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Queer(ly) Lingering in Nineteenth-Century British Literature

Emily Datskou

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

QUEER(LY) LINGERING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN ENGLISH

BY
EMILY DATSKOU
CHICAGO, IL
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For my family.

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The field of queer studies is known for its tendency to suppress or disavow its antecedents
— Heather Love, *Underdogs: Social Deviance and Queer Theory*

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a critical critique of Queer Theory as a field and how its establishment as a discipline and as a canon has, to borrow Heather Love’s language from my epigraph, “suppress[ed]” and “disavow[ed] its antecedents” (*Underdogs* 14). This project contends that the nineteenth century *was* (and as I will argue, currently is) an important place for the founding of queer theory. However, it has been overshadowed by the transgressiveness of modernism and the avant-garde as well as by contemporary works and figures. Challenges to the temporal focus of queer theory as an academic discipline and to the literary examples that make up its canon have largely been ignored or downplayed by the field. And this is where my project intervenes. My dissertation argues that in establishing queer theory both as an academic discipline and as a periodizing and historicizing force through the bibliographies that make up its canon, the field has upheld and supported the very normative models of temporal progression that queer theory claims to resist. I examine the lack of sustained attention to the nineteenth century within queer theory and look at what happens to our narrative of queer literary history when we open up the queer literary canon beyond the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Part of the reason queer theory is so attractive yet seemingly inaccessible or even confusing is because its history, definitions, and subject matter are so messy—they often overlap and present conflicting ideas. There is no established, singular referent for its discussions, and scholars have used queer theory and queer strategies to examine a variety of disciplines,

discourses, and themes. For example, although queer theory, queer studies, gay and lesbian studies, history of sexuality studies, and LGBTQ studies are often used interchangeably, each of these fields is distinct and has its own primary concerns and subject matter. While queer theory was initially concerned with the production and representation of identities and identity politics, it has shifted to also include, and sometimes prioritize, examining the production and dismantling of normative and antinormative behaviors, structures, and institutions. And yet, in many popular and academic discourses and disciplines, queer theory is used to signify the history of sexuality or the historical tracing of gay and lesbian identities. The use of queer theory as a catch-all term for many discourses concerning sexuality and normativity, this project claims, is part of the reason it is so hard to identify all of the different mechanisms by which these fields have overlooked the nineteenth century in their respective discussions. Because I will be engaging with many of these conversations, it is important to understand how I am using certain words and concepts within my project.

Queer: “Queer” is commonly used in two different ways: 1. As a noun referring to identity (e.g., gay/lesbian/trans) and 2. As a verb (queering) or adjective (queer) looking at and describing structures of identity, discourse, and institutions that resist (hetero)normativity. Following queer theorists such as Jack Halberstam and Lee Edelman, the use of “queer” in my project does not necessarily mean homosexuality, queer identity, or same-sex desire and interaction but is primarily used to indicate difference from dominant norms and structures: difference in the creation of kinship communities, difference in the organization of time and space, difference in the construction of narrative structures, and difference in sexual and gender

behaviors.¹ As Halberstam defines it in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), I am using ‘queer’ to suggest “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time,” not simply nonnormative sexualities (6).²

Queer Theory: Teresa de Lauretis is accredited with coining the term “queer theory” in her 1991 introduction to the special edition of *differences*. Initially focused on literature and cultural studies, queer theory has come to define and provide strategies for a multitude of disciplines, fields of study, and praxis-based movements interested in the workings of power, norms, and knowledge transfers. For the purposes of my project, it is important to distinguish between queer theory as a set of theoretical concepts and models of critiquing social and cultural norms and queer theory as an institutionalized discipline with a set theoretical and literary canon and standard syllabus and reading list. My discussions here in my Introduction and in my first chapter are largely concerned with those founding works and theorists of the discipline and those texts and figures that make up the field’s current canon. In my later chapters on narrative

¹ While I do recognize that ‘queer’ also denotes an identity and that identity plays a significant role in queer theory and queer studies, my project will primarily focus on ‘queer’ as a verb and as an adjective in order to move away from the limiting and reductive representations of queerness in the nineteenth century. As I will discuss in Chapter One, queer structures, strategies, and practices in the nineteenth century have been long overshadowed by investigations of queer identities, authors, and characters.

² I will be referencing Halberstam’s oeuvre in my project. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995), *Female Masculinity* (1998), *The Drag King Book* (1999), *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” (2005), “Shame and White Gay Masculinity” (2005), “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion” (2007), and *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) were all published under “Judith Halberstam.” *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the Edge of Normal* (2012) was published under “J.Jack Halberstam,” and *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (2018) and *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020) were published under “Jack Halberstam.”

structure, temporality, and kinship, I use many of the canonical queer works and theorists that I initially critiqued in my early chapters to support my discussions of nineteenth-century texts.³

History of Sexuality and Sexuality Studies: Within my discussion, the history of sexuality and sexuality studies refer to the ways in which scholars have traced the emergence and development of sexuality and sexual identity throughout history. While many works that fall under the history of sexuality and sexuality studies are associated with queer studies and queer theory, these fields are primarily focused on identity and identity politics. Queer theory, both as an academic discipline and those individual contributions that make up the field, encompasses more than identity. And yet, as I will discuss in my project, at times it appears that queer scholarship outside of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been filtered through discussions of sexuality and its history.

Teleology: According to the third definition in the online *Oxford English Dictionary* (“*OED*”), “teleology” is defined as “(The presence of) purposiveness, design, or final causality in nature; the fact of being directed towards a goal” (“Teleology”).⁴ Within the literary and queer scholarship that I will be examining in my project, teleology is the name for the “investment in conclusive process” and is “[d]efined as the doctrine of ends or final causes [and] depends on a sequence leading to an end that can retrospectively be seen as having had a beginning” (Menon “Spurning” 492). “A teleological perspective,” Valerie Traub succinctly argues, “views the present as a necessary outcome of the past—the point toward which all prior events were

³ Importantly, while my project as a whole is a comment on queer theory as an academic field, not every chapter is going to be a critique of queer theory. Instead, following Houston Baker’s discussion of critique in *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1987), I see my project as the “detailing of arguments and an amassing and interpretation of evidence designed to refigure prevailing notions of a topic or area of inquiry” (63).

⁴ Definitions from the *OED* are accurate as of July 7th, 2022.

trending” (21). A teleological structure or trajectory progressively builds on itself to get to or explain one defined goal or conclusion. It is this narrative structure that queer theory and queer narratives crucially reject.

Progressive: While “progressive” may seem to have a positive connotation (e.g., we are a more progressive society than the 1950s), the *OED* defines the term as “[o]f or relating to forward movement in space” (“Progressive”). When used within my project, “progressive” signifies moving forward in space and developing temporally without any implications or suggestions of whether these moves are positive or negative.

Background

Temporality is at the center of queer theory and queer studies. As Janet Halley and Andrew Parker argue in their introduction to *After Sex?: On Writing Since Queer Theory* (2011), queer theory has been bound up in time from the beginning because “the very relationship between two books crucial for all queer theory—volumes 1 and 2 of [Michel] Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* [(1978)]—plants the temporal question in the center of the courtyard” (4-5). Temporality is the subject of numerous canonical queer works, e.g., Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place*, Lee Edelman’s *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009), David Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz’s “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?” (2005), and Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010). It is the means or vehicle through which many of our contemporary queer notions have developed, e.g., failure and success in Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), reproductive futurity in Edelman’s *No Future*, performativity and identity in Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and

conceptualizations of queer kinship in Freeman and Tyler Bradway's *Queer Kinship: Race, Sex, Belonging, Form* (2022). And it is the focus of a number of works looking at the life and subject matter in and of queer theory, e.g., Halley and Parker's *After Sex?*, Michael O'Rourke's "The Afterlives of Queer Theory" (2011), Carolyn Dinshaw's *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (2012), and Dinshaw et al.'s "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion" (2007). Temporality is also the method through which queer histories and genealogies are constructed, helping to provide a community with traditions and group knowledge for queer individuals growing up, e.g., Eve Sedgwick's "Queer and Now" (1993).

Questions of temporality then have been integral to queer theory from its foundation. However, they continue to be important because temporality allows scholars to separate 'queer' from 'sexuality.' "Queer temporality can be understood to dislodge queer from its gossamer attachment to sexuality," Carla Freccero claims in "Queer Times" (2011), "by thinking 'queer' as a critique of (temporal) normativity *tout court* rather than sexual normativity specifically" (21). "With the notion of queerness strategically and critically posited not as an identity or a substantive mode of being but as a way of becoming," E.L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen similarly argue in their introduction to *Queer Times, Queer Becomings* (2011), "temporality is necessarily already bound up in the queer" (8).

And yet, for all of its discussions and interrogations of time and temporality, the temporality of queer theory *itself*, as a discipline, is generally not discussed. Instead, criticisms of the field are primarily focused on subject positions (e.g., identity, race, gender, class, and

nationality), rather than the temporal development of the institution of queer theory.⁵ This gap in scholarship is where my project begins.

I maintain that even though the nineteenth century was foundational to queer theory in its beginnings, the focus of the field has shifted as it has become more institutionalized. Since then, queer theory has concentrated primarily on twentieth-century literature and contemporary texts and film and has largely ignored the nineteenth century, leaving it behind. Queer theory has moved from viewing the nineteenth century as a whole as exemplary of queer studies to

⁵ For example, in *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam argues that the current gay male archive is too “narrow” and too “canonical” which only limits its “range of affective responses” (109). Similarly reacting against the ‘traditional’ queer canon, in *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz looks to “figures from those temporal maps that have been less attended to than O’Hara and Warhol have been” (4), and Freeman’s *Time Binds* is “organized not around the great works of the twentieth century and beyond, but around a series of failed revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s” (xiii-xiv). Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz posit in their foundational “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?,” that “much of queer theory nowadays sounds like a metanarrative about the domestic affairs of white homosexuals” (12). And scholars such as Muñoz (*Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* [1999] and *Cruising Utopia*), Roderick Ferguson (*Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* [2003]), Halberstam (“Shame and White Gay Masculinity”), Jasbir Puar (*Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* [2017]), and Hiram Perez (“You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat It, Too!” [2005]), to name a few, have highlighted queer theory’s implicit whiteness and pushed back against the general trend in queer theory to dismiss or ignore race. Love’s *Underdogs* (2021) broadens the focus of these critiques by re-examining the creation of queer theory as a field and as an institutional discipline. While Love focuses on queer theory’s relationship with and disavowal of deviance studies and not necessarily temporality, the work illustrates the more discipline-wide shift in which my project is also invested.

Scholars such as Love, Edelman, Halberstam, Dinshaw, and Tim Dean have also rejected the “affirming” and “legitimizing” efforts in contemporary queer theory to establish a positive, proud, successful, and visible history of queer individuals (Love *Feeling* 1-3). Instead, Love’s work in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007) focuses on the “corpses of gender and sexual deviants,” the “shame and the legacy of the closet,” and those texts that “choose isolation, turn toward the past, or choose to live in a present disconnected from any larger historical continuum” (1, 2, 8). Edelman’s *No Future* argues against the “narrative of reproductive futurism” that organizes society and instead advocates for the “negativity of the queer,” the rejection of hope, and the promotion of the death drive and jouissance (21, 4). Halberstam (*The Queer Art of Failure*) and Dinshaw (*How Soon is Now?*) both reject normative standards of success, discipline, and knowledge production in their works and instead promote methodologies of failure and amateurism, respectively. And Dean examines the subculture around barebacking in *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (2009) and how this community creates new kinship bonds through unprotected sex and the transmission of HIV.

upholding modernism and contemporary works as *the* premier examples and locations for discussions of queer theory.⁶

Specifically, I will argue that three separate but often overlapping methods within queer theory have helped position the nineteenth century as no longer relevant for queer theory: First, through the progressively forward, teleological trajectory of queer theory as a discipline; second, through the normalizing, teleological forces of the history of sexuality—in working to establish a coherent and developmental history of sexuality, I maintain that queer theorists and historians of sexuality have created historical narratives of sexuality that not only position whole eras as pre-queer or as outside of queer studies and histories of sexuality but also reduce whole eras and genres to single representations within this historical narrative; and finally, many of the discussions within queer theory and the history of sexuality studies have reduced or limited the nineteenth century to issues of identity and have largely ignored other prominent queer topics, such as temporality and narrative structure, thereby diminishing the nineteenth century within the discourse of queer theory.

Methodology

This project's origins are the critical critiques of normativity, queer institutional structures, organizations, and temporalities underlining much of queer theory and the models explored in Love's *Feeling Backward* and *Underdogs*, Freeman's *Time Binds*, and Freccero's *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006) that resist chronological and teleological discussions and structures

⁶ As I discuss in more detail in Chapter One, there are specific nineteenth-century genres and individuals, such as decadence and Oscar Wilde, that are considered queer and are frequently discussed in queer discourse, both on an individual scholarly level and by the field. However, *as a whole*, the nineteenth century has largely been left behind. Furthermore, as I will illustrate in Chapter One, many of the nineteenth-century works and figures that are considered queer have been positioned as modernist or as anticipating modernist moves rather than being rooted in the nineteenth century, further eroding the queerness of the period.

and instead “turn back” to look at forgotten or marginalized narratives of queerness in all its forms. In addition to questioning the construction of norms, discourses, and organizational modes (as opposed to a narrow focus on identity), my project takes as its starting point many of the claims proposed by the antisocial thesis in queer theory and the use of queer as a methodology (as a verb, “queering” or an adjective “queer,” rather than an identity) to examine the construction of normative institutional frameworks and productions of knowledge. It follows the anti-progressive, anti-teleological, anti-closure, and anti-success and anti-successive models promoted by queer scholars such as Halberstam (*The Queer Art of Failure*), Edelman (*No Future*), and Love (*Feeling Backward*) and gestured towards in Jay Prosser’s focus on the transition in *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998) and Freeman’s discussion of the pause in *Time Binds*.

While I do recognize that many of queer theory’s anti-social or queer negativity theories may not be appealing or applicable to our contemporary lives and society, they are extremely attractive and productive for my work on the novel, narrative, the family, temporality, and the nineteenth century in general. For example, Edelman’s suggestion in *No Future* that the only way not to be interpolated into normativity is to be on the side of the queer, to not have children of any sort (biological, adoptive, pets, anything that could carry on one’s legacy in a sense), may not be the most viable in a real-life kinship sense, particularly with contemporary discussions regarding families, legal rights, and the well-being of queer children. However, it is particularly helpful when looking at a genre of literature largely involved in constructing and displaying families and generations. Similarly, the contemporary notions of progress and success by which we currently live and work may not allow for Halberstam’s promotion of failure in *The Queer Art of Failure*, and not all people may be able to safely engage in such resistance to social norms.

However, failing and refusing to abide by normative values of success are productive tools for examining nineteenth-century works that are perceived to tie up neatly at the end with all of a reader's questions answered. Freeman sums up this tension best when she differentiates in *Time Binds* between the "appeal" of "queer antiformalism...on an intellectual level" and what she is "emotionally compelled by" (xiii).

In approaching queer as a methodology and not solely as an identity category, I follow the discussions from Freeman, Freccero, Dinshaw, and Madhavi Menon that see a queer methodological practice as prompting us to think about *how* we approach our subject, not *what* is our subject.⁷ As Menon suggests in "Spurning Teleology in *Venus and Adonis*" (2005), we should focus on "the *method* of inquiry" rather than "the different *objects* of inquiry" (498, emphasis mine in the latter quotation). Using queer as a methodological practice rather than an identity position or characteristic is particularly important for my work on the nineteenth century. Although nineteenth-century scholars have illustrated the numerous ways the period engages with all conceptions of the word queer, outside of the field there remains a stubborn association between "queer" and people and behavioral practices (e.g., Oscar Wilde, Michael Field, female marriages). In using queer as a method instead of as a position, I can highlight and investigate the ways in which nineteenth-century British texts resist normative practices, institutions, and productions of knowledge as well as identarian positions.

My project also follows scholars like Freccero (*Queer/Early/Modern*), Dinshaw (*How Soon Is Now?*), and Freeman (*Time Binds*) in melding together works from a mix of periods and genres to explore different representations of queerness and resist chronological models of queer

⁷ See also Freeman's *Time Binds* and Freccero's *Queer/Early/Modern*.

progression.⁸ Rather than presenting a chronological discussion of queer theory in nineteenth-century British works, starting with Mary Shelley at the beginning of the century and finishing with Bram Stoker at the end of the century, my dissertation is organized around key themes or subjects in contemporary queer theory, such as temporality and kinship. And it examines how nineteenth-century texts' interactions with and presentations of these themes have been obscured or overlooked by the depiction of modernism as *the* queer period or genre. Within most of my chapters, I will illustrate how the chapter's subject has been depicted as coming from or related to a particular modernist work (e.g., Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* is characterized as one of *the* texts presenting a queer narrative structure) and then demonstrate how nineteenth-century novels also engage with the same queer theme, usually in similar ways to the modernist example. In doing so, I will also show that the progressive narrative that dominates so many works of queer theory, which suggests the twentieth century is the beginning of the 'real' queer theory that we know today, is misleading.

Finally, because my project consists of both a theoretical critique (its outer framework) and textual analysis (its inner content), the theoretical works I use as secondary sources within my discussion of the novels will also be considered primary texts in my initial theoretical critique. For example, while I critique Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* and *The Queer Art of Failure* for helping to create and support a progressive and chronological timeline within

⁸ In *Queer/Early/Modern*, Freccero "juxtaposes readings of 'early' and 'late' modern texts" (5) to "rea[d] 'against' history" (4), and in *How Soon is Now?*, Dinshaw explores the relationship between "late medieval English texts and their postmedieval readers, and the specific temporal systems colliding in a single moment of *now*" (5). In her work, Freeman "reverse[s] the canonical/noncanonical relationship of priority, treating the canonical works as ways into noncanonical ones rather than vice versa" (*Time* xvii).

queer theory's canon, I also rely on his theoretical arguments within my analysis of nineteenth-century British texts and twentieth-century novels.

Organization and Chapter Break Down

My dissertation is focused on examining nineteenth-century queer traditions and engagements alongside contemporary queer theoretical concepts. In doing so, I resist the progressive, developmental, and teleological depictions and representations of queer theory (in both its history and its discipline as an academic institution) that focus on the twentieth century and instead promote a queer methodology of lingering, of delaying. Following discussions by Freeman (*Time Binds*) and Kathryn Bond Stockton (*The Queer Child: Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* [2009]), I explore how the very act of lingering in the nineteenth century, in stopping to interrogate the way this century engages with queer theory and representation, rather than moving quickly to modernism and contemporary works, is a queer(ing) effort. In her discussion of the body in *Time Binds*, Freeman looks at performances of sadism and masochism to suggest that the pause before the whip hits bodily flesh “does not signal an interval between one thing and another” (155). Instead, Freeman continues, this pause “is itself a thing” and “reveals the ligaments binding the past and the present” (*Time* 155). Discussing Walter Benjamin, Freeman notes that Benjamin sees the pause as “an antidote both to the traditional historicist models of progress and to the ‘revolutionary’ ideology of a complete break from the past—and, we might add, to the restorative pause that feeds modernity’s model of progress” (*Time* 155). Similarly in her discussion of normative models of growing up in *The Queer Child*, Stockton argues for “sideways growth” as a way to “prick (deflate, or just delay) the vertical, forward-motion metaphor of growing up” (13, 11). In examining the lateral relationships that children make, e.g., those connections to pets and toys, Stockton sees “sideways growth” as

producing a space for children to engage in non-reproductive growth and thus remain outside what Halberstam calls the “maturational models of growth,” those stages and experiences that move a person from childhood to adulthood according to heteronormative standards (*Failure* 73).

These discussions by Freeman and Stockton inform my concept of lingering. Both suggest a turning away from time as constantly moving forward from one marker to the next and instead emphasize exploring the moments in between these markers, the gaps that are typically smoothed over and ignored in progressive narratives. Stopping to “smell the queerness” in the nineteenth century, then, is one way we can not only break down the historicist notions of development but also chip away at the conception of the nineteenth century as either too conservative or as located too early in histories of modern sexuality and queerness, before the institutions and norms against which queer theory defines itself were solidified. Incorporating the methodology of ‘lingering’ will also help to open up nineteenth-century studies for queer theory *from a queer theory standpoint*, and, hopefully, to encourage more work done on nineteenth-century literature’s relationship to queer structures and dynamics.

My dissertation then focuses on queer lingering as I examine how many nineteenth-century texts were already constructing the same queer structures and representations that we find in queer modernist literature and in contemporary discussions of queer theory, such as queer temporalities and narrative structures as well as the focus of and on reproduction and kinship. In other words, it is not just that nineteenth-century narratives can be read through a queer theory lens. Rather, I am arguing for a different temporal approach to seeing queerness in literature, one that resists the notion that because queer identities as we know them today became more visible in the twentieth century than in previous centuries, those periods before the twentieth century are

not as queer. Instead, I maintain that by adhering to teleological notions that see queer theory progressing to more visibility in the twentieth century, we miss the ways the nineteenth century was always already queer.

My project is structured in two parts. The first is the overarching theoretical framework. Within this framework, I show how the progressive narrative of queer theory is not only misleading but is also at odds with the very nature of queer theory itself. In doing so, I argue that this progressive model has obscured the ways in which earlier works have engaged with more contemporary queer themes. After developing this framework, the second part of my dissertation examines three important subjects in queer theory and shows how these subjects are explored, but overlooked, in nineteenth-century British novels. Rather than provide a chronological examination of how nineteenth-century novels engage with queer theory, which would support the very progressive trajectory that I am arguing against, these chapters are grouped around major themes or topics from contemporary queer studies and how these themes relate to novels within the nineteenth century. The literary chapters in my project also have a combination of nineteenth-century British works and more modern texts through which to read these subjects and questions. In reading these texts together, rather than individually and chronologically, I hope to undercut the progressive narrative of queer theory and show how many of the themes or notions we consider ‘contemporary’ or ‘modern’ occur in the nineteenth century but may be missed or overlooked in our desire to make the nineteenth century the precursor of queer theory as we know of it today rather than a queer period in its own right. Importantly, because my project is organized around topics and not chronology, the breakdown of novels within each literary chapter differs from chapter to chapter and not all periods within the nineteenth century are represented. In general, I have chosen texts that are considered Gothic or have Gothic

elements, such as Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), as well as works such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), Alan Dale's *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), and George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) that either would not generally be considered queer or that are relatively unknown or for which there is limited scholarship. My goal is not to provide a definitive, regimented survey of the century but instead to linger in this productive space to appreciate its specific form of queerness.

My first chapter critiques the temporality of queer theory as an academic field and illustrates the ways in which the nineteenth century has been left behind by this field. Analyzing canonical queer texts from canonical queer theorists, I will show how the field of queer theory has created a progressive and heteronormative temporal trajectory for itself, a temporality that goes against key tenets of queer theory. I will also highlight the various ways in which the nineteenth century has been positioned as outside of the discipline's purview even though work on the nineteenth century is the foundation for much of the field.

Chapters Two through Four focus on three significant themes in queer theory—narrative and narrative structure, temporality, and kinship. As I will discuss in each chapter, these are key subjects in queer theory, and they are also subjects traditionally associated with queer modernism. And yet, as I will show, they are also visible in the nineteenth-century novel. In organizing this part of my project, I begin with the least recognized topic in nineteenth-century novels—queer narrative and narrative structures—before moving to more recognized queer themes—queer temporality and queer kinship.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the production of queer narratives and narrative structures in works such as Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), Alan Dale's *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), and Oscar Wilde's *The*

Picture of Dorian Gray (1891). Using theories from queer and narrative scholars such as Judith Roof, Peter Brooks, Halberstam, and Foucault, I examine how many of the avant-garde techniques as well as queer themes in *Nightwood*—complications in a progressive timeline, resistance to the reproductive futurity impulse, lack of a defined and definitive conclusion—are also produced in these nineteenth-century works. Chapter Three examines the creation of queer temporalities in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Using work from queer scholars such as Halberstam, Edelman, Freeman, and Dana Luciano, I show how the same theories and structures of time that we discuss in relation to *Orlando*—issues of generational time, the dismissal of reproduction, the intense focus on one character's behavior and interactions instead of the passing of time—are also found in nineteenth-century texts. My fourth chapter focuses on queer kinship formations, specifically the queer figure of the nineteenth-century bachelor. Approaching this figure structurally and not thematically and using work from scholars such as Katherine Snyder and Jennifer Beauvais, I look at how the bachelor functions in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and how his position helps to queer relationships, promote queer knowledges and organizing logics, and, importantly, protect domesticity and the nuclear family. Because the nineteenth-century bachelor is a figure so rooted in the nineteenth century, this chapter does not examine a modernist novel.

Rather than close my project with a conclusion, which would undermine my own queer methodology, I end by focusing on one of the most popular queer subjects in the nineteenth century: identity. In this final chapter, I re-situate how we view Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) in relation to trans narratives and theories of embodiment by concentrating on one of the

earliest trans narratives, *Man into Woman* (1931), the life story of Lili Elbe. Reading these two texts together, I explore the ways that *Frankenstein* can be read as an intertext for Lili's narrative, focusing on how *Man into Woman* incorporates many of the themes, organizational structures, and phrasings from Shelley's novel. Such a comparison opens up our readings of both texts and enables us to see Shelley's *Frankenstein* as more than a metaphor for trans lives. It becomes, I argue, a prototype for the telling of trans experiences and queer narratives more generally. Through this re-examination, I circle back to the beginning of the century to show the extent to which the nineteenth-century novel provides a queer template for twentieth-century texts and the rewards of returning to and lingering in the nineteenth century.

queer theory is not the theory *of* anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape
—Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?”

Queer Theory [dignified by capitals] does have a working bibliographical and anthologizable
shape which once can easily constitute
—Michael O’Rourke, “The Afterlives of Queer Theory”

CHAPTER ONE

THE ‘SHAPE’ OF QUEER THEORY

“The attraction of the [nineteenth century] to theorists of many disciplines is obvious,” Eve Sedgwick argues in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), it is “condensed, self-reflective, and [shows] widely influential change in economic, ideological, and gender arrangements” (1). Indeed, as I discuss further in my subsequent chapters, it is during the nineteenth century that we see the negotiation and construction of many of the themes on which queer theory focuses today, including gender and identity formation, sexology and sexuality, the establishment of standardized time and its role in organizing the subject, and the elevation of the family and reproduction as institutions and structuring logics. While this has led to the narrative that the nineteenth century was a conservative, normative, and generally unqueer period, at the same time as these norms were being established, there was also a very significant and extensive resistance to such conventions, especially in literature.

As scholars such as Michel Foucault, Sharon Marcus, and Sedgwick contend, and as work by nineteenth-century sexologists illustrates, the nineteenth century was a period of flourishing sexualities and sexual behaviors. Modern and contemporary notions of sexuality and sexual identity were being developed and disseminated in the nineteenth century by sexologists

such as Heinrich Kaan, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs, Magnus Hirschfeld, and Havelock Ellis. These classifications allowed for a more diverse and deeper understanding of sexuality and sexual desire than our primarily binary system of identification allows for now. As Foucault demonstrates in his examination of institutional discourses during this period, rather than trying to squelch and repress sexuality, the nineteenth century was an “age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of ‘perversions’” (*History* 37). Because “our contemporary opposition between hetero- and homosexuality did not exist for Victorians” (Marcus 19), I would argue that for much of the nineteenth century there was more room for the exploration of desires and behaviors than there is today.¹

The British nineteenth century was a period in which the identity formations and the institutional structures that have come to make up the foundations of queer theory were being negotiated and developed. The literature and literary genres it produced, such as the Gothic, reflected these concerns, making the nineteenth century an attractive space for queer theory. A popular and dominant literary genre during the period, the Gothic is an extremely beneficial site for queer theory, if not the first queer genre.² The “Gothic has,” William Hughes and Andrew

¹ As Marcus’s argument in *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007), Sedgwick’s discussion in “Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl” (1991), and Foucault’s examination of the “proliferation of sexualities” in the nineteenth century in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) show, we could argue that the nineteenth century was much more open and much queerer than our binary-based society suggests today.

² For a discussion of the relationship between queer theory and the Gothic see George Haggerty’s *Queer Gothic* (2006), Paulina Palmer’s *The Queer Uncanny: New Perspectives on the Gothic* (2012), Ellis Hanson’s “Queer Gothic” (2007), Mair Rigby’s “Uncanny Recognition: Queer Theory’s Debt to the Gothic” (2019), and Hughes and Smith’s “Introduction” in their edited *Queering the Gothic* (2009). For more detailed discussion of the Gothic, queer theory, and the nineteenth century, see Jack Halberstam’s *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995), Ardel Haefele-Thomas’s *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: Transgressing Monstrosity* (2012) and “Queer Victorian Gothic” (2012), O’Rourke and Collings’s “Introduction: Queer Romanticism” (2005), and Max Fincher’s *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye* (2007).

Smith declare, “always been ‘queer’” (1) to which Michael O’Rourke and David Collings add “Queer Theory [is] *always already* gothic” (15). Attributed to Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Ann Radcliffe’s *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the Gothic began in the late eighteenth century and continued throughout the nineteenth century, most heavily concentrated in the beginning and end of the century. Focusing on themes such as sexual repression, non-normative sexualities, gender performance, non-linear temporalities, and challenges to normative institutional structures such as the family and the Church, the Gothic is a very popular area for queer theory. It was also, according to Sedgwick, “the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality” (*Between* 91). In “Uncanny Recognition,” Mair Rigby suggests that we “view the Gothic as enabling queer scholarship, helping theorists to articulate queer reading practices and discuss the construction of sexual nonconformity. Gothic horror fiction has given queer theorists a language...which they have drawn upon to speak about queer experience and produce critical narratives” (54). From its content to its narrative structures to the very language it uses to speak about itself, the Gothic is tied to queer theory on every level.

For readers and writers in the long nineteenth century, as well as for contemporary readers and writers today, the Gothic provided a space in which “all normative...configurations of human interaction are insistently challenged and in some cases significantly undermined” (Haggerty *Gothic* 3). A space where “we find the institutions of family and marriage shaken, the representation of extreme states of being, encounters with outcast monsters, not to mention conventional preoccupations with forbidden knowledge, paranoia, madness, secrecy, and guilt” (Rigby 47). According to Sedgwick in *Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986), “it was the function of the Gothic to open horizons beyond social patterns, rational decisions, and

institutionally approved emotions” (3). These novels, Sedgwick continues, “deal with things that are naturalistically difficult to talk about, like guilt; but they describe the difficult, not in terms of resistances that may or may not be overcome, but in terms of an absolute, often institutional prohibition or imperative” (*Coherence* 14).

The Gothic is not the only queer environment in the nineteenth century. As I will illustrate in the chapters that follow, the nineteenth-century novel is also queer in the multitude of ways the literature of the time resisted norms and the organizing logics that structured narratives and people according to heteronormative ideologies focused on progression toward a definitive conclusion, reproduction, and growth. Nineteenth-century British novels promoted queer temporalities, queer discourses, and queer knowledge-making and refused closure, definitive conclusions, reproduction, and the heteroideological structures that arrange our lives. Queer temporalities were created and promoted in works by Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë, Bram Stoker, and Oscar Wilde. Queer figures were endorsed over nuclear family models in works by George Eliot, Shelley, and Stoker. And the queer resistance to closure, mastery, and heteroideological organizing logics can be seen in writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Alan Dale, Wilde, and Shelley.

From its content to its structure, the nineteenth century and its novels are a queer space. And yet, queer theory as a discipline and queer scholarship in general have tended to skip over this period and its literature, instead focusing on the early modern and modernist periods and cultures. When the field does focus on the nineteenth century, it is limited to a few constraining narratives. The nineteenth century is depicted as the starting point for what we find more ‘fully realized’ in the twentieth century. The focus tends to be on queer individuals and relationships in the nineteenth century and not on other foundational elements of queer theory. And, importantly,

queer theoretical discussions primarily center on the American nineteenth century and not the British.

This first part of my project then will draw attention to this general trend in queer theory and help to tease out the various overlapping ways in which the nineteenth century has been overlooked in these conversations: through the normalizing and progressive temporal trajectory of queer theory as an institutionalized discipline and its canon; through the way “modernism” has been associated with “queer” and how connections to modernism have overshadowed other periods; through the reduction of the nineteenth century to issues of representation and identity in queer discussions; and through the positioning of nineteenth-century queer figures and elements as anticipating what we see in the twentieth century, rather than as queer nineteenth-century figures and elements in their own right. Significantly, these views of the nineteenth century often contradict one another and, as a result, so does my discussion that follows. For example, while I argue that queerness, when it is addressed, in the nineteenth century is seen largely seen in terms of identity, I then will examine how queer identity is largely rooted in modernism and the twentieth century. My goal in this chapter, and in my larger project, is not to provide any defined conclusion, which would go against my queer methodology of resisting closure and resolution, but to explore the various ways in which queer theory has overlooked the nineteenth century and later, the various ways in which the nineteenth century is incredibly queer. Notably, as a queer project structured by a queer temporal methodology that resists teleology and conclusion, my discussion in this chapter is not linear or straightforward. Instead, it moves throughout periods, discourses, and uses of “queer” and “queer theory,” complicating and expanding how we conceptualize these terms. In doing so, I illustrate the multitude of ways in which the nineteenth century has been minimized in and overlooked by queer theory.

Queer Theory's "I'm Open" Definition and its Normative Bibliographic Temporality

In their 1995 guest column, "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?," Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner maintain that "queer theory is not the theory *of* anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape" (344). Critiquing the way "one corpus of work (often Eve Sedgwick's or Judith Butler's) is commonly made a metonym for queer theory or queer culture," Berlant and Warner argue that "no particular project is metonymic of queer commentary" (345). In their foundational "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" (2005), David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz reflect on the openness of queer theory and claim that one of queer theory's most attractive and productive promises is that it "remains open to a continuing critique of its exclusionary operations" (3). Since queer theory was first established in the academy in the 1990s, it has been characterized by its inability to be, or conscious resistance to being, defined. "The operations of queer critique," Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz continue, "can neither be decided on in advance nor be depended on in the future" (3). Making this point more directly, O'Rourke argues in "The Afterlives of Queer Theory" (2011) that "the appeal and lasting power of queer theory...is that it is non-delimitable as a field and non-locatable in terms of a chrononormative temporal schema" (126). "Part of...the attraction of queer theory," he explains, "is its very indefinability, its provisionality, its openness, and its not-yet-here-ness" (O'Rourke "Afterlives" 126).

Queer theory's "non-delimitabl[ity] as a field" and its "indefinability" are particularly attractive to scholars because they help characterize queer theory as an open and (welcoming) field of possibilities, applicable to any discipline, genre, and period. From this standpoint, queer theory gives us the rhetoric and models for critiquing the normative standards, institutions, and constructions in our respective research interests and disciplines. However, when we consider the

way that queer theory has been and continues to be constructed, both as a discipline and as a theoretical canon, queer theory actually has a very defined “bibliographic shape,” thinking of Berlant and Warner’s claim (344) and a very defined and rigid temporal trajectory. A trajectory that is firmly focused on and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and, as a result, one that does not fully consider and often overlooks the nineteenth century.

“From its very ‘beginnings,’” O’Rourke claims in “Afterlives,” “Queer Theory has...been turned toward the future” (132). “[D]espite sophisticated work on nonchronological temporalities,” Kadji Amin similarly argues in *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (2017), “Queer Studies, as a field, remains driven by a set of temporal values that orient it, almost triumphally, toward futurity” (33). O’Rourke locates this forward-looking impulse in the way queer theory as a field is constantly “revision[ing]” itself (107), and Amin connects it to queer theory’s engagement with politics (*Disturbing* 33-34). However, I see it in the ways that queer theory has established a future-orientated and teleological trajectory for its scholarship since it was first established as a discipline, based on works such as Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* (1978) and Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). As some of the founding works of queer theory, Foucault’s and Sedgwick’s texts have determined both the general trajectory and tone of queer theory and its theoretical framework, one that both highlights and simultaneously dismisses the nineteenth century’s engagement with the field.

Tracing the historical development of the disciplines and institutional discourses that contributed to the emergence of homosexuality as an identity and not an act, Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, illustrates the ways in which sexual identities are not only regulated and produced by dominant institutions or powers but also their effect on these

institutions. Sedgwick builds upon Foucault's work in *Epistemology of the Closet* when she argues that "the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms" the way "identity, truth, and knowledge" are created and disseminated (3). For Sedgwick, issues of sexuality, particularly "the endemic crisis of [the] homo/hetero definition" are central to our daily lives (*Epistemology* 1). In treating sexual identity as institutionally constructed rather than inherent, and as changing the frameworks for how we think about identity from ontological to epistemological, both works were central in moving queer theory away from an almost solely identity-based position (i.e., gay/lesbian studies) to a discipline that examines the networks of power, the systems of knowledge transfer, and the production of norms by dominant institutions and frameworks.

In addition to developing the focus of queer theory, these two works also provide a template for how to position the nineteenth century within queer discourses. In his well-known discussion of the repressive hypothesis, Foucault famously claims that "[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (*History* 43).³ In going from "had been" to "was now," Foucault makes the importance of temporality in queer theory explicit. In their introduction to their edited *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory* (2007), Janet Halley and Andrew Parker argue that Foucault's work "plants the temporal question in the center of the courtyard" (5). Similarly, in "After Thoughts" (2011), Jonathan Goldberg sees readers of Foucault as "insist[ing] on an unbreachable temporal divide" within the history of sexuality (35). Whether we see Foucault as simply making the "temporal question...central" or creating "an

³ This statement from Foucault may also have started or at least has encouraged the trend of seeing the nineteenth century in terms of sexuality studies and identity.

unbreachable temporal divide,” the nineteenth century in Foucault’s work is marked as the starting point for the creation of (sexual) identities that came after it.

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick similarly situates the nineteenth century as the beginning of queer theory and sexuality studies but does so through the structural framework of her text rather than in an explicitly temporal claim as does Foucault. Although Sedgwick states that her book “is organized, not as a chronological narrative, but as a series of essays linked closely by their shared project and recurrent topics,” she begins in the nineteenth century with Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd* (published posthumously in 1924 but created in 1891), followed by Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), the nineteenth-century Gothic and Henry James before ending with Marcel Proust (*Epistemology* 12). In doing so, Sedgwick’s organization suggestively positions the nineteenth century as the beginning of her larger analysis of queer elements and is a model followed both by later individual works and by later individual authors, as I shall discuss.

In marking the nineteenth century as the contemporary starting point for considerations of identity, sexuality, knowledge, and institutional power, Foucault and Sedgwick both position the nineteenth century as the origin point for queer theory. The queer theoretical works that came after them used the nineteenth century as their initial starting point before moving their discussions and supporting evidence forward in time. This general trend produced a temporally-progressive narrative as the field engaged first with the twentieth century and then with the twenty-first century, and primarily left the nineteenth century behind.⁴ This type of narrative may

⁴ As I will note later in this chapter, there are some exceptions to this trend, e.g., discussions of the Gothic and decadence. However, in general, the nineteenth century as a whole has been relegated to the position of queer theory’s origins.

be a result of an impulse in queer theory to not only show how it and we have evolved over the years (i.e., how each new society is more progressive and more accepting of non-normative sexualities) but also to establish evidence of queer histories and communities. However, it risks generalizing what came before it and obscuring the ways in which previous periods engaged in queer movements, behaviors, and structures. This type of development also promotes a false narrative of continuity from period to period. Regardless of the reason, queer theory has been producing a progressive model of development that runs contrary to its desire to break away from such a conventional paradigm. In developing queer theory as a field and trying to keep it ‘alive’ and relevant, then, queer theory is falling back into the very heteronormative models of temporality that its theories and discourses resist.

This organizational model does not just happen in queer theory’s canon. It also occurs within collections of works and within individual texts from queer scholars. For example, when we look at Halberstam’s oeuvre, we see that the focus of his work moves from the nineteenth century to contemporary culture. Halberstam’s first book, *Skin Shows* (1995), examines the production of monsters and the monster’s connection to the creation of the human subject from the nineteenth century through the twenty-first century. Using examples such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Halberstam locates both the nineteenth century-monster and the nineteenth-century novel in queer theory. However, rather than continuing to investigate the role of queer theory in the nineteenth century, Halberstam’s next major work leaves the nineteenth century behind as it moves our attention from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century.

In *Female Masculinity* (1998), Halberstam focuses on the depictions and roles of masculine female characters in literature and pop culture, looking at figures such as Radclyffe Hall, the individuals from Havelock Ellis's case studies, depictions of the stone butch, and the drag king. Although Halberstam does include a discussion of "two examples of female masculinity from the nineteenth century" in his second chapter, his inclusion comes off as obligatory in its effort to create a genealogy of masculine women (46). Moreover, Halberstam's two nineteenth-century examples are not the primary focus of the chapter or the book. Instead, the central focus is on the construction of masculinity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This temporal trajectory is also modeled in *The Drag King Book* (1999), co-authored with Del LaGrace Volcano, which examines the depiction and history of drag kings in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

From there, Halberstam's focus solidifies in the twenty-first century, looking at everything from pop culture to animation to live art performances for inspiration and evidentiary support for his discussion. In *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), Halberstam examines the contemporary case of Brandon Teena and trans films such as *The Crying Game* (1992), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), and *By Hook or by Crook* (2002), along with contemporary postmodern and trans art, depictions of drag kings, and queer subcultural spaces and communities. In *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), Halberstam looks at movies such as *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *Dude, Where is My Car?* (2000), contemporary feminist performances, and representations of queerness in movements such as fascism. In *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the Edge of Normal* (2012), we again see the concern with contemporary pop culture as he examines figures such as Lady Gaga and animations such as *SpongeBob SquarePants*. In *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability* (2018),

Halberstam focuses on his own life story using references to pop culture and historical figures from the twentieth century onward. In Halberstam's most recent work, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (2020), he returns to the modernist period while also mixing in more contemporary works and films such as *The Secret Life of Pets* (2016) and *The Life of Pi* (2012). Incorporating a range of works from the twentieth century to today, *Wild Things'* literary examples mirror its theoretical arguments of the wild. From *Skin Shows* to *Wild Things*, Halberstam's focus has followed a temporally progressive trajectory, one that begins in the nineteenth century and ends with contemporary cultural figures.

Finally, this progressive trajectory also occurs *within* individual works of queer theory. As discussed above, we initially see this in Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*. However, this organization also emerges in more contemporary works. For example, in her influential *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), Elizabeth Freeman positions her exploration of nineteenth-century texts as the window through which we can look at more contemporary issues and works. Halberstam's *Skin Shows* traces the development of the queer monster from the nineteenth century to contemporary film, and *Wild Things* begins with a focus on theorizing and conceptualizing nature and wildness in the nineteenth century before centering on modernist and contemporary works. In *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), Lee Edelman explores the role of reproductive futurity and the death drive from the nineteenth century with Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861) to the twentieth century with Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959) and *The Birds* (1963). Valerie Rohy's work on queer etiology in *Lost Causes: Narrative, Etiology, and Queer Theory* (2015) begins with Oscar Wilde before moving into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, ending with Sarah Waters's *The Night Watch* (2006). And Tyler Bradway begins his

introduction in *Queer Experimental Literature: The Affective Politics of Bad Reading* (2017) by discussing Victor Frankenstein as the canonical bad reader and ends the chapter by looking at Alison, the protagonist in Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006). The rest of the work similarly focuses on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Through these organizations, the nineteenth century is continually positioned as and limited to just the starting point of queer theory, something that can be left behind in the pursuit of more contemporary, and implicitly more relevant, texts and contexts.

The linear, progressive narrative constructed by the queer theory canon has two effects. The first is that it continues to position and promote the nineteenth century as the origin of contemporary queer identities and categorizations. The second is that in characterizing the nineteenth century as the start of queer theory, the queer theory canon reinforces the view of the nineteenth century as more oppressive and conservative than the periods that come after it and thus out of touch for discussions and applications of queer theory. This representation allows everything that comes after the nineteenth century to be conceived as more queerly developed, more liberal, and more accepting, and depicts the twentieth century, the avant-garde, and modernist works as 'queerer' than the nineteenth century and its works. While there is certainly some truth to this developmental narrative, setting up these periods in such a linear and progressive fashion also helps to obscure the queerness or antinormativity that does exist in the nineteenth century.⁵ This hetero-linear model of queer theory's history misses the ways in which the nineteenth century was fully cognizant of and promoted the same queer structures, behaviors,

⁵ Although the early works from Sedgwick and Halberstam may highlight the ways in which many queer themes and structures actually exist and operate within the nineteenth century, the temporal trajectory of both the canon and their own oeuvres has generally left this thinking behind.

and identities that are perceived as primarily developing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A key motivation of this dissertation is to draw our attention back to these moments in nineteenth-century texts.

Queer theory's rigid temporal focus has not gone unnoticed by scholars. "It's obvious to anyone working in periods preceding the twentieth century that inside the academy these specialties can feel like 'nonqueer' domains," Freeman argues in "Still After" (2011), "insofar as the protocols of inquiry, the dominant terms of the field, and the materials themselves resist any easy assimilation into contemporary sexual politics" (28). Similarly, Amin posits in *Disturbing Attachments*, "one reason why queer scholarship on Asia, Africa, and Latin America, as well as on earlier historical periods, tends to be marginalized within the field as a whole is because it examines sites in which *queer* operates in markedly different ways from what has been canonized within Queer Studies" (188).

Critiquing the temporal insularity of queer theory is not a recent development. Since the establishment of the field, there has been resistance to queer theory's seemingly rigid temporal divide, most notably and most comprehensively from medieval, Renaissance, and early modern scholars with such works as David Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (1990), Jonathan Goldberg's edited *Queering the Renaissance* (1994), and Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero's edited *Premodern Sexualities* (1996).⁶ Published more-or-less in tandem with Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), these theoretical works almost immediately

⁶ This is not the only scholarship pushing back against the temporality of queer theory. However, these fields, as a whole, have offered some of the first and some of the most effective critiques. For a more contemporary work see Carolyn Dinshaw's *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (2012).

pushed back against the view promoted in many of these early queer theory texts that the historical and literary narrative(s) of sexuality is primarily located in post-nineteenth-century works.

Summing up many of the questions and conversations in these pre-nineteenth-century critiques, Madhavi Menon, in “Afterword: Period Cramps” (2009), claims that “the impression we get from reading queer Renaissance work in particular and queer scholarship more generally is that there is no queerness, let alone queer theory, before the nineteenth century” (229).

Similarly, in “Queer Renaissance Historiography” (2009), Stephen Guy-Bray, Vin Nardizzi, and Will Stockton allege that “because the implicit goal of much queer scholarship has been to serve the aims of contemporary gays and lesbians, texts [and I would argue, periods] that are not useful in this regard have been marginalized” (1). As a result, Goran Stanivukovic argues in “Beyond Sodomy: What is Still Queer About Early Modern Queer Studies?” (2009) that “contemporary queer theory still tends to pass over the arguments produced by early modern criticism” (43).

One of the most visible critiques against the normalizing temporality of queer theory, and an important one for my work here, is the pre-nineteenth-century scholarship on teleology and historicism, most notably Goldberg and Menon’s “Queering History” (2005) and Menon’s “Spurning Teleology in Venus and Adonis” (2005).⁷ Looking at both Sedgwick’s Axiom 5 in *Epistemology of the Closet*—“The historical search for a Great Paradigm Shift may obscure the

⁷ In *How Soon is Now?*, Dinshaw provides a similar, but more general and temporality-focused discussion from a medieval standpoint. In her work, Dinshaw reads Bruno Latour and Dipesh Chakrabarty to argue that “the image of time as moving relentlessly forward in a constant, measured flow” that “promoted the related, specious chronology of modernity with its abjected premodernity” was “a modernist plot” (*How* 18). And she discusses how analyses of the “premodern/modern divide” “reveal periodization functioning in the interest of contemporary Western European (or Westernized) concerns” (Dinshaw *How* 19). Suggesting that the implicit “modernist tenacity in the organization and production of knowledge” in institutions limits our ability to “thin[k] broadly” and engage critically, Dinshaw argues that “temporal critiques remain urgent” (*How* 20).

present conditions of sexual identity” (44) —and the infamous “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (temporally-reflected) proclamation in Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* (43),⁸ Goldberg and Menon argue (both separately and together) that queer history or the queering of historical narratives about sexuality is teleological and “often works to moot different markers of sexuality for the sake of categories claimed to be more general” (Goldberg and Menon 1610).

Discussing the consequences of teleology further in “Spurning Teleology,” Menon argues that “according to these [critical-historical] narratives, the divide between sexual regimes follows a curve of increasing legibility in which the regime we currently inhabit is anticipated in the Renaissance” (492). “Such an understanding of sexuality,” she continues, “depends on the existence of a developmental curve from the proto-gay to the gay,” a “conclusive progress” defined as “teleology” (Menon “Spurning” 492). Menon sees “this investment in teleology” as a result of the “fascination with thinking about sexuality as a developmental movement from before to after, from prematurity (or early modernity) to maturity (or modernity), an investment that marks the historicist project of distinguishing between a distant past and a current present” (“Spurning” 493).⁹

⁸ The quoted text here reflects the version of *The History of Sexuality* used elsewhere in this project. The version Menon uses in her work is the following: “The sodomite *was* a temporary aberration; the homosexual is *now* a species” (“Spurning” 492).

⁹ Menon’s claim in “Spurning Teleology” is echoed by other scholars as well. In *How Soon Is Now?*, Dinshaw, a medievalist, adds to this argument when she discusses how even though historians do not believe that time is a single, progressively-moving trajectory, we still rely on timelines. “[E]ven recent work that is fully informed by postmodern critique,” she writes, “begins with a timeline—a carefully cross-cultural timeline” but a timeline nonetheless (19). Similarly, in *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007), modernist scholar Heather Love points out that although “many queer critiques take exception to the idea of a linear, triumphalist view of history, we are in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress” (3).

Not all pre-nineteenth-century theorists agree with Menon and Goldberg's treatment of history or their views on teleology, but as a model, their argument is important for looking at how narratives of queer history and sexuality studies have created and temporally fixed the periods before modernism as not productive for and outside of queer theory.¹⁰ This model also becomes incredibly important when we consider how the use of "Early Modern" to refer to the Renaissance period helps to uphold this temporal divide and how this naming structure affects the view of the nineteenth century in queer theory and queer studies. While on its own, a discussion of the use of "Early Modern" instead of the "Renaissance" may seem more suited to a footnote, when we consider the implications of attaching the term "modern" and its variants to those elements (texts, people, ideas) before modernism proper, and, importantly, what that means in terms of a temporal arc, it becomes more important. It implies that a period is significant for its relationship with modernism and modernist agendas, not for its own cultural production.

(Queer) Modernism: Definitions and Effects

While "modernism" is a fraught and capacious term, it generally refers to a period of aesthetic experimentation and engagement with modernity, one largely located in the twentieth century and concerned with the first World War. For queer scholars, modernism is typically seen as the 'first' literary and aesthetic period in which we find notions of queer(ness) that most resemble the representations, concepts, and concerns that we see in our own society today. As

¹⁰ For a work that does not agree with Menon and Goldberg, see Valerie Traub's "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies" (2013). The discussions from pre-nineteenth-century scholars, such as Menon and Goldberg, that critique the temporality of queer theory as a discipline are also important for understanding how the nineteenth century is left out of such conversations in queer theory. As my discussion in this chapter and in my Introduction illustrates, most of the criticisms of queer theory's subjects (both initially and today) come from pre-nineteenth-century scholars, modernists, and contemporary queer scholars. However, there have not been many visible or well-known examinations coming from or about the nineteenth century. This is one of the reasons why, I argue, that the nineteenth century is often overlooked in queer discussions.

Heather Love argues in “Modernism at Night” (2009), not only do we find “the pervasiveness of nonnormative desire” in the modernist period, but “the classic period of aesthetic modernism [also] coincides with the emergence of modern sexual identities,” suggesting a historical grounding or basis for modernism’s claim of being the first ‘real’ queer period (744, 745). Similarly, in “Queer Modernism” (2013), Benjamin Kahan examines how German sexology, the scandals of Oscar Wilde and Radclyffe Hall, and French Decadence work together to characterize the modernist period as queer. Defining “queer modernism” as “delineat[ing] the sexually transgressive and gender deviant energies that help fuel modernism’s desire to thwart normative aesthetics, knowledges, geographies, and temporalities,” Kahan’s discussion locates the representation of sexual identities and homosexuality as central to both queer modernism and modernism itself (348). And in “Modernism Queered” (2006), Laura Doan and Jane Garrity define “modernism queered” as “a particular way of seeing or knowing modernism from *the perspective of sexuality*, informed by an interpretative framework called ‘queer theory’” (542 emphasis mine).¹¹

For scholars such as Love, Kahan, Doan, and Garrity it seems that one of the founding tenets for identifying the modernist period as *the* queer period is the visibility of queer identities

¹¹ While Doan and Garrity acknowledge that focusing on the lives and behaviors of queer individuals within the modernist period is not the only way to think about “queer modernism,” they immediately follow this declaration with “[n]evertheless, we begin with an exploration of the emergence...of dissident sexualities” (542) and the rest of their work largely follows this initial viewpoint, equating ‘queer’ with ‘sexuality’ and ‘homosexual practices and eroticism’ within this period. For example, Doan and Garrity argue that “the hunt for the presence of the ‘queer’ within modernism has to do not only with foregrounding the historical formation and narrative presence of homosexuality but also with denaturalizing heterosexuality” (546). And, at the end of their discussion, Doan and Garrity divide modernist works into three groups in “defin[ing] the concept of ‘queer modernism’”: 1. Those works that “deal explicitly with the topic of homosexuality”; 2. Those works that are not visibly queer texts but “grapple with homoerotic themes”; and 3. Those works that do not seem connected to “homosexuality but none the less reveal nascent homosexual possibilities upon analysis” (547-548). In all three of these groups, sexual behavior, characteristics, and themes provide the basis for their identification as ‘queer.’

in this period. However, not only did visibly (and flourishing) queer identities and kinship structures exist prior to the modernist era, but the “emergence of modern sexual identities,” that Love and Kahan see as crucial for the connection between queer theory and modernism, was based on nineteenth-century sexologists and sexology (Love “Modernism” 745).

Calling the modernist period and its literature “*the* queer period” or “the first queer period” is problematic then when we consider that queerness in this period is largely figured as representational, i.e., concerned with identity, which is only one part of queer theory. In depicting the modernist period and modernist literature as queer because of their associations to and with visible queer identities and characters, queer, in these contexts, becomes more about identity and less about highlighting and resisting hegemonic models of power, livability, and dissemination of norms and knowledge. Not only does this type or use of queer produce normative notions of progress, evolution, and tradition (as we can look back and see how far queer identities and queer politics have come), but it also obscures elements of queerness that do not deal with representation or identity, such as temporality and reproduction, and seems to promote or fall under sexuality studies or a history of sexuality rather than queer theory as we think of it today.

This obscuration is particularly important when queer modernism/modernist literature is used as the basis against which we measure queerness that came before it. Because ‘queer’ in these modernist contexts is associated with identity and sexual behaviors, the focus is on how those other eras and genres that are compared with modernism/modernist literature show queer identities. Periods like the nineteenth century and nineteenth-century literature then may not be considered queer, or *as* queer, because queer identities were not a concrete representation yet, but were still being solidified. And, importantly, queer elements outside of identity, e.g., queer

narrative structures, queer temporalities, queer kinship structures, are ignored or not perceived or sought out in these periods and genres before modernism/modernist literature. This is one reason why, I believe, the queerness of the nineteenth century and its literature have not been considered or greatly pursued in contemporary discussions and scholarship of queer theory.

The characterization of modernism as the first ‘real’ queer period and genre also has significant consequences when we consider how modernism and its variants are often added to names and titles to create a progressive trajectory. A clear example of this is the change in nomenclature in the period defined as the Renaissance. Although only occupying a few sentences at the end of a page in her introduction to *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006), Freccero’s astute observation highlights the temporal concern with using ‘modernist’ or ‘modern’ or ‘modernism’ as adjectives, qualifiers, names. Referring to the use of slashes in her title—

Queer/Early/Modern—Freccero claims they “are intended to interrupt the current notion of the Renaissance as the early modern period” and, importantly for my argument, “to highlight precisely those...ways in which the period has stood in for the beginning of modernity, its anticipation, its seeds so to speak, because those are also what are to be read in the tracing of a queerness that is projected backward to the period and forward from it” (3). For Freccero, “early modern” “suggests that ‘early on,’ in other words ‘before’ the modern, there was an instantiation of the modern, and so the early modern comes proleptically to figure modernity” (3). Offering a similar critique, although approaching it via teleology rather than naming, Menon writes in “Spurning Teleology” that the “insistence on a progressive curve has also been terminologically institutionalized—and the Renaissance is now more ‘correctly’ and commonly known—as the *early* modern period, the precursor to the modern period” (492). In “Queering History,”

Goldberg and Menon explicitly make the connection between teleology and naming when they

claim that to “persist in using the term *Renaissance*” is “to refuse the teleologically inflected *early modern* with its certainty that what matters in the past is its relation to a predetermined modernity” (1610).

Even though these discussions occupy only a few sentences in each work, these three arguments have a profound impact in examining how queer theory and sexuality studies have created an exclusionary and excluding narrative arc from the Renaissance/early modern period to the modernist period. This arc solidifies the modernist position as modern, i.e., the most developed and progressive, and the period in which we find queer elements that most resemble the representations and discussions we have today.¹² Periods outside of this arc or between the two periods, such as the nineteenth century, are removed from this narrative.

Discussions of the effects of using ‘early modern’ to refer to pre-nineteenth-century literature help draw our attention to the way the nineteenth century is positioned as outside of this temporal arc. However, they also show how the prevailing critiques against the arc and queer theory’s temporality have also pushed aside the nineteenth century. As Menon points out in “Spurning Teleology,” the reliance in both queer theory and sexuality studies on Foucault’s famous discussion of the sodomite-homosexual division makes Foucault “sound as if he were drawing a neat arc according to which what comes before the nineteenth century is merely preparatory for what comes after it” (494).¹³ While Menon’s claim on its own is important for critiquing the teleological historical impulse in these disciplines, her language also highlights the

¹² For example, see Dinshaw’s *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (1999). Even at the level of the title we see this arc connecting the periods before the nineteenth century to those in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

¹³ See also her discussion in “Afterword: Period Cramps” (2009).

lack of attention to the nineteenth century. In her phrasing, we have the separation of “what comes before the nineteenth century” and “what comes after,” but there is no consideration given to what happens during the nineteenth century. Instead, the nineteenth century is just left out. Similarly, although Freccero highlights the effects “early” has on the periodization “before” modernism, what does it mean for those periods not included? There is no “post early modern but not exactly modernist” modernism. The designation of the Renaissance as “early modern” marks everything else as not modern and as not connected to modernism and, importantly, as not included in this temporal arc. Occurring between the Early Modern and Modernism, the nineteenth century, as an autonomous period, disappears, together with any queerness it may have.

Examining the change in nomenclature from “Renaissance” to “Early Modern” also helps to illustrate a pattern that I observed during my research for this project. Over and over again, I saw scholarship positioning non-twentieth-century and non-modernist work as anticipating a queer effect that is more fully realized in the twentieth century. As I discussed earlier and as I discuss in further detail in my subsequent chapters, the nineteenth century contains many of the same features and behaviors that we find both in queer modernism and in contemporary queer studies. However, when they are discussed in scholarship, they are often characterized as anticipating modernism, gesturing towards modernism or modernist aesthetics, or, in some cases, identified *as* modernist rather than standing on their own as nineteenth-century queer elements, individuals, and works. This reclaiming then undermines the merit of the nineteenth century as a queer and queering period on its own.

