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Still Hidden in the Future:

Allegory and Metalepsis in British Fiction in the Long Nineteenth Century

DISSERTATION

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by

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DEDICATION

To Kenzie, for listening

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At the beginning of this dissertation, I say that I want to explain myself. So, here, before the beginning, I want to attempt a different kind of explanation: an accounting of my many and varied debts.

I want to acknowledge the constant support of my committee through a long and sometimes difficult process. Jami Bartlett gave me all the room I needed to work out the convoluted readings that make up this work and much needed direction when promising directions revealed themselves as dead-ends. Andrea Henderson helped me understand what it means to be a Victorianist and how to say new things about old texts. Oren Izenberg's generous and incisive comments on drafts of these chapters have changed the way I write and the way I think about the way I write.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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"Still Hidden in the Future" takes a pragmatist approach to reading the mutual interference of allegory and metalepsis in British fiction in the long nineteenth century. I begin the study by providing a threefold account of metalepsis derived from narratology, traditional rhetoric, and the work of Harold Bloom. In each instance, the trope serves to disrupt priority, and reading texts marked by metaleptic effects often requires entertaining nonstandard and occasionally counterlogical interpretive premises. With that in mind, the dissertation offers a metacritical argument that prescriptive reading methodologies foreclose potentially illuminating critical maneuvers and, for that reason, should be ignored. Paul Feyerabend's critique of the scientific method serves as theoretical grounding for this aspect of the argument. The first chapter elaborates a model for reading based on the practice of modeling developed in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles." The pragmatist approach I develop in the chapter serves as a model for my work in later chapters, and my reading of metalepsis in Carroll's fable of right-thinking feeds back into my larger polemic against received method. The second chapter makes a more radical argument about an intra-

oeuvre metalepsis in G.K. Chesteron's corpus. Investigating the meaning of a series of cryptic notes in *The Man Who Was Thursday* leads me not only to a metaleptic intensification of *Thursday*'s themes in the much later *Tales of the Long Bow* but also to a metaleptically embedded justification of my own badly premised search in one note's allusion to a similar effort in W.S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*. The final chapter amounts to a symptomatic reading of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, arguing that the author's use of a banshee figure appropriated from Ann Fanshawe's memoirs reveals the novel as an attempt to rewrite the suffering of Irish people during the Great Hunger as a text about personal, apolitical mourning. In each of the chapters, I deliberately incorporate elements of earlier, abortive interpretive efforts to emphasize the pragmatist commitments of my approach.

Introduction: Notes Untoward a Method

> He remembers the philosophers dead with detail, and how they honed their trade into the grave for the sake of their livelihoods. Incapable of audacity, they pleasured themselves with a maze constructed of nothing but dead-ends.
>
> —Gary J. Shipley, *Dreams of Amputation*

> Now that I'd come out with my theory, actually put it into so many words, I was starting to wonder if there was anything to it.
>
> —John Swartzwelder, *How I Conquered Your Planet*

Mostly, I want to try to explain myself. Explaining oneself or one's arguments entails a lot of things besides explanation: description, justification, qualification, etc. Typically, though, it begins at the beginning. This dissertation concerns allegory and metalepsis, and it began with a question about a particularly thorny figure in *Tender Is the Night*: "Nicole could stand the situation no longer; in a kitchen-maid's panic she ran downstairs, afraid of what the stricken man above would feed on while she must still continue her dry suckling at his lean chest" (279). I found the passage strange. Seemingly, Nicole, the character, fears a figurative starvation, something which only exists in the narrative voice, which she should not be able to access or know. That is, Nicole seems to have an affective response to something that simply does not exist in her world. The novel itself doesn't call any particular attention to the figure, but I thought and continue to think that this disruption of standard causality demands some kind of reading and, more crucially, a category.

Whether the example above qualifies as metalepsis is arguable. I can imagine someone making a case that the language, though characteristically Fitzgeraldian, more comfortably fits as an instance of free indirect discourse and that the confusing causal mechanics represent nothing so much as Nicole's own disordered thinking. That's fine. That makes good sense, but it isn't terribly interesting. To my mind, the idea that the language in which the characters are rendered

directly affects their emotional states and actions offered the promise of a reading that might open up in unexpected ways. Fitzgerald casually discrediting the mental state of a fictionalized version of his wife is, unfortunately, to be expected. He even admitted as much.[1]

Rather than pursuing that reading, whose eventual product seemed more-or-less predetermined, I pursued a category. What I was looking for was something like a trope of causal disruption. Across a string of irrecoverable search terms, a few suspects emerged, none quite appropriate. Something like "extended metaphor" produced results on Pablo Lopez's concept of pataphor, which seemed interesting at first. Lopez derived the term from Alfred Jarry's 'pataphysics, a notional branch of knowledge that stands in the same relation to metaphysics as metaphysics to physics (Hillyer 26). In effect, a pataphor involves the unmooring of a vehicle from its tenor and extending it without regard to its provenance. Aaron Hillyer in reference to both Jarry and Lopez suggests that "the pataphysician seeks to initiate a new world on the grounds of a tenuous unreality" (26). This is certainly a delight, but it didn't promise much for my purposes. For one, the major extant writing on the subject exists almost exclusively on a personal website that continues to link to an abandoned Myspace page, shorn of user data by a botched server migration in 2019.[2] More importantly, pataphors talk about a moving away from reality, not a corruption or contagion of reality by the figurative. I wanted a category for crossing a threshold the wrong way, not for something that initiates a new threshold as it continues in the same direction. I began again with a better sense of what I was looking for.

Somehow—the vagaries of the research process escape the best of us and me—this search brought me to metalepsis. As with any sufficiently aged literary concept, metalepsis defies capsule definition. It's a trope with a rich history marked by meaningful overlaps and limited agreement. For our purposes, I want to put three accounts into consideration. The

traditional rhetorical account of metalepsis derives largely from a limited description provided by Quintilian, a first century Roman rhetorician: "For the nature of metalepsis is that it is an intermediate step, as it were, to that which is metaphorically expressed, signifying nothing in itself, but affording a passage to something" (133, 8.6.38). Chris Baldick gives a more coherent account and provides an example from Marlowe: metalepsis "refers to various kinds of complex figure or trope that are figurative to the second or third degree; that is, they involve a figure that either refers us to yet another figure or requires a further imaginative leap to establish its reference, usually by a process of metonymy" (204): "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" (Marlowe 178, lines 90-91). In this example, *face* stands in as a synecdoche for Helen, who is already only implicated in a figurative sense. Crucially, in any traditional account, metalepsis is a trope that depends on a sequence that requires some understanding of a prior trope or figure.

Harold Bloom starts from this premise and pushes it further within the context of his theory of influence: "We can define metalepsis as the trope of a trope, the metonymic substitution of a word for a word already figurative. More broadly, a metalepsis…is a scheme, frequently allusive, that refers back to any previous figurative scheme. [T]he present vanishes and the dead return, by a reversal, to be triumphed over by the living" (74). While the Freudian underpinnings here are perhaps dubious, Bloom's account has the utility of offering a functional role for metalepsis beyond something like a two-step metaphor, figurative complexity for its own sake. The insistence on a "reversal," as opposed to a sequence, is the foundation of the paradoxical implications of metalepsis that much of my argument depends on. Whether this position can be strictly derived from traditional accounts is arguable and, I think, beside the point. If anything, Bloomian misprision teaches us the necessity of defying tradition for the sake

of utility. Later critics, like Edward Said and J. Hillis Miller, have taken Bloom's definition more or less as a given, with Said indicating the full import in starker terms than Bloom himself: in metalepsis, the poet hopes to "murder [the past] by making the precursor a son."

Finally, narratological understandings of metalepsis shift the site of substitution from words and phrases to diegetic levels. Metalepsis is an umbrella category that includes typical metafiction as well as any other "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse," in Genette's initial formulation (234-35). A great deal of critical work has been devoted to what Debra Malina calls "the mind-numbing taxonomies of narratology" (1), but I don't think getting any further into the weeds will serve the current argument. It suffices to say, along with John Pier, that metalepsis in a narrative sense constitutes a "paradoxical contamination" of ontological levels, which disrupt or reverse the standard sequence of cause and effect (190).

In practice, my use of the concept tacks back and forth between these formulations as they prove relevant but much of my interest in the concept and, thus, much of my use emphasizes the disruptive aspects of metalepsis foregrounded in the Bloomian and narratological versions. At multiple points in the chapters that follow, I talk about metaleptic effects, a term that I use to describe reversals or disruptions of causality afforded by figurative language.

Once I had access to the term and developed a kind of composite category, I started seeing examples of it everywhere, a kind of personal, literary Baader-Meinhof phenomenon. But cognitive biases, for all their downsides, offer enabling constraints, and dissertations demand nothing so much as a pathological narrowing of focus. I stacked up examples across novels: penetration figures in *Tess*, oracular confusion in *The Last Man*, biblical allusions in *Middlemarch*. These are just off the top of my head. (Most of my notes from this period exist on

a hard drive buried under these same books in a storage locker.) One instance, though, seemed to authorize my continued study. When I wrote the prospectus for this dissertation, I focused on *Bleak House*'s fascinating, confusing treatment of Allegory—more precisely, its treatment of a painting of a Roman warrior called, apparently, Allegory. The next eight paragraphs represent an edited and amended version of my previous analysis.

Dickens's *Bleak House*, given its depth and range, offers its author an embarrassment of opportunities for allegory—some eagerly seized, others perhaps less consciously indicated. Likewise, it offers its readers plenty of chances for allegorical interpretation, whether confidently developed or more tendentiously asserted. Given these varying degrees of authorial intention and interpretive plausibility, Dickens's choice to acknowledge the trope directly by way of an ekphrastic treatment of a painting of a personified Allegory merits some attention. The painting, which appears on the ceiling of Mr. Tulkinghorn's offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields, depicts Allegory, lodged in an ornate setting, with his hand outstretched: "Allegory, in Roman helmet and celestial linen, sprawls among balustrades and pillars, flowers, clouds, and big-legged boys, and makes the head ache—as would seem to be Allegory's object always, more or less" (158). Given the patent strangeness of naming the Roman Allegory, it's easy to miss the complexity initiated by the syllepsis.[3] *Allegory* serves as the subject of both *sprawls* and *makes*. The first construction clearly describes the painted figure.[4]

The second construction, though, is much less clear; the figures compound in a vertiginous display, causing at least as much confusion as the author promises and probably more to boot: "Allegory . . . makes the head ache." The predicate is clearly figurative. By "makes the head ache," Dickens means something on the order of "causes bewilderment." But can the initial Allegory (the painted one) be said to cause bewilderment? Isn't that the proper domain of

the abstract concept, lowercase allegory? Apparently, it isn't (or isn't entirely) since Dickens confirms the identity of this second, elliptical Allegory by pointedly capitalizing the possessive form of the term in the parenthetical remark: "Allegory's object" is to make the head ache. We're already knee deep in metaleptic effects, many so far unmentioned, but unpacking takes time. Allegory (the painted figure) points, and Allegory (less clear) has an object. Objects are nothing so much as things at which to point, but the narrator neglects to make that connection explicit. One reading, then, is that the constant object to which Allegory directs its attention is allegory's making of headaches. That is, the painting is about how the ability of texts to refer to something that isn't actually stated is difficult to understand.

While one might be forgiven for thinking that what the painting refers to here is the interpretive difficulties presented by a single instance, an isolated allegorical text, the fact that Allegory represents the concept or class of allegory means that what confounds is not a specific interpretive problem but, instead, the fact of allegory itself. Dickens supplies the two premises that the helmeted Roman is a representation of the concept of allegory and that Allegory has a goal—to confound or at least encumber understanding. Dickens then provides a shifting description of the action this image of Allegory's extended hand performs. Early in the novel, Allegory points to or out the window: Tulkinghorn declines Allegory's apparent invitation to look out the window since "the hand [is] always pointing there" (259). Later, however, Allegory points toward the floor and, in particular, toward the now dead body of Tulkinghorn that "lie[s] directly within [Allegory's] range" (750): "But a little after the coming of the day come people to clean the rooms. And either the Roman has some new meaning in him, not expressed before, or the foremost of them goes wild, for looking up at his outstretched hand and looking down at what is below it, that person shrieks and flies" (750). For Dickens, the allegorical painting's real

"object" is what happens to readers who encounter it (it baffles and pains them); rather than anything in particular it says to them. Allegory is what points to the headache-inducing problem of reference, of determining what in the world allegory is pointing at. Thus, when "readers" within the novel offer a decisive account of what the painting means, it may be a painting of Allegory, but it can no longer quite be an allegorical painting. When "eyes look up at the Roman" (750), for its "deadly meaning" (752), they do not find a mysterious or uncertainly referential representation but, instead, a decisive intervention that effects directly some change in their world.

But of course this is in its own way headache inducing; the painting was put up long before Tulkinghorn's murder, so the painter couldn't have meant for Allegory to point at anything related to an unexpected future event. The novel initiates a priority problem that is not so much a problem of or for reference as it is a problem for realism. It also raises an ontological problem, or at least a problem for the source of intention. Saying that the painter intended the figure to point toward Tulkinghorn with no possible way of knowing that he would die there makes as much sense as saying that Tulkinghorn intended to die below the painting in order to justify its pointing, which is to say that neither makes good sense. With these problems in mind, I want to refer to the painting's "pointing" to Tulkinghorn's body as a metaleptic, rather than an allegorical, event.

It is in relation to metalepsis that allegory actually begins to achieve the putative object of making heads ache. The actual, legible allegory of the painting is that Allegory points to something that isn't depicted, a nutshell definition of allegory if ever one existed and not a particularly difficult definition for anyone with even a passing understanding of the term to

accept—no headaches yet. The headaches set in (or begin to) when it becomes clear that Dickens's point about allegory is not the same as the painting's.

Dickens's own allegory takes into account both the painting and Allegory's metaleptic incursion into the world of the novel. If the painting's message is not confusing, then what is confusing is how Dickens asserts—too early in the course of the novel—that allegory is confusing when the painting of Allegory isn't. That is, he declares it difficult before it has become difficult. This suggests that Allegory is twice an occasion for metalepsis—once within the novel itself for the readers of the painting and once again for the readers of the novel.[5]

Dickens's point, at least initially, seems to be that the status of allegory in relation to what is outside is what makes the head ache. This paradox is, perhaps, what really constitutes the headache as Dickens understands it. The whole episode as related in the text—in which the characters are confronted with an allegory, fail to read or simply ignore its latent content, then misinterpret its intentional relationship to the world—is Dickens's allegory.

The fact, then, that Dickens's point is basically to suggest that intentions are as likely misread as read correctly means that this reading (my reading) of Dickens's allegory is similarly suspect—a third instance of making the head ache that Dickens, paradoxically, might not have intended. The figurative structures, intensified and pushed to their limits, generate a meaning that appears to outstrip intention and, in doing so, frustrates interpretation. At the very least, the episode would seem to articulate a sort of theoretical position on itself, one that we could attribute to Dickens but only insofar as we can't. It only fully expresses Dickens's intention if it generates itself.

At this point, the text shifts to issues that need not concern us here. I'm including this excerpt for several reasons. One, I personally think it's a good reading, and since it's a reading of

a relevant text that takes up relevant concerns, that seems like more than enough justification. Given that Dickens's treatment of the painting occupies a scant few pages of a very long novel, it represents a relatively approachable starting point for the emphases that will animate the rest of this dissertation. Finally, I just don't like treating writing as disposable. I wrote it, so why shouldn't I turn it to account here? All that said, I continue to have some reservations about the clarity—maybe the coherence—of the argumentative trajectory. I hope that it is clear. More precisely, I hope that it clearly conveys the sense of disorientation that metalepsis introduces into interpretive efforts. In this case, the density of the opening description—Dickens employs local syllepsis and metaphor in a sentence-length ekphrasis that have knock-on effects across the larger mutually interfering features of allegory and metalepsis—creates a problem for efficient elaboration, much less reading. What Dickens does, I have to try to account for, tracing the ways in which all of those aspects of the novel interact with and modulate one another across multiple instances. It's a tall order, and this is but a short introduction.

The primary reason to include this, though, is that this was the point in the process of the writing where I became convinced that considering metalepsis alongside allegory would be productive. I'm going to write later about my attempts to show my work in the chapters that follow. Each argument tries to incorporate an earlier version of itself without erasing all evidence of its prototype. This is the first, and likely only, draft of this introduction. I don't have an equivalent early version to scavenge or transfigure. But in order to retain the ethos of the work still to come, this backwards-looking interpolation will have to suffice. This study started because of a hunch, and the reading above represents the point at which the hunch-tree started to bear fruit. (Again, this is likely the only draft.)

Before I turn to the critical and theoretical context of the arguments to follow, I want to very briefly make what I think is the only strong, overarching argument of this introduction. Metalepsis should be reclaimed from the ash heap of narratology. I deliberately leave the genitive case ambiguous here. This is a joke. I like narratology and narrative theory in general, and it clearly holds a wealth of knowledge and approaches with broad applicability. But because it's become such an insular and intimidating field of study, I worry that nonspecialists have abandoned useful ideas that the field has arrogated for fear of looking amateurish, which is a shame. Metalepsis also suffers from its association with Bloom's retrograde, chauvinist political stances. I'm not interested in defending the value or even the utility of narratology's most complicated taxonomies, and I want to directly disavow Bloom's forceful but misguided defense of the western canon. But I want to save metalepsis. When I discuss this project with people, I typically tack between introducing the concept and apologizing, and I'm only ever talking about this with other students of literature. That's anecdotal evidence, sure, but it's evidence that metalepsis needs saving.[6] I hope that this dissertation will serve as evidence that it deserves saving.

Having defined and made my plea for metalepsis, I want to briefly address allegory, the other motivating consideration in this work. I believe this is the point in most introductions where the author provides a quasi-comprehensive overview of the literature. I have no intention of doing that although I will provide a brief list of major sources I consulted in the endnotes.[7] Because allegory, and criticism of it, has been proceeding for centuries, I simply can't hope to give a synoptic or synthetic account that would do justice to the concept.[8] Since that seems impossible (or at least roundly impractical), I want to take a different approach and offer a relatively simple definition that tries align with the common sense understanding of the term,

leaving any theoretical nitpicking about the mode for the individual readings as such nitpicking seems advisable or necessary.

To that end, I rely on that lowest common denominator of literary studies, Northrop Frye, whose work in that lowest common denominator of research, the encyclopedia, will provide our guide for the readings to follow. I mean this seriously. I think that a pragmatic—which is to say, in this case, simply practical—approach to the subject matter here will benefit from a relatively streamlined and, thus, capacious description. In the *Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, published by Princeton in 1965, Frye defines allegory thusly:

> Allegory . . . is a term denoting a technique of literature which in turn gives rise to a method of criticism. As a technique of literature, a. is a technique of fiction-writing, for there must be some kind of narrative basis for allegory. We have a. when the events of a narrative obviously and continuously refer to another simultaneous structure of events or ideas, whether historical events, moral or philosophical ideas, or natural phenomena. . . . It is continuity that distinguishes a. from ambiguity or simple allusion. Fiction-writing has two aspects: (1) a progression of incidents which are imitations of actions, and (2) elements of meaning or thought which represent a poetic use of ideas. . . . If the allegorical reference is continuous throughout the narrative, the fiction "is" an a. If it is intermittent, if a. is picked up and dropped again at pleasure, . . . we say only that the fiction shows allegorical tendencies. (12)

On allegoresis, another worthy and complex topic, Frye continues:

> Allegorical interpretation, a method of criticism, begins with the fact that a. is a structural element in narrative: it has to be there, and is not added by critical interpretation alone. In fact, all commentary, or the relating of the events of a narrative to conceptual

> terminology, is in one sense allegorical interpretation. . . . Strictly defined, allegorical interpretation is the specific form of commentary that deals with fictions which are structurally allegories. This leaves considerable latitude still, for there are many fictions, notably ancient myths, where the presence or absence of a. is disputable. In this situation the critic must content himself with offering his allegorical interpretation as one of many possible ones, or—the more traditional method—he may assume that the poet has, deliberately or unconsciously, concealed allegorical meanings in his fiction. (12-13)

Frye's work as represented here has the substantial benefit of arriving a year prior to Derrida's 1966 presentation of "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" at Johns Hopkins. For the purposes of this dissertation, I need recourse to an undeconstructed version of allegory.

Frye provides that version with a few limiting provisions, which I want to highlight. I'll make a list. First, Frye contends that continuity decides whether a work as a whole can be called an allegory. That seems fine to me, and the question of where allegory starts and stops will be of some importance in the dream visions under consideration in the chapters on Carroll and Chesterton. Second, Frye contends that texts can have "allegorical tendencies," pointing to "intermittent" allegorical reference. I take this to cover two possibilities: limited, local instances of complete allegories within larger, nonallegorical texts and texts that sometimes treat their events as in reference to other events or ideas and sometimes do not. We might say of the latter that they have a limited or partial allegoricality. Frye makes this notion of degree explicit, when referring to the mode's opposing capacity of fictional verisimilitude: "Often the allegorist is too interested in his additional meaning to care whether his fiction is consistent or not as a fiction" (12).[9] Third, although Frye attempts to set hard limits as to what in his scare-quoted term "is" an

allegory and confines allegorical interpretation only to works that "[are]" allegories, he also admits the fundamental problem facing any critic wrestling with the form, namely each instance's potential "disputab[ility]." In this regard, Frye seems to understand his role as a describer of the form and surrenders to brute facts of centuries of divergent, often conflicting use.[10] In this regard, I want to act as the Fryean critical ideal and offer each of my "allegorical interpretations as one of many possible ones," while remaining largely agnostic on the question of intention, of whether authorial concealment arises from deliberation or from whatever version of the unconscious obtains. Allegories, although Frye doesn't say so explicitly, seem to exist simultaneously on a spectrum and as functions of one of two mutually exclusive poles. If this be inconsistency, we shall try to make the most of it. At some points in this study, I will point to what I take to be intentional choices on the part of the authors; at others, I will treat allegorical elements as symptomatic. In some cases, I will present allegorical interpretations that, because of metaleptic procedures, can't properly be said to arise either from an author's individual choices or from larger structural forces. In this last form—we might call it, following but obliquely W. K. Wimsatt, "counterlogical"[11]— I don't believe I can lay claim to any sense of allegoresis derived from Frye's criteria, but I will return to this point later in the introduction.

At this point, convention and critical integrity demand some consideration of the space these questions of intention and interpretation have taken up in literary studies over the past several decades. We could go back at least as far as the New Critics, but I want to try to limit the scope slightly, so let's start with the early '80s.[12] Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* appeared in 1981; Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels's "Against Theory," a year later. These feel like useful starting points for adumbrating a bipolar approach to interpretation over the last forty or so years.

I can't imagine doing justice to the method Jameson develops over the course of one hundred pages or so in a paragraph, but I want to stress how committed he is to an allegorical practice, indeed to the inescapability of allegorization as such. In the opening preface, Jameson suggests that the fact that texts come to us saddled with reading conventions "dictates the use of a method . . . according to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and appropriate it" (9-10). He continues, "Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code" (10). He argues that the local master codes in operation in American literary criticism were, like the texts they considered, laden with ideological baggage and, as such, deserved to be interpreted in terms of Jameson's preferred "totalizing, properly Marxist" practice (10). Relying heavily on Althusser's notion of structural causality, Jameson eventually articulates a three-tiered structure of interpretation and ideology critique that rewrites an individual text as the "imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" before moving to position the text as symptomatic of class antagonism and ultimately of the overdetermined mode of production (77). Because part of the function of ideology is the erasure of its own operations, Jameson's version of allegorization falls squarely within—as the book's title would suggest—the realm of what Frye calls "unconscious" allegory.

Appearing a year later and making no reference to Jameson's thoroughly articulated method nor to allegory as such, Knapp and Michaels's "Against Theory" takes a radically different approach to textual meaning.[13] For Knapp and Michaels, the idea of an "unconscious" meaning and, thus, of a theory or method designed to ferret out that meaning are fundamentally incoherent. Instead, they argue, that "the meaning of a text is simply identical to the author's intended meaning" (724). Knapp and Michaels's real concern is with arguing against the idea of

"an objective method of choosing among alternative interpretations" (725). The recourse to intention as a final justification for an interpretation of meaning does nothing to guarantee the validity of interpretation because it merely splits the problem in two and attempts to use one half to solve the whole. Any interpretive method that pretends to objectivity on such grounds should be abandoned. While the authors don't directly address allegory, I think it's fair to say that allegory's splitting of meaning across two registers of content, the manifest and the latent, would not materially alter Knapp and Michaels's approach: the allegory would simply mean what it's author intended it to mean, even if that meaning is split.[14] Crucially, Knapp and Michaels don't insist that meaning is easily recoverable; interpretation still involves an interpretive act on the part of the reader, an attempt to understand the author's meaning. They just argue that any method predicated on discovering an intention behind the meaning starts from a faulty premise and is therefore useless. This would seem to preclude a Jamesonian reading strategy to the extent that Jameson develops a rigorously articulated method predicated on the idea that texts mean in ways that their authors can't be aware of. Their position would seem to place them squarely in Frye's "deliberate" camp.

More recently, the closely related but loosely defined schools of surface reading and postcritique have revived debates about interpretation. In "Surface Reading: An Introduction," Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus argue for the viability of reading practices swimming against the current of the "enormous influence" of symptomatic reading (5). Although they state that surface reading, to the extent that it's a coherent category, "represent[s] neither a polemic against nor a postmortem of symptomatic reading," the force of Jameson's polemic demands exactly that (3). If, in their view, "Fredric Jameson argued that only weak, descriptive, empirical, ideologically complicit readers attend to the surface of the text," then their argument must at

least repudiate his account of other reading practice in order to position such practice as anything but weak (5). I will ultimately seek to argue that Best and Marcus are right to push back against Jameson's exclusionary rhetoric and to welcome the increasing diversity of reading practice. My concern is that the focus on the surface of texts, "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts; what is neither hidden nor hiding," tends to foreclose the possibility of interpretation, leaving only something on the order of commentary (9). It's notable, although not surprising, that even with their focus on Jameson, their essay contains practically no mention of intention and only a passing reference to allegory, the mode that most demands a distinction between latent and manifest content and which surface reading would seem to overlook entirely. Unless we take very seriously Frye's notion that allegory's manifest content "obviously" refers to its latent content—something which his own positing of a kind of allegorical spectrum would seem to preclude—it's difficult to see how a surface reading could meaningfully attend to an allegorical text. In practice, surface reading seems to want to shelve the question along with the related question of intention. To be clear, that's totally fine, and surface reading has produced some useful insights but has done so at some cost.

Identifying a different starting point, Rita Felski's argument in *The Limits of Critique* (2015) positions itself against what she calls the "hermeneutics of suspicion," a phrase that she identifies with Paul Ricoeur's analysis of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx in *Freud and Philosophy*, which predates Jameson's work by about a decade. Felski makes explicit what Best and Marcus leave mostly implied, that practices like symptomatic reading remain loaded with their own, often unconscious, assumptions even as they seek to muscle other reading strategies out on the grounds of their ideological complicity. Felski writes, "the aim is to de-essentialize the practice of suspicious reading by disinvesting it of presumptions of inherent rigor or intrinsic

radicalism—thereby freeing up literary studies to embrace a wider range of affective styles and modes of argument" (3). I think Felski's right to treat critique, what she calls the "diverse range of practices" left in the aftermath of the Nietzsche-Freud-Marx revolution, as a practice deserving of attention in itself and as something to which alternatives can and should be offered (2). Again, however, Felski's lack of attention to allegory and intention seems designed to sidestep the very question of interpretation. If Knapp and Michaels hoped to short circuit arguments about method by recoupling intention and meaning, proponents of this more recent intervention into critical method seem to want to avoid the question entirely—or, more charitably, shift the focus to other issues.

Where does that leave those of us who still want to talk about allegory, and how should we treat the question of intention given its lack of purchase in the current critical context? Are we stuck endlessly rehashing symptomatic interpretation or, worse yet, in a deconstructive loop whereby allegory—and in fact any narrative—can only talk about its own process of talking about other things?[15] If the critical interventions of Best and Marcus and Felski teach us anything, it's that the field of literary criticism is and should be open. To the extent that I question the procedures of surface readers, it has more to do with the ways in which their slogans and the expectations they entail seem to set them up for failure. Take, for instance, Heather Love's reading of *Beloved*, which she approaches through a practice of description. Love's claim that "a descriptive rather than an interpretive account of *Beloved* draws attention to qualities of the text that critics have tended to ignore, particularly its exteriorizing and objective accounts of social life" makes good enough sense, but Love struggles to maintain that focus. Love's descriptive procedure mostly amounts to a recapitulation of Morrison's already established description. To the extent that Love's reading offers insight, it seems to do so at the level of

interpretation. Love assigns a rhetorical function to Morrison's mode of narration, reading it as an intentional choice designed to communicate ideological content: "Morrison draws attention to what is irrecuperable in the historical record" (387). Sethe's motivation goes undefined, but Love is quick to identify Morrison's, a move that grates against her avowed purposes. Description, in this case, serves less as a way to read Morrison's text than as an aspect of Morrison's text that is accessed through fairly standard close reading. It becomes less a reading methodology than a theme or formal structure to be identified and assigned meaning. Love admits as much in the essay: "It is of course impossible to account for behavior without any projection of a 'rear world' of intentions, structures, or values. There is no such thing as a 'pure' description, since every description entails an interpretation of some kind" (380). My goal in pointing to contradictions in Love's approach is not so much to criticize her for inconsistency, a criticism that she girds herself against anyway, as to suggest, along with Knapp and Michaels, that approaching a text's meaning necessarily involves questions of intention and interpretation.

If surface reading has looked for new options for critical engagement by burying the long-simmering intention debate, then I want to suggest that another option might be to explode the concept of intention entirely, to treat any meaning that might be pulled from the text seriously regardless of where it falls in relation to Frye's spectrum. The most interesting readings in this dissertation fall outside of it entirely inasmuch as they seek to impute meanings to textual features and patterns that I cannot convincingly associate with any agent—whether an individual author or a structural condition. Put more simply, where Jameson argued for a method that made allegories of texts based on a kind of structural intention, I don't follow any particular methodological paradigms and treat as intentional and, thus, interpretable counterlogical features that no one could have intended in order to see what conclusions can be drawn once we dispense

with the idea that arguments about literature need to be able to justify their premises. Who says they have to?

I take inspiration in this pursuit from Paul Feyerabend's discussion of theory and observation in *Against Method*.[16] Feyerabend argues that the traditional notion of a scientific method cannot be derived from science as it is and has been actually practiced and that, on the contrary, major breakthroughs in scientific knowledge have come as a result of ignoring the methodological precepts that have, at various points, obtained. He provides a synoptic account of procedures in practice early in the work:

> The development of the Copernican point of view from Galileo to the 20th century is a perfect example of the situation I want to describe. We start with a strong belief that runs counter to contemporary reason and contemporary experience. The belief spreads and finds support in other beliefs which are equally unreasonable, if not more so (law of inertia; the telescope). Research now gets deflected in new directions, new kinds of instruments are built, "evidence" is related to theories in new ways until there arises an ideology that is rich enough to provide independent arguments for any part of it and mobile enough to find such arguments whenever they seem to be required. We can say today that Galileo was on the right track, for his persistent pursuit of what once seemed to be a silly cosmology has by now created the material needed to defend it against all those who will accept a view only if it is told in a certain way and who will trust it only if it contains magical phrases, called "observational reports." And this is not an exception—it is the normal case: theories become clear and "reasonable" only *after* incoherent parts of them have been used for a long time. (10-11)

Feyerabend develops this descriptive account of scientific procedure and normalization over the course of his long essay, providing examples of situations in which a theoretical interpretation precedes and goes in search of evidence to justify itself: "Experience arises *together* with theoretical assumptions not before them, and an experience without theory is just as incomprehensible as is (allegedly) a theory without experience" (151). Feyerabend, in a Peircean vein, follows this statement with an account of children's development, stating that children take up and discard interpretive paradigms as needed "even before [they have] experienced [their] first clear sensation" (152). This reading of the history of science grants empirical permission to what Feyerabend calls "*a pragmatic philosophy*" of always "makeshift" knowledge formation (226).

I find Feyerabend's account convincing and much of the work in this dissertation depends on my undertaking the work of interpretation with a methodological license similar to that which Feyerabend attributes to science. By the same token, I think that an argument similar to Feyerabend's about science can be made about literary interpretation or literary studies more generally. Most actual critics don't hew so closely to a method as their more forceful assertions might suggest. Jameson, whose apparent methodological rigor in *The Political Unconscious* continues to make itself felt some forty years after the work's publication, does not and cannot stick exclusively to Marxist analysis and has incorporated psychoanalytic and structural insights even as he argued for their lesser status. Similarly, my sense of Heather Love's work is actually more charitable than my discussion a few paragraphs back might suggest. That she would have to break slightly from her own methodology seems all but inevitable. In short, I think that all critics, whether they are aware of it or not, tend to stray from prescribed methods, ignore or paper over these lapses, and still produce interesting and meaningful work.

My own work only differs from this standard approach in its self-consciousness. Because I am firmly convinced that method and methodological presuppositions should not constrain our reading practice, I attempt to read aspects of texts that other critics would immediately disqualify as irrelevant, illegible elements. My propensity for overreading, whether natural or acquired, finds a fitting instrument in the often contradiction-laden trope of metalepsis.[17] As I encounter elements within or across texts that seem to me to be readable, I read them. I do this even when common sense would suggest that, for instance, Charlotte Brontë could not have anticipated that a misprinted word in a seventeenth century memoir could be used as evidence for the idea that *Villette* is about its own silence on the Great Hunger. I do this because I don't see any reason not to, but if I'm forced to try to justify my actions, I do so because I think reading apparently unreadable things often produces interesting results that, to my mind, justify the apparently counterlogical procedures that produced them. Feyerabend, in elaborating his pragmatic philosophy provides a justification (which I include here mostly as a matter of convention and with full awareness of the contradiction):

> One may base judgements and actions on standards that cannot be specified in advance but are introduced by the very judgements (actions) they are supposed to guide and one may even act without any standards, *simply following some natural inclination*. . . . Standards which are intellectual measuring instruments often have to be invented to make sense of new historical situations just as measuring instruments have constantly to be invented to make sense of new physical situations. (236-37; my emphasis)

My sense is that most of us follow our natural inclinations in reading and that it would be all but impossible not to.

