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Seeing Trauma: The Known and the Hidden in Nineteenth-Century Literature

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Seeing Trauma:
The Known and Hidden in Nineteenth-Century Literature

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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DEDICATION

To David, Mariva, Maximillian, Cosette, and Fantine

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From my mother who required that each of her six children “bring a book” wherever our travels took us, to my father who patiently read my stories and essays and taught me to value the nuances of words, to my siblings who modeled a love of learning, I am thankful for an upbringing rich in words, stories, and books.

Since high school, I have dreamed of earning a Ph.D. in literature, but back then, I had no idea how that kind of goal could be achieved. Many years later, several people have helped me make this journey and I am full of gratitude for their support and help.

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ABSTRACT

Trauma as an official diagnosis first entered the DSM in 1980 and literary theorists began employing the term to discuss literature not too long after. Since the 1990s, theorists have largely focused on twentieth-century trauma literature with Holocaust and Modernist texts garnering much of the critical interest. Yet, Victorian life was also marked by trauma-causing events. From railway catastrophes, to industrial accidents, to premature deaths, and infectious diseases, Victorians reckoned with wounds to the mind through their lived experience. Trauma scholars who work with nineteenth-century texts, with few exceptions, consider trauma in terms of its modern theories. While the work of Cathy Caruth, Shoshanna Felman, Ann Whitehead, E. Anne Kaplan, Dominick LaCapra, and Judith Herman has stimulated important discussions about trauma literature, their development of the concept of trauma rarely reaches further back than Freud. Victorian configurations of the mind and its response to psychological wounding have much to offer to the current discussion of literary trauma. This dissertation presents a study of Victorian literary texts through current theories of trauma juxtaposed with nineteenth-century formulations of the concept. The analysis offers three main points: one, to identify instances of trauma in nineteenth century texts that would otherwise go unnoticed; two, to situate texts within the cultural and historic milieu of their publication and to consider how literary conventions and forms indicative of the nineteenth-century serve to represent the effects and symptoms of trauma, and three, as a result of seeing trauma in the texts, to challenge common readings of Victorian literary characters, images, and forms

Chapter 1

What Literature Can Do: A Literary Representation of Trauma

i. Teasing the Knot

Roger Luckhurst equates the phenomenon of trauma to a knot. This is an incredibly apt metaphor, for the field of trauma studies entangles several disciplines, including history, medicine, law, psychology, and literature, and it is difficult to know where one disciplinary strand ends and another begins. Its discourse engages clinicians, theorists, and victims in widely differing--often competing--views on the causes and effects of trauma. Scholars working in trauma question whether trauma bypasses memory. If so, how? Is the imprint pristine or subject to the mediation of the unconscious? What symptoms or behaviors signify trauma? Does the effect of trauma extend to secondary victims?¹ In “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some ‘Enabling Questions’” (2006), Elissa Mardner posits that since the late twentieth century, literature and literary theory have provided some of the “most influential and far-reaching new insights” to

¹In his review essay, “Traumatic Futures: A Review Essay” (2011), Jared Stark shares a scenario that illuminates some of the contentions within the field of trauma studies: “Those familiar with discussions of trauma theory, particularly in literary and cultural studies, will be sensitive to [its] charged field.... From Dominick LaCapra’s persistent investigation of the uses and limits of trauma theory for historical understanding, to Ruth Leys’s confessedly ‘unsympathetic’ critique of Caruth and Shoshana Felman’s stunning deflation of Leys’s work in an eight-page endnote in *The Juridical Unconscious*, to the painful exchange between Thomas Trezise and Dori Laub in the pages of *History and Memory*, to mention only a few instances, the links between trauma, history, and culture proposed by Caruth have come to elicit sharp division and have become as much a matter of scholarly inquiry as of moral (and moralistic) positioning” (455).

questions such as these. Mardner specifically refers to the scholarly work of Cathy Caruth and Shoshanna Felman who, she argues, have been “working creatively on the borders of trauma, literature, and psychoanalysis” since the late 1990s (1). Mardner suggests that this interdisciplinary traffic is “surprising” and new. Susannah Radstone makes a similar claim in “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, and Ethics” (2007). Radstone notes that the term “trauma theory” first appeared in Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) and cites the work of Caruth, Felman, and Laub as opening “the Humanities to trauma” (9-10). Mardner and Radstone are partially correct. Caruth and Felman (and others theorists) have opened up creative ways of responding to literary depictions of trauma; however, twentieth-century trauma theorists are not the first thinkers to work on the “borders of trauma, literature and psychoanalysis” (Mardner 1). Nineteenth-century novelists, dramatists, and poets not only engaged in discourses about the mind and explored the effects of trauma in their fictions, but they also participated in the construction of the concept itself. The symptomatic language available to these authors predated psychoanalysis, and Victorian concepts of the conscious and unconscious were based on a different architecture of the mind; nonetheless, these authors created texts that demonstrated great sensitivity to the human mind in the aftermath of psychic wounding.

Opposing the notion that trauma literature begins with the twentieth century, my dissertation operates from the premise that the nineteenth century contains many examples of trauma literature. In order to make this claim, I define trauma literature as literature that depicts a subject processing trauma. This trauma is marked by certain symptoms or effects: the distortion of linear time, the disruption of relationships with others and the self, and the vivid and enduring impression imprinted in the mind of the victim. The traumatic event itself may be represented in direct or indirect action.

Because the experience of trauma is often viewed as unrepresentable, modern theorists often presume that trauma literature is recognized foremost by its employment of a vocabulary and syntax that resists representation. Stef Craps and Luckhurst link this notion to Theodor Adorno's well-known pronouncement that "It is barbaric to write a poem after Auschwitz and that is why it is impossible to write poetry today" (qtd. in Craps 39). Adorno feared attempts to convey a traumatic experience that diminished the horror of the event, yet later, he advocated art as a way for those who suffer to come to voice. Stef Craps and Kai Tal draw out important concerns with seeing this as the only or the most viable representation of trauma. Tal warns that the formula for traumatic literature can become so codified that narrative form replaces content (6), and Craps cautions that seeing disjointed language as the hallmark of trauma implies that a return to coherent storytelling signifies healing where some traumatized subjects do not have this kind of language or the wholeness it is said to be indicative of in which to return. To de-privilege content, in my view, is to devalue the story of the traumatized subject. A representation is not the form it copies; nonetheless, it can inspire a degree of understanding important to the recognition and understanding of trauma.

One scholar who is mining the nineteenth century for evidence of trauma is Jill Matus. Matus argues that up until her book, *Shock, Memory and the Victorian Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (2009), there had "been no sustained exploration of how Victorians construed the effects of psychic shock or pain and how such investigations shaped a cultural context whose legacy is detectable in late-modern theories of trauma, memory and unconscious processes" (3). Matus's text explores the ways that Victorian conceptions of shock prefigure trauma through an analysis of several mid nineteenth-century novels. Her work treats the novel of the mid nineteenth century as an "index of cultural reactions" to historicize contemporary facets of trauma theory

and to broaden our understanding of Victorian theories of the mind (8). Matus's work is invaluable for my own project, which takes Victorian concepts of traumatic shock and the mind in a different direction. Where she discusses the novel to broaden our understanding of trauma and recognize the forward thinking and perceptive psychological insights of nineteenth century novelists, my project analyzes multiple genres, venturing to uncover how seeing trauma in the form and content of nineteenth-century literary texts can yield fresh readings of their stories.

ii. A Brief History

The term trauma originally derives from the Greek word for a physical wound. Thus, when the term trauma (not the concept), first appeared in the seventeenth century, it referred specifically to a physical wound. This nearly exclusive use persisted for more than one hundred years until late nineteenth century physicians and psychologists began to consider the psychical nature of trauma. In the mid nineteenth century, the telegraph, the telephony, and the railway provided evidence that voices could travel as quickly as electrical spark. From its beginning, railway travel was dangerous and often deadly. Records from the Railway Regulation Act indicate that between 1871 and 1901, deaths due to railway travel numbered no fewer than two hundred passengers a year (Luckhurst 21). Victims and witnesses of railways accidents reported the traumatic symptoms of flashbacks, paranoia, and lack of affect which manifested some time after the accident. In the words of current theorists, the symptoms appeared belatedly. English physicians were divided about locating the cause of accident-related illness in the psyche. J.E. Erichsen labeled the condition a concussion to the spine in 1875, noting that any psychical problems were the result of a physical wound. A few years after Erichsen's declaration, Herbert Page and Charles Dana put forth that the emotions accompanying severe danger were alone

enough to produce symptoms of shock.² Several scholars thus locate the origins of trauma in the burgeoning railway system of the 1860s; however, others argue that the concept of trauma appeared long before the seventeenth century. Edward Tick argues that trauma has been evidenced for thousands of years under more than eighty labels, each invoking different nuances connected to the time and culture of its recognition. Labels such as hysteria, shock, railway spine, and shell shock reflect historically and culturally inflected attempts to recognize psychological wounds, which could manifest in body and mind or in mind alone.

In spite of the evidence trauma's pre-nineteenth-century history, many contemporary theorists tend to unravel no further than Freud. Part of this reluctance to engage pre-Freudian discourses on trauma may involve the distinction some draw between shock and trauma. Prior to the late nineteenth century, physicians described psychological wounding when it was accompanied by physical injury as shock. Since early nineteenth-century physicians rarely conceived of a wound lodged only in the psyche as being able to profoundly affect the victim's mental well-being, they relied on the language of nervous shock to indicate that a physical injury, such as a carriage accident or a near-drowning incident, delivered a shock to the nervous system which in turn triggered aberrations of thought, such as repetitive nightmares, memory losses, incoherent babblings, or hallucinations. It was not until Freud considered the injuries of "shell-shocked" WWI soldiers that the limits of shock's physical causality were reckoned with. To Freud and others, it was clear that some soldiers suffered wounds to the psychic with no physical origin.³

² At stake in the language and diagnosis of the physician were insurance claims. Insurers would not be liable to pay for injuries that bore no physical wound, so medical doctors who worked for the insurance companies had a conflict of interest.

³ Charles Myers, psychologist and volunteer medic, initially coined the term and diagnosed shell shock. Shell shock originally denoted a battle injury a soldier incurred when in close proximity to exploding shells. Affected soldiers were described as amnesiac, emotional, mute and with no sense of time and place. Luckhurst recalls that Myers cherry-picked his

However, rather than reading the disorders as discrete, I aver that we should read the Victorians' treatment of shock as clearly prefiguring twentieth-century formations of trauma. Recognizing the connection between shock and trauma allows us to consider the ways Victorians understood shock and its effects, to see how Victorian notions of shock anticipated modern constructions of trauma, and to consider Victorian texts through the lens of current formulations of trauma.

iii. The Nineteenth-Century and Trauma

To recognize depictions of trauma in my selected texts, I read nineteenth-century literary texts through the symptomatology of both Victorian conceptions of shock and of twentieth-century constructions of trauma. To begin, it is necessary to situate the texts in terms of Victorian theories of emotion and the nineteenth-century configuration of conscious and subconscious. For most of the nineteenth century, the workings of the body and mind were believed to be inseparable. As discussed, this often prevented the recognition of traumatic shock when the only symptoms were aberrational thoughts and behaviors. However, their view of mind-body unity helps current scholars to make sense of the ways Victorians viewed the emotions. In the early nineteenth century, emotions were viewed as the physical movement of the soul, but by the mid nineteenth century the display of emotions was thought to record a non-logical physical state (Dixon 3). As such, emotional display was an automatic response generated by a physical cause. The paralinguistic cues associated with emotion registered changes in the body. These cues would include facial expressions, crying or laughing, and bodily tension. Descriptions of these features replaced overt declarations and analyses of love, heartbreak, and grief found in early

subjects, interviewing only those who bore evidence of physical and psychological injury. Because many men suffered traumatic symptoms where no physical injury was present, the theory was eventually deemed untenable; however, the label persisted even when doctors recognized the psychological cause of the illness of the WWI soldier (Luckhurst 50-51).

nineteenth-century texts (Matus 45). Through them, readers would have to infer the emotional states of characters. In 1873, Alexander Bain further clarifies the Victorian's sense of the connection between body and emotion. Bain posits that an emotion excited the brain and the brain triggered a physical response. Matus concludes that as the nineteenth century progressed, the mind "becomes increasingly passive as greater agency is attributed to the body" (45). Attending to the contours of emotions in several of my texts allows me to identify the visible effects of trauma. Sudden or prolonged weeping or the swift onset of stoicism often provides the nineteenth-century equivalent to the twentieth century's sense of memory disruption.

A second cluster of concepts central to Victorian thinking concerning trauma radiates around the architecture of the conscious and unconscious. In "Locating the Victorian Unconscious" (1997), Jenny Bourne-Taylor makes clear that Freud did not discover the unconscious; rather, he drew upon "well-known theories of the pervasive influence of unconscious mental processes" (140). Early in the century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge conceived of a divided mind where the unconscious exercised limited agency. In *Biographia Literaria* (1817), Coleridge responds to eighteenth-century associationism by telling the story of the young woman who after never having had a lesson in Greek spoke the language when suffering from a fever. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that as a girl, the young woman had overheard a neighbor speaking Greek and unconsciously learned the language (64). Coleridge's account ascribed order and purpose to the unconscious--its movement did not consist of a series of associated thoughts, running uncontrollably. Rather, the unconscious worked with some degree of intention.

Victorians later conceived of a multi-layered, deep self.⁴ According to Taylor, these currents were considered to be in flux and often at odds. Taylor sees this chaotic movement as producing a social being, but I argue it also allowed Victorians to conceive of “spaces” in which to lodge motives, ideas, and experiences. In 1859, Sir William Hamilton proposed a three-strata conception of the mind where “degrees of mental latency” occurred: First, a layer where repetitive action trains the mind to automatically complete an action; second, a place of submersed powers which manifest under extraordinary states of consciousness, such as dreams, trance, and fever; and third, a depth where unconscious thoughts are not consciously known but do inform daily thinking and decision making (Taylor 144-145). Further, Matus adds that the Victorians acknowledged the division of the self where a subject could be “beside” one’s self, as in Brontë’s representation of Jane Eyre after her red-room trauma. Literary references to the mind’s depth registered how traumatic impact could push an individual just off center or send him deeper into his unconscious.⁵ By the mid nineteenth century, several mental scientists and philosophers afforded the unconscious an agency that was not cultivated by habit. However, Victorian’s were anxious about affording too much agency to the unconscious, for it threatened the clear assessment of guilt and innocence. William Carpenter’s sense of the will trumping automatic action respond so this fear. In his thinking, the unconscious is a wild horse, but human will is a skillful rider (“The Power of Will Over Mental Action” 96). Willed actions become habits and these become automatic actions.

⁴ Michel Foucault argued that the nineteenth century produced the depth model of the mind (Taylor 141).

⁵ Throughout my dissertation, I alternate between uses of masculine and feminine pronouns where the gender of a subject of trauma is unspecified.

Finally, Victorian discussions of states of consciousness concerned double consciousness, often signified by mesmerized states. Developed by Franz Anton Mesmer, a Viennese doctor, mesmerism was based on the idea of an internal fluid which connected an individual to the matter around him. If the energy was stopped or its flow damned, a subject could suffer physical or mental illness. Mesmerism promised relief to those suffering, but was a highly controversial practice. Practitioners induced a trance-like state in their subjects and directed them to perform their pent-up emotions and energies in front of an invited audience. John Elliotson, a prominent and passionate supporter of mesmerism, claimed the mesmeric state allowed spectators to view “the mighty power of the mind” (qtd. in Borne Taylor 150). Mesmerism rendered the interior external. Ruth Leys argues that the figure of the hypnotized subject offered a template for symptoms of trauma. Mesmerism and hypnosis are different in theory, but similar in appearance and aim. Leys connects the traumatic experience to the interplay between the practitioner and the subject, specifically the repetition that often characterizes trauma. Subjects repeat the words they are commanded to and mimic suggested actions. Further, hypnosis creates an “‘absence’ from the self,” mirroring a dissociative state (Leys 8-9). Nineteenth-century conceptions of the mind provide a space to locate traumatic memory where it can be lodged outside of conscious awareness or preserved for at-will retrieval. Ascribing agency to the unconscious helped to make sense of automatic or numbed responses and to account for the mastery of an unstudied skill or talent.

iv. Looking Forward: Twentieth-Century Views

To recognize nineteenth-century representations of trauma that gesture toward the twentieth century and that might otherwise go unnoticed, I must also view these texts through current trauma theory, drawing from the ideas of clinical and literary theorists, such as Ruth

Leys, Anne Whitehead, E. Anne Kaplan, Cathy Caruth, Roger Luckhurst, Bessel van der Kolk, and Dori Laub. These theorists exemplify some of the dissenting views in trauma theory. Ruth Leys divides all trauma theory into two camps: mimetic and anti-mimetic. This division can be helpful for discussing the emphases of key theorists and clinicians. Representing the anti-mimetic view, Laub, Caruth, Felman, van der Kolk and van der Meer focus on the violence of the event, which comes to wound a “sovereign if passive” individual (Leys 10). Caruth defines trauma as being constituted “solely in the structure of the experience or reception...where the event is not fully assimilated at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it” (*Trauma* 4-5). In this model, memory is completely unavailable. The traumatic event is an unprocessed pristine record, sequestered to a separate area of the mind, which resists retrieval. Unbidden flashbacks, hallucinations, dreams, and repetitions, intrude into the conscious, representing the unexperienced event or events. The appeal to this kind of theory, according to Leys, is found in its protection of the subject. The entire weight of the trauma rests on the event; neither the subject’s experiences nor her unconscious assists in constructing the trauma. Conversely, theorists such as Leys and Radstone work from a psychoanalytic vision of a mind divided into parts: the conscious and subconscious. The victim’s subconscious stores the memory, can mediate it, and delivers patches of the memory to the conscious when triggered or suggested. The unconscious shapes the mind’s reaction to psychic injury, and experience and desire inform the subject’s unconscious. Radstone qualifies that dissociation in Caruth’s camp occurs when a memory is stored outside of the mind’s memory centers; in Leys’s conception, dissociation occurs when the mind is dissociated from the self (14).

Luckhurst describes these poles, averring that they reflect century-old arguments about the physical or psychical nature of the origin of trauma, but his own theory does not register as

mimetic or anti-mimetic. Luckhurst describes the repetition compulsion as an attempt at memory integration: “individuals, collectives and actions risk trapping themselves in cycles of uncomprehending repetition unless the traumatic event is translated from repetition to the healthy analytic process of ‘working through’” (9).⁶ However, he is less focused on the dissociative states of trauma and more on trauma’s ability to “pierce” or “breach” a border, “putting inside and outside into a strange communication...[opening] passageways between systems that were once discrete, making unforeseen connections that distress and confound” (3). This border-crossing renders trauma “worryingly transmissible,” spreading from therapist to patient, from patient to patient, and from victim to witness. Finally, E. Ann Kaplan proffers a more flexible approach, overtly resisting a rigid system of categorizing trauma victims. Kaplan advocates for the consideration of the individual victim and of the complex nature of the event, arguing that an overemphasis on dissociation oversimplifies the traumatic situation. Kaplan recognizes three possible responses to trauma, allowing for traumatic situations where the victim has no conscious memory of the event; situations where the victim can hold the event in conscious memory, and situations where the event triggers both “earlier memories and unconscious fantasies” (38). Kaplan provides a flexible model of trauma theory in many ways conducive to Victorian concepts of shock. She does not privilege memory as the hallmark of trauma, but recognizes that varying degrees of dissociation can be a symptom of trauma. She concedes that literature cannot fully represent trauma, but that it can go some way--if only “inch by inch” toward creating empathy (37).

⁶ Luckhurst’s allusion to Freud here would make one think he reads trauma through a psychoanalytic lens. However, all of these theorists draw from Freud, making different use of his ideas, which is understandable since Freud’s ideas on trauma underwent several significant mutations.

Michael Rothenberg also divides the field of trauma studies into two different tracks: one he labels classic trauma theory, which would include most of the theorists I have just discussed but for different reasons than Leys outlines, and while he does not label the other branch, it calls for a more inclusive, progressive theory of trauma. In *The Future of Trauma Theory* (2014), Rothenberg cautions that we cannot expect a theory of trauma to travel smoothly from one cultural and chronological context to the next (1). We cannot expect a theory of trauma constructed from the experiences of white, middle-class twentieth century males to map onto the suffering of an enslaved, black female. Rothenberg draws out that classical trauma theory fails to recognize the traumas of minorities and marginalized groups by its recognizing primarily one-time events rather than systems of trauma, by assuming positions of dominance, and by privileging a fragmented modernists aesthetic as a means of representing trauma in literature (4-6).

Like Rothenberg, Stef Craps appeals for a more nuanced theory of trauma. While acknowledging the significant debt contemporary trauma theorists owe to Caruth et al, Craps disputes Caruth's well known assertion that "trauma itself may be the very link between cultures." Craps avers that the founding texts of trauma theory fail to live up to this promise by "[ignoring] traumatic histories of currently subordinate groups both inside and outside Western society, and/or take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities as a result of this one-sided focus" ("Wor[ld]s of Grief" 53). Craps further denounces classical trauma theory's tendency to conflate linguistic control, or a sufferer's ability to remember and narrate his or her trauma, to recovery. This criticism is in-line with the

emphasis of the psychoanalytically inflected trauma theory of the classical theorists, which relies on the subject's ability to properly order her history by recalling and narrating the trauma.

The work of Craps and Rothenberg demonstrates that trauma theorists have made good progress identifying the inadequacies of classical trauma theory; however, Craps clarifies that trauma theory is still in need of a concrete alternative to this model. In the late 1990s, Tai Kal argued that American critics looked to Europe and the Holocaust for an example of a traumatized people and concurrently “[refused] to look at any aspect of the African American experience. . . ., [perpetuating] the racist and Eurocentric structures that were responsible for the traumatization of those populations in the first place” (11). According to Gilda Graff, in 2014, texts dealing with trauma expressed the same state of denial: “Refusal to remember, denial, dissociation, and disavowal are all echoed in the absence of slavery from the trauma literature and, until recently, from psychoanalytic literature. Trauma literature gives attention to the Holocaust, floods, earthquakes, sexual abuse, rape, etc. but not to slavery” (183). Graff acknowledges small gains in the treatment of slavery as trauma in psychoanalysis, and while, I believe, a few examples of contemporary slavery-as-trauma literature, such as Morrison’s *Beloved*, can be found, she levels a strong and germane accusation against theoretical *and* literary texts. In my chapter on “Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point,” I put forth some criteria that shape a theory of slavery-as-trauma. Foundational to this model is a recognition of the traumas of racism and slavery as products of colonialism in the United States.

v. Bringing Together Dickens, Du Maurier, Brougham, Bronte, and Barrett

Browning

My aim in this dissertation is to explore the ways that identifying trauma in a nineteenth-century text alters or enhances common readings of characters, narrative, image, and form.

While I will examine causes of trauma in literary characters and explore how literature represents traumatic symptoms, I do not intend to simply diagnosis trauma retrospectively. Rather, identification serves my larger purpose. The traumas represented in the texts I have selected range from the physical violence of rape to the emotional strangulation of a broken relationship to the trauma of confinement by race and gender. I submit that each of the traumas represented in these texts is a distinctly nineteenth-century trauma represented in forms and literary conventions indicative of Victorian literature. In *Great Expectations*, trauma visits through a convict recently escaped from the English hulks and a jilted wealthy, but vulnerable woman who failed to conform to nineteenth-century expectations of the female. In *Trilby*, class and national loyalties clash and foment Trilby's trauma; in *Jane Eyre*, the trauma of failed marriages is underscored by Victorian socioeconomic hierarchies, patriarchy, and colonial power; and, finally, in "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," trauma is a product of the American nineteenth-century system of slavery. Further, all of the literary cases I examine center on a traumatized subject who, at one time in the text, is marginalized or othered. This commonality leads to the conclusions that the marginalized state of the characters makes their response to trauma plausible, that their position in society has strained them, left them weak and susceptible to trauma.

vi. Chapter Summaries

I begin my exploration of literature and trauma with a chapter on Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861). This chapter focuses on the formation of Pip's narrative voice via his traumas. First, Pip's encounter with Magwitch on the marsh creates a long-lasting psychological wound in young Pip. Later, Pip experiences his second trauma when meeting Miss Havisham at Satis House. Meeting Miss Havisham, who is bound by the manacles of trauma to the exact site and time of her own pain, immerses Pip in a representation of her wounded unconscious. Thus,

Pip also bears the weight of Miss Havisham's trauma and demonstrates the status of secondary victimhood or vicarious trauma. Dickens's depiction of psychological wounding countered mid-nineteenth-century notions of the unity of body and mind and prefigured late nineteenth-century developments in the recognition of trauma. Both Pip and Miss Havisham experience wounds to the mind that bear no physical correlative—their minds alone are wounded. Trauma influences both the ways Pip narrates his story and filters how he views characters, reports events, and experiences places. Recognizing trauma in *Great Expectations* makes sense of unusual behaviors and validates experiences. It casts Miss Havisham less as a villain and more as a victim, affirms the magnitude of Pip's fear and severity of his guilt, and makes sense of Pip's compulsive thoughts and actions.

Chapter two examines the intersection of trauma, art, and performance in George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). Visual art and musical performance operate on several levels in this text. Art functions to engender a state of crazed admiration. We see this effect in the ways the *Trilby* mania swept the novel's nineteenth-century reading audience--both in American and in Europe-- and in the in-text characters' impassioned responses to art. *Trilby* provides a model for fandom and demonstrates the human psyche's susceptibility to alterations of consciousness via the shock of art. Second, art functions to convey the traumatic experience. Du Maurier signifies the pair's traumas by turning Little Billee and Trilby inside out--both their emotional processing and their artistic production invert when encountering trauma. Often the narrator will comment on the interiority of these characters, but the characters themselves do not speak of their traumas. Instead, through their art, Du Maurier makes their response to trauma known. Finally, art functions in *Trilby* as a site of complete dissociation and a portrait of trauma. Twentieth-century therapists employ art as tool of therapy for victims of trauma. In some ways, *Trilby* prefigures

this. However, art in *Trilby* promises mediation, not recovery. It is a balm, not an antidote, a mediator, not a conclusion. Through Du Maurier's portrait of trauma and its relationship to art, we see that painting is not only Little Billee's gift and that musical performance is not only La Svengali's (*Trilby's* personae when mesmerized) torment. For him, it is a tool to cope with and communicate his traumas; for her, it is an offering of emotional poignancy.

My third chapter examines how trauma can inhabit form by comparing John Brougham's dramatic adaptation of *Jane Eyre* (1856) to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1848). I argue that Brougham's dramatic adaptation is positioned to represent trauma in three ways: one, Brougham draws the kernel of his plot from a psychologically complex source-text that depicts several kinds of traumas; two, the adaptation observes the conventions of melodrama, which channel the excesses of trauma into its images. Mid nineteenth-century discussions of neurasthenia conceived of the body as a neureo-electric system tasked with regulating shocks from the everyday world. Traumatic shock could therefore be produced by the body's inability to process the level of stimuli at the speed required to maintain mental health (Armstrong 3). Tim Armstrong theorizes that the physical wound indicative of shock is replaced with an economic model (later taken up and developed by Freud) whereby the body fails to process excessive stimuli. By application then, a wound to the mind is created by the excess the conscious body is unable to process.

I connect the mid-century conception of the mind as a regulator of stimuli to Nowell-Smith's contemporary theory of melodrama. Nowell-Smith theorizes that the excess of trauma inhabits melodrama. Emotions and memories "repressed by the [socio-cultural] narrative [are] redirected into channels melodrama provides" (qtd. in Singer 41). Traumatic memories represented as suppressed in the characters are displaced and made visible in the imagery, music,

and body language of melodrama. Third, Brougham facilitates an expression of trauma through the form of adaptation, which I argue enacts trauma upon a text. Adaptation cuts, displaces, and repeats a source text; thus, by its creative acts, adaptation invokes trauma. Further, adaptation's primary tool, intertextuality, mimics the effects of trauma. Brougham uses intertexts to invoke the language and action of Brontë's, bringing a depth of traumatic representation that would be absent without the references to his source text.

I end my dissertation with a chapter on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (1847). Here, I aim to situate Barrett Browning's text in terms of nineteenth-century abolitionist poetry to demonstrate that EBB's representation of love, rape, death, infanticide, chase, and capture distinctively represents the trauma of slavery. Both theorists and clinicians have pointed out that slavery has received a paucity of critical attention as a site of trauma. Graff's contention that trauma literature largely fails to treat slavery as trauma resonates with the critical treatment of "Runaway Slave." Contemporary critics have not well addressed slavery in the poem as a site of trauma. Since trauma is a historically constructed concept and its use came to the fore in the late nineteenth century, its lack of application to "Runaway Slave" makes some sense; however, it is also not discussed in the language of the term's corollary, shock. My chapter offers a corrective to this omission and submits a theory of slavery-as-trauma that when applied to "Runaway Slave" illuminates the character and action of the poem's heroine. Since trauma is a culturally constructed category, it is important that this theory be constructed with the slave culture of the nineteenth century in mind. This involves representing and valuing the slave's voice and interiority.

To this end, Barrett Browning uses the dramatic monologue to provide an unmediated representation of the slave's thoughts and speech. Rather than appropriating the slave's voice, I

argue that Barrett Browning employs what Stef Craps identifies as strategies of estrangement to signify that the speaker's voicing is a representation--not an appropriation. As a dramatic monologue, the poem foregrounds the importance of two audiences: the auditor and the reading audience. Dominick LaCapra conveys the importance of a witness, here the audience, in the traumatic situation, yet he cautions against moving from empathy to identification. In identification, the witness takes on the trauma as his or her own; empathy is a reaching toward understanding while respecting that someone else's trauma can never be fully understood. In my final assessment, Barrett Browning's portrait engenders empathy and even more importantly, I argue, admiration for the enslaved woman's bravery, resistance, and resilience.

vii. Conclusion

My analysis of Victorian literary texts confirms that Victorians were not reluctant to examine situations and factors that cause trauma or to consider how traumatic symptoms present in characters, imagery, and forms. On the contrary, their fiction is steeped in traumatic representation that cuts across lines of class, gender, and race. The portrait that emerges from the representation of trauma provided by Dickens, Du Maurier, Brougham, Brontë, and Barrett Browning, at once, provides a twentieth-century reader with a window into Victorian ideas about the mind, consciousness, and psychic suffering and with a sense of how Victorians helped shape an evolving sense of what it means to be one who suffers from a wounded mind.

Chapter 2

Trauma in *Great Expectations*: Authenticating Experience, Moderating Empathy

i. Introduction

In *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens depicts a constellation of wounded characters—few of the main characters escape the effects of traumatic situations: Joe’s derelict father physically and mentally abused him; Mrs. Joe is bludgeoned and rendered mute; Arthur is haunted by ghostly images of Miss Havisham; Molly is brought into submission by questionable, coercive methods; Estella is abandoned as an infant and is physically and emotionally isolated as a child; Pip, the only survivor of a family of eight, suffers constant belittling, probable physical abuse, and endures death threats and sustained manipulation; and Miss Havisham’s jilting at the altar triggers one of literature’s most profound representations of a mind in its traumatic aftermath. Significant among this cast of the wounded are Pip and Miss Havisham. Unlike most nineteenth-century literary representations of a wounded mind, these characters suffer from invisible wounds that are only detectable in their representations of psychological trauma.⁷ Dickens

⁷ It is difficult to know what term to use here to describe this emerging discourse of the mid nineteenth century. The term trauma itself “would not be used until late in the nineteenth century when the label for a physical wound came to be associated with a mental state” (Matus 7). Yet, clear evidence of mental wounds causing traumatic behaviors can be found earlier in the century. In the 1860s a railway traveler was awarded 700 pounds in compensation when he claimed that a railway accident (physical wound) left him unable to conduct business due to the vision of “his fellow-passengers, with terrified eyes, would come before him whenever he attempted to do any reading or writing...” (Luckhurst 21), and in 1876, physician Herbert Page would assert that nervous disorders without any traumatic lesion will manifest in cases of physical nervous shock (Charcot 99). However, according to the *OED*, it was not until 1895 that *Popular Science Monthly* employed the term psychical trauma, referring to a morbid nervous condition. This is the first printed usage of trauma referring to a non-physical wound (Luckhurst 3). Jill Matus avers that the discourse of psychic shock “stands behind the development of

depiction of sane characters who, in varying degrees, operate out of traumatic woundedness contributed to a growing discussion of traumatic shock, challenged Victorian conceptions of individual volition, and elevated the agency of the unconscious.⁸

Great Expectations also gestures forward in its modern experiments with narrative voice. Through Pip's first-person narrative voice, readers are privy to external, highly attuned descriptions of Miss Havisham's trauma—Pip conveys Miss Havisham's story with the sensitivity of one who understands a traumatic break. More significantly, Pip's narrative voice develops the interiority of trauma. Dickens draws some of his most striking characterization from the effects of traumatic wounds: Pip's guilty hallucinations and Havisham's rigid and repetitive behavior. However, it is through the novel's narration that Pip is so deeply characterized as a young man operating out of trauma. Through both its content and delivery, *Great Expectations* acts as a window into the wounded unconscious. Peter Ackroyd, Lawrence Dessen, Vincent P. Pecora, Sean Glass and others have indicated that *Great Expectations* is shaped by Dickens's own private traumas; however, I do not aim to analyze how Dickens projects his childhood poverty or his Warren's-shoeblicking-factory trials onto his narrative. Beyond its autobiographical implications, *Great Expectations* offers an exploration of the ways

trauma theory" (85). In this chapter then, I will employ both the term trauma and traumatic shock. I will generally use the term trauma since *Great Expectations*, both by its story and the timing of its publication, will be shown to provide a link between Victorian discourses of shock and late Victorian reformulations of shock into trauma. However, to distinguish between wounds that are manifest in purely psychical symptoms from wounds that display both the physical and psychical, I will term the latter traumatic shock.

