

Knowing Children: Telepathy in Anglo-American Fiction, 1846-1946

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“Knowing Children” describes the means by which telepathic devices present the mind of the child in novels by Charles Dickens, Henry James, William Faulkner, and Carson McCullers. An intellectual interest in the child and childhood flourished not only during the same period as the formal study of telepathy, but also within the same circles. “Telepathy” can be understood for my purposes as a mode of narrative representation of consciousness and knowledge. Because social, linguistic, and cognitive limitations generally prevent child characters from articulating the contours of their surprisingly complex knowledge, their minds can best be rendered through the use of telepathic literary techniques that enable the child figures themselves to influence the course of their narratives. The theoretical core of the thesis illustrates how telepathic techniques in fiction influence causality, characterization, and reader reception. More broadly, the thesis demonstrates how the telepathic mode challenges the historical assumptions, narrative effects, and readerly responsibilities of so-called omniscient narration, showing how characters’ minds are revealed through those of other characters, especially those of children, who would properly be sheltered from the discourses of authority. Thus, the thesis also calls into question the conventional category of childhood itself.

Enfants savants: télépathie dans la fiction Anglo-Américain, 1846-1946

« Enfants savants » décrit les méthodes par lesquelles les dispositifs télépathiques présentent l'esprit des enfants dans les romans de Charles Dickens, Henry James, William Faulkner, et Carson McCullers. Un intérêt intellectuel pour l'enfant et l'enfance ont proliféré en tant qu'étude formelle de la télépathie, non seulement lors de la même période, mais aussi à l'intérieur des mêmes milieux. Pour mes fins, la "télépathie" peut être comprise en tant qu'un mode de représentation narrative de la conscience et de la connaissance. Puisque les limitations sociales, linguistiques et cognitives empêchent généralement les personnages d'enfant d'articuler les contours de leur connaissance étonnamment complexe, leurs esprits peuvent le mieux être traduits par le biais de dispositifs télépathiques-dispositifs qui permettent fondamentalement aux personnages d'enfants à influencer eux-mêmes le courant de leurs récits. Le principe théorique de ma thèse souligne la manière dont les techniques télépathiques influence la causalité, la caractérisation et la perception du lecteur. D'une manière générale, la thèse démontre la manière par laquelle le mode télépathique remet en question les suppositions historiques, effets narratifs et responsabilités du lecteur lors d'une narration autrefois omnisciente, montrant comment l'esprit des personnages est relevé à travers d'autres personnages, particulièrement ceux des enfants, qui seraient probablement gardés à l'écart des discours de l'autorité.

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For six-year-old Miranda and four-year-old Carmen.

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financially and emotionally with his ever sure, ever steady character. His encouragement, love, and abiding devotion have sustained this mind and its work in ways impossible to put into words.

Primary Text Abbreviations

Primary texts by Charles Dickens

- DS—*Dombey and Son (Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail and for Exportation)* 1846-8
 MED—*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870)

Primary texts by William Faulkner

- AA—*Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
 AILD—*As I Lay Dying* (1930)
 CS—*The Collected Stories of William Faulkner* (1950)
 FD—*Flags in the Dust* (1929)
 ID—*Intruder in the Dust* (1948)
 SF—*The Sound and the Fury* (1929)
 RN—*Requiem for a Nun* (1951)
 WP—*The Wild Palms* (or, *If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*) (1939)

Primary texts by Henry James

- AC—*The Art of Criticism* (1986)
 AN—*The Art of the Novel* (1909)
 CN—*The Complete Notebooks of Henry James* (1987)
 LL—*Henry James: A Life in Letters* (2000)
 IC—*In the Cage* (1898)
 PL—*The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)
 TS—*The Turn of the Screw* (1898)
 WK—*What Maisie Knew* (1897)
 WD—*The Wings of the Dove* (1902)

Primary texts by Carson McCullers

- LH—*The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940)
 IN—*Illumination and Nightglare: The Unfinished Autobiography of Carson McCullers* (1999)
 MW—*The Member of the Wedding* (1946)

*a little girl . . . was in a drawing lesson, she was 6 . . .
The teacher . . . went over to her and she said,
“What are you drawing?” and the girl said,
“I’m drawing a picture of God.”
And the teacher said,
“But nobody knows what God looks like.”
And the girl said,
“They will in a minute.”*

Sir Ken Robinson

**Knowing Children:
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Reading Minds

What, exactly, is literary telepathy? The question comes from all corners. Sometimes the desired confines of telepathy dissolve, and with them the formal comforts of the literary document, before a distracting question: “Do you believe in telepathy?” What I hope will become apparent in the following pages is that a belief in telepathy in the actual world is neither here nor there. And I don’t mean that in exclusively cliché terms: it doesn’t matter whether I believe in it “here,” or whether they—George Eliot, Henry James, Jacques Derrida, Pamela Thurschwell, or Nicholas Royle, for instance—believe in it “there.”¹ After all, we are neither here nor there where we read. In other words, at least as far as this argument goes, literature is where the path toward proving, disproving, or believing in the possibility of telepathy in the actual world ends. What matters is that the authors and many of the critics on whom this thesis focuses knew of

¹ The “where” of reading as I describe it here is informed by my understanding of Garret Stewart’s *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext*. Stewart describes the “place of reading” as being in the “reading body[, the] somatic locus of soundless reception” in the brain (1). He further examines the place where we might read to ourselves as being a place of “displacement, a disenfranchisement of voice, a silencing,” theorizing that where we read, “we listen” (2-11). Drawing on Barthes, he emphasizes the notion that “*listening* is a psychological act” (as opposed to hearing, which is merely physiological), and suggests that we take this concept a touch further. In so doing, we might say that it is a psychosomatic act. Because Barthes focuses on the musical text, Barthes’s argument moves toward the space in which “*listening speaks*” (a concept that will considerably inform chapter 4 of this thesis), which Stewart then inverts using the logic by which reading and listening, hearing and reading, are part of the same psychosomatic act to argue that *reading voices* (11). More recently Nicholas Royle takes a similar approach to writing—what he calls the “telephony of writing and the *where* of this experience”—through his reading of Elizabeth Bowen in *Veering: A Theory of Literature* (122-31). In general, Royle’s approach to literary theory bespeaks a hearing, which is always a silencing, that inheres in the reading act.

the concept of telepathy in the actual world, and that it influenced the ways in which they produced, and I receive, their work.

Reading fiction, after all, is about reading minds. It's about getting into people's heads and finding things that sometimes even they don't know they know.² As James Phelan puts it, "[O]ne significant value of reading narrative is the opportunity it offers to encounter other minds—that of the author who has constructed the narrative and those of other readers also interested in shared readings" (*Living* 19). To these we add those of the characters whose minds we read with a spirit of generosity and skepticism: we know that language will fail, but we trust it to trace a collection of mental, and sometimes surprisingly few physical, characteristics we attribute to "Florence Dombey," "Huck Finn," "Maisie Farange," "Quentin Compson," "Saleem Sinai," and "Harry Potter," helping us to fill out what linguistic inscriptions sketch. Partly because of this mental relationship I share with Charles Dickens, Sheila Teahan, Quentin Compson, and you, I, like Phelan, "will often use the first-person-plural pronoun to refer to the activities of the authorial audience" (19). As problematic as this "we" can be, potentially including class-based or gendered perspectives, for instance, I am more skeptical of interpretive claims that seem to posit a sort of *received* reading—say, "Emma concerns herself with others in

² For a well-articulated example of how this works in Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, see James Phelan's *Living to Tell about It*, pages 31-65 (esp. pages 32-7). George Poulet and the other members of the Geneva School, growing out of Russian Formalism, also explored the relationship between the author's unconscious and his or her productions within the world of literature, similarly characterizing fiction as a tool to access the minds of others. Dorrit Cohn's seminal *Transparent Minds* was among the early texts to discuss various representations of consciousness in narrative fiction. Covering the period from Sterne to the mid-twentieth century, *Transparent Minds* discusses various modes of narration used to represent consciousness, including what Cohn calls "psychonarration," retrospective first-person narration (which I will refer to as character narration), quoted interior monologue, and others. The narrated language used to describe figural minds as "a kind of mask" in what she called "narrated monologue" (which I call free indirect discourse) is, as she points out, a short leap from interior monologue, a leap cleared with the simple alteration of third- to first-person references. I will argue that the relationship between the narrator of, say, *Mrs. Dalloway* and Septimus Smith can be understood telepathically, frequently sweeping the narrator from the stable position that third-person references imply.

order that she might avoid thinking too closely about herself”—that are not attributed to an imagined or imaginary person or group. In other words, when I write “I” or “we,” I am inviting an imagined addressee to disagree with what I present not as fact, but as my perception, flawed and subjective as it might be. I invite my addressee to imagine me as that “creature of the text” whom Robyn Warhol characterizes as the implied reader (*Narrative Theory* 149), but also to trust that my thoughts imperfectly accord with various groups of readers, usually including what Peter Rabinowitz calls the “authorial audience.”³ This “I” enfolds Mikhail Bakhtin’s polyvocal I into its ken, literary thought

³ Warhol uses the common term the “implied reader” to call special attention to this reader’s uniqueness (*Narrative Theory* 144). Warhol’s important caution in *Narrative Theory* that feminist readings seem to recede behind the long, patriarchal tradition associated with Narratology informs my work (esp. 9-10, 148-9, 201-4). It will become increasingly evident throughout this thesis that class and gender (especially the latter) are key concerns, for the telepathic mode troubles categories of gender, as well as patriarchal, economic, racial and “conventional” models of meaning making. As the central figure through which I analyze these texts, moreover, the “child” breaks down codes and strata that work to shelter them from the discourses of authority. According to Peter Rabinowitz, the authorial audience is the audience ostensibly receiving the text as the author intended, willing to adopt a particular paradigm for understanding the world of the fiction, and aware of the irony and figuration in the text (*Before* 21). The members of this audience resemble Umberto Eco’s “ideal reader” in *The Role of the Reader*, especially when understood in light of Wayne Booth’s original coinage of the authorial audience in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. There, Booth defines this audience in terms of the relative involvement and distance an author works to produce among its members, engaging in the debate over the value of emotive, ostensibly realistic art, and the more dehumanizing art whose *artifice* deflects overinvolvement on the reader’s part, encouraging her to maintain enough critical distance to appreciate it for its own sake (esp. 92-8, 120-6, and 130-42). Rabinowitz defines the manner in which an educated audience navigates between moments of involvement productive of emotion that require her quintessential “suspension of disbelief,” in Coleridge’s terms, and the distance required of the critic of art (Booth 138; *Before* 95). As Rabinowitz puts it, “The pretense” involved “is closer to Coleridge’s ‘willing suspension of disbelief,’ except [in his reading, disbelief] is [not] suspended but rather . . . suspended and not suspended at the same time”; and Rabinowitz distinguishes between these states in terms of the “narrative audience” and the “authorial audience” (95). The narrative audience is “truly a fiction” inasmuch as it allows itself to accept the improbabilities of the fictional world; moreover, “the author not only knows that the narrative audience is different from the actual and authorial audiences, but rejoices in this fact” (98). For my purposes, we might say for instance that the narrative audience of Faulkner “believes” in telepathy, while the authorial audience knows it to be at the very least improbable, if not impossible. By allowing disbelief to be “suspended and not suspended at the same time,” the reader will then be more willing to recognize how telepathy as an exaggerated figure for empathy can permanently alter the cognitive environment, for ill or for good, of a character. In *Narrative Theory*, Rabinowitz and Phelan are careful to point out that the authorial audience is “fuzzy around the edges Some books—say, Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*—are sharply focused (in this case, written for a small group of extremely well-educated and careful readers); others—say, McEwan’s *Amsterdam*—may also require advanced knowledge . . . but are more forgiving of reader ignorance,” and *Huckleberry Finn* is “fuzzier than any of these cases” (141).

fueling its telepathic expanse, and it is in a sense this “I” whom Nicholas Royle at once invents and traces in *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind*—the literature-reading (mind-reading) “I” connected intertextually, culturally, and fantastically to the many spheres of selfhood with which each phoneme I encounter explodes.⁴

Novels in particular have always been about reading minds, but in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, they became much *more* about reading minds as intellectuals became increasingly interested in human interiority—a dominant force in what the novel sought to expose and explore—which included a developing fascination with telepathy between non-fictional human beings in the actual world. Of course, work on psychology and psychiatry in the adult mind more generally was proliferating as the arts and sciences worked to describe and represent the human mind in various ways. Moreover, as Lisa Zunshine suggests in *Why We Read Fiction*, our interest in discerning invisible mental states from external behaviors helps to explain the human interest in fictional narratives. But the relationship between a concept of telepathy and psychology or psychiatry shouldn’t be underestimated. Cofounder of the Society for Psychical

⁴ In Poulet’s phenomenological terms, “the *I* which I pronounce is not myself,” for the reading self is constituted by the text (“Phenomenology” 56, emphasis in original). The relationship between the reader and the text, moreover, is reciprocal: “You are inside it [and] it is inside you,” diminishing the boundary between the subject and the object (54). (As we will see in chapter 2, this is the project, in Dorothy Hale’s reading, of Jamesian technique.) “In the last analysis,” Poulet writes elsewhere, the literary text “must be recognized as the ‘mental place’ of him who thinks it, as the site of the mind. . . . Thus poem and reader, spectacle and spectator coalesce in one selfsame thought I merge myself and find myself in the perfect moment and in the absolute place in which I create my thought and recognize it for mine. The space, the duration, the universe of my poem, they are myself” (*Interior Distance* 281-3). As J. Hillis Miller puts it in *Literature as Conduct*: “The reading is constitutive of the ‘I’ that enunciates it” (29). Recently, in *Veering*, Royle describes the relationship between the “I” I am and the “I” I encounter thus: “For literary fiction consists in a mode of telepathic or magical thinking, speaking or writing, in which there is always at least one ‘I’ (whether narrator or author-figure) who can access or indeed invade and take over the thoughts and feelings of another (whether that be a character or the narrator). In this moment of telepathic ‘uproar’ . . . we are presented with a singular exposition of the internal logic of the text. . . . [T]he space of literature is where thoughts and feelings are indeed *shared* and its mode of operation is what we might call (after Melville) *veering about*” (164).

Research, Frederic W. H. Myers, for instance, was responsible for introducing Freud to the English-speaking world, and the first doctoral degree awarded in psychology in the United States went to the student of the American Society for Psychical Research cofounder William James at Harvard (Salter 31). What I'm stressing here is the relationship between scientific and historical curiosities and a particular kind of shared consciousness between fictional and extra-fictional minds, as well as between two or more fictional minds that narrative, and especially the novel, is uniquely able to produce.⁵

It is of course no accident that the characters I cite above are of childhood age during much, if not all, of the novels they populate, for at about the same time as Anglo-American intellectual circles saw a growing fascination with telepathy and related ideas, similar (and often overlapping) circles—including those of authors, psychologists and psychiatrists, and scientists—became increasingly interested in a particular subset of non-fictional minds: the minds of children. In *The Mind of the Child* Sally Shuttleworth demonstrates how the work of these groups, from evolutionary psychology to novels, was mutually influential in formulating the characteristics associated with the “child mind.”⁶ Concepts regarding childhood famously advanced by thinkers such as Rousseau, Darwin, and Freud support Shuttleworth's claims as she explores the uneven terrain on which the foundations of the category were erected, demonstrating just how mutable the conventional markers of childhood were in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Of special interest to this thesis is the fact that towering figures such as G. Stanley Hall were

⁵ In the arena of historical relevance, the ideas in this thesis are especially indebted to John Durham Peters's *Speaking into the Air*, Roger Luckhurst's *The Invention of Telepathy*, Pamela Thurschwell's *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*, Sara Danius's *The Senses of Modernism*, and Richard Menke's *Telegraphic Realism*.

⁶ Drawing on the nomenclature of the period, Shuttleworth refers to the mind of the child as the “child mind” in this study, to which I will refer periodically throughout my thesis.

buttressed by intellectuals dedicated to the study of telepathy and related phenomena.⁷ Central to the “child study movement” in the United States, Hall was the student who earned that first Harvard psychology doctorate I mention above.⁸ As I will show, telepathic effects cluster around literary representations of children in the period leading up to and including what Jerome Bruner refers to as the “inward turn” in fiction; the childhood minds thus presented challenged the historical assumptions, narrative effects, and readerly responsibilities of so-called omniscient narration, even as they worked to dismantle any stable rendering of the category of childhood itself.

Drawing on the title of Erich Kahler’s *The Inward Turn of Narrative*, Bruner introduces *Acts of Meaning* with an early articulation of the mutual relationship between the inner self and its cultural context, citing—more than once—Clifford Geertz’s famous announcement: “There is no such thing as human nature independent of culture” (Bruner

⁷ In September of 1880, G. Stanley Hall began conducting the first full-scale scientific studies of childhood development, and eventually earned the first Harvard doctorate awarded in psychology under the guidance of Henry’s brother, William James. In 1881, the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) conducted its first experiments with what was then called “thought transference” (Thurschwell 24). The following year, Frederic W. H. Myers coined “telepathy” in England and began conducting the first, full-scale “scientific” studies of telepathy and clairvoyance under the auspices of the now well-known SPR whose American branch enjoyed the leadership of its founding member, William James. In 1895, 20,000 questionnaires were widely dispersed by different groups interested in child study; in 1896, William gave his presidential address to the SPR; and by the year of *Maisie*’s publication, the National Congress of Mothers held its first convention, as women’s clubs and the new parent-teacher associations engaged actively in child study (Mintz 186-9; Thurschwell 15-36).

⁸ In 1882, Sir William Barrett, Henry Sidgwick, Frederic W. H. Myers and several other respected thinkers in Cambridge and London founded the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Among the forces at work in the development and diffusion of the Society’s theories about “telepathy,” or “thought-transference,” were the advancement of new technologies, the institutionalization of the sciences, interest in spiritualism and mediumship, and the ideas of a number of important literary and philosophical figures acquainted with members of the Society. The cultural pressures of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that led to the development of the Society and its theories were not unlike those felt in the United States, and it is unsurprising that the ideas formulated by the Society would find their way across the Atlantic. For a detailed description of the Society’s members, concepts, and expansion, see Renée Haynes’s *The Society for Psychical Research 1882 – 1982: A History*.

12).⁹ In his discussion of the “inward turn,” Bruner argues that “Modernist literary narrative . . . dethron[es] the omniscient narrator who knew both about the world ‘as it was’ and about what his protagonists were making of it” (51). The historical factors and literary devices that divested this omniscient narrator of his authority, I will show, also served to dethrone the so-called innocent, preternatural child—a Romantic figure indebted in large part to Wordsworth’s renderings.¹⁰ Most effective in achieving that overthrow are literary devices that enable the text to impress the child’s mind with what Roger Luckhurst in *The Invention of Telepathy* and Henry James in “The Pupil” refer to as “knowledges” communicated “by no physical means . . . : no sound, no gesture” (Luckhurst 113; James 135; *Intruder in the Dust* 162). A child character who knows what her vocabulary is insufficient to describe—knows, that is, things about the world of which the adults around her imagine her to be ignorant—points up the degree to which the categories of conventional enlightenment epistemology inhere in the vocabularies that

⁹ Despite what Philip Stevick viewed as a problematic progressiveness in *The Inward Turn of Narrative* in his 1974 review of the book (an indictment some might be inclined to level against this thesis), Erich Kahler rightly reads a shift in consciousness in the novel through its cultural influences. Bruner emphasizes the modernist representation of *disparate* perceptions and of the “alternative meanings” those perceptions assign to the worlds around them (52). This thesis will place special emphasis on shared perceptions among characters *despite* the lack of a so-called omniscient narrator who would otherwise seem to be the necessary site of perceptual merging.

¹⁰ The Victorian child emerges, on one side of the coin, as knowing too little of the world to make immoral or unethical choices; she is faultless, artless, even “natural” along the lines in which Rousseau imagined the unsocialized child. Moreover, her powerless social and economic position renders her conventionally unable to take advantage of others. Largely freed from Romantic figurations of original sin (though not altogether, as *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*’s Deputy reveals), she is employed in revealing a new form of bondage into which she has been thrown—the innocent victim of adult pride and selfishness. Thus Dickens places the figure of these “genderless angels” in the service of showing up, through contrast, the immoral behavior of adults (Kincaid 13). For Dickens, this ostensibly innocent child’s intervention is necessary: it exposes not only the unpleasant underlayer of Victorian veneer, but also the almost unbearable pressure concealment entails. Florence, for instance, suffers under the “oppressive” weight of “secrecy and silence,” suggesting a deeper knowledge of what lies beneath. If the “innocent” child thus suffers under the pressure of concealment, the fiction erupts with that pressure and sends the coin up spinning only to land on its Janus face. On the other side of the coin, the child viewed through the lens of evolutionary psychology is portrayed as having an innate knowledge of the lives she inherited before birth that can be understood not as innocent and ethereal, but as unsettlingly “old-fashioned.”

define them. “Small children” like Paul Dombey, Maisie Farange, and young Quentin Compson “have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them,” as Henry James puts it in the preface to the New York edition of *What Maisie Knew* (1897). Crucially, however, although they lack a “prompt,” an “at all producible, vocabulary” with which to describe what they *know*, that very knowledge enables them to shape their fictional and extrafictional worlds (WK 8). The category of the child becomes radically unstable in such texts, and conventional epistemological power dynamics begin to shift, ousting the omniscient narrator from his position of authority.¹¹ The paradigm of telepathy, and the literary techniques it cultivates in predominantly realist and modernist narrative fiction, thus places limits on narratorial omniscience on the one hand, while lifting the conventional limitations of childhood perception and influence on the other.

In *Huck's Raft*, Steven Mintz observes that “[m]any of the era’s greatest authors, including Mark Twain, wrote stories for children, and readers of all ages devoured tales about barefoot rascals and mischiefmakers, exuberant tomboys, and adorable cherubs [C]hildren’s books expressed nostalgia for a simpler past and fantasies of youthful freedom” (186).¹² Part of their attraction for adult readers, as well, was that these child characters often seemed far more knowledgeable about the world of experience than conventional wisdom would allow. Little wonder that these minds found some of their most complex representations in fiction produced at the same historical moment as

¹¹ My Foucauldian formulation here of the so-called child’s unique position with respect to conventional power relations recalls that of James Kincaid in *Child Loving*, in which he demonstrates the means by which erotic representations of the child work to establish the limits of what is conventionally acceptable with respect to childhood sexuality.

¹² Here, Steven Mintz is speaking specifically about American fiction produced between 1865 and 1910. I am extending his chronological boundary into the mid-century and his geographical boundary into the UK.

intellectuals assembled some of the earliest analyses of “clairvoyance” and “telepathy.”¹³ “Today,” Mintz claims, “children’s literature is radically separate from adult literature” (186). I would argue that today children’s literature is not radically separate from adult literature: the enchanting mystery of the child mind, which attracted readers to Louisa May Alcott’s *Jo* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*, for instance, persists today in the contemporary fascination with such series as *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games*. Moreover, the obscurities of this mind obtain in the neurological sciences, where the only models for “normal-range” readings of EEGs are those of the adult mind because the childhood mind is too mutable and difficult to codify, a sort of “predictable unpredictability” as one physician refers to it (Yaremko).¹⁴ Perhaps it is just this contemporary interest in the child mind that gave rise to *Huck’s Raft* and the current thesis that takes up its observations.

What I have found hiding in the occult, fecund spaces that telepathic effects can only dramatize are the figures of uncanny children in novels otherwise predominantly realistic—children who hide in plain sight, lurking, observing, knowing improbably mature things.¹⁵ Mintz’s “recognizably realistic children” stand “at the heart of the narrative” fiction I discuss, but in my reading, they do more than that: they shape it—receiving, transforming, and transmitting impressions from narrators and other characters

¹³ As I will discuss in greater detail below, the term “telepathy” was coined in 1882. Clairvoyance had at that point been in use for at least thirty-five years, according to the *OED*, which cites 1847—the middle of the two-year period during which Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* was serially published.

¹⁴ Dr. John Yaremko, pediatrician, uttered this language in discussions in January, 2010 and May, 2013, recently confirming that we have no child mind models with which to confirm normal versus abnormal results.

¹⁵ Discussed in more detail below, Brian Richardson’s characterization of “impossibly eloquent” children in *Unnatural Voices* reveals the ways in which an emphasis on the telepathic features of the child characters’ minds I discuss benefit from concepts currently taking shape in the relatively new field of unnatural narratology (*Unnatural* 3).

that read as narration itself (Mintz 185). In child figures, often legible as telepathic regardless of genre, I find evidence of how characters who would properly be sheltered from the discourses of authority authorize thoughts in other, often chronologically older, characters' minds—even if those characters are their own future selves. They are children, and as such fall subject to some of the same representative challenges that all silenced figures face (reductive though this assessment might be, as Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak would remind me), but as children, they level the playing field: we were all six at one time or another.

Literary Telepathy

Our inclination as readers is to naturalize childhood knowing into the framework of the adult mind engaged in projection, inscription, or reflection. A familiar convention for presenting what Brian Richardson calls the “impossibly eloquent” child is that of the adult flashback, a convention on which Rebecca West in *The Fountain Overflows* (1957), for instance, relies (*Unnatural* 3). And in novels such as Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*, we are often inclined to read what the child knows in terms of her adult narrator's vocabulary. But a telepathic reading emphasizes the manner in which the child “knew it all already,” and not much has changed (AA 172). For it's not what Maisie knows, it's what Maisie *knew*—a knowing that always comes before her narrator was brought into being *by her*, epitomizing what Royle calls the “constitutive necessity of a certain foreseeing of the past” (*Telepathy and Literature* 14). Such a reading of the knowing child insists on understanding telepathy in several registers, perhaps the most crucial of which takes telepathic impressions on their own terms.

And what exactly are those terms? Many things to many people, literary telepathy as I trace it here functions in three important ways: mimetic, figurative, and productive/effective. Mimetically, telepathic acts represent in fiction what Frederic W. H. Myers defined in the actual world in 1882 as the transmission of impressions from one mind to another without the use of the five senses.¹⁶ Metaphorically, telepathy has dual, antithetical registers: on one hand, it represents the fantasy of perfect, unmediated communication between minds; on the other hand, it represents the horror of exposure.¹⁷ Derrida presents the latter register in his sense of suffering transparency and violation: “The truth, what I always have difficulty getting used to: that nontelepathy is possible. Always difficult to imagine that one can think something to oneself, deep down inside, without being surprised by the other, without the other being immediately informed” (qtd. in Miller *The Medium is the Maker* 15).¹⁸ Characters, such as Kate Croy in James’s *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and Thomas Sutpen in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936),

¹⁶ In *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), Myers defined telepathy in as “the transference of ideas and sensations from one mind to another without the agency of the recognized organs of sense” (Myers 9). He and the members of the Society for Psychical Research had originally coined the term in 1882. In addition to telepathy, the SPR researched a plethora of phenomena associated with thought transference, including those of life after death and communication with the deceased, clairvoyance, and the movement of consciousness across time. Ghosts figure other telepathic phenomena enacted throughout Faulkner’s and James’s oeuvres: communication with the dead. Telepathic acts between the living and the dead reverse the power structures that enable the living to write monumental histories. Moreover, shared consciousness between the dead and the living in these narratives indicates James’s and Faulkner’s intersection with what, in their cultural moment, is a fascination with spiritualism and mediumship that the members of the SPR sought to prove or disprove.

¹⁷ The reciprocal nature of telepathy to which Michael Naas calls attention in “Lacunae: Divining Derrida’s Sources Through ‘Telepathy’” is apparent within each of the putative functions I assign to telepathy, and this reciprocation will become increasingly pervasive as I move through my analyses of various novels. For Henry Sigdwick and Daniel Barrett, the idea that the human mind could not only *sympathize* (an act dependent upon imagination), but could literally share the consciousnesses of another suggested a possibility for a utopian world. After all, if one suffered the pain of the oppressed *with* them, exactly as they suffered it, how could they allow the suffering to continue? Considering in this light Dorothy Hale’s poignant claim that “regardless of period or national origin, the novel’s primary ideological work turns out to be the promotion of sympathy,” one can understand how Faulkner’s telepathic devices take this ideological work to its utmost potential in terms of his cultural moment (*Social Formalism* 8-9).

¹⁸ Here, J. Hillis Miller has translated the passage from “Telepathy” himself.

for instance, who deploy particular discourses to assert positions of power, are usually working with equal zeal to conceal the secret histories that would undercut those positions. The pressure to maintain secrecy in the contexts of their narratives thus necessitates furtive and fugitive modes of communication within the story that the fiction presents as vigilante telepathic transmissions of exposure.¹⁹ Metonymically, telepathy represents the destabilizing confusion engendered by the rise of telecommunications in this period and its newly overwhelming surplus of signs.²⁰ Finally, telepathy can be understood as a conceptual tool used in the production of narratives on the one hand, and as an effect of narrative reception on the other. It depends upon a syntax of gaps, fissures, figures in carpets, acknowledging the dissemination of signs whose meaning is retrievable only within a reading subject, that “passive register of inscription itself,” discursive, historical, and ethical (*Reading Voices 2*).

Key to embracing the ideas in this thesis is a commitment to understanding the telepathic in this last, fundamentally literary sense; that is, with an emphasis on the literary effects of its mimetic status. The telepathic—read telepathic narration, telepathic effects, telepathic characters—should not be confined exclusively, for instance, to the space of the symbolic, to metonymic representations of tele-technologies, or to the generic arenas of fantasy or science fiction, among other possible relegations, though all

¹⁹ Margaret Reid’s *Cultural Secrets as Narrative Form* (2004) eloquently demonstrates the ways in which secrets structure narrative. For Reid, characters who may be marginalized by the plot remain central to the kinds of texts I treat largely because “the fiction’s historical world,” the world of story, exists within their minds (xix). Reid explains that the storytelling characters are working in “direct contrast to the narrator who obsessively plots a design,” allowing them a certain freedom to access knowledge of their situations (xix). It is in searching for methods of communicating this knowledge that the children explore what I would call forms of inscription.

²⁰ Among others, Luckhurst’s *Invention*, Peters’s *Speaking*, Sara Danius’s *Senses*, and Richard Menke’s *Telegraphic Realism* mentioned above nicely illustrate the ways in which the speed of tele- and other technologies gave rise to ideas about telepathy during the period this thesis addresses: roughly 1850-1950.

of these readings play an important role in revealing what the telepathic mode both enables and refuses. The refusals have much to do with the increasing secularism to which Nicholas Royle, in his pioneering work on the reciprocal relationship between telepathy and literature, calls attention. In *Telepathy and Literature*, Royle briefly outlines the historical interest in ideas about telepathy and telesthesia as defined by Myers, giving as the primary reasons for this interest a “crisis or failure in Christian belief and with forms of modern psychology,” the inevitable “hyperbolization” of the central concept of sympathy in Romanticism, and the development of “tele-culture” in general (4-5).²¹ Royle then deploys telepathic effects to deconstruct the literary itself, ultimately rendering the eponymous concepts “telepathy” and “literature” as virtually equivalent. More than a decade later, Royle’s “The ‘telepathy effect’” emphasizes the decline in Christian ideology and its mimetic outcome in order to reveal how and why novels effect the, if not impossible, then certainly improbable concept of minds reading other minds that they then share with us; that is, the work of the erstwhile omniscient narrator (*The Uncanny* 256-76). For Royle, “telepathic” more aptly describes a narrator “‘now looking into this mind,’ now into that” whom Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg describe in *The Nature of Narrative*—more aptly, in part, because such a narrator more closely resembles a human, rather than a godlike, construct (*The Uncanny* 258-9).²² “[I]t

²¹ People in the Western world were reacting against a number of spiritual or spiritualist paradigms and religions, though Royle focuses on the Judeo-Christian trajectory.

²² In *Structuralist Poetics*, for example, Jonathan Culler writes, “if the reader is a reasonable man like the narrator, . . . he will not be upset by the improbable . . .” (174). Written thus, a narrator is certainly to be understood as mimetically closer to a human being than to God. Culler continues, however, by observing the narrator’s seemingly limitless command over fictional possibility. The writing act, and the language it deploys, enables us to naturalize it by way of a “critique of mimetic fiction” (175). Thus, though Culler defines the narrating position as “impersonal,” he nevertheless relies on signifiers relating to the human being in order to describe the narrator’s impersonal pressure. Moreover, in “Omniscience,” Culler endorses Royle’s argument in “The ‘telepathy effect,’”: “I have reached the conclusion that [omniscience] is not a

is no longer a question of any narratological fantasy of omniscience, any single point of view, any ‘stable character of [an] ego’ or, indeed, any fixed *place* that could be called ‘the unconscious,’” writes Royle more recently, “There is a kind of magic: we are both inside and outside [a character’s] thoughts and feelings, and such narrative telepathy or magical thinking is the very oxygen of the novel” (*Veering* 193).

As I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, telepathic effects cause metaleptic slips that move mental influence across ontologically distinct diegetic planes, diegetic and extradiegetic planes, and fictional and extrafictional planes, putting considerable pressure on the mimetic aspect of Royle’s telepathic narrators. Indeed, Royle applies this pressure to the direction of influence in *Veering: A Theory of Literature*, pointing to the multidirectional force of telepathic inscription that the mimetic field allows, and this is precisely the kind of pressure mimesis is designed to take: as Seo-Young Chu puts it in *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, “to the extent that all representation is in some measure nontransparent—to the extent that it is impossible to establish full mimetic correspondence between referent and representational text—the process of representation is always characterized in some measure by the same dialectic that defines [science fiction], namely the dialectic between cognition and estrangement” (Chu 5). Understood in light of Chu’s more elastic conception of mimesis, telepathic knowledge needn’t move exclusively from the level of the narrative to that of the narrating act. “Fantasy,” Chu

useful concept for the sturdy of narration . . . —that it obfuscates the various phenomena that provoke us to posit the idea” (*The Literary in Theory* 184). “Nicholas Royle,” he continues, “proposes . . . to replace *omniscience* with *telepathy* . . . The basis of omniscience appears to be the frequently articulated analogy between God and the author . . . This is all very well, but if, for instance, we do not believe in an omniscient and omnipotent God, then we cannot draw on what we know of God to illuminate properties of narrative. Even if we believe in God, there is precious little knowledge about him on which to rely” (*Literary* 185). I rely on these ideas in order to read in the figure of the child a challenge to omniscient authority more generally in chapter 1 of this thesis. There, I engage Audrey Jaffe’s work, which draws, as well, on Culler.

continues, “is a type of science fictional mimesis whose cognitively estranging referent is the prodigious working of the imagination itself.” And the fantastic, I would argue, must be characterized as part of the wonderful childhood mind’s realism.

Indeed, the interiority that novels represent is nowhere more fantastical or wonderful than in the mind of the fictional child. A site of creativity, the child mind perceives a world shot through by possibilities, not *im*possibilities: what’s there is here; thinking is making; thought is plot. As Amberly Malkovitch puts it, “Fantasy and fantastic worlds become central to the . . . child’s journey and experiences . . . Fantastic spaces offer alternative areas where protagonists, much in the vein of Shakespeare’s dual plots of reality/fantasy . . . , may be free from social and romantic constructs of the ‘child’ and ‘childhood’” (5).²³ And among its valuable contributions to narrative theory, the field of “unnatural narratology” is particularly useful, according to Monika Fludernik, in demonstrating “how the fabulous relies on the cognitive frames of realism to become interpretable” (Fludernik 363).²⁴ This assessment of unnatural narratology, as Jan Alber and Brian Richardson, among others, set out to define it, is thus pertinent to my theory of the fictional child.

²³ Importantly, while Malkovitch’s emphasis on the fantastic in the figure of the child accords with my interest in the relative mimetic applicability of the telepathic in literature, I have some reservations about Malkovitch’s reading of the fictional child as a site of transformative possibility for readers, as well as with her somewhat essentialist take on female and male authorship for which she leans on U.C. Knoepfelmacher.

²⁴ “[T]he cognitive frames of realism” are of course, not straight forward, and I am sensitive to the role of “realemes” in literary (mimetic) formations (“‘Reality’ and Realemes in Narrative” 210). According to Itamar Even-Zohar, “literature has been identified exclusively with those verbal products which endeavor to break with conventional models. This practice has been harmful to our understanding of the relationships which may obtain between semiotic codes and real worlds. . . . One of the major tasks of literature has been understood to be that of breaking with conventions. No doubt some literature does do this, but not necessarily all of it” (209). In the case of Paul Dombey, for instance, his telepathic role in troubling the conventions associated with omniscience would seem to be less a breaking with literary conventions than with critical ones. For, as Audrey Jaffe shows in *Vanishing Points*, the *features* of “omniscience” are *in the making* in such texts, though critical discourse might shift the way it understands, defines, and codifies those features.

“Unnatural narratology” denotes a particular branch of narratology that aims to highlight antimimetic, defamiliarizing events that are generally not understood to be possible in the actual world. The qualifier “unnatural” has met with considerable unease in the field of narratology. After all, the features of narrative that “unnatural” narratology works to foreground would, in a perfect world, be unnamed and unnamable. Codification would be the enemy of what is ideally not naturalized, but the conundrum is obvious. So what we might call “the anti”-unnatural narratologists would ask the unnatural narratologist to use the terms we already have to describe each anti-mimetic event or nuance, each unfamiliar or always already defamiliarized circumstance, individually, one-by-one, using extant terminology for each instance, rather than grouping them together under an unnamable umbrella term. I’m inclined to leave terminological decisions to others whose provocative observations, in my view, contribute to the perceivable value in emphasizing the telepathic effects upon which child characters rely in their inception and reception. Especially apt is Jan Alber’s observation that, “conventionalized instances of the unnatural in . . . genres [other than postmodernism] have become important features of certain generic conventions,” and he “tries to demonstrate that the conventionalization of the unnatural is a hitherto neglected driving force behind the creation of new generic configurations (“What” 373).

Brian Richardson has argued that unnatural narratology should limit its arena to that of texts which include conspicuously “anti-mimetic and defamiliarizing scenes, entities, and events, such as impossible spaces, reversed causal progressions, and acts of narration that defy the parameters of natural conversational narratives” (372-3). But if we were to adopt Chu’s model of mimesis, we would find that the question of what is or is

not possible in the actual world is not a question of what is or is not mimetic. For Chu, it is a question of degrees, so, for instance, the multidimensionality of the science fiction referent is simply proportionately more estranging than that of the realist novel but not, for all its strangeness, less a product of mimesis. In other words, the telepathic aspect of the childhood mind is considerably less estranging, but no less an “unnatural” mimetic construct, than the more “conspicuous” unnatural features, such as a man waking up as a bug in Kafka, that Richardson’s definition of unnatural narratology emphasizes (“Response” 372). By turning the mimetic/anti-mimetic dichotomy into a sliding scale, Chu’s model enables us to see that, with respect to the fictive telepathic childhood mind, the unnatural serves not as a description of anti-mimetic events and devices, but as a curious ability that mimesis makes possible in the novel.²⁵ Indeed, it is the conspicuous inconspicuousness of telepathy that produces unease in the adult characters who encounter these strangely knowing children. Moreover, it’s precisely the marvelous sneakiness of these telepathic minds that causes us, their readers, to miss their special powers, and therefore to miss a reading that turns convention inside out.

The fictional children I discuss gather telepathic effects around them, inscribing the text with visions and perceptions that read as proleptic events of plot once we attune ourselves to such improbable readings. Sensitized to what impossible events and circumstances in the novel enable in otherwise logically possible worlds, we find new temporal relationships, new orders, new causalities we had theretofore missed. Most important, we find child characters shaping the discourses their third-person, heterodiegetic narrators ought to mold, reversing the direction of the ontological

²⁵ Understood in this manner, Chu’s argument regarding mimesis aligns somewhat—though in an exaggerated sense—with that of Fludernik.

boundary crossing on which Royle's argument for telepathic narrators in "The 'telepathy effect'" relies, and finding a central role for themselves in the theory of literature he advances in *Veering*. I'm not suggesting here that these child characters "look into" their narrators' minds; this would mean that they were aware of their own fictionality and of the narration that instantiates them. Only one character in this thesis has that luxury, and his name is Harold Crick. More on Harold later . . . much later. In contrast, Paul Dombey is no more conscious of his own fictionality than is the narrator who knows him. But I *am* suggesting that we try to imagine mental influence moving in that direction: i.e., from the diegetic level of the fiction *down one level* to that of the narration.²⁶

The Epistemology of Authorship

The authors I treat, Charles Dickens, Henry James, William Faulkner, and Carson McCullers, suggest this direction of mental influence in their characterizations of authorship as they experienced it, and we can understand this productive arena as the lowest level of narrative.²⁷ For example, James's understanding of how he comes to know his characters bears an unexpected resemblance to that of Dickens. In the authors' accounts of literary creation, story seems at times to come from a source exterior to conscious thought, as though events and characters (whom James famously views as reciprocally generative: "What is character but the determination of incident? What is

²⁶ I will consistently base my readings of diegetic levels on the model established by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse*, which takes the level of narration to be the lowest level of the narrative (212-223). For Genette, in other words, the diegetic level of a particular event is always one level higher than that of the narrative act that produced it. So, for instance, Douglas and his audience in *The Turn of the Screw* are one diegetic level *below* the governess.

²⁷ In fact, in his discussion of omniscience, Culler begins by discussing "the omniscience of the novelist," for when it comes to the question of who knows what about the fictional world, one can hardly avoid talking about the writer at some point ("Omniscience" 186).

incident but the illustration of character?" [AF 174]) communicate themselves *to* their authors. Here is one of James's descriptions of novelistic invention:

I shall here . . . indulge myself in speaking . . . of how, superficially, [the story] did so proceed; explaining then what I mean by its practical dependence on a miracle.

It had come to me . . . abruptly enough, some years before: I recall sharply the felicity of the first glimpse, though I forget the accident of thought that produced it . . . I was charmed with my idea, which would take, however, much working out; and precisely because it had so much to give, I think, must I have dropped it for the time into the deep well of unconscious cerebration: not without the hope, doubtless, that it might eventually emerge from that reservoir, as one had already known the buried treasure to come to light, with a firm iridescent surface and a notable increase of weight. (AN 22-3)

From the Preface to *The American* (1876-77), this passage reveals James's rendering of the process whereby unconscious thought reveals itself to the author in and through story, but such a revelation, as Rosemarie Bodenheimer in *Knowing Dickens* also describes it, occurs only after a marked deferral not part of conscious "cerebration."²⁸ In Sharon

²⁸ James began toward the end of his career to take seriously the possibility of a consciousness that could "reach beyond the laboratory-brain," but unlike his brother William, Henry generally preferred to think of this expanding consciousness in fictive terms ("On Consciousness" 614). The trademark characteristics of what Mattheissen calls "the major phase"—complicated focalization and obscurity "not susceptible to simple de-coding" (White 16)—are enhanced by the telepathic devices James employs in texts such as *In*

Cameron's view, consciousness in James's fiction reflects what he describes above as its relationship to the subject of fiction, for consciousness is "disengaged from the self . . . an intersubjective phenomenon" (*Thinking* 77). A similar deferral marks Faulkner's distinctly Romantic failure to account for the source of his fiction: "And now I realize for the first time what an amazing gift I had. . . . I dont know where it came from. I dont know why God or gods or whoever it was, selected me to be the vessel" (SL 348).²⁹

Characters take shape on an ontological plane distinct from his own, impressing themselves into his mind and, in turn, onto the page. Here, Faulkner explicitly *describes* the artist as the vessel; as I will demonstrate in chapter 2 on *What Maisie Knew*, James characteristically *shows* us how his "vessel" Maisie produces the "glittering picture" that keeps her afloat on relentlessly troubled waters.³⁰ Finally, Dickens portrays *himself* as a murky, inchoate representation of what his characters reflect back to him only after the

the Cage, *What Maisie Knew*, and *The Golden Bowl*. These devices then serve to destabilize the already unstable boundary between fictional and extra-fictional worlds, namely, the worlds in which characters live and the worlds in which narrators and readers live, typical of late-Jamesian prose. Ideally, for James, this destabilization serves the mimetic function of representing the unstable boundary between his conscious act of creation and an unconscious knowledge of the fictional world communicated *to* him from without, even as it produces the readerly effect of knowing what narrators and characters—communicating to the reader from the Jamesian unconscious—cannot explicitly reveal.

²⁹ One thinks here of W. B. Yeats and H. D., who feared, as Miranda Hickman observes in *The Geometry of Modernism*, "that the occult knowledge they were receiving through mystical means might be . . . undeserved" (192). More generally, Hickman points to the manner in which a geometric idiom was employed—sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously—in the service of counterbalancing the passivity occult transmission of knowledge suggested (191-6).

³⁰ I would add, moreover, that Dickens saw great value in what Percy Lubbock would later present as James's seminal achievement: characterization engendered by the dramatization of consciousness rather than the "vulgar," as James would put it, naming of its qualities. For Dickens: "It is not enough to say that they were this, or that. They must shew it for themselves, and *have it in their grain*" (*Letters* 6. 87, my emphasis [Bodenheimer 22]). The "grain," as I understand it, is consciousness itself, and it is at this level that the character is impressed upon the author's mind. This reading reverses that of Steven Connor in "Against the Grain" in which he discusses the grain in its purely material sense: "If I am reading the novel against the grain, then I can at least call to my defence the fact that this is precisely the process which seems to preoccupy Dickens. Jasper complains that 'the cramped monotony of my life grinds me away by the grain' (15). Later on, Jasper will apply this operation to Neville – intending to 'to wear his daily life out grain by grain' (Dickens 1996, 225). Bazzard's lowly position as manservant 'rubs against the grain' (214), according to Grewgious, who remarks of himself 'I am a hard man in the grain' (Dickens 1996, 113)."

story is written. In an uncanny rendering of his “inner” self, Dickens writes to his friend, “Oh, my dear Forster, if I were to say half of what *Copperfield* makes me feel tonight . . . I should be turned inside-out! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World” (Forster 1966: 2.98).³¹ One might say that *Copperfield* wrote himself, and in doing so wrote Dickens, whoever either of them might have been.

Indeed, Dickens registers an anxiety of passive narration in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), which I discuss in chapter 1.³² In that novel, narration lies always just in the corner of the eye, at one remove from the figure ostensibly describing the events of the plot, betraying an anxiety of authorial passivity represented in the figure of the child who thus represents that very anxiety. But for James, such passivity is the ideal toward which the author strives, displacing narratorial authority at every exchange. Thus Maisie, as the central site of exchange in a novel, whose events originate both within and external to her mind, is the representative of art itself—of the nexus at which reader, author, character, and event merge. Only from sites of telepathic exchange can narrative proceed, and at these sites, authority—origin—is never ascertainable. Finally, in McCullers’s literary representations of the artistic impulse, its offspring is delivered through virtually telepathic channels rendered as the sound waves of music. Importantly, the origin of the

³¹ This quotation, incidentally, is omitted from the *David Copperfield* section of Forster’s original 1872 text. In that text, Forster was concerned with underscoring the mistake in identifying *Copperfield* too closely with Dickens, thus such a quotation was likely determined counter-productive to one of his primary aims. Also interesting to note given my alignment, to some extent, of Dickens with James (who in no way viewed Dickens as a skilled presenter of the inner self) is that ten years later, W. C. Brownell’s review of *The Portrait of a Lady* in *Nation* included an observation that characters’ “secretive natures are turned inside out for the reader’s inspection” (*Nation* 2 Feb. 1882: 664). Grahame Smith describes Dickens’s increasing eschewal of public attention to his personal life, which began with his early concealment of his boot blacking days in “The Life and Times of Charles Dickens.” Importantly, so engaged was Dickens with his readership that he included the “Shadowy World” remark in the prefaces to both editions of *David Copperfield* (Project Gutenberg).

³² This anxiety of passive authority again resembles that of H.D. and Yeats, who were unsettled by the “passive and medium-like— . . . in their terms, the ‘amorphous,’” to which they responded with a “geometric vocabulary” (194).

sound waves is literally and metaphorically unknowable, originating both within and external to the characters who simultaneously hear and write. Hearing, moreover, is a part of visualizing, music giving artistic shape to thought, producing that consciousness “disengaged from the self” that Cameron reveals as “an intersubjective phenomenon.” The intersubjectivity in McCullers is that of so-called self with other and conscious with unconscious self, a shared consciousness pictured “Right here in this corner of the eye. . . . You suddenly catch something there” that fiction, if not the world it represents, makes possible (MW 548). And on its arrival at the level of consciousness, as I will show in chapter 4, the artistic vision reflected back to the subject gives welcome shape to the images of experience.

I take seriously Phelan and Rabinowitz’s caution that there is “serious disagreement about whether we should be talking about authors at all, especially about authors as . . . well, authorities on or even designers of texts whose designs are of any significant consequence for interpretation” (*Narrative Theory* 30, elipsis in original). What I hope to have illustrated is that the authors *themselves* insist on this very lack of authority. The creative process is not about an author actively plumbing the well of the unconscious from which stories proceed: it is about passively allowing that which exists simultaneously within and without—the defining characteristic of all telepathic impressions—to somehow find its way into the reader’s mind, and telepathic effects make this possible. As Michael Naas observes, “The categories of activity and passivity are seriously threatened by telepathy” (84).

Crucially, the inherently mimetic status of telepathy as this thesis will deploy it is indivisible from its effects, for it always implies a witness—someone who perceives the

act, explicit or implicit, and determines that shared consciousness is in play—and the reader is often that witness. On the fictional plane, a character who witnesses a telepathic act calls attention to the uncanny, destabilizing nature of witnessing one character's innermost thoughts expressed by another. Dickens's Septimus Crisparkle in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) offers an exemplary case when he finds himself witness to a telepathic connection between John Jasper and Neville Landless. Referring to Edwin Drood, Neville claims that he would have “cut him down” had Jasper not been there to prevent it, and moments later, Jasper confirms the past danger, claiming that Neville would have “cut him down.” “Ah! His own words!” Crisparkle thinks, revealing his sensitivity to the connection, and drawing our attention to Dickens's fascination with telepathic phenomena such as mesmerism and clairvoyance. Interestingly, when Jasper tries to *make* a witness of Crisparkle, uttered language proves the site of dissimulation. We are quite sure, as chapter 1 will concede, that Jasper is responsible for the murder of Edwin Drood. In order to claim his innocence before Crisparkle, Jasper attempts to coerce him: “‘You are my witness,’ said Jasper . . . , ‘what my state of mind honestly was, that night, before I sat down to write, and in what words I expressed it’” (85). We can be fairly sure that the diary of which Jasper speaks quite literally bears false witness to the events leading up to and including Edwin Drood's disappearance. Similarly, the following chapters will demonstrate that language in James, Faulkner, and McCullers often dissimulates, emphasizing the authoritative value of telepathic impressions.

Most importantly, on the extrafictional plane, we, the readers, are leveled with the responsibility of witnessing: we have to judge whether or not the coincidence of thought between two characters, or whether moments in which the events of plot that correlate

with thoughts and visions a character has previously had in the discourse, can or should be read as instances of telepathy or clairvoyance. And sometimes even more is required of us, for thoughts shared by two characters participating in a telepathic “dialogue without words, speech” is rarely explicitly revealed, and it is up to us to fill in the gaps (AA 88). The images and language we use to do so are the outcome of telepathy: in other words, mimetic telepathic acts are always to some degree extra-fictional events—what Royle describes in *Veering* as the “anachronicity . . . , apparitional magical thinking-writing, the ghosts, the vertigo and vertighosting that *only happen to you*” (102, emphasis in original). In this regard, the telepathic always requires the reader to make ethical, historical, and ideological judgments about the fiction *before* he or she can determine the truth value of telepathic readings.

As witness to the telepathic act, then, the reader enters what Faulkner’s Darl Bundren refers to as “a kind of telepathic agreement” which renders her spellbound by the very telepathic effects she helped to produce (AILD 134). As I will explain in detail in chapter 3 entitled “Controlling Quentin,” what so debilitates Quentin Compson is his status as both intradiegetic character and extradiegetic witness to the events of the fiction that he has himself helped to author. Though J. Hillis Miller writes specifically of Henry James, the following passage could apply to the ways in which all of the authors in this thesis encourage their readers to determine the truth of an implicit event, to make ethical judgments, and to respond accordingly:

I must carefully sift the evidence, read between the lines, put two and two together. The effect is to make me read carefully (or it should be). . . .

As in all such cases, I am myself on trial. I am in danger of being unjust, insensitive, or inattentive. I may have missed something crucial. James excels in putting the reader in that situation. . . . If [the narrator] behaved badly, how should he have behaved? . . . How would I have behaved in his place? And of course beneath all that, or around it, I am judging James, who I know is the author of the tale I am reading. Can I trust him as a moral guide, as someone who tells the truth about the human situation?

. . . I think [this putting of the reader on trial] can be said to be a general characteristic [of James's stories]. In each story by James the characters behave in a certain way and the story comes out in a certain way. The reader is asked to evaluate that behavior and that outcome. I must then . . . pass judgment on the protagonist's decisive, life-determining act, or, one might better call it, death-in-life-determining act. (14-15)

The activity in passivity associated with authorship therefore applies, as well, to readers whose relationship to the fiction authorizes them to witness what the text doesn't articulate.³³

³³ In this sense, my approach to critical analysis accords with that of Peter Rabinowitz and James Phelan: "In explaining the effects of narrative, rhetorical narrative theory identifies a feedback loop among authorial agency, textual phenomena (including intertextual relations), and reader response" (*Narrative Theory* 5).

Knowing Children

The fictional children I discuss gather telepathic effects around them, effects that reverse conventional ontological boundary crossings as they move back toward their narrators who are no more conscious of their own fictionality than are the characters they know. In *Veering*, Royle's emphasis on the reciprocation legible in Rabinowitz and Phelan's "feedback loop" make of the novel a sort of telepathy machine whose every impression moves between maker and receiver—author and reader included—rendering them both at once. Importantly, these telepathic effects hang around fictional child figures, enabling them to absorb and influence the mental pictures of other characters. Thus read, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* has Helena Landless influencing her narrative by entering the minds of increasingly impotent power figures, rather than the reverse. It emphasizes Maisie's discourse-shaping telepathic intrusions of which her narrator is ironically unaware, mistakenly imagining Maisie as his double though it is in fact he who turns out to be hers. It insists on Quentin Compson's sane discovery that he has at once analeptically and proleptically authorized the heinous narrative of fratricide he constructs in the shared mental space of Henry/Bon/Shreve/Quentin. And it has Frankie Addams, on divesting herself of the limitations conventional childhood has placed upon her, seeing the artistic potential—the beauty—that the imagined subject position of childhood can hold.

In chapter 1 of what follows, I focus on Charles Dickens's Paul and Florence Dombey in *Dombey and Son* (1846-8) and on Helena and Neville Landless in his uncompleted *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in order to demonstrate how the figure of the child challenges conventional ideas about omniscient narration and about authority more

generally. If this child has a centuries' old knowledge—innate, ineffable, and indispensable—what sort of pressure does that place upon both the child and the adults surrounding her? The “old-fashioned” epithet that apparently reveals the naming person's control over the child winds up connoting precisely what it purports: a disquieted awareness of that age-old knowledge the child possesses,³⁴ as well as a more pressing knowledge of what adults attempt to conceal. Thus the child figures as the invisible hand the narrator famously invokes to uncover what Victorian England would sooner bury (661):

[I]f the moral pestilence . . . could be made discernible . . . Then should we stand appalled to know, that where we generate disease to strike our children down and entail itself on unborn generations, there also we breed, by the same certain process infancy that knows no innocence, youth without modesty, or shame, maturity that is mature in nothing but suffering and guilt, blasted old age that is a scandal on the form we bear. . . .

Oh for a good spirit who would take the housetops off
. . . . (DS 701-2)

As innocent as she might appear to be through Wordsworth's eyes, this child is equally all-knowing, uncanny, unsettling, her timeless knowledge pressing itself into the contours

³⁴ Shuttleworth observes, “Paul is not an incarnation of the pure wisdom of innocent childhood, living in harmony with nature, but rather a distinctly social and unnatural product of his environment. In his creation of this ‘old-fashioned’ child, Dickens drew together a variety of strands from contemporary culture: there are echoes of the Wordsworthian child of ‘We are Seven’ and of the child from Evangelical tracts who was ‘too good for this world’ and so destined for an early death. He is also, however, directly engaging with educational and psychological debates about child development which stretch back to Rousseau” (114).

of the texts she inhabits. Starting with her tendency to unsettle the adults she encounters, the child's telepathic influence results in a destabilization of the conventions that guide adult behavior, ultimately changing the behaviors themselves.

If Helena Landless's chronological childhood occurs before we meet her in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, it is not because she spends an actual childhood there. In a novel whose plot relies, by Edmund Wilson's account, on a "machinery" of "telepathic powers," the quiet but powerful female figure—both "girl" and "woman"—has no possibility of childhood in the conventional sense of the word (Wilson 81; MED 47, 52). However skillfully Helena might transmit, she also receives, and her powers of perception, like those of all the child figures that "lurk" among the novels I discuss, annul whatever promises childhood might have held out to her (AA 15). But she is undaunted. The promises of childhood—happy endings, playing, winning, unknowing—linger among the dark impressions with which adult minds have deformed her thoughts. And so she transmits when the time is right, and the promise of a happy ending is hers to shape in the minds of her readers. Dickens's death may have terminated physical inscription, but as Cloisterham reveals, entombment has no bearing on communicability.

In chapter 2, I perform a close narratological analysis of the telepathic effects that give shape to Henry James's Maisie Farange and the novel she inhabits in *What Maisie Knew*. These effects make of her text the telepathic reading-writing machine Royle imagines with Maisie at the nexus of its ever-reversing impressions. Like all literary child figures, Maisie invites fantasy and speculation. Her youth is anticipatory, and yet, dependent as she is upon guardians, stories, and inheritance, she points inevitably to a past James's fiction will increasingly visit by occult means. She also embodies a mute

invisibility that conceals a perceptive presence: hidden around corners, in tall gardens, under tables, or in plain sight, the child figure gathers much more than she ought to know, misguiding Pemberton in “The Pupil” (1891) and sending Miles and Flora’s governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) into virtual hysteria.³⁵ She absorbs fugitive information by means other than the medium of language, for her vocabulary cannot yet answer to adult lexica. The telepathic mode enables fiction to obviate those limitations, imbuing children and “innocents” such as Milly Theale with the very knowledge that undermines their conventional status as such; thus, child figures are often telepathic, and telepathic effects can often be traced to children or so-called innocents, forcing readers to encounter them on the unsettling, counterintuitive grounds on which Maisie’s narrator, for instance, never quite finds his or her footing. It makes sense, therefore, that the study of the inscrutable child and the study of telepathy emerged simultaneously. In the space of the literary—birthplace of the uncanny—each benefitted from the development of the other.

The pressure to suppress and repress dark stories and occult knowledge is always threatening to erupt in William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County. Telepathy forces that knowledge into consciousness by distributing scraps of deliberately withheld stories among unwilling children, especially in Faulkner’s early novels. Many of the stories and messages that are obliquely revealed through characters’ thoughts remain untold, unheard, or unwritten, yet the characters’ responses to the knowledge of untold stories generate Faulkner’s primary narratives. What David Minter calls the “art of

³⁵ In Shuttleworth’s reading of Miles and Flora, the innocence of their appearance or expression is a lie the governess is loath to propagate, for “The appearance of innocence . . . becomes the external marker of those missing traces of past experience” that evolutionary psychology imagined was part of the child’s mental composition at birth—one on whom Dickens’s “old-fashioned child,” whom I’ll discuss in chapter 1, depended (218).

concealment,” like the social economy of concealment in James, motivates the behavior of Faulkner’s characters, yet such a concealment fails in the face of telepathy as a stream of unrefusable messages relentlessly floods the primary narrators’ minds (“Faulkner, Childhood” 393). Chapter 3 focuses primarily on *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) in order to demonstrate how the fiction forces those stories into consciousness even as their receivers’ thoughts shape the discourses that deliver them. Telepathic effects make of Quentin Compson, Rosa Coldfield, and Darl Bundren at once readers, witnesses, and authors of their own storied horrors, committing Rosa and Quentin to suicide and Darl to an insane asylum. By adopting a paradigm of telepathy to understand the fiction, readers begin to recognize a South willfully occulted by privileged southerners, thus challenging early-twentieth-century received ideas about history.

Finally, chapter 4 focuses on Carson McCullers’s adolescent Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), respectively. In both novels, telepathic transmissions are associated with music: the telepathic is rendered musically as the space of artistic invention and transmission in *Heart*, for instance, and as her connection to the music of childhood fantasy fades, so the promise of Mick’s artistic potential seems to recede with it. Promise lies in her ability to come to terms with that recession, picturing the space of art as that of an “inside room” to which her telepathic connection to childhood—a connection from which Quentin wishes to extricate himself—provides access. The contradiction between the unreadable adult mind of the deaf mute John Singer and the open mind of the young Mick points up the increasing unreadability of adult minds that populate McCullers’s desolate South. The

shift into adulthood, then, signals the weakening of telepathic bonds that connect the child to the world, to others, and to the art through which those connections are enacted. Fortunately, what Mick can only trace, Frankie perceives within the space of *The Member of the Wedding*. Ultimately transcending the imagined distance between the child and the adult, Frankie sees childhood itself from the artist's perspective, perceiving the "glittering picture" Maisie's insight promises, Quentin's transmissions obscure, and Mick's articulations sketch. Coming to terms with the loss of telepathic unity, Frankie finds beauty in the clarity of its reflections.

In the following pages, I will trace the telepathic effects and telepathic powers that have enabled a few of the most memorable child figures in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British and American fiction to impress themselves indelibly into our minds. As their minds have been deformed by the messages they relentlessly receive, so our minds have been reformed by theirs. I will demonstrate the manner in which telepathy as a concept takes shape in the context of fiction, and I hope to make the following clear: telepathic impressions, and the force of the weighty knowledge they deliver, often get the better of the child figures that received them. What saves Maisie curses Quentin. What enables Helena misleads Mick. Telepathy is tricky: its agency grows in inverse relation to the characters it controls, wresting agency from characters who know and delivering it to knowledge itself, a vigilante force by which stories will *be known* "like the oldentime *Be Light*" (AA 4).

Much as *The Craft of Fiction* takes James as its central author in the description of narrative that dramatizes, rather than describes, the events of the plot, I take James's Maisie as my central character through whom I display the effects of telepathy in the

formation of literary child minds. Narrative ““piece[s] itself together for Maisie”” in that state of activity in passivity the artist calls home (WK 147).³⁶ That James’s late fiction should take a central role here is also consistent with the general shift in fictional and poetic representations we associate with the rise of modernist aesthetics—aesthetics that relate closely with what I will call the “poetics of telepathy.”³⁷ If Maisie, puzzling over those scraps of images and thoughts delivered to her mind without proper frames, is finally able to piece them together into a “glittering picture,” she does so with the hopefulness of a childhood that never was one, likening her to Stephen Dedalus and his namesake (WK 87). But the “jigsaw puzzle picture integers” that puncture Quentin Compson’s mind in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are far more violent (AA 250),³⁸ not only because of the violent South that projected them, but also because of the war-torn world whose fragmentary realities chiseled the aesthetic his mind reflects—what some refer to as the “more real realism” of modernist fiction. To some extent, though, Quentin’s condition also points up the manner in which Faulkner’s fiction is thought to bear many of the characteristics typically associated with postmodernism, as Martin Kreiswirth and Brian McHale have argued, especially given Quentin’s

³⁶ Again, H.D. employs a similar vocabulary, albeit with less passivity, to describe the means by which she hoped to ““piece together’ the elements of her visionary knowledge” (Hickman 191).

³⁷ Geoffrey Hartman’s “maze of modernism” certainly calls our attention to the Maisie who embodies and represents it, as does Astradur Eysteinnsson’s observation that “the major achievement of modernism may have been its subversion of the *authority* of tradition, creating a situation in which the attitude toward the various traditions of the past becomes to an increasing degree a matter of self-conscious choice and adaptation and . . . [it] may be . . . that modernism negated not only traditional literature but *tradition itself*” (137, emphasis in original). Maisie aesthetically, figuratively, and mimetically embodies that challenge to authority, that volition (“self-conscious choice”) to alter the contours of her narrative, and that “negat[ion]” of tradition and traditional literature. Her negation of tradition inheres not only in the poetics through which James represents Maisie, as I will show in chapter 2, but also as a fictive child who represents those real-world children of divorced parents—both the divorce itself and her active role in creating new and supportive relationships out of the ruins it leaves behind are direct challenges to “tradition itself” in 1897.