The very nature of allegoresis—we might even say of interpretation in general—requires us to make a leap of faith, to presume that words can mean something that they don't explicitly say. Any allegorical interpretation starts from a sense that a text might refer to something to which it doesn't explicitly refer, a sense based on some experience of the text, followed by attempts to build up evidence to support the initial interpretive leap. Such an argument can only ever approach justification, absent a direct statement from an author as to the hidden meaning of their work, which would of course defeat the purpose of the exercise. It can never reach something like total closure, which puts it solidly in line with every other instance of inductive reasoning. Rather than pretend that the problem doesn't exist, I want to treat it as permission to try out new ways to think about rewriting texts as allegories while paying attention to the ways that metalepsis can complicate what counts as meaning.

While I'm not committed to standard methodology, I am aware that introductions are conventionally an opportunity to summarize the chapters that follow them, and since that seems productive, I'll do my best to meet the occasion. I have some other things I need to say about my approach, such as it is, that will also be better served by a less abstract field than literary studies in general. The actual readings from the chapters should suffice.

The dissertation comprises three chapters: the first on Lewis Carroll with particular attention to *Through the Looking-Glass*, the second on G. K. Chesterton with particular attention to *The Man Who Was Thursday*, and the third on Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* with some tangential consideration of *Bleak House* and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*. The chapters didn't start out this way. Originally, I hoped to discuss Carrol and Chesterton in a shared chapter on Victorian dream visions. It got too unwieldy, so I split it. The chapter on *Villette* was going to be an attempt to historicize the ghosts in *Villette* and *Bleak House* in terms of the inauguration of

British emergentism, which occurred during roughly the same period. (There was going to be another chapter, on Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, but I sacked that one.) Dream visions and emergentism still show up in the chapters as they stand because in each chapter I've tried to make the most of the reading process by incorporating my initial, now outstripped interpretive schemes into fuller readings. That is, I show my work and then use it. I would, if I could, turn in a series of drafts with tracked changes instead of this. I think that would be more in the spirit of the method. The chapters as they stand—as most chapters probably do—represent not so much completed readings as artificially static moments of the reading process. There is more to do. But there is always more to do, and eventually one must file.

I mention all of this because it's relevant but also because it helps to provide a basis from which to understand the summaries that follow. I'll start at the beginning. "'Unsatisfactory': Modeling in *Through the Looking-Glass* (and This Chapter)" starts with an abortive reading of a goat's transformation into a gnat through a typographical pun. I found out that *beard* doesn't mean what I hoped it would mean in typography jargon, but I kept the reading in because I liked it and because I don't like doing work that goes nowhere. Mostly, I kept it in because my own procedure of getting there reminded me of Alice's attempts at knowledge formation as she navigates the looking-glass world. In the chapter, I argue for an understanding of Alice's interpretive practice as involving a kind of modeling. In the final sections of the chapter, I attempt to use Alice's approach of pretending as if something were true to make an argument about how we might understand Carroll as a kind of Achilles figure by combining his Achilles, from "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles," with Feyerabend's reading of Achilles, ultimately suggesting that the allegory can be approached quasi-recursively, thus offering insights for a

field that Carroll probably couldn't have imagined: American literary criticism in the 21st century.

In the second chapter, "Snowdrop's Precipitation: Notes in *The Man Who Was Thursday*," I make an argument about an intra-oeuvre metalepsis in Chesteron's corpus. Chasing down, effectively on a whim, the meaning of a series of cryptic notes in *The Man Who Was Thursday* leads me not only to a metaleptic intensification of *Thursday*'s themes in the much later *Tales of the Long Bow* but also to a metaleptically embedded justification of my own badly premised search in one of the note's allusion to a similar search for the writer of cookie mottoes in W. S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*. This chapter started life as a discussion of isomorphism in the novel premised on the choice to use days as a seven-unit organizational anchor. Ultimately, I'm not convinced that that approach fully pays off, but the idea of doing a second reconstitution of the chapter that would now incorporate two prior attempts feels incredibly daunting.

In the final chapter, "The Ghost of Sovereignty: *Villette* and the Great Hunger," I perform what ended up being a symptomatic reading of *Villette*. Initially, I was interested in attempting a lateral move, deemphasizing the formal concerns of the opening chapters in order to pursue a historically oriented reading of ghost figures in *Bleak House*, *The Woman in White*, and *Villette.* I argue that these three novels, by making emergent ghosts out of essentially allegorical, in-narrative ghost stories, mark a shift in cultural understandings of being related to the contemporaneous shift from vitalism to emergentism in English science and philosophy. This was not meant as a culmination of my reading method (or lack thereof) but as a test case. I'm not convinced that consideration of historical conditions constitutes a methodological imperative, but I think paying attention to them is an option. Paying attention produces something useful, a context for thinking about why allegory gets mixed up with metalepsis in the middle of the

nineteenth century. Eventually, though, after reading and rereading *Villette* but especially after reading Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts* and coming across a chance mention of Ann Fanshawe's memoirs on the *Wikipedia* page on banshees, I changed course. The version of the chapter included here argues that *Villette*'s main purpose is refusing to acknowledge the Great Hunger, which was coming to a bitter end at roughly the same time Brontë was composing the novel. The material on vitalism and emergentism is still there but is now in service of the larger reading: what emerges from the novel (in my reading) is a vitalist insistence on mass death as something that can't be ignored. I find some confirmation for my endeavor in a buried allusion to Pharaoh's dream in the Book of Genesis.

Readers who, like me, can't leave patterns alone will have probably noticed some even in these relatively brief summaries: all the chapters include some notion from philosophy of science, and they all depend pretty heavily on intertextual considerations. I can't provide a substantive reason to back up the former concern. I can say that it came about naturally. It wasn't a part of the original outlines. I found the concept of modeling productive as I drafted the Carroll chapter and hoped that isomorphism and vitalism/emergentism would prove similarly interesting in the later chapters. I think they do if only as part of the processes that led to the fullness of the readings as they stand, and I think there's something valuable in trying to preserve the process. Most arguments arrive apparently fully formed and more-or-less airtight. I've punched holes in mine (or, maybe, refused to plug up the holes left by constructing vessels from the discarded parts of other vessels). Part of doing the kind of reading that I'm trying to do here responsibly is acknowledging the ways in which it doesn't always work.

Metalepsis itself demands some of the emphasis on intertextuality. To deal with it in the Bloomian sense is to consider how writers handle strong misprision, something that I impute

especially to Brontë even as I recognize that she almost certainly didn't mean to rewrite Pharaoh's dream of famine as a novel about personal loss that is also about how it isn't about famine. Ultimately, though, the attention to the intertextual features of these texts is a function of my nearly perverse interest in running down every potential allusion I notice. It took me to weird places in these readings. Remember *Bab Ballads*? Why should that have ever come up? This is a longstanding fixture of my reading practice. I couldn't stop if I wanted to, and to be clear I don't want to. The kind of evidence that I turn up this way often, to my mind, retroactively justifies the fact that I went looking for it with no particular end in mind. The internet has allowed me to do this, and in this regard I think my approach is particularly in line with Feyerabend's analysis of how shifting possibilities for observation emerge along with theories to put them to use. Consider the fact that Chesterton couldn't have imagined a reader with access to what I have access to. He couldn't have possibly intended some of the meanings that I attribute to his texts because he couldn't have possibly imagined a reader that could pull together the features that I do. Put another way, my rewriting of these texts as allegories depends to some extent on my search-enabled capacity to run circles around what Peter J. Rabinowitz calls the "authorial audience," the virtual audience that can call on the same cultural knowledge as the author and, thus, fully understand the text: "most novelists . . . try not to rely on information which we will not in fact possess. For most novelists are concerned with being read and hence try to minimize the distance between the actual and authorial audiences" (126). In the case of these readings, I'm actively trying to put distance between myself and the authorial audience, just in the opposite direction.

A few things remain to be said. Readers will have noticed my writing voice is less formal than the standard academic voice. Obviously, this is a choice. Partially, I write this way because

it allows me to write faster than I would normally be able to. Developing these readings takes me a long time, and I have to make it up somewhere. I also do this as a kind of performance, a way to bring the presentation of my ideas in line with the premises of my work. Ignoring conventional standards of what counts as good or convincing reading should, I think, extend to my style. I don't have to write in a standard fashion to present my ideas effectively, and I don't want to. Finally, I think the style allows me to explain concepts that might be foreign to my readers in the clearest way possible. Given the synthetic approach of much of the reading—the extent to which I bring in material that is not well-established in literary criticism—I think there is a premium on concision and clarity. (I can only hope that readers will forgive the many instances in which I forget these imperatives and slip, unconsciously, into an academic prose somewhere between turgid and leaden. I cut my teeth on Jameson, and sometimes it shows.)

Finally, I want to say a word about my choice of texts. That word: arbitrary. My sense is that I could have performed similar readings of most any text given time and inclination. Although I attempt a bit of historicism, there is nothing about allegory or metalepsis that binds my approach to the Victorian era. Both allegory and metalepsis have been with us for centuries, and I suspect, although I can't say, that metalepsis has been modulating allegory all along. The almost total dearth of consideration of the two in tandem should be taken, I think, as a lack of interest, not a lack of opportunity. It gave me something to do.

Nothing besides the readings can justify the faulty, partial, and idiosyncratic premises from which I started. Having relied on those premises so heavily and defended them so jealously, I hope that the readings will oblige.

Notes

1. See Fitzgerald's inscription to Zelda Fitzgerald's psychiatrist, Robert S. Carroll, qtd. in Bruccoli and Baughman 63.

2. See Lopez.

3. Lionel Morton's suggestion that "in being called Allegory he is presented as an allegorical representation of allegory, so meaning nothing beyond himself" reflects a kind of critical surrender to the complexity here (434).

4. My turn to syllepsis, not included in the original version of this excerpt, is spiritually indebted to Garrett Stewart's work on the figure in Dickens in "Ethical Tempo of Narrative Syntax: Sylleptic Recognitions in *Our Mutual Friend*." See also Kent Puckett's response and Garrett's later "Rejoinder."

5. And, of course, there are more. Recall that this started with a metaphor embedded in a sylleptic sentence.

6. For a recent example of a critic turning metalepsis to account, see Kornbluh's chapter on metalepsis and financialization in *Realizing Capital*.

7. Because I don't think ranking these is of any particular use, I present the major works on allegory that I consulted in alphabetical order: Benjamin; Bloomfield; De Man; Fineman; Fletcher; Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*; Greenblatt; Jameson, *Allegory and Ideology*; Quilligan; and Teskey.

8. I feel as though I'm in good company as Angus Fletcher began his seminal work on allegory in much the same way: "No comprehensive historical treatment of [allegory] exists or would be possible in a single volume, nor is it my aim to fill even a part of this gap" (1). More pointedly, Brenda Machosky provides an overview of caveats and qualifications at the beginning

of prominent studies of the mode as a way of qualifying her own study's necessarily limited emphasis on phenomenology (16-19).

9. Frye is more explicit on the question of degree in *Anatomy of Criticism*: "Within the boundaries of literature we find a kind of sliding scale, ranging from the most explicitly allegorical, consistent with being literature at all, at one extreme, to the most elusive, anti-explicit and anti-allegorical at the other" (91).

10. Toril Moi's argument about Wittgenstein's approach to meaning might have some relevance here: "Use is a practice grounded on nothing. Use is simply what we do. Nothing—no essences, no built-in referential power—obliges us to continue using language as we do now. In fact, we don't always continue: language is a constantly changing practice" (29). We could probably say something similar about allegory.

11. Hoping to use this term as it seemed the most appropriate, I was delighted to find that Wimsatt found the same framing useful in "Verbal Style: Logical or Counterlogical."

12. My own sense of the trajectory of American literary criticism derives largely from Vincent Leitch's remarkably lucid history in *American Literary Criticism Since the 1930s*.

13. It's worth asking, although I am not prepared to answer, whether Knapp and Michaels simply considered the issue of allegory beneath contempt. Jameson's casual assertion that "the discredit into which interpretation has fallen is thus at one with the disrepute visited on allegory itself" suggests the prestige held by the form in the early '80s (*Political Unconscious* 58).

14. I use latent and manifest to identify different registers of meaning throughout the project. I'm only now realizing that the terminology almost certainly derives from *The Political Unconscious,* which I first read more than a decade ago (60).

15. I, of course, refer here to Paul de Man's work. I imagine that this summary says as much about my feelings of the critical dead-end as any longer criticism might. See especially "The Rhetoric of Temporality" and the claim in *Allegories of Reading* that "any narrative is primarily the allegory of its own reading" (76).

16. The title of this dissertation comes from *Against Method*, not from any of the novels I'll go on to talk about in the chapters. I present the context here without comment: "The new natural interpretations, which are also formulated explicitly, as auxiliary hypotheses, are established partly by the support they give to Copernicus and partly by plausibility considerations and ad hoc hypotheses. There is as yet no independent evidence, but this is no drawback; it takes time to assemble facts that favour a new cosmology. For what is needed is a new dynamics that explains both celestial and terrestrial motions, a theory of solid objects, aero-dynamics; and all these sciences are still hidden in the future" (74).

17. Although not a position that he actually advocates, Colin Davis provides what I take to be a very clarifying account of overreading in an elaboration on Richard Rorty's position in "The Pragmatist's Progress": "The notion of overinterpretation is redundant because it falsely implies that we have a reliable distinction between what is in the text and what is merely supplied by a willful interpreter, and therefore that we have a measure for ascertaining which interpretation(s) may be correct. In the absence of such a distinction there is no essential difference between reading and overreading, there are just more or less interesting and useful acts of reading" (x).

1. "Unsatisfactory": Modeling in *Through the Looking-Glass* (and This Chapter)

Common sense suggests that one shouldn't start a chapter they hope will be successful by recounting a failure—in this case an attempt to read a set of textual features that probably didn't deserve to be read.[1] Since, however, this is a chapter largely about a text that undermines any notion of sense common to different characters or across instances within narrative time, there might be something to recommend an account of even a nakedly wrongheaded interpretative effort. The evidence against my reading is all but irrefutable, and I'll produce it presently, but I still find the reading that followed my initial intuition surprisingly useful in a way that I hope to explain in what follows. Reading *Through the Looking-Glass*—reading anything, really—does not differ so much from being on the other side—*being* anything, really—in that it demands that its readers proceed in the absence of stable world knowledge or projectible predicates or immutable, natural laws. Faced with such an absence, in reading or otherwise, we generally make guesses, gauge the success of those guess and what they make available, and revise or recuperate them as necessary.

My object here is an incident in the third chapter of Lewis Carroll's second *Alice* book. Alice, having traveled through the mirror in her family's drawing-room, is near the beginning of a picaresque journey involving, among other things, nursery rhyme characters and animate chess pieces, eventually culminating in an ontological break that finds her waking up back in her drawing-room, shaking the same kitten she had been scolding in the novel's opening pages. Such a brutalizing plot summary perhaps does a disservice to the novel, but any plot summary would since the apparent plot is, excuse the pun, not the whole story. For plot to work in a way that lends itself to neat paraphrase, some semblance of a consistent, self-contained causal logic must abide. In *Looking-Glass*, however, the events of Alice's journey across the looking-glass world

do not evince any such consistency but do correspond roughly to moves in a chess problem laid out by Carroll in the novel's preface: Alice seeks promotion as the white queen's pawn.

In the novel's third chapter, Alice begins to advance by moving forward two spaces. These in-game events are depicted in the narrative by Alice crossing two brooks. She leaps over the first brook, the threshold of the second and third squares, and finds herself a passenger on a train crossing the landscape that corresponds to the third square. With her on the train, among other strange passengers, is a Goat as well as a small, seemingly disembodied voice encouraging her to make jokes. As the train "jump[s] over" the next brook, Alice, in a fright, grabs hold of the Goat's beard (220). The text breaks, and when it resumes, the Goat, his beard, and the train have "melt[ed] away," leaving Alice "sitting quietly under a tree" below a now very large Gnat (221). Prior to the break, Alice could not make out the Gnat. Despite its disconcertingly abrupt growth, the narrator strongly asserts that it is "the insect she had been talking to," and Alice approaches it as such (221).

To be fair, this is not the only (or even the first) jarring transition in the story, but when combined with another textual feature that struck my attention, the shift felt readable. So, I began to look for a logic. In the previous paragraph, I tried to position *Goat* as close to *Gnat* as possible to draw attention to what seems to me the obvious feature of the two words in close juxtaposition: they are orthographic neighbors.[2] In fact, as Fred Madden points out, Carroll would later use the same orthographic transformation in an 1880 edition of *Doublets: A Word Puzzle* (74n3).[3] In each puzzle, Carroll provides two words, in this case "GNAT" and "BITE," and a target as to the intermediary shifts, six in this case: "GNAT goat boat bolt bole bile BITE" (31). It may be worth noting that Martin Gardner actually cites Madden's article in *More Annotated Alice* (203n11), an edition from which I was not working when the idea originally

struck. Instead, I was working from the knowledge that Carroll makes frequent use of wordplay and with the increased attention brought about by the content of the pre-shift Gnat's (orthographically oriented) comedy pitches: "something about 'horse' and 'hoarse'"; "something about 'you *would* if you could,' you know" (219-20). Not having access to Gardner's notes meant that I did a lot of unnecessary legwork in developing and provisionally justifying this reading, but had I known this was trodden territory, I probably wouldn't have tread. So, in this case, as in so many others, ignorance proved useful.

Without the aid of Gardner's essential annotations, I considered the orthographic transformation of *Goat* to *Gnat* alongside the transition between episodes, a shift marked by a series of asterisks. That is, I tried to get a handle on how *Goat* turning to *Gnat* across a typographical flourish might be comparable to Alice's shift in attention from the Goat sitting across from her in the train carriage to the Gnat "balancing itself on a twig just over her head" (221). In Thomas MacKellar's roughly contemporary manual on typography, the asterisk is recognized as the "chief reference," which "presents itself most readily to the eye" (55). Crucially, according to MacKellar, "[a]sterisks also denote an omission, or an hiatus by loss of original copy; the number of asterisks being multiplied according to the largeness of the chasm" (55). Carroll uses fourteen asterisks to denote the narrative chasm only described as the Goat's beard "seem[ing] to melt away" (221). With momentum building for a nonlinguistic reading of Carroll's language use, the force of this typographical indicator and the strangeness of the beard's melting called to mind that the term *typeface* is used to refer to a specific set of glyphs sharing a particular design. I speculated that the bodily metaphor might extend to characteristic features of the glyphs. More specifically, I hoped that the lower part of closed characters—the underside of the letter *o,* in this case—was called a "beard." I reasoned that if that were true, then

Alice's pulling on the Goat's beard would mean that she was also pulling on *the Goat*'s beard, which would pull the lower half of the "o" away, leaving a sort of rounded hump, something very similar to an "n," give or take the slightly ascending portion of the vertical stroke or stem. I predicted this would be the case.

It wasn't, or not exactly.

In fact, *beard* is a typographical term that dates to well before Carroll's composition of *Looking-Glass*. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a beard is commonly defined as "[t]hat part of the type above and below the main body of a character, which provides space for ascenders and descenders and prevents their meeting those in the lines above or below." The *OED* cites John Johnson's 1824 volume of *Typographia*. For Johnson, letters have a face, neck, and beard—the neck being the sloping part of the type moving down from the face and the beard being the space on the type that doesn't show up in print (225). To be fair, *beard* is something of an amorphous term across time and national context. In Daniel Berkeley Updike's 1922 work, *Printing Types*, for instance, *beard* and *neck* are interchangeable and refer to sloping part of the type while the "flat part of the body which supports the neck or face" is called, logically enough, the "shoulder" (15-16). Ultimately, though, such ambiguity amounts to little since the bottom part of *o* is never a beard in any jargon regime past or present, British or American.

My initial hope that the beard's disappearance might transform *o* to *n* is, if anything, the opposite of what happens in practice. The beard, in any case, is a part of the type that is not printed, so what actually happens in the shift from *o* to *n* is not a beard melting away but a beard asserting its absence upward, invading the *o* in order to break its closed circle and produce an *n* in its place. And so, my initial (or maybe just aspirational) reading proved less than satisfactory. Still, I think even an abortive reading like this has something to offer. Even if Alice doesn't

transform the Goat into the Gnat by way of the beard, the transformation still occurs—except that it doesn't inasmuch as the Gnat's voice was already present in the train carriage, provoking Alice "in an extremely small voice" only after the Goat has exclaimed in "a loud voice" that Alice ought to know how to find the ticket office (218-19). If *Goat* becomes *Gnat*, it doesn't necessarily follow that the Goat becomes the Gnat. The two characters occupy the same physical space prior to the asterisk-marked break, but somewhere in the break—or, more precisely, in the identification of the Gnat after the break—the prior separation of entities is retroactively erased in order for the Goat to have become the Gnat and to make narrative sense of a shift motivated by a nonlinguistic driver of events. That is, in naming the unidentified voice the Gnat, the narrator activates a metaleptic revision whereby the previously distinct Goat and voice are revised and combined, allowing for their proximity in space to become a proximity in narrative sequence by way of the transformation.

With my own reading having found its way through a typographical blind alley and back somewhere close to its initial formulation, the tenets of good faith probably demand that I provide the most plausible version of Carroll's motivation in having Alice grab the Goat's beard. In short, he did so on the advice of his illustrator, John Tenniel. Martin Gardner avers that, in the original manuscript, Alice clutches at the hair of an elderly woman. Tenniel wrote to Carroll in June of 1870, "I think that when the jump occurs in the railway scene you might very well make Alice lay hold of the goat's *beard* as being the object nearest to hand—instead of the old lady's hair. The jerk would actually throw them together" (qtd. in Carroll, *The Annotated Alice* 221).[4] Why Tenniel made this particular suggestion isn't clear, but it may be a simple matter of graphic economy. Where Carroll was free to work in a constantly morphing textual space, leaving gaps in the written account and the reader to imagine how these shifts in the environment might have

looked, Tenniel had to confront the problem of where, exactly, Alice sits and whom she is facing. And the Goat seems a more fitting subject than, it seems, some humdrum person. Thus, Alice shifts her attention from Goat to Gnat as she crosses the threshold of the fourth square as a result of the purely practical constraints of an illustrated work and the mutual consideration of author and illustrator.

I think the metaleptic reading holds as a description of what happens in the text and even works as a supplement to the steadfast intentionalist reading of the Goat as a substitute for an older woman. It seems entirely possible that Carroll found in Tenniel's suggestion an opportunity to introduce a further twist to Alice's threshold crossing: the old woman from the original manuscript could not have become the Gnat since the orthographic justification simply isn't available; the Gnat would have merely crossed along with Alice and gotten larger, something which would make sense in the looking-glass world but which would have been, in this reader's opinion, less revealing of the largely implicit drivers of narrative events. So, I think, my admittedly partial reading still holds some value, particularly in the context of the larger novel in which it occurs, and does so even with the hefty qualification that would be necessary to satisfy readers of Carroll with a particularly intentionalist bent (assuming such readers do, in fact, exist). It may feel like a stretch to assert metalepsis as a deliberate effect on the limited evidence of Carroll's later puzzle games. After all, Carroll might have simply noticed the interesting, though coincidental, orthographic proximity in his own novel and, amused by it, incorporated an approximation into his later work, retroactively imbuing the *Looking-Glass* scene with the aura of intentionality (in what would be an intra-oeuvre metaleptic maneuver). The fact that the word ladder identified by Madden is not included in the first edition of *Doublets* certainly might

suggest an accidental initial occurrence and opportunistic reiteration following a casual refamiliarization, but then it would still be a re-iteration.[5]

Leaving aside points that may as well be moot, one takeaway from all this is that determinants besides narrative coherence drive this scene. In this regard, it is representative of the larger text. Carroll explicitly acknowledges two primary but competing drivers of events: the chess problem alongside something close to standard narrative causality. In the Author's Preface, Carroll similarly acknowledges the mutually disruptive quality of the two in concert: The chess problem "is correctly worked out, so far as the *moves* are concerned," but the "*alternation* of Red and White is perhaps not so strictly observed as it might be" (171).[6] Chess and narrative interfere with each other, hardly remain consistent in themselves, and often subordinate themselves to the more minor and local determinants that also crop up intermittently. An exhaustive list seems daunting in this context, but at the very least other formal determinants include typography, parody, broader intertextual references including a relationship to the previous *Alice* book, nursery rhymes, deductive logic, illustration, and (as already demonstrated) orthography. All of this results in a kind of unstable, multifaceted determinism that all but insists on a reading practice comprising partial and even contradictory moves. As opposed to a singular allegorical reading, which assumes a specific unchanging meaning (intentional or symptomatic) at bottom, waiting to be exhumed by a rigorous system of interpretation, what is demanded here is a more pragmatic reading practice. The novel itself only ever invites—by, I argue, only every modeling—provisional readings.

In this chapter, I attempt to take such a pragmatist's approach. The twin topics of this study are allegory and metalepsis, and *Looking-Glass* represents an object lesson for what remains to be read when allegory gets in over its head, having mistaken tides and currents for

something with a singular, deep meaning. As Alice encounters each new circumstance of the looking-glass world, she does as I have done: she speculates, hopes, reasons, predicts, and (most crucially) pretends—developing, revising, and discarding models for action as the situation demands. Typically, she does so with very little firm ground on which to construct stances towards future action, and it is in these instances that pretending proves most useful. Abductive intuition in the reading that opens this chapter made a red herring of a goat's beard, but once considered and discarded, it led to a fuller though perhaps still provisional reading of an orthographic metalepsis. Pragmatism's flexibility is generative, and generation always looks to sustain itself as a process.

This chapter takes up a range of subjects befitting the fiction it considers, and to some extent it charts the development of my own search for methodology to address the premises delivered by intuition, to wit: allegory as a category feels insufficient to the parallel but sometimes mutually determinative ontological progressions in evidence; chess has been understood as a model; therefore, I propose that modeling is a better fit. There's more than enough to unpack here, but decorum suggests that I should at least gesture towards where this all leads (and what can we follow if not decorum?). In short, I want to stake out some distance from the standard line on Carroll's approach to or refusal of stable knowledge. Traditionally read, Carroll finds a kind of ironic solace in the systematic pleasures of nonsense. I find this approach convincing as far as it goes, but part of what I want to attempt here is a consideration of what the text does as a supplement to what Carroll meant. And what it does is model the always partial and abductive process of modeling itself.

Not Speaking Otherwise: Allegory

Perhaps it goes without saying that Carroll's two *Alice* novels have been received as allegories (or, in some cases, as comprising more local allegories). If it doesn't, then perhaps a stronger claim is worth making: Carroll's work has been possibly the most fertile literary ground for allegoresis, especially outside the academy, because of its familiarity and its broad, nonsense-afforded applicability. Hephzibah Anderson, in a primer on the many readings of *Alice* for the BBC, tics off the preoccupations of the novels' many amateur allegorists by which Carroll's work becomes "variously an allegory on drug culture, a parable of British colonisation, and the story of a heroine with a bad case of penis envy." That the BBC saw fit to publish such a clearinghouse in 2016 likely says more about the received conception of Carroll's work as trafficking in allegory than any individual example or even Anderson's admirably concise breakdown ever could.

The broader culture around the texts has conceived and perpetuated a category mistake about these novels, taking the novels (and the figures for access they've made available) as a kind of type for allegory as such. If *JFK* offered a generation of conspiracy-minded viewers a readymade figure for the screen separating the public from what's really going on, *The Matrix*'s invocation of Alice in the red-or-blue-pill scene has been picked up by a whole generation of awful people on the Internet who might not have read the novel but understand it to involve a hidden world, and therefore hidden knowledge, as well as a way to access it. With little else than that understanding, such "readers" have instrumentalized Alice's movement down the rabbit hole or through the looking-glass as a way of talking about getting at a truth below or behind whatever emerging ideology threatens the position of reactionary types. But therein lies the most

interesting wrench in these gears. The popular appropriation of Carroll's imagery seems always to get the point exactly wrong (or exactly right, saying more than they mean to about their political positions in the process): Wonderland and the looking-glass world are, explicitly, spaces of nonsense; Alice does not return from them radicalized or bursting with secret knowledge.

My goal here is less to point out the foundational carelessness of redpilling as a concept.[7] Instead, I want to argue that allegory as a category has always been an awkward fit because, to read the novels allegorically, one must either disregard the framing scenes and threshold crossing—reading only the content of the dream as a self-contained narrative, probably but not necessarily against events in Alice's waking life—or take Alice's whole journey from waking through the dreamworld and back to waking into account—which means disregarding the problem of Alice's oneiric entrance and exit. (The redpilled approach seems to take the crossing itself as the only event of allegorical value, which leads to different problems.) Neither approach strikes me as especially productive because Alice's narrative metalepsis interferes with the traditional notion of allegory. That is, Alice's unmarked entrance through the looking-glass disrupts the kind of one-sided and one-to-one determination that characterizes traditional accounts of allegory as involving the "events of a narrative obviously and continuously refer[ing] to another simultaneous structure of events or ideas" (Frye, "Allegory" 12).

It's my impression that most allegorical accounts of Alice's adventures confine themselves to the dream reports in order to avail themselves of the fantastical affordances of the events in Wonderland and the looking-glass world (or to even more localized episodes). The novels' actual text, however, present problems for a wholly compartmentalized allegory—whether within or outside of a larger narrative frame. Alice isn't telling a story about her dreams; she's dreaming, and the beginning of the dream refuses precise identification. Thus, even the

most forgiving allegoresis would need to acknowledge a fundamental uncertainty about where the dream starts, relying on an arbitrary starting point. The narrator never gives an account of Alice falling asleep and only hints at something like diminished attention or the experiential discontinuities that define her experience in the looking-glass world. Immediately prior to her entrance, Alice is "up on the chimney-piece . . . though she hardly knew how she had got there" (184). Alice, for her part, seems unconcerned with this or the later gaps in her awareness. Rather than fixating on whether or not she might enter the mirror, she assumes an unfixed, pragmatic stance, calling upon her "favorite phrase 'Let's pretend'": "Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty" (179, 181). Alice's actual trip through the mirror is, like her falling asleep, unnarrated; "[i]n another moment," Alice is simply "through the glass" and in the looking-glass room (184). While such narrative elisions should trouble any allegorists looking for a place to start, they leave Alice unmoved. She chooses, instead, to pretend and continue pretending—to treat scaffolded pretenses as though they were knowledge and see what happens: "Let's pretend that you're the Red Queen, Kitty! . . . I'll put you through into Looking-glass House. How would you like *that?*" (180). And at least in the logic of the novel, these moves pay off. Alice, an idiosyncratic but no less successful pragmatist, passes through the mirror and the kitten becomes (at least a part of) the Red Queen. In short, events that should disrupt the common sense that Alice should have seem less a problem than an opportunity for further pretending and continued progress in the face of an abyss of knowledge. Alice treats her lived experience in a subjunctive mood, saying it were so and then responding once it is.

A similar sort of fuzziness marks her exit from the dream although, in this case, the transition announces itself more clearly. The events in the novel have not progressed in a logical way—another potential problem for allegoresis. By novel's end, the dream having descended

into a kind of chaos that even the most earnest recuperative apparatus can't handle, Alice finds herself taking hold of the Red Queen and declaring that she will "shake [the queen] into a kitten" (336). An entire, though very short, chapter passes with Alice shaking the diminutive queen as she grows "shorter—and fatter—and softer—and rounder" (337). Then, in yet another chapter, the queen becomes her little black kitten, and finally, in the novel's final chapter, Alice begins once again to interact with the real world of the frame narrative, even going so far as to show the red chess piece to the black kitten and demand that the kitten "[c]onfess that was what [it] turned into!" (342). The reversion of the queen into the black kitten recalls the Goat's transformation into the Gnat. While, in the prior case, two entities merge as Alice crosses an in-dream threshold, in this last crossing the kitten, in becoming once again herself, throws off the personality of the queen, leaving the chess piece as a kind of physical sediment. In each case—but especially in concert—these episodes undermine any sense that Alice's dream is fully distinct from and, thus, can reflect the objects and events of her waking life. Across narrative levels, there is no rule-bound difference separating kitten from queen as there is no strict correspondence between gnat and goat. The logic by which Alice or a reader might surmise such relationships is essentially arbitrary, based in one case on orthographic proximity and in the other on color-coding (the black and white kittens are matched to their respective queen pieces), and not entirely satisfactory. Alice, for her part, demands a confession from Kitty in an effort to shore up her weak evidence.

To put all this another way, the many and varied (narrative) metalepses that constitute Alice's movements into, out of, and across spaces within the looking-glass world disrupt the ways in which the text could function as an allegory.[8] Traditionally, readers have understood both allegory and metalepsis as structured in terms of "levels." Even readers who push back

against the spatial metaphor nonetheless see the use in reverting to it by way of explanation or introduction. Maureen Quilligan notes that we typically think of "different 'levels' of meaning," explaining, "The very word signals our tendency to think about allegory in terms of a vertically organized spatial hierarchy, where the gaps between the levels of meaning . . . hold for us the definitive allure of the form" (27). Angus Fletcher, on the other hand, argues that the "mode is hierarchical in essence" (22). Following Genette, Debra Malina understands metalepsis in similar terms, as the "intrusion" across diegetic "levels": "part of the shock value of metalepsis derives from the fact that these universes are originally conceived as hierarchically ordered" (4). If metalepsis "necessarily violates the structure of the narrative and disrupts the reading process that relies on that structure for its constituting of meaning" (Malina 4), then metalepsis would doubly disrupt the reading process of allegory because it undermines the hierarchy of a mode that is, in essence, hierarchical.

The disorienting effects of this disruption come to a head when Alice encounters the sleeping and apparently dreaming Red King. Alice famously argues with Tweedledee and Tweedledum about the Red King's dreaming. Tweedledee insists that if the Red King "left off dreaming" Alice would "be nowhere": "Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" (238). Tweedledee and Tweedledum seem unbothered by the fact that they, since they are interacting with Alice about whom the Red King is dreaming, must also be "things in his dream" and mercilessly explain to a clearly distraught Alice that she "won't make [her]self a bit realer by crying" (239). The scene itself is strange and memorable, not least for the Tweedle brothers' cruelty, and has attracted attention from a range of critics. Stephen E. Soud, for instance, identifies the "infinite regress" as a perennial favorite, one that "deconstructive critics have hastened to construe as positing an ultimate indeterminacy or infinite deferral" (747). But even

Soud's dubious approach to Carrollian criticism posits this as a moment of infinite regress, which doesn't seem wholly accurate. For one, Alice's and the Red King's positions are asymmetrical, and the Red King's feels especially compromised. He seems to be a "sort of thing" in his own dream, which means that if Alice and the Tweedles are in danger of "go[ing] out" upon his waking, so too is the Red King (238). Furthermore, if the Red King is dreaming Alice, if she is the protagonist of his dream, it seems likely that—just as in the narrative progression—the Tweedle brothers will simply stop existing once she has moved on. Rather than an infinite regress organized around two poles, what seems to be happening is an altogether messier sort of infinity made up of nesting and branching realities running along tracks sometimes parallel, sometimes hierarchically ordered, and sometimes only intermittently existing at all.

