

STORYTELLING AND SELF-FORMATION
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS

A Dissertation

by

SOOK KYONG HYUN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2008

Major Subject: English

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling and Self-Formation

in Nineteenth-Century British Novels. (August 2008)

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This dissertation aims to examine the various ways in which three Victorian novels, such as Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White (1860), Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848), Charlotte Brontë's Villette (1853), address the relationship between storytelling and self-formation, showing that a subject formulates a sense of self by storytelling.

The constructed nature of self and storytelling in Collins's The Woman in White shows that narrative is a significant way of attributing meaning in our lives and that constructing stories about self is connected to the construction of self, illustrating that storytelling is a form of self-formation. Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall exemplifies Brontë's configuration of the relational and contextual aspect of storytelling and self-formation in her belief that self is formed not merely through the story he/she tells but through the triangular relationship of the storyteller, the story, and the reader. This novel proves that even though the

writer's role in constructing his/her self-concept through his/her narrative is important, the narrator's triangular relationship with the reader and the text is also a significant component in his/her self-formation. Charlotte Brontë's Villette is concerned with unnarration, in which the narrative does not say, and it shows that the unnarrated elements provide useful resource for the display of the narrator's self. For Charlotte Brontë, unnarration is part of the narrative configuration that contributes to constructing and presenting the storyteller's self-formation.

These three novels illuminate that narrative is more than linguistic activities of the symbolic representation of the world, and that it cannot be fully conceived without taking into consideration the storyteller's experience and thoughts of the world.

To my parents

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: STORYTELLING AND SELF-FORMATION
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS

Storytelling is a basic human activity. We tell stories everyday and understand our own lives as stories. It is a fundamental means through which human life comes into conscious existence. Fredric Jameson asserts that the “all-informing process of narrative” is “the central function or instance of the human mind” (13). Jean-François Lyotard refers to narrative as “the quintessential form of customary knowledge” (19). Jameson and Lyotard agree on the fact that narrative is deeply rooted in our lives, that making narrative is an inherent, universal human trait. Roland Barthes makes clear the central role of narrative in our life: “narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. . . . narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself” (“Introduction” 79). Barthes elucidates the pervasive, ubiquitous aspect of narrative. Implied in his connection of narrative with life is the idea that narrative is what constitutes us as human beings. In a similar vein, Richard Kearney argues that telling and listening to stories are a major part of what

This dissertation follows the style and format suggested by the second edition of MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (1998).

they mean to be human, and that stories are intimately bound up with our lives: “there is an abiding recognition that existence is inherently storied. Life is pregnant with stories. It is a nascent plot in search of a midwife” (On Stories 130). And Peter Brooks similarly asserts that “[o]ur very definition as human beings is very much bound up with the stories we tell about our own lives and the world in which we live” (19). The ability to recount our lives and to live our lives as accountable is what lifts us above pure animal existence.

As a fundamental tool that defines us as human beings, narrative links us to the world as it constructs our sense of reality. Without narrative intervention, we cannot understand the world around us. Here, it is necessary to clarify my view of the relationship between narrative and the world it represents. My position is that narrative is linked to the world but the narrative representation of the world is not based on a resemblance between a symbolic structure of the text and the world, or between symbol and object. Rather, the relationship between narrative and the world is established through the narrating agent’s understanding and idea of the world. The relationship between the text and the world cannot be comprehended without the agent’s act of bridging the gap between the two. My approach echoes Ferdinand de Saussure’s conception of signification, which elucidates the relationship between the signifier (the word) and the signified (the idea). His basic argument is that the signifier does not directly refer to the referent but is mediated through the signified. It is the relationship between the word and the idea that

meaning is created (65-67). The significance of Saussure's theory of signification for the notion of representation is that the text does not directly refer to the world but is related to the world through the agent that holds the idea and uses the text. What matters in the meaning-making process is not the relationship between narrative and the world but that between the narrative and the agent who holds ideas about the world.

Before proceeding further, I want to briefly clarify my position on the relationship of the narrative, the storyteller, and the world in terms of the poststructuralists' notion of language and representation. For the last several decades, the poststructuralist theory has opened up a new way of thinking about our relation to reality and it has remained a dominant paradigm in a number of disciplines in the academy, such as feminist and gender studies, history, discourse analysis, linguistics, and psychology, to name a few. While a considerable scholarly attention has been given to this theoretical framework, poststructuralism nevertheless leaves room for reconsideration. I want to address briefly the poststructuralist thought on the notion of language and the world in connection with my discussion of the narrative representation of the world.

My argument of the possibility of a link between narrative and the world through the ideas held by the agent diverts from the poststructuralists' notion of representation in two ways. First, it counters the poststructuralists' proposition that language exists in isolation from the world. Barthes claims that "[w]hat takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally *nothing*; 'what

happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, and unceasing celebration of its coming" ("Introduction" 124). His view is based on the assumption that language is a closed system that does not offer any access to the world. As implied in Jacques Derrida's widely quoted statement that "there is nothing outside the text," what the text refers to is not the outside reality but another text. The text does not refer to the thing-in-itself, but more texts, more writing, "supplements, substitutive significations" (Of Grammatology 158, 159). Also implied in his term "différance" is his understanding that the text does not signify the referent, or the world, but another signifier, constantly deferring its meaning by producing endless chain of signifiers" ("Structure" 280). The emphasis on language as a system of signifiers creates the irreducible gap between language and the world. For the poststructuralists, there is no "right" word to refer to what we mean, for language is insufficient and what is to be signified is ever elusive. Contra the poststructuralists' ignorance of the text's link to the world, I contend that although the text does not directly represent the world, it is produced in relation to the world. While the poststructuralists emphasize the irreducible gap between reality and language, I hold that there exists a possibility of the link between the two. As Jerome Bruner argues in "The Narrative Construction of Reality," although "narrative construction can only achieve 'verisimilitude,'" it is still "a version of reality" (4).

And second, my position is different from that of the poststructuralist in that I take into account human agency as a central role in the process of representation.

What links the text and the world is the producer of the text who at the same time thinks, feels, and experiences the world. Within the poststructuralist conceptual structure, the agent is considered, to borrow Christopher Norris's phrase, as a mere "place filler, a recipient of . . . directives which issue from some other, heteronomous source of authority, and which cannot be conceived as in any way belonging to a project of autonomous self creation" (33). As implied in Judith Butler's emphasis on the "performativity," the subjectivity is an illusory concept. According to Butler, "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming." What we perceive as identity is not the integral center of thought but only an illusive result of reiterative "performative" act (33). Butler ignores the individual's reason behind an act; rather, her focus of attention is on the act itself and the effect that is produced on the individual. The poststructuralist theory ignores the apparent resonances of inner thoughts and feelings which are real, full, and conscious enough to be felt as "self." It does not take into consideration the ways in which and the reasons why individuals come to act in certain ways. What matter to them are the workings of the text and its relationship to other texts, not the individual who produces the text. Barthes claims in his discussion of the author, or "the death of the author," "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality . . . to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs,' and not 'me'" ("Death" 143). The individual who composes the text is completely dismissed in the text's meaning-making process. What creates the text's

meaning is not a person but previous texts. As implied in Julia Kristeva's concept of "intertextuality," the text speaks to, responds to pre-existing texts while anticipating subsequent texts; in the process of a text's production, the author's role is minimized to the point of practical nonexistence. It is in this context that Kristeva writes, "[t]he notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity" (66).

If what matter are the textual workings that have nothing to do with the world, what do we make of ourselves who experience, think, and feel as we live in this world? Does the language that we use have no relation to our understanding of the world? And is it not us who use language to express our feelings and thoughts and to provide a meaning to the experience of our past? Contra poststructuralists' de-emphasis on the subjectivity of self, I contend that individuals actively engage in accounting for their understanding of the world and their selves. As Kearney succinctly points out, "even after deconstruction we must still suppose a human self who suffers and creates" (Strangers 188). Our sense of existence as human beings is not something to be disregarded for the sake of foregrounding the linguistic interactions that offer no access to the world. We live as active individuals who are historically and temporally extant and who actively participate in using language to express our experience in the world. We exist as agents that link the world to the text of our own making. Even Kristeva, in her relatively recent work, Pouvoirs et Limites de la Psychanalyse: Sens et Non-Sens de la Révolte (1996), reveals the changes in her view with regard to the concept of the text and language. She claims

that she intends to get “beyond the notion of *text*, to the elaboration of which I contributed with so many others and which has become a form of dogma in the best universities of France, not to mention the United States and other even more exotic places. I will attempt to introduce, instead, the notion of *experience* which includes the pleasure principle as well as the principle of rebirth of meaning for the other and which cannot be understood except on the horizon of revolt-experience” (qtd. in Davis 131-132). What is implied in this statement is her attempt to divert her focus away from the activity of the text towards the experience of the subject who constitutes the text and the meaning that is created in the process. Her earlier idea that “textual practice decenters the subject of a discourse (or meaning, of a structure)” gives way in her later works as the cognitive dimension comes to predominate (qtd. in Davis 132). She now views the text as an illustration of the storytelling subject’s “experience” of the world. Hence, stepping beyond the poststructuralist boundary that places an emphasis on the textual activities, I focus more on the subject and the relationship between the text and the world it seeks to represent in the belief that narrative is not a closed system because it consists not only of language but also of an agent who performs a narrative act. Narrative is linked to the world through the narrating subject’s view of the world; it is the representation of the agent’s thoughts of the world. The world cannot be understood without a narrative medium and this understanding cannot be done without the agent’s participation in the narrating process. Through the narrating

agent's act of selecting and organizing the events in a particular order so as to suggest some relationship between them, narrative renders our experience significant. The relationship between narrative and events is mediated through an individual who actively engages in putting together manifolds of events into a meaningful whole.

As it represents our ideas of the world, narrative allows for our experience to be given structure and meaning and, furthermore, provides a sense of who we are. It allows us to provide meaning to what we see, feel, and experience, and conceptualize our being in the world in a meaningful way. By telling the story of our lives, we have our selves felt, experienced, materialized, or confirmed. Simply put, our sense of self is constructed through narration. As Charles Taylor puts it, "[t]here is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language" (35). Or to borrow Alasdair MacIntyre's words, "any attempt to elucidate personal identity which separates it from narrative intelligibility and accountability is bound to fail" (218). Jerome Bruner similarly conceives of the interrelation of narrative and identity as he points out that "[i]t is only in the narrative mode that one can find an identity and find a place in one's culture" (Culture 121). According to him, narrative, constructed through our subjective understanding of the events, allows for an observation of "the dynamics of human intentions" and "how human actors (including ourselves) strive to do things over time" (Acts 11). Who we are depends on the story we tell about ourselves; this

narrative constitutes the essential form and feature of self-understanding or self-knowledge. In order to know who we are, we need to tell stories.

Conceiving of narrative as a mode of perception and cognition, Paul Ricoeur considers narrative as a product of the symbolic act of interpreting and giving meaningful structure to human reality. He suggests that thoughts and actions are not already narrative, but become meaningful through the act of emplotment. In the first volume of Time and Narrative, Ricoeur points out that the mediating process of narrative “configuration” provides a meaning and value to human experience that is yet pre-narrated or “prefigured” (54). And through emplotment, the act of putting together bits and pieces of fragmented experience and giving them a coherent plot, the “manifold of events” comes to form “the unity of one temporal whole” (66). For Ricoeur, the narrative produced through the imaginative process of emplotment does not transcribe the actuality of the events in an objective and factual way, but involves the process of configuration that results in “an unstable mixture of fabulation and actual experience” (Oneself 162). Here, Ricoeur takes into account the human agent’s incorporation of his/her own understanding of events in the process of narrative configuration. Ricoeur also takes into account the relationship between narrative and self, which he terms “narrative identity.” For him, to answer the question “Who am I?” is to tell the story of a life. He states that “[t]he self of self-knowledge is the fruit of an examined life . . . And an examined life is, in large

part, one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of the narratives” (Time 3: 247). By narrating our lives, we attain insights into who we are, where we are coming from and where we are heading.

This study pays particular attention to the relationship between narrative and the storytelling agents that produce their ideas of the world in a narrative form. Because narrative is not linked directly to the world but to the agent, an understanding of the narrative presupposes an understanding of the relationship between narrative and the storytelling agent. Regarding the storytelling agent as the medium of the relationship between narrative and the world, I argue that storytellers understand themselves by narrating their ideas of the world. Narrative, which is a product of the storytellers’ understandings of the world, allows for their purpose in their act of narration and further their self-understanding through the process of their own narration. Narrative is a means through which individuals come to make sense of their lives and selves. By structuring a subjective understanding of the world in the form of narrative, the storytellers understand who they are, where they are situated, and how they are related to others. Simply put, self-formation is a matter of telling stories.

The term “storytelling” implies that there is an act of telling involved and that there is an agent who tells the story. Narrative cannot be constituted unless there is a storytelling agent. Hence, my interest is directed towards the act of telling and the agent that tells the story. Also implied in the term is my approach to

narrative as a process rather than a finished text. I look at the process in which the storytelling agent formulates scattered and disconnected events into a coherent plot. Examining the process will provide insights into the ways the storyteller's act of narrativizing events is associated with the storyteller's formation of self.

For my discussion of storytelling and self-formation, I choose nineteenth century first-person novels in particular as they provide an extensive resource through which we are to examine the novelists' presentation of their narrating subjects' sense of discontinuities and their struggle towards finding a meaningful, coherent sense of self in the dynamic changes of the world. In the following chapters, I will discuss in detail different aspects and modes of storytelling as illustrated in such three nineteenth-century novels which employ the first-person narrative as Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White, Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Charlotte Brontë's Villette, and look into each novelist's understandings of and approaches to the ways in which storytelling is associated with the storyteller's self-formation.

The nineteenth century was a period of tremendous upheaval and change in England.¹ In the period of political upheavals, industrial revolution, socio-economic

¹ The first major change can be found in an unprecedented increase of population. As shown in the statistics provided by Donald Read, the population of England and Wales in 1851 had doubled since the start of the century, from 8.9 million to 17.9 million, only to double again by 1901 to 32.5 million (6, 214). The second big change has to do with the tremendous industrial development came with the use of new machines for manufacturing and communication. Thomas Henry Huxley wrote in 1887 that "[t]he most obvious and the most distinctive feature of the History of Civilisation, during the last fifty years, is the wonderful increase of industrial

changes, and class struggles, one of the contributions of the novel was its participation in the construction of individual identity through narrative. In fact, it seemed that while their world was in a constant flux, the Victorians' frame of mind did not fully correspond to the rapid social change. Between 1850 and 1851, according to Hugh Stowell, the age is still undergoing "fusion and transition. . . . Old formula, old opinions, hoary systems are being thrown into the smelting-pan; they are fusing—they must be cast anew: who can tell under what new shapes . . . they will come forth from the moulds" (qtd. in Houghton 9). Commercialism and capitalism, the growth of economy and population changed the world incredibly, and with such changes, people were forced to live out the gaps that emerged between old and new. When individuals were confronted with the changes and discontinuities of the world, the search for coherence and stability in the self became an urgent task. William Rathbone Greg comments on the Victorians' inability to live

production by the application of machinery, the improvement of old technical processes and the invention of new ones, accompanied by an even more remarkable development of old and new means of locomotion and intercommunication" (42). The development of the train, the steamship, the telegraph, and the typewriter along with the other technical astonishments of the period furthered the industrial growth and vast expansion of commerce. With the advent of these marvels, "[e]verything is near, everything is immediate—time, distance, and delay are abolished," to borrow Sydney Smith's phrase (qtd. in Pearson 292). The third contributing factor to the change is a rapid urbanization, which occurred in combination with the industrial development and the growth of population. The census provided by Read also reveals that more than half of the population of England and Wales lived in an urban environment in 1851 (214). The establishment of national railways and steamships, which changed people's accustomed notions of space and time, contributed to the rapid flow of population into the industrial city. It is understandable when William Rathbone Greg notes that "the most salient characteristic of life in this latter portion of the 19th century is its speed" (272). And lastly, the combined effects of expansion in manufacture, commerce and overseas trade, rapid growth and increased movement of population, and improvements in transport systems, led to a broadening of the middle classes that ranged from a clerk to the owner of company.

in accordance with their continuously evolving society. He notes that Victorians in general felt that they were living “without leisure and without pause . . . that we have no time to reflect where we have been and whither we intend to go . . . still less what is the value, and the purpose, and the price of what we have seen, and done, and visited” (268). As a response to the Victorians’ search for a sense of stability and coherence in the complex cultural situation, the major Victorian novelists brought the chaotic and disordered stuff of the world into their texts and interpreted and made sense out of it. Indeed, it is difficult to generalize in any simple terms as to the ways the Victorian novel responds to the social changes and the fictional modes and formal changes it employs.² However, it may be conceived that whatever their genres and forms may be, these novels respond, in one way or another, to the upheaval of the time and to the Victorians’ struggle to fit in as they explore, analyze and describe the changes of the world and give a certain shape and meaning to them in their own way. As Wheeler puts it, “the Victorian novel reflects the energy and vitality of an age which witnessed more rapid and disturbing social and intellectual change than any other period before or since” (11). Through imaginative accounts of various characters and events that may be encountered in everyday life

² In terms of genre and subject matter, the types of novel range from historical novels (William Thackeray’s The History of Henry Esmond, The Virginians), to industrial, or so-called “Condition of England” novels (Elizabeth Gaskell’s Mary Barton, Cranford, North and South), bildungsromane (Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, Charles Dickens’s David Copperfield, George Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss), domestic realist novels (Anthony Trollope’s Barchester Towers, George Eliot’s Middlemarch), and sensation novels (Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White, Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s Lady Audley’s Secret).

and by giving a shape and meaning to the chaotic and unprecedented way of life, Victorian novelists brought the chaotic world before the readers' eyes and helped them deal with the new ways of the world. And as implied in Robert Louis Stevenson's statement that "[l]ife is monstrous, infinite, illogical, abrupt and poignant; a work of art, in comparison, is neat, finite, self-contained, rational," the novel, for the Victorians, promised underlying order and coherence as it represented the discontinuities and uncertainties of the world (213).

Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White, Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, and Charlotte Brontë's Villette particularly conceptualize and create discourses about making sense of self. Through their first-person narrators, the novelists provide insights into the ways individuals develop self-awareness by telling stories of their past. By means of storytelling, the narrators, as illustrated by the novels, grasp the tension between past and present, between the narrating self and the reading other, and within different aspects of one's self. I choose first-person novels as they provide a useful site for the study of the self and narration; the first-person novels allow for the examination of the events in the narrators'/heroes'/heroines's minds while disclosing an external series of events around them. Because the first-person narrative, unlike the novels that employ the voice of an omniscient narrator, invites the reader directly to the minds of the narrators/heroes/heroines with minimal authorial intervention, it offers a useful look into the narrators' relationship to the stories they narrate. The novels that I

examine employ the genres of autobiography (Villette), diary (The Woman in White and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall), personal letter (The Woman in White and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall), and testimony (The Woman in White), which allow for observation of the effect that the different forms of writing have on the ways to the storytellers' self-formation.

The use of first-person narrators in the novels I discuss present the individual's ignorance of life, his/her limitation, and his/her attempt to make sense of life and self by configuring his/her past in the form of narrative. These novels show the ways in which a storytelling self is realized by putting into words the remembrance of one's past, by narrating one's thoughts to the reading other, and by selectively telling what one knows. I will explore the novelists' varying approaches to self and storytelling illustrated through their narrators' telling of their pasts and their understandings of their selves in the process.

Chapter I explores Wilkie Collins's demonstration of the constructed nature of self and storytelling in The Woman in White. In The Woman in White, Collins has a number of first-person narrators recount their varying understandings of particular events. Through numerous narrators' formation of different stories of the same events, Collins foregrounds the idea that self-formation and storytelling is a matter of construction that leaves room for revision. Implied in his creation of multiple narratives is his view that different stories may be told through different points of view and in different circumstances and that storytellers' self-conceptions

may change according to the stories they create. He shows that while the storytellers form their selves through storytelling (as shown in Walter's and Marian's narratives), their identities may also be misconstrued (as exemplified in Mr. Gilmore's and Eliza's narratives) and/or reshaped (as seen in Count Fosco's and Mrs. Michelson's narratives) through their stories and/or stories told by others.

Chapter II examines Anne Brontë's presentation of the relational and contextual aspect of storytelling and self-formation illustrated in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. In this chapter, Donald Davidson's concept of "triangulation" is employed to help elucidate Brontë's approach that self is formed not merely through the story he/she tells but through the triangular relationship of the storyteller, the story, and the reader. In The Woman in White, Brontë provides three instances in which one single text (Helen Huntingdon's diary) is shared between different tellers and readers in different storytelling contexts. First, through Helen's diary-writing, Brontë demonstrates the ways in which a diarist develops a triangular self-understanding by simultaneously becoming a writer, a reader, and an object of her own writing. In the second triangular instance in which Helen gives her diary to Gilbert Markham, Brontë shows that the text becomes an interactive means through which the teller and the reader conceive of themselves in relation to each other. And in the third instance of triangulation in which Gilbert transcribes Helen's diary to Halford, his brother-in-law, Brontë presents the way the storyteller's conception of him/herself is associated with the text and the reader for

whom the story is narrated. These three narrative situations substantiate Brontë's idea that self-formation through storytelling is relational and contextual.

Chapter III, which deals with Charlotte Brontë's Villette, pays particular attention to what may be considered a flip side of narration – unnarration. In Villette, Brontë draws our attention to what the narrator, Lucy Snowe, intentionally unnarrates as she tells the story of her life, allowing for observation of the relationship of unnarration and self-formation. Lucy's instances of unnarration and its effect on self-formation illustrate Brontë's view that self is not only realized by what is told but also what is not told. Her use of unnarration in Villette may be classified into three categories: limited narration, delayed narration, and ambiguous narration. Through Lucy's omission, delay, and equivocation of the events that occur frequently throughout the narrative, Brontë illustrates unnarration as part of the narrative configuration that contributes to constructing and presenting the storyteller's understandings of his/her self.

By examining these novelists' varying illustrations of the relationship between storytelling and self-formation, I will show the following three things. First, self-formation is a matter of construction through storytelling; second, it is a matter of exchanging stories with others; and third, storytelling involves the storyteller's experience and thought that extend beyond the linguistic activities. Throughout this study, I am chiefly concerned with the storytelling agent, the activity of formulating the story in his/her own way, and the way it serves to form an understanding of the

world and of self. The purpose of emphasizing the storyteller's act of making his/her own story over the story itself is to show that the workings of narrative is not so much a textual phenomenon as a cognitive one. Narrative is more than linguistic activities of the symbolic representation of the world; it cannot be fully conceived without taking into consideration the storyteller's experience and thoughts of the world, for they are what bring the narrative into existence. By foregrounding the storyteller's activity of narration and the effect that it has on the storyteller's self-formation, this study seeks to make a step beyond the poststructuralist conception of textuality and towards the hermeneutic, cognitive discussion of narrative and self.

CHAPTER II
STORYTELLING AND SELF-FORMATION
IN WILKIE COLLINS'S THE WOMAN IN WHITE

Storytelling is a basic human activity. As we tell stories, we assemble and integrate bits and pieces of events of our lived experience in the form of a plot. Narrative is the means through which the raw materials of human actions and events are configured into a coherent and meaningful whole. As Terence Cave puts it, “[w]ithout the narrative structure [stories] impose, our experience of the world and of ourselves would not be intelligible” (112). By telling stories of lived experience, we come to develop a sense of our lives and our selves. Charles Taylor asserts that in order to have “a sense of who we are,” “we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going.” He further claims that we develop a sense of our lives in a narrative: “I understand my present action in the form of an ‘and then’” (47).

The storytelling subject constitutes a sense of self by telling the story of his/her past. By providing form and structure to the fragmentary and heterogenous experience and integrating them into a coherent narrative, which Paul Ricoeur terms as “emplotment,” the storyteller recognizes his/her being as an object of knowledge (65). And as implied in the title of his work, The Stories We Are, William Lowell Randall equates narrative and self. He asserts that we come into

being by narrativizing our life, that our life is “formed, revealed, and re-created by the exigencies of an unfolding ‘plot’” (93). Similarly, Marya Schechtman claims that “[t]he sense of one’s life as unfolding according to the logic of narrative is not just an idea we have, it is an organizing principle of our lives” (113).

Identity is a matter of telling stories; hence, narrative identity. The fact that self is formed through storytelling denotes that self is a matter of construction. When we tell stories, we are constructing our reality and our selves. As Stephen Crites states, “the self is a kind of aesthetic construct, recollected in and with the life of experience in narrative fashion” (162). The constructed nature of self and story leads to the idea that there is room for re-appropriation and re-arrangement of narrative and of self. Different stories may be told about the same events concerning the same person. They may be told by the same individual in different circumstances or in different period of time, or they may also be told by others with different points of view. As Randall argues, “[o]ur life, it turns out, is not one story but many, a plethora of stories in fact, both stories within us and stories we are, in turn, within” (185). Here, I foreground the constructed nature of self-formation and storytelling by taking into account not only the story an individual narrates but also the story others narrate in which the individual is included. Randall succinctly holds that “[i]t is clearly not just the stories I tell about myself that affect the shape and direction of my self-creation but the stories others tell about me as well” (44). For this particular discussion, Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White will be used as

a reference text as it provides various instances in which self is formed through storytelling. By having a number of narrators tell stories that intertwine with one another and sometimes contradict and contest one another, Collins allows for observation of how identity is a matter of telling stories about ourselves, but also of responding to and taking into account the stories of others which we are part of.

Collins's The Woman in White begins with Walter Hartright's unexpected encounter with a woman dressed in white whom he rescues from a group of pursuers. The following day, Walter starts his new job as a drawing master for two half sisters, Laura Fairlie and Marian. He soon falls in love with Laura who, by coincidence, closely resembles the mysterious "woman in white," later revealed as Anne Catherick. But although Laura loves Walter, she is already engaged to a baronet, Sir Percival Glyde, who is only interested in Laura's fortune. Sir Percival and his sinister friend Count Fosco devise an ingenious plot to deprive Laura of her fortune, and despite Marian's constant endeavor to prevent them from harming Laura, they succeed in securing her fortune by switching her identity with Anne's, who has died by then, and confining Laura to a mental asylum. However, Walter, who returns after three years of absence (during which he went on an expedition to Central America), eventually manages to restore her identity and her fortune.

In The Woman in White, Collins installs a number of narrators and has them tell a sequence of events from several different perspectives. He creates Walter as the primary narrator and compiler of documents, having him weave together a

number of voices in the narrative framework. In the preamble, which begins the novel, Walter briefly explains the rationale of the story and its structure. He states that pieces of documents are collected, organized, and presented in a manner analogous to the courtroom testimony: "As the Judge might once have heard it, the Reader shall hear it." Hence, instead of telling the story solely in his voice, he lets other witnesses present their stories "in its most direct and most intelligible aspect" (33). As the witness-characters recount the stories of the events pertaining to Laura, they locate themselves within the emplotted stories and make sense of how the events relate to them, how they participate in the events, and what it means for them to construct a meaningful narrative. That is, by telling what they saw and what they experienced pertaining to Laura, they come to construct a story about themselves. Collins presents a number of stories narrated by different narrators that all subsumed within one large plot: losing and regaining Laura's identity. By having the reader read one story against another, Collins illustrates the ways in which storytelling produces the storyteller's self and the ways in which the stories told by others allow room for the reappropriation of different aspects of an individual's self.

Creating different types of storytellers engaging themselves in different storytelling practices in The Woman in White, Collins shows how storytelling allows for the construction of the storytellers' selves and how their identities may be misconstrued and/or reshaped through their stories and/or stories told by others.

In order to discuss Collins's narrative strategy, six narratives in The Woman in White will be divided into three pairs in terms of the different ways in which the storytellers' selves are formed. The first section examines Walter's and Marian's stories to show how storytellers come into being by telling their stories. Their narratives show that self is a constant dynamic process of becoming through storytelling. In Walter's story (which constitutes two sets of narratives written three years apart), Walter's emotional and subjective voice in the first narrative is transformed into a mature and objective voice in the second narrative, which indicates the change in his self, and over time. Marian's story captures the contradictory and wavering nature of the everyday self through daily writing. The second section, through an analysis of the stories told by Mr. Gilmore (Laura's family lawyer) and Eliza Michelson (the housekeeper at Blackwater Park), investigates how self-narrating may be unreliable. Their stories illustrate that because storytelling is indeed a subjective act of selecting, patterning, and fitting events and characters into the story of their own making, it does not necessarily conform to what others think actually happened. The storytellers' sense of unreliability is recognized primarily by locating their stories in relation to other stories that recount the same events from different points of view. And the last section, through the stories of Count Fosco and Mrs. Catherick that retell the events told by others, looks to the ways in which re-forming one's self is associated with retelling the event from one's own perspective and also illustrates that narratives

may be revised and reinterpreted based on the storytellers' remembrance and intention. These narrators reformulate particular events for their own end and, in so doing, they attempt to reshape what they claim as "false" selves. Through these narratives, Collins points to the multiple, contending nature of narrative and the possible ways in which identities can be reshaped by retelling the events.

While the first section of this chapter focuses primarily on the direct relationship of self-formation and self-narration, the second and the third section pay particular attention to the self formed through multiple narratives that are told both by and about the self. The fact that a few of the narrators in the novel are either unreliable or manipulative can be fully recognized as their stories are read against other stories that relate the same events. Collins's The Woman in White presents the constructive nature of storytelling and identity. It illustrates that self-formation consists of both the stories we tell about ourselves and the stories told by others about ourselves and that identity is a matter of all the stories in which we are included.

Storytelling and Self-Formation: Walter's and Marian's Narratives

Walter's and Marian's stories show the process in which storytellers make sense of their selves by means of storytelling. The two stories differ in terms of the

time span that they cover, and the readers to whom and the purpose for which they are written. And the distinction allows us to look at how different storytelling processes and methods produce different ways of realizing the storyteller's sense of self. First, I examine Walter's narrative and then Marian's.

