

GOTHIC AUTHORS/GHOST WRITERS:
THE ADVENT OF UNAUTHORIZED AUTHORSHIP IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AMERICAN GOTHIC LITERATURE

A Dissertation

by

KI YOON JANG

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

Gothic Authors/Ghost Writers: The Advent of Unauthorized Authorship in
Nineteenth-Century American Gothic Literature. (August 2008)

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This dissertation proposes “ghost writer” as a new critical term for the “author” in accordance with what Roland Barthes calls the “death of the author.” For this purpose, the dissertation conjoins current gothic criticism, modern authorship theories, and studies of nineteenth-century American literature. Current gothic critics, in their endeavors to re-define the gothic as a serious genre that represents social, cultural, and historical anxieties and terrors, have obscured gothic authors’ presence. This indistinct, ghostly authorial existence within gothic criticism becomes relevant to modern authorship theorists’ reflection on the end of eighteenth-century sovereign and autarchic authorship due to the ever-interpretable text and ever-interpreting readers, by means of the self-effacing gothic writers in nineteenth-century America. American literary scholars agree on contemporary readers’ increasing power to assess writers’ performance. Gothic writers, especially susceptible to this power since the ambiguities of the gothic necessitate readers’ active constructions, composed their texts without self-assumed authorial intentions. This dissertation considers how the century’s five most

representative gothic writers re-configure the author as a ghost that should come into being by readers' belief in what it writes.

Chapter I examines the common grounds between the aforementioned three fields in further detail and illuminates the exigency of the ghost writer. Chapter II discusses Charles Brockden Brown's prototypical exposé in Wieland of Edward Young's typically romantic formulation of the originary and possessive author. Chapter III shows Edgar Allan Poe's substantiation of Brown's exposé through his conception of the author as a reader-made fiction in Arthur Gordon Pym. Chapter IV applies Poe's author-fiction to Frederick Douglass and Louisa May Alcott, and investigates how those two marginalized writers overcome their spectrality with the aid of readers' sympathetic relation to their texts, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass and "Behind a Mask," and subsequent validation of their author-ity. Chapter V explores the author's willing self-transformation into the ghost writer in James's The Turn of the Screw, and ponders how the ghost writer goes beyond the author's death. By introducing the ghost writer, this dissertation ultimately aims to trace the pre-modern shift from the autonomous author to the heteronomous author.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE GHOST WRITER

Conjoining three fields, current gothic criticism, theories of authorship, and studies of nineteenth-century American literature, this dissertation proposes “ghost writer” as a new critical term that substitutes for an “author” in accordance with what Roland Barthes calls “the death of the author” or the end of the dominance of eighteenth-century sovereign and autarchic authorship. The basic grounds for this proposal are encapsulated in the typically gothic adjective, “ghost,” as well as the distinction between the “author” and the “writer.” Whereas the author usually refers to one who autonomously assumes an authorial position and exercises authority over the text and readers, the ghost writer describes one who takes into consideration his or her interrelationship with readers and seeks readers’ acknowledgement of his or her author(-)ity by adopting the ghostlike—that is, barely visible and disembodied—posture in the production and signification of the text. To demonstrate how exactly the ghost writer can work in the author’s stead, this dissertation will examine five major nineteenth-century American writers’ envisioning and practice of reader-initiated and reader-directed authorship in their representative gothic works, including Charles Brockden Brown’s Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale (1798), Edgar Allan Poe’s The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838), Frederick Douglass’s Narrative of

This dissertation follows the style of The Henry James Review.

the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself (1845), Louisa May Alcott's "Behind a Mask; or, A Woman's Power" (1866), and Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898).

Modern scholarly interest in gothic literature, though roughly begun as early as the 1950s,¹ had not taken its definitive form until 1980 when the two most influential gothic studies concurrently appeared: David Punter's The Literature of Terror, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's The Coherence of Gothic Conventions. Noticeably, both of them focus on the representational capability of gothic literature. To Punter, "Gothic fiction has, above all, to do with terror; and where we find terror in the literature of the last two centuries, in Britain and in America, ... we almost always find traces of the Gothic" (14). Based on this close affinity of terror to the gothic, Punter insists that we study the genre as a mode of literary expression of diverse kinds of terror in reality: "exploring Gothic is ... seeing the various ways in which terror breaks through the surfaces of literature, differently in every case, but also establishing for itself certain distinct continuities of language and symbol" (21). Sedgwick makes an issue of how the earliest modern gothic criticism was customarily "privileging the spatial metaphor of depth from among the Gothic conventions" and "taking that metaphor to represent a model of the human self" as defined by the (Freudian) psychology of the inner unconscious (11). From Sedgwick's perspective, such a custom results not from a close and proper reading of gothic

¹ Scholars generally agree that Robert Heilman's 1958 essay, "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic," initiates such an interest. See Heilman, "Charlotte Brontë's 'New' Gothic," From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: Essays Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse, eds. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1958) 118-132.

literature itself, but from “an extreme critical irritation with the surfaces of Gothic novels” and subsequent endeavor to endow gothic superficiality with semantic profundity (11-12). Then Sedgwick, based on her own reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gothic works, suggests revising that custom: she contends that “the major Gothic conventions are coherent in terms that do not depend on that psychological model” for “the strongest energies inhere in the surface,” and that gothic literature, therefore, rather works “to undermine the sense of inside and outside, the centeredness of the ‘self,’” in a proto-postmodern fashion (12, 27).

Punter’s emphasis on the characteristically gothic “language and symbol” and Sedgwick’s revisionary proposition of new consistent gothic conventions of the surface simultaneously attest and show the way to contemporary gothic critics’ efforts to redeem gothic literature from its traditional status as nothing more than the lurid, sensational, and shallow writing and to re-define it as a primarily historico-cultural—and thus “serious”—genre. Following Punter and Sedgwick, ensuing critics have become in large part concerned with the ways gothic texts articulate otherwise unrepresentable anxieties and terrors in society. George E. Haggerty, in Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form (1989), argues that gothic writers from Horace Walpole to James conceive and develop a new narrative form of gothic “tale” in order to defy the standard realistic novel form that reflects “an eighteenth-century empirical worldview” and to “giv[e] private experience external manifestation” (7). Teresa A. Goddu’s Gothic America (1997), postulating that “the gothic registers its culture’s contradictions, presenting a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality” (2-3), traces the eruption of American historical terrors such as

American Revolution, Indian massacre, and slavery in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American gothic works. And Peter K. Garrett, in Gothic Reflections (2003), takes notice of “the typically Gothic multiplication of narrative versions” or interpretations as indicating the gothic’s exploration of “relations between extremity and the ordinary, between ‘privately bred’ isolated subjectivities and public norms,” and between the individual and society (6-7).

This scholarly focus on the gothic’s textual formality in turn invests gothic texts with a representational agency and scholarly significance of their own and obscures the role of gothic writers in the production of those texts.² It is, one might say, as if gothic texts overpower and even erase their own authors’ intention, consciousness, and presence. As a result, gothic writers become inconspicuous and inconsequential as authors to the point that, intriguingly, they are analogous to one of the most distinctively gothic characters they write about: ghosts. Put another way, in modern gothic criticism

² Critics like Haggerty and Garrett do point out the centrality of the author-reader relationship in the gothic. Haggerty notes that gothic authors count considerably on readers inasmuch as the representation of subjective feelings and emotions can become objectified and legitimate only “by each reader in his or her private terms” (8). Similarly, Garrett pinpoints as the peculiar power of the gothic its “narrative force, not only affective, rhetorical, and ideological force but the dynamics of plotting and that active engagement of readers which makes every narrative a dialogical transaction” (ix). Yet both Haggerty and Garrett stay in line with gothic criticism’s emphasis on the representational modality of gothic literature. After all, Haggerty attributes gothic authors’ invention of the gothic tale to the gothic’s “primary formal aim” of the “emotional and psychological involvement of the reader” (18), and Garrett’s point of the multiple narratives of a gothic story created by the intercommunication between the author and readers is subsumed for him under gothic narrative’s generation of “alternative perspectives on the relationship between an isolated consciousness and the social group” (220).

the authors build up the gothic House (or Castle) of Fiction but only to be merely haunting it, with their existence and effect not fully recognized.

While the image of the author as a ghost testifies to the insignificant and impotent status of the author within current gothic criticism, the same image may earn more positive and productive implications if we take another look at it with the help of contemporary authorship theories and studies of nineteenth-century American literature. Revolving around the (already quite gothic-sounding) issue of the death of the author that was originally brought up by Barthes's pathbreaking 1968 essay, "The Death of the Author," modern authorship scholars ponder the problematic of individualistic and authoritarian authorship. According to Barthes, the common conception of the author as a sole originator and owner of the text and controller of its meaning is doomed to termination. A text, becoming a "neutral, composite, oblique space" once it comes into being, denies any single and fixed origin or author, so that by simply writing the text, "the author enters into his own death" (142). Such a death, Barthes goes on, heralds a revolutionary modernization of literary studies in that in accordance with the dethronement of the "Author-God" there emerge readers, to whom "Classic criticism has never paid any attention" and whose multiple readings of the text guarantee equally multiple meanings of it (146, 148). Hence, "to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148). In Barthes's view, then, the inevitable death of the author signifies the limit of the orthodox ideation of the author and calls for a new notion of the author, authority, and authorship, a notion that especially takes into account the role of readers.

Authorship scholars after Barthes, while conceding that the author no longer exists as a self-contained dictator due to the unspecified—and unspecifiable—mass of readers, have expanded on Barthes chiefly in two ways. Some of them trace retrospectively the economic, legal, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds of the eighteenth-century invention of autonomous authorship. Mark Rose’s Authors and Owners (1993), which investigates the history of copyright laws in Britain, and Martha Woodmansee’s The Author, Art, and the Market (1994), which probes the modern conceptualization of art mostly in eighteenth-century Germany, similarly show how eighteenth-century European intellectuals’ and writers’ shared insecurity about the newly rising literary market system and mass audience, combined with the rise of individualism during the period, conduces to the birth of the author as “a specially gifted person able to produce from the depths of personal experience an organically unified work of art” (Rose 132).³ Others attempt to comprehend and theorize the very event of the Barthesian demise of such an excessively individuated author. Michel Foucault, in “What Is an Author?” (1969), famously counters Barthes’s poststructuralist assertion of the ultimate extinction of the author from a sociohistorical point of view, by maintaining that even if the author as a discernibly dominating individual presence within the text may be gone, the author in the form of his or her proper name stays and keeps functioning as “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning” or categorizing and

³ For the historical study on the androcentric basis of eighteenth-century authorship that systematically exploits female writerly and readerly desire and conceals such exploitation, see Sonia Hofkosh, Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998).

systematizing our discourses on literature (159). Foucault's portrayal of the author as an essentially "ideological figure" (159), which would never die as far as we use and value its proper name, is re-addressed within the (con)textual domain and equally famously deconstructed by Jacques Derrida. In his "Signature Event Context" (1971), Derrida pushes the boundary of Barthes's point by opining that the author (and readers too) should be absent in the text in order to make it "iterable," or ceaselessly signified and re-signified, only within "contexts without any center of absolute anchoring" (315, 320). Then he applies that iterability to the signature of the author's name, which is now the only mode in which the author is visibly related to the text but which, "In order to function ... must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form" and "be able to detach itself from the present and singular intention of its production" (329). In this manner, Derrida refutes Foucault's resuscitation of the author by means of his or her proper name, and reassures us that the author is deceased.

With Derrida's dissolution of the author or his or her (signed) proper name, which generated a myriad of followers who would constitute Derridean deconstruction, the author undoubtedly becomes a dead absence in the text. Such dissolution of the author, however, raises one crucial question: though the author is conceptually no more, there still remains in reality someone who starts writing and keeps writing for us readers; how, then, should we understand this writing subject that survives its own death as an author and lingers around us readers? The lack of a sufficient account for this question within Derrida's paradigm seems attributable to his deconstructive tenets of "an overturning of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system"

(Derrida 329). In other words, Derrida perceives the system of authorship in binary oppositional terms such as the author/the text, the author/the reader, and the author/the context. And by reducing the author's presence to the detachable and reproducible signature, Derrida apparently succeeds in "overturning" those oppositional terms ultimately on behalf of the text (and the context), yet fails to "displace" that archaic, ineffective institution of authorship; he has to conclude that "it appears necessary, provisionally and strategically, to conserve the old name" of writing (329). Taking that failure as caused by modern authorship theorists' neglect of the irreducible and irreplaceable truth that authors, readers, and texts (and contexts) are all symbiotically intertwined with one another,⁴ I will give attention to the writing subject that is left

⁴ Such a failure of deconstruction is also demonstrated in Peggy Kamuf's Signature Pieces (1988). Kamuf, à la Derrida, states that the author's proper name has lost its power as it is practically superseded by the author's signature, which is only "a piece of name" and thus works to dismantle the name by revealing its fragmentable nature (12). The pieces of the name, indeed, are none other than "arbitrary signifiers," which, "at any moment, can be cut off from their referent—the bearer of the name—and left to their fate, floating in the currents of chance encounters with readers who are free to associate a meaning with the name" (Kamuf 3). By saying this, Kamuf underlines authors' mandatory recourse to readers in order to have any "meaning" as authors: the decomposed authors can only be recomposed by means of readers' construction of their texts and imagining of their authorial characteristics. Kamuf's foregrounding of readers' role that would give a new life to the dead, decomposed authors, however, arrives at the conclusion that attending to signature pieces is "an unnerving remainder or reminder, a fragment that was never wholly of the whole, be it author or work," and "cannot ... offer a method of exorcism, restitution, or any other rite performed in view of some eternal life" (20). I would say that Kamuf's more or less nihilistic conclusion comes from her basically deconstructive purposes that hinge on the antitheses of the author/the reader and the author/the text: she can "overturn" or negate the author's superiority over the reader and the text, but cannot go beyond and elaborate on the significance of that negation in productive ways.

This impasse in deconstructive authorship theories seems to be resolved with the publication of Seán Burke's The Death and Return of the Author in 1992. Observing that

behind after the annihilation of the author and continues talking with us readers, and think about how to update our knowledge of authorship on account of that subject, not simply “displace” it. By doing so, I aim to find a balance between the textual death of the author in Barthes and the social revival of that dead author in Foucault, so as to go beyond Derrida’s mostly analytical deconstruction of sovereign and autarchic authorship and point to a more practical mode of authorship. To be exact, I propound a linkage between the de-author-ized writing subject in modern authorship theories and the disempowered, ghostified author in current gothic criticism. That linkage, in turn, will allow us to configure an authorial identity as a ghost whose existence and effect is now only detectable and realizable through readers’ response to its writing.

Significantly, our configuration of the author as the reader-dependent and even reader-created ghostly writing subject, or the “ghost writer,” can be substantiated by virtue of nineteenth-century American gothic writers, whose literary performance within remarkably reader-centered literary markets will provide us with sufficient literary evidence of the theoretical dismantling of the eighteenth-century author in concurrence with the empowerment of readers. Nineteenth-century literary scholars commonly agree

the pronounced death of the author does not stop the scholarly reflection on the (defects of) the author, Burke argues that the author is dead but “returns on condition that his life is discontinuous, fictive” (31). Though ostensibly similar to my stance, Burke explains such a return of the dead author as part of a wider movement of the contemporary critique of representation: “What Roland Barthes has been talking of all along is not the death of the author, but the closure of representation” (48). Furthermore, Burke’s focus is mainly on the theories of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, so that his potentially constructive conclusion—our ceaseless interest in the authorship question proves “the limit of an expressive world and the striving we make toward a beyond” (206)—remains unwarranted.

that during this time American writers in general were obliged to seek new ways of establishing their authorship, owing to the surge of the democratic worldview and sentiment and consequent changes in the conditions of literary production and consumption. Mark R. Patterson, in Authority, Autonomy, and Representation (1988), says that the period's writers encountered a situation in which readers' literary appetites became uncontrollably diversified and their power to evaluate literary works rapidly increased. In that situation, Patterson adds, American writers saw that the conventional principle of autocratic literary authority would not work; instead, they came to realize that authority now becomes what Carl Friedrich calls a "quality of communication," and that "its boundaries and terms are fluid and relational" (xxvi). And such a realization drove the writers to "concede more to their audience, at least in principle, than their counterparts in the Old World" (Railton 19). American gothic writers, it should be noted, must have had to yield themselves to readers more willingly than their contemporaries. Their usually wide popularity in the markets did not suit the then-normative image of the author as a transcendental, anti-commercial, and self-evidently unique genius, and customarily designated them to be second-rate scribblers. In fact, this hierarchizing attitude toward gothic writers still reigns, as most studies on nineteenth-century American authorship euphemize or keep silent about canonical writers' gothic works or tendencies; and my dissertation, which puts forward the notion of the ghost writer by attending to five nineteenth-century writers' reader-reliant ways of establishing their authorship, will significantly deviate from that mainstream scholarly disposition.⁵

⁵ Patterson discusses the gothic ambiguity of Brown's Wieland as betokening the

Moreover, even in a huge pool of commercially successful writers of various genres, gothic writers would have stood out as the notorious ambiguities of the gothic make it essentially contingent upon readers' active interpretations. In this respect, American gothic writers must have turned to readers with a sense of exigency for the recognition of their writing and the sanctioning of their career.

Drawing on these observations, my dissertation addresses five nineteenth-century American gothic writers and investigates their composition of gothic texts with unspecified, spectral authorial intentions and personae that solicit their readers to construe their texts and determine their author-ity. The gothic texts in this dissertation have been chosen for the notably relevant delineation of author-figure characters, which embody the writers' keen awareness of the insufficiency of self-assumed and self-

disruption of traditional authority and intentionality during the postrevolutionary period. Kenneth Dauber, in The Idea of Authorship in America (1990), similarly counts the "wildness and inconsistency" of Brown's texts as indicating the instability surrounding the professionalization of authorship for the first time in American history (xviii). In addition, Dauber, in his chapter on Poe in the same book, underscores the plagiaristic intertextuality, among Poe's diverse (and considerably gothic) writing traits, as bespeaking Poe's Romantic desire for free inspiration and for transcendence from the professionalization of authorship. Stephen Railton's chapter on Poe in Authorship and Audience (1991) focuses on Poe's anxiety of authorship against ever-powerful readers that Poe supposedly shares with other representative nineteenth-century American (not-necessarily-gothic) writers, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Michael Newbury's Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America (1997) posits Poe, along with Hawthorne and Fanny Fern, within the (de-gothicized) context of copyright law debates. Exceptionally, Nancy Ruttenburg, in Democratic Personality (1998), keenly captures and fully analyzes the eerie disembodiment of the speaking and writing subject in Carwin and Clara, the two main characters of Wieland. But her observation of that gothic disembodiment supports her fundamentally historico-religious argument for a de-individualized, national democratic authorial personality in post-Puritan America that evolves through (once again, not-characteristically-gothic) classic writers like James Fenimore Cooper, Walt Whitman, and Melville.

justified authority and their revolutionary vision of the authorial identity as an immaterial ghost that can only be re-materialized by readers' sympathetic belief in what it writes. As such, it should be made clear, some of those texts are not strictly categorized as gothic but nonetheless regarded as gothic here as far as they exhibit gothic qualities, including the representation of horror and the presentation of the uncannily destabilizing alternatives (i.e. the ghost writer) to the official, normal version of sociocultural institutions (i.e. authorship). Chapter I will examine the relationship between nineteenth-century American gothic writers and eighteenth-century sovereign and autarchic authorship so as to help us see more clearly how the former debunks the latter and pursues ghost-writership instead. To do so, I will place Brown, one of America's (gothic) literary forefathers, side by side with Edward Young, one of the renowned European supporters of the author's exclusive textual proprietorship, by reading Brown's "The Rhapsodist" (1789), where a dogmatic narrator struggles against an intrusive reader for narrative control, as a critique of Young's foundational theorization of the originary, possessive, and imperious author in Conjectures on Original Composition (1759). Then I will proceed to Wieland, Brown's most well-known gothic work and one of America's first (gothic) novels, and show how Brown elaborates more fully his critique of Young's formulation of authorship (or, Youngian/sovereign/autarchic/authoritarian/etc. authorship from now on): Brown in that novel describes at once the self-righteous first-person main narrator Clara Wieland's failure in narrative authority because of the unidentifiable ventriloquist Carwin's readerly and writerly intervention in her narration, and Carwin's achievement of

authorship thanks to Clara's readers' credence in and curiosity about his version of Clara's story. The chapter will end with a discussion of how Carwin's reader-induced author-ization gives us clues to Brown's quest for editorial, depersonalized, and prototypically ghostly authorship and foreshadows Brown's nineteenth-century literary descendants' continuation of that quest.

Chapter II will consider how Brown's innovative yet inchoate attempt at the ghost writer is accomplished by Poe's "author-fiction." I will start by looking at Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) to foreground his perception of the author as a fictional character that does not exist in its own right but should be taken as and made real by readers (hence the author-fiction, which reminds us of and prefigures the Foucauldian author-function, or our artificial construction of the author as a functional being for regulating our discourses on literature). Then I will move on to Poe's one and only novel, and his most frequently studied gothic work, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, and explore how its main character and first-person narrator Pym stands for the Youngian author and how Pym's inability to provide an absolutely authoritative account of his incredible South-Sea voyage on his own points to Poe's insight into the fictive, reader-created essence of the author. I will conclude the chapter by regarding the incessant controversies over Poe's authorial character ever since his death as the ultimate realization of his author-fiction in his own ghostly state of being and the effective shaping of his authorial identity as a ghost writer.

Chapter III will apply the basic principles of Poe's author-fiction to the reader-initiated author-ization of writers from two socially marginalized, practically nonexistent

groups. I will see Douglass and Alcott the representative writers for those spectral groups and observe how they overcome their spectrality by obtaining valid authority with the aid of their sympathetic readers who have socially valid presence and identity. More specifically, I will discuss: how Douglass's best-known autobiographical account, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, presents his self-story with not a typically autobiographical, a priori self but an absent-present, ghostlike narratorial self that is a fugitive slave writer Frederick Douglass, and lets his readers identify with that self and give it authorial rights and legitimacy; and how Alcott's recently re-discovered, and most critically acclaimed thriller, "Behind a Mask," features the story of governess Jean Muir's attainment of a socially viable identity of Lady Coventry through the Coventrys' readerly construction of her barely identified mask as such, and hints at powerless woman writer Alcott's reader-directed characterization of her pseudonymous writerly mask, A. M. Barnard, as an officially existent author. At the end, I will emphasize that Douglass and Alcott transform from ghosts to ghost writers.

Chapter IV will probe how not only socially absent-present writers like Douglass and Alcott but socially recognized authors as well willingly choose death and seek to be ghost writers. To do so, I will first bring up the nineteenth-century distinction between the author and the writer as practiced in the American literary sphere and theorized by Foucault. Then I will read The Turn of the Screw, a gothic novella by one of the classic American literary masters or "authors," James, to demonstrate how it disrupts that distinction with the use of the main character, the unnamed governess: she initially acts as one of the period's most impotent writerly figures, the ghostwriter, but later, via the

posthumous circulation and endorsement of her narrative by her readers, turns into the Jamesian—not Foucauldian—model of a self-de-author-izing and reader-author-ized ghost writer. I will round out this concluding chapter by contemplating how all the author-figures in this dissertation serve to illustrate and flesh out my notion of the ghost writer and how the notion contributes to illuminating and surmounting the inherent limitation of current deconstructive authorship theories as it permits us to look beyond the death of the author and discover the afterlife of that dead author in harmony with readers. In this way, my dissertation as a whole will locate the pre-Barthesian, pre-modern shift from the autonomous author to the heteronomous author within the nineteenth-century American gothic literary realm by tracing the emergence and evolution of the ghost writer during the time.

CHAPTER II

“THIS PHANTOM TO PURSUE MY STEPS”: THE FAILURE OF THE AUTHOR

IN CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

Charles Brockden Brown's Wieland; or, The Transformation: An American Tale (1798) came out when professional authorship, along with the literary market system, was soon to be settled down in America. As such, it has been understood as the thematically and artistically founding text for American literature as a whole. Especially the novel's gothic portrayal of the Wieland residence, located in the remote and isolated rural area of Mettingen, Pennsylvania, as a central stage for bloodchilling cases of spontaneous combustion, ventriloquism, religious fanaticism, and family massacre, has incited a number of scholarly arguments about Brown's unique application of the traditionally European literary genre to represent the sociopolitical instability and disorder of the New World in the late eighteenth century. This chapter proposes yet another reading of the "American" gothicism of Wieland. To that end, it will examine the novel in terms of Brown's innovative view of his own authorial career under the dramatic changes in the relationship between authors and readers, and discuss the novel's significance as the prototypical "American Tale" that foreshadows ensuing American gothic writers' participation in the "transformation" of the established author-centered authorship to a protomodern reader-oriented one.

1. How the Author is Born to Fail: Edward Young's Conjectures and Brown's "The Rhapsodist"

The eighteenth century marks a significant juncture in the history of authorship. It is during this period that intellectuals first directed their attention to authors' role in the production of texts and tried to formulate the modern notion of the author. Such intellectual attention and effort was chiefly instigated by contemporary scholarly debates about copyright laws that began around 1710, when the Statute of Anne, or "the world's first copyright statute," was enacted in Britain (Rose 4). The statute allowed writers, for the first time in history, to own and regulate what they write, but at the same time it gave rise to a question about how and why they can achieve such an exclusive authority on their works.⁶ Among the proponents of writers' rights to their texts, Edward Young

⁶ There are a number of reasons for the rise of this question. According to Martha Woodmansee, writers up to the eighteenth century had not been qualified to claim the privilege of textual ownership, because they had been mostly considered either to be a "master of a body of rules, or techniques, preserved and handed down in rhetoric and poetics, for manipulating traditional materials in order to achieve the effects prescribed by the cultivated audience of the court," or to be "inspired—by some muse, or even by God" (36). In either sense, writers during the Renaissance and neoclassical era would have been just "a vehicle or instrument" (36). The assumed passivity and impotence of writers is further suggested by the fact that copyrights of works had been usually owned not by writers but by booksellers and printers, due to the power of "a guild system in which the right to print a book was established through entry" in the register of the Stationers' Company; according to its rules, "Once secured [by one stationer], the right to print a particular book continued forever, and thus a 'copy' might be bequeathed or sold to another stationer or it might be split into shares among several stationers" (Rose 12). Such monopolization of copyrights by the guild system minimized writers' role in the (re)production and circulation of texts. Moreover, writers before the eighteenth century had to depend upon the patronage of the aristocracy for financial support. All of these traditional conditions, however, changed as the market economy began to affect the literary domain in the eighteenth century: writers could have a chance to become more independent as they came to live on the sales of their works in literary markets

offered an answer for the question by introducing a new concept of the author and thus articulating “an emergent eighteenth-century construction of authorship” (Rosenthal 33) in his Conjectures on Original Composition. In a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison (1759). In this treatise, Young defines the author as one who produces an original text in contrast to one who simply imitates what others—especially the ancient literary authorities—wrote. The originality of the author’s text comes from its “vegetable nature”: because the text “rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius” of the author, it is something that “grows” directly out of him (8). Also, as the text is naturally born of the author’s mind, it would contain the traces of his self and, by extension, become a kind of offshoot or even replica of his personality. Therefore, the text is in essence inseparable from the author and must be regarded as his possession.

To Young, the author’s organic creation and rightful possession of the text should go hand in hand with his self-confidence that would distinguish him from others, insofar as the text embodies the author’s self and its uniqueness comes to be “dependent on the individuality of the author” (Rose 121). Without the strong sense of selfhood and self-esteem, Young states, the author just “makes one of a group, and thinks in wretched unanimity with the throng”; “Incumbered with the notions of others, and impoverished by their abundance, he conceives not the least embryo of new thoughts” and fails both in being a unique person and in producing the unique text (30). Now if the author believes in and respects himself, Young continues, he “will soon find the world’s reverence to

consisting of numberless readers rather than a small group of aristocrats. The question about the legitimacy of writers’ textual proprietorship emerged in accordance with this commercialization of literature.

follow his own” and his works will be accordingly appreciated and “stand distinguished” (30). Such an image of the author as a self-assured and distinguished artist does more than help writers to overcome “considerable anxiety among [themselves] in the middle years of the century about the commodification of writing” in literary markets, as many authorship theorists emphasize (Rose 118). It serves to hierarchize the structure of authorship by at once mystifying and empowering authors and demeaning and subordinating readers. Young makes clear authors’ superiority to readers when he defines the act of writing as “a noble Amusement” and the act of reading as “more humble amusement” (5, 6). He proposes as authors’ essential duty the dedication of their genius or intellectual excellence to improving readers’ knowledge and virtue: “Wit, indeed, however brilliant, should not be permitted to gaze self-enamour’d on its useless Charms,” but “it should sacrifice its most darling Offspring [i. e. the author’s work] to the sacred interests of Virtue, and real Service of mankind” (4-5). The author is eligible for this “sacred” “Service” because he is the only one who can access, by means of his exceptional genius, “a delicious Garden of Moral and Intellectual fruits and flowers; the Key of which is denied to the rest of mankind” (5). Based on this moral and intellectual ascendancy, authors are deemed by Young even as equal to the ultimate noble figure, God, while readers are regarded as obliged to venerate the Author-God and obey its words/writings for self-improvement: “With regard to the Moral world, Conscience, with regard to the Intellectual, Genius, is that God within. Genius can set us right in Composition, without the Rules of the Learned; as Conscience sets us right in Life, without the Laws of the Land: This, singly, can make us Good, as Men; That, singly, as

Writers, can, sometimes, make us Great” (18). This apotheosis of the author results in the vertical separation of authors and readers, which in turn finalizes Young’s paradigm of original and sovereign authorship.

The author’s characteristics depicted in Young’s Conjectures are also found in the American literary scenes of the eighteenth century. During this period, the dominant mode of authorship in the nation was constructed through the generic conventions of sentimental romance. Influenced by the novels of Samuel Richardson, who was a close friend and literary mentor of Young and played a significant part in Young’s conceptualization of the author in Conjectures,⁷ American writers were mostly producing works with an obvious authorial intent to give a moral education to readers. Ernest Marchand illustrates the trend when he says that “In order to make its way at all,” the contemporary American novel “had to surround itself with a thick coating of moral sugar” (550). Also, W. M. Verhoeven notes that phrases like “Moral benefit” were formulas “any writer had to briefly invoke at the time (and in the ‘enlightened,’ post-Revolutionary America even more so than in Britain) whenever he expressed himself favorably about fiction” (157, fn. 44). There is a distinctively “American” reason for such enormous popularity of, and writers’ considerable recourse to, sentimental didactic romance among many other literary genres. According to Emory Elliott, in America “the

⁷ It is well known that Richardson actively encouraged Young to compose Conjectures and offered enthusiastic advices on its revision. See Rosenthal 34-35, and Rose 116-117. See also Robert L. Chibka, “The Stranger within Young’s Conjectures,” ELH 53. 3 (1986): 541-656; Alan D. McKillop, “Richardson, Young, and the Conjectures,” Modern Philology 22. 4 (1925): 391-404; and Patricia Phillips, “Richardson, Young and the Conjectures: Another Interpretation,” Studia Neophilologica: A Journal of Germanic and Romance Language and Literature 53 (1981): 107-112.

intimate relationship between literature and religion” had “prevailed well beyond the Revolution” in that literature had played “the moral and spiritual role” to guide people throughout the turbulent process of building up a nation (7-8). That role of literature is embodied as the idea of the “gentleman of letters,” which had reigned over American society and culture from the colonial era up to the eighteenth century. The gentleman of letters, collectively referring to a “self-conscious elite” group of “Ministers, magistrates, lawyers, and the gentry,” produced works to promote civic virtue and knowledge and “dominated both intellectual life and the social structure as part of their paternal exercise of authority” (Watts 196). The dominance of the gentleman of letters in the early period of America paved the way for the prevalence of Young’s notion of authorship in eighteenth-century American literature, in that the gentleman of letters, like the Youngian author, would have presented in the text an intellectually outstanding authorial character and morally defined writing intention, with a condescending air towards readers. The types of texts by the gentleman, including “devotional literature and scientific treatise, classical allusion and rhetorical skill, law and history” (Watts 196), show authors as authoritative specialists in the reputable fields of knowledge who work to improve society spiritually, ethically, and intellectually. And by virtue of this honorable and exemplary persona, the gentleman-author “expected and received deferential respect from below,” that is, from readers (Watts 196). Hence, through the custom of the gentleman of letters, the authorial position in America was exalted above the readerly one and constituted a sociocultural high class.

Considering this stratified texture of the early American literary realm, we might say that the first American novelists' involvement with sentimental romance in the latter half of the eighteenth century passes "the mantle of moral preceptor and intellectual leader" to "artists and poets" (Elliott 12), and points to their desire for the spiritual, ethical, and intellectual leadership of their predecessors and insistence on the hierarchical division between authors and readers. For this reason, sentimental romance would have proven especially apt, since the genre, being "didactic," features the author-reader relationship basically as lecturer-audience, teacher-student, and thus superior-inferior. Moreover, sentimental romance, being "literary," permits writers to be entertaining yet directive towards readers. For example, in Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth (1794), a huge bestseller of the time, we see the authorial voice frequently meddling into the captivatingly heartbreaking story of the corruption and tragic death of an innocent American girl and specifically telling readers what to learn from the story. Such manner of meddling renders Rowson as a Youngian author who skillfully creates the text to instruct readers in strict agreement with her lofty authorial aim.

Although not strictly categorized as a writer of sentimental romance, Charles Brockden Brown has been generally considered as a representative eighteenth-century American novelist and a model of the conventional pedagogic author-figure. Earlier scholars agreed with Marchand's emphasis on "thorough-going didacticism" of his authorship (562) and described him as a preacher or "giver of advice in palatable form" (Warfel vi). The moralistically didactic orientation of Brown in turn characterized him as

an author who hankers for power over his readers, as critics began taking notice of Brown's debt to William Godwin, especially his best-known novel of purpose, The Adventures of Caleb Williams; or Things as They are (1794).⁸ To those critics, Caleb Williams epitomizes Godwin's self-definition as a potent author who can not only edify but also transform readers. In his 1832 account of the composition of the novel, Godwin talks about how he has endeavored to write a novel that would exactly coincide with his authorial design and "ultimate conclusion," for the consequent "entire unity of plot" and "the unity of spirit and interest in a tale" would enable him to have "a powerful hold on the reader" (xxvi). The author's "powerful hold on the reader," in Godwin's view, translates into the author's sovereign power to induce a significant and beneficent change in the reader, which is his primary goal as a novelist: "I said to myself a thousand times, 'I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before'" (xxvii). Scholars who insisted on Brown's affinity to Godwin applied this idea of an author with absolute mastery over readers to Brown by searching for his authorial objective of affecting and molding readers' character and mind.

Such scholarly quest for the administrative Brown had a deep impact on Brown criticism to the extent that, though the early opinions on him as a conspicuously didactic

⁸ For instance, Michael T. Gilmore says that "Godwin's Caleb Williams had a major impact on Brown": "its publication in 1794 prompted the American turn to the writing of fiction" (107). Attention to Godwin's influence on Brown was initiated by William Dunlap's The Life of Charles Brockden Brown (1815), the first biography of Brown. Dunlap notes that Brown "was an avowed admirer of Godwin's style, and the effects of that admiration, may be discerned in many of his early compositions" (qtd. in Bell 163, fn. 27).

writer have gradually lost their appeal, critics keep describing his authorship as fundamentally relying on the formula of the magisterial author and the obedient reader. This critical disposition is especially well-demonstrated in John Seelye's and Frank Shuffelton's discussions of Brown. Seelye differentiates Brown from the typical didactic writers of late eighteenth-century America by observing that "his fiction operates on a more speculative plane, where moral values are seldom absolute, ethics are situational, conclusions indeterminate" (184). But Seelye remains in synch with the critical consensus on Brown as a commander of readers as he concludes that "we can see the uniqueness of Brown's brand of didacticism, which seems aimed at educating his audience away from any easy faith in rational or 'moral' behavior" (184). More recently, Shuffelton, noting the general scholarly assumption that most eighteenth-century American novels are essentially "about teaching virtue to a republican readership," insists that Brown's novels do not really fit in that assumption because they contain unsuitable materials for the education of young readers, including "homicidal sleepwalkers and mischief-making ventriloquists" (91). Then he states that "Brown's democratic lessons emerge not out of the content, the 'moral,' of his fiction but out of the act of reading itself and the continuous judgments it simultaneously necessitates and problematizes" (91). Shuffelton's statement exemplifies how critics still cling to the image of Brown as an ultimate superior who intentionally gives "lessons" to readers-inferiors even when they no longer agree with the inherent "moral"-ity of his works.⁹

⁹ Critics' inclination to characterize Brown as intentional and domineering is especially noticeable in their readings of Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793 (1799),

Though Brown scholars have continuously portrayed our “founding father of American literature” as a respectable author-figure who takes charge of readers with a benevolent aim, Brown himself was in fact quite doubtful about the hierarchical compartmentalization of authorship and readership implied in literary didacticism. It is well known that Brown, during his first attempt at novel writing in 1795, made a self-conscious remark on himself being “unfitted for the instructor’s chair” (qtd. in Pattee xvii),¹⁰ yet even before that remark, Brown already put into question the mainstream power structure between authors and readers in his writing. “The Rhapsodist,” Brown’s earliest work consisting of four essays serialized in The Universal Asylum, and Columbian Magazine in 1789, illustrates the collapse of the strict stratification of authors and readers and subsequent destabilization of authoritarian authorship. More significantly, such collapse and destabilization is seen by Brown as resulting from readers’ responses to authors’ texts, which reflects his perception of the realities of the literary production and consumption in America that were gradually moving against the orthodox tenet of authorial superiority. As fully examined by many literary historians, between the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century the nation observed the

which they usually regard as exhibiting most obviously Godwin’s influence on Brown. Jane Tompkins observes that “the model of right conduct that Brown wishes his readers to make their own [in this novel] is benevolence” (68, emphases added). James Dillon, in his discussion of how Brown stresses a necessary cooperation of objective historians and imaginative romancers to produce a reliable record of human actions and sentiments, labels Brown as the romancer and argues that “The reader [of Arthur Mervyn] ... is not merely a reader, but works as an apprentice romancer” for Brown (249, emphases added).

¹⁰ Harry R. Warfel suggests that the novel implied in this remark must have been Arthur Mervyn, which was Brown’s first try at a novel but completed and published after Wieland (viii).

advance of printing technology and transportation networks that would have made possible the mass manufacture and wider distribution of cheaper books with speed, as well as the increase of the average literacy rate and, consequently, the number of potential readers or consumers.¹¹ In this situation, readers came to have a great influence on authors as their reading and evaluation of works became an important factor to authors' artistic and financial success. From this view, one might say that at that time authors and readers were about to clash on a more or less equal level and have to struggle for the meanings of texts.

Such clash and struggle is foreshadowed in "The Rhapsodist" in the forms of a dynamic between the first-person narrator, who overlaps in many respects with Young's notion of the author, and his unidentified reader, who, eager to respond to the narrator's writing, intervenes in his authorship. This dynamic does not just epitomize "the ironic subjection of literary authority to public opinion" (Simpson 95): it bespeaks Brown's belief in the necessity of taking into account readers' growing eagerness to partake in literary creation. The narrator first introduces himself simply as a rhapsodist and proclaims his purpose of explaining who he is. At a glance, he seems to accept and be fully aware of the transition of the author-reader relationship in progress: he says that he regards his writing of these essays as "a voluntary obligation" to readers and that he will write as if he "converse[s] with his reader not as an author, but as a man" (I: 3, 5). The

¹¹ For more information about the development of the literary industry and the rise of the reading public in America from the late eighteenth to the nineteenth century, see William Charvat, The Profession of Authorship in America 1800-1870 (New York: Columbia UP, 1992), and Cathy N. Davidson, Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America (New York: Oxford UP, 1986).

actual text of the essays, however, exposes the narrator's underlying affiliation with sole, sovereign authorship. According to him, he entitles the essays "The Rhapsodist" for, with a title directly relevant to "my acknowledged character" as such, he can achieve a "Unity of design" and create "a bond of union between parts utterly dissimilar [sic], and otherwise unconnected with each other" (I: 4). This account, designating the narrator/rhapsodist himself as the title and the structural principle of the essays, aims to confirm his origination, possession, and control of his text. Also, his design to describe "The character of a rhapsodist" (I: 5) throughout the essays signifies his object to make his text a copy of himself filled with the marks of his authorial character and thus enhance his authorship and textual proprietorship. The narrator goes on to solidify his authorial station by singling himself out as an eminent and noble author. The rhapsodist always seeks to be "in the deepest recesses of his garden" or retire "to muse and meditate in his chamber," since "It is only when alone that he exerts his faculties with vigour, and exults in the consciousness of his own existence" (II: 7, 6). By isolating himself, the rhapsodist also becomes able to "preserve his dignity sacred from promiscuous intercourse" among undistinguished ordinary people (II: 7). As such, the narrator asserts, the rhapsodist is no other than a "poet" with "a sublime and elevated devotion" to his art that would "raise him to a level with the most illustrious of philosophers" (II: 9). With this assertion, the narrator seeks to associate himself with sovereign authorship and to place him in an undeniably superior position to readers.

Yet the narrator's objective to obtain the authority of the transcendental and divine poet is soon held in check by the "unseasonable interruption" of a letter from one

of his readers (II: 11). The narrator immediately expresses his feeling of annoyance and even resentment of that interruption, which, to him, violates the inviolable partition between authors and readers that he has set up: after lamenting that “In vain the Rhapsodist announces to his Readers, that he hates the intrusion of a visitor,” he adds that the letter is clearly against “my pretensions to unlimited sovereignty over my own person and actions” and “my strong original propensity to silence and reserve” (III: 12). As further implied in his continuing remark that “I loved to be alone, and spoke in a language unintelligible to any but myself” (III: 13), the narrator writes essentially self-servingly; he at best writes “to” readers, while deciding on his own how they should read what he writes. The reader’s letter threatens this self-directed authorship, as it breaks down the narrator’s system of one-way communication in spite of his will and forces him to deal with how the reader thinks of the essays. Now the narrator has no choice but to get into communication “with” the reader, by acknowledging the reader’s letter-response and introducing it in his text: he is “compelled to pay obedience, though grudgingly, to the laws of society” (III: 12), that is, to the laws of the world of “promiscuous intercourse.”

The letter turns out to be indeed highly detrimental to the narrator’s authority, as it is written by a kind of reader who wants to not only speak out his opinion on the narrator’s writing but also do his own writing, and who thus destabilizes the strict division between an authorial act and a readerly act. The reader at first identifies himself as the narrator’s “friend” on account of his reading of the first number of the essays (III: 17). Then he boldly argues for “so great a resemblance [of the narrator] to myself in the

common qualifications of an author” that has motivated him to write the letter (III: 17). Ironically enough, given that the essays were supposed to distinguish the narrator as an author with extraordinary and unique talent, the reader finds his similarity with the narrator and his opportunity to become an author himself just like the narrator. The reader’s finding, obviously unintended by the narrator, evinces the impossibility of authors’ total control of texts because of readers’ interpretation, and weakens the narrator’s authority. Based on what he has discovered, the reader then professes his willingness to try his hand at an authorial post: “I have unwarily admitted in my bosom, a belief that literary fame is a prize not altogether unattainable” (III: 17). The reader, however, has in effect already made himself an author, as he has his own writing introduced in the narrator’s writing—“I am, even now, entitled to share with you the honour of publication” (III: 17)—and, more important, has written the letter “to” the narrator and turned the narrator into his reader. This inversion of the authorial and readerly positions bestows the reader with power over the narrator. The reader continues: “In the mean time, permit me to address you as an author, and to close this epistle with some directions respecting the composition of your essays” (III: 18). Even if he says, “permit me to address you as an author,” and appears to agree with the narrator being an author, the reader is actually highlighting the fact that it is he, not the narrator, who makes the narrator an author. The narrator cannot obtain authorship autonomously but needs the reader who would “address [him] as an author” to be one; and for now, or “in the mean time,” the reader would regard him as an author, whereas he, in other times, may not. What is more, the reader’s proposal to give the narrator “some directions”

intimates an imminent possibility of his intervention in the narrator's authoring act and appropriation of the narrator's authoring position.

The narrator, perceiving such intimidating connotations of the reader's words, tries to re-claim his authority by abruptly cutting off the letter: "The narrow bounds to which I am restricted [as a periodical writer], will not suffer me to insert the whole of this letter at present" (III: 18). Yet now that the reader's voice in his essays has become too loud to be ignored in that despotic manner, the narrator cannot help but re-introduce the letter. In doing so, he endeavors to restrain the reader's growing effect on him by calling the reader's proposed help mere "assistance" and thus subordinate to his writing (IV: 21). The re-introduced portion of the letter, however, shows the reader already ready to write, with a claim to the "liberty of judging for myself" and "entire freedom with respect to composition, and the qualities of stile [sic]," and "a subject" (IV: 22, 23). And he begins to write about a certain medical condition called "itch of writing" (IV: 23). The topic is quite an appropriate choice for his attempt at authorship inasmuch as it looks as if he himself had that itch: his narrative is comprised of a jumble of medical knowledge and personal meditation with an impulsive tone. Alarmed by the reader's unpremeditated and spontaneous writing, the narrator interrupts once again to "impose silence upon my correspondent, with remarking, that he does not appear to consult propriety" (IV: 24). By judging the reader's writing in terms of "propriety," the narrator subjugates the reader to his power to determine what should be said in his text, and finally manages to put an end to the reader's dangerous intervention. But it still does not restore to the narrator his authorship, for along with the reader's writing his own essays

end as well: after the conclusion of the fourth number with the “propriety” remark, we never see him come back and finish up “The Rhapsodist.” This incomplete closure reveals the narrator’s interrelationship with the reader. To be more exact, since the reader’s break-in with the letter, the essays as a whole have become a record of the narrator’s interaction with the reader so that now it is impossible for the narrator to continue writing without the reader. In this sense, “The Rhapsodist” illuminates readers’ fundamental involvement in authors’ composition of texts.