That things should be so complicated is hardly surprising considering that, unlike the single intentional meaning that serves as the determinative factor in allegory's implied "chain of command" (Fletcher 23), *Looking-Glass*'s narrative has more than one boss. That the King is sleeping is a function of his and Alice's relative positions on the chessboard. At this point, the Red King occupies the square immediately to Alice's right and could take Alice-as-pawn—make her "go out." However, doing so would mean moving into check as Alice's position is protected by the White Knight, one square up and two over, so the King sleeps as Alice passes. Because the dream-within-in-a-dream aspect of the episode promises a rich (if incredibly tired) metaphysical discussion, considerably less critical attention has been paid to the fact that the encounter merely serves to give an account of why Alice should pass through a dangerous position in the chess problem that, at other points, more forcefully constrains her actions. Clearly, Carroll has both concerns in mind, but that's exactly my point: even if this localized

episode has an allegorical significance, it is also partially determined by a much larger system. The negotiation is what matters.

The events of Alice's dream often seem less related to the experiences of her waking life (or to any other concerns brought with her from the top diegetic level or imported from an extratextual reality) than to the chess problem laid out in the author's preface. The relationship of the narrative to the working out of the chess problem is a delicate issue, one that, Lawrence Lipking argues, "reflects the limitations of fiction rather than chess": "Since words cannot convey what happens in a game, any more than they can capture a tune, they must first reshape the game in a form they can handle—a travesty or perversion of life" (161). Nonetheless, critics have tried a variety of approaches to handle the difficult relationship. For one and most obviously, chess simply offers a thematic system in which Alice's narrative can play out. The presence of kings and queens allows Carroll to draw clear parallels between *Looking-Glass* and its predecessor. A different account holds that chess (and indeed the notion of a card game in *Alice in Wonderland*) sets strict limits on the actions of the characters, effectively foreclosing meaningful decision-making. Robin Lakoff elaborates:

> Many of the anomalies of the *Alices* arise because the context is so markedly different from that of the normal world. For one thing, the latter demands an essential distinction between "real behavior" and "games." . . . In games, . . . rules are made explicit at the start, and typically are rigid and nonnegotiable. . . . [T]o the inhabitants of [the novels] their behavior seems "real," sincere, and spontaneous, although to the outsider it does not. . . . [I]t is impossible to distinguish games from real life: one *is* the other. So the . . . characters fail to distinguish (presumably) spontaneous conversational turns from "turns" in a game. (379)

If Lakoff is overstating the case, it is mostly as a corrective to the sense of the chess game as mere thematic window-dressing. Although Carroll admits that the rules are "not so strictly observed as [they] might be" (171), meaning that the imperatives of the narrative sometimes take precedence, it is also clear that the rules of chess play a structural role in the actions of certain characters and in the shape of the episodes, which would be almost wholly nonsensical otherwise. That the rules are not so strictly observed also, of course, means that the story is not simply, as Lipking's account might suggest, a perverse novelization of a prior and independently motivated chess problem.

Doing Otherwise: Modeling

It's worth taking a moment to establish more firmly Carroll's use of chess as constituting a form of modeling. Chess has historically, with regular and consistent qualification, served as a kind of rough and ready model for warfare. In 1854, Herbert Coleridge, the grandson of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and first editor of the Philological Society's *New English Dictionary* (the precursor to the *OED*),[9] argued that the "*military view*" of chess—that the "manœuvres of the Chessboard were but a mimicry, on a tiny scale, of the operations of real war"—was "common to all nations among whom Chess has ever flourished" (xx-xxi). Thus, chess was among the most venerable extant models available to the likes of Lewis Carroll.

Clearly, then, chess was understood as a model. To my mind, two aspects of that understanding deserve special attention. First, understanding chess as a model is all that's necessary for it to serve as a model. Second, chess's status as a model distinguishes it not only from allegory but also from what we might call gameplaying. My first point derives largely from

Mary Hesse's account of models based on what she calls "material analogy" (68). Material analogy relies on an observer's pretheoretic intuition of a similarity between different objects, events, phenomena, and so on. Material analogy essentially involves developing a hunch about a potential relationship based on observable similarities which can then be used to make predictions about further similarities. As I've suggested about my own reading practice, the kinds of understanding enabled by such models need not be and often are not complete but are instead part of a longer process of theory-generation and development:

> Of course the description of similarities and differences between two analogues is a notoriously inaccurate, incomplete, and inconclusive procedure. Although we often feel some confidence in asserting the existence of a similarity and that some things are more similar to each other than to other things, we cannot usually locate discrete characteristics in one object which are positively and finally identifiable with or differentiable from those in another object. But the inconclusive nature of the procedure is not fatal here, because we are not looking for incorrigible inductive methods, but only for methods of selecting *hypotheses*. (76)

What is perhaps most crucial to emphasize here is that only models based on intuitive relationships have a generative capacity with regard to knowledge formation. New theories can't happen when model-making depends on the preexistence of the theories themselves. Understanding chess as a model for warfare, then, depends on recognition of some material similarities and does so with the purpose of making predictions that can then be tested and revised as necessary. And, to the extent that the point of modeling is knowledge formation, it differs from both allegory—which depends on a single, discoverable truth to be accessed through

a specific code—and from gameplaying—which dispenses with the idea of knowledge development.

Allowing chess to serve, then, as a provisional standard for models as such, I want to draw out a few possible inferences—let's just go ahead and say three—regarding the utility of approaching the text as engaged in modeling. First, models need not correspond to their targets in every feature in order to represent them, and which features we regard as relevant depends on specific circumstances, including our purpose in using the model. Second, models can effect changes in the nature of (or our understanding of the nature of) their targets, and this is especially true for models that target human behaviors. Third, thinking of models in terms of meaning is a category mistake. While any individual game of chess necessarily depends on fixed rules, the modeling of combat through chess has developed over time and to suit sometimes very specific purposes. As recently as 2018, while serving as commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, Gen. David Perkins argued for the necessity of a "'chess-based' appreciation of the world" as distinguished from a "'checkers-based' world outlook": "In this world, there are many paths to victory; few events allow for linear extrapolation. Victory no longer comes from wiping out an opponent's pieces, but by removing all his options." Clearly, Perkins's use of chess as a model differs greatly from Coleridge's. He scales up the model's target, focusing not on the mimicry of the maneuvers of battle but on the ways in which chess deemphasizes attrition tactics, but chess nonetheless serves as model in his formulation to the extent that it allows him to make predictions, even judgments, about modern warfare.[10]

To a more extreme degree, models can effectively determine or contribute to the determination of the reality of their targets. For instance, as Adam Toon points out, "the representational properties of ether models may have played an important role in allowing

scientists to determine whether or not the ether exists" (91). If a model or process of modeling can effect changes in its targets or objects—or at least in our understanding of them—then perhaps it makes for a better partner for metalepsis than allegory. That is, if *Looking-Glass* models modeling it can do so in concert with metalepsis, using Alice's paradoxical threshold crossing as a part of its model of how to do abductive inference. (It uses the fact of Alice's paradoxical presence in *Looking-Glass* as a feature, a way to throw her into a disorienting scenario in which she is forced to make the kind of abductive leaps that are also an aspect of modeling). Finally, unlike any given allegory, chess need not mean anything—and probably cannot mean anything under a hierarchical understanding of allegoresis, where latent meaning dictates manifest content and some author or other dictates that meaning. Models don't mean; they represent. In Toon's analysis, "models are props in games of make-believe, which represent their objects by prescribing imaginings about them" (95). Models work provisionally by employing conventions that establish how they function. This is what models do and what, I argue, *Looking-Glass* does.

In order to draw out the relevance of modeling to the compartmentalized tête-à-têtes that comprise the lion's share of the narrative content of Alice's dream, it might be useful to draw a distinction between different kinds and levels of abductive inference. Umberto Eco, in an attempt to systematize Charles Sanders Peirce's expansive and often inconsistent work on abduction offers a scheme of three kinds of abductive inference (appropriately Peircean) and appends a category of meta-abduction. For Eco, hypothesis or overcoded abduction amounts to automatic or semi-automatic "interpretive labor" (206). In essence, this involves recognizing phenomena or objects as belonging to established categories. The process qualifies as abduction inasmuch as such recognition is not natural or truly automatic and still depends on a kind of cultural context

(which can change). Undercoded abduction involves selecting a rule for a given scenario "from a series of equiprobable rules put at our disposable by the current world knowledge" (206). Eco concludes with creative abduction, which involves the wholesale invention of a rule in the absence of rules within the current world knowledge. He adds that creative abduction "obliges one to make . . . a meta-abduction" (207), which "consists in deciding as to whether the possible universe outlined by our first-level abductions is the same as the universe of our experience":

> In over- and undercoded abductions, this meta-level of inference is not compulsory, since we get the law from a storage of already checked actual world experience. In other words, we are entitled by common world knowledge to think that, provided the law is the suitable one, it already holds in the world of our experience. In creative abductions we do not have this kind of certainty. We are making a complete "fair guess" not only about the nature of the result (its cause) but also about the nature of the encyclopedia [the current world knowledge] (so that if the new law results in being verified, our discovery leads to a change in the paradigm). (207)

Using Eco's scheme, it's fairly simple to read traditional chess as the interplay of back-and-forth over- and undercoded abductions. Everything happens within an agreed upon, artificially constructed and therefore limited and stable set of rules. If someone breaks these rules, then chess simply isn't happening and inference is essentially pointless.

What Alice is forced to attempt—over and over again, and in addition to the first two types of abduction which necessarily dictate virtually all behavior in any situation—is creative abductions and meta-abductions to support them. As Alice interacts with characters and finds herself in situations—or between situations—that defy her sense of how the world works, she has to make guesses about what rules are operative and to proceed as though the guesses

correspond to the world she doesn't understand. She could barely make it a few steps (forward or sometimes backward to go forward) in the looking-glass world without "meta-betting that the possible world [she] has outlined is the same as the 'real' one" (218). What's more, because the worlds and world-rules seem to change from episode to episode, she has to constantly update or replace her creative abductions and meta-abductions about the rules across episodes and also develop an even more capacious meta-abduction about the fact that rules (and the worlds they govern) can change. That is, she has to, at some point, come to an understanding that she will not be able to count on any previous aspect of her world knowledge except the one piece that tells her the rules aren't necessarily consistent.

At a very local, readable level, Alice develops or slightly tweaks conceptual models through which to understand and by way of which to react to her shifting environment. These smaller, provisional models act as a supplement to the larger meta-abductive inference she makes in order to reconcile her apparently stable consciousness with the constantly shifting world-rules she must navigate. Much of Alice's abductive labor occurs to little fanfare, and even some of the more creative of her creative abductions happen without much in the way of conscious meta-abduction on her part. Often, Alice simply accepts the good faith of the other characters. Alice tends not to voice much skepticism—at least as far as suspecting the motivations of other characters; more is allowed with regard to competence. It is only once Alice has wakened that she voices a kind of measured, compensatory suspicion: "'Now, Kitty!' she cried, clapping her hands triumphantly. 'Confess that [the again inanimate Red Queen] was what you turned into!'" (342). Alice feels comfortable enough with the waking world's world rules that she can temporarily ignore their premises to engage in some harmless fun. The point here is not to paint Alice as Pollyannaish or overly deferential. Instead, Alice's taking other characters at their word

seems like a productive strategy, especially when she confronts particularly cryptic scenarios or intransigent interlocutors. When, on the other hand, she stumbles into situations with which she has some familiarity, she takes her prior knowledge into account while crafting responses. This pattern is most obvious during her encounters with nursery rhyme figures.

Three of *Looking-Glass*'s episodes contain recognizable characters or sets of characters: Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the Lion and the Unicorn. Alice is aware that they are or represent fictional entities and uses what she knows to make predictions about how they will behave and, to some extent, how the world around them will operate. In this respect, Alice performs a kind of pragmatic, reverse *vraisemblablisation*, "naturaliz[ing] a text [by] bring[ing] it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible" (Culler 161-62). In this case, because Alice has entered the nursery rhymes—or some spaces that seem to resemble them but can't *be* them by virtue of her presence—she uses the texts she already knows as a model, as opposed to using the extratextual world as a model to understand or engage with a fictional text.

Tweedledum and Tweedledee is a useful starting point. Throughout and even before her encounter with them, Alice makes abductive judgments. In the last few paragraphs of "Looking-Glass Insects," she begins to follow finger-post signs: one reading "TO TWEEDLEDUM'S HOUSE"; the other, "TO THE HOUSE OF TWEEDLEDEE" (227-28). After the road has divided enough times without the signs pointing in different directions, Alice makes a guess: "'I do believe,' said Alice at last, 'that they live in the *same* house! I wonder I never thought of that before—But I can't stay there long" (228). Alice, with an inductive supplement, makes a properly abductive leap. The chapter break dramatizes her next guess. Before the break, she comes upon and is startled by "two fat little men" but then recovers herself, "feeling sure that

they must be"—at which point the chapter breaks (228). The title of the next chapter, "Tweedledum and Tweedledee," forms a straightforward couplet, one that even the most inattentive reader would find it hard to miss but that, nonetheless, rewards even the most careful reader for their trouble. It's an inflection point, and as is often the case in *Looking-Glass*, it occurs at a moment of transition, in this case through the hard and fast limit of chapters (instead of in-plot but unnarrated threshold crossings). Given Carroll's penchant for obscurity at some points in the novel, it's worth considering why the couplet makes itself so available. What I want to suggest here is that the break and the cross-chapter enjambment draw attention to the fact that Alice herself is making a kind of leap. Admittedly, given the signage, it's a reasonable one, one that proves out, but at least at this point, Alice has yet to verify anything and is only "sure" in "feeling." She observes them standing under a tree and—and this is crucial—she "knew which was which in a moment" because each has his name stitched into his collar, something Alice seems not yet to have noticed as of her feeling sure.

Alice initially finds conversation with the twins difficult. In the first instance of what will become a pattern throughout the nursery rhyme-derived episodes, she thinks through the "words of the old song" (230). Carroll, perhaps in an effort to familiarize young readers with the song itself or perhaps to lend some added weight to the long original poems contained in the text, renders the full verse in the report of Alice's inner monologue:

"Tweedledum and Tweedledee
    Agreed to have a battle;
For Tweedledum said Tweedledee
    Had spoiled his nice new rattle
Just then flew down a monstrous crow,

As black as a tar-barrel;

Which frightened both the heroes so,

They quite forgot their quarrel." (230)

Carroll puts the full text to use in the pages to come as most of the events to follow correlate fairly precisely with the poem itself. Alice, on approach, had decided she would only "call and say 'How d'ye do?' and ask them the way out of the wood'" (228). But after being struck dumb upon seeing the twins, she effectively goes off-model, entering into an altogether more complicated social interaction. When she has repeated the old song to herself, Tweedledum avers that he "knows what [Alice is] thinking about" (230). Then, he and his brother insist that it "isn't so" (231). It's unclear if the Tweedle brothers have actually surmised that Alice is thinking through a poem about them. What, exactly, "isn't so" isn't elaborated, and the use of "it" makes it difficult to track against the poem, which includes a description of multiple events. Playing it safe, Alice, as she often does, changes the subject entirely: "'I was thinking,' Alice said very positively, 'which is the best way out of this wood: it's getting dark. Would you tell me, please?'" (231). Assuming Alice's original plan—say "How d'ye do?" and *then* ask them the way out—was in sequence, she veers off again here by asking directions before properly greeting the brothers. They don't respond. After Alice impulsively calls Tweedledum and -dee "First Boy!" and "Next Boy!" with no apparent result in mind and after the Tweedles have characteristically replied in the negative, Tweedledum dresses Alice down: "You've begun wrong! . . . The first thing in a visit is to say 'How d'ye do' and shake hands!" (231). Alice's plan for a quick visit, if it ever might have been viable, is now certainly scuttled. She proceeds in the wrong order, embarrasses and angers the Tweedle brothers, and is forced to take their lead going forward.

Things immediately get weird, and Alice mostly goes along with it. She and the Tweedles dance in a ring to music "she was not even surprised to hear . . . playing" (232). When Alice later recounts the events to her sister after leaving the looking-glass world, she describes it as being marked by a distorted and partial sense of time and sequence. She listens to Tweedledee recite *The Walrus and the Carpenter* and discusses its import with the two brothers. They encounter the sleeping Red King. Finally, as Alice is about to give up on the enterprise, things shift back into seemingly preordained place: Tweedledum sees his rattle, apparently "spoilt" (240). He is upset, and the brothers agree to battle. When Alice, tired of trying to shame the brothers into giving up their preposterous fight, "wish[es] the monstrous crow would come," it does and breaks up the proceeding (244). Whether Alice somehow summons the crow or merely predicts its appearance based on her knowledge of the poem probably doesn't matter. That Tweedledum refers to it as "the crow" and not "a crow" is probably more significant, at least more interesting, but no less difficult to pin down. While the definite article suggests Tweedledum's familiarity with the crow, that could simply mean that the bird is a regular fixture in his world. It doesn't necessarily mean he knows the poem. It's as likely that the Tweedle brothers play out the same scenario over and over as any other explanation—which is another way of saying it's just as unlikely.

What is clear is that Alice approaches the interaction with a model in mind. Strangely, in this case, the poem doesn't occur to her—or her recollection of it isn't reported—until she actually meets the Tweedles although she has seen the signs with their peculiar names beforehand. In fact, her thinking through the poem is part of what disrupts her otherwise practical plan of greeting the inhabitants and quickly asking for directions, forcing her to develop and enact a plan based on the nursery rhyme model. In the other two episodes, "Humpty Dumpty" and "The Lion and the Unicorn," Alice's motivations are less distinct. She's not simply

trying to escape the forest but more generally making her way toward the end of the board and promotion. Arguably, neither of the other poems contains as many narrative events as "Tweedledum and Tweedledee," so neither gives her as much material to work from in terms of content. Even so, Alice's interaction with Humpty Dumpty is interesting, and possibly because of the lack of clear narrative entry points, her use of models is arguably more interesting.

The second encounter begins much like the first with Alice approaching the next contact through a confusing space, having just left a different and differently confusing situation. She has just purchased an egg from the sheep in the shop and is attempting to retrieve it. As she walks towards it, it gets farther away until eventually—after another chapter break—it starts instead to seem larger and larger as she approaches, eventually appearing in the now customary form of Humpty Dumpty, an egg with broadly human features: "when she had come close to it, she saw clearly that it was HUMPTY DUMPTY himself. 'It can't be anybody else!' she said to herself. 'I'm as certain of it, as if his name were written all over his face!'" (261). As in the case of Tweedles, Alice achieves certainty without terribly much to go on. Some concerns: this might not actually be an eggman; Humpty Dumpty might not be the only eggman; even an eggman named Humpty Dumpty might not be *the* Humpty Dumpty. These are probably quibbling inasmuch as the Red Queen tells Alice at the start of her journey that the sixth square "belongs to Humpty Dumpty" (212), and of course the chapter's events roughly correspond to the nursery rhyme. And, obviously, he's an egg-shaped presence sitting atop a wall. If quibbling, though, these issues are never fully resolved since Humpty Dumpty never identifies himself, and I would argue they are irresolvable given the metaleptic mechanics of Alice's visit.

Once she has made the abductive identification, Alice immediately begins acting in accordance with the nursery rhyme. Nothing in the rhyme itself gives any indication of how

Humpty Dumpty conducts himself or what someone besides Humpty should do, save perhaps attempting and failing along with the King's horses to "put . . . him in place again," so Alice simply stands below Humpty "with her hands ready to catch him" and remarks, "And how exactly like an egg he is" (262). Alice expects him to fall and takes steps to prevent that eventuality. After some back and forth that "wasn't at all like conversation," she repeats the pertinent nursery rhyme to herself:

> Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:
>
> Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
>
> All the King's horses and all the King's men
>
> Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again. (262)

She follows it up with the accurate, if understandably imprecise, assessment that the "last line is much too long for the poetry" (262). This last remark is, I think, crucial. Alice, confronted with a dearth of narrative information from which to construct a model for action, develops an aesthetic evaluation about the language behind Humpty's existence. The rest of the chapter, as has been more than adequately discussed in a number of places, concerns questions of language and force.[11] Alice's simple remark can be elaborated; it's an observation about language and force. "Humpty Dumpty" is a relatively simple poem written in *falling* meter,[12] constructed almost entirely of dactyls—the only exception being the trochees that comprise *Humpty Dumpty*. In the first two lines, the trochees cause little problem for the dactylic tetrameter, placed as they are at the outset. The third line is smooth, in a regular rhythm. The fourth, though, doesn't work. The line would work this way: "Couldn't put Humpty in his place again." (I said a corrupted form of this as a child.) Adding *Dumpty* means adding another stress and interrupting the dactyl that *Humpty* is starting. The line is too long, but the real problem is the disruption of the meter, the

falling meter. The extra syllables are enough to confuse the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, a problem compounded by the skipped unstressed syllables at the line's end. The rhythm of the final line is out of place, and *Humpty Dumpty* can't be in place so long as it exists in that final line. To insist on the metaphor, the unit of language is forced. Alice's remark, limited as it is, sets in place an expectation about language and force in the rest of the chapter.

The rest of the chapter proceeds in a way very similar to "Tweedledum and Tweedledee" with Alice having difficulty making much headway in her discussions with the eggman. While I don't mean to underplay the significant and interesting material in the chapter, I do want to stress how it ends:

> Alice waited a minute to see if he would speak again, but, as he never opened his eyes or took any further notice of her, she said "Good-bye!" once more, and, getting no answer to this, she quietly walked away: but she couldn't help saying to herself, as she went, "Of all the unsatisfactory—" (she repeated this aloud, as it was a great comfort to have such a long word to say) "of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met—" She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crush shook the forest from end to end. (276)

The language surrounding Alice's comment is reminiscent of the earlier episodes. In this instance, Alice "couldn't help saying" what she does in the same way that "she could hardly help saying [the words of the old song] out loud" after meeting the Tweedle brothers (230). The difference is that, while earlier Alice had "repeated" the words to "Humpty Dumpty" to herself, here, having found comfort in the word *unsatisfactory* she "repeat[s it] aloud," at which point Humpty Dumpty falls. Alice thinks of it as a long word, and it is. It's also a pair of dactyls.

When Alice speaks aloud the long word that would be in place in the last line of "Humpty Dumpty," the word that wouldn't disrupt the *falling* meter, Humpty falls.

My point here is not to suggest exactly that Alice has a direct effect on Humpty's fall. It's to suggest that Alice, when developing and trying out social models based on abductive premises, is even if unconsciously paying attention to form as well as content. In the Tweedle brothers episode, Alice looks to the poem for narrative content: she is concerned with a specific series of events and her mental work is turned toward a specific outcome. In this later chapter, her only real commentary on the poem itself concerns its form. Where Alice wishes the crow to come as a narrative event, she supplements the poem with the correct metrical form, reinstating an orderly falling meter and, in an oblique pun, the possibility of the fall itself. This is not to suggest that other accounts of Alice's evaluation of Humpty Dumpty are wrong. Charles Matthews's argument that Alice finds "Humpty Dumpty . . . unsatisfactory because he is so self-centered" seems reasonable enough and need not interfere with my reading of her diction (115).[13] There can be multiple drivers here, just as in any rhetorical case form and content both interact and remain distinct. And if, as Matthews's argues, "Alice is baffled because she is not privy to the rules of [Humpty Dumpty's] game," Humpty himself is not privy to all the rules governing his world, some of which are metrical (115). Alice, on the other hand, is fully aware of the meter and develops a response to her interaction with Humpty on the order of her aesthetic, formal evaluation of the poem she has memorized.

And this is by no means unprecedented in abductive thinking and the construction of models. Eco notes that, when choosing "among many . . . possible mental courses," one may be "obliged to choose . . . the one which displayed more aesthetic coherence, or more 'elegance'" (216). Unlike Copernicus, who, according to Eco, "figured out a possible world whose guarantee

was its being well structured, 'gestaltically' elegant," Alice has the advantage of realizing—really just abductively assuming—that she is operating within a deliberately structured world and some sense of the (in this case metrical) rules that define its operation. Like other model makers, she makes an evaluation about aesthetic coherence and uses that to define her reaction. Unlike other model makers, what she is reacting to is actually an aesthetic object. Unlike Alice, but like most subjects of most poems, Humpty Dumpty is wholly unaware of the meter in which he has been rendered.

This last point is made clearer when Humpty fails to pick up on Alice's meaning after she anticipates his comments about the King's horses and men. Humpty badly misinterprets the nature of her knowledge: "'Now I declare that's too bad!" Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into sudden passion. "You've been listening at doors—and behind trees—and down chimneys—or you couldn't have known it!" (264). When Alice responds that the pertinent information is "in a book," he takes her to mean that the King's promise of aid has been recorded in a "History of England" (264).[14] Humpty's leap is reasonable but fundamentally faulty; he doesn't even get the genre right, limiting any potential for him to intervene in his own future affairs in the way that Alice does. He simply doesn't understand the rules, and his blind faith in what "*the King has promised [him]*"—a phrase rendered in iambs, a rising meter, which he repeats—means that he won't take basic steps to address his precarious position (264).

Alice's intervention doesn't seem fully intentional on her part. She has a better sense of the world-rules than Humpty Dumpty because she knows what a poem is and has read the poem in which he appears, and she engages in first-order abductions about how those rules work and meta-abductions about the fact that those rules apply in ways that the characters don't—and seemingly can't (with the possible exception of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, who may or may

not realize that she's thinking about the poem in which they appear and may or may not realize that the words she's thinking are actually a poem). In the case of the Tweedles, Alice seems to wish a crow—that she expects to come—into coming sooner. In "The Lion and the Unicorn," her only real effect on events is to draw the King's attention to the fact that *for* in "fighting for the crown," can mean both *on behalf of* and *in order to claim,* a fact that creates some anxiety but has no real impact on the unfolding of events. What is especially compelling about the Humpty Dumpty episode is that Alice's presence is necessary for the narrative events to occur. Without her deeming the events "unsatisfactory" and repeating the word aloud, Humpty Dumpty wouldn't have been put in his proper place, shattered at the foot of the wall.

Alice's intervention is doubly metaleptic. In the narrative-theory sense, Alice shouldn't be able to cross the threshold into a world that she has read about and affect events in that world. In a poetics sense, Alice's intervention in the final line, a deep pun on "falling meter," is what precipitates the event depicted two lines prior. Carroll, in an extremely complex move, rewrites the nursery rhyme and does so by making a pun from the metaphorical usage of "falling" in a description of poetic form. To be fair, "Couldn't put unsatisfactory -gain" doesn't make sense, but that seems beside the point. What matters is that Alice enters the world and, using the internal logic of the poem's meter, adds depth to the poem, giving a reason for Humpty's "great fall," something which the poem has stubbornly refused to do, and explaining that Humpty Dumpty couldn't be "put . . . in place again" because the two trochees not only never fit but actively confused the meter in the final line, disrupting the very idea of metrical place.

That Alice causes the fall doesn't seem to occur to her. That she has any real effect on the poems' events is something she doesn't seem to consider. That is, her meta-abductive inferences are partial at best. For instance, she never seems to consider the paradox that her interaction with

Humpty Dumpty means that he isn't and can't be the Humpty Dumpty she has read about. If he were, then she would have to be part of the poem and had to have already met him and caused his fall by the time she first read the poem. The fact that she knows who he is upon meeting him means she has already read the poem, and her having read the poem is what allows her to use metrical rules to cause his fall. This is the kind of paradox that typifies narrative metalepsis, but it's especially interesting here because the paradoxical knowledge that Alice uses to make her abductive inference and develop a model shouldn't be possible. The model should be prohibited by the paradox, but she not only makes but employs it. And it is only by way of the model already existing (or having existed) that the model is possible.

The paradox of Alice's presence, initiated by the narrative metalepsis, allows Carroll to explore the functions of abduction and by extension modeling by way of the make-believe game of Alice's interactions with the nursery rhyme figures. Model making, when models exist in an ontologically distinct realm, depends on deciding on and investing in principles of generation, and the use of such models proceeds based on the effects of such principles. In everyday life, navigating the world depends on a recursive, constantly updated abductive interpretations, the stakes of which are significantly higher. Carroll, then, makes a model of an abductive exercise by playing a game of make believe in which Alice has to do abduction in a make-believe setting. Ultimately, what I think the paradox points towards is a sense that any abductive inference is both as unjustifiable and *as potentially useful* going forward as any other game of make believe.

Thinking after Doing: Some Theory

Having performed the readings that seem relevant, I think now is an opportune time to try to lay out the theoretical concerns on which they depended. To some extent, my motivation here is to align this study with what I take to be a productive reconsideration of the place of interpretation in literary studies. If the shine has worn off surface reading as a slogan and a (sometimes too) loosely defined critical project in the decade and a half since Best and Marcus introduced it into the scholarly lexicon, the diversity within the surface reading camp means that—by just playing the odds—some real insights were bound to crop up. With a full-throated acknowledgement that close reading continues to be a crucial element of my methodological presuppositions in this chapter, I do want to consider the efficacy of the tack that Jeffrey Nealon takes in *Post-Postmodernism*. After summarizing the emphasis on interpretation from the heresy of paraphrase sloganeering of the New Critics to the infinitely deferred place of meaning in deconstruction, Nealon puts forward a philosophically distinct aim for criticism:

> Against this narrowly interpretive sense of literature, I'd suggest that the literary can, in a more robust sense, comprise a thinking "vis-à-vis without meaning." While this probably sounds a little odd—what's literature without the ultimate question of meaning?—it always seemed equally strange to me that literary studies found itself in the recent past so completely territorialized on this question of meaning, when virtually no other art form or art criticism is as obsessed by it. "What does it mean?" seems like the wrong question to ask, for example, about music or sculpture . . . (141)

Later, during a discussion of Deleuze's notion of the powers of the false, Nealon suggests that a productive critical stance might more reasonably attend to the question "What does it do?" than

"What does it mean?" Nealon at times vacillates between a description of the development of literary studies since the '80s and '90s and a more polemical stance regarding what the proper role of criticism should be going forward.

I think Nealon's descriptive account of the trend away from the kind of interpretation prevalent during the MLA theory wars of some few decades ago is persuasive, and I'm at the very least amenable to the aspects of his prescriptive stance predicated on a critique of endlessly open readings. That said, I don't know that the goal of criticism he hazards near the end of his study is especially compelling, at least in the snapshot form presented. Nealon, following Foucault, takes up the treatment of "monuments and archives" as "documents" and suggests that critics "reverse the polarity: to treat documents and archives as monuments, to remain at the descriptive level of the document itself rather than attempt to ventriloquize archives or render texts 'meaningful' through an interpretive method of some kind" (144). My main hesitation here is probably more one of rhetoric and force than substance. Undoubtedly, description is crucial, but the proscriptive tendency on display here represents an overcorrection, brought on by a clear frustration with the continuation of reading practices and the debates around those practices going back at least as far as the New Critics. Carving out a humbled, limited niche for literary criticism probably isn't Nealon's goal, but his approach risks that kind of withdrawal, especially in its (perhaps superficial) affinities with other critics pushing for a descriptive turn. Nor is description—and particularly the kind of bare description that Nealon's language might suggest but which Nealon certainly doesn't practice[15]—the only conceivable methodological response to the line of the thought coming out of the admittedly simple and intimidatingly open question "What does literature do?"

An endlessly open-ended reading is not my goal in this chapter, but modeling, as understood in the philosophy of science, as is true of other loadbearing concepts within the field, like falsification, tends toward a kind of unfinishedness. Because the reading that I want to put forward with modeling at its center involves not merely understanding *Looking-Glass* as engaging in a kind of modeling but starts from abductive premises that fall very much in line with the kind of intuitive responses upon which models are built, some amount of openness is probably baked in. I think that the benefits of this approach outweigh the costs. For one, taking an approach based on the process of modeling brings my critical efforts in line with Alice's conversational ones, which depend on a series of abductive inferences as she is presented with unprecedented, sometimes disturbing new stimuli. Perhaps more importantly, taking such an approach means that an interrupted or partial reading does more to invite refinement and increased precision—occasionally wholesale revision—than it does to discourage critical engagement with a text. Models do, but mostly they do for now. And an obsolete model remains a contribution.

Although she does not adopt the Peircean terminology, Mary Hesse differentiates types of models and philosophical approaches to modeling in terms of abductive inference. Hesse, in her groundbreaking study *Models and Analogies in Science*, makes a distinction between models based on formal analogy and those based on material analogy, finding more to recommend in the latter, as they don't depend on a prior theory to be productive. Since my own work in this chapter began without a developed theory or methodological apparatus, her work seems appropriate. More importantly, her approach is largely compelling as a description of how modeling works and has worked in a practice and of the benefits that model making independent of rigorous theory has to offer.

In Hesse's view, formal analogy describes models that correspond to a given formal theory or to another version of a model derived from the same formal theory. Material analogy, on the other hand, relies mostly on an observer's pretheoretic intuition of a similarity between different objects, events, phenomena, and so on. Material analogy essentially involves developing a hunch about a potential relationship based on observable similarities which can then be used to make predictions about further similarities—and does so in the absence of any theoretic account of a causal interaction between the objects under consideration:

> We have seen that analogy is used in two senses in physical theories—there is the one-to-one correspondence between different interpretations of the same formal theory, which we may call *formal analogy*, and there are pretheoretic analogies between observables . . . which enable predictions to be made from a model. Let us call this second sense *material analogy*.
>
> It is clearly the notion of material analogy which causes most of the difficulties, and it is this type of analogy which is required if prediction from models is to be possible in the strong sense . . . (68)

Hesse's account of how similarities are identified in a pretheoretic scheme betrays a kind of conceptual slipperiness. She is clearly committed to a kind of methodology here, but the actual process of that methodology is left more-or-less undescribed and undertheorized. While the method being pursued concerns the selection of hypothetical stances, the way that selection comes about is unclear. Hesse unapologetically acknowledges that the confidence in asserting similarities is not or not necessarily a function of deliberate, conscious articulation of similar features.