Walter's Narrative

Walter's narrative illustrates the ways in which a storyteller's self comes into being by telling stories of one's past. Walter's two narratives composed three years apart show the process in which Walter is transformed from an unstable and insecure person to a self-confident one who believes to possess a higher self-awareness. In the first part of his narrative, Walter is a helpless man with low self-esteem as he describes himself as being incapable physically, mentally, economically, and professionally. He says he was "out of health, out of spirits . . . out of money," and was unable to manage "[his] professional resources as carefully as usual" (34). Being completely unproductive, not having any manly sensibilities and being financially dependent on his mother and sister, Walter corresponds to the image of a stereo-typical middle-class Victorian woman. As Ann Gaylin states, his helplessness and the inability to support himself are equivalent to "that of a Victorian woman" (312). In fact, the description of his role in the family is the complete reverse of the ideal Victorian middle-class family in which the male figure

exercises absolute authority over the family members. With the help of his Italian friend, Pesca, who helps him find a short-term job as a drawing master, Walter finally manages to recover from his helpless and desperate situation. However, his recovery is only partial. Instructing the two young ladies with their drawings, he sees himself as no more than “a male version of female governess,” to borrow Ann Cvetkovich’s terms (28). Although Mr. Fairlie proposes that Walter be treated at Limmeridge House “on the footing of a gentleman,” Walter’s position in the house becomes so ambiguous that he even goes so far as to describe himself as a “harmless domestic animal” (43, 89). What we find towards the beginning of Walter’s narrative is a man who is unstable and unsure of himself.

Walter’s sense of instability and insecurity becomes prominent in his narration of the two moments of surprise: the moment of a sudden touch of an unidentified woman in a white dress and the moment when Walter notices the striking similarity between the woman in white and Laura. The following passage recounts the moment of his unexpected encounter with the woman in white, Anne Catherick, on the night before moving into Limmeridge House as a drawing master:

I had mechanically turned in this latter direction, and was strolling along the lonely high-road – idly wondering, I remember, what the Cumberland young ladies would look like – when, in one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of

a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me.

(47)

Here, Walter shows how he was susceptible to a sudden interruption as he makes it clear that when Anne touched him from behind, he was taken by surprise. He recounts that right before this moment, he was “completely absorbed in [his] own fanciful visions of Limmeridge House,” imagining “what the Cumberland young ladies would look like” (47). During this moment of private enjoyment, he was emotionally aroused with his wishful fantasies and imagination, and then suddenly, he sensed a light but rapid touch of a woman from behind. Notice how Walter delays disclosing the very fact of the light touch on his shoulder until the end of the sentence as a way to foreground the abruptness of the touch and his bewilderment. And through the use of concrete vocabulary, for example, “every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop,” he foregrounds his physical disconcertment that generates from his emotional vulnerability and an unstable state of mind.³

Walter’s sense of instability is also accentuated in his narration of the moment when he notices the striking similarity between Laura and Anne: “My eyes

³ Pertaining to this particular scene, D. A. Miller points out that Walter’s nervousness is “gendered.” Arguing that the feeling of sensation is essentially feminine, Miller emphasizes that Walter’s insufficient manliness stems from Anne’s nervous touch: “Released from – and with – the Woman, nervousness touches and enters the Man: Anne’s nervous gesture is at once sympathetically ‘caught’ in Walter’s nervous response to it” (152). I agree with Miller that “nervousness” is associated with the “feminine”; however, I would contend that it is Walter’s feminized feelings and emotions that get transformed into a sudden nervousness through Anne’s sudden and gentle touch, not Anne’s nervous touch transferred over to Walter’s body. It is not the touch itself but the unexpected interruption to his unstable mind that makes him nervous.

fixed upon the white gleam of her muslin gown and head-dress in the moonlight, and a sensation, for which I can find no name – a sensation that quickened my pulse, and raised a fluttering at my heart – began to steal over me” (85). He claims that on seeing Laura, he experienced the same sensation that he felt on his unexpected encounter with the woman in white on the night before coming to Limmeridge House, and the sensation brought back his memory of that encounter. And he explains that as he saw Anne transposed upon Laura, the same strong agitation at the moment of his unexpected encounter with Anne was immediately revived in his nervous body that reflects his emotional vulnerability. Through the similar tone and the concrete description of his emotion, Walter again reveals himself as a man of nervous sensitivity and emotional vulnerability.

Walter’s wavering sense of self is also found in his narration of his first meeting with Marian at Limmeridge House. On first seeing Marian from a distance, Walter assumes the powerful position of a gazer. But as he begins communicating with Marian, he becomes a passive and submissive man under Marian’s dominance. As illustrated in his description of Marian, Walter exerts the typically masculine power of the gazer, critiquing and analyzing her as a sexual and passive object.⁴ At

⁴ The concept of “gaze” originates from Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” In the article, Mulvey examines the conventional narrative films and regards the gaze as a condition of the asymmetry of power. She asserts that in patriarchal society, “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (27). In traditional films, men are presented as active controlling subjects, whereas women are treated as passive objects of desire for men in both the story and in the audience. Women are not allowed to be positioned by

first, Marian's beautiful figure seen from a distance catches his eye, and he continues to enjoy "the rare beauty of her form." He then slowly scans through her body: "Her figure was tall, yet not too tall; comely and well-developed, yet not fat . . . her waist, perfection in the eyes of a man, for it occupied its natural place, it filled out its natural circle, it was visibly and delightfully undeformed by stays." He admires her natural body and her elegant movement so much that it sets him "in flutter of expectation to see her face clearly," and he strongly believes that her facial features will impress him as much (58). Walter continues to exert his role as a gazer as Marian approaches him:

The easy elegance of every movement of her limbs and body as soon as she began to advance from the far end of the room, set me in a flutter of expectation to see her face clearly. She left the window – and I said to myself, The lady is dark. She moved forward a few steps – and I said to myself, The lady is young. She approached nearer – and

desiring sexual subjects in their own right but are objectified in relation to the "controlling male gaze" (33). It is in this context that Mulvey coins the term "the male gaze." Adding to Mulvey's concept of "male gaze," Jonathan Schroeder asserts that "Film has been called an instrument of the male gaze, producing representations of women, the good life, and sexual fantasy from a male point of view" (208). However, Mulvey's concept of "the male gaze" has later been regarded as essentialist. As implied in the title, "Is the Gaze Male?" E. Ann Kaplan points out that the gaze can be exercised by both male and female subjects (23-35). Teresa de Lauretis asserts that a female spectator is always engaged in a "double-identification" with both the passive and active subject positions (134). And stepping beyond the male/female dichotomy, Steve Neale challenges the "heterosexual" tendency of the cinematic tradition. He argues that "in a heterosexual and patriarchal society the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look: that look must be motivated, its erotic component repressed (281). For him, male is not always the controller of the gaze.

I said to myself (with a sense of surprise which words fail me to express), The lady is ugly! (58)

In this passage, Walter gives a detailed account of Marian's looks and movements by means of description and narrative as a way to recount his change of thought in accordance with Marian's approach.⁵ His description of Marian changes from "dark" to "young" to "ugly!" as she comes closer to him. And once Marian approaches to the point where Walter can clearly see her face, he realizes that his wild imagination quails in the face of the reality and that his position as a gazer only generates an unexpected surprise.⁶

With the tone of bewildered surprise, Walter continues to describe her "ugly" face. He no longer comments on the graceful, feminine, and perfect shape of her "natural" body, and his attention is concentrated all on her unconventional, masculine, and thereby "ugly" facial features:

The lady's complexion was almost swarthy, and the dark down on her upper lip was almost a moustache. She had a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal-black hair, growing unusually low down on her forehead. Her expression – bright, frank, and intelligent – appeared,

⁵ In *Coming to Terms*, Seymour Chatman argues that when description and narrative are "fused," "one comes in to assist the other" (29-30). In Walter's description of Marian, narrative operates "at the service of" description, to borrow Chatman's phrase (21).

⁶ As for this particular scene, Valerie Pedlar points out that the combination of Marian's movement and Walter's reactions that results in an "anticlimax, or bathos" can be seen as Collins's way of baffling the conventions of representing women (75).

while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine attractions of gentleness and pliability, without which the beauty of the handsomest woman alive is beauty incomplete. (58-59)

Here, “the rare beauty” of Marian’s bodily figure is completely shadowed by her “ugly” face. For Walter, Marian’s face, unlike her body, lacks any feminine qualities. What he sees is, as Elana Gomel and Stephen Weninger put it, an ambiguous “combination of masculinity and femininity” – “she is female but not feminine, alluring but not beautiful, masculine but not male” (33, 34). Or to borrow Susan Baleé’s term, Marian, seen through the Walter’s eyes, is “shockingly androgynous” (202). Her complexion is “swarthy,” and her upper lip looks almost like “a moustache.” She also has “a large, firm, masculine mouth and jaw; prominent, piercing, resolute brown eyes; and thick, coal-black hair.” All of these qualities negate what Walter expects in a feminine beauty. What Walter sees in her are those elements that are stereotypically male. He finds in her the discordant cohabitation of masculinity and femininity. Or as D. A. Miller asserts, her sexuality “cannot be reduced to either term of a phallic binarism” (179). The unexpected outcome poses a challenge to Walter’s position as a gazer as he remarks that he feels a kind of “helpless discomfort” in the “anomalies and contradictions” that he sees in Marian (59). Furthermore, as Marian looks back at him with piercing eyes, Walter shifts from a gazing subject to an object of Marian’s gaze.

As Marian initiates the conversation, Walter immediately drops his role as a gazer, which is reflected by the way he hands his narrative power over to her by providing abundant textual space for Marian to speak directly and uninterrupted in the form of speech. He becomes a subordinate and passive transcriber of Marian's speech, not just because the conversation was soon dominated by Marian, but also because he feels the discomfort and uneasiness that this determined and resolute woman provokes in him. In stark contrast to his earlier description of Marian, where he voices his opinions of her bodily appearance with unwavering confidence, he shifts into merely transcribing her speech. This incident in which he turns from a powerful gazer into a submissive transcriber substantiates Walter's sense of instability who is unsure of himself and who has yet to possess a fuller awareness of himself.

However, in his second narrative, as if to prove his sense of maturity, Walter assumes a completely transformed persona. Returning to the narrating scene as a more grown-up man after the three-year long adventure in Central America (as he claims in his own testimony), he performs his narrative authority by thrusting Marian into a marginal position, suppressing her power to speak:

My position is defined – my motives are acknowledged. The story of Marian and the story of Laura must come next.

I shall relate both narratives, not in the words (often interrupted, often inevitably confused) of the speakers themselves, but in the

words of the brief, plain, studiously simple abstract which I committed to writing for my own guidance, and for the guidance of my legal adviser. So the tangled web will be most speedily and most intelligibly unrolled. (435)

As illustrated in the above passage, Walter's voice is significantly altered to being rational and dispassionate, and his emotional tone is now nowhere to be seen. The change in his narrative mode reflects his desire to replace his previous image as an immature, unstable, sensitive drawing master with a more mature, stable, objective and authoritative guardian. He reappears on the scene not as Marian and Laura's drawing master, but as their brother, their source of living, and their voice. His position in relation to Marian and Laura has shifted considerably as he now assumes the role of the author of their lives and their lost identities. Here, the transformed self that Walter displays in relation to what he calls his "sisters" puts him in the position of an authoritative storyteller, relating the story in the voice of objectivity and reason (433). He refuses to let other characters speak directly in dialogue in this particular section of the narrative for fear that they might "interrupt" and "confuse" his version of the story. Instead of having others speak, he chooses to document briefly but informatively the crucial events that occurred in his absence in the form of narration, or what he calls the "explanatory narrative" (445). As a way to substantiate his status as a more authoritative and reliable narrator, he suppresses the unnecessary details that might distract the flow of what

he deems “factual” reportage and mainly recounts what, when, why, and how particular events happened as they did in a formal, factual, objective, and impartial voice:

On Lady Glyde’s departure from her husband’s house, the fact of that departure, and the necessary statement of the circumstances under which it had taken place, were communicated to Miss Halcombe by the housekeeper. It was not till some days afterwards (how many days exactly, Mrs. Michelson, in the absence of any written memorandum on the subject, could not undertake to say) that a letter arrived from Madame Fosco announcing Lady Glyde’s sudden death in Count Fosco’s house. The letter avoided mentioning dates, and left it to Mrs. Michelson’s discretion to break the news at once to Miss Halcombe, or to defer doing so until that lady’s health should be more firmly established. (436)

The above passage represents the language and the tone that Walter implements throughout the second section of his narrative. In sharp contrast to his earlier narrative that is full of subjective opinions and emotional expressions, this passage is recorded in a very dry and neutral tone. And the sentences are imitative of legal writing as they are structured with heavy modifiers, agentless passives, and nominalizations.

What is necessary to note here, however, is Walter's excessive use of impartial, neutral tone and a passive voice, which seems to obscure his personality. The new voice and style that Walter employs, as illustrated in the passage above, do not seem to reflect the mature and responsible self that he attempts to show but to conceal himself behind the veil of neutrality. For example, phrases such as "Lady Glyde's departure," "the fact of that departure," "the necessary statement of the circumstances," "Lady Glyde's sudden death," and "Mrs. Michelson's discretion" are overly and unnecessarily nominalized. As in the case of these phrasings, nominalizations often hide the real action in the sentence, creating wordy and cumbersome sentence structure. In addition, the use of passive voice, which also appears frequently in this section of his narrative, conceals the actor; what is emphasized is only the thing acted upon, thereby making the sentence less energetic. Since passive voice creates an objective and detached tone, making it sound impersonal and neutral, what Walter seems to do is in fact effacing his self. Even when the sentences are not constructed in a passive voice, the agents still remain ambiguous: "the letter avoided mentioning dates" ("Who" avoids mentioning dates in the letter?). Excessive use of this structure makes the sentences abstract, eventually causing ambiguity and confusion.

However, in the second part of Walter's narrative, as illustrated in the passage above, Collins seems to take into account another aspect of the self that the writing itself does seem to reflect fully. That is, through the manner in which Walter

presents himself by means of narration, Collins illustrates how the narrative's apparent lack of personality does not efface the storytelling subject but reflects the storyteller's conscious undue desire to accentuate his growth. That is, Walter's strategic use of impartial language underscores his conscious endeavor to distance himself from his old self and to prove his change and gain public acknowledgement of his growth.

Through Walter's two separate narratives that differ in tone and style, Collins expands our understanding of the relationship between storytelling and self. First, he shows how the storyteller's self is reflected in the way the story is narrated, that language serves as a vehicle through which a storyteller's self-understanding comes into actual realization. As shown in the first narrative, Walter's sense of weakness and immaturity is presented through the emotional and unstable tone of language. His constant shift of tone indicates his sense of instability and insecurity. Second, Collins also illustrates the ways in which the narrative is produced out of the storyteller's conscious attempt to present himself in the way that he desires to be seen. In the second narrative, Walter's excessive use of neutral and detached tone and style at first appears to efface himself, but, in fact, it is reflective of the storyteller's conscious attempt to distinguish himself from the old, immature self and to substantiate his growth over the three years' of absence.

Marian's Narrative

If Walter's story demonstrates the changes in the formation of self over the period of years, Marian's story stresses the formation of self in the everyday life. By having Marian's story narrated in the form of diary, Collins shows how a diarist continuously redefine and reshape one's self through daily and private writing. While Marian's diary is modified and recontextualized within Walter's narrative framework, it still provides a lens through which to look into the daily changes of the diarist's self.

As a genre, the diary defies traditional closure or the structural constraint of narrative form. It is by nature open-ended and unfinished. Focusing on the immediate present, it lacks the conventional plotting of linearity and coherence, but is rather "cyclical, repetitive and cumulative," to borrow Rebecca Hogan's terms (98). It is constructed by association rather than by logical connection, and by multiple fragments rather than by spatio-temporally bounded unity. Unlike other forms of narrative that configures the diversity of human actions into a whole through the act of emplotment, the diary constantly revises and reshapes the diarist's thoughts and perceptions. As Suzanne L. Bunkers aptly affirms, the diary illustrates "life as *process*, not *product*" ("Reading" 15). Illustrating the constantly shifting self, or "selves," as Felicity A. Nussbaum rightly terms it, Marian's diary

confirms the notion that defining a self is a matter of acknowledging one's inner struggles and change of thoughts on a daily basis (135).

Let me examine in particular the moments in Marian's diary that reveal the constant shift between her logical and emotional self, and her feminine and masculine self. Marian's perpetual struggle between her logical and emotional self is found in her narration of Sir Percival:

I find myself always referring to Sir Percival in disparaging terms. In the turn affairs have now taken, I must and will root out my prejudice against him. I cannot think how it first got into my mind. It certainly never existed in former times.

Is it Laura's reluctance to become his wife that has set me against him? Have Hartright's perfectly intelligible prejudice infected me without my suspecting their influence? Does that letter of Anne Catherick's still leave a lurking distrust in my mind, in spite of Sir Percival's explanation, and of the proof in my possession of the truth of it? I cannot account for the state of my own feelings; the only thing I am certain of is, that it is my duty – doubly my duty now – not to wrong Sir Percival by unjustly distrusting him. If it has got to be a habit with me always to write of him in the same unfavourable manner, I must and will break myself of this unworthy tendency, even though the effort should force me to close the pages of my

journal till the marriage is over! I am seriously dissatisfied with myself – I will write no more today. (208)

Here, Marian wavers between emotional engagement and rational judgment. On the one hand, she refuses to acknowledge Sir Percival as Laura's future husband, for she strongly suspects that he is untrustworthy and discreditable. Her prejudice against him makes her dislike and distrust him all the more. On the other hand, she tries rationally to examine her feelings, and analytically to question herself about what it could be that made her to write about him in such an "unfavorable manner." She asks herself whether it is "Laura's reluctance to become his wife," "Hartright's perfectly intelligible prejudice," or "the letter of Anne Catherick's" that causes her to distrust Sir Percival. Although her thoughts are put in the form of a question, the specificity and the breath of the question reflects her analytical ability to monitor her thoughts. Marian also seems to take into account that her unaccountable hostility towards Sir Percival do not comply with the public display of herself as a rational subject. Thus, she thinks that although she does not want to approve of him for the reasons that are yet unexplainable, it is her "duty" not to mistrust him without sufficient logical ground. She suppresses the emotional side by foregrounding her logical and reasonable side that accounts for her thoughts and actions and that considers all the possible causes for her actions and thoughts.

Marian's suppression of emotion, however, does not last long. Her inner tension persists between the desire to shape and project her sense of rationality and

the lurking shadow of her emotional sensibility. At one moment, she speaks highly of Sir Percival's appearance and comportment by analytically describing his facial features that could attract women and his "unquestionable merits" in his movements and conduct (210). While pointing out his positive aspects, she touches upon his defects as well (because she is a fair-minded person!), which she soon comments might not be considered as flaws at all but as "only a bad habit" or the cause of his "unusual energy" (211). As if to carry out faithfully the duty that she promised herself earlier in the diary, she tries to stay as logical and prudent as possible. However, her strangely complimentary description of him – "Sir Percival is a very handsome and a very agreeable man" – is soon undermined by her last comment in the diary entry that explicitly shows what her emotional self thinks of him: "There! I have written it down at last, and I'm glad it's over" (211). This particular passage aptly shows Marian's inner strife in her attempt to remain logical and her desire to be true to her emotion. She consciously tries to convince herself that it is her duty to think favorably of Sir Percival, for she has the mind of the rational thinker, and yet, her emotional self does not want to approve of what her logical self says of him. She finds her logical self in conflict with her emotional self. And her struggle continues on.

Again, when Marian narrates how Sir Percival shows his unselfish interest in the whereabouts of Anne Catherick, she praises him for his "pure charity" (212).

With all her analytical judgment, however, she is still somehow reluctant to support his actions and motives:

Surely it was singularly considerate and unselfish of him to think of Anne Catherick on the eve of his marriage, and to go all the way to Todd's Corner to make inquiries about her, when he might have passed the time so much more agreeably in Laura's society? Considering that he can only have acted from motives of pure charity, his conduct, under the circumstances, shows unusual good feeling and deserves extraordinary praises. Well! I give him extraordinary praise – and there's an end of it. (211-12)

Here again, Marian is torn between her unwilling praise of Sir Percival's "unselfish" search for Anne Catherick and her disapproval of his not spending the time with Laura "on the eve of his marriage." As the word "singularly" implies, she finds his generous action not just worthy of compliment, but also too odd to be considered merely an "unselfish" behavior. Her reluctant praise of Sir Percival due to what she sees as her duty not to be prejudiced against him, as shown in the last sentence of the passage, indicates her struggle in defining her relationship to Sir Percival, and hence, in making sense of her inner struggles.

At one point, she endeavors to depict him in a positive light by complimenting his agreeable manners and courteous comportment, but her approving comment on him is emphatically denied on the very next day as if to

invalidate all the positive things she has said about him all along, which is exemplified in the following passage: “I hate Sir Percival! I flatly deny his good looks. I consider him to be eminently ill-tempered and disagreeable, and totally wanting in kindness and good feeling. . . . I am more unreasonable and more unjust than ever. In three words – how glibly my pen writes them! – in three words, I hate him” (213-14). At this moment, she is no longer able to let her emotion be governed by logic, simply blurting out her emotion-driven thought, which, in fact, proves right about him. Indeed, her emotion tells her that she has every reason to hate him. But she has been consciously trying to suppress her anger and aversion towards him, because, first, her negative thoughts and feelings about him go against the public opinion of him, and second, the society values reason more than wild emotion and instinct. Hence, she feels obligated to like him. But eventually, she cannot allow her logic to be overruled by her emotion, thereby letting her frustration out in an overly irrational and upsetting tone. Here, what makes Marian’s outburst of emotion possible is her belief in the diary as safe and private. Her belief in the diary as a safe realm allows her to acknowledge her differing and even contradictory thoughts.

Marian’s narration about a constant waver between her logical and emotional self in her diary allows us to consider the diarist’s private and daily practices of self-formation. The daily recording of events, feelings and reflections allows the diarist to recognize the continuous wavering of her thoughts. Marian’s

diary traces her thoughts that vacillate sometimes daily or even twice daily. And the private aspect of the diary allows the diarist to release her inner thoughts and be honest about her tensions and anxieties. While Marian is publicly regarded as a woman of logic and reason, she is revealed in the diary as a woman who is also strongly guided by her emotion.

Marian's conflicting sense of self is also noticeable in her narration of Count and Countess Fosco. Particularly with regard to these two characters, Marian reveals her contested gender identity. That is, Marian shows her contradictory thoughts on the position of women in the Victorian society. Firstly, through the description of Countess Fosco that is full of disparaging remarks, Marian reveals herself as a woman who refuses to conform to the expected Victorian gender norms. Her perception of the Countess both before and after her marriage is equally unsympathetic. As she points out how the marriage to Count Fosco has brought about so much change in Countess Fosco, Marian does not approve of her transformation in any positive way. According to Marian's understanding, Countess Fosco used to be a "vain" and "foolish" woman whose "pretentious nonsense" always caused distress in some men (238). After she becomes Countess Fosco, however, she is completely transformed into "a civil, silent, unobtrusive" woman who is so submissive and obedient to her husband that Marian even compares her to "a faithful dog" (239). Marian's degrading comparison of the Countess to an animal shows her disapproval of women's obedient and passive

submission to men and Marian's resistance towards the typical feminine characteristics that are expected by the Victorian society. She deprecates Countess Fosco's complete feminization, for feminization results from the masculine/feminine dichotomy and gender hierarchy. And her feminine demeanor is mainly caused by Count Fosco's secretly domineering way of molding a woman. Thus, as implied in Marian's writing, perhaps Countess Fosco is not "reformed" but rather "deteriorated" (239).

In describing Countess Fosco's transformation in an unfavorable way, Marian displays herself as a woman who objects to not just female vanity and pretentiousness but also passive feminization and feminine vulnerability, both of which characterize the Victorian stereotypes of feminine traits. As a matter of fact, Marian at one point comments on the female sex to Walter: "We are such fools . . . You see I don't think much of my own sex" (60). As implied in her remarks, Marian is critical of how members of the female sex act according to Victorian patriarchal logics, thereby performing as they are expected to perform. At the moment when she realizes that there is nothing that Laura could not but marry Sir Percival, she bursts out in anger and frustration:

Men! They are the enemies of our innocence and our peace – they drag us away from our parents' love and our sisters' friendship – they take us body and soul to themselves, and fasten our helpless lives to theirs as they chain up a dog to his kennel. And what does the best of

them give us in return? Let me go, Laura – I am mad when I think of it! (203)

She indignantly decries the unreasonable gender position that she, or women in general, are obligated to inhabit. She simply cannot endure the fact that women fall as innocent victims under masculine dominance. Her conception of gender, however, is not simple, for, as illustrated in the following passage, she refuses to be defined by a binary gender system. During her first talk with Walter, she introduces herself as follows:

My name is Marian Halcombe; and I am as inaccurate as women usually are, in calling Mr. Fairlie my uncle, and Miss Fairlie my sister. My mother was twice married: the first time to Mr. Halcombe, my father; the second time to Mr. Fairlie, my half-sister's father. Except that we are both orphans, we are in every respect as unlike each other as possible. My father was a poor man, and Miss Fairlie's father was a rich man. I have got nothing, and she has a fortune. I am dark and ugly, and she is fair and pretty. Everybody thinks me crabbed and odd (with perfect justice); and everybody thinks her sweet-tempered and charming (with more justice still). In short, she is an angel; and I am – Try some of that marmalade, Mr. Hartright, and finish the sentence, in the name of female propriety, for yourself. (60-61)

Here, Marian describes herself as being “inaccurate as women usually are,” which implies that she has a clear understanding of what women’s position in Victorian society is perceived to be. The fact that she is able to express her understanding of the typical depiction of Victorian women indicates that she is aware of the Victorian preconceptions that pigeonhole women into certain gender stereotypes. It also indicates her inability to define herself otherwise and to break free from the Victorian gender norms. Reluctantly positioning herself within the category of women, she eventually refuses to finish her sentence at the end of her speech, leaving it open for Walter to finish. The word to be filled in the blank to maintain the antithetic parallelism, would be, as Valerie Pedlar puts it, a “demon” or a “devil” (76). Pedlar further states that the unfinished sentence shows Marian’s “playfulness towards the conventions of representing women” (76). Concerning Marian’s position illustrated here, Gaylin states that she represents the space of “liminality,” for she “constantly refigures conceptions of masculine/feminine, public/private, outside/inside” (316). Here, Marian does not seem to be “playful” in the way Pedlar argues; rather she is reluctant to confine herself within a simple binary classification. She would rather leave the blank open, for she is aware that there is no single word that could define who she is.

As illustrated above and through her depiction of Countess Fosco, Marian consciously refuses to conform to the gender conventions of Victorian society. While critiquing Victorian gender logics, however, she is unable to break free from

the bounds of the discourse in which she is situated. Not being able to break the confines of the discourse, she wavers between a misogynist and a feminist impulse. At times, she harshly critiques how men mistreat women, and at other times, she distances herself from women and even belittles them for their inability to go against the society's expectation.

And secondly, in her depiction of Count Fosco, Marian contradicts herself and becomes a submissive, malleable woman who is willing to submit herself to the Count's masterdom. Her strong resistance to the stereotype of Victorian women is now nowhere to be seen, and she imagines herself as the mirror image of Countess Fosco whose conduct she has been condemning all along:

. . . . He looks like a man who could tame anything. If he had married a tigress, instead of a woman, he would have tamed the tigress. If he had married *me*, I should have made his cigarettes, as his wife does – I should have held my tongue when he looked at me, as she holds hers.

I am almost afraid to confess it, even to these secret pages. The man has interested me, has attracted me, has forced me to like him. In two short days he has made his way straight into my favourable estimation, and how he has worked the miracle is more than I can tell.

(239-40)

Notice Marian's sudden change of tone in her writing that reflects her vulnerable passivity in regard to Count Fosco. This woman who has been describing Countess Fosco in condescending and disparaging terms now echoes an image of the Countess, as the language partly reflects her submissive and obedient tendencies. Marian fears that the complete feminization that she sees in Countess Fosco might be actualized in her under Count Fosco's magical power of domination. Although she does not want to admit that his domineering way could put her in a subordinate position, she hesitantly confesses that he nevertheless "attract[s]" her. She is "almost afraid to confess" how her rebellious disposition against masculine dominance and feminine submission would simply crumble under his enchanting power that could even "tame the tigress." Marian's ambivalent attitude towards Count Fosco implies that she wavers between a resistance towards masculine domination and a desire to be molded. Marian's conflicting attitude toward gender is realized through her inability to define her feelings towards him, for she asks herself the question without any intention of answering it: "Is this because I like him, or because I am afraid of him? *Chi sa?* – as Count Fosco might say in his own language. Who knows?" (246). Here, borrowing his language, "chi sa," already denotes her willingness to be controlled by his art of ventriloquism. What we find in her illustration of Count and Countess Fosco is a woman with a sense of inconsistencies in the thoughts on gender. While she seems to believe firmly on the

society's unfair treatment of women and women's tacit acquiescence, she at the same time feel attracted to the man that possesses the characters that she despises.

In short, Collins shows in Marian's narration of these characters the ways in which the private characteristics of diary allows the diarist to be open and candid about his/her sense of inconsistencies. Because the diary is a private and secretive space in which the diarist tells his/her story only to him/herself, it allows the diarist to ruminate on varying aspects of him/herself that may be hidden from others. Marian is oftentimes regarded by other characters as a strong, logical, and independent woman who possesses a solid sense of herself. However, what she shows in the diary is someone who is torn in between her logic and emotion, and between her conscious refusal to conform to Victorian gender norms and her unconscious desire to submit herself to masculine dominance. Collins's emphasis on the private nature of diary is aptly shown in the instance in which Count Fosco leaves a sudden trace in the private pages of Marian's diary.⁷ Count Fosco's unexpected intrusion into Marian's diary allows for the consideration of a sense of privacy and the author-reader indistinction in diary-writing. He reminds us how the diary is originally intended to be secret and confidential, and how it is the space for a confession to the self with the self as the only listener.⁸ And the manner in

⁷ In *Novel and the Police*, D. A. Miller aptly characterizes Count Fosco's intrusion into Marian's secret niche of self-pleasure as a textual "rape" (162).

