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American Love Stories:
Narrative Ethics and the Novel from Stowe to James

By

Ashley Carson Barnes

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University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Dorothy Hale, Chair

Professor Samuel Otter

Professor Dorri Beam

Professor Robert Alter

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Abstract

American Love Stories: Narrative Ethics and the Novel from Stowe to James

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“American Love Stories” argues for the continuity between two traditions often taken to be antagonistic: the sentimental novel of the mid-nineteenth century and the high modernism of Henry James. This continuity emerges in the love stories tracked here, from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Gates Ajar*, through Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* and Herman Melville’s *Pierre*, to Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons* and James’s *The Golden Bowl*. In these love stories—the other side of the gothic tradition described by Leslie Fiedler—desire is performed rather than repressed, and the self is less a private container than a public exhibit. This literary-historical claim works in tandem with the dissertation’s argument for revising narrative ethics. The recent ethical turn in literary criticism understands literature as practically engaging the emotions, especially varieties of love, that shape our social lives. It figures reading as a love story in its own right: an encounter with a text that might grant us intimacy with an authorial persona or else spurn our desire to grasp its alterity. Narrative ethics thereby enables literary criticism to speak to moral and political questions about how reading fiction might shape our lived experience of self and other. And narrative ethics offers an antidote to methodologies that would reduce a text to a cultural symptom, giving literary critics, instead, theoretical tools to evaluate the sense of otherness and intimacy that reading can evoke.

But in imagining the text-as-other, narrative ethics relies on a deep model of subjectivity that isolates the text from its cultural moment. Historicist methods offer an instructive supplement by reading selves and texts alike as flatter entities embedded in discursive networks. Maintaining narrative ethics’ notion of the text as the other, this dissertation employs historicist techniques to read novels as thoroughly engaged with their cultural milieu. The dissertation tracks the novels’ preoccupations, which direct attention toward surrounding discourses like religious devotional guides, art criticism, and interior decoration. One payoff of this hybrid methodology is to put into conversation texts that have often been divorced from each other in the criticism and thus to bring to light overlooked aspects of each. Read as a starting point for Jamesian psychological realism, sentimental love looks less like an ideological smokescreen, as it can in historicist criticism, and more like a viable description of self-other relations. When James is read as an inheritor of the sentimental mode, his self-conscious difficulty, highlighted in narrative ethics, gets complicated by his relish for the scenic and the melodramatic. Further, by recapturing the historical antecedents of the American love story, this dissertation provides an intellectual history of narrative ethics’ commitment to an ideal of reading that is deep and emotional. The dissertation finds sources for this ideal in mid-nineteenth century Protestant guides urging believers to read the Bible deeply, as a love letter from God.

Finally, this hybrid methodology tracks in the love stories themselves the persistence of a version of selfhood in the American tradition that is no less lovable for being more surface than depth. This model of subjectivity, and the methodology it sponsors, enables narrative ethics to account for a fuller range of self-other encounters. The text emerges as an other which is at once culturally determined and emotionally compelling.

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Chapter 1

Reading as a Love Story: The Text as Significant Other

The narrator of Henry James's story "The Figure in the Carpet" wonders if marriage offers a key to unlocking textual secrets: was his favorite author's literary design "traceable or describable only for husbands and wives—for lovers supremely united?" (265). His hunch that being in love enhances interpretive vision suggests how easily reading and loving work as analogues for one another. We speak of falling in love with a book as we would with a person, and of reading a person as we would a book. These analogies shape the methodology of narrative ethics: reading is like falling in love, and a text is like a person, an "other." Narrative ethics can thus stake its claim for the good of reading fiction by claiming that reading is like getting to know someone—by imagining, I will argue, a kind of love story between a reader and a text, one that unfolds in a private and timeless scene of reading. My project maintains these analogies, but revises this reader-text love story by way of two interdependent claims. First I make the case that American literature offers a different version of the love story, one that views selves as essentially interconnected with their worlds. This continuity emerges in the love stories I track from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Gates Ajar*, through Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* and Herman Melville's *Pierre*, to Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* and James's *The Golden Bowl*. In these love stories—the other side of the gothic tradition described by Leslie Fiedler—desire is performed rather than repressed, and the self is less a private container than a public exhibit. This happier love story underwrites my effort to revise narrative ethics' methodology by allying it with new historicism. Rather than imagine the reader-text love story as a private and timeless one-on-one relationship, I read the fictional love stories themselves in conversation with contemporaneous discourses. Maintaining narrative ethics' notion of the text as the other, I employ historicist techniques to read novels as thoroughly engaged with their cultural milieu, letting the texts' preoccupations direct my attention toward surrounding discourses like religious devotional guides, art criticism, and interior decoration. Thus my account enacts the hybrid methodology for which it argues.

This hybrid methodology maintains the guiding concerns of narrative ethics with the scene of reading and the sense of otherness we feel when we read, but it addresses those concerns by approaching texts as others fundamentally embedded in history. It tries to revise, but not to abandon, the model of the love story between the reader and the text. If the other is inseparable from the world around it, then the acts of attention that make up reading and loving the other must likewise spread out into the world. This revised love story construes falling in love as a process of looking carefully at, but not necessarily into, the other. It takes more seriously the idea of the text as a stand-alone other, with its own habits and preoccupations, stylistic tics and patterns of representation, all of which can be traced outward into the historically-situated world that informs those concerns.¹ If falling in love requires such a broad view, then reading requires us to understand

¹ Imagining the text in this way recasts one version of narrative ethics' text-as-other, where the text's otherness is granted by its instantiation of the author's will—particularly Wayne Booth's notion of the implied author as the cumulative personality that accrues through the author's writing decisions. Booth likes the implied author for the way the concept enables us to speak about the work of authorial agency, the "core of norms and choices" which we intuit as having shaped the text (RF 161). My revised reader-text love story would instead precisely emphasize the text as itself the agent we feel we encounter in the process of reading.

the text as it intersects with other discourses of its time and place. Thus new historicist or cultural studies methods become a necessary adjunct to falling in love with the text-as-other, and narrative ethics can understand these processes as extending beyond a private to a more fully social encounter. This wide-angle view enables narrative ethics to imagine reading as a more social, and as a potentially more political, act.

But if falling in love makes such a capacious metaphor for reading, we should begin by asking about the consequences of this model. What happens when the text is described as an “other”? And what kind of “other” does the text become in our theorizing about it? Asking such questions reveals potential affinities between otherwise apparently incompatible interpretive methods. Narrative ethics and new historicism need not be mutually exclusive approaches, as they practically have been. Like narrative ethics, new historicism can imagine the reader as in quest of alterity, and the text as a route to that alterity. What has separated these methodologies is their understanding of where and how that alterity is constituted. New historicism identifies alterity not in the work itself, nor as a phenomenon activated by a private encounter between reader and text, but rather in the text’s communal existence within a network of contemporaneous texts. As Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt write in *Practicing New Historicism*, they wish to make contact with “the whole life-world” within which “the writers we love” worked. And that world is itself a kind of text. The two authors note that “the linguistic turn in the social and humanistic disciplines” makes it possible to understand “cultures as texts” and to thereby apply the kind of interpretive skills that literary studies normally exercises on creative works to the wider, nonliterary range of texts—indeed, to an entire way of life in a given time and place. Thus the literary text becomes “the key to particular historically embedded social and psychological formations” (7). These formations, for humanist-minded new historicists like Greenblatt and Gallagher, seem to play the role of the narrative ethicist’s other.

This concept of historically embedded alterity lends itself to a nodal or rhizomal concept of the social that can treat the text as a thing rather than as an other to whom the reader owes respectful attention. If one makes the strong Foucauldian case against autonomy and for social determination, then “selfhood” or “otherness” alike appear as illusory consolations offered by capitalism. New historicism has little interest in the potential seductions of the text-as-other; it has more often aimed to demonstrate how the text props up one or another dominant ideology, and in some cases it threatens to reduce a novel to its political stance. Critics have recently pushed back, for instance by questioning Fredric Jameson’s “symptomatic reading,” which values the text not for its particular otherness but for the access it offers to the absent causes of history. For Jameson, literary criticism should aim at “detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative”—namely, class conflict, “the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity”—and at thereby “restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history” (18, 19). This is one way to diminish the potential for a reader to fall in love with a text. From a quite different position—one that denies the kind of repressed truth that Jameson wants to unearth—Foucauldian archaeologies of power seem no more interested in connecting with the felt alterity of a text. For a new historicist following this approach, subject and object lose their distinction as interchangeable relays produced by a power network, and the potential affective power of the text over the reader loses interest.²

² As Paul Hamilton notes, Foucault can at times sound as if he harbors a humanistic desire to recover the lost voices of history, but in Hamilton’s reading, such redemption is ultimately impossible for Foucault, for whom “a catastrophic unconnectedness is exactly the state of affairs, past and present. The accidental conjunction of objects paradoxically reflects the infinitely flexible design of the power whose effect they are and which they can therefore never escape” (139).

Still, if “the ethical turn” hailed in the later 1990s never attained the status of a dominant paradigm in English departments—not as dominant, at least, as cultural studies and new historicism enjoyed for a time—these approaches are themselves undergoing serious reappraisal. A special issue of *American Literature* in 2004 considered “The End(s) of Cultural Studies.” The *PMLA* 2008 Profession issue featured a call by Clifford Siskin and William Warner for “Stopping Cultural Studies” on grounds that it reads too reductively.³ Last September Michael Bérubé similarly castigated cultural studies in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* for its will to read everything as a case of false consciousness. A new and improved version of formalism seems poised to take the place of reading as Marxist diagnosis. Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus find an alternative in “surface reading,” a reading strategy “that does not involve the untenable claim that we are always more free than those who produce the texts we study” (18). Insofar as this is a call for more humility on the part of the critic, narrative ethics offers a useful model in its vision of the reader who carefully, and humbly, attends to every move the text-as-other makes. I attempt to combine the practices of narrative ethics and new historicism out of a sense that narrative ethics is right to take seriously the analogy between reading and loving, even if its idea of love is too constrained by its focus on obligation and responsibility. But the version of alterity that new historicism imagines—if it does not reduce the text to a symptom of a diseased culture—opens up a different kind of love story that can enrich narrative ethics.

My project finds underlying affinities between these two approaches and mobilizes their strengths—an appreciation of discursive networks from cultural studies and new historicism, an acute vision of the scene of reading from narrative ethics—in an effort to counteract the blind spots of each. A historicized narrative ethics, one that imagines reading and loving as requiring a vision that tracks the other’s connections to its context, might help make good on the social concerns implied in narrative ethics’ analogies between texts and others, between reading and loving. This hybrid methodology aims to push the narrative ethics “emphasis on interhumanity” to become “better synthesized with a social and/or political ethics,” a step that Lawrence Buell argued for in a 1999 *PMLA* overview of narrative ethics scholarship (12-13). My project theorizes this approach from the ground up—from the founding analogies of narrative ethics, and from a perspective that revises narrative ethics’ adoption of its originating theorizer, Henry James. As Buell points out, the signal strength of narrative ethics may be its idea of reading “as a scene of virtual interpersonality that enacts, activates, or otherwise illuminates ethical responsibility” (13). But by limiting the scene to an isolated version of the reader and the text, narrative ethics has hindered its ability to imagine how selves exist in communities and how cultural preoccupations can shape communication in those communities.

My project’s core argument, its literary historical claim that James can be understood in a tradition that begins with the sentimental novel, authorizes the revised and historicized narrative ethics that I envision. It is true that James attacked the sentimental for pandering to readers’ feelings, and that he deliberately strove to elevate the novel form above such pandering. But reading American literature with attention to its historical context and continuity (both synchronically and diachronically), and filtering it through the genre of the love story—a genre that foregrounds self-other relations and the role of emotion in those relations—highlight the affinities between the models of subjectivity we see in James and in the sentimental novel. The sentimental mode, like James after it, deploys a subjectivity I call the “manifest self.” Something like soul or personality can

³ Siskin and Warner cite Bruno Latour’s argument in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* that (in their summary) “theory-driven sociological analysis, guided by its long-standing commitment to a nineteenth-century emancipatory politics, repeatedly reduces the complex networks of human beings and objects that it studies,” and conclude that “our emancipatory deployment of culture may empty and simplify the objects it examines” (101).

travel from a manifest self to the objects that make up the world around that self; what in other texts would be called the “inner self” exhibits itself on a person’s surface, rather than lurking in imputed depths. For instance, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Rachel Halliday’s rocking chair speaks for her, as Bob Assingham’s shoes, in *The Golden Bowl*, speak for him. James’s last novel borrows from the sentimental not only this notion of transitive subjectivity, but corresponding structures of the self-other relationship: an understanding of emotion as socially performed, not just as an expression from deep within, and an understanding of the attachments between persons as constituted by an appreciation for each other’s surfaces, not just by the longing to discover what lies in each other’s depths. These structures constitute a love story that figures love as a process of attention that aims less into, and more around, the other. To look around rather than into the text-as-other will mean seeing where it is situated, how it plays with the surfaces and discourses at its disposal, and what it makes of this surrounding material.

My argument begins in this chapter with a critique of narrative ethics carried out via juxtaposition with the methods of new historicism. This framing argument will culminate in the last chapter with a reading of *The Golden Bowl* revised by the literary historical argument of the chapters between. That core literary historical argument begins by showing how two sentimental novels (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Gates Ajar*) reconcile versions of surface and depth they import from competing Christian understandings of Bible reading and religious devotion. Next it considers a pair of canonical authors, both critics of the sentimental, who chronicle failed experiments at salvaging a model of private depths. In Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance*, love finally amounts to a circulation of fungible desires among the members of a group. In Melville’s *Pierre*, we see a critique of the dyadic model of love, as private union with another’s deepest self implodes under the weight of its own inward pull. The literary historical argument ends with a return to a version of sentimental subjectivity no longer grounded by theology, a model that plays off of surfaces to produce a facsimile of depth, both in James and in Elizabeth Stoddard’s *The Morgesons*. Each of these readings will proceed with a twofold methodology, depending both on new historicist archival research and on narrative ethics’ interest in the moment-to-moment reading experience, and on the varieties of affective relation that might obtain between a reader and a text.

I. NARRATIVE ETHICS

In his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, James offers a hint like that dropped by the distinguished author in “The Figure in the Carpet”: he explains that he splits the novel’s point of view between Amerigo in volume one and Maggie in volume two because their marital relationship makes them especially useful observers of each other. The novel, says James, “abides rigidly by its law of showing Maggie Verver at first through her suitor’s and her husband’s exhibitory vision of her, and of then showing the Prince, with at least an equal intensity, through his wife’s” (21). The two volumes of the novel actually provide us with points of view other than Maggie’s and Amerigo’s, and I will argue in the final chapter that Fanny and Bob come closer to matching the intensity of observation that James seems inclined to attribute to married couples. But it interests me that James should suggest again that the marriage bond is one that grants special observational or perceptual powers. Fanny and Bob are not only the most happily-married and fully functional couple in the novel; James also makes them reader- and author-figures, dedicated to acts of interpretation and to creative repurposing of the material of their friends’ lives. I want to investigate the connection between intimacy and discovery, between love and intensity of vision, that James so temptingly holds out, because it bears on the project of revising narrative ethics’ love story of reading. The idea that intimacy, a love developed between the reader and text alone, leads to a privileged understanding seems to encourage the narrow focus that constrains narrative ethics’ readings.

What does the love story of reading look like in narrative ethics accounts? To begin the story, narrative ethics grants the text the status of an other—a stand-in for a friend or a stranger. The text becomes a generalized “other” and the reader a generalized “self” in this scheme, although the text’s alterity can coalesce more specifically in the figure of an implied author or a particular character whom the reader pursues. And from the start, narrative ethics establishes privacy for the reader and the text, generally banishing other texts (for instance the kinds of extraliterary documents that new historicist approaches revel in) from the scene of reading.⁴ The middle of the story unfolds as the reading process itself is detailed. Because narrative ethics treats reading as an ongoing event, focusing on the reader’s moment-to-moment emotional response to the text, the interpretation of the text becomes its own story of an intimate give-and-take relationship, rather than appearing as a foregone conclusion.⁵ Finally, the love story can end happily, or not. The reader either engages with the text, yielding a reciprocal and emotionally satisfying relationship, or the reader is left to suffer unrequited love, never really knowing the text-as-other but desiring it nonetheless.

This happy versus unhappy love story designation maps onto the polarization in narrative ethics that other critics have observed. Robert Eaglestone divides the field between “epi-readers” who read for content and “graphi-readers” who attend to form; C. Namwali Serpell finds that narrative ethicists shuttle between empathy and alterity as the two possibilities for the act of interpretation; Dorothy Hale, setting up the categories that I will follow, divides narrative ethics between humanist and poststructuralist strands. The humanists typically work from Aristotle, taking literature to be the rhetorical act made by a knowable other who aims to communicate with an audience; the poststructuralists typically work from Levinas’s concept of ethics before ontology, the claim that the self is constituted by its encounter with the other, an other before whom the self is infinitely responsible.⁶ Martha Nussbaum’s *Love’s Knowledge*, published twenty years ago, still stands as a key text for narrative ethics. Her work may influence the field more by prompting resistance than by inspiring adherents—narrative ethics has largely turned away from her unproblematic vision of sympathy between reader and text, and toward a Levinasian model of unknowable yet demanding otherness. This newer, Levinas-influenced narrative ethics typically negates the happy understanding Nussbaum projects. But it does so without fundamentally altering her model of how reading—and how love, Nussbaum’s analogue to reading—works. It substitutes an unhappy for a happy ending in the reader-text story, without broadening narrative ethics’ vision of how love might work.

Hale’s recent analyses of narrative ethics⁷ help demonstrate the persistence of the love story model of reading across the spectrum. Terminology may be the chief difference between Nussbaum and her poststructuralist counterparts, since “the name given by poststructuralists to their valorization of readerly experience is anything but ‘love’” (“Aesthetics” 902). But as Hale argues, poststructuralist accounts of the ethics of reading are themselves more or less marked by “erotic overtones,” talk of vulnerability, surrender, and bondage. “‘The web of the other,’ the seduction of the implied author, the call of the text, the anxiety from estrangement: in all these new ethical paradigms ‘sharing’ is made possible only by the reader’s willingness to submit” (“Fiction” 201). Certainly the experience of the other that results from this unrequited love of the text-as-other sounds passionate enough: it “is knowledge that is beyond reason, that is of the emotions, and that

⁴ Such attention to the text and nothing but the text is not peculiar to narrative ethics, of course; it is necessary to the practice of close reading.

⁵ Similarly, such attention to the moment-by-moment reading experience is a feature common to reader-response criticism. See Hale’s introduction to the “Novel Readers” section of *The Novel*, 748-762.

⁶ Levinas writes: “I am trying to show that man’s ethical relation to the other is ultimately prior to his ontological relation to himself (egology) or to the totality of things which we call the world (cosmology)” (qtd in Kearney, 57).

⁷ Hale has written about the connection between Martha Nussbaum and Judith Butler in “Aesthetics and the New Ethics”; in “Fiction as Restriction” she surveys poststructuralist narrative ethics and its working assumptions.

is so intuitive as to seem a bodily knowing” (“Aesthetics” 903). For humanists like Nussbaum or Wayne Booth, the knowledge that comes from love of the text satisfies the reader both rationally and emotionally. By contrast, in Judith Butler’s reading of James’s *Washington Square*—as in J. Hillis Miller’s or Derek Attridge’s readings—the ethical point of reading seems to be that it positions the reader as a yearning lover who can never truly know her beloved. Whether the story ends with a happy reciprocal marriage of reader and text or in a sad unrequited love depends on how much agency the reader is granted, and thus how symmetrically the reader’s and text’s relationship is figured. Across the board, though, these narrative ethicists narrow their focus to a private relationship that unfolds between the text and the reader, and their valorization of that event effectively lifts the text out of its own historical and cultural milieu.

The Beginning of the Story: The Text-as-Other, in Private

For narrative ethics, the first step to falling in love with a book is to see that book as something with the qualities of a person, not as a mere thing, a cultural symptom or a bound stack of printed pages. In the case of the humanists, the text earns the status of the other on the strength of an Aristotelian account of literature as rhetoric. Thus Wayne Booth can conceive of the implied author as the product of a real author’s particular values and quirks as they meet and answer the particular demands of a particular artistic project. For Booth the implied author comprises “the core of norms and choices” represented in a given work; he likes the term for the way it “[calls] attention to that work as the product of a choosing, evaluating person rather than as a self-existing thing” (RF 161). This implied author is the cumulative personality that accrues through authorial choices, and becomes the other that we meet in reading. Nussbaum, borrowing Booth’s idea, finds an author’s “intentions and thoughts... realized in the text” (LK 9); a well-written novel instantiates an author’s “sense of life” so thoroughly that reading a novel necessarily takes on the character of meeting the person who holds those values (LK 5). Novels—at least the good ones—thus have the power to “lure [the reader] with more mysterious and romantic charms.... into a more shadowy passionate world, asking her to assent, to succumb” (LK 238). For Booth himself, meeting the implied author makes for a less erotically-charged version of falling in love: reading is making a friend. But such friendship does involve the desire to go deeper and further with a book. Booth asks his own readers to think of their favorite book-friends, texts “that you have recently chosen to re-read...out of a strong desire for a deeper acquaintance: your earlier encounters yielded so much that you can predict much more and you desire much more” (CK 175n7). Both Nussbaum and Booth self-consciously adopt such language as a counter to what they feel is the aridity of poststructuralist approaches: “After reading Derrida,” writes Nussbaum, “...I feel a certain hunger for blood: for, that is, writing about literature that talks of human lives and choices as if they matter to us all” (LK 171). Booth prefers the language of meeting and making friends to the vocabulary of structuralist and deconstructive accounts, with their “more mechanized pictures of texts / webs / prison houses / mazes / codes / rule systems / speech acts / semantic structures” (CK 170). Personification—the knowing projection of human traits onto a bound stack of pages—fights the bloodlessness of such approaches to the text. Because the text feels like a potential friend when it is viewed in isolation with its reader, Booth can ground his claim for the ethical value of reading in that metaphor. But it also means that the reading experience narrows down to a one-on-one encounter more or less exempt from the influences of the “web” of the surrounding culture and its “semantic structures.”

Rather than assume alterity as an essentially demanding force that humbles any reader who approaches, Booth observes a range of alterity in the text-as-other, from permeable to alien. That is, just as “the depth of psychic ‘entry’ to which our friends invite us” varies, so too do “implied authors obviously vary in their willingness to let down barriers and allow full entry” (CK 187). Booth approves “genuine encounters with otherness... as a value that perhaps we could all embrace” (CK

69). But in an observation that works to critique the Levinasian insistence on asymmetry, Booth notes that “For some ethical critics, no fictions are worth bothering about if they do not stagger us, shatter our complacencies, open up new worlds, change us from what we were, teach us new (and often dark) truths, shock our technical expectations: Make it new!” (CK 194).⁸ Such an extreme degree of otherness represents for Booth just one possibility along a spectrum. Booth’s interest in maintaining readerly agency means that an encounter with otherness can include the reader’s being pleased or satisfied by the text in return.

For the poststructuralists, the text takes on the status of a different kind of “other,” more a stranger than a friend, as Derek Attridge says. Here the model of interpersonal relations is informed by Levinas’s idea that the self only becomes itself through its encounter with the infinite obligation it faces in the other. The book becomes such an other as the reader encounters it, and this encounter tends to unfold as a tale of unrequited love. Attridge, for example, claims the term “other” for a written text because of its power utterly to change all those who encounter it: a text remakes both its writer in the process of its being written, and its reader in the process of its being read. Such power comes through the newness and uniqueness of the written creation. Literary otherness “implies a wholly new existent that cannot be apprehended by the old modes of understanding and could not have been predicted by means of them; its singularity,” even if just a matter of revision or adaptation, “is absolute” (22). This insistence on the singularity of the text vaults it to the status of a one-and-only.

The beginning of the reader-text love story must also establish privacy. Here new historicism works as an especially sharp contrast; narrative ethics readings do cite other critics and other texts, but they typically treat novels as if they were timeless. It is hard to imagine a narrative ethics reading that would crowd one of James’s novels alongside the literary criticism of Willa Cather, the paintings of John Singer Sargent, and turn-of-the-century debates on interior decoration, as Bill Brown does in *A Sense of Things*. Narrative ethics tends to find its strongest arguments in the intimacy between reader and text, moments when the text-as-other stands alone before the reader. Miller’s reading of *The Awkward Age* makes explicit this demand. “I as reader feel myself to be to some degree alone with the text,” Miller writes. This is true of *Age* specifically because it has received relatively little critical attention, but Miller understands this loneliness to extend to reading generally:

Perhaps, however, that is the actual condition of readers at any time, however much they may feel themselves to be members of a community of readers. Reading is, for the most part, a lonely, silent business. How could one know what happens when another person reads a book I have read or am reading? How can I be certain that anything like the same thing happens to other readers as happens to me? (99)

Since we cannot know what anyone else thinks or feels when she reads, not even in a book group or an English class, reading occurs fundamentally between two isolatoes, the reader and the text. Our readings are mysterious, locked away in a hidden interiority. Miller’s argument for the solitude of the reader furthers the project of writing a love story that insists that self and other come to know each other best in isolation, one-on-one and face-to-face.

The reader-text privacy enjoined by narrative ethics, and its consequent emphasis on close reading, finds new traction in recent critiques of cultural studies and new historicist reading. If the reader that narrative ethics envisions faces the text alone, that means he faces it without the aid of a political, psychological, or other theoretical apparatus that the text must satisfy. Booth and

⁸ Booth’s linking the modernist credo with Levinasian stringency finds an echo in Derek Attridge’s claim for modernism as the ideal style for ethical reading in his argument for the exemplarity of J. M. Coetzee’s work.

Nussbaum and Attridge all make the case that close reading is the only ethical way of encountering a text because it allows the text freedom to speak without having to prove a reader's politics right. "Literal reading," as Attridge calls the kind of reading he endorses, "defers the many interpretive moves that we are accustomed to making in our dealings with literature, whether historical, biographical, psychological, moral, or political" (60). This call for deference—and I shift the verb to the noun advisedly, since it captures the attitude narrative ethicists generally call for—finds an echo in Sam Otter's indirect suggestion that critics "pause, and insist on the details" of a text before reading through it to cultural or historical "abstractions" (18). Attridge calls such readings-through "allegorical," insofar as they make the literary text match up with and illuminate some master narrative.⁹ Such politicized readings threaten the text's integrity and self-sufficiency as the other. For Otter, the trouble with such readings is not that they fail to treat the text with the respect due to an other, but that they disable the critic's ability to understand "lived experience" as literary language makes it available. Already, then, in this matter of the reader's approach to the text, we can see the potential for a fruitful yoking of historicism and narrative ethics.

The Middle of the Story: Event Quality

Once the text has been established as an other, and once the reader and the text-as-other have been established in privacy, the interpretive process—the getting-to-know-you that provides the middle of the reading love story—can get underway. For both poststructuralist and humanist narrative ethics, reading is understood as an event that unfolds between the reader and the text over time. The reading love story gets its quality of duration for Miller, for instance, by virtue of his understanding of reading as a performative event. Reading is not an epistemological quest; it is a matter of action rather than of knowledge. As with Attridge, for Miller the ongoing relationship with the text really makes us readers anew, so that the moment that most matters is happening now: "A rhetorical reading"—one that attends to nothing but the text—"may actively liberate a past text for present uses.... The reading is constitutive of the 'I' that enunciates it" (29). By carefully attending to the text's rhetoric, the reader lifts it from its historical moment; shedding that its historicity is figured here as liberating. And in return the text reconstitutes the reader. For Attridge too, of course, the concept of the text as the other is closely tied up with the event quality of reading. He defends his calling the text "the other" because it captures the way reading feels like an ongoing effort to get to know someone: "Otherness, that is, is produced in an active or eventlike relation—we might call it a *relating*" (22). This focus on the event quality of the relationship of reading discloses how Attridge frames reading as a love story, one in which "I affirm, cherish, sustain the other" that is the text (27).

On the humanist side, for Booth, ethical criticism must proceed by showing how the time spent with a novel affects a reader's sense of the world (8, 10); one of his grounding claims is that "Each work of art or artifice...determines to some degree *how at least this one moment will be lived*. The quality of life in the moment of our 'listening' is not what it would have been if we had not listened" (17). Thus Booth's readings are careful to delineate the mental steps of interpretation or reaction to a particular text.¹⁰ For Nussbaum, reading itself can become a love story because the activity of reading so closely mirrors the process of falling in love. The reader must be patient and trusting, focused keenly on the text's every nuance but emotionally open to it, not aggressive or "controlling"

⁹ Attridge cites both Susan Sontag ("Against Interpretation") and Donald Davidson ("What Metaphors Mean") as inspirations on this score for staking the significance of art or metaphor on what art and metaphor do, rather than on what they mean (37). Best and Marcus, too, quote Sontag in their critique of symptomatic reading.

¹⁰ For instance, he isolates the various steps in understanding Jonathan Swift's satire, showing how our moment-by-moment testing of possibilities yields "an inferred total reciprocity and intimacy" with Swift: "his mind works, I infer, much as mine does—only better" (189).

(LK 282). Nussbaum endorses a love that occurs slowly, accumulating data and responding to that data over time, just as reading does. In reading a story about a woman who reluctantly opens herself to a relationship, Nussbaum says, “like her, we have learned to fall. Reading a story is like that. Like her love, it takes time” (280). Nussbaum’s own reading of this story works through the tale step by step, showing her reactions and recalibrations as she progresses.¹¹

The End of the Story: Happy or Sad, Reciprocal or Unrequited

Booth’s ideal reader relationship sounds like the kind of marriage we would delight in at the end of a happy love story: friendship with a book means that both sides “offer each other not only pleasures or utilities but shared aspirations and loves of a kind that make life together worth having as an end in itself,” a relationship whose consummation is found in “the quality of the life” the two friends “live during their time together” (174). The happy reciprocity of reader-text love, for Booth as for Nussbaum, flows from the concept of an empowered reader who can choose among possible texts, friends, or love-objects, at will. Booth’s reader, like Nussbaum’s, must be willing to become vulnerable, but the reader’s strong agency means that an encounter with otherness can actually satisfy the reader’s desire.¹² Having to follow difficult language, such as surprising metaphors, intensifies our sense of being occupied, of being made to think thoughts that would otherwise never have occurred to us. Booth calls this “figurative bonding” (190). But for Booth such figurative bonding really grants us an experience of, say, Shakespeare’s otherness, rather than chiefly making us feel its inaccessibility. For Booth, while “[a]ny ironic or metaphoric shaping required of me as I play the role of implied reader will become *mine*”—Booth’s emphasis, and a reminder of the reader’s aggrandizement—“insofar as I genuinely engage with the text,” it is still the case that “I may repudiate it later” (190). Surrender does not hinder the reader from being objective enough to process and digest the reading, to judge the values that the reading offers or the kind of friend the text might become. Like Booth’s, Nussbaum’s version of reading involves a degree of self-surrender compensated by an increase in knowledge. The reader is always aware of her own life projects and goals and can choose to read—and to love—texts that further such goals. The emotional charge of falling in love yields knowledge, rather than unhinging the reader.¹³

For poststructuralist critics influenced by the Levinasian notion of the self as “hostage”¹⁴ before the other’s infinite alterity, the reader’s power is sharply attenuated. Miller and Attridge tip

¹¹ It is true, though, that Nussbaum’s interpretations are equally ready to render characters into philosophical abstractions, to make them data points in a carefully controlled and lucid argument. Thus she reduces Fanny Assingham to the danger of unbounded perception and Bob to the danger of strict adherence to moral rules, turning their marriage into a neat demonstration of the necessity for both rule and perception united by love. See “Literature and the Moral Imagination” (LK, esp. pp. 157-161).

¹² Booth actively pushes back against the narrative-ethical strain that imagines the reader’s desire as colonizing. He seems deliberately to invite that critique when he describes the reader’s urge to discover otherness in her text-friends through the figure of the hunt: “I embrace the pursuit of the Other as among the grandest of hunts we are invited to; from birth onward our growth depends so deeply on our ability to internalize other selves that one must be puzzled by those who talk about the self as somehow independent, individual, unsocial in this sense” (69). The hunt metaphor may serve here as an antidote to the sanctimony that can attach to talk of alterity; the object of a hunt that gets internalized is just the sort of encounter with the other that Levinasians reject. I like Booth’s acknowledgment that readers do want the pleasure of encountering others. My own view, though, is that such encounters can be pleasurable without being as comfortably knowing as Booth imagines them.

¹³ In *Upheavals of Thought*, Nussbaum takes the cognitivist view that emotions (including love) entail a rational payoff: they help guide us toward a good life, toward fulfillment of our cherished projects and goals. For Nussbaum, “emotions are appraisals or value judgments, which ascribe to things and persons outside the person’s own control great importance for that person’s own flourishing” (4).

¹⁴ Levinas writes that “It is this responsibility for the creature,” the other that we confront, “that constitutes the self”; the self does not exist in any sense outside of or prior to “human fellowship” (94, 91). “To be a ‘self’ is to be responsible

the reciprocity of Booth's and Nussbaum's reader-text relationship into an asymmetry that insists on risk, challenge, and uncertainty. Attridge proposes that we therefore consider the text, even if we have read it multiple times, not as the friend that Booth argues for but "as a stranger, even and perhaps especially when the reader knows it intimately" (26). The challenge of the strangeness of the text, our failure to know it intimately, is what makes reading it ethical. Where Booth imagines that figurative bonding really allows us for a moment to think with Shakespeare or Swift, Miller stresses the offputting nature of figures of speech. As a poststructuralist, Miller holds that language refuses to let us say what we mean, and in Miller's account this linguistic unpredictability builds up the asymmetry between the yearning reader and the unfathomable text. Miller turns necessity into virtue by making the failure of understanding a condition of ethical reading. The aporias of the text, for example the "blank place in the narration" of *The Portrait of a Lady* where Isabel Archer's decision to marry Osborne should be filled in and described, rule the act of reading and give it its ethical charge (74). We readers can try to understand the text-as-other; in fact, says Miller, we are "enjoined" to do so. "[B]ut... the bridge between the performative speech act, sealed with a kiss that silences speech, and the knowledge the performative gives is missing. It is a blank place in the language. Whereof one cannot speak one perhaps should remain silent" (80). The reader is ethical insofar as she keeps trying to know and love a text that by nature refuses to be known or loved.

Rather than imagine the reader's vulnerability as rewarded by a union with or an understanding of the text-as-other, poststructuralists emphasize the reader's endless responsibility to the text. "Responsibility" for Attridge functions much like unrequited love. Our readerly responsibility "involves assuming the other's needs, being willing to be called to account for the other, surrendering [our] goals and desires in deference to the other's" (27), and it puts "my emotional and sometimes my physical self... at stake" (28).¹⁵ Yet it is clear that such vulnerability is part of the love that develops between reader and text. Miller, for his part, writes that "[c]ertainly I have fallen in love with" Isabel, and he imagines that anyone, whether reader or writer, might do the same: "Perhaps even the reader may fall in love with Isabel, as James himself may be imagined to have done" (63). For Miller, Ralph Touchett serves as a proxy both for James and for us readers, doomed to love Isabel without consummation. Such is the case for poststructuralist readers generally. They are ethically bound to love the texts they read without ever really understanding them, but they are made ethical by that love. This renunciation of pleasure in the other is what my own revised reader-text love story hopes to correct, without making overly sanguine claims for the reader's ability to see deeply into the text. I hope, by borrowing the resources of historicism, to imagine another kind of love that might develop between the reader and the text: a reading that is emotionally powerful, but that finds its pleasure through non-penetrative surface appreciation.

II. NEW HISTORICISM AS SOURCE FOR THE READER-TEXT LOVE STORY

Though they tend to read different texts and to ask different questions, narrative ethicists have voiced admiration for critics who work in the historicist camp. Booth observes that "the best new Marxists"—he cites Raymond Williams, Fredric Jameson, and Terry Eagleton—are pursuing their own version of ethical criticism (6). And he argues that "a serious ethical criticism cannot be divorced finally from political criticism" (12). Similarly, though Derrida leaves her hungering for

before having done anything," and on this basis Levinas can affirm that "The Other (*Autrui*) is the end, and me, I am a hostage" (94).

¹⁵ While "Conventional moral codes require certain kinds of support and succor for other persons," "my responsibility for the other person as other"—not just as another person—"is more demanding than these. As when I create a new artifact or mode of thought, my obligation is to refashion what I think and what I am in order to take the fullest possible account of—to respect, safeguard, and learn from—the otherness and singularity of the other and to do so without any certainty about the consequences of my act" (27-28).

blood, Nussbaum notes that feminist and Marxist critics do provide interpretations that bear on real-life ethical questions (171n6). Attridge specifically excludes from his critique of allegorical reading a humble historicism that simply gathers data without any guiding agenda. Such “estimable effort[s]” have “enrich[ed] the reading of literary works by illuminating the relevant historical and cultural contexts.” Attridge goes further: “indeed, literal reading fails if the reader is not possessed of the necessary contextual information. Literal reading needs all the history—literary history, social history, political history, cultural history, intellectual history—it can get” (60). Still, if he approves such historicism, Attridge does not actually practice it in his own readings, nor figure it as part of the reader’s falling in love with a text. If they do admire historicist criticism, narrative ethicists tend to do so as non-practitioners.

What makes the difference, then, between reading a book as narrative ethics does—one on one, concentrating on the text alone, feeling responsible and vulnerable—and reading a book as new historicism does? To begin with, as I have been suggesting, each methodology takes a different view of the text, one that does not put so much weight on the text’s alterity. Whereas narrative ethics focuses on the moment-to-moment experience of reading and on the affective consequences of the text’s solicitation or withholding, new historicism situates the text in its time and place by reading it alongside other nonliterary documents.¹⁶ Such juxtaposition renders the text a different kind of “other.” For narrative ethics, the demand to read privately and non-contextually flows from the demand to treat the text with the respect due to another person, to a potential friend or lover. Anything other than a close attention to the text’s language, its voice, diminishes the text-as-other’s dignity. Treating a text like a person ideally means encountering that text without a prejudicial agenda, with only an open mind and heart and ear for the other’s speech. It may be fair to approach a thing with prejudice; not so a text.

The demand to read the text and nothing but the text would seem to indict new historicist approaches for Miller. In an argument that echoes Attridge’s attack on allegorical reading (and, again, more recent critics of new historicist symptomatic reading), Miller rejects what he views as the indoctrination in “anthropology, political science, cultural studies, and the study of gender, race, and class” that goes by the name of “‘literary teaching’” (44).¹⁷ James, Miller reminds us, tells us his characters are “singular,” “not representatives of social types or classes,” so for instance it would be wrong to understand *Portrait* as “reflect[ing] the conditions of women and marriage conventions at the time the novel was written” (62). Isabel makes her own choices, Miller emphasizes; like the novel she appears in, she isn’t determined by society or historical circumstances. In the narrowly-focused view of the reading love story that narrative ethics writes, new historicism may be said to commit the mistake of treating a person (the text as a willful free agent) as a mere thing (the text as a product of social and historical forces).

Thus one argument for the incompatibility of narrative ethics and new historicism focuses on the status of the text: is it more like a person or more like a thing? Miller and Attridge object to reading as ideology critique because such reading destroys the sense of the encounter with a person that narrative ethics relies on. David Haney elaborates the stakes of this objection. For Haney, new historicist approaches are incompatible with narrative ethics because they flatten out human creativity to just another process in the ideological system, suppressing the agency both of the art

¹⁶ As Hamilton writes, “Most attractive to a critic writing after Foucault and wishing to have no truck with universal, transhistorical humanism”—the kind of humanism that Nussbaum is charged with practicing—“would be a kind of local knowledge of the past true to its own largely piecemeal self-awareness” (153).

