicate Lady Audley's guilt. The inability of Brantlinger's schema to explicate the effect of these narrated details is evident in his treatment of a scene in which

Lady Audley orders her maid to send what would be, if revealed, an incriminating telegram: "'And now listen, Phoebe. What I want you to do is very simple." It was so simple that it was told in five minutes, and then Lady Audley retired into her bed-room' (ch.7, p. 39). The central mystery [Brantlinger comments], the disappearance of George Talboys, involves the same pattern. (14)

Brantlinger uses this scene as an example of how the narrative 'ceases to convey all information and begins to disguise much of it as hints, clues, hiatuses' (14). He rightly compares the tactic Braddon uses to communicate Lady Audley's request with the tactic Braddon uses to communicate what happened to George Talboys (although Brantlinger does not mention that it is the accumulation of scenes such as these that implicate what has happened to George; in effect, the described scene is a microcosm of the way implicature operates in the narrative as a whole). However, Brantlinger's specification of the 'hints, clues, hiatuses' Braddon uses to 'disguise' narrative information is misleading. As discussed above, the narrative information presented here is not, and cannot be, disguised, but is rather only partially given: Braddon's narration carries distanced 'objective' report to a satirical degree, reporting only what can be 'overheard' and providing none of the usual narrative commentary that accompanies such report. This narratorial restraint functions as a purer form of narrative objectivity than is found in most texts (including, as Brantlinger points out, that found in <u>Middlemarch</u>), but also satirises the narrative distance that is often entangled with that objectivity. While narrative omniscience and the aim of objectivity do not necessarily entail narratorial distance, they do often consist of an element of narratorial restraint, in that 'intrusions' (in the form of commentary) are frowned upon. In many passages in <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>, Braddon takes this philosophy to an extreme by refusing to comment on the significance of narrated acts. Although the context of this scene allows the reader to reconstruct the missing narrative information, the very information that the narrative voice omits is the most interesting and relevant to the narrative: Lady Audley has ordered Phoebe to send a telegram, requesting that Lady Audley visit London on the same day that George Talboys is expected at Audley Court. The passage implicates not only these concrete details of

the plot but also the lengths to which Lady Audley will go to avoid meeting George. Instead of explicitly disclosing this significant information, the distanced narrative voice narrates only a relatively immaterial conversation that could realistically be 'overheard'. In Lady Audley's Secret, narrative 'distance' equates with obtuseness, and that obtuseness both satirises the broad aims of realist fiction and makes ostensive the 'mystery' which the passage is instrumental in (inexplicitly) dispersing.

Brantlinger's analysis does not consider that the reader draws on textual context in interpreting the passage quoted in this last excerpt, and in effect does not describe how the reader infers that 'Lady Audley orders her maid to send what would be, if revealed, an incriminating telegram'. An examination of the passage's context clarifies how that implicature is constructed (from what contextual information it arises). A few sentences prior to giving the instruction, Lady Audley introduces her request by saying 'I want you to go to London by the first train to-morrow morning to execute a little commission for me. . . . I shall give you a five-pound note if you do what I want, and keep your own counsel about it' (61). From these sentences we learn that the task requires Phoebe's presence in London, and that it is incriminating or at least delicate enough to warrant a substantial bribe. The larger context and succeeding paragraphs of the passage communicate the task's relevance to the narrative: the reader has previously been made aware that George Talboys's initial visit is expected at Audley Court the next day (58), and soon afterwards learns that a telegraph has reached Lady Audley from London, asking for her immediate presence at the side of an ill former employer (61-62). Because Lady Audley's absence will conveniently allow her to avoid George, the reader deduces that it has been prearranged by Phoebe's dispatch of a telegraph.

Other key passages in the text work similarly to evoke a picture of Lady Audley's secret

guilt. George's first recognition of Lady Audley is spurred not by meeting her, but by viewing

her portrait while she is in London. Braddon writes that

> strange as the picture was, it could not have made any great impression on George
> Talboys, for he sat before it for about a quarter of an hour without uttering a word—only
> staring blankly at the painted canvas, with the candlestick grasped in his strong right
> hand, and his left arm hanging loosely by his side. He sat so long in this attitude, that
> Robert turned round at last.
>> 'Why, George, I thought you had gone to sleep!'
>> 'I had almost.'
>> 'You've caught a cold from standing in that damp tapestried room. Mark my
> words, George Talboys, you've caught a cold; you're as hoarse as a raven. But come
> along.'
>> Robert Audley took the candle from his friend's hand, and crept back through the
> secret passage, followed by George, very quiet, but scarcely more quiet than usual.
> (72-73)

The phrase 'it could not have made any great impression on George Talboys' is clearly facetious,

as the context of the passage confirms (as well as the length of time George spends in front of the

portrait and the immediate physical changes witnessed in him). Brantlinger writes that 'we sense

that the narrator is being willful and even capricious when George and Robert view Lady

Audley's portrait'—but how does the reader sense this wilfulness? (14). The feeling of narrative

wilfulness that Brantlinger identifies is most likely a result of the incongruence between the

display of the narrative voice's powers of clarifying commentary in the first paragraph, and the

converse lack of narratorial clarification in the dialogue underneath and afterwards. As in other

key passages of the text, the narrator remains playfully silent as to the factive status and

significance of the assertions depicted in the latter half of the passage: whether or not George had

almost fallen asleep, and whether or not he caught a cold, is never explicitly resolved; the

assertions explicitly stated in these sentences hold only arrested relevance. But the information

they entail—that George spent an unexpectedly long time in front of the portrait, and that his

voice is now hoarse—provides evidence for the reader (who has narrative context to draw upon)

that George has recognised his wife. In this passage's dialogue, Robert plays the role of the

unreliable commentator, voicing an obvious misconstruction of narrative information.

Brantlinger's analysis does not capture the dramatic irony which arises from Robert's (and the

narrative voice's) obtuseness. Robert, of course, is not privy to as much context as the reader

possesses; he has not followed the scenes which sharply alternate between George Talboys and

Lady Audley; more importantly, his interpretation is not subject to the conventions of fiction

which allow the reader to perceive the ostensiveness with which certain narrative details are

presented. The silence with which George's response is communicated, then, not only depicts

Robert's obtuse perception of the situation, but functions as a narrative joke of which Robert is

the butt: he has been unable to solve a narrative puzzle which is clear to the reader.

Braddon's use of implicature extends to her depiction of the act that defines the rest of the

narrative: Lady Audley's attempt to murder her husband. Unlike the previous passages

discussed, it does not implicate the information which, in retrospect, it is gradually perceived to

have represented; instead, it merely indicates that the primary 'secret' denoted in the novel's title

has occurred. When interpreted in the context of narrative information later learned, however,

the passage implicates Lady Audley's murder of George Talboys. Braddon writes:

> . . . my lady had strolled, book in hand, into the shadowy lime-walk; so [Audley Court]
> had never worn a more peaceful aspect than on that bright afternoon when George
> Talboys walked across the lawn to ring a sonorous peal at the sturdy, iron-bound oak
> door.
>   The servant who answered his summons told him that Sir Michael was out, and
> my lady walking in the lime-tree avenue.

He looked a little disappointed at this intelligence, and muttering something about wishing to see my lady, or going to look for my lady . . . strode away from the door without leaving either card or message for the family.

It was full an hour and a half after this when Lady Audley returned to the house, not coming from the lime-walk, but from exactly the opposite direction. . . . (80)

After the omitted 'hour and a half' of the narrative George Talboys disappears from the text, and, as this disappearance is sustained, the implicature asserting George's death gains strength. The above passage provides a quintessential example of implicature in that, by reducing the scene in which Lady Audley pushes George down a well to the undisclosed action of 'an hour and a half', it forces all information the reader has about the pivotal scene to be inferred from the scene's context. While the scene does not immediately implicate George's murder, it is physically demarcated (and rendered relevant) by the explicit mention of the passage of time, thereby manifesting its relevance to the interpretation of the overall narrative. The passage is further foregrounded by the detail with which the (unnarrated) encounter is introduced. The scene is set for the long-awaited first interaction between George Talboys and his estranged wife; after this scene is omitted, the reader is told that Lady Audley returns to the house from the opposite direction in which she had been walking—implying that something has interfered with the expected course of her walk, and that something (of considerable duration) has happened. What has happened, however, is only communicated by the passage's context and by the accumulation of further speciously irrelevant details in the narrative that follows. Passages such as these are what Brantlinger likely has in mind when he refers to Braddon's use of 'hiatuses' to 'disguise' narrative information; while a hiatus is incapable of 'disguising' information, the one demarcated (by the explicit mention of a lapsed 'hour and a half') in the above passage calls attention to the information which surrounds it, characterising it as related to the 'secret' and 'criminal case'

already introduced into the narrative. Because there are eighty preceding pages on which the

reader may draw, the passage reliably communicates that Lady Audley and George have just met;

however, it coyly backs away from describing more than how long the meeting took. When

reading passages further along in the narrative, the reader is able to recall the omission of this

scene; in the context of information that the narrator later adds, it implicates that Lady Audley

has killed George Talboys.