⁸ Considerable attention has been given to mad or insane characters of nineteenth-century fiction. In this chapter, however, I aim to discuss characters who are not mad but are traumatized, who are not shut-up or institutionalized and whose behaviors do not prevent their participation in society. I do not place Miss Havisham in this category. As Glass has pointed out, Miss Havisham is mentally present, perhaps calculating enough to have escaped mad-woman status. Further, her wealth has allowed her to care for herself rather than requiring institutionalization.

that evolving concepts of traumatic shock inform narration and character. The effect of this depiction authenticates the perceived danger in Pip's and Magwitch's initial encounter, moderates Havisham's guilt by rendering her deplorable behavior understandable, and shows trauma's potential for contagion.

In this chapter, I will situate *Great Expectations* within the dominant mid-nineteenth ideas about trauma and the subconscious, take a brief look at the publication contexts of *Great Expectations* and of the short, gothic-style fiction published concurrently with the novel in *All the Year Round*. Next, I will discuss several specific events that cause Pip's trauma, a trauma that Dickens makes clear is a wound to the mind alone. If we read *Great Expectations* as the testimony of a traumatized subject, the narrator's delivery, selection of detail, and way of seeing people and places come together to cohere plot and illuminate relationships. I will go on to argue that Pip's early encounters with Magwitch leave an enduring imprint upon Pip's psyche and shape the ways he responds to Miss Havisham, Satis House, and Estella. Pip's devotion to Estella and her adopted mother do not simply indicate his love-struck condition or his masochistic tendencies but can be seen as the workings out of his traumas, both those he has personally experienced and those traumas he has taken on. Finally, I will argue that the non-physical symptoms of Pip's trauma—belated processing, layers of consciousness, and silences—work to construct a narrative voice through Pip that represents his personal suffering and the suffering of others.

ii. The Wounded Mind and Characterization

Some literary critics explain the nineteenth-century emphasis on physical wounds by seeing the shift from shock to trauma as signaling a switch point between the physical and psychological. Prior to the late 1800s, a bodily wound accompanied by specific, abnormal behaviors

signified shock; after the 1890s, a psychological wound independent of physical harm was considered cause for trauma. For most of the nineteenth century, Victorian mental philosophers and later mental scientists believed that the condition of the body controlled the condition of the mind. In “Two Types of Shock in Modernity,” Tim Armstrong avers that prior to Freud, conceptions of shock did not have a psychological component. Armstrong credits Freud with “dismissing the old naïve theory of shock,” replacing it with his own theory of trauma, and consequently, saving the theory from being purely material (64). Yet, distinguishing shock from trauma as one being physical and the latter as psychological fails to consider the scope of shock, a diagnosis enfolding both the impact of an event and the after effects of the event. Rather than viewing the two terms in opposition, we may view trauma as an extension of shock or trauma as a more nuanced recognition of wounds to the mind. In his thorough discussion of the history of trauma, Roger Luckhurst details how the expansion of the railway industry led to serious and damaging accidents and to an increased awareness of large-scale accidents in general and their resulting mental disturbances specifically.⁹ Luckhurst emphasizes the high cultural stakes of claiming that psychological wounds alone could cause traumatic symptoms; a host of implications for the legal, medical, and psychological communities was in play. It follows then that portraying a literary character as mentally wounded apart from physical trauma indicated forward thinking on the part of Dickens while it ran the risk of an unsympathetic response from readers who may not recognize the invisible wounds as the source of the character’s behaviors. Indeed, Jill Matus remarks that for a nineteenth-century literary character’s wounds “to be really commanding of

⁹ In the introduction to *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst presents a complicated history of trauma beginning in the 1860s, weaving together its medical, cultural, historical, legal and religious threads. The text goes on to explore literature’s important role in the cultural formation of trauma, but does not address literature prior to trauma’s inclusion in the DSM (1980).

sympathy, [their] illness must be bodily” (6). Victorians embraced a unified view of the body and mind, seeing the health of mind and body as interdependent. Dickens’s depiction challenged this view of mind-body unity while it also capitalized upon the representation of mental trauma to create complex characters.

Not only did Dickens risk the sympathy of the reader, but he also unsettled the mid-Victorian readers’ idea of the authority of an active, conscious mind. Ideas about the nature and authority of the unconscious fueled debates from mid eighteenth century throughout the nineteenth. From David Hartley’s associationism, to Sir William Hamilton’s view of the tripart degrees of latent mental states, to Coleridge’s refutation of Hartley, to William Carpenter’s emphasis on the training of the mind, nineteenth-century thinkers engaged in an ongoing debate which explored the sophisticated contours of interiority.¹⁰ A significant point of contention concerned the agency of the unconscious. Most nineteenth-century thinkers were willing to concede a few involuntary processes to the unconscious, but maintained their belief in an overall “active mind whose agency is uncompromised” (Matus 24). Fueling the debate was the 1833 discovery of the reflex response, which showed that a nervous impulse could travel the spinal cord, causing an immediate action whose initiation bypassed the brain’s conscious sanction. Consequently, Victorian psychological writing evidenced a growing anxiety: discipline and salutary habit did not guarantee that the conscious dictate the majority of human action and thought. Matus underscores the perceived ramifications of the reflexive response: “developments

¹⁰ See Jenny Osbourne Taylor’s chapter “Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious” in *Writing and Victorianism* (1997) for an excellent overview of nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious. Taylor contextualizes Victorians views of the unconscious and compares Victorian thinking to Freudian. While Taylor’s chapter does serve to illuminate nineteenth-century thinking on trauma, she fails to consider examples of trauma where memory is intact. Additionally, Bourne Taylor’s and Sally Shuttleworth’s *Embodied Selves* offers a collection of excerpts from influential psychological texts of the period.

in physiology and neurology on automatic and unconscious mental functioning pointed threateningly to an erosion of agency with its dark implications of a lack of responsibility and accountability...unconscious perpetration of action (or the omission of action) [raised] urgent questions about the contradictory or congruent motives in the conscious self and its automatic or unconscious counterpart” (36). In other words, limiting the volition of the conscious muddied assessments of guilt and innocence. If Miss Havisham’s macabre penchant to live in the past or her manipulations of Estella can be attributed to the involuntary action of her unconscious, then she is less guilty and more pitiable. If Pip’s compulsive desire to return to Miss Havisham’s is a kind of repetitive return to the site of trauma, his visits appears less the actions of a desperate young man and more the reflex of a mind driven by a wounded conscious. Earlier, I mentioned that Dickens risked the sympathy of his readers by inflicting characters with wounds to the mind alone with no physical cause; perhaps, implicating their unconscious for their deplorable actions and behaviors also worked in the inverse to garner his characters less judgement and more empathy.

However, while forward looking, *Great Expectations* still clearly reflects the mid-Victorian period. Dickens’s representation of trauma stretches across the nineteenth century by bridging mid nineteenth-century views of the mind and personal responsibility to late nineteenth, early twentieth-century constructions of trauma and its causes. Victorian culture was less a culture of blame and more a culture of responsibility. In contrast, Matus suggests that contemporary trauma theory is more vested in reparation. The Victorian emphasis on responsibility may have prevented nineteenth-century culture from forming a fully developed theory of trauma (184-185). In her keen analysis of “Lease, the Pointsman” (1869),¹¹ Matus

¹¹ Ellen Woods’s “Lease, the Pointsman.”

points out how a signal man's being mentally absent (albeit physically present) from the scene of a catastrophic rail accident did not diminish his responsibility for the accident (186). In fact, Matus explores how a considerable part of the narrative seeks to unravel where the seminal responsibility for the accident can be placed, questioning if Lease's wife is ultimately responsible because she forgot to take him tea that day or because she failed to run an orderly household where her children stood ready to go in her place. The narrator explores the thinking of characters who sought to understand and take responsibility for their actions. If the unconscious could house knowledge that the conscious was unaware of or if the unconscious could dictate behaviors not initiated by the conscious, how could one be held accountable for all of their actions? I want to be careful, however, not to conflate the registration of an unusually painful event in the unconscious with the lack of ability to recall the event.

Victorians recognized layers of memory and stages of recall, including the partial or full recollection of a traumatic event.¹² Characters in *Great Expectations* are generally in full possession of their memories even when they choose to keep their pasts secret. The belated processing that does occur tends to focus on understanding the *impact* of what happened rather than understanding *what* happened. Further, I want to distinguish among three distinct responses to trauma: the recollection of a trauma-causing event, a non-volitional response to trauma, and the awareness of non-volitional behaviors resulting from trauma. Unlike late-modern theories of trauma, Victorian discourses indicated that these responses can and often do exist concurrently

¹² This is contradictory to many popular current views of trauma. Cathy Caruth's famous pronouncement that "a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" exemplifies much of modern trauma theory's reliance on dissociation (*Unclaimed Experience* 8).

and allowed for an unconscious that shaped conscious decision and action.¹³ In *Great Expectations*, characters remember their trauma-causing events, yet do not choose to enact traumatic behaviors. Dickens's characters are aware of their trauma and of its effects, but they do not will to manifest trauma's symptoms. Miss Havisham recalls the heartbreak of a ruptured engagement, she chooses to use Estella for revenge, but her impulse to circle her wedding cake or to freeze the moment of her suffering go beyond conscious volition. Pip remembers Magwitch's threats but cannot control the flashbacks and hallucinations that attend his memories of helping a convict. Additionally, by the end of the novel, characters recognize and bear responsibility for any wrongdoings—their traumas do not dismiss them from accountability. Pip's narration of the novel's traumas serves then, not so much to shift or dismiss blame, but to demonstrate the agency of the unconscious and to create empathy and verisimilitude in a tale that would otherwise be outlandish, bleak, and humorless.

iii. An Exigency for Trauma: Publication

Writing to Forster in August of 1860, Charles Dickens shared his enthusiasm for an upcoming story, a “grotesque” and “comic” tale (Forster 91). Dickens planned to write and serialize *Great Expectations* in twenty monthly installments; however, the financial strains of keeping two households, one for his wife and one for Ellen Ternan; establishing his two sons in business; shouldering the financial responsibilities for his recently passed brother Alfred's

¹³ Matus explores how George Eliot captures this idea in *Adam Bede* in her depiction of Arthur Donnithorne when she likens his unconscious to a “small unnoticeable wheel” that has a “great deal to do with the motion of the larger obvious ones” (Matus 36).

In *Lectures of Metaphysics and Logic* (1859), William Hamilton outlines three levels of latency. Hamilton's schematic points out how Victorians were working to map the mind, its conscious, and unconscious. His theory also draws out that the behavioral effects of trauma were commonly viewed as being non-volitional even while being recognized as products of traumatic shock. Excerpts of this text are included in Taylor and Shuttleworth's *Embodied Selves* (2003).

impecunious widow and five children; and the lagging circulation of Dickens's journal *All the Year Round*,¹⁴ drove Dickens to take a different—more expedient and potentially more profitable—path. To provide for his family and jolt the sales of his journal, Dickens traded monthly serialization for weekly. He published two chapters at a time for a total of thirty-six installments in *All the Year Round*. As Sean Glass comments, the writing of *Great Expectations* was forged in the crucible of psychological and financial need” (618). Complicating the challenge of writing weekly chapters was Dickens's plan to publish the novel as a triple decker for circulating libraries after the weekly serialization was complete. No other Dickens novel was serialized with this intention (Patten 291).¹⁵

The result was twofold: one, a story structured by the need to hook a weekly reader by ending every other chapter with a moment of suspense. Rachel Malik captures the effect of these endings, labeling them “tantalizingly incomplete [in] form” and leaving a reader “mired rather than freed by context” (481, 482);¹⁶ and two, Dickens's writing was shaped by his plan to create the novel in three parts or stages—the two-chapter installments needed to neatly divide into a greater three-part plan. While some critics have argued that these parts are disparate or feel like

¹⁴ In “Commodity and Identity in *Great Expectations*” (2012), Sean Glass claims that Dickens's financial pressures were more felt than actual. Glass argues that by 1859, Dickens was well situated financially and had no serious financial woes. Instead, Glass sees Dickens's drive to produce and progress financially as part of his ongoing attempts to escape the depression and trauma of his childhood (625).

¹⁵ In *Charles Dickens and His Publishers* (1978), Robert Patten explains the significance of *Great Expectations* being published at 3s 6d in triple decker form for the more upscale market of circulating libraries. Dickens's early novels were published in cheaper formats produced for wider sales.

¹⁶ In “Stories Many, Fast and Slow: *Great Expectations* and the Mid-Victorian Horizon of the Publishable” (2012), Rachel Malik accounts the details surrounding the publication of *Great Expectations* and discusses the effects the novel's publication—the pacing and its format—has on the language and structure of the story.

digressions, others argue that Dickens artfully weaves the pieces together.¹⁷ I suggest that the offering of different narrative strands—by Dickens’s taking up different characters’ stories, staging the content in different settings, and by delivering the narrative from multiple chronologies—in some ways reflects both schools of thought. Dickens does create disparate worlds, but in doing so, he offers readers worlds that can be bridged, connections that need to be made in order for the narrative to be satisfying. Roger Luckhurst defines trauma as the “piercing or breach of a border that puts inside and outside into a strange communication. Trauma opens passageways between systems that were once discrete, making unforeseen connections that distress or confound” (3). *Great Expectations* navigates between the country and city, connects the wealthy to the poor, and entangles the guilty with the innocent—indeed, making “unforeseen connections” through occurrences of “strange communication.”

Thus, the very exigencies prompting the writing of *Great Expectations* helped shaped the novel into a platform that reflects the effects of trauma. As Malik notes, “The dramatic acceleration of life in nearly all its aspects transformed the processes of fiction publishing more than once during the Victorian period, and was fundamental to shaping its horizons: its possibilities and limitations of form, genre, narrative, and characterization” (478). Reading trauma in *Great Expectations* as a “passageway” allows us to see how the novel’s patterns of development and its distinctive narrative strands reflect the novel’s publication venue and rapidly changing nineteenth-century culture in general. Further, attuning to trauma as a passageway

¹⁷ Malik argues for what she terms “capsular” moments in *Great Expectations*. The “capsular scene” relies on grammatical and imagistic threads to connect narrative strands. It “involves the development of a number of relatively autonomous stories...[in] a compositional practice that presumes accelerated processes of multiform publishing....” Her argument answers critics who see *Great Expectations* as containing digressions.

allows an exploration of the trauma's transferability. Trauma becomes a discernible, contagious connection among spheres that were unlikely to intersect.

Of course, Dickens was not the only nineteenth-century author foregrounding mental suffering in his texts, but *Great Expectations* acknowledges psychical trauma where physical signs or wounds are absent or minimized but significant symptoms of trauma still persist. The physical can become part of the equation for trauma as an initial physical wound that accompanies or leads to a psychical one (a blow to the head), a physical wound that persists alongside mental anguish (as in railway spine), or as a physical ailment that manifest in response to a mental wound or emotional exertion (such as brain fever or muteness). For example, the anonymous gothic-style stories published alongside *Great Expectations* in *All the Year Round* feature the effects of traumatic shock.¹⁸ In "My Father's Secret," published aside chapters twenty-three and twenty-four of *Great Expectations* in the March 9 issue of *All the Year Round*, the main character is awoken by a ghostly woman's presence in his room. Having heard mysterious screams on several prior nights, the young man's nerves were already excited. Her presence ignites his full terror and he "falls insensible" (517). He later awakens with a "brain fever" (517). The young man's traumatic response is conveyed mostly in physical terms (falling), and the severity of his terror is made known through his brain fever. Published in the December 22, 1860 issue, alongside chapters six and seven of the novel, "The Family at Fernhouse" also depicts a customary nineteenth-century view of traumatic shock. When

¹⁸ In "'We were unhealthy and unsafe': Dickens' *Great Expectations* and *All The Year Round's* Anxiety Stories" (2010), Deborah Wynne shares that much of *All the Year Round's* popularity was based on its inclusion of sensationalist texts, which had emerged as quite popular in the 1860s. Wynne saw these anxiety tales (her term for the gothic short stories) as giving vent to the nineteenth-century fear of reversion; however, I am looking at these stories to show how trauma was most commonly represented in nineteenth-century literature.

witnessing a murder, the narrator becomes “giddy” and experiences a “trance” (263). From this initial response, however, “Family at Fernhouse” registers the wound as both physical and mental: “But as my brain grew clearer it grew also feverish, and I knew there was no rest for me to-night. My hearing began to be distressingly acute, and every painful thought and circumstance of my life rose up before me with the force and vividness of living scenes actually present to my senses” (263). In addition to the narrator’s flashbacks, she emphasizes the severity of her wound by explanations of intensified hearing. In both accounts, the representation of physical symptoms operating in concert with mental ones affirms the Victorian notion of the unity of the mind and body. Several of Dickens’s characters represent trauma in a way that enforces this view. Mrs. Joe, for example, manifests muteness commonly associated with trauma but it is unclear if the muteness is due to fear or a blow to her head. Arthur suffers from a hallucinatory decline that ends in death, and even Pip suffers from a brain fever after aiding in Magwitch’s escape; however, in Pip’s initial encounter with Magwitch and his interactions with Miss Havisham, Dickens distinctly offers clear representations of trauma that are neither connected to a physical wound nor manifested in physical symptoms.

iv. Pip’s Multifaceted Traumas

Guilty—this is perhaps the most common adjective associated with Pip. Although this descriptor is apt, it can, at first, distract from recognition of Pip’s trauma. We might consider Pip’s guilt as only a consequence of his thankless treatment of Joe and Biddy. However, guilt is also a common symptom of trauma. Victims of trauma often display non-rational guilt. Payne argues that a victim’s sense of terror triggers a “rapid incorporation of essentially the entire world view of the perpetrator, including the perpetrator’s guilt” (Payne 160). As mentioned earlier, Victorian culture was more a culture of responsibility than of blame and this too may

account for the one-sided attention given to Pip's guilty conscious. Yet, Pip's guilt may be one of the main indicators of his childhood traumas, which I argue converge in his gravesite visit on the marsh. In this opening scene, Dickens foregrounds the wounds that will shape Pip's conscious and unconscious behaviors: his outliving his parents and younger brothers, the oppression of his sister, and the physical and verbal threats of Magwitch.

Dickens situates the first engagement between Pip and Magwitch in a landscape embedded with trauma. References to the tombstones of Pip's parents immediately communicate Pip's orphanship. While infant mortality rates in early nineteenth-century England were high, the number of deaths in Pip's family exceeds the norm by far.¹⁹ The scene underscores Pip's aloneness through its imagery. In a Kantian sense of the sublime, the passage captures the capaciousness of the setting and Pip's smallness within it through the ordering of images, which take the mind's eye over a desolate and hostile land in a doubly clever play of narrative distance. Pip-the-narrator positions the image of his younger self in an expanding frame which moves the reader's view spatially, beginning with an image of Pip's family's tombstones, out to the marshes, further to the lair of the sea and back up-close to Pip. It is as if the reader shares Pip's mind's eye until the paragraph's final image where Pip is both narrator and subject:

...and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond, was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind

¹⁹In "Health in England (16th–18th c.)," Lynda Payne states that approximately 140 children per 1000 died before their first year of life in the Early Modern period. Payne also goes on to dispute the notion that early nineteenth-century parents avoided strong emotional connections with their infant children until they were older and more likely to survive.

was rushing, was the sea; and that small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (3-4)

Dickens's use of "Pip" rather than "me" momentarily shifts the narrative point of view, forcing the reader to move from observing *with* the narrator to seeing the narrator—Pip, a small, solitary child in a hostile world. His vulnerability is palpable, and Dickens concretizes the effects of Pip's orphanship and his future prospects in the "bleak," "raw," and "dark" marshes. Perhaps as foreshadowing but certainly to connect Pip's hardships to Magwitch's, the narrator describes Magwitch in terms that show he too has been damaged by the landscape. As if he has been at war with the marshes, he is "soaked in water, and smothered by mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars" (4). The narrator's polysyndetic enumeration of passive-voice clauses emphasizes the hostility of the natural order toward Pip and Magwitch.

The histories of Pip and Magwitch condition them for an encounter that traumatizes. Hardship has made Pip vulnerable and it has rendered Magwitch desperate. Upon meeting Pip, Magwitch threatens "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat" (5). Next, he capsizes Pip, hints at cannibalism, and threatens to cut out Pip's heart and liver if Pip should fail to bring him "wittles" and a file. It may be tempting to dismiss the initial scene between Magwitch and Pip as childish exaggeration rather than to see it as a terror-inducing moment. Because Pip is telling his story from its end, the audience knows that the threat of death will not be realized. Further, narrator-Pip's recollection of Magwitch's turning him upside down, filtering the memory of upturn through the eyes of young Pip, reminds the reader that sometimes a child perceives a situation as more dangerous than it is. The action mimics the time-honored, trust-producing play of caregivers' tossing children in the air (within arm's reach) or turning them upside down to elicit a temporary state of fear, usually followed by laughter. Symbolically,

however, Pip's inversion punctuates the magnitude of this encounter's terror; the experience will upend his whole life. We should be reluctant to underestimate the potential for this experience to traumatize a child. Trauma experts propose that a child is more susceptible to being adversely affected by a potentially traumatic event than an adult is.²⁰ Perceived terror translates to real terror in the mind and body of a child. Pip himself anticipates a future audience diminishing his youthful fear: "I have often thought that few people know what secrecy there is in the young, under terror. No matter how unreasonable the terror, so that it be terror. I was in mortal terror" (14). Pip's interacting with Magwitch here works to authenticate the danger—real or perceived—of this marsh encounter. It was a matter of life and death and leveraged the ability to trigger trauma in him. Further, foregrounding Pip's trauma so early in the novel establishes both the validity of Pip's suffering and informs his narrative voice. His life-threatening encounter with the surly, bedraggled convict helps to make sense of Pip's relationship with Estella and Miss Havisham and brings to the fore that the voice telling this story bears the marks of trauma.

Pip's second traumatizing incident occurs when he visits Miss Havisham's house as a young child. Miss Havisham and Satis House represent a complex and layered depiction of Pip's trauma. At Satis House, Dickens enfolds traumas experienced both directly and indirectly and maps successive traumas onto one site and one person. Visiting Satis House traumatizes Pip initially through the direct trauma of his introduction to Miss Havisham. Her behavior is so bizarre and death-like as to shock young Pip. When Pip enters the wedding room at Satis House, he meets the mysterious spinster, "the strangest lady" he had ever seen. She has the appearance of a wax statue with wandering eyes or a "skeleton in rich dresses, that had been dug out of a

²⁰ Zlotnick et al review several studies that compare the effects of child onset trauma to adult onset trauma. They propose that potentially traumatic incidents occurring in childhood are experienced longer and with more severity.

vault under the church pavement” (53). When considering the images of the barren and rotted brewery, her withered visage, and descriptions of her creepy behaviors—she wants him to play in accordance to her “sick fancies”—the traumatic indelibility of an encounter with Miss Havisham seems rather realistic. Peter Brooks discusses the incident in the language of trauma and terms Pip’s introduction to Miss Havisham as a trauma of “visual impression” which returns in flashbacks of “unmastered horror” (509). Still, some may think it stretches plausibility to categorize an encounter with a care-worn, pale and too-thin woman as traumatic. Again, Pip recognizes this: “My sister’s upbringing had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may only be a small injustice that the child can be exposed to, but the child is small and his world is small...I was morally timid and very sensitive” (57). Although few interactions between Mrs. Joe and Pip are recorded in *Great Expectations*, the implication is that being “raised by hand” is a physically painful—even abusive—process, and if Mrs. Joe was quick to use her hand, she was even quicker to wound with her words, consistently reminding Pip that he should be dead without her intervention.

Pip’s traumatic response to Miss Havisham is significant in that it concurrently registers Pip as victim in cases of primary and secondary trauma. Yes, Pip is traumatized by the horrific and bizarre images of human decay and pain in Miss Havisham; however, he also “takes on” her trauma or experiences secondary victim status. Miss Havisham’s primary trauma becomes Pip’s secondary. From the early twentieth-century until the present, matters of how physically near a potential victim must be, how much time has passed between the traumatic event and confrontation with the event, and what kinds of relationships qualify claims of secondary trauma as viable persist in blurring the lines between witness and victim and enlarge the circle of those

awarded trauma-victim status. *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network* (TNCTSN) (2017) states that secondary traumatic stress results from hearing about another's trauma and presents symptoms similar to those of PTSD, such as flashbacks, hyperarousal, memory dysfunction and a sense of helplessness. TNCTSN specifies "hearing" as the transmitter of trauma to suit a therapeutic situation: however, Roger Luckhurst draws out that trauma is "worryingly transmissible": "it leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients (as in the 'contagions' of hysteria or shell shock), between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference or suggestion, and between victims and their listeners or viewers who are commonly moved to forms of overwhelming sympathy, even to the extent of claiming secondary victimhood" (3) . According to Luckhurst, it was not until 1925 that courts extended the impact of trauma to secondary victims who met the standard of susceptibility (28).²¹ Dickens crossed this bridge between primary and secondary victimhood years before the courts did. *Great Expectations* features a few characters who are traumatized indirectly, namely Pip, Estella, and Arthur. These characters do not experience or display any physical wounds, but each absorbs trauma from Miss Havisham.²²

²¹ In "The Genealogy of a Concept," a chapter in *The Trauma Question* (2008), Roger Luckhurst recalls the *Hambrook v. Stokes Bros* where a mother watched as a lorry carrying children careened out of control. After viewing the event, the mother was so terrified for the safety of her own children that she became ill and died. Recognizing the trauma of secondary victims, those not incurring the traumatic event directly, a court granted compensation on the grounds that fear for another could cause personal shock. Luckhurst goes on to illuminate the legal history of secondary victim status, demonstrating that the concept of trauma is protean and problematic (28-34).

²² Several scholars indicate that Miss Havisham chooses her extreme behaviors. Catherine Golden, Maria Loannou, and Martina Sciolion read Miss Havisham as acting out of revenge. Ciugureanu credits Havisham with having the presence of mind to willfully "freeze the moment of her misfortune" (353). These reasons may help to explain Havisham's behavior toward Estella (at least partially); however, to assume a mentally healthy individual would choose to live without sunlight for years, without change of clothes amid rotting food and its arachnid-scavengers is reductive thinking. Others diminish Havisham's conscious agency and

For Pip, the “contagionability” of Miss Havisham’s trauma can be partially accounted for by her being bound to Satis House, the site of her trauma. The walled up and barred windows of her home and its chained entrance evoke multiple meanings. They communicate the imprisonment of Miss Havisham in a dark, decaying environment. She cannot leave the physical site of her trauma even if she desires. Additionally, these images suggest that Miss Havisham’s own mind and body hold her captive. Susan Walsh sees Satis House “as the architectural correlative of its female inhabitant, a public digest of a thwarted woman’s private mental and bodily decay” (Walsh 73).²³ Walking among the rotten casks and up the dark stairways, Pip encounters the psychological landscape of Miss Havisham’s trauma. Thus, young Pip’s visit to Satis House forces a too-vivid witness of her pain. Further, narrator Pip’s recollection of his initial visit to Satis House reveals that Pip’s sensitivity to Miss Havisham’s suffering is mingled with and compounded by his marsh-experience with Magwitch. Pip describes Havisham in terms that recall his first meeting the convict. Magwitch wears an “old rag round his head” (4), and Havisham a “long half-arranged veil” (52); Magwitch wears one leg-iron, Havisham one shoe, and both wear discolored, worn clothing. More significantly, both Magwitch and Havisham appear to be on the cusp of death, a condition resulting from their own traumas. In the dark, near the tombstones of Pip’s parents, Magwitch bears the expression of one “eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in” (6). Similarly, narrator Pip meets Havisham in a desiccated Brewery, a record of a life

accredit her bizarre behaviors as being “animated by mania” (Mukherjee 110). Miss Havisham presents a more complex representation of suffering; she is acting both volitionally—out of vengeance—and subconsciously—out of trauma.

²³ Susan Walsh’s essay “Bodies of Capital: Great Expectations and the Climacteric Economy” (1993) explores how the female body reflects nineteenth-century concerns about the economy. More narrowly, she argues that Miss Havisham’s aging body serves as a metaphor for a dysfunctional market economy.

dried up, and sees Miss Havisham as a “corpse like” woman who is grave-ready, her veil, a “shroud” and her dress, “grave clothes” (54). Both characters are subject to hostile physical environments and victims of class oppression. The parallels between these two suggest that Pip’s encounter with Magwitch colors the way he is affected by Miss Havisham. Her domineering manipulations are rendered doubly traumatic because Pip has “been there” before.

Deception is at the heart of both Magwitch’s and Miss Havisham’s trials. Both have been bamboozled by Meriweather Compeyson. Magwitch becomes the dupe in Compeyson’s money-making schemes, and Miss Havisham is deluded into thinking her engagement to Meriweather Compeyson will lead to marriage. When Compeyson calls off the wedding, the situation proves traumatic for her. On the surface, we can identify jilting as the catalyst of Miss Havisham’s trauma, but beneath this lies a host of nineteenth-century cultural expectations that inform how powerfully the jilting affected her. Miss Havisham broke several “rules,” by becoming romantically involved with Arthur. Kathryn Hughes discusses common expectations for engagement in mid-Victorian Britain. The man should be approximately five years older than the woman and be able to financially support the wife; the proposed union should be based on the desire for a stable life and for children. Readers are given limited information about her engagement to Compeyson, but we know Miss Havisham is acting out of “passion” rather than circumspection. Compeyson has demonstrated, to the distress of Matthew Pocket, that he is dependent upon his fiancé for money rather than able to provide for her. While we are not told his age directly, this “showy man” is the friend of Arthur, her younger half-brother, so it is likely that he is not five years older than Havisham and plausible that he is younger. Thus, Miss Havisham’s engagement separated her from convention and cast her future with a disreputable man. The broken engagement prophesied an emotionally solitary present and future.

Her response to the jilting perverts nineteenth-century expectations for a married woman and evidences serious trauma. Historian Barbara Welter's seminal article, "The Cult of Womanhood" explains that according to the Cult of Womanhood, a true woman must be pure, submissive, and domestic.²⁴ Her purpose in life was to keep the home, bear her husband's children, and raise them to maintain or improve the father's reputation and social standing. Miss Havisham strangely fulfills and clearly perverts these expectations while remaining forever a "Miss." Gendered separate spheres are maintained so much so that Havisham never leaves her home, and it is "kept," but in a manner that resists change. She does have a child, but Estella is not trained to elevate the father but to break the hearts of men. In her trauma, Miss Havisham twists the notion of angel in the house—she keeps a home-fire burning, but for torture, not nurture. These behaviors—often inversions of societal expectations—underscore the degree to which behavioral codes were ingrained in women by revealing how a damaged mind could "comply."

Visiting Miss Havisham forces Pip to inhabit both the place and time of her jilting, compounding the impact of her trauma upon young Pip. To enter her dressing room is to step back some twenty years. Pip carefully recalls how this space captured the moment time was disrupted: "She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on—the other was on the table near her hand—her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom lay with those trinkets..." (52). The unworn accessories that lie about her room signal a return to the moment of her great humiliation. Each image is a sign of an incomplete, arrested activity and marks the incursion of the past into the present. The objects'

²⁴ While Welter's discussion is most known for her examination of American conceptions of nineteenth-century womanhood, her defining work is based on how British concepts influenced American ones and as such, is useful here.

undisturbed display, their sameness, conveys the repetition of Havisham's life. When the imprint she has maintained of this memory is disturbed, she is quick to restore its precision. After she tries the effect of a necklace upon Estella, she puts "down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up" (54).