Like Hesse, I don't have a compelling case to make for how this kind of model formation or hypothesis selection works. But I do think it's worth noting that these kinds of intuitive leaps have been a consistent subject of epistemology and were already well-established at the time of her writing. Moreover, her account of a pretheoretic response affording a further elaboration tracks Peirce's writing on abduction, and to some extent, her theory of model-building (and the theories of philosophers who have followed her in the field) might serve as a useful example of the work of pragmatism in practice.

Peirce makes strong claims about the utility of abductive inference but simultaneously admits a certain groundlessness. In a short manuscript published posthumously as "Guessing," Peirce refers to what, in other situations, he called abduction as a "singular guessing instinct," describing abduction in terms strongly reminiscent of Hesse's account of material analogy: "we often derive from observation strong intimations of truth, without being able to specify what were the circumstances we had observed which conveyed those intimations" (34). Peirce's "without being able to specify what were the circumstances" sounds a great deal like Hesse's "cannot usually locate discrete characteristics in one object which are positively and finally identifiable with or differentiable from those in another object." Both thinkers readily acknowledge difficulty in addressing the actual workings of hypothesis formation. When Peirce says that "the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction" (qtd. in Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 16), he is admitting the partial, always-temporary nature of abductive work. When he says in the same text that "[t]hat there is any explanation of [an extraordinary combination of characters] is a pure assumption," he points us toward the tenuousness of any claim about causal mechanics (qtd. in Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 17). Peirce's "pure assumption" is one that Alice, once she crosses the threshold into the

looking-glass world, can no longer take for granted. She is much more aware of its presence and necessity and continues acting as though things do make sense, before trying to work out how she can understand and respond to her surroundings. All of which is to say that modeling for Hesse is predicated on a special case of abductive inference. Modeling, or at least certain forms of modeling, is not a wholly abductive activity, but abduction is crucial to its enactment. I think this contention is probably not especially controversial and that the relationship between modeling and the broader category of abduction can be characterized as synecdochic. When Alice makes an abductive leap, because of Carroll's more total practice of modeling, we can think of Alice as making a sort of sub-model of the rules that govern the looking-glass world or, more precisely, specific encounters within it.

While I find Hesse's account compelling, some supplement is probably necessary to bring it in line with what actually happens in the novel, which is that Alice enters and interacts with the models. With that in mind, I want to return to Adam Toon's understanding of models, derived from Kendall Walton's work on mimesis, as "props in games of make believe, which represent their objects by prescribing imaginings about them" (95). Unlike Hesse, who is mostly concerned with models' predictive capacity, Toon defers the question of purpose. Models, for Toon, don't prescribe what we do with the knowledge gained from games of make believe. All that is necessary for models to represent—or to "model-represent" to use Toon's more specific terminology, akin to *depiction* as a term for pictorial representation—is that a prop be used according to some convention: "Together, the model and principles of generation determine what users of the model are supposed to imagine" (73, 82). Both prop and principle are essentially open categories. Toon uses tree stumps and "stumps 'count as' bears," respectively, as a running example (80).

But, crucially, the convention or principle does not make a model through "mere stipulative fiat" (Callender and Cohen 75, qtd. in Toon 77). What Toon calls "merely denoting entities" don't prescribe imaginings; they merely denote. On this account, modeling demands an imaginative investment, even just a virtual one, from a user or users, but doesn't depend on an actual object or target. A broad understanding of a principle of generation means that models can represent imaginary entities, something that Toon explains in terms reminiscent of Alice's "Let's pretend": "Consider the Phillips machine. The machine could be used to represent some actual economy, such as that of Britain. Alternatively, perhaps it could be used to represent a type of economy. But we could also use the machine simply to represent a particular 'imaginary' or fictional economy. (We might begin by saying '*suppose there were* an economy like this . . .'.)" (90, my emphasis). I want to draw out two aspects of this in relation to *Looking-Glass*. First, that Alice in pretending the kitten is the Red Queen establishes an altogether arbitrary but still deliberate principle of generation. Second, that this initial game of make believe seems to require the elaboration of a whole network of further, now unconscious principles of generation to fill out a world in which the impossible kitten-Queen is possible. That is, the initial pre-theoretic or non-theoretic assertion of a model then obliges Alice to develop further provisional models—to engage in further recursive abductive enterprises—in order to get along within the model world that she has initiated. She supposes something were so and then negotiates with that something on a pragmatic basis.

My main motivation for dealing with modeling's pre-theoretic—what I'm calling abductive—inferences at such length is to make it clear how my reading here engages in a kind of metatheoretical work. My own inclination to work on modeling sprung from a sense that allegory was inadequate coupled with knowledge that chess has sometimes been understood in

terms of modeling. These are, I think, weak justifications. As Hesse would say, this isn't a "fatal" weakness. I was able to select a hypothesis and work with it towards a fuller reading, whether the procedure is wholly "inaccurate, incomplete, and inconclusive," of course, remains an open question. What seems clear to me is that once the problem of modeling is introduced—introduced on a hunch—it's hard not to see how it pervades every element of the narrative's rhetoric. Alice uses models; Carroll uses models; I, as a reader, am applying modeling itself as a model for the text's structure. To elaborate slightly, what I mean this last assertion to suggest is that I take the principles of modeling as a philosophical category and practical phenomenon as a model to aid in my understanding of how the text works.

Thinking about this in contradistinction to allegory is probably helpful. We could speak of an allegory model for literature (take, for instance, Shu-Mei Shih's 2004 reference to a "national-allegory model" [22]) that might involve certain qualities: representational, meaningful, teleological. Modeling, as an alternative model, might involve an absence or partial lack of representational intention or effect and more emphasis on literature's generative potential and tendency toward emergent effects. Modeling, and abduction more broadly, starts with hypothetical stances and sees how things play out. I don't mean to suggest that the allegory model doesn't work or shouldn't work. It seems to me that allegorical readings can be useful and essential to our understanding of texts. My point is that, in this case specifically but probably in others as well, a different model may be more appropriate.

In what remains of this chapter, I try to take Alice's relation to Humpty Dumpty as something of a model, paradox and all. I produce a short reading of a later text by Carroll and then use that reading as a justification for the method that I used to produce this entire chapter. The paradox is either a fortunate coincidence or an absolute necessity, and the distinction

probably isn't important. If my goal is to use the paradox as one feature of the model of reading and responding that I want to develop, then that probably isn't so far removed from standard conceptions of the hermeneutic circle derived from Schleiermacher or Gadamer and so is hardly as radical or as much a departure as this framing might suggest. Nonetheless, the new framing serves a purpose, namely permitting the elaboration of a reading that doesn't (or doesn't seem to) fall in line with the apparent standards of the field. In his delineation of pragmatism, Paul Feyerabend permits himself to give such permission: "One may base judgements and actions on standards that cannot be specified in advance but are introduced by the very judgements (actions) they are supposed to guide and one may even act without any standards, simply following some natural inclination" (*Against Method* 236). Knowing full well that depending on Feyerabend's nonstandard as a standard contradicts his point, I want to follow some natural inclinations developed in response to the problems of metalepsis and produce a reading that I imagine will be, at best, controversial. So, first the reading, then the method although the actual order was *more like* the opposite.

Tortoise and Achilleses

In order to arrive at some kind of stopping point—perhaps arbitrarily, but, in that sense, not out of keeping with the rest of this chapter or with its object of study—I want to consider a significant Carrollian intertext, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles" (1895). In the brief piece, Carroll attempts, by way of the titular tortoise to undermine Achilles's and, presumably, nineteenth century "Logicians[']" confidence in the certainty afforded by syllogistic logic (1229). Several elements of the text serve to recommend its inclusion here. In the most

immediate sense, the Tortoise's invocation of his "cousin," the Mock-Turtle from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and the pun on tortoise and "Taught-Us," means that we can, with some justification, read the narrative as an extension of or prequel to the narrative world of the Alice stories. But of course this is a superficial connection, albeit one that Carroll deliberately invites by way of the Tortoise's statements. More significantly, the text's metaleptic aspects and openness to allegoresis make it a neat fit in terms of formal concerns. The fact that the pairing of Achilles and the Tortoise derives explicitly from a mathematical-philosophical model first elaborated to illustrate Zeno's paradox of motion means that a thematic application is also, at the very least, available.

First, though, a basic summary is probably in order. The text itself takes the form of a Socratic dialogue, with the Tortoise—overtaken by Achilles in Zeno's avowedly unwinnable race—instructing Achilles in the construction of a series of increasingly self-referential syllogisms, denying the validity of each in turn. It is worth noting that the exchange is essentially unmotivated, using, as the flimsiest pretext, Achilles's assertion that the "distances were constantly *diminishing*" as an excuse to discuss an "infinite number of distances" (1225-26). The Tortoise repeatedly frustrates Achilles by having him articulate a syllogism culled from Euclid's First Proposition then refusing to accept the conclusion until Achilles inserts an additional premise that makes explicit the rule of inference underlying the deductive enterprise, calling it *C*: "(*C*) If *A* and *B* are true, *Z* must be true" (1227). Once Achilles prevails on the Tortoise to accept *C*, the Tortoise demands a further premise necessary to establish the logical rule justifying the newly established chain: "(D) If A and B and C are true, Z must be true" (1228). The process continues for "some months," with no hope of ending (1229).

Philosophers and historians of logic have explained the significance of Carroll's text in different ways. Penelope Maddy, citing Quine's discussion, has suggested that Carroll's dialogue represents the first objection to a conventionalist justification of logical certainty. According to Quine, "The difficulty is the vicious regress, familiar from Lewis Carroll . . . Briefly the point is that the logical truths, being infinite in number, must be given by general conventions rather than singly; and logic is needed then to begin with, in the metatheory, in order to apply the general conventions to individual cases" (qtd. in Maddy 495). By a similar token, John Corcoran reads the text as anticipating the problem of articulating an apodictic theory of proof, something that C. I. Lewis attempted by way of inserting a "'strict-implicational' proposition that the conclusion is strictly implied by the premise" (7). Unfortunately, while Carroll anticipates Lewis, Lewis fails to take the conclusion (or lack thereof) into account: "To accept this would be to reject all logics before Lewis or to claim that, contrary to what their authors seem to be saying, these logics really contained a means of expressing strict implications. If Lewis had read Carroll's 'What the Tortoise Said to Achilles' . . . , he might have changed his mind" (7-8). Barry Barnes and David Bloor sum up the most accessible and most popular reading, that Carroll's text "captures" the "predicament" of all deductive logic. Perhaps ironically, they generalize the point: "The basic point is that justifications of deduction presuppose deduction. They are circular because they appeal to the very principles of inference that are in question" (40-41). Whatever the reading or the metaphor describing the failing—whether it's the circle or the regress that's vicious depends on how narrowly the reader understands Carroll's critique—what is clear is that Carroll's challenge to deductive logic is and has been received as a particularly strong indictment of a foundation of Western philosophical method. Ultimately, what I want to argue in what's left of the chapter is that the allegory, intended or inferred, supplies us with some considerations on

method more generally and—certainly an inferential reading—the method(s) of literary theory in particular. But first I need to provide a reading.

Carroll's use of Zeno's already-appropriated characters and setting seems arbitrary at least if the main concern is the transmission of a critique of deductive logic and the rules of inference. Any two characters could have this conversation, and one could be forgiven for assuming that Carroll's third-hand use of *Achilles* has as much to do with its affording the pun "A Kill-Ease" and its application to the intractable Tortoise as any more efficient or calculating rhetorical aim. But Zeno's model has other affordances within and without the text itself, particularly in terms of metaleptic effects. If Carroll's goal in the dialogue is a disruption of a reasoned argument, he could have done worse than reconfiguring a famously knotty philosophical model while simultaneously undermining it—Achilles easily reaches the Tortoise while interpolating Diogenes's likely apocryphal (but nevertheless enjoyable) refutation of Zeno, *Solvitur ambulando*, whereupon the two sit, one atop the other, in order to discuss syllogisms.[16] The dialogue neatly dramatizes the ontological complications that arise when models are employed across time (and allowed to talk instead of being only allowed to not reach goals) when Achilles casually references Diogenes, a figure that lived nearly a millennium after the (mythical) Achilles, some four hundred years after the (composite) Homer, and a century after Zeno—of whom we have little in the way of historically reliable information and basically no extant writing, save some material quoted by Simplicius, again nearly a thousand years after the fact.[17] Achilles and the Tortoise consistently acknowledge this temporal strangeness. Both admire Euclid "[s]o far, at least, as one *can* admire a treatise that won't be published for some centuries to come!" (1226). In other words, the ontological instability is deliberate. Simplicius suggests that Zeno's second paradox is essentially an expansion or elaboration of the first

paradox, the Dichotomy, which argues that progress is impossible because moving any distance requires having already moved half the distance (*Physics 6* 116; 1015.3-8). Simplicius argues that at least part of the difference between the first and second paradox is strictly—which is not necessarily to say merely—rhetorical: "That not even the fastest pursuing the slowest will overtake it has been added [by Zeno] in tragic style to this argument [the Dichotomy], with both Achilles and the tortoise brought in as characters as though in a tragedy or comedy" (116-17; 1015, 9-11).[18] If Zeno chooses the two characters for their symbolic entailments, "swift-footed" Achilles and a slow, steady Tortoise, then Carroll chooses not the same two characters, but specifically Zeno's version of them, with a mind to making use of the entire network of connections and accreted associations.

Another, admittedly wholly anachronistic reason to consider Achilles, is that Feyerabend, following Adam Parry, posits Achilles as a limit figure, adrift somewhere in between conflicting discursive frameworks. More exactly, in Parry's estimation, Achilles is the victim of a tragic isolation who "can in no sense, including that of language . . . , leave the society which has become alien to him" (7). For Parry, "Homer in fact, has no language, no terms, in which to express this kind of basic disillusionment with society and the external world," and Achilles cannot "speak any language other than the one which reflects the assumptions of heroic society" (6), assumptions about the basic identity of broadly accepted patterns derived from and described by "traditional formula" and reality (4). The dissonance between Achilles's formulaic Greek pronouncements and his clear, if subtly articulated, intentions bespeaks an emergent turn away from the common language of the heroic period. From within the heroic period, though, Achilles's words and deeds seem "confused," concerned in a wholly uncommon way with "the awful distance between appearance and reality" (5). In Feyerabend's application of Parry's

analysis, Achilles's language and actions can only register as irrational in this context: "Taking the unchanged traditional concepts as a measure of sense we are of course forced to say that Achilles speaks nonsense" ("Putnam" 79). It is important to note here that in both Feyerabend's and Parry's readings, Achilles seems as disoriented by his own linguistic exile as one imagines his fictional compatriots and Homer's audience to be.

This is not to suggest that Achilles's grasping is unproductive. To the contrary, Feyerabend suggests that the elaboration of provisionally irrational theoretical or discursive positions (even affects) is a necessary waypoint on the path to new concepts and eventually entire cosmologies. Achilles haltingly "discovers . . . a new side of honor and of archaic morality," but this "new side is not as well defined as the archaic notion—*it is more a foreboding than a concept*—but the foreboding produces new ways of speaking and thus, eventually, clear new concepts (the concepts of some Presocratic philosophers are endpoints of this line of development)" (79; my emphasis). That positions must pass through an inchoate phase is, as one would expect, necessary; apparently unnecessary is the personal confusion experienced by Achilles. Indeed, Feyerabend suggests that, "like Achilles," Galileo "gave new meanings to old and familiar words" and "presented his results as parts of a framework that was shared and understood by all," but "unlike Achilles he knew what he was doing and he tried to conceal the conceptual changes he needed to guarantee the validity of his argument" (80). Likewise, Parry, recognizing the force of intention in the *Iliad*, attributes to Homer the Galilean impetus to subversion, to a conscious smuggling of emergent concepts in the guise of familiar categories within an established, shared, and recognizable discursive system. The legibility of what Achilles articulates—never quite legible to Achilles himself—is a function of Homer's "wonderful

subtlety," his capacity to use "the epic speech a long poetic tradition gave him to transcend the limits of that speech" (7).

If, as I've suggested, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles" promises an allegorical reading, the next question is what to do with this newly (and altogether inappropriately) loaded figure of Achilles. Stubbornly committed to the anachronism and fully willing to double down, I want to suggest that later readings of Carroll's paradox that tend to stress his fumbling towards something for which he didn't have an adequate vocabulary could position Carroll as a type for Feyerabend's conflicted, unwitting argot-naut. R.B. Braithwaite nicely exemplifies this tendency: "Lewis Carroll was ploughing deeper than he knew. His mind was permeated by an admirable logic that he was unable to bring to full consciousness and explicit criticism" (qtd. in Woods 122).[19] Certainly, Carroll didn't think of himself as Achilles, and a responsible reading would note that Carroll creates a first-person narrator to suggest a level of disinterestedness in relation to the exchange. A responsible reading would also suggest that Carroll also regularly constructed his dialogues in such a way as to disguise his investments in order to not tip his intellectual hand or bias his readers and note that he fully identified with the Tortoise's challenge if not the Tortoise herself. So, responsible readings profit us little. Given the double bind, it would not hurt to consider reading Carroll exactly how he *did not* imagine being read, as the befuddled Achilles or, even worse, as the "confused" Achilles of Feyerabend's account, an Achilles that heralds a shift in the prevailing discourse or, at least, enacts an unconscious registration of its limits.

Of as much note as late condescending readings of Carroll's paradox is its initial reception. If Carroll thought of himself as the Tortoise, a figure who finds it necessary to endlessly explain the cruel logic of his paradox to a dense interlocutor, he might have done

worse than pointing to G.F. Stout, the editor of *Mind*, as his Achilles. In a letter in response to Carroll's initial submission, Stout asked, "Is there any difference between affirming *A* and affirming *the truth* of *A*? If there is *no* difference, there would appear to be no point in your puzzle" (Carroll and Stout 9). Carroll responded by explaining his interest in the problem of hypotheticals and then rehearsing the Tortoise's argument in the dialogue, complete with infinite regress. This and other early lack of interest and misunderstanding of what, exactly, Carroll was arguing, combined with the paradox's later favor-finding with the likes of Bertrand Russell and W. V. O. Quine, make Carroll a neat fit for Feyerabend's Achilles. If, as Amirouche Moktefi and Francine Abeles have argued, Carroll's position is marked by a "'minimal' purpose that might deceive modern readers" (38), or if a full elaboration of Carroll's inchoate critique would have to wait some 75 years for a fuller account on the part of Gilbert Harman, as John Woods has suggested (122), it's worth asking why a poorly understood thought experiment with no clear takeaway has exercised such a strong pull on generations of philosophers (in particular). It is clear that Carroll was pointing to a contradiction in the then current language of logic, but I want to argue that part of why the dialogue has had staying power is precisely its weird grasping. Carroll clearly saw himself as making a contribution to the study of logic, but the real contribution and the real force of the dialogue's influence lay in its style, a style marked by nonsense and an allegory lacking in the kind of clear lines of reference that might have made it easy to nail down. Carroll, like Achilles, transcends limits without realizing it. He is, perversely, metaleptically, his own Homer.

Let's pause briefly to acknowledge that I'm taking Carroll's use of already loaded figures—a fact that's really only available through my reading—as a model for my further loading of those figures with metaleptic significance and that using my own reading to drive

further aspects of my reading means that I'm working through a kind of desperate, sweaty recursion.[20] I don't know that Carroll's *interest in* an infinite regress justifies my *use* of something that gets dangerously close, but this is where a metaleptic reading of a metaleptic text takes us. I find this disorienting, and I imagine I'm not alone in that. But we won't allow this to spin totally out of control, and I want to be clear that I don't want to position myself as some version of Achilles on the cusp of new and profound insights. My insight is simple, and my purpose in this reading is neither epic nor heroic. I just want to produce a reading of "Tortoise." I think it works here, and I think a similar procedure could work in other situations, but I don't see this practice or the larger arguments about method that I'm making in this chapter as pointing the way toward some new method that should overtake all others. I'll return to this at the close, but first I want to offer one more reading—mostly because I've already written it—that might bring us to a similar point from a different angle. If you can't imagine Achilles rewritten as Carroll, have you tried him as Darwin?

If Carroll could not have known how Feyerabend would read Achilles or what significance would be attributed to the already conceptually overburdened figure after the "Logicians of the Nineteenth Century" had finished having their say, he was certainly familiar with the works of Charles Darwin (1229). It's possible that Darwin's tortoise provides a kind of interpretive backdoor to the same allegorical structure that I have, with little justification, already elaborated.[21] (I hope that the reader might be receptive to the addition of a second, supplemental reading and open to finding a giant gnat at the end of it, instead of a goat and separately a voice.)

Although a handful of critics have found some value in Darwin-as-historical-context, the relationship between Carroll's tortoises and Darwin's—second only to his finches in lasting cultural influence—has gone relatively unremarked. Laura White, in cataloging Carroll's long-

term interest in turtles and tortoises, goes so far as to mention "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles" and Darwin's journey aboard the Beagle in adjacent paragraphs but fails to make any connection between Darwin's descriptions of the great tortoises of the Galapagos and Carroll's reformulation of Zeno's model (84). Darwin's anthropomorphic characterization should strike us as familiar; his tortoises, like Carroll's if more literally, "travelled . . . methodically along well-chosen tracks" (406-07). What's more, when Darwin recounts his interactions with the tortoises, his language very precisely predicts Carroll's account of Achilles "overtak[ing]" the Tortoise and finding his way onto "its back" whereupon the Tortoise is "flatten[ed]" ("What the Tortoise Said" 1225-26):

> The inhabitants believe that these animals are absolutely deaf; certainly they do not overhear a person walking close behind them. I was always amused when *overtaking* one of these great monsters, as it was quietly pacing along, to see how suddenly, the instant I passed, it would draw in its head and legs, and uttering a deep hiss fall to the ground with a heavy sound, as if struck dead. I frequently *got on their backs,* and then giving a few raps on the hinder part of their shells, they would rise up and walk away;—but I found it very difficult to keep my balance. (407; my emphasis)

Here, Darwin engages in some of the most colorful and charismatic writing of what initially succeeded mostly as a travelogue, an account of far-flung locales and exotic specimens. Darwin's broadly comic tone seems to have exerted an outsized influence on Carroll. Of course, these observations amount to more. The marked variation of discrete tortoise species across the islands comprising the Galapagos Archipelago represented nothing less for Darwin than the first inklings of what would become the theory of evolution. And while the finches have provided the more famous example of scientific curiosity and delicate, precise observation, Darwin's

suggestion that in the Galapagos "we seem to be brought somewhat near to that great fact—that mystery of mysteries—the first appearance of new beings on this earth" follows not on the heels of the finches but on those of the tortoises (400).

If Achilles, in Feyerabend's reading, represents an inflection point in the history of human cosmology, his role as a surrogate for Darwin in Carroll's allegory places him in more or less the same position, the only question being the breadth of the field under consideration. That is, where Achilles stands astride a near total shift in the way humans understood themselves and their place within the larger ontological framework, Darwin's position matters within the much more constrained field of the natural sciences, even if his intervention produced truly profound downstream effects. Nevertheless, Darwin's project represented a marked disruption in the Oxford circle in which Carroll found himself. And Carroll's deliberate allegorical invocation of Darwin's work can be read simultaneously as a critique of Darwin's worldview—a clear sense of Darwin as at a loss—as well as a registration of the profoundly disruptive effect Darwin's work was having and would continue to have on the science and culture of the time.

It is interesting, then, that at least one account of the intellectual history of the nineteenth century places Carroll more squarely in the position of Feyerabend's Achilles, a transitional figure grasping towards a new discursive framework. In *The Discourse of Modernism*, now perhaps as useful as an artifact of the Big Theory era of the '80s and '90s academic establishment as it is for any of its specific analyses, Timothy Reiss looks to Carroll and—perhaps unsurprisingly—Peirce as representing analogous if generically distinct challenges to what he calls the analytico-referential worldview that continued to operate through the nineteenth century. By way of figures like Carroll and Peirce, that cultural dominant started giving way to

the as yet incomplete project of a new discursive frame. For Reiss, "Peirce and Carroll represent a moment when the analytico-referential is itself being put in question" (382):

> We cannot yet know whether a new instauration has occurred or is in the process of occurring. That is indeed for history to show. Still, it is of some interest to note that at the same time as Lewis Carroll was basing much of the nonsense of *Alice* on games with the law *tertium non datur*, C. S. Peirce was seeking to constitute a semiotics on the basis of a tertiary relationship replacing the stasis of the true/false dichotomy with a continuous process of the production of sense. (381)

Even given Carroll's and Peirce's shared commitment to questioning the binary oppositions on which modern Western discourse is based, the "unfamiliar discursive class" that they might be heralding is not "emerging" here "with any clarity" (382). Rather, any such indication would be experienced as a "'displacement' within the discourse where it occurs, and therefore not a 'sign' at all for that discourse. It is *non-sensical* because what it would signify (were it able to do so) could never 'fit' the other signifieds of the discourse" (382). Thus, in almost Feyerabendian terms, Reiss rehabilitates Carroll's nonsense as, potentially, an emergent discursive gesture and by implication a critique of the prevailing discourse, dominated as it is by the law of the excluded middle. In Reiss's reading, Carroll's unself-conscious, emergent critique looks strikingly like Achilles's grasping, confused rhetoric, insofar as it fails to fit the other signifieds of the discourse. Or, to put it more bluntly, Reiss's Carroll roughly corresponds to Feyerabend's Achilles, and both display clear parallels to Carroll's Achilles-as-Darwin and even to Zeno's Achilles inasmuch as that figure was integral to an argument against a certain regime of prevailing common sense.

To reiterate: what emerges from this complex of potential allegorical associations is a figure forced by circumstance (or Tortoise) into an alien and potentially alienating frame—whether discursive, theoretical, cosmological, or methodological—who confronts but largely fails to understand the implications of that frame. What separates the historical Carroll from the Feyerabendian Achilles is the extent to which he recognizes the failure of the discourse available to him and, rather than wholly resigning, finds some affective solace in the registration of that failure in a nonsense narrative.

Should we then feel comfortable with this badly damaged syllogism:

Feyerabend uses Achilles to embody a point about method

Carroll also uses Achilles

Therefore, we can use Carroll to make a point about method

Conclusion: "No *mathematical* argument"

My assumption is that most readers will not feel comfortable with this. That lack of comfort is part of the point. I can offer some justifications. One is that a willingness to reside within a fractured or nonsense logic is fully in line with Carroll's own narrative work, which often playfully attempted to shift criteria away from prescriptive logic when a joke seemed good enough to justify the intellectual heresy. In an earlier philosophical dialogue on Zeno's paradox, "An Inconceivable Conversation between S. and D. on Indivisibility of Time and Space," Carroll's stand in for himself attempts to shift the terms of the argument in a way that his interlocutor finds unacceptable:

S. . . . Achilles and the Tortoise will walk off hand in hand. No argument of any sort can be maintained, which would prove him *not* to overtake it.

D. No *mathematical* argument, you mean; for, if you permit me a classical one, I will contend that the Tortoise was nothing but the '*testudo*' of the ancients, a machine of common use in sieges—that it was at that moment moving against the walls of Troy—and that the true reason why Achilles did not overtake it was simply that he was sulking in his tent and never went near it.

S. I beg to limit this discussion to *mathematical* argument.

S. is unwilling to hear D.'s response, but I think the joke nicely acquits itself.

Another justification might look to the text itself as producing criteria for its own reading. Given how comprehensively Carroll commits to a logic of metalepsis within the confines of his story, it would seem only consistent to figure out a way to read the story metaleptically. If inductive approaches call on stories to establish criteria that can be inferred and applied, an inductive approach to a metaleptic text would necessarily push that approach to a further degree. A metaleptic text might call on us to use it as criteria not just for the text but for how we approach texts to begin with. I think taking metalepsis seriously as a trope means being open to rethinking the logic of how and why we read and what's acceptable for reading.

But the final and most important one is that I don't think method matters, nor do I think that anyone arguing for a specific method can offer a final justification for it. What makes more sense to me is to admit the ad hoc nature of what I'm doing—what, I think, most every literary critic is actually doing—rather than to assert and try to defend the idea that what I'm doing makes some final sense. That this last reason fully contradicts the first two is part of the point. The first two are certainly ad hoc but follow a line of reasoning—a kind of immanent approach

that derives interpretive criteria from texts or tropes rather than from a deductive or structuralist account—that will be recognizable to any reader with a passing familiarity with literary criticism. I'm certainly partial to such an approach, but there's no real justification for it. Nor is there one for a countervailing approach. In some cases, the always-provisional nature of reading practice is admitted by its practitioners. But too often it's left murkily implied or is outright denied by polemical methodological accounts that seek to supplant or subsume less-totalizing theories.

My own approach, as exemplified in this chapter, probably amounts to an overcorrection inasmuch as I'm pursuing a reading based on paradoxical premises that fall well outside the conventions of recognizable literary criticism. My hope is that the overcorrection is useful as a kind of provocation. I don't mean to say and will not try to defend the idea that literally anything goes or that every potential reading practice will necessarily produce readings that deserve serious consideration. On the other hand, nothing should be considered sacrosanct, and everything should be open to criticism. I'm simply arguing that methodological presuppositions are inherently unjustifiable and value-laden and shouldn't foreclose a given conclusion or even a certain kind of attention or topic to which attention is turned. Metalepsis opens some new doors provided we're willing to dispense with certain pat notions of causal sequence or intentionality. Because metalepsis has a recursive quality, it lends itself well to this kind of metacritical commentary and, if for no other reason, might deserve more attention. Who wants to read more criticism of Carroll that traffics in tired conventionally justifiable methodology? This is a rhetorical question but could be a serious one, and I think serious answers will have more to do with institutional and professional considerations than intellectual ones. Ultimately, trying out

new things seems more interesting and could lead to uptake, then blowback, then incorporation into a bigger grab bag of options.

This sequence of uptake and blowback should sound familiar.

Eric Hayot, in the essay that concludes perhaps the most significant collection on postcritique to date, argues for an understanding of the rhetorical turn against work from the theory era as little more than an intensification, a leveled-up recapitulation, of the same process of "emergence, dominance, and decline" that marked the succession of schools during the heyday of theory (289). Instead of theory's schools continuing to succeed one another, postcritique, Hayot says, subsumes all of these schools under the broader category *Theory*, which can then be succeeded by something else—one of the various iterations of what happens "after critique": "the historical logics previously internal to Theory (in which one school follows another school, in a parody of revolutionary change) are simply in this more generalizing conception, elevated to principles for the Theory era as a whole. . . . In this way what a certain vision of the end of critique seeks is in fact a *return to critique under another name*" (287). If theory's periodic, even predictable, upheavals "operated very much like a fashion system" (287), the postcritique groundswell registers an understandable desire to break the cycle even as it reasserts its logic at a higher level, "tak[ing] the historicity of Theory as a model for all intellectual development" (288).

It seems clear to me that, as Hayot argues, various declarations of a new approach to or rejection of theory, arriving in messianic fashion to save theory or critique or literary studies from itself, are an insufficient response and more than a little naïve. But, perhaps more importantly, postcritique strikes me as more than a little disingenuous, as does Hayot's account of it. Theory and the methods that attend it have always been hybrid and synthesized ad hoc.

Vincent Leitch summed up what was already obvious by the turn of the century, slightly before the biggest push for postcritique had gotten off the starting line: “Interdisciplinarity during postmodern times designates the de facto intermixture of disciplines, new and old, plus recognition of their differences and conflicts” (*Theory Matters* 170). That is, I think the account of theory or critique pushed by the death-of-Theory, postcritique crowd has always been something of a strawman, an easy way to drum up exigency for a defense of something pretty much everyone already does: apply theory and use methods liberally to suit specific purposes, shifting emphases as it makes sense to do so. Thus, I think that Hayot is right in that we as critics should focus less on the *after* of “after critique” and that taking up an “essentially *continuous*” relation to the “disappointing past” is of greater value than insisting on a break from it, but that’s mostly because there’s been no break because there really wasn’t much to break from that wasn’t invented whole cloth by critics invested in the idea of a break.

Carroll didn’t understand himself as standing athwart two cosmologies, nor do I imagine myself to be making a case for a new method. Rather, and perhaps anticlimactically, I’m arguing that any case for any premise was always already just a case. At most, I’m arguing that metalepsis deserves more and new kinds of attention. Mostly, I’m saying what I think everyone already knows: Literary criticism is and always will be a hodgepodge of sometimes competing, sometimes complementary approaches, and the only guiding principle, at bottom, is some version of pragmatism, a trial-and-error approach that doesn’t tend so much toward progress as to the expansion of opportunities for reading. Recognizing that fact means we can make moves that we might have imagined weren’t allowed.

I’m arguing for abundance and a diversity of nonsenses instead of a sequential and prescriptive parade of prevailing nonsense.

Notes

1. The reader should not take this invocation of common sense to mean that I'm throwing my lot in with what Carolyn Lesjak calls the "middle reader" who "accommodates herself to the given, to common sense, against the now discredited excesses of the theory years" (241). Rather, as I hope this chapter will show, the success of some readings depends on setting aside the dictates of received methodological wisdom.

2. For the sake of clarity, Jonathan Grainger and Walter Van Heuven, following Coltheart et al., defines orthographic neighbor as "a word of the same length sharing all but one letter while respecting letter position (e.g., '*work*', '*ward*', and '*ford*', [*sic*] are orthographic neighbors of WORD)" (6).

3. Without tipping my hand before the cards even have been dealt, I do want to briefly acknowledge that my reading in this chapter is in sympathy with Madden's assertion that "[a]lthough language employed in a linguistic, not an orthographic, manner determines much of what happens in the looking-glass world, it should not be seen as the only determining factor" (70).

4. In this same letter, Tenniel suggests cutting the "Wasp in a Wig" sequence, which was, subsequently, dropped from the text. In a different letter quoted in Stuart Dodgson Collingwood's *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*, Tenniel insists that "a *wasp* in a *wig* is altogether beyond the appliances of art" (146). In this case, the force of Tenniel's appeal, one based on an idiosyncratic sense of the capacities of artistic representation, prevailed, suppressing for just over a century the portion of the text in which the Wasp avers that Alice "may read it [a Carrollian newspaper] if [she's] a mind to": "Nobody's hindering you, that *I* know of" (qtd. in *More Annotated Alice* 344).

5. And this, of course, wouldn't do anything to make sense of the small voice's orthographic jokes.

6. Carroll risks an understatement so bald as to give away the game. Of the twenty-one entries in the chess problem, only sixteen amount to actual moves, with five indicating moments of stasis when Alice "meets" each of the two queens. Of the entries for actual moves, white has thirteen to red's three. It is a chess problem—pieces are threatened and taken—but the narrative bleeding, even in the entry descriptions, is impossible to ignore.