³⁸ Though Quentin appears in other narratives, I only discuss these two in the present thesis.

metadiegetic role in perceiving and handling those puzzle pieces.³⁹ I am among those who have difficulty with the modernism/postmodernism binary; nevertheless, it is worth observing how telepathic effects inhere differently in chapters 2 and 3—especially in terms of the metaleptic slips telepathy effects in Quentin’s textual life—and relating those differences to the apparent features of “modernist” and “postmodernist” fiction. The image puzzle pieces Quentin simultaneously receives and transmits cannot and will not piece themselves together, but will instead remain fixed where they land—unmatched, unwanted, and unframed.

In *The Geometry of Modernism*, Miranda B. Hickman calls our attention to those terms and forms that gave shape to thought and aesthetics in the modernist period. “Insofar as [the geometric idiom] was pictorial,” she observes, it “provided a welcome alternative to what [the modernists] regarded as an untrustworthy and insufficient verbal medium” (9). That Maisie should find a “glittering picture” piecing itself together geometrically, beyond the scope of what words could compass, should come as no surprise. James certainly was among those who pictured the artistic process in geometric terms, writing in the preface to *Roderick Hudson*, for instance, that “Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so” (AN

³⁹ As Kreiswirth puts it, also citing Linda Hutcheon, “It has been long recognized that aesthetic postmodernism challenges much of modernist dogma—the centrality of the subject, the autonomy of art, its alienation from the world, and so forth. Yet, postmodernism just as clearly developed out of modernist strategies, seen most plainly . . . in its ‘self-reflexive experimentation, its ironic ambiguities, and its contestations of classic realist representation.’ Nevertheless, postmodernism’s inherent self-contradictions, unlike modernism’s own, are emphasized to ‘such an extent that they become the very defining characteristics of the entire cultural phenomenon we label with that name’” (“Intertextuality” 110). I will briefly discuss McHale’s observations in *Postmodernist Fiction* in chapter 3. Perhaps most important, viewed through the paradigm of telepathy, *all* novels I treat will be shown to demonstrate features often associated with realism, modernism, and postmodernism alike.

5). If there's a geometry of childhood, it's a puzzle, and the pieces are a great deal too many and too large for their frame.

INHABITING HELENA

*and in the night he called out from his little room within hers
 . . . that he loved her*

Dombey and Son

*What is the Landlesses?
 An estate? A villa? A farm?*

The Mystery of Edwin Drood

“I live a busy life,” drops Charles Dickens’s eponymous hero of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), “and I speak under correction by you readers, who ought to know everything, and I dare say do” (MED 55). Addressing Neville Landless here shortly before his disappearance, Drood unconsciously includes among his readers Neville’s mindreading sister, Helena, as well as the extrafictional readers he attempts to write off with his cavalier inscriptions on the text. The uncharacteristically keen sense of direction that inclines Drood to launch his remark toward the telepathic Neville points to a relationship between the Dickensian child figure and the uncontrollability of creativity and reception. After all, we *do* know everything there is to know about Drood. The doomed hero’s disclosure to Neville thus aligns us with Helena, Neville’s telepathic sister who receives all that her brother hears: “[T]hough no spoken word . . . may have passed between” them—indeed, though they may be physically separated by miles—Helena “very well knows” what Neville says, does, and feels (48). I’d like us to keep Helena and Neville in mind as I turn to *Dombey and Son*’s (1846-8) Florence and Paul Dombey, a brother and sister who enjoy a connection similar to that of the Landless twins. Much as

Helena communicates with Neville from within the space of his mind, so Paul communicates from “his little room within” Florence (187).

Despite his untimely death at the age of six relatively early in the novel, Paul Dombey maintains a persistent influence over the entirety of *Dombey and Son*. Importantly, that influence depends on his relationship with Florence, a relationship that the novel articulates in terms of the physical space they occupy in the Dombey mansion: “And in the night he called out from his little room within hers . . . that he loved her” (187). His much beloved Florence is less person to Paul than place—a place into which he plunges; a mind his is pleased to occupy.⁴⁰ His sister’s is a pleasant, intelligent mind, hospitable and kind, fascinating and domestic, and to it his inevitably returns at the end of its sojourns. Thus in his “wandering speculations” the errant Paul is “never so distressed as by the company of children—Florence alone excepted, always” (110, 127). And as place, Florence is time. Saturday wraps itself back around to Saturday and swallows up the space between, rendering a specific marker of diachronic time a representation of perpetual presence: “Oh Saturdays! Oh happy Saturdays, when Florence always came at noon, . . . Whether it was the great sea shore, where they sat, and strolled together; or whether it was only Mrs Pipchin’s dull back room, in which she sang to him so softly, with his drowsy head upon her arm; Paul never cared. It was Florence,” Paul’s mental excursions into her his most treasured journeys in the novel (185).⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Pictures from Italy* having been written in the two years before the serialization of *Dombey and Son*, the unconscious influence of *that* Italian place on Dickens is worth considering, especially when we consider Dickens’s childlike representation of Italy as the “magic-lantern show” Kate Flint describes in her introduction.

⁴¹ For Nina Auerbach, time is masculine and space feminine (97), but in my reading we find Florence troubling that categorization. Time, after all, is what Dombey wants to advance in Paul’s young life: “he was impatient to . . . hurry over the intervening passages of [Paul’s] history” (109). But of course Dombey fails: “by virtue of his will to conquer time,” Steven Marcus reminds us, “Dombey is destined to be its chief

Paul's aunt Mrs. Chick overcomes her characteristic myopia long enough to offer a surprisingly accurate reading of her nephew: "The fact is," she chirps, "that his mind is too much for him. His soul is a great deal too large for his frame" (113).⁴² Yet in all their vastness, Paul's mind and soul rest in the "little room within" his sister's, the spatiality Florence embodies articulated as always in excess of her brother's, so that it is Florence's vastness that most often determines the breadth of Paul's transcendence (187). Depositing Paul inside the space signified by "Florence," the Dombey mansion thus thematizes telepathy, affording Paul considerable territory in the novel even as it foregrounds the other characters who lay claim to it.⁴³ As Jan Alber posits in "Impossible Storyworlds," "foregrounding the thematic" offers a possible means by which readers consciously or unconsciously naturalize physically or logically *impossible* scenarios (79-82). In order to engage with the concepts I will advance in this chapter, we might indeed view telepathy thematically, but we must do so aggressively enough to permit the thematics of telepathy to influence mimetic possibility. Thus situated, we find insightful child characters—

victim" (318). Yet, while Dombey fails to make time disappear, Florence by her very existence in Paul's life embodies that disappearance of space between diachronic markers of time of which Mrs. Chick inadvertently foretells: "Dear me, six will be changed to sixteen, before we have time to look about us" (159). The markers are still there, and they're located in Florence.

⁴² To explain away his knowingness and remain true to form, she imagines that his new nanny is simply putting ideas into his head. Nothing in the text makes her rationalization believable, least of all that Paul would be inclined to repeat any ideas Wickam might share.

⁴³ Paul's habitation of Florence thus might be read as a response to the market-driven leveling out of a religiously ordered system understood from the outside as something nostalgically possessing an inaccessible inside rich with meaning. This is especially poignant given Paul's association of the power(lessness) of money with the absent mother (I'm drawing here on the work of Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*). By extension, this would suggest that I read Florence as having an exterior as impermeable as her interior is empty ("thought systems . . . which look as though they had something to do with the forms in which our own consciousness is at home, and yet which remain rigorously closed to it" [241]), a reading obviously contrary to the one I'm suggesting. I'm simply acknowledging some of the cultural and economic forces at work in making of Florence an attractive, domesticated space. Also worth observing is the manner in which my reading challenges the otherwise limited spatiality of Paul as character along the lines in which Alex Woloch describes it in *The One Versus the Many*. The telepathic mode fosters the means by which, to appropriate Woloch (who is here describing Milly Theale), "the narrative is *compelled* to pay attention to other characters because they are implicated in [Paul Dombey's] own story," and in Paul's case, this includes the period following his bodily death (21).

variously called “old-fashioned,” “odd,” “curious,” “evil”—extending a mental reach that shapes the plots of which they seem to be victims. Indeed, Paul’s telepathic impressions will influence the text before and after his bodily death, a premonition of which his father voices early on: “I see him . . . in after-life . . . actively maintaining—and extending, if that is possible—the dignity and credit of the Firm” (61).

In *The Burdens of Perfection* (2008), Andrew H. Miller observes that the period during which he wrote *Dombey and Son* found Dickens describing “with greater economy than previously a densely reticulated social network in which individual experience is routed through other people, near and far” (163).⁴⁴ Informed by the forces of communication and industrial technologies of the period, the figurative analogues of literary telepathy that symbolize this “reticulation” are discernable in passages such as the following:

the carcasses of houses, and beginnings of new
thoroughfares, had started off upon the line at steam’s own
speed [like] the electric telegraph There was even
railway time . . . as if the sun itself had given in. . . . Night
and day the conquering engines . . . gliding like tame
dragons into the allotted *corners grooved out to the inch for*

⁴⁴ The modernizing technologies that transported people and money faster and more aggressively (the train, for instance, and an already globalizing economy)—what Miller calls “the ways that modernization transformed traditional lifeways”—are a central feature of such texts as Roger Luckhurst’s *The Invention of Telepathy* and John Durham Peters’s *Speaking into the Air* discussed in the introduction. For Miller, an underlying desire that animates the Victorian imagination is the desire to be known. Thus, in Miller’s reading, shame is in a sense a positive feeling inasmuch as it entails the possibility of another person seeing, knowing the hidden sources of that shame. While the desire to be known and to share experience is always part of the fantasy of telepathy, I find the adults in *Dombey and Son* more agitated by the possibility of exposure than placated by the fantasy of finding their secrets *out*. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, Carson McCullers’s characters desire above all else a visibility of interiors.

their reception, stood bubbling and trembling there, making the wall quake, as if they were *dilating with the secret knowledge of great powers yet unsuspected in them*, and strong purposes not yet achieved. (244-6, my emphasis)⁴⁵

The speed of industrialism, typified by the railroad, parallels that of what Mark Twain at this time conceived as “mental telegraphy” (Thurschwell 20). And these firing engines expand like Paul’s mind and soul with “great powers yet unsuspected,” threatening to obliterate the physical frames designed to contain them. Novelistic passages such as this always point to the mental landscapes Dickens indistinctly sketches. With these sketches in mind, I trace a particular course of Miller’s routing, revealing a common site of exchange—those “corners grooved out” for “reception” and “dilating with the secret knowledge”—in the mind of the child.

So penetrating, for example, is Paul Dombey’s mind that his perceived reception turns his guardians’ proprietary dominion into protracted dysphoria. And the influence across time of the younger Florence Dombey brings her father dangerously close to his self-inflicted end—an end then uncannily prevented by the merging of the older and younger Florences. Looks and gestures from these pensive pupils unease their masters far more than do those of adults. And what is true of Dickens’s lovable characters is equally true of his loathsome ones: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*’s “baby-devil” Deputy, for example, is the only character commissioned with instigating a public display of the

⁴⁵ Jay Clayton’s discussion of the cultural conditions of the 1830s and 40s, as well as Lynn Cain’s, Nina Auerbach’s, Gillman’s and Patten’s, Humphry House’s, and Rosmarie Bodenheimer’s discussions of Dickens’s response to those conditions inform my reading here (Clayton 90-125; House 133-169; Cain 52-90; Gillman and Patten 450-7; Bodenheimer 1-19; 73-135). I am also indebted to John Gordon’s reading of Dickens in and through his fiction in *Sensation and Sublimation*.

otherwise publicly unflappable John Jasper's deepest fear: the fear of exposure itself. Children's minds—or at least what others perceive to be the contents of their minds—in these texts exert transformative pressure on the adult minds they penetrate, as if they hold “the clue to something secret” in the adult “breast As if [they] had an innate knowledge . . . and [their] very breath could sound it” (DS 42). To imagine Dickens's insightful child characters as telepathic is to discover in them a mental reach that has a surprising influence over the novels. The pivotal events of the plot I'll discuss below always occur with a child in mind, the effects of their occupation literal. That is, when adults sense the child *in mind*, they behave as though their thoughts are legible to that inhabitant. To put this into real-world terms, if I think that you know what I'm thinking, then I'll behave as though you know what I'm thinking, and my actions could run counter to what they might otherwise have been. In the world of the fiction, therefore, the child's perceived insight influences adult behavior and thus the shape of the text, threatening to diminish the very boundaries the narrator attempts to establish in his view toward omniscience.

Sensing Children

Little could be more troubling than mind-reading children scattered about if one's inner self is one's most closely guarded possession. Dombey's fear of exposure is palpable in *Dombey and Son*, and though “the world” out there seems to be its object, he reveals that the children within the House pose the greatest threat.⁴⁶ In his discussion of shame, Andrew Miller posits that “we desperately escape from sight even as we imagine

⁴⁶ Henceforth, I will refer to father Paul Dombey as “Dombey” and son as “Paul” in accordance with the majority of criticism on the novel.

others as all seeing,” and in all of Miller’s initial *Dombey* examples, shame is felt most keenly in the presence of a child because her supposed innocence would exacerbate, by contrast, the experienced guilt of the shamed character (170). I would argue that it is the altogether contradictory sense of the child’s *knowledge* in *Dombey* that intensifies shame.⁴⁷ Such is the case when Dombey attempts to deflect Paul’s questions about why money couldn’t save his mother: whether or not Dombey imagines that Paul is reading his mind, Paul’s questions (“what’s money after all. . . . what can it do?” [110]) are posed with an evident sincerity to which Dombey clings. And yet Paul’s queries have the classic markers of rhetorical questions, rebounding off of his interlocutor to reveal that the knowledge they ostensibly seek is in fact the knowledge they seek to impart: nothing. Money can do nothing. Dombey’s visible disquietude during this exchange enhances our sense that Paul knows what Dombey can’t quite comprehend. The conversation about money and the manner in which Paul—like James’s Maisie Farange and Morgan Moreen—expresses himself leaves Dombey “so astonished, and so uncomfortable, and so perfectly at a loss how to pursue the conversation, that he could only sit looking at his son by the light of the fire, with his hand resting on his back, as if it were detained there by some magnetic force” (112).⁴⁸

And if Paul’s interrogation gets Dombey’s back up, his silent scrutiny renders Mrs. Pipchin vertically prostrate in her throne. Mrs. Pipchin, never in the habit of

⁴⁷ The novel is also concerned with representing the oppressive horror of received knowledge “traceable to no place and no person in particular” (Jaffe 8).

⁴⁸ And the list of Paul’s disquieting influences over his father is long: among the highlights are Paul’s incisive questions about money, his troublingly close relationship with his sister (which I’ll discuss at length below), and his illness that inevitably signals death. And yet Dombey’s attachment, however malformed, to his son should not be overlooked. Every turn away from Paul is coupled with an equally, if not more forceful, pull toward him. Helene Moglen’s argument in “Theorizing Fiction/Fictionalizing Theory: The Case of *Dombey and Son*” bears this out.

entertaining her pupils in her strange sanctuary of meats and fires, allows Paul—indeed desires him—to join her in the evening as he intensely scrutinizes her. “[N]ot inclined to talk” to his tutor, Paul finds that silence “answer[s] to his purpose better than conversation”: a “purpose,” I argue, invested in influencing the movements of his guardians and thus the narrative (180). As uncomfortably seated as Mrs. Pipchin might be, the mental supplement Paul provides seems to satiate her in ways her meat can’t. Indeed, in the presence of Dombey’s “old-fashioned” son, his guardians’ postures accommodate a new interiority that betrays their consciousness of a not altogether uninvited guest within (DS 109).⁴⁹

Florence’s influence over Dombey’s behavior is driven by a similar unease.⁵⁰ What Hilary Schor calls her “sympathetic vision” draws its objects into her ken despite their efforts to evade it, and, in a telepathic reversal, turns their gazes around on them: Dombey, for instance, “once attracted, seemed to have no power to turn his eyes away” from his daughter (Schor 54; DS 547). Fixed upon her though Dombey’s gaze remains, Florence, embodied but sylphlike, glides through minds like a passing thought at once gothic and fantastical. As Audrey Jaffe remarks in *Vanishing Points* (1991), Dickens calls Florence a “certain SHADOW, which may go into any place. . . . a kind of semi-

⁴⁹ The magnetic force of Paul’s surveillance is similarly received by Mrs. Pipchin (121-4). For a thorough discussion of mesmerism and animal magnetism in Dickens, see Fred Kaplan, *Dickens and Mesmerism* (1975). I am indebted to Kaplan’s research. For more recent discussions of Mesmer’s well-known influence on Dickens, see Alison Winter’s *Mesmerized* (2000) and Steve Connor’s “All I Believe is True” (2010).

⁵⁰ Julian Moynahan articulates Florence’s extraordinary influence over Dombey rather differently than I will here, in his oft-cited article “Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son: Firmness *versus* Wetness.” Hilary Schor rightly takes to task the inherently masochistic reading of Florence upon which Moynahan’s argument depends (a reading, incidentally, echoed by, among others, Helene Moglen in “Theorizing Fiction/Fictionalizing Theory: The Case of ‘Dombey and Son’” and Kate Flint in “The Middle Novels: *Chuzzlewit*, *Dombey*, and *Copperfield*”). My argument will locate her power over Dombey in the shared mental influence Paul and Florence together exert over their father, foreclosing on the duality masochism entails.

omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature” who, in Jaffe’s words, is relatively “unmarked,” and between whom and the reader there is “scarcely any boundary,” recalling the relationship Drood inadvertently articulates between the telepathic child figure and the reader (Forster 419-20; Jaffe 15). Take, for example, Dombey’s perception of Florence just after her mother’s death, part of which is cited above:

Unable to exclude [the memory of Florence and her mother clasped together on Fanny’s deathbed] from his remembrance, or to keep his mind free from such imperfect shapes of the meaning with which they were fraught, as were able to make themselves visible to him through the mist of his pride, his previous feeling of indifference toward little Florence changed into an uneasiness of an extraordinary kind. He almost felt as if she watched and distrusted him. *As if she held the clue to something secret in his breast, of the nature of which he was hardly informed himself. As if she had an innate knowledge of one jarring and discordant string within him, and her very breath could sound it.*

. . . He would have preferred to put her idea aside altogether, if he had known how. Perhaps—who shall decide on such mysteries!—he was afraid that he might come to hate her. (42, my emphasis)

At this early stage of the novel, the conditional phrasing (“*As if she held . . . As if she had . . . could sound . . . might come to hate her*”) suggests that telepathy is figurative—an

effect of Dombey's fear of exposure.⁵¹ As Dombey conceives it, his fear is embodied by the child who could air the contents of his mind in a soft, familiar chord pitched to crack his icy front; Florence's mindreading endows her with a mental picture of an interior to which its embodiment lacks access, for only Florence can give voice to his inchoate thoughts. As telepathy begins to permeate the language of narration, Dombey's mental response to his fear enwraps the narrator's rhetoric in Florence's thoughtful embrace: describing Dombey's preference for putting the idea of Florence aside altogether as his desire "to put *her idea* aside altogether," the narrator contributes to the telepathic effects of the passage. Victorian as this syntax might be, "her idea" nevertheless starts to look like something Florence has put into Dombey's head. Florence's insight sees the narrator through a syntactical gesture that places her "idea" of the future in Dombey's mind, endowing her father with a clairvoyant vision of the hate he will bear her later in the novel: "he might come to hate her" at the novel's inception becomes "he hated her" near its deliverance (610). In other words, whatever paranoia might have contributed to telepathic effects, telepathic *acts* ultimately shape the text: the figure of telepathy starts to behave literally, and paranoia begets reality. At this later stage, moreover, when Dombey's conditional becomes the narrator's affirmative, Dombey "ante-date[s]" his claim upon Florence's duty in an attempt to nullify the mind-reading act that had inscribed the text with this hate, and thereby tries to assume ownership of an emotion he has never controlled (610). This uncontrollability betrays early in Dickens's career the

⁵¹ Such fears underlay the economy of concealment on which many Victorian social networks relied. A number of twenty-first century critical texts challenge assumptions about Victorian repression, including MacKenzie's *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain* and Matthew Sweet's *Inventing the Victorians*. And as I've suggested, Andrew Miller's reading of shame implies that the Victorian characters he discusses in fact *want* to be found out. In *Dombey and Son*, however, the aligned architecture of mind and home suggests that, at least for Dombey, containment is key.

author's incipient "anxiety," as Robert Patten and Susan Gillman describe it, about the uncontrollability of creativity. Dombey's unease, moreover, betrays to his Victorian readership something of Dickens's interiority.

A vividly public figure, Dickens was at times unsettled by Victorian scrutiny, finally expressing his anxiety in the letter to John Forster that I quote in the Introduction ("Oh, my dear Forster, . . . I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World"). If Florence is "semi-omniscient," a "certain SHADOW," then certainly the "World" Dickens describes—his readers cast in shadow—is at least an unconscious analogue to the mind-reading child he figures in Florence. Dickens's *Copperfield* effect is far more unsettling to Dombey, and the fear it instills surges in proportion to emotions he has difficulty ignoring. Thus, when he witnesses another man wearing mourning cloth in remembrance of Paul following the boy's death—an objective correlative for the father's sentiments worn, if not literally on another's sleeve, then awfully close to it—Dombey is overwhelmed by a sense of violation:

He had seen upon the man's rough cap a piece of new crape,
and he had assured himself, from his manner and his
answers, that he wore it for *his* son.

So! from high to low, at home or abroad, from
Florence in his great house to the coarse churl who was
feeding the fire then smoking before them, every one set up
some claim or other to a share in his dead boy, and was a
bidder against him! (310, emphasis in original)

Likewise, when he's compelled to employ a member of the lower class as Paul's wet nurse, Dombey's emotional distaste is met by an equally forceful consciousness of his desire to conceal it: "For all his starched, impenetrable dignity and composure, he wiped blinding tears from his eyes as he did so; and often said, with an emotion of which *he would not for the world, have had a witness*, 'Poor little fellow!'" (30, my emphasis). He has a witness, of course—many, many witnesses—and I'm one of them. Though Dombey imagines himself "keeping his thoughts and feelings close within his own breast, and imparting them to no one," his readers are always privy to them (773). And as Jaffe observes, our witnessing postures are heightened in the chapter entitled "Dombey and the World": as "The World" turns its gaze upon Dombey's declension, our awareness of our own incursion intensifies.⁵² Understood in terms of their interdependence, then, the thoughts and expressions we have from Dood, Dombey, and Dickens blur the boundary between the reader and the telepathic child figure: Neville, Helena, and the readers with whom they are aligned know, "I dare say," more of Dood than he knows of himself; David Copperfield and his readers expose Dickens; and finally, like his readers—"The World" Dombey attempts to banish—Florence accesses an interiority elusive to her father.

⁵² For Jaffe, the relationship between what is public and what "no one knows" is inevitably tied to the construction of omniscience, which is necessarily defined in negative terms: omniscience is constructed only by way of creating the boundaries to knowledge that characters can't cross (Jaffe leans on Rimmon-Kenan here). The appearance of omniscience results from oppositions—all of which are effects of narrative strategies—that "mark a difference between describer and objects of description" (6). Importantly, Jaffe articulates a sort of fault line between the true inner self and the outer self that is the site of exposure Victorians fear. "True character," she writes, "reveals itself in the incompleteness of a character's control over his or her appearance, and the narrator establishes his power over his characters, just as the characters do over one another, by noting these lapses of control" (75). What's different about understanding this in terms of telepathy is that no such fault line need exist. There needn't be Poe's ticking clock (real or imagined—for either one produces the self-deceiving fault line in the anxious person) or James's crack in the bowl. It is in part for this reason that, by Jaffe's logic, the narrators as I will portray them have less control over the characters they attempt to expose as the texts I discuss increasingly deploy telepathic devices. (See especially pages 71-5 in Jaffe.)

For all her supposed passivity in childhood, Florence is more than assertive: in fact, she cajoles. As she says goodbye to Paul's wet nurse, Polly (a.k.a. Richards), Florence remarks, "I shall come to see you again soon, and you'll come to see me? Susan will let us. Won't you, Susan?" (39). At roughly six years of age, Florence's determination to make Susan let her establish a relationship with Polly is not only surprising, but critical, for the lasting relationship established here between Polly and Florence places the narrator in position to witness a purely mental bond between mother figure and motherless child. From Polly's mind, we have the following perception: "In the simple passage that had taken place between herself and the motherless little girl, her own motherly heart had been touched no less than the child's; and she *felt, as the child did*, that there was something of confidence and interest between them from that moment" (40, my emphasis). At this moment, the narrator's sudden shift from Polly's mind, to Florence's ("as the child did"), and back to Polly's positions him as a witness to a coincidence of thought between Florence and Polly that lacks the full force of telepathy by virtue of the omniscient control the narrator tirelessly works to assert. Polly's is the framing mind, though, and is thus characterized as the point of entry into that of Florence. Her characterization as such then rapidly progresses into the site of clairvoyance that Dombey rightly, though inadvertently, finds in Florence.

The narrator is privy to the proleptic potential Polly embodies clairvoyantly, this time beyond the bonds of blood: "[P]erhaps, unlearned as she was, [Polly] could have brought a dawning knowledge home to Mr. Dombey at that early day, which would not

then have struck him in the end like lightning” (40).⁵³ In his effort to assert narratorial authority over the discourse—to harness control in ways articulated by Peter Brooks in *Realist Vision*, which I’ll discuss below—the narrator quickly claims that his discussion of what Polly could have revealed to Dombey is “from the purpose” and moves on (40). As we know, it is only too precisely “the purpose”; that is, the novel rises to a climax in which Dombey falls to the horrifying discovery of a love in his daughter that lay unclaimed before him his whole life, a fate notoriously awaiting John Marcher in Henry James’s *The Beast in the Jungle*. Deliberately coy and misleading here, the narrator wrests control from a relatively minor character whose thoughts, coincident with those of Florence, have just inscribed the text with a future that ought to come as no surprise to any more careful reader than Dombey.

Miller also subordinates the narrator’s insight into Dombey’s mind to that of Florence, equating the messages she receives with knowledge itself. What follows shows Dombey and Florence communicating in silence, the intensity of their mental connection enveloping their rapt narrator in a telepathic spell:

The old indifference and cold constraint [in Dombey’s regard] had given place to something: what, she never thought and did not dare to think, and yet she felt it in its force, and knew it well without a name: that as it looked upon her, seemed to cast a shadow on her head.

⁵³ Notably, the negative effect that Dombey fears the Toodle blood will have on Paul proves not only to be exactly wrong (her milk was what kept him well for a while), but in fact proves to be of less concern here than the clairvoyance that enables Polly to inscribe the text with Dombey’s near death.

Did he see before him the successful rival of his son,
 in health and life? Did he look upon his own successful rival
 in that son's affection? Did a mad jealousy and withered
 pride, poison sweet remembrances that should have endeared
 and made her precious to him? Could it be possible that it
 was gall to him to look upon her in her beauty and her
 promise: *thinking of his infant boy!*

Florence had no such thoughts. . . .

"I came papa—"

"Against my wishes. Why?"

She saw he knew why. . . . (284-5, my emphasis)

What follows this complicated passage in which the narrator relinquishes knowledge to Florence is the first of the narrator's ministerial choruses, beginning with the repeated phrase, "Let him remember it in that room, years to come" (285).⁵⁴ In what he describes as a moment of "mind-reading" between Florence and Dombey, Miller's reading of this passage challenges those of critics such as Kate Flint, who argues that Dickens's Benthamite approach to narration puts "the narrative voice in position of overviewer, able to see connections between events, or types of personality, or modes of behaviour, which are not, and could never be, apparent to the individual consciousnesses which he

⁵⁴ In "Neonarrative: Or How to Render the Unnarratable in Realist Fiction and Contemporary Films," Robyn Warhol builds upon Gerald Prince's concept of the narratable to establish several categories of what she calls the "unnarratable," employing the term both adjectivally and as a verb, "unnarrate" ("Neonarrative"). Essentially, the unnarratable is that which cannot or should not be explicitly narrated for various reasons, including ineffability and taboo-related restrictions, in realist Victorian fiction. The underreporting the narrator engages in here ("Let him remember it . . .") could be understood as an example of what Warhol refers to as "disnarration," in which the narrator tells the reader what he or she will *not* be telling the reader—at least for now. ("Neonarrative").

represents” (*Dickens* 76).⁵⁵ Instead, Miller quickly tracks over the narrator’s remarks here as “tentative, Florence *knows* what her father feels and thinks: their backlit intimacy is shadowed by the narrator’s contrasting display of distanced uncertainty” (178, my emphasis).⁵⁶ I see Miller, and I raise him.

This passage comes as part of a chapter entitled “Father and Daughter,” the first chapter in the novel written in the present tense, suggesting that what had registered for the narrator as events he had chosen to report from the space of an immediate past have become events of which he is part (266).⁵⁷ In the telepathic instance described above, Florence inscribes the text through her father’s mind (“he might come to hate her”) with a future the novel ultimately retells in the narrator’s words (“he hated her” [610]). Having earlier perceived the threat that Florence’s telepathic insights posed to omniscient narration, the narrator here unconsciously abdicates his throne. The narrator had described the earlier scene (“He almost felt . . . as if she had an innate knowledge” [42]) in the past tense of direct reporting, establishing a conventional distance between himself and the world of the story. In “Father and Daughter,” that future is now, and the teller relinquishes even his supposed spatiotemporal distance. Inhabiting his characters’ world—perforce aligned temporally with them—the now intradiegetic narrator enacts the

⁵⁵ Lest this quotation alone give a misleading representation of Flint’s larger argument, she consistently notes the indeterminacy of Dickens work, though she does so as a function of narrative itself and not of the influence of various consciousnesses—understood mimetically rather than synthetically, to employ Phelan’s usage—in the fiction (*Living*, esp. 12-30).

⁵⁶ Importantly, though Jaffe notes that Florence’s reading of other characters “is not the same as mind reading,” she certainly acknowledges their structural and functional similarities (18). But whether or not Florence can actually read other characters’ minds, as I have observed, the fact that those characters, and especially her father, perceive her as possessing this ability influences plot enough to render telepathy all but provable. In other words, in my reading of Dickens, the functional similarities between telepathy and “semi-omniscience” are what really count.

⁵⁷ Several chapters after this are also written in present tense—“The Wedding” (475); “Contrasts” (513); “The Happy Pair” (540); “New Voices on the Waves” (626)—and the last of these opens with a paragraph that expresses the view from Florence’s mind with as little apparatus as possible.

shadow child's knowledge of the father eclipsing that of his own, succumbing finally to free indirect discourse. The intensely erotic nature of this telepathic bond then results in the narrator's shared ecstatic and troubling return to Dombey's recollection of Paul ("thinking of his infant boy!"). Arrested by the merging of Florence and Paul that reveals what Helene Moglen describes as "the most profound and forbidden longing at the fiction's center" (179),⁵⁸ the narrator recollects himself, recoiling into the reliability of convention and the innocent child it coddles: "Florence had no such thoughts." Alarmed by the intensity of the telepathic bond that threatens to send his characters and the force of their shared knowledge beyond the realm of what he can compass, this narrator quite deliberately casts language into the narratable space of ineffable telepathy only to yank it back into the narrated, thus breaking its spell.

When the text is inscribed with his children's thoughts through Dombey's mind, moreover, the thoughts appear to have originated in their father (consider Dombey's conditional "as if"). Their *apparent* source in Dombey, I would argue, fosters Jaffe's reading of Dombey's changed behavior—modified late in the novel to accommodate the knowledge his children impart—as a return to his "natural" self. But let's consider another possibility: Florence's silent insistence on Dombey's good nature, and Paul's mute resistance to Dombey's bad behavior, form mental impressions with which his children deform and *re-form* their father's mental landscape. Indeed, each step in Dombey's transformation involves an occupation of mind by his children whose shared

⁵⁸ "At a deeper level," Moglen argues, the relations among Florence, Dombey, and her children "gesture . . . toward [one] of the erotic displacements marked by the novel's title" (179). Dombey's daughter masks the object of desire which "cannot even be spoken"—the longing of the father for the son (179). Thus the doubling of brother and sister that Dombey and the narrator together perform here ironically renders Robert Clark's "unsayability" of "Dombey and Daughter" the unsayability of the title itself (Clark 72).

consciousness wins out in the discursive battle to the finish, for their forays into thoughts and lives at pivotal moments in *Dombey* position Florence and Paul to merge thought and plot at the site of their minds.

Inhabiting Children

Paul's thoughts animate the fantastic wallpaper creatures he sees on his fragile meanderings at Blimber's Academy, where, as George Orwell puts it, "little boys are blown up with Greek until they burst" (Orwell 62). Synecdochic representations of present and future loved ones, these wallpaper creatures animate Paul's dull days much as Florence, Walter, and Dombey will animate his fairytale ending.⁵⁹ The visionary creatures, moreover, suspended above the boy upon whom they seize even as he conjures them, bring to mind images of characters suspended above their author in nineteenth-century sketches of Dickens at work.⁶⁰ Paul conceives these new sublime and grotesque forms on his mental staircase sojourns, and his impressions thereof then influence Florence's and Dombey's physical rehearsals of those cognitive steps, which I'll discuss at length below, invoking their flesh-and-blood orchestrator.⁶¹ Indeed, Paul's physical

⁵⁹ Paul Goetsch discusses Paul within the category of the "old-fashioned" child, noting that he is in turns a "real child," a "fairy-tale creature," "an old man or a young goblin," but that he is most importantly a "visionary who has intimations of both mortality and immortality Paul is, then, a grotesque fusion of real child, penetrating commentator, and Wordsworthian visionary" (51-2). As John Gordon observes in *Sensation and Sublimation*, "Michael C. Cotzin, Harry Stone, and others have admirably demonstrated the importance of the fairy tales and other popular entertainments absorbed by Dickens in his early years; no need to duplicate their work" (2).

⁶⁰ See Andrew Miller "Specters."

⁶¹ Little Paul would likely have been the character with whom Dickens identified in his development of Mrs. Pipchin's establishment. Writing "I was there" when he mentions Mrs. Pipchin's, Dickens alludes to his unpleasant time with Mrs. Roylance (qut. in Schlicke 184). Humphry House puts it as directly as Dickens, writing that the author "lived for a time with Mrs. Pipchin," emphasizing historically the manner in which Dickens's characters populated his lived experience—a condition that the sketches to which Andrew Miller calls attention in "Specters" represent (*The Dickens World* 11). As House puts it, "Instead of speaking about real people as if they were fictions, he spoke about his fictions as if they were real people"

absence from the events he influences after his death recalls his author struggling to write of home from Switzerland and Paris: Paul's death sent Dickens wandering the streets of Paris till dawn, calling out from his little room within the narrative that he loved Paul (Bodenheimer 130-1).⁶² In the following section, I'll trace that influence, the narrator's role in advancing it, and Florence's central role in bringing its object to life, for wherever Florence is, so is Paul—dead or alive.⁶³ And as Florence and Paul's love evolves, its

(12). What House describes is thus an early example of the kinds of readings now familiar in cultural studies. "It is proper," observes House, "to ask whether, if it is true that his treatment of social reform is immature and lacking in thought, it may not be one of the main duties of historical criticism to try to explain why . . ." (16). Most compelling about House's reading of Dickens is his interest in how the imperfect relationships readers mistakenly emphasize between Dickens's biography and his fiction point to matters of cultural interest contemporary to the writing (9-11).

⁶² In a letter to Angela Burdett Coutts, Dickens wrote, "Paul is dead. He died on Friday night about 10 o'clock; and . . . I walked about Paris until breakfast-time next morning" and later "It was to be, and I couldn't help it" (*Letters*, V: 9; 16). Whatever his motivation for writing of Paul's death this way, it was part enough of his consciousness for him at least to imagine that Paul's death was a narrative event that couldn't be helped. Dickens's attachment to the characters in this novel he makes plain from the start, and whatever sales value that attachment augmented needn't empty it of all of its authenticity. Indeed, Dickens struggled with a conservative appreciation of capital investment and technological advancement and a deep concern for its effects. A persistent struggle Faulkner shared, though in a different sense.

⁶³ Crucially, the telepathic bonds formed among Paul, Florence, Dombey, and Walter that I will describe in this section are established early and continually reiterated throughout the novel with a common site of exchange in the child's mind. Florence, for instance, stands at the mental interchange between Edith and Dombey, and it is only following Florence's intensely telepathic perception of Carker's evil that the latter's mesmerizing mind-reading reveals in him a double of Dombey. He has been in Dombey's life, manipulating the master's resources for many years in the story, but only becomes an actual threat when the narrator inscribes the text with Florence's vision: "Florence had no remembrance of having ever seen him, but she started involuntarily when he came near her, and drew back . . . It was . . . something in the gentleman himself . . . that made her recoil as if she had been stung" (385). More generally, my reading here contradicts Moglen's perspective that Edith stands "at the boundary between Dombey and Florence" (172). That our perspectives of the relationship among these three can be characterized in virtually parallax terms reveals the shifting emphases among signifiers ("Edith," "Florence") of embodied knowledge in the context of telepathy. The perspectival shift Moglen and I represent as readers, moreover, Andrew Miller observes as a fundamental aspect of moral character development within the fiction: the same birth/death scene following Paul's delivery signifies in parallax terms (though Miller does not use the term) the relative moral fibers of Florence and Dombey. For the compassionate Florence, it is a site of death; for the selfish Dombey, a site of birth (165-6). I would argue, however, that whatever Florence perceives so does Dombey, for her father is certainly not immune to the horror of Florence's mental perception, however determined he is to repress it. Thus officiate the effects of telepathy. Eventually Carker and Edith also communicate by way of telepathic effects, but even Edith and Carker ultimately absorb Paul inasmuch as their connection to Florence entails her brother. Space prevents me from discussing Edith and Carker's relationship in any detail. Of incidental interest is Lynn Cain's observation that to the many self-references critics have observed in *Dombey* we can add the doubling of "Carker" and "Dombey" to produce the requisite CD (85-6).

telepathic nature, replete with all of the qualities a telepathic bond engenders, becomes its defining characteristic.⁶⁴

Paul and Florence's "curiously passive presence" derives in part from the siblings' mental connection, the novel's central telepathic union characterized as a bond of love; thus, what J. Hillis Miller calls an "undifferentiated current of sympathy," I read telepathically (Pattison 90; *Charles Dickens* 149). Reminded by the narrator's melodramatic, ministerial intrusions that religion is for Dickens a worldly affair, we needn't stretch beyond reason to endow love shared by characters in the novel with the scriptural quality of a love that reads minds.⁶⁵ Indeed, the telepathic nature of love as Dickens styles it in *Dombey and Son* is nowhere more apparent than in the love between Florence and Paul. I agree with Schor's reading of Florence as a strong and in many ways surprisingly independent person, but I would contend that her odd passivity persists through the novel's close; they are not mutually exclusive states. That her unsettling passivity endures even in moments of extraordinary independence (given the context and Florence's circumstances) is largely a result of the telepathic effects that surround her and her brother.

⁶⁴ Such a reading, then, undercuts critical views of Florence's love as masochistic. Schor provides a welcome corrective to this frequent reading of Florence's love as masochistic, a reading expressed, for example, by Julian Moynahan and Helene Moglen. Indeed Moglen observes in Florence "a range of masochistic responses" to her father's sadistic expressions of his foreseen hatred, and more recently, Kate Flint tacitly laments Florence's "worryingly masochistic," self-abnegating devotion to her father (Moglen 164; Flint 40). Understood, however, in terms of its continuity with that of Paul, Florence's love begins to resist a masochistic interpretation: on the one hand, masochism is part of a dyadic relationship problematized by this triangulation; on the other hand, if Paul and Florence are united mentally, as Dombey's perception of them cited above affirms, then Paul's in no way masochistic comportment toward his father forecloses on that of his sister.

⁶⁵ Speculation about Dickens's religious beliefs Robert Newsom nicely reduces to the impossibility of determining once and for all what Dickens believed. Virtually all who discuss his possible religious beliefs mention at some point the New Testament he wrote for his children. Most importantly for my purposes, Newsom generously observes that if Dickens in the end looks at best conflicted about his beliefs, such conflict does not necessarily inhere in confusion, but rather reflects the conflicts endemic to Victorian understandings of religion, philosophy, and the sciences ("Goods" 38-9).

The following example establishes early in the novel the telepathic bond that unites the siblings. The impression Florence receives in the following quotation startles her, and she sits bolt upright out of apparent sleep so suddenly as to have the admittedly imperceptive Miss Tox convinced that she remains in a state of half-sleep:

She had risen . . . and the lashes of her eyes were wet with tears. But no one saw them glistening save Polly. No one else bent over her, and whispered soothing words to her, or was near enough to hear the flutter of her beating heart.

“Oh dear nurse!” said the child, looking earnestly up in her face, “let me lie by my brother!”

. . . Florence repeated her supplication, with a *frightened look*

“I’ll not wake him,” she said, covering her face and hanging down her head. “*I’ll only touch him with my hand, and go to sleep.* Oh, pray, pray, let me lie by my brother to-night . . . !”

. . . She crept as near him as she could without disturbing his rest; and stretching out one arm so that it timidly embraced his neck, and hiding her face on the other, over which her damp and scattered hair fell loose, lay motionless.

(64, my emphasis)

Given what we know of Paul's fate, we might attribute the urgency Florence exhibits here to her knowledge of Paul's quite literal, life-saving need of that light touch.⁶⁶ In his time of need, Paul communicates something to a child who has barely seen him above an hour, and the fear of death Paul certainly cannot voice is legible in the "frightened look" Florence wears. After all, in Paul's physical presence, Florence shows no consciousness of her own fears. Moreover, Paul will later rehearse Florence's melting of her physical body into her brother when, following the grim discussion of money with his father, he becomes "child-like" again in Florence's presence and throws his arms "negligently round her neck" as she toils up the stairs in a hauntingly tragic display of sustaining love (113). (That he is "child-like" and not a child is an early indication of the trouble Dickens will bring to the category of the child, a troubling whose final iteration in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* I'll discuss below.) Finally, Paul physically reenacts Florence's movements in the passage above, initiating an exchange rife with telepathic effects.

When Paul lies with Florence by the ocean one day, he softly banishes the other children who "distress" him: "'We don't want any others, do we? Kiss me, Floy'" (128). The erotic overtone of this encounter bespeaks the telepathic quality that connects the siblings, and as the intensity of the mental union increases so does the eroticism of their

⁶⁶ One has to consider Paul's precarious situation in a fatal context. As Lynn Cain points out, even by 1850, the infant mortality rate was still up at 16.2 percent (84). We know today, as well, that SIDS is less common among children who share rooms with siblings. Moreover, we know that SIDS is far more common among babies kept too warm (Paul is toasted "brown" like a muffin [11]) than among those kept in rooms at cooler temperatures during sleep. Indeed, the trajectory of Paul's illness is consistent with current information about infant wellness, for as soon as he is robbed of Polly's breast milk, his health declines rapidly, and Florence's very presence seems to have seen Paul through an infancy he otherwise would not likely have survived.

bond.⁶⁷ Later, Paul will, however innocently, articulate mimetic desire in terms of his pleasure at seeing “how much [the boys at Blimber’s] all admired [Florence] . . . the beautiful little rosebud of the room” (224). (Rosebud is an especially coquettish epithet for Dickens that in *Drood* will have Rosebud eliciting illicit desire from those who should by Victorian standards stand clear.) Falling asleep under the erotic aura of his “Kiss me,” Paul awakens “suddenly,” and like his sister before him, sits bolt upright as though in response to a communicated message:

[H]e listened, started up, and sat listening.

Florence asked him what he thought he heard.

“I want to know what it says,” *he answered, looking steadily in her face. “The sea, Floy, what is it that it keeps on saying?”*

She told him that it was only the noise of the rolling waves.

“Yes, yes,” he said. “But I know that they are always saying something.” (128-9, my emphasis).

The passage subtly conceals the means by which Florence comes to know that Paul is listening to and not watching something, given the thoughtful attention he generally accords objects in his field of vision. He doesn’t wear the vague, imprecise look of a person who hears something in the distance, nor does he wear that Dickensian gaze into the middle distance in a moment of artistic musing: he is “looking,” not staring blankly,

⁶⁷ In *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking*, Pamela Thurschwell discusses the eroticism that accompanied occult communications and gatherings in Victorian England. I’ll address these underpinnings as Thurschwell characterizes them periodically throughout this thesis.

but “*looking* steadily in her face.” And looking at her, he responds, “The sea, Floy,” to what could only have been the mental question, “what *what* says?” Thus, in his supercilious description of Paul as a “little image” of his father “entertaining Heaven knows what wild fancies, half-formed thoughts, and wandering speculations,” the narrator ironically provides an accurate depiction of a young mind whose thoughts wander, half-formed, into his sister’s (110).

In what is often viewed as an overly sentimental death scene (though not by Steven Marcus), Paul finally moves in the direction of those waves with a will that bespeaks his general volition over his mental wanderings, perceived or explicit, leaving his sister behind to enact what Paul could only think. As she haunts the Dombey staircase, Florence’s body wanders, her mind fixed on her deceased brother and her no less absent father: “Not an orphan in the wide world,” bemoans a witness, “can be so deserted as the child who is an outcast from a living parent’s love” (381). A precursor to Faulkner’s Emily Grierson seen from the inside out, Florence treads tirelessly in search of her father’s love, embodying brother and mother on her occult wanderings as she casts on the dark house a telepathic “spell”:

There had stolen solemn wonderings and hopes, arising in the dim world beyond the present life, and murmuring, like faint music, of recognition in the far off land between her brother and her mother: of some present consciousness in both of her: some love and commiseration for her: and some knowledge of her as she went her way upon the earth.

(350, 353-4)

Her thoughts finally project an image of herself as her brother, the dead child: “And now Florence began to think, if she were to fall ill, if she were to fade like her dear brother . . . of that river which her brother had so often said was bearing him away” (384-5). From the narrator’s first description of this region, the “dark . . . sea that rolls round all the world,” he intimates that it is “unknown,” even to him (21). In her recollection of “that river,” Florence reveals what had earlier been restricted to the ineffable impressions of telepathy; it is thus *Florence* who witnesses and articulates what critics often call Paul’s clairvoyant impression of impending death. Importantly, Paul listens here to that “invisible region” into which the novel will soon deliver him.

With this in mind I read Hilary Schor’s observations about Florence: “The movement Florence makes into the city,” Schor argues, “belies the passivity critics have noted in her: she is far from an unworldly . . . creature” (55). In fact, reading his books to tutor him in their meaning, Florence “gain[s] upon Paul’s heels, and [catches] and passe[s] him” (187). Her keener mastery over the patriarchal education their father reserves for his son underscores Florence’s mastery over those objects of the mind and heart in which the novel is most heavily invested and in the service of which its economic metaphors always work. But in considering this particular example of Florence’s ingenuity, we must also observe that Florence learns what she can to help her brother in the interest of becoming a “substitute for one small Dombey” (DS 187); that is, Florence imagines acquiring knowledge that her brother will share at the cost of her individual identity, the “specter of difference dissolving” a desirable guest her movements invite (Keller 106). This is not a new concept: substitutability between siblings in Victorian

fiction is a common trope that reflects the ideology of the period.⁶⁸ And the substitution of one character for another in *Dombey and Son* is an unsurprisingly familiar theme given its many substitutions that include the pervasive implications of Paul's substitution by Florence as the Firm of Dombey and Son's "daughter after all."⁶⁹ Indeed, the "old-fashioned" characterization of Paul is taken to such an extreme that it imagines Paul substituting himself: "he had a strange, old-fashioned . . . way . . . of . . . brooding . . . like one of those terrible little Beings in the Fairy tales, who, at . . . two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted" (109).⁷⁰ Joss Lutz Marsh nicely articulates the manner in which linguistic substitutions (ranging from Miss Tox finishing Mrs. Chick's sentences to the substitution of the male narrative for the suppressed female narrative) are an organizing principle of *Dombey* ("Good Mrs. Brown" 416-17). And in the substitution of Paul for Walter, Helena Michie locates the

⁶⁸ With what Holly Furneaux points out are families of choice, the Victorians provided a foundation for the solid development of same-sex relationships. Furneaux's reading of Dickens in "Families of Choice" is especially concerned with the manner in which likeness (physical and mental) between siblings, especially of the opposite sex, helps to accommodate homoerotic desire by way of intermarriages that bind persons of the same sex (Arthur Hallam and Dickens's favorite poet, Alfred Tennyson, to name one real-life example) to each another through matrimonial sibling bonds. Indeed, as Furneaux observes, Tennyson's representation of the bond his sister's marriage formed between himself and Hallam in *In Memoriam*, *A.H.H.* is remarkable in its comingling of the two men's blood: "Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine" (69). That the Deceased Wife's Sister Controversy—obviously of considerable importance in Dickens's case given his sister-in-law's assumption of Catherine's place in the home following the Dickens's divorce—found its basis for concern in what the Victorian's viewed as a virtually incestuous relationship such a marriage would produce betrays a relationship of equal closeness between husband and sibling of the opposite sex; i.e., brother-in-law. Furneaux nicely articulates the ways in which these concerns are represented in a number of Dickens's novels, though she does not mention *Dombey and Son* or *Drood*.

⁶⁹ Among the texts that recognize the role of substitution in *Dombey and Son* are Nina Auerbach's "Dickens and Dombey: A Daughter After All," Helena Michie's "From Blood to Law: The Embarrassments of Family in Dickens," Andrew Miller's *The Burdens of Perfection* (161-3), and Hilary Schor's *Dickens and the Daughter of the House*. Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds in *Representations of Childhood Death*, in fact, point to the manner in which one child's death can serve as a substitute for another character's life (144-7).

⁷⁰ It behooves us, moreover, to consider this substitution in light of the fear of child substitution Dombey has imagined earlier in the novel. Imagining what would happen if his son were switched with Polly's son at birth, Dombey wonders if he, as an old man, would be able to treat the real son as his own—"would be able to pluck away the result of so many years of usage, confidence, and belief, from the impostor, and endow a stranger with it" (31).

“potentially embarrassing conflict between the fraternal and erotic that underpins [Walter’s] relationship with Florence”: the term “brother,” Michie reminds us, “exiles the erotic” (141; 148). But what if these substitutions aren’t substitutions at all, but rather the foregrounding of a spatiotemporally located embodiment of shared consciousness? What if, for instance, we trace Paul’s errant consciousness in and through other characters in the novel, both before his bodily death and “in after-life, when he is actively . . . extending . . . the dignity and credit of the Firm”? Maybe “brother” doesn’t have to exile the erotic if we try to understand the erotic in telepathic terms.

In the context of telepathic transmissions neither sex nor sublimation are full enough concepts of what characters are able to do with erotic energy. Indeed, Freud’s powerful descriptions of filial attraction’s destructiveness might present an imbalanced picture, a picture Freud might have reframed had he revisited these concepts after his interest in telepathy had deepened. On the one hand, erotic energy that flows between siblings is never going to pass the taboo test, much less an erotic flow of energy that moves between father and daughter. On the other hand, given the erotic nature of telepathic connections between characters, I’d like to suggest that here and in the context of *What Maisie Knew*, which I discuss in detail in the following chapter, the erotic filial tension telepathic connections in literature frequently effect doesn’t always have to be registered as toxic. After all, the unarguable frigidity of Miss Tox is far more toxic than any erotic energy that flows between Florence and Paul; the erotic energy that derives from their mental union is less displaced than intensified between them, sealing ever tighter their bond and producing offspring that reads as narrative.

Despite evidence of Florence's independence retrievable in the pages of *Dombey and Son*, we're still left, as I've intimated, with a vexing sense that Florence winds up in a strangely passive state of matrimonial bliss forged by forces not singularly attributable to her. We can credit this strange and somewhat counterintuitive state of entranced matrimony in part to Paul's reciprocation of Florence's "smother[ing]" love, for a love like this precludes any possibility of Florence transcending the boundaries of the House of Dombey (and the social and economic forces that underlie its system of exchange), keeping her home instead, where she belongs (69).⁷¹ Her escape from the House of *Dombey*, after all, deposits her right back in the House of Gills-cum-Gay, where she had long before begun her journey back to father and brother. Lost at the tender age of six in the streets of London, Florence lands miraculously at the feet of Walter Gay, an employee of her father. He quickly assumes a brotherly role, the depth of which increases long after he returns her to her father, which troubles the romantic affection that blooms between him and Florence. In Michie's view, Florence "authoriz[es] her affection for Walter through Paul's—and specifically through Paul's commands; and turn[s] Walter into a brother and, explicitly, into an earthly substitute for Paul" (142). Once Dombey casts the young, womanly Florence from their house, she finds shelter in the home of Walter's uncle and guardian, Solomon Gills, now gone in search of his nephew. Soon after her residency there begins, Gills returns with Walter whom Florence marries, substituting brother for brother.⁷² By lending primacy to the thematization of telepathy

⁷¹ Robert Newsom observes a Dickensian dichotomy between neglect and "the troubling image of smothering, over-protective love" exemplified in *Oliver Twist* ("Fictions" 94).

⁷² And, like substitutability between siblings, the brother to husband trajectory in Victorian fiction was common. In *David Copperfield*, Agnes calls David her brother for most of the novel—until the end when she marries him.

that places Paul within Florence's mental space, however, we find that Walter is less a substitution for Paul than Paul's second home—a home, in fact, that he has inhabited in the “sea that rolls round all the world” at which Walter has been lost metonymically these many years. That Florence's presence in the house should call Walter back there is unsurprising in light of the fact that Paul lives at once in Florence and at the sea Walter calls home. In fact, when the “banishment” Dombey imposes on Walter threatens to separate him from Florence for good, it is Paul's call “from his little room” that harkens Walter to his deathbed.

Importantly, only *after* Paul's death does Walter begin to perceive himself inside of Florence's mind. Consider, for instance, the following example, marked by the interrogative rhetoric the narrator employs when gesturing toward telepathic bonds:

Had Florence any misgiving of which she was hardly conscious: any misgiving that had sprung into an indistinct and undefined existence since that recent night when she had gone down to her father's room: that Walter's accidental interest in her, and early knowledge of her, might have involved him in that powerful displeasure and dislike? *Had Walter any such idea, or any sudden thought that it was in her mind at that moment? Neither of them hinted at it.* Neither of them spoke at all, for some short time. Susan, walking on the other side of Walter, eyed them both sharply, *and certainly Miss Nipper's thoughts travelled in that direction, and very confidently, too.*

(295-6, my emphasis)

Here, the narrator's rhetorical questions engender unnarrated telepathic communication among Susan, Florence, and Walter, echoes of which we will see in the following chapter among the narrator, Maisie, and Beale with far less apparatus in *What Maisie Knew*:

but if he had an idea at the back of his head she had also one in a recess as deep, and for a time, while they sat together, there was an extraordinary mute passage between her vision of this vision of his, his vision of her vision, and her vision of his vision of her vision. What there was no effective record of indeed was the small strange pathos on the child's part of an innocence so saturated with knowledge and so directed to diplomacy. (145)⁷³

In *Maisie*, James replaces the rhetorical question with the conditional (“if”), and no character witness “confidently” observes the telepathic bond (a confidence the narrator’s “certainly” certainly undermines) between the filially and erotically attached couple during their most intense telepathic exchanges. In the Dickens passage, in contrast, Susan’s “thoughts travel[ing] in” the same direction as those of Florence and Walter bespeaks her role as a character witness.⁷⁴ Though the narrator’s agency over what he chooses to conceal seems to be intact, moments such as this will increasingly reveal not necessarily that his agency is diminishing, but rather that the characters’ telepathic

⁷³ In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton dated 4 February 1872, James writes, “You have always, I think, rated Dickens higher than I,” and then infrequently throughout his career writes of Dickens in ways that suggest a looming influence James would prefer to discount (LL 47). Indeed, comparing himself to Dickens, he suggests that both of them present “a thing by ‘going behind’” many forms of consciousness, but he implies that unlike Dickens, he knew “how he [was] doing it” (67, 68).

⁷⁴ Apart from the obvious play on words, by “character witness” I mean a witness who exists on the same diegetic level as Florence and Walter. The relevance of their diegetic equivalence will become especially important to my argument in the following chapter. I’m drawing from Phelan, who refers to narrators who are also characters within the story as “character narrators.”

connections are encroaching upon it, threatening to land mental strikes on one another as their narrator bobs and weaves. Finally, despite romantic fancies toward Florence that we have witnessed in the privacy of his mind earlier in the novel, Walter attempts to sequester his affections within the realm of the filial:⁷⁵

Walter taking [Florence's hands], stooped down and touched the tearful face that neither shrunk nor turned away, nor reddened as he did so, but looked up at him with confidence and truth. In that one moment, every shadow of doubt or agitation passed away from Walter's soul. *It seemed to him that he responded to her innocent appeal, beside the dead child's bed: and, in the solemn presence he had seen there, pledged himself to cherish and protect her very image, in his banishment, with brotherly regard; to garner up her simple faith, inviolate; and hold himself degraded if he breathed upon it any thought that was not in her breast when she gave it to him.* (294, my emphasis)

Rehearsing the narrative of “breath” that can sound the “mute address” of another that Florence's father had sensed in his daughter's mind, Walter's thoughts in this remarkably Jamesian passage mark a sublimated eroticism that Florence, whose love always entails that of the deceased brother in the house, has by the logic of this passage returned in advance. And this return animates Paul's fairytale ending of mimetic desire realized, his postmortem influence a presence F.W.H Myers will term “telepathy” some thirty-five

⁷⁵ Walter's vision of himself inside Florence's mind will be echoed in Tull's similar vision of himself through Darl's eyes in *As I Lay Dying* (125).

years hence in *Human Personality* (1882). The House whose walls are for Dombey tormentingly permeable Florence willingly embodies, ever responsive to the interminable call of love from the “little room within hers” Paul inhabits. And in his transcendence in and through Florence and Walter, Paul—even if only conceived as the function of memory—is the source of their romantic plot.

Most important, if the idiosyncratic limits of individual characters present the boundary outside of which the narrator positions himself, then Paul’s postmortem transcendence through the ostensible boundary of his little room within Florence can’t help but threaten a similar transcendence of the boundary between character and narrator. For this last boundary is no less permeable than the one Dombey attempts to maintain between himself and the world, himself and his daughter, himself and his deceased son. In this light, I’d like to look closely at some passages that precede what Julian Moynahan calls Florence’s “magical” life-saving reappearance to her father (125). Having haunted the Dombey mansion, retracing night after night the steps his daughter forged, bewildered by his self-imposed loss, Dombey finally makes an attempt on his own life. Just before that attempt, Florence colonizes his mind, and consistent with the spatial relationship the novel has thus far established between her and her brother, Paul breaches with her:

[Dombey] thought of [Florence], as she had been that night He thought of her as she had been in all the home events He thought, now, that of all around him, she alone had never changed. His boy had faded into dust. . . . the very walls that sheltered him looked on him as a stranger; . . .

She had never changed to him – nor had he ever changed to her

And now he felt . . . that between him and the bare wide empty wall there was a tie, mournful, but hard to rend asunder, connected with *a double childhood, and a double loss*. . . . He resolved to stay another night, *and in the night to ramble through the rooms once more*.

He came out of his solitude . . . and with a candle in his hand went softly up the stairs. Of all the footmarks there . . . he thought . . . oh was there, somewhere in the world, a light footstep that might have worn out in a moment half those marks! – and bent his head, and wept, as he went up.

He almost saw it, going on before. He stopped, looking up towards the skylight; and a figure, childish itself, but carrying a child, and singing as it went, seemed to be there again. . . . [He] pondered the loss of his two children. . . . *He reunited them in his thoughts, and they were never asunder*.

[. . .] Sitting thinking in his chair, [he] saw, in the glass . . . this picture.

A spectral, haggard, wasted likeness of himself . . . Now, it was looking at the bottom of the door, and thinking. . . .

Now it was thinking again! What was it thinking?

(906-9)

In an overarching time warp, Florence, conjured thus, is united with her younger self, and Paul is once again visible in the little room within hers, Dombey's mind inhabited by not one, but two children. The "focalized" character that Jaffe locates in the "semi-omniscient" Florence is traceable on this view to Paul. Indeed, it was a dead Paul emerging in that house years earlier when into Dombey's mind he stole, "A little figure in a low arm-chair . . . springing into the light, and look[ing] up at him wonderingly with its old-young face gleaming as in the flickering of an evening fire" as Florence "followed close upon" that image, sending Dombey "up the stairs to escape" (469). Both within and external to Florence, moreover, Paul belies the masculine/feminine opposition in Freud's formulation: though Florence might at first seem to be the metonymic "snug container of masculinity" Shoshana Felman reads in Freud, Paul rests quietly in his little room within hers "*inhabit[ing]* masculinity . . . as otherness, as its own *disruption*," as the children together disrupt the masculine codes that defined Dombey: "Femininity, in other words, is a pure difference . . . and so is masculinity; as signifiers, masculinity and femininity are both defined by the way they differentially relate to other differences" ("Rereading" 42). And just as Edith's dominant posture of surveillance and manipulation is swept from her by Florence's influence (a circumstance Florence has foreseen in a clairvoyant dream that has Edith one moment next to her "on the brink of a dark grave" and the next, "what!—another Edith lying at the bottom," representing the figurative death to which Edith will sentence herself), so Dombey's illusory surveillance of the "dealings" of the Firm is

found here under the watchful eye of his dead son and absent daughter, regarding him from the inside out.⁷⁶

When Florence appears miraculously—having conveniently stayed away just long enough for Dombey to rue her loss—Dombey is clutching “something from the dressing table,” held there by a force both alien and intrinsic in a hand Dombey can only observe with the detached amazement of a Lady Macbeth: “how wicked and murderous that hand looked” (910). The passivity we have observed in Florence and Paul becomes that of the father, as the children command his thoughts and the act to which they give rise. The series of passages cited above thus also mark a shift in Dombey from father to son, a role he will play through his final act; the transition to the site of telepathic exchange involves a transition from adult (father) to child (son). In an uncanny displacement of the mental with the physical, Dombey’s thoughts of Florence draw her wordlessly to him, and she stays his hand bent on suicide: where before she had saved an infant brother, she now saves the father become son. But embodying and mentally uniting his children in the passages cited above, “rambl[ing]” through the house and rehearsing the wanderings that began in Paul’s mind, cannot make of Dombey a conventional “child”: on the contrary, Paul and Florence’s “double childhood” admits no child, for their so-called childhood exists here *only* by virtue of the adult mind they inhabit. The narrative of their young lives is inscribed here by the destruction that haunted them from the first, so Dickens enacts the foreclosure on childhood his London decrees.

⁷⁶ In *Dickens in Cyberspace* (2003) Jay Clayton discusses the importance of the panopticon in the development of early-nineteenth-century conceptions of information and dissemination (61-3). Here, the industrial technology of the panopticon shudders beneath the childlike gaze of a child who sees the future. Indeed, Edith is captivated by Florence and feels “herself drawn on towards” the girl in sleep as Florence had earlier been drawn to her brother (475). Edith’s “death” in the novel is of course figurative, but it will be to the girl and the girl alone that Edith asks to be imagined dead, and by Victorian standards, she is.