Yet, Miss Havisham's efforts to freeze time have not gone without complication. Her "withered," once white, now yellow bridal dress, adorned with "frillings and trimmings" that appear "earthy paper" indicates that time has continued to move at Satis House (55). Try as she may to keep everything from change, the cake has decayed, the dress has deteriorated, and the bride has aged—in fact, her description is ghost-like: "I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but for the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bones" (52). Pip's initial sense of her being ghost-like is reiterated much later in the novel: "As I looked around at them, and at the pale gloom they made, and at the stopped clock, and at the withered articles of bridal dress upon the table and the ground, and at her own awful figure with its ghostly reflection thrown large by the fire upon the ceiling and the wall, I saw in everything the construction that my mind had come to, repeated and thrown back at me" (277). Havisham's concurrent representation of bride and ghost, again, draws out the past erupting into the present. Cathy Caruth explains "The ghost represents an appropriate embodiment of the disjunction of temporarily, the surfacing of the past in the present" (*Unclaimed Experience* 6). On her own body, Havisham bears the evidence of one time erupting into another. She enacts a kind of self haunting and bears a constant reminder that the events of the past are not fully processed.

The clear depiction of her trauma lends credence to its contagionability and demonstrates Dickens's prescient recognition of the course trauma studies would take in the next century. For the nineteenth-century audience, however, Pip's traumatic behaviors in response to Havisham open up his interiority beyond even the scope of a first-person narrative. Having discussed the situations and characters that cause Pip's trauma, in the next sections, I will explore how several distinctions of Pip's narrative voice are symptoms of trauma. Pip tells his story as one who has endured suffering and faced danger and has been shaped by the encounters. His traumatic symptoms raze the natural walls of self-preservation, showing the degree to which Pip is impressionable, guilt-ridden, and empathic.

v. Narrative Process: Pip's Belated Processing

Until the 1860s, memory was commonly viewed as a kind of storehouse, an archive holding fully intact memories. Frances Power Cobbe's theory of the fallacy of memory challenged this view, arguing that what people remember is actually a composite, subject to personal prejudices and interests. For Cobbe, there was no engraved tablet, but rather a palimpsest. Today, theorists, such as Judith Herman, Anne Whitehead, Charlotte Delbo and Joseph Delacroix,²⁵ would likely label this as narrative memory, memory that is able to be recalled, ordered and shaped in the process of narrativization. In the 1870s,²⁶ William Carpenter

²⁵Joseph LeDoux, in *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotion Life* (1996), offers neurobiological explanations for remembered trauma. Drawing from her experience at Auschwitz, Charlotte Delbo's *Days and Memory* (1990) upholds memory as the means of survival. She avows to not have forgotten one moment of life in the concentration camp; however, she differentiates between deep and external memory. Anne Whitehead offers the most flexible view of memory, allowing for space between full recall and full dissociation. She distinguishes between depths of memory: narrative memory and traumatic memory; the former is capable of improvisation and amplification and the latter is inflexible and uncontrollable.

²⁶Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology: With their Chief Application to Psychology, Pathology, Therapeutics, Hygiene, & Forensic Medicine* came out in several

engaged Cobbe's conception of a memory's reliability. Minimizing the role of personal passion and self-interest and emphasizing the power of repetition in creating narrative, he too discusses a process of retrieval that allows for the shaping of memory: "the mind may undergo modifications, sometimes of very considerable importance, without being itself conscious of the process, until its results present themselves to the consciousness, in the new ideas, of the new combination of ideas, which the process has evolved" (515). Here, Carpenter's view of unconscious cerebration, a term he employed to describe the operation of the mind when the will was suspended, implies that the conscious mind gathers details as the unconscious mind delivers them.²⁷ However, Carpenter exempts memories like those of trauma from this kind of embellishment, qualifying that "single experiences of peculiar force and vividness" can be so unusual as to prevent memories from evolving (454). Carpenter's exception links to Freud's well-known view of traumatic memory. Traumatic memory is not accessible; it possesses the subject. Drawing inspiration from Freud, Cathy Caruth averred that memory is pristine and the retrieval process is a venture in resurrecting a precise, stable memory—there is no evolution or embellishment of the imprint of trauma (*Trauma* 4).²⁸ While departing on their views of the degrees and purity to which a memory imprints, each of these views of memory storage and

editions, with the 1st edition in 1874 and the 6th edition in 1888 (published after his death). I have drawn the quote from the 4th edition, 1876.

²⁷ Carpenter's view on the agency of the unconscious developed over his career. Early, he views human will as superseding any involuntary actions; later, in his discussion of responsibility and duty, he concedes that the unconscious must have some agency for automatic actions, but even those actions can be subject to the power of the will.

²⁸ Caruth is the best known among several trauma theorists who advocate for pristine traumatic memory. Other prominent proponents of the neurobiological approach to trauma favoring exact recall include Bessel van der Kolk and Brian van der Hart.

Jill Matus points out that twentieth-century discussions on the nature of memory echo Victorian debates (24). Today's argument between neurobiological and psychoanalytic approaches to trauma can sound a lot like the tussle between thinkers like Cobbes, Huxley, and Carpenter.

recall capture the idea of belatedness, the after-the-fact, often gradual return of a complete memory. Several times in the novel, Pip-the-narrator alerts his reader to the belated understanding of his traumas. Pip gives no indication that he has embellished the memory; conversely, it appears he provides full disclosure even when this paints his own thoughts and actions in an unfavorable light. Indeed, part of Pip's delayed processing is delayed confession.

As Pip reflects, he is able to cohere the elements of his experience. Through his belated processing, we gain access to his confusion and anguish and to his sense-making efforts. When the soldiers arrive at Pip's house on Christmas day to request Joe's help with locked handcuffs, Pip recalls the belatedness with which he processed the moment: "All of these things I saw without then knowing that I saw them, for I was in agony of apprehension" (29). Pip's description here captures the Victorian notion of memory as a storehouse and prefigures the twentieth-century neurobiological emphasis on a traumatic event's ability to bypass memory and imprint directly to the the psyche. Pip is no amnesiac, but his processing of the import of the event has been delayed, thwarted by his "agony of apprehension." His fear of the convict and his fear of Mrs. Joe's discovery of his theft converge in the sight of the soldiers visiting his home. Pip looks around the room and as his processing gains strength, some of his fear is alleviated. For the next few paragraphs, Pip's descriptions of the men present, his sister's response to them, and to Pumblechook's posturing serve to begin fleshing out his understanding of the terror of the moment; however, I argue that the full processing must be viewed as part of Pip's ex post facto narration, the narration of the story long after its events have occurred. Although Pip admits feeling guilty about his file-pilfering, young Pip did not feel "impelled" to "frank disclosure" (37). Sometime after the theft but before the narrativizing of his life, Pip concedes the guilt that propels him to share his story. Confession is woven into his processing.

Later when Pip first meets Miss Havisham, a similar moment of belated processing occurs. Upon his first visit to Miss Havisham's home, Pip recalls, "It was not in the first few moments that I saw all these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. But, I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow" (52). In his survey of the room, Pip goes on to record five "I saw" descriptions. These allow the reader to follow Pip's processing within the moment and to track his more belated processing which occurs in the telling or writing. Soon after the initial reconnoiter, Pip begins to play beggar my neighbor with Estella where he recalls, "It was then that I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped" (54). Pip's inclusion of the word "began" indicates that fuller understanding was yet to be achieved after this narrative moment. As in the last instance, he enacts his initial processing for the reader through a series of clauses delineating his visual recognition: "I noticed Miss Havisham put down the jewelry...I glanced at the dressing-table...[and], I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent" (54-55). What Pip "begins" to understand here, the condition of Miss Havisham, he more fully appreciates later: "I thought it a strange thing then, and I thought it a stranger thing long afterwards" (67). Dickens allows for Pip's processing of his trauma to move from a description of his first witness, to a time outside of the narrative's scope—"long afterward"—to, I argue, a processing that becomes complete in the tale's full narration. Where the effects of one kind of trauma begin and the others end is not my concern. What is important is seeing the effects of compounded trauma in Pip. Pip's belated processing layers the effects of someone else's trauma with his own and evidences both his impressionability and his empathy. His desire to marry Estella makes more sense in these terms. Miss Havisham was denied a marriage that, by proxy, Pip may achieve in marrying Havisham's

adopted daughter. The desire to marry Estella, therefore, is the impulse to break a traumatic loop that encircles both Pip and Miss Havisham.

Further, Pip's flashbacks and hallucinations offer additional specific manifestations of belated processing. As Mrs. Joe berates Pip for visiting the churchyard, Pip stares into the fire and sees the image "of the fugitive out on the marshes with the ironed leg, the mysterious young man, the file, the food and the dreadful pledge I was under...rose before [him] in the avenging coals" (9). This is the first of Pip's hallucinations and it occurs within hours of the encounter. Personifying Pip's guilt and fear, this vision entangles past (the fugitive on the marshes), present (the moment itself) and future (the dreadful pledge). Being accosted by a weathered and fearsome convict when out for a memorial visit to your parents' grave site is indeed "too horrible" to be processed at the time, so Pip must relive the events (*Trauma* 5). Later at the Blue Boar, the sight of Joe's file, a symbol of Pip's guilt and self-condemnation, clearly triggers this trauma: "I knew it to be Joe's file, and I knew that he knew my convict, the moment I saw the instrument. I sat gazing at him, spell-bound...But I was in a manner stupefied by this turning up on my old misdeed and old acquaintance, and could think of nothing else" (72). The sight of the file has at once jumbled and monopolized Pip's thinking—it has "possessed him" (*Trauma* 5). That night, he cannot sleep because he keeps rehashing a vision of the man at the Blue Boar "taking aim at [him] with his invisible gun." Pip is "haunted by the file" whose image appears repeatedly and a "dread [possesses] him." Further, when he finally is able to sleep, he sees "the file coming at [him] out of a door, without seeing who held it, and screaming [himself] awake" (72). Beyond a day-time hallucination, the file also appears in Pip's dreams.

Dickens was well aware of Victorian theories on dreams. In a letter he wrote to Dr. Thomas R. Stone, published as "A Physician's Dreams" in *All the Year Round* in 1859, Dickens

appears to be responding to the contemporary emphasis on Hartley's associationism, stating that dreams are most often not related to the day's events with one exception germane to his use of dreams in literature: "I should say the chances were a thousand to one against anybody's dreaming of the subject closely occupying the waking mind—except—and this I wish particularly to suggest to you—in a sort of allegorical manner" (111), such as, in an everyday file symbolizing guilt. Additionally, Pip's waking from the dream signifies its traumatic content. After working with WWI soldiers, Freud distinguished traumatic dreams from the dreams indicative of repression by their content. Repressed dreams played out taboo desires or anxieties and allowed their dreamers to remain in sleep. Traumatic dreams arose from the site of horror and worked to reproduce the event. From dreams of trauma, victims often awoke screaming. Both Pip's hallucinations and his dreams hint at a measure of unconscious agency. These mental images appear unsolicited by his conscious and represent Pip's nonvolitional return to a site of terror, guilt, and contrary to what readers expect, to sympathy.

Aberrations of thought also attend Pip's trauma related to Miss Havisham. Pip's hallucinations of the jilted bride reveal the degree to which her image has disarmed his conscious. Visiting Miss Havisham's house is intriguing, humiliating, and terrifying all at once. On Pip's first visit after he eats his bread and meat, Estella leaves him alone in the court-yard. Pip spies her walking in the brewery among extinguished fires. While mysterious, it appears that this is no mirage; Pip is actually seeing Estella walk among the empty casks. However, soon after, "a strange thing happens to [Pip's] fancy" and tricks of his mind are apparent:

I turned my eyes—a little dimmed by looking up at the frosty light—towards a great wooden beam in a low nook of the building near me on my right hand, and I saw a figure hanging there by the neck. A figure all in yellow white, with but one shoe to the feet; and

it hung so, that I could see that the faded trimmings of the dress were like earthy paper, and that the face was Miss Havisham's, with a movement going over the whole countenance as if she were trying to call to me. In the terror of seeing the figure, and in the terror of being certain that it had not been there a moment before, I at first ran from it, and then ran towards it. And my terror was greatest of all when I found no figure there. (58).

This hallucination, occurring after Pip's first visit, reveals how deeply Pip was affected by meeting Miss Havisham. Her behavior toward Pip has been nothing but cold and stern, yet his hallucination reveals that Pip has intuited Miss Havisham's vulnerability—perhaps because her vulnerability is Magwitch's vulnerability. This inverts the power relationship between Pip and Miss Havisham, revealing her as the one who needs help. Much later in the novel after Pip witnesses Estella and Miss Havisham exchange “sharp words,” he spends a night in Satis House. Pip lay awake unable to sleep when he begins to see “a thousand Miss Havishams [haunting] me. She was on this side of my pillow, on that, at the head of the bed, at the foot, behind the half-opened door of the drawing-room, in the dressing-room, in the room overhead, in the room beneath—everywhere” (280). Miss Havisham has appeared in multiple; she is everywhere, her traumatic influence inescapable.

vi. Narrative Voice: Stratifications and Silences

Perhaps the most pervasive literary representation of trauma in *Great Expectations* is achieved through the novel's first-person narration. All events are doubly filtered through Pip, his younger and older self. In effect, the narrative voice represents the mind of Pip. This narrative position affords the audience degrees of access that convey the effects of trauma, including disjunctions in time, repetitions, degrees of consciousness, and silences. While some

critical attention has been given in some way to each of these traits, strata of consciousness and silences have received the least critical attention and offer the greatest potential for examining Dickens's creation of a traumatized voice. Calum Kerr comments that what some perceive as disconnected layers—chapters and sections—are instead artfully connected, “twinning” streams of plot: one developing the intersection between Pip and Magwitch and a second featuring Pip and Estella. In place of superfluous clauses and unmerited coincidences, Kerr sees connecting capsular phrases and intentional links between narrative strands (154-159). Reading Pip's voice through a lens of trauma accommodates both views. I argue that Dickens achieves both—a sense of distinct layers of meaning and a sense of cohesive plot—both augmenting the representation of trauma via Pip's voice. Judith Herman explains that trauma victims at once desire to share and to keep secret their traumas. This conflict results in fragmented, often unbelievable, narratives. *Great Expectations*' narrative style may result from a number of things: the exigencies of the novel's publication, from efforts to mimetically represent the inner workings of a wounded mind, or stem from Dickens's genuine feeling for human suffering. Nonetheless, the narrative style of *Great Expectations* anticipates contemporary trauma literature in several ways and has led some to claim that it is a kind of “modern novel behind an old-fashioned ‘Victorian’ façade” (Gurdip).

The effect of layers of consciousness is achieved by on multiple fronts. First, the narrator alerts readers to developments in his self-awareness. After Joe and Orlick fight over Pip's request to have a half-day holiday, the narrator assesses Pip's youthful actions through his adult sensibilities: “With what absurd emotions (for we think the feelings that are very serious in a man quite comical in a boy) I found myself again going to Miss Havisham's, matters little here” (105). The single word “absurd” inserts the views of the older narrator into the first-person, in-

the-moment account. It is a way of, at once, acknowledging the passage of time and Pip's self-reflection. Young Pip did not realize the absurdity of his behavior in the moment, yet the distance of time renders this obvious to his older self. The serious feelings encouraging Pip's return to Satis House, the narrator now sees, were irrelevant. Later when Pip so easily leaves Joe and the forge to pursue his fortune, the narrator laments his youthful choice: "O dear good Joe, whom I was so ready to leave and so unthankful to, I see you again, with your muscular blacksmith's arm before your eyes, and your broad chest heaving, and your voice dying away, O dear good faithful tender Joe..." (128). This moment of self-recognition is a clear break from the rest of the chapter. It frames the narrative of the selfish child from the view of the repentant adult. Moreover, the narrator apostrophizes Joe, invoking an audience other than the implied reader—a desired audience, adding yet another layer to the narrative situation. In a similar move, when walking around Satis House with Estella, the narrator's self-pity and self-reproach moves him to refer to himself in third person: "...but the air of inaccessibility which her beauty and her manner gave her, tormented me in the midst of my delight, and at the height of the assurance I felt that our patroness had chosen us for one another. Wretched boy!" (218). The phrase wretched boy reflects the deep-felt emotion of the narrator, surfacing amid the more emotionally controlled narrative.

Additionally, from the novel's beginning, Pip withholds information from the reader and from other characters. Pip, of course, knows the identity of the convict on the marsh, that Estella will marry Drummle and that Miss Havisham is not his true benefactor, yet this information is withheld from the reader and throughout the novel, Pip withholds information from Mrs. Joe, Joe, Magwitch, and Estella. The effect of this withheld information is a "particular unsaid quality" (Glass). It signals a stratification of knowledge and consciousness indicative of

trauma.²⁹ Along these lines, the first-person narration covers the silence of all the characters except for Pip's. Pip-the-narrator tells the story both of his wounds and of the wounds of others, but because he is the teller, a first-person narrator, the audience witnesses these traumas in very different ways. We have some direct access to Pip's psychic suffering where our witness to the mental wounds of the others is always partial and external. However, the novel is a representation of Pip's mind--all of the stories in their full and partial telling inform Pip's consciousness.

Pip's voicing the traumas of the others is significant, specifically in that, as a male, he voices all of the females' traumas: Mrs. Joe's, Molly's, Miss Havisham's, and Estella's. Pip's voicing for the female characters then can be read to extend the effects of trauma and as participation in a system that traumatizes women. His narration perpetuates their muteness by usurping female voices. Ann Whitehead proffers that a male-focalized narrator, such as Pip in *Great Expectations*, may face limits when seeking to empathize with the traumatized females he speaks for. Male-centered narration runs the risk of appropriating female trauma through identification. Pip's male-voiced narration could appropriate the experiences of Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, Estella, and Molly and his telling cross into an identification that magnifies the voicelessness of the novel's female characters (8-10). Martina Sciolino argues that Pip's discourse spoken on behalf of Estella is a "forgery" which incorporates Estella into Pip's imagination (111). I find these kinds of critiques of Pip's speaking for the female characters incongruent with the sympathy Pip shows for Miss Havisham and the adoration he professes for Estella. Narrator Pip does not claim to present Havisham's whole story or even to provide her point of view. Yet, the fragments of her backstory that he does share engender sympathy for

²⁹ Critics have noted the modernist quality that this gives *Great Expectations*.

Miss Havisham and pity for Estella (arguably, not small achievements). We can also read the silence of the women as strengthening the portrait of their trauma, as a kind of respect—for their pain and for the unknown fullness of their stories. Their muteness is evidence of the severity of their trauma—perhaps a trauma more severe than Pip’s. Pip’s narrative ensures that even if the women he cares for do not speak, a degree of their sufferings is made known. As noted, Pip’s allegiance to Miss Havisham is mysterious. However, given his projection of his surrogate father’s traumas on to Miss Havisham’s, we begin to see a connection between characters that accounts for Pip’s puzzling allegiance and his desire to speak for Miss Havisham and Estella. Pip’s attempts to order the events of his trauma by working-in the traumas of Miss Havisham and Estella demonstrate the interconnectivity of traumas in *Great Expectations* and illustrate Pip’s desire to engage narrative memory. Pip’s recognition of the ways these stories overlap and interact with each other reflects Pip’s ordering his story and his ability to narrativize. He can tell his story, moving pieces around, disrupting the chronology, and inserting the stories of others. His narrative is becoming a controlled testimony.

vii. Conclusion

Great Expectation is thus a story about the causes of trauma, the effects of trauma, and the telling of trauma. It considers individual traumas and webs of traumas through a narrative voice that effects the symptoms of trauma. The pervasive traumatic imprint on this novel specifically calls out the damage that can be done to the mind—not to the body—through the threatening words of individuals, oppressive institutions, and exposure to ongoing trauma. Moreover, it is an early example of the vehicle of testimony as a means of working through trauma. Pip’s way of telling his story validates what his story conveys: the wounds he speaks of were severe and traumatic and his traumatized voice bears witness to this. The characters he

describes, including himself, have been damaged, but are worthy of empathy. Connections that appear discordant read as traumatic links between times, places, and characters. Marshall W. Gregory argues that it is the cumulative experience of “great suffering which purges [Pip’s] character, mettle, passions, and values of all pretentiousness and vanity, thus rendering him capable of taking his place in the world as a whole man” (Gregory 3). Gregory’s assessment connects to a common mid twentieth-century reading of the novel, as a coming-of-age story, a *bildungsroman*. Perhaps, in light of the color current understandings of trauma cast on *Great Expectations*, we can read the story as less about coming of age, and more about coming to the other side of trauma.

Chapter 3

Visual Art and Musical Performance: Traumatic Representation in *Trilby*

i. Introduction

The story goes that one evening in the 1880s when Henry James and George Du Maurier were out walking, James confessed he often had difficulty discovering plots for his stories. Du Maurier then offered James an idea for a novel he had long been turning over about how a poor servant girl with a promising voice becomes the mesmerized musical mouthpiece of a foreign Jew. Selflessly, James denied the offer, seeing the kernel as a “too valuable present” (qtd. in Showalter x). James had clearly intuited something. The first installment of *Trilby* was published in Harper’s in 1894. By the next installment, Harper’s circulation was said to have increased by one hundred thousand (Jenkins 229). *Trilby* the book went on to sell over 200,000 copies in England and America its first year of publication. Further, the novel spawned “Trilby-mania”: Trilby hats, Trilby foot-shaped ice-cream figures, Trilby tableaux vivants, Trilby sausages, and diverse theatrical Trilby adaptations (Olwell 101-102). Indeed, *Trilby* became a sensational bestseller and Du Maurier, reluctantly, an international celebrity.

Trilby mania did not last long, however, and by 1900, by most accounts, the craze had passed.³⁰ When rehearsing nineteenth-century classics today, *Trilby* is not among the first novels

³⁰ Showalter mentions the words of a reporter discussed in Edward Purcell’s “Trilby and Trilby Mania: The Beginning of the Bestseller System”: “By 1900, a New York reporter declared that the craze was over and that the days where ‘Svengali and Svengalism were lugged unceremoniously into all the petty details of our every-day life and talk’ were past” (qtd. In Showalter xxi).

to come to mind.³¹ In her 1995 introduction to *Trilby*, Elaine Showalter suggests that the novel will find a contemporary readership if it is read anew in light of twentieth-century theories and sensibilities: “As we approach the threshold of a new century, with less need to censor and conceal..., Du Maurier’s *Trilby* should be due for a revival” (xxi). While the twenty-three years since Showalter’s pronouncement have witnessed an uptick in *Trilby* scholarship, critical interest falls rather short of a “revival.” The preponderance of scholarship in the last two decades largely works to provide a nineteenth-century cultural context for a new reader, focusing on illustrating nineteenth-century concepts and preoccupations—Bohemianism, anti-Semitism, degeneration, social Darwinism, aestheticism and late nineteenth-century book marketing—for a twentieth century reader.³² Of greater interest to this project is the recent scholarship that has sought to historicize the novel’s depiction of art and music. In “The ‘over-aesthetic eye’ and the ‘monstrous development of a phenomenal larynx’: Du Maurier’s art of excess in *Trilby*,” Nathalie Saudo-Welby labels the text a “novel of art” and links regeneration to artistic genius.

³¹ In her 1995 introduction to *Trilby*, Elaine Showalter offers a few explanations for *Trilby*’s fall in popularity. She cites the novel’s questionable textual status, problems with audience, abstruse cultural references to painting, literature and music, and the perception of antisemitism fueled by the novel’s theatrical adaptations (ix). A quick database search confirms the decline in *Trilby*’s popularity in the early twentieth century. JSTOR catalogs further into the 19th century than most databases and records very few articles about *Trilby* in the 100 years after its publication heyday. A January 2018 search on the Literary Reference Center records between 32 to 36 scholarly articles written between 1996 and 2016.

³² A brief summary of a few select essays illustrates this focus: Neil Davison claims in “‘The Jew’ as homme/femme-fetale: Jewish (art)ifice, *Trilby* and Dreyfus” (2002) that post-structural scholarship has a general lack of interest in *Trilby*’s historical role. He explores the novel against the backdrop of the Dreyfus affair. In “Mesmerists and Other Meddlers: Social Darwinism, Degeneration, and Eugenics in *Trilby*” (2009), Laura Voracheck explains how *Trilby* is a response to Francis Galton’s, Darwin’s cousin’s, theory of eugenics. Victoria Olwell’s “*Trilby* and Mass Genius” (2011), explores the nineteenth-century concept of genius, intellectual property, and publicity and how these elements affected the novel’s reception. Finally, Michèle Mendelssohn’s “Beautiful Souls Mixed up with Hooked Noses: Art, Degeneration, and Anti-Semitism in *The Master* and *Trilby*” also identifies a rhetoric of degeneration and fin-de-siecle aesthetics in *Trilby*.

Nicholas Daly's "The Woman in White: Whistler, Hiffernan, Courbet and Du Maurier" examines the connection between Whistler's art and *Trilby*, seeing aestheticism and sensation as formed "in the same modern cultural matrix" (4), and Rosanna Nunan's "Rethinking Hysteria through Artistic Genius in George Du Maurier's *Trilby* and F.W.H. Myers's *Human Personality and its Survival of the Bodily Death*" (2013) argues in light of theories of hysteria and consciousness that Du Maurier's depiction of La Svengali presents a woman whose will and talent are manifest when hypnosis allows her to focus on the universal and her singing. These readings bring to the fore the significance of music, art, and performance in *Trilby*. They provide a reading lens rich with cultural and historic contexts. Yet, as Showalter noted, modern theories and aesthetics also serve to magnify the novel's tropes and themes. To that end, this chapter enters the discourse on *Trilby* at the intersection of nineteenth-century art and music and modern trauma literary theory. In *Trilby*, Du Maurier treats a range of traumatic experience to explore the ways emotion, art, and trauma build upon each other. While trauma is depicted as a powerful force, able to alter characters' automatic emotional processes, art and performance are elevated as stronger agents, able to mediate traumatic symptoms and communicate the traumatic experience.

In this study of *Trilby*, I focus on modern concepts of trauma, in which complete dissociation or memory erasure often marks the traumatized subject, and on more Victorian notions of shock, considering occurrences where subjects are not quite themselves or when self-possession appears threatened. Jill Matus's *Shock, Memory, and the Victorian Unconscious* (2011) explores this distinction when referring to *Jane Eyre's* red-room episode (3). After enduring a night of terror where images of Mr. Reed's ghost haunted her, Jane announces the next morning that she was "a trifle beside [herself]; or rather out of myself" (Brontë 8). Ranging

from Jane's childhood fear of ghosts to the pain of a break-up to the agony of sexual abuse, without doubt, the nature of the trauma influences the degree of its dissociative effect. However, today clinicians and theorists often recognize gradations of impact, noting that "smaller" traumas should also be considered significant. "Lesser" traumas can gain strength through their repetition; further, lesser traumas can render the subject more susceptible to future traumas (Putnam). Dissociation, psychic suffering, art, and the subconscious, are inseparable in *Trilby*. Du Maurier employs music to effect altered consciousness in many of his characters. He demonstrates music's power to disarm a susceptible psyche in the listening habits of Little Billee and his companions and in audiences throughout Europe, and he goes on to show its potential to draw a traumatized subject out of trauma. He explores the relationship between trauma, emotions, and the production of art, using musical performance and painting to "speak" when words fail. Finally, musical performance in *Trilby* becomes a powerful trope for a process of amnesia or traumatic dissociation.

Contemporary trauma theorists point out how language itself is often insufficient to describe the traumatic experience because trauma can leave a victim without the words to communicate his or her suffering (C. van der Mere and Gobodo-Madikizela 6). Anne Whitehead avers, "the term trauma fiction represents a paradox or contradiction: if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativized into fiction?" (3). Further, even when language succeeds, trauma narratives present moments of knowing and not knowing, relying on language to convey this contradiction. Trauma, at once, demands our witness and denies it. Thus, according to Whitehead, Caruth, and others, the presentation of trauma is likely impossible and problematic at best; modernist literature—with its gaps, fragments, and dense language—thus becomes the style

many trauma theorists favor to effect a semblance of the traumatic situation. Du Maurier's *Trilby* lacks the modernist aesthetic that theorists such as Caruth and Whitehead argue best represents the unrepresentable. I argue that Du Maurier uses performance as a site of *aporia* and in place of feats of language, he employs art, music, and performance to convey the contradictory impulses of trauma--to be known and not known.

This chapter will begin by briefly looking at the novel's reception. *Trilby* is clearly a product of a marketing machine that bolstered the novel's sales, but *Trilby* itself, its style and content, arguably contributed to the spread of Trilby mania. Next, I will examine the causes and representation of Trilby's and Little Billee's emotional shock. Each character's emotional life is disrupted when their engagement is broken. When their emotions are distorted and their voices restricted, art communicates in ways their voices cannot. Finally, I will examine how musical performance operates as a site of traumatic dissociation and *aporia* that, at once, invites understanding and resists it.

ii. Reading *Trilby*: A Model of Enthrallment

In "*Trilby*: Fads, Photographers, and 'Over-Perfect Feet,'" Emily Jenkins explains how the publication and literary climate of the late nineteenth century created the ideal space for a new kind of best seller. She argues that new printing technologies, increased social literacy developed via illustrated advertisements, the advent of book collecting, and changes in the politics and distribution of novels made a publication phenomenon such as *Trilby's* possible. *Trilby* exceeded all previous records for best sellers and its themes and images reverberated into British and American culture. I posit that the way the novel sold was influenced by the way the novel was written. *Trilby* provided a model for how to be not simply an adoring fan, but an entranced—nearly mesmerized—fan. Hyperbolic descriptions of characters' responses to

music—both to La Svengali’s singing and to the performances of others—and depictions of the hypnotic power of Svengali modeled for readers a response to art. Nathalie Saudo-Welby argues that the novel’s high-flown descriptions of the audience in *Trilby* inscribe in the text how reading fans should respond to the novel (51). At Sir Louis Cornelys’s palace, listeners respond to a Bach violin solo with a “rapt and tranced mobility,” and a gaze of “stony gorgon-like intensity” (164). The description of this incidence clearly prefigures the audience’s response to La Svengali’s singing later in the novel. Both audiences are engaged in a more positive dissociative experience, one of paralysis and rapture. When the famous singer Glorioli follows the violins and takes the platform to sing, Little Billee, the Laird, and Taffy are among those who are held captive by the music: “but even the earnestest of all, caught, surprised, rapt, astounded, shaken, tickled, teased, harrowed, tortured, tantalized, aggravated, seduced, demoralized, degraded, corrupted into mere naturalness, forgot to dissemble their delight” (Du Maurier 166). The narrator’s catalog of high-flown adjectives “is perfectly in tune with the hysterical atmosphere Du Maurier tries to evoke” (Saudo-Welby 51).

The audience’s reaction to La Svengali’s singing epitomizes a mystical response to art. The narrator describes the effect of Trilby’s singing on her audience as “irresistible; it forces itself on you; no words, no pictures, could ever do the like” (218). The audience weeps and displays smiles of idiotic wonder. They are caught up in “astonishment, enthusiasm, [and] ecstatic delight!” (215). Trilby’s performance accesses the sublime. The discourses of sublimity and of trauma often overlap, both invoking the failure of words, an incommunicable abundance, and a sense of dissociation. Trilby’s voice transports her audience beyond current realities as the novel would do for its readers. As Jenkins explains, readers transferred their worship of La Svengali to the fetishization of *Trilby*:

The strange behavior exhibited by *Trilby's* adoring public—in particular the consumption of spin-off products and the perpetuation of *Trilby* based entertainments—mimicked the adoration showered on Trilby as La Svengali, only in grosser form. As La Svengali, she receives gifts of jewels and flowers from countless admirers; as the heroine of the novel, she was parodied, fetishized, and even waltzed. (228)

Judging by their post-purchase behaviors, *Trilby* readers were clearly moved by the lofty description of Trilby's singing. The image Du Maurier paints of Svengali intensifies this effect.

As a mesmerist, Svengali's ability to control others is foregrounded in the novel; moreover, his skills as a talented instructor of music and conductor underscore his portrait of one able to direct the masses. The dynamics of crowd control in nineteenth-century England were built on the powers of a "charismatic individual," much like a musical conductor, who could tap into the unconscious minds of an audience. These leaders invoked sensation to give corporeal life to private, imaginative processes (Weliver 4). From Svengali's ceremonious stage entrance, to the two little page boys who part the curtain for La Svengali, to his conducting of La Svengali's singing, Svengali appears to be in total control of all aspects of the performance.³³ One of Du Maurier's illustrations captures Svengali's power over Trilby more clearly, perhaps more starkly, than the narrator's descriptions.³⁴ In the illustration "Au clair de la lune" (211), Du Maurier portrays Svengali as lively and dominating. He occupies the illustration's foreground.