The implicatures on which the story builds continue from this point, echoing the

deductions Robert makes but teasingly stopping short of the conclusions he reaches. Robert

begins to suspect Lady Audley when, shortly after George's disappearance, he notices a bruise on

her wrist. When asked how the bruise occurred, Lady Audley responds

> 'I am rather absent in mind, and amused myself a few days ago by tying a piece of ribbon
> round my arm so tightly, that it left a bruise when I removed it.'
> 'Hum!' thought Robert. 'My lady tells little childish white lies; the bruise is of a
> more recent date than a few days ago; the skin has only just begun to change colour.'
> Sir Michael took the slender wrist in his strong hand.
> 'Hold the candles, Robert,' he said, 'and let us look at this poor little arm.'
> It was not one bruise, but four slender, purple marks, such as might have been
> made by the four fingers of a powerful hand that had grasped the delicate wrist a shade
> too roughly. A narrow ribbon, bound tightly, might have left some such marks, it is true,
> and my lady protested once more that, to the best of her recollection, that must have been
> how they were made.
> Across one of the faint purple marks there was a darker tinge, as if a ring worn on
> one of these strong and cruel fingers had been ground into the tender flesh.
> 'I am sure my lady must tell white lies,' thought Robert, 'for I can't believe the
> story of the ribbon.' (91)

In introducing a discussion of Robert's deductive skills, Jennifer Carnell notes of this passage

that the 'reader and Robert Audley think she has George's blood on those hands. Robert shows

detective abilities, as he notices clues that no one else does, and Braddon succeeds especially in

details like this because the reader follows his thoughts, sharing his investigation' (253). While

Carnell's discussion aptly explains Robert's position as 'detective' in the narrative, her assertions do not address the broader narrative problem of how it is that the information presented in the above passage convinces the reader and Robert that Lady Audley 'has George's blood on those hands'. On an explicit level, Robert only notices that Lady Audley must be lying, a conclusion explicitly linked to the colour of her bruise. According to reader interpretations that are based only on the passage's explicit content, the two paragraphs lying between Robert's assertion and reassertion of this conclusion must be irrelevant; there is no explicit link made between their content and the conclusion that is attributed to Robert. Carnell's assertion that the above details are indicative of Robert's thoughts is untenable, considering that Robert has not yet begun to consider that George might have been physically harmed (two pages later he leaves for London, expecting to find George there). It would also be socially incongruous for an unrelated man to grasp Robert's aunt's hand as the details implicate: in Robert's social context and his current state of awareness, it would be a surprising mental leap for him to form such conclusions.

On a narrative level, the paragraphs are jarringly specific and detailed for an analysis of a bruise: the passage provides a suspiciously detailed speculation as to what 'might have' produced an ambiguous mark. In this passage, the narrative voice abruptly pulls back from the objectivity it has supposedly practiced, and encourages lurid conjectures that far surpass what their context evidences. Moreover, it is only, on an explicit level, a hypothesis that is detailed: the narration leaps from one extreme of minimal commentary to another which details an unlikely hypothesis. This incongruity implicates the truth of what is being posed as conjecture: the specificity of the cause's description clashes with the vagueness expected of discussions concerning hypothetical occurrences, causing the reader to reevaluate their view of the description as hypothetical. In

relevance theoretic terms, the space devoted to a concept that is explicitly designated as nonfactual is disproportionate. While an interpretation that includes an assumption of literariness would conclude that the passage's implicated factuality is a result of the reader's perception of the description as *deliberately* disproportionate, an interpretation that includes an 'assumption of narratorial omniscience' would be more specific, claiming that the passage is felt to be deliberately disproportionate because the omniscient communicator of the narrative would not devote such space and detail to a description that is irrelevant to the narrative (nonfactual).[64] This fictional-level attribution of narratorial (as opposed to authorial) intention allows the reader to conclude that the information itself is factual, and that it is the proposed nonfactiveness of it that is facetious. The reader's assumption of narratorial omniscience, then, is capable of explaining not only why the nonfactual language of the passage seems motivated (which a reader's assumption of literariness explains) but also why it leads the reader to assume that, specifically, Lady Audley 'has George's blood on those hands'.

Like the other readings of novels in this dissertation, the above discussion of Lady Audley's Secret attempts not to interpret it in a new light, but to clarify and explain existing interpretations and reader reactions to the novel. The reader interpretations assumed by the above pragmatic analysis are evidenced by contemporary reactions to the novel as well as the more recent ones discussed above. An early review in The Morning Post lists similar reader reactions and interpretations to the ones examined above: after claiming that the 'identity of Helen Talboys and Lucy, Lady Audley is apparent at once to the reader', the writer goes on to remark upon 'the slow and deliberate revelation of crime' ('Lady Audley's Secret' 6). This

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[64] Mary Louise Pratt believes that, in order to experience the literary aspects of a text, the reader must assume that it is literature (86). See the Introduction (26).

narrative revelation is the result of extended, central uses of implicature. Although the novel is

judged as stylish and clever, the reviewer feels the need to point out that the 'story is unredeemed

by any touch of the higher sentiments of human nature, and in this lies the grave defect of the

author' (6). The perception of a deliberate humour in the narration of the plot's serious events,

enacted by these same implicatures, is responsible for the lack of '[high] sentiments' attributed to

Braddon; the real controversy surrounding Lady Audley's Secret has to do with its satirical

echoing of a dominant narrative mode.

Hidden Identities and Sly Communications: Narrative Games in *Our Mutual Friend*

Charles Dickens's relationship with sensation fiction is a matter of ongoing discussion and

dispute. He was the mentor and close friend of Wilkie Collins, who, more than any other

novelist, is given credit for having spurred the sensation movement (Levine, How to Read 100;

Radford 3). In fact, it was in the weekly magazine which Dickens edited, All the Year Round,

that Collins published the seminal novel The Woman in White. It is often claimed that Dickens's

example provided an important influence on the formation of the genre, but that his work is

nevertheless to be distinguished from that of the 'true' sensation authors. Although Brantlinger

specifies 'the powerful influence of Dickens' as a defining characteristic of the sensation novel

(2) and claims that 'Dickens set the pattern' for the sensation mode (5), he sets Dickens's work

apart from other sensation fictions. For instance, Brantlinger writes that negative 'responses to

the sensation novel often echo negative responses to Dickens'—in short, sensation novels are

shown to 'echo' Dickens's work, in that they are consistently characterised as alike yet

categorically different (7). However, other sources indicate that some contemporary readers felt differently. Radford writes

> Was Dickens really a lowbrow sensation author masquerading as a fastidious practitioner of high art, as some declared after reading <u>Bleak House</u> (1852-53) and <u>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</u> (1870)? <u>Belgravia</u> claimed him as the 'founder' of the sensation school, while Margaret Oliphant in <u>Blackwood's</u> reviewed <u>Great Expectations</u> (1860-61) along with all the other current sensation novels, judging it markedly inferior to Collins's <u>The Woman in White</u> as a specimen of the genre. . . . (5)

Dickens's identification with sensation fiction is evidenced elsewhere: in <u>The Morning Post</u>'s review of <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u>, for instance, it is asserted that

> The sensation literature of this day is a variety of the school of fiction inaugurated by Mr. Charles Dickens, and which has departed from the undisciplined imaginativeness and inconsistency of his style, and assumed an elaborate symmetry in the construction of its fancies which invests the most *outré* designs with mathematical precision and realism. ('Lady Audley's Secret' 6, emphasis in original)

While there are some historical difficulties with the above assertions (as with Radford's claim that 'sensation' might have been used as a derogatory label for fiction as early as 1853) there is a persistent logic in associating Dickens's fiction with a movement he was materially involved in (considering his role as mentor and publisher to Collins). Moreover, it is interesting to note that <u>The Morning Post</u>'s characterisation of the difference between Dickens's fictions and those of the sensation novelists' is one of enhanced 'realism': this claim inherently contradicts conceptualisations of the sensation mode which define it primarily as 'less realistic' than other mainstream fiction, and more particularly contradicts popular conceptions of Dickens's works as having set the stage for sensation fiction but restrained itself, remaining within the arena of the dominant, more 'realistic' mode.

Few discussions of Dickens's relationship with the sensation mode consider how the movement might have affected his own writing. While all of the scholars discussed above note his importance as an influence on sensation fiction, few scholars discuss Dickens's later work within the context of the burgeoning sensation mode. Our Mutual Friend, which began serialisation in 1864, was written during the peak of sensation's popularity, and directly after the mode had been firmly established by the first-noted sensation novels, appearing in 1861 and 1862. In the novel, Dickens makes use of an extended central implicature, which he expects the reader to comprehend during his or her ongoing interpretation of the narrative. Like the extended implicatures discussed in other sections of this chapter, the implicature discussed here is ostensively unmotivated, largely unrelated to the content which it communicates. In effect, Dickens's non-codified communication of central narrative information imbues the narrative with a slyness reminiscent of that found in The Dead Secret, Lady Audley's Secret, and other sensation narratives.