Such illumination, then, allows us to read “The Rhapsodist” as Brown’s call for an almost mandatory dissolution and change of dictatorial authorship in consideration of readers. And the fact that those essays are what made Brown a “published author” (Cowie 313) supports the idea that Brown looks for such dissolution and change of authorship right from the beginning of his writing career. Indeed, Steve Hamelman observes that “The Rhapsodist” “spelled out the literary theories that would soon find fictional expression” in Brown’s novels (173). Yet Hamelman, like many other Brown scholars who argue for Brown’s sovereign authorship, reads the essays as thematizing “Brown’s repeated theme of originality” that is later fictionalized in Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker (1799), and affirms that “The Rhapsodist (ever eager to rhapsodize about his infatuation with nature, solitude, and self), Edgar Huntly, and Charles Brockden Brown speak in harmony” (186). Disagreeing with Hamelman’s portrayal of Brown as a self-regarding and self-dissociating, and thus essentially Youngian author, I would maintain that “The Rhapsodist” theorizes Brown’s re-configuration of the author according to the mutation of readership and his quest for an

alternative type of authorship built on that re-configuration, and propose that their “fictional expression” is most discernibly found in his first published gothic novel, Wieland.

Several critics, taking mainly two different standpoints, have already paid attention to how Wieland represents Brown’s problematization of the traditional notion of authorship. The first standpoint, concerning the location of originality and authority in the novel, is well illustrated in Walter Hesford’s and Mark R. Patterson’s discussions. Hesford, pointing out how the uncertainty of who causes all the calamities in Wieland raises a question about “the author, the initiator, of the bloody, confusing action,” opines that the novel “works to deconstruct the idea of single authorship, and, with it, belief in a single, authoritative source of meaning and action,” by making the reader “something of an author, a constructor of meaning” (239, 246). Patterson similarly notes that Wieland has no author in the sense of “one who creates or causes an action” insofar as “we can never safely trace events back to their authors,” and insists that such a lack testifies to Brown’s transference of “the power to judge the value and verifiable truth of his novel” to readers (68, 69, 73). These readings, while shedding light on how Wieland showcases Brown’s dubiety about the supremacy of authors’ origination and his recognition of the importance of readers’ construction, only focus on the general idea of the author as a creator of an action, and neglect a more specific, “literary” sense of the author as a creator of a “story.” For that reason, they fail to address how the novel is more self-consciously concerned about the “act” and “process” of authoring—of composing a story and claiming its ownership—chiefly by means of the first-person narrator and

“writer” Clara Wieland. This failure seems to be made up for by the other critical standpoint to Wieland, which heeds the import of Clara’s narration. It especially takes notice of her anxious but fruitless efforts to provide a satisfactorily complete narrative of events, as indicating the inherent limitations of the author’s unshared control of the text. According to Mark Seltzer, Clara’s incapacity to causalize events exemplifies “the difficulties that [Brown] encounters in the act of writing,” which can be summed up as “the uncertain relation between intent and effect, between the verbal performance and the actions and reactions which it instigates” (81). Cynthia S. Jordan, remarking that the precipitate ending in Clara’s narrative shows her “attempts to impose order on an anarchic reality,” contends that the deficiency of such an ending signifies Brown’s message that “the motives and actions of other people, are ever inscrutable, and thus any interpretations of such realities must remain inconclusive ‘stories’” (158, 170-71). Later Toni O’Shaughnessy expands Seltzer’s and Jordan’s opinions in a poststructuralist perspective, and claims that “the inadequacy of Clara’s interpretive efforts, and, by analogy, of other interpretive efforts” similarly relying on single accountability, demonstrates Brown’s idea that neither author nor reader but language itself becomes an agent, “more important for its power to effect behavior than for its source or meaning” (49). All these observations certainly contribute to illuminating Brown’s depiction in Wieland of the impossibility of the purely author-directed production of the text due to the fundamental relatedness of the authorial act with the readerly act. But they still do not offer an insight into his actual application of his awareness of that impossibility to the practice of authorship per se.

Drawing on these observations, I will argue in this chapter that Wieland registers Brown's attempt to put into practice his realization of at once the insufficiency of contemporary autarchic authorship to handle readers' irrefutable influence on authors' performance and the necessary transformation of the notion of the author to overcome that insufficiency. To do so, I will focus on not only Clara, who has been the center of critical attention, but also Carwin, who, despite the novel's allusion to him as "the principal person" (3),¹² has been depreciated, if not neglected, by critics owing to his mostly unexplained and ghostly existence and motivation.¹³ As Roland Hagenbüchle notes, Wieland illustrates through Carwin Brown's employment of the gothic convention

¹² Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist (Ed. Jay Fliegelman, New York: Penguin Books, 1991). All quotations from the novel will be taken from this edition.

¹³ Earlier critics denied any significance to Carwin due to his lack of distinctive identity. William M. Manly sees that "Carwin, in fact, is for the most part a shadowy background figure whose final confession reveals him to be more of a pathetic bumbler," and asserts that "Though he is the mechanism behind mysterious events, the dramatic heart of the novel is not in the events themselves but in the reaction of Clara and Wieland to them" (319, 320). David Lytle agrees with Manly, saying that Carwin's ability "to mimic voices" only "symbolizes his failure of identity" and, by extension, as a character in the novel (265, fn. 19). Toward the mid-1970s Carwin has gradually appealed to critics, but only as a textual device to articulate Brown's authorial ideas precisely through his unidentified presence in Wieland. To Michael Davitt Bell, Carwin's character is Brown's fictionalization of the problematic of authorial sincerity that he has originally brought up in "The Rhapsodist": "If Clara represents the Rhapsodist's ideal of absolute literary sincerity, then Carwin represents his fear that all literary expression, being "artful," leads inevitably to artificiality and deception" (147). Mirosława Ziaja-Buchholtz sees Carwin's hollowness as a means of Brown's invocation of readers' participation. Because Carwin is "never objectively, omnisciently described," readers "may choose either to trust or reject" his story at the end (28). Recently, critics Paul Downes and Hsuan L. Hsu discuss Carwin more exclusively, by attending to an unfinished sequel to Wieland, "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist" (1803-1805). Yet their discussions are mostly devoted to the exploration of the historiopolitical implications of the sequel rather than the textual analysis. Hence the critical tendency toward regarding Carwin as an essentially symbolic figure still continues.

of “character instability and character ambivalence (along with unfathomable motivation)” (130). As a character defined by incongruity between the interior and the exterior, Brown’s Carwin marks “a doubling that, like the superimposition of two picture-puzzles, defies all attempts at unriddling,” and exists as “ambivalence incarnate” (130). I propose that we embrace the spectral ambiguity and unreadability of Carwin as it is, by linking it to the ungraspable identity and unprecedented weight of the newly emerging reading public in late eighteenth-century America that would have bewildered and threatened many contemporary writers. Therefore, if Carwin signifies the gothic qualities of Wieland as Hagenbüchle sees, he does so by embodying and reviving what/who should be repressed for the proper operation of sovereign authorship: readers. In this light, I will initially view Clara and Carwin as respectively an authoritative author and an intrusive reader. Clara, the main narrating voice, represents an author whose authority counts on her undivided possession of the text; Carwin, the ventriloquistic voices haunting Clara and her narrative, epitomizes readers’ ubiquitous presence around the author and unpredictable responses to the text that would debilitate Clara’s authority. Viewing Clara and Carwin in this way will elucidate how the conflict between the self-contained author and the responsive reader in “The Rhapsodist” is reenacted in Wieland. Furthermore, it will point to how such conflict incites the birth of a new kind of author and authorship out of readers when Carwin eventually turns into an author of his own narrative, “Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist” (1803-1805), as the consequence of readers’ responses to him. Carwin’s transformation will in turn show how Brown’s later career as a magazine editor can be understood not an alternative choice for his failed

literary authorship, as many critics think, but an attempt at a reader-inspired mode of authorship. Paralleling Carwin's transformation with Brown's own will support my ultimate argument in this chapter that Wieland presages Brown's literary descendants' efforts to establish their authorship in harmony with readership in nineteenth-century America.

2. How the Author Fails, and Thrives: Clara, Carwin, and Brown in Wieland

From the beginning, Wieland makes clear its deep involvement with the changing environment of American literary markets at the end of the eighteenth century. The "Advertisement"¹⁴ in particular represents that involvement: it practically puts the novel up for sale and tries to attract readers/consumers, who "must be permitted to decide" the "lasting reputation" of the novel, by bringing up the story's similarity to "an authentic case" that they "will probably recollect" and must be curious about (3, 4).¹⁵ The "Advertisement" also posits the narrator Clara as a writer under the same increasingly reader-inclined circumstances. It is noted that the narrative of Wieland is

¹⁴ Among Brown's novels, only Wieland begins with the "Advertisement"; others have more conventional opening segments such as a letter from a main character to another (Ormond; or, the Secret Witness), a "Preface" (Arthur Mervyn), an author's self-explanatory address "To the Public" (Edgar Huntly), and so on. This fact clearly distinguishes Wieland from Brown's other works as a text reflecting authors' increasing dependency on readers in contemporary America.

¹⁵ "An authentic case" adverts to a notorious family massacre committed by a religious maniac James Yates in 1781. The reader-appealing effect of this incident is clearly pointed out in one reviewer's comment on Wieland in the North American Review in 1819: "Sometimes the author takes advantage of a recent event amongst ourselves, as in Wieland, which is too shocking to receive any aid from exaggeration or to lose any interest from its notoriety" (qtd. in Wiley 100).

“addressed, in an epistolary form, by the Lady whose story it contains, to a small number of friends, whose curiosity, with regard to it, had been greatly awakened” (4). Here we are given the presupposition of Clara’s narration/writing: she would write on equal terms with readers (they are her “friends,” as in “The Rhapsodist”) and in response to readers’ reactions to her story (her friends are “curious” about what has happened to her and, presumably, want to know about it in detail). This presupposition, emphasizing the “epistolary form,” delineates Clara as a writer in close affinity with readers. Since the epistolary mode is basically designed to feature an intimate transaction between senders and recipients, the epistolarity of Clara’s narrative leads us to look forward to finding her friendly and familiar correspondence with readers in the novel.

The actual text of Clara’s narrative, however, exhibits neither her writerly consideration of readers nor her intimate communication with readers. Rather, it reveals Clara’s attempt to be the kind of author defined by Young, that is, an author who aspires to the non-communicative relationship with readers, to exclusive textual ownership, and to a distanced and transcendent authorial position. The narrative begins with Clara directly addressing and responding to her friends’ “curiosity” about her story. Yet her own response to her friends betrays her anxiety about readers’ excessive closeness with her narratorial position and her effort to detach herself from them. What we notice first of all is her “little reluctance in complying with your request” for her storytelling, followed by a decisive remark that “You know not fully the cause of my sorrows”; she adds that “You are a stranger to the depth of my distresses,” so “your efforts at consolation must necessarily fail” (5). Strictly speaking, as suggested in the

“Advertisement,” it might be her friends’ “request” for her story that encourages and even empowers her to write it in the first place. But Clara simply seems to belittle such significance of the readerly “request,” as she not only sets about her narration mentioning her “reluctance” but also quickly underscores the impossibility of readers’ sympathetic understanding of what has happened to her. Then by stating that her story is “not intended as a claim upon your sympathy” (5), Clara in effect establishes a communicative gap that dissociates her from them.

Clara’s self-dissociation in turn enables her to formulate the author-reader relationship as she wants. She grants her readers “right to be informed of the events that have lately happened in my family,” and asks them to “Make what use of the tale you shall think proper” (5). Right after this seemingly reader-concerned comment, however, she promptly proposes her intended use of her story: “If it be communicated to the world, it will inculcate the duty of avoiding deceit. It will exemplify the force of early impressions, and show, the immeasurable evils that flow from an erroneous or imperfect discipline” (5). Here, Clara acknowledges readers’ “presence” but not their “agency beyond a ‘right to be informed’” (Ferguson 7). Or, I would add, Clara wants readers to remain mere addressees or passive receivers of her epistolary narrative, who shall not reply to her with their “sympathy.” By contrast, she can be an active and authoritative dictator, who determines the meaning of her story by herself. Clara proceeds to reinforce this dictatorship by rendering her experience unsharable and her narrative essentially her own, which consequently endows her with sole authorship. For the experience she has gone through is something that “no human being can furnish a parallel” and that she,

“beyond the rest of mankind, should be reserved for a destiny without alleviation, and without example!” (6). Clara’s “unparalleled” experience individualizes her case and elevates her writerly status “beyond the rest of mankind” including her readers. As a result, she now steps “on this dreadful eminence” and can claim that she is the only one who is “still alive” and “able to relate” her story (6). In this respect, Clara’s epistolary and thus supposedly dialogic narrative reveals its underlying tendency towards a “massive monologue that parodies the epistolary conceit” (Wallach 8).

Clara’s self-elevating and monologic authorship can be further examined in terms of her familial and geographical backgrounds. As to the former, the story of her grandfather provides important clues. Most critics have only focused on how the history of Clara’s father, the elder Wieland, prefigures his son and Clara’s brother Theodore Wieland’s religious zealotry and maniacal murder of his own family and Clara’s own latent insanity and conspicuous secrecy.¹⁶ Yet the history of Clara’s grandfather equally

¹⁶ J. V. Ridgely points out that the elder Wieland’s “tendency toward a private belief which leads to insane conclusion is inherent in the Wieland family” and that “Like her father and brother, Clara is eventually led by her untested perceptions into mental disorientation” (13, 14). Jordan observes that the elder Wieland’s “imperfect tale” about how his body was caught on fire hints at “more integral cause of narrative imperfection” of Clara’s storytelling in that in both of their narratives “not only does external reality remain inscrutable, but storytellers themselves are shown to be unreliable” (163). Also, Jordan continues, Clara keeping her father’s manuscript in her closet “metaphorically strengthens the idea that she has inherited the psychological limitations implicit in his imperfect authority” (164). Norman S. Grabo adds to Jordan by saying that Clara tries to conceal her own resemblance with her father. In Grabo’s view, Clara “apparently intends to explain her brother’s madness by including this extraordinary event [of her father’s possible spontaneous combustion]” and insisting on her belief that “Theodore’s madness relates to their father’s peculiar death” (8). By “externaliz[ing] Theodore’s inheritance of guilt, faith, and obedience to a sense of divinity” from their father, Grabo’s Clara attempts “to hide that she also shares that inheritance,” not knowing that “what she

deserves our attention as, epitomizing the fate of an aristocratic artist in conflict with a newly constituted mercantile and democratic society, it casts light on Clara's Youngian view of art and artists. According to Clara, he was the first one among the noble Wieland household who gave up the family prerogatives owing to his marriage to a woman from the merchant class. Consequently, he had to "search out some mode of independent subsistence" to overcome his "poverty," and came to resort to "literature and music," which had been the "sources of amusement" in his earlier aristocratic habitat but now became his "means of gain" in the world of commerce (7). But his venture into that world was not very successful. His artistic accomplishment was, as described by Clara, praiseworthy enough to posit him as "the founder of the German Theatre" at a time when "there were few works of taste in the Saxon dialect" (7). His artistic performance was, however, overall a failure; his "sonatas and dramatic pieces" were "not unpopular, but merely afforded him a scanty subsistence" (7). This conflicting outcome of the grandfather's career exemplifies not just "the committed artist's inability to cope with the world in mundane vocational terms" (Ferguson 148), but the aristocratic artist's incapability to communicate and share his high-class art with his non-aristocratic audience. Yet the obviously laudatory and proud tone in Clara's relation about her grandfather—she extols "the fruitfulness of his invention" and "the soundness of his taste" (7)—bespeaks that she does not regard his "unpopularity" as failure but rather cherishes the image of artists as distinguished yet solitary creators whose preeminent

imputes to and exteriorizes in her brother is first of all true of herself (26, 27).

achievement can be justly appreciated only by a few with an equally preeminent artistic taste, like her.

Clara's aristocratic view of art and artists is also backgrounded geographically, by the "self-imposed isolation" (Vickers 1) and self-sufficiency of her life in Mettingen. Clara, along with Wieland, has been "exempted ... from the necessity of personal labour" thanks to her father's property "equally divided" to them (23, 24). By virtue of that financial security, she could have lived a tranquil life, withdrawn "from the society of others" or strangers while keeping a selective company with Wieland and his friend Henry Playel as well as Wieland's wife and Playel's sister Catharine, whose "tempers" and intellectual "pursuits" are "remarkably congenial" to Clara (23). With this tightly bound group of people, Clara can maintain a safe "distance" from, and assume a privileged indifference to, "calamity" outside Mettingen that tends only "to heighten enjoyments": "The sound of war had been heard, but it was at such a distance as to enhance our enjoyment by affording objects of comparison," "agitating our minds with curiosity, and furnishing causes of patriotic exultation" (25, 29). In this disconnected and self-absorbed mode of life, art is not a communicative act that requires an audience from outside but just a self-satisfying means of pleasure. As narrated by Clara, "Our tasks, our walks, our music, were seldom performed but in each other's company" (23). She also "sung, and talked, and read, and occasionally banqueted" with the group at a temple, a private, insulated artistic shrine that allows them to nurture the self-appointed artistic authority and contend, for example, "to admire the performance [i. e. the bust of Cicero], without waiting for the sanction of connoisseurs" (26). Clara's self-pleasing experience

of art in Mettingen, combined with her strong sense of privacy and “independence” even within the place (Shelden 20) as reflected in her decision to live alone, “three quarters of a mile from my brother’s,” for “administering a fund, and regulating an household, of my own” (24), provides grounds for Clara’s sovereign authorship with no attention to the sympathy of readers/outsideers.

It is, nonetheless, exactly because of a reader/outsideer that Clara’s autonomous authorship is put into danger as in the case of the narrator in “The Rhapsodist.” Carwin, a mysterious intruder in Mettingen, disrupts Clara’s narratorial authority by generating numerous interpretations of and responses to her Mettingen story and her authorial character from the inside. In doing so, he at first acts as a prying and meddling reader of Clara, and then turns others, especially Wieland and Pleyel, into equally prying and meddling readers by inducing their responses to his readerly act. As a result of this chain reaction, Clara has to strive against the reader-responses so as to keep the legitimacy of her version of the story and preserve her authorial image as she intends. In this sense, unlike the common gothic reading of Wieland according to which Carwin is a villain who sneaks into Mettingen and disrupts its peace whereas Clara plays the roles of an innocent victim or a damsel in distress, Carwin’s intrusion in Mettingen works to liberate a readership from oppression under Clara’s tyrannically selfish narration/writing.

Carwin’s invasion begins to affect Clara through Wieland, who hears Carwin’s mimicry of Catharine’s voice and, after contemplation, creates a “narrative” of his own (38), the process of which is not totally regulated by Clara’s narratorial authority. It should be noted first that Carwin’s mimicry or re-presentation results from his

undetected observation or reading of Clara's clique. Despite Clara's careful management to maintain privacy, he "often caught parts ... of [their] conversation" while wandering around the temple, and became "well acquainted with the voice" of Catharine and informed of her marital relationship with Wieland (228). One day Carwin, hiding himself at the empty temple, senses Wieland's approach, and to stop it, throws Catharine's voice. So he essentially interprets and recomposes what he heard/read about Catharine and Wieland in order to protect himself. Carwin's ventriloquistic interpretation and recomposition in turn gets Wieland, now as Carwin's audience, to wonder how to explain what he hears. Yet before Wieland's attempt at explanation, Clara, as a narrator, steps forward to impose her explanation of what he hears. When Wieland returns home and tells others about Catharine's voice, Clara readily concludes that his account bears a "shadowy resemblance" to "my father's death" in a way that Wieland's "senses should be the victims of such delusion" as the father's (39). Clara's conclusion, heavily reckoning on her subjective belief in the father-son resemblance, foreshadows her self-imposing authorial trait that will become more and more salient toward the end of her narrative. The conclusion simultaneously points to the problematic of such authorial traits because she can by no means prevent Wieland from expounding or making a story about the Catharine incident in his own ways. She observes that after the incident, "He was less disposed than formerly to converse" with her and others, which makes it "difficult to ascertain the exact species of impression which it made upon him" (40). Wieland's reserve upsets Clara for she cannot complete her account of the incident: his untold reaction becomes a semantic hole in her narrative and fails her

formation of the ultimate conclusion. Thus Clara ventures to ask him directly about how he feels so that she can get hold of “the state of his thoughts” (40), but he would not be caught in her hold; he only answers that “There is no determinate way in which the subject can be viewed” and that “To suppose a deception will not do,” for “there are twenty other suppositions more probable” (40-41). We know that Wieland in fact has already taken the incident as the proof of God’s presence, which is fully narrativized in his confession about his family slaughter later in the novel and which contradicts Clara’s narrative that blames Carwin for the slaughter. But at this point he refuses to reveal his thought to Clara and place it under her authorial scrutiny, which evinces the impossibility of authors’ thorough governance of readers.

It is likewise noteworthy that Wieland, after his encounter with Carwin, comes to perceive a possibility of “twenty other suppositions” about a single incident. Indeed, Carwin’s readerly act stresses the fact that everyone has, and should be allowed to have, an opinion about the same issue, which undermines Clara’s homogenizing authorship. Such a function is especially well shown in Carwin’s other interference in the conversation between Wieland and Pleyel. Wieland and Pleyel discuss whether the former should move to Europe to claim his rights of “male primogeniture” on his Saxon ancestors’ property (42). Wieland is reluctant about the idea, not sure if Catharine as well as Clara agrees with it, but Pleyel pushes him to put it into action. Whereas Pleyel’s motive is, on the surface, for the sake of his friend’s legitimate rights, he actually wants to move to Europe to re-unite with his lover there—the Baroness de Stolberg, or Theresa. But he would not go there alone and be out of contact with his long-time friends in

Mettingen, and thus is eager to procure Wieland's company. Yet Pleyel "anxiously concealed from [Clara and Catharine] his purpose" because he himself anticipates their "efforts against him" once they know of his selfish plan (45). And he makes use of the spousal influence of Catharine's opinion on Wieland by asking him, "when she knows your pleasure, will she not conform to it?" (50). Then suddenly Catharine's voice, ventriloquized by Carwin who has been listening to their conversation out of their sight, intervenes and answers "No" to Pleyel (50). Carwin's intervention, originating in his reading of the conversation and subsequent speculation on Catharine's opinion, holds in check Pleyel's self-interested attempt to suppress others' opinions. Moreover, Carwin's intervention leads Pleyel to discard his plan and say that "I cannot hope to prevail with my friends to accompany me" (50). This whole transaction, in which the unpredictability of Carwin's interruption once again underscores the spontaneity and uncontrollability of the readerly response, proves how Carwin serves to dismantle single authorship as his ventriloquism gives a sense of presence to the absent readers and materializes their reactions that would have been otherwise silenced and misused by a self-centered and willful speaker/writer.¹⁷

¹⁷ Interestingly, we now can see that Carwin's first two interventions are made with the voice of Catharine, who, throughout the novel, remains silent and almost invisible comparing to the other three main characters. Catharine's silence and invisibility or insignificance is in a sense promoted by Clara, who rephrases most of Catharine's words in her own words in her narrative. Also, Clara at one point describes Catharine as "clay, moulded by the circumstances in which she happened to be placed" (88), which emphasizes the latter's essential passivity and lack of individuality. In this respect, Carwin's ventriloquization of Catharine makes audible, visible, and tangible her presence in Clara's narrative and counterbalances Clara's autarchic authorial disposition.

Carwin's function to represent reactive readers enables him, or his intervention, to revive the dialogic nature of the author-reader relationship that Clara endeavors to stifle, as demonstrated in his conversation with Clara's circle at the temple. Carwin is officially introduced into Mettingen society by Pleyel, who met him in Europe in the past, and soon becomes a frequent visitor and close friend. One day he is invited to join in Clara's group's discussion about the recent mysterious voices, and, after listening to their relations of the incidents, volunteers to relate some other similar instances. But his storytelling, which is another readerly act on his part, is not welcomed by Clara who believes that "his narratives, however complex or marvelous, contained no instance sufficiently parallel to those that had befallen ourselves, and in which the solution was applicable to our own cases" (85). Clara's judging of Carwin's story indicates her authorial tendency to keep every part in her narrative in accordance with her intention, which here is to convey the discussion about those mysterious voices in Mettingen; for that reason, she must point out the irrelevance of Carwin's story(telling). But despite her domineering gesture, Carwin's interference engenders varied readerly opinions. To Carwin's conclusion that his own instances as well as the Mettingen incidents may result from "a human agent," Wieland counters that they rather imply "the probability of celestial interference," whereas Pleyel gives credit to "his senses" as the only reliable measure to determine the matter (85, 86). Carwin's conclusion does not aim at his readers' unanimous agreement with it; as Clara later recollects, throughout the whole discussion Carwin "never explicitly declared his opinion as to the nature of those voices, or decided whether they were real or visionary," and "recommended no measures of

caution or prevention” (109). His conclusion, instead, encourages his listeners’/readers’ articulation and exchange of views with one another, and gives rise to continuous interpretations of the given topic. On the contrary, Clara does not partake in that active communication: detaching herself as a narrator/referee, she simply states that Carwin’s conclusion is still “insufficient to impart conviction to us” (87) and adheres to her opinion.

Nevertheless, Clara’s authorial principles of non-communication and hierarchical distance are broken by Carwin, who turns her into the object of readerly attention and (re)interpretation. Such objectification originates from Carwin’s intrusive interest in her character. He happens to hear about Clara from her maid and his secret lover Judith: as he confesses later to Clara, “According to my companion’s report, your perfections were little less than divine. Her uncouth but copious narratives converted you into an object of worship” (230). His initial response to Judith’s “narratives,” which coincide with Clara’s earlier self-portrayal as a distinguished and superior being, is to doubt the probability of such a portrayal: he calls Clara “a prodigy,” and feels as if “some dæmon of mischief” propels him to make certain “whether [she was] such an one” (230). Then following that “dæmon” inside him, Carwin infiltrates the “interior of [her] chamber” and her closet (234). His infiltration, generally analyzed as the trespass on “Clara’s very identity” (Russo 69) or “an inner part of her mind” (Ringe 285), can also be viewed as his intrusion into the textual foundation of Clara’s authorship because, among many other things, the closet contains the fullest version of her (Mettingen) story: her journal that records “the most secret transactions of my life” in short hand (218). Her double

concealment of the journal in her closet within her private room signifies her intense desire for inviolable ownership of her text and power over her readers: by having the full version of her narrative to herself, she would be the only one who knows the very truth of what has happened to her and who decides what should be told and what should not.¹⁸ By accessing that journal, and obtaining the knowledge of Clara that only “conjugal intimacies can give” (234), Carwin sufficiently contravenes her authority-driven “policy of concealment” (Samuels 62).

Carwin goes on to interpret and re-make her authorial character through his reading of her journal. In the process, significantly, he receives aid from another reader: Pleyel. Pleyel’s participation proves especially helpful in denigrating Clara’s eminent authorial image due to his original belief in her perfection. When he was in Germany in childhood, Pleyel exchanged “copious and uninterrupted” letters with Clara (138). Their correspondence tips us to Clara’s dictatorial authorship in that in addition to continuing their friendship, it inscribes a reputable image of her in Pleyel’s mind. The effect of such inscription is illustrated when Pleyel, returning to Mettingen and finally seeing Clara in person, remarks that “Here ... is a being, after whom sages may model their transcendent intelligence, and painters, their ideal beauty. Here is exemplified, that union between intellect and form, which has hitherto existed only in the conceptions of the poet” (138-

¹⁸ Jordan, attending to Clara’s journal, similarly proposes that we understand Clara as “a suppresser of information, a distorter of truth”: the journal, written in short hand, implicates her attempt to “conceal the truth” since “the original information, ‘disguised’ as it may be, is virtually transformed into a symbolic representation that offers only partial data to readers” (164, 165). But Jordan does not extend her observation to the discussion about the implication of Clara’s power relationship with her readers: she only concludes that Clara is “an eminently unreliable narrator” (165).

139). Pleyel's immediate and unhesitating identification of Clara's real person with the "transcendent" and "ideal" image may evidence his total submission to her authorial design, for her letters to him, as authored by herself, must have consisted of her information selected and arranged by herself. After all, those letters were the only source for his understanding of Clara's character on account of the geographical distance between them, which would have allowed her a maximum degree of the authorial liberty to depict herself whichever way she wants. In this sense, her letters altogether might be an example of another seemingly epistolary but virtually monologic narrative by her that requires readers to accept what it says as decisive and true. Indeed, Pleyel, like Judith, acts for a while as Clara's minister who delineates and solidifies her venerable character: he writes down Clara's conduct, which he believes to be flawless, so that he can make a "copy" of her and thus an "example" and "model" for other women—including his own Theresa—to look up to and learn from (139, 140).

Yet Pleyel soon changes into a nosy reader of Clara as his proximity to her in Mettingen no longer obstructs his own reading of her. Significantly, Pleyel's readerly acts come to resemble Carwin's in terms of unexpectedness. Pleyel's change is instigated by "The spirit of mischievous gaiety" (142), which reminds us of "some dæmon of mischief" that stimulates Carwin. Also, Pleyel, like Carwin, intrudes in her room furtively and gets a glimpse at her journal. One day he visits Clara and, informed that she is writing in her room, impulsively decides to go and see by himself that private scene. He enters the room and approaches her stealthily, out of the aforementioned "spirit of mischievous gaiety," and "pr[ie]d into [her] papers" over her shoulder (142).

His prying, caused by his “strong” “curiosity” and committed “almost spontaneously,” in turn permits him to catch part of her journal, including words like “summer-house” and “midnight” and “a passage which spoke of the propriety and of the effects to be expected from another interview” (142-143). Pleyel’s glimpse at Clara’s journal, along with her “trepidation and blushes” when she finds him standing right behind her (143), marks readers’ ungovernable and almost unruly interest in texts.

Pleyel’s partial reading of Clara’s journal contributes to Carwin’s re-making of her authorial character as it gives rise to a story about her “clandestine interview” with Carwin, “which [she] afterwards endeavoured with so much solicitude to conceal” (143). Pleyel’s imagination of Clara’s liaison with Carwin not only attests to the independence and creativity in readers’ construction on texts, but also symbolizes the effect of such a construction to make self-protective authors related and even vulnerable to readers. More specifically, put in a relationship with Carwin by Pleyel, Clara’s authorial character goes through a drastic transfiguration regardless of her will. Shortly afterwards, Carwin manipulates Pleyel to hear/read his ventriloquized conversation with Clara, in which he, using his knowledge of her “personal history” and “most secret thoughts” from her journal, mimics her voice and personality and re-writes her character as a fallen woman secretly in love with him (240). Carwin also features himself as a “murderer, thief, guilty of innumerable perjuries and misdeeds,” and Pleyel, in light of his assumption of Clara’s involvement with Carwin, comes to regard her as equally “debased ... to the level of such an one,” as “most specious, and most profligate of women” who shares “the base, grovelling, and atrocious character of the wretch” (240,

119).¹⁹ In this way, Clara is “pushed from [her] immoveable and lofty station, and cast upon a sea of trouble” (80) by her two unanticipated readers, notwithstanding her belief in her isolation from and immunity to the readerly influence.

Facing this crisis of self-debasement by her intrusive and (re)creative readers, Clara blames Carwin the outsider’s mysterious, gothic appearance in Mettingen, and strives to “guard myself against future injury from Carwin” (121) and to regain her dignity. She first blocks any chances of readerly meddling with her authorial image, and re-confirms its inviolability. When reproached by Pleyel for her association with Carwin, Clara remains “passive and silent,” “Wrapt up in the consciousness of innocence” (121). Her silence here makes a nonverbal statement of her self-evidently honorable character:

¹⁹ Critics have usually explained Pleyel’s belief in the fallen Clara in terms of the predominant sentimental romantic literary and cultural codes in late eighteenth-century America, and agreed that such belief marks Brown’s critique of the genre’s static assumptions about human nature. Larzer Ziff characterizes Pleyel as “the self-righteous agent of the sentimental values,” who “matches each of [Clara’s] shows of protestation with the corresponding conventional response of the wronged sentimental lover” without looking at the “facts of life” beyond that convention (53). Therefore, Ziff contends, with Pleyel “Brown achieves one of the greatest condemnations of that tradition in the history of the American novel” (53). Micheal D. Butler similarly views Pleyel as “a conditioned reader or writer of sentimental fiction,” who leaps “to a conclusion prepared by popular fiction’s definition of woman as weak and highly susceptible to seduction,” which “Wieland repeatedly denies” (134, 135). Hesford opines that Pleyel is unable to see “other aspects of [Clara’s] personality which make her a more complex, more human person than [his] exalted, supposedly exact literary version of her suggests,” and states that his inability to perceive Clara as a person, along with “The ease with which Carwin’s fictive involvement with Clara deconstructs Pleyel’s model,” indicates “the fragility of such supposedly authoritative portraits of virtue eighteenth-century writers were fond of holding up for their readers’ edification and encouragement” (245). All these analyses throw light on Brown’s authorial stance outside contemporary mainstream sentimental romantic conventions, but they deem Clara as an essentially passive victim misunderstood by Pleyel, and thus fail to notice her agency in the construction of her earlier ideal image.

she would not bother to prove her innocence since she is incontrovertibly faultless, and such a character of hers would be immutable because “Yesterday and to-day I am the same” (130). Her silence also betokens her rejection of intercommunication with her reader Pleyel so that she would not give him a second chance to respond to and interpret her against her authorial intent.

Yet Clara’s pretension to her unquestionable self-righteousness and persistence in non-communication soon encounters another readerly challenge, this time from Wieland. She visits him to ask for advice regarding Pleyel’s accusation, and Wieland, who has already heard of Pleyel’s story, demands that she vindicate herself “from aspersions so foul, if vindication be possible,” while offering himself as “a judge” (124). Wieland’s assumption of the role of her “judge,” signifying the necessity to consider readers’ judgment of texts in one’s claim to authorship, compels Clara, however enraged, to comply with his demand. Yet her way of self-exoneration does not concern the reader-judge, counting on the absolute authoritativeness of her words/writing. She says that “Perhaps [Pleyel’s] tale has been different from what I suspect it to be. Listen then to my narrative. If there be any thing in his story inconsistent with mine, his story is false” because her story is “the truth” (123, 124). Clara’s assertion, on account of the fact that the detail of the story is not fully given in her narrative, can be seen as her endeavor to maintain her authorial independence from readers. Keeping her self-vindicating account beyond “the hands of a precipitate and inexorable judge” and “his arbitrary verdict” (130, 127), she underlines its indisputable sincerity and reliability with Wieland’s eventual

discard of his doubts. By manipulating her narrative as such, Clara reaffirms her autonomy and re-certifies her authority.

Nonetheless, Clara cannot stay independent from readers as Carwin begins to intervene in her authoring act and authorial station more aggressively. So far, Carwin's intervention has affected her via his interactions with Wieland and Pleyel that convert them into readers, but now he actively engages himself in her narration/writing by speaking/writing directly to her. Moreover, his engagement forces Clara to respond to and interpret what he says/writes, and thus renders her as his reader and inverts the positions of the author and the reader. Hence Carwin becomes reminiscent of the reader in "The Rhapsodist." Carwin's first intrusion of this kind occurs with his sudden letter to Clara to request an interview after she has caught him hiding in her closet. To her, the letter, written by "one capable of plotting against my life and my fame," and saying that he has some story "of the utmost importance to [her] happiness," is "perfectly inexplicable," and she struggles to figure out what he might really plan and whether she ought to accept his request (157). Carwin, in a word, impels her to analyze his text as its reader and entangles her into a network of correspondence that she has tried to shun. Meanwhile, reading the letter in consideration of a number of possible meanings completely dismays Clara, who has relied on a system of single authorial intention and single interpretation: "My mind seemed to be split into separate parts, and these parts to have entered into furious and implacable contention" (159). Eventually she resolves to see Carwin, believing that "the means of defence and resistance" is still "in my power" and euphemizing her gothic sense of self-split and confusion as "The poet's chaos,"

which testifies to her tenacious clinging to the title of the author (161). Such tenacity, however, is no longer effective, for the interchange of authorial and readerly positions between Clara and Carwin is already set in motion with her response to his letter and entering into a communication “with” him. Clara comes back home from a trip to the city to meet Carwin, but notices that her room is “pre-occupied” by, presumably, Carwin. This unexpected situation leads her to behave as if she is breaking into someone else’s place: she “paused to deliberate on the propriety of advancing” and, after knocking at the door and getting no answer, “determined to gain access behind” (165, 166). Her behavior, like that of a stranger to her own residence, signifies her losing the authorial post to Carwin. She becomes an outsider to her own “place” while Carwin, an original outsider, is envisioned in her mind as an insider who newly takes up that “place.”

Indeed, since this figurative dislocation of Clara from her proper authorial place, her narration starts exhibiting at once the deterioration of her narratorial ability and her struggle to compensate for that deterioration by recovering her place. On her way upstairs to meet Carwin, Clara feels frustrated by the indescribability of her emotions: “Alas! my heart droops, and my fingers are enervated; my ideas are vivid, but my language is faint; now know I what it is to entertain incommunicable sentiments. The chain of subsequent incidents is drawn through my mind, and being linked with those which forewent, by turns rouse up agonies and sink me into hopelessness” (167). To Clara, who used to giving the definitive account of every incident and situation in Mettingen, this experience of “incommunicable sentiments” certainly imperils her authorship, marking a breach between language and its user, between her narrative and

her authorial grip on to it. And Clara tries to fix that breach by identifying her writing with her being: “Yet I will persist to the end. My narrative may be invaded by inaccuracy and confusion; but if I live no longer, I will, at least, live to complete it” (167). Clara’s strong desire for “completing” her narrative till death implies her taking on a full responsibility for and proprietorship of what she has been writing. She will never give up her authoring task and authorial position to anybody else, namely Carwin, no matter what kinds of “inaccuracy and confusion” he might cause, and will keep the narratorial role under her sole possession.

Clara then strengthens her resolution for lifelong, nonnegotiable authorship with a rhetorical question: “What but ambiguities, abruptnesses, and dark transitions, can be expected from the historian who is, at the same time, the sufferer of these disasters?” (167). Her self-characterization as a “historian” needs to be understood especially in the eighteenth-century sense of the term, which is one who would “speculate on underlying causes of, and seek meaningful patterns in, human affairs” (Dillon 239). This definition, endowing historians with the sacred duty “to record truth for the instruction of mankind” (Hugh Blair, qtd. in Dillon 241), in turn renders them the nobler version of contemporary sentimental romantic writers with the didactic objective and the ultimate version of the imperative author with lofty responsibility. By calling herself the “historian,” then, Clara puts her forward as a serious and potent author and belittles “ambiguities, abruptnesses, and dark transitions” in her narrative, caused by her anxiety about Carwin’s possible appropriation of her authorial standing, as just some of those obstacles that she

commonly encounters in producing the most authoritative and trustworthy text dutifully and will soon surmount on her own.

Accordingly, the historian Clara now devotes herself to composing the determinative Mettingen story that pictures Carwin as the very origin of all the mysterious events and their dismal outcomes. Entering her room for an interview with Carwin, Clara discovers the dead body of Catharine in her bed. Soon, news reaches her that Wieland has confessed his murder of Catharine and their children to prove his obedience to God and has been put in jail. In relating this unbelievable family tragedy, Clara jumps to the conclusion that Carwin should be blamed for it. Such a conclusion would benefit her authorship in that it contains Carwin within her narrative as a (villainous) character and puts him under her narratorial authority. To this end, Clara first has to distort Wieland's testimony for his murder. So she "incorporates only a part of the text into her own story" (Jordan 161) and makes it consistent with her conclusion.²⁰ Or it might be that she appropriates Wieland's story, just as she takes the place of "Wieland," the title character of the novel, by making her presence more conspicuous than Wieland through her egotistic narration/writing. After presenting the testimony up to the point where Wieland admits the murder of his children, Clara abruptly stops by saying that "I had discontinued the perusal of the paper in the midst of the narrative; but what I read, combined with information elsewhere obtained, threw, perhaps, a sufficient light upon these detestable transactions" (200). Her words,

²⁰ Jordan adds that Clara's misrepresentation of Wieland's testimony "suggests the type of material 'transformation' ... that stories undergo in the telling" (161). To me, Clara's misrepresentation is more deliberate, attesting her self-directed authorship.

suggesting that what she has shown of Wieland's testimony is, and must be, "sufficient" enough for readers to understand the whole, betoken her commanding attitude to readers. In fact, the original testimony is unattainable: it is "copied down by an unknown person" among the audience of Wieland's trial and "finally copied down again by Clara" (Jordan 161). Clara thus has got the opportunity of distorting it for her purpose. She of course re-introduces the rest of the testimony, but only as skipping a considerable part of it and giving a brief summary of how it ends: "I turned over the leaves till I came near the conclusion. The narrative of the criminal was finished. The verdict of guilty reluctantly pronounced by the jury, and the accused interrogated why sentence of death should not pass" (200). Then Clara wraps up the testimony by de-criminalizing Wieland and condemning Carwin: "yet was it indisputably certain that their murderer [i. e. Wieland] was criminal? He was acquitted at the tribunal of his own conscience; his behaviour at his trial and since, was faithfully reported to me; appearances were uniform; not for a moment did he lay aside the majesty of virtue; he repelled all invectives by appealing to the deity, and to the tenor of his past life; surely there was truth in this appeal" (206-207). After these subjective favorable comments on Wieland (again, readers would never know if his original testimony really reflects "the majesty of [his] virtue"), Clara makes the equally subjective condemnation of Carwin as "the grand deceiver; the author of this black conspiracy; the intelligence that governed in this storm" (217). Then she forces readers to agree with her by adding that Carwin is "an object ... on which we may pour out our indignation and our vengeance" (217). Although Clara's denunciation of Carwin is basically her "indignation" at and "vengeance" on his menacing approach to her

authorial position, she aims to validate herself by saying “our indignation and our vengeance”—both hers and readers.

Despite her efforts to criminalize Carwin and thus confine his effect within her narrative, Clara cannot frustrate him from writing and telling his story. Carwin, all of a sudden, comes directly to her, with no formal request for an interview this time, to give his own account of what has happened in Mettingen that he has composed in “some retreat in the wilderness, inaccessible to [her] inquiry” (242). Carwin’s ensuing storytelling, as Clara has been afraid, damages her authorship in uncontrollable ways. On the surface, he comes to “confess my errors” and “expiate my crimes” to her (223, 225), yet his actual story is “anything but repentant” (Bauer 316). What his story is really intended for is, rather, converting her into his audience/reader: “Will you not hear me? Listen to my confession, and then denounce punishment. All I ask is a patient audience” (225). By telling—or, to be more exact, ordering—Clara to “Listen to” him, Carwin instantly usurps the narratorial role from her and invades her narrative with his own Mettingen story. Carwin’s invasion in turn encourages readers’ active signification in a way that his story, written/narrated from his perspective, allows readers to compare it to Clara’s narrative and figure out how to comprehend the Mettingen incidents through that comparison. Also, his story displays a different type of writer than the authoritarian one like Clara inasmuch as it mostly consists of how Wieland, Pleyel, and even Clara have reacted to his ventriloquistic meddling with them. All he says about his own design is that he lacks one: “I am the undesigning cause ... I have acted, but my actions have possibly effected more than I designed” and that “I meditated nothing” (223, 229). In a

word, Carwin's storytelling, demonstrating the possibility of composing texts through writers' intercommunication with readers, draws a sharp contrast to Clara's dictatorial way of writing and questions its legitimacy.

Against Carwin's reader-encouraging storytelling, Clara refuses to listen to him and resumes her narration. Right after Carwin finishes his story, she quickly comments that "it is enough that he owns himself to be the agent; his tale is a lie, and his nature devilish. As he deceived me, he likewise deceived my brother, and now do I behold the author of all our calamities!" (246-247). Then she re-affirms the unity of her being and her writing and, by implication, the untouchability of her authorial standing and her narrative: "When I lay down the pen the taper of life will expire: my existence will terminate with my tale" (252). But Clara's re-affirmation is put on trial when Wieland unexpectedly appears and, to fulfill his self-sacrifice in the name of God, tries to take away her life and thus terminate her writing. This situation symbolically reveals the self-destructive quality of Clara's rigidly self-directed authorship: though she has distorted and repressed Wieland's readerly interpretation of the Mettingen incidents, his interpretation never really dies but returns for its substantiation and haunts her. And such gothic haunting of Clara the author by Wieland the reader entails the end of her (authorial) being in that her writing principles are incompatible with authors' intercommunication with readers. Ironically, therefore, Clara now must resort to Carwin's ability to interact with Wieland in order to save her life and authorship: she asks Carwin to "exert the powers which pertain to thee, whatever they be, to turn aside

this ruin” and “interpose in my defence” (259, 261). Her unavoidable reliance on Carwin’s interposition further highlights the limitation of single authorship.