³³ A few scholars contend that Trilby exercises her will during the performances, including Nina Auerbach and Nathalie Saudo-Welby.

³⁴ Nathalie Saudo-Welby explores how the motifs of eye and voice develop an art of excess in *Trilby*. One of her sub-points is that Du Maurier reserves "what is funny, ugly or jarring for writing, while preserving in his drawings the most perfect decorum" (53). She goes on to note how the illustrated bodies are in perfect proportion. The novel's voice is often hyperbolic, but its images are precise and controlled. Indeed, there is an objectivity to the image I discuss that enforces its dark undertones.

Behind him in soft focus is the audience and above him, positioned on a pillar and bearing the blank look of an automaton, is La Svengali. She is poised to receive his command, inert until he taps his conductor's wand. Her body is held in place by invisible bonds and she is poised, it appears, to jump. The whole image is reminiscent of a sacrificial damsel. However, individuals able to exert this kind of social control needed not deliver a speech from behind a podium or wield a conductor's baton. Allison Winter makes the link between conductor and author, arguing that the sensation novelist "affects the nerves of his or her readership...mobilizing crowds to rebellion against or unified for the existing political structures" (Winter 306-343).³⁵ In *Trilby*, Du Maurier crafted a novel that positions himself as such a conductor. He employs emotive rhetoric, colorful images, sensual descriptions of food, and detailed illustrations to control the readers' "emotions and awaken [their] fascination" (Saudo-Welby 50). Svengali is to Du Maurier as La Svengali is to *Trilby's* audience.

While Svengali is clearly a talented and powerful mesmerist and conductor, Du Maurier provides additional justification for the potency of his effect on the characters. In chapter one of *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2006), Ruth Leys discusses the ongoing polarity in trauma studies between mimetic and anti-mimetic theories of trauma. In mimetic theories, the subject of trauma is rendered susceptible to the traumatic blow as a product of what lies within him or her (Leys 30-33), in some ways akin to Freud's seduction theory. Du Maurier consistently represents

³⁵ Many scholars, including Daly and Saudo-Welby whom I reference in this chapter, have addressed the role of sensation in *Trilby*. Sensation to trauma is an apparent, often explored connection. In examining how *Trilby* creates altered psychological states in its readers, I've surely touched on some traits of the sensation novel, but a consideration of the genre does not figure into my analysis significantly for two reasons: one, my primary focus is on emotion, art, and trauma and two, following the lead of Jill Matus, I wanted to avoid upholding sensation fiction as the premier representation of traumatic shock in nineteenth-century fiction.

trauma along these lines.³⁶ Trilby possesses a “singularly impressionable nature,” which largely accounts for Svengali’s ability to mesmerize her (53), and the defining feature of Little Billee’s art is his super sensitive ability to receive impressions (20). Further, judging by the descriptions of their response to La Svengali, her audiences are also impressionable, and likewise, by accounts of the novel’s reception, the nineteenth-century audience was also highly susceptible to suggestion. Svengali’s hypnotic influence triggers a three-crest mesmeric wave: from Svengali to Trilby, from Trilby to the novel’s music-listening audience, and from the novel to Du Maurier’s late nineteenth-century reader.

Thus, large numbers of people were not merely reading (or viewing) *Trilby*; they were entranced, transported by the story and its whole related hyper-sensory enterprise. The reading audience’s experiences with *Trilby* allowed them to witness, to feel firsthand how susceptible they were to feeling “outside” themselves, to a kind of shock inspired by art. Growing up, Du Maurier had been particularly sensitive to music’s ability to move the listener. In the vivid biography *George Du Maurier*, Leoneé Ormond recounts a young Du Maurier’s love of music. Ormond argues that the opening pages of Du Maurier’s first novel *Peter Ibbetson* are nearly autobiographical. As such, Ormond likens Peter’s appreciation of music to George’s. Music in *Peter Ibbetson* mentally connects the main character to the setting of his childhood: simply hearing a song of his youth takes Peter to Passy, France (19). Du Maurier expects that *Trilby*’s reader will respond to its descriptions of music in a similar way. Little Billee’s reaction to musical virtuosity mirrors the distraction, the transport *Trilby*’s audience is offered. On one end

³⁶Leys personal theory of trauma falls on the mimetic side of the spectrum. While she recognizes many of the traumatic behaviors described by Caruth, van der Kolk and van der Meer, her position directly opposes Caruth’s anti-mimetic theory which assumes that a passive victim receives a purely external event.

of the continuum of dissociation, listeners in *Trilby* experience the pleasure of a respite. Perhaps *Trilby*'s readership found escape from the shock of modernity or from the perceived threat of degeneration, but surely, for most readers the novel distracted them against the specific and individual concerns of their own daily lives.³⁷ It allowed them a form of dissociation, a healthy separation. On the darker side of dissociation, La Svengali's escape is directed by Svengali and propelled by her traumas. When mesmerized, Trilby finds total distraction from ache of the heart and mind, but the cost is her identity. She moves more deeply into dissociation than the novel's readers do, experiencing erasure of memory in her dissociation. *Trilby* then explores the potential for the self to experience altered states of consciousness through both its content and its reception—whether that altered state provides transport from the concerns of daily life or escape from the grief of life and love lost.

iii. Tension to Trauma: Loyalties to Class and Nation

Arguably the turning point in *Trilby* pivots on the manifest traumas of Little Billee and Trilby. The first half of the novel builds to their short-lived engagement. Convinced by Little Billee's mother, Mrs. Bagot, that she is not a suitable fiancée for Little Billee, Trilby breaks off the engagement, which initiates traumatic symptoms in both characters. The second half of the novel follows the trajectory of Little Billee's emotional numbing and Trilby's mesmerized dissociative state. The thwarting of their marriage mid-novel is the lynchpin leading to their psychic suffering, but illustrating the novel's anti-mimetic approach to trauma, competing social and national loyalties create tensions that poise the two for traumatic breaks.

³⁷While *Trilby* is set in the 1850s, many of its themes derive from the time of its publication, the 1890s. Saudo-Welby and others discuss the effect of these anachronisms.

Du Maurier situates the first part of the novel in a setting he well knew: the Parisian Bohemia of 1857 where he studied art as a student in Charles Gleyre's Studio (Stern 547-548). According to Amanda Anderson's *The Power of Distance*, Bohemia was a unique space of detachment, a space away from the rest of the world, a "political limbo" where mainstream culture was resisted. For Little Billee, Parisian bohemia was a space away from English propriety and middle-class pretensions. He could shape his life and relationships under conditions of "cultural mixture" (Stern 549). Yet, Little Billee's Englishness continues to insert itself into his life at the studio—the lads' meals are lusciously English, they suppress French speech and privilege English, and they are keen to maintain their English standard of cleanliness. Little Billee's love for Trilby is at odds with his national identity. He does not love Trilby without condition, but as Kimberly Stern points out, he seeks to convert her into a young and respectable English woman who "might have been the daughter of an English dean" (Du Maurier 70). His makeover efforts signal "his inability to move beyond his parochial British upbringing" (Stern 559).³⁸ Further, when Little Billee's proper English mother arrives, allegiances to class and nationality surface and clash. Little Billee's fiancée is Trilby O'Ferrall, a Scotch-Irish part-time grisette, part-time model, raised in the Latin Quarter. She is the antithesis of Mrs. Bagot's vision for her son's wife in several respects; foremost, Trilby is not sexually innocent and lacks the genetic stock to perpetuate the English sense of "infallible efficacy of gentle birth" (Du Maurier 35). Mrs. Bagot's arrival and reaction to Trilby foregrounds the culture in which Little Billee

³⁸ In "Rule Bohemia: The Cosmopolitics of Subculture In George Du Maurier's *Trilby*," Kimberly Stern explores how Parisian bohemia functions as a testing ground for cosmopolitan values. She explores the significance of the novel's setting in the Latin Quarter in the 1850s and how the characters' hybridity--or lack thereof--is reflected in their artistic performance. I extend the tensions she identifies between nationalism and cosmopolitanism to a first cause of Trilby's and Little Billee's traumas.

was raised. As much as Bohemia promised a neutral space, Little Billee is Mrs. Bagot's English son. For all its promises of freedom, Bohemia has not rendered Little Billee classless or nationless. He remains a middle-class Englishman who proposes to a poor Irish woman. The dissolution of their engagement is concrete evidence of cultural differences that love has not overcome.

Trilby is also rendered sensitive to trauma by her ultimate inability to redefine nineteenth-century cultural categories. When the Three Musketeers of the Brush first meet Trilby, she is a French-speaking, notably boyish model who poses in the altogether. Trilby exudes a kind of innocence generally viewed to be incompatible with her experiences. Upon her death bed, Trilby tells Mrs. Bagot that the "lowest and meanest" thing she has ever done was leave Jeannot, a young boy whom Trilby identifies as her brother but who could just as well be her son, behind on Palm Sunday so she could accompany Durien, the sculptor, to a fair at St Germain (Du Maurier 277). To Mrs. Bagot's bewilderment, it does not occur to Trilby that modeling in the nude or having many sexual partners (the narrator tells us "*Quia multum amavit!*"—She has loved many) are behaviors meriting forgiveness (36). Contrary to Victorian standards, Trilby defines her own categories of morality. Yet, the tension between how she is viewed and how she views herself cannot be resolved. Nunan argues that Trilby displays traits of hysteria for most of the novel and locates the cause of this hysteria in Trilby's resistance to the categorization of her behavior as immoral or shameful. The "excessive stimulus of Victorian morality rather than initial weakness of mind" abrades Trilby's mental strength and precipitates her mental illness (Nunan 6). Elaine Showalter concurs, explaining in *The Female Malady* that Trilby's hysterical symptoms "mark her as a woman who unconsciously resists patriarchal mandates regarding respectable behavior (157). Nunan further links modes of hysteria to genius.

Against the common interpretation of Trilby as a passive conduit for Svengali's power, Nunan sees Trilby as exercising a powerful will and her mesmerized singing as a moment of concentrated will and genius. While Nunan's discussion of Trilby's resistance to Victorian definitions helps explain Trilby's divided self, her argument for Trilby's strength of mind hinges on one phrase and, I think, glosses the implications of her seeking the relief Svengali offers through mesmerism. In Svengali, Trilby seeks relief from cumulative suffering—a life of orphanhood, poverty, abuse, objectification, and loss—and escape from the categories in which others have placed her. For Trilby, the broken engagement signifies her irreconcilable otherness; for Little Billee, it renders his internalized tensions impossible to ignore.

iv. Parallel Traumas and the Self Inverted

Showalter, Saudo-Welby, and Nunan³⁹ have noted that Little Billee's response to trial and pain mirrors Trilby's. I extend their point to argue that these parallel behaviors allow us to specifically witness the pair's responses to trauma where both characters experience psychological wounding as an inversion of the self. The primary markers of this inversion are emotional processing and artistic performance.

The complicated concept of emotions was under paradigm-changing revision in the 19th century. Prior to the mid nineteenth century, emotions were seen as the motion or agitation of the mind or soul. By the publication of *Trilby*, they were largely understood as non-logical or non-intellectual, physical states (Danziger 43). As Alexander Bain explained in 1873, an emotion, such as fear or worry is felt in the brain and leads to an emotional sensation, which triggers

³⁹ Saudo-Welby argues Trilby's progress "from grisette to diva to madonna to death is paralleled by Little Billee's own downward course" (44). Showalter focuses on the pair's artistic arc: "Trilby's uncanny music, and her ability to wrest tragic significance from popular song, parallels his trajectory" (xvii), and Nunan sees the parallel as connecting Little Billee's artistic genius to Trilby's hysteria, both platforms that connect the subconscious to the conscious.

physical symptoms, such as stomach pain or sweats (Bain 144). Emotions registered the actions of the body. These theories suggest that emotions are purely biological. Since the 18th century, theories of the origin of emotions have tended to oscillate between biological and cultural explanations. In *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of the Emotions* (2001), William Reddy calls for a more complex evaluation of emotions and resists the culture-biology binary. Instead, Reddy puts forth the theory of emotions as “overlearned cognitive habits” (16). Reddy posits that the processing of emotions can be at once automatic and intentional. As an example, he reviews the common anecdote of a young boy taught to substitute feelings of sadness with feelings of anger. He comments that “people may be able to regulate their feelings, through their focus and through changing what they learn in given situations” (16). Sadness is automatic; anger is taught. Reminiscent of William Carpenter’s elevation of the will,⁴⁰ Reddy’s theory accounts for emotions that change through the exercise of the will, or in Reddy’s terms, conscious cognition (18). My examination of emotions in *Trilby* takes its cue from both the Victorian concept of non-intellectual states and from Reddy’s theory of learned cognitive habits. Reddy seeks to find a middle ground between understanding emotions as a form of “ethnocentric, and aggressive universalism” and labeling emotions as pure cultural constructs (xi). To find this balanced view, Reddy acknowledges the “near-universality” of some emotions, but proposes that most of these emotional responses can change based on will and application or practice. I expand Reddy’s tools-of-change to include trauma. In *Trilby*, it is not practice or will

⁴⁰ In the chapter “The Power of Will Over Mental Action” from *Principles of Human Physiology* (1855), Carpenter explains the relationship between the body and will. He compares the “locomotive” power of a horse when directed by a trained rider: “It is not the rider’s whip or spur that furnishes the power, but the nerves and muscles of the horse...the rate and direction of the movements are determined by the Will of the rider...” (Carpenter 95-96).

that modifies the characters' emotional processing; it is traumatic wounding. Du Maurier elucidates this point by distinctly gendering Little Billee and Trilby in opposition to their biological sex. However, when trauma enters their Parisian art studio, the gendered emotional display reverses.

Two events register significant traumatic responses from Trilby and Little Billee. First, Little Billee catches sight of Trilby posing in the altogether for Carrell. The sight of the woman he loves sitting nude for other artists triggers an emotional outburst whose stages reflect responses to trauma. He is at first "petrified," then "shocked," and finally struck: "The sight of her was like a blow between the eyes" (82, 80). Prior to this, Little Billee has been most noted for being sensitive, for having a "girlish purity of mind" (9). He is described as "small and slender," "delicate" with regular features" (6), and "gentle" (23). He tears up when Gecko plays the violin (23) and is generally a "cry-baby sort of chap" (Vorachek 199).⁴¹ After seeing Trilby pose naked, however, he storms out and heads to Barbizon to paint the forest (80). No "feminine" tears—but a bold, more masculine retreat.

Contrast Little Billee's response with Trilby's. In the novel's part first, Trilby is often described in masculine terms. The narrator remarks that Trilby would have made a "jolly boy" (13), describes her deep voice and military jacket (16), and comments that Trilby is without fear or "shame" (66).⁴² Ironically, the purity ascribed to Little Billee is not characteristic of Trilby,

⁴¹ Saudo-Welby catalogs the number of times Little Billee cries in-text. She notes, "Little Billee is generally shown to be emasculated and seems to be continually crying (12, 23, 65, 110, 120, 212, 216, 225, 232, 283)" (45).

⁴² The narrator discusses two kinds of shame. Not long after Little Billee first meets Trilby, he looks into her eye and intuits that beneath her sweetness and compassion, there is a "thin layer" of a kind shame (31). The quality of shame Little Billee sees in Trilby's is not clearly defined, but it is different than the shame she does not feel for posing in the altogether (66). The shame Little Billee does not see in her relates to Trilby's confidence in body and in her

but this contrast serves to underscore their gendered differences. She is generally described as confident and calm-headed. However, when she comes to understand why Little Billee bolted from Carrell's studio, the narrator describes a definitive change:

She turned alternately pale and red, pale and red all over, again and again, and the thought grew up in her--and soon the growing thought became a torment.

This new feeling of shame was unendurable--its birth, a travail that racked and rent every fibre of her moral being, and she suffered agonies beyond anything she had ever felt. . . . She shook her head, and the work went on.

Presently, she dropped the pitcher; that broke into bits; and putting her hands to her face, she burst into tears and sobs--and there, to the amazement of everybody, she stood crying like a baby. (82)

In this scene, Carrell has been painting Trilby who is posed in the altogether as the woman in Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's *La Source* (1856). Du Maurier feminizes Trilby by describing her response to Little Billee's departure as the process of giving birth. She is experiencing waves of physical and mental anguish and a resolve to see the process through. The moment not only depicts Trilby's birth to shame, but it also reveals a rebirth of herself: from one who knows little about "love's heartaches and raptures and torments and clingings" to one fully experiencing "torment" (37, 82). She emerges from the knowledge of disappointing Little Billee as a "crying baby." Trilby's dropping of the pitcher indicates a release of emotions, but only through brokenness. In both Little Billee's and Trilby's cases, this traumatic moment reverses the

choices. I suggest that the shame he does see relates to shame felt because of things done to her, "grief she came to through a trusted friend" (38), rather the choices she has made herself.

gendered emotions of the characters. Trauma disrupts their typical responses and causes different emotions.

The second, more damaging trauma centers around the broken engagement of Little Billee and Trilby and it further enforces how psychical injury inverts their emotions. Little Billee's initial response to the thwarted nuptials is replete with gaps and stutters. When he confronts Taffy for agreeing with his mother that Trilby is not a suitable match for him, his speech is infused with exclamations, questions, dashes, and elliptical phrases, all marking the attack to and disintegration of his formerly feminine identify: "Why she's an angel—far too good for the likes of *me*...you know she is. As...as for her social position and all that, what degrading rot! Her father was as much a gentleman as mine...besides...what the devil do I care for her father? ...it's her [...] Good God! I'll never paint another stroke till I've got her back.... never, never, never I tell you—I can't—I won't!" (134-134). The stop-and-start, hiccuppy nature of this pronouncement evokes a sense of blocked pressure reflecting both the hydraulic theory of the emotions and nineteenth-century technological developments. By the late nineteenth century, most people believed nerve-force and emotions moved through the body in currents similar to those that powered Faraday's electric dynamo (1831) rather than through hydraulics, the prevailing theory in the 18th century. While electricity replaced water in terms of power, the language of hydraulics endured to describe emotions throughout the 19th century and indeed, is still used today. In 2007, the American Psychological Association explained that the hydraulic model of emotions is based on an analogy between emotions and flowing liquid. Emotional distress occurs when the emotion is "not expressed, [or] gets stored and can create pressure in the system, therefore 'venting' emotions should decrease tension and consequently the negative psychological experience and symptoms. The greater the expression of negative emotions, the

greater the relief should be” (American Psychiatric Association DSM-5). Du Maurier depicts Little Billee’s (and Trilby’s) trauma in language that conveys a buildup of pressure, similar to dammed water or contained electrical current. His emotions are blocked, only escaping in small bursts. He is aware of this block, but can do nothing to “unplug” himself: “He felt rather bitterly how happy he could be if the little spot, or knot, or blot, or clot which paralysed that convolution of his brain where he kept his affections could be but conjured away” (174). He is unable to provide his own cathartic release.

This “epileptic seizure” of Little Billee’s results in a brain fever that lasts for many weeks. Interestingly, in nineteenth century fiction and medical writing, those who suffered from brain fever were most often women or men depicted with feminine characteristics (Matus 4-5; Oppenheim 181). Little Billee’s brain fever then further underscores his initially feminine characterization by providing a clear contrast to the after-trauma Little Billee. Characters who survived brain fever were expected to emerge morally purified and fit to embark on a new life path. When Little Billee emerges from the fever, he is aware that “some mysterious cause of his power of loving had not come back with his wandering wits—had been left behind—and it seemed to him that it was gone for ever and ever—would not come back again—not even his love for his mother and sister, not even his love for Trilby—where all *that* had once been was a void, a gap, a blankness” (137). Trauma excavates Little Billee’s sensitive nature and becomes a crucible he endures with a masculine stoicism for half a decade.

Little Billee’s mourning for Trilby evidences two other traits of trauma: his trauma has separated the idea of love from the emotion of love and he equates loss of feeling with memory loss. When hearing Gecko play the violin, he realizes “in his brain all the love he could no longer feel in his heart” (139). In 1889, Pierre Janet offered a limited definition of dissociation as “those

cases in which there was a pathological separation between ideas and behaviors and consciousness” (Putnam 116).⁴³ Little Billee regularly ponders that he wishes he could feel love for his mother, sister, his pals, or even Trilby, but trauma has divided the workings of his mind from those of his heart. Five years after losing Trilby, the effect has not waned. Little Billee defines his suffering as a localized “paralysis,” which leaves his ability to love impotent while his other faculties are “as active as ever” (146). Finally, Du Maurier aligns Little Billee’s loss of feeling with forgetting. From the window of a train, Little Billee views Paris and takes a parting gaze of adored French sites for when his “powers of loving and remembering clearly should come back” (142). Emotions and memory are integrally knotted in trauma. Here Little Billee fails to remember not an event, but an emotion, a way of feeling. Du Maurier describes the psychological phenomena of Little Billee’s condition in terms that fit nineteenth-century concepts of traumatic dissociation: an altered sense of identify and a degree of memory erasure (Putnam 118). However, his behaviors also anticipate more modern concepts of dissociation where finer degrees of dissociation are recognized. As Little Billee’s numbness of heart measures the altering impact of trauma on his emotions, so does Trilby’s deep pain register emotional permutations wrought by trauma.

Du Maurier allows fewer and less detailed descriptions of Trilby’s reaction to the break-up news than he does Little Billee’s, but he delivers several key details that indicate her emotions and personality have drastically changed. First, Du Maurier’s imagery indicates that she is feeling much more than she demonstrates. After promising Mrs. Bagot that she will neither marry Little Billee nor see him again, she handles Mrs. Bagot with a coolness that suggests she

⁴³ Other contemporary psychologists, interpreted dissociation much more broadly than Janet, seeing dissociation as on a continuum from daydreaming to psychic disorders, such as amnesia and multiple personality (Putnam 117).

wants to escape the confrontation quickly as if she wishes to be alone before displaying her building emotions. She exits the confrontation, and experiences a “sharp pang,” feels “dazed,” and begins to cry when she recounts to the Laird her decision to part from Little Billee and move to the country with Jeannot (130). Taffy, upon reading her farewell letter, recognizes that very “deep anguish underlay [her] somewhat trivial expression of sorrow “ (133). Again, Du Maurier captures Trilby’s traumatic symptoms in language that reflects the hydraulic theory of emotions. Her emotions are overwhelming, yet she lets off no “steam.” Taffy intuits the pressure that is submerged—bottled up—in Trilby. In terms of current trauma theory, the built-up pressure Trilby demonstrates signifies her blocked speech. Her terse replies to Taffy indicate the onset of traumatic symptoms and a newly restrained speech not seen in Trilby who carried on free and easy conversations with the Laird and Taffy at the studio. Trilby resists “commemorating the events” for a listening audience, which is sometimes viewed as being necessary for healing.⁴⁴ Second, prior to loving Little Billee, Trilby regarded love and commitment casually. With her, love was “lightly come and lightly go” (37). Her response to losing Little Billee indicates a great change in her ability to develop lasting connections. Thirdly, after the break-up, the once shameless Trilby feels a fresh sense of shame at having accepted Little Billee’s proposal (132). Trauma “regenders” Trilby. After the pain of love lost, she has become more committed, more emotive, more evasive, and more self-aware—in short, more traditionally feminine—in both positive and negative ways.

However, the most prominent marker of Trilby’s changed emotional state is Trilby’s voice under the power of Svengali’s mesmerism. To make this link, I propose that Trilby’s

⁴⁴ Both Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart’s “The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma” (1995) and Judith Herman *Trauma and Recovery* (1997) claim that narrativizing one’s trauma functions to begin healing.

mesmerically inspired singing as La Svengali operates as a multifaceted site of trauma, one enfolding symptoms, causes, and relief. La Svengali's performances extend the dissociative state Trilby evidences immediately after her breakup: while La Svengali's external appearance is emotionless, the emotion her singing evokes indicates a beneath-the-surface intensity of emotion able to cause audiences across Europe to weep. The well of emotion Trilby submerges in her subconscious surfaces in La Svengali's performance. Glorioli praises La Svengali's performance, noting that her voice is "just a detail. It's what she does with it--it's incredible! it gives one cold all down the back! it drives you mad! It makes you weep hot tears by the spoonful! Ah the tear, mon fy! I can draw everything but *that!*" (169-170). As the greatest male vocalist of his time, even Glorioli cannot draw emotion from the crowd as La Svengali does, and it is not simply her voice. It is an intangible quality of her whole musical performance. These descriptions of La Svengali's singing light hope in Little Billee and he decides to forestall shooting himself until he too has a chance to hear and witness her singing. When Little Billee does eventually attend a La Svengali performance, he begins to "melt" when simply viewing the "divine contour" of her face and her "simple and sweet" character (209). Melt here stands in contrast to freeze and confirms that the stop to Little Billee's flowing emotions was fully solidified.

Du Maurier anticipates Little Billee's reaction to La Svengali when his traumatic symptoms first manifest. As I discussed, Gecko's playing causes Little Billee to be aware of the disconnect between his heart and mind, between emotion and the intellect, but it also offers Little Billee a moment of solace: Gecko's playing "seemed to do Little Billee more good than anything else...The sweet melodic phrase, rendered by a master, was as wholesome, refreshing balm to him while it lasted—as manna in the wilderness. It was the one good thing within his reach" (139). Gecko's playing tugs at the emotions trauma has suppressed—it is a small drink of

temporary refreshment, but La Svengali's music is a deluge that will overwhelm him and melt his frozen heart. When Little Billee, Taffy, and the Laird finally hear the famed La Svengali, the sight and sound of her releases something in Little Billee's "brain, and all his long-lost power of loving came back with a rush" (213). The emotion of her singing restores Little Billee's. While he is a changed man—less innocent, more sombre—the primary symptom of his trauma, stoicism, has lifted: "Little Billee had lost all control of himself, and was shaking with his suppressed sobs—Little Billee, who hadn't shed a single tear for five long years! Half of the people in the house were in tears, but tears of sheer delight, of delicate inner laughter...his joy was almost a pain" (212-213). Note, that the audience is also incredibly moved emotionally by La Svengali's singing. The narrator is careful to emphasize that Little Billee and the Albert Hall audience weep together; when "Little Billee begins to weep again...so does everybody else" (216). The narrator mentions crying, weeping, sobbing several times in the passage describing La Svengali's singing and the audience's reaction to her performance. In *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual, and Drama* (2001), Thomas Scheff argues that crying is an automatic, untrained emotional response: "Crying itself is instinctual: the baby comes out of the womb with the ability to cry. This ability is unlearned" (10). Recalling Reddy's theory of emotions and my claim that trauma in *Trilby* functions to change or invert automatic responses, Little Billee's return to his crying-self signifies a temporary release from his traumatic symptoms. After Trilby's death, the force of his trauma returns and presumably leads to his death, for which the narrator provides no physical cause. In a similar way, Trilby's trauma persists. Svengali's death appears to have cracked the extreme dissociative state of La Svengali, but she still suffers, languishing from an unknown illness described in terms of brain fever. As she nears death, the narrator implies that Svengali's power over Trilby extends even into the afterlife. When an unexpected and unsigned present

arrives for Trilby, she opens it to find a photograph of Svengali. She gazes at “it with close attention for a long time” until her “eyes [dilate] and a quite strange light [appears] in them” (282). Once again mesmerized, again slave to her extreme dissociative state, she gives one final, moving performance and dies.

v. Painting and Singing: Art as Mediator

Little Billee’s heart springs are blocked and Trilby is submerged in the identity of La Svengali. These states limit disclosure of the characters’ interiority. However, Du Maurier conveys the characters’ fuller emotional experience via art. Art, both painting and singing, registers the characters’ growth and emotions in ways that words cannot.⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century, several thinkers lauded art’s ability to transcend pathology or hysteria. In *The Gay Science* (1866), E.S. Dallas philosophized that the “creative imagination is but a popular name given to the unconscious automatic action of the hidden soul” (245) and psychologist William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) contended that creative art could transcend mental illness or hysteria through the workings of unknown mental process (25-27). The relationship between art, the subconscious, and suffering has a long history. By the twentieth century, the notion that a diseased mind could produce exemplary art was a well-accepted one. Twentieth-century theorists and clinicians began to use art to connect with victims of trauma in

⁴⁵ While the focus of this chapter has been on the effects of trauma on Trilby and Little Billee, it is worth noting that Taffy arrives at the art studio directly after soldiering in the Crimean campaign. The narrator notes that he served “without a scratch” and eventually missed out on a glorious battle. This “humiliating misadventure had sickened him of soldiering for life, and he never quite got over it. Then, the feeling within himself an irresistible vocation for art, he had sold out; and here he was in Paris, hard at work...” (5). The narrator makes light of Taffy’s exiting the battlefield, but his words seem more in defense of Taffy’s departure than a statement to be taken at face value. Surely, Taffy witnessed some of the horrors of battle. Taffy’s “draw” to art can be read as the pursuit of the catharsis that painting offers from the trauma of war.

new ways, including recognizing art as expressing the emotions of the victim and allowing the victim some post-trauma agency.

In her chapter, “Art Therapy with Traumatically Bereaved Children” (2012), Laura Loumeau-May explains that the creation of art “assesses aspects of trauma experiences that have evaded verbal processing” because it has the potential to integrate disconnected hemispheres in the subject’s brain by connecting non-verbal and verbal hemispheres (99). In Little Billee’s case, painting and drawing track his evolving life view and register the effects of his trauma. The narrator’s first description of Little Billee’s art prior to the onset of trauma occurs after Little Billee and his friends have returned from visiting the Louvre. “Surfeited with classical beauty” (10), Little Billee makes the “most delightfully funny little pen-and-ink sketches of [the Laird and Taffy] ...so lifelike, so real, that you could almost hear the beautiful things they said” (11). Later, upon viewing Trilby’s foot for a short instance, Little Billee is able to produce an amazingly realistic image: “Slight as it was, this little piece of impromptu etching, in its sense of beauty, in its quick seizing of a peculiar individuality, its subtle rendering of a strongly received impression, was already the work of a master. It was Trilby’s foot and nobody else’s, nor could it have been, and nobody else but Little Billee could have drawn it in just that inspired way” (20-21). Little Billee’s art at this point is generally focused on French settings and French subjects. Further, it captures his interest in beauty, friendship, and realism. Because he is not yet so disillusioned with the world, he seeks to capture it as it is. One other work illustrates this. When Jeannot visited the studio, Little Billee “made a beautiful water-colour sketch of him, just as he was” (69). Although Jeannot is poor and orphaned (or parented by a single woman who appears to spend more time at the studio caring for Little Billee et al than she does her son), Little Billee

sees no need to alter his image or to augment it to reflect his poverty. In Little Billee's estimation, Jeannot is beautiful without any embellishments.

The most important painting in this period of Little Billee's life is "The Pitcher Goes to the Well." Little Billee began painting this portrait before he witnessed Trilby's altogether-sitting with Carrell, but he completed the work in Carrell's studio not long after the shocking episode. Thus, this painting represents both his pre-and post-traumatic mindsets. "The Pitcher Goes to the Well" captures a French peasant girl holding a pitcher. The narrator provides little description of the painting and few reactions to it. By a brief reference, at the end of a list of characters Trilby portrayed to pose for the trio's paintings, we know Trilby is the sitting model for Little Billee as she was for Carrell: "She sat...for Little Billee's studies of the beautiful French peasant girl" (62). Dennis Denisoff indicates that Little Billee's painting is based on Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's *La Source* (1856), the same painting from which Carrell drew inspiration with Trilby's altogether pose. *La Source* is a neoclassical painting with idealistic proportions, sharp focus, and natural colors. While neoclassicism and realism are closely related styles, one distinction is that neoclassicism aims to capture things not as they are, but as they should be or as one wishes they were. I submit then that "The Pitcher Goes to the Well" likely demonstrates Little Billee's using art to work through his trauma. His depiction of the French peasant reflects how he wishes it had been posed. Loumeau-May emphasizes that sensory memory is stronger than cognitive memory. By using sense-memory to create art, a subject can respond to his or trauma in healing ways:

During creative activity, the artist is continually responding not only to internal images and feelings but also to the impact of embodied imagery as it develops in the artwork in progress. It is common for art therapy clients to rethink, change, or

redo an image based on responses to its physical manifestation. Art making is a symbolic and metaphorical re-creation of experience. (101)

In essence, art can share the thoughts and emotions of a subject when the areas of the brain that process cognition and speech are damaged and art can change a subject's response to the trauma by re-imagining the traumatic moment. In an instance, to ameliorate the shock of seeing Carrell paint Trilby in the nude, Little Billee effects to create the same painting; however, in his idealized version, the model is clothed. Trilby herself participates in the reconstruction of Little Billee's traumatic memory as she has gathered the appropriate costume for the model (62). Rather than abandon the painting after he is shocked out of his wits, Little Billee completes the painting in a way that ameliorates the memory.