⁸ Felicity A. Nussbaum argues that the diary is born from the "privatization of self" (134). In the process of writing and reading, the boundary between the author and the reader becomes blurred. As Valerie Raoul argues, the diarist performs three functions simultaneously: "author,

which Marian's diary is written oftentimes on a daily basis illustrates the daily practices of self-formation. Collins shows how the daily writing allows the diarist to perceive of the constant alteration of him/herself. Marian's change of thoughts and feelings as revealed in her diary clearly shows that one's identity is an ongoing process of making sense of one's self through daily experience and the struggles that arise from it.

Walter's and Marian's narratives demonstrate that self-formation consists of stories we tell about ourselves. Whether it is a story written over a period of several years or on a daily basis, the act of assembling and integrating the happenings in the form of a narrative allows the storytellers to make sense of what happened and what it means for them. Storytelling allows the storytellers to make sense of their selves as they situate themselves in the world of their own telling.

Unreliable Storytelling and Self-Formation:

Mr. Gilmore's and Eliza Michelson's Narratives

Self-narration does not necessarily denote that a storytelling subject is in control of his/her identity constructed through storytelling. In the words of Judith

character and reader" (60). As she writes her diary, Marian becomes the subject of the utterance, the object of the narration, and the addressee to/for whom the story is recounted. Her identity as a diarist shifts constantly, for the self is simultaneously "desiring and desired, watching and watched, inside and outside, judging and judged" (Raoul 60).

Butler, storytellers “will not be able to be very authoritative when [they] try to give an account with a narrative structure” (26). Collins confirms it through the narratives of Mr. Gilmore and Eliza Michelson. As they narrate the events from their subjective observations and experiences, the two narrators end up creating unreliable stories.⁹ There occurs an inconsistency between what actually happened and what the narrators believe has happened. Collins shows through their narratives the possible manifestation of unreliability in a self-narration. He illustrates that in self-narration, a storyteller may not have a full knowledge of the events he/she narrates and may even be unconscious of his/her discrepancies, which leads to the fact that the storytelling self may not be fully aware of his/her self. First, I look into Mr. Gilmore’s narrative and then Eliza Michelson’s.

Mr. Gilmore’s Narrative

As the Fairlie’s family lawyer, Mr. Gilmore narrates the story of the incidents that he witnessed during his sojourn at Limmeridge House. The tone and the type

⁹ Mr. Gilmore and Eliza Michelson are obtuse and unreliable narrators. To borrow Seymour Chatman’s technical understanding of unreliable narrator, “[w]hat makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from . . . the rest of the narrative.” The norm of the work “conflicts with the narrator’s presentation, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the ‘true version’” (*Story* 149). And as Wayne Booth states, a narrator may be unreliable in the sense of being “potentially deceptive” or unconscious of his mistakes (“he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him”) (159). Mr. Gilmore and Eliza are the latter type of unreliable narrators. Their narratives illustrate that the tellers of their stories may not be particularly authentic and that they may be unreliable as they may not process as much knowledge as other characters/narrators.

of the language he employs for the story nicely reflects his profession as a lawyer, for his language is plain, clear, and concrete; it is polished but straightforward, erudite but easily intelligible:

I arrived at Limmeridge House on Friday the second of November.

My object was to remain at Mr. Fairlie's until the arrival of Sir Percival Glyde. If that event led to the appointment of any given day of Sir Percival's union with Miss Fairlie, I was to take the necessary instructions back with me to London, and to occupy myself in drawing the lady's marriage-settlement. (150)

Being a man of judicial technicality, Mr. Gilmore begins his testimony by lucidly stating when ("Friday the second of November") he came to where ("Limmeridge House") for what purpose ("to remain at Mr. Fairlie's until the arrival of Sir Percival Glyde"), what is to happen there ("the appointment of . . . Sir Percival's union with Miss Fairlie"), and how the event is to be resolved (by "drawing the lady's marriage-settlement"). In the opening sentences, he clearly and plainly elucidates his narrative framework.

As he narrates with logical objectivity, Mr. Gilmore presents himself as a man of principle and ethical values. In the beginning of his testimony, he explicitly states his storytelling incident in a very logical and systematic manner. He clearly

articulates why he is given the position to narrate, what he plans to tell, and which time-period his story intends to cover:

I write these lines at the request of my friend, Mr Walter Hartright. They are intended to convey a description of certain events which seriously affected Miss Fairlie's interests, and which took place after the period of Mr Hartright's departure from Limmeridge House.

. . . My appearance here, as narrator, is the necessary consequence of this arrangement. I was present during the sojourn of Sir Percival Glyde in Cumberland, and was personally concerned in one important result of his short residence under Mr Fairlie's roof. It is my duty, therefore, to add these new links to the chain of events, and to take up the chain itself at the point where, for the present only, Mr Hartright has dropped it. (150)

Perceiving the importance of his position as the narrator at this particular storytelling stage, he makes the most of his investigative and analytical skills and dutifully performs the required narrative task in a rational and objective tone and manner. As shown in the passage, Mr. Gilmore tries to avoid manipulating the story for any dramatic or momentary effect, but state the events as they are – unabridged, non-dramatic, and non-emotional – and analyze and critique the underlying situation, which serves to underscore his identity as a lawyer.

However, as Mr. Gilmore begins testifying his experience at Limmeridge house, the reader finds that Mr. Gilmore is not as rational, objective, and reliable as he claims to be. What we find as the narrative unfolds is that he is rather opinionated, judgmental, and biased. However, unconscious of his prejudiced attitude, he continues to employ the language and the tone that reflects his identity as a lawyer. As a result, a sense of doubleness is built into the language. His tone captures objective neutrality and subjective engagement, scientific detachment and emotional empathy, and rational, logical thinking and irrational, blind belief. This doubleness and his ignorance thereof become explicit as he recounts his experience with Walter and Sir Percival. The following passage aptly illustrates his prejudice towards Walter:

I had been favourably impressed by Mr Hartright on our first introduction to one another, but I soon discovered that he was not free from the social failings incidental to his age. There are three things that none of the young men of the present generation can do. They can't sit over their wine, they can't play at whist, and they can't pay a lady a compliment. Mr Hartright was no exception to the general rule. (151)

Mr. Gilmore exercises his logical faculties to explain his first impression of Walter by providing three persuasive reasons why Walter is not wholly favorable. First, he points out that just like the "young men of the present generation," Walter cannot

sit over wine. Here, Mr. Gilmore refers to Walter's last dinner at Limmeridge House. Apparently, Mr. Gilmore rightly states that Walter did not linger over his wine, but he fails to see the primary cause of Walter's uneasiness at the dinner table that night. Here, it is necessary to read Mr. Gilmore's account of this particular event against that of Walter's. According to Walter, the reason he could not sit over wine on his last evening at Limmeridge was that the ladies have all been left to the drawing-room after dinner, and that his sole desire was to "[return] to the drawing-room" which used to provide him with "the happiest evenings of [his] life" and which he "was never to see again" (144). Walter states that he had to reject Mr. Gilmore's kind offering of wine, because his sole attention was on Miss Fairlie. Second, Mr. Gilmore criticizes Walter for being unable to play at whist. But Walter's narrative reveals that he could not join them at the card-table not because he did not know how to play it, but because he would rather be close to Laura who was playing music for him and spend the short remaining time of the last evening with her. And lastly, Mr. Gilmore erroneously states that Walter "can't pay a lady a compliment." But in fact, the words that Walter whispered to Laura at her piano, which he narrates in detail in his narrative, were nothing but an expression of sincere affection: "I shall remember those kind words, Miss Fairlie, long after tomorrow has come and gone" (145). Not realizing their emotional turmoil, as revealed in Walter's story, Mr. Gilmore judges him merely by Laura's nervous physical reaction: "The paleness grew whiter on her face . . . Her lips trembled . . . Her fingers wavered on

the piano – she struck a false note, confused herself in trying to set it right, and dropped her hands angrily on her lap” (145). Looking up at her in astonishment, Mr. Gilmore erroneously believes that it must have been Walter’s disturbing comment that has caused an emotional agitation on Laura. Mr. Gilmore’s ignorance of the events he tells becomes noticeable as his narrative is read against Walter’s.

Mr. Gilmore’s apparently logical assumptions about Walter are flawed for three reasons. First, he completely misreads Walter’s behavior based on his age. From his biased perspective, Walter is immature, inexperienced, and too young to live up to his expectation; therefore, he is likely to behave inappropriately. Second, his hostile and condescending attitude towards Walter stems from Walter’s inability to satisfy his emotional need of attachment as well as Walter’s immaturity and humble origin. Declining unintentionally Mr. Gilmore’s kind offering of another glass of wine, Walter does not join Mr. Gilmore’s card game and makes Laura, whom Mr. Gilmore has a fatherly love towards, feel uneasy as she plays the piano. And lastly, he commits the logical fallacy of making hasty generalizations about Walter based on a couple of minor incidents that cannot be said to be representative of Walter’s behaviors at all. In short, Mr. Gilmore’s apparently objective and rational judgment conflict with his irrational and emotional behavior. But ironically, he does not realize his contradictions. He strongly believes himself to be a rational and objective lawyer, trying to affirm it through the tone of his language and logical

reasoning. But he is simply oblivious to the fact that underneath the veil of reason and rationality lies his judgmental and opinionated nature.

Mr. Gilmore's unreliability becomes more explicit in his description of Sir Percival. Apparently, the account of his first impression of Sir Percival is very detailed and rational; however a closer look reveals that his objective narration is filled with his subjective opinion:

On Monday Sir Percival Glyde arrived.

I found him to be a most prepossessing man, so far as manners and appearance were concerned. He looked rather older than I had expected, his head being bald over the forehead, and his face somewhat marked and worn, but his movements were as active and his spirits as high as a young man's. His meeting with Miss Halcombe was delightfully hearty and unaffected, and his reception of me, upon my being presented to him, was so easy and pleasant that we got on together like old friends. Miss Fairlie was not with us when he arrived, but she entered the room about ten minutes afterwards. Sir Percival rose and paid his compliments with perfect grace. His evident concern on seeing the change for the worse in the young lady's looks was expressed with a mixture of tenderness and respect, with an unassuming delicacy of tone, voice, and manner, which did equal credit to his good breeding and his good sense. I was rather

surprised, under these circumstances, to see that Miss Fairlie continued to be constrained and uneasy in his presence, and that she took the first opportunity of leaving the room again. (152-53)

While he exhibits a condescending attitude towards Walter, Mr. Gilmore is oddly fond of Sir Percival. Even though Marian, Laura, and Walter do not have a favorable impression of him (Laura and Walter obviously have their own reasons), Mr. Gilmore is alone ready to understand and sympathize with him. When it comes to Sir Percival, his logic does not support his judgment. Sir Percival's "manners and appearance" show his utmost good will and gentlemanliness (152). For Mr. Gilmore, Sir Percival is the man of high spirits and great courtesy; he is "delightfully hearty and unaffected" in his manners and movement, and his voice is delicate and tender (152). All of these charming personal traits of Sir Percival, Mr. Gilmore believes, come from his "good breeding," experience, and the privileged class position, which are the qualities Mr. Gilmore respects and also possesses. The resemblance between him and Sir Percival seems to be one of the causes of his evident partiality. As he becomes more blinded by his unreasonable fondness for Sir Percival, he further loses the ability to see the real reasons for people's uneasiness towards Sir Percival. He fails to fathom why Laura "continue[s] to be constrained and uneasy" in Sir Percival's presence, and why Marian keeps showing "a certain hesitation of manner" when the incident regarding Anne's disturbing and threatening letter is drawing to a close (153, 155).

Indeed, whenever it comes to his attitude towards Sir Percival, Mr. Gilmore, a man of judicial temperament and ability, becomes oddly irrational and illogical. Mr. Gilmore witnesses the scene as Marian hands Sir Percival the note for Anne's mother and describes in detail that Sir Percival "folded it up immediately without looking at the contents, sealed it, wrote the address, and handed it back to her in silence" (156). Apparently, Sir Percival has handled the situation in a petulant manner. However, his behavior seemed to Mr. Gilmore as more than merely polite and respectful, for he blindly exaggerates: "I never saw anything more gracefully and more becomingly done in my life" (156). Mr. Gilmore, who is strictly analytical and judgmental when it comes to his evaluation of other people at Limmeridge House, never questions the motive behind Sir Percival's action.

Mr. Gilmore's contradiction continues on with regards to Sir Percival, but again, he is completely unaware of his contradiction. When it comes to Sir Percival, the man who is self-claimed to be "sensible" and to "only tell the truth" turns out to be the complete opposite of what he thinks he is. His perspective is so colored by his fondness towards Sir Percival that he even confesses how he "felt as if [he] could cheerfully do anything to promote the interests of Sir Percival Glyde" (168, 169). On hearing Sir Percival's version of Anne Catherick's story of why and how she was sent to the private asylum, Mr. Gilmore trusts his words without question:

[M]y function was of the purely judicial kind. I was to weigh the explanation we had just heard, to allow all due force to the high

reputation of the gentleman who offered it, and to decide honestly whether the probabilities, on Sir Percival's own showing, were plainly with him, or plainly against him. My own conviction was that they were plainly with him, and I accordingly declared that his explanation was, to my mind, unquestionably a satisfactory one. (155)

Mr. Gilmore's apparent logic in this passage is not even close to being "judicial." His "own conviction" of Sir Percival's explanation is based on nothing more than his "high reputation," good breeding, and gentlemanlike behavior. Sir Percival's rank, social position, and age serve as the primary reasons for trusting his words. Being simply inclined towards Sir Percival, Mr. Gilmore does not seem to be willing to consider what Laura and Marian have to say about, or why they are reluctant to agree with, Sir Percival's version of the story.

Mr. Gilmore's blind affection for Sir Percival also keeps him from questioning the odd behavior of Miss Fairlie's little Italian greyhound towards Sir Percival. Mr. Gilmore observes Laura's "coward" greyhound suddenly shrinking away, whining, shivering, and hiding under the sofa as Sir Percival "good-humouredly" reaches out to the dog. Sir Percival's "irritable" temper due to "such a trifle as a dog's reception of him" occurs to Mr. Gilmore as odd at first, but he does not care to question what causes the dog to react the way it did and Sir Percival to suddenly walk away. Rather, he emotionally understands Sir Percival's action without any doubt: "My temper is irritable at times too" (156). Interestingly, while

Mr. Gilmore is oblivious to the real person of Sir Percival, Walter and Marian are aware of Sir Percival's real intention and motive for pursuing Laura, which they recount clearly in their stories. Although each has his/her own reasons to think unfavorably of him, their understanding of him turns out to be more accurate. Reading his narrative in conjunction with Walter's and/or Marian's narratives confirms that, first, Mr. Gilmore is not a reasonable man that he thinks he is, but rather a man of prejudice and partiality; and second, he is not only unaware of the discrepancy between the displayed self and the inner self, but also of the events he narrates with confidence.

Mr. Gilmore's narrative illustrates the ways in which the storyteller's inability to comprehend his self influences the story that he creates. Collins creates Mr. Gilmore as a narrator full of inconsistencies who does not realize himself to be so. The language used in Mr. Gilmore's story is apparently clear, plain, and straightforward, which reflects his desire to display himself as a man of objectivity and rationality. However, his misinterpretation of the events regarding Sir Percival, Walter, and Marian corroborates (which the reader finds by reading his narrative in conjunction with other narratives) the fact that he is rather a man full of bias and errors. The disparity points to the fact that he does not fully conceive of his self as revealed in his narrative. While he is inconsistent in his depiction of the characters, he fails to realize himself to be so. As a result, lacking in authority and credibility,

his story fails to function as a factual or objective reportage, but turns into nothing more than an inaccurate and misleading story.

Eliza Michelson's Narrative

Eliza Michelson's narrative demonstrates another instance of unreliable self-narration. Eliza Michelson, the housekeeper of Blackwater Park, is a narrator who is also full of fallacy and error but who does not realize herself to be so. Throughout her story, Eliza does not realize the discrepancy between the person that she claims to be and the person that gets unconsciously revealed in the narrative. In the beginning of her story, Eliza states that her task as a narrator is to "state plainly . . . the progress of Miss Halcombe's illness and of the circumstances under which Lady Glyde left Blackwater Park for London" (379). As a narrator, she apparently has a clear understanding of what she is supposed to present, for she claims that she will "offer facts only" (381). Before progressing with the main story, she makes a conscious effort to establish her authority as a reliable and trustworthy narrator by introducing herself as "the widow of a clergyman of the Church of England," who has "been taught to place the claims of truth above all other considerations" (379). She oftentimes refers to the sermons of her late husband; she says that, being taught from her husband's sermon, she "endeavour[s] through life . . . to judge not that [she] be not judged" and "to do as [she] would be done by" (381, 384).

However, Eliza who promises to offer nothing but the truth eventually tells more than just facts, for her narrative abounds with erroneous interpretation and biased opinions. She strongly believes that she is a religious, sympathetic, and considerate person; however, the thoughts and opinions revealed through her storytelling process and the combined reading of her narrative with other narratives reveal that she is in fact judgmental, opinionated, and proud. Throughout the story, she constantly reminds the reader that she “advance[s] no opinions” and that she “offer[s] facts only” when, in fact, the story is filled with personal opinions and judgments. Particularly with regard to Count Fosco, she describes him as having a “truly Christian meekness of temper” and being “a true nobleman,” even though, in actuality, he is a man of conniving and malicious disposition, as revealed in Marian’s and Walter’s narratives (380, 381). Her high estimation of him must have resulted from his apparently sympathetic and caring attitude towards her and his polite treatment of her “on the footing of a lady,” all of which are to mask his evil and guileful nature (381). So, when Count Fosco leaves the house to go to the boathouse on the banks of the lake in the hope of finding Anne, which event Marian recounts in detail in her diary, Marian misguidedly thinks that his long absence from the house is to “set the example of keeping the house as quiet as possible” (380). So blinded is she by Count Fosco’s apparently courteous and respectful treatment of her that she fails to see his devious plotting to separate Laura and Marian. Although she senses that some deceptive scheming has been implemented

concerning Laura and Marian, she emphatically declares that “no blame whatever, in connection with the events which I have now related, attaches to Count Fosco” (419). Eliza undoubtedly has a favorable attitude towards Count Fosco, perhaps because, first, he treats her with kindness and respect, and second, she simply has no idea his hidden vile nature. Hence, it is obvious that she provides a pleasing account of him. And what she provides is not the “factual” rendering that she stated she would offer, but rather her subjective opinions.

Another instance that highlights Eliza’s unreliability occurs as she misinterprets Laura’s uneasiness towards Mrs. Rubelle. She makes condescending and demeaning remarks regarding Laura’s behavior without knowing what induces Laura to act in such a manner:

Lady Glyde appeared to be very unwilling that the new nurse should be employed to attend on Miss Halcombe. Such want of liberality towards a foreigner on the part of a lady of her education and refinement surprised me. I ventured to say, ‘My lady, we must all remember not to be hasty in our judgments on our inferiors – especially when they come from foreign parts.’ (385)

Eliza, who once proudly claimed in the beginning of her story that her mission was to tell facts only, is falsely opinionated, for she makes judgments and assumptions about Laura only based on what she sees. In fact, as inferred from Count Fosco’s narrative, Laura did not want his sister to be taken care of by a stranger (Mrs.

Rubelle) who has been brought to Limmeridge by Count Fosco, for she simply does not trust him. However, without realizing the real cause of Laura's unwillingness to let Marian be attended by the foreign nurse, Eliza deduces that Laura's reluctance towards Mrs. Rubelle probably derives from her prejudice towards foreigners. However, in actuality, it is Eliza who has a preconceived bias against foreigners, for she is the one who regards them as her "inferiors" and who indeed makes a "hasty . . . judgment" on them. Eliza's apparent sympathy towards foreigners corroborates her hypocritical tendencies, for her ostensible compassion and understanding towards them stems, in fact, from her sense of religious superiority.

The following passage aptly illustrates Eliza's hypocrisy in her account of Mrs. Rubelle:

. . . I will not say that Mrs. Rubelle struck me as being a small, wiry, sly person, of fifty or thereabouts, with a dark brown or Creole complexion and watchful light grey eyes. Nor will I mention, for the reasons just alleged, that I thought her dress, though it was of the plainest black silk, inappropriately costly in texture and unnecessarily refined in trimming and finish, for a person in her position in life. I should not like these things to be said of me, and therefore it is my duty not to say them of Mrs. Rubelle. I will merely mention that her manners were, not perhaps unpleasantly reserved, but only remarkably quiet and retiring – that she looked about her a great deal,

and said very little, which might have arisen quite as much from her own modesty as from distrust of her position at Blackwater Park; and that she declined to partake of supper (which was curious perhaps, but surely not suspicious?), although I myself politely invited her to that meal in my own room. (384-85)

Eliza's ironical presentation of Mrs. Rubelle is preposterous, for she is simply oblivious of her inconsistencies. Eliza believes herself to be a devout, religious, and understanding woman; however, what her language reveals is a woman full of bigotry and duplicity. She is judgmental although she claims that she strives not to judge others. She says that she has "a feeling of humane indulgence for foreigners" (384), but at the same time critiques Mrs. Rubelle for being "a small wiry, sly" and her dress for being "inappropriately costly in texture and unnecessarily refined in trimming and finish, for a person in her position in life." She even states that she "should not like these things to be said of [her], and therefore it is [her] duty not to say them of Mrs. Rubelle," but in fact, she has just expressed all the unfavorable opinions about Mrs. Rubelle, and those, in detail. And what makes it all the more interesting is that she is simply unaware of her disparity.

Eliza remarks at one moment that because the foreigners are "brought up in the blind errors of Popery," thereby not possessing the "blessings and advantages" of the Church of England, they deserve sympathy and compassion from her who receives God's blessings and privileges (384). However, these condescending and

demeaning thoughts towards foreigners added with her ignorance of the real reason behind Laura's uneasiness lead her to produce an unreliable story.

Eventually, Eliza's narrative, which covers the period from Marian's illness to Laura's departure for London, does not so much recount the "facts" about what happened at Blackwater Park as what she believes has happened. And her assertion of herself as a religious and trustworthy woman turns out to be simply erroneous, for she is a woman of deception and guile. Eliza, however, is oblivious to the incoherence between the person she unconsciously reveals in the narrative and the person she believes herself to be. Hence, the story, written by the self-proclaimed consistent and trustworthy narrator, ends up nothing more than another misleading and unreliable story.

Mr. Gilmore's and Eliza's narratives allow us to consider the subjective nature of storytelling. Narrative is a construct that involves selecting, omitting, organizing, and arranging the events from a storyteller's subjective point of view. Hence, it is probable that narrative is unreliable. As Walter Fisher states, "narrative [is] prone to unreliable narration" (47). And in the words of Judith Butler, "[m]y account of myself is partial. . . . There is that in me and of me for which I can give no account" (27). Collins shows in these two narratives that in self-narration, there can be found an inconsistency between what happens and what they believe has happened, that a storyteller may not be particularly authoritative, and that he/she may not be fully aware of the events he/she narrates and even unconscious of

his/her ignorance. The narrators' unreliability and their ignorance of the discrepancy become more noticeable as their narratives are situated against other narratives in which the same events are told and in which these narrators take part as characters. This confirms my argument that identity is not confined to self-narration, and that narrative formation of self requires both the stories told by the individual and the stories told by others in which the individual takes part.

Retelling and Self-Reformation: Count Fosco's and Mrs. Catherick's Narratives

Count Fosco's and Mrs. Catherick's attempt to reshape their selves by retelling the events underscores the notion of the constructed nature of self and story. The two narratives show that different aspects of self may be produced through different versions of the events. The narrative self does not record every fact but rather provides selective events that integrate into a meaningful whole. Terence Cave points out that different people may "give different accounts of my behavior and of what kind of person I am" and that I am "perfectly capable of telling my own story in different ways" (112). As a storyteller narrates, he/she may tell stories selectively; he/she may skip over or omit the events that do not cohere within his/her intended plot and may emphasize the good and interesting. These narrators' attempt to re-construct the story of their selves for their own end

elucidates that different stories may be told about the same event, that narratives may be revised, reinterpreted based on the storytellers' remembrance and intention, and that the individual's self can be retold by responding to other narratives in which the individual appears. To verify this, let me first discuss Count Fosco's narrative and then Mrs. Catherick's narrative.

Count Fosco's Narrative

Count Fosco has a definite purpose of telling the story. First and foremost, he tells the story in an attempt to save his life. Unlike the other narrators who voluntarily participate in storytelling, Count Fosco is reluctantly put in the position of having to tell the particular portion of the event. And in fact, he is the only one who has the key evidence (Laura's departure date from Limmeridge House) to prove that Laura's and Anne's identities have been switched. Only when Count Fosco discloses to Walter the fact that Anne died the day before Laura arrived in London can Laura's identity be finally restored. Obviously, as Walter's "enemy," Count Fosco would not have wanted to disclose the fact. However, if he refuses to tell the truth of the event, his identity as the member of the Brotherhood will be revealed, and he will be eventually killed for betraying the secret political organization. His security depends solely on whether he provides the proof of the date on which Laura left Blackwater Park for London. Thus, in order to escape

death, he has no alternative but to tell the truth. To put it simply, his storytelling is essentially a life-saving act; in order to pursue his life, he has only to comply with Walter's request for the truth.

Committing himself to the story of Laura as a way to preserve his life, Count Fosco endeavors to accomplish his second objective, which is to rectify what he claims to be a "falsely" constructed image. Now that he is obliged to tell the story anyway, he decides to make the best use of this textual space for his own personal gain. Before he begins the story, he contends that other storytellers' subjective and selective perception of the events to form their stories inevitably induces a misconception of his demeanor and character. Thus, as a way to stave off further damage to his reputation, he finds it necessary to "enter a necessary protest, and correct a lamentable error" (621). And he does so by retelling the events for his own benefit and refiguring his self within the context of his own making. This act points to the constructed and contested nature of narrative; because narratives are constructed by the storyteller's own subjective understandings and rendering of the event, there may occur several representations of the same events that sometimes may not cohere.

The following passage exemplifies the constructed aspect of narrative and the conflict that it generates. Count Fosco comments in frustration on how his conduct with regard to the use of chemistry has been misrepresented:

Why this outburst? Why this withering eloquence?

Because my conduct has been misrepresented, because my motives have been misunderstood. It has been assumed that I used my vast chemical resources against Anne Catherick, and that I would have used them if I could against the magnificent Marian herself. Odious insinuations both! All my interests were concerned (as will be seen presently) in the preservation of Anne Catherick's life. All my anxieties were concentrated on Marian's rescue from the hands of the licensed imbecile who attended her, and who found my advice confirmed from first to last by the physician from London. On two occasions only – both equally harmless to the individual on whom I practiced – did I summon to myself the assistance of chemical knowledge. (622)

Count Fosco emphatically contends that people have completely misunderstood that he has used his chemical knowledge against Marian and Anne when, in fact, his only concern was preserving their lives. His frustration seems warranted, for he, in fact, tried to get Marian to cure her illness, which turned into typhus fever, and he sent for a doctor to prevent Anne from dying. Especially in the case of Marian's illness, he contends that it is rather "the doctor's imbecile treatment" of Marian's illness, not his chemical substance, which led to "typhus" (625). He even tells that he was very concerned about Marian's illness and that although such people around him as the doctor did not trust him, he was desperately anxious to cure her.

What Count Fosco does is emphasize the fact that he did not physically harm Marian and de-emphasize his real intention, which is that he made use of Marian's illness to switch Laura's and Anne's identities. By retelling the event to fit into the coherent plot of his own, he attempts to correct people's misapprehension of the event and confirm his "innocence."

Count Fosco's constant endeavor to conceal his evil under the guise of benevolence is fully elaborated in the following passage. Here, he tries to put on the "comparatively innocent" face:

On a calm revision of all circumstances – Is my conduct worthy of any serious blame? Most emphatically, No! Have I not carefully avoided exposing myself to the odium of committing unnecessary crime? With my vast resources in chemistry, I might have taken Lady Glyde's life. At immense personal sacrifice I followed the dictates of my own ingenuity, my own humanity, my own caution, and took her identity instead. Judge me by what I might have done. How comparatively innocent! How indirectly virtuous I appear in what I really did! (632)

Apparently, his argument again seems valid. He "emphatically" claims that he is "comparatively innocent" and "indirectly virtuous" for not "committing unnecessary crime" of murder. By asserting that he did not commit any murderous deeds when in fact he could have using his chemical resources, he is trying to

exonerate himself from the blame. By foregrounding the fact that he did not kill Laura, he assays to portray himself as not an evil man as he is often represented. He then says that he sacrificed himself to keep Lady Glyde alive and “took her identity instead.” However, a combined reading with Walter’s narrative that recounts the hardship that Laura suffered through her loss of identity shows that his act of taking her identity does not make him any more virtuous than if he actually took her life. That is, he did not kill Laura literally, but he did symbolically by taking away her identity. By inscribing her name on the tombstone, he symbolically removed Laura from the world. Because of him, Laura is alive physically but socially and symbolically dead. As Elisabeth Bronfen phrases it, Fosco puts Anne in the position of “death in life” (304). As an individual, she is no longer living the life of Laura but of Anne. But Walter’s and Marian’s continuous attempt at bringing her back to her own identity enables Laura to eventually restore her identity. To be more precise, it is specifically through Fosco’s retelling of the incident, the reinscription of the tombstone and Walter’s narration of the process in which she restores her identity that Laura is finally able to become “Laura.” The incident of the loss and restoration of Laura’s identity ties in with the overarching argument about self and story in the sense that Collins shows how one’s identity cannot be reinstated simply on one’s own assertion of identity nor on the recognition of those close to her but through the written proof of testimony and narrative.