¹⁷ Miller takes this argument from a late de Man essay that argues for close reading as better classroom practice than the training to read for “‘theology, ethics, psychology, or intellectual history’”; Miller updates that list to reflect more current classroom preoccupations.

work and of the reading subject (a worry that Nussbaum and Booth would share). His argument is representative in its willingness to push this ontology in one direction, personifying the text at least enough to argue for the resemblance of the relationship of reader to text to the relationship of self to other. But he rejects the ontological slide in the other direction, from person to product, that he finds in the Marxist-inflected critiques of Stephen Greenblatt or of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. He cites “Greenblatt’s emphasis on ‘the whole structure of production and consumption’ within which the work of art ‘is itself the product of a series of manipulations’ (8, 12)” (qtd 34). If art becomes such a product, so too does the reading self. Haney objects to Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that (in Haney’s words) “even desire is only production,” and “selves are products rather than agents of” the systems of production in a given society (35). Haney uses Coleridge to argue for a version of “the autonomy of the work of art” based in part on “the poetic text’s resemblance to a human other in its resistance to incorporation into subjectively controlled concepts” (37). Like Attridge, Haney approves of the data-gathering function of historicism, “because part of a past text’s resistance to conceptual appropriation is its historical otherness,” but he objects to the historicist tendency to make texts (like persons) into mere things, relays in a capitalist system.¹⁸

One consequence of the difference between reading the text as personified other versus reading the text as a product or thing emerges in the contrast between the texts narrative ethics and new historicism choose to read. Each approach pursues different questions; each approach turns to texts that more readily answer such questions. New historicism asks what cultural work the text does in its time and place, and it typically reads all manner of texts without regard for specifically “literary” qualities. Narrative ethics asks what ethical work reading a text does, here and now. So it typically reads canonical works, which tend to be amenable to transhistorical readings—they have survived because we continue to read them now. These texts are effectively pre-screened to be as complex and demanding as another person might be. James is a particular favorite.¹⁹ But narrative ethics also favors contemporary works that stage dilemmas of cultural diversity. J. M. Coetzee is a characteristic choice.²⁰ In any case, for narrative ethics, a work of literature must be as much as possible like a complicated, emotionally challenging “other” (potential friend, or resolute stranger) in order to yield a good reading. Narrative ethics thus requires that the text exercise the modernist literary values of difficulty and uncertainty. Attridge, for instance, argues that it is Coetzee’s modernist styling, the “foregrounding of language and other discursive and generic codes” common to modernism, that enables his works to mount their ethical challenge to reigning discourses. Such metafictional techniques can work toward “the testing and unsettling of deeply held assumptions of transparency, instrumentality, and direct referentiality,” and thereby “[open] a space for the apprehension of the otherness which those assumptions had silently excluded” (30). For poststructuralist narrative ethicists, in particular, only texts that do such difficult and unsettling work—texts that do not require the reader’s love—are conducive to ethical reading.

New historicism has no such investment in aesthetic complexity. Its objects may be artistically negligible or commercially marginal, flat or superficial by canonical standards. Elizabeth Dillon, for instance, notes the “disdain in high modernist thought for both mass culture and the

¹⁸ Thus Haney finds that Marjorie Levinson’s historicist reading of “Tintern Abbey,” because it focuses on the poem’s “representation of an excluded social reality,” “precludes a relation to the poem itself that can be structured along ethical lines.” This is because Levinson reads the poem as mimetic representation of its contemporaneous social ills, and to do so is to ignore the poem’s “resistance to conceptualization”—its person-like autonomy.

¹⁹ Both Nussbaum and Booth, who imagine a more reciprocal relationship between reader and text, allow for the ethical value of reading less overtly demanding texts, but their personification of the text still favors texts more complicated than those new historicism often reads.

²⁰ Coetzee also wins praise from Gayatri Spivak for the ambiguity and difficulty of his work, an ambiguity and difficulty that make the grounds for ethical reading.

sentimental”; narrative ethicists too, for the reasons I outlined above, prefer high art to bestsellers. For Dillon this disdain is “emblematic of a critical divide between the evaluative standards of an aesthetic criticism” on one hand “and the standards of cultural studies” on the other (496). Similarly, Jim O’Loughlin has pointed out that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was recuperated by critics in the 1980s precisely for its popularity. “Whereas the novel’s success was once seen as a strike against its literary relevance, critics such as Jane Tompkins and Richard Brodhead have viewed the popularity of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as a sign of its cultural importance” (575). For the new historicist, popular works are culturally important works, and that cultural importance makes it worth reading. Culture, not the novel or the poem itself, is new historicism’s “other.”²¹ When new historicists do begin with a Hawthorne or a Melville, they read such canonical authors through pieces of their surrounding social and cultural milieu, such as phrenological charts, accounts of South Seas exploration, or popular gift books celebrating scenic America.²² Historicism can find matter worth interpreting in a slew of greeting cards or a series of legal briefs because it does not view interpretation as a process akin to falling in love. The text need not maintain depths of meaning or emotional complexity because it is not meant to stand in for a person. New historicism can interpret objects that offer none of the literary values of challenge and ambiguity, the values that create the intersubjective potential that narrative ethics seems to require.

If Haney is right to argue that new historicist approaches fatally compromise narrative ethics’ aims by denying agency to the reader and text, then it may be perverse to ask new historicism to lend its strengths to imagining how a reader falls in love with a book. Indeed for Nancy Armstrong, as for many other new historicist critics of the sentimental, the idea of falling in love with a novel is simply an ideological artifact, a symptom of our capitulation to the liberal subject and our acceptance of its consolations. Hale points out that critics like Armstrong oppose Nussbaum’s version of reading because of “the ethical value it confers on private emotion” (898). Love is rather the false consciousness that keeps the bourgeois reader content. “For the Foucauldian,” Hale writes, “readerly love becomes the basis for (in [D. A.] Miller’s words) ‘the subject’s own contribution to the intensive and continuous “pastoral” care that liberal society proposes to take of each and every one of its charges’ (viii)” (898). H. Aram Veese’s summary of new historicist methods gives us no reason to think that new historicists feel any obligation to remain open to the texts they study, nor to treat those texts as speaking “others.” In Veese’s account, Greenblatt is a great critic because he shows how “all aesthetic representation anticipates or embodies market relations”; in this formulation market relations become the explanatory key to all reading, just the opposite of the agenda-free, literal, close reading of the text that Attridge and Miller call for (3). Instead of the rich offers of friendship or the baffling but alluring aporias that narrative ethicists find in the text-as-other, Veese writes that new historicists “all agree that contemporary life at its best embodies mobility and impersonality,” and that they further “agree that capitalism requires hollow, empty personalities that resemble money itself” (4). For new historicism, though, Veese says, this emptiness is not an outrage; rather new historicism “accepts the inevitability of emptiness” (19). Haney’s worries about the evacuation of agency seem confirmed.

²¹ As Paul Hamilton’s introduction to historicism puts it, the first characteristic move of historicism is to take a “hermeneutical” approach because “The past is to be understood on the model of interpreting a text,” which must like all texts “only have meaning within an economy of other texts” (3). Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, introducing their volume *Practicing New Historicism*, note that “the linguistic turn in the social and humanistic disciplines” has made it possible to understand “cultures as texts” and to thereby apply the kind of interpretive skills that literary studies normally exercises on creative works to the wider, nonliterary range of texts—indeed, to an entire way of life in a given time and place. It is Herder, again, who allows new historicism “the possibility of treating all of the written and visual traces of a particular culture as a mutually intelligible network of signs” (7).

²² These are some of the many “extraliterary” sources that Samuel Otter uses to read Melville in *Melville’s Anatomies*.

How could such an approach, then, help rewrite a love story between the reader and the text? How could a reader fall in love with a text-as-other imagined as a hollow product of cultural manipulations, neither complicated nor ambiguous? I maintain that there are resources within the new historicist approach that lend themselves to revising the one-on-one, happy or sad love story that narrative ethics imagines, without abandoning the love story model. The thing-like quality of the text need not mean giving up on the text's real and powerful alterity. New historicism can usefully reshape narrative ethics' approach precisely because it reminds us that subjects can be thing-like, that they can invite and demand a broad contextual view. My aim is to show that subjects (meaning texts as well as the people who are imagined in those texts) can be this way without losing their emotional punch. New historicism helps reimagine the love story between the reader and the text because it raises the possibility—a possibility I find confirmed in American love stories—that an other who is available on the surface and fundamentally networked into its milieu, an other whose salient qualities may be in part the effects of power-relays, could still be lovable.

The sentimental novel offers a useful case study here, revealing the needless polarization between the two methods. As I have suggested, narrative ethics overlooks the sentimental in favor of works from the high end of the literary canon, texts that make for more complicated “others.” If the link I have proposed between James and the sentimental novel seems counterintuitive, that may be a measure of how far narrative ethics has divorced itself from practical morality. What could be more politically engaged than a novel like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, credited by Lincoln, as legend has it, with starting the Civil War, and credited by Tompkins, as we will see below, with combating chattel slavery and patriarchy to boot? Why does narrative ethics ignore a subgenre that so overtly aims to produce ethical effects in its readers? Why should Nussbaum, Booth, Attridge, and Miller not feel moved to treat Harriet Beecher Stowe's effort to expand the perimeter of the human to include slaves like Uncle Tom?²³ I have offered the germ of a possible answer above, in describing the ways narrative ethics requires its objects of study to display literary values of complexity and challenge in order to secure their status as textual others. Narrative ethics eschews “ethics” as moral instruction—the kind of didacticism that Stowe offers in abundance—for a more subtle analogy between the text and the other.²⁴ What both poststructuralist and humanist narrative ethics share is the claim that what makes reading ethical is that reading is like a one-on-one encounter with a stranger. And to theorize the ethical value of novel-reading, narrative ethics takes its cues from James, credited with defining high modernism and psychological realism. By those standards, the sentimental text-as-other fails to be the kind of other that one can manage to fall in love with: it is not challenging enough, deep enough, complicated enough, or ambiguous enough. Under the lens of the love story that narrative ethics tells, the sentimental novel is too much like a thing and too little like a person.²⁵

²³ That Stowe is interested in effecting such an expansion is Philip Fisher's argument about the novel in *Hard Facts*. Nussbaum does, however, appreciate the sentimental as executed by Dickens. Altieri notes that her appreciation of *Hard Times* testifies to Nussbaum's willingness to make “pathos...the central link between the literary and the ethical,” a position that fits her interest in the cognitive value of emotions, a position which, Altieri argues, must ultimately (and circularly) value emotions based on a narrow definition of their reasonableness. (“Lyrical Ethics” 41).

²⁴ Adam Zachary Newton, in his *Narrative Ethics*, notes that while Tolstoy may have loved *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that text's ethics works by example, urging “its readers... to imitate and inculcate” the narrative's good guys by way of “a chain of mimetic and performative substitutions” (66); this “exemplary” modus operandi undercuts Newton's preferred emphasis on “confrontation” with the text.

²⁵ Tompkins argues that the process of establishing a male canon of American literature, of establishing a ruling modernist aesthetic that privileged “psychological complexity, moral ambiguity, epistemological sophistication, stylistic density, formal economy” (xvii), overt ethics were deliberately cast out of the realm of literary value: “[t]he very grounds on which sentimental fiction has been dismissed by its detractors, grounds which have come to seem universal standards

Though the sentimental novel fails to be the kind of text-as-other that narrative ethics requires, it does explicitly invite its reader to identify with it, cry over it, and fall in love with it. Multitudes of readers, certainly past and probably present, have loved sentimental novels—though not, we would expect, in exactly the way Miller loves Isabel Archer. Many new historicist critics who have published readings of the sentimental novel, however, have read it chiefly as a symptom of the spread of capitalism. Certainly they have not appeared to fall in love with the object of their study, at least not in the way that Nussbaum or Miller fall in love with James’s novels. The more reductive of such criticism reads the text alongside relevant contemporaneous documents in the service of the allegorical reading that Attridge warns about, to explain the sentimental—and specifically its mobilization of readers’ feelings—according to a master narrative of the march of capitalism. Lori Merish, for instance, reads the sentimental along with the autobiography of a Methodist preacher, Stowe’s *House and Home Papers*, and the works of Scottish Common Sense philosophers (among other documents) in order to trace the development of what she calls “sentimental ownership” as a justification for consuming luxury goods. For Merish, sympathy amounts to an “affectional equivalent of the money form” (51), and she argues that although it is “constructed as an autonomous emotional response, sentimental ownership is a fantasy of intimate possession that is in fact—like the ‘free market’ itself—produced and sustained by laws and economic policies” (4). Her work closely follows Gillian Brown’s argument that “sentimental possession” offered a way for women imaginatively to assert the power to remove commodities from the marketplace and to humanize them, whether they were inanimate objects or slaves. Like Merish, Brown also takes a broad contextual view of the text-as-other, reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in concert with Catherine Beecher’s domestic manuals, for instance. Both authors, though, employ such textual juxtaposition to expose the apparently private and emotional space created by the sentimental novel as a smokescreen for capitalist enterprise.²⁶ But, as we have seen, there are new historicists who reject such unmasking techniques. June Howard argues that “it is time for American literary historians to vacate, once and for all, the discourse of judgment that has characterized so much work on sentimentality” (63). Glenn Hendler charges critics like Merish and Brown with an “uncharacteristic literalism” (9) that ignores sentimental authors’ intentions; he suggests approaching the sentimental as an instance of what Raymond Williams famously terms a “structure of feeling” in order “[t]o avoid reducing sentimentalism to a form of false consciousness or a merely strategic use of rhetoric” (10). As Samuel Otter writes of the bestseller *Ruth Hall*, its deployment of sentimental clichés offers “a set of forms saturated with affect and rife with possibilities,” functioning as an instance of Roland Barthes’s “notion of ‘écriture,’” “the historically inflected patterns of syntax, diction, and logic that elicit recognition with but an allusion or a gesture” (*MA* 235). These critics’ calls for nonreductive approaches gesture toward the historicized version of the reading love story that I want to delineate.

Jane Tompkins’s work would seem to offer just the model I am seeking. Her effort to recuperate the sentimental from Ann Douglas’s (and various modernist canon-makers’) dismissal is grounded in terms that suggest that we must see the sentimental in the context of its time and place in order really to love it. Tompkins adduces materials from the New York City Tract Society to demonstrate the cultural pervasiveness of such sentimental conventions as the deathbed scenes. She claims, much as I do, that “in order to understand the appeal of their [the sentimental novelists’] project one has to have some familiarity with the cultural discourse of the age for which they spoke” (“Other” 35-36). Further, “it is only by attempting to see that reality from within the assumptions

of aesthetic judgment, were established in a struggle to supplant the tradition of evangelical piety and moral commitment these novelists represent” (123).

²⁶ For a critique of such arguments and their predominance in American studies, see Clark Davis’s introduction to *Hawthorne’s Shyness*.

that founded it that one can arrive at a notion of what gave sentimental fiction its tremendous original force” (36). We can only fall in love with these novels, Tompkins seems to say, if we look around rather than deeply into them. But Tompkins is not trying to read a novel like *The Wide, Wide World* as the kind of “other” that narrative ethics imagines. She argues for a redemptive value for the sentimental beyond the experience it offers of coming to know and love the text, a value rather conceived as, and granted by, sociopolitical potency in a particular historical moment. Her account attaches the sentimental novel to what she positions as a more important story of cultural activism, rather than enjoying the ways the sentimental text-as-other engages its world and its reader. That is what my revised reader-text love story aims to do.

If the sentimental shows the contrast between narrative ethics and new historicist methodology, it also offers a possible bridge between them. The sentimental mode can de-polarize narrative ethics and new historicist methods by blurring the line between “public and private, proclaiming their separation and at the same time demonstrating their inseparability,” and by “mark[ing] a moment when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible,” as June Howard writes (76-77). Insofar as narrative ethics conceives love as a private matter, just between the reader and the text, and insofar as the sentimental form makes such love widely sharable, then, it appears to vitiate the intimacy that is key to narrative ethics readings. Is a feeling really love, is it really ethical, if everyone else feels it too? I would argue that it can be, and that the publicly-directed, non-penetrative reader-text love generated by the sentimental novel reveals the constraints of the reader-text love story that narrative ethics privileges. A contextual view of the text-as-other is necessary to understand at least some kinds of emotional attachment we can have to a text or to the other. This is why, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, the sentimental offers a workable hinge between the interests of narrative ethics and new historicism.

Looking beyond the scholarship on the sentimental, we find in Hale’s concept of “social formalism” evidence that the notion of a lovable subjectivity in the text does, in fact, discreetly power new historicist or cultural studies readings more generally. By her argument, such methodology owes an unacknowledged debt to the idea of the value of the sympathetic encounter with the other that James’s formalism enshrines. Social formalists find justification for imagining the novel as instantiating a personality, for “transfer[ring]...social identity from persons to texts” (*SF* 17), in Bakhtin’s argument that the novelist’s special use of language makes the best representation of the social. Thus the interest in alterity that James’s formalism establishes carries all the way through to new historicists and cultural studies critics who would otherwise distance themselves from formalism.²⁷ Similarly, the idea that the novel as a genre manages to comprehend the way individuals exist in a web of social relations, the “untheorized understanding of the novel as inherently politicized” (“Aesthetic” 899), links humanist and poststructuralist narrative ethics.²⁸ But unlike narrative ethics approaches, new historicist readings put literary novels (or plays, or poetry) in conversation with nonliterary texts of the same time and place. New historicist reading practices, that is, make good on the notion of the text’s sociality by seeing the text alongside contemporaneous cultural productions rather than in the one-on-one scene of reading that narrative ethics uses as a

²⁷ “A tradition that begins with the definition of subjectivities as points of view and culminates in the definition of languages as subjectivities is based on the enduring desire to imagine that even de-essentialized identity can have stability, that the ‘characters’ of both people and literary genres can be recognized through their material manifestations in language” (*SF* 18).

²⁸ This “belief that the novel instantiates social identity through its form,” a belief “at the heart of the Jamesian tradition of novel theory,” “is not a logical confusion about the ontological status of literary form but an aesthetic effect of the novel as the genre has been developed through the twentieth century and into our own cultural moment” (“Aesthetic” 904).

frame. If we think of the “empty personalities” that Veeseer invokes, then, they may appear less empty if we widen our view to look around them into the fullness of their connections.

As Tompkins’s work makes clear, new historicists themselves may claim an interest in understanding, if not quite falling in love with, marginalized voices of history, personalities instantiated in texts or in cultures-as-texts. Veeseer notes, in describing an essay by Catherine Gallagher, the “scandal” of new historicism’s “contradictory valuation and debasement of the human individual, an oscillating effect” that Gallagher captures as she shows how Dickens characters are “‘equally garbage and treasure to each other; indeed, they are treasure because they are garbage’” (qtd 13). Greenblatt and Gallagher themselves clarify the humanist and individualist stakes of new historicism in their joint introduction to *Practicing New Historicism*. Citing the influence of Herder’s Romantic hermeneutic on new historicist methods, they conclude, “The task of understanding then depends not on the extraction of an abstract set of principles, and still less on the application of a theoretical model, but rather on an encounter with the singular, the specific, and the individual” (6). Such an encounter sounds remarkably congenial to the narrative ethics encounter with the literary text, and the preference for the specific over the abstract certainly agrees with Nussbaum’s preference for concrete particulars of literature to the abstract generalities of moral philosophy. The new historicist investment in individuality, however, comes through not in an explicit claim for the text as an other but in a focus on the anecdote. Through the anecdote (a ship’s log, a broadside, a popular song), new historicists seek “real bodies and living voices, and if we knew that we could not find these—the bodies having long moldered away and the voices fallen silent—we could at least seize upon those traces that seemed to be close to actual experience” (*PNH* 30).²⁹ The anecdote offers “the touch of the real,” an immediacy that no other approach yields. This sounds like an urge to know and possibly to love the other that comes through the encounter with the text—although it is not, as in narrative ethics, a love that unfolds through the encounter itself.³⁰ If the human subject is as fungible as money, it is still worthy of rhetorical attention. Close reading, then, need not be the special province of the isolated reader-text reading; the text can be read closely in juxtaposition with its myriad contemporaneous discourses.

The person-versus-thing split—the methodological difference between viewing the text as a subject (welcoming or overpowering) versus viewing it as an object (a link in capitalism’s chain, or a piece of socioeconomic data)—plays out, of course, in fictional content as well as in literary criticism. The texts I will be considering in the coming chapters all portray falling in love, in one way or another, and all try in various ways to understand the difference in how we love persons and how we love things. Miller writes of *The Golden Bowl* that “[t]he novel as a whole, it could be said, devotes itself to ‘looking into’ the queer mistake involved in seeing another human being as an object of price that can be bought, acquired, possessed, enjoyed,” and he warns that “[b]eyond the general immorality of treating a person as a thing, a danger derives from the way human beings have wills, feelings, an ability to think and do, of their own. They do not just rest passively in glass cabinets” (251). I want to call into question Miller’s claim that the novel definitively shows that seeing a person as a thing is a mistake. In the leave-taking scene near the end of the novel Charlotte and Amerigo, arrayed just so on the sofas in Portland Place, might as well be sitting passively in glass cabinets (*TGB* 574). This might be reprehensible for Miller, but if, like Nussbaum, you are rooting for

²⁹ Such a humanistic aim in reading—to make immediate contact with the other—does not escape disapproval within the new historicist camp: Veeseer notes Marjorie Levinson’s criticism that “[t]he wish to reconstruct a milieu in which ‘to restore to dead their own living language’ is precisely unaltered *old* historicism” (10).

³⁰ Veeseer’s argument for the superiority of new historicism to old historicism also privileges the individual encountered in the text. New historicism is better, he writes, because the literary critic’s close reading of a cultural document “get[s] an inside look at something also beneath most historians’ notice—a single *human subject*” (5; emphasis in original).

Maggie, that passivity might provide the legitimate condition of a happy ending. James's portrayal of Fanny and Bob, as I will show, offers a vision of a couple who are capable of seeing each other as exhibits of a sort, and who nonetheless love each other dearly.

Similarly, in his discussion of *Portrait*, considering Gilbert Osmond's treatment of Isabel, Miller asks, "To treat a person like a thing, what could be more reprehensible?" (57). But he notes here that even our heroine Isabel loves Gilbert in part for "aesthetic" reasons, "for his rarity, for his fine grain, just as Osmond values Isabel as another item for his collection, and just as James gives his novel a title that suggests the way he has turned his imaginary personage... into a work of art" (62-63). In noting that James implicitly asks us to see Isabel as a work of art, as a portrait, Miller points toward James's acceptance that we do see persons (both real and imaginary) as objects. And Miller comes close here to acknowledging that for Isabel to view Gilbert as a work of art (much as Adam Verver views his daughter Maggie) does not foreclose the possibility of her really loving him. Clearly Gilbert's kind of love is toxic. But Gilbert's wrong may not be so much that he treats Isabel like an item in a collection, but that he maltreats his collection. If he were a collector more in the mold of Adam, or of Mrs. Gereth from *The Spoils of Poynton*, his marriage to Isabel might have been bearable. The problem is not so much that we view some persons as things; the problem might be that we don't go far enough in viewing some things as being like persons.³¹

Love between reader and text should be possible, then, whether we approach the text as a thing or as an anthropomorphized other—or as both at the same time. I propose reconceiving the text-as-other as a recognizably poststructuralist subject that nonetheless invites our affection. In the love stories I read from Stowe to James, I find a beloved other that is apprehended not through penetrating insight but through surface-level appreciation, through an eye that takes in the way the beloved integrates pieces of his or her surrounding world. Such a beloved is so thoroughly connected with its world that it would be impossible actually to know it (and love it) by isolating it. To apply the analogy to literary criticism, it would be impossible as a reader actually to see the text-as-other stripped of its cultural matrix, or to know it (and love it) without tracking its textual ties and preoccupations into archives of contemporaneous materials. Such an approach takes it that both persons and things are fundamentally, constitutively, connected to their milieu. Thus the thing-versus-person distinction loses its force as a guide to reading, and falling in love with, a book.

Citing new historicism's debt to Clifford Geertz's "thick description," Gallagher and Greenblatt write, "The point is that to understand what people are up to in any culture"—whether winking or twitching, stealing sheep, or writing string quartets—"you need to be acquainted 'with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs'" (27). This is no more than Attridge or Haney, otherwise defending literature against the predations of new historicism and its ideology critique, would agree with. And it is a model of knowing and loving that we will see Fanny and Bob Assingham, as well as Little Eva and Uncle Tom, carry out in their own attachments to each other.

III. THE NEW READER-TEXT LOVE STORY

My argument throughout will rely on taking seriously the ways loving and knowing are portrayed in a sequence of fictional love stories. It aims to use these love stories to help illuminate the interpretive processes by which we come to know and love texts and persons. In that respect I will be arguing as Nussbaum would for the value of applying fictional models to real-life ethical problems, and I will be maintaining the narrative ethics framework of reading as a species of falling in love. But I find these fictions proposing that knowledge and love are both possible without relying on the tropes of depth and penetrative insight. For Hawthorne and Melville, the urge toward

³¹ This is to build on Bill Brown's claim that James quite happily takes rhetorical advantage of the "recognition that we use physical objects to arouse and organize our affection" (163).

deep insight does much to counteract any sense of the sufficiency of surface. But the novels I read by Stowe and Phelps, and by Stoddard and James, all invite us to take them as manifesting their value on their rhetorical surfaces. If these novels are others, their subjectivity (like the subjectivities they portray in their fictional worlds) is that of the manifest self, a self that is more congenial to objecthood than Miller or narrative ethics more broadly imagines. I will show more clearly how this manifest self functions in the next chapter, but it bears an introduction here.

Charles Altieri, who is no fan of the sentimental, offers a description of subjectivity that might conceptualize the text-as-other in a way that satisfies both narrative ethics and new historicism. His notion of “modular agency” bridges the thing-versus-person gap in much the way I have said the sentimental mode does. Modular agency, as Altieri describes it, suggests a subject that has more agency than the new historicist’s thing-like “empty personality,” but a subject that is more permeable to its surroundings, less private, than narrative ethics typically assumes. Such a concept of agency, Altieri hopes, will help narrative ethics to develop “moral vocabularies that pay much greater attention than is now the norm to the complexity, self-division, and emergent or event-based aspects of moral life” (“What” 118). For him this means understanding subjectivity in a way that is illustrated by lyric poetry rather than by novels, poetry that highlights “aspects of agency very difficult to reconcile with reason” (“What” 114). He likes the lyric form because it is relatively denuded of the contexts that can make longer narrative fiction so appealing to those who want to evaluate moral judgments and actions. If we consider the ethics of reading as we read lyric, then, “we will find versions of individual agency that cannot be ‘owned,’ in Stanley Cavell’s sense, because there is a constant interplay between the effort to perform or represent the self and the manifestation of the dependencies and slippages” familiar to “postmodern psychology” (“What” 118). The modular agency that Altieri finds in the poetry of Robert Hass, for instance, maintains boundaries between persons (even between lovers) while perpetually shifting, adjusting to “scenic features” like birds and hotels and apple-tree blossoms and to “the metaphors that tell us who we are as we respond to those [scenic] features” (“What” 122). Such a model of agency, as Altieri says, “modifies what we can mean by ‘stranger’” because it shows how “parts of our lives are always potentially overlapping others” (“What” 121). Such modular agency closely resembles the manifest self that I will argue connects the sentimental novel with James’s late work. And it offers a model for imagining the kind of text-as-other that would be amenable to a reading that takes account of the text’s connections to its world.

The hybrid of narrative ethics and new historicism that I imagine, then, will treat the text as a connected and permeable subject. And with what aims will this reading style approach such a text, such an other? New historicist readings that aim to unmask, symptomatic or allegorical readings like Merish’s or Brown’s, are not what I have in mind. Best’s and Marcus’s introduction to “surface reading”³² delineates a version of reading that takes the new historicist interest in discursive networks but relaxes its will to expose the ideological complicity of literary texts.³³ One version of

³² It is worth noting that this is the journal that first put the new historicists on the map, as Hamilton writes: “profit[ing] especially from the visits of Foucault to the University of California at Berkeley during the last years of his life,” the “editors and contributors to the journal *Representations* helped place an American new historicism in productive relations with historiographers..., theorists of postcolonialism..., and... critical ethnologists like Geertz” (163).

³³ In Best’s and Marcus’s genealogy of symptomatic reading, Freud and Marx are the top modern progenitors, but early Christian thought too plays a role in promoting the idea that reading is a matter of showing how what the text says it means and what it really means are two distinct things. Indeed, as Marcus and Best note, Jameson himself recognized the likeness between his own Marxist allegorizing and Augustine’s interpretive method (15), and is as zealous as Augustine in arguing for the transcendence of his master narrative. For his part, Miller, as a narrative ethicist of the Levinasian stripe, also opposes this style of hermeneutic reading, the digging through the surface for the real meaning beneath. He argues in particular that James in *The Aspern Papers* gives the lie to the idea “[t]hat truth can by proper procedures be penetrated,

surface reading, as Best and Marcus describe it, takes the form of “placing a text in its discursive contexts” so as to “illuminate textual features that are obvious but which critics have overlooked” (7). Such a reading sounds like new historicism without the urge to uncover false consciousness, since it looks for affinities with other contemporaneous texts but not for complicity with capitalism or patriarchy. This is effectively the approach I take in each chapter, and my motivation for juxtaposing, for instance, Bible-study guides with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and in *The Gates Ajar*. My reading also participates in the kind of surface reading that Best and Marcus describe in introducing Anne Cheng’s essay. Cheng’s reading construes surface explicitly as “an affective and ethical stance.” Her reading “replace[s] suspicion and critical mastery with a susceptibility that could undo the dichotomy between subject and object” and reads for “a constellation of multiple surfaces understood as concealing nothing,” rather than for the depth beneath the surface (8, 9). This is a boundary-erasure that follows Susan Sontag’s call for “an erotics of art,” and it marks both an erotic and an ethical goal (14).³⁴ These models of surface reading coincide with key aspects of the historicized reading of the text-as-other as I imagine it. Marcus and Best note that because it gives up unmasking ideology, and because it typically abandons the idea that either art or criticism produces freedom, “[s]urface reading... might easily be dismissed as politically quietist, too willing to accept things as they are” (16). In response they cite Altieri’s call for a mode of art appreciation that enables the reader “to enjoy what and where one is without having to produce any supplemental claims that promise some ‘significance’ not immediately evident” (qtd 16).³⁵

I will conclude with what seems to me an exemplary contextualist reading, one that treats its literary object with much the same respect that narrative ethics calls for. Samuel Otter’s essay on *The Garies and Their Friends* recommends that critics “read even more slowly and less transparently,” spending more time appreciating the peculiarities and resistances of the text before making any “claims about politics” based on those texts (747). Otter situates Frank Webb’s novel in a synchronous network, shifting attention fluidly from the world the novel presents to the world in which the novel presented itself, but he lets the text’s own preoccupations direct his attention. The scene of a wedding dinner prompts Otter to include a recipe for boneless turkey from a 19th-century cookbook; the “lavish detail” of the scene’s description prompts an exposition on the tradition of still-life as it carried down to contemporaneous Philadelphia painters. Positioning the text in a discursive network this way does not serve to demonstrate an archeology of power, nor does it read the text as a symptom of the rise of a black bourgeoisie. To label certain scenes of the novel “bourgeois,” as one editor of Webb’s work does, “insufficiently marks the shifting alignments of class and race described in the novel, or the characters’ tactical materialism, or their strenuous pleasures” (747). Texts like Webb’s, Otter says, “suggest that we only think we know what we are seeing when we look at surfaces” (748). Surfaces are what such a reading takes into account, without straining for something more valuable deep inside, or beyond, the text. Such reading appreciates and admires the way the text-as-other exists in its time and place. It is a reading that pays attention to, but forbears making claims about, the text’s engagements with its historical and political moment.³⁶

reached, decoded, revealed, and unveiled. It can then be triumphantly brought out into the open where all may see it and where it may be told as a coherent narrative” (19).

³⁴ Best and Marcus list several other versions of surface reading, including reading as taxonomy or pattern-recognition. Their enumeration of these varieties is in itself helpfully productive, suggesting multiple alternatives to the polarization I have described between narrative ethics and new historicism.

³⁵ This recalls Altieri’s objection to Nussbaum’s drive to attach cognitive, moral-philosophical baggage to the reader’s emotions, a drive that I would trace in part to her narrow focus on the text-as-other.

³⁶ Tompkins’s claim for the politically redemptive value of the sentimental seems bound to perpetuate the trap of the containment/subversion debate that has constrained scholarship on the sentimental novel. Otter’s approach helps mitigate such insistence.

One distinct aim of the wide-angle reading that I envision is, as with the surface reading Best and Marcus describe, to avoid “reduc[ing]” literature or art “to instrumental means to an end” (16). Does narrative ethics, whether it reads with a narrow focus or a wide angle, make literature instrumental to the end of proving the ethical good of reading? Is even Attridge guilty of allegorical reading, insofar as he allegorizes the text as an other? And doesn’t my own wide-angle method retain that end? I am, after all, maintaining the allegory of reading as falling in love. If this is not a reading method that aims at critical mastery—if instead it makes a virtue of critical relaxation—that doesn’t mean that wide-angle reading manages to see the text just as it is, which is, indeed, impossible. That doesn’t mean, to put it another way, that my wide-angle revision of narrative ethics is any less culpable than narrowly-focused narrative ethics for its insistence on seeing the text as an other. But I hope there is something salutary in taking seriously the analogies between person and thing, or (to put it negatively) by dropping the person-thing distinction as a guide to reading and taking it that anything or anyone is fully embedded in its thing-filled world. This is another way of saying, as in Cheng’s reading, that I hope to wear down the boundary between subject and object precisely by arguing that both can be viewed the same way: through the materials that their time and place supplied them with, the materials from which they made themselves and through which they exist.

Chapter 2

The Word Made Exhibition: Protestant Reading Meets Catholic Worship in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar*

Gerald Graff has recently lamented the pedagogical habit of treating reading as falling in love. In Graff's terms, the problem is the idea that students should intuit, without the aid of secondary criticism and by virtue of intuition, something like the soul of a work. Under this model, "To read *Paradise Lost* closely and well... is to submit to the text so fully and to get on such intimate terms with its language that the text's literary discourse will transmute itself into our appropriate responses to it as readers." Reading here works as an emotionally intense experience of the other by the self, whether the self successfully apprehends the depths of the other beneath its surface, or whether the self is baffled by its failure to so apprehend those depths. Because this view imagines good reading as intimacy, as a yearned-for (though perhaps unachievable) mutual unveiling—because it expects that "if a literary work is truly great and if we read it receptively, the work itself will tell us what to say about it"—it does not require an acquaintance with the tradition of criticism on the work. Graff ascribes this pedagogy to "the deep-seated belief of humanists that reading and responding to commentators about a literary text competes with reading it closely and attentively" (3-4). The same belief also finds expression in the reader-text love story that narrative ethics tells. That love story similarly imagines the best reading to occur in the solitude between reader and text, a solitude that enables a transfusion of meaning that overcomes the barriers between self and other.

The model of reading that Graff describes here bears a telling resemblance not only to recent accounts of narrative ethics, but also to the nineteenth-century American Protestant view of Bible reading. As I will show, the rhetoric of nineteenth-century Protestant guides to Bible study, like the rhetoric of twentieth-century narrative ethics, privileges depth as the aim of good reading. It proposes that for the good reader, the solid book sublimates into spiritual immediacy. Seen in this light, the language of love, of personal intimacy with a text-as-other, that Graff cites appears as a latter-day secularization of the notion that salvation might be accessible through the unmediated experience between a reader and her Bible.

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was translated and published in Italy in 1852, it was read widely and enthusiastically, but some Catholic observers took exception to its theology, according to Joseph Rossi. One newspaper, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, objected to Harriet Beecher Stowe's portrayal of "sentiments so noble and virtues so marvelous [being acquired] by the *sole* reading of the *sole* Bible, which seems to be the predominant fixation of the author" (qtd in Rossi 422-423). This judgment is no mistake. The scene of Little Eva and Uncle Tom reading the Bible next to Lake Pontchartrain, for instance, represents an ideal of reading for and feeling the presence of God, and it consecrates in advance their upcoming deaths. The newspaper reminds its readers that the Catholic church has "little faith in this means" of accessing God through the printed page, and warns them not to be "impressed" by images of scriptural salvation (qtd in Rossi 423). But it also faults Stowe for taking inspiration from "the immense treasures of Catholic hagiography" to feed a "fervid imagination" embodied in a "sentimental novel" (qtd in Rossi 423). My essay argues that the religious hybrid identified by the review--Stowe's attempt to wed the treasures of Catholicism with a Protestant faith in reading--shapes her fiction. Along with Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's 1868 *The Gates Ajar*, another bestseller that puts outsize pressure on the question of how to read and how to access the sacred, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows how Christian doctrinal differences influenced the imagination of reading in the sentimental novel and decisively shaped its style. It is by balancing the appeals of Catholic and Protestant faith that Stowe and Phelps develop a novelistic strategy I will call the exhibitional style.

Certainly both Stowe and Phelps are possessed of impeccable Protestant credentials. Stowe was daughter and sister, respectively, to prominent clergymen Lyman and Henry Ward Beecher; Phelps was raised in a family of two generations of Andover seminarians. Stowe's Protestant influences have been persuasively and extensively tracked, as have Phelps's.³⁷ But Stowe developed a robust, if vexed, relationship with Catholicism. Jenny Franchot argues that in writing *Agnes of Sorrento*, ten years after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe "Catholicize[s] her narrative" on the rhetorical level "by imitating the liturgical practices celebrated by the plot" (250). Anthony Szczesiul finds that in her religious poetry "Stowe openly expresses a desire for the 'imagistic' tradition of Catholicism--the sights, smells, and sounds of Catholic ritual," and argues for Stowe's portraying Eva and Tom according to specifically Catholic conventions of sainthood (n. pag.). Little Eva is an evangelist, certainly, but a Catholic one. In Phelps's novel, characters openly voice appreciation for Catholicism. The hero of *Gates*, Winifred Forceythe, worries that "In our recoil from the materialism of the Romish Church, we have, it seems to me, nearly stranded ourselves on the opposite shore" (110). Winifred's daughter Faith kisses a portrait of her dead father nightly, as if it were an icon, an act of devotion that startles the narrator Mary when she first sees it. Wanting to win their readers to the abolitionist cause or to console them for the losses of the Civil War, Stowe and Phelps act both as novelists and practical theologians. They take it that reading can save the soul, a foundational Protestant view that inspires their projects as authors. But the reading they imagine goes against the grain of Protestant injunctions to sit alone and pore over the pages. The exhibitional style reconfigures devotional reading as a communal and emotional, a visual and almost tactile, experience.³⁸ In this way *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar* attempt to find a middle ground between competing models of human contact with God: private reading that goes deep between the lines, or a public sacrament that relies on the sharable, visual, and material. The interpretation of texts that is key to Protestant devotion begins, in their hands, to resemble Catholic worship. This holds both for the kind of reading Stowe and Phelps portray in their fiction, and for the kind of reading their fiction aims to generate in its own readers.

The theological debate that informed Stowe's and Phelps's fictional practice was frequently cast in terms of surface and depth, especially by Protestant commentators, whose faith in the Bible's salvific potential demanded a specifically deep reading. In 1844, for instance, the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society published a guide to Bible interpretation urging believers to read beneath the surface. Ordinary reading, as of a "common book" or newspaper, would fail to attain the proper depth; at best the reader would "gather up, perhaps, a few fragments that lie upon the surface" (41, 52). The ideal reading, by contrast, would feel more like diving into dark water and finding a gem:

As by steadily and intently gazing into waters which at first appear dark and fathomless, you by degrees penetrate their depths, and see the lost jewel that lies at the bottom, so by dwelling with earnest meditation upon the deep things of God, light comes to the mental eye. (55)

³⁷ For recent instances of such work, see, for instance, Coleman, who argues for Stowe's narrative voice as homiletic (266-267), and Farrell (245-246), who shows the influence of Puritan primers on her prose. Smith catalogs Phelps's "personal exposure to currents in biblical hermeneutics" (108).

³⁸ This is not to deny that secular reading was frequently a communal practice. Barbara Hochman observes that recent studies of reading history have stressed public reading: "[B]ooks consolidate communities—imagined or otherwise. Gone is the figure of the solitary reader" (848). But guides for the specifically devotional reading that I discuss here stress privacy, solitude, and focus.

The reward for such reading-as-diving was the reader's penetration to the deepest level of the text, where its true meaning hid, and an illuminating merge with the spirit of the text. By "endeavor[ing] to find the treasure which is there hidden from the world," good readers might "be penetrated and filled with the spirit and life of the Divine word" (56). Deep reading, at its best, would spiritually incorporate the word and afford contact with that word's author, God. The promise that reading might, by penetrating to the depths of the text, fill a reader with divine life effectively elevated it to the level of a sacrament.

As the review in *La Civiltà Cattolica* makes clear, this implicit claim to sacramentality was, from the Catholic view, precisely the problem. Catholic doctrine held that while reading the Bible might be salutary, it could not be the instrument of grace, because no text could deliver the spirit and presence of its author. "Christ alone can make men Christians," *The Catholic World*, an American monthly, reminded its readers in 1883.