Thus, Little Billee's art before the trauma of breakup favors French settings and subjects, and is realistic, optimistic, and therapeutic. After the breakup, Little Billee's work becomes more overtly English and, in turn, more unrealistic, symbolic, and even mystical. Since art is able to bypass the effects of trauma, it communicates where other forms of language do not.

Immediately post break-up, Little Billee declares that he will never paint again, yet he does. Painting is a reflection of his inner self, something so part of his being that while trauma has repressed his emotions and altered his personality, he continues to paint, but only after he "flies" to England where thereafter he is known as "William Bagot," his full English name rather than the sobriquet connecting him to his life in Paris. A new artistic identity emerges in London. The narrator explains that William Bagot's painting was now on par with Frederick Walker's, an actual British magazine illustrator and painter who was a friend of Du Maurier's (Denisoff

323).⁴⁶ While both artists are supremely talented, the narrator is clear that their styles are different: “And yet in their work are they not as wide apart as poles?”. One of Walker’s most famous works is *A Fishmonger's Shop* (1872). This Walker painting is certainly less idealistic than Ingres’s *La Source*; his colors more sombre, his forms not idealized (an older man, a woman and young child) and the setting includes items stacked askew, dirt, and clutter. The only other description we have of W. Bagot’s painting at this time is of a painting that features “little piebald piglings, and their venerable black mother, and their immense fat wallowing pink papa” (152). The narrator lauds this painting as “An ineffable charm of poetry and refinement, of pathos and sympathy and delicate humor combined, an incomparable ease and grace and felicity” (152). If *A Fishmonger's Shop* serves as representing Walker’s painting, comparing W. Bagot’s to Walker’s painting involves some complications. According to the novel’s narrator, they are polar opposites. Perhaps, this is because Walker’s paintings address social issues and figures transparently and W. Bagot’s paintings are symbolic. Showalter speculates that the narrator’s praise here is more tongue-and-cheek than direct and honest and that this image functions symbolically to mock the “fierce code...of the English middle-class family or the prejudices that have blocked his own hybrid marriage” (xvii). Is Little Billee then only embracing his Englishness in an external, name-changing fashion? Pairing Showalter’s interpretation of the image with Little Billee’s ostensible love of all things England, we can read the painting as underscoring the tension between loyalties evidenced in bohemia. Walker is a true Englishman; Little Billee is still divided.

⁴⁶ Du Maurier consistently weaves real-life and fictional examples in *Trilby*. This temporal disjunction is one of many points in *Trilby* that points to strata of knowledge in the narration. It layers the present over the past, drawing out the traumatic effect of the encroachment of one time upon another. However, this is a pursuit for another inquiry.

We know little of his last painting beyond its title, *The Moon Dial*. This “immortal canvas” was the “fruit” of Little Billee’s life and at the narrator’s telling is installed in the National Gallery of England (153).⁴⁷ However, we can draw some implications from the title and the clue that it was painted near the end of Little Billee’s life that again reveal art as registering Little Billee’s alteration by trauma. *The Moon Dial* draws on the many possible symbolic meanings of the moon—associated with the senses, the emotions, reflection, fantasy, and the mysterious (Bonnin 6; “Moon”). The image of the sun dial represented math and the sciences; by contrast, a moon dial is allied with imagination (Bonnin 6). Further, the moon’s stages are often associated with the periods of life, a reminder of mortality. From these details—some textual, some speculative—we can infer what kinds of emotions Little Billee expressed through this art. The title and the narrator’s phrase, “immortal canvas,” suggest that the focus of Little Billee’s art has evolved from being more realistic, light in tone, and focused on beloved figures to being symbolic, ethereal, and melancholic with a more detached focus. (His painting subjects post break-up-trauma include unknown villagers, pigs, and likely the moon.)

The timing of the painting offers insight into what emotions Little Billee may have communicated in *The Moon Dial*. Little Billee paints for a short interval between hearing La Svengali sing in Paris and the London debacle (where Svengali dies and La Svengali—now Trilby—fails to sing in front of a large audience) (242). Chronologically, it makes sense that *The Moon Dial* was painted during this window. Not long after the failed performance in London, Trilby dies and Little Billee follows shortly thereafter. As his last masterpiece, painted near the end of his life, Little Billee imbued this painting with the emotions we have no record of him speaking, emotions he felt after discovering that La Svengale is Trilby. The omniscient narrator,

⁴⁷ *The Pitcher Goes to the Well* is his “blossom” (143).

however, offers commentary that fills-in our understanding. He reveals that when Little Billee hears her sing in Paris, he feels it is a “heavenly glimpse beyond the veil!” and causes him to “look inward at some transcendent dream of his own” (214, 215). La Svengali’s voice orients Little Billee’s thoughts toward things far away and celestial. Unlike his former realistic paintings, *The Moon Dial* works on a symbolic level, representing both Little Billee’s admiration for Trilby and signifying his alteration in personality.

The final intersection between art and trauma I wish to explore concerns La Svengali’s performances. As discussed, on one level, her performance operates to circumvent the effects of trauma and unleash her suppressed emotions to the point of dramatically affecting her audience at large and specifically, Little Billee. The next level I identify concerns relief. Trilby explains that she sought out Svengali after Jeannot died and her headaches had increased in severity. Since mesmerism was thought to have an analgesic effect, seeing her mesmerism as a place of eased pain is an easy connection to make. However, the final layer of meaning I identify in her mesmerized performance is somewhat at odds with eased pain: I posit that La Svengali’s mesmerized performance acts as a metonym for the complete dissociation caused by trauma. Her performance then represents both relief and extended suffering signified by dissociation. While poems such as “Charmides” by Oscar Wilde (1881), “During Music” (1892) by Arthur Symons, and “Legend of Jubal” by George Eliot (1870) employ music to convey sensuality and to create and restore memories—things that *Trilby* arguably also does—*Trilby* alone juxtaposes the performance of music with complete dissociation. The early nineteenth-century view was that hypnotism or mesmerism offered relief by helping victims remember their traumas (Putnam 120). Yet, the relief Trilby finds is not a restoration of memory, but complete dissociation. When Svengali’s influence ends, she has absolutely no memory of her life as La Svengali. La

Svengali's performance uncannily reads as textbook trauma: Svengali's mesmerizing of Trilby rents her integrated functions of "consciousness, memory, identity and perception of the environment" (American Psychiatric Association DSM-5). Trilby's traumas are many and her performance likely enfolds the trauma of love lost, life lost, objectification, and exploitation.

In her introduction to *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth discusses Freud's examples of Clorinda and Tancred. According to Caruth, Tancred becomes a wound crying out "a truth that cannot be fully known" (3). Caruth identifies a key characteristic of trauma in this story, where trauma simultaneously presents moments of knowing and not knowing, demanding our witness and denying it. Trilby's very performance positions her as one to be known and not known in a couple of key ways. First, Madame Svengale's public performances call for recognition, but her unparalleled singing resists alignment with the voice of Trilby of old. She is at once recognizable and hidden. While Little Billee and Taffy are certain in their identification of La Svengali as Trilby, Taffy cannot accept that the two are one: "the Laird proceeded to explain that, putting aside the impossibility of Trilby's ever being taught to sing in tune, and her well-remembered loathing for Svengali, he had narrowly scanned her face through his opera-glass, and found that in spite of a likeness quite marvelous there were well-marked differences" (222). Further, the Laird goes on to add that La Svengali's physicality did not match Trilby's. The demanding training process Svengali has forced upon has altered her physically.

Secondly, Du Maurier's long description of La Svengali's Paris debut, twelve pages in the Oxford edition, adds to this tension of known and hidden by the contrast between La Svengali's appearance and her sound. While her costume and form is divine, her facial expressions reveal one who is detached from the moment: She begins "without the slightest

appearance of effort” (210), “Her dove-like eyes look straight over Svengali’s head, forward” (213), and there is no sign of effort, of difficulty to overcome: “All through, Trilby smiles her broad, angelic smile; her lips well parted, her big white teeth glistening as she gently jerks her head from side to side in time to Svengali’s baton” (219-220). Yet, the music is robust and supremely alive. When she repeats “Au Clair de la lune” for the third time, her vocal ability is at its full expression. La Svengali sings the audience to heaven and back to earth, evoking images of Pierrot’s pining for Columbine and Marguerite’s betrayal by Faust (212). She coos “anti-German” listeners to imagine beautiful scenes of German damsels dreamily drinking beer and smoking pipes. Her voice “warbles that long, smooth, lilting, dancing laugh, that shower of linked sweetness, that wondrous song without words; and those who hear feel it all, and remember it with her” (218). The effect of her voice and her vocal gymnastics contrast markedly with the cool automatism of her appearance, emphasizing Trilby’s division of self.

Finally, Trilby’s performance reflects a site of trauma by its de-privileging of words. Neurobiologically focused studies on trauma confirm that trauma disables the speech and language centers of the brain (van der Mere and van der Kolk). The words a victim needs to express the trauma are not within mental reach. While Trilby uses words in performance, they are meaningless. Trilby sings lyrics, words, but the fact that they are delivered through a hypnotic state problematizes them as sites of meaning. Hypnosis was early-on used to treat hysterics. In their attempt to relieve hysteria, Charcot, Bruer, and Freud employed hypnosis differently, but all three practiced a hypnosis that dominated a patient and rendered her a passive recipient. In using mesmerism to draw-out Trilby’s voice, du Maurier attributes to Trilby words that are not her own because she sings scripted, mostly foreign, lyrics and because she is a passively and mindlessly submitting to the demands of Svengali. She first sings “Au Clair de la

lune,” three times without musical accompaniment. The narrator expresses shock that she sings a passe nursery rhyme before this sophisticated audience, but Little Billee’s proclamation makes clear that her words do not matter—it is the music, the art of her voice that reaches her audience: “[Her singing] is irresistible; it forces itself on you; no words, no pictures, could ever do the like!” (218). Then, after singing “Nussbaum,” La Svengali herself, we are told, “[says]: ‘See! what does the composer count for? Here is about as beautiful a song as was ever written, with beautiful words to match, and the words have been made French for you by one of your smartest poets! But what do words signify, any more than the tune, or even the language?’” (213). In this account of Trilby’s “words,” the narrator engages in free indirect discourse. The effect of this technique furthers the sense of an undisclosed Trilby—it is another voice beneath the voice we hear; yet, she does not speak these words. Rather, the narrator engages in his own form of Svengalism and momentarily moves into her mind to share—or invade—her thoughts, making clear we know very little of what Trilby thinks or feels. She is seen, but she is not known.

vi. Conclusion

Showalter’s 1995 pronouncement that *Trilby* merits a revival is right-on, but perhaps the reasons for this have less to do with a modern acceptance of its more salacious themes and more to do with the intricate way it treats the human mind and art. From the vantage point of the twentieth century, we gain a kind of bird’s-eye view of *Trilby*, witnessing how the effects of the novel’s style and content rippled through its audience into the twentieth century through the now immortalized character of Svengali. We can see the complex interchange between author, publisher, media, and consumer that led to a bi-national phenomenon. Moreover, we can see that Du Maurier’s treatment of mental suffering acknowledges ranges of dissociation, not only the severe erasure of memory identified by Pierre Janet, but the recognition of more modern

gradations of the dissociative state. In *Trilby*, Du Maurier demonstrates a respect for the ways psychological wounds can damage a mind and in turn disrupt personality and emotional processing. The trauma Du Maurier depicts is powerful enough to precipitate the deaths of his two main characters. However, perhaps because he was a visual artist himself and a lover of music, Du Maurier elevates art as the more powerful, more enduring agent. When trauma limits or shuts down verbal and physical expression, art can bypass these channels of voice and body to communicate. This theme is punctuated by the novel's ending. Both Little Billee and Trilby die due to their traumas, but the magnitude of their brokenness is captured in literary art.

Chapter 4

“There’s a mysterious mystery hanging about”: The Cloaked Representation of Trauma in

John Brougham’s *Jane Eyre*

i. Introduction

In the beginning of Act II of John Brougham’s 1856 dramatic adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, John Downey, a servant at Thornfield Hall, enjoins Grace Pool, also a servant, to share with him the mysteries of Rochester’s home. He has heard “awful laughter” and loud “rumpuses,” but cannot ascertain their origin. He senses a “mysterious mystery [hangs] about the place” and knows “There’s something a going on in this house” (2.1.8, 22). The dissembling Grace denies knowledge of the source of any strange noises or late-night movements and labels John a fool, but the audience knows better. Thornfield harbors a hidden story, an underside, a few skeletons in its closet. For John, this hidden story is the tale of Rochester’s first wife, Bertha Antoinetta Mason. Yet, the audience is also positioned to sound a hidden depth in Brougham’s *Jane Eyre*. Both Brougham’s mid nineteenth-century audience and contemporary readers know there is more because we began our Jane-Eyre journey with the source text, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ It should be noted that in her thesis “Intersectionality in *Jane Eyre* and Its Adaptations” (2015), Laurel Loh states that Brougham’s adaptation is based on John Courtney’s 1848 adaptation, *Jane Eyre or the Secrets of Thornfield Manor* (Loh 47). Courtney’s reorientation of the plot’s tensions to a focus on class and economic hierarchies rather than on gender and racial conflicts does prefigure Brougham’s treatment of a similar theme in his adaptation. However, the 1848 publication of the *Communist Manifesto* could also account for two playwrights adapting *Jane Eyre* to address class oppression.

While Brougham greatly truncates Brontë's storyline, he also adds characters and events. As a point of departure, rather than beginning at Gateshead, Brougham begins the action at Lowood; upon arrival at Thornfield, he throws Jane into a party of condescending aristocrats; and quickly bridges the time between Bertha's discovery to Rochester and Jane's marriage. He expands the servants' roles, including depicting Grace Pool as comedic relief and desired female. However, much of Brontë's basic plot mechanics remain: orphaned girl, abused in her home and mistreated at school, becomes a governess who falls in love with her charge's tortured guardian whose desire to marry her is prevented for a time but eventually fulfilled. Arguably, the pleasure in viewing Brougham's play was not found in its original plot. Rather, the audience's satisfaction is located in what Ivonne Defant describes as the "ongoing interplay between expectation and surprise" (4),⁴⁹ between *what* is known and *how* the drama will make it know.

Foremost among the elements in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is the great psychological duress Jane faces in the Reed's home, Gateshead Hall; at Lowood Academy; on the way to Morton; and at Thornfield. At each site, Jane receives a traumatic blow to her psyche. Brougham's drama, it first appears, glosses over these trials of mind and spirit. Further, the trauma of Bertha is minimally represented. Brougham uses a few words, a sentence, or a single image to represent Jane's trials-of-mind where in Brontë's novel, the narrative pace slows in moments of trauma. Jane's first-person narration pays close attention to settings and delivers a developed portrait of her wounded mind. For example, Brougham stops Jane and Rochester's marriage with two words, "My Wife," and the appearance of Bertha with a torch in her hand (IV.III.130). He then

⁴⁹ In "The Mystery of the Past Haunts Again: Jane Eyre and Eugenie Marlitt's Die Zweite Frau" (2017), Ivonne Defant discusses the relationship between adaptation and consumption. Defant argues that when texts present an awareness of their consumption and value, adaptation often leads to the "[revision and effacement of] the source text" (4).

quickly moves to Jane's life after Morton: "Twelve months have passed since that day" (V.I.I). Brougham relies on the space between acts, the image of Bertha, and a soliloquy that opens Act V to convey the trauma that Brontë takes several chapters to explore. Chapter twenty-seven unfolds with great detail Jane's struggle to process the discovery that Rochester is already married and her mental battle between her love for Rochester and her sense of right and wrong. In Brougham, Bertha's traumas, like Jane's, are hinted at. We never learn her backstory in his text and we become aware of Bertha's presence mainly through her occasional scream. Yet, by building on the hidden histories found in Brontë's source text, Brougham skillfully represents the traumas of Jane and Bertha. His successfully adapting the bildungsroman "autobiography" into a melodrama laced with intertext evidences two points: one, Brougham is indebted to Brontë's layered psychological representation of trauma, and two, his *Jane Eyre* artfully employs structural mimesis to forcefully represent trauma.

This chapter will begin by discussing the ways adaptation facilitates an expression of trauma. Adaptation performs trauma on a source text and leaves evidence of trauma within the adaptation. Next, I situate Brougham's drama by defining and briefly historicizing melodrama. I will explore how the excess of melodrama makes itself known in sound and image as the hidden symptoms of trauma surface in repetition, stasis, and flashback. Finally, I will discuss how Brougham's adaptation relies on intertextuality, concluding that Brougham invokes the trauma Brontë depicts by weaving her characters and plot into his drama and by manipulating intertexts to capture the effects of trauma.

ii. Brougham's Adaptation Among the Adaptations

Patsy Stoneman catalogs and describes the eight known nineteenth-century dramatic adaptations of Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. All eight are melodramas, but bear some sharp differences in

plot structure and theme. Appearing after Brougham's drama, the three dramas that Stoneman labels the Birch-Pfeiffer group (1867, 1870, and 1877) emphasize Jane's virtue above her female independence, eliminate Lowood, and end the plot at Thornfield. James Willing's 1879 adaptation focuses more on the reformation of Rochester than on Jane's growth and departs more significantly from Brontë's novel through the addition of subplots. John Reed and Brocklehurst take on more significant roles in this adaptation. Reed competes with Rochester for Blanche Ingram and Brocklehurst not only provides shelter for Jane when she flees Thornfield, he offers his hand in marriage. T.H. Paul's 1879 adaptation also includes subplots, primarily developing John Reed's character. In Paul's adaptation, Reed vies to marry Jane rather than Blanche and aligns himself with Mason to blackmail Rochester. His adaptation skips over Jane's childhood life at Gateshead and minimizes the oppression at Lowood by casting Brocklehurst as a comedic school master. Finally, Wills's 1882 adaptation locates nearly all of the drama at Thornfield and eliminates the red-room trauma by having Jane arrive at Thornfield from a place of safety and contentment (*Jane Eyre on Stage, 1848-1898* 3-15; 341-342).

The two most similar dramas are John Brougham's and John Courtney's, which were written and produced within ten years of the publication of Brontë's novel. According to Bolton's *Women Writers Dramatized* (2000), Courtney and Brougham were the first two to publish adaptations of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in 1847. Courtney's drama was then produced in 1848 at the Victoria Theatre in London. Brougham's was produced at the Bowery in New York City in 1856 and again in 1856 at either Triple Hall or Laura Keen's Varieties, theatres also in New York City. Both Brougham's and Courtney's adaptations focus on the oppressive hierarchies of class and economics. Additionally, they include comedic scenes and develop the role of the servants--some drawn from Brontë's text and others added to build the comedic relief.

A few characteristics, however, distinguish Brougham's drama from Courtney's, specifically in relation to its depiction of trauma. First, only Brougham's drama builds his plot around the novel's five main locations: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Morton, and Ferndean. Brougham stages content at Lowood, Thornfield, and Ferndean and invokes both Gateshead and Moore House through lines in soliloquies Jane delivers in Act I, Scene I and at the beginning of Act V. Of specific importance to an analysis of trauma in *Jane Eyre* is the inclusion of Gateshead. Unlike Courtney's adaptation, Brougham's drama invokes the location of the first cause of Jane's trauma by alluding to the red-room scene. Second, Brougham relies upon the audience's knowledge of the source text to inform the plot of his adaptation more than Courtney does. Courtney often directly stages trauma; Brougham alludes to the traumas from Brontë's *Jane Eyre* indirectly through a single physical gesture, an intertext, or a detail of the setting. In his Act I depiction of Lowood, Courtney allows audiences to witness Brocklehurst's upbraiding of Jane. In Brougham's text, Jane's laments Brocklehurst's dehumanizing treatment after it has occurred. In Courtney's drama, we see evidence of Bertha's presence in Mason's bleeding wound. In Brontë's text, this is an important scene; it reveals that Bertha is suffering and that she is dangerous. Brougham leaves Mason out altogether. He draws on the audience's ordinary text knowledge of Bertha and uses other elements to present her as a mysterious and dangerous figure.

Brougham's instructions for set-construction in Act I present a second example. The directions call for "*barred prison like*" windows at Lowood Academy (4). Later in a soliloquy, Jane calls her life at Lowood, "pitiless imprisonment" (1.1.96). Brontë based her descriptions of Lowood Academy on her own experiences at Cowan Bridge School (Barnard and Barnard 202-203). While the treatment at Cowan was unusually harsh for girls' schools of the nineteenth

century, the school did not go so far as to bar its windows. Visually then, this image is unexpected, even jarring. The setting does the work of conveying that Lowood's is a prison-like atmosphere, where one is confined in order to be rehabilitated. With these two prison references, Brougham communicates the emotional and physical hardship of eight years at Lowood and they also signify the cumulation of other childhood traumas (a point I will take up later in this chapter in greater detail). With these kinds of less-developed references, Brougham is able to invoke the suffering that occurs at each setting in Brontë's novel, but without the traumatic acts or their consequences unfolding directly on stage. Brougham's representation of trauma is cloaked--the work of its discovery and experience is the audience's.

Further, the adaptations differ in the ways they invoke the traumas associated with Bertha. In Brougham, we learn of Bertha indirectly--we mostly hear of Bertha; in Courtney, we see her in action. The presence of Bertha in the other six dramas ranges from no evidence of the mad woman, to scenic evidence of her harm (physical wounds, rent clothing), to howls and screams, to direct appearance. Courtney's directions send Bertha on stage several times for brief haunting appearances, and we also see some of the results of her actions: When she accosts Mason, for example, the wound is dressed on stage. Brougham invokes the trauma of Bertha's uprooting and failed marriage through sound alone until her final scene. His distinctive deployment of adaptation renders his drama more able to convey the traumatic sense of inner and outer, secret and manifest than Courtney's drama. Sally Shuttleworth posits that Brontë aimed "to penetrate hidden recesses, to unveil the concealed inner processes of the social body or the individual mind" (15). She asserts that many Victorian texts present readers with an outer image, requiring them to "discover the secrets of psychological and social life" (15). While Shuttleworth is concerned with the realism of the nineteenth-century novel, the stylistic

paradigm she discusses articulates what I see as the effect of Brougham's drama, an invitation to unearth the characters' traumas and Thornfield's secrets.

iii. Adaptation as Trauma: Knowledge and Form

As a literary genre, adaptation is especially well suited for the representation of trauma for several reasons. Successful adaptations re-create a text's kernel, its essence, in a manner that "revision[s]" and "relocate[s]" (Defant 4). Mettinger-Schartmann posits that alterations in character resulting from adaptation suggest that the characters possess hidden histories. In Brougham's case, the audience knows several of the characters in his adaptation of *Jane Eyre* are psychically wounded characters, but this understanding is largely wrought via the way Brougham invokes his source text. In the last chapter on *Trilby*, I explored how Trilby's trauma speaks through her singing and Little Billee's trauma, at times, manifests in his broken and emotional language--what I identify as a kind of mimetic syntax. Here, I want to argue that in the same way that syntax functions mimetically to represent trauma, so do mode and form. An adaptation dismembers, submerges, and repeats its source text; its very creative activity speaks of trauma.

The range of terms describing adaptation points to its potential to represent traumatic suffering. Eckart Voigts-Virchow's describes adaptation as "murder and vampirism" (63-64), and Julie Sanders enumerates terms ranging from positively to negatively connoted: "borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating, [...] being influenced, inspired, dependent, indebted, haunted, possessed, homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion, and intertextuality" (19). Several of these terms invoke aspects of trauma: A trauma is a damaging act or acts (murder, stealing, vampirism), that is suppressed or hidden (allusion, intertext, possessed), that repeats or inserts itself into the present (echo, mimic, haunt). Consider the overlap between the

concept of adaptation and Caruth's definition of trauma from *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995): "The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure* of its experience of reception: the event is not *assimilated* or experienced fully at the time, but only *belatedly*, in its *repeated possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be *possessed by an image or event*" (4-5 emphasis mine). By its form, adaptation tenders its audience the process of connecting narratives and disinterring hidden histories. Brougham's adaptation is organized around a collection of traumas: the red-room incident at Gateshead, the pillory scene at Lowood Academy, and Bertha's reveal at Thornfield--all drawn from Brontë's source text. Thus, Brougham's adaptation is doubly positioned to represent trauma: it mines trauma from a rich source text and takes a form whose effects mirror those of trauma.

iv. Melodramatic Excess and Redirected Traumatic Symptoms

The most popular type of drama in the Victorian period, melodrama, achieved its prominence as a way to get around the theatre licensing laws of the early nineteenth century. These laws permitted only two theatres in England to produce serious, spoken-word dramas. The remaining theatres across England circumvented the laws by including gimmicks to differentiate their drama from the spoken ones, including acrobatics, water tanks, and fireworks--any trick to de-emphasize the spoken text. However, the most common way to avoid competing with serious drama was to include music. Dialogue spoken to the accompaniment of music was its own category of entertainment and avoided violating the two-theatre law (*Jane Eyre on Stage, 1848-1898* 5). When the Theatre Regulating Act of 1843 overturned this law, theatres had already learned to utilize the form well, and audiences had developed a taste for melodrama; thus, there were no immediate changes, and melodrama's popularity continued for most of the remainder of

the century (6).⁵⁰ That Brougham's adaptation took the form of melodrama, then, was less of a stylistic choice and more the consequence of the social, legal, and artistic climate of mid-nineteenth-century theatre.

In *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (2001), Ben Singer conceives of melodrama as a conduit for the expression of oppressed psychological responses. Singer explores the difficulty in delimiting a clear set of traits characterizing melodrama. He begins by reviewing what has been considered melodrama's most unifying trait: "The essential element perhaps most often associated with melodrama is a certain 'overwrought' or 'exaggerated' quality summed up by the term *excess*" (Singer 39). Next, he reviews Lea Jacobs's concept of "situation," and follows by throwing his own "cluster concept," which includes five qualities of melodrama--pathos, overwrought emotion, moral polarization, neoclassical narrative structure, and sensation--into the definition quagmire (41-49). Singer's cluster concept offers five elements by which to measure melodrama, but it seems to me that four return to or overlap with the first characteristic his essay addresses: excess.

Singer credits Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's short essay "Minnelli and Melodrama" (1977) as establishing excess as one of the most dominant traits of dramatic form. Nowell-Smith avers that the excess of melodrama is "repressed by the [socio-cultural] narrative and redirected into channels melodrama provides" (qtd.in Singer 41). His theory suggests that rather than submerging overwrought emotions, melodrama surfaces their excess and associates it with non-verbal elements. The excess of melodrama is akin to the overwhelming experience of trauma: "Like neurotic symptoms, [melodramatic excess] find[s] an outlet through other channels of

⁵⁰ Melodrama's reputation as non-serious drama persisted, too, and as such melodrama garnered little scholarly attention for most of the twentieth century. Loh points out that within the past forty years, scholars have begun to re-estimate melodrama (Loh 38).

expression” (Singer 41). In “Two Types of Shock in Modernity” (2000), Tim Armstrong discusses George M. Beard’s application of the diagnosis neurasthenia, which Beard views along the lines of hysteria. In the late 1860s, Beard conceived of the human body as able to process stimuli at a certain speed before the stimuli overwhelmed the subject’s nervous system. In this view, shock is registered when the nervous system cannot process stimuli quickly enough to prevent system overload. It allowed Victorians to continue attributing traumatic symptoms to physical causes: when the nervous system failed to process shocks at the speed of delivery, the excessive stimuli caused traumatic symptoms. Beard’s economic model implied that shock did not require a visible, external wound and moved Victorians closer the recognition of the psychical wounds of trauma (Armstrong 2-3). I read Nowell-Smith’s notion of melodramatic excess in light of nineteenth-century conception of stimuli overload. In this view, wounds to mind result from the overwhelming, unprocessed stimuli of trauma.

Both major camps of current trauma theory—neurobiological and psychoanalytic—acknowledge that the experience of trauma is too much for a subject to process. This traumatic excess, its neurotic symptoms, lodge in the subconscious, but memory-fragments of the experience surface in the form of flashback, repetition, and stasis. Rather than suppressing this excess, melodrama displaces these memories and emotions to imagery, music, and body language. It makes the subconscious visible. While Nowell-Smith’s argument situates melodrama as resistance to twentieth-century patriarchal ideology, his concept of redirected excess maps well onto Victorian discourses of traumatic shock. His ideas allow us to make sense of the way the excess of melodrama finds expression in non-verbal elements, such as a physical gesture, setting, and tableaux.

v. Focalizing Excess: Visual Pauses

Melodrama is known for its uneven pacing. Moments of change, including sudden reversals and discovered identities, speed the plot's pace. Conversely, strategic impasses and points of decision stay progress by making visible "momentary paralysis" (Jacobs 41).

Brougham imposes these pauses in a few ways; however, consistent with trauma's resistance to vocalization, my particular focus here is to examine non-verbal representations of trauma that focalize excess. Brougham's stage directions often work to visually reinforce the class conflict his dialogue presents. As an orphan, a charity school student, and a governess, Jane knows the restrictions of class. Her desire to leave Lowood, a place of "bitter slavery," is punctuated when she [*Throws [the] window open*] mid speech (4). The simple action registers Jane's profound desire for freedom and the impasse she inhabits between Lowood and Thornfield. The open window is an invitation to the audience to envision what lies beyond. Through inviting audiences to think of the outward, Brougham reveals Jane's inner self, and renders her emotions palpable. He focalizes the excess of her desire in this symbolic physical gesture.

The novel's descriptions of Jane standing before an open window connect directly to Jane's soliloquy in the drama. In the novel, shortly after Miss Temple marries, Jane begins to feel a "stirring of old emotions" and a desire to expand her existence beyond Lowood (94). Brontë involves the window symbolism far more than Brougham does, devoting a rather long paragraph to Jane's view, moving from the confines of her building to the white road and gorge beyond, but achieves a similar effect of suspension or delay (94). She imbues this scene with a reflective, deliberate quality. Successive sentences begin with "I" and follow with verbs of desire and memory: "I longed," "I traced," "I longed," "I recalled," and "I remembered." To contrast the change she longs for, Jane lists all the banalities that have composed Lowood: "school rules,

school duties, school-habits, and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies” (94). Jane relies on polysyndeton to separate and emphasize each item, punctuating her weariness and suspending the reader for a moment in her malaise. The paragraph closes by returning to the sentence-syntax it began with: “I desired,” “I gasped,” “I uttered,” “I abandoned,” and “I cried” (94). In this way, Jane-the-narrator uses syntax to frame her reflection, mimetically setting aside a space for the reader to pause. Unlike the detailed setting Brontë invokes, Brougham’s brief stage directions situate Jane in a minimally described location, “*a very plain chamber*” (3), but by accessing the deep longing Jane presents in the novel, he is able to condense a very similar sense of longing into the image of her opening a window.

When she does arrive at Thornfield, her in-flux class position is underscored by the physical responses of Rochester’s aristocratic associates.⁵¹ Colonel Dent and Lord Theodore Ingram greet the new woman and size her up, “(walk[ing] around JANE with quizzing glances)” (5). In Brougham’s drama, Jane is not intimidated. Rather, she returns unwelcomed flirtation with confident correction: it is the wealthy, proud party that should be pitied rather than her: “Pray calm yourself, my Lord. I shall retire, not out of dread of your contumely, but from very pity of your infirmities; and it may be, that the poor, lowly-natured drudge, whom you sent for to bring you unworthy amusement, will have given you a wholesome, though unwelcome lesson” (1.2.231-237). Rather than with a spoken response from Ingram or Dent, Brougham ends this scene with the “*Tableaux of astonishment.*” Colonel Dent and his ilk are shocked that one so

⁵¹ In “The Governess and Class Prejudice” (2014), Erin Wells explores the low social and economic status of the governess. Also, In *Changing Lives* (1989), Bonnie J. Smith discusses how the governess was essentially classless, caught between the servants and the household members.

beneath them could respond so boldly. While we can only imagine the composition of this tableaux, a plausible image begins with well-dressed characters posed with shoulders back, heads atilt, eyebrows raised, mouths wide open. Classical melodrama allowed an audience the cathartic pleasure of disdain for the villain. In this scene, the aristocrats represent the villainy of class oppression, a very real concern for Brougham's mid-century working-class audience.⁵² The tableau pauses action and directs Jane's sense of class alienation into the frozen pose.

A bit later in the drama, when Rochester plays the gipsy, Brougham includes another tableau that captures tension between the aristocratic class and Jane's in-flux class status. In this occurrence, the tableau serves to stall dialogue. Just prior to the curtain's rise, Lord Ingram makes clear his and his family's motivation for desiring this marriage. Lord Ingram wishes Rochester would make "haste about [marrying his sister]" for he "[wants] to cut in for a slice of his ready—" (3.1.134-135). Lord Ingram is cut off mid speech when the curtain rises and music accompanies the discovery of "*Lady BLANCHE dressed as a bride, two bridesmaids attending*" (9). In this tableau, Blanche is leading the party to guess a word in game of charades. The first syllable is "bride"; hence, she and two others affect a bridal pose. By interrupting Lord Ingram's line, the tableau physically pauses this scene and focalizes Jane's yet unexpressed desire to thwart plans for a Rochester-Ingram union.