We can observe this approach in modernist and nineteenth-century scholarship on a few different levels, the most visible being the attachment of the designation ‘modern’ to an

individual or text from the nineteenth century. An early example of this occurs in Joseph Allen Boone's *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (1998), an important work for the characterization of the modernist period as defined in and by its sexual transgressiveness and, what we would now call, its queer aesthetic practices. There, Boone refers to Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) as a "quintessential expression of *modernist* writing 'before its time'" (19) and as a "*protomodernist* novel" (27). However, the most visible example occurs when Boone calls *Villette* "a precursor text in which can be located, in embryonic form, many of the issues of sexuality and narrative that dominate experimental fiction written in the first half of the twentieth century" (26-27). This recharacterization also happens in more contemporary scholarship. In his examination of the role of family and alternative kinship networks in modernist literature in *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce, and Proust* (2011), Barry McCrea labels Charles Dickens's work as the "precursor for the queer narrative shift of Joyce and Proust" and as providing an "antecedent or parallel for the queer family dynamics of modernists" (20, 25).¹⁴ And McCrea more broadly refers to Victorian literature as the "key precursor" to "queer model[s] of narrative" in the twentieth century and suggests that modernists took advantage of the potential for queer narratives and structures found in nineteenth-century literature (*Company* 3). In "Queer Modernism" (2010), Robert L. Caserio refers to "nineteenth-century naturalist fiction" as the "seedbed of modernism" (200). And in his discussion of subjects, desires, and behaviors that have been "swept under the carpet within twentieth-century projects of sexual classification," Halberstam points to the

¹⁴ McCrea even goes so far as to suggest that Bucket in *Bleak House* "point[s] to a queer narrative shift that will prove central to Joyce and Proust" before pointing out that "*Bleak House* itself, of course, is not a modernist novel" as if its position not as a modernist novel means it cannot be a queer one (48).

fluidity and disorder in the nineteenth century, arguing that “[w]e can stretch this sense of untimely desire, disorderly bodily expression, and untidy identities out of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth” (*Wild* 14).

In addition to positioning nineteenth-century figures and works as anticipating modernism, scholarship also refers to nineteenth-century works and individuals *as* modernist or includes them in modernist discussions. For example, in *Feeling Backward*, Love describes her work as “group[ing] together a handful of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors under the rubric of backward modernism” (7). Although most of the primary authors she considers are from the twentieth century, she does focus on one author from the nineteenth century: Walter Pater. While Love briefly acknowledges that Pater is “generally understood as a late Victorian or aestheticist writer,” this acknowledgment of Pater as a nineteenth-century figure is undermined as she argues that “each author’s work departs in various ways from classic definitions of modernist literary practice” (*Feeling* 7).¹⁵ Love makes a similar move in her “Modernism at Night,” when she refers to Oscar Wilde as a “queer modernist” (745), and we see echoes of this structure in discussions by Jamie Hovey, Matthew Burroughs Price, and Halberstam.¹⁶

In aligning Pater and Wilde with modernism, Love “recovers” them from the nineteenth century for modernism. Although Wilde is one of the most popular individuals for this type of

¹⁵ In associating Pater with a “modernist literary practice,” Love positions Pater within modernism even if she recognizes his location in the nineteenth century. Rather than extending a nineteenth-century literary practice out to the twentieth century, she brings Pater into modernism.

¹⁶ See Hovey’s *A Thousand Words: Portraiture, Style, and Queer Modernism* (2006), Price’s “A Genealogy of Queer Detachment” (2015), and Halberstam’s discussion and positioning of Henry David Thoreau, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Oscar Wilde in *Wild Things*.

recharacterization, perhaps because of his location at the end of the century, he is not the only figure we find in these positions. As searches on scholarly databases such as the MLA Bibliography, Google Scholar, and Google show, Henry James, Emily Brontë, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, among others, and their works have also been positioned as modernist or as anticipating modernism.

It is important to note that my critique of these depictions is not to uphold periodization or to promote the dismantling of it. Instead, I hope to illustrate how both the institution of queer theory and the ways we are writing about the nineteenth century (and those periods around it) are not only making but supporting a set canon and a progressive trajectory that goes against many foundational theories in queer theory and that excludes texts, authors, and temporalities in favor of presenting a defined and continuous temporal arc. In using the term “modern” and its variants (early modern, anticipating modernists, gesturing to modernism) to talk about texts, authors, individuals, behaviors, and characteristics, two ideas are sustained: First, that temporality and development are progressive and continuous—what we are finding in the sixteenth century leads to the seventeenth century which leads to the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and so on and so forth; and second, that queerness (behavior, identities, moves, strategies, narrative elements) is a property of the twentieth century and is applied as a label retrospectively and only in ephemeral senses, to those works, periods, and authors prior to it, i.e., using language to suggest a work is gesturing towards, anticipating, similar to, predicting, foreshadowing, looking forward to, or prefiguring. Such gestures take away those queer elements and figures from the nineteenth century that could help us see the nineteenth century, as a whole or even a particular part of the century, as queer on its own and instead adds them to the twentieth century and modernism. In doing so, this characterization ignores and undermines the

robustness of the queerness that, I argue, already existed in the nineteenth century and its literature.

The Queer Nineteenth Century

One common response to the question of whether or not the nineteenth century and queer theory would be productive bedfellows is to suggest that because queer identities in the forms closest to what we know of them today were not categorized until the twentieth century, queer(ness) does not apply to or show up in periods before modernism. However, as the work in Renaissance and early modern literature suggests, queerness does show up in texts outside of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is just not as readily recognized, explored, or acknowledged by queer theory. Moreover, this conception of queer as related to sexual identities is only one definition or one way of conceptualizing queer theory. Queer theory also encompasses non-normative behaviors, strategies, and ways of thinking that push against societal and institutional structures. In mainly focusing on one aspect of the word “queer,” we miss the numerous other ways in which the nineteenth century productively engages with and supports queer concepts.

Part of the resistance to or dismissal of queerness in the nineteenth century may also be a result of the way the nineteenth century seems to have acquired two opposing but still restrictive identities. The first, associated with writers such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Charlotte Brontë and supported by scholarship’s focus on the bildungsroman and the marriage plot, is the view that the nineteenth century was conservative and sexually oppressed, primarily focused on creating and sustaining genealogies and privileging the family, Christian morals, gender norms, and the institution of marriage. The focus on family in Dickens’s oeuvre, the famous “Reader, I married him” at the end of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), and the various journeys of the young

female protagonists in Austen's novels from wild and willful to contained and married all illustrate the view aptly put by McCrea that "[t]he Victorian novel is... focused on family genealogy; its plots invariably involve wills, bequests, long-lost relatives, and, of course, marriage" (*Company* 5). "[T]he Victorian novel," McCrea continues, "derives a sense of narrative rhythm around promises that paternity will be revealed and courtship will end in weddings" (*Company* 5-6).

The second common view of the nineteenth century, produced by its positioning as the start of queer theory and supported by the type of scholarship I outlined above, is that the nineteenth century is too ambiguous and too heavily located at the beginning of modern sexuality and queerness to be productive for queer conversations. According to this narrative, the nineteenth century is not regarded as queer because the institutions and norms against which queer theory defines itself were still coming together. While we can still point to individual works, people, or genres within the nineteenth century that we can see as queer (e.g., Walter Pater, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, decadence), the period, as a whole, is not considered conducive to queer theory.

While there is scholarship on the British nineteenth century and queer theory, the work that has been done is largely from nineteenth-century scholars and is generally located in nineteenth-century studies. In this sense, O'Rourke and Collings's claim that "queer Romanticists have tended to be a bit like porn stars: very well known in their own field yet not making any real impact outside of those clearly demarcated areas" is both apt and applicable to the nineteenth century as a whole (5). Moreover, much of the nineteenth-century work engaging with queer theory has been using the strategies and techniques developed and promoted by queer

theory (e.g., using normative and antinormative rhetoric) but has generally been unacknowledged by queer theory, queer theorists, and the queer theory canon.

Perhaps even more significantly for my project, much of the foundational queer work on the nineteenth century and many canonical queer texts that use the nineteenth century as examples are focused on American literature and culture from this period, not British. This is particularly prevalent in queer discussions of temporality in the nineteenth century. For example, there is Peter Coviello's *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* (2013), Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (2007), and Freeman's *Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American Nineteenth Century* (2019). The use of American nineteenth-century literature as literary support is not limited to discussions of queer temporalities. American literature is also used as the primary example in other key queer works, such as Michael Borgstrom's *Befriending the Queer Nineteenth Century: Curious Attachments* (2020), Christopher Looby's *"The Man Who Thought Himself a Woman" and Other Queer Nineteenth-Century Short Stories* (2017), Natasha Hurley's *Circulating Queerness: Before the Gay and Lesbian Novel* (2018), and Valerie Rohy's *Chances Are: Contingency, Queer Theory and American Literature* (2019), among others. This leads me to ask, why is the American nineteenth century seen or depicted as a more productive space for queer theory as opposed to its transatlantic British counterpart?

In general, when queer theory as theory (as opposed to discussions of sexuality and normativity) is associated with the British nineteenth century, it is usually focused on individual works or authors, such as Dickens, Wilde, Pater, John Keats, Henry James, William Blake, and

Lord Byron.¹⁷ For example, in *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (2010), Holly Furneaux challenges the traditional view of Dickens as conventional and conservative and instead highlights the various conceptions of positive male-male behavior and desire that are found in Dickens's oeuvre. In *Blake and Homosexuality* (2000), Christopher Hobson explores how Blake uses homosexual references and codes in his works to challenge conventional views on morality, social oppression, revolution, and representations of intimacy and love. James Najarian looks at how the Victorians constructed Keats's representation as *the* effeminate poet in *Victorian Keats: Manliness, Sexuality and Desire* (2002), and Julia Saville examines Gerard Manley Hopkins's relationships with and negotiation of homoerotic desire in *A Queer Chivalry: The Homoerotic Asceticism of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (2000). And we cannot forget the numerous works examining the queerness of Oscar Wilde, and Henry James.

When queer theory does engage with the British nineteenth century on a broader level, it generally focuses on nineteenth-century themes and specific periods from within the century, e.g., the Gothic (and all its associated monsters), the fin de siècle, aestheticism, and decadence. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the Gothic is one of the most important genres for queer theory and many foundational queer theorists, such as Sedgwick and Halberstam, began their theoretical and academic careers in the Gothic. Sedgwick's *Coherence of Gothic Conventions* is arguably one of the first texts to make connections among the Gothic, queer theory, and the nineteenth century, followed by works such as Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995) and Halberstam's *Skin Shows*. In the 2000s we get Patrick O'Malley's

¹⁷ See Richard Kaye's "The New Other Victorians: The Success (and Failure) of Queer Theory in Nineteenth-Century British Studies" (2014) and Holly Furneaux's "Victorian Sexualities" (2011) for two helpful and concise discussions of the work on queer theory and the nineteenth century.

Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture (2006), Max Fincher's *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age* (2007), and Ardel Haefele-Thomas's *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic* (2012), to name a few. Works using queer theory to examine the fin de siècle include Elaine Showalter's *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (1992), and Stephan Karschay's *Degeneration, Normativity and the Gothic at the Fin de Siècle* (2015).

Aestheticism and decadence are also considered attractive to and crucial for queer theory and queer discourses. The focus on deconstructing binaries, promoting transgressive and 'perverse' sexualities, engaging in camp, and challenging categorizations in these movements make them, according to Elisa Glick, "queer sites of cultural production that helped to define both literary and sexual modernity" (325). As Stefano Evangelista notes in "Decadence and Aestheticism" (2019), "just as literary critics of [decadence and aestheticism] have drawn on the insights of queer theorists, queer theory has benefited from the knowledge of the complexities of gay history, and the modes of its cultural inscription, generated within literary criticism" (107). Similarly in her examination of decadence's influence and use in post-Victorian movements and periods, Kristen Mahoney argues that "[t]he tone of Decadence has inflected the tone of queer theory and queer studies and underwrites the models of reading and appreciation that are central to those traditions of thinking" (200).¹⁸ An early, foundational work on the intersections between these movements and queer studies is Richard Dellamora's *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (1990). More recent work on these fields includes Dustin Friedman's *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (2019), Mahoney's

¹⁸ For further discussion of the links between decadence and aestheticism and queer theory, see Price's "A Genealogy of Queer Detachment" (2015).

Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence (2015), and Kate Hext and Alex Murray's edited *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (2019).

Mahoney's and Hext and Murray's respective discussions are particularly important for my work in this project as they demonstrate how decadence was an influential movement that extended well beyond the nineteenth century. Although, as Mahoney notes, "[c]onventional visions of periodization along with modernist dismissals of the fin de siècle have obscured from view the persistence of Decadence in the twentieth century," modernist and twentieth-century writers, artists, and thinkers repeatedly turned to Decadent themes and strategies to critique their contemporary period (Mahoney 6). As Hext and Murray (12) and Mahoney (5) note, the return to decadent themes and strategies was particularly prevalent in responding to the effects and experiences of World War One, and decadent and aesthetic figures and conventions "play[ed] a prominent role in the cultural landscape of the early twentieth century" (Mahoney 4-5).

Finally, we also see queer theory engaged on a thematic level in the nineteenth century with subjects like marriage and the bildungsroman, but these relationships are on a much smaller scale (and more focused on/in individual works) compared to queer theory's relationship with the Gothic, decadence, and fin de siècle literature. For example, in *Between Women*, Marcus challenges the notion that relationships between women were discouraged and marginalized in Victorian England. Instead, she argues that intimacy between women in its various forms was not only accepted in Victorian England but a vital element in society and conceptions of femininity. In *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal, and Victorian Letters* (2012), Kate Thomas looks at how the post in Great Britain encouraged and allowed for queer relationships and communities, and in *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia*

Woolf (2008), Mary Jean Corbett examines how domestic fiction from nineteenth-century writers such as Austen, Eliot, Gaskell, and Charlotte Brontë affected kinship structures.

While this brief overview of nineteenth-century queer work shows that queer scholarship is being conducted on the nineteenth century, it is important to notice what is missing. The first is queer work on the nineteenth century *from a queer theoretical standpoint*, as opposed to nineteenth-century scholars doing queer work. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, queer theory's focus is on modernist and contemporary works, not texts from the nineteenth century. The second is queer engagement with the nineteenth century *on a larger scale*, rather than contained within nineteenth-century studies. Broadening O'Rourke and Collings's questioning in "Queer Romanticism" (2004) about the lack of a *Queering the Romantics* or *Queering Romanticism* compared to works such as Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger's *Queering the Middle Ages* (2001) and Goldberg's *Queering the Renaissance*, I want to ask, where is the *Queering the Nineteenth Century*? Or even *Queering the Victorians?* (2).¹⁹ And the third is work on queer power structures, institutions, narrative structures, and disseminations of knowledge, of the kind that we see in discussions of queer modernist and contemporary texts, rather than focusing primarily or solely on identity and representations of queer characters.²⁰ It is with this last point that my project begins.

¹⁹ In their work, O'Rourke and Collings see the Victorian question answered by Richard Dellamora's edited *Victorian Sexual Dissidence* (1999). However, while Dellamora's edition does examine questions of same-sex desire and representation, it is too focused, in my opinion, on queer characteristics, behaviors, and representations of queer identity. While still an important part of queer theory, identity is not the only subject in queer theory. I would like to see a more comprehensive and open investigation of the various uses of queer in nineteenth-century British literature.

²⁰ For example, while Kaye provides a helpful overview of queer nineteenth-century work through 2014 in his "The New Other Victorians," the majority of the works he references deal with issues of sexuality and the nineteenth century, not queer as a strategy to resist normative structures. Even Kaye's definition of queer theory suggests its primacy of sexuality over antinormativity: "the basic discernments of Queer Theory" are "that sexuality is an

unstable, historically shifting, and overlapping set of categories; that Victorians were no more 'repressed' or constricted than those who followed in their wake; that sexuality is shaped by numerous social and cultural factors and in highly gendered ways" (756).

CHAPTER TWO

QUEER NARRATIVES

Narrative theory and queer theory have been closely tied together since queer theory emerged as a discipline in the 1990s following the publication of Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) and Michel Foucault's *A History of Sexuality* (1978).¹ Because, as Robyn Warhol and Susan Lanser explain in their foundational *Narrative Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions* (2015), "narratives are critical to constructing, maintaining, interpreting, and exposing and dismantling the social systems, cultural practices, and individual lives that shape and are shaped by performative acts" it should come as no surprise then that "the centrality of narrative in shaping heteronormativity and with it queer subjectivity has been acknowledged by virtually every major queer theorist from Roland Barthes to Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler to Lee Edelman" (7, 8).

Narratives have always been important for the ways in which they make queer identities and behaviors visible and invisible. However, their very structures and organizations are also crucial for upholding normative values. With narrative's emphasis on teleology and progressive linearity (in plot, chronology, and generational legacy), production (whether in children, new knowledge, a final sense of closure and accomplishment, or other tangible products), social discipline and conformity, and mastery or transference of authorized or official knowledge, narrative's basic structure is premised on heteronormativity. Narratives that ascribe to these

¹ Although published in the late 1970s, the work became foundational to queer theory in the 1990s.

ideals, then, in a circular pattern, continue to both promote these values as the norm in society as well as mirror the norms produced by society. However, narratives can also undermine these norms when they or their characters resist following a heteronormative structure and instead complicate linear timelines, defy the reproductive imperative for a narrative's trajectory, promote subjugated knowledges over dominant discourses, and refuse defined and definitive conclusions.²

Scholars and readers have long considered the nineteenth century to be conventional and as promoting conservative social norms due to its associations with the marriage plot, the realist novel, and the bildungsroman. Barry McCrea sees the nineteenth-century novel as being in the “thrall of a sort of fertility cult, where all sense of beginnings and endings are predicated upon marriage and procreation” and as “deriv[ing] a sense of narrative rhythm around promises that paternity will be revealed and courtship will end in weddings” (*Company* 7, 5-6). Similarly, Holly Furneaux argues that the “Victorian novel has widely been interpreted as a particularly stubborn heterosexual form...concerned with marriage, birth (and death)” (*Queer Dickens* 83). And as Jill Galvan and Elsie Michie so succinctly note in their introduction to *Replotting Marriage in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (2018), the marriage plot has not only come to “ground our sense of the long nineteenth-century” but is precisely what defines and separates

² It is important to note that this chapter does not focus on queer characters, i.e., characters considered queer in terms of identity or sexuality. While including queer characters, relationships, and behaviors in literary (and cinematic) works is important, both for making queer individuals and behaviors visible and to push back against normative values, including them in a narrative does not necessarily mean that a narrative itself, in its structure, is queer. As queer narrative theorist Judith Roof maintains in her discussion of lesbian coming-out narratives, “visibility does not necessarily signal a change in ideology or structure” (104). For Roof, many narratives featuring queer characters end up structured according to conventional trajectories, where the lesbian, or queer, character enters a bildungsroman trajectory in discovering who they are and the “coming out” or the newly visible identity ends up being the product at the end of this tale, thus ascribing the coming out narrative to a heteroreproductive structure.

the nineteenth century from other periods (1, 2), especially, and importantly, I would add, from modernism.

However, as this chapter will argue, nineteenth-century narratives very much resisted these normative ideals and structures, even if they seemed to promote them. And yet, the focus on the twentieth century and the avant-garde that predominates in queer and narrative theories has made it easy for scholars to overlook the nineteenth century's challenges to conventional forms and ideologies. This chapter will change this focus by highlighting the multitude of ways in which nineteenth-century novels resist these heteroideological narrative forms, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818 to Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in 1891.

What Makes a Narrative Heteronormative?

As narrative and queer theorists argue, narrative's organizing structure is inherently heteronormative as it is based on teleology, production, and difference. In *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (1984), Peter Brooks contends that a narrative's plot moves and is structured according to our readerly desires for conclusion and ending. "Plots are not simply organizing structures," Brooks asserts, "they are also intentional structures, goal-oriented and forward gazing" (*Reading* 12). For Brooks, "we read...in anticipation of" the end (*Reading* 94). This desire to get to the end (where something—death, knowledge, life—is produced anew) is what keeps readers engaged in a narrative's plot and, importantly for Brooks, is what produces a heteronormative narrative structure. Similarly, in *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (1996), one of the foundational works of queer narrative theory, Judith Roof maintains that "our understanding of narrative as a primary means to sense and satisfaction depends upon a metaphorically heterosexual dynamic within a reproductive aegis" (xxii). According to Roof, narrative is produced by and continues to reproduce a heterosexual reproductive structure

because for a narrative to progress, it needs difference (xxix). Roof then sees narrative's goal as generating a tangible element at the end of the novel through a heterosexual reproductive structure. Supporting this idea, Roof claims, are the "countless analogies to child/product—knowledge, mastery, victory, another narrative, identity, and even death—that occupy the satisfying end of the story" (xvii).

Narrative's inherently heteronormative structure is supported by its temporal trajectory. Although not traditionally considered a narrative theorist, Edelman's discussion of reproductive futurity, Warhol and Lanser argue, "has profoundly influenced queer studies of narrative" (8).³ Edelman's claim in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) that both our individual lives and society as a whole are organized around reproduction supports the view that heteroideology and (re)production are the basis for narrative and helps to illuminate how narratives and their plots are organized. Although examining the role of the figurative Child in organizational structures and not plot, Edelman's discussion mirrors Brooks's in its emphasis on looking to the future to organize the present. Just as Brooks argues we "read...in anticipation" of the end, Edelman sees society as looking to the future and ascribing to reproductive futurism to solidify one's current identity. While discussing different aspects of narrative (one desire and structure, the other reproduction and temporality), both works argue that the structure of narrative is forward-looking and focused on the teleological.⁴

³ For a persuasive discussion of how queer and feminist scholars are rarely recognized as narrative theorists see Abby Coy Kendall's "Towards a Queer Feminism; or Feminist Theories and/as Queer Narrative Studies" (2015).

⁴ Jack Halberstam also briefly discusses this heteronormative trajectory in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) and *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005). See Chapter Three on temporality for more information and examples.

Although explored in varying frameworks, these discussions see narrative's normative structure as progressive and sequential: as following, producing, and supporting a linear chronology of events, all in service to the (re)productive end. That is, an end that produces something concrete, whether this is a new identity (as in the bildungsroman and marriage plots), a new or a reiteration of a normative standard (e.g., the deaths or containment of unruly or transgressive characters), support for authorized and normalizing knowledges, or new information (e.g., the "truth" in a detective novel or about a paternity case).

How to Queer Narrative

While the conventional structure of narrative suggests its inherent heteronormativity, a narrative may also resist such an organizing logic. Queer narrative structures devalue the productive ending and instead privilege narrative dissolution and digression over completion and linearity. These types of narratives expose the inner workings of the heterostructure found in all narratives and highlight the ways in which this (re)production fails (Roof xxiv). They "never perceiv[e] an end as a possibility," Roof explains, instead "putting repetition, alternation, and accrual in place of progress and closure" (182-183). Queer narratives also lack a central organizing master narrative and instead promote "digressions, ruminations, and texture of language" which "furnish a substitute for the more oedipal narrative gratification of mastery and totalized meaning" (Roof 142). Moreover, in undermining the productive ending, queer narrative structures often produce queer temporalities as they resist the progressive, developmental trajectory required of individuals in a normative society.⁵

⁵ For a discussion that resists this view of queer narrative structures, see Tyler Bradway's "Queer Narrative Theory and the Relationality of Form" (2021).

Although theorists such as Brooks and Roof are primarily concerned with a narrative's plot structure, I also propose in this chapter that a narrative may be considered queer if it undermines normative meaning-making and knowledge practices and promotes unauthorized or subjugated knowledges over authorized and official ones. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Jack Halberstam argues that "knowledge practices that refuse both the form and the content of traditional canons may lead to unbounded forms of speculation, modes of thinking that ally not with rigor and order but with inspiration and unpredictability" (10). Focusing on practices of failing, specifically behaviors such as "forgetfulness and stupidity," Halberstam suggests that these strategies "produce an alternative mode of knowing, one that resists the positivism of memory projects and refuses a straight and Oedipal logic for understanding the transmission of ideas" (*Failure* 69). These strategies of failure not only help us resist the societal imperative to grow up according to social norms, but also, according to Halberstam, resist the "developmental and progress narrative of heteronormativity" (*Failure* 59-60).

Through strategies of failing or other queer knowledge practices, we can produce or uncover new or unauthorized forms of knowledge, what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges." In his "Two Lectures" (1976), Foucault defines subjugated knowledges as "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (*Power* 82). These knowledges, he continues, are "opposed primarily...to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse within a society such as ours" (Foucault *Power* 84). In upholding and promoting those knowledges over dominant, institutionalized, and disciplinary knowledges such as science, the law, and medicine, narratives provide the

opportunity to resist the reproduction of hegemonic, disciplinary knowledges and narrative shapes, especially in moments where narratives would be expected to uphold heteroideological ideals.

Nineteenth-Century Narrative Structures

As this brief discussion of narrative structure suggests, it is easy to see why the nineteenth-century novel is traditionally viewed as both following and producing heteroideological forms. It is consumed with the search for answers, focuses on journeys and the family, promotes conventional gender roles and the social order, and results in defined (and usually tidy) conclusions. However, to see novels from this period as only upholding normative values would be a mistake.

Many popular and influential nineteenth-century works, literary genres, and literary elements resisted such normative values and forms.⁶ Nineteenth-century Gothic novels are rarely chronological, coherent, or singular. Instead, they contain a multitude of narratives from a variety of perspectives that manipulate a narrative's temporality. Frequently made up of frame narratives and unresolved mysteries, the Gothic's narrative structure resists conclusion and promotes subjugated knowledges, such as the occult and folklore, over institutionalized ones. And marriage plots in the Gothic are regularly broken, dismissed, or organized along non-normative lines or partnerships. New Woman fiction similarly resists narratives structured according to the marriage plot and heterosexual couplings that positioned women as objects to be

⁶ For other examples of how nineteenth-century works resist normative narrative forms, see Sharon Marcus's *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007), Furneaux's *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (2009), Sedgwick's *Between Men* (1985), Claire Jarvis's *Exquisite Masochism: Marriage, Sex, and the Novel Form* (2016), Helen H. Davis's "'I seemed to hold two lives': Disclosing Circumnarration in *Villette* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" (2013), and Derek Bedenbaugh's "Novel Violations: *The Hermaphrodite* and the Failure of Form" (2015).

won and reincorporated into the patriarchal social system at the end of the novel (Mangum 15-16). Instead, these works focus on relations between women and the period *after* the marriage (Mangum 15-16). “Drawing attention to the potentially masculinist authority of narration, through intersection generic structures and conventions, multiple plotting, and ‘feminizations’ of the *bildungsroman* and the *kunsterroman* plots” these New Woman novels, Teresa Mangum argues, reveal “the operations of gender privilege and suppression masked as marriage practices” (16).⁷

Nineteenth-century serials similarly resist the heterocentric impulse toward completion and closure (albeit to keep readership and thus profits) and instead focus on the production of more narrative. The multiple subplots and the plethora of characters in a serial undermine the idea that there is one central narrative that must be followed and one conclusion that must be acknowledged (Furneaux *Queer* 86). The staggered publication of each issue also encourages a sense of wandering and imagination between episodes as opposed to normative literary trajectories that focus on progression, linear development, and “productive” goals (McCord Chavez 708).⁸

Heteroideological norms were also challenged by popular literary elements in nineteenth-century texts. For example, in *The Flirts Tragedy: Desire Without End in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction* (2002), Richard Kaye argues that the numerous depictions of flirting and

⁷ For more information on New Woman fiction and narrative structure, see Gerd Bjørhovde’s *Rebellious Structures: Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel, 1880-1900* (1987), Ann Ardis’s *New Woman, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990), and Mangum’s *Married, Middlebrow, and Militant: Sarah Grand and the New Woman Novel* (1998).

⁸ For more information on serials and how they resist heteronormative narrative trajectories, see Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund’s *The Victorian Serial* (1991), Robyn Warhol’s “Making ‘Gay’ and ‘Lesbian’ into Household Words: How Serial Form Works in Armistead Maupin’s ‘Tales of the City’” (1999), and Jennifer Hayward’s *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (1997).

“flirtatious desire” in nineteenth-century novels indicate “that the aim of desire is not necessarily the realization of desire but rather deferral itself” (3-4). Connecting “flirting” to “deferral,” Kaye maintains that “the Victorian novel thrived not on myths of courtship but by flirtatious energies that were inassimilable to plots of marriage” (*Flirts* 39). In their introduction to their edited *Narrative Middles: Navigating the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* (2011), Caroline Levine and Mario Ortiz-Robles suggest that the often-overlooked middle of nineteenth-century novels provides opportunities for social dissidence and encourages new ways of thinking through the very strategies that characterize queer narratives: intentional pauses and narrative deferrals, suspensions, and repetition. And in *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (2019), Dustin Friedman claims that decadence, art, and aestheticism in nineteenth-century novels, especially those at the fin-de-siècle, function as mediums through which figures (both real and fictional) are able to experience and, importantly, self-create their own queer identities outside of normative spaces.

Nineteenth-century literature was not the only force that challenged hegemonic narrative structures. Nineteenth-century figures and intellectuals resisted these traditions as well. As Kate Hext and Alex Murray note in their “Introduction” to *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (2019), “fin-de-siècle decadents,” such as Walter Pater and Algernon Charles Swinburne, “reject[ed]...the conventional narrative structures of the triple-decker novel” and “the epic poem” and “revolt[ed] against realism and the values it encapsulates” (11). Instead, they focused on “fragmented forms, overwrought styles, and...the fleeting and erotic” (Hext and Murray 11). In his “Conclusion” from *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), Pater promotes aesthetic experiences and the moment over sustained development and teleology. And John Ruskin similarly denounces teleology in “The Nature of Gothic” (1853) as he values the

fragment and “suggests the productive nature of wandering in an era that was increasingly organized around progress and a future-oriented outlook” (Chavez 792).⁹

All these nineteenth-century works, literary genres, literary elements, and figures promote queer narrative strategies, illustrating the structural queerness of texts from the nineteenth century. However, the specific generic classifications of these texts, such as the Gothic or the serial, often obscure the queerness of this period as a whole. When we do notice queer structures and strategies in these works, we often view them as part of the specific genre, e.g., as a convention of the Gothic or a characteristic of the serial, not as reflective of the greater nineteenth-century literary tradition. In discussing examples from a wide range of nineteenth-century literary genres, this chapter will show just how ubiquitous queer narratives were in the nineteenth century.

“I have a narrative but you will be put to it to find it”: *Nightwood* as a Queer Narrative

When queer scholars discuss queer structures and strategies in narratives, they typically turn to modernist and postmodern texts for models, not nineteenth-century novels. One of the most prominent modernist examples of queer narrative structures is Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* (1936). *Nightwood* is considered one of the first novels to portray a passionate relationship between two women and has long been part of the gay and lesbian literary canon. Featuring a collection of misfits and outcasts, *Nightwood* follows Robin Vote as she marries Felix Volkbein and has a child and then leaves Felix and her son for two separate female lovers, Nora and Jenny. *Nightwood* is hard to read, and, at times, an even harder novel to summarize and describe,

⁹ See Chavez’s “The Gothic Heart of Victorian Serial Fiction” (2010) for a discussion of how Ruskin’s “The Nature of Gothic” resists conventional forms and can be applied to literature.

because, as Jeanette Winterson remarks in her Preface to the 2006 publication, “*Nightwood* is demanding. You can slide into it...but you can’t slide over it” (x). The novel is likewise unable or unwilling to give an account of itself: “I have a narrative,” Matthew says as if in the voice of the author, “but you will be put to it to find it” (104). The novel’s long and descriptive prose, its focus on the psychology of the characters over plot, its resistance to closure, and its manipulations of time not only challenge readers but also secure *Nightwood*’s status as a queer text.

Nightwood does not follow a teleological organization. Instead, the narrative is presented as episodic, focusing on one person’s experience at a time rather than following a chronological timeline. For example, in the penultimate paragraph of the second chapter (“La Somnambule”), Robin abruptly leaves her husband Felix and their new son: “‘I’ll get out,’ she said. She took up her cloak; she always carried it dragging. She looked about her, about the room, as if she were seeing it for the first time” (53). Instead of telling readers where Robin goes or what Felix does while she is gone, the narrative’s next sentences focus on Robin’s return. “For three or four months the people of the quarter asked for her in vain,” we are told, “When she was seen again in the quarter, it was with Nora Flood. She did not explain where she had been: she was unable or unwilling to give an account of herself” (53-54). The next chapter (“Night Watch”) then provides an account of Robin’s life with Nora, focusing on Nora’s experience and psychological reactions, that fills in the time between Robin leaving Felix in the penultimate paragraph of the previous chapter and Robin returning with Nora in the final paragraph of the same chapter.¹⁰ The

¹⁰ A similar manipulation of narrative time happens in the following two chapters as well (“Night Watch” and “The Squatter”). At the end of “Night Watch,” Nora sees Robin leave her for an unnamed woman, whom the next chapter identifies as Jenny. However, as in the chapters introducing Nora, the next chapter “The Squatter,” does not follow Nora or even Robin and Jenny post-elopement but takes readers to the beginning of Robin’s relationship with Jenny. At the end of “The Squatter,” the narrative brings readers back in time to the temporality of “Night

narrative's lack of teleology and an overarching narrative trajectory is epitomized in the final scene of the novel during which Nora finds Robin in a chapel on Nora's property, running on all fours and barking with her dog. Watching Robin and her dog interact, Nora simply observes what is happening without any involvement. The novel then ends without any indication of what will happen or any explanation and thus without any closure.

Nightwood's temporality is also affected by the excessive, descriptive, and decadent style of narration. Frequently breaking up the trajectory of the story, the narration's emphasis on long-winded descriptions force readers to work through the dense language, extending the temporality of a moment, sometimes by paragraphs and even pages. For example, when Felix is first introduced to Robin, the narrative pauses while readers go through three long paragraphs of description before the narrative action picks up again. "The perfume that her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry, overcast with the odour of oil of amber, which is an inner malady of the sea, making her seem as if she had invaded a sleep incautious and entire" the often-cited second paragraph begins (38). Composed primarily of similes, this description of Robin forces readers to work through the various levels of imagery rather than providing a mimetic portrayal. These prolonged descriptions of Robin exemplify Teresa de Lauretis's take on the temporality of the novel. De Lauretis sees two narrative strategies at work in *Nightwood*, and both affect the temporality of the narrative's trajectory. "[O]ne stretches out the time of narration by excruciatingly protracted monologues and punctiliously detailed descriptions of characters and locations," de Lauretis

Watch" when they are told "it was not long after this that Nora and Robin separated; a little later Jenny and Robin sailed for America" (83).

explains, “like a film shot in long takes where we can see the minutest details of a scene but what ‘happens’ is next to nothing” (“*Nightwood*” S118). The other is “a contraction of the time of narrated events and their elliptical arrangement, such that the passage of months, at times years, can take up no more than three lines of text, while the events of one night may spread out over two or more chapters, as they are first told and then retold through a character, as in a flashback” (“*Nightwood*” S118).¹¹ This kind of temporality has come to be termed “queer.”¹²

Nightwood's queer form and narration are a constant point of discussion in criticism of the novel. Katherine A. Fama argues that the novel's use of melancholia “disrupts the unities of events, plot, and meaning” (40). Discussing Dr. Matthew O'Connor's “floods of excessive, melancholic, wandering speech,” Fama posits that this melancholia provides “an alternate mode of ‘telling’ that reveals the instability and the insistence of narrative accounts” and “resist[s] the ordered structure of the plot” (40). De Lauretis sees the “syntactical and rhetorical density...unusual lexical choices, and the kaleidoscopic storytelling” of the novel, its organizing logic and style of the narration, as what “frustrate both narrative and referential expectations” and thus makes it a queer text (“Queer” 244). Alan Singer argues that *Nightwood*'s “independence from any linear narrative logic” and its play with language put the novel “at odds with all the reductive unities of teleological plot” (69). And Leah Lynch similarly maintains that the novel's “delight in a play of surfaces” and “episodic...narrative arc” resist “character and plot cohesion” and teleology (84).

¹¹ For another reading of how this passage illustrates the novel's queer temporality, see Leah Lynch's “Intemperate Time: Queer(ing) Temporality and Narrative in *Nightwood*” (2019).

¹² For further discussion of queer temporalities, see Chapter Three.

In *Come As You Are*, Roof identifies *Nightwood* as the rare example of a work that avoids ascribing to a heterosexual structure because of its disjointed narrative and its rejection of the reproductive impetus. Although the novel is focused on Robin and her various relationships, which may initially suggest its heterocentric structure, Roof argues that the narrative is actually about “the failure of a reproductive ideology” as “reproduction...is no longer the alibi of the story” (xxv). Throughout the narrative, Robin flutters from partner to partner, unable to commit to a lasting relationship. As a result, the emphasis in the novel is on the various companions’ responses to Robin and their relationship, not promoting the perpetuation of the relationship itself. Robin even has a child early in the novel with Felix, one that she staunchly cries that she “‘didn’t want’” (53). Shortly after the child is introduced, Robin leaves Felix and ends up with Nora in America. In not just “thwart[ing]” or “frustrat[ing]” reproduction as an organizing logic, but in showing it as artifice and as unnecessary for the narrative, the reproductive trajectory is “no longer the alibi of the story” but is “reduced to just another pathetic narrative” (Roof xxv). As a result, Roof sees *Nightwood* as being “a narrative about narrative dissolution, a narrative that continually short-circuits, that both frustrates and winks at the looming demagogue of reproduction” (xxiv).¹³

The features of *Nightwood* that contribute to its queer form—the excessive and wandering narration, the manipulations in time, the episodic structure instead of a chronological and progressive trajectory, the dismissal of the reproductive impetus, the lack of conclusion—are

¹³ For other readings of *Nightwood*’s structure and narrative style see, Joseph Frank’s “Spatial Form in Modern Literature” (1995); Diane Warren’s *Djuna Barnes’ Consuming Fictions* (2008); 118; Daniela Caselli’s “*Nightwood*: Darkness Visible” (2009); Brian Glavey’s “Dazzling Estrangement: Modernism, Queer Ekphrasis, and the Spatial Form of *Nightwood*” (2009); Ashley T. Sheldon’s *Unmaking Love: The Contemporary Novel and the Impossibility of Union* (2017), 38-41; and Joseph A. Boone’s *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* (1998), 232-251.

characteristic of modernist novels and the avant-garde. However, they were also already functioning in nineteenth-century novels, just not in the same ways, which may make it easy for scholars to overlook novels from this period in discussions of queer narratives. The rest of this chapter will explore how four nineteenth-century novels engage in queer narrative strategies and forms: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1853), Alan Dale's *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).

“urged by curiosity”: *Frankenstein*'s “Curious[ly]” Queer Narrative Structures

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is a Romantic epistolary novel contained within a frame narrative structure. The text follows Robert Walton, a young, inspired adventurer exploring the Arctic, and his letters to his sister back home in England. Contained within these letters is the story of Victor Frankenstein and his attempts to create life and the consequences of his actions for himself and for his family.

Frankenstein's narrative structure has been widely noted by scholars and is included in almost any critical discussion of the novel.¹⁴ With its multiple levels of narration, *Frankenstein* is commonly described as a frame narrative.¹⁵ However, because *Frankenstein*'s structure forces readers to travel down and then back up through multiple layers of narrative in order to go from

¹⁴ For example, see Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010); Halberstam's *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995); Beth Newman's "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*" (1986); Andrew Burkett's "Mediating Monstrosity: Media, Information, and Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'" (2012); Gregory O'Dea's "Framing the Frame: Embedded Narratives, Enabling Texts, and *Frankenstein*" (2003); and Manuel Aguirre's "Gothic Fiction and Folk-Narrative Structure: The Case of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (2013).

¹⁵ *Frankenstein* has also been described as containing concentric circles of narration or stories-within-stories, as having embedded narratives, and compared to Chinese boxes and Russian nesting dolls. See Gregory O'Dea's "Framing the Frame" (2004); Marc Rubenstein's "My Accursed Origin": The Search for the Mother in 'Frankenstein'" (1976); Charles Schug's "The Romantic Form of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (1977); and Criscillia Benford's "'Listen to my tale': Multilevel Structure, Narrative Sense Making, and the Inassimilable in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (2010).

Walton's opening letters to his ending ones, the novel is not just a simple frame narrative like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) or Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* (1898). Instead, *Frankenstein*'s structure resembles a modified chiasmus, where the different sides of the narrative in the story mirror one another in an inverted structure.¹⁶

Seeing the narrative as specifically chiastic instead of just multi-layered or a frame narrative is important in thinking about how the narrative structure resists a progressive, linear trajectory. In a chiastic structure, we are not just going through multiple one-sided frame narratives (Walton-Frankenstein-Creature) to get to the end, but instead readers are forced to read down through the various narratives and then up to their conclusions to enter back into Walton's narrative and finally reach the end of the novel. Not only does this delay our sense of closure and our reading pleasure, but this drawn-out structure and the careful exploration of each character's individual narrative suggest that the narrative's trajectory is less about teleology and more about wandering, exploration, and character development.¹⁷

The way the various levels of narrative are introduced supports a reading of *Frankenstein*'s structure as concerned primarily with wandering instead of teleology or conclusion. Each individual narrative in the novel begins with the focalizer's desire to

¹⁶ There is the outer framework of Walton's letters to his sister that is always there ("A"), lurking in the background as readers go through the other narratives. Then we get Frankenstein's tale ("B") which is interrupted by the creature's tale about his life ("C") which contains the DeLacey's and Safie's tales in the middle ("D"), then we return to the creature's story ("C"), then Frankenstein's story ("B"), and then finally finish our climb back up to end where we began, with Walton's letters to his sister ("A"). Taken together, the ABCDCBA narrative pattern resembles that of a chiasmus.

¹⁷ This chiastic, multiple narrative structure also impacts our sense of the narrative's temporality. Because these frames are all being told within Walton's letters to his sister (which is the current temporal moment), we have a sense that the present time and narrative is continuing linearly, i.e., days are passing on the ship, while we as readers have to go through these different frames and narrative temporalities before getting back to Walton's own narrative at the end and the present moment.

understand the subject of the next narrative. At each introduction to a new character, and thus a new narrative, we see some version of the following: the current focalizer meets the new character, is intrigued by something, and wants to learn about the character so the focalizer, importantly, pauses his own story and asks the new character for his story. The old focalizer then fades into the background as the new character tells his tale. Reading this organizing logic in terms of sympathy, Jeanne Britton argues that “sympathy itself produces the impetus for the narrative to be both told and recorded” (4). Although Britton is focused solely on the role of sympathy in the novel, her analysis, when read within the context of narrative structures, affirms the idea that *Frankenstein* is a queer narrative. It is not the impetus for teleology or closure that creates this narrative, but the desire to pause and hear the different characters’ stories.

This pattern of interruption and deferral is first introduced in Walton’s fourth letter to his sister. There, Walton meets Frankenstein and reports to his sister that he “never saw a more interesting creature” and that Frankenstein’s “constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion” (14, 15).¹⁸ Walton is so affected by Frankenstein’s “constant and deep grief” that he asks Frankenstein about his journey. “I felt the greatest eagerness to hear the promised narrative,” Walton tells his sister, “partly from curiosity, and partly from a strong desire to ameliorate his fate, if it were in my power” (17). Foreshadowing a pattern that we will see with Frankenstein and the creature, Walton’s desire to hear Frankenstein’s story stems from his “curiosity” and his longing to understand Frankenstein. Interestingly, Frankenstein’s response to Walton’s desire to understand his tale is one of caution: “You seek for knowledge and wisdom,

¹⁸ All references to the text are taken from the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, published in the 1996 Norton Critical edition.

as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been” (17). While we can read this as a warning against seeking knowledge, Frankenstein’s statement is also a warning against “gratification” and closure and thus foreshadowing the lack of resolution in each narrative and in the novel as a whole. Walton’s curiosity and desire to empathize with Frankenstein, in a sense to explore Frankenstein’s character and life story, pause the linear movement of the narrative and instead promote a static narrative (in the sense that the larger, outer narrative of Walton does not move) in which one thing (or character in this case) is explored in detail.

This pattern of deferring one’s own story to explore the story of another character is continued in both Frankenstein’s and the creature’s tales. When Frankenstein sees the creature for the first time after his birth (and after William’s and Justine’s deaths), Frankenstein’s immediate reaction is one of “rage and horror” (65). However, when the two eventually do meet face-to-face, Frankenstein yields to the creature’s request to talk and hear the creature’s story (66-67). As with Walton, Frankenstein’s decision to listen to the creature is “partly urged by curiosity, and compassion confirmed [his] resolution” (67). Again, we see the use of “curiosity” and “compassion” as the impetus for the story. Frankenstein wants to understand the creature, wants to understand why and how the creature could have murdered William, and through that, understand himself. The characters’ desires to understand one another then suggest a desire to understand themselves, creating a kind of looping back that also resists the forward movement of the narrative.

Although the creature does not use the same language as Walton and Frankenstein (e.g., “curious”), we find similar connotations when the creature stops his own tale of his birth and post-birth to talk about the DeLaceys. After being abandoned by Frankenstein and living without

human companionship, the creature comes upon the DeLaceys, a poor family living in a cottage. Although the creature had previously been shunned, at times violently, from interacting with other humans, which would suggest the creature would be fearful of this family, the creature is intrigued. The creature tells Frankenstein he felt “sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature...[he] had never before experienced” so he decided to “remain quietly in [his] hovel, watching, and endeavouring to discover the motives which influenced their actions” (72, 73). Although not as direct as the beginnings of the tales from Frankenstein and Walton, the creature’s interest in the DeLaceys is also motivated by curiosity and the desire to understand them. Continuing to watch them, the creature wants to know why “these gentle beings [were] unhappy” (74). It is also, however, motivated by the desire to understand himself and his role in society through learning about their family.

The beginning of all three narratives (Walton’s, Frankenstein’s, and the creature’s) are prompted by this desire for empathy and understanding (both of others and of oneself) and cause the various narrative levels of the novel to pause while each new narrative is explored. The closing of the creature’s and Frankenstein’s narratives are also motivated by this same prompt. After recounting how he introduced himself to the DeLacey’s patriarch and was run off by his children, the creature ends his story with a plea to Frankenstein to create a companion for him that will ease his loneliness and unhappiness (98). “You must create a female for me,” the creature implores, “with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being” (98). Frankenstein then picks his own narrative back up and, after some contemplation and persuasive rhetoric by the creature, is initially swayed. “I was moved,” he tells Walton, “I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of my consent; but I felt that there was some justice in his argument” (99). “I compassionated him,” Frankenstein

continues a bit later, “and sometimes felt a wish to console him” (99). Rather than kill the creature, Frankenstein listens and is persuaded, and thus the plot can continue.¹⁹ If Frankenstein had accomplished his initial goal of killing the creature, or even if he simply declined to listen to the creature, both Frankenstein’s narrative and, presumably, the larger narrative of the novel would have ended.

The desire to understand is not the only organizing logic that encourages narrative deferral in *Frankenstein*. The narrative also uses the revenge plot to defer closure. Although seemingly opposites (one focuses on compassion and the other on destruction) both desires organize the narrative in terms of deferral rather than completion. When it comes time for Frankenstein to finally finish the creature’s companion, which, presumably, would lead to the end of the creature’s involvement with Frankenstein and in the narrative overall as the creature would, as promised, leave with her, the narrative trajectory (again) swerves as Frankenstein refuses to complete his work. Overcome with fear that the creature and his companion would not abide by the terms of their agreement and instead populate the earth with “a race of devils” (114), Frankenstein destroys the companion he has been working on and produces a new, but still delaying, organizing logic: the revenge narrative (or avengement narrative depending on the subject). The creature, who had been following Frankenstein on his travels, confronts Frankenstein later that same day. However, rather than killing Frankenstein or Frankenstein

¹⁹ While we can read Frankenstein’s acquiescence to make a companion as a sign that the narrative, and Frankenstein, are following the heteroideological imperative to reproduce and continue, this decision, importantly, allows Frankenstein to defer his marriage plot trajectory with Elizabeth and instead to travel, or wander, throughout England for two years with Henry. This decision results in a narrative delay that happens on two levels: the marriage plot in Frankenstein’s own personal narrative and, as a result, the larger novel as we must wait for Frankenstein’s narrative to close before we can get to Walton’s. As soon as Frankenstein begins working on the companion and her reproductive capabilities become a reality, Frankenstein destroys the companion and inserts a new deferral strategy: revenge.

killing the creature, the creature tells Frankenstein he will get his revenge: “You can blast my other passions; but revenge remains...I may die; but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery” (116). Instead of challenging or killing him right then, Frankenstein tells him to leave, which the creature does, perpetuating the novel’s pattern of deferring concluding actions. This pattern is almost immediately supported in the following paragraph when Frankenstein asks himself “[w]hy had I not followed him, and closed with him in mortal strife? But I had suffered him to depart, and he had directed his course towards the main land” (116-117). No answer to his self-reflection is given. Instead, this decision allows the narrative to continue and, importantly, it allows Frankenstein to keep putting off his marriage to Elizabeth, and thus a heteroreproductive ending for his individual narrative.

The creature and Frankenstein continue this pattern of deferral via revenge throughout the rest of the narrative. Some of the clearest examples of this pattern occur after Elizabeth’s death.²⁰ Overcome with the spirit to avenge Elizabeth and his family, Frankenstein decides to leave Geneva and track the creature down. Leaving his home, he sees the creature while he is saying goodbye to his family at their gravesites. “I darted towards the spot from which the sound proceeded,” Frankenstein recounts, “but the devil eluded my grasp” (141). Again, the creature *just* slips out of Frankenstein’s control. During Frankenstein’s subsequent pursuit of the creature, the attempts to deny closure become even more blatant. Although the creature clearly has the upper hand in terms of strength and ability to live off the land, the creature does not allow Frankenstein to perish or even kill him. Instead, the creature helps Frankenstein continue his

²⁰ Another example occurs after the creature flees Frankenstein after Frankenstein destroys the companion. The creature, unbeknownst to Frankenstein, kills Henry, and Frankenstein, who had fallen ill, is charged with his murder, thereby delaying the narrative again.

pursuit. The creature leaves footprints in the snow and other clues cut into trees and stones so Frankenstein can continue tracking him and prepares food and leaves dead animals for Frankenstein to eat (141-142). The creature even leaves Frankenstein taunts or messages to inspire Frankenstein to continue his journey and his revenge when his spirit is low (142). “Come on, my enemy,” the creature writes to Frankenstein, “we have yet to wrestle for our lives; but many hard and miserable hours must you endure, until that period shall arrive” (142).²¹

When Frankenstein finally does catch up with the creature, he decides to try and trap him farther along the trail instead of confronting him then and there. Again, like the other instances already identified, the creature eludes Frankenstein (143). This evasion by the creature allows their feud to continue, thus delaying any conclusion. It also allows Frankenstein to eventually meet Walton when the latter saves him from the ice.²² The meeting between Walton and Frankenstein is important for the narrative as a whole (the entire narrative premise is based on this interaction). Additionally, as readers follow the narrative along, it is also important in closing out Frankenstein’s narrative and allowing the narrative trajectory to move to the next frame.

However, even though Frankenstein’s narrative ends, the organizing force of the revenge plot does not. Importantly, as Frankenstein concludes his narrative, he passes along his desire to

²¹ Although seeing the interactions between the two characters in relation to the desire for and inability to access community, Richard Dunn’s characterization of this relationship as a “chase” is helpful. “All that is left Frankenstein,” Dunn observes, “is the frustration of the chase, which, serving as the emblem of his relationship with the Creature, becomes a mockery of communicative union” (415).

²² Schug offers a slightly different interpretation of this structure: Frankenstein “recognizes that his pursuit of the monster is both futile and compulsory. It is futile because its ultimate aim is to achieve a finality that is impossible, since what he is chasing is not really his physical creation, the monster, but some solution to the terrible and monstrous moral questions that he has previously tried to avoid but which were merely exacerbated while the monster one by one murdered the people Frankenstein loved. It is compulsory because only through his pursuit will he be continuously forced to live up to the responsibility of formulation and reformulation of values” (615).

avenge his family to Walton, like a virus. “[M]ust I die, and he yet live?,” he asks Walton in his final paragraph, “If I do, swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape; that you will seek him, and satisfy my vengeance in his death” (145). Frankenstein even reiterates his plea to Walton as he lies dying: “The task of his destruction was mine, but I have failed. When actuated by selfish and vicious motives, I asked you to undertake my unfinished work; and I renew this request now, when I am only induced by reason and virtue” (151). Not only is Frankenstein unable (or unwilling) to kill the creature himself (which would be one form of closure), but he defers the pleasure and ending of this trajectory yet again by asking Walton to take over his quest. In this way, Frankenstein’s narrative trajectory does not die with him but continues on into a new narrative frame and a new narrative, frustrating the desired conclusion.

After Frankenstein’s request to Walton, Walton’s narrative and the novel as a whole quickly wrap up, although not very satisfactorily or reproductively in terms of narrative trajectory and desire. Walton tells his sister that his crew has demanded they return to England or they would mutiny and Walton acquiesces. Frankenstein dies without killing the creature and the creature confronts (the now dead) Frankenstein to ask for forgiveness. During this confrontation, Walton meets the creature but does not follow through with Frankenstein’s request. He talks with the creature instead of killing him (153). “[M]y first impulses,” Walton recounts in his letter, “which had suggested to me the duty of obeying the dying request of my friend, in destroying his enemy, were now suspended by a mixture of curiosity and compassion” (153). Walton’s deference to “curiosity” and “compassion” here suggests that this initial pattern of deferral continues until the very end and, importantly, is one of the last reasons that the novel ends without any closure. Instead, using the future tense, the creature claims that he “shall quit [Walton’s] vessel...and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe; [he] shall collect

[his] funeral pile” and “shall die” (155), and jumping out of the window, the novel abruptly ends (156).

The characters’ desires for sympathy and vengeance might seem to uphold a heteroideological narrative structure, in the sense that achieving these desires would produce a conclusion. However, in the novel these desires prompt the characters to keep wandering and expanding the narrative rather than concluding it. Britton succinctly sums up this organizing logic when she claims, “[c]haracters in [the novel] desperately seek but never find ideal sympathetic companionship” (3). They “fail,” according to Britton, because they are “madly but fruitlessly pursued” (3). This “ma[d]” and “fruitles[s]” chase suggests that these narratives and the organizing logics of sympathy and revenge are not geared towards completion and success but towards further narrative and interaction.²³

Frankenstein’s sense of wandering and its sudden ending show that the novel disallows resolution. At the end of the novel, the characters’ initial desires and impetuses for the narratives have not been accomplished and none of the various narratives achieves closure, they just end. All three of Walton’s desires—for a friend, to explore the North Pole, and for knowledge on how to reanimate the dead—remain unsatisfied at the end of the novel. And Frankenstein’s desire to avenge his family and the creature’s desire to be part of a family and to be forgiven by his maker are similarly unresolved. Instead, we are left with a long list of dead or missing characters and open questions: Frankenstein has died, Frankenstein’s family and his friend Henry have been killed off, Walton has been forced to turn back to England, and the creature leaves the ship to

²³ We can also read these trajectories as producing a plot that operates along the lines of Lauren Berlant’s discussion of cruel optimism. According to Berlant, “a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (1). As the reading of the end of the novel shows, what the characters’ desire actually ends up inhibiting the achievement of that desire.

commit suicide. We do not know if Walton survives the return, if the creature actually dies, if Walton's sister ever received his letters, or how Frankenstein made the creature. As Susan Winnett observes, "[w]e need only to consider the kinds of major questions the novel raises to realize how successfully it avoids resolving any one of them" (291). We do not even get a sign-off from Walton in his last letter to his sister. The recounting just ends with the creature jumping out of the ship's window. All of these unanswered questions and speculations gesture to the narrative's queer structure and undermine the heteroideological ideals and plot trajectories of marriage and reproduction.

The novel's rejection of marriage and reproduction and its association between death and family further establish *Frankenstein's* structure as queer. As I discuss in Chapter Three on temporality, marriage and reproduction are undercut at all points in the novel, suggesting that these conventions are not important or applicable organizing logics. On the largest level, the figure that Frankenstein self-births, goes on to kill many of the characters in the novel after he is born. The creature directly kills William, Henry, and Elizabeth and indirectly causes the deaths of Justine, Frankenstein's father, and even Frankenstein himself. Frankenstein, the novel's ultimate creator, dies alone and without family, at the end of the novel. The creature, Frankenstein's progeny, presumably kills himself at the end of the novel as well, destroying both himself and Frankenstein's hereditary line. And after animating the creature, Frankenstein has a dream in which Elizabeth "in the bloom of health" turns into "the corpse of [his] dead mother" (35), a link between death and reproduction that is further emphasized as all characters able to reproduce, including Frankenstein, die in the novel.

Death is in fact the impetus for the entire narrative. As Beth Newman notes in her discussion of the novel, "death is the very stuff of narrative in *Frankenstein*, the set of events that

compose the plot” (157). It is Frankenstein’s very “desire to reverse the most basic plot of all, the ending of life in death,” Newman continues, “that engenders his scientific discoveries and the horror story they bring about” (157). If Frankenstein had not made the creature, then the rest of the narrative would not have occurred. Death is also the center of the narrative insofar as the creature’s desire for heteroideological values like companionship and family brings about death and destruction. At multiple levels in the novel—content, theme, structure—we see death being promoted over reproduction and kinship. In doing so, *Frankenstein* undermines the prominence of reproduction as *the* conventional organizing logic.

The end of the novel, specifically the creature’s desire for death via suicide, also highlights the inability of *Frankenstein*, and nineteenth-century narrative structures more broadly, to tell the stories of queer figures or queer desires and behaviors. As a non-normative figure existing outside of society whose family and community continually reject him, conventional narrative forms, particularly a novel’s conclusion, are unable to fully tell the creature’s story. Instead, the abrupt ending of the novel suggests the creature’s rejection of the traditional need for conclusions and closure and opens up space for alternative ending forms. Examining the suicide plot in works from the early twentieth century to today, Dana Seitler argues that suicidal fantasy “inscribes an alternative space for living by formulating suicide as a counteraesthetic narrative form” (602). “[S]elf-annihilation,” she continues, forces us to consider the “existing constrictions of narrative form and to conjure alternative modes to experience narrative closure” (602). The creature’s “shall die” resembles the contemporary examples Seitler discusses, such as *Thelma and Louise* (1991), where the narrative (or film) freezes on the moment before the death actually occurs. Seeing *Thelma and Louise*’s suicide as “an act of staying together rather than a wrenching apart,” Seitler argues they “embrace a mode of

belonging beyond belonging *to* some other confounding, constraining form” (610). Similarly, we can read the creature’s pronouncement of suicide as his desire to live outside the cultural norms that constrain him in addition to its rejection of closure.

The structure of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* encourages exploration and wandering and continuousness over linear progression and conclusion. In basing its organizing logic on desires such as compassion, vengeance, and death, the impetus for the narrative overall and the individual narratives it contains do not follow a heteronormative structure based on readerly pleasure and satisfaction. Instead, as with Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* and Alan Dale’s *A Marriage Below Zero*, the work produces a queer narrative structure that rejects closure, reproduction, and progression and highlights the limits of conventional narrative structures to portray the lives of queer figures. Gaskell’s *Cranford*, the next work I discuss, similarly devalues and rejects the heteronormative ideals necessary for a heterocentric structure. It resists teleology, closure, marriage, and (re)production and instead encourages wandering, delay, and unauthorized knowledges.

“somehow the gentleman disappears”: The Queer Project in *Cranford*

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1853) focuses on a community of older, single women and their daily interactions with one another in the small, quaint village of Cranford. Based on Gaskell’s own experiences growing up in Knutsford, a small town near Manchester, *Cranford* interrogates gender and class conventions, social norms and social reform, and tracks the industrial and economic influences of urban life in a small village. First published as a serial in *Household Words* (December 1851 to May 1853), *Cranford* was revised and published as a single volume in 1853. Structured primarily as short, singular, comedic episodes, the work follows Mary Smith, a young woman from the city of Drumble who spends large portions of the

year with her friends in Cranford, primarily Miss Matty, and her interactions with them and other prominent inhabitants of the village. Juxtaposed against the bustling industrialization of the city of Drumble, Cranford is positioned as comedically outdated and old-fashioned, as its inhabitants follow seemingly strict social and economic rituals and privilege stasis over change. Minutely focused on the day-to-day activities and interactions of the town, *Cranford*, may, at times, come off as a tedious read. However, it is precisely in this minutia, in the slowed-down descriptions and deliberations over social exchanges, that *Cranford* produces a queer narrative.