The implicature communicates the true identity of the narrative's central character, John Harmon/Julius Handford/John Rokesmith. John Harmon is heir to a large fortune, with the one stipulation that he must marry the girl his now-deceased father chose for him, Bella Wilfer. John has been raised outside of England, and upon his return he is poisoned, assumed dead, and thrown into the Thames by a sailor whom he met on his voyage home, and whom he has been told he resembles. Within a day the man who poisoned John is found murdered, and declared to be John Harmon. The real John Harmon—now briefly posing as Julius Handford—decides to take advantage of his assumed death by familiarising himself with his proposed fiancée without the pressure of being known to her as her proposed fiancé. Under the name of John Rokesmith,

he establishes himself in the Wilfer family by becoming their lodger and insinuates himself into

the home of the elderly couple who have inherited his money upon his (John Harmon's)

supposed death. The couple, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin, are the late Mr. Harmon's employees and

responsible for what little parental care John experienced as a small child. John, under the

assumed last name of Rokesmith, becomes Mr. Boffin's secretary, and works as his primary

financial advisor until Bella proves herself worthy of becoming John's wife. He then marries her,

and eventually reclaims his identity and fortune.[65]

The narration of these events is not as straightforward as this synopsis. Much as Braddon

omits the key scene in which Lady Audley pushes George down a well, Dickens begins the novel

directly after the murder of the sailor has taken place. As Robyn Warhol has written, Our Mutual

Friend is essentially a 'novel built on a secret', and in this way functions much as sensation

fiction in general is assumed to ('"What Might Have Been"' 50). Beth F. Herst, in fact, discusses

the protagonist's secret as a reason to categorise Our Mutual Friend with the sensation fiction of

the era:

> Some critics of Our Mutual Friend, and of the other novels of Dickens's last decade,
> both in their own day and since, have viewed them largely in the light of the 'sensation'
> fiction so popular in the 1860s. And this does suggest one possible means of
> approaching the problem posed by Harmon and his 'plot'. The 'sensation' form,
> exemplified by such bestselling titles as East Lynne and Lady Audley's Secret, relied
> for its interest on secret guilt and domestic intrigue, bringing violence out of the safely
> distanced Gothic castle or underworld den and into the 'respectable' English home.
> With their elaborate machinery of mystery, coincidence and revelation, they placed a

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[65] The novel has a parallel plot line that occupies as much space as the first; it relates to the daughter of the man who found the sailor's corpse (Lizzie Hexam), and her eventual marriage to a man of much higher social rank (Eugene Wrayburn). Criticism of the novel often concentrates on one plot line or the other. While the second plot line is, functionally, as dominant as the first, one could argue that the storyline described above is intended as the primary narrative of the novel: the phrase 'our mutual friend' is explicitly linked to John Harmon (115). This discussion is preoccupied with the John Harmon narrative because its use of implicature is more central and extended. Implicature is used, however, to communicate central aspects of the Lizzie Hexam-Eugene Wrayburn narrative as well: Bradley Headstone and Eugene's silent battle over Lizzie's affections, for instance, is initially communicated through implicature (285, 387).

> premium on plotting in both senses of the term, with an accompanying tendency to
> subordinate character to situation, larger meaning to local effect. John Harmon, with
> his secret return from the dead—a favourite 'sensation' device—his assorted disguises
> and mysteriously murdered double, could certainly qualify as a 'sensation' hero. (111)

In the above discussion, Herst uses the content of the John Harmon narrative as evidence for the

novel's involvement in the sensation mode. As clarified above, this dissertation argues (in line

with George Levine) that it is the tone rather than the content of the narrative that is decisive in

assigning a subgenre to these novels. However, the 'secret guilt' that Herst identifies—which

naturally accompanies plots of hidden identities—lends itself to communication through

implicature, and correspondingly to the type of muted dramatic irony that assumes, rather than

overtly draws in, the reader's understanding of an open narrative secret.

The extended implicature concerning Rokesmith's true identity functions partially to fill

the gap that is indicated at the beginning of the narrative: it allows the reader to discern John

Harmon's actual whereabouts (that he has not, in fact, been mysteriously killed), but

simultaneously heightens the mystery surrounding the identity of the corpse that has been found,

and the mystery concerning how it became a corpse. While Rokesmith's intentions concerning

Bella are rendered transparent through implicature, the reader latches onto the mystery

surrounding the corpse and links it with their perception of Rokesmith's true identity as hidden, a

connection which is then complicated by the narrative's omission of any possible motivation for

his secrecy. The implicature communicated, then, is strictly related to Rokesmith's true identity,

and is apparently unconcerned with the motivations underlying that hidden identity; instead,

these motivations are abruptly revealed to the reader midway through the novel.[66] In this way,

Dickens combines elements of implicature and sudden explication within the same narrative.

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[66] The Boffins' part in Harmon's duplicity is also abruptly revealed, even later in the novel (751).

His alternation between these communicative forms fulfils multiple narratorial characteristics

that have been noted of sensation fiction: Brantlinger's sense of the sensation novel's 'structure of

abrupt revelation' (14) and yet its 'gradual discovery—or, better, recovery—of knowledge' (19);

as well as the 'exaggerated concealment of crucial data' noted by Radford (35). This chapter

section argues that Dickens's 'exaggerated concealment of crucial data' correlates with yet

another general characteristic of sensation literature: the sense of narrative game playing that

creates much of the fiction's non-serious tone. Regardless of Our Mutual Friend's status as a

sensation novel or otherwise (a taxonomic decision largely up to the reader), it rewards

discussion within the context of sensation fiction's general use of implicature to create a playful

style of narrative.

The implicature communicating Rokesmith's secret identity begins with the

characterisation of John Harmon's death, which appears in the text before Rokesmith does.

Dickens's mode of communication, here, emphasises the information's defeasibility: the

information is initially broken to the reader through a character's speech, when that character is

gossiping with other members of a dinner party (27). The information about Harmon's death is

later explicitly declared in a passage notable for its heavy use of ironic free indirect discourse:

> Upon the evidence adduced before them, the Jury found, That [sic] the body of Mr. John
> Harmon had been discovered floating in the Thames, in an advanced state of decay, and
> much injured; and that the said Mr. John Harmon had come by his death under highly
> suspicious circumstances, though by whose act or in what precise manner there was no
> evidence before this Jury to show. And they appended to their verdict, a recommendation
> to the Home Office (which Mr. Inspector appeared to think highly sensible) to offer a
> reward for the solution of the mystery. (39-40)

The formal jargon, repetitive clauses, and unconventional capitalisation in the passage echo the

official language of a jury's verdict, exemplifying the linguistic properties of free indirect

discourse. The irony found in the passage results from the discrepancy between the jury's

official verdict—what has been decided as 'factual'—and the transparent (even admitted)

inconclusiveness of the evidence. The passage as a whole parodies a legal system which aims to

distinguish fact from unreliable evidence and which, as the ensuing implicatures communicate,

suffers the consequences of its ineptitude. Importantly, the jury's (and, correspondingly, the

Law's) failure allows for an explicit—but saliently defeasible—storyline to be created, and the

ensuing implicature details John Harmon's friendly deception while leaving the 'official' storyline

undisturbed for hundreds of pages. It is also noteworthy that the episode of Harmon's alleged

death is, despite this ruling, still considered a 'mystery'; the passage explicitly problematises

narrative information that would otherwise be assumed.

Harmon's first alias, Julius Handford, appears a few pages before Harmon is officially

declared dead. Handford first appears as an 'extremely pale and disturbed' 'stranger' who thinks

he might be able to identify the corpse of the drowned man (32). Upon being questioned, the

stranger readily answers that he is not from London and that he is not, contrary to his appearance

at the morgue, seeking John Harmon (33). Further questioning, however, proves almost fruitless,

and serves to expose the unwillingness with which the stranger speaks of himself, or the

connection he holds to the corpse he has come to see (34-35). Upon a police inspector's pressing

request, he provides the name 'Mr. Julius Handford': a name whose initials match those of John

Harmon's. This unsubtle hint towards the man's true identity understandably escapes the

characters who are operating in their own 'actual world',[67] rather than on a literary plane in which

every detail is interpreted as significant. The matching initials of Julius Handford and John

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[67] See pages 30-31 of the Introduction for a discussion of 'actual worlds'.

Harmon, then, provide the first instance of the dramatic irony that pervades the communication of Harmon's true identity in the narrative.

As Julius Handford's name disappears from the text, John Rokesmith's appears. Rokesmith is first presented as a newly instated lodger of the Wilfers (47). Pages afterwards, a concrete association between Julius Handford and John Rokesmith is explicitly stated, when Dickens writes that 'if Mr. Julius Handford had a twin brother upon earth, Mr. John Rokesmith was the man' (51). The sentence is the last of the chapter, and is clearly intended to end the chapter portentously (the preceding sentence shows Bella thinking of Rokesmith as a 'suspicious lodge[r]'). Taken in any but the most literal sense, the final sentence of the chapter indicates the likelihood of Handford and Rokesmith being the same person. It is the conditional quality of the sentence that indicates the questionable veracity of the explicit assertion. The narrative voice is, noticeably, practising omniscience by simply claiming the possibility of a fraternal connection between the two characters; the rest of the paragraph is focalised through Bella, and there is no possibility of her knowing enough of Rokesmith's (or Handford's) life to form such a conjecture. The sentence functions as a narratorial intrusion, reminding the reader of the omniscience of the narrative voice. Interestingly, then, it holds back, as the narrative voice only exercises its powers of omniscience to a seemingly movable limit, refusing to comment as a certainty on the information it has postulated. The very arbitrariness of this limitation is what calls it into question: there is no readily apparent reasoning behind it. In this way the sentence makes manifest its more-than-explicit meaning, entailing the identical (or at least very similar) appearances of Handford and Rokesmith, but implicating that they are one and the same person.