In short, in response to Count Fosco's question of whether "[his] conduct [is] worthy of any serious blame," the answer is (as opposed to his "No") obviously and "emphatically," yes. He wants to show himself as "comparatively innocent" and "indirectly virtuous . . . in what [he] really did," and he tries to cover up his potential maliciousness through a cunning and artful play of language in the retelling of the events (632). But examining his acts as shown in his narrative against those recounted by other narrators substantiates the fact that he is not the man he claims to be. Count Fosco's constant endeavor to depict himself as a man of sympathy and compassion through the manipulative exploitation of the events eventually fails, only to substantiate that he is indeed an evil and sinister man.

Mrs. Catherick's Narrative

Along with Count Fosco, Mrs. Catherick is another narrator who tries to reshape her self by retelling events for her own purpose. Collins composes her story in the form of a letter, which offers insights into the different effects that this particular genre of writing could have on the storyteller's presentation of him/herself. As a genre, a personal correspondence letter is a private form of writing, for it is a medium of private exchange of words between a sender and a receiver that allows them to experience an interpersonal and reciprocal relationship. And, as opposed to the stories written for the public or the diary written only for

oneself, a letter is audience-dependent. That is, it is addressed only to a specific audience for a particular purpose, and the choice of stories and the manner in which they are written are dependent on the writer's relationship to the audience and the type of audience that would read it.

This particular letter of Mrs. Catherick's is addressed to (and only to) Walter. When Walter opens her letter, he finds that it is "neither dated nor signed, and the handwriting [is] palpably disguised" which shows Mrs. Catherick's desire to conceal her identity from public, except for Walter (548). And Walter immediately notices that the letter is sent from Mrs. Catherick. And while she intentionally distorts her handwriting so that her secrets are revealed only to Walter, she makes use of this textual space as an opportunity to achieve her desired purpose, which is to reshape Walter's perception of her. On the surface, she seems concerned with Walter's interest and values, for she tells the stories that she believes Walter would be happy to know. But in fact, the primary purpose of telling those stories is to rectify his preconceptions about her by reconfiguring her past experience for her own ends.

First of all, Mrs. Catherick attempts to manipulate Walter's perception of her by bridging the emotional gulf between them and referring to him as her "friend" (549). If Walter had saved Sir Percival's life from the fire at the vestry, then she would not have considered him as her "friend." But now that Sir Percival's death is indirectly due to Walter's pursuit of his personal history, Mrs. Catherick feels

indebted to Walter. This woman who once “refuse[d] to trust” him is now willing to call him her friend (for they share one common interest, which is having Sir Percival out of their lives), and is ready to share her secrets through the private medium of letter writing (510). Now that she takes him as her “friend,” she decides to tell him her private stories that Walter has not discovered but might like to know with regard to Sir Percival:

You had a great curiosity to know certain private affairs of mine when you came to see me – private affairs which all your sharpness could not look into without help – private affairs which you have not discovered, even now. You shall discover them – your curiosity shall be satisfied. I will take any trouble to please you, my estimable young friend! (548-49)

This stubborn and heartless woman who once rebuked him for prying into her “private affairs” is now willing to “satisfy” his curiosity by recounting her relationship with Sir Percival. Through her friendly gesture of unveiling her “private affairs,” Mrs. Catherick attempts to project an image of a considerate woman who is willing to sacrifice herself to please her “estimable” friend.

Second, Mrs. Catherick’s another way of manipulating Walter’s (mis)conception and reformulating her self can be found in her use of questions. Through a continuous posing of questions, she tries to develop a bond, gain Walter’s emotional support, and eventually exploit his thoughts: “Do you

understand now how I hated [Sir Percival]? Do you understand why I am taking all this trouble – thankfully taking it – to gratify the curiosity of the meritorious young gentleman who hunted him down?” (553) She is making use of questions to connect herself with Walter and to ask him to confirm why she had no choice but to hate Sir Percival. And by flatteringly referring to him as “the meritorious young gentleman,” she desires to gain his support and approval for her past behaviors. Her “thoughtful” consideration of Walter continues as she selects and organizes the stories for Walter’s better understanding. Since she is not writing for herself but for Walter, she recounts the events that matter to him; she shapes and structures her story based on his needs:

You said the other day that Mrs Clements had told you everything she knew. In that case there is no need for me to write about the trumpery scandal by which I was the sufferer – the innocent sufferer, I positively assert. You must know as well as I do what the notion which my husband took into his head when he found me and my fine-gentleman acquaintance meeting each other privately and talking secrets together. But what you don’t know is how it ended between that same gentleman and myself. You shall read and see how he behaved to me. (552)

The manner in which Mrs. Catherick narrates is closely associated with her understanding of Walter’s need for the story. For the stories that Walter is not yet

informed of, she kindly provides a lengthy and detailed account. And as for the stories that Walter is already familiar with, she briefly touches on them just to help with the smooth flow of the story. In so doing, Mrs. Catherick attempts to portray herself as a thoughtful woman who is willing to share her private secrets and configure her story for his needs and purpose.

However, further investigation into Mrs. Catherick's story uncovers that she is indeed a malicious woman with a mask of hospitality. Her considerate gestures are only to hide her evilness. Her true intention for divulging her secret is primarily to modify Walter's preconceptions about her. She is using his curiosity and their "friendship" as a pretext to alter what she argues is "false" image. For her, this secret story becomes the means through which she misleads him into believing that she is indeed a "good" woman who is unjustly portrayed as a "bad" woman. As illustrated in the earlier passage where she briefly mentions his talk with Mrs. Clements, we see how she points to the talk not only to help Walter follow her story but to reframe it within the story of her own making. Mrs. Catherick detects that Walter had heard from Mrs. Clements of the kind of person Mrs. Catherick is. As it were, Walter learned from Mrs. Clements that Mrs. Catherick is a "wicked mother" and an "awful woman," and that she is "a heartless woman, with a terrible will of her own—fond of foolish admiration and fine clothes, and not caring to show so much as decent outward respect to Catherick, kindly as he always treated her" (494, 497-98, 487). Detecting his negative perception of her, she defends herself and

reformulates her story to the point where she creates herself as a “sufferer” with an emphasis on “the innocent” for fear that Walter might have thought otherwise. She wants to be looked at as a passive and helpless victim who could not but be manipulated by Sir Percival’s evil planning.

Mrs. Catherick’s deliberate effort to confirm herself as an “innocent sufferer” becomes explicit as she redefines her relationship to Sir Percival. Concerning her relationship to him, she contends that she has been helplessly used by him: “He had deceived me about the risk I ran in helping him. He had practiced on my ignorance, he had tempted me with his gifts, he had interested me with his story – and the result of it was that he made me his accomplice” (553). Notice the way in which the sentences are structured, for she puts Sir Percival syntactically in the place of an agent and herself in the position of an object to imply the asymmetric and unequal relation. According to this passage, he is indeed the cause of all the trouble and she is a mere victim who had no other choice but to be put under his power and be ill-used for his well-being. As a matter of fact, however, she is not the innocent victim that she is projecting herself to be, for Walter soon finds that she is fairly “compensated” with Sir Percival’s “reward,” “a handsome yearly allowance, payable quarterly” (553). And at one point, she even confesses that she was happily bribed with such luxurious presents as a gold watch and chain by keeping Sir Percival’s secret, which she keeps to this moment. If she believed herself to be mistreated by Sir Percival, then she should have refused to accept his gifts and

to be “his accomplice.” Indeed, she was given the choice – truth or money. And she chooses money over truth (554). Here, her story of Sir Percival’s ill-treatment of her does not support her claim of herself as an “innocent sufferer” at all, for this woman’s “suffering,” as she terms it, is already compensated for by financial and material support, and she is fully satisfied with such a negotiated arrangement.

With all her attempts at retelling the story, however, Mrs. Catherick fails to change Walter’s perception of her. At first, she makes a friendly move by projecting herself as Walter’s “friend” and discloses her private matters apparently to fulfill his curiosity. But as it turns out, these gestures are intended only to carry out her real purpose, to gull him into believing that she is a sympathetic, thoughtful, and innocent woman. The fact that the story does not deliver its intended results is substantiated through Walter who finds her letter simply disgusting and deserving of destruction. Because Walter already knows her to be a “wicked mother” and an “awful woman” through Mrs. Clements’s story, her story does nothing to convince him. For Walter, Mrs. Catherick is far from a helpless victim as she projects herself as but a woman with “the atrocious perversity of mind” (560-561).

Count Fosco’s and Mrs. Catherick’s narratives demonstrate the ways in which retelling of the events is associated with re-forming the self. For both Count Fosco and Mrs. Catherick, the purpose of narration is to rectify people’s (mis)conception of themselves. They attempt to reclaim their selves by revising and reinterpreting the events told by others. The retelling of events points to the fact

that narrative is a matter of construction, that the events may be reshaped and reorganized according to the storyteller's subjective opinions and narrative purpose. And the failure in Count Fosco's and Mrs. Catherick's attempt to persuade Walter (and the actual reader) illustrates Collins's idea that identity is associated not only with the story one tells about oneself but also with the stories others tell in which one takes part. As Walter reads Count Fosco's and Mrs. Catherick's narratives in conjunction with other narratives that recount the similar events, he learns that a better understanding of their identities requires multiple stories with diverse approaches to the particular events.

Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White demonstrates the various incidents in which storytellers form their selves by means of narration. First, Walter's and Marian's narratives illustrate the interconnection between self-formation and self-narration. Collins shows in the two narratives the process in which the storyteller's self is revealed through configuring fragments of events into a narrative whole. Second, Mr. Gilmore's and Eliza Michelson's stories take into account the possibility of unreliable self-narration and its association with the storyteller's self-misconception. Collins takes into account both the fact that the narrators may lack certain knowledge of the events they recount and the fact that the unreliable narration leads to a lack of full understanding of the narrators' selves. And lastly, Count Fosco's and Mrs. Catherick's narratives, which retell the events as a way to reshape their selves, demonstrate the possibility that self is reshapable through

different accounts of events. Because the narrative is constructed through the narrator's subjective understanding of the events and his/her choice and arrangement of the events for his/her own narrative purpose, it may be retold and reshaped and the narrator's self may be re-formed in the process. While the first section of this chapter focuses on the relationship between self-formation and self-narration, the latter two sections take into account the workings of multiple stories in the formation of the storyteller's self. Self-formation may not necessarily be authentic; it may be unreliable and reshapable. And the fact that narrative formation of self requires both the stories told by the individual and the stories told by others in which the individual takes part confirms that self-formation is a matter of construct through storytelling.

CHAPTER III
TRIANGULAR STORYTELLING AND SELF-FORMATION
IN ANNE BRONTË'S THE TENANT OF WILDFELL HALL

Donald Davidson's "Triangulation" and the Storyteller's Self-Formation

When it comes to narrating a story, we need someone who listens and responds to our stories. The teller's relationship with the listening other is not an optional or accidental extra but the very condition in which the story comes into being and through which the self is conceived. As Judith Butler asserts in "Giving an Account of Oneself," "one can only tell an autobiography, one can only reference an 'I' in relation to a 'you'; without the 'you,' my own story becomes impossible" (24). In order for the storyteller's self to be realized in the story, it is required that there be a storyteller, a reader, and a text that work in interrelation to one another. For a detailed discussion of self-formation in terms of the triangular relationship of the storytelling self, the text, and the reading other, I choose Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall as it offers three different instances of such a triangular relationship, allowing for a useful discussion of the dynamics of triangular relationship in the storytelling process.

My argument that the storyteller's self awareness involves the self's simultaneous relationship with the other and the text is primarily based on Donald Davidson's notion of "triangulation." In Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective, Davidson refers to "triangulation" as "the result of threefold interaction, an interaction which is twofold from the point of view of each of the two agents: each interacting simultaneously with the world and with the other agent" (128). According to Davidson, triangulation takes place in a communicative interaction where such three elements as the speaker, the hearer, and the shared object are always present. These three elements work simultaneously in relation to one another; as the speaker speaks, he/she speaks to the hearer about the shared object or world and the hearer/reader responds to it in return. According to Davidson, we form concepts through communication, and communication requires triangulation. As we triangulate, we first realize the existence of the other, react to the other's reaction about the shared object, and align our knowledge with that of the other, in which process we form concepts about ourselves. Communication is what initially connects the self with the other and allows us to find ourselves socially situated. Davidson asserts that, "For two people to know of each other that they are so related, that their thoughts are so related, requires that they be in communication. Each of them must speak to the other and be understood by the other" (Subjective 121). Hence, to say that we know our own minds denotes that we know the minds of others by means of communication. Unless we get in touch with the other and

the shared world, we cannot understand ourselves. Self-understanding is achieved not in isolation, or through a bi-directional relationship between the self and the other but through triangulation with the other and with the object that constitutes our shared world. Human subjectivity alone cannot gain knowledge of the world and of the self without communicating with the other who has a shared understanding of the world. Hence, in order to know our minds, we must communicate, for without the other subject and without the shared world, we cannot form knowledge about ourselves. Simply put, the self exists through the other by way of the shared world.

Then specifically, what does it mean to know oneself through the relationship with the other? According to Donald Davidson, to be engaged in the process of triangulation implies that the self goes through a constant adjustment of difference with the other about the knowledge of the shared world. His notion that the self cannot know one's mind without knowing the mind of the other does not mean that the self and the other are in mutuality, reciprocity, or complete fusion. Rather, he posits that the understanding of self is achieved through a constant process of tension, adjustment, and negotiation with the other. As he asserts, the speaker and the listener "don't . . . have to mean the same thing by the same words, but they must each be an interpreter of the other" (Subjective 121). In fact, there would be no communication unless the self and the other are in tension as to their knowledge about the shared world. In the communicative interaction, both the

speaker and the listener engage in interpretation as to what the other does and does not know. As the speaker speaks and the listener listens, tension arises in one's interpretation of the other's thoughts, which leads to a modification in the possibility of arriving at a shared understanding about the world and about themselves.

Davidson explains this communicative interaction in terms of what he calls the "prior theory" and the "passing theory": "For the hearer, the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance of the speaker, while the passing theory is how he *does* interpret the utterance. For the speaker, the prior theory is what he *believes* the interpreter's prior theory to be, while his passing theory is the theory he *intends* the interpreter to use" ("Nice Derangement" 442). The hearer's prior theory is the hearer's guess as to how to interpret the speaker's utterance, and his/her passing theory is the theory he/she actually uses to interpret the utterance. And the speaker's prior theory is the speaker's speculation of how the hearer may interpret his/her utterance, and his/her passing theory is the theory that he/she "intends" the hearer to employ in the process of interpretation. Before the actual communication takes place, the speaker's prior theory and the hearer's prior theory may not necessarily coincide, for we can never know in advance how our utterance will be interpreted or how others will accurately interpret what we say. But as the communication takes place, their prior theories are modified and the speaker and the listener arrive at a passing theory, which is in fact the primary stage

of the communicative interaction. As Davidson points out, "What must be shared for communication to succeed is the passing theory. For the passing theory is the one the interpreter actually uses to interpret an utterance, and it is the theory the speaker intends the interpreter to use" ("Nice Derangement" 422). As we communicate, we make guesses about each other's meanings using our own passing theories until the speaker finds that his/her discourse has been well interpreted and until the listener's interpretation reaches close enough to the speaker's intended message. Although the passing theories may not coincide, they allow us to align our intention both with the interpretation of the other and with the shared discourse. This passing theory then becomes part of the prior theory that may be used in other communicative situations. This communicative cycle is what takes place in the process of "triangulation." It can be argued, then, that "triangulation" occurs because there is no complete fusion between the self and the other. Davidson's notion that the self can be understood only through the other does not necessarily denote that there is no self/other split. Rather, the initial lack of complete understanding and mutuality is what keeps the communication going and allows the self to come to one's understanding of oneself in the process.

Davidson's concept of "triangulation" can be appropriated for a discussion of narrative production and the conception of storyteller's self-formation in the sense that for a narrative to become meaningful, there must be a storyteller, a reader, and a text. These three elements obviously correspond to the three apexes of

Davidson's model of "triangulation" where the storyteller assumes the place of a speaker, the reader assumes the place of a hearer/interpreter, and the text assumes the places of an object in the world. As he/she narrates a story, the storyteller employs passing theories in order to align his/her intended meaning of the text with the reader's possible interpretations and with the language of the narrative, through which process the storyteller develops an awareness of his/her self.

The idea that the storyteller's self is conceived through a triangular relationship between the reader and the text leads to an understanding that one's self-conception is relational in the same sense that the storyteller's self-conception is dependent on the storyteller's relationship with both the text and the reader. Hence, if one of the three elements undergoes modification, then the interactive dynamics undergo changes as well. That is, as the self's relation to the reader changes, the text's meaning, even if it may retain the same language, is modified, in accordance with which the storyteller's self-conception is revised. Or, as the text that the storyteller shares with the reader changes, the storyteller and the reader employ new "passing theories," attempting to interpret each other's thoughts on the text, in which process, the storyteller comes to conceive of another aspect of his/her self. Because all three elements are required simultaneously to generate a meaning and they cannot be conceived of in isolation, a replacement of one element generates a whole new triangular dynamics and the sharers' conception of themselves and of each other.

Let me look at Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall to discuss self-formation in the triangular relationship of the storyteller, the text, and the reader. The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is structured as a series of letters written by Gilbert Markham to his brother-in-law Halford recounting the most important event of his life, that is, how Gilbert came to gain Helen Huntington's love and eventually to succeed in marrying her. In the process of narration, Gilbert transcribes hundreds of pages of Helen's diary that Helen let him read twenty years ago. Appropriating Davidson's concept of "triangulation" in the novel, I will examine three distinct instances where Brontë situates Helen's diary as an apex of three sets of triangular relationships of the storyteller, the text, and the reader.¹⁰ In the first triangular

¹⁰ The triangular relationship in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall can be seen in association with the novel's embedded structure corresponding to each layer of the story. Brontë's choice of the embedded framing of the novel, however, generated a negative reaction from the public. A number of critics found it awkward and unnecessary for various reasons. Jill Matus describes the novel as "an obscure text" (99). In Conversations in Ebury Street, George Moore critiques Anne Brontë's overall structure of the novel as a failure, complaining that it resembles Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights "in the clumsy device of a plot within a plot" (13). Winifred Gérin also sides with Moore in his introduction to The Tenant of Wildfell Hall on the weakness of the embedded structure of Anne Brontë's novel (13). They find that particularly the inclusion of Helen's diary within Gilbert's letter has weakened the overall effect of the story. To borrow Garrett Stewart's phrase, "its structure of postponed directness . . . was considered an inadvertence or a gross miscalculation" (75). And as for Brontë's choice of letter as the structure of the novel, Inga-Stina Ewbank remarks that "the machinery creaks sadly at times: there is no intrinsic reason why the framework should be in the form of letters (to a person who has no function in the novel)" (71). Seeing from a story perspective, Gilbert's inclusion of Helen's diary when his original purpose is to narrate "his" life may seem unnecessary, for Helen's diary recounts the events occurring before she met Gilbert does not bear a clear relationship to Gilbert's life. And from a structural standpoint, the story of Gilbert's life seems to be interrupted by Helen's story. Perhaps Moore is right with his poignant statement that "the diary broke the story in halves" (216). While these critics' observations are well taken, however, I maintain that Brontë's choice of the embedded narrative structure is not a failed work of art as it provides a useful site to look into the dynamic workings of triangular relationship of the storyteller, the text, and the reader in the formation of the storyteller's self.

relationship in which Helen writes the diary for/to herself, she is positioned as a storyteller with her diary being the text and herself the reader.¹¹ In the intra-subjective relationship that occurs by way of diary-writing, Helen becomes both a storyteller and a reader at the same time, observing herself as she writes and negotiating her thoughts, in which process she is able to look at herself in a more comprehensive manner. The second triangular relationship occurs as Helen gives her diary to Gilbert Markham, who strives to win her heart. In this instance, Helen becomes a storyteller, with her diary being the shared text and Gilbert the reader of her text. As they share the diary, Helen and Gilbert employ their own “prior theories,” which undergo modification. And as they negotiate their guesses about each other’s understanding of the text, they together arrive at a “passing theory” that enables them to understand their selves with respect to each other. And the third triangular relationship takes place as Gilbert transcribes Helen’s diary in his

¹¹ Several critics have noted the “un”-private aspect of diary writing. In “Toward Conceptualizing a Diary,” Felicity A. Nussbaum asserts that a diary may not “always [be] strictly secret” and that it may be written with an intention of having others read it (135). She further mentions that a diary, along with a journal, a letter, or an epistolary novel written in the eighteenth century, “rests uneasily on the perplexing boundary edge between the private and public worlds” (134). In “Diaries: Public and Private Records of Women’s Lives,” Suzanne L. Bunkers focuses on the public aspect of diary writing by pointing out that most of the diarists in the nineteenth century “had a specific audience in mind,” and she even goes so far as to argue that the understanding of the diary as a private form of writing is “a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon” (24, 17). However, in this chapter (as in chapter II), I want to emphasize that the diary nevertheless carries with it the notion of privacy and secrecy, as exemplified in Marian’s diary in Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White (where the reader is surprised at Count Fosco’s unexpected intrusion into Marian’s diary) and Helen’s diary in Brontë’s The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (where Helen desperately attempts to snatch her diary when Huntington “forcibly wrest[s]” it from her (370)). Both cases imply that privacy is the primary factor of diary writing that allows the diarists to be open with their inner feelings and thoughts. Hence, in this chapter, I want to focus on the value of diary-writing as a private form of writing.

letters to Halford, his brother-in-law, twenty years later. In this relationship, Gilbert becomes a storyteller with Helen's diary being the shared text and Halford its reader. In this instance, Gilbert makes Helen's text a part of his text, modifying it to fit his narrative purpose, through which process he reveals another aspect of his self as a storyteller.

In these instances in which the same text is shared by different sets of characters and is understood differently, Brontë illustrates that the storyteller's self-understanding is conceived not merely through the relationship to the text or to the reader but is associated with the storyteller's simultaneous relationship with both the text and the reader.

Let me look into three distinct situations in which Helen's diary is shared in order to show how in each of the triangular relationships in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, the storyteller engages in the act of negotiating his/her meanings of the text with the reader and forms his/her sense of self in the process: the triangular relationship of Helen as the writer, Helen's diary, and Helen as the reader; the triangular relationship of Helen, Helen's diary, and Gilbert; and the triangular relationship of Gilbert, Helen's diary and Halford.

The Triangular Relationship of Helen as the Writer, Helen's Diary,
and Helen as the Reader

In the innermost layer of Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall lies Helen's diary that covers the five years of her married life with Arthur Huntingdon (her selfish and irresponsible husband) to the point when she secretly moves to Wildfell Hall with her son Arthur. Helen's diary-writing shows how the diary is, for Helen, the only means available to her to satisfy her need to communicate, to freely express herself, and to become herself. As can be inferred from the diary section of the novel, Helen lives in loneliness, frustration, and pain, devoid of any means to relieve her feelings. As her husband, Arthur, slowly unveils his vile nature, slips into gambling and alcoholism, and even goes so far as to have an affair with Annabella Lowborough, a wife of one of his friends, Helen feels a desperate need to release her frustration and relieve her emotional pain. However, there is nobody to whom she can divulge the problems and pains of her marriage and nobody who can fully understand and sympathize with her concerns and struggles. Furthermore, she is well aware of the society's expectation that a woman shows a wifely submission and unquestioning obedience to her husband no matter how irresponsible and immature he may be. Subordinated by social constraint that prevents her from showing any signs of the emotional distress resulting from her marriage, she makes use of her diary as the only way to let out her suppressed feelings. The diary

becomes the means through which she divulges her thoughts and feelings and responds to them while she, at the same time, frees herself from the constraints of social judgment and expectation. It is a safe place for expression of any story, even something that would elicit pity or derision if exposed to the public. By expressing her thoughts freely, Helen unearths her buried self, her spontaneous and unpremeditated mind.

The manner in which Brontë has Helen compose the diary provides some insights into the characteristics of diary-writing and its association with the triangular relationship of the storyteller, the text, and the reader. The diary is composed in a private setting. At the moment of writing, Helen is alone in a room isolated from the outside world. In this setting where she is confined to her internal world, triangular dynamics are created in the relationship of herself as both the diarist and the reader, and the text. Brontë shows through Helen's process of composition that each element is closely interrelated, constantly influencing and influenced by the other two elements, through which the diarist comes to uncover her unconscious and unpremeditated mind and develop her self-awareness.

There are three types of triangular communicative interactions in the relationship of Helen as the writer, Helen's diary, and Helen as the reader: the interaction between the writer/diarist and the reader, the interaction between the text/diary and the reader, and the interaction between the text/diary and the writer. The first type of Brontë's triangular interactions leads us to look at her presentation

of Helen's double role as the diarist and the reader. In the private space of diary-writing, Helen narrates, reads, and responds to her own story at the same time. Unlike other genres of writing in which the writer expects that the reader exists as a separate entity (such as novels and letter-writing), a diary effaces the distinction between the storyteller and the reader as writing and reading takes places simultaneously. It is an intra-active form of storytelling, for as this diarist narrates, she reflects on her voice, negotiates and modifies her thoughts, which allows her room for a more objective and comprehensive look at herself. For example, as Helen recounts how when Huntingdon "is under the depressing influence of the after-consequences" of drinking too much wine and "bemoans his sufferings and his errors, and charges them both upon" her, she asks herself:

Have I not laboured long and hard to save him from this very vice? . . . Is it my fault that I have lost my influence with him, or that he has forfeited every claim to my regard? And should I seek a reconciliation with him, when I feel that I abhor him, and that he despises me? – and while he continues still to correspond with Lady Lowborough, as I know he does? (330)

Helen already has the answers to her own questions, for she exclaims right away vehemently, "No, never, never, never! – he may drink himself dead, but it is NOT my fault!" (330). Helen poses questions not because she is curious to know whether she is indeed responsible for his sufferings. Rather, the series of questions allow her

to check on her thoughts, specify the reasons why Huntingdon's errors are not her fault, and emphasize her indifferent attitude towards him. By listing the reasons she is not responsible for Huntingdon's alcoholism, she feels certain that Huntingdon's errors and sufferings are "NOT [her] fault" (expressing her certainty by capitalizing "not"). And by substantiating her thoughts into words (in the form of questions and answers), Helen organizes and (re)shapes her position, which leads her to be centered in herself and actually be the self that she understands herself to be.

As Huntingdon's behavior worsens and begins to corrupt their son Arthur, Helen decides to leave her marriage. And as she writes of her scheme of escape, her double role as the diarist and the reader becomes pronounced. Again, she employs the pattern of question and answer in the process of her planning:

But where should I find an asylum, and how obtain subsistence for us both? Oh, I would take my precious charge at early dawn . . . and seek a quiet, humble home in New England, where I should support myself and him by the labour of my hands. The palette and the easel, my darling playmates once, must be my sober toil-fellows now. But was I sufficiently skilful as an artist to obtain my livelihood in a strange land, without friends and without recommendation? No; I must wait a little; I must labour hard to improve my talent and to produce something worthwhile as a specimen of my powers And then I must have money for the journey . . . for who could tell how

long I might have to struggle with the indifference or neglect of others, or my own inexperience, or inability to suit their tastes?

What should I do then? Apply to my brother, and explain my circumstances and my resolves to him? No, no; even if I told him all my grievances . . . it would seem like madness to him . . . Rachel should be my only confidant – I thought I could persuade her into the scheme; and she should help me, first to find out a picture-dealer in some distant town; then, through her means, I would privately sell what pictures I had on hand that would do for such a purpose, and some of those I should thereafter paint. (357-58)

As Helen plans for the escape, her thoughts become more specific and concrete. In the initial stage of her plan, as shown towards the beginning of the passage above, her questions are more like an expression of her apprehension mixed with vague anxiety for her future life. The general sense of anxiety then develops into specific thoughts and plans. Her apprehensive questions as to where to go and how to support herself and her son are followed by answers, which then lead to more concrete questions and answers. As she goes through the dialectics of questions and answers, her thoughts become more specific and her anxiety is turned into firm resolution. In this process, Helen's thoughts are edited and modified to become more concrete and she is able to form a clear sense of how to proceed. Her vague apprehension turns into specific plans which then generate a firm resolution based

on which she immediately carries out her plan: "Having formed this resolution, I immediately set to work to accomplish it" (358). Here, Brontë shows that Helen's act of formulating concerns and worries into words and her performance of a dual role as the writer and the reader allows her to look into herself and her life with a perceptive eye and construct a specific plan for her future life. In the process of questioning and answering, Helen forms a better sense of her self and prepares herself for her life to come.

Helen's diary also demonstrates how the diarist's dual role as the writer and the reader brings about a therapeutic effect on the part of the diarist. Diary writing may seem to resemble the relationship and situation created between an analyst and an analysand in a therapy session. As the writer and reader, Helen occupies the position of both an analyst and an analysand. As she reflects on the past events, she analyzes them, re-invents them by experiencing them again while living in the present, through which process she is able to release all her emotional turmoil, sadness, and pain without fearing the repercussion of her thoughts. It offers her time for reflection, allowing the lingering thoughts to develop and making the abstract experience concrete and real, and through this process she is healed.