7. The memetic lifecycle has largely sapped redpilling of even the limited rhetorical utility it served on Reddit threads in the mid-2010s. See Tiffany's discussion in *The Atlantic*.

8. I would be remiss if I didn't admit that there are, of course, ways to recuperate Alice's threshold crossings as representing shifts in her consciousness, but I think doing so probably involves something like intoxication or spiritual experience, neither of which seems a good fit. Alternatively, playing pretend seems a better fit, but that would basically render the novel's allegoricality functionally null, which I think defeats the purpose of that kind of recuperation.

9. See Mugglestone 8-9.

10. A 2004 report in *The Guardian* provides evidence of chess's continued, though updated, use as a kind of battlefield simulation. Teams of researchers ran tens of thousands of computerized chess matches—with modifications to "key variables" meant to better simulate the asymmetric relations of modern combat—to "investigat[e] the relative importance of a host of factors that translate to the battlefield" (Young).

11. See, for instance, Leila S. May's recent discussion of Humpty Dumpty and speech act theory, especially pages 90-92.

12. The terminology was certainly available to Carroll. Eduard Munk's 1834 primer on Greek and Roman metrical forms was translated into English in 1844, see especially 14-15. As early as 1781, Lucian's satirical take on Jupiter's many epithets, useful to "frantic poets" who need a "thousand names to prop the falling metre, and fill up the hiatus," had entered English through the translation of Thomas Francklin (53).

13. Similarly, Anjelika Zirker's argument that "[w]hat seems to be 'unsatisfactory' during their conversation is" Humpty Dumpty's aposiopesis-filled song strikes me as compelling as far as it goes (88).

14. That Humpty Dumpty regards himself as English or in some relation to the King of England has given me no end of interpretive trouble. Would that I had the time to explore this discomfiting statement.

15. See for instance his careful, insightful readings of "so-called language poet[s]" and "so-called Conceptual Writers" in the chapter that follows the one under discussion (163-167).

16. It's worth noting that at this point in the dialogue both the Tortoise and Achilles pretty much wholly conflate Zeno's first and second paradoxes of motion. To the extent that the latter depends for its force on the former (see Barnes's discussion of the paradox's reception in Aristotle's circle, 215-16), this may be an intentional confusion.

17. For these fragments, see Huby and Taylor's translation in *On Aristotle, Physics* 1.3-4, page 51 or 140.29-141.8.

18. No extant commentary on the *Physics* or Zeno identifies the other runner as the tortoise prior to Simplicius's (see Sorabji 6). Aristotle does not mention a tortoise in his discussion of Zeno, nor is it possible to trace the tortoise to Zeno's own writings, fragmentary as they are. We can say that, according to Michael Share's notes, Simplicius felt comfortable

enough with Aesop's fables to casually reference "The Camel and Zeus" (Perry Index 117) in his commentary on *Physics* 8 (174n148). This might suggest an earlier metaleptic intervention on Simplicius's part, a rewriting of Zeno so successful that it has fully supplanted its precursor text, a fact to which I would devote greater attention were it not a few too many degrees removed from the already murky topic of this chapter.

19. Moktefi and Abeles quote C. I. Lewis in a similar, if less condescending, vein: "I shall never cease to regret that [Carroll] had not heard of material implication" (41).

20. In the interest of or despite a certain kind of exhaustion, I want to briefly address the (world) elephant in the (infinite regress) room. It is entirely possible that Carroll had the image backing the phrase *turtles all the way down* in mind as a kind of alternative or supplemental allusion when landing on Zeno's paradox as a model for what is at least superficially a regress problem. Both Carroll's dialogue and the idiom (or its parent anecdote, often misattributed to Williams James, noted pragmatist [Doniger 251n91]) more-or-less arbitrarily associate the turtle or tortoise with infinity. Several authors have remarked the resemblance between Carroll's dialogue and the turtles-all-the-way-down approach to cosmology. That modern writers might seek to mine the correspondence for rhetorical effect is understandable, even when, as in the case of Wendy Doniger, the significance of Carroll's (and Zeno's) position gets somewhat lost in the weeds: "In this vision of the self, it's 'tortoises all the way down'—the fabled retort of the informant replying to a question about the foundation of the world . . . . Perhaps this tortoise is being chased by Achilles and cannot escape from Zeno's (and Lewis Carroll's) paradox: every time you take off a mask you get halfway closer to a 'true self,' and another and another, but you never reach it because it does not exist" (Doniger 231). Jady Hsin goes so far as to invoke the idiom in a summary of Carroll's argument, suggesting that, "as Carroll's Tortoise showed

Achilles, … one cannot wield a further rule at every step all the way down" (287), heavily implying that it comprises an explicit part of Carroll's text. Occasionally, writers assert that it was actually Carroll's use of the tortoise that consolidated or activated an only nascent idea and image: "the idea [of using infinitely stacked turtles to represent an infinite regression] may have been sparked by Lewis Carroll's use of tortoise in the regression arguments" (Pavlovic 2n1).

The shared association is not uninviting. If nothing else and in line with the thematics of this study, the daisy-chained allusions load the Tortoise with metaleptic weight, affording further rhetorical turns—even if these turns have tended to obscure more than they reveal or transcend. To be clear, to my knowledge there is no direct evidence of Carroll's familiarity with the idiom or larger discursive network from which it derives. The idiomatic expression *tortoises* [sometimes *turtles*] *all the way down* was used not infrequently in the mid to late nineteenth century, particularly in reference to religious discussions of god as a kind of terminus, an unmoved mover. Although variations on the phrase show up throughout the 17th century, perhaps most notably in John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the exact phrasing appears in the recorded transcripts of a series of debates between Joseph Frederick Berg and Joseph Barker in 1854 (48). James T. Bixby, writing in 1891, compares "tortoises all the way down" to "inspiration all the way down" (687). All of which is to suggest that the usage was probably available to Carroll writing in 1894.

So, while it may be a buried allusion-based joke, which certainly contributes something to the text, the term doesn't really provide much to go on, as the main thrust of it is just the regress. These critics aren't wrong to note a similarity here; it's just that the similarity keeps us at a kind of basic level, ironically not leading us down at all.

21. That Carroll was familiar with Darwin's work is not in question: there is extant correspondence between Darwin and Dodgson concerning Dodgson's offer to collaborate on a follow-up volume to Darwin's *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, for which Dodgson would apparently have provided photographs, and Darwin is mentioned by name, if in passing, in *Sylvie and Bruno*. Perhaps as a consequence, a significant amount of work on the *Alice* books has taken up the question of the impact of evolutionary theory. Famously, William Empson argued that Carroll's work should be read in the context of contemporaneous intellectual debates, particularly that surrounding *On the Origin of Species* (254), and Jo Elwyn Jones and J. Francis Gladstone have argued convincingly not only that the lumbering puppy from *Adventures in Wonderland* parodies Darwin (and his theory's profound impact on the Oxford set) but that Darwin took considerable offense to the caricature, apparently more hurt by it than the many and various depictions of him displaying simian features (252).

2. Snowdrop's Precipitation: Notes in *The Man Who Was Thursday*

In the earliest version of this chapter, it wasn't a chapter. It was half of the previous chapter. I assume any reader proceeding through the manuscript in sequence needs no explanation for the necessity of that division. The earliest version also focused heavily on modularity as a structuring concern for both *Through the Looking-Glass* and the subject of this chapter, G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). Unfortunately, and especially in relation to Chesterton's novel, modularity explained too much and too little. Nearly everything could be understood as a module from one angle or another. The characters are presented in modular terms: six undercover policemen posing as six anarchists, most notably. The plot structure is episodic: each policeman is revealed as such in turn, but I would argue that there is no clear causal necessity for the order in which this occurs. The narrative structure has modular elements in that it is an unmethodically articulated dream vision with three parts: a prologue that ends without clear demarcation, the dream report that begins without any, and the epilogue, which begins abruptly and returns Syme, the protagonist, to some point during the murky space spanning the last bit of the prologue and first bit of the vision.[1] Many more minor events, processes, objects, characters, and character statements can be understood in terms of modularity. The fact that the novel provides an "incessant stream of confirmations," that modularity could be used to explain or at least characterize nearly every element of the novel and the relationships between them means that modularity as a premise for interpretation is weak in terms of its "explanatory power," to borrow the language of Karl Popper (*Conjectures* 34-35).[2] I don't mean to endorse Popper's broader philosophy or even his investment in falsifiability, but in this case the fact that, across registers and types, these instances "always fitted," that modularity was "always confirmed," means that there is vanishingly little of interest to say about the book. I

might as well have said that words are an important structuring concern, which is also true and only slightly weaker than my original position.[3]

In order to salvage what I could, I tried to make sense of a single category that seemed to be a useful characterization of many of the relationships between modular units: isomorphism, a term that denotes the structural identity of two or more objects, processes, or phenomena based on a correspondence of certain relevant points of comparison. Although the notion of isomorphic structures had migrated to mathematics and, as a result, become more open to generalized application by the late nineteenth century,[4] the earliest demonstration of the principles of isomorphism is generally attributed to Eilhard Mistcherlich, who, in 1821, identified isomorphic (in his terms, "isomorphous") "elements" in the crystal forms of arsenic and phosphoric acids. Mistcherlich's initial formulation of isomorphic systems retains its explanatory power: "an equal number of atoms, combined in the same way produce the same crystal forms and the crystal form does not depend on the nature of the atoms, but only on their number and mode of combination" (qtd. in Szabadváry 425). The structure, indifferent to any potential incompatibility at the level of constituent elements, depends only on the internal relations of the elements—their number and mode of combination. That they are atoms, much less the kind of atoms they are, matters less than their regular, identifiable relation to each other within the system.

In science, and sometimes in philosophy of science, the notion of isomorphism maintains a fairly strict precision. Patrick Suppes, for instance, makes explicit the necessity of deliberate, strict language, even when *isomorphic* travels outside the definitionally strict bounds of science, in this case model theory: "The point of the formal definition of isomorphism for a particular theory is to make the notion of *same structure* precise" (70). He continues: "sameness of structure is relative to a set of concepts" (71). That is, even as isomorphism as a concept

becomes generalized, a useful employment of it needs to articulate a basis or criterion for Mistcherlich's "mode of combination," specifying a logic upon which the constituent elements can be said to be in relation to one another and upon which different systems can be compared and found to be isomorphic with one another.

Unfortunately, the critical utility of something like structural sameness makes isomorphism a predictable victim of semantic drift. Notably, the term occurs with some frequency in narratological circles, very likely due to its short-lived and largely abandoned use in Gestalt psychology. David Herman's use waffles from careful (or at least unobjectionable)—as in his distinction between "isomorphic" and "*scalable*" processing strategies for sentences and discourses (*Story Logic* 118; Herman's emphasis)—to so casual as to be basically unrecoverable except in a figurative reading—as when Herman suggests there might be "greater [or presumably lesser] isomorphism between the time of the told and the time of the telling" (*Narrative Theory* 74). The latter use essentially replaces a sameness predicated on one-to-one, necessarily precise correspondence with a much fuzzier notion of similarity subject to greater and lesser degrees, the logic of which is left undefined.[5] The humanities' penchant for uncritical and largely unmarked metaphorical usage has brutalized any number of concepts appropriated from the sciences, in many cases to good effect, but in my discussion of Chesterton's isomorphic sets, I want to insist at least occasionally on a more rigorous definition. It shouldn't be too difficult given the simplicity of Mistcherlich's original formulation. When I fail to meet my own standards—when the upside to discarding them becomes overpowering—I acknowledge the deviation and seek to provide some justification.

Not only is isomorphism more precise than modularity, but it sustained the relevance of metalepsis in my reading. Modularity had been part and parcel of a reading that tried to take

seriously the effects of certain metaleptic maneuvers across modules—in this case the world of Syme's dream and the waking world that blurrily frames the main narrative—in order to argue for a kind of ultimate indecision. Ultimately, the conclusion of my argument won't land so far away from that, but it will do so with a fuller, if perhaps more controversial, justification and, I hope, in a more interesting way.

To be as transparent as possible, I should say that isomorphism occurred to me largely because I had an interest in iterating on the approach of the previous chapter. If modeling might represent a useful way to recontextualize what has passed for allegory, then maybe isomorphism could prove similarly compelling as the basis for an alteration in approach given a different context. By having each of its principal characters take up the name of an English day of the week, the novel provides some permission for a start. And I will certainly devote more time to that. However, I want to start where I started once I knew that I was looking for isomorphism over and above the readily apparent example of the names, with a note thrown by the enigmatic leader of the Anarchist Council, Sunday, to one of his six former followers who had by then been revealed as an undercover policeman. The note reads as follows: "Your beauty has not left me indifferent. — From LITTLE SNOWDROP" (139).

I intend to show that this note represents a node in a complex network of metalepses that culminate in Chesterton's later *Tales of the Long Bow*, only then justifying a reading of *Thursday* as profoundly and paradoxically committed to isomorphic structures. That my search for further isomorphic structures should produce a reading that does little but reconstitute the same thematics of indecision of the earlier reading replicates a similar and similarly unproductive search for knowledge metaleptically embedded in another of Sunday's notes is, I think and will attempt to show, interesting. But I will return to that at the end of the chapter.

For now, the reader should keep in mind the same basic information that I had going into this reading, that the network of day names has shifted over time and across cultures but has consistently preserved a basic set of correspondences and, thus, that these different iterations represent isomorphic structures. Chesterton's novel features a cast of characters taking their aliases from English day names, names derived from Germanic deities and displacing an older system predicated explicitly on biblical terms, and metaleptically appropriates these isomorphic correspondences. Ultimately, I argue that Chesterton's later use of the name Snowdrop, a metaleptic maneuver necessarily scaled up, is what provides the most thorough justification for reading Chesterton's use of days as evidence of his heavy investment in isomorphism as a structuring concern. Or, to put it more bluntly, Chesterton uses metalepsis, a rhetorical form thoroughly invested in hierarchy, to justify his interest in isomorphism, an analytic concept that resolutely refuses any sense of temporal or causal priority.

Where Are the Snowdrops of Yesteryear?

I tend to look into things that confuse me, especially when that confusion arises from what I take to be an antagonistic authorial assertion. There is no shortage of such moments in Chesterton's 1908 *Nightmare*—or in his greater oeuvre, to be fair. Even so, the note quoted above is one that deserves and rewards sustained attention. Of course, I did not know that it would prior to attending to it. What I did know was that Snowdrop is the name of one of Alice's kittens in *Looking-Glass*. So, the accidental context of this composition—which I am at pains to present an account of—almost entirely dictated my initial readerly focus.

To reiterate, at the risk of overexplaining, the note is the last of a series dispensed by Sunday—the President of the Central Anarchist Council and, by his own admission, the police chief "in the dark room, who made [all the supposed anarchists pursuing him] policemen" (132). All the notes arrive as the six detectives pursue Sunday on a madcap chase through London, during which Sunday proceeds from a hansom-cab to an elephant to an untethered balloon, which finally lands at a country estate. The note attributed to Little Snowdrop arrives last, dropped from the balloon onto the hat of Wilks, an actor who has usurped the identity of Professor de Worms, a German Nihilist philosopher, in order to pass as an anarchist and gain a seat on the council as Friday. Wilks is the first policeman to reveal himself to Syme and Syme's investigative partner in the revelations to follow.

On a first glance, Wilks's note reads as at least referential, especially compared to Inspector Ratcliffe's: "Fly at once. The truth about your trouser-stretchers is known. —A FRIEND" (134). I confess that I do not have even a provisional reading of this short phrase. Unfortunately, on closer inspection, the actually declarative content of Wilks's note fails to offer much more. "Your beauty has not left me indifferent" makes itself available to several readings. The sentence itself—leaving aside for the moment the demonstrative attribution—is koan-like in its unmarked complexity. Several possible paraphrases suggest themselves, which for the sake of streamlining this analysis, I want to adumbrate with limited commentary. I do not mean this list to be exhaustive:

1. The note's author has noticed and is invested in the reader's beauty.

2. The reader's beauty has caused the author to become interested in something or in things in general.

3. The reader's beauty has caused the author to become an object of interest in some regard.

4. The author, having surrendered possession of the reader's beauty, disclaims responsibility for its current indifference.

5. It was not the reader's beauty that led to the author's lack of enthusiasm.

Although each of these paraphrases relates to the original sentence in a way that marks them as superficial isomorphs—each stands in the same relation to the original sentence, so each paraphrase relation is isomorphic to each of the others, a fact that led me to continue pursuing this line of analysis—the syntax, word choice, and total lack of context make pinning down any particular intention virtually impossible.

It is completely understandable, then, that Robert Caserio, while characterizing Sunday's notes as "God's improvisations" and the "consummation" of ambiguity in the novel, argues that the "precise specificity of the notes makes them feel as if they are intelligible particulars dropped from a comprehensive and intelligible tale" (164). Taking the notes as nothing more than nonsense, even deliberately tantalizing nonsense, seems a reasonable readerly response. The notion, implicit in Caserio's analysis, that the notes are not intelligible—or, more precisely, that their particulars aren't—is, I think, simply wrong. It may be that the content of each of the notes merits and would reward fuller attention even if compelling paraphrases necessarily remain obscure.

I fully admit that I am unable to say what, specifically, Little Snowdrop's statement is about, and I'm more or less hip to the fact that saying the nonsense note is about communicating its own inability to communicate is a tired, unproductive move. That's not what I want to argue here. Instead, I want to shift the focus to the fact that the note derives from a figure identified as

Snowdrop. Sager minds than I have noted, helpfully, that along with other allusions to Lewis Carroll's work in *Thursday, Snowdrop* might be a reference to one of the two kittens in *Through the Looking-Glass*—the white kitten, who Alice suspects was transformed into the White Queen during her dream. Martin Gardner, who produced annotated editions of both *Looking-Glass* and *Thursday*, takes a characteristically cautious approach: "It may not be a coincidence that Snowdrop was the name of Alice's white kitten, as we learn from the last chapter of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*" (237n13).[6]

I think Gardner is understating the case here: *Looking-Glass* seems a clear reference point. Perhaps more importantly, Gardner neglects or refuses to speculate as to what Chesterton might have hoped to convey by way of the allusion to Carroll. Considering the avowed interests of this study, I hope it will surprise no one that I would be willing to risk a reading here. In short, Snowdrop seems to be drawing attention to the structural similarity of *Thursday* and *Looking-Glass*. Both stories feature protagonists making unmarked entrances into dream visions, entrances that can only be even approximately pinned down once the protagonists reenter the waking world. In *Looking-Glass*, that reentrance occurs while Alice is holding the Red Queen, who over the course of a few very short chapters transforms into the black kitten that Alice had been scolding before nodding off. Snowdrop is the other kitten, the white one. The black kitten is unnamed, and so Snowdrop only works metonymically to indicate the one-to-one correspondence of the black kitten and the Red Queen and how that correspondence is troubled as the same figure travels with Alice, the only anchoring subject, across the threshold. It seems clear to me that Chesterton intends to use *Snowdrop* as a hint or, in modern parlance, an Easter egg to clue the reader into the broader homage to Carroll's deft reinvention of dream vision forms. It is equally clear to me that the compound kitten-Queen serves as a clue to the emphasis

on isomorphism in Chesterton's novel. Whether or not this was obvious to Chesterton need not concern us although it probably should have concerned Martin Gardner.

In any case, Gardner's abundance of caution is useful to the extent that it excuses his overlooking the other literary Snowdrop that Chesterton might have had in mind, the eponymous flower from Hans Christian Andersen's short fable. The suggestion gains some credibility from the fact that Chesterton risked opprobrium for an "odious" comparison of Carroll and Andersen in "Both Sides of the Looking-Glass" (66). The two nineteenth-century stalwarts comprise the poles of a Chestertonian nonsense spectrum. In Chesterton's estimation, Andersen "remained in touch with the enormous tradition of the earth in the matter of mystery and glamour—he did not have to make a new and rather artificial sort of fairy-tale out of triangles and syllogisms" ("Both Sides" 69). While Chesterton's affection for Carroll is without question, his clear preference and the more apparent influence on *Thursday* is Andersen.[7] In a more or less offhand comment in 1916's *The Crimes of England*, Chesterton clarifies the value of ineffability even in the case of allegory, where one might imagine clarity being paramount: "[Andersen's] treatment of inanimate things as animate was not a cold and awkward allegory: it was a true sense of a dumb divinity in things that are" (107). Andersen's Snowdrop is, to be sure, an inanimate thing treated as animate; it is also a story about shifting names.

Andersen wrote "The Snowdrop" in response to a request from his friend, the noted Danish jurist Adolph Drewsen, and explained the nature of Drewsen's interest in his 1874 notes on the final three volumes of a five-volume reissue of his stories, *Eventyr og Historier*. For precision's sake, I have maintained the orthographic and typographic features of the original text:

> „Sommergækken" er blevet til paa Opfordring; min Ven, Hr. Konferentsraad Drewſen, der med Iver og Inderlighed holder paa danſke Minder og danſk Sprog, beklagede en

> Dag, hvor tit gode gamle Navne blive forvanſkede. I Aviſerne anmeldte Gartnere „Vintergæk", den vi i vore unge Aar altid og mere forſtaaelig kaldte „Sommergæk", da den gækker og med Sommeren. Han bad mig at ſkrive et Eventyr og i det hævde det gamle Navn, og jeg ſkrev „Sommergækken". (332)

The British Library's edition of Andersen's *Complete Stories* offers the following, unattributed, translation in its own editorial notes on the stories:

> '"Sommergäkken" . . . was written at the request of my friend State Councillor Drewsen, who believes most fervently in Danish memories and a correct Danish language, and who, one day, was complaining about the frequency with which good old names were changed. The gardeners when advertising in the newspapers called the flower *Wintergäk* which we in our younger years always and more understandably called *Sommergäk*, because it fools us in regard to summer. He asked me to write a fairy tale and to maintain the old name in it. So I wrote "Sommergäkken".' (927-28)[8]

The story, in the original Danish, plays on the shift that so upset Drewsen, resolutely refusing to employ *vintergjæk* to refer to the flower. *Sommergjæk*, in literal translation, means something like *summer fool*. Because snowdrops typically bloom before the vernal equinox, the story depicts the titular flower as a kind of fool, the subject of Wind and Weather's cruel mockery for having believed the promise of the Sunbeam and bloomed too early. Andersen, then, strays from the apparent commonplace personification of the flower as one that fools: Andersen's flower *is* the fool. The flower is picked, pressed, and enclosed with a love poem. In it, a young woman asks a romantic interest to be her winter fool—in this case rendered in Danish as *vinternar*, to distinguish it from *vintergjæk*, which Andersen is deliberately avoiding. Of course, the romance is short-lived; the young man feels he has been taken for a fool, and the flower finds its way into

a book of poetry by Ambrosius Stub. The snowdrop takes solace in the fact that the man reading the book likens it to Stub, a "digtergjæk," or poet-fool, whose work had been ahead of its time.

In the original Danish, Andersen never distinguishes between *sommergjæk* as used to denote a type of flower and as used figuratively to describe a person whose thoughts or behavior outstrip their circumstances. Adding to the confusion, Andersen's flower has more in common with the people to which it is allegorically linked than to the purported reasoning of Drewsen. Naturally, this led to some confusion in English translations of the story. Two issues are relevant here: both the snowdrop and the human summer fools are rendered as *sommergjæk* in the Danish, a conflation English translations obliterate by using Snowdrop to describe the flower in some or all instances, and English translations obscure the fact that Andersen deliberately opts for *vinternar* instead of *vintergjæk*, translating the former as *winter fool* or otherwise using the same English word to render both *-gjæk* and *-nar*, instead of opting for *dolt* or some other synonym that would more clearly preserve Andersen's original distinction.

The first case is most clearly illustrated in Jean Hersholt's translation. For reasons that aren't entirely clear, Hersholt adds *snowdrop* in a place where Andersen does not use *sommergjæk*. Compare Hersholt's translation with Andersen's original:

> Then she took the lovely Flower and laid it on a scented piece of paper that had a verse written on it, a verse about the Flower, beginning with 'snowdrop' and ending with 'snowdrop'. 'Little sweetheart, be my snowdrop, my winter fool!'—thus she had playfully mocked him with the summer. (658)
>
> tog ſaa den fine Blomſt, lagde den i et duftende Stykke Papir, ſom der var ſkrevet Vers paa, Vers om Blomſten, der begyndte med Sommergjæk, og endte med Sommergjæk, „lille Ven, vær Vinternar!" hun havde gjækket ham med Sommeren. (50)

The young woman does not ask the young man to be either a flower or a summer fool. Instead, she introduces a second term, *vinternar*, designed to contrast with *sommergjæk*, a contrast that Hersholt's translations obscures. *Vinternar* has nothing to do with flowers.

The second case is illustrated by the earliest English translator of "The Snowdrop," H.W. Dulcken, who to his credit appends a short note explaining the "Danish name for snowdrop signifies 'summer gauk' or 'summer fool'" (83).[9] Unfortunately, his translation is not always so transparent: Dulcken translates *vinternar* as "winter gauk" in order to have it match with his preferred "summer-gauk," effectively introducing the closest English equivalent to *vintergjæk* into a text that had been written with its deliberate exclusion in mind (85).[10]

My goal here is not to criticize these translations. I have no reason to suspect that there was any ulterior motive in completing or publishing them, that Hersholt and Dulcken were in some way opposed to "Danish memories and a correct Danish language." If anything, Dulcken's translation is the only serviceable evidence for the notion that Chesterton might have been consciously acting to take advantage of a buried isomorphic structure in his use of *Snowdrop*. Either Carroll's or Andersen's Snowdrop might have been the referent. Similarly, for a brief period of time, either *sommergjæk* or *vintergjæk* might have been the target word in an English translation,[11] and *sommergjæk* might have referred to either flower or person. Both cases depend upon a simple isomorphic relationship in which two equivalent sign functions correspond to a single instance of the complementary sign function. Consequently, moving backwards from *Thursday*'s allusion, we find a chain of isomorphic relationships or—maybe more precisely—something like nested, even cascading isomorphic structures.[12]

Part of my point here is simply that it can be argued that Chesterton, consciously or not, employs a kind of bifurcated metalepsis in which the knowledgeable reader will be left without a

clear sense of which author Chesterton means to rhetorically upend. The fact that both referents also bifurcate in undecidable ways in their original contexts would only seem to intensify the already apparent ambiguity. Chesterton does not simply make a reference that could equally apply to two different targets. He makes a reference to that could equally apply to two different targets that could, themselves, serve as referents with two different targets. That is, more knowledge about the metaleptic sources does not solve the problem of which text is intended; instead, it makes the novel's investment in a lack of priority more intelligible.

Elephant in the Brume, or, the Sphinx in Time

While I have largely abandoned modularity as a focus for this chapter's content, its form is to some extent modular, and the reader need not have accepted every element of the claims made in the previous section in order to move forward with this one. Understanding how or just that Chesterton moves backwards in literary history should prove useful by chapter's end, but here I'm concerned with pushing forward through history to see how Chesterton would circle back to Snowdrop as a perplexing referent in *Tales of the Long Bow* (published some seventeen years after *Thursday*) in order to effect a further intensification on the problem of undecidability. *Tales of the Long Bow* is a collection of interwoven short stories with a shared cast of characters. It's been broadly characterized as a kind of distributist propaganda—which is fair[13]—but what makes it relevant here is the gimmick: in each of the first seven stories, one of the characters performs a seemingly impossible task related to a common English idiom or proverbial saying. In the first three chapters, one character eats his hat, another sets the Thames on fire, and a third makes pigs fly. In the last three chapters before the final, one character makes silk purses out of

sows' ears, another demonstrates how cows jump over the moon, and a third builds a castle in the sky. It is the fourth, central chapter, however, that concerns me here. That chapter, "The Elusive Companion of Parson White," features a white elephant named Snowdrop.

There are several reasons to place special attention on this particular story. The first, which I will develop presently, is that it very clearly links back to *Thursday* (and for that reason is included in this discussion) both because of the use of Snowdrop and the fact that Sunday's madcap chase partially takes place on an elephant. The second, to which I will also return slightly less presently, is that the story also makes subtle but still direct nods to the Sphinx and her riddle or riddles. The third is simply that this is the only story in the lot that does not take its major focus from an idiom describing an impossible action. Giving or receiving a white elephant is not supposed to be impossible; it just represents the transfer of an extreme burden. In that sense, for the receiver, a white elephant represents a conundrum: sacred elephants gifted by monarchs could not perform labor and were thus little more than a money pit, one the receiver was expected to fill lavishly. The lack of fit between this idiom and those of the other stories demands attention and turns it toward the fact that Snowdrop carries an unacknowledged, ponderous weight in light of Chesterton's corpus and his broader investment in the Western canon.[14]

In other ways, "Elusive Companion" matches pretty nearly the other stories in the collection, and, while most of the specifics of the plot aren't especially relevant to this discussion, it does bear mention that Parson White, embroiled in a land use dispute, has been keeping an elephant and informs a few of his friends by letter that "Snowdrop is really a very intelligent companion" (118), neglecting to mention that Snowdrop is an elephant and giving only unintentionally cryptic clues as to her identity. His friends are unable to say with any

certainty and so eventually travel to meet White, discovering him riding the elephant to a white elephant sale in his village.

White's cryptic letter *about* Snowdrop calls to mind Sunday's cryptic notes, one purportedly *from* Snowdrop. Similarly, his story's place in the center, with three stories on either side, recalls Sunday's position on the Anarchist Council: According to Professor de Worms, "Sunday is a fixed star" (70). In fact, Chesterton's narrator draws the reader's attention to White's story's placement at the end of chapter three:

> But if any indomitable reader wishes to know what was the new line Mr. Oates pursued and why, it is to be feared that his only course is to await and patiently read the story of the Exclusive Luxury of Enoch Oates; and even before reaching that supreme test, he will have to support the recital of The Elusive Companion of Parson White; for these, as has been said, are tales of topsy-turvydom, and they often work backwards. (110)

Chesterton's intertextual play does, necessarily, work backwards and does so by blowing right past Carroll's own "topsy-turvydom" and the literary nonsense of the nineteenth century all the way to the riddle of the sphinx and the earliest era of the Western canon.

Traditionally, the Sphinx has been associated with riddles and an aura of mystery, often and in this case associated with the kind of casual orientalism that typified British writing during the heyday of empire. Chesterton peppers his character-mediated descriptions of Snowdrop with qualifiers recalling the orientalist associations of the Sphinx's traditional Aethiopian origins. White, himself, describes Snowdrop as "giv[ing] one quite a weird Asiatic feeling" (117). He continues: "[W]hat I thought at first was an oriental atmosphere was only an atmosphere of the orient in the sense of dayspring and the dawn. It has nothing to do with the stagnant occultism of decayed Indian cults; it is something that unites a real innocence with the immensities, a power

as of the mountains with the purity of snow" (120). Pierce, the youngest of the three friends reading White's letter, and the only one unfamiliar with White and his notoriously confounding epistolary style, frets over the vicar's apparent dabbling with non-Christian belief. Eventually asserting that Snowdrop must be nothing more than "the name of a spirit, or a control, or whatever they call it" (125), Pierce embarks on an overnight journey to White's village "to find in a wood at midnight the *riddle* that he thought worthy of Merlin" (133; my emphasis). He describes his entirely misinterpreted initial meeting with the slightly obscured elephant in a wooded area: "Against that pallid gleam stood four strong columns, with the bulk of building apparently lifted above them; but it produced a queer impression, as if this Christian priest had built for his final home a heathen temple of the winds" (129). Pierce's misidentification probably isn't comic enough to justify its strain on credulity and says more about Chesterton's thematic predilections than Pierce's character.

Part of the force of the story and of its place in this reading is that Pierce's initial trip and the three men's follow-up excursion have strikingly little real motivation. While Pierce seems concerned about White's mental or spiritual integrity, the other two men treat his letter as a characteristic and innocuous missive, even as they express measured curiosity about the ill-defined Snowdrop. Nor does the plot demand any real action: the trip to White's village does not materially affect White or resolve a conflict. It only satisfies the curiosity of White's friends, men who, by all rights, should have been able to read between the lines. Since all three of them have, by Hood's conscious admission, "lived to falsify proverbs" (120), they might have given more consideration to White's initial, since-quelled fear that something (the reference isn't clear) "would really be an encumbrance, as you know it's always supposed to be" (117). The narrator even indicates that White had probably used the exact phrase *white elephant* and been badly

misunderstood by others: “None of them could remember the exact words he had used; but all could state in general terms that it referred to some sort of negative nuisance or barren responsibility” (124). Given that these three men have recognized the shared gimmick dictating their circumstances and responses, the fact that they stand thunderstruck and kicking themselves once Snowdrop is revealed is difficult to stomach on realist grounds. A careful reader, especially given Chesterton’s blatant signposting, would likely have inferred the reveal long before it occurs. So, the problem of the synthetic level of the narrative has more to do with why Snowdrop is the name than what Snowdrop is.[15] Snowdrop, predictably, is a white elephant. The question is why Chesterton uses the name Snowdrop again. A second, no less important question, is why this version of Snowdrop is so thoroughly associated with a metaleptic endeavor to interpolate the Sphinx.

The most important association to note here is Chesterton’s deliberately subtle employment of the riddle most prominently attributed to the Sphinx, something along these lines: What has four legs in the morning, two at midday, and three in the evening? As the three friends debate what Snowdrop could possibly be, they consider legs and their number. At this point, quotation will be more efficient than summary. The first two sentences are from White’s letter:

> “‘Snowdrop tries to enter our ways, as they always do; but, of course, it would be awkward if she played tricks. How alarmed they would all be if she took it into her head to walk about on two legs, like everybody else.’”
>
> “Nonsense!” ejaculated Colonel Crane. “Can’t be a child—talking about it walking about on two legs.”
>
> “After all,” said Pierce thoughtfully, “a little girl does walk about on two legs.”
>
> “Bit startling if she walked about on three,” said Crane.

The sequence—four, implied by the fact that Snowdrop would have to take "it into her head to walk about on two"; two; and three, a joke that seems to me only to serve the purpose of rounding out the allusion—matches the Sphinx's riddle's progression exactly. This is not to suggest that Snowdrop is a man. The point, rather, is the obviousness of the reference.