Yet Clara would not acknowledge her inevitable dependency but only try to cover it up by persevering in her authorial design for Carwin. Although she herself asks for his interposition, Clara is still anxious to restrain its impact on her narratorial authority: watching him ventriloquizing God’s voice and successfully appealing to Wieland, she wonders, “Why did he [i. e. Carwin] not forbear when this end was accomplished? Why did his misjudging zeal and accursed precipitation overpass that limit? Or meant he thus to crown the scene, and conduct his inscrutable plots to this consummation?” (262). She is worried that Carwin, through his vocal mediation, might “overpass that limit” of a subordinate and take charge of the scene and her narrative. Accordingly, as soon as Carwin successfully dissuades Wieland from killing her, and Wieland kills himself with her penknife—which implies her ultimate silencing of the reader by her authorial pen²¹ and her final accession to the post of “Wieland” in Wieland by her narratorial advantage—Clara tries to expel Carwin out of her narrative. She treats

²¹ Some critics have proposed that Clara actually kills Wieland. Jordan mentions that “just as Wieland’s actual death is caused by Clara’s penknife ... so might his ‘suicide’ have been effected solely by Clara’s pen” and that “Clara might have killed her brother and suppressed half the truth in the later telling” (165). James R. Russo, in his argument for Clara’s insanity, observes that when Clara says, “My hands were sprinkled with his blood as he fell,” her “earlier prediction, that someday she would awaken with her own hand imbrued with blood, comes to pass, and the young girl is seen to exhibit fully the Wieland legacy of insanity and violence,” and states that “Theodore Wieland, then, is murdered by his sister” (82). Although such scenario is not impossible, we cannot be sure due to the lack of the reliable textual evidence. I would rather agree with Hesford’s opinion that “The author who closes Theodore Wieland’s life is his sister, Clara, who first provides him with the penknife with which he kills himself, and then, as our narrator, concludes his story with her pen” (242-243).

him as insignificant, with total disregard: “I did not listen—I answered him not—I ceased to upbraid or accuse. His guilt was a point to which I was indifferent. Ruffian or devil, black as hell or bright as angels, thenceforth he was nothing to me” (264-265). She also denies her reliance on Carwin: “He intended, by the final effort of his power, to rescue me and to banish his illusions from my brother. Such is his tale, concerning the truth of which I care not” (266, emphasis added). At the same time, her “frantic defensiveness becomes obvious” (Grabo 22): after the death of Wieland, Clara converses with her friends and uncle who come to her chamber when Carwin calls for help, but all we hear is her voice alone, which entreats them to listen and assent to her reproach of Carwin and exclaims that “my work is done!” (266). That is, she endeavors to guard her narrative against Carwin’s further interventions as well as others’ possible different opinions about him, through her almost autistic manner of narration and hasty declaration of the end of her narrative. And, as if such an effort is not enough, Clara adds another epistolary narrative—the last chapter written three years thereafter—to make a doubly conclusive conclusion.²² In that new narrative, she inserts the story of one Maxwell. The story, as many critics have conceded, does not really synchronize with the other parts of her narrative but rather gives an impression that she is channeling readers into her intended message that Carwin is the ultimate villain. At first, she seemingly

²² Clara could only produce this new narrative after moving to Europe, where her will to live, and thus to write, is resuscitated: “My curiosity was revived, and I contemplated, with ardour, the spectacle of living manners and the monuments of past ages” (271). Such circumstance intimates her failure to get adjusted to the increasingly reader-directed environment of American literary domain as well as her affinity to the old structure of power relationship—“living manners of past ages”—including the author-dominant institution of authorship upheld by Young and his “European” contemporaries.

acknowledges readers' right to apprehend the Maxwell story by saying that "I leave you to moralize on this tale" (278). But soon, just as she did at the very beginning of the novel, she forces readers to ponder the consequences of "the evils of which Carwin and Maxwell were the authors" and underscores Carwin as "the double-tongued deceiver" (278). Thus with yet another monologic epistolary narrative Clara manages to exorcise Carwin's presence and voice and finally achieves her autarchic authorship.²³

But, of course, Carwin is not to be exorcised that easily, under Brown's scenario of the destabilization of the kind of authorship that Clara bears. Clara's (and Carwin's) readers, out of their curiosity about and wish to know more of what he has to say/write, would restore his presence and voice and transform him into an author in his own right. Such transformation, or author-ization, by readers is hinted at in the "Advertisement" of Wieland, which specifies that "The memoirs of Carwin, alluded to at the conclusion of the work, will be published or suppressed according to the reception which is given to the present attempt" (4). And, indeed, even though Clara wants it "suppressed" in Wieland, Carwin's story would be "published" and serialized under the title, "Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist," in an American literary journal, The Literary Magazine, and American Register, from 1803 to 1805. This real-life publication of Carwin's memoirs, because of the specification of the "Advertisement," becomes (not merely one of Brown's works but) that which is realized by readers' approving "reception" of Carwin's

²³ Hagenbüchle similarly attends to the monologic narrative mode in the final chapter of Wieland: "The narrator, from the start, anticipates the conclusions of her story-telling and factually ends where she begins," which characterizes Clara's narrative as a whole as "circular" and thus self-contained (141).

Mettingen story in Wieland, and exemplifies the mechanism of reader-made authorship while testifying to the ultimate failure of Clara's self-appointed authorship.²⁴

The fact that the "Advertisement" hints at the failure of Clara's authorship owing to readers' approbation of Carwin's authorship is, in turn, significantly relevant to Brown's peculiar representation of his own authorship in Wieland. Throughout the novel, we have two different authorial characters that can refer to Brown: the writer of the "Advertisement" and editor "C. B. B.," and the nominal author "Charles Brockden Brown." C. B. B., appearing sporadically in the novel, fosters readers' diverse readings and challenges the authority of Charles Brockden Brown, just as Carwin, barging into Clara's narrative here and there, induces readers in its signification and impairs her authorial mastery. In the "Advertisement," C. B. B. introduces the authorial purport of Charles Brockden Brown as "the illustration of some important branches of the moral constitution of man" (3). But then he proceeds to entitle readers to "be permitted to decide" the reading of the novel and in effect diminishes the weight of Charles Brockden Brown's premeditated purport (3). And, in the footnotes, C. B. B. provides readers with the factual information regarding the issues addressed in the novel, including spontaneous combustion and ventriloquism, as well as the sources of the in-text references and quotes, and satisfies reader's varied interests and boosts their construction

²⁴ It seems that Brown devised and composed "Memoirs" deliberately in association with Wieland. Hsu reports that Brown "had completed part of 'Carwin' by September 1798," about the time when he finished Wieland, but "waited until November 1803 to begin publishing it in installments" in Literary Magazine (152, fn. 13). Hence, borrowing Downes' words, "Memoirs" occupies "the intriguing status of already-written and yet-to-come within the text of Wieland" (116, fn. 48).

on the novel beyond what is officially given by Charles Brockden Brown. In this way, C. B. B. invites readers to access the work of Charles Brockden Brown with no constraint and endorse the authorship of Charles Brockden Brown voluntarily as in the case of their ratification of Carwin's authorship.

C. B. B.'s subjugation of Charles Brockden Brown to readers suggests Brown's perception of the inefficacy of sovereign authors to cope with participative readers and the necessity of the alternative author-figure, which avoids overwhelming readers by writing from the secondary and marginal position and looks forward to their assessment of the text. Moreover, it represents Brown's mockery of his own public authorial persona that had to preface "his novel with a conventional moral tag" as in the "Advertisement" (Hagenbüchle 124), following the customs of contemporary didactic authorship. This self-mockery obviously contributes to the gothicism of Wieland, betokening the self-bifurcation of Brown's authorial image. What should be also noted, however, is Brown's use of the editorial character C. B. B. to ridicule his conventional authorship, since it might explain the radical change of his career from a novelist to a magazine editor around 1803.²⁵ Critics have usually seen this change as Brown's shameful departure

²⁵ Strictly speaking, Brown had been already involved in magazine editorship while writing novels. Between 1799 and 1800, he had been an editor of The Monthly Magazine, and American Review, founded by the New York Friendly Club, a private intellectual group to which he belonged. Yet it was with Literary Magazine in 1803 that Brown became a devoted magazine editor; he kept the office until 1807. Of course, during his editorial period, Brown tried his hand at translations, book reviews, and essays as well, but his occupation of a magazine editor might represent the second phase of his career if we consider that American literary markets in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were configured mainly with two kinds of writing: novels and periodicals. The popularity of novels at the time is extensively examined by Davidson in

from novel writing due to his artistic and financial failure at literary authorship. Elliott regards the change as at once the end of Brown's career in the middle of "obscurity and personal failure" and "the frustrated efforts of the first generation of American writers to achieve the elusive goal of winning popular acclaim and critical praise in the new republic" (218). Steven Watts backs up Elliott in observing that Brown had to discard his novel writing because he obtained neither "Economic success" nor "popularity" (131). These negative opinions have been very often corroborated by the following remark from "The Editors' Address to the Public," written by Brown himself but signed with no name, in the first number of Literary Magazine in 1803:

I am far from wishing, however, that my readers should judge of my exertions by my former ones. I have written much, but take much blame to myself for something which I have written, and take no praise for any thing. I should enjoy a larger share of my own respect, at the present moment, if nothing had ever flowed from my pen, the production of which could be traced to me. (I: 4)

The critical consensus reads this remark as Brown's straightforward confession of regret for his earlier unsuccessful novel writing in his immaturity. But recently Michael Cody

Revolution and the Word. As to the popularity of periodicals, Warfel provides clues in his introduction to Rhapsodist: according to him, "The most popular form of [non-creative] prose composition in the eighteenth century was the periodical essay in imitation of The Tatler and The Spectator," and "To begin with the essay, as did Oliver Goldsmith, and one day to write a novel became a common literary experience" (vi). Warfel's report conveys the fact that American writers during the time, including Brown, were mostly categorized as "either" novelists "or" periodical writers, and supports the validity of my characterization of Brown's later career as magazine editorship.

presents another interpretation. Noting that Brown does not make clear what works he means by “my former ones,” Cody objects to the idea that Brown blames his own writings. To him, the remark evinces Brown’s “choice of anonymity—not denial of work already performed or ‘self-hatred,’” and his “wish to disassociate his name from his writing” (29). That choice and that wish, Cody adds, reflects Brown’s “realization that public knowledge of him—his character, reputation, past work, personal associations, and beliefs—or even a public representation of him as an identifiable—and therefore knowable—individual negatively affected the validity of any public ventures such as the Literary Magazine” (29). In Cody’s view, Brown’s conversion into an editor is his conscious determination to be a nameless and selfless writer, that is, a writer with no distinctive “character” or “reputation” that results from a limited number of works produced under his full name and that might prejudice readers’ judgment of his entire writing performance. In this respect, Brown’s decision to be an editor is not an attempt to desert authorship but an effort to try a new form of authorship via a different medium with different conventions, which, in his own words, require him only to “collect materials from all quarters” considering “the variety as well as copiousness of [the] contents” of a magazine and to present them only with “a desire to please readers” (“Address” I: 5, 6). As such, Brown the editor might be no other than Brown the author with no self-ordained authority.²⁶

²⁶ Cody similarly observes Brown’s lack of authority in his editorship: “As editor, Brown most often seems to exercise no authority over the miscellany’s contents beyond simple selection, allowing the articles that appear in a given issue to compete on equal terms for a reader’s interest and sympathy” (20).

If we look at Brown's transformation from a novelist to an editor as his venture to try out anonymous, editorial, self-erasing, and, most important, ghostlike authorship, then we can re-examine Carwin's authorship as the prototype of that kind of authorship. According to Hesford, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it was common to distinguish an author from "a mere compiler or translator"; and drawing on this common sense, Carwin the author-figure rather fits in the latter category since "When he puts his abilities to work on the people he wishes to manipulate, test, or dazzle, it is often their own voices he compiles and imitates" (244). Indeed, Carwin's story in Wieland contains various episodes of his interactions with Wieland, Pleyel, and Clara, under no unifying perspective or principle of his own. This mere compilation of episodes certainly has a reader-engaging effect in that it becomes the readers' job to causalize those episodes and define the compilation as a whole. Also, throughout his story as well as Wieland, Carwin's identity remains unidentified: not to mention his hazy past, his name "Carwin" itself is a mystery for it is a pseudonym, "a Spanish name" that he uses "instead of his own" (77). His notorious ability to throw voices from a distance only characterizes him as essentially unlocatable and thus even more unknowable. Carwin's pseudonymity and unknowability are further accentuated by his ghostly, absent existence in the novel, especially from the moment when he begins to tell his story to Clara and assume an authorial stance. Carwin's unanticipated appearance at Clara's chamber for his storytelling makes her feel as if she is visited by a "shadow" or "horrid apparition" that she wishes to "vanish" (221, 222). And when Carwin ventriloquizes God's voice to communicate with Wieland, he "glided through the door" of the chamber like a spirit

while Wieland “seemed to notice not the entrance or exit of” him (260).²⁷ Finally, through Clara’s oddly apt description of him intervening in her narrative and life as “this phantom to pursue my steps” (260), Carwin’s spectral being translates into a new mode of the author that would soon overtake and substitute for the normative one, that is, into a ghost writer without any graspable personal or authorial characteristics that prepossess both authorship and readership, but only with invisible, editorial hands that compose a book of gathered materials for readers to enjoy.

It seems that Brown sought to concretize his vision of an editorial, absent-present, and ghostlike author-figure by serializing “Memoirs” in Literary Magazine and further promoting the combination of literary authorship and editorship in Carwin. Such an effort, however, failed after all as the serialization underwent a number of irregular appearances and was eventually left unfinished in 1805. It might be said that the abrupt abortion of the “Memoirs” project indicates Brown’s ultimate inability to represent the unprecedented ghostly authorial being of Carwin.²⁸ If so, Brown’s inability would mean his incapability to handle his brilliant self-mockery in Wieland: he was aware of an uneasy coexistence of the traditional and revolutionary authorial dispositions in himself, but could not resolve their conflict or break away completely from his contemporary sense of self as an author who was supposed to control and take responsibility for what

²⁷ Russo also attends to “phantomlike” quality of Carwin in this scene, but he interprets it as “the insubstantial, imaginary quality of his presence in Clara’s mind” (81).

²⁸ Watts, grouping Carwin with Stephen Calvert from Brown’s Stephen Calvert, sees them altogether as at once “a desperate, floundering individual set loose in a society of confusing possibilities and terrifying choices,” and “a ghostly spectre of the fragmented liberal ego of early capital culture,” and opines that “Brown half-consciously tried to evade or repress their realization” because the result would be beyond his control (181).

he produces. To see an author's further dissociation from his own authorial status and complete deconstruction of Youngian authorship, we have to wait thirty more years for the emergence of another self-mocking and self-negating author, who is armed with the similar perception of both the growing power of readership and the impending need of ghostly authorship that comes from the similar experience of magazine cultures to Brown's: Edgar Allan Poe.

CHAPTER III

EDGAR ALLAN POE AND THE AUTHOR-FICTION

Toward the mid-nineteenth century, America observed a remarkable development of its literary markets chiefly through an explosion of journalistic writings, corresponding to readers' fast-growing demands for affordable sources of varied information. Pursuing his authorial profession at the heart of this reader-catering magazine culture, Edgar Allan Poe has been actively studied in terms of contemporary readers' undeniable influence on authors' performance. Such studies, however, have altogether stubbornly produced the same image of Poe as an author whose primary motivation is the desire for total control over readers and texts. Associating this curiously long-lasting unanimity in Poe scholarship with the insistence of Young's notion of authorship, this chapter will find the other, more reader-oriented authorial image of Poe in his one and only gothic novel, and modern Poe scholars' most talked-about text, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838). The novel has been taken as gothic mainly for its presentation of the first-person narrator Pym's fantastic and horrific sea adventure, which has in turn been read as either Poe's masterful hoax of a merely sensation-seeking readership or his equally masterful representation of the unrepresentable. Yet I will show how the gothicity of Pym rather lies in Poe's description of Pym's character and narrative that reveals the true nature of an authorial subject as an insubstantial, fictive identity like a ghost, and how Poe realizes, both in the

novel and through his real-life writing career, a ghostlier version of Charles Brockden Brown's editorial, self-erasing author-figure.

1. Poe's Philosophy of Composition, According to Poe

At the end of his investigation of the history of copyright in Britain in Authors and Owners (1993), Mark Rose discusses the persistence of the eighteenth-century idea of authorship in the present. According to him, the obvious "continuity between earlier literary-property debates and modern copyright doctrine" shows that the Romantic representation of the author as "a specially gifted person able to produce from the depths of personal experience an organically unified work of art" (132) has steadily dominated our understanding of artistic creation. Such a dominance, Rose goes on, has been possible due to the gradual expansion of the concept of authorship in accordance with the emergence of new types of art works, such as movies, "photographs, sculptures, sound recordings, and choreographic works" in the modern era (132). Rose describes this expansion as "the enclosure of new territories," quoting Peter Jaszi's words that a copyright purchaser now obtains "a general dominion over the imaginative territory of a particular literary or artistic production" (133). Yet if we remind ourselves from Chapter I that Youngian authorship basically postulates an artistic work as the re-presentation and replica of its author, it would be reasonable to substitute "new artists" for "new territories" in Rose's formulation and restate his opinion as follows: the conception of the exclusively creative, possessory, and regulatory author could persist because newly

emerging artists since the eighteenth century have been continuously incorporated into the boundary of that conception.

This “enclosure of new artists” is especially well demonstrated in Poe scholarship. From a scholarly perspective Poe has been a “new artist” for a long time; after a certain period of obscurity, he was discovered first by the French symbolists in the late nineteenth century and then by American literary scholars in the twentieth century. As is well known by now, Poe was not a very popular or critically acclaimed writer in America during his lifetime.²⁹ It was French poet Charles Baudelaire who for the first time assessed him as a literary genius. Baudelaire contributed to making Poe known to nineteenth-century Europe by writing essays on him in the 1850s and translating his works between the late 1840s and 1860s. What is noteworthy is that Baudelaire’s discovery of Poe went hand in hand with his characterization of Poe as a typical eighteenth-century artist, that is, “as an isolated and brilliant victim of his artistic temperament, neo-European and aristocratic, essentially opposed to his bourgeois American milieu of ‘money-making’ journalism and democratic mediocrity” (Allen 11),

²⁹ According to Killis Campbell, “it was as critic that he was chiefly known in his day and time in America, though as a fearless and caustic and not always impartial critic rather than as a just and discriminating critic” (“Contemporary” 145). Indeed, Poe’s contemporary reputation was for the most part built upon his severe and harsh reviews and criticisms, which earned him the nickname of “the tomahawk man” by 1836. Timothy H. Scherman informs us that “Poe’s editorial commentary and critical notices were generally unsigned, but by the end of 1835,” right after Poe became an editor of the Southern Literary Messenger, “few readers of the Messenger failed to see the change in the tone and style of its book reviews” (11). In contrast, his tales and poems seem to not have appealed to a wide range of the contemporary audience. It was his gothic poem, “The Raven” (1845), that finally gave him “the brightest of limelights he would ever enjoy during his lifetime” (Rainwater 305).

and as “a sensitive artist struggling to survive in a merciless, mercantile environment that valued neither art nor the artist” (Magistrale 261). Through this characterization—which echoes Young’s delineation of the solitary and noble author in Conjectures and Clara’s depiction of her aesthetically praiseworthy yet commercially failed late grandfather in Wieland in the previous chapter—Poe was rescued from the unknown, if not mis-known, and “newly” included into a constellation of sovereign artists that shines above and against the tasteless, common people.

Thanks to Baudelaire, and his followers like Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, and Algernon Charles Swinburne, “by the 1870s it would become a truism among American critics and textbook writers that Poe was more appreciated in Europe than ‘at home’” (Peeples 10). To most Americans, it seems, Poe was still a relative stranger, or, what Allen Tate calls “a dejected cousin” (40) at best.³⁰ It was not until the 1920s that Poe became more familiar to his natives. At that time, Michael Allen reports, “a new generation of literary historians in American universities” was “engaged in discovering and explaining the American literary tradition” (11).³¹ In the process, they turned their

³⁰ Kenneth Dauber also mentions Tate’s description of Poe as Americans’ “cousin” in his examination of the common ambivalence towards Poe. Observing how people usually admire Poe’s genius but feel frustrated in comprehending his works, Dauber puts that “He is a relative for whom allowances must be made. And it is only because Poe seems to stretch the allowances beyond any reasonable bound that difficulties arise” (125).

³¹ Scott Peeples argues that the Americanization of Poe began earlier than the 1920s, mainly by post-Reconstructionists. He says that “after the war [i. e. Civil War], given the national anxiety over reconciliation and nation-rebuilding, the question became more prominent in the larger discussion of Poe’s status,” and that several commemorating speeches at the commission of Poe’s bust at the University of Virginia in 1899 addressed Poe and his writing as “essentially American” (17, 18). Peeples also points out various new editions of Poe’s works—with his notorious first editor Rufus Wilmot Griswold’s

attention to Poe in Europe and tried to transplant him into the American artistic soil. To that end, scholars underscored Poe's career-long involvement with nineteenth-century American journalism as an editor, commentator, and contributor.³² Such underscoring certainly worked to illuminate "an encouraging sign of his Americanness" (Allen 13) by associating him with American readership and thus taking him into a network of American literary production and consumption during the period.

To be sure, even after the literary historians' efforts between the 1920s and the 1950s, it took some more time for Poe to be fully accepted as an American writer because of the lingering scholarly reluctance to canonize his mostly "too gothic"—too fantastic, too pathological, and too sensational—writings.³³ Yet since the 1980s, critics begin to call into question the legitimacy of that reluctance, and embark on the Americanization of Poe, which means the re-configuration of his authorial identity as a more Americanized version of the Romantic author than Baudelaire's. More specifically, Poe's formerly awkward, otherized standing as Americans' "dejected cousin" is attributed to his self-understanding as an author who, despite his unavoidable catering to

(deliberate) errors cleaned out—appearing between the 1870s and the 1900s.

³² Poe became an editor for the Southern Literary Messenger in 1835, and after leaving the magazine two years later, became an assistant editor of Burton's Gentleman's Magazine in 1839; he officiated as the appointed editor in 1841. Poe became a sub-editor of the Evening Mirror in 1844. In 1845, he got an editorial position with the Broadway Journal, and acquired its sole proprietorship later that year. The proprietorship soon ended in debt in early 1846.

³³ The most well-known example of this reluctance would be F. O. Matthiessen's 1941 discussion of American Renaissance canonical writers, which does not include Poe in it. Also, Edward H. Davidson, in his 1957 study of Poe, talks about Poe's lack of interest in "the questions of man in the new mass world of democratic society" (256). Louis A. Renza additionally lays a finger on Harold Bloom's "conspicuous silence about [the] anxiety-seminal influence [of Poe's works] on later American writers" (59).

the mass audience during the nineteenth century, clung to eighteenth-century sole textual ownership and was never comfortable with, and even hostile to, the same audience's increasing influence upon literature. In this way, Poe, after re-discovered as a "new" American literary figure, is successively contained once again within individualistic, autarchic authorship.

Such containment of the re-discovered Poe is initiated by Jonathan Auerbach in the early 1980s. Objecting to the scholarly view of Poe as "an anomaly in American literature" and his works as ahistorical, Auerbach proposes to see Poe as "the professional journalist, engaged in the day-to-day business of winning over readers" (341, 343). As a reader-sensitive journalist, Auerbach continues, Poe understood that "Once the author expresses himself in public, his written identity becomes common property, subject to ceaseless duplication and appropriation" by readers (343). And that knowledge deeply concerned Poe for he was "Craving recognition as an original American genius, yet fearing the consequences of public exposure" (343). Auerbach contends that "The problem we must address, then, is ... how he sought to encode the self in a written form that would allow him to maintain control over his fiction after it was let out into the open" (343). Auerbach's argument attempts to situate Poe within an antebellum American literary realm where the eighteenth-century assumption of authors' natural claim on their works was rapidly de-stabilized, and to depict him as an author who strives to overcome that de-stabilization by identifying who he is with what he writes and keeping his authorship inviolable to readers.

The image of Poe as a possessive and self-protective author is reproduced by Louis A. Renza and Michael J. S. Williams towards the end of the 1980s. Renza postulates that Poe's works are essentially autobiographical in a sense that they reflect "Poe's reading of his own texts as he imagines them being misread by others in order to regard them as his dialectically confirmed exclusive private property" (60). "Poe's tales," Renza proceeds, "produce two distinct tiers of reading," by which he could keep to himself his "own secret relation to his initial aesthetic composition of [the text], and 'never-more' allows the reader access to this relation" (67). This is why, Renza speculates, Poe has slipped through "the various critical attempts to recuperate the major canonical status of his works or his proper place in the 'American Renaissance,'" and "foster[ed] his ambivalent status in American literary history" (82, 83). In Renza's view, the previous scholarly indisposition to finding Poe American simply testifies to Poe's artistic greatness that frustrates and rejects average reading attempts at his writings. Williams similarly ascribes the label of Poe as "an other ('irresponsible,' 'vulgar,' 'abnormal')" to scholars' inability to grasp that Poe's "tales, regardless of their ostensible character, consistently explore the conditions of their own meaning and the displacements implicated in any act of signification," motivated by his "anxiety" about "the attenuation of an (originating) authorial voice once its text has been launched in time to undergo subsequent interpretation and reinterpretation" (xiii, xv). Yet, Williams adds, Poe also "fears the failure to gain a readership," and this mixture of "anxiety" and "fear" led him often to resort to hoax, "which pandered to the popular taste of the day while at the same time preserving his own sense of power" inasmuch as its "duplicity

keeps readers perpetually hesitant to claim Poe's texts for their own" (65, 66). As Williams suggests, Poe's self-guarding and antagonistic attitude towards readers becomes the signature trait of his authorship.

In the 1990s, Poe's somewhat defensive authorial stance changes into a more aggressively authoritarian one, as demonstrated by Stephen Railton and Peter K. Garrett. Noticeably, both Railton and Garrett emphasize as Poe's principal authorial tenet his notion of unity of effect—priority of effect over all the other literary elements in the composition of a work—which he first presented in his 1842 review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales (1837), and which Poe scholars have deemed as the foundation of his aesthetics. "[C]ontrol is," Railton affirms, "the central, informing preoccupation of Poe's uneasy career as an American writer," as Poe's unity of effect itself modifies A. W. Schlegel's concept of "unity of interest" by "shift[ing] the emphasis from the reader and how he or she feels about a work, to the writer and how he or she is forcing the reader to feel," and thus foregrounds writers' ability "to coerce, even to oppress" readers (133, 138). So Railton's Poe, even if he would ironically find himself "caught between his contempt and his need for the mass audience" insofar as the unity of effect, for its proper operation, essentially necessitates readers to be affected (151), actively and obstinately seeks to cultivate and uphold his dominancy over readers. Garrett takes notice of Poe's yearning for control over readers likewise when he claims that "All of Poe's writing, including his criticism and poetry, his detective stories, burlesques, parodies, and hoaxes, pursues and reflects on [his] struggle for the control of reading" (54). And the struggle "reaches its greatest intensity and complexity in his tales

of terror” where “The writer’s dream of total mastery, subordinating representation and meaning to unity of effect, aims at reducing the otherness of the reader to a register of his power, so that ‘the soul of the reader is at the writer’s control’” (54, 57). To be more specific, Garrett explains, in his gothic tales Poe models his first-person narrators’ ways of storytelling precisely after readers’ ways of reading his tales; therefore, “even as we suppose we are assuming a position outside the narrator’s account we find ourselves inscribed within it” (63). Though Garrett then says that Poe’s stories ultimately let readers “recognize the necessarily open and dialogical nature of even the most insistently self-enclosed narrative or authoritative reading” (63), he after all portrays Poe as an authoritarian author who aims to contain in his writing even that kind of “recognition.”

Most recently, James L. Machor fully establishes Poe’s controlling authorship as a critical norm. Machor intends to contribute to Poe criticism’s “examinations of his relation to the newly developing antebellum marketplace for literature and the expanding mass readership that accompanied it,” by investigating how Poe’s career as a reviewer also fits in his “quest for authorial power even as he asserted the need to give the marketplace and its public what they wanted” (163). Machor attends to Poe’s unity of effect following Railton and Garrett, and opines that the notion, “undergirded by the assumption ... that the successful author would be a virtual enchanter who controlled the audience with his or her spell-binding artistic performance,” alludes to Poe’s belief that “to achieve [an] effect” is “a matter of exercising power and control as the sine qua non of his artistic identity” (169, 171). As Poe was, Machor continues, always writing to

“produce himself ... as a singular influence” on readers, so his reviews “frequently consisted of a variation on a single principle: a work’s failure at effect as an index to the inability of the writer to assert authority by taking irresistible control of the reading experience” (176, 177). Thus Poe the reviewer chiefly sought to criticize “the inadequacy of a work that allowed readers an opening to seize the authority the text had failed to hold” (177). Machor’s observation, notwithstanding his ending comment that Poe’s attempt to unify his writerly and readerly practices was “always in danger of tipping toward self-cancellation” (178), consummates the scholarly encompassing of Poe within the category of the masterful authors by rendering every type of his writing as domineering.

As such, Poe acquires a secure place within American literary history under the ever-embracing effect of Youngian authorship upon our conception of artists since the eighteenth century. Critics’ formation of his place, however, significantly betrays an inherent problem of that effect. While Poe has been almost unanimously identified as the antebellum American author who most aggressively pursues authority, it has been obscured and repressed that there is actually evidence in his texts pointing to the other, far-from-authoritarian, version of authorship. This critical obscuring and repression is precisely what Michel Foucault points out in “What Is an Author?” (1969) as a main factor in the continuing “enclosure” of writers by the eighteenth-century ideation of the author. In identifying an author, Foucault says, “Critics doubtless try to give this intelligible being a realistic status, by discerning, in the individual, the milieu in which writing originates” (150). “Nevertheless,” Foucault goes on:

these aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection ... of the operations that we force texts to undergo, the connections that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, or the exclusions that we practice. (150)

Put another way, an author is by no means a natural origin of the text, but an artificial construct reflecting critics' imposition of their own comprehension of the text. Such a construction, Foucault adds, necessarily involves critics' oversimplification of the diverse characteristics of authors so as to make them function as "the principle of a certain unity of writing" and serve "to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts" (151). It is, then, by this critical unification and neutralization that the author has been constantly claimed as the "single" originator, possessor, and controller of his or her entire body of works. By the same token, I would say, it is by critics' enforcement of the unity of Poe's authorial image that he has been all the while envisioned as an author who obsessively tries to keep his text in perfect unity with his authorial power and intention.

One of the most telling examples of critics' compulsive homogenization of Poe's authorial performance is their reading of "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). This famous essay³⁴ specifies the process of the composition of Poe's most successful literary work throughout his life: "The Raven" (1845). Poe begins the essay with the following remark on writers in general:

³⁴ Before its publication in Graham's Magazine in April 1846, "Philosophy" was delivered as a lecture right after the success of "The Raven."

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would—that is to say who could—detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say—but, perhaps, the authorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition—and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought—at the true purposes seized only at the last moment—at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view—at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable—at the cautious selections and rejections—at the painful erasures and interpolations— ... which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary historio. (21)³⁵

Then Poe, noting that “I have [no] sympathy with the repugnance alluded to,” introduces his “design to render it manifest that no one point in [the] composition [of “The Raven”] is referable either to accident or intuition—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem” (22). And he explains how the poem was composed mainly in consideration of “unity of

³⁵ Edgar Allan Poe, Literary Criticism of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Robert L. Hough (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965). All references to the essay will be from this edition.

impression,” “the design of rendering the work universally appreciable,” and the choice of “a close circumscription of space” for “keeping concentrated the attention” of readers (22, 23, 29). “Philosophy” arranged as such has been interpreted by critics as showcasing Poe’s authorial principles of unity of effect and total control over texts and readers. For instance, in Railton’s view, Poe’s analysis of “The Raven” evinces his insistence that “the poet creates a perfect order out of ‘the jarring and tumultuous chaos’ of the mind” and that “composition involves nothing short of a concentrated, sustained, conscious purpose, subordinated at every point to the faculties of rationality and analysis” (135, 136). Ergo, Railton maintains, the essay serves to underwrite Poe’s conviction of the importance of “the writer’s mastery of content” (137) and to show off his own extraordinary ability to perform that mastery. To Philip D. Beidler, “Philosophy” at first “promises an inside look at the mysteries of the creative process while simultaneously unwriting and demystifying the poem back down to a collocation of technical cheap tricks,” and thus works as “at once a valedictory stump speech on art and a last bitter hoax on the mob, the tasteless, unreasoning rabble to whom [Poe] had been beholden throughout his life for his meager living and reputation” (264). Accordingly, Beidler claims, the essay conveys Poe’s praise for “Aesthetic defiance, grounded in profoundly political [i. e. anti-democratic] contempt” (264). From Beidler’s standpoint, “Philosophy,” seemingly Poe’s reader-friendly guide to how to read his poem, communicates his scorn for the degraded state of literature as a mere object of popular entertainment and for general readers’ inability to appreciate a piece of art as

originally presented by the author, and asserts his intellectual and aesthetic superiority as a genius.

Both Railton and Beidler, however, are too intent on proving how “Philosophy” in every aspect accords with Poe’s autarchic authorship, without acknowledging a subtly yet surely existing clue to a different way of reading it. There are, in fact, the two distinct Poes present in the essay: Poe the essayist and Poe the poet of “The Raven.”³⁶ The distinction is suggested when Poe the essayist, right after talking about “Most writers—poets in especial” (emphasis added) who tend to glorify their authorial personae through writing while hiding their real selves behind the surface of the texts—mentions his lack of “sympathy” with them. Indeed, being a writer and main narrator of “Philosophy,” he exhibits no particular urge for self-expression: we are given no information about either who he is or what type of writer/narrator he wants us to see in him, but only his “mathematical” description of Poe the poet’s composition of “The Raven.” Therefore, the basic structure of the essay would be: Poe the essayist, standing at a distance and taking on an impersonal perspective, recounts how Poe the poet conceived and wrote his poem according to unity of effect, tone, and setting that would channel readers’ reception. If so, Railton’s characterization of Poe in “Philosophy” as

³⁶ Eliza Richards also notices the existence of the two Poes when she says that Poe “adopts an incongruous critical voice” along with a poetic voice (“Feminine” 15). Despite her notice, however, Richards ultimately merges those two Poes to argue for a unified, transcendental image of Poe: “The vast difference between Poe’s critical and poetic voices enhances the mystique of Poe the author, for in trying to reconcile the disparity between the essay and the poem, readers must posit an author outside the two texts who stands behind both” (“Feminine” 16). Hence, Richards falls into line with the critical consensus on Poe’s self-dissociation from readers for his authority.

engrossed with “the writer’s mastery of content” and eager to flaunt such a mastery by himself, should be attributed to Poe the poet, not Poe the essayist. By the same token, it is not that Poe “unwrites” and “demystifies” his own poem in the essay for the purpose of deceiving readers out of arrogance, as Beidler observes. Rather, Poe the essayist “unwrites” and “demystifies” how Poe the poet creates his work and his image in conformity with his “authorial vanity” that craves for “universal appreciation” as a natural-born genius with rare poetic “intuition.” In this light, “Philosophy” marks not Poe’s affinity with the monocratic, unity-concerned authorial identity, but his detachment from it. And, more important, through his detachment, Poe in turn unveils that authorial identity as a mere effect of a carefully plotted composite of words, as a sheer textual product, and thus as a kind of fictive character that does not exist on its own but can come into effect only by virtue of readers’ belief in its natural perfection and their acceptance of its reality. This way of reading the essay finally enables us to discover a Poe who has been systemically excluded from the discourse of Poe studies under the continual dominance of eighteenth-century authorship.

Based on this “discovery” of the other Poe, whose “philosophy of composition” includes an exposé of an authorial being as none other than a fiction, this chapter aims at recovering and reviving the more reader-oriented and reader-inviting nature of Poe’s authorship. Such a nature is in part already noted by Terence Whalen in Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses (1999). Whalen argues that Poe’s critical writings between 1842 and 1847 betoken his departure from his aristocratic authorial posture in the 1830s, as a result of his gradual realization that “the popular text” is “a site at which writer and

reader produce meaning through collaborative labor” and that any flaws in the author’s work are after all “attributable to his neglect of the mass audience” (102, 103). I agree with Whalen’s implication that, unlike the critical consensus, Poe’s critical writings never consistently display his sense of supremacy over and disdain for readers.³⁷ Yet I would go a step further and place more emphasis on the fact that Poe was writing in nineteenth-century American magazine culture where, borrowing his own words, “To be appreciated [authors] must be read” (Poe to Thomas W. White, April 30 1835, qtd. in Letters 58). And, considering that fact, I put forward the idea that Poe’s early gothic novel, Pym, dramatizes his awareness of the non-viability of authors’ complete governance of readers and his quest for a different kind of author-figure and author-reader relationship from the onset of his writing career. To prove it, I will investigate how Pym debunks the first-person narrator and self-centered author-figure Pym’s pretension to his natural author-ity by revealing the fictive quality of an author that needs readers’ belief in his factual existence and their conception of his character. In this sense, the author-figure that Poe propounds in the novel resembles a ghost, a presence that is not self-determined and self-evident but determined and evidenced by the interpretive responses of its witnesses. And while I am exploring the analogy of the ghost with Poe’s fictive author-figure in Pym, the traces of Poe’s relatedness to his predecessor Brown will be detected through two editorial characters—Mr. Poe of the “Preface” and an unidentified editor of the “Note”—whose participations in the

³⁷ Machor brings to light critics’ overgeneralization of Poe’s bifurcated view of readership, when he says that “Poe never uniformly distinguished between mass and elite readers, at least in dealing with the magazine audience for fiction” (173).

production of Pym's narrative function, in continuation of Brown's editorial ghostly authorship, to accelerate the disclosure of Pym's reader-conditional author-ness. The analogy will be concretized further in my conclusion in this chapter that the surge of various speculations on Poe's "character" right after his mysterious death in effect realized his vision of the perpetually (re)interpreted and (re)imagined author through readers in his own ghostly state of being. This conclusion, in turn, will highlight the inadequacy of current Poe studies to take into account the Poesque "author-fiction," due to its affiliation with the Foucauldian "author-function."

2. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, According to Pym

Probably what best qualifies Pym for tracking Poe's suppressed critique of the Youngian author is the fact that, in spite of critics' long-time depreciation, the novel is now "the pivotal text in current discussions of the author [i. e. Poe]" (Kennedy, "On Poe" 169). When it first came out as a book edition by Harper & Brothers in 1838, following the two installments of its opening segments in the Southern Literary Messenger in January and February 1837, Pym was "a disappointment all around," both critically and commercially (Ridgely and Haverstick 79). Critics in the early twentieth century assigned this failure to the novel's highly episodic narration of Pym's first-person account for his sea adventures, and its abrupt ending of his encounter at the South Pole with a gigantic white human figure. So Henry James, in his 1909 New York Edition preface to the volume containing "The Altar of the Dead," assesses Pym as indicating Poe's disqualification for a novelist: the novel fails "because it stops short, and stops

short for want of connexions. There are no connexions; not only, I mean, in the sense of further statement, but of our own further relation to the elements, which hang in the void: whereby we see the effect lost, the imaginative effort wasted” (257). Sharing James’s view of Pym as an artistically flawed story, the earliest Poe critics busied themselves locating nineteenth-century exploration literature that Poe might have used “for piecemeal development, or elaboration of details” of the novel (Bailey 513) yet without a skillful touch to fuse them in harmony. Around the 1950s, there appeared another group of critics who were devoted to finding the thematic and structural unity hidden under the incoherent narrative texture of Pym, and who seemingly suggested a more constructive way of reading the novel. But I would rather agree with L. Moffitt Cecil, who opines that those New Critics tried to explain away “an embarrassing number of lapses and inconsistencies, hardly to be expected in the work of one whose literary trademark came to be a pronounced unity of effect achieved through conscious artistic integration” (232).³⁸

In the 1970s, Pym criticism does become apparently constructive. Taking a cue from Jean Ricardou’s well-known point that Pym reflects its own textual state of being read in multiple ways, critics now pay attention to how Poe represents the problem of

³⁸ As to the criticism on Pym’s sources, see Robert Lee Rhea, “Some Observations on Poe’s Origins,” Texas Studies in English 10 (1930): 135-136; D. M. McKeithan, “Two Sources of Poe’s ‘Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,’” Texas Studies in English 13 (1933): 116-137; Bailey; Keith Huntress, “Another Source for Poe’s Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,” American Literature 16. 1 (1944): 19-25; and David Ketterer, “Tracing Shadows: Pym Criticism, 1980-1990,” Poe’s Pym: Critical Explorations, ed. Richard Kopley (Durham; London: Duke UP, 1992) 237-240. As to the criticism on the thematic and structural unity of Pym, see Cecil 232-233, and Josie P. Campbell.

representation in this ostensibly underrepresented novel. John Carlos Rowe, refuting the preceding New Criticism, proposes that “What critics have considered difficulties and inconsistencies in the text [of Pym] may also be considered self-conscious disruptions of the impulse toward coherent design and completed meaning” (104). Then, seeing the “eccentricity” of Pym as bespeaking Poe’s “modern awareness of the displaced center, the divided present, the irrecoverable origin,” Rowe asserts that the novel “deconstructs the idea of representation as the illusion of the truth and dramatizes the contemporary conception of writing as the endless production of differences” (105, 106). Rowe’s poststructuralist analysis of Pym greatly inspires subsequent criticism, as most notably discerned in John T. Irwin’s famously exhaustive, two-hundred-pages-long discussion about Poe’s Pym and other tales of a journey to the unknown in American Hieroglyphics (1980). According to Irwin, Poe is intrigued with the idea that “all physical shapes become obscurely meaningful forms of ... hieroglyphic writing each of which has its own science of decipherment” (61). As such, Irwin continues, Poe’s voyage stories, especially Pym, thematize “The essential precariousness, both logical and ontological, of the narrative act” (69). Thus Irwin’s Poe, through Pym’s subjective, erroneous interpretations of signs in the course of his journey and his inability to recognize the white human figure as a reflection of his own (interpretive) self at the end of that journey,³⁹ reveals the self-centered basis of writing and deviates from single authorship.

³⁹ Here I put the word “interpretive” within parentheses because Irwin also mentions a possibility that the figure might be one of the “natural optical illusions” happening occasionally at the polar areas, and thus a literal reflection of Pym’s own shadow upon the screen-like mist (208).

Later on, Dennis Pahl, J. Gerald Kennedy, and Patrick Pritchett continue arguing for Poe's deliberate destabilization of authorial mastery over the text in Pym. Pahl notes that our theorization of Poe is nothing more than an effort to "set in place a boundary between oneself and that other we designate as 'Poe,'" "so as to be better able to master him" ("Framing" 1). Yet this binary oppositional theorization significantly overlooks "how the sort of framing or enclosing devices [are] actually pictured within his narratives" and "undermined ... through the violations of boundaries, the disruption of 'self-contained' narrative spaces" ("Framing" 7). Pahl then claims that Pym best exemplifies how "writing in Poe, as well as Poe's own writing, marks the disruption of truth, of boundaries, of frames that attempt to secure in place a world that Poe would otherwise have us believe is one marked by 'unity' and 'totality'" ("Framing" 10). Kennedy focuses on the ubiquitous destruction and death throughout Pym's gothic adventure, and counts it as Poe's allusion to writers' exchange of their "putative historical existence for that of a purely textual entity" and to the oneness of "the space of death and the space of writing" ("On Poe" 193, 194). Pritchett reiterates Kennedy by saying that Pym's excessive concern about truthful narration ironically betrays the truths that "The written word carries more weight than the testifying person who writes it" and that writing is "a gesture of apophasis, of unsaying, or negation, in as much as the word must always stand in for the presence of the person" (41, 54). With Pritchett, Poe's Pym becomes a gothic story about the Barthesian death, or total disempowerment, of authors by their own writing.

Certainly, the critics since Rowe permit us to re-view Poe's authorial performance as less domineering, as they underscore his keen cognizance of the impossibility of authors' absolute regulation of the texts. Yet they also have their own limitation. On the one hand, some of these critics treat Poe not as an individual artist but as a part of larger aesthetic and intellectual movements, so ultimately neutralizing his personal difference from conventional eighteenth-century authorship. Irwin regards Poe as an "heir" of an ongoing tradition since the Romantic poets that probes into "man's linguistic relationship to the world" and that gives rise to literary works "whose inquiry into the origin of their own written presence on the page is a synecdoche for the inquiry into the simultaneous origin of man and the world in the act of symbolization" (55). For Pahl, Poe's "self-questioning narratives" let us "understand the American romance in general as a kind of writing that dramatizes its own instability," in contrast to "certain English romances—for example, Walter Scott's Waverly—where authority and an authorized moral vision is finally asserted" ("Framing" 10). On the other hand, Rowe, Kennedy, and Pritchett, though making prominent Poe's own insightful and subversive representation of authors' subjection to writing, tend to minimize, if not ignore, Poe's reader-consciousness in that representation. Consequently, those critics isolate Poe's authorial principles and praxis from readers, and more or less conduce to the still-prevailing image of him as a self-absorbed and self-concerned author.