Producing Children

As I close my discussion of *Dombey*, I would like to suggest that Paul has a hand in Dombey's near-death experience, especially in terms of its visibility to Florence and to us. That Paul creeps into his mind when Florence is ostensibly its object is key to understanding how the occult forces that fascinated Dickens played a role in his conception of children as sites of telepathic influence. In Jaffe's words, we might say that Paul represents "omniscience's contradictory need to be at once inside and outside character [and . . .] conflate and confuse narratological and characterological functions" (16). The overwhelming telepathic effects of these mental mergings seep into the central consciousness of the story, drawing the narrator into that nether "region" whose characteristics are "unknown" to him. Thus positioned, the narrator has no choice but to present Dombey's view in free indirect discourse at the end of the climactic passage above: "Now it was thinking again! What was it thinking?" Comprised as it is of the narrator and Dombey, it's probably thinking, "We could use a little help from Florence right about now." And so she materializes.⁷⁷ In other words, Florence's ability to influence the narrative is first and foremost uniquely part of lived experience that Paul can only influence from afar: thus, Paul inhabits the space of narratability itself even as

⁷⁷ That the forgiveness and reconciliation between Florence and her father takes place mostly "off-stage," as Schor observes, enhances the telepathic effects of the father-daughter bond. The narrator, inclined to over-write much, leaves this important reconciliation to the reader. Perhaps little or nothing further is said on the matter, in fact, and this daughter, who could breathe the deepest thoughts her father attempts to conceal, has already voiced all that need be said. Her actions substantiate, after all, what her father perceived from the start: she knows his life is in danger and comes to prevent his suicide just in the nick of time. Thus, though the novel "repeatedly stages the daughter's quest for the father's authority," that authority is always already undermined by the fact that her authority over him has been named first (Schor 67); moreover, her life thereafter bears that authority out. Further, Florence's ingenuity, intelligence, and diligence can be understood to represent the other side of Dickens's creative efforts as conjurer, orchestrator and participant-observer we find in the pensive pupil at Mrs. Pipchin's.

he occupies the mind of its sister who lives the narrated (21).⁷⁸ Further, the narrator increasingly loses control over the narratable space Paul occupies, betraying, I argue, a growing ambivalence about ultimately relegating Florence to her confinement as the angel of the house. The ending, after all, is at once what Florence actively pursues and what Paul would have wanted, especially in the context of mimetic desire that he articulates early in the novel: adoration of Florence comes at the end not from Paul's boys at Blimber's, but from the father whose love Florence has relentlessly pursued and the brother, Walter, whose love she makes conjugal, narrative desire now "fleshly desire" with its object in Florence (Marsh 418).⁷⁹

As Schor observes, Walter is drawn back into Florence's ken "as if recalled to life by her presence in [Solomon Gills's] house" following their many-year separation during which Dickens himself didn't envision Walter's return (Schor 59). Note how Schor articulates Florence's influence over Walter: she doesn't write, "by Florence," she writes, "by her *presence in his house*" (my emphasis). Florence's physical presence is what matters: her mental influence an implied but by no means independent source of plot. What is shadowy in Florence is, like all shadows, the result of effects. Shadows are cast, after all, by material objects in a "real" world, and while Florence might at times seem to be herself the shadow, she is equally at other times the material, human object whose movements here eclipse, and there reveal, aspects of the objects it encounters. And

⁷⁸ We might even imagine that what Florence enacts Paul streams in wirelessly from his disembodied region beyond. My reading here is strongly influenced by Richard Menke's articulations in *Telegraphic Realism* of the cultural conditions and scientific intrigues Dickens enthusiastically engaged.

⁷⁹ In Joss Lutz Marsh's excellent reading of *Dombey* in "Good Mrs. Brown's Connections," she articulates the various ways in which Dickens and the narrative enact a Freudian suppression of the female narrative. Here, I'm offering an alternative reading by which female desire gives rise to narrative desire and its fulfillment. Importantly, Marsh locates the ultimate possessor of desired knowledge—the knowledge of story—in the narrative's two pure females, Florence and Harriet Carker, to whom Edith and the Marwoods, respectively, disclose the true secret stories around which *Dombey's* narrative turns.

indeed, in Steven Marcus's reading, that shadow extends its influence extrafictionally: her childhood experiences represent "like Mrs Brown's 'distorted shadow on the wall', [sic] the inner reality of Dickens's experience, and dramatize his need to come to terms with it" (354).⁸⁰ What Paul can only influence mentally following his "bodily" death, Florence can continue to influence with mind and body alike. Thus, where Moynahan argues that Florence, on whom he bestows various angelic epithets (Angel of Death, of the House, of Love) (127), does not interest us "as a human character," I view her as precisely and importantly human—a character who, like Quentin Compson in chapter 3, walks the streets of realism, inhabiting the material world Schor foregrounds in "The Daughter's Nothing," even as her mindreading love connects her to the consciousnesses swimming in the mental sea she inhabits.⁸¹

In this light, we find that the narrative Florence lives out with Walter bespeaks a long-felt erotic attraction to her brother-lover for which she had earlier lacked a vocabulary, and that Paul simultaneously endorses from within the space of her mind and

⁸⁰ Paul's childhood, as Marcus shows, has the same effect, but I'm interested in looking at the embodied, rather than figurative, in Florence here. One recognizes, of course, the Platonic rendering of shadow in most related discussions of Florence.

⁸¹ This recalls Dorrit Cohn's transformations of transparent minds in the introduction. The mysterious region comprised of Heaven and sea Dombey also inhabits, but he so thoroughly denies his residence there that he perceives himself shut out, as Moynahan observes (124). And oddly enough in this topsy-turvy world, up here is down there below the surface of the sea, Heaven and sea equated, mother and daughter at the bottom of the sea, Paul swimming out into it. Consciousness, moreover, is itself the sea, and the characters swim perpetually in what William James will eventually term its "stream." What Dombey fears in Florence and Paul is their ability to make him recognize the House of Dombey for the submarine it is. Still worse, Florence proves that its shell is an illusion: through her he sees into Paul, into his wives, into Polly—always it is Florence who reveals the sharedness of the many consciousnesses through which their little submarine streams. Moreover, as John Gordon realizes, the stream of consciousness is within the mind of Dombey himself—evidenced in a scene I'll discuss at length below—which Gordon reads as a string of linguistic associations that recall Garrett Stewart: "Various . . . influences make him think of the tabletop as a 'dead sea,' which makes him think of the Dead Sea, which makes him think of the Dead Sea fruit that according to biblical and literary tradition turns to ashes in the mouth, which makes him think of his life as having turned to ashes, and so on" (*Sensation* 5).

from the nether region external to her.⁸² Critical reluctance to perceive Florence's desire is part of what I view as a reading of Florence not full enough to account for the richness of her expanse, always in excess even of Paul's, whose soul is "a great deal too large" for his frame. With a few exceptions, including a pleasantly witty one John Gordon interposes in *Sensation* that posits the Toxic Tox against the Flowering Florence,⁸³ the general view of Florence as non-sexual would benefit from a closer look at the eroticism of Florence's melting effects on those around her (Edith, Dombey, Captain Cuttle, Sol Gills)—effects Maisie also induces in *What Maisie Knew*, as we will see in the following chapter (1897). Indeed, much of what these six-year-old, effectively parentless girls experience suggests that at least some degree of erotic energy surrounds them as much at six as it does at twelve or twenty-one, and Walter's substitution for Paul, whose matrimonial bliss produces a second Paul, only serves to enhance this aspect of Florence.⁸⁴ Moreover, the narrator's professions of Florence's innocence begin to take on

⁸² As we will see in my discussion of *What Maisie Knew*, lacking a vocabulary does not necessarily mean an absence of thought but rather a difference in its representation. Just as Paul at six can experience mimetic desire watching the boys at Blimber's fawn over the sister he adores, so Florence at six can experience desire for Walter.

⁸³ "So Dombey," writes Gordon, "without heir after two marriages, is, by deduction among other things, probably a sexual brute, one no sensitive woman could warm to. . . . And all this must be conveyed indirectly, both the nice bits and the naughty ones, of which latter there are quite a few. For instance: Florence, depicted throughout as a fluttering dove, sets sail with her young man on their honeymoon ship, which ship is . . . 'spreading its white wings to the favouring wind.' Hm. Miss Tox, the book's resident old maid, a scissor-wielding snipper of houseplants with wanly romantic designs on the senior Paul Dombey, at one point . . . takes 'the little Paul in her arms . . . making his cockade perfectly flat and limp with her caresses.' Hm, again" (63). Importantly, I think Gordon misses one opportunity his argument sets up nicely. Arguing in general that support in this novel "percolates up," and in accordance, that parasitic behavior is a top-down affair (the wealthy sucking the lifeblood from the poor), he also argues that what must importantly be said in this novel is always found to be in inverse relation to characters' ability to say it. A notable exception to this claim is Susan Nipper's final inability to hold back what must be said about Florence's love for her father. This moment is, in my view, the most authentic and important instance of verbal communication in *Dombey and Son*, and it indeed percolates up. What Susan expresses Dombey only comes to realize when it is almost too late.

⁸⁴ Viewed with the effects of telepathy in mind, Maisie and Florence begin to look more and more alike, as this dissertation should demonstrate. Kelly Hager, too, perceives similarities between them in *Dickens and*

a Shakespearean note of overemphasis and thereby undercut the truth value of their content (435-6). Florence's love is sensual and sexual, fecund and productive, its link to the sea enhancing its eroticism.

Though Florence and Walter's son Paul is conceived and delivered off-stage, so to speak, the significance of his conception while Florence and Walter are *at sea* should not be overlooked, for the physical sea they navigate is metonymically the "sea that rolls round all the world" inhabited by her deceased brother (DS 21). Thus united in a complex sexual encounter that has Florence embodying her dead brother Paul even as Walter acts as that brother's descendent proxy, the eroticism of the trio is essentially consummated in an at once homo- and heteroerotic merging that diminishes the "real, and absolute, barrier" between the sexes Auerbach perceives (103). Thus when Florence sits, hearing and watching the sea at the novel's close, what she utters absorbs a Walter whose identity dissolves into his forebear. Florence keeps Walter in the dark, revealing his dissolution only to us in free indirect discourse that marks the narrator's decreasing agency:

[Florence] "It makes me think so much—"

[Walter] "Of Paul, my love. I know it does."

Of Paul and Walter. (811)

A less sexual being than Florence, Walter remains remarkably insensitive to his embodiment of Paul and is thus less mildly pedophilic predator than outnumbered prey. As unsettling as this reading might at first seem, it needn't be registered as heinous taboo—properly socialized behavior in the physical world remains intact—but we are not required to relegate it instead to pure sublimation, for Paul is part of any sexual encounter

the Rise of Divorce, though her reading, quite distinct from mine, is limited to circumstantial likenesses that center on a reading of Mrs. Wix with which I disagree (Hager 135-6).

in which Florence (or Walter, for that matter) is engaged, and in this case he is both progenitor and progeny. The birth of baby Paul at the end of the novel is the birth of his visionary father's conceived fairytale ending.

For Moynahan, that ending moves the narrative from “complexity to a watering simplicity” (127). Indeed, Paul and Florence's narrative offspring takes after Paul, playing out the simplicity of a small boy's mental vision (“paul” meaning “small,” “humble”), a vision that colors much of Dickens's fiction—a central consciousness of childhood that gives rise to caricature and phantasmagoria.⁸⁵ And this vision finds in baby Florence (Florence's daughter) the apple of Dombey's eye, the wandering girl (her mother) tucked neatly back into the house where, this time around, she is sufficiently adored by father and husband alike. Moynahan's reading is in one sense understandable: Florence seems to arrive at a childhood that had foreclosed upon her when she was, in fact, a “child.” The idealistic dreams to which childhood should ostensibly give rise are realized only in chronological adulthood, Paul's “little room within hers” projecting the phantasmagoria of his and her combined dream world. No doubt this is partly because her chronological age contributes to Florence little or none of the cynicism we would expect such a life to incite. But it is also because Paul—neither child nor adult—still shapes discourse from within the space of Florence. And once recast as the child the novel has heretofore cast off, Florence finally provides a hiding place for her father, as well.⁸⁶ Father, like son, finally comes willingly to occupy “his little room within” her house.

⁸⁵ I'd like to thank Tabitha Sparks for her astute observation that such a central consciousness could have much to do with Dickens's inability to move past his blacking days at the warehouse (1824). In this view, we might imagine his warehouse days as Dickens's primal scene.

⁸⁶ For Schor, this recasting is a restoration, but perhaps this is more a product of the reminiscent effects Paul creates than a description of Florence's journey.

Father merges structurally with son, and the thoughts Paul has impressed into his father's mind finally disperse and shape the whole of the father in the image of the son. What Jaffe views as a return to his "natural" self we might thus imagine as *Dombey's* assumption to his begotten self, a biblical reading not unfamiliar in Dickens scholarship.⁸⁷ In another sense, then, Moynahan's assessment disregards the complex relationships and events that have made its apparent simplicity possible. The "miracles" Florence performs are in Moynahan's view "all arranged for her by the intrusive author," but I think we might also imagine that they're all arranged for her by Paul, whose influence over the narrative is consistently apparent—again, even if registered as a function of memory—and whose final nudge fosters an ending he could only relish from the sea at once internal and external to Florence that reflects "omniscience's contradictory need to be at once inside and outside character" (Jaffe 130). From this perspective, Florence functions less as the agent of rebellion "appropriated by the categorical form of male desire," whom we might perceive in characters such as Edith Granger and Lady Dedlock, than as the agent of narrative appropriated by the liminal form of childhood fantasy (Moglen 175).

Again, Gillman and Patten suggest that Dickens was threatened by the uncontrollability of creativity (457). The child as unbounded creativity would seem to offer a site into which the narrator deposits that threat. In Florence, the threat passes into *Dombey's* mind, out into the streets, into the space of self-knowledge personified by Edith Granger, and finally returns again to domestic space. But Paul is in that space, threatening its domestication in the embodied, female character. What's more, Paul is

⁸⁷ This reading bears out what Newsome argues Dickens "might" be doing: i.e., literalizing "in a weird way Wordsworth's formula . . . 'The Child is the Father of the Man'" ("Fictions" 96).

beyond that space in a sea of death the narrator can't name, try though he may to harness its revelatory potential. So far, I've made several assumptions about this narrator and his inability to read what some characters see in other characters' minds. I've discussed instances of telepathic communication between characters in which the narrator does not figure. I've relied on Jaffe's description of Dickensian omniscience in which "The novel's omniscience attempts to naturalize itself by thematizing the secret observation of others," including those of the reader (88). I've also looked to Andrew Miller's observations about Florence's mind-reading ability shadowed by the narrator's uncertainty. But in each case, we can make the conventional assumption that the narrator purposely underreports, "unnarrates" in Robyn Warhol terms, or simply dissembles in order to serve a particular function. For example, even as the narrator longs for that angel to lift the rooftops off of the houses, general consensus is that he is doing just that. Moreover, if Dickens is helping him, the narrator remains ignorant of his own fictionality and therefore of the author who is, in fact, the only angel/daemon at work. So the question is, how ironically can we read telepathy?

Not as ironically, I'd like to suggest, as the narrator might think. If the realist novel is, as Peter Brooks argues in *Realist Vision*, analogous to a dollhouse the child manipulates in an effort to exert control over *a* world, if not *the* world, then Florence and Paul might be read as the narrator's unconscious attempt to displace that desire for control into the minds of his mindreading children: Paul, the Asmodean "gentle spirit" who couldn't embody conventional childhood even in life, takes the rooftops off of the houses and shows us his little toy world. The limits of narrative omniscience are unconsciously displaced into Paul in that nether region toward which the narrator

maintains an ironic posture of unknowing. But as Garrett Stewart has shown us in *Death Sentences*, that unknowing is legible less as irony than as one of the defining characteristics of the space of death. Thus, by establishing a relationship to Paul that is internal to his mind but external to it following death, the narrator creates a fissure through which his omniscient control leaks out toward the telepathic, old-fashioned, spectral Paul.⁸⁸ Though the narrator might intend his protestations of limited capability to be ironic, Paul's established telepathic relationship with Florence, along with the central role of the spirit world in Dickens (read the unconscious, the world of projected characters, or the world of actual spirits) that Andrew Miller observes in "The Specters of Dickens's Study," troubles that irony, and the narrator hovers dangerously close to being one of those human characters Paul embodies ("Specters" 328).

To be sure, narrative omniscience's attempt to naturalize itself by "thematizing the secret observation of others" fails as soon as we read those secret observations telepathically. In the context of literary telepathy, therefore, the impossibility of the conventional child starts to look a lot like the impossibility of the omniscient narrator: both are epistemological constructs defined by boundaries that are no boundaries at all, but rather sites into and out of which knowledge streams by way of other characters, and as Edwin Drood posits, readers and authors. If Florence is unable to "outgrow that darker childhood" that is no childhood at all, what I finally wonder is whether Florence fails to write her way out or whether her author fails to let her, burdened as he is by that growing

⁸⁸ I am indebted for my formulation here to Joss Lutz Marsh's discovery of the "cracks" in the Dombey mansion through which the woman's story leaks out.

anxiety of uncontrollability the child represents (Schor 68; Gillman and Patten 457).⁸⁹

Happily, whatever freedom Dickens robs from Florence in *Dombey in Son* he bequeaths to Helena Landless in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Writing Readers

Robert Newsom observes that Dickens shows signs of “being progressively troubled by” the precocity of children. The dramatic mutability of age and age-related markers in his final uncompleted novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, is just such a sign, which points up the foreclosure on childhood telepathic communications authorize (98). Briefly, the novel, which takes place in a town called “Cloisterham” based on the Rochester of Dickens’s youth, unfolds as follows: Rosa Bud and Edwin Drood, orphaned in childhood, have been promised to each other in marriage by their parents. Until they are of age and able to marry, Rosa remains in Nun’s House under the legal guardianship of Mr. Grewgious, and Edwin is left under the guardianship of his uncle, John Jasper, the cathedral choirmaster. Also orphaned are Helena and Neville Landless, twins from

⁸⁹ The sometimes overwhelming inclination to equate Dickens with his narrators has lent to the study of his work good reason to discuss an implied author, that troubling conceptual entity whose relationship to the text and to the author has given rise to continuous debate since Booth introduced the concept in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. On one side of the argument, we have those who value the designation in light of its resistance to notions of authorial intentionality even as it accounts for some of the structural norms or codes a “second self” (Booth’s term) might be responsible for contributing to the text. On the other side of the argument, we have those who are troubled by a number of problems the concept creates, including those of intentionality and of the overlap between a construct that somehow has to be at once produced *by* the text and extratextual. To quote Phelan, who draws on Nünning, “if the implied author is equivalent to the whole text, and if the implied reader is also a textual fiction, then the implied author is either equivalent to or a subsumption of the implied reader” (*Living* 42). Though excellent, seminal readings such as those of Steven Marcus and Edmund Wilson serve as reminders that we should resist conflating the author (as opposed to cultural conditions) with the product of his work, I nevertheless find myself inclined to adopt Nünning’s suggestion to do away with the implied author and talk exclusive about the narrator, the text, and the author for the purposes of this closing section. Despite my decision here to discuss “the text” and “Dickens,” I agree more generally with Phelan’s suggestion of an implied author who is a “streamlined version” of the author (45).

Ceylon who appear in Cloisterham early in the novel. Helena moves into the Nun's House, and Neville falls under the guardianship of Septimus Crisparkle, minor canon and friend of John Jasper. The "mystery" of the novel lies in the disappearance of Drood after a reconciliation dinner Jasper is to have hosted for Neville and Drood following a fight between them. Because Neville coincidentally journeys outside of Cloisterham on the morning Drood is found missing, suspicion for Drood's murder falls on him, and he is essentially exiled despite his acquittal on the basis of insufficient evidence. As the novel launches into its next major phase, we are transported between Cloisterham and London, where Neville has taken up residence, followed shortly thereafter by Rosa who has left Cloisterham for fear of John Jasper's mesmeric sexual advances. I agree with the generally accepted assumption that Jasper has murdered Drood, and my analysis will thus proceed according to that intended ending.⁹⁰ More importantly, my analysis will relate Dickens's "trouble" with childhood precocity to the "anxiety" Gillman and Patten discern, and I will argue that in *Drood*, Dickens finally came to embrace the former's intrinsic narratability, however anxious that embrace might have made him.

Pursuing a psychological approach to character in a thematically and literally "unfinished" text, Dickens left *Drood* (like "The Signal-Man" [1866] and *Our Mutual Friend* [1864-5], his last completed novel) radically open to interpretation, marking his final step toward the kind of psychological realism Henry James would work to perfect.

⁹⁰ The volume of criticism dedicated to resolving the issue of what "actually" happened is impressive. I am indebted those with whom this reading agrees, including Margaret Cardwell, Edmund Wilson, Wendy Jacobson, and a host of others, whose arguments rely in most ways on the evidence of Dickens's biographer and friend, Forster, his original illustrator, two of his sons, and his daughter, Kate Perugini (see Cardwell, intro; Wilson "Two Scrooges"; Jacobson "Friend" and "Genesis"). But I am also indebted to the careful arguments such as those of John Beer and David Parker, which take all of the evidence into consideration but nevertheless remain convinced that Edwin is still alive (see Beer "Apartness" and Parker "Redux").

Indeed, age, knowledge, and gender are functions of mind rather than body that serve to undercut expectations about idealistic—as against admirable—womanhood in *Drood*.⁹¹ Moreover, *Drood* enacts the communication of knowledge as a function of mind over media more explicitly than *Dombey*: stories lurk everywhere in *Drood*, liable to dart out at any instant and inhabit receptive minds, much as Dickens himself imagined his characters darting out and attaching to his.⁹² As Edmund Wilson puts it, *Drood* presents us with “a whole machinery of mystification: of drugs, of *telepathic powers*, of remote oriental cults,” and those telepathic powers are most beneficial to the characters suspended somewhere between innocence and experience (81, my emphasis).

Telepathy permeates this novel, confused messages emanating from the very structures that trouble Cloisterham’s fractured minds: “Fragments of old wall, . . . convent, and monastery, have got incongruously or obstructively built into many of its houses and gardens, much as kindred jumbled notions have become incorporated into many of its citizens’ minds” (13). The means by which Edwin and Neville’s fight is made known among the girls at the Nun’s House, for instance, exemplifies the manner in which story itself lurks among the ruins and presses into the minds of village citizens, taking to

⁹¹ Edmund Wilson early observed that Dickens’s commitment to exploring the mental relationships among his characters was troubling to critics attached to the social commentary they had come to expect from the Inimitable (69). As some critics have noted, however, the problems posed by opium addiction can be read as social commentary.

⁹² In his seminal essay on *Drood*, Wilson reports Dickens’s sense of having images such as that of a corpse he had seen “popping up among the people and things he encountered and sometimes compelled to him to leave public places . . . And now . . . he jokes about his ‘murderous instincts’ and says that he goes about the street feeling as if he were ‘wanted’ by the police” (79). The concept of stories being at once a function of telepathic transmission and coming from the very objects characters encounter reflects, as Andrew Miller observes in “Specters,” ideas about the unconscious prevalent at the time. As Miller notes, “Dickens’s characters were regularly pictured as occupying the same ontological field as their author . . . the residents of the imagination have become as perceptible as their creator” (328).

its logical extreme the House of Dombey's impressions on its residents and on the "The World":

By what means they knew that there had been a quarrel between the two young men over-night, involving even some kind of onslaught by Mr. Neville upon Edwin Drood, got into Miss Twinkleton's establishment before breakfast, it is impossible to say. Whether it was brought in by the birds of the air, or came blowing in with the very air itself, when the casement windows were set upon; whether the baker brought it kneaded into the bread, or the mailman delivered it as part of the adulteration of his milk; or the housemaids, beating the dust out of their mats against the gateposts, received it in exchange deposited on the mats by the town atmosphere; certain it is that the news permeated every gable of the old building before Miss Twinkleton was down, and that Miss Twinkleton herself received it through Mrs. Tisher, while yet in the act of dressing; or . . . of sacrificing to the graces. (64)

Impressed into characters' minds from the ether, from inanimate objects, from the inert yet sentient world, the means by which this story spreads bespeaks the impersonal pressure of the stories Cloisterham attempts to bury (a pressure Faulkner will exaggerate in the following century—more on that in Chapter 3). Indeed, it is the dead and fugitive knowledge entombed in the city's crypts that their keeper, Durdles, seems to suck from

very stones he turns: “Durdles comes by *his* knowledge through grubbing deep for it, and having it up by the roots when it don’t want to come” (35, emphasis in original). So forceful is storied knowledge’s will to “out” that characters as preposterous as the “jackass” Sapsea are endowed with clairvoyant articulations. Claiming that there will never be a railway to Cloisterham, Sapsea is proven right by the narrator: “marvellous to consider it has come to pass” that no train ever comes *to* Cloisterham, but rather passes it by (41).

But the only characters capable of harnessing and exploiting the explosive power of the narrative’s sequestered messages are either children or childlike—the text has a hard time deciding which.⁹³ The eponymous Drood, for instance, is defined by his boyishness, though in Drood’s case, boyishness is not indicative of telepathic perception: first introduced to the fiction as “young Drood,” a “boy (for he is little more),” Drood is soon revealed to be nearly of legal age (6; 7). The following catalogue of characters, in contrast, employs mindreading powers in service of “the good”; they are either young-adults defined by the peculiar characteristics of their usurped childhoods, or adults whose enactments of childhood innocence are their defining behaviors. The “young” Helena and Neville Landless, who are inevitably scrutinized on the basis of a childhood that impossibly stretches into young adulthood in the span of a single journey from the East into Cloisterham, are examples of the former, while “Mr. Crisparkle, Minor Canon, fair and rosy,” whose “bounding—indeed coercive—innocence” Eve Sedgwick observes in *Between Men*, represents the latter (MED 47, 5; *Between Men* 185).

⁹³ This indecision reflects the conditions of the period: as Shuttleworth observes, “The concept of a child, with reference to age, was decidedly elastic in the nineteenth century, shifting markedly according to context” (10).

Neville's first speech suggests that the twins are around thirteen, having run away from their guardians when they were seven and then "four times in six years" total, followed by a very short stint (perhaps days, perhaps weeks) with Mr. Honeythunder, who accompanies them to Cloisterham (47). And yet they seem closer to twenty largely as a function of their "old-fashioned" qualities that troublingly include their Eastern, "un-English" characteristics. Helena is described as a "girl" and as a "womanly," "noble creature" with "resolution[,] power," and a "masterful look" (47; 52). And though Neville's behavior seems adolescent enough, his articulations trouble his chronological adolescence, the "pupil's" diction and syntax "uneas[ing]" Crisparkle with its uncanny brand of adult knowingness that anticipates Henry James's Morgan Moreen: "There was *that* in the tone of [Neville's . . .] speech which made the conscientious man to whom it was addressed, uneasy. It hinted to [Crisparkle] that he might, without meaning it, turn aside a trustfulness beneficial to a mis-shapen young mind and perhaps to his own power of directing and improving it" (45-6, emphasis in original). And despite his thirty-five years, Septimus Crisparkle's "radiant features teemed with innocence," rendering him as somehow more childlike than the "baby-devil," Deputy (37). The first actual "small boy" we encounter, Deputy is in fact the only character whose surveillance the evil John Jasper openly fears:⁹⁴ "What! Is that baby-devil on the watch there!" (109). And finally, the vague hints as to Drood's age in the opening scene of the novel frame a "childish" picture of his fiancée, Rosa Bud, neither girl nor woman, hanging on Jasper's wall (6). In short, Dickens's last novelistic attempt replaces childhood with childishness—category

⁹⁴ His collapse under the keen insights of the angular Grewgious, however, reveals his awareness that the lawyer could expose him.

devolving into catachresis in a psychological novel whose “machinery” of “telepathic powers” makes childhood obsolete.

To set the stage for the role telepathy plays in troubling the category of childhood, I’ll start by describing early scenes that characterize the present Edwin and Rosa in terms of the chronological children whose parents sealed their marriage promise. At the beginning of the novel, we find Jasper drugged in an opium den, and shortly thereafter we find him alone in his living room beneath Rosa’s portrait. The “unfinished picture of a blooming schoolgirl” above Jasper’s chimneypiece depicts a figure neither child nor adult, its unfinished quality suggesting that its as yet unknown creator either cannot or will not fix her age beyond what her expression, “quite childish, almost babyish, touch of saucy discontent, comically conscious of itself,” affords (6). In the secret knowledge the portrait would seem to conceal, parallels to Dickens’s own life (the portrait, like its novel, is doomed to remain unfinished; the girl, more sister than lover, is held artfully captive in a childishness Dickens’s memory of Mary Hogarth reified) are difficult to ignore.⁹⁵ So powerfully personified is Rosa’s portrait that it is not the girl’s likeness, but rather the discontent legible in its expression that has a “consciousness of itself.” Drawing thus on the eighteenth-century gothic convention of the living portrait, the picture of “Rosebud” captures qualities not womanly and beloved but naughty and coquettish that the original will uncomfortably embody. As we will learn, Drood is responsible for this reproduction of “Pussy,” as he calls her, and the failure of his attempt to control her in artifacts and epithets is established under the ironic gaze of her painted double.

⁹⁵ In his 1996 introduction to the Everyman edition of *Drood*, Steven Connor ruminates on the pervasive thematic and structural relevance of the unfinished.

Once Drood enters the room, the self-conscious discontent of the girl's likeness alternately permeates the objects of her gaze, such that she seems to be regarding first Edwin through Jasper's eyes, ("Fixed as the look the young fellow meets [in Jasper], is, there is yet in it some strange power of suddenly including the sketch over the chimney-piece" [7]), and then Jasper through Edwin's eyes ("The younger man glances at the portrait. The elder [Jasper] sees it in him" [10]). This is inscription, whose origin is always unclear: does Edwin inscribe Jasper with the look Rosa wears or does Rosa through her portrait inscribe Edwin with discontent he feels emanating from Jasper? Does it matter? After all, her discontent immediately functions in reverse. Any potential fix on the site of discontent is rerouted through a new reader/communicator. This mediated perception, a literalized version of the rerouting Andrew Miller describes, enables the text to enact within the fiction the reading effects telepathy produces between itself and flesh-and-blood readers. And what is most extraordinary about the impression the girl makes in advance of her actual appearance in the novel is that the "discontent," legible to the interlocutor of the man who wears it, defines her relationship to each: she proves to be discontent with her marriage promise and discontented by Jasper's sexual aggression. The picture, therefore, is the first of the narrative's objects to communicate telepathically, and in this case it communicates the mental disposition of its original by inscribing that disposition upon her fiancé and would-be lover. When the actual Rosa makes her first entrance, she is characterized as a veiled "apparition"; "wonderfully pretty, wonderfully childish, wonderfully whimsical . . . The apparition appears to have a thumb in the corner of its mouth . . ." (14-16). Portrayed later in the figure of Raymond Chandler's childishly devilish Carmen in *The Big Sleep*, the child figure here, thumb in the corner of her mouth,

has despite her diminutive air already embodied first Jasper then Drood in the spirit of her portrait. This helps to explain her strange observation, “It *is* so absurd to be called upon!” (16, emphasis in original). Both conjured spirit and willful possessor, Rosa is called upon to perform her childhood role, but while assuming that role, the young apparition will announce with womanly awareness her refusal to uphold the demands of the dead by breaking off her engagement to Drood.

Indeed, encouraged by Grewgious to do what is best for her despite her inherited engagement, Rosa importantly breaches the contract, suggesting a kind of independence that could lead to future growth. Although that potential might indeed be inferred by this event, I have difficulty finding in Rosa the self-possession necessary to influence plot implied in Wendy Jacobson’s “Freedom and Friendship.” In my view, the irony of the portrait’s power consists in the fact that Rosa represents one of those vacuous angels into whom Victorians deposit their various ideologies that James Kincaid describes in *Child Loving*. Unlike her portrait, the actual Rosa is ever receptive but utterly unable to transmit messages delivered to her fragile frame by Jasper and his rival, Helena. Neither the pure, unidirectional transmission of mesmerism Jasper deploys, nor the reception of messages Rosa embodies, is sufficient: to contribute to the good, characters in *Drood* must also transmit. Thus, though Rosa is decidedly more self-aware and assertive than her portraitist and, as Michael Slater has argued, could come to resemble those Florence- and Ada-like heroines whose devotion and strength unwaveringly support their loved ones, the strength we find in such characters is reserved in the extant *Drood* material for Helena, whose telepathic influence over other characters shapes the plot in ways that

promote Rosa's success (*Dickens and Women* 287).⁹⁶ Helena's influence derives from her ability to receive *and* transmit the mental impressions the text disperses; whether she directs her impressions at other characters—such as Neville—or at the reader—with whom Drood aligns him—Helena transmits, making her the reader's fictional representative “who ought to know everything, and I dare say” does.

Inhabiting Landlesses

Helena Landless, neither child nor adult, is less one of Henry James's “monstrosities” than an embodiment of knowledge secreted behind the veil of decorum age increasingly weaves over the lives of the young. Recalling Florence's climactic merging of child and adult, the womanly child that Helena embodies wields power over other characters, instilling a hope of success within those she loves. “Helena,” writes Slater, “is something new” for Dickens, “a mingling of elements that have hitherto tended to be strongly opposed to each other in Dickens's characterization of the sexes. It is on Helena that he focuses the reader's attention . . . [:] a beautiful dark woman possessed of inner strength” (288). Indeed, what's striking about Helena's preeminent position in the narrative is her uncertain filial origin, especially given her conventionally problematic racial markers.⁹⁷ And yet she is possessed of the “absolute hallmarks of the author-approved feminine: a quickness to sympathize lovingly with others of her sex, and sisterly devotion to her brother” that also characterize Florence (288). Along Slater's mingling lines, I will argue in this closing section that Helena stands as the narrative's

⁹⁶ Though I do think her future happiness in matrimony is likely, I can't quite agree with Slater's assertion that Rosa's inevitable “attainment of true heroic womanhood . . . seems plain enough” (287).

⁹⁷ For Sedgwick, these markers are most troubling in their attribution to Jasper, in whom they bespeak the homophobic underpinnings of empire (*Between* 185-192).

primary site of mergings and exchanges, though in my reading, they are mental. Helena subverts convention in her refusal of the boundaries upon which it relies. And the subversion for which Dickens owes Helena the greatest debt is the one that refuses narratorial omniscience, embracing instead the unruliness of narrative and the mindreading audience she represents.

Our first sense of Helena's ability to read minds comes from her brother, who explicitly describes their relationship in telepathic terms. Explaining to Crisparkle that his opinion of the minor canon is far better than he had imagined it would be, Neville goes on to say that his sister agrees with him entirely. Knowing that the twins have had no opportunity to discuss their opinion of him, the guardian inquires, "Excuse me, Mr. Neville, but I think you have had no opportunity of communicating with your sister, since I met you. . . . May you not have answered for your sister without sufficient warrant?" to which Neville replies, shaking his head,

"You don't know, sir, yet, what a complete understanding can exist between my sister and me, though no spoken word—perhaps hardly as much as a look—may have passed between us. She not only feels as I have described, but she very well knows that I am taking this opportunity of speaking to you, both for her and for myself." (48)

Of one mind with her brother, Helena knows the actions he presently performs. Thus when Drood describes Neville as part of a community of "readers" in the quotation above, he includes not only readers in general in what had become a more frequent, synthetic moment in Dickensian narrative, but also the sister with whom Neville forms a

mental dyad.⁹⁸ As I will show below, Crisparkle must also be included among those with whom Neville will share exclusively mental impressions (55).

Helena's mental receptions move beyond filial ties, as well, enabling her to save Rosa from a fate worse than death that recalls the potentially life-saving touch Florence alights upon her infant brother, as well as her wildly well-timed appearance to Dombey. In a famous scene in which Jasper mesmerizes Rosa, the girl is defenseless against his plain aggression.⁹⁹ Playing the piano as Rosa sings, Jasper regards her with the intimacy of a sexual embrace, sounding a chord that critics generally agree advances the trance into which he would plunge her: "As Jasper watched [Rosa's] lips, and ever again hinted the one note, as though it were a low whisper from himself, the voice became a little less steady, until all at once the singer broke into a burst of tears, and shrieked out, with her hands over her eyes: 'I can't bear this! I am frightened! Take me away!'" (51). Helena's countenance in what follows displays early in the fiction her dauntless assimilation of telepathic impressions. First, Helena acts:

With one swift turn of her lithe figure, Helena laid the little beauty on a sofa Then, on one knee beside her, and with one hand upon her rosy mouth, while with the other she appealed to all the rest, Helena said to them: "It's nothing; it's all over don't speak to her for one minute, and she is well!" (51)

⁹⁸ My use of "synthetic" is drawn from James Phelan's use of the term in *Living to Tell About It*. Essentially, a synthetic technique calls attention to itself as such, and thus produces particular self-reflexive effects.

⁹⁹ See Sedgwick, *Between Men*. Fred Kaplan convincingly describes the mesmeric skills Jasper exhibits in *Dickens and Mesmerism*, though as we will see below, I read Crisparkle's presence at the Weir as less a product of Jasper's influence than a product of Crisparkle's own telepathic powers.

Helena knows precisely what's going on here, and more importantly, knows that shutting Rosa's mouth is literally and figuratively imperative: she perceives Jasper's threat and intercedes physically to buttress a girl with an unstable consciousness. Next, Helena reveals: asked if she would be afraid of Jasper under similar circumstances, she replies that she would not be afraid of him "under any circumstances," projecting bravery in the face of apparent danger while tacitly mocking Jasper's psychic inferiority. Importantly, it is only following these revelations regarding Helena's telepathic prowess that the text's description of the "girl" shifts to that of a "womanly," "noble creature." The obviously primitivist characterization here is important, but its racial tenor, though still problematic in general, sounds as positive a note as any such epithets are capable of communicating.

Helena's unlikely role in influencing plot becomes increasingly important, and its triangulation with Crisparkle contributes to the central role the supposedly naïve muscular Christian will play in shaping the plot, his exceptional Englishness ironically confounding conventional racial stereotypes.¹⁰⁰ We first hear of the telepathic twins in a letter from Mr. Honeythunder to Mrs. Crisparkle, Septimus Crisparkle's mother (39). When they make their initial appearance in Cloisterham, the narrator describes them as "very dark, . . . she of almost the gipsy type;" both

untamed . . . a certain air about them of hunter and huntress

and yet withall a certain air of being the objects of the chase,

¹⁰⁰ Robert Newsom doesn't mention Crisparkle in "Dickens and the Goods," and thus misses an exception to his observation that of the "remarkably few" examples of "admirable clergy, . . . those who are exemplary are far removed from the center of power" (43). His stereotypical characteristics liken him somewhat to Jasper in David Faulkner's "The Confidence Man: Empire and the Deconstruction of Muscular Christianity in 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood,'" endowing him with as much power as any text rife with telepathic effects can spare. However, Helena is at least as influential as Crisparkle. I also view Crisparkle's source of control rather differently from Faulkner (*Muscular Christianity* 175-93). One can't ignore the link I have made between earthly and divine love, though I am (perhaps ironically) disinclined to read the Reverend Crisparkle's insights in a religious light.

rather than the followers. Slender, supple, quick of eye and limb; half shy, half defiant; fierce of look; an indefinable kind of pause coming and going on their whole expression, both of face and form, which might be equally likened to the pause before a crouch, or a bound. The rough mental notes made in the first five minutes by Mr. Crisparkle, would have read thus, *verbatim*. (42-3, emphasis in original)

What interests me most in this passage is not the characterization of the twins, but rather the telepathic embedding of the narrator's reception of Crisparkle's perception. The narrator insinuates that Crisparkle sends his unconscious racial slur telepathically to the novel *via* the narrator, rendering the latter unable to refuse the telling.¹⁰¹ In so doing, he problematizes the racist tenor of the observations by un-authorizing them. While this looks a lot like what Warhol-Down terms "narrative refusal," it lacks the absence of content true narrative refusals require ("Dickens's Narrative Refusals"). Instead, the telepathic relationship between the "coercive[ly]" innocent Crisparkle and the narrator undercuts the latter's authority: by way of Crisparkle, the text suspends its injunction on narrating taboo, even as it enacts, by way of the narrator, its "antinarratability" thereby announcing its taboo status ("Neonarrative"). Helena's power over Crisparkle, nascent upon Dickens's death but legible in passages I describe below, then sublimates the minor canon's own observations, highlighting the narrator's ineffectual role and confirming the

¹⁰¹ Importantly, this characterization is embedded in telepathic perception, underscoring the conflicting concepts about mind-reading beginning to take effect at the time that on the one hand, imagined mind reading as a highly advanced evolutionary development, and on the other, as an atavistic quality. I'll say more about this in chapters 2 and 3. Indeed, racial markers are important to understanding Helena's and Neville's characterizations. See Myers, Sidgwick.

emptiness of racial assumptions. I'd like to think that this aspect of the text discloses Dickens's growing ambivalence about racial stereotypes.

As Tara MacDonald observes, "racial discourse" in Victorian England "worked as an all-encompassing form of difference that inherently referenced other forms of social diversity," including "perverse class and sexual representations" (48-9). Helena and Neville will both contribute to a subtle homoeroticism in the novel; with MacDonald's remarks in mind, we must consider the homoerotic effects mental minglings bring off in light of their "dark"-skinned agents. Early in their relationship, Neville implies that the origin of thought between him and his guardian is impossible to distinguish, at once part of Neville's will even as it results from Crisparkle's conjuring: "Let us turn back and take a turn or two up and down, Mr. Neville, or you may not have time to finish what you wish to say to me. . . . I invite your confidence.' 'You have invited it, sir, without knowing it, ever since I came here'" (46). The haunting nature of Neville's proclamation takes on an increasingly erotic tenure as the relationship between the "sparkling" pupil and Crisparkle progresses:

"How goes it, Neville?"

"I am in good heart, Mr. Crisparkle . . ."

"I wish your eyes were not quite so large, and not quite so bright," said the Minor Canon, slowly releasing the hand he had taken in his.

"They brighten at the sight of you," returned Neville.

. . .

“If I were dying, I feel as if a word from you would
rally me; if my pulse had stopped, I feel as if your touch
would make it beat again” (154)

On the one hand, given Neville and Helena’s racial markers, the eroticism that unfolds between Rosa and Helena, and more overtly between Crisparkle and Neville, would seem to represent the Victorian England MacDonald describes. On the other hand, however, both relationships—exemplars of loyalty, open-mindedness, affection, and support Dickens extolled—must be counted among those the text goes well beyond sanctioning, providing counterexamples to Sedgwick’s overarching assumption of the text’s homophobia. Inasmuch as his mental bond with Neville automatically extends to Helena, Crisparkle’s erotic relationship to both emerges. In other words, that eroticism, triangulated through brother and sister much as Walter’s is triangulated through Paul and Florence, returns discursively to his relationship with Helena.

Having earlier established himself as witness to telepathic acts within the diegesis, the innocent Crisparkle again serves as a semi-clairvoyant witness in a reverie that confirms the twins’ unity of mind through the technology of the novel. First observing that Neville shares his reading lessons mentally with his sister, Crisparkle soon characterizes their behavior as a form of mindreading: “He thought how the consciousness had stolen upon him that in teaching one, he was teaching two; and how he had almost insensibly adapted his explanations to both minds—that with which his own was daily in contact, and that which he only approached through it” (77). Crisparkle’s thoughts of Helena and Neville stream on as he observes the environs at the Weir. Soon after these reflections, Crisparkle is confronted by the actual pair:

In his mind he was contrasting *the wild and noisy sea with the quiet harbour* of Minor Canon Corner, when Helena and Neville Landless passed below him. *He had had the two together in his thoughts all day*, and at once climbed down to speak to them together. The footing was rough in an uncertain light for any tread save that of a good climber; *but the Minor Canon was as good a climber as most men, and stood beside them before many good climbers would have been halfway down.* (79, my emphasis)

Crisparkle embodies for a moment not only the twins whom his thoughts have called forth, but also the very machinery of telepathy Wilson observes. When he returns to this same place later in the novel and uncovers evidence of Drood's likely murder, he questions, "How did I come here? . . . Why did I come here?" (145). Critical readings of the text generally accept Fred Kaplan's claim that Jasper's mesmerism is "undoubtedly" responsible for Crisparkle's return here (Kaplan 154). But given the receptive and communicative strength that we can trace to Helena, and given the indelible impression she and her brother have made on Crisparkle in this place, isn't it just as likely that *they* brought him here? "[S]omething unusual hung about the place," Crisparkle thinks, and "[h]e reasoned with himself: What was it? Where was it? . . . Which sense did it address?" (145). Indeed, his discovery at the Weir ultimately brings Jasper to justice,

according to Forster, and it is Neville (no doubt with Helena's help, as usual) who brings him there.¹⁰²

Dickens did not yet have the nomenclature of telepathy, but this text was among those giving telepathy its contours. In fact, it says so: “[N]one of us so much as know our letters in the stars yet—or seem likely to, in this state of existence—and few languages can be read until their alphabets are mastered” (160). As fascinated and actively engaged in mesmerism as Dickens might have been, narratives such as “The Signalman,” *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Drood* are at least as telepathic as they are mesmeric; its language just wasn't mastered. After all, Helena is his heroine in both action and mind, and one would not call her mesmeric. Viewed thus, Crisparkle resists readings that reduce him to comic impotence, for such readings disregard his central telepathic role in the psychological mysteries Dickens frames. Indeed, Crisparkle's perceptions portray him and Helena as two of the most complex characters in the fiction even as they perform the synthetic function of demonstrating readerly telepathic effects. With telepathy in mind, therefore, the text affirms the believability of the Helena-Crisparkle match that Forster claimed would have come to pass.

Crisparkle's observations on the twins as he regards the Weir materializes them, extracting them telepathically, as Durdles does his stories, from the very slopes he regards. Neville hosts Helena, receiver of all Crisparkle teaches his pupil, and now the minor canon has “the two together in his thoughts all day.” At the same time, however, they remain dispersed somehow, inhabiting the environs in which Crisparkle is a guest, much as Paul inhabits the “sea that rolls round all the world.” The twins are a landless

¹⁰² Though Neville unfortunately dies in the battle, according to Forster (and others).

place, an oxymoronic space into and out of which transmissions float; their expanse is unfixable but feels somehow like containment. It is fitting then, that on hearing their name, Mr. Grewgious expresses simultaneously their synthetic and mimetic functions: ““What is the Landlesses? An estate? A villa? A farm?”” This echo of Crisparkle’s ““What was it?”” that called him to the Weir evokes the same answer: Helena and Neville. And that these questions come from Grewgious is especially important: though the “angular” man fashions himself as excluded from the world of interiors, Grewgious not only perceives the manner in which “the true lover’s mind is completely permeated by the beloved object of his affections,” thereby inciting Drood’s depressing self-discovery before his disappearance, but he is also unmoved when Jasper lies senseless on the floor on learning that Edwin and Rosa had broken off their engagement before his nephew’s untimely death (138; 205). His posture reveals his perception of Jasper’s guilt, but more to the point, his disclosure confirms his knowledge of Jasper’s motivation for murder (138). Steadfast, Grewgious anticipates—indeed, precipitates—Jasper’s downfall.

That Jasper’s downfall would assist Rosa’s rise inspires Grewgious’s behavior, for he beholds in the girl an image of her mother. Having delivered Rosa to Grewgious, the train seems to have taken her across time: her “apparition,” as it had been characterized early in the novel, comes to Grewgious as that of her dear dead mother for whom he harbors an enduring love. Seeing Rosa in his doorway unexpected, he thinks for a moment that she is her mother’s ghost. And here, criticism on the novel falls victim to its effects: the telepathic effects that locate Helena *within* other characters such as Rosa finally have Helena subsuming the girl altogether in Andrew Miller’s reading of the doorway scene in “Specters.” Drawing from the continuation of *Drood* by the medium,

T.P. James, Miller discusses Grewgious's mistaken impression of Rosa as her mother, but so identified with Helena has Rosa become, so powerful the embodiment Helena achieves, that he confuses Grewgious's love of Rosa's mother for his love of Helena's. Thus, Helena's embodiment of Rosa transcends for a moment the ontological space of the narrative in a reflection of the manner in which "Dickens's characters were regularly pictured as occupying the same ontological field as their author . . . the residents of the imagination have become as perceptible as their creator" ("Specters" 328). Importantly, she accedes to the space of her readers whom she represents. Inhabiting other minds, seeing their world from the inside out—Crisparkle, Rosa, Neville, and literally Datchery as the agent of rebellion—Helena represents her mindreading audience, novel in hand.¹⁰³

Notably, her penetration of Jasper that dispels Rosa's danger (above) is brief and enraging—no surprise that she should prefer not to linger there: he would hardly be a pleasant or hospitable host. Indeed, Helena's habitations bespeak the moral content of the novel, reflected in her responses to the minds she occupies. So it is that her telepathic perceptions earn Helena the subservient narrator's most emphatic endorsement: "There was a . . . gleam of fire in the intense dark eyes Let whomsoever it most concerned, look well to it!" (54). Helena seems to foresee Jasper's guilt before the murder itself is done, thus resting the whole of the narrative in a mind we can generally only trace in others. Indeed, if Helena and Neville so completely understand each other at a distance, we might imagine that Helena's knowledge of Jasper's guilt and whereabouts, placed into

¹⁰³ Due to her having played Shakespearean male roles, as well as Datchery's attempt to conceal "feminine" hands, critics often suggest that Datchery, Jasper's spy, is Helena in disguise. See Beer, Wilson, Parker. I particularly like Beer's observation that Helena would appear in the crypt, dressed as Drood, and incite an admission from Jasper the murderer, though I tend to find it equally plausible that either the Princess Puffer or Grewgious will have that pleasure (145).

her brother's mind, begets Jasper's ultimate exposure.¹⁰⁴ She is the site of mental exchange, the source of insight, the agent of action, and the blurring of boundaries signified by "Helena."¹⁰⁵

The sylleptic paradigm of Stewart's *Dombey and Son* is thematically, characterologically and naratologically enacted in *Drood*, divided consciousness the defining quality of its murderous John Jasper, and the division of a single consciousness the animating feature of its orphaned twins, Helena and Neville ("Dickens and Language" 143).¹⁰⁶ In violent resistance to the ancient drudgery of his role, the recidivist Jasper mesmerizes and manipulates; reading minds with a view to compassion and empathy is reserved for more sympathetic characters in which the division between child and adult is always unstable. Jasper's intentions in mesmerism, voyeurism, and the deployment of spies serve an end against which the novel's moral codes are inscribed, while Helena's and Crisparkle's telepathic perceptions advance plot in support of the novel's ideal ethical model. In this sense, *Drood* resembles *Dombey* in the novel's "attempt to resolve the ambivalence that attends covert observation and to associate itself with the" latter ethical model Helena and Crisparkle found (Jaffe 88). Further, although, as criticism rightly observes, Helena's and Neville's Eastern origin is critical to understanding their role in the fiction, the threat they racially/telepathically represent is sublimated, indeed subsumed, by the moral (and legal) high-ground on which they stand. Importantly, we readers are often the only audience privy to their probity, while highly visible characters

¹⁰⁴ According to Forster, though he is less certain of this than of other later plot developments, Neville will die in the act of apprehending Jasper.

¹⁰⁵ For Wilson, Helena represents Ellen Ternan whose full name was Ellen Lawless Ternan.

¹⁰⁶ And on his departure from Cloisterham, Neville's situation is described in sylleptic terms: "he went whithersoever he would, or could, with a blight upon his name and fame" (146).

condemn them. It is the jackass Sapsea, after all, who is intent upon calling attention to Neville's "un-English[ness]" in an effort to assign him blame, even as the text confirms his innocence.¹⁰⁷ Thus the text, with divided consciousness its defining quality, attempts, as *Dombey* does, to "distance itself from [Jasper whom] it disturbingly resembles" by aligning itself with the preferences of its mutable Helena (Jaffe 88).

How we come to know Helena in all her mutability, more shadowy indeed than Florence, is deeply complicated. We find her via those "reticulations" that Andrew Miller articulates, transcending the boundaries of character that physically distinct figures such as Crisparkle exhibit; detailed descriptions of his fair, naked, muscular body shadow boxing before the mirror are hard to forget. Indeed, he throws feckless punches at the very shadow of the "dark" Helena and all that she signifies: the ineffable, the uncontrollable, the reception and communication of unexpressed impressions—in short, the literary. Helena thus figures Dickens's commitment to a more cryptic, psychological rendering of character than that of which George Eliot, for instance, thought him capable: as I discuss in the introduction, Dickens felt that characters "must shew [their character] for themselves, and *have it in their grain*" (*Letters* 6.87). What's "in their grain" is left to us to decide as the author increasingly surrenders the shape of the text to the *shared* work of his, and our, unconscious.

"Dickens," writes Bodenheimer, "'knew' somehow that he had intertwined" the "Shadows" of others "with his own" in ways that ultimately shaped his characters and his fiction (Bodenheimer 12). The shape of *Drood*, including both its literal and thematic "unfinishedness" and the telepathic perceptions of its most admirable characters,

¹⁰⁷ See Beer, "Apartness."

authorizes an open, writerly narrative that embraces not necessarily childhood, but rather the possibilities of childhood fantasy. A peculiarly open, even unsettled, epistemology of authorship, involving the interdependent relationships among authorial agency, textual phenomena, and reader engagement,¹⁰⁸ becomes a core aspect of Bodenheimer's Dickens exemplified by this last and final novel but traceable to his first "serious" one, *Dombey*. As its exemplary figure, Helena represents an increasing willingness in *Drood* to surrender authority to the authorial audience.

Importantly, both *Drood* and *Dombey* serve as "reminder[s] of how the past can catch up with the present" (Flint *Dickens* 61). *Dombey* is neither the story of the father, of the brother, nor of the sister, but precisely and transcendently all three at once: a narrative conceived in the shared space of their mental union that Dickens calls "love" whose telepathic eroticism comingles, delivering a fairytale ending. According to Steven Marcus, Florence's affection for Walter is brotherly,

nothing more. Yet the alternative to Florence in this novel is the world with its crippling distortions of the sexual will: the frigid, self-destroying Edith, the impotent Dombey, the vicious Carker. Dickens's revulsion from these was so intense that it seems to have passed into a revulsion from sexuality itself. For sexuality implies the will, and to allow Florence anything positive in this regard would be to endow her with will—which is for Dickens always assertive and aggressive. Having a woman for one of his central

¹⁰⁸ See Phelan, *Living to Tell about It* and *Experiencing Fiction*.

characters seems to me in this novel to have been Dickens's unconscious strategy for prolonging . . . the possibility of the life without will, the life of simplicity and of exclusively affectionate feeling. (355-6)

What I hope I have shown is that what Marcus argues is a patent disgust with sexuality as “will” might be an unfortunate attribution to Dickens that his characters belie.¹⁰⁹ Though Helena is young, it is her womanly ability to command others' thoughts that make her adolescence invisible, and that contribute to a darkly appealing sensuality whose contribution to the good outweighs that of Jasper's (whose power certainly must be assigned to the realm of the sexual). And despite Paul's extraordinary influence over Walter before his death, the adventure of Walter and Florence's marriage exemplifies Florence's connection to the real world she inhabits, always presenting the pragmatic element of the Paul-Florence dyad. Moreover, the lens of telepathy brings into clearer focus her resemblance to Helena, whose activity in and through Neville gives rise to some of the most redeeming likelihoods of the plot. Florence is six when we encounter her, and the life her adulthood brings about is legible in those first incidents—her perceived insight into Dombey's mind that colonizes it and produces his epiphany later in life, and her extraordinary landing at Walter's figurative doorstep that eventually lands them together in the same house—rendering the past and the childhood it never permitted inextricably part of the present. Moreover, what Paul will see from his nether sea at the end of the novel is the enactment of a vision the boy would have fancied.

¹⁰⁹ Edith, for example, is certainly not frigidly characterized in the homoerotic moments that bring her and Florence beautifully together at a time when the young woman so desperately needs affection.

This vision is the vision of the so-called child, Paul—a child who is perhaps more childish in death at the end of the novel than he was in life at the beginning. And this vision is the vision of the so-called child, Florence—a child who is perhaps more childish in life at the end of the novel than she was in death at the beginning. After all, Florence has weathered the sea of a world out there, as Paul has weathered the world of a sea out there, so that their story might come to life. The adulterated fairytale ending for which they settle is precisely as naively executed as it had been conceived in a “reticulated” world whose mental connectivity offers no role for conventional children recast as sites of exchange. Together, they’ve done the best they can and their best is pretty good. While I agree with Slater’s description of Helena as a powerful, self-possessed, independent departure from the female characters Dickens had previously held up as ideal, I’m not convinced that Florence and Helena are as opposed to each other as his reading suggests (288-90). We’ll never know for certain the story that Helena, “girl . . . / . . . woman,” might have authored and lived out, but we can be quite sure that its ending would have been a “success.” If, like Florence, she did in fact lose her brother in the name of justice,¹¹⁰ Neville could never have strayed any farther from Helena than Paul strayed from Florence.

“Telling without telling that he’s telling” as Bodenheimer puts it, “is the game Dickens played with his reader throughout his career,” rehearsing, “the simultaneous

¹¹⁰ As a reminder, Forster was fairly certain that Neville died while aiding in the apprehension of Jasper. Allan Lloyd Smith reads this as a means by which to reward Rosa with a more racially acceptable mate in Tartar, though this is itself a questionable argument given that Tartar is described as exceptionally dark, tanned from time spent sailing to mysterious places (“Uncanny Reencountered” 299).

pride and shame in a knowingness that does not want to speak its name” (19).¹¹¹ If such knowingness does not want to speak its name in Florence, it rings confidently through the noise of *Drood* in Helena. Both young women have shaped their narratives with the inscriptions of a usurped childhood—a childhood on which their texts foreclose. I can’t help but think that Boddeneimer is being ironic when she claims that “the emphases” she describes above “are peculiar to Dickens” in a text whose first chapter is entitled “What Dickens Knew.” And what Dickens knew James shows more insistently in the impossibility of childhood Maisie figures. Perhaps childhood can only be rendered in the stories it writes.

¹¹¹ The relationship between *Knowing Dickens* and Jamesian narrative theory is so fundamental as to subsume, with almost traceless perfection, Kristevan intertextuality into the telepathic literary paradigm Nicholas Royle establishes in *Telepathy and Literature* (1990). For Royle, characters are always in telepathic communication with other characters—both within single texts and across different texts—through the authors who record in literature the thoughts and ideas shared among them. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton dated 4 February 1872, James writes, “You have always, I think, rated Dickens higher than I,” and then infrequently throughout his career writes of Dickens in ways that suggest a looming influence James would prefer to distinguish entirely from himself (*LL* 47). Indeed, comparing himself to Dickens, he suggests that both of them present “a thing by ‘going behind’” many forms of consciousness, but he implies that unlike Dickens, he knew “how he [was] doing it” (67, 68). And it is this epistemology of authorship James not only sought to articulate, but wholly embraced, as I suggest in the introduction.

BEING MAISIE

*Somewhere in the depths of it the dim straighteners were fixed upon her;
somewhere out of the troubled little current
Mrs Wix intensely waited.*

What Maisie Knew

*we fellow witnesses,
we not more invited but only more expert critics . . .*

Preface to *What Maisie Knew*

The more time I spend with Henry James’s fictional “innocents,” the more telepathic they seem—Maisie, Miles, and Morgan Moreen spring to mind (“The Pupil”; *The Turn of the Screw*; *What Maisie Knew*). From the inevitable dilemma of *how* Maisie knew what she knew, for instance, comes a tempting question: could she read people’s minds? A resounding “Why, yes!” would of course fail miserably to account for all of Maisie’s ways of knowing in *What Maisie Knew* (1897), but reading Maisie with her virtually telepathic perceptions in mind places her at the center of the plot she “appeared to have been brought into the world to produce,” revealing a great deal about how she feels and experiences the knowledge of other, older characters, and about how an uneasy awareness of that knowledge affects her guardians (WK 47). Despite their haphazard attempts to shield her from them, the contents of her guardians’ minds impress themselves on Maisie’s, hastening the swell of her “expanding consciousness,” and we feel the unease of her adult companions who sense that Maisie “somehow” knows too much for their own good (WK 4, 21, 41, 67). Indeed, the predominant fear legible in the guardians, tutors, and governesses of James’s children—Pemberton in “The Pupil”

(1891), the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), and Maisie's multitude of parents and governesses, to name a few—is that their young friends know precisely what they're thinking. This fear, reminiscent of the fear her father harbors regarding Florence Dombey's ability to read his thoughts, prompts Maisie's mother to exclaim that the child “had better learn to keep [her] thoughts to [her]self,” but “[t]his was exactly what Maisie had already learned, and the accomplishment was just the source of her mother's irritation” (26). And Maisie's guardians are not alone: the narrator, too, is troubled by her telepathic vision. Given to elaborate, vortical phrasing, the narrator describes Maisie's seeing abruptly, uncomfortably: “She saw more and more; she saw too much” (23).

In his preface to the New York edition of *What Maisie Knew* (1897), James posits that Maisie knew without knowing, influenced without “design,” her narrator nowhere to be found:

This better state, in the young life, would reside in the exercise of a function other than that of disconcerting the selfishness of its parents [I]nstead of simply submitting to the inherited tie and the imposed complication, our little wonder-working agent would create, without design, quite fresh elements of this order—contribute, that is, to the formation of a fresh tie, from which it would then (and for all the world as if through a small demonic foresight) proceed to derive great profit. (WK 5)

In this passage, James describes what Maisie reads, what she writes, what she does, what she is. Out of the situations and relations in which she finds herself, Maisie, “without

design,” produces new ties that would benefit her, ties of which she seems to have a “demonic foresight.” Such foresight conjures notions of a spirit, perhaps even of the fallen Victorian angel-child that the focalizing Maisie represents when the novel proper commences.¹¹² Or maybe this demon is the knowing, haunting, future double of the precocious but innocent Maisie that the narrator perceives. Regardless of the tradition upon which we draw to define James’s demon, his claim is inevitably bound up with the “foretaste of . . . death” Maisie will experience late in the novel in a scene I will discuss below (223). For a Maisie capable of demonic foresight, a future self provides her with a vision of that future, glimpses of which she shares with the narrator and with us throughout the novel.

Most important is the assumption in the passage that the Maisie who haunts the preface to the New York edition has always already seen the events which will transpire in the novel we are about to read. This is easy enough to accept in reference to a text that James has completed, published, and reread. What I find peculiar, however, is how it would be possible for such a vision to be part of a “demonic foresight” yet “without design” in any text of narrative fiction. As I will show, Maisie’s foresight—her visionary mode of seeing—dictates the events of plot. Thus, a central, defining aspect of Maisie’s storied character controls discourse by way of clairvoyant visions and telepathic insights rendered as proleptic events of plot, as well as implicit instances of dialogue that influence behavior. In other words, a character in the world of story determines discourse—the “design” of the text—with foresight. What James effectively does in this

¹¹² J. Hillis Miller describes in *Versions of Pygmalion* a kind of resurrection of the dead in which a narrator, including that of *What Maisie Knew*, always participates when recounting past events. As I’ve noted above, moreover, the title inscribes the novel with the past-ness of the text. Indeed, this is now a relatively commonplace description of one of the functions of narrative fiction.

single sentence, then, is attempt to enact the first divorce of the New York edition: the divorce of story from discourse. If visionary seeing places Maisie in the subject position of the artist,¹¹³ then when James imagines her so doing “without design,” he is attempting by way of Maisie to construct that already foreseen course—i.e., the work of the author—as somehow charting itself.

In their different ways, J. Hillis Miller in *Versions of Pygmalion*, John Carlos Rowe in “The Use and Abuse of Uncertainty in *The Turn of the Screw*” and *The Other Henry James*, and Sharon Cameron in *Thinking in Henry James* all suggest that in James we find a covert, if not entirely intentional, attempt to control meaning. For Miller, this manifests itself in an inadvertent creation and reification of ideology that results from a narrative performance of that very ideology, and for Rowe, this attempt to control reception is manifest in the transformation of apparent fictionality into a psychic defense of the author’s “unique insight into and understanding of reality” (56). And yet Rowe and Miller, by the greater logic of their arguments, suggest that in the final analysis James leaves open the possibility of indeterminate meaning. Like Shoshana Felman in “Turning the Screw of Interpretation,” Rowe determines that James’s success is in limiting his own mastery over narrative and, as part of that narrative, the reader as character. Miller, by making of Maisie a Galatea to James’s Pygmalion, allows the work of art quite literally to speak for itself. Miller’s conceit in *Versions*, then, finds its theoretical analogue in Dorothy Hale’s description of the ideological and syntactic underpinnings of this effect in *Social Formalism*. My emphasis on the telepathic effects of *Maisie* presents a different avenue toward a similar understanding of James’s project.

¹¹³ For discussions of Maisie as the artist figure, see Juliet Mitchell, John Carlos Rowe, Alfred Habegger, and Dorothy Hale in “Invention,” among others.

Six-year-old Maisie's parents, Ida and Beale Farange, use their daughter to launch destructive words at each other in a war they continue to wage despite the legal termination of their marriage. In addition to acts of cruelty between her parents, what Maisie sees during the roughly six years that transpire within the novel is each parent's involvement in unsanctioned affairs or conspicuous absences, which eventually result in second marriages: her mother to Sir Claude, and her father to Maisie's governess, Miss Overmore. Soon, Sir Claude and Miss Overmore (now Mrs. Beale) are engaged in an adulterous affair. Because these two have taken far better care of Maisie than either of her biological parents (who will eventually abandon her altogether), they use their relationship with Maisie to lend their liaison an air of propriety. Silenced as this Victorian child typically is, Maisie's sight seems to be all that falls upon these unseemly acts. Thus, when James writes in the Preface to the New York edition, "I should have to stretch the matter to what my wondering witness materially and inevitably *saw*," he is ostensibly speaking about Maisie's silent view of the goings-on—cruel, illicit, sexual, shameful—in the world of adults she inhabits (7).¹¹⁴ Yet, what fills Maisie's consciousness involves a kind of seeing that stretches beyond the material so that her "purpose in the world" comes to her as part of a "deeper prevision" that fills her guardians with an anxiety of exposure (47).