Of course, in its most esteemed iteration, Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* (apologies to Laura Mulvey), the riddle is functionally null. Many perfectly interesting readings of the play take the riddle's content as a given, playing Oedipus's disability against the riddle's emphasis on legs and locomotion.[16] In point of fact, in Sophocles's work, the riddle is a fully obstructed pseudo-intertext, a fictional text mentioned but never presented or even paraphrased. Readings have understandably interpolated a preexisting riddle associated with the Sphinx in an effort to supply that lack.[17] The enterprise has been inarguably successful, but if the Phocian path of least resistance has proved useful, it hasn't obliterated alternatives, for which compelling evidence exists. Most pressingly, in the original Greek text, the chorus describes Oedipus as the solver of "famous riddles."[18]

And antiquity does offer at least one alternative (or supplement). In the Sphinx entry of his *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Pierre Grimal puts forward "another" riddle (and suggests that Oedipus eventually "solved the *riddles*") (407). Grimal presents a version of the riddle, but since Matthew Wright translates directly from the Greek original and since his translation is cogent and is contextualized, it seems a more useful iteration: "There are twin sisters, of whom one gives birth to the other, and having given birth she herself is born from the one she bore" (173). This riddle, the lone surviving fragment from Theodectes's *Oedipus,* survives thanks to Anthanaeus's discussion of Theodectes and "enigmatical sayings" in *The Deipnosophists,* of which an English translation has been available since the mid-nineteenth century (713-14; bk.

10, chs. 75-77). The riddle or versions of it appeared in various other English translations through the early twentieth century, sometimes attributed to Theodectes's *Oedipus,* often juxtaposed against the traditional riddle of the legs.[19]

Cleary, I can't firmly establish that Chesterton knew the sisters riddle or, even given that, knew it to be associated with Oedipus and the Sphinx. If I could, I would have done that by now. There are arguments in favor of that riddle as a more compelling topic in the Oedipus myth. If the legs riddle seems especially relevant given Oedipus's early injury and later use of walking stick, then the riddle of the two sisters—one that does away with any Freudian distancing regarding incest—is all the more relevant. My point is that maybe it doesn't especially matter. Plenty of interesting, compelling readings have proceeded without certainty, relying instead on the sheer force of their inventiveness. I think there is something inventive here, which I will address presently; I'm also not convinced that others will agree with me, which means a hedge is forthcoming.

The two riddles are relevant—and all the legwork that got us here is relevant—because they tie the primary isomorphism of *Thursday*, the relationship between the seven members of the anarchist council to the weekly calendar of days, into perhaps the most famous pseudo-intertext in the Western canon. Sophocles's unstated riddle, an abstract placeholder that never sees direct representation in the text, might have been answered either *man* or *(the cycle of) night and day*. The men of *Thursday* take days for their names. What's more, and I'm somewhat loath to admit this given the amount of work I've done here to contextualize the second riddle, we don't really need both. The standard riddle of four legs in the morning, two at midday, and three at dusk already establishes a relationship between *man* and *day*. But, obvious as it seems, I don't think I would've realized that without having become aware of the second riddle. The process is

the point here. I got to the Sphinx's riddle by following Snowdrop from *Thursday* to *Long Bow*. Now, I follow the sphinx from *Long Bow* through the classics back to *Thursday*, returning with a better sense of what the note means—and what the novel does around that note.

There's one more point I want to make before moving on. To my knowledge, Chesterton only mentions the riddle of the sphinx once in his extremely prolific career. It happens in these words:

> [The mystics] wished the stars to be their omnipresent eyes and winds their long wild tongues unrolled; and therefore they favoured twilight, and all the dim and borderland mediums in which one thing melts into another . . . in which a man can be as large as Nature and (what is worse) as impersonal as Nature. But I never was properly impressed with the mystery of twilight, but rather with the riddle of daylight, as huge and staring as the sphinx. I felt it in big bare buildings against a blue sky, high houses gutted or still empty, great blank walls washed with warm light as with a monstrous brush. One seemed to have come to the back of everything. And everything had that strange and high indifference that belongs only to things that are . . . . You see I have not said what I meant . . . ("Wonder" 166)

There is much in this quotation from 1912's "Wonder and the Wooden Post" that reminds us of *Thursday*. Even in the poem that precedes the novel, Chesterton invokes "huge devils that hid the stars" before day could "br[eak] on the brain," and Syme is forever concerned with getting round the "back of the world" that is "stooping and hiding a face" (xl, 145). Near the end, Chesterton trails off. He's speaking about something sacred or at least ineffable. Most readings of the novel focus on that ineffability, and with good reason. I am, of course, more interested in the extent to which Chesterton here explicitly rejects "the mystery of twilight," preferring instead

the "riddle of daylight, as huge and staring as the sphinx." Was he thinking of the riddles I'm thinking of? Maybe not, but it's certainly interesting.

The Plot against the Allegory

I've argued, thus far, that the reference to Snowdrop in *Tales of the Long Bow* serves to reorient and intensify the structural and thematic effects of isomorphism in *Thursday*. I have neglected, thus far, to explain precisely how isomorphism functions in the novel or, perhaps more importantly, to explain why thinking of the novel in isomorphic terms should prove useful.

Let's start with the latter. Very simply, *Thursday* has largely been read as an allegory, and while those readings mean no harm, they focus too heavily on meaning without achieving much. It's best to be skeptical of arguments made over and over again with slight modification. At best, the repetition suggests a lack of efficacy; at worst, a tendency to propaganda. Much of the critical work on the novel has appeared in journals with clear Christian or Catholic emphases.[20] Without question, Chesterton is an important author in the Catholic canon, but the deluge of work on Chesterton's apologetic tendencies distracts from work with a greater focus on Chesterton as a formalist.[21] Chesterton himself, in a review written the day before his death, bemoaned the neat allegorical reading of Sunday as "the Deity," suggesting instead that the novel "was intended to describe the world of wild doubt and despair which the pessimists were generally describing at that date; with just a gleam of hope in some double meaning of the doubt, which even the pessimists felt in some fitful fashion" (qtd. in *Thursday* 160). But my point here is not that reading the novel as a religious allegory is wrong. It isn't wrong, exactly, although the sheer number of readings in this vein have, I think, distorted the critical consensus on

Chesterton.[22] Rather, reading the novel (or even just the fuzzily embedded dream content) as an allegory of any kind is tired and often less than convincing anyway.

I want to consider briefly what might have the best credentials for a compelling allegorical reading of *Thursday* outside the niche realm of Catholic studies (*briefly* because I don't know that there's much percentage in extended revisitations of critical monographs from the late '70s). Lynette Hunter's work on *Thursday* is a great example of the kind of pitfalls that allegoresis can fall into, especially with a work as slippery as Chesterton's. Her well-regarded theoretical work on allegory as such lends more weight to her reading of *Thursday* than instrumental readings from critics that start from the premise of apologia and retrofit an allegorical reading to match.[23] Hunter's approach, therefore, represents a substantial improvement on the kind of simplistic reading of Sunday as the godhead that Chesterton explicitly rejected and deserves acknowledgement here.[24]

In short, Hunter predicates her reading on a functional similarity between allegory and ritual: "For Chesterton both allegory and ritual are themselves an allegorical expression of life. Rather than an absurdity without logic, it is an enigma with an unknown logic; and enigma is the central feature of Chesterton's allegory" (72). Hunter helpfully provides operational definitions (or near-definitions) of both allegory and ritual in Chesterton's work. She quotes a 1900 piece from *The Bookman*, in which Chesterton argues that "all men are allegories, puzzles, earthly stories with heavenly meanings" (Hunter 15). And, in an unattributed paraphrase, Hunter suggests that the "indication of essence is Chesterton's definition of the process of ritual," adding that allegory is the "verbal mode" of ritual (63). In her discussion of *The Ball and the Cross,* Hunter brings these threads together: "an actual [narrative] event . . . contains rational meaning and indicates an experience. Yet the full expression implies more than these aspects; it points to

a meaning that we cannot fully understand but that we can know: the existence of an external and absolute authority" (63). What we must necessarily deduce from this analysis is that, for Chesterton as read by Hunter, allegory expresses the fact that life expresses the existence of an external authority by dint of an unknown logic dictated by that external authority. Whether we focus on the hidden meaning—an authority exists—or the unarticulated logic whereby some author expresses that meaning, we seem to return to the notion that allegory necessarily allegorizes its own process or the process of a broader category for which allegory can stand as a representative.

Certain aspects of Hunter's reading stand ready to recommend it. In particular, her consideration of ritual in Chesterton lends her account a level of specificity that safeguards it against any too-easy lumping in with the post-de Manian gold rush to read narrative texts as "allegor[ies] of [their] own reading" (de Man 76). Unfortunately, it still deserves a few lumps. In short, Hunter's take on Chesterton tends toward an obliteration of explanatory power. If, for Hunter, for Chesterton, life is essentially allegorical, then any depiction of narrative events that traffics in a kind of recognizable verisimilitude will necessarily tend toward allegory. And, if allegory is just the verbal mode of ritual, it would be hard to say, based on these premises, that all of Chesterton's works do anything but reach out toward ritual through a series of transitive processes that start to lose any real specificity. But this is perhaps ungenerous. Hunter's reading does, in its systematization, wash itself out. She does, however, in local instances, provide a more discrete analysis of allegorical elements. These too, though, have some problems.

If allegory overexplains at the level of her critical premises, it underexplains (or underperforms) at the level of the individual text. In order to turn her focus on ritual to advantage, Hunter focuses on the last third or so of the novel, when the exposed policemen chase

Sunday, find him at his country estate, and enter into a costume ball—before Syme's dream disintegrates: "The final section is written as an allegory, allowing the characters to participate in ritual which eludes understanding but points to one external authority. The message of his story and the function of his style are very close to each other. Syme and the writer go through the same process of expression with the progress of events, and the events themselves illuminate the meaning of the expression" (67). The problem here with treating the final section in isolation is that Hunter's reading necessarily depends on the earlier characterization of the policemen and of Syme's struggle and failure to perceive and then express reality, a struggle that eventually leads Syme—as a flawed human in the narrative—and Chesterton—as a flawed human controlling the narrative—to depend on ritual to point to the ultimate reality of external authority. Thus, the progressive exposures necessarily form part of the allegorical framework. This wouldn't be damning in itself. The further problem is that Chesterton—perhaps congenitally—lacks the capacity to maintain a streamlined allegory in which characters line up with ideological or metaphysical positions in a clear and, more importantly, consistent way.

To be fair, this was not a fault unique to Chesterton. Multiple critics have noted that the anarchist as a figure was overdetermined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[25] As Shane McCorristine notes, "The anarchist in late-nineteenth-century culture was as much a symbol and mythological entity as a proponent of a particular political ideology. 'Anarchy' denoted a variety of meanings: mercurial creativity, revolutionary disorder, social chaos, communitarian utopia, unstructured activity" (28). Chesterton was one of coterie of latecomers, commentators who, writing after the heyday of anarchist terrorism, "could not give up the sensational image of an international anarchist dynamite conspiracy" (29). This sensational image, which lent the struggle the "character of a metaphysical war," had more value than any

particular relation to an underlying reality (30). Although Chesterton announced his own intention to write "a story in which modern thoughts are typified, not by long arguments, but by rapid symbolic incidents" and although more credulous (or forgiving) critics have suggested that *Thursday* "may be said to build up characters . . . by imagining the consequences of a set of abstract theories taken to their limits" (Chesterton qtd. in Medcalf xxii; Medcalf xxiv), these purported intentions fail to hold up to any significant scrutiny. Take, for instance, Hunter's characterization of the five anarchists besides Sunday and Syme. She places each on a spectrum between anarchy and order and identifies each pole with a particular "[aspect] of man": "The other men on the council each represent different uses of intellect for the perversion of logic" (68). This is a compelling framework. In practice, however, things get messy. Monday, a standout in this reading, vacillates between intellect (bad) and philosophy (good). Tuesday somehow represents "a madman," "a fanatic," and "a Russian peasant" as contrasted with a "Cockney business man" (69). The logic of that dichotomy escapes me. The others take these forms: Wednesday, "aestheticism and cynicism" backed by "common sense"; Friday, "nihilism" backed by "realism"; and Saturday, "rationalism and efficiency" backed by "ordinary practicality" (69-70). Hunter isn't at pains to distinguish common sense from realism or practicality, and it is difficult to blame her. There just isn't enough to go on in the text itself. It's not that the characters themselves are indistinct: they just aren't developed enough to support both the comic characterization at the level of manifest content and the underlying typification of a single strand of "modern thought" or, in Hunter's reading, its inverse.

The case of Tuesday is instructive. Hunter places Tuesday as the "obvious choice" for a first exposure by which Sunday can give a "clue" as to Syme's mission of discovery (69). The point seems to be that because Tuesday is the most apparently alien character—the one most in

line with a stereotypical but still somehow vague sense of *anarchist*—his exposure will carry more weight. The problem is that Tuesday doesn't actually represent any political position or "aspect of man" that could reasonably be associated with an anarchist, even in the most stereotypical sense. Prior to his exposure, Tuesday is complaining of his inability—not disinclination—to pass as a normal, upright citizen, a crucial part of Sunday's conspiracy. Once revealed, it's clear that Tuesday (a Cockney businessman, remember) is a gifted mimic who has his Polish accent down pat. It upsets the other members, "ma[king] everyone jump to hear a clear, commercial and somewhat cockney voice coming out of that forest of foreign hair," and Tuesday even sees fit to call attention to his remarkable dissimulation: "All I say is, I don't believe any Pole could have imitated my accent like I did his" (56). While it's clear from the revelation that there are poles (like posts, not like a demonym) between which Tuesday vacillates, they aren't poles of thought but poles of talent or capacity. The point seems to be less about representing thought than performing the poles. The point isn't what's revealed, isn't the allegory; it's the systemic correspondences based on floating, arbitrary criteria. If, as I'm suggesting here, even the big tent of Edwardian conceptions of anarchism can't withstand a subdivision into, let's say, five distinct categories, a fact that Chesterton surely could have intuited, why then did Chesterton expand the Anarchist council from five, in an early version of the story, to seven?[26]

Having spent a section trying to explain the latter—why thinking of the novel in isomorphic terms should prove useful, namely as a corrective to overzealous and undercooked allegoresis—I return in the next section to explaining the former and much deferred central issue—how isomorphism functions in the novel.

A Thursday Like Any Other

Of course, it wouldn't do to jump right in. First, I want to briefly address Chesterton's oft-remarked penchant for paradox. That even a sympathetic contemporary reader arguing for the efficacy and broad appeal of Chestertonian paradox is forced to note that his "exploitation of paradox" can grow "tiresome" suggests exactly how foundational and pervasive his use of the form is (Nichols 117). Even as early as 1947, Kenner had to acknowledge and account for Chesterton's reputation for "paradox-mongering" (14). Chesterton provided his own explication and defense of his predilection for paradox, implying that his use of paradox fell into one category, "fruitful," while almost all other use tended toward the "barren":

> [As opposed to] epigrams which deny the possibility of further life and thought[, a] paradox may be a thing unusual, menacing, even ugly—like a rhinoceros. But, as a live rhinoceros ought to produce more rhinoceri, so a live paradox ought to produce more paradoxes. Nonsense ought to be suggestive; but nowadays it is abortive. (53)

Unlike the riddle which begs for a definite, final answer, the fruitful paradoxes and suggestive nonsense Chesterton builds around the Sphinx's riddles effectively foreclose the possibility of definition, leaving in its place the fertile ground between (or above or in the ether around) two opposing positions. Instead of reeling through the, yes, tiresome catalog of examples of Chestertonian paradox in *Thursday*'s sentences and paragraphs, I want to focus on a key and no less relevant instance at the formal, narrative level. And I want to argue that the paradox built into Syme's crossing of the diegetic frame from a prologue space into the world of his own dream renders the demands of allegoresis moot, with the possible exception of an allegorical reading of Syme's entire experience across the levels, a tall and probably ill-conceived order.

Certainly, critics have historically read the middle section of the dream vision—the vision itself—in allegorical terms. The visions, insofar as they represent a different world that might include structural similarities to the world of everyday experience, involve a degree of allegoricality or an openness to allegoresis regardless of any intentional allegory. *Thursday*, following the *Alice* books, employs a murky threshold. There is a key innovation, however. While the narrator never indicates that Alice has fallen asleep, her experience becomes immediately and obviously oneiric, remaining that way until the end of her dream. When Alice wakes up, it is not a surprise. Syme's experience, on the other hand, involves a slow ramp up, and a reader could be forgiven for overlooking the novel's subtitle—*A Nightmare*—and the suspicions of some of the characters that this might all be unreal, hints that only feel unsubtle in retrospect. When Syme's dream finally collapses, even with the slow build of increasingly strange elements, it feels like a twist. What's more, our forgivable reader could make a compelling case that where Syme ends up doesn't gibe with any reasonable entry point. This is a question not of hints but of narrative continuity. Syme comes to still walking with Lucien Gregory, the poet who led Syme to the anarchist meeting and to whom Syme reveals his policeman secret. Syme must have started dreaming prior to either revelation, and nothing in the leadup to them suggests that Syme is a secret policeman. On the contrary, when Syme is recruited by the "invisible chief" of the detectives who is later revealed to be Sunday, he is told explicitly that his role will be to blend in with the "entirely lawless modern philosopher[s]" of the Anarchist Council (33). Syme, as the poet of order, is failing so hard at this task that it would be reasonable to wonder if he was ever actually assigned it. He might not have been: the scene in which Syme is recruited occurs as a flashback within the dream. There are at least a couple of options here. One is that Syme actually was recruited by a policeman, is just a bad spy, and if the

Anarchist Council or some similar entity exists for Syme to infiltrate, he never actually encounters it. In this case, the only interesting question left is why Syme's dream takes the form it takes. My reading here still accounts for this. The other obvious option is that Syme was not recruited but that his dream involved the production of a phantom memory of having been recruited as a necessary prior experience underlying his further actions in the dream. This case seems to suggest an absolute epistemological and ontological uncertainty. A final option would be something like the second with Sunday or some other supernaturally powerful entity serving as the author of Syme's recruitment paradox and the events following in order to play out a virtual extension of his actual experience for some pedagogical end. The novel does not offer a solution—explicit or buried—to this problem, and this seems wholly intentional. It's not that the goal is confusion. Rather, it seems that the mutual interference of these possibilities is interesting in itself, calling for a kind of sustained tension and continuous generation, a fact that basically precludes a fixed, allegorical reading.

At the most basic level, allegory needs a complete structure with clear boundaries. In order to say that some string of manifest content can be graphed against some string of latent content, a reader needs to know where the narrative begins and ends. Wherever Syme's dream starts, the actual events relevant to the dream narrative predate the dream. With no clear entry point, it is difficult to read for meaning. It's much easier to find the places where structures match each other's form. In this case, no hard boundaries means that there is a greater space in which to mine for isomorphic structures. While I am convinced that allegory does not represent the best scheme for categorizing *Thursday* and would argue as such based solely on that conviction, my motivation here stems at least as much from my sense that thinking of *Thursday* as a narrative shot through with isomorphic structures leads to more compelling and more

generative descriptions of *Thursday* than endless fine-tuning of the allegorical reading. Nuance and qualification are digging tools, not modes of transportation.

The most patent aspect of isomorphism in the novel is, of course, the codenames of the Anarchist Council. Seven units organized around a single outlier—such is the makeup of the Council and of the seven-day week. This is a simple isomorphism and is probably, also, singularly uninteresting in itself. Less patent, and more interesting, is the fact that embedded in the history of the English names for days of the week are multiple isomorphic exchanges across centuries and cultural and geopolitical lines. D. H. Green, in his excellent *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*, provides an overview of the processes whereby the English day names came into being. I can only touch on the broad strokes here, but even a limited overview should suffice for my purposes. The earliest evidence of a seven-day week can be traced to Hebrew material from around the fifth century BCE, roughly the period of the composition of Genesis: "Around [the Sabbath, Saturday] the other days of the week were grouped systematically. Friday was designated by the word for 'evening' (the eve of the Sabbath), whilst the others were counted by numbers" (Green 236). Green suggests that two features of this scheme matter in terms of its later adoption in most of Christian Europe: the significance of a single day of worship and the recourse to "numbering" or "relative reference" to avoid the "polytheistic terms" of the Roman week (237). The early Roman week comprised eight days, but Augustus introduced a seven-day system, which received "support from the Jewish population" even though it was largely based on an astrological system that "associated the seven days with the seven planets and, in turn, with the gods attributed to these planets" (240). The week began on Saturday and ran in this order: Saturnus, Sol, Luna, Mars, Mercurius, Iupiter, and Venus (240). From the fourth century, Sunday shifted to the first position, probably due to pressure

from Christians seeking to distinguish their holy day from its Jewish counterpart. Eventually, Saturday and Sunday were re-named: *Sabbatum* and *Dominicus* (241). The Romance languages derived from Latin retain the same "unresolved discrepancy" between pagan and Christian terminology. Because the Roman week was adopted in West Germania prior to the re-naming (among other reasons), West Germanic languages, notably English, are not heir to the same discrepancy. English day names ultimately came about as a result of two countervailing processes of cultural interchange: *interpretatio Romana*, whereby Romans used "a term or name already in use" to designate Germanic concepts, "even at the cost of ignoring vital differences," and *interpretatio Germana*, whereby Germanic peoples did the opposite. Germanic gods substituted for Roman ones—Mars became Tiu; Mercurius, Wodan; Iupiter/Iove, Donar; and Venus, Friga—on the "basis of comparable attributes" (245-47). Sunday and Monday retained their associations with Sol and Luna, respectively. In English as distinct from other Germanic languages, Saturday was left largely unmarred by later Christian pressure. In short, the English week represents a hodgepodge of elements from three different religious systems, Jewish (or Judeo-Christian), Roman, and Germanic, each of which corresponds to the other in more or less difficult ways.

Of course, Chesterton's knowledge of *interpretation Germana* or even of the basic historical and linguistic processes that produced the common English day names is difficult if not impossible to pin down. It seems unlikely and hardly matters. The novel itself provides more than enough evidence for an understanding of day-name schemes as necessarily isomorphic. The novel's final chapter concerns a "fancy dress ball" organized by Sunday (149). Each of the detectives takes on the costume corresponding to one of the days as depicted in Genesis. However, although the modern Sunday corresponds to the first day of the week in the Jewish

scheme, the Secretary, née Monday, is outfitted in the first day's creation of light. At the party, Sunday represents the day of rest, which by all rights should be Dr. Bull's, in order to more closely adhere to the Christian calendar, a mishmash of the operative isomorphic systems for organizing seven units around a single outlier.

What I mean to stress here is that isomorphism is a central thematic concern and structuring consideration in the novel in ways both very obvious and depending on prior knowledge for their effect. It's not necessary to demonstrate the presence of isomorphic structures in the novel's references or in Chesterton's later interpolation of his own previous work to make this case. What those demonstrations achieve is a sense of the way that isomorphism informs the metaleptic trajectory across *Thursday, Long Bow,* and various *Oedipodes*. Isomorphism underlies sophisticated functions in the novel in isolation, but it's only in the intertextual maneuver that isomorphism can undermine and be undermined by metalepsis. If isomorphism is about the impossibility of causal priority in understanding structural identity, metalepsis is about the insistence on causal priority even when it means a hierarchy not to be untangled. If isomorphism and metalepsis mutually enforce and interfere with one another, the result looks less like a cancellation or obstruction than an intensification. Thus, from a formal perspective, Chesterton's oeuvre-wide (even canon-wide) ramblings allow for a highwire rhetorical move in the vein of his smaller, flea-circus paradoxes. The metalepsis-isomorphism complex can be turned about, considered from multiple perspectives: a "fruitful" paradox, one that seems to more effectively communicate a kind of utter unknowability more fully than any of Chesterton's "abortive" attempts to explain the novel's ostensible allegorical value.

Conclusion: Finding Oneself a Ferdinando

As I began this chapter with a discussion of Sunday's final note, and as this chapter has been concerned with a certain kind of circle squaring, it seems fitting to close with Sunday's first. The note is addressed to Dr. Bull and reads as such: "What about Martin Tupper now?" (134). By 1908, as fitting a "now" as one might propose, relatively little was being said about Martin Tupper. In fact, by 1871, Tupper's "great poem," *Proverbial Philosophy*, was already an object of light ridicule in Trollope. In *The Eustace Diamonds*, Lucy Morris takes up the volume out of boredom, sits "with it for ten minutes," "attempt[s] to read it," and finds that it does not "fascinate" (252-54). Little surprise then that Dr. Bull's only response is confusion: "What does the old maniac mean?" (134). When he turns to Syme, who has also received a note, seeking more context, he finds what seems to be more nonsense: "No one would regret anything in the nature of an interference by the Archdeacon more than I. I trust it will not come to that. But, for the last time, where are your goloshes? The thing is too bad, especially after what uncle said" (134).[27] The narrator elides any mention of their reaction or description of their efforts to make sense of the notes in juxtaposition, but the impulse to juxtapose is telling in itself—and in a return to the concerns of the previous chapter—a potential model for Chesterton's work as a whole. When confronted with nonsense, we look to context, whether extant or virtually implied.

That drive to make sense of the seemingly nonsensical, the same drive that opened this chapter, led me to a different intertext, W. S. Gilbert's less cryptic hoisting of Tupper in *The Bab Ballads*. "Ferdinando and Elvira" was originally published in *Fun* in 1866 and was included in the first collection of *The "Bab" Ballads* in 1868. In his *Autobiography*, Chesterton recounts meeting and striking up a friendship with Edmund Clerihew Bentley after the latter "happened to

quote Dickens or the Bab Ballads, or something I had read" (63). William Oddie helpfully argues that, "[g]iven Chesterton's lifelong habits, we can surmise that he probably knew many of the *Bab Ballads* by heart" (199). This seems a fair surmise to me—convenient, since it lends weight to the point I'm about to make: Chesterton's reference to Tupper loops back to include Gilbert's own account of Tupper's famously turgid, difficult (let's call it) verse.

"Ferdinando and Elvira" concerns Ferdinando's search for the poet behind the mottoes that he and Elvira have been finding in "paper crackers" (5), something akin to a fortune cookie or motto-kiss. For reasons that aren't entirely clear, Ferdinando writes to four poets: Longfellow, Tennyson, John Close, and Tupper. Longfellow and Tennyson kindly disclaim the cracker-verses. Close and Tupper take a different tack:

> "MISTER MARTIN TUPPER, POET CLOSE, I beg of you inform us;"
> But my question seemed to throw them both into a rage enormous.
> MISTER CLOSE expressed a wish that he could only get anigh to me;
> And MISTER MARTIN TUPPER sent the following reply to me:
> "A fool is bent upon a twig, but wise men dread a bandit,"—
> Which I know was very clever; but I didn't understand it. (33-38)

Tupper wrote in a style that by the mid-nineteenth century was ripe for parody, difficult (or perhaps unpleasant) but not nonsensical. Gilbert's humor hewed closer to nonsense. By invoking one and lifting the notion of cryptic notes from another, Chesterton achieves the kind of unsettled and unsettling non sequitur that so confounds Dr. Bull and the reader (or at least this reader). I'm comfortable making a strong assertion that this was a deliberate, fully conscious choice on Chesterton's part, and that one conscious choice serves to paradoxically justify the less apparent

choices I've been writing about in this chapter, less apparent choices that also paradoxically serve to render the Tupper note legible.

Eventually, Ferdinando's chance encounter with a pastrycook reveals that it is the latter who "write[s] the pretty mottoes which you find inside the crackers" (54), a thoroughly logical conclusion to an unnecessarily faulty search based on the premise that some great (or perhaps merely famous, there's no accounting for taste) poet has written the mottoes. Dr. Bull and Syme and the other detectives know that Sunday has written (or at least distributed) their notes. But this is hardly sufficient: knowing *that* Sunday writes them is not the same as knowing *who* Sunday is. Ferdinando was sent by Elvira "*only* [to] find out who it is that writes those lovely cracker mottoes" (28; my emphasis); identity is enough. That is, Ferdinando's search winds up confirming what he already knew: the person who wrote the crackers wrote them. My own search mirrors Ferdinando's.

I began this chapter by suggesting its conclusion wouldn't "land so far away" from an earlier version's focus on Chesterton's "thematics of indecision." And it hasn't. I've argued that the interplay of metalepsis and isomorphic patterns means that no strict decision as to priority is possible, which seems to me to be the point. Like Ferdinando, I arrived at my current position by seeking more information about a cryptic note. Also, like Ferdinando, the fact of my arrival feels largely irrelevant. Gilbert's reveal is certainly funny, but the poem is enjoyable because of the cheap shots that Gilbert makes en route. If this reading has anything to offer, it's not in its assertion of meaning but in the laying out of that meaning's provenance, processes that by no means stop operating at the boundary of "Ferdinando and Elvira."

What's worth stressing here is that the note sent to Dr. Bull, the Tupper note, is not recursively self-justifying. Following the Tupper note to its likely intentional intertext reveals a

fairly cut-and-dried, unidirectional allusion. It's clear that Chesterton has brought Gilbert's notes into his own text. It's only, I think, from the context of this Bloomian misreading of the novel, that a greater purpose for the Tupper note can be gleaned. The narrative of Gilbert's poem predicts my own process, something I did not and could not have realized without going through the process. It also, I argue, confirms the utility of this process as far as it goes. By the same token, the process makes sense of the inclusion of the Tupper note in a way that other readings of it have failed to do.[28] Another way to say this is that one of the notes I followed up on intimates that following up on notes wouldn't get me anywhere, something I had already discovered from following up on other notes. This seems to me a kind of strange loop but may look to others like simple confirmation bias. I will say, in my defense, that it wasn't simple and that confirmation bias rarely requires marshalling so many things to end up with nothing—or at least nothing new.

Once, Chesterton, in a rather reactionary mode, suggested of modernist poetry that "a thing that is not anything is not new" ("The New Poetry" 35). I hope, at least, that such a thing might at least be interesting. In the next chapter, I attempt the much more traditional endeavor of making nothing into something.

Notes

1. My characterization of the novel as a dream vision derives from J. Stephen Russell's account of the form: "At the simplest level, a dream vision is the first person account of a dream; the dream report is usually preceded by a prologue introducing the dreamer as a character and often followed by an epilogue describing the dreamer's reawakening and recording the dream report in verse" (5). There is some precedent for the categorization: In a discussion of the texts that might have influenced *1984*, William Hunt describes *Thursday*, along with *A Christmas Carol*, as a "Victorian-Edwardian dream fable" (539). It's worth mentioning here that other critics have proposed different categorizations. In a brief reference, Brian Richardson has placed *Thursday* alongside *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in a subgenre he calls the "intellectual fable," which seems reasonable (300). In the same breath, however, Richardson calls *Thursday* a "supernatural allegory," a position which this chapter will argue against.

2. Given that this dissertation takes a lot of its cues from Feyerabend, invoking Popper here might give some readers pause. Feyerabend's notoriously combative relationship with his former advisor is well-known and explicitly acknowledged again and again in Feyerabend's writing. He once described Popper's positivism as "infantile" and Popper himself as "just a tiny puff of hot air in the positivist teacup" (*Farewell* 282). I can only say that Popper's problem of demarcation as it pertains to verification is useful (as modified and employed) in this context and that radical pragmatism often means mining the useful from the ill-conceived and pedantic.

3. I am still convinced that modularity represents a useful way to understand the structure of texts like these, assuming we understand them as something like allegory-as-picaresque, marked as they are by wild swings in tone and thematic force across discrete episodes.

Underread, though not criminally, John G. Blair's *Modular America* (1988) remains a crucial work on modularity in cultural forms, with its recognition of the written word and description of a text's parts as "interchangeable and/or cumulative and/or recombinable" (125). See, especially, his chapter on Whitman. Although Blair views the phenomenon as distinctly American, there is nothing to foreclose employment of the heuristic in other settings.

4. As early as 1892, the term had been incorporated into American mathematical writing, by way of F. N. Cole's translation of German mathematician Eugen Netto's *The Theory of Substitutions and its Applications to Algebra*. The relevant discussion appears in the fourth chapter (82-84).

5. It is, of course, possible to argue that Herman means to suggest a cumulative level of isomorphism derived from several distinct criteria (modes of combination) operating simultaneously, but there is no evidence to suggest that this is his intention.

6. It's actually clear from the first chapter that the white kitten's name is Snowdrop. Dinah, the mother of the two kittens, is cleaning Snowdrop in the opening chapter and still cleaning her in the last, the duration of a kitten's bath roughly corresponding to the amount of time necessary for Alice's nap.

7. It is worth asking, however, whether his reading of Carroll as a purveyor of "mathematical neatness" and syllogistically derived nonsense is too final, too much at odds with his own defense of Carroll against the stultifying and routinizing reading of Carroll as a figure of Victorian pride and primness (*Defendant* 46). At times, Chesterton applauds the openness of Carroll's "topsy-turvydom" ("100th Birthday" 1); at others, he insists on putting him in his place—or really just in any one fixed place. Chesterton's engagement with Carroll is then not merely an invitation to further consideration but a provocation to a certain kind of corrective.

What should we preserve from Chesterton's reading, and how does his reading inform his own sense of what kinds of fairy tale are acceptable and what the value of nonsense is? This is doubly important given that Chesterton disavows the monumentalization and routinization of Carroll on the basis of Carroll's willingness to "invent a sort of impossible paradise in which to indulge in good logic" ("Both Sides" 67).

8. It's unclear why the translator has changed the spelling of *sommergækken*, *sommergæk*, and *vintergæk* in their translation. It may be a symptom of typographic exigencies, of the period of orthographic shifts in the Nordic Languages from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth (Swedish has used *ä* in place of *æ* for centuries), or of the fact that some early English editions of Andersen's works were very likely relay translations from German source texts (Lathey 98). Adding to the trouble, Andersen changes his own original spelling, *sommergjækken*, as it appears in the 1866 collection, *Nye Eventyr og Historier*, dropping the *j* in the notes to the 1874 reissue.

9. Also, Dulcken includes what I think is a pretty dubious etymology linking *gjæk* to the German *gauch* and the English *gauk* and *geck* (83).

10. Dulcken's oversight is more understandable in light of the fact that his translation dates to 1869, about five years before Andersen's explanatory note in volume five of *Eventyr og Historier*. Still, given Andersen's deliberate choices, Dulcken might have been more careful not to confuse a confusing issue further.

11. At the time, *sommergjæk* and *vintergjæk* were both recognizable names in Danish. Drewsen's preference, as reported by Andersen and based as it is on a patently arbitrary criterion and the fallacy of tradition, only drives home the extent to which no real priority can be

discerned. *Vintergæk* is the only one still listed in *Den Danske Ordbog*. *Sommergæk*, *sommernar*, and *vinternar* are all relegated to the historical dictionary.