In fact, Pym starts out as making clear that authors' existence per se depends on readers' reception of the texts. In the "Preface" of the novel, Pym explains how he has come to publish his narrative. Pym at first hesitated to do so mainly owing to the

public's probable disbelief in his too incredible adventure story. Then he met Mr. Poe, who was, just like the real-life Poe, "lately editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a monthly magazine, published by Mr. Thomas W. White, in the city of Richmond," and who tried to talk him into publishing his story and expecting readers' possible belief in it (4).⁴⁰ But Pym only agreed that Mr. Poe would write down the opening part of his story "under the garb of fiction," and issue that writing in the *Messenger* with Mr. Poe's name "in the table of contents of the magazine" (4). The public accepted Mr. Poe's "fiction" as fact, and Pym, encouraged by this success, has decided to print the entire narrative under his own name by adding the rest in his own words to Mr. Poe's portion.

Critics have by and large argued that the "Preface," obscuring the distinction between fact and fiction, carries out Poe's scheme of fooling and estranging contemporary readers. Paul Rosenzweig states that "Under the guise of Pym's reassuring the reader of the authenticity of his narrative, Poe ironically calls that authenticity into question" by italicizing/emphasizing such words as "'appearance,' 'under the garb of fiction,' 'ruse,' and 'exposé'" (145). According to Kennedy, Pym's confession of "the difficulty of affecting the appearance of the truth inherent in his statement" implies "that appearance and reality may not coincide"; ergo, "Through the mask of 'A. G. Pym,' Poe alludes to an underlying objective—to produce an ingenious deception—while evincing a high-minded concern for its reception as truth" ("On Poe" 172). Rosenzweig and Kennedy, in their Youngian approach to Pym in search of Poe's authorial intent, fail to

⁴⁰ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, ed. Richard Kopley (New York: Penguin, 1999). All references to the novel will be from this edition.

catch the very basic supposition of the “Preface” in particular and the entire novel: that it is Pym, not Poe, who is introduced to readers as the author of the narrative. Not to mention Pym’s first-person narration, the novel was at first published as a book anonymously, only with the main title, “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket.” This fact, pointing to Poe’s original design for the novel “to be a factual account of real experiences undergone by Pym, and, in some measure, actually written by him” (Quinn 563),⁴¹ leads us to heed a distance between Pym and Poe. And that

⁴¹ Although Pym was anonymously published, it is likely that readers soon, or even instantly discovered Poe’s authorship of the novel, because, as the “Preface” tells us, the first two installments of the novel in the Messenger already appeared with his name. Yet Walter E. Bezanson, and J. V. Ridgely and Iola S. Harverstick inform us that the name was given at not Poe’s will but the publisher of the magazine Thomas W. White’s. Bezanson says that the first installment of Pym was “unsigned, but the table of contents on the inside of the blue wrapper noted that this piece, along with two poems, four reviews, and a brief statement of his resignation as editor, was ‘By E. A. Poe.’ The following month [i.e. February, 1837] a second installment appeared, and that was all” (149). Ridgely and Haverstick identify White as the one who “in an editorial note credited to Poe ‘the first number of Arthur Gordon Pym, a sea story,’ and also placed his name by the title in the table of contents” (66). This information supports Poe’s original purport to suppress his nominal authorship in favor of Pym’s.

The anonymous publication of Pym, of course, has been taken by a number of critics as part of Poe’s hoax. Patrick F. Quinn maintains that “All the factual apparatus is there to deceive the reader who is deceivable. The motif of deception ... is integrally present in [the novel’s] construction and subject matter” (579). Kennedy, in his article on Pym as satire, similarly associates Poe’s withholding his name with his authorial intent to mock readers. According to Kennedy, before they published Pym, Harper & Brothers had rejected Poe’s collection of tales, “Tales of the Folio Club,” in 1836, with the advice that his writing is “too learned and mystical” whereas the mass audience prefers a single-edition book; Poe “thus found himself obliged to ... turn his energies to the fabrication of a long narrative which would please the American reading public ... whose fondness for ‘stupid’ books he had decried in a review only two months prior to the letter from Harpers” (“Satire” 192). As such, Kennedy goes on, Poe “decided to conceal his authorship behind the persona of Arthur Gordon Pym,” so that he could “satisfy the requirements of Harper Brothers [sic], capitalize on the bad taste of the reading public, and salvage his artistic self-respect by turning the whole unfortunate episode into a kind

distance, in turn, allows us to see how Poe, from a detached standpoint, presents Pym himself as an author-figure for our observation, just as Poe the essayist in “Philosophy” indifferently proffers Poe the poet for our scrutiny.⁴²

If we treat Pym as an authorial subject and examine the “Preface” in view of his authorial disposition, what we consequently discover is the fact that Pym bears the features of the eighteenth-century self-contained and self-authorizing author. At the beginning of the “Preface,” when he is about to explain his initial reluctance toward publication, he makes a brief yet telling comment: “I had several reasons ... for declining to do so, some of which were of a nature altogether private, and concern no person but myself; others not so much so” (3). Pym’s comment on some “private” reasons, as immediately followed by his seemingly unreserved and unrestrained relation of the presumably “not-so-much” private reasons, evokes a suspicion that he may not be telling readers honestly about himself, and that even what he is telling them openly about himself may not be true. In addition, the comment gives us an impression that Pym

of esoteric joke” (“Satire” 192). Quinn and Kennedy obviously epitomize the typical critical emphasis on Poe’s hierarchical sense of readers as the very ground for his authorship.

⁴² Evelyn J. Hinz, in her analysis of Pym as a Menippean satire, similarly notes the distance between Pym and Poe. According to her, one of the clues to the satiric qualities of the novel is “in the title itself: The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket,” which implicates that “The subject of the work ... is not the adventures of Pym but his presentation of his adventures; not Pym as voyager but Pym as narrator; and not merely any narrative and any Pym but the narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket,” and that “Poe ... is directing the reader’s attention toward the literary and intellectual significance of the work and simultaneously toward the limited consciousness of his narrator” (382). “Thus the title,” Hinz concludes, “is a caveat against identification of Poe and Pym (which leads to the didactic interpretation) and confusion of the reader’s perception with that of Pym’s (the Bildungsroman approach) and finally, a literal-minded concern with the physical details of the voyage (the picaresque appreciation)” (382).

intends to draw a veil over himself, censoring and filtering what to say to readers. The impression of Pym's veiling in particular reminds us of "Most writers—poets in especial" in "Philosophy," who are anxious to prevent readers' possible peek at them through the surface of their texts. So it can be said that Pym's comment on the "secret" and unsayable reasons, other than "non-secret" and sayable ones, signifies his desire for self-concealment, self-protection, and self-dissociation from readers and his wish to maintain his authorial liberty of self-characterization.

Securing his narratorial/authorial status from his readers in this manner, Pym proceeds to affirm its inherent authority. He says that as his narrative is full of "so positively marvelous" incidents, he "could only hope for belief among my family, and those of my friends who have had reason, through life, to put faith in my veracity—the probability being that the public at large would regard what I should put forth as merely an impudent and ingenious fiction" (3). Here, while he sounds as if worrying about the hardly believable appearance of his narrative, Pym in reality underscores his not needing to prove its "veracity" since it is already, naturally, proven by "my veracity," or the "veracity" of his own authoring self. He is not implying that nobody would possibly accept his narrative as true. He is denoting that those who know his personality "through life," and know his creation of the narrative, would believe in its verity, and that his authorship is thus self-guaranteed.

Pym's confidence in his self-evident, organic authorship is further detected in his interpretation of readers' reception of Mr. Poe's "fiction" as fact and his concluding remark on the clean-cut difference between his writing style and Mr. Poe's. In his

opinion, readers must have taken Mr. Poe's writing as true because "the facts of my narrative would prove of such a nature as to carry with them sufficient evidence of their own authenticity" (4). Pym is giving himself all the credit for the success of Mr. Poe's story, by attributing the story's verisimilitude to the "authenticity" of its origin—"the facts of my narrative"—and, by extension, to that of the author of that origin, himself. Here, we can take a look at Pym's essentialistic perspective towards his authorship: though his narrative is re-produced and fictionalized by Mr. Poe, its factual nature never changes and remains always discernible. To Pym, therefore, it is his origination of the narrative that dismisses and subdues the possible "popular incredulity" (5). Based on this firm belief in his unquestionably verifiable and fundamentally immutable authorship, Pym ends the "Preface" by proclaiming the distinguishability of his authorial being and performance: "it will be seen at once how much of what follows I claim to be my own writing," and "Even to those readers who have not seen the Messenger, it will be unnecessary to point out where his [i. e. Mr. Poe's] portion ends and my own commences; the difference in point of style will be readily perceived" (5). Pym does not have to elucidate to readers the characteristics of his writing; all he has to do is present readers what he writes, and let it point to himself as its singular origin.

Pym's assertion of self-explanatory authorship is, however, simultaneously undercut by his non-understanding of the reader-directed mechanism of contemporary literary markets. The mechanism is hinted at in Mr. Poe's advice to Pym on publication, which goes that Pym should "trust to the shrewdness and common sense of the public" and that "however roughly, as regards mere authorship, [Pym's] book should be got up,

its very uncouthness, if there were any, would give it all the better chance of being received as truth” (4). Unlike several critics’ interpretation of it as insinuating Poe’s sarcasm toward contemporary simple-minded and superficial readers,⁴³ Mr. Poe’s words enlighten us about authors’ loss of control over the texts in accordance with readers’ empowerment to decide the nature and value of the texts. More specifically, his words impart that Pym does not have to, and cannot, care about how to “get up” his narrative and make it truthful, for it will be truthful only if it is “received as true” by readers; therefore, Pym can only “trust to” and depend on readers. Also, Mr. Poe’s association of the “very uncouthness” of Pym’s narrative with the “better chance” for readers’ authentication suggests the ironic situation in which authors’ own artistic mastery is no longer relevant to their success as it is now the readers’ call to define their mastery. As a whole, Mr. Poe’s advice at once communicates the reader-dominant realities of the antebellum literary world, including the destabilization of authors’ sole regimentation of the texts and the degeneration of the previously privileged authorial profession into “mere authorship,” and embosses by contrast the inadequacy of Pym’s reliance on himself, not on his readers, to sanction his authority.

What is more, Pym’s authorship does turn out to be ordained by readers as, despite his affirmation of the clear difference between his writing style and Mr. Poe’s, the main text of Pym does not exhibit that difference in any degree. Accordingly, Pym’s self-validating authorial attitude is immediately problematized by his own text, which

⁴³ Kennedy, for instance, contends that “Behind the pretense of complimenting the public on its collective ‘shrewdness and common sense,’ Poe manifests scorn for readers disposed to regard ‘uncouthness’ as a sign of truth” (“On Poe” 172).

does not designate him as its author, and his own authorial self, which is not distinguished from Mr. Poe's. It is now only Pym's readers who can designate him as the author of the narrative and distinguish his authorial self from Mr. Poe's. Put another way, Pym does not exist as an author in his own right, but can come into existence only by his readers' acknowledgement of what they think he writes and envisaging of what kind of author he might be. Pym's ontological reliance on readers, then, reveals the essentially fictive inbeing of the author: the author ought to be created like a fictional character by readers. That Pym chiefly concerns such a fictitious quality of the authorial being is indicated in the very first sentence of the novel: "My name is Arthur Gordon Pym" (7). This plainly self-introductory sentence causes a lot of complication to Pym's pretension to authorship. To begin with, the sentence, appearing in the first chapter of the narrative, is presumably written by not Pym but Mr. Poe. Also, considering that Mr. Poe's writing is supposedly a fictional version of Pym's factual account, the same sentence directly brings up questions like whether Pym really exists as well as who Pym is. Finally, if we take into account Mr. Poe's own identity as a fictional character of a de facto author, Edgar Allan Poe, the self-referentiality of the sentence and that of Pym's own (authorial) existence becomes far more pointless.⁴⁴ Given all these clues at the opening of Pym,

⁴⁴ Quite predictably, many critics have apprehended Mr. Poe as Poe's textual double. John P. Hussey, presupposing that Pym has "two narrators, Pym and 'Poe,' both of them fictional," analyzes how Mr. Poe refines the entirety—not just part—of Pym's factual yet crude writing (30). In Hussey's view, Mr. Poe, with a transformative power of "a true poet," endows Pym's narrative with "a unity and harmonized pattern which it would not otherwise possess," and re-organizes Pym's facts as "related and functioning elements" (31, 32). Kennedy proposes that Mr. Poe functions to confuse "the issue of truth" in the novel: "the true author fictionalizes himself to enforce the impression that his narrator is

readers instantly get ready to see what Pym the author cannot in his own narrative: the substitution for the author as absolute truth by the author as fiction.

The main text of Pym manifests the contingency of Pym's authorship upon a readership that thwarts his repeated endeavors to solidify his authoritarian and autonomous authorial status.⁴⁵ Such contingency, or the readerly background of Pym's authorship, is initially observed in his relationship with a close friend Augustus Barnard. It is told that when he was still at school, Pym went out for a sail with Augustus, both drunken, on a boat Ariel one stormy night, and almost got shipwrecked. The incident, however, does not kill Pym's longing for the sea adventure thanks to Augustus, who

an actual, living personage" and to make fun of the public's inability to "distinguish between fact and fable" ("On Poe" 172, 173). Hussey's argument cannot be proven since, as I have pointed out, it is impossible to tell the difference between Mr. Poe's and Pym's writing styles and thus determine whether Pym's original narrative has been really improved thanks to Mr. Poe. Kennedy makes an obvious error of identifying authors and their fictional characters, which comes from the eighteenth-century idea of the text as the replica of its author's personality.

⁴⁵ Pahl also takes notice of Pym's pursuit of ultimate authorial authority in his narrative. He notes that "Pym's whole adventure story ... doubles (but also splits from) the outer frame [i. e. Pym's writing about his adventure story] by becoming itself something of a quest for authority, for an originating voice" ("Framing" 5). On the one hand, Pahl goes on, "Like Pym the writer, who wishes to become the author and origin of his narrative, the adventurer Pym in the story (or the 'written' Pym, as Irwin calls him) desires to make a journey toward origins"; on the other hand, "Just as writer-Pym struggles to attain authorship, adventurer-Pym wants to become the author(ity) of his ship, master of his own destiny, origin of himself" ("Framing" 6). But Pahl, in his attempt to read Pym in a double frame, fails to see that "Pym the writer" cannot be severed from "Pym the adventurer" insofar as Pym "struggles to record the 'truth' of his adventures by translating remembered scenes into verbal signs" (Kennedy, "On Poe" 171, emphasis added). "Pym the adventurer," in a word, is essentially (re)created and (re)written by "Pym the writer" looking backward. What is more, Pahl, like most Pym critics, does not catch that Pym has claimed to have an authorial authority in the "Preface" as I have already shown. That is, Pym is not searching for his authority that is not in his hands, but trying to maintain and strengthen his already owned authority in the course of writing his narrative.

“had a manner of relating his stories of the ocean (more than one half of which I now suspect to have been sheer fabrications) well adapted to have weight with one of my enthusiastic temperament, and somewhat gloomy, although glowing imagination” (18). Augustus’s stories are so appealing and convincing that Pym feels as if “Augustus thoroughly entered into my state of mind” and “our intimate communion had resulted in a partial interchange of character” (19). Many critics reckon Pym’s remark to suggest the “interchangeability” between Pym’s and Augustus’s “characters.” But rather than arguing for the doubling or identity between Pym and Augustus—since we do not see any visible resemblance in those two throughout the narrative—I would contend that the “interchange” takes place between more “partial” or particular “characters” of Pym and Augustus, that is, between Pym the listener and Augustus the storyteller in their relationship. That is, Pym has his readerly office interchanged with Augustus’s authorial one and becomes an author himself. Inspired by Augustus’s sea-adventure tales, Pym soon stows away on a brig Grampus (in so doing, Pym is once again aided by Augustus’s authorial ability to forge a letter under the name of a friend of his family’s and cover up his plan). And through the voyage, Pym would undergo various incidents that he is currently narrating/writing about in retrospect in Pym. In this sense, it can be said that Pym’s authorship arises from, and is built upon, his readerly experience of Augustus’s authorial act.

To an author who hankers after autocratic authority like Pym, however, such an interchangeable linkage between authorship and readership that dismantles the fixed division between an authorial and a readerly identities is too dangerous to admit. So Pym

deliberately represses, through his narration, any pointers to Augustus's author-ness that may put him back into the readerly place. Pym, sneaking into the Grampus, has to hide himself in the hold for the time being under the care of Augustus, who is aboard the brig as a son of its captain, Captain Barnard. Yet there occurs a mutiny on the Grampus, and desperate to convey the news, Augustus writes a letter, ties it on the back of Pym's dog Tiger, and sends him in to Pym. Augustus's letter threatens Pym's authorship because, by relating how he receives and deciphers the letter, he should act as Augustus's reader. Aware of this reader-izing effect of Augustus's letter, Pym makes use of his narratorial power to minimize the effect by rendering the letter unreadable. According to the narrative, Pym at first thinks that the letter is "a dreary and unsatisfactory blank" and tears it up into pieces (37). Here, even though he ascribes it to the darkness of the hold, Pym's description of the letter as total blank is not very plausible because Augustus later confesses that he writes it on "the back of a letter—a duplicate of the forged letter" which he wrote earlier for Pym's voyage plan (56). Rather than believing Pym's words about the emptiness of the letter, therefore, we may have a suspicion that he intends to empty any significance out of what Augustus authors—both the forged letter and the letter about the mutiny. Of course, Pym afterwards tries to read the letter by retrieving and recombining some of its pieces. But what he gets after all the labor (to recompose Augustus's text in his own way) is just an incomprehensible and "fragmentary warning"—"blood—your life depends upon lying close" (39)—that only enhances the unreadability of the letter and, by extension, of its author, Augustus.⁴⁶ And Pym later

⁴⁶ Kennedy interprets Pym's misreading of Augustus's letter as an allegory of writing

recounts Augustus's death, noticeably caused by the "mortification" of his wounded right arm (125), when the Grampus is adrift after being attacked by the storm, and thus "confirm[s] [Augustus's] further uselessness in any project of writing" (Kennedy, "On Poe" 188).

Whereas Pym tries to unlink his authorship from its readerly genesis, his narrative continues to betray its reader-related constitution. For instance, Pym's encounter with his grandfather right before stowing away on the Grampus suggests how Pym's authorial character as a former sailor is in essence accredited by his audience. On the encounter, Pym is temporarily wearing "a thick seaman's cloak ... so that my person might not be easily recognized," but the grandfather identifies him and asks, "why, why—whose dirty cloak is that you have on?" (21). At this moment, let us heed, Pym does not think of himself as a sailor yet, using the "seaman's cloak" only for self-concealment. It is by the grandfather's question, with a quick shift of its focus from "why" to "who(se)," that Pym is compelled to decide "who" he should be between a naïve young schoolboy and an experienced rough seaman. And Pym chooses to be the latter, "assuming ... an air of offended surprise, and talking in the gruffest of all imaginable tones," and answering that "sir! you are a sum'mat mistaken—my name, in the first place, bee'nt nothing at all like Goddin, and I'd want you for to know better,

and reading: the episode signifies that "meaning is invariably hostage to the vagaries of reading," and that "writing and reading prove to be ineluctably separate activities, each the function of a subjectivity operating under the different pressures at different times, struggling with an arbitrary and imperfect system of signs" ("On Poe" 175, 176). Yet Kennedy fails to consider the possibility of Pym's abuse/misuse of his narratorial authority in his basically first-person narration.

you blackguard, than to call my new overcoat a darty one!” (21). Pym’s assumption of the seaman’s identity, however, does not make him one by itself. What does so is his audience’s endorsement of that assumption, that is, his grandfather’s reaction to him as if he is a real seaman: the grandfather “started back two or three steps, turned first pale and then excessively red,” and goes away, mumbling that “Won’t do—new glasses—thought it was Gordon—d__d good-for-nothing salt water Long Tom” (21). By this reaction Pym in effect becomes the seaman, even before he actually goes to the sea. As such, Pym’s encounter with his grandfather epitomizes the operation of the reader’s credence on the formation of his authorial character.⁴⁷

Pym, of course, does not realize the implications of the encounter: he only recollects it, in a pompous tone, that “For my life I could hardly refrain from screaming with laughter at the odd manner in which the old gentleman received this handsome rebuke” (21). In Pym’s view, the encounter simply attests to his own representational talent. Yet Pym’s assurance of such a talent is challenged by one peculiar character: Dirk Peters, a line-manager of the Grampus and one of the mutineers. Peters’s peculiarity lies in his appearance, which is a grotesque composite of diverse human and non-human physical traits that “makes [him] occupy a middle-ground between a predatory and cannibalistic nature, white civilization, and indigenous cultures—between beasts, whites,

⁴⁷ Josie P. Campbell and Domhnall Mitchell reckon this episode to dramatize Pym’s resistance to and subversion of authority. Campbell opines that “Pym acts out in miniature a mutiny against his grandfather, a representative of order and of social values in life, the man who is the successful lawyer and from whom Pym is to inherit property” (208). Mitchell regards Pym’s decision to stow away as his “rebellion against parental authority”: “he only just manages to evade a representative of that authority, in the shape of his grandfather, Mr. Peterson, by impersonating a drunken sailor” (103).

blacks, and Indians” (Achilles 263). Accordingly, Pym’s description of Peters’s looks is very minute and comprehensive as if trying to get complete hold of this gothic “hybrid” (57 and passim). But that physiognomic minuteness and comprehensiveness itself evinces difficulties Pym has in representing who Peters is in any definitive way. The more peculiar hybridity of Peters that repels Pym’s ability to represent, however, comes from the multiple representability of Peters’s character: “Of this singular being many anecdotes were prevalent among the seafaring men of Nantucket. These anecdotes went to prove his prodigious strength when under excitement, and some of them had given rise to a doubt of his sanity” (50). What should be noted here is that the “anecdotes” of Peters are the result of collaborative readership: those who behold Peters’s unusually frightful appearance produce diverse speculations on and stories of his character, which altogether work to render him “a folk legend” (Kamaluddin 125). Such a reader-directed mode of representation is incompatible with Pym’s autarchic authorial principles, so that he shortly overrules those popular images of Peters by saying that “But on board the *Grampus*, it seems, he was regarded at the time of the mutiny with feelings more of derision than of anything else,” and pushes readers to move on by adding that “I shall have frequent occasion to mention him hereafter in the course of my narrative” (50). And Pym does “mention” Peters a few more times in the rest of the narrative, but only to re-present him at will: Peters’s role would be limited to that of a subordinate to Pym throughout the sea adventure, while his physical presence would become more and more obscure to the point that he is later said to be “white” (188) notwithstanding his characteristically “dark” appearance earlier. In this manner, Pym seeks to eventually

homogenize Peters's reader-induced heterogeneity by (ab)using his narratorial authority to represent.⁴⁸

Yet even before witnessing Pym's intentional misrepresentation of Peters, we can see Pym's move to corroborate his authorial mastery of representation when he discusses a "proper stowage" of a ship (63) and when he disguises himself as a ghost to defeat the mutiny on the Grampus. These two scenes seem irrelevant at first glance, but, examined together, come to display Pym's author-centered authorial performance. After being rescued by Augustus out of the hold that is full of a jumbled heap of cargoes, Pym deliberates on the problematic stowage of the Grampus. He opines that "the manner in which this most important duty had been performed on board the Grampus was a most shameful piece of neglect on the part of Captain Barnard, who was by no means as careful or as experienced a seaman as the hazardous nature of the service on which he was employed would seem necessarily to demand," and who should have known that "A proper stowage cannot be accomplished in a careless manner, and [that] many most disastrous accidents, even within the limits of my own experience, have arisen from neglect or ignorance in this particular" (63). A captain is supposed "to allow no possibility of the cargo or ballast's shifting position even in the most violent rollings of

⁴⁸ As for the increasing invisibility and silence of Peters in the latter half of Pym, Sydney P. Moss ascribes it to Poe's goal of writing a hoax as "represented by the 'pseudo-voyage' of the second yarn, facts, or purported facts" in the Jane Guy portion (303), whereas Lisa Gitelman assigns it to the convention of nineteenth-century American exploration literature that, unlike white characters, "non-whites and women ... are never permitted to tell their own stories" (358). Sabiha Kamaluddin presents the most relevant opinion to mine when she asserts that "Peters is denied speech" owing to "the inability of the narrator to control more than one narrative voice" (125).

the vessel,” to which “great attention must be paid, not only to the bulk taken in, but to the nature of the bulk, and whether there be a full or only a partial cargo” (63). And Pym proffers the best ways of stowing cargoes, and concludes by repeating that the stowage of the Grampus is “most clumsily done” (66). This passage is analyzed by several critics as talking about the narrative’s own status as a textual stowage, consisting of episodes, characters, and techniques. Evelyn J. Hinz neatly outlines such an analysis. She observes that “stowage is a metaphor for literary composition, ballast for verisimilitude, sea for audience, and wind for favor or reception,” and insists that the passage, which underscores the difficulties in accomplishing the good stowage, is “an extended comment on the problems of the writer in general and on the technical features of [Pym] in particular” (391). If the passage is about “the problems of the writer,” however, it does not refer to the difficulties of “the literary composition” as Hinz claims, for what the passage is stressing is not the laboriousness of the proper stowage but the adroitness of a captain’s care of the stowage. Pym is strongly imputing the problems of the stowage of the Grampus to Captain Barnard’s “performance” of “this most important duty” with “a most shameful piece of neglect.” Pym’s vehement blaming of Captain Barnard in turn tells us how much weight he lays on a captain’s ability to keep firm hold on the contents of the ship. And if we extend Hinz’s metaphorical reading and deem a captain who handles the stowage to be an author who directs the composition, Pym’s entire remark on the stowage becomes at once his prioritization of the author’s role in the construction and management of the text over other relevant elements including “ballast-verisimilitude,” “sea-audience,” and “wind-reception,” and his advocacy of the self-

governing and controlling author who would “allow no possibility” of the disturbance of what he writes “even in the most violent rollings” caused by readers’ whimsical and unpredictable responses.⁴⁹

In this light, Pym’s stowage speech explains why he soon resolves to “regain possession of the brig” from the mutineers (67): Pym intends to prove himself as a masterful captain/author who is in full charge of his ship/writing and in full control of readers. To do so, Pym relates in detail how he represents a ghost of a dead crewman, Hartman Rogers, and shocks and subdues the mutineers. With the help of Peters, who is now on Pym and Augustus’s side against the mutineers and performing his duty of protecting them like a tamed wild dog, Pym puts on Rogers’ clothes and colors his face in white and red. And looking at himself in the mirror, he is immediately filled with “a sense of vague awe at my appearance, and at the recollection of the terrific reality which I was thus representing,” so that “I was seized with a violent tremour, and could scarcely summon resolution to go on with my part” (80). Pym, from a reader’s perspective, is underwriting how his own (re)creation of dead Rogers would “awe” and dismay the audience and put them under the “seize” of his authorial power. Then Pym proceeds to detail his performance of the ghost of Rogers in front of the mutineers, especially focusing on how his careful staging of the performance successfully produces “The

⁴⁹ Gitelman, believing that the passage emblemizes the textual stowage, or “disunity,” of both the narrative of Pym and the contents of nineteenth-century American magazines for which Poe worked as an editor and contributor, demonstrates how those textual products by Poe, “despite any reader’s accusations of disunity and sloppy stowage, manage to float in the same way that a voyage account . . . manages to float fairly well, buoyed by the expectations of readers accustomed to the conventions of sloppy stowage in the period’s habitually eclectic magazines and exploration literature” (356).

intense effect” on them (83). Pym notes that as usually there is doubt “in the mind of the spectator” at the vision of a ghost, so “the appalling horror [of the ghost] is to be attributed ... more to a kind of anticipative horror, lest the apparition might possibly be real, than to an unwavering belief in its reality” (83). Nonetheless, Pym states, “in the minds of the mutineers there was not even the shadow of a basis upon which to rest a doubt that the apparition of Rogers was indeed a revivification of his disgusting corpse, or at least its spiritual image,” because he takes care of all the elements necessary to represent the ghost believably, including “The isolated situation of the brig,” “the awe-inspiring nature of the tempest,” the “deep impression” of Rogers’s body already left on the mutineers, “the excellence of the imitation in my person,” and even “the uncertain and wavering light in which they beheld me” (83, 84).

Pym’s account of his acting the ghost, implying how his exceptional authorial faculty for representation produces a powerfully terrifying effect on the mutineers and enables his group to become “masters of the brig” (85), reminds us of Poe’s unity of effect that he frequently uses for his gothic stories. As such, it seems to sanction critics’ argument for it as designed for authors’ total mastery over readers and substantiate the efficacy of Pym’s regulatory authorial disposition. Yet the same account actually does the opposite. When he ponders upon “the mind of the spectator” above, Pym purposes to underline how his skillful representation of Rogers’s ghost vanquishes its tendency to suspicion. But what becomes salient is the power of “the mind of the spectator” to originate a horrifying effect of a ghost. Regardless of spectators’ usual doubt about its reality, a ghost would be still horrible owing to their “anticipation” that it “might

possibly be real”; it does not really matter if the ghost is real or not, for it is the spectators’ minds that imagine and make the ghost real. If so, Pym as the ghost could have a terrifying effect on the mutineers inasmuch as they mentally and emotionally conceive and—unlike what Pym alleges—believe in it to be terrifying for real. In this respect, Pym’s account, in addition to illuminating the reader-originated nature of Poe’s unity of effect,⁵⁰ becomes his ironic designation of the mutineer-audience as the main factor in his successful achievement of mastership/authorship, and re-defines his truthful representation of the ghost into the mutineer-audience’s truthful representation of him as the ghost.⁵¹

⁵⁰ George E. Haggerty, in Gothic Fiction / Gothic Form (1989), discusses how Poe fully understands and makes use of the gothic’s affective, and thus reader-reliant nature. Yet Haggerty concludes that Poe ultimately aims to “manipulate his audience so closely” and make sure that “our involvement is total” (85, 92), and remains in line with the mainstream Poe criticism. My analysis of how Pym performs Rogers’s ghost following Poe’s unity of effect refutes Haggerty (and most Poe critics), as it shows how readers are not being passively effected and captured by authors but actively participate in the production and operation of a certain effect along with authors.

⁵¹ Bezanson, Josie P. Campbell, and Paul John Eakin altogether interpret Pym’s disguise as the ghost as his re-birth. Bezanson alleges that Pym, looking at his disguised self in the mirror, “has looked upon his own corpse, as it were, risen from the grave of the hold” (162). Campbell says that “It is noteworthy that Pym relinquishes his identity as he severs his connections with the land and with his family in the person of his grandfather. ... The self that is born of the deception of Pym’s grandfather is buried in the hold of the ship Grampus only to be reborn in a far more distorted form than Pym could ever have imagined” (208). In Eakin’s opinion, Pym, in his disguise as the dead, “act[s] out literally what is, symbolically, his role in each experience first and last, that of Lazarus-Valdemar” (19). Recently, Kennedy and Marita Nadal re-interpret the disguise as a metaphor for Pym’s ambivalent state of being. According to Kennedy, “Pym’s impersonation of a corpse places him in the singular position of being both a living subject and a dead object; for a moment (when seized by the ‘violent tremour’) he experiences the alienation of the self from itself which—as Kafka figuratively suggests in ‘The Metamorphosis’—belongs to the phenomenology of dying” (“On Poe” 184). Nadal argues that “Through his impersonation of Rogers’s corpse and the contemplation

As Pym's authorial act turns out to be in no way self-substantiating and self-sustaining, so his newly achieved mastership of the Grampus, founded on his lack of concern about the audience, quickly collapses. The brig is attacked by a storm and broken into pieces—a situation in which, using Hinz's symbolism of sea and wind as “audience,” Pym's authorship is overpowered by readership—and Pym and his followers go through a series of indescribably dreadful and discouraging incidents: they encounter a ship full of dead, rotten bodies; they have to practice cannibalism in order to live; and they have to watch Augustus putrefy and die. So when finally rescued by another brig, the Jane Guy, Pym quickly resolves to re-solidify his author-ity by adopting a new authorial persona. Such a resolution is well indicated in Pym's following comment: “On board the Jane Guy ... we began to remember what had passed rather as a frightful dream from which we had been happily awakened, than as events which had taken place in sober and naked reality” (135). Pym is denying the “reality” of his former experiences as a whole by simply calling them a “dream” and negating their detrimental impact on his authorial being, so that he can pave the way for realizing his authorship anew.

Accordingly, Pym after the rescue becomes more straightforwardly directive toward readers.⁵² As Sidney P. Moss correctly points out, Pym becomes “suddenly quite

of ‘I’ as Other in the mirror, Pym experiences the fascination and repulsion of the abject” (380). To me, these readings are too I-centered, not considering the fact that the disguise is essentially designed to be “performed” for others.

⁵² A number of critics have tried to elucidate Pym's sudden change in the latter half of Pym. Cecil counts it as a token of the two distinctive stories and thus the two distinctive narrators in the novel: “the narrator of the Jane Guy story does not identify himself, either by recalling events of the past or expressing hopes for the future, with the young Nantucketer who originally set out on the adventure,” because the Jane Guy portion is

informed not only about the typography, geography, and history of the South Sea and Pacific Islands, not to mention their flora and fauna, but about the great historic efforts to penetrate to the Pole” (301-302).⁵³ Pym’s sudden transformation like this, I would add, is closely related to his yearning for ultimate authority that would make him superior to both other authors in the field of oceanography and his readers. For instance, when he narrates about rookeries, he notes that “These rookeries have been often described, but, as my readers may not all have seen these descriptions, and as I shall have occasion hereafter to speak of the penguin and albatross, it will not be amiss to say something here of their mode of building and living” (140). Also, starting to narrate the Jane Guy’s sailing toward the South Pole, Pym says that “Before entering upon this portion of my narrative, it may be as well, for the information of those readers who have paid little attention to the progress of discovery in these regions, to give some brief account of the

“detached from the Grampus story” and “independent and artistically complete” on its own (236, 239). Ridgely and Haverstick contend that Poe, unable to finish “a verisimilar voyage narrative” in the Grampus portion, “tried to transmute his protagonist into an older and self-effacing reporter of incredible but actual discoveries,” so that the novel is “thrown wildly off balance,” with “much of the earlier material ... rendered irrelevant in terms of preparation for the final scenes” (79-80). Kamaluddin extends Cecil’s and Ridgely and Haverstick’s arguments when she divides Pym into “three almost unconnected adventures” respectively on board the Ariel, the Grampus, and the Jane Guy, and points at the absence of any resemblances or “cross references” in the third portion to the earlier two (122, 123). These critical perspectives, in synch with W. H. Auden’s characterization of Pym as “purely passive” (211) and Daniel Hoffman’s emphasis on Poe’s “struggle to master the uncontrollable” as the theme of the novel (261), do not take into account Pym’s own reasons for and agency in his transformation (being the narrator and author of the narrative).

⁵³ Robert L. Carringer also characterizes Pym after his rescue as a “natural historian, describing in detail the flora and fauna of the nearby islands” (513). See more, Carringer, “Circumscription of Space and the Form of Poe’s Arthur Gordon Pym,” PMLA 89. 3 (1974): 513-514.

very few attempts at reaching the southern pole which have hitherto been made”; and, after summing up the existing discourses on the Pole, he concludes that “My own experience will be found to testify most directly to the falsity of the conclusion arrived at by the society” (150, 155). On both occasions, Pym is simultaneously boasting to his readers about his uncommon knowledge of the sea and the polar areas, and invalidating other authorities’ knowledge of the same issues by means of his own exclusively valid—because first-hand—experience and observation.⁵⁴ Hence, Pym in effect puts forward his text and authorial self as the one and only authoritative source, upon which readers must depend without any questions.

Pym’s desire to be an author with utmost power is exhibited most clearly when he recites the indentations or “indentures” on the wall of a chasm under the ground of a primitive island of Tsalal, where everyone and everything is black. The Jane Guy crew stays on the island for a while for the purpose of recruitment and commerce; but the natives, unlike their friendly look, ferociously bury the entire crew alive in the gorge so as to pillage the brig. Only Pym and Peters manage to survive the burial; and, seeking their way out of the gorge, they find out that there are several “most singular-looking” chasms and that one of them has equally “singular-looking indentures” on its wall (199, 202). These chasms and indentures cause a serious crisis in Pym’s authorial authority

⁵⁴ Pym’s pretension to authority on the basis of his first-hand experience and observation of the polar areas might be also explained through Irwin’s idea of “the first man”: “The notion of ‘the first man’ to reach the South Pole or the first civilized man to cross the Rockies means, of course, the first to make the discovery and return to tell the tale (either in person or in a written narrative, if he is physically unable to return), the first to inscribe the discovery in the written narrative of history. It is writing, then, that constitutes the originality of the first man to enter an unknown region” (70-71).

since their figuration is totally incomprehensible to him: whereas he has, since rescued by the Jane Guy, provided readers with proficient analyses of whatever comes under his eyes, Pym now only remarks that “we could scarcely bring ourselves to believe [them] altogether the work of nature” (199). Pym’s remark registers his sense of frustration, from a narrator’s and reader’s viewpoint, in construing and mastering what is made by “nature,” or, by an ultimate author of the universe: God. As if aware of that crisis, however, Pym attempts to assume that authorial position of God, which baffles and nullifies readerly approaches to his work, by incorporating the unreadable signs of the chasms and indentures into his narrative and (re)writing them in his own words. He quickly presents his pictorial depiction of the “precise formation of the chasm[s]” and “accurate copy of the whole” set of the indentures (200, 202), and even adds his circumstantial verbal description of them. Then Pym goes on to secure his usurped god-like authorship of those chasms and indentures by urging their ungraspability. When Pym and Peters are surveying the indentures, Peters, who has up to now been muted and rendered almost nonexistent by Pym, suddenly expresses his willingness to decipher them as a combination of a human figure and alphabetic letters. Faced with Peters’s wish for commentary, which betokens the unpredictability of an readerly act, Pym promptly dismisses it as “idle opinion” though he himself, for a minute, deems such an interpretation possible (202). Then Pym “convinced [Peters] of his errors” by showing the pieces of the stone flakes on the floor and “thus proving [the indentures] to have been the work of nature” (202) or the product of the unfathomable godly workmanship that he has just preempted. In this way, Pym successfully dissuades Peters’s and other

possible readerly interpretations of those indentures, and finally consolidates his authorship with the most sovereign authorial identity of the Author-God.⁵⁵

Pym's acquisition of the godly status, however, does not make up for the self-insufficiency of Pym's authorial being. Soon afterwards, Pym and Peters try to get out of the gorge of Tsalal by descending a steep declivity. Peters easily succeeds in doing so, but Pym, suddenly flooded by a fear of death and an impulse to fall, feels dizzy, loses

⁵⁵ Some critics claim the resemblance between the contours of the chasms and indentures in Pym's drawing and the initials of Edgar Allan Poe. Daniel A. Wells initially exemplifies the claim: "The shape of the chasm ... spells out in longhand the letters of Poe's last name, reversed of course. This communication is between Poe and his special readership, who must connect the figures in written script before the meaning emerges. ... When the connection is made ... the aesthetic distance between author and work disappears; ... It is his handwriting, these are his walls, and he has written with an invisible finger his signature in the Tsalalian hills" (14). Pahl, in his 1987 article on *Pym*, echoes Well's point: "we might see in the strange designs of the chasms ... the creator's initials, 'e a p'; or in the designs of the indentures, the author's last name spelled out in reverse, 'E O P.' Here, the whole notion of authorship/authority is suddenly made ironic, as the real Poe becomes inscribed in his own narrative—the author graven and in his grave" (60). This way of reading the chasms and indentures not only overinterprets those non-letters but also exemplifies, once again, the prevalence of the eighteenth-century conventions of interpreting the text by looking for the author's marks on it. See how Pahl later revisits and revokes his own earlier argument:

As some critics have done, we could read into these strange designs, these scratchings on the walls of the text, either Poe's own initials or even his last name spelled out backwards (see Irwin, 228; Pahl, 56). Such readings would at first glance seem to suggest the possibility of a final author(ity), a final frame or framing-self that would at last bring closure to the text. But given the ironic nature of Poe's writing, we would perhaps do well to understand that nothing could be further from the truth. ("Framing" 9)

Then he adds that "Of course to bring any reading at all to these inscrutable chasm designs, even if it is to read into them the 'death of the author,' is at once to imprint upon the page one's own markings, one's own special designs. It is to fill in the gaps, the holes of the text with one's own inventive writing, and so in effect create the author (or even his death). ... And it is precisely this that Poe's writing warns against" ("Framing" 10). As for the other analysis, see Eakin: "Poe establishes the figures in the text itself as symbols of the shape of Pym's experience, the configuration made by the path of the embattled self as it moves tortuously through a threatening nature" (17).

control, and tumbles into the arms of Peters, “a dusky, fiendish, and filmy figure” (206). In contrast to his peremptory manner toward Peters, Pym in this scene has to count on Peters for his life, lacking the power to command himself. This sudden change in the power relationship between Pym and Peters bespeaks an author’s inability to stand on his own feet and his mandatory dependence for his existence on the reader. What is more, now Peters somehow restores his former peculiarity—that “dusky, fiendish, and filmy [because he rejects any determinate representation]” appearance—to which Pym has purposefully turned a blind eye so far. Peters’s self-restoration, regardless of Pym’s will, thus further highlights the limitation of Pym’s single-handed authorial regulation.⁵⁶

It is the ending of Pym’s narrative, however, that registers most conspicuously the impossibility of Pym’s self-contained authorship. Pym and Peters, after their narrow escape from Tsalal with a native captive Nu-Nu, arrive at the South Pole where whiteness predominates—with the white powders falling from the sky, and the white vapor, in the form of “a limitless cataract” or “gigantic curtain,” arising from the horizon (216-217). Then Pym, looking at the emergence of “a shrouded human figure” in front of his boat (217) and rushing into the vapor-cataract, abruptly puts an end to his narrative. This enigmatic ending of Pym has generated numerous critical opinions, most of which are guided by Ricardou’s pronouncement that “No text is more complete than

⁵⁶ The declivity episode has been frequently discussed in terms of Pym’s experience of a perverse desire to fall and die, and thus suggested as prefiguring Poe’s later gothic tale, “The Imp of the Perverse” (1845). Yet still the episode has much to do with the problematic of Pym’s controlling authorship, in that Pym is said to lose his control because he is consumed by his “imagination growing terribly excited by thoughts of the vast depth yet to be descended” (205): he cannot even control his own authorial creative faculty.

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, for the fiction it presents points to the end of every text, the ultimate establishment of ‘blank page defended by whiteness’” (4), and by Irwin’s comprehension of the white human figure as “Pym’s own shadow, which he does not recognize” (205).⁵⁷ I agree with the conclusiveness of Pym’s ostensibly inconclusive narrative, but I would argue that it is conclusive from Pym’s authorial point of view, not from the novel’s or Poe’s as Ricardou intimates. Also, while I concur with the idea of the human figure as Pym’s self-image, I would add that it is neither his unrecognized and unintended nor hieroglyphic and intricate image as Irwin points out, but the very image Pym consciously designs to finish his text. To be more accurate, Pym is concluding his narrative by impressing the image of his authorial self on it and thus ultimately declaring his authorship of it. In so doing, Pym portrays the image in a highly mystified tone: according to him, the human figure appears in front of the endlessly stretched white vapor-cataract, and looks “very far larger in its proportions than any dweller among men” (217). Pym’s delineation of his projected self-image—which,

⁵⁷ For instance, Shawn Rosenheim explicates that “recuperating the fragmentation of Pym’s ending depends largely upon the ability to decipher the ‘hieroglyphs’ Pym has transcribed on his adventures” and that “The ‘white figure’ of the novel’s end is revealed as an image of the self projected on the fog—a pictograph of Pym’s identity, cast upon the world” (378). Cynthia Miecznikowski pinpoints that “the image which author [i. e. Poe] and character [i. e. Pym] confront at the end of Pym symbolizes the culmination of every reading of every text in the abrupt vacancy of the white page” (60). Mitchell likewise insists that “The narrative itself ends by literally dissolving in front of us, as Poe removes the curtain of writing to reveal the white page underneath” (106). Kennedy, in wrapping up his discussion of Pym’s death as a biographical self and re-birth into a textual one through writing, considers “Pym’s final voyage” to be “a movement toward figurality itself, toward a trope of writing and textual closure” (“On Poe” 189). Most recently, Nadal alleges that “Pym disappears as a narratorial presence: as narrator he has reached the bottom/whiteness of the page, the end of [his narratorial] journey” (385).

bestowing on the image the overwhelming mysteriousness and colossality, reifies the divine authorial persona that he has taken on at the chasm of Tsalal—in turn projects his pretension to the awe-inspiring authorial presence that no mere “dweller” or audience would dare to doubt or challenge its supremacy. Yet the same delineation also impairs Pym’s final self-authorization by producing the effect of his consistent disregard and repression of readers’ role in the constitution of his author-ity. The human figure is Pym’s own projected image, yet it does not indicate anything characteristic of him; instead, it has “the perfect whiteness of the snow” (217), or the utter blankness. This absence of Pym’s character in his own projected image exposes the deficiency of self-defining, self-characterizing, and self-sanctioning power of his authorial identity, which calls for others’/readers’ partaking in defining, characterizing, and sanctioning that identity and points to his necessary interaction with his readers to be an author.