When Helen finds it difficult to organize her thoughts or control her emotions, she often seeks recourse in writing. For example, on the day when Helen is suddenly offered a marriage proposal by Huntingdon, she deems it necessary to ease her confused and disoriented mind by narrating what happened that day. The

entry begins as follows: "What have I done? And what will be the end of it? I cannot calmly reflect upon it; I cannot sleep. I must have recourse to my diary again; I will commit it to paper to-night and see what I shall think of it to-morrow" (180). The fact that Helen feels the need to write illustrates how writing is the only available means for her to let out her uncontrolled emotion and clear the mind of unorganized thoughts. On writing this, she then goes on in detail about Huntington's marriage proposal and her aunt's disapproval of his act. By narrating this proposal, Helen re-experiences it while being in a present moment of writing/reading it, which helps her release tensions and anxieties, clear her mind of issues and concerns that constantly demand her attention, step back from the problems that now exist in black and white on the secret page, and analyze it in a more objective manner.¹² As for the diary's therapeutic effect on Helen, Naomi M. Jacobs points out that "in writing down her experience, she affirms its reality; by making visible the invisible, speaking her forbidden rage, she breaks out of her emotional prison" (213). Hence, it is natural that after she finishes narrating it, she says, "I feel calmer now that I have written all this; and I will go to bed, and try to win tired nature's sweet restorer" (186). Writing not only calms her emotionally but

¹² Brontë also suggests that although diary-writing may allow Helen to be more balanced both emotionally and physically, it is not a problem-solver in itself, for with all the thinking and reflecting through diary-writing, she marries Halford nevertheless. This illustrates the limitation that the diary-writing has for the writer. While the writing may help her to look at herself from a distance, it cannot be completely freed from her own conceptual boundary which may be limited and subject to inaccuracy.

also physically, allowing her mind to be freed of confusion and struggle, at least for the present moment.

The healing effects of the diary, however, go beyond a mental and emotional scope as Brontë extends the power of diary writing to the alleviation of physical pain. The significant moment when Helen seeks recourse to her diary to ease her pain is when she finds out the shocking fact that Huntington and Annabella are having an affair. After witnessing the horrifying scene of Huntington and Annabella together outside in the garden, Helen finds it impossible to contain her anger. She immediately resorts to her diary, for it is the only resource that calms her down and keeps her headache at bay. Helen writes:

I have found relief describing the very circumstances that have destroyed my peace, as well as the little trivial details attendant upon their discovery. No sleep I could have got this night would have done so much towards composing my mind, and preparing me to meet the trials of the day – I fancy so, at least;-- and yet, when I cease writing, I find my head aches terribly. (317)

What assuages Helen's shock and headache at this moment is the writing of the incident that is the source of her dismay. By actually releasing her thoughts and emotions in concrete language and re-inventing and re-experiencing the incidents by way of writing, she finds "relief." Unloading her thoughts and putting into words her suppressed emotion helps her ease her pain, because it gives her pain

and suffering a voice, substance, and validity. Replaying the incidents through writing/reading allows her to let out the heaviness of her heart, the force of her rage, and the depth of her frustration. She feels a kind of bodily release; her headaches fade away and she feels relieved of an oppressive burden. This therapeutic function of the diary writing helps Helen look at the experience and deal with the situation in a calm, objective manner, as shown towards the closing of her entry where she writes, "Yet let me remember it is not I that am guilty: I have no cause to fear; and if they scorn me as the victim of their guilt, I can pity their folly and despise their scorn" (317). What helps Helen regain her calm and composure in a situation like this is the act of putting down her thoughts in words, ruminating on the incidents, and looking at her self from the distanced perspective of a writer describing a character.

The second type of Brontë's triangular interaction allows us to look into the ways in which the diary-writing creates a sense of unity not only between the diarist and the reader, but also between the text and the reader. At one point, Helen even considers the diary as her friend: "This paper will serve instead of a confidential friend into whose ear I might pour forth the overflowings of my heart. It will not sympathize with my distresses, but then it will not laugh at them, and, if I keep it close, it cannot tell again; so it is, perhaps, the best friend I could have for the purpose" (169-70). Helen treats the diary and the reader as one: it is a written text and a reader (a friend) at the same time. And the fact that Helen refers to the pages

of her diary as “silent” denotes that she desires to regard her diary as something more than a mere lifeless thing, as a “silent” reader/friend that listens to her inner thoughts while keeping them safe from others (256). Her desire to treat the diary – a lifeless document – as her “best friend” denotes how desperately she is in need of someone with whom to share her feelings and thoughts.

Taking the place of a human confidant, the diary satisfies Helen’s need to vent all her affliction and frustration of her marriage life and to find grounding in her own being. Particularly when she finds out that her husband is having an affair with Annabella Lowborough, whom he used to flirt with before marrying Helen and who is now the wife of one of his friends, Helen pours out her uncontrollable anger in the diary. While she retains her calm composure in front of others the day after the occurrence – “I was calm and cool throughout. I answered composedly all enquiries respecting my health,” she blurts out her utter hatred for him in her private pages – “it is not enough to say that I no longer love my husband – I HATE him! The word stares me in the face like a guilty confession, but it is true: I hate him – I hate him!” (318). Notice the striking contrast between her coolness towards others and her utter anger in her diary. In the private pages of her diary, Helen candidly declares her abhorrence for him. Because her diary is safe from the judgment of others and her “silent” friend, she is able to divulge her secret thoughts that would otherwise be simply unacceptable. And as she vents her anger and frustration, Helen checks on and responds to her own writing at the same time. She

confesses downright that she “hates” her husband, but as she writes down the word “HATE,” she simultaneously becomes a reader of her own writing: “the word stares me in the face like a guilty confession.” As the reader’s persona, she immediately reflects on and modifies her own thoughts from a more objective viewpoint. She somehow feels “guilty” for expressing an aversion towards her husband, for such an act goes against the social expectation of a dutiful and supportive wife. But then knowing well that her aversion towards her husband does not have to be curbed by the social constraints within the safe boundary of private writing, she immediately puts an end to her guilty feeling by proclaiming her detestation again: “I hate him!” Under such circumstances where Helen is not allowed publicly to open up her thoughts, her diary is the only friend that she can communicate with, an outlet of her distress and pain, a shelter that can protect her thoughts, a reader that responds to her own thought process, and a mirror through which she sees herself taking a center stage of her life.

The third type of Brontë’s triangular interactions guides us to consider her demonstration of relationship between the text and the writer. Written in a private setting and on a regular basis (for the most part), the diary functions as more than a finished document ready to be consumed or ruminated. Rather, it exerts an influence on its creator, allowing the diarist to determine an event that is yet to occur. In a sense, the text itself becomes an agent of the diarist’s future act. As illustrated in the earlier passage that shows Helen’s plans of escape, Helen’s writing

helps her specify her thoughts and determine her future acts. After making specific plans to run away and make a living by selling her paintings, Helen immediately sets out to carry out her plans: "I worked at my canvas from daylight till dusk, with very little intermission saving when pure necessity, or my duties to little Arthur, called me away" (359). Brontë shows here how writing influences the subsequent action and how that particular action is in turn represented in writing. For Brontë, Helen's writing is an emergent act that effects the outcome of an event. This dynamic interaction between the text and the writer can occur because the diary is not a finished product but an ongoing form of writing; the story is still in progress in the course of narration. The diary bridges the gap between the time of action and the time of writing, as is the case in the following passage: "Early this morning, Arthur mounted his hunter and set off in high glee to meet the----hounds. He will be away all day; and so I will amuse myself with my neglected diary – if I can give that name to such an irregular composition" (215). At this moment, writing becomes a part of the action as Helen comments on the very act of writing. To a certain extent, action and writing takes place simultaneously as writing induces change in the diarist's thoughts and views, eventually influencing her future action. And as also illustrated in the passage discussed earlier that traces Helen's transition from being anxious about her uncertain future after elopement to becoming decisive and resolute as to how to support herself and her son, there is a continuous dynamic between writing and action, between the text and the writer in a diary-writing in

Brontë's novel. The form of the text is dependent on the manner in which the diarist chooses to narrate at that particular narrating moment. And at the same time, the text exerts its own control over the diarist as the act of writing allows the diarist to prepare for new events. The text takes the role of an agent as the recorded event impacts her understanding of herself and prepares for what is to come in the future. The text and the diarist continuously interact with each other, each taking shape along the way. They are like links in a chain in which one influences and is influenced by the other.

Brontë's creation of Helen's diary has allowed us to examine the triangular dynamics in the relationship of the diarist, the text, and the reader by looking at the relationships between the diarist and the reader, between the text and the reader, and between the diarist and the text, respectively. In fact, the communicative interaction takes place not bi-directionally but tri-directionally as one element influences and is influenced by the other two elements simultaneously. Obviously, what we read is a finished, polished, edited, and fictive text. But an imitation of a drama of composition allows Brontë to examine the process of diary-writing and its association with the diarist's self-formation. Helen's writing shows how the diarist becomes simultaneously an agent and object of her writing, and the recipient upon which the text acts on. She shows, too, how this ongoing form of writing allows the relationship of the diarist, the text, and the reader to undergo continuous modification, constantly influencing one another. The dynamic triangulation in

which the diarist performs several roles allows her to develop a more comprehensive understanding of herself and to create a more acute orientation toward the future. By writing, the diarist sees herself through her own eyes and constitutes her identity.

The Triangular Relationship of Helen, Helen's Diary, and Gilbert

The triangular relationship of Helen, Helen's diary, and Gilbert in Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is associated with Helen's giving of her diary to Gilbert Markham. In this particular instance, Helen still remains a storyteller and the diary continues to be a shared text; the only change made in this instance is that the original reader (Helen) is replaced by Gilbert. Helen's sharing of her private story with Gilbert shows how the substitution of one element induces a different dynamic of triangulation and generates a different meaning for both the teller and the reader. As the diary is shared with someone other than the diarist herself, the story originally intended for the diarist's own self-communication turns into a medium of communication and exchange of thoughts between the diarist and the reader. With the introduction of the reader other than the diarist herself, the diary no longer functions as a stage for the diarist's solo performances but as a site for symphonies of shared understanding between the diarist and the reader. In a new set of

triangular dynamics in the relationship of Helen, the shared text, and Gilbert, Brontë presents the ways in which the text generates a new meaning in a new interactive context and the process through which the writer and the reader realize their selves in relation to each other.

First of all, let us look at the implication for herself of Helen's offering of the diary to Gilbert. Helen's act of giving the diary to Gilbert denotes her willingness to reveal herself. Such an act implies an openness and mutual trust between a giver and a receiver. Helen shows Gilbert the diary when she sees the depth and profundity of his feeling and believes him worthy to share her innermost feelings and thoughts, which indicates that giving the diary to him is her way of declaring that she trusts him so much as to regard him as her confidant. Regarding Helen's transmission of her diary to Gilbert, however, George Moore argues that Brontë should have let Helen tell her story directly to Gilbert instead of offering the diary that spans several hundred pages. For Moore, the handwritten diary dampens what otherwise could have been a passionate love story. Moore wrote to Brontë, "the presence of your heroine, her voice, her gestures, the questions that would arise and the answers that would be given to them, would preserve the atmosphere of a passionate and original love story. The diary broke the story in halves" (216).¹³

¹³ While George Moore and Winifred Gérin criticize the novel's overall structure as a failure (as I have noted earlier), a number of recent critics argue that Brontë's choice of an embedded narrative structure for the novel was necessary. In "Gender and Layered Narrative in Wuthering Heights and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall," Naomi M. Jacobs points out that in both novels, the layered narrative is a strategic device to "deal with the unacceptability of the subject matter"

While Moore's objection to Brontë's narrative strategy is understandable, however, I maintain that Brontë's narrative choice produces a more powerful effect in Helen and Gilbert's relationship, for such an act indicates her willingness to show every detail of her intimate concerns and thoughts. If Brontë had chosen direct narration, Helen's immediate choice of the stories and the manner in which they are conveyed would have to be taken into account in order to meet Gilbert's needs and interest; Helen's public telling of her story to Gilbert would have been reshaped and reconstructed within the constraint of Gilbert's expectation and standards and, to a certain extent, social expectations and standards. In this respect, Helen's decision to show him the diary filled with her unedited thoughts and feelings is a courageous move on her part. When Helen kept the diary in the first place, there were no specific expectations to fulfill, except for those maintained by the diarist herself. It had a single perspective of Helen's which was free from the pressures of the public eye. Within the safe pages of the diary, she was able to divulge her raw, candid thoughts, such as her initial love for her husband, her negative feelings about the marriage, and her growing dislike for her husband. Considering the situation in which the diary was written, giving the diary to Gilbert is a significant act as it

(206). She argues that such topics as domestic violence, a husband's degeneration into alcoholism and gambling and the break-down of marriage life cannot be recounted without presenting them in a roundabout way by framing it within a narrative by another voice. Edith A. Kostka's "Narrative Experience as a Means to Maturity in Anne Brontë's Victorian Novel The Tenant of Wildfell Hall" regards the embedded narration as a crucial means for Gilbert's development into adulthood (41). And Elizabeth Signorotti argues that Gilbert's act of incorporating Helen's diary in his letter reflects Brontë's view of Victorian men's desire to maintain power over women (21).

indicates that she strongly believes in his “depth of soul and feeling” to understand and sympathize with her intimate needs and thoughts (146). On giving the diary to Gilbert, Helen says, “Bring it back when you have read it; and don’t breathe a word of what it tells you to any living being—I trust to your honour” (146). Her remark indicates that the diary still remains as her private resort that she refuses to share with anybody except with him, which underscores the fact that allowing him the access to her diary signifies her sincere trust and confidence in him. What is implied in this scene publicizing her private narrative denotes the diarist’s desire to be accepted and recognized for the person that she reveals in her private page. In this context, the diary no longer functions as a means for self-revelation or self-communication, but becomes a tool for confession of their love. To borrow Garrett Stewart’s phrase, Helen’s diary in this particular context functions as “a roundabout love-letter” (“Narrative Economies” 77).

In addition to functioning as a “love-letter,” Helen’s diary also serves to minimize the breach between the publicly perceived image of her self and the self revealed in the diary. Ever since Helen’s arrival at Wildfell Hall with her son, Arthur, people have been constantly speculating about her dubious circumstances, turning her into someone that she is not. In fact, Helen’s reputation among people has less to do with her and more to do with their incessant curiosity at the new face in town and with their selfish urge for a new, interesting story. Reputation is generally a publicly formed understanding of one’s self based on one’s appearance,

deeds and behavior, as well as on aspects of those determining the reputation. One's public image that is formed based on what is seen may not coincide with one's own self-conception, for what is seen on the outside does not necessarily reflect one's own inner state. And the more one conceals oneself from the public, or the more a particular aspect of one's self is accentuated, the wider the gap grows between the publicly formed image and the self that one conceives oneself to be. Such is the case with Helen. A "single lady" with a child in "slightish mourning," she does not attend the Sunday church service a couple of times and is a mere tenant of a "place . . . in ruins" (37, 38, 37). In addition, her silence as to her background (why is she living in isolation in Wildfell Hall? who is the father of her child? how does she support herself? etc.) induces the gossip to flourish, turning her into a poor, unsociable, and disreputable widow. To borrow Jan B. Gordon's term, the townspeople function as "author[s]," participating in constructing the woman that Helen is not (723).

The story about Helen that people are so intent on creating is far from being favorable, as is usually the case with gossips. As he begins to have an interest in her, Gilbert denies, or wants to deny, any truth of the community gossip about Helen's mysterious situation, her past, and her mysterious relationship to Frederick Lawrence (who is, in fact, her brother). Instead, he treats it for a time as "the poison of detracting tongues," "the vile slander," and "some detestable falsehoods" (102, 108, 120). Gilbert's affection for Helen has prevented him from being affected by the

rumors about her. Whatever people say, Helen is for Gilbert “the noblest, the most adorable, of her sex that [he] had ever beheld” (101). However, since he has no substantial basis on which to keep his confidence in her, his trust in her is shaken when he spots Frederick and Helen close together out in Helen’s garden late in the evening. Gilbert later says to Helen, “I have hitherto been perseveringly shutting my eyes and stopping my ears against everything that threatened to shake my confidence in you, till proof itself confounded my infatuation” (144). On hearing him, Helen realizes that Gilbert’s misunderstanding of her is induced by his complete ignorance of her identity fueled with the townspeople’s negative speculation about her, eventually causing him great pain and grief. Gilbert confesses, “you have done me an injury you can never repair . . . you have blighted the freshness and promise of youth, and made my life a wilderness! I might live a hundred years, but I could never recover from the effects of this withering blow,” in response to which Helen feels the need to unveil her self (145-46). Although Helen is initially hurt by his misperception of her, she at the same time understands that his emotional injury confirms that he has strong feelings for her. Hence, by giving him the diary, she not only confirms her trust in him but also modifies his misconception of her.

While it may bring Helen and Gilbert close together and towards mutual understanding, the diary also shows how their thoughts with regard to each other differ nevertheless. As they share the diary, Helen and Gilbert apply their own

“prior theories,” to borrow Davidson’s term, which do not coincide. Helen’s “prior theory” is that while it will satisfy Gilbert’s curiosity as to her past, her story will at the same time help him realize the impossibility of continuing their relationship. Helen once says to Gilbert, “I will tell you all you seek to know; and perhaps you will then see the necessity of discontinuing our intimacy” (122). For Helen, the act of giving a diary implies a couple of things. First, by letting him read her diary, she wishes to satisfy her desire to share her intimate thoughts and feelings with someone who can sympathize with and understand her. While she originally made use of the diary as her best friend, she has now found the real person who can take the place of the diary, who can actually listen and respond to her intimate concerns. And second, she intends to let him know that their relationship cannot progress beyond friendship, that however strong his love for her may be, their relationship has to come to an end, for, as the diary shows, she is still married.

Gilbert’s “prior theory,” however, differs from hers; he has a different set of values, mores, and goals. In addition to expecting that her text will confirm his faith in her virtue and goodness, he believes that knowing her past will eventually help their relationship develop. As implied in his reference to the diary as his “prize,” he believes that the diary denotes her heart and he has finally come to win it (147). Even after he finishes reading Helen’s diary and employs his own “passing theory” to modify his “prior theory,” his thoughts do not fully coincide with hers as he does not fully comprehend Helen’s intention in offering him the diary. While one of her

primary reasons for showing the diary is to let him know that their relationship cannot continue, Gilbert interprets it simply as her confession of love, for his love for her intensifies as he finishes reading it. The following scene that describes Gilbert's visit to Helen right after finishing her diary clearly substantiates their different take on the diary:

“Now Gilbert, you must leave me – not this moment, but soon, – and you must never come again.”

“Never again, Helen? Just when I love you more than ever!”

“For that very reason, if it be so, we should not meet again

[O]ur intercourse must end here.”

“End here!” echoed I; and approaching the high, carved chimney-piece, I leant my hand against its heavy mouldings, and dropped my forehead upon it in silent, sullen despondency. (405)

This passage clearly illustrates the discrepancy in their “passing theories.” Helen shows her diary to convince him that his love for her has to come to an end and she expects him to interpret it as such, whereas Gilbert, who took the diary as a sign of her love, has not taken into consideration the impossibility in the consummation of their love and he finds himself loving her all the more. The conversation above allows them to realize their different thoughts, to undergo modification of their different interpretations of the text, and to minimize the interpretive gap.

Here, it is necessary to examine in detail Gilbert's take on the text and the ways in which the text becomes a useful site for Gilbert to reframe his thinking and develop his self-awareness. In fact, Gilbert's reading of the diary demonstrates that the diary does more than show the writer's desire for recognition through understanding, affective sharing, and emphatic resonance, that it also becomes the means by which the reader goes through his own process of self-realization and alteration. Written over several years, the diary reveals Helen's development from a naïve, immature girl who used to have fantasies and dreams about marriage to a defiant, powerful and strong woman/mother who is ready to break from the confines of a suppressed marriage life and to live an independent life. And written on a regular basis, it reveals the ongoing inner process of conflicts, struggles, and negotiation of her identities as a woman/wife/mother over time.

For Gilbert, Helen's diary becomes a tool that helps him develop into adulthood and adapt himself to her level of maturity. By reading Helen's diary that traces the process of her maturation, Gilbert indirectly goes through his own process of growth. Helen's text allows him to look into himself and create the story of his own development. Gilbert has not seen (not to mention, suffered) the kinds of incidents that Helen has gone through; he has been ignorant of the kind of world that Helen has lived in. During the six years when Helen has opened her eyes to the mistake in her life, suffered its consequences, managed her inner conflicts and struggles, and eventually learned to face adversities with courage and

determination, Gilbert has been living a secure and comfortable life under maternal protection. In fact, Gilbert was not a man of much ambition, for although he says he originally had higher aims than becoming a farmer, he gave up his own goals without much hesitation to embrace his father's expectations, living the life of "an honest and industrious farmer" by managing the farms so as to "transmit the paternal acres to [his] children" (35). And even at twenty-four years of age when he first met Helen, he still remained a mama's boy, for he did not mind his mother calling him a "brave boy," and rather seemed to "feel quite a good boy" at his mother's stroking (37, 128). He never seemed resentful or annoyed at his mother treating him like a boy. Such was the kind of man that Gilbert was until he encounters a totally different dimension of life in Helen's narrative.

Gilbert who used to lack depth and maturity, however, undergoes a transformation by means of reading Helen's diary. Helen's diary becomes an eye-opener for Gilbert to the part of life that he has been unaware of. By indirectly experiencing the life that Helen has lived through, indirectly suffering the pain that she has gone through, and seeing the courage it takes for her to live her own life, he comes to reflect on himself in the process, the initial step into maturity which is followed by an eventual transformation of self. As Edith A. Kostka argues, Helen's diary provides Gilbert with "the means to change youthful indifference into responsible, aware adulthood" (41). Gilbert's change of self shows that the act of reading is not a passive and receptive act of understanding the writer's self as the

writer intends it to be seen, but an active and creative act that enables the reader to go through his/her own self-realization.

How does Gilbert, then, recognize himself as he journeys through the process of Helen's alteration? As Helen's potential lover, Gilbert reads the diary not so much from Helen's position as from the position of a man who desires to win Helen's heart. While sympathizing with Helen's suffering and fuming at Huntington's mistreatment of her, Gilbert imagines himself as someone who can take Huntington's place, as her future lover. In the story of Helen's pain and struggles in marriage, he reads the story of Helen's deteriorating relationship with Huntington. In her suffocation in marriage, he sees Helen's love for Huntington extinguished and gone; and in Helen's wish to escape the confines of her marriage life, he perceives the possibility of himself as her new love. In his letter to Halford, Gilbert writes of his reaction after reading Helen's narrative:

[T]he former half of the narrative was, to me, more painful than the latter; not that I was at all insensible to Mrs Huntingdon's wrongs or unmoved by her sufferings, but, I must confess, I felt a kind of selfish gratification in watching her husband's gradual decline in her good graces, and seeing how completely he extinguished all her affection at last. The effect of the whole, however, in spite of all my sympathy for her and my fury against him, was to relieve my mind of an

intolerable burden and fill my heart with joy, as if some friend had roused me from a dreadful nightmare. (402)

As implied in the passage, Gilbert is not so much interested in Helen's "wrongs" or "sufferings" as in her gradual loss of affection for Huntington. Gilbert remarks that the former half of her diary is "painful" to read, because it reveals Helen's growing love for Huntington, and that the latter delights him as Huntington has "extinguished all her affection at last." In a way, Helen's joy is his pain, and her suffering, his delight (which, of course, he confesses he is embarrassed to say). But eventually, reading Helen's diary helps him relieve the "burden" and bring back the "joy," for it not only clarifies his misunderstanding of her but also shows him the possibility in the development of their relationship now that her love for Huntington has faded away. As Garrett Stewart rightly points out, "he finds in the diary the lifted veil of his very desire, the potential chance of consummation, the wish-fulfillment scenario of triangulated passion overcome at last by the humiliating degeneration of the rival" ("Narrative Economies" 94). For Gilbert, Helen's lack of love for Huntington denotes the possibility of her affection for him and the failure of her first marriage means hope for a new love. As he reads, Gilbert participates in creating his own meaning through the interaction of the text's language and his position in relation to the text and to Helen, the original writer of the text. The triangular dynamics in the relationship of Gilbert, the text, and Helen

leads Gilbert to impose a new meaning on Helen's story, in which process her story becomes his.

As a man who desires to win Helen's heart, Gilbert's focus of attention in the diary must have been Arthur Huntington, her husband. For Gilbert, Huntington is the rival against whom he has to compete and from whom to distinguish himself in order to develop his relationship with Helen. As depicted by Helen, Huntington is the man who has turned Helen's life into misery, whose never-ending plunge into moral and physical degradation caused her to give up on her role as his moral and spiritual guide, and whose self-absorbed attitudes and lack of appreciation for his wife has eventually made her turn her back on him. Although Gilbert is not the type of man who, like Huntington, ruins himself by gambling or drinking, there are some similarities between himself and Huntington in their views towards women. In the diary, Helen reveals that Huntington perceives a wife to be:

a thing to love one devotedly and to stay at home – to wait upon her husband, and amuse him and minister to his comfort in every possible way, while he chooses to stay with her; and, when he is absent, to attend to his interests, domestic or otherwise, and patiently wait his return; no matter how he may be occupied in the meantime.

(257)

For Huntington, a wife is someone who exists solely for her man, someone who should be selflessly devoted to the care of her husband. For him, Helen is nothing

more than a mere instrument that fulfills his selfish needs and desires. Helen, however, does not fully comply with his idea of wifedom. She writes in her diary, “[h]is notions of matrimonial duties and comforts are not my notions” (256). She does not see herself as his selfless shadow, devoid of any sense of individuality of her own, but as his moral and spiritual guide, an individual who tries to fulfill her purpose in life (256).

Gilbert’s perception of women does not seem to differ much from Huntington’s, for he also believes that women should be selfless supporters of their men. Being raised by an ideologically conservative mother who believes that in a marriage relationship, “it is [a] husband’s business to please [him]self, and [a wife’s] to please [him]” and that all household matters should be determined in terms of “what’s most agreeable to the gentlemen of the house,” he finds it natural that women attend solely to men and their needs (79, 78). Although he contends, “When I marry, I shall expect to find more pleasure in making my wife happy and comfortable, than in being made so by her: I would rather give than receive,” his general self-indulgent and self-absorbed attitude, which very much resembles Huntington’s, are shown in his behavior towards Eliza Millard, the flirty, superficial town girl, and even towards Helen in the initial stage of their relationship (79). He admits that “perhaps . . . [he] was a little bit spoiled by [his] mother and sister, and some other ladies of my acquaintance” (58). For Gilbert, women should be able willingly to cater to men’s needs and ego. For that reason, he enjoyed having Eliza

Millward around, for she knew how to flatter and cajole him with her “gentle and childish” voice and the “pretty, playful” kitten-like manners (42).

Gilbert’s first impression of Helen also reflects his haughty and disdainful demeanor towards women. Upon first seeing Helen, the new woman who immediately becomes the talk of the town, he begins a close scrutiny of her looks and poise. Noticing her “too firmly compressed” lips and her air of “no very soft or amiable temper,” he reaches a hasty conclusion that she would not have the capacity to conciliate and propitiate him, thus “[he] would rather admire [her] from this distance . . . than be the partner of [her] home” (41). Such a self-indulgent attitude is immediately noted by Helen, who stares back at him with an “expression of quiet scorn” (41). Helen’s scornful look provokes in this manipulative young man a sense of agitation and anger: “She thinks me an impudent puppy. . . . Humph!— She shall change her mind before long, if I think it worthwhile” (41). As Naomi M. Jacobs rightly points out, the young Gilbert is “a product of his society’s obsession with gender and reinforcement of male privilege” as a result of the patriarchal upbringing (208). Helen’s contemptuous attitude towards him becomes a challenge to his masculine vanity. And although he develops feelings for Helen, he cannot rid himself of the thought that women are objects to control and conquer, for when he thinks that he has finally won Helen’s heart, he thinks his “hour of victory was to come” (110). To borrow Elizabeth Signorotti’s words, “Markham (which sounds suspiciously like marksman) is interested only in the conquest, the hunting down,

of Helen Huntingdon" (21). Such was the man of Gilbert before reading Helen's diary, a self-absorbed and vain man who seeks for a selfless, submissive wife who can please him; in this he shares some aspects of Huntington's personality.

However, as he reads of Helen's growing antipathy to Huntington in accordance with his continuous selfish and self-indulgent behaviors, Gilbert finds the need to dispose of his old self in order to become the man that Helen would expect her new partner to be, if she ever intends to find one. Helen has stepped out of her husband's shadow, making a living and supporting her son by selling her own paintings. Huntington's disrespectful, self-absorbed, and self-abusive behaviors have eventually turned her into a strong and independent woman who is willing to lead her own life, even if it means going against social norms and expectations. Gilbert is now aware (after reading the diary) that she is already a changed woman who is not willing to repeat the mistake of sacrificing her life for someone else. He realizes that she is not the naïve Helen who used to think it her duty and "delight" to "please" the man anymore, but who now exerts the right to command her own life (216). She is completely transformed into a woman like a "winter rose"; having survived the freezing winter of her first marriage, she is ready to bloom again as a strong, independent woman (484). Hence, in order to win Helen's heart, Gilbert must forsake his old self and become a man who can respect and appreciate a woman as an individual being.

After reading Helen's diary, Gilbert, who used to be hard-headed, emotional, and selfish and who regarded women as inferior and subordinate to men, now considers them as his equal partners, which is clearly illustrated in the scene where Helen proposes marriage to Gilbert. At this moment, Helen makes it clear that her second "marriage is to please [her]self alone" (486). This statement clearly denotes her refusal to be sacrificed to dominating male power and her determination to live her own life. And the fact that Gilbert accepts her marriage proposal indicates that he accepts and respects her as an individual with strength and power over her life and that he is ready "to find more pleasure in making [his] wife happy and comfortable" (79).

Gilbert's reading of Helen's diary shows the dynamics of triangulation and its association with the reader's self-realization and his self-development. For Gilbert, Helen's story is more than a story of her life as it also functions as a mirror through which he reflects on himself and as a guide to a future relationship with Helen. As he reads, Gilbert also takes the role as a writer in the sense that he projects his thoughts and interest into the story and formulates the meaning of Helen's story for his own use, turning Helen's story into his own. In a way, Helen's text becomes what Roland Barthes terms a "writerly" text, the text whose "goal" is "to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text," the text whose meaning depends on the ways in which the reader interprets it (S/Z 4). By reading Helen's story and indirectly experiencing Helen's life, Gilbert writes of his

need to break the comfort zone that kept him socially dependent and immature and to encounter a new dimension of life so that he is capable of becoming Helen's new love.