¹¹⁴ While some critical discourse has rightly seized upon the materiality of his claim, the *visionary* aspect of Maisie's way of seeing has been the focus of much criticism, as well, including Christina Britzolakis, Susan Honeyman, Dan McCall, and Robert Martin, to name a few. My reading belongs exclusively to neither the first group nor the second, but rather draws upon readings from the mid- to late-twentieth century, including those by Martha Banta, Sharon Cameron, and J. Hillis Miller. It also draws upon relevant narratological debates raised in the twenty-first century.

Maisie's distant relative, notes Ellen Pifer, refers to Maisie as a "poor little monkey" (31). This characterization of the child dates back at least to Shakespeare from whom Peter Coveney draws the title *Poor Monkey*, a text in which he discusses literary child figures. Rowe notes that the "monkey" classification explicitly aligns Maisie with the Countess and the racial problem this epithet reveals (*Other* 146). That the ability to communicate with children and with animals so often entails representations of telepathic phenomena should tell us something about how such phenomena are designed figuratively to place certain people in regions far removed from discourses of power, figures such as those "dark" others the Countess troublingly embodies, pointing up the now critically acknowledged problem of race in James. There were two schools of thought about telepathy at the turn of the century: for some, it was an ability to communicate without words that human beings had evolutionarily acquired; for others, it was an atavistic, "unevolved" ability to which human beings had lost access over time. Understood atavistically, telepathy would align children such as Miles and Maisie with those primitive "third world" nationals a racist paradigm relegates to England's own figurative backyard (the literal version of which, incidentally, is during this period the dominion of both your pet dog and your "pet" child, as Ida refers to Maisie, in the rising middle class family [Maisie 39]). Indeed, for those who imagined themselves securely in command of the discourse of power, children and the alien figures they represented seeing into one's thoughts would be tantamount to tyranny.

The reader's relationship to the anxiety such children foster in their adult guardians is far more direct in *The Turn of the Screw* and "The Pupil" than it is in *Maisie* as a result of focalization and rhetoric. Viewed through the eyes of the governess (*Turn*)

and Pemberton (“The Pupil”), the gazes of Miles, Flora, and Morgan present minds to be read, decoded, and inscribed by fictional and extra-fictional readers. In *The Turn of the Screw*, for instance, first-person narration, as well as the skepticism Shoshana Felman famously describes in “Turning” as governing our reading of the nameless governess’s testimony, aligns us all the more with her. And “The Pupil” is focalized through Pemberton, excluding us (mostly) from the interior world of Morgan Moreen. Yet despite our lack of direct access to the children’s thoughts, we feel “with” their tutors an uncanny sense that these children penetrate the boundaries of the adult minds they encounter, producing a generally unwelcome, otherwise repressed, self-consciousness in the governess and Pemberton.¹¹⁵ “[T]he mysteries of transmission,” about which Pemberton speculates in “The Pupil,” for example, inform his fear that the boy might prove to be “cleverer than himself”—a possibility, which “figured, to his nervousness, among the dangers” of their relationship (139, 134). Indeed, Morgan, with no degree of subtlety, implies that he sees into Pemberton’s mind with a comical, strangely mature proclamation that he knows the Moreens are not compensating Pemberton for his time:

“What on earth put that into your head?”

“It has been there a long time,” the boy replied,

continuing his search.

Pemberton was silent, then he went on: “I say, what

are you hunting for? They pay me beautifully.”

¹¹⁵ For Sharon Cameron, the relationship between repressed, unconscious thought and consciousness is key to understanding the spatial relationship between knowledge and consciousness in James. Not always easy to distinguish, consciousness and knowledge are nevertheless at least partially discrete categories: “[C]onsciousness and knowledge (traditionally associated with awareness and with interpretation that is socially codified) are neither identical nor completely separable, the space between the two is the ground of confusion” (65).

“I’m hunting for the Greek for transparent fiction,”

Morgan dropped. (147)¹¹⁶

That anxiety is less seen than felt in these texts is certainly more obvious and more important in *Turn* than in “The Pupil.” This is partly because, whereas the governess is disquieted by her sense of Miles’s knowing, even conjuring, her role in his life (“I walked in a world of their invention,” she muses of Miles and Flora [668]), Pemberton cautiously welcomes Morgan’s insightfulness, exhibiting a readiness to extend and intermingle his consciousness with the boy’s.¹¹⁷

Most importantly, Miles’s and Morgan’s minds have a way of “darkening off into” other minds so that we, like their guardians, “rather tormentedly miss” any vision they might conceal (WK 8). Thus, while Maisie’s shared mental relationship with the narrator permits my analysis of how her vision accords with the events of plot, the sites (and sights) of meaning making that Miles and Morgan embody become something whose evidence we are reduced to seeking out in the minds of their guardians. As though

¹¹⁶ His sophisticated response to Pemberton recalls Edwin Drood’s comportment toward his young guardian, Jasper, when Drood is “little more” than a boy in Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*: “Don’t moddley-coddley,” says Drood to his future killer, “there’s a good fellow” (*Mystery* 6; 7).

¹¹⁷ Indeed, when characters have less to hide, they have more to gain by mastering this crucial Jamesian art. This is evident in *The Wings of the Dove*. Kate and Densher work to influence Milly’s consciousness, but with so much to hide, the contents of their minds are quickly found *out*, figuratively and literally, by Milly. In other words, by mastering the art of extending consciousness, Kate and Densher have everything to lose. Importantly, a concept of consciousness extending beyond the bodily boundaries of one character and intermingling with that of another character whose consciousness must likewise extend beyond her ostensible physical boundaries is beautifully articulated by Sharon Cameron in *Thinking in Henry James* (1989). For Cameron, to understand consciousness in James, we must understand it as a spatial entity, which moves *between* characters, enabling what would otherwise be discrete consciousnesses to be shared. And within this category of externalized consciousness, meaning and knowledge can exist (again, spatially) *above* and *below* consciousness, as in *Portrait of a Lady*: explaining an example she provides from *Portrait*, Cameron writes, “[This is] what an ‘understanding’ looks like when it is simultaneously shared and seen at a distance. In the passage cited above, meanings are *below* consciousness and *between* people” (61). My reading of telepathy in James also takes into account the shared space of two minds in telepathic communication with one another: there is a symmetry—a virtual doubling—that telepathic communication produces however fleetingly between characters. For Cameron’s reading of *Maisie*, see pages 63-82.

to represent the inner workings of Florence's "coercive . . . innocence" from the exclusive perspective of the child, James allows us to see how such a mind, represented by Maisie, can influence plot by the sheer force of its telepathic effects (*Between* 185).¹¹⁸ Once inside the mind, and with a more intimate awareness of its influence over the narrator, we find that what might have registered as *perceived* telepathy in *Dombey* can be understood as actual, mimetic telepathy in *Maisie*. In other words, we are privy to Maisie's ability to see that "something behind" what the material world presents—an ability in evidence from the start, which troubles the conventional subject position of the Victorian child. Indeed, the site of telepathic exchange located in the "child" permits an inward and outward flow of knowledge from which those who deploy the discourses of secrecy in their defense can't hide.

Victorian expectations of decorum engender a social economy of concealment in James's narratives from which children would properly be excluded. In the context in which *Maisie* takes place, for instance, "the facts of sexuality, particularly illicit sexuality, should be kept secret from children, especially female children. The whole novel turns on the fact that though Maisie is surrounded by shameful goings-on, she is supposed to know nothing of it" (*Versions* 29).¹¹⁹ In the context of Victorian England, the innocent child, largely freed from Romantic figurations of original sin, was employed in

¹¹⁸ As a reminder, this is the description Sedgwick gives for Crisparkle in *Between Men*.

¹¹⁹ "Part of James's own fascination with the figure of the child at this period," writes Shuttleworth, "was that it could function to intensify all the indirectness, the power games, the 'unnamed and untouched' of adult intercourse; to impose sexual knowledge, or to name directly, could in this case indeed be a crime, a murder of the cherished construct of childhood innocence. . . . The child, in this sense, is knowable precisely because it has no experience, no history which can be known. Yet, James is writing at the height of evolutionary psychology, when it was believed that the child . . . [carried] within in it the legacy of past experience, both animal and human. The ghosts [in *Turn*] function, in this regard, as warnings of an undisclosed past, of innate or inherited tendencies which must give the lie to assumptions of inborn innocence" (217). Like Goetsch, Shuttleworth notes that Dickens was largely responsible for bringing the epithet "old-fashioned child" into use, citing, as well, the *OED* to support her claim.

revealing a new form of bondage into which she had been thrown: she was the innocent victim of adult selfishness.¹²⁰ The hypocrisy of this convenient characterization, however, is evident throughout *Maisie*. For instance, Miss Overmore's emphatic claim that Ida's letters to Maisie "were not fit for the innocent child to see" is uttered in the service of underscoring her supposed moral high ground, rather than out of a sincere commitment to preserving the moral fiber of the "innocent child" (46). As Ellen Pifer puts it, children "hold out the tantalizing if illusory promise of exposing human nature in its nakedness"; however, "the only image of human nature accessible to us cannot be divested of the observer's cultural cloth" (19). The apparent contrasts such Victorian texts intend to represent ultimately reveal the constructedness of the contrast itself.

Indeed, *knowing* children in James's fiction threaten to dissolve the innocence against which adults define their "bad" behavior.¹²¹ What Maisie, Miles, and Morgan reveal is that in order to behave badly, the adults they encounter need to imagine that they can conceal their immoral behavior from someone. In her famous exchange with her French doll, Lisette, Maisie most forcefully reveals that the discourse of concealment is ostensibly the discourse of the adult world: "She could only pass on her lessons and study to produce on Lisette the impression of having mysteries in her life, wondering the while *whether she succeeded in the air of shading off, like her mother, into the unknowable*" (36, my emphasis). In the telepathic atmosphere James creates, the "inner self," which

¹²⁰ Goetsch subtly reveals the two-sided perception of children in competition with each other: they were vulnerable to wicked temptation and must therefore be shielded from evil, or they were lovely innocents who could look back as adults on their childhoods with fond remembrance (46-7).

¹²¹ In his discussion of Freud's trouble estimating the "power of children," James Kincaid posits: "there seems to be no way in which an interpretive model, 'knowing,' can be secure in drawing limits" (17). Indeed, Kincaid compares the futile attempt to determine knowing in children to that of determining power: as Kincaid reminds us, one can't determine or describe power, one can only try to produce power by entering into its discourse.

Maisie has recently discovered, always threatens to emerge, finding itself inside of another, recalling Dickens's gothic fear, cited in the previous chapter, of being turned inside out. Shame follows closely on the heels of Maisie's fear of exposure—Maisie “was rather ashamed afterwards, though [the cause of her shame] was not quite clear” (37)—as though shame were itself less a product of an idealized conception of innate virtuosity now fallen, than the inevitable byproduct of being found out. In other words, shame is felt not due to the acquisition of a moral sense, but due to the conciliated awareness that one can't keep one's “thoughts to oneself.”¹²²

Hiding from the ones in hiding proves impossible by virtue of the suspicion, perhaps even paranoia, those “in the know” embody. As I mentioned in the introduction, for Derrida, this registers as the “difficulty” of imagining “that non-telepathy is possible. Always difficult to imagine that one can think something to oneself . . . without the other being immediately informed” (“Telepathy” 13). Suspicion, generated in minds with a solid grasp on immoral behavior, is enough to make concealment if not impossible then at least inadequate. Exposure among peers, therefore, is a persistent threat in James, and

¹²² Maisie's is the mind from within—able to shape, paint, color the glittering picture she creates—while Miles and Flora's story is that told from without, the imposition of adult perception deforming any glittering picture the mind might have made. As Shuttleworth puts it, “James's tale functions as a challenge to all those who seek to cast their own projections onto the figure of the child, or exhibit a need to define, articulate, and hence control” (220). Surprisingly, in this regard, Shuttleworth's reading of *What Maisie Knew* is antithetical to mine in that she emphasizes the adult's “advantage” over Maisie in the adult's ability to “attend and amplify.” Shuttleworth thus reads *Maisie* as a “trial run” for *A Small Boy and Others*. That is, Maisie emphasizes for Shuttleworth what the adult, looking back, is able to lend to the deeper meanings of childhood perception. Shuttleworth's reading is consistent, then, with most readings of Maisie's story, which generally resist my reading: that *Maisie* is James's opportunity to write the mind of the child, and let it guide the world “of [her] creation” *despite* what she “materially and inevitably saw.” Shuttleworth profoundly and convincingly suggests that Miles's and Flora's minds are constructed as the source of the evil the governess perceives rather than the reverse (the more common reading that it's all in the governess's head); in contrast, she reads Maisie's mind as shaped by her environment. While Shuttleworth reads “our own commentary” as one and the same as the *narrator's* commentary, I read “our own” as precisely that: *our* own—yours, mine, and James's: the conventionally extrafictional participants in *Maisie's* life. To conflate James with this narrator misses, in my view, some of the ironies that characterize both the narrator and the figure of the child whose mind he represents.

genuine concealment is precluded by the subject positions of those who deploy the discourse itself.¹²³ The novelistic betrayals of the long eighteenth century (*Pamela*, for instance) are also evidence of this, as are the novels of that Jamesian exemplar, Hawthorne. Yet, there is one site from which, in the adult imaginary James presents, the secrets we keep ought to have a possibility of hiding: the mind of the child. Against this ideal adult discourse defines the immoral; however, what begins as a site of the differentiating Other quickly devolves into a repository in, for instance, “Maisie.”¹²⁴ As M. H. Phillips puts it, “They imagine a child with an interior, but that interior is perfectly empty, perfectly porous, and strikingly inanimate. In truth, it is an interior belonging not to its child host but to her parents” (101).¹²⁵ Hiding *from* the child really turns out to be hiding *in* the child.

But a telepathic child knows and transmits, or at the very least always threatens to transmit, even that knowledge “she either wouldn’t understand at all or would quite

¹²³ Merton Densher and Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), for example, suffer under a “strange consciousness of exposure” as they work to conceal the secret histories that would undercut their designs on Milly’s money (329). Though Milly is not a child, she is generally read as one of James’s many “innocents,” not because she *is* innocent, but rather because she appears to be as innocent as the conventional child.

¹²⁴ This child-as-repository formulation might be understood in metonymic relation Kincaid’s repository of figures that the child represented to the Victorians: “The boundless sweep of *everything* [that the Victorians questioned and analyzed] suggests childlike anarchy . . . : the child was the inquirer, the theorist, the scientist, the reformer, the unacknowledged (or not so unacknowledged) legislator” (45).

¹²⁵ Importantly, the empty and inanimate aspects of this description are purely a result of what the adults “imagine,” not of a posture James intends his readers to adopt. In my view, the telepathic mind of the child, in which the adults they encounter are part of “their invention,” remains creative: to be porous and transmit does not necessarily entail being inanimate. Further, I should note that Phillips’s overarching reading, which includes the assertion that “Maisie’s is the epitome of the privatized interior,” is of course quite different from mine. In her description of James’s claim to the modernist tradition through *What Maisie Knew*, Phillips argues that Maisie as text works to conceal. In contrast, I would suggest that although she may attempt to conceal in order to achieve certain objectives (to protect Sir Claude, for instance), that attempt fails much as most attempts to control and conceal consciousness fail in late James. It is, in my view, this *failure* that makes the text recognizably modernist. Consciousness in modernist fiction overflows *despite* attempts to conceal. One thinks of Merton Densher, Septimus Smith, Stephen Dedalus, Quentin Compson, Dewey Dell Bundren, . . . the list goes on.

misunderstand” (WK 7). Early in the novel, for example, Maisie’s knowing is registered in an oppressive future of comprehension:

[S]he found in her mind a collection of images and echoes to which meanings were attachable—images and echoes kept for her in the childish dusk, the dim closet, the high drawers, like games she wasn’t yet big enough to play. The great strain meanwhile was that of carrying by the right end the things her father said about her mother—things mostly indeed that Moddle . . . took out of her hands and put away in the closet. A wonderful assortment of objects of this kind she was to discover there later, all tumbled up too with the things, shuffled into the same receptacle, that her mother had said about her father” (20).

The second word in the passage suggests that the time of the thoughts’ accumulation has already past: somewhere among the ruins of Maisie’s remembered family, these sooner lost objects have, however punishingly, been “found.” Thus, by the time we read that she “was to discover” them there later, what we are reading is the very “echo” of the future in which they were found. Her present (now past) and future are perpetually weighed down with the “great strain . . . of carrying” inchoate knowledge that is no less oppressive for its shield of dusk. With this in mind, we come to the passage in which thought objects, uttered or felt, are “dropped into her memory,” inevitably to be “delivered in due course at the right address” (22). Literally, this address belongs to whoever is on the receiving end of one of Ida’s or Beale’s warring missives. Figuratively, however, it represents both

the future mind of the child and the minds of adults, present or future, to which the knowledge might be meaningful. Maisie will retain the indelible impressions she has received until the deformities they have left become the sites in which knowledge takes shape. Thus, the reading effect of virtual time-travel, in which the early events of the novel are perpetually inscribed by later ones (an effect the title insists on), produces the immanence of knowledge—conscious, unconscious, or repressed.

Maisie herself thus embodies the threat of a future made present. This condition helps to explain her confounded sense of temporality, one that contributes to the mental disruptions of Faulkner's Quentin Compson, whom I'll discuss in the following chapter. The narrator misreads (or pretends to misread) Maisie's experience of time as part of the conventional Victorian child's comportment toward life: "In that lively sense of the immediate which is the very air of a child's mind, the past, on each occasion, became for her as indistinct as the future"; "The actual was the absolute, the present alone was vivid" (22). In one sense, he's right of course: it is her subject position of childhood that produces this synchronic experience of time. In another sense, however, he's wrong, for her *childlike* experience of time is in fact what forecloses her childhood before it has even begun: "understand[ing]" is inevitable once thoughts have been communicated to child characters' minds figured as telepathic sites of transmission through time and space.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ For Sharon Cameron, the sense of an inevitability of knowledge is a fetishization: "[M]uch like knowledge, consciousness is fetishized as comprehensible. It is portrayed as something the child could eventually gain access to, even as the idea of mastery, given the forces that oppose both knowledge and consciousness, is disputed categorically by the ontology portrayed by the novel. I am in fact struck by how the repetitions of the words 'know' and 'knowledge' in *Maisie* . . . finally seem symptomatic of general incoherence . . ." (72). Indeed, knowledge is fetishized in the novel, but I think that the kind of knowledge to which the text gestures is less a product of incoherence than of a mutability in the concept of knowledge akin to what Philip Weinstein describes in *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction*. Unlike a stable, Enlightenment version of "knowledge," the concept of knowledge *Maisie* prescribes is unsusceptible to obliteration by "continued vocalization" (Cameron 73). The kind of knowledge Cameron seems to be

(The irony in the narrator's reading of Maisie will be key to understanding his role in the narrative: his observations will disclose their accuracy at one diegetic remove from the level of irony he deploys. His posture is mimetically well placed but ontologically misplaced. I'll discuss this at length below.) In Maisie's case, her six-year-old present is shaped by her roughly twelve-year-old "Maisie,"¹²⁷ signaling from the outset the unstable category of age, the last remaining marker (innocence and experience having failed) by which the dictates of decorum could determine one's exclusion from discourses of adult knowledge. It is for these reasons that James's "innocent" children seem to be "under the influence of curious . . . knowledges" that uncannily replicate the interiors of the adult minds they read, throwing the possibility of innocence, and the category of innocence the child embodies, into question ("The Pupil" 135). Thus, while Ellen Pifer posits that Maisie "remains innocent but prescient," I would suggest that we release Maisie altogether from the closed circuit of innocence and experience (35).

Sir Claude knows where Maisie doesn't belong; in a challenge to the Victorian conventions of innocence that Maisie's telepathic knowing undercuts, Sir Claude "slightly colour[s]" when he insists that he has not visited Mrs. Beale. Appropriately, the construct of innocence whose feebleness Sir Claude registers flows through Maisie: "he must have felt this profession of innocence to be excessive as addressed to Maisie . . . He was liable in talking to her to take the tone of her being also a man of the world" (70).

describing, moreover, is in my reading proximally closest to the readers, to "we fellow witnesses." What Cameron does not account for is the reader's role in the establishment of knowledge, producing some of the most important differences between our readings of consciousness and knowledge in the novel.

¹²⁷ Critics are forced to speculate on Maisie's precise age at the end of the novel. While Rowe puts her at "eleven or twelve" but is inclined to agree with Barbara Everette that she's "nearly fourteen or fifteen," I see her as around twelve or thirteen without an inclination to go higher. She seems to be within the typical range of puberty (around twelve or thirteen), but the readings that place her closer to fourteen or fifteen are informed partly, I think, by assumptions about what children and younger adolescents are (or ought to be) likely to do and say, and about the responses they are likely to elicit from adults.

Within Sir Claude's mind, to which the narrator has access *exclusively because* Maisie has access to it, we trace a Maisie who quivers beneath the frail innocence that she ought to embody. Indeed, Maisie's first "feeling of danger" entails at the age of six or seven the very fear of exposure ostensibly reserved for adults: "She had a new feeling, the feeling of danger; on which a new remedy rose to meet it, the idea of an inner self, *in other words*, of concealment" (23, my emphasis). Inasmuch as the text, and the discourse of concealment and exposure it represents, refuses the possibility of "concealment," this quotation precludes the possibility of the "inner self" with which it is equated. Sir Claude's protestation of innocence is misplaced, and it has nowhere to go, for what Maisie knew renders her no child at all. With no children, there are no secret hiding places.

Knowing Maisie

Try as they might, her guardians find little cover under "Maisie," the contents of whose mind, inscribed as it is with the thoughts her adult companions attempt to conceal, stream out toward their rivals. Though the potential exposure—the knowingness—Maisie represents within the story world unsettles her guardians, however, her "fresh" wonder imbues them with the positive light in which her impressions are held. Thus the reader's view, though clouded by melancholy and at times downright horror at the verbal and physical abuse Maisie sustains, is nevertheless illuminated by the beauty of Maisie's mental inscriptions that effectively nullify in many cases the realistic visible world she inhabits. In fact, if Maisie were blind, my approach to her "function" in the narrative would hardly be altered. Antithetical to readings such as that of Christina Britzolakis in

“Technologies of Vision in Henry James’s *What Maisie Knew*,” this reading need not be considered mutually exclusive of them. I’d like to suggest, though, that we imagine Maisie in this light (or rather dark) as I discuss her relationships with other characters.¹²⁸ The narrator himself (or herself) describes her this way during arguably the most climactic moments in her relationship with Sir Claude, as Maisie’s inscriptions are forged in virtual blindness: “She went about as sightlessly as if he had been leading her blindfold” (259).¹²⁹ Indeed, James so thoroughly troubles the trope of vision in *Maisie* that an unconventional reading of the preface presents itself, and we find James’s view of his subject subordinated to her view of him: “[W]ith perceptions easily and almost infinitely quickened [. . .] *she* might well see *me* through the whole course of my design” (6, my emphasis).¹³⁰ This reading recalls my discussion in the introduction of James’s relationship to his artistic subject in which we find literature pointing inexorably toward its author in the figure, in this case, of his heroine.¹³¹ Given the principle of irony under

¹²⁸ In James and James criticism, vision and the visionary are inextricably linked. Even the impressionistic aspect of James in which a single quotidian scene takes on an almost mystical, transcendent meaning (one thinks of Sir Claude’s impression, viewed from within Maisie’s consciousness of the fisher woman), it is the purely subjective, internal transformation of that vision that counts. As Tony Tanner puts it, “James . . . dramatize[s] the instinct of the mind to reshape the world” by which Tanner means the visible, as well as the invisible, world (98). And as Robert K. Martin points out in his reading of “ecstatic vision” in James, the writer insisted that “impressions *are* experience” in “The Art of Fiction” (Martin 33; *The Art of Criticism* 172).

¹²⁹ The frequent understandable tendency to read this narrator as gendered is a result, among other things, of his close affiliation—syntactically, figuratively, and ideologically—with James (James Maisie).

¹³⁰ This kind of vision, in Don McCall’s view, is so central to Maisie’s wonder that its loss throttles her into adulthood: “[T]he hushed pain, the death of childhood, comes, like a physical blow, from the terrific disappointment of what Maisie *didn’t* see” (51).

¹³¹ This concept is informed by Dorothy Hale’s articulation of the Jamesian subject in *Social Formalism*, as well as by Royle’s formulation in *Telepathy and Literature* of texts perpetually gesturing toward their authors. Other formulations of the text’s perpetual “backward-looking” toward the author are expressed by Freud, Roland Barthes, and, more recently, Julie Rivkin, who note the Oedipal aspect of narrative that gestures toward its patriarchal father (*Absalom*; Rivkin 194-5). As my reading of *Maisie* will show, where Rivkin sees a disruption of this gesture in *Maisie* through the elements of plot forged at the outset of the novel, I see the disruption occurring finally much later, when patriarchal narrator and surrogate patriarchal father are exchanged for a genderless “nobody” in Mrs. Wix. The overarching gesture toward James as feminized artist further diverts a cleaving toward patriarchal authority.

which James toiled for many years in her conjuring, one can imagine the “interminable little Maisie” pressing herself not only further into the minds of Sir Claude and Mrs. Wix, but also into that of James, as she commanded increasing control over the narrative. If this kind of “seeing *is* knowing [and] vision and knowledge are one,” as Juliet Mitchell posits, then what Maisie knew is what Maisie always knew (Mitchell 168). The space between Maisie’s supposedly limited view and her figurative ability to see, or know, “All” is the fissure into which “we fellow witnesses, we not more invited but only more expert critics,” are called upon to plunge (WK 216, 7).

Between the Maisie who sees and the Maisie who *sees* is an occult space characterized by an unsettling, chiasmatic reading effect: what James purports to be a ready “light vessel of consciousness,” a “register of impressions” that the assaulting material world turns sharply toward her view, is also a mind that “penetrate[s]” into the “habitable air” of her companions’ consciousnesses (6, 4, 43).¹³² Yet the gothic quality of this reversal does not adversely contaminate the nature of her penetrations: what is for the telegraphist in *In the Cage* an un-empathetic contagion that short-circuits the potential

¹³² In George Butte’s view, the kinds of telepathic exchanges I focus on can be understood virtually always as instances of intertwining chiasm in the sense in which Merleau-Ponty conceives it. Indeed, Butte claims emphatically that allowing the telepathic to creep into discussions of such exchanges is a mistake, a product of “overstep[ping] into transcendental mode” (130). Robert Weisbuch, however, posits in “Henry James and the Idea of Evil” that “characters respond with the utmost consequence to each other’s verbal and physical nuances to the point where a kind of mystical telepathy without the mysticism gets created” (Weisbuch 102). What I find interesting about Weisbuch’s claim is that he seems to be describing something that looks more like interpretation than telepathy, mystical or otherwise: a response to a verbal or physical communication, no matter how exaggerated, is still a response to physically mediated event, as opposed to unmediated mental communication. Perhaps unintentionally, Weisbuch suggests here that telepathic messages, which “characters respond [to] with the utmost consequence,” are the ones to which the receiver attributes the greatest truth value. Importantly, for Butte, Weisbuch’s move toward the telepathic or transcendent is erroneous. In this line of argument, then, J. Hillis Miller makes a similar error in *Versions of Pygmalion*, in which he sees in the famous exchange between Maisie and her father at the Countess’s house a “species of instantaneous telepathy” (40). While I agree with Butte’s chiasmatic reading of James, James’s rhetorical complexity and figuration, I argue, allows for the chiasmatic *effects* of telepathic acts.

life-saving effects of telepathic exchange, I argue, is for Maisie a fecund discourse of creative consciousness, “spreading and contagiously acting” in the service of improving the “total value,” as James puts it in the preface, of the story it writes (10).¹³³ Inert as they are without the organic shimmer of her perceptions, Maisie’s divorced parents and their new spouses benefit from the “activity of spirit” with which she infects them: this is no Typhoid Maisie (8). In contrast, with the exceptions of Sir Claude and Mrs. Wix, her guardians’ vision is restricted to the purely physical, the failure of which has its analogue in the metonymic contrast between Maisie’s physical appearance and that of her mother (9). Ida’s enormous eyes that fail to see anything of the “truth” upon which James focuses throughout his prefaces glower in stark opposition to Maisie’s small, mesmerizing eyes (one thinks of what Pemberton describes as Morgan’s “intelligent, innocent eyes” [“Pupil” 135]) against which Sir Claude is defenseless.

What she sees, importantly, Maisie is willing to know: her willingness to acknowledge what is brought to consciousness will distinguish her from those whose knowledge is held at arm’s length—denied and restricted to mere consciousness, or

¹³³ In Menke’s view, mimetic instances of what might seem to be telepathic communications are figurative representations of telegraphic communication that demonstrate the threats an overactive imagination, taken to the extreme, pose to James’s Victorian ideology. The telegraph as Menke skillfully portrays it offered to the realist imagination a materialized “social structure of connections and exchanges” even as it “threatened to short-circuit any such stable structure” and devolve into “a switchboard for fugitive and unconventional connections” (210). Alternatively, I suggest that his telepathic narratives represent what were for James the artistic, “prosocial” possibilities that the mimetic, figurative, and synthetic registers of telepathy offered, serving James’s primary concern with developing among his readers an appreciation of alterity (Keen, Hale, Thurschwell). In other words, we might view my take on the telepathic in James as the other side of a theoretical coin, which, like the one James describes in the Preface to *What Maisie Knew*, has two antithetical faces: on the Menke side, a realist representation of an unwanted short-circuiting that destabilized necessary boundaries between classes and genders, and on the Holmgren side, a modernist poetics of literary telepathy deployed to point up what I read as the *failure* of his characters in *In the Cage* to see the possibilities these newly formed networks allowed.

perhaps to the unconscious.¹³⁴ This volition enables her to extend her knowledge beyond herself, influencing the events of plot in a manner akin to the activity in passivity characteristic of what I have called the epistemology of authorship. Her exhibitions of passive authority, along the lines I describe in the introduction, have the air of accumulating as the story progresses, but a closer look suggests that she has been willing things to go certain ways from the beginning. Her thoughts, therefore, understood as part of a telepathic paradigm of which the narrator is of course part, become narrative acts of foreshadow bordering on prolepsis; this is the poetics of telepathy that causes J. Hillis Miller to perceive in “Maisie’s knowing . . . a gradually increasing clairvoyance” (42). In effect from the start, instances of Maisie’s foresight reveal that what I describe above as an “increasing control over the narrative” turns out to be a control Maisie has had from her fictional inception.

Witnessing Maisie

Four characters are key to Maisie’s vision: Mrs. Wix, Sir Claude, the narrator, and the reader.¹³⁵ Despite Maisie’s often quoted sense of being excluded from the adult

¹³⁴ Sharon Cameron describes something along these lines when she discusses the “two disparate accounts of Maisie’s consciousness,” one of which is “contingent on what she *will* know, in the sense of having volition to,” a concept that will be of special relevance in the coda to this thesis (65).

¹³⁵ I’ll discuss the narrator function as character below. For now, I’ll point to John Carlos Rowe’s argument that readers are “always implicit characters in [James’s] work,” as well as his passing observation that the narrator is a character when he discusses the possibility that the narrator is female (although Rowe implies that critical discourse—“even the most interesting feminist readings”—has failed to consider the possibility that the narrator is female, Miller did suggest it eight years earlier in *Versions of Pygmalion*.) (“Use” 55; *Other* 135). It seems reasonable to assume that the narrator, who, in Seymour Chatman’s formulation, is closer in degree to the characters in the novel than are readers, might also be understood as a character. Importantly, although we might concur with Rowe’s assessment that readers are always implicit characters in James’s work, it would be a mistake ever to assume that we can equate a reader with a narrator or character due to the simple fact that readers are always conscious of the fictionality of the narrative, thus insisting on their positions at one diegetic remove from the narrator and characters. We must also assume

world—outside of closed doors and looking through windows with her face pressed against the glass—she remains simultaneously very much inside of that discourse mentally, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the mental communion she shares with her closest guardians, among whom I count her narrator. Though Miss Overmore would also seem crucial to Maisie’s vision, Mrs. Beale turns out to be its adversary.

Early in Maisie’s development, we have from her mind a paragraph of Miss Overmore’s thoughts. As though to reveal to Miss Overmore (later Mrs. Beale) that she sees the affair developing between her and Maisie’s father, the girl asks if, as her mother has suggested, her father knows “that he lies” (24). “That’s what mamma says I’m to tell him,” Maisie continues: “*Am* I to tell him?” In answer to the question, Overmore’s thoughts, flowing over more into Maisie’s mind than she might like, take the shape of the thoughts that Maisie impresses upon her mind. The dialogue is purely telepathic: no explicit exchange of words takes place, anticipating Clarissa Dalloway and Peter’s “queer power of communicating without words”:

It was then that her companion addressed her in the
 unmistakable language of a pair of eyes of deep dark grey.
 “I can’t say No,” they replied as distinctly as possible; “I
 can’t say No, because I’m afraid of your mamma, don’t you
 see? Yet how can I say Yes after your Papa has been so kind
 to me, talking to me so long the other day, smiling and
 flashing his beautiful teeth at me the time we met him in the
 Park . . . ?” Somehow in the light of Miss Overmore’s lovely

that if Rowe is correct, then readers and narrators alike are more or less pawns in the author’s intricate game of chess (though Rowe himself cautions us on the dangers of such readings).

eyes that incident came back to Maisie with a charm it hadn't had at the time On their way home, when papa had quitted them, she had expressed the hope that the child wouldn't mention it to mamma. Maisie liked her so, and had so the charmed sense of being liked by her, that she accepted this remark as settling the matter and wonderingly conformed to it. The wonder now lived again, lived in the . . . pleasure of the thought that Miss Overmore was saving her. It seemed to make them cling together as in some wild game of "going round" (24-5).

Miss Overmore is portrayed here, inside of Maisie's mind, pleading with Maisie to conceal from her mother what she knows. Telepathic effects dash the plea for silence into the unuttered content of Maisie's mind. When Miss Overmore shares Maisie's vision of the scene at the Park, she imbues it with her desire for Beale Farange, producing in Maisie the romantic effects of mimetic desire, which lend to the scene a new "charm" for the girl. Maisie likes the idea of being saved by her governess, and Overmore's charm soon produces in Maisie an image of the two females "cling[ing]" to each other in a fugitive instance of vaguely eroticized female bonding, which will be echoed often in the novel, reaching its climax in a scene in which Mrs. Wix and Maisie "touched bottom and melted together" (222).

"[W]e fellow witnesses," with whom James importantly aligns himself in the preface, find in the telepathic exchange cited above evidence of the questionable moral fiber of Miss Overmore, the narrator's hollow attempts to control reception, and Maisie's

unsettling ability to see what the narrator can only glimpse. By encouraging our witnessing postures, James conditions us to treat all purely mental communications “of impressions of any kind,” dependent as they are upon our justification, as representations of shared, meaningful communications.

The effects produced by the quoted language above, together with the plea for silence, should be taken as authentic, valuable insight into Miss Overmore’s manipulative prowess and moral character; thus, a covert, fugitive mode of communication emulates its content. Moreover, the narrator’s deceptive rhetoric only pretends to put us in view of Maisie’s ability to discern Miss Overmore’s thoughts through her physical features. After all, what exactly is “the *unmistakeable* language of a pair of eyes of deep dark grey” (my emphasis)? How would a pair of deep dark grey eyes express precisely enough the contents of a mind to merit direct, quoted reporting any more than would a pair of, say, deep dark brown eyes? The physical gesture the narrator misrepresents is the result of a strange posture in which he reports a telepathic conversation, even as he explains it away with an empty rhetoric of body language. The narrator’s rhetorical gesture thus enables him or her to assume an imposed distance from Miss Overmore’s mind by way of his exclusive mental relationship with Maisie. In fact, the narrator is forced to report Miss Overmore’s actual utterances in *indirect* discourse (“she had expressed the hope that . . .”), revealing Maisie’s desire to dispel from memory the verbal utterances that threaten to fragment a private, mental bond. Late in the novel, in fact, Mrs. Beale’s prolixity weakens the telepathic signal Mrs. Wix and Maisie usually share: having placed herself in a particularly awkward situation in Boulogne, Mrs. Beale confronts it with compulsive verbosity, her “presence and even her famous freedom loom[ing] larger,” and her

“mighty mass” causing Maisie and Mrs. Wix to “exchange with each other as through a thickening veil confused and ineffectual signs” (225).

Indeed, telepathy reads in *What Maisie Knew* as a spell that can be broken by verbal utterances, and this is often the case in late James. Ineffability is thus what makes child characters such as Maisie, Miles, and Morgan so attractive as sites of telepathic exchange: we generally don’t have to worry about whether or not they can confirm their own telepathic experiences. Despite having “‘no end’ of sensibility,” James reminds us, Maisie lacks the vocabulary to describe what she senses, and Morgan is left searching for the Greek for “transparent fiction” when Pemberton feigns handsome payment for his tutoring efforts (WK6, 8; TP 147). They appear to be signs that record and disseminate mental inscriptions the origins and destinations of which are virtually impossible to trace, causing Miller to see “Maisie” as a “blank, floating signifier” (*Versions* 66). Maisie, therefore, like the reader, rarely threatens to disrupt telepathic currents flowing between characters. In his discussion of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Shadow of a Doubt*, Ned Schantz observes that a character’s “knowledge of the telepathy she enjoys with [another character] has no meaning except through the technological networks that confirm it,” for Charlie’s coincidence of thought with her Uncle Charlie can only be confirmed as “telepathy” by way of a telegraph that informs the niece who wished to contact him of her uncle’s upcoming visit (87).¹³⁶ In other words, technological networks not only allow

¹³⁶ The compelling relationship between James and Hitchcock is evident in *The Men Who Knew Too Much*, edited by Susan Griffin and Alan Nadel, in which Mary Ann O’Farrell’s description of knowledge transmitted like a blow to the head in “Bump: Concussive Knowledge in James and Hitchcock” includes a discussion of the child observer alongside young Charlie’s perceptions in *Shadow*. Schantz is drawing on Friedrich Kittler, whose overarching claim is that technology (and not the reader) is the additional witness to fictional events such as telepathy. Citing Manfred Frank, who holds that “any connection between the reflection and the object requires a ‘witness *for* whom it exists, or more exactly, exists *as* a reflection,’” Kittler suggests that a witness is necessary to representation (*Literature* 132). As he moves into his

the character to perceive telepathy, they cause her to do so.¹³⁷ If the viewer perceives telepathy, such a perception exists over and above the technologically induced chimera the character “enjoys.”¹³⁸ In my reading, in contrast, “actual” representations of telepathy—that is, two minds thinking the same thing at the same time as a result of more than pure coincidence—are enacted in the fiction. Indeed, Maisie is able to “enjoy” telepathy in large part because she does *not* ever confirm it through telepathic networks and thus expose the ontology she occupies to its technological underpinnings. Although technology is indeed required to confirm telepathic acts that are disencumbered of the kinds of gothic apparatuses we find in, say, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the telepathy itself occurs on a different plane from the one that confirms it: technology does not *cause* literary telepathy to exist in the world of the fiction, it merely records and disseminates telepathy’s dramatization by James. It’s no surprise therefore that James began to refine his production of telepathic effects following his short, unsuccessful stay in the theatre.

discussion of Lacan, it becomes evident that he concurs with the necessary witness function, which for him is both produced by and a product of the various media that record and inscribe it—with or without actual human bodies—all of which, taken together, underlies to some extent Richard Menke’s view of fiction as “a medium and information system” that self-reflexively imagines itself as such (Menke 3).

¹³⁷ By “technological networks,” Schantz is referring at this point to the telephone and the telegraph. The technology of film itself also presents a larger network for the “confirmation” of telepathy, as viewers are privy to moments when thought is coincident between two or more characters, even when the characters are not. For instance, if Charlie had not received Uncle Charlie’s telegram, we still would have known that they were thinking of each other at the same time. When Charlie confirms their telepathic connection, a certain responsibility falls on her that has everything to do with knowing and naming “telepathy” (a responsibility with which she struggles for most of the film). In contrast, because she is a child and does not confirm “telepathy,” Maisie is not leveled with the responsibility naming entails. But the technology of recording and disseminating unnamed telepathic acts in the space of a novel (in lieu of the technology of the telegraph present in the fiction) enables readers to discover over many chapters two things: what exists at first in Maisie’s mind eventually comes to pass, and what Maisie thinks influences the mental states of other characters. Such a discovery is only possible because the technology of the novel enables us to see it, but within the space of the novel, telepathy remains unconfirmed. Therefore, when I refer to technology, I’m referring both to the communication technologies in the world of the fiction and more importantly to the technology of the novel and its dissemination.

¹³⁸ A reading that recalls Menke’s view of the telegraphist’s telepathic encounters.

He provides scene and stage on which his fellow witnesses are enabled to discern telepathic acts, to see the value in such a reading, and to take responsibility for it.

If we are to attribute truth to Maisie and Miss Overmore's silent dialogue in which the impressions that result from the telepathic event are *named*, then we are assuming the role of witnesses to a telepathic act.¹³⁹ With the reader in the position of witness, a triangulation effect takes place among Maisie, the reader, and Miss Overmore. Such a witness is necessary to the confirmation of telepathic communication in which certain points, or thought objects, in one mind must be symmetrical to those in another, *especially when those thought objects remain unnamed*. Because the silent dialogue between Maisie and Miss Overmore is put into words, it is susceptible to the inevitable failure of the sign. In contrast, when the novel presents no language to represent the specific thoughts to which telepathic transmissions give rise, the result is a more stable and more penetrating (because exclusively *writerly*, in Barthes's sense of the word) symmetry produced in the mind of the reader/witness. The reader witnesses purely mental connections between characters by producing in her own mind the corresponding points of the *mental* "bijection" a telepathic event entails.¹⁴⁰ In other words, when the corresponding points of the telepathic event remain unnamed, actual "telepathy" can occur precisely because the authorial audience member (and the narrative audience member she embodies) produces it. My mind, the reader's mind, produces one, singular impression that both characters share. Thus, we are aligned as witnesses with the children

¹³⁹ In this respect, my reading of *Maisie* becomes considerably different from that of Sharon Cameron. Cameron does not insist upon the reader function as a necessary aspect of the intermingling of consciousness.

¹⁴⁰ Kittler observes that technology is a witness that "representations of bijection, which are only controlled logically by an algorithm, require" (*Literature* 132).

who lack the at all “producible” vocabulary—at least inasmuch as it can be produced on the page. In such cases, the authorial audience’s task becomes particularly complicated, and I’ll discuss that task in greater detail in the following section.

Importantly, though Maisie can receive and disseminate telepathic impressions freely without any obligation toward naming, confirming, she is still Maisie—no quotation marks required. That is, though telepathic effects undercut her status as a representation of a human *child* in the conventional (if unstable) sense of the term, they do not necessarily undercut her status as a representation of a human being. Therefore, as important as the somewhat preverbal status of the so-called child is to my reading of literary telepathy—a status that might cause these figures to look like “blank, floating” signifiers—I’d like to suggest that literary telepathy needn’t undercut their status as literary representations of human beings. As such, the mental impressions telepathy communicates and the characters through which those communications flow retain the moral, affective aspects of human experience that were so compelling to James.

These experiences are associated not just with signs (“Maisie,” “Sir Claude”), but with the discrete minds those signs represent. Hence my insistence in the introduction that telepathy can be understood both figuratively *and* mimetically. In *What Maisie Knew*, more than in *In the Cage*, it is the mimetic aspects of telepathic communication that allow us to make moral judgments about characters in the world of the fiction. And the child characters to whom James gave life at the close of the century were just the beginning: the signature style of James’s late phase is, in my view, creditable in part to the skillful manner in which he deployed telepathy and its effects to enable “innocents,” such as Milly Theale and Lamber Strether, to set in motion from the start, and ultimately

to realize, their designs in plots over which they ostensibly have little or no influence. To return finally to Maisie and to the example at hand, the triangulating witness posture we assume in our reading of Maisie and Miss Overmore's wordless, gesture-less dialogue early in the novel informs our readings of crucial moments between Maisie and Mrs. Wix, and between Maisie and Sir Claude, especially in its final chapters.

Writing Maisie

I'd like now to take a look at two examples of how telepathic effects work to produce Maisie's reading/writing function in the text, bound up with what she *is* as "wonder-working" agent. The first example, involving Mrs. Wix, serves chiefly to illustrate how Maisie willingly embraces her experience of telepathic communication with other characters; that is, of how she brings the contents of another's mind into full consciousness and embraces their latent potential. The second example, involving Sir Claude, will illustrate the effects of Maisie's clairvoyant vision in the novel; namely, the manner in which Maisie's clairvoyant vision determines the events of plot.

Maisie and Mrs. Wix's relationship is replete with telepathic effects presented early in the novel in the "silent profundity" they share (64). Indeed, Mrs. Wix's very presence in Maisie's life is anticipated in Maisie's mind: "She vaguely knew . . . that part of what made [the future still bigger than she] was the number of governesses lurking in it and ready to dart out" (24). As I will show, Mrs. Wix does indeed seem to "lurk" and "dart out" and most importantly to make the future "still bigger than" it would be without her. In one of the most striking telepathic moments in the narrative, Maisie inhabits Mrs. Wix's consciousness at a distance, and the power of her mental occupation draws Mrs.

Wix into Maisie's physical space at a time when Maisie needs her, desperately. Having been cast out of Maisie's presence on a permanent basis by Miss Overmore (of whom Mrs. Wix has thus far retained at least a little fear), Mrs. Wix nevertheless remains remarkably present to Maisie:

[Mrs. Wix's] very silence became . . . one of the largest elements of Maisie's consciousness; it proved a warm and habitable air, into which the child penetrated further than she dared ever to mention to her companions. *Somewhere in the depths of it the dim straighteners were fixed upon her; somewhere out of the troubled little current Mrs Wix intensely waited.* (43, my emphasis)¹⁴¹

At the end of this passage from which one of my epigraphs is drawn, the narrator ceases to narrate, and indeed closes the chapter, inviting us to inhabit this profound “unnarratable” space, as Warhol might refer to it, with the girl and her governess for a moment—to rest comfortably in our witnessing postures as we feel Maisie's “warmth” and Mrs. Wix's “intensity” intermingling along the metaphorically telegraphic “current” that diminishes the physical space between them.¹⁴² With her two-way vision, Mrs. Wix remains grounded in an environment she perceives, even as her wandering eye remains fixed on Maisie. (This represents one of Mrs. Wix's most fascinating qualities: in a novel full of visionary figuration, the “wall-eyed” Mrs. Wix sees in two different directions at

¹⁴¹ Mitchell views this silent space as a lonely one for Maisie (181). In my view, it is the space of the company Maisie keeps.

¹⁴² Warhol, building on Gerald Prince's articulation of the “disnarrated,” coins the term “unnarrated” to describe an “associated trope . . . which refers to those passages that explicitly do not tell what is supposed to have happened, foregrounding the narrator's refusal to narrate” (“Neonarrative”).

once, her two-way vision inducing her to wear “straighteners” not to improve her own vision, but rather to improve her interlocutors’ vision of her vision of them.) The sudden transition from this profound space to that of Beale’s home at the beginning of the seventh chapter—a kind of underreporting—opens a Derridean lacuna that serves to enhance the telepathic effects of the passage above and the chapter(s) to follow. Indeed, elliptical moves such as this one are among the narrator’s few efforts over which he has agency.¹⁴³ What transpires between the absence imposed by Miss Overmore’s injunction and the sudden transition to the following scene in the next chapter is up to the authorial audience to write, enhancing our connection to Maisie and Mrs. Wix. Indeed, much happens in the chasm that opens between chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 7 commences with an intricate, tautological passage in which Mrs. Wix is discovered at Maisie’s residence, brought there not by the narrator and not even by Mrs. Wix’s own volition, but by the pull of Maisie’s “unutterable and inexhaustible” communication in the preceding chapter (30).¹⁴⁴ Mrs. Wix has appeared at Beale Farange’s household while Beale and Miss Overmore are away together at Brighton. But how she came to know of their absence is inexplicable by any conventional means of communication. Here is the passage:

It quite fell in with this intensity that one day, . . . Maisie
should have found [Mrs. Wix] in the hall, seated on the

¹⁴³ Generally speaking, challenges to narratorial agency point up an analogous feeling that 92% of authors purportedly feel, according to Suzanne Keen’s research: “92% of authors . . . experience . . . the illusion of independent agency (IIA),” that experience of the characters in their minds and fiction possessing their own agency . . . an involuntary empathizing with a person out there, separate from themselves” (221). This romantic characterization of the authorial experience was something Faulkner claimed to have felt much of the time, and his unwitting “authors,” Quentin and Shreve, represent that experience, as we’ll see in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁴ To be fair, this comes from an earlier exchange between Maisie and Mrs. Wix and is meant to characterize the “secret” of Clara Matilda.

stool usually occupied by the telegraph-boys who
 haunted Beale Farange's . . . She understood in a *flash*
 how the visit had come to be possible—that Mrs Wix,
 watching her chance, must have slipped in under
 protection of the fact that papa . . . had, for a three days'
 excursion to Brighton, absolutely insisted on the
 attendance of her adversary. It was true that when Maisie
 explained their absence . . . Mrs Wix wore an expression
 so peculiar that it could only have had its origin in
 surprise. *This contradiction indeed peeped out only to*
vanish, for at the very moment that, *in the spirit of it*, she
 threw herself afresh upon her young friend a hansom
 crested with neat luggage rattled up to the door and Miss
 Overmore bounded out. (44, my emphasis)

Expressed as a “flash” and “contradiction,” the lacuna produced by the circularity of this passage almost disguises the question it begs: how could Mrs. Wix have been there on account of Beale's and Miss Overmore's absence if their absence proves to be a “surprise” to her? The “contradiction” belongs simultaneously to Maisie and Mrs. Wix, indeed to Maisie *through* Mrs. Wix, the latter of whom is unsettled by what “we fellow witnesses” perceive from within the habitable air of Mrs. Wix's consciousness we have so recently occupied. We can read Mrs. Wix's unease in a number of meaningful ways, but I'd like to suggest that we read it as an effect of her ephemeral consciousness of why she's there: Maisie's vision of Mrs. Wix's straighteners intensely fixed upon her

produced their inclusion in Maisie's mind, the contents of which were then, in a typical Jamesian reversal, returned to Mrs. Wix, this time mingled with Maisie's isolation and longing for companionship. The effect of representing Mrs. Wix in Maisie's mental space is thus the impression on Mrs. Wix of Maisie's isolation at Beale's, and ultimately the inclusion of Mrs. Wix in Maisie's physical space; i.e., the effects of telepathy produce a figurative collapse of the physical space between them, which results in a literal collapse of that physical space. The metonymic representation of telegraphy in the first passage at the end of chapter 6 calibrates the synecdochic naming of the telegraph-boys in the second one at the beginning of chapter 7, for what was the absence of telegraphy between Mrs. Wix and Maisie (imposed by Miss Overmore) was the presence of its figurative expression in the telepathic communication that uncannily brings Mrs. Wix home. By way of her "troubled little current," Maisie has brought her "dingy" governess to the house in a moment of safety. At the instant that safety collapses, so too does a fleeting consciousness of the telepathic effects that brought it about. Moreover, what the narrator covertly, if not intentionally, reports here is an enactment of Miss Overmore's "bounding" into and disrupting the telepathic bond Maisie and Mrs. Wix share—an enactment which he will eventually resort to naming in the "thickening veil" that causes them to exchange "confused and ineffectual signs" late in the novel (225). And were it not for the mental-*cum*-physical collapse of the space separating the charge and her governess, the latter would have missed an important milestone in her relationship to Mrs. Beale. The kernel of refusal to submit further to Mrs. Beale's injunctions that Mrs. Wix exhibits during this meeting is crucial to Mrs. Wix's participation in her later battle

of wits (“Wix” expressing itself a chiasmus of “wit” that will define Mrs. Wix’s relationships to other characters) with the overabundant sign of her nemesis.¹⁴⁵

Maisie’s “demonic foresight” is key to determining much of what the future holds for Mrs. Wix, including her final voyage into the world of Maisie’s unknowable future. Indeed, the telepathic effects of Maisie’s connection to Mrs. Wix in the first part of the novel place the governess in her young charge’s boat in the last. In a conversation with Maisie about her mother, Mrs. Wix describes Ida’s unfounded rage at what she assumes has been Mrs. Wix’s betrayal to interested parties of Ida’s immoral behavior. “I’ve pretended,” Mrs. Wix urges,

“*not to see!* It serves me right to have held my tongue before such horrors!” What horrors they were [Maisie] forebore too closely to enquire, *showing even signs not a few* of an ability to take them for granted. That put the couple more than ever, in this troubled sea, in the same boat, so that *with the consciousness of ideas on the part of her fellow mariner Maisie could sit close and wait.* (87, my emphasis)

The pronouncement that Maisie “could sit close and wait” recalls to us the waiting Maisie has done within the habitable air of Mrs. Wix’s profound silence quoted above. More importantly, though, her thoughts offer an accurate depiction of future events. Less figuration than foresight, what Maisie sees here inscribes the text with a proleptic vision of the novel’s final scene in which Mrs. Wix will literally sail away with Maisie into her

¹⁴⁵ Though Mrs. Wix still requires Maisie to overcome Overmore at the end of the novel. I’ll discuss this in more detail below.

“fellow mariner’s” narratable future. With this in mind, I’d like to return to James’s paradoxical claim that Maisie works her wonders “without design.”

Maisie is confident that she can “sit close and wait” for the events of a future with which her “demonic foresight” has inscribed the text. Though the design might exist somewhere below the level of knowledge, it has, as I will show in my discussion of Sir Claude, been part enough of Maisie’s consciousness to produce textual evidence early in the novel. The important division between story and discourse upon which Seymour Chatman and Gerald Prince, for instance, insist seems to be at once upheld (the first “divorce” of the New York edition) and challenged. Few would argue that Maisie’s “vision,” which the narrator articulates, is anything less; in other words, an authorial audience is unlikely to read this vision of the fellow mariners as a metaphor devised exclusively by the narrator to describe Maisie’s comportment toward Mrs. Wix. This vision belongs to Maisie, and the narrator’s access to it provides him or her with an opportunity to put it into words. Thus, a character situated within the world of story is covertly producing the events of plot; i.e., influencing discourse by way of more or less proleptic visions.

With evidence of the design—its past, present, and future—named within the space of Maisie’s mind in the first third of the novel, it seems difficult to argue that such a design doesn’t exist. And Mrs. Wix plays a profound role in articulating key aspects of Maisie’s vision on their journey toward that final vessel at the novel’s close. Encouraging Sir Claude to make a home with her and Maisie, for instance, Mrs. Wix comes out with: “‘The way’s just to come along with us.’ It hung before Maisie,” that reified version of the vision she’s held so closely within her (87). Seated securely next to Mrs. Wix in the

boat that unites them at once figuratively and mimetically—placing diachronic events (one mental, one physical) in synchronic relation to each other—Maisie can leave the next move to Mrs. Wix, who gives voice to her vision. The ambiguity of this “her” is intentional: because Mrs. Wix utters the content of Maisie’s desire/design, her utterance entails a reversal in which the vision, “like a glittering picture,” takes on the appearance of being “Mrs. Wix’s way,” and Maisie “clasps her hands in ecstasy. ‘Come along, come along, come along!’” (87).¹⁴⁶ It becomes virtually impossible to determine whence mimetic desire originates by virtue of the feedback loop telepathic communication entails. The question becomes how Sir Claude came to be the object of desire expressed in Maisie’s ecstatic “Come along!”

The “clairvoyance” Miller perceives in Maisie establishes Sir Claude as guardian and object of desire. On first hearing of her mother’s relationship with an unnamed

¹⁴⁶ I’d like to call attention quickly again to Sharon Cameron and to the difference between language reified into an idea that might *seem* like pure consciousness and the content of thought to which verbal utterances have made no contribution. Citing the passages in which (1) Maisie urges the Captain to admit that he loves Ida, and in which (2) Maisie and Ida finally part for good in Boulogne, Cameron argues that consciousness is merely a receptacle for impressions but cannot govern them: “Consciousness cannot assert desires; it can only be impressed upon by them, for . . . when . . . it aggressively reifies what it feels . . . it is ultimately blocked and then brutalized” (67). I’d like to point out that in Cameron’s first exemplar, importantly, reification doesn’t necessarily happen exclusively within consciousness, but rather within language. In both cases, what Maisie wishes to hear ventriloquized (along the lines in which Wyndham Lewis’s eponymous Tarr likes to hear the sound of his own words about himself echoed back to him to give them a deeper significance) is uttered first with a tentative obliquity, and then, hanging in the form of utterances—of word-things—almost palpably in front of the Captain for the plucking (“You *do* love her!”). The words Maisie has virtually put into the Captain’s mouth are taken up again by the girl and reified into the apples of her eye. But because Maisie has *named* love, she has alienated it from the inner beauty with which unuttered consciousness alone can imbue it. Thus, like Ida’s eyes, this eye devolves from the figurative, visionary eye to the physical eye. By no means am I suggesting that Maisie’s words here look anything like the throw-away words we utter when our minds are entirely elsewhere; that is, words devoid of the type of consciousness Cameron describes. Maisie is obviously entirely present at these climactic moments. But I’d like to suggest that in such instances, in which Cameron suggests that consciousness as such is the entity responsible for reification and thus blocked, it might be useful to consider the primacy of language in the exchange. Although Maisie’s naming of “love” is motivated by a passionate and affective attempt to create something beautiful out of something that is anything but, it nevertheless resorts in desperation to the same kind of vulgar act that results in the death of the equally precocious Miles at the end of “The Turn of the Screw” (a reification that could certainly be called “blocked and then brutalized”).

companion in Europe, Maisie attributes to Sir Claude his most important defining attributes. The narrator's exclusive access to Maisie implicates him in her telepathic act, but he remains unable to *influence* the events of plot, restricted, as he of course is, to reporting them. Drawing her mother's companion into her ken long before her physical presence begins to challenge his powers of resistance, Maisie receives an impression that instantaneously determines the central role he will play in the much discussed final chapters of her novel. Learning from Miss Overmore that her mother "was accompanied on her journey [abroad] by a gentleman whom . . . she had—well, 'picked up'," Maisie inscribes the text with another proleptic thought:

Familiar as she had grown with the fact of the great alternative to the proper, she felt in her governess and her father a strong reason for not emulating that detachment. At the same time she had heard somehow of little girls—of exalted rank, it was true—whose education was carried on by instructors of the other sex, and she knew that if she were at school at Brighton it would be thought an advantage to her to be more or less in the hands of masters. She turned these things over and remarked to Miss Overmore that if she should go to her mother perhaps the gentleman might become her tutor. (41, my emphasis)

In this example of "foresight" or "divination," Maisie's mental activity includes not only the most crucial events she will face in the story, but also the moral tenor of the situation they perpetuate. Her thoughts in this passage importantly acknowledge the manner in

which her relationship, brought about at this instant with the yet unnamed and thus eminently narratable Sir Claude, is associated somehow with a sense of impropriety: sidling up to the improper, Maisie finds the view favorable to her vision and allows her mind to receive a blurred, indeed flawed, impression of Sir Claude the “master.” Thus Maisie immediately formulates the duality of bliss and bale to which James calls attention in the preface. Her positioning of Sir Claude in the role of tutor proves to be true, for Sir Claude visits the nursery, recognizing and discussing her want of an education, and he is responsible for the fitful attacks on learning in which Mrs. Beale engages Maisie. More importantly, Sir Claude is her tutor in another sense: though her “wonder working” has worked wonders on her perception of her guardians, Sir Claude tutors her in the pain of life’s inevitable disappointments enhanced by the filial yet erotically charged aspects of their relationship. Maisie’s mind inevitably writes the events of plot simply by thinking them, for once the narrator describes her visions, he has inscribed the text with its future.

On Maisie’s first meeting Sir Claude, their encounter expresses the telepathic nature of their mental relationship that Maisie establishes in the quoted passage above, including all of the erotic overtones such mental intermingling entails.¹ Established, therefore, even before Sir Claude is brought physically before Maisie, their telepathic bond will enable the communication of impressions between them for which words and even gestures (with one, notable exception I’ll discuss below) are vulgar superfluity.

When he does finally meet her, Sir Claude tells Maisie that he “knew her ever so well by

¹ Though this sexual tension does not, as Harris Wilson claims, lead Maisie to offer up her virginity to Sir Claude in exchange for his exclusive devotion to her and Mrs. Wix, the manner in which the tension between them evolves does accord, as most critics agree, with her advancement in years from girl to young lady (Wilson 281). For Cameron, the sexual innuendo of Sir Claude’s decision to bring Mrs. Wix on their adventure is lost on Maisie, whereas for Miller, Maisie seems dimly aware of something, expressed viscerally, spasmodically, that is sexual in nature.

her mother, but had come to see her now so that he might *know her for himself*. She could see that his *view of this kind of knowledge* was to make her *come away with him*, and, further, that it was just what he was there for and had already been some time” (55, my emphasis). Lending primacy to that species of transcendent vision (obscured by the innuendo that will persistently penetrate their shared mental space) to which the narrator, Miss Overmore, and Mrs. Wix have had access, the description of their meeting brings Sir Claude into Maisie’s mental, visionary ken. We might also acknowledge here the kinship between *Dombey* and *Maisie* engendered by their epistemological and narratological reliance upon the knowledge pun.² What Maisie sees is the view from within Sir Claude’s mind; but also from within that shared perspective, she sees both a present and a future act of the pair coming away from Mrs. Beale’s home and setting their course for Boulogne. Maisie’s vision once again captures Sir Claude’s future in a telepathic poetics that finds its narratological analogue somewhere between foreshadow and prolepsis. Unfortunately, however, if Sir Claude has been there for “some time” to take Maisie away, then perhaps he’s been there too long: the appointed meeting time for Maisie’s “com[ing] away” with him is in about five years, and the appointed place is Boulogne. As Derrida suggests, the telepathic event disrupts the ordinary flow of time, causing “an anachronism [that . . .] brakes or accelerates us as if we were late with respect to that which has already happened to us in the future” (Derrida 3). In a frequently cited passage I discuss below, Sir Claude’s absence in Boulogne will leave Maisie with a “foretaste of . . . death,” an anachronism that nevertheless occurs right on cue.

² See Marsh, 420-21.

So forceful is Maisie's transcendent vision during her introduction to Sir Claude that it impresses itself upon Mrs. Beale's consciousness, producing a response, which could just as easily have been uttered in that future hotel room in Boulogne: "'You seem so tremendously eager,' she said to the child, 'that I hope you're at least clear about Sir Claude's relation to you'" (55). A complicated web of exposure and anxiety inform Mrs. Beale's dimly perceptible unease in this exchange, woven by her sense that Maisie knows what she's thinking, evidence of which we have witnessed earlier in the novel in the wordless dialogue between Maisie and her governess—now stepmother—cited above. This is not to say that there would be no tension between Mrs. Beale and Sir Claude were Maisie absent from this exchange, but, as they will soon explicitly acknowledge, Maisie makes "all the difference."

Mrs. Beale intends to suggest here that Maisie's excitement might be premature in its assumption of filial intimacy because Sir Claude has not yet confirmed his marriage to Ida. What her observation ironically does, however, is preemptively emphasize the taboo imposed by the filial nature of their relationship, which will prohibit in Boulogne a different kind of intimacy that would threaten her, the future Mrs. Beale's, status as Sir Claude's mistress. In this sense, the threat Maisie poses gives rise to a second register of bliss and bale entailed in her relationship with Sir Claude. (In fact, it seems any woman's bliss with Sir Claude is another woman's bale.) Maisie's first mental impression of Sir Claude, then, entails the several registers on which the young man and girl will relate to each other throughout the novel: those of the erotic, underscored by Maisie's acknowledgment of the improper and Sir Claude's innuendo (however unconscious); the filial, attenuated by its foundation in a second marriage and by the already apparent

weakness of that marriage bond; and the platonic, made possible by the chronological difference in age between them. As Maisie's maturity level begins effectively to close the age gap between them, the viability of these last two registers shrinks with it. In answer to Mrs. Beale's charge, we find that it is precisely the tenuous filial nature of their relationship that determines the final events of the narrative: yes, Maisie's "clear."