Rokesmith's character is soon rendered still more suspicious. After securing his lodgings with the Wilfers, Rokesmith continues his odd activities by approaching Mr. Boffin on the street and, as a stranger, asking to become the man's secretary. A series of intentionally vague answers to Mr. Boffin's reasonable questions characterises Rokesmith as secretive, and his behaviour as incongruous in a man earnestly seeking employment:

> 'Where do you come from?' asked Mr. Boffin.
>> 'I come,' returned the other, meeting his eye, 'from many countries.'
>> Mr. Boffin's acquaintance with the names and situations of foreign lands being limited in extent and somewhat confused in quality, he shaped his next question on an elastic model.
>> 'From—any particular place?'
>> 'I have been in many places.'
>> 'What have you been?'
>> Here again he made no great advance, for the reply was, 'I have been a student and a traveller.'
>> 'But if it ain't a liberty to plump it out,' said Mr. Boffin, 'what do you do for your living?'
>> 'I have mentioned,' returned the other, with another look at him, and a smile, 'what I aspire to do. I have been superseded as to some slight intentions I had, and I may say that I have now to begin life.' (101)

Rokesmith's uninformative answers to a potential employer are coupled with his odd willingness to work for two years without pay (101). Together, they make Rokesmith's advances wholly incongruous with the expected scenario of a man seeking employment, and indicate a hidden motivation which Mr. Boffin is characterised, here, as too naive to perceive. Rokesmith's vagueness in response to questions about his identity and his past has an added effect on the reader's interpretation of the passage. Besides assigning Rokesmith hidden motivations, the vagueness of Rokesmith's answers highlights the mystery of his background, a mystery that is not indefeasibly solved until Rokesmith is explicitly revealed to be John Harmon 258 pages later. In the context of Rokesmith's probable identification with Julius Handford (and, further,

Handford's questionable relationship to and saliently possible identification with John Harmon),

Rokesmith's evasiveness casts doubt upon the identity he is operating under, and makes his

identification or non-identification with Handford and Harmon more relevant to the overall

interpretation of the developing narrative.

Rokesmith's flimsy identity is further associated with Harmon's when, in another bout of

incongruous behaviour, he shows an extreme reaction to an unexpected use of John Harmon's

name. Bella Wilfer is sitting with the Boffins when Rokesmith is first introduced to Mrs. Boffin.

Dickens writes that, upon Rokesmith's arrival, Mrs. Boffin

> gave him a good day, and he bestirred himself and helped her to her seat, and the like,
> with a ready hand.
> 'Good-bye for the present, Miss Bella,' said Mrs. Boffin, calling out a hearty
> parting. 'We shall meet again soon! And then I hope I shall have my little John Harmon
> to show you.'
> Mr. Rokesmith, who was at the wheel adjusting the skirts of her dress, suddenly
> looked behind him, and around him, and then looked up at her, with a face so pale that
> Mrs. Boffin cried:
> 'Gracious!' and after a moment, 'What's the matter, sir?'
> 'How can you show her the Dead?' returned Mr. Rokesmith.
> 'It's only an adopted child. One I have told her of. One I'm going to give the
> name to!' (116)

It should be noted that Harmon's supposed death is well-known by this point in the narrative (it

has been, as the opening chapters of the book indicates, the talk of the town), and there is no

narrative incongruity in Rokesmith's knowledge of Harmon's death. But the extremity of

Rokesmith's reaction is sufficient enough to be registered by another character. His unusual

reaction to Mrs. Boffin's use of 'John Harmon' strengthens an implicature that has formed over

one hundred pages; the flimsiness and incongruity of characterisation manifested by John

Rokesmith and Julius Handford are explained by the hidden identity they have in common: John

Harmon. A relevance theoretic account of this extended implicature is straightforward: salient

incongruities in the text communicate ostensively to the reader that the primary meaning of

certain passages is not explicit. These incongruities then motivate the reader to reconsider these

passages' relevance in light of their narrative context. The collapsed identity of John Harmon,

Julius Handford, and John Rokesmith provides the most relevant 'solution' to these narrative

incongruities by simultaneously being the most comprehensive and the least difficult solution to

reach. The cementation of the implicature in the reader's mind, then, brings with it a solution to

the narrative puzzle, accompanied by the enjoyment inherent in puzzle solving and the effects of

dramatic irony. In consequence, the central implicature in <u>Our Mutual Friend</u> must be

understood for substantial aspects of the narrative experience to be felt.

In its contemporary review of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>, the <u>London Review</u> complained that

the revelation of Rokesmith/Harmon's history was awkward. 'Young Rokesmith, or Harmon,'

writes the reviewer, '*tells himself* his own previous history, in a sort of mental soliloquy (in which

a long series of events is minutely narrated), evidently for no other purpose than to inform the

reader' (P. Collins 456, emphasis in original). This abrupt revelation of narrative events (which

dispels the mystery of 'how' Harmon became Handford and Rokesmith) is introduced by a few

last instances of the extended implicature (359, 360), and the first explicit linking of all three

names does not generate any additional contextual effects (366). While Dickens's working notes

indicate that he still meant to 'Work on to possessing the reader with the fact that he [Rokesmith]

is John Harmon' (indicating that Dickens was aware his implicatures might not have been

detected by all readers), his most explicit discussion of the Harmon plot suggests otherwise

(Cotsell 175).[68] This discussion forms the opening of Dickens's postscript to the novel:

> When I devised this story, I foresaw the likelihood that a class of readers and
> commentators would suppose that I was at great pains to conceal exactly what I
> was at great pains to suggest: namely, that Mr. John Harmon was not slain, and
> that Mr. John Rokesmith was he. Pleasing myself with the idea that the
> supposition might in part arise out of some ingenuity in the story, and thinking it
> worth while, in the interests of art, to hint to an audience that an artist (of
> whatever denomination) may perhaps be trusted to know what he is about in his
> vocation, if they will concede him a little patience, I was not alarmed by the
> anticipation. (798)

Dickens's explanation of what he was 'at great pains to suggest' offers rare evidence of a

Victorian author consciously privileging implicature over more explicit communication.

The authorial intentionality that Brantlinger withholds from Braddon is impossible to

withhold from Dickens, who explicitly discusses his intentional use of implicature in the

postscript.[69] Interestingly enough, Michael Cotsell notes that it 'has been remarked (by

Gill, 1971) that Dickens had before him Wilkie Collins's defence of such a method of

plotting in the preface to the 1861 edition of The Dead Secret' (283). Cotsell goes on to

mention that 'Collins made a similar defence in the preface to No Name (1862)' (283).

Dickens would certainly have been familiar with both of these novels: in 1861 The Dead

Secret was published in Dickens's journal Household Words (Dead Secret xxvi), and in

1862 No Name, like The Woman in White before it, was published in his journal All the

Year Round (No Name xxii). Dickens's dismissive reference to the 'denominations' of

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[68] Dickens's working notes were necessarily truncated, and the least favourable interpretation for this thesis is
provided in the parentheses above. The note concerns a chapter in which Harmon is yet again disguised as another
person; Dickens could be referring to the need to indicate that particular disguise, and not the two others which
Harmon has previously adopted.

[69] Brantlinger claims that Braddon 'pushes third-person omniscient narration to its logical limits' '[w]ithout any
consciously experimental intention' (14).

art, then, may be interpreted as a show of solidarity with his mentee Collins and other

sensation authors (as well as a possible excuse for participating in a commercially

successful subgenre). Regardless of the official 'denomination' of <u>Our Mutual Friend</u>, its

tone was demonstrably influenced by the sensation fiction that formed its historical

context.

<u>Representing Fate in Fiction: Artificial Plotting in *Armadale*</u>

By 1863, Wilkie Collins had established himself as a leading writer of the era and, arguably, the

leading writer of the sensation movement. According to both contemporary and modern

scholars, his 1860 publication of <u>The Woman in White</u> 'launched the fashion for "sensation

fiction"', and Collins's new-found fame guaranteed him years of work (Law 97). The publication

of <u>Armadale</u> was one result. The publishing firm of Smith & Elder offered £500 for the rights to

<u>The Woman in White</u>—a sum rejected by Collins and subsequently proven to be laughably low

by the novel's watershed success. Recognising their earlier mistake, in 1861 Smith & Elder

eagerly offered Collins £5,000 for the rights to an as yet unwritten novel. Due to other writing

engagements and illnesses, Collins took two years longer on the novel than Smith & Elder had

foreseen; in November 1864, however, he turned in the first instalment of <u>Armadale</u>.