12. Efficiency demands that I relegate a third, no less compelling possible allusion to this endnote. In the earliest English translation of the Grimms' "Little Snow White" (originally "Sneewittchen," a low German compound made up of the word for *snow* and a diminutive form of the word for *white*), Edgar Taylor changed the title to "Snow-drop." Taylor, who "surpassed all other nineteenth-century translators in the liberties he took in his collection," provides prefatory remarks pointing to other alterations but fails to explain the title change (Kyritsi 36; Taylor 229-31). The original German title does not refer to the flower—the German word for it is *Schneeglöckchen* (roughly, *little snow bells*). While Taylor's translation dates to 1823, the use of "Snowdrop" to denote the tale was still current in the late nineteenth century, as evidenced by its appearance in Andrew Lang's popular series, *Fairy Books*, which began publication in 1890 (329-39). The translation issues and certain aspects of the story—seven (not anarchists but) dwarfs, a magical looking-glass, and several instances of concealed identity—all suggest that it might have some relevance to the Chesterton-Carroll-Andersen complex I lay out in this chapter. I neglect entirely a fourth possible but to my mind unlikely reference: *Little Snowdrop and her Golden Casket*, an almost entirely forgotten popular novel by Matilda Horsburgh, published anonymously in 1875.

13. In "Chesterton and Distributism," for instance, Ian Boyd claims that the collection "provides the only detailed description of a successful Distributist revolution" (269).

14. White does mention "falsify[ing] the proverb" in his initial letter, something the three characters reading it have done, but this fails to account for the fact that the proverb itself is

nonexistent. White elephant is simply a category of thing and not a component of a well-worn piece of advice.

15. For an elaboration of synthetic, as well as mimetic and thematic, narrative functions, see Phelan 5-6.

16. Consider, for instance, the influential reading of Seth Benardete, who argues that Oedipus's "weakness no doubt enabled him to solve the riddle of the Sphinx" as he was "'three-footed' before his time," or a more recent psychoanalytic reading by A. Samuel Kimball, who references the—forgive me—repressed riddle even though he has to resort to *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* to put it into evidence (1; 62-63).

17. See Lowell Edmunds discussion of the prehistory of the riddle in *Oedipus* (18-20).

18. Originally, κλεινός αἰνίγματ'. Here, *aínigma* has been pluralized as *aínigmata*. Most English translations obscure the plural form, but David Grene's 1942 version retains it (142; line 1525).

19. In addition to the discussion in *The Deipnosophists*, Arthur Elam Haigh included the bare bones of the riddle in a footnote to a discussion of Theodectes's "conundrums in verse, which attracted great admiration" in 1891 (425n2), and a less precise version had appeared on the same page as seven other riddles, including the standard Sphinx riddle, in a miscellaneous section of a Greek anthology translated by Robert Guthrie MacGregor in 1864 (175; 185n51-2). The riddle appears unattributed immediately after a discussion of the standard riddle of the Sphinx—the two apparently belonging to "the same class" of descriptive riddles—in Friedrich Max Müller's 1890 Gifford Lectures, published under the title *Physical Religion* (260). The untranslated riddle also appears alongside a brief English paraphrase in Edward B. Tylor's 1871 monograph *Primitive Culture*.

20. While I don't mean to impugn the work of the individual authors, it's worth noting that the plurality of the twenty-three articles on *Thursday* indexed by the MLA International Bibliography appear in such journals: six in *The Chesterton Review*, founded by Ian Boyd, a priest and professor of Catholic studies; one in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*; two in *VII*, which focuses on seven avowedly Christian British authors; and one in *CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society* (this last, admittedly, written by Boyd).

21. See, for instance, Michael Shallcross's well-considered argument for *Thursday* as premised on a Bakhtinian dialogism assimilating Carroll, Wilde, Kipling, and Andrew Lang.

22. The fact that Ignatius Press, a Catholic publishing house and current holder of the rights to Gardner's annotated edition of the novel, describes *Thursday* as a "profound allegory" with a "metaphysical meaning" only compounds the perception problem ("The Man Who Was Thursday").

23. See Hunter's *Modern Allegory and Fantasy*.

24. In an extract from an article in the *Illustrated London News*, included as an Appendix in the Penguin edition of *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Chesterton is clear on the question of "the elemental elf" Sunday's status: "[T]he tendency to miss what the title means . . . led many to infer that this equivocal being was meant for a serious description of the Deity . . . . But this error was entirely due to the fact that they had read the book but had not read the title-page. In my case, it is true, it was a question of a subtitle rather than a title. The book was called *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*" (159).

25. See, for instance, Shpayer-Makov.

26. Stephen Medcalf provides an overview of the "first draft" of *Thursday*, "The Appalling Five" (xx).

27. It's worth mentioning here that Medcalf provides partial or provisional readings of all the notes, some more convincing than others, all, I think, underselling the heteroglossic potential of the cryptic compositions alone and in concert. Medcalf describes the Snowdrop note, for instance, as a "love-letter" and a "compliment to [Professor de Worms'] disguise" (xxxiii).

28. Medcalf, for instance, sees the note as simply confirming Dr. Bull's "Victorian middle-class optimism," which certainly rings true but also, to my ears, a little dully (xxxii).

3. The Ghost of Sovereignty: *Villette* and the Great Hunger

I originally intended to open this chapter with an epigraph, T. Crofton Croker's short comment on Ann, Lady Fanshawe's 1676 account of a banshee encounter as inaccurately paraphrased in a note to Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*. My hope is that this tortuous chain of custody suggests why it might demand a slower elaboration than I could hope to achieve in the medium of the epigraph. With assurances that I will make every effort to come to the point as quickly as possible, I present that short quotation from the 1825 edition of *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*: "Lady Fanshaw [*sic*; replicating Scott's error] lived in turbulent and unsettled times, when to the lively imagination every sight and sound came fraught with dismal forebodings of evil. Perhaps this reasoning will account for the Banshee being a spirit peculiar to Ireland" (261-62). I want to call attention to two things here. First, Croker's "reasoning" fails utterly. Why would the time period dictate the geographical and ethnocultural derivation of the banshee? The troubled times should logically affect everyone they encompass, which would mean that the English should be at least analogously haunted. In fact, the turbulence in Ireland during the mid-seventeenth century was largely a product of the English imperial project, further undermining Coker's skulking critique of Irish folk figuration. If "unsettled times" make a banshee and the English unsettled the times, it seems unfair to blame the Irish for their figurative response to imperial oppression.

Second, and more tellingly, Croker in his misleading application of blame, unknowingly replicates a similar confusion in Fanshawe's account. What's remarkable here is that in 1825 Croker would not have had access to Fanshawe's memoir, which remained unpublished until 1829. Rather, Croker was very likely working from Scott's footnote, which makes no mention of Fanshawe's amateur cultural criticism. Nonetheless, the similarity is striking: "[Sir Richard

Fanshawe] entertained me with telling how much more these apparitions were usual in this country than in England. And we concluded the cause to be the great superstition of the Irish, and the want of that knowing faith that should defend them from the power of the Devil, which he exercises among them very much" (58).[1] Whether the apparitions are "usual" or the spirits "peculiar," the implication is the same: blame the Irish for figuring their fear of calamity, not the English for actualizing it. Notably, Fanshawe seems to regard her experience as an actual occurrence: Irish superstition allows the banshee's appearance. She declines to comment on a couple of considerations. Typically, superstition arises as a response to anomalous occurrences, so where does the feedback loop start? Perhaps more importantly, why can this apparition jump across the cultural divide to spook the apparently god-fearing Fanshawes? I don't have answers for these questions but do want to stress that they represent the kind of confusion in hierarchical ordering or ontological priority that almost inevitably asserts itself in ghost stories. To my mind, the more compelling question is how Croker's replication occurred at all. It's almost as if the Anglo and Anglo-Irish tendency to dismiss Irish culture is so baked in as to reassert itself across centuries and in the absence of any apparent connective tissue. We might call this the vitalist account of anti-Irish bigotry.

This chapter largely focuses on Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*. I open this chapter with Fanshawe, Scott, and Croker because I'm convinced that Brontë was familiar with Fanshawe's encounter, perhaps by way of Scott's footnotes. While critics have suggested that Scott's paraphrase served as source material for the Earnshaw ghost in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, to my knowledge no one has made the connection between the historical Fanshawe's ghost encounter and the banshee interest of Lucy Snowe or the ghostly hoax perpetrated in part by her acquaintance, the fictional Ginevra Fanshawe. In this chapter, I argue that Fanshawe's

account—stemming from the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland during the Wars of the Three Kingdoms—constitutes the primary textual source for both the nun's ghost and the banshee motif in *Villette*, a novel published at the very end of a different era of British imperial violence, the Great Hunger, any mention of which this novel, and the Victorian novel more generally, assiduously avoids. The relative lack of attention to the banshee in *Villette* and the wholesale ignorance of its probable source material in the extant criticism mirrors and replicates the novel's own omission.

To be fair, some critics have swum upstream.[2] Unfortunately, the most prominent piece of writing on the Brontës' relationship to the Great Hunger remains Terry Eagleton's heavily qualified and deliberately counterfactual reading of *Wuthering Heights* in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*. Since the dates of Branwell Brontë's 1845 trip to Liverpool—soon to see many famine refugees—"don't quite fit," Eagleton is left noting how "tempting [it is] to speculate" about Branwell meeting a few people who had beaten the rush and conveying his experience to his sister, Emily (3). The avowed stance of this dissertation has been and continues to be open to and largely in favor of counterintuitive reading practice, so I take no exception to the premises on which Eagleton bases his approach. His results, however, leave something to be desired, namely, a clear, if even retroactively discovered, purpose. His reading seems less an allegorical interpretation of *Wuthering Heights* than an appropriation of *Wuthering Heights* as an allegorical frame through which to understand the ideology of English imperialism in the nineteenth century. It doesn't shed new light on the history, nor does it attempt a reading of the novel. Eagleton could have simply written an ideological analysis of the famine; that's essentially all he does, and the *Wuthering Heights* overlay feels like little more than a gimmick. Had the novel juxtaposition afforded some new insight into either the text or the history, Eagleton's argument

would have acquitted itself nicely, but even as a sympathetic reader, I'm at a loss for a justification. But, of course, I would be: I have a dog in this fight. There is a Brontë novel that's about Ireland and about its own silence on the Great Hunger. And that novel is *Villette*.

What should be clear at this point is that this chapter represents an attempt to think about the tools I've so far been using to formalist ends in terms of how they might shed light on questions from political and historicist reading modes. The chapter didn't start out with that goal. Instead, I was thinking in terms of genre and literary history. More specifically, this chapter began with an observation. Three major novels between 1852 and 1860 include emergent ghost figures, unreal ghosts that nevertheless exist as a result of complex interpersonal and narrative processes: *Villette* (1852), *Bleak House* (1853), and *The Woman in White* (1860). I held—and still hold—a suspicion that a careful reader could find or productively impose a connection between these emergent ghosts and the roughly contemporaneous development of British emergentism and its overtaking of the vitalist position in the scientific and philosophical discourse. I'll produce that reading presently as it remains part of the argument. But the larger argument hinges on my having found, by chance, reference to Ann Fanshawe's memoirs, and the banshee encounter described therein. For the sake of clarity, given the sloppiness with which it's been handled, I quote from the uncorrected first edition of 1829:

> From hence we went to the Lady Honor [*sic*] O'Brien's, a lady that went for a maid, but few believed it: she was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Thomond. There we staid three nights. The first of which I was surprised by being laid in a chamber, when, about one o'clock I heard a voice that wakened me. I drew the curtain, and, in the casement of the window, I saw, by the light of the moon, a woman leaning into the window, through the casement, in white, with red hair and pale and ghastly complexion:

she spoke loud, and in a tone I had never heard, thrice, 'a horse;' [*sic*] and then, with a sigh more like the wind than breath she vanished, and to me her body looked more like a thick cloud than substance. I was so much frightened, that my hair stood on end, and my night clothes fell off. I pulled and pinched your father, who never woke during the disorder I was in; but at last was much surprised to see me in this fright, and more so when I related the story and showed him the window opened. Neither of us slept any more that night, but he entertained me with telling how much more these apparitions were usual in this country than in England; and we concluded the cause to be the great superstition of the Irish, and the want of that knowing faith, which should defend them from the power of the Devil, which he exercises among them very much. About five o'clock the lady of the house came to see us, saying she had not been in bed all night, because a cousin O'Brien of her's, whose ancestors had owned that house, had desired her to stay with him in his chamber, and that he died at two o'clock, and she said, 'I wish you to have had no disturbance, for 'tis the custom of the place, that, when any of the family are dying, the shape of a woman appears in the window every night till they be dead. This woman was many ages ago got with child by the owner of this place, who murdered her in his garden and flung her into the river under the window, but truly I thought not of it when I lodged you here, it being the best room in the house.' We made little reply to her speech, but disposed ourselves to be gone suddenly. (83-86)

Given what I took to be the clear parallels between Fanshawe's banshee-ghost and Brontë's ghost and banshee, which I will address in more depth later in the chapter, I started to think of *Villette* as a novel in some fundamental sense about Ireland and, considering the timeframe of its composition, about the Great Hunger.

Metalepsis as an interpretive consideration makes a historicist approach, frankly, tricky. Because it serves to disrupt priority, metalepsis troubles the very notion of extratextual, linear time. In previous chapters, the question has been left largely unasked, and instead I sought to derive reading strategies from the preoccupations of the novels themselves. In *Villette*, however, what concerns me is precisely what the text doesn't say, so I need at least to ask the question of historicism in order to be able to render Brontë's silence salient. In that sense, this reading is not merely allegorical but more properly symptomatic in the Althusserian sense. In the same way that a reading of *Capital* can be derived from *Capital*'s own omissions, a reading of *Villette* can emerge from the things not quite said by Brontë.[3]

As was true in both of the other chapters, this one begins in earnest with what I now take to be a weak reading (or, at least, a less interesting reading), this time of emergent ghosts in Brontë, Dickens, and Collins. In roughly the first half of the chapter, I will argue that, while ghosts have traditionally been understood as vitalist concepts, examples of an immaterial life force that both activates biological life and exists outside of it, the turn to emergent ghosts in the middle of the nineteenth century accords with the advent of the emergentist tradition. In all three novels, the turn to metaleptically-induced ghost figures serves both a generic function—providing a mystery to be solved, and a person or persons on whom to pin blame—and as a way to render death manageable. However, as I argue in the second section, attention to a strain of rhetorical metalepses in *Villette* reveals an unacknowledged vitalist commitment: what haunts the novel is the ghost of Irish sovereignty and, conservatively, a million victims of famine.[4]

Vitalism and Emergentism in the Nineteenth Century

By the turn of the nineteenth century, vitalism had come to dominate British physiological thinking, displacing early efforts toward mechanistic investigation that had gained some prominence in the prior century. Theodore M. Brown notes the "precipitous decline of varieties of mechanism and the rapid rise to preeminence of alternate varieties of vitalism . . . between 1730 and 1770" (179). Brown argues that, by the 1770s, "John Hunter [had] completed the dismantling of the Royal Society's mechanistic physiology" (181). In the second decade of the nineteenth century, Hunter's student, John Abernethy, would still be "expound[ing] a conservative vitalism" in the mold of his teacher's (Ruston 10). In Abernethy's 1814 tract on Hunter's theory of life, he lays out an understanding of a vital force "superadded" to the body by way of analogy, arguing that there is "some subtile, mobile, and invisible substance, superadded to the evident structure of muscles, or other forms of animal or vegetable matter, as magnetism is to iron, and as electricity is to various substances with which it may be connected" (39). Abernethy concludes his defense of Hunter by hazarding the idea that "mind might be superadded to life, as life is to structure" (94). From context, it's clear that part of what Abernethy has in mind here is something on the order of a soul or spirit, a position with which his contemporaneous audience was largely comfortable.

It wasn't until Abernethy's own student, William Lawrence, began to promote a kind of modified, light vitalism during the vitality debate of 1814-19 that any hint of the previously dominant mechanistic explanation began to creep back into the public discourse. According to Sharon Ruston, Lawrence undertook a years' long campaign to prove that "a notion of life as an independent matter superadded to the body was outmoded" (11). Building off the work of

pioneering French physiologists, Lawrence understood life as an effect of physiological organization, not as an independent element to which such material was heir:

> Organization means the peculiar composition, which distinguishes living bodies; in this point of view they are contrasted with inorganic, inert, or dead bodies. Vital properties, such as sensibility and irritability, are the means by which organization is capable of executing its purposes; the vital properties of living bodies correspond to the physical properties of inorganic bodies; such as cohesion, elasticity, &c. Functions are the purposes, which any organ or system of organs executes in the animal frame; there is of course nothing corresponding to them in inorganic matter. Life is the assemblage of all the functions, and the general result of their exercise. (120)

Worth noting here is that Lawrence's position is still, in L.S. Jacyna's estimation, essentially "vitalistic" inasmuch as it "reject[s] the iatromechanical systems of the mid-eighteenth century" (312). Nonetheless, Lawrence's position was subject to intense criticism, seen as a kind of slippery slope to materialism and a disavowal of the immaterial soul. Jacyna attributes much of the controversy to the "weakness of barriers" between the sciences and the broader discourse that obtained in British society in the early nineteenth century: "physiological discussion was subject to extraneous demands: it was difficult, if not impossible, to talk of life without at once impinging on such topics of the greatest sensitivity as the nature of the soul and the relation between God and man" (312). It is perhaps unsurprising that in short order Lawrence abandoned this aspect of his theoretical work and perhaps even less surprising that he was rewarded with a baronetcy by Queen Victoria shortly before his death in 1867 (Ruston 73).

At times, Lawrence and especially his contemporary and defender Thomas Charles Morgan traffic in language reminiscent of emergentism. Jacyna uses *emerge* and *emergent* in his

instructive but sometimes anachronistic paraphrase: “monists stressed that life and mind emerged, as it were, from below, by means of the elaboration of qualities inherent in matter” (315). However, neither Lawrence nor Morgan elaborated a thoroughgoing emergentist position. The latter wouldn’t appear until 1843 when John Stuart Mill would introduce the concept but not the terminology in his more rigorous philosophical treatment of causal forces in *A System of Logic*. Brian P. McLaughlin identifies Mill’s chapter, “Of the Composition of Causes,” as “the locus classicus on the notion of emergence,” citing Mill as the “father of . . . ‘British Emergentism,’” an intellectual byway that would continue through George Henry Lewes’ coining of the term *emergent* in 1875, culminating somewhere around C. Lloyd Morgan’s *Emergent Evolution* in 1923 (26).

In “Of the Composition of Causes,” Mill puts forward a cautious form of emergence by way of what he calls “*heteropathic* laws” (431). Mill couches the distinction between heteropathic laws and the “general rule” that “causes in combination produce exactly the same effects as when acting singly” in terms of a distinction between chemistry and mechanics (433). Although chemistry provides the readiest examples for Mill’s purposes—based on the mid-nineteenth century understanding of the field—Mill suggests that other kinds of phenomena constitute heteropathic effects and implies what would become explicit in later emergentist writings: natural phenomena comprise a series of increasingly complex organizational structures and their interactions across levels. Crucially for my purposes here, Mill suggests that such heteropathic effects can be traced from physical to chemical components and from there to consciousness “and even . . . social and political phenomena, the result of the laws of mind” (432).

In Mill's work, we find echoes of the vitalism that prevailed earlier in the century. There are some telling overlaps. Mill, for instance, discusses physiological organization, a key feature of Lawrence's work, and at one point uses *superadded* in a way reminiscent of Abernethy's. However, Mill, unlike the vitalists, contextualizes his discussion of "the Laws of Life" in terms of a larger procedure of emergence across ontological levels (431). Life—or even consciousness—is not an anomalous feature of natural phenomena, nor even the terminus of such phenomena, but a part of a larger system of processes. Mill, perhaps deliberately, avoids the question of entelechy that clearly motivated the vitalist debate. Life and the mind are not evidence of a soul but the irreducible results of simpler natural processes and complex compositions. By 1843, such a position seemed to cause less fuss than had Lawrence's gestures toward materialism some thirty years prior, as evidenced by Mill's high esteem among his contemporaries.

My goal in belaboring this intellectual history is, appropriately enough, historicist. My sense is that the increasing agnosticism regarding the soul in Britain's science and philosophy afforded the possibility of a new kind of ghost in its literary output. Where traditional ghosts represent something like Abernethy's superadded animating life force shorn of its material trappings, the emergent ghost of the 1850s represents nothing so much as a heteropathic effect of a complex of causal contributors. Cutting across these questions of vitalism and emergentism as regards ghosts are the related questions of metalepsis and allegory, which I turn to in the next section.

Ghosts and Allegory

In this section, I hope to demonstrate that considering ghosts, allegory, and vitalism in concert reveals circuits of reciprocal modulation and interference. That is, once we take the trouble to consider these categories in relation to one another, we start to have trouble in disentangling them. Ghost stories demand at least a partial or virtual belief in ghosts and the vital force that ghosts imply, and their allegorical force depends on the instability inaugurated by such partial belief. Narrative attempts to decouple one from the others can't succeed without recourse to strategies and concepts—in this case, metalepsis and emergence—that largely succeed in their local aim of detaching the allegorical meaning of the ghost stories from the concept of ghosts but do so at the risk of loosing that meaning from its (im)material base and exposing it to other influences and interpretations. Tearing the sheet off the ghost doesn't reveal the ghost's real meaning. It destroys the ghost, leaving us holding a sheet and trying to decide what to make of what's left standing.

Since working definitions of allegory, metalepsis, vitalism, and emergentism are already in place, the only thing left to get a handle on is the notion of ghosts. For reasons that are probably obvious, definitions are a little tricky. Patricia Lysaght (in a different context, one to which I return at the end of this chapter) neatly clarifies our problem: "Any attempt to categorise supernatural beings is fraught with difficulties and uncertainties. Something which by its very nature is mystical, dim and vague cannot readily be fitted into a logical system" (*The Banshee* 41). Ghosts represent a kind of unnatural target concept, a shared housing for a wide array of beliefs, reactions, and outright fabrications that gives the impression of an observable, external referent. A comprehensive description or definition comprising anything other than endless

caveats refuses to cohere. Nonetheless, some versions have had more significant uptake than others, and I count on the reader to extend the same generosity to this account of ghosts as a category as they would to a ghost story itself.

Complicating the already thorny issues of categorical consolidation, the appearance of a mass spiritualist movement in the 1840s meant that traditional notions of ghosts fell out of fashion. Since ghost belief was largely relegated to informal and folk settings, the increasing professionalization of psychical research in the latter half of the nineteenth century threatens to overshadow or even retroactively displace earlier forms. Commentators at the time noted the shift in prevailing attitudes. In 1894's *Cock Lane and Common-Sense*, the historian and folklorist Andrew Lang describes the waning in the public consciousness of the "good old-fashioned ghost":

> We say "old-fashioned" of set purpose, because while modern tales of "levitation" and flighty furniture, of flying stones, of rappings, of spectral hands, of cold psychical winds, are exactly like the tales of old, a change, an observed change, has come over the ghost of the nineteenth century. Readers of the Proceedings of the Psychical Society will see that the modern ghost is a purposeless creature. He appears nobody knows why; he has no message to deliver, no secret crime to reveal, no appointment to keep, no treasure to disclose, no commissions to be executed, and, as an almost invariable rule, he does not speak, even if you speak to him. (95)

Owen Davies has suggested that this perceived change largely resulted from different premises and methodological imperatives motivating the most prominent ghost investigators during different periods. While the case studies collected by clergymen and philosophers in the seventeenth century sought to "uphold a crumbling system of religious philosophy based on the

Neoplatonic conception of a world that was infused with and functioned through the interconnection of a myriad of spirits" and, thus, reflected a world of purposeful ghosts with legible motivations, the psychical research of the late nineteenth century took place in world where that system had already crumbled (Davies 8). Spiritualism and psychical research represented an attempt to integrate older beliefs into a world increasingly dominated by scientific ideas. Janet Oppenheim has argued that the Victorians and Edwardians caught up in the "occult crazes of their day . . . had not had time to adjust to an amoral world that neither cared about humanity nor made manifest an ultimate meaning in life. If they turned to spiritualism and psychical research as refuge from bleak mechanism, emptiness, and despair they did so as part of a widespread effort in this period to believe in *something*" (4). All of this suggests that the ghosts of 1850s fiction appeared as traditional understandings were just starting to shift.

For his part, Davies, in his comprehensive study of English hauntings, understands pre-spiritualist ghosts as comprising two broad categories: "purposeful and memorial" (132). The latter "memorialise the tragic end to human lives" while the former "actively intervened in the affairs of the living rather than merely appearing before them" (4). Although Davies notes that purposeful ghosts continued to appear in the popular imagination through the end of the nineteenth century, purposeful ghosts were more typical of medieval and early modern hauntings and were considered vestigial manifestations of the Catholic concept of purgatory (4-8). It's worth noting, then, that most of the ghosts under consideration in this chapter fall into the memorial category, the two exceptions being the Catholic M. Paul's version of the nun's ghost in *Villette* and Honora O'Brien's account of the banshee-ghost in Fanshawe's memoir.[5] I want to hazard a rough-and-ready progression: purposeful ghosts associated with Catholic notions of purgatory, memorial ghosts that seemed more typical of British beliefs in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, and purposeless ghosts and poltergeists that emerged once more developed scientific knowledge rendered traditional accounts unsustainable.

Clearly, the memorial ghosts of the mid-nineteenth century, if not exactly Catholic or medieval, represent a continued indulgence of Christian notions of the soul and related scientific or quasi-scientific notions of vital force. It's not surprising that this notion should prevail during the period of revanchist vitalism in the late 1700s and early to mid-1800s. The memorial ghost-form is arguably the most strictly vitalist version of ghosts available. A ghost ceaselessly performing habitual actions doesn't depend on intentional capacities undergirded by consciousness. It merely repeats behaviors without any clear purpose or desire to affect its surroundings.

Ultimately, though, nailing down what notion of ghosts motivated these authors' accounts need not be so difficult, especially for the ghosts haunting the text of *Villette*. In each instance, the historical or fictional personages explicitly articulate their understandings of the ghosts and their provenance. Honora O'Brien understands the Irish banshee-ghost to have appeared as a response to traumatic events, explains that her behaviors follow a standard pattern, but doesn't attempt an explanation of her motivations. In *Villette*, M. Paul, in typically Catholic fashion, associates the nun's ghost with his dead fiancée, believing that she troubles Lucy because Lucy has replaced her in his affections. Lucy, for her part, associates the nun's ghost with the tradition at Mme. Beck's pensionnat of a nun buried alive under a pear tree on the grounds. Tellingly, Lucy does not seem to regard the ghost as active or purposeful, instead adopting the explanation provided by the legend, that the events were so evil or the girl's psychic trauma was so great as to reverberate endlessly through time: "something had happened on this site which, rousing fear and inflicting horror, had left to the place the inheritance of a ghost-

story" (117). Where Lucy seems mostly to rely on the extant legend to guide her response, M. Paul, distrusting the legend (and perhaps what it suggests about "monkish conclaves") provides his own explanation, one that derives from guilt.

Lucy and M. Paul's polarized accounts strike me as representative of the larger function of ghost stories, especially those embedded in longer, more grounded narratives. Ghost stories typically serve allegorical functions when belief in their underlying mechanics is, at most, partial, and they tend to fall into one of two emotional camps: the endlessness of trauma and the undeniability of fate (or, perhaps, comeuppance). These two latent determiners map pretty neatly onto Davies' polarized notions of "traditional" ghosts. Memorial ghosts repeat their traumas endlessly; purposeful ghosts seek vengeance.[6] In both instances, past injustices become consolidated into anthropomorphic figures that know and do little besides carry out their behaviors. In all the novels under discussion, the ghost story—or in the case of *The Woman in White*, the virtual ghost story—arrives as a frame narrative within a world whose world-rules largely preclude ghosts. (While some characters seem to seriously entertain the possibility of ghosts, the novels imply a readership largely skeptical of these claims and invariably disprove them from a strictly literal standpoint.) To my mind, this confirms the distinction between ghost stories and ghost encounters. If encounters imply the reality of ghosts—their lived experience in the present—ghost stories always work in terms of allegory, as a vehicle for conceptualizing the high stakes of traumatic events or for more concretely figuring how the past impinges on the present. One way of thinking about allegory, especially as it concerns ghosts, is as a kind of vitalist form: the meaning of the allegory is "superadded" to the manifest content. The meaning itself appears nowhere in the story; rather, it represents an intangible, immaterial force that we assume exists based on the fact that it can be inferred through allegoresis.[7]

This neat account overlooks what I take to be a foundational aspect of ghost stories: that ghosts always threaten to return, that the hauntings might at any point reassert their force and confront us in the present. As ghosts manifest, they break their own allegorical function, forcing a reconsideration of world rules. The transition to belief in ghosts—as opposed to the entertaining of the concept—means that ghosts no longer function as figurative entities and the epistemological strategies for dealing with them no longer apply (or no longer apply as an exclusive response, which amounts to the same thing). Ghosts, when they appear, do so as actual historical or ontological existents, something to confront, not something to interpret. The threat of ghost stories—that ghosts might, at any point, become real—is constitutive of the experience of ghost stories, a contradiction that has to abide for the stories to have any real impact on their listeners.[8]

By the same token, as ghosts become real, they undermine the most fundamental notions of vitalism even as they give evidence of an immaterial soul that might animate brute material. Vitalism in the strongest form requires a material base on which the immaterial substance can act. Abernethy's notion of superaddition requires as much. The force can't act as a supplement if it has nothing to act on.

The emergent ghosts of the 1850s, then, can be read as an attempt to manage these contradictions to the extent that they deny or disregard the vitalist position while preserving ghosts' allegorical capacity. The contradiction abides, however, hobbling any attempt to rehabilitate the allegory. Foreclosing the threat (experienced or simply entertained) of a ghost actually appearing means that the ghost story serves as little more than curiosity and the allegory loses its bite. Ghosts as mere metaleptic effects can wring some of their uncanny force from the metaleptic process but do so at the risk of their own ontological grounding. The vital, allegorical

meaning of the story that found a natural, if necessarily unstable, resting place in the familiar ghost figure and its attendant forms is now freed, cut loose from its material frame and desperate for a new means of transmission. *Villette* cuts the meaning of the ghost figure loose from the ghost in an attempt to heighten or externalize Lucy's internal affective experiences of alienation, persecution, and melancholy. The melancholy is diachronically unmoored, pervading the novel because Lucy (the narrator) already knows that she (the character) will have mourned M. Paul somewhere between the conclusion of the novel's plot and the instance of its narration. By accidentally making the nun's ghost a death-messenger—a banshee figure—the novel opens up the loosed meaning to radically different interpretations than the one it seeks to communicate—but we will return to this in the second half of the essay.

Metalepsis and Emergent Ghosts

I suspect that many emergent ghosts haunt the novels of the 1850s, but I only know of three. Three constitutes a readable trend; three in significant texts across eight years probably justifies a historical reading. We won't know unless we try.[9] To that end and in preparation for a fuller discussion of *Villette*, I want to turn to a brief consideration of the emergent ghosts of *The Woman in White* and *Bleak House*.

Perhaps because it arrives last in the sequence I'm expounding and thus has the benefit of precursors to draw on, *The Woman in White* offers the most streamlined, least ontologically troubled or troubling version of an emergent ghost, in this case a ghost cobbled together in the mind of the observer, initially without a ghost story to fall back on. In brief, when Walter Hartwright and Marian Halcombe arrive at a schoolhouse seeking information about a

mysterious letter received at Marian's home, they find a schoolmaster disciplining one of his pupils, Jacob Postlethwaite, for upsetting his classmates. Postlethwaite has apparently seen a ghost walking at dusk in a nearby churchyard. By way of evidence, he offers that the ghost was dressed all in white, "as a ghaist should be," and was seen in a churchyard. When pressed by a curious Marian as to the ghost's identity, he replies that it is "T' ghaist of Mistress Fairlie," Marian's deceased mother (87). Prior to this identification, Marian expresses a kind of delight in the boy's evidentiary warrants, his speaking "as if the manners and customs of ghosts had been familiar to [him] from [his] infancy"; afterwards, she becomes accusatory, interrogating the schoolmaster about the "idea [having] been put into his head by others" (87-88). She suspects that a ghost story about her mother has been circulating in the village. Where Postlethwaite creates a ghost from mundane events, Marian manifests a ghost story based on two bad assumptions: that the boy hasn't seen an actual woman in the graveyard and that he must have been coached to imagine one on the basis of a ghost story.

In reality, Postlethwaite has seen the eponymous woman in white, Anne Catherick—the other half-sister of Marian's half-sister, Laura Fairlie—visiting the grave of Marian and Laura's mother, the late Mrs. Fairlie. As we will presently see of the ghost in *Bleak House*, the emergent ghost of Postlethwaite's perception, when combined with Postlethwaite's laborious dialectal speech, foreshadows the revelation of family secrets later in the novel. When Postlethwaite mistakes Anne for "T' ghaist of Mistress Fairlie," deeply offending Marian in the process, he says more than he realizes. By 1791, the contracted pronunciation of the title, *Mrs.*, had become standard. The *OED* quotes John Walker who writes that, by the early nineteenth century, "to pronounce the word as it is written would . . . appear quaint and pedantick" ("Mrs."). Had Postlethwaite meant Laura and Marian's mother, he should have said "Mrs. Fairlie" as the

schoolmaster does when referring to "Mrs. Fairlie's grave" a few paragraphs later (88). *Mistress Fairlie* has other connotations readier to hand, namely, "woman other than his wife with whom a man has a long-lasting sexual relationship" ("mistress"). Anne is, in fact, the daughter of Philip Fairlie and a mistress, Jane Anne Catherick. The boy accidentally identifies Anne's buried lineage, rightly designating her an illegitimate Fairlie long before most of the novel's other characters have gotten wise to the secret she carries but does not know.

The identity of the erstwhile ghost becomes clear relatively quickly, and I refer to the ghost as a metaleptic effect largely because Postlethwaite's story forces the assumption of a ghost story from which it might have sprung in the mind of Marian. Additionally, the scene ramifies both backwards and forwards in the novel's narrative. It helps to make sense of Walter's description of Anne as an "extraordinary apparition" in their initial meeting (24). More potently, it gives a framework for understanding the uncanny effect of the undecidability that pervades the novel's later sections, in which it is not clear if the woman Walter has married is Laura or Anne—that is, if it is the daughter of Mrs. or mistress Fairlie—a confusion that the novel ambiguously papers over by way of Walter's unaccountable certainty: "Not the shadow of a suspicion" crosses Walter's mind (413).[10] Contrary to Walter's clarity, the novel remains opaque on which of the women has died. In any case, a ghost of one or the other (a shade of a doubt, maybe) hangs over his marriage.