The eroticism that characterizes the bond between Maisie and Sir Claude is both an *effect of* mimetic enactments of telepathy, which will gather as the novel continues, and an aspect of the relationship that *produces* telepathic effects. However, the erotic aspects of their connection should in no way undermine the fact that Sir Claude, like Mrs. Wix, genuinely cares for Maisie. One way in which he and Mrs. Wix reveal their authentic concern for Maisie is in their attempts to pretend that Maisie's mother loves her dearly. Mrs. Wix attributes Ida's neglect to being overwhelmed with her love for Sir Claude, and Sir Claude attempts to convince Maisie that Ida is tormented by her absence from her dear daughter: "There were occasions when he even spoke as if he had wrenched his little charge from the arms of a parent who had fought for her tooth and nail" (77). But their motivations differ: where Mrs. Wix certainly cares for Maisie, she is nevertheless spurred by a financial need that the governess position meets, as well as the economy of exchange Maisie offers for the loss of her daughter. Sir Claude, in contrast, has little if anything to gain by committing himself to Maisie, especially once Ida has obviously engaged in extra-marital affairs, and after his relationship to Mrs. Beale has become more oppressive than rewarding.³ While Sir Claude might at first have

³ John Carlos Rowe suggests the possibility that Sir Claude could be motivated by his desire to recognize in Maisie a suitable heir, given the manner in which his wife exhibits all the qualities of the "modern" woman uninterested in children and childbearing. While I think this is a possibility, I don't think it's a strong

appreciated, and even sought, the structural hiding place Maisie offered his affair with Mrs. Beale—not unlike the financial living space Maisie offered to Mrs. Wix—his interest in the mind that would preclude any concealment Maisie might ineffectually embody proves to be of greater value to him. Thoughts communicated implicitly or explicitly among Sir Claude, Maisie, and Mrs. Wix supply evidence of this primacy.

In fact, Sir Claude describes the relationship among Mrs. Wix, Maisie, and himself so as to reveal the manner in which her two guardians together support Maisie, even as he surreptitiously reveals his antipathy toward Mrs. Wix: “‘Oh yes,’ said Sir Claude; ‘Mrs Wix and I are shoulder to shoulder’” (72). After all, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, they can’t be seeing eye-to-eye, their visually impaired front metonymically represented by Mrs. Wix’s two-way vision. In his careful posturing here Sir Claude aligns himself with Mrs. Wix, gazing down upon their prized Maisie whose gaze of course mingles with and returns those of her joined compatriots. (We see evidence of this reversal late in the novel when Maisie is stricken with a “sharpened sense for latent meanings” that reveal “how much more even than she had guessed that her friends were fighting side by side” [189].) What is most important about Sir Claude’s posture at this early stage is its tacit expression of discord, which produces a skewed mirroring effect between Mrs. Wix/Maisie and Sir Claude/Maisie. The difference between the two guardians’ postures toward Maisie, which Sir Claude’s observation represents, is born out in the shifting degrees of agency manifest in relation to their charge: Sir Claude will move from a state of passivity to a state of agency in Maisie’s world, while Mrs. Wix will journey the other way.

enough one (that is, within Sir Claude’s mind, if we accept it as true) to discount my claim here (*Other* 129-30).

Sir Claude acts with at least some agency difficult to discern in any of Maisie's other guardians, lending a degree of authenticity to his posture, "shoulder-to-shoulder" with Mrs. Wix: "Dear Mrs Wix is magnificent, but she's rather too grand about it. I mean the situation isn't after all quite so desperate or quite so simple. But I give you my word before her, and I give it to her before you, that I'll never, never, forsake you. Do you hear that, old fellow, and do you take it in? I'll stick to you through everything" (91). The beauty of this moment, perhaps the most authentic instance of compassion, empathy, and solidarity directed toward Maisie, is the core of her vision in which a sincere promise of love and security—a speech act rendered as prolepsis—comes from the only person in the novel capable of bestowing it economically and emotionally.⁴ Paramount to this moment is that it not only includes, but calls attention to its dependence upon a witness: Mrs. Wix. As witness, Mrs. Wix is briefly aligned with the reader in a crucial, defining moment over which Maisie's penetrating telepathic effect on those around her diminishes: in the face of authentic utterances, telepathic effects withdraw. Expressed with the full force of the future it unleashes into their present "situation," Sir Claude's utterance proves to be true: he will not abandon Maisie but will instead be abandoned by her at the cost of his own freedom sacrificed proleptically here with his verbal inscription on the text. Thus, as Maisie's "vision," which necessarily entails Sir Claude's agency (inasmuch as the love and commitment Maisie desires would always include a conscious choice by the person who bestows them), is realized, her influence over it diminishes. A reversal takes place that puts Sir Claude in the "sticking" posture, at once deeply present and clairvoyant, and

⁴ Sir Claude's financial status is, of course, not straight forward. As some critics observe, he seems to live off of the women he charms. Yet, when he "pays for [Maisie] himself," he seems to do so by his own means (93). Crucially here, his annual worth is of less concern than his ability to secure funds and the manner in which he chooses to dispense of them.

Mrs. Wix in the witness posture. And indeed, this speech marks a shift in Sir Claude's comportment toward Maisie: away from the restrictions of Victorian decorum and toward an acknowledgment of difference that is nonetheless unbounded by categorical constraints.⁵

Introduced in the conjuring act that produces Sir Claude, telepathic effects contribute to the increasingly erotic quality of Maisie and Sir Claude's encounters.⁶ Sir Claude confesses his more than filial attraction to Maisie less than halfway into the novel. In a discussion with Sir Claude about the relationship between adoration and fear, Maisie intimates that Sir Claude ought to be afraid of her, given her feelings toward him. He replies:

“What prevents [me from being afraid of you] is simply that you're the gentlest spirit on earth. Besides—” he pursued; but he came to a pause.

“Besides—?”

⁵ A similar circumstance, whereby telepathic effects withdraw in the face of straightforward language, occurs in *Dombey and Son*. Susan Nipper, unable to hold her tongue a moment longer, unleashes on Dombey her arsenal of authentic observations about Florence's love for her father whose dagger point will finally face the man in an attack executed—almost successfully—by his undisciplined hand. Despite Dombey's affronted horror, “the Nipper” continues through his warnings for a considerable length of time, and gives voice to some of the most important and revelatory aspects of Florence's life and history in the discourse (*Dombey* 665-9). What is uttered explicitly here enrages Dombey, but it also inaugurates a deflation of the pressure repression augments.

⁶ In *Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking*, Pamela Thurschwell places special emphasis on the erotic aspects of telepathic exchanges, aspects that are key to the erotics I will discuss in this and the following chapter (see especially 4-9, 115-19).

“I *should* be in fear if you were older—there!

See—you already make me talk nonsense,” the young

man added. “The question’s about your father.” (96)⁷

“Shortly after” this explicit revelation and denial (namely, Sir Claude’s pretense of “nonsense”), Maisie discloses a rare instance of denial on her own part. During their discussion quoted above, Sir Claude has insisted to Maisie that he has been writing, but not seeing, Mrs. Beale. Soon after, Mrs. Wix reports to the contrary, and Maisie responds emphatically, “Sir Claude? . . . Oh no—not *seeing* her!” Curiously, however, Maisie’s unuttered thoughts quickly turn to an acknowledgment of her stepparents’ trysts: “It was not wholly clear to Maisie why Mrs Wix should be prostrate at this discovery [that they have been seeing each other]; but her general consciousness of the way things could be both perpetrated and resented always eased off for her the strain of the particular mystery. ‘There may be some mistake. He says he hasn’t’” (97-8). In thoughts communicated by the narrator Maisie transmits precisely what Sir Claude attempted to conceal, yet she pretends to conceal her consciousness of this likelihood with her silence on the subject even as she undermines her ostensible denial. Her defense of Sir Claude, “He *says* he hasn’t,” is tantamount to revealing that Sir Claude dissembles (my emphasis). Placing the lie in language lifts the strain from a shared consciousness between Maisie and Mrs. Wix whose “profundity” in silence is too great to bear. It would be a mistake to exclude this moment of denial from the expression of attraction that precedes it in the novel, for both are a part of Maisie’s attempts to defer, even as she secures, a promise of more than filial attraction.

⁷ The narrator is careful to describe him as a “young man” at this point, emphasizing the taboo imposed by significant age differences.

Maisie's enchanting telepathic effect on Sir Claude brings him yet closer to an expression of romantic attraction to her, yet the encroaching "fear" that attends all of his erotic entanglements (as well as the obvious taboo Maisie presents) stops him short. Again, however, Maisie will push him through his apprehension, resuming her role as writing visionary:

"Nothing would induce me," the young man said to Maisie, "to tell you what made me think so well of *her*." Having divested the child he kissed her gently and gave her a little pat to make her stand off. The pat was accompanied with a vague sigh in which his gravity of a moment before came back. "All the same, if you hadn't had the fatal gift of beauty—!"

"Well, what?" Maisie asked, *wondering* why he paused. It was the first time she had heard of her beauty.

"Why, we shouldn't all be thinking so well of each other!" (107, my emphasis)

Maisie's "wonder" here can be understood as part of the prefatory wonder James describes, rather than the wonder of confusion. Her wonder enhances the romantic aspects of the statement itself, and moves her closer to her vision—however flawed—in which the "butterfly" and fairy princess are united (77). And yet when the vision glimmers close enough to hand to be grasped, Maisie averts her eyes:

“He isn’t speaking of personal loveliness—you’ve not *That* vulgar beauty my dear, at all,” Mrs Beale explained. “He’s just talking of plain dull *charm of character*.”

“Her character’s the most extraordinary thing in all the world,” Sir Claude stated to Mrs Beale.

“Oh I know all about that sort of thing!”—she [Maisie] fairly bridled with the knowledge.

It gave Maisie *somehow a sudden sense of responsibility from which she sought refuge*. “Well you’ve got it too, ‘that sort of thing’—you’ve got the fatal gift: you both really have!” (107, my emphasis)

As Maisie registers the larger implications of Sir Claude’s admiration, she acknowledges the role that her “charm” has played in effecting it. Thus, she once again responds with denial, only this time is it far less subtle. We might be tempted to read Maisie’s “sudden sense of responsibility” as a result of the shame she feels for pretending toward a kind of knowledge she doesn’t quite yet comprehend, but that quintessential “somehow” reminds us of the narrator’s posture.

Mentioned above, this “somehow” is a marker the narrator frequently deploys in his gesture toward the suggestion of unorthodox, ineffable means by which Maisie comes to know. “She had heard somehow,” “She knew somehow,” “somehow it was brought fully to the child’s knowledge . . .” (25, 41, 67). The “somehow” enables the narrator to report nothing and imply everything. It leaves open the twin possibilities that Maisie either doesn’t really know anything, or that she knows precisely what we think she

knows. Without undermining the seriousness of his subject matter, I'd like to suggest that the narrator's posture is playful: maybe she's telepathic, he teases, maintaining all the while a subtle suggestion that any such assumption is merely an effect produced by his rhetorical skills. I'll talk more about this in the closing section; for now, I'd like to return to the case at hand.

The responsibility from which Maisie seeks refuge has, from her first inscription of Sir Claude as "tutor" and "master," moved the narrative toward this moment. What she does in the passages above is to press Sir Claude now on the subject of a future with which she has long since inscribed the text. Sir Claude's explicit expressions, importantly, will soon prove illicit expression, for her age will have begun to impose limitations on the namable even as it offers a new sort of freedom. Here in Beale's home,⁸ the present is shot through by the future in Boulogne in which these expressions become so relevant; in Boulogne, when the possibilities that Sir Claude's pronouncements introduce are for an instant imaginable, the filial history, the past in which the expressions were voiced, prohibits their naming by Sir Claude, by Maisie, or (especially) by the narrator.⁹ At that later stage, all messages whose contents transcend the boundaries of filial love are by necessity restricted to the covert, fugitive mode of telepathic communication.

Importantly, for all its explicitness, the content of Sir Claude's communication here is no more pregnant with responsibility than were earlier, unnamable expressions.

⁸ Maisie "somehow" knows this is Beale's new house without ever having been there and without Sir Claude's telling her she was to go there that day: "I'm here to see Papa?" (99).

⁹ This is especially true if we conceive, for a moment, of the narrator as an authorial representative in the historical context of the novel. Thus, this would fall into the category of what Warhol refers to as the "antinarratable," which includes those scenes or topics that cannot be narrated due to their basis in socially or emotionally restricted topics, such as taboo or trauma.

The difference now is the presence of a character witness for whom the diegetic utterance of the confession is a necessary condition. Again, “we fellow witnesses” are represented in a character, falling this time under the sign of “Mrs. Beale.” Before and after this, the narrator is careful to level responsibility for most unnamed content that stretches beyond the “proper” on us. Here, with a character witness in place, Mrs. Beale and Maisie run for cover in an Edenic landscape—Mrs. Beale by undermining the value of Sir Claude’s confession, and Maisie by turning the trio’s attention to Sir Claude and Mrs. Beal (“Well you’ve got it too . . . the fatal gift!”). Sir Claude stands firm. Ultimately, Sir Claude’s and Maisie’s thoughts are communicated almost exclusively by telepathic effects, with the reader resuming the witness posture.

There’s an “effective record,” of course, and witnesses, and one of them might be Sir Claude.

Indeed, even the physical abuse Maisie sustains at the hands of her mother is among the telepathic images she shares with Sir Claude. The young man’s metaphor for Ida’s abandonment of Maisie presents the girl “chucked . . . overboard . . . out of the window and down two floors to the paving stones” (190), as though Maisie’s consciousness had impressed upon Sir Claude’s a vision of what had actually transpired earlier in the novel when she was “dashed by Mrs. Farange almost to the bottom [of the stairs],” a vision of which Maisie recollects instantly upon leaving Sir Claude (127). Indeed, the paragraph in which this event is recounted begins with “Sir Claude,” placing him syntactically in the space in which the narrator’s mind, inscribed as it is by Maisie’s consciousness, imagines the scene. In Boulogne, these kinds of impressions are all Sir Claude and Maisie require to “know [each other] for [them]selves,” and Maisie “ha[s] not

to put into words” her responses to him. She observes that: “He could be afraid of himself,” and several pages later discovers that it is now “She [who] was afraid of herself” (248, 257). Such telepathic impressions move briefly between Maisie and her father while the two have Sir Claude in mind:

If he had an idea at the back of his head she had also one in a recess as deep, and for a time, while they sat together, there was an extraordinary mute passage between her vision of this vision of his, his vision of her vision, and her vision of his vision of her vision. What there was no effective record of indeed was the small strange pathos on the child’s part of an innocence so saturated with knowledge and so directed to diplomacy. (145)

The telepathic effects that had contributed to the eroticism of Florence and Walter’s bond had anticipated to some extent similar, though even more striking effects in James—especially given the slippage between biological father–daughter telepathy, and father *figure*–daughter telepathy, in both. Moreover, in the following passage, *Maisie* anticipates the merging of characters across time and space in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, which I’ll discuss in the following chapter. Maisie and Sir Claude think as one, their physical tour through Boulogne the analogue to two minds marching in an identical stride:

[N]othing came now but the intenser consciousness of their quest and their subterfuge. . . . She saw nothing that she had seen hitherto—no touch in the foreign picture that had at first

been always before her. The only touch was that of Sir Claude's hand, and to feel her own in it was her mute resistance to time. She went about as sightlessly as if he had been leading her blindfold. *If they were afraid of themselves it was themselves they would find at the inn.* (259, my emphasis)

What Miller calls a “splendid example of Maisie’s ‘divination’” can be understood here as her ability to read Sir Claude’s mind so thoroughly as to produce of the “young man” a double of the young woman (*Versions* 43).

The couple mentally merges in the only way disembodied literary characters can: by the linguistic signs that gesture to a similar, though utterly unnamable and unknowable, signified located somewhere within the sign of “themselves.” Most importantly, the signified to which they gesture exists in one mind and one mind only: the reader’s. This is made possible not only by the telepathic effects that increasingly characterize the relationship between Sir Claude and Maisie, but also by the profound absence of Maisie’s physical characteristics. To apply Kittler’s observations on the double to *What Maisie Knew*, “the Double must for its part . . . be believed by [James’s] readers. There is no guarantee of the optical identity of two . . . images except for the words that make that assertion” (*Literature* 88). And yet words, as Kittler intimates, will always lead the witness away from a positive identification of the double due to the sign’s inability to produce stable signifieds. The same is true of telepathy. Were the text to provide language denoting either a description of Maisie’s physical attributes or of the contents of Sir Claude’s and Maisie’s minds, our interpretation of those words—these in

Maisie's mind, those in Sir Claude's—could only serve to sever their telepathic bond.¹⁰ (And the narrator becomes increasingly reluctant to detail Maisie's thoughts—more on that below.) Just as Kittler's exemplary novel never provides a description of the double, so *Maisie* substitutes important telepathic impressions between characters with lacunae, ellipses, and underreporting such as the fissure between chapters 6 and 7.

The doubling effect of Maisie and Sir Claude, triangulated as it is by the reader/witness, is further complicated by a doubling effect, which takes place at one diegetic remove: the doubling of dyads, Maisie/Sir Claude and Maisie/Mrs. Wix. The doubling of the dyads is a result of numerous telepathic effects. First, the relative absence of Maisie's concrete attributes fosters mutability (though I do not go as far as Miller in suggesting that she is a “blank, floating signifier”).¹¹ Additionally, the triangulation effect Sir Claude produced earlier in the novel, “shoulder-to-shoulder” with Mrs. Wix, breaks down as the novel progresses, for the Maisie with whom Mrs. Wix shares a relationship is increasingly distinct from the Maisie with whom Sir Claude shares one. The doubling effect is also produced partly by the troubling of gender roles. Both Mrs. Wix and Sir Claude represent gender trouble:¹² Sir Claude is the feminized male who relies on the economic support of females, and who imagines himself as a woman (“‘I’m an old grandmother,’ Sir Claude declared. ‘I like babies—I always did. If we go to smash I shall

¹⁰ Ingmar Bergman attempts to reveal this in *Persona*. In a scene in which a story is uttered twice verbatim by Bibi Andersson—once with the camera focused on her face and a second time with the camera fixed on Liv Ullmann's face—the story takes on an entirely different content in the receiver's mind simply by virtue of camera placement. Were the literary narrative focalized through Maisie and then through Sir Claude, the very same words would nevertheless take on different meanings, and this is true over and above the instability of the sign.

¹¹ In one sense, such a reading of Maisie leaves her open to precisely the kind of overwriting Kincaid, Pifer, and Honeyman, for instance, perceive the child to have sustained at the hands of Victorians.

¹² I draw from Rowe (who of course draws from Judith Butler) in the title of his chapter on Maisie in *Other*: “The Portrait of a Small Boy as a Young Girl: Gender Trouble in *What Maisie Knew*.” This chapter nicely articulates these troublings, some of which I rephrase here. See especially pages 124-132.

look for a place as a responsible nurse” [58]); and while Mrs. Wix’s physical appearance obviously threatens conventional Victorian codes of femininity, more troubling is how her figuration as mother fails to obtain due to the absence of father/partner, the ghosting of Clara Matilda, and the economics of Maisie/employment. Because Maisie embodies half of each dyad, and because of the gender instability her two guardians represent, a new triangulation effect emerges that results in an oblique doubling, or mirroring, of Sir Claude and Mrs. Wix.

We register this doubling in the novelistic echoes of scenes involving the guardians and their charge. When Sir Claude and Maisie, for instance, “collapsed so that they had to sink down together for support” near the end of their journey alone together in Boulogne, it would be difficult to divorce this scene from the earlier one in which Maisie and Mrs. Wix “touched bottom and melted” together in an example of homoerotic female companionship (263, 222).¹³ The doubling of Sir Claude and Mrs. Wix produced by this echo lends an unexpected air of hetero-eroticism to the bond between Maisie and Mrs. Wix that presents a challenge to the primacy awarded such conventional erotic attachments (underscored by the superfluity of the qualifying marker “hetero”). And Sir Claude’s bond with Maisie then announces a similar challenge: just as Maisie and Mrs. Wix’s melt down can be understood on hetero-erotic grounds, so the eroticized collapsing together of Maisie and Sir Claude can be seen on homoerotic grounds. The effects of telepathy thus rapidly diminish the boundaries between hetero- and homoerotic love, filial love, and brotherly love, along with the boundaries among characters. Juliet Mitchell nicely demonstrates the ways in which the characters, from the viewpoint of

¹³ A scene which itself, as I’ve noted, echoes (though less directly) the scene in which Miss Overmore and Maisie cling to each other in their game of “going-round” (25).

Maisie as artist, are all essentially mirrors of one another. One flows into the other, and the differences among them become a backdrop to the play of their sameness (176-77).

At the site of the child *as* site of telepathy, Maisie is the character whose difference begins to emerge; thus one of the ironies that characterizes her is her characterization as the sign of a discrete, narratable mind.

Being Maisie

To accept—indeed, to take responsibility for—our roles as witnesses to the telepathic act that presents the contents of Mrs. Beale’s, Mrs. Wix’s, and Sir Claude’s minds through Maisie, we would first have to understand the narrator as a construct mimetically designed to emulate a human being. He’s one of us, but with one special power: he can read Maisie’s mind. Just Maisie’s: nobody else’s. I’d like to suggest that we imagine the relationship between the narrator and Maisie as telepathic, and assume that telepathic effects *effectively* enable Maisie to see into other minds, providing the narrator and therefore the reader with access to their thoughts. In *The Uncanny* (2004), Nicholas Royle focuses his discussion of “telepathy” on its value in redressing the ideological, deistic implications imposed by the use of the term “omniscient” to describe the role of the heterodiegetic narrator. Royle convincingly argues that the narrator should be thought of as a human, rather than a godlike, construct, and Jonathan Culler takes up and supports Royle’s challenge to the deistic implications involved in employing the language of an “all-knowing,” “all-seeing” being drawn from Judeo-Christian ideology.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Jonathan Culler, “Omniscience” (183-201); Nicholas Royle, “The ‘telepathy effect.’” See also William Nelles, “Omniscience for Atheists: Or, Jane Austen’s Infallible Narrator” (118-131), who describes the narrator in Austen in similar terms.

Interestingly, moreover, William James rejected omniscience even as a characteristic of the Deity: “I do not believe, picturing the whole as I do, that even if a supreme soul exists, it embraces all the details of the universe in a single absolute act either of thought or of will. In other words I disbelieve in the omniscience of the Deity” (*Manuscripts and Notes* 5). Thus, a second triangulation of the reader function is always in place at an ontological level higher than that of first (character-reader-Maisie): the triangulation of narrator-reader-Maisie, with the reader at the apex of each triangle. Above, I suggested that the triangulation of the reader with the two characters engaged in telepathic communication produces a witness represented at times by characters within the world of the fiction (Mrs. Wix, Mrs. Beale). I, the reader, though a sort of “character” myself, nevertheless stand at one diegetic remove from the characters in the story inasmuch as I have to be aware of their fictionality (and thus of their abilities to read minds) and of the technology that positions me as witness. If we accept that Maisie has, from the outset of the novel, provided the mental leads, which the narrator followed in shaping the narrative, then this triangulation essentially demotes the narrator to the same diegetic level as Maisie.¹⁵

Where Royle in *Telepathy and Literature* and I diverge in our understanding of telepathic narration is in my view that the use of telepathic narration becomes predominantly recognizable in texts, spanning the period of the mid-nineteenth century to

¹⁵ Thus challenging the absolute division between narrator and character upheld, for example, by Monika Fludernik. Further, I would argue, telepathy allows us to talk about the fallibility of narrators. A telepathic narrator, understood as a human presence, is capable of misreading a character’s mind, whereas a god-like, omniscient narrator is not. Although William Nelles emphasizes the *infallibility* of the telepathic narrator in “Omniscience for Atheists,” it is equally productive to talk about a narrator that can at once read and *misread* minds.

the mid-twentieth century (and especially after the term was coined in 1882), which are concerned with the challenges modernity presents to Enlightenment epistemology.

Telepathic devices continue to be deployed in the period that follows the mid-twentieth century, but at that point, telepathic devices—often deployed in the service of calling attention to the construct itself, as in, for instance, much postmodern literature—are so diffuse as to be emptied of some of their ethical value. The telepathic relationship between ostensibly heterodiegetic narrators and characters, I argue, governs the modernist poetics that telepathic effects help to produce in the fiction I discuss, and points to the responsibility I describe in the introduction that inheres in J. Hillis Miller’s “read[ing] between the lines.”

As Paul Dawson has recently assessed in “The Return of Omniscience in Contemporary Fiction”: “We are accustomed to an historical trajectory of the novel which holds that modernist and postmodernist fiction throughout the twentieth century can be characterized, in part, as a rejection of the moral and epistemological certainties of omniscient narration” (144).¹⁶ Everything is subjective, and in *What Maisie Knew*, subjectivity is redoubled by the second level of focalization (Sir Claude as the object of Maisie’s focalization as the object of the narrator’s focalization, for instance) that looks like a kind of embedded focalization.¹⁷ In such cases, Maisie’s own mediation of other

¹⁶ Dawson does not argue that what happened in between was telepathic narration, but he observes the manner in which omniscience was challenged. Essentially, in marking a *return* to omniscient narration in fiction (the implication being, of course, that modernist and postmodernist fiction had largely abandoned this mode, as most modernist and postmodernist critical discourse suggests), Dawson describes what he calls “contemporary omniscience”: “The narrative authority of contemporary omniscience, as it circulates in public discourse, needs to be approached as an interrelation between the narrative voice of a work of fiction and [the] extrafictional voice” of the author, as Susan Lanser describes it in *The Narrative Act*. For Dawson, this extrafictional voice establishes a discursive relationship between the historical author and his or her extraliterary publications.

¹⁷ See Bal (156-160); Genette (77-78).

characters' minds further obscures their already flawed subjectivities to which the narrator has access only by means of Maisie. Essentially, telepathy, a historically pervasive concept at the time—and certainly for the James family—serves as a guiding principle for producing such effects.¹⁸ J. Hillis Miller posits that because of his exclusive access to Maisie's mind, the narrator is “exactly as much outside [of the other characters' minds] as Maisie is” (39). We might also recognize that Miller's argument is equally true in reverse: the narrator is exactly as much *inside* of the other characters' minds as Maisie is. Miller's observations about Maisie's “clairvoyance,” “telepathy,” and “divinations” make this aspect of the narrator's access to Maisie's knowledge especially relevant.

I'd like, now, to ask my reader to proceed as though you believe in telepathy and therefore that fictional representations of human beings can include the ability to read minds. As I noted in the introduction, a belief in telepathy in the actual world of flesh-and-blood readers is irrelevant; however, assuming a posture of such a belief (or perhaps more accurately, “willing suspension of disbelief”) is not only useful in the reception of my closing here, but is also essentially what I've been arguing that a reader does whenever she assumes the posture of “witness” to a literary telepathic act. Again, the only way for us to be sure that a mimetic instance of unmediated, telepathic communication has occurred is by deciding for ourselves that this is what's going on.¹⁹ If

¹⁸ For more on the influence of friends and family on Henry's understanding of telepathy and clairvoyance, see, for instance, F. O. Matthiessen's *The James Family* (1947), Jonathan Freedman's introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James* (1998), Elliot M. Schrero's “The Narrator's Place of Thought in ‘The Sacret Fount’” (1971), Martha Banta's *Henry James and the Occult*, and Philip Horne's *Henry James: A Life in Letters*.

¹⁹ In a sense, this is what Susan Lanser suggests that we need to do when we are deciding whether or not there is such a thing as an implied author (“(Im)plying the Author”). It's a question of belief in a theoretical construct. The value of proceeding *as though* we believe in telepathy while we read by no means implies that we have to believe in telepathy in the actual world. Nor does it imply that the fact of the telepathic event is the most important aspect of these exchanges for us to consider. On the contrary, what's important

we assume for a moment that literary human beings are capable of mind reading, then a telepathic narrator maintains a level of equality with other characters on human grounds. And because of the “feedback loop” telepathy creates, Maisie’s mind influences the narrator in ways that render a more intradiegetic narrator than might at first glance appear.²⁰ My reading of the narrator in texts such as *Maisie* herein differs from Dawson’s in its understanding of the relationship between the heterodiegetic narrator with mind reading capabilities and the characters in the fiction: for Dawson, this narrator is extrafictional; for me, this narrator moves ontologically between fictional and extrafictional worlds *because of* his relationship to the reader and to Maisie.²¹

With this in mind, I’d like us to imagine Maisie as the double of the narrator, the latter of whom fails in the end to effect the “mobility and freedom . . . in relation to and at the expense of what it constructs as characters . . . with identifiable patterns of speech and behavior, and as physical entities distinguished by bodily features and details of clothing” (Jaffe 12-13). Maisie’s musings about her own potential to know “All”—contrasted at this stage in the novel with the narrator’s limited view of her mind and the minds into which it sees—enable James to represent in her the untenable nature of omniscience, contributing to the novel’s consciousness of itself that James thought necessary to its being taken seriously (AC 165):

is that by imagining them as mimetic representations of telepathic events, we are required to judge Miss Overmore’s and Sir Claude’s mute expressions, for example, as authentic representations of their thoughts (rather than as representations of things that the narrator would have Maisie believe) and therefore of the content by which we must make moral decisions about their characters.

²⁰ That he has no idea of Maisie’s fictionality, as Miller observes, contributes to his ironic inclusion in the fictional world. For a discussion of the telepathic effect of a feedback loop, see Sconce and Naas.

²¹ It’s useful here to think about this in terms of Jim Phelan’s description of a particular kind of narration that entails a blending of the “narrator’s focalization and voice with the character’s focalization and voice” (*Living* 117).

As she was condemned to know more and more, how could it logically stop before she should know Most? It came to her in fact as they sat there on the sands that she was distinctly on the road to know Everything. . . . She looked at the pink sky with a placid foreboding that she soon should have learnt All. They [Maisie and Mrs. Wix] lingered in the flushed air till at last it turned to grey and she seemed fairly to receive new information from every brush of the breeze. (216)

Maisie's "All" aligns her with the subject position of the self-deceiving omniscient narrator doomed to extinction. The ironic metaphor of the "road to know Everything" is lain on the sands of diachronic time, through which "Everything" will always slip. Indeed, "every brush of the breeze" with which knowledge floats into Maisie's mind threatens to brush it away again. Thus Maisie, imagining herself in the subject position of one who knows "All," is thrust from it as quickly as any other possible candidate: the telepathic center of the novel can't hold fast to the position of omniscience, which she gracefully lets go at the cost of even the vaguest claim that the narrator could have been a contender. Further, the melancholy that finds its home in the "placid foreboding" of a pink sky suggests that knowledge floats inevitably toward its subject on untroubled water. Like the waves that bring the knowledge of death to Paul Dombey, this knowledge is also placid, peaceful, quiet, dead, signaling Maisie's death, and foreclosing on the omniscient narrator with whom James dispenses.

Among the strategies this narrator deploys, particularly interesting to critics has been his increasing refusal to disclose what Maisie is thinking. As Sheila Teahan puts it,

the narrator is “[u]nable to report directly the contents of Maisie’s consciousness” and can therefore “only articulate his inability to answer for her knowledge and its uncanny effects” (“Improper” 225). Here is an exemplar:

Maisie had known all along a great deal, but never so much as she was to know from this moment on and as she learned in particular during the couple of days that she was to hang in the air, as it were, over the sea which represented in breezy blueness and with a summer charm a crossing of more spaces than the Channel. *It was granted her at this time to arrive at divinations so ample that I shall have no room for the goal if I attempt to trace the stages*; as to which therefore I must be content to say that the fullest expression we may give to Sir Claude’s conduct is a poor and pale copy of the picture it presented to his young friend. (159, my emphasis)

Slightly later, he observes: “Nothing more remarkable has taken place in the first heat of her own departure . . . than her vision . . . of the manner in which she figured. I so despair of courting her noiseless mental footsteps here that I must crudely give you my word for its being from this time forward a picture literally present to her” (216). But ideas vulgarized often become ideas ironized in James, and the narrator’s proclamation of Maisie’s divination, together with his pretense toward its unreportability, produce the full irony of his relationship to Maisie. The narrator behaves rhetorically as though his comportment toward Maisie—including a gesture toward telepathic disclosure (“divinations”), as well as a reluctance to report her mental stages of development—is

merely a *posture* over which he has control. It turns out, however, that what he attempts to represent as a posture presents an accurate depiction of how the telepathic effects of Maisie's mental development have compromised the narrator's agency over the discourse.²²

Recall Miller's observation on how completely the narrator is excluded from the knowledge that Maisie is a fiction (*Versions* 39). It is reasonable to assume that this "fiction," capable of seeing into the minds of characters to which the narrator lacks access, is the "phantom of [the narrator's] own ego" in Kittler's description of the Double: "In order to see one's Double as the 'phantom of our own ego,' the cunning strategies by which the other produced it must be thoroughly masked" (*Literature* 88). These "cunning strategies" are deployed, of course, by James, to whom the text inevitably points. Though the narrator pretends to effect Maisie's telepathic qualities rhetorically, those very qualities have ironically undercut his ability to shape the discourse. Thus, by the novel's conclusion, Maisie is the narrator's imagined double over whom he finally loses even the *illusion* of control.

The final lines of the novel—"Mrs. Wix gave a sidelong look. She still had room for wonder at what Maisie knew"—have incited much debate (275). The critical track I'd like to follow here insists that the narrator has lost access to Maisie's mind. In my view, nothing has changed: the evidence we have encountered throughout the novel now gives

²² Discussing the second quotation in this paragraph, Teahan argues: "In its interplay between literal and figurative ('the manner in which she figured'), the passage interrogates the status of figurative language in the novel as a whole. For if we have access to 'what Maisie knew' only through the narrator's figures for it, what is the literal term for Maisie's knowledge? . . . The narrator's relation to Maisie is one of catachresis in the sense of figure without the ground of a literal term" ("Improper" 226). What I'm suggesting is that the "literal" terms available to us are those pertaining to telepathy: "divinations," "foresight." And these literal terms, inasmuch as they include a mimetic component, bind the literal to the figurative aspects of their effects.

us every reason to believe—to witness—that his access to Maisie’s mind once again provides the narrator with access to that of Mrs. Wix. Indeed, Maisie colors Mrs. Wix’s thoughts with that very wonder by which the girl was marked as early as the preface. And Mrs. Wix’s “sidelong look” has always been in place: she looks straight ahead even as she looks “sidelong” at Maisie on whom her wandering eye has always remained fixed, pointing up her fixed position in Maisie’s life as friend, guardian, and loved one. Maisie’s cruel exclamation, “Oh, you’re nobody!,” seems to condemn the mangy governess to an infertile, inert position, echoing those of her biological parents (236). The nought that Mrs. Wix embodies is produced in part by her representation of the no-bodies governesses represent in the context of Victorian and Edwardian England,²³ her figurative colonization of mind by Maisie, and finally, her unfortunate compulsion to speak her mind too readily, her honesty threatening to crack her straighteners. However, concluding the narrative with Mrs. Wix’s wonder reminds us of the neutral no-body whom Victorian convention has mistakenly imagined the “child” to be, and underscores the illusive assumption that such wonder could ever belong exclusively to that child. The chiasmus Mrs. Wix embodies finally crosses back toward itself: Maisie binds herself, as she had years ago foreseen, to the no-body on whom she might now inscribe her narrative. She has supplanted herself as child/nobody with Mrs. Wix as governess/nobody, rendering Mrs. Wix her amanuensis. As an alternative to Barbara Eckstein’s final assessment that Maisie is “not free” and “does not ascend into artistry,” therefore, I would suggest that

²³ This is true in James regardless of beauty or education: Miss Overmore has managed to secure Beale, who devolves into nobody; and certainly despite her youth, beauty, and accomplishments, the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* is nobody whom her Master has no desire to know. Thus poor Mrs. Wix’s peculiar unattractiveness makes her no less nobody than everybody else. Stuart Burrows nicely articulates the negated figure of the governess in James in light of the author’s own relationship to his servants in “The Place of a Servant in the Scale.”

the freedom Sir Claude ironically repeals in naming “Maisie” in almost the same breath as he proclaims, “You’re free,” is recuperated in two ways: in his offering of his own freedom in exchange for Maisie’s (as he foretold), and more importantly in the amanuensis Mrs. Wix embodies. In Maisie’s final act, she might well have supplanted herself—assumed by the adults in the novel to have been nobody from the start—with Mrs. Wix in her life’s game of puss-in-the-middle. Breaking with Sir Claude, Maisie catches the steamer with Mrs. Wix, sinking “slowly and imperfectly” into their new narrative whose first scene Maisie’s vision had analeptically inscribed on the text in that boat with her “fellow mariner” so many years before (274-5, 87).

By authorizing Maisie’s launch into her narratable future with the eminently inscribable nobody, Mrs. Wix, James allows the subject to speak for itself—to create the illusion, that is, of the story “piec[ing] itself together,” displacing the origin of narrative indefinitely until no one can be sure of who’s writing. The narrator gestures toward this possibility during the famous, pivotal scene at the Countess’s house:

She had had to mention Sir Claude, though she mentioned him as little as possible and Beale only appeared to look quite over his head. *It pieced itself together for her* that this was the mildness of general indifference, a source of profit so great for herself personally that *if the Countess was the author of it* she was prepared literally to hug the Countess.

(147)

The narrator assumes a posture here in which he gives the illusion of lacking control over the narrative; namely, of its “piecing itself together” even within the perception of the

mind (Maisie's) responsible for the novel's every thought. What we have witnessed, however, as the narrative comes to a close is that the narrator, despite himself, was right all along.²⁴

For Miller, what the reader does based on his or her reading is a "doing that is not soundly based on clear and demonstrable knowledge . . . It appears that the author, narrator, protagonist and reader can encounter nothing that they have not, in one way or another, made" (80-81). Such a claim, in its vastness, is virtually impossible to refute. Of course every reading involves something that is made by the reader, whether that reader is fictional or extra-fictional. What Miller doesn't address is the concept of witnessing to which James calls attention in the preface. Witnessing implies that something *actual*, provable by law, has occurred, and that we have seen it—not made it up—*seen* it. Though this seeing can be understood in terms as figurative as those we attribute to Maisie's vision, the ways in which we should respond to it are the same as if the telepathy we had witnessed were literal, actual. Witnessing suggests that there is something to which one is expected to do justice—the kind of justice Miller years later in *Literature as Conduct* expects readers to carry out. We could say, of course, that what we witness is simply those perceivable acts done to and around Maisie in the course of her novelistic life, but to do so would be to suggest that James distinguishes those acts from the mental activity that accompanies them, and such a suggestion would be untenable in

²⁴ The narrator's intrafictional status thus contributes to the novel's "consciousness of itself behind it" that for James was essential to the novel's being taken seriously as an art form (James, "Art," 165; Kreiswirth "Henry James"). This self-consciousness is of a distinctly modernist (and postmodernist) slant, belonging to the category of the "self-reflexive" text. It's noteworthy that the emphasized phrase in the quotation is repeated in *The Golden Bowl* (another of James's telepathic novels) when "it pieced itself together for Charlotte" that the "Assingham pair . . . had had somewhere in the gallery . . . an accidental concussion," which has made the Colonel instantly aware of Charlotte's actual relation to the Prince (185).

James. James's deployment of telepathy asks us to act *as though* we are actually reading minds associated with discrete characters for whom we accept responsibility. Such a posture toward the telepathic act, then, assumes that the content of telepathic messages provides evidentiary contributions to knowledge. Thus, if Dickens through Dombey characterizes the reader as a gothic adversary (consider Andrew Miller's playful caution: "Edith is in want of protection from me, as her shame is projected forcibly . . . onto the paper pages of the novel I am holding in my hands . . ." [173]), James through Maisie characterizes her as a champion, and as Maisie's champions, we participate in the epistemology of authorship.

The oft-quoted passage to which I gestured earlier, in which Sir Claude fails to appear at the appointed time and place in Boulogne, now takes its leading role: "She was yet to learn what it could be to recognise in some lapse of a sequence the proof of an extinction, and therefore remained unaware that this momentary pang was a foretaste of the experience of death" (223).²⁵ A willingness to know what is visible to us literally and figuratively involves the final step in Maisie's full acceptance of her role as creator, conjurer, artist, and it involves unveiling her preternatural ability to deny that last of all things: death.²⁶ Such a death is proleptically repeated (happening again for the first time) upon the artist's completion of a work, a figurative death that proved especially difficult for James to brook in the "interminable little Maisie."²⁷ With the ability thus to overcome

²⁵ For Juliet Mitchell, the significance of this "foretaste . . . of death" is less the fact that Sir Claude's absence has propitiated it than the fact that no one has done so before now. Despite all of the ostensible abandonments to which Maisie has been subjected, no one actually leaves her: like Clara Matilda, they haunt simply haunt her with the threat of departure (175).

²⁶ Worth noting here is Hilary Schor's consistent observation that in their readiness to die, typical Dickensian characters are ready to live.

²⁷ Neil Hertz, for example, observes that the death of Maisie's childhood figures the "collapse of that charged distance and equivocal comer between James and his surrogate that attend the completion of the

that final repressive impulse, Maisie as artist, and readers as artists, are free to acknowledge and empathize with others—to harness the figurative element of shared consciousness between self and Other, which Cameron and Weisbuch essentially view as James’s extraordinary linguistic invention, and to do justice to what it expresses. As James puts it in the preface to *Maisie*:

The only thing to say of such lucidities is that, however one may have “discounted” in advance, and as once for all, their general radiance, one is disappointed if the hour for them, in the particular connexion, doesn’t strike—they so keep before us elements with which even the most sedate philosopher must always reckon. (11)

If the narrator fails to make a success of that reckoning, Mrs. Wix and her readers still have a chance. We have the opportunity to acknowledge all of the wonderful and tragic impressions Maisie receives *directly* from adult minds, and to appreciate the “glittering picture” she can make of them as she sets sail with Mrs. Wix. Despite James’s comments in the *Notebooks*, it would be a mistake to overlook the extraordinary role her governess plays in Maisie’s future. The chiasmus Mrs. Wix embodies finally crosses back toward itself: Maisie binds herself, as she had years ago foreseen, to the no-body—the figurative amanuensis whose actual, eroticized counterparts James first employed for *Maisie*—on whom she might now inscribe her narrative. It is Mrs. Wix, then, with whom

novel” (67). This then recalls Hilary Schor’s observation that the negotiation of departure executed between Florence and Edith in *Dombey and Son* is close “to the mood of readers (authors?), about to part from the characters they have been living with so closely for so many months of the original part publication” (67).

Maisie replaces the narrator in her narratable future, but she allows the narrator to narrate his own exit through his final, borrowed vision of Mrs. Wix's mind.

CONTROLLING QUENTIN²⁸

*If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain
Absalom, Absalom!*

If Henry James places “telepathy” in the mouths of his readers, William Faulkner places it in the mouths of babes. And with that naming comes the weight of responsibility James reserves for his “not more invited but only more expert critics,” whose luxury of ontological separation is never enjoyed by Quentin Compson, Rosa Coldfield, or Darl Bundren.²⁹ James’s reluctance to name “telepathy” stemmed in part from his elevation of the artistic over the literal possibilities it presented, and from an emphasis on the dramatic paradigm that governed his creative process.³⁰ Thus, as I noted in the previous chapter, telepathy reads in James as a spell that can be broken by language, to the extent that Kate Croy and Merton Densher, for instance, refuse to read Milly’s letter lest they break the telepathic spell that binds them. By revealing what they know to be its contents, the script would dissolve in an instant the strength of their bond: the telepathic knowledge of telepathy itself that a single vulgar word would blight. For James, in other words, whether the effects of telepathy were enabling Maisie or paralyzing Kate, they had to remain suspended in the space of Faulkner’s “notlanguage.”³¹ Masking the ineffability of what telepathy communicates in the very terms that describe it, Faulkner conceals what

²⁸ For the purposes of clarity, any emphasis I add to italicized quotations in this chapter will be presented in **bold font**.

²⁹ Because many of Faulkner’s characters appear in several texts and because I will often address more than one of the texts in which they appear, I will reserve text assignments for local examples as I come to them.

³⁰ See Martha Banta’s *Henry James and the Occult* and Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction*.

³¹ As the *Concordances* reveal, “notlanguage” is a pervasive term in Faulkner’s fiction.

he pretends to be telling by naming its source in “telepathy.” Children such as Quentin Compson and Rosa Coldfield remain the children they were at the ages of six or seven, mentally occupying the space of that childhood and finding that what they know now is what they knew then. The brutal narratives of the encrypted past and occulted present colonize the minds of Faulkner’s sensitive children, rendering them as witnesses to their own undoing. In short, Faulkner’s naming fails to break the spell and breaks instead the child.

Though in many ways no less tragic than Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), Maisie can narrate a life worth living due largely to her freedom from naming telepathy, the effects of which the narrator’s equivocal posture augments. For Quentin, in contrast, the narrator, “the stage manager, call him what you will,” dissolves in favor of a high modernist immediacy that obliterates naïve bulwarks of assumed objectivity (AA 57). Indeed, the telepathic devices that began in Dickens to undermine the supposed objectivity of so-called omniscient narration—importantly, in the mind of a child—become so pervasive in Faulkner that they fracture single minds, single “characters,” whose multiple selves double those of fractured others. Neither the poetics of modernism nor the poetics of childhood work very well without telepathic devices that enact a kind of knowing not consummate with conventional enlightenment epistemology—knowing what cannot be seen, what cannot be put into words, what is happening in another place and even another time. In this sense, telepathic devices also importantly register a sense of pain felt at a distance only too familiar in times of war—be that World War I or the American Civil War. In short, narrators are a

luxury few can afford in the 1920s and 30s,³² and “childhood” is little more than a reification of reminiscence itself. Thus the relationship between the figure of the child and the “aesthetic movement” of modernism, as Walter Benn Michaels describes it in *Our America*, is paramount to our understanding of that aesthetic (2). With no narrator to mediate, Quentin in the chronological childhood that *The Sound and the Fury* presents is caught in the crossfire of telepathic messages, and the knowledge they communicate burdens him with the responsibility of witnessing. If Maisie has the good fortune to inscribe the text with her vision of the future, Quentin has the misfortune of relentless inscription by the depressions of the past. Maisie’s and Quentin’s narratives end with acts of extraordinary volition: using whatever mental scraps she can salvage, Maisie assembles her design and sails “slowly and imperfectly” on the waters of a narratable future; his mind pocked with fragments of failed designs, Quentin absorbs them during his youth like so much shrapnel and in young adulthood (which is also childhood) drowns a future of unnarratable pasts (WK 275). One writes a story worth writing, and one writes a story written once too often.³³

In 1938, just two years after *Absalom* was published and ten years before the publication of *Intruder*, *The Unvanquished* plainly announces the evidentiary value of telepathic transmissions in a conversation between the children Bayard Sartoris (usually associated, like Quentin, with Faulkner) and Ringo that privileges knowledge acquired clairvoyantly:

³² To put it plainly, there’s little cause, little justice, and little time to give any “outside” figure the authority to redeploy the mental and physical experiences of suffering characters in the tumultuous, radically unstable period of roughly 1914-1945.

³³ For Kevin Ohi, the repeated telling continues indefinitely because of a “curious atavistic structure” in which “the past, if never fully told, also never fully disappears” (“Queer Transmission” 207).

“Watch him,” I [Bayard] said . . .

“Who tole us to watch him?”

“Nobody. *I just know.*”

“Bayard, did you dream hit?”

“Yes. Last night . . . Father said to watch Loosh” . . .

“Then hit’s so,” he said. “If somebody tole you, hit could be a lie. But if you dremp hit, hit can’t be a lie cause ain’t nobody there to tole hit to you. So we got to watch him.” (22-3, my emphasis)³⁴

Additionally, postmortem narratives, such as the character narrations of Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* and Quentin in “A Justice,” constitute readers as mediums accessing a history that’s “never dead” (RN 88).³⁵ That Darl Bundren seems to know virtually as well as we do what we learn from Addie would be difficult to deny, and what Quentin reveals in “A Justice” involves crimes of mistreatment on the basis of racial and class discrimination whose only justice lies in the act of its telling. Each time we base our judgments of characters on information thus “communicate[d] by no physical means . . . : no sound, no gesture,” we are accepting the mimetic component of telepathy that transmits this information, serving as fellow witnesses to unmediated events and thoughts in the story world (ID 162).³⁶ For instance, we base our judgment of Charles Bon at least

³⁴ Freud explored the concept of “dream telepathy” as the sharing of thoughts during sleep, claiming, “If only one accustoms oneself to the idea of telepathy, one can accomplish a great deal with it” (“Dreams and Occultism” 55. See also “Dreams and Telepathy”). Jung applied Freud’s findings along with his notion of the collective unconscious to further explore what he called “dream transference” (Jung 118).

³⁵ For an extended article on Quentin as a framing device in this and other “postmortem” Quentin narratives, see John T. Matthews, “Faulkner’s Narrative Frames” in *Faulkner and the Craft of Fiction*.

³⁶ Apart from a handful of critics, few have discussed how thought-transference and clairvoyance in Faulkner’s narratives transmit knowledge in spite of the failure of conventional communication. Frederik

partly on Quentin and Shreve McCannon's simultaneously received and transmitted version of his story in *Absalom, Absalom!* and thus tacitly acknowledge the telepathic nature of the knowable past as Faulkner constructs it. Most importantly, though, syntactic, rhetorical, and graphical effects force us to witness epiphanic moments the *primary* witnesses of which are the child characters themselves.

That children are the key witnesses to atrocities from which they ought to be shielded tells us much of what we need to understand about the exposure of Yoknapatawpha to the reader: telepathy acts as a vigilante force that enables the fiction to expose what characters would sooner hide or repress (AA 88). Shame, denial, and a paucity of empathy for one another prevent characters from disclosing the knowledge that would reveal an unwanted social identity predicated on ideologies of prejudice, class stratification, and racism.³⁷ But with children lurking everywhere, their minds ripe for the unmediated reception and transmission of secreted stories, the "truth," as Darl Bundren refers to it in the epigraph below, is as likely to remain permanently hidden as is Henry

N. Smith productively analyzes a kind of repetition in *As I Lay Dying* that he calls "telepathic diction," but he does not treat telepathy as a central fictional phenomenon ("Telepathic Diction"). In his intriguing essay, "The Modern Magnetic Animal," Christopher White acknowledges the clairvoyance in play in *As I Lay Dying*, but remains focused on the relationships between humans and animals. Others who have addressed Faulkner's use of telepathy and related phenomena either argue that telepathy fails to explain the epistemology and behavior of the characters, or simply relegate these phenomena to aspects of Faulknerian religiosity (see, for instance, Charles Palliser, Brent Harold and Donald Palumbo). In "Animal Magnetism in *As I Lay Dying*," Rosemary Franklin treats clairvoyance and telepathy as forms of animal magnetism, but her inclination to equate clairvoyance with madness undermines the truth value Faulkner accords clairvoyant "visions."

³⁷ There are, of course, times when characters do try to communicate with one another, but those attempts often fail. Thus, critical approaches to his work frequently have been concerned with how and why these failures occur. For instance, in *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge* (1975), John T. Irwin observes that deferral structures much of Faulkner's work through the withholding of information and obstructions to communication. Withheld knowledge is also a primary concern of Robert Dale Parker's *Faulkner and the Novelistic Imagination* (1985), and in *Faulkner: Letters and Fictions* (1987), James G. Watson calls attention not only to the material letters that structure Faulkner's life and fiction, but also to those letters never written or never read. An understanding of the telepathic devices Faulkner employs complements the work done on failed or deferred communication by demonstrating important ways in which knowledge is transmitted despite those failures.

Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*. As David Michael Walter elegantly puts it, “children roam about like phantoms of a hidden history, trying for reasons they cannot understand to make themselves whole” (497). In their almost-always failed attempts to make themselves whole, they collide mentally with other phantoms that serve more to puzzle than to clarify.³⁸ The childhood stories that Rosa Coldfield likewise absorbs despite miles of distance or the space of a closed door, make of her a perpetually “old-fashioned” child who bears a striking resemblance to the tiny yet strangely aged Paul Dombey in his too-tall chair at Mrs. Pipchin’s, as she delivers to us through Quentin her darkly received vision of the past, “sitting bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung . . . clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children’s feet” (3). The posture of “bolt uprightness” in Faulkner, to which Darl also refers, consistently indicates alarm at a knowledge so saturated with truth that the subject practically explodes with it—a harsher version of the child’s soul that is “a great deal too large for [its] frame” we find in Dickens (DS 113). Where Paul’s and, to a much greater degree, Maisie’s vision influence narrative, however, Rosa’s visionary mind offers narrative a site of defenseless reception; thus, the freedom of artistry into which Maisie (and, notably, Stephen Dedalus) finally launches is the imprisonment of a silently received past by which Rosa is entombed, despite her artistic attempts to extricate herself.

Unfortunately, the mysteries we’re compelled to solve in Faulkner often thwart our readiness to acknowledge telepathic transmissions in favor of cold, hard “evidence.” The figure that *Absalom, Absalom!* leaves in the carpet, for instance, has drawn a multitude of dutiful attempts to demonstrate what we can prove, beyond doubt, from

³⁸ Recall the relationship between “specters” and the unconscious mind of which Andrew Miller reminds us in his reading of Dickens, and in “phantoms” read “minds.”

evidence provided in the text. Take, for instance, Loren Schmidtberger's "What Clytie Knew," which argues that Clytie's mysterious ways of knowing can be explained by novelistic evidence—evidence that, by Schmidtberger's own admission, is sometimes vague and uncertain.³⁹ Schmidtberger writes, for example, that Rosa

thought that Clytie had occult signals of her arrival at Sutpen's Hundred after the fratricide, but it is more likely that Clytie simply expected that Rosa would return with Wash Jones . . . Similarly, there is an ordinary explanation for Quentin's feeling that Clytie's motions in the hallway were directed by preordaining forces when he and Rosa entered the mansion. Clytie feared that the discovery of Henry was now inevitable. (202)

As important as it is for us to consider the reliability, potential misreadings, and possible madness of these narrators, the novel is less interested in asking us to debate whether or not Clytie "simply expected that Rosa would return with Wash" than it is deeply and critically concerned with why and how Rosa would come to *feel* this way—why she would feel, that is, "*as though*" she and Clytie "*spoke to one another free of the limitations and restrictions of speech and hearing.*"⁴⁰ Moreover, the text is crafted to

³⁹ Nancy Batty similarly discusses the way in which Clytie acquires knowing in her article "Looking at the Wrong Blackbird?" in her exploration of the way in which Quentin comes to know the identity of Bon's murderer. Batty addresses the intentional indeterminacy of Faulkner's writing by illuminating the ways in which truth is validated, or put into question, in criticism of *Absalom, Absalom!*

⁴⁰ And I would add that I find these explanations somewhat wanting. Nothing in the text, least of all Rosa's comportment toward characters such as Wash, would make this assumption on Clytie's part "likely"—possible, perhaps, but not likely. Moreover, that the discovery of Henry was "now inevitable" has little to do with the likelihood of a young man with whom Clytie has had absolutely no relationship and of whom she might never even have heard entering her house in the fugitive's pursuit. In "Animal Magnetism in *As I Lay Dying*," Rosemary Franklin treats clairvoyance and telepathy as forms of animal magnetism, but her

inflict precisely those effects of mental colonization that enable Sutpen to violate Rosa throughout her life, a violation so insidious as to haunt not only the woman or even the child figure she embodies, but the very voice with which she has attempted to cleanse her mind: “the ghost mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he haunted where a more fortunate one would have had a house” (AA 4). And observe Charles Palliser’s claim that the typically Calvinist conceptions of fate and determinism that shaped much of Faulkner’s spiritual education can wholly account for what might otherwise be read as instances of clairvoyance in the character of Darl Bundren (“Fate and Madness”).⁴¹ Are we to cast Rosa’s, Quentin’s, and Darl’s transmissions received by unorthodox means aside, relegating them to madness or religiosity? To do so would be to limit our moral judgments on Sutpen and Anse and Addie Bundren, for instance, to what we can *prove* by conventional means of transmission. Were we to make such demands on these texts—indeed, on most of Faulkner’s novels—we would be left with little on which to base our judgments and even less with which to empathize.

On the one hand, proving that there is a logical explanation for all of this importantly locates characters such as Clytie in their historical contexts. It reminds us that like the families in *A Tale of Two Cities*, the Sutpens are private, metonymic representations of public, macrocosmic problems, including racism, war, fratricide, patriarchy, misogyny . . . with which Faulknerians are only too familiar. On the other

inclination to equate clairvoyance with madness undermines the truth value Faulkner consistently accords clairvoyant “visions” throughout his career.

⁴¹ Palliser further claims that “Darl’s ability to intuit his . . . sister’s thoughts is clearly associated,” claims Palliser, “with his acute sense of fatality” (625). This perspective, however, places fatalism at the forefront of Faulkner’s project at the cost of what I argue is the author’s overarching concern with empathy and social responsibility. Moreover, Palliser claims that Darl’s ability to recognize repeated patterns enables him, through history, to predict the future. This principle, however, is precisely what the modernist project rejects, as Donald Kartiganer observes in “Faulkner’s Art of Repetition.”

hand, the deeply troubling manner in which young minds are perpetually violated by secrets that are unuttered and un-betrayed by bodily gesture is as important in Faulkner as are the logically explicable, historically representative narratives those secrets try to conceal. Furthermore, telepathic transmission is itself a historically grounded construct figured in novels such as *Sartoris* and *The Wild Palms* as the dissemination of Hollywood images, the flooding of the Mississippi delta in 1927, the speed of automation and teletechnologies, and the violations of war.⁴² So I now ask my reader to let go for a while the care with which she might be inclined to pore over *Absalom, Absalom!* to prove what was or was not explicitly communicated with full confidence that I, too, have done my share of sleuthing, armed with original manuscript in hand, looking for signs of explicit versus implicit transmission, and to focus instead on what was as important to Faulkner as the historical tendernesses and atrocities that gave rise to his fiction: the experience of felt knowledge, “absorbed . . . without the medium of speech *somehow*” from the wisteria, the air, the houses that “actually possess a sentience, a personality and character . . . inherent in the wood and brick,” as Durdles’s knowledge is absorbed from the stones in Cloisterham in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (AA 172, 67, my emphasis). This is the kind of knowledge that “was . . . a part of the town’s . . . eighty years’ heritage of the

⁴² The previous chapter addresses some of the texts relevant to this discussion, but I would also, and especially, recommend here Sara Danius’s *The Senses of Modernism*. Relative specifically to Faulkner studies, Catherine Kodat’s “Unhistoricizing Faulkner” provides a general case for reevaluating and to some extent re-appropriating in our current critical context some of what Miranda Hickman points out are the original tenets of the New Criticism as it was developed in Cambridge and the Southern U.S.—origins whose breadth is often limited by abridged representations of its original doctrines in critical collections (“Rereading”). As Kodat puts it, “rigidly historicist contextualism, even if intended to expand our political understanding of how texts arise and circulate in the world, can also limit literature’s purchase on that world” (10). Particularly useful to the present study is Kodat’s emphasis on Tim Dean’s reading of the Freudian unconscious that “knows no negation, no contradiction, and nothing of time” (qtd. in Kodat “Unhistoricizing” 9). The breadth of the unconscious as it is conceived here bears some resemblance, moreover, to Alan Palmer’s broad conceptualization of the unconscious, which “consists of much more than just the *Freudian* unconscious of psychoanalytic theory,” in *Social Minds* on which my work in this chapter relies (Palmer 59).

same air which [Sutpen] himself had breathed . . . when he first rode into town out of no discernable past and acquired his land no one knew how and build his house, his mansion, apparently out of nothing . . .” (7). The “nothing” that “no one knew” will be a great deal that we all know by the end of this novel, and the telepathically transmitted aspects of Supten’s pieced together story read as what I called in the previous chapter “evidentiary contributions to knowledge” on which we are expected to base our moral judgments. The fabular contributions of each narrator read as *received*, not made up—an effect of telepathic devices Faulkner so ubiquitously deployed as to hide them in plain sight like the children they shape.

Controlling Quentin

*All of a sudden I'd realize silence and the unwinking minds . . .
Then more silence and the cruel unwinking minds . . .
jerking into the silence . . .
Then the minds would go away . . .*

—Quentin Compson
The Sound and the Fury

In 1884, two years after the Society for Psychical Research coined “telepathy,” Samuel Clemens wrote a letter to the editor of its journal about what he had “been in the habit” of calling “mental telegraphy”: “Thought-transference,” he wrote, “has been a very strong interest with me for the past nine or ten years . . . I often feel like a *mere amanuensis* when I sit down to write a letter under the coercion of a strong impulse” (Thurschwell 20-1, my emphasis).⁴³ Forty-five years later, Faulkner, who famously

⁴³ As Thurschwell notes, Twain “not only became a member of the Society but also corresponded with Frederic Myers In an 1891 article in *Harper’s Magazine* ‘Mental Telegraphy’, [sic] Twain reiterates his early belief in telepathy and his support of the Society for Psychical Research” (21).

characterized his experience of writing in the same romantic terms, wrote another letter about the importance of “thought-transference”: on receiving his edited draft of *The Sound and the Fury* from Ben Wasson, he discovered with some frustration that his italics had been removed: “I purposely used italics,” he replied, “to permit the reader to anticipate a thought-transference,” registered in the related ideas of “telepathy” (AILD, AA), “second-sight” (AILD, AA), and “clairvoyance” (SF, WP, AA) (SL 45).⁴⁴ After years of financial challenges and publication rejections, Faulkner had come to believe that he “would never be published,” so he “stopped thinking of [him]self in publishing terms” and insisted that Wasson retain the ubiquitous graphical indicators of telepathic transmissions in Yoknapatawpha County and beyond (*Sanctuary* vi). As Kreiswirth argues, his reuse of earlier iterations of characters and scenes in *The Sound and the Fury* seems to substantiate Faulkner’s claim that he was writing without a view toward publication: “if he were writing only for himself,” observes Kreiswirth, “it would not matter if he resurrected characters and reworked existing scenes” as *William Faulkner: The Making of a Novelist* reveals to be the case (135).⁴⁵ Faulkner needed all of the graphical and syntactic means available to him to produce the telepathic effects that represented his experience of Southern personhood. Thoughts *insist* on being known in the South he conjures, whether their hosts would have them or not; the agency with

⁴⁴ In addition to texts about various forms of mind-reading, see also texts that address the influence of ideas about clairvoyance, mediumship, and spiritualism in modernist fiction, including Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, *The Celestial Tradition: a Study of Ezra Pound’s The Cantos* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier U P, 1992); Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and the Occult*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s U P, 1993); and Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism*. (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 2002).

⁴⁵ For Kreiswirth, Quentin and Benjy’s obsession with their sister is central to recognizing the similarity between them and their predecessors, John and Bayard Sartoris in *Sartoris/Flags in the Dust*. More important to my reading of the similarity between the Sartoris and Compson brothers is their telepathic bond performed in the pages of *Sound*.

which James endows Maisie, Faulkner therefore bestows upon story itself as it journeys from mind to mind, losing and gaining pieces of its discursive puzzle in the futile frames characters provide along the way.⁴⁶ The italics remained.

On the “thought-transferences” Faulkner described to Wasson *The Sound and the Fury* remains uncharacteristically as silent as *Maisie*, dramatizing them instead in the mental relationships among the Compson children. Erik Sundquist’s argument that *Sound* doesn’t go directly at the problem of race the way *Absalom* does is both a symptom and a logical effect of that silence.⁴⁷ Given Faulkner’s decision to dramatize without naming unwanted telepathic transmission in the first Quentin novel, it’s only natural that he should quietly dramatize its most powerful metonymic source in the concept of miscegenation and all of the racial problematics it signifies. Thus stories of racial origin, especially as Walter Benn Michaels incisively illustrates their significance to national identity in *Our America*, are among those stories that will “out” by any (telepathic) means necessary, framed and reframed by reluctantly receptive minds (*Our*, see especially pages 7-13 and 113-42). Quentin Compson, the eldest of the four Compson children in *Sound* and one of five narrators in *Absalom, Absalom!* (four of whom are character narrators), perceives himself peopled by minds not because the characters who embody those minds seem so present to him, but because the contents of their minds find their way into his: their minds are his; they are he. This does not mean that Sutpen, Bon, and Henry, for

⁴⁶ Richard Menke similarly suggests that information has agency in *Telegraphic Realism*. Worth considering, as well, is the manner in which Hume endowed feelings themselves with agency, describing them as “transpersonal,” “autonomous entities that wander that wander[ed] extravagantly from one person to another” (*Strange Fits of Passion* 3). Understood thus, feelings look more telepathic than empathic.

⁴⁷ It is worth noting that, as Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle observe, “questions of race, slavery and racial violence are everywhere, and that they pervade even the most apparently ‘innocent’ literary works” (*Introduction* 206).

instance, don't appear in Quentin's mind as figures, but that fractured images of their narratives precede them as frameless "integers" of the stories to which they belong (AA 250). The mechanism of substitution, with its long and rich history that in Dickens involved the exchange of characters (Walter for Paul, for instance), becomes in Faulkner the substitution of the stories those characters embody, the "mere names" by which literature signifies that embodiment "interchangeable" (7).⁴⁸ In *Absalom* the substitutability of narrative, whose telepathic communication is also generally signified graphically by italics, is what enables anything approximating a unified narrative to emerge.