And no account of Christ is Christ.... nobody nowadays needs to be told that the contents of a book, whatever these may be, are powerless to place its readers in direct contact and vital relations with its author.... All effort is vain to... stop the cravings of a soul for the living Saviour with a printed book! (4)

Here the Protestant argument for deep reading is refuted on its own terms: there is no possibility of standing within a book, or of spiritual communion with its author. The notion that some deep reality lies in wait beneath the surface of the printed page is a fantasy. Rather than charge the reader with transforming paper and ink into contact with the divine, Catholic faith relied on church tradition to interpret the Bible and to mediate access to God. And church tradition dictated that God's grace came not through reading but through the sacrament of communion: tangible, publicly consumed, and, in the hands of a priest, capable of transubstantiation. This sacrament, as German Catholic apologist Johann Adam Möhler put it, was not a matter of invisible feeling or mental light but a "sensible means, instituted by Christ, to convey grace to the soul" (10).

I explore the surface/depth binary in Catholic and Protestant discourse at more length below. This is by no means a full treatment, and I do not mean to reduce these doctrinal differences to a contest between people who believe in words and abstractions and people who believe in wafers and crucifixes. Indeed, certainly not all Protestants acted according to the dictates of the clergy's guidance on Bible reading. The traveling salesmen who distributed Bibles for the American Tract Society reported occasional hostility to their wares. They also reported scenes of communal reading—"people regularly read to each other and, especially, to nonreaders"—as well as instances of what looks like outright fetishization of sacred texts. One colporteur told of a woman in rural New Jersey who had wrapped a tract in linen, apparently without ever reading it, and who requested another copy of the same book.³⁹ And Protestant women, especially later in the century, found ways to make sacramental reading into public ornamentation. When they decorated their homes, they did so not with pictures as such, but with words made into pretty images: *Godey's Lady's Book* offered "directions for making bookmarkers with biblical phrases such as 'Forsake me not O Lord' and 'God is Our Refuge.'" (qtd in McDannell 39).⁴⁰ Such decoratively stitched Bible verses are "verbal

³⁹ David Paul Nord's study of the twinned rise of cheap mass printing and the formation of societies to spread the word of God—whether for free or for payment, in the form of a Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, or some other religious work—is illuminating in its collection of such anecdotal evidence of actual reading practices among nineteenth-century Americans (147-149).

⁴⁰ Similarly, McDannell goes on, "Mottoes and their cases made from perforated cardboard 'could be finished up in most lovely colors and embroidery.' Each day a different motto could be set in its case: Monday, 'Be diligent in well-doing,' Wednesday, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help,'" and so forth (39). By the end

images,” to borrow a phrase from Mitchell, and it fits the model of the hybrid aesthetic developed in the sentimental novel, a strategy that I will call the exhibitional style.

I focus on the conflict, though, to show how Stowe and Phelps reconfigure in their novels the distinct relationships between surface and depth codified in Protestant versus Catholic ideas of worship. The exhibitional style they develop rehabilitates what Protestant Bible-reading guides would characterize as mere surface without abandoning the Protestant will to depth. We can see the exhibitional style crystallize in scenes of Bible reading and musing about heaven, and it pervades both novels in formal choices that run contrary to a core Protestant insistence on private feeling. In light of the positions staked out by the Sabbath School Society and *The Catholic World*, we can see more clearly how the scene of Tom and Eva’s reading (discussed at length below) reaches toward what Winifred calls the materialism of the Romish Church. Stowe portrays an interpretive act of worship that requires penetration neither of the surface of the text nor of its scenic analog in the smooth surface of the lake. Tom and Eva are reading their way to salvation, like good Protestants. But what they do is not figured as diving into depths or meditating on the deep things of God, but as gathering fragments from the Bible’s textual surface and creating a shared imaginary vision of it. Mary and Winifred’s discussions of heaven in *Gates* work according to similar principles. These models of reading depart from the ideal that the Sabbath School Society proposes and attempt to make reading into a more “sensible means” of conveying grace.

The exhibitional style appears, too, in these authors’ appeal to their own readers. As Tom and Eva read the Bible, for the pleasure of sharing the text as a spectacle rather than for the pleasure of diving deep, so Stowe and Phelps encourage us to read their novels. They want to show us how to live rightly. But if there is to be salvation in reading, it does not, for these authors, require us to plunge through the fiction to make contact with the real author, as we might be tempted to do with the Hawthorne of *The Blithedale Romance*. Their prose solicits us to enjoy what the text shows without requiring it to harbor secret meanings in “dark and fathomless waters.” Their handling of language quells the urge to lift the veil or strike through the mask, resisting what Winfried Fluck calls the “‘hermeneutical’ romance” in Hawthorne or Melville (431). They want us to picture bodies, not just spirits, and to see concrete objects as much as ideas. If we are to picture heaven, it will not be as abstract as the one John Humphreys describes to Ellen Montgomery in *The Wide, Wide World*; it will have carnations and gingersnaps, as Winifred and Faith claim (*TGA* 139, 183).⁴¹ The exhibitional style develops from within the sentimental mode, then, out of its wrestling with theological concerns, but it is not fully continuous with the sentimental.

This impulse to privilege surfaces in the act of reading carries on in later, decidedly secular, fiction. The exhibitional style reappears, minus the evangelicalism, in the work of an author like Elizabeth Stoddard, who makes her characters legible to each other through their dress and room decorations. Theodore Dreiser might be said to use the exhibitional style against itself, to preach against the power of surfaces. And while the exhibitional style does not characterize the silent and private vigil of Isabel Archer, which is figured in terms of abstract propositions and speculations, it does reappear when Henry James taps what he calls the “exhibitional charm” of a narrative focal point like Maggie Verver, whose mental depths are pictured as a jumbled closet and whose doubts take shape as a giant pagoda (22). In other words, then, I am claiming that when J. Hillis Miller notes

of the nineteenth century, McDannell writes, Victorian culture and its encouragement of mass consumption had all but erased the differences between the decorating styles of middle-class Protestant versus Catholic homes.

⁴¹ Early in *World*, Susan Warner describes Ellen reading the Bible privately in just the manner recommended by the Sabbath School Society: “She used to get alone or into a corner with it, and turn the leaves over and over; looking out its gentle promises and sweet comforting words” (65). In later scenes, when Ellen does have theological companions, their talk is more abstract than it is in similar scenes in Stowe or Phelps. John encourages her to look past the material world to the spiritual, for instance telling her that a white camellia is an “emblem of a sinless, pure spirit” (385).

that in *The Golden Bowl*, characters' thoughts must be "'outered' in... words or other signs," he is identifying a later version of a rhetorical strategy Stowe and Phelps develop in response to theological concerns (286). The exhibitional style adapts itself to modernist mores in James's insistence on the scenic and in his rendering his characters continuous with the things around them. As Rachel Halliday's rocking chair speaks for her, so Bob Assingham's shoes speak for him.

The exhibitional style, then, marks an embrace of the surface that crosses generic boundaries. It does not equally characterize every production we might call "sentimental." But it does add to our understanding both of these two novels and of the sentimental mode more broadly. If Stowe and Phelps worked in their own prose to sidestep the depth-reading model idealized by the Sabbath School Society (and by other Protestant clergy, as we will see), if as novelists they were seeking a way to balance the "recoil from the materialism of the Romish Church," then the proliferation of spin-offs, theatrical and material, that each novel generated takes on a theological appropriateness. The Uncle Tom stage shows seem like a natural crossover for a fictional technique that wanted to abjure the privileged position of private reading in favor of a more public worship experience. Similarly the merchandizing of *The Gates Ajar*, the funeral wreaths and cigars that Lucy Frank analyzes, might afford the "sensible means" for attaining a kind of grace from the novel.⁴² Reading through theological concerns grants these phenomena a layer of meaning beyond their now-familiar critical status as symptoms of consumer culture.⁴³ We can see more clearly how such performances and knick knacks might have been invested with the weight of a route to salvation. There are more general implications for the sentimental mode, as well. The keepsake--one of the defining conventions of the sentimental, as Joanne Dobson argues in her delineation of sentimental style--may be understood as a Protestantized relic, an unacknowledged borrowing from Catholicism for the management of grief. Most broadly, we can see a resonance between the Catholic reliance on the social sacrament of mass and the social model of emotion that June Howard argues is characteristic of the sentimental, in that both resist making private feeling the standard of authenticity.⁴⁴

Insofar as the exhibitional style links the sentimental with the communalism of Catholic practice, this account fits within the familiar effort to "[define] sentimentalism in terms of an anti-individualist ethos that emphasizes connective over autonomous relations," as Elizabeth Dillon puts it (498). My understanding builds on the work of critics like Glenn Hendler and Mary Louise Kete, as well as that of the sentimental novel's early champion, Jane Tompkins, who emphasize the group subjectivities that the sentimental produces.⁴⁵ But I am not simply redescribing as "Catholic" the motifs of material culture and communalism that other critics have located in the sentimental. These motifs had theological stakes for Stowe and Phelps, and they emerge from these novels' querying how and whether people can access God, or at least goodness, through a book. In what follows I aim both to historicize the novels, juxtaposing them with contemporaneous Christian thought, and

⁴² Frank reads Phelps as "exploiting the power of commodities" to respond to the shocks of postbellum grief (167). My reading emphasizes Phelps's sacred, rather than secular, motives for embracing materiality, falling in line with Candy Gunther Brown's contention that "evangelicals configured commerce as a religious instrument" (19).

⁴³ For work that tracks the links between the sentimental mode and consumer capitalism, see, for instance, G. Brown, who argues that "domestic 'haven' ideology facilitated capitalist market growth" (3), or Merish, for whom sentimental novels "[reinvent] capitalist economic and commodity structures as the forms of interiority proper to 'private,' domestic life" (2-3).

⁴⁴ Howard approvingly surveys a range of social-scientific research on the social context of emotion, citing one study, for instance, that finds that "the social and the bodily nature of sentimentality characterizes emotion in general," and another that "construes emotion as social rather than individual and internal" (66, 67).

⁴⁵ Kete argues for an understanding of "sentimentality's role in the construction of a personal subjectivity that was not at odds with, but a necessary condition of, community" (7), and Hendler reads sympathy as "always a public sentiment, oriented as it is toward implied and actual audiences" (128).

to closely read them. My analysis in no way displaces one like Frank's, which takes *Gates* as a "revealing example of" the ways fiction "can register the impact of--indeed, be generated by--traumatic national events and rapid social change" (165). But this essay does not mean to read these novels as windows on, or as generated by, historical movements. Rather, it reads theological history as a context within which to understand how Stowe and Phelps created a style for American fiction that might make good on the novel's promise to offer contact with transcendence.

Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar* through the lens of Catholic and Protestant discourse enables us to take into account the theological stakes of the negotiation of surface and depth these novels effect. Stowe and Phelps develop the exhibitional style through recourse to specifically Christian resources. But their way of marrying surface and depth offers a useful model for secular literary criticism, mapping onto broader debates about how to read today. We can see, for instance, Phelps and Stowe as grappling with the same interpretive dilemma that motivated Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus to argue recently for an alternative to symptomatic or suspicious reading, and to plump instead for a "surface reading" that reads for "a constellation of multiple surfaces understood as concealing nothing" (8). Heather Love, who pegs the motivation to close reading to the history of sacred hermeneutics, has also lately called for a reading that "rel[ies] on description rather than interpretation," one that is "close but not deep" (375). To produce such a reading was a goal very much in Stowe's and Phelps's sights as novelists, precisely because of their investment in a faith that promises that reading offers access to sacred truth. They understood that the possibility that a text could open onto the divine might work as much through its surfaces as through what might otherwise be called its depths.

Going Deep: Protestant Bible Reading

In the rhetoric of Protestant Bible study guides, the opposition of inside and outside was deployed in concert with related binaries--surface and depth, public and private--to define real reading, and real worship, as deep, interior, and solitary. Reading that went deep enough, or got the reader far enough inside the text, would enable a felt contact with God's otherness that might yield salvation. The English Baptist clergyman Joseph Angus stressed the inside/outside binary in his description of how to read:

First, we are not to contemplate this glorious fabric of Divine truth as spectators only. It is not our business to stand before Scripture and admire it; but to stand within, that we may believe and obey it. In the way of inward communion and obedience only shall we see the beauty of its treasures. It yields them to none but the loving and the humble. We must enter and unite ourselves with that which we would know, before we can know it more than in name. (2)

For Angus, deep reading allowed the reader to unite in a meaningful way, "more than in name" only, with the spirit that authored the book. The demand to "stand within" the text, not outside as a spectator, echoes Martha Nussbaum's approach to reading; the emphasis on obedience and humility is reminiscent of Levinasian descriptions. This passage does picture truth as a fabric we could admire, and reading as the discovery of beautiful treasures, but the appeal to material imagery remains faint. The emphasis is on the abstract virtues that reading requires: love, humility, obedience. Such reading enabled the Christian to grow stronger in understanding and in loving the god--not just the implied but the real author--that she met in the pages of the Bible. The point was not to admire the Bible for its mere surface; that surface must be penetrated so that the real beauty of the text, the beauty that came through its offer of union with divine truth, could be known fully.

Catholic doctrine claimed instead a union of surface and depth, imagining the material consumed at mass as at once spirit and flesh, representation and reality. Visible matter, as much as invisible feeling, was the agent of salvation. Invisibility is, in fact, a stumbling block to belief that God mercifully removed. A nineteenth-century Eucharist meditation thanks God that “in pity to our dark and feeble apprehensions, [Thou] hast ordained outward, and obvious, and visible signs to represent to our minds Thy Grace which is invisible” and affirms that “the Bread that we break, and the Cup that we drink, are not bare signs only, but the real Communion of Thy Body and Blood” (Ellicott 31-32). The presence of God, rather than depending on a believer who is alone, focused, and emotionally susceptible, exists mysteriously in things that can be eaten and drunk. “A sacrament,” writes Möhler, “is no idle ceremony or mere outward sign, or rite, or symbol.” Möhler’s refutation of “idle” and “mere,” like the prayer’s caveat that bread and wine “are not bare signs only,” recognizes the need to defend ceremony and materiality from charges of shallowness. But “Catholics firmly hold,” writes Möhler, that God “changes the inward substance of the consecrated bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ” (310-311). For Möhler as for his Protestant counterparts, the aim was union with the transcendent. But that aim would be achieved through the act of eating the host: “divine matter impregnates the soul of man, vivifies it anew, [and] establishes it in the most intimate communion with God” (281). It takes matter, not a book, to begin a process that ends in intimacy.

Protestant writers, in their effort to limn the conditions needed for attaining such intimacy through reading, put the burden on the reader’s attitude. If reading failed to produce a sense of God’s presence, it was likely the reader’s fault for reading too shallowly. Charlotte Bickersteth Wheeler admonished the young women who were her audience that “If a chapter does not seem to speak to you, to have any message for you, it is generally because you have not been searching it. You have not read it in a prayerful spirit, but with your mind’s eyes partly shut, or even looking another way; or your heart has been full of something else” (311). Surface-level reading, looking around the text rather than searching it deeply, cut off the believer from God’s presence. Deep reading, on the other hand, had the power to make the text speak and deliver its messages. Taking this analogy to its logical limit, Watson argues that God’s word should “not only *inform* you, but *inflamm*e you” (39), and calls the Bible a love letter from God: “The Spirit is God’s love token; the word his love letter; how doth one rejoice to read over his friend’s letter” (31).

To foster such a relationship with the divine, in the first place, the reader was directed to isolate herself for a one-on-one encounter with the text. The Sabbath School Society guide recommended readers to “lay aside all the cares and business by which our attention is liable to be diverted... and seek a place of stillness and seclusion, where we may listen undisturbed to the voice that speaks from heaven” (45). The titles of the works of two English Non-Conformists, Rev. Thomas Watson and Rev. Samuel Lee, “The Bible and the Closet” and “Secret Prayer Successfully Managed,” reissued together in 1842, clearly signal the alignment of privacy with devotion.⁴⁶ As the bee sucks honey from a flower, Watson says, so “by reading we suck the flower of the word,” an image that relegates the form, or the surface, of the text to an empty husk (24). Shallow reading habits fed by secular print culture would hamper the encounter with the Bible. Watson warns that “Some can better remember a piece of news than a line of Scripture; their memories are like those ponds where the frogs live”—muddy and shallow—“but the fish die” for lack of deep water (24). The more deeply the mind absorbs the word, the more vitally nourishing the word can be for the reader.

⁴⁶ The volume’s introduction, by Rev. E. N. Kirk, echoes the equation of depth with truth. “There are rich veins of scriptural illustration and of religious sentiment,” writes Kirk, “buried in the tomes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it is a good service to the church of the nineteenth century to reopen those mines.” (*The Bible* 8).

Indeed that word must move from the head, where it first enters, deeper into the body, to the heart, where it can take full effect. This sounds like the digestive act of the Catholic sacrament. But if Protestant guides did at times reach for bodily metaphor, one key difference stood firm. For Catholics taking communion is, crucially, a work of group participation. As a communal act, the Catholic sacrament deemphasizes the individual's inward feeling. "It is not however the interior acts of thanksgiving, adoration, and gratitude, which [the church community] offers up to God," says Möhler; these feelings "are deemed unworthy to be presented to God." Rather "it is Christ himself present in the sacrament" that enables the sanctifying work of grace (314). That sacrament was performed by a social self: "the community, in the person of the priest, performeth this" (314). Such a model of community performance is absent from Protestant Bible-reading guides, which privilege individual feeling as authenticating the sacrament of deep reading. Angus's *Bible Hand-book* stresses that truth comes to those who are emotionally moved by what they read. Feeling serves as an interpretive tool: we cannot "*know* those truths which are revealed only to those who feel them" (148).⁴⁷

From the Protestant view it is up to the reader to be properly susceptible to God's presence in the pages of the Bible at least partly because there are no material props to aid the believer in feeling that presence. "We need, therefore," says Angus, "to supply by our thoughtfulness and solemnity, the feelings which were produced of old by sensible images of the Creator's presence and authority" (65). The real believer does not need such images to feel that God is near, but can generate that feeling from words alone. No doubt Stowe and Phelps, as novelists, felt the power of this model of the reader-text relationship. But their writing shows that they felt, too, the power of Catholic warnings of the consequences of Protestant inwardness. *The Catholic World* charged that "Man is not a bodiless spirit, and a sacrament without a sensible sign or medium is not fitted for the twofold nature of man" (10). Without "sufficient external appliances and supports," religious devotion risks falling prey to perversions like the Salvation Army and revivalism. Such reactions of misguided enthusiasm naturally would follow the stripping of the tangible and visible from worship practices. The Protestant will to keep the spiritual separate from the material "betrayed heretical tendencies" and threatened to "end in spiritual death" (11). The idea that surfaces (whether images, the materiality of earthly "supports," or the Bible's glorious rhetorical fabric) had to be abjured or broken through to access depth (contact with God) was an absurd reduction to the Catholic mind.⁴⁸ And it was, as we will see, uncongenial to the exhibitional style that Stowe and Phelps would develop in their fiction, precisely to try to make reading more tangible and communal. But as novelists they had an investment in salvation through reading. John Carroll, a Catholic superior of the previous century, challenged Protestants "to prove either, that no more was revealed, than is written; or that revealed doctrines derive their claim to our belief" by virtue of "their being reduced to writing" (qtd in Fogarty 3). The idea that the mere text of the Bible could offer any reader access to God—that it was a surer route to grace than the church, imagined as a living collective consciousness that stretched across centuries—was an absurd reduction to the Catholic mind, a kind of bibliolatry. *The Catholic World* argued that a Protestant would "[need], in order to interpret the sacred text, a knowledge of revelation which can neither be obtained from the text itself without interpretation nor supplied by private judgment" ("Authority" 155). Stowe and Phelps made the bet

⁴⁷ Similarly, Horace Bushnell, a Congregationalist minister and one of the most influential nineteenth-century Protestant thinkers, wrote that "We want no theologic definition of God's perfection; but we want a friend, whom we can feel as a man, and whom it will be sufficiently accurate for us to accept and love. Let him come so nigh" (qtd in Prothero 70).

⁴⁸ Franchot cites Möhler as arguing from a theological understanding of symbiosis between interior and exterior. "From his perspective," she writes, "Protestant theology was characterized throughout by a rupture between internal and external that left the human creature only partially regenerated, the church insufficiently materialized, and the relation between body and spirit antagonistic" (327, 330).

that their novels could reveal something akin to sacred truth, but they wrote so as to encourage public, not private, judgment and interpretation of the novel's text.

Reading the Surface: Tom, Eva and the Exhibitional Style

I want to turn now to the fiction that responded to the competition between surface and depth I have just sketched in the religious discourse. How do Stowe and Phelps recuperate surfaces for a sacramental reading experience? What does the hybrid of Catholic and Protestant amount to as a rhetorical strategy I call the exhibitional style? First, for the exhibitional style, appearance serves as characterization. Through description that catalogs the visible surfaces of body, dress, appearance, and the things that surround a person, characters are presented as manifest selves whose interiors are externalized.⁴⁹ Second, the exhibitional style takes it that understanding functions through shared responses to emphatically visible, theatrical, scenes. Within the story world, consciousness materializes into signs and gestures; it works through an audience, rather than through private soul-searching. The selves we find in these novels are inescapably social, modeling performative, rather than expressive, emotion. Characters fall for each other not because they have deep insight into each other's souls but because they can share the same devotional images or because they are attached to each other's physical presence. Exterior signs, not interior states of being, are charged with emotional weight and allure. Finally, the exhibitional style addresses its own readers as such selves. Rather than prod the reader into long mulling to gain an ever-deeper and ever-truer understanding of the text she reads, Stowe's and Phelps's prose encourages the reader to read on the surface, without being called upon to penetrate it. She can respond to what the text shows her without requiring it to harbor, or to give up, secret meanings. The reader-text encounter sponsored by the exhibitional style of the sentimental novel encourages readers to conceive their emotional responses publicly, as part of a network of shared emotions, rather than to privilege their intimacy with the book. While the sentimental novel does not call attention to its own materiality by means of typography or meta-reflections on the act of writing, it does call attention through its storytelling to the ways that surfaces and material things—bodies, clothes, and furniture—can themselves, without reference to a private self, solicit powerful emotional responses. These assumptions about identity and experience—the body and its accouterments as constitutive of subjectivity, the social and scenic nature of emotion and judgment—serve to bridge the surface-depth tension in the exhibitional style.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's descriptions assume that appearance is equivalent to the truth of a character, an equivalence that recalls the unproblematic union of spirit and matter that Catholic sacraments propose. She makes her characters practically allegorical, as Tompkins argues (135). Eva and Tom are saints; St. Clare is the cosmopolitan cynic; Simon Legree is the villain. One consequence of this allegorizing is an effacement of individuality. Just where we readers might be most inclined to grieve for losing Eva, for instance, Stowe makes the point that Eva is in fact completely generic. "Has there ever been a child like Eva?" Stowe asks, and immediately answers "Yes, there have been." In fact there have been multitudes. She expects that every family will have a "legend [of the] goodness and graces... of one who is not" (269). Angelic, doomed children like Eva are not rare; they are actually the convention, interchangeable with any other such child. Such universally shared losses call for public rather than private grieving.

⁴⁹ Colbert notes that the tenets of phrenology offered Stowe a framework for giving "mental qualities a physical dimension" (240). Such assumptions permeated the wider culture of the time, as Halttunen argues. She gives the name "sentimental typology" to the prevailing belief that "all aspects of manner and appearance were visible outward signs of inner moral qualities" (40). That belief takes on a specifically Catholic inflection in the context of Stowe's and Phelps's thematic concern with religious practice.

Again, whereas Protestant reading depends on focused solitude, Stowe's novel makes understanding an event that functions through and with an audience. This model of understanding helps account for the dramatic quality that propelled Stowe's novel so successfully to the stage. Senator Bird's conversion--his decision to help Eliza escape in defiance of the Fugitive Slave Act--is proposed as the triumph of "private feelings" (85) over against Congress and the Union. But we can see that private feelings here still must be generated within a community who all witness the same tableau of a beautiful mother and son. Similarly, Stowe presents us with the "tears and sobs" of the slaves as Eva distributes locks of her hair, handing out relics of herself just before her death, as an emotional response we readers might take as a model for ourselves (297). Eva's deathbed scene is laid out with careful attention to setting, because it assumes setting is continuous with character. Stowe tells us that "St. Clare had... [furnished] [Eva's] room in a style that had a peculiar keeping with the character of her for whom it was intended" (291). We are given a detailed catalog of the window hangings, the design of the rug, the bamboo furniture, the general color scheme of rose and white, and the knick knacks themed on angels and lilies. Stowe seems to take it that, to register Eva's death fully, readers need to visualize the surfaces that surround and in effect compose her.

The match between Eva and her decor and the dispersal of her hair point to another assumption the exhibitional style borrows from the yoking of surface and depth proposed by Catholic faith. The body and the things that surround it extend a person's subjectivity out into the world. For this manifest self, subjectivity takes on a transitive quality, whereby prolonged physical proximity enables the spread of selfhood from the animate to the inanimate. If subjectivity is not dependent on the hidden depths that we understand, say, furniture to lack, then it follows that things can speak as well as persons. Thus Rachel Halliday's rocking chair has a life of its own, which it shares with Rachel. Stowe can shift seamlessly from a description of Rachel's loving brown eyes to the chair Rachel sits in. "It had a turn for quacking and squeaking,--that chair had"--the need to specify here admits to the possible confusion between chair and woman--"either from having taken cold in early life, or from some asthmatic affection, or perhaps from nervous derangement" (140). The tone here is comic, yet the fondness of Stowe's presentation of the chair equals the fondness with which she presents Rachel. Both are worthy of love. The chair's "subdued 'creechy crawchy'" is beloved by the family because "for twenty years or more, nothing but loving words and gentle moralities, and motherly loving kindness, had come from that chair;--head-aches and heart-aches innumerable had been cured there,--difficulties spiritual and temporal solved there,--all by one good, loving woman, God bless her!" (140). The agency hovers around the chair at the beginning of the sentence and only settles distinctly on the "good, loving woman" sitting in it at the end. The slipperiness of the line between beloved possession and character indicates a breakdown in the model of depth, suggesting that we might be what we own and wear.⁵⁰ Certainly for Stowe the things we own and wear are worth loving, in spite of--or perhaps because of--their lack of depth.

It is fitting, then, that Tom and Eva read each other with a vision that takes in appearance, manner, and surrounding props. They grow closer and closer, but not by virtue of seeing more and more deeply into each other; neither one possesses any depth to see into. Neither they nor we readers are privy to their interior states of mind. We see Eva first through Tom's eyes as if she were a Catholic icon: Tom "gazed on her as the Italian sailor gazes on his image of the child Jesus,--with a mixture of reverence and tenderness" (152). Her image does not prompt Tom to search for her core; it pushes his attention outward, to refer him to other familiar sacred images. Such is the

⁵⁰ Fisher notes that "in Stowe's subtitle [Tom] is 'a man that was a thing'" and argues that the work of the novel is to render Tom human by extending sentimental feeling so that it included him within its humanizing circle (14). From a different perspective, G. Brown argues that Stowe's utopian project was a vision of a maternal love whose plenitude could wrench commodities from the market economy and personify them (24).

process of attention by which he comes to know and to love her. If the exhibitional style renders Eva as all surface and no depth, she is nonetheless easy to love, and to appreciate aesthetically--which amounts to the same thing here. That looking onto, rather than into, the other can inspire love is a point Stowe's characterization relies on throughout the novel.

The surface reading solicited by the exhibitional style is thus not penetrative but appreciative. And Eva and Tom demonstrate a Bible reading that corresponds to this style. When the Catholic Eva begins to learn, through Tom's influence, the Protestant hope of salvation through reading the Gospel, the effect is magical. "At first, she read [aloud] to please her humble friend; but soon her own earnest nature threw out its tendrils, and wound itself around the majestic book; and Eva loved it, because it woke in her strange yearnings, and strong, dim emotions, such as impassioned, imaginative children love to feel" (267). Eva's yearnings and emotions are here invisible and internalized, appropriate to Protestant depth-reading. But the winding tendrils Stowe invokes to describe Eva's reading hint at a different model. Eva's interest in the Bible takes the form of a plant-like embrace that wants to hold and grasp the book around the outside, rather than penetrating its interior meaning. In the case of Tom's reading, Stowe tells us he marks up his Bible--"bold, strong marks and dashes" in "a variety of styles and designations"--to indicate "the passages which more particularly gratified his ear or affected his heart" (151). The very feeling that Protestant depth-reading calls for, Tom's gratification, expresses itself in a decorative embellishment that layers image on top of word and extends the text's range on the page. Tom's stylized marginalia may serve as a reminder that he is new to literacy and still reads with a neophyte's pictorial imagination, but they seem also to suggest a desire to illuminate the scripture, to translate the text from words into something closer to pictures. Tom's marks seem to work less as exegesis than as a visual response to the text. Such reader response offers one way to bridge the divide between surface and depth. Both of them find satisfaction not through a narrowly-focused merging with the depths of the text, but through "playing" the text (to borrow Barthes' term) so that it spreads outward into the production of a new, more vivid and concrete, text.

Tom and Eva's climactic scene together is a scene of Bible reading. Stowe's language solicits the same kind of reading she portrays here: reading as a horizontal movement across surfaces, rather than the more vertical surface-to-depth penetration imagined by Protestant clergy. Stowe sets the stage vividly:

It is now one of those intensely golden sunsets which kindles the whole horizon into one blaze of glory, and makes the water another sky. The lake lay in rosy or golden streaks, save where white-winged vessels glided hither and thither, like so many spirits, and little golden stars twinkled through the glow, and looked down at themselves as they trembled in the water. (268)

This horizontal spread--horizon stretching out, vessels gliding across the surface--evokes the kind of reading that the exhibitional style calls for. The surface of the lake matters because its reflective quality makes the vertical distance between sky and lake blur into indistinctness: the "water" is simply "another sky." The water and sky both become a freely shared representational space for Eva and Tom that allows them to reimagine and visualize the Bible text together. They are not hoping to merge with the soul of the text or to unite here and now with its author. Instead the two are trying to make the Bible concrete and visible and thus shareable. When Eva reads, "'And I saw a sea of glass, mingled with fire,'" she interrupts herself: "'Tom,' said Eva, suddenly stopping, and pointing to the lake, 'there 'tis.'" She shows him how the lake is that sea of glass, and Tom sees it. In response he sings a verse from a hymn about how "'Bright angels should convey me home, / To the new Jerusalem.'" When Eva asks him where that Jerusalem might be, Tom says, "'O, up in the clouds,

Miss Eva.” Eva responds to the suggestion by seeing what he says the text means: “ ‘Then I think I see it,’ said Eva. ‘Look in those clouds!--they look like great gates of pearl.’” She asks Tom to sing another hymn, and again to his verse describing angels “ ‘robed in spotless white,’” she declares “ ‘Uncle Tom, I’ve seen them,’” and claims further that she is going there (268-269). Tom asks where, and in answer Eva stands and points to the sky. As Stowe presents it, Tom and Eva understand each other, and they understand the Bible. This is a moment of shared rapture that substitutes, through Christian doctrine and Bible-reading, for what might have played out as an erotic merge with the other in a more secular love story. They are not looking into each other’s souls; they are looking around each other and out into the world through the mediation of the text. Likewise they have not dredged up meaning from the depths of the text, but they have refashioned the Bible’s words into a shared spectacle.⁵¹ If their expectation of attaining grace through reading the gospel is Protestant, the character of Eva and Tom’s reading--their shared materialization of the Biblical text--is tinged by Catholic practice. This hybrid reading, an understanding that is full without being deep, is the aim of the exhibitional style.

Rematerializing in Heaven

The exhibitional style of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* presents a manifest self constructed through surface appearance and accessories, one whose consciousness is a social phenomenon that requires an audience and a setting. Stowe’s writing suggests that surfaces offer all the interpretive nourishment we need. Stowe does admit the value of depth, though, insofar as she hypothesizes a depth-reading for the afterlife: the reader of the Bible “folds” the “unknown hieroglyphics” of its mysterious passages “in her bosom, and expects to read them when she passes beyond the veil” (267). In *The Gates Ajar*, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps takes on the task of realizing that hypothesis. And her novel discovers that whatever depth might be imagined for selves in the afterlife is irreducibly tied to those selves’ surfaces. The self cannot remain simply, abstractly, deep, since depth has no meaning, no purchase on the hearts of characters (or readers), without surfaces. The tension between surface and depth is pitched higher here, and the exhibitional style accordingly has to work harder to negotiate that tension. Phelps’s characters prize depth in themselves and in their loves, but they struggle to empty themselves of egoism. They hate idolatry, but they only know and love each other through what they can see and touch. Phelps’s use of the exhibitional style is further complicated by her choice to frame the novel as a first-person diary. The diary promises us privileged access to the narrator’s depths, but Phelps, we will see, must repudiate that promise. Her formal negotiations will lead *The Gates Ajar* to a union of surface and depth, one more fraught than Stowe’s, but like Stowe’s indebted to Protestant understandings of Catholic practice.

As in Stowe, characters in Phelps are manifest selves who can reliably read each other’s surfaces, whose sense of identity relies on bodies and the material things that surround them. But the diary form means that Phelps’s is a less theatrical, less visual, novel. Mary Cabot, the novel’s narrator-protagonist, never gives a catalog of interior decoration in the course of her entries. The action and dialogue take place in fairly unspecified rooms and gardens. And because Mary never describes herself to her diary, we cannot clearly envision her surface or adore her as Tom adores Eva. This absence of a visible surface forces us to think of Mary as a disembodied voice, a vague interiority. The story of Mary’s development from a deeply romantic rebel into an exemplary Christian takes shape mostly outside the visual register, through shared reading and dialogue. But we can see the exhibitional style’s shaping influence in the way Mary’s Aunt Winifred trains Mary to

⁵¹ It is no wonder that this scene became the single most reproduced image that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* generated. Morgan writes that “From scores of scenes in the story, generated for more than 150 years, illustrations of Tom and Eva together in gardens or courtyards, huddled over the Bible, have been the most reproduced” (27).

exchange her deep private consciousness for a publicly sharable one--trains her how, in effect, to be less like herself and to be more like Christ. Mary ends by thinking and feeling out loud, and by accepting a selfhood that is de-individualized and communally integrated.

She has a long way to go from the novel's--her diary's--opening pages. Mary's diary begins by recording her anguish after she hears of her brother Royal's death in the Civil War. Her fiercely self-insulating grief shuts out all would-be comforters: she rejects the efforts of the community to ease her pain and resists the social conventions that would govern her emotion. In the immediate aftermath of the news, she pictures herself as in solitary confinement: "Those two words--'Shot dead'--shut me up and walled me in, as I think people must feel shut up and walled in, in Hell" (4). We take these pages as Mary's private thoughts, truer than what she can say to the condolence callers she resents. But Mary will not remain so private and deep. After less than two weeks she condemns her own introspection and quits the diary. She quits it, curiously, for reasons that are in conflict with each other. On one hand Mary stops writing because she realizes that the journal is cultivating a self-involvement that for her amounts to selfishness, an indulgence of the "luxury of grief" (23). Her brother, she reflects, would not approve. On the other hand Mary distrusts her journal writing as a record of the mere surface of her emotion: "On looking over the leaves [of the journal], I see that the little green book has become an outlet for the shallower part of pain" (22). The trouble with Mary's journal is that it threatens to make her both too deep and not deep enough. She fears that writing will over-privilege all that is deepest within her; she fears that her writing will shortchange all that is deepest within her. This is the beginning of the conflict in the novel between the urge toward surface and the urge to privilege depth: the competition between a public self whose emotions are governed by Christian norms and a private self (a self nurtured by the promises of sacramental reading) felt to be more real and more authentic than any shareable, visible self could be.

That Mary privileges depth over surface at first comes through most sharply in her reaction to Dr. Bland's sermon at the Homer First Congregational Church. Bland's heaven is built on universal, not particular, love; he speculates that in the joy of contemplating infinite truth, a man might forget to think of his wife for thousands of years. There will be no individual depths, but a perfect transparency of each soul to every other. Bland quotes "an eminent divine" who speculates that in heaven "The soul will have no interests to conceal, no thoughts to disguise. A window will be opened in every breast, and show to every eye the rich and beautiful furniture within!" Mary records this idea with withering scorn: "I wonder if he really thought that would make 'a world of bliss.'" (71). The transparent selves and universal love that Bland anticipates, by opening up depths to the surface, would effectively destroy individuality for Mary and Winifred. Such individualism was not a key issue for Stowe, as we have seen, but in Phelps's novel love and understanding depend on recognizing the particularity of the self. Aunt Winifred's love of her is more valuable, Mary says, because "she seems to love me a little, not in a proper kind of way, because I happen to be her niece, but for my own sake" (58). Real love must be love of the unique individual according to its private quirks and merits, not according to conventional forms.

When she and Winifred parse Dr. Bland's sermon later, Mary brings up this transparency of heart and its accompanying universalization of love as a cause of anxiety. "I would rather be annihilated than to spend eternity with heart laid bare,--the inner temple thrown open to be trampled on by every passing stranger!" (79). The interior is sacrosanct here: the self is no mere container but a temple. And Winifred, the voice of wisdom in the novel, agrees. She calls Dr. Bland's notion "nonsense" because it would destroy the self by rendering its depths as surfaces for all to see. Winifred argues that transparent hearts and indiscriminate loves "would destroy

individuality,” leaving us “like a man walking down a room lined with mirrors... till he seems no longer to belong to himself, but to be cut up into ellipses and octagons and prisms” (79-80).⁵² This passage is remarkable for its rejection of the surface/depth equivalence the exhibitional style tries to negotiate, for its Protestant reinscription of the privilege of depth and the unreliability of surface. Faced with fragmentary reflections of ourselves, we would lose our crucial sense of private self-ownership and go mad. Winifred concedes that in heaven we will have extra moral legibility to one another, but such legibility could not violate the privacy of one’s own hidden self.

But if Phelps begins her novel favoring the private depths of self, those depths will yield to her interest in models of faith and of selfhood that match Winifred’s appreciation of Catholicism. As I noted at the start, Winifred’s little girl kisses a photograph of her father at night as if he were a saint, and Winifred herself worries about being “stranded” by the Protestant “recoil from the materialism of the Romish Church” (110). The social self we saw invoked in the Catholic mass will play a role in reintegrating Mary into the community as it moves her attention from the inside to the outside, from depth to surface. To begin with Mary must loosen her investment in privacy and adopt a more publicly available selfhood. If it is too absurd to imagine a man who “no longer [belongs] to himself” in heaven, as Winifred says in repudiating Dr. Bland’s sermon, much of the guidance she provides to Mary nudges Mary precisely not to belong to herself, at least while she lives on earth. Instead she urges Mary to belong to others. When Mary revives her journal it is in the interest of cultivating selflessness. She returns to her diary only when Aunt Winifred arrives, and only then, she says, for the “excellent reason” that “I have something else than myself to write about” (24). She becomes acquainted with the poor, cultivates “weekday holiness,” and concludes that “one’s self becomes of less importance, which seems to be the point” (145, 193). We know that Mary is healing when we see her reach out to others; it is a sign she is regaining her true self, which, as Phelps’s novel progresses, comes to mean her communally-constituted self. It is a sin to sit upstairs meditating on one’s interior life rather than to respond to dull Mrs. Bland’s social call. By the end of the novel Mary has achieved selflessness. Her diary no longer records her inner pain, only her anticipation of a heavenly union with Jesus and her brother.

Winifred, like Stowe’s characters, takes the Protestant view that salvation comes through reading the Bible. But Winifred, in a manner more in line with the Catholic reliance on tradition than with the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*, understands the Bible through spiritual authorities, never reading alone but with a community of earlier interpreters. Widow of a Congregationalist minister, she has read a library’s worth of theologians. She calls up names and cites passages by heart: Thomas Chalmers on “spiritual materialism,” Isaac Taylor, even Swedenborg (whom she likes but does not accept) and an unnamed “grand old Catholic singer” whose hymn about heaven she quotes at length (175). Under Winifred’s influence, Mary trades her private reading of German romantics for conversations about Christian texts. The social aspect of reading--being able to externalize rather than internalize the text--becomes the point for Mary, and in this way Phelps rejects the Protestant emphasis on reading alone.