Cranford's queer status is evident even before we open the novel. Throughout its scholarly history and reception, *Cranford* has been identified as a comedy, a social critique, a social instruction handbook, an ethnographic narrative, a provincial novel, a parody, and a feminist novel, among other genres and categories. In fact, some scholars have argued that it is not even a novel at all. There is a "critical difficulty in classifying *Cranford*," Caroline Jackson-Houlston emphatically states (16). *Cranford* resists normative narrative conventions by eluding generic categories and scholarly attempts to pin it down. Instead, the novel's fluid nature allows for a multitude of interpretations and reader responses. Part of the reason *Cranford* defies easy definition, as scholars such as Jackson-Houlston and Shirley Foster suggest, is that *Cranford*'s comedic nature makes it difficult to tell, with certainty, what exactly the work is and what it is trying to resist or undermine.²⁴ The effects of comedy particularly affect the novel's potential for

²⁴ See also Patsy Stoneman's "Reading Elizabeth Gaskell: The Story So Far and Some New Suggestions" (2006) (1,5); Emma Karin Brandin's "Domestic Performance and Comedy in *Cranford* and *Wives and Daughters*" (2010) (32-33); and Lisa Niles's "Malthusian Menopause: Aging and Sexuality in Elizabeth Gaskell's 'Cranford'" (2005) (293-294). Although not focusing on *Cranford*'s style or content, Thomas Recchio similarly agrees. Instead, Recchio argues that *Cranford*'s "generic instability" is a result of its publishing history, first "read as a series of auto-ethnographic observations" with "no clear generic status," which morphed as the work was published as a novel, illustrations were added, and it became adapted for film, television, and the stage (2).

social and feminist commentaries. Shirley Foster argues that “Gaskell...defuses the subversive implications of this self-reliant female world by focusing on its comic elements” (170), and Jackson-Houlston claims, “critics have found difficulties in taking *Cranford* seriously because of its comic tone” (17). And yet, it is precisely because of its “comic tone” that *Cranford* is able to open a space for social critique that appears non-threatening to the social order, especially when we consider that this comedy is focused on a marginalized, redundant, and unthreatening population: unmarried, elderly women.²⁵

Cranford's lack of a cohesive narrative trajectory also supports what Thomas Recchio calls its “generic instability” (2). Gaskell's work is a difficult novel to summarize because, like *Nightwood*, its plot is episodic, and it resists, from the very beginning, the teleological drive and closure characteristic of traditional narratives. And this persisted even when bound together in a single volume. Structured as episodes without an overarching narrative arc, *Cranford* is focused on what occurs in each chapter, such as a character's response to a new interaction or an adventure outside of the village, rather than producing a central plot line. The lack of progressive development in *Cranford* is often discussed in criticism of the novel, although not always in the language of narrative theory, and rarely in relation to queer theory.²⁶ “Since *Cranford*'s

²⁵ In “Malthusian Menopause,” Niles makes the connection between the novel's generic classification and its main characters clear. “Like the characters that comprise the heterogeneous homogeneity of the Cranfordian community, the novel embraces categorization in order to resist it,” Niles argues (294). The “novel's implicit commentary on taxonomy,” she continues, “reframes our conception of the limitations and usefulness of classifications that, both figuratively and literally, impinged upon women” (294).

²⁶ While most scholars have argued that the novel defies plot, there are some that see plot structures in the novel. See, for example, Andrew Miller's “The Fragments and Small Opportunities of *Cranford*” (1995), Martin Dodsworth's “Women Without Men at *Cranford*” (1963), Tim Dolin's “‘Cranford’ and the Victorian Collection” (1993), and Natalie Kapetanios Meir's “‘Household Forms and Ceremonies’: Narrating Routines in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*” (2006). Scholars also claim that *Cranford* suggests alternative ways to circumvent the conventional way of viewing narrative. See, for example, Margaret Case Croskery's “Mothers Without Children, Unity Without Plot: *Cranford*'s Radical Charm” (1997) (199); Susan Lanser's “Single Resistances: The Communal

publication,” Jacob Jewusiak notes, “critics have had difficulty reconciling the novel’s modular storytelling with the teleological arc of a conventional novel narrative” (1). Similarly, Talia Schaffer claims, the episodic nature of the novel, its “[f]ragmentariness, indeed, is one of the aspects of *Cranford* on which virtually all scholars concur” (64). And Anna Fenton-Hathaway argues that in *Cranford*, Gaskell “target[ed] the assumption that matrimony represented a triumphal point of narrative closure...[and] challenged the related claim that episodes and plotlines should work concertedly toward that end” (235).²⁷

The lack of a cohesive, overarching narrative in the novel and its fluid generic classification help to categorize *Cranford* as a queer narrative. The work’s characterization as queer is further solidified as *Cranford*, similar to *Nightwood*, rejects and devalues crucial social and structural markers, such as marriage and reproduction, and the heteronormative ideals, such as capitalism, that organize narratives and structure lives. In their place, *Cranford* promotes a queer collectivity that highlights community and non-hegemonic knowledges.

Cranford is famously a novel about unmarried, spinster, and non-reproductive women. And this characteristic of the village has come to define the narrative and its criticism, even more so than its fragmented structure. However, while much of the criticism has read the village’s population as promoting the work’s feminist ethos and space, the population is also important for

‘I’ in Gaskell, Jewett, and Audoux” (1992) (241-246); and Jewusiak’s “The End of the Novel: Gender and Temporality in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*” (2011) (16).

²⁷ Although generally described as “episodic” or “fragmented,” we can also think of *Cranford* as a collection—a collection of fragments stitched together into a narrative, of things, and of people. As a collection, *Cranford* is from its very structure, queer. Collections and collecting, according to Victoria Mills, “open up possibilities, challenge established hierarchies and suggest new associations between things” (36).

seeing the narrative structure as queer.²⁸ As marginalized and forgotten women in the nineteenth century, the lives of these characters are not structured according to normative timelines and they are not focused on normative desires so their narratives do not have to, and perhaps cannot, follow heteronormative narrative structures either.²⁹

Instead, reproduction and marriage are dismissed throughout the novel. Marriage plots or love matches fail or are thwarted (usually by death), as we see in the example of Miss Matty and Mr. Holbrook. When the marriage plot is successful, in the case of Miss Jess and Mr. Gordon, these couples end up leaving the novel anyway, unless the husband dies.³⁰ “Soon after Miss Mary Hoggins married Mr. Fitz-Adam, she disappeared from the neighbourhood for many years,” the narrator tells us, “He died...And then Mrs. Fitz-Adam reappeared in Cranford” (63).³¹ Moreover, as Margaret Case Croskery points out, the “romances that do flourish in *Cranford* are over quickly, and their stories lack the narrative buildup so essential to typical romance teleology” (215). Instead, these romance stories appear as byproducts of rather than central to the narrative and are not an organizing narrative or temporal structure.

²⁸ See, for example, Caroline P. Huber’s “‘Heroic Pioneers’: The Ladies of Cranford” (2007); Anna Koustinoudi’s “Narrative Voice and Gender in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*” (2001) (115-117); and Lanser’s “Single Resistances” (241-246).

²⁹ See Niles’ “Malthusian Menopause” and Fenton-Hathaway’s “Gaskell’s Detours: How *Mary Barton*, *Ruth*, and *Cranford* Redefined ‘Redundancy’” (2014) for a discussion of how *Cranford*’s narrative structure comments on and prioritizes such marginalized women in the nineteenth century. Specifically, Fenton-Hathaway argues that in *Cranford* Gaskell touches on the “excessive women problem” from the 1851 Census when she “handed the reins of her narrative to older, unmarried women—figures that more conventional novels generally sidelined. The episodes that result from Gaskell’s strategy enlarge the emotional scope of the story while slowing its progress. With these ‘detours,’ Gaskell reenacted the perceived crisis of ‘superfluity’ in narrative terms, pitting the novel’s excessive elements against critics’ assumptions that a work of fiction should move incrementally and lineally toward closure in marriage” (235).

³⁰ See also Miss Mary Hoggins and Mr. Fitz-Adam (63) and Martha and Jem (whom we never actually hear about being married, just their pregnancy) (146).

³¹ All references to the text come from the 1972 edition published by Oxford University Press.

The opportunity for marriage within the novel is also rare. A few men do exist in Cranford but primarily in functionary roles, not as autonomous individuals.³² Captain Brown is positioned as a caretaker and as a consultant for chimneys (7); although out of the narrative's focus, Mary's father provides financial commentary; and Peter Jenkyns, Miss Matty's brother, also absent for most of the narrative, returns home in the end to smooth over the tense relations between Mrs. Jamieson and Mrs. Hoggins (the former Lady Glenmire) (159-160).³³ Even the men that are conditionally accepted in Cranford society are portrayed as transgressive in some way, emphasizing their undesirability. For example, Captain Brown is considered "brazen" and vulgar" for disregarding the strict etiquette of Cranford and helping where he is not wanted and for boasting about his low economic status (4, 7). He is also associated with serials and print literature (most famously Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*), which, as I will discuss later, are negatively associated with hegemonic institutions and dominant knowledges. The surgeon, Mr. Hoggins, is accepted for his surgical skills but "as a man... [the ladies of Cranford] could only shake their heads" (103). Mrs. Jamieson's lazy servant, Mr. Mulliner, constantly disregards his duties and often steals the issue of *The Chronicle*, negatively associating him, like the Captain,

³² In the opening paragraph we are told "What could [men] do if they were there? The surgeon has his round of thirty miles, and sleeps at Cranford" (1). In using "surgeon" after asking the question, rather than "Mr. Hoggins" (or even just the word "man"), the narrator shows that it is the function of men that Cranford is concerned with, not the men themselves. Interestingly, Gaskell also uses "sleeps" and not "lives" here which would suggest Cranford as a home, a permanent place of dwelling. This refusal to allow the male characters to live in Cranford is also seen with Captain Brown, who lives in "a small house on the outskirts of the town, where he lived with his two daughters" (5) and Holbrook, who "lived four or five miles from Cranford" (28).

³³ Importantly, those male characters that do not serve a useful and necessary role in Cranford are often killed off or removed from the narrative. Captain Brown is killed off soon after his introduction into the narrative (17); Peter, introduced in the second half of the narrative, comes in and out of the narrative scope; Thomas Holbrook, the staring character in Miss Matty's failed romance plot, dies in Paris mere pages after becoming a part of the narrative (28); and Major Gordon (and Miss Jessie) are promptly removed from the narrative after he swoops in after the Captain's death and whisks the Captain's younger daughter off in marriage (22).

with normative transmission of knowledge. And finally, Peter, as a young child, is associated with gender blurring through his repeated cross-dressing performances, and his adult identity as Aga Jenkyns is associated with the East and Orientalism. Both identities position him as transgressive and queer in Cranfordian and nineteenth-century society.

Instead of focusing on and organizing around heteronormative ideals and reproductive trajectories, *Cranford* privileges alternative values and knowledges over heteronormative ones. Perhaps the most obviously non-normative value in *Cranford* is the critique of capitalism, which is highlighted by the Town and Country Bank incident. Occurring a few chapters from the end of the novel (“Stopped Payment”), this event has the potential to bring significant change to the narrative and to position capitalism, and its heteroideological ideals, as Miss Matty’s saving force. However, as Cranford’s response to the event illustrates, Miss Matty’s new capitalistic endeavor actually allows for queer community-making and promotes non-hegemonic notions of success and profit.

In this chapter, Miss Matty receives a letter from the bank, letting her know that an important meeting is scheduled. Leaving the letter, Miss Matty and Mary go to Mr. Johnson’s store to look at new gowns. There, they observe a man attempting to buy a shawl with a note from that same bank, but the shopkeeper rejects it on the grounds that the bank is going to fail. In response, and foreshadowing the events to occur, Miss Matty gives the man her own five-sovereign piece in exchange for the note because as a shareholder it is her responsibility to help the man (123-124). Miss Matty and Mary leave and, in the morning, receive the news, the bank has failed, and Miss Matty is left in financial ruin. After selling some of her belongings, Miss Matty, on the advice of Mary and Mary’s father, reluctantly decides to sell tea from her home.

Banks like Drumble in the novel, and a capitalist market economy in general, are based on the heteroreproductive norms of increase, profit, and future development. As Halberstam argues in *The Queer Art of Failure*, “success in a heteronormative, capitalist society equates too easily to specific forms of reproductive maturity combined with wealth accumulation” (2). In the novel, such a capitalistic and heteronormative economy is not only aligned with the industrial Drumble, but also specific characters such as Mary Smith, her father, and, importantly, Deborah, Miss Matty’s sister, who has invested their money in the Town and Country Bank. When the bank fails, this is the moment in the narrative when the queer, or perverse, threat has the opportunity to take over. The decision for Miss Matty to sell tea, then, and become “an agent of the East India Tea Company” (142), itself a hegemonic and capitalistic power in the nineteenth century, would seem to be the “saving force” of heteroideology (Roof xix). However, Miss Matty’s actions actually subvert this process and instead promote an anti-capitalist, barter society. Methods that we can read, following Halberstam, as modes of queer failure.

Almost immediately after consenting to sell tea, Miss Matty “trotted down to” Mr. Johnson’s store to make sure that her business would not interfere with his (144). “My father called this idea of hers ‘great nonsense,’” Mary tells us, and he “wondered how tradespeople were to get on if there was to be a continual consulting of each others’ interests, which would put a stop to all competition directly” (144). “Perhaps, it would not have done in Drumble,” she continues, “but in Cranford it answered very well” (144). Here, the explicit comparison between the capitalist and heteronormative Drumble and the ‘simple’ country Cranford, I argue, positions both Cranford and Miss Matty’s actions as contrary to the norm and thus as queer.

In checking with Mr. Johnson before starting her business, Miss Matty refuses the competitive ideals of a free-market economy and instead bases her business endeavor on the

opposite values of community, compromise, and understanding. Once she opens her business, Miss Matty also engages in anti-capitalistic behaviors as she actively works against her own profits when she discourages sales of her green tea (146), gives away extra almond-comfits to children (148), and, when convinced to stop giving away comfits, lozenges (148). Moreover, while Miss Matty was initially encouraged to sell tea in order to save herself from impending financial ruin, her business quickly evolves from a capitalist enterprise into a community-based barter system and collective.³⁴ As soon as Miss Matty sets up shop, the Cranford community brings Miss Matty “little country present[s]” such as “cream cheese, a few new-laid eggs, a little fresh ripe fruit, [and] a bunch of flowers” that take over her counter and shop in exchange for “a good weight” of product, suggesting a barter rather than capitalist system (148). Importantly, these anti-capitalist behaviors give her a profit and thus the means to survive, suggesting a way to live, and even succeed, outside of the capitalist systems.³⁵

Although Miss Matty “made more than twenty pounds during her last year,” thanks in large part to the community’s collective patronage, Miss Matty stops selling tea almost immediately after Peter returns home (148). “A day or two after his arrival,” Mary tells us, “the shop was closed” with Miss Matty and Peter occasionally “shower[ing]” the children with their remaining comfit and lozenge product from the windows and the tea disseminated throughout the

³⁴ It is also important to note that when Miss Matty initially begins selling off her property, her desire is to pay back those frauded by the Town and Country Bank, not to make a profit for herself. This should also remind readers of Miss Matty’s justification for exchanging her sovereign piece with the bank note at Mr. Johnson’s before the bank’s failure was announced.

³⁵ Miss Matty is not the only character in the Cranford community that espouses a queer collectivity; the other prominent ladies of Cranford do as well. After the bank fails, Miss Pole, Mrs. Forrester, and Mrs. Fitz-Adam collectively come together to financially support Miss Matty. Pledging annual sums from their own dwindling (and non-replenishable) resources, these ladies resist the normative impulses for individual (and financial) success and instead work as a community.

Cranford community (153).³⁶ Instead of selling off the remaining product in her shop before closing, selling it to Mr. Johnson for his shop, or even bartering with members of the community, Miss Matty gives it all away. These actions reinforce the idea that the heteroideological impulses of a capitalistic society—future-oriented, success, individualism, profit—are not important to Miss Matty and also not the point of this business.³⁷ Money is merely a means to an end. Miss Matty did not need to turn a profit; she just needed enough money (or support) to survive.

Instead of following institutional norms where capitalism equals success, Cranford turns to the collective for support and is prosperous. The success of Miss Matty shows that capitalism is not necessary for survival and promotes community over self. Repurposing Halberstam's comments about queer community survival, *Cranford* and its ladies show us that survival "has little to do with [heteroideological norms] and everything to do with collective good will" (*Failure* 41).

Capitalism and marriage are not the only heteroideological values that *Cranford* rejects. The novel also offers a subtle critique of knowledge production, choosing to privilege unauthorized knowledges over hegemonic ones. As Alyson Kiesel observes in her discussion on meaning-making in *Cranford*, "Cranford's mode of meaning-making is deliberately contrasted

³⁶ While it may be tempting to read Peter's return as the (re)productive return of heteronormativity to the novel—once Peter comes back from India, Mary's family is restored and she has a man to take care of her—this view, to quote Halberstam, "blots out a far more compelling story about cooperation, collectivity, and nonheterosexual, nonreproductive behaviors" (*Failure* 38). Moreover, Peter is not a figure of heteronormativity but one of transgressive bodies blurring boundaries. Thus, even if we read Peter as saving Miss Matty, it is a queer figure doing so. The other ladies of Cranford also had a plan to help Miss Matty stay afloat even without Peter's return. These alternative plans for saving Miss Matty provide possibilities for survival outside of the self-serving, individualistic, capital system.

³⁷ This is not the only instance of anticapitalistic behavior in the novel. However, I am focusing on this one here because it impacts the structure of the narrative, not just its theme. At this moment in the novel and in Miss Matty's life, the normative structure is the most vulnerable and instead of turning to capitalism, Miss Matty subverts it.

with that of London's" which represents "a kind of normative model to which Cranford can never attain" (1007). While Kiesel sees London's "meaning-making" as "unattainable" for Cranford, suggesting a lack or deficiency on the part of Cranford, we can also read Cranford's difference as a queer resistance to conventional forms of knowledge and power, as the promotion of subjugated or unauthorized knowledges over dominant and institutional knowledge.

In the novel, unauthorized knowledges, such as storytelling, letter writing, gossip, and oral conversation, are the norms for knowledge transmission rather than the contemporary dominant models of the newspaper and printed literature. Mary and the women of Cranford impart their knowledge via letters to one another and through personal visits. The entire novel is even structured as Mary's personal writing. These forms of knowledge production offer an alternative to the book and the newspaper, which represent dominant knowledges, social control and discipline, and, importantly, normative organizational structures that do not apply to the women of Cranford. Unlike the forms used by the ladies of Cranford, these formal modes are frequently unsuccessful, ignored, or repurposed for their needs. Importantly, as Jewusiak observes, those "characters that are associated with the novel and written texts in general are propelled to their own death" (6). All three proponents of literature in the novel—Miss Deborah Jenkyns, Mr. Holbrook, and Captain Brown—die shortly after interactions with literature.³⁸ Captain Brown's demise is the most explicitly connected to literature as he dies after reading

³⁸ Miss Deborah Jenkyns gets into a feud with the Captain about Dickens and dies after, and Mr. Holbrook, whose reading of poems puts his guests to sleep, dies shortly after this scene. Deborah is also associated with printed literature—Dr. Johnson's novels—and she also dies early and is associated with heteronormativity throughout the novel. While Miss Matty does not die, her lifestyle is threatened after she receives a printed letter from the Town and Country bank about a meeting a day before it fails.

Dickens and his death is noted in two newspapers.³⁹ Thus, we can see that conventional forms of literature are associated with death. In dismissing the centrality of the novel and literature, *Cranford* rejects the “story of active regulation” that D.A. Miller sees as “the story of the Novel” (10).

It is not just literature that is mistrusted. Printed knowledge in general is also treated with suspicion and is easily dismissed in the novel. For example, when the exotic magician Signor Brunoni comes to town, Miss Pole feverishly consults the encyclopedia for the mechanics behind the Signor’s tricks, “prim[ing] herself with scientific explanations” which she writes down and reads to her friends during the performance (84, 87). However, Miss Pole’s “scientific explanations” do not sway her friends. Indeed, Lady Glenmire, one of the highest ranking in their circle, “would not agree with Miss Pole” (87). Moreover, when Miss Pole was doing her “research” and trying to read the entries from the encyclopedia aloud to Mrs. Forrester, Miss Matty, and Mary, she is rebuffed: Mrs. Forrester tells Miss Pole that “she could never understand being read aloud to” and Mary “threw in...one or two well-timed yawns” and “dropped the pack of cards” to imply that Miss Pole should stop (84). Similarly, during a visit with Mr. Holbrook, Miss Pole “encouraged him” to read poetry, not because she wanted to hear it, but “because she had gotten to a difficult part of her crochet, and wanted to count her stitches without having to talk” (35). Miss Matty promptly falls asleep during this poetry reading as well.

³⁹ As a domineering man, an author traditionally considered in relation to heteronormative values, structures, and plot points, and as person who often tried to exert his influence and power over Gaskell, Dickens represents much of what *Cranford* resists. However, at the same time, Gaskell wrote for and initially published the *Cranford* segments in Dickens’s *Household Words*. Although I do not get into a biographical discussion of Gaskell and Dickens in this project, the relationship between them was a contentious one, and we can read the allusions to Dickens in the text as both friendly nudges and social commentary from Gaskell. For more information on their relationship, especially while Gaskell was writing and publishing *Cranford*, see Hilary Schor’s “Affairs of the Alphabet: Reading, Writing and Narrating in ‘Cranford’” (1989).

Perhaps the most explicit example of this dismissal of hegemonic knowledge is the scene at the beginning of the novel where Mary tells us of the afternoon she and Miss Matty spent covering Miss Matty's new carpet in newspaper to protect it from the sun and the morning before a party they spent "cutting out and stitching together pieces of newspaper, so as to form little paths to every chair, set for the expected visitors" to protect the carpet from being walked on (13-14). Schaffer sees the "stitching together of the newspaper" as "express[ing] a pervasive anxiety about the fragmentary nature of the narrative" (75). However, we can also read it as a dismissal of the newspaper and the knowledge that it contains and represents and a repurposing of it to suit the needs of Cranford's society. A vehicle for normativity, the newspaper symbolizes outside knowledge infiltrating Cranford, structures the lives of the Cranfordian ladies, and enforces class distinctions within the village.⁴⁰ In using such materials to absorb "dirt" and "defilement," Mary and Miss Matty reject its importance in the Cranford community and instead, transform it into something they find useful: protection from their shoes.⁴¹

⁴⁰ For example, although Miss Matty and Miss Pole equally subscribe to the *St. James' Chronicle* with Mrs. Jamieson, "in right of her honourableness, [Mrs. Jamieson] always had the reading of it first" (74). They receive the paper on Tuesday, and as Mary notes, they organize their time and their activities on Tuesdays so they are dressed and ready for its arrival. However, they frequently are forced to wait on the paper as Mr. Mulliner, Mrs. Jamieson's servant, will often read the newspaper first, even privileging reading it over his duties to his mistress. See, for example, Mr. Mulliner's derelict of duty in bringing the tea during the gathering introducing Lady Glenmire to the Cranford ladies, which Mary attributes to his desire to finish reading the *Chronicle*.

⁴¹ In repurposing dominant forms, here and elsewhere in the novel, the ladies of Canford also engage in methodologies of queerness as they "recogniz[e] that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent" (Halberstam *Failure* 88). Repurposing becomes a radical queer act that resists dominant norms and finds alternatives within the established modern, patriarchal, hegemonic systems. "Queerness...does not only reject or subvert the objects and forms of the dominant culture," Abigail Joseph notes, "it also produces, inhabits, innovates, transfigures, and is fascinated by them" (13). We see this theme of repurposing early in the novel when Mary comments on the "use that was made of fragments and small opportunities in Cranford; the rose-leaves that were gathered ere they fell, to make into a pot-pourri for some one who had no garden" or "the little bundles of lavender-flowers sent to strew the drawers of some town-dweller" (14).

One of the most subtle ways that *Cranford* rejects hegemonic knowledge is in its attitude toward fashion. In eschewing fashion, the ladies of Cranford inhibit the ability of people to read and categorize them. In *Between Women*, Sharon Marcus makes fashion's impact on women clear: "By following fashion codes, women learned to fit their bodies into a social mold; by improvising on those codes, as fashion itself demanded, women developed the kind of restricted autonomy associated with liberal subjectivity" (143). One of the first things we learn about the ladies of Cranford is that contemporary fashions are not a central concern.⁴² While they do frequent Mr. Johnson's shop for new pieces, "their dress is very independent of fashion; as they observe, 'What does it signify how we dress here, where nobody knows us?'" (2). A more explicit example of this rejection of contemporary fashion occurs in "The Cage at Cranford," a Cranford fragment published ten years after the novel. There Mary asks Mrs. Gordon to buy something "pretty and new and fashionable" for Miss Pole on her behalf (168). In response, Mrs. Gordon sends a hoop skirt to which Miss Pole is horrified. After trying to fashion it into a cage for her bird, Miss Pole "proposed that [they] cut up the pieces of steel or whalebone...and make...two good comfortable English calashes" (178), thus not only disregarding the fashion of the day but, like the newspaper, refashioning the piece into something else. While the outdated dress may be a reflection of Cranford's spinsterhood, their refusal to acquiesce to societal standards is also a refusal of norms that require them to look a certain way in order to be made visible. Because these characters already exist and operate in temporalities and spaces outside of heteronormativity, they are not required to and, in fact, have no desire to conform.

⁴² We can also read the dismissal of contemporary fashions in *Cranford* as what Elizabeth Freeman calls a "hallmark of queer affect": "the stubborn lingering of pastness (whether it appears as anachronistic style, as the reappearance of bygone events in the system, or as arrested development)" (*Time* 8).

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* produces a queer narrative structure through its rejection of heteroreproductive values such as teleology, progressive temporality, marriage, and (re)production and through its promotion of queer communities and knowledge-making practices. As a novel about non-normative figures—spinsters and unproductive women—*Cranford* shows, like *Frankenstein* and *Nightwood*, that conventional narrative structures cannot tell their stories. Dale's *A Marriage Below Zero*, the next work I discuss, also rejects these heteroideological values. In their place, it provides a critique of nineteenth-century norms in spaces where normative narratives would traditionally promote heteronormative values.

“Brain fever is a boon to the novel writer”: Queer Narrative Strategies in *A Marriage Below Zero*

Alfred Cohen's *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), written under the pseudonym Alan Dale, is a melodramatic, pseudo-detective novel that tells the story of a seemingly naïve young woman, Elsie, and her relationship with Arthur, a gay man using Elsie and their marriage as a way to deflect from his ongoing illicit relationship with another man.⁴³ Published at the end of the nineteenth century, the novel, as Kaye notes in his “Introduction” to the Broadview edition, “is the first novel in English to address the subject of male homosexuality in explicit terms” (9). An important work in Trans-Atlantic and gay literature, Dale's novel is commonly mentioned in histories of gay literature but rarely analyzed.⁴⁴

⁴³ Although the nineteenth century did not use “gay” (or homosexual or queer) in relation to sexual identity, Arthur has long been read as a gay man and the novel as a text talking about a gay couple. For ease of my discussion, I will use the same terms.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Kaye's “‘Unearthly Visitants’: Wharton's Ghost Tales, Gothic Form and The Literature of Homosexual Panic” (1994); Mark Mitchell and David Leavitt's *Pages Passed From Hand to Hand: The Hidden Tradition of Homosexual Literature in English from 1748 to 1914* (1997); Jane Nardin's “Homosexual Identities in Willa Cather's ‘Paul's Case’” (2008); and Axel Nissen's “A Tramp at Home: *Huckleberry Finn*, Romantic Friendship, and the Homeless Man” (2005). What sustained scholarship exists on the novel comes from Richard Kaye: his “Introduction” to the Broadview edition of Dale's novel (2018); “The Return of Damon and Pythias—Alan Dale's ‘A Marriage below Zero,’ Victorian Melodrama, and the Emergence of a Literature of Homosexual

At first glance, *A Marriage Below Zero* appears to be straightforward both in terms of content and narrative structure. Told retrospectively from Elsie's point of view, the novel follows Elsie's marriage to Arthur Ravener and her subsequent search for the identity of his lover (presumed to be female) that ends in Arthur's death from a self-administered dose of laudanum. Depicting herself as an innocent, shallow, and naïve character, Elsie misses the many clues the narrative and its characters provide about Arthur and his best friend Jack, remaining seemingly unaware of their relationship until the very last moment.

Following Elsie as she comes to terms with her marriage and attempts to discover the identity of Arthur's lover, the work appears to obey the heteroideological impulses in narrative for answers, the production of knowledge, conclusions, and the emphasis on marriage as an organizing logic. However, when we look at the moments in the text that should lead to these products, the narrative structure fails to generate them. Instead, we see Elsie actively engaging in strategies of failure as she intentionally misinterprets or refuses to recognize Arthur and Jack's relationship in a way that moves the narrative out of a heteroideological trajectory and into a queer one. It is through these very behaviors that the narrative defers conclusions, critiques nineteenth-century literature and society and nineteenth-century norms, and, importantly, like *Frankenstein*, gestures to the inability of popular nineteenth-century narrative forms to tell the lives of queer people. These moments of failure also allow for Arthur and Jack to continue their relationship during a period in which such relationships were both socially marginalizing and illegal and for Elsie to defer her (socially-expected) transition from wife to mother, which would

Representation" (2002); and "'Oh God, There is No Woman In This': *A Marriage Below Zero*, the Somerset and Russell Scandals, and the Sodomitical Threat to Victorian Marriage" (2013).

fully embed her in a heteronormative trajectory. Elsie's "failures," then, help the narrative be both queer in content and queer in form.

Elsie's strategies of failure are largely tied to her personality traits. Various described by herself and others as innocent, naïve, superficial, coy, eccentric, and jealous, Elsie is depicted in the story as a stereotypical nineteenth-century woman. This interpretation of Elsie makes it easy to discount her behavior in the novel and write her off as an undeveloped and innocent character. As Arthur observes, "'Elsie...sometimes I wonder, after listening to your speeches, how it is that you really have depth after all. People who never heard anything but your small talk would think you were good for nothing else'" (170).⁴⁵

In his discussions of the novel, Kaye sees the work as "exploit[ing] the inherently comic potential in its heroine's naive refusal to grasp the nature of the predicament confronting her household" ("Return" 61). "As with the audience of classic Victorian melodrama, the implied reader of Cohen's novel is never as naive as the anguished heroine," he continues later, "Elsie is depicted as too innocent to appreciate the magnitude of the sinister forces plotting against her" (67-68). In reading Elsie in this way, Kaye posits that Cohen was "inspired by an impulse, in part satiric in nature, to act on behalf of women who, out of misguided innocence, might be exploited by men of same-sex preferences whose fears of public scorn led them to marry as a means of disguising those preferences" ("Return" 62).

⁴⁵ Other characters in the novel see her as innocent and naïve as well. Her good friend Letty calls her "'an innocent little thing'" and expresses concern that Elsie will have "'plenty of trouble'" navigating society (66). Elsie's mother has to painstakingly explain to Elsie that her husband is having an affair because Elsie cannot pick up on her subtleties (121-124). And Arthur repeatedly refers to her as a "child," "innocent," and a "little girl" (107, 127, 170). References to the text are from the 2018 Broadview edition.

While Kaye's reading is certainly supported in the text, this view of Elsie discounts another important and compelling reading that is also endorsed: that Elsie is a non-conforming character with queer and non-normative desires who emphasizes her personality traits in her interactions with other characters and in her retelling of her story as a way to defer conclusions, undermine the structural markers necessary for conventional narratives and character trajectories, and avoid acknowledging what is going on, producing, as a result, a queer narrative structure. From the beginning of her story, Elsie makes it clear that she does not follow social norms and conventions. Unlike other young women of her age, most notably her best friend Letty, Elsie does not desire to follow the heteronormative trajectory (i.e., society's approved script) set out before her. She "despised [her] education" for how it prepared her for her role in society, and she preferred the contact of her school girl friends to the men she should be courting (60-61). Discussing her coming-out ball with Letty, Elsie is distraught over the advances from the men at her event. "I wish mamma would let society alone," Elsie complained, "I know I shall be forced to flutter about drawing-rooms until one of these men wants my star-like eyes...for his own. I don't look forward to much happiness. I'd sooner be a governess, or a shorthand writer, or—or—anything" (66-67). Reflecting on this time, Elsie admits she was a "peculiar girl" as she did not follow "the laws of nature that a budding woman should rejoice in the admiration of the other sex, should court its favor, and should be plunged into dire misery if she finds it not" (68).

Instead, Elsie "wish[es] to be consistently frivolous" (58) and describes herself as "gidd[y]," and "superficia[l]" (55). "Butterfly-like I flutter about in society," she continues, "living in the all-sufficient present, reckless of the future, and absolutely declining to recollect the past" (56). While these descriptions of Elsie could imply that Elsie does not have much depth, we can also see them as noting Elsie's refusal to follow and settle for societal norms and

the socially-approved trajectory set before her, required by those in nineteenth-century society. Instead, she “flutter[s] about” following her own desires. Rather than look ahead and plan for the future, steadily progressing from young woman to wife to mother, following the reproductive futurism that structures normative society, she exists only in the “all-sufficient present.” “To be accepted by society,” Elsie comments later, “you must follow the laws it prescribes” (81). And yet, Elsie refuses to do so.

Elsie is not only an outsider for her refusal to follow social conventions. The text also hints at her same-sex desires. From the beginning, Elsie details having intimate relationships with the girls from her finishing school. Recounting her coming out ball, Elsie tells us she was “going to rush at the dear girls I knew [from school], gushingly glad to meet them again after such a long separation, and burningly anxious to take them off to indulge in those nice long talks we had at school” (61). While close relationships between young girls during this period were quite common and not a definitive sign of queer desires, Elsie makes it obvious that she prefers the company of her lady friends to those of the men with whom she is being forced to interact, suggesting, at least, a rejection of her social role if not queer desires. However, the clearest indication of Elsie’s queer feelings is the language that connects her and Arthur, particularly the use of “eccentric” to describe their “peculiarities,” their same-sex desires. Throughout the text, the characters use these terms to talk about Arthur’s behavior and Elsie also uses this language to refer to herself, especially in moments in which she explicitly notes how her desires do not always line up with society’s standards.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ “My later experiences have taught me that readers who despise what are generally acknowledged to be the pleasures of girlhood, will get but little sympathy in this world,” Elsie tells us after being warned away from Arthur by Letty, “I must have been eccentric” (80). “The right to be eccentric must be earned,” she continues, “What right had a chit like myself to declare that I found the young men whom I was called upon to meet, undesirable and

Importantly, it is not Elsie's identity, however we read her, that makes this a queer narrative. Instead, it is the way Elsie's innocence, superficiality, and naivety are used in the text to repeatedly refuse to acknowledge and actively misinterpret what is going on in the narrative and her resistance to conclusions that make the structure of *A Marriage Below Zero* queer. Through these behavioral moves, the novel resists the narrative conventions that structure both nineteenth-century texts and lives according to heteronormative ideals of progress, development, and reproduction and opens up space to critique these norms. When we position Elsie's innocence (and her other personality traits) alongside Halberstam's discussion of failure, we can recognize them as methods to gain "new form[s] of knowing" and strategies to resist society's desire to mold us into acceptable models of behavior (*Failure* 54, 3). Reading *A Marriage Below Zero* with Halberstam's discussion of stupidity and forgetfulness, then, the narrator's self-proclaimed "frivolous[ness]," "superficiality," and naivety are tools, like forgetfulness and stupidity, to resist a heteronarrative trajectory and narrative structure. If normative narrative trajectories, especially in relation to melodrama and detective fiction, are concerned with conclusions, revelations, and progression, when we examine Elsie not as a character but as a narrator, as a part of the narrative's structure, Elsie's failures in the novel become strategies to resist these heteroideological impulses.⁴⁷ In their place, Elsie provides commentaries about

uninteresting?...I cannot lay the blame upon anybody. The ideas were there. Topsy-like, I suspect, 'they grewed'" (81). See also the uses on pages 89, 97, 105, 124, and 162.

⁴⁷ Elsie notes in the opening of the novel that although "nothing in my behavior nowadays [after Arthur's death] indicates that I have the faintest suspicion of a will of my own, mamma knows better" (57). "Perhaps in the solitude of her chamber she wishes that dear Elsie were the sweet little gushing nonentity she appears to be," Elsie continues (57). Although only briefly mentioned before Elsie gets into her story, these statements suggest that Elsie is not as naïve and spineless as her narrative makes her out to be which supports the view that Elsie's failures are active choices rather than melodramatic tropes.

gender norms and the inability of conventional literary forms to tell the stories of non-normative individuals.

We see these failures occurring repeatedly throughout the text, during moments in which the trajectory (and thus the novel) would have ended if Elsie had uncovered the truth. The first key moment in the text that Elsie misses occurs when she is introduced to Arthur and Jack. Letty first tells Elsie about Arthur during their rehashing of Elsie's coming-out ball. In response to Elsie's "disgust" at how the different genders are required to act in society, Letty asks if Elsie knows Arthur Ravener and Captain Jack Dillington (66, 67). Calling them "Damon and Pythias," which Kaye suggests signifies both "true friendship" and "[b]y century's end...a baleful alliance" (67n1), Letty describes them as "inseparable" and "[s]uch a case of friendship" more than anything she has known (67). "I have never met one without the other," she continues, "They always enter a ball-room together and leave together. Of course they can't dance with each other, but I'm sure they regret that fact" (67). As both contemporary and current readers of this scene might infer, Letty's description hints at an alleged sexual relationship between the two.⁴⁸ Elsie, however, does not seem to understand the allusion as she replies that she is "'sure [she] should'" appreciate them and that she would "'like to know them'" (68), to which Letty responds that Elsie is a "'strange girl...but [she] suppose[s Elsie] can't help it'" (68).⁴⁹ Elsie meets Arthur (and Jack) shortly after this conversation and sees his "unconventionality" and

⁴⁸ As Kaye notes in his introduction (and in his two articles on the book summarized in the introduction), there were a number of nineteenth-century scandals in close proximity to the publication of the work that would have helped contemporary readers reach this conclusion such as the Somerset scandal and the Cleveland Street scandal.

⁴⁹ Although the work is focused on Arthur's sexual behavior, this interaction between Elsie and Letty implies that Elsie similarly has a non-normative sexuality or behavior that would ostracize her from polite society.

close relationship with Jack in person. However, Elsie does not think anything is odd about it and even tells Arthur his friendship with Jack is what interested her in Arthur in the first place (72).

However, the clearest failures occur during and after Elsie's marriage to Arthur. Although readers may think that Elsie's marriage would be a climatic or at least noteworthy event in this narrative's story, considering the trope of the marriage plot and her early assertion that this narrative is going to be "the story of [her] married life," her marriage is barely mentioned and what details she does provide are brief and disengaged (57). This should come as no surprise as Elsie has spent the preceding chapters making it clear that she has no interest in social norms such as the coming out ball and rituals such as dancing and conversing with eligible young men. She also makes it clear that she does not understand these social checkpoints, as her questions about why she even needs a coming out ball and why it was considered successful if she had such a horrible time at it allude. Because of this, Elsie is unable to muster the appropriate excitement for her wedding day and instead grabs on to literature to describe it for her.

"My marriage was not a particularly interesting event from an anecdotal standpoint," Elsie tells us at the beginning of Chapter VIII (89). And although she does admit that her "wedding morning was one in which novelists delight," but, importantly, not her, she immediately follows this statement by saying she was only "happy" because her marriage to Arthur provided the "the prospect of freedom from the hateful society chains, which [she] felt would in a few years deprive [her] of [her] much prized liberty" (90).⁵⁰ Her feelings about her wedding day are cemented later on this page when she maintains that she "should have enjoyed

⁵⁰ Elsie does mention that she loves Arthur, but part of her love for Arthur is this opportunity for freedom (90). This view is further supported by Elsie's earlier admission that she hoped to meet a man to "carry [her] away from mamma to a life which would be more endurable" (61).

the wedding if it had been somebody else's" (90). Marriage for Elsie is not about love but freedom. In describing the event as such, Elsie calls attention to the constraints surrounding young women in society and highlights the event's use as a vehicle for social freedom rather than social norm. And her remarks introducing her wedding day ("one in which novelists delight") draw attention to her commentary on the marriage plot and literary romance tropes. Marriages in novels are concerned with the outside trappings, such as the weather, and not, as Elsie will highlight later, necessarily with the marriage itself and those involved in it.⁵¹ In framing her recounting of the wedding as a day novelists would like, but, importantly, not her, Elsie shows the distance between how marriages are portrayed in novels and how they work in real life. She also highlights how conventional narrative forms only represent and are only applicable to one type of life trajectory—a trajectory she cannot or does not wish to follow.

Elsie continues this critique at the beginning of the next section when she reflects on what has happened. "As we rolled away from the metropolis towards our country home," she tells us, "I tried hard to direct my thoughts into those channels through which I felt they ought to grow" (91). "Here was I, a bride of a few hours," she continues, "leaving home without a regret and without a reflection of 'childhood's associations,' the new life, and other pathetic subjects over which nineteenth century brides are popularly supposed to become sentimental. I must put it down to the flippancy of my nature" (91). Taking Elsie at her word, this statement not only shows Elsie's "odd" behavior, but it also highlights the social norms that Elsie should be following as a productive member of society. In not being "sentimental" in this way, Elsie

⁵¹ The full quote from Elsie states "[her] wedding morning was one in which novelists delight—plenty of sun, and a delightfully invigorating atmosphere" (90).

critiques the social norms surrounding brides, nineteenth-century representations of romance and marriage, and nineteenth-century marriage plot conventions.⁵² Because Elsie has conflicted views on her marriage—on the one hand it represents freedom but on the other hand she has no interest in being with men of society and would prefer the company of women—Elsie does not know how to view, feel about, or describe her wedding so she uses what representations in society and literature tell her she should be doing, describing, and feeling. However, because her views on marriage and men do not conform with those in literature and society, Elsie is unable to connect with popular portrayals of them.

After arriving at their new home in Kew later that evening, Arthur shows Elsie around (but does not allow her to see his rooms) and then, after a silent dinner, informs Elsie that he will be leaving her that night to go back to London for business, which we can infer means he is going to see Jack (94). Elsie tells us that she “thought it was rather strange that he should be obliged to go up to London so soon” (94). “However,” she then follows up, “there might be a hundred reasons for his departure, and I had no doubt that when I had earned the right to know what they were, he would permit me to do so” (95). Rather than question why her newly married (as of that very afternoon) husband is leaving her on her wedding night instead of consummating the marriage, Elsie lets Arthur go without much of an outward fuss.⁵³ And while she does try to

⁵² This is not the first time we see a critique of novels in the book. The first instance of this occurs in the very first line of Elsie’s recounting in Chapter I, where she highlights the “selfish” organization of the bildungsroman: “I shall not weary you with a long account of my childhood, and all that sort of thing. When I read a story, I always skip the pages devoted to a description of the juvenile days of the hero or heroine. They are generally insufferably uninteresting, or interesting only to the writer, and I can find no excuse for selfishness” (58). Because her childhood and childhood desires do not relate to normative childhoods and child markers, Elsie is unable to connect with popular representations of them.

⁵³ She does initially resent his behavior but only because she tells us, “Arthur’s conduct *seemed* so strange” as opposed to knowing that it was odd (95, my emphasis). She then demands that he kiss her before leaving, which he does, but it was so “coldly and undemonstratively” that she flees (95).

bring it up the next morning with Arthur at breakfast (as he never returned that night), he quickly wins her over (99). Elsie is also outmaneuvered later that day when Arthur tells her that Jack will be coming to dinner that evening. Reminding Elsie that she said their “great friendship was a source of admiration” to her, Arthur soothes Elsie and she brushes off the invitation (101-102).

If Elsie had figured out what was going on or demanded an answer from Arthur after they were married, the trajectory toward a conclusion would have been sped up. However, in failing to do this, Elsie defers the opportunity to learn the truth about Arthur and instead substitutes a new truth, a critique of nineteenth-century literature and their depictions of relationships. Describing her discomfort at being alone in Tavistock Villa, Elsie remarks that she “knew very little about brides and bridegrooms beyond what [she] read in novels, nine-tenths of which either ended with a couples’ engagement, or began, in early married life” (95). She then attempts to read a few books, “but their unreality disgusted [her]. The heroine in one of them was sentimental to idiocy, with a flower-like face and violet eyes, while the principal character in the other was a hoyden with whom [she] could find no sympathy” (95). Following the structure set in the previous examples, here we have again an instance of Elsie turning to literature in moments where she is uncomfortable with what is happening around her or where her feelings do not conform with social norms. And, like the previous examples, Elsie is unable to connect with what she finds. Elsie needs help navigating the moments *after* the wedding, which, as she specifically notes, “nine-tenths” of novels do not cover, and how to live in a relationship which both parties seem to resist.

Elsie’s inability to find comfort in these books and her acknowledgment that what she does know about married life comes from them illustrates the ways in which nineteenth-century novels and society provided and perpetuated unrealistic knowledge and portrayals of marital

life.⁵⁴ It also highlights how Elsie's life experiences cannot fit into the model provided by such novels and conventional narrative structures, which echoes Elsie's earlier comments about her feelings as she leaves her wedding.

As the narrative repeats scenes of misreading, Elsie continues to mistake or misinterpret the clues regarding Arthur's relationship with Jack.⁵⁵ Jack eventually does leave their house, but Elsie finds out that very same evening that Arthur has left as well without telling her. While it is easy to assume that Arthur has gone to see Jack, Elsie, following the established pattern in the narrative, does not come to this, or really any, conclusion but simply turns to her own emotions, giving up the opportunity to question what is going on.

Elsie reluctantly visits her mother for help. While her mother is also unable to see the relationship between Arthur and Jack, she does comprehend that Arthur is having an affair and attempts to tell Elsie. However, Elsie does not understand any of the hints about infidelity that her mother is giving her (122-123). Even when her mother plainly says "Of course, Elsie, there's a woman in the case," Elsie does not understand and thinks, "a woman in the case! What woman? What did my mother mean?" (123). Although her mother believes Arthur is having an affair with a woman, she does think that Jack is intimately involved. "No doubt your husband's

⁵⁴ Elsie's discussion also demonstrates how heteronormative timelines and narratives are generally only focused on the moments that uphold a heteronormative trajectory—an engagement, a marriage, a baby—and not the moments after these events, such as the period after the marriage. They also assume that these events will happen and will happen in this order. The literary examples Elsie has access to do not give Elsie the context and information she needs in order to understand and navigate her situation which goes beyond what is normally depicted.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Arthur's fear of ignoring Jack the day after his wedding to Elsie (101) and when Arthur drops Elsie's hands and grows cold and distant when Jack sees Arthur and Elsie together (108); when Arthur and Jack become so consumed with talking to one another that they forget Elsie is in the room (103) and their discussion about keeping her happy with material goods after Elsie leaves the room (105); and Arthur's fear for his reputation after Elsie threatens to leave him (110).

friend, the Captain, is the go-between,” she tells Elsie, ““That might explain his intimacy with your husband, might it not?”” (124).

After speaking with her mother, Elsie finally confronts Arthur outright after dinner. To no one’s surprise, except perhaps Elsie’s, Arthur denies the accusations.⁵⁶ While Elsie remains convinced that he is lying, it still takes her months to do anything further. Eventually, Elsie does contact a private detective, Mr. Rickaby, to find out the identity of Arthur’s lover. While Elsie’s decision may suggest she is finally ready to confront the truth, thus affirming or giving in to a heteroideological trajectory, Elsie stops just short of such an action. Instead, Elsie asks that Mr. Rickaby only ““find out...where [Arthur] goes, and I will then see what it is best for me to do. Leave me to discover who the woman is”” because she ““should like to know—exclusively”” (136). Although there may be a variety of reasons for Elsie’s desire to control the information—avoiding a scandal, embarrassment—the effects in terms of narrative trajectory are significant. If she allowed Mr. Rickaby to find out the identity of Arthur’s lover then one narrative trajectory would end. Both the readers and Elsie would know and have to acknowledge the truth. However, in having Mr. Rickaby stop short of an ending, Elsie can decide what to do and, as a result, how the narrative trajectory will continue. She even declines to commit to a course in her response to Mr. Rickaby when she says ““I will then see what it will be best for me to do”” (136). Elsie does not want to know the truth because then she will be forced to do something with it. In asking Mr.

⁵⁶ However, Arthur’s final response to Elsie’s repeated demands for the truth is telling. When pushed to provide the name of the woman, Arthur finally tells Elsie that the woman ““does not exist...Elsie, you are the only woman in the world to me”” (129). Again, readers would see this as a strategic admission of his love for Jack, but Elsie misses the slippery wording and is convinced that he lied.

Rickaby not to bring his investigation to an end, Elsie can prolong her naivety and the narrative.⁵⁷

Conducting her own investigation of Arthur's personal rooms at home, she finds a receipt for a house he has been paying for in Notting Hill (140). However, rather than going there and exploring the premises, Elsie again prolongs the search for truth and waits until the detective confirms the address a few days later. During her train to London, she overhears two men discussing Arthur and his marriage to Elsie. "You see how mistaken you were in the case of Arthur Ravener," the first man begins, "You had branded him—everybody, had, in fact. His name was on the lips of all fellows. He was shunned. What happened? He married; tongues ceased wagging" (143). "Before I apologize to Ravener, I'd like to know Mrs. Ravener's side of the story," the other man retorts, "Ravener's marriage was always, in my opinion, brought about solely with that object in view. And he married a very young girl, as ignorant as a new-born babe" (144).

Again, readers can infer that these men are talking about Arthur's reputation as a gay man. However, Elsie merely wonders what Arthur could have done to cause such gossip before eventually deciding that it must be because of his current affair with a woman (144). Arriving at the house, Elsie bursts into a room with Arthur and Jack engaged in a passionate "tête-a-tête" (148). This time we would think that Elsie might directly question the pair as to why they were secretly meeting at night in a fully furnished home paid for by Arthur. Instead, Elsie thinks back to her conversation with her mother and sees Jack only as "the medium by which [her] husband

⁵⁷ Mr. Rickaby also wholeheartedly agrees to this plan, saying "I will obey your instructions to the letter. It is to my interest to do so" (137). His phrasing here may either suggest that he does not want to discover the truth either or that he already does know the truth about Arthur and does not want to get involved.

communicated with his paramour” (148). Conversing with the two men, we see Elsie get close to the truth but not realize it, or refuse to realize it, even though the reactions from Arthur and Jack (such as gasping, growing pale, and trembling) suggest as much. Reading this along the lines of melodramatic tropes, Elsie’s inability to grasp what is happening (here and elsewhere in the novel) may be read as simply an effect of Dale using the trope of the naive young woman in the melodrama, as Kaye suggests in “The Return of Damon and Pythias.” While Kaye dismisses this as a trope meant for comedic effect, I think it is important for what it does in the novel. Elsie’s pretense of naivety, which may also be interpreted as her failure or refusal to understand the situation, importantly, allows the narrative to continue and thwarts any attempt at a conclusion which would effectively end this particular trajectory and the narrative.⁵⁸

The potential unveiling of Arthur’s lover is one of the most pivotal moments of the text. However, Elsie, following the narrative pattern, fails to see what is going on and provides instead another commentary on how nineteenth-century narratives are constructed. After returning home with Arthur, Elsie begins the next chapter with a critique on “[modern] novel-writers”:⁵⁹

Once [you] get your hero into some scrape from which there is no outlet...you are forced to call upon brain fever for help. He lies dangerously ill for weeks, months...and in the meantime, what? All difficulties have been smoothed away and the eager interest of the unsuspecting reader has been relieved of its keen edge. Brain fever is a boon to the novel writer...Brain fever, however, is not nearly as frequent in real life as it is in novels. It is fiction’s way out of a climax. (152)

⁵⁸ Elsie’s retort to Arthur in this moment about his motives for marrying her also suggests her function in the narrative’s structure. ““If you had married a girl who had mixed more with the world, she would not have lived with you one week,”” she angrily remarks, ““I had peculiarities, however, and you thought they would give you an opportunity to carry out your wretched plans without interruption; that is why you married me”” (150-151). With any other girl, the novel would have ended. However, Elsie’s “peculiarities” allow Arthur (and the narrative) to keep going. The use of “peculiarities” also supports the reading of Elsie as queer and having non-normative desires or goals that Letty hints at during her initial discussion of Arthur and Jack. In this context, we can read Elsie as knowing what is going on with Arthur but allowing it to continue and playing as a naïve detective in order for their marriage to continue and her own secrets to remain hidden.

⁵⁹ The text reads “modem novel-writers” which I have interpreted as a typo for “modern novel-writers” (152).

Although Elsie is targeting nineteenth-century fiction here, such as the bildungsroman, her description can also be read along the lines of Roof's discussion of narrative trajectory. In her discussion, Roof suggests that there is a queer moment in all narrative structures in which the perverse threatens to overtake the trajectory before being reincorporated and straightened out. It is the moment in the narrative where everything seems about to unravel but then is miraculously saved. That is what brain fever does. In calling out these moments in narratives, Elsie not only critiques normative narrative structures but foreshadows her own plot trajectory.

This moment is also a clear example of how Elsie turns to and provides commentaries about literature, especially traditional heteronormative genres such as the bildungsroman and the marriage plot, and literary conventions in moments of unease. These insertions become a patch to move from one event to the other instead of detailing what she is actually feeling or thinking during the moment. It takes the narrative space of where we might expect Elsie's own internal commentary about the event to be and where we would expect Elsie and Arthur to talk about what just happened. Instead, after her comments about brain fever, Elsie moves on to the next day where both Elsie and Arthur ignore what just happened. In using this method, Elsie pushes back against the heteronormative constraints of narrative that conflict with her own life experiences.

After they return from Notting Hill, Arthur falls ill, and Elsie sends for the doctor. The doctor, like the detective, seems to know about Arthur's relationship with Jack. "[H]esitatingly" asking Elsie questions, the doctor suggests that Elsie forget and forgive Arthur's past indiscretions as "[y]oung man of fortune...marrying at an early age, cannot break from old associations, from bachelor friends, from—ah! how do I know?" (153). Those in the know can

infer from this statement that the doctor knows or at least suspects that there is a relationship between Arthur and Jack and that the only way to break the relationship is to enforce ““complete rest and change”” (153). Specifically, the doctor tells Elsie to “[l]eave this country as soon as you conveniently can, and take your husband with you” (154). ““It would be the making of you both. If,”” he continues “stammering, ‘as y-you suspect, and—as—I—suspect, Mr. Ravener—er—has—er—ties—er—here, which he should not have—er—what better means of breaking them could you possibly discover?’” (154). Again, rather than take the time to understand what the doctor is suggesting about Arthur’s relationship, Elsie blindly, stupidly, naively, just thinks that the doctor “was right...I had never thought of attempting to remove him from temptation” (154).

Elsie takes Arthur to America where both Arthur and their relationship seem to improve and where she can extend the narrative even further.⁶⁰ Arthur even thanks Elsie for her patience in dealing with him and for helping him recover (162). As we read more about their time in America, the narrative shape suggests that we are finally past the moment of crisis in the narrative, what Roof refers to as the “perverse middle,” and have begun the process of wrapping up the narrative in a nice, tidy and happy marriage plot ending. However, before that can fully happen a new crisis ensues that puts a stop to this marriage plot. Visiting a “sensational preacher” whose sermon focuses on Sodom and Gomorrah and the consequences of sin, Arthur has an extreme reaction and becomes “white as death” (166-167). And while Elsie, predictably, does not make the connection among the sermon, Arthur, and his relationship with Jack, Arthur

⁶⁰ The narrative does suggest that Arthur met with Jack before he decided to go to America (156). However, we do not know whether Arthur was telling Jack that he was leaving (and perhaps seeking Jack’s permission if we read Jack as having all of the power in the relationship) or if Arthur was telling Jack that it was over. Either way, Jack knew that Arthur would be in America as he meets up with him later during their trip.

does show us new behavior: he attempts to instigate an affectionate and sexual relationship with her. Back in their room, Arthur “voluntarily” takes her hand and later encloses Elsie in his arms and “murmur[s] hoarsely, ““Why need we say good-night?”” when she gets up to leave (170, 172). This is a key moment for Arthur, their relationship, and for both narrative trajectories of the novel: If Elsie stays with Arthur and, we can assume, (finally) consummates their marriage, then this would suggest that the conventional marriage plot ending (happiness, pregnancy, heterosexuality) is imminent and would give a sense of conclusion to their relationship.⁶¹ It would be a definitive action towards a conclusion that has thus far been missing in the novel. However, as expected, Elsie refuses to follow this trajectory and instead rebuffs his advances. Blaming the “devilish spirit of feminine coquetry,” Elsie removes her hand from Arthur’s embrace, mentions that they should think about their return to London (the land of temptation for Arthur), and finally, after Arthur asks her to stay, runs to her room (171-172). With all three of these actions, Elsie not only dismisses the marriage and heterosexual plots but also triggers Arthur’s fears about London (either of temptation for or fear of Jack).

The next day, Arthur disappears. He leaves a note apologizing and telling Elsie to return to London but without giving any information as to where he has gone. “For the first time I began to doubt if there were a ‘woman in the case,’ after all,” Elsie tells us, ““But the doubt brought no relief to my mind. I almost wished that I could have known that my husband was on his way to some woman who loved him...As it was, I could only suppose that the Captain’s evil influence was exerted over Arthur for some object that I could not guess at” (185). In this

⁶¹ This moment is also key for Elsie and her non-normative desires and life goals. If she had accepted Arthur’s advances, she would consummate her marriage, theoretically get pregnant, and her position in a heteronormative life trajectory would be affirmed. In rejecting Arthur, she not only rejects the marriage plot but also how the marriage plot contains women, especially women whose desires do not follow socially-approved timelines.

moment, we see Elsie coming so close to finally acknowledging what has been happening but, once again, she backs away at the last minute, focusing on Jack's "evil influence." If she had not done this, the narrative could tidily end here with Elsie finally realizing that Jack is Arthur's lover.

Even in the very last moments of the novel, Elsie refuses to come to or acknowledge a conclusion. After reading about a scandal in Paris and seeing Jack named as a ringleader, Elsie rushes to Paris to see if Arthur was there. In this very last scene in the very last pages, Elsie bursts into the hotel room and finds Arthur dead, from a self-administered dose of laudanum, and a picture frame containing two photos, one of Arthur and one of Jack. There is no note for us to read and we do not find out anything else about Jack's arrest. Instead, Elsie rips up the picture and leaves. In this final moment where we would expect, following the conventions of traditional narrative structures and trajectories, to find some completion and resolution we get nothing. We do not even know why Elsie is upset: Is she mad because Arthur died? Because Arthur was with Jack these past few days instead of her? Because Arthur embarrassed her? Because Arthur loved and had a relationship with Jack? Instead, the ending is open-ended with a number of unanswered questions. All we are left with is the last sentence: "Then turning away, and without another look at the dead form in the chair, I left the room and the hotel" (191).⁶²

While we could argue that Arthur's suicide is the closure required for the novel to end satisfactorily, his death does not end the novel's questions but continues them. Death, the novel suggests, is not a conclusion in the sense that there is closure and a resolution but simply an

⁶² Although the text of the narrative ends here, the temporality of the ending brings us back to the beginning of the narrative as the novel begins with Elsie an unspecified amount of time after Arthur's death. Thinking about this temporal trajectory suggests a circular temporality that also resists a normative narrative structure as it does not progress forward to some end but circles back to the beginning.

ending, a stopping point. In ending on Arthur's death and without answering many of the questions the narrative brings up, *A Marriage Below Zero* not only resists a normative narrative structure but, importantly, like *Frankenstein*, comments on the inability of heteronormative narratives and narrative structures to tell the stories of non-normative figures. Recalling my earlier discussion of Seitler's work on suicidal fantasy and queer narratives, although Seitler makes it clear that she is not talking about "actual acts of suicide" but a "persistent cultural fantasy of unbecoming" (606), within the context of *A Marriage Below Zero*'s commentary on nineteenth-century narrative conventions, I argue that we can also see Arthur's literal suicide within these terms.

Elsie's refusal to actually vocalize what has happened in the novel supports this reading. The sudden lack of conclusion and progression demonstrates that Elsie's life (and Arthur's) is incapable of being portrayed by conventional narrative structures and trajectories. Instead, the narrative temporality brings us back to the beginning of the novel, where Elsie is a widow, telling her story, suggesting that Elsie, and other non-confirming individuals, are stuck lingering in these heteronormative forms because others are not available. In doing this, it broadens a critical narrative tradition typically associated with twentieth-century works such as Woolf's *Orlando* (1928) and Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness* (1928).