Thus as a young adult, Quentin registers his reception of knowledge in childhood, quintessentially situated in the classroom, as a series of telepathic violations by other minds, part of which I quote in the epigraph to this section: "I wouldn't begin counting until the clock struck three. Then I would begin . . . , until all of a sudden I'd realize silence and the unwinking minds. . . . Then more silence and the cruel unwinking minds . . . jerking into the silence. . . . Then the minds would go away" (SF 88). Not even the ostensibly extradiegetic narrator of *Absalom, Absalom!* is immune to the infectious impressions Quentin receives and transmits: his description of Quentin's mind as a "commonwealth" is thus infused with Quentin's articulation of childhood knowledge acquisition in what can be read as a special Faulknerian brand of free indirect discourse in *Absalom*:

⁴⁸ In his analysis of character in *S/Z*, Roland Barthes calls attention to the ways in which character traits are traced through signifying names (i.e., Benjy) and to some extent, story along with it. Faulkner's integers of story shifting among interchangeable names here merge to some extent Barthesian notions of character with the concept of "intermental thought" as Alan Palmer describes it in *Social Minds in the Novel*.

His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn backlooking ghosts still recovering . . . from the fever which had cured the disease.

(AA 7, my emphasis)

Having reported Quentin's predilection for perceiving himself alternately in the first and third persons, the narrator has already invited us to imagine this as Quentin's mind presented to us without the classic markers of direct reporting. More to the point, though this might seem to be the extradiegetic narrator's perception of Quentin's perception of himself, that narrator typically bears a stronger rhetorical resemblance to the cynical, irreverent Mr. Compson than to Quentin, whose melancholy, poetic, and mildly defeated tone sounds in this echoing description of childhood. Faulkner ultimately packages this brand of free indirect discourse in the autobiographical fiction essay, "Mississippi," that makes of him both witness to and conjurer of the world he authors—"he was born of it and his bones will sleep in it; loving it even while hating some of it . . ."—that seamlessly blends elements of the actual American South with those of the South represented in Yoknapatawpha, with the mind of the teller presenting *itself* in the third person (36). Faulkner's gesture points to the intertextual "I" I describe in the introduction, and his (and my) spheres of selfhood move beyond the intertextual field of Yoknapatawpha into the intertextual realm of the texts and contexts that I, like Faulkner, inhabit intra- and extra-diegetically.

Though Quentin is still alive in *Absalom* seven years after his death in *The Sound and the Fury*, he first takes shape in *Sound* as one of four children in the Compson family, only three of whom are character narrators in full sections of the novel. His family's narrative first comes to us through the mind of his mentally handicapped brother Benjy, the youngest of the Compson children. Unable to communicate in language, Benjy epitomizes the purely mental nature of literary transmission, for we don't imagine Benjy writing this down or even reflecting upon what we receive, neither of which are possible for him, his amanuensis (Faulkner) our only access to his mind. He lives in a perpetual present, embodying in turns his chronological child self and his chronological adult self, shifts between which are triggered by visual or linguistic stimuli that transport him across time among several key events in his life whose causes and effects are indistinguishable. In this sense, Benjy's mind might be understood to represent the time travel that literary telepathy makes possible. For example, Caddy's threat—"I'll run away and never come back"—is happening for Benjy at the moment we receive the impression from the page; however, even as he literally relives the threat, Caddy is already gone and the threat carried out (19). She is both gone (by virtue of the date on which this mind's contents surface: conventionally the "narrative present") and presently threatening to leave: thus, threats *are* the acts they threaten to bring about; words are speech acts. So, while foreshadow winds up looking more like prolepsis in the context of Maisie's foresight, foreshadow *is* prolepsis (and analepsis) in the context of Benjy's mind. That Benjy will wail with a misery as fresh and meaningful in 1928 as it is in 1899 endows his *first* childhood wail in response to Caddy's threat with the weight of a known future to which "we fellow witnesses" attest. Faulkner thus uses the special workings of Benjy's mind to

inaugurate a text in which what threatens to happen in childhood is happening simultaneously (or has already happened), as if Benjy “were late with respect to that which has already happened in the future.”⁴⁹ Thus Benjy lives in a constant clairvoyant nightmare. To miss this as we read his and Quentin’s sections alongside each other is to miss a great deal of what the novel works to impress upon us.

In fact, we might imagine this first section of *The Sound and the Fury* as a confluence of thoughts at a site of exchange in Benjy on the titular date, “April Seventh, 1928.” On this day in this mind, Quentin is as present as he is on the day of the following section, “June Second, 1910,” in which he will have died, emphasizing the mockery the titles make of marking time in the context of indistinguishable mental transmissions. That Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—the three sibling character narrators—are actually Compson adults on the dates assigned to their sections is a part of that mockery, for the mental transmissions among them are received and transmitted across the spatiotemporal field that ought to separate “now” from “then,” dramatizing the *never was* that permeates all of Faulkner’s fiction. Thus, though the absence of a fourth “Caddy” section suggests, on the one hand, her silenced imprisonment by her brothers’ takes on her, that absence can be read, on the other hand, as her freedom from meaningless temporal signifiers that impotently erect boundaries around the character narrators they introduce.⁵⁰

Despite its mimetic instability, *Sound* enables us to adopt the principle of minimal departure in large part because its world, like that of many other extremely complicated

⁴⁹ Consider, for instance, the primacy of beginnings and endings to which Peter Rabinowitz rightly calls our attention, and to Kreiswirth’s acknowledgment of Faulkner’s conscious decision, despite the difficulties it would entail, to put the Benjy section first because the “groundwork” of the novel needed to be “laid by the idiot . . . as that idiot child saw it” (FU 63-4).

⁵⁰ My emphasis on child characters should make plain my reason for omitting a discussion of the final, so-called Dilsey section, though I will briefly reference its narrator.

modernist texts, is depicted by what some conceptualize as a more real realism that represents Faulkner's sense of impressions received from the residents of Lafayette County. J.M. Coetzee suggests that learning to read Faulkner is a matter of an essentially physical mind memory. Like learning to play tennis, he argues, we can't *read* how to read *The Sound and the Fury*: we must actually go through the mental steps until our minds' muscles recall how to do it. The telepathic paradigm I have sketched from Paul Dombey to Quentin Compson should have our minds in shape for that reading as we launch into Benjy's and Quentin's interior monologues, each of which is wholly dependent upon the other in approximating a coherent narrative. All needn't be reduced to madness or "idiocy" if we take oppressive telepathic violations into account, so while *Sound* deconstructs itself, I reconstruct its characters by tracing the impressions and lost pieces of one mind in the space of another. Neither Benjy's nor Quentin's narrative can be compassed without reference to the other minds of which it is comprised, especially those of Caddy whose mind comes into play below. For now, though, I'll focus exclusively on semantic, syntactic, and graphical evidence of Mark Twain's "mental telegraphy" between Benjy and Quentin.

One of our first clues that a mind properly external to Benjy's is influencing his monologue creeps into his impression of Caddy's wedding. Picturing his sister, Benjy describes her not in his characteristic literal terms but with metaphorical language that reveals Quentin's influence: "*I saw them. Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind. Caddy Caddy*" (39). The use of simile here is beyond the scope of Benjy's descriptive faculties, which is usually restricted to active verbs. "Moonlight came down the cellar stairs. . . . the moonlight jumped away" and "*The roof*

was falling. The slanting holes were full of spinning yellow” better reflect the “hyperliteralism” of so-called childhood perception Benjy’s thoughts seem to exemplify (40; 12). This anomalous use of figuration in the Benjy section, as well as its familiar Quentin-esque lack of punctuation (“*Caddy Caddy*”), runs counter to what we’ve come to expect from the literal Benjy whose frequent and exclusively imperative punctuation indicates our tenuous hold on his narrative. And Quentin’s recollection of the moment Benjy imagines in uncharacteristically metaphorical terms comes round to combine the brothers’ established semantic and syntactical qualities in the “Quentin” section: “*That quick her train caught up over her arm she ran out of the mirror like a cloud, her veil swirling in long glints . . . the floating shadow of the veil running across the grass*” (81).

Importantly, the simile in the “Benjy” section (“*a long veil like shining wind*”) follows his observation of the branches into which the children were looking up to where Caddy is perched, confronted with the death of their grandmother, Damuddy (who is named for Faulkner’s actual grandmother): “We watched the muddy bottom of her drawers. Then we couldn’t see her. We could hear the tree thrashing. . . . The tree quit thrashing. We looked up into the still branches” (39). The trees are “still,” reflecting the stillness of thought and death in Caddy’s denying mind. The link in Benjy’s narrative between Damuddy’s death and Caddy’s loss of virginity, pregnancy, and failed marriage is stunning. His narration of her mental exposure—“Her eyes flew at me, and away. I began to cry. . . . Her hand was against her mouth and I saw her eyes and I cried. . . . she shrank against the wall, looking at me”—is immediately followed by a time shift in which Benjy is now chastised literally and figuratively by the *evidence* of those little deaths, namely, Caddy’s daughter Quentin: “*He needs to be sent to Jackson, Quentin*

said. How can anybody live in a house like this" (69). And Benjy is brought with his brother Quentin's mental help to the link between the death Caddy sees and the death she lives ("I died that day . . ."), a death she has revealed only to Quentin in a scene united in Benjy's mind to both the months preceding Quentin's death and the chronological childhood in which Damuddy dies. All of the following series of quotations regarding Damuddy's death are revealed to us through Benjy's mind:

"What was that.' Caddy said. . . . *That was Mother.*'

Quentin said. . . . 'That was Mother. . . . She was crying.'

Quentin said" (25).

"Quentin had his face turned away. 'What are you crying for.' Caddy said" (73).

"There were two beds. Quentin got in the other one.

He turned his face to the wall" (74).

"Mother's sick.' Caddy said. 'She and Damuddy are both sick.' . . . Caddy said, 'Hush, Maury' putting her hand on me. . . . *We could hear us. We could hear the dark.*" (74-5, my emphasis)

Quentin's telepathic conversation with Caddy, which I'll discuss at length below, binds her own sexual encounters to death, recalling the manner in which Benjy connects Damuddy's death to sex represented by Caddy's "muddy drawers." And the series of phrases Benjy shares above reveals that the "stillness" he observes in the trees as Caddy peers reluctantly at death is different for Quentin than it is for Caddy: for Quentin, who does not hide in the tree and go seek truth, the truth is plain, as Quentin is penetrated by

vigilante impressions of death. In working to uncover the truth, Caddy skirts its mental revenge and defers the recognition of that death. Quentin's knowing from the age of seven or eight therefore resembles that of Maisie, Paul Dombey, or the childhood Rosa whom I'll discuss below. But while Maisie embraces the mental influence of telepathic communication, Quentin is oppressed by it, turning his face to the wall and to death in a visual echo of Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*.

Benjy shares this view, tortured by it and as unable as Quentin to communicate it aloud. Benjy's use of "we" narration here emphasizes the degree to which his thoughts include those of the other Compson children's minds.⁵¹ Importantly, Benjy *only* uses we narration when he occupies the mental space of chronological childhood, the room they share in the quotation an analogue to the mental space in which the siblings form a single "intermental unit," as Alan Palmer refers to it in *Social Minds in the Novel*. A mind that is part of an intermental unit, Palmer reminds us, is true to life: it operates much like the minds we conceive as contained within our extremely complex and disparate brains, whose individual parts cannot function independently of one another to produce conscious thought. As Palmer puts it, "once your concept of mind is flexible enough for you to question the commonsense assumption that the physical brain is necessary to the production of a mind, you are then free to wonder whether a mind can also consist of more than one brain" (50). Palmer simply asks that we imagine that mind on a broader scale: certain minds, he argues, become so dependent on each other (or one another, depending on the size of the unit), that neither mind can wholly grasp a thought without

⁵¹ Brian Richardson's discussion of "we" narration in *Unnatural Voices* is particularly relevant here, though my reading of "we" narration in Faulkner differs slightly from his, as the "Receiving Rosa" section below reveals (45-8).

the input of the other, a condition that I would argue governs the process by which story unfolds in *The Sound and the Fury*. This is then taken a step further down into the level of diegesis in *Absalom*, as I will demonstrate below.⁵² Such a view of Benjy's shared thoughts precludes a reading that emphasizes the "flatness of [his] mind," and thus introduces *Sound* with a challenge to preconceptions about what certain *kinds* of minds (handicapped, chronologically young, animal) are able to contain, whatever their capacities for organizing them *in isolation* into a coherent, time-bound narrative (Gwin "Feminism and Faulkner").⁵³ The Quentin section then serves to expand our open-mindedness, for we discover that no amount of so-called intelligence, education, or experience can guarantee the coherence of their shared narrative, which consistently draws them back to the same moments Benjy has initially brought into focus.

By the time we encounter the first italicized phrases of the "Quentin" section, we can recognize the quintessential features of "Benjy": "*She ran right out of the mirror, out of the banked scent. Roses. Roses. Mr and Mrs Jason Richmond Compson announce the marriage of*" (77). Quentin's thoughts here are deeply inflected with the syntax and semantics of Benjy's literal, fractured observations that cut through time by means of those "thought-transferences" Faulkner described in his letter to Wasson. The first part of the quotation—"She ran . . . Roses. Roses."—employs the punctuation, syntax, cognitive reception, and synaesthesia that mark Benjy as a victim of his mind. As we know, Benjy not only "smells" death ("I could smell it"), but Dilsey and T.P. articulate his conception of death in precisely his terms (36). Quentin's recollection of that confirmation appears in

⁵² Palmer draws much of his terminology from cognitive studies and psychology. For a detailed description of intermental thought, which I have paraphrased here, see pages 39-63.

⁵³ Gwin's later work (this was published in 1988, two years before *The Feminine and Faulkner* to which I generally refer) deemphasizes this flatness.

italics: “*He smell hit,*” confirming an utterance (surely there were others?) that pertains to Father’s death and thus occurs *after* Quentin’s death (36; 90). (In fact, his observation, “This is where I saw the river for the last time this morning, about here. I could feel water beyond the twilight, smell,” certainly haunts the text with a dead consciousness, Benjy’s marker of death—“smell”—indicating this time the death of the thinker.) Recall, as well, that in the Benjy passage above, punctuation is missing, exhibiting an absence characteristic of Quentin’s typical thought processes: “*Caddy Caddy*”; whereas here, in *Quentin’s* section, the period is in place (“*Roses. Roses.*”), representing not only Quentin’s melancholy and the little death each rose comes to signify, but also the effects of Benjy’s mind. The second part of the quotation—“*Mr and Mrs . . . marriage of*”—then returns us to Quentin’s typical frame of mind.

Echoes of Benjy’s syntax and diction permeate Quentin’s narrative. Consider, for instance, the manner in which they both “*hear the roof*” (57, 66; 136). Here, first, is Benjy: “*I could hear the clock, and I could hear Caddy standing behind me, and I could hear the roof. It’s still raining, Caddy said. I hate rain. I hate everything. . . . I could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy*” (57). And finally Benjy’s “I” becomes the “we” he increasingly uses—“*we could hear the roof*”—and that Quentin uses most often when reliving childhood events, anticipating Quentin “*hearing the roof loud*” during his botched kissing episode with Natalie (66). It’s reasonable to assume that this is how Benjy conceives of rain, but that Quentin would describe it the same way is less obvious and should call our attention to the possibility of one of Faulkner’s “thought-transferences.” As we take both passages more closely into consideration, moreover, we find that the states of mind in which these semantically linked conceptions of rain are

embedded share one very important characteristic: Caddy's mad, and her anger threatens her brothers' telepathy with collapse. Quentin's "*hearing the roof*" is coupled with his discovery that Caddy has seen him with Natalie:

I dont care she looked at us stay mad she went away

. . .

Stay mad. My shirt was getting wet and my hair.

*Across the roof **hearing the roof loud now** . . . I was hugging her I tell you.*

I dont give a damn what you were doing

*You dont you dont I'll make you I'll make you give a damn. She hit my hands away I smeared mud on her with the other hand I couldn't feel the wet smacking of her hand I wiped mud from my legs smeared it on her wet hand turning body **hearing her fingers going into my face** but I couldn't feel it even when the rain began to taste sweet on my lips . . . (136-7, my bolded emphasis)*

Taken together, the passages appropriately mingle rain and Caddy's anger with sex and death, leaving both brothers to feel—Benjy because of Caddy's hatred, Quentin because of Caddy's feigned indifference—the roof caving in.

And their observations on shadow present us with another significant instance of like-mindedness between the brothers. While a typical example of Benjy's observation, "We went down the steps, where our shadows were," can be attributed to hyperliteralism, Quentin's similar observation, "I stepped into the sunlight, finding my shadow again," is

generally attributed to Quentin's increasing dissociation from his physical body whose fragmentation his shadow drives home (35; 82). Drowning the shadow to recuperate the loss of what was once imagined as a unified self follows logically, then, from his state of mind. While these typical readings are certainly valid, it's also worth considering the mutually influential aspects of their minds, and especially of their childhood minds. Sparked by Quentin's meditation on shadow, a light is cast into the space Benjy's thoughts carved *in the context of a narrative that places Benjy's thoughts before those of Quentin*, regardless of where they occur in linear time—which the fiction has rendered as radically irrelevant—and into and from that space springs Benjy's perception. Although "finding my shadow again" is articulated in the Quentin section in terms reflecting the shape of Benjy's thoughts, it is not italicized, suggesting that knowledge has been stripped of those qualities, signified by italics, which attribute them to an external source. Either Quentin removes italics where italics should be, or Quentin's ostensibly originary thoughts are shaping themselves to fit into the spaces Benjy's thoughts have formed. A space had been carved by Benjy's thought-object exploding into Quentin's mind, and that space is now and will perpetually be exploited by the thought for which it has been formed by Benjy. This concept then sheds new light on the effect "Mother" has on the children, an effect typically viewed in Lacanian and Freudian terms (but not those of the Freud I'll discuss below).

These are but a few examples of what can be read as "thought-transferences" between Benjy and Quentin. Conventionally, such thought coincidence is read as an echo, a literary technique that helps us to recognize the ways in which certain major events in siblings' lives are lived and relived by them in similar ways, regardless of what seem to

be their cognitive differences. But to observe these echoes in light of the echoes from her childhood that James has Maisie discovering in adulthood is to recognize that Quentin's are hardly different from the ones Maisie conjures and then lives. The difference here is that Quentin does both at the same time, having the benefit of the years in between. This reading of telepathic transmissions in *Sound* then opens our minds to better comprehend the oppression with which these debilitating *impressions* are received. It helps us to recognize that what Quentin perceives in other minds registers for him, especially in chronological childhood, as fact, not as a projection of his own mind; it matters far less to Faulkner, I would argue, what *we* think Quentin's reception of someone else's thoughts really are, than what *Quentin* thinks they are. And in the end, if we insist on reading these "thought-transferences" as projections or as Freudian examples of transference, we could then read Quentin's suicide as a result of his horror on discovering that what he thought were thoughts from other minds were really thought up himself. Not that there's any difference in the context of his literary life—more on that before, in Maisie, and more on that later.

Perhaps the most telepathically communicated impression in the novel is Caddy, an example of the "absent center" around which James crafted his fiction and in whom Faulkner invested so much of his imaginative energy.⁵⁴ Like Maisie, Caddy is profoundly

⁵⁴ Andre Bleikasten, John T. Matthews, Doreen Fowler, and Minrose Gwin focus much of their attention on Caddy as the absent center. Fowler's Lacanian reading of Caddy as representing not only the original fall (*cadere*) from grace, but also the fall from language into the symbolic order nicely correlates with Gwin's understanding of Caddy as the feminine within through whom Quentin must come to terms with the self: "From within Quentin's tortured psyche," writes Gwin, Caddy "speaks to him of the feminine within himself—that part of himself he must deny in order to become a man in a patriarchal order" (27). We listen for the "whisper of Caddy's voice from within the folds of Faulkner's text and from within our own willingness to be absorbed into the concentric and bisexual spaces *between* the 'manifest text' of Faulkner's male creative consciousness and the 'unconscious discourse' of its own feminine subjectivity. . . . To hear Caddy within the margins of Quentin's text will require listening to a language which transgresses the

devoid of physical attributes, the mental impressions and recollections with which she fills her brothers' minds our only access to her. Disembodied, she thus reads as a figure for literary telepathy itself, anticipating Addie Bundren's postmortem emergence in *As I Lay Dying* the following year. In Caddy's case, she is figured by means of character narration that shares mental space with her "'now in this mind,' now in that'" (qtd. in "The 'telepathy effect'" 259). The dark but benevolent Caddy who thus emerges, of course, comes from the space of desire, contributing to Quentin's obsession with her that culminates in a palpable fantasy of incest generally associated with a romantic tradition of sibling intimacy, Freudian problems of socialization and repression, an obsession with the preservation of conventional masculine and feminine codes, fierce familial and cultural guardianship, and the survival of white male domination.⁵⁵ All of these provide in one way or another source material for, and structural influences on, Faulkner's use of the theme, and none of them need be read as inconsistent with telepathy. But Pamela Thurschwell's appropriation of Freud in the context of what she refers to as "Magical Thinking" helps us put some of Quentin's and Benjy's missing pieces, including Caddy, back together again with full knowledge that no complete picture can ever emerge.

Locating Quentin and Caddy's relationship in the context of "erotic fantasies of minds and bodies merging, as well as utopian hopes for better communication," as Thurschwell

bounds of consciousness, a language which must be listened to in much the same way that Caddy listened to Benjy—beyond sound and syntax, between the lines. . . . She speaks *from* Quentin *to* Quentin of the feminine within himself—that which he, entangled in a cultural narrative already written for him, can but desire and grieve for" (35; 47). Gwin importantly locates the source of what she calls the "bisexual," drawing from Kristeva, in his flesh-and-blood author. As Fowler puts it, Caddy "evokes the primary repression that constitutes the self," and like Gwin, observes that this points to the flesh-and-blood author, whose creation of Caddy reveals an "unconscious desire for the lost first other, for the mother of the imaginary relation" (Fowler 32, Gwin 16).

⁵⁵ Karl F. Zender's analysis of the romantic tradition in the first chapter of *Faulkner and the Politics of Reading*, "The Politics of Incest," is deeply engaging, convincing, and harks back to my reading of Florence and Paul Dombey in the first chapter of this thesis (1-31).

describes it, seems not only fitting but perhaps as close to what Faulkner had in mind for the dramatization of what *was* (which is what *is*) in relation to what *could be* (8). Put simply, the erotic fantasies *Sound* dramatizes might be as debilitating to Quentin as the telepathic transmissions that violate him, but *Sound* and *Absalom* tacitly encourage *us* to acknowledge the latent utopian possibilities of unmediated communication between two people that the dark novels in which they are housed occlude.⁵⁶

In fact, Caddy figures this kind of utopian knowing. She has a freedom that I read primarily as a result of her commitment to empathizing with those around her in an effort to unleash the narratives they labor in turns to reveal and conceal. The first section clearly displays Caddy's eagerness to know the minds of others, as Gwin observes in *The Feminine and Faulkner*. We consistently find her trying to decipher Benjy's wails, his movements, his silences: "Did you come to meet Caddy What is it. What are you trying to tell Caddy" (6); "You're *not a poor baby*. Are you. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy" (9, my emphasis). Knowing that she embodies his only peace, she never hesitates to "snuggle her head beside [Benjy's] on the pillow" when he needs to sleep (44), and recognizing that her perfume upsettingly obfuscates her familiar smell, Caddy offers Benjy the pleasure of giving the bottle to Dilsey as she dispels his displeasure at smelling its contents on her person (42). Finally, she knows that Benjy senses her sexual encounter with Dalton Ames: "she shrank against the wall, looking at me" (69). She similarly attends conscientiously to Quentin's disposition and postures, perceiving the danger he poses to himself: knowing that he has embarked upon

⁵⁶ I'm drawing here from Noel Polk's rich reading of the relationship between architecture and childhood perception in novels such as *Absalom*, *The Mansion* and short stories such as "Barn Burning" in *Children of the Dark House*. Though Polk does not address utopian potential, he does address the transmissions and occlusions of the houses, which I'm comparing to the physical structures of the books themselves.

the path that will lead him into the Charles River, she fears her brother's departure once her virtue is lost and thus attempts to stay him:

come here

what do you want

come here Quentin

I went back she touched my shoulder

. . .

wait for me at the branch

Im going for a walk

Ill be there soon wait for me you wait. (155)

Caddy's utterances bespeak her willingness to know the minds of others, as her gestures reveal in her own mind a desire to help and protect them. This smattering of examples attests to the success of Caddy's volition to know, which, like Maisie's, frees her from the oppression of concealment; this is why freedom sometimes seems a legitimate possibility for Sir Claude who attends to Maisie's needs and thoughts. In Faulkner as in James, telepathic effects withdraw in the face of authentic utterances, and in Yoknapatawpha County, the reason is clear: authentic expressions of empathy afford characters such as Caddy and Chick Mallison in *Intruder in the Dust* freedom from the paralyzing repression of denial that in Faulkner virtually always results in attacks by what I call vigilante telepathic impressions.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In fact, *The Wild Palms*, published a year after *The Unvanquished*, whose primacy of telepathic knowledge I describe above, epitomizes the debilitating aspects of vigilante telepathic effects in the "silent steady glare of what [the doctor] was never to know was actual clairvoyance": "the veil [was] about to break, the cogs of deduction about to mesh [. . .] *But why? Why?* [. . .] He could feel, hear them: the cogs, clicking, going fast; [. . .] a premonition that the final cog would click and the bell of comprehension ring

While the dialogue above falls under the sign of empathy for Caddy, the category is murkier for Quentin. On the one hand, Quentin correctly registers it (the content and syntax of which does, indeed, point to a remembered conversation) as an uttered dialogue. On the other hand, Quentin's perception of telepathic conversations such as those we'll see below—"dialogue[s] without words, speech" with his sister—also seems to be that of recollected utterance, a part of memory that Quentin is unable to distinguish from what might have been purely mental (AA 88). In other words, what some read as conversations had only in the mind (Irwin chooses not to decide—"real or imagined"—and yet treats the contents of these conversations in *Absalom* as evidence of what actually occurred in the plot), Quentin registers as uttered conversations that shape his understanding of actual relationships. Thus, what appears to be remembered dialogue, I read as the clearest and most essentially telepathic dialogues in this novel, as well as in *Absalom*, which I'll discuss below. Especially in the case of Caddy and Quentin, little could better describe these exchanges than to say that they are dialogues in which "erotic fantasies of minds and bodies merging, as well as utopian hopes for better communication" are foremost among the concerns of the fiction and the characters it presents.

His telepathic bond with his sister, from which Quentin cannot extricate himself, is nowhere more obvious than in the siblings' mental dialogue near the end of his interior monologue. In the well-known passages that follow, we witness what David Michael Walter describes as the merging of identity in "the field of desire" in which the *cri du*

and he would not be quite near enough to see and hear" (20;11-12). The Doctor will not see and hear, for "man alone of all creatures deliberately atrophies his natural senses and that only at the expense of others" (105).

sang motif he analyzes in the context of *Absalom* figures prominently (Walter 489). But this merging is also, and perhaps more accurately, the merging of identity in the field of *telepathy* (often difficult to distinguish from desire), for it is always as much “*tele*”—underscored by Quentin’s excessive physical distance (North and South), as well as his figurative distance (virgin and ruined, found and lost, fracture and whole) from Caddy when these mental conversations occur in the fiction—as it is a merging: telepathy, in short, is always a *frustration* that the very merging produces. They were as distant from each other when in immediate proximity, in other words, as they are now, when we have access to their mental union. In fact, the telepathic mode itself, in which we find Maisie and Sir Claude communicating near the end of their journey, is one of the strongest contributors (second, perhaps, only to the content) to the erotic tone of these passages:

*There was something terrible in me sometimes at
night I could see it grinning at me. I could see it through
their faces it's gone now and I'm sick*

Caddy

Don't touch me just promise

If you're sick you cant

Yes I can after that it'll be alright it wont matter

don't let them send him to Jackson promise

I promise Caddy Caddy

Dont touch me dont touch me

What does it look like Caddy

What

That that grins at you that thing through them. . . .

*you thought it was them but it was me listen I fooled you all
the time it was me you thought I was in the house where that
damn honeysuckle trying not to think the swing the cedars
the secret surges the breathing locked drinking the wild
breath the yes Yes Yes yes . . . did you love them Caddy did
you love them **When they touched me I died** (112, 149-50,
my bolded emphasis)*

And finally, mentally mingled in what Quentin figures as a single “flame,” their talking “without the words” requires no italics (SF 176; AD 27):

Caddy you hate him dont you . . .
yes I hate him I would die for him Ive already died for him I
die for him . . . everytime this goes . . .
youve never done that have you
what done what
that what I have what I did
yes yes lots of times with lots of girls . . .
I held the point of the knife at her throat
it wont take but a second . . .
yes the blades long enough Benjys in bed by now
yes . . .
Caddy do you remember how Dilsey fussed at you because
your drawers were muddy . . .

push it are you going to
 do you want me to
 yes push it
 touch your hand to it
 dont cry poor Quentin (151-2)

The eroticism is palpable; worth noting, however, is the characterization of Quentin that Caddy would be unlikely to utter. At this stage in her life, Caddy would resist an utterance like “poor Quentin” in his presence: she not only admires her brother, as Herbert Head’s conversation with Quentin makes clear, but she has shown herself loath to belittle Quentin or Benjy: she gets downright angry or feels sorry for them, but pity them patronizingly she does not. Though she has dissembled in an attempt to conceal from Quentin a taboo jealousy (a jealousy that would read to Quentin as a sign of weakness to boot), her disposition is kind, and if we accept Palmer’s claim that dispositions are acquired, Caddy’s kindness evidences her resistance to environmental pressure. Because of the role the more-than-Freudian unconscious plays in determining our habits and behaviors in the image of those who surround us, our dispositions take shape, Palmer argues, in response to our communities (60-2). In Palmer’s example, children have a “dual” attitude toward things that they are conditioned to believe are good: “the positive feelings” that they know they are supposed to have “according to the feeling rules; and the negative feeling that they subsequently and consciously discover” that they have “unconsciously had all along” (62). Caddy answers primarily to the latter, while Quentin is tortured by the former. Moreover, though Caddy might *think* “I died . . .

,” it seems unlikely that she would give *voice* to those thoughts, however willingly she shares them with Quentin mentally.

Drawing on Shoshana Felman, Minrose Gwin argues that Caddy represents the feminine, which is within though not necessarily accessible to Quentin (recalling the influence of Helena and Florence I describe in chapter one). Given the structure of the narrative, Faulkner’s letters, and the evidence we have in fiction preceding and following *Sound*, we also have reason to believe that Caddy and Quentin simply communicate “without the words,” as Dewey Dell, pregnant out of wedlock one year after the publication of *Sound*, will describe her telepathic conversations with her brother, Darl, whom *other* characters in *As I Lay Dying* also perceive as clairvoyant. Telepathy literalizes Gwin’s view, forcing us to perceive Caddy as precisely *within* Quentin: she is at once intrinsic to him and the “foreign body” invading him that Derrida uses to describe telepathic transmissions (“Telepathy”). The cutting blade that assails their passage toward sex and death penetrates the siblings’ relationship with the violation telepathic transmissions often signify, torturing their victims with foreign thoughts such as those Latimer battles in George Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil* (1859): they “would force themselves on my consciousness like an importunate, ill-played musical instrument, or the loud activity of an imprisoned insect” (Eliot 19). The combination of hate and desire Caddy’s transmissions thus engender is the analogue to the combination of hate and desire Quentin eventually recognizes in his comportment toward the South itself, and that Faulkner will finally articulate in “Mississippi.”

As Doreen Fowler’s Lacanian reading in *Faulkner: The Return of the Repressed* suggests, the internalization of that feminine self is also, and perhaps more poignantly,

characterized as the “Mother” within. Quentin’s thoughts of Caroline are rarely framed in the language of reported memory (unlike those of Father: “Father said . . .”) but emerge from the unconscious, like the script he will imagine in *Absalom, Absalom!*, only to disappear again:

what have I done to have been given children like
 these Benjamin was punishment enough and now for
 [Caddy] to have no more regard for me her own mother I’ve
 suffered for her dreamed and planned and sacrificed I went
 down into the valley yet never since she opened her eyes has
 she given me one unselfish thought . . . dont you know I can
 look at her eyes and tell you may think she’d tell you but she
 doesn’t tell things she is secretive you dont know her I know
 things she’s done that I’d die before I’d have you know . . .
 let me have Jason and you keep the others they’re not my
 flesh and blood like he is . . . I’ll go down on my knees and
 pray for absolution of my sins that he may escape this curse
 and try to forget that the others ever were . . . (103-4)

How Quentin comes to hear his parents’ conversations is unclear at best and anticipates the manner in which Rosa Coldfield accesses knowledge through closed doors that, according to her, don’t permit the passage of sound. He absorbs this message as though it has been delivered telepathically, and we will soon find that Darl Bundren, whose knowledge of his dead mother’s monologue the text implies, can indeed describe events from which he is literally absent. Most importantly, when he receives unmediated

transmissions in a manner akin to that of Darl, Quentin registers them as fact, leaving him in doubt about what is and is not his “fault”: “theres a curse on us its not our fault it is our fault,” this confusion importantly a part of the climactic telepathic dialogue between him and his sister (158).

What follows the mental dialogue between Quentin and Caddy I cite above (pieces of which continue to emerge from the page) is often read as Quentin’s final descent into insanity. That Quentin goes mad in no way precludes our reading of Quentin’s journey toward that madness as telepathic. His connection to the world around him is solid and perceptive to the last, as his observations about the people and things he encounters on his final day make clear. But his connection to the outside world entails his awareness of the signifieds that remain dangerously mutable and bend to the will of the thinker, as he observes of the boys fishing: “They all talked at once, their voices insistent and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will when their desires become words” (117). Just as Maisie’s desires, on becoming words, evolve into plot, so Quentin perceives the clairvoyant quality of all inscription, and his curse is that he witnesses that phenomenon in the very novel that reflexively unveils it in the context of his mind: “we are cursed”—we, the Compsons, and we, the “commonwealth” of foreign minds he embodies that transcend bloodlines, a transcendence of special significance to *Absalom* that I’ll discuss below. Quentin’s witnessing of shared consciousness, however, fails to halt its progression and so failing, turns the feedback loop of telepathic transmission into the nightmare of repetition Irwin so skillfully articulates. The outside world always turns

back in on itself and on the character who, in perceiving its contours, inscribes the text with the very traps telepathic transmissions set.

And yet *The Sound and the Fury* is as silent on the subject of “telepathy” as it is on the subject of Quentin’s suicide, though both exert a deforming pressure over the whole text. Quentin was at Harvard while the actual William James was there researching telepathy, and, as I mention in the introduction, James’s first doctoral candidate (who received the first doctoral degree in psychology at Harvard) became a leading figure in the mind of the child; with the merging of fact and fiction Faulkner enacts in “Mississippi,” we know that Quentin knew what William James knew about telepathy (Mintz 186-9). Yet *Sound* enacts telepathic communication with a sure and steady resistance to naming what Quentin experiences as violations by properly external “cruel, unwinking minds” that perpetuate that silenced death. But the “death drive is irreducibly bound up with the performative, in particular with the act of naming,” as Nicholas Royle incisively articulates (*Uncanny* 85). Freud’s silence on the subject of the death drive in “The Uncanny” in 1919 then enhances its deferred power, Royle observes, citing Derrida’s articulation of the “silence that is walled up in the violent structure of the founding act”—founded, that is, only to be named the following year in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: “In putting forward the name ‘death drive’, [*sic*] Freud changes everything” (“Death Drive” 86, 85). The year after Faulkner published *The Sound and the Fury* (and according to Faulkner, after a furiously non-stop whirlwind of writing), *As I Lay Dying* unleashes lucid, direct observations on speaking “without the words,” naming “telepathy” and “clairvoyance” as though to provide the relief that comes with “getting it

out into the open.” But Quentin doesn’t name it: he remains ambivalently suspended in *Sound* between living and naming. He can’t commit.

Committing Darl

*But now it was like we had all
—and by a kind of telepathic agreement of admitted fear—
flung the whole thing back like covers on the bed and we all sitting
bolt upright in our nakedness, staring at one another and saying,
“Now is the truth.”*

—Darl Bundren
As I Lay Dying

Faulkner commits Darl. He commits him to naming telepathy and to the institution in which that naming lands him in *As I Lay Dying*, and “once he has committed himself, as it were, you cannot see him for dust” (“Death Drive” 92). Darl commits to a cryptic articulation of “a kind of telepathic agreement” that has the family sitting in that “bolt upright” posture of knowledge saturated with truth. Announcing the telepathic transmissions *Sound* only dramatizes, *As I Lay Dying* performs an attempt to break the spell under which James holds his characters suspended in the “silent profundity” of unacknowledged telepathic transmission (WK 64). But no such relief will grace Darl. Instead, the suicide to which telepathic transmissions drive Quentin becomes the institution to which telepathy-induced madness commits Darl.

That Darl is able to see distant things and distant scenes—in other words, that Darl is clairvoyant—is acknowledged in some quarters as a legitimate reading of his

“second-sight.”⁵⁸ What hasn’t been sufficiently emphasized, however, is that his visions of these scenes typically are presented in italics. Observe, for instance, Darl’s description of Jewel’s movements despite his absence from the scene:

He had gone back to the horse and he was taking the saddle off . . . he hadn’t come in with us. . . . He is down there in the barn, sliding fluidly past the gaudy lunging swirl, into the stall with it. He climbs onto the manger and drags the hay down and leaves the stall and seeks and finds the curry-comb. Then he returns and slips quickly past the single crashing thump and up against the horse, where it cannot overreach. (182-3)

Everything Darl narrates here is well away from his field of vision (in a different building altogether, in fact). But Darl’s vision in absentia is an important feature of what we see, for it enables us to witness a certain interspecies communion best revealed in the (second)sight of a beholder (Darl) of whom the actor (Jewel) has no orthodox knowledge. It is at once a secret sharing and a narratable event, and Darl *as telepathic witness* lends a second degree of wordless intimacy to the connection between Jewel and the horse. This connection then lends itself to a telepathic reading that would bring the animal kingdom into Palmer’s novelistic world of intermental thought in a move Donna Haraway, Jacques Derrida, and Christopher White have made in their different ways.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Notably, Joe Urgo’s reading of the novel, in which he discusses the importance of Addie’s postmortem narration as it relates to Darl, in “William Faulkner and the Drama of Meaning” makes an intriguing and convincing argument for Darl’s clairvoyance.

⁵⁹ I’m thinking here of Derrida and Will’s formulation in “The Animal That Therefore I Am.” Christopher White endorses telepathic readings of the exchanges we encounter in the novel in the context of animal

As we see in the epigraph to this section, Darl himself employs the rubric of telepathy to unlock the secret “truth” that lies beneath the utterances of the Bundren family, the dreadful future toward which the family wades through its muddy present, and the unuttered criticisms leveled against its members (AILD 134). John Liman posits that “the ontological theory of the book (the world is undivided heavy flow), the linguistic theory of the book (words are not units), and the formal theory of the book (reality belongs to . . . a character whose stream of consciousness overflows her banks), are all announced by Addie” (44). And given the ontological theory Liman proposes, what is announced by Addie is necessarily announced by the son into whose mind her consciousness overflows. Like the Mississippi Delta as Faulkner characterizes it in *The Wild Palms*, Darl’s mind is shaped by a flood of messages he is unable to refuse, “presage[s] . . . irrevocable as . . . death-notice[s] over the telegraph,” which exert an impersonal pressure over the novel that moves uncannily toward us, implicating us in those violations (WP 168).⁶⁰

The unwelcome weight of the future as it haunts the present in the “Darl” sections of the novel is a product of the virtual time-travel telepathy makes possible. A future event, for example, in which Jewel attempts to pry his dead mother out of the ditch is

magnetism. For this reason, passages such as this are of interest to Peterson due to the human being’s concern with, and ability to commune with, the animal world. Donna Haraway relates that ability to connect with animals to the connections among different organisms in my body in *When Species Meet*, which I’ll discuss in greater detail in the following chapter. For both Palmer and Haraway, therefore, the disparate parts of the brain working together to produce a functioning mind are key to understanding how that mind moves out “beyond the boundaries of the laboratory brain” as Henry James put it.

⁶⁰ An awareness of telepathic acts in these texts fosters a richer understanding of how the advancement of technology pressed into the Southern consciousnesses, revealing the limitlessness of ideological dissemination. What happened in Mississippi was inevitable: “the years during which [the water] consented to bear upon its placid and sleepy bosom the frail mechanicals of man’s clumsy contriving was the phenomenon and this the norm and the river was now doing what it . . . had waited patiently . . . ten years . . . to do, as a mule will work for you ten years for the privilege of kicking you once” (WP 160).

focalized through Darl's consciousness, foregrounding the doom in which a terrible future is enshrouded (52). Sharing a consciousness with his future self, Darl now sees what his future self sees. The phenomenon of telepathic time-travel as Faulkner presents it here is consistent with Charlotte Anne Moberly's and Eleanor Jourdain's construction of their telepathic experience as they describe it in "An Adventure" (1911), a bestseller during Faulkner's lifetime (a second and third edition were published in 1913 and 1955). Discussed at length in Terry Castle's "Contagious Folly: An Adventure and its Skeptics," Moberly and Jourdain experience a time loop whereby the two ladies share a consciousness with Marie Antoinette while she was still living. This "adventure," like Darl's shared consciousness with his future self, places them in neither the present nor the past but rather a "durée" not bound by a fixed frame of reference (Bergson). Indeed, Marie Antoinette is as much in a future with Moberly and Jourdain as the two ladies are in a past with Marie Antoinette. That Darl figures the inevitability of future events, inscribing the text with proleptic visions as he impresses them into our minds, tells us something about the disappearance of omniscient narration in high modernist fiction to which Paul Dawson calls our attention. "A more precise way of talking about the fact that fictional [character] narrators seem to have knowledge of the future," writes Royle, is "in terms of clairvoyance" ("The 'telepathy effect'" 259). That Royle speaks here not of character narrators but of so-called omniscient narrators is of no great consequence; in fact, the inconsequential nature of their differences, which the more "modernist" James dramatizes in his late fiction, is what interests me here. The reciprocation between Maisie's inscriptions on the text and the narrator's reporting of them all but disappears in Faulkner when so-called omniscient narrators are present in *Sound* and *Absalom*. But in

As I Lay Dying, the only narrator whose vision approximates omniscience and clairvoyance is Darl—call it telepathy and look for it especially in the italicized sections.

For most intradiegetic and extradiegetic readers, Darl figures the fear of exposure that links the South Faulkner represents in Yoknapatawpha to the Victorian ideologies on which it is grounded according to Daniel Singal in *Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*. The deepest secret, of course, is Dewey Dell's pregnancy, knowledge of which Darl accesses telepathically:

And so it was because I could not help it. It was then, and then I saw Darl and he knew. He said he knew without the words like he told me that ma is going to die without the words, and *I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us.* But he said he did know and I said "Are you going to tell pa are you going to kill him?" without the words I said it and he said "Why?" without the words. And that's why I can talk to him with *knowing* with hating because he *knows*. (27, my emphasis)

The Jamesian quality of the italicized sentence becomes Faulknerian as soon as Dewey Dell thinks, "I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us." By combining the feedback loop of telepathic knowing with an articulation of the objects those impressions communicate, Faulkner turns the telepathic into a mode that can be witnessed and articulated even as it underscores its own ability to destabilize the language, or law, on which witnessing relies.

The destabilization of language then entails the destabilization of the selves we create within the symbolic; thus, Darl as the figure for linguistic transcendence deconstructs the minds into and out of which he sees. As Tull puts it, “It’s like he had got into the inside of you, someway. Like somehow you was looking at yourself and your doings outen his eyes” (125). Tull’s complicated formulation here points up Palmer’s argument about self-knowledge as against knowledge of others. Palmer describes the manner in which our understanding of ourselves and our own behavior can be so foreign to us that we are in many cases better positioned to judge the motivations of *others* than those of ourselves: thinking with our “conscious” minds that we are going “to do one thing,” the decision to act is often “taken by [the] unconscious mind,” and we “end up doing another” (59). “For this reason,” he continues, “we are often much more accurate in predicting other people’s behavior than we are in predicting our own,” and for him this is itself a form of intermental thought. Tull’s perception of Darl’s clairvoyance enables *As I Lay Dying* to represent literally what can be understood figuratively as seeing yourself through a better judge’s eyes in the actual world. And that judge, in this case a merging of Darl and “you,” poses a serious threat to the repression and denial on which Southern ideology depended. Thus the threat to seeing *through* what people say and into what they actually think is at bottom where *As I Lay Dying* takes us—the bottom, that is, to which Addie sinks even as she rises with the final word on words.

As I Lay Dying famously devalues the power of spoken language, a devaluation most emphatically articulated in Addie Bundren’s postmortem character narration. For Addie, the failure of language is bound up with “motherhood”:

And when I knew that I had Cash . . . [t]hat was when I learned that words are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at. When he was born I knew that motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it because the ones that had the children didn't care whether there was a word for it or not. I knew that fear was invented by someone that had never had the fear . . . , we had had to use one another by words like spiders dangling by their mouths from a beam, swinging and twisting and never touching . . . that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack; that when the right word came, you wouldn't need a word . . . anymore . . . for . . . fear. (172)

That the uselessness of language would be bound for Addie to communication with a child should come as no surprise at this point. Addie, of course, is concerned more with the loss of self into motherhood, and an evaluation on these grounds need not be recited here. I'd like to call our attention instead to some striking connections Addie makes. When Darl names telepathy, he does so in terms of what *fear* catalyzes (“telepathic agreement of admitted fear”)—both are named, yet both are articulated in terms of that posture of bolt uprightness I describe above as consistently representing in Faulkner a knowledge so saturated with truth that the subject nearly explodes with it. Here, the insight of the child (Darl) emerges in the consciousness of the dead mother in which content and mode merge—Darl thinks of truth and telepathy in dark and violent terms

(“we all sitting bolt upright in our nakedness”) that strip the subjects of denial, and Addie violates orthodox laws of communication media to describe the emptiness of language in the context of fear. Finally, Addie will link her (Darl’s) understanding of what it really means to share feelings and mind to the “violations” of sex in the following paragraph (172). Further, the spider web of language Addie describes here anticipates the “faint and spidery script” that disappears even as it’s read in *Absalom, Absalom!*, which I will discuss at length below. Addie imagines words as keeping people separated, “swinging” and “never touching,” as any vulgar naming of the telepathy that binds them would separate Maisie and Sir Claude, or Kate and Merton, in a miscarriage of telepathic union. The extraordinary physicality of *As I Lay Dying*, represented here in the actual “spider” Addie imagines, stands in stark contrast to the telepathic transmissions by which it is shaped—a shape the absent center of which is materially represented in the trace of an illustrated coffin, and to whom we have access only by becoming mediums ourselves. Indeed, the great violation to which Addie calls the most attention is the one that penetrates us: to access Addie, we must first occupy the space of the clairvoyant in a posture of witnessing merged with Darl.

We are thrown into that witnessing posture in a violent act of mental intrusion, taken without warning into Addie’s cryptic space where Darl’s clarity, which is madness, is for a moment our own, wondering, “But wait! Isn’t she dead?” “Now you are aware of me!” Addie exclaims, jettisoning her thoughts out beyond the boundaries of the classroom in which they were formed, toward the reader now forced to channel her: “Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own forever and ever” (170). That this self-reflexive maneuver marks *our* “blood”

with her own bespeaks Faulkner's Southern rendering of the blood as the soul, which in *Absalom, Absalom!* is framed and reframed so as to obviate the need for any blood at all. (I'll discuss this at length in "Being Henry" below.) Importantly, the telepathic act that brings Addie's narrative into *As I Lay Dying* is remarkably overt in its denial of normative disadvantages, for the text directly presents the consciousness of a poor, white Southern woman who otherwise struggles to lay claim to an audience. Thus, the violence that lands her in our minds is the other side of a coin on which the flip side returns us to the utopian possibilities unmediated communication imagines. Telepathic devices provide readers with access to what the conventional, virtually Victorian Southern body politic would not speak. In other words, though Faulkner's naming doesn't save Darl, it does allow his narrative to flow indistinctly toward the possible connections telepathic transmissions enable, like the "ripples" Quentin will imagine in *Absalom* (210).

Darl's knowing merges the utopian and dystopian elements of telepathic transmission. First, being "found out" is a nightmare that nevertheless provides the discovered subject with a sense of not being alone. This helps to explain why Andrew Miller understands shame in *The Burdens of Perfection* as somehow a desirable emotion: it implies being known by someone else, and to be known is to partake of the intimacy of another's company. The utopian and dystopian aspects of their transmission can be understood in a different sense, as well: Darl feels the pregnancy inside of Dewey Dell's mind and body, and he feels the pressure of ridicule to which Dewey Dell will be subject should she keep the baby, yet this pressure clashes with his ideological opposition to the abortion. What Faulkner achieves here is remarkable: the internal conflict that results from his "knowing" about Dewey Dell is one among innumerable paradoxes that

characterize *Darl's mental state*, the analogue of which is the instability of language on which the novel turns, which in turn is a metonym for the “telepathy” and “second-sight” the text paradoxically names as a source of that mental state whose naming *can't help Darl*. Faulkner commits the novel, through Darl, to a naming that fails to save Darl from being committed to the asylum, where he will no doubt continue to see the world as though out of other people's eyes. That we see every character in *Absalom, Absalom!* out of Quentin's eyes isn't always obvious. But a closer look shows us that Quentin's mind is always there, lurking, carving out pieces of text with the mental jigsaw he wields.

Receiving Rosa

*the liquorish and ungirdled mind is anyone's to take
in any darkened hallway of this earthly tenement*

—Rosa Coldfield
Absalom, Absalom!

Out of the darkness in which she speaks, the “figure of a little girl” resolves itself before Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*: she “seemed to stand, to lurk, . . . with that air of children born too late into their parents' lives and doomed to contemplate all human behavior through the complex and needless follies of adults—an air Cassandralike and humorless and profoundly and sternly prophetic out of all proportion to the actual years even of a child who had never been young” (15). While James witnesses Maisie's ability to see her future “as if through a small demonic foresight,” Quentin is cursed to perceive clairvoyance for himself, looking back over Rosa's life to which telepathy gives him direct, unmediated access. So ubiquitous is telepathy in *Absalom* that you can't see *anyone* for dust: the “dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old

dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as wind might have blown them,” a sort of visible ether of fecund mental transmission (3).⁶¹ Like Maisie’s inscriptions on the text whose narrative she authors, Quentin’s initial thoughts and perceptions inscribe Rosa with a childhood that her narrative, importantly delivered in italics and without signifiers of direct reporting, naturally confirms: “*So they will have told you doubtless already . . .*” she begins in one of her longest narratives, Quentin’s mind the source of this narrative not through memory, but through simultaneous thought we witness. “[*T*]here is no such thing as memory,” Rosa reminds us (115).⁶² As Quentin sees the child take shape, his vision shapes her vision of the past, both childhoods “so saturated with knowledge” as to foreclose altogether on the category of the child (WK 145). The first part of the novel has her claiming in reprise, “I saw,” “I saw,” “I saw,” only to have Rosa reveal her absence from those scenes and thus construct herself as clairvoyant, all knowledge traceable to what was absorbed “somehow” (this novel is also full of those now archetypal “somehows” I discuss in the previous chapter) in a so-called childhood that admitted “no child”: “*Ah, wake up, Rosa: wake up—not from what was, what used to be, but from what had not, could not have ever, been*” (111, 113). Thus, the old, childlike woman sitting before him is almost irrelevant, for the mind of the “little girl” who was rarely present at the events she transmits is embodied here. Moreover, to read Rosa’s mind—the mind of the child as she ostensibly constructs it—in the italics of Quentin’s

⁶¹ In one sense, this perspective enhances John T. Matthews’s astute observation that “*Absalom*, even more explicitly than *The Sound and the Fury*, encourages the reader to understand the desire of a character for the absent body of his or her beloved as analogous to the desire of the storyteller for his subject’s representations and for the achievement of natural sense” (“Speaking” 583).

⁶² The quotation continues “*and worthy only of the name of dream*,” ironically anticipating the dream whose evidence *The Unvanquished* will deem worth taking into account just months after Rosa’s view is published.

mind, is to read the mind of Quentin's chronological childhood. Thus Quentin perceives her as clairvoyant only to discover "too late" that the clairvoyance he perceives in Rosa turns out to be his own.

Rosa's most resonant insights are importantly presented to us in paragraph after paragraph of italics, a graphic that fosters an effect of mental penetration—of reaching and shaping places in our minds in much the same way in which shared thoughts have shaped Quentin's. And like Rosa, Quentin longs for what Matthews calls "the illusion of a life not exhausted by descriptions of it," even as many of those descriptions mask what is communicated below the level of language ("Speaking" 584). What we see in italics, therefore, we can read as coauthored by Quentin and Rosa. Consider this time not the obvious content, but rather the lexical and syntactic clues that signify "Quentin" in the following passage:

She seemed to stand, to lurk, . . . with that air of children
born too late into their parents' lives and doomed to
contemplate all human behavior through the complex and
needless follies of adults—an air Cassandralike and
humorless and profoundly and sternly prophetic out of all
proportion to the actual years even of a child who had never
been young. . . . It should have been later than it was; it
should have been late. (15)

And now the following passage, generally considered to be part of "Rosa's" narrative:

*"and now too late, who would have been too late if you had
come there from the womb or had been there already at the*

full strong capable mortal peak when she was born; who came twelve miles and nineteen years to save what did not need the saving, and lost instead yourself. . . That is the substance of remembering . . . not mind, not thought: there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less: and its resultant sum is usually incorrect and false. (113)

Remembering is creation; transmission is evidence. Even as the text calls up to memory the too-lateness Quentin ponders, it refuses our (unconscious) inclination to register it as memory. Part of what makes this possible is Quentin's embodiment of Rosa's thoughts qua narrative whose italics signify thought-transference. In fact, this passage manages to undercut any singularity of authorship we might attribute to Rosa even as it more dramatically undercuts the authority of the erstwhile omniscient narrator who occasionally makes an appearance. Faulkner stresses the impossibility of such objective omniscient narration in "Mississippi," in which every "remembered" moment is romanticized, seen through rose-colored glasses that shatter in the face of what actually was: "But . . . he hated the intolerance and injustice"; "But he loves it, it is his, remembering . . . remembering" (37, 38-9).

Quentin's perception of Rosa's "Cassandralike" clairvoyance positions him as witness to what the previous chapters establish as the foreclosure on childhood, a foreclosure Rosa continually articulates. Rosa thus points us at once backwards and forewords to Quentin's not-childhood that ends in suicide. Observe Rosa's observations on childhood:

as though that warped and Spartan solitude which I called my childhood . . . had taught me to listen before I could comprehend and to understand before I even heard . . . that unpaced corridor which I called childhood, . . . instead of accomplishing the processional and measured milestones of the normal childhood's time I lurked, unapprehended as though, shod with the very damp and velvet silence of the womb, I displaced no air, gave off no betraying sound, from one closed forbidden door to the next and so acquired all I knew of that light and space in which people moved and breathed as I (that same child) might have gained conception of the sun from seeing it through a piece of smoky glass . . . not spying, not even hiding, who was child enough not to need to hide, whose presence would have been no violation . . . turned twenty true enough yet still a child. (112, 116, 119, 131, my bolded emphasis)

Quentin's mind co-authors this passage (recall Rosa's "lurk[ing]" posture that Quentin first thinks); thus Rosa's articulation of the absence of childhood cannot be extricated from the mind in which it also originates. Rosa not only articulates the absence of childhood, but she turns that absence on its head, as the telepathic mode can and will do. She is twenty and "still a child" who was no child at all. In other words, the absence of childhood loops back by virtue of the child's mind in the adult, and when Quentin kills himself, importantly at twenty and "older" than "a lot of people who have died," it is in

fact still the child who commits the act, rendering Quentin as “stillborn” like the child Rosa describes herself to be. That these two merge mentally in their narrative contributes to the most important observation on the question of family, race, and bloodlines in the fiction of his major phase, for it reminds us that the telepathic moves beyond bodies, and so moving, makes no allowance for the preservation of so-called “Racial Integrity” the Virginia Act of 1924 sought to protect.⁶³

For Rosa, the threat of miscegenation is inextricably linked to the telepathic that Clytie embodies, as though they “*spoke to one another free of the limitations and restrictions of speech and hearing*” (111). Quentin embodies that threat as well precisely because blood has nothing to do with it. That the telepathic mode transcends the *cri du sang* motif is indeed at the heart of *Absalom, Absalom!*; after all, the two primary narrators who telepathically coauthor the first half of the novel, Rosa and Quentin, and the other two who similarly coauthor the second half are not biologically related. The text could hardly place more emphasis on this circumstance than it does, as Shreve continuously plies Quentin with doubtful questions about this “Aunt Rosa” to which Quentin replies with a confused frustration—“Not Aunt Rosa . . .” “Miss Rosa . . . Miss Rosa, I tell you”—echoed in the litotes that typifies his feeling about the South: “I don’t hate it . . . *I don’t. I don’t! I don’t hate it! I don’t hate it!*” (143, 303). This, too, is why Quentin’s mind delivers an oft-quoted passage that can’t help but recall the stream of consciousness William James conceived (and for James, it might certainly have been understood as a stream of consciousnesses flowing into and through one another) with a genealogy of mental inception and progeny:

⁶³ In Faulkner’s context specifically, “Virginia Act to Preserve Racial Integrity” of 1924 made its presence felt as part of the logic of the one-drop rule to which Kreiswirth calls attention (*Making* 134).

Yes. Maybe we [Shreve and I] are both Father.

Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on the water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed . . . : that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Supten to make all of us. (210)

In its intense self-reflexivity, Quentin's musing here can and has been read as an observation on the novel itself: Sutpen, the idea of Sutpen, giving rise to everyone else in the text. But as we know, Shreve and Quentin came first in *The Sound and the Fury*, so such a reading is always undone by Quentin's ability to authorize it. Shreve's *disbelief* that Rosa is not related to Quentin by blood underscores how little the *cri du sang* actually matters in the context of telepathic transmissions, for in such a context, miscegenation is always already happening without actual physical contact, and mental genealogies, to Quentin's dismay and ultimate demise, trump biological ones. Quentin knows this only too well. His blood relation to Caddy can't unite them any more strongly than does his mental relation to Sutpen, Henry, Shreve, Bon, or Rosa, thus the *cri d'esprit* is heard most clearly, and its jigsaw puzzle integers, confused and traceless in the

Deleuzian sense, won't conform to the Southern imaginary to which Quentin's conscious mind clings.

In "The Haunted House of Kinship," Christopher Peterson describes the threat of miscegenation through the lens of chiasmatic interpersonal relationships. Inasmuch as my telepathic reading of the relationship between Maisie and Sir Claude dovetails with George Butte's chiasmatic conceptions thereof, so my telepathic reading of Faulkner's characters, especially in light of the problems of race, dovetails (and loops back around again . . . and again) with Peterson's reading, which draws from Sundquist's seminal gothic reading in *Faulkner: The House Divided*:

[T]he threat of miscegenation would seem to lie in its confirmation of a chiasmatic relation between and within white and black bodies prior to any racial admixture. If . . . all bodies are related in a chiasmatic way, then all bodies are in some sense miscegenated bodies. Indeed, it remains unclear whether we can still retain the trope of containment that the signifier "body" always seems to imply once its integrity has been called into question. The white body, like the body of the nation, is always divided in itself by precisely that which it excludes. . . . the *possibility* of miscegenation [is] more traumatic for the racist imaginary than the *actuality* of miscegenation, [and] such an argument relies on a division between . . . the threat of miscegenation and something like "miscegenation itself."

(230, 234, emphasis in original)⁶⁴

By the warped Southern logic of race that shaped Rosa, which Twain represents in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*—"It's de nigger in you, dat's what it is. Thirty-one parts 'o you is white, en only one part nigger, and dat po' little one part is yo' soul"—Rosa's *soul* is black (Twain 75). Hence Rosa's trouble with Clytie's clairvoyance to which Schmidtberger refers above: it is one and the same as Rosa's trouble with Clytie's race. For Clytie to be clairvoyant and thus know of Rosa's imminent arrival at Sutpen's Hundred is for Clytie and Rosa to be one person, making of Rosa "that coffee-coloured" sphinx she abhors. Still worse, it points to that childhood she always and never has, the present absence of which Clytie alone seems to understand: "*to her of all who knew me I was no child*" (111). The shared mind is the shared self, telepathic bonds thus figuring what John Jeremiah Sullivan characterized succinctly as "stubborn race hatred that coexists with intense racial intimacy" in a 2012 *New York Times* article about *Absalom, Absalom!* lauded as the greatest Southern novel of all time.

Indeed, Rosa's understanding of Clytie's clairvoyance as an atavistic trait "inherited from an older and purer race than [Rosa's]" frequently appears throughout Faulkner's oeuvre, likening African Americans to animals even as it holds them up as ideally able to embrace the utopian potential of a sort of perfect empathy. Such a formulation is consistent with ideas about telepathy in the late-nineteenth and early-

⁶⁴ "[U]nderstood as contamination, and therefore, as a *différance* that delays and defers any return to self-presence or self-containment," Peterson continues, "miscegenation is the condition of *any* life, indeed, of any-body" (239-40). Ultimately, Peterson nicely observes reveals Quentin's and Shreve's that their homoerotic relationship produces its own immortal offspring in a manner recalling my argument about the offspring produced by Florence and Paul. The offspring, Jim Bond in this case, is miscegenated, linking homosexuality with miscegenation. Kevin Ohi's deeply engaging recent essay in *Queer Times*, "'My Spirit's Posthumeity' and the Sleeper's Outflung Hand: Queer Transmission in *Absalom, Absalom!*" revisits homoeroticism in *Absalom* with an emphasis on its absolute and undeniable primacy not as a theme, but as a representation of homosexuality.

twentieth centuries. While some members of the SPR thought telepathy was an atavistic trait that had been increasingly concealed from consciousness or lost over time, other members thought telepathy was a product of evolutionary development. Sensitive, privileged characters such as Quentin and Old Bayard Sartoris whom the texts portray as telepathic embody the evolutionary component of telepathic “powers.” However, the same narratives often construct “niggers” as telepathic, but in these cases, telepathy is less tempered by reflection and skepticism, contributing to a primitivist strain in Faulkner.⁶⁵ In this sense, clairvoyant childhood, epitomized in the triangulation of its presence in the perpetual child “idiot” Benjy, its acknowledgment by Roskus, and Roskus’s telepathic relationship with animals angles the following quotation from *Sound* toward the problematic slant that Faulkner, it seems, will never outgrow: “‘He know lot more than folks thinks.’ Roskus said. ‘He knowed they time was coming, like that pointer done. He could tell you when hisn coming, if he could talk. Or yours. Or mine’” (32). In *As I Lay Dying*, then, the communication between man and animal is between so-called poor white trash and animals, class replacing race as the marker of socialized intelligence and thus positing an ambivalence toward class, as well, given Darl’s position of intellectual primacy that telepathically enables him to witness that communication. Not to perceive the racist undercurrent of this message would be a mistake, but it would be equally mistaken to overlook the crucial witnessing and validation the African-American Ringo awards Bayard Sartoris’s clairvoyant dream in *The Unvanquished*, children though they are. In short, the ambivalence toward race manifest in the paradigm of telepathy

⁶⁵ Rosa contributes to this primitivist strain as she observes the “negro” men handling the horses: “it was the negro now, who in the act of passing another carriage spoke to that team too as well as to his own—something without words, not needing words probably, in that tongue in which they slept in the mud of that swamp and brought here out of whatever dark swamp he had found them in and brought them here” (17).

bespeaks both a reverence for and a demeaning objectification of African Americans and thus reflects the ambivalence toward racial issues Faulkner expressed throughout his life.⁶⁶

To return now to the child at hand, by the ill logic of miscegenation, Rosa's *soul*, proximate as her body is to that of Clytie, is black, and by the logic of telepathic reception and transmission, Rosa's soul is what we are receiving in Quentin—a transmission represented in part by the italics in which we receive her narrative in Quentin's mind as it penetrates ours. Thus, just as Quentin embodied the feminine immediately upon his mental reception of Caddy's thoughts, he was black as soon as he stepped into Rosa's abolitionist father's house in Jefferson. Shreve's announcement at the end of the novel that "in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere" is remarkably accurate in its naivety: none of this is happening "in time," and the Jim Bonds have long since done their conquering (302).