Moreover, Phelps, though she gives over much of her novel to theological speculation rather than concrete imagery, values the physical as much as Stowe does. Although Mary never becomes the sort of icon that Eva does, appearance remains a reliable index of character. Winifred, for

⁵² Möhler, by contrast, comes up with a similar image of self-annihilation when he imagines the threat to the church of losing its communal connection with God. Countering the Protestant demand that the church justify itself by appeal to the Bible, Möhler retorts that the church predates the Bible. For the church to undertake such a justification “she would fall into the most absurd inconsistency, and annihilate her very self... She would have to go in search of herself, and this a madman only could do: she would be like the man, that would examine the papers written by himself in order to discover whether he really existed!” (367).

instance, simply looks more spiritual than Deacon Quirk. Mary sums them up thus: “ ‘Of the earth, earthy. Of the heavens, heavenly.’ The two faces sharpened themselves into two types” (157). And the inner temple that Mary abhors to imagine laid bare is inconceivable without the hair, eyes, and arms that embody it. What Mary misses in her brother, what makes him lovable, is his eyes, arms, smile, hair, the weight and cadence of his walk. Saying his name calls up the physical presence of him: “Roy, with the flash in his eyes, with his smile that lighted the house all up; with his pretty, soft hair that I used to curl and kiss about my finger, his bounding step, his strong arms that folded me in and cared for me.” It grieves her above all to imagine that body in the ground, laid out there in the wet and snow,--in the hideous wet and snow,--never to kiss him, never to see him any more!” (9) Phelps has Dr. Bland, who proposed that heaven would be a place of forgetting the individual, learn this lesson the hard way when his wife dies and only Winifred’s material vision of the afterlife can console him. If Mary locates the core of the self in a heart that must remain unseen by all but the beloved, her grief shows that individual identity depends on concrete surfaces, on bodies and things. The novel wants to preserve the idea of sacred depths. But the love that makes those depths sacred demands faces, hands, and hair to love; it demands carnations and gingersnaps, as we have seen, as well as houses and pianos, to love with (139, 154). She cites Isaac Taylor’s assertion that we will have some sort of body, whether granite or ether, in the afterlife, and insists herself that she and Mary will not simply be “puff[s] of gas” (203). She has Mary read Thomas Chalmers, who argues in “On the New Heavens and the New Earth” that we will have bodies in heaven, but new and improved ones, free from sin. To expunge original sin “the old fabric must be taken down, and reared anew; and that, not of other materials, but of its own materials, only delivered from all impurity, as if by a refining process in the sepulcher” (413).⁵³ Since our bodies in heaven will be purified of sin, they cannot be flesh and blood as we know them, but they must be solid material of some better and brighter kind. After his death, she reasons, Jesus returned in a recognizable body, ate fish and talked with his friends; thus we can be sure we will be capable of the same. “I don’t believe, for instance, that Adam and Eve have been wandering about in a misty condition all these thousands of years,” says Winifred (113).

In the course of Mary’s diary, too, we see that she comes to know and love Winifred through an appreciation of Winifred’s style. Here too there is tension: Winifred both arouses surface-desire (and frequently sanctions it by telling Mary that of course she and Roy will have bodies in heaven) and denies it. Before she meets her aunt, Mary is drawn to Winifred’s letter for its specifically material and formal qualities as much as for the truths and ideas it communicates. Mary loves Winifred’s handwriting, and her careful choice of words, and then loves her voice and her face. And in the voice and handwriting, she loves the form of Winifred’s words, the vessel in which those words find delivery. Their love also relies on reticence. Winifred wins Mary’s heart at crucial moments by not speaking--by holding her or stroking her hair instead. Such reticence might seem to privilege depth over surface by suggesting that what is deepest suffers diminishment by surfacing into expression. That was the fear that partly motivated Mary to quit her diary early on. But in Phelps’s novel reticence, instead, yields space for the physical to promote real self-other understanding. At crucial moments, the body and hands communicate more effectively than the abstractions of mind and words. During Dr. Bland’s sermon about heavenly transparency, Mary recounts, “Aunt Winifred slipped her hand into mine under her cloak. Ah, Dr. Bland, if you had known how that little soft touch was preaching against you!” (71). Phelps makes this touch effect a

⁵³ For Chalmers, the trouble with the abstract view of heaven is that it leaves an audience cold: it is “utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals here below--where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes that have no power of allurements, and certain unearthly ecstasies, with which it is felt impossible to sympathize” (412).

deep mutual understanding across the body's surfaces, exactly the solution that the exhibitional style aims toward.

Yet Phelps never stops plying the tension between the surface of the body and the depth imagined within that body. Near the novel's end, after Winifred has schooled Mary in her notion of heaven and brought her safely back to the fold of the community, Winifred wonders aloud about the keepsakes from the dead--the "lock of hair to curl about our fingers; a picture that has caught the trick of his eyes or smile; a book, a flower, a letter"--that the living hold dear. "Yet who loves the senseless gift more than the giver,--the curl more than the young forehead on which it fell,--the letter more than the hand which traced it?" (199). By casting the choice here in terms of material relic versus real person, Winifred distances herself from idolatry. She maintains the Protestant distinction between inside and outside, false show and genuine core. But this valuation--Winifred's claim that what we really love is the soul within, not the hair or the mere look of the face--runs counter to the novel's portrayal of how love works. For the novel shows that love of depth can only function along with love of the surface. In fact, though Winifred's comparison seems to renounce the mere physical relic, the terms of her comparison only propose that real love is a matter of favoring one physical surface over another, the body over the traces it leaves: the forehead more than the hair, the hand more than the handwriting on the sheet of paper, the eyes or smile more than the photograph of them. Whether Mary will love Roy or Jesus more is also a source of anxiety; Phelps must continually keep idolatry at bay. "God himself will be first,--naturally and of necessity, without strain or struggle, *first*," says Winifred (198). And it is only after some struggle that Mary can agree: "Now.... The more I love Roy, the more I love Him. He loves us both" (198). The solution to, or the sanction for, this competition between loves is the incarnation: to imagine Jesus less as a spirit united with in the reading of a book, and more as a flesh-and-blood human. The way to love God more than your own brother is to make God into your brother: to love him in Jesus, as a friend, not so much glorious and inscrutable as a man at whose sandaled feet you can sit and listen.

Ultimately Mary and Winifred will solve the problem of surface and depth by making selfhood a matter of materiality, though it is a materiality that is only fully allowable and fully sanctified in heaven, where Christ's body redeems it. They invest in an uneasy, and deferred, Protestant doctrine of transubstantiation. Beginning from a model of self that favors depth, Winifred and Mary arrive at a self that is constituted bodily and socially. Depth is privileged, insofar as the reward for resisting its lure on earth is its enjoyment in heaven, but even in heaven depth is unimaginable without surface. To put it another way, love for Phelps is finally strong enough to make the distinction between surface and depth--a distinction that Protestant faith and its hermeneutics would otherwise oblige her to insist on--irrelevant. Phelps, like Stowe, thus makes a novelistic virtue of the insight that depth without surface is meaningless. Both authors enable fiction to make a claim to speak God's truth precisely through fiction's ability to present a world of vivid surfaces, whether on heaven or earth.

The exhibitional style works against sacramental reading by granting surface the same power over our emotions that depth claims. But heaven is the only place where the Protestant can imagine surfaces, bodies, and material to be sanctified and pervaded by depth. One consequence of this solution is to make heaven--the place where depth and surface can finally coexist--more desirable than earth. Thus as Winifred and Mary both exert pressure to dematerialize earth, they correspondingly re-materialize the life to come in heaven: "That is the substance, this the shadow." Stowe demonstrates how Bible-reading yields a love that is meant to be consummated in heaven, where it is expected to be suitably deep. Phelps's novel attempts to fulfill that expectation and winds up re-materializing heaven, flattening its depth back into the shallowness and concreteness that love turns out to demand. As much as Stowe's or Phelps's novels might idealize love as depth, their love stories show that our presumed deep interiors are only knowable as surfaces or things.

Chapter 3

The Blithedale Romance and Pierre: The Novel as Self-Portrait

In his famous paean to Hawthorne, Melville, reading *Mosses from an Old Manse*, finds in the person of Jesus support for the idea that an author's real spirit must be hidden. Melville wishes, early in the review, that "all books were foundlings," and that "we could glorify them, without including their ostensible authors." And Melville follows that wish with an analogy: "not even in the case of... our Saviour, did his visible frame betoken anything of the augustness of the nature within. Else, how could those Jewish eyewitnesses fail to see heaven in his glance" (2308). By opposing the "visible frame" with the "nature within," Melville can argue that real "augustness"—the stuff that makes Jesus worthy of worship—must be invisible and interior. Similarly, a great author's specific physical identity matters very little, because what makes him great is his channeling the "Spirit of all Beauty," much as Jesus channels the holy spirit. Melville accordingly claims that the "dust" that gives us our particular "bodies" is too mean to "express the nobler intelligences among us," even when the dust in question is supposed to incarnate God.⁵⁴ What I find instructive here is the way Melville bolsters his claim for the proper invisibility of the author by citing Jesus' invisible divinity, linking the author with a lower-case "a" with God the Author. We will see below, in the discourse around whether it was possible to paint a portrait of Jesus, how the drive to protect the divine author from too much visibility plays out on the visual register. The same drive to hide creative power plays out in the written word, too, shaping Melville's *Pierre* and Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*. Both novels, I take it, are metafictional testing-grounds for the kind of otherness fiction can offer. And given that project, the idea that an author's power must be invisible just as God's is, the parallel drawn between sacred and secular authorship, diminishes rather than empowers.⁵⁵ Melville's and Hawthorne's sense of the kind of relationship a novel can offer a reader suffers by the comparison. The proxy figures they create—Miles Coverdale and Pierre Glendinning—seem from one view like tempting allegories of Hawthorne and Melville themselves. They lure us to believe we are seeing a portrait of the author himself. But Miles and Pierre are finally cast as failures, and by the end of each novel the prospect of making friends with an implied author, or of falling in love with the vision of life in his fiction, looks hardly worth the effort. The author is an unoriginal scribbler we might be better off avoiding.

The urge in Melville and Hawthorne to keep the author (whether God or the novelist) invisible and unknowable effects a reaction against, and points the way toward a new version of, the exhibitional style. As we have seen, the exhibitional style developed by Stowe and Phelps works to privilege the visible. It reconciles versions of surface and depth understood to be in competition, and it does so by portraying on its pages and assuming in its readers a social model of selfhood: a manifest self that wears its truths on its surface, and that registers what it feels as part of a public,

⁵⁴ Similarly, Melville has just admiringly quoted Hawthorne's own claim that the true artist prefers the "spirit" of his art to the "symbol by which he makes it perceptible to mortal senses." But this restatement of the body/spirit divide, with its strong privileging of spirit, is by no means the last word on the subject for Melville or for Hawthorne. The urge to maintain that neither God nor an author can be known or seen feeds on an equal and opposite urge to know and see them both. A few paragraphs later Melville is eagerly on the track of Hawthorne's particular authorial persona, reading between the lines of *Mosses* for "clues" to the man himself.

⁵⁵ In *Pierre* itself, reviewing Pierre's career as a writer, Melville's narrator reminds us that "the only original author [is] God" (259).

witnessing audience. The exhibitional style writes a love story for the manifest self that offers a vision of genuine understanding between self and other, and between reader and text, that develops through surface appreciation. A manifest self does not fall in love by reading between the lines, digging deep into a hidden meaning, either in other selves or in texts. It appreciates what is readily available to the senses, not aiming to uncover the one true text but to create with other readers a newly revised text that is pictorial and shareable. The novels that Hawthorne and Melville published in the year of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), *Pierre* and *The Blithedale Romance*, take advantage of the logic of the exhibitional style to a degree; they revel at times in the pictorial language that marks Stowe's and Phelps's prose. But they also fiercely resist its assumptions about how the self operates and how interpretation happens. For Hawthorne and Melville, the exhibitional style, its pleasure in surfaces and its willingness to defer verification of depth, is alternately a scandal and a resource.

One sign of this conflict is that, in the pages of *Pierre* and *Blithedale*, Melville and Hawthorne tell equally frustrated, not quite tragic, tales of botched love. They present their characters finally as manifest selves, but only after pitching those characters into a long losing battle to verify some kind of psychic depth. No one ever really knows anyone else; lovers seek zealously but fruitlessly to reveal the hidden truths of beloved others. Bolstered by their appropriation of Catholic faith in material means of grace, Stowe and Phelps could write of a love that was satisfied by physical contact, by hair and the touch of hands. But we see Miles and Pierre direct an unquenchable depth-drive at Zenobia and Isabel. With no transcendental other to redeem or relieve the paltriness of earthly others, with no promise of a heaven where the dust of their visible frames would be deepened, love appears in *Blithedale* and in *Pierre* as a perverse obsession responsible for self-destruction. For Miles or Pierre, it would be better to burn than to marry. If Melville had embraced the exhibitional style, if he really accepted its representational logic instead of resisting it, he might have made Pierre's emotional response to Isabel's face proof enough that she was indeed his illegitimate sister—they might have sailed to France and lived happily ever after. Miles might have become Zenobia's perfect audience and wooed her from Hollingsworth by the sheer warmth of his unforced, undemanding admiration. But why does the kind of love story that the exhibitional style could tell fail here? There are many reasons why those counterplots would not make for Melville or Hawthorne novels, why it wouldn't occur to them to tell those stories. But the answer that interests me here begins from the possible parallel between God and the novelist. To arrive at that answer we first have to see that the frustrated love story Hawthorne and Melville tell within these novels parallels the love story they set up between the novels themselves and their readers. And in turn we have to see that this reader-text love story is the product of Melville's and Hawthorne's effort to test what kind of alterity the novel can provide—what kind of other, sacred or secular, it might reveal.

If *Pierre* and *Blithedale* are trying to work out what authorship is good for, specifically what kind of otherness a novel can claim to offer its readers, why should that project disable the kind of love story that the exhibitional style enables? The answer comes down to a sense of diminished creative authority. For Stowe and Phelps, the power of authorship is securely reposed in God. We saw that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar* develop the exhibitional style as a way of negotiating, on one hand, the Protestant promise of a text to offer private contact with the divine and, on the other, the Catholic promise that God is accessible through material artifacts and shared rituals. In their work as novelists, Stowe and Phelps are also preachers and practical theologians; they write to reveal God's truth, channeled through their own vision, to their readers. This is not the mode of authorship that Melville and Hawthorne inhabit. But they do show a will toward, if not the

homiletic, then the prophetic, as Richard Brodhead argues.⁵⁶ They would, if they could, write novels that reveal God's truth. They would tell a story of a heaven on earth, whether in the utopian community of Blithedale or in the apartment at the Apostles where Pierre pursues truth at the expense of convention. But that desire goes unfulfilled, both for the characters (Blithedale fails, Pierre dies) and for the authors. In *The Blithedale Romance* and *Pierre* neither author offers contact with transcendence. This lack of transcendence is felt as a keen and persistent loss; it generates the irony and discomfiture that attends the self-consciousness of the narration.⁵⁷ If they cannot grant the reader a sense of God's presence, as Stowe and Phelps do, what can they offer?

The offer alternately made and withdrawn by Melville and Hawthorne is for contact with the author's own self, the creative force behind the act of creating the novel. *Pierre* and *Blithedale* play with our will to find an authorial persona hidden in the pages. The friendship between Hawthorne and Melville became public news in 1850, and Melville, at least, was willing to confirm it by dedicating *Moby-Dick* to Hawthorne.⁵⁸ We know from Hawthorne's "Custom-House" that he felt that in writing a book, he could imagine himself "address[ing], not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates and lifemates."⁵⁹ At the same time, much as we see in Melville's urge toward authorial anonymity, Hawthorne makes preserving "the inmost Me behind the veil" the condition on which such intimacy could be legitimate. His ideal author-reader relationship is not an ecstatic merge of self and other but a decorous mutual warmth, wherein the author addresses the reader as a "kind and apprehensive, but not the closest, friend."⁶⁰ In *Blithedale's* first-person narrative, Hawthorne thins his veil almost to the point of transparency. Despite the prefatory protestations that this is romance, Miles could easily stand in for Hawthorne at Brook Farm. Likewise the character of Pierre, late in Melville's novel, might stand in for the author of *Moby-Dick*. All the writing about writing gives us a tantalizing sense of being in on the art of composition with the authors. Stowe and Phelps, writing

⁵⁶ Brodhead argues in *The School of Hawthorne* that in fact the only real options for "literary self-conception... operative in American writing of the 1850s" are the prophetic and the domestic, but he notes that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* combines the two strands (41).

⁵⁷ My idea of authors who take on the role of creator without apology will come clear in the next chapter. There I argue that Elizabeth Stoddard and Henry James assume the mantle of the author-as-god, a power they claim through the calculated artistry of their prose.

⁵⁸ As Brenda Wineapple writes, Cornelius Mathews recorded the gossip of the Hawthorne-Melville friendship in a series called "Several Days in the Berkshires" in the *Literary World* in 1850, and with that dedication, she says, Melville "deliberately invites us into [his and Hawthorne's] literary pantry" (53). "Thus a snare was set for future biographers, literary critics, and sleuths, myself among them" (51). Wineapple writes that *Blithedale* "folds Melville's letters into its third chapter, infusing his tenderness and childlike egotism into the brawny character of Hollingsworth" (63); Brodhead finds that "Virtually every detail of this portrait [of Plinlimmon] ties Plinlimmon to Melville's Hawthorne" (44). Michael Rogin makes a thoroughly compelling case for reading *Pierre* as the story of Melville's own authorship. My aim here is to link this manipulation of the public interest in their real-life selves to Melville and Hawthorne's testing out the kind of alterity the novel can claim to offer.

⁵⁹ Hawthorne singles out for disapproval here "[s]ome authors" who "indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy; as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature, and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it" (*SL* 5-6). That is as good a description as any for the ideal depth-merge that narrative ethics envisions for the reader and the text.

⁶⁰ Thomas Mitchell points out that Hawthorne makes a stronger case for this revelatory and intimate author-reader relationship in a reassuring letter to a fellow-writer, a poet named L. W. Mansfield: Hawthorne seems to encourage Mansfield, at any rate, to unveil his soul for his readers, arguing that only the right readers will hear and understand him anyway (250-251).

to represent God's creation, drop no such autobiographical lures.⁶¹ But Melville and Hawthorne make their protagonists into quasi author figures to play on their readers' depth-drives. Both will make a point of keeping their essential augustness veiled, but they will continually twitch the veil. Playing on the Protestant promise of access to God through the pages of the Bible, Melville and Hawthorne tempt us to get at them through the pages of their novels. They promise a depth that is not to be fulfilled in heaven but in the revelation of the soul of a novelist.

Hawthorne and Melville clearly believe this is an offer of real value, insofar as they relish the power of the novelist as a god who creates fictional worlds. They take pleasure, and seem to want to give some pleasure, in the intensity and excess of the language we find here, whether in Miles's insatiable descriptions of Zenobia, or Melville's narrator's description of Pierre saddling his colts for a rural jaunt with Lucy. Melville and Hawthorne wield that same power themselves, whether to show us the joy of Priscilla's girlish bloom or the strange magic of Isabel's hair draped over her guitar. This prose invites us to enjoy the flicker of sensory images, to be astonished by the fictional world. In this way it taps the power of the exhibitional style, its ability to effect emotional response just by describing a deathbed scene or enumerating a lost loved one's body parts, much as we see Stowe and Phelps do. But here such vivid concreteness doesn't exist to illustrate earthly types of God's truths, as it would have done for Stowe and Phelps. And in such passages Melville and Hawthorne seem not to regret the absence of the God who effectively underwrote the pages of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar*. As enthusiastic showmen, language-painters gleefully inhabiting a ungodly version of the exhibitional style, they prefigure the adaptations of that style that we will see Elizabeth Stoddard and Henry James develop.

But such language, though it is pictorial in a way that seems aligned with Stowe's or Phelps's interests, never resolves into visibility.⁶² We are left with a sense of compositional gears grinding or of lexical ingenuity for its own sake. Hawthorne's and Melville's prose turns the exhibitional style against itself at the point where its excess forces us to pay attention to it. We cannot relax into the fictional vision, appreciate or imaginatively play with its imagery, as we would have in Stowe or Phelps. Instead of landing comfortably in a plush and vivid world, we are forced to think about the made-up-ness of that world. Brodhead writes that this stylistic "self-consciousness," through which their work abjures mimeticism, is cultivated "to heighten our consciousness of the imaginative processes through which their images of reality come into being" (23). Yet in these two novels, Hawthorne's and Melville's self-consciousness seems less than a whole-hearted "invitation to us to join them in this adventure" of making new worlds in fiction. The quantity of detail devoted to Zenobia's flower or Isabel's mournful eyes does not come across as sheer celebration of the power of imagination, in part because it is kept in tension with the author's possible self-revelation. The self-consciousness that pervades both novels saps the exhibitional style's effectiveness by disabling our sense of the completeness of the fictional world, by making us feel that fictional world is merely a surface (a "merely" that Stowe and Phelps would never let diminish their own work), by holding out instead the promise of some autobiographical depth that is the real prize for reading.

An intimacy with the author, achieved through the revelation of such autobiographical depth, does seem to be on the horizon at first. Establishing Miles and Pierre as writers gives us a sense that we are seeing privileged glimpses of Melville and Hawthorne themselves thinking,

⁶¹ Stowe directly preaches to and exhorts us, but she is speaking for the Christian truth of the abolitionist cause. Phelps makes Mary not a proxy for herself but an Everywoman who has lost a beloved man to the war, and shows us through Mary how to find God behind grief.

⁶² Christopher Lukasik's reading of *Pierre* makes this point, historicizing the gap between recent literary critics who find the novel picture-heavy and Melville's contemporary reviewers who fault him for not making his words pictorial enough. In short, "*Pierre* is an antivisual novel in nineteenth-century terms, which is precisely why it is a visual novel in twentieth-century terms" (191).

worrying, and second-guessing. But in fact the ceaseless pointing out of the novels' fabrication produces less a feeling of intimacy than of vertigo or claustrophobia. We might not, after all, want to be this close to the author. If narrative ethics would have us treat each novel as an other, as a persona we encounter through the page, these novels show how that relationship can turn sour. Moments in which we feel we are watching the author struggle to convey the truth of the human condition alternate with statements of disgust at the world of mere representations—Miles's visceral distaste for Westervelt, Pierre's rejection of the vogue for daguerreotypes—and a concomitant wish for true revelatory power. That focus on artifice smacks of ambivalence about whether the novelist's soul is worth keeping veiled and of doubt whether there is much to be seen behind the tempting lure of the author-figure. In fact, Melville and Hawthorne end up making their protagonists proxies for us readers at least as much as they serve to figure the authors themselves. Pierre's and Miles's ceaseless efforts to get to the truth of Isabel and Zenobia are much like our ceaseless efforts to get to the bottom of these novels, to approach their true authors beneath the fiction. We find in these novels not deep otherness but a reflection of our own will to intimacy, just as Miles can only see his own reflection in Zenobia's eyes.

The other novels in this study offer a critique of the reader-text love story that narrative ethics imagines in that they provide us readerly satisfaction without our having to penetrate to something presented as depth. Melville and Hawthorne, on the contrary, reproduce in *Pierre* and *Blithedale* the basic Levinasian critique of the humanist, happy version of the reader-text love story: the beloved text spurns our readerly advances, and the other of the text remains inaccessible. In my readings of these two novels, I want to show that the force of this critique is generated by Hawthorne's and Melville's quest to figure out what kind of alterity the novel can offer, a quest that arises from the untenability of the position they find themselves in as authors: stuck between the Protestant-sanctioned ideal of reading for God-as-Author (the kind of novel that Stowe and Phelps write) and the secular-aesthetic ideal of reading for author-as-god (the kind of novel that we will see Stoddard and James write). They can offer nothing transcendent, no capital-A Author, only the authorial spirit that created the worlds of the novels. And their faith in the value of that authorial spirit is intermittent. This accounts for the passive-aggressive energy Hawthorne and Melville build into the reader-text relationship in these novels. If Isabel and Zenobia are figures for the novels themselves, and if we are like Pierre and Miles, hopefully digging into their mysteries and in search of what makes them tick, we are made fools of. Melville and Hawthorne put us on the hunt with their narrative setup. But they half-mock, half-punish us for trying to track them in between the lines. The scorn with which both authors alternately hold out and withdraw the possibility of autobiographical truth bespeaks a sense of diminishment for the novel. Neither author seems confident that there is anything beneath the surface in these novels—as there is perhaps nothing in Isabel or Zenobia—worth protecting from visibility.

In working out the question of what kind of otherness the novel can offer, Hawthorne and Melville use as a foil the power of the visual arts to apprehend and to represent otherness. Specifically, they try to find out what novel-writing can do, what kind of attachment it can inspire and what kind of otherness it can reveal, by putting it in competition with portrait-painting. They stage the conflict between depth and visibility by portraying women who, once they can be pictured, or once their real identities are understood to be manifest as surface, lose their divine souls. (It is no coincidence that they are women. In Gotthold Lessing's influential argument for the split between image and word,

the image was coded feminine: both helplessly mute and threateningly seductive.⁶³) A great deal is made to ride, for Pierre and for Miles, on whether we can adequately read a character with our eyes, or whether we ought to trust only the words of a narrative to reveal character. Both Miles and Pierre share in the Protestant expectation that words trump appearances. Painting offers a surface for the eye, but words can claim to show that which is invisible. And visible things, skin and hair, faces and bodies, are what Miles and Pierre want to get beyond in their understandings of Isabel and Zenobia. We have seen in Stowe an assurance that visual cues are fully reliable; in Phelps we ultimately see the same confidence, although Phelps's characters do fret about preserving invisible depth. But in *Pierre* and *Blithedale* such fretting is pervasive, and the claims made by the visual threaten rather than complement the verbal system of meaning. Reading with the eye in these novels is inevitable, and it seems, in the end, to be the best we can do. But that best is not good enough: believing what you see provokes bad choices and disorder.

Portraiture has been much discussed in the criticism of *Pierre*, and it is easy to see why: portraits crowd the novel's pages.⁶⁴ From the hall of ancestral portraits in the opening we come to the chair-portrait, which activates the key moments in Pierre's developing consciousness. The novel's great shake-up occurs in front of a portrait in a gallery of fakes in Manhattan. The question of portraiture is at work more subtly in *Blithedale*. Hawthorne doesn't foreground portraits here as he does in *The House of the Seven Gables*. But in *Gables* the portrait of Judge Pyncheon reads as a play on Gothic conventions, not so much as an interrogation of the novel form. In *Blithedale*, much more than in the relatively conventional third-person narration of *Gables*, portraiture becomes a metaphor for writing. Miles is a narrator who fancies himself a kind of portraitist. He wrings his hands over the problem of how best to show us the characters he sees. Above all, he wants to create an accurate portrait of Zenobia, and perhaps through her, of Margaret Fuller.⁶⁵ And Miles, like Pierre, pits word against image: he cannot decide whether it matters more to get the physical likeness right, to trace exactly how Zenobia looks with the flower in her hair, or to render her soul by abstracting what that flower represents. Insofar as both obsessively weigh the relative strengths of images and words, and both self-consciously stage that fight as a way of testing the kind of otherness a novel can offer, *Blithedale* is a match for *Pierre*.⁶⁶

My reading finds the connection between novel-writing and portrait-painting in the way both novels deploy the metaphor of the writer as portraitist, and the novel as self-portrait. And what that connection reveals is both novels' shared concern with deciding how to judge the truth of a portrait. Just as we readers wonder if we can discern the true Melville behind the pages of *Pierre*, or the true Hawthorne in the figure of Miles, so Miles wants to know whether he has seen the real Zenobia, and Pierre whether he has seen the real Isabel. Painters and novelists alike encounter roughly the same

⁶³ Lessing writes in his preface to *Laocoon* that his aim is to counteract "the love of description in poetry, and of allegory in painting," to correct the false idea that poetry amounts to a "speaking painting" and that painting is a "dumb poem" (xvi).

⁶⁴ Lukasik, for instance, has lately taken this tack, arguing that Melville's handling of portraits serves to critique the binary between performative and essentialist notions of selfhood. Lukasik puts it this way: "By challenging both assumptions of the logic of physiognomic distinction (that a person has one essential character over time and that a face can express it) the final portrait gallery scene in *Pierre* exposes the physiognomic fallacy—the false opposition between a model of character read from performance and one read from the face—an opposition that, as I argue throughout *Discerning Characters*, was foundational to how early American culture imagined the structure of social relations" (*DC* 21). James Creech, whose work I cite below, is another notable example.

⁶⁵ Mitchell makes this case, as I will explain in more detail below.

⁶⁶ Beyond the specific thematics of these novels, though, reading fiction alongside portraiture would have been customary for Melville's and Hawthorne's contemporaries. Lukasik writes that "Reading faces and reading novels were indistinguishable practices for discerning character during the period and the benefits as well as dangers derived from each were frequently discussed together" (16).

problem: how can I make my reader or viewer believe in and connect with whomever I'm portraying? How can I get at the truth of my subject? The portraitist had to find a way, as painter John Neagle put it, "to penetrate [a sitter's] disguise," namely whatever the sitter thought he ought to look like or wanted to project, "and [to] discover the truth" and thereby "lay his character open as to day" (qtd in Harris 67). This is exactly what Miles and Pierre want to do with Zenobia and Isabel, and it is what we readers are led to try to do as we look for clues to Melville and Hawthorne through the pages of these novels.

But was the character we perceive in a portrait something revealed, uncovered from below the mere dust of a sitter's body, or was it invented by the hand of the artist and verified by the credulous eyes of the beholders? Those are the options we will see emerge in the contemporaneous discourse around these questions, options that took shape around the high-stakes subjects of Jesus and George Washington. We have already seen that Melville, arguing that Jesus' real spirit must have been invisible, takes it that great authors should likewise keep their souls deep out of sight. The question of how, or even whether, to try to paint Jesus reminds us why it might matter to find out whether representation aims at revealing the subject's true nature, on one hand, or at the potentially devastating possibility of inventing it on the other. Keeping Jesus' portrait constrained to words only—the revealed truth of sacred text—would keep the savior's spirit from being co-opted by the artful hands of his creatures. Hawthorne and Melville would write *Pierre* and *Blithedale* to play on their own readers' drive to know them, and to thereby test what kind of alterity, whether a sense of the author as god or of God as the Author, a novel might offer contact with. Their answer, in these novels? Neither.

I. PAINTING PORTRAITS: JESUS VS. GEORGE WASHINGTON

For mid-nineteenth-century Americans, no picture of Jesus was good enough. Even the best works of Europe, Henry Ward Beecher found, "lack[ed] that suffusion of love" that was "the true nature of Christ." Not until Warner Sallman's 1941 portrait would Americans agree they had a truthful a picture of Jesus as a man. But it was possible, at the end of the Civil War in the Capitol Rotunda, to paint George Washington as a god. What made the difference? I will try to answer that question in what follows, examining this problem in midcentury portrait-painting with an eye to a concurrent crisis in the novel's project of portrait-writing. In both cases I track two competing standards of success in portraiture: accuracy on one hand, and emotional effectiveness on the other. Accuracy here takes on the weight of revelation, the painter's careful transcription of just what he sees in a subject. Emotional effectiveness, on the other hand, is a matter of invention, the painter's ability through craft to maximize audience response. In Gilbert Stuart's Athanaeum portrait of Washington, a picture that was crucial to the process of deifying the president, we find the competition between these two standards resolved. Emotional effectiveness turns out to count as accuracy; revelation and invention are conjoined. But there is a loss attending this collapse of the two standards. The standard of accuracy, we will see, rules out the possibility of portraying divinity. But it also maintains a sanctity for otherness that the standard of effectiveness threatens to undermine. I propose that the tension between these two possible standards for judging the truth of a portrait helps illuminate the tension that drives *Pierre* and *The Blithedale Romance*. In these novels, what's at stake is whether fiction, through its verbal portraits, can or cannot offer some experience of transcendent otherness to its readers.

Antebellum painters did not avoid religious themes, but they rarely painted Jesus. Stuart never made an attempt at Jesus, perhaps in part because he knew his talent lay in painting from life. Other painters felt it would be hubristic. Washington Allston wrote an artist friend that "I have long since resolved never to attempt" a portrait of Jesus (qtd in Dillenberger 142). Robert Weir said that "I painted the *Two Marys at the Tomb*, but left the figure of Christ to be imagined. I have often so left

it. One feels a delicacy in even attempting the delineation” (qtd in Dillenberger 143). Magazine writers were tough on artists who did make the attempt. A review in *Godey's*, otherwise enthusiastic about religious paintings, finds that the Jesus in Benjamin West's *Christ Healing the Sick* proves the painter's "comparative incompetency" ("Our Artists" 64). To capture Jesus' true nature, the painter's own soul must be properly sanctified, and West had not risen to the occasion.⁶⁷ Likewise *The Literary World's* "Fine Arts" column notes that an image of "Christ giving Sight to the Blind, has not been treated in a sufficiently elevated manner; the figure of the Saviour lacks dignity" (510). It finds Horatio Greenough's *Head of Christ* "wholly deficient in that expression of sublimity which we inseparably connect with our idea of the Saviour." Greenough, the reviewer feels, has the artistry but not the spirit for the task.

Even the old masters might fail to measure up. Beecher was generally enthusiastic about European art: visiting Christ Church College, he was moved to feel that a series of portraits "cease to be pictures. They are realities." Looking at Guido Reni's portraits of the apostles, he exclaims, "At last you are with them!" (52) Nonetheless Beecher too finds pictures of Jesus himself wanting. "They are more than human, but not divine. They carry you up a certain distance, but then leave you unsatisfied." Looking at a picture of the lamentation over Christ's crucified body, Beecher muses that while the face is properly noble and serene, it "lacks that suffusion of love... [which] was the true nature of Christ"; love was the "very element that painters have failed to depict" (81-82). What seems clear is that while Protestant viewers said pictures of Jesus did not accurately capture his true nature, they had an idea of what that true nature—whether it went by the name of love or dignity—*would* look like. They just hadn't seen it yet.

A more hardline Protestant position helps spell out why. An anti-Catholic polemicist, John Cumming, flatly "den[ie]d that man can make a picture of our Lord." Cumming frames this as a problem of ontology, and of the fundamental limitations of visual media to capture conceptual truths. A painter might paint Jesus "bearing the cross," but could not paint him "bearing our sins away," which was the central fact to be understood about Jesus. The only portrait that could capture the true nature of Jesus, Cumming wrote, was "that which God has sketched" in the revelatory words of the Bible (462-463). The *North American Review* further explicates the superior capacity of words over pictures to represent, better yet to reveal, the truth of divinity. What "makes us turn away from all the attempted portraits of the Saviour, which the pencil of even a Michael Angelo or a Raphael has drawn," is that the Gospels have presented Jesus as beyond representation: he exists on "a height to which the Muses never climb." The writer asks, "How can painters copy the face of him, from which beamed an intelligence, a kindness, a dignity, an energy, and a glory which no mortal man ever did or could possess?" (249) To the extent that words like "intelligence" and "kindness" and "dignity" refer us conceptually to the "special ideas" that make Jesus who he is, they do all that can be done toward representing him. Words, because they do not look like what they mean but must be deciphered inside a reader's head, seem to offer the only way to communicate that which is invisible. And if such words do not serve to "copy the face" of Jesus, that is the point: by so failing, they at least avoid detracting from that face—they protect its sanctity and its divinity—by keeping it invisible. For this reviewer, not surprisingly, even the greatest painters in the Catholic tradition failed to depict the essence of Jesus.

One source of the difference in the Catholic approach might be traced to the greater role played by Mary in Catholic faith. If it is impossible to imagine how the features of the father might show up in Jesus' face, we can imagine him as his mother's son. The English translation of Adolphe Napoléon Didron's *Christian Iconography* makes this point clearly: the author claims that "Christ in

⁶⁷ Specifically, the writer speculates, "The cherubim were not invoked [by the artist] to impart their sacred fire, nor did the hesitancy of self-distrust cause the dilated heart to tremble" ("Our Artists" 64).

taking upon him the form of Adam, assumed features exactly resembling those of the Virgin Mary.” In support of that claim, Didron offers an eyewitness report of Jesus’ appearance. Publius Lentulus, a civil servant sent by Herod to procure a verbal portrait of Jesus, “had seen the Saviour, and had made him sit to him, as it were, that he might give a written description of his features and physiognomy.” Lentulus’s report unites physical and abstract features: Jesus has a “countenance severe and virtuous, so that he inspires beholders with feelings both of fear and love”; his hair “is of the colour of wine, and from the top of the head to the ears, straight and without radiance, but it descends from the ears to the shoulders in shining curls.” With “blue and very brilliant” eyes, a “faultless” nose and mouth, Jesus “is in appearance the most beautiful of the children of men.” The author tells us that Constantine had pictures of Jesus painted from this description. According to a later commentator, St. John Damascenus, who had seen a facial impression made on linen by Jesus himself, Jesus had “thick eyebrows... black beard, face of the colour of wheat, like that of his mother, long fingers, sonorous voice, and persuasive language. He is.... invested with every virtue that our reason conceives to be appropriate to the Incarnate God” (246-248). Didron assures us that even a century later, this description provided the basis for portraits. And in so doing, he suggests that this record of image-making proves the description’s validity. The authenticity or faithfulness of this blazon of Jesus, if it cannot be grounded in checking against another more original source, can be satisfactorily verified by noting the number of reproductions it inspired).

George Washington was only a little easier to picture accurately. And he was held to be only slightly less divine than Jesus. Though his official apotheosis would not be painted until 1865, Rembrandt Peale and Greenough had both already aligned Washington with the god Jupiter in their portrayals.⁶⁸ Moving the association from the pagan to the Christian deity, William Powell’s 1864 painting of *General Washington Receiving His Mother’s Last Blessing* led one reviewer to compare Mrs. Washington to the Virgin Mary, suggesting that her son, too, had saved the world.⁶⁹ So it is not surprising that a popular biography of Stuart frames his task in painting Washington in much the same terms that were operative in discussions of painting Jesus. The biographer writes that when the former president first sat for Stuart in 1795, “Washington was, as his name ever will be, the idol of every lover of liberty, and the world were anxious to have a correct likeness of him.... They had seen what were called likenesses of this great man... but still were not satisfied; nothing, as yet, had been produced that reached their idea of him” (“Gilbert” 324). The job required Stuart to attain both a “correct likeness” of Washington and to limn the “idea” behind the “idol” satisfactorily.

One index of how much a correct likeness mattered comes through the painstaking effort given to sorting out which pictures of Washington were done from life and which were not. Washington Irving’s 1855 biography includes an appendix devoted to collating details on the various portraits of Washington. That same year, both *Putnam’s* and *The Crayon* ran lengthy reviews of all the major portraits of Washington, tallying up their claims to authenticity and comparing the virtues of the different results. A life portrait commanded a higher price on the market, suggesting that buyers put a premium on the accuracy that would attend painting a subject at first hand. And given the widely-accepted claims of phrenology and physiognomy to make a person’s character legible on his face and head, it would seem to follow that the painter who most accurately mapped that face and head would thereby most accurately map the subject’s true nature.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Peale’s 1824 *Patriae Pater* depicted Washington with a miniature of Jupiter above his face; Greenough’s 1840 sculpture posed a shirtless Washington in a toga and in a recognizably godlike gesture of command.

⁶⁹ “[N]o woman since the mother of Christ has left a better claim on the affectionate reverence of mankind,” according to the text that was printed along with the engravings of Powell’s pictures (qtd in Colbert, 238).

⁷⁰ Lukasik observes that “Lavaterian physiognomy created the very faces it claimed to interpret” by generating the categories that people would use to read faces. “Instead of discerning character from the face, it merely collapsed the

Stuart did paint Washington from life, three times, and he had returned to America from London with a reputation for an unparalleled knack for accurately capturing a subject's essential character.⁷¹ "He seemed," fellow-painter Allston recalled, "to dive into the thoughts of men, for they were made to rise and to speak on the surface" (qtd in Lester 132-133). Nonetheless, Stuart had trouble working his magic on Washington. During their sittings, he had to fight to penetrate the stolidity of the former president. Stuart talked of "battles" and the "republican ages of antiquity," neither of which provoked any soul-revelation from the former president. But "At length the painter struck on the master-key"—apparently, the subject of horses—"and opened a way to his mind which he has so happily transferred to the canvass with the features of his face."⁷² Much as Ralph Winwood did in painting Pierre's father, Stuart used conversation as a way to disarm his sitter and thereby to get a picture true to the sitter's real nature. Stuart's accuracy could also be explained by the theory of sympathy: the idea that, as a reviewer in the *Atlantic Monthly* put it, "To paint a great man, one must not merely comprehend that he is great, but must... enter into and identify himself with some essential quality of his character" ("Reviews" 653). We can see how it might be difficult to paint an accurate portrait of God incarnate if full sympathetic identification is requisite. But if greater sympathy should yield a truer portrait, then Stuart, already acknowledged a great painter, and a great admirer of Washington to boot, could pull it off.⁷³

Rembrandt Peale applied the logic of sympathy in a bid to make his own portrait of Washington the standard image, arguing that it was he, not Stuart, who had the requisite emotional connection to create the best, most accurate, likeness. This was in 1832, the centennial of Washington's birth, when Congress was debating which images should be used as models for new memorials. Stuart's picture had long been the accepted version, a decision ratified in an 1826 congressional resolution. Peale now proposed that his picture was better because he had "more sacredly treasured up" his "impression" of Washington, and because, as a kind of cosmic ratification, he shared the same birthday with Washington. That meant that he "was annually, from infancy, excited to greater admiration of [Washington's] character" (qtd in Verheyen 134).