The triangular dynamics in the relationship of Helen, Gilbert, and the diary illustrate the ways in which the text brings about a whole new meaning in a different interactive context and that the writer and the reader of a shared text come to an understanding of their selves by means of both the text and of each other. Particularly in this version of the triangular formation, Brontë allows us to look into not just the writer's but also the reader's self-realization in the text-sharing process. She shows how the writer's story is not to be read and understood solely from the writer's perspective and how the reader's thought process and his/her relationship to the writer add to the multiplicity of the story's meaning. Gilbert's reading experience clearly illustrates the ways in which the reader also constructs his/her own version of the story and conceives of his/her self in the process. For Helen, giving the diary to Gilbert denotes that she desires to reveal her completely hidden inner self and at the same time implies that she cannot continue on with the relationship because of her status as a married woman. And for Gilbert, while it allows him to understand and love her all the more, the diary also becomes the means for his own self-realization and self-growth which eventually helps him win Helen's heart. This triangular relationship shows that the shared text not only allows both the diarist and the reader to reflect on themselves with respect to each

other, but also generates different interpretations for the other. That is, while the story serves to blur the emotional and social gap that has kept them apart and helps Helen and Gilbert come to a better understanding of each other, it also allows them to realize their different thoughts in relation to each other, leaving room for adjustment and modification of their thoughts, through which process each sharer reaches his/her own self-realization.

The Triangular Relationship of Gilbert, Helen's Diary, and Halford

In the outermost frame of The Tenant of Wildfell Hall lies the triangular relationship of Gilbert, Helen's diary, and Halford. In this triangulation, Brontë positions Gilbert as the storyteller, Halford as the reader, and Helen's diary as the shared text. While the shared text remains the same as in the first and second triangular relationship, the sharers of the text (teller and reader) are replaced by Gilbert and Halford, respectively. In this newly allocated context, the text generates a completely different meaning for Gilbert. When Gilbert was positioned as a reader of Helen's diary, the reading led him to open his eyes to his immaturity, selfishness, and lack of respect for women's individuality and agency, eventually allowing him to develop into adulthood. Now, after twenty years as Gilbert tells of his life in a series of letters to Halford, Gilbert is placed as a teller of Helen's story with Halford

as a reader, formulating Helen's story for his own use. In this particular version of triangular relationship, Brontë allows us to examine two aspects in terms of storytelling: first, how the teller's relationship with the reader influences the way the story is told and the way the teller conceives of him/herself, and second, how the absence of the original author of the shared text influences the text's meaning in the process of triangulation. I focus primarily on Gilbert's interaction with Halford, his new approach to Helen's text, and his self-conception in the process of storytelling.

As Brontë composes The Tenant of Wildfell Hall in an epistolary structure, she creates Halford as an imaginary reader (a "narratee") who does not have a function in the story.¹⁴ His existence can be inferred only through the qualities and faculties bestowed by Gilbert. Although Halford does not exist as a character in the story, the ways in which Brontë has Gilbert formulate the story allow us to take into account how the storyteller's narration is associated with his understanding of and relationship with the reader. The manner in which Gilbert formulates the story particularly for Halford illustrates that the teller's recognition of the reader's existence is closely associated with the way the story is narrated and the way the teller comes to an awareness of another aspect of himself in the process.

¹⁴ In "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee," Gerald Prince defines a "narratee" as "someone whom the narrator addresses" (214). He points out that a "narratee" may be, first, no one in particular, second, an identified entity that is not a character in the story, and third, a character in the story. Depending on the types, the narratee may or may not influence the plot of the story. In The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Halford falls in the second category as he is addressed by Gilbert, the narrator, but does not participate in the plot.

What is Gilbert's perception of Halford? And how does such an understanding influence his manner of storytelling? First, Gilbert is aware that Halford is "not naturally communicative" and a person of "comparative closeness and taciturnity" (33). In this respect, Halford's act of giving him "a very particular and interesting account of the most remarkable occurrences of [his] early life" in their last meeting was indeed a significant move on his part, for it must have required some courage to do something that he deems "the last of the kind" (33). Second, Gilbert refers to Halford as an "old boy" who does not seem to be appreciative of "so many proofs of frankness and confidence" that Gilbert has given him and who shows "a certain dignified, semi-melancholy stiffness and reserve" simply because of Gilbert's refusal to tell an interesting story in return (33). As Gilbert understands it, Halford thinks that he has done such "great things" to prove his trust and confidence and that Gilbert does not appreciate it as such, which is implied in his denial of Halford's request for "the smallest return" "for so mighty a favour" (33). In fact, Gilbert jokingly scorns Halford for his childish behavior in maintaining an air of cold reserve and distance for being denied his request for a return of confidence. Thus, in order to propitiate him, Gilbert has only to accede to his request for a story as captivating and engaging as his. And third, Gilbert understands that for Halford, sharing stories is his way of establishing and developing intimate friendship. Indeed, it must have demanded considerable nerve

for such an uncommunicative man to tell the story, which infers that Halford has done his utmost to substantiate his absolute trust as a friend.

Comprehending the reader's frame of mind allows Gilbert to decide which story to tell and how to tell it. As a way to return his proof of friendship, Gilbert decides to do exactly the same; he undertakes to tell the most significant event of his life. As he writes to Halford that "I did not take up my pen to reproach you, nor to defend myself, nor to apologize for past offences, but, if possible, to atone for them," Gilbert finds it best to recompense what Halford might have deemed as "offences" by telling an equally interesting story in return (33, 34). Moreover, to satisfy Halford's propensity for "a long story" and "particularities and circumstantial details," he adds "minute details," even going so far as to include hundreds of pages of Helen's diary within his narrative frame (34). Gilbert's decision to give "a full and faithful account of certain circumstances connected with the most important event of [his] life" is his way of granting Halford's request of confidence in return and satisfying his desire for an equally "interesting" and "remarkable" story. Here, Brontë illustrates that the storyteller's presumption about the reader's disposition influences the way the story is told. That is, the storyteller's act of restructuring his formal understanding of the past events is associated with his understanding and anticipation of the reader's perspective on and expectations of the text. While the storyteller may be the one in control of the choice of materials and their presentation, his manner of narrative configuration is subjected to his

understanding of the targeted reader. The manner in which Gilbert constructs the story is determined by his understanding of the reading audience for whom the story comes into being. If it were not for Halford, Gilbert's story would remain mere abstract musings; his memories of the past would have been left in a pre-narrated state.

In the following passage, Brontë provides the scene in which Gilbert comes to play the role as a storyteller such that his abstract musings come to take a narrative form:

It is a soaking rainy day, the family are absent on a visit, I am alone in my library, and have been looking over certain musty old letters and papers, and musing on past times; so that I am now in a very proper frame of mind for amusing you with an old-world story;—and, having withdrawn my well-roasted feet from the hobs, wheeled round to the table, and indited the above lines to my crusty old friend, I am about to give him a sketch—no, not a sketch,—a full and faithful account of certain circumstances connected with the most important event of my life—previous to my acquaintance with Jack Halford at least;—and when you have read it, charge me with ingratitude and unfriendly reserve if you can. (34)

As Gilbert decides to tell the story of the event that occurred before he was acquainted with Halford, he desires to maximize Halford's satisfaction by telling an

event that may be unfamiliar to him. This scene illustrates two things with regard to storytelling. First, she shows that a story is brought into being when there is a storyteller, elements that can be made up into a coherent story, and a corresponding reader. Only when there is a teller who desires to tell a story and a reader who desires to read what is told can the story come into existence as a distinct, valid entity. When Gilbert first refused Halford's request for a story, there was no teller, no story; hence, no reader. Halford's desire to be positioned as a reader is frustrated by Gilbert's denial of storytelling. But, now as Gilbert is "in a very proper frame of mind for amusing" Halford with the story of his past, his decision to become a storyteller of his past event automatically puts Halford in the position of a reader; hence, the triangular relationship is actualized in the relationship of Gilbert (as a teller), Halford (as a reader), and Gilbert's story (in which Helen's story is included).

Second, it is in the teller's and the reader's desire for a story that the abstract musings of the past become a specific narrated entity. If Gilbert has not decided to take up the role as a storyteller, those "musty old letters and papers, and musing on past times" would remain fragmented and disparate traces of his past that are yet unplotted, pre-narrated, or "prefigured," to borrow Paul Ricoeur's term (Time 1: 54).¹⁵ But now that he decides to tell a story, he is ready to play the role as a

¹⁵ My concept of memories as yet unplotted and non-linear is based on Paul Ricoeur's approach to the narrative process of human experience. In the first volume of Time and Narrative, Ricoeur argues that thoughts and actions are not already narrative, but they become meaningful through the narrative process. According to him, the mediating process of narrative "configuration" provides a meaning and value to the pre-narrated or "prefigured" human experience (54). And

storyteller as desired by the particular reader, for his existence as a storyteller is determined by the reader who recognizes him as such. As implied in the following passage that opens Gilbert's second letter to Halford: "I perceive, with joy, my most valued friend, that the cloud of your displeasure has passed away; the light of your countenance blesses me once more, and you desire the continuation of my story: therefore, without more ado, you shall have it," Gilbert's position as a storyteller is completely dependent on Halford's desire to remain a reader of his story (45).

Hence, as a way to continue the teller-reader relationship, Gilbert attempts to fulfill Halford's readerly desire by offering "not a sketch" but rather "a full and faithful account of certain circumstances connected with the most important event of [his] life" with the aid of other texts, such as old letters and papers, his journal, and Helen's diary, in addition to his sketchy memories.

Here, it is necessary to note that the triangular relationship of Gilbert, Halford, and Gilbert's narrative is formed out of Gilbert's need to regain friendship with Halford. If Gilbert refuses to resume the role as a storyteller, then Halford will continue to maintain a certain degree of "stiffness and reserve" and their friendship may never recover as before. Hence, as a way to satisfy Halford's readerly taste and eventually to help rebuild their friendship, Gilbert decides to appropriate and recontextualize pieces and elements of old writings into his new narrative as a way to provide a "full and faithful account" of his story. And among the texts that he

it is through this configuring act of emplotment that the "manifold of events" forms "the unity of one temporal whole" (66).

incorporates into his own story is Helen's private diary, which, in fact, becomes the primary text that takes up more than half of his narrative space. It is worth noting here that while Gilbert blends other texts, such as his journal, "old letters and papers" smoothly into his narrative, he leaves Helen's diary unaltered, retaining its original words, which implies Gilbert's opinion of the significant role that Helen's text may play in re-establishing his friendship with Halford. The following passage shows Gilbert's purpose in including hundreds of pages of Helen's diary within his narrative frame:

I have it now before me; and though you could not, of course, peruse it with half the interest that I did, I know you would not be satisfied with an abbreviation of its contents, and you shall have the whole, save, perhaps, a few passages here and there of merely temporal interest to the writer, or such as would serve to encumber the story rather than elucidate it. It begins somewhat abruptly, thus – but we will reserve its commencement for another chapter, and call it, – .

(147)

Gilbert speculates that Halford may not read Helen's diary with the same "interest" as he did, for the story does not bear any direct relation to Gilbert's life. But at the same time, he is fully aware that Halford would nevertheless want "the whole" story, for, as mentioned in the very beginning of the narrative, Halford is, as Gilbert understands him, "a stickler for particularities and circumstantial details" (34). And,

this passage illustrates that Gilbert's primary purpose of reproducing Helen's text verbatim is to satisfy Halford's desire for a lengthy and detailed story. In a way, Helen's text becomes a tool that allows Gilbert to reveal his interest in and concern for the reader's response; it functions as a bridge of communication between him and Halford. Furthermore, Gilbert's decision to include hundreds of pages of Helen's diary (only minimally edited) as part of his text clearly confirms his desire to be identified through his relationship with Halford. By the way he makes use of Helen's diary in his narrative, it is clear that his relationship with Halford matters more to him than his promise with Helen, his wife. When first shown the diary by Helen, Gilbert was warned to keep it secret: "Bring it back when you have read it; and don't breathe a word of what it tells you to any living being" (146). However, twenty years later, Gilbert takes pains reproducing Helen's diary verbatim for Halford, which substantiates that Gilbert is more intent on proving his "frankness and confidence" to Halford than keeping his promise with his wife, that his identity as Halford's friend matters more to him than his identity as Helen's husband (34).

Another aspect to consider is Gilbert's claiming of editorship of Helen's text. As implied in the way Gilbert divides it into chapters and providing chapter titles, Gilbert transforms Helen's text into his own, editing it in the way that suits his authorial taste. Here, Brontë allows us to consider the implication of the absence of the text's original author in the triangular dynamics. In the relationship of Gilbert, Halford, and Helen's text, Helen, the original meaning of the text, is completely

dismissed. Helen's authorial intention is no longer to be found in Gilbert's narrative configuration for Halford's readerly satisfaction, for what matters in Gilbert's transcription of Helen's text is what the original authorial intention is but what the text means to Gilbert in association with his relationship with Halford, the reader. This substantiates that the text's meaning is not author-dependent, but sharer-dependent; or to be more precise, triangular. That is, the text's meaning does not exist in isolation in which the author's intention remains independent of the context and reader, but it is dependent on the way the teller (who may not necessarily be the text's original author) makes use of it with regard to the reader at a particular triangulating moment.

How, then, is Helen's diary textually incorporated in Gilbert's narrative? How does Gilbert make Helen's text his own? And how is Gilbert's manner of narration associated with his relationship with Halford and eventually his self-display? In his narrative, Gilbert makes a sharp structural demarcation between his text and Helen's by beginning Helen's text with a new chapter and giving it a new title: "It begins somewhat abruptly, thus – but we will reserve its commencement for another chapter, and call it, –" (147). As mentioned in the passage here, the following chapter that begins Helen's story "abruptly" throws the reader in medias res: "June 1st, 1821. – We have just returned to Staningley – that is, we returned some days ago, and I am not yet settled, and feel as if I never should be" (148). There is no explanation as to who "we" are, where "we" have been, and why "we"

are returning to Staningley, and the date of the journal entry is given, all of which provide a sense of immediacy and directness, creating the effect that the reader is actually reading the actual diary without Gilbert's explicit mediation or interruption. While leaving the content of the text untouched, Gilbert makes the text a structural part of his narrative by dividing it into chapters and providing titles that encompass the thematic content of each chapter. As Gilbert situates the diary within his narrative framework, he adds his retrospective perception of the text by providing titles for each chapter. For example, the title of the chapter that begins Helen's story, "The Warnings of Experience," shows Gilbert's comprehension of that particular section of the story. As implied in the title, he finds the main point of the chapter to be "the warnings," or to be more specific, Helen's disregard for her aunt's "warnings," which hints at his retrospective understanding that Helen should have listened to her aunt's "warnings" about love and marriage. The title serves as a foreshadowing of what would become of her life if she does not take the warning seriously. While Gilbert keeps Helen's original language, the manner in which he presents it makes it a constitutive part of his own text.

As Gilbert transcribes Helen's diary, he controls her text, adding a novelistic touch to it as he does with the rest of his narrative. In the beginning, Gilbert notified Halford that his narrative will be divided into chapters: "To begin then, at once, with Chapter First, — for it shall be a tale of many chapters. —" (34). He then situates Helen's diary within his novelistic framework by dividing her story into chapters as

well and making it a structural part of his narrative. Here, Helen's original meaning is not a matter of concern within his narrative, for it has no effect on the triangular dynamics in the relationship of Gilbert, Halford, and Helen's text. What matters here is what the text means to Gilbert and how it fits within his overall storytelling purpose, the purpose to fulfill Halford's readerly desire and resume their friendship. On finishing his transcription of Helen's diary, Gilbert asks Halford, "while you read it, did you ever picture to yourself what my feelings would probably be during its perusal?" (402). Here, Gilbert directs Halford's attention away from Helen's feelings at the moment of writing towards Gilbert's feelings at the moment of reading. He lets Halford focus more on his thought process than on Helen's, or to be more precise, more on his "joy" than on Helen's "sufferings": "[T]he former half of the narrative was, to me, more painful than the latter; not that I was at all insensible to Mrs Huntingdon's wrongs or unmoved by her sufferings. . . . The effect of the whole . . . in spite of all my sympathy for her and my fury against [Huntingdon], was to relieve my mind of an intolerable burden and fill my heart with joy" (402). Gilbert makes Helen's narrative part of his own, both in structure and in content. While he satisfies Halford's desire for an exciting story by adding a novelistic touch, he also guides Halford through his own thought process. Gilbert's narration makes it evident that for Gilbert, what Helen's diary is about does not matter so much as what this text means to him, how reading it has affected his relationship with Helen,

what is to occur later in his life, and eventually how the telling of his life in this manner will help recover his relationship with Halford that matters.

Gilbert's situating of Helen's diary within his narrative shows that Helen's text functions as a bridge in the relationship between Gilbert and Halford and that it becomes a means of male-bonding as it allows Gilbert to communicate with and to foster a sense of solidarity with Halford. In Between Men, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points to the triangular desire in which women serve as instruments that produce connections between men. Drawing on René Girard's concept of erotic triangle in which the bond that connects the two male rivals equals the bond of either of the males to the beloved, Sedgwick asserts that women are used "as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men" (25-26). This notion of triangular desire aptly elucidates the relationship between Gilbert and Halford. Helen's diary with Halford helps Gilbert solidify his bond with Halford by inviting him into his secret realm. What was shared between Gilbert and Helen no longer remains their secret as Gilbert fosters a new secret with Halford by sharing Helen's private diary. And with regard to Gilbert's identity as a storyteller, Brontë suggests that Gilbert's existence as a storyteller is subjected to Halford's response to the text. The fact that the story is composed based on Gilbert's comprehension of the reader's appetite for the story illustrates Brontë's understanding that the storyteller is defined simultaneously through the story that he/she narrates and the reader for whom the story is narrated. While the storyteller

may act as an active force that initiates the triangulation, its continuous dynamics are dependent on the reader's perception of the text and its teller. Furthermore, in this particular triangular relationship in which the text's original author is completely absent in the triangular dynamics, Brontë confirms how the text's meaning is not an isolated product of the author's creation but is a triangular process. As illustrated in the ways in which Helen's original meaning is lost within Gilbert's fabrication of Helen's story for his own narrative purpose, the text's meaning is dependent on the way the teller makes use of it to communicate with the reader.

Three distinct triangular relationships in Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall demonstrate the ways in which a storyteller reveals his/her self through his/her simultaneous communication with the reader and the shared text. The first instance of triangular dynamics in which Helen communicates with herself through diary-writing shows how a diarist develops a comprehensive understanding of oneself and constitutes one's identity by simultaneously becoming a writer, a reader, an agent, and an object of her own writing. The second instance of triangular relationship in which Helen shares her diary with Gilbert displays the drama of communication in which the storyteller and the reader align their understanding of the text and realize themselves in relation to each other in the process. And the third instance of triangulation in which Gilbert shows Helen's diary to Halford illustrates how his new identity as the storyteller is associated with

the text and the intended reader for whom the story is constructed in the first place. It also substantiates how within the triangular dynamics, the text's original meaning is not a matter of concern as what matters is what the text means to the teller and the reader and how it aids in a further understanding of each other at a particular triangulating moment.

The three instances in which Helen's diary remains an apex of each set of triangular relationships point commonly to the fact that a storyteller's simultaneous interaction with the reader and the text is indeed a necessary process towards achieving one's sense of self. What matters is not so much the content and structure of the text itself as the relationship of the storyteller, the reader, and the text. In fact, the relationship is inherently part of the structure and meaning of the narrative as the text exists only in so far as it becomes part of a process of triangulation. The storyteller's self is not conceived autonomously but through a continuous process of interaction with the reader by means of the shared text. It is the storyteller's constant alignment of his/her understanding of the text with that of the reader's that the storyteller's self-conception is realized.

CHAPTER IV
 STORYTELLING AND “NOT” TELLING:
 UNNARRATION AND SELF-FORMATION
 IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË’S VILLETTE

Narration and Unnarration

This chapter pays particular attention to unnarration, to what the narrative does not say, but nevertheless provides useful resource for the display of the narrator’s self. When it comes to narrating the story of our lives, we are in the position to choose what to tell and what not to tell. In the process of narrative “configuration,” as Paul Ricoeur claims, we bring together “pre-narrated,” or “prefigured” fragments of our experience, recontextualizing and synthesizing them into “the unity of one temporal whole” (Time 1: 54-70).¹⁶ The events that are woven

¹⁶ Ricoeur perceives narrative as a basic structure of our experience of time, and he proposes a three-stage process of mimesis, from which stems narrative identity and all human creativity. His first stage is mimesis₁, in which the world is received to perception in a prefigured, pre-narrative form. By prefiguration, Ricoeur denotes that the world is symbolically prefigured for humans, that our reception of the world is pre-narrative, and that we understand the world “because it is already articulated in signs, rules and norms; it is always already symbolically mediated.” (“What is a Text?” 57). The process of turning semantic understanding into narrative is the second stage of mimesis, the stage of “emplotment” or “configuration” (Time 1: 65). For Ricoeur, narrative does not emerge until pre-narrated thoughts and actions have been translated, or configured, by emplotment. And the last stage is mimesis₃, the process by which the narrative transfigures our ideas of that world. Ricoeur’s three stages of mimesis suggest that narrative is a construct imposed by humans and that by assembling the manifolds of events together into a

into the fabric of narrative may be referred to as “narratable,” to borrow Gerald Prince’s term. In *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Prince defines “the narratable” as “that which is worthy of being told; that which is susceptible of or calls for narration” (56-57). Combining Prince’s understanding of the “narratable” with Ricoeur’s concept of narrative “configuration,” I posit that narrative emerges through the process of blending and arranging the disparate “narratable” events into a coherent whole. The narrator brings together “pre-narrated” events that are worth putting into narrative, that are “narratable.”

While some events are represented in the form of narrative, other events do not make their way into the narrative: they remain “unnarrated,” as Prince would put it (“Disnarrated” 2).¹⁷ As for the “unnarrated,” Prince does not refer to the events that are not narrated because they are irrelevant or not worth mentioning within the narrative plot but what is not narrated but nevertheless noticeable. In “The Disnarrated,” Prince refers to the “unnarrated” as “the frontal and lateral ellipses found in narrative and either explicitly underlined by the narrator (‘I will not recount what happened during that fateful week’) or inferable from a significant lacuna in the chronology or through a retrospective filling-in” (2). As indicated in the definition above, the “unnarrated” is discernible through the narrator’s explicit or implicit disclosure of what is left unsaid, and it results from the narrator’s

meaningful whole we come to comprehend the world.

¹⁷ Besides the “unnarrated,” such terms as Millicent Bell’s “the gap” (84), Gerard Genette’s the “ellipsis” (43), or Wolfgang Iser’s the “blank” (195) also refer to what is left unsaid in the narrative.

deliberate decision not to tell in the process of narrative configuration. If what is left unsaid does not affect the flow of the story or is not detectable, then it is highly unlikely that the reader perceives what is untold as necessarily “unnarrated.” Prince’s conception of the “unnarrated” helps us to discuss discernible narrative gap in Charlotte Brontë’s Villette that is either explicitly or implicitly signaled by the narrator, that draws the reader’s attention, and that is instrumental to constructing meaning.

The fact that the “unnarrated” is perceivable through the narrator’s various acts of strategic concealment signifies several things. First, it denotes that the “unnarrated” results from the narrator’s choice not to narrate. If the narrator is ignorant as to what he/she does not tell, then he/she would not be able to leave any signs or hints as to what is left untold. In “Neonarrative; or, How to Render the Unnarratable in Realist Fiction and Contemporary Film,” Robyn Warhol refers to the “unnarrated” as the “passages that explicitly do not tell what is supposed to have happened, foregrounding the narrator’s refusal to narrate.” That the “unnarrated” occurs as a result of the narrator’s decision not to narrate clearly illustrates her conception of unnarration as the narrator’s active choice; hence, a “narrative [act]” (221).

Second, because unnarration does not occur without purpose, it directs the reader’s attention to what is missing. The reader would not know whether anything is “unnarrated” unless the narrator makes note of what is left unsaid in some way

or another. The “unnarrated” stimulates our curiosity and thwarts our expectation of a smooth and coherent narrative flow through such formal features as “ellipsis,” “lacuna,” “retrospective filling-in” (as Prince indicates in his definition of “unnarration”), or explicit announcement of unnarration, further allowing us to fill in the holes with our own interpretations of its purpose and effect in the narrative as a whole. As Wolfgang Iser puts it, “[w]hat is concealed spurs the reader into action” (169). In “Narrative Gaps/Narrative Meaning,” Millicent Bell similarly points out that readers have a tendency to make sense out of what is given. Hence, “[w]hen the gaps are permanent, our meaning-hungry, plot-hungry minds work passionately at still making a whole of what remains” (102).

Third, the fact that the “unnarrated” is noticeable implies that what is not narrated serves an equally important function as what is narrated in the meaning-making process. In his discussion of the narrative gaps in Flannery O’Connor’s fiction, Donald E. Hardy asserts that a “narrative gap” (or “the unnarrated” in Prince’s term) “that is noticeably missing or delayed in the narrative discourse” is “a specific piece of information” that contributes to generating certain effects and meanings in the narrative (364). What is untold functions as part of the narrative elements that stimulate the reader into recognizing what is omitted, challenging our hypothesis of narrative coherence, and prompts us to generate the meaning of what is untold in relation to what is told in the narrative.

Because of its sense of absence within the narrative frame, the “unnarrated” may generate multifarious meanings and resonances. The meanings and the effect of the “unnarrated” vary depending on what is not told, how it is marked in the narrative process, in which context unnarration occurs, and whether it eventually gets revealed or not. As Prince notes, the “unnarrated” sometimes serves to create “rhythm, characterization, suspense, surprise, and so on” (“Disnarrated” 2). Elaborating on Prince’s understanding of the “unnarrated,” Harold Mosher Jr. maintains in “The Narrated and its Negatives: The Nonnarrated and the Disnarrated in Joyce’s Dubliners” that some events may be “unnarrated” “for the sake of suspense, mystery, characterization, or development of theme” as he argues is the case in Joyce’s Dubliners (408). And according to Bell, the “unnarrated” may “[serve] to revise, by a harsh stroke, our narrative expectations” of “all the values of human continuity and connectedness” (91). The absent presence of unnarration induces diverse meanings and effects in the narrative depending on whether the unnarrated is clarified later on, depending on the context in which it occurs, and depending on the ways in which it is exercised in the narrative.

Unnarration is an intentional act of narrative that requires the same level of scrutiny and evaluation as narration itself. The fact that unnarration occurs as a result of the narrator’s decision not to narrate leads us to conjecture that it also allows us to look into the narrator’s intention and his/her thought process. That is, if the “unnarrated” functions in just as significant a manner as the narrated in the

narrative configuration, then it is evident that like what is narrated, what is not narrated also functions as a site for the narrator's self-formation. The narrator may tell us everything he/she knows, but at times, he/she may withhold certain information for various reasons. Examining the moments of unnarration and speculating about what is unnarrated and why it is unnarrated in association with what is narrated will help us discern the self that narrates. As a way to elaborate my point, I classify the mode of unnarration into three possible categories, which may not be an exhaustive list of all possible modes of unnarration: the narrator may withhold certain elements in the narrative, first, through limited narration; second, through delayed narration, and third, through ambiguous narration. In connection with these categories, Charlotte Brontë's Villette is a good example, for it provides a useful resource for the "unnarrated" and its relationship to the understanding of the narrator's self. In Villette, Brontë creates a first-person narrator, Lucy Snowe, who tells the story of her life from the vantage point of late middle age. At several moments in the novel, Brontë has Lucy leave some things unsaid. Therefore, it is worthwhile to examine the instances of Lucy's unnarration according to the three categories listed above in order to demonstrate the role of unnarration in Lucy's self-formation.

Unnarration in Charlotte Brontë's Villette

In The Novel in the Victorian Age, Robin Gilmour briefly sums up Charlotte Brontë's Villette as "a novel of silent suffering, bravely confronting the morbidity in the heroine's situation" (69). Heather Glen points out that "[c]entral to [Lucy's] narrative is a quite distinct emphasis on estrangement and alienation" (259). And for Janice Carlisle, Villette is "primarily a record of losses and humiliations" (265). As indicated in some critics' statements above, Villette is woven around the theme of loss, loneliness, alienation and desolation. It recounts a bleak and inscrutable vision of life; it tells the story of a silent suffering and brave confrontation of the dismal and morbid condition of Lucy's life. And the narrator of Villette does not appeal to a shared understanding with the reader, but rather insists upon difference by taunting the reader's desire for more knowledge. As Millicent Bell succinctly states, Villette "does not take as its subject the conventional adventure of the person forming himself in a familiar world of social choices. It tries to project a freer exploration which carries the female persona away from familiar modes" (98). In short, it can be argued that Villette does not follow the traditional paths of women's development, and provides no traditional solutions to the problem of living an unconventional life as a woman in a patriarchal society. This narrative approach that Brontë takes on in Villette seemed to be unacceptable for many of the Victorian readers and critics. Matthew Arnold found Villette to be a "hideous undelightful

convulsed constricted novel" and "one of the most utterly disagreeable books [he has] ever read" (Letters 2-3). Connecting the author's mind with the overall tone of the novel, Arnold also pointed out that "the writer's mind contains nothing but hunger, rebellion and rage, and therefore that is all she can, in fact put into her book" ("Matthew Arnold" 201). And although not in such a biting manner as shown by Arnold, Harriet Martineau also gives a negative response to Villette: "'Currer Bell' here afflicts us with an amount of subjective misery which we may fairly remonstrate against. . . . An atmosphere of pain hangs about the whole, forbidding that repose which we hold to be essential to the true presentment of any large portion of life and experience" (172).