Caddy and Rosa have offered an apt site for the development and understanding of modernist themes, aesthetics, criticism, and theory in large part because they have supposedly signified in turns the "other of language," the "absent center," because they "will not be pinned down" as Gwin and Fowler observe in their Derridian and Lacanian readings (*Writing and Difference* 27; *Spurs* 55). The telepathic as I conceive it—that is, both as a deconstructing technique *and* as a mimetic means of communicating thoughts from discrete minds within the space of other minds—allows us to recuperate what these

⁶⁶ Culminating, of course, in his famously problematic remark about his imaginary sister ("I don't have anything against Negroes, but I wouldn't want my sister to marry one") of which Irwin reminds us in *Doubling* (25).

readings often relegate to the endlessly reflective, unsubstantial space of the “feminine.” I trace Quentin in Bon’s mind similarly to how I trace Quentin and Caddy’s in Benjy’s.

In much the same way, I trace Rosa in Judith’s mind. And I’m not alone: not unlike Andrew Miller’s merging of *Helena* and Rosa in “Specters,” Arthur F. Kinney’s merging of *Judith* and Rosa (Coldfield this time) in his introduction to *The Sutpen Family* underscores the extra-fictional transmutability of character in the context of minds “densely reticulated” through one another (*Burdens* 163). Kinney draws parallels between Sutpen and Rosa, quoting the text: “‘She would have acted as Sutpen would have acted with anyone who tried to cross him’ (p. 96),” finally noting that “‘they also think so much alike they can communicate without talking (p. 96)’” (4). Both of these observations—one about the girl who “would have acted as” Sutpen and one about telepathic like-mindedness—are descriptions of Judith and her father. But the mental characteristics that distinguish Judith and Rosa from, say, Ellen and Henry are precisely those which make them difficult to distinguish from anyone, the narrator included: their abilities, established by the age of six, to grasp subjects mentally either conventionally beyond the scope of a six-year-old mind, or literally beyond the boundaries of the audible, cause their intermental unit to swap signifiers in criticism for just a moment (AA 57). And that intermental unit itself moves well beyond the Sutpen family and the narrators of *Absalom*.

We find Rosa speaking of the mind of Jefferson as though she were communicating with it much as Maisie communicates mentally with Sir Claude: “our neighbors and the people we lived among knew that we knew and we knew that they knew we knew and we knew that they would have believed us about who and where we

came from even if we had lied, just as anyone could have looked at him once and known that he would be lying about who and where and why he came from by the very fact that apparently he had to refuse to say at all” (11).⁶⁷ In fact, it is Rosa’s shared mind with the town that makes possible her knowledge that Clytie is still in the Supten mansion: thus Rosa somehow knows that “*the cold Cerberus of [Sutpen’s] private hell,*” as Rosa calls her, “*still wears [that sphinx face] now at seventy-four*” that she had worn when Rosa last saw her some forty-three years earlier (109). The “we” Rosa uses to represent Jefferson signifies a single mind akin to the one Palmer imagines of Middlemarch: “[W]ithin the *Middlemarch* storyworld, the town actually and literally does have a mind of its own” (74).

Indeed, the mind of the South as Faulkner constructs it in Yoknapatawpha County (and in some senses as W. J. Cash traced it) looks strikingly like the Middlemarch mind: a set of “minds,” each of which requires the others in order to form a somewhat unified narrative emanating from one mind that Henry James called the “central consciousness” of the novel, much as the town in “A Rose for Emily” that Brian Richardson describes in *Unnatural Voices* functions as a single unit comprised of individual minds.⁶⁸ But I will go a step further in suggesting that each “mind” (read “narrator”) in *Absalom*, comprised as it is of the other minds that permeate it, requires the contributions of those other minds in order to produce that single consciousness. This helps to explain why criticism has so often found the narrators of *Absalom* to sound strikingly similar—what Stephen Ross

⁶⁷ This passage can’t help but recall James, as well as George Butte’s discussion of deep intersubjectivity in the appropriately titled *I Know That You Know That I Know: Narrating Subjects from ‘Moll Flanders’ to ‘Marnie’*.

⁶⁸ Though, where Richardson, like Menakhem Perry, describes gendered differences among the minds, I will emphasize the gender crossings shared minds engender.

calls a “monological overvoice”—with the frequent notable exception of Rosa.⁶⁹ But as much as Rosa is absorbed into Quentin, so Quentin is absorbed into her, and her rhetoric of the knowing child colors his, and our, earliest impressions of her. In fact among the doublings and repetitions John T. Irwin recognizes is that between Quentin and Rosa, a doubling John T. *Matthews* further articulates in “The Marriage of Speaking and Hearing in *Absalom, Absalom!*” (Irwin 74-6; “Speaking”). That doubling, I argue, is most effectively enacted by the text’s embodiment of Rosa’s thoughts within Quentin into whom she seems to all but disappear, right up until we recall that it is Quentin who first disappears into her and the sea of minds of which she comprises but a molecule. This unit, then, is the “we” to whom Rosa so often refers, and in my reading, that very “we” includes the fifth, floating, narrator whose demotion to the same diegetic level as Quentin he silently protests.

Rosa and Quentin together command that demotion in the narrative they coauthor. In his first full narrative, the narrator opens with, “It was a summer of wistaria” (23). And when Rosa’s remembered observation about the summer of wistaria comes in the same syntax later in the text—“Once there was . . . a summer of wistaria. . . . It was a vintage year of wistaria”—one can’t help but wonder whether the narrator observes it or smells it through Quentin’s sense of Rosa’s sense (115). More importantly, Rosa has just rehearsed the difference between knowledge and the kind of “remembering” that is purely mechanical, as omniscient narration would have to be (115). Thus 1909 and 1833 merge as much over the course of the novel as they do in those single moments when Quentin becomes Henry that I’ll discuss below. This narrator continues, “Then he *seemed* to quit.

⁶⁹ For Ross, this is associated with fatherhood and authority, and for Zender, it can also be associated with the rhetoric of fascism as “fatherland” and “fatherhood” (Ross 79; Zender 21).

He *seemed* to just sit down in the middle of what he had almost finished” (30, my emphasis). The narrator speaks with the uncertainty of the townspeople in “A Rose for Emily,” making us part of that “we” narration. It is the children, in contrast, who narrate with unwanted certainty. Finally, the narrator posits, “So *doubtless* General Compson was the first man in the country to tell himself that Sutpen did not need to borrow money with which to complete the house” (31, my emphasis). This “doubtless” of course produces doubt, but what I find most interesting about it is that it signals that quintessential tick of Mr. Compson whose mind we can almost always recognize by his pathetic and empty “doubtlesses” peppered through every longwinded doubting observation he unloads into his son—“doubtlesses,” I would add, that Rosa increasingly uses *only once her narrative is presented in the italics that indicate Quentin’s mental influence that includes his father’s*.

The following chapter inaugurates the dissolution of the extradiegetic narrator, notably through Faulkner’s use of the italics that indicate telepathic transmission, as the narrator unwittingly reveals Quentin’s narratorial primacy. The arena of direct quotation, properly the arena of the narrator, is represented in italics, suggesting that Quentin now transmits his stage-managing decisions to the narrator: “If he threw her over, I wouldn’t think she would want to tell anybody about it *Quentin said*. Ah *Mr. Compson said again* After Mr Coldfield died in ’64, Miss Rosa moved out to Sutpen’s Hundred to live . . .” (46). The italics thus signify a literal representation of the kind of telepathic narrator Maisie’s narrator turns out to be. Quentin is sending the signals, and his narrator receives them *from* Quentin “as though by means of . . . telepathy”: much as the narratorial status of the ostensibly extradiegetic narrator in Maisie is increasingly compromised, so this

narrator more dramatically reveals his loss of agency over a text in which his involvement ought to be controlled *by him*. And shortly hereafter, Mr. Compson, who has failed just a few pages earlier to recognize Rosa's clairvoyance ("even if she had been clairvoyant . . ." he says of her), falls under the spell of his son's: Quentin's perception of Rosa as "cassandralike" permeates the text, causing the father to think in the image of the son. Mr. Compson describes Rosa as "Cassandra-like listening beyond closed doors . . . lurking"; with the notable syntactic marker of the hyphen Quentin characteristically omits, his father thus clings to his typical command over form if not content. This is Quentin's mind influencing his father's "in the silent steady glare of what" Mr. Compson "was never to know was actual clairvoyance" (WP 20).

The direct reporting at the novel's close, then, not unlike the narrator's increasing protests of narratorial agency in *What Maisie Knew*, is paramount: Quentin's protest, "*I don't hate it!*" dramatizes its form, for this narrator is no more able to reckon with his passive complicity in a narrative his characters write than Quentin is with his passive complicity in living it. That Quentin telepathically *sees* Rosa's tragic withdrawal from the Sutpen mansion, as Rosa "saw" all of her childhood visions, is key to understanding Quentin's guilt that the narrator witnesses, announcing the telepathic in a paradoxical naming that can't save Quentin:

he (Quentin) could see her, them; he had not been there but
 he could see her, struggling and fighting like a doll in a
 nightmare, making no sound, foaming a little at the mouth,
 her face even in the sunlight lit by one last wild crimson

reflection as the house collapsed and roared away, and there
was only the sound of the idiot negro left. (301)

Indeed, Quentin's vision of this microcosm of Southern history in *Absalom* is crucial to understanding how Faulkner came to articulate in fine the crude experience of the "cruel unwinking minds" by which Quentin was violated in *The Sound and the Fury*.⁷⁰ To understand his role in authorizing it is to understand why he's already dead.

Being Henry

*almost touching the answer,
aware of the jigsaw puzzle picture integers of it
waiting, almost lurking,
just beyond his
reach, inextricable, jumbled, and unrecognizable*

Absalom, Absalom!

John T. Irwin's reading of the function of memory generally is that in remembering and therefore recognizing so-called repetition, Quentin registers his role in those repeated events as primary. That is, though Quentin is the third recipient of story of Sutpen—the third generation to know the story that came from Sutpen to Quentin's grandfather, to Quentin's father, and finally to Quentin—the narrative and its multigenerational trajectory *only exists* because Quentin perceives that lineage at all. Therefore, he is primary in terms of the perceived trajectory and the narrative it delivers,

⁷⁰ In this regard, my reading diverges considerably from that of Irwin, because the "ring of the family" from which he reads the characters as unable to escape would on my reading be almost a luxury (59). That Quentin so vehemently argues against Rosa's blood relationship to him in the face of Shreve's constant badgering bespeaks the horror that the family provides no insulation from the filial relationships telepathy forges beyond the blood. The *cri du sang* in *Absalom, Absalom!* fails to provide any cover. Notable here is David Michael Walter's fine and compelling argument in "Sibling Love Triangles in Faulkner and Balzac" for the relationship of the *cri du sang* in *Absalom, Absalom!* to that of Balzac's *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* (*La Fille aux yeux d'or*). Further, the relevance of Balzac to Quentin Compson as an imaginative creation Martin Kreiswirth clearly reveals in *The Making of a Novelist*.

which only he can fully grasp. Put differently, though he is third in line, the line only exists because of his father's secondary and his tertiary position; because Quentin sees the line at all, he is primary in terms of the line itself (69-75). Importantly, Irwin registers the third step that enables the character to regard these two states (primary and secondary) as an imaginative act of "recollection." In contrast, I would argue that there is no sense of "re"-doing anything; there is rather a "tele"-doing it simultaneously with the first event in diachronic time, placing, as I wrote in the previous chapter, diachronic events in synchronic relation to one another. In other words, when Henry shoots Bon, Quentin registers his role in that killing as primary.⁷¹ The doubling the novel enacts then enables Henry through Quentin's embodiment of him to announce the future (in which he is narrated), out of which his own present is formed at the diegetic level of the story. Quentin and Shreve telepathically narrate: in the shared mental space of Quentin and Shreve, Henry acknowledges that he and Bon were "shaped . . . out of that blind chance darkness we call the future" that Quentin embodies mimetically and represents metaphorically (254). This is the realm of the telepathic—it is that simultaneous realm to which Henri Bergson, president of the Society for Psychical Research whose work deeply influenced Faulkner's, dedicated much of his thinking and writing about time.⁷²

⁷¹ We might also think of this reversal of the primary and secondary positions, Irwin notes, in relation to the reversing roles of father and son, harkening the present discussion back to the relationship between the two Paul Dombeyes.

⁷² Faulkner's interest in Bergson, president of the British SPR in 1913, further suggests that his understanding of telepathy and its effects was indebted to the positive view of telepathy held by the SPR in England. A number of studies have explored Bergsonian influences in Faulkner's texts; among them are Sanford Schwartz's *The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth-Century Thought* and Paul Douglass's *Bergson, Eliot, & American Literature*. Jean-Paul Sartre, among the first important critics to write a strikingly positive review of Faulkner's work, noted the likeness between Proust's and Faulkner's depiction of time, and Proust's relationship to Bergson and other members of the Society has been well documented. What these projects do not take into account, however, is how important the concepts explored by the SPR were to Bergson's project and, therefore, to those authors whose work Bergson

Essentially, Irwin works toward an explanation of this feeling: the feeling of *being* the previous actor. Still worse, Quentin is, for Irwin, a “helpless and passive” actor who tries to combat this passivity by “actively willing repetition, actively willing his own passivity” (75; 82). For Maisie, this manifests itself in “the doom of a peculiar passivity” that Maisie embraces with the volition of future possibility (WK 85). But I’m not convinced that Quentin is quite able to “actively will” his own passivity except in his final act of suicide. In my view, the activity and passivity Irwin perceives in Quentin are not to be got round; Quentin is both at once. He is in two places, two minds, and two states of agency at once; a time-travelling figure for Faulkner’s experience of the past.

The phenomenon of telepathic time-travel in *Absalom* is also consistent, then, with Moberly’s and Jourdain’s construction of their telepathic experience described in *An Adventure*. Neither individual is “in time” in the conventional sense, recalling Kreiswirth’s observation that Faulknerian characters are “beyond time”: “the actions of the centripetal figures reverberate through time. They themselves, however, are beyond” it (*Making* 146). Thus, while Quentin’s decision to tear the hands off the watch Mr. Compson gives him (with his father’s infamously cynical claim that he gives it to his son “not that he may remember time, but that [he] might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all [his] breath trying to conquer it”) is conventionally read as Quentin’s attempt to destroy time, I would argue that he yanks those hands off precisely because time never worked in the first place: the hands, like his own hands in the fight with Dalton Ames or with the gun offered him by Herbert Head, are useless tools that attempt

influenced, including Faulkner, Marcel Proust and Gertrude Stein (Stein, in fact, engaged in experiments in consciousness with William James).

to maintain a hold on things (time and a sister's honor) that simply don't exist (SF 76). Instead, Quentin lives within a "condensation of time which [is] the gauge of its own violence" (AA 201). Repetition in this case is impossible and cannot be willed. His peculiar passivity reminiscent of Paul Dombey's is most damaging to Quentin when he discovers that somewhere within the space of it, he has been actively narrating—causing events to occur in the fiction and in the minds of readers—despite his posture of reception. Resituating Irwin's Freudian paradigm into a telepathic paradigm enables us to remain true to Faulkner's admittedly shifty proclamations,⁷³ take the Southerner's Bergsonian influences into account, and recognize the Thurschwellian Freud in Faulkner that helps to accommodate the Jamesian influence Irwin's *Doubling* takes so thoroughly into account. Most important, in Quentin's, Rosa's and Darl's cases, *being* the actor isn't the whole story. The horror for them is that of simultaneously bearing witness to that doing. It's the witnessing that does them in.

In his discussion of intermental thought, Alan Palmer describes the process of creation as John Ashbery and James Schuyler experienced it when they alternately contributed one or two lines of prose at a time to a text. According to Ashbery, he and Schuyler "were often unable to remember who had written what, as our lines seemed to emerge from an invisible third person" (qtd in Palmer 44). Ashbery could just as easily have been describing the shared narrating instance between Shreve and Quentin, several sections of which follow in a series of frequently quoted passages:

They stared—glared—at one another, their voices (it was
Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which

⁷³ He claimed not to have read Freud.

the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (differences not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrase and usage of words), it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal; the two of them creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all . . .) quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporizing breath.

...

That was why it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone . . . but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing wherein each . . . forgot the faultings of the other—faultings . . . in the creating of this shade whom they discussed (*rather, existed in*)

...

—“Wait,” Shreve cried, though Quentin had not spoken . . .

(243, 253, 257, my emphasis)

Quoting Francine Ringold’s reading of *Absalom*’s “notlanguage” as “the narrator speaking through Quentin as not the language of Quentin’s idiom,” Polk and Urgo seem to endorse her reading, and yet their later reading of notlanguage shifts to account for that subtle difference between Quentin’s relationship to the supposedly extradiegetic

heterodiegetic narrator and his relationship to another character narrator, Shreve. In that later reading, Polk and Urgo argue that Quentin and Shreve disappear into that space of “notlanguage” when their narrative “voice,” as the critics call it, disappears into a manifestation of the objects of their descriptions (8, 27). What I am suggesting is that that space, though *named*—as the death drive is finally named within the space of the uncanny by Freud—is the space of telepathy: the space in which signifiers are replaced by shared impressions that operate below the level of language; the space of the presymbolic—the space, in other words, of early childhood.

Quentin and Shreve come to form a singular entity, an entity that articulates, then recognizes the futility of its own attempt to organize these shadows into a pattern, even as it describes the desire to do so in a simultaneously received and transmitted impression from Bon’s mind: “aware of the jigsaw puzzle picture integers of it waiting, almost lurking, just beyond his reach, inextricable, jumbled, and unrecognizable yet on the point of falling into a pattern which would reveal to him at once, like a flash of light, the meaning of his whole life, past” (250).⁷⁴ The problem is that Bon’s explanation is located somewhere in the space of two shared minds whose hosts haven’t yet been born in diachronic time but who nevertheless share his thoughts simultaneously. The

⁷⁴ This echoes Henri Bergson’s conceptualizations of time passage: “*When a child plays at reconstructing a picture by putting together the separate pieces in a puzzle game, the more he practices, the more and more quickly he succeeds.* The reconstruction was, moreover, instantaneous, the child found it ready-made, when he opened the box on leaving the shop. The operation, therefore, does not require a definite time, and indeed, theoretically, it does not require any time. That is because the result is given. It is because the picture is already created, and because to obtain it requires only a work of recomposing and rearranging a work that can be supposed going faster and faster, and even infinitely fast, up to the point of being instantaneous. But, to the artist who creates a picture by drawing it from the depths of his soul, time is no longer an accessory; it is not an interval that may be lengthened or shortened without the content being altered. The duration of his work is part and parcel of his work. To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal” (*Creative Evolution* 340, my emphasis). For Quentin, of course, there are too many pieces despite their being ready made, recalling the final line of the introduction to this thesis: the pieces are a great deal too *many* for their frame.

impression now shared by Bon, Shreve, and Quentin is the stuff of evidentiary knowledge Faulkner offers us through the ironically impotent narrator:

Shreve ceased. That is, for all the two of them, Shreve and Quentin, knew he had stopped, since for all the two of them knew he had never begun, since it did not matter (and possibly neither of them conscious of the distinction) which one had been doing the talking. So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen December ruts of that Christmas eve: four of them and then just two—Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry, the two of them both believing that Henry was thinking *He* (meaning his father) *has destroyed us all*, not for one moment thinking *He* (meaning Bon) *must have known or at least suspected this all the time; that's why he has acted as he has, why he did not answer my letters last summer nor write to Judith, why he has never asked her to marry him*; believing that that must have occurred to Henry . . . because he must have now understood with complete despair the secret of his whole attitude toward Bon from that first instinctive moment when he had seen him a year an a quarter ago; ***he knew, yet he did not, had to refuse to, believe***. So it was four of them who rode the two horses through that night and then across the bright frosty North Mississippi Christmas Day. (267, my bolded emphasis)

The first line of this quotation, “Shreve ceased,” is the result of one of surprisingly few changes made from the original manuscript, in which Faulkner had written “He stopped at last.”⁷⁵ That “Shreve ceased” speaks to the impossibility of intramental thought even within one of the most uniquely definable characters in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Shreve’s physical characteristics are among the most distinctive in the novel, his language generally quoted so as to be easily discernable, and his disposition unlike the Southerners with whom he comes into mental contact through Quentin.⁷⁶ And then he “ceases” to exist as the uniquely distinct mind of a North that an international border should have helped to sustain. In Polk and Urgo’s words, “the events unfold [in Shreve and Quentin’s narrative] in a kind of silent vision which they share” (27). If this isn’t a description of telepathy, I’m not sure what is.

That Quentin *is* Henry (“Quentin-Henry”) is a generally accepted premise, the italicized section largely focalized *through* Henry indicating that they are one and the same (267). On the one hand, the desire to know that fourteenth “truth” of which Faulkner spoke makes the intermental unit responsible for it a desirable space. On the other hand, it is a terrifying space of unavoidable oneness that makes of all equally passive and active participants a single, black, white, male, female, brother, murderer for whom neither time nor bloodlines offer protection. Quentin’s desire for incest viewed in this light is the desire to make incest possible at all; that is, it is the desire to reify a diminishing difference between his telepathic sexual encounter with Caddy and every

⁷⁵ From the original *Absalom, Absalom!* MS at the Harry Ransom Center archive.

⁷⁶ “It is by interpreting episodes of consciousness within a context of dispositions,” writes Palmer, “that the reader builds up a convincing and coherent sense of character” (28). They are mental states that exist over time.

telepathic (read sexual) encounter with non-blood relations. “The tragedy of *The Sound and the Fury*,” writes Minrose Gwin, “is the pervasiveness of an economy which diminishes and destroys the desire to spend one’s self in negotiating the spaces between self and other, the conscious and the unconscious, the male and female” (55). This desire for purely physical incest, then, is the desire to escape that shared mental space in which Maisie thrives. In other words, physical sex is for Quentin the “authentic utterance” I describe in the previous chapter that could force the far more intimate and debilitating effects of telepathic unity to withdraw. To put the puzzle together is to understand the self, but to put the puzzle together is to share a mind where no *individual* self can be. Those who finally reconcile this conundrum will die at their own hands either directly or indirectly—Bon, Clytie, Henry, Rosa, Quentin—both in, and not in, that order.

Like the impressions Maisie at once receives and transmits, the impression in the single mind Shreve and Quentin share leaves the narrator no choice but to make of it the stuff of story rendered as evidence. Despite the uncanny doubling and redoubling of Henry/Bon and Quentin/Shreve that announces Bon’s African American heritage as an “entirely uncorroborated allegation, communicated through a hypothetical conversation, mediated by means of a conjectural multiple narration,” Kreiswirth argues, once Bon is “*said to be*” black, he *is* black, rendering moot the source of his origin (“Uncanny Inheritance” 132, Kreiswirth’s emphasis). To recall, Peterson renders his epistemological description of miscegenation as having conceptually always already happened when black and white bodies are in close proximity to one another in the context of the fiction. In other words, his conception of miscegenation moves ontologically *from* the extradiegetic space of the American South Faulkner represents *into* Yoknapatawpha.

Though Kreiswirth's argument about what Shreve and Quentin do also rests to some degree within the ontological field of Yoknapatawpha, he implicitly takes this argument into the realm of narration itself in terms of what I have called in the previous chapter *inscription*. To fully grasp the manner in which Quentin is both author (like Maisie) and witness (like us) of the crime "Henry" commits, we have to take both of these features—one that lends primacy to the epistemological questions of race and that takes the jump from one ontological plane to the other for granted, and the other shifting the discussion slightly toward the slippage between those planes—into consideration.

This requirement on our part then helps us to understand in fine why Brian McHale points to *Absalom, Absalom!* as an "isolated" example of Faulkner lending primacy to ontological over epistemological questions (11). On the one hand, I'm not sure that's really what happens here, because it would be impossible to separate the epistemological sources of racial problematics from the crime Shreve and Quentin author in an ontologically unstable realm (as McHale himself argues generally, though not in relation to race and *Absalom*). On the other hand, understood as a deconstructing technique along the lines in which Royle employs it in *Telepathy and Literature*, the function of the telepathic here would certainly seem to meet the qualifications of a mode to which the questions "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" most poignantly apply.⁷⁷ But what's most important for Quentin is how this kind of authorship affects causality in his world—singular. For to Quentin, the worlds of Henry, Quentin's own childhood, Quentin's present, and even Quentin's and

⁷⁷ This is part of an epigraph to *Postmodernist Fiction* that McHale draws from Dick Higgins's *A Dialectic of Centuries* (1978).

Henry's future are *one* as an effect of telepathic transmissions, and this oneness of worlds is the essence of his authorial problem.

By the nature of narrative as we understand it, in the context of miscegenation as Faulkner understood it, Bon is black less by the hand of a narrator who loses his agency into their italicized sections, than by the two Harvard boys who inscribe Bon with blackness in an embedded narrative that *Absalom, Absalom!* literally and metaphorically *forces* us to read as a product of “telepathy with which as children [Henry and Judith] seemed to anticipate one another’s action as two birds leave a limb at the same instant” (AA 79). (And, incidentally, the “telepathy with which” *this* brother and sister communicate turns out to describe that of their doubles, Caddy and Quentin, whose telepathic communication was only dramatized in *Sound*.) These inscriptions might be the ones that penetrate Quentin/Shreve/Bon/Henry’s mind only to disappear as Quentin imagines the disappearance of Bon’s script, but they are for us also the inscriptions like those Judith has etched into the tombstone: the product of shadows, but the evidence of life and fact and truth “with which even the most sedate philosopher must reckon” (“Preface” WK 11). Taken as evidence, the inscriptions for which Quentin is responsible do not register as contingent: Faulkner constructs a scenario in which Quentin is two, separate actors at once: he *embodies* the author of the narrative over and over again, rather than simply recalling and decoding it, even as he stands apart from that narrative and passes judgment. In other words, the “two Quentins” we encounter in the opening pages in the context of Rosa’s narration are dramatized in the closing chapters in the context of *his own* narration with much more at stake. That Quentin stands apart from his

own authorship (like his author) and witnesses his own complicity in the crime is his undoing.

Most important, as a mentally authored inscription on the text, Quentin and Shreve's shared impression becomes the evidence we are expected to judge. The "invisible third person" Ashbery describes is the witness with whom I replace Irwin's "third step." Both of these third conceptual entities belong to the realm of the telepathic—the third entity that was the witnessing reader in *Maisie* now hovering somewhere within the shared space of the reader and the character witnesses who are in this case witnesses to their own intradiegetic mimetic acts and their own extradiegetic narrating acts, both of which finally amount to the same thing. The child-Quentin cannot be separated from the retrospective narrator he now is by virtue of the telepathic doubling established between him and the "innocent" Benjy, whose position of primacy in *Sound* nullifies conscious distinctions between the child and the adult. In other words, the child Quentin *was* is the child Quentin *is* (Faulkner consistently reminds us of the impossibility of "was"), and this child is actor, witness, judge, and executioner whose recognition of the purely mental causality involved in his actions (i.e., *Absalom's* naming of the telepathic) can't save him from the self-written sentence(s) that he is already, in *Absalom*, "too late" to pardon.

Quentin *thinking* Henry's act of fratricide in a single intermental unit with Shreve makes it so: thoughts become plot much as *Maisie's* image of her "fellow mariner" allows her to "sit close and wait" for their launch into the future. What Quentin thinks/writes/*commits* is a racist fratricide to which he and Shreve are witnesses, and whose justice Quentin is forced to execute. The crucial difference between what happens here and what happens in late-James is that Quentin is thinking another's act in what

should be a different time and place. Henry should properly not collide with this young author—“older at twenty than a lot of people who have died”—of his narrative, having come both after him extradiegetically (*Sound*) and before him intradiegetically (*Absalom*). But unlike Maisie’s vision, which seals her fate with characters mimetically located in her spatiotemporal plane and whose telepathic impressions are witnessed (by us) in some murky region on the limit of that plane, Quentin’s vision seals his fate to a double that forces Quentin *himself* to cross into that murky region. *Absalom* practically commands us to take his situation literally: by virtue of the time-travel telepathy makes possible, Quentin *is* Henry, rendering their physical encounter as redundant and ineffectual as his suicide in *Sound*:

And you are—?

Henry Sutpen.

And you have been here—?

Four years.

And you came home—?

To die. Yes.

To die?

Yes. To die.

And you have been here—? . . .

To present their conversation in italics is to demonstrate that the mode of transmission no longer matters. Whether this conversation was uttered or communicated “without the words” is irrelevant because the two have so thoroughly been established as one. And to execute his own just punishment for the fratricide of which Quentin is thus guilty, which

represents the general paradox of desire (for the agrarian South he loves and the sister who ought to embody it) and guilt (for the means by which it came to be) that he and his father have inherited, he kills *himself*. This is why I write above that Quentin discovers “too late” that what he perceives to be Rosa’s clairvoyance turns out to be his own. By the time he discovers it, he’s already sealed Henry’s and Bon’s fate, which is his. But I don’t have to stop this time and ask you to believe in time-travel: telepathy *is* time-travel.

~

As I wrap up this paragraph, I recall with considerable frustration that I have cut, an hour or so back, a crucial passage in order to paste it into a new location. I failed to paste it. For the first time, I “Enter” Apple’s “Time Machine” in order to reverse the effects of my error. On my journey through the digital wormhole, I retrieve the original version of “Controlling Quentin” from yesterday and choose to “keep both” versions, thus allowing me to retrieve the quotation from the original version and paste it into the new one. Apple placed yesterday’s version into my documents below the newest one from today. The original version from yesterday is still called “Controlling Quentin.” The new version from today has acquired a deictic modifier: it’s called “Controlling Quentin (original).”

~

Most importantly, that fifth narrator of *Absalom* that few discuss has less control over the narrative than Quentin has, telepathically though his design might be communicated to him by other narrators. Quentin is responsible for the destruction he imagines, embodying it like his author, its shame at once an inherited emotion over which he has no control and a product of his own invention. Quentin kills off his double in *Absalom*—i.e., the primary narrator he both becomes and already was in *Sound*—because he *recognizes* the narratorial status of that projection: he recognizes, unlike Maisie’s narrator, that by witnessing the evidentiary aspects of telepathically arranged “jigsaw puzzle” story

“integers,” he has inscribed his text with what he loathes. Mr. Compson ““didn’t know . . . all of it,”” Quentin tells Shreve (214). ““Then who did tell him?”

“I did.”

That *Absalom* was completed seven years after *The Sound and the Fury* is paramount to understanding how Faulkner conceived of the Bergsonian futurity of the past: “Again. Saddest of all. Again.”⁷⁸ “[T]he prologue to the suttee” Shreve sees in Quentin’s attire in *The Sound and the Fury* foretells intertextually the fire in which Quentin, as Henry’s double, will burn alive in *Absalom, Absalom!* Does Quentin know that his author will give us a glimpse of him and his roommate, conjuring the backlooking ghosts that won’t ever be “was”? The communications Quentin receives overflow, and his mind is sealed: “The entrance was empty [. . .] just the stairs curving up into the shadows echoes of feet in the sad generations like light dust upon the shadows, my feet waking them like dust, lightly to settle again” (SF 171). The “originary sources” of these confused, oppressive messages are manifestly unknowable, and he decides to return them to nothing, to remove them from the network by drowning one of their most overloaded sites of exchange (“Telepathy” 38). As stories told and untold become clearer in their minds, characters like Quentin or Charles Milligan in *Intruder* begin to understand themselves as the creators of the horrors they perceive.

Controlling Faulkner

*Home again, his native land; he was born of it and his bones will
sleep in it; loving it even while hating some of it;*

⁷⁸ That Bergson was a major influence on Faulkner is well documented, but that Bergson was president of the Society for Psychical Research and thus that his thinking about the experience of time would have been influenced by ideas about telepathy and clairvoyance is not considered in Faulkner scholarship.

*the river jungle and the bordering hills where still a child he had ridden
behind his father on the horse . . .*

–William Faulkner
“Mississippi”

Intruder in the Dust finally brings the telepathic feedback loop around full-circle, to offer freedom and some sort of justice to a white boy and a black man by forcing Alan Palmer’s shared mind of the South represented in Yoknapatawpha into that state of reckoning Henry James confines to the preface of *What Maisie Knew*. *Intruder* has often been criticized for its long-winded call to that reckoning, but I would argue that it is merely a dramatization in fiction of what Henry James explicitly expressed extrafictionally in his preface to *Maisie* quoted above: “The only thing to say of such lucidities is that . . . one is disappointed if the hour for them, in the particular connexion, doesn’t strike—they so keep before us elements with which even the most sedate philosopher must always reckon” (11). The crime in *Intruder in the Dust* is solved as a result of the characters’ unsought and undesired access to one another’s thoughts. Telepathy catalyzes a series of events that shape the narrative and lead to the exoneration of Beauchamp in the discourse of the novel, rather than in the fictional court of law. With “no sound” or gesture, Chick “saw, heard Lucas saying something to him” (64, 67). In that soundless communication is the key to solving the crime, which remains yet unclear largely due to Chick’s ideological reluctance to accept Beauchamp’s innocence. Importantly, the narrator’s knowledge of the crime is bound up with and limited by Chick’s reluctant cognitive progress. Fortunately, Chick’s hesitation telepathically induces Miss Habersham to visit Gavin’s home and encourage Chick to solve the crime with her (74-87). As Chick reflects upon his situation, his thinking is interrupted by that

of Gavin Stevens, “whereupon once more his uncle spoke at complete one with him and again without surprise he saw his thinking not be interrupted but merely swap one saddle for another” (150).⁷⁹ The detective and discovery plots of this generically hybrid novel then dovetail at the instant Chick’s ideological veil goes “flick!” enabling him to solve the crime of which he and the rest of the white townspeople are guilty.⁸⁰ Despite his theoretical attempts to distance himself, Gavin is part of this epiphany, and he is forced to reckon with the racism, guilt, and denial he has bequeathed to Chick. The crime of fratricide thus solved in *Intruder* is not only that of one Gowrie brother against another, but also figuratively that of white Southerners against their black brothers.⁸¹ Chick’s epiphany unites his consciousness at once with Gavin’s, Beauchamp’s, and the intermental lynch mob’s, forcing him to acknowledge the larger ideological crimes of which he has been a part. I read this reckoning as a sign of hope for those utopian possibilities telepathy imagines: Chick comes to acknowledge the evidence delivered to his mind *even as he acknowledges its source in telepathy*. What couldn’t save Darl or Quentin, in other words, saves Chick. That Peter Rabinowitz observes in *Intruder* “all the characteristics of a retrospective first person narrative” is consistent with the manner in which Chick *knows*, as though participating in an act of reflection, the deeper relevance of the events he witnesses (“Licked his Lips” 166-7). In this reading, Chick’s narration might start to resemble the melancholy narration of “A Justice” in a voice that once

⁷⁹ Writers, theorists, and psychologists have discussed the telepathic quality of mobs since the early nineteenth century.

⁸⁰ My reading here is deeply indebted to that of Peter Rabinowitz in “The Click of the Spring.”

⁸¹ See Peter Wilson Jordan who claims that the crime “really amounts to fratricide. White against black is really brother against brother” (Peter W. Jordan. *Faulkner’s Crime Fiction: His Use of the Detective Story and the Thriller* p. 188 [quoted in “Click” 368]).

belonged to the Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, or even the angry one that once belonged to Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying*. Either way, a good way to rewrite secreted histories might be postmortem, or, telepathically.

The secreted histories Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha attempts to conceal seize Quentin's mind with an impersonal aggression that occupies mental territory with little or no warning, revealing a South that significantly contributes to its own marginalization. This was the experience of Southern personhood Faulkner needed to communicate, and Quentin was the child of his mind whose receptiveness to those stories emulated his own. But Chick is there, too, in the novel that seems to posit Faulkner's own reckoning with what he "hates." Faulkner characterized himself as one burdened by unwanted knowledge of a past that "is . . . not even past" and he was deeply, perhaps pathologically, moved by the telepathic means through which truth would "out," unuttered and ineffable. Faulkner's special brand of free indirect discourse, as I call it above, was packaged in "Mississippi" in what seems to fall somewhere between fictional autobiography and autobiographical fiction, as Faulkner makes of himself both author and witness of the narratives he wrote, including that of the life of William Falkner, born September 25, 1897.

Telepathic acts in Faulkner invite—indeed demand—a readerly commitment to "somehow" recovering untold histories that are fundamentally and perpetually fragmented and ineffable. Like Quentin, we flutter in the miasma of obscurely framed thoughts and like Darl, grope in a sea of consciousnesses, intertextual and relentlessly relative, feeling, with any luck, the oppressive sense of unwanted knowledge that their author absorbed in "a darker childhood he longed to outgrow," to appropriate Hilary

Schor's description of Florence. What we must take away from Faulkner's representation of the child as telepath is this: when the child perceives thoughts from other minds, she registers those perceptions as *receptions*: she does not have the experience or wherewithal to say to herself, "Oh, that's just my perception of what he's thinking. It's a projection: it's empathy. It's probably not as bad as all that." For children like Quentin and his real-world correlatives (read "Faulkner"), thoughts perceived from the space of another mind register for the child as fact, as evidence. The more the adults around those children attempt to conceal or deny those thoughts—attempting to hide them *in* the child—their telepathic force gathers strength, and with that strength grows the force of the blow to the child's head. Allowing ourselves, the children's fellow witnesses, to perceive the effects and outright naming of telepathy in Faulkner gets our minds in shape to take that blow and recognize it empathically for what it is. According to Lillian Smith in *The Killers of the Dream*, it looks something like this:

Even its children know that the South is in trouble. No one has to tell them aloud. To them, it is the vague thing weaving in and out of their play, like a ghost haunting an old graveyard or whispers after the household sleeps . . . But all know that under quiet words and warmth and laughter, under the slow ease and tender concern about small matters, there is a heavy burden on all of us and as heavy a refusal to confess it. The children know this "trouble" is bigger than they, bigger than their family, bigger than their church, so big that people turn away from its size. They have seen it flash out like lightning and shatter a town's peace, have felt it

tear up all they believe in. They have measured its giant strength
and they feel weak when they remember. (25)

REFRAMING FRANKIE

*The whole world was this symphony,
and there was not enough of her to listen.*

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter

If the child figures the site of telepathic transmission, the adolescent figures the weakening of its signals. For Carson McCullers's adolescents, perhaps most horrifying among the fears an impoverished adulthood entails is their sense that the fertility of telepathic transmission Faulkner's novels effect has dried up, withered away with the end of a so-called childhood that had never really existed in the first place—remembered only, as “Mississippi” remembers the joys of a childhood that “*had not, could not have ever, been*” (AA 113). Presented during the climactic moments of their adolescence, McCullers's Mick Kelly in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and Frankie Addams in *The Member of the Wedding* suffer the diminishment of mental connections that seem to have flourished in their childhoods. Consumed by the desire to project idealized images of themselves, the adult characters in these novels are generally blind to other minds, exhibiting the kind of mindblindness Lisa Zunshine has recently attributed to all persons—regardless of their general mental abilities—who are unable to understand the embodied signals of others (“I Was Wrong”). In Faulkner, the fierce compulsion to conceal the contents of one's mind lends strength to the power of secreted knowledge revealed by way of vigilante telepathic impressions; in McCullers, by contrast, an intense desire to “be attended” and “be known” exceeds the will to know others, ironically imprisoning knowledge in the minds it exclusively tortures (LH 195; MW 514). As

Frankie Addams comes to recognize the isolation her desire to be known foments, so Mick Kelly finds in her young-adult mind a resistant awareness of Lillian Smith's "refusal" that closed the previous chapter. The "giant strength" of their adult denial places a "heavy burden" on Mick and Frankie, and in the instant of its inception, that denial is relegated to the arena of "remember[ing]" that Rosa Coldfield so thoroughly discounts in *Absalom* (Smith 25).

"Human beings," writes McCullers, "are innately cooperative, but an unnatural social tradition makes them behave in ways that are not in accord with their deepest nature" (IN 163).⁸² This "social tradition" engenders among children distortions that manifest outwardly in what Patricia Yaeger calls "bizarre somatic images," which appear in Mick and Frankie as excessive height, and inwardly as an attenuation of mental intercourse with others (120-1).⁸³ McCullers's desolate landscape is thus populated by unread and unreadable minds whose apparent freakishness stems largely from the obfuscation adolescence reifies. Crucially, however, signals do transmit from time to time, and language is rarely part of those transmissions: moments of transcendence in McCullers whose "intensity [is] too powerful for words" render music as a communication medium of near-telepathic intimacy (Whitt 119). In *Heart*, music ultimately fails in the context of the novel to provide Mick with a means of escape from the adult world of mental and physical impoverishment, but Mick nevertheless represents promise made possible formally by way of the novel, which will always contain both the childlike Mick and the young woman into whom she is rapidly, uncomfortably growing.

⁸² The Rousseauian quality of this perspective harks back to the shifting, nineteenth-century concept of childhood Shuttleworth illustrates.

⁸³ McCullers, too, was quite tall: both Mick and Frankie bear clearly resemblances to their author.

Indeed, the period of life into which *What Maisie Knew* launches its eponymous heroine, adolescence represents the space of artistic potential: the adolescent figure has discursive access to whatever “childhood” the novel affords and to the terms of adulthood that endow her with the linguistic frame, the “vocabulary,” of artistry itself. Though the vague memory of diminished mental connections needles McCullers’s adult minds, the texts’ emphases on adolescence reveal their author’s commitment to the potential of art—and especially of the literary—to recuperate that loss.

Unreading Singer

At the center of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* is a deaf-mute named John Singer toward whom four other primary characters gravitate: thirteen-year-old tomboy Mick Kelly, transient revolutionary Jake Blount, Marxist African-American doctor Benedict Mady Copeland, and café owner Biff Brannon. Organized as a fugue,⁸⁴ the novel opens with a short, introductory section that presents the relationship between Singer and his live-in companion, Spiros Antonapoulos, who is also deaf and mute. Following Antonapoulos’s removal to a mental institution, Singer moves into the Kelly boarding house as the novel unfolds into the largest second section that develops the four “satellite” characters in orbit around Singer.⁸⁵ A telepathic narrator focalizes the chapters in this section variously through Mick, Jake, Doctor Copeland, Singer, and finally Biff,

⁸⁴ McCullers referred to the organization as such in her outline to “The Mute” on which she based *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (*Illumination* 183, *Understanding* 18). McCullers’s artistic career began with music (like James Joyce, she aspired to be a musician), and she was somewhat of a savant along the lines of Mozart, whose name Mick Kelly will attempt to inscribe on a wall with the letters “MOTSART” (38).

⁸⁵ McCullers describes the four main characters apart from Singer as being in “orbit” around him; thus, critics have referred, as I will, to these other characters as the “satellites” (see, for instance, Virginia Spencer Carr [*Understanding* 29], Oliver Evans [191], and Joseph Millichap [14]). Moreover, as Millichap points out, as Singer orbits Antonapoulos, even Singer’s satellites have satellites of their own orbiting them.

who observes the other characters with calculated distance. Apart from the retiring Biff, the satellites speak relentlessly to Singer, reading a deep understanding into his expression though he

never smiled until several seconds after the funny remark had been made; then when the talk was gloomy again the smile still hung on his face a little too long. The fellow was downright uncanny. People felt themselves watching him even before they knew that there was anything different about him. *His eyes made a person think* that he heard things nobody else had ever heard, that he knew things no one had ever guessed before. He did not seem quite human.

(24-5, my emphasis)

Vital here is the external description of Singer: limited to Biff's perception, the narrator can only describe possible things this "not . . . quite human" person "knew [that] no one had ever guessed before." Thoughts only "seem" to be in the mute's mind; they are only what he "made a person think," suggesting that Biff registers the limits of his perception. Despite the other characters' certainty that Singer understands them (and their tacit belief that he cares about them), Singer kills himself shortly following Antonapoulos's death with no apparent concern for how his death will affect them. Following Singer's suicide, the novel closes with a brief third section of four parts, entitled "Morning," "Afternoon," "Evening," and "Night," which treat each of the satellites' reactions to Singer's loss. The *stretto* that settles the score, Singer's suicide sends the satellites spiraling into a coda of

isolation and emptiness.⁸⁶ Though the final throws of isolation are launched by Singer's suicide, displacement threatens each of the satellites throughout the novel, metaphorically representing the threat of displacement from childhood that poverty and adolescence impel.⁸⁷

Indeed, the threat of displacement is palpable in the novel, reflecting the threat that plagues most Depression-era Southerners, and pointing up the historical status of the South as America's displaced Other.⁸⁸ Blount has been displaced from many homes in many towns as he tries to spread "the truth . . . The bastards who own these mills are millionaires, while the doffers and carders and all the people . . . who spin and weave the cloth can't hardly make enough to keep their guts quiet" (65-6). Biff's wife is ailing and dies fairly early in the novel. As the spouse who manages the finances, she takes with her not only the possibility of intimacy and a sense of home, but also what little financial stability the café retains. Stubborn, aggressive behavior has alienated Benedict Mady Copeland from his family, and now poverty threatens to take his home and tuberculosis his life. Finally, Mick's father has lost his job and is working out of the home, but it's not

⁸⁶ For closer readings of the novel and music, see Carr's *Understanding Carson McCullers*, Barbara Farrelly's "The Heart is a Lonely Hunter: A Literary Symphony," and Barbara Nauer Folk's "The Sad Sweet Music of Carson McCullers" (204-5).

⁸⁷ The role poverty plays in instigating this loss harks back to Dickens's experience and representations of child labor: the commencement of employment is the foreclosure of childhood.

⁸⁸ As Allen Tate put it in his Introduction to *Sanctuary*, the South was "Uncle Sam's Other Province," an epithet meant to articulate what the other eleven Southerners who contributed to *I'll Take My Stand* also viewed as the South's position within the context of the United States and the world. In this social and political manifesto, the authors—the so-called Agrarians, a group closely linked to the Fugitives—decried the encroachment of Northern industrialism, which they believed was threatening to destroy the remnants of agrarian culture that were worth preserving. The Agrarians maintained that the Southern farmer's connection to his land and kin was superior to the Northern industrialist's commitment to capitalism at the expense of humanity. While the virtues of the South did not pass unnoted, many Southern writers characterized their region in terms of failure and marginalization, contrasting it with, and maintaining its distinctiveness from, other regions of the country. In *The Mind of the South*, W.J. Cash also articulates the otherness of the South but with more obvious lyrical skepticism that emphasizes the similarities between the so-called "Old South" and the South he inhabited.

enough and the bank is threatening to foreclose, forcing the horribly indebted Kelly family to take boarders. What this means for Mick is that her “childhood” and the dreams to which it clings are at stake: should the family be unable to make ends meet, she’ll have to quit school and go to work, which she eventually does . . . at Woolworth’s. By the end of the novel, all that was threatened is gone, save Copeland’s life and, so far, the café.

Most important, Singer’s presence in the Kelly home signifies displacement even as it provides the means for its deferral, and for Mick, this is true both physically and mentally. Physically, Singer’s occupancy in an already overcrowded home reminds its inhabitants of their tenuous residence, even as his rent holds foreclosure at bay. Mentally, Mick understands her connection to “Mister Singer” in terms of what she refers to as her “inside” and “outside” rooms:

She went into the inside room. With her it was like there was two places—the inside room and the outside room. School and the family and the things that happened every day were in the outside room. *Mister Singer was in both rooms.* Foreign countries and plans and music were in the inside room. The songs she thought about were there. And the symphony. When she was by herself in this inside room the music she had heard that night after the party *would come back to her.* This symphony grew slow like a big flower in her mind. During the day sometimes, or when she had just waked up in the morning, a new part of the symphony *would suddenly come to her.* Then she would have to go into the

inside room and listen to it many times and try to *join it into the parts of the symphony she remembered*. The inside room was a very private place. She could be in the middle of a house full of people and still feel like she was locked up by herself. (163, my emphasis)

Exclusively hospitable to Mick and Mister Singer, the “inside room” is the space of creation, fantasy, telepathy. She accesses her tenuous connection to childhood wonder through music both heard and not heard, which she unites mentally with the Singer who neither sings nor signs.⁸⁹ “Locked up by herself” Mick is still somehow with the mute, rendering Singer (the singer, song, music) as precisely *herself*—a self within to whom she has access only when that self rises to consciousness.

With Mick’s musings in mind, we might conceive the recuperation of music to conscious thought along telepathic lines that carry the contents of the unconscious from the inside room to the outside room, recalling Henry James’s formulation of that spark of artistic invention that lies buried in the “deep well of unconscious cerebration” until somehow it emerges, glittering with potential signification for the inhabitants of the “outside room” (AN 22-3; LH 163). A note, a phrase, travels wirelessly from some distant unknown radio Mick hears, communicated along the telepathic networks Rudyard Kipling traces in “Wireless,” and lodges itself into a particular part of her brain.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Early in the novel we learn that Singer has decided to stop signing, and we frequently find “his hands in his pockets” emphasizing that refusal (14, 32, 77, 144, 159).

⁹⁰ In *Haunted Media*, Jeffrey Sconce observes the important shift from radio as a means of communication to the electronic “presence” that resulted from network broadcasting (93). What was once an “unseen and fleeting order of consciousness lost in the ether” became a familiar “living” voice “[d]omesticated through the broadcast schedule and thus no longer and “elusive and uncanny presence” that “saturated the entire atmosphere” (93). In *Heart*, however, class bears on how these radio signals are received. Mick has left the overcrowded Kelly home, as she often does. She accesses this Beethoven composition not in the

Without warning, those musical bodies later—sometimes much later—transgress the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious with a welcome union Mick hopes to exploit, recalling the kind of communication Donna Haraway imagines in *When Species Meet* (2007). For Haraway, the many organic “others” that live within me, sometimes to “my” advantage and sometimes to “my” disadvantage, are as alien to me as any body in what Mick would call the “outside” room. My relationship to these others within looks almost telepathic in nature: they tell my body, my cells, and even my mind to behave in particular ways, often against my will. Such “foreign bodies,” to appropriate Derrida’s term for telepathically invasive thoughts, inhabit me like Helena Landless inhabits Neville, and communicate with me *from within*.⁹¹ This strange communication from within—unsettling, threatening, life-sustaining—Mick begins to articulate in and through Singer. On the one hand, therefore, Singer’s move into her physical home, is the analogue to his move into her mental space that threatens her displacement from the conceptual childhood to which she clings. On the other hand, given Singer’s unity with the musical Mick, the deferred foreclosure Singer’s boarding money offers the Kelly family winds up finding *its* analogue in the deferral from childhood foreclosure the silent Singer affords. If Mick desires Singer’s presence in the inside room, the musical contents of which can be communicated to her conscious mind with or without her influence, then Mick’s characterization of Singer as an inhabitant there represents a *desire for* the foreign

comfort of a lovely drawing room, but out roaming the streets where she can find some room to appreciate what she hears. Far from domesticated, the wireless signal is received in nature, outside, and yet inside. The omnipresence of radio waves is thus still accessible to Mick here, and the unseen consciousness it accesses is at once Mick’s and Singer’s.

⁹¹ If this formulation seems to render the space of childhood fantasy as the space of adult repression, we oughtn’t be surprised, for the childhood mind certainly seems to erupt from the unconscious like a foreign body lurking within. Such eruptions can deform the receiver’s perception of the actual world in welcome or horrifying ways.

invasions of telepathic communication that Quentin can't evade. What was an obstacle to omniscience in *Dombey*, a narrative means of knowing in *Maisie*, and a metaphor for miscegenation and other invasions in *Absalom* is the object of desire in *Heart*, and at the heart of that desire is a desire to know oneself in and through the other—the very desire that underlies the production and reception of fiction.

Importantly, moreover, a character's desperation to be known—to share space in the “inside room” with another character—increases in relation to that character's mental and chronological distance from the “plans and music” of childhood fantasy. The novel registers that interval largely through the relative distance between ineffable knowledge and explicit language. Having appeared one morning at Biff Brannon's café and writing down what he wants for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day, Singer never communicates another word to anyone in the town. The satellites, therefore, know where Singer eats, sleeps, and rests, and they can usually guess where he'll be when he's not eating, sleeping, or resting. Almost always in one of two places, Singer seems to offer a sense of unity precisely because he is both silent and present. So, “They talked, and the mute's expression changed as he watched them. It was a funny thing” (134). Indeed, for the majority of the novel, Mick, Blount, and—when he has the opportunity—Copeland speak to Singer with a profound, irrational confidence in his ability to understand them. Mick, for instance, shares her dreams of traveling to foreign countries and composing symphonies, her childlike imagination construing their connection in secret terms: “For some reason it was like they had a secret together. . . . He was the only person in the inside room” (241). Copeland describes the plight of his people and the alienation he suffers as the only man who seems to understand the nature of that plight: “Truly [Singer]

was not like other white men,” Copeland thinks, “He was a wise man, and he understood the strong, true purpose” (135). And Blount describes the origins and trajectory of his ideologies, even speaking when Singer, who reads lips, has his back turned to him. So emphatically does Blount desire shared consciousness with Singer that he claims that their communications no longer require utterances at all: ““For two days now I been talking to you in my mind because I know you understand the things I want to mean”” (23).

Early in the novel, our assumptions about Singer are somewhat aligned with those of the satellites (albeit with far more skepticism and far less zeal) due to rational conclusions the mute’s nonverbal communications foster. For example, we have been privy to the affection Singer shows Antonapoulos before his companion’s committal, and our judgments are therefore informed by a plausible inference of their mental union: “The thin mute, John Singer, nearly always put his hand on his friend’s arm and looked for a second into his face before leaving him” (3). Additionally, his characterization as a figure for alterity—who importantly functions outside of the conventional world of uttered speech—encourages a readerly assumption of Singer’s mental connection to other Others. As we progress through the novel, however, we start to sense that there is “something wrong,” as Biff Brannon thinks (134). Veiled beneath expressions both familiar and distant, Singer’s inscrutable face broadcasts a compassionate interiority that seems to be, but isn’t quite, there. In a letter Singer writes to Antonapoulos late in the novel, we are finally confronted with what could hardly be called telepathic understanding:

The one with the mustache [Blount] I think is crazy.

Sometimes he speaks his words very clear like my teacher

long ago at the school. Other times he speaks such a language that I cannot follow. Sometimes . . . he will be black with dirt and smelling bad and in the overalls he wears to work. He will shake his fist and say ugly drunken words that I would not wish you to know about. He thinks he and I have a secret together but I do not know what it is. (215)

Exposing Blount as a failed secret agent, the letter also disabuses us of Mick's misreading: "She knows I am deaf but she thinks I know about music" (215). Because the child figure as I read it is often portrayed as insightful, sensitive, or telepathic, we are especially unnerved to read that she apparently has been no closer to reading his mind than anyone else. Her "inside room" home to no Other, she remains entirely, restlessly, frantically alone (LH 163). For Blount, Singer's "eyes seemed to understand all that he had meant to say and to hold some message for him" (69). With this letter in view, however, it appears that the special understanding Singer's eyes express in the eyes of his beholders has little to do with his mind. Singer's unreadability to *us* before we read his letters produces the kind of obscurity Lisa Zunshine discusses in *Why We Read Fiction*. We fellow witnesses, to appropriate James, are thus initially subject to the same misinterpretation of Singer's actions as the characters, and our apparent disillusionment (once we read the letter) produces the dramatic irony of the fiction.

As Zunshine more recently puts it in *Getting Inside Your Head*, "The more we look for the 'true' mind in the body, the less we can hope to find" (19). Having misread perhaps curiosity, or boredom, or avoidance, or resignation as telepathic knowing, the satellites imagine a connection that is absent, underscoring the difference between

Maisie's influential knowing freed from the limitations of language, and the failure of adult "vocabulary" to signify meaningfully. Essentially a register of body language, the mindreading on which these characters lamentably rely is called "Theory of Mind" (ToM), used in the cognitive sciences to denote that feature of human communication by which we have sustained life for centuries.⁹² "Theory of mind," Zunshine observes, "is a term used interchangeably with mind-reading, to describe our evolved cognitive capacity to explain observable behavior as caused by unobservable mental states" ("I Was Wrong" 1). The satellites in *Heart* are exceptionally bad at this kind of mindreading due in no small part to their obsession with being understood at the cost of understanding. But the satellites' egocentrism can't be blamed entirely for their misjudgments: what incites misinterpretation of Singer is his profound inscrutability, his unreadable mind the backdrop against which all other minds are to be understood in the novel.

Singer's "buried life with Antonapoulos" replicates those of the satellites with Singer: the satellites have little interest in extracting from the mute any insight into his inner life, though they know that he reads lips, writes, and could enlighten them. Likewise, Singer writes to Antonapoulos: "I am not meant to be alone and without you who understand" though we have learned early in the novel that "Singer never knew just how much his friend understood of all the things he told him" (217, 5). In his memories of Antonapoulos, Singer's companion "*seemed* pleased" much as Singer "*seemed*" to understand the satellites and "*seemed* to take in everything around him" (201, 200, my emphasis). Finally, as Singer appears wise to the satellites, so Antonapoulos appears to Singer:

⁹² Our mindreading abilities, as ToM researchers have shown, enable us to function in society by helping us to understand, anticipate, and respond to others' actions and expressions.

He saw Antonapoulos sitting in a large chair before him. He sat tranquil and unmoving. His mad face was inscrutable. His mouth was wise and smiling. And his eyes were profound. He watched the things that were said to him. *And in his wisdom he understood.*

This was *the* Antonapoulos who now was always in his thoughts. (204, my emphasis)

“But the long letters he wrote to Antonapoulos,” we learn, “accumulated in his pockets until he would destroy them” (212).⁹³ In fact, Antonapoulos can’t read, doesn’t understand sign language, and doesn’t appear to be interested in anything besides the sensory pleasures Singer offers, the most pleasing of which are sweets. Singer is compelled to write his companion, but not, evidently, in the interest of developing an understanding between them. After destroying the letters he has never sent to an ostensible addressee who couldn’t have read them if he had wanted to, Singer travels along the countryside by train, visions of Antonapoulos occupying the majority of his mental territory “until at last the night had come, and his own face was reflected in the glass before him” (322): his mute utterance (writing) of the mental connection between himself and his loved one ultimately reveals itself as a projection.

Moreover, though Singer writes his thoughts out in letters, the trace is appropriately destroyed by the unreadably-minded man who produced it. Singer’s

⁹³ Discussing Singer’s unsent letters to Antonapoulos, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that this structure might point to the silenced other “in those canonical and publicized exchanges” such as invocations to the muse, epistles, and sonnet sequences, who have always been “mute, muted, distanced, displaced, imprisoned, mysterious, uncommunicative, and so unlike her ‘self’ that she might as well be mad” (“Three” 134).

unreadability will thus perpetually persist with respect to the other characters, allowing them to read what they wish while enabling us to read their—the satellites’—minds better. As McCullers puts it, he is “[t]he symbol of isolation and thwarted expression,” but what is thwarted in Singer is compulsively wrought from his would-be interlocutors (IN 165). Indeed, even the linguistic evidence of understanding to which the letters ought to bear witness is thoroughly established by the novel as alien to thought, and perhaps even to the thinking self—Singer’s proper name always an ironic reminder of his failure to sign, sing, or *mean* in his furious communications at Antonapoulos. Thus, while Singer’s inner life “changed and developed as did the happenings around him,” Antonapoulos’s inner life never figures in those happenings, the later description of the “you who understand” underscoring the failure of understanding between *any* characters in the novel (200-1).

The narrator’s limited access to Singer’s mind, moreover, powerfully underscores the mute’s unreadability. Strangely excluded from Singer’s thoughts even in chapters that follow his perceptions and movements, the narrator’s rhetoric betrays a lack of insight parallel to that of the satellites: “His gray eyes seemed to take in everything around him, and in his face there was still the look of peace that is seen most often in those who are very wise or very sorrowful” (200). The passive voice is key here, emulating the passivity not only of the object of inquiry (Singer), but also of that narrative voice whose objectivity is compromised by the infectious desire to see reflected in Singer’s gray eyes that which originates within the observer. These “gray eyes” are as tricky as Miss Overmore’s, which, as I write in chapter 2, seem to convey thoughts with “the unmistakable language of a pair of eyes of deep dark grey” (WK 24). The irony in *Maisie*

is that the eyes convey nothing while the mind conveys all; the irony in *Heart* is that the eyes convey nothing, and *that nothing is all*—nothing meaningful to the satellites is behind them. Moreover, Singer has stopped signing: hands in his pockets, he is unwilling to communicate with anyone save blank sheets of paper with no ontologically equivalent addressee.

In his silence, therefore, Singer signs exclusively to the occupant of what Mick calls the “inside room,” and it looks like the only ones in there with him are we. Given that Antonapoulos couldn’t have read the letters if he had wanted to, it is perhaps Singer’s awareness of their alienation from each other that incites his ceremonious performance of their destruction. Singer’s writing thus represents the obverse of Quentin and Shreve’s performative act, which is rendered in *Absalom* in almost precisely the sense in which J.L. Austin conceived of it.⁹⁴ In *Absalom*, the “child’s” authority (to think a thing is to make it so) always precedes the speech act inasmuch as it is the dialectical thinking (telepathy) that produces the thought object Quentin/Shreve utters. The utterance, then, of Bon’s blackness and Henry’s fratricide *makes them so* in the fiction; in contrast, Singer’s writing act, the value of which is always already undercut by the failed speech acts of the satellites whom Singer ultimately mirrors *makes it fail*, and the spell is broken. His speech acts, including language such as “I do not know” and “I think,” fail to make of these announcements a readable mind that “thinks” or “knows” or “does not know.” The Mute stays mute. As Sedgwick observes in her discussion of the value James places on

⁹⁴ Sedgwick’s concept of “performativity” is useful here. In *Touching Feeling*, Sedgwick describes a performativity that moves beyond the precise and bounded limitations of the speech act as J.L. Austin conceived of it, and emphasizes instead its absorptive and theatrical qualities. Apparently oppositional, these qualities of performativity examined through the lens of the internal and external aspects of shame prove mutually influential; indeed, mutually existential (35-91). The effects of Singer’s writing act point to its performativity.

the “truth” of a speech act, a “speech act may be performatively efficacious only to the degree of (which is to say, only *through*) its constative validity” (*Touching* 46). Thus, Singer’s unreadability—likely even to himself—is ironically *readable* (literally) in the letters he writes that may or may not reflect the knowledge that he may or may not have. In this sense, his unreadability at once produces and undercuts that irony by transcending the ontological boundary between the reader and the satellites. In his letters, Singer performs a belief in an understanding he knows to be wanting, the false mental connection with which he inscribes the text, undercutting the possibility of its existence in *our* minds. On the extrafictional plane, therefore, the dramatic irony that seems to produce his readability (the letters) by illuminating his thoughts ultimately clarifies for us the isolated darkness that enshrouds them. And that’s their purpose after all: we are their only addressees—“the magical thinking-writing, . . . the vertighosting that *only happens to you*” (*Veering* 102).

Singer’s inscrutability might therefore best be analyzed in terms of Porter Abbott’s provisional ethics of unreadability. In “Unreadable Minds and the Captive Reader,” Abbott asks us to resist the tendency to turn unreadable minds into symbols of something other than unreadable minds, observing that the unreadable character read as catalyst or symbol is removed from the plane of characters to narrative levels beyond them; i.e., they are no longer understood diegetically. Further, he argues, reading such characters instead as “opaque types” is equally “illegitimate . . . insofar as it forecloses a full response to the narrative” (453). Turning off our mindreading tendencies is tough, but Abbott asks us to accept something like Zunshine’s assertion in *Getting* that our mindreading skills often fail, and to comport ourselves appropriately. A refusal to read

Singer strictly as a symbol would seem to entail a refusal to acknowledge McCullers's own description of the mute as the "symbol of . . . thwarted expression." As Abbott observes, however, such a reading "does not preclude the symbolic, but requires that it not displace *the experience of unreadability*" (463, my emphasis). To ask the devoted literary reader to "experience . . . unreadability" is a tall order given that those of us reading the authors I discuss in this thesis are generally inclined to mindread for the sheer pleasure of the act. Asking someone to embrace "the experience of unreadability," in fact, is about as natural as asking them to embrace "the experience of telepathy." But as unnatural as it might be, *Maisie* asks us to do the latter, and as "unnatural" as it might be, McCullers asks us to do the former (IN 163). In other words, we must learn to relax into a little "mindblindness" from time to time, grateful that this isn't always the way.⁹⁵

Mindblindness, as Abbott notes, can be terrifying, and the reader's dismay at being deluded along with the characters in *Heart* confirms that terror. But in order to understand the mental deformities McCullers's "unnatural social system" produces, we have to experience that disturbance without immediately conforming to convention. The

⁹⁵ The controversial term "mindblindness" is shifty. Historically, neurologists used the term to describe the varying degrees of an inability to read other minds associated with people along the autism spectrum. To appropriate one of Zunshine's examples from *Getting Inside Your Head*, I reach for a glass, and you assume that I am about to pick it up. To extrapolate with the research of Simon Baron-Cohen in mind, you are therefore not surprised when the glass rises from the table, clutched in my hand, and goes toward my mouth. An autism sufferer might have difficulty reading this sign and be alarmed when I take the glass away from the table. Thus, as Baron-Cohen observes, the predictable world of objects is preferable to people who suffer severe autism. Importantly, at the MLA convention in Boston this year (2013), as well as at the conference of the International Society for the Study of Narrative in Manchester, Zunshine argued against using the term mindblindness to describe autism sufferers, encouraging us to look at their poetry and other writings. Indeed, she had pointed out early on in *Why* the importance of acknowledging the range of mindreading abilities among those on the autism spectrum. In her most recent work, she cautions us to recognize that we are all a little mindblind (and *Heart* certainly advances the same caution), and our mindblindness might be especially great when confronted with persons whose physical embodiments of mental states are least familiar to us, including for instance, those persons who suffer from autism. I would like to thank Zunshine for passing along an advance copy of an article soon to be published that addresses these issues.

backdrop of unreadability cast by Singer throws into relief the potentially telepathic mind figured by the so-called child, even as that childish open mind diffuses through adolescence into the sea of unreadability McCullers's adult world signifies. Most important, acquiescing into a little mindblindness makes room for the kind of artistic witnessing that inheres in literary telepathy.