But Peale's sympathy argument was not persuasive; Stuart's picture still prevailed as the national standard.⁷⁴ What made Stuart's portrait better than Peale's? If accuracy really was the key, then Stuart's advantage might be explained by his having had Washington sit for him, whereas Peale painted his portrait from memory, after Washington's death. Instead, Stuart's portrait demonstrates the collapse of the difference between the two standards. In praising the Athenaeum portrait, reviewers do not linger on how much it looks like Washington, but on the ideals and qualities they see in it. *Putnam's* praises Stuart's picture for its "freshness of color" and "the studious modeling of the brow," but these references to Washington's actual flesh give way to a flood of admiration in the

difference between the two" (32). We will see that same collapse in the standards of accuracy and effectiveness effected by Stuart's portrait of Washington.

⁷¹ Painter Benjamin West reportedly said that Stuart could "nail a face to a canvas." The remark is quoted in a letter from Temple Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's grandson, to his grandfather (qtd in Evans 27).

⁷² That key was the subject of horses, according to a recollection from Washington's grandson George Washington Parke Custis: "Washington was a bad sitter," and "Stuart, once finding the Chief very dull, bethought himself to introduce the subject of horses. This roused up the sitter, and the artist obtained the desired expression" ("Portraiture" 389).

⁷³ Evans cites Jane Stuart's account of her father's devotion to Washington: "it is impossible for any human being to have a more exalted admiration (and I might say love) than my father had for Washington"; she recalls that "An old friend of my father's told me he remembered that, when speaking of Washington, an exalted expression would pass over" her father's face as he thought of the president (qtd in Evans 71).

⁷⁴ As Verheyen recounts, Peale's portrait would be left behind in a disused Senate chamber after the Capitol buildings were renovated in the 1850s. The portrait that used Stuart's head as a model was carried along to the new Senate chamber (137).

form of a list of abstract ideals: “Self-control, endurance, dauntless courage, loyalty to a just but sometimes desperate cause, hope through the most hopeless crises, and a tone of feeling the most exalted” (346). These serve far more powerfully to confirm the truth of the portrait. The question of accurate resemblance does not drop out; some baseline verisimilitude must be necessary to produce a strong emotional response. But it’s the emotion that seals the judgment. Stuart’s Athenaeum portrait shows that we call a portrait accurate because it makes us feel what we expect to feel when we look at a given subject.

The analyses of later art historians confirm that effectiveness trumps, or counts as, accuracy. Egon Verheyen, for instance, suggests that Peale’s portrait actually lost out because it was too accurate. Whereas “Stuart attempted to render Washington’s character by eliminating details and avoiding precise rendering of his features,” Verheyen writes, Peale “attempted to show Washington in a much more clearly defined way. It is as if a veil before Stuart’s painting had been removed” (136-137). For Verheyen, it is skillful deployment of artistic convention that helps Stuart succeed. The way he poses Washington, managing the view of Washington’s head so that it seems “in direct contact” with the viewer while retaining an indistinct soft focus, creates a mix of intimacy and mystery.⁷⁵ Achieving a strictly accurate likeness might have been difficult to begin with because, as Verheyen documents, one of the key distinguishing features of Washington’s face, documented repeatedly in contemporary descriptions, was that it had no distinguishing features.⁷⁶ Joseph Mandrillon, for instance, wrote in 1784 that Washington’s face was “calm and sedate, but without any one striking feature,” so that “when you depart from him, the remembrance only of a fine man will remain” (qtd in Verheyen 132). And Stuart was not faithful even to those undistinguished features. Comparing Stuart’s portrait with the features recorded in a life mask of Washington, Dorinda Evans shows that Stuart tweaked and adjusted anything that would make the president less emblematic of sublimity, which was the effect he wanted.⁷⁷ Evans writes that “the Athenaeum likeness is arguably Stuart’s only sublime portrait in that it alone was recognized... as producing the appropriate reaction” (65).

This emphasis on viewer reaction falls in line with the prevailing aesthetics of the time—the idea that, in Theo Davis’s summary, “beauty [is located] in [its] effects on observers rather than in the intentions of artists or even in definable properties of objects” (573). But where there can be no way to test a picture’s resemblance to its subject, for instance if the subject is Jesus, this logic becomes highly charged. A standard of likeness based on popular emotional response locates the power to authenticate otherness—to say that a picture does or does not represent the other truly—in the eye of the beholder, undercutting the possibility that the subject of the portrait might have its own source of verification beyond the needs and projections of the viewer. If what was designated as the truest portrait of Jesus was simply the one that made the most people feel a connection to God, that would mean that a pure “fancy piece,” as Melville’s narrator in *Pierre* would say, would count as the most accurate, most truthful depiction of divinity. What more proof would be needed that man had indeed invented God?⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Verheyen points out that Stuart taps into “Renaissance compositional devices embodied in Raphael’s *Castiglione*” (133).

⁷⁶ Verheyen cites numerous “descriptions that spoke of the impression the presence of Washington made on the visitor: they all asserted that there were no outstanding, striking features” (133).

⁷⁷ “Judging from the bone structure in the life mask”—taken by Jean Antoine Houdon in 1785—“Stuart, in his Athenaeum head, actually diminished the size of the large eye sockets and the prominence of the cheekbones, which together would have made Washington more sensitive looking, even somewhat haunted” (67).

⁷⁸ To trace the gradual trajectory from the abstract to the concrete all the way to Sallman’s famous picture would be to parallel the path taken by Mary Cabot as she learned to love God more than her brother Roy: the way to make Jesus visible, like the way to make him lovable, was to bring him down to earth—to make him a brother.

II. THE NOVEL AS SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

What does this case study in portraiture tell us about the novels that Melville and Hawthorne published in 1852? The question common to both the novels and the portraits is how, or whether, representation of transcendence might work, whether in painting or in the novel. As I noted at the outset, Melville draws a parallel between the author of a novel and God the Author, arguing for the necessary invisibility of both. His assertion that “not even in the case of... our Saviour, did his visible frame betoken anything of the augustness of the nature within” is an invocation of the standard of accuracy that, we have seen, forecloses the possibility of portraying Jesus at all, that aims to protect his divinity by maintaining its invisibility. And in *Pierre* and *Bleedale*, Melville and Hawthorne stage the same kind of invisibility for themselves. Both of these novels, that is, are presented to us as self-portraits of their authors. Both novels put their readers on the hunt for the true nature of the author that we are led to believe lies behind the fiction—isn't Miles really Nathaniel? and isn't Pierre really Melville? But they keep their own authorship finally veiled, like God's (and that at a time when their friendship had become common knowledge, the subject of literary gossip). Hawthorne and Melville never do let us feel sure they are revealing themselves in these novels. And insofar as Hawthorne and Melville do finally keep their authorship veiled, dead-ending our hopes to get a glimpse of their true natures behind the surface of the fiction, I propose they take seriously this analogy between God the Author and the novelist.

But there is a complication. Within the story-world of these novels, the author proxies, Miles and Pierre, pursue that same protective standard of accuracy. The standard of emotional effectiveness is precisely what's insufficient for them: they are not at all satisfied with the very strong emotional effects that Zenobia and Isabel exercise on them. They want to know that they are seeing the true nature of these women accurately, getting at the essence of their natures. Finding out that his trust in his feeling for Isabel was misplaced is arguably what kills Pierre. It's the kind of mistake Miles Coverdale spends his energies guarding against. But Hawthorne and Melville present Miles and Pierre, in their search for an accurate picture of the true nature of the other, as playing a fool's game. So are we readers, insofar as we are made to feel foolish for trying to track the real authors behind the fiction. Ultimately, then, Hawthorne and Melville give up on the analogy between God the Author and the lower-case-a author. Warner Sallman's portrait of Jesus will win a massive following for the same reason Stuart's Athanaeum portrait did: because invention, not revelation, is what makes people think they are apprehending someone or something other than themselves.

***Pierre*: The Story Behind the Picture and the Picture Behind the Story**

How does Melville both use and resist the exhibitional style? How does he manage to write a fictional love story that mixes allure and bafflement to generate a critique of the reader-text love story—one that punishes the reader for wanting the very intimacy the novel itself holds out? Melville offers such intimacy by playing with the possible connections among his own authorial persona, his narrator, and his protagonist. The novel's form tempts us to allegorize the novel, to map its fiction securely on to the deeper, realer truth of Melville's own life. That move, mirrored in the fiction by Pierre's drive to get to the truth of Isabel's life, constitutes the novel's bid for deep reading. On the other hand we can find, again both on the register of *Pierre*'s love story and on that of the would-be love story we find ourselves in as readers, the novel delighting to present anything but depth. We find, that is, a sense of satisfaction in creating a baroque and self-sufficient fictional world, a world that relies on the logic of the exhibitional style. Melville's narrator, for instance, tells us that however deep we dig, “the world... is found to consist of nothing but surface stratified on surface” (285). How much disappointment ought we to hear in this description? In the process of tracking the mix of disappointment with surface and of pleasure in the artful manipulation of it, we will see, too, how the novel pits visual against verbal as ways of apprehending otherness. Portraits

are pitted against narratives: the story behind his father's chair-portrait shapes and confirms Pierre's devotion to that image of his father.⁷⁹ The chair-portrait's appeal to love is later trumped by Isabel, who tells her own story.⁸⁰ And again Pierre trusts Isabel's narrative to validate and organize the inchoate emotional responses he feels for the image of her face. Finally, we will see along the way, too, how Melville tests the standards for truth in portraiture that we have seen in play: whether truth is in the sitter or in the eyes of the beholder, whether what matters most is resemblance to an original or just how much feeling a viewer feels.

Pierre rejects the idea that falling in love may be a matter only of "accidental congeniality" (the narrator's words [350]) or mere chance "juxtaposition" (as Pierre's mother explains marriage [55]). For Pierre, the sense of temporal deepening that narrative grants to a picture makes it safe to love that image; it removes the threat of contingency that Pierre associates with the visual. Cousin Ralph's "chair-portrait" of Pierre's father, we are given to understand, achieves what Stuart's portrait of Washington did, and it achieves what people were wary of portraits of Jesus ever achieving: it makes visible the inner truth of its subject. Dorothea's narrative of how the portrait was made assures us that the picture is indeed revelatory. Dorothea tells Pierre that it was only "by many little cunning shifts and contrivances" that Ralph covertly "kept your father there sitting... and rattling away, and so self-forgetful too, that he never heeded that all the while sly cousin Ralph was painting and painting just as fast as ever he could" (77). Stuart's method was, as we saw, just the same. Pierre's father, a believer in physiognomy, comes to fear that Ralph has made such a revelatory portrait of him—one that would discover his love for a beautiful foreign girl. The power of her story is such that by its end, both she and Pierre have come to feel as if the portrait itself, hanging in Dorothea's parlor, has come to life and is watching them. But, unlike Stuart's portrait of Washington, this one insists, rather menacingly, that there is more to it than that. The painting keeps tempting Pierre to read it deeper, to "Probe, probe a little" beneath the surface. "Something ever comes of all persistent inquiry; we are not so continually curious for nothing, Pierre," he hears the chair-portrait urging him (84).⁸¹ Isabel does the same to Pierre, and so does the novel, to us.

For Pierre any promise of hidden depth makes the love-object more lovable. This is a great advantage for Isabel. To Pierre's perception, Lucy, unlike Isabel, has nothing to hide. Lucy is herself an artist, a portraitist with a knack for "steeping [her subjects] in a beautifying atmosphere" (330). When Lucy sends Pierre to her room to bring her portfolio to her, Pierre is half-paralyzed by the urge to unroll a "mystic vellum" that he finds rolled up on her bed. Despite his intense curiosity, he declines to "to unroll" its "sacred secrets" (39). But when he delivers to Lucy her portfolio, showing her it is still locked, she tells him to "Read me through and through. I am entirely thine" (40). She opens it and tosses out not weighty mysteries but "all manner of rosy things," lightweight enough to float (40). Lucy's inner vacancy, her transparency, makes it easier for Isabel to take Lucy's place in Pierre's heart. Isabel inaugurates a depth-love, a love based on interior life and secrecy, that Pierre's

⁷⁹ Susan Williams argues that nineteenth century writers "attempt to reassert what Hans Georg Gadamer terms 'occasionality' by linking portraits with a particular origin or referent" and thereby "assert the power of the word to refer to something concrete outside of itself that will prevent it from engaging in an unregulated system of circulation" (33).

⁸⁰ When Pierre tells Lucy "the story of the face" after he catches sight of Isabel at the Miss Pennies', that story is powerful enough to keep Lucy from sleeping that night (54), and powerful enough to make Lucy demand that Pierre tell it to her again.

⁸¹ As James Creech points out, the secrecy that surrounds the chair-portrait—the way it must be sent to Pierre "trebly boxed" and kept from his mother's eyes—enhances its desirability: "closeting the portrait paradoxically acknowledges a taboo pleasure, and the pleasure of taboo, without acknowledging what about it is illicit" (136). And in this visionary speech by the portrait, Creech writes, "a father presents the images of sexual desire to his son by presenting the seductive spectacle of his own body in an erotic *blason*," beginning with the words "'Consider this strange and ambiguous smile....'" (137).

love with Lucy did not require—theirs was a public, conventional love. In her face, Pierre thinks, he has discovered depth—he has “uncovered one infinite, dumb, beseeching countenance of mystery, underlying all the surfaces of visible time and space” (52). Pierre risks everything to go hear the girl with that face tell her story. Hidden truth is what attracts the would-be lover or reader, and for Pierre an image is only as good as the story it might hide.

As a figure for the novel-as-beloved, Isabel establishes a relation with Pierre that parallels the relation the novel establishes with its readers. Like Melville’s narrator, her voice is full of switchbacks, at times peremptory—“But let me be silent again. Do not answer me” (119)—and at times apologetic—“I did not mean to turn off into the mere offshootings of my story” (121). Pierre will return to Isabel the next night, he tells her, because “I feel that something is still unsaid by thee” (127). We keep reading *Pierre* for much the same reason. Much as literary critics have done in reading *Pierre* against Melville’s life, Pierre tries to correlate Isabel’s tale with the real-life facts he knows, lining up dates, tracing causes and effects. Emotionally, he is hooked, even more thoroughly than he had been by her face. Yet just as reading *Pierre* does not yield up Melville’s soul to us, Isabel’s story does not amount to the full disclosure of mystery that Pierre wants. Before the second installment of her tale Pierre has concluded that “her life... was an unraveled plot; and he felt that unraveled it would eternally remain to him.” At this moment he pities verbal representation for its weakness. He sees through the “helpless miserableness” of the novels he has read and their efforts to “to unravel, and spread out, and classify, the more thin than gossamer threads” of human lives (141). And yet he does believe that he has unraveled the key element of Isabel’s history. He believes, that is, that she is his father’s daughter. He trusts her story to have settled their kinship. And when his confidence that he correctly understood the origin of Isabel’s mystery wavers at the end, in the gallery of fakes, so does his love for her.

In the end, Isabel’s promise of deep love is unexpectedly trumped by a mere surface, a portrait in a gallery which seems to have just as much soul as Isabel herself or as the chair-portrait. The portrait of the “stranger’s head by an unknown hand” makes, for a crucial moment, a transfixing claim on Pierre’s attention and potentially on his love and devotion. He is devastated to find himself recognizing a face he loves in a gallery full of shabby copies and fakes. He has no way of verifying the provenance of the stranger’s head; it may be a “pure fancy piece” with “no original” (353). It is, like any of the fakes, for sale to the highest bidder. Suddenly Pierre thinks that Isabel does not resemble the father he remembers; suddenly he realizes that words, which he has relied on to legitimize his response, are no more intrinsically deep than images. What he recognizes is the logic by which we saw Stuart’s portrait of Washington succeed: what counts as the best, the most truthful, portrait, is not any provable resemblance or accuracy in depicting its original; it’s the emotional response of the viewer. This discovery horrifies Pierre, because it threatens the otherness of the other by making proof of otherness lie in the self’s own sensations.

Yet if Pierre rejects a standard that makes artfulness more important than resemblance, the narrator is undoubtedly in love with wordplay for its own sake, words with no promise of depth beyond the fun (to borrow in advance a term that we will see Henry James rely on) they afford. Early on, the narrator tells us we must have a “[n]imble center” and a “circumference elastic” if we are to keep up with him (54). He is noisy and intrusive; he protests that no good reader will “dream that the last chapter was merely intended for a foolish bravado” (12); he gives Pierre’s mother a soliloquy containing twelve variations on the word “docile” (19-20). This narrator is coy: on one page he frankly judges Mrs. Glendinning as foolish for thinking herself superior to Lucy; on the next, he cedes a failure of omniscience, saying “there is no absolute telling now” what Mrs. Glendinning thought (60). He keeps us busy sorting the circumlocutions of a narrator who “do[es] verbally quote [his] own words” (13).

This narrator delights, too, in using words to create not depth but elaborately detailed surfaces for his readers. He declaims on the power and glory of Love as “a volume bound in rose-leaves, clasped with violets, and by the beaks of humming-birds printed with peach-juice on the leaves of lilies” (34). Like Stuart borrowing Renaissance painting conventions, Melville’s narrator borrows well-worn tropes. Pierre and Lucy appear to us in a happy Romeo-and-Juliet balcony tableau that assures us immediately of their true love (3-4). The conventionality of the image, Melville’s narrator trusts, does what it is supposed to do: trigger the correct emotional attachment to what we see. He need not set out a long exposition detailing the two characters’ interior lives, how they met and fell in love. Likewise we are encouraged to fall in love with Lucy through that traditional verbal portrait of a woman as objet d’art, the blazon.⁸² She has cheeks of white and red; her eyes were “brought down from heaven” by “some god”; “her teeth,” though of this earth, were things costly and rare, “dived for in the Persian Sea” (24). The question of interior depths is irrelevant here. The narrator hyperbolizes, and thereby ironizes, the idea that love reads the depths of the other. Love, Melville’s narrator assures us, can see the depths of the beloved with supernatural clarity: “Love sees ten million fathoms down, till dazzled by the floor of pearls”; “looking in each other’s eyes, lovers see the ultimate secret of the worlds” (33). But this supposed clarity of depth is not at all clear; what could we actually learn about the other from looking at a floor of pearls? This heap of words does not give us a clear picture, as Stowe’s word-painting does, but neither does it offer anything that could go by the name of depth.

Melville’s prose here thus points toward a new variation on the exhibitional style, the possibility of a love story without relying on depth on earth or in heaven. But he undermines the possible power of this secular exhibitional style by pushing it over the top and by keeping it in constant tension with the depth-drive the novel puts in play. Such displays of verbal excess prevent us from being absorbed into the world of the story; the narrator’s hyperactivity connects the reader more firmly to the narrator himself than to Pierre. Thus begins the promise of intimacy that is most fully developed in the New York section of the novel, when Pierre becomes a writer. That intimacy ultimately undoes the sheer fun of the language by proposing that what we are really reading for is a privileged glimpse into Melville’s own travails as an author. As Isabel does with Pierre, Melville’s novel keeps promising its readers mystery and ambiguity, a hint of the possibility that the author might bare his soul.

Michael Paul Rogin, more thoroughly than any other critic, argues for seeing Pierre as Melville’s alter ego. Early on in the novel, Rogin writes, “Melville had played with the conjunction between Pierre’s life and his own”; in the novel’s later New York sections,

as we grow more convinced that Pierre’s voice is contaminated, the narrator’s dissolves into it. This confusion between protagonist and narrator mirrors a deeper, more disturbing breakdown of boundaries, those that separate the author from his text.... As Melville becomes identified with the hero he is discrediting, he loses himself inside his own fiction. (178)

The excessive soul-baring the novel enacts is unhealthy and self-destructive, Rogin concludes, and it makes the novel a disaster. What disturbs Rogin is exactly what might excite a narrative ethics

⁸² The blazon of Lucy, as Otter notes, results in an image of a girl as “a walking encyclopedia of landscape features” and as “an overstocked embodiment of individual, natural, and national characteristics” for Pierre to hold for his own (203). In his view Melville repeatedly stages Pierre’s search for depth only to arrive at some version of surface. These surfaces pile up in layers, burdening the tropes of sentimental love until they bend and then break: “The extremes are taken to their extremity” (*MA* 204).

reader, one who begins from the premise that reading is meant to be like falling in love with the voice of a novel.⁸³ Here is that voice, turned into something like a confession. Rogin confirms *Pierre's* autobiographical strain. What Melville's playing with autobiography amounts to, I argue, is a surrender of the novel's possible offer of a real experience of alterity.

Especially in those New York chapters, as Rogin says, the narrator feeds our desire for contact with the author, letting us imagine that what Melville is really telling us is the story of his own writing. When Pierre is writing his way to death in the shabby writers' retreat of the Apostles, the narrator more and more overtly offers to let us imagine Pierre as a proxy for Melville himself. Watching Pierre lose his sight, his appetite, his balance, and his consciousness under the pressure to produce a work of genius, we cannot but think this mirrors Melville's experience. But the novel does not end with intimate and profound meditations about the writing life. Melville refuses to allow his dropped autobiographical hints to resolve into a clear picture of his own authorship. Melville closes instead with ripe melodrama: gunshots on the street, poisonings in a dungeon, and a heap of bodies.

The novel, then, invites our will to merge with the presence of the author lurking behind the pages, but to read it as the self-revelation of Melville's authorial struggles is finally impossible. Melville not only does not make good on the promise of self-revelation; he punishes us for wanting to see him revealed. One instance of the passive aggression that laces the narrator's apparent candor comes in the chapter "Pierre as Juvenile Author." At a moment when the narrator has admitted that in talking about his protagonist's writing career perhaps "I too begin to loungingly expand," he begins to undercut the idea of originality. Here the narrator declares that the only truly original author is God; all the rest, even Milton, are at best clever repackagers of their own experience, and most are blatantly derivative. The narrator, having thus diminished the enterprise of human writing, makes a gesture of intimacy, telling us that "It is impossible to talk or to write without apparently throwing oneself helplessly open" (259). But the proffered intimacy—and already that "apparently" casts doubt on the openness—gets followed by a weary spitefulness. The narrator continues,

Still, it is pleasant to chat; for it passes the time ere we go to our beds; and speech is further incited, when like strolling improvisatores of Italy, we are paid for our breath. And we are only too thankful when the gapes of the audience dismiss us with the few ducats we earn.

What comes across first is a tempered disappointment, perhaps a wry resignation, that all writing, however vulnerable it makes the author, must be little more than "chat" to beguile us before we sleep, or die (the "bed" might well be a grave, given the melancholy here). Perhaps the "pleasant[ness]" of such small talk redeems its smallness, but we are surely not in the realm of exaltation. The mention of money, of getting paid (Pierre's financial straits become the focus of the next section of this chapter), gives the narrator's melancholy a harder edge. The narrator forces on us the recognition that we are the yawning audience tossing coins at him as we dismiss him, and he is grateful to get away from us with our change. In the space of one paragraph Melville tells us he is wide open, blames us for dismissing him with tossed coins, and derides us for looking for an easy pastime and then getting bored with it. These sentences are too gentle to feel really hostile (they don't have the manic energy of the earlier chapters), but there is a dark edge of disgust in this assessment of the reader-text love story.

The Blithedale Romance: The Appeal of Paint and Pasteboard

⁸³ Yet it is clear that Rogin, too, expects a certain kind of companionship from a novel's author, and that he misses the subversive Melville whom he wanted to find in *Pierre*. In other words, Rogin is himself a narrative ethics reader insofar as he is hoping to find the real author behind the fiction.

In his preface to *Blithedale*, Hawthorne offers the disclaimer that any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental. He hopes his readers will not assume that, just because he spent time at Brook Farm, and just because this romance is set in such a utopian community, “he has been sketching [the] likenesses” of any persons who were really there. The characters of his novel are “entirely fictitious,” and he gives them capitalized identities as if they were allegorical figures—“Philanthropist,” “Woman,” “Maiden,” and “Minor Poet.” He ends by urging one of Brook Farm’s founders to record the “history” of the real community and its real persons. From the start, then, Hawthorne insists on the difference between the work of creating an accurate likeness, a historian’s job to which he would have brought “the touches of a friendly pencil” if he had actually undertaken it, and the work of the romancer, who idealizes. And he sets up that contrast, as Melville does, only to play these two tasks off of each other. There is again the desire to hide and protect depth, motivated by the same reasons we saw articulated in the unease over picturing Jesus: because to picture it fully would be to vitiate real otherness. Again a semi-autobiographical text sets in motion a bait-and-switch with the reader who wants to discern the author’s soul behind the fiction that is presented as a surface. As in *Pierre*, the motivating question here is what kind of alterity the novel can offer—can the novel provide access to any more transcendent creative power than the author, the mere Minor Poet?—and we will see Hawthorne mock the diminished state of authorship through his protagonist and narrator, Miles Coverdale. We will see, too, that sense of diminishment as Hawthorne mocks our readerly desire to know him. The same mix of temptation and punishment we saw in *Pierre* is operative here: the novel holds out the promise that we will see Hawthorne’s own soul, but then closes the door in our faces. The standard of truth that relies on the reader’s, or viewer’s, emotional response is held in contempt, but accurate resemblance—something that would promise a real view of the other’s depths—is equally impossible. There’s nothing to do but scoff at novels, and novel-readers, for wanting to make contact with otherness.

It is true that we see more performances and tableaux vivants, and fewer actual portraits, in *Blithedale* than in *Pierre* (or *Seven Gables*). Hawthorne does have Miles, fairly early in the novel, forecast the “great public hall, in which [Hollingsworth’s] portrait, and mine” will be on display; “I will be painted in my shirt-sleeves,” Miles proposes, “and with the sleeves rolled up, to show my muscular development” (132). Elsewhere, to Priscilla, Miles speaks bitterly of the vain hope of finding, in a beloved’s heart, “One’s own likeness, in the innermost, holiest niche” (93). And he gives a careful and appreciative inventory of the paintings in a Boston tavern. What matters most, though, is that the same problematic that shapes the question of portraying Jesus and George Washington also shapes Hawthorne’s query into the kind of alterity a novel can offer. The same language we saw in the discourse around the portraits of Washington and Jesus—the satisfaction on one hand that something invisible has been made visible, and the reluctance on the other to make visible something that ought to remain invisible—informs what Hawthorne is doing in *Blithedale* much as it informed Melville’s choices in *Pierre*.

As much as Hawthorne plays with his readers’ drive to read Miles as a version of himself, he presents Zenobia as a possible portrait of Margaret Fuller. Zenobia ultimately stands in, I will argue, for the novel itself, much as Isabel does in *Pierre*. In this way Miles becomes a figure for us readers, trying to scratch through the surface of *Blithedale* as Miles himself tries to peer into Zenobia’s depths. Unlike *Pierre*, though, Miles never commits to or acts on his emotional response to the apparent truth of a woman’s face. He and Zenobia never run away together to Boston. In a sense, they begin where *Pierre* had begun his second half: in going to Blithedale, both Miles and Zenobia have already sought out the kind of creative and social freedom that *Pierre* tried to invent, or hoped to find, at the Apostles. Miles’s drama is that of the fence-sitter, and Hawthorne does not subject us to any one moment of revelation that emotional response trumps truth (the lesson both of Stuart’s Athenaeum portrait and of the stranger’s head by the unknown hand). But Hawthorne’s narrator generates a

constant, low-frequency, irritating hum: the cognitive dissonance of Miles's mingled desire to give in to what he feels when he sees Zenobia and his refusal to believe in any representation of Zenobia at all, his constantly weighing his emotional response to her looks against the possible data that might count as real truth.

The teasing hints that Hawthorne is both revealing himself on the page through Miles and hiding himself behind the fiction of this invented narrator entice us to look (in vain) for the line between what Hawthorne calls the "daydream" and the "fact" of his own Brook Farm experience. That friction helps generate a representational energy for the novel that manifests in several ways. For one, Hawthorne ironizes his narrator's drive toward depth on multiple levels. On some occasions the author's hand shows by letting us see his narrator's misunderstanding; these moments make Miles's depth-drive look like a fool's game. Small moments accumulate to let us see Miles's misinterpretation: when Miles wonders why Hollingsworth wants to build a cottage on the hillside for all to see, the perceptual blunder will be clear to sharp-eyed readers—we understand that Hollingsworth is thinking of his prison reform project—and many readers will register as humorous the similarly unselfconscious moment when Miles switches abruptly from ruminating about the truth-telling backs of houses to accepting delivery of his evening cocktail.⁸⁴ At other points, Miles's effort to hold back a secret from us—as when he is describing Zenobia's grief over Hollingsworth and says, "It suits me not to explain what was the analogy that I saw, or imagined, between Zenobia's situation and mine" (200)—comes across as perplexing or even absurd. His final declaration of love for Priscilla seems most of all calculated to make us think he was all along holding something, anything, back. Miles's last-ditch, breathless promotion of this revelation, one that his foregoing story has given us no particular reason to believe, makes the concept of "holding back" such secrets in some depth of soul seem risible.

Further, multiple echoes between the narrator's and the characters' words alert us both to the necessarily fabricated status of Miles's account and to the presence of a consciousness guiding Miles's observations. These repetitions appear within the narration and between narration and dialogue, and we might take them as cropping up deliberately or accidentally through Miles's consciousness. But we might take them, too, as signals of the work of Hawthorne, patterning Miles's words. There is no telling which, but it is impossible not to wonder. Miles speaks of imparting his bachelor's "bitter honey" to Priscilla early in the novel (93); much later Zenobia uses the same phrase to describe the moral of the ballad she imagines Miles will write about her (201). When he returns to Blithedale and unexpectedly finds Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla gathered at the foot of Eliot's Pulpit, he thinks to himself that Zenobia looks as if she had been "on trial for her life"; a few paragraphs later, Zenobia asks him "Do you know, Mr. Coverdale, I have been on trial for my life?" (194). Miles imagines surprising the Blithedalers with a harvest of grapes from the vine around his hermitage, appearing "like an allegorical figure of rich October" (110); much later "allegoric figures from the Faerie Queen" show up among the masqueraders (191). Imagining his spectator position to himself, Miles pictures how the story might end, and how, "The curtain fallen, I would pass onward with my poor individual life" (153). On the next page, Zenobia draws the curtain on the drawing room of the boarding house, much to Miles's chagrin. Miles thinks of Priscilla as a leaf borne on a stream, then records Priscilla describing herself as such (161, 163); Miles thinks how the "flaming jewels on [Zenobia's] neck, served as lamps to display" her beauty, then notes a few paragraphs later the number of literal lamps in the room (157). These echoes show us the seams of Hawthorne's tale. They could mark the novel as fantasy—deliberate efforts to create a kind of dream-like world where everything resembles everything else—or as reality—an accurate

⁸⁴ Both of these examples—the mistaken house on the hill and the sherry-cobbler moment—are highlighted in Jordan Stein's analysis of the "queer style" in *Blithedale*.

account of what happened and how Miles thought of it, an account that just happens to be marked by a string of subtle repetitions.

Such invitations to see through Miles's narrative, giving us room to judge him, flag Hawthorne's hand at work. At such moments we feel, briefly and tantalizingly, that we are in on something with the author himself. These moments invite us to go behind Miles, to see his quest for depth and his faith in subtle intuitions as comically misguided. The "paint and pasteboard of [the] composition" that Hawthorne says he would prefer to hide (38) are hypervisible at such moments. They keep our interest and uncertainty whetted much as Miles's interest and uncertainty are unabated after hours and hours of staring at Zenobia. At other moments we feel we can hear Hawthorne speaking more sincerely through Miles. When Miles worries that his best efforts to tell us about his friends makes patchwork monsters of them, we suspect we are really overhearing the worries of a novelist who feels the obligation to be a historian.

Such is the lure of depth presented by the text to the reader. In the fictional world, likewise, Miles would have us believe he is deep. That is what he hopes to prove by letting us in on his purportedly long-hidden love for Priscilla. But he is prey to competing narrative urges. Miles will take pleasure in the emotional effectiveness of well-arranged surfaces, but he resists that pleasure strenuously. In the tale of Fauntleroy, he tells a fabulously embellished story that condemns a man who is all surface ornament. Westervelt's highly polished manner and dress provoke both disgust and envy in Miles. Though he cheerfully imagines himself and Hollingsworth as portraits, enjoying the game of picturing himself as a surface to be seen by future utopia-dwellers, he resents Zenobia's teasing him about his poetry, her implication that his work is mere prettifying and falsifying. He admires the mystifying techniques of the Veiled Lady, but he wants to attain the true-to-life. He wrings his hands over the way his microscopic examinations of his friends must necessarily tear them apart and patch them back up into monsters; he can think of no other way, though, to go about telling their stories. He watches them carefully, and while he will resort to the expedient of inventing whatever he cannot observe, he is always shamefaced about this. When he is overtly stymied, as when Zenobia pulls the curtain down on his peeping, his defense is to assert his superiority as a hermeneut: Miles uses his God-given "generous sympathies" and "delicate intuitions" to watch his friends, "taking note of things too slight for record" and thereby trying "to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves" (155). Such secrets are the ultimate prize, and seem to be what makes his friends worth paying attention to in the first place.

Just as Isabel is a proxy for the novel *Pierre* in Melville's critique of the reader-text love story, Zenobia stands in for *Blithedale* itself. We readers, like Pierre and Miles with their women, find ourselves wanting to pick apart the surface of the novels in hopes of getting to the real author deep inside. Miles's frustrated fascination with her models the response that Hawthorne's narrative invites from us. Her name alone ignites a will to get to the truth behind the fiction. Miles confirms in conversation with Westervelt that Zenobia is only "her name in literature," and tempting us to wonder if Miles is only Hawthorne's name in literature. Though Miles tells us that he "mention[s] Zenobia's real name" a moment later in that scene, he does not record it in the narrative (106). We never learn what it really is, and if we thought she was a stand-in for Fuller, we are thrown off that scent by the episode with Priscilla and the letter.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Hawthorne flags the possibility that he is writing history, after all, in the scene when Priscilla, bearing a letter from Margaret Fuller, reminds Miles of Zenobia. This is a missive from the real world that Hawthorne claims to have turned into a "Faery Land," a move that feels like a breaking of the fourth wall. And if we are today more inclined to be interested in Miles as Hawthorne, the novel's original readers may have been more curious about how far Zenobia was a portrait of Fuller. As Thomas Mitchell notes, *Blithedale* appeared just two years after Fuller had died in a tragic shipwreck, and just four months after three of her colleagues—Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Freeman Clarke, and William Henry Channing—edited and published a volume titled *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*. The *Memoirs* attempted to write a

Zenobia's flower further thematizes the manifest self that the exhibitional style takes for granted. The flower becomes for Miles a symbol for her "pride and pomp" (48), somewhat as George Washington's face becomes a symbol for nobility. Miles begins his description of Zenobia straightforwardly enough, showing an interest in recording an accurate resemblance by identifying the fabric of her dress as "an American print," explaining that he believes "the dry goods people call it so" (47). But the description of what she is wearing begins to read like a description of a consciously arranged costume as Miles's tallying of details yields to a fixation on the flower in her hair. He does not give the name of the flower—hibiscus or gardenia—but tells us that "it was an exotic, of rare beauty, and as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just clipped it from the stem"; that it "struck deep root into my memory"; that he can still "see it and smell it" at the time of writing. He emphasizes the contrast between the flower's richness and its evanescence. So far, this might amount to an appropriate appreciation of Zenobia's self-performance, a properly attentive reading of her costume and its crowning touch.⁸⁶ When he sees Zenobia alive for the last time, he registers how "the effect of her beauty was even heightened by the over-consciousness and self-recognition of it," and he sees how she appreciates his recognition: "She understood the look of admiration in my face; and—Zenobia to the last—it gave her pleasure" (203). Her recognition here of Miles's fitness as an appreciative audience makes her wonder aloud why she had not thought of wooing him.

We can attribute Miles's misreading of Zenobia—and his concomitant failure to love her—in part to his insistence that all that her costuming and accessorizing must refer to something deep inside her. The flower, by Miles's logic, must be an index of Zenobia's character. He cannot let it remain merely a "brilliant," "rare," and "costly" touch that sets off Zenobia's beauty. The flower must gather its force through a more essential connection to the interior reality of the woman. Its connection to her cannot be contingent. In his sickness—a period he thinks of as endowing him with heightened perception—her flower seemed to him "preternatural" (69). But even afterward "her daily flower affected [his] imagination" just as powerfully. "The reason," Miles thinks, "must have been that, whether intentionally on her part or not, this favorite ornament was actually a subtle expression of Zenobia's character" (70). This could be the only explanation for its persistence in his imagination, Miles thinks: the flower would only matter to him so much if it actually expressed some hidden aspect of the real woman.⁸⁷ It can't just be that he responds to it himself—the truth must come from inside her. Zenobia allows him to attempt to peer into that interior through the windows to her soul, when she "let me look into her eyes, as if challenging me to drop a plummet-line down into the depths of her consciousness." But Miles is disappointed: he sees "'nothing... unless it be the face of a sprite laughing at me from the bottom of a deep well'" (72). He assures us that he is only interested because bachelors always are interested in virgins who got away. What he feels is not love, could not be love, to Miles's way of thinking, because it has no secure connection to depth. He does not like to admit that her attractive force might be a matter merely of the effectiveness of her costume. More importantly, he does not like to admit that being attracted to her costume, to her self-presentation, might amount to love, might be finally indistinguishable from what he expects to feel for Zenobia if only he could discover "the mystery of [her] life" (71).

history of the woman; *Blithedale*, as we have seen, explicitly denied doing any such thing. And yet, as Mitchell shows, contemporary reviews took Hawthorne's fictional Zenobia as a far more truthful portrait of Fuller than the attempted objectivity of the *Memoirs* (PGS).

⁸⁶ Zenobia later tests, and approves, Miles's appreciation of her costuming powers when she presents him with Priscilla decked out in flowers with one stray weed mixed in. Miles spots the false note immediately (79-80)

⁸⁷ He relies on what contemporary theorists of emotion call the "container model" of the self, a model that recommends "venting" to purge an interior of its bad feelings. Robyn Warhol describes this model and its assumptions in her introduction to *Having a Good Cry*.

It is a fear of the loss of such mystery, whether among worldly authors or heavenly ones, that drives Melville's and Hawthorne's anxiety in these novels. The same anxiety aimed at keeping the divinity of Jesus secure by keeping Jesus himself limited to words, not images. Stowe and Phelps can make the standard of emotional effectiveness work toward the experience of transcendent otherness in the novel; they can put fictional invention in the service of Christian revelation with full faith and assurance. Melville and Hawthorne don't have the requisite faith to pull off that same trick. Nor, as Stoddard and James later would, are they willing to make the lower-case-a author god enough in his own right. That neither-nor position accounts for the way both authors mock the diminished possibilities of the novel, half making us want to see them behind the fiction, and half punishing us for being foolish enough to want to see them there. For them, in these novels, the conflating of invention and revelation feels like a diminishment of the novel's possibilities. The idea that the novel might offer real otherness makes Hawthorne and Melville hold out the possibility that we might truly see them; but their doubt that such an offer is worth hoping for makes them mock us for trying.

The representational logic that made viewers believe they could see the deep truth of Washington's spirit in Stuart's painting would enable Warner Sallman in 1941 to paint Jesus just as successfully. Stuart's portrait helped elevate the human to the divine: once it was agreed that Stuart had captured the inner spirit of the man on canvas, later artists could readily portray Washington as a god. Eventually that logic would work in the other direction, and Jesus would finally come down to earth, by overwhelming Protestant consensus, in Sallman's pensive, wavy-haired profile. Sallman's success confirmed the fate that Melville and Hawthorne were guarding against in these novels: the loss of any real otherness in favor of the power of emotional, popular response. Hawthorne and Melville wanted the novel to prophesy. But they saw that if an author used the exhibitional style without the full faith and assurance that Stowe and Phelps worked with, the assurance that depth would be revealed and that surface would be redeemed in heaven, then he might well end up with something like kitsch, idolatry, or mere going through the motions, all the evils Protestants feared in Catholic worship.

Reading the love stories of James and Stoddard, however, will suggest that pitting emotional effectiveness against faithful resemblance to real otherness is a needlessly polarized way to frame the issue. It is not necessarily the case that if we cannot lay our hands on the deep truth of the other, then our response must be mere projection or artful manipulation. That, at least, is the possibility we will find in *The Morgesons* and *The Golden Bowl*, both novels that picture couples functioning happily, despite not knowing each other deeply. But *Pierre* and *Blithedale* largely proceed as if these were the only, intractably opposed, possibilities.