Indeed, the very last scene of Pym’s narrative stresses that Pym’s inability to have an interactive relationship with readers deactivates his self-proclaimed authorship. The gigantic human figure arises in the way of Pym’s rush into the vapor-cataract,⁵⁸ which seems to wait to embrace him with the “flitting and indistinct images” in it (217). Here, Pym’s situation should be understood as less threatening than beneficial to his (authorial) being. The scene describes how his magnified self-image is hindering his way to ultimate survival as an author even after writing comes to an end, a survival obtainable by merging with those multiple “images” that could be produced by readers’

⁵⁸ Of course, at this moment, Pym is with Peters and Nu-Nu on the boat. But Peters is silenced again since the chasm episode, while Nu-Nu, another silenced presence, is dead, so that the ending, as it were, concerns Pym only.

constructions on his narrative and thus fill up his essentially vacant authorial self. This description, in turn, directs our attention to the following segment of Pym, the “Note,” which is “The actual ending of Poe’s story” (Zanger 279) and which serves to exorcise the baneful image of Pym’s self-confined authorship and re-open his hindered pathway to interrelation with readers.

The “Note,” written by an anonymous editor, performs such a service in two steps. First, it prevents any more one-man authorial attempts at Pym’s narrative that may channel or suppress again readers’ linkage to it. The editor informs us of “the late sudden and distressing death of Mr. Pym,” who has finished “the few remaining chapters which were to have completed his narrative” in its revised edition, yet “irrecoverably lost through the accident by which he perished himself” (219). What this information tells us is, of course, the death of Pym the author as a sole creator, owner, controller, and completer of his text. The editor continues to report on the unavailability of other authorial substitutes for Pym: Mr. Poe “has declined the task—this for satisfactory reasons connected with the general inaccuracy of the details afforded him, and his disbelief in the entire truth of the latter portions of the narration,” and Peters, though “still alive” and residing in Illinois, “cannot be met with at present” (219). Consequently, Pym’s narrative remains authorless, unauthorized, and uncredited.

Next, the editor invites readers to the empty place of an author and gives them an opportunity to authorize and credit Pym’s narrative. Saying that “it would afford the writer of this appendix much pleasure if what he may here observe should have a tendency to throw credit, in any degree, upon the very singular pages now published,”

the editor addresses readers back “to the chasms found in the island of Tsalal, and to the whole of the figures” or indentures (219). The editor’s re-directing of readers’ attention to the chasm scene truly works for his expectation of their “credit,” because that scene is the only part throughout the narrative where Pym does not impose any specific meaning: Pym, let us recall, in defense of his god-like authorship of those chasms and indentures, has insisted on their inscrutability and thus left them uninterpreted. By bringing readers back to this point of no author-intended meaning, then, the editor entitles readers to signify those unsignified signs in whichever ways they believe.⁵⁹ To do so, he criticizes that Pym’s assertion of incomprehensibility is “made in a manner so simple, and sustained by a species of demonstration so conclusive (viz., the fitting of the projections of the fragments found among the dust into the indentures upon the wall), that we are

⁵⁹ Eakin, Irwin, and Pahl also ponder upon why the editor leads readers back precisely to the chasm scene. Eakin states that “as if ‘to fill the vacuum’ left by the ‘missing’ chapters and their account, presumably, of the world ‘beyond the veil,’ the note proceeds to decipher the mysterious ‘indentures’” (16). Irwin observes that “the note returns the reader to the chasm episode, presumably to retrace the narrative line to the final break in the text, and then on to the note which sends him back to the chasm episode, and so on” and that “This skewed circularizing of the narrative line points to the only kind of immortality that writing can confer on the author’s self: not an endless persistence of the self-as-image in the infinite void beyond death, but an indefinite repetition of the author’s inscribed self through the act of (re)reading” (196-197). Pahl opines that “this apparent limit of the narrative, this seeming endpoint, serves only to send us back into the pages of Pym to reinvestigate the chasm designs—designs that are, according to the postscript’s explanation, fragments of Ethiopian and Arabic characters. Thus from one fragment marking the ‘end’ of the tale, we are led into further fragments, consisting not of nature’s landscape but of, as it were, the landscape of writing, of language” (“Framing” 9). It is exactly my intention in this chapter both to show some other mode of authors’ “immortality” or life after death than Irwin’s, which would confine authors eternally within a single version of their “inscribed self” in the texts, and to propose to look beyond the point of the author’s death by the text’s fragmenting effect, a point that Barthesian critics like Pahl have repeated for too long.

forced to believe the writer in earnest” (219-220). And, as if resisting such a “forced” view, he expounds the shapes of the chasms and indentures as a combination of the words from the Ethiopian, Arabic, and Egyptian roots that mean “To be shady,” “to be white,” and “The region of the south,” and an image of “a human form” with its “arm ... outstretched towards the south” (220). Interestingly, therefore, the editor comes to “afford strong confirmation of Peters’s idea” (220) that has been rejected by Pym. Yet, more important, the editor does not confirm the analysis in any way; rather, he moves on to incite readers to perform their own analyses, saying that “Conclusions such as [his and Peters’s] open a wide field for speculation and exciting conjecture” (220). Then he leads readers to interpret not just the chasms and indentures but Pym’s narrative as a whole, by remarking that the conclusions “should be regarded, perhaps, in connexion with some of the most faintly-detailed incidents of the narrative; although in no visible manner is this chain of connexion complete” (220). With this remark, readers are empowered to re-read Pym’s narrative focusing on the “incidents” that are “most faintly detailed” or distorted by Pym, to re-make any kinds of “connexion”—since no one “connexion” would be more “complete” than others—between those “incidents,” and to re-write it in unlimitedly diverse ways.⁶⁰ By extension, readers’ boundless recomposition of Pym’s

⁶⁰ The editor has been often misrepresented as authoritarian. Eakin construes that “For Pym’s ‘editor,’ stationed as he is at a privileged, indeed ‘angelic,’ vantage point looking down on the chasms from above, the figures have a meaning, they spell out a message” (20). Rosenzweig characterizes the editor as “hardly either neutral or objective” inasmuch as “his note has one continual thrust—a search for meaning” (147). Sam Worley argues for “The ambiguous results of the endnote’s assertion of interpretive authority over both glyphs and text” (241). And Kennedy opines that “As if to seal the narrative in an enveloping contradiction which would insure the book’s unreadability,

first-person narrative would bring about the equally boundless number of characters for his narratorial self, and finally enable Pym to go beyond his own gigantic but hollow authorial image standing in his way, receive the embrace of the “limitless cataract,” and continue to exist through the “flitting and indistinct”—that is, ghostly, indeterminate, incomplete, and thus ever-re-creatable—“images” in it.⁶¹

Poe, in the editorial appendix, not only disposes of his narrator but undermines his credibility,” and that the editor, by pointing out what Pym and Mr. Poe fail to perceive in Pym’s narrative, “leaves the whole matter of authority unclear” (195, 196). All these depictions of the editor coincide with the eighteenth-century notion of writing in establishing one decisive meaning and point of view, which is clearly not the editor’s writerly intent as I have shown.

⁶¹ The “Note” ends with an italicized biblical quotation: “I have graven it within the hills, and my vengeance upon the dust within the rock” (221). Critics like Ricardou, Wells, and Irwin try to find its significance. Ricardou, based on his symbolism that substitutes “paper” for “the white travelers” and “writing instruments” for “the blacks” in Tsalal, speculates that “Covering the whites (paper) with the black dust of the cataclysm (ink) and thus transforming the contour of the deep gorges of the island, ... the islanders, without realizing it, are setting new windings of the script in place,” and concludes that “The enigmatic sentence that concludes the appendix ... can be read, then, as words formed by the deadly ravine after the attempt upon the lives of the whites (a dramatization of the antagonism between ink and paper): ‘I have written it on the page, and the ink has engulfed the paper’” (5). Wells says that “Engraved in the hills is Poe’s name, undercutting the claims to authenticity of the landscape of the characters. Therefore, Poe’s ‘vengeance,’ an example, perhaps, of his need to prove his intellectual superiority, is on the majority of his readers, who, in failing to conjoin geography and philosophy, chasm and creativity, are forever blind to the ingenuity which lies before their eyes, but beyond their vision” (15). Irwin agrees with Wells when he asserts as follows:

A writer—who wills fictive worlds into existence, who creates himself in the act of writing and endows that written self with the power to survive death—is particularly subject to [the] presentiments of immortality. Perhaps that is the deepest meaning of the quotation that ends Pym, for though the quotation sounds like the word of God ..., Poe’s readers, familiar as they were with Scripture, would have known that these words are not from the Bible. And Poe would have known that his readers would immediately register that fact. Certainly, the question we are meant to ask is, who is the author of these godlike words? Not the Creator of the physical universe, but the creator of the

By virtue of the “Note,” Pym uncovers the fictive core of the eighteenth-century author-figure that necessitates readers’ belief in its validity and their configuration of its characters based on their own signification of the text. Poe’s participation in revealing the reader-oriented foundation of the author, however, is not just observable in his literary composition. He himself serves as a proof of how an author can exist by agency of readers’ myriad (re)interpretation of his texts and (re)characterization of his authorial self. Right after his death in 1849, which was as “sudden and distressing” as Pym’s death,⁶² Poe, or his “character” to be more exact, became an object of widespread

written world of Pym. (227)

Hence, the quotation is “an encrypted signature—the author’s signature for the whole work” (227-228).

However, in view of the editor’s function to endorse readers’ rights to (re)write Pym the author’s text in his stead, other critics’ arguments for the meaninglessness of the quotation would make more sense. To Ridgely and Haverstick, “a pseudo-biblical quotation” is “full of impressive sound but signifying nothing”; “Pym thus comes to a lame anticlimax, in which the author himself invites us to doubt the seriousness of his conclusion” (79). Rosenzweig objects to Irwin’s too author-centered perspective by taking into account a reader’s standpoint to the quote: “the final, italicized warning ... seems to be derived from the Bible ... but it is only a parody of the Bible. Its language, seeming to carry a clear meaning, is finally not poetic but garbled and unclear. ... If this is to be taken literally, it hints at a final paradigm for the novel itself” in that it “only adds further mystery” (149). And that paradigm is the reader’s realization that “he holds nothing certain—the rock, hollow, hiding within it only the dust of disintegrating meaning. Nothing is certain in the world of the Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, not even the certainty that nothing is” (149). Shandy Rudoff debunks more fully the biblical aura of the quotation as “only ‘near’ references”: “in Pym, the biblical allusions turn out not to be quite right. Poe doesn’t use the Bible. He uses biblical inflection. It is this almostness, this ‘sounds-like-the-Bible’ which Poe plays with throughout” (74). Then Rudoff adds that “In an act of biblical mimicry, Poe transcribes the fraud: what sounds and looks like a biblically authoritative verse is actually manmade” (79). I would extend Rudoff’s observation by arguing that Poe inserts the quotation in order to highlight for the last time the inner void of Pym’s godly authorship that calls for readers to fill it with meanings.

⁶² It is reported that Poe, during his trip to Richmond for his lecture on poetry and visit to

controversy among his contemporaries.⁶³ The controversy was spurred by Poe's literary executor, biographer, and well-known foe Rufus Wilmot Griswold, whose series of newspaper and magazine articles on Poe delineate his character as, in sum, an immoral alcoholic with a perverted imagination.⁶⁴ This controversy needs to be examined in terms of Poe's authorship in that it basically concerns who Poe was and how he should be recognized as an authorial individual rather than a biographical individual: the arguments about Poe's character are mostly based on the arguers' readings of his works. Griswold's "Edgar Poe," published in Tait's Edinburgh Magazine in April 1852, gives a useful paradigm for the underlying rhetoric of the controversy:

his then fiancée, Mrs. Shelton, was found semiconscious in the streets of Baltimore on October 7, 1849, and died at a hospital on the same day. A large amount of conjectures have been made on why and how he came to die there, but the truth of his death still remains what Beidler aptly terms "Poe's last gothic tale of terror" and "detection" (253).

⁶³ William A. Pannapacker examines Poe's character reflected and signified in his daguerreotypes, in relation to the explosion of the biographical interest in him in America toward the end of the nineteenth century. See Pannapacker, "A Question of 'Character': Visual Images and the Nineteenth-Century Construction of Edgar Allan Poe," Harvard Library Bulletin 7. 3 (1996): 9-24.

⁶⁴ About how Griswold, notwithstanding his animosity against Poe, became responsible for Poe's posthumous collected editions and biographical accounts, critics cast doubt on Poe's mother-in-law Mrs. Clemm's claim that Poe himself recommended Griswold for those tasks while he was alive, due to the lack of supporting records. Yet Peeples takes an interesting exception: "Poe may or may not have requested Griswold as his literary executor, but one thing is certain: both Poe and Griswold would have wanted his collected works to sell. ... While it still seems unlikely that Poe would have actually wanted Griswold to malign him when he died, he might have appreciated his rival's cunning" as an experienced editor (4). As to the detail of Griswold's distortion of the facts about Poe's life and work, see Killis Campbell, "The Poe-Griswold Controversy," PMLA 34. 3 (1919): 436-464. Campbell tries to measure objectively the extent of Griswold's responsibility for denigrating Poe by, for example, comparing the original of some of Poe's letters with Griswold's edited version of them. Campbell concludes that "It was as biographer, not as editor, that Griswold sinned against Poe" (464). For Griswold's forgeries, see also A. H. Quinn, Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1941).

The writings of Edgar Poe, whether poems or tales, are quite as remarkable and incongruous as his character. They evidence an imagination the most fervid and daring; and in most of his tales this imagination is brought to bear on abstruse phenomena in nature and science, with results which are rendered more astounding to the reader by the apparently strict adherence to fact and scientific detail. ... To be able to produce such an effect is proof of great power; to use that power in a manner so outré is at first sight proof of a diseased mind, or, to use a cant expression, of a naturally “morbid imagination.” (233-234)

Here and in his other articles on Poe, Griswold similarly forges Poe’s authorial character out of his interpretation of Poe’s writing. The ensuing debates for and against Griswold’s readerly (re)characterization of Poe altogether conjoin the (re)reading of Poe’s works and the (re)creation of Poe the author as well.⁶⁵ Take for example the following quote from “Poe and His Biographer, Griswold” by George Washington Eveleth, one of Poe’s defenders:

As it is, we claim for Eureka [i. e. Poe’s last poetic work published in 1848] a place among the noblest productions of modern times; and we enter now the name of its author, Edgar Allan Poe, upon our fame-roll as that of the greatest genius to whom America has given birth—as that of a critic, a philosopher, and a poet, in the true sense of those most shamefully misapplied terms; and,

⁶⁵ Many critics trace the entire controversy over Poe’s character back to the two major figures: Griswold, and a poet and Poe’s one-time fiancée Sarah Helen Whitman. For the information of Whitman’s role in defending Poe against Griswold, see Pannapacker 9-11, and Richards, “Lyric Telegraphy: Women Poets, Spiritualist Poetics, and the ‘Phantom Voice’ of Poe,” The Yale Journal of Criticism 12. 2 (1999): 269-294.

besides, as that of a real gentleman; the Reverend Rufus Wilmot Griswold, his traducing biographer, and his clique to the contrary notwithstanding. (354)

Here, Eveleth counters Griswold's portrayal of Poe by offering his evaluation of Poe's Eureka and applying that textual evaluation to his re-assessment and re-definition of Poe's authorial persona. Then, the entire controversy over Poe's character after his death, which had not been fully resolved until the mid-twentieth century when the critical imposition of the controlling Poe began, would have in effect revived dead Poe and re-embodied his ghostly presence on and on through a variety of his authorial images engendered by his readers.⁶⁶ In this sense, Poe's authorship as a whole should be understood as heteronomous and self-dispossessing rather than autonomous and self-preserving. This understanding, at last, calls for a significant re-consideration and modification of current critical discourses on Poe, which only prematurely put his undead body within a coffin made in the eighteenth century and bury him alive.

It might be said, then, that Poe becomes a ghost writer whose authorship is incessantly made present in his absence by and through readers. Yet, of course, such a never-ending reader-initiated effect of presence is not just exercised in the case of physically dead authors. Around the time when Poe passed away, the American literary world began to be haunted by whole new kinds of the living dead. Fugitive slave writers and women writers were producing the period's most popular works, but their authorship,

⁶⁶ People describes this reviving effect of the Poe controversy that Poe "resembles his own Smith [i. e. the General John A. B. C. Smith in "The Man That Was Used Up" (1839)] (whose name playfully means 'maker') in that he too was used up—and then rebuilt into an ever-more-fascinating public figure" (25).

and often their existence per se, were not fully recognized by contemporary white- and male-dominant society. Aware of their social, cultural, and political spectrality, these writers contrived various ways to materialize and legitimate their authorship in cooperation with readers. In the next chapter, we will meet two of these ghostly writers and see their resurrection into reader-made ghost writers: Frederick Douglass and Louisa May Alcott.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE AUTHOR:

THE CASES OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

American literature around the mid-nineteenth century might be above all characterized by the popularity of abolitionist literature and popular magazine literature. These two phenomena contributed to one remarkable change in the American literary domain: the emergence of traditionally marginalized groups, namely, slaves and women, at the central stage of literary production. The cases of Frederick Douglass and Louisa May Alcott in particular show how the assumption of the writing subject's position by the powerless, or the sociopolitical living dead, destabilizes the conventional Youngian notion of the author and realizes the idea of the ghost writer. According to scholars, Douglass and Alcott seem to have chosen different ways to cope with their existential liminality in their writing; the former wrote first-person slave narratives apparently so as to prove his real-life presence and authorial capabilities, whereas Alcott composed sensation stories anonymously and pseudonymously in order to acquire financial security while supposedly concealing her participation in the unwomanly genre. Yet these two seemingly disparate scholarly paradigms of authorship are in fact built upon a common ground: the Romantic conception of the author as the only essence and source of the text. This essentialist conception isolates Douglass and Alcott from their readers who, in reality, were indispensable for their success and survival as writers. Drawing on this observation, this chapter aims to rejoin Douglass and Alcott to their readers by

shedding light on their ontological reader-consciousness. In the first section, I will read Douglass's best-known autobiographical account of his life as a slave, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself (1845), as a gothic text where his selfless self-story at once dramatizes his actual social identity as a ghost and induces his readers to flesh it out as a legitimate authorial being. The next section will read Alcott's most acclaimed gothic novella, "Behind a Mask; or, A Woman's Power" (1866), which pictures a mysterious governess Jean Muir who eventually transforms into an aristocratic Lady Coventry with the aid of the Coventry family's readerly imagination, and demonstrate how the novella features in Jean Muir an author-figure that has no inner, essential self but is only made of a surface or mask and converted by readers into a substantial authorial being. In the process, I will contend that Jean Muir's reader-initiated substantiation of her flimsy existence parallels Alcott's reader-intended authorization of her pseudonymous writerly identity, or "mask," for that novella, "A. M. Barnard." In this way, we will witness how not only the physically dead or absent author as in Poe's case in Chapter II but also the figuratively dead or absent author becomes resuscitated by readers, and how the notion of the ghost writer sufficiently accounts for authors' dependence on readers in every dimension. Although I do not directly compare Douglass and Alcott, their similarities as the spectral Other in nineteenth-century America who could return to life and become real, renowned writers by means of readers, will become clear.

1. Self-Story Without Self: Douglass's Narrative

The gothic perspective on slave narratives has been by and large manifest through scholars' sporadic—like an unpredictable pattern of a haunting ghost in a gothic novel—comments on their picturing of the horror of slavery.⁶⁷ Yet those comments, examined altogether, exhibit a noteworthy change in tone. Until the 1980s, it seems that the commentary had been usually disparaging. Mary Ellen Doyle, categorizing slave narratives into those with “the interest of a good story of horror or adventure” and those with “the interest of the issue of enslavement and freedom, of the psychology of those who pass or fail to pass, legally or spiritually,” evaluates the former group as inferior (83). Those narratives are inferior because, Doyle specifies, being in nature none other than “horror stories” as well as “adventure stories,” they “focus on the situation of slavery itself or on some aspect of it” and are “not much concerned with the personality of the narrator or the meaning of his experiences, but only with what he has seen of the ‘peculiar institution’ or by what astonishing means he got free of it” (84). These “strictly episodic and sensational” narratives, Doyle goes on, merely comprise a “catalogue of bloody lashings and brutal rapes, bleeding flesh and tear-filled eyes, desperate pleas and bitter curses, all rendered with the pressuring, emotive diction in which nineteenth-century gothic writers specialized” (84).⁶⁸ The same “strictly episodic and sensational”

⁶⁷ It seems that there have been a few “gothic” criticisms on African-American literary works as early as the 1970s. See, for example, Robert Hemenway, “Gothic Sociology: Charles Chesnutt and the Gothic Mode,” Studies in the Literary Imagination 7 (1974): 101-119.

⁶⁸ Doyle counts Douglass's Narrative as “the most important thematic narrative” (85) and thus dissociates it from the “horror stories,” which evinces again her depreciatory

depiction of slavery, however, came to receive much more favorable attention beginning in the 1990s, when New Historicism hit the field of American literature. Eric J. Sundquist offers a good example of this change: “The literature of American slavery transplants the language of oppression and liberation from the romantic and gothic traditions, where it had been a particular spur to Britain’s successfully antislavery movement, into a new national setting where it is bound together with the language of American Revolutionary sentiment” (11). Here the gothic of slave narratives loses its earlier shallowness and puts on profundity and seriousness as connected first to European literary “traditions” and then to American historical contexts, namely, the American Revolution. And all these new connections qualify slave narratives for Sundquist’s unhesitating, respectable designation of “the literature of American slavery” (emphasis added).⁶⁹

Since Sundquist’s historicizing note on “gothic” slave narratives, literary scholars have frequently referred to those gory records as exposing America’s inconvenient past. By the mid-1990s, Betty Ann Bergland could simply say that “slave narratives expose the institution’s brutality in the land of the free” (87), while Leonard

attitude toward the gothic.

⁶⁹ One anonymous British reviewer of 1845 noted the connection between horror and slavery in Narrative: “Frederick deals a little in atrocities, though he admits them to be exceptions; but they do not make the greatest impression on the reader as to the horrors of slavery. This appears rather in the brutish degradation to which the mind of the slave is reduced, the destruction of all family ties which is systematically aimed at, and the reaction of the ‘institution’ upon the whites themselves, lowering their character, and often, according to Douglass, wringing their affections in the case of their Coloured children” (qtd. in Douglass, Narrative 86). But to the reviewer the connection was just what makes Narrative “singular,” “curious as a picture of slavery,” and “worth reading” (qtd. in Douglass, Narrative 87, 88).

Cassuto, opining that “Broadly speaking, the history of the slave narrative is the history of the development of literary strategies for representing the racial grotesque and the slaves’ corresponding strategies for fighting it” (234, emphasis added), makes the gothic historicity of slave narratives almost a truism. But it is Teresa A. Goddu’s Gothic America (1997) that sublimates these passing remarks into a substantial historico-literary discussion. Her book is intended to explore how “the gothic registers its culture’s contradictions, presenting a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality” in American history, and its concluding chapter is particularly devoted to discussing how slavery “produced gothic narratives during the antebellum period and how these narratives reproduced the scene of slavery” (2-3, 132). To Goddu, the gothic is indispensable to slave narratives in that, as several African-American historical studies have already indicated,⁷⁰ “the African-American experience, written as a realist text, resembles a gothic narrative” (131). Furthermore, Goddu continues, gothic literary conventions provide slave writers with a formal and affective means of communicating their unspoken and unspeakable experience of slavery to a mostly white audience with no such experience,⁷¹ thus “unveiling slavery’s horror” (132). There is yet a “catch” for

⁷⁰ Goddu especially mentions such works as Theodore Weld’s American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses (1839), Trudier Harris’s Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals (1984), Neil McMillen’s Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow (1989), and Toni Morrison’s Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination (1992).

⁷¹ Goddu’s “audience” or readership does not tell the difference between white common readers and white abolitionist sponsors, and neither will mine in this chapter. As to slave writers’ relationship with the sponsors per se, scholars commonly view it as that of another enslavement. See Tyrone Tillery, “The Inevitability of the Douglass-Garrison Conflict,” Phylon 37. 2 (1976): 137-149; William L. Andrews, “The First Fifty Years of

slave writers. Using gothic codes and modes surely enables them to articulate their horrifying experience effectively to readers, but its very effectiveness may as well disable them from conveying that experience fully. The strong gothic feeling of horror aroused in readers' minds can deprive the narrative of "the source of its effect"—the reality of slavery—and turns that specifically historical writing into "a legend," or a story that, transcending time and space, would be only "imagined instead of experienced" (134). To prevent this relocation of "the horror of slavery from the slave's experience to the white viewer's response," Goddu claims, "The slave narrative must rewrite the conventions of gothic fiction for its own factual ends" (134, 137).

In spite of its successful attestation of slave narratives' inherent affinity with the gothic, Goddu's paradigm of their use of and operation as the gothic begs our question. The paradigm states that the gothic of slave narratives should serve to display the writers' life in slavery as it was, but not inciting too much readers' imaginative re-creation of that life. After all, Goddu implies, it is slave writers who have first-hand experience and, therefore, who should tell the story of what they saw, heard, and had to do and enlighten inexperienced and ignorant readers; if readers, or outsiders, are encouraged to envision the life inside slavery on their own, they would "departicularize"

the Slave Narrative, 1760-1810," The Art of Slave Narrative, eds. John Sekora and Darwin T. Turner (Macomb: Western Illinois UP, 1982) 6-24; Lucinda H. MacKethan, "Metaphors of Mastery in the Slave Narratives"; Raymond Hedin, "Strategies of Form in the American Slave Narrative," The Art of Slave Narrative, 25-35; Sekora, "The Dilemma of Frederick Douglass: The Slave Narrative as Literary Institution," Essays in Literature 10. 2 (1983): 219-226, and "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," Callaloo 32 (1987): 482-515; and James Olney, "I Was Born."

that very particular mode of life (135). In other words, Goddu's paradigm, privileging slave writers' authentic interiority and discrediting their readers' sympathetic capabilities, works in essentialist and dualistic ways. In so doing, it upholds slave writers' exclusive control of the form and content of their narratives, to the point that it renders the narratives altogether the Youngian duplication of the writers' personality.⁷²

⁷² To be just, Goddu's way of reading slave narratives is not unique. Many scholars of slave narratives take notice of the writers' inevitable compromise of their essential blackness in writing for the white audience. Stephen T. Butterfield identifies the "black experience and the white models" as the "sources of influence on the slave autobiographer's style," and specifies that those "models" include "the Bible and other Christian literature, sermons, editorials in abolitionist newspapers, Websterian and Garrisonian oratory, and the antithetical prose style inherited from eighteenth-century England" (72). All these models, Butterfield adds, along with an explicitly political purpose, work to "reduce experience to a single dimension" (73), but the writers managed to counter such circumscription by adopting irony, parody, and satire in narration. Raymond Hedin discerns the tension between self-restraint and self-expression innate in slave narratives, and ascribes it to the complex demands of their multifaceted readership: "if southern critics and northern editors moved the narrators toward truth as verifiable fact, and toward a correspondingly controlled and understated voice in the interests of appearing reliable and safe, the extreme nature of the slaves' experience, the intensity of their own emotional response to that experience, and the tastes and expectations of their audience moved them toward truth as emotion, toward the extremes of literary romance rather than toward the even-toned middle of restrained realism" ("Voices" 134-135). And Carla L. Peterson situates the issue within the broader context of nineteenth-century commercialization of American markets: "Slave narrators thus discovered that the autobiographical act, far from freeing them from commodification, tended to reinforce their status as commodities. In writing their lives, they often found that they had created alienated images of themselves. And, in agreeing to sell their life experiences on the marketplace, they further exposed themselves to the gaze of an alien audience, whether well-intentioned abolitionists, prurient readers seeking titillation in the accounts of slave nudity or whippings, or simply those eager to consume private lives" (562). Although these readings are not gothic, they share Goddu's perception of slave writers' authorial consciousness in that they altogether assume slave writers' own experience of slavery to be the essential source of their narratives and their conflict with white readers to be ineluctable. Such essentialist approaches to slave narratives still pervade, as illustrated by Jon D. Cruz recently: "The slave narratives ... contain the beginnings of a modern conceptualization of interpreted

Another problem with Goddu's paradigm is that, emphasizing the importance of the particular facticity of what slave writers wrote, it fails to account for the conditions in which the writers wrote. Strictly speaking, the majority of slave writers, though already escaped from the physical circumscription of slavery, were not completely free. As scholars including Lynn A. Casmier-Paz correctly point out, the writers were officially still fugitives, and "can be found, kidnapped, and returned to slavery" because "there was no legal protection for the escaped slave who sought refuge in the North—even among powerful and influential white abolitionists" (221, 224, fn. 4). Moreover, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Casmier-Paz adds, "made it a federal offense to help or harbor fugitives, and slave owners had the help of federal law enforcement in the capture and return of their fugitive 'property'" (224, fn. 4).⁷³ Finally, slave writers had to deal with ongoing racial prejudices even in the free North; Leon F. Litwack reports that "Although fundamental differences existed between a condition of legal servitude and freedom, municipal, state, and federal statutes relegated northern Negroes to a position of legal inferiority, while custom and prejudice reduced them to a subservient economic and social status. Disfranchised in nearly every state, denied the right to settle in some, confined to a diminishing list of menial employments, northern Negroes found themselves systematically separated from the white community" (50).⁷⁴ All these

culture that is rooted in (or to be excavated from) the process of proposing a fathomable psychocultural interiority," so they "reveal the inner world of the author, and, by extension, of slaves in general" (306, 307).

⁷³ The 1850 Act was technically an elaboration of the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. It was the 1793 Act that gave rise to the Underground Railroad.

⁷⁴ Litwack, in the same essay, further focuses on racial prejudices among white

historical contexts indicate that, from society's viewpoint, slave writers were not very different from slaves; if, as María del Mar Gallego Durán perceives, slaves are "the absence in every single sense of the term" (122) due to their total lack of social, political, and legal rights, so are slave writers. But what distinguishes the latter from the former is that the writers are, at the same time, the presence, in that they give their testimonies at abolitionist meetings and, more important, publish their narratives to the general public.⁷⁵ So slave writers are characterized by a curious type of liminality; they are there, audible and legible, but they are also not there, ineffective and unrecognized. Or, the same peculiar liminality takes a more distinctly gothic hue if we look at it by using Orlando Patterson's famous definition of a slave as "a socially dead person" (5).⁷⁶ Then slave writers would be ones who are dead but not completely dead, as well as absent yet

abolitionists: "abolitionist literature contributed its share to the popular conception of the Negro, frequently referring to his meek, servile, comical, minstrel-like qualities" (60).

⁷⁵ For their gothic, or sensational and sentimental story line and images, slave narratives were enormously popular, appealing to not just politically driven readers but also entertainment-seeking ones. See Charles H. Nichols, "Who Read the Slave Narratives?" *The Phylon Quarterly* 20. 2 (1959): 149-162. Such immense popularity makes it reasonable to presume that the writers gained more "presence" with their narratives than with their speeches.

⁷⁶ Patterson historicizes that definition in the European context: "in France, Spain, England, and the Netherlands a severe form of enslavement of Europeans by Europeans was to develop and flourish from the middle of the fifteenth century to well into the nineteenth. This was penal slavery, beginning with galley slavery and continuing with its replacement by the Bagnes, or penal slavery in public works. ... They developed as substitutes for the death penalty at a time when there was not a prison system in Europe to accommodate the huge number of persons found guilty of capital offenses" (44). It seems that such substitution eventually came over to America, as Joan Dayan, talking about nineteenth-century American slaves, similarly observes that "The materiality of the slave, analogous to that of the civilly dead felon, links both in their status as unredeemed corporeality" (417).

present. And this (non)dead-ness of slave writers, combined with absent presence, makes them analogous to one of the most gothic characters: ghosts.⁷⁷

Regarding slave writers as ghosts foregrounds their recourse to and interaction with—rather than struggle against—readers. Whereas they write about their life from the first-person perspective, the writers could not claim to be the “particular” origin and organizer of what they write simply because, as Goddu postulates, they are insiders; it is precisely their insider-ness that disqualifies them for such a claim in the outside world. By extension, the writers could not verify their own narrative and assert themselves as an authoritative author as numerous others have argued⁷⁸; such traditionally creatorial individual agency is fundamentally denied to them since they do not exist as individuals, both socially and legally, in the first place. Considering this “particular” condition of slave writers, where their writerly selves and words are devoid of autonomy, I propose that they write not to author-ize themselves but to be author-ized by readers, who have—being mostly white—legitimate social identity and legal capacity and thus do exist for

⁷⁷ Cassuto explains slave writers’ gothic liminality as the non/human: “Left suspended between the categories of person and object, slaves enter a liminal space. As partially transformed human/things, they become grotesque. . . . The slave narrator essentially wants to reclaim his or her humanity from those who are trying to take it away” (231).

⁷⁸ To Martha K. Cobb, slave writers’ first-person narration originates in the particular “existential reality of [their] black personhood,” and gives them merits of “projecting [their] image, ordering [their] experiences, and presenting [their] thoughts in the context of [their] own understanding of black reality as it has worked itself out in [their] own life” (36, 38). Goddu, together with Craig V. Smith, believes the slave writers, “Born into an existential vacuum,” use their narratives for “vocally and textually asserting [their] status” in society (824). Nancy Clasby finds a mythical heroic quality in slave writers’ self-presentation, where “The author construes personal experience and articulates a pattern of crises on a journey from anonymity, to singularity, to archetypal significance” (347).

real, and whose sympathetic, self-identifying reading can in turn legitimate their narratives and concretize their authorial entity. To be exact, Casmier-Paz makes a similar point when she sees slave writers as the textual absence that is made present by readers. Believing that the narratives constitute a site where “The newly emergent, racified body is possible through the inscribed death of the illiterate, ahistorical African,” she ascribes that possibility to readers: “slave narratives function as representations, or artful ruse, to the extent that readers bring to slave narrative discourse their own beliefs and historical needs, which the discourse may then attend, refute, or resist” (218, 223). Slave writers, in a word, overcome their social death and obtain distinctive sociohistorical attributes by means of imaginative readers with distinctive sociohistorical backgrounds. However, in Casmier-Paz’s view, such a relationship between the absent writers and present readers is not necessarily an inter-relationship, since, being still fugitives, “the ‘resurrection’ of an ongoing identity would be a fatal effect” for the former; hence the writers “cannot be found in the writing, but [their] absence forces readers to misread, misapprehend, misinterpret, and misplace the writing traces left behind” (218, emphasis added). Casmier-Paz’s configuration of readers as hunters from whom the writers should run away for their survival as from their former owners, echoing Goddu’s dualistic formulation of slave writers and readers, not only overshadows her valuable interpolation that “slave narratives prefigure post-modernism’s trace of the lost subject” (215) but threatens to annihilate our “readerly” discussions of slave narratives in general. This chapter aims to disprove that kind of

futilely antithetic schematization⁷⁹ by putting forward the writers' dependence on and dynamic with readers. This aim does put me in line with Casmier-Paz insofar as it shares her disagreement with the scholarly ideation of the writers' association with readers as their subjection or enslavement to the "white" language and culture. But the aim simultaneously differentiates me from her in a sense that it treats that association as a productive means for the writers to not just rise from their historical and ontological spectrality through readers but realize a different type of authorship along with readers.⁸⁰ With this goal in mind, I now turn to Douglass whose Narrative, undoubtedly the most

⁷⁹ Recently we have a modified version of this binary oppositional positioning of slave writers and readers. Both Michael Newbury and Sterling Lecater Bland, Jr., point out how antebellum audience's voracious literary appetites and curiosities, as well as rapidly expanding literary markets, threatened to consume and (re)enslave celebrity (slave) writers symbolically. See Newbury, "Eaten Alive: Slavery and Celebrity in Antebellum America," Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997) 79-118, and Bland, Epilogue, Voices of the Fugitives: Runaway Slave Stories and Their Fictions of Self-Creation (Westport: Greenwood, 2000) 159-163.

⁸⁰ Many scholars contend that slave writers, using the white language for a white audience, inevitably end up embracing a white-American version of selfhood. The best known among them is probably Houston A. Baker, Jr., who, in his discussion of Douglass in The Journey Back (1980), maintains that "Had there been a separate, written black language available, Douglass might have fared better," but "the nature of the autobiographer's situation seemed to force him to move to a public version of the self—one molded by the values of white America" (39). Baker, Jr.'s words, once again, betoken the persistence of essentialist assumptions within ethnic studies, which, of course, may trace back to W. E. B. Du Bois's well-known formulation of "double-consciousness" in The Souls of Black Folk (1903). See also Annette Niemtow's evaluation of Douglass: "By choosing to write, at a time when most blacks, still slaves in America, were not literate, he has offered a move of assent toward structuring a self for white readers," that is, he "has adopted a white definition of selfhood, and tries to attain it" (101).

representative nineteenth-century American slave narrative,⁸¹ would make an equally representative example of such an authorship.

In accordance with the reputation of his masterpiece, Douglass himself has been respectfully called “The Representative Colored Man of the United States” (Gates, Jr., 99). And, not surprisingly, his authorship has been frequently imbued with self-construction, self-empowerment, and self-endorsement.⁸² Cassuto makes prominent this scholarly attitude: “Although he knows that he has been objectified in the eyes of others, Douglass does not see himself as (socially) dead—and so the reader does not see him that way, either. . . . Because Douglass is a person, and because he is telling his own story from his own vantage point, the rhetorical power given by his own perspective makes the decisive difference in his fight to be perceived as human” (238). Cassuto’s words, it should be noted, portray Douglass as a charismatic self-made author by distinguishing him from the majority of “socially dead” slave writers of the time. This distinction, which betokens the prevalence of the Youngian conception of sovereign authorship in the discourse on nineteenth-century American literary canons,⁸³ de-historicizes

⁸¹ Even though Douglass published three autobiographical accounts in his life time, scholars seem to generally take sides with Peter Ripley, who calls Narrative “perhaps the most influential and best received exslave autobiography of the antebellum era” (14).

⁸² Robert B. Stepto praises Douglass’s Narrative as “offer[ing] what is unquestionably our best portrait in Afro-American letters of the requisite act of assuming authorial control” (26). Olney and George P. Cunningham, respectively, assess the work as Douglass’s “declaration of independence” (“Fathers” 6) and as a record of his “self-induced metamorphosis from object to subject” (109). Goddu, along with Smith., succinctly proclaims that “When Douglass writes his Narrative in 1845, he authorizes himself” (825), which Carole A. Raybourn later restates that Douglass “wrote himself into being” (34).

⁸³ As another indication of this prevalence, Douglass has been very often compared to

Douglass's literary performance and misrepresents his "representative" quality as a nineteenth-century American slave writer. Not unlike his contemporaries, Douglass, around the time of the publication of Narrative, was a fugitive slave who was "writing 'illegally' according to state laws" (Goddu and Smith 840). Also, not unlike those contemporaries, his words had no innate force or effect in that his several, warmly received abolitionist lectures for the public did not spare him from writing the narrative to ascertain that he was a real person and that he had been a real slave.⁸⁴ Lastly, not unlike a number of the period's slave writers, Douglass was a mulatto, whose social position might have been more ambiguous and more disturbing than that of a "black."⁸⁵

the prototypical "self-made" author-figure of American literary tradition: Benjamin Franklin. See Andrew Levy; and Rafia Zafar, "Franklinian Douglass: The Afro-American as Representative Man," Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays, 99-117. Stephen Matterson makes clear the canonization of Douglass implicated in this scholarly perspective: "his narrative is an already familiar, even canonical one, a form of conversion narrative or a success narrative of becoming and self-fulfilment [sic] akin to the Autobiography of Benjamin Frankln" (84).

⁸⁴ Many critics concur with Gregory S. Jay's account that "the success, inventiveness, confidence, linguistic power, and complexity of his speeches ... prompted doubts about Douglass's claim to being an ex-slave, a suspicion that finally motivated the writing of the Narrative" (231-232). Purported to prove Douglass's exceptional rhetorical power and literacy, this account ironically testifies to the ineffectuality of slave writers' words (Douglass's verbal words were not easily accepted by the public). Indeed, Albert E. Stone informs us that "Douglass's Narrative was labeled a fraud soon after publication" (198). Note as well Douglass's own words about the legal force of a slave's testimony in "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" (1852): "His own testimony is nothing" (199).

⁸⁵ It is intriguing to see that Douglass as a mulatto has been seldom pinpointed; he has been, rather, usually known as an "African-American" or "black" writer. Whereas it is possible to say that both blacks and mulattoes were altogether outsiders to nineteenth-century American white-centered society, I suspect that this collective neglect or silence might also symptomize a scholarly disposition to "de-particularize" Douglass so as to typify him further as a "representative" figure. In this light, Gates, Jr.'s above expression, "Colored Man," seems to be more observant.

All these facts add up to Douglass's ontological uncertainty and liminality shared with his fellow slave writers, and hint at another "representative" dimension in his writing of Narrative. And it is that dimension that my ensuing analysis of Narrative will make patent, by demonstrating how an allegedly incompetent and incapable "slave writer" achieves authorship by virtue of readers' construction of his authorial identity based on their reading of his account of his life (and this is my counterpoint to Cassuto's above comment on Douglass "telling his own story from his own vantage point"). In the course of my analysis, the narrative will turn out to be a self-story without a self, which means, an abnormal autobiographical story⁸⁶ where an autobiographical subject talks about itself without imposing on readers any single version of itself, and where that simultaneously present and absent, or ghostly personal subject is re-born as a publicly recognized, real being in cooperation with readers.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Some point out the lack of the autobiographical selfhood in Narrative as well as slave narratives. William W. Nichols says that Douglass's autobiographical narratives do not register "the sovereignty of the individual will," unlike most American autobiographies (158). Baker, Jr., in both "Problem" and Journey Back, insists on slave writers' lack of an a priori self, the very element that makes autobiography possible at all. To Niemtzw, the slave narrative, "recapturing a self that the slave wishes to cast off, and ... in a search for a self capable of blooming into an admirable adult," cannot but violate the typical autobiographical assumption of "an implicit identity between the writer and the protagonist" (96, 97). Sekora perceives the absence in ideologically intended slave narratives of the autobiographical "creation of a self" by writing, and labels Narrative "the first comprehensive, personal history of American slavery" ("Comprehending" 159, 169). And Casmier-Paz discusses how slave narrators with multiple names complicate what Philippe Lejeune calls the "autobiographical pact," or the presumed equation of the authorial name on the cover of a book to that of the real author.

⁸⁷ By saying this, I disagree with the critical reading of Narrative as depicting a tension between Douglass's private and public selves, which is, again, essentialistically binary oppositional. To me, as slave writers' achievement of any social reality starts with their transaction with readers in their autobiographical narratives, so their private and personal

Narrative directs our attention to Douglass's cooperative association with readers quite early on, as it makes clear the presence of its readers even before its main text begins. Narrative is prefixed with the Preface by illustrious abolitionist and Douglass's mentor William Lloyd Garrison and a letter from another famed abolitionist Wendell Phillips. These preliminaries by two well-known public figures are, following the convention of slave narratives,⁸⁸ intended to give "suitable assurances to the audience before permitting an Afro-American to address them" (Matlack 18). To that end Garrison and Phillips present a description of Douglass's personality, which is, significantly, relevant to their reading of the manuscript of Narrative. Garrison's insistence on Douglass's "true manliness of character" as well as "gentleness and meekness" is buttressed by his evaluation of Douglass's narrative that "it is essentially true in all its statements; that nothing has been set down in malice, nothing exaggerated,

selves are inseparable. See Baker, Jr., who, in both "Problem" and Journey Back, contends that, by using the white language, Douglass lost his authentic black selfhood and became a public, white being; John Burt, who propounds that Douglass intends to build up his "citizenship" rather than his "selfhood" in "Learning to Write: The Narrative of Frederick Douglass," Western Humanities Review 42 (1988): 330-344; and Donald B. Gibson, who finds Douglass trying "to sustain balance between the public and private focus" in the narrative (553).

Those who give attention to Douglass's absence in Narrative as well take it mostly as a sign of his authority. See Lindon Barrett, who regards Douglass's increasing disembodiment as his "rendition of himself as the shaping agent and intellect of the text" (433) and bestows him with a Foucauldian invisible power.

⁸⁸ For studies of the formal conventions of slave narratives, see Barbara Foley, "History, Fiction, and the Ground Between: The Uses of the Documentary Mode in Black Literature," PMLA 95. 3 (1980): 389-403; Eugene Terry, "Black Autobiography—Discernible Forms," Okike: An African Journal of New Writing 19 (1981): 6-10; and Marva J. Furman, "The Slave Narrative: Prototype of the Early Afro-American Novel," The Art of Slave Narrative, 120-126

nothing drawn from the imagination” (5, 7).⁸⁹ And Phillips’s “most entire confidence in [Douglass’s] truth, candor, and sincerity” results from not just having known Douglass personally but having finished the manuscript and come to believe that “every one who reads your book will feel, persuaded that you give them a fair specimen of the whole truth” (10-11). As such, Garrison’s and Phillips’s Narrative-based representations of who Douglass is foreshadow how readers should help form an authorial character of the powerless and ghostlike Douglass by their reading of his narrative.⁹⁰

Yet Garrison’s and Phillip’s representations likewise serve as negative cases of such a reading act, for the way those two readers create Douglass’s persona hampers other readers’ creative attempts. Garrison pinpoints specific episodes of his choice, including Douglass’s soliloquy on the Chesapeake Bay and merciless murders of slaves by a white master and a white overseer, and attaches specifically abolitionist connotations to them. And Phillips, though less specific than Garrison, plays the same tune with the use of overtly Christian metaphors like “the most neglected of God’s children” for slaves (10). In so doing, Garrison and Phillips alike obscure Douglass’s personal historical particularity and compose his image as an ahistorical, universal abolitionist and Christian hero.⁹¹ Then, backed up by their reputation as leading political

⁸⁹ Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself, eds. William L. Andrews and William S. McFeely (New York: Norton, 1997). All references to this source will be from this edition.