At the onset of *A Marriage Below Zero*, the work appears to follow a conventional narrative trajectory where the protagonist hits the required social markers, such as marriage, and ends in a product of some sort, Arthur's death and the knowledge of his relationship with Jack. However, not only is Arthur's death not satisfactory, but when we look at the moments in the text that should lead to these products, such as Elsie's marriage and marriage night or her confrontation of Arthur and Jack in Notting Hill, we see the narrative structure fails to and

actively resists producing them.⁶³ Elsie skips over these required details, minimalizing their importance and focus in the story, and refuses the narrative's (and the reader's) desires for conclusion or knowledge. Instead, she promotes critical commentaries on heteroideological ideals and narrative conventions.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the next novel I discuss, has long been considered a queer narrative and is considered one of the first queer narratives by many scholars. However, much of this recognition stems from the view that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written by a queer man and features queer characters. As this chapter and my next chapter on queer temporality argue, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a queer novel because of its narrative structure, not just its content and author. Its narrative structure, this dissertation asserts, locates the work in a long line of queer nineteenth-century traditions. Privileging deferral over knowledge and aestheticism over plot, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* resists teleology, conclusion, and linear progression. In doing so, the novel dismisses conventional narrative structures such as the narrative plot and the bildungsroman. In place of these traditional ideals, the novel, just like *A Marriage Below Zero*, critiques social institutions and promotes queer knowledges and subjectivities.

“It was a novel without a plot”: Queer Plot Making in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

First published as a serial in 1890 and then as a novel in 1891, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* follows the infamous life of young socialite Dorian Gray as he is befriended and painted by Basil Hallward and influenced by the hedonistic Lord Henry. Mysteriously connected

⁶³ In ending back where the story begins without providing any conclusions or definitive knowledge, even the telling of Elsie's narrative itself cannot even be considered a “product” as we're back to the beginning.

to his portrait, Dorian does not age and lives blemish free even as he is rumored to commit transgressive (but unsubstantiated) behaviors. Instead, his portrait ages, presenting the bodily evidence of Dorian's many alleged offenses until Dorian's sudden and tragic death at the end of the novel.

Although most nineteenth-century and queer scholars could summarize *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the novel, itself, similar to *Nightwood*, does not have much of a plot. A narrative's plot is not simply its information, but the selection and purposeful ordering of events. A plot requires an organizing structure that helps to move the events (and the reader) along. As E.M. Forster notes in his discussion of plot, "the emphasis fall[s] on causality" (71). While readers know certain plot points in the novel (e.g., Basil paints Dorian, Dorian becomes connected to the portrait, Dorian does unnamed horrific acts that maim the portrait, Dorian dies when he stabs the portrait), the narrative actively delays or withholds the information that would connect these points and produce a developmental narrative trajectory. Instead, while key moments and information are frequently introduced, any discussion of them is delayed or interrupted by unrelated narratives. For example, after introducing Henry on the very first page, the narrator then provides thirteen lines of extensive figurative description (composed of numerous semi-colons, commas, and conjunctions) before Basil is introduced. The paragraph begins, "[f]rom the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum..." (5).⁶⁴ Like the excessive language in *Nightwood*, this

⁶⁴ References to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* will be using the 1891 edition. The full paragraph states:

From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum, whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a

paragraph stretches out the descriptions of nature to such an extent that the narrative development is interrupted and the trajectory slows until the mention of Henry is dismissed or forgotten.

The narrative also introduces events that are then not explained. One of the most obvious unexplained insertions is how Dorian is connected to the portrait and why the portrait changes. While readers know that the portrait changes after, or in response to, Dorian's actions, the actual process as well as what specific activities Dorian engages in to cause these changes are never revealed. Similarly, while readers know that Dorian stabs the portrait and then dies at the end of the novel, the details of what occurs and the link between the two subjects are never discussed. And, at times, the text avoids any mention of what is or has occurred during a specific moment, only noting that time has passed. The clearest example of this type of withholding occurs in Chapter XI. Transpiring right after Dorian discovers the infamous yellow book, this chapter effectively cuts readers off from what is happening in Dorian's life after this moment and instead provides a listing of Dorian's interests during the unnarrated years of this chapter. We then are thrust back into Dorian's life on the eve of his thirty-eighth birthday at the beginning of Chapter XII, about eighteen years later.⁶⁵ In all of these instances, the narrative delays or refuses to

beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted across the long tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. The sullen murmur of the bees shouldering their way through the long unmown grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine, seemed to make the stillness more oppressive. The dim roar of London was like the bourdon note of a distant organ. (5)

⁶⁵ For other examples of narrative deferral and withholding, see the introduction to Dorian (40); Dorian's first mention of Sibyl Vane to Henry (43); the revelation of Dorian's engagement to Sibyl (43); Dorian's wandering explanation of how his engagement occurred (65); Dorian's behavior after he breaks up with Sibyl (75); unnarrated jumps in time (105); Basil's questions about Dorian's social standing (126); Dorian's morning after he killed Basil (136-138); and Dorian's unnarrated threat to Alan (142).

connect the information readers are provided, which would establish the causality necessary for a plot, so these points or moments cannot be organized into a plot structure that serves a teleological ending.

Because much of the narrative is withheld from readers, there is no overarching plot or dilemma that connects the entire narrative together, and thus the text is unable to develop along a progressive trajectory. Without a teleological structure, there cannot be an anticipated conclusion. As a result, the narrative cannot provide any closure at the end of the text. Similar to the endings of *Frankenstein* and *A Marriage Below Zero*, Dorian dies, but death does not mean closure, just an ending to the narrative.⁶⁶ Instead, readers are left with questions: How did Dorian become connected to the painting? What did Dorian do to become so evil? Which subject, the painting or Dorian, is the real Dorian? What information does he have about Alan Campbell? What happens to Henry? The list could go on.

The Picture of Dorian Gray's lack of plot and narrative progression have not gone unnoticed by scholars. Directly stating that "the book is boring" with "long stretches of the story [that] are almost unbearably uninteresting," Jeff Nunokawa argues that the novel's promotion of boredom (both by the characters and for the readers) places the narrative outside a trajectory premised on desire (71). Similarly, Valerie Rohy sees the "plot...effectively begin[ing] with Dorian's murder of Basil" and the chapters before and after as a "protracted prologue" and a "generous wadding of irrelevant scenes," resulting in the narrative refusing resolution (283).

⁶⁶ The lack of details surrounding Dorian's death and the lack of a death scene in the narrative also suggest that *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, similar to *Frankenstein* and *A Marriage Below Zero*, is a commentary on how traditional narrative forms, such as the bildungsroman, are unable to tell the lives of queer and non-conforming people. Although the text is not frozen in the same way as *Frankenstein* or Seitler's discussion of *Thelma and Louise* and does not return us to the beginning of the narrative like *A Marriage Below Zero*, the lack of narrative explanation suggests that such lives are outside the boundaries of nineteenth-century forms and language.

John Paul Riquelme finds the narrative's repetitiveness as "leading...not to an exit but to an impasse" (616), and Kevin Ohi highlights the tension between the "feverish action...and still descriptive passages" that "moves [the [plot] in circles" (81).⁶⁷

These critical views gesture toward the narrative's queer structure. The lack of closure at the end of the novel and the narrative's methods of withholding information suggest that conventional narrative trajectories, such as the marriage plot and the bildungsroman, are both actively dismissed in the narrative and positioned as unnecessary. These strategies characterize the novel as queer. However, the novel's queer structure also comes from what Wilde offers in response to these missing plot points and conventions: space for queer meaning-making and social critiques.

Throughout the text, the narrative focuses on aesthetics over story, exquisite description often substitutes for plot development. "Wilde's paragraphs often luxuriate in long sumptuous litanies of descriptive detail, directing the reader's attention to sensory inventory rather than to plot, action, or even characterization," Jed Esty writes, the "lyrical description...that we find in the opening chapter is characteristic of the entire text—one reason it can be understood as a kind of anti-novel" (105). Calling these moments "purple patches," John G. Peters traces how each crisis in the novel is followed by a purple patch rather than an exploration or discussion of the crisis (9). In this way, according to Peters, the narrative "subordinat[es] the content (plot) to the form (style)," making the novel's stylistic descriptions into the novel's content rather than a moralistic message or a realistic experience (9). While Peters sees the narrative's change in focus as the novel's resistance to realism, this shift, importantly, also allows the narrative to give

⁶⁷ See also Elizabeth Hanson's "*The Picture of Dorian Gray and the Epistemology of the Asexual Closet*" (2013).

textual space to queer ideals and trajectories over heteronormative ones. The two moments in the narrative that suggest a heteronormative orientation, for example—Dorian’s engagement to Sibyl Vane (the marriage plot) and Chapter XI (the bildungsroman)—foreground aesthetic description over story, thwarting such a course.

Dorian begins his explanation of his engagement protesting that “[t]here is really not much to tell” before acquiescing, “what happened was simply this” (65). However, what follows is anything but a simple recounting. Instead, readers are given detailed descriptions of the décor, the atmosphere, the costumes of the theater, and of Sibyl. There is no mention of a marriage proposal or even a discussion at all. Instead, Dorian focuses on the sensory details of the night, noting that he “can’t describe...what [he] felt at that moment” (65). Henry must press Dorian for details about the actual engagement, which Dorian is unable to give, specifying “[a]t what particular point did you mention the word marriage, Dorian? And what did she say in answer? Perhaps you forgot all about it” (66). In focusing on these descriptions over the actions of the engagement, Dorian favors figurative description over the heteronormativity of the engagement act and its role in creating a marriage plot structure.⁶⁸

The only direct discussion of the engagement comes, instead, from Lord Henry and Basil, and it paradoxically serves to undermine rather than promote marriage as an institution and organizing structure. The engagement is first introduced in the very last line of Chapter IV. Arriving home from dinner, Lord Henry finds a telegram waiting for him which states “[Dorian] was engaged to be married to Sibyl Vane” (53). We then must wade through an entire chapter

⁶⁸ As Peters notes, the text makes a similar move after Dorian rejects Sibyl (and while Sibyl is committing suicide): “A significant tragedy has just occurred,” Peters writes, “and yet rather than continuing in a tragic vein...Wilde instead leads the reader to a lyric scene that never has nor could exist in reality—only in the perfection of the ideal” (8).

focused on Sibyl and her mother before the narrative picks up this thread again at the beginning of Chapter VI. However, rather than finding out details about the engagement, expressing excitement over it, or hearing anything from Dorian, Chapter VI begins with Lord Henry and Basil critiquing Dorian's engagement and marriage as an institution in general.

Both Henry and Basil are concerned with the engagement. "But think of Dorian's birth, and position, and wealth," Basil admonishes, "It would be absurd for him to marry so much beneath him" (63). While Basil's initial distress over the pending marriage focuses on Dorian's status in society and Sibyl's vocation as an actress, Henry's comments point to a larger, more social critique of the institution. "The real drawback to marriage is that it makes one unselfish," Henry tells Basil, "And selfish people are colourless. They lack individuality" (64).⁶⁹ Repeatedly referring to marriage as "foolish," "stupid," and "silly," Lord Henry explains that "there are other and more interesting bonds between men and women" (63, 64-65). Instead, he hopes Dorian will have multiple loves during his lifetime, undermining marriage's position as *the* organizing logic and focus in society (64). Lord Henry reinforces the view that marriage is not the ultimate objective when he calls it "an experience" (64). With this simple phrase, Lord Henry undermines the notion that marriage is our sole goal and the marriage plot one of the primary trajectories for our lives. The use of "an" suggests one of many events and something temporary, and "experience" suggests that it is a moment from which Dorian will grow and learn *not the* moment he, and society, have been growing towards (64).

⁶⁹ Lord Henry then follows this comment with some of the 'positives' associated with getting married, such as "becom[ing] more highly organized" which Henry "fanc[ies], the object of man's existence," suggesting a comic and satirical tone (64).

As the only married man in the triad, one may expect Lord Henry to represent the values associated with marriage and heteronormative trajectories. Instead, Henry brings them up only to continually undermine them.⁷⁰ From the beginning, Henry warns Dorian away from traditional marriage relationships, bluntly telling Dorian to “[n]ever marry at all” after hearing about Dorian’s love for Sibyl (43). Marriage for Henry is founded on deception and produces conflict instead of peace. According to Henry, romance is something that “begins by deceiving one’s self” and “always ends [in] deceiving others” (47). Instead of being a lifelong partnership to which we should all aspire, marriage produces “discord” as two people are “forced to be in harmony” (67). In response, Henry advocates for promoting “[o]ne’s own life” and desires (67). Although Lord Henry’s discussion of marriage and its effects is not as obvious as Elsie’s commentary on social and literary conventions in *A Marriage Below Zero*, both serve the same function.⁷¹ In places where we would expect to find description of heteronormative moments and values, we instead find social commentaries on the role of marriage that undermines its position in society and dismisses it as an organizing structure. Although brief and occupying only a few pages, Henry’s discussion of marriage and its effects is the only sustained discussion we get of

⁷⁰ It is easy to see Lord Henry’s critiques of marriage as inconsequential, flippant, and satirical. However, it is because of these attributes that Henry is able to provide these comments. Henry makes sure that normative conventions like marriage and the family story are brought into the novel only to then undermine them. For another example of this strategy, see Henry’s search for information on Dorian’s familial lineage. Asking his uncle what he knows about Dorian’s family, Henry is the first character to bring in this important feature of the bildungsroman and a heteronormative structure. However, he then undermines this convention when he requests his uncle only tell “useless information” about the family and subsequently focuses on the beauty of Dorian’s mother (31-32).

⁷¹ Although most of Henry’s comments are about society and not literature, he does address the disconnect between fiction and real life when he promotes pleasure and sin over morality. Responding to Basil’s argument that selfish men have to pay for their sins, Henry comments, “mediæval art is charming, but mediæval emotions are out of date. One can use them in fiction, of course. But then the only things that one can use in fiction are the things that one has ceased to use in fact” (67).

marriage in the novel and sets the tone for how we view both the kinship form and Dorian's relationship with Sibyl.

The bildungsroman is also dismissed as a structuring device in the novel. Centered around a young man and the events he experiences in and out of society until he dies, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has the markings of a bildungsroman trajectory. And yet, most of the information that is necessary for a bildungsroman is missing from the narrative's purview. This lack of information is epitomized in Chapter XI.⁷² As the chapter that covers eighteen years of Dorian's existence, Chapter XI occupies a privileged space in both the novel and in Dorian's life. However, instead of showing what happens to Dorian, which would explain his future ostracization from prominent members of society, the chapter details Dorian's aesthetic interests and pursuits during these years. Readers learn about his experience with perfumes, his obsession with jewels, and his discovery of tapestries and embroideries. They hear about his study of music, of stories, of ecclesiastical garments. Reading through this chapter, the details and the descriptions are excessive and overwhelming and, perhaps, even boring. While the narrative does briefly gesture to the events happening outside of the chapter's purview, noting rumors and stories floating around society, these mentions do not provide any concrete detail. Instead, they serve as reminders for readers that Dorian's life is happening behind the scenes. The chapter gestures to what should be the focus of this chapter (and the content that would formalize the narrative trajectory) and then promptly dismisses it.

This dismissal is immediately reinforced by the next chapter, which begins by highlighting the time that has passed while readers were being told about Dorian's collection of

⁷² See Chapter Three for a more detailed discussion of Chapter XI in Wilde's novel.

interests. “It was on the ninth of November, the eve of his own thirty-eighth birthday,” the chapter begins, spelling out specifically that Dorian has gone from a twentyish-year old young man to almost thirty-eight (124). The narrative then brings in Basil who questions Dorian on what he has been up to, allowing the narrative to once again gesture to these unknown events. Dorian deflects and readers are not given any answers, shutting down the suggestion that the narrative could be following a bildungsroman structure.

Not only does this style take the place of heteronormative content, which is itself a queering narrative strategy, but, importantly, aestheticism itself, as a style, is queer. With its focus on immediate pleasure over future-oriented didacticism, its promotion of transgression over norms, and the breaking of binaries, aestheticism challenges heteronormative values. It also encourages queer subject-making. In his analysis of art in the work of popular nineteenth-century aesthetes, Friedman argues that art functions as a medium through which figures (both real and fictional) are able to experience and, importantly, self-create their own queer identities outside of normative spaces. “A character, a narrator, a lyric persona, or even the author him- or herself encounters a work of art and then realizes his or her desires are not what the culture says they should be,” Friedman explains, “Though this revelation is, at first, profoundly unsettling, aesthetes soon find themselves harnessing that sense of fear and alienation and transforming it into a liberating sense of detachment from oppressive social norms” (2). “[A]esthetic experience allows one to gain a sense of personal independence while still enmeshed within structures of oppression,” Friedman maintains, “granting access to a domain where repressive laws are not always strictly enforced” (3). Although Friedman is primarily concerned with art-as-object, I contend that his argument may also be applied to the aesthetic descriptions in Wilde’s novel, especially those in Chapter XI which describes objects. In offering such figurative descriptions in

the novel in moments of crisis and as a substitution for heteroideological content, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, then, not only creates spaces for queer readers to engage in queer subject-making and to escape the pressures of social norms but also positions aestheticism, and thus queer spaces and subject making, as *the* organizing logic of the novel. Moreover, in its substitution of such a logic for more conventional narrative structures, we can see Wilde's queer novel as an extension of the nineteenth-century narratives I've been examining, not just an exemplar of nascent modernist ones.

As my discussion of *Frankenstein*, *Cranford*, *A Marriage Below Zero*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* show, the queer narrative is not a solely modernist form but extends back into the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century novels frequently engaged in queer narrative strategies commonly associated with modernist novels. They devalued heteronormative rituals and checkpoints such as courtship and marriage. They resisted conventional pacing based on a progressive and linear timeline in favor of stasis and disjuncture and encouraged and sustained behaviors that focus on the present rather than looking ahead to the future. They promoted new and unauthorized forms of knowledge instead of hegemonic ones and narrative deferrals over knowledge and conclusions. And they privileged aestheticism and provided literary critiques instead of plot development.

In looking at these novels together in one chapter, my discussion shows how the nineteenth-century as a whole literary period resisted heteronormative narrative forms, not just the individual genres, e.g., the epistolary novel, the Gothic novel, the Romantic novel. It is only when viewed together that we see this is a common occurrence across genres and works in the period, from the beginning of the century to the fin-de-siècle. This chapter also highlights how conventional nineteenth-century narrative structures, such as the bildungsroman and the marriage

plot, are unable to tell the lives of queer figures and queer plotlines. While this critique of narrative form is more commonly associated with modernist and avant-garde novels, my discussions of *Frankenstein*, *A Marriage Below Zero*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* show how this critique also operates in nineteenth-century novels.

My next chapter focuses on another and related theme in queer theory: temporality. As I alluded to in my discussion in this chapter, temporality is an important part of a novel's narrative structure and heteroideology. However, temporality on its own is also a central subject in queer theory and one heavily associated with modernist novels. And yet, as I will show, nineteenth-century novels also resisted conventional temporal structures as they dismiss social temporal markers and institutions such as family and reproduction, resist progressive and developmental trajectories, and promote affective relationships with temporality.

CHAPTER THREE

QUEER TEMPORALITIES

Temporality has been one of the most important themes in queer theory since its establishment as a theoretical discipline in the 1990s. As I note in the Introduction and first chapter, queer temporality is a foundational concept in major works of the field. Significantly, it is one of the ways in which queer theory has separated sexuality from queer.¹ And it is through temporality that many heteroideological ideals, such as reproduction and productivity, are expressed and sustained.

Temporality is a system of organization based on production, linearity, heterosexuality, and forward movement. This process, what Dana Luciano terms “chronobiopolitics” (9) and Elizabeth Freeman calls “chrononormativity” (*Binds* 3), refers to the ways in which society and its hegemonic institutions have structured one’s life and identity to follow heteroideological ideals.² “These are teleological schemes of events or strategies for living,” Freeman explains, “such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals” (*Binds* 4). “In a chronobiological society,” Freeman

¹ In my Introduction and first chapter, I discuss queer theory’s relationship with temporality as a concept and the temporal structure of the field itself to argue that as a discipline, queer theory actually supports the very normative models of temporal progression that the field claims to resist. In this chapter, I explore how nineteenth-century novels promote queer temporalities within their works. While my earlier chapters briefly highlight some of the concepts that I discuss in this chapter, e.g., queer temporalities’ resistance to progression, this chapter provides a much more focused discussion of how temporality is constructed, how queer theory undermines the foundations of temporality, and how queer temporalities are produced in nineteenth-century texts.

² Luciano defines “chronobiopolitics” as “the sexual arrangement of the time of life” (9), and Freeman defines “chrononormativity” as “the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity” (*Binds* 3).

continues, “the state and other institutions, including representational apparatuses, link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of moment and change” (*Binds* 4). In order to be counted as subjects in society, individuals are required to follow timelines in which they emerge from childhood, grow up, engage in courtship, get married (or form acceptable kinship relations that are similar to heterosexual ones), and have children. Through these temporal social requirements, lives are structured according to a heteronormative timeline, one that is forward-looking, based on production, and values longevity over the fleeting moment or the present.

The notion of time as linear, progressive, and developmental, and as invested in the future was institutionally and socially founded during the nineteenth century.³ Time as the organizing and unifying concept that we conceive of it today was initially established with the rise of factories during the Industrial Revolution, which arranged life around work and leisure time; then with the invention of railroads and subsequent railroad time in the mid-nineteenth century; and finally with the implementation of Greenwich Mean Time across Great Britain in the 1880s, which created a standard way of understanding and viewing time across the nation.⁴ The modern conception of human growth as a journey from childhood to adulthood was legislatively established in the first half of the nineteenth century with child labor acts such as the Factory Act (1833) and the Mines Act (1842), which created age requirements for labor, set working hours, and prompted child labor education reforms. William Wordsworth, William

³ For more detailed discussions regarding nineteenth century views of time, see Sue Zemka’s *Time and the Moment in Victorian Literature and Society* (2012), Jerome Buckley’s *The Triumph of Time: A Study of the Victorian Concepts of Time, History, Progress, and Decadence* (1966), Patricia Murphy’s *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman* (2001), and Robin Gilmour’s *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890* (1993). For an early but influential discussion of time in the nineteenth-century novel, see Patricia Drechsel Tobin’s *Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative* (1978).

⁴ For further discussion, see Zemka’s “Introduction” and E.P. Thompson’s “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” (1967).

Blake, and other Romantic writers helped to create and perpetuate the view of the child as both innocent and a separate, protected category, and, anticipating Lee Edelman's discussion in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), as a tool for social agendas. And the rise of the bildungsroman supported the organization of human maturation as progressive and developmental.⁵

The sharp divide between the past and the present and the view that society operates according to a developmental trajectory, an "ideology of progress," was also firmly established in the nineteenth century with the rise in and the institutionalization of fields such as archeology, history, and anthropology.⁶ As Freeman notes, "[t]he dominant historiography of the nineteenth century was made up of firm boundaries between then and now...historical writing was a way of ordering time in and for a nineteenth-century present tense deeply invested in hierarchical differentiations between bodies" (*Beside* 22-23). The rise in natural sciences was also heavily focused on temporality, with publications such as Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) arguing for a progressive, developmental narrative of evolution and theories of de-evolution and social degeneracy claiming that society could de-evolve into lower, inferior forms of beings.⁷ "The 'new sciences' of the nineteenth-century—uniformitarian geology, nebular astronomy, evolutionary biology—were all sciences 'in time,'"

⁵ For more information on nineteenth-century conceptions of the child and childhood, see Judith Plotz's *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (2001), Ann Wierda Rowland's *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (2012), Laura Berry's *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel* (1999), and Neil Cocks's *The Peripheral Child in Nineteenth Century Literature and its Criticism* (2014).

⁶ Although there were different ways of thinking within each of these fields, they operated under the general idea of "inevitable, progressive development" (Gilmour 31).

⁷ See, for example, Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892) and the representations in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Henry Rider Haggard's *She* (1887).

Jerome Buckley explains, “governed by temporal methodologies” (6). And the rise of the autobiography, realist novels, the marriage plot, and the bildungsroman during the nineteenth century emphasized linear and teleological time as an organizing structure and the idea that from looking at the past and finding an origin we can trace a line to our present and our future.

Nineteenth-century advancements in technology, such as the photograph and the phonograph, “made time seem suddenly pliable,” Freeman claims in *Beside You in Time: Sense Methods and Queer Sociabilities in the American Nineteenth Century* (2019), “such that the ordinary rhythms of things sped up or slowed down, events could be made to run backward, or a juxtaposition of disparate moments could invoke change over time” (20). Visual technologies like the camera also helped to produce physical, tangible connections between generations. According to Freeman, “domestic photography helped merge the secularized, quasi-sacred time of nature and family with the homogenous empty time across which national destiny moved” (*Binds* 22). The camera was not the only technology that helped to bind individuals together under a sense of “national destiny.” Trains, newspapers, serials, and the telegraph, Sue Zemka argues, “also promoted readers’ mental insertion into a single temporality shared across geographical regions” (5).

From this brief background of nineteenth-century British society, it is easy to see why discussions of queer temporality have primarily focused on twentieth and twenty-first century texts. However, as this chapter will argue, nineteenth-century British novels also pushed back against such conceptions of time and produced alternative temporalities and timelines from which to live, even as they seemed to promote the dominant conception of time as developmental and progressive. And yet, the focus on the twentieth century and high modernism that predominates in discussions of queer temporality has made it easy for scholars to overlook the

nineteenth century's challenges to conventional temporal organizations. Exploring works from the beginning of the nineteenth century with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to the end of the century with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), this chapter will endeavor to change this focus by showing how a range of nineteenth-century novels interrogated what we consider to be traditional views of time. To contextualize these readings, I begin with an overview of discussions of temporality in queer theory more generally and specifically as applied to nineteenth-century literature.

How To Queer Temporality

“Queer temporalities,” Freeman explains, “are points of resistance to [the heteronormative] temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others” (*Binds* xxii). More specifically, Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), defines “[q]ueer time” as “a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge...once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” (6).⁸ Queer time challenges or complicates a conception of time based on reproduction and the family and in doing so, distances itself from a normative trajectory of generational events. One of the central organizations of temporality that queer temporalities resist is the idea that life is structured by and around reproduction and the family and, more

⁸ As the numerous works on the subject attest, there are many different conceptions of queer or non-normative temporalities. This chapter will focus on the ways of viewing temporality that primarily correspond to nineteenth-century changes in temporality (e.g., reproduction, the future, linearity, affect). For more general discussions of queer temporality, see Carolyn Dinshaw et al.'s “Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion” (2007) and the discussions referenced in my Introduction and my first chapter.

specifically, the figure of the child.⁹ In his foundational *No Future*, Edelman argues that the “Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention” (3). In a heteronormative social organization, predicated on heterosexual and reproductive acts, everything we do is for and in the name of the future, represented by the child. Edelman terms this structure “reproductive futurism.”¹⁰

Queer temporalities are commonly produced in two ways: by refusing to follow what Halberstam calls the “maturational models of growth” that organize one’s life along acceptable models of living and timing (*Failure* 73) and by remaking and rethinking one’s relationship with the past and the future. For queer theorists such as Edelman and Halberstam, rejecting the conventional and socially-acceptable life trajectory opens up new possibilities for living, new kinship relations, and new knowledge practices. This can take the form of refusing to grow up, like the child characters in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1911) and refusing to follow acceptable standards of behavior, e.g., participating in subcultures or activities that focus on the present and oneself. “The queer,” Edelman claims, “comes to figure the bar to every realization of futurity, the resistance, internal to the social, to every social structure or form” (4). The queer individual’s

⁹ According to Halberstam, “[t]he deployment of the concept of *family*, whether in hetero or homo contexts, almost always introduces normative understandings of time and transmission” (*Failure* 71). Because, for Halberstam, “family time refers to the normative scheduling of daily life that accompanies the practice of child rearing,” family is aligned with “the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability” (*Time* 5). Halberstam’s clarification of family—“ether in hetero or homo contexts”—is a vital point to understanding the hegemony of heteronormative time. Once individuals form families, whether through adoption, biological birth, or other constructions of kinship, they are entering into this heterosexual discourse.

¹⁰ While Edelman’s discussion of reproductive futurism is essential for thinking about conceptions of temporality, especially in the nineteenth century, his suggestion that queerness is intrinsically linked to the death drive and his promotion of the antisocial or antirelational thesis, which suggests queer individuals are not only incompatible with heteronormative society but also must resist its values such as marriage, community, and children, have also been challenged by other theorists in the field for their limiting and unrealizable views. See, Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), Freeman’s *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010), and José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (2009).

refusal of reproductive futurism allows and encourages the individual to focus on their own present desires rather than what is best for society. Similarly, in his discussion of queer punk subcultures, Halberstam argues that “stretched-out adolescences of queer culture markers...disrupt conventional accounts of subculture, youth culture, adulthood, and maturity” (*Time* 153). “The notion of a stretched-out adolescence,” he continues, “challenges the conventional binary formulation of a life narrative divided by a clear break between youth and adulthood; this life narrative charts an obvious transition out of childish dependency through marriage and into adult responsibility through reproduction” (*Time* 153).

Affect may also produce multiple, or queer, temporalities. According to Luciano, the “feeling body [can be an] index of a temporality apart from the linear paradigm of ‘progress’” (1). Affective emotions such as grief, love, and trauma may move or delay individuals from following the “proper timing” prescribed by society.¹¹ Although specifically talking about grief, Luciano’s claim that “emotional attachment [has] its own pace” is helpful for thinking about how affect queers or disrupts temporalities in general (2). This “pace,” Luciano writes, “is a slower and essentially nonlinear relation to the value of human existence” (2). “In grief, the sensory body does not rise out of time so much as fall behind it,” Luciano describes, “everything but the past fades away and yet, at the same time, remains” (20). Freeman similarly argues that “empathy and affection [are] not segmented into clock-time, even if highly ritualized public performances like courtship and grieving [do] follow timelines; the sentiments and their perceived rhythms counte[r] ‘work time’” (*Binds* 6).

¹¹ For example, when children or young people fall in love, this is often described as “puppy love” or not given full consideration or respect because it occurs before its “proper timing.” “Real” love cannot occur until they are older.

Queer temporalities may also be produced by creating new relationships with history and time.¹² The ideology of progress suggests a hard and fast break between the past and the present and follows a narrative that positions the developed (and civilized) present against a primitive past. Queer temporalities may reject this developmental view and instead promote a more fluid relationship with the past and future. In her most recent works, *Time Binds* and *Beside You in Time*, Freeman focuses on the body's relationship with history, temporality, and subjectivity, calling, in *Time Binds*, for an examination of how "erotic relations and the bodily acts that sustain them gum up the works of the normative structures" of temporality (173). Promoting a methodology of "erotohistoriography," Freeman argues that "contact with historical materials can be precipitated by particular bodily dispositions, and that these connections may elicit bodily responses, even pleasurable ones, that are themselves a form of understanding" (*Binds* 95-96). Similarly, in *Beside You in Time*, Freeman claims "that subjugated knowledge is often lodged in the flesh itself, and lives as timed bodiliness and as styles of temporally inflected sociability...that we have forgotten, or never learned, how to see" (8). Examining the rituals, movements, and behaviors of dissident and marginalized groups in the American nineteenth century, such as the Shakers and African American slaves, she contends that "alternative uses of time" such as "duration, frequency, repetition" were used by these groups to create new and non-normative communities and identities (Freeman "Beside"), connections to history, and "other

¹² For other discussions regarding temporality and history, see Heather Love's *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007), Carla Freccero's *Queer/Early/Modern* (2005), Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (1999) and *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (2012), Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon's "Queering History" (2005), Menon's *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (2008), Christopher Nealon's *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (2001), and Peter Coviello's *Tomorrow's Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* (2013).

modes of arranging past, present and future” (Freeman *Beside* 8). Calling these methods “sense-methods,” Freeman sees them as “a way of feeling and organizing the world through and with the individual body, often in concert with other bodies” (*Beside* 8).

Likewise in *Cruising Utopia*, José Esteban Muñoz argues for a queer vision of futurity as he looks to the aesthetic and affective moments of the past in order to reconceive the future. Positioning his work against the (then) recent turn to negativity in queer theory, one in which theorists such as Edelman and Leo Bersani see queerness associated with antisociality, the death drive, and as only existing outside of society, Muñoz advocates for a temporal methodology of hope and utopianism; a methodology focused on the potentialities found within collective society rather than on the isolation he sees promoted in Edelman’s and Bersani’s works (*Cruising* 99).¹³ For Muñoz, queerness is about potentiality. “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality,” Muñoz writes, something always unattainable and that should be worked towards (*Cruising* 1). “[I]f queerness is to have any value whatsoever,” he continues, “it must be viewed as being visible only in the horizon” (*Cruising* 1, 11). Similar to the discussions of affect from Luciano and Freeman and Freeman’s discussion of erotohistoriography, Muñoz sees the potential for queer temporal disruption and the production of queer spaces in moments of ecstasy and contemplation, “when one looks back at a scene from one’s past, present, or future” (*Cruising* 32). In these moments, “straight time is interrupted or stepped out of” and the potential for queer spaces and queer utopias is produced (Muñoz *Cruising* 32). “Utopia lets us imagine a space outside of heteronormativity,” Muñoz argues, utopia lets us create a “picture of what *can and perhaps will be*” (*Cruising* 35).

¹³ See Bersani’s “Is the Rectum a Grave?” (1987) and *Homos* (1995).

The Nineteenth Century's Relationship with Time

As this brief discussion of queer temporalities suggests, it is easy to see why nineteenth-century British literature is not generally considered in discussions of queer time. The nineteenth century's focus on linearity, reproduction, and development and its institutionalization of standardized time and proper work-life timelines suggest that nineteenth-century society and literature supported a heteroideological organizing structure. However, as this chapter and my previous chapter on narrative structures show, the same challenges to temporality's linearity and narrative coherence that we see in modernist texts—challenges to temporal markers, refusing the reproductive imperative, rejection of linearity, circular and repetitive temporal pacing—are also found in nineteenth-century texts and nineteenth-century literary genres. Nineteenth-century Gothic novels such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Henry James's *Turn of the Screw* (1898) frequently played with temporality: blending the past, present, and future; refusing to provide temporal clues; skipping over periods of time; and focusing on or including characters such as ghosts, vampires, and other monstrous figures that stand outside the linear passing of time. Nineteenth-century serials such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851-1853), Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (1859-1860), and Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860-1861) resist a teleological trajectory of time as they withhold closure and linear advancement in favor of more plot developmental and character arcs.¹⁴ And novels such as *Frankenstein* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) organize their temporalities and pacing around affect rather than structured, industrialized, and developmental times.

¹⁴ For more information on Gothic novels and serialization, including relevant scholarship and examples, see my chapter on queer theory and my chapter on queer narrative structures.

Exploring the institutionalization of time in the nineteenth century, Zemka claims that rather than eagerly accepting these changes in temporality, Victorians were “uncertain” and “mystified” by the new standards of time (7). Alleging that nineteenth-century society knew it was a “victim” of time, Robin Gilmour points to the century’s obsession with “the memento, the keepsake, the curl of hair cherished in the brooch, [and] the photography in the locket” as the century’s way of pushing back against time’s relentless flow forward (25). And Patricia Murphy explicitly argues that late nineteenth-century novels, particularly those focused on the New Woman, “were the true literary pioneers in probing time’s ideological allegiances,” not modernists (3).¹⁵ Specifically, Murphy maintains that “[i]n protesting the female’s subordinate position within Victorian society, New Woman advocates implicitly sought to undermine... a veritable ‘natural order of time,’” (3) which Murphy defines as a temporality based on “prevalent and positive views of history, progress, Christianity, and evolution” and “reinforced by a masculinist perspective” (3, 4). The New Woman was not the only social figure challenging nineteenth-century standards of temporality. Popular social personas such as the dandy and the bachelor rejected temporal markers such as marriage, reproduction, and productive labor in favor of self-fulfilling pleasures and the immediate moment. And influential artists and thinkers such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Walter Pater, William Morris, and the Pre-Raphaelites engaged in and promoted aesthetic and decadent expressions that resisted the forward progression of time

¹⁵ “Though all of these novels about the New Woman certainly chart the avenues that modernism would follow,” Murphy continues, in a vein similar to some of my project’s central claims, “they deserve recognition as far more than mere transitional texts” (2-3).

in favor of the pleasure of the present moment.¹⁶ They also turned their attention to the past, using medievalism as a way to challenge industrialization and the Victorian social order.

Recent scholarship has focused on the nineteenth century's challenges to conventional temporalities and its creation of alternative temporalities. In *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (2007), Luciano sees the "pronounced nineteenth-century attention to grief and mourning" as a reaction "to anxiety over the new shape of time by insisting that emotional attachment had its own pace" (2). The "time of feeling, deliberately aligned with the authority of the spiritual and natural worlds," Luciano continues, "was embraced as a mode of compensation for, and, to some extent, of resistance to, the perceived mechanization of society" (6). The focus on feeling, especially expressions of grief and mourning, in this period "produce[d] alternate perspectives on time," according to Luciano, "perspectives that not only challenge the content of official histories but also reimagine the arrangements of time upon which those histories are constructed and reproduced" (16). Freeman comes to a similar conclusion in *Time Binds* and suggests that in the nineteenth century, the rise of publicized emotions and affective behaviors was seen as "sensations that moved according to their own beat" rather than the regimented "clock-time" of the period (5, 6). Developing this view further in *Beside You in Time*, Freeman describes the nineteenth century's emphasis on affect and the body, what she refers to as "sense-methods," as exposing the "overlapping and shifting powers of discipline and sexuality" and resisting "the ordering force of time in the

¹⁶ Perhaps the most famous example of this is Pater's conclusion of *The Renaissance* (1873). There Pater argues for staying in the present moment, focusing on our immediate sensations, rather than looking toward the end: "For our one chance lies in expanding that interval [of our lives], in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness" (120-121).

production of bodies and collectivities” (17). Looking at five sites of “temporal control” in the nineteenth century—religious rituals, racialization, historiography, health and conservation culture, and sexuality—Freeman explores how in each of these sites, sense-methods allow marginalized groups to produce and live within alternative methods of temporality.

These works from Luciano and Freeman are important in demonstrating the various ways in which the nineteenth century engaged in alternative temporalities.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that these works primarily focus on *American* nineteenth-century literature, not British.¹⁸ Comparable queer work on British nineteenth-century literature is largely missing from such critical discussions. This chapter endeavors to mind that gap by showing how conventional temporalities were interrogated and alternatives were produced in British nineteenth-century texts.

“For it is a difficult business—this time-keeping”: The Queer Temporalities of *Orlando*

One of the most prominent examples of queer temporality in British literature is, not surprisingly, a modernist work, namely Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). Its prominence, I argue, is precisely what has misled scholars into associating queer temporalities with modernist-era works. Nonetheless, a discussion of *Orlando* can bring out into strong relief traits that go unnoticed in less explicit treatments of temporality in nineteenth-century novels. This mock biography follows Orlando, originally a young nobleman in Elizabethan England, through four centuries as Orlando changes from a man to a woman and moves throughout time

¹⁷ Although Freeman does discuss *Frankenstein* in her earlier work, *Time Binds*, the nineteenth century is not the focus of this work.

¹⁸ As the subtitle suggests, Coviello’s *Tomorrow’s Parties: Sex and the Untimely in Nineteenth-Century America* is another example of recent queer nineteenth-century scholarship on temporality and history focusing on American literature.

and space before ending in London in Woolf's present time of 1928. Although *Orlando* is frequently read in terms of gender and sexuality, Orlando only ages about twenty years (over four centuries), making temporality a foundational concept in the novel. Orlando and the novel are important representations of how modernist temporalities resisted the values of normative temporal paradigms: progressive linearity, reproduction, and developmental writing genres and styles (e.g., the bildungsroman). As Pamela L. Caughie states, "*Orlando's* temporality is as queer as its eponymous protagonist" (517). Referring to Halberstam's discussion in *In a Queer Time and Place*, Caughie argues that the novel "exposes" the very "modes of temporality" that form normative temporality: "reproductive and family time...generational inheritance and capital accumulation" (517).¹⁹

One of the most obvious ways in which *Orlando* and its titular character resist normative temporalities is through Orlando's lack of aging. Although the novel follows a linear trajectory, which is a sign of a normative temporality, it is not a developmental trajectory as Orlando barely ages over four centuries. Instead, according to the narrative focus, Orlando flits around from century to century, engaging in personal pursuits and introspective commentary. As a result, scholars such as Loretta Stec and Theodore Martin argue that the novel's genre is called into question and thus, implicitly, the novel's temporal structure. "The narrator expects to use the conventions of biographical narrative, of reproductive time, normative time, designed for a male

¹⁹ For other discussions of temporality in the novel, see Pooja Mittal Biswas's "Queering Time: The Temporal Body as Queer Chronotope in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" (2020), Melanie Micir's "The Queer Timing of *Orlando: A Biography*" (2012), and James O'Sullivan's "Time and Technology in *Orlando*" (2014).

subject to tell Orlando's life," Stec explains, "neither is adequate, neither is flexible enough, not the genre nor the gender designations" (192).²⁰

Instead, throughout the documentation of Orlando's life, the novel recognizes the heteronormative markers of time, such as marriage and reproduction, but then reorients away from them so they are not the driving impetus of the novel or the pacing and telling of the story. We see this rejection from the beginning of the novel with the list of Orlando's multiple (broken) engagements (32-33) and the extremely sudden and brief reminder that even though Orlando was courting the Russian Princess, everyone "knew that Orlando was betrothed to another" (42), although that betrothal is also unsuccessful.²¹ With these examples, the novel acknowledges the normative temporal markers that structure one's life but also highlights how Orlando, and the narrative, refuse to commit to them. We see a similar response from the biographer later in the novel regarding Orlando's eventual marriage and child. While Orlando does get married to Shel, it is an unexpected and hurried affair; its legitimacy questioned by both Orlando and the biographer (264). Orlando's child also comes out of nowhere as Orlando's pregnancy is never mentioned, and the child leaves the narrative as swiftly as it entered it (295, 296).²² In introducing these events and then promptly dismissing them, the novel suggests that these heteronormative temporal markers do not fit the life of this queer character and are not the

²⁰ Similarly, Theodore Martin argues that "[t]he novel is a mock biography that mocks biography, as its subject doesn't live according to the steady, chronological rhythm of biological time. Orlando defies the quintessentially modern ways of thinking about temporality and change: she doesn't change over time in the way she's supposed to—that is, she doesn't age" (xviii-xix).

²¹ All references to the text come from the 1928 Harcourt edition of the novel.

²² At the end of a long, descriptive discussion about happiness from the biographer, the midwife, Mrs. Banting, abruptly interjects with "'It's a very fine boy, M'Lady'" (295). "In other words, Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning" the biographer continues before turning back to describing Orlando watching out the window (295, 296).

priority or the organizing force of the novel. Moreover, as Stec points out in her analysis of Orlando's relationship with Shel, the novel "compresses the time of romance and engagement, satirizing the marriage plot of nineteenth-century novels of nineteenth-century novels" (191-192).²³

In place of heteronormative maturational markers, the novel depicts changes in time through the introduction of objects, such as the train and the motorized vehicle, and discussions of environmental changes, such as the thawing of the River Thames, which let the characters in the novel (and readers) know that time has passed. For example, in noting the change from the last day of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the biographer associates each clang of the clock announcing the change with descriptions of the weather. "[B]y the time the sixth stroke of midnight had struck," the biographer writes, "the whole of the eastern sky was covered with an irregular moving darkness" (225). "As the ninth, tenth, and eleventh strokes struck," the biographer continues, "a huge blackness sprawled over the whole of London" (225). In focusing on descriptions of the weather instead of the clock's ringing in of midnight, the narrative undermines the power and hegemony of standardized time.²⁴ The weather and external objects are not the only markers of time in the novel; Orlando's fashion and bodily changes also express the passing of time. As Martin puts it, "changing styles are the one thing that reliably alert Orlando to the fact that her times have changed" (xxvii). Similarly, focusing on

²³ For example, Orlando meets Shel and immediately gets engaged. Shel sees Orlando sleeping outside, Shel jumps off his horse, they say two sentences to each other and then "[a] few minutes later, they became engaged" (250).

²⁴ For another example of this, see the very brief mention of how long Nick Greene has been staying with Orlando: "[Orlando] unloosed the mastiff which had been tied up these six weeks because it never saw the poet without biting him" (94). Instead of explicitly stating that Greene had been with Orlando for six weeks or that six weeks had passed, the biographer, again, ties the passing of time to an external object, this time the dog.

the body as an object, Freeman reads Orlando's change in gender as a physical manifestation of erotohistoriography, the idea that "encounters with history are bodily encounters" (*Binds* 105). For Freeman, the changes in Orlando's body illustrate how we experience time and history differently depending on our bodies (*Binds* 107).

Both the narrative structure and the narrative content resist the developmental and mechanical conceptualizations of time. As Caughie explains, "[t]he frequent changes in the narration's temporal pacing, the many pauses in the story, as when the biographer looks out of the window while Orlando writes, the numerous anachronisms in the form of both analepsis and prolepsis, the thematizing of time—all serve to accentuate time's queer force" (517). In expanding the discussion of plot points that typically require only a few sentences and condensing major events to a few lines, the biographer rejects a standardized way of discussing time, a way of pacing the novel, and undermines the socially-perceived worth of different topics. For example, although the biographer spends four paragraphs describing what we see outside of Orlando's window (269-271), an entire year passes in the space of five lines: "It was now November. After November, comes December. Then January, February, March, and April. After April comes May. June, July, August follow. Next is September. Then October, and so, behold, here we are back at November again, with a whole year accomplished" (266).

The biographer-narrator frequently provides overt commentary on the ways in which time does not always follow a mechanized and objective temporality, in which, for example, a minute is always sixty seconds. "The mind of man," the biographer explains, "works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second" (98). Describing

Orlando's periods of introspection, the biographer notes how "he would go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least. Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most" (99). These explicit comments highlight the ways in which time is subjective and malleable, not consistent and fixed.

The features of *Orlando* that contribute to its queer temporality—its dismissal of social temporal markers, its lack of a developmental narrative, its depiction of changes in time via objects instead of clocks and narrative development, the pacing of the novel, and its explicit commentary on temporality—are characteristic of modernist novels and the avant-garde. However, they were also already functioning in nineteenth-century British novels, if not as explicitly as in *Orlando*. The absence of overt thematization of temporality in nineteenth-century novels has led scholars to overlook this period in discussions of queer time. To demonstrate how nineteenth-century novels engage in non-normative temporalities, I begin by exploring queer temporalities in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and then return to works discussed in my chapter on narrative structures—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). In coming back to those narratives previously discussed, I seek to show not just that narrative queerness in the British nineteenth century is pervasive and multifaceted, but to counter the chronological progression structuring even queer analyses of temporality. In circling back, my larger project itself takes a queer turn as it resists building an argument along a progressive trajectory.

“their eyes are precisely similar”: The Queer Temporalities of Family in *Wuthering Heights*²⁵

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) tells the story of two generations of families on the Yorkshire moors. There is Catherine and Hindley Earnshaw, Edgar and Isabella Linton, and the mysterious orphan Heathcliff in the first generation and Cathy Linton, Linton Heathcliff, and Hareton Earnshaw in the second generation.²⁶ Told by the family servant Nelly to the interloper Lockwood, the novel focuses on themes of gender, sexuality, power, psychology, and trauma.

Although the novel’s themes and its classification as a Gothic novel provide opportunities for queer readings, such work on the novel is limited.²⁷ As Richard Kaye notes in his 2016 article on queer theory and the Brontës, “although Queer Theory originated in critical accounts of Victorian literature...critics [using queer theory] have largely ignored the fiction of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë” (39).²⁸ The work that does focus on the novel tends to focus on themes

²⁵ Parts of my discussion of Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* were previously published in *Brontë Studies*, Volume 45, Issue 2 (2020).

²⁶ Because I will be looking at both sets of families over the generations, I will use “Catherine” when I am referring to the first generation and “Cathy” when I am referring to the second generation.

²⁷ Although not explicitly making the connection between queer theory and the novel, there is some criticism that appears to be influenced by the concepts of queer theory. However, as with the other works I reference, these texts primarily focus on issues of desire and identity rather than other themes of non-normativity. See U.C. Knoepfmacher’s *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights* (1989), Stevie Davies’s *Emily Brontë: Heretic* (1994), and Deborah Lutz’s *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism, and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (2006). For one of the first foundational works using queer theoretical concepts before the field was established, see Leo Bersani’s discussion of *Wuthering Heights* in *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature* (1976). While Bersani’s discussion of the novel highlights many of the same issues I see in the novel, it does so from a discussion of identity. Although I look at how identities are constructed in the novel in my argument, my focus is how identity engages with conceptions of time and progress in the novel and how these inform our discussion of queer time.

²⁸ Although highlighting the lack of queer work done on the Brontës, Kaye’s article does not look at a particular sister or work. Instead, he looks at the way creative pieces, what he calls “Brontë revision,” such as adaptations, myths, and parodies, queer the Brontës (“Brontë” 40).

of identity and desire, not the novel's structure or temporality. For example, in their respective works, both Claire O'Callaghan and Lydia Brown read Brontë's poetry against a queer theoretical background to reevaluate how we conceptualize Brontë's identity. And the three explicitly queer works on the novel look at how the novel queers courtship and marriage. In "Marking the Territory: Heathcliff, Edgar, and Homosocial Desire" (1996), Maggie Berg uses Eve Sedgwick's concept of homosocial bonds to argue that "Heathcliff's love for Catherine is partly a consequence of, and is intimately bound up with, his rivalries with the other male characters, particularly Edgar" (55) while Talia Schaffer argues that Catherine's desire to be with both Heathcliff and Edgar is a queer desire in the face of contemporary marriage standards in "Reading on the Contrary: Cousin Marriage, *Mansfield Park*, and *Wuthering Heights*" (2015). And in "Nostalgia, Apostrophe, *Wuthering Heights*: The Queer Destiny of Heterosexuality" (1999), Bonnie Burns looks at the novel's use of nostalgia and apostrophe in its "interroga[tion of] the astonishing impossibility of heterosexual desire" (81).

My discussion here endeavors to broaden the scope of queer scholarship on *Wuthering Heights* and provide a new opportunity for interrogating the novel through its depiction of time. As a novel following and structured by the relationships between two families over two generations, the emphasis on family and generations in the novel initially suggests that the novel upholds and promotes a normative temporality, that is, one founded on reproduction and the future and one that follows a linear development. However, as I will argue, upon a closer examination of these generations and how they are positioned in the novel, we see that the second generation of children (Cathy, Linton, and Hareton) are not distinct, autonomous individuals but instead entities defined by the identities and actions of the previous generation. James Kincaid's view of the child as "a wonderfully hollow category, able to be filled with

anyone's overflowing emotions" is helpful here (12). The second-generation children in this novel are "hollow" entities reproducing the past as each new character is "filled," to borrow Kincaid's wording, with the identity and, at times, even shares the name of older characters, creating a kind of stagnant circularity. They are empty characters, that is, without their own sense of self, used to patch up old feuds and continue past relationships. As a result, generations and genealogy in the narrative appear cyclical, rather than straight and linear.

While the structure of time is not a prominent theme in criticism of the novel, the repetitive nature of the novel's storyline and the doubling among characters are frequently noted by scholars.²⁹ Identifying this "filling" effect as allegorical repletion, "the *filling up* of fictive space with a single identity," Camille Paglia suggests that in *Wuthering Heights*, "a dominating personality is extended through psychological space" (447). In his examination of identities in the novel, Bersani notes that "an apparent move away from beginnings or sources is counteracted by a compositional tour de force which returns us to our point of departure and suggests that we have not really been anywhere" (*Future* 223). "The generations do not really progress in *Wuthering Heights*," Paglia puts it more bluntly, "They are irresistibly called back to their origins" (447).³⁰ Building off these discussions, I wish to resituate discussions of repetition and the doubling in the novel within a queer theoretical context in order to explore how the

²⁹ While critics comment on the "cyclical repetition of names and space across generations," as Brown does in her discussion (182) or briefly acknowledge the non-linear timeline, very few works exclusively focus on the subject of time or temporality in the novel. For the few that do, see Robert F. Gleckner's "Time in 'Wuthering Heights'" (1959), Josh Poklad's "Time-Space Compression in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*" (2017) and Graeme Tytler's "Facets of Time Consciousness in *Wuthering Heights*" (2015).

³⁰ See also J. Hillis Miller's "*Wuthering Heights*: Repetition and the 'Uncanny'" (1985); Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), 248-308; Lyn Pykett's "Changing the Names: The Two Catherines" (2003); and Kathryn McGuire's "Second Chances: Doubling in *Wuthering Heights*" (1993).

narrative's structure and the repetition of characters and characteristics produces a queer temporality that resists heteronormative compulsions for linear growth and futurity.

The duplication of characters from one generation to the next begins early on in the novel with Lockwood's interaction with the waif and Heathcliff's introduction into the narrative. Reading Catherine's improvised diary against the clamoring of the storm outside, Lockwood observes that the "writing [...] was nothing but a name repeated in all kinds of characters, large and small—*Catherine Earnshaw*, here and there varied to *Catherine Heathcliff*, and then again to *Catherine Linton*" (15-16).³¹ Falling asleep repeating these names, Lockwood awakens to a disturbance outside the window and feels an "ice-cold hand" clutching at his wrist (20). Looking through the window, he claims he "discerned obscurely, a child's face," and yet the "child" announces herself as Catherine Linton, the married and adult (and dead) Catherine (20). "It's twenty years" the child cries, "twenty years, I've been a waif for twenty years" (21). While the scene clearly contributes to the Gothic nature of the novel, this interaction is also an early example of the novel's queer temporality. Reading this scene with Lockwood from the position of queer temporality highlights the way that the child represents a figure outside of a linear conception of time. Although the child names herself Catherine Linton, her description as a ghostly child wandering the moors undercuts this identity and instead is reminiscent of the child Catherine before her marriage to Edgar. The child's description thus suggests that after death, the adult Catherine reverted back to being a child, foreshadowing the queer circular structure that, I will argue, that structures the rest of the novel.

³¹ All references to the text are taken from the Fourth Norton Critical Edition of *Wuthering Heights* edited by Richard J. Dunn.

Heathcliff's entrance into the novel similarly highlights this circular structure.

Introducing Heathcliff to his family, Mr. Earnshaw tells his wife to ““take it as a gift of God although it's as dark almost as if it came from the devil”” (29). ““I found they had christened him ‘Heathcliff,’” Nelly recounts, ““it was the name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname”” (30). Heathcliff is an extreme example of the novel's replication process as he is given only one name—Heathcliff—and no surname, so his entire identity revolves around and is subsumed by the former Heathcliff. With this naming, Heathcliff is positioned as the replacement child in the Earnshaw family rather than his own being.

However, it is not until Nelly recounts the births of Hareton, Cathy, and Linton, the second generation of children in the novel, that this duplication emerges as a pattern in the novel. When each second-generation character is introduced in Nelly's story, we see the same pattern occurring: each child is conceived and birthed offstage, without warning, and precipitates the death or removal of the mother.³² These second-generation characters take the place of their parents or predecessors as they allow for the narrative to continue many of the outstanding tensions and relationships from the first generation. The novel, then, never truly advances but continues to dwell on the conflicts from the beginning. This focus, Bersani notes, makes it seem “as if Emily Brontë were telling the same story twice, and eliminating its originality the second time” (*Future* 222). Bersani's reading suggests the notion of a copy without an original, or a non-

³² Although Brontë does include a few clues regarding Catherine's pregnancy (94, 105-106), they are vague and rare enough that I would not consider her pregnancy common knowledge for readers, and it can easily be passed over in initial readings. These references can also be read as sickness and hysteria, typical feminine illnesses in the nineteenth century.

originary origin, which disrupts conventional notions of temporality. If there is no original character or origin point, then we cannot trace their progress or development.

Hareton is the first second-generation character born among the various families and the first to be introduced in Nelly's accounting of the family history. Nelly announces Hareton's arrival at the beginning of Chapter VIII. However, in her tale to Lockwood directly preceding this announcement, Nelly recounts the altercation between Heathcliff and Edgar on Christmas and Hindley's subsequent punishment of Heathcliff (46). Immediately before breaking off her story to attend to Lockwood, Nelly tells readers that Heathcliff was planning his revenge on Hindley. "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back" Heathcliff tells Nelly, "I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last" (48). Nelly then pauses in her story and tells Lockwood, "I'm annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate; and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed!" (48). Readers then have to wait until the beginning of the next chapter to pick up her tale again. However, rather than starting where she left off with Heathcliff, Nelly begins Chapter VIII with the birth of Hindley's son Hareton, thereby structurally connecting Hareton to Heathcliff's desire and plan for revenge and positioning Hareton as Hindley's surrogate on which Heathcliff can take his subsequent revenge.

Hareton's introduction in the narrative is reminiscent of Heathcliff's introduction in Chapter IV. Introducing Hareton, Nelly tells us "[o]n the morning of a fine June day, my first bonny little nursling, and the last of the ancient Earnshaw stock, was born" (50). When we look at the wording here, and in the other descriptions of the second-generation children, Hareton, like Heathcliff, is not even considered an 'autonomous' child until *after* Nelly names him in her story. Instead, Hareton is referred to as "it" until Nelly gives "it" a name, Hareton, almost a page and a half into the chapter. Until then, we are told that Nelly is going to "nurse *it*...to feed

it...and take care of it...it will be all” hers (50, emphasis mine). Nelly finally gives readers his name after telling readers that Frances has died: Hindley “raised [Frances] in his arms; she put her two hands about his neck, her face changed, and she was dead...the child Hareton fell wholly into my hands” (51). Like Heathcliff’s introduction, it is not until the child is connected to Hindley’s family, effectively providing him with an identity (i.e., Hindley’s identity), that he is given a name and seen as a real character within the narrative. Until then, the child is considered a neutral and empty entity.³³

This pattern also happens with the other two second-generation children, Cathy and Linton. Following the paradigm, Nelly tells us about the birth of Cathy at the start of a new chapter (Chapter XVI), after describing the emotional and dramatic confrontation between Heathcliff and Catherine. Nelly tells Lockwood “[a]bout twelve o’clock that night was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights, a puny, seven month’s child; and two hours after, the mother died” (128). Nelly then goes on to describe Cathy as “an unwelcomed infant *it* was...*It* might have wailed out of life, and nobody cared a morsel...*its* beginning was as friendless as *its* end is likely to be” (128, emphasis mine). Here, as with the other characters, the birth of a child causes the death of its mother, and “it” is used to describe the child.³⁴ The child is not identified as something other than “it” or the generic use of “baby” until fifteen pages after she is introduced (at the start of Chapter XVI). There Nelly tells us that “[*i*]t was named Catherine, but

³³ Although not considered part of this second generation of children, Heathcliff is similarly considered a neutral entity until he is formally connected with the memory of his predecessor, Heathcliff Earnshaw. Mr. Earnshaw tells his wife to “take *it* as a gift of God...*it’s* as dark almost as if *it* came from the devil” (29, emphasis mine). Mrs. Earnshaw and Nelly continue this pattern of referral with Nelly using it a striking number of times. Readers are not given Heathcliff’s name until Nelly tells us he was now a member of the family (30).

³⁴ Although Nelly uses “Catherine” when she talks to Lockwood, this is in a direct address, and Cathy has already been introduced in the novel outside of Nelly’s tale. When Nelly is recounting the story for Lockwood, she initially uses “its” within the actual narrative.

[Edgar] never called *it* the name in full...The little one was always Cathy; *it* formed to him a distinction from the mother, and yet, a connection with her, and his attachment sprang from *its* relation to her, far more than from *its* being his own” (143, emphasis mine). Nelly’s description shows that the child is a structuring relation, not an emotive entity; it does not signify the future but reproduces the past.

Although not as direct as the Hareton example, with her birth Cathy becomes the object of Heathcliff’s revenge as well. She takes the place of Catherine in Heathcliff’s desire to punish Catherine for her self-destruction. During the confrontation that Nelly describes right before she tells readers about Cathy’s birth, Heathcliff, seeing Catherine’s ill and hysterical state, places his grief and despair onto her, crying, “I forgive you what you have done to me. I love *my* murderer—but *yours!* How can I?” (126). Heathcliff views Catherine as responsible for her own impending death. However, we can also read Cathy herself as one of the reasons for Catherine’s death. If Catherine had never gotten pregnant then it is possible she would not have died, thus marking Cathy as the literal and figurative representation of Catherine’s murderer. As Catherine’s duplicate, both in name and description, Cathy is positioned as the perfect surrogate on whom Heathcliff can take revenge.