Chapter 4

The Love Story as Prose Exhibition: Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* and Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*

Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* was first published during the Civil War, fully forty years before Henry James published *The Golden Bowl*. *The Morgesons* did have a turn-of-the-century afterlife, in its 1889 and 1901 reissues, when Stoddard's friends in the New York publishing world encouraged the reprintings. But it never gained any widespread or sustained attention: good reviews and puny sales figures greeted it both early and late. Henry Beers, writing in *The Atlantic* in 1901, finds Stoddard has suffered bad timing. At its initial publication, he says, *The Morgesons* failed to meet its due because would-have-been readers were preoccupied by the war; now that the novel has come out again, it has been pushed off the literary scene by the likes of James. Stoddard's work "finds a new school of fiction in possession of the field.... The spirit of the former age was lyrical... and its expression was eloquence and poetry. The spirit of the present age is observant, social, dramatic, and its expression is the novel of real life, the short story, the dialect sketch."⁸⁸ James's 1870 "A Passionate Pilgrim" marks for Beers the advent of the "newer and finer art" that would rise in American letters after the Civil War. "Here was a novel attitude toward life, cool, dispassionate, analytic, sensitive to the subtler shadings not only of character, but of manners and speech, and registering the most delicate impressions" (750). Beers recognizes James's debt to Hawthorne, but says that James's characters talk by contrast like real people; "the persons of [Hawthorne's] romances are psychological constructions—types sometimes hardly removed from allegory—engaged in working out some problem of the conscience in an ideal world. His books are not novels in any proper sense" (750). Beers's emphatic polarization of romance and realism leaves out many shades of gray. Certainly readers in our own day have found Stoddard "cool, dispassionate, [and] analytic," and to say that she was not "sensitive to the subtler shadings of character" and "of manners and speech"—to deny her skills as a realist—misses as much as does denying that James's prose has its own "eloquence and poetry," or that James was as interested as Hawthorne was in "working out some problem of the conscience in an ideal world." If we drop Beers's urge to define a post- versus an antebellum literary style, and with it the notion that fictional technique marches forward into ever-finer developments, we can see how James and Stoddard were working in the same territory. Considering them as adapters of the exhibitional style and as writers of love stories helps us account for both the romance and the realism in their work. And in approaching their novels as two versions of the love story, we will see the before and after picture that Beers proposes mostly disappear.

But what can these authors have to do with a style I have argued originated with the sentimental novel, when neither had kind words for the bulk of popular works written by women? For James an author like Rebecca Harding Davis "drenches the whole field beforehand with a flood of lachrymose sentimentalism, and riots in the murky vapors which rise in consequence of the act" (qtd in Howard, 74). Stoddard, in an 1856 review of Caroline Chesebro's *Victoria, or the World Overcome*, writes, "After the title (for why should the world be 'overcome?') Miss Chesebro's dogmatic and pious ideal of a woman assails me in reading her book" (qtd in Buell and Zagarell,

⁸⁸ Beers's identification of Stoddard as an outdated romancer is ironic, in that it was partly Stoddard's appeal to the writers who were being recognized as realists—William Dean Howells had praised her work—that suggested the time was right to put her work before an audience (Buell and Zagarell, xxii). But his assessment is more in line with Stoddard's own self-identification, as we will see.

325). The gap seems wide, too, because I have argued for the specifically Christian motivations for the valorization of surfaces in the exhibitional style. And Christian motivations are mostly absent from James's and Stoddard's novels. In *The Morgesons*, the narrator, Cassandra Morgeson, says to her father, Locke, "I am afraid that Love, like Theology, if examined, makes one skeptical" (137), and the notion of the Christian god is actively critiqued as a stifling holdover from a Calvinist past. The closest instantiation of God on earth is Cassy's Grand'ther Warren. He is "aboriginal," "a Puritan," the kind of figure who looms over and shadows many Hawthorne and Melville fictions. Though his influence lives on in her mother's and her aunt's pinched lives, Warren himself dies off early in the novel, living just long enough to give Cassy a chance to size him up and reject him, to suffer and rebel under his rule. In *The Golden Bowl*, God is not even present enough to dismiss.⁸⁹ But the aura of the divine or the sacred still lingers around passionate human attachments.

The love stories told in *The Golden Bowl* and *The Morgesons* suggest that in erotic love there is a chance, here and now, for the kind of perfect transparency of the depths of another's soul that Stowe and Phelps had to defer to heaven. In James and Stoddard, though, this depth is identified with the secular realm of romance, the homeland of what James describes as those "things that can reach us only through the beautiful circuit and subterfuge of our thought and our desire" (*AN* 32). Even this sacralized love—that is, the version of love that wants to be a repository of the divine, that wants to guarantee full union of the self with the other—largely succumbs to skepticism. Love as a source of depth glimmers, but largely fails; and it fails without overwhelming tragedy. Instead, Stoddard, along with James in his last novel, writes a love story that succeeds without depths. Love manages to link together selves through mutual admiration, not just through deep merging. And the selves doing the loving are like exhibits, collections that require display, rather than isolatoes. Love here, as it was between Tom and Eva or Mary and Winifred, is a shared discursive enterprise. Stoddard and James push the love story away from the marriage plot, or the adultery plot, that culminates in an ecstatic merge of self and other, and toward an already-married plot that plays out in an ongoing process of mutual display and appreciation—one that need not be fulfilled in heaven. This model of love operates, as we will see, both within the story-world and between the story and its reader.

That this love story represents a new iteration of the version of love developed in Stowe's and Phelps's sentimental novels is a case I will make in several steps. First, I want to review my account of the exhibitional style as it appeared in the sentimental novel and as it was grappled with in Hawthorne and Melville. Then I will describe, focusing on the constitutive tension between surface and depth, how this model of love shapes the stories James and Stoddard tell and how it shapes the kind of love that novel-readers might have for these novels. I will first consider Stoddard's work, written within the same decade and a half that the other novels I have considered were published. But I will argue that she, and James after her, share the same fundamental strategy for writing a love story, and that, forty years apart, they find a strikingly similar way to adapt the power of the exhibitional style to imagine a love story that is happy insofar as it appreciates surfaces. In arguing for the continuity between their writing strategies, I also, as in previous chapters, look outward to the historical context, following the lead of the novels' content. In this case it is Stoddard's and James's emphasis on decorating and collecting that prompts exploration of the growing circulation of magazine articles and guidebooks on these subjects. Stoddard was writing in the early years of what would be a decades-long booming of interest in exhibitions and display that filtered from public (big-city world's fairs and expositions) to private life (guidebooks and magazines advising people how to make their homes into attractive showcases of personality). The interest in decorating and collecting only grew in the years from the 1862 publication of *The Morgesons* to 1904's

⁸⁹ I will treat this question more thoroughly below, in my consideration of *The Golden Bowl*.

The Golden Bowl, forming a cultural preoccupation shared by both authors. *The Morgesons* includes multiple scenes of shopping and redecorating, and it freights rooms and objects with an intensity that is much closer to James's treatment than to Stowe's or Melville's. What Stoddard begins in her practice as a novelist, James will later both practice and theorize for the novel as a form. My readings of the novels will show how first Stoddard and, later, James created a version of the love story that is recognizably exhibitional, and how that love story resonates with the growing cultural consensus that home decor—in particular, the collecting and arranging of things—amounts to an expression of selfhood. I conclude by showing how reading James as an inheritor of a style that began in sentimental novelists' efforts to unite Protestant and Catholic models of interpretation and worship can recast narrative ethics' understanding of the reader-text love affair.

I. Retracing the Exhibitional Style and the Love Stories It Tells

The exhibitional style, I have said, was motivated in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar* by specifically Christian concerns about how to read the Bible and access God. Stowe and Phelps wanted to imagine for the novel a version of reading and loving that would be less private, and less aimed at prying out deep meaning, than Protestant orthodoxy imagined. But the novelist's job is still that of disclosing God's reality, drawing the reader into a community united by love of God. The novel-reader is invited not to merge with the novel, but to share the joy of this disclosure by recreating it imaginatively with other readers, as Eva and Tom make colorful pictures of Biblical imagery or as Mary and Winifred apply and embellish the theology they read. Instead of going deep, Bible reading in these novels spreads outward, into marginalia and into resplendent visions shared by two readers; and the novel-reading too exceeds the bounds of privacy, into stage shows and funeral wreaths and cigars.⁹⁰ Love comes about as self and other try to meet in the third term of God, a meeting that is confidently deferred to a heaven that will re-materialize all that is most beloved and familiar on earth. In the hands of Stowe and Phelps, surfaces are hallowed by the promise of being joined to depth later, in a Christian heaven in which the self will finally be merged with the transcendent otherness of God.

Hawthorne and Melville find straight disclosure of the world impossible; instead the world feels haunted by the absence of God. A heaven where surfaces might be redeemed drops off the horizon of expectations. For now, God himself is beyond representation, as we saw in the discourse of portraits, and even God's creatures cannot be reliably represented in fiction. The exhibitional style serves as a resource, insofar as these authors are charmed by, and want to charm us with, artfully crafted surfaces—Zenobia's costumed appeal or Isabel's performance of mystery. But Pierre and Miles long for a love that merges the self in the depths of the other. So the exhibitional style's privileging of surfaces as a route to otherness is also a scandal, given the loss of the hope of transcendence to redeem or relieve the paltriness of those surfaces. The inability to verify or to fix the meaning of a text, or to authenticate a representation of the other, becomes a problem that must be ceaselessly attacked but that cannot be solved. The absence of such authority seems to disable love between creatures. Love appears in *Blithedale* and in *Pierre* as a perverse obsession, responsible for self-destruction, better avoided if possible. Whereas Stowe and Phelps could offer their readers a

⁹⁰ As noted in chapter two, these latter items are instances of the mass merchandizing that followed the success of those novels. As suggestive evidence of the common urge toward the material and the visible that links this original strand of the exhibitional style with James and Stoddard, I would cite the lushly produced Merchant-Ivory film adaptations of James's work, most recently their 2001 version of *The Golden Bowl*. And I can imagine Stoddard's book, had it attained the popularity that Phelps and Stowe did, inspiring a fashion column in *Godey's Ladies Book* or a line of home textiles and wallpapers. But it is telling that James's cinema adaptations have been, and Stoddard's hypothetical merchandizing would have been, branded upscale and aimed at a boutique market. This is because, as I will develop below, they have shifted their source of novelistic power from the popular religion of Christianity toward a notion of a selective religion of art.

vision of union with the transcendental other, the best offer Melville and Hawthorne can make—and it is alternately made and withdrawn—is for contact with the author himself, creator of the novel. The act of writing becomes itself the scene of the action. But the lack of transcendence, of final authority for authorship, is felt keenly and persistently; it generates the discomfiture that attends the self-consciousness of the narration. Hawthorne and Melville signal their distance from the authorial role by mocking it in *Miles* and *Pierre*. This means, too, a distancing in the reader-text relationship. The potential for collaborative interpretation of the text that is celebrated in Stowe and Phelps (celebrated in part because they trust it will all be validated and clarified in heaven) becomes a burden, and the reader is treated with some suspicion.

Stoddard and James, on the other hand, are pleased to exercise the power of authorship to the fullest. They show less discomfiture, less ambivalence, about stepping into the role of the creator. For them, presenting in fiction a world that is composed rather than disclosed becomes the privileged task of the author. The felt need for a transcendent authority drops away. Stoddard's first-person narrator Cassy authors her own transformation without agonizing over whether doing so is or is not legitimate. Self-authoring, like the authoring of a novel, becomes an act to be done with brio or with fine-tuned care, but not necessarily with guilt or irony, as Hawthorne and Melville did. And Cassy's repeated failure to verify or to authenticate her knowledge of others, or of their self-representations, is treated less as a source of anguish than as an inconvenient fact one lives with. For James, too, we will see, it is decisively the novelist whose artistic consciousness shapes reality rather than opening on to it. The resulting representation can be offered to readers as something worthy of enjoyment. In these novels, the exhibitional style is directed not to motivate love of God the Author, but love of the author as god: love, that is, of the author's power to create the novel as an object of beauty, as an exhibition that can be admired if not definitively interpreted.⁹¹

The relocation of the authority imagined for the novel writer thus makes for a different reader-text relation. We are free, in a way we were not quite free with *Pierre* or *Blithedale*, to fall in love with the novel's representation of life: to enjoy the novel's "true beguilement," or to be "led captive by a charm and a spell, an incalculable art," as James puts it in the preface to *The Golden Bowl* (35). This enjoyment of the novel's spellbinding art depends, as I will explain, on an adaptation of the exhibitional style's assumption of the manifest self. All of these novels portray characters who are such manifest selves. In *The Morgesons* and *The Golden Bowl*, subjectivity is fundamentally a matter of display, much as it is in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or in *The Gates Ajar*. But whereas Tom's inner grace was visible in his appearing to be a walking Bible, James and Stoddard present their fictional personae as admirably self-fashioned exhibitions. Likewise these novels address their reading public as made up of manifest selves capable of appreciating variously framed "surfaces." But by contrast with *Uncle Tom* and *Gates*, these later novels mobilize the exhibitional style not to promote communal worship or a shared sense of God's presence, but to promote an aesthetic appreciation that marks out those with a good eye. James and Stoddard have none of the fervor to convert us that Stowe and Phelps did. Instead their display is made to a select audience, one that will meet the authorial persona halfway and work to pay attention. The scope of the love between the text and its imagined readers shrinks, without the universalizing claims of Christian doctrine, to a much smaller community of

⁹¹ Carolyn Porter offers the provocative insight that "James's solution to the moral dilemma reflected in Ralph Touchett's problematic complicity"—that is, Ralph's wish to maintain Isabel's free will despite stacking the deck for her by passing along his wealth—"resembles, on the face of it, nothing so much as God's solution to a similar problem. For only God is on record as having accounted for his complicity in human events without thereby sacrificing his detached contemplative stance. And although he succeeded finally at being both spectator and agent in the same drama, it was not easy, even for him" (130). Similarly, if "Fanny claims to love all the creatures she has brought together," she "behaves more like the irresponsible God who creates the world out of boredom" (131). In this, Porter says, Fanny closely resembles James.

taste. James and Stoddard demand, or expect, a sympathetic, intelligent, discerning audience. The point is not to win us over, but to single us out.

Thus Stoddard and James treat the reader not quite as a confidante, as Stowe and Phelps do, nor, as we can feel with Melville and Hawthorne, as a potentially threatening stranger to be alternately seduced and discouraged. While Stoddard's novel verges on autobiography, as Hawthorne's and Melville's do, in her hands this is not a ploy for hermeneutical teasing. James and Stoddard offer the display of their novels for our pleasure, without the sadistic flashes we saw in *Blithedale* and *Pierre*. They offer it confidently, even defiantly, as a pearl of great price for discerning readers only: James, in one among many examples, laments "one's inevitable consciousness... of the dire paucity of readers ever recognizing or ever missing positive beauty" (AN 319). We might now, from this vantage point, see Stowe and Phelps working from a conception of the novelist as practical theologian, deliverer of the word, of comfort and encouragement. For Melville and Hawthorne there is a sense in which the novelist is a portraitist (the James who wrote *The Portrait of a Lady* seemed to think of himself as one, too) bound by an impossible obligation to capture the subject's soul. But James in his later years and Stoddard imagine the novelist at least in part as a collector, an arranger, a curator.

The changing role of the author reads as part of the familiar story of growing secularization, in that it tracks a shift from the author engaged in working out God's will to the author engaged in working his or her own will on the materials life provides. But as always, secularization does not signify the absence of religion, and James and Stoddard do develop a kind of aesthetic religion through the discourse of decorating and collecting. Beautiful objects, beautiful arrangements, have for them a numinous power that is recognizable from Stowe and Phelps. But as we saw in the specific discourses that provided context for Stowe and Phelps (worship and Bible-reading) and for Melville and Hawthorne (portraiture), here too, the contextual discourse (contemporaneous texts that discuss how to decorate, collect, and arrange) provide particular valuations of surface and depth. Those relative values of surface and depth in turn shape the sense of an author's powers and entail particular models of love and knowledge. As we have seen, the surface-and-depth tension that defined the exhibitional style for the sentimental novel emerged between Protestant injunctions to read the Bible deeply to make contact with God, and Catholic acceptance of tangible and public rituals—superficial and dubious means, from the Protestant view—that would convey grace. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and in *The Gates Ajar*, interrogations of Bible reading and theological speculation lead to a vision of love and knowledge fulfilled in heaven. In *Blithedale* and in *Pierre*, both authors worry about the problems of representing the other in verbal and visual media, and the conflicting urge both to represent depth and to prove that it was unrepresentable matches the equally impossible task of knowing and loving another person (let alone God). Surface and depth are less at odds in Stoddard's and James's use of the exhibitional style. Drawing on the language of display and exhibition enables for them a version of the love story in which love is entirely possible even though deep knowledge of the other is fleeting or unavailable. Such a model of love is made available in part because, for example, home-decorating discourse consistently conflates depth with surface. Persons and things blur, but without any loss of visibility or lovability. Really to see the *objets* someone has willfully gathered about herself is equivalent to seeing her; and, likewise, to fail to see a man in the context of his props and his scenery, surrounded by the evidence of his taste, is really to fail to see him, period.

Neither James nor Stoddard, then, turns to depth as a comprehensive source for love. Seeing into the soul of the other does not yield a love that lasts forever in either *The Morgesons* or *The Golden Bowl*. But this does not rule out the possibility of, or the idealizing urge toward, loving the depths of the other, and both authors keep the ideal of depth in play. They do so, however, without the Christian faith that Stowe and Phelps relied on. God drops out as the source of a posited

transcendence for Stoddard as well as for James. This is less surprising in *The Golden Bowl*, given the decades of drift away from the Christian faith that had motivated midcentury authors. Stoddard's novel, though, was published in between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *The Gates Ajar*, God was as culturally available a figure for her as for Stowe or Phelps. Whereas James can simply omit God, Stoddard's rejection of the depth promised by Christian faith is overt and deliberate. In the world of *The Morgesons*, Christianity is most remarkable for its ability to leach a person of interest and vitality. The depth that Stoddard does propose must relocate. And it finds a home in that secularized version of the sacred, romance.⁹² Religion and romance trade places as the great beyond or as the guarantor of some version of depth. James and Stoddard meet in their appreciation of romance—both posit a realm of knowledge that is accessible through desire, not rational inquiry. Stoddard, for her part, rejected the realist label when it was applied to her after the reissue of her novels toward the end of the century. “I am not realistic—I am *romantic*, the very bareness and simplicity of my work is a trap for its romance” (qtd in Buell and Zagarell, xxii). Depth is what Stoddard's contemporary (and Nathaniel Hawthorne's son), Julian Hawthorne, finds in her writing. In a review of her work the junior Hawthorne claims that “we feel that the personages she depicts are real to the marrow,” and that “Mrs. Stoddard's method takes us direct to the heart and soul” (868). And as much as Beers in 1901 could position James as a pathbreaking realist, we will see later critics, notably Peter Brooks, argue compellingly for James's reliance on techniques of romance that intimate depth and transcendence. Such depths are most vividly suggested in the erotic love between characters. To the degree the self still yearns to merge with an other, it seeks an erotic merge, motivated by physical passion. For Stowe and Phelps, we recall, love must be deferred to heaven as a matter of theological necessity, to avoid idolizing a mere creature on earth. But no such necessity prevents James and Stoddard from limning erotic tension and sexual attraction in their novels, and we get melting and mingling, flashes of fire in the veins. If Miles and Pierre both yearned for and were terrified of the dissolution of the self-other boundary, in James and Stoddard we see that dissolution happen. Charlotte and Amerigo act on their identities of impulses and achieve virtual telepathy. Between Stoddard's Cassy and her married cousin Charles, we see “a blinding, intelligent light [flow] from [his eyes] which I could not defy nor resist, a light which filled my veins with a torrent of fire” (86).

And yet the deep love ratified in these moments of self-other merge, the potential for transcendence in romance, is undercut by each novel's large-scale plot movement. The moments of ecstatic dissolution are not fully climactic. They are thwarted, but their failure does not culminate in the sort of unmitigated tragedy that ends *The House of Mirth*, for instance. In both *The Golden Bowl* and *The Morgesons* we find instead love plots that end with not-quite-happy marriages. James shadows any confident reading that Maggie and Amerigo at last thoroughly know and love each other: she hides her face from his in a way that might be joyous but might equally be defeated. Cassy's love affair with Desmond drops offstage for a long stretch; Stoddard returns to it only on the last few pages of the novel. Even then Stoddard does not allow the happy union of Cassy and the newly-reformed Desmond to count as blissful fulfillment. Their marriage is overshadowed by the final scene's focus on Veronica's widowhood and the flashback to Ben's death. These are, to be sure, more satisfying love-story endings than the strange sad joke of the triple death of *Pierre* or Miles's unconvincing “I loved Priscilla!” But Cassy's fractious relationship with her family, especially with her sister Veronica, takes up a greater share of our attention than her love affairs with Charles and Desmond. Love as a phenomenon that succeeds through failed knowing takes center stage. Likewise for James the marriage between Fanny and Bob, their “intercourse by misunderstanding,” provides a small-scale comic vision of how two people can live with the misapprehension that we will see Cassy observe

⁹² T. E. Hulme argued that romance—which committed, in his view, the category confusion of trying to locate perfection in the human realm—amounts to “spilt religion.”

again and again. And they take on an outsize role in the novel through their prominence as reader stand-ins. James and Stoddard share an interest in imagining a quotidian love that lives with misunderstanding and relies not on ecstatic merging but on mutual appreciation and performance. And that kind of love story—one that relies on the understanding afforded by an appreciative enjoyment of the display made by another—works through these love stories' engagement with the language of home decor. We can see their interest directly in Adam Verver's collecting and in Cassy's shopping and decorating. It comes through, too, in the way both authors practice a mode of characterization that puts intense pressure on wardrobe and setting. To be known and loved in these fictions, as I will show in my readings below, a person must be seen as part of a display that she has designed, or within the context of the beautiful objects she has collected for herself.

Not only does the shape of the love stories they write depend on the easy permeability of surface and depth, person and thing, sponsored by the discourse of collection and display; so does the style of their novels. An interest in display informs not only their mode of characterization but the way James and Stoddard write their sentences. I do not mean to map any specific home-decorating dicta from, say, Edith Wharton or Harriet Spofford on to the rhetoric created by James and Stoddard. Instead, what I hope to shed light on by linking the style of these novels to the culture of collection and display in later-nineteenth-century America is a broader, generative impulse toward thinking of writing as a decorative art, or as susceptible to the rules of exhibition. "One's work should have composition, because composition alone is positive beauty" (*AN* 319), says James; and this drive toward composition which James theorizes as key to the artistry of a novel shows up early on in Stoddard's work. Their prose partakes of the exhibitional style's embrace of the material and public by focusing attention on the author's created harmony of things—whether bits of language and turns of phrase or details of character and setting—selected from a multitude of possibilities. One might say that they emphasize style over content, except that they seem rather to propose that style makes content. The basic plot elements of *The Golden Bowl* are those of a bedroom farce, and Stoddard recycles the familiar domestic trajectory of a young woman finding her place in a home with a husband, the safe and satisfying end granted by bestsellers like *The Wide, Wide World*. But Stoddard and James practice a self-conscious stylization of language that makes otherwise shopworn elements of plot and character feel different. It is this careful arrangement of elements into verbal surfaces that is the formal mark of James's and Stoddard's use of the exhibitional style. My readings of their work will make the case that Stoddard's composition relies on non sequitur, the abrupt juxtaposition of unlike elements; James's principle of arrangement relies on convolution and spread, producing syntactical calisthenics. If Stoddard's prose-as-display puts unlike elements in close proximity, James's diffuses and elaborates them almost beyond our ability to connect them.

This notion of writing-as-arranging enables Stoddard and James to make surfaces sufficient to the cause of love when depths are inaccessible or nonexistent. It shapes both the love story the novel tells, and the love story the novel invites its readers to participate in. Before demonstrating these claims in my readings of the novels, I want to explore the home-decorating discourse itself, and to show how its valuations of surface and depth might have enabled love stories to be told this way.

II. The Satisfactions of Arrangement

Jackson Lears reminds us that one of the driving aims of the Reformation had been "to create an alternative to the method of constructing meaning through the assemblage and display of objects.... The pietist tradition in Protestantism insisted that salvation lay in faith rather than works, in inner being rather than outward form" (76). Conceiving the surfaces of objects as meaningful and readable is key to the exhibitional style and its versions of knowing and loving. As I have argued, Stowe and Phelps develop the exhibitional style in tension with the pietist impulse Lears identifies, but they

manage to maintain the Christian sanctity of objects by drawing on the materialism of Catholic practice. In Stowe's and Phelps's hands, the compelling power of bodies, faces, hair and hands, as well as of pianos, gingersnaps, and carnations, work to further Protestant visions of sacrifice and heavenly reward. At midcentury, certainly, the question of how to arrange a home found ample motivation in Christian piety. Catherine Beecher, Stowe's sister, was a widely-known advocate of good housekeeping consecrated to Christian, and patriotic, purposes. But for their contemporary, Stoddard (who, again, asks of Caroline Cheesebro's work, why should the world be overcome?), the great interest inhering in a thing, the reason to put one object rather than another in a room, is its reference not to Christian truth but to psychic truth, its capacity to match or to set off the person dwelling in that space. Stoddard's determined secularism points the way forward: during the decades that stretch between Stoddard and James, as home decorating guides proliferated, they would largely trade the aims of Christian nurture, in which the home is cast as the earthly type of heaven, for the almost equally ineffable allure of individual expression and good taste.

Catherine Beecher's *Domestic Treatise*, first published in 1841 and reissued every year after that for over a decade, was not concerned with making the home an expressive display-case for its dwellers.⁹³ Rather the home would be a laboratory for virtue. Beecher aimed to cast women as geniuses of thrift and exemplars of self-sacrifice whose labors were crucial to the ongoing project of American nation-building. She recommends designing a home for maximal convenience and economy, and she scolds women for throwing away money on "finical ornaments, which are fast going out of fashion" (260). It is not that she has no eye for beauty. She suggests that "a short curtain" might be installed in a closet to "give a tidy look" by hiding a shelf full of blankets; she recommends planting trees in clusters to produce the "graceful ease and variety" of nature. We might see the aesthetic she espouses as an early version of the form-follows-function mantra: she finds beauty in simplicity and efficiency.⁹⁴ She assures her readers that one of the most beautiful homes she ever visited was "even... plainer" than the models illustrated in her book (260). The floor plans she includes outline uncomplicated four-room cottages; she promotes multi-use rooms, noting that a front room can be used as a "genteel parlor" by day and as "an airy bedroom" by night (264); a family might add a whole second story, she tells her readers, for the same cost as adding a showier and less useful front porch. But above all she encourages designs, indoors and out, that "secure the most economy of *labor* and *expense*, with the greatest amount of *convenience* and *comfort*" (271), and her meticulous directions (for making whitewash, for setting up a cistern, for cleaning carpets) all aim toward this end. She suggests in "On the Care of Parlors" a general contrast of light and dark tones, but does not recommend any specific colors; when she advises against choosing carpets with "black threads" it is only because "they are always rotten" (302). Such hints suffice for Beecher's guiding purpose of teaching American women how to wring the most use from household furnishings.

But Beecher's pious housekeeping comes eventually to accommodate an appreciation of the ornamental. The publication in 1869 of the expanded version of the *Treatise*, *The American Woman's Home*, devotes a full chapter to "Home Decoration." The home being decorated is, to be sure, still an emphatically Christian one. The bucolic cottage illustrated at the head of the chapter called "A Christian House" shows a cross topping each roof-peak. And Beecher continues to advocate maximizing economy and utility in every room. But the Christian home, now, is not merely useful,

⁹³ According to Paul Gutjahr, the *Treatise* was "so popular and influential that it was reprinted annually for the next fifteen years" (from his headnote to the selection reprinted in *Popular American Literature*, 255).

⁹⁴ Lears suggests that modernist minimalism marks a return, by way of design principles, to the Protestant tradition of plain speech: "European modernists," "animated by a blend of Dutch Calvinism and German pietism," "preached a gospel of secular puritanism, rationality, and efficiency in the guise of liberation from the airless, closed box of the nineteenth-century interior" (88-89).

but pretty to boot. Where the *Treatise* offers a line drawing of a fireplace and mantel perfectly bare of ornament, the *Woman's Home* shows not just the design of brick and panel but the arrangement of things within the domestic space. An illustration of a staircase landing shows an alcove with a table set with a fringed tablecloth and a vase of flowers. It is difficult to imagine anyone sitting and working or eating at this table on the landing; there are no chairs; it exists apparently for nothing but to hold up the flowers. Pictures hang above the three gothic-arched openings on the landing. Whereas the *Treatise* recommends, without providing further details, a “light screen... covered with paper or chintz” to offer privacy in a shared bedroom, the *Woman's Home* describes step-by-step how such a screen might be given a faux “ornamental cornice” with “fresco-paper” and how to paste and varnish pictures into its panels (27). In the later work Beecher provides a drawing of such a screen, fitted with a triptych of Hudson-School-like images of natural grandeur, for inspiration.

Beecher might well have felt it necessary to accommodate her readers' growing taste for prettifying the home, since as the nineteenth century wore on, the power of assemblage and display only grew. London's Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851 inaugurated the practice of going out to see arrangements of furniture and knickknacks, and exhibitions were before long part of American public life as well, in cities like Louisville (Southern Exposition, 1883-1887), Chicago (World's Columbian Exposition, 1893), Buffalo (Pan-American Exposition, 1901), and St. Louis (Louisiana Purchase Exposition, 1904). While the earliest exhibitions granted manufacturers a venue for showing their wares, they did not immediately know how to arrange them, as Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant observe: “in the early years of the exhibitions, no readily understood concept of ‘the interior’ was being employed by which to organize the material,” and things were jumbled together. But the exhibitions did at least accustom people to “viewing objects in public space” (193). Likewise, department stores began refining their displays. William Leach notes that “Before 1890 *display* as a term denoting systematic treatment of goods did not exist,” and shopkeepers simply piled up their wares in their windows or on the sidewalks (106). But storefront displays became more artful and elaborate;⁹⁵ in-store displays, following the lead of museums that began to show historic period rooms,⁹⁶ began to resemble idealized home interiors. As the century wore on, as store windows made artful arrangements into downtown fixtures and not just special events, the fact of display “became an important aspect of modern life” (Aynsley and Grant, 194). Public display influenced the private home: articles on home decorating proliferated in ladies' magazines; guidebooks appeared from Clarence Cook, Charles Eastlake, Harriet Spofford, and Edith Wharton. The 1878 edition of Cook's *The House Beautiful* opens by observing that “There never was a time when so many books written for the purpose of bringing the subject of architecture—its history, its theory, its practice—down to the level of the popular understanding, were produced as in this time of ours” (19).

But as the cultural interest in display and assemblage grew, it mostly shed its possible Christian motivations. Leach notes that as storefront windows became more carefully designed they had the effect of “shift[ing] the improvising power of the imagination away from natural and

⁹⁵ Among the factors that pushed the development of shop-window exhibition, writes Leach, were the arrival of immigrant populations, particularly Jewish and Catholic, with less staid tastes; the development of better lighting, more colorful dyes, and ever-larger sheets of glass; and the opening up of retailers' sense of the profits to be made by window dressing, pioneered by L. Frank Baum, who founded the magazine *Show Window* in 1897 before quitting retail to write *The Wizard of Oz* (106-110).

⁹⁶ Around the same time, in museums, whole historical period rooms began to be “collected,” as Aynsley and Grant detail: in 1869, in what would later be known as the Victoria and Albert museum, “the Serilly Cabinet of 1778,” from a hotel in Paris, was ensconced. It took until 1903 for rooms—“the Pompeii bedroom, the Bosco Reale Room of 40-30 BC” (197) plus some later European examples—to be given the museum treatment in America, at New York's Metropolitan Museum.

religious things toward artificial and secular things” (100). The prie-dieu, a sort of personal prayer-desk, offers a case study. For the first Protestant woman who had one made, it would have been a frank appropriation from Catholic worship habits. But it became, partly through the popularity of the Gothic Revival style, simply another pretty piece of furniture. A character in a satirical story in *Putnam’s* makes this point to a friend wearied by his wife’s insistence on a fancy prie-dieu: “It is a romantic, not a religious whim. She’ll want a missal next; vellum, or no prayers.... You’ll see religion made a part of the newest fashion in houses, as you already see literature and art, and with just as much reality and reason” (660-661). The Catholic and Protestant differences that had set the terms for Stowe’s and Phelps’s negotiation of surface and depth become, like God, less and less relevant. Father Edward McClure, a Massachusetts priest, may have been exceptional in the quantity of china he collected and the care with which he displayed it. A privately-produced album of photographs documents rooms crowded with the evidence of “chinamania”: endless pitchers and bowls, plates and cups, carefully arrayed on freestanding shelves and ledges, and hanging in cascades down the walls. They overwhelm the recognizably Catholic artworks in his home. But as prominent a Protestant as Henry Ward Beecher was little different in this respect. At his death in 1887, he had an extensive collection of bric-a-brac to be auctioned off. One hundred forty-nine items are listed under “Japanese Ceramics, Enamels, etc.” alone.⁹⁷ Assembling and displaying things—plates, clocks, vases, books, salt and pepper shakers—was a nonsectarian pastime. Colleen McDannell notes that “Under the influence of Romanticism and the Victorian predilection for conspicuous consumption, Protestant homes departed from the Calvinist distrust of religious art.... After 1860 fashion encouraged stronger iconic expression of religious sentiment” (39). Beecher’s emphasis on Christianizing the home helped legitimize shopping and decorating, as long as the décor was ostensibly pious, but the momentum of consumption pushed it beyond such justifications.⁹⁸

But home decorating traded in its Christian motives for others that were equally available to be spiritualized. We find a swath of guidebooks using the language of religious faith to describe the stakes of home decorating, regardless of any potential Christianizing influence. The *Harper’s* “Editor’s Literary Record” praises Cook’s *The House Beautiful* for nudging housewives to see the living room as a potential work of art, or a “cathedral”: Cook is to be thanked for “awaken[ing] a longing” and “giv[ing] the housewife a notion that a carpet, four chairs, a sofa, and a centre table do not constitute a well-furnished room; that there is a possible art unity in parlor, dining-room, bedroom, or library as truly as in a cathedral or a picture” (307). It is telling that here the sacred space and the artistic creation, the cathedral and the picture, are accorded an equivalent, and equally desirable, status as ideals of beauty for the housewife to follow. “Art unity,” not piety, is the great aim here, but it is no less a matter of soul-culture. The authors of home decorating guides could themselves be heralded as prophetic figures—evangelists not of the good word, but of good taste. Charles Perkins, editor of the fifth American edition of Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste*, writes an introduction that casts as Eastlake as a man who “does not shrink from the discharge of his duty, for he speaks what he considers to be the truth in a plain way. He rightly thinks that the public taste is corrupt, and he does not scruple to declare it so.” Perkins praises “the zeal with which [Eastlake’s work] holds up truth as a *sine qua non* in the construction and decoration of houses,” a zeal matched for Perkins only by Ruskin before him, who “long ago mounted on the housetop to decry shams” in home-building and -decoration (vi). Perkins credits Ruskin as the one who brought

⁹⁷ The catalog attending the executor’s sale was published by the American Art Association; the auction was held at the American Art Galleries in New York, beginning on November 8, 1887.

⁹⁸ McDannell cites, for instance, Rev. Timothy Titcomb in *Titcomb’s Letters to Young People, Single and Married*: “I love the man who earns his money with the special design of spending it building up their homes, making them abodes of beauty and plenty” (qtd 50).

light to a world darkened by bad taste, “who first burnished, filled, and lighted the lamp of architectural and decorative truth in our time, and set it on a pedestal, where it has since continued to burn with steady and unflickering ray, illuminating many a dark place, and revealing many an unsuspected error” (vii). Such praise registers a sanctification of taste as truth in home decorating, a saturation of spirituality across material culture. As such, this channeling of the values of depth and spirit into directives about what kind of sofa to buy certainly fits the familiar narrative of secularization in American culture. But the aura of the sacred does not disappear, even if its source is no longer explicitly Christian.

That sacred aura retains its force in the kinds of claims made for the influence of the domestic environment. In order to claim that a living room’s decorations could soothe or jar someone’s soul, or could ill or well reflect someone’s soul, decorators had to be willing to invest objects and arrangements with real power. For Cook, not surprisingly, the decor of the living room bears “a serious relation to education, and... deserves to be thought about a great deal more than it is”; the question of what pictures to hang is tantamount, in its effects on heart and mind, to the question of the company we keep. “It is no trifling matter, whether we hang poor pictures on our walls or good ones, whether we select a fine cast or a second-rate one. We might almost as well say it makes no difference whether the people we live with are first-rate or second-rate” (49). This proposed equivalence between pictures and friends blurs the line between animate and inanimate, person and thing, by granting either side of the binary the same practical power to shape the texture of our lives. Beecher would certainly have agreed with the fundamental assumption that a home shapes the moral and emotional lives of its dwellers. But in these later guides, objects are powerful not because they refer a homeowner or a guest to Christian ideals, but because they refer her to ideals of beauty and to her own, or her host’s, personal taste.

That reference to personal taste drives a perpetual undoing of the distinctions between persons and the objects in the guidebooks of the period. The authors of these guides freely grant a kind of selfhood to objects; we see it in their frequent and whimsical use of personification. Cook, lamenting the fashion in home decor of the mid-nineteenth century, recalls rooms in which “the carpet swore at the wall-paper, the stiffly-arranged curtains swore at the carpet, while a burst of profane jeers came from the chorus of sofas and chairs with their coverings in some irreconcilable color” (*WSWD* 28-29) Virginia Robie’s remark that “Blue Staffordshire is sufficient unto itself and quarrels a bit with other things, but pink is entirely amiable with all sorts of surroundings,” is typical (4); so are Cook’s description of a brood of custard cups mothered by a soup-tureen and Alice Morse Earle’s fretting over a bowl she regarded as the “poor prisoner” of an unappreciative farmer’s wife (6). For many collectors this personification is more than a figure of speech. The items gathered by a collector readily take on the nature of companions worthy of affection. Herbert Byng Hall writes of his china collection that “I should be almost ashamed to confess how much pleasure these fragile treasures afford me. For hours I sit amidst my friends, pen or book in hand.” He can recall where he first saw these bits of china and how they came to be his own (19-20). Lida and M. J. Clarkson recommend, in the collection of *Ladies’ Home Journal* columns published in 1887, putting a valance on a fireplace mantel (Cassy does so in her room at Surrey), “for what woman of taste does not take pleasure in an attractive mantel, over which she tenderly lingers as she dusts and arranges her *bric a brac*, almost as though these articles could feel and appreciate her attentions” (11). Collection and decoration thus becomes part of the tissue of a housekeeper’s or a collector’s emotional response, evoking tenderness indiscriminate of whether what is being apprehended is a person or a thing.

As collecting humanizes an object, making it available for appreciative friendship, so decorating inaugurates a potentially loving relationship between the decorator and the space she inhabits. Cook pleads for his readers to love their homes so that those homes can in turn nurture

their dwellers. “If people really loved their houses,—loved them as we *can* love material things from their association with what is nearest and dearest to us... they would find many devices to improve them, not in the mere ‘dumb-waiter,’ ‘permanent wash-tub’ sense of the word, but in the sense that makes them homes for home-loving, cultured families” (*HB* 250-251). The cycle of loving attention, from homeowner to home and back, echoes Harriet Beecher Stowe’s vision of Rachel Halliday’s perfect domicile. But for Cook the payoff is in a “cultured” family, not a specifically Christian one. The lovely cottage that Phelps had imagined for heaven is in effect plucked back down to earth and praised for the benefits it can grant to the living. The inaugural issue of *The Curio*, a magazine devoted to collecting, explains how the “the collector’s genius presides over” the evolving beauty of a home and “coordinates the treasures” within its walls (“Our Friend” 1). The genius that collects and decorates is elsewhere identified as an expression of the instinct of love. Mary Granniss, writing in 1858 in *Arthur’s Illustrated Home Magazine*, proposes that love is the new housewife’s secret weapon in decorating the home: “Love, the great talisman, can throw around the humblest home, the lowliest fireside, a potent charm, converting all things within the sphere of its influence into higher forms of beauty and gladness than aught else could bestow” (284). The home becomes a living vessel for the loving soul of its caretaker, which can express itself on kitchen shelves, wallcovers, or furniture.