The novel's complicated plot was another factor in the delay of its publication. In

November of 1863 Collins was 'getting ideas—as thick as blackberries—for another book' (W.

Collins, <u>Letters</u> 238), but by January he had realised that constructing the plot would take him

longer than he had expected, and wrote to his mother that it was 'a very difficult job this

time' (W. Collins, <u>Letters</u> 244). Unlike many other authors, Collins fully laid out the plots of his

novels before beginning serialisation; in 1865, he explained to a fan that

> the great stages of the story, and the main features of the characters, invariably lie before
> me on my desk before I begin my book. In the story I am now writing ('Armadale'), the
> last number is to be published several months hence—and the whole close of the story is
> still unwritten. But I know at this moment who is to live and who is to die—and I see the
> main events which lead to the end as plainly as I see the pen now in my hand—as plainly
> as I see the ground laid, months since, in the published part of the story, for what (if I am
> spared to finish it) you will read months hence. (W. Collins, <u>Letters</u> 259)

Collins's description of his writing practices emphasises the careful construction of his plots, and

explains the year-long interval between Collins's initial structuring of the novel and the

appearance of its first instalment in the <u>Cornhill</u>.

Armadale contains a plot that justifies the extended time Collins spent constructing it.

Winifred Hughes famously labeled it 'one of the most over-plotted novels in English literature';

its plot is certainly one of the most complicated and tortuous in Victorian fiction (155). The

greater part of the novel involves the consequences of an embedded story, one that the critic

Peter Thoms refers to as the 'inherited story' (116). The inherited story is first communicated to

the reader as it is narrated by Allan Armadale on his deathbed, to a witness charged with penning

the story for Armadale's son (also named Allan Armadale), so that he may read it when he turns

twenty-one. The narrating Allan Armadale was born Allan Wrentmore, christened after a

wealthy relative of his father named Allan Armadale. When Wrentmore is twenty-one, he

receives a letter from this same relative, explaining that he has disinherited his own son (another

Allan Armadale) and that if Wrentmore adopts the last name of Armadale, he will make him heir

to his West Indian property. Wrentmore agrees, and throughout the rest of the text is also

referred to as Allan Armadale. When this Armadale agrees to his mother's suggestion that he

marry the beautiful daughter of a wealthy English family, the original Armadale's son

impersonates the new Armadale and, with the help of the daughter's devious maid, marries the

daughter first in revenge. The new Armadale, enraged by the loss of his expected wife, joins the

crew of a boat on which the other Armadale is voyaging, and locks him in an inner cabin when

the boat sinks during shipwreck, effectively murdering him. The widow returns to England to

give birth to a son (another Allan Armadale), while the surviving Allan Armadale (the one

narrating the 'inherited' story) marries a woman of Afro-Caribbean descent and fathers a last

Allan Armadale. The narrator Armadale dies within a few years of his son's (and the other Allan

Armadale's) birth, but leaves the letter communicating the inherited story along with a warning

to

> Avoid the widow of the man I killed—if the widow still lives. Avoid the maid whose
> wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage—if the maid is still in her service. And
> more than all, avoid the man who bears the same name as your own. (56)

The rest of the plot involves the unwitting realisations of the actions warned against and their

apparently fated consequences. The son of the once-narrator Armadale is maltreated and he

leaves home at an early age, assuming the name Ozias Midwinter. He is harshly treated

throughout his early life as a vagrant and develops a nervous, if worldly, disposition. Having not

yet received the letter his father wrote him, he happens to fall ill in a town where the other Allan

Armadale and his mother live, and is nursed back to health by him (this Armadale is open and

friendly, but naive to the point of stupidity). The two become close friends. When Midwinter

turns twenty-one he receives his father's letter and becomes terrified of bringing fated harm upon

Allan by remaining near him. He enlists only the confidence of the Armadales' close family

friend, Mr. Brock, who insists that Midwinter's warm feelings for Allan can do nothing but good for him, and that Midwinter's fears are empty superstitions.

When Allan's mother dies, Midwinter and Allan take a sailing voyage, and in their travels end up spending a night aboard the shipwreck that Allan's father died in. While asleep on the wreck, Allan has a dream that Midwinter interprets as an omen. After seeing a figure that Midwinter (and the reader) interpret as Allan's drowned father, Allan is shown shadowy scenes involving a man and a woman. Midwinter interprets these images as warnings of pivotal scenes in Allan's future life.

Midwinter is eventually shown to be the man in Allan's dream, and 'the maid whose wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage' is shown to be the woman. Only twelve years old when she helped Allan's mother wed the wrong Armadale, Lydia Gwilt is still a relatively young woman (and looks younger) when Allan and Midwinter are both twenty-one. Having previously extorted money from Allan's mother while she was alive, Gwilt decides to con Allan (who has never heard of her) into marrying her when he unexpectedly succeeds to a large property. Gwilt, hired by a neighbouring family as their governess, ultimately fails in seducing Allan after his attempts to learn more of her history take him to a notorious house in London. Midwinter, however, falls in love with Gwilt, and the two marry after she uncharacteristically reciprocates his love. After Midwinter tells Gwilt his real name (and signs the marriage registrar as 'Allan Armadale') she plots to acquire the other Allan's wealth by posing as his widow after killing him. After a few failed and detected attempts to kill Allan, she poisons herself and Midwinter's fears concerning Allan are finally laid to rest, as he reinterprets the dream's omens as warnings for him to stay near and protect Allan.

While the above paragraphs outline (a much reduced synopsis of) the novel's plot, they do not communicate narrative information in the same style as it is communicated in the novel.[70] Essentially, Armadale's entire plot is derivative of the 'inherited' story's warnings: for Midwinter to avoid Allan, Allan's mother, and Allan's mother's maid. For much of the novel, narrative information is continuously (if at times implicitly) related back to this original warning, and is represented as pertaining to the overall narrative only if it is represented as pertaining to the narrator-Armadale's letter. Although the novel is coloured with hidden identities, shipwrecks, seduction, murders, attempted murders, bigamy, and spying, it is essentially Allan's, Midwinter's, and Gwilt's proximities to each other that propel the plot, and create the possibility that Midwinter's superstitious fears will come true. Consequently it is dramatic irony that drives the reader's interest: for most of the novel, none of the three characters is fully aware of each other's true identity and the foretold disastrousness of their proximity. The 'fated' quality of these consequences is teasingly played out in Collins's sustained use of implicatures to introduce Midwinter and Gwilt into the text. Their introductions are the basis of the ensuing plot, as well as the realisation of the narrator-Armadale's warnings. In this way, primary aspects of Armadale's plot are communicated through sustained implicature, and Collins relies on the defeasibility of implicatures to create suspense regarding whether the narrator-Armadale's fears will be realised. Although the reader must read Midwinter's and Gwilt's implicated appearances as certain in order to make sense of the emphasis placed on (and space devoted to) discussion of their identities, the defeasibility of implicatures allows Collins to keep plot twists in reserve, a technique which he utilises in communicating more peripheral aspects of the plot. In Armadale,

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[70] This synopsis may appear lengthy, but the convoluted nature of the plot is such that it cannot be shortened further.

the possibility of the implicatures' defeasibility is highlighted by character dialogue, and Collins's

continual strengthening (and eventual confirmation) of his most central implicatures lends a

teasingly deterministic tenor to the narration of events.

While contemporary reviews of the novel were generally mixed, Collins's execution of

Armadale's complex plot was generally admired. The Spectator wrote that Collins had 'raised

"plot interest" to the rank of a science' (Page 150) while the London Quarterly Review noted of

Collins that

> He is a pure story-teller, spending comparatively little care on anything but his plot; but
> in his own department he is unrivalled. There is no one who, with more consummate
> skill, can weave an exciting tale out of the most slight and unpromising materials, leading
> his reader on from point to point with ever-growing interest, concealing the mystery on
> which the whole depends till the proper time for disclosure comes, and, meanwhile, ever
> dangling it before the eye with an art that tantalizes even while it stimulates the curiosity.
> (Page 156)

One aim of this dissertation is to clarify seemingly oppositional statements like the one given in

the last sentence of this quotation—this section will argue that the mystery of Armadale is at no

point truly 'conceal[ed]' and it is implicature which allows Collins to create the 'dangling' effect

which 'tantalizes' the reader. However, this quotation is also an example of reviewers' generally

mixed feelings about Collins's plots: while they admired the skill with which he could 'weave an

exciting tale', they often derided his tendency to spend 'comparatively little care on anything but

his plot', and more often than not did not appreciate its content. The Saturday Review, for

instance, wrote of Armadale's plot that 'it is subtle and well-sustained, and the unity of purpose

and aim which pervades it is very perceptible', but objected that without 'the incidents of the plot,

the characters in Armadale would be very wearisome', and that there 'is such a thing as economy

in the free use of improbabilities, . . . the story of <u>Armadale</u> hinges almost entirely on miraculous combinations, the arithmetical chances against which are simply infinite' (Page 153).