⁹⁰ Stone also observes “a dramatic presentation of himself by another” in the Preface and the letter, but finds its “advantage” in “dealing at once with the reader’s possible imputation of vanity” (199).

⁹¹ David Leverenz also observes Garrison’s delineation of Douglass as “the type of the Christ-like, tormented slave, bonded to his fellow sufferers rather than to his readers”

activists, they put forth that image as a definite one while annulling any other images of Douglass as (politically) incorrect. Consequently, Garrison's and Phillip's readings of Narrative restrict a possibly wider range of readers' imaginative invention of Douglass.

Again, in accordance with the generic code of nineteenth-century American slave narratives, Garrison and Phillip's creative yet restrictive readership⁹² was requisite to Douglass's first public appearance as a slave writer. Facing that dilemma, Douglass, in his own portion of writing in Narrative, attempts at once to lessen the restrictive effect of the two initial readers and to enhance their creative side so as to foster a larger number of readers' involvement in the making of his authorial being. More specifically, Douglass recounts his experience with utmost particularity, so that although readers, as outsiders of the system of slavery, have not actually undergone what he did as an insider, they can still vicariously do so. As the main text of Narrative begins, we see Douglass telling that he knows only where he was born but not how old he is or who his father is. Critics have normally understood his relation as marking his ontological void as a slave: to Cunningham, "Frederick Douglass could not begin his story with the assumption that he was always already a subject," so "Instead, he opens with negation" (112); and Durán discerns in the relation "the lack of any literate documentation of his existence" (123).

(355).

⁹² Saying this, I differ from the critical focus on Garrison's (but not Phillips's) de-individualization of Douglass in the Preface. See Leverenz, who says that "Garrison's expectations give Douglass little room for complex individuality, and almost no room for aggressiveness or imagination" (356), and Goddu and Smith, who claim that "His 'Preface,' addressed to the reader, ... does strive for discursive authority" as it "tries to determine our reading of the Narrative—and indeed our vision of Douglass—by preempting him" (831). It should be noted as well that neither Leverenz nor Goddu and Smith mention the creative aspect of Garrison's and Phillips's writings about Douglass.

Whereas I agree with Cunningham and Durán's point that Douglass starts his writing with and upon his existential vacuum, I would go a step further and contend that Douglass is inviting readers into that vacuum to write it out for him. At the opening, Douglass gives us very concise yet detailed information of his birthplace: "I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland" (12). Thanks to this geographical and factual information, the void of the opening section does not remain meaningless emptiness but gets framed by actual contexts that makes signification possible. Hence, when readers set out to read Douglass's first-person account of his self, they are furnished with a historical ground for their interpretation of it. And, Douglass expects, readers' historically grounded interpretations would generate a historically delineated identity for his current flimsy, spectral one.⁹³

Douglass puts into practice this expectation in his recounting of the whipping of Aunt Hester. He tells us that Captain Anthony, his first master, got jealous of his slave Aunt Hester's secret rendezvous with another male slave and whipped her harshly, and that he watched the whole scene while hiding in a closet, afraid of being the next victim. Many critics have designated the episode as the most gothic moment of Narrative, in that

⁹³ Stone detects Douglass's pursuit of historical selfhood out of a self-directing motive: "The process from first to last is the creation of an historical self. 'I was born in Tuckahoe ...' So begins his story ... Under slavery, man possesses no such historic identity as name, date, place of birth or residence usually provide. Douglass has achieved these hallmarks of historicity, has attached himself to time, place, society" (201). Lillie Butler Jugurtha discerns Douglass's gesture of "moving the story slightly away from [himself], by describing a place" at the opening of Narrative, but explains it as his gesture of recounting his "exemplary" story of slavery (110-111).

its gruesome content strongly appeals to readers' sense of horror and stimulates their emotional identification with Douglass, who is "so terrified and horror-stricken" at the sight he has never seen before (15). As Stephen Matterson states, the episode serves for "both [Douglass's] and the reader's introduction to the cruel treatment of individual slaves" (83-84, emphasis added). However, Douglass also promotes in this gothic scene more than readers' horror-driven empathy with him. He refers to the scene as "a most terrible spectacle" that makes it impossible for him to "commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it" (15). Yet he proceeds and delineates that scene in detail, to the point that he can recollect in a calm tone how "the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor" (15).⁹⁴ Here, Douglass's minutely descriptive delineation of the whipping while being mute about his "feelings" renders him a mere reporter of his own experience and distances him from his own text. As a result, Douglass's narratorial stance becomes, paradoxically, non-participant as well as participant, or absent as well as present. Douglass's paradoxical

⁹⁴ Some critics have discussed this mixture of a strong sentiment of terror and a poised manner of narration in terms of Douglass's endeavor to expose the horror of slavery realistically and sharably. Hedin regards the mixture as a sign of "heightened realism," which was "the best solution the slave narrators found to the problem of conveying strong emotion without drawing too much attention to themselves" ("Voices" 137). So the narrators, Hedin goes on, could "keep their narratives socially acceptable" and "achieve real power by their very indirection—but at considerable cost to the instinctive expression of human emotion and to the development of their own literary voice" ("Voices" 137). Terry Martin, finding that "Douglass simply lingers long enough in his description to register such horrors fully before passing on to others," analogizes Douglass's narrative viewpoint to "that of a naturalistic novel in which no resurrection is possible and the universe remains flatly indifferent to human suffering" (2). To Goddu, Douglass emphasizes how "Aunt Hester is 'literally' covered with blood" for he is "rewrit[ing] the gothic as actual horror instead of stage effect" (139).

stance, easily overlapping with his ghostlike liminal state of being in society, in turn works to allow readers to step into his narrative and play the normative narratorial role in his stead. Because readers have been already emotionally identified with Douglass due to the gothic, horror-evoking effect of the whipping scene, they can fill up the emotional blank in his narration made by his inability to “commit to paper the feelings.” In so doing, Douglass’s minutely descriptive delineation of the scene would only enhance the reality and particularity of readers’ narratorial re-presentation of his “feelings.”

Such writerly identification of readers with Douglass—or outsiders-readers’ entrance into the empirical domain of the insider-slave writer—does not, as Goddu maintains, “abstract the horror by turning it into a timeless trope of terror” (138), thanks to the particularity of Douglass’s narration. To begin with, the incident happens between the two particular personages—Captain Anthony, who got that title “by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay,” and Aunt Hester, who was “a woman of noble form, and of graceful proportions” and who was seeing Ned Roberts, a slave of a superior of Captain Anthony, Colonel Lloyd (14, 15)—not between some master and some slave. And it is described by another particular figure, Douglass, who has been already firmly situated within certain geo-historical backgrounds at the beginning of the narrative. Finally, the incident is described through Douglass’s particularly defined narratorial vision. In his recollection, Douglass is concealing himself in the closet and watching the bloody transaction by way of some sort of chasm, like a crack in the closet door, with a

voyeuristic concentration as well as an appalling shock.⁹⁵ This heightened focus, captivating and fixating readers' gaze on what Douglass is watching, helps readers feel as if they were Douglass's autobiographical self, situated at the very moment when Captain Anthony was whipping Aunt Hester. As such, Douglass's narration of the Hester episode enables readers to form a sufficiently particular authorial identity for him through their emotional and (virtually) physical identification with his otherwise barely existing, ghostly autobiographical self even from the outside.

Douglass underscores more strongly the importance of outsiders-readers' signification and legitimation of his inside, self-insufficient experience when he contemplates slave songs. He recalls how those slaves who were chosen to run errands to the Great House Farm—the headquarters of Colonel Lloyd's plantation empire—used to “compose and sing” songs about their enslaved life on their way through the woods (18). The songs would contain “words which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves” (19). Douglass “did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs,” since he was too young, and, furthermore, resided “within the circle” where he “neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear” (19). But now he can “trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery” to those songs, and express his utter astonishment, drawing on “my experience,” “to find persons who could

⁹⁵ Some critics like Ben Slote configure this image as that of a peeping Tom, and take it as betokening “Douglass's own, voyeuristic exploitation of the violence” to “mark his own narrative progress—the blood-stained gate ... through which he is passing” (30). As Slote's emphasis on “he” marks, this way of imagining Douglass does not take into account the reader-incorporating effect of his relation of the Hester episode.

“speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness” (19). Quite predictably, several critics have construed this reminiscence in a dichotomous manner. James Matlack takes it as illustrating a “spirit of double-entendre,” which refers to an African-American cultural characteristic that “Outward contentment and surface meanings, perennially misread by whites, have often been contradicted by deeper feelings and private symbolism” (19), and insinuates Douglass’s interpretive authority in revealing that spirit within slave songs for white “mis”-readers. Jon D. Cruz, amplifying Matlack’s insinuation, maintains that Douglass counters contemporary whites’ observations, or “meanings imposed from the outside,” on the black culture by “open[ing] up the interior sensibility of slaves” hidden in the songs and telling “his readers just how to conduct the analysis” (308, 310). In sum, Cruz concludes, “He pulled back the veil of slave culture” (314). To concur with Matlack and Cruz, however, we see the division between Douglass the insider and his white readers the outsiders too explicitly complicated in Douglass’s narration. That complication is initially found in the fact that he, being “within the circle,” could not comprehend slave songs “as those without” would do and obviously gives much credit to the outside for getting hold of the life inside slavery. Of course, one might agree with Steven Mailloux, who says that by “those without” Douglass means escaped slaves like himself who come to acquire a physical and perceptive distance necessary to make sense of the past in autobiographical slave narratives, and that he is therefore confirming his authorial “authority ... not simply because he was a slave but because he is now an escaped slave” (10). But such an argument soon turns out to be defective as Douglass does nothing to register his

authority of that sort. As Daniel J. Royer correctly points out, Douglass, in his relation of slave songs, “never does offer an interpretation to substitute for the experience itself” (371). Instead, Douglass promptly moves on to say that “If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd’s plantation, and ... place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him, in silence, analyze the sounds” of the songs (19, emphasis added). Saying this, Douglass is at once refusing to give the purely internal account for the songs and asking readers to take the position of his autobiographical and narratorial self and come up with accounts of their own for him.⁹⁶ By the same token, his earlier formulation of “those without” comes to mean his readers outside “the circle” of slavery and to call for their imaginative representation of his experience.

Douglass’s call for his readers continues even when he registers his astonishment at the idea that the songs signify slaves’ jolliness. Though mentioning his “experience” that he used to sing for sadness, he does not expand the mention any further; rather, he proceeds and finalizes his point by analogizing slaves’ singing to “The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island” (19). This de-racialized analogy, itself being an

⁹⁶ Though Royer, like I do, views Douglass’s reader-incorporating gesture here as “a creative response to the need to recontextualize himself upon his emergence from slavery” (371), his view is ultimately subsumed under his larger argument that Douglass tries to re-connect himself with his black community in *Narrative*. See Barrett for another way of arguing how Douglass’s reader-invitation in the song episode conduces to the blurring of racial boundaries: “the odd address to his readers compromises any apparent immediacy to racial blackness,” for “Where one is led to expect pure racial blackness, one finds appeals to whiteness, so that the stark racial distinction paramount to the narrative and to the cultural and political intrigue the narrative report emerges, in these textual moments, as troublingly imprecise and unreliable” (“Experiences” 32-33).

example of reading the inner realm of slavery from the outside standpoint, de-stresses Douglass's essential "experience" as an insider and de-privileges a dichotomous approach to slaves' life stories. In this manner, Douglass boosts readers' interpretive participation in his narrative and sympathetic reenactment of his ghostly self in it.

Aptly enough, the two most frequently discussed parts of Narrative center around the same kind of participation and reenactment by readers. The first one is the episode of Douglass's fight with Edward Covey, a notorious "nigger-breaker" (42). After having lived with Hugh Auld's family at Baltimore for years, Douglass came into the possession of Thomas Auld at St. Michael's to be a field hand for the first time in his life. To make him suitable for that use, Thomas Auld sends him to Covey, whose beastly treatment almost breaks him physically and spiritually. But Douglass's bold confrontation with and defeat of Covey turns the table, and he would not have to endure any more abuse from Covey afterwards. To numerous critics, this incident signifies Douglass's single-handed self-transformation into a self-confident subject and his yearning for autonomous authority. And they usually find themselves supported by Douglass's own declarative statement that opens his recital of the fight: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man" (47). For example, Albert E. Stone believes that the statement encapsulates Douglass's re-fashioning of himself as a free man and works as both "the turning-point of his life" and "a microcosm of the whole Narrative" (208). James Olney similarly deems the statement to imply that "Through the power of his narrative, as through his resistance to Covey's 'nigger-breaking' tactics, Douglass calls himself from nonexistence into existence, the

‘onlie begetter’ of his own manhood” (“Fathers” 5). Yet these critical opinions do not take into consideration one notable aspect about Douglass’s portrayal of the fight. As Donald B. Gibson properly takes notice and fully analyzes, Douglass hardly gives us either “reference to his emotional response” and “description of the pain,” or the detail of “what [he] was doing or thinking during the beating” (564, emphasis added); he chiefly talks about how he subdues “puffing and blowing” Covey by seizing and kicking him hard, and how he comes to feel “a sense of my own manhood” and “a determination to be free” after the fight (50). “The reader is,” Gibson continues, “thus invited to supply from the resources of his own imagination the missing currents of thought and feeling” during that critical incident (564).⁹⁷ If so, I would add that Douglass’s invitation of readers into his storytelling is precisely what is inscribed in his key sentence that “You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.” Not to mention “Douglass’s use of direct address to a reading audience” as in “You have seen” and “you shall see” (MacKethan 65),⁹⁸ the sentence is grammatically characterized with passivity: “how a man was made a slave” and “how a slave was made a man” (emphasis added). Combining these two characteristics together, we now have a new, reader-centered meaning of the sentence, which is that Douglass wants his readers, not

⁹⁷ To Gibson, however, Douglass’s reader-inviting narration is only to show that “The true climax of the autobiography is the private, psychological one, explicitly revealing the formation on Douglass’ part of a new consciousness, a different awareness and sense of self, and a firm resolve for the future” (554).

⁹⁸ But MacKethan goes further and says that “The transformation is a linguistic event, accomplished by language in a territory that demands and so invokes readers to witness and thus confirm the transaction” (65, emphasis added), and that thus upholds Douglass’s authoritarian disposition.

himself, to be active agencies for him by “seeing” or reading his narrative and “making” him “a man” out of “a slave.” If so, again, we can see how readers’ “reading” and “making” of Douglass becomes the real “microcosm of the whole Narrative.”

The other part where Douglass incorporates readers into Narrative is the account of his long-desired escape from slavery. As it is, this part occupies the climax of the narrative, yet not in a typical sense.⁹⁹ The atypicality comes from Douglass’s reticence about exactly how he escaped, which he justifies by saying that “I would keep the merciless slaveholder profoundly ignorant of the means of flight adopted by the slave” (66). Not satisfied with his justification, critics have dwelled on his reticence per se¹⁰⁰ and reached the consensus that, borrowing Lucinda H. MacKethan’s words, the reticence bespeaks Douglass’s “sheer exercise of mastery” over his text (“Metaphors” 59). John Sekora extends MacKethan’s point by claiming that Douglass’s silence is “an assertion of personal control within a mandated form” of slave narratives because “Only he can write this section, not Garrison or Phillips; only he knows what is being withheld” (“Comprehending” 167).¹⁰¹ And Lindon Barrett modifies Sekora by considering

⁹⁹ Matlack differs: “By giving no details of what otherwise would be the climax of the story, more emphasis is thrown back on the consequences of Douglass’ fight with Covey and the mental attitudes required for such a flight” (22-23).

¹⁰⁰ To be sure, as Doyle reports, it seems that in lots of nineteenth-century American slave narratives “the escape at the end is recounted briefly so as not to obscure the focus on slavery but only to sharpen it by contrast to the joy of freedom” (84). But still “the escape portion of a slave narrative would have been eagerly awaited as the most suspenseful and thrilling segment” (MacKethan, “Metaphors” 59), and was “an element of the narrative that had made it one of the most popular literary forms in American in the 1840s” (Sekora, “Comprehending” 166-167). In this respect, Douglass’s total silence about the detail sets Narrative apart from those narratives and demands our attention.

¹⁰¹ About the fact that Douglass eventually gave the detail of his escape in his later two

Douglass's readership and maintaining that "Douglass denies the expected climax of his narrative in order to announce and display his mastery over his readers ... as master and withholder of important information" (433). While I share these critics' belief in the significance of Douglass's silence, I reject their assumption (which especially becomes clear in Barrett's account) of his antipathy toward his readers. And, in truth, so does Douglass. He does not merely persist in his silence but attaches the following remark, which Douglass critics have neglected to mention in their promotion of the masterful Douglass:

It was a most painful situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or imagine himself in similar circumstances. Let him be a fugitive slave in a strange land—a land given up to be the hunting-ground for slaveholders— ... I say, let him place himself in my situation—without home or friends—without money or credit— ... I say, let him be placed in this most trying situation,—the situation in which I was placed—then, and not till then, will he fully appreciate the hardships of, and know how to sympathize with, the toil-worn and whip-scarred fugitive slave. (69-70)

Owing to this passage, where Douglass plainly and repetitively speaks his intent to "let" others "imagine" and "place" themselves "in [his] situation" that he depicts in detail, his silence about how he ran away from slavery converts to his most persuasive exhortation of, and strongest trust in, outsiders-readers' sympathetic, self-identifying reading of his

autobiographical writings, Sekora maintains that "Only he can decide the proper time for its release" ("Comprehending" 167).

inside self-story. In this light, the silence denotes Douglass's practically voiceless and absent-present, or spectral existence as a fugitive slave writer that should come into a free authorial being with voice and presence with the aid of his readers.¹⁰²

Yet the reader-dependent foundation of Douglass's author-ity becomes most evident in his relation of how he got his current name, "Frederick Douglass." Before that name, Douglass tells us, he had had various other names from "Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey," which his mother had given him, to "Frederick Johnson," under which he got married in New York after his escape. But on his arrival at abolitionist Nathan Johnson's in New Bedford in search of further safety, Douglass felt that he should need another name as "there were so many Johnsons" in that city, including the host, and "it was already quite difficult to distinguish between them" (71-72). He "gave Mr. Johnson the privilege of choosing me a name" but on one condition: "Frederick" must stay, so that he could "preserve a sense of my identity" (72). And Mr. Johnson, based on that condition and his reading of Sir Walter Scott's The Lady of the Lake (1810), which features Lord James of Douglas as its protagonist, came up with "Frederick Douglass" (72). This anecdote, recording that "the moment when freedom is finally felt to be irrecoverable coincides precisely with a ceremonious exchange of slave surname for an agnomen designating a literally liberated 'self'" (Benston 3), has

¹⁰² In another opinions on Douglass's silence, Keith Byerman pays more heed to Douglass's justification and interprets his silence as "the source of black magical effects on the slaveholder" and the token of his essential blackness (75). To Ann Kibbey, the silence "declares the invisible and unspoken presence of the enslaved; for rhetorically it represents the presence of the human being concealed in the language of slavery" (180). Goddu and Smith concur with Kibbey when they take Douglass's silence as his creation of "a 'protection' for future slaves who will follow him" (834).

engendered a considerable amount of critical commentary. And most critics meet at the common point that “Frederick Douglass,” though he has not created the name, still marks Douglass’s ability and authority to identify himself inasmuch as he has “chosen” the name. Kimberly W. Benston adds that “Social and economic freedom—a truly new self—was incomplete if not authenticated by self-designation” (3). MacKethan infers that Douglass was “perhaps finding a compliment in its reference to such a manly hero” as Douglas, “a noble Scottish chieftain exiled in the Highlands” (67). After all, MacKethan goes on, “The power to take a name, any name, for himself was surely what mattered most. That the name was an allusive one extending into a heroic text would only increase its value” (67). David Leverenz elaborates on MacKethan as well as Benston: “he chose Douglass [sic] ... a paragon of unflinching fortitude in adversity. Leaving behind his mother’s name of Bailey, just as he left slavery behind, he renames himself from a manly text. The literariness of his choice itself bespeaks an upwardly mobile self-reliance severing his identity from social bonds” (362). And to Cunningham, “The name, ‘Frederick Douglass,’ is the symbol of its possessor’s struggle toward subjectivity, and the Narrative of 1845 establishes Douglass’s claim of a right to that name and of a right to name” (129).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Unlike these critics, Niemtow perceives that Douglass being named by “a white man and a poem by a white man” confirms how “all definitions of self are defined by whites” (102). But, not unlike these critics, she underlines Douglass’s autonomy by saying that “To acquire a self, he sacrifices his tie to a past which does not provide access to the white world” and that “Douglass invents (in the Renaissance sense) a self recognizable to himself and to his white readers by the end of the tale” (102).

Among those who focus on Douglass’s various names, Daneen Wardrop at first observes that “His multiplicity of names demonstrates the difficulty of negotiating a

Just as in their reading of Douglass's reticence, however, critics' reading of his name overlooks a very crucial point in favor of his individual agency. According to Douglass, he did not instantly "choose" the name when Mr. Johnson suggested it. Rather, he reports, "From that time [of Mr. Johnson's suggestion] until now I have been called 'Frederick Douglass'; and as I am more widely known by that name than by either of the others, I shall continue to use it as my own" (72). In other words, Douglass has eventually accepted the name "as his own" primarily because he has been accepted—"called" and "known"—to others by that name.¹⁰⁴ And, as implied in the phrase, "more widely known by that name than by either of the others," the name was basically other people's "choice" among his various names. Besides, if those people, as their knowledge of Douglass's earlier names hints, would have made their choice according to their knowledge of his story as a fugitive slave, we can say that their choice of "Frederick

racist logos," but ultimately argues that "Douglass finds his way, at least partially, through such a labyrinth, by renaming himself" (656, 657).

¹⁰⁴ Casmier-Paz similarly views "Frederick Douglass" as "a creation that merges his given name—the name given him by his mother—with another name, which is likewise 'given' to him by someone else," but soon places emphasis on how "Throughout the narrative Frederick Douglass discards old identities and old names as easily as he could discard old clothes, and fashions new identities and new names which signal his independence from the chains of a slave owner's patronymic and its hold upon the former slave" (220, 221, emphasis added). Matterson shows the same attention to Douglass's "acceptance" of the name, which "seems to strike a neat balance between his sense of established identity and his willingness to assimilate": "The figure after whom Douglass is named, Lord James of Douglas, is a rebel, an outlaw who comes eventually to be reconciled with the king. Symbolically, then, the name is that of the outlaw who is reformed and who accepts the imposition of outside authority" (87-88). However, he ultimately considers Douglass as one of the African-American "apologists for themselves as deviants from the standards of nineteenth-century white middle-class American society," who, "In seeking to justify their behavior ... are, though in different ways, entreating a form of acceptance from the reader" (88).

Douglass” epitomizes and foreshadows how Douglass would be named and affirmed as “Frederick Douglass,” the author of Narrative, by his readers. (This reader-naming and reader-affirmation of Douglass may have already commenced with Mr. Johnson, whose primal choice of the name originated in his “reading” act.) If so, Douglass’s insistence on “Frederick”—a symbol of his past—in his new name comes to advocate the fact that his writerly identity as “Frederick Douglass” is indeed the co-product of Douglass, who remembers and writes about his past, and readers, who read his reminiscent narrative and find a suitable, substantial personality of him to replace his ghostlike nonexistence in the present.

It is in light of this reader-determined constitution of “Frederick Douglass” that we should comprehend Douglass’s very last words in Narrative: “I subscribe myself, / FREDERICK DOUGLASS. / LYNN, Mass., April 28, 1845” (80). Now that we know how the name was originally selected for Douglass by his readers, those words cannot be his conclusive self-subscription and assertion as the author of Narrative as critics including Olney, Goddu and Smith, and William W. Cook see.¹⁰⁵ Rather, they signify

¹⁰⁵ To Olney, that “I subscribe myself” means that “I write my self down in letters, I underwrite my identity and my very being, as indeed I have done in and all through the foregoing narrative that has brought me to this place, this moment, this state of being” (54). Goddu and Smith contend that Douglass finally “can declare his name, the date and place of signing it—just as validly, in fact, as Garrison and Phillips” or any other “actual person” (829). Note as well their additional analysis of the word “subscribe” in terms of Douglass’s ideological subjugation to Garrison (829-830). Cook observes that “What he does own, if not a name, is the power of naming, and he chooses to exercise this power and become Frederick Douglass, the product of his own nomination and subscription” (16). See also Lacan-inspired Wardrop: “The ironic, punning gesture of ‘sub-scribe’ indicates his name beneath as well as his once marginal positioning within the logocentric system of signifiers. He shows with this pun, clearly, that he has become

that Douglass is subscribing his ghostly, impotent self “to,” or “scribing” it “under,” that reader-given name and thus announcing his contingency on readers’ construction of his nominal authorship. If there is anything self-assertive about Douglass at the moment, it would be his contextualization of that announcement within the very particular place (Lynn, Massachusetts) and very particular time (April 28, 1845), so that he can make sure—as he has been throughout Narrative—that his authorship as “Frederick Douglass” should be historical and tangible. As such, Douglass is, like his Narrative, in a real sense “Written by Himself” and “Authored by His Readers.”¹⁰⁶

And so it was. After its publication in 1845, Narrative made a huge success in both America and Europe, and the name “Frederick Douglass” gained currency and reputation as one of the ablest and most popular slave writers during the period.¹⁰⁷

actively positioned. He has the last word; he is the last word. ... Douglass gives us the name we must accept in order to read all of the foregoing” (658).

For other opinions, see Casmier-Paz’s suggestion that as “The slave’s signature ... is neither a contract nor ‘the simple truth,’” so “‘Frederick Douglass’ is the sign of an elusive, fragile new representation—still likely to be a lie, or to disappear” (222).

¹⁰⁶ As to the title of Narrative, Stone reads it too simply autobiographically: “Douglass’s title asserts the identity and responsibility of its black author” (199). So does Olney, particularly regarding the phrase, “Written by Himself”: “it is literally a part of the narrative, becoming an important thematic element in the retelling of the life wherein literacy, identity, and a sense of freedom are all acquired simultaneously” (54). He later restates himself: “‘Written by Himself’ certifies that Douglass has authored his own existence in much the same way that naming his own postslavery name as the last words of the text certifies his identity against any and all who might threaten it” (“Fathers” 5-6). David Van Leer seems close to my point when he comments that “Written by Himself” “marks the extent to which it is not written ‘for’ himself,” but he ends up saying that “the slave narrator is allowed no comparably selfish motives, but writes to inform and reform others” (132).

¹⁰⁷ Stone reports that by 1849 “The Narrative had already gone through seven editions” (193), and Ripley recounts that “The Narrative sold thirty thousand copies in five years, was translated into French, German, and Swedish, and went through several editions in

Significantly, his popularity, or his great appeal to readers, finally got him actual freedom that he could not have obtained by himself: in December 1846 a number of his British supporters (who, of course, got to know of and sympathize with him through Narrative), using their funds of \$711.66, purchased his manumission from Hugh Auld, his then-lawful owner.¹⁰⁸ His readers, then, would have enabled him to achieve legal capacity, social legitimacy, and the valid authorship of Narrative as “Frederick Douglass.”¹⁰⁹ They also endowed that authorial identity with nominal effect. After emancipation, Douglass kept writing actively and profusely under the name of “Frederick Douglass.” In 1847, he purchased a printing press with the fund of \$2,174 that his British and Irish friends raised for him, and established an abolitionist weekly newspaper, The North Star, and served as its co-editor along with journalist Martin R. Delany. Hence the readers of Narrative, once again, aided Douglass in becoming “the first black man to publish a newspaper in the United States” and “reaching out to a more

the British Isles alone” (5).

¹⁰⁸ Ripley tells us how Douglass’s tour to British Isles itself was made possible by his readers there: “Douglass landed in England without specific plans except to elude American slave-catchers. Yet, on his arrival in August 1845, he found that The Narrative [sic] and his reputation had preceded him. ... The Narrative blended with the tour, one contributing to the success of the other. By providing advance publicity, the book helped launch Douglass’s tour of the British Isles, and its sales sustained him while there (‘I realize enough from it to meet my expenses...’)” (10-11).

¹⁰⁹ Some scholars place more weight on Douglass’s own literacy as a factor to his emancipation. Matlack underscores the effect of Narrative on the emancipation: “The popularity of Douglass’ Narrative ... verified his origins in slavery and raised the threat of renewed bondage became the means for achieving his permanent freedom” (16). Levy demonstrates how scholars can distort the same fact about Douglass’s emancipation in support of his autonomous authorship: “And Douglass, in 1847, purchased himself ... using funds received from supporters on a lecture tour of Britain: taking control of his life-story, he exchanged it for his life” (748, emphasis added).

broad-based reading public” (Leverenz 354).¹¹⁰ And their aid eventually made him an undeniably recognizable public author-figure when, four years later, he renamed the newspaper Frederick Douglass’ Paper and his name emerged as an influential discourse producer and distributor. Such a publicity in turn led Douglass to write two more autobiographical narratives, My Bondage and My Freedom (1855) and Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself (1881; revised in 1882 and 1892). Though they came out after he became a free man, the contents of those two narratives are for the most part rooted in and added to that of Narrative with initially untold details about and changes in his life after emancipation, and thus more or less re-present the Douglass in Narrative.¹¹¹ Then we can say that Douglass’s later narratives substantiate and consolidate “Frederick Douglass,” the author of Narrative, as an authoritative version of his personal and public self.¹¹² Yet that version is not necessarily authoritarian.

¹¹⁰ Yet Leverenz leads his point into the author-centered direction by arguing that “Douglass fashions a self to please and appease this wider audience” (354). For the similar stance, see Sundquist, “Frederick Douglass: Literacy and Paternalism,” Raritan: A Quarterly Review 6 (1986): 112-113.

¹¹¹ Slote explains in detail of this relationship between Narrative and Douglass’s later narratives: “From the start, Douglass’s second autobiography tells us that it is less an extension than an expansive revision of the first. Only two of its twenty-five chapters address themselves to the years after 1845” (23); “roughly the first third of [Life and Times] ... uses [My Bondage] nearly verbatim, not expanding that material but compressing it by eliding those passages from My Bondage which (by basic but not wholly consistent narrative standards) seem unessential” (33, fn. 7). Drawing on this relationship, a number of critics assess Douglass’s two later narratives as inferior to Narrative. See Stone 212-213; Baker, Jr., “Problem” 27; and Matlack 15. This assessment basically regards Douglass’s narratives as Youngian textual records of his own literary and artistic genius.

¹¹² Olney makes an interestingly relevant observation: unlike Narrative, “Neither Bondage and Freedom nor Life and Times starts with the existential assertion. ... It is as if by 1855 and even more by 1881 Frederick Douglass’ existence and his identity were

Douglass's writing of those narratives was prompted by his social capacity, legitimacy, and influence that he could earn by virtue of the readers of Narrative. What is more, the "Frederick Douglass" of Narrative is, as we have seen, the reader-made author. In this respect, Douglass the social ghost in antebellum America comes back to life as a ghost writer whose author-ity is established through the media of the sympathetic hearts and palpable (social) bodies of his readers.

In the following section, we will meet another writer, Louisa May Alcott, who goes from being a ghost to a ghost writer by the help of readers in postbellum America. This time Alcott the social ghost will appear wearing the mask of A. M. Barnard, the pseudonymous writer of Alcott's most celebrated gothic novella, "Behind a Mask." It is not to hide herself, let me clarify, but to manifest her virtual nonexistence as a woman writer in a highly gendered culture more explicitly, or on the surface. Yet, more importantly, Alcott's pseudonymous appearance as A. M. Barnard is to instigate her readers to turn her nonexistence into existence by turning the virtually blank surface of her pseudonymous mask into a socially recognizable face of an author. We will get to see such a dynamic between Alcott/A. M. Barnard and her readers more clearly by looking at the interaction between Jean Muir, the heroine of "Behind a Mask," and the Coventry family, her employers/readers.

secure enough and sufficiently well known that he no longer felt the necessity of the first and basic assertion" (68, fn. 5).

Leverenz insists on the self-authorizing effect of Douglass's autobiographical works: "Much as Emerson strives to represent an emerging cultural elite in his notion of manhood, Douglass presents his own self-made manhood as the epitome of his race's potential" (363). Sundquist likewise characterizes Douglass's works as "carefully drawn portraits of himself by Douglass the public figure" (5).

2. Mask That Matters: Alcott's "Behind a Mask"

By now, considering Alcott as a gothic writer seems to be no longer an issue of debate. It has been already over six decades since an antique bookseller Leona Rostenberg and her business partner Madeleine Stern first discovered that our "Children's Friend" had her hand, more often than not, in stories of deception, betrayal, revenge, and murder. In the early 1940s, Rostenberg and Stern located a number of letters to Alcott from James R. Elliott, a publisher of a postbellum miscellaneous weekly magazine, The Flag of Our Union, at the Houghton Library at Harvard University. Those letters, showing that Alcott wrote blood-and-thunder stories for that magazine under the pseudonym of A. M. Barnard, confirmed her participation in popular sensational literary culture.¹¹³ Rostenberg soon officialized her and Stern's finding by issuing an article, "Some Anonymous and Pseudonymous Thrillers of Louisa M. Alcott," in the Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America in 1943. But it is Stern's publications of Alcott's anonymous and pseudonymous thrillers¹¹⁴ that spurred scholars' active revision of Alcott's literary legacy as a whole. Starting with Behind a Mask: The Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott in 1975, Stern edited and put into print four more major

¹¹³ It seems that there has been a constant suspicion of Alcott's secret production of the gothic. Stern and Rostenberg embarked on their quest for the gothic Alcott thanks to one Alcott collector Carroll Atwood Wilson, who first tipped them to that suspicion (Stern, Behind xxiv-xxv). Gail K. Smith notes that "While Ednah D. Cheney [i.e. Alcott's first biographer] had mentioned the stories in passing in her 1889 biography of Alcott, both the titles and Alcott's pseudonym were as yet unknown. No manuscripts existed, and it was uncertain where Alcott had published the stories" (45-46). Catherine J. Golden further informs us that Alcott's thrillers were even "suspected during her lifetime" (12).
¹¹⁴ Stern also wrote several articles on Alcott's thrillers since the 1940s. But in terms of the scholarly impact, they are not comparable to her book publications.

collections, including Plots and Counterplots: More Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott (1976), A Double Life: Newly Discovered Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott (1988), The Lost Stories of Louisa May Alcott (1993), and Louisa May Alcott Unmasked: Collected Thrillers (1995). As a result of Stern's continuing efforts to make known the gothic Alcott to the world, Alcott's authorial image gradually and positively shifted from a popular yet sentimental-didactic and second-rate woman writer to a popular, multifarious, and exceptionally gifted one.¹¹⁵ So while Alcott was not mentioned at all in Mary Kelley's influential 1984 study on nineteenth-century women writers, Private Woman, Public Stage,¹¹⁶ she has since been frequently discussed as one of the period's representative American writers and with diverse academic orientations in such weighty books as Elaine Showalter's Sister's Choice (1991), Richard H. Brodhead's Cultures of Letters (1993), and Goddu's Gothic America. And on account of this remarkably beneficial contribution to Alcott's scholarly reputation, Stern has won the honorary title

¹¹⁵ Although Little Women has been consistently popular since its first appearance in 1868, Alcott's status as its author has never been fully secured within American literary studies "because of the scant attention critics gave to novels for juveniles" (Ross 911). For the earliest depiction of Alcott the author of Little Women, see Louise Chandler Moulton, "Louisa May Alcott," Our Famous Women (Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1885) 29-52; Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters, and Journals, ed. Ednah D. Cheney (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1889); Maria S. Porter, "Recollections of Louisa May Alcott," The New England Magazine 6. 1 (1892): 2-19; Gamaliel Bradford, "Portrait of Louisa May Alcott," The North American Review 209 (1919): 391-403; and Marion Talbot. All these sources portray Alcott as a little woman herself, with a strong sense of moral, familial, and filial duty.

¹¹⁶ Mary Kelley's exclusion of Alcott was counteracted even in 1984, by the publication of Critical Essays on Louisa May Alcott, ed. Madeleine Stern (Boston: G. K. Hall), which might be the first scholarly attempt to establish Alcott criticism that embraces the sensational Alcott.

of “the dean of Alcott scholarship, a meticulous scholar who almost single-handedly gave birth to modern Alcott studies” (Shealy 162).

There is, however, another contribution of Stern that is equally remarkable yet not necessarily beneficial. In her introduction to Behind a Mask, Stern speculates on why Alcott would have composed her gothic tales incognito. On the one hand, Stern explains, the never-resolved financial difficulties of Alcott’s family compelled her to make money by teaching, serving as a companion and a domestic, and writing; and she frequently felt humiliated and exasperated as a woman working in an androcentric culture. On the other, her naturally imaginative and “lurid” disposition (Behind xii) led her to pursue the theater and enjoy gothic novels. These biographical facts mean to Stern that Alcott must have found ways in lucrative sensational magazine markets to solve the money problem, vent her frustration as a working woman, and satisfy her artistic penchant. In so doing, Stern goes on, Alcott was well aware of the impropriety of her engagement in those markets as a woman. Therefore, she dove into “the whole clandestine procedure involved in producing thrillers from ‘behind a mask,’” that is, by hiding her self and motivations under anonymity and pseudonymity (Behind xxiv). Then Stern suggests that her exposé of Alcott’s sub-rosa creation of the gothic would be “The unmasking of Louisa May Alcott” (Behind xxiv).

Stern’s use of a trope of un/masking to explicate Alcott’s secretive manufacturing of sensational literature immediately set the tone of modern Alcott studies. Scholars came to characterize Alcott’s authorship as self-concealment and began

searching for the hidden, real Alcott “behind a mask.”¹¹⁷ Jeanne F. Bedell, who entitles her article “A Necessary Mask: The Sensation Fiction of Louisa May Alcott” (emphasis added), betokens the burgeoning currency of Stern’s trope around 1980. Eight years later, Elaine Showalter, borrowing Stern’s approach to re-appraise Alcott from a gender-studies standpoint in her introduction to Alternative Alcott, a collection of Alcott’s miscellanies, defines her editorial purpose as a revelation of “a woman very different from [Alcott’s] celebrated image as either the kindly ‘Aunt Jo’ who preached self-sacrifice, or the self-styled ‘Ancient Lu’ who practiced it in endless support of her family,” and closer to “a passionate spinner of feminist plots and counterplots” (x).¹¹⁸ In 1997, Goddu configures Alcott’s overall authorial character as a masterful “veiled lady.” Taking notice of Alcott’s eventual transition from secretive sensational fiction to nominal sentimental domestic fiction, Goddu regards it as the result of Alcott’s firsthand knowledge that “like many female writers of the period, she had to disguise her mercenary motives under the pretense of disseminating the feminine values of the private sphere”; this is why “she could publish her domestic fiction under her own name,” whereas “her gothic tales, which often reveal the ‘true’ woman to be a fraud” through deceitful heroines with virtuous appearances, “had to circulate masked” (118). Consequently, Goddu argues, Alcott emerges anew as “the grand magician masquerading as the sentimental writer, exploiting the market for profit even as she

¹¹⁷ Stern herself repetitively uses the trope of the mask in her introductions to the ensuing Alcott collections.

¹¹⁸ Showalter, also like Stern, delineates the “alternative Alcott” biographically, as a result of “a power struggle between the two parents for psychological dominance and authority over their children and for the children’s loyalty” (x, xii).

participates in veiling its illusions” (119). With Goddu’s argument, the shrewd and furtive Alcott becomes her unfeigned self lurking under the façade of an exemplary Victorian lady, while Stern’s methodology of uncovering Alcott becomes the elementary principle of Alcott scholarship. And in 2003, Catherine J. Golden’s entry on Alcott in Writers of the American Renaissance, a bio-bibliographical reference book for a general audience as well as an academic readership, addresses freely “The masked sides of Alcott’s literary life” (12).

The trope of un/masking is often sanctioned by Alcott’s own gothic novella, “Behind a Mask,” for chiefly two reasons in my opinion. This title story of Stern’s first and pathbreaking collection of Alcott’s thrillers, Behind a Mask, is written under the name of A. M. Barnard, which is the first sensation-literature pen name of Alcott that Stern and Rostenberg identified in the Alcott-Elliott letters, and thus the most famous mask of the gothic Alcott in modern times. And it is the story where Alcott presents a heroine who, in critics’ view, performs most apparently the same masquerade as her own by means of A. M. Barnard or other masks. According to the critical consensus, Jean Muir, the heroine, covers up her real self as a divorced thirty-year-old ex-actress with the mask of a proper and womanly nineteen-year-old governess, and successfully deceives her aristocratic yet naïve employers, the Coventry family, seduces the male members, manipulates the family head, Sir John, to marry her, and finally becomes a Lady Coventry; and her skillful self-camouflage designates her as a fictional double and an unequivocal endorsement of the self-masking Alcott. Stern again plays a major role here, as she initially singles out “Behind a Mask” as Alcott’s best thriller in that it is “per se a

suspenseful story recounted in a masterly manner,” and “a Gothic roman à clef, a fast-moving narrative whose episodes unlock the past not only of the heroine Jean Muir but of the writer Louisa Alcott” (Behind xvii, xviii). Hence Jean Muir serves as “a dark but revealing portrait” of Alcott (Behind xviii). Bedell takes a hint from Stern and equates Jean Muir specifically with Alcott/A. M. Barnard: “Like Jean Muir, her creator wore a mask. Behind the pseudonym of A. M. Barnard, author of lurid sensation fiction in which madness, drug addiction, and sexual passion are staple subjects, is concealed Louisa May Alcott, ‘the children’s friend,’ whose juvenile stories emphasize self-sacrifice and devotion to duty” (8). Judith Fetterley adds to Bedell by comparing Jean Muir to Alcott the author of Little Women. Jean Muir, who “adopts the mask of femininity and impersonates the character of a ‘little woman’” for economic survival, epitomizes Alcott’s “frighteningly prophetic vision of the act she will eventually perform” as a moralistic woman writer without visible pecuniary motives (1).¹¹⁹ And Elizabeth Lennox Keyser synthesizes Bedell’s and Fetterley’s views into one finalizing contention that “Behind a Mask” is “doubly self-referential, for in it Alcott not only

¹¹⁹ Fetterley corroborates her point biographically: Alcott wrote the novella right after an Europe tour as a companion only to face more family debts waiting for her; ergo, “Produced to fill the ever-yawning maw of Alcott need, ... Behind A Mask identifies the source of the desperation and forecasts Alcott’s final solution to it,” which is, the donning of the mask of a domestic woman writer (2). Martha Saxton offers another biographical justification of the Jean Muir-Alcott equation, as she claims that the former “represents Alcott’s view of herself as good on the surface, but bad, angry, and unforgiving underneath,” a view that Alcott developed out of her love-hate relationship with her affectionate yet strict father, Bronson Alcott (256-257). Later, Mary Elliott adds that “The condescending treatment which Jean Muir first received from the Coventrys ... originated, at least in spirit, with an American family, for whom Alcott became a domestic at the age of nineteen” (304).

writes again from ‘behind the mask’ of her pseudonym A. M. Barnard but, more important, anticipates the direction her career is about to take,” insomuch as Jean Muir’s change into Lady Coventry prefigures “Alcott’s rejection of pseudonymity” and “change in genre” from sensational fiction to domestic fiction (47, 57).

But critics’ recourse to Jean Muir in “Behind a Mask” for an approval of their unmasking of Alcott/A. M. Barnard et al. has one serious defect: the novella does not express that kind of approval. More specifically, it does not focus on Jean Muir’s masquerade, or how she keeps her real self inside and pretends to be someone else outside. Even though we do not get the detail of her intention with the Coventry family until the very end, we could nonetheless have enough suspicion as we take a look at Jean Muir’s real person quite early in the novella. Toward the end of chapter 1, we see Jean Muir, after her first meeting with the Coventry family as a new governess, retire to her room and swear violently that “I’ll not fail again if there is power in a woman’s wit and will!” (11).¹²⁰ Then pouring herself some liquor, she removes wigs, makeup, teeth, and a dress, and stands as “a haggard, worn, and moody woman of thirty at least” with “the scar of a newly healed wound” on her breast (12). Moreover, throughout the novella, we often witness Jean Muir’s duality: during the meeting with the Coventry household, Jean Muir faints, and when she recovers her consciousness, Gerald Coventry, the first son and heir, sarcastically remarks, “Scene first, very well done”; at this, Jean Muir “looked over her shoulders with a gesture like Rachel” and replies, “Thanks. The last scene shall be

¹²⁰ Louisa May Alcott, Behind a Mask: The Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott, ed. Madeleine Stern (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1975). All references to “Behind a Mask” will be from this edition.

still better” (7). So when it transpires in the concluding chapter that Jean is not who she has seemed to be, we are not much surprised. Rather, the thrill of the novella comes from our observation of how Jean Muir gets along and survives at the Coventry, that is, how she interacts with the family members, how their interactions entail conjectures on who she is, and how their conjectures conduce to her transmutation into Lady Coventry. Put another way, “Behind a Mask” has us not look for who Jean Muir really is behind the mask of the governess, but attend to who Jean Muir is and how she becomes a person as shown on the surface of that mask through her transaction with the Coventrys.