It is natural, then, in such guides, to speak of decorating a room as an extension of decorating oneself. “As [a person] loves himself best,” says a writer for *The Curio*, “he indulges, first of all, in the luxury of dress, and beautifies his own fragile person. Then he looks around, finds his home shabby and bare, and puts all his spare cash into furniture, wall decorations, bric-a-brac” (“Bookbinding” 25). The shift between decorating oneself and decorating one’s home is made with similar ease by Mrs. H. R. Haweis, author of multiple guides to decorating. Haweis, for whom furniture is “a kind of detached dress,” is explicit about the applicability of her advice on personal dress to questions of room decor (363). In such guides there is, further, a kind of agency granted to the space of the home; multiple authors liken the impression made by entering a home’s front door to the impression made by shaking hands with a person. Lillie Hamilton French writes that windows “betray [the] character” of a home’s occupants, and that bedrooms are like “some secret chamber of the soul” (89). But if the decorator invests a room or a home with personality, the decorated room can exert its own willful influence in return. Haweis warns that in a roomful of the wrong colors, a woman risks having her “personality... destroyed by the surroundings over-assimilating or absorbing her, so that she becomes a mere letter in an alphabet of violent colour” (22). French recommends against too completely furnishing a room “when beginning your housekeeping. In so doing you may find yourself perpetually cramped by some early expression of yourself, from which you would find it as difficult to grow away, as men find it difficult to escape the records of a youthful misdemeanor” (24). There is a reciprocal circuit here, driven by something like love, that enables the collector and decorator to love and be loved by the objects she collects and the spaces she decorates.

But it seems crucial for the effective working of that circuit of love between the collector and his collectible, or between the decorator and what she decorates, to be skillful arrangers. Authors of guides to collecting extol many of the virtues and pleasures of collecting—the hunt for objects, the profit of resale, the gain in knowledge of history—but all of them highlight the satisfaction to be found in arranging one’s finds. J. H. Yoxall laments the loss of opportunity for a collector who focuses only on “British war-medals and their clasps and bars” or on “Swansea-style vases”; the home he imagines for a miscellaneous collector is a testament to the joy of display. “I know [a] house where a Victoria Cross lies upon the plush of a curio table beside a miniature by Samuel Cooper, a snuff-box enamelled by Petitot, and a fan that Watteau painted; a marble bust by Houdon stands on a pedestal by Buhl, and a pastel by Quentin de la Tour hangs opposite to a portrait of a beauty by Romney” (20-21). It was not just objects that required careful juxtaposition.

Speaking of general principles of home decoration, Haweis makes the arrangement of color a key to beauty in the home. Her list of sixteen color combinations, including “Primrose and dark green,” “Pale yellow and chocolate,” “Cream white and Turkey red,” “Blue and pink with brown, sea-weed-like,” ends with the remark that “I could go on for ever, for the combinations are endless” (364). For Robie, the specialist collector—a loyalist only to pepper-boxes or to mugs, for instance—will either graduate to becoming a generalist or else lose out on the great pleasure of arranging things. A dedicated “bowl lady,” for instance, will never have the satisfaction of working out a corner cupboard display, a task Robie takes on with vigor, imagining “a fine deep blue Staffordshire platter thirteen inches long for the center position of the middle shelf, a teapot, sugar-bowl and pitcher of the same forceful blue placed in front,” and with “two rather important pieces of copper luster on either side of the set, say a quart pitcher and a beaker or a mug—rather a deep luster so as to hold ground with the blue;—two bowls next, or a creamer and a bowl, one on either side—of blue and green, or blue and yellow in that delightful ‘splashed ware’ of humble origin and rare decorative quality” (302-303). Robie goes on to detail other possibilities for other imagined cupboards, recommending against light blue and dark blue together, but in favor of adding “Cottage figures” and pepper-boxes and bowls, or china in either pink or green. Good arrangements might also be made on the principle of likeness, as with a “cupboard... filled entirely with old blue, or with pink luster, or with copper luster” (304).⁹⁹ The sense of pleasure and satisfaction to be had in placing one thing next to another, and the interest in creating a whole effect from the juxtaposition of mass, volume, shapes, and colors of things gathered by a collector’s hand, manifest in Stoddard’s and James’s prose. But whereas Robie warns against incongruity, Stoddard, we will see, revels in it.

These guidebooks and magazines are public evidence of a widespread cultural preoccupation. One striking demonstration of how the interest in collecting and arranging filtered into private imaginations appears in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century collage albums or paper dollhouses.¹⁰⁰ Made of carefully cut out illustrations from newspapers, magazines, and catalogs laid atop swaths of decorative paper and embellished with trimmings of chiffon or foil or ribbon, all glued into the pages of a bound book (whether blank or repurposed, such as an old catalog or journal), they comprise across their pages a series of domestic set pieces. “Every paper-dollhouse scrapbook was a self-contained, particularized world,” Beverly Gordon notes, and each one generally tracked the expected layout of a home from public to private space: a parlor would appear in the first pages, a bedroom near the back. They vary widely in detail and in scope; some “expanded to more than forty separate spaces, including dressing rooms, pantries, backyard gardens, and even outdoor cottages” (117). These scrapbooks, writes Gordon, were created at least in part for children to play with, but they were also “aesthetic outlets... self-contained, imaginary worlds into which the women [who made them] could pour their creative energy” (116). As such, and of course because of the different degrees of time or materials available to their creators, they vary strikingly in the visions they offer of a fantasy home, some orderly and spacious, some choked with furniture; some haphazard, some fastidious. Leafing through one gives the effect of looking at the shop windows of a furniture store, but the mix of media can generate a fantastic, sometimes surreal, effect, more reminiscent to a twenty-first-century viewer of a Joseph Cornell box. The different scales of the various elements can be jarring: one double-page spread, for instance, shows a nursery with a

⁹⁹ By way of an organizing principle, Robie offers a rule for sorting these objects into a social caste system: “There is one very safe principle to follow in any arrangement of china; let it all be on the same social equality, as it were” (307).

¹⁰⁰ The particular albums I have seen are housed at the Winterthur Library archives; Gordon’s article treats some of these. She identifies this form as having been “popular in the United States between approximately 1875 and 1920,” and notes that “In their own time, they were called homes for paper dolls, book houses, or scrapbook houses. More recently, they have also been descriptively referred to as collage albums” (116).

cheerful baby that is twice the size of the woman who stands poised nearby. The roses figured in one carpet are enormous, the size of platters; the flowers on another wallpaper are the size of umbrellas. Juxtapositions may be more suggestive than seamless. In one album, a photo of a dining room is cut out and placed behind two crepe-paper curtains, pulled back with ribbon, so that it resembles a stage set. Above it in white space float three decorative china plates and a garland from, perhaps, a Valentine's card. Furniture may be crammed in, armchair next to piano next to fireplace, with no room for human figures; or it may be carefully spread out with gatherings of engraved women in fashionable street or party dress. In each case the beholder's eye finds some route, whether geometric and orderly or sinuous and chaotic, to travel from one element to the next; we discern some sense of order driving the creator's placement of elements. Whether we conceive them in more elevated art terms as "collage" or in their instrumental capacity of "paper doll houses" (they are both at once), these scrapbooks demonstrate their makers' abiding interest in the work of arranging pieces into a whole.

The care evidently given to making, and the pleasure we must imagine was gained from creating these collages, suggests how satisfying that arranging impulse can be. In the pages of these scrapbooks we find an authority exercised over the things the world (at least the commercial world) has to offer, an authority that plays out in selection and placement. The careful application of floor covering and wall covering, which must be hunted up and cut out to fit precisely; the manipulation of cut-out pianos and sofas to mimic three-dimensional space; the placement of chairs and tables, whether careless or careful of the rules of perspective and verisimilitude; the additions of tissue-paper to make curtains or glassine to make windows—all of these suggest the tremendous satisfaction to be had from simply surrounding oneself with things one chooses, and which one chooses to order according to one's vision. The creative power at work here is not concerned with representing the soul of a sitter, as we saw in the discourse of portraiture. But it does seem aimed at providing the right backdrop for its human company, whether that company is pasted onto the page or whether we have to imagine it being provided by separate paper dolls. The creative power that manifests here depends on selecting, ordering, and balancing found elements—much the same impulse that guides Stoddard's and James's adaptation of the exhibitional style—into a setting that seems intended to match or intensify the qualities of its inhabitants. In that sense, these collage albums provide a visual metaphor of the version of the manifest self that we will see in these novels. Roger Cardinal writes that "there is almost always an intention eventually to place the collage or the collection on display. Both ultimately exist to be *shown*, and implicitly to be shown to impress. We can say that both aspire to be noticed, inspected, admired, even envied" (71). The desire to impress, to be displayed, inspected, admired and even envied, certainly motivates the characters who people *The Morgesons* and *The Golden Bowl*. This is Stoddard's and James's iteration of the manifest self that appeared in Stowe and Phelps (where it was redeemed by God's depth) and that alternately baffled and disgusted Pierre and Miles. In what follows I suggest that we can see in Stoddard's work a kind of self who might decorate and redecorate herself for display—though not, we will see, without reference to a depth beneath the display. Stoddard articulates, in the characters she imagines falling in love, a self that relies on arrangement, on the deliberate piecing together of distinct elements, for the apprehending eye of others. Collecting and decorating, as practices and as ideas, shaped habits of apprehension that would in turn shape the ways selves to come to know and love both things and other selves alike. And in that way, the culture of collection, exhibition and display offered a model of selfhood that a novelist like Stoddard (and, later, James) could use as a resource for writing the kind of love story she thought was true.

III. *The Morgesons* and the Intimacy of Taste

It is common for recent critics of Stoddard's work to claim that she is ahead of her time. Critics point to her stylized prose to make the case for her as an early modernist: John Humma, for instance, compares Stoddard's style to that of French Symbolists; Jessica Feldman finds it kin to that of Stéphane Mallarmé, Samuel Beckett, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein.¹⁰¹ But Dorri Beam is right to point out that Stoddard was less isolated in her own time than such comparisons suggest. Beam identifies a group of nineteenth-century women writers (including Margaret Fuller, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and Pauline Hopkins) who produce "highly wrought" prose which, like Stoddard's, "[indulges] in a sensual style that renders the world opaque and strange rather than assimilable and interpretable" (7). Stoddard's preference for "condensed and taut" prose makes her something other than a highly-wrought practitioner for Beam. But she is certainly a writer of her time. Where Feldman sees an analogy to Cubism in Stoddard's "jaggedness" and in her "awkward" and abrupt transitions (221n25), I would propose the pieced-together, slightly surreal, collage albums presented above as evidence that such aesthetic effects were very much present, closer in time and space to Stoddard's work. Feldman, too, observes that Stoddard's characterizations, dependent as they are on external referents like wall-hangings and upholstery choices, come across as flat: "They are, psychologically speaking, two-dimensional, stylized, abstracted" (224). I agree with the terms of Feldman's description, which come close to endorsing the idea of Stoddard as a collagist—Feldman further speaks of *The Morgesons* "as a series of planes that will not resolve into one" (221), and as a "kaleidoscope" (222)—and, like Feldman, I find these stylistic qualities recapitulated in the disjointed and volatile relationships of Stoddard's novel. In *The Morgesons* selves come across less as coherent wholes than as arranged elements. Stoddard's stylization is a prose rendering, I suggest, of the manifest self that emerges through home decorating discourse, in the decorating guidebooks' implicit and explicit assumptions that the self is at least partly, if not mostly, a product of assemblage and display. What this will mean for the love story is that depth is frequently unavailable at all, and that characters love by other means—through arrangement and exhibition.

Depth is, however, still a potential value, and a live possibility, in Stoddard's writing. Cassy, like Zenobia facing down Miles's stare, recognizes when others want to see into her soul and resists. She articulates, as we might imagine Zenobia to have done, the destructive potential in love's urge to know the depths of the other. Of her sister Veronica and Ben (who is first Cassy's and later Veronica's suitor), Cassy says, "I think both would have annihilated my personality if possible, for the sake of comprehending me, for both loved me in their way" (156). Such loving annihilation is a threat, but the novel ultimately suggests that it is a threat that cannot be carried out. Veronica and Ben, for their part, are presented as both intensely happy together and basically ignorant of each other. When Veronica decides to marry Ben, and her father asks if they know each other, Veronica points out to her father that she has lived in his house for eighteen years and that they have so far failed to get to know each other. She asks, "What is the use of making *that* futile attempt?" (162). The suggestion from Stoddard is that these are the conditions human beings live, and love, with. Early in the novel, Cassy records her father Locke's remark that she and Veronica "'do not love each other, I suppose. What hatred there is between near relations! Bitter, bitter,' he said calmly, as if he thought of some object incapable of the hatred he spoke of." The difference between the calm of his voice and the despair of his statement, the objectivity and detachment that difference registers,

¹⁰¹ For Feldman, *The Morgesons* strikes us now as a "modernist" work "in that it offers meaning in the medium of words on the page that often announce themselves as words" in preference to realist verisimilitude. Feldman rightly observes that a novel like *The Morgesons* might well prompt scholars "to adjust our notion of when literary modernism began in America" (208). Humma's comparison rests on Stoddard's abrupt juxtaposing of heady, vivid detail (a black horse, fog) with intense interior states; in his reading, such details refer immediately to the unconscious, an effect the symbolists worked toward. My reading ties such juxtapositions to the discourses of home decor that Stoddard lived with (37).

will be key to the kind of love we see operating in Stoddard. Cassy's reply—that "I think I love her; at least she interests me"—is equally detached, weighing the accuracy of "love" against other possible expressions of her relation to her sister (100-101). The narrative avoids any extended hand-wringing over this state of affairs. It registers this failure of knowledge without making it equivalent to a failure of love. Stoddard leaves us in no doubt that Cassy loves her family, but it is a love that functions without any knowledge of the roots of one another's actions. The narrative suggests that "interest" may be, after all, a valid expression of love. In Stoddard's world people make the most of opacity. Such opacity becomes both a source of and a goad to love, in that it prompts attention—an interest in the other-as-display that can be a response to, and a generator of, intense feeling.

Stoddard, true to her avowed romanticism, does maintain the potential for depth. If Veronica is willing to reject the quest for deep knowledge in her husband-to-be, her sister Cassy, as narrator, will at times claim an immediate, ecstatic contact between two souls. When Cassy falls in love with her married cousin Charles, for instance, we read that "a blinding, intelligent light flowed from [his eyes] which I could not defy nor resist, a light which filled my veins with a torrent of fire" (86). The breathless language gives us a fairly abstract transaction of heat and light between interiorities, although the mention of veins allows us to place this as an erotic, physical response. Yet this kind of merging does not take a central place in the novel's portrait of love. Charles dies, and his death causes Cassy much grief, but he is handily replaced by the equally scintillating Desmond. These loves seem most important for generating self-knowledge for Cassy, and they come across as secondary to the novel's greater concern for family ties. Cassy's erotically charged friendship with Ben vies for narrative attention with her passion for her suitors, and both tales of courtship (Charles and Desmond) take up less space than her family in terms of sheer page count. The novel does end with marriage, taking its structural cues from the traditional marriage plot. But Cassy's relationships with her sister and parents are the novel's primary concerns.

If the kind of love felt as an electric charge in the veins carries less force in the novel than some kind of un-deep love that is more akin to interest, what exactly does that love look like? Cassy's love for her mother, Mary, serves as an example. Cassy wishes she might know Mary's deepest feelings, and laments that "It was not for me to know her heart. It is not ordained that these beautiful secrets of feeling should be revealed, where they might prove to be the sweetest knowledge we could have" (58). This wish for the sweet knowledge of depth goes unfulfilled, but it prompts a complex description, a portrait pieced together of carefully arranged surfaces. Her mother's "appearance [strikes]" Cassy "by contrast" during a tea party in which all the surrounding guests "were larger, more rotund, and older than mother." She offers a lengthy description of Mary, inventorying her "long, lusterless, brown hair," "threatening to fall out" of its comb; her "round-toed morocco shoes," minus the shoelaces that she removed rather than bothering to tie them; the "ruffle of fine lace [that] fell around her throat, and the sleeves of her short-waisted dress [that] were puffed at the shoulders." At the end of this description Cassy confesses, "I make no attempt to analyze her character. I describe her as she appeared." The appearance is all she gets, for the most part, but the scarcity of knowledge of her mother's depths encourages Cassy's attachment: "I never understood her, and for that reason she attracted my attention" (17). Dress as self-decoration becomes a resource for selves that want to know and love. Human opacity thus becomes a productive limitation, in that it prompts the lover to attend to the display and exhibition of the love-object. The level of detail of this description effects its own kind of understanding, a love based on taking in without penetration—not a depth merge, but not, either, a baffled incomprehension. It comes across as a complex enjoyment of no more than what is visible.

The contrast produced by arrangement—an arrangement effected by Cassy's perception, and heightened by what she feels as love—also helps her produce her vision of both her male lovers. Introduced to Charles's home, where she will stay while in Rosville, she takes stock of the red, black,

and bronze color scheme—“notwithstanding the stream of light over the carpet, I thought it somber, and out of keeping with the cottage exterior”—and is drawn to “the green and white sprays of some delicate flower I had never before seen” (69). Her observation of the contrast between the flowers and the overbearing darkness of the furnishings leads quickly to an acknowledgement with Charles of their mutual desire:

“What a contrast!” I said.

“Where?”

“Here, in this room, and in you.”

“And between you and me?”

His face was serene, dark, and delicate, but to look at it made me shiver. (69)

There is a contrast at work here not only between flowers and furniture but between words and looks: the serenity and delicacy of his face belies the adulterous urgency that motivates Charles’s question. Cassy’s shiver registers this contrast. Similarly, her first glimpse of her next suitor, Desmond, comes across as an arrangement of elements that do not harmoniously cohere:

My attention was diverted to a large dog in the court, chained to a post near a pump, where a man was giving water to a handsome bay horse, at the same time keeping his eye on an individual who stood on a stone block, dressed in a loose velvet coat, a white felt hat, and slippers down at the heel. He had a coach whip in his hand—the handsomest hand I ever saw, which he snapped at the dog, who growled with rage. (163).

Here there is no particular color scheme as in Charles’s home. The loosely-strung first sentence offers an unmarked flow of space—no sense of what is nearer or farther from Cassy—that gives us the sense of looking at a nonperspectival still-life (or a scrapbook page). The narration draws our mental eye from dog to post to pump, to man to horse, and then to a figure set “on a stone block” like a statue; this person is identified by coat, hat, shoes, whip, and finally hand, on which all the affect rests. That hand, handsome and hurtful, attracts Cassy as it elicits rage from the chained dog. But as above, contrast is the operative principle here, and because there is no face or narrative to which we can assign the mixed affect—just a nameless list of objects that in their totality produce both attraction and repulsion—the bare arrangement is what we register. We cannot sort it out into a story, or even a whole picture. Yet the erotic power of those seemingly haphazard single elements is undeniable. And this vision of Desmond will count, as the story moves on, as love at first sight.¹⁰²

Because Stoddard’s version of love pays attention to the meaningful array of objects on or around the self, Cassy gives careful attention to rooms throughout the novel. A description of a new

¹⁰² Though we will not see Cassy’s and Desmond’s marriage—the novel ends once we know that they will be wed—a short story Stoddard published two years after *The Morgesons* offers another view of what Stoddard imagines marriage to be. “The Prescription” reinforces the living-with-opacity message of the novel. It sets up a couple—Caroline and Gérard—for whom sympathy is impossible because the husband’s aggressive desire renders his sympathetic efforts toxic. But Stoddard makes it clear that Gérard’s desire is motivated by something like love; he can’t be written off as a bully. Stoddard’s solution, though, finds help precisely where Hawthorne would not. The spectacle of theater, watching other people on stage, provides a therapeutic counterweight to the overaggressive sympathy that can undo love. The healthiest moments Caroline can recall in her marriage were moments of theatergoing. There were times before her illness “when [Gérard] took me to the opera, and forgot almost that I was his wife, or to the theatre, where we could not fail to have the same chord of appreciation struck” (798). Theatergoing seems to work because it lets Gérard forget his spousal relation to Caroline, and thus forget his demand for deep knowledge of her, as they share an appreciation of the aesthetic experience they both watch. Stoddard suggests here that restraining desire to the level of the surface allows a kind of appreciation that is vital to love.

character is almost inevitably accompanied by a description of the room she dwells in. This is certainly a realist convention, but as we have already seen, the attention to details of contrast and arrangement loads the room (or the clothes) with an attractive force that goes beyond verisimilitude. At Rosville, after a jealous scene with Charles and Ben, Cassy thinks that “In my room I shall find myself again,” and indeed “it welcomed me with so friendly and silent an aspect, that I betrayed my grief, and it covered my misery as with a cloak” (110). As she leaves Belem to return to Surrey, Cassy recognizes that individuality reposes in the arrangement of things in a room: looking back at her guest room in the home of Desmond and Ben, she thinks of the maid already tidying up after her: “The ghost of my individuality would lurk there no longer than the chairs I had placed, the books I had left, the shreds of paper flowers I had scattered, could be moved or swept away” (201). Back home in Surrey, Cassy’s room, and Veronica’s room, once they decorate them, become partly expressions and partly constructions of their selves. Cassy writes that

Veronica’s room was like no other place. I was in a new atmosphere there. A green carpet covered the floor, and the windows had light blue silk curtains.

“Green and blue together, Veronica?”

“Why not? The sky is blue, and the carpet of the earth is green.”

“If you intend to represent the heavens and the earth here, it is very well.”

The paper on the wall was ash-colored, with penciled lines. She had cloudy days probably. A large-eyed Saint Cecilia, with white roses in her hair, was pasted on the wall. This frameless picture had a curious effect. Veronica, in some mysterious way, had contrived to dispose of the white margin of the picture, and the saint looked out from the soft ashy tint of the wallpaper. (134)

Veronica effects a collage on her own walls, contrasting the quiet saint with a picture across the room of a man whose face shows “concentrated fury.” Cassy’s questioning of the mix of blue and green suggests that it was a bold combination at the time—Mrs. Haweis warns that when mixing the two colors, “care is required what blue and green” (364). But Veronica has, taking her cues from heaven and earth, made a wholly different atmosphere that is as strange and indelible as she is herself. Whatever is worth knowing about the self, it seems, can only be known through the surfaces that self assembles for view. Veronica’s interior is invisible, but it is also there in the “cloudy days” of her wallpaper. Her self could not be so persuasively posited without the décor to do the positing. Likewise for Cassy in her own room, newly done up in blue and white, “It already seemed to me that I was like the room”; when Veronica sees her in it, she says “I recognize you here” (143, 144). Cassy takes it as a sign of Alice’s knowledge of Cassy when Alice gives her a carpet that is precisely the pattern and color that Cassy is most fond of. Cassy plainly admits that “[h]ad she sought the world over, she could have found nothing to suit me so well” (249). But since this carpet comes as a kind of restitution for Alice’s marrying Cassy’s father, Cassy spurns it and gives it to Veronica. The point, though, is made: Alice and Cassy understand each other, and in a way that the novel privileges—they understand each other’s taste, each other’s style. The dicta of home decorating assure us that arrangements of color and textile and object can truly express oneself. *The Morgesons* confirms that to share a taste for a particular color scheme and pattern is to be fundamentally linked. Alice, we know, shares with Cassy not only a taste in carpet but in men, since they have loved the same ones: first Charles, then Locke. But the carpet is what Cassy registers as the confirmation of their mutual understanding.

We have seen that Stoddard imagines a partial remedy for self-other opacity in visions of display and arrangement. But how does the principle of arrangement carry through to her style more broadly? Stoddard’s mode of arrangement, unlike what we will see in James, is based on the principle

of non sequitur; abrupt contrast makes the elements of her prose stand out more starkly. The opening scene, with its jarring flash-forward, initiates the deliberately haphazard display of her prose. The first line of the novel is jarringly *in media res*, presenting us with no context, no setting, no situation (these will come shortly after, at the start of the next chapter) but straightaway presenting Aunt Mercy's verdict on Cassy that "That child is possessed." There is no familiar "When I was a girl" to settle us in; the time lag marking the reminiscent structure of a first-person *bildungsroman* is only indirectly flagged, as a remark on Cassy's indiscriminate reading. "To this day," Cassy says, she mixes up the details of the travel narratives that she read as a child, so we understand that she is writing this from a more mature point sometime in the future. Indeed the rearranging of contents in her memory mirrors the principle of pushing together disparate elements that marks Cassy's own voice. "Sheridan's Comedies, Sterne's Sentimental Journey, and Captian Cook's Voyages are so mixed up in my remembrance that I am still uncertain whether it was Sterne who ate baked dog with Maria, or Sheridan who wept over a dead ass in the Sandwich Islands" (5). This time lag is more dramatically underscored on the next page, when Cassy's defiant gesture of covering her ears against her aunt's psalm-singing suddenly springs us into the present moment, when the room she has carefully described has disappeared. "I looked defiantly round the room," Cassy says, still from the vantage of her child-self; but in the next line she is in the moment of writing: "Its walls are no longer standing, and the hands of its builders have crumbled to dust." Cassy will not assign this moment any special status, though it makes the beginning of the story: "Some mental accident impressed this picture on the purblind memory of childhood" (6). Rather than invite us to feel the significance, then, of her narration, or of a guiding intelligence meaningfully organizing its elements, Cassy wants us to feel its arbitrary arrangement. The haphazardness of her style establishes a demanding form of intimacy, in that Cassy will make little allowance for her readers' not getting it. A later scene, exemplary in this respect, details a visit to her mother from a self-satisfied local minister. It begins with Cassy looking at a picture in a book "of a Hindoo swinging from a high pole with hooks in his flesh, and trying to imagine how much it hurt him," and ends with the minister quoting the Bible and Cassy recalling, "Presently he began to sing, and I grew lonesome; the life within me seemed a black cave" (21). We get a sense here of the manipulability of prose, the pieces of sentences and paragraphs becoming objects to be arranged not for coherence but for contrast. But the arrangement is not without its emotional punch, too. The singing and the black cave give the reader a quick gust of Cassy's lonesomeness—not a lasting mood of melancholy, but an inexplicable pang. For Stoddard, the most striking arrangement is the least predictable. But that contrast makes us attend to her novel as a collection of pieces with an interest that may be akin to Stoddard's version of love.

The taut condensation of Stoddard's narration that, as Beam notes, sets her apart from highly-wrought writers, oddly coexists with flourishes of romantic bombast. The two modes set each other off, each standing out more strongly against the foil of the other. Cassy, who also reads Byron late into the night, sounds at times transcendental. In her hands, though, rather than gaining momentum as it would in the highly-wrought prose of Fuller or Spofford, such language becomes an isolated, baroque element in the general prose arrangement. These moments emerge as the most self-conscious moments of narrative reminiscence. They read as odd bits of excess, often coming at the end of a chapter or before a change in scene. In one such instance, Cassy reflects that "The silent and serene currents which flow from souls like Veronica's and Ben's, whose genius is not of the heart, refuse to enter a nature so turbulent as mine. But my destiny must be changed by such! It was taken for granted that my own spirit should not rule me." A few lines from a poem about the uncertainty of the future follow, and then, after a quick description of the stormy weather, Cassy closes the chapter with "I had grown older" (219-220). The oratorical mode becomes in itself a jarring counterpoint to the abrupt brevity that otherwise dominates Stoddard's prose. These lush

sentences offer a reader-text counterpart to those flashes of electricity between Cassy and her lovers: heady moments of intense, apparent intimacy that go as quickly as they come.

The quality of “interest,” of detached curiosity, marks Cassy’s narrative style as well as the content of her descriptions; it is what marks her as an arranger of elements rather than a portrayer of souls. There is a coolness and objectivity to Stoddard’s style that contributes to the sense that she is standing back arranging things, manipulating the display of her novel. Stoddard makes Cassy as interested in psychology as Miles was. But as first-person narrators their voices are nothing alike. When Cassy describes the relation between Grand’ther Warren and his daughter, Cassy’s Aunt Mercy, she pinpoints the power dynamic in a way that might remind us of Miles studying Priscilla and Hollingsworth at the end of *Blithedale*. But unlike Miles she views the father-daughter bond here as interesting pathology, leaving out the shadings of tragedy that color Miles’s description. She judges with a confident knowingness, without the uncertainty that haunts and torments Miles. Aunt Merce, Cassy says, “wore a mask before her father. There was constraint between them; each repressed the other. The result of this relation was a formal, petrifying, unyielding system—a system which, from the fact of its satisfying neither, was kept up the more rigidly” (28). She delivers this insight with an analytic firmness, with none of the ambivalence or coyness we get from Miles; the phrasing is compressed and declarative, motivated by an unapologetically keen interest. Veronica’s preternatural ability at the piano, too, reminds us of Isabel with her guitar. But Veronica’s oddities, while they are carefully observed and registered, are ultimately let be by Cassy. She reads what she can of her sister, which she admits is not much. She takes Veronica’s mystery as a given, that is, and she takes their fraught and uncanny relationship much the same way. Cassy is willing to take surfaces as sufficient ground for judgment, where Miles is not. The author as collector and arranger can exercise her power by judging effectively what best sets off the elements of her tale. By careful arrangement she makes us feel we are seeing a character’s essence, the task of the author-as-portraitist as Miles imagined it, even if all we have seen is a combination of dress and hair and jewelry. Being able to discern the rightness of the combination and of its arrangement becomes the test of perception that makes for the kind of intimacy that matters—an intimacy of shared taste. We will see how James, too, gives a new privilege to the task of arranging and composing the elements that make up a novel, and how this privileging shapes the love story of *The Golden Bowl*.

IV. James and the Object of Love

Stoddard and James use the field of interior decor and of collection and display to test whether the visible surfaces a person builds up around herself, in the space she inhabits, might serve all, or at least most, of the purposes claimed by depth—specifically, the purposes that make for love between self and other. Apart from the link that I propose home decorating discourse makes between James and Stoddard, though, there is straightforward biographical reason to read James in its light. Critics have noted that James shared this interest with his friend Edith Wharton, and have tied their work as novelists to their vision of what interior space should be.¹⁰³ Other critics read James’s interest in decorating and collecting as a response to the commodification of selfhood that emerges in turn-of-the-century consumer culture. Bill Brown has written about the swapping of thing and person that occurs so eerily in James’s late fiction; Thomas Otten argues that “the long Jamesian paragraph” mirrors in its form “a body coming apart as it comes together in new combinations with objects and accessories” (16). Bill Brown agrees with Carolyn Porter (122) that the world of *The Golden Bowl* is

¹⁰³ Sarah Luria, for instance, connects the privacy of the bedrooms at Edith Wharton’s self-designed summer house, The Mount, to the restraint and sublimated desire that marks both her and James’s fiction. Luria argues that “we can look at the architecture of Wharton and James as more than a ‘metaphor’ for their novels; rather, architecture created the very conditions without which those novels could not exist” (190).

one where reification has saturated human relations, so that everyone sees everyone else as some kind of object. And he suggests that things and objects so predominate in James's fiction because it appears that loving an object is perhaps the only way that one can love, period.¹⁰⁴ I have tried to show how Stoddard translates the culture of collection and display into a love story that favors a particular version of surfaces. Now I aim to show how the culture of exhibition and collection so overtly thematized in *The Golden Bowl* (it is a novel about a connoisseur's quest for the perfect collection) plays out in James's handling of the love story. My readings of *The Golden Bowl* demonstrate how, like *The Morgesons*, the novel tells a version of the love story that is recognizably exhibitional. In doing so I show, too, that the writing-as-arranging practice that Stoddard began in her work, James theorizes in his vision of the novel-as-art. Finally, I aim to show how reading James as an inheritor of a style that began in sentimental novelists' efforts to unite Protestant and Catholic models of interpretation and worship can recast narrative ethics' understanding of the reader-text love affair.

Early on in *The Golden Bowl*, James's narrator suggests the potential for conflict between loving and collecting. When Adam Verver recalls his marriage to Maggie's now-dead mother, he reflects that as a young couple "they had loved each other so that his own intelligence, on the higher line, had temporarily paid for it. The futilities, the enormities, the depravities of decoration and ingenuity that before his sense was unsealed she had made him think lovely!" (141). By the time the novel's action begins, Adam's sense has been unsealed, and his reputation as a collector shows that he knows better than anyone how to judge loveliness. As we saw Ruskin and Eastlake commemorated as prophets of the religion of good taste, so Adam conceives his own project for American City along the lines of a sacred revelation: his museum will be "a house on a rock" from which "the highest knowledge would shine out to bless the land," "releas[ing]" Americans "from the bondage of ugliness." Adam is an evangelist for the "religion he wished to propagate," namely "the passion for perfection at any price" (143).¹⁰⁵ But what we see in the course of the novel is that love does not interfere with his decorative and collecting intelligence; love rather aligns with, takes its character from, this intelligence. How this alignment looks in practice, for Adam's and for the other characters' loves, I will discuss below. What has struck narrative ethics critics in particular as a mistake that James's novel shows must be rectified—the blurring of the line between loved persons and loved objects that both J. Hillis Miller and Martha Nussbaum identify as moral immaturity or blindness—becomes not only a constitutive element of the love story in this novel, but also comes to shape the novel and the reader-text relationship as James imagines them more generally.

James's characters fall in love in ways that read as variations on the loves we have seen between Tom and Eva, or between Mary and her dead brother Roy. Love in *The Golden Bowl* is like the love felt, but finally rejected, by Miles for Zenobia or by Pierre for Isabel. And it is like the loves

¹⁰⁴ He reads James's rhetoric as adapting to this commodified perception: whereas "objects traditionally have a *metonymic* relation to characters in the realist novel—they are legible as indications of character—here they have an overwhelmingly *metaphorical* relation: they don't express characters, they substitute for them, they translate them into something visible, valuable, potentially possessible" (161). Speaking of *The Spoils of Poynton* and its way of rendering the feeling of a rich woman for a poor one as that toward a well-chosen piece of furniture, Brown writes that "Collecting thus appears as the most immediately obvious mode of keeping boredom at bay, of transforming abstract longing—the desire for *something*—into a desire for some (particular) things" (163). Brown's understanding echoes Gillian Brown's description of "sentimental possession" in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Stowe's vision for snatching an item out of the circulation of commodities, loving it and making it one's own, and thereby circumventing the demeaning effects of capitalism.

¹⁰⁵ Not surprisingly, then, Adam is not a churchgoer, and on the Sunday morning when his privacy is interrupted by Mrs. Rance he reflects that "If persons under his roof hadn't a right not to go to church what became, for a fair mind, of his own right?" (132), and it is characteristic of him that he wishes he could place the church that stands on the Fawns property, with "its simple sweetness," in a "glass case" in his museum (147).

of Cassy's life. All of these exemplify love between manifest selves, which thrives on mutually generated stories; it is aroused and reassured by the sight of the beloved on display. The objectification of a beloved by a lover is nothing new in the history of the love story, even less of love poetry, which gave us the inventory-taking form of the blazon. What sets apart the love stories these novels tell is the way surface appreciation is made sufficient for the lover's desire to know the beloved within the story, and the way it is self-consciously tested as an interpretive model for the novel-as-other itself. In *The Golden Bowl* as in *The Morgesons*, the potential for love's deep knowledge is mooted. Each novel makes that possibility the source of some loss and yearning. In Stowe and Phelps, such yearning for depth is fulfilled in heaven; in Melville and Hawthorne, the unfulfilled promise of deep love undermines the possibility of love altogether. But in James and Stoddard love goes on, on earth, despite loss and without assurance of depth. Cassy is left scarred, both body and spirit, by Charles's death. But the story continues, and she falls in love again, with a better (because unmarried) beloved. Similarly, for James, the rupture of what Carolyn Porter correctly identifies as the novel's most passionate loves¹⁰⁶—the love between Charlotte and Amerigo and between Adam and Maggie—is felt sharply. The inaudible “shriek of a soul in pain” that Maggie hears from Charlotte, shortly before Charlotte leaves for America with Adam, is indelible (526). Even the happy ending between Maggie and Amerigo leaves plenty of room for doubt about the future of their marriage. But the novel does provide, crucially, a portrait of a middle way—a happy love that gets by without much depth—in Fanny and Bob. And that middle way turns out to be the right formula, for James, for the interpretation of the novel, for reading-as-loving. Their marriage is a case study for love that functions through reading, interpreting, and generating texts anew. Fanny and Bob's marriage praxis involves arranging characters, seeing others as objects to be arranged; and if they do not escape James's irony and disapproval altogether, the novel does not condemn such seeing as immoral or immature. James after all makes *The Golden Bowl* a showcase for the “arranging” consciousness: it is his plan, acknowledged in the preface, to show us how Amerigo arranges the people in his world so that we might thereby see how Amerigo thinks, and then to show us how Maggie arranges the people in her world so that we might thereby see how she thinks.

The exhibitional style in James's hands, as in Stoddard's, aligns with the principles of collection and display. As Stoddard does, James treats his language as an arrangement of elements we can admire for its striking design. Whereas Stoddard employs abrupt juxtaposition to vivify the elements or moods of a given scene or paragraph, James uses the principle of convolution to spread out the elements of a scene. Our forced concentration creates an effect of tremendously complicated workmanship. It is as if he would bring us down to an ant's-eye view of a paisley or a cloissone pattern and have us follow the lines in their endless curvatures. We cannot see, from this level, anything clearly; what we feel is the intricacy of the art and craft itself. For James, one crucial pleasure offered to his readers (who are, again, a select group) comes through his plush, extravagant sentences: each one a long, slow, falling, a getting-lost between pronoun and antecedent.¹⁰⁷ The *longueur* of James's sentences, their unnecessary convolutions and stretches, create layers and piles of words until what is non-essential (throwaway interjections) becomes, for the reader straining to keep up, practically indistinguishable from the essential (subject and verb). It insists on an attention

¹⁰⁶ Porter writes that it is Charlotte who “[apprehends]... [the Prince's] value as an individual in whom public and private selves are unified, and out of a quality of devotion to that individual of which no one else in the novel seems capable” (158).

¹⁰⁷ This can also be a frustrating experience. As Brooks notes, arguing for the way James's prose bolsters his interest in keeping the “behind” hidden while putting as much pressure on it as possible: “The very rhythm and punctuation of late Jamesian conversations—‘he hung fire,’ ‘this fairly gave him an arrest,’ ‘she took it in,’ ‘she stared’—suggest the need to postulate meanings in the margins between words, a desire to make the reader strain toward making darkness visible” (178-179).

that seems meant to stand, not unlike Stoddard's detached interest, as a kind of love in itself. (This is a point I will develop below in considering James's preface.)

The scene in which Fanny is about to tell Amerigo that Charlotte is in town offers an early example of these convolutions. We read, from Amerigo's point of view, that "To wait thus and watch for it was to know of a truth that there was something the matter with *him*;" not with her, as Amerigo had started out by thinking; "since—strangely, with so little to go upon—his heart had positively begun to beat to the time of suspense" (63). There is in this long pause "a crisis—neither could have said how long it lasted—during which they were reduced, for all interchange, to looking at each other on quite an inordinate scale" (63). The clauses ("neither could have said," "for all interchange") interrupt and slow down the progress of this unwieldy sentence. And in the midst of this crisis James presents us with an image of the two of them in Fanny's room as a "photograph" or a "*tableau-vivant*." This freeze-frame moment comes with a hinted warning not to read too much into things: "The spectator" who "might have read meanings of his own into the intensity of their communion" (63-64), and who, "even without meanings," might "have found his account, aesthetically" in the looks of Fanny in particular (64). The aesthetic account, however, appears to be just what James then gives us in a long description of Fanny with pet gazelle and sherbet, and of her happy marriage to Bob (65). Meanwhile we have left the "crisis" and the "suspense" between Fanny and Amerigo—left them sitting there looking inordinately at each other. It is two full pages later that we return to Amerigo saying to Fanny that he thinks she has "something on [her] mind" (66). The prose is, like Fanny herself, a matter of endlessly piled-on things.

How does this version of the exhibitional style play out on the larger scale, in James's characterization? Above all, the novel proposes that to be loved, a person must be seen as part of a display that she has designed, or within the context of the beautiful objects she has collected for herself. This accords with the principle that Clarence Cook and Mrs. Haweis and a multitude of other home-decorating advisers repeat in the years that stretch between Stoddard and James, the principle that one should decorate the home so that it projects the real self. We have seen too how readily collectors personified the objects they collected, how susceptible those objects were of being loved. The ease with which Herbert Byng Hall can feel his chinaware to be friends, or with which Cook can picture a soup tureen as a mother, bolsters or extends the qualities of the manifest self we saw in Stowe and Phelps. Mrs. Gereth, in *The Spoils of Poynton*, might be the most obvious Jamesian parallel for this phenomenon; her collection of art and furnishings is taken not only as a genuine extension of her personality, but as if it amounted to her personality. But if she is presented as comic or pathological—much as Madame Merle, another Jamesian apologist for seeing persons as coextensive with things, comes across as more cruelly conniving than sympathetic—she nonetheless marks only an extreme case that becomes naturalized, universalized, in the relationships we see in *The Golden Bowl*.