The <u>Athenaeum</u> was less generous, writing that those 'who make plot their first consideration and humanity the second,—those, again, who represent the decencies of life as too often so many hypocrisies,—have placed themselves in a groove which goes, and must go, in a downward direction, whether as regards fiction or morals' (Page 146). The <u>Athenaeum</u>'s moral objections are generalised to the sensation mode: the writer initially characterises <u>Armadale</u> as a '"sensation novel" with a vengeance' (Page 146), and accuses Collins of belonging 'to the class of professing satirists who are eager to lay bare the "blotches and blains" which fester beneath the skin and taint the blood of humanity', 'without any such genuine motive as led formerly Hogarth and latterly Mr. Dickens not to show a horror without a suggestion towards its cure' (Page 147). The author of the review appears to link Collins's emphasis on plot construction (as well as the sensation mode as a whole) with satiric tendencies that are devoid of moral purpose. In short, the plot of <u>Armadale</u> is portrayed as unnecessarily 'ugly', to use the term of the <u>Saturday Review</u> (Page 155).

Reviewers' portrayals of Collins's plotting as the sole asset of <u>Armadale</u> may have fed contemporary and ongoing perceptions of the novel as unusually constructed and artificial. Sue Lonoff, for instance, notes more generally that the '"good things" in Collins's fiction are his taut, suspenseful plotting, his skill at construction, and his effective blend of realism and sensationalism' (50). According to Lonoff, however, Collins's 'skill at construction' becomes overbearing in <u>Armadale</u>; she writes that

> <u>Armadale</u> suffers from an excess of contrivance. The mechanics of the plot are obtrusive, and while Collins is ingenious, he is also overzealous; he strains for effect, heaps ploy on

ploy, supplies too many cues and warnings. Still, the games within his novels can be highly effective, especially when he combines them with strategies that engage the reader as an active participant. (120-21)

It is telling that where Lonoff characterises the narrative voice as supplying 'too many cues and warnings', Brantlinger notes 'the unobtrusiveness of the narrator' in Armadale and his occasional 'abdication of omniscience' (18). These oppositional claims are both warranted: as will be shown in close readings of Armadale, implicatures and character dialogue repeatedly communicate narrative information concerning Midwinter's and Gwilt's identities and pasts (as well as other, more peripheral narrative detail)—information that the narrative voice conspicuously does not comment on. It is the narrative voice's ostensive break from omniscience that communicates the presence of an implicature to the reader.[71] Collins's 'cues and warnings', however, are part of why many scholars feel that 'Armadale suffers from an excess of contrivance'. Shortly after discussing Anthony Trollope's claim that he could 'never lose the taste of the construction' when reading a Collins novel (qtd. in Hughes 138),[72] Hughes claims that Collins believed in two fundamental structures for novels: 'the novel in which everything is hinted at beforehand and that in which everything is found out afterward. In the first half of The Woman in White, as in Armadale, the future impends ominously and is partially foreshadowed' (138-39). The narrative voice's ostensive omniscience and its superficially unwarranted breaks from it, then, are a large

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[71] While the narrator's omniscience is illustrated early in the narrative (by, for instance, exhibiting knowledge of characters' private thoughts), this omniscience becomes more pronounced as the narrative proceeds beyond the section that this chapter discusses. Lonoff's acknowledgment of Collins's excessive 'cues and warnings' likely pertains to the heavy use of foreshadowing throughout the novel (see 214, 238, 283, 288, 415, 655).

[72] The rest of Hughes's quote from Trollope explores the general feeling that many scholars have about the perceived artificiality of Collins's work: 'the construction is most minute and most wonderful. But I can never lose the taste of the construction. The author seems always to be warning me to remember that something happened at exactly half-past two o'clock on Tuesday morning; or that a woman disappeared from the road just fifteen yards beyond the fourth milestone. One is constrained by mysteries and hemmed in by difficulties.' (qtd. in Hughes 138)

part of the artificial effect of <u>Armadale</u>: the breaks from omniscience render the narrator's ability to foreshadow the future problematic, emphasising the fictionality of the omniscience displayed.

Peter Thoms believes that the artificiality other scholars have attributed to <u>Armadale</u> is intended rather than a failure of the author's skill. Thoms writes that in '<u>Armadale</u> Collins emphasizes the artificiality of the narrative sequence (with its coincidences and allusions to fate) to suggest Midwinter's status as a mere character trapped within an impersonal story' (128). The end of the novel sees Midwinter empowered by the narrated events: he both recognises the existence of 'fate' (which the novel seems to endorse) and realises that it does not equate to a complete inability to control the consequences of his actions. The artificiality of the narrative, then, mimics Midwinter's feelings about the pre-scripted nature of his life, evoking a deterministic narrative world in which characters cannot truly act as free agents, even within their narrative plane. Brantlinger also links the artificial quality of the narrative with the explicit discourse on fate within the book, writing that because 'of the dream and the heavy doses of coincidence, everything in <u>Armadale</u> seems to be laden with a preternatural—if not quite supernatural—significance' (17-18).

The following close readings are meant to evidence Thoms's and Brantlinger's assertions, and show that the sustained implicatures which Collins employs help create the 'artificial' quality of his narration. Collins's implicatures rely heavily on the dominant use of narratorial omniscience in the novel, in that he uses breaks in omniscience to make the implicatures salient to the reader. His inconsistent use of omniscience breaks the realist convention of (relatively) unobtrusive narration, highlighting the fictionality of the narrative and, in association, its 'plotedness'. As a piece of fiction, the evolution of the plot is necessarily pre-scripted, and

Collins brings the reader's attention to the story's fictional status in order to parallel Midwinter's concerns about his fate. Because this 'fate' has been communicated through warnings and sinister omens, the defeasible qualities of the implicatures propel the narrative, engaging the reader's interest in whether or not Midwinter's and Allan's fates will be overturned, and the implicatures voided.

Ozias Midwinter's identity is rendered questionable, and his association with the narrator-Armadale's son implicated, with his first appearance in the text. After the 'inherited story' has been presented in a fifty-eight page prologue, the first book of the novel opens with a chapter entitled 'The Mystery of Ozias Midwinter' (59). Just as the 'secret' mentioned in the title of <u>Lady Audley's Secret</u> characterises Lady Audley as secretive and spurs the reader to detect her secret, the 'mystery' attributed to Midwinter (ambiguously indicating either a mystery surrounding his identity, or a mystery in his keeping) characterises Midwinter as mysterious and spurs the reader to detect a mystery concerning him. After this introduction, however, the narrative is unexpectedly focalised through Mr. Brock and concerns only Allan and his mother; Midwinter is first mentioned under his alias (and the name he continues to be referred to as) ten pages later (69). In the interim, an account is given of a newspaper advertisement that appears five years prior, publicising the disappearance of an Allan Armadale who is roughly the same age as the Allan Mr. Brock knows, and who Mrs. Armadale insists is of 'Another family, and other friends'—although she mysteriously refuses to explain her knowledge of him (64). The narration then omits five years, and Midwinter's appearance in the village is recounted.

The initial description of Midwinter notes that he is 'young' and that his 'tawny complexion, his large bright brown eyes, and his black beard, gave him something of a foreign

views are often overly fearful and pessimistic (66). The defeasibility of the implicature

concerning Midwinter's hidden identity is then highlighted when Mrs. Armadale is noted to have

'passionately declared that the vagabond Armadale of that advertisement, and the vagabond

Midwinter at the village inn, might, for all she knew to the contrary, be one and the same' (77).

This statement creates one of the many narrative 'games' Lonoff identifies in Armadale: although

Collins has emphasised the defeasibility of the implicature by explicitly attributing the resultant

inference to a character whose perspective is consistently unreliable, he continues to strengthen

the implicature. Midwinter is shown abruptly leaving the village in a 'violent hurry' directly after

reading the newspaper with the advertisement concerning his death (89), and, upon turning

twenty-one, is shown with the letter the narrator-Armadale wrote in the prologue (102). One

page later, Midwinter is referred to as 'the inheritor of the fatal Armadale name'. The ensuing

chapter explicitly clarifies his hidden identity and past life. After drawing attention to the

defeasibility of the implicature, then, Collins explicitly confirms it, teasingly leading the reader

back to the determinism that has been debated in character dialogue.

Lydia Gwilt's introduction into the narrative is, in many ways, a prolonged version of the

revelation that Midwinter is the missing Armadale. In her introduction to the novel, Catherine

Peters notes that 'the deliberately delayed and carefully prepared first appearance of Miss Gwilt

[takes place] more than a third of the way through the book'; while this is technically false,[73] the

first appearance of Miss Gwilt that does not communicate her identity through implicature is

indeed as delayed as Peters indicates. Lonoff notes that Miss Gwilt's youthful appearance

'prolongs the riddle of her true identity for hundreds of pages' (120), explaining that

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[73] Miss Gwilt appears within the first tenth of the novel, and of course is referred to in the prologue as 'the maid
whose wicked hand smoothed the way to the marriage' (56).