Villette has been unfavorably received by many readers, for it is, indeed, as Penny Boumelha states, "among the strangest of nineteenth-century novels to read" (100). To borrow Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's terms, Villette is "perhaps the most moving and terrifying account of female deprivation ever written" (400). Or, as can be inferred from Nancy K. Miller's notion of the novel and its plausibility, Villette is simply not "plausible" to nineteenth-century readers because in many ways (including the plot, the narrator's means of narration, the overall tone, etc.) it baffles the reader's expectations about fiction and its representation of reality, which are in turn determined according to the dominant cultural ideology (36). Suzanne Keen sees Villette as one of those Victorian novels that cross the bounds of the "conventions that transfer the restrictions and assumptions of the social to

representational norms" (10). Keen finds the unconventionality of Villette primarily in the heroine's pilgrimage to strange and emancipatory locations, or "annexes," as she terms them, and argues that the heroine's life outside the safe boundary of England allowed Lucy to become "a centered, independent, abandoned self" that does not quite fall within the conventional representation of women in the mid-nineteenth century (107). In short, for many readers and critics of the period, Villette is a novel that defies the general Victorian conception of what a novel should be and how a heroine should live.

What adds to the unconventionality of Villette is the mode of unnarration that occurs in the novel, which has attracted some critics of the twentieth century. These two elements – the novel's untypical depiction of the heroine's life and its use of what I am calling unnarration – are inextricably intertwined and must be understood in relation to each other, for Brontë's illustration of the narrator's unusual view of life and her unique sense of self is clearly reflected in the moments of unnarration. In fact, there have been numerous attempts at explicating Lucy's self in terms of her manner of unnarration. But the interpretations oftentimes led to perceiving Lucy as an abnormal, unreliable, and mentally unstable narrator. These understandings have surfaced primarily because the act of unnarration deviates from the conventional manner of narration in which the mature first-person narrator tells us what he/she knows from a retrospective perspective. Associating Lucy's personality with her manner of narration, a number of critics argued that her

unnarration is a reflection of her sense of absence, unreliability, disingenuousness, or to borrow Janet Gezari's terms, her "morbid pathology" (145). Nancy Cervetti points out that Lucy's lack of voice makes her a woman of "morbidness, deprivation, and defeat" (72). Associating Lucy's unnarration with her unreliability as a narrator, Mary Jacobus maintains that "Lucy's deliberate ruses, omissions, and falsifications . . . unsettle our faith in the reliability of the text" (43). For Tom Winnifrith, Villette is weakened by "Lucy's unreliability as a narrator" (153). Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz contends that "Lucy deceives us," withholding information "with the intention of misleading us" (244, 245). And according to Kate Flint, Lucy "conceals and misleads," thereby making the reader "insecure" (188). As such, Lucy's unnarration has often been interpreted as an illustration of her sense of absence, her mental deprivation, or her inability to exert power and validate her existence.

My position, however, is that Lucy is not an evasive or unreliable narrator as most critics have assumed and that she is indeed a reliable narrator for whom unnarration is used not to mask herself but rather to assert her own selfhood on her own terms. As Gezari puts it, "[a]cts of withholding and concealment are characteristic of Villette," but such narrative gestures do not hide the subject, but rather, they enhance our desire to look beyond the imperturbable surface of the story and allow us to see Lucy as she is exposed to the reader (145). Lucy's unnarration does not serve to conceal herself, but instead, makes her all the more

audible and visible. As Brontë depicts the unconventional life of a heroine, she intensifies the unconventionality by having the heroine/narrator unnarrate what she could otherwise tell. She has the narrator illustrate her sense of self by thwarting the reader's expectation of a smooth and coherent narrative flow by means of unnarration. Unnarration directs our attention to what is unnarrated, why something is left unsaid, further allowing us to consider how particular instances of unnarration are associated with the formation of the narrator's self. Through Lucy's limited narration, delayed narration, and ambiguous narration, Brontë foregrounds the aspects of Lucy's self that may otherwise be left unnoticed. Lucy's mode of limited narration in the beginning of the narrative highlights Lucy's sense of isolation, marginality and her role as an observer in her life; her delayed narration points to her self-recognition through differentiation and individuality; and her ambiguous narration of the tragic moments of her life illuminates the self that is torn between her desire to fit and her unwillingness fully to comply.

Limited Narration

Lucy Snowe's unnarration starts right from the beginning of the novel. In the first chapter of Villette, Brontë defies our expectation of a fictional autobiography by having Lucy reveal herself only partially. We are not given much information

about the narrator, neither do we know much about her origin, her family, her age, and her reason for staying in Bretton. Instead, the first half of the chapter is focused on introducing Mrs. Bretton (Lucy's godmother), her house, and her family, which do not seem to bear any direct relation to the narrator. The only information we are provided about Lucy's stay at Bretton in the first half of the chapter is that as a child, she visited Bretton "about twice a year," and that she "liked the visit" (61). The latter half of the chapter is taken up in discussing another character, Paulina Home, a six-year-old visitor at Bretton during Lucy's stay. While we are given information about Paulina, her parents, and her purpose of visit at Bretton, we still remain ignorant of the narrator who provides us with these facts. In the beginning of Villette, Lucy says too little about herself, leaving us in a state of dissatisfaction and allowing us to foster a sense of curiosity about this unidentified narrator.

The manner in which the narrative begins differs from the conventional form of fictional autobiography in which the narrator is introduced in one way or another towards the beginning of the narrative. Take Charles Dickens's David Copperfield, for example. In this novel, the titular hero/narrator makes an explicit comment in the beginning that the narrative will be about "[his] life," and he opens the narrative "with the beginning of [his] life" and a brief history of his origin and his parents, which information he gained second-hand (13). David tells us more than enough information that we want (or need) to know. Right from the start, the reader is provided with basic knowledge of the narrator whose life the story will center on.

In her previous pseudo-autobiographical fiction, Jane Eyre, Brontë begins the narrative with Jane's own consciousness as Jane starts off by narrating her life with the tyrannical relatives by whom she has been abused when young. Although the novel does not trace back to the moment of Jane's birth or discuss her origin as David does in David Copperfield, the manner in which Jane narrates allows us to know that the narrative will be centered on the narrator herself.

The beginning of Brontë's Villette, however, differs from the beginnings of the contemporary fictional autobiographies in the sense that it does not offer us enough elements to know whose life the story revolves around. While the narrator's voice is heard, it does not provide us with clear knowledge as to who she is, where she is from, and what her aims are. This unnarration leads us to pose the following questions. Who is the agent that narrates the story? And is the narrator going to function as a heroine of her story or remain a mere observer? If she purports to narrate the story of her life, then why does she choose to displace the story of her early years from the narrative? These questions occupy our minds as we read, further allowing us to uncover what is not provided by focusing on what is provided.

Then what do we know of Lucy based on what she tells, or does not tell us and how is her act of limited narration associated with her self-revelation? First of all, Lucy's limited narration about herself illustrates her sense of dislocation and

dispossession. As to her background, Lucy makes brief reference to her family, but she only touches on it as a passing comment:

In the autumn of the year ---- I was staying at Bretton; my godmother having come in person to claim me of the kinsfolk with whom was at that time fixed my permanent residence. I believe she then plainly saw events coming, whose very shadow I scarce guessed; yet of which the faint suspicion sufficed to impart unsettled sadness, and made me glad to change scene and society. (62)

Lucy only briefly comments on her family in the context of the narration of her stay at Bretton, which gives us an impression that her life at Bretton, not her family, is the focus of her narration. Furthermore, Lucy's reference to her "kinsfolk" leaves us with unanswered questions. Why did Mrs. Bretton, her godmother, come to take her from her "kinsfolk"? Why could not Lucy stay with her family? And what are the "events" that separated her from her family? Lucy refuses to answer them as if her family is not the central concern of her story, leaving them all to the reader's imagination. By the way she depicts her "permanent residence" as an "unsettled" one and presumes that the news that she expects from home would be something "disastrous," we can presume that something unsettling is to occur to her family that may have an impact on Lucy's life (62). However, such vague references do not help us further our knowledge of Lucy. Even later in the narrative, the story of her family is never fully revealed. Several chapters later we learn that Lucy returns

home and she spends seven years with her family, but even then, we are still left ignorant of her origin and her background. Her seven years with her family are briefly commented on in metaphorical terms based on which we become vaguely aware that something terrible occurred to her family that has left her bereft (This particular scene will be discussed more in depth in the section on “Ambiguous Narration”).

While she declines to tell us of her family and her self, Lucy provides detailed description of other characters, such as Mrs. Bretton and Paulina Home, another young visitor at Bretton, as if they are the central figures of the story. We learn, through Lucy’s narration of Mrs. Bretton, her husband’s family and even her house. We also gain sufficient knowledge about Paulina regarding her origin, her father and her purpose of visit to Bretton. In fact, the second chapter, entitled “Paulina” is devoted to discussion of this character Paulina. Lucy spares more than enough pages introducing other characters. Partial exposure of her identity through limited narration in the beginning of the story is Lucy’s way of hinting at her sense of dislocation and isolation that she has experienced throughout her life. Looking back on her life as a mature narrator, Lucy has a power to tell and not to tell what she knows. But she chooses to reveal herself only partially. And she does so by positioning herself in relation to Mrs. Bretton and Paulina and veiling her identity behind the introduction of these characters. In a way, this particular mode of

narration prepares us for the kind of person that narrates – an outsider, a marginal figure who does not fit.

In fact, Lucy's sense of isolation is explicitly revealed as the story progresses. In the beginning, she only briefly hints at how she was unrecognized and overlooked during her stay at the Brettons. She has never been caressed by Mrs. Bretton as Paulina has. Mrs. Bretton, whom Lucy describes as "not generally a caressing woman," seats Paulina on her lap, smiling at and kissing the little girl on her first day of arrival (64). And Lucy is never found interesting by Graham Bretton, Mrs. Bretton's teenage son. Graham says to his mother, "[Paulina] amuses me a great deal more than you or Lucy Snowe" (85). Even when she feels that her stay at Bretton is comparable to a period of calm in a pilgrim's progress – "My visits to [Mrs. Bretton] resembled the sojourn of Christian and Hopeful beside a certain pleasant stream" – she is still disassociated from other characters at Bretton (62). She "calmly" watched when Paulina runs out of the house "mad" to greet her father (Mr. Home) that she has been waiting (70), and she still kept herself "calm" when Mrs. Bretton, Graham, let alone Paulina, grieved at Mr. Home's departure (79). Even at Bretton where she felt at home, she remained detached, not connecting with other characters emotionally.

As the story progresses, Lucy's sense of isolation becomes more explicit as hinted through her limited presentation of herself towards the beginning of the narrative. As she narrates of her thoughts of leaving London, Lucy becomes quite

open about her sense of loneliness and isolation. At this moment, the young Lucy has lost her family and is completely left alone: "All at once my position rose on me like a ghost. Anomalous; desolate, almost blank of hope, it stood. . . . What prospects had I in life? What friends had I on earth? Whence did I come? Whither should I go? What should I do?" (107). Even when she finds a job as an English teacher at Madame Beck's *pensionnat* in Villette, the city of Labassecour, and apparently seems settled, she still remains an outsider. During the fête at Madame Beck's school when everybody enjoys themselves, Lucy retires to a corner where nobody can see her, for she does not feel herself to be part of the ball: "Withdrawing to a quiet nook, whence unobserved I could observe – the ball, its splendours and its pleasures passed before me as a spectacle" (211). And when she thought she found a lover (M. Emmanuel Paul, a colleague at Madame Beck's *pensionnat*) who could provide her with a sense of belonging and fitting into the world, she loses him in a shipwreck. Her life is simply one of utter loneliness, dispossession, and loss. Having nowhere to belong, she can never feel at home anywhere. Lucy's limited revelation of herself in the beginning of the narrative prepares us for Lucy's sense of dislocation and alienation that pervades throughout the narrative. The narrating Lucy sets the atmosphere of her life that we are about to encounter by partially veiling herself behind the narration of other characters.

Second, the fact that Lucy replaces her self-narration with that of others illustrates her understanding of herself as more of a spectator than an actor in her

life. When Lucy withholds her name until the second chapter, readers may suspect that the narrator is perhaps not the heroine of the narrative. And when she finally reveals her name, she only briefly identifies herself as “I, Lucy Snowe” in the context of her detailed depiction of Paulina, still presenting herself as a peripheral figure (69). And the repeated use of such phrases as “I watched,” “I witnessed,” “I perceived,” “I observed,” “I saw,” “I beheld,” “I viewed,” and “I examined” in the first couple of chapters raises a presumption that the narrator is not so much an actor occupying the center of the stage as a figure in the margins – a mere observer. Her position as an observer is quite obvious in her relation to Paulina. She expresses how her eyes were mostly fixated on Paulina but detached at the same time. Although Mrs. Bretton told Lucy to “take no notice” of Paulina as she weeps for her father silently in a corner, Lucy “did take notice”; she watched Paulina’s every move (65). She further writes, “I half rose, and advanced my head to see” how Paulina was doing on her first morning at Bretton (66); “my eyes [were] fixed on” Paulina when she suddenly acted differently on seeing her father (70); “I – watching calmly from the window – saw” Paulina when she ran out of the house to greet her father (70); her “eyes followed her” as Paulina got breakfast for John Graham (Mrs. Bretton’s son who was sixteen at the moment) (80); and she even “went to look after her” to find Graham and her having breakfast tête-à-tête (81). Lucy’s sense of herself as an observer continues to grow through her relation to Ginevra Fanshawe and Madame Beck. As to the relations between Madame Beck (a head mistress of

the *pensionnat* in Villette where Lucy teaches) and Ginevra Fanshawe (a flirty and superficial girl attending Madame Beck's *pensionnat*), Lucy casts herself as more of an observer, which can be noticed by the way Lucy directs her narrative attention to them as if they are the central figures of her narrative.

And lastly, the limited presentation of herself in the beginning is a hint on her sense of social marginality. Unlike Mrs. Bretton or Paulina, she has no family lineage or wealth by which to define herself. Mrs. Bretton married into a family whose members "had been residents [at Bretton] for generations, and bore, indeed, the name of their birthplace – Bretton of Bretton" (61). And Paulina has a father who came "of mixed French and Scottish origin" and who "called himself noble." But Lucy has no kinsfolk to be claimed "noble" (63). What is worse, she loses her family in a "storm" (which seems to be a metaphorical rendition of the disasters that have left her bereft) (94). Unlike Ginevra, Lucy lacks beauty and feminine attractiveness. While Ginevra is beautiful and feminine (such displaying abilities to play music, sing and dance) able to attract men of good social standing, Lucy has no beauty to be recognized by others and none of the qualities that women of the Victorian period were expected to have. In Ginevra's eyes, Lucy is nothing but a "poor soul" who is not only "nobody's daughter" but who possesses no youth or beauty (215). As Karen Lawrence aptly argues, "it is against Ginevra's beauty that Lucy's plainness begins to make itself visible" (462). And unlike Madame Beck, Lucy lacks social power. It is Madame Beck's position as a headmistress of the ladies' boarding

school in Villette that allows her to wield power to scrutinize others. As Lucy puts it, Madame Beck regulates “this mass of machinery” through “surveillance” and “espionage” (135). Hence, although Lucy is aware that she is being secretly observed, that Madame Beck “sp[ies] and receiv[es] the reports of spies all day” (136), she cannot disapprove of it as “hardly fair or justifiable” (131), because she is not in such a position to complain about her action. In a society that defines an individual in terms of his/her family, appearance, or social position, Lucy possesses none of the qualities that confer valued social status. Ginevra later plainly validates: “I suppose you are nobody’s daughter . . . you have no relations; you can’t call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments – no beauty” to which Lucy admits that a “good deal of it is true as gospel, and shrewd besides” (215-16). As a narrator looking back on her life, Lucy is well aware of what she did not have and who she was not according to social norms and values. Hence, as a way to imply her sense of being a social nonentity, Lucy withholds any specific information about herself and fills in the gaps with the narration of those who are socially identifiable.

Lucy’s limited description of her self may seem unexpected considering that the novel takes the form of an autobiography, and the narrator in autobiography usually tells us what he/she knows from a retrospective vantage point. As a reader, we expect that the narrator provides us with sufficient information about herself (such as her background and her origin) towards the beginning of her narrative.

However, the narrator denies our habitual patterns of expectation by veiling her identity and letting it be revealed slowly in the course of narrative. This particular mode of unnarration demonstrates how the narrator's choice of limited narration is a conscious act that hints at her intention and her thought process. Associating Lucy's manner of narration with her life (as we find in the narrative), we can perceive her manner of unnarration as an illustration of her understanding of the self-image that she has acquired throughout her life. As Brontë demonstrates in the beginning of the novel in which Lucy's limited narration serves to reveal her sense of non-belonging in the society and isolation, unnarration does not necessarily conceal what the reader is supposed to know; rather than hiding the narrator, it offers insight into various aspects of Lucy that are yet to be revealed.

Delayed Narration

The second mode of unnarration in Villette is what I want to call delayed narration, literally indicating that the revelation of a certain piece of information is delayed until later in the narrative. The effect and meaning of delayed narration vary depending on the context in which the information is first unnarrated and is eventually narrated. As with the limited narration discussed earlier, delayed narration also draws our attention to what is unnarrated, albeit in a different

manner. In the case of delayed narration, the reader does not notice that certain narrative elements are unnarrated until they are revealed later in the narrative. It is only when the “unnarrated” is finally unveiled that its meaning and effect become evident and we come to see the narrator’s intention behind the delayed narration. It is worthwhile to examine two particular moments when Brontë has Lucy delay narrating certain elements in the story, the narrative moments associated with the identity of Dr. John and the identity of the ghostly nun. The two moments of delayed narration demonstrate that Lucy uses delayed narration as a way to highlight her sense of isolation and her position as a secret observer and that she forms her self by differentiating and distancing herself from others.

The first instance of delayed narration that I want to examine occurs with regard to the identity of the nun that the young Lucy encounters a couple of times at Madame Beck’s ladies’ boarding school where she teaches English. As for the identity of the nun, the narrating Lucy is aware that it is a young man named Count de Hamal disguised as a nun so as to sneak into the girls’ pensionnat to meet his lover Ginevra Fanshawe. However, she defers the revelation of this fact until much later in the story. Our discussion of this particular narrative instance needs a look at the workings of delayed narration in the context of autobiographical narration. This particular case of deferred narration provides a resource through which we are to examine Lucy’s/Brontë’s manner of autobiographical writing in general. In Villette, Brontë employs the form of autobiography by having the older Lucy retrospectively

tell the story of her life. And for the most part, Brontë has Lucy narrate her past experience from the perspective of the younger self so that the young Lucy's experience is not disturbed by the consciousness of the old Lucy. Dorrit Cohn's concepts of "dissonant self-narration" and "consonant self-narration" may help clarify Lucy's retrospective self-narration. In Transparent Minds, Cohn states that they are the two poles on the continuum along which a first-person narrator positions him/herself. According to Cohn, a dissonant narrator views his/her self retrospectively, often distancing him/herself from the younger self "steeped in ignorance, confusion, and delusion" while providing a great deal of knowledge from the vantage point of a current self (145). For example, Dickens in David Copperfield employs a dissonant mode of narration by having the older David employ his current consciousness as he looks back to the past, as exemplified in added qualifications, such as "according to my present way of thinking," and "later understanding comes . . . to my aid" (230, 26). At one point, the narrating David refers to one particular event as "irremediable," suggesting that he is already aware of its outcome in the future while the young David is simply ignorant of what is to come (434). And in Brontë's Jane Eyre, the older Jane distances herself from the younger self by making clear that her later understanding of past events does not align with that of the younger Jane: "I could not answer the ceaselessly inward question—Why I thus suffered; now, at the distance of—I will not say how many years, I see it clearly" (47).

As opposed to a dissonant narrator, a consonant narrator identifies with his or her younger self by “renounc[ing] all manner of cognitive privilege” (Cohn 145). In Villette, Lucy for the most part assumes the role of a consonant narrator, for she narrates from the perception of the younger self who is ignorant of what is to come later in her life. At one point, Lucy even says, “I give the feeling as at the time I felt it; I describe the view of character as it appeared when discovered” (266). There are, however, several moments in the narrative where the narrating Lucy becomes dissonant by employing the marks of present-past dichotomy (i. e. “I do not know: or rather did not *then* know”), or by directly addressing the reader in a present tense (114). Nevertheless, a sense of consonance predominates. In fact, dissonance and consonance are a matter of degree and not two distinct domains. A largely dissonant narrator may at times choose to identify with the younger self, or a largely consonant narrator may interrupt the narrative flow by stepping in with a mature consciousness. According to Cohn, however, consonant self-narration is rarely used in autobiographical narratives, because narrators usually like to distance themselves from the past events that they are recounting so as to indicate the growth and maturity of their current self. Moreover, the time of autobiographical narration is the present; hence it is likely that the dominant consciousness most often belongs to the narrating self (167-171). In this sense, it is understandable that David Copperfield and Jane Eyre, two successful

autobiographical novels of the mid-Victorian period, exhibit a higher degree of dissonance.

Villette differs from the two aforementioned novels as it chooses to take the form of consonant self-narration. Obviously, since the story is a retrospective narration of the past events, the narrating Lucy has a full knowledge of her past and its relation to the present; however, she limits herself to the perception of her younger self for the most part by narrating only what she knew at the moment of the event. The narrating Lucy recounts the initial impression of the events, refusing to hint at the actuality or the outcome of the events, as a result of which the reader is put on the same psychological and intellectual level as the young Lucy. The reader only feels and thinks with the young Lucy, not knowing whether her first impressions may be altered or effaced by her knowledge of later events. As a result of Lucy's choice of consonant self-narration, a distance is created between the narrating Lucy and the reader. This mode of narration does not generate a shared understanding between the narrator and the reader but enhances a sense of distance and isolation. By unnarrating her retrospective understanding of the events, Lucy makes us just as ignorant and naïve as her younger self, thereby distinguishing herself from us in terms of knowledge. On the narrative stage, Lucy plays the double role as an actor and a viewer of the reader, in relation to whom the reader becomes not so much an audience as the object of her observing eye.

Lucy's delayed narration with regard to the nun is a good example that illustrates her choice of a "consonant" mode of narration. The narrating Lucy is well aware from the vantage point of retrospection that the ghost is none other than Count de Hamal disguised as a nun so as to gain access to Ginevra; however, she deliberately omits this fact until the young Lucy finds out the real identity of the nun. Because she conceals the fact by narrating from the perspective of the experiencing Lucy, the reader is given no other option but to follow the plot along with the young Lucy. Lucy narrates the moment of her unexpected meeting with the nun as follows:

what was near me? . . .

Something in that vast solitary garret sounded strangely. Most surely and certainly I heard, as it seemed, a stealthy foot on that floor: a sort of sliding out from the direction of the black recess haunted by the malefactor cloaks. I turned: my light was dim; the room was long—but, as I live! I saw in the middle of that ghostly chamber a figure all black or white; the skirts straight, narrow, black; the head bandaged, veiled, white.

Say what you will, reader—tell me I was nervous or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the excitement of that letter; declare that I dreamed: this I vow—I saw there—in that room—on that night—an image like—a NUN. (325)

Here, the narrating Lucy relives the moment by rendering into words what she saw and how she felt at the very moment she saw the image of a nun. As Robyn R. Warhol points out regarding this scene, the narrating Lucy “textualizes the experiences she recalls retrospectively” while the experiencing Lucy sees the events (“Double Gender” 862-63). The narrating Lucy captures a sense of the reality of the scene by randomly misusing punctuation and modifying grammar and syntax. She even delays telling us what she saw – “a NUN” – capitalizing “NUN” so as to convey the feeling of shock on seeing this unexpected image. Such a typographical rendering not only reveals the young Lucy’s disconcerted state but allows us to experience the similar befuddlement. The readers, restricted to young Lucy’s views, sense the same trepidation and fear, remaining ignorant of what is actually happening here. Of course, as Lucy remarks, some realistic readers would want to think that she was “nervous or mad,” “unsettled,” or that she “dreamed.” Lucy does not fail to ignore readers, for she directly addresses them – “say what you will, reader” – even going so far as to “vow” that she has actually seen the ghost. Obviously, the narrating Lucy knows very well that it is nothing but a real human being disguised as a nun. But by strictly restricting herself to the perception of the younger self and dispelling any possible doubts from the reader’s mind, Lucy puts her younger self and the reader on the same level of not knowing the actuality of the scene.

The identity of the nun is revealed towards the end of the narrative as the young Lucy finds out through Ginevra's letter written after she eloped with Count de Hamal in which Ginevra confesses that it is no other than her lover disguised as a nun so as to sneak into the girls' pensionnat. This revealing moment also brings us to a full realization that the narrating Lucy has restricted our views to that of her younger self by way of "consonant" self narration. Unveiling the actual happening towards the end of the narrative is necessary for Lucy, for, first, it conforms to her manner of "consonant" narration; and second, it underscores her sense of isolation. By unnarrating this particular information, Lucy guides us through the emotions and thoughts of the young Lucy while isolating herself from us by completely masking her present thoughts and understanding. While obscuring her present self may allow us to enjoy a sense of immediacy and directness to the story, it at the same time widens the emotional and intellectual gap between her and us.

Lucy's delay of information through a consonant mode of narration provides a way to look at Lucy's sense of alienation that she experienced earlier in her life. As a character, Lucy has lived her life in solitude and the manner in which she deals with the reader through a delayed narration reflects her sense of isolation and detachment. And the fact that the narrating Lucy refuses to put herself on the same intellectual and emotional level as the reader indicates that she is concerned not so much with establishing a bond and developing a shared understanding with the reader as with asserting her own uniqueness and individuality.

Here, it is necessary to examine Lucy's way of dealing with the reader in general and the way in which it is associated with her sense of isolation. Throughout the story, Lucy consciously addresses the imagined readers: "My reader, I know, is one who would not thank me for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impressions" (105-06), "I will permit the reader to picture me" (94), "The sensible reader will not suppose that I gained all the knowledge here condensed for his benefit in one month, or in one half-year" (137), "Has the reader forgotten Miss Ginevra Fanshawe?" (148), or "the reader is advised not to be in any hurry with his kindly conclusions" (436), etc. As revealed in these examples, Lucy constantly acknowledges the readers' presence, reminding them of the previous facts, advising them, and controlling information for the readers' sake. Indeed, taking into account the reader's presence is a necessary process of narration. Judith Butler claims that "one gives an account of oneself to another, and . . . every accounting takes place in the context of an address" (31). This idea is in the novel as Lucy addresses the readers in explicit terms. As an autobiographical narrator, she is responsible for escorting us through her story and sharing with us a certain amount of knowledge. Regarding Lucy's relationship with the reader, Brenda Silver argues that "[o]ften, Lucy's mode in dealing with the reader is a form of cooperation that transforms the reader into an accomplice in whatever observation she is about to make" (104). Such gestures, however, do not necessarily indicate that she is willing to connect with them emotionally. Rather, her relation to the reader eventually intensifies the

emotional and intellectual rift, for at crucial points in the story, she does not include the readers as sharers of her life. For example, as Lucy narrates one of the most lonely and hopeless moments of her life, a long vacation when she was left alone in Madame Beck's pensionnat, she creates various types of imaginary readers:

Religious reader, you will preach to me a long sermon about what I have just written, and so will you, moralist; and you, stern sage: you, stoic, will frown; you, cynic, sneer; you, epicure, laugh. Well, each and all, take it your own way. I accept the sermon, frown, sneer and laugh; perhaps you are all right: and perhaps, circumstanced like me, you would have been, like me, wrong. (228)

As Lucy narrates the most depressing and bleak moment of her life, the moment when she desperately needed someone to talk to, she refuses to share her intimate concerns with her imaginary readers. From the manner in which she addresses them, it is easy to see that she does not take them as her confidants but her critics who might judge her with their social knowledge; she presumes that they will "preach," "frown," "cynic," "sneer," or "laugh." As clearly illustrated from the way she reacts to her imaginary readers, Lucy maintains an emotional distance, for she does not expect to gain sympathy and understanding from them.

Lucy's manner of narration shows how Lucy's deliberate isolation from the reader at this narrating moment mirrors the utter loneliness and alienation that she felt at this particular narrated moment. The narrating Lucy's distance from the

reader is reflective of her inability to establish any forms of connection and dependence with others throughout her life. Just as the young Lucy thought that there was nobody to fully understand her but herself, the narrating Lucy does not believe that she would gain any emotional support from readers. Her disbelief in others turns into her unwillingness to connect and bond with the reader. In Lucy's treatment with the reader that reflects her relationship with other characters, we find that Lucy forms a sense of self not through connection and bonding but through distinction and differentiation. As Judith Butler puts it, narration is not only "a reflexive activity" but also the act of "speaking to you and thus instituting a relation in language as I go" (31). Lucy's self-recognition involves the process of addressing, thereby establishing a relationship with the reader.

The narrator's sense of individuality and isolation becomes apparent through Lucy's deferred revelation of Dr. John's identity, which is the second instance of delayed narration. As a narrator looking back over her past life, Lucy is fully aware that Dr. John, as he is often referred to by other characters, is the same person as Graham Bretton, the son of Mrs. Bretton who used to take care of Lucy during her stay at Bretton. However, until halfway through the story when Dr. John finally comes to realize with the help of his mother that this lady is Lucy Snowe, she withholds this fact from Dr. John and the reader. What is also worth noting is that even the young Lucy has been cognizant of the real identity of Dr. John, but that the narrating Lucy refuses to make note of this fact until halfway into the story. The

first time the young Lucy comes across Dr. John after she left Bretton is at a station in Villette where he kindly guides her to an inn. Lucy notices that “he was a young, distinguished, and handsome man; he might be a lord, for anything I knew: nature had made him good enough for a prince, I thought. His face was very pleasant; he looked high but not arrogant, manly but not overbearing” (124). The narrating Lucy is already aware at this moment of the real identity of Dr. John. However, she refuses to even hint at it, describing him as if she has met him for the first time in her life. In fact, the description of this gentleman does not conform to that of Graham that Lucy remembers earlier in her life: Graham, as she describes him, was “a handsome, faithless-looking youth of sixteen. . . . A spoiled, whimsical boy he was in those days” (73). Not only does she conceal the identity of this gentleman but also she offers two significantly different impressions of the same person of about ten years apart, which eventually befuddles the reader at the revealing moment of Dr. John’s real identity. This moment of revelation is disconcerting for the reader, because not only do we come to find out about Dr. John’s identity but also because we realize that we have been duped by Lucy’s manipulative narrative strategy all along. The reader remains ignorant of Lucy’s narrative manipulation until Dr. John’s real identity is revealed. When the narrating Lucy and the reader arrive at the same level of knowledge, not only does the reader feel beguiled but he/she also realizes the intellectual gap that has Lucy has initiated through the delayed revelation of Dr. John’s identity. This sudden realization followed by a

vague feeling of betrayal on the reader's part widens the emotional rift between the narrating Lucy and the reader.