In James, characters come to us as persons as much as things, by the aid of elaborate metaphors whose materiality often overtakes the personality those metaphors purport to serve. In *The Golden Bowl* James takes this aspect of the manifest self farther than any other author we have seen. Rather as Rachel Halliday's rocking-chair spoke for her in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Bob Assingham's foot in its shoe, polished and sleek, can speak for itself: "It seemed to confess, this member, to consciousness of military discipline.... [and] went so far as to imply that some one or other would have 'got' something or other, confinement to barracks or suppression of pay, if it hadn't been just as it was" (86). For an author who wants to make feeling and thinking into plotworthy actions, this materialism may be an inevitable resource, a valuable tool for rendering "scenic" something as invisible as the evolution of anxiety. But if materialism is a methodological necessity for James, his commitment to that method nonetheless entails the view that our feelings, our presumed deep interiors, are only knowable as surfaces or things. When we do enter a character's consciousness,

James gives us that consciousness in terms of a pile of vivid things, not a list of general beliefs or propositions. While Isabel's meditations on her husband proceed through careful abstractions with only a few subdued images,¹⁰⁸ Maggie's consciousness is a riot of extravagant metaphors. The narrative voice-overs do not purport to reveal the truth deep within a character's heart or mind, nor do they give the sense that the deeper we get the truer we see, as Miles firmly believed. There is just more accumulated stuff (though we will see below, in considering the preface, that James sets no little store by "accumulated good stuff"). Maggie's mind is a jumble of surfaces: bric-a-brac, pagodas, coaches. If a person's mind is a roomful of things, then it is not surprising that rooms, as we have seen in Stoddard, are themselves key to reading persons. But whereas Stoddard will detail the steps—the shopping and the putting up of draperies—by which a character decorates a room to exhibit herself properly, for James a room becomes uncannily attached to a character. A person gives the impression of a room, carries a virtual scene around with himself, radiates a domestic space like an aura. Adam is described as having a face like "a small decent room, clean-swept and unencumbered with furniture" (137). Around Fanny, we are asked to see "hammocks and divans," "sherberts" and "slaves," a "mandolin" and a "pet gazelle" (64). Bob manages to project "strange straw-like textures, of the aspect of Chinese mats," and "a continual cane-bottomed chair" upon "wide verandahs" (86). This produces an effect different from, say, Howells's realism, where the room is given as the environment for a character; here the room becomes the expression of a character or a force acting on that character.

Another key element of the manifest self is its dependence on social contact, rather than private meditation, to generate understanding and knowledge. Isabel Archer sees Osmond and Madame Merle together, and later works out by herself the meaning of that image in her nighttime vigil. In *The Golden Bowl* such unpacking occurs in a crowd: as Maggie sees her father with Mrs. Rance, he sees Maggie see him in a new light, and he sees Fanny see both himself and Maggie understanding the situation. The circuit of understanding forms in a shared and public moment as one person looks at another and another. Truth is not arrived at alone, through communing with one's own deeper consciousness; it is generated through the collective communication of a group.¹⁰⁹ Such communication frequently works through the visual appeal of a surface, without audible words. All the information that is available to us, as Miller points out, is what we can see as an audience.¹¹⁰ James's characters themselves learn to comport themselves by the rules of stagecraft. Fanny from the start has "eyebrows marked like those of an actress" (64); Amerigo feels obliged to show himself to those "spectators and subjects whose need to admire, even to gape, was periodically to be considered" (69); Maggie learns over time to improvise and manipulate audience response.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ We read, for instance, that Isabel sees how her marriage "Instead of leading to the high places of happiness... led rather downward and earthward, into realms of restriction and depression where the sound of other lives, easier and freer, was heard as from above, and where it served to deepen the feeling of failure" (PL 356).

¹⁰⁹ Sharon Cameron makes the case for externalized, intersubjective consciousness in *Thinking in Henry James*. Robert Pippin accepts this picture of intersubjective consciousness but alters its conclusions: "In the view I am presenting, by contrast, it is not because 'we are unable to sustain the idea of meaning as a question' that we 'moralize about the novel, see its thematic as one of morality, which is an ultimate act of codifying the arbitrariness of our interpretation by making a special case for its inevitability' (p. 120). It is rather precisely because of our acknowledgement, in reading the novel, and the characters' realization in living, of the unavailability of individually owned, discoverable, even hidden or secret meaning that morality—a certain sort of acknowledgement of our dependence on others and their entitlements—arises unavoidably in the first place" (85, fn 12).

¹¹⁰ Miller writes that James's metaphors of consciousness arise from his sense that "The consciousness of the other is... in principle at least, opaque, never to be known directly, only to be inferred from external audible, visible, or even tangible signs," and that such metaphors "bring into existence the states of mind they name" (LC 265-266).

¹¹¹ Peter Brooks points out in his argument for James's artistic debt to melodrama that, in articulating the advantages of the "scenic" method late in his career, James was only spelling out an allegiance that motivated all of his work:

One of the most striking of many such instances in James's last novel occurs at its climax when Fanny, raising the golden bowl to inspect it, understands by the look on Maggie's face that she, Fanny, wants to smash the bowl. The circuit of self-understanding only travels through others, through an audience; it begins in a physical gesture--the way Fanny is, apparently unconsciously, holding the bowl. Thus Fanny "kept the cup in her hand, held it there in a manner that gave Maggie's attention to her, she saw the next moment, a quality of excited suspense. This suggested to her oddly that she had, with the liberty she was taking, an air of intention" (446). As we saw so plainly with Stowe's model of subjectivity, James's requires an audience--because perception and understanding must be routed through other selves in one's community. But if James's characters, like Stowe's, will find ways to bond that are nonpenetrative, his characters do not have the solace of a deep merge in heaven.

How, then, do such characters fall in love in *The Golden Bowl*? They do so, persistently, by seeing their beloveds through the lens of collection and display. The beloved is either an item in a collection or arrangement, or herself constitutes a collection or arrangement. When Amerigo sees Charlotte at Fanny's, years after their affair has ended and just before he marries Maggie, she strikes him as a handsome collection, "a cluster of possessions of his own," a group of "relics" for him to relish: each of her attributes, hair and face and dress, are "items in a full list, items recognized, each of them, as if, for the long interval, they had been 'stored'—wrapped up, numbered, put away in a cabinet" (72). The collection that is Charlotte comprises her "tawny" hair like that of a "huntress," her "rounded" arms like a "Florentine" statue made of "old silver" or "old bronze," her hands and fingernails, the "special beauty" of her back; her waist is both "the stem of an expanded flower" and gives her the look of a "long loose silk purse" whose coins he can just hear clinking in his ear as she turns toward him.¹¹² Moreover she, like Fanny and Bob, emanates a whole scene by the arranged touches of her costume. The "free vivid yet altogether happy indications of dress," the size of her hat and the color of her shoes, create a mobile scene of their own: "winds and waves and custom-houses" and "far countries and long journeys" (71-72). Of course the Prince is a collectible item himself, "a rarity, an object of beauty," a "curious and eminent" example of his kind, as Maggie tells him before their marriage (49). Amerigo seems to accept this equably enough, and while he might well be read as a victim of capitalist dehumanization (as Porter does), his view of Charlotte as a collection of relics suggests that his own collectability accords with his guiding sense of how people exist in the world.

Certainly it accords with the view that Adam habitually takes. He does not enumerate Charlotte's physical virtues as we see Amerigo do, and his visual appreciation for Charlotte is prepared for by his daughter's and by Fanny's verbal descriptions of Charlotte as "great" and brave (167-168) and as "the real thing" (178). He finds himself possessed of "an odd little taste, as he would have described it, for hearing things said about this young woman" (176). And if he does measure "old Persian carpets... and new human acquisitions" with the same "one little glass," the standard of judgment that serves for Amerigo and Charlotte as aptly as it does for "the Bernardino Luini" and "a set of oriental tiles," it is true too that he regards his much-beloved daughter in this light. "[T]he long habit of their life together hadn't closed his sense" to Maggie's own aesthetic perfection, and we are told that he "[cares] for precious vases only less than for precious daughters"

"Theatrical conventions, enactment, theatricality itself were the semiotic preconditions for the novel as James understood it." While Brooks makes his case based on James's affinities with the French drama of his time, I propose that James's experience of the theatricality of the sentimental tradition—for instance, the many versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* he saw as a boy on stage in his home country—had a shaping influence as well.

¹¹² Thomas Otten's reading of Amerigo's appreciation of the metaphorical pieces of Charlotte—"the flower, the silk purse of gold pieces," and particularly the literal and figurative turning-point of her waist—makes the case well (16-17).

(172). This sense for Maggie's precious fineness is "kept sharp, year after year, by the... comparison of fine object with fine object, of one degree of finish, of one form of the exquisite with another"—in short by a sense for the art of arrangement that shows off one thing by comparison and contrast with others. Not surprisingly, then, he imagines her as a statue, one whose "perfect felicity," whose balance of antique and modern touches, would be appropriately seen against the backdrop "of Vatican or Capitoline halls" (172). Her figure bears for him the attributes of both nymph and nun. Yet his seeing her with the eyes of the collector does not, as James shows us, hinder Adam from loving her.

Nor does it hinder Adam from seeing how great Maggie's own love is. In Adam's estimation, she is a passionately loving wife, so loving that she makes him wonder if her mother "had after all been capable of the maximum... of tenderness... the maximum of immersion in the fact of being married. Maggie herself was capable; Maggie herself, at this season, was, exquisitely, divinely, the maximum" (145). As Miller notes, Maggie's loves, both for Amerigo and for her father, "are present to her not as abstract responsibilities but as deeply compelling physical attractions" (*LC* 251). And yet Maggie's loves depend, James shows us, on the kind of triangulated desire—desire that depends on seeing the beloved not just as an individual, a decontextualized one-and-only, but arranged in a tableau as the object of another's gaze—that so disquieted Miles and Hawthorne. First, it takes Maggie's witnessing Mrs. Rance's pursuit of her father to realize how desirable he is to other women, how vulnerable her marriage has left him. Adam and Maggie's "decent little old-time union" (135) has placed Adam "too deep down" in her heart and in her life "to be disengaged, contrasted or opposed, in short objectively presented"—but this is exactly what she can do now, having seen her father as a man desired. James here puts Maggie's vision of her father in terms that suggest how arrangement can make for visibility: she has not really seen him until now, because he has not been set off properly by contrast and opposition. This is a moment of loss and rupture in the father-daughter relationship—it is disengagement that allows Adam to be arranged and presented so that he can appear in Maggie's field of vision. But it is also, as Nussbaum has argued, a moment of the maturation of their love. It is more mature because the two separate enough to see each other clearly. For Nussbaum the payoff is moral uplift, the appreciation of alterity that such vision allows. In my argument, the point is just that proper seeing and loving, whether we decide they are moral or not, requires the beloved to appear as a definite presentation, set off and complemented as a member of a collection.¹¹³

Second, it is crucial to Maggie's love for Amerigo that she see him as an object of others' desire. Early in the novel she "hadn't yet learned to see him" as he would appear to others "in her absence. How did he move and walk, how above all did he, or how *would* he, look" when faced with odd neighbors or dull guests? (155). This failure of imagination—a failure in part to project a plausible mental arrangement of Amerigo among others—looks in hindsight like a symptom of the weakness of Maggie's bond with Amerigo. But we learn at this point too that she sees him with greatest desire when he is in front of her, with other women who are like Maggie "reduced" by Amerigo's manliness to a "passive pulp" of longing. We learn that "she never admired him so much, or so found him heart-breakingly handsome, clever, irresistible in the very degree" that she had found him when she first fell in love, as when she sees him desired by other women. It stands, in

¹¹³ In Nussbaum's terms, this moment of visualization is not just about seeing clearly; it shows us that "Moral objectivity about the value of a person... requires, evidently, the ability to see that item as distinct from other items" and "as a value that can be contrasted or opposed to others" (*LK* 131). It sets Maggie on the path toward adult morality and its recognition of the single-mindedness that real love demands. David McWhirter takes the same view in *Desire and Love in Henry James*, arguing that Maggie's growth comes with her ability to see her father and Amerigo alike as "an other" and not "a mere extension of herself" (196).

fact, as “one of the most comfortable things between the husband and the wife” that Maggie is capable of such jealous inflammations. She jokes with Amerigo that “even should he some day get drunk and beat her, the spectacle of him with hated rivals” would make her forgive him, just for the “sovereign charm of it... as the exhibition of him that most deeply moved her” (157). It is the exhibition of Amerigo as the object of others’ desire that she finds moving. Nor, I think, can we dismiss this as a symptom of her immature infatuation, because it is the case that her whole course of action in the novel’s second part is determined by her finally seeing how Charlotte wants him. Maggie responds to the adultery as a great evil, and she says to Fanny that she will sacrifice everything “for love”; there is no doubt that James makes her heroic in her willingness to swallow her outrage and to maintain appearances. But it is no less accurate to say that the plot moves forward only when Maggie finally recognizes Charlotte’s desire for Amerigo, a recognition which in turn rouses Maggie’s desire for him and prods her to take back her husband for herself. Viewed this way, she is as much in thrall to triangular, Girardian desire as Don Quixote. That Maggie is at least in part imitating Charlotte’s desire helps account for why the ending—Maggie’s burying her eyes in Amerigo’s face after he tells her he sees nothing but her—reads as ambiguously as it does, despite the optimism of critics like Nussbaum.¹¹⁴ It also accounts, I think, for Maggie’s ability to understand better than anyone else Charlotte’s pain: Maggie is the one who can interpret Charlotte’s “[frantic] tapping” “against the glass,” the one who feels she could translate Charlotte’s message to Amerigo in a long (imagined, but quote-marked) address that begins, “You don’t know what it is to have been loved and broken with” (552-553). It is true that Maggie tells her father that she has gone beyond jealousy to the “abysmal and unutterable” in her love for Amerigo (506); but it is also true that she is at that moment engaged in seeing that Charlotte is on her way out.¹¹⁵

Yet if these loves are enabled by seeing the beloved as collectable and arranged, both Maggie and her father, and Charlotte and Amerigo, nonetheless enjoy an intimacy that is granted all the privileged terms of depth. In a crucial scene between Maggie and her father, when she feels on the verge of telling him all she knows about his wife’s infidelity, she sees “his strained smile, which touched her to deepest depths, sounding her in his secret unrest”; she feels the “thin wall” keeping each one ignorant of what the other knows “[shake]... with their very breath”; it “hung by a hair” and “would give way the next instant if either so much as breathed too hard” (509). As Cassy and Charles are guided by an invisible magnetism, so James grants Charlotte and Amerigo a “community of passion” and a “perfect parity of imagination” that allows them to arrange a rendezvous without having actually to speak about alibis and train schedules (282, 283). When they kiss, everyday intersubjective boundaries dissolve: “everything broke up, broke down, gave way, melted and mingled” (259). They achieve an undifferentiated state of union. Charlotte is proud to say to Amerigo that “you’re not too different from *me*,” as he has confessed he feels too different from his wife and her father. Charlotte’s desire focuses exclusively on her identity and merging with Amerigo, a point underlined by their echoic conversation (“It’s all too wonderful”; “It’s too beautiful”; “It’s sacred”; “It’s sacred”) and kiss. James’s narration of the moment also works to undo our ability to distinguish Charlotte from Amerigo, as he describes, with dually referential pronouns and chiasmus, how “Their lips sought their lips, their pressure their response and their response their pressure” (259). It is a beautiful moment, a high point in the novel. And yet James will not quite allow it to

¹¹⁴ For McWhirter, critics who doubt the happiness of the ending “have fallen victim to the same error which had prevented James from speaking the sentence of love” in his prior novels: namely, like John Marcher in “The Beast in the Jungle,” such critics “expect too much, and want the impossible rather than the attainable” (197).

¹¹⁵ A few pages later, when Adam half-jokingly tells Maggie that “if you say much more we *will ship*” off to America, Maggie feels “the cup of her conviction... [overflow] at a touch” as she sees Charlotte “removed, transported, doomed,” and as she realizes that “she had *made* him” hatch this plan at this time (512).

stand unchallenged. He casts an ironic shadow on the erotic telepathy that enables Charlotte and Amerigo to noiselessly arrange their afternoon dalliance. His narrator notes that “They had these identities of impulses—they had had them repeatedly before,” presumably in the course of their original affair; “and if such unarranged but unerring encounters gave the measure of the degree in which people were, in the common phrase, meant for each other, no union in the world had ever been more sweetened with rightness” (290). This is a heavy load for an “if” to bear—the claim for the sweetest, most right union in the world—and it seems probable that James intends us to infer that Charlotte and Amerigo’s sending and receiving of signals does not amount to proof of their being meant for each other in some cosmic sense.

And these moments of self-other dissolution are not fully climactic, in the sense that such erotic merging does not solve, but only complicates, the novel’s bigger and more interesting problems. The breakup of these relationships does not finish the novel; James leaves us with the recommitted embrace of Maggie and Amerigo. But neither does this closing image of Maggie burying her face in Amerigo’s chest leave us feeling cheerful. The deep love that results in the self-other merge, the potential for transcendence in romance, is undercut. Nussbaum’s reading of the novel as finally the triumph of matured conscience and erotic fulfillment for Maggie seems to me to elide the real doubt James leave us with about whether, having recaptured her husband, Maggie’s marriage with Amerigo will be happy. Karen Liebowitz observes that in *The Spoils of Poynton*, Fleda’s “model of love”—one that James discredits as naive in that novel—“postulates two individuals, inscrutable to the world but thoroughly legible to one another, such that each resembles an author generating text for an ideal reader who values the other’s refusal to ‘make any show’” (18). The fact that the adulterous Charlotte and Amerigo seem to match Fleda’s vision, as Liebowitz notes (25), suggests that it is not for James a sound ideal—not an affair Lambert Strether would urge them to pursue in the interest of living all they can.¹¹⁶ It seems to be a part of James’s vision of love that such an effort to get beyond the surface is doomed to be not only immoral but fruitless. Those who pursue such love may pursue it heroically, or deceitfully, or pathetically, or all three at once, as Charlotte does. But to believe in a James novel that love is, at its very best, a matter of merging one’s depths with another is a dead end.¹¹⁷ It seems, as Miller holds, that James takes selves to be so mysterious and private as to make full access impossible. This being the case, because the self always needs an audience or a reader, and because a lover can only really see a beloved as part of a collection or arrangement, James imagines that love must be less like merging and more like generating texts. The performances and the surfaces of the self are not hiding something deeper, as Charlotte and Amerigo’s variety of love would insist. After Charlotte claims her own non-difference with him, Amerigo suggests in reply that perhaps if he and she were married they would “find some abyss of divergence.” It seems as if James would suggest that even if identities of depth make for beautiful loves, erotic or familial, these are fleeting; divergences are what make a marriage. This could be bad news for marriage if it were not for the strength of Fanny and Bob’s counterexample.

Why Fanny and Bob, though? They are hardly the stars of the novel; frequently they provide comic relief. But the pair matter for two reasons. The first is widely recognized: their role as reader and author stand-ins. Fanny and Bob do much of the gruntwork of arranging and interpreting the

¹¹⁶ Ultimately, Liebowitz argues, “the most radical consequence of James’s practice” is “his revalorization of artifice as an intrinsic good” (24).

¹¹⁷ There are many good ways to understand the failure of their romance: to name just two, James’s aesthetic commitment to reticence (Liebowitz) or his recognition that marriage has become, like capitalism, a matter of buying and selling (Porter). My own argument is less an attempt to understand why James makes this love fail, or why he makes his people shallow; it is more an attempt to understand how, under these circumstances, love is supposed to function. And it concludes that for James, as for Stowe, love can only function--can only endure--as a shared interest in interpreting texts.

story, not only by reviewing and confirming plot-points and character motivations for us readers, but also by setting up love matches within the story world. They are aware of each other's wandering eyes, but this mental infidelity comes across as their being seduced as authors are by their own characters. Their co-authorship is an unquestioned bond. Bob accuses Fanny of arranging Amerigo's marriage as a way of exercising (if not exorcising) her love for Amerigo: "you fell violently in love with the Prince yourself, and... as you couldn't get *me* out of the way you had to take some roundabout course," that of marrying him off to Maggie (96). Much later, Fanny coaches Bob to draw on his love for Maggie ("as I've given you so perfect an opportunity to fall in love with" her, Fanny notes) to bear up under the burden of lying about Amerigo's affair with Charlotte (410). Yet this reader- and author- position is, in large part, what makes their marriage run. The second reason for focusing on Fanny and Bob's love story is that it stands out as the most functional, durable love relationship in the novel. They represent to their "younger friends" a model marriage, and they are touted as "discoverers of a kind of hymeneal Northwest Passage" between an American woman and an Englishman (65). As with Eva and Tom, these two do not attempt to understand each other's depths; instead they try to understand together the text that is before them. It is the connection between these two qualities, their marital happiness and their reader-author roles, that makes Fanny and Bob an exemplary pair.

Fanny and Bob are not perfectly legible to each other. We are told that by and large they do not understand one another so much as they edit and perform for one another. Their relationship works not by virtue of identity but by virtue of divergence. This enables them to be a good authorial team. Fanny loves excess; Bob's thinness routinely cuts down his wife's surplus, figured as overwriting: "[A] large proportion of [Fanny's] meanings he knew he could neglect. He edited for their general economy the play of her mind, just as he edited, savingly, with the stump of a pencil, her redundant telegrams" (87). James makes this thinness and excess physical and literal: Fanny is stocky, Bob bony. Their divergence also enables them to continue seeing one another as objects, objects that are susceptible to arrangement and display and therefore to a crucial visibility. Fanny's endless hand-wringing over her friends' relationships reminds Bob of "the celebrated lady" "at the Aquarium" "who, in a slight, though tight, bathing-suit, turned somersaults and did tricks in the tank of water which looked so cold and uncomfortable to the non-amphibious" (85), and he comports himself as a spectator who wants to enjoy the show. Bob in turn enables a crucial externalization for Fanny; he helps her own self become other to her. We are told that generally Fanny's "thoughts... in her husband's company, pursued an independent course. He made her, when they were together, talk, but as if for some other person; who was in fact for the most part herself. Yet she addressed herself with him as she could never have done without him" (235). He allows her an audience—albeit an uncomprehending one—without which she cannot be herself because she cannot perform herself. The misunderstanding that typically reigns between them, the way neither one is much interested in getting beneath the other's surface, seems to be part of what makes the marriage work.

Setting up their midnight conversation by the "mystic lake" that Bob envisions for Fanny, James's narrator writes first of all that their usual "intercourse by misunderstanding"—the cheerful talking past each other that the pair usually practices—has yielded to something more intense (297). Yet if this is a night for a conversation that gets deep, the narrator's attention nonetheless hovers, as always, around surfaces. If we expect that a scene between a husband and wife by a mystic lake creates an opportunity to portray these characters as they really are, or a chance for merging and mingling, that opportunity goes untaken. Instead Fanny and Bob are, as usual, only like something or someone else. Fanny appears, in one of her many oriental-themed likenesses, as "the immemorially speechless Sphinx about to become articulate," and Bob plays the role of "some old pilgrim of the desert camping" at her foot (296). The two, having just left Amerigo and Charlotte at Matcham, are trying to work out an understanding of their situation. Bob can confess to himself "a

consciousness of deep waters. She had been out on these waters for him, visibly,” and he has stood by patiently (297); but the mystic lake is less mystical than relentlessly physical. Bob’s “inner man,” standing by the lake, is even wearing a “coat and waistcoat” (297). Indeed, that the lake is the invention of practical Bob’s imagination ironizes and diminishes any mysticism it might yield. Neither Bob nor Fanny will actually or metaphorically enter any deep waters. Though Bob fears that Fanny’s boat might falter, she “bump[s]... ashore” before the “sheet of dark water” is broken.¹¹⁸

The lakeside conversation itself, as usual, is a matter of textual interpretation--the text in question being the love story that Fanny and Bob tell together about their friends’ affairs. Where the essence of Eva and Tom’s love was their collective desire to inhabit the Biblical text, the essence of Fanny and Bob’s love is their collective desire to keep improvising a story together. Bob pushes Fanny to provide character motivation: “‘You mean then [Amerigo] doesn’t care for Charlotte--?’” And Fanny, after a dramatic pause, “simply said: ‘No!’” (314). Together they work out how Maggie will behave in the coming chapters. Even when the story seems to end--when Fanny concludes that Maggie’s keeping her father in ignorance of the adultery “‘will be work cut out!’” and says good night to Bob--he lures her back in to the story with a choice of adjectives. “‘Ah but, you know, that’s rather jolly!’” he says; she questions “‘jolly’”; “‘I mean it’s rather charming,’” he amends; and when she again questions “‘charming’” he finally edits it to “‘I mean it’s rather beautiful’” and reminds Fanny “‘You just said yourself if would be’” (311). It is only after this challenge that Fanny, invoking one of James’s cardinal rules of artistic creation, excuses her setting up Charlotte with Adam by saying that Charlotte was otherwise doomed to be “a piece of waste,” and that it was thus she “‘[fell] in love with the beautiful symmetry of my plan’” (313). “‘I see--I see,’” muses Bob, not seeing Fanny but seeing the love story they are writing. In the end Fanny finds that “the amplitude of her exposition sustained and floated her,” and for Bob “she had done perhaps even more to create than to extinguish in him the germ of a curiosity” (320).¹¹⁹ Such is love between these manifest selves. Fanny and Bob do embrace, in a moment of lyrical beauty, by the mystic lake; but that embrace does not amount to the merging of depths that we might expect of a love story. It ends neither the scene nor the conversation. James continues both in the next chapter. That suggests to me that for James what makes the marriage is not its possible moments of union but the neverending work of textual play,¹²⁰ as what makes the bond between Eva and Tom is their shared interpretation of the text of the Bible.

I noted at the beginning of this study that James holds out the possibility that married love conveys a special interpretive power: the author in “The Figure in the Carpet” suggests as much to the desperate critic when he says that perhaps the critic’s married friends will understand the secret pattern of his work. James in the preface to this novel suggests that he chooses Amerigo and Maggie as his authorial deputies because their relationship grants them especially vivid sight, especially of each other, the characters whose remarriage (so to speak) forms the plot arc. Fanny and Bob, though, end up being the married characters whose vivid interest and attention we rely on most.

¹¹⁸ Further, when James’s narrator, taking Bob’s point of view, references penetrating that lake, it is always phrased carefully in the conditional: the silence of Bob and Fanny’s embrace “*might have* represented their sinking together... into the mystic lake”; when Bob at the end of that embrace says he is unsure why Fanny is so worried about Maggie, “it was quite *as if* in possession of what they had brought up from the depths” (306, my emphasis).

¹¹⁹ James grants them literal, fleshly surface-level communication when Bob asks Fanny how Charlotte will “take” the Prince, “if anything happens”: “she put out a grasping hand to his arm, in the flesh of which he felt her answer distinctly enough registered,” giving him “the firmest longest deepest injunction he had ever received from her.” The injunction is that “‘Nothing *is* happening’” (320).

¹²⁰ Thus I read this scene differently from Martha Nussbaum, who understands Fanny and Bob’s embrace by the mystic lake to represent the union of perception and rule, and who argues that “the right ‘basis’ for action is found in the loving dialogue of the two” (*LK* 155) when in fact they simply decide to lie about Charlotte and Amerigo’s adultery.

They enact even more clearly than Maggie and Amerigo the model James outlines in the preface for the reading and writing of stories, a conception that has shaped the terms by which narrative ethics operates. By showing that in fact it is a different kind of love, Fanny and Bob's rather than Maggie and Amerigo's, that really enacts interpretation, I hope to expand narrative ethics' vision of the reader-text love story so that it can embrace new historicist techniques.

V. The Preface, and the Conclusion

James's long involved sentences, as I said above, stretch the reader's attention to its limit. The length and convolutions of his sentences can tempt us to follow the doomed narrator of "The Figure in the Carpet," to chase after depth. If Stoddard vivifies individual items by pushing unlike things together, James's prose arrangements, by their expansiveness, force us to try to compress and pull together the items strung out in a given sentence. This kind of sentence-writing makes us into co-creators with James, as we have to untangle and rearrange and weigh possibilities, sort them out in our own heads, "in [our] own other medium, by [our] own other art," as James puts it. In this sense it is reminiscent of Protestant depth-reading, insofar as it demands meditation and privacy.¹²¹ But the point of getting his readers to concentrate is not only, for James, to produce a sense of intimacy with the authorial consciousness. In James's adaptation of the exhibitional style, the lengthy stretches between a verb and its object or a noun and its descriptive clause, between a pronoun and its antecedent, become an attraction unto themselves. We register the style as much as the content, the vehicle as much as the tenor, and this is as it should be in James's model of how people apprehend things. The style matters because it must demand the right kind of attention from the reader. James worries toward the end of his preface about the reader being "swindled" or "sold" by subpar writing. The poetic form that the novel could be—a form "whose highest bid is addressed to the imagination, to the spiritual and the aesthetic vision, the mind led captive... by an incalculable art" (35)—depends on arrangement to elicit the kind of reading-as-pearl-diving that we recall the Massachusetts Sunday-School Society advocated. A good poetic form, a good novel, will "give out its finest and most numerous secrets" not if it is "skimmed and scanted, shuffled and mumbled" like a mere newspaper (again, a fearful source of bad reading habits to Protestant clergy). The best novel will "[have] so arranged itself as to owe the flower of its effect to the act and process of apprehension that so beautifully asks most from it" (35-36).

James articulates his novelist-as-arranger principle at length in his prefaces. In his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, the last of the series, James proposes that the "most exquisite of all good causes" for the novelist is "the appeal to variety, the appeal to incalculability, the appeal to a high refinement and a handsome wholeness of effect" (21). He is thinking here of the "endless interest... of the compositional contribution" made by his narrative deputies, Maggie and Amerigo. It is worth noting that this series of appeals seems more aligned with the a kind of design sensibility work of ordering things than with the work of accurate representation. The "most exquisite of all good causes" for the novel to pursue is not verisimilitude. What James recognized—much as Stoddard did—is that verisimilitude (in particular, the sort of psychic truth that generates the soul-searching depth that Julian Hawthorne found in *The Morgesons*) might come through approaching characterization, and novel-writing more broadly, as arrangement. And the further step that James articulated is that the novel might attain the status of high art by adopting arrangement, even more than representation, as its principle. Brown notes of Mrs. Gereth, whom Fleda credits with high powers of arrangement, that like James her "accomplishment lies not in the act of acquisition but in the art of composition";

¹²¹ Yet James says that good fiction should be able to be read aloud, a claim that reminds us again in turn of the making-public of reading that the exhibitional style aims for. James's recommendation of "the *viva-voce* treatment" may seem fanciful until we recall that he was, in fact, dictating his novels by the time he wrote *The Golden Bowl*.

for Brown, “by emphasizing design over detail, the novel itself, as a manifestation of taste, participates in the aspirations outlined by the decorating discourse of the day, which ultimately advocated transforming the physical into something, say, metaphysical” (148). This is another way of viewing the shift from Christian depth-assurances to secular ones that I have tracked across this study. Proper arranging now seems poised to achieve the numinous and, if it cannot grant transcendent knowledge in the hereafter, at least it can claim to provide soul-enrichment here on earth.

In *The Golden Bowl*, Brown notes, as we see in Maggie’s recollections, “the scenes of the drama become images and objects that the participant spectator can rearrange” (166). And James himself arranges the novel for a “handsome wholeness of effect” through carefully manipulating the perspective through which his tales are told to produce a specially focused arrangement of characters. His works, therefore, are not “my own impersonal account of the affair in hand, but... my account of somebody’s impression of it,” arranged so that he gets double-value from the point of view coming through the “impersonal author’s concrete deputy or delegate, a convenient substitute or apologist for the creative power otherwise so veiled and disembodied” (19). In *The Golden Bowl* he aims to show us Maggie through Amerigo’s eyes, and then Amerigo through Maggie’s, “the advantage thus being that these attributions of experience display the sentient subjects themselves at the same time and by the same stroke with the nearest possible approach to a desirable vividness” (21). By serving as point of view Maggie “duplicates... her value and becomes a compositional resource.” Her “interest, *her* exhibitional charm, determines the view” to “the same persons and things” that we had seen earlier through Amerigo’s eyes (22). James’s arrangement of his sentient subjects is calculated for maximum value; he has only a few of them, but he makes them work double-time. They offer us their own display, and they offer us too a different angle on the display of the others. They are there both to see and to be seen. That is, we see them in the act of seeing others, and in the act of seeing others, they are most fully on display themselves. This emphasis on looking and being looked at draws much from the later-nineteenth-century culture of collection and exhibition, decoration and display.

Making arrangement a principle for the novel as high art is precisely what James is doing here. Good taste, as it was in the gospel of Charles Eastlake, is not just a pleasant attribute but much more: for the “poet,” James says, taste is “his active sense of life,” “a blessed comprehensive name for many of the things deepest in us” (30). Considering the process of writing the prefaces for his New York Edition, at the end of the line with the *Golden Bowl* preface, James recalls how the process of gathering and revising his own novels renders them a collection that needs sprucing up if not rearranging. As Richard Brodhead writes, “the labor of style in James’s late novels is of a piece with the labor of selection, revision, and prefacing that made the New York Edition”—which was itself an effort to “give his writing the retroactive character of a completed *oeuvre*,” of a collection (171). In that spirit James fondly enumerates the flaws and highlights of different pieces: *The American*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The Princess Cassamassima*. And like any collector he views them as a collection not of inanimate objects but of persons. His works now strike him first as an “uncanny brood” whose old clothes have to be “twitched” into place after so many years gone by, then as small children who need their faces washed in the nursery before being brought down to the drawing-room (27, 28). But even more it is the general sense of his works as collected things—“the finer appeal of accumulated ‘good stuff’ and... the interest of taking it in hand” (31)—that has made revision an exciting process for James. The “good stuff” actually “sit[s] up, in its myriad forms,” and beseeches James to “‘believe in us and then you’ll see!’” What makes revision “a living affair” is the unpredictability of how the good stuff responds to his look and his touch now, its capacity to catch him off guard: there are “arrests and surprises, emotions alike of disappointment and elation” (31). The emotional circuit running from collector to collectible and back again is thus complete.

Hawthorne and Melville, I have said, imagine the novel through the metaphor of painting, specifically portrait-painting. How is the novelist-as-arranger practically different? James thinks more obsessively about arrangement and composition whereas the earlier authors think more obsessively about capturing the truth of a character. This makes the standard of judgment not accuracy (which is the real Zenobia? is Isabel really Pierre's half-sister?) but effect. Those parenthetical questions bedeviled Miles and Pierre, and it was accuracy that they insisted on having to judge the merits of the love-object. James's preface tells us that the most vivid story comes through the eyes of a beholder, not an actor. We have seen that among his characters, the ability to step back and to see one's beloved as a presentation of sorts—to see the beloved as he or she appears to others—is a crucial aid to rightly beholding the other and to loving him or her. For James love, even if it is of the very deepest, must sooner or later be routed through the mode of display and collection. Objectifying has its uses—uses which may not be dissociable from its abuses. Bob might see Fanny as a circus performer, all to the good; that Maggie and Adam seem to view Charlotte and Amerigo as human furniture seems rather more to the bad. But such objectification achieves a standing-back position that allows for clearer sight of the other. Yet this is not, I want to argue now, equivalent to the sort of alterity and difference we saw privileged in the readings of poststructuralist narrative ethics. Miller's reading of the preface of *The Golden Bowl* bears down most on its final assertion—James's claim that “to ‘put’ things is very exactly and responsibly and interminably to do them” (36). From this claim Miller makes the case that words are unruly to the point of overmastering those who use them, and that readers are to be held infinitely accountable for their reading. But the theme of arrangement that runs throughout the preface is always linked to “pleasure” and to “fun.” James, rereading his own works, extends “an earnest invitation to the reader to dream again in my company.” And if he feels the kind of boundless responsibility as author that Miller claims for the reader—if, as James writes, “There is then absolutely no release to [the author's] pledged honour on the question of repaying [the reader's] confidence”—then it is worth pointing out that James immediately follows by saying that “The ideally handsome way is for [the author] to multiply in any given connexion all the possible sources of entertainment—or, more grossly expressing it again, to intensify his whole chance of pleasure” (34-35). This is one difference from the kind of difference that Miller and Attridge and Butler promote as ethical: not knowing, not penetrating the other, still makes for a happy love story, at least as happy as Fanny and Bob's marriage.

How does this make for a stronger narrative ethics? Insofar as narrative ethics makes its stand on a certain model of reading—reading as falling in love—it will be better off if it can recognize this different model of love between manifest selves. Early on I made the point that whereas narrative ethics works to humanize the text-as-other, it tends to blame new historicist methods for evacuating authorial agency from the text, for treating the text as a mere thing. In this final section, we have seen how tenuous the distinction between person and thing is, both in James's work and in the broader cultural discourse of collecting and decorating. Moreover I hope I have showed how, for James, love can be felt for persons, however objectified and arranged they may be—and indeed it seems that objectifying and arranging persons as if they were things is necessary (if not sufficient) to love them in any enduring way. This insight allows us to revisit the analogy of reading and falling in love and to say that falling in love requires seeing the beloved not as an isolated consciousness, as narrative ethics is wont to do with any given text-as-other, but as one piece of a collection. And, as I have tried to demonstrate in this study, the clue to what that collection might be—the answer to the question of what counts as “historical context,” and where the reader should start and stop looking at that context—will be in the text itself, in its most prominent thematic interests.

Heather Love has recently provided a useful summary of the trouble with narrative ethics readings—one that broadens the trouble beyond narrative ethics to any literary critical method that

relies on close reading. She locates a (for her, troublesome) confluence of ethics and intimacy in close reading itself. As I have suggested across the previous chapters, narrative ethics begins in a model of Christian hermeneutics, one that aims to read deeply to make contact with the author—God, if one is reading the Bible. And I have tracked how reading from the mid-nineteenth century shifts from a sacred to a secular practice not by giving up on depth, but by shifting its claims for “depth” from heaven to good taste, from the evangelical sentimental novel to the romance of art. Love locates this process as it continues after the nineteenth century: “If the encounter with a divine and inscrutable message was progressively secularized in the twentieth century, the opacity and ineffability of the text and the ethical demand to attend to it remain central to practices of literary interpretation today” (371). To get around the intimacy and ethics talk of close reading, Love turns to sociological models for a kind of “close attention” that aims for “description rather than interpretation” (375)—“close but not deep” reading. These sociologists (she names Bruno Latour and Ervin Goffman) are worth the emulation of literary critics for their “refusal of the distinction between human and nonhuman actors” (375) and for their focus on description rather than interpretation. They are also valuable models for novel-reading because their work focuses on networks rather than on individuals.¹²² Her case study is *Beloved*, and her “flat reading” of the novel “suggests the possibility of an alternative ethics, one grounded in documentation and description rather than empathy and witness” (375). Here is where that reading ends up: ultimately the novel is less deep and humanistic—less humanitarian—than its teachers have thought: “Less a witness than a documentarian, Morrison conveys the horrors of slavery not by voicing an explicit protest against it but by describing its effects”—she is “registering the losses of history rather than repairing them”; seeing that aspect of Morrison’s work is the payoff of Love’s variety surface reading (386).

Interestingly, Love herself, for all that she admires the way such sociologists can avoid humanistic talk and stick to the facts—it is a plus for her that Goffman’s accounts of “the small worlds of face-to-face interactions... are flat: complex and variegated, but not rich, warm, or deep” (378)—also advocates through them the task of listening to the vocabulary of the other, not imposing a judgment or a language on that vocabulary, attending to individual quirks, appreciating what makes them resist your urge to appropriate. These are all the values that narrative ethicists, whether they imagine a happy or unhappy outcome to the reader-text love story, themselves have long espoused. What matters here for my argument is that Love’s terms show how reading methods that do see the text-as-other as flat, not fully human, and networked can retain an ethical charge. However we read, we are liable to fall in love insofar as we feel the text as a more or less responsive personality; but there are different kinds of love, even in Henry James, and narrative ethics would do well to recognize the value of a love that gets by without depth.

¹²² In particular, “Latour’s embrace of flatness”—he says sociology has been too quick to ascribe depth “to flat interactions”—“is an argument for the conceptual significance of networks; it is also an argument against phenomenology”—that is, putting emphasis on face-to-face encounters, “microsociology,” which for Latour rests on “a belief in the authenticity and presence of small-scale social encounters” (378).

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