> The riddle is highly complex. Her first appearance in Book One, as a heavily veiled woman who attempts to extract money from Allan's mother, and her second, as an attempted suicide, are conundrums in themselves. Her identity becomes clear to the reader at the time she first exchanges letters with her confidante, Mother Oldershaw, but her mysterious past is not revealed until the fifteenth chapter of Book Three. Meanwhile, the characters are variously aware of her scheme and her identity, and some, like the two Allans, never perceive the solution that Collins gives the reader. (255)

Lonoff's description illustrates the fragmented nature of what constitutes a 'true identity': while Miss Gwilt's identity as 'the maid' is clarified on page 83, she is first named in Mother Oldershaw's correspondence with her (189) and, as Lonoff indicates, her past life is not narrated until late in the novel (632). For the purposes of Collins's discourse on fate, however, it is Miss Gwilt's identity as Mrs. Armadale's maid that is important.

The implicature that communicates the maid's presence is sustained, rather than confirmed, because it is not immediately made explicit that the same woman who extorts money from Mrs. Armadale (explicitly identified as the maid) appears again in the novel. The first description of Miss Gwilt is focalised through Mr. Brock, when he is

> accosted in the village by a neatly-dressed woman, wearing a gown and bonnet of black silk and a red Paisley shawl, who was a total stranger to him, and who inquired the way to Mrs. Armadale's house. She put the question without raising the thick black veil that hung over her face. Mr. Brock, in giving her the necessary directions, observed that she was a remarkably elegant and graceful woman. . . . (81)

This woman is almost immediately identified as Mrs. Armadale's previous maid (83), and as antagonistic in her extortion of money from Mrs. Armadale. However, her name is teasingly withheld from the reader; when pressed to divulge it by Mr. Brock, Mrs. Armadale answers:

> 'The name I knew her by,' she said, 'would be of no use to you. She has been married since then—she told me so herself.'
> 'And without telling you her married name?'
> 'She refused to tell it.' (83)

This namelessness is carried forward into the woman's next appearance, in which she jumps ship in a suicide attempt, only to be saved by a man (Arthur Blanchard) who then falls ill, dies, and instigates the chain reaction that ends in Allan's improbable inheritance. In popular reports of the incident, she is described as

> neatly dressed in black silk, with a red Paisley shawl over her shoulders, and she kept her face hidden behind a thick veil. Arthur Blanchard was struck by the rare grace and elegance of her figure. . . . (92)

The woman's description is rendered saliently identical to that of Mrs. Armadale's former maid, but the lack of an explicit identification with the other woman renders the ensuing implicature defeasible. This lack of explicit identification is emphasised by the narrative voice:

> Who was the woman? The man who saved her life never knew. The magistrate who remanded her, the chaplain who exhorted her, the reporter who exhibited her in print—never knew. (94)

The defeasibility implied by the woman's namelessness is made explicit in a discussion in which Mr. Brock and Midwinter realise that the woman who extorted money from Mrs. Armadale and the woman who caused Blanchard's death have identical descriptions:

> 'Can it be the same?' [Midwinter] said to himself, in a whisper. '*Is* there a fatality that follows men in the dark? And is it following *us* in that woman's footsteps?' . . .
>   'My young friend,' [Mr. Brock] said kindly, 'have you cleared your mind of all superstition as completely as you think? . . . Let your own better sense help you; and you will agree with me, that there is really no evidence to justify the suspicion that the woman whom I met in Somersetshire, and the woman who attempted suicide in London, are one and the same. Need an old man, like me, remind a young man, like you, that there are thousands of women in England, with beautiful figures—thousands of women who are quietly dressed in black silk gowns with red Paisley shawls?' (125-26)[74]

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[74] Interestingly, this point is one of the red herrings of the novel, in which Collins does employ a plot twist. While Gwilt's participation in both passages is later confirmed explicitly, the second-order implicature concerning her identity here is that she purposefully caused Blanchard's death. This is later denied in the first person by Miss Gwilt, which voids the implicature.

The defeasibility emphasised here illustrates the dependence of the implicature upon its fictional context: as with the implicature indicating Midwinter's hidden identity, the implicature concerning the maid's description would prove ludicrous if attempted in a nonfictional context (there would have been, truly, 'thousands' of women who matched the description of Lydia Gwilt). It is only within fiction, and specifically within omnisciently narrated fiction, that the length of the discussion devoted to this possibility may be interpreted as evidence of its factuality, because its factuality would prove most relevant to the narrative. But despite Brock's logical objections (which, as with Mrs. Armadale's perverse endorsement of an implicature, highlights the defeasibility of it) the implicature is still recognised by the reader, and continues to strengthen as the text progresses. Mrs. Oldershaw's letter identifies the name 'Lydia Gwilt' with the maid who aided Mrs. Armadale's marriage (189-90), and Mr. Brock's coincidental sighting of 'the woman with the red Paisley shawl' as she is discussing Allan Armadale with a woman who matches Mother Oldershaw's description strongly links the various facets of Gwilt's identity together (250-51). In the case of Lydia Gwilt, Collins does not rely on omniscient third-person narration to confirm the implicature's verifiability; instead, Brock's observation of Gwilt and Mother Oldershaw begins a novel-length trend in which pivotal information is communicated through character dialogue and first-person narration, allowing for a continuance of the dramatic irony that was effected by the early use of implicature.

In Armadale, then, Collins's sustained use of implicatures institutes playful narrative games, teasing the reader and highlighting the dramatic irony that engages the reader's interest. The implicatures Collins uses evoke the artificial, constructed feeling common to sensation novels, emphasising the narrative art of the text. In Armadale, however, the over-constructed

feeling of the narrative also echoes the novel's themes, and specifically Midwinter's preoccupation with his questionable agency. The salient artifice of the narrative highlights instead the author's agency, exposing the necessary personality behind all texts (including those which are posed as objective). The dramatic irony which propels the narrative necessarily undercuts the realist endeavour: as Hughes notes, more 'than any other sensation novel, Armadale depicts an entire populace down on its knees before its neighbours' keyholes, prying into their unsavory secrets. . . . but in spite of the unbridled curiosity, no single character ever finds out the entire story' (158). Both the content and narration of Armadale illustrate that the realist endeavour towards a serious, 'truthful' fiction is necessarily flawed; because omniscience is impossible, its representation is inherently fictional. Any fiction exhibiting omniscient narration and aspiring to nonfictional truths is, one could argue, essentially fraudulent: unlike the newspaper articles that sensation plots imitate, novels communicate stories that are created rather than reported. The narrative games endemic to the sensation mode, and Armadale in particular, incessantly remind their readers of the text's fictional status, primarily entertaining where many of their predecessors have attempted primarily to inform.

Conclusion

The research presented in this dissertation was prompted by my initial encounter with

scholarship on Lady Audley's Secret. While there is a wealth of insightful criticism on the novel,

there is little that attempts to account for the playfully indirect tone of much of its narration.

Patrick Brantlinger's scholarship is the primary exception to this generalisation, and my

admiration for his groundbreaking discussion is acknowledged in Chapter Three. However, I

was not completely convinced by the analyses that I read in Brantlinger, Carnell, and others:

while I found that my general impressions of the novel's tone were often reflected in this

scholarship, little was said about how those impressions had been achieved. Moreover,

significant details of those impressions sometimes failed to resonate with my own: unlike

Brantlinger, for instance, I did not feel that the 'reduct[ion]' of the information explicitly

presented was due to the focalisation of the narrative through Robert Audley, and unlike Carnell I

did not make an unproblematic connection between the premature suspicions of the narrative

voice and Robert's blossoming 'detective abilities' (Brantlinger 18, Carnell 253). (Side by side, it

is clear that these two claims contradict each other: they both entail that the narrative is focalised

through Robert, but Brantlinger aligns this focalisation with less narrative information being

made explicit, while Carnell aligns this focalisation with more being made explicit). At the time

I did not know the term 'implicature', but felt that the effect produced by the novel's narration

could be explained more satisfactorily by an acknowledgment of its ostensive reliance on a

gradual accumulation of contextual details, rather than on explicit narration—in other words, by an acknowledgment of the centrality of the text's implicatures.

In attempting to explicate reader reactions that are described elsewhere I have followed the established aim of literary pragmatics. The originality of my contribution to the field lies primarily in my focus on strong and central implicatures, as opposed to weak implicatures and those communicating background information. My approach is, moreover, somewhat unusual for literary pragmatics in that it concentrates more on the authorial techniques employed to generate certain narrative effects, than on the reading processes involved in interpreting those effects. A further contribution to the field arises out of the stances I have adopted from narrative theory: in contradiction to the prevailing literary pragmatic assumption that there is little difference in reader interpretations of fiction and nonfiction, I have argued that fictionality should be recognised as a context which may affect the interpretation of utterances. Specifically, I have discussed the potential for narratorial omniscience that fiction allows, and how the reader's assumption of this potential affects what narrative information (or lack of narrative information) the reader regards as most relevant to his or her interpretation of the text. This last contribution has implications for future studies within literary pragmatics: more needs to be written about the potential differences that are involved in interpreting fictional and nonfictional texts, and current formulations that attempt to encompass all 'literature' need to be reevaluated. Similarly, it is hoped that recognising narratorial omniscience as a potential reader assumption, rather than solely a potential characteristic of a text, will allow theorists to articulate various ways in which this assumption can be exploited to generate narrative effects.