Although not as detailed, Linton’s birth follows the same pattern as Hareton’s and Cathy’s. After fleeing Heathcliff and Thrushcross Grange, Isabella gives birth to Linton in an undisclosed area, “south, near London,” very much removed from the narrative (142). In her address to Lockwood, Nelly tells us “there [Isabella] had a son...He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be an ailing, peevish creature,” similar, as we know, to a young Edgar (142). Just as with the birth of Cathy, Nelly refers to Linton as an “it” when

recounting her conversations with Heathcliff about Linton.³⁵ While Isabella does not die immediately after childbirth like the other two mothers, Nelly tells readers about her death shortly after she recounts Linton's birth; the two events are separated by only a little over ten lines in the text (142). Although not the focus of the narrative in the same way as Hareton and Cathy, Linton's birth is necessary in order for Isabella to reenter the narrative, thus recreating the original generation of Catherine, Isabella, Edgar, and Hindley, and for Heathcliff, again, to take revenge. Linton is positioned as a stand-in for Isabella who serves as "Edgar's proxy in suffering" to Heathcliff (114).

In presenting the second generation in this way, Brontë structurally positions these characters as stand-ins for the unresolved conflicts and relationships of the first generation. Within this pattern, the children are not distinct, autonomous individuals with their own desires, identities, and agendas but instead entities defined by and in the previous generation. While any child carries, to some extent, the traits of previous generations, in this inverted family structure, the children literally revert to the past, as if returning to a previous state. However, the connection between the two generations is not just structural or positional. The second generation of characters also *resembles* the first generation, both in terms of characteristics and in the similarities between their plot trajectories. "[W]ith its baffling duplication of names, place, events," *Wuthering Heights*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar argue, "seems endlessly to reenact itself, like some ritual that must be cyclically repeated in order to sustain (as well as explain) both nature and culture" (257). These structural connections between generations allow readers

³⁵ Talking to Nelly about the baby, Heathcliff says, "They wish me to hate *it*" and "I'll have *it*...when I want *it*" with Nelly answering, "I don't think they wish you to know anything about *it*" (142, emphasis mine).

to see the temporality of the narrative as resisting the heteronormative drive forward as Brontë recreates events and relationships from the first half of the novel.

On the broadest, most basic level in the novel, the second generation consists of three children (two boys and one girl) involved in a triangular relationship just as with the first generation. However, the similarities go even further than this basic character and structural formation. The names of the children in the second generation (Cathy, Linton, Heathcliff) play on the names from the first generation (Catherine, the Linton family, and Heathcliff) and the descriptions of the second-generation characters (both physical and behavioral) recall their predecessors. For example, Cathy has Catherine's "capacity for intense attachments" as well as Catherine's "breadth of forehead" and the same "arch of the nostril that makes her appear rather haughty" (146, 246), and Cathy and Hareton both have "the Earnshaws' handsome dark eyes" (146).³⁶

In addition to their names and physical characteristics, the two generations are also similar in terms of the events that happen to them in the novel. Many of the same plot points and tropes that occurred with the first generation of children are repeated with this second generation, although they might be arranged differently or associated with different characters, emphasizing the view that these new children are simply copies reliving the first half of the novel. The novel reads as though Brontë put the narrative elements from her first volume in a bag, mixed them up, and then pulled them out one by one to create the second volume.³⁷ One of the most obvious

³⁶ And as previously mentioned, Linton, Nelly tells us, is an "ailing, peevish creature" just like Edgar (142).

³⁷ While there are a number of differences between the two halves of the novel, such as the reversal of Hareton's degradation, the overarching structure of the narrative and the positions of the characters within the novel are largely the same.

similarities between the two generations is the way in which Hareton's degradation mirrors that of Heathcliff's. Both individuals are cast out of their homes and used both as manual labor and objects of scorn, although they both long to be involved in the family, particularly with the Catherine/Cathy character. Heathcliff traps both Cathy and Isabella in the different halves of the novel and Heathcliff's imprisonment of Cathy, Nelly, and Linton (206-107) in the second half is reminiscent of Catherine's imprisonment of Edgar, Heathcliff, and Nelly (90-91) in the first half, which is similar to the altercation between Heathcliff, Hindley, and Isabella (141). Linton and Heathcliff are both rescued from outside of the narrative and brought into the novel proper, and their respective histories and childhoods are both unknown to readers. Cathy's joy at preparing to welcome Linton home (154) is similar to Catherine's joy when Heathcliff returns to her life (74-76). Catherine is injured in the first half of the novel, leading to her relationship with Edgar, and Linton emphasizes his frailty in the second half of the novel (albeit on behalf of Heathcliff) in order to form a relationship with Cathy.

Time does progress in the sense that new characters appear in the novel, but because the novel largely replicates the same events and relationships from generation to generation *and* because the 'new' characters can be read as replications of the older characters, time also seems to stand still, stuck in the temporality and plot of the first half of the novel. These select examples also point to a larger system of replication that sees the second half of the novel as largely a retelling of the first. This retelling is emphasized at the end of the novel when readers are brought back to the very beginning of the narrative. The end of the text shows Cathy and Hareton together in possession of Wuthering Heights. While it is easy to read this relationship as the reversal of Heathcliff's and Hareton's degradation and the resolution of Catherine and Heathcliff's doomed love, these readings disregard Hareton's role and lineage in the text.

Hareton is Hindley's son, not Heathcliff's, and, as I have argued, we can read Cathy and Hareton as surrogates for Catherine and Hindley. Thus, at the end of the novel, we have direct descendants of the original inhabitants of Wuthering Heights, Cathy and Hareton (or, as I have argued, structurally Catherine and Hindley) back in possession of their house with just the original, nuclear family and characters present: Cathy (or Catherine), Hareton (or Hindley), Nelly, and Joseph. Nelly confirms this reading when she tells Lockwood that Cathy's and Hareton's "eyes are precisely similar, and they are those of Catherine Earnshaw" (246). In remarking that their eyes come from Catherine Earnshaw, Nelly reminds readers that Hareton is Hindley's son (even though Hareton's early behavior suggests he is Heathcliff's). Because the characters and the plot structure largely repeat the events of the past, the novel's plot cannot be said to progress but instead essentially turns back on itself, forming a circular temporal structure. This is a queer temporality. The return to the beginning, then, suggests a moving backwards instead of forwards, resisting the heteronormative pull toward the future.

It is not just the turn backwards that produces queer temporalities in the novel, but also its heteronormative foundation. As a novel that follows the movements of two families through time, the novel is predicated on a reproductive paradigm. However, the components of the family in the novel—the children—are inherently queer figures, thus undermining the novel's heteronormative foundation and sense of time. On a very basic level, the child is an inherently queer figure because "it changes to fit different situations and different methods" (Kincaid 5). The same features that allow the child to be used by society as the image of heteronormativity—such as its inherent hollowness—also allow it to be inherently indefinable, corresponding to the definition of "queerness" put forth by Edelman as the "refusal...of every substantialization of identity" (4). Its inherent instability then marks the figure as queer because it allows for a range

of interpretations and uses, both normative and nonnormative. Looking at our treatment of children throughout history, we can also see how we have positioned them as queer through our desire to define ourselves against them. In this view, the child is constructed as nonreproductive and presexual in order to position adulthood as a separate category. Because society today is focused on purging and sterilizing the sexuality of children, preserving them in a timeless state of innocence, we are placing them outside of the ‘natural’ heterosexual standard. As scholars such as Edelman, Kathryn Bond Stockton, and Halberstam argue in their respective works, “the child is always already queer and must therefore quickly be converted to a protoheterosexual by being pushed through a series of maturational models of growth that project the child as the future and the future as heterosexual” (Halberstam *Failure* 73).³⁸ However, by treating the child as this figure of innocence, we obstruct its ‘conversion’ to heterosexuality and delay its maturity. Thus, as Pugh Tison argues, “queerness provides an apt metaphor for considering the psychosexual development of children, if one views queerness not as a synonym for *homosexuality* but as a descriptor of disruptions to prevailing cultural codes of sexual and gender normativity” (6).

Because the first generation of children is replicated by and in the second generation, in a sense repositioning the first generation back into childhood in the second half of the novel, this first generation of characters resists the ‘natural’ impulse to grow up. Instead, this first generation remains stuck as children and thus rejects or delays heteronormativity’s influence and temporal structure. The children in the novel are kept outside the “maturational models of growth” that produce normative-abiding citizens and normative temporalities (Halberstam *Failure* 73). As a result, the novel structurally produces a single generation of queer children that

³⁸ See Edelman’s *No Future* and Stockton’s “Introduction” from *The Queer Child: or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009).

do not grow up and that bring us back to the beginning of the novel rather than looking outward towards the future.

While it could be argued that the first generation of characters does in fact grow up, because the second generation is produced, when we look at how sexuality or maturity in general are positioned in the narrative, these signs of adulthood are kept from the novel, which suggests they are not its focus. According to Kincaid, “[c]hildhood ended with the onset of puberty, of sexuality. Such logic required that the child be thought of as that which is non-sexual, a conception which seems always to have required some elaborate mental slithering and some brash pseudoscience” (70). While Kincaid sees the portrayal of children and childhood as a concentrated, detailed maneuver, for Brontë’s novel, this “elaborate mental slithering” is as easy as removing the adult characters from the focus of the novel. Pregnant mothers (Frances, Catherine, and Isabella) and pregnancy in general are largely effaced in the narrative and the mothers removed, killed off, after they produce a child. And both the male and female figures are largely kept out of the narrative during their adolescence, re-emerging *after* they have matured.³⁹ Both Hindley and Heathcliff are offstage during what is, we presume to be, their adolescence—Hindley off at school and Heathcliff out of the narrative completely—and both return to the novel as ‘men.’ Edgar and Isabella are also out of the scope of the novel at Thrushcross Grange, and what knowledge we do get of them suggests they have already been converted into the roles society expects of them. Significantly, Catherine’s development into a woman and a lady also occurs out of sight at Thrushcross Grange while she recovers her health, and we see her only

³⁹ There is an allusion to Hindley’s sexuality in the beginning of the novel. However, it is figured as childish and thus ‘natural’ and not threatening. Seeing Frances and Hindley together, Catherine describes them as acting “like babies, kissing and talking nonsense by the hour—foolish palaver that we should be ashamed of” (17). By framing them as “babies” and referring to their activity as “nonsense,” Catherine sterilizes the sexuality of their behavior.

after the transformation has occurred. When Catherine finally returns to Wuthering Heights, she is no longer “a wild, hatless little savage” but “a very dignified person” who can now be called “a lady” (41). In these instances, the middle stage of development is missing, and thus there is no sense of progression.

The children also remain outside normative trajectories of time in the novel because they are positioned as outside the conventional family structure, a paradigm which creates and promotes both normativity and normative time.⁴⁰ Instead of being intimately involved in family life, the children appear as orphans, outsiders, and surrogates, which allows them to both access and distance themselves from the constraints of conventional time.⁴¹ In her discussion of genealogy in novels, Patricia Drechsel Tobin suggests that “[o]rphans and foundlings...are let loose in the world without ever having been born into it, foregoing the delicacy of initiation rites...which a society responsive to and responsible for them would have institutionalized as stages in their maturing processes” (31-32). Orphans and outsiders, both categories in which we can place the children from *Wuthering Heights*, operate outside societal codes and thus outside normative, heterosexual and reproductive time.

The novel’s rejection of the characters’ sexuality and maturation and the characters’ location outside the family and normative institutions such as school and church allow them to sidestep the dominant social framework that requires all participants to grow up and perpetuate this social order. It allows them to access other modes of living and other (queer) temporalities

⁴⁰ See discussions in Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure*, 71; Freeman’s *Time Binds*, 22-23; and Drew Lamonica Arms’s “*We are three sisters*”: *Self and Family in the Writing of the Brontës* (2003), 13.

⁴¹ Nelly and Lockwood can also be considered orphans in this sense. As a servant, Nelly is inherently an outsider from the families she interacts with and as a visitor and a city dweller, Lockwood is similarly distanced from the families in the novel.

that do not require them to look to and make decisions for the future or invest in longevity.

Thinking about the characters in this way may help to explain why so many of them engage in behaviors that may initially appear as selfish, immature, and self-destructive, such as Catherine's reasons for accepting Edgar's proposal (61-62). When viewed from a queer position, they are simply focusing on their own life and desires rather than investing in the future or in conventional structures like their families or other social norms.

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* produces queer temporalities through its repetition of characters and relationships and its rejection of normative temporal markers. Although time does pass in the novel, as the characters grow up and the next generation is produced, the foundation of the novel's temporal trajectory is, as I have argued, inherently queer.⁴² As a novel that does not appear, at the onset, to be overtly queer, my discussion helps to show the ways in which nineteenth-century novels were already engaging with concepts we associate with queer theory today. Like *Wuthering Heights*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* also rejects normative values, yet the narrative produces a queer temporality through its emphasis on the now rather than the future. *Dracula*'s focus on emerging technologies, simultaneous narration, and narrative structure creates an ideology of the now that rejects the values of normative temporalities.

⁴² Although not the focus of my discussion, this tension between the heteronormative surface and the queer foundation also points to the novel's inherent queerness. As Miller makes clear in his foundational "*Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the 'Uncanny'*" (1982), the novel resists any attempts to classify it or uncover a secret meaning. "[T]his novel seems to have an inexhaustible power to call forth commentary and more commentary," Miller argues, "The essays tend not to build on one another according to some ideal of progressive elucidation. Each is exclusive" (50). "The error [in *Wuthering Heights* criticism] lies in the assumption that the meaning is going to be single, unified, and logically coherent," Miller continues, "there is an error in the assumption that there *is* a single secret truth about *Wuthering Heights*" (51). In refusing to allow one central meaning, the novel embodies the force of queerness that Edelman discusses in *No Future*: "queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one" (17).

“up-to-date with a vengeance”: The Ideology of the Now in *Dracula*

Published in 1897, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* follows a vibrant cast of characters as they come together to learn about a vampire named Dracula and attempt to contain him before he can take over English society. This ragtag group includes the solicitor, Jonathan Harker; the group secretary and Jonathan’s eventual wife, Mina Harker; the slain fallen woman and fiancée to Lord (Arthur) Godalming, Lucy; the passive and melancholic fiancé of Lucy, Lord Godalming; the strappy and boisterous American cowboy, Quincey Morris; the psychiatrist and supervisor of an asylum and mentee of Dr. Van Helsing, Dr. John Seward; and the infamous doctor, occultist, and lawyer, Professor Abraham Van Helsing. Composed of diary, journal, letter, and phonographic entries as well as newspaper clippings, reports, and telegrams, the novel’s structure is as diverse as its group of characters.

Initially written as separate and discrete accounts by each of the characters during the first portion of the novel, the entries are transcribed, collated, and organized by Mina once the characters meet in the second half of the novel to create a cohesive and chronological narrative that is then disseminated amongst the characters. As the plot unfolds and the characters uncover more information about Dracula, Mina continually adds to the manuscript, making sure that the text is up-to-date to the present moment. Through its composition and distribution, the text highlights many of the social and technological anxieties occurring at the end of the nineteenth century, anxieties that have also been highlighted by critical scholarship on the novel.

Although much of the novel’s plot and structure are focused on conceptions of time (e.g., the time actions occurred, the use of new technologies such as the telegram and phonograph), critical discussions of temporality in the novel have largely been overshadowed by the novel’s

themes of gender, sexuality, imperialism, and colonialism.⁴³ What scholarship there is on temporality in the novel has primarily been concerned with three central themes: the role of technology in the novel, the novel's framework, and Dracula himself.⁴⁴ Scholars such as Adam Barrows and Leah Richards read the characters' heavy reliance on new technologies, such as the telegraph and the typewriter, and advances in transportation, such as the train, as a way for the characters to get ahead of Dracula and, ultimately, defeat him.⁴⁵ Such views also point to the focus on recording and dating in the novel, seeing the use of Western methods as a way to gain control over and pin down the unknowable figure of Dracula and his Eastern associations. As Ahmet Süner explains, "[f]or Jonathan and the other Western characters...the modern technologies of writing and recording offer a way to hold onto the present and make whatever escapes detection present during their ineffable encounters with the vampire" (60). And scholars such as Alana Fletcher and Thomas M. Stuart have argued that because Dracula operates outside

⁴³ For discussions of gender and sexuality, see Christopher Craft's "'Kiss Me with those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" (1984); Talia Schaffer's "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*" (1994); Xavier Aldana Reyes's "*Dracula* Queered" (2017); Jordan Kistler's "Rethinking the New Woman in *Dracula*" (2018); Heike Bauer's "*Dracula* and Sexology" (2017); and Carol A. Senf's "'Dracula': Stoker's Response to the New Woman" (1982) and "*Dracula* and Women" (2017). For discussions of imperialism and colonialism, see Stephen D. Arata's "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization" (1990) and Halberstam's "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" from *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995).

⁴⁴ For other discussions of these three temporal themes, see Thomas M. Stuart's "Out of Time: Queer Temporality and Eugenic Monstrosity" (2018); Holly J. McBee's "Vampires Do(n't) Exist: Using Past and Present Technologies to Make *Dracula* Real" (2011); Adam Barrows's "The Shortcomings of Timetables': Greenwich, Modernism, and the Limits of Modernity" (2010); Anne DeLong's "Communication Technologies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*: Utopian or Dystopian?" (2018); and Wesley Holmes Burdine's "'Up-To-Date With a Vengeance': *Dracula* and Prosthetic Bodies of Text" (2006).

⁴⁵ In "At the Limits of Imperial Time; or, Dracula Must Die!" (2010), Barrows argues that "Stoker's international coalition of vampire hunters use tools of temporal synchronization as weapons against the vampire, whose very ontological being initially frustrates any attempt at temporal control or representation" (82-83). And Richard contends that the characters' desires to record everything about Dracula and the compilation of their records is what allows the group to destroy Dracula (440).

of social norms and is not bound by Western methods of measuring time, such as the clock, he is outside of temporal control.⁴⁶

Adding to these critical readings, I maintain here that the attention on temporality in the novel and the novel's framework are not just a representation of cultural anxieties of the fin-de-siècle or a way to defeat Dracula. Looking at how technology and temporal markers are used in the novel, I contend that these moments focus on creating a sense of the "now," of immediacy, that not only resists normative linear development but is also unproductive in terms of labor and proper work-rest timelines. Although read as a novel heavily concerned with the future, *Dracula* and its characters, I argue, resist this very heteronormative impulse.

The novel's focus on the present moment may be seen from the very onset with its cohesive narrative trajectory. Scholars have read the text's linear and chronological organization as one way in which the characters undermine Dracula's threatening presence in the novel. In Gustavo Generani's discussion of temporality in the novel, Generani argues that Jonathan and Mina's reorganization of the written and spoken materials into a chronological order "should be interpreted as a political action," one that allows them to "control" or to contain Dracula (122). Similarly, Barrows sees the "comfortable narrative trajectory" as "fix[ing Dracula] in time" ("Limit" 77, 86) and as "preserving England's ontological purity" ("Shortcomings" 265). And Richards explicitly states that it is the characters' information "gathered and arranged into a collaborative and comprehensive account, that enables the group to defeat Dracula" (440). The

⁴⁶ Fletcher sees Dracula as "governed by his bodily needs" and not the "measurable linearity" of "the modern hour, minute, and second" (57) while Stuart calls Dracula a figure of "stopped time" because he exists outside of "a[n] eugenic, evolutionary logic" (223).

characters themselves even support these views when they mention how Mina's manuscript allows them to glean new information about Dracula.⁴⁷

However, these views do not take into account how the progressive chronological structure also lends itself to a focus on the now rather than the future. In placing the various entries together roughly by date and time, Mina does not just present the information in terms of chronology, but also in terms of what Carolyn Dinshaw terms "asynchrony": "different time frames or temporal systems colliding in a single moment of *now*" (*Now* 5). Although Dinshaw uses asynchrony to discuss the queer temporality of postmedieval readers engaging with medieval texts, the concept of multiple temporalities "colliding in a single moment of *now*" is also relevant to the narrative structure of *Dracula*. In arranging the entries in chronological order, the narrative presents multiple versions of the same moment in an attempt to keep the band of hunters and readers "up-to-date with a vengeance," to borrow Harker's description (40). A strict heteronormatively-aligned chronology would present one day after the other, progressively moving forward to the end of the novel. This is not what we get in *Dracula*. Instead, multiple versions of the same day are presented one after the other, forcing us to stay in that present moment. At times we are even brought back to an earlier moment even after we thought we had progressed. In this way, the novel's structure resists the hetero-temporal impetus forward.

For example, the first entry we receive from October 5th is Mina's journal entry, time-stamped five p.m., where she describes the group's meeting to discuss the identity of the boat Dracula was using to travel back to Transylvania and the Count's next moves (275). The next

⁴⁷ See Dr. Seward's September 30th letter (199). In this initial discussion of the manuscript, Seward not only mentions that the manuscript helped them realize the house next to the asylum was Dracula's, but he also explicitly wishes that "if we only had [the manuscript] earlier we might have saved poor Lucy!" (199). References to the text are taken from the 1997 Norton Critical Edition of *Dracula* edited by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal.

entry should, in a chronological trajectory, move us forward in the day or even to the next day. However, instead Dr. Seward's diary entry moves us back to the beginning of October 5th, right after "[rising] early" for the day (279) and then continues through the end of the day, including describing the meeting first mentioned by Mina. The third entry for October 5th, from Harker's journal, continues this recursive temporality as it brings us back to the afternoon of October 5th (282) and, similar to Dr. Seward's entry, mentions the effects of the meeting. With each of these entries, readers are unable to gain momentum forward and progress along the linear development of the narrative. While we can read this as evidence of the novel's desire to keep everyone (characters and readers) up-to-date and synchronous in their knowledge and spatial positions, as critics such as Wesley Burdine suggest, we can also read this as the text's desire to keep us in the temporal moment of October 5th and, bringing in Dinshaw, in a single moment composed of multiple temporalities and knowledges.

The critical focus on the chronological organization of the novel also, importantly, overlooks one of the primary motivators for producing these entries, affect. Throughout the text, particularly in moments of crisis or trauma, the characters turn to recording their thoughts in order to gain control over the situation. This attempt at control may be seen from the beginning of the novel. "Left Munich at 8.35 p.m. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46," Jonathan writes at the opening of the novel, "but train was an hour late" (9). Leaving the West, and the order and knowledge that it connotes, Jonathan uses his journal to keep track of what is going on around him, especially in a place where his standards of knowledge are not used, and to keep his sense of self intact in an environment and social order out of his control. This loss of control is highlighted a few days into Jonathan's stay with Count Dracula. After a few unsettling encounters with the Count, including the commonly-cited

shaving scene, and his search of the castle that yielded no escape, Jonathan confides in his journal. “I began to fear as I wrote in this book that I was getting too diffuse,” Jonathan writes, “but now I am glad that I went into detail from the first...Let me be prosaic as far as facts can be; it will help me to bear up, and imagination must not run riot with me” (30). Fearing that he has been overcome with madness, Jonathan pauses his search and begins to think about his situation, recording his thoughts and what has happened in his journal (32).

Later in the novel, when the full horror of Dracula has emerged, the connections among writing, affect, trauma, and crisis become more direct. After witnessing Mina unconsciously lapping at the self-infected wound on Dracula’s breast, Jonathan writes in his journal, “[a]s I must do something or go mad, I write this diary” (252). “I must keep writing at every change,” he continues, “for I dare not stop to think” (252). In these moments, writing is the only thing stopping Jonathan from going insane; it is a necessary cathartic process, and one that he must engage in or risk “go[ing] mad.” Writing is doing nothing in this moment for society, for the future, for heteronormativity. It is simply used to keep Jonathan together.

The two other main writers in the novel—Mina and Seward—similarly use writing, or recording in the case of Seward, in times of anxiety and loss of control. Expressing her concern over Lucy’s sleepwalking and the lack of communication from Jonathan in Chapter VI, Mina writes in her journal, “I am anxious, and it soothes me to express myself here; it is like whispering to one’s self and listening at the same time” (72). And Dr. Seward’s diary is introduced with language similar to Jonathan’s. “Ebb tide in appetite today,” Seward records in his first ever phonographic entry, “Cannot eat, cannot rest, so diary instead” (61). Like Jonathan’s assertions about writing in his diary, both of these examples make deliberate connections among distractions, health, and recording information. Just as Jonathan turns to his

diary to keep from going mad, Mina and Seward are recording their lives because they need an outlet for their emotions, not for some greater, socially productive purpose.

In “Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*: Breaking the Imperial-Anthropological Time” (2018), Generani highlights the cathartic nature of Jonathan’s and Mina’s writings, noting that “[w]riting implies reflection, analysis, and catharsis” (123). Generani sees their journaling as a way of regaining control over their sense of self and as creating a linear temporality to defeat Dracula’s circular and unending one. However, these cathartic exercises also produce temporalities outside linear time and heteronormative notions of productivity. The focus on affect and affective responses takes the place of public labor, social behaviors, and reproductive responsibility—all foundational components in normative temporalities. As Luciano and Freeman discuss in their respective works on time, feeling, and the nineteenth century, affect, particularly feelings of grief and trauma, disrupts a normative transmission of time based on notions of progress and specific, socially-approved timetables.⁴⁸ “As a newly rational and predominantly linear understanding of time came to dominate the West,” Luciano explains about the nineteenth century, “the time of feeling, deliberately aligned with the authority of the spiritual and natural worlds, was embraced as a mode of compensation for, and, to some extent, of resistance to, the perceived mechanization of society” (6). In turning to writing (or recording) in times of grief, anxiety, and madness, the characters in *Dracula* eschew their social responsibilities (e.g., work, eating, sleeping, reproduction) in favor of recording their feelings, recording what has just occurred, and, importantly, keeping themselves and readers up-to-date in the present moment. We see this

⁴⁸ See Luciano’s *Arranging Grief* and Freeman’s *Beside You in Time*.

refusal of social responsibilities and appropriate work-leisure timelines directly in the novel's introduction to Seward's phonographic diary: "Cannot eat, cannot rest, so diary instead" (61).

In focusing on recording and updating the manuscript, the characters also prioritize non-productive labor acts, that is acts that do not promote the advancement of the Victorian family and society, over socially-approved timelines and behaviors. These alternative choices are seen throughout the novel, but most visibly with Mina.⁴⁹ As the unofficial secretary for the band of men, Mina often eschews sleep and other domestic behaviors in order to work. For example, after listening to Seward's phonographic accounting of Lucy's death and what followed, Mina "didn't know what to believe, and so [she] got out of [her] difficulty by attending to something else" (198). This something else is the transcription of Seward's recordings. She then tells us at the end of this entry that she still is unable to sleep so she is turning back to her work. "I am not sleepy, and the work will help to keep me quiet," she writes (199). Not only does Mina turn to work in order to distract herself from what she has just heard, but she then continues to focus on work rather than what she should be doing, according to proper timelines, such as sleeping (and perhaps working on procreating with her new husband).⁵⁰ As Mina's proclamation suggests, the

⁴⁹ For example, although not all of the characters would have held jobs, e.g., Lord Godalming, both Seward and Jonathan are men of professions actively working who end up ignoring their professional responsibilities in pursuit of Dracula. While Seward does attend to his patient Renfield, Seward is initially only interested in him because he is a novelty, and Seward stays interested in Renfield because of Renfield's connection to Dracula. Moreover, Seward's interest in Renfield is temporary, and he frequently forgets to do his work. "I was so absorbed in that wonderful diary of Jonathan Harker and that other of his wife that I let the time run on without thinking," Seward records in an entry (197). And although Harker begins the novel and his entries with a focus on his job, which is the reason he first met Dracula, he quickly abandons any discussion of his profession in favor of revenge.

⁵⁰ Mina also sees her writing as something private, as just for her. In her first letter presented in the novel, Mina tells Lucy about Jonathan's diary and mentions that she will keep something similar when she comes to visit. "I don't mean one of those two-pages-to-the-week-with-Sunday-squeezed-in-a-corner diaries," she specifies, "but a sort of journal which I can write in whenever I feel inclined. I do not suppose there will be much of interest to other people; but *it is not intended for them*" (55, emphasis mine). The private nature of Mina's diary also supports the non-productive nature of her work.

desire to make writing socially productive or in service to the future does not factor into the characters' motivations for writing.⁵¹ Instead, their reasons for recording their feelings and lives come from their own desires and affective responses.

It is not just the organizing framework and motivation for the novel that focuses on the present moment. The content of the novel does as well. As most scholars note, the individual entries themselves are all concerned with recording time.⁵² Each entry begins with a date, allowing Mina to organize them in chronological order.⁵³ As Mina writes in her journal, "dates are everything" (198). Some entries also go as far as providing a physical description of where the writing is taking place (e.g., "29 September, in train to London" [200]) or a time stamp (e.g., "1 October, 4 am" [214]). And many times these notations are continued throughout a single entry. For example, Jonathan begins his October 5th entry with "5 October, afternoon" and then includes, as he writes, "Later," "Later, midnight," "6 October, morning," and then "later" (282-285).⁵⁴ Ellipses are frequently used at the end of paragraphs or sentences to denote when the writing was paused and then continued or insertions of "Later" and "Later, [time stamp]" used to

⁵¹ Even when the characters are planning out how to kill Dracula, a future event, the emphasis in the entries is not on what they will do in the future but on recording what they just talked about doing in the future. The focus is on the present moment, not looking ahead to the future.

⁵² This focus on dating is something we also see in Woolf's novel. This is an example of how Woolf thematizes and makes overt what is already happening in nineteenth-century texts.

⁵³ The undated entries in the novel have "continued" next to their entry to note that they are part of an entry with a date.

⁵⁴ Jonathan in particular favors this kind of dating and frequently updates the time and location throughout an entry. See also Jonathan's October 1st entry where he includes two notations of the date and time. He begins with "1 October, 5 a.m." and at the end of the entry, he updates the time to be "1 October, later" (218, 224). See also his October 3rd entry where we see "3 October" and "Piccadilly, 12:30 o'clock" (252, 260).

note when new information was added or inserted.⁵⁵ And we often see “(continued)” next to an entry’s title (e.g., “*Dr Seward’s Diary [continued]*”) to suggest that the presented information is continuous even if the entry is broken between chapters or by other entries.⁵⁶ Many of the entries even include a combination of these notations. Harker’s journal entry on the night/early morning of October 3rd and 4th, for example, opens with a precise date and time (“3-4 October, close to midnight”), includes an ellipsis at the end of the first paragraph, and then opens the subsequent paragraph with “*Later*” (270).

These dating techniques create a sense of continuation, where readers are kept within one entry, one moment, or one day for as long as possible. When reading through the various entries, the focus is solely on what is happening in that moment and in that entry. There is no room for speculation about what is happening with another character or on other days, and there is no room for anything beyond the immediate future. Rather than break up the different days from each entry, the novel’s structure allows the different days within one entry to flow together at times, to keep the temporality of the entry completely intact.

As noted earlier, scholars view this extreme dating as alluding to the tensions between East and West in the novel and as advocating for a view of the world organized around Western scientific methods and institutional discourses.⁵⁷ Discussing Harker’s opening entry of the novel

⁵⁵ Dr. Seward’s diary entry from September 30th contains both of these styles (199). For other examples see, Dr. Seward’s October 5th entry (280-281) and Jonathan Harker’s October 5th and 6th entries (282-285).

⁵⁶ This notation occurs throughout the novel. For one such example, see the end of Chapter XV with Dr. Seward’s entry from September 28th (181) that is continued in Chapter XVII. There, Dr. Seward’s entry opens the chapter with “*Dr Seward’s Diary (continued)*,” noting that even though it begins a new chapter, the entry’s temporality is still continuing (194).

⁵⁷ One of the most visible examples of this occurs when Jonathan is getting ready to leave the inn to complete his journey to Dracula’s castle. The landlord’s wife rushes to Jonathan, imploring him to stay, asking, “Do you know what day it is?” (12). While Jonathan knows the date according to Western calendars, he is unaware that it is St. George’s Day, the day when “all the evil things in the world will have full sway” (12). If Jonathan had known the

(“4 May. Bistritz.—Left Munich at 8:35 p.m., on 1st May” [9]), Süner argues that “[t]ime, indeed precise time...launches the thematic explorations of *Dracula*. If Jonathan feels the need to report the precise time of departure, this is because precision is a value that characterises both modernity and the West” (56). “For the modern British subject,” Süner continues, “the entrance into the East signals a movement away from the time of precision (and punctuality) into a pre-modern time when time does not count, a time of timelessness” (57). While such readings are supported throughout the text, especially with Harker’s interactions during his journey to Dracula’s castle, these dating techniques also point to the sense of immediacy in the narrative and the characters’ desires to make sure that they are capturing everything up to and, importantly, through the very present moment, what I’m viewing as an ideology of the now. Such an ideology resists the impetus of looking and planning to the future and refuses the temporal phases of appropriate work and growth. Instead, this ideology creates a relationship with temporality in which everything is in service of the present moment.

This ideology of the now is also highlighted by the characters’ simultaneous narration. Throughout the novel, the characters keep a constantly running commentary of what is happening around them. For example, at the end of Dr. Seward’s September 28th entry, where Dr. Seward describes meeting Mina for the first time, the doctor recounts how Mina “told me...she would come presently to my study, as she had much to say. So here I am finishing my entry in my phonography diary whilst I await her” (195). He then writes a few lines about reading the papers Van Helsing left him before announcing Mina’s return: “I must be careful not to frighten her. Here she is!” (195). Similarly, at the end of Jonathan’s October 4th entry, he

date’s associations, perhaps he could have pushed or avoided his meeting with Dracula. Instead, he declares “there was business to be done” and blindly goes about his way (13).

details how “[t]he day is running by more quickly than I ever thought a day could run for me again. It is now three o’clock” he tells us (275). Characters do not just announce what is happening (“it was three o’clock”) or what happened (“Mina came by my office”), which is common when writing diary entries about one’s day. Instead, they are recording what is happening *while* it is happening (or as close to it as possible). Through this simultaneous narration, readers are pulled directly into their actions and into a temporality that is solely focused on the present moment. After Harker realizes he is being held prisoner in Dracula’s castle at the beginning of the novel, he reflects on his situation writing, “[w]hen, however, the conviction had come to me that I was helpless I sat down quietly...and began to think over what was best to be done. *I am thinking still*, and as yet have come to no definite conclusion” (32, emphasis mine). In this moment Jonathan is still thinking and still transcribing *as* he is thinking. He is recording his thoughts simultaneously as they come to him which emphasizes the *nowness* of the moment.

This practice of the now is summed up most completely when Van Helsing questions Mina’s record keeping in Chapter XVIII. “I am told, Madam Mina,” Seward records Van Helsing saying, “that you and your husband have put up in exact order all things that have been, up to this moment. Not up to this moment, Professor,’ [Mina] said impulsively, ‘but up to this morning’” (208). “‘But why not up to now?’” Van Helsing inquired (208) to which Seward noted, “[a]nd so now, *up to this very hour*, all the records we have are complete and in order” (208, emphasis mine).

These dating techniques are modes of temporal resistance. These comments root the characters (and readers) in the present moment and argue for the importance of a single, present moment. The characters rarely look and plan ahead (beyond documenting what is said containing

the future) and, for the most part, they do not try to make plans for the future or write about what is to come. Instead, their entries are concerned with documenting what is currently happening, what has just happened, and what has happened in the recent past, all in the effort to bring both the writing, and the readers, up to the present moment. For example, both the content and the dating of Jonathan's September 29th entry show this focus on immediacy: "*29 September, in train to London.*—When I received Mr Billington's courteous message that he would give me any information in his power, I thought it best to go down to Whitby and make, *on the spot*, such inquiries as I wanted" (200, second italics mine). Instead of responding to Mr. Billington and making plans to go see him or sharing the information with the rest of the group, Jonathan immediately, and without mentioning any further thought, decides to visit Mr. Billington and ask him "on the spot" what he wanted. Moreover, Jonathan is literally recording his movements as he makes them, as he is "*in [the] train to London.*"

In addition to not making future plans, the characters also rely on this ideology of the now to fill their everyday moments. When Mina meets Lord Godalming and Mr. Morris for the first time, she is alone at Dr. Seward's house and is forced to welcome them into his home. Not knowing either of them, Mina "thought the matter over, and came to the conclusion that the best thing [she] could do would be to post them in affairs right up to date" (202). Instead of following standard social rules and welcoming them into the house properly, e.g., offering something to drink and eat and chatting with them about socially-appropriate topics, Mina feels she needs to immediately tell them what has been happening through the present moment. This drive to stay in the present takes no breaks, and the characters continue to feel the impetus to record their lives even while en route to the impending standoff at Dracula's castle. "Now to the historical," Van

Helsing writes, “for as Madam Mina write not in her stenography, I must, in my cumbrous old fashion, *that so each day of us may not go unrecorded*” (314, emphasis mine).

The new technologies and methods of recording that the characters use are also focused on capturing the immediacy of the moment and, in the case of Dr. Seward’s phonograph, the emotion of the moment as well. Both Jonathan and Mina use shorthand throughout the novel, which allows them the quickest method of documenting their thoughts and decreasing the distance between what has happened and the present moment. Mina’s typewriter allows for immediate physical transcriptions and, because Mina “used manifold,” multiple copies to be produced at once so everyone can be updated simultaneously (198). Mina even brings a traveling typewriter with her to make sure that she can be updating the manuscript in real time on the road. And Dr. Seward’s phonograph allows him to immediately dictate what has and is happening. His phonography is particularly focused on this idea of the now as its primary focus is its use in the moment, not as a recording device for future reference. Discussing his phonographic records with Mina, Dr. Seward realizes that he has no idea how he will be able to find a particular event or note within his records. “[A]lthough I have kept the diary for months past, it never once struck me how I was going to find any particular part of it in case I wanted to look it up,” he exclaims (196). Perhaps the most direct example of the novel’s technologies being used in service of the now is when Mina sends a telegram to Van Helsing to let him know that she is coming immediately by train because she has “important news” (194). In this moment, Mina uses two different types of technological advancements (the telegram and the train) to ensure that she is immediately sharing her information. She does not even wait for Jonathan (even though she barely knows Van Helsing and the other men) or a response from Van Helsing. Instead, like

Jonathan's immediate desire to go see Mr. Billington, Mina must instantly share her news and get everyone up-to-date.

Critics have commonly read the use of new technologies and modes of transportation in the novel as a way to capture and contain Dracula, a figure whose powers and knowledge rely on outdated modes of technology and movement.⁵⁸ Fletcher calls the normalization of train time a “weapon of temporal precision” that the characters can “wield against Dracula” (69), and Barrows explicitly states that in the novel, transportation timetables are more important than the “conventional weapons [of] garlic, stakes, [and] pistols” (“Limits” 86). Looking at the way technology helps to create the collaborative manuscript in the text, Anne DeLong argues that the novel’s “cutting-edge technologies” not only help to form a community amongst the characters through Mina’s ability to transcribe and collate the materials but also help them to overtake Dracula (115), and Süner sees the technological advancements in recording and disseminating their entries as a way to highlight “whatever escapes detection” from their confrontations with Dracula (60). The novel’s showcasing of advances in technology and recording and the characters’ heavy reliance on such modes of communication as the typewriter and the telegram certainly support these critical readings. It is only once all of the materials are together that the group, primarily Mina, is able to make several subtle connections to and discoveries about Dracula.

⁵⁸ For readings that do not see technology as successfully containing Dracula, see Fletcher’s work and David Seed’s “The Narrative Method of Dracula” (1985). While Fletcher does see the characters as relying on technology to try and defeat Dracula, she ultimately argues that the writers fail to trap Dracula through their “chronological synchronization” and reliance on facts over memory (62). Seed highlights how the novel both “emphasizes the modern” and shows it as “inadequa[te]” (68). See also DeLong for readings of the novel’s technology as both utopian and dystopian.

However, in the act of containing Dracula, these technologies also support the characters' desires to always live in the present moment. Looking at the spread of knowledge in the novel, Burdine argues that the manuscript creates a synchronous temporality for the characters (and readers). Because Mina "continually edits" the manuscript, the text's information and the characters themselves are bound together, existing together simultaneously (Burdine 124). "[T]he new texts serve to synchronize the protagonists," Burdine explains, "The close relationship between the text and temporality means that to be up-to-date literally means to be informed, so that knowledge is synchronic" (124-125). What Burdine sees as synchronous, however, can also be read as continuous, as the desire to keep both readers and the entry's content in one, long present moment. The writers' continual uses of temporal and spatial markers (later, now, in the train, ellipses, here she is) make sure that the entry (and its temporality) are unbroken. The entries continually remind us to stay in the present moment (of both reading the entry and of the entry itself) and not to think ahead to the present or behind to the past.

The simultaneous recording practice, obsessive dating, and affective exercises in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* produce an ideology of the now: a practice that resists longevity, futurity, and appropriate social and behavioral temporal markers. Through this practice, the novel creates and exists within an alternative temporality from Victorian society. Similarly, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* also uses affect to reject normative temporalities. As I will show, in reading revenge as the structuring affect of the novel, *Frankenstein* systematically removes the traditional indicators of normative temporalities from the novel, placing the narrative outside of any sense of temporality.

“revenge kept me alive”: Maintaining the Status Quo in *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is a work consumed with reproduction, family ties, and relationships. Following Victor Frankenstein’s construction of the infamous creature and the subsequent consequences for Frankenstein and his family, the novel interrogates what it means to be a parent, to yearn for a family, and the ethics and responsibilities around reproduction. Even the production of the novel is colored by these themes. Read against the backdrop of Shelley’s own issues with pregnancy and children, much criticism of the novel, especially feminist scholarship, has read the novel as Shelley’s own child, supported, of course, by the famous line in the 1831 introduction, “And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper” (173).⁵⁹ As Frann Michel straightforwardly states, “[m]ost of the now-canonical feminist studies of the novel have pursued arguments primarily concerned with maternity” (241). “Ever since Ellen Moers’s study of *Frankenstein* as a birth myth,” Michel continues, “the novel has been persuasively read as a text of material anxiety” (241). This emphasis on family, reproduction, and generational legacies in both the novel and its criticism seems to put the work squarely in the camp of heteronormative temporality.⁶⁰

Despite this critical focus on family and reproduction, however, *Frankenstein*, I argue, is at its core a novel about revenge. While the creature’s birth tends to take center stage in summaries of the novel, the creature’s animation actually occurs fairly early on in the text. The

⁵⁹ All references to the text are taken from the 1818 edition, published in the 1996 Norton Critical edition. For discussions connecting the novel with Shelley’s own reproductive history and female reproduction in general, see Eric Daffron’s “Male Bonding: Sympathy and Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (1999); Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), 221-34; Anne K. Mellor’s *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988), 38-69 and “Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*” (1988); and Barbara Johnson’s “My Monster/My Self” (1982).

⁶⁰ A notable exception to this is Gayatri Spivak’s reading of the novel in her “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (1985). There Spivak argues that the novel resists both the “axiomatics of imperialism” and the “feminist individualism” that is championed in so much feminist criticism of the time (the 1980s).

rest of the novel concerns the creature's vengeful actions against Frankenstein and his family and Frankenstein's passionate pursuit of the creature. Revenge is the very reason readers even have access to the story at all. If Frankenstein and the creature were not locked in a recurring effort to find one another at the end of the novel, Walton would never have met Frankenstein (or the creature) and would never have heard and then relayed the story to his sister. The motif of revenge, then, structures the narrative and its temporality, not family time or reproduction. It is revenge, as an affective response, that positions the novel outside of normative temporal markers.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, affective responses, such as love and grief, allow a subject to relate to and experience time differently. Affect creates avenues for organizing one's life and relationship to time that do not follow conventional temporal markers (e.g., courtship and reproduction) and proper timelines for social growth (e.g., appropriate labor and rest times). Although revenge is typically associated with images of violence, obsession, and convoluted (and often unsuccessful) plots, revenge is, like love, an intense emotional experience and way of relating to life. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* ("OED"), revenge is defined as "[t]he action of hurting, harming, or otherwise *obtaining satisfaction* from someone in return for an injury or wrong suffered at his or her hands; *satisfaction obtained* by repaying an injury or wrong" (emphasis mine).⁶¹ The key concept of revenge, for my argument here, is that the actions are done in order to gain "satisfaction." Revenge then is inherently selfish, and thus anti-normative, because its actions and its purpose are to satisfy the doer, the revenger, and thus it

⁶¹ I am deliberately using "revenge" in my argument as opposed to "avenge" to suggest the selfish and all-consuming nature of the emotion. To avenge, means to "take vengeance, inflict retributive punishment, exact satisfaction, or retaliate, *on behalf of* (an injured person, violated right, etc.)" (*OED*, emphasis mine). The creature and Frankenstein are not taking action "on behalf of anyone." They are doing this for themselves.

does not have to, and most likely does not, follow the socially-prescribed timings of normative temporality or other social norms such as etiquette and morals. Because revenge is almost singularly focused on accomplishing one's goal, all of the other maturational and temporal markers that let a subject (and society) know that they are properly progressing according to normative timelines fall away and are forgotten in the desire to achieve revenge. Revenge is not productive. Its goal is not to produce anything for the community, and thus it does not fall in line with temporal structures of development and progress. Importantly, it is not so much that these temporal markers are suspended by revenge, but that they are often dismissed from one's life trajectory, rendered irrelevant.

As a narrative primarily concerned with revenge, *Frankenstein's* characters and plot trajectory are positioned, from the outset, as outside of normative conceptions of temporality. However, the revenge plot also removes other foundational models of temporality from the narrative which produces a sense of timelessness. The primary marker of temporality that *Frankenstein's* revenge plot dismisses is the family.⁶² Family is one of the most successful and most important paradigms for producing and enforcing normative temporalities. As Halberstam remarks in *The Queer Art of Failure*, the “deployment of the concept of *family*, whether in hetero or homo contexts, almost always introduces normative understandings of time and transmission” (71). Although *Frankenstein* may initially seem focused on family, there are no actual successful and sustained relationships in the novel, heterosexual or queer. The novel, Freeman declares, is

⁶² Although often used as a synonym for kinship and defined in terms of relationships and bonding, the concept of “family” may also be considered a social institution, a biopower, and a temporal organizing structure which is how I am using it here.

“fiercely antigenealogical” (*Binds* 96).⁶³ By the end of the novel, the revenge plot has directly or indirectly killed off all members of the Frankenstein family, the creature is alone, and Walton has just lost his only friend.⁶⁴ The De Lacey family and Walton’s sister, Margaret Saville, and her husband are the only characters in the novel that are in sustained relationships. However, as James Holt McGavran importantly notes, “we never learn their fates” (55).⁶⁵ The deaths of these characters and the idea of family in general are not just important because they dismiss a temporal organization based on family, but also because these characters represent particular strategies for creating and organizing temporality along heteroideological lines.⁶⁶

The revenge plot begins shortly after the creature’s animation. After being brought to life only to be abandoned by Frankenstein, the creature flees, and, after several unsuccessful (and violent) interactions with society, finally stumbles upon the De Lacey family. Attracted by the strong bonds among the family members, the creature spends months observing and learning

⁶³ See also Halberstam’s discussion of the family in the novel “as fragmented and incoherent as the monster himself” (*Skin* 30), and James Holt McGavran’s review of how all of the relationships in the novel, both heterosexual and queer, end up marginalized, delayed, and, for many of them, in death (55-56).

⁶⁴ While Ernest Frankenstein does not die in the novel, he is simply dropped from the narrative with Frankenstein’s father’s death. Justine and Henry, while not related by blood, are also considered family by the Frankensteins and they also end up dead.

⁶⁵ George Haggerty also questions the presentation of the De Lacey family in the novel. “What the creature sees in the cottage is the failed remains of domesticity that cannot offer him a home because the De Laceys are already paranoid and defensive about what they represent,” Haggerty argues, “The De Laceys do not so much represent an ideal as they do the failure of an ideal” (“What” 117-118).

⁶⁶ My discussion offers a model of reading that focuses on how the various characters and relationships function in the novel to disrupt normative temporality. In looking at the function of the characters rather than their identities or kinship bonds, I depart from how much of the criticism reads the characters in the novel. For discussions of character identity and kinship bonds, see, for example, Eve Sedgwick’s *Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980) and *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985); McGavran’s “‘Insurmountable Barriers to Our Union’: Homosocial Male Bonding, Homosexual Panic, and Death on the ice in *Frankenstein*” (2000); Haggerty’s “Erotic Friendship: The Horror of Friendlessness in *Frankenstein*” (2018) and “What is Queer About *Frankenstein*?” (2016); Eric Daffron’s “Male Bonding: Sympathy and Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (1999); Mair Rigby’s “‘A Strange Perversity’: Bringing Out Desire Between Women in *Frankenstein*” (2009); and Michel’s “Lesbian Panic and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*” (1995).

from the De Lacey's. After attempting to make contact with them and gain entrance into their family, the creature is, again, violently chased away. Inflamed with hatred and despair, the creature is overcome with the desire for revenge and burns down the De Lacey's house. Leaving the scene and pondering where to go, the creature thinks of his creator. As the creature later tells Frankenstein: "But on you [Frankenstein] only had I any claim for pity and redress, and from you I determined to seek that justice which I vainly attempted to gain from any other being that wore the human form" (94). The desire for revenge against Frankenstein only deepens as the creature travels to Frankenstein's family home. "The nearer I approached to your habitation," the creature recounts, "the more deeply did I feel the spirit of revenge enkindled in my heart" (95).

After being abandoned by two families, his creator and the De Lacey's, the creature stumbles upon William, Frankenstein's youngest brother. Although the creature initially considers making William into his companion (96), which would provide him with a family that he so desperately desires, when the creature learns that William is related to Frankenstein, the creature is overcome with revenge. "'Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim,'" the creature cries while strangling William (97). The creature's desire for revenge outweighs his deep desire for acceptance and for family, illustrating how the revenge plot pushes all other social and temporal markers out of one's purview.

With the death of William, the first character killed for revenge, the narrative withholds any sense of reproductive futurity from the novel. Described as "the most beautiful little fellow in the world" who "inspired the tenderest affection" (24), William is the perfect picture of the innocent child. As the youngest Frankenstein child, and the youngest character in the narrative, William represents Edelman's conceptualization of the figurative Child, the figure "for whom

[the social] order is held in perpetual trust” and the one upon whom reproductive futurity is based (Edelman 11). Elizabeth indeed illustrates this relationship as she considers William her “darling and speaks of him almost like a son” (Haggerty “What” 122).

The revenge plot does not just kill off the next generation. The revenge plot in this novel also works against the social institutions which generate the genealogical structure of time: marriage and the heteronormative couple. Although there are numerous couples in the novel, the most explicit and sustained example of the connections among marriage, reproduction, and temporality occurs with Elizabeth and Frankenstein.⁶⁷ However, as much as the novel promotes the marriage plot between Frankenstein and Elizabeth (and thus promotes a normative temporal organization), the novel also undermines such a plot (and thus resists marriage as an organizing structure). For example, while at Ingolstadt, Frankenstein is consumed with his work, forgetting about friends and family, until he is reunited with Henry after the creature’s birth and nursed back to health. Once revitalized, Frankenstein and Henry go on a goodbye tour rather than going straight home to see his family, further delaying a family reunion and, importantly, his impending relationship with Elizabeth. Even when Frankenstein does return to Elizabeth and his family, he resists making his relationship with Elizabeth permanent. When his father confronts Frankenstein about Frankenstein’s feelings for Elizabeth and asks if Frankenstein would “object to an immediate solemnization of the marriage,” Frankenstein becomes alarmed, telling Walton that “to me the idea of an immediate union with my cousin was one of horror and dismay” (104).

⁶⁷ Elizabeth is brought to the Frankenstein family as a young child after her mother died in Italy, and Frankenstein’s family immediately identifies Elizabeth as Frankenstein’s “future wife” (19). Frankenstein’s family continues to support the relationship between Frankenstein and Elizabeth throughout the novel; see pages 24, 104, and 130 for examples. These instances also point to the ways marriage and family are used as methods to keep Frankenstein invested in the social order and to remind him of his duty to his family, to Elizabeth, and to the future.

Instead, Frankenstein proposes a “year or two” delay “in change of scene and variety of occupation, in absence from my family” (105). While Frankenstein does suggest this in order to build the creature a companion, this is just another delay in the pattern of refusing to follow normative maturational markers.

Elizabeth’s death on their wedding night at the hands of the creature is the ultimate rejection of a heteronormative organizing framework and conception of temporality. Importantly, Elizabeth dies before she and Frankenstein are able to consummate the marriage, further cementing the rejection of reproductive futurity in the novel. As Richard O. Block sums up in his discussion of the novel, with Elizabeth’s death, “the possibility of producing new Frankensteins is undone” and “the fulfillment in generational transmission of values and beliefs is also disabled. The family has no future” (18).⁶⁸ While Block only focuses on Elizabeth’s death in his discussion and what that means for the Frankenstein family, when read alongside the deaths of the other major characters in the novel and what they represent, Elizabeth’s death becomes representative of a much larger commentary on family and temporality. In killing off each of the main characters, the novel, I argue, systematically removes the primary representations of normative temporality.

Time as predicated on a heterosexual and reproductive organizing logic is not the only paradigm upended by revenge. With the deaths of Henry and Frankenstein’s father Alphonse, the novel also dismisses the non-familial institutional markers involved in creating normative

⁶⁸ Frankenstein and Elizabeth are not the only representation of family and reproduction that is rejected in the novel. “Alphonse Frankenstein pursues his homosocial career of public service in Geneva well into middle life,” McGavran argues, “before he thinks of marrying...and starting a family” (55). And although not the primary focus of the novel, McGavran also sees Walton’s ability to “pursue his Arctic scheme” as suggestive of “no apparent marriage prospect” (55).

timelines, such as education and labor. Henry's relationship with Frankenstein has been much discussed in criticism of the novel, particularly in terms of queer and homosocial relationships.⁶⁹ However, Henry is not just a representative of kinship in the novel. Henry is also one of the only characters in the novel that engages in timely, socially-appropriate, and productive labor and thus promotes normative timelines, as becomes clear when Frankenstein recounts his decision to study abroad.⁷⁰ While Frankenstein wants Henry to come with him, Henry's father refuses. "[H]is father could not be persuaded to part with him," Frankenstein tells Walton, "intending that he should become a partner with him in business, in compliance with his favourite theory, that learning was superfluous in the commerce of ordinary life" (25). Henry's father's "favourite theory" follows the temporal organization in the nineteenth century of productive labor and of proper life sequencing. Henry had his schooling during childhood and now the next step for Henry in his growth as a person and as an appropriate member of society is to enter his profession, which Henry does. As the son of a trader, Henry needs to learn the labor, not toil away learning subjects that will not directly help his profession.

⁶⁹ McGavran defines their relationship as one "of intense but 'safe' homosocial desire" (49). Similarly, Haggerty and Daffron see Henry and Frankenstein in an "intense" relationship with a special kind of intimacy (Haggerty "Erotic" 113) that makes them the "perfect example of close friendship" (Daffron 424). Haggerty's discussion in "Erotic Friendship" about Henry's role as nurse (building off of Holly Furneaux's discussion of nursing in Dickens's works) is particularly interesting. And Haggerty also argues elsewhere that Henry's death "is almost more devastating to Victor than his loss of Elizabeth" ("What" 125). However, regardless of how Henry's relationship with Frankenstein is defined, as a kinship formation, it follows Halberstam's discussion of family and time discussed earlier and works to bring normative conceptions of temporality (*Failure* 71). See the many reminders Henry provides to Frankenstein about family in general and the Frankenstein family in particular.

⁷⁰ Henry also promotes the transmission of heteroideological values. Describing Henry growing up, Frankenstein calls him "a boy of singular talent and fancy"; one whose "favourite study consisted in books of chivalry and romance" (20). Although suggestive of fantasy and imagination, chivalry and romance genres are consumed with heteronormative values and plot structures, such as the hero's journey. In "compos[ing]" plays from these genres and having his friends perform them, Henry disseminated these views to his family and friends (20).

Even when Henry is finally allowed to pursue his scholarly passions and study abroad, he ends up sublimating them for the social good. Surprising Frankenstein in Ingolstadt the day after Frankenstein animated the creature, Henry is met with an emotionally unstable Frankenstein who quickly succumbs to a “nervous fever” for several months (37). Throughout this period, Henry gives up his studies to stay with Frankenstein and nurses him back to health. As Frankenstein tells Henry, “[t]he whole winter, instead of being spent in study, as you promised yourself, has been consumed in my sick room” (38). In sacrificing his own desires to help Frankenstein recover, Henry follows nineteenth-century norms of doing what is best for society by restoring Frankenstein to health and productivity. As Freeman discusses in *Beside You in Time*, an important aspect of conventional timelines is that everything one does is in the interest of furthering society and the nation. Society “demand[s] temporal obeisance in the form of punctuated periods of activity and rest for the purposes of maximum productivity, and forward motion connected to national progress” (Freeman *Beside* 127). Only after Frankenstein recovers his health does Henry turn back to his studies.

Unlike Frankenstein’s education, which became an all-consuming obsession, Henry takes up studies that are appropriate to his field as a trader, such as languages, and follows the proper divisions of rest and work that regulate social time. Henry also helps the newly recovered Frankenstein recommit to appropriate timelines. After their farewell tour of Ingolstadt, Frankenstein admits that his past studies had “secluded” and isolated him and “rendered [him] unsocial,” all symptoms of improper timing for school and labor (43). After Henry’s help, however, Frankenstein’s “own spirits were high” and he “bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity” (44). Henry has not only nursed Frankenstein back to health during this period but has also returned him to a joyful state, where he cherishes family and home. In

doing so, Henry helps Frankenstein get back on track, that is, to return to a “normal” temporal rhythm.

Henry is not the only character invested in proper timelines. Although Alphonse Frankenstein, like Henry, is not given much narrative attention, he similarly promotes the social and institutional forces behind normative timelines. He consistently encourages Frankenstein and Elizabeth’s relationship, many times explicitly connecting their marriage to the future. He also advocates for appropriate affective behaviors that follow acceptable timelines. After William’s and Justine’s deaths, Alphonse confronts Frankenstein about Frankenstein’s extreme grief (and guilt), which has produced what Frankenstein refers to as a “deep, dark, death-like solitude” (59). Frankenstein recounts that his father “endeavoured to reason with [him] on the folly of giving way to immoderate grief” (59). “[I]s it not a duty to the survivors, that we should refrain from augmenting their unhappiness by an appearance of immoderate grief?,” Alphonse asks Frankenstein, “It is also a duty owed to yourself; for excessive sorrow prevents improvement or enjoyment, or even the discharge of daily usefulness, without which no man is fit for society” (59). Alphonse’s admonishment to Frankenstein here echoes discussions by Luciano and Freeman in which normative timelines require that affect and sensibility not exceed their proper moments. There is an acceptable period to mourn, and then one must move on. It also reminds readers that temporality is not just about one’s own timing, but also how one’s growth and behavior affect the timing of the nation and of society. Frankenstein’s inability to move past his grief means he is unable to be a productive member of society; he cannot work to better society and the nation.

Like Henry, Alphonse tries to get Frankenstein back on track and decides to take the family on a trip in order to “restor[e]” Frankenstein back to his “wonted serenity,” and thus back

on an appropriate life trajectory (62). When the trip does not fully heal Frankenstein, Alphonse brings everyone home to Geneva and tries a new tactic by directly asking Frankenstein about his marriage plans with Elizabeth: ““Tell me, therefore, whether you object to an immediate solemnization of the marriage”” (104). At every opportunity, Alphonse continues to promote normative behaviors in the hope of curing his son and getting Frankenstein’s life back in order and following a socially-sanctioned timeline.

Henry and Alphonse both represent social and institutional frameworks of conventional temporality in the novel. However, like the other representations of normative time in the narrative, they do not survive. Although not narrated, Henry is killed by the creature after Frankenstein refuses to complete the creature’s companion.⁷¹ And we can connect Alphonse’s death to the creature’s killing of Elizabeth, another vengeful act. “[Alphonse] could not live under the horrors that were accumulated around him,” Frankenstein tells Walton, “an apoplectic fit was brought on, and in a few days he died in my arms” (137). With the deaths of Henry and Alphonse, the remaining representations of normative temporality are removed from the novel. Any sense of family or kinship in the novel has been destroyed; both Frankenstein and the creature are the only surviving members of their family lineages.⁷² The rest of the novel then

⁷¹ Destroying the creature’s companion also explicitly shows the connection between marriage and the future in the novel. Frankenstein’s decision to terminate the female companion occurs when he starts to think about the potential for reproduction between the two creatures. Implicit in this discussion is the linear connection that the novel makes, again, between companionship, reproduction, and the future. Frankenstein is unable to recognize any other temporal outcome between the creature and his companion than children.