Mindreading Children

*Can you see through them bones in my forehead?
Have you, Frankie Addams, been reading my mind?*

The Member of the Wedding

Against a backdrop of adult unreadability, Frankie Addams and six-year-old John Henry in *The Member of the Wedding*, and Mick Kelly and seven-year-old Bubber in *Heart*, share mental impressions that most closely exhibit the qualities, and produce the discursive effects, of telepathic communication. As the girls move farther from chronological childhood, the signals that connect them to their little loved ones weaken, and they begin to redefine what Frankie refers to as the “we of me.” In other words, if in the small child’s mind, what I think is what *is* (telepathy is real), then for the adolescent Frankie and Mick, what they think might, to their horror, *not be*.⁹⁶ For McCullers, a danger lurks there: the doubt invoked by this possibility leaves characters such as Blount

⁹⁶ Usually naturals at “make believe,” most children are able to distinguish between pretend reality and actual reality even if their emotional responses seem to “take” a little faster. In fact, Suzanne Keen questions: “Whether mature, experienced readers show a similar degree of swift emotional responsiveness to just-introduced characters as children (not yet habituated to the convention of psychological realism) would make an interesting research question” (Kindle locations 1342-45). A different set of cognitive apparatuses is functioning at such times than those to which I’m referring here. The “we of me” is not a stable description for Frankie, but we might conceive of it as the self in the Other and vice versa. The concept of the self *as* the Other (in the sense in which, for instance, Paul Ricoeur articulates it in *Oneself as Another*) is alien to Frankie early in the novel as she clings to a self the Other must accommodate (as opposed to the reverse).

and Copeland in a state of arrested development. They consciously choose—obstinately and without exception—to believe that what they think is so, while the unconscious tortures them with a repressed knowledge that such a perspective is impossible in the adult, socialized world. Any possibility of social change, then, lies primarily in the transition from childhood to adulthood: Mick and Frankie are the loci of hope. Even Copeland recognizes that the developing mind is the site of hope: “‘You always had a great interest in little children,’ said Portia. . . . ‘There is more hope in the young child,’ said Doctor Copeland” (86).⁹⁷

The relationship, therefore, among Mick’s readability, Singer’s relative unreadability, and their disparate perceptions of their relationship to each other are key to understanding the mental spectrum of telepathy to unreadability figured in the transition from childhood to adulthood in the novel. On this spectrum, Mick’s adolescence positions her precariously between the impressive mind of “childhood” and the repressive mind of “adulthood.” On the former end of the spectrum, Mick’s childlike mental connection to her little brother Bubber exhibits the qualities of telepathic transcendence reminiscent of those of Florence and Paul Dombey. Their parents’ poverty (emotional or financial) has conferred upon the girls the roles of their little brothers’ primary sources of affection, and though Mick’s class breeds a love that is tougher, courser (less romantically Dickensian) than Florence’s, it is every bit as strong. Regrettably, moving through the roughly fourteen months of adolescence in *Heart*, Mick’s mental connection to Bubber abates and is finally extinguished, but we find hints of an evolving sympathy to which those

⁹⁷ Importantly, Copeland’s insistence on molding the child toward specific ends undercuts the potential he articulates, and his daughter knows it: “‘A person can’t pick up they children and just squeeze them to which-a-way they wants them to be’” (78). Portraying what it condemns, *Heart* thus reveals in its adults the characteristic denial it aims to expose and ameliorate in its readers.

telepathic transmissions give way, enabling the kind of prosocial behavior Suzanne Keen extols in *Empathy and the Novel*.⁹⁸ Her subtle sensitivity to Bubber's needs, for instance, enables Mick consciously to acknowledge his human survival tools just seconds before he requires them: "A person's got to fight for every single thing they get,' she said slowly. 'And I've noticed a lot of times that the farther down a kid comes in the family the better the kid really is. Younger kids are always the toughest. I'm pretty hard 'cause I've a lot of them on top of me. Bubber—he looks sick, and likes pretty things, but he's got guts underneath that'" (166). Mere seconds after this announcement, Bubber accidentally shoots Biff Brannon's niece, Baby, forcing him to rely on those guts to get him through. The syntactic proximity between Mick's meditations and Bubber's calamity shouldn't be

⁹⁸ I intend here to emphasize the relationship between agency and sympathy. While telepathic transmissions could be achieved with no agency on the part of the sender or the receiver (between whom, incidentally, we can hardly distinguish in terms of the telepathic feedback loop itself), we generally understand sympathy as involving at least some degree of agency on the part of the sympathizer. As to prosocial behavior, Keen is careful to present challenges to the notion that empathy is inherently a positive affect that promotes prosocial behavior: if one becomes too overwhelmed with grief, fear, or sadness on behalf of another, one can find oneself quite unable—even disinclined—to lend help (locations 903-905, Kindle edition). As Keen notes, as well, high modernism appeared to challenge the kind of aesthetics most likely to foster empathic responses among readers by preventing readers from becoming submerged in the reading experience and requiring them instead to participate actively in meaning making (locations 1142-46). However, the project of creating characters whose every experience was presented in a manner more authentically representative of the ways in which people actually experience the world was central to the concerns of such high modernists as Woolf, Joyce, and Forster, as Keen observes, and was thus still interested in inspiring empathy by miming consciousness (locations 1176-1208). Though complexity and realism don't necessarily improve the degree of character identification, they also don't necessarily *impede* it. Moreover, she quotes Robert Scholes, who argues that reading remains "incomplete unless and until it is absorbed and transformed in the thoughts and deeds of readers" (*Protocols* x [qtd in Keen locations 1248-52]). Keen's assessment of readerly empathy brought about by reading relies heavily, as well, on Wayne Booth's argument in *The Company We Keep* that reading *ought* to change the character of the reader. Whether it actually does is a different question. In contrast, Catherine Gallagher (whom Keen addresses) observes the manner in which our essential ownership over the characters we help to create—a concept on which my argument, of course, heavily relies—fosters the kind of empathy ownership alone augments. That is, I can empathize with a loved one or someone over whom I have some sort of control *precisely because* of the nature of my relationship to that person. Were the same conditions applied to someone well out of my realm of control but with whom I came into contact (i.e., someone I can't simply construct in my own chosen image but who is in no way close to me), I might not empathize with that person. A character is by her very nature *precisely* someone I construct, own, create in my chosen image, so any empathetic connection I feel toward that representative person could largely be a product of my control over her.

underestimated, and it lends a clairvoyant quality to her observation that turns reflection into speculation.

By acting on mental assumptions, moreover, whose only proof lies in the certainty of her bond with Bubber, Mick demonstrates a love that the novel characterizes as a life-preserving knowledge. Bubber runs away shortly after the shooting, and Mick “suddenly [knows] where Bubber [is],” charging after him (168-9). Having reached his assumed destination, Mick stands “for a minute by the trunk of the tree. ‘Bubber—,’ she said quietly. ‘It’s Mick.’ He didn’t answer, but she knew he was there. It was like she could smell him” (169). On the one hand, Mick’s characterization of telepathic knowing recalls Benjy’s intuition of death represented as an ability to “smell” it in *The Sound and the Fury*. On the other hand, while Benjy’s intuition in *Sound* functions independently of the Compson children’s emotional regard for one another, *Heart* encourages us to think of Mick’s intuition as an effect—or even as a defining aspect—of love, not unlike the love that so powerfully connects Paul and Florence Dombey:⁹⁹

She was awake a long time. In the dark she put her arms around [Bubber] and held him very lose. She touched him all over and kissed him everywhere. He was so soft and little and there was this salty, boy smell about him. *The love she felt was so hard* that she had to squeeze him to her until her arms were tired. *In her mind she thought about Bubber and music together.* It was like she could never do anything good enough for him. She would never hit him or even tease him

⁹⁹ As a reminder, this is the bond that J. Hillis Miller reads as an “undifferentiated current of sympathy” (*Charles Dickens* 149).

again. *She slept all night with her arms around his head.*

Then in the morning when she woke up he was gone.

(179, my emphasis)

Love, a function of Mick's "mind" that holds "Bubber and music together," is the medium of telepathic transcendence. As Oliver Evans observes, the reader "is forced . . . to choose between the popular view of love that it is blind . . . and the view that it is clairvoyant, endowing the lover with special vision which enables him to see qualities in the beloved to which others, because they do not love, are blind" (196-7). In Berenice's words in *Member*, "Yes, that is the way when you are in love . . . Invariably. A thing known and not spoken" (548-9). Her observation concerns more than the knowledge of love itself: like Evans, she describes what the lover knows of the object of her affection, and that knowledge is sacred, ineffable, telepathic. The "popular view of love that is blind," in contrast, seems closer to what Singer feels toward Antonapoulos, and the novel ultimately characterizes this kind of love as a projection that brings into focus the would-be lover's isolation. "It is repeatedly suggested throughout the novel that this clairvoyance is but a projection of what the lover wishes to find," Evans continues, "and this is a psychological rather than a metaphysical theory of love" (197). Mick, I would argue, enables the text to straddle both sides of this argument with the childlike, transcendent love she feels for Bubber on one side, and the more selfish, colonizing love she feels for Singer, and Singer for Antonapoulos, on the other.¹⁰⁰

The double register of love as clairvoyance and love as projection is aligned in *Heart* with the shift from childhood to adolescence, which Mick represents in her shifting

¹⁰⁰ This is the kind of affection in *Heart* that rightly troubles Spivak.

delineations of the “inside” and “outside” rooms. I’d like to look at part of the inside/outside-room passage again, but with different emphases:

With her it was like there was two places—the inside room and the outside room. . . . Foreign countries and plans and music were in the inside room. *The songs she thought about were there. And the symphony. . . . This symphony grew slow like a big flower in her mind.* During the day sometimes, or when she had just waked up in the morning, a new part of the symphony would suddenly come to her. . . . She could be in the middle of a house full of people and still feel like *she was locked up by herself.* (163)

Without the line regarding Singer, the inside room reads as an isolation chamber whose boundaries only music transcends.¹⁰¹ When Bubber is threatened shortly after this description of the inside and outside rooms, the force of Mick’s love draws him into the inside room on the wireless chords of music (“The love she felt was so hard that she had to squeeze him to her until her arms were tired. *In her mind she thought about Bubber and music together*” [my emphasis]). By uniting music and Bubber, to whose mind her access transcends the physical world, Mick merges transcendent thought with love while yet insisting on a thinking self. In adolescence, therefore, Mick is uniquely endowed with

¹⁰¹ As I have written in the epigraph, Mick thinks, “The whole world was this symphony, and there was not enough of her to listen,” characterizing with Levinasian insight music as an object that transcends what the self can compass, repressent, or signify (118). “Is that the original awakening of thought? Had it not already been opened to a deeper vigilance, to which is revealed, beyond all *unveiling*, that which cannot be contained in any representation?” questions Levinas, “A transcendence of the Cartesian idea of the Infinite, in a thinking that finds itself thinking more than it can embrace” (4, emphasis in original). The novel encourages thinking toward this kind of transcendence.

at once clairvoyant and sympathetic sensibilities that enable her to know, see, and reflect simultaneously, displaying that simultaneous knowing and remembering Smith's opening passage in *Killers of the Dream* enacts: "Even its children know . . . and they feel weak when they remember" (15).¹⁰² The "inside room" represents an attempt at containment within the naming self, while its contents—music and brotherly love (*agape*)—resist the very containment such a room conjures.¹⁰³

To some extent, then, the inside room, despite the boundaries invoked by its naming, resembles Paul's little room within Florence: it is private and enclosed and yet infinitely expansive, enabling Paul to influence the discourse in ways that music and love ought to shape *The Heart*. Their failure to do so within the chronological confines of the novel is marked by the stark rhetoric of the closing line: "Then in the morning when she woke up he was gone." Bubber is gone and with him the potential for telepathic transcendence the child symbolizes. Mick's representation of the infinity music and love engender thus does battle in McCullers with the "giant strength" of the trouble to which Lillian Smith gestures. Once the effects of Bubber's traumatic encounter with potential homicide and incarceration collide with the debilitating effects of Mick's adolescence, their connection evaporates and the battle is lost. Locked around its head her arms can

¹⁰² Interestingly, the opening passage of Smith's original, 1949 publication of *Killers* is written as I have quoted it in the closing to the last chapter. All is present tense besides "have seen" and "have felt," rendering this final phrase I re-quote here—"and they feel weak when they remember"—a fascinating and provocative instant of the kind of time travel I have been describing throughout this thesis. The "children *feel* weak when they *remember*"—a remembering we would typically attribute to adulthood. It is this reading of the adult *through the mind of the child* that I find so compelling about Smith's original opening passage. However, in Smith's 1961 version, "smoothed and spruced up a bit" in her words to her publisher, she changes every verb in the above epigraph to the past tense (*Killers* [1994] 25). I invite my reader to review closing of the last chapter and read it thus: past tense, stagnant, over-read. It is as though Smith enacts the very repression that the horror of remembering demands.

¹⁰³ *Agape*, the "Greek god of feast, the God of brotherly love and of man" is acknowledged by Carr as being superior to romantic love in McCullers's writing (63). McCullers's characters do not manage to achieve "redemption through *agape*," which Carr calls "communal affection" despite this superiority.

contain neither the mind she reads nor the object of a love that expands as immeasurably as music.

Consider in this light the transcendental effects of music in *The Member of the Wedding*. Also concerned primarily with the experience of adolescence in a character who, like Mick, resembles her author, *Member* follows Frankie Addams as she comes to terms with the loss of her childish (and in that sense, telepathic) connection to an older brother soon to wed. On her brother's betrothal, Frankie welcomes his fiancé into her inner world, characterizing the two together, Janice and Jarvis, as the "we of me" (497). She has understood her connection to her brother as an internalization of him that resembles Mick's hospitality to Singer in the "inside room," but there's an important difference: though Mick and Frankie both imagine the self as the other,¹⁰⁴ Mick does so pictorially (inside and outside rooms), and Frankie does so exclusively in language that points only to its own signification. Beginning to recognize clairvoyant connections with others, the adolescent interest of which inheres in her conscious awareness of those connections and in her longing to articulate their telepathic intricacies, Frankie works to describe what they mean to her. A glance between Frankie (now self-re-named "F. Jasmine") and an African-American man on the street produces

a new unnamable connection, as though they were known to
each other—and there even came an instant vision of his

¹⁰⁴ We might think of these concepts as the thinking "I," in the Cartesian sense, and the "other" as possessing an "otherness," as Paul Ricoeur puts it, "that can be constitutive of selfhood" (3). To be both "person and thing," then, might be understood as being both the thinking I and the subject of inquiry as to what, exactly, an "I that thinks" is. As his title, *Oneself as Another*, suggests, "the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other, that instead one passes into the other." For Descartes, importantly, God always comes before, and thus stands at a higher ontological order than the thinking I. Thus Cartesian formulations of subjectivity, operating from within the deistic paradigm, give way to a different kind of telepathic otherness within.

home field and country roads and quiet dark pine trees as the wagon rattled past her on the paved town street. . . .

Now the same thing happened again and again [with other passers by]. It was a feeling impossible to explain in words—and later when she tried to tell of it at home Berenice raised up her eyebrows and dragged the word in a mocking way: Connection? Connection? (507)

Confronted with the receding connections of childhood fantasy, Frankie works furiously to articulate the nature of her experience, speaking her mind to just about anyone who will listen. She discovers, however, that words don't mean, as Addie Bundren puts it, "what they're trying to say at" (AD 172). In her desperation to make words signify, Frankie's language quickens as she sits with her black housekeeper, Berenice, and her six-year-old cousin, John Henry: "She began to talk in a high fast voice, but they were the wrong words, and not what she had meant to say" (565). "[S]uddenly," in the midst of this discussion,

it started, though why and how they did not know; the three of them began to cry. They started at exactly the same moment, *in the way that often on these summer evenings they would suddenly start a song. . . .* Sometimes they knew in advance that they would sing, and they would agree on the tune among themselves.

Or again, they would disagree and start off on three different songs at once, until *at last the tunes began to merge*

*and they sang a special music that the three of them made up
together. (569, my emphasis)*

Their jointly-rendered score recalls Quentin and Shreve orchestrating Henry's narrative telepathically, each contributing, like Ashbery and Schuyler, to an eminently shared composition. But the arrangement in *Member* is accompanied by tears, as though the group knows that this is their swan song. The disappearance of the "we of me" has, after all, been the novel's primary concern from the start: "But a part of her was with [her brother and Janice], and she could feel this part of her own self going away, and farther away; farther and farther, so that a drawn-out sickness came in her, going away and farther away, so that the kitchen Frankie was an old hull left there at the table" (485). This loss was inevitable; losing herself, Frankie embodies a panic that permeates the text until she can grasp the terms of her artistic ascendancy.

John Henry's six-year-old mind is keenly sensitive to that panic: his knowing unsettles those around him, as Paul Dombey's knowing unsettles his guardians and alleged educators. When Frankie asks him to come over for dinner at the height of her isolation anxiety, John Henry says, "I can't" (498). "Why?" Frankie pushes, and with a simple "Just because" John Henry tries to terminate the discussion. When Frankie presses on ("Why can't you come?"), John Henry's "Because, Frankie, I don't want to" exposes her desperation and its alienating effects: "It is too quiet. I have a peculiar warning in my bones" she drops (498). Indeed, the novel characterizes the boy much as *Dombey and Son* characterizes little Paul:

And Holy Lord God John Henry's voice would rise up
happy and high and strange, and his world was a mixture

of delicious and freak, and he did not think in global terms: the sudden long arm that could stretch from here to California, chocolate dirt and rains of lemonade, *the extra eye seeing a thousand miles*, a hinged tail that could be let down as a kind of prop to sit on when you wished to rest, the candy flowers.

(MW 546, my emphasis)

With his mythic third eye and his “long, green, secret look” John Henry sees the isolation in an inevitable future Frankie dreads (527). She clouds her perception of that future with the denial demanded of a poor Southern child intent on survival, and the puzzle Quentin never quite pieces together takes shape: “It’s like I’ve known it all my life, that I belong to be with them. I love the two of them so much.’ And having said this, she did not need to wonder and puzzle any more” (501). She names what she “felt, in an unworded way” in so-called childhood (MW 514). With this speech act she attempts to render a telepathic love but instead extinguishes its childlike clairvoyant effects—“A thing known *but not spoken*,” the glass-eyed Berenice warns (my emphasis). Thus the suppressed knowledge of what is not to be, obliterating Maisie’s wonder and Quentin/Henry’s puzzlement, underlies the false declaration of what *is* to be.

In naming the “we of me,” moreover, Frankie defers their latent potential. Only on reflection does Frankie articulate the loss her brother’s departure accelerates:

The long hundred miles [between Frankie and her brother and Janice] did not make her sadder and make her feel more far away than the knowing that they were them and both together

and she was only her and parted from them, by herself. And as she sickened with this feeling a thought and explanation suddenly came to her, so that she knew and almost said aloud: *They are the we of me*. Yesterday, and all the twelve years of her life, she had only been Frankie. She was an *I* person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a *we* to claim, all others except her. . . . Now this was suddenly over with and changed. There was her brother and the bride, and it was as though when first she saw them something she had known inside of her: *They are the we of me*. And that was why it made her feel so queer, for them to be away in Winter Hill while she was left all by herself; the hull of the old Frankie left there in the town alone.

(497, emphasis in original)

Articulating the “we of me” (a naming Maisie avoids) diminishes the telepathic possibilities it might otherwise have engendered.

Mick’s is a similar problem: ostensibly home to music, her little brother Bubber, and her most treasured thoughts, the “inside room” had once been filled with the kind of childhood fantasy I describe in chapter 1. It was a narratable space in which thoughts, unnamed and unnamable as those for which Maisie lacks a vocabulary in *What Maisie Knew*, could be shared among characters. But by naming that space and the boundaries it postulates, Mick had unconsciously restricted it, reified it, the latent potential that childhood couldn’t fulfill unveiling “childhood” as catachresis not, as *Dombey* does,

within the liminal space between the narrator and reader, but within the diegesis. The mental connections of childhood wonder that had seemed to nourish dreams of adult happiness—Zunshine’s “plain old telepathy”—are increasingly limited to the impressions of plain old mind-reading on which we extrafictional readers depend every day with some success and considerable failure (*Why* 6).¹⁰⁵

Deforming Children

“Die,” John Henry echoed in a whisper.
The world stopped.
The Member of the Wedding

In *Heart*, McCullers shows us the failures of mind-reading and the “bizarre somatic images” they mold. McCullers’s fiction frequently includes characters who are, as Rachel Adams puts it, “constrained by corporeal anomalies that defy the imposition of normative categories of identity”; given our current understanding of how the mind works, such corporeal anomalies can certainly be understood neurologically (Adams 552).¹⁰⁶ Biff Brannon importantly describes Blount thus: “Blount was not a freak, although when you first saw him he gave you that impression. *It was like something was deformed about him*—but when you looked at him closely each part of him was normal and as it ought to be. Therefore if this difference was not in the body *it was probably in*

¹⁰⁵ In *Getting Inside Your Head*, Zunshine turns more of her attention to the failures as she moves her discussion from the interiority of fiction—especially modernist fiction—to the exteriority of mindreading through bodily clues along the lines in which Alan Palmer describes it in *Social Minds*, which I discuss in the previous two chapters. Both draw on cognitive studies and psychology, and Zunshine draws heavily on cognitive and neurological research.

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Gleeson-White points to the value of such “grotesque” anomalies in “Revisiting the Southern Grotesque,” according them a value commensurate with that of my reading. Quoting “Russian Realists, she writes: “The grotesque can . . . offer greater possibilities for representation and knowledge, and McCullers’ [*sic*] own definition of the grotesque is dynamic in its emphasis on creative tension: ‘. . . a bold and outwardly callous juxtaposition of the tragic with the humorous, the immense with the trivial, the sacred with the bawdy, the whole soul of a man with a materialistic detail’” (109).

the mind" (21, my emphasis). In fact, all of the main characters in *Heart* suffer from some sort of infirmity, whether it's Copeland's consumptive alienation from his family, Blount's protrusion that "looked as though it had been stung by a wasp" beneath his compulsively flapping lower lip, or Brannon's feminine impotence contrasted against "two fists and a quick tongue" (33). His mind open to the narrator, Biff is himself a retiring observer of patrons and family who remains to book's end endlessly captivated by the mental lives of others. His special affinity for Mick in the first part of the novel—that is, when she is still childlike—points to the attraction child figures hold for avid (ToM) mind-readers. Moreover, his intense internalization of others approaches a Levinasian transcendence reflected in the oneness of telepathically unified minds. With a touch of the wonder and androgyny of youth, Biff sits somewhere toward the center of the spectrum of readability, but as his interest in Mick wanes, his potential for fostering systemic change goes with it.

As Biff and Mick work to know Singer, their conceptions of how he thinks at once unite them and insist on their individuation, like two players over a game of chess. Mick first thinks of her communications with Singer as part of a game:

Mick loved to go up to Mister Singer's room. Even if he was a deaf-and-dumb mute he understood every word she said to him. *Talking with him was like a game. Only there was a whole lot more to it than any game.* It was like finding out new things about music. She would tell him some of her plans that she would not tell anybody else. . . . Except for her Dad,

Mister Singer was the nicest man she knew. (91, my emphasis)

Her acknowledgment that this communication game is “like finding out new things about music” makes an important move whose trajectory will reveal that she has been playing alone. Biff’s unconscious awareness of Mick’s inevitable isolation he later senses when he takes his turn: “What did that fellow think and realize? What did he know?”, he questions: “The puzzle had taken root in him. It worried him in the back of his mind and left him uneasy. There was something wrong,” he thinks, sensing that what people say to Singer is not necessarily commensurate with what he thinks (of them) (134). Though his puzzle aligns him with the reader, his childlike puzzling more significantly contributes to a mental resemblance between him and Mick, recalling a similar connection between Sir Claude and Maisie. It is something about Singer’s face that renders him so magnetic and inscrutable to Mick and Biff, and that connects them to each other, their puzzling syntactically linked. Importantly, Singer is also the only primary character who will die in the course of the novel, though death threatens others; thus, his face represents a being toward death, which signals a finitude that we might imagine falling on the opposite end of an embodied trajectory from childhood.

The puzzle Mick tries to solve, therefore, involves the move *toward death*, not unlike the move Maisie embraces and transcends as she ascends into artistry.¹⁰⁷ For Mick, however, the move toward death, toward that unreadable face, is more consequentially a

¹⁰⁷ Abbot’s analysis of the unreadable mind demonstrates that in death (real or imagined), unreadability persists (453-5). We might say that unreadability both represents and *is* death itself.

move *away* from telepathic affiliation that the death of childhood sentences.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Biff's growing uneasiness as he gets closer to solving Mick's puzzle (which recalls a similar uneasiness in Sir Claude as Maisie approaches maturity) begins to color his perception of Mick more generally, signaling the distance between reading minds that adolescence inaugurates. Early in the novel, Biff and Mick's connection almost transcends the physical world. For example, in Mick's presence,

Biff *sensed* that someone was standing in the entrance and he raised his eyes quickly. A gangling, towheaded youngster, a girl of about twelve, stood looking in the doorway. She was dressed in khaki shorts, a blue shirt, and tennis shoes—*so that at first glance she was like a very young boy*. Biff pushed aside the paper when he saw her, and smiled when she came up to him. (18, my emphasis)

His "sense" of her presence registers similarly at first to Frankie Addams's sense of her brother's, the soldier's, and later of John Henry's presence-in-absence that Frankie evidently describes but that only Berenice utters within the discourse: "Right here in this

¹⁰⁸ Here, one might consider Levinas's emphasis on the Other, as opposed to God, that humanizes transcendence in the context of telepathic possibility. Considering, for instance, Royle's project that shifts mindreading from the vertical to the horizontal plane, one can see a parallel. Taking his position within the Western Platonic and German phenomenological traditions in *Alterity and Transcendence*, Levinas situates our comportment to finitude less in terms of the distinction between finite humanity and the eternity of the One (God), than *vis-à-vis* the human perception of finitude in the face of the Other (human being) (10-17): "But that face facing me, in its expression—in its mortality—summons me, demands me, requires me: as if the invisible death faced by the face of the other—pure alterity, separate, somehow, from any whole—were 'my business'" (24). This perception of the Other's finitude brings to consciousness one's own finitude and thus one's awareness of self in and *through* the Other; in essence, one's *primary* access to the breaking through of lived experience and knowledge that is at once embodied and temporally transcendent is the finite Other with whom she comes into contact. Such transcendence, moreover, always insists on the alterity that inheres in the possibility of transcendence in the first place. This brings us back, then, to the irony by which, for instance, Maisie's telepathic connection to others ultimately gives rise to our perception of what I called in chapter 2 a "discreet, narratable mind."

corner of the eye. . . . You suddenly catch something there. . . . Yet just now is the first time I ever heard it put into words” (548-9). The exquisite irony here of Berenice putting into words a description Frankie has apparently provided enacts that known but unseen, “unworded” entity Frankie perceives. Like that of Mrs. Wix, Berenice’s two-way vision is symbolic of telepathic insight that is, in this case, troubling to her young charge: “As Berenice read, she moved her lips to shape each word. Her dark eye looked up as Frankie spoke, but, since Berenice did not raise her head, the blue glass eye seemed to go on reading the magazine. This two-sighted expression bothered Frankie” (483). One has a sense that in this room, with these three (John Henry, Berenice, and Frankie), thoughts move among them thus, the impending death of childhood (and the literal childhood death of John Henry) the only obstacle threatening their successful transmission. For Biff, in contrast, his “sense” of Mick is quickly displaced not only by his physical perception of her, but more importantly by the physical characteristics on which that perception seizes. She is a “gangling, towheaded” girl who looks like “a very young boy.” The changes brought on by age ultimately cause Biff to lose interest in Mick, so his persuasion by the physical signs of adolescence here foretell a later ejection altogether from the metaphysical world the child figures.

The narrator’s evidently unlimited access to Biff’s thoughts, moreover, aligns their subject positions and helps to explain why Biff has the last word, literally, in the novel. In much the same way as Biff’s perception of Mick’s mind is ultimately overshadowed by her physicality, the narrator turns toward Biff’s physicality in lieu of an overwhelming mental connection that subsumes her objectivity within the shared affective space of free indirect discourse:

Again there was no answer. But, motherogod, was he a sensible man or was he not? And how could this terror throttle him like this when he didn't even know what caused it? And would he just stand here like a jittery ninny or would he pull himself together and be reasonable? For after all *was* he a sensible man or was he not? Biff wet his handkerchief beneath the water tap and patted his drawn, tense face. Somehow he remembered that the awning had not yet been raised. As he went to the door his walk gained steadiness. And when at last he was inside again he composed himself soberly to await the morning sun. (359)

The narrator's recourse to direct reporting here doubles the content of Biff's thoughts about Mick: projecting oneself into the other's mind is a useful pastime, and one in which the narrator has participated for some 359 pages. But in the end, survival is key and the path toward that survival entails a degree of objectivity telepathy forecloses.

Despite the connection that flashes out from time to time between Biff and Mick, moreover, their apparent metaphysicality might be merely a synthetic effect of narrative structure. For instance, Biff goes to sleep at night "nobody but . . . old Biff with two fists and a quick tongue—Mister Brannon—by himself" and no sign of Mick. But just as night descends on Biff, morning rises on Mick: "The sun woke Mick early," the following line reads, with only the division between Chapters 2 and 3 separating them (33). One initially has the uncanny sense that Biff has transmogrified into Mick during sleep by way of the kind of personality transcendence F.W.H. Myers imagined. However, while the transition

between chapters 6 and 7 in *Maisie*, for instance, suggests that the events of each chapter mutually influence those of the other forward and backward in time, the transition between chapters 2 and 3 in *Heart* winds up revealing that the external world's influence encroaches on whatever metaphysical connection Biff and Mick might share. In other words, though Biff seems at times to get into people's heads, he can in fact only imagine them, approach them, and abruptly end where they begin. For this reason Biff's observations generally read as reflections, whether or not he is in the presence of the object of his gaze.

After Mick's departure from the café in the section above, Biff could not keep his mind on [what he was reading]. He *remembered* Mick. He wondered if he should have sold her the pack of cigarettes and if it were really harmful for kids to smoke. *He thought of the way Mick narrowed her eyes and pushed back the bangs of her hair with the palm of her hand. He thought of her hoarse, boyish voice and of her habit of hitching up her khaki shorts and swaggering like a cowboy in the picture show.* A feeling of tenderness came in him. He was uneasy.

Restlessly *Biff turned his attention to Singer.*

(22, my emphasis)

Biff reads Mick entirely by way of her external features: through Biff, *Heart* names the kind of insight of which Maisie makes so much, but *presents* the more limited type of all-to-human "mindreading" that is merely a register of body language. Biff's turn to Singer

signals, then, his turn toward death and away from the adolescent Mick who had once figured childhood. As childhood recedes, he becomes uneasy, sex and death unconsciously mingling.

Indeed, emphasized in the passage above is also a telling turn away from the more than paternal attraction he feels toward Mick. His uneasiness can be read on the one hand as a response to the impossibility of fathering his own child: Biff's impotence helps to explain his position hovering between the shared consciousness of childhood (virginity, telepathic knowledge) and the unreadability of adulthood (sex, carnal knowledge). On the other hand, his uneasiness can be read as a response to the subtle eroticization he finds creeping into his gaze that importantly registers homosexual desire. As he finds himself more powerfully drawn to Mick, Biff increasingly emphasizes her androgynous qualities, which he later observes in himself:

By nature all people are of both sexes . . . The proof? Real youth and old age. Because often old men's voices grow high and reedy and they take on a mincing walk. And old women sometimes grow fat and their voices get rough and deep and they grow dark little mustaches. And he even proved it himself—the part of him that sometimes almost wished he was a mother. (133)¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Notably, Biff's androgyny renders him as a mirror image of *The Ballad of the Sad Café's* Amelia, a "dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man" and "a face like the terrible dim faces known in dreams—sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are turned inward so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze . . ." (3-4). Also a café owner, Amelia, like Biff, is attracted to freaks: "I like freaks," Biff claims, to which he wife replies, "I just reckon you certainly ought to . . . being as you're one yourself" (14).

His motherhood wish stems in part from his unsettled attraction to Mick that recalls Sir Claude's uneasy attraction to young Maisie. And in both cases, the adoring father figure emphasizes the maternal within: Biff "almost wished he was a mother," and Sir Claude fancies himself "an old grandmother" when discussing his motherly comportment toward Maisie: "I like babies," Sir Claude announces, "I always did. If we go to smash I shall look for a place as a responsible nurse" (WK 58). In Biff's case, the characterization of himself as female turns on its head the homoeroticism of the earlier passage, lending to that earlier moment of desire a heterosexual dimension. Thus Sir Claude's and Biff's androgynous characterizations of themselves ostensibly work to minimize the erotic aspects of their attractions to the girls, but instead underscore the presence of a pure erotics that transcends the boundaries assumed by gender categories. Importantly, the androgyny Biff perceives in himself and in Mick connects them, at least during Mick's transition into adulthood, and its freakishness is a recurrent motif in McCullers that in *Heart* is particularly relevant to our understanding of the annihilation of fictional, if not metaleptic, telepathy.

Her androgyny a manifestation of her age, Mick wears adolescence itself as the "bizarre" somatic image of her mental state, an image that "seem[s] unnecessarily cruel or out of control . . . And yet this cruelty has a function: it tears at the social fabric and leaves it in shreds" (Yaeger 121).¹¹⁰ This "gangling, towheaded youngster" with a "horse, boyish voice" who has a habit of "hitching up her khaki shorts and swaggering like a cowboy in a picture show" is neither child nor adult, neither man nor woman (18, 22).

Though she suffers an unnamable fear that her childhood will be foreclosed by the

¹¹⁰ Though Yaeger is referring to Southern women's fiction, this applies as well to that of much Southern fiction by male authors.

demands of an impoverished family, the fear she in fact *names* is that of her freakish height and its potential to increase:

She knew what [Harry] was thinking. It used to worry her all the time. Five feet six inches tall and a hundred and three pounds, and she was only thirteen. Every kid at the party was a runt beside her, except Harry, who was only a couple of inches shorter. No boy wanted to prom with a girl so much taller than him. But maybe cigarettes would help stunt the rest of her growth.

“I grew three and a fourth inches just in the last year,” she said.

“Once I saw a lady at the fair who was eight and a half feet tall. But you probably won’t grow that big.” (121)

The trouble with freaks, of course, is their alienation from a community and the challenge they pose to convention. As Sarah Gleeson-White observes, “Gigantism defies the more appropriate, delicate height of ‘ladies,’ something that is particularly striking when we compare Mick and Frankie with the petite Janice and Baby Wilson” (116). But if “cuteness” in McCullers “aestheticizes the most primary social distinctions, regulating the shifting boundaries between Selves and Others, cultural ‘insiders’ and cultural ‘outsiders,’ ‘humans’ and ‘freaks,’” her hunchbacks and androgynes do more than this (Merish 188): they reveal that even those who should be most sensitive to alienation seek community not to understand Others, but to be understood. Not to include, but to be included. Benedict Mady Copeland wants to “speak the truth and be attended,” and for

Frankie Addams, the “strongest [need] of all was the need to be known for her true self and recognized” (*Heart* 195; *Member* 514). Like the carnival that employs Jake Blount in *Heart*, freaks remain on the fringes; thus, as Mick grows freakishly tall (at least from her perspective) during the roughly fourteen-month period of her adolescence the novel spans, the text suggests that even the *physical* shift from childhood to adulthood is causally related to the onset of adult alienation.¹¹¹

Sex is what finally severs the child from the adult, a severance signified by the cruel somatic image of decapitation. Mick’s articulation of the inside and outside rooms begins thus: “She sat down on the steps and laid her head on her knees. She went into the inside room” (163). The head is tucked into the body, meditative and connected. And in her effort to cling to the clairvoyant childish love Bubber embodies for her, it is his head she locks within her arms. Not surprisingly, then, when “childhood” is terminated through the act of sex, the head is cleaved entirely from the person:

They [Mick and Harry] both turned at the same time. They were close against each other. She felt him trembling and her fists were tight enough to crack. “Oh, God,” he kept saying over and over. *It was like her head was broke off from her body and thrown away.* And her eyes looked up straight into the blinding sun while she *counted something in her mind.*

And then this was the way.

This was how it was. (274, my emphasis)

¹¹¹ Deformed characters are prevalent throughout Southern fiction (one thinks for instance of Faulkner’s wailing Benjy Compson or tiny, childlike Rosa Coldfield or Flannery O’Connor’s many deformed characters, including, of course, The Misfit, and even freakishly old, mythic characters such as Eudora Welty’s Phoenix Jackson).

Spivak reads this as a description of orgasm (131-3). In signifying the loss of childhood, orgasm signifies the loss not just of the *mind* (reduced to a counting machine), but of the entire “head.” In other words, the loss of childhood understood as a loss of virginity McCullers renders as a complete severance of the means by which purely mental connections between self and Other—or self and other, for that matter—would be possible. The “we of me” Frankie longs to embody involves a mind intensely receptive, permeable, and open: such a mind is thoroughly castrated from the body with the breaking off of its head. For Mick, the loss reads as a sublime alienation:

For a minute there was a bright, golden glow over everything before the sun sank down behind the trees and their shadows were gone on the road before them. She felt very old, and it was like something was heavy inside her. She was a grown person now, whether she wanted to be or not.

[. . .]

When he reached the sidewalk he turned and looked back over his shoulder. A light shone on his face and it was white and hard. Then he was gone. (277)

In the morning, Bubber was gone, and in the afternoon, Harry followed. In the previous chapter, I suggest that Quentin’s longing for incest might be read as a longing for that authentic utterance that would break the far stronger telepathic bond uniting him with Caddy. That such a union would also put an end to Quentin’s virginity is of particular

importance here.¹¹² If the physical markers of conventional childhood include virginity, then its loss occasions a final closure of those purely mental pathways: Quentin longs for the loss Mick mourns.

After Mick loses her head, her mourning devolves into a panic, which anticipates that of Frankie Addams. “[S]he could not stay in the inside room. She had to be around somebody all the time,” allowing, at least, for the possibility of externalist if not clairvoyant mindreading (305). No longer convinced that Singer knows what she thinks, she has to be with him physically. So she “wait[s]. Sometimes she would look all around her quick and this panic would come in her. Then in late June there was a sudden happening so important that it changed everything” (315). A final flash of clairvoyance accompanies this “happening” like the afterglow she perceives in the sun setting on Harry: Mick “had just been thinking about a sack of wintergreen candy” that she had bought at Woolworth’s when her family introduces the possibility of her working there (child labor notably the Dickensian sign of childhood foreclosure) (315). Her impending employment at Woolworth’s marks the absolute dissolution of childhood fantasy for

¹¹² The significance of the immaculate conception in Western ideology underlies the force of this connection, especially considered in light of Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History.” In the “Theses,” Benjamin’s overarching thematic concern is that of the promise held out by the possibility of a second coming. When one awaits the arrival of the Messiah, every moment is richly invested with possibility, significance, “For every second of time [is] the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter” (*Illuminations* 264). Shortly before his tragic suicide, Benjamin draws partly on concepts from medieval and nineteenth-century German historicism, which demanded that those involved in historical inquiry must necessarily abandon the ideologies and circumstances of their immediate present in order to engage imaginatively and empathetically in an isolated past, “Verstehen.” Benjamin suggests that an entirely Marxist approach to history is perhaps more dangerous, and, dare I say, inauthentic than a historicist approach, which investigates all historical moments through “empty time,” those on the calendar and those not, with equal, immediate, imaginative interest. (I refer here to Marxism as Benjamin knew it to exist at that time). Benjamin’s concern with monistic approaches to history lies largely in its method, in the process by which it creates history with the overarching ideology that power structures overdetermine the course of history. What proclaimed to articulate a grand master narrative was, Benjamin tacitly suggests, actually a constellation constructed of Messianic historical events - instances wherein conflict between the ruling and lower classes reveal both the oppression and the redemption of the latter. History is divested of causality.

Mick, “childhood” and its redundant death symbolized by the same capitalist system: the former buying, the latter selling. Finally, “It was like the inside room was locked somewhere away from her. A very hard thing to understand” (353).

Member likewise portrays sex as childhood loss. When Frankie starts to run away following an attempted rape she has narrowly escaped, there is “one thing she had not counted on—John Henry began to call. ‘Frankie!’ The high child voice seemed to carry through all the room of the night house. ‘Where are you?’” (594). At this point in the novel, the mental distance between the child telepath (John Henry) and the now young adult (Frankie) is at its peak. That Frankie had not anticipated John Henry’s call is telling, for the narrative has given us every reason to believe that the visionary boy, his tiny glasses recalling the insights of Mrs. Wix, would see this coming and would move to prevent it. But Frankie’s connection to John Henry has forsaken her. As she moves away from the house, she feels that “she ha[s] lost her mind”; “her mind felt splintered. . . . Should she go down to the house . . . and say that she had used up the whole future, and what was she now to do?” (596). Frankie’s sense of a future “used up” is actually a future remote from her perception, receding with childhood into the space of memory. As Mick moves from the child’s mind to that of the adult with the act of sexual intercourse, she feels her head has been “broke off from her body”; as Frankie finally severs the bond with John Henry following her own sexual encounter, she feels her mind is “lost,” “splintered.” In other words, sex violently wrenches the telepathic from the mind of the would-be child, and as the “we of me” proves the vain wish of childhood fantasy, Frankie and Mick are left alone. For Frankie, “The world was now so far away that Frances could

no longer think of it. . . . There were the changes and Frances was now thirteen” (600-1); for Mick, the inside room is “locked somewhere away from her.”

Like Paul Dombey, John Henry dies at the age of six. Both exhibit a seeing *through* others that we read in their interlocutors’ unsettled responses to them, but while *Dombey and Son* emphasizes the generative and even procreative force of the telepathic child before and after death, McCullers emphasizes the death itself that sex symbolizes. Those who survive the loss of death survive it with a hardening of spirit aimed at locking the permeable boundaries Paul transgresses. Thus, while Paul’s death launches him deeper into other characters’ thoughts, John Henry’s death comes as an afterthought: “nothing . . . would bring to mind John Henry West. But nevertheless there were times when Frances felt his presence there, solemn and hovering and ghost-gray,” presenting those final flashes of childhood telepathy Frankie *feels*. Only several pages later does Frankie’s conscious mind allow her to think materially, “John Henry had meningitis and after ten days he was dead” (601, 604). Again, the stark rhetoric parallels that of *Heart*: “Then in the morning when she woke up he was gone.” The language is barren of figuration, representing the horror of clarity sharpened by the absence of other minds. Frankie thinks: “the unexpected did not make her wonder, and only the long known, the familiar, struck her with a strange surprise” (MW 502).

Adolescence brings about what McCullers calls the “unnatural” social requirements of mindreading at the cost of telepathy. The clairvoyant love that connected Mick to Bubber and Frankie to John Henry gives way to logical explanations for mental distance following traumatic events. In other words, the generative success of childhood clairvoyance devolves into the profound failure of adult mindreading. Telepathy makes

Maisie know; mindreading makes Mick know little. This is what the literary makes possible: the mind of the child is the occult space of imagination, fantasy, receptivity, impressionism—or, of the telepathic, in which thinking something *makes it so*. Thus, what was natural in childhood seems impossible in the “unnatural” adult world, unless we understand it on its own, literal, mimetic terms, as well as within the realm of the symbolic. And it is here, in the representative space of artistry, that Mick sketches, and Frankie finds, a home for the we of me.

Reframing Frankie

*Doesn't it strike you as strange that I am I, and you are you?
 . . . And I can't ever be anything else but me,
 and you can't ever be anything else but you.
 Have you ever thought about that?
 And does it seem to you strange?*

—Frankie Addams
The Member of the Wedding

That Mick takes in her loss and ably reflects upon it is key to understanding her potential to survive. “[Mick’s] story,” writes McCullers, “is that of the violent struggle of a gifted child to get what she needs from an unyielding environment” (IN 166). At the end of the novel, she is left feeling “Cheated” (354). Having lost her piano and all that it signifies due to the family’s debt, she can only hope for its return on new terms. “But maybe,” she thinks,

it would be true about the piano and turn out O.K. Maybe she would get a chance soon. Else what the hell good had it all been—the way she felt about music and the plans she had

made in the inside room? It had to be some good if anything
made sense. And it was too and it was too and it was too and
it was too. It was some good.

All right!

O.K.!

Some good. (354)

It's difficult to read much promise into these lines, but I'd like to suggest that the expanding void left by the *absence* of telepathy makes space for its chronological and philological offspring: empathy. If we look closely, we find that Mick and Frankie begin to replace the fantasy of telepathy with the tenderness of conscious identification: the trait most closely associated, according to Keen's research, with empathic responses.

Reviewing Mick's observation about the characteristics that will likely contribute to her little brothers' survival, for instance, we find that the transcendence Levinas imagines might point to a hint of potential for Mick Kelly that McCullers evidently intended to produce. "Even though he's just seventeen months old," Mick says of her youngest brother, "I can read something hard and tough in that Ralph's face already" (166). Hard and bitter as her words are at the end of the novel, she has already announced in an empathic expression of love that grit is precisely what she needs. Moreover, as part of the same scene, Mick's reflective state enables her to help Bubber, possibly saving his life.

In that earlier scene I describe above involving Baby's shooting, Mick begins to imagine Bubber in jail, and her fears mount. More importantly, she imagines the fear this threat will level on him, and her empathic experience of his pain ignites her sympathy: "Maybe they would really do something terrible to Bubber. She wanted to go out to the

tree house right away and sit with him and tell him not to worry” (172). Evidence of the prosocial behavior empathy fosters encourages Mick to try to alleviate his pain. Mick later returns to the tree house:

When she thought of [Bubber] sitting up in the dark, cold tree house thinking about Sing Sing she felt uneasy. . . . Then just as she started to reach for the first limb a terrible notion *came over her*. *It came to her* all of a sudden that Bubber was gone. She called him and he did not answer. She climbed quick and quiet as a cat. . . .

Without feeling in the box she knew he wasn't there.

(175, my emphasis)

For sweet, soft Bubber, the terror of his and Baby’s lost futures—and of his role in bringing them about—is the smelter. When he cools and hardens to cope with this event, Mick’s earlier clairvoyant assessment of that coping mechanism’s value inadvertently reveals the mental deformities required of those who hope to conform to the “unnatural social system.” With a flicker of clairvoyant insight, Mick heads out after Bubber, the inside room of brotherly love and artistic invention—of childhood—marching confidently into the outside room to solicit help from the adults who have the resources to find him.

Mick’s path toward perceiving her father’s uniqueness, and her responsiveness to his condition, also finds her acting in the light of what the picture of the man reflects:

Up until then *she had never thought about him as being a real separate person*. A lot of times he would call her. She would

go in the front room where he worked and stand by him a couple of minutes—but when she listened to him her mind was never on the things he said to her. Then one night she suddenly realized about her Dad. Nothing unusual happened that night and she didn't know what it was that made her understand. Afterward she felt older and as though she knew him as good as she could know any person.

. . . Now she just suddenly *knew* about her Dad. He was lonesome and he was an old man. Because none of the kids went to him for anything and because he didn't earn much money he felt like he was cut off from the family. And in his lonesomeness he wanted to be close to one of his kids—and they were all so busy that they didn't know it. He felt like he wasn't much real use to anybody.

She understood this while they were looking at each other. It gave her a queer feeling.

(99-101, second emphasis in original)

The kind of knowing Mick perceives is the kind of knowing that comes not from an innate or telepathic connection but rather from socialization—from the move toward adulthood that enables her to understand the isolation of the adult condition. That “queer” feeling could be read as the feeling of shame, closely aligned with the loss of so-called childhood innocence, that she feels on behalf of her father. But as I argue in chapter 2, the shame we often associate with this loss might simply be the acquired awareness that one

can't keep one's thoughts to oneself. In other words, the queer feeling is her affective response to reading her father's mind and to recognizing that his mind *can be read*.

Suddenly, he is both "a separate person" and one whose mind is strangely transparent. He is he, and he is she: the boundary between the inside and outside rooms has been transcended and the image of the father—pictured, distant, transformed, internalized—is a work of art. Compassion then stems from this "queer feeling," and Mick behaves with the sympathy of adult awareness when her father suggests that she would likely wish to leave him: "'No, I'm not in any rush,' she said. 'Honest,'" and she stays (101).

Likewise, Frankie's epiphanic observation in the epigraph to this section is one of the few profound announcements by the girl that aren't at least a little terrifying: it's "strange" to be separated thus—"I am I and you are you"—but not awful (563). After all, it is this separation that allows for the degree of agency sympathy requires.¹¹³ Certainly the differences between Frankie and Berenice are many, and what's important is that Frankie acknowledges that difference but still feels it strange—it's a good strange. Thus, as Wayne Booth, Peter Rabinowitz, and James Phelan consistently emphasize, the novel enacts what it hopes to advance among its readers in the actual world, in this case, by demonstrating the adulthood gains of childhood loss.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ The kind of Levinasian transcendence budding here nicely aligns with the kind of empathy Keen discusses in *Empathy and the Novel*, particularly when she treats reader responses to child figures: "character identification often invites empathy, even when the character and reader differ from each other in all sorts of practical and obvious ways. Indeed, the opportunity to share feelings underwrites character identification that transcends difference" (Locations 1359-66, emphasis in original).

¹¹⁴ Keen's scholarship, for which she draws on researchers such as Baron-Cohen who study empathic responses in human beings, suggests that readers can respond with greater empathy to fiction than to events in actual life due to freedom from the usual "obligations of self-protection through skepticism and suspicion" in play in the extra-fictional world, but they can "still internalize the experience of empathy with possible later real-world responsiveness to others' needs" (*Empathy and the Novel* xiv, 170).

Frankie's and Mick's advancing age gives rise to the kind of *sympathetic* behavior that their increasing maturity enables, and this helps to explain McCullers's claim that Mick's case, for instance, remains hopeful. That is, where the mind of the small child is portrayed—in fiction as in life—as generally unable to separate what is thought from what is actual, the shift to adolescence includes a shift toward the recognition that what I think, valid and important as it is, must be understood in light of what I believe.

Unsurprisingly, Mick presents her awareness of this through the manner in which she imagines music for Singer: “she wondered what kind of music he heard in his mind that his ears couldn't hear. Nobody knew. And what kind of things he would say if he could talk. Nobody knew that either” (53).¹¹⁵ In the end, it was Singer who misread Mick, his mindblindness causing him to miss the special recognition of his selfhood Mick understood. The musical and the literary merge here among reader, lip-reading Singer, and listening Mick, for whom the reception of art—musical or literary—is a silent hearing: “When we read to ourselves, our ears hear nothing. Where we read, however, we listen. . . . To *listen* in this way is to speak silently the turmoil of wording itself before and athwart the regime of words” (Stewart 11, my emphasis). For Mick, music is not what *she* hears; it's what each person hears—a hearing that the literary produces and that *only happens to you*.

Most important for Mick and Frankie, the promise that the child mind holds out is the promise of possibility. As I wrote in the introduction: thinking is making, thought is plot. Their increasing mental distance from the little boys they love signaling their

¹¹⁵ For Abbott, empathy “dilutes the humility and respect before the human unknowable that . . . to some extent governs” the texts he discusses” (463). While we can't ignore the danger of empathy as a colonization of mind, I would nevertheless argue that McCullers thought an attempt to understand the other was a laudable undertaking.

increasing distance from the child mind, Mick and Frankie must come to terms with how the inside room and the outside room conjoin. If the telepathic lifts the conventional limitations of “childhood” authority, telepathic recidivism finds those limits emerging in the boundaries of “inside” and “outside” rooms, of language intended to describe clairvoyant “connections.” That Mick perceives the inside and outside rooms at first reads as a foreclosure on what its obscurity in childhood fostered. However, as Ned Schantz puts it, “Coming to terms with those limitations is a form of beauty.”¹¹⁶ The distancing effect of adolescence serves to augment their connections to others through the act of naming. Naming the rooms, in other words, is a way of articulating the literary, giving it a form, a frame. It is this very framing device that enables Frankie, finally, to “hear” for “first time in her life”; she “heard the sweetness in [the] sounds of [children playing], and she was touched” (506). If the puzzle pieces transcend that frame, the transcendence moves impersonally toward readers—like the sounds of Beethoven an unknown radio moves toward Mick—who then *reframe* them as we see fit, with Frankie as our guide.

In the introduction to this thesis, I discuss my use of the first-person-plural pronoun to describe the activities of the various groups to which I might belong where I read. There, I acknowledge that this “we” incorporates the reading me, the telepathic me who encounters other readers, authors, and characters on my mental journey, and the me who’s a member of the many possible groups I might join along the way. And I acknowledge how problematic this “we” can be.” But for all the challenges this we might pose, this “we” can be us: you, me, Frankie, the children playing, and all of the possible

¹¹⁶ From a discussion held on May 28, 2013. Montreal, Quebec.

combinations of us that the literary “sounds” (MW 506).¹¹⁷ This “we” can be artistic, perspectival but inclusive. Perhaps you, and I, and the children playing among whom Frankie might still sometimes count herself, are finally, strangely, differently the “we” of Frankie. Perhaps we can be the we of me.

¹¹⁷ Again, I lean on Garrett Stewart’s conceptualization of the sound of reading—that is, what we mentally hear when we read—in *Reading Voices* in order to draw a relationship between the sound of music and the sound of the literary to which *Heart* and *Member* always point.

Amending Harold

Like anything worth writing it came inexplicably and without method.

—Karen Eiffel
Stranger than Fiction

“This is a story about a man named Harold Crick, and his wristwatch.” The familiar voice that introduces Mark Forster’s film *Stranger than Fiction* (2006) many of us will soon recognize as the sound of Emma Thompson’s impeccably articulated witty, cynical tone. Those of us who don’t recognize the voice will still note a self-assured control typical of the actress’s roles. As she speaks, we zoom in on the resolute watch chirping diligently in the somewhat less familiar frame. Contrasted with the knowing voice, we finally see Will Farrell (as Harold) passively sleeping in the darkened room—inevitably innocent, earnest, comic, and vulnerable—the edgy digital watch glaring at him from the nightstand. The voice continues, informing us that Harold is “a man of . . . remarkably few words. And his wristwatch said even less.” The watch is ominous, but not for the obvious reasons alone: we quickly sense that the narrator feels a closeness to the watch yet to develop in her relationship with the sleeping Harold, the watch’s position of primacy at the end of her opening sentences a dead giveaway.¹¹⁸ Harold goes about his day, a graphical user interface augmenting the narrator’s knowledge of his thoughts, as he counts brushstrokes over sections of teeth, counts steps to the bus, and times coffee breaks, and Karen Eiffel’s (Emma Thompson’s) patronizing cynicism is thick as she narrates the pathetic life these actions constitute. Life has always run thus for

¹¹⁸ Here, I’m pressing on the importance of beginnings and endings in the sense in which Rabinowitz explores them in “Reading Beginnings and Endings” by understanding their syntactical relevance at the level of sentence (*Narrative Dynamics* 300-313).

Harold, “a senior agent at the Internal Revenue Service” who lives life “entirely alone.” “That was, of course, before Wednesday: On Wednesday,” Eiffel remarks, “Harold’s wristwatch changed everything.” From this moment on—that is, from the moment Harold’s life becomes narratable—Harold takes note of her voice. Curiously, however, Eiffel doesn’t note his noticing. Despite Eiffel’s literally towering position of authority that the opening scene markedly emphasizes, Harold’s control over this narrator will quickly present itself, throwing into doubt not only the power dynamic the opening scene sets up and the conventional ideas about authorial agency it seems to champion, but also the assumption that an “innocent” character like Harold is unlikely to have any significant influence over the course of his life.

My general understanding of narratability throughout this thesis has depended largely on D.A. Miller’s articulations in *Narrative and its Discontents*, but our understanding of Harold benefits from considering his life more specifically in terms of Robyn Warhol’s concept of the “subnarratable.” Warhol defines the unnarratable generally by way of antinomy: what Gerald Prince calls “narratable” in *The Dictionary of Narratology*, Warhol inverts, thus articulating the characteristics of what she calls the “unnarratable,” other subcategories of which I have discussed in earlier chapters. The kinds of activities, such as tying one’s shoelaces, that are not narratable according to Prince—events that are “too insignificant or *banal* to warrant representation”—Warhol defines more specifically as “subnarratable” (Warhol, my emphasis). By this logic, Harold’s entire *life* is subnarratable until the watch “changes everything.” Ironically, the most significant change the watch will force is Eiffel’s recognition that the apparently

insignificant activities that she thought rendered a subnarratable life characterized a *mind*, and thus a life, of great value in and for its own sake.

As Harold goes through the motions of his life on this particular Wednesday, he starts to pause and listen to the voice, and his pauses stop Eiffel short. Eiffel begins, “. . . and he began [the day] the same way he—”, but Harold’s pauses interrupt her cognitive progression. She tries to continue: “and he began it the same way he always did.” Harold forces her to pause again as he looks at the toothbrush, wondering if it is the speaker: “Hello?” he asks it. Eiffel finally finishes: “He began it the same way he always did,” getting her bearings, taking control. She begins again: “When others’ minds would—” and he interrupts again, “Hello, is someone there?” Harold’s evident knowledge of the voiceover immediately diminishes her illusory control over the actions he takes; quite literally “let loose from the discourse,” as Schantz puts it, “he is out making trouble in the story” (“Telephonic Film” 31).¹¹⁹ Unfortunately (or fortunately) for Eiffel, she is not letting him loose. He is letting *himself* loose by the power of his character—the power, that is, of his knowledge that his life is not banal, that the little actions which constitute this life have value, and that her judgments about his life are therefore off, wanting, inaccurate. “Alright,” he asks, “who just said ‘Harold just counted brushstrokes?’ And how do you know I’m counting brushstrokes?” But the voice, like the watch, says nothing. Harold soon comes to understand what’s happening here: “I’m being followed by a woman’s voice,” he says to a friend. “Wha— What is she saying?” he asks. “She’s narrating.”

¹¹⁹ Schantz discusses “telephonic film” in greater detail in *Gossip, Letters, Phones* discussed above.

When Harold hears the voice announce his “imminent death,” he ultimately approaches literary professor Jules Hilbert, played by Dustin Hoffman, for help:

Hoffman: “So, you’re the *young gentleman* who called me about the narrator” (my emphasis).

Farrell: “Yes.”

“And this narrator says you’re gonna die.”

“Yes.”

“Uh huh. [pause] How long has it given you to live?”

“I don’t know.”

“Dramatic irony. It’ll fuck you every time.”

Harold later begins to quote the most troubling narration: “Little did he know that this simple, seemingly innocuous act would lead to his imminent death.” Hilbert is intrigued: “You said, ‘Little did he know’: ‘Little did he know . . .’” “Yeah,” Crick replies, “it’s third-person omniscient.” We’re a touch surprised that Harold should be so up on his narratology; there seems to be more to Harold than meets the eye. And he’s right: the *phrase* does qualify as third-person omniscient. But he’s *also* right that the *narrator who voices* it does not: “She doesn’t know I can hear her.” *Stranger than Fiction* thus literally enacts the directional shift in telepathic knowledge I describe in the introduction *from* the narrator *to* the character reading her thoughts—a reading that is a literal representation of the silent hearing Stewart articulates. In a climactic conversation between Harold and Hilbert, the professor advises the young man: “Harold, you don’t control your fate . . . Go live your life . . . I mean *all* of it,” to which Harold replies, “This is not . . . a story to me; it’s my life.” “Absolutely,” responds the professor, “so just go make it the one

you've always wanted." Little did Hilbert know that as *reader* of Harold's discourse, he would help to change his story. And little did Harold know that as *character* in his own narrative, he would go out and save the life he'd "always wanted." So powerful are the "seemingly innocuous" activities in which Harold engages following this exchange—activities that define a kind, determined, and thoughtful life—that they disintegrate Eiffel's monumental intention to "kill" yet another character.¹²⁰

Indeed, when it looks like all else is about to fail and his death is still "imminent," Harold picks up the phone and calls his narrator. It's a phone call: we make them every day. But this phone call is quite special: the figure of telepathy is turned on its head here, as telephony occupies the realm of the impossible since Harold can only make the call because of the metalepsis his *telepathic* connection to his narrator causes—a connection that is one diegetic level *lower* than the now metonymically-valenced *telephonic* connection. In other words, if, as Schantz suggests, "Telepathy is the telephone in a perfect state of dematerialization," fulfilling the fantasy of unmediated communication film fosters, then here, the telephone is telepathy in a perfect state of materialization fulfilling the fictional Harold's fantasy of material contact (*Gossip* 80). Eiffel types, but does not *say*, "The phone rang." And the phone rings. She glances at it with obvious denial written all over her face. She types again, but again does not say (read, does not *think*), "The phone rang again." This time, we hear keystrokes snapping metal onto the paper—an otherwise banal, unnarratable sort of a thing. And the phone rings again. The

¹²⁰ Speaking to her assistant about the difficulty of figuring out how to kill her character, Eiffel shouts: "The quaint ideas I'm sure you've gathered in your adorable career as an assistant are to no avail when faced with killing a man! . . . As much as I would like to, I cannot simply throw Harold Crick off a building." One thinks of Dickens's tendency, as I mentioned in chapter one, to "[speak] about his fictions as if they were real people" (House 12).

author is muted; Harold is narrating. She runs over, picks up the phone, and soon drops it in horror, accepting at last that the man she is about to kill is *actually* real. Seeing him when he enters her home, she looks on Harold with the love of an overwhelmed and passionate mother, giving him the handwritten manuscript of his life's ending. Harold reads it voraciously in one sitting on a city bus; finding that his death will be heroic and necessary, he tells her to write it as she intended, and she is changed: "I realized I just couldn't do it . . . because it's a book about a man who doesn't *know* he's about to die . . . but if the man *does* know he's going to die and dies anyway—dies . . . dies willingly, knowing he could stop it, then . . . I mean . . . isn't . . . that the type of man you want to keep alive?" her final decision to save Harold rendered in the form of a question to her reader, Hilbert. And to us.

Hit by a bus that severs his artery—as planned—in order to save a child's life—as planned—Harold lives—*not* as planned—because a piece of his wristwatch blocks the otherwise fatal bleed. It's a small thing. It's an otherwise subnarratable item—a watch on a wrist a few minutes off the exact time; a tiny little anomaly within the arena of the subnarratable. I think it's worth remembering Harold and that watch as we go back and imagine those quiet child characters whose minor activities often seem to have little bearing on the outcomes of their fictional lives. It's worth paying attention, as Eiffel finally does, to the seemingly little details of these small figures whose minds and souls are a great deal too large for their frames. In Eiffel's closing words, "The nuances, the anomalies, the subtleties. . . are in fact here for a much larger and nobler cause. They are here to save our lives. I know the idea seems strange, but I also know that it just so happens to be true. And so it was, a wristwatch saved Harold Crick." And so it was,

Harold Crick's telepathic receptivity and strength of character incited the inevitable reversal in this epistemology of authorship: inscribing his author's mind with what he *ought* to be, he allowed himself, and Hilbert, and us, to write a life worth narrating. And so it was, Harold Crick saved Harold Crick.

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