My contributions to Victorian studies are necessarily more diffuse, reflecting both the pervasive applicability of the concept of implicature and my distinct engagements with different aspects of Victorian culture. At a local level, the relationships between the narrative effects uncovered in this dissertation and their Victorian contexts need to be further explored. Acknowledging Robyn Warhol's basis of organisation in her discussion of narrative gaps, each chapter concentrated on a specific authorial motivation that could have prompted the central implicatures discussed. This organisational principle allowed me to comment on the use of implicature to represent specific issues within a chosen Victorian context. It was found that, while the politeness-driven implicatures discussed in Chapter One (in relation to illegitimate pregnancy) could be related to Warhol's concept of the antinarratable, those discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three could not be assigned 'unnarratable' status. Instead, the implicatures in Chapter Two mimicked characters' semiconsciousnesses of their romantic feelings for other characters, and those in Chapter Three posed transparent narrative puzzles, satirising the conventional constraints on narratorial omniscience within realism and effecting a playful tone. More can be done with these findings: as each case study shows, even authors with similar motivations fashioned implicatures suited especially for their texts, and tailored according to their specific intentions. Consequently, the analysis of other central implicatures in any of these subcategories would add to my discussion.

Further research is also possible within the broad categories into which my case studies were grouped. Implicatures are obviously capable of communicating antinarratable topics other than illegitimate pregnancy, semiconscious states other than those relating to romantic desire, and narrative games not found in sensation fiction. But it is not only antinarratable content,

character semiconsciousness, and narrative games that are sometimes communicated through implicature. To begin with, unnarratable content other than the antinarratable is also capable of being narrated through implicature. However, it is important to look beyond the bounds of the 'unnarratable' when discussing narrative gaps within fiction: although the concept has been of considerable use to narrative theory, its recent prevalence has led to neglect of other effects of and motivations for narrative silence. The subject matter discussed in my last two chapters cannot be categorised as 'unnarratable', but there are still other potential authorial motivations behind the central use of implicature that cannot be categorised under any of the topics I have noted here. Even within the fictional context discussed in this dissertation, there is a wide range of meanings implicatures could generate, regardless of their centrality. Through my chosen subject matter I have attempted to elucidate some of the more common discussions I have encountered in Victorian literary criticism and narrative theory, but the method of interpretation discussed here could be applied far more widely.

In several sections of the dissertation, for instance, I have provided brief analyses of how the representation of blushes functions within fictional narratives (96-97, 169-70). I have often related these analyses to discussions of semiconscious character states, but the character states implicated by blushes are not always semiconscious. More importantly, a detailed analysis of the implicatures associated with narrative blushes would inform prominent strands of criticism within Victorian studies, feminist theory, and narrative theory. Blushes are often discussed as a gendered form of character expression, seen as indubitably sincere because beyond the character's control: they are considered more a betrayal of the character's thoughts than a willing expression of them (Homans 168; C. Levine 115-16). However, a close examination of the

narrative blushes encountered in Victorian novels suggests conclusions that do not align with their commonplace representation in criticism: both male and female characters blush for a wealth of reasons that are not often textually inscribed, and characters are sometimes (if rarely) depicted as conscious of, and enjoying, their blushes (Caroline Levine rightly notes that Hetty blushes 'with perfect complacency' [115]). These representations are further complicated by the presence of rouged women in Victorian literature; the connotations of rouge within the Victorian era present a further context in which (unadulterated) narrative blushes are sometimes explicitly entangled (if only because of the necessary dichotomy between real and fake blushes). An examination of how represented blushes function within narratives must take into account that they almost always function by way of implicature, and that these implicatures carry information of a more certain cast when the narrative voice is sure of the cause of the blush (that is, when it is omniscient).

This dissertation examined only the conspicuous use of implicature within third-person omnisciently narrated Victorian novels; while there is more to write about this use of implicature in particular, there is also much to explore about how especially salient implicatures might function in second- or first-person narration, as well as other types of literature (both fictional and nonfictional). In the Introduction, for instance, I discussed Mary Louise Pratt's analyses of certain passages in Tristram Shandy. Her larger point is that the passages' effects are partly derived from the reader's assumption that the text is 'composed, edited, selected, published, and distributed' (170), but she also mentions that they are partly derived from the perceived duality of sources communicating the content—that is, from the reader's assumption that there is both an author and a narrator of the story (174). Although Pratt does not discuss the point further, this

perceived duality is only possible when a narrative is assumed to be fiction. The effects she

isolates differ from those discussed here, and, if analysed further, could inform current

conceptions of how dramatic irony is effected within first-person fictional narratives. Although,

as in many first-person narratives, <u>Tristram Shandy</u> sometimes slides into the third person (in

that although the narrative is largely about him and his birth, Tristram digresses into stories about

other characters), it is still categorically a first-person narrative. Tristram is decidedly not

omniscient, but rather humorously fallible. Whereas I have examined implicatures that are

generated by a narrative voice's assumed omniscience, Pratt discusses those which are generated

by a narrator's perceived ignorance. The narratives I have discussed are often interpreted as

having narrators who know more than they explicitly communicate to the reader; in <u>Tristram

Shandy</u>, the narrator knows decidedly less, unwittingly communicating more information than he

is aware of. While dramatic irony may be created by both narrative situations, it is inherent in

the situation that Pratt describes. Pratt's focus, however, is on illustrating the relevance of the

Cooperative Principle to literary analysis and characterising narration as an 'imitation speech

[act]', not on the dramatic irony that necessarily results from the implicatures which she

describes (173). An analysis that concentrates on the dramatic irony generated from such

implicatures, and that fully acknowledges the fictional context in which they must operate,

would be a worthwhile addition to both literary pragmatics and narrative theory.

     The dramatic irony found in <u>Tristram Shandy</u>, as well as in many of the novels discussed

in this dissertation, could be considered a direct result of unreliable narration. Suzanne Keen

describes unreliable narration as arising when 'a writer deliberately exploits readers' awareness

that the version of the story retailed by the narrator should be treated with skepticism' (42). In <u>A</u>

Glossary of Literary Terms, M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham identify the 'fallible' or 'unreliable narrator' as 'one whose perception, interpretation, and evaluation of the matters he or she narrates do not coincide with the opinions and norms implied by the author, which the author expects the alert reader to share' (244). It would seem that an authorial reliance on central implicatures would automatically entail unreliable narration: the above definitions indicate that the reader is meant to glean key points from the text through an accumulation of contextual details rather than through isolated, explicitly significant utterances. However, Abrams and Harpham mention other aspects of unreliable narration that are notably absent from the texts discussed in this dissertation: narratorial 'perception[s], interpretation[s], and evaluation[s]' are far more pronounced in Tristram Shandy than they are in any of the novels discussed in the preceding chapters. Following her definition, Keen also implies that the '[p]lausible reasons for a narrator's unreliability' usually form an important aspect of what the unreliable narration is intended to communicate to the reader (43). While individuated, first-person narrators such as Tristram may be unproblematically described as unreliable narrators, the descriptions of the largely unindividuated narrative voices explored in this dissertation are more difficult to categorise. The analyses presented in this dissertation highlight the vagueness with which these narrative voices have been described by critics, and the associated difficulties with the generally useful category of 'unreliable narration'. The narrative voices discussed in this dissertation are 'unreliable' in the sense that the reader must infer beyond what is directly narrated to understand basic occurrences within the plot. The novels discussed in Chapter Three employ narrative voices which seem to pointedly pass over key points in the storyline, giving an effect of intentionally unreliable narration; however, the 'intention' behind these implicatures is opaque,

and (as Chapter Three has shown) is a point of contention even among the most 'alert' readers.
The narration discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two might fulfil the technical requirements
of unreliable narration, but is even further from achieving the effects which Keen, Abrams, and
Harpham describe: although Keen clarifies that the designation of 'unreliable' is not a value
judgment upon the narrator (42), the narrative situations she and others describe invariably
consist of narrators who, in Seymour Chatman's words, lack either 'sincerity or competence' (qtd.
in Keen 42). The narrative voices described in Chapters One and Two lack neither, employing
implicature to maintain presentational politeness and communicate character psychology more
effectively. In each case study, the narrative voice's 'sincerity and competence' is, indeed,
evidenced by their use of implicature. In this dissertation, I have avoided the term 'unreliable' for
the above reasons; a study focusing solely on the relationship between unreliable narration and
the use of implicature might dispel some of the vagueness that surrounds detailed discussions of
unreliability, and might identify additional characteristics of a narrative voice that leads the
reader to perceive it as 'unreliable'.

I have attempted to explicate a method of authorial communication that has been, both
within primary texts and within the realm of much literary theory, too often all but invisible even
as its effects have been recorded at length (if at times misattributed to other authorial
techniques). My conclusion has centred primarily on the potential benefits to be derived from
making implicature more visible within literary theory; that is, it has explored the use of
discussing the narrative effects implicature is capable of generating within fiction. By
articulating these processes, it will be possible to clarify not only readily described reader
experiences such as 'reading between the lines', but also relatively elusive ones, such as reactions

to narratorial 'tones'. These tones often result from the author's skilful exploitation of general pragmatic principles; it is only by acknowledging the author's conscious use of implicatures that we can fully understand this aspect of his or her craft.

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