⁷² The creature, as critics point out, has actually never been part of a family lineage. Instead, the creature was brought to life and then abandoned by Frankenstein without, importantly, a name, a family, and an identity. This lack of a name, Block argues, positions the creature outside of familial relations (8) and thus, I argue, unable to access normative conceptions of time. For another discussion of the creature’s lack of an identity and family ties, see Freeman’s *Time Binds* (96-97).

exists in a state of chronicity, in which Frankenstein and the creature both work to maintain the status quo.

In *Beside You in Time*, Freeman discusses how chronic states and conditions produce a sense of time that is neither developing nor anti-developing, but simply exists. Highlighting the chronic figure's inability to develop (to be cured or to decline in health) and be productive (according to societal standards), Freeman equates chronicism with "a tenseless and perpetual mode of being... a certain shapelessness in time" (*Beside* 125-126). Although Freeman primarily discusses chronicity in terms of illness and pathology, her use of this concept may also be applied to *Frankenstein*. As the systematic dismissal of the novel's characters suggests, acts of revenge in the novel remove the models and methods upon which normative conventions of temporality—e.g., professional commitments, educational practices, courtship rituals—are established. With no conventions left to rule one's relationship to time, the creature and Frankenstein simply exist, languishing in a perpetual state of unfulfilled revenge. Thus, the revenge plot produces a chronic temporality in the narrative, one in which there is no development, only timelessness and the status quo.

Although social connotations and common uses of the term "status quo" may suggest its normativity, especially when seen in connection to a particular moment, on its own "status quo" simply refers to the "existing state of affairs" (*OED*). The status quo suggests a temporal maintaining, of neither developing nor declining, that connects it with Freeman's discussion of chronicity. The status quo in the novel is also maintained by the protagonists' inability or refusal to take direct action against one another, as much as their desires for revenge would otherwise suggest. Both Frankenstein and the creature have ample opportunities to engage in some sort of action toward the other character during the revenge plot. However, time after time both

characters actively choose to resist hurting one another and instead engage in indirect behaviors that continue their unchanging relationship. For example, throughout the novel, Frankenstein loudly and vehemently professes his rage against the creature and his passionate desire to end the creature's life.⁷³ And, as Frankenstein notes at the end of the novel, rage and revenge are what carry him forward (140). However, even with all of this boasting, Frankenstein continues to shy away from taking any action, especially when he comes into contact with the creature. Instead, Frankenstein will frequently imply and even outright state that he *would* have done something or he *thought* about doing something before not doing anything. "I thought of pursuing the devil; but it would have been in vain," Frankenstein explains to Walton (48). And when he is finally faced with the creature and forced to listen to the creature's story, Frankenstein backtracks on his previous pronouncements of revenge and rage and instead simply tells the creature to leave; "begone!" he repeats over and over when confronted by the creature for the first time after its animation (66-67, 98). It is particularly ironic that no sooner is Frankenstein back on track than he backtracks—yet another example of how the novel works against development or progress.

The most obvious maintaining of the status quo occurs at the end of the novel when the two figures chase each other across the Arctic in a fit of revenge. After Frankenstein's family is completely destroyed, Frankenstein is left utterly alone. Fueled by revenge, he decides to go after the creature. "My present situation was one in which all voluntary thought was swallowed up and lost," Frankenstein recounts, "I was hurried away by fury; revenge alone endowed me with

⁷³ For example, see Frankenstein's description of his feelings after Justine dies: "My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived. When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed when I reflected on his crimes and malice, my hatred and revenge burst all bounds of moderation. I would have made a pilgrimage to the highest peak of the Andes, could I, when there, have precipitated him to their base. I wished to see him again, that I might wreak the utmost extent of anger on his head, and avenge the deaths of William and Justine" (60).

strength and composure” (140).⁷⁴ Shortly after Frankenstein leaves on his quest for revenge, he sees the creature in the cemetery. Although Frankenstein moves to capture him, “the devil eluded [his] grasp” and thus begins the game of chase that concerns the rest of the novel (141).

Throughout this chase, Frankenstein and the creature act in ways that maintain the status quo, rather than fulfill their vengeful desires. Although the creature’s size and skills at living off the land suggest that he could overtake Frankenstein at any time, he helps Frankenstein continue chasing him instead. The creature leaves clues for Frankenstein, shows his path with footprints in the snow, and leaves markers and ‘inspirational’ messages cut into trees and stones so Frankenstein can continue pursuing him (141-142). Frankenstein even confesses to Walton that these acts were done because the creature “feared that if I lost all trace I should despair and die” (141). The creature also provides Frankenstein with food and sustenance along the way to “restor[e] and inspir[e]” him and give him energy to continue the chase (141-142). The creature motivates Frankenstein, who continuously and almost comically fails at capturing his prey, to subsist in this stalemate (143, 144-145). Frankenstein’s last attempt leaves him “drifting” out on a piece of ice, presumably to his death unless the creature came back to save him, before meeting Walton’s ship (145). In all of these instances, the two protagonists continue to maintain the status quo rather than take direct action against one another that would result in their goal of revenge.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Frankenstein continues to make great proclamations of revenge at the beginning of this journey. “How I have lived I hardly know” he declares, “many times have I stretched my failing limbs upon the sandy plain, and prayed for death. But revenge kept me alive; I dared not die, and leave my adversary in being” (140). Promising to “pursue the dæmon,” Frankenstein makes revenge his life’s meaning: “For this purpose I will preserve my life: to execute this dear revenge, will I again behold the sun, and treat the green herbage of earth” (140). However, all of these declarations of revenge ultimately mean nothing to Frankenstein as he continues to let the creature slip through his fingers.

⁷⁵ The repeated references to endlessness-ness that the protagonists use during their chase also suggest a chronic framework. Frankenstein calls the pursuit an “almost endless journey” done with “unabated fervour” (143) and proclaims that he will “[n]ever...omit [his] search” (142). The creature similarly repeatedly uses the word

Their relationship, theoretically, could go on forever. It only seems to end, if it ends at all, because Frankenstein is picked up by Walton's ship and his body gives out, *not* because the creature does something to Frankenstein or because Frankenstein hurts himself. And, importantly, before Frankenstein dies, he implores Walton twice to continue his quest for the creature (145, 151). “[S]wear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape,” Frankenstein pleads the first time, “that you will seek him, and satisfy my vengeance in his death” (145). In asking Walton to take over his quest for revenge, the status quo of the narrative is maintained.⁷⁶ When Walton does finally meet the creature, Walton, like Frankenstein, does not kill the creature but simply listens to him and then watches as the creature departs (155-156). The pattern of inactivity is once again reified. Indeed, as I discuss in my previous chapter on queer narrative structures, the entire ending of *Frankenstein*, especially the fate of the creature, creates a sense of temporal stasis that may be read as chronicity.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* systematically removes the main venues for producing and enforcing normative timelines: family, reproduction, marriage, and socially-appropriate behaviors such as labor. In doing so, the novel produces a chronic temporality, one that rejects any movement, whether forward or backward in favor of the status quo. In promoting the status quo over any other sense of temporality in the narrative, the novel promotes a queer temporality.

“everlasting” to describe their vengeance and their chase and often comments on the “many hard and miserable hours” they have left together (142, 143).

⁷⁶ Frankenstein's repeated emphasis on Walton taking over his pursuit of the creature at the end of his life and Frankenstein's refusal to provide Walton with concrete details about the creature's birth also supports this notion that revenge and revenge plots do not allow for any other temporalities. All of Frankenstein's focus is wrapped up in obtaining revenge against the creature and, when he knows he is going to die, in ensuring that the revenge plot does not die with him. His friendship with Walton is entirely one-sided, as much as Walton would wish otherwise.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* also rejects normative temporal markers to produce a queer temporality, in this case, by rerouting the narrative through collections of aesthetic objects.

“I love beautiful things”: The Aesthetics of Time in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

As a bildungsroman about a young man's entrance into society, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) would seem to be structured along a heteronormative temporality. Roughly spanning eighteen years of Dorian's life, the narrative follows Dorian from a young man to an adult and tracks his new friendships, his (short-lived) engagement, and his establishment as an influential, and infamous, member of society. However, when we look at how these heteronormative check-ins are depicted in the novel, the narrative actively undermines them even as it seems to highlight them, producing a queer temporal structure. Indeed, the representation of temporality in Wilde's novel is strikingly similar to its presentation in Woolf's *Orlando* written almost forty years later.

Most discussions of temporality in Wilde's novel focus on the, primarily negative, depictions of aging. Noting that Wilde's novel was “published at a key point in the history of attitudes toward ageing,” Heather Ingman argues that the Victorians' “association of youth with purity, innocence and beauty, and conversely, the prematurely aged with ugliness, weakness, sickness and even wickedness is evident in [the] novel, which portrays the distancing of the old as objects for mockery” (31). Kay Heath similarly sees a “hatred of aging...early in the novel” and explores how “Dorian links age and loss of affective viability” as “he fears aging out of desirability” (33).⁷⁷ Regardless of how critics read the treatment of aging in the novel, scholars

⁷⁷ Other readings see the treatment of aging as more multifaceted. Karen Chase reads an “ambivalence” toward aging in the novel, as it “tak[es] pains alternately to associate and then to separate crime, conscience, and age” (203). Chase also reminds readers to “not forget that Dorian's most prized objects are always old if not antique” and “the most interesting characters in the novel are not young” (214). Glenn Clifton similarly explores the many different relationships to aging and specifically youth in the novel. Although Clifton reads Dorian's “stagnation of...aging” as

agree that Dorian remains frozen in time, unable or refusing to age.⁷⁸ Approaching Dorian's lack of aging from the perspective of queer temporality, I argue in this chapter that Dorian is not simply frozen in time nor does he consciously resist normative temporal trajectories that value development. Instead, the narrative positions him outside these trajectories, in timelines that value immediate pleasure over progression, sideways growth instead of linear development, and that reject or downplay the conventional markers required for normative timelines. In doing so, the novel promotes a queer temporal framework.

As with Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the temporal markers revolving around family, courtship, and marriage are all sidelined in the novel. We hear about them but do not see them.⁷⁹ But more to the point in this novel associated most strongly with aestheticism, is the rerouting of time in the famous Chapter XI, which spans, but does not fully narrate, eighteen years of Dorian's life.⁸⁰ Occurring after Dorian reads about the inquest into Sibyl's death and his subsequent turn to the infamous yellow book, the chapter presents a collection of about eleven

signaling the "failure of the new historical period to properly arrive" (291), he also claims that "[the novel] is perhaps the most complex reflection of Decadent artistry's entanglement with emphatic youth" (288). According to Clifton, it is Dorian's "plasticity" and his "emblem [as] potentiality" that invites multiple readings of and relationships with aging, history, and periodicity (288).

⁷⁸ Chase argues that although Dorian tries to resist aging, "he finds himself trapped by the confines of egotism...Dorian never became other selves; he merely absorbed others into his own experience...and then discarded them when familiarity replaced novelty" (213). Noting Dorian's relentless pursuit of (temporary) pleasures, which speeds up time instead of slowing it down, Ingman bluntly states that "Dorian's bid to live in the ageless, but lifeless, world of art fails" (35). And Douglas Mao sees Dorian as "evad[ing] the peril of becoming anything specific," which allows him to live in "endless youth" (93).

⁷⁹ See, for example, the introductions of Dorian and Sibyl Vane's courtship and (unfulfilled) engagement in the novel (43, 53). Consider also Dorian's lack of family in the narrative. Although there are a few references to an unseen guardian who authorizes Dorian's purchases, Dorian does not have a family structure on which to rely and which will help him navigate a conventional life. Instead, Dorian is simply dropped into the narrative. As a result, Dorian, similar to the children in *Wuthering Heights*, is positioned outside conventional temporal frameworks. All references to the text are taken from the 2007 Norton edition, edited by Michael Patrick Gillespie.

⁸⁰ Chapter IX in the 1890 edition.

descriptive objects, ranging from Dorian's behavior, to religion and spiritism, to perfumes and jewels, to stories and paintings, and textiles. This chapter and its collections of pleasures is one of the most often-cited moments from the novel, particularly in discussions of homosexuality, queerness, and aesthetics. Calling the chapter "Victorian literature's most iconic account of the encounter between a queer man and material things," Abigail Joseph sees it as an example of how the production and consumption of things in the nineteenth century were not only spaces for regulating identity norms but also the "cultivation of the distinctive styles associated with homosexuality" (1, 7). Wayne Koestenbaum similarly sees Dorian's collection and collecting as evidence of Dorian's homosexuality. "Collecting is a code for homosexual activity and identity," Koestenbaum argues, "It's not clear whether Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray obsessively collects...because he's gay, or whether Wilde tells us about collections because he can't mention homosexuality" (62).⁸¹

Examining the temporal structure of the chapter from the position of asexuality, Elizabeth Hanson sees this chapter as queer in temporal rather than identity terms, as a resistance to teleology. Reading the presentation of objects as repetition, Hanson argues that the collections are an example of the narrative "doubling back or digging one's heels in against forward movement" (193).⁸² Building on Hanson's interpretation of the chapter, I argue that we can also read this chapter as not just resisting the teleological impetus forward but stepping outside of it

⁸¹ In "Bricabracomania! Collecting, Corporeality and the Problem of Things in Victorian Fiction" (2013), Victoria Mills similarly discusses how men collecting objects, especially *bric-à-brac*, challenged gender and heteronormative norms and categories and were often seen as feminized (34-25).

⁸² Although focusing specifically on Dorian and not just Chapter XI, Chase similarly reads the novel as attempting to resist time. Looking at how "age, desire, class, style, and solipsism come together" in the novel, particularly in Dorian's pursuit of pleasure, Chase argues that there are temporary moments of stopped time, but overall, this resistance is unsuccessful (213).

completely. The presentation of objects and the iterative narration in this chapter provide a different relationship to time, an alternative framework and trajectory (one spatial instead of linear). While time may be progressing in the background, the chapter's focus on iteration, both in narrative structure and thematic content, follows a different timeline. Similar to the passage of time in *Orlando*, in Wilde's Chapter XI, time progresses, as highlighted by the opening of Chapter XII, but the temporal markers that society requires us to follow are not present.⁸³

Positioned at a pivotal time in Dorian's life, spanning his emergence into adulthood over eighteen years, this chapter should detail and make visible Dorian's progress along a normative trajectory of growth. Dorian should court women and perform socially-appropriate acts of labor and leisure. Instead, the behaviors Dorian engages in and the actions he undertakes during this period are not narrated. In their place, Dorian's iterative behaviors and collections of things are highlighted, obscuring both the temporal development of the narrative and, importantly, Dorian himself. This obscurity is seen in the first line of the chapter. "For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book," the chapter begins, alerting readers to the unspecified amount of time that has, and continues to, pass and, importantly, to the iterative nature of the chapter (105). This iterative opening structure continues in the next few paragraphs, starting discussions with phrases such as "often, on returning home," "he would," "then there were moments," and "once or twice every month" (106-107). In using iteration, the narrative severs Dorian's behavior from the linear, progressive passing of time and presents his actions as static collections. We do not know when things are happening, only that they *are* happening,

⁸³ Unlike Chapter XI, Chapter XII begins with a very specific date and age: "It was on the ninth of November, the eve of his thirty-eight birthday, as he often remembered afterwards" (124). By including the date and its relevance to Dorian's life, the narrative highlights how much time passed, un-narrated, in the previous chapter.

repetitively, and for a particular period of time. Like the collections of interests that come after them, there is no temporal connection among the summaries of Dorian's behaviors at the beginning of the chapter. From a structural standpoint then, the iterative narration in Chapter XI sets the temporality of this chapter as outside progressive, cohesive, and linear trajectories.

After these summaries of Dorian's actions, the narrative's focus shifts away from Dorian to a laundry list of interests that Dorian uses as a "means of forgetfulness, modes by which he could escape, for a season" (117). In terms of content, as the quotation notes, these pleasures help Dorian "forget" the confines of his time. But they also structurally move the chapter and the narrative focus outside of time. Instead of narrating Dorian chronologically maturing into adulthood, this chapter moves from pleasure to pleasure indiscriminately like checking off boxes on a list. In doing so, the narrative redefines Dorian's and the novel's relationship to time in two different ways: first, by routing the passing of time into aesthetic descriptions and second, by making the passing of time spatial instead of linear. We are told *what* their physical features are, *where* the items are housed and *where* in the world they are from, but not *when* in Dorian's life he acquired these objects. For example, in discussing Dorian's "devotion to music," the text notes that Dorian collected music from such people and places as the "Mad gypsies," "Tunisians," "the Aztecs," "Peru," and "Amazonian tribes" (111-112). "He collected together from all parts of the world the strangest instruments that could be found," the narrative recounts, "either in tombs of dead nations or among the few savage tribes that have survived contact with Western civilizations" (111). Similarly in the discussion of embroideries and tapestries (115), we are taken to Delhi for "muslins, finely wrought with gold thread palmates," to China for "elaborate hangings" and "books bound in tawny satins," to Hungary for "veils," to Sicily for "brocades," to Spain for "velvets," and to Georgia for "gilt coins" (116). In addition to directing

our focus spatially, the items in Chapter XI also do not have any obvious relationship with one another, beyond being grouped together in this chapter. Beginning each discussion of a particular object with variants of “on one occasion,” “at another time,” and “and so he would now,” the narrative indiscriminately moves through the objects, keeping our attention on *what* and *where*, not *when*, and, importantly not on how they all fit together, which would suggest some sort of linear connection or, at least, coherent explanation.

As Sandra Leonard notes, the collections in Chapter XI were copied from other nineteenth-century works, such as Ernest Lefébure’s *Embroidery and Lace* (1888). Examining Wilde’s plagiarized collections against their original descriptions, Leonard considers the objects in Wilde’s chapter “deliberately unusable” and as having “no practical [or narrative] purpose” (157). “[D]ivorced from their initial context,” Leonard explains, “they can no longer be referred to as a museum guide or catalogue” (157). Instead, they are simply empty, ornamental objects. However, that is precisely what I see as the objects’ value in this chapter, namely that they are collections with no connection or overarching narrative. As objects taken out of context, they have no associations to the world outside of Chapter XI. They exist simply in the moment of the chapter and offer no temporal directions for Dorian, the narrative, and readers.⁸⁴ We do not even know if the order in which these collections are presented is the order in which Dorian searched them out, if indeed he even actively pursued their acquisition, which would at least support a

⁸⁴ This repurposing of the objects in the chapter also aligns itself with Victoria Mills’s discussion of *bric-à-brac*, a collection of items lumped together without reason. “*Bric-à-brac*...opens up possibilities, challenges established hierarchies and suggests new associations between things,” Mills argues (36). And these descriptions are frequently used to “marginalise the depiction of characters’ lives in favour of ‘grouping a series of objects, pictures which are ends in themselves’” Mills continues (38). Although Mills sees the objects in this chapter as a way for Wilde to subvert the role and power of the museum in collecting, containing, and disseminating knowledge (46), we can also read the objects as subverting the hierarchies of temporal timelines.

linear, temporal progression. Like Dorian's lack of family background, these objects and their collections have been removed from their temporal context and simply exist.⁸⁵

Importantly, as I discuss in my chapter on queer narrative structures, these items are not just indiscriminate things but aesthetic objects, *objets d'art*. As critics such as Joseph, Dustin Friedman, and Elisa Glick explore in their various works, aestheticism was a vehicle for queer desires and relationships in the nineteenth century.⁸⁶ Discussing turn-of-the-century aestheticism and decadence together, Glick details the various ways these movements exceed categorizations, rejected hierarchies, and “transgress[ed] boundaries,” arguing that they were “queer sites of cultural production” (327, 325). And both Friedman and Joseph see queer spaces and cultures produced through individual relationships with objects and art. “[A]esthetic experience allows one to gain a sense of personal independence while still enmeshed within structures of oppression,” Friedman argues, “granting access to a domain where repressive laws are not always strictly enforced” (3). “Queer culture draws on and embraces, sometimes in a transformative way, the objects of mass culture,” Joseph explains, “it also produces, inhabits, innovates, transfigures, and is fascinated by [the objects and forms of the dominant culture]” (12, 13).

⁸⁵ The focus on the surface attributes of these objects—their physical attributes, their locations in Dorian's properties, their geographical origins—instead of their position and value in Dorian's life and their detachment from their original contexts also allow us to read the objects and this chapter as a representation of camp. Camp rejects depth models in favor of surface ones and, like bric-a-brac, also rejects dominant hierarchies and categorizations. Wilde's refusal to attach significance to these objects in this chapter is a type of camp. For discussions of Wilde and camp and how camp functions in his works, see Gregory W. Bredbeck's “Narcissus in the Wilde: Textual Cathexis and the Historical Origins of Queer Camp” (1994) and Moe Meyer's “Under the Sign of Wilde: An Archaeology of Posing” (1994).

⁸⁶ For additional information on aestheticism as a social critique, see my discussions in Chapters One and Two.

In structuring this pivotal chapter in this way—as a discussion of detached and frozen objects instead of Dorian’s maturational events and markers—the narrative moves our attention away from the progressive, linear paradigm of normative temporality to resemble something more akin to Kathryn Bond Stockton’s discussion of “sideways growth.”⁸⁷ In Stockton’s reading of queer children in literature, children can delay the imperative to grow along proper divisions of time by growing horizontally rather than vertically and exploring the “energy, pleasure, vitality, and (e)motion in the back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive” (13). In the novel, the narrative uses objects to revise its relationship to time. The narrative grows outward towards these different objects instead of progressively forward.⁸⁸

The collections are not the only objects in this chapter that reroute temporality. The portraits of Dorian’s ancestors do as well. Although family portraits may be used to mark one’s place in a long family line, in this chapter, they are simply described in terms of another collection, not a genealogy. The portraits are introduced at the end of Chapter XI. “[Dorian] loved to stroll through the gaunt cold picture-gallery of his country house,” the narrative tells us, “and look at the various portraits of those whose blood flowed in his veins” (119). In providing a visual collection of Dorian’s familial legacy, the narrative seems to be promoting or at least working within a heteronormative conception of time and futurity. “Family is the form through which time supposedly becomes visible,” Freeman posits, “predominantly as physical likeness

⁸⁷ Highlighting the ways in which children treat pets and dolls as their own children, Stockton explains how these relationships “le[t] one object stand for another, by means of which [the children] reconceive relations to time” (15). In doing so, children, and other subjects, grow horizontally instead of vertically along socially-prescribed models of growth.

⁸⁸ Although discussing the aesthetic moments in the text in terms of structure and narrative, John G. Peters’s exploration of “purple patches” in the novel may be helpful here. For more information see my discussion on the novel in Chapter Two and Peters’s “Style and Art in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: Form as Content” (1999).

extending over generations—but also...as natural likeness in manner, or orchestrated simultaneities occurring in the present” (*Time* 31). In aligning Dorian with his ancestors, the narrative positions Dorian as the next individual in a long line of kinship, firmly cementing the family or institutional temporality in the narrative. And yet, looking at how these portraits and their subjects are described we see that this is not always the case. Just within this discussion’s opening sentence, the narrative pushes back against normative transmissions of family, legacy, and temporality. Dorian’s family is described as “portraits” rather than “ancestors,” things instead of people, and they are housed in the “gaunt cold picture-gallery,” reinforcing their status as objects to be owned, displayed, and then hidden away in the country house, not prideful possessions central to Dorian’s life.

The descriptions of the portraits that come after this opening line continue to enforce this view of the paintings as frozen objects. “Here, in gold-embroidered red doublet, jeweled surcoat, and gilt-edged rug and wrist-bands, stood Sir Anthony Sherard, with his silver-and-black armour piled at his feet,” the description of the first portrait begins, “What had this man’s legacy been? Had the lover of Giovanna of Naples bequeathed him some inheritance of sin and shame?” (120). The last portrait is described similarly: “What of the second Lord Beckenham, the companion of the Prince Regent in his wildest days, and one of the witnesses at the secret marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert? What passions had he bequeathed? The world had looked upon him as infamous. He had led the orgies at Carlton House. The star of the Garter glittered upon his breast” (120).

Similar to the discussions of collections, the portraits in this section of the chapter are presented as discrete, individual objects, even though they are connected by blood and marriage. Rather than provide extended details about how the ancestors are connected (to each other and to Dorian), the narrative moves from one portrait to another, making the description of each more

like a separate vignette. It creates the sense of looking at these portraits individually, as closed off and isolated entities, rather than seeing them as part of one cohesive, familial network, a paradigm necessary to enforce normative conceptions of time and knowledge transmission. Supporting this vignette-like structure is the lack of kinship identifiers in the discussions. Who is Lord Beckenham? Dorian's uncle? Grand uncle? Who is Lady Elizabeth (120)? If the discussion of these portraits is supposed to situate Dorian within a family lineage that supports normative conceptions of time, why, then are the elements that would do so missing from the narrative?

Within these descriptions, then, instead of seeing a direct, linear line from ancestor to Dorian (e.g., 'here is Dorian's Aunt Elizabeth. He gets his extravagance and love of jewels from her'), the discussions are more spatial, akin to the discussions of pleasures earlier in the chapter. Instead of readings about familial connections, the narrative highlights a portrait and then describes the individual and their characteristics in decadent and historical ways, moving our attention back in time and then outward to their own stories. For example, looking at Lord Beckenham, instead of informing us how Dorian is related to Beckenham (establishing Dorian's place in this generational line) or what traits Dorian can trace back to him, we are told that Beckenham was the "companion of Prince Regent," "one of the witnesses at the secret marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert," had the "star of the Garter," and "led the orgies at Carlton House" (120). These descriptions are all about Beckenham's own life and his own relationships; they mark Beckenham's legacy and position with others, not with Dorian. While these discussions do gesture towards a linear familial history or connection—e.g., in discussing Lady Elizabeth the narrator asks, "Had [Dorian] something of her temperament in him?"—these questions and gestures are not answered within this discussion (120). Instead, they are glossed over as the narrative moves to the next portrait on the wall.

The ancestor portraits in this chapter are not used to establish a genealogy. Instead, they become individual, separate items to be owned and displayed. Thus, they do not propel Dorian forward towards living out and living up to a name and legacy. Instead, Dorian can side-step his role and position in normative time and write himself out of this normative script. Moreover, if to be part of this normative trajectory means to hope for and desire one's portrait on the wall, creating the next in line, Dorian already has that. He already has his portrait on the wall.

And it is because of this object, the portrait of Dorian Gray, that Dorian as a character can escape the normative scripts of reproductive futurity and maturational growth most fully. In making Dorian's portrait a living, changing object (although one that we never see in motion), the narrative essentially splits Dorian up: Dorian the individual character can remain perpetually innocent and childlike while Dorian as the object undergoes those 'maturational models of growth' necessary to push children into adulthood. This splitting then makes it appear that Dorian (the individual) is able to both subscribe to and reject normative conceptions of temporality. However, the narrative never allows the reader to actually *see* the portrait aging, we are only *told* about its changes. Because of this, the descriptions that we are given become more like vignettes, more akin to the narrator's descriptions of Dorian's ancestors in Chapter XI. We can see that the picture changes, not *how* or *when* it changes. In obscuring the process of the portrait's development, then, the painting becomes less of a living entity and more of an object to be owned, or objects if we see them as separate pictures, which neutralizes the heteronormative force and trajectory forward. Through this narrative structure Dorian essentially contains or remakes heteronormative models of growth and temporal trajectory into one object hidden far away and eventually destroyed.

In providing new readings of *Wuthering Heights*, *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, this chapter broadens the scope of criticism and queer work being done on these novels. Through these readings, my chapter shows the various ways in which British nineteenth-century novels challenge normative conceptions of temporality and, as my discussion of *Orlando* illustrates, provide models for the presentations of queer temporalities that follow them. These nineteenth-century works dismiss social temporal markers and institutions such as family and reproduction, resist progressive and developmental trajectories, and promote affective relationships with temporality. In the next chapter, I turn to the subject of kinship structures to examine the ways in which the nineteenth-century queer bachelor created queer communities, formed queer bonds, and disseminated queer knowledge and traditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUEER KINSHIP

Although the relationship between kinship studies and queer theory is an emerging field, kinship forms, particularly the family and marriage, are, as I have noted throughout this project, an integral part of queer theory.¹ As queer theorists such as Lee Edelman, Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, and Elizabeth Freeman discuss in their various works, family is a disciplinary matrix that organizes much of our life: it underlies our conceptions of temporality, our relation to the past and the future, the transmission of knowledge, and our identity as recognizable subjects in society.² Discussing Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1987), Freeman declares that the "modern family actually appeared at the intersection between kinship and sexuality. The family helped channel the polymorphous effects of sexual discourse into sanctioned alliances" (Freeman "Belongings" 296). Our lives and our connections to society are almost completely based on and organized by marriage and kinship relationships. "In state-centered societies," Freeman explains, "kinship consists of the social policies that recognize some forms of lived

¹ Although the make-up and role of the family is a central concern for queer theory, it is primarily associated with queer studies and LGBTQ studies. It is also a divisive concept for queer theorists, frequently splitting theorists into two camps, with antisocial theorists, such as Lee Edelman and Jack Halberstam, and other queer theorists, such as Judith Butler, seeing queer as fundamentally at odds with lasting kinship formations. For further discussion on the relationship between queer theory and kinship studies and kinship theory, see Elizabeth Freeman's "Queer Belongings: Kinship Theory and Queer Theory" (2007) and the recently published edited collection *Queer Kinship: Race, Sex, Belonging, Form* (2022) by Freeman and Tyler Bradway.

² See, for example, Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) and *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), Butler's "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" (2002), and Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010).

relationality—those extending from the heterosexual couple and the parent-child unit—with financial and other benefits” (“Belongings” 295).

Kinship and kinship formations are important for literary theory when we consider how the traditional narrative structure is organized around heterosexual kinship models and relationships. “Narrative and family both attempt to plot a relationship between what came before and what comes after; both organize the unknowable jumble of events and people who preceded us into a coherent array of precedence, sequence, and cause,” Barry McCrea explains, “They imagine continuity between different moments in time, and they draw affinities—‘kinship’—between disparate or distant people and events” (*Company* 8).³ However, widescale scholarship on queer kinship structures and forms, how kinship functions *structurally* in the narrative, as opposed to the theme of queer kinship in literature, is largely absent from literary criticism.⁴ What discussion exists generally comes from close readings of kinship structures in particular works.

The nineteenth century is an important period for discussions of kinship. It was during this interval that the conventional and idealized notions of family that we have today were being negotiated and ingrained into society and literature. However, at the same time traditional kinship models were being solidified there also existed a resistance to such forms, and non-normative kinship models were quite common in literature and culture. Indeed, unlike the themes I discuss in my previous chapters, queer kinship is one area in nineteenth-century studies in

³ For more information on the connection among heterosexuality, the family, and narrative, see my discussion in Chapter Two.

⁴ While Freeman and Bradway’s *Queer Kinship* was published too late to be considered in this dissertation, their edited collection may help add to this field.

which there is substantial work. However, as I will discuss, much of this scholarship focuses on the visible and thematic presence of non-normative kinship configurations, not their structural significance in narrative. This is one area in which this chapter intervenes.

The second area in which my chapter intervenes is to bring attention back to the ways in which the nineteenth century and its literature engaged in questions and formations of queer kinship. Although there is a substantial amount of criticism on queer kinship formations in the nineteenth century, the marriage plot and its associated connotations of heterosexuality and the nuclear family form remain *the* dominating narrative of nineteenth-century British culture and novels. As Eileen Cleere notes, “although the Victorian family as a nuclear, father-centered unit is a recognized ideology, *as an ideology* it continues to maintain its intellectual authority, tailoring even the most sophisticated discussions of nineteenth-century kinship to the narrow contours of a nuclear unit” (20). “This tyranny is especially remarkable,” Cleere continues, “even though the stark absence of biological parents is a nearly ubiquitous paradigm of nineteenth-century fiction” (2). Put more bluntly, Jill Galvin and Elsie Michie argue that even though “[w]e teach and write about this period as one of revolutionary democratic energy, wide-scale industrial change, imperial expansion and rebellion, religious self-questioning and alternative spiritual movements, and the institutionalization and dispersion of scientific thought” it is the marriage plot that “has come to ground our sense of the long nineteenth century” (1).⁵

To undertake a large-scale examination of queer kinship as a structure in nineteenth-century novels, however, is too expansive for this current chapter. Instead, this chapter will focus

⁵ For other discussions on how the family as a hegemonic form still dominates narratives of the nineteenth century, see Elizabeth Thiel’s “Introduction” in *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal* (165) and Talia Schaffer’s *Romance’s Rival: Familiar Marriage in Victorian Fiction* (2016), 8.

on an often-overlooked queer figure in work on nineteenth-century kinship forms: the bachelor. As my discussion in this chapter will show, bachelors held key roles in nineteenth-century novels, from being positioned as pillars of the community to being responsible for moving the plot along. Importantly, many of these bachelors formed relationships with the protagonists that were more supportive and more effective than the nuclear family. This chapter interrogates the narrative potential and positioning of the bachelor figure, an inherently queer figure, and what it means when such a queer figure is placed in relation to, and sometimes superior to, normative conceptions of domesticity and kinship.

My organization of this chapter departs slightly from my previous two chapters. As with my previous chapters, I begin here with context about the family as an institution and how this social structure was negotiated and solidified in the nineteenth century. I examine the ways in which the nineteenth century also resisted this form and look at existing critical scholarship on non-normative forms of kinship. I then turn to the limited amount of scholarship on the bachelor before moving into my analyses of three novels. As in my chapter on queer temporality, this chapter includes previously discussed novels, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and a new novel, George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859). The big difference, however, is the lack of a modernist novel. Because the figure of the bachelor is so rooted in the nineteenth century and does not have the same connotations in the twentieth century, this chapter deviates from the organization of my previous two chapters and will not examine a modernist novel.

The Concept of Family in the Nineteenth Century

The influential role of the family and other socially-recognizable kinship forms in society is not a new concept. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that “the ideal of the home

and its attendant heteronormative family life [was elevated] to an almost secular religion” (Dau and Preston 5). It was during this time that Romantic and Victorian writers such as William Wordsworth, William Blake, Charlotte Brontë, and Charles Dickens and legislative acts such as the Factory Act (1833) and the Mines Act (1842) created childhood as a separate, established category and the child as a figure to be protected, primarily by a norm-abiding, heterosexual family. Importantly, as scholars such as Judith Plotz and Ann Wierda Rowland argue in their respective works, this new figure of the child was not a neutral figure but a space for social control.⁶ This “[p]reoccupation with childhood,” Plotz maintains, “or rather with a single child self, becomes in the nineteenth century a non-threatening means of commitment to social hope without the need of a political and social transformation” (39). The nineteenth century’s construction of the child as a figure to be protected and as a representation of “social hope” for the future aligns itself with Edelman’s discussion of the Child and reproductive futurity. “[T]he Child has come to embody for us the telos of the social order and come to be seen as the one for whom that order is held in perpetual trust,” Edelman contends (11). This conceptualization of the child helps to make the family a central focus of social concern and social power. “Families become important social mechanisms to protect the next generation and ensure the replication of social norms and values,” Duc Dau and Shale Preston explain, “Middle-class Victorians considered families to be important social institutions of the provision of nurturance, the socialization of children, and the formation of individual identity” (5).

⁶ Plotz’s *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (2001) and Rowland’s *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (2012). For more information on the role of the child in the nineteenth century, see James Kincaid’s *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Literature* (1992), Laura Berry’s *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel* (1999), and Neil Cocks’s *The Peripheral Child in Nineteenth Century Literature and its Criticism* (2014).

During this period, social, economic, industrial, and scientific advancements and upheavals created the family and the home as both a safe space to retreat from this chaos and a site of cultural and social power to produce the next generation of “correct” nineteenth-century citizens. The nineteenth century saw the abolition of slavery; two Industrial Revolutions; advances in technology and transportation such as the camera and the railroad; the rise of populations in cities leading to chaotic and fluid home lives and rampant poverty and illness; the influence and expansion of the British Empire and the influence of (and potential contamination by) colonized peoples and cultures; wars and military engagements such as the Napoleonic Wars, the Greek War of Independence, the Revolutions of 1848, and the American Civil War; the rise in theories of ontology and evolution; and changes in religious ideologies, gender roles, and sexuality and sexual norms. All of these events caused concern over what it meant to be a British subject in society. “In the wake of revolution overseas and in the midst of industrialization and modernization at home,” Elizabeth Thiel explains, “it was scarcely surprising that the Victorians were preoccupied with order and classification, and their conceptualization of the family as the lynchpin of society from which all else emanated was a palliative; it promised the recreation of a mythical age in which all was secure” (3).

Influential social figures and writers such as John Ruskin, Coventry Patmore, Sarah Stickney Ellis, and Queen Victoria helped solidify the heterosexual nuclear family as the center of society by advocating for (what we now call) traditional gender norms and roles and the ideology of separate spheres. Queen Victoria viewed herself and was also viewed by Victorian society as “Mother” to the British Empire, establishing the role of the family in nationhood, culture, and one’s daily life. Patmore’s *The Angel in the House* (1854) cemented the feminine model of a submissive and selfless woman and mother. In “Of Queen’s Gardens” (1865), Ruskin

extends this view when he famously encourages, what we would now call, conventional gender roles for men and women, positioning men as doers, protectors, and creators in the public sphere and women as in charge of the home, spiritual concerns, and domesticity. In the process, Ruskin defines the home as “the place of Peace; the shelter, not from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division” (158). Ellis similarly advocates for normative family values and gender in her oeuvre, arguing, famously in *The Women of England and their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (1839), that a woman’s place is in the home, and her role is to raise morally-correct children and influence her husband.⁷

As I discuss in my previous chapters, the role and prominence of the family was also supported by the dominating literary genres of the period—namely, the bildungsroman, the marriage plot, the realist novel—and by conduct books and magazines such as *Household Words*, *The Home Companion*, and *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* (Thiel 5). Depictions of traditional families and gender and social norms were extremely pervasive in literary works, although, as I will note, they were often challenged and undermined. Importantly, these representations of family and the home were not just depicted in adult literature. They were also a prominent part of children’s literature, indoctrinating future generations. As Thiel discusses in *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal* (2007), this ideology “create[d] a template for a world in which father and mother, devoted to the moral and/or spiritual well-being of their offspring, were ever-present and ever-mindful of their duties” (5).

⁷ See Karen Chase and Michael Levenson’s *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family* (2000) for a detailed review of Ellis’s works and how she positioned herself as “the semiofficial portraitist of an aspiring middle-class domesticity” (67).

As this brief overview of nineteenth-century culture and society suggests, it is easy to see how the traditional (and heterosexual) view of the family was idealized and established by the middle class and nineteenth-century institutions and has remained as *the* official narrative of the nineteenth century.⁸ And yet, just as with the other topics I discuss in this project, at the same time as this push for family (and its associated norms) was taking place, there was also a strong resistance to this totalizing view and stable definition of family. As Dau and Preston point out in the introduction to their edited *Queer Victorian Families: Curious Relations in Literature* (2015), the Victorians “appeared to have had an elastic understanding of the word [family]” (6). “While asserting the English family is ‘in its essential type’ a nuclear family composed of husband, wife, children, and, ideally, servants,” they explain, “the [foundational 1851] census makes it clear there wasn’t simply one type of family but the existence of families ‘variously constituted’” (Dau and Preston 6).⁹ “[T]he story of the Victorian family we have inherited is just that, a story,” Kelly Hager and Talia Schaffer similarly argue, “[t]he Victorian family was not always loving, and it was never nuclear” (19). Instead “[i]t consisted of extended, substitute, affiliative, and shifting members, and its most cherished principles—maternal adoration, conjugal bliss—were painstakingly produced against an array of dangerous circumstances...and surprisingly non-normative compositions” (Hager and Schaffer 19).

⁸ For a more detailed discussion on family in the nineteenth century, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (1987), Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748–1818* (2005), Thiel's *The Fantasy of Family* (2007), and Kelly Hager and Talia Schaffer's introduction to their special issue on “Extending Families” (2013).

⁹ The description of “family” in the 1851 Census, as cited in *Queer Victorian Families*, is as follows: “The family, consisting of a head and of dependent members, living in the same dwelling, is, as has been shown in the previous report, variously constituted; but the English family in its essential type is composed of husband, wife, children, and servants, or, less perfectly, but more commonly, of husband, wife and children” (Dau and Preston 6).

In addition to offering alternative ways to conceptualize family, Victorian society questioned the validity and power of marriage as an institution. As Schaffer notes, “the 1850s to the 1870s marked a period of ferment about what marriage ought to mean, where marriage came from, whether marriage was good for men and women, and how the marriage state ought to be reformed” (*Romance’s* 16). Legislative acts such as the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 and the Married Women’s Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 gave financial, property, and divorce rights to married women, and the Custody of Infants Acts of 1839 and 1873 gave married women the right to petition for custody of their children in event of a divorce. Jennifer Phegley argues that “the Victorian era’s obsession with love, marriage, and domesticity gave birth to marriage reformers, critics, and abstainers of both sexes who rejected their society’s romantic notions to live unconventional love lives” leading individuals to enter “unions that were outside of the bounds of legal marriage, including heterosexual cohabitation, romantic friendship, and same-sex partnership” (146). And questions about gender, especially “[d]ebate over the ‘Woman Question[,]’ ignited and fueled a broader controversy over the institution of marriage” (Winstead 315).¹⁰

Writers and literature of this period reflect the questions surrounding the idealized view of marriage and highlight the fluidity of kinship formations that simultaneously existed in society.¹¹ As Charles Hatten discusses, nineteenth-century writers such as George Eliot, Wilkie Collins, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley frequently resisted conventional views of marriage and

¹⁰ For additional discussion examining the relationship between criticisms of gender roles and kinship in the nineteenth century, see Charles Hatten (19).

¹¹ In *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850–1925* (1999), Katherine Snyder also sees the “explosion of popular bachelor discourse” as “attest[ing] to the uneven developments that cultural ideologies and institutions of marriage and domesticity were undergoing during this era of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization” (3).

family. Novelists such as Thomas Hardy, Grant Allen, Mona Caird, and Sarah Grand, scholar Karen A. Winstead maintains, questioned the institution of marriage “in their fiction, portraying women languishing in unhappy marriages or punished for eschewing what they viewed as marital servitude” (315). And although Dickens is traditionally upheld by critics and readers as *the* premier writer supporting gender roles and conventional marriage, recent works by Sharon Marcus, George Haggerty, Holly Furneaux, Catherine Waters, Hager, and McCrea, among others, highlight the various ways in which Dickens critiqued the nuclear family form and offered more successful kinship alternatives in his novels.¹² “Domestic units bonded through neither blood nor marriage are so numerous in Dickens’s work,” Furneaux asserts, “they outweigh depictions of what we have come to describe as the ‘nuclear’ family of married parents and offspring” (*Queer* 22). This leads Furneaux to argue that “the alternative presentations of kinship that proliferate in Victorian fiction displace the biological family as a natural given and demand a further debunking of the fantasy that the Victorian era enshrined a narrowly conceived form of family” (*Queer* 22). Literary genres challenged heteronormative views of marriage and kinship as well. In my previous chapters, I have discussed many of the ways in which nineteenth-century novels and literary genres, such as the Gothic and sensational fiction, resisted and undermined traditional conceptions of the family and the marriage plot as an organizing structure.

¹² See, among others, Sharon Marcus’s *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007), George Haggerty’s *Queer Friendship: Male Intimacy in the English Literary Tradition* (2018), Holly Furneaux’s *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (2009), Catherine Water’s “Gender, Family, and Domestic Ideology” (2001), Hager’s *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce: The Failed-Marriage Plot and the Novel Tradition* (2010), and McCrea’s *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce, and Proust* (2011).

Nineteenth-century novels frequently promoted non-normative and non-nuclear kinship formations over the heterosexual family and marriage plot.¹³ In *Romance's Rival* (2016), Schaffer argues that conventional marriages based on heterosexual love and individual desire were not the dominant or only form of marriage available to characters in nineteenth-century novels (3). Instead, she highlights the various alternative kinship formations promoted in these novels, including familiar marriages, compassionate marriages, and vocational marriages. In their respective works, Jane Spencer and Leonore Davidoff examine the role of sibling kinship formations (among other non-parental kinship models) in producing literature.¹⁴ Similarly, Eileen Cleere explores the uncle as a significant figure in literary kinship models and structures in *Avuncularism: Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (2004). And Marcus's *Between Women* and Haggerty's *Queer Friendship* examine the pervasiveness of same-sex friendships in nineteenth-century novels over familial ones, arguing that these intimate friendships were vital relationships for the heterosexual marriage model (Marcus) and gave "shape to the novels of which they are a part" (Haggerty 2).

The structures of nineteenth-century narratives challenged the predominance of the family and the marriage plot as organizing logics for narratives as well. In *In the Company of Strangers* (2011), McCrea argues that the heterosexual marriage plot is not the only way of

¹³ For other works looking at alternative figures in kinship relations beyond the heterosexual nuclear family and parent-child relationships, see Karen Chase's *The Victorians and Old Age* (2009), Jennifer Beauvais's *Domesticated Bachelors and Femininity in Victorian Novels* (2020), Hager and Schaffer's special issue of *Victorian Review* on "Extending Families" (2013), Anna A. Berman's "The Problem with Brothers in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel" (2020), Maia McAleavey's *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel* (2015), Mary Jean Corbett's *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (2008), Hager's *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce* (2010), and Thiel's *The Fantasy of Family*.

¹⁴ See Spencer's *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660-1830* (2005) and Davidoff's *Thicker than Water: Siblings and their Relations, 1780-1920* (2012).

structuring narrative in nineteenth-century novels. Instead, McCrea turns to the figure of the stranger, looking at “how nongenealogical experiences of kinship and time can be taken from the periphery and ‘centered’ as an alternative underlying model for narrative itself” (*Company* 4). Working backward from modernist novels by Joyce and Proust, McCrea argues that “the radical narrative formalism of high modernism exploits the potential of an alternative queer plot that was already present as a formal building block in the nineteenth-century novel” (3). Similarly, Galvin and Michie’s edited *Replotting Marriage in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (2018) examines what happens when we stop “taking marriage as a literary and cultural given” in nineteenth-century society and literature and instead view it as a discursive and contextual institution (2,4). In doing so, they push back against the idea that the marriage plot *is* the plot of these novels and instead allege that it is just one plot line among many (4-5).

As this overview of scholarship suggests, the nineteenth century and its novels were greatly invested in both non-normative and nuclear kinship formations. However, there is one queer kinship relation in which both queer and nineteenth-century scholarship is still limited: the role of the bachelor in nineteenth-century novels. By the end of the nineteenth century, the bachelor had become a central literary character in novels such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897). However, even before the bachelor took center stage, he was a pivotal figure in nineteenth-century novels. This chapter will explore how the bachelor character is not only an inherently queer figure but is also a necessary figure for plot development, especially the development of the protagonist, and for the creation of supportive kinship formations in nineteenth-century British novels.

Importantly, in ending with the bachelor, I end this project with a figure that is specifically associated with the nineteenth century and rooted in nineteenth-century literature and culture.¹⁵ Many modernist and queer literary works feature unmarried men, a character similar to the bachelor. However, the bachelor, as an autonomous and distinct figure, comes out of nineteenth-century values and organizing logics, such as the marriage plot, that do not have the same valence in the twentieth century. To be a single man does not necessarily mean that one is a bachelor. The very being of the bachelor, their very presence, is a resistance to the normative middle-class values and behaviors, such as marriage and productivity, that organized and defined nineteenth-century society, the country, and the subject, something that does not apply as well to the unmarried, single man in the twentieth century.

There is limited scholarship on the nineteenth-century bachelor as a queer figure. I suggest that the reason it has not been given much critical queer attention may be because it is so embedded in the nineteenth century and does not easily translate to the twentieth century and modernism, the spaces in which the majority of contemporary queer theorizing is taking place. Moreover, what attention it is given usually focuses on the bachelor's hidden queer desires. However, as my discussion here will show, the bachelor was a pivotal queer figure in nineteenth-century novels, and not just because of any potential queer erotic desire. Although as Katherine Snyder notes, the term "bachelor" became a slur or shorthand for homosexuality by the late nineteenth century (3), bachelors did not automatically engage in queer erotic behaviors or have

¹⁵ Interestingly, while Snyder begins her foundational work on bachelors in the nineteenth century and includes texts by Emily Brontë, Henry James, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, she identifies these works as coming from "our current canon of pre-modernist, proto-modernist, and modernist fiction" (2). Again, as with McCrea, we see this move to pull figures, themes, and works so rooted in the nineteenth century into modernism rather than depicting these modernist figures and pieces as part of the long nineteenth-century or a Victorian aesthetic.

queer desires, and I will not be examining them as such. Instead, I am interested in how the bachelor as a narrative figure, not an individual, is positioned in novels and represents antinormativity and how these queer figures help to structure narrative trajectories. In this chapter, I will explore the narrative potential of the bachelor figure and what it means that an inherently queer figure is so pivotal to narrative trajectories and formations of kinship in nineteenth-century novels.

The bachelor is a contested and queer figure in nineteenth-century literature and culture. The bachelor and his lifestyle went against the core nineteenth-century social norms of productive labor, appropriate future-looking goals and desires, and family. He refused marriage, engaged in improper sexual behaviors, had problematic spending habits (either too much or too little), and preferred homosocial communities over heterosexual couplings and the nuclear family. And his refusal to act according to masculine gender norms called into question hegemonic conceptualizations of masculinity and gender roles. Often depicted as a marginal character in nineteenth-century novels until the end of the century, the bachelor's position in literature suggests his insignificance and his peripheral status in society.

One of the first significant queer works to examine the role of the bachelor in nineteenth-century novels is Eve Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). There, Sedgwick claims that "the bachelor" became a solidified figure type in the early and mid-Victorian period (*Epistemology* 188). In her discussion, Sedgwick traces the evolution of the bachelor, seeing the Victorian bachelor as the transformation of the Gothic hero amid fears of homosexuality. Sedgwick argues that this new bachelor type illustrates the extent to which nineteenth-century homophobia created a fear of any male homosocial bonds (social or sexual). The Gothic hero, like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, was "solipsistic," "raged," "suicidally inclined," and had

emotions “rang[ing] from euphoria to despondency” (Sedgwick *Epistemology* 189). While the Victorian bachelor, like Uncle Frederick Fairlie in Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860), “bitches,” was “selfish,” and “a hypochondriac” and had emotions ranging from “the eupeptic to the dyspeptic” (Sedgwick *Epistemology* 189). The “bachelor is at least partly feminized by his attention to and interest in domestic concerns,” Sedgwick continues; he is timid, introspective, and “housebroken by the severing of his connections with a discourse of genital sexuality” (*Epistemology* 189-190). Unlike the Gothic bachelor who was frequently center stage in Gothic novels, “the [Victorian] bachelor is a distinctly circumscribed and often a marginalized figure in the book he inhabits” (Sedgwick *Epistemology* 189).

Although Edelman’s *No Future* is not specifically focused on the nineteenth century or the nineteenth-century bachelor, this figure features prominently in Edelman’s discussion of reproductive futurity through his conceptualization of the *sinthomosexual*. According to Edelman, the *sinthomosexual* “den[ies] the appeal of fantasy” and “refus[es] the promise of futurity” (35). “I am calling *sinthomosexuality*,” Edelman continues, “the site where the fantasy of futurism confronts the insistence of a jouissance that rends it precisely by *rendering* it in relation to that drive” (38). For Edelman, the *sinthomosexual* is *the* epitome of the death drive and *the* resistance to reproductive futurity. It represents those individuals and desires that refuse to participate in our society’s collective belief in reproductive futurity by focusing, instead, on their own desires in the present moment. While Edelman identifies a range of characters as *sinthomosexuals*, he ground his initial explanation of the *sinthomosexual* in the nineteenth century, largely building his definition on Charles Dickens’s Scrooge and George Eliot’s Silas Marner. Importantly, Edelman’s exploration of these figures and their connection to the *sinthomosexual* hinges on their identity as nineteenth-century bachelors. According to Edelman,

it is precisely because of Scrooge's bachelorhood, not just his status as a single man, that positions him as the *sinthomosexual*.¹⁶ "What might seem to bespeak narcissistic isolation from everyone around him," Edelman explains, "—his self-delighting stinginess, his solipsistic rejection of comforts, no less for others than for himself—instantiates, then, a death drive opposed to the ego and the world of desire" (46). As I will detail below, Scrooge's character traits, as well as Silas Marner's, are some of the defining attributes of the bachelor as a queer figure and not just an unmarried man.

More recent work on the bachelor examines the ways in which the figure's behavior resists nineteenth-century social norms and responsibilities more generally.¹⁷ One of the most universally agreed upon characteristics of the bachelor is his selfishness. "[N]egative attitudes toward marriage were considered extremely selfish," Jennifer Phegley explains, "and career bachelors were often characterized as men with 'the wish for luxury, the desire to evade responsibility, stinginess, love of comfort, the longing for glory'" (148). Jennifer Beauvais similarly defines the bachelor as "a figure of luxury, excess, and self-indulgence" whose "delay

¹⁶ Edelman does link the "sin" in "*sinthomosexuality*" to the "'sin' that continues to attach itself to 'homosexuality'" (39). However, as his discussion of Scrooge makes clear, Edelman is not interested in "revealing an 'identity' encoded in" Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (43). Instead, like my project, he is interested in the "potent effects" of understanding Scrooge as the *sinthomosexual* (43).

¹⁷ Although not using the language of queer theory or locating their discussions in such a context, the arguments put forth by these scholars easily align with queer theory as they focus on the non-normative behaviors and characteristics of the bachelor figure. See Jennifer Phegley's "Bachelors, Old Maids, and Other Challenges to Marriage" (2011), Snyder's *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel* (1999), Jennifer Beauvais's *Domesticated Bachelors and Femininity in Victorian Novels* (2020), and Dennis S. Gouws's "George Eliot's Enthusiastic Bachelors: Topical Fictional Accounts of Nineteenth-Century Homoerotic Christian Masculinities and the Manhood Question" (2008). See also Monica Flegel's "Pets and Patriarchy: Bachelors, Villains, and Their Animal Companions" (2015). Snyder's work is particularly of note as it is one of the foundational works focusing primarily on bachelors in literature.

or refusal to marry” makes him a “threat to nineteenth-century bourgeois society” (6).¹⁸

Bachelors were considered selfish in the way they spent or did not spend their money as well. “Profligacy and stinginess are flipsides of the same coin which bachelors were seen as reserving for their own selfish use,” Snyder states, “Bachelors were as often accused of miserliness as of extravagance” (31). Their improper spending habits helped to depict these figures as engaging in other transgressive behaviors. In her work, Snyder connects “bachelor economies” and “bachelor sexuality,” noting, “[j]ust as bachelors were imagined as spending their money on the wrong objects or for the wrong reasons, they were also imagined as channelling, or dissipating, their sexual energy in a variety of nonmarital ‘dead ends’” (32).¹⁹

The nineteenth-century bachelor operated as a queer lens, exposing the contours of Victorian masculinity. In her work on the domesticated bachelor, a particular type of nineteenth-century bachelor, Beauvais argues that because the domesticated bachelor retains some of his socially-constructed masculinity, he is able to function in both the private, domestic, and feminine sphere and the public, social, and masculine sphere (4-5). “The domesticated bachelor expands the concept of Victorian masculinity to include men who are not married, but experience the domestic,” Beauvais explains, “by, at first, experimenting with performing femininity, and eventually redefining the domestic sphere” (2). In doing so, the domesticated bachelor “challenged the Victorian definition of masculinity, which requires that he marry,

¹⁸ The bachelor’s selfishness also aligns him with the view from some antisocial theorists, such as Edelman, that in focusing on themselves and the present rather than marriage and reproductive futurity, queer individuals are inherently selfish.

¹⁹ According to Snyder, bachelors were particularly concerning to Victorian society because “they had no sanctioned sexual outlet” (33). “By the turn of the century,” Snyder continues, “all forms of nonprocreative sexual activity including masturbation, bestiality, and pederasty, *even the absence of sexual activity within or beyond the bonds of marriage*, were coming increasingly to be seen as possible signs of homosexuality” (33, emphasis mine).

procreate, and support his family” (Beauvais 2).²⁰ The bachelor was able to do this, according to Beauvais, because he “combin[ed] the homosocial with the domestic” rather than just “simply performing and mirroring aspects of the private sphere” (2). Although here Beauvais is specifically focusing on the domesticated bachelor, her argument, I believe, can be extended to the nineteenth-century bachelor figure in general. Dennis S. Gouws supports this view in his work when he argues that the bachelor challenged nineteenth-century conceptions of masculinity and manhood by connecting the bachelor’s “selfishness luxury” to “civic uselessness” (2). The bachelor forces us to consider *why* nineteenth-century society was afraid of deviating from prescribed norms and highlights just how far its social institutions will go to keep a version of ideal masculinity in circulation. This effort demonstrates just how constructed this version of masculinity, and relationally, femininity, actually was in society.

Importantly, bachelors in the nineteenth century were not seen in opposition to marriage and domesticity, but outside of it, establishing these figures as queer. As Beauvais argues, “it is important to acknowledge the bachelor’s success at achieving a new type of domesticity and not simply mirroring the traditional Victorian domestic space” (2). “Crossing borders is what defines the bachelor and allows him to remain an ambiguous and fluid figure throughout literary history,” Beauvais explains (4). Similarly, in her foundational work, Snyder calls the bachelor a “threshold figure[e] who marked the permeable boundaries that separate domesticity, normative manhood, and high-cultural status” (7). Because “bachelor narrators delineate the thresholds of bourgeois domesticity and manhood,” Snyder continues later, they “enabl[e] themselves and

²⁰ See Flegel’s discussion on bachelors and pets for further information on how the bachelor resists social and gender norms (97).

their authorial creators to mark the boundaries of normativity while simultaneously going out of bounds” (17). The bachelor did not just create a masculine domestic space, copying the feminine sphere, or completely reject masculinity for domesticity and femininity. Instead, the bachelor created his own queer space outside of this gendered binary, whether that is outside of the system, as Beauvais suggests, or in between the system, as Snyder claims. This “gives the bachelor a unique perspective on society” (Beauvais 4), positioning the bachelor as a tool to highlight the “permeability” of social and gender norms and Victorian society.

Clearly, the bachelor is a key figure in discussions of gender, sexuality, and kinship in the nineteenth century. He is also an inherently queer figure, both in the sense that he highlights and disrupts nineteenth-century norms and behaviors, such as the gender binary and the social requirement of marriage, and in his position as an outsider to nineteenth-century society. Regardless of the bachelor’s individual sexual desires, then, the figure of the bachelor, the space of the bachelor itself, is a queer and queering position. The bachelor is such an important figure for queer intersections into the nineteenth century because the figure, and everything it stood for and against, is so integrally tied to nineteenth-century norms and cultures explored throughout this dissertation.

Bachelors are featured in all the novels I have discussed in my project thus far. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) follows an infamous bachelor socialite, and bachelors make up the vast majority of Dorian’s social group; the bachelor Lockwood opens and closes *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and is the impetus for Nelly’s narration, which makes up the bulk of the story; and *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889) showcases late nineteenth-century fears about bachelors, homosexuality, and the seduction of young, naïve women for queer men’s nefarious purposes. Bachelors also play important, but smaller roles in novels such as *Frankenstein* (1818), *Cranford*

(1853), and *Dracula* (1897). In all of these novels, bachelors are integral to the unfolding of the plot, to the protagonists' mental and physical health, and, importantly, in making sure that social norms and institutions, such as the family and masculinity, are supported and stay relevant in these narratives. It is these seemingly peripheral but key figures which will be the focus of this chapter that teases out the various ways in which these ostensibly insignificant bachelors are actually vitally important to the development of protagonists and kinship forms in novels.²¹ It is precisely because of their marginal positions in these novels that these bachelors are able to affect the narratives in subtle but significant ways. These characters resist stereotypical notions of masculinity, expose gender norms and roles as socially constructed, provide critical commentaries about nineteenth-century institutions and social discourses such as religion and class, and are crucial to both the plot's trajectory and the creation of normative and supportive kinship formations. The protagonists in these novels would not have or would not find kinship formations to support their development and growth without these bachelors.