Brougham's stage directions call for the actors to use their bodies to create images that focus the characters' overwrought emotions. This allows the characters' inner tensions, the excess of their desires or pains, to become visible. Bertha's voice and Bertha's presence in Act III also operate as sites that concentrate and evoke melodramatic excess. In adaptation, it is often

⁵² Stoneman notes that the audience at the Bowery Theatre in New York City was much like the audience of the "transpontine" London theatres where Courtney's drama ran. These theaters were located on "unfashionable south of Surrey side of the Thames" (3).

an intertext that makes the excess of melodrama known--we know the emotional magnitude of a scene because we know of the event in the source text. As such, I will discuss how Bertha's image releases excess in the next section on intertextuality.

vi. Intertextuality: Bridging and Disrupting Connections

Intertexts are the foundation of adaptation. The term "intertextuality" means different things to different speakers. In *Intertextuality* (2011), Graham Allen cautions that the term often used imprecisely and incorrectly. Allen declines to offer a set definition, averring that to define the term is a project larger than the scope of his book. Rather, he presents a history of the term's development, offering brief defining phrases along the way: Intertextual texts lack all "independent meaning," immerse readers in a "network of meanings," and "activate a range of associations and background knowledge about the pre-text (1, 30).⁵³ In *Trauma Fiction* (2011), Anne Whitehead offers a slightly more specific definition: "intertextuality...refer[s] to the particular set of plots, characters, images or conventions which a given text may bring to mind for its readers" (Whitehead 89). Adding purpose and tone to the definition, Birgit Spengler highlights "flaunting gestures of affiliation," such as "transworld characters as well as common motifs, themes, and plot elements" where "the pre-text text is continuously evoked and re-invoked as a foil and frame of reference for the ensuing reading process" (4). Other sources mention paratextual markers, such as titles, book covers, and illustrations. The list of signs indicating intertextuality is long and open-ended. Brougham uses intertextuality in *Jane Eyre* to fix the cornerstones of his drama in his source text; however, the drama's structure leans in a

⁵³ Allen credits Julia Kristeva with first using the term in "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966), noting that Kristeva built her ideas upon Bakhtin's work. While Kristeva is credited with first using the term, Allen notes the concept's long history, dating back to Plato, the Bible, and Socrates.

new direction by its inclusion of new characters, the alteration of characters, and by its emphasizing class struggles over those of gender.⁵⁴

Like the form of adaptation, the aesthetic device of intertextuality mimics trauma primarily through three key effects: it creates a sense of repetition compulsion, indicates submersed knowledge, and imposes a fractured time signature. Drawing from Freud, Caruth develops her theory of a trauma's belated return. After progression through various, and sometimes contradictory, theories of trauma, in 1893 Freud claimed that Anna O's traumatic symptoms, manifestations of memories that existed below the subconscious (hysteric reenactments or descriptions under hypnosis), were the result of earlier sexual experience. Shortly before this, Freud had stated that her symptoms derived from guilt and the death of the father (Luckhurst 5, 7-8). Freud's new theory⁵⁵ centered on a two-stage model, where the "first forgotten impact [makes] a belated return after a hiatus" (Luckhurst 8). For Caruth, the history of the trauma, or stage-one, is inaccessible for at-will recall. Rather the memory possesses the subject and compulsively repeats the trauma not grasped in the moment. Caruth privileges memory erasure as the hallmark of trauma, and as I have discussed, nineteenth-century thinkers viewed other behaviors as more reliable signs of psychological disruption. Still, Caruth's sense of the continual return of the traumatized moment is a central concept—whether agreed with or disputed—and serves to illustrate the effect of the return of unbidden thoughts, emotions, or memories.

⁵⁴ Allen notes that post-structuralist critics employ intertextuality to destabilize concepts of meaning whereas structuralist critics identify intertexts as fixing the meaning of the text (4). I see Brougham's drama operation between these poles.

⁵⁵ In *Trauma Culture* 2005, E. Ann Kaplan clarifies that Freud did not intend to create a theory of trauma. Rather, he used trauma as a process to explain hysteria and treated trauma as an assumed concept (25).

For Brougham's audience, intertextual encounters—words, actions, or scenes taken from Brontë's novel—create a sense of repetition through repeated actions, words, or scenes. Repetition represents the sense of trauma's inescapability; each return signifies a confining cycle. Beyond return, Whitehead sees intertexts as conveying a sense of "predestination" or predestined trauma, where an audience "knows in advance the end which is to come, and that the decisions and fate of the characters" are set. Intertextuality becomes a "motif of an inescapable trajectory or fate of the character are predestined from the outset" (Whitehead 89). Intertexts invoke the impasses and mistakes of literary predecessors: the characters in the adaptation appear doomed to repeat the same actions. Jane arrives at the altar only to be stunned and wounded in Brontë's text and will again, in Brougham's. Intertextuality extends the life of character from one text to the next: Brougham's Jane repeats the misstep of her model. Alternately, Whitehead posits that when intertexts take the spinoff text in a new or subversive direction, they can represent endlessly unfolding alternative plot trajectories. In this scenario, intertextuality creates "a curious and undecidable wavering between departure and return" that reflects the looping of trauma (85). Brougham engages this kind of play with the character of Grace Pool and the confident way Jane addresses the Ingram party. While in Brontë's novel, Grace is reclusive and terse, here she engages John in witty conversation and hides about with her beer and cake (8). The incisive wisdom Jane shares with Rochester in Brontë's account, she delivers with double force in Brougham's account to his friends. These characterizations take root in Brontë's text but grow in unexpected directions in Brougham's. Jane's character reaches the ending Brontë provides; however, ending in marriage to John, Grace's character trajectory culminates outside of the novel's framework. Jane evidences trauma's sense of launch and return; Grace foregrounds the interminable paths trauma can take.

vii. Intertextuality: Repression, Repetition and Fractured Time

While there are several scenes in Brougham's adaptation that invoke trauma through intertextuality, two occurrences stand out as conveying the pivotal traumas of Brontë's text. Act I, scene I imports exact words and phrases from the novel to the adaptation. At the drama's opening, Miss Scatcherd and Miss Temple are dreading Mr. Brocklehurst's arrival at the school for one of his regular nit-picky supervisory visits. After reviewing the school accounts, he discovers Miss Temple has given the children an additional portion of food to replace a day's breakfast that was deemed inedible. He informs her and Miss Gryce that to "put bread and cheese, instead of thin water-gruel, into those children's bodies, you little think how you starve their immortal souls" (1.1.58-60). His words make clear to the audience the deprivation that the orphans suffered at the charity school. Brougham substitutes "thin water-gruel" for "burnt porridge" for his American audience,⁵⁶ but no other words are changed. Brougham inserts these nearly identical lines from Brontë's text into his adaptation, but they appear much earlier in the drama's plot than they do in the novel's. In this way, Brocklehurst's words disrupt the plot's linearity. They surface⁵⁷ out-of-place and time, mimicking the unruliness of traumatic memories. Brougham triggers the audience's memory of Brontë's novel to invoke her more developed portrait of the school master's hypocrisy. Brocklehurst promotes austerity for the orphans while

⁵⁶ Mettinger-Schartman explores the implications in Brougham shifting the audience from English to American.

⁵⁷ Intertextuality conveys the surface of an idea that is largely submerged--the intertext sits on the surface of a moment, like the tip of an iceberg, inviting readers to consider what memory came before, what lies beneath the image or word. Theorists often explain the relationship between intertext and source text by stating that one "reflects" the other. In my discussion of trauma and Brougham's use of intertextuality, I have found verbs such as "reflects," "mirrors," or "parallels" insufficient for addressing the effects of an intertext. If trauma suppresses or submerges a memory or emotion, I posit that an intertext releases or surfaces the same memory or emotion. An intertext does not copy; it expands.

he, his wife, and his girls lead lavish lifestyles. The sarcasm and cutting word play Miss Scratcherd directs at Mr. Brocklehurst are satisfying to Brougham's audience because of the knowledge these intertexts provide.⁵⁸ The novel tells us he deserves the comeuppance delivered in Act I.

Brocklehurst's double standard is emphasized in another phrase found in Act I. Brocklehurst comments that Julie Severn's curls must be cut off. He will "not have a curl or a top-knot in the school. I want those charges to become the children of grace, not the offshoots of vanity" (1.1.74-78). To apprehend the implication of Brocklehurst's command, Broughman relies on the audience's knowledge that Brontë depicts his own wife and daughters as being "offshoots of vanity." In the novel, amid Brocklehurst's mini-sermon on modesty and the lusts of the flesh, his family arrives. Jane-the-narrator regrets that they had not arrived earlier to hear their father's commentary on dress and outward adornment: "they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs. The two younger of the trio...had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl...and she wore a false front of French curls" (75). Brocklehurst and family represent a traumatizing system that keeps the poor, poor by feigning concern for their souls while depriving their bodies of sustenance and their minds of freedom.

⁵⁸ The ease with which dislike for Brocklehurst is created can also be attributed to the form of melodrama. Ben Singer explains "Classical melodrama, particularly on stage, gave the audience the cathartic pleasure of the very purest, unequivocal king of hatred, repulsion, or disdain for the villain. Melodrama was designed to arouse, and morally validate, a kind of primal bloodlust, in the sense that the villains is so despicable, hated so intensely, that there was not more urgent gratification than to see him extinguished" (40).

The second way intertextuality operates to represent trauma in Brougham's adaptation is through imagery. Act I, scene 1 covers a great time span and, I argue, invokes two of the novel's locations: Gateshead Manor and Lowood Academy. By providing imagistic intertexts drawn from both of the novel's locations, Brougham assigns the emotional turmoil of Gateshead and Lowood to one composite location. Brougham's references to Gateshead are few, including Jane's direct address of Aunt Reed in a soliloquy. However, Jane's litany of offenses she has suffered at Lowood reminds us more of her treatment at Gateshead. Brontë's Jane describes her time at Lowood as one of privation, but also a time of friendship, education, and some consolation, but Brougham's Lowood is pure confinement and misery.⁵⁹ Brougham's stage directions call for a "*barred prison like*" window (Brougham 3). A few lines later, Miss Scatchered confirms that the place is a "dungeon" (1.1.11). This imagery captures the emotional and class oppression of Lowood, but does not relate to its physical confinement. Rather, the dungeon intertext draws in the infamous Gateshead red-room scene found in chapter two of the novel. After John Reed verbally and physically accosts Jane for reading one of the Reed's books, she lashes out at John, calling him a "wicked and cruel boy" who is "like a murderer" (Brontë 25). As a consequence, Aunt Reed confines Jane to the red chamber and locks the door. After a night alone in the room, imagination and fear bring young Jane to a mental breaking point. She begins to imagine how her dead uncle's spirit would "rise before [her] in her chamber" and look sympathetically, but eerily upon her:

I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room; at this moment a light gleamed on the wall...prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves

⁵⁹ Jane's view of Lowood Academy in the drama clearly lacks nuance. This can partially be accounted for in terms of the excess of melodrama.

were by agitation, I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. (Brontë 31)

In response to Jane's scream, which she uttered unaware, Bessie, Abbott, and Mrs. Reed come to investigate the situation. Jane begs to be taken out of the room; however, Aunt Reed is unmoved and "thrusts" Jane back into the room, again, locking the door.

It strikes me that the most trauma-inducing element of this moment is Jane's being sent back to the point of terror--her facing the empty, locked room--a second time. Returning to the site of her torment overwhelms Jane who experiences "a species of fit" and becomes unconscious (Brontë 32). Young Jane faces trauma akin to Pip's in *Great Expectations*. In both incidences, a young, still developing mind encounters events that permanently imprint on the psyche. After Brocklehurst leaves Lowood in Brougham's account, Jane takes center stage and delivers a soliloquy that reflects her desire to leave Lowood, but even more so, the language Jane uses recalls her need to escape the red room.⁶⁰

Ah, aunt, aunt! You do not, you cannot know the bitter slavery to which your hate has doomed me:...joyless, hopeless, pitiless imprisonment--life dragged along in one unvarying level, in the very springtime of my youth....Oh, for freedom! Freedom! My heart bounds like an imprisoned bird against its wiry barrier...Oh, I have prayed for

⁶⁰ The stage directions in the facsimile of 1849 edition with which I worked indicate Jane delivers this speech "L.H." (Brougham 3). In *Jane Eyre on Stage, 1848-1898*, the copy of Brougham's text indicates "L," but Stoneman comments that Jane delivers the speech stage center, indicating her strength and independence.

liberty until my loud cry seemed scattered on passing wind. I cannot rest--I cannot think--
my tortured brain, in wild confusion, whirls. Heaven send me a change...or I shall go mad
(1.1.93-101).

While physically, Jane speaks from Lowood, emotionally, she speaks from the red-room. Her exclamatory calls for freedom; her feelings of imprisonment; and her brain, tortured to the point of madness, align with the traumatic behaviors of young Jane's lone night of unmerited punishment. Gilbert and Gubar identify "This little drama [...] which opens *Jane Eyre* [as] itself a paradigm of the larger drama that occupies the entire book (Gilbert and Gubar 343), and more recently, Madeleine Wood credits the red-room episode with providing "the dynamism for [Jane's] adult story." Wood argues that the scene reveals the difficulties of romantic love operating in a patriarchal system and functions as a scene prototype that repeats at Thornfield with Rochester and at Moore House with St. John.⁶¹ Wood's identification of patriarchy exemplified and resisted in *Jane Eyre* is a common thread in Brontë scholarship. I would argue that several oppressions converge in the treatment of Jane Eyre (and other characters in the novel), but deciding which most contributed to her sense of confinement here is not within my argument's aim. Rather, I wish to foreground that the red-room confinement was traumatizing, so much so that its effects reverberate throughout the novel and into Brougham's adaptation.

Through the lens of life-experience, Jane-the-narrator reflects upon this moment and makes clear that the effects of the red room were not purely physical, but indeed along the lines of traumatic shock:

⁶¹ In "Jane Eyre in the red-room: Madeline Wood Explores the Consequences of Jane's Childhood Trauma" (2006), Wood's primary aim is to explore how parent-child relationships inform the confinement trope of Jane Eyre. Wood concludes that Brontë's *Jane Eyre* demonstrates that "we can never escape our childhoods in an adult experience of love."

No severe or prolonged bodily illness followed this incident of the red-room; it only gave my nerves a shock of which I feel the reverberation to this day. Yes, Mrs. Reed, to you I owe some fearful pangs of mental suffering, but I ought to forgive you, for you knew not what you did: while rending my heart-strings, you thought you were only uprooting my bad propensities. (34)

Jane reveals the extent of her trauma by appealing to the Victorian theory of emotions. Her emotions are understood as physical but non-cognitive forces--her heart strings are "rent"--and as manifestations of nervous shock--"nerves a shock" and "pang." In *Principles of Psychology* (1855), Herbert Spencer claims that nervous shock is the "ultimate unit of consciousness" (151). Spencer qualifies that we are subject to continual slight shocks, representing all degrees and forms of emotions, but a shock, a jolt of greater magnitude, signifies a very powerful emotion.⁶² Further, Brontë underscores Jane's trauma through her invoking "Mrs. Reed." This direct address reflects Jane's address of "Aunt Reed" in Brougham's account. Jane's apostrophizing here cuts through time and space in a manner akin to trauma. These apostrophes magnify the representation of trauma by disregarding chronological and spatial laws. The great emotion present in Jane's Act I Lowood speech gains much of its effect by drawing from the deep trauma of the red-room incident by the traumatic content it connects to and the forms in which it captures that content.

Likely the most striking intertext in Brougham's adaptation is the image of Bertha. In adaptation, Bertha's character revisits the scene of her trauma. Brougham's adaptation does not

⁶² Incidentally, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* expresses strong emotions through the hydraulic theory of emotions and concepts of electrical shock. Jill Matus treats this point in section five of her chapter "Historicizing Trauma." Matus also discusses Alexander Bain's ideas about nervous shock, which are similar to Spencer's.

begin where the source text leaves off. Instead, his drama creates a time loop, leading his audience back to the Bertha's enclosure, and again to her death by fire. Even in adaptation, she has been unable to escape the cycle of marriage, madness, and confinement. The development of Bertha's character and her suffering is largely accomplished through Rochester's account of their marriage in Brontë's novel. Rochester's biased views and Jane's responses to them and to Bertha herself have led many scholars to determine Rochester's colonial culpability for Bertha's situation or to reclaim Bertha's madness as feminine genius contained. In these views, Bertha's madness is not in question; rather, the meaning of her madness is. Carine Mardorossian points out that while in the 1970s *Jane Eyre* was the "cult text" for feminist critics, today, discussing Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in terms of British Colonialism is a kind of rite-of-passage for modern scholars of postcolonialism. Bertha's animalistic and sexualized character is at the center of this discourse, representing Victorian's "fear about the colonizers' ...racial degeneration" (Mardorossian 1).⁶³ While it is impossible to ignore the important implications of both the feminist and postcolonial strands of Brontë scholarship, both views generally fail to consider that not only is Bertha mad, but she is also traumatized. We can argue that Bertha is a victim of patriarchy, of a system that traps women in marriages to perpetuate chattel-like ownership, or of colonialism, a power structure that whitewashes reprehensible treatment of the Other to further the aims of the white European male. Alternatively, we can track Bertha's mental illness through her family line, but we need not ignore one problem to recognize the other. Mental illness and

⁶³Mardorossian argues in "Unsuspecting Storyteller and Suspecting Listener: A Postcolonial Reading of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*" (2006) that the connecting factor between feminist and postcolonial critics is Jane's sympathy for the Other, which ultimately allows her to represent oppressive systems rather than opposed them.

trauma are not exclusive. While the recognition of systemic trauma informs Bertha's behaviors and position, what I wish to explore here is the more local, individual cause of her trauma.

I locate Miss Havisham's trauma and Bertha's along some of the same lines. For both women, the crisis of expectation clashing with reality creates a psychological wound. For Miss Havisham, the promise of engagement is never fulfilled; she is consequently frozen in the moment of the traumatizing discovery of her being left at the altar. Similarly, Bertha's situation loops rather than progresses. She is bound by legal arrangement to a relationship that is a thin semblance of marriage. Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman explain the importance of the context of the traumatic event, its resulting helplessness, and the importance of closure for the subject of trauma:

The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of "normal" reality, such as causality, sequence, place, and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after. This absence of categories that define it lends it to a quality of "otherness," a salience, a timelessness and a ubiquity that puts it outside the range of associatively linked experiences, outside the range of comprehension, of recounting and of mastery. Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. (69)

Bertha's marriage is her trauma. Rochester's uprooting her from Jamaica to live in an unknown land takes her outside her "parameters" of "normal" reality. Because she is denied a divorce, this situation presents no escape, short of death. Finally, imprisoned in Rochester's attic, she has no

mastery over her situation. This trauma has left Bertha in a state of hyperarousal, characterized by her sleeplessness, explosive anger, and hypervigilance (Zaikowski 199).

Brougham's treatment of Rochester's first wife is sparse; however, her presence in Brontë's novel so deeply resonates her pain and suffering that Brougham need only hint at her presence in his adaptation. In Brougham's case, less is more. Much of the references to Bertha are indirect; we hear reports of her noises and wanderings from the servants' dialogue. In Act III, scene I, Lord Ingram recalls hearing "sundry mysterious noises, at strange times" that put "one's nerves in an inelegant state of agitation" (3.1.67-70). Later, in Act IV, scene II John claims he has seen the ghost again, "a wild looking ghost-like thing, with heavy hair" (2.2.2-3), and try as she may to continue denying the "ghost's" presence, Grace verbally slips and asks John to direct her in the ghost's direction. Additionally, the stage directions indicate times where Bertha's voice is directly heard on stage. Sound creates her presence far more than sight. In Act II, scene 1, John the servant, reports hearing an awful laugh (2.1.8), a scream (2.1.68), and seeing a "fearful" visage (2.1.70). While Grace denies that he has seen or heard anything, the stage directions indicate "*scream heard*" and "*a wild laugh heard*" (Brougham 6). Belying Grace's protestations, these auditory effects invoke the sense of inner and outer in a way a visual image does not. They trigger the question: Where does that sound come from? While we can see a mysterious image on stage, it does not create the same inquiry. Direct sound invites the recognition of inner and outer, known and hidden. Postcolonial critics may argue that if Bertha's story is nearly erased in Brontë's novel, she is obliterated from Brougham's text. (The only backstory Brougham provides his audience concerning Bertha is found in Rochester's labeling her his wife.) Conversely, I interpret each of Bertha's screams in Brougham's adaptation as

extending the influence of Bertha, as inserting the memory of her madness and trauma into the audience's consciousness.

At the very end of Act IV, we are permitted our only sight of Bertha. Her face is hauntingly framed by the oratory window and she holds a torch (Brougham 13 [stage directions]). The effect of her appearance relies heavily for its meaning on Bertha's fuller presence in Brontë's novel and on Brougham's strategic use of auditory imagery in the drama. The mystery Brougham built through the sound of Bertha's screams is solved in this haunting image where the excess of melodrama is pinned. As Jane and Rochester are about to share their wedding vows, we hear Grace Pool announce her escape. The whole scene builds to Bertha's reveal:

Grace. (Heard outside.) "She has escaped!"

Roch. Horror! what do I hear; must my cup of joy be dashed from me, even in the moment of my greatest bliss? never. Proceed with the ceremony.

(Noise increases-bell louder.)

Enter JOHN.

John. "The house is in flames."

(Confusion--the oratory window is thrust open with terrible crash, and the maniac wife appears in the opening, a torch in hand.)

Roch. My wife!

Jane. His wife!

(Faints--portion of house beyond seen in flames.) (4.2.125-131; 1

13).

Thus, Act IV culminates in an image that represent three streams of overwrought emotions--the denial of Rochester's joy, the thwarting of their marriage, and the audience's "surprise" to learn the identity of the screaming woman. Since the audience's source-text knowledge has prepared us for the woman's identity, Brougham creates shock in the scene by interposing Jane's fainting directly after hearing Rochester declare, "My wife!" and by using fire on stage to show the destruction of Thornfield. In the novel, Jane does succumb to something like a faint⁶⁴ after she has returned from the oratory to her room and Thornfield does go down in flames; however, Brougham has re-situated these events to create a sensational scene. His displacement and organization of the responses to the thwarted marriage and to Bertha's identity channel the excess into this one moment.

viii. Conclusion

Charlotte Brontë's novel is one of the most well-known, studied, and beloved stories of all English literature, yet John Brougham's adaptation of *Jane Eyre* is barely known. It would be easy to conclude that Brougham's lack of acclaim lays with the claim that he has achieved nothing new or that without Brontë's text, his carries no effect. Yet, Brougham's adaptation deserves more critical attention, and this is specifically made clear when examining the two texts in relationship to each other and to adaptation, melodrama, and intertextuality more generally. There is a complex and interdependent relationship among these concepts and between the two literary texts. Indeed, Brougham does rely on the power of Brontë's depiction of traumatic causes--individual and systemic---to inform his drama. However, his use of the melodramatic form, his selection and manipulation of intertextual references, and his rendering the known

⁶⁴ Jane recalls, "The waters came into my soul; I sank in deep mire: I felt no standing; I came into deep waters; the floods overflowed me" (Brontë 292).

newly shocking and traumatic is worthy of garnering him a contemporary scholarly attention. Like most adaptations, his work needs to be read in light of a source text. However, rather than seeing his work as unimportant when standing on its own, perhaps we should see it as standing best--as a model of the deft use of a source text and of the mimetic expression of trauma--amid a complex of related texts and forms.

Chapter 5

Seeing Her Clearly: Trauma as Interpretive Tool in “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point”

i. Introduction

“The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” tells the story of multiple traumas, of psychological and cultural trauma, of a single traumatic moment and of a long-standing, traumatizing system. While drawing from Victorian theories of emotion and their concepts of the relationship between mind and body, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem also apprehends what would later come to be recognized as classic trauma: the uncoupling of time and traumatic event, the unbidden return of painful memories and events, and the fragmented, disjointed narrative of traumatic events. “Runaway Slave” offers much for an analysis rooted in a classically inflected theory of trauma. However, a theory of trauma intentionally constructed by a nineteenth-century African American experience of slavery offers greater potential to reframe common estimations of the character and her situation.

The slave woman inhabits a complex position in the poem—she is at once victim, survivor, and perpetrator. A theory of slavery-as-trauma will reveal a subject in complete possession of her will and memory. Further, it affirms that “Runaway Slave’s” speaker is a black female slave who is not pathologized by her race but rather traumatized by the system of slavery.⁶⁵ Cathy Caruth provides an useful distinction between these terms: “Trauma seems to be

⁶⁵ The OED defines pathology as “The study of disease; the branch of science that deals with the causes and nature of diseases and abnormal anatomical and physiological conditions; (in later use) *esp.* the branch of medicine that deals with the laboratory examination of body tissues,

much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (*Unclaimed Experience* 11). While elements of Caruth’s classical theory of trauma neglect the slavery-as-trauma theory I will employ, Caruth’s distinction divines one of the main points of my analysis: applying a theory of trauma to “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” will illuminate character, action, and motive in a way that other theories do not. Several of the critiques of the poem will find fresh returns when filtered through a lens of trauma. Additionally, as a subject of trauma, the slave woman’s words, her silence, and her actions allow us to witness a woman who bears the psychic wounds of rape and of the systemic trauma of slavery. Integral to this reading is Barrett Browning’s poetic form of choice: the dramatic monologue. Marrying the purpose of an abolitionist text with the mode of the dramatic monologue positioned Barrett Browning to represent the enslaved woman’s traumatic experience poignantly, with empathy and authenticity. I do not aim to suggest that reading via trauma theory has the potential to redeem rape or enslavement, but rather that it can render the representation of the enslaved woman’s suffering a statement of her dignity, self-possession, and strength.⁶⁶

In this chapter, I begin by briefly reviewing current scholarship devoted to “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point.” I demonstrate that some of these readings touch upon trauma

cells, and fluids for diagnostic purposes” and trauma as “A psychic injury, esp. one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed; an internal injury, esp. to the brain, which may result in a behavioural disorder of organic origin. Also, the state or condition so caused” (“pathology” 2; “trauma” 3a).

⁶⁶ *In Writing History Writing Trauma* (1999), Dominick LaCapra cautions against just such a “redemptive reading” a traumatic story: “Also dubious is a response...that circumvents, denies, or represses the trauma, for example through...redemptive narrative through which one derives from the suffering of others something...’spiritually’ uplifting or identity forming for one’s group” (98-99).

but do not develop a reading of the poem that demonstrates how seeing the enslaved woman as a subject of trauma shapes the way we see her—the way we understand the trauma of slavery. Next, I place the poem amid nineteenth-century abolitionist poetry to argue that Barrett Browning’s poem captures the direct experience and interiority of the enslaved woman in a distinctive manner. To illustrate this, I compare the voice of “Runaway Slave” to other abolitionist texts from the 1840s, such as the poem “Voices from Slavery” (1848) and the song, “O, Pity the Slave Mother” (1848). Indicative of most abolitionist poetry, these poems work to capture and censure the experience of the enslaved. They did much to bring the plight of the enslaved to the attention of nineteenth-century readers through the descriptions of a distanced observer. However, the feelings, viewpoints, and words of the slave are not represented. The position of speaker in “Runaway Slave” permits readers to see her experiences and to hear her speak. The next section explores how many current theories of trauma—recognized as classical trauma theory by Michael Rothenberg—explain some of the characteristics of trauma represented in the poem but fail to open a space for the specific consideration of slavery-as-trauma. Since no single theory addresses slavery-as-trauma, I build on the ideas of several theorists and the poem’s historical contexts to shape a theory of slavery-as-trauma. The second half of this chapter then focuses on an application of this theory to “Runaway Slave.” First, I examine how the long-standing system of American slavery causes and perpetuates trauma, focusing specifically on the re-interpretation of the slave’s actions and words through the lens of trauma theory. Next, I attend to Barrett Browning’s deployment of the dramatic monologue as a tool for developing the slave’s voice. The chapter ends by responding to charges that the poem’s speaker appropriates the slave’s voice, arguing that the poem includes strategies of estrangement that prevent the poem’s speaker from crossing from empathy to over-identification.

ii. A Case for Applying Trauma Theory to “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point”

“The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” was generally well received upon publication by both black and white readers as a bold and evocative poem.⁶⁷ The few exceptions derided Barrett Browning for writing beyond her feminine purview. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, scholarly interest significantly waned; critics often mentioned the poem only in passing if they mentioned it at all (Schaub 558). Others, such as Gardner Tiplin, disparaged the poem in the 1950s, calling it “too blunt and shocking to have any enduring artistic worth” (194). Likely, Tiplin was responding to the poem’s startling description of infanticide more than he was its condemnation of slavery. More recently, Sarah Brophy (1998) argues that Browning’s treatment of the slave woman denies the woman subjectivity and agency, instead saddling her with a “melodramatic feminine voice within a patriarchal framework” (288).⁶⁸ Of course, several critics, including Brophy, have critiqued the poem for its appropriation of the black female voice

In her 2006 essay, Tricia Lootens hailed the emergence—or re-emergence—of Barrett Browning as a central figure in the study of Victorian poetry, noting that most major Victorian

⁶⁷ In “Between Ethics and Anguish,” Marjorie Stone recounts how both white and African American readers deemed the poem a powerful representation of the enslaved woman’s experience. Significantly, she discusses the response of Charlotte Forten, an African American abolitionist, who lauded the poem as “powerfully written,” averring that the writer “earnestly and and touchingly portrays the bitter anguish of the poor fugitive” (qtd. in “Between Ethics and Anguish” 144). Further, in “Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Style, Subject and Reception,” Simon Avery mentions how the critical response to the poem was mixed, with some “reviewers admiring her bold stance” and others condemning her position on women’s issues.

⁶⁸ Brophy’s argument is often tenuous for it fails to situate her claims in terms of the dramatic monologue and to account for the 253 lines of “voice” spoken by the slave.

teaching anthologies published since 1996 now contain Barrett Browning's poetry.⁶⁹ Lootens examines the contemporary phenomenon of the publishing of Barrett Browning's works by comparing the publication fecundity of 1990 to 2006 to the relatively quiet ninety years prior during which Porter-and-Clarke's *Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* (1900) was the single critical collection garnering attention. Lootens largely credits this upsurge in publication to a renewed interest in transatlantic and circum-atlantic studies, interdisciplinary and feminist studies, and to the increased attention to African-American studies—all of these interests “altering the parameters of Victorian literature” (494). While Lootens cautions that current writing about Barrett Browning can require one to navigate multiple camps—academic, popular, and even fictional—she lands on a salient point: contemporary scholars and critics are finding fresh and diverse angles from which to approach a reading of Browning's poetry.

While “Runaway Slave” is still not Barrett Browning's most studied poem, it has garnered increased interest in the past thirty years. Convincing critiques have been written about “Runaway Slave,” focusing on topics ranging from student-reader reception to a Marxist reading of the slave's work and journey. In the 1980s, Dorothy Mermin read the poem in the context of Browning's father. Likewise, Angela Leighton's “The Daughter's First Muse” (1986) protests “the domination of the father” while it also recognizes the poem's critique of white imperialism (41). Later, in *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart* (1992), Leighton moves from the autobiographical approach and questions, “Is morality universal and totalitarian or is it

⁶⁹ In “Publishing and Reading ‘Our Barrett Browning’: Editorial Pedagogy, Contemporary Culture, and “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point” (2006), Lootens explores several of the many readings recently produced on Barrett Browning. While Lootens maintain respect for the poet, she cautions that some ideologically motivated readings miss or overstep the mark in Barrett Browning studies. Concurrently, she welcomes more creative scholarly additions to the Barrett Browning dialogue.

historical and relative?” (101). In general, prior to the 1980s, critics privileged an autobiographical approach; thereafter, they began to perform historical and political readings. Marjorie Stone presents a balanced and complex assessment of “Runaway Slave” in “Between Ethics and Anguish: Feminist Ethics, Feminist Aesthetics, and Representations of Infanticide in ‘The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point’ and *Beloved*” (2002). She notes that while the unconscious projection of personal and imperial fears may inform “Runaway Slave,” it would be a mistake to reduce the poem to a mere “witch’s brews of fears and anxieties” (141). Rather, Stone lauds the poem as one of the most nuanced antislavery poems of the nineteenth century. In “The Margins of the Dramatic Monologue: Teaching Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s ‘The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point’” (2006), Melissa Schaub problematizes the poem’s classification as a dramatic monologue, arguing that the poem both exemplifies and violates this form, but that nonetheless, it offers an immediacy of experience that renders all readers—past and present—relativist who condemn slavery but not infanticide. Sarah H. Ficke’s point of departure, however, is that Victorians did consider infanticide a terrible act but that the killing of one’s child was wrong mostly because it denied black female slaves the universal female right of motherhood (2013). Ficke praises Barrett Browning for finding a space within conservative narratives to argue for women’s legal and social rights while she also calls out the inherent hypocrisy of the American audience.