What is more disconcerting for us readers at this moment is the fact that Lucy has led us into believing that she told the readers what she knows about Dr. John. Up until this moment of revelation, Lucy has reinforced our faith in her omissions by means of partial disclosures about Dr. John. For example, on recounting her second meeting with Dr. John at Madame Beck's pensionnat, she tells us that Dr. John is the same man that Lucy met at the station on her first night in Villette, but she never tells Dr. John about it. She even confesses to the reader how such silence gave her a sense of power. And when she has been caught staring at Dr. John, she says:

I did not speak. I was not in the habit of speaking to him. Suffering him, then, to think what he chose, and accuse me of what he would, I resumed some work I had dropped, and kept my head bent over it during the remainder of his stay. There is a perverse mood of the mind which is rather soothed than irritated by misconstruction; and in quarters where can never be rightly known, we take pleasure, I think, in being consummately ignored. (163-64)

Lucy tells us in detail how she deliberately ignored his presence and how it rather pleased her.¹⁸ While keeping herself silent and pretending to ignore him, she

¹⁸ Several critics have interpreted Lucy's feigned ignorance of Dr. John at this particular moment

unveils her “perverse” thoughts at which moment readers become her secret sharer. She even pulls us further in and binds us to her with a “we”: “we take pleasure, I think, in being consummately ignored.” Lucy leads us into believing that she and we are on the same plane of knowledge with regard to Dr. John. Hence, “we,” meaning Lucy and the reader, share pleasure in knowing that Dr. John is the man that kindly guided her to an inn on her first night in Vilette when he is simply unaware of this fact. But suddenly out of nowhere when we believed that Lucy has been telling us all (including the “perverse” secrets), Lucy proclaims that Dr. John is the son of Mrs. Bretton – “reader, this tall young man – this darling son – this host of mine – this Graham Bretton, was Dr. John” (247). This unexpected disclosure at the unexpected moment destroys our faith in the narrator’s reliable rendition of the events and we come to be reminded of her tendency to exert her power by not telling. As implied in the passage above, it is clear that Brontë writes Lucy’s unnarration of Dr. John’s identity as an intentional and purposeful act. Janice Carlisle is right in arguing that “Lucy violates the one essential convention of autobiographical form” as she conceals what she knows when the reader “does have the right to know what the character realizes at the time of any given moment”

of narration as a way to protect herself. Regarding Lucy’s silence to Dr. John, Silver argues that Lucy does not speak in order to “preserve her self” (101) and Helen Moglen explains in Charlotte Brontë: The Self-conceived that Lucy rejects Dr. John with her silence because she fears rejection (196). Rabinowitz provides a more balanced argument of the incident by asserting that while Lucy makes use of her silence as “a defensive strategy,” she also exerts “a negative control . . . over the situation by not speaking” (248, 246). In line with Rabinowitz, I add that she transforms her passive form of fear into active ignorance, seeking self-satisfaction by remaining silent and gaining more knowledge of him than he of her.

(275). Lucy defies our expectation of an autobiographical narrative by choosing not to tell what we expect to know and revealing it at the unexpected moment.

These narrative instances of delayed revelation illustrate Lucy's tendency to break free from convention in her life. Mary Jacobus points out that Lucy's choice of delayed narration breaks "the unwritten contract of first-person narrative (the confidence between reader and 'I')" (43). Because we thought that the first-person narrator has been telling us what we should know, the unexpected revelation of the withheld information confounds us, putting us helplessly under her narrative manipulation. This choice of narration clearly reflects Lucy's tendency to defy the convention according to which she is supposed to act, as illustrated in her stubborn refusal to dress like a man while playing the role of a flop in the school play for Madame Beck's fête. While Lucy agreed to take a man's part, she adamantly refused to dress like a man: "To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man's name and part; as to his dress — halt là! No. I would keep my own dress; come what might" (208). When one acts the part in a play, it is expected that one dresses accordingly; otherwise, it would be seen as what M. Paul, Lucy's lover, calls "an amateur affair" to a general audience (208). But, while it may be an act of deviation from the socially expected or "normal" script, Lucy refused to do so simply because it does not please her. As she says, she "acted" not "to please another" but "to please [her]self" even if it means to violate the norm (211). Lucy's tendency to act and think outside the boundaries of

convention for her own satisfaction is reflected in this particular narrative instance of withholding Dr. John's identity as she says that it suits her not "to say anything on the subject, to hint at [her] discovery" (248). Just as it pleased her to resist conventions of dramatic costuming, it pleases her to conceal her knowledge to the reader.

The two instances of delayed narration show that, just like the limited narration, Lucy's narrative delay allows us to perceive the kind of personality that she has displayed to others throughout her life. Lucy's delayed narration is not a way to mislead the reader by any means, but a way to display the self that does not fit into a social norm. In fact, the delayed revelation of information illustrates two important aspects of Lucy's self. First of all, it underlines Lucy's sense of isolation and individuality. That her delayed narration that occurs in a consonant mode of self-narration denotes the narrator's attempt to maintain a certain distance from the reader. As exemplified in her narrative dealing with the identity of the ghostly nun in which Lucy veils her knowledge of the nun to the reader until much later in the story, the reader's identification with the young Lucy creates a gap between the narrating Lucy and the reader. In the second instance in which the revelation of Dr. John's identity is delayed, Lucy's sense of detachment becomes more pronounced as she even goes so far as to reject the consonant mode of self-narration by unnarrating even what the young Lucy knows. On discovering the fact, we come to amend our presumptions that the narrator is telling us what we expect to know. We

come to understand her tendency to break the convention by unnarrating the expected and narrating the unexpected. This act of (un)narration underscores her individuality through nonconformity.

And secondly, also illustrated in unexpected unnarration, the delay underscores Lucy's sense of herself as a secret observer, her tendency to enjoy knowing unknown, seeing unseen. Her way of forming relationship with others (both characters and readers) is not a matter of shared understanding but of distinction and differentiation. As she reveals Dr. John's real identity, Lucy narrates, "I had preferred to keep the matter to myself. I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, while he stood before me under a ray of special illumination, which shone all partial over his head, trembled about his feet, and cast light no farther" (248). Lucy enjoys her position as a secret observer, for it allows her to observe others while remaining unrecognized. On her first night at Madame Beck's pensionnat as Madame Beck inspects her, Lucy secretly examines her while "feign[ing] sleep" (131). And as Madame Beck surveys her and rifles through her "every article" "noiseless[ly] as a shadow," Lucy follows her every single movement (131, 132). Lucy is fully aware that she has been followed, listened, and closely watched, but she keeps her observation secret so as not to be noticed by Madame Beck. In a way, she is secretly exercising the power of seeing unseen.¹⁹

¹⁹ The moments of Lucy's observation of Madame Beck well illustrate Lucy's power as a secret observer. As for Lucy's relationship to Madame Beck, Margaret L. Shaw argues in "Narrative Surveillance and Social Control in *Villette*" that "the secret of Lucy's power as an observer is that

Concerning Lucy's relationship with the reader, Joseph Litvak rightly points out that the terms, "'surveillance' and 'espionage,'" which Lucy used to characterize Madame Beck's management of her school, are "the watch-words (the pun is all too appropriate) of Lucy's narrative as well" (473). Lucy used to observe Madame Beck spying on her, and now the object of her surveillance is replaced by the reader. Considering how Lucy has a habit of observing others unobserved, we can easily deduce that her secret surveillance applies to her relationship to the reader as well. By delaying Dr. John's and the nun's real identity, Lucy has observed us ignorant of ourselves being watched. Just as she enjoys watching Dr. John while "covered with a cloud," she becomes a secret observer, scrutinizing us standing "under a ray of special illumination."

Delayed narration reveals Lucy's self as formed through the relationship with the reader. Lucy's constant recognition of the reader throughout her narrative befits Judith Butler's argument that self-narration is "an action in the direction of an Other, but also an action that requires an Other, for which an Other is presupposed" (37). Lucy's relation with the reader, however, is not that of a shared understanding. Rather, she makes sense of her being through the reader in such a way that an irrecoverable distance is created between her and the reader. She forms herself not through an intersubjective connection but through disconnection and differentiation.

she, like Madame Beck, is not fully observable; she is not readable" (818).

And the relationship with the reader through intentional delay of information substantiates her self of independence and singularity.

Ambiguous Narration

At certain moments in Villette, Brontë has Lucy equivocate about what actually happened, leaving room for subjective speculation. The two most distinctive instances of ambiguous narration can be seen, firstly, in her brief account of the eight years of her life with her family after leaving Bretton, and secondly, in her narration of M. Paul's return to England after three years of absence. These incidents are indeed two of the most despairing moments of Lucy's life. Lucy's denial of a full, straightforward narration of the traumatic events illustrates Lucy's self torn in between the self who desires to narrate what happened and the self who cannot deny the convention of happy ending. Thus, it is necessary to examine each narrative instance to show how ambiguity offers an insight into the narrator's conflicting self revealed in the disparity between a desire to portray the actuality of events and a constraint of having to produce an expected plot.

First, let us take a look at Lucy's ambiguous narration of the eight years of her life after she left Bretton:

On quitting Bretton, which I did for a few weeks after Paulina's departure – little thinking then I was never again to visit it: never more to tread its calm old streets--I betook myself home, having been absent about six months. It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! The amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass – the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?

(94)

While Lucy makes clear how she misses her stay at Bretton, she leaves unsaid her emotions upon returning home. What is more, she even refuses to directly tell us of the next eight years of life with her family. Instead, she recounts the missing eight years in ambiguous and metaphorical terms, leaving us with much speculation as to what could have happened during those times. As indicated in such equivocal phrases as “It will be conjectured that,” and “I will permit the reader to picture me,” Lucy allows the reader to fill in the gaps of what is left unsaid. Was she happy to return home or not? Lucy says that if the reader wants a happy story, then so be it—

“A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?” She simply refuses to answer it—“Well! The amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted.” There is a bit of unseriousness in the tone.

Lucy’s irony here strongly implies that such a conjecture is mistaken. Brenda Silver points out that “the irony evident in her first direct address to this reader . . . allows her simultaneously to mock those who choose to remain locked within their traditional expectations and to offer them an alternate version of reality that would reflect and validate her existence” (103).²⁰ As Silver maintains, Lucy’s ironic rendering of this event may be seen as her way of not only mocking the conventions but also allowing the reader to perceive the alternative path that Lucy may have taken. Lucy, then, tells readers what did not happen through a metaphorical image of storm and drowning: “it cannot be concealed that . . . I must somehow have fallen over-board, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time, of cold, of danger, of contention” (94). This passage implies that she has undergone much suffering and that the kind of life she has led does not conform to the lives of other conventional heroines. Still, however, the shipwreck is a metaphorical rendition, and what really happened is not clearly elucidated.

²⁰ Regarding Lucy’s relationship with the reader, Peeck goes even further as to argue that Lucy offers the reader with a more pleasant scenario, because she “has little faith in the reader’s capacity, or desire, to understand her situation” (225). Penny Boumelha offers a quite different reading of this scene as she attributes a more active role on the reader. She writes, “what is allowed to readers, what they expect and can contrive, is as significant as any narration in the indicative” (108-9).

Here, the ambiguity of narration focuses our attention to the manner of delivering it and Lucy's relation with the reader. At this moment of narration, Lucy does not so much narrate the event as comment on her act of narration and reader's possible speculation as to what might have happened. Notice that Lucy writes not solely in a narrative mode here, but combines narrative with conjecture and her interactive communication with the reader. This narrative act implies that the narrator takes into consideration the conventional reader's response to the traumatic scene that is unexpected within the boundaries of conventional texts. The ambiguity of narration reveals the conflicts between Lucy's desire to narrate the actual event and perceived social expectations. Lucy is burdened with a double task of narrating what actually happened and placating the readers with a romantic and expected plot. And ambiguous narration is her way of negotiating these tensions.

The second instance of ambiguous narration occurs towards the end of the narrative when Lucy refuses to tell us whether M. Paul, her lover and fellow colleague, has returned from the West Indies after three years of absence. Just as in her rendering of the missing eight years, Lucy omits M. Paul's whereabouts, again leaving some room for the reader to choose the path that suits his/her narrative taste. The following passage tells of the storm that raged about the time when M. Paul is supposed to return:

That storm roared frenzied for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had

gorged their full sustenance. Not till the destroying angel of tempest had achieved his perfect work, would he fold the wings whose waft was thunder – the tremor of whose plumes was storm.

Peace, be still! Oh! A thousand weepers, praying in agony on waiting shores, listened for that voice, but it was not uttered – not uttered till, when the hush came, some could not feel it: till, when the sun returned, his light was night to some!

Here pause: pause at once. There is enough said. Trouble no quite, kind heart; leave sunny imaginations hope. Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life. (596)

Lucy veils M. Paul's fate and leaves it to the readers to interpret the ending in the way that suits their taste. If the readers with "quite, kind heart" wish to picture "union and a happy succeeding life" of Lucy and M. Paul, then let them imagine so. Just as in the previous instance, Lucy is not so much concerned with telling what happened as with the manner of telling it.

A number of critics claim that although M. Paul's death is never made explicit, the manner in which Lucy narrates the event makes it obvious that he is dead. For example, Garrett Stewart points out that "despite the rhetoric of avoidance, we have no real choice . . . but to recognize the death in its full

inevitability" ("Valediction" 52). Maureen Peeck similarly argues that although the reader is given the choice as to M. Paul's fate, "the attentive reader intuits that Paul will not be returning, and that there will be no living happily ever after" (225). And according to Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, Lucy's choice to leave Paul's return in a dubious state "can only be seen as a conscious resistance of the conventional 'happy ending'" (252). In fact, a closer look at Lucy's narrative shows that there are several inferences as to M. Paul's miserable fate. As Ian M. Emberson notes, "the key is there for the careful reader in numerous clues scattered throughout the novel" (90).²¹ The images of storm, shipwreck, drowning at sea, and "a thousand weepers . . . on agony" indicate that M. Paul will not come back to Lucy, that he may be dead (596). A number of times does Lucy comment on the coming of the deadly winter – "the leaves grow sere" and "the wind takes its autumn moan" – juxtaposing them with his foreboding arrival – "but – he is coming," which suggests the coming of the impending calamity (595). Her repetitive utterances of "but – he is coming" points to her strong wish for his return and at the same time the utter fear that he might not be coming.

I agree with these critics' claims that M. Paul's death is evident. However, what I want to emphasize is the narrator's deliberate choice to recount M. Paul's

²¹ With an assumption that M. Paul is dead, Kate Millett argues in *Sexual Politics* that his death was necessary for Lucy, for his death allowed her to break free from his prison: "There was, in Lucy's position, just as in the Brontë's own, no other solution available" (146-47). But she continues on by asserting that since "it is . . . impossible for a Victorian novel to recommend a woman not marry . . . Paul suffers a quiet sea burial" (147).

death in an indefinite manner. The narrator offers various clues to M. Paul's death, and yet, a sense of equivocation is still present. The primary reason for ambiguous narration of this particular scene may be found outside the fictional frame. In The Life of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell points out that Patrick Brontë, Charlotte Brontë's father, was not satisfied with the original ending in which M. Paul's death was made explicit. He disliked "novels which left a melancholy impression upon the mind" and wished that Brontë would "make her hero and heroine (like the heroes and heroines in fairy-tales) 'marry, and live very happily ever after'" (484).²² For Patrick Brontë, while art should take its material from ordinary life, it should leave enough room for a more positive outlook on life and provide happy endings which real life may fail to deliver. He associates a happy ending with the consummation of marriage of the heroes and heroines.²³ He particularly wants to

²² Although not in the same manner, Anthony Trollope's definition of the novel reflects in a way Patrick Brontë's taste for the novel. Trollope regards a novel as "a picture of common life enlivened by humour and sweetened by pathos," which shows his view that while novels should take their materials from an everyday life, they should be "sweetened" and romanticized at the same time (Autobiography 7). Trollope seems to believe that the world should be represented in a more interesting and exciting manner than what one may experience in real life.

²³ As illustrated through a number of Jane Austen's novels, marriage was the instrument of automatic closure in many of the nineteenth century novels. As Kate Miller argues, "Every Victorian novel is expected to end in a happy marriage; those written by women are required to" (146). For example, Emma ends as Emma Woodhouse married Mr. Knightly, and Persuasion ends with Anne Elliot's marriage to Captain Wentworth. Even in her previous novel, Jane Eyre, Brontë concludes with Jane's marriage to Edward Rochester. And in David Copperfield, Charles Dickens wraps up his story with David's eventual marriage with Agnes and a brief description of their happy marriage. Although in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the marriage was not the only way to end the story, as illustrated in George Eliot's The Mill on the Floss in which Maggie Tulliver, the heroine, dies in flood, expectation for a closure with the consummation of the relationship still seemed to dominate.

see M. Paul's safe return and Lucy's happy marriage.²⁴ Brontë makes changes, but not in the way that her father would have liked.

What is inferred from the ambiguous ending of *Villette* is that a happy ending is not inevitable in real life. Lucy's refusal to identify with the conventional readers is implied in her reference to them a third-person plural "they" and a sense of mockery that resides in her tone of voice: "Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life" (596). She mocks those with "quite, kind heart" who have such a great imaginative power to turn "terror" into "joy" and to rescue heroes/heroines from "peril" and "dread." For these types of readers, she has nothing more to say – "There is enough said."

For Brontë, "[t]here is enough said" also because narrating M. Paul's death in a straightforward manner would simply be unacceptable within the Victorian representational convention. Regarding this particular scene, Robyn R. Warhol

²⁴ By obscuring the events, Brontë does not fully negate the reader's romantic imagination, which can be seen in her famous responses to her reading public, such as those to Miss Mulock and Lady Harriet St Clair who requested "exact and authentic information respecting the fate of M. Paul Emanuel." In a letter to her publisher William Smith Williams, Brontë wrote, "I have sent Lady Harriet an answer so worded as to leave the matter pretty much where it was. Since the little puzzle amuses the ladies, it would be a pity to spoil their sport by giving them the key" (qtd. in Gaskell 443-444). This statement illustrates that Brontë's intent is not to provide a faithful rendition of the events but to allow the readers to look beyond what is provided. As Bell points out, when not enough information is given, readers "strive to make meaning out of the materials of offered narration," thereby generating a meaning that relates to their own understanding of the text (101). Luann McCracken Fletcher rightly states that for Brontë, "the participation of the reader" is important "in giving power and meaning to a text . . . even if the reader's interpretation differs from her own" (740).

comments that because “the influence of dominant ideology on fictional form is too powerful,” to provide something other than a heroine’s marriage as an ending “simply would not do” in the Victorian period (“Neonarrative” 227, 226). She terms such type of narrative as “paranarratable,” which she defines as “what wouldn’t be told because of formal convention” (226). While the unexpected could certainly happen in real life, it “wouldn’t be told” in novels. Hence, while equivocating about the rest of Lucy’s life, Brontë has Lucy abruptly turn to other characters who live the remains of their lives alone but not necessarily unhappy – “Madame Beck prospered all the days of her life; so did Père Silas; Madame Walravens fulfilled her ninetieth year before she died” (596). Madame Beck remained unmarried in her life, but she “prospered”; Père Silas, a catholic priest (hence, unmarried), also “prospered”; and Madame Walravens, the mother of M. Paul’s late fiancée, lived to “fulfill” ninety years of age alone. Within a literary convention, such a deserving character as M. Paul, and not these characters listed above, should have survived and prospered. Replacing Lucy’s and M. Paul’s life with those of others who are not as virtuous as M. Paul by any means and whose lives also do not end in marriage, Brontë indirectly conveys the idea that marriage is not the only solution to the plot, and that real life is more flexible and complex than the conventional novels attempt to depict.²⁵ In real life, not every woman married and not all the virtuous and the

²⁵ Brontë’s take on *Villette* quite differs from *Jane Eyre* which ends in a happy marriage of Jane and Rochester. From a biographical perspective, this change of view may be partly due to her loss of siblings in 1848 and 1849 (Branwell, her brother, and Emily died in 1848 and Anne died

righteous prospered. The narrative suggests that perhaps Lucy's life does not differ so much from these characters that remained single. Unlike Mrs. Bretton or Paulina Home who live their lives as a mother and a wife, Lucy remains unmarried but still continues to lead on with her life. Her life is more like that of Madame Beck's, establishing her own school and prospering. And like Madame Walravens who lived to be ninety, Lucy lives on until her hair grows white – "my hair which till a late period withstood the frosts of time, lies now, at last white, under a white cap, like snow beneath snow" (105). Brontë seems to be well aware of the not-so-rosy reality and the romantic life as desired by the readers, and she has Lucy represent the tension by way of Lucy's ambiguous narration. Lucy's ambiguous narration shows how the deliberate ambiguity inherent in the narrative allows room for the readers to look beyond what they want to see and to open their eyes beyond the fictional frame and ponder the ambiguity and complexities of life.

Then, what does ambiguous narration lend to our understanding of Lucy's self? What is Lucy's reason for the narrative choices that Brontë attributes to her? Within the novelistic frame, Lucy has lost her lover, but she refuses to tell us so in a straightforward manner. That is, she effaces her grim reality by undermining the reader's expectation of fully knowing it. This ambiguity seems to point to Lucy's inability to define herself in clear terms; that is, it reflects the self that is torn between her desire to fit and her unwillingness fully to comply. Lucy may be

the following year). Their death had a tremendous impact on Brontë's view of life as it led her to face the sobering reality.

defined by differentiation, but at the same time, her sense of distinction can only be achieved only within the social boundaries that define and delimit one's perception of oneself. Ginevra once asked Lucy, "Who are you, Miss Snowe?" to which various answers are offered (393). Lucy is sometimes a "nobody" (393), "somebody" (393), "a personage in disguise" (393), "anybody" (394), and "a rising character" (394). Lucy's life and her sense of herself do not conform to the stereotypes provided by the society; however, the realization of her inability for a clear identification of herself in turn denotes that she is nevertheless positioned within the society that provides the norm and the standard. While her thoughts may differ from these imaginary readers with "those" "quiet, kind heart" whose views are bound by the cultural, literary norms, she cannot deny their presence; their views have to be taken into account, for it is against their views and thoughts of life that she can be identified. While she has a tendency to distinguish herself from the conventions, she is at the time subject to their influence. And the ambiguity inherent in narrative substantiates the narrator's doubleness of self, a self that is willing to be realized through differentiation but a self that nevertheless remains within the society that obscures her. In this sense, for Lucy, ambiguous narration is not a way to obscure what happened to her, but a way of bringing attention to her struggle as a narrator in representing the real within the constraint of the Victorian convention.

Villette illustrates Lucy Snowe's limited, delayed, and ambiguous narration that unnarration is closely associated with the narrator's self-formation. Lucy's

unnarration is categorized into three different types: limited narration, delayed narration, and ambiguous narration. And each type of unnarration and its role in presenting Lucy's self is examined. First, Lucy's limited narration allows us to glimpse at Lucy's self that we are about to encounter later in her narrative, such as her sense of dispossession, marginality, and her sense of herself as an observer. Second, the delay of the nun's and Dr. John's real identity until later in the narrative underscores Lucy's sense of alienation and individuality. And third, the narration of such critical moments of a loss of family and a loss of a loved one—M. Paul—in an ambiguous manner allows us to look at Lucy's doubleness of self through her desire to differentiate and her need to remain within the society that obscures her. What we find through these instances of unnarration is the self who does not fit into the societal expectation of women's role and nature and the self that is established through distinction and differentiation. Simply put, Brontë's employment of an unconventional mode of unnarration is a way to present the unconventional heroine/narrator.

Villette makes use of unnarration as part of the narrative configuration that contributes to constructing and presenting the narrator's understandings of his/her self. According to Brontë, the act of unnarration does not serve to obscure the "unnarrated" but to make it all the more visible, drawing our attention to what is not narrated and spurring us to examine the meaning and purpose of unnarration, further allowing us to perceive the fictional narrator's mind, attitude, and the

imagined thought process behind unnarration. Unnarration is indeed an uncommon mode of narration in the Victorian period when the novel in general “is notably ambitious . . . to show it knows everything and everyone” (David 3). But Brontë pushes the reader outside the comfortable narrative paradigm by introducing the unexpected and the unexplained. Jane Eyre’s desire for speech (“speak I must”), which reflects the nineteenth century’s equation of speaking with self-assertion, is denied in Villette as Brontë allows Lucy’s voice to be heard and her self to be displayed in unnarration: “There is enough said.” She shows, in Lucy’s unnarration, a way of asserting her sense of self on her own terms.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

In this discussion of Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White, Anne Brontë's The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, and Charlotte Brontë's Villette, I have been chiefly concerned with the novelists' illustration, through the use of first-person narration, of the relationship between storytelling and the storyteller's self-formation. These novelists show the ways in which the self is constituted through the act of relating the experience in his/her own way, telling the story to others, and sometimes omitting some details of experience. They commonly share the idea of the importance of the story in the constitution of the self; their novels demonstrate that the story is the site where identity is constructed.

The examination of these novels leads to the following three claims in terms of the relationship between storytelling and self-formation. First, the self is a matter of construct through storytelling. As Crites puts it, "the self is a kind of aesthetic construct, recollected in and with the life of experience in narrative fashion" (162). The understanding that the self is constructed denotes that the self arises as a processual gestalt. It is not something that we "find" as a result of a developmental process but something that we "make" through the narrating process. As we engage in the process of putting together disparate and fragmentary events into a coherent whole, we undergo the process of self-realization and self-formation. We

construct our reality and our selves in a constant movement. The idea of the self as a construct via storytelling also points to the subjective nature of self-formation.

Because storytelling involves selecting, organizing and arranging events from a storyteller's subjective point of view, narrative is necessarily unreliable and the storyteller is not particularly authoritative. The storyteller cannot know everything; he/she cannot possess a sense of omniscience. His/her understanding of the world is naturally limited, incomplete, sometimes flawed, and subject to change in different temporal and spatial contexts. The storyteller's subjective understanding of the world further leads us to consider that the story he/she tells leaves room for revision. Wallace Martin argues that "[n]arrative identity, being at the same time fictitious and real, leaves room for variations on the past—a 'plot' can always be revised—and also for initiatives in the future. It is an open-ended identity" (8).

Because the narrative self is constructed through subjective and limited understanding of the world, it can be re-formed by producing different versions of the events. In The Woman in White, Collins's demonstration of the narrators' continuous change of thoughts through storytelling (through Walter's and Marian's narratives), their sense of unreliability and subjective understanding of the world (through Mr. Gilmore's and Eliza's narratives), and their reshaping of stories for their own end (through Count Fosco's and Mrs. Michelson's narratives) confirm the notion that the self is a construct via storytelling.

Second, while self-formation occurs through the story one tells, it is also a matter of exchanging stories with others. Storytelling does not occur in isolation. It requires an agent who tells and audience who listens and recounts in their turn. Even when a storyteller recounts the events only to him/herself, she takes up the role of both the teller and the reader. The fact that a story is told implies the existence of the hearing/reading other. It is through the act of sharing the story with the other that the story becomes meaningful and the storyteller comes into existence. The relational aspect of self-formation and storytelling points to the fact that self-formation is context-dependent. The text itself does not create meaning about the self but it becomes meaningful as it is shared with others. What produces the text's meaning is the process of triangulation that occurs among the storyteller, the reader, and the text. It is through the triangulating process of exchanging between the teller and the reader via the text that the storyteller makes sense of his/her self in the world. As Anne Brontë shows through the sharing of Helen's diary in different contexts and with different sharers in The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, meaning is created through the act of exchanging the text between the teller and the reader. And the storyteller's self is formed in the context of exchange, or triangulation.

The last claim that I want to make with regard to the relationship between self-formation and storytelling is that storytelling goes beyond the linguistic activities of the symbolic representation of the world, that it involves the

storyteller's experience and thoughts of the world. The act of telling stories entails more than symbolizing bits and pieces of events in the form of narrative. Selecting and organizing the selected details into a coherent plot implies that an act of omission is also involved in the process of a symbolic representation. And the act of selection and omission cannot be understood without taking into account the storyteller's purpose and intention behind it. Charlotte Brontë's illustration of unnarration and its association with Lucy's self in Villette aptly shows that the act of "unnarration" entails the existence of the pre-symbolic realm, of the storyteller's experience, thoughts and feeling that extend beyond the linguistic activities. Unnarration, as a part of storytelling process, allows for observation of the storyteller's purpose behind telling certain events while leaving other events unsaid, and further, of his/her way of making sense of the world.

Narrative is not a straightforward representation of the world; rather, it is a representation of the storyteller's understandings of the world. As a tool that connects us to the world, narrative gives structure and meaning to what we see, feel, and experience, and helps us conceive of our being in the world in our own meaningful way. Narrative affirms the existence of a storytelling subject, however problematic, endangered, or uncertain it may be. It is the site in which, as a subject, one explores and (re)shapes one's understandings of one's self and the world. What matters in storytelling is not whether the story conveys reality in a truthful manner, but how the storyteller makes sense of the world through the story he/she tells. The

truth or falsehood of the story is not of primary concern; the story exists as a story when it bridges the storyteller to the world in its own way. The act of representation links the storytelling agent to the world, allows the storyteller to situate him/herself and realize his/her existence in the world. The question of the universal validity of the story is irrelevant, for the significance of the storytelling lies in the storyteller's own act of connecting him/herself to the world and realizing his/her being in the world through the process of representation.

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