**“his presence brought back to my thoughts...all those scenes of home”: Domesticity's
Reliance on the Bachelor in *Frankenstein***

Although the bachelor, as a figure, is generally associated with the mid-to-late nineteenth century, we can see his influence from the very beginning of the century with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a novel, as I have discussed in my previous chapters, that resists social norms and institutions. It is a novel replete with single men that removes, at times violently, women, marriage, and reproduction from the narrative. Instead, it is,

²¹ I am not focusing on bachelor protagonists in this chapter. As protagonists, their bachelorhood usually comes out in discussions of their character and there has already been important work on these characters. See Snyder's *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel* for the substantive study on bachelor narrators, most of which are prominent characters in their respective novels.

at its barest level, a novel about the relationships between bachelor men. Indeed, the most productive and supportive relationship that we see in the novel is not one between a heterosexual or queer couple or even a man and his family. It is the relationship between Henry and Frankenstein, two bachelors. In her chapter on Henry James and the Victorian bachelor, Sedgwick firmly positions *Frankenstein*, and its titular character, as an example of the “unmarried Gothic hero”; a character type that eventually leads to the creation of the bachelor as “the representative man” later in the century (*Epistemology* 188). However, as I will argue, the mid-century bachelor and all of its associations are already present in *Frankenstein*, in the character of Henry Clerval. Similar to the bachelors in the mid- and late-nineteenth century, Henry creates his own domestic space, calls into question the shape of masculinity, and is the key liaison between family and the protagonist.²²

In my previous chapter on queer temporalities, I outlined the various ways in which Henry is associated with heteronormative values and claim that his removal from the narrative helps to erode its heteroideological foundation. Reading Henry as a queer bachelor figure in this chapter, I show how intertwined domesticity and heteronormative values such as the family are with queer figures and forces in the nineteenth century. In returning here to *Frankenstein* and, later in this chapter, *Dracula*, I expand on the ways in which we can read these nineteenth-

²² While I am focusing on Henry here, Walton, another marginal male character, also supports my reading of bachelors and kinship in the novel. As a single man who rejects his family and resists his role in society by leaving to explore the Arctic, Walton represents the nineteenth-century bachelor and foreshadows the bachelor adventure genre that became popular at the end of the century. Walton’s letters to his sister and his conversations with Frankenstein in the opening and closing framework also show us his desire for male companionship. While we can read Walton’s desire for a friend as a desire for a homoerotic relationship, as many scholars do, I am more interested in whom the novel offers up as the option for Walton’s friend: Frankenstein, a bachelor. As I detailed in my chapter on queer temporalities, Frankenstein is a character who resists social norms and requirements at every turn. Through his singlehood, his (selfish) desire to follow academic pursuits over marriage, his homosocial relationships, and his rejection of society and his antisocial behaviors, he is representative of the nineteenth-century bachelor and a queer figure in more than one sense.

century novels as queer. As I have illustrated throughout this project, these novels are not queer because of one topic, theme, or character but because they represent the “the open mesh of possibilities” that Sedgwick sees inherent in the conceptualization of queer (“Queer” 8). These works are queer in so many ways that they overlap and contradict one another, and provide new opportunities for exploration, as illustrated by this chapter and my project overall.

Although an important character for both Frankenstein’s and the narrative’s trajectory, Henry is not generally explored in scholarly criticism and, as Haggerty notes, adaptations of the novel often change what happens to him (“Queer” 125). When Henry is mentioned in criticism, he is usually depicted as a foil to Frankenstein or viewed in terms of a potential queer relationship with him.²³ The lack of scholarly material suggests Henry’s insignificance in the novel. I argue, however, that Henry is a vital part of the novel, especially when looking at the novel’s view of kinship. While other normative kinship structures are removed from the novel, the text frequently puts Henry and Frankenstein together, especially when Frankenstein could use a strong support system. It is Henry, not his father and not Elizabeth, who best exemplifies domesticity in the novel, and it is Henry who forms the most successful kinship form with Frankenstein, suggesting that it is the bachelor, and not the heterosexual, nuclear family that is the ideal form.²⁴ In promoting Henry over other kinship models, the novel demonstrates that the

²³ For discussions of a queer relationship between Henry and Frankenstein, see footnote 69 in Chapter Three, my chapter on queer temporalities. Haggerty’s *Queer Friendship* is one of the more substantial discussions of Henry, and Haggerty argues, as well, for his importance in the novel. Focusing on the role of friendship in the novel and between Henry and Frankenstein, Haggerty’s claims support my reading of the work.

²⁴ Haggerty similarly sees Henry as vital for Frankenstein’s success. “The solitary rape of the natural world would not have failed so spectacularly,” Haggerty claims, “—that is, succeeded in the way that it did—if Victor had allowed his friendship to guide him” (*Queer* 111). While I agree with Haggerty about Henry’s importance, both in the novel and in his relationship with Frankenstein, I am interested in exploring Henry’s bachelorhood and how this affects the narrative and Frankenstein, a facet of Henry that Haggerty does not discuss.

bachelor is the most important and the most successful kinship configuration, not the nuclear family or marriage.

As an early iteration of the more established bachelor that we see later in the century, Henry's associations with the bachelor figure are subtle but still there. Similar to the other prominent male characters in the novel, Henry is single. However, Henry's bachelorhood goes further than his lack of attachment. Unlike the other male characters in the novel, Henry is not associated with heterosexuality, marriage, or other forms of kinship beyond his relationship with Frankenstein. It is not so much that Henry rejects heterosexuality and these notions of kinship, as Frankenstein does, but that he stands outside of them. Instead, Henry is primarily associated with his career, like many mid-nineteenth-century bachelors. Henry's bachelorhood is also apparent in his desire for more education over immediately working for his father, a desire his father sees as unnecessary and extravagant (25), and in the ways that he inhabits Frankenstein's space in Ingolstadt and helps him recover.²⁵ Although he traveled to Ingolstadt to attend school, once Henry sees Frankenstein's state, he puts his own scholarly desires aside to take care of his friend.²⁶ In doing so, Henry presents a new model of masculinity that is missing from the novel. Frankenstein, Walton, and the creature are all selfish adventurers, defined by their own self-centered desires. Conversely, Henry presents a domesticated masculinity as he nurses

²⁵ All references to the text are from the 1996 Norton Critical Edition of the 1818 edition.

²⁶ In *Queer Friendship*, Haggerty convincingly reads Henry's caretaking alongside Furneaux's discussion of homoerotic nursing in Dickens and his view of the friendship between Henry and Frankenstein during this period supports my reading of Henry: "This transformation in mood and sudden sense of calm seems inspired by the touch between [Henry and Frankenstein]... This role of nurse, so broadly ignored in most discussions of the novel, marks Clerval as a very special friend indeed. This kind of intimacy, as Holly Furneaux mentions in her discussion of Dickens, helps to fill out friendship with a mode of physical reality that it otherwise lacks... I'm not claiming that these relations are specifically homoerotic, but nevertheless they mark a friendship that is more intense than has otherwise been allowed. Clerval is a caring and nurturing friend, and as such, he stands in almost direct contrast to Victor's callous rejection of the creature" (113).

Frankenstein and promotes his friend's needs above his own, producing a happier and more fulfilled character than the other masculinities presented in the novel.

As I have highlighted in my earlier discussions of *Frankenstein*, the novel undermines both the family and marriage as institutions throughout the novel.²⁷ Removing them from the narrative shows that these institutions have no power in the narrative and are unable to support Frankenstein in his ordeal with the creature.²⁸ Instead, the narrative positions the bachelor, Henry, as *the* character and kinship type for Frankenstein over more traditional relational forms. We see the family's lack of power from the beginning, as soon as Frankenstein becomes invested in his experiment. At school, Frankenstein completely isolates himself from the outside world and cuts off contact from his friends and family. He grows increasingly "frantic" and hysterical, solely focusing on his experiment to the detriment of his physical and mental health (32). Immediately after detailing his physical and mental decline for Walton, Frankenstein recalls words from his father: "I know that while you are pleased with yourself, you will think of us with affection, and we shall hear regularly from you. You must pardon me, if I regard any interruption in your correspondence as a proof that your other duties are equally neglected" (33). But Frankenstein does not write to them during this period and pushes back against his father's advice. "I know well therefore what would be my father's feelings; but I could not tear my thoughts from my employment," Frankenstein tells Walton, "I wished...to procrastinate all

²⁷ See my chapters on queer narrative (Chapter Two) and queer temporality (Chapter Three) for more information, including a review of scholarly criticism on *Frankenstein* and the family.

²⁸ The idea of family is also unable to support other characters in the novel. For example, when William is caught by the creature, he uses the family name to try to get out of the situation. "My papa is a Syndic—he is M. Frankenstein—he would punish you. You dare not keep me," William cries out (97). However, the family name does not stop the creature. Instead, it actually encourages the creature's violence: "Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy—to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim" (97).

that related to my feelings of affection until the great object, which swallowed up every habit of my nature, should be completed” (33). Frankenstein acknowledges that his father would not be pleased with his son’s lifestyle at school and then promptly dismisses his father, illustrating the family’s lack of power.²⁹

The narrative continues to highlight the family’s diminished role throughout the rest of the novel. After Frankenstein learns about William’s death, he becomes despondent, but Henry is able to revive him until Frankenstein begins his journey home. As he gets closer to his home and his family, Frankenstein slows his progress and “grief and fear again overcame” him (47). Without Henry to take care of him, Frankenstein has no support system to help him through his grief. Instead “solitude was [his] only consolation—deep, dark, death-like solitude” (59). After William’s death and Justine’s trial, Frankenstein, again, falls into despair and, again, his family is unable to help him. His father suggests the family visit Chamounix to recuperate. However, instead of helping Frankenstein’s mental health, the trip to Chamounix allows the creature to approach Frankenstein and tell his tale, causing Frankenstein to once again become depressed. As Frankenstein explains, “[t]he intention of my father in coming had been to divert my mind, and to restore me to my lost tranquility; but the medicine had been fatal” (101). His family tries to cheer Frankenstein up, but even his “beloved Elizabeth was inadequate to draw [him] from the depth of [his] despair” (101). In this moment, it becomes clear that none of the socially-promoted models of domesticity—a father, a family, a wife—can support Frankenstein.

²⁹ Frankenstein doubles down on the family’s lack of power and support a few paragraphs later, noting that his family does not seem particularly concerned about Frankenstein’s lack of communication. “My father made no reproach in his letters,” Frankenstein recounts, “and only took notice of my silence by inquiring into my occupations more particularly than before” (33). Frankenstein, again, ignores his family’s “inquir[ies]” into his life and does not answer his father.

The family's frequent association with death and trauma in the novel further undermines the allure and prominence of the nuclear family. As I have detailed in earlier chapters, family and reproduction, of all kinds, in the novel are associated with death and mental anguish. The family is also responsible for giving bad news to Frankenstein throughout the narrative. For example, the first letter from Frankenstein's family that he opens after he has fully recovered from his ordeal details William's death (allegedly) at the hands of Justine. Frankenstein also blames his father for prompting his fatal obsession with reanimation and setting him on his current path. Telling his father about his newfound interest in Cornelius Agrippa, Frankenstein's father responds by calling Agrippa "sad trash" (21). "If, instead of this remark," Frankenstein stresses, "my father had taken the pains to explain to me...that a modern system of science had been introduced...I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside, and...[i]t is even possible, that the train of my ideas would have never received the fatal impulse that led to my ruin" (21). At various points during the beginning of Frankenstein's journey, the family could have stopped or tried to stop Frankenstein. But they either did not care to or did not have the power to influence him, and they are unable to support Frankenstein once his suffering begins.

Instead, it is Henry, the bachelor, who is the most supportive character in Frankenstein's life and the only one in the novel to soothe him. Throughout the novel, Frankenstein uses Henry as an excuse to get away from his family, and Frankenstein's quality of life always improves when he is with Henry, as opposed to when he is with his family and Elizabeth.³⁰ Importantly, Henry is also the character that connects Frankenstein to and rouses Frankenstein's desire for family and domesticity. Perhaps the best, and most significant, example of the bachelor's

³⁰ See, for example, pages 103 and 105.

importance in the novel is when Henry unexpectedly arrives in Ingolstadt the morning after Frankenstein animates the creature. “Nothing could equal my delight on seeing Clerval,” Frankenstein recounts to Walton, “*his presence brought back to my thoughts my father, Elizabeth, and all those scenes of home so dear to my recollection. I grasped his hand, and in a moment forgot my horror and misfortune; I felt suddenly, and for the first time during many months calm and serene joy*” (36, emphasis mine). In a theme that we will also see in *Adam Bede* and *Dracula*, Henry-as-bachelor restores domesticity and family to the novel. Henry, and not Frankenstein’s family or letters from his family, is responsible for reviving these feelings in Frankenstein. In this moment, Henry brings back domesticity to Frankenstein and we can start to see a relationship that becomes clearer later in the century: the integral ties between family, as an institutional force and form, and the bachelor. Without the bachelor, there would be no family.

Frankenstein’s response to Henry affirms this connection. “[T]ell me how you left my father, brothers, and Elizabeth,” he inquires of Henry (36). Earlier, Frankenstein did not seem to have any concerns about his lack of contact with his family, and there are only a few brief mentions of them in all of Frankenstein’s recounting of his time at school. However, once Henry returns to the narrative, we see the return of the family. The narrative supports this association as we get a letter from Elizabeth at the beginning of the next chapter, a few pages after Henry enters the narrative, that focuses on the themes of marriage and family. Sensing his family’s anxiety over not hearing from him, Frankenstein immediately writes back, something he had never considered before Henry came to Ingolstadt.

That Henry is able to provide for and support Frankenstein, even embodying a domestic position in nursing his friend back to health and cleaning his home, shows both the bachelor’s importance in the novel and the family’s lack of power. Henry continues to advocate for

Frankenstein's health even after Frankenstein recovers from his initial illness.³¹ During their conversations with Frankenstein's teachers, Henry sees that Waldman's discussion of Frankenstein's scholarly interests was bothering Frankenstein, so Henry quickly changes the subject (42). And Henry convinces Frankenstein to take a tour of Germany after he starts to recover rather than returning home. During this excursion, Henry continues to bolster Frankenstein's health and spirit and reminds him of the value of family, even though that family cannot provide for him. "Clerval called forth the better feelings of my heart," Frankenstein fondly remembers, "*he again taught me to love the aspect of nature, and the cheerful faces of children*" (43, emphasis mine). Once again, we see a direct association between Henry and family and society. "A selfish pursuit had cramped and narrowed me, *until [Henry's] gentleness and affection* warmed and opened my senses," Frankenstein continues, "I became the same happy creature who, a few years ago, living and beloved by all, had no sorrow or care...My own spirits were high, and I bounded along with feelings of unbridled joy and hilarity" (44, emphasis mine). While I have previously discussed these moments in Chapter Three as illustrating Henry's ability to get Frankenstein on more socially-appropriate timelines, when we look at them from the perspective of the bachelor's role in the novel, Frankenstein associates Henry with joy, love, and happiness, feelings that are largely missing from Frankenstein's relationship with his family. Frankenstein explicitly names Henry and Henry's effect in explaining how and why he changed.

³¹ Significantly, during this time, Henry keeps Frankenstein's declining health to himself and does not tell Frankenstein's family. Henry tells Frankenstein that "knowing [his] father's advanced age, and unfitness for so long a journey, and how wretched [his] sickness would make Elizabeth, [Henry] spared them this grief by concealing the extent of [Frankenstein's] disorder" (37). Although this could suggest that Henry does not allow Frankenstein's family to support him, it also shows that family and marriage (represented by Elizabeth) are too weak to support Frankenstein. Henry is the only character of sound constitution and mind that would be able to care for Frankenstein.

Henry helps Frankenstein at every point throughout his recovery. For example, during Frankenstein's journey abroad to assemble the creature's companion, he admits that "[c]ompany was irksome to me" (109). However, "the voice of Henry soothed me, and I could thus cheat myself into a transitory peace" (109). It is Henry and not his family, friends, or his soon-to-be wife Elizabeth who is able to soothe Frankenstein's mind and bring him back into society. And it is a letter from Henry and not his family that inspires him to finally leave his isolation after he destroys the companion on which he had been working. After describing himself as "a restless spectre, separated from all it loved, and miserable in the separation," Frankenstein receives letters from both his family and from Henry (117). However, he only focuses on the letter from Henry: "This letter in a degree recalled me to life, and I determined to quit my island at the expiration of two days" (117). Even after Henry's death, his memory, and not the memories of his family, continues to sustain Frankenstein. Detailing his second excursion abroad to Walton, Frankenstein is bolstered by thinking of Henry: "even now it delights me to record your words, and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving" (107).³²

As these examples show, although only in the narrative for a short period, Henry is an integral part of the narrative's depiction of kinship and facilitates the connection between family and Frankenstein in the novel. It is Henry, and not the family or marriage, that has power in the novel; it is the bachelor and not the normative institutions that provides succor to Frankenstein. In George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, we continue to see the bachelor as caretaker for the protagonist as well as for the larger community. The two bachelors, Irwine and Massey, not only center the

³² See also pages 16, 44, and 108.

novel but, through their queer bachelorhood, promote knowledges and behaviors that resist social norms and institutions throughout the community.

“If you trust a man, let him be a bachelor”: The Bachelor’s Queer Agenda in *Adam Bede*

George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859) is a realist novel centered on three families in Hayslope village—the Bedes, the Donnithornes, and the Poyser. The novel primarily follows the two young male protagonists—the local carpenter Adam Bede and his handsome, rich, titled friend Captain Arthur Donnithorne—as they compete for the same woman—the beautiful and vain Hetty Sorrel, Mr. Poyser’s orphaned niece. While Adam works to prove his worth to Hetty, Arthur and Hetty engage in a secret affair until Adam discovers their relationship and forces Arthur to end it. After Arthur, predictably, leaves Hetty, she turns to Adam and accepts his marriage proposal. However, before they can get married, Hetty discovers she is pregnant with Arthur’s child and leaves Hayslope to find him. Hetty ends up giving birth on her journey and buries the baby alive. After being arrested for murder and sentenced to death, Hetty’s life is saved at the very last minute when Arthur brings a stay of execution, and Hetty is transported instead. At the end of the novel, Adam ends up married to Dinah Morris, a Methodist preacher related to the Poyser family.

Depicting the development of society during a time when foundational social tenets were being interrogated and transformed, *Adam Bede* is extremely fruitful for discussions of feminism, gender (especially masculinity), and sexuality.³³ Although Eliot has been portrayed by many

³³ See, for example, Laura Green’s “George Eliot: Gender and Sexuality” (2013), Kate Flint’s “George Eliot and Gender” (2001), Tara MacDonald’s “Healing Masculinity in Mid-Century Fiction” (2015), R.E. Sopher’s “Gender and Sympathy in ‘Adam Bede’: The Case of Seth Bede” (2012), Kate Faber Oestreich’s “Deviant Celibacy: Renouncing Dinah’s Little Fetish in *Adam Bede*” (2006), and Eve Sedgwick’s “*Adam Bede* and *Henry Esmond*: Homosocial Desire and the Historicity of the Female” in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985).

scholars as embodying traditional and conservative viewpoints, especially in relation to issues of gender and feminism, Eliot, as George Levine argues, “created her art out of a cluster of rebellions, particularly against reigning social, moral, and aesthetic conventions” (12, 2). Notably, one of these conventions is the construction of and role of the family in Victorian novels. “[W]hile she constantly celebrated the value of childhood experience, traditional community, and traditional family structures, she almost bitterly portrayed the failures of community and family” Levine contends (2). Similarly, Josephine McDonagh maintains that the “ideal community is thus not exactly a family, but like a family” in Eliot’s early novels (88). “In a variety of ways,” McDonagh continues, “the early novels do not merely celebrate traditional societies as pastoral havens, but explore the formation of modern social organizations” (92).³⁴

My discussion here takes up Eliot’s exploration of the ideal family form and argues that Eliot rejects the traditional family structure in *Adam Bede* in favor of the bachelor-mentee relationship. Not only are bachelors important characters in the novel and for the narrative’s progression, but, as in *Frankenstein*, the nuclear and biological family, what contemporary readers would consider *the* conventional kinship structure, is not the predominant and most effective model in *Adam Bede*. Instead, *Adam Bede* suggests that it is the bachelor figure and primarily the bachelor-mentor paradigm that provide the guidance and support associated with the family.

Although as Gouws notes, “George Eliot wrote frequently and attentively about bachelors,” there has not been much critical attention paid to the structural role of the bachelor in *Adam Bede* (7). And yet, *Adam Bede* contains a number of prominent characters that may be

³⁴ For other discussions of Eliot and the family form, see Sedgwick’s “*Adam Bede* and *Henry Esmond*.”

considered bachelors: Arthur; Reverend Adolphus Irwine, the Vicar of Hayslope and Arthur's godfather; Bartle Massey, the village's misogynistic schoolteacher; Adam; and Seth, Adam's younger brother. When critics do discuss the figure of the bachelor in the novel, they primarily focus on Seth.³⁵ However, while Seth remains a single, unattached man throughout the novel, he is not a bachelor; he is simply an unmarried man. He does not embody the nineteenth-century bachelor figure's connection and resistance to social and gender norms. Instead, it is Irwine and Massey who illustrate the conventions of the bachelor figure by challenging social norms and institutional discourses and blurring gender boundaries.

As the Rector of Broxton and Vicar of Hayslope and Blythe, Irwine has a privileged position in the community of Hayslope, amongst the various families, and in the novel. Indeed, Irwine acts as a guidepost and mentor for many of the characters, especially for his godson Arthur, and his influence carries weight in the community. Unlike Massey, Irwine is not a self-imposed bachelor. Instead, the novel attributes Irwine's bachelorhood to his financial circumstances. As discussed earlier in this chapter, financial concerns were one of the main reasons eligible men remained bachelors in the nineteenth century. As the narrator explains, "if that handsome, generous-blooded clergyman, the Rev. Adolphus Irwine, had not had these two hopelessly-maiden sisters...he would very likely taken a comely wife in his youth" (67).³⁶ "As it was—having with all his three livings no more than seven hundred a year, and seeing no way of keeping [them] in such lady-like ease as became their birth and habits, and at the same time providing for a family of his own—he remained," the narrator continues, "you see, at the age of

³⁵ For example, see Dennis S. Gouws's "George Eliot's Enthusiastic Bachelors" (2008), Sopher's "Gender and Sympathy in 'Adam Bede'" (2012), and MacDonald's "Healing Masculinity in Mid-Century Fiction" (2015).

³⁶ All references to the text come from the 1960 edition by E. P. Dutton.

eight-and-forty, a bachelor” (67). Although the brief mention that Irwine “would very likely [have] taken a comely wife” if he did not have the responsibility of his family may suggest that Irwine desired marriage, at least at one point, its quick dismissal in this passage and Irwine’s lack of attention towards the female characters in the novel suggest that Irwine is completely comfortable in his bachelorhood status and may even desire it. The narrator supports this reading, recounting that Irwine “laughingly, if any one alluded to [his bachelorhood], [would say] that he made it an excuse for many indulgences which a wife would never have allowed him” (66). Unlike the other married men in the novel, or those, like Adam, looking for marriage, Irwine, as the stereotypical nineteenth-century bachelor, enjoys the freedom that his bachelorhood gives him—the freedom to engage in pursuits like mentoring Arthur and reading the ancient classics instead of traditional religious tracts.

Massey is also a peripheral but important character in the novel known, both by characters and readers of the novel, for his misogynistic quips about women. While Irwine represents the nineteenth-century financially-induced bachelorhood, Massey’s bachelorhood is characterized by his homosociality and his disgust for women.³⁷ From our very first introduction to Massey, he is portrayed as the stereotypical crotchety bachelor that lives apart from society, concerned only with his own interests. Joshua Rann, the Hayslope parish clerk, highlights Massey’s selfishness while talking to Irwine: “Bartle Massey come from nobody knows where, wi’ his counter-singin’ and fine anthems, as puts everbody out but himself” (57). Describing Massey as a “man-centered man” and a “raging misogynist,” Monica Flegel explains that “Bartle

³⁷ Critics have also argued that the text suggests Massey’s bachelorhood and hatred of women comes from a failed love match in his past. However, the text remains vague about Massey’s background and any such reading is not sustained.

is someone who enjoys the companionship of men, the pride of paternity, and the pleasures of domesticity; he simply wishes to firmly exclude women from any of these experiences” (121). Massey lives alone in a house with his dog Vixen, surrounds himself with the men of the community, and teaches the night school for the men and boys of the village. He cooks and cleans for himself, with the help of a young man from the village, and he boasts to Adam that his “house is cleaner than any other house on the Common, though the half of ‘em swarm with women” (233). “By embracing a ‘female’ role in the home,” Flegel argues, “Bartle does not so much challenge the concept of separate spheres as rely on the connection of women with domesticity to prove their ultimate worthlessness” (121). “Invoking the power of men to work together in the home in ways marked by the traditionally masculine attributes of skill, efficiency, and rationality,” she continues, “Bartle creates a vision of domestic life that brings together homosociality and domesticity as ideals that complement, rather than oppose, each other” (122), a space reminiscent of Beauvais’s domesticated bachelor.

Even though Irwine and Massey are not part of the nuclear family unit, they provide the strongest model for kinship relations in the novel. As in the other works I discuss in this chapter, and in my larger project, conventional family forms and relationships are broken, dismissed, and undermined in *Adam Bede*, and there are no successful or supportive nuclear families in the novel. The Donnithornes, Arthur’s family, are largely missing from the narrative. Arthur’s parents are dead, and he is “raised” by his absent grandfather, the Squire, who also dies by the end of the novel. The Bede family, the nuclear family model in the novel, falls apart in the first few pages when the Bede patriarch dies in a drunken accident, and Adam is left to continue supporting the family. Adam’s mother is depicted as the stereotypical hysterical woman and rapidly declines after her husband’s death, relying on Dinah to come take care of her and the

household. Instead of finding support in his family, Adam is forced to turn to other members of the community, most notably Massey, for guidance.

The other prominent family form in the novel is the Poyser family; a kinship unit modeled on a more encompassing sense of family as it includes the Poyser's nuclear family, nieces, and servants. While the Poyser family is more successful and supportive than the Bede family, and depicted in a more positive light, as Sedgwick notes, the novel's trajectory "move[s] the novel's normative vision of family from the Poyser's[s] relatively integrated farm to the Bedes'[s] highly specified nuclear household" (*Between* 140). Moreover, the family is unable to guide and protect Hetty, the proud, vain, orphaned niece of Mr. Poyser. Instead, Hetty ends up engaging in a torrid affair with Arthur before becoming pregnant and killing her child.³⁸ Hetty's actions not only destroy the friendship between Arthur and Adam and result in her exile from the country, but they also undermine the conventional and idealized view of motherhood as domestic bliss and the relationship between mother and child in the nineteenth century.

Both Arthur and Adam are, for all intents and purposes, on their own in the novel and cannot rely on their families. Instead, it is their mentor relationships with the bachelors Irwine and Massey that sustain them and move them along the narrative's storyline. A clear example of this occurs when Adam goes to Stoniton to await Hetty's trial.³⁹ No one from his family goes

³⁸ Importantly, it is not just conventional kinship forms that are missing from the text. As Cleere argues, "affective parent-child relationship[s]" are continually "den[ied]" in the novel (79). These bonds between parent and child are part of the supportive framework of the nuclear family and of the domestic ideology that reigned supreme in the nineteenth century.

³⁹ For additional examples, see Arthur's decision to go to Irwine for advice and resolution after he kisses Hetty in the woods (136); Adam's discussion with Massey about the potential manager of the woods opening and Massey's honest reflection on Adam's faults to Adam, mainly Adam's pride (237); and Adam's sudden "impulse" to see Irwine for help and confidence before Adam sets off again to find Hetty after she leaves him to tell Arthur about their baby (387-388).

with him. However, after speaking with Irwine about Adam's mental state, Massey shuts up his school to follow Adam. There, Massey, reminiscent of Henry in *Frankenstein*, spends his time just being with Adam, making sure that he continues to eat and is taken care of, fully embracing the role of the domestic and caretaker. "I must see to your having a bit of the loaf, and some of that wine Mr. Irwine sent this morning" Massey beseeches Adam (410). Supported by Massey's care and his frank depiction of Hetty's trial and state of mind, Adam gains the confidence and resolution to attend the trial and stand in Hetty's corner (412-413). After Hetty is pronounced guilty and sentenced to death, Massey stays up with Adam all night offering him advice and comfort. "I shall sleep long enough, by-and-by, underground," Massey tells Adam, "Let me keep thee company in trouble while I can" (439). It is significant then that a novel concerned with the role of family suggests that the most supportive and successful kinship relation does not come from the nuclear family or the heterosexual family but from bachelors and their nonconformist views.

The bachelors are also important for the narrative's progression. For example, because Irwine represents the selfish and lazy nature of the bachelor, he lets Arthur get away with withholding his feelings about Hetty. "If there had been anything special on Arthur's mind in the previous conversation, it was clear he was not too inclined to enter into details," the narrator tells us, "and Mr. Irwine was too delicate to imply even a friendly curiosity" (170). While scholars, such as Mary Waldon, have attributed this silence to Irwine's religious failings, we can also read this disinclination as a result of Irwine's lazy nature. In this moment, it is precisely because of Irwine's bachelorhood that the narrative trajectory continues. Irwine is also positioned as a key disseminator of knowledge in the novel, especially in relation to Hetty's trial. Irwine is the first one in the community to find out that Hetty is in prison for murdering her child and the

“constable who arrested her” delivers the letter from the magistrate directly to Irwine, not to Hetty’s family (392). Irwine then tells the other characters: first Adam, encouraging him to go to Stoniton to support Hetty, then later the Poyser family, and finally Massey. Irwine even helps to settle Adam’s affairs while Adam is at Stoniton, explaining the situation to Adam’s employer and asking Massey to go support Adam (400-401). Significantly, Irwine is responsible for saving Hetty’s life as he leaves a letter for Arthur bluntly telling him about Hetty’s situation, in response to which Arthur ends up procuring a “hard-won release from death” for Hetty (426, 444).

The bachelor figure’s importance in *Adam Bede* is not just because he is a pillar of kinship for the community and the protagonists. The bachelor is important, perhaps more important, because of what he represents in the novel: the resistance to hegemonic discourses, such as religion, class and educational hierarchies, and gender norms and roles. Irwine displays many of the characteristics of the bachelor figure that push against nineteenth-century social norms. He does not work for the collective good of Victorian society-at-large or the Hayslope community but instead acknowledges that he is “lazy” and “always spending more than [he] can afford in bricks and mortar” (63). The narrator confirms the view that Irwine is not a productive member of society when it mentions Irwine’s lack of “lofty aims” and “theological enthusiasm” (68). “[I]f I were closely questioned,” the narrator continues, “I should be obliged to confess that he felt no serious alarms about the souls of his parishioner” (68). Our introduction to Irwine even illustrates Irwine’s lack of involvement in his parish community and his disregard for Church doctrine. Concerned with the visiting Methodists “[p]reaching on the Green” and the local Methodist Will Maskery’s potential subversive influences in the community, the parish clerk, Joshua Rann, asks Irwine for guidance. However, rather than get involved, Irwine advocates for letting things go and promotes tolerance and privacy instead. “[I]t wouldn’t become wise

people, like you and me, to be making a fuss about trifles,” Irwine tells Joshua, ““We must ‘live and let live,’ Joshua, in religion as well as in other things”” (59).

Irvine’s views on hegemonic discourses and institutions position him as outside normative Victorian society. Immediately after meeting with Joshua, Irvine meets with Arthur. Discussing the “queer, wizard-like stories” of *Lyrical Ballads* with Mrs. Irvine, the Reverend’s mother, Arthur mentions to Irvine that he received some “books that [Irvine] may like to see... pamphlets about Antinomianism and Evangelicalism” (65). Rather than be excited by the new reading, Irvine seems ambivalent, stating that he is not ““very fond of *isms* myself; but [he] may as well look at the pamphlets; they let one see what is going on”” (65). In specifically mentioning that he does not like “isms,” Irvine highlights his disregard and dislike for ideologies. And even though he does not outright refuse the works, he only pursues them to “see what is going on,” not to learn new concepts or practices.⁴⁰ Instead, as Waldron mentions, the “basis of Irvine’s moral discourse is noticeably grounded in classical literature rather than the Bible” (24). Irvine’s dislike of social norms and institutions is most visible in his warnings against marriage. Listening to Arthur comment on the friendly people of the neighborhood, Irvine warns him to be careful with whom he marries: ““don’t get a wife who will drain your purse and make you niggardly in spite of yourself”” (166). Although Irvine acknowledges that it might be possible to arm oneself against the threat of a bad match and wife, he quickly points out how such inoculations are “apt to be missing just at the moment [they are] most wanted” (167-168).

⁴⁰ We see Irvine’s resistance to dogma a few pages later when the narrator tells us Irvine “thought the custom of baptism more important than its doctrine” (68).

Irwine's passions lie in history, poetry, and ethics, specifically those from the Ancient Greeks. In introducing Irwine, the narrator tells us that Irwine "was fonder of church history than divinity" and Irwine's "mental palate...was rather pagan" (68). He "found a savouriness in a quotation from Sophocles or Theocritus that was quite absent from any text in Isaiah or Amos" and his "recollections of young enthusiasm and ambition were all associated with poetry and ethics that lay aloof from the Bible" (68-89). Indeed, Irwine's passion for ancient Greek texts is highlighted throughout the novel. Visiting Irwine at breakfast one morning, Arthur observes that the "first volume of Foulis Æschylus" is by Irwine's elbow, which Irwine acknowledges is a "favourite book" (164, 165). And during Irwine's discussion with Arthur about marriage, Irwine suggests that the classics "fortif[y]" a man, especially against "diseases" like love and marriage (167-168).⁴¹ In using the classics, and particularly the Ancient Greeks, as a defense against marriage, Irwine implies that marriage, and thus the nuclear family, are ailments against which one should protect oneself.

Massey similarly provides important social commentary, though he is often ignored in criticism of the novel. Unlike Irwine, when Massey is mentioned in scholarship, his bachelorhood is usually cited, even if just in passing. However, I maintain this is primarily due to Massey's inflammatory statements about women and less about his status as a queer character and his role in the novel. The very limited scholarship that does center on Massey tends to focus

⁴¹ See also Irwine's mention of "unloving love" from Æschylus in relation to Arthur's relationship with his grandfather (249). Interestingly, the references to Irwine's regard for Greek literature primarily occur when Arthur is present. While I am not arguing that Irwine's relationship with Arthur is one based in desire, Ancient Greek characters and figures were often used as coded language for homosexuality during the nineteenth century. Irwine's use of the ancient classics as a stronghold against heterosexual marriage could suggest queer desire or the desire for a homosocial kinship form over a heterosexual one. For more information on the connection between Ancient Greece and homosexuality, see Linda C. Dowling's *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (1994).

on his relationship with his female dog, Vixen, and questions if he can be redeemed at the end of the novel.⁴² Flegel claims that “[t]hrough [Vixen], we see a man who is, in fact, drawn to domestic and familial life, one who uses his dog to construct the version of heteronormative family his extreme misogyny prevents” (128). And Keridiana Chez argues that Vixen shows the novel’s audience how to read Massey’s humanity: “the vivid portrayal of a dog by extension humanizes the unsympathetic character to whom the dog is attached, even in the face of his offensiveness” (67).

Although Massey’s comments about women are undeniably misogynistic, they offer important critiques of nineteenth-century gender and social roles. As a bachelor, Massey exists outside the social order and is able to reflect on society in ways that those embedded in its normative institutions cannot or refuse to do so. His comments about women in the novel highlight the constructedness of gender and society’s double standard on idealized gender representations. For example, discussing the Poyser family with Adam, Massey remarks that there are “too many women in the house for [him]” and that he hates their “buzz[ing]” and “squeak[ing]” voices, for which Adam attempts to rebuke him, saying, “‘don’t be so hard on the creaturs God has made to be companions for us. A working-man ‘ud be badly off without a wife to see to th’ house and the victual, and make things clean and comfortable’” (232). Although Adam’s response here is meant as a way to shut down Massey’s sexist attack on women, Adam’s description similarly demeans women as it follows and supports the conventional, patriarchal view of women in Victorian society. According to Adam, women are not autonomous beings, or

⁴² See also Lana L. Dalley’s reading of Massey’s relationship with Vixen in “The Economics of ‘A bit o’ victual,’ Or Malthus and Mothers in *Adam Bede*” (2008).

even humans, but “creatures” that were “made to be companions” *for* men (232). Their only use, it seems, for men is to take care of the house, cook, and “make things clean and comfortable” (232). One might even argue that Adam’s view of women is more demeaning than Massey’s here because Massey is commenting on their voices, but Adam is commenting on their entire purpose in life.

Although usually seen as an attack against women, Massey’s response to Adam suggests we can also read it as highlighting the constructedness of gender roles and social norms:

“Nonsense! It’s the silliest lie a sensible man like you ever believed, to say a woman makes a house comfortable. It’s a story got up because the women are there and something must be found for ‘em to do. I tell you there isn’t a thing under the sun that needs to be done at all, but what a man can do better than a woman, unless it’s bearing children, and they do that in a poor make-shift way; it had better ha’ been left to the men—it had better ha’ been left to the men.” (232-233)

Massey’s notion that there is nothing women can do better than men, except maybe their “poor” attempts at childbirth, does suggest he sees men as superior to women. However, when we focus on the sexism and misogyny of Massey’s comments, we overlook the ways they critique nineteenth-century views of gender. Here, Massey pushes back against the idealized notion of the Angel in the Household, arguing that gender roles are constructed “because the women are there and something must be found for ‘em to do.” Massey calls out the constructedness of gender roles even further when he calls women’s roles in the home “the silliest lie.”

This is not Massey’s only observation of nineteenth-century conventions in the novel. Massey also comments on the way society faults or puts the blame and responsibility on women, especially lower-class women, for the actions of men. For example, during Massey’s meeting with Irwine to discuss Adam’s despair over Hetty’s arrest, Massey, as in the previous example, shows his dislike of women when he exclaims that he does not “value [Hetty] a rotten nut” but

only “for the harm or good that may come out of her to an honest man” (401). Read on its own, this characterization is another example of Massey’s misogyny. However, he then argues that Arthur should be condemned along with Hetty, an addition often excluded from critical discussions. ““For my own part,”” Massey vigorously maintains, ““I think the sooner such women are put out o’ the world the better; *and the men that help ‘em to do mischief had better go along with ‘em for that matter.* What good will you do by keeping such vermin alive, eating the victual that ‘ud feed rational beings?”” (402, emphasis mine). Here, again, Massey does not just criticize women but also the gendered social order, condemning Arthur for his part in what happened: “and the men that help ‘em to do mischief had better go along with ‘em for that matter.” Not only is Massey suggesting that men in general deserve to be punished for behaving in stereotypical male behavior but that they, not just women, are responsible for the moral health of society.

Massey’s commentary on social norms extends to education and class. Massey believes all men, regardless of class or status, have the ability to better themselves and should be educated. As Dinah Birch remarks, “Bartle’s night school is seen as an admirable institution” and “one of the very few educational institutions in Eliot’s fiction that is seen in positive terms” (9, 10). Resisting the contemporary view that rural, laboring men do not need, and should not receive, education, Massey welcomes anyone into his classroom that is willing to put in the work, albeit as long as they are men or boys.⁴³ “I’ll send no man away because he’s stupid,” Massey proclaims, “if Billy Taft, the idiot, wanted to learn anything, I’d not refuse to teach him.

⁴³ See Birch’s ““Good Teaching’: *Adam Bede* and Education” (2010) for more context about education and education reform during the years surrounding the publication of *Adam Bede* and when the novel is set.

But I'll not throw away good knowledge on people who think they can get it by the sixpenn'orth, and carry it away with 'em as they would an ounce of snuff" (229).⁴⁴ Massey does not just push against hierarchies in the classroom but also in society, promoting practical thinking over social positions and social customs. Asked to adjudicate an argument about the order in which the "large tenants" should sit around the table at Arthur's birthday dinner, Massey says "'Why, the broadest man [should be at the top]...and then he won't take up other folks' room; and the next broadest must sit at bottom'" (250, 252).

Massey is a problematic character even with all of his counterhegemonic views and social commentary. My goal here is not to redeem him or ignore his comments about women but to highlight his critiques of society and institutions, such as gender and education, that are subsumed in his worldview. The important question is why Massey, a bachelor, is the character to espouse these views in the novel. Why not Dinah? Or Hetty? Or Adam?

Although Irwine and Massey appear to be on opposite ends of the social spectrum—Irvine enjoys being with the community and interacting with women and men, and Massey enjoys staying in his homosocial bubble and vocally dislikes women—they both embody a queer bachelor position in the novel that challenges social norms and conventions. They promote thinking for oneself over hegemonic knowledges and dogma. They expose the construction of gender norms and nineteenth-century gender roles. They advocate for privacy and tolerance over assimilation. And they support selfishness and focusing on one's own desires instead of the social good. However, these characters are not just significant for their critiques of nineteenth-

⁴⁴ Massey's view on education is also important when we consider that Adam was a pupil under Massey and Arthur a student of a more formal, classical education benefiting his class and social status. As Adam tells Arthur, Massey's system helped to better Adam and his internal character (162). Arguably, Adam is also seen as the better character in the novel, with Arthur more negatively depicted against his class background and for his behavior with Hetty.

century society. Importantly, they both are responsible for guiding the community and the two protagonists, Arthur and Adam, respectively. Similar to the other bachelors I examine in this chapter, Irwine and Massey are integral to the narrative structure and provide the strongest and most supportive forms of kinship in the novel. In having these bachelors, and all of their queer associations, positioned as the pillars of the community and the best forms of kinship for the protagonists, *Adam Bede* promotes a new form of kinship that is founded on resisting norms. In *Dracula*, we similarly see the bachelors helping to disseminate information and guide the Crew of Light but, unlike *Adam Bede*, they also help to protect normative forms of kinship.

“Then don’t stay”’: Bachelors as Foundation(al) in *Dracula*

As a foreign, blood-sucking creature that feeds on both English men and women, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and the novel that bears his name (1897), have long been discussed in terms of gender and sexuality. Scholars have explored Lucy and Mina’s intimate relationship and their own individual relationships with gender roles and sexuality; Jonathan’s relationship with *Dracula* and his representation of masculinity; the use of Mina as a safe link for the homosocial, or homosexual, bonds among the Crew of Light; queer reproduction and reproductive technologies; and the vampire-as-queer-figure and its blurring of gender roles and sexual norms.⁴⁵ While gender and sexuality are certainly important themes in *Dracula*, discussions of

⁴⁵ For discussions of masculinity, see, for example, Dejan Kuzmanovic’s “Vampiric Seduction and Vicissitudes of Masculine Identity in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (2009), Valerie Pedlar’s “The Zoophagous Maniac: Madness and Degeneracy in *Dracula*” (2006), and Karen A. Winstead’s “Mrs. Harker and Dr. Van Helsing: *Dracula*, Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms, and the New Wo/Man” (2020). For discussions of the New Woman, gender, and the relationship between Mina and Lucy, see Carol Senf’s “‘*Dracula*’: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman” (1982), Jordan Kistler’s “Rethinking the New Woman in *Dracula*” (2018), and Winstead. See Jennifer Wicke’s “Vampiric Typewriting: *Dracula* and Its Media” (1992) for a discussion of the typewriter as a vehicle of reproduction. For discussions of sexuality and gender, see Christopher Craft’s “‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (1984), Marjorie Howes’s “The Mediation of the Feminine: Bisexuality, Homoerotic Desire, and Self-Expression in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (1988), Xavier Aldana Reyes’s “*Dracula* Queered” (2017), Schaffer’s “‘A Wilde Desire Took Me’: The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*” (1994), Nancy F. Rosenberg’s “Desire

them often obscure what McCrea argues is at the core of the novel: family and the marriage plot (“Heterosexual” 254). Not only does the narrative begin as a marriage plot—Jonathan is engaged to Mina—but it also ends as one with the birth of Jonathan and Mina’s son, Quincey. Following the marriage plot structure, “the uncertain lovers of its opening,” McCrea explains, are “now married, rich, and socially established” (“Heterosexual” 254). This leads McCrea to emphatically posit that “[f]amily and reproduction are central to many critical interpretations of *Dracula*” (“Heterosexual” 254).⁴⁶

Anita Levy and Nancy Armstrong similarly find that the depiction of family is a central concern in *Dracula*. Seeing fin-de-siècle novels as “part of the larger challenge to the perpetuity and continuity of the nucleated family posed by modernity at least since the Malthusian moment,” Levy argues that *Dracula* “challenge[s], if not destroy[s], values sacred to the bourgeoisie—heterosexuality, masculinity, whiteness, marriage, Englishness, and art” (130). Looking at the lack of strong nuclear family models in the novel, Levy reads the text as “the occasion for a new ‘telling’ of the family, the household, and their relationship to the world outside,” an “ideal family” based on a partnership between the New Woman and the “professional man” (160, 168). Armstrong similarly proposes that Victorian novels provide “alternative kinship practices” (10). However, Armstrong argues that these models end up

and Loathing in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*” (2000), and Halberstam’s *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995).

⁴⁶ While other scholars have discussed the role of family in the novel to some degree, often in relation to gender and sexuality, McCrea’s work goes the farthest in examining the way that family and the marriage plot are the foundation of *Dracula*, both in terms of theme and organizing structure. For other work on family, see Chez’s “‘You Can’t Trust Wolves No More Nor Women’: Canines, Women, and Deceptive Docility in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (2012), Winstead’s “Mrs. Harker and Dr. Van Helsing,” Kistler’s “Rethinking the New Woman in *Dracula*,” David Punter’s “*Dracula* and Taboo” (1999), and Elizabeth Signorotti’s “Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in ‘Carmilla’ and ‘Dracula’” (1996).

“dissolv[ing] gender differences and so produc[ing] monsters,” suggesting that “the job of the nineteenth-century gothic [is] to turn any formation that challenges the nuclear family into a form of degeneracy so hostile to modern selfhood as to negate emphatically its very being” (10). While Armstrong acknowledges that “the family still shapes the community” at the end of the novel, there seems to be hope for different models of kinship, as the family requires a “polyandrous community” to care for it and “an international community of experts to secure its reproductive capability” (11-12). Additionally, as Armstrong notes, it is only because of the Crew of Light and their communal effort to destroy Dracula that the nuclear family is able to survive. The band of men then has an important role in both protecting and producing the family unit, and social norms like gender roles that help to produce the family, and in conquering Dracula. They are at the center of the novel, the plot, and the family.⁴⁷

While the Crew’s importance in the novel is mentioned in criticism, its bachelor membership generally is not.⁴⁸ And this is where my discussion intervenes. The nuclear family form in the novel is only possible because of the support of bachelors. More specifically, as I will argue, this normative kinship formation is only attainable because of two particular, and underrated, bachelors: Renfield and Quincey Morris. Although commonly overlooked in criticism of the Crew of Light and often reduced to character types (e.g., the American cowboy) or one-dimensional characters, Quincey and Renfield are key figures in the novel. As I will

⁴⁷ A claim made even more apparent when we consider how many types of blood are running through Quincey Jr., in addition to his name. Tracing the exchanges of blood throughout the novel, Lucy has had blood transfusions from all of the men, except Jonathan, and Dracula has feasted on Lucy, and then Mina drank from Dracula before having Quincey.

⁴⁸ While Van Helsing is married, he does not have a relationship with his wife and considers her dead to him. Instead, he spends all of his time with the men of the novel.

show, throughout the work, these bachelors provide the foundation upon which the nuclear family is based, offer clues as to what is or will be happening, and are vital to stopping Dracula. Even though they are ignored by the group for the majority of the text, they, nonetheless, show readers their worth and the value and necessity of the bachelor in sustaining the heterosexual family structure.

Critical discussion of the Crew members as autonomous characters in their own right is limited compared to the numerous discussions of gender, sexuality, and technology in the novel. The scholarship on the group tends to focus primarily on their roles as professionals and experts and, of course, their relationships with Lucy and Mina.⁴⁹ Amongst the group of men, Jonathan, Seward, and Van Helsing, predictably, garner the most attention, while Arthur and Quincey are often ignored. Calling Quincey “the most mute, clumsy, self-denying, apologetic member of the group,” Schaffer argues that “Quincey is silent because he has no self to talk from, or to talk about. He is simply the living embodiment of a concept called ‘manly loyalty’” (“Homoerotic” 411). Perhaps the most sustained critical discussion of Quincey comes from Franco Moretti. Unlike Schaffer, Moretti finds Quincey a more developed character when he claims that “[t]he American, Morris, must die, because Morris is a vampire” (41).⁵⁰ Agreeing with Schaffer that Quincey “would be a totally superfluous character” if not for his movements in the text, Moretti

⁴⁹ See, for example, Nicholas Daly’s “Incorporated Bodies: *Dracula* and Professionalism” (2000), Eric Kwan-Wai Yu’s “Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (2006), Jasmine Yong Hall’s “Solicitors Soliciting: The Dangerous Circulation of Professionalism in *Dracula*” (1996), Sabine Lenore Müller’s “‘Sure we are all friends here!’ Bram Stoker’s Ideal of Friendship and Community in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Bio-Social Thought” (2018), and Kuzmanovic’s “Vampiric Seduction and Vicissitudes of Masculine Identity in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.” For one of the foundational works on *Dracula*, labor, and capitalism, see Franco Moretti’s “The Dialectic of Fear” (1983).

⁵⁰ In “‘If America Goes on Breeding Men Like That’: *Dracula*’s Quincey Morris Problematized” (2002), James R. Simmons develops Moretti’s reading of Quincey’s vampiric connections.

ultimately argues that it is Quincey's "mysterious connivance with the world of the vampires" that gives him substance (76). "So long as things go well for Dracula, Morris acts like an accomplice," Moretti explains, "As soon as there is a reversal of fortunes, he turns into his staunchest enemy," competing with Dracula and ultimately desiring "to replace him in the conquest of the Old World" (76). While Renfield is not considered part of the band of men, the criticism dedicated to him is similarly muted, with most mentions focusing on his connection to nineteenth-century discourses of degeneracy and his connection to Dracula.⁵¹ And yet, I contend, Renfield and Quincey are two of the most important characters in the novel not just for helping to combat Dracula but for protecting the nuclear family.

Although Quincey and Renfield do not get as much narrative space as the other characters, what descriptions we do get of them position them not just as unmarried men, but as bachelor figures. Renfield has many of the stereotypical attributes of the nineteenth-century bachelor. As with *Adam Bede*'s Massey and other nineteenth-century fictional bachelors, Renfield is surrounded by animals. However, he does have a non-traditional relationship with them, mainly the eating of animals according to a hierarchal food chain (69).⁵² He is fanatical about keeping records of his animals, frequently indulges in acts of mania, is emotional and hysterical, and is often described as paranoid. He can be violent but easily switches between acts of passion and passivity. Renfield's behaviors, especially his zealous recording and collecting of animals, match up almost directly with Beauvais's description of the bachelor as one who "can develop eccentricities, such as instances of paranoia, obsessive compulsive disorders, [and]

⁵¹ See, for example, Pedlar's "The Zoophagous Maniac."

⁵² All references to the text come from the 1997 Norton Critical Edition.

hoarding” and her historical examples of bachelors that “encouraged mice” and cultivated collections of things (8).

Although we do not get as much description of Quincey as we do of Renfield, what we do know aligns him with the nineteenth-century bachelor figure. Hailing from Texas, Quincey is a foreign adventurer who excessively spends his money during the Crew’s quest and enjoys homosocial environments.⁵³ Connected to the late nineteenth-century adventure genre, Quincey is associated with genres that focus on men, the relationships between men, and spaces in which traditional gender roles were often ignored or blurred as women were often absent and men had the opportunity, and at times were required, to take on more domestic roles.⁵⁴ The designation of Quincey as a “cowboy” reaffirms his characterization as a queer(ing) figure. Cowboys lived in and valued homosocial environments on the margins of society, resisted society’s requirement to get married and have children, and promoted their relationships with their partners over relationships with women (Packard 2-3). “In other words,” Chris Packard aptly states, “the cowboy is queer” (3).

⁵³ While a larger discussion of bachelors and nationality is outside the scope of this current chapter, it is also important to consider the national identities of both Renfield and Quincey and what their positions and success in the novel say about the relationships between the two countries and masculine ideals. While both are important bachelors in the novel and both die, Renfield, the ailing British lunatic, is dispatched earlier and more violently than Quincey, the heroic, masculine, American cowboy. Renfield is also unable to effectively communicate what is happening to the group in time for them to be successful. In contrast, Quincey’s interventions produce important and necessary changes, and Quincey himself is instrumental in killing Dracula. The characters may also reflect the late-nineteenth-century fears and hopes regarding the roles of Britain and America in the world and with each other. Both bachelors represent dying depictions of masculinity: the unproductive aristocrat that drains society’s resources and the rugged frontier man outside of civilized society. With both of these masculine types removed, the novel opens the way for a new masculinity to emerge at the turn of the century, the New Man represented by Jonathan. For more information on Stoker, America, and Quincey, see Senf’s “Bram Stoker’s Reflections on the American Character” (2016). See Winstead’s “Mrs. Harker and Dr. Van Helsing” and Kistler’s “Rethinking the New Woman in *Dracula*” for discussions of masculinity and the New Man.

⁵⁴ For more information on this particular bachelor type, see John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (1999) (175).

As bachelors, these characters exist both inside and outside of Victorian society and, as a result, gain access to knowledge and anticipate outcomes that the other single men cannot.⁵⁵ Throughout his time in the novel, Renfield provides vital clues about Dracula, but because he is a patient in Seward's asylum, he is considered an unreliable narrator and is often ignored. Seward even acknowledges Renfield's role, albeit too late to do anything, when he exclaims "[s]trange that it never struck me that the very next house might be the Count's hiding-place! Goodness knows that we had enough clues from the conduct of the patient Renfield!" (199). Renfield is the first one to alert the group that Dracula has moved into the house next to the asylum (96-08), and his behavior draws attention to the delivery of Dracula's fifty boxes of dirt, which are key to Dracula's survival (141-142).⁵⁶

Renfield's most important contributions are his repeated warnings that something will happen to Mina. However, the group, again, does not listen. "[W]hat are you doing here" he asks Mina during their introduction, to which she replies "My husband and I are staying on a visit with Dr. Seward" (205). "Then don't stay" he responds with quiet confidence, leaving no room for misinterpretation. Unfortunately, the group does not heed Renfield's advice. A few days later, Renfield again tries to warn the group that something is going to happen, which, as we

⁵⁵ The spaces in which these characters operate also reflect the space of the bachelor. Throughout the novel, the private and the public are constantly blurred with the public world taking root in the domestic. As Daly notes, "[s]ince vampirism is already within the home, the professional must follow it there...[t]he domestic merges with the institutional and the institutional merges with the domestic" (50-51). "The first is the Westenras' home, where the Count's attacks on Lucy necessitate...the turning of the home into a hospital," he continues, "Later in the novel, the novel's principal institution, Seward's asylum for the insane, becomes itself a home: Mina and the band of men all come to live in the institution" (Daly 51). Just as the bachelor exists both inside and outside of society, spaces in the novel reflect a melting of the private and public.

⁵⁶ While the group contributes this information to Mina's collation, Renfield actually attempted to let Seward know much earlier in the novel, even before Mina and the rest of the group had joined Seward and made the asylum their new home.

later find out, ends up being Mina's fall to Dracula. Renfield presents himself as the perfect picture of lucidity and sanity and asks Seward to release him. "I desire to go at once—here—now—this very hour—this very moment, if I may" he proclaims (216). Rebuffed, Renfield again implores Seward to allow his request, centering it "not on personal grounds, but for the sake of others" (216). Although Renfield is unable to give more background during this moment, based on what we find out from him and other characters later, Renfield is trying to warn the men that he is under Dracula's influence and that Dracula will use him to get to Mina. However, Seward refuses to heed Renfield's warning and refuses to release him. Defeated, Renfield leaves them with his final warning—that they will regret this moment.⁵⁷

Dracula does get to Mina through Renfield that very night. Renfield confirms what happened later in the novel when he recounts how Dracula came to him and used Renfield to get inside. "It was that night after you left me, when I implored you to let me go away," he states, placing the blame on Seward and the other men. After Dracula gains entrance to the asylum through Renfield, Dracula feeds on Mina to such an extent that Renfield thought Mina was in the room with them when Dracula visited him the next day (245). "He didn't even smell the same," Renfield remembers, "I thought that, somehow, Mrs. Harker had come in the room" (245).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Quincey also tries to persuade Seward to let Renfield go. "I believe that he had some serious purpose," Quincey tells Seward, "and if he had, it was pretty rough on him not to get a chance" (218). While Seward again refuses, he does admit in his explanation that Renfield is "so mixed up with the Count in an indexy kind of way" (219).

⁵⁸ Mina's own detailing of that night also supports Renfield's assertion. Admitting in her diary that she does not know how she fell asleep, she recalls the sounds of dogs barking, and a struggle below her, and seeing the mist creep into her bedroom before noticing two red eyes staring out from it (227). Mina's recounting is similar, again, to much of what Lucy experienced and told Mina.

After revealing to the band of men that Dracula has been feeding on Mina, and thus has tainted their most precious possession, Renfield dies, his function in the novel now over.⁵⁹

Although a trusted member of the band of men, Quincey occupies a similar position in the narrative to that of Renfield. At first glance, Quincey appears to be a seemingly minor and inconsequential character. He is often missing from the narrative's focus, does not have a narrative of his own, and, when he is present, is often used to bolster the team's morale with enthusiastic speeches and proclamations rather than having a substantive role in their activities. His purpose seems to derive from the end of the novel where he deals the mortal blow to Dracula before succumbing to his injuries.⁶⁰ However, similar to Renfield, Quincey has a crucial but subtle role in the novel as he tries to convince the characters what is happening, foreshadows what will happen, and protects the nuclear form.

Quincey is both a founding member of the Crew of Light and critical to the group's foundation. It is Quincey's invitation to the men to commiserate their rejected proposals and celebrate Arthur's successful one that initially brings the men together in the novel. Scholars, such as Schaffer, have read this moment as the novel "sanction[ing]" the homoerotic bonds between the men ("Homoerotic" 410) and illustrating the men's elevation of homosociality over Lucy and eventually Mina. While those readings are certainly present, they miss, and often shift our perspective of, the narrative function of Quincey and of the bachelor. He is the entire reason the band of men comes together in the novel. After creating the group, Quincey helps to sustain

⁵⁹ Although Renfield does not physically protect the nuclear family as Quincey does, Renfield also tries to safeguard the symbol of domesticity and kinship in the nineteenth century—the pure woman—and the woman at the center of the nuclear form in the novel.

⁶⁰ Even with this, many scholars see Quincey's purpose as undefined and his character as superfluous. However, it is precisely in this ambiguity, this fluidity, that Quincey embodies the bachelor.

them in moments of crisis and uncertainty, often being the first one to pledge his support and inspiring the others to follow. For example, after Mina asks the group to “promise [her], one and all...that, should the time come, [they] will kill [her],” Quincey is the first one to speak and commit to Mina’s request (287).⁶¹

After bringing the group together, Quincey remains *the* figure that binds them, from offering suggestions to make their plans more successful to keeping up the group’s morale. A clear example of this occurs during the discussion of how to break into Dracula’s house in Piccadilly.⁶² While the group thinks that it will be as easy as breaking into the house next to the asylum, Quincey quickly interrupts to suggest otherwise. ““Art, this is different,”” Quincey proclaims, ““we had night and a walled park to protect us. It will be a mighty different thing to commit burglary in Piccadilly, either by day or night”” (234). Quincey also reminds the group they should be more discreet with their transportation to and from the house. Based on Quincey’s interjections, the group revises their plan and does not get caught. After helping the group successfully break into Dracula’s house, Quincey also becomes responsible for a sudden plan of defense when Dracula discovers them hiding in his Piccadilly home.

⁶¹ The text suggests that Quincey is also the first, and only, character to understand what Mina is asking before she explicitly asks to be killed. ““Your lives are God’s, and you can give them back to Him; but what will you give to me?”” she asks them (287). ““She looked again questioningly,”” Seward records, before noting that ““Quincey seemed to understand”” (287). “[H]e nodded, and her face lit up”” Seward continues (287). As an outsider figure, Quincey is not blind to what Mina truly wants or overshadowed by his own patriarchal and sexual desires. Once again, his bachelorhood illuminates what is going on in a way that the other men cannot access.

⁶² Other examples include the various times Quincey runs after Dracula to see if he could ascertain where Dracula goes (248, 267); Quincey’s ability to smooth over conversations and be the voice of reason when Van Helsing first brings up the idea of opening Lucy’s casket and killing her again (182-183) and when they go to Lucy’s tomb (185); and when Quincey bribes the shipping official to give them information about the *Czarina Catherine*, Dracula’s ship (275).