This brief and selective review of recent criticism serves to illuminate what seems to be a grave omission in the scholarship on “Runaway Slave”: a consideration of Barrett Browning’s representation of the female slave’s traumatic suffering. Many critics have discussed suffering or pain within the poem, but not in the sense of clinical trauma and certainly not foregrounding that a lens of trauma theory can bring into focus a more authentic and transgressive portrait of a

female slave. Of course, not every reading is focused on the psychological state of the poem's speaker; however, those that broach this, depict her pain as being tragic, but not as being specifically traumatic. Of the theorists listed above, only two mention the term trauma in their analyses. They are both cursory references, without definition, that give little attention to the ways reading the poem in light of trauma theory can reshape our view of the enslaved woman. Tricia Lootens questions if the portion of the poem describing the infanticide "involves the reader in an endless cycle of traumatized narrative compulsion" (499). Lootens likely refers to the unbidden return of the memories of traumatic events. Her discussion here connects to the reader's involvement in the poem, how the traumatic event represented might break the wall between reader and speaker in a dramatic monologue. Lootens then briefly explores the implications of the multiple genres present in the poem—from dramatic monologue, ballad, polemic, and melodrama—to approach a discussion of a traumatized, polyphonous voice of the poem. However, Lootens's analysis falls short of developing the implications of this view. Admittedly, Lootens discloses that the aim of her article is broadly focused, "only" gesturing "toward [a] discussion" of the various readings her essay entertains and doing so in a "spirit of invitation" (487). Marjorie Stone comes closer to considering a theory of trauma when she questions the ethical implications of depicting extreme suffering in art. Stone, however, is not concerned with the ways framing the slave within a theory of trauma informs the slave's behaviors and personality; her project takes a different and important direction.

What occurs to me is that most of these readings converge in a theory of trauma. While these representative scholars do not employ the discourse of trauma or seek to identify trauma as the catalyst for the enslaved woman's silences, words, or actions, the topics they explore—

biographical, cultural, and political—could each be considered a “trigger”⁷⁰ for trauma. Their primary aim is not to identify the manifold causes of the runaway slave’s trauma nor to use a lens of trauma to interpret her behaviors, but they do each identify contexts that could inform a reading via trauma. Indeed, Barrett Browning’s family history, her role in the abolitionist cause, her depiction of the American system of slavery, her poetic experimentation with the dramatic monologue, and her voice as a liberal (or not) feminist all imbricate within a reading rooted in trauma theory.

iii. Placing “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” Amid Abolitionist

Poetry

In 1845, Maria West Chapman requested Barrett Browning contribute a poem to the journal she compiled and edited, *The Liberty Bell*, but she would have to wait a year for Barrett Browning’s response. *The Liberty Bell* was the product of one of America’s most extreme abolitionist organizations who distributed its progressive ideas via a festive gift book sold annually at the National Anti-Slavery Christmas bazaar. Chapman herself described the book as “the promotion of the cause through the promulgation of its principles in an attractive form” (qtd. in “The Liberty Bell, An American Abolitionist Magazine”). *The Liberty Bell* mostly featured American writers, but Chapman thought that the British poet who spoke on behalf of enslaved children in “The Cry of the Children” would contribute poetry to the journal that would strongly speak against the enslavement of black Americans. Having just married Robert Browning in 1846, Barrett Browning was in a position to explore topics about which her father had formerly

⁷⁰ Although this term is problematic, it is the term commonly used to indicate a cause of trauma. I will take-up the problematic implications of the work in the latter half of this chapter.

forbade her to write.⁷¹ Additionally, Barrett Browning's family had made its fortune through slavery in Jamaica and she had long struggled under the guilt of this involvement. As critics who have explored the biographical implications in "Runaway Slave" have noted, writing the poem offered Barrett Browning a way to demonstrate freedom from her father's constraints while also providing her with a way to work through her guilt by familial association; for Barrett Browning, writing "Runaway Slave" served as a personal emancipatory catharsis. It follows that Chapman's request for Barrett Browning's poetic contribution to *The Liberty Bell* was perfectly timed.⁷²

The placement of Barrett Browning's poem within the gift volume is telling. "Runaway Slave" directly follows A. Southron's "The Insurrection and its Hero," an essay that recounts a slave's failure to lead an insurrection. Even though the slave leader, Isaac, failed to lead his fellow slaves into rebellion, the essay lauds his valiant actions and bold spirit. Directly following "The Insurrection and its Hero," Barrett Browning's poem picks up and intensifies the essay's call to resurrection. In a discussion of the 1848 *The Liberty Bell* as a rare item, Bahar Saber points out that the final lines of "Runaway Slave" place the poem's speaker in the same category as the hero of the preceding essay. The slave woman's final words call for the enslaved to continue what she ignited: "up to the mountains, lift your hands, / O slaves, and end what I have

⁷¹ Barrett Browning wrote the poem while still on her honeymoon in Italy, only three months into her marriage. In the letter she sent to James Russell Lowell accompanying the manuscript of the poem, Barrett Browning apologizes for her slow response: "I ought to have at once answered your request last year, & should have done so but was driven by a great wind of vexatious circumstances, altogether from my purpose. Driven up & down, distracted from writing & reading I have been since, too, .. & you will make allowances for me in remembering that I am only three month's married, & in the sudden glare of light & happiness, here in Italy, after my long years of imprisonment in sickness & depression, without so much as the hope of this liberty" (qtd. in Borderud).

⁷² Chapman requested an abolitionist poem in 1845; however, Barrett Brown didn't deliver the poem until 1847. The gift volume was printed in time for the Christmas Bazaar of 1847, but it was dated 1848.

begun” (230-231). Where the essay recounts Isaac’s failure to rouse his fellow slaves, Barrett Browning may succeed in inciting slaves (and her readers) to end slavery in America.

The significance of “Runways Slave” is further punctuated by its placement in *The Liberty Bell* directly before Eliza Lee Follen’s “The Harshness of Abolitionists.” This essay addresses the claim that abolitionists are often too harsh in their call for the cessation of slavery and that their language offends slaveholders. Follen begins by quoting a letter admonishing abolitionists to use softer language and treat slaveholders with Christian charity, for “The abolitionists are so harsh, so uncompromising, so very very severe, no wonder that the slaveholders detest them” (Follen 45). In essence, the letter invites abolitionists to equivocate or to gloss over the behaviors of slaveholders and to think of the slaveholder’s feelings: “What man likes to be told that he is a robber, and that he is an accessory to murder...?” (45). Follen quickly identifies the absurdity of this request and in doing so, serves both as apologist for abolitionists in general and for the graphic content and taboo subjects presented in the poem following her essay, “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point.” Saber points out that a segment of the audience reading *The Liberty Bell* in 1848 would have been shocked by the directness of Barrett Browning’s poetic narrative. Topics such as the beating of slaves, rape, and infanticide, presented horrors of slavery that while commonly known to be true, were considered too shocking to be addressed in abolitionist literature. Placing the essay directly following Barrett Browning’s poem was a way of anticipating and responding to the emotions and questions “Runaway Slave” was sure to evoke in some readers.

Coming to print amid a host of abolitionist poetry, “Runaway Slave” falls into the category of “moral cause” poetry, which sought to turn the heart and mind of those still sympathetic to slavery and, more importantly, to galvanize abolitionists. Popular antislavery

publications featured emotive poetry, songs, essays, and historical accounts of tragic situations of the enslaved. While texts from these journals importantly raised awareness and stirred readers to protest, the third-person, distanced/outsider perspective of the many of the poems and songs positioned white speakers as objective observers and empowered activists whereas the enslaved were depicted as highly pitiable, passive objects. These poems ascribed agency to the observer, the author. They called whites to resistance. Their bold portraits served to catalyze the abolitionists, but they fell short of depicting the enslaved as engaging in their own resistance.

In October of 1848, just months after “Runaway Slave” was published in *The Liberty Bell*, the *Leeds Anti-Slavery Series* featured an anonymously authored poem, “Voices from Slavery.” Written after reading a paper on the “Aggravated Horrors of the Slave Trade,” this poem invites an audience to “Hark! To the sounds that come from afar... / Deep stifled moans, / And dying groans: The living freight of human woe!” (16-20). The speaker calls the audience to attention to hear and see the pain of the enslaved, underscoring a clear insider-outsider dichotomy. A few lines later, the poem attempts to capture one of the most poignant traumas of slavery, one that “Runaway Slave” also depicts, the forced separation of loved ones:

Hark! to the wail from yonder mart,
The tale of grief and anguish spoke;
 Heart torn from heart —
 Friends sold apart —
And every tie of Nature broken!

Husbands and wives to meet no more!
 Children from parents forced to sever!
 For paltry gold,
 To bondage sold,

Beyond the reach of hope for ever! (45-55)

The speaker's ability to convey the anguish of the slave here is limited by his outsider position, a position frequently chosen by many other antislavery poets in the mid nineteenth century. There is little room in this poem to consider the traumatic effects of slavery on the vaguely depicted enslaved men and women. The emotive exclamatory lines capture the emotions of the poem's speaker, of his reactions to enslavement. Therefore, the focus seems to be on the effects the descriptions can evoke in a sympathetic audience, not on a faithful representation of the slave's pain and struggle. Clearly, in "Runaway Slave" Barrett Browning aims to likewise move her readers to sympathy and action. Yet, via the dramatic monologue, she employs a poetic strategy that allows her to approach the interiority of the enslaved, to present her as a thinking, fully feeling person capable of acting and speaking on her own behalf. To further emphasize the bold strategy Barrett Browning adopted, let us consider two other texts, both songs, that narrate the separation of mother and child.

"O, Pity the Slave Mother," a song published in *The Anti-Slavery Harp* (Boston, 1848) compiled by William W. Brown, describes a speaker's feelings as he ponders the impending separation of enslaved mother and her child due to the sale of the child to a new slave master:

I pity the slave mother, careworn and weary,
Who sighs as she presses her babe to her breast;
I lament her sad fate, all so hopeless and dreary,
I lament for her woes, and her wrongs unredressed,
O who can imagine her heart's deep emotion,
As she thinks of her children about to be sold;
You may picture the bounds of the rock-girdled ocean,

But the grief of that mother can never be known. (1-8)

This first stanza/verse tellingly focuses on the feelings of the observer, *his* pity and *his* lament, not the slave's. To the speaker's merit, he admits that the audience may imagine the pain of the slave, but it will never know the rawness of her grief. The final stanza of the song decreases the narrative distance between speaker and subject via a direct address. The speaker calls her to "hope! see—the nation is shaking!" (17) and to "Rejoice, O rejoice! for the child thou art rearing / May one day lift up its unmanacled form" (21, 22). The song's ending strikes one as dismissive of the woman's pain, too quickly moving from lamentation to joy. The reader has no insight into her feelings or actions, only into the speaker's perceptions.

Also published in *The Anti-Slavery Harp* in 1848, "The Bereaved Mother" likewise attempts to capture the pain of mother-child separation. The song describes a mother's impending separation from her child who is about to be sold to another slave master. Aware that the separation is coming, both the mother and child are "shrieking" (8, 12) while the auctioneer "Tears the babe from its mother and sells it for gold" (14). For the most part, these observations come from an onlooker whose perspective is rooted in what is visible and audible. The perceptions of the speaker-onlooker are privileged above the emotions and feelings of the slave. The only movement into the mother's interiority involves identifying her as reeling with "madness" (18). In a vein similar to "Runaway Slave," "The Bereaved Mother" employs the idea of the right and sanctity of motherhood as a vehicle to illuminate the inhumanity of slavery. The song's final lines draw on familial relationships and implore "O, ye kind mothers" listen to "the cries of the slave; / The parents and children implore you to save; / Go! Rescue the mothers, the sisters and brothers / From sorrow and woe" (29-32). The song becomes a rousing call to action between speaker and audience; the enslaved child and woman are passive objects whose

reactions and thoughts are at best sidelined and at worst altogether ignored. Again, this limited revelation of the enslaved woman's pain allows little to no space for an exploration of her trauma.

Many critics of abolitionist poetry have discussed the poetry's poor mediation of the slaves' experiences, noting the objectification of the slave and the lack of development of their interior lives. J.P. Gump discusses how the subordination and dehumanization of slaves depended upon disregarding their emotional life: "A slave's feelings, if one could conceptualize their existence, were meaningless. Grief and anger were explicitly forbidden" (626). Gump links the suppression of a slave's feelings to the destruction of her subjectivity. This kind of destruction communicates through word and action "what you need, what you desire, and what you feel are of complete and utter insignificance" (623). Many of the abolitionist authors bravely took up the abolitionist cause and published texts that succeeded in raising awareness and ire; however, their texts often promoted awareness and action at the cost of presenting a slave's destroyed subjectivity. Poetic texts that "observe" and "depict" hopelessly enslaved women but offer the audience no conduit to her voice or mind in some ways further construct the mindset that upholds slavery and perpetuate its traumas. In "Runaway Slave," Barrett Browning tramples many of the poetic conventions of her day. She features rape and infanticide; she shares the routines, insights, and feelings of a female slave who takes action; and, while not without problematic implications, her female slave boldly speaks. Through the dramatic monologue Barrett Browning radically represents the enslaved woman's trauma. Thus, as many scholars have noted, in "Runaway Slave," Barrett Browning achieved a very different sort of abolitionist poem.

iii. The Limits of Classical Trauma Theory

The complexities of topic, authorship, publication, and speakership in “Runaway Slave” offer many inroads for theoretical analysis, and as mentioned, theories of trauma enfold many of the poem’s critical considerations—its biographical situation, its feminist currents, and its depiction of racism and slavery. Classical theories⁷³ of trauma often guide these discussions, but they need to be supplemented with a theory of trauma that addresses the traumas of marginalized or non-Western groups. Applying a Euro-Centered, incident-based model of trauma to the traumas of a black, female slave who suffers rape and the daily aggressions of life as a slave, ignores the distinctions of her traumas and accepts a universal definition of trauma and recovery that has developed out of a Western, twentieth-century mindset. Definitions of trauma can partially account for the limited focus of classical trauma theorists. Early definitions in the DSM did not account for systemic trauma, cultural trauma, or insidious trauma (terms I will define in shortly). Classical trauma literary theorists also perpetuated this view, beginning with Caruth whose definition of trauma is based on a single event: “solely in *the* structure of *the* experience or reception” (4 emphasis added). Laub, Felman, and La Capra likewise lodge the catalyst of trauma in a single-event model. This is not to say that these theorists fail to recognize clusters of traumas or traumas that are preceded or followed with secondary wounds, but that they privilege one-time events as causing the primary state of trauma.

The current DSM definition perpetuates much of this exclusionary language. When defining PTSD, the DSM-5 (2013) repeatedly refers to “*the* traumatic event” (“Post Traumatic Stress Disorder,” emphasis added), and while the definition does allow for a specific kind of

⁷³ According to Michael Rothenberg, classical trauma theory refers to the school of trauma theory that burgeoned in the 1990s and has significantly driven the field until now. Rothenberg largely refers to the theories of trauma developed by Yale School theorists, such as Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman, and Shoshana Felman.

recurring event “that could apply to police officers or first responders,” the wording still very much privileges single-event traumas suffered by individuals within dominant people groups. In this way, psychiatry and literary theory appear to be moving in different directions: while clinical practitioners are in several ways contracting the already too-narrow net, several theorists are reweaving the net, and casting one that, at-once, offers nuanced diagnoses and acknowledges historically and culturally rooted constructions of trauma.

Additionally, trauma has often been defined as a staggering event disrupting a certain kind of life, but not the life of the other. Laura Brown discusses how hegemonic definitions of trauma have been constructed to describe the traumatic experiences of “white, young able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian men” (“Not Outside the Range” 101). This, of course, marginalizes the traumas of people of color, women, people with disabilities, lower class people, and LGBT people—a hefty segment of society. Western-dominant constructions of trauma ignore the traumatic impact of every-day events and long-standing situations as they impact all people. African American slaves commonly experienced trauma in the form of a single, horrific event, but for the slave, every-day life was also clearly traumatic.

In the nineteenth century, to be believable, a wounded mind was contingent upon a wounded body. Mental suffering was viewed as authentic or convincing only when it was concomitant of physical harm, such as the fever of Trilby and Little Billee or the swooning of Jane Eyre (These are the kinds of wounds that Pip and Miss Havisham lacked). Victorian mental science rarely conceived of a wound that could begin in the mind only.⁷⁴ Thus, the enslaved woman’s rape serves more than one purpose in the poem. It represents a historically plausible

⁷⁴ Jill Matus offers a thorough explanation of the role emotions played in the identification of trauma in the mid-Victorian period in *Shock, Memory and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (2009). See chapter 1 and the “Afterword on Afterwords.

and physical, single-event trauma. More important, for this analysis, by nineteenth-century standards, it creates a space for the effects of the enslaved woman's insidious and cultural traumas to be represented. The wounded mind accompanies the wounded body. The manifestations of insidious trauma ride the traumatogenic effect of rape. Laura Brown defines insidious trauma as "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" ("Not Outside the Range" 110). Brown goes on to contend that many events that constitute insidious trauma are every-day events or part of long-standing situations. The recognition of insidious trauma relocates the cause of trauma from within the individual's body, the enslaved woman's, to the culture and environment, the nineteenth-century system of slavery (Root).⁷⁵

Cultural trauma is also evident in "Runaway Slave." This brand of trauma is often not recognized by classical theorists who focus on traumas as they are experienced by an individual. Cultural trauma radiates beyond an individual's suffering to a group's consciousness: "members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (Alexander 1). In many ways, cultural trauma is similar to systemic trauma. When discussing systemic trauma, Ron Eyerman distinguishes cultural trauma as being woven into the collective memory of a community, such that individuals

⁷⁵ Maria Root first discussed insidious trauma and makes this important distinction. This is a deviation from psychoanalytically inflected trauma theory where Freud's notion of prior sexual assault positions some as more susceptible to trauma than others. Ruth Leys explains that "Freud argued that the symptoms of hysteria could only be understood if they were traced back to experiences that had a traumatic effect, specifically early experiences of 'seduction' or assault" (20).

traumatized by an event need not have experienced the specific trauma directly. Thus, the traumatized behaviors represented in “Runaway Slave” must be understood through the framework of hundreds of years of slavery.

Barrett Browning’s “Runaway Slave” participates in the construction of a theory of trauma that accounts for insidious, cultural, and systemic traumas—all causes of trauma essential to a theory of African American trauma. As George Levine and Gillian Beer discussed in the 1980s and as Jill Matus and others have reminded us more recently, literature in the 19th century partook in the construction of science; it did not merely reflect the discourse. Barrett Browning’s attention to the psychological causes of trauma in the African American enslaved community prefigured the scientific community’s discussion of these kinds of traumas by nearly a hundred years. While Barrett Browning has been criticized for appropriating the voice of a black slave, her sensitivity to the effects of slavery on an individual are remarkably intuitive and prescient whether one feels she crossed a line in her representation of the slave woman or not. In addition to Barrett Browning’s exploration of the causes of trauma that are particularly germane to a discussion of slavery, “Runaway Slave” depicts several traumatic behaviors that are consistent with a representation of African American trauma. “Runaway Slave” offers a representation of an enslaved woman that, unlike most abolitionist poetry, recognizes a black woman as a resistant subject.

It is arguable then that few poems, if any other, published in England in the mid nineteenth century represent an experience of a female slave with the fullness and nuance that “Runaway Slave” communicates.⁷⁶ As critics have noted, suffering is foregrounded in the poem

⁷⁶ In “Subject to Others” (1992), Moira Ferguson points out the tendency of white British women to present black female slaves as a “totalized, undifferentiated mass, denying...the people

through its political, historical, and biographical contexts, and I argue that each of these contexts contributes to the representation of suffering, but that the slave's primary struggle is rooted in the deep suffering of slavery-based trauma. In addition to the poem's contexts, its immediacy of experience delivered via the mode of dramatic monologue, its refusal to enforce black female slave stereotypes, and its head-on treatment of the blights of slavery position it as a politically effective site to examine a representation of this specific strain of trauma.

iv. Toward a Reading of "A Runaway Slave" via a theory of slavery-as-trauma

While classical trauma theory fails to offer a sufficient heuristic for examining trauma that takes into account the specific experience of a black, female slave from the nineteenth century, several theorists offer views from which we can assemble a theory of trauma germane to the experience represented in "Runaway Slave." Theorists discussing the traumas of African Americans often register trauma's causes and manifestations in ways contrary to their classical counterparts and this may help to help to explain why literary representations of the traumas of enslaved African Americans often are overlooked. As discussed in my introduction, trauma is a historically produced category and is not a timeless pathology; however, there are connections among the labels given to wounds to the mind—hysteria, shock, shell shock, and trauma—that allow us to see an emerging commonality of symptoms. The diagnoses opened a language for sufferers to discuss and to understand their wounds. Since the traumas of slaves often went unrecognized, their pain lacked the legitimacy of a label and their traumatic symptoms could be wrongly attributed to race, class, or gender. A theory of African American, slavery-based trauma needs to recognize slavery-as-trauma as a historically produced category with distinct causes and

any authentic heterogeneity" (4). I employ the indefinite article "a/an" here instead of "the" as a measure to resist this kind of essentialism.

symptoms. Such a theory would share much with classical trauma theory,⁷⁷ but I will now focus on those places where these theoretical camps depart: the marginalized traumatic subject and her specific “triggers,” the agency of the traumatized subject, and the voice of the traumatized subject.

A theory that serves to illuminate the traumas of enslaved African Americans begins with recognizing marginalized traumatized subjects. Several theorists and clinicians have pointed out the hypocritical and selective focus of trauma studies. Susannah Radstone concludes that “It is the sufferings of those categorized in the West as ‘other’, that tend *not* to be addressed via trauma theory” (25).⁷⁸ As surely as this kind of thinking still occurs today, racism in the nineteenth century branded African Americans as other. Bryant-Davis and Ocampo offer some explanation for the elision of racism from the cannon of trauma causes. They address five barriers that explain why theorists and clinicians are reluctant to identify racism as a source of trauma. Four of their points address problems with the DSM’s definition; the fifth, most important to an analysis of literature depicting an enslaved person, points out the danger in “pathologizing blackness.” Survivors fear that race, rather than racism, will be considered the root of their disorder (Bryant-Davis and Ocampo 485-486). Further, Judith Butler argues that Western-focused trauma theory has been guilty of failing to identify and aid trauma victims whose lives have are not regarded “as potentially grievable, and hence valuable” (25). It follows

⁷⁷ When reading “Runaway Slave” through the lens of classical trauma theory, the poem displays many traits commonly associated with trauma literature, including a sense of fractured time (represented by ghosts), fragmented or disoriented speech, shifting narrative, and punctuation that indicates omissions, great emotion and withheld information.

⁷⁸ Scurfield and Mackey point out that clinicians afford insufficient attention to race-related traumas. Bryant-Davis and Ocampo offer a review of clinicians who call out the bias in trauma theory in “A Therapeutic Approach to the Treatment of Racist-Incident-Based Trauma” (2008).

then that to apply a theory of race-based trauma, theorists must recognize and value black subjects; our analyses need express grief for those who suffer and apply a fresh look to places where racism has prevented traumas from being recognized.

Once the scope of trauma clearly includes the enslaved as subjects of trauma, a more inclusive theory of trauma must reconfigure what “triggers” trauma by expanding the definition to account for cumulative and every-day traumas. The loaded term “trigger” itself should be reconsidered for it connotes violent, single-event causes, and its use precludes the study of insidious trauma, cultural trauma, and systemic trauma. For these kinds of traumas, it may be better to discuss in terms of insidious trauma or cumulative causes. Theorists and clinicians, such as Brown, Tal, Rothenberg, and Craps, have challenged us to consider what causes trauma by calling theorists to examine incidents in their place of cultural and historic context. This enlarged definition opens a space for the analysis of slavery as a site of trauma, but to fully appreciate its implications for “Runaway Slave,” we must attend to the specific and daily system of trauma of an enslaved person in the nineteenth-century American South. Acts of insidious trauma derive power by being “every day,” through their consistent appearance and cumulative effect. Admittedly, the concept of “everyday” is problematic: everyday life is difficult—perhaps impossible—to qualify with consistency. However, with increased sensitivity and education, historians and literary theorists can identify some common elements that are traumatic.

“Runaway Slave’s” central narrative concerns the enslaved woman’s rape, escape, and act of infanticide; hence, most of the traces of daily insidious trauma figure into the poem’s setting and backstory.⁷⁹ The details that do evoke daily life lurk in the poem’s background; they

⁷⁹ I divide the poem as follows: stanzas I-VII connection to and lament before the pilgrim souls; VIII - XIV backstory of the pair’s tragic love; XV- XXVII pregnancy and infanticide, and XXVIII - address to hunter sons and the enslaved woman’s death.

are imagistic crumbs that lead readers to recall plantation life for the enslaved in nineteenth-century America. It is important to establish the insidious traumas that frame the main story of the poem, since the aggressions of everyday life, I argue, catalyze the single-event traumas of “Runaway Slave.” The traumas in “Runaway Slave”⁸⁰ cannot be separated; the slave woman’s story is a web of traumas that exacerbate each other.

Barrett Browning makes clear that the actions of the slave woman are born out of a long history of slavery. Birthed in trauma, her love story begins when she makes eye contact with a fellow slave:

And once I laughed with girlish glee;
For one of my color stood in the track
Where the drivers’ drove, and looked at me:
And tender and full was the look he gave!
A Slave looked so at another Slave,—(VII. 52-56).

Several indications of the everyday trauma of slavery are present in this stanza. First, the dramatic situation is made clear by the reference to the driver. A driver was usually a black male slave placed in a position of authority where he oversaw the daily work of the other slaves for the white plantation master. Drivers controlled slaves by wielding a whip, “an emblem of power and

⁸⁰ For this analysis, I will use the 1847 version of “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point.” While the poem was featured in the 1848 *Liberty Bell*, the annual itself came to print in 1847 in preparation for the annual Christmas bazaar. The first issue is dated with the actual year of publication, 1847. Issues following are dated 1848 to indicate the year for which the volume was intended. A quite different version of the poem was published in England in *Poems* in 1850. Barrett Browning herself labeled the first version “bitter” because of the raw portrait of slavery it presents. The 1850 version adapted its structure and wording to better appeal to an English audience who had already taken a national stand against slavery. Andrew Stauffer’s “Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s (RE) Visions of Slavery” explains the timing of the poem’s and offers a clear comparison between the 1847 and 1850 versions.

means of coercion” (Littlefield). While some drivers were more benign in their treatment of the slaves than others, his authority represented a kind of betrayal and a regular reminder of the chattel-status of the enslaved. Further, the drivers’ mediation was consistent, driving the slaves “day by day,” reminding them that they had no autonomy and that their labor was for someone else.

Secondly, it is clear that the enslaved speaker is a field worker. Field work involved extreme and intense labor where slaves worked ten or more hours a day, six days a week. Daniel Littlefield comments on the numbing effect induced by long, successive days of working in the field. He recalls Frederick L. Olmsted’s witness to the monotonous, life-draining field work and its effects on the slaves: “the stupid, plodding, machine-manner in which they labour, is painful to witness. . . . I repeatedly rode through the lines at a canter, . . . often coming upon them suddenly, without producing the smallest change or interruption in the dogged action of the labourers, or causing one of them, so as I could see, to lift an eye from the ground” (qtd. in Littlefield). One DSM-recognized symptom of trauma is a subject’s emotional numbing or lack of affect. The runaway slave’s robotic execution of infanticide can be informed by the cumulative effects of the inhuman, oppressive treatment she faced daily in the field. To assume she could switch off the numbing effects of field labor and become a fully feeling person at will undermines the severity of her daily treatment.

Other evidences of insidious trauma point to the procrustean limits placed on the slaves’ daily interactions. The speaker of the poem makes much of the way her lover looks at her during work time. The work day was highly regulated; communication between slaves working in the field was forbidden. More to the point is that the young black man’s gaze affects her because it recognizes her as human. Conversely, the master’s look “used to fall / on [her] soul like his lash”

(XX. 143-144). His look is so burned into her soul that the enslaved woman recognizes the look of her master in “a single glance” from her white-skinned child. The daily, lash-delivering looks of the master arguably constitute insidious trauma that provoke the enslaved woman’s murder of her own child. Drivers also monitored and suppressed spoken communication between the enslaved. The woman sings her lover’s name repeatedly, but she sings it “low, that the slave girls near / Might never guess, from what they could hear, / That all the song was a name” (XI. 78-80). The quiet tone she employs is not to keep her lover’s name a secret from the other slave girls; rather, their not being able to hear her voice provides evidence of how quietly she sings. Likewise, the young man confesses his love for her but only while “the shingle-roof [rings] sharp with the rains” (X. 66-68). His words can only be delivered secretly when muffled by the sound of rain. This is not simply secret romantic communication; it is the product of systemic oppression whereby masters considered slaves property—“property” that should be inhuman and insensate.

While the act of infanticide takes center focus in this poem, Barrett Browning carefully builds to its plausibility, and even its necessity, by representing a culture that promotes the rape of female slaves. Tragically, the rape of African American female slaves was not an out-of-the-ordinary event. Rape in “Runaway Slave” operates as a single-event trauma and also as evidence of everyday, “ordinary”⁸¹ trauma. Masters felt sexual activity with female slaves was an ensured right within the bonds of slavery. At each point in the slavery system, white male authority figures demonstrated their claim to the female slave body. In “‘Ar’n’t I a Woman?’ Female Slaves in the Plantation South,” Deborah Grey White discusses how during transport, male

⁸¹ Laura Brown’s, Judith Herman and Maria Root have all resisted the too-narrow DSM definition of trauma as being beyond the ordinary.

slaves were shackled one to another, but the women and children were free to move about on deck. The women's freedom of movement set them up as easy prey for the male officers who were permitted to use the African woman to indulge their passions. One slaver reported that the officers "were sometimes guilty of such brutal excesses as disgraces human nature" (qtd. in White 63). After arrival in the United States, female slaves were often stripped, oiled, and displayed for sale,⁸² this sexualized marketing staging them as "fancy maids" or concubines. Still, not all female-slave rape was driven by desire alone. Threat of rape was an ominous force designed to maintain male power and control female slaves' behavior, and commonly, rape served as a means of punishment for the enslaved who transgressed the master's rules. Such is the case in "Runaway Slave" where rape is the toll exacted for one slave having loved another.

The runaway slave murders the child that is the result of rape-as-punishment. Sarah Ficke identifies infanticide in "Runaway Slave" as Barrett Browning's condemnation of the system of slavery, which separates mothers from their children and denies mothers the fundamental right to raise their own children. Ficke's point is well made, and I build on her argument, adding that the daily insidious trauma endured by the enslaved woman, fashioned the slave woman into one able to commit infanticide. The rape of lines 97- 99 could alone traumatize a victim; however, Barrett Browning makes clear that the slave woman's repulsion of her child is not catalyzed by rape, but by the systemic trauma the child's face recalls. She cannot "look in his face, it was so white." Further, she can already see in his whiteness that the child wants "his master's right" (XVII. 118, 124). It is not simply that slavery prevents women from being mothers that renders slavery an inhuman system; it is that the traumatic system of slavery warps

⁸² This method of preparing a slave for sale was practiced on both males and females, but was far more common with the female population.

African women into slaves who are able to coolly kill their children. The runaway slave's act of infanticide is catalyzed by a single act, by the insidious traumas of daily life, and by a long-standing system of slavery.

While the infanticide in "Runaways Slave" is generally discussed as a terrible act, it is nonetheless an act, and as such, it is a demonstration of a kind of agency with several implications. The destruction of the self or another can constitute a creative act when the destruction serves to change or improve the person's situation or selfhood (Pearsall 78). The slave woman's act here works more broadly, for it will impact her, her family, the master's family, and her race. However, if the slave woman has been reduced to one whose actions are automatic and numbed, where does she draw the agency to complete this act, an act that will that will deny the male infant his white man's "liberty" and eventual power (XVII.123)? In "Obscure Recesses: Locating the Victorian Unconscious" (1997), Jenny Bourne Taylor discusses *Oliver Twist*'s "hovering in a borderland state between sleeping and waking" (138). She suggests we view Oliver's dreamy states as a "particular kind of mental state, a condition in which two realities may co-exist simultaneously, when the mind hovers on borderline of consciousness" (138). Taylor's chapter goes on to examine how the Victorian conceptions of multiple layers of consciousness served to develop a social identity (141). I see the representation of the slave woman's mind operating in a similar vein to the one Taylor describes. The slave woman's absent-minded performance of both daily duties and infanticide indicate her mind is on the threshold where conscious meets unconscious. In this inbetween state, to murder the child she invokes the will of the conscious to override her unconscious, automatic responses. William Carpenter's metaphor comparing the unconscious to an untamed horse and the human will to the horse's skillful rider, applies here. Thus, when viewed as the product of trauma, the infanticide in

“Runaway Slave” represents the enslaved woman’s active resistance to an institution that exploited her body, her labor, and her child.