Critics’ persistent reading of “Behind a Mask” as a story of what is behind Jean Muir’s mask as the governess and Alcott’s mask as A. M. Barnard or other noms de plume, despite the novella’s quite direct emphasis on what is on the mask, enlighteningly resonates with what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her momentous criticism of gothic conventions in The Coherence of Gothic Conventions (1980), points out as gothic critics’ conventional interpretation of the gothic “imagery of the surface.” According to Sedgwick, modern gothic critics have been analyzing masks, veils, or walls in gothic texts as “spatial metaphors of interiority” (140). That analysis, in Sedgwick’s opinion, mainly derives from critics’ “eagerness to write about content” or their “intent on grasping the essence of the Gothic novel” normally characterized with superficiality (140). Their “eagerness” or “intent,” in turn, stems from the Freudian psychoanalytic model of the self as a being whose true nature resides in the inner, repressed, and unconscious (140-141). In accordance with this model, then, critics would take the veil “only as a cloak for something deeper and thus more primal” (143). But Sedgwick’s own

reading of the gothic tells us otherwise. She could “Note ... how much the veil is like the veiled” as the whiteness of a nun’s veil is like the chastity of her body under the veil (144). She could see as well that “the [blood-]suffused veil very often hides Nothing, or death, or, in particular, some cheat that means absence and substitution” (146, emphasis added). Sedgwick’s reading, as she herself concludes, negates the typical interiority of the gothic surface by making it clear that “The self expressed or explored by these conventions is all surface, but its perimeter is neither fixed nor obvious” (154). And that conclusion finally illuminates how the gothic “self is at least potentially social, since its ‘character’ seems to be impressed on it from outside,” and does not originate from inside (155, emphasis added).

Sedgwick’s point that critics regard the gothic surface essentialistically due to their analytical desire for profundity significantly applies to the Stern-inspired scholarly notion of the “unmasking of the gothic Alcott” and Jean Muir. Stern and Rostenberg’s discovery of Alcott’s anonymous and pseudonymous sensation writing shattered the myth of the domestic Alcott and opened up a huge void in the scholarly discourse on Alcott’s authorship. Endeavoring to fill up that void, scholars have been mostly concerned with deciphering the inner, secret, and serious purposes for Alcott’s anonymous and pseudonymous masks; in that way, they believe, they can restore the entirety of Alcott’s authorial identity, certify her creatorship and proprietorship of newly excavated tales in the Youngian manner, and, most important, secure her hard-won reputation within American literary studies. In so doing, however, they have neglected to ask other valid questions, including what Alcott would have wanted to do with her very

own masks and what those masks themselves may tell us about Alcott's conceptualization of authorship. And that neglect has resulted in the fallacious reading of Jean Muir's story "on" the mask.

Taking a cue from Sedgwick's revisionary critique of the gothic critical convention, which purports to "point the reader's attention back to surfaces" (141), I proffer to revise the current scholarly formulation of the Alcott-Jean Muir equation and custom of "unmasking" Alcott's gothic authorship by shifting stress from behind the mask to the mask per se. Jean Muir is Alcott's fictional double for she illustrates that there is no inner, true authorial identity of Alcott behind her mask, but the mask itself is her very identity.¹²¹ As what claims our attention in "Behind a Mask" is the outer appearance of Jean Muir, so what should matter in Alcott's secretive authorial

¹²¹ This remark may remind one of the similar fate of the Reverend Hooper in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836). In that tale, Hooper all of a sudden starts wearing a black veil over his face and makes himself look "ghost-like from head to foot" (189); the townspeople at first get shocked and vehemently debate on why he would do so (which is the reading effect of the unsignified veil also found in "Behind a Mask"), but eventually take his veil as part of who he is. Yet, of course, there is a critical difference between Hooper's veil and Jean Muir's mask. Hooper ultimately remains "a bugbear" (195) or an object of dread to the townspeople, and, though not trying anything to change such impressions, he himself does not seem so happy about his situation either; on the contrary, as will be shown in this section, Jean Muir not only appeals to the Coventry family as an object of curiosity and attraction, but also becomes a lady of the house and anticipates the family's full acceptance in the near future. This difference in how the viewers/readers react to the blank surface may translate into the difference in Hawthorne's and Alcott's authorial attitude toward contemporary readers' growing power to determine an authorial image: Hawthorne would be more self-defensive and hostile toward that power while Alcott would be more open and embracing toward it. As for the discussion of such a difference between Hawthorne and Alcott in terms of a character of a veiled lady, see Goddu, "(Un)Veiling the Marketplace: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and the Female Gothic," *Gothic America* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997) 94-130.

performance would be her mask—especially the one for the novella proper, A. M. Barnard.¹²² Furthermore, Jean Muir is Alcott’s fictional alter ego since she shows that Alcott’s mask is not her own device as Alcott scholars have generally seen, but a construct of her readers. As Jean Muir’s surface image comes to be defined as a result of the Coventrys’ imaginative creation of her person, so Alcott’s mask as A. M. Barnard would be determined through readers’ construction of its identity as an author based on their reading of “Behind a Mask.”¹²³

Considering the reader-definition of Jean Muir’s mask equivalent to the reader-author-ization of Alcott’s pseudonymous mask A. M. Barnard can be indeed a valid way of understanding Alcott’s view of authorship, if we take into account the oddly oxymoronic status of postbellum women writers. First of all, the contemporary gender-discriminating atmosphere did not completely admit women writers’ careers. Melissa J.

¹²² Alcott wrote some other thrillers under the name of A. M. Barnard, including “A Marble Woman: or, The Mysterious Model” (1865) and “The Abbot’s Ghost: or, Maurice Treherne’s Temptation” (1867). “V. V.: or, Plots and Counterplots,” originally published anonymously in 1865, was later reprinted under the name of A. M. Barnard. For details, see the conclusion of this section.

¹²³ G. K. Smith similarly criticizes the scholarly obsession with what is behind the mask of A. M. Barnard, by observing that “the image of the mask ... is more complex in Alcott’s hands than a simple distinction between reality and assumed identity,” for her stories “consciously manipulate fictional conventions about identity, character, and the task of the author” (46-47). But Smith still clings to the division of the inside and outside of a mask following the feminist critical view that Alcott’s masking of herself and her heroines reflect how women must lie in order to survive: “Nowhere is Alcott’s skillful reworking of gender and identity more apparent than in her stories of women who gain the trust and devotion of their willing victims in order to outwit them and gain what they desire. Stories like ‘V.V., Or, Plots and Counterplots,’ Behind a Mask, Or, A Woman’s Power, and ‘Pauline’s Passion and Punishment’ revise the male tradition of the confidence story. In fact, Alcott writes story after story featuring what we might call a ‘confidence woman’” (47).

Homestead, in her American Women Authors and Literary Property (2005), informs us that, though nineteenth-century America, with the passage of the Copyright Act in 1831 and the International Copyright Act in 1891, was slowly yet surely moving toward protecting and advocating writers' textual ownership, women writers were not part of that movement for the reason of women's general lack of rights to property. "Copyright grants literary texts legal status as property," Homestead explains, so "laws regulating the ownership and control of property more broadly applied to copyrights, and under broader property law principles, women (and especially married women) had a profoundly different relationship to property than that enjoyed by their male peers" (3). Indeed, when Alcott, still early in her writing career, accidentally signed her name for one of her magazine publications as "Louisa M. Alcott" instead of the usual one, "L. M. Alcott," the publisher sent her a considerably smaller payment, saying that "his payment was always less for women" (Talbot 736). This anecdote clearly conveys women writers' unwarranted, unstable, and unauthorized standing within nineteenth-century American literary markets.

Whereas women writers could not be textual proprietors/authors in a legal sense, they could nevertheless retain their writerly standing solidly within the markets. As Nathaniel Hawthorne's well-known complaint, "the d—d mob of scribbling women," suggests, the period's American literary realm was for the greatest part revolving around sentimental domestic fiction, dime novels, and sensational magazine stories, and thus virtually dominated by women writers, their main producers. Susan Coultrap-McQuin reports on that reality in detail: "Before 1830 about one-third of those who published

fiction in the United States were women. During the antebellum years, almost 40 percent of the novels reviewed in journals and newspapers were by women, which suggests that an equally high percentage were being published. Best-seller lists reveal that by the 1850s women were authors of almost half of the popular literary works. ... By 1872 women wrote nearly three-quarters of all of the novels published” (3). Such an immense popularity, Coultrap-McQuin further remarks, characterizes women writers’ existence as highly “paradoxical: they had a place in the literary world, yet that world often rendered them invisible” (7).¹²⁴ In other words, I would add, if postbellum women writers were socially and legally “invisible” and incompetent, they could become visible and competent via their readers whose avid interest in and consumption of their works made them keep writing and holding their writerly position within the markets. If so, we can say that, just as in the case of Douglass, contemporary popular-literature women writers including Alcott were like ghosts, who populated the House of Fiction only as unrecognized or absent beings, and who could be recognized and proven as present solely by their readers.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Kelley earlier designates nineteenth-century women writers as “hybrids,” who were supposed to remain “invisible” in the private sphere yet made commercial success in the public sphere (111). But her designation rather means the emergence of “a new breed,” which was an “accident” (111, 112).

¹²⁵ Interestingly, Homestead, in a manner that reminds us of Patterson in the Douglass section, analogizes death and the legal incapacity of nineteenth-century American women: “Both in the nineteenth century and in modern scholarship, the effects of marriage for women under the common law have been labeled a kind of ‘civil death.’ That is, on entering the state of coverture, a woman so thoroughly loses her ability to act as a legal subject in the civil sphere that she is essentially dead to that world” (257). This resemblance in Homestead and Patterson re-confirms the shared spectrality of Douglass and Alcott.

Alcott would have certainly known of her reader-empowered writerly condition. After the unpleasant and unjust incident in the above anecdote, she rapidly grew up in the 1860s as one of the most sought-after contributors to popular magazines, like the Saturday Evening Gazette, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, The Flag of Our Union, and Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner. Meanwhile, she came across the same publisher who this time offered a good sum of money for her writing, and she could delightfully and decisively turn him down (Talbot 736). That is, Alcott has experienced the ascendancy of her writerly status thanks to readers' ever-growing demand for her blood-and-thunder tales. Such an experience of Alcott, then, encourages us to heed A. M. Barnard, a noticeably "successful contributor to penny dreadfuls" among many pseudonyms for her gothic work (Rostenberg 139),¹²⁶ as an especially useful example of her ghostlike writerly mask that does not autonomously exist as a socially recognizable and legally capable author but counts on readers for its existence and author-ity. And how Alcott's writerly mask of A. M. Barnard comes into an authorial being by readers will be demonstrated in how Jean Muir's initially unregistered, ghostly mask forms into

¹²⁶ To many scholars, A. M. Barnard is indeed Alcott's representative gothic pseudonym. See Stern's account of Alcott's composition of a gothic novel, A Modern Mephistopheles: "When in 1877 her publishers had proposed that the author of Little Women provide an anonymous book for their 'No Name Series,' Louisa Alcott had dipped her pen into A. M. Barnard's lurid ink and written a novel dreamed by A. M. Barnard's ghost" (Plots 23). James W. Tuttleton, when questioning the validity of Alcott's current (feminists-initiated) scholarly fame, comments that "Miss Alcott had authored a great deal of trash under the masculine pseudonym A. M. Barnard" (18).

Alcott also used in her thrillers such pseudonyms as Flora Fairfield ("The Rival Prima Donnas," 1854), L. M. A. ("Perilous Play," 1869), and L. M. Alcott ("Enigmas," 1864; "The Mysterious Key, and What It Opened," 1867; and "The Skeleton in the Closet," 1867).

a socially legitimate and acceptable identity of Lady Coventry by the Coventrys in “Behind a Mask.”

The novella begins by drawing our attention to Jean Muir’s mask, or her reader-inscribable exteriority. We first observe the Coventry family—Mrs. Coventry, her sons Gerald and Edward, her daughter Bella, and her niece and Gerald’s fiancée Lucia¹²⁷—gathering in the living room and talking about the soon-to-be-arrived new governess. And their conversation reveals that they know practically nothing about whom they are expecting: Lady Sydney, the family friend and the previous employer of the governess, has recommended her to them with a note—“a quiet, accomplished, amiable girl, who needed a home, and would be a help” to little Bella—but it is rather a typical and “very brief” one (4, 5) and has not enlightened them much as to her character. All the Coventrys can do is idly conjecture on whether the governess would be bearable and whether she would be on time (although Gerald, owing to his usual languidness, has forgotten to send a carriage for her). This lack of knowledge about Jean Muir, anterior to her personal appearance, indicates the lack of pre-determined definition of who she is and gives more emphasis to who she would be or how she would look.

Yet there is likewise a certain lack in her actual appearance. When she arrives and meets the Coventrys’ scrutiny, Jean Muir, unlike critics’ principal assumption that

¹²⁷ As mentioned earlier in the section, Sir John is currently the head of the Coventry household, but he is not a husband of Mrs. Coventry. He lives in a separate residence of his own nearby, and calls Gerald and Edward his “nephews.” So we can guess that Sir John would be the older brother of the father of Gerald, Edward, and Bella. Sir John is called Lucia’s “uncle” as well, but it is not clear whether he is related to her father or mother.

she disguises herself “as” a governess, does not particularly look like one. Instead, she strikes the Coventrys as, above all, “pale-faced” and “Small, thin, and colorless” (6). Thus if she is wearing a mask of the governess, that mask seems, recalling Sedgwick, to correspond to her innate undefinedness, manifest it on the outside, deprive her of distinctive properties, and render her almost blank.¹²⁸ At the same time, however, the near blank of Jean Muir’s mask does not stay that way; she also appeals to the Coventrys as having “very expressive features” (6). This ostensible contradiction—the coexistence of absence and full presence—is soon explained through a peculiar manner in which Jean Muir’s appearance affects the Coventrys. During the interview with this “pale-faced” and “colorless” girl, “everyone looked at her ... and all felt a touch of pity” (6); when she, in the midst of singing for the family, suddenly faints and comes to looking “as white and rigid as if struck with death,” Mrs. Coventry feels “quite touched” while Bella becomes “full of pity and remorse” (7); and Edward, “eager to feed the pale

¹²⁸ Elliott and Melanie Dawson exemplify the reading of Jean Muir “as” a governess. Elliott does so when underlining the class difference in Jean Muir’s relationship with the Coventrys: “As a governess, Jean Muir enters the Coventry household as a laborer, albeit a relatively high-ranking one. Though at first the Coventrys cannot see her or regard her as fully human, since they have been conditioned to obliterate the laboring body from sight, she distinguishes herself and becomes transformed into a spiritual entity, a radiant, virtuous presence reminiscent of the ‘selfhood’ of More’s domestic ideology, and is transformed from laboring body into aristocratic spirit. Much of *Behind a Mask* is preoccupied with establishing and then reversing these class distinctions, and it is these reversals which eventually establish Muir as an individual and empower her to execute her plans” (304). Dawson, picturing Jean Muir as “the socially ambiguous governess who possesses superior skills in reading others,” and whose “skills allow her an upward social movement,” enlarges on Elliott’s point by saying that “she plays on the sympathies and interests of her employers, the Coventry family,” and “attempts to counter class prejudice by evoking sympathy” (23). Dawson even labels “*Behind a Mask*” “Alcott’s governess story” (27).

governess, was awkwardly trying to make the tea” (8). In a word, Jean Muir’s ghostly pallid and vacant visage has—borrowing the words from the subtitle of the novella—a “power” of “an” unspecified woman to stimulate the Coventrys’ sentiment, so that she comes to look “expressive” to the family when, in fact, they become “expressive” watching her.¹²⁹ In this way the virtual emptiness of her mask gets impregnated with her viewers’ emotions and feelings in reaction to the sight of her.¹³⁰

The reader-reactive effect of Jean Muir’s visage or mask on the Coventrys, however, does not just work in an affective dimension. Whenever she is asked about herself, Jean Muir tends to give a very scanty answer. And her incomplete self-account, coinciding with and enhancing the indeterminacy of her mask, gives rise to a series of the Coventrys’ speculations or “fancies” about her identity.¹³¹ When Mrs. Coventry asks

¹²⁹ By saying this, I differ from the critical consensus that the full subtitle of the novella, “A Woman’s Power,” alludes to Jean Muir’s “ability to act” (Fetterley 12) or to control the Coventrys as she wants.

¹³⁰ The novella continuously demonstrates this process, especially through Gerald’s emotional reaction to Jean Muir’s whitish, expressionless face. Taking a glance at the “very pale” face of Jean Muir when she asks him to deliver a letter to Lady Sydney on his trip to London, Gerald, despite his notorious aristocratic aloofness, “found it impossible to forget the almost tragical expression of the girl’s face” (29). Later, Gerald, looking into a scene of Jean Muir’s book reading for Sir John, notices the “absent expression” in her eyes and her “perfectly expressionless face” and senses “an air of patient weariness” (47).

¹³¹ Fetterley, without mentioning the actual word, “fancy,” makes a similar observation: “Indeed, Jean’s success in playing the part, even temporarily, depends on a level of fantasy. . . . Jean is, as Alcott would like to have been, the woman who can do it all, who can be all things to all people, the woman who could meet the demands Alcott felt were placed on her [by her ever-dependent family] Obviously, the successful ‘little woman’ is a superwoman. Thus fantasy reveals fantasy. Further, since the role clearly requires an extraordinary level of consciousness, any illusion about its being the natural expression of essential femininity is also exploded. Thus Behind A Mask defines men’s belief in the reality of ‘little women’ as comically stupid” (3). As will be shown, I

about her background, Jean Muir only describes herself as a nineteen-year-old Scotch girl with no blood relations, while throwing a hint at the connection between her premature departure from Lady Sydney's and her certain transaction with the son. Catching that hint, Gerald says that "I have a fancy that she is at the bottom of Sydney's mystery. He's not been himself lately, and now he is gone without a word" (9). Mrs. Coventry takes the hint as bespeaking Jean Muir's sensible reticence, and "has taken a fancy to her" as a "Quite prudent and proper" governess (9, 10). Edward, moved by Jean Muir's youth and orphaned state, thinks that "Poor little woman! She has had a hard life. We will try and make it easier while she is here" (11). Even little Bella comes to form an idea that "I've imagined such a nice little romance about her, and someday I shall tell her, for I'm sure she has had a love trouble" (21). Sir John joins this fancy-making about Jean Muir likewise. After a short encounter at his garden with Jean Muir, who introduces herself as "only Miss Coventry's governess" and expresses high respect for his noble character, he "felt redoubled curiosity to learn who she was" and "wonder[s] where Mrs. Coventry found such a piquant little governess" (14, 15). And later, getting a glimpse at Jean Muir's lively reading of a history book to Bella, and her sudden burst of tears when left alone, Sir John "all that night ... puzzled his brains with conjectures about his niece's interesting young governess, quite unconscious that she intended he should do so" (24).

In fact, most critics have seen the Coventrys' fanciful responses to Jean Muir as the result of her calculated "intention" towards or plan upon them. Ann Douglas

disagree with Fetterley's biographical and gender-divided standpoint.

observes that “Jean Muir makes everyone fall in love with her ... by her ability to be all things to all people” (62). Bedell calls Jean Muir a “plotter” and a “stage manager” who “sets herself precise goals” and pursues them deliberately (9). To Keyser, Jean, like the dualistic Alcott, possesses an “ability to play Lady Tartuffe” and “styles herself, for the purpose of achieving worldly success” (47). Gail K. Smith further develops Keyser’s view to the point that Jean Muir represents both Alcott’s gothic heroines and Alcott herself who, “Using the language of the dramatic director and the author,” “consciously manipulate their victims’ [and readers’] access to knowledge, their emotions, their gendered perceptions, and their assumptions about gender in others,” and who “in doing so ... ‘write’ the confidence tale we read” (50). And Melanie Dawson completes Keyser’s and Smith’s investment into Jean Muir of purposeful and masterly authorship by arguing that “‘Behind a Mask’ depicts protagonist Jean Muir’s uses of a dramatic literacy, focusing most obviously on her employment of extreme emotive and physical displays,” and her “abilities to create carefully crafted impressions on other characters” by “carefully reading and catering to the interests and actions of the household” (22, 23). And this knowledge and these abilities, Dawson adds, empower Jean Muir “to outwit her employers” (23). These critical opinions, however, misunderstand the nature of Jean Muir’s authorial “intention” and disposition in “Behind a Mask.” According to the novella, after his glimpse at alternately spirited and tearful Jean Muir, Sir John occupies himself with “conjecturing” about her character, and “she intended he should do so.” Here, her “intention” is to make him “do” the “conjecturing,” but not to prescribe exactly “what kinds” of conjectures he is supposed to arrive at. That is, her purpose lies

in making him get interested in and surmise who she is, but not in channeling his interest and surmise into certain pre-determined ways. Jean Muir lets Sir John look at how she behaves at Bella's study without her account of why she behaves so, and such a lack of the account, which matches her existence only as a mask, instigates him to account for her external behavior on his own.¹³²

Such is also true in the cases of other (especially male) Coventrys. Talking with Jean Muir the next morning after her arrival, Edward notices her surprise at the fact that he is not the heir, and asks her, "Whom did you take my brother for last night?" (16). She answers: "For some guest who admired Miss Beaufort [i.e. Lucia]. I did not hear his name, nor observe him enough to discover who he was. I saw only your kind mother, your charming little sister, and—" (16). Jean Muir's inconclusive answer, followed by her "half-shy, half-grateful," and thus equally inconclusive "look," motivates Edward to believe voluntarily, with "a little color ... into his brown cheek," that her "look" has "finished the sentence better than any words" (17). Afterwards, Edward, even though Jean Muir "does not flirt" or do anything explicitly provocative but simply "treats him

¹³² The same misunderstanding appears even in a more reader-concerned discussion of Jean Muir. Goddu points out Jean Muir's "fluid persona" that "can change according to circumstances or the viewer," but puts emphasis on her own agency as "the veiled lady, the economic witch behind the sentimental woman" (123). Isabell Klaiber, employing Judith Butler's notion of the performativity of gender, argues for Jean Muir's other-dependent performance of who she is. But Klaiber underlines a performer's agency and clings to the idea of Jean Muir's self-serving ability: "Jean's autonomous exploitation of the established female gender roles, her continuous switching of roles, as well as her subversive recombination of originally incompatible aspects of various types of womanhood renders her indefinable within the range of established gender categories" (216). Accordingly, Klaiber's point that Jean Muir's performance needs "the affirmation of her social co-actors and audience," that is, the Coventrys (219), does not stand out much.

like an elder sister ... with a quiet dignity,” follows and “devour[s] her with his eyes”; and he “makes himself the hero, Miss Muir the heroine, and lives the love scene with all the ardor of a man whose heart has just waked up” (26, 27). Similarly, Gerald, reiterating his earlier “fancy” about Jean Muir and Sydney to Edward, makes a point that it is his own formulation, piqued by Jean Muir’s silence at the most: “On Sydney’s account I take a slight interest in her; not that I expect to learn anything from her, for a woman with a mouth like that never confides or confesses anything. But I have a fancy to see what captivated him; for captivated he was, beyond a doubt, and by no lady whom he met in society” (19). And Gerald eventually confirms this “fancy” of Sydney’s love for Jean Muir when he sees “a half-open letter” fallen from her dress and catches a glance at one sentence, in “Sydney’s handwriting,” that says, “By the love I bear you, believe what I say” (57). In this light, if Jean Muir has an authorial “intention” towards the Coventrys with regard to the formation of her mask, it is to inspire—not dominate—them to read that barely delineated and visible mask and make it out for her with the use of their imagination. By the same token, Jean Muir’s careful “reading and catering to the interests and actions of the household” that Dawson observes above would rather picture her as a popular-literature writer whose survival, owing to her spectral socio-legal status, hinges on her appeal to readers, and who therefore should write in accordance with what intrigues her readers most.

Jean Muir’s non-dictatorial authorial intent to foster readers’ substantiation of her mask becomes more conspicuous as the Coventrys’ “fancies” about who she is develop into multiple “stories” about who she is. The Coventrys’ development of their “fancies,”

or a bunch of fragmented images, into “stories,” or coherent narratives, would highlight their, not Jean Muir’s, active creatorial and writerly role in the construction of her mask. After his passionate confession of love is rejected by Jean Muir and ends up hurting Gerald, who tries to calm the situation, Edward relates to Gerald in remorse “the history of the growth of his ... passion” (36). During his relation, “Jean Muir’s character was painted in glowing color. All her unsuspected kindness to those about her was dwelt upon; all her faithful care, her sisterly interest in Bella, her gentle attentions to their mother, her sweet forbearance with Lucia, who plainly showed her dislike, and most of all, her friendly counsel, sympathy, and regard for Ned himself” (36-37). Thus Edward’s story of Jean Muir, grown out of his earlier fancy of her within the “love scene,” depicts her as a “wise, and kind, and sweet,” and “true” girl who “would make a man of me” (37). Then Edward reveals his suspicion, or “imagination” (37), that Jean Muir might have rejected him because she loves Gerald, and sparks Gerald’s own “imagination” with respect to her in spite of his initial fancy about Sydney’s involvement with her. After the conversation with Edward, Gerald sends for Jean Muir to loosen his bandage, and she appears “All in white, with no ornament” (38). The “whiteness” in her appearance, which overlaps with her ghostlike, “pale” and “colorless,” and nearly empty mask at the beginning of the novella, serves as a fresh, new sheet of paper upon which Gerald starts writing his story of her. He instantly conceives of her as no longer “the meek, nunlike creature” but “A fresh, gentle, and charming woman” (38, 39). And as Jean Muir takes a seat behind a white curtain (another reminder of her undefined mask) and stays there quietly while holding his hand, “a thousand fancies danced through his

brain” and become projected upon the translucent surface of the curtain/her mask (40). After this transaction, Gerald comes up with a romantic story of how “the piquant character of the girl ... would lighten his ennui” (41).¹³³

Meanwhile, Sir John’s previous fancy of Jean Muir as the “interesting” governess becomes more solidified when he finds out that she is a daughter of the late Lady Grace Howard. To be exact, he gets the information from Jean Muir herself: “she only told me yesterday. I was looking in the Peerage and chanced to speak of the Howards. She forgot herself and called Lady Grace her mother. Then I got the whole story, for the lonely little thing was glad to make a confidant of someone” (48). Yet, still, it is Sir John, not Jean Muir, who sublimates her account of her being Lady Howard’s daughter into “the whole story.” Not to mention that he technically initiates the talk with Jean Muir about Lady Howard as he brings up the topic of the Howards, Sir John, prior to that talk, has personally already known of and been interested in that not-so-renowned lady. “I’m much interested in [Jean Muir], both on her own account and on her mother’s,” he explains to Gerald: “Her mother was Lady Grace Howard, who ran away with a poor Scotch minister twenty years ago. The family cast her off, and she lived and died so obscurely that very little is known of her except that she left an orphan girl at some small French pension. This is the girl, and a fine girl, too” (47). So we can imagine that, when he has heard Jean Muir momentarily addressing Lady Howard as her mother,

¹³³ Gerald’s story about Jean Muir awakening him out of boredom in a way foreshadows his feeling of excitement when he later observes Jean Muir’s performance in tableaux vivants at a party. Watching her pose, and acting with her in various fragmented scenes (both of which he has never enjoyed or done before), he “experienced another new sensation” and feels “thrilled ... with a strange delight” (53).

Sir John might have eagerly inquired of her about what she means, offered himself as her “confidant,” listened to Jean Muir’s account in light of his historical knowledge of Lady Howard, believed in it, and turned it into a true story. It does not matter whether Jean Muir is really a daughter of Lady Howard, or whether any other information about her given throughout the novella is true. The issue of who Jean Muir is, let me stress, is entirely up to the Coventrys’/her readers’ judgment, just like whether a ghost exists or whether a ghost has appeared altogether rests upon its witnesses’ conviction.¹³⁴ What is more, when Gerald shows his doubt about Jean Muir’s account—“I shall write to [Sydney] as soon as I discover his address . . . to make a few inquiries about Miss Muir, and prove the truth of her story”—Sir John vehemently objects by stating, “Don’t annoy me by expressing it, if you please. I have some penetration and experience, and I respect and pity Miss Muir heartily” (49). And his resolute objection immediately dismisses Gerald’s doubt: “I’ve neither time nor inclination to discuss the matter now, sir, but will be careful not to offend again” (49). In this manner, Sir John successfully establishes and consolidates the idea of Jean Muir’s filial relationship to Lady Howard as a valid story, while inventing, this time by himself, another story of Jean Muir as a highborn woman who “has had a hard life” but never lost “a brave spirit” (48).

As such, the Coventrys’ composition of varied stories about who Jean Muir is leads to diverse personae or masks of her, which in turn provide her with equally diverse

¹³⁴ This said, I am refuting Fetterley’s obsession with the questions, “what is Jean’s real self? Who is she in fact?” and her conclusion that “the ultimate truth of this early story [by Alcott] is to tell us why she must write lies; Alcott’s final truth is that she can not tell the truth” (13, 14).

chances to become a wife of a Coventry: following Edward, Gerald soon breaks off an engagement with Lucia and proposes to Jean Muir, and Sir John develops a deep affection for her to the extent that “Formerly he said ‘father’ or ‘the old man,’ but lately he always spoke of himself as her ‘friend’” (78). These chances significantly point to Jean Muir’s lack of any original scheme of who she purports to be, and permit her instead to have the readerly versions of who she can be. Indeed, when she first sees the Coventry residence and garden, Jean Muir says, “Not bad ... but the other may be better, and I will have the best,” and proceeds to look around Sir John’s neighboring hall and garden (13). This remark and behavior, far from illustrating how Jean Muir, “calculating every word, gesture, and action, achieves her aim and becomes Lady Coventry” (Bedell 9), indicates that she is looking for opportunities.¹³⁵ So when Lucia’s maid, Hester Dean, blames her for Gerald’s breakup with Lucia, Jean Muir states: “Take your hand away and treat me with proper respect, or you will be dismissed from this house. Do you know who I am? ... I am the daughter of Lady Howard and, if I choose it, can be the wife of Mr. Coventry” (75, emphasis added). Yet, to be precise, she is led to choose—not chooses solely at will—“the best” and “last chance” (77) by the change of the Coventrys’/her readers’ attitude toward her. Edward, who is now away from home to be in commission, comes upon Sydney’s story that characterizes her as a femme fatale, and writes to her and requests her to leave his family in three days. Figuring the impact of

¹³⁵ Similar to Bedell, Douglas maintains that Jean Muir is “building up, objectifying in more and more extensive and concrete ways, the different facets of herself” (62), and Dawson claims that “In her disguise as a governess, her every action and gesture are calculated to achieve her desired position as a bride” (33).

Edward's knowledge on Gerald's feelings for her, she turns to Sir John's "fancy [that she] would reject young lovers for an old man like [him]" and accepts his "plan" to make her his "little Lady Coventry" (81). In this way, Jean Muir's indefinite, ghostlike mask with "a pale, absent expression" on it (83) comes to take the reader-sensitive, reader-proposed, and reader-defined form of Lady Coventry.¹³⁶

Accordingly, Jean Muir's new mask as Lady Coventry must receive the final sanction from her readers. To that end, the novella re-affirms the absence of Jean Muir's interiority so that the Coventrys can establish her mask of Lady Coventry as her actual identity. Toward the end of the novella, Edward comes back home and informs his family of what he has found out about Jean Muir by presenting her letters to a female accomplice, Hortense. The letters, containing Jean Muir's first-person detailing of how she has willfully duped the Coventrys by using her acting skills to become "the" lady of the house, seem to reveal her true and authoritative (as written by herself) self as a dangerous lowlife hidden underneath as critics have largely agreed. Yet the expected revelation of Jean Muir's essential self does not happen. First of all, we cannot be sure

¹³⁶ That the position of Lady Coventry is Sir John's proposition becomes clearer when he and Jean Muir are talking about their wedding plan. Jean Muir suggests a somewhat skeletal plan: "Edward is coming home in three days. I must be gone before he comes. ... And if you love me, tell nobody of your approaching marriage. ... If I could have my wish, I would go to some quiet place tomorrow and wait till you come for me" (83). But Sir John enthusiastically insists on a solidier "plan" of his own instead: "Tomorrow, if we like. A special license permits people to marry when and where they please. My plan is better than yours. ... I will go to town tomorrow, get the license, invite my friend, the Reverend Paul Fairfax, to return with me, and tomorrow evening you come at your usual time, and ... make me the happiest man in England. How does this suit you, my little Lady Coventry?" (83, emphasis added). Then he gets "so intent on hurrying the event that Jean had nothing to do but give a ready assent to all his suggestions" (84).

whether those letters are genuinely by and about Jean Muir. Though Edward and Gerald claim that they can recognize her handwriting in them, the same letters say that “You know I can imitate almost any hand” (100), and raise a question to the authenticity of her authorship. Also, when directly confronted by Edward with the letters, Jean Muir simply “shrugged her shoulders” (104) and exhibits her indifference to what the letters say about her (because, of course, it does not matter), which cuts down the authority of their content. And the letters become literally useless as Jean Muir tosses them into the fire and has them burnt to ashes.

Still, the letters’ anticipated effect to uncover the real, inner Jean Muir becomes most decisively nullified when Jean Muir appears in front of the Coventrys with the mask of Lady Coventry on her. Finishing his reading of the letters, Edward states that “She is gone; no one knows the truth but Sydney and ourselves; he will be silent, for his own sake; we will be for ours, and leave this dangerous woman to the fate which will surely overtake her” (102). But his words are soon followed by at once “A soft voice” that utters, “Thank you, it has overtaken her, and a very happy one she finds it,” and, more important, by “an apparition” of “Jean Muir leaning on the arm of Sir John” that “appeared at the door, which made all start and recoil with amazement” (102). Here, Edward’s assertion that “She is gone” and his insistence on the family’s “silence” about her ironically erases, annuls, or kills the possibly true and authoritative, evil version of Jean Muir induced from the letters, and in effect disproves the essentialist view of her

character.¹³⁷ Then Jean Muir, corresponding to this death of her possible a priori self, appears as “an apparition” or an insubstantial being that now only exists as the newly donned mask of Lady Coventry. And that mask becomes her substantial self through its appeal to her readers. Looking at Edward, Bella, and Mrs. Coventry, she calmly says that “You have been kind to me, ... I thank you for it, and will repay it if I can. To you I will acknowledge that I am not worthy to be this good man’s wife, and to you I will solemnly promise to devote my life to his happiness”; and “Edward’s indignant eyes fell before hers” while “Bella half put out her hand, and Mrs. Coventry sobbed as if some regret mingled with her resentment” (104). Such a response of the family speaks their favorable answer for Jean Muir’s entreaty to consider her as the wife of Sir John, and foreshadows their eventual full acceptance of her into their family.¹³⁸ In this way, Jean Muir’s indeterminate identity is finally, officially, and wholly acknowledged as the

¹³⁷ Apart from their belief in the letters’ disclosure of the essential Jean Muir, Keyser and Dawson offer some interesting observations. Keyser points out the letters’ simultaneous exposé of the truth of the Coventry family: “Jean’s letters to Hortense convey the unvarnished truth about every member of the Coventry family, and what begins as a revelation of Jean’s character becomes an indictment of their own” (56). Dawson argues for the inadequacy of Jean Muir’s letters to keep up the thrill of “Behind a Mask” as a whole: the letters’ “version of Jean’s story is not as compelling as the intriguing doubleness of the narration, during which Jean’s identity and deceptions, but not necessarily her malice and scorn, have been suggested, and it is this doubleness that enriches the narrative. When reduced to a single, transparent, and unambiguous history—as in the letters—Jean’s story appears as merely vindictive and self-serving, not as filled with the tensions of action and disguise so obvious in the domestic dramas” (37).

¹³⁸ Christine Butterworth-McDermott misses this subtly yet certainly favorable reaction of the Coventry family when she argues that the family “remain[s] protected, different from the Other, who is sexual, foreign, outside of themselves” and predicts that “In the end, Jean may be no more than a walking tableaux vivant: a frozen, empty picture” (45, 46).

socially legitimate identity of Lady Coventry by a socially legitimate group of her readers.¹³⁹

The Coventrys' acknowledgement of Jean Muir's mask gives clues to the similar kind of reader-endorsement of Alcott's pseudonymous writerly mask of A. M. Barnard as an author. Alcott scholars normally estimate that the trajectory of Alcott's blood-and-thunder writing, notwithstanding its enormous and continuing success in postbellum literary markets, mostly ended when she issued "Perilous Play" in 1869. Such an estimation is made chiefly in keeping with Stern's claim that "The publication of Part II of Little Women in April, 1869, brought her the fame and fortune she coveted and set her on the path of sweetness and light from which she seldom strayed" afterwards, with one exception of the anonymous publication of A Modern Mephistopheles in 1877 by the request of her then publishers, Roberts Brothers, for their No Name Series (Plots 22). However, Alcott's gothic career did not exactly stop according to her conscious desire for the security and respectability of a domestic woman writer. Stern herself inadvertently provides the reason: in the 1870s, "Astute and sometimes piratical publishers ... did not hesitate to reprint the Alcott forays into the realms of darkness and from time to time, without her knowledge, her thrillers reappeared" as dime novels (Plots 22). Those thrillers include "The Mysterious Key," "The Skeleton in the Closet,"

¹³⁹ Some critics reckon Jean Muir becoming Lady Coventry negatively. See Alan Louis Ackerman, Jr., who takes it as visualizing the conflicting cohabitation of the theatricality and the domesticity within nineteenth-century women's life (182-183); and Butterworth-McDermott, who regards it as contemporary women's inability to be themselves (43-45). Both Ackerman, Jr., and Butterworth-McDermott, in their focus on the theatrical, demonstrate the dualistic reading of Jean Muir as a being whose inside is, and ought to be, different than the outside.

as well as “V. V.: or, Plots and Counterplots,” all of which were reprinted as numbers for the Ten Cent Novelettes of Standard American Authors series (Plots 22). This incident signifies more than the legal vulnerability of (especially women) writers within the markets at the time. Because dime novels were designed for faster and wider sales across the nation, piratical publishers would have chosen stories and writers for publication based on their sheer popularity. If so, among Alcott’s pirated stories, “V. V.” especially begs our attention in that the story at first came out anonymously in The Flag of Our Union in 1865, but it was “unbeknownst to Louisa May Alcott ... again made available to the public” about half a decade later under the authorship of A. M. Barnard (Stern, Plots 23). Publishers’ ascription of that popular yet unauthorized story to A. M. Barnard not only reflects contemporary popular-literature readers’ acquaintance with that name, but also testifies to those readers’ characterization and recognition of the name, drawing on their reading of its previous gothic tales, as one of the most representative or “standard American authors.” In this respect, readers authorize A. M. Barnard by furnishing it with an effectual and concrete authorial position and reputation. Also, that authorization, as it happened “without Alcott’s knowledge,” brings to fruition her perception of the reader-directed constructability of an authorial being, her pursuit of not her current scholarly authorial identity as “the many-sided author of Little Women” (Stern, Plots 25) but multiple reader-made pseudonymous authorial identities in her non-self-evident, ghostly state of being as a postbellum woman writer, and her ultimate realization of the ghost writer.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Even those who discuss the multiple authorial personae of Alcott fundamentally stand

In this chapter, we have examined how Douglass and Alcott, two representative social specters in nineteenth-century America who shared the lack of political, legal, and cultural forces, could put an end to their ghostly hovering over the borderlines of society and become fully located within it in the form of a renowned, prominent, and effective author thanks to their readers. Put another way, Douglass's and Alcott's cases illustrate a transition from a ghost to a ghost writer, or from a powerless, unrecognized "writer" to a reader-empowered and reader-recognized "author." The following concluding chapter will give more focus to the relevance of the ghost writer to the nineteenth-century distinction between author and writer, by taking an example of one male "author" who also wrote a story about the reader-activated transfiguration of an unidentified writerly governess into a reader-created author "without a deliberate intervention" of his own: Henry James.

in line with Stern. For example, Brodhead observes that Alcott, writing in the markets where multiple genres coexisted, tried "several publics and several models of authorship equally available to" her, but eventually chose sentimental domestic authorship and readership "because of the level of dignity" that could have "protected her against an inferior status, the company of story-paper writers being morally freer yet unacceptably 'low'" (80, 88). Due to this observation, which ignores Alcott's knowledge and consciousness of readers' power to establish her authorship, the value of Brodhead's following comment is obscured: "Having come to her career at the time when literary boundaries were being socially organized, and having chosen a certain social audience and social ethic with her choice of work, Alcott would have understood the process that produced Richardson's divided world. But she would also have known that that process made a different world from one she had seen: a world in which a writer could write across generic boundaries; could be an author of all kinds, at once 'blood and thunder' writer and high-literary aspirant and 'the Thackeray, the Trollope, of the nursery and the school-room;' and so could write toward the whole audience that was divided up in her time" (106). My argument in this section has aimed to prove that she did understand and know what Brodhead too cautiously suggests, and did write accordingly.

CHAPTER V
 FROM GHOSTWRITER TO GHOST WRITER: THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR
 IN HENRY JAMES'S THE TURN OF THE SCREW*

As we have witnessed in the case of Louisa May Alcott from the previous chapter, the American literary sphere of the late nineteenth century was chiefly characterized by an ever-continuing expansion of the market for the popular taste. That expansion, threatening the dominance of the eighteenth-century conception of art as a transcendental and sovereign field of activity, subsequently caused the compartmentalization of the literary sphere into the high and the low. The status of high literature was assigned to the work of those who would take writing as a serious calling and devote their life exclusively to honing their creativity and achieving their artistic ideal. The label of low literature, by the same token, referred to the writing of those who would be mostly concerned with mass appeal and go after commercial (and ignoble) success. This hierarchical division of literature, in turn, testifies to the persistence and intensification of Young's equally hierarchical division of an author (or an exceptional individual genius) and a writer (or an undistinguished story-manufacturer) at the time.

My concluding chapter will address this division and, through an analysis of Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898), describe its eventual collapse toward the

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end of the nineteenth century. American literary scholars have commonly pinpointed James as a representative personage for the “author” of “high” literature, whose long-time contribution to the period’s prestigious literary magazines such as the Atlantic Monthly distinguishes him from, and endows him with superiority to, mere scribbling “writers” like Alcott. However, James in fact not only partook in the intensely reader-sensitive genre of the gothic, most famously by means of The Turn of the Screw, but, more important, problematized and dissolved in that novella the theoretical bifurcation between the author and the writer considering readers’ growing influence over literary production in reality. I will examine James’s heroine, the governess, as representing one of the most impotent writerly figures at the turn of the century, a ghostwriter. And I will show how she, deliberately letting her first-person narrative of the ghostly incidents at Bly, a country house in Britain, be presented to readers after her death, makes inevitable and mandatory readers’ signification and authorization of what she writes and converts herself into a ghost writer. James’s employment of a governess with no name and no distinctive personality to get across his reader-conscious point should remind us of Alcott’s unspecified governess Jean Muir and serve as more evidence of the blurred demarcation between James the “author” and Alcott the “writer” in terms of their relationship with a postbellum readership.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the governess’s intended

¹⁴¹ By saying this, I disagree with the common scholarly belief in the antithesis of the James-Alcott relationship. That belief generally counts on the fact that James criticized Alcott’s Moods (1864) as too sentimental, unnatural, and unrealistic in his review of the novel in North American Review 101 (July 1865): 276-281. Noticeably, in my delineation of their affinity in terms of their shared use of the governess figure to pursue a similar vision of reader-dependent authorial identity, Alcott would turn out to be

publication of her text after her death in The Turn of the Screw will point to at once the exigency of nineteenth-century “authors” willful murder of their own author-ity on behalf of readers’ formation of it and the essential reader-contingency of the very notion of the author. At the end James himself will emerge as a new representative figure for a ghost writer, whose authorial performance in (and out of) The Turn of the Screw captures and puts into practice both the Barthesian death of the author and the reader-reliant afterlife of that dead author.