Quincey offers important clues about Dracula's plans and predicts what will transpire in the narrative.⁶³ Quincey is the first character to openly suggest a vampire is at work in the novel. After giving Lucy her final blood transfusion, Quincey politely demands to talk with Seward about what is going on, which, importantly, helps to lay out the whole situation for the reader.⁶⁴ In his outline of what has happened, Quincey mentions how weak Arthur was, because of the transfusions, and offhandedly names the creature involved:

I have not seen anything pulled down so quick since I was on the Pampas and had a mare that I was fond of go to grass all in a night. One of those big bats that they call vampires had got at her in the night, and, what with his forge and the vein left open, there wasn't enough blood in her to let her stand up, and I had to put a bullet through her as she lay. (138)

Both Seward and Quincey treat Quincey's mention of Pampas and vampire bats as a nonchalant comment, instead focusing their conversation on Arthur. However, Quincey's brief comment provides us with a wealth of information about what is happening and what will happen. Lucy's blood is being sucked out by something; he names the creature—vampire; clues us into one of the forms the creature will frequently take—bat; and foreshadows Lucy's death.⁶⁵ While Seward's response implies he does not know what is going on, Van Helsing's prescription of

⁶³ Quincey is also instrumental in helping the band and Mina prepare for their journey abroad to kill Dracula. Quincey buys a traveler's typewriter for Mina which allows her to prepare a comprehensive outline of Dracula's movements as they are on the road and make a final plan of attack. Quincey also predicts what will happen on their quest in Transylvania by encouraging the group to bring guns to help protect themselves instead of relying on Van Helsing's armory of garlic and the Host. "I propose that we add Winchesters to our armament," Quincey tells the group, "I have a kind of belief in a Winchester when there is any trouble of that sort around" (282). Indeed, the guns do come in handy as they are the only weapon that convinces the gypsies to stop their attack.

⁶⁴ The recovery times of the men may also suggest Quincey's bachelor superiority in the novel. As Quincey notes in his discussion with Seward, Arthur is still recovering from the first transfusion, and, as we know from Seward's own writing, the transfusion took a toll on him. And yet, Quincey only needed a short time to convalesce before he was back up.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, this scene occurs at the same time as the dirt arriving at Dracula's Carfax house. If the group had picked up on the clues given by Renfield and if Van Helsing had shared his knowledge earlier, perhaps they could have destroyed Dracula's boxes sooner and stopped him from ever getting to Mina.

garlic and closing the windows hints that he may know. However, up until this point, no one has explicitly mentioned the cause. Instead, as Winstead notes, Van Helsing hoards his knowledge (321).⁶⁶ With this one brief remark, Quincey works to make Van Helsing's knowledge more transparent to everyone. Importantly, Quincey is only able to provide this connection because of his bachelorhood. As a bachelor, Quincey is able to travel because he is not bound by the constraints of a kinship unit. He then draws on his previous travel experiences to evaluate the situation.

Quincey even foreshadows his own death. Discussing their plan of attack, Quincey, once again, asks Van Helsing for details about how exactly they are planning on stopping Dracula. Van Helsing suggests that they wait until they “get the opportunity that [they] seek” to strike, “when none are near to see” and then they “shall open the box, and—and all will be well” (284-285). Whether Van Helsing wants to keep the details to himself or he just does not know exactly how and when to strike, he remains characteristically vague, and Quincey pushes back. “I shall not wait for any opportunity,” he enthusiastically declares, “When I see the box I shall open it and destroy the monster, though there were a thousand men looking on, and if I am to be wiped out for it the next moment!” (285). And this is exactly what occurs. Once they reach the cart, Quincey, and Jonathan, force their way to Dracula without thinking about “the levelled weapons or the flashing knives of the gypsies in front, or the howling of the wolves behind” (324). In the process, Quincey is mortally wounded by a knife and ends up dying almost immediately after Dracula is killed, significantly by Quincey's own knife.

⁶⁶ Calling Van Helsing's desire for secrecy “Draculean,” Winstead's sees Mina's desire to share knowledge as a “threa[t]” to Van Helsing's role in the novel and leadership (321). As a woman who must be protected by the men and society, Mina must tread carefully, but as a bachelor and a liminal figure, Quincey can reveal what is happening.

Quincey's role in killing Dracula is made even more significant because he is the one that ultimately deals the true death blow, not Jonathan. As Nicholas Daly notes in his discussion of the ending, "[w]hile Jonathan's decapitating of the monster is part of the protocol, it is clear enough from the earlier 'saving' of Lucy that it is the actual staking that is symbolically central" (40).⁶⁷ Through his actions, Quincey is fundamental in restoring the family form. Because of Quincey, Mina's purity is re-established, her link to Dracula is broken, and she is able to bear a child. Moreover, as scholars note, Quincey does not remain lost from the novel, but re-enters the text and the family as Mina and Jonathan's son, thus, forming the foundation for the next generation of the nuclear family.⁶⁸ Once again, the bachelor figure makes space for the nuclear (heterosexual) family structure in the novel.

In addition to their efforts to protect Mina and the band of men, Quincey and Renfield support the nuclear family form as they become companions for Arthur and Seward after their attempts at family are initially thwarted. We are first introduced to Renfield after Lucy rejects Seward's proposal. In his phonographic entry immediately following his proposal, Seward records his feelings about what happened.⁶⁹ "Since my rebuff of yesterday I have sort of empty

⁶⁷ As a result, according to Daly, Quincey must be removed from the novel because this same-gender staking, "symbolic penetration," "threaten[s] the homosocial arrangement of the text" (40). In focusing on sexuality and not narrative function, Daly's reading, supported by many scholars, misses the vital role of Quincey and the bachelor in the novel.

⁶⁸ This is not the only example of Quincey protecting domesticity and the nuclear form in the novel. He is the first one, and the only one noted in the text, to watch over Mina and Jonathan after the men discover Dracula feeding on the couple in their bedroom, producing a sense of safety for their previously violated bedroom. Arthur also asks Quincey to travel to Whitby to check on Lucy. Rather than go to Lucy himself, Arthur stays with his father. Unlike Arthur, Quincey is unattached and not part of a family in the novel, so he is able to check on Lucy and give her his vein, helping to sustain her. Without Quincey's blood, Lucy most certainly would have died and her impending marriage to Arthur would have been no more. Arthur's request to Quincey here is another reminder from the novel that bachelors are vital for the foundation of nuclear kinship forms and, perhaps, even the preferred kinship mode.

⁶⁹ There seems to be a mistake in the dating of this entry. The entry is dated as April 25th which means it occurred almost a month before Lucy's May 24th letter to Mina discussing the proposals. However, Seward's mention about

feeling,” he dictates, “As I knew that the only cure for this sort of thing was work, I went down amongst the patients. I picked out one [Renfield] who has afforded me a study of much interest” (61). As we see frequently throughout the text, and as I note in my discussion of *Dracula* and temporality in Chapter Three, Seward turns to his work, and in particular Renfield, as a distraction from what is going on around him. In doing so, Seward positions Renfield as a stand-in for Lucy, someone to help support him in his dejection, to cheer him up, and to keep him company and occupied until he can find his next love.⁷⁰ Quincey’s relationship with Arthur serves a similar purpose as Renfield’s role for Seward. After Lucy’s mortal death, Arthur returns to Ring with Quincey in tow, and Quincey helps Arthur heal from his grief. Receiving a letter from Arthur, Seward notes that Arthur sounds like he is “beginning to recover something of his old buoyancy” which he sees as a result of Quincey’s “bubbling well of good spirits” and influence (170). Quincey continues to be there for Arthur throughout the rest of the novel, frequently pairing off with him during the quest. Importantly, Renfield and Quincey are only able to support Seward and Arthur because they are unattached and have no other kinship responsibilities.

Bachelors are key figures in *Dracula*. They make up the Crew of Light that takes on Dracula and protects the homeland, and, without them, the group would not have a roadmap to Dracula’s plans. However, unlike the rest of the male characters, it is precisely because Renfield

his “rebuff of yesterday” and its placement immediately after Lucy’s letter suggests that the dating may have been a mistake on Stoker’s part (61). Even if the date is correct, the entry is placed after Lucy’s letter suggesting a connection.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, Quincey’s notes to Arthur and Seward that bring the initial group together are placed right after Renfield’s introduction into the novel. Although Quincey is (briefly) introduced earlier in the novel, the note is his first substantive act in the text. Thus, both Renfield and Quincey enter the novel and start working to sustain the nuclear family together.

and Quincey are outside of late Victorian society, as a lunatic and American cowboy respectively, that they are able to see what is happening with Dracula and can offer suggestions that help to keep the group safe. Quincey is able to make the connection between the vampire bats and Lucy's ailment and foresee how the band's actions will unfold because of his experience as a cowboy and his worldly travels. And Renfield's insanity gives him a different perspective on life and allows him to be controlled by Dracula which gives Renfield insight as to Dracula's plans. Significantly, as we saw in *Frankenstein*, bachelors are a vital part, if not *the* vital part, of the nuclear family structure in *Dracula*. Although *Dracula* begins and ends with the nuclear family, and spends much of its middle protecting those figures, such as Mina, that produce such families, the bachelor is the foundation upon which the family is created. Quincey is the one that brings them all together, and Quincey and Renfield attempt over and over to warn the group of men, protect Lucy and Mina, and provide clues as to what is going to happen. They work to make sure the group stays focused and on track and is successful. And Dracula is only able to be defeated because of them.

What I have hoped to show in this chapter is how embedded the queer figure of the bachelor is in nineteenth-century novels and just how important this figure was for both a novel's plot and its themes. In these novels, bachelors are crucial figures for the development of the plot and its characters, often are the link between domesticity and traditional forms of kinship and the protagonists, protect the nuclear family form, and challenge existing gender norms and social ideologies such as religion and class while being positioned as vital members of the community. While I have only focused on three novels here, this is a narrative pattern that we can see throughout the period and much work remains to be done on this queer kinship figure.

Compared to the themes of my previous two chapters, queer kinship is one of the more recognized subjects in the nineteenth century by nineteenth-century scholars. And yet, as my discussion of the bachelor shows, there is still opportunity for queer readings of kinship in this period, especially queer readings that focus on function and how the bachelor affects the novel and not sexuality or the bachelor's identity. Similarly, in my last chapter, I turn to what is arguably the most often-discussed subject in queer nineteenth-century scholarship, the site from which so many queer readings begin—queer identity—to show, again, how fruitful and still unexplored the nineteenth century is for queer scholarship and what queer theory can learn by returning to and lingering in this period.

what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?
 These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

...now and then the question would surge up in his mind, “Who am I? What am I? What was I?
 What shall I become?”

—Niels Hoyer, *Man into Woman*, American Edition

CHAPTER FIVE

RETURNINGS

I began this project by arguing against the progressive, developmental trajectory of the Queer Theory canon and calling instead for a return to the nineteenth century. Following the queer, recursive nature of my project, I end it with a return to the early nineteenth century. In choosing to end my project with a return instead of a traditional conclusion or a look to the future, I continue my project’s queer framework as I resist the heteronormative impulse to provide a progressive structure that moves toward closure and resolution and instead choose to linger in the nineteenth century. In doing so, I mirror some of the works discussed in this project, such as Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Alan Dale’s *A Marriage Below Zero* (1889), that end their narratives by returning their readers to the beginning of their stories.

As I have shown in my chapters on queer narratives and narrative structures, queer temporalities, and queer kinship, not only is the nineteenth century and its literature a very queer space, but it is also a productive site in which to engage with contemporary notions of queer theory. As with modernist novels, nineteenth-century texts resist heteroideological organizing logics and temporalities based on reproduction and growth, clear conclusions and hegemonic knowledges, and promote queer figures over the nuclear family. Moreover, as my discussions of

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) illustrate, there is no single characterization of queerness that encompasses these nineteenth-century texts. These novels, reminiscent of the nineteenth century itself, are queer on multiple levels, which necessitates continual returns and reassessments of what we think we know about them. It is only by lingering in this period and with these works that we can begin to parse out their different queer representations. Furthermore, in continuing to return to these novels in my project, I have shown the inherent queerness in these texts and in the nineteenth century. My discussion in this last chapter further emphasizes this period's queer nature as it highlights new readings of *Frankenstein* and shows how the novel and its characters serve as models and templates for more modernist and contemporary discussions.

I finish this project by returning to the beginning of the nineteenth century with Shelley's *Frankenstein* and to the queer topic most associated with the period—identity.¹ In ending with the concept of queer identity, I paradoxically end with a discussion which many people may have expected a queer project to start. Identity is not only melded to the concept of queer in general, but it is also one of the most recognized queer topics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this chapter, I broaden the conventional focus of queer identities in the nineteenth century by examining the construction of the trans subject in Shelley's *Frankenstein*.²

¹ Parts of this chapter, primarily the readings of Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Lili Elbe's narrative, are forthcoming in Michael Paradiso-Michau's edited *Creolizing Frankenstein*.

² While discussions of queer identities in the nineteenth century have historically been focused on sexual identity, the exploration of trans identities in the period has recently been brought to the forefront. See Ardel Haefele-Thomas's special 2018 issue of *Victorian Review* on "Trans Victorians."

Shelley's *Frankenstein*, particularly the creature, has long been associated with the trans subject and experience.³ From Herculine Barbin's memoir (1872) to Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), we can trace the centrality of Frankenstein's creature and the creature's monstrosity in trans narratives for over one hundred years.⁴ Because monsters undermine "the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed," the monster represents cultural fears of uncategorizability (Cohen 12). Specifically "[a]s a figure laden with negative affect," Anson Koch-Rein explains, "the monster offers transgender readers a way of addressing feelings of shame, gender dysphoria, and alienation from heteronormative gender and sexuality" and provides a "transgender speaking position in the face of the silencing gestures of transphobia" (44).⁵ While the creature's monstrosity and constructed body have been part of the cultural and literary imagination since its publication in 1818, it was not until Susan Stryker's "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage" (1994), based on a 1993 performance piece, that the link between trans experience and the novel was firmly established.⁶ Opening the essay by unequivocally stating

³ I am using "trans" here in its broadest, most applicable definition to refer to those persons whose identities do not agree with the gender given to them at birth. While I recognize that to use a single term such as "trans" to refer to such a broad and diverse group of people is problematic, I choose to do so in order to capture all of the different identities and embodiments associated with the term.

⁴ See Anson Koch-Rein's "*Trans-lating the Monster: Transgender Affect and *Frankenstein**" (2019) for a succinct overview of works that reference the narrative.

⁵ The monster has also been used in transphobic writings as a way to suggest the terrifying nature of trans bodies and the position of trans individuals outside of normative society.

⁶ As Stryker notes in her piece, she is not the first scholar to make the connection between the trans experience and *Frankenstein*. See Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) and Peter Brooks's "What Is a Monster? (According to *Frankenstein*)" (1993). See also Marjorie Garber's *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1992). However, Stryker's text is the most direct and influential in relating Shelley's creature to the trans experience. For a discussion of Stryker's influence, both on trans studies and the novel, see Jolene Zigarovich's "The Trans Legacy of Frankenstein" (2018), 260-272.

that the “transsexual body is an unnatural body,” one created by science and technology, Stryker sees “a deep affinity between [herself] as a transsexual woman and the monster” (238). “Like the monster,” Stryker continues, “I am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster’s as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist” (238). Stryker ends her piece by reclaiming the term “monster” for transgendered individuals. “I will say this as bluntly as I know how,” Stryker writes, “I am a transsexual and therefore I am a monster” (240).

Since Stryker, the connections between trans experiences and those of Frankenstein’s creature have primarily been conceptualized in terms of affect (e.g., rage and shame) and surgical and medical technologies.⁷ Here I revisit these connections, expanding how we view *Frankenstein* in relation to trans narratives and theories of embodiment by reading it together with one of the earliest trans narratives, *Man into Woman* (1931), the life story of Lili Elbe.⁸

⁷ See Koch-Rein “*Trans*-lating the Monster”; Harlan Weaver’s “Monster Trans: Diffracting Affect, Reading Rage” (2013), 287–306; and Sonny Nordmarken’s “Becoming Ever More Monstrous: Feeling Transgender In-Betweenness” (2013), 37-50.

⁸ Scholars have differing views on how to identify Lili and her narrative because the surgeries took place in the 1930s before contemporary terms were available and because much of the scientific and medical documentation regarding the surgeries and exams leading up to them is lost. For those that read the narrative as an early example of a trans narrative, see Sandy Stone’s “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” (1991), 341; Nerissa Gailey’s “Strange Bedfellows: Anachronisms, Identity Politics, and the Queer Case of Trans*” (2017), 1719; Eliza Steinbock’s “The Violence of the Cut: Transsexual Homeopathy and Cinematic Aesthetics” (2010); and Nerissa Gailey and AD Brown’s “Beyond Either/or: Reading Trans* Lesbian Identities” (2016), 66. While Nicholas Chare does not call it a trans narrative, Chare does “suggest that Wegener’s corpus is open to interpretation as embodying a trans* aesthetic” in “Landscape into Portrait: Reflections on Lili Elbe and Trans* Aesthetics” (2016), 348. For discussions from those that do not see Lili’s narrative or Lili herself as trans, see Kadji Amin’s “Glands, Eugenics, and Rejuvenation in *Man into Woman*: A Biopolitical Genealogy of Transsexuality” (2018), 589-605 and Sølve M. Holm’s “Current and Historical Notions of Sexed Embodiment and Transition in Relation to Lili Elvenes” (2020), 233-248. For a comprehensive discussion and overview of this question, see also Pamela L. Caughie and Sabine Meyer’s “Introduction” (2020), particularly pages 1-2, 4, 16-19.

In putting these two works into conversation with one another, I highlight the various thematic, syntactical, and structural ways in which Elbe's life narrative borrows from, builds on, and responds to Shelley's text and its characters. Such a comparison opens up our readings of both texts and enables us to see Shelley's *Frankenstein* as more than a metaphor for trans lives. It provides, this chapter argues, a narrative template for how trans experiences get told. This comparative approach also highlights the extent to which the creature and his experience have been incorporated into and transformed by cultural and literary rhetoric, becoming both a shorthand for those experiences that cannot be named and providing a familiar roadmap that allows readers and audiences to understand the unfamiliar. First incorporated by Elbe's narrative, this framework becomes disseminated throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In using *Frankenstein* as a model from which to tell Lili's life story, *Man into Woman* affirms the significance of the nineteenth century and its literature for queer and trans theories and subjects. And it shows the necessity for scholars and queer theory to return to the period not just to see what new readings they can discover, but to understand the genesis of much of what queer scholars have come to associate with the twentieth century.

Since Lili Elbe's life narrative is not widely known, especially in its various editions, a summary and some background on the narrative are necessary. In March 1930, Danish artist Einar Wegener underwent a series of surgeries to transition to a new identity as Lili Elbe. Her life story, *Fra Mand til Kvinde: Lili Elbes Bekendelser* (From Man to Woman: Lili Elbe's Confessions), first published in Copenhagen in 1931, is the first full-length life narrative of a person who "undergoe[s] what was then called genital transformation surgery" (Caughie and Meyer 1). Although the narrative is constructed in an autobiographical manner, it was, in reality, a collaborative effort among Lili's friends, family, and journalists and was based on a

combination of personal knowledge and other materials that feature in the texts: diaries, letters, and photographs. Ernst Harthern (who also went by Niels Hoyer, the name used in the narrative), a German translator and journalist, primarily drafted the work and finished the typescript (*Lili Elbe Buch*) a few months after Lili's death in September 1931. This typescript was used as the template for the first published edition of Lili's narrative, the Danish edition entitled *Fra Mand til Kvinde: Lili Elbes Bekendelser* in 1931. The German edition, *Ein Mensch wechselt sein Geschlecht* (A Person Changes Sex), returned to the original transcript and was published in 1932, and two English-language editions, a translation from the German edition, were published in Britain and the United States in 1933 as *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex. The true story of the miraculous transformation of the Danish painter Einar Wegener (Andreas Sparre)*.⁹

According to the narrative, Lili first comes into being when Andreas (the fictionalized name for Einar) helps his wife Grete (the fictionalized name for Gerda) finish a painting of a famous dancer and actress in Copenhagen, Anna Larsen.¹⁰ Anna was unable to make her appointment with Grete and asked if Andreas could take her place as his ““legs and feet are as pretty as [hers]”” (A1 63). After some pleading from Grete, Andreas acquiesces, and Lili comes

⁹ I will be referencing different editions of Lili's narrative in this chapter using abbreviations. “A1” refers to the American edition, “B1” refers to the British edition, “D1-TR” refers to the translation of the Danish edition, and “TS-TR” refers to the translation of the German typescript. The translations of the Danish edition and the German typescript were created for the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive* and can be viewed, along with the other versions and contextual archival materials (e.g., letters, periodicals), on the digital archive at <http://www.lilielbe.org/narrative/editions.html>. For more information on the construction of Lili's text, the differences between editions, and its publication history, see Caughie and Meyer's “Introduction,” the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive* (<http://www.lilielbe.org>), and Meyer's “*Wie Lili zu einem richtigen Mädchen wurde*: Lili Elbe: Zur Konstruktion von Geschlecht und Identität zwischen Medialisierung, Regulierung und Subjektivierung” (“How Lili Became a Real Girl:” Lili Elbe: On the Construction of Gender and Identity between Medialization, Regulation, and Subjectification) (2015).

¹⁰ For more about the historical individuals referenced and involved in this narrative, see the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive* (www.lilielbe.org) and Caughie and Meyer's “Introduction.”

into existence. From this moment on, Andreas would dress up as Lili for Grete and for their friends, both in the privacy of their home and in public. Lili soon had her own acquaintances and her own temperament; she became a “perfectly independent person” with a “separate personality” (A1 68, 66). As Lili becomes more prominent in their lives, Andreas becomes more feminine in appearance and in behavior, and his health is negatively affected (A1 92). Andreas and Grete visit various doctors to find a diagnosis and a potential cure, but they are unsatisfied with the medical diagnoses that they receive. Physicians categorized him variously as “neurotic” (A1 vi), a “homosexual” (A1 vi), completely healthy (A1 18), slightly off (A1 19), and insane (A1 19). Most were unable to offer medical solutions, though one doctor subjected Andreas to x-ray treatments, which almost killed him. With Lili further taking over their shared body and all potential medical solutions seemingly exhausted with no results or promising prognoses, Andreas becomes even more desolate and promises himself that if he could not find a doctor to help him, he would commit suicide.

However, during dinner with friends in February 1930, Andreas finally receives a glimmer of hope. At this dinner, Elena Rossini tells Andreas and Grete about a physician friend of theirs from Dresden, Professor Werner Kreutz (“the Professor”), who might be able to help him. Andreas goes to see Professor Kreutz, and the Professor not only tells Andreas he knows what is ailing him, but that the Professor can help him. Andreas then undergoes several operations. First, Andreas has an orchidectomy in Berlin in order to enter the Women’s Clinic in Dresden where the Professor will operate on Andreas. At the Women’s Clinic, Andreas experiences a penectomy and is given healthy ovarian tissue. According to the narrative, it is the ovarian tissue that firmly establishes the transition from Andreas to Lili because at that time the sex glands determined one’s gender. Lili then undergoes another unnamed surgery before

leaving the Women's Clinic. Months later, after receiving a marriage proposal from an old friend, Lili returns for a fourth operation to make her capable of bearing children, because Lili so wants to be a mother. However, while she survives the operation, she dies from complications following the surgery.¹¹

Lili's narrative has inspired many trans individuals who came after her, "from Christine Jorgensen in the 1950s to Jan Morris in the 1970s to Reneé Richards in the 1980s to Juliet Jacques in the early 2000s" (Caughie and Meyer 10). As one of the first full-length narratives of its kind, Lili's life story, Tim Armstrong proclaims, has "served as an anchor" for many of these memoirs and autobiographies as well (*Modernism* 165). "As a literary kind," Nerissa Gailey argues, "Elbe has been not only prototypical but archetypal, in spite of the discrepancies and disconnects in the narrative ascribed to her" (1721). And yet, as one of the earliest full-length works to depict the experience of a surgical change in one's biological sex, there were no "adequate models" for Lili and her collaborators from which to work, though, importantly for my argument here, scholars such as Armstrong and Kadji Amin have suggested affinities between Lili's narrative and nineteenth-century fin-de-siècle works, such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and Robert Lewis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).¹² In addition to these, I propose that we can find even

¹¹ It is important to note that although contemporary trans theories and practice would require I use Lili instead of Einar/Andreas throughout, both Andreas and Lili in the narrative and Lili in her personal correspondence were adamant that they were separate, "two beings" in one body as the narrative repeats. Lili even directly addresses the use of Andreas in the narrative over the first person "I," exclaiming to her friend in a letter at the end of the narrative, "But, my dear friend, what other form of narrative could I have chosen? I could not relate the story of Andreas's life in the first person" (A1 283). In this chapter then I retain the narrative's logic of keeping Andreas and Lili separate and will also be using the fictionalized names of historical figures found in the narratives.

¹² See, Armstrong's *Modernism*, 169-173, 176; Amin's "Glands," 596; and Caughie and Meyer's "Introduction," 41.

more substantial structural, thematic, and linguistic connections with an earlier work, Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

Produced and published in the early 1930s, Lili's narrative was being constructed only two decades after Shelley's *Frankenstein* was translated into German, the language of the typescript for *Man into Woman*. However, even before this translation, the story of Frankenstein was already disseminated throughout European and Trans-Atlantic societies and cultures. In addition to the German translations of *Frankenstein* in 1910 and 1912, there were also two French editions in 1821 and 1922 (both Lili and Gerda spoke French and lived in Paris for nearly two decades), and numerous printings in London and the United States.¹³ By 1826, there were countless stage adaptations of the story in England and six productions in French.¹⁴ According to Radu Florescu, "[a]fter 1826, there was hardly a season in London, Edinburg, Paris, Vienna, New York, in English provincial theatres or at the universities, where some melodramatic or burlesque adaptation of *Frankenstein* was not performed either by professional or amateur groups" (166). The first film adaptations were produced in the United States in 1910 and 1915, and there was an Italian production in 1920, a French production in 1932, and the famous British-American production in 1931, James Whale's iconic *Frankenstein*. The prevalence of Shelley's story throughout English and European societies suggests, then, that Lili and her collaborators, especially the primary editor Ernst Harthern, would not only have known about the

¹³ References for the German editions can be found in Donald Glut's *The Frankenstein Catalog* (1984), 12. As Glut notes, the German translations of the novel are from the 1831 edition (11). For the French editions, see Glut (11) and "Editions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," from *The Pennsylvania Electronic Edition of Frankenstein*, edited by Stuart Curran.

¹⁴ For information about dramatic and film productions, see Glut's *The Frankenstein Catalog* and Steven Earl Forry's "Dramatizations of *Frankenstein*, 1821-1986: A Comprehensive List" (1987), 63-79.

narrative and the creature's story but would have had access to it. Although there is no way of confirming such familiarity, the strong resemblances between the two works argue for it.

The clearest examples of the thematic, structural, and syntactical similarities between the two texts occur in relation to the births of their subjects. Although both narratives encompass the act of physical creation that brings their subjects into being, there is a noticeable lack of discussion concerning the creation scenes and the subjects' bodies and identities within the texts. Though *Frankenstein* is ostensibly a narrative about the animation of a dead being, the scientific details surrounding Victor Frankenstein's actual experiment are quite sparse. "It was on a dreary night of November" Frankenstein recounts to Walton, that "I beheld the accomplishment of my toils" (Shelley 34).¹⁵ Although Frankenstein does let slip that he created the being with human and animal materials from "charnel houses," "dissecting room[s]," and "slaughter-house[s]," we receive no tangible information on *how* exactly he animated the creature (Shelley 32). Frankenstein merely "collected the instruments of life around [him], that [he] might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing" (Shelley 34). While Walton does try to find out more information at various points in the narrative, he is repeatedly rebuffed.¹⁶ Shortly before Frankenstein is about to tell Walton about the act, he stops. "I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes express, my friend, that you expect to be informed of the secret with which I am acquainted," Frankenstein says to Walton, but "that cannot be" (Shelley 31).

¹⁵ All references to the text are taken from the 1818 edition, published in the 1996 Norton Critical edition.

¹⁶ Frankenstein's refusal to impart his scientific knowledge occurs both before and after the creation as well. See, for example, Frankenstein's advice shortly after he meets Walton (Shelley 17) and in Walton's letter to his sister after Frankenstein finishes his tale (Shelley 146).

Lili's narrative, it seems, takes Frankenstein's injunction to Walton to heart, as it similarly omits crucial medical and surgical details as well as elides providing a concrete identity for Andreas and Lili.¹⁷ "Well, Professor, what am I? . . . What . . . ?," Andreas asks Professor Kreutz after Andreas's initial medical examination (A1 25). "Come to me in Germany," the Professor responds, "I hope I shall be able to give you a new life and a new youth" (A1 25). Here readers do not gain any concrete scientific and medical information about Andreas's body and what the Professor has just observed. Instead, the narrative avoids providing details in these moments and simply refers vaguely to giving Andreas "new and strong ovaries" (A1 25). This is a pattern repeated throughout Lili's narrative. For example, shortly before Lili receives her new ovaries, she asks the Matron, the head nurse at the Women's Clinic, "why are really healthy ovaries removed from a woman?" (A1 172). In response, the Matron glosses over the explanation: "But, Miss Lili...it would take too long to explain this to you, especially as you do not possess the necessary anatomical knowledge to understand it. But be easy in your mind, the Professor knows what he is doing. Leave everything to him" (A1 172).¹⁸

Lili is not the only one who does not receive information; her friends and family also are uninformed. In a letter to their friend Claude after the first operation, Grete writes about what she knows:

¹⁷ Although not as explicit, Hoyer plays the role of Walton in Lili's narrative as he repeatedly encourages her to provide details about her and Andreas's medical experiences. Included at the end of the English and German editions is an excerpt from a letter to Hoyer where Lili, we believe, responds to one of his pleas. "You say that the people who read my book will want to know something about the nature and progress of the operations," Lili writes (A1 283). However, rather than provide these details, Lili, similar to Frankenstein, abstains and instead includes a series of questions about what the audience would want to know before ending with "Oh, dear friend, more than this I cannot write. I can discuss all this with you, as I proved in Copenhagen. You know full well how I have striven in order to find the simplest and smoothest language for my 'Confessions'" (A1 284).

¹⁸ See also Lili's interaction with the Professor in her letter to Grete in the American edition (202).

[Andreas's] germ glands—oh, mystic words—have been removed...The doctors talked about hormones; I behaved as if I knew what they meant. Now I have looked up this word in the dictionary...But I am no wiser than I was before. Must one equip oneself, then, with wisdom and knowledge in order to understand a miracle? I accept the miracle like a credulous person. (A1 134)

Rather than treat Lili's operations as a scientific case history, the narrative characterizes them as "miracles," which then positions Lili as an extraordinary being, a phenomenon, similar to Frankenstein's creature. The clearest information that readers receive about the operations occurs in the Introduction to the English-language editions.¹⁹ There, Norman Haire, a twentieth-century British sexologist, outlines the medical operations:

The first one was castration. His testicles were removed. A few months later he went to Dresden, where his penis was also removed, his abdomen was opened, and the presence of rudimentary ovaries was established, and at the same time ovarian tissue from a healthy young woman of twenty-six was transplanted into him. A little later he underwent another operation, the nature of which is not explained, though it had something to do with the insertion of a canula. (A1 vii)

It was after this operation that Lili died, although documents provide various causes for her death.

The lack of medical detail in Lili's narrative has been highlighted by critics. Armstrong sees the narrative as "press[ing] towards, but never reach[ing], an account of complete physical transformation" ("Magic" 250). And Gailey finds the lack of medical and anatomical details as a way to avoid the obscenity charges that Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) received shortly before the editions were published (1717-1718).²⁰ Reading Lili's narrative from a

¹⁹ Lili also provides some information about the medical procedures in letters attributed to her that appear at the end of the American edition (284). In her description, she also uses the word "creature" to describe the liminal identity and body produced by these operations: "'Shall I relate that a creature who was not yet I, but a castrated man, a being who was neither man nor woman, entered the Women's Clinic in the spring of last year?'" (A1 284).

²⁰ Gailey's claim is supported by the letter from N. Templeton Macan, a publisher at *Jonathan Cape*, the publishing company of *The Well of Loneliness*, declining to publish *Man into Woman*. The letter can be viewed, along with

religious context, Meyer points out that while the narrative deliberately withholds surgical information about the operations, readers do “lear[n] much about how Lili responds to the treatments and how she ultimately feels at home in Dresden and wishes to remain there” (“Divine” 70). Meyer sees the lack of “medical information” as a choice to “give more space to a less technical narrative of Lili’s transformation” (“Divine” 70). Meyer’s reading of Lili’s narrative corresponds with Elizabeth Freeman’s reading of the creature in *Frankenstein* as foreshadowing Michel Foucault’s discussion of gender and sexuality as historically and culturally contingent. Freeman argues:

Frankenstein’s monster is a body that contains a history of bodies and of bodiliness and thus figures a gender and a sexuality that themselves write a history of genders and sexualities. After Foucault, the monster suggests, we are all Frankensteinian monsters: or, after *Frankenstein*, the Foucauldian body emerges. (*Time* 103)

For Freeman, the creature is an embodied example of the Foucauldian idea that bodies and identities are socially and historically created rather than biologically innate. This same view is emphasized in Lili’s narrative with the focus on Lili’s psychology, social surroundings, and modernist cultural context rather than medical details. In this way, Lili is an extension of what we see in *Frankenstein*.

By withholding the scientific and technical details in these creation scenes, both narratives shift the reader’s focus from the physical creation of the subjects’ bodies to their social and psychological construction, thereby showing an early, desperate need for identity categories and for acceptance by friends and family. In both narratives, the subjects are depicted as being the first of their kind, which means that they have no models to follow and the other characters in

the narratives have no models on how to treat and categorize them.²¹ “I was not even of the same nature as man,” the creature protests to Frankenstein, “When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?” (Shelley 80). Although Lili’s narrative does not use the word “monster,” we find similar descriptions of Lili as an outsider, as a “phenomenon” (A1 152, 263, 277). In the Foreword to the American edition, Niels Hoyer describes Lili as a “person whose earthly course assumed the shape of an unparalleled and incredible tragedy of fate” and “a person whose afflictions were outside the range of our ordinary ideas” (A1 xiii). In an unpublished Foreword (“Vorwort”), Lili discusses her life after her transition, noting that “[i]t was a difficult year, because within a society that is only accustomed to the normal, conventional and everyday things I am the only being existing outside of any law, meaning not having previously been taken into consideration by any lawmakers” (Elbe 11).²² And while Lili considers the story of her life a “wonderful, strange, fairytale” and periodical reports have called the procedures “a miracle,” she herself is always considered “a degenerate and sad creature” (Elbe “Vorwort” 1, 2). Like the creature in *Frankenstein*, Lili stands apart from society, as something undefined and undefinable.

Both subjects directly confront their unique positions after their procedures and struggle to find the language with which to describe themselves and their place in society. Frankenstein’s creature is not able to come to terms with his birth and what that means for him as a creation

²¹ While the narrative implies that Andreas will undergo a surgery that has never been done before, in their “Introduction,” Caughie and Meyer note that “similar operations had been performed at Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexual Science and other hospitals” before Andreas and Lili underwent their operations (7, fn. 43).

²² According to the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive*, while the “foreword is attributed to Lili Elbe...since she was so ill at the time the manuscript was being prepared, we suspect Ernst Harthern may be the author.” The Foreword was translated for the *Lili Elbe Digital Archive* and can be viewed on the digital archive at <http://lilielbe.org/context/foreword.html>.

until he observes the DeLaceys and learns to speak and read. Finding a collection of books on the ground during his search for supplies, the creature takes them back with him to explore. “As I read,” the creature tells Frankenstein, “I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener” (Shelley 86). “My person was hideous, and my stature gigantic,” the creature continues, “what did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them” (Shelley 86). With no one to talk to and no history (familial or social) to call on, Frankenstein’s creature is at a loss as to his identity and his place in the world.

Although Lili’s construction was not as unexpected or involuntary as the creature’s, and was in fact desired, we find language in her narrative that is hauntingly familiar, both in wording and in syntax, to that of the creature’s. Lying in bed after his first operation, during which he was medically castrated, “now and then the question would surge up in [Andreas’s] mind, ‘Who am I? What am I? What was I? What shall I become?’” (A1 130). That Andreas’s questions at this moment call back to the creature’s questions after his birth should come as no surprise. The creature’s feelings of grief, loss, and confusion, and his inability to be accepted and known as a defined subject are deeply recognizable in culture and literature. Andreas cannot make his experience legible and understandable on its own, so he grabs on to what is available in cultural discourse (A1 27). Andreas, mirroring the creature, also turns to books to try to figure out his identity and his space in society (A1 100). He reads works on sexology (D1-TR 58) and “sexual problems” (A1 100). However, he does not see himself represented: “I soon realised that nothing about ordinary men and women could apply to my condition” (D1-TR 58).

Not only do the questions in Lili's narrative echo very closely the ones asked by the creature, but the sentiment behind them and their location in each narrative are similar as well. Both moments occur after the subject's operation (in the creature's case, the retelling of the operation), and in both narratives, the subjects are beginning to realize that they are the same but different from those around them. While composed of human body parts and being able to think logically and speak eloquently, elements we may think of when defining what it means to be a human subject, the creature is also unrecognizable because of these elements. He has too many body parts from too many different sources which highlight his body's artificial constructedness rather than naturalness. Andreas similarly exists in this murky area. In a letter to her German friend in the narrative, Lili writes that during this time, Andreas was "a being who was neither man nor woman" but instead "a creature" (A1 284). Without male sex organs, Andreas is not considered a man. However, because Andreas has not yet received new ovarian tissue, Andreas cannot be considered a woman either.²³ The other characters in Lili's narrative also find it hard to categorize this body. In her letter to their friend Claude after this first operation, Grete comments that "[e]verybody here, the doctors, the nurses, our friends...do not rightly know whether they ought to address this being as a man or a woman" (A1 135).

This in-betweenness of the subject is also visible in Lili's narrative in a terrifying dream that occurs in the German typescript and the Danish edition after Lili receives the healthy ovarian tissue and thus is considered, by Lili, to finally be a real girl (TS-TR and D1-TR). It is a day that Lili calls her "actual birth" (TS-TR 150). The dream is similar to the one that

²³ Andreas's liminal status is also highlighted before this initial operation. Because Andreas's previous x-ray treatment "may have destroyed [his] organs—male as well as female," Professor Kreutz tells Andreas at the beginning of the narrative that Andreas "could hardly be regarded as a living creature" (A1 30).

Frankenstein has after he creates the monster, in that it happens after Lili is fully brought into being. In Lili's dream, a "terrible creature, half bear half human" enters her room with a severed woman's head bleeding inside a newspaper that the monster wants to "put...on [Lili] instead of [her] own" (TS-TR 152). Lili fights back with a needle she finds in the monster's pocket, and the monster responds by exposing and ripping open her new scars before "fall[ing]" and bleeding all over her (TS-TR 153). Reminiscent of the dream in *Frankenstein* in its Gothic tones and in its position after a surgery, the monster's actions—laying on Lili and bleeding on and with her—highlight the constructedness of Lili's body and her identity and illuminates a parallel between the two characters. This scene suggests that Lili herself is also a monstrous hybrid and that perhaps Lili and the monster are the same.

One option that the narratives present to help their subjects establish their identities is to be accepted by those around them. As readers of *Frankenstein* know, Victor abandons his creature immediately after the experiment is completed. After successfully animating the dead material that dreary night in November, Frankenstein is terrified to see the creature whom he constructed come alive. Consumed with "breathless horror and disgust," Frankenstein rushes out of the room, leaving the newly-animated being to fend for itself (Shelley 34). Disoriented, the creature wanders into the forest and falls asleep from exhaustion. Awaking, the creature "felt cold also, and half-frightened as it were instinctively, finding [himself] so desolate" (Shelley 68). "I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch," he continues, "I knew, and could distinguish nothing; but, feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept" (Shelley 68).

Alone and miserable, the creature stays on the outskirts of European society. However, it is not until he locates the DeLaceys and finds the books that he realizes the extent to which he is isolated. "And what was I?," he questions, "Of my creation and creator I was absolutely

ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friend, no kind of property” (Shelley 80). Instead, he was “endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome” (Shelley 80). “But where were my friends and relations?,” he continues asking later, “No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses...I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed my intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans” (Shelley 81). Created on an amateur scientist’s table and then immediately abandoned, the creature is essentially brought into existence without a familial lineage, i.e., a family name to bestow upon him an identity and a way to enter society. The creature is not provided with any of the requirements for societal recognition: no legible body, no money, no property, no partner or children, and no genealogy.

While the creature does attempt to socialize and integrate himself into society, he is repeatedly rebuffed because of his outward form and appearance, most significantly by the DeLacey family to whom he had become particularly attached. After realizing that his birth and his existence make him an outsider and that he has no other ways through which to enter and be accepted by society, the creature musters up the courage to introduce himself to the DeLaceys. “The more I saw of them, the greater became my desire to claim their protection and kindness,” the creature explains, “my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures” (Shelley 89). If everything goes according to the creature’s plan, the family will accept him and thus “protect” him by giving him a place in society through their relationship with him. In “knowing” and “loving” the creature, the DeLacey family will acknowledge him as legible.

However, the creature’s strategy backfires and all ties that the creature has with human society are severed. To the creature, his only recourse is to beseech Frankenstein to make him a female companion, one equally deformed and monstrous, with whom the creature can live out

his days cut off from society. “Shall each man,” cries the creature after Frankenstein aborts the companion, “find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone? I had feelings of affection, and they were requited by detestation and scorn” (Shelley 116). In desiring a female companion, the creature tries to recreate the same society and social values that refuse him entry. In doing so, the creature would be able to find some sense of relational identity as he would know which role to perform. However, the language that the creature uses in his pleas suggests that even if a companion was successfully created, he would still be without an identity and thus outside society. In stating that “each man” and “each beast” is able to have a mate but he shall “be alone,” the creature feels himself positioned outside of these two categories, neither human nor animal. This abjection further highlights his outsider status and the lack of terms or categories available to the creature. The creature’s use of “companion” throughout the narrative also indicates something similar. Because the creature does not have the necessary identity categories to define himself, he cannot define his mate and thus must use a neutral term such as companion. Moreover, as readers of the story know, the creature never receives his companion and, with Frankenstein’s death, the creature’s only relationship with someone outside of himself is severed leaving the creature alone, unintelligible to himself and to society, and filled with despair. As a result, he, like Andreas at the beginning of Lili’s narrative, turns to suicide.

Although Lili was already accepted into society and had her own circle of family and friends prior to Andreas’s physical transformation into Lili, we still find themes and concerns reminiscent of the creature’s during and after the surgeries. Similar to the creature, Lili sees herself as “a newborn babe” without a past and without a family (A1 185). “I know I have had neither father nor mother,” she proclaims, as she was born not “through a mother’s travail, but fully conscious through her own pangs” (A1 242, 270). However, Lili’s main concern after her

birth is the same concern the creature voices and the people in *Frankenstein* demonstrate—concern over her appearance and the fear of being alone. Welcoming Lili to the Women’s Clinic, the Professor tells her there are no beds immediately available, so she will need to stay at a local hotel. At this, Lili becomes frantic. Describing the scene in her diary, Grete comments that “Lili is completely desperate. She believes the Professor sees in her nothing but a disguised man, namely Andreas. She is imagining that she looks ugly and repulsive, and that every normal human being has to be disgusted by her” (TS-TR 137). Although Lili was seen as a woman before the surgeries, she is completely terrified of not being recognized as one once the surgeries have started. To fail would mean that she is not her own being but, as Grete writes, “a disguised man.” As a result, Lili works hard to be hyper-feminine at all times to ensure that she is accepted as a “real girl.” During her stay with Andreas’s sister after her ovarian operation, Lili writes in her diary:

[t]he tiniest smudge on the face intimidated me at that time so much that I would only sally forth with [Andreas’s nephew] heavily veiled. I felt like a pariah. Other women could be ugly, could commit every possible crime. I, however, must be beautiful, must be immaculate, else I lost every right to be a woman. (A1 236)

Lili not only tries to be “beautiful” and “immaculate,” but she also engages in hyper-gendered behavior as well. Wearing high heels and beautiful dresses, Lili describes herself as “thoughtless, flighty, [a] very superficially minded woman, fond of dress and fond of enjoyment” who was “untroubled, carefree, illogical, [and] capricious” (A1 235). Although Lili writes that these behaviors were not just an act but “really [her] character,” Lili, following the creature, knows the importance of one’s physical appearance and actions. In order to be accepted by her friends, family, and society as Lili, as her own entity, Lili needs to show the extent to which she was a “different creature from [Andreas]” (A1 235).

Ironically, her desire to be completely a woman leads to her final operation and ultimately her death. Early in the narrative, before the surgeries, Lili formed a platonic relationship with Claude Lejeune. They remain in contact throughout her ordeal in Dresden, and after the surgeries, they are reunited, and Claude proposes marriage (A1 265). While Lili wants to accept and does initially say yes, she tells Claude that she must visit the Professor before she can be with him. “I cannot marry you until I have asked Professor Kreutz,” Lili responds, “Without his permission I can do nothing. He alone has the right to dispose of me” (A1 265). Arriving back at the Women’s Clinic, Lili quickly realizes why she needed to see the Professor. Before marrying Claude, Lili wants one last surgery to show that she is a real woman: she needs to be able to become a mother. “You must sympathize with me in my desire for maternity, to have a child, for I want nothing more ardently than to demonstrate that Andreas has been completely obliterated in me—is dead,” Lili writes in a letter to her German friend, “Through [bearing] a child I should be able to convince myself in the most unequivocal manner that I have been a woman from the very beginning” (A1 275). Just as the creature desires a companion to cement his identity, Lili needs to fully embody the maternal associations and reproductive nature of her gender in order to feel complete and secure in her identity. Unfortunately, while the Professor does attempt this surgery, Lili dies from post-surgical complications.

Unlike Frankenstein’s creature, Lili has developed a network of friends and, importantly, her creator, Professor Kreutz, who support her before, during, and after the operations. After the Professor tells Andreas that he will be able to give him “new and strong ovaries” so Lili will survive, the Professor becomes serious (A1 25). “[T]he operation which has become necessary, especially as it is the first of its kind, will create a number of remarkable situations, not least, from a legal point of view,” he tells Andreas, “But’—and with this he came close to Andreas

and took his hand—‘I promise you I will not leave Lili in the lurch and that I will assist her with her first independent steps into life’” (A1 27). Following Victor Frankenstein (who is often mislabeled Doctor), Professor Kreutz will attempt a surgery that is “the first of its kind.” However, unlike Frankenstein, the Professor promises Andreas that Lili will not be left alone. Her creator, the Professor, will take care of her. And the Professor, for the most part, keeps this promise in the narrative, even helping her obtain her own Danish passport, which gives her an identity and makes her intelligible within society with her chosen name, Lili Elbe (A1 186).

However, even though the subject in Lili’s narrative is supported, the figure still fears being alone. The clearest examples of this fear occur after the first operation in the typescript and the Danish edition. After Andreas wakes up screaming, he asks the nurses if he made ““a ruckus”” (TS-TR 108). A nurse answers, “you kept yelling ‘You must not leave me! You must not leave me. I am still so little. I can not be alone yet’” (TS-TR 109). But Andreas is not left alone after this early operation and neither is Lili after she enters the Women’s Clinic. Upon leaving the Clinic after her operations are complete, the Professor tells her, ““Write and tell me where you are, how are you getting on, and what you are doing. And regularly. Tell me everything. And if you want my help, you will always find a refuge and friends here”” (A1 216).

Although Lili’s narrative suggests a more supportive atmosphere for Lili than we find for Frankenstein’s creature, both narratives demonstrate the importance of physical appearance and social acceptance and recognition in the formation of one’s identity. For by sensing, and fearing, their difference, both feel isolated and abandoned, even if in Lili’s case she is not. Agonized by their difference and without the knowledge of or language for what they are, the subjects are unintelligible within society and rely on those around them to help shepherd them. Over and over, they turn to the heteronormative ideals that govern social recognition, such as acceptance in

a family and appropriate physical appearance, before resorting to basic gender norms, a wife for the creature and a child for Lili, in order to render them as full subjects. Reading these two texts together, it is almost as if Lili learned from or is reacting to the creature's experiences in *Frankenstein*. Her hyper-fixation on her appearance, her intense concern over abandonment, and her desire for a child all relate back to themes we see with the creature. The emphasis on community and support for Lili even before she has surgically come into being responds to and rewrites the creature's rejection first by his maker and then by the DeLaceys. When we read *Frankenstein* as a template for Lili's narrative, it suggests *Man into Women*, intentionally or not, calls on these themes from Shelley's work to give cultural language and understanding to what Lili is experiencing and to make Lili's journey more legible to a heteronormative society.

Lili's turn to Professor Kreutz before marrying Claude is not simply a commentary on what it means to be a woman in Lili's narrative. It highlights another significant parallel between the two narratives: the positioning of the creator as a God-like figure. The portrayal of Victor Frankenstein as "playing God" has long been established in contemporary culture and is commonly used today as a way to criticize unbridled scientific advancement. Lili's narrative also positions the Professor as God-like. One of the most foundational (and widely-cited) discussions of the Professor comes from Sandy Stone in "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1991).²⁴ Examining Hoyer's creation of Lili as a subject in the narrative, Stone sees the Professor as containing "the irruptive masculine self, still dangerously present within [Lili]" (344). In Stone's reading of the narrative, Lili must "displac[e]" her masculine self onto the "the

²⁴ For other readings of the Professor, see Meyer's "Divine Interpretations," 73, 74; Armstrong's *Modernism*, 169, 176; and Chare's "Landscape into Portrait," 355.

God-figure of her surgeon/therapist Werner Kreutz” in order to keep the respective heterosexual desires of Andreas and Lili separate even though they exist in one body (344).

The Professor’s relationship with Lili is what Frankenstein had initially hoped would transpire between himself and the creature, one of total adoration and worship. Telling Walton the motivations behind his experiment to reanimate life, Frankenstein boasts: “a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve their’s” (Shelley 32).²⁵ With the pride (or hubris) of a god-like father, Frankenstein expects to rule over a newly-created species when his experiment is complete. And yet, as we know, this does not happen.

Although Professor Kreutz is also described as a miracle creator in Lili’s narrative, the Professor and Lili have a different relationship. Lili adores and glorifies the Professor, to the point of blurring the line between gratitude and discomfort, what Gailey refers to as an “icky sexually inflected hero-worship of her surgeon” (1720). Using words and phrases such as “her lord and master,” “protector,” “creator,” and “maker,” Lili regularly idolizes the Professor and surrenders to his will (A1 163, 171). “It seemed to her as if she no longer had any responsibility for herself, for her fate,” Lili thought shortly after meeting the Professor for the first time, “For Werner Kreutz had relieved her of it all. Nor had she any longer a will of her own” (A1 170). Lili’s initial impression of the Professor remains throughout the narrative. Talking with the Matron a few days before the ovarian tissue operation, Lili explains that “[n]one of us dares to

²⁵ Although Frankenstein may be considered an unreliable narrator and thus his boasting may not be entirely true or genuine, this is Frankenstein’s last proclamation about his experiment before it unfolds and thus sets the tone for his relationship.

ask the Professor for anything. When he comes it is always as if God himself came, and none of us has anything else to say but: yes, Professor. No, Professor” (A1 145). Grete too refers to the Professor as “a god, whom all feared, whom all revered” and questions the origins and extent of his powers (A1 176). In addition to using wording that evokes Frankenstein’s proclamation to Walton, Lili’s connection with the Professor enacts the very relationship that Frankenstein assumed he would have with the creature. Adoring the Professor as her creator, Lili owes her life to him and continues to defer to him throughout the narrative.²⁶

However, even though the Professor appears to be more supportive of Lili, he still has the power to hurt Lili. Thinking back to the scene in Lili’s narrative where she enters the Women’s Clinic for the first time and there are no beds available for her, Lili becomes, in Grete’s words, “utterly despondent” because “she thinks the Professor sees in her nothing but a female impersonator, that is to say, Andreas” (A1 164). Lili’s lack of agency and the extent of the Professor’s power are epitomized at the end of the novel following Lili’s last surgery. After completing the surgery, the Professor leaves Lili, a “creature who is still weak and impotent,” on bed rest to go on vacation (A1 285). In response, Lili feels hopeless and writes to her friend, “I cannot see that I am making any progress, but there are moments when I am so tired that I almost wish I could die; but I have no[t] received permission to do this” (A1 286). The narrative then

²⁶ Lili’s relationship with the Professor may also suggest a change in cultural attitudes toward science in the twentieth century. Whereas Frankenstein’s actions and his relationship with the creature address moral questions and highlight the potential threats and responsibilities of scientific advancement (both in the novel and for contemporary readers), the Professor’s seemingly caring relationship with Lili and his focus on taking care of her before, during, and after her surgeries suggest that advances in science and medicine are not as threatening. We can also read it as a way to show that Lili’s subjecthood and constructed body are not as terrifying as the creature’s constructed body. Rather than be scared of her, the Professor embraces her and her subjecthood, acknowledging her as a subject. For a different reading of the Professor’s relationship with Lili, one that sees the Professor wielding power over Lili and as the cause of Lili’s death, see Hélène Allatini’s chapter on Lili (“Il et Elle”) in her memoir *Mosaïques* (1939), 121-139.

provides three fragments of letters from Lili in which we see her suffering and despair increase before we are finally told that she succumbs to death (A1 286).

These fragments show the extent to which the Professor holds power over Lili.²⁷ Without him there, the letters suggest, Lili has no desire to live, and her health rapidly declines. However, even as she succumbs to death the Professor still has all the power as Lili feels she is not able to die without his “permission.” Alone, separated from Grete and the Professor at the end of the novel, Lili dies, echoing the ending of *Frankenstein*. As I argue in Chapter Two, by the end of the novel the (revenge-fueled) relationship between Frankenstein and the creature is the only thing keeping them alive. With Victor’s death, the creature is left utterly alone and has no remaining link to society through which he could become legible. The creature then announces his ritual method of death to Walton, and the novel abruptly ends.

As the long history between trans narratives and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* suggests, it is not surprising that we would find traces of *Frankenstein* in one of the earliest narratives focusing on a gender-variant person. However, what this deeper analysis of the two accounts has illustrated are the ways in which the telling of Lili’s narrative is not just similar to but actually tracks the themes, language, and organizing structure of the creature’s birth and life in

²⁷ Although the focus of this chapter is on the typescript and the different editions of Lili’s narrative, this moment is also recounted in Allatini’s chapter on Lili. Allatini was not only a good friend to Lili and the Wegeners in real life, but she is also featured in the narratives as Elena Rossini. Her description of this moment in Lili’s life not only directly shows Lili’s complete dependence on the Professor but also her status as an experiment, similar to the creature in Shelley’s novel:

Lily’s passionate adoration for her surgeon had become her unique reason to live; and so, deprived of his presence, she no longer forced herself to react and stopped fighting to recover her health. She was tormented by the thought that she had been to him only something to experiment on. The time had come for vacations and the professor left the clinic to take the rest indispensable to his profession...he realized that in spite of all that she had endured and that he himself had tried, the poor creature was doomed. His departure finally caused the unhappy girl to give into despair and to aggravate the bitterness that she had served as a guinea pig for this person whom she loved more than her life so much that she let herself die. (Caughie and Allatini “Il et Elle” 137)

Frankenstein. These points of connection among the narratives suggest that even if Harthern, or the other collaborators on Lili's narrative, had not read *Frankenstein*, the linguistic, structural, and organizational connections between the two narratives attest to *Frankenstein*'s enduring legacy in terms of narrative structure, not just theme or subject.

Reading *Frankenstein* alongside Lili's life story allows us to see how both emphasize the psychological and social aspects of identities and embodiment over the surgical and the physical. In both works, identity is not to be taken for granted and is not an achievement. Rather, it is a process that continues long after the physical transformation, which also aligns them with contemporary trans narratives that avoid thinking of transition as a single moment. The creature asks profound questions about human existence, such as how to enter society without a legible identity and what heteronormative elements (e.g., family, property, kinship) are necessary in order to be legible or legitimate within society, questions that Lili's narrative attends to as well. The two works are focused on what it means to be an intelligible human subject and to have an intelligible body in society and how to achieve this status without having exact terms of identity on which to anchor oneself. And both *Frankenstein* and Lili's narratives highlight the extent to which creation tales are narrated from and structured by the dominant cultural perspective, by those whose humanity and identity are socially acknowledged as legitimate.

These correlations among the works also change how we understand Shelley's novel. Reading *Frankenstein* as a narrative template for Lili's story not only shows a new and, importantly, early connection between Shelley's novel and trans experiences but also opens up a new way of thinking about identity and embodiment in the novel. As I have demonstrated, it is not just the surgical creation of the creature and his rage at his monstrous body that are productive for trans readings of the novel. Whereas Stryker and more contemporary readers may

read the creature's monstrosity and rage as empowering and as providing terminology for what they themselves are experiencing, in the narrative the creature very much desires admission into the heteronormative order and to be categorized under it. The creature does not have a figure from which to recognize his existence because he is (or will become) the figure for future generations. The creature's experience in trying to figure out who he is and how he can enter society not only humanizes the monster for us but also raises questions about what it means to be recognized as fully human within society. Both Shelley's story and the creature compel us to ask, as Judith Butler does in writing on transgender experience, "what are the conditions of intelligibility by which the human emerges, by which the human is recognized?" (*Undoing* 57). The creature's experience shows how having a legible and an acceptable body are not the only elements necessary for admittance into society. Identity terms, support from friends and family, and social acknowledgement are also just as, if not more, important.

The creature's inability to categorize itself and enter into society may also point to one of the reasons why Shelley's creation is still so popular over two hundred years after it was published: it speaks to and for those whose lives have been deemed unspeakable and unrepresentable within current discourses of the human. Reading Shelley's work and the creature's experience alongside Lili's life narrative shows us just how impactful the whole of the creature's journey, not just his rage and despair, is for the trans experience. It reminds us, as Jay Prosser neatly states in *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (1998), that "tran[s] is always narrative work" (4). As an unnamed and unidentified figure, Shelley's creature provides a narrative model for those unable to access society. This open invitation to connect with the creature allows the creature to be used as a figure for those experiences and feelings of embodiment that are not-yet-named, such as Lili's early trans experience. The continued

prevalence of the creature and his narrative in modern and contemporary culture reaffirms just how influential the nineteenth century is in queer and trans discourses and supports my call for a return to this period.

In circling back to the beginning of the nineteenth century and reading Lili's life narrative through Shelley's novel, I invite us to linger in the nineteenth century rather than move chronologically into the early twentieth century in searching for queer narratives. As I have shown in this chapter and previous chapters, queer(ly) lingering in the nineteenth century is crucial not just for the new readings it produces of nineteenth-century texts. It is important because these readings demonstrate the extent to which these nineteenth-century novels established templates for queer studies and queer novels in the centuries that followed. Recognizing these texts as models for modernist and contemporary queer works should prompt us to consider, as I do in this chapter, why the paradigms put forth by these nineteenth-century novels remain relevant even to this day. Scholars have done queer readings of nineteenth-century novels and moved on, as if the real work of queer studies lies in the next centuries. I argue instead that novels of the nineteenth century are fundamental to the development of queer studies and the understanding of queer narrative structures. I would regard them not as prototypes, preliminary models that get more fully fleshed out in later works, but archetypes, original versions that are later imitated. My invitation to linger also gives us space to question the institutionalization of Queer Theory as an academic discourse and asks us to examine how we as scholars write about literary periods prior to the advent of queer identity and queer studies and how our writings have positioned, inadvertently, such periods as outside of the field's purview.

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VITA

Emily Datskou received a Bachelor of Arts in English from American University and a Master of Arts in English from Boston University. Dr. Datskou also received a concentration in Women's Studies and Gender Studies from Loyola University Chicago. In 2019 Dr. Datskou was awarded the prestigious Arthur J. Schmitt Dissertation Fellowship in Leadership and Service. At Loyola, Dr. Datskou studied the British nineteenth-century novel and queer theory and taught courses in the English and Women's Studies and Gender Studies departments.

During her time at Loyola, Dr. Datskou was an executive member of the English Graduate Student Association, a founding member of the Loyola University Chicago Victorian Society and reading group, and a long-time participant in an interdisciplinary Queer Theory reading group. She is also the Project Manager for *The Lili Elbe Digital Archive*.