Symbolically, the runaway slave has killed the master who oppressed her. Her actions stand in contrast to the inaction of most other nineteenth-century antislavery poems. As a point of contrast to “Runaway Slave,” Stone discusses two nineteenth-century poems where the mother of a mixed-race child is depicted as *asking* God to kill the child in order to save it from a future of slavery (“Garrisonians” 53). The runaway slave’s ability to enact her own will aligns both with early nineteenth-century ideas about willed agency and with an African-American theory of trauma. In their exploration of the role of the unconscious, Victorians were invested in the idea of “an active mind whose [conscious] agency is intact and uncompromised” (Matus 24). They were loath to “relinquish” control of their actions and memories to the unconscious. The slave’s agency then is represented as doubly defiant. First, she murders her white male child to thwart the progress of slavery. Second, the strength of her conscious will exceeds the numbing, absent-mindedness of her unconscious and enables her to murder her child.

Additionally, the enslaved woman’s ability to remember her trauma and to react to it is indicative of an African American theory of trauma. Rather than trauma rendering African Americans “impotent aphasiacs in need of an interpreter,” Kali Tal discusses how, unlike most Western writers—both literary and theoretical—African American writers have depicted traumatized slaves as both eloquent and empowered. Tal reasons that “Gates sees the survivor as an agent, a witting and powerful, though apparently wounded (limping) messenger” (Tal). The runaway slave is a powerful messenger who as E.W. Slim has pointed out “imperiously commands” the Pilgrim fathers and hunter sons (87). The hunter sons do not speak to her; she enters the slavers’ world, summons their presence, and verbally confronts their misdeeds. When

discussing Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Cynthia Davis describes Jacobs's struggle to communicate her rape to her grandmother. Yet, Jacobs's physical suffering does not mute her voice. Rather, memory of the trauma compels her to communicate, to speak. This need and ability to speak is the very exigency informing the voice in "Runaway Slave." Like Jacobs, the runaway slave will not be shamed into silence.

Classical trauma theory often points to the helplessness of the victim who is unable to "recover" from his or her trauma without the therapeutic intervention of an other. Theorists such as Herman, Caruth, and Laub, emphasize the role of the witness in bringing healing to the traumatized subject; a theory of African American trauma elevates the victim's voice and his or her power to heal him or herself. This positioning reverses the roles of Western trauma theory. Barrett Browning's victim is not passive, inarticulate, or amnesic; instead, it is the audience, the listeners, who are ignorant of her story. Beginning with Freud and extending until recent theories on trauma, classical trauma theory often expects that the victim has lost her memory. In this way, the listener/witness is the wise one, the one who can help the victim put together a full and accurate story. However, Barrett Browning upholds the victim's memory as a means of coping and of survival.⁸³ Charlotte Delbo, Joseph LeDoux, and Anne Whitehead offer distinctions between functions and layers of traumatic memory. For Delbo, external or intellectual memory allows one to recall the "facts"; however, this kind of recall is disconnected from the raw emotion of the suffering. In a similar vein, Whitehead also distinguishes between depths of memory: narrative memory and traumatic memory. While these theorists lay claim to the legitimacy of traumatic memory, they posit an emotionally sterile memory bereft of creativity. In

⁸³ Charlotte Delbo, Joseph LeDoux, and Anne Whitehead make arguments for a functioning traumatic memory in *Days and Memory* (Delbo), *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotion Life* (LeDoux), and *Trauma Fiction* (Whitehead).

“Runaway Slave,” the enslaved woman remembers many of the details of her story and shares them with passion.

v. Hearing Her Voice: The Dramatic Monologue

The vehicle of the dramatic monologue⁸⁴ makes way for Barrett Browning to demonstrate the enslaved woman’s control in telling her own fully remembered story and to afford her voice first place. Instead of a voiceless and memoryless victim, “Runaway Slave’s” speaker represents an enslaved black woman who is in control of her story’s telling. Unlike the depiction of infanticide in William Wordsworth’s “The Thorn” (1798) or George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859) where the fallen woman is denied the power of being a speaking subject, in “Runaway Slave,” the slave-woman’s voice has no mediation. Similarly, articles on infanticide that ran in the *Times* between the late 1820s and 1880s spoke for the one committing infanticide; they did not allow the one committing infanticide voice. In a letter to the editor, one Sussex parson writes of the hard choice before an unwed, pregnant woman in the mid nineteenth century: “Her only chance is to find someone who will take it from her at the charge of 4s or 5s a week...and then perhaps tempt her to murder it...the choice of an expectant mother lies between this hard outlook and the hope that the child will die at its birth” (“Infanticide”). Like the mid-century abolitionist poetry, writings like these raised awareness and even sympathy but silenced the voice of the one suffering.

Barrett Browning’s decision to allow the subject of trauma to speak for herself is a symptom of her trauma. Coming-to-voice represents resistance to the white patriarchal system of slavery; it is telling the story the masters would rather remain unspoken. The enslaved woman

⁸⁴ Arthur Hallam is credited with the first description of the dramatic monologue. In 1831, he declared, ““We contend that it is a new series of poetry, a graft of the lyric on the dramatic, and Mr. Tennyson deserves the laurel of an inventor.”” (qtd. in Pearsall 69).

who quietly toiled daily in the fields, post trauma, will not be “stifled.” In this moment, she will speak and calls her audience to “hark! I will tell you low—low—” (XVI.109). The imperative “hark” affords her a place of control since she alone knows the story her audience needs to hear. Because the dramatic monologue speaks in the present but narrates events from the past, we are able to, at once, hear the speaker as she recalls her journey and we are able to witness the in-the-moment ways she has used her voice and withheld it to demonstrate her agency. Made bold by trauma, the runaway slave directly addresses both the pilgrim-souls and the hunter-sons. The direct address asserts her place in a discourse with her male oppressors and inverts the master-slave power relationship. Here, it is the male oppressors who are speechless. Miller points out that the runaway slave “seizes upon their names and seeks to redefine them, using their originary power to curse the very land they founded” (641). She begins in a mild voice, calling, “O, pilgrim-souls” (II.1) and crescendos to ordering the hunter-sons to “drop that stone you dared to lift!” (XXX.218) and to “(Stand off!)” (XXXIV.251).⁸⁵ The souls and sons are not present to validate the story of her suffering as a traditional witness would do; rather, their listening points to their condemnation. Likewise, the poem’s nineteenth-century American audience is implicated. The speaker’s invitation to “witness”⁸⁶ is a call for the poem’s readers to recognize its complicity in perpetuating the American system of slavery.

⁸⁵ E. Warwick Slinn reads the speaker’s address of the hunter-sons as an “imagined projection of Elizabeth’s own defiance of her male relatives” (Slinn 61).

⁸⁶ I use witness in the sense explained by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992). While Laub and Felman’s view of single-event traumas is not consistent with the framework I propose for a theory of slavery-as-trauma, their conception of the witness as one being key to making a trauma known fits well with my exploration of “Runaway Slave.” In chapter two, Laub explains that a victim witnesses his own trauma when he narrates the trauma to a listener. The empathic listener, in turn, becomes a witness to the victim’s witness of his own trauma.

Additionally, the runaway slave is able to use her voice to tell her auditor when she chooses not to speak. Barrett Browning shows silence as a symptom of trauma that demonstrates strength rather than aphasia. She says “not a word” when a dead baby hangs around her neck, and when she is tied to the flogging-place, she “shrieks” “not a sound” (XXXI.232-XXXIII.233). Speaking in these moments would gratify the witnesses rather than charge them. Most tellingly, the runaway slave refuses to speak a curse as she dies. Brophy has critiqued this ending as a return to a feminine passivity. Conversely, Miller sees the ending as consistent with Barrett Browning’s poetic oeuvre, which reflects the Christian tenet of forgiveness. I offer a different reading of the ending that hinges upon her being the poem’s sole speaker and on the poetic practice of out-of-order syntax. Since the speaker’s last words are “In my broken heart’s disdain!” (XXXV.262), I find it inconsistent that she would use her silence to demonstrate forgiveness for those she holds in contempt. In stanza XII, she informs the hunter sons “Thou wilt not speak to-day!” (87), making clear that she alone can invoke the power of a blessing or curse at Pilgrim’s Point. I posit that the adjective “curse-free” modifies the speaker rather than the auditors, as in “I, curse-free, leave you all.” Because she has silenced them, they have not been able to curse her and she leaves her earthly life unburdened.

The speaker’s strong voice is also defined by successive declarative statements in active voice. Predominant is the subject “I” followed by physically active verbs. Several of these incidents of passive voice are connected to Barrett Browning’s Christian faith: “God was thanked for liberty” (I. 4), “With a look of scorn, that the dusky features / Might be trodden again to clay” (IV. 27-28), and “And the sweetest stars are made to pass” (V. 35). These occurrences of passive voice reflect an order in the universe where pilgrim sons and the enslaved are likewise subordinates to God. A final example of passive voice in lines 256-257, when read in terms of

trauma, resists the notion that narrating one's trauma brings closure or restoration to the traumatized subject. Instead of restoration, which implies a return to the same condition, the slave woman seeks freedom. In the lines, the speaker hints at a final silence where she is "floated along, as if I should die / Of Liberty's exquisite pain" (XXXV.256-257). The speaker's passive voice emphasizes the historic context of the poem—there is no collective, national victory here; slavery lives on in America. However, the phrase "Liberty's exquisite pain" indicates a personal victory for the slave who is now, for the first, time experiencing liberty and as such, there is a beauty to her final suffering.

From one view, the speaker has lost her active position; death subsumes life. However, the very nature of poetry, its invitation to read again, promises that the speaker's voice will loop, repeat, and continue to be heard. Perhaps, in this way, Barrett Browning's poem enacts cultural trauma. According to Ron Eyerman, cultural trauma has the potential to incorporate an individual memory into a collective consciousness so that those traumatized by the event need not to have experienced the event directly. Eyerman suggests that cultural trauma can be passed down from generation to generation via representation, which preserves the event as part of collective memory (15). There is no healing for the runaway slave, no closure to her story, no return to an ordered, safe narrative, only representation and repetition that can be experienced in perpetuity. Likewise, Stef Craps cautions against equating linguistic control with healing from trauma: "The emphasis placed on narrative reconstruction as a means of consigning traumatic memories to the past is dependent upon the subject having a sense of his or her own history as ordinarily uninterrupted and coherent. Those for whom history is characterised by division may find it impossible or inappropriate to organise their memories in a singular, chronological fashion" ("Postcolonial Witnessing" 87). In the case of African American slaves in the mid

nineteenth century, this implies the restoration of a privilege that was never possessed.

“Runaway Slave’s” ending with the death of the poem’s speaker underscores that her telling did not “cure” her trauma. The poem’s speaker dies within the poem and will now inhabit the poem as ghost. The poem’s very text will function as a disruption of the past to haunt its readers. Each time the dramatic monologue is read, it will insert the past traumas of American slavery into its current milieu. Because the enslaved woman’s voice carries the dramatic monologue, her ghosting promises the greatest summons to mourning and to memorialization.

One possible hallmark, then, of a traumatized slave is an articulate and brave voice but does the resilient speaker of “Runaway Slave” believably represent the voice of a female slave in the nineteenth century? Further, does a white middle-class European woman have the right “to enter a slave woman’s house of anguish” and if so, does Barrett Browning’s poem “perpetuate the construction...of a silenced Other” (“On Ethics and Anguish” 136)? The critiques of the poem’s voice are many. John Miller and Sarah Brown problematize a white woman’s use of a black woman’s voice. Miller speculates that the poem is “vulnerable to charges of interracial puppeteering” (639), and Brown explores the implications of a writing from the dominant culture and appropriating the voice of a racial and ethnic minority. E. Warwick Slinn avers that the poem does “not present an actual black person speaking; it enacts a bourgeois representation, a fiction written by a middle-class poet...it is always a white person’s representation” (66), and, perhaps most damningly, Sarah Brophy argues that “Runaway Slave” fails to offer the radical political critique for which others have praised it. After problematizing Barrett Browning’s choice of a black, female speaker, most of these critics⁸⁷ ultimately find Barrett Browning’s poem more

⁸⁷ Brophy maintains her condemnation of the speaker and of the political message of the poem.

progressive than exploitive. Even so, the spirit of these critiques often misses the mark by failing to consider the aims of a dramatic monologue, elevating a poem's objective elements over its effect, and most importantly, by failing to read the speaker's voice as an expression of empathy rather than identification.

To R. Browning and Tennyson, practitioners of the then titleless poetic form, the dramatic monologue was a poetry of psychology. Tennyson desired to express the workings of the human mind and Robert Browning aimed for nothing short of revealing the human soul in his dramas and his poetry. For a Victorian audience, the intensity with which the emotional self of a monologists could be conveyed was the measure of the dramatic monologue's excellence, for the dramatic monologue was first and foremost a a poetry of effect (Faas 22). In 1957, Robert Langbaum picked-up the Victorian conception of the dramatic monologue, arguing that the form is more than a set of criteria: "We must abandon the exclusive concern with objective criteria by which poems are either combined when they lack any *effect* in common...It is when we look inside the dramatic monologue, when we consider its *effect*, its way of meaning, that we see its connection with poetry" (77 emphasis added). Langbaum defines this effect as the poem's "way of meaning" (77), a technique located in the poem's form for causing the the audience to suspend judgement of the speaker's actions in favor or sympathy or even admiration (85). He explains that dramatic monologues create this effect exclusively through "passion, power, strength of will and intellect, just those existential virtues which are independent of logical and moral correctness..." (86). For a current definition of the dramatic monologue, Ekbert Fass focuses less on objective criteria and more on the psychological quality of the poem, its "gift of moral imagination" (21). For the Victorians, Langbaum, and Fass, the dramatic monologue is not identified by its common objective criteria—"its *in media res* opening, its evocation of a setting

and listener, or on the ‘psychological revivification’ of past events from the depth of the speaker’s memory” (Fass 16), but by an intangible effect that allows us into the mind of the speaker and controls our response to her actions.

The contrast between R. Browning’s and Tennyson’s aims and what, for many, has been a focus on objective criteria since the 1950s demonstrates that many modern critics had lost a sense of a Victorian aesthetic and audience. Tricia Lootens posits that in an attempt to validate Victorian poetry to a modern audience, professors of literature and contemporary critics have applied the tools of New Criticism to texts crafted to appeal to a different sensibility.

Contemporary critiques of the poem’s stilted diction and the Romantic style of the speaker focus on objective criteria rather than effect. Nineteenth-century readers did not require the literary realism that today’s reader finds believable and evocative. Melissa Schaub contends that by current standards, Barrett Browning’s poem is both emotionally believable and linguistically dubious: When the poem’s speaker “describes how she finally found some emotional resolution after carrying her child’s body with her for days, she achieves perfect emotional realism but complete linguistic unrealism” (Schaub 560). Yet, this disjuncture did not jar Victorian readers. Instead, a poem’s authenticity was conveyed through its emotional and psychological realism.

In this sense, we can judge “Runaway Slave” by how well it renders the emotional complexity of the enslaved woman and the effect this representation produces for the reader. From the lens of slavery-as-trauma, we can consider the speaker’s outdated forms, such as “About our souls, in care and cark” (VI.39) and “Yes, two, O God, who cried on Thee” (XII.83), and its archaic spellings, such as “sate” and “twix,” as tools that would have created the strongest impact, the clearest portrait of trauma, on a nineteenth-century reader who was accustomed to these forms. Further, the images she creates paint a mind deeply wounded. Her language may not

emulate “slave speech,” but her images nonetheless deliver the mind of a traumatized subject. The depiction of her withered, crouching soul finding no comfort even as it reaches through the prison-bars of blackness (VI.39-43) and her hand touching her lover’s blood’s-mark in the dust (XIII.92-93) show not so much how the monologist speaks, but how she feels.

Slinn points out that a paucity of published slave narratives in 1848 offered very few examples with which to compare “Runaway Slave’s” diction, grammar, and imagery. In light of this, it seems Barrett Browning’s work did something other than usurp a position or appropriate a voice; rather, she stood-in for a voice that would very likely not have been heard without her representation. Other abolitionist texts *observe* the slaves’ experience; “Runaway Slave” takes us into a slave’s “house of anguish” and Barrett Browning uses her own words to open the door. If, then, Barrett Browning is innocent of exploitive interracial voicing, some may argue she is guilty of appropriating the slave experience. I’ll concede that the speaker intends to create understanding of an Other’s trauma; however, her “appropriation” lacks the motivation of personal gain implicit in the term. If the artful representation of suffering minimized the pain of the Other, the charge of appropriation would carry more weight. Instead, I would argue that Barrett Browning did not seek to write a biographically accurate poem and she is using an experience to an end that would benefit the Other who is represented. As Stone clarifies, a dramatic monologue’s aim is to imitate not life but a particular perspective toward life (143). The depiction of trauma in “Runaway Save” is not a portrait of a single, specific life. Rather, it represents a horrifying existence for many American slaves.

vi. Cultivating Empathy

In addition to granting greater currency to the poem’s effect than to its language choices, an understanding of how the poem’s speaker generates empathy for the suffering of a

traumatized people demonstrates how a theory of trauma can help justify Barrett Browning's construction of the poem's voice. Most contemporary trauma theorists would agree that appropriately responding to trauma involves empathy; however, they would also agree that the witness must keep this empathy in check. Dominick LaCapra distinguishes between two witness-positions: those who empathize—witnesses who are fully “responsive to the traumatic experience of others” and those who identify—witnesses who appropriate the experience of the other (*Writing* 41). LaCapra cautions witnesses to avoid crossing from empathy to identification. To maintain this distinction, LaCapra calls for “empathic unsettlement,” a term he coined to describe the listener's recognizing the limits of his or her understanding. Empathic unsettlement is characterized by successfully maintaining the distinction between one's own experiences and an other's; it is feeling for another while upholding the distinctions between one's experience and the other's. LaCapra qualifies that it involves “virtual not vicarious experience—that is to say experience in which one puts oneself in the other's position without taking the place of—of speaking for—the other or becoming a surrogate victim who appropriates the victim's voice or suffering” (*History* 135). Indeed, the witness position LaCapra describes—between putting oneself in the position and taking the place of—is a fine and tenuous perspective. Yet, I believe it is a position “Runaway Slave's” speaker occupies. While the story is conveyed through a first-person voice, the speaker does not appropriate a specific voice. She does not engage speech indicative of an abused American slave in the nineteenth century. If she had attempted to capture this idiom, the attempt would have greatly diminished the poem's impact. If she failed to represent slave speech authentically (as she most surely would have), the glaring lapses in diction would jar a reader from the experience or worse come across as parodic.

Stef Craps credits Jill Bennett with linking LaCapra's notion of empathic unsettlement to Bertold Brecht's term, "crude empathy," a "feeling for another based on the assimilation of the other's experience to the self" (qtd. in "Linking Legacies of Loss" 192). Craps goes on to discuss how some trauma art and fiction can "combine affect with critical awareness, resulting in encounters of an expropriative kind in which the space between self and other is not eradicated but 'inhabited'" ("Linking Legacies of Loss" 192). Craps identifies elements that create this distance as "strategies of estrangement" and their application the "management of empathy" (192). I expand the function of Craps's estrangement strategies by casting them as elements Barrett Browning deploys to craft a speaker who creates distance between her audience and the "life" of her speaker. It is important to note that I see the runaway slave as operating in two roles in the poem—she is speaker to the poem's auditors and witness to the poem's greater audience of the tragedy of slavery. The dramatic monologue makes her position multifaceted. Barrett Browning needed to deliver a speaker who could convey the depth of a slave's emotional pain while maintaining respect for a private and individual experience. Barrett Browning's decision to represent the runaway slave in highly formal—sometimes archaic, sometimes stilted—diction can be read as a strategy of estrangement, a device to demonstrate both her valuing the voice and experience of an Other but to also demarcate the line between empathy and identification.

Craps notes that a strategy of estrangement draws the reader's attention to critical elements in the text. "Runaway Slave's" speaker creates this effect, not for the poem's auditors, but for the poem's larger audience. The speaker's use of rhyme, word play, and the fantastical all draw attention to the literariness of the story. Rhyme in "Runaway Slave" gestures toward a reading not bound to a chronological linearity and involves the reader in both the past and

present:⁸⁸ rhyme is a “graveyard” from which “undead words re-surge”; it “drags signs back from the abyss of obliteration” (Beer 196). For example, “Runaway Slave’s” first stanza, Barrett Browning rhymes “knee,” “liberty,” and “see.” These words at once recall a site visited by early pilgrim-ancestors, invoke the traumas connected to America’s founding, and establish the enslaved woman’s location. Shifts in chronology stretch an audience’s empathic response and thwart identification. Further, rhyme-speak does not represent real speech; rather, it functions rhetorically. It is a sign of craft and intention. Second, the speaker employs several words that function on multiple levels. When discussing how she and her lover worked, the speaker comments, “We did not mind” (IX.63). Here the word mind could mean, the slaves were not bothered by the field work; alternately, it could indicate that they subversively resisted the driver’s orders. In stanza XX, the speaker declares, “I saw a look that made me mad, —” (142). It seems plausible to venture these words indicate that the speaker has been pushed over the mental edge, but in-line with an African American approach to trauma, mad could mean incensed, upset to the point of action.

Finally, the poem also juxtaposes fantastical moments with historically plausible events. While these surreal descriptions can be read as evidence of the speaker’s break from reality, they can also convincingly be read as the speaker’s drawing attention to her story as rhetorical strategy. The speaker invokes ghosts and feels their “souls around [her] hum” (III.18), records the image of an angel’s “fine white finger” (XXV.185), and recalls the moment her dead child’s song rose to sing from the grave (XXVII). These images limit audience empathy by reminding the reader that “Runaway Slave” is a what-likely-did—happened-poem, rather than a what-did-

⁸⁸ Gillian Beer’s “Rhyming as Resurrection” (2000), a chapter in *Memory and Memorials*, discusses how rhyme has the power to connect the present and the past.

happen poem. They estrange the audience by clearly departing from a historical context, complicating our imaginative identification. When reading “Runaway Slave,” an audience may feel in the presence of the trauma of slavery but the speaker’s moderation of empathy reminds us that we, the speaker, and the author remain on its parameters. The choice to render the language of the runaway slave in poetic idiom does not demonstrate Barrett Browning’s appropriating a voice. Instead, it is evidence of Barrett Browning’s management of empathy, her control of the trauma situation. Because the speaker herself is estranged from the trauma, we as an audience witness the pain of the Other but are not tempted to enter into her suffering in a way to claim her pain as our own.

vii. Conclusion

As the venue and invitation to write “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” underscore, Barrett Browning’s main purpose in writing the poem was to promote the abolitionist cause, to challenge the prejudices of pro-slavery readers and to bolster the convictions of those already on the side of abolition. Abolitionist poems decried slavery and warned that its continued practice would harm individuals and the nation. Generally, these poems recorded the speaker’s observations, thoughts, and emotions concerning slavery, but they rarely depicted the raw violence of slavery or the interiority of the slave. Via the dramatic monologue, Barrett Browning crafts an abolitionist poem that does capture the personal and brutal experience of a slavery and the psychological wounds of a female slave. The poem’s speaker shares her personal story of being a slave rather than describes the scene of slavery she witnesses, and consequently, it conveys an unmediated experience that keenly represents the trauma of nineteenth-century slavery. Viewing the slave’s reactions to her enslavement, rape, and pursuit through a theory constructed specifically to understand slavery as trauma reveals a portrait of the African American female as

capable, decisive, resistant, and dignified. The runaway slave is not helpless or even pitiable; trauma has stripped away the silences and false civilities of the slave system and forced her to perform resistance. By viewing slavery as a traumatic system and recognizing the enslaved woman's actions and words as traumatic symptoms, Barrett Browning elevated the portrait of the black female slave. Her audience could empathize with the woman's plight and concurrently admire her courage, lucidity, and strength.

Chapter 6

What Trauma Can Do

“If you knew all my story, you’d have some compassion for me”—Miss Havisham

i. Guiding Questions

The central inquiry of this dissertation has been “What do we see in nineteenth-century literature when we see trauma in the text?” Related to this question are two others. First, “How do we identify trauma in nineteenth-century literature?” Nineteenth-century conceptions of shock preclude considering wounds with no physical cause. Twentieth-century frameworks deprivilege remembered traumas. To broaden the scope of my investigation, I have considered both nineteenth-century and more modern constructions of trauma to facilitate my identification of trauma and an interpretation of its implications for interpreting character, content, and form. Broadening the scope should not serve to normalize trauma, but rather to reframe what a wound to the unconscious can look like. Victorian conceptions of a psychical mind range from moments of absent-mindedness or being beside oneself to complete erasure of memory. Nineteenth-century theories of trauma tend to focus less on if an event is remembered and more on how it is remembered. Thus, Victorian literature represents degrees and types of woundedness. Some wounds debilitate and stagnate; some drastically alter a character’s way of experiencing life; still, others galvanize the victim to voice and action. Second, I pursued, “How do nineteenth-century literary texts employ distinct literary conventions and forms to intensify the representation of trauma in literary texts?” Many trauma theorists see the tropes and themes of modernist literature as best suited to a representation of trauma, but my analysis demonstrates that Victorian

literature depicts traumas specific to the nineteenth century and offers its own tools for representing the hidden and known qualities of trauma.

ii. Denominators as Discoveries

A close reading of the four texts discussed in my dissertation to address these questions surfaces a few common denominators in Victorian authors' representation of trauma. To begin, each of the texts interrogates how the conscious and unconscious co-exist and where the agency of a traumatized subject is located. In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham's actions operate between conscious and unconscious activity. Some behaviors stemming from the trauma of her broken engagement, are willed. When she first becomes Estella's guardian, she purposes to "steal" Estella's heart and replace it with ice. Some of her other actions, indicate the workings of a wounded unconscious. Neither her unremitting impulse to inhabit the moment her trauma first occurred nor her ongoing manipulation of Estella are volitional acts. Pip's conscious agency is more limited than Miss Havisham's. Hallucinations of a floating file and of a ghostly Miss Havisham visit Pip unbidden. His compulsive desire for Estella and his puzzling allegiance to Miss Havisham appear products of a mobilized and wounded unconscious. Like Miss Havisham, the agency of Barrett Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" alternates between conscious and unconscious movement. The slave woman murders her child, both out of her numbed, absent-minded state and out of her conscious memory of her rape, a product of a system she resists. In Brougham's *Jane Eyre*, the unconscious—its desires and wounds—is manifest in the visible effects of the melodrama. The drama's staging, its actor directions, and its sensational displays offer concrete representations of a wounded unconscious surfacing. In *Jane Eyre*, the

unconscious is not so much driving the characters' actions as it is seeking to recognition. Brougham's text by nature of its being a drama rather than a long novel must pare the plot of the source text; however, Jane's and Bertha's battered unconscious minds refuse to remain hidden. Finally, in *Trilby*. La Svengali performs music out of her unconscious. Through inducing a mesmerized state, Svengali disarms her conscious, trains her unconscious, and draws out a performance that bypasses her conscious will. These views of the relationship between the unconscious and conscious suggest that the question of agency was not a matter of equal distribution of power. The Victorian fear of the unconscious having control beyond a few automatic actions seems moderated in literature's collective portrait of distributed conscious-unconscious agency.

The next two denominators point to areas for future inquiry. First, Victorian literary representations of trauma offer little evidence of the modern idea of the process of working through. Modern trauma scholars such as Judith Herman and Bessel van der Kolk elevate the expression of trauma to movement toward healing. Others, such as Stef Craps and Michael Rothenberg, caution against equating the ability to narrativize one's trauma to healing. Others, such as Caruth and Laub, speak of integrating the event into consciousness, of testifying to witness the traumatic event's occurrence. While Victorians examined the mind, memory storage, and the somatic response of the emotions, they did not devote significant attention to working through psychological wounds. Rather, there seems to be little expectation of recovery. A character might exhibit a changed-heart and mental endurance, but more frequently, traumatized characters die in text. In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham regrets her treatment of Estella, but dies in a

conflagration bound to Satis house, the site of her trauma, still in her wedding dress, a symbol of her trauma. In a similar way, *Jane Eyre's* Bertha never escapes her confinement, but rather ends her life in flames. Both Little Billee and Trilby die from unknown causes, in some ways connected to their traumas. The runaway slave dies in a half-conscious, half-hallucinatory state. Her death occurs as her trauma is manifesting. Of the characters, considered, Jane Eyre and Pip fair the most favorably. Jane's and Pip's "happy" endings, however, are punctuated with reminders of their traumas. Jane's new husband bears the wounds of the fire that killed Bertha, and Pip, in Dickens's second ending, appears to be attached to the object of his compulsive thoughts. These portraits one to wonder how did Victorians regard the healing of the mind? Did literary texts "kill off" many characters because they lacked a framework for recovery?

Finally, on some level, these texts investigate the role nineteenth-century culture played in developing, perpetuating, and reflecting trauma. In each of the texts examined, an element of nineteenth-century culture is implicated as contributing to the cause of trauma. Trauma, in this way, brings to the fore social issues. I see this presentation in-line with Ruth Leys's view of mimetic trauma. In these Victorian texts, trauma does not come to a sovereign but passive victim. Rather the victim is involved in a web of factors that influence how a traumatic event affects him. It is not only the event "going inside," but also what is "inside" that calculates the magnitude and longevity of the trauma. Leys mentions how the anti-mimetic turn of trauma theory understands a traumatic event to "[come] to the subject entirely from the outside" (37). Mimetic theory, on the other hand, considers the victim and by extension, the culture that shapes the victim.

In place of Leys's consideration of the Freudian primary repression, I posit that the shaping influence of culture figures prominently into a subject's susceptibility to trauma. Thus, facets of nineteenth-century culture which weaken or assault the individual become subject to critique through literary representation. Matus explains that Victorian culture was a culture of responsibility rather than blame (186-189). She refers to the individual's willingness to accept her responsibility for personal suffering—brain fever is brought about by the choice to overextend the self. The literature I explore does not present examples that counter her claims about individual accountability. However, whether it is blame or something closer to responsibility, culture in these texts is depicted as complicit. *Little Billee* and *Trilby* are divided ultimately by class and national prejudices, and the readers' responses to the novel itself underscore human susceptibility to alterations in consciousness. Pip faces the impossible task of becoming a gentleman by Victorian standards. Miss Havisham faces the ignominy of one left at the altar and of a single, older woman in nineteenth-century England. Jane is a dependent orphan who seeks employment in one of the only possible venues for unmarried women as a governess and Bertha has been abandoned by her husband and a culture that hides those it considers mentally ill. However, the sharpest use of trauma to illuminate social injustice is found in the violent treatment of Barrett Browning's runaway slave. The focus of the poem's censure is directed toward nineteenth-century Americans. The poem paints a portrait of culture complicit in the development of slavery extending from the American pilgrims to the mid nineteenth century. It draws out the culpability of institutions and the dangers of systems that perpetuate trauma.

iii. In Summation

When Miss Havisham finally realizes the damage she has wrought on Estella, she defends herself with one statement to Pip:

“If you knew all my story,” she pleaded, “you would have some compassion for me and a better understanding of me.”

Pip responds “I believe I may say that I know your story, and have known it ever since I first left this neighborhood. It has inspired me with great commiseration, and I hope I understand it and its influences” (365).

I began my study of nineteenth-century literature and trauma because I desired to locate images of human mental suffering and a response to that suffering in Victorian literary texts. In a time when we can be inured to the suffering of others, I wanted to look to another age to see the representation of a particular kind of suffering. Trauma theory offered this lens. What I found was a vivid representation of trauma whose foundation was built on active and often dissenting public discourses on the architecture of the mind, intensified by Victorian tropes and themes, and shaped by the acute perceptions of the human mind in the wake of traumatic wounding. I also found that while the experience of trauma is not fully representable, it is representable—at least in part. These texts confirm that one need not know the whole story to be moved by the known parts. The nineteenth-century representation of trauma is based on the creation and amplification of a victim’s story. As the exchange between Pip and Miss Havisham expresses, knowing--in part or in full—opens the way to understanding and empathy.

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