1. Ghostwriting Governess: James’s The Turn of the Screw

As much as he was notoriously prolific throughout his writing career, Henry James is probably the most frequently and diversely discussed among nineteenth-century American writers. Indeed, as David McWhirter neatly puts it in 1995, “Recent James criticism” is nothing short of “a virtual encyclopedia of the pluralistic universe of contemporary literary theory” itself (1). This pluralistic effect of James, however, does not seem to have been exercised on studies of nineteenth-century American literature in general. Though McWhirter goes on and opines that “The myth of the master initiated by James and reinforced by generations of his commentators has increasingly been challenged by critics” (1), American literary scholars have continued positing James as one of the nation’s exemplary literary “masters,” or authors whose stubborn pursuit of their own aesthetic perception and belief, regardless of what the (common) audience

someone who knew about the reality she was living and writing in and executed that knowledge truthfully.

expected, has conduced to the establishment of classical, respectable American literature. Richard H. Brodhead, in his study of the stratified literary domain in nineteenth-century America in Cultures of Letters (1993), places emphasis on James's postbellum affiliation with the Atlantic Monthly, "the premier organ of literary high culture in America" that constituted "a zone of artistic, cosmopolitan, and classical production," apart from those of working- and middle-class-centered productions of story papers and popular domestic fiction (79). Such an affiliation, Brodhead adds, doubtlessly designates James (along with the editor and fellow contributor of the Atlantic, William Dean Howells) a prototype of "the idealized writer" in nineteenth-century America who is supposed to be a "single-minded devotee of a highly specialized craft whose work derives value from its mastery of its art" (81). Brodhead's delineation of James as a masterly, masterful, and admirably self-absorbed artist still reigns, as evinced when Susan S. Williams, in her investigation of postbellum theories on and modes of women's authorship in Reclaiming Authorship (2006), briefly discusses the (gendered) difference between the author and the writer during the period. Whereas authors, Williams contends, "were associated with a discrete, original, and prophetic imagination, a proprietary model of production, and a personality anterior to the work of art," writers were "seen as occupying a lower (heteronomous) cultural plane than autonomous authors," being "defined as those who wrote from experience or observation rather than from unique genius or imagination" (5). Then she argues that contemporary (women) "writers" mostly struggled to emulate

“authors,” whose tradition, as originated in Nathaniel Hawthorne and maintained through Herman Melville, had finally reached its peak with Henry James.¹⁴²

Such a quintessentially Youngian (and Modernist) authorial image of James is, as in the case of Edgar Allan Poe and The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym in Chapter II, effectively counteracted by James’s most well-known “popular literary” text: The Turn of the Screw. The novella, despite James’s own passing remark on it as a simple “potboiler,” has been “the site of a long-standing and seemingly intractable critical controversy” (J. Williams 43). The earlier phase of the controversy was characterized mainly by two different perspectives, one inspired by Edmund Wilson’s Freudian analysis in “The Ambiguity of Henry James” (1934) and the other brought up by Robert Heilman’s “pro-ghost, pro-religious” (Banta 115) argument in “‘The Turn of the Screw’ as Poem” (1948).¹⁴³ These two readings—one that interprets the governess’s narrative as a Freudian case study of repressed female sexuality and the other that sees the governess as a preserver of Christian morality fighting against evil forces to save a childlike Adam and Eve from the fall—in turn gave rise to an approximately thirty-year-long scholarly debate on how to read this complex piece of fiction.

¹⁴² For instance, Williams, in her chapter on Louisa May Alcott, claims that Alcott’s writings, ranging from “Pauline’s Passion and Punishment” and Moods to Little Women, suggests that she models her authorship first after that of “the tradition of Hawthornean romance” and then after that of Jamesian realism (101).

¹⁴³ According to Jeff Williams, earliest critics generally agreed that The Turn of the Screw is at any rate a ghost story, attending to “James’s efforts, after failing as a playwright, to write a sensationalist bestseller—in his famous formulation, a potboiler” (43). This somewhat naïve reading then began to get complicated through Wilson and Heilman.

The debate then took a new turn in 1977 through Shoshana Felman's groundbreaking "Turning the Screw of Interpretation," where she nullifies the up-to-then standard question of how to interpret the novella by questioning the very possibility of its interpretation. Many critics subsequently aligned themselves with Felman's argument that the story produces a "reading effect" which is very "uncanny" in that "whichever way the reader turns, he can but be turned by the text, he can but perform it by repeating it" (101). Consequently, instead of the interpretive effort to pinpoint the meaning of the text, textual ambiguity itself has been regarded as a key critical principle.¹⁴⁴

The discovery of uncertainty or limitless interpretability, however, has rarely extended to the reading of one particular element of the novella—the governess. Earlier critics doubted and downplayed the credibility of the governess's narrative. They deprived her of any authority as a narrator because her account is narrated in the first person and doubly framed by two other characters, Douglas and an unidentified frame narrator "I." Later, Felman views the unreliability of the governess as a translucent reflection of textual ambiguity. She states that "the governess's whole adventure turns out to be, essentially, a reading-adventure, a quest for the definitive, literal or proper meaning of words and of events" (153), so that she stands for any reader who tries in vain to capture the meaning of the text and thus contributes to illuminating the textual ambiguity. In Felman's identification of the governess with the unrewarded reader, the

¹⁴⁴ J. Williams points out that The Turn of the Screw eventually becomes "an exemplary metacritical text, offering a case study of the processes of interpretation" (44, emphasis added). For a more extensive overview of the history of criticism of the novella, see Peter G. Beidler, "A Critical History of The Turn of the Screw," Henry James: The Turn of the Screw, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995) 127-51.

governess becomes a kind of transparent medium through which the uncertainty of The Turn of the Screw keeps producing its effects. John Carlos Rowe likewise emphasizes the medium-like quality of the governess when he insists that her narrative merely enacts and re-enacts the “absent authorities” of the master and James (Theoretical 125).¹⁴⁵ That is, her textual existence functions only as the representational mediation for the otherwise unrepresentable features of other para/textual characters.

The problem is that such constructions of the governess do not sufficiently correspond to James’s own emphasis on her authority. In the preface to the New York Edition volume that included The Turn of the Screw, James affirms that “She has ‘authority,’ which is a good deal to have given her” (AN 174).¹⁴⁶ Truly, the governess can be said to have a kind of “authority” since it is she who writes the story of what happens at Bly: what we see or read in the novella is, fundamentally, her manuscript. Yet her “authority” is not her own. As will be shown in detail, it is delegated to her by

¹⁴⁵ Rowe, in so doing, translates Felman’s formation of an “association between James and the Uncle” or the master into their achievement of mastership by means of self-effacement (Theoretical 129).

¹⁴⁶ Heilman, in his critique of Wilson’s Freudian reading of the novella, mentions James’s comment on the governess’s authority. Yet he states that it just means that James tells the story “entirely from the governess’s point of view” for the highest effect of the ghosts and concludes that “the governess is not his subject” (“Freudian” 434, 435). Similarly, J. S. Leonard refers to the same comment but asserts that “the governess’s authorial narration” only functions as James’s “central reflector” for the impression the ghosts produce in the core of the story (46, 47). Later, McWhirter gives some credit to the governess’s authority by reading the comment in terms of James’s attitude towards gendered cultural values in society. According to McWhirter, the governess being invested with authority signifies James’s experimental “investment in the feminine” and his attempt “to see the invisible, to say the unsayable, ... to express the experience of in-betweenness for which our language and culture, and all the genres of genre they entail, possess no adequate terms” (“Authority” 142).

her absent superiors: the master, the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel, and Henry James. The fact that she creates a text for them remains unacknowledged, so that the ownership of her text can be attributed to her superiors and her “authority” can be displaced to them.

In order to understand this peculiar type of writerly authority, we need to contextualize the governess in terms of contemporary notions of writer, author, and authorship. In the nineteenth century there was a clear distinction between writers’ and authors’ relationships to texts. According to Michel Foucault, the distinction came from the modern “form of ownership” that appeared in the eighteenth-century juridical system corresponding to the advent of individualism and private property. At the time, discourses became “objects of appropriation,” while the text became understood as a possession of the author protected by law (148). And the author was differentiated from a writer insofar as the author’s proper name functioned as the indicator of this textual proprietorship.

The author’s proper name further distinguished the author from a writer as it guaranteed authorial participation and presence in the production of a text. The name of the author on a book cover ensured, supposedly at least, that the named person actually wrote the text, that the text was made by and of him or her. This implication of the author’s proper name in turn brought forth what Leah Price calls “the cult of authorial authenticity” at the turn of the century (215): readers came to expect that by reading the text they could encounter and get a glimpse of the author as a real person, and this expectation was demonstrated in the popularity of renowned figures’ autobiographies at

the time. But this cult also accounted for the rise of a uniquely modern writerly figure, the ghostwriter, that is, a person “who writes for and gives credit of authorship to another” (“Ghostwriter”). As Price reports, a high proportion of celebrities in truth secretly hired unknown writers to compose their life stories in their stead (214-215). That the ghostwriter was necessary to maintain the author-function is further revealed in another contemporary sociocultural phenomenon: the growing number of female office workers. According to Price, among various jobs allowed to women, “the most common ‘New Paid Occupation for Women’” around 1893 was “to take dictation,” a task usually assigned to female secretaryship.¹⁴⁷ Price suggests that this modern version of the female secretary figure, who is employed to produce a document signed by a male boss, easily overlaps with the image of the ghostwriter, who is “normally hired to execute an idea conceived by wealthier employers” (212-214).

Drawing on this context, I propose an analogy between the secretarial ghostwriter-figure in the nineteenth century and the governess in The Turn of the Screw. Both figures are situated in a system of delegation. Placed in an intermediary position between a text-property and the author-proprietor, they substitute for the latter while carrying out and materializing the former. The materiality of their writing disguises the absence of the author-proprietor in the creation of the text. Each of them remains a writer but not an author because their names are kept invisible in the text. In the case of

¹⁴⁷ As to the increase of female office workers at the turn of the century, Price informs that their number “multiplied more than eighty times between 1850 and 1914, going in the same period from 2 to 20 percent of the total number of British clerical workers” (213). This is, Price adds, “why late nineteenth-century employers suddenly turned to women to fill the office jobs formerly monopolized by men” (213).

the governess, however, we have a more complicated version of the ghostwriter. She not only plays the conventional role of ghostwriter, that is, a writer who exists and functions through her ghost-like presence, but also turns it into the role of ghost writer, that is, a ghost who writes.¹⁴⁸ The governess transforms herself into a ghost, and re-defines her writerly identity as a new type of author. In that process, an unauthorized authority of the ghostwriter changes into an uncannily authorized authorship by readers after her death. This chapter will investigate how the governess's self-transfiguration from the ghostwriter to the ghost writer reveals James's fin-de-siècle vision of the author-figure, which suggests a new relationship between authors, readers, and texts—a relationship not bound to the author's proper name or the author-function—and offers a critique of, and an alternative to, the Foucauldian notion of the author-figure.

In the beginning of The Turn of the Screw, the governess appears as the ghostwriter for the master by being delegated his authority, that is, the authority in his name and in his ownership of Bly. As for the master's proprietorship of Bly and his need to entrust his authority to the governess, Rowe provides a detailed explanation, backing it up with William Blackstone's study of English inheritance laws. According to Rowe, the master might not be a proper possessor of Bly, even though he is the first son of his parents: in the novella, the children's father is his "younger" brother (Theoretical 132), and there are no allusions to the possible existence of any other brothers. "[M]ost nineteenth-century English gentry," Rowe continues, "devised some means (generally

¹⁴⁸ Usually, critics use the terms "ghostwriter" and "ghost writer" interchangeably, and the distinction of these two in this chapter is my own formulation. See Marjorie Garber; Price; and Helen Sword. Also see Julie Rivkin 13-15.

during the father's lifetime) of settling a 'suitable' inheritance on younger sons, especially those who had married and had children" (Theoretical 133). Because the master remains a bachelor, Miles is in truth "most likely ... heir to some competence or other inheritance descending from his father, the Uncle's younger brother." The master's ownership of Bly is further undercut by the fact that "English law distinguishes between two basic claims to property: possession of property and the right to property"; a complete legal title requires the combination of the two claims. Since it is Miles, not the master, who actually lives at Bly, he is better equipped to claim possession of the Bly-property: in the novella, we do see him called "Master Miles" (65) by the servants at Bly.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, if the master wants to claim ownership of Bly, he would have to live there with the children, but that means the master "risks his reputation as 'a gentleman, a bachelor'" (Rowe, Theoretical 133). He should, I would add, degrade his name-value that is built upon his single life with "a glow of high fashion, of good looks, of expensive habits, of charming ways with women" (4). In this circumstance, the presence of the governess at Bly is urgently needed by the master, because his "employment of a governess to represent his guardianship at Bly enables him to maintain his 'right of possession' without requiring his physical presence" (Rowe, Theoretical 133). In other words, the master employs the governess in order to make her produce the effect of his presence in his absence, or to disguise his absence with her presence, while keeping his name untainted and his ownership of Bly unbleached.

¹⁴⁹ Henry James, The Turn of the Screw, eds. Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren (2nd ed., New York: Norton, 1999). All references to this novella will be from this edition.

The “main condition” of their contract (6) gives us more clues to the governess’s status as the ghostwriter for the master. It stipulates that the governess should never attempt to contact the master but “take the whole thing over and let him alone” (6). The master possesses Bly, but the governess has the whole responsibility for its management under his dictation of the law. The very nature of their contract thus resides in the master’s intention of making “a relation of non-relation” and of “disconnection” with the governess (Felman 145). In this way, he can block any chance of her being associated—and even identified—with his name and preserve his name-value from whatever happens within Bly, while garnering the “respectable” effect from what the governess eventually makes out of Bly (5). Indeed, the master, in his interview with the governess, emphasizes to her the importance of being “respectable” at Bly, remarking that Miss Jessel, her predecessor, “was a most respectable person” and that all the people at Bly are “likewise thoroughly respectable” (5).

The governess tries to protect the master’s name from contamination and endow it with respectability by writing a story under his name. More specifically, she comprehends that her “supreme authority” (5), given by the master, is to (re)create Bly as a kind of fictive text by means of her novelistic perception. As soon as she arrives at Bly, the governess discovers “the textual quality of life” there (Cappello 155)¹⁵⁰: she perceives it as a place that “would somehow ... take all colour out of story-books and

¹⁵⁰ Even though Mary Cappello observes the fictive characteristic of Bly, she reads it in a different way. She suggests that what the governess encounters at Bly is the “fairytale quality of the bourgeois context” (155), which she can neither read nor (re)write due to her failure to overcome the class difference. Therefore, Cappello contends, the governess remains a painter or illustrator—“the choice of a disempowered author” (156).

fairy-tales,” and finds the house equipped with all the necessary elements for a story, such as “all the romance of the nursery and the poetry of the schoolroom” and “a roomful of old books” (9, 18, 38). She even interprets her first sight of the ghost of Peter Quint as a part of the fictional aspect in *Bly*: “Was there a ‘secret’ at *Bly*—a mystery of *Udolpho* or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?” (17). All these textual elements of *Bly* are, however, left fragmented, disjointed from one another, and thus meaningless as a whole, due to the—probably intentional—neglect of them by their owner, the master. It is the governess who would interweave them into a coherent and meaningful narrative.¹⁵¹ She sees that *Bly* has “neither bad name nor ill fame” (26), and determines to keep it that way for the name of her “superior”: she describes the master as “my exalted stamp” that would be on the cover of her *Bly*-narrative and imagines that he would be “happy and highly distinguished” by her successful (re)rendering of *Bly* (28).

The governess’s recognition of her ghostwriting job for the master is also revealed when she discusses with Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper of *Bly*, the matter of writing to him about Miles’s dismissal from school. Because of the main condition of her contract with the master—the edict of discommunication between them—the governess hesitates to write, and Mrs. Grose suggests letting the bailiff do so instead. To this suggestion, the governess, with “a sarcastic force,” asks: “And should you like [the

¹⁵¹ David Punter reads the governess’s attempt to reconstruct *Bly* in terms of a Victorian impulse towards social stability. He argues that the governess is urged to “fulfill all the duties of social reinforcement” and, equipped with “the guardianship of the ‘line’” between the proper and the improper, endeavors to “reconstruct” and “impose control” over the “microcosmic society” of *Bly*-world (298-299).

bailiff] to write our story?" (59). Here, "our story" does not mean the story of the governess and Mrs. Grose, because Mrs. Grose, in effect, does not—and cannot—participate in the process of writing: she is illiterate, neither reads nor writes, so that she cannot be the ghostwriter for the master. Therefore, "our story" should mean the story of the governess and the master, a story which she would write under his name. Based on this implication, the governess's question about "writing our story" effectively re-asserts that it is she who is employed to write the story of and for the master, and leads Mrs. Grose to re-affirm her position as his ghostwriter by answering, "Ah Miss, you write!" (59).

The governess's function as ghostwriter gains a new dimension through her relationship with the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. In this relationship, she serves to provide them with an effect of presence—a reality and materiality of being—through her own physicality. To be more exact, the governess performs the role of medium in relation to the ghosts:

There were exactly states of the air, conditions of sound and of stillness, unspeakable impressions of the kind of ministering moment that brought back to me, long enough to catch it, the feeling of the medium in which, that June evening out of doors, I had had my first sight of Quint, and in which too, at those other instants, I had, after seeing him through the window, looked for him in vain in the circle of shrubbery. (50)

From the beginning, the ghost of Peter Quint imposes on the governess a "feeling of the medium" that compels her to "look for him" almost dutifully and compulsorily. In fact,

the “medium” is a key term to explain the governess’s function of making the ghosts real and present, especially with regard to the fact that one of many different definitions of the term is “a person thought to have the power to communicate with the spirits of the dead or with agents of another world or dimension” (“Medium”).¹⁵² Considering this definition, we can see a similarity of the governess’s condition to that of the medium, in which “a departed spirit enters or seems to enter, the body of a person still living, using it in its own way, speaking with its mouth, hearing with its ears, and so forth” (Beidler, Ghosts 160).

Rather than being possessed by and speaking as the ghosts, the governess embodies the disembodied ghosts through her writing and physicality. She describes, for instance, her first encounter of the ghost of Peter Quint as if her “imagination ... turned real” (15). And when she meets his ghost later again, she narrates that “He was

¹⁵² The female medium was a very popular phenomenon at James’s time: Martha Banta reports that “during the last decades of the nineteenth century women mediums and telepathists flourished” (154). Henry James was associated with this figure through his brother William. According to Beidler, William became acquainted with Mrs. Leonora Piper, “the most famous and most unquestionably honest medium,” via his mother-in-law’s visit to her (Ghosts 150). His initial skepticism about Mrs. Piper’s mediumship vanished after his own visit to her, which led him to write a report about her psychical abilities to the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research in America in 1886. His report drew attention from the British Society for Psychical Research, which decided to publish it in their Proceedings. Henry James, who lived in London at the time, read a letter-form statement about the report at a meeting of the Society in 1890 on behalf of William, who was in America. The letter, Beidler writes, would have invoked James’s interest in female mediumship, though he had admitted his “lack of knowledge about psychical research” and “‘aversion’ to mediums” (Ghosts 153). James’s use of the term “medium” to describe the governess, I would suggest, attests to Beidler’s speculation. For William James’s involvement with psychical studies, see Deborah Blum, Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death (New York: Penguin, 2006).

absolutely ... a living detestable dangerous presence” (39). Moreover, the governess’s attempt to indicate to Mrs. Grose and Flora “the hideous plain presence” of the ghost of Miss Jessel “with [her] pointing hand” (69) signifies her attempt to physicalize the insubstantial being of the ghosts by means of her own body. In this way, she furnishes the ghosts with her corporeality, converting their “elusive/illusional qualities” into a “reality” and “concretiz[ing] the influence of the ghosts” (Leonard 48).¹⁵³

This medium-like function of the governess is closely connected to her role of the ghostwriter. Mrs. Grose describes her, right after her second encounter with the ghost of Peter Quint, as being “as white as a sheet” (21). Indeed, she is for the ghosts a “sheet” of paper upon which they project themselves and make visible the effect of their presence. This aspect becomes clear when she recalls her first confrontation with the ghost of Peter Quint: “I saw him as I see the letters I form on this page” (16). The governess’s writing literalizes the ghosts’ hazy existence so that we can see what we otherwise cannot see. And, in the end, the governess succeeds in representing the ghosts as “the hideous author of our woe” (84), an author of her record of their effect or impact on Bly. She has Miles—the last one who denies the presence of the ghosts—admit their

¹⁵³ Leonard sees the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel as “perceptual loci, or foci” of The Turn of the Screw, and states that James’s intention is to make them “become potent—and therefore real—forces to be reckoned with” (46).

The governess’s use of her physicality to capture the horrible effect of the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel should remind us of Teresa A. Goddu’s suggestion in the previous chapter that Douglass and other slave writers focus on slaves’ gothic bodies—tortured, wounded, and bled—to make real the otherwise unreal terror of slavery to readers. If so, the governess in her relationship with the ghosts can be viewed as a skillful gothic writer who knows how to produce a substantial sense of horror in readers’ minds.

existence as he specifically names them, “Miss Jessel, Miss Jessel!” and “Peter Quint—you devil!” (84, 85), and fully accomplishes her role of the medium-ghostwriter for the ghosts by effecting the confirmation of their authentic presence. Using Helen Sword’s definition of ghostwriting as “a medium’s publication of written messages supposedly authored in the spirit world” (11), the governess finally declares the ghosts’ nominal authorship of what she writes/speaks for them.¹⁵⁴

The governess’s function as ghostwriter is not just established and developed within the text of The Turn of the Screw but extended outside the text, by her ultimate superior and nominal author in the power system of ghostwriting: Henry James. In this relationship, the governess’s writing gives a palpable narrative form to James’s formless authorial design and imagination and visualizes his invisible authorship within the text. In order to comprehend this relationship, we need to take a look at what James originally expected the governess to do. In the New York Edition preface, he mentions that one of his readers has rebuked him for his not having “sufficiently ‘characterised’ [his] young woman engaged in her labyrinth,” not having “endowed her with signs and marks, features and humours,” and not having “in a word invited her to deal with her own mystery as well as with that of Peter Quint, Miss Jessel and the hapless children” (AN 173). To this complaint, James responds:

¹⁵⁴ Leonard similarly points out that Miles’s speaking of the names of the ghosts is “the final achievement of [their] concreteness” (49). I disagree, however, with his conclusion that by this speech act the ghosts are ultimately “exorcised” and “vanish,” which he views as the governess’s ultimate intention (49).

It was ‘dèjà très-joli,’ in ‘The Turn of the Screw,’ please believe, the general proposition of our young woman’s keeping crystalline her record of so many intense anomalies and obscurities—by which I don’t of course mean her explanation of them, a different matter; and I saw no way, I feebly grant ... to exhibit her in relations other than those; one of which, precisely, would have been her relation to her own nature. We have surely as much of her own nature as we can swallow in watching it reflect her anxieties and inductions. It constitutes no little of a character indeed, in such conditions, for a young person, as she says, ‘privately bred,’ that she is able to make her particular credible statement of such strange matters. She has ‘authority,’ which is a good deal to have given her, and I could n’t have arrived at so much had I clumsily tried for more. (AN 173-174)

What is suggested in this response is that James planned the governess mainly as a figure who would “record” what happens at Bly “as it is.” He does not deny that her account registers some portion of her own personal traits—“her anxieties and inductions”—but they are de-emphasized as he promptly excludes from the scope of his discussion her “explanation”—her own interpretation and re-construction—of the Bly-situation as “a different matter.” James, instead, underlines her ability “to make her particular credible statement.”

The governess as recorder attributes the “merit” of conceiving The Turn of the Screw to James’s imagination, since the novella is “a perfect example of an exercise of the imagination unassisted, unassociated,” where he could allow his imagination “absolute freedom of hand ... with no ‘outside’ control involved” (AN 170-171). He was

aware that authors' excessive concern with how to communicate what they intend to write might hamper the productive working of their imagination. To do so, James writes, he had to deal with the difficulty of "improvisation, the running on and on of invention": he wanted his imagination to be exercised "freely ... with extravagance" but "controlled," since otherwise it would terribly overspread and eventually destroy "our sense of the course and the channel, which is our sense of the uses of a stream and the virtue of a story" (AN 170-172). This is where the governess as a ghostwriting recorder comes into James's textual play. As she is charged to put into practice the idea contrived by him, her narrative, articulating and realizing what James imagines, functions as a vessel into which he pours his overflowing imagination and a mold through which he shapes his "high fancy" (AN 169) in the well-regulated and materialized fictive world of Bly. The governess's text truthfully presents the products of James's profuse imagination—"so many intense anomalies and obscurities" and "such strange matters"—without her intrusive "explanation" or re-writing of what he initially wished to be written, and the text becomes the "crystalline ... record" and "credible statement" of James's authorship. In this light, the "authority" that the governess has is fundamentally James's own, "given her" by him only to inscribe visibly within the text the effect of his authorial imagination in his absence.

James's employment of the governess as his ghostwriter is remarkably analogous to his concurrent use of typists, or typewriters as they were called during the 1890s. Rowe reports that James was very anxious to preserve "virtual possession" of what he dictated and thus preferred the direct dictation to a Remington to his typewriters'

stenography. Since James himself had no knowledge of shorthand transcription, Rowe infers, he might have felt somewhat threatened by his typists' composition of a text only readable to them, not to him. Indeed, James's former typists Theodora Bosanquet and Mary Weld agreed that during his dictation, James wanted them simply to be "part of the machinery" in order to ensure the congruence of what they typed with what he uttered, which Rowe interprets as an indication of James's "desire for a 'typist without a mind'" (Other 157-158). James's desire for the mechanization of his typewriters coincides with his intention not only to reduce the distance between his speech and its written version but also to promote the unrestricted performance of his creativity.¹⁵⁵ Pamela Thurschwell notes that to James "The new technologies of machine culture paradoxically serve to imbue writing with a sense of presence, and the author with a corresponding prolixity"; "One's own hand hinders writing," Thurschwell goes on, "but somebody else's hand attached to a typewriter enhances it, makes for what amounts to an unstoppable flow for James" (13). James's amanuenses were, as their very title etymologically says it, to substitute for his writing hands so that he could overcome the

¹⁵⁵ Rivkin, in her analysis of the mode of delegation and representation in James's fiction, quotes Jacques Derrida's association of the "speechwriter" or "logographer" to the ghostwriter in "Plato's Pharmacy" (1968). According to Derrida, she says, a Platonic logic of representation assumes that speech is "prior to and more authentic than writing," since the latter is "a secondary copy" of speech and only serves to "preserve that speech in the speaker's absence" (14). But Derrida argues that writing is in fact "not attached to a living presence" of the speaker and thus possibly deviates from the effect of speech intended by the speaker. The speechwriter-ghostwriter embodies Derrida's argument in that the figure "not only reverses the order of temporary priority between speech and writing but also exposes as illusory the conviction that speech guarantees living presence and authenticity" (14). Rivkin's restatement of Derrida reassures us that the ghostwriter has potentials for exposing and subverting the myth of the author's origination of and presence in the text.

frustrating elements in his physical involvement with the writing process—elements ranging from his rheumatism in his right wrist to the hindrance of the stream of his creative thought caused by its textual reproduction with his own hands—and equip his literary genius with uninterrupted freedom.

Furthermore, James's attitude towards his amanuenses corresponds to the relationship between the female secretarial ghostwriting typewriters and their male bosses in the late-nineteenth-century workplace. The typewriters were obliged to compose a text the content of which was to be in strict accordance with their bosses' intent. Their text was expected to be a transparent representation of their bosses' idea with the effect of presence, not a re-creative translation. Their intermediary position between their bosses and the text required them, with a degree of anxiety on the part of the former, to remain impersonal, mindless, and spectral, and to serve only as an obstruction-free conduit of their bosses' dictation into the text. This speculation identifies James's secretarial typewriter—a figure that “meant both typing machine and female typist” toward the end of the nineteenth century (Kittler 183)—with the governess, drawing an image of James as a male boss who employs the ghostwriting amanuenses to compose a work for and under his name.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Friedrich A. Kittler explains how the “typewriter” comes to mean “both typing machine and female typist”: “it is clear that the statistical explosion begins in 1881, with the record sales of the Remington II. Although the number of men dwindles like a bell curve, the number of female typists increases almost with the elegance of an exponential function. As a consequence, it might be possible ... to forecast the year in which typist and woman converge” (183). The fact that James insisted on hiring female typewriters except for the first one—William MacAlpine—might reflect this shift of gender economics in the typewriter market at the time.

The governess, however, does not remain merely James's "small recording governess" (AN 71). She does have "authority" of her own, though this is not easily discernible. James does not name the governess, which means that her manuscript is presented without any proper name of its author, and thus without any Foucauldian author-function. Besides, her narrative does not have any title. As Richard Sawyer points out, a title is supposed to reflect the author's intention for his or her story by "identify[ing] the style or genre in which a story is composed" and "perform[ing] a 'nominal' role ... to identify ... a central character in the work, or where the important action takes place" (56). The untitled manuscript of the nameless governess, in sum, may be seen only as an anonymous writing. Nonetheless, the governess does not coincide with the Foucauldian author-figure. Her authority arises precisely from the absence of her name, from a possibility that she may intentionally erase her name and the title from her manuscript. And it is with this possibility that we can get a hint of how the governess's role of ghostwriter changes uncannily into that of ghost writer.

What mainly contributes to the governess's self-transformation from the unauthorized ghostwriter to the authoritative ghost writer is the condition of the circulation of her manuscript. Her narrative is mediated and circulated by two other writerly figures: Douglas and the frame narrator "I." Yet it is precisely through the interventions of Douglas and the frame narrator "I" that she finally finds a genuinely "magnificent chance" (27) of her own. The governess is already dead when her manuscript is read by Douglas and later transcribed by the frame narrator "I," so that she in reality exists as an absence in her text. Her absence, however, comes to produce an

effect of presence through the writing acts of Douglas and the frame narrator “I”: both mediators become the ghostwriters for the dead governess, and, by the same token, the dead governess becomes her own ghost, that is, the ghost who (re)writes her own story by means of her ghostwriters.

Douglas serves as a ghostwriter for the governess through his reciting of her manuscript, as we see in the prologue of The Turn of the Screw. Douglas’s voice, however, does not cover or efface the traces of her act of writing but rather revives them. He reads her manuscript with “a fine clearness that was like a rendering to the ear of the beauty of his author’s hand” (6). Douglas’s voice simultaneously foregrounds the governess as “his author” and evokes her writing “hand,” so that his reading of the manuscript illuminates what he reads as her manu-script, not as its verbally re-articulated version by him. Consequently, Douglas’s listeners feel touched by not only Douglas’s voice but also the hand of the dead governess revived in his voice, and the governess’s manuscript generates the effect of her presence via his reading of it. Douglas’s ghostwritership for the governess, then, becomes a form of ventriloquistic articulation of her authorship, through which, borrowing Marjorie Garber’s words, “the dead hand of the past reaches over to our side of the border” (xv) and (re)writes her narrative. His role as the governess’s ghostwriter is also verified when he is asked by one of his listeners, “What’s your title?” (6). He not only answers that “I have n’t one,” but also ignores the frame narrator “I”’s intrusive assertion that “Oh I have!” (6). By refusing to endow the

governess's manuscript with a title, Douglas preserves its original condition and thus remains a pure reflector of its authorial design.¹⁵⁷

The frame narrator "I" works as the ghostwriter for the dead governess by virtue of his or her unidentified identity: James never reveals the name, social status, or the gender of the frame narrator "I."¹⁵⁸ The indeterminacy of "I" is very significant in that the governess also remains almost unidentified—once again, as in the case of Alcott's governess Jean Muir, we are given no solid information of her identity or background, except her brief remark early in the novella that "I was in receipt in these days of disturbing letters from home, where things were not going well" (19)—and is also addressed as "I" in her narrative. Hence, two unspecified "I"s exist within the novella. These two "I"s, in turn, may merge into one when the frame narrator "I" becomes the very person who transcribes, or—considering another definition of the term "transcribe"—"represents by symbols" or words, what another "I," the dead governess, originally writes. If so, there emerges a new sign of "I," which means the returned dead

¹⁵⁷ Douglas's ventriloquism that maintains the indeterminacy of the governess's manuscript and foregrounds the reader-inviting principle of her authorship may overlap with Carwin's ventriloquism that voices the absent readers of Clara's narrative and highlight the reader-contingency of her authorship of *Wieland* in Chapter I.

¹⁵⁸ Many critics assume that "I" would be a male in terms of the highly homosocial and androcentric atmosphere of the prologue. For example, John H. Pearson observes that the prologue as well as James's preface are "unquestionably male voices" and, along with "the female voice of the governess's narrative," construct the "models of engendered transference of authority" (96). Also, Priscilla L. Walton says that the governess's narrative is "structurally trivialized as a result of the prologue" and, referring to the frame narrator "I," concludes that "her 'I' commands less authority than her male counterpart's" (260). The gender of the frame narrator "I" is, however, "never explicitly identified as male" ("Authority," McWhirter 132-133).

governess. In this newly signified word “I” the dead governess becomes embodied and reified through the medium of the living body of the frame narrator “I.”¹⁵⁹

Douglas and the frame narrator “I” then do not obscure the fact that it is the governess who actually writes and owns the manuscript. Rather, their intermediate stance as her ghostwriters reinforces her authorship of the manuscript. The frame narrator “I” in particular appeals to us as not just the (ghost)writer but also readers of the governess’s manuscript: even though Douglas is the initial listener and reader of the governess’s narrative, what is presented to us to read in The Turn of the Screw is, structurally, the reading (and transcription) of it by the frame narrator “I.” The unnamed- and ungendered-ness of “I” allows any of us, regardless of our individual differences, to put our own “I”s in his or her place, and we come to read the governess’s story as if we were the frame narrator “I.” Our readerly “I”s, then, come to identify with the governess through the merging of the frame narrator “I” with the governess’s “I,” which occurs, as shown above, via his or her ghostwritership for the governess. Accordingly, we read the governess’s narrative from her point of view and in her position. Eventually we become the ghostwriters for her, by (re)enacting her writing in her stead and incarnating her ghost in our own “I”s. In so doing, we come to recognize her authorship, since we perform her writerly role under her dictation of what is “most essentially ... her account of her own experience” (“Authority,” McWhirter 137).

¹⁵⁹ Douglas is already dead when the frame narrator “I” receives the governess’s manuscript from him: “Poor Douglas, before his death—when it was in sight—committed to me the manuscript” (4). Hence the frame narrator “I” is the only one who is left alive and conveys the governess’s story to readers.

The governess's "I" is, however, not the type of dictation that controls or determines our reading and (re)writing of her narrative. This is the very point where the authorship of the governess as ghost writer deviates from the one defined by the Foucauldian author-function and exposes the inherent contradiction in it. For Foucault, the author, or his or her proper name, exists as "the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning," a principle "by which ... one limits, excludes, and chooses" the interpretation of a text or discourse and "by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (159). Authorship manifests its authority as forcing us to seek a particular and proper relationship with the text, a relationship both authorized by and authorizing the authorial intention. The author functions only to limit and channel readers' analysis of and connection with the text, and that power of limitation and channeling is the very source of authorship, of the delineation and demarcation of the author's authority. Yet under this scenario, the interpretation of a text is meaningless, because each interpretation is essentially the mere replication of the one and the same authorial message and purpose of the text. The governess's "I" does not perform her authority in this way. James's earlier decision to exclude the governess's "explanation" from her record-narrative defines the absence of her explanation as the absence of any authoritative way of reading her narrative. Instead, the governess's unexplained record-narrative invites us to account for it in our own ways. Nevertheless, the governess is not deprived of narrative authority because the meanings that we make out of her narrative basically originate in, as

discussed above, our readings of her story, the merging and identification of our “I”s with her “I.”

Such an interrelationship between the governess and readers demonstrates James’s attempt to invoke the ceaseless relationship of signification. Trying to figure out the best way of conceiving the “sense of the depths of the sinister” in the two ghosts (AN 175), he concludes that he should let readers do so for themselves: “There is for such a case no eligible absolute of the wrong; it remains relative to fifty other elements, a matter of appreciation, speculation, imagination—these things moreover quite exactly in the light of the spectator’s, the critic’s, the reader’s experience” (AN 176). James’s conclusion emphasizes and acknowledges that readers’ reading experience is an essential part in the process of the creation of the meaning and the production of various versions of the text. Authors benefit from readers’ participation like that in that they are “released from weak specifications” and can avoid “the charge of a monstrous emphasis, the charge of all indecently expatiating” (AN 176, 177), the charge of the despotic—and destructive—authority upon the construction of the reader-text relationships. The governess in The Turn of the Screw receives the same benefit: her semiotic intention, like her authorial stance, remains unspecified and ghostly, and by presenting herself as a nameless ghost, she intentionally permits readers to explain and re-explain her story diversely and endlessly. In this way, the governess as ghost writer ultimately makes possible the never-ending triologue of authors, readers, and texts, which is evinced in the ongoing critical debates on, and numerous adaptations of, The Turn of the Screw.

The governess's transformation from ghostwriter to ghost writer illuminates at once the instability of the existent mode of authorship at the turn of the century as well as throughout the nineteenth century and James's creative re-interpretation of that instability. That the ghostwriter was in great demand to maintain the power of the author's proper name betrays the incongruity between the author and the author's name, between the author's name and the text, and between the author and the text. From the ghostwriter's intermediary position, James discovers—in his well-known expression—a “germ” of uncannily authorized authorship. He develops it in the character of the governess, who in turn ghostifies herself and re-defines the powerless spectrality of the ghostwriter as the productive indefiniteness of the ghost writer. In the process, James embodies this new kind of author-figure in himself, by remarking that “my values are positively all blanks” (AN 177) in the novella, and by allowing “this perfectly independent and irresponsible little fiction” (AN 169, emphasis added) to float around joyously in the middle of flourishing interpretations. And, most important, he does so by not having “clumsily tried for more” with his own authorial hands.

2. Conclusion: Ghost Writer, the Gothic Afterlife of the Dead Author

With James's unnamed dead governess at the end, we now have an interesting array of author-figures that also includes Charles Brockden Brown's Clara the self-righteous isolato and Carwin the ventriloquist, Poe's Pym the sailor, Douglass's Frederick Douglass the fugitive slave, and Alcott's Jean Muir the governess. A brief contemplation on the significance of those figures will help wrap up and theorize my

discussion of the notion of the ghost writer. Seemingly heterogeneous, these figures from nineteenth-century American gothic literature share certain ontological traits: none of them have a secure, fixed, or licit place in mainstream society; none of them have a solid and coherent identity; and, therefore, none of them can exist or operate of their own will. This shared liminality, fluidity, and dependency of being, of course, aptly serves to evince the virtual nonentity of the author within gothic literature, to represent the non-self-evident basis of the author that Roland Barthes, Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and their followers have argued for, and to illustrate the heteronomous mode of authorship that nineteenth-century American writers in the reader-centered literary domain were actively pursuing. As such, the figures validate this study's proposal of the ghost writer as an alternative, reader-oriented notion to the author by conjoining current gothic criticism, modern authorship theories, and studies of nineteenth-century American literature.

Among those figures, that of the governess in particular attracts our attention. Appearing twice in this study through Alcott and James, the figure performs the aforementioned representational and validating service with extra effectiveness. It does so first by means of its characteristically other-reliant positioning within a (familial) society: the governess is in principle not a part of the society, but becomes one only through the society's members' acceptance of her among them. Also, only through such an agreement can the governess have certain social identity as a governess: one cannot act or live as a governess on one's own, but should be hired, and thus "made" to do so. In this respect, the governess is very apposite to the ghost writer, which does not "govern" the trajectory of its own authorial life and career but is "governed" by the mass

opinions or judgments on that matter, and which works for its employers, not itself, in order to bring to an end its ghostly wandering around the rim of society and settle down within.

All those author-figures from Brown's Clara to James's governess, furthermore, offer effectual answers for the most likely anticipated—and highly valid and valuable—questions against the notion of the ghost writer: so where are we going with this incessant creatability of the author by readers? would it not be possible that allowing for this incessant formation of the relationship between authors, readers, and texts is ultimately a nihilistic—because “any” relationship is acceptable—gesture? can the notion of the ghost writer really be a “meaningful” alternative to the dead author? Here, the main issue is the hazard of the meaninglessness implied in the idea of “boundless” possibilities. In fact, that hazard is exactly what I have observed in the mostly deconstructive current authorship theories and tried to overcome with the ghost writer. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, since Barthes's pronouncement of the death of the author in 1968 most theorists have been in essence merely reiterating Barthes by marking and re-marking the inherent limit of the author's ultimate control over the ever-interpretable text and ever-interpreting readers. The problem of that reiteration is that those theorists have approached the death of the author as if it means the end of the author per se, rather than considering a more positive prospect of the beginning of a new type of writing subject. For this reason, the theorists could afford us seemingly endless ways of analyzing how the text has a de-centering and fragmenting effect on a single authorial voice and intention, but not a viable way of grasping a newly emerging reader-

contingent writing subject out of those (over)analyzed, disintegrated pieces of the author's cadaver.

To me, such fruitless self-repetition of deconstructive theoretical discourses can come to a halt and get somewhere with sufficient literary discussions of how the writing subject is actually producing a text and making a relationship with readers after its own death. Accordingly, I have examined how representative nineteenth-century American gothic writers—rather than being and staying dead—delineate the reader-constructed author-figures and develop the reader-conscious notion of the ghost writer out of those figures in their gothic works. What has happened during the examination is, significantly, that the abstract idea of the boundlessly deconstructable author is specifically captured or circumscribed, as it is represented in the particular author-figures from Brown's Clara to James's governess and conceptualized as the particular notion of the ghost writer. This circumscription, therefore, puts to practical use, and enhances the importance of, the deconstructive exposé of the reader-factor in Youngian authorship while preventing that exposé from remaining a mere present-day philosophical trend. As such, the circumscription of the dead author by/as the ghost writer is constructive rather than constrictive. By extension, my study, "Gothic Authors/Ghost Writers," demonstrates that our author-ization of a writer should be never purely boundless but, paradoxically, boundless within certain boundaries.

Such a paradox seems to be truly necessary and even advantageous. Sigi Jöttkandt, in her Lacanian and Kantian analysis of James's ethical aesthetic in Acting Beautifully (2005), points out a predicament caused by the recent intellectual emphasis

on unlimited differences. As “The concept of universality,” Jöttkandt remarks, “has been the target of some of the most sophisticated critiques of contemporary thought,” namely, deconstruction, so “the ethics of the particular, specifically of the rights of particulars to differ from the all-encompassing, hegemonic Same,” has come to thrive (99).

Apparently more liberal and open-minded, this modern ethical attitude betrays yet a critical problem in Jöttkandt’s view: “without some workable concept of universality ethics dissolves into mere cultural relativism and the ‘free play’ of endless, metonymic slippage” (100). To this problem, Jöttkandt urges us to focus on “how to resurrect the concept of universality, but without repeating the excesses and violent impositions that this concept historically has invoked,” or without “imply[ing] the (surreptitious and illicit) dominance of one particular at the exclusion of another” (100). Jöttkandt is suggesting the usefulness of the basic common ground of signification for ceaselessly produced diverse opinions: by having a certain larger shared understanding by which we build up—but not channel—our opinions, we can make the differences among those opinions practically mean something. As shown in this chapter, by only agreeing that the narrative of The Turn of the Screw is by and about the governess, our varied and ever-continuing readings of the novella could add up to “her” varied and ever-re-conceivable authorial personae, and constitute and actualize a reader-made authorship or ghost-writership. Without such an elementary consensus, the multiple readability of The Turn of the Screw would have been deemed as simply another facet of its notorious (and, in many cases, frustrating) ambiguity, as it has been so within the general criticism of the novella. Put another way, there can be, and needs to be, what may be called productive

boundaries. And it is one of those boundaries that I expect the ghost writer, and the ghostly author-figures that physically manifest the ghost writer, to perform for our continuing constructions on the deceased Author-God, while going beyond the futilely ever-particularizing post-Barthes dissection of the totalizingly universal eighteenth-century conception of the author.¹⁶⁰

Lastly, that the author-figures in this study embody readers' circumscribed yet productive re-configuration of the author as a ghost writer sheds light on how the notion of the ghost writer defines the author-reader relationship significantly anew. It seems that even after Barthes's revolutionary declaration of the author's ineluctable and requisite death, the general understanding of the author's relationship with readers has not greatly changed from that of the eighteenth century. More specifically, the Barthesian death of the author has been normally (mis)understood as the author's demise "by readers" as well as by the text, and the author-reader relationship has for the most part remained mutually exclusive, if not antagonistic. The author after Barthes has

¹⁶⁰ Jöttkandt, in her reading of James's "The Altar of the Dead" (1895) in Acting Beautifully, notes the similar fruitlessness of deconstruction's self-repeating tendency. To encapsulate her point, deconstruction is surely effective as it can reveal the inherent impossibility of our system of representation, but it simply repeats such revelatory acts on and on without pointing to what is, and can be, beyond that impossibility, and ultimately remains "the sheer, senseless, mechanical repetition of language voided of its (illusory) transcendent powers" (109). Then Jöttkandt re-locates deconstruction's problem within the context of the Symbolic and proposes solving it from a psychoanalytic perspective. She introduces a psychoanalytic para-Symbolic concept of the Real, and re-defines deconstruction's self-repeating revelation of the Symbolic impossibility, or limit, as that of the threshold between the Symbolic and the Real. As a consequence, Jöttkandt is able to contend that our deconstructive reading of literature is our diverse re(-)presentation, within the limit of the Symbolic, of one (psychological, and non-imposing) universal truth: "every speaking being is castrated" (130).

become not only susceptible to and dependent on readers, but also incompetent and impotent in contrast to readers. Accordingly, talking about the author's "intention" regarding readers, implying the former's dictatorial power over the latter, has become shamefully anachronistic and customarily tabooed. However, our author-figures' function as not constrictive but constructive boundaries for our readerly act confirms that the author, rather than seeming self-concerned and egocentric, can have a harmonizing and mutually beneficial intention as regards readers. In so doing, those figures also testify to the fact that the author's relationship with readers should be in a real sense a "relationship," that is, should be cooperative and interactive with one another. In this way, our author-figures, with their absent-present, ghostlike standing within texts and for readers, underscore the ghost writer's, and nineteenth-century American gothic writers,' clarification of the truly reader-involved implication of the author's death and realization of the dead author's afterlife "along with" readers.

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