Bleak House arrives almost contemporaneously with *Villette* and offers a more complex kind of ghost than *The Woman in White*. Two statements relative to the metalepsis occur early in the novel. In one, the aunt of Esther Summerson, the novel's protagonist, provides some cryptic information about her parentage in the form of a depressing chiasm: "Your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers" (275). In another, Mrs. Rouncewell, the housekeeper at

Chesney Wold, relates the story of the Ghost's Walk, a terrace where echoing footsteps are heard periodically, though perhaps more periodically when it's raining. In short, a former inhabitant of the house was severely injured by her husband.[11] During her long decline, she walked up and down what is now the Ghost's Walk and eventually died there but not before cursing the family of her husband. Notice the chiasm that Mrs. Rouncewell preserves (or invents) in her telling: "I will die here where I have walked. And I will walk here, though I am in my grave. I will walk here until the pride of this house is humbled. And when calamity or when disgrace is coming to it, let the Dedlocks listen for my step!" (113).

The main calamity hanging over Chesney Wold during the time of the narrative is the fact that Lady Dedlock is Esther's mother, having given birth to her out of wedlock (note the rhyme). After the two discover each other, their relationship having been hidden from both by the machinations of the Dickensian plot, Esther, who must keep the secret, paces below her mother's window, only to realize what her steps resemble:

> [T]here above me were the balustrades of the Ghost's Walk and one lighted window that might be my mother's.
>
> The way was paved here, like the terrace overhead, and my footsteps from being noiseless made an echoing sound upon the flags. Stopping to look at nothing, but seeing all I did see as I went, I was passing quickly on, and in a few moments should have passed the lighted window, when my echoing footsteps brought it suddenly into my mind that there was a dreadful truth in the legend of the Ghost's Walk, that it was I who was to bring calamity upon the stately house and that my warning feet were haunting it even then. (586)

Esther finds herself an unwitting agent of prophetic fulfillment. The force of the story, combined with the force of Esther's aunt's admonition, becomes too much. She becomes what her aunt has always, against all reason, suggested she was—the disgrace of her mother. Esther acts as both a character in an in-narrative allegory, effecting a kind of metaleptic break across narrative thresholds, and confirms, at least figuratively, what her aunt could never have known. Similarly, Lady Dedlock's purported guilt ramifies both backward to justify the ghost story and forward to justify her sister's condemnation. No clear boundary separates one instance from the next; rather, they seem to occur in a circuit of mutual implication.

Having built some momentum for a historical reading, I want to turn to *Villette* and to try to sketch out a few of the metaleptic processes at work in the novel, at the center of which stands the nun's ghost. The logic of metalepsis suggests the center is little more than an excluded middle, a point around which things pivot and reorder, and I think that's mostly the case here. In brief, what I want to argue is something that is patently obvious in the novel: the nun is a dodge. The nun that haunts Lucy is revealed, very near the end of the book, to have been the disguise of Count de Hamal who has been sneaking into the boarding school where Lucy works in order to meet Ginevra Fanshawe.

Part of what I think is crucial about the nun is that, although Lucy narrates the novel as a much older woman, she allows the authenticity of the ghost to go unquestioned throughout the lion's share of the text. For Lucy, for most of the novel, and for M. Paul until his elliptical death—assuming I'm correctly reading Lucy's suggestion that none "concerned, save and excepting one, Lucy Snowe" ever "obtained satisfaction on [the] point" of how the "untoward event [de Hamal's and Fanshawe's elopement] happened"—the ghost nun is just and precisely

that (522). A bit wary of the "romantic rubbish," Lucy nonetheless associates the nun with the schoolgirls' legend (118):

> The legend went, unconfirmed and unaccredited, but still propagated, that [a slab at the foot of a dead tree in the school's garden] was the portal of a vault, imprisoning deep beneath that ground, on whose surface grass grew and flowers bloomed, the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive for some sin against her vow. (117-18)

If Lucy's rehearsal feels thin, and it does, it still provides enough information to make some pointed connections both to the Fanshawe source material and to M. Paul's interpretive scheme. Multiple aspects gesture obliquely to Fanshawe's banshee: the girl was killed in a garden, she was Catholic, and her murder followed a sexual encounter. Compare Lucy's account to that given to Fanshawe by Honora O'Brien:

> I wish you to have had no disturbance, for it is the custom of this place that when any die of this family, there is the shape of a woman appears in the window every night until they be dead. This woman was many ages ago got with child by the owner of this place, and he in his garden murdered her and flung her into the river under your window. But truly I thought not of it when I lodged you here, it being the best room I had. (58-59)

The overlaps here are instructive, as are Brontë's amendments. First, where O'Brien says "ages ago," Brontë specifies the "drear middle ages" before the O'Briens renounced their Catholicism.[12] The fact that the girl in Brontë's version is specifically a nun revises the girl's position in order to emphasize her Catholic identity. The revision also allows Brontë to inject some ambiguity into the nature of the sexual crime. Although a reader might be likely to assume the "sin against her vow" was committed by the nun, the syntax goes out of its way to avoid

identifying an agent. It seems equally likely that the nun was buried alive to cover "some[one else's] sin" against her vow. Brontë certainly doesn't make any effort to clue the reader into her source; the source, like the nun, is buried. Exhuming the remains, textual or otherwise, of the dead Irish girl, gives us a fuller picture of Brontë's metaleptic revisions and what purposes they serve. The last revision—the nature of disposal—is also worth mentioning. While O'Brien's victim is "flung . . . into a river," Brontë's is interred behind a portal, a threshold for the nun to cross.

This form of burial provides the connective fibers necessary to link Lucy's understanding of the ghost to M. Paul's and contributes new thematic significance to the already complex assemblage of metaleptic maneuvers. M. Paul, in a much more personal vein, feels that the ghost is the spirit of Justine Marie, a woman to whom he had been engaged but who became a nun when he was unable to provide for her. She died "in her noviciate" (435). With these two wholly disparate causal sources in mind, I want to suggest that the nun is multiply metaleptic in nature. There is some precedent for this in the literature. Anne Cheng, for instance, hints at a metaleptic reading without using that terminology: "Yet to trace this path of signifiers can only lose us in its multiple destinations; that is, the path can run forward as well as backwards. Freudian doubles and *revenants* are entertained as both possibility and fantasy: the double identities of the 'ghost'" (86). In Lucy's initial reading of the nun, and I don't want to belabor this since it seems fairly straightforward, the nun is metaleptic in the sense that she transgresses the boundaries of diegetic levels. If, in fact, the story of the nun is a legend, then the nun's appearance in the diegetic level of the main narrative is a kind of narrative metalepsis, a move from the world of the told into the world of the telling. On M. Paul's account, the haunting itself is the effect of his courtship of Lucy. He admonishes Lucy not to "fancy . . . that a saint in heaven [Justine Marie] perturbs

herself with rivalries of earth," betraying his own suspicion of precisely that circumstance (452). In this reading, the nun is not a ghost as a result of her untimely or untoward death but only becomes a ghost as a result of events that transpire long after she has already died, a circumstance that would seem to upend the fairly rigorous causal logic that sustains the common sense around hauntings. The nun emerges from the complex and paradoxical causal mechanisms that attend metaleptic processes, a fact that the novel emphasizes by placing the image of Justine Marie on a literal threshold, a portrait hung on a door. Lucy, while visiting the home of Madame Walravens, an elderly relative of Justine Marie whom M. Paul supports, is "attracted by the outline of a picture on the wall": "By-and-by the picture seemed to give way: to my bewilderment, it shook, it sunk, it rolled back into nothing; its vanishing left an opening arched, leading into an arched passage, with a mystic winding stair" (431). Later, "the picture … moved, fell away with the wall and let in phantoms. Imperfectly seen, I had taken it for a Madonna; revealed by clearer light, it proved to be a woman's portrait in a nun's dress" (433). Thus, the nun is not only a figure that crosses (diegetic) thresholds, she or her image itself comprises a threshold that "let[s] in phantoms," in this case, the "shadow," "sorceress," and "evil fairy," Madame Walravens herself (431). But I want to suggest that this characterization of her portrait's capacity for intromission is only possible in the wake of the "apparition" of the nun, the disguised Count de Hamal, to M. Paul and Lucy in the alley outside the boarding school (452).

In her analysis of ekphrasis in the novel, Francesca Kazan suggests that Lucy's impressionistic account of the painting is indicative of a larger "pattern in the text" inasmuch as "[s]omething is not what it seems" (545). The fact that the ghost nun is neither ghost nor nun

would certainly serve to lend some credence to this reading. But I think the ghost is not what it seems in a deeper way as well.

Throughout the middle portion of the novel, the nun serves as a kind of accessible, perhaps ironically coherent locus for the otherwise discorporate thematic indicators of death at work in the text. The nun is threatening, sure, but her embodiment is oddly comforting. It is something to investigate, to pursue. M. Paul says as much to Lucy: "Whether this nun be flesh and blood, or something that remains when blood is dried, and flesh is wasted, her business is as much with you as with me, probably. Well, I mean to make it out; it has baffled me so far, but I mean to follow up the mystery" (407-08). (This comes prior to his admitting his earlier engagement to Lucy, so she doesn't know to what he refers here.) And, of course, as we have seen, the nun proves entirely accessible. De Hamal even "ma[kes Lucy] a prettily-turned, neatly-worded apology, about the ghost visits" late in the novel (526). In this revelation, however, the nun is shorn of her threatening associations, leaving only the much more nebulous and more nebulously haunting effects of the subtler metaleptic processes.

I want to reiterate, by way of concluding this section, that the novel regards the legendary nun's identity as incidental. Unlike *Bleak House* and *The Woman in White, Villette* treats the identity of the ghost—or purported ghost—as something to be glossed over. Without some knowledge of the Fanshawe source, the nun's ostensible sin and murder submit to interpretation only along lines of Gothic convention. With Fanshawe's banshee in mind, the fact that the nun has no identity starts to make sense: *Villette* is a novel about not talking about the Irish. That the novel never acknowledges—that it *can't* acknowledge—that the nun is really a dead Irish girl is precisely the point.

The Great Hunger

It is probably worth clarifying terms at the start of this section. I use *Great Hunger* instead of *Potato Famine* (or any derivative form) because I fear that the latter places too much emphasis on the crop failure. The potato blight caused by *phytophthora infestans* affected much of Europe in the 1840s, but none besides the Irish were reduced to famine. Mike Davis, following Amartya Sen, argues that famines are "not food shortages per se, but complex economic crises induced by the market impacts of drought and crop failure" (19). To attribute blame to a water mold is to avoid properly directing it, and in this instance there is considerable reason to assign it to the British ruling class. Unlike some recent commentators, I'm not altogether comfortable referring to what occurred in Ireland as a genocide.[13] Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group," and the question of intentionality here is one that I'm not in a position to comment on.[14]

What seems clear from the historical record is that a complex of ideological motivators kept British elites from doing more to address the worst effects of the famine. Three factors, in particular, provided ideological cover for the negligence that left a million dead from hunger or related disease: "moralism," Providentialism, and a commitment to *laissez faire* economic policy. "Moralism," in this context, denotes "the set of ideas in which Irish problems were seen to arise mainly from moral defects in the Irish character" (Donnelly 20). This long-standing English prejudice worked in concert with the Providentialist interpretation of the famine. Sir Charles Trevelyan, the assistant secretary of the Treasury at the start of the famine who held the

primary responsibility for the administration of relief, provides a dismal synthesis in the closing paragraphs of *The Irish Crisis* (1848):

> [S]o far as the maladies of Ireland are traceable to political causes, nearly every practicable remedy has been applied. The deep and inveterate root of social evil remained, and this has been laid bare by a direct stroke of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence . . . . Innumerable had been the specifics which the wit of man had devised; but even the idea of the sharp but effectual, remedy by which the cure is likely to be effected had never occurred to any one. (201)

This attitude—unfortunately all too typical of British imperial ideology—was modulated and exacerbated by radical free market commitments.

There is considerable controversy over the question of economic considerations in British famine policy. What's undeniable is the fact that liberal economic theory counseled against any form of government intervention and that this approach continued to inform British policy even in the aftermath of the Great Hunger. During the Great Famine of 1876-1878 in India, British viceroy, Lord Robert Bulwer-Lytton invoked the "sacerdotal authority of Adam Smith" to justify his strict *laissez faire* approach (Davis 31). Smith, writing in response to the Bengal famine of 1770, avers that "a famine has never arisen from any other cause but the violence of government attempting, by improper means, to remedy the inconveniencies of a dearth" (Smith 105). Even Cormac Ó Gráda, who has argued contra Sen, that "the integration of markets and the gradual eradication of famine are linked," recognizes the culpability of free market fundamentalists in famine deaths: "in nineteenth-century Ireland and India a dogmatic faith on the part of the ruling elite in markets as a mechanism for relieving famine cost millions of lives" (157-58). In *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Davis is blunter: "By official dictate, India like Ireland before it had

become a Utilitarian laboratory where millions of lives were wagered against dogmatic faith in omnipotent markets overcoming the 'inconvenience of dearth'" (31). Blunter still is John Mitchel's assertion that Ireland "died of political economy" (qtd. in Ó Gráda 205).[15]

Unfortunately, the blind eye to Irish suffering was not turned exclusively by elite interests and state officers. Even a thinker as committed to decency and humanity as John Stuart Mill downplayed the humanitarian disaster of the famine. While completing *Principles of Political Economy*, Mill authored a series of leading articles in *The Morning Chronicle* between October 1846 and January 1847, arguing vociferously against proposed public works schemes in favor of a massive reform to Ireland's landholding system. He discusses the failure of his polemic in his autobiography:

> Instead of a great operation on the waste lands, and the conversion of cottiers into proprietors, Parliament passed a Poor Law for maintaining them as paupers: and if the nation has not since found itself in inextricable difficulties from the joint operation of the old evils and the quack remedy, it is indebted for its deliverance to that most unexpected and surprising fact, the depopulation of Ireland, commenced by famine, and continued by emigration. (165)

While Mill's motives here seem considerably less suspect than those of Trevelyan, describing the mass starvation of a nation in the distancing language of "depopulation" and treating it as a "deliverance," belies a lack of concern with the actual human cost of the famine. Mill's language in *The Morning Chronicle* more starkly reveals his ideologically motivated refusal of any timely and, thus, any meaningful intervention: "But as things are, we protest with all our force against giving one additional farthing on plans which hold out no better promise than that, after a larger or smaller sum of money is spent and gone, the Irish will be exactly as they were before. . . . We

will not hear of any giving merely to feed the disease, not to cure it" (886). The last sentence here is especially telling. Even in the mind of Mill, one of the most progressive thinkers of the Victorian era, giving could not mean "feed[ing]" the starving, only the disease.

Such ideological commitments hampered English responses to the Irish crisis across social registers, foreclosing any significant response. In "Ideology and the Famine," Peter Gray, while roundly criticizing the official response and its justifications, notes that the government had cover for its baldly inadequate mitigation efforts: the middle class. According to Gray, sympathetic politicians proposed alternative approaches, but these were consistently shot down due to "the strength of British public opinion manifested in parliament and particularly in the commercial and industrial constituencies": "During the Famine years the British economy went through a crisis that mobilised an assertive middle-class political opinion. Amid the confusion, those most in line with this sentiment, and those (as in the case of Wood and Trevelyan) ready to exploit it, were at a political advantage" (103). Taken as a whole, the ideological constraints of the Victorian era amounted to "a death sentence on many thousands" (103).

It's my sense that the lack of concern on the part of the English public at the height of the Great Hunger is reflected in the almost total lack of famine representation in the fiction of the period. Given the enormity of the catastrophe, it's remarkable how little was said about it. In her bibliography, "Writing of the Irish Famine," Marguérite Corporaal notes only eight novels that discuss the famine in any detail between 1853 and 1870. Six of these appear to be Irish writers, none of whom command significant name recognition.[16] Only two English novelists thought the famine worthy of significant attention; only one of these, Anthony Trollope, would be familiar to anyone besides a specialist. Unfortunately, in Corporaal's estimation, *Castle Richmond* "put[s] forth a more sympathetic image of landlordism, revealing that the fortunes of the landed class are

also affected by the Famine and suggesting that landlords may be benevolent toward their tenantry." I would suggest that, by any metric, this is a paltry showing.

While I'm sympathetic to Corporaal's and others' suggestion that the "traumatic paradigm" initiated by Eaglteon in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* deserves to be "reassessed" in the milieu of Irish literary output, an equivalent paradigm—let's call it the characteristically polite silence paradigm—indisputably holds as far as the English response.

Attempts to rehabilitate English literature from the period have, to my mind, only underscored the prevalence of the politeness paradigm. Writing on Elizabeth Gaskell's "The Poor Clare," Raphaël Ingelbien argues against "the perception that a deafening silence surrounded the Great Irish Famine" (1). Ingelbien positions the story as an allegorical commentary on the inadequate official response. I don't have any qualms with Ingelbien's allegoresis, but I do think that the very category of allegory undermines his claims on Gaskell's behalf. If the story is an "indirect, but searching treatment of the Irish Famine," then the key term in that formulation is "indirect" (1). On Ingelbien's own account, Gaskell felt it necessary to mask her true purpose. This felt necessity is precisely what's at issue inasmuch as it provides *indirect* evidence of social pressure to avoid explicit engagement with the famine. Elana Gomel, in an essay on Soviet-era allegorical science fiction, argues that "textual secrecy" can serve as a "defense against . . . censorship" (101). And allegory, as Lynette Hunter notes, has historically been a "mode of expressing what is impossible to articulate" (268). All of that is well and good. But the English government did not outlaw discussion of the famine, nor was its articulation impossible. The famine was just unpleasant, so the English willfully ignored it. But repression, as both Freud and common sense teaches us, can only hold out for so long before symptoms start showing themselves.

The Two Fanshawes

In her tightly argued 2014 article titled, directly enough, "Ireland in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," Julie Donovan provides a compelling analysis of "how Ireland insinuates itself into the more obvious continental setting of Brontë's text" (214). With a particular focus on the character of Mrs. Sweeny, an Irish caricature successfully passing as British in Labassecour, Donovan draws attention to the "submerged narratives interrogating British identity" (214). While the particularities of her argument about Mrs. Sweeny aren't my concern here, Donovan's animating premise that "[n]ames are rarely neutral in *Villette*" is one that I want to adopt in this section (215). Ultimately, Donovan argues that "we can infer a connection between Labassecour (Belgium) and another small, Catholic country struggling against a bigger, Protestant imperial power in the nineteenth century—Ireland" (220). What I want to suggest is that Ginevra Fanshawe provides a more direct route to the novel's preoccupation with Ireland's colonial history by way of her namesake, Ann Fanshawe, the wife of Richard Fanshawe, a Royalist politician who fled Ireland in advance of Cromwell's conquering army.

It's worth noting that, although the extant criticism on *Villette* has not made a connection between the two Fanshawes, critics have linked Fanshawe's memoirs and the banshee in particular to Brontëan literary output. Paula M. Krebs, the current executive director of the MLA, made the connection between Emily Brontë and Ann Fanshawe in 1998—the earliest such instance I can find—writing, "the Wuthering Heights banshee bears some striking resemblances to a tale recounted by Walter Scott in the notes to *The Lady of the Lake*, which Katherine Ankenbrandt and J. F. Goodrich [*sic*] have shown that Emily Brontë read" (45). In point of fact, both J. F. Goodridge and Ankenbrandt are concerned with the provenance of Nelly's song in chapter 9: "It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat, / The mither beneath the mools heard

that" (66). But neither "show[s]" that Brontë had read *The Lady of the Lake*. Goodridge, writing in a 1976 chapter, claims to have "traced this to the ballad 'The Ghaist's Warning', which Emily *almost certainly* found in the Notes to Scott's *Lady of the Lake*" (172; my emphasis). Seven years prior, Ankenbrandt had already shown that this connection had already been made by Francis James Child in the fifth volume of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* from 1898 (Ankenbrandt 92-93). Given Emily Brontë's avowed admiration for Scott, Ankenbrandt argues that it "*seems reasonable to assume* that Emily Brontë read [*The Lady of the Lake*]" and, thus, first encountered the text there (95n7; my emphasis). I find the Child-by-way-of-Ankenbrandt account of the ballad's sourcing compelling, if not as clear cut as Kreb's phrasing would suggest. However, I think it's a less than compelling account of the source of the Earnshaw ghost. In fact, the Earnshaw ghost might be more likely to have come from Scott's actual quotation of Fanshawe in an 1832 edition of *Tales of the Crusaders*, which he felt compelled to do since Fanshawe's manuscript had been published a few years prior and which it's likely both Brontës also read. In Krebs's reading of *Wuthering Heights*, the banshee figure gestures toward a kind of diffuse Victorian other by way of an uncanny revenant, Irish to some degree but also feminine and derived from working-class folklore. Since *Wuthering Heights* effectively predates the Great Hunger, Krebs's reading makes sense, but I argue that her sister's appropriation of the same figure a few years later—during the height of the famine—suggests a narrower concern with the Irish.

Ann Fanshawe's memoirs were first published in 1829, possibly due to public interest piqued by Walter Scott's mangled paraphrase of the banshee encounter.[17] His version of events in *The Lady of the Lake* differs markedly from those recounted in Fanshawe's text:

> But the most remarkable instance of the kind (supernatural intimations of approaching fate), occurs in the MS. Memoirs of Lady Fanshaw [*sic*], so exemplary for her conjugal affection. Her husband, Sir Richard, and she, chanced, during their abode in Ireland, to visit a friend, the head of a sept, who resided in his ancient baronial castle, surrounded with a moat. At midnight, she was awakened by a ghastly and supernatural scream, and looking out of bed, beheld, by the moonlight, a female face and part of the form, hovering at the window. The distance from the ground, as well as the circumstance of the moat, excluded the possibility that what she beheld was of this world. The face was that of a young and rather handsome woman, but pale, and the hair, which was reddish, loose and dishevelled. The dress, which Lady Fanshaw's terror did not prevent her remarking accurately, was that of the ancient Irish. This apparition continued to exhibit itself for some time, and then vanished with two shrieks similar to that which had first excited Lady Fanshaw's attention. In the morning, with infinite terror, she communicated to her host what she had witnessed, and found him prepared not only to credit but to account for the apparition. "A near relation of my family," said he, "expired last night in the castle. We disguised our certain expectation of the event from you, lest it should throw a cloud over the cheerful reception which was your due. Now, before such an event happens in this family and castle, the female spectre whom you have seen is always visible. She is believed to be the spirit of a woman of inferior rank, whom one of my ancestors degraded himself by marrying, and whom afterwards, to expiate the dishonour done to his family, he caused to be drowned in the Castle Moat." (348-49)

Beyond misspelling Fanshawe's name, Scott misremembers the circumstances of her stay in Ireland and of the young woman's murder. In fact, Fanshawe is clear that she is staying not with

the "head of a sept" but with Honora O'Brien, "a lady that went for a maid, but . . . was the youngest daughter of the Earl of Thomond" (83-84). What Fanshawe fails to mention is that Honora O'Brien was also a direct descendent of the last King of Thomond, Murrough O'Brien, who renounced Catholicism and surrendered his native title for a peerage under Henry VIII in 1543, becoming the first Earl of Thomond ("O'Brien"). Nor does Fanshawe mention that the O'Briens traced their lineage back to Brian Boru, a now legendary figure in the Irish nationalist imagination.[18]

During Fanshawe's brief stay in Ireland, her family was offered shelter by the now Royalist O'Briens, escaping in advance of Cromwell's brutal suppression of the still simmering Irish rebellion against British rule.[19] Fanshawe, from within a Royalist bubble, pauses only occasionally to consider the damage done to Ireland by warring British factions. On her family's February 1650 departure from Galway, Fanshawe considers the devastation of the isle:

> [W]e left that brave kingdom fallen in six or eight months into a most miserable sad condition, as it hath been many times in most kings' reigns. God knows why, for I presume not to say. But the natives seem to me a very loving people to each other, and constantly false to all strangers, the Spaniards only excepted. The country exceeds in timber and seaports, and great plenty of fish, fowl, flesh; and, by shipping, wants no foreign commodities. (62-63)

That Ireland's devolving into a "miserable" condition might have some direct correlation to "kings' reigns" seems not to have occurred to Fanshawe. "God knows why," indeed.

The contradictory impulses motivating Fanshawe, a desire to acknowledge Irish suffering—even if her sympathy confines itself to the "worthy persons" whose families were "ruined" during Cromwell's campaign—and a refusal to consider the role of king and country in

that suffering, are in evidence in the short quotation with which I began this chapter (57). Anne Fogarty comments on the "terrifying emotions of identification and alienation" experienced by Fanshawe during her stay in Ireland, and the banshee acts as a kind of target of this contradiction-induced anxiety: "The Irish royalists with whom Fanshawe and her husband have been making common cause are at once incorporated into their emotional ambit through the experience of the death messenger and then summarily abandoned as they are found, in the case of the Protestant O'Briens of Thomond, to be still dangerously associated with a culture that they find momentarily alluring but ultimately atavistic and suspect" (67). Ultimately, Brontë extends the force of that abandonment without the compensation of even fleetingly making common cause with the Irish.

Sharp-eyed (maybe long-memoried) readers might have remarked an inconsistency forecasted by a *sic* in the block quotation at the start of this chapter. *Honora* was left to fend without its final vowel. The original 1829 publication was riddled with typographical errors, some of which deserve more mention than others. D.K. Broster, reviewing the corrected 1907 edition of the memoirs, makes our case: "The famous ghost story gains too by the restoration of the red-haired Irish phantom's exclamation—given in 1829 as 'A horse!'—to its more appropriate form 'Ahone!'" (365). This is an unforgivable lapse on the part of the earlier editor as the Irish lament *ochón* is attested in various spellings in English as far back as 1425, appearing in works as notable as the Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (3rd ed., 1628) and Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817).[20] Although there isn't evidence to suggest a political motivation on the part of the 1829 editor, it's difficult not to read the misprint in a political light. *Ochón*, as a characteristic Irish lamentation and as intoned by a female death messenger, can't be separated from the larger history of keening as a mechanism of Irish cultural resistance to English efforts to

reform and civilize the Irish populace. Andrea Brady has argued that New English settlers in the 16th and 17th centuries experienced keening as a kind of affective threat: "Keening not only disrupted public order directly, through the release of affective energies into protests against specific church or civil authorities; its persistence in spite of legal and ecclesiastical attempts to suppress it also presented a symbolic challenge to English sovereignty" (83). Considering the wartime context of Fanshawe's presence in Ireland, the banshee's lamentation might have a wider significance—as might its suppression in the early nineteenth century, whether deliberate or coincidental.

While Honora O'Brien avers that the banshee wept for a dying family member, that the death messenger appeared to an English woman during Cromwell's brutal suppression of Irish resistance might suggest a different interpretation. We don't need to know that this particular banshee has been associated with Irish sovereignty—something I will return to in the next section—to see something more pressing behind her *ochón*. Nor do we need to brush up on our Spivak to be suspicious of that *ochón*'s misrendering as "a horse." Readers of the mid-nineteenth century were confronted not with the mourning of Irish sovereignty, not to mention those dead at the hands of Cromwell's forces, but with utter gibberish, an emptying out of political content. Of course, Fanshawe's readers were better off than Scott's, who were offered only three inarticulate "shrieks." Can the subaltern speak? Who's to say, but maybe Scott would rather they didn't.

In Brontë's work, the figure of the banshee is further neutralized. Picking up on a thread in Fanshawe's account—something that suggests Brontë's familiarity with the original text and not merely Scott's paraphrase—Lucy Snowe relates the banshee to natural phenomena. Where Fanshawe attests that the banshee vanished "with a sigh more like the wind than breath," Snowe suggests that the wind is all there ever was: "Three times in the course of my life, events had

taught me that these strange accents in the storm—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee" (43). While there is no reason to expect that Brontë would have been familiar with the complex development of the banshee figure in Irish folklore, her casual euhemerism belies a lack of concern with its symbolic value. Taken together, the accounts of both Fanshawe and Brontë effectively silence the banshee and suppress its potential political significance, a problem that I return to in the next section. Here, I only want to suggest the relation of the banshee to Irish sovereignty in order to prepare my own reader for what I imagine will be greeted as a strange assertion: Ginevra Fanshawe—the character, not the memoirist—is also implicated in the thematics of sovereignty.

It's worth remarking, again, that no critic has made the connection between Fanshawe's memoirs and *Villette*, even though critics have connected Fanshawe's memoirs to *Wuthering Heights* and a character in the novel shares her surname. Once we acknowledge that connection, it's difficult to ignore the ways that Ginevra's presence in the novel often seems to point us toward Ireland. Lucy meets Ginevra on a boat bound for Labassecour, typically understood as a stand-in for Belgium. Both are en route to Villette, the capital. The native inhabitants speak French, which is to say, like the Irish, they don't speak English. Consider this bit of dialogue from their first conversation, which is also, incidentally, the first mention of Villette in the novel:

> "And where are you now?" I inquired.
>
> "Oh! at—*chose*," said she.
>
> Now, Miss Ginevra Fanshawe (such was this young person's name) only substituted this word "*chose*" in temporary oblivion of the real name. It was a habit she

had: "*chose*" came in at every turn in her conversation—the convenient substitute for any missing word in any language she might chance at the time to be speaking. French girls often do the like; from them she had caught the custom. "*Chose*," however, I found in this instance, stood for Villette—the great capital of the great kingdom of Labassecour.

"Do you like Villette?" I asked.

"Pretty well. The natives, you know, are intensely stupid and vulgar; but there are some nice English families." (60-61)

A few observations assert themselves. Lucy Snowe calls specific attention to Ginevra's name, an emphasis that criticism on the novel has clearly overlooked. By substituting the French word *chose* for the name of their destination, the author calls attention to the fact that some form of substitution might be in play and, in a bilingual pun, suggests that such substitution is a choice. Where they are going has some "nice English families" surrounded by "stupid and vulgar" natives, a description that calls to mind contemporary English accounts of Ireland.[21]

So, why this choice to substitute Labassecour, a non-English speaking Catholic country, for Ireland, a different non-English speaking Catholic colony? The meaning of *chose* in English may supply a partial answer. *Chose* in French means something like *thing* or *stuff*. In this sense, Ginevra's use and Lucy's explication are both perfectly legible. However, *chose* in English common law derives from the French and refers to rights in property. The *OED* is inadvertently direct for our purposes: "A thing, chattel, piece of property." Alternatively, the *OED* defines *chose* in terms reminiscent of Ginevra's use: "Thing (as a general term for a thing not more particularly named)." Here, though, the primary example is extremely relevant. The dictionary cites the Wife of Bath's Prologue, which might give savvy readers some idea of where all this defining is headed. The wife twice refers to her vulva as her "bele chose," which means

something like "pretty thing" (lines 447 and 510).[22] In this context, it's relatively easy to read between the lines of the *OED*'s definitional euphemism. Thus, leaving England, Lucy and Ginevra are headed to a Catholic land that is someone's property and also something to be—for lack of a more appropriate term—fucked. Given what happened to Ireland during the Great Hunger, I'm at a loss for a more significant placeholder for the colony. The exchange represents a microcosm of the novel's strategy towards Ireland: don't directly invoke Ireland and its people's suffering; use a placeholder that still obliquely refers to it; make that (overdetermined) placeholder French. In making a very different point but concerning the introduction of Ginevra, Patricia Yaeger argues, "For Brontë what is 'unspoken' indicates not the metaphysical but the cultural limits of speech; Brontë chooses to symbolize this socially excluded zone of representation through her incorporation of an alien language system that reveals how much what is unspoken asks for a language" (20). I think this is right but want to make a couple of supplemental remarks. Where Yaeger seems concerned with the ability of the French language as a kind of metaphor for the unsayable, I argue that there is a specific thing not being said: Ireland. Ireland is what polite society in England refused to discuss.[23]

Of course, there's another way to read the yonic quality of *chose* in relation to Ginevra Fanshawe. Put simply, the novel consistently treats her with some disdain, as a frivolous, even promiscuous woman. I don't think, however, that these two readings are at odds, and I want to suggest that Ginevra's first name provides the link. Ginevra is an Italian form of Guinevere of Arthurian legend, and this is not insignificant. Clare Broome Saunders explains that reprints of Malory's *Morte Darthur* in 1816 and 1817 served as "catalysts for much of the nineteenth-century Arthurian Revival" and that Malory's version "gives extensive treatment to the love affair of Launcelot and Guenevere" (134). With the Victorian reading of Guinevere in mind,

Brontë's motivation for the other part of Fanshawe's name becomes clear: Ginevra's romantic entanglements flirt with infidelity. At the very least, she isn't to be trusted. But, there's another wrinkle here, one Brontë probably couldn't have intended. There's a well-established though somewhat fringe strain in Arthurian criticism that links Guinevere to sovereignty goddesses in the Welsh tradition. In "Gwenhwyfar, Guinevere and Guenièvre," Glenys Witchard Goetinck argues that Guinevere's sharply divided character, on the one hand "magnanimous and a fitting consort for Arthur," on the other "capricious and faithless," might well be explained by recourse to an earlier iteration of Guinevere as a sovereignty goddess: "Guinevere with her beauty, her several lovers, her sharp tongue, her tendency to test her favourite and her connection with a cup, may derive from a Welsh equivalent to the goddess known in Irish literature as the Sovereignty of Erin" (354). In this reading, Guinevere acts as a personification of the kingdom, with marriage representing the rightful bestowal of sovereignty on her deserving husband. Over time, these pagan stories were forced into a more Christian mold, and the vestigial elements—particularly the transfer of affections to a more appropriate receiver—became contradictions in the Arthurian cycle.

I don't mean to suggest that Brontë was calling on a tradition of literary criticism with which she could not have been familiar. Rather, by attempting to allude to Guinevere's infidelity and capriciousness by way of Ginevra Fanshawe, she has unwittingly rewritten Fanshawe's banshee encounter as a confrontation between two sovereignty goddesses: Gwenhwyfar, now thoroughly Anglicized, and Aoibheall, the O'Brien banshee, who was linked to the kingship of Brian Boru. It is fitting, then, that in such a confrontation, the English woman (and the author who rewrote her as Guinevere) should have been oblivious while the Irishwoman inarticulately mourned.

Lucy Snowe: Labassecourien Banshee

Banshee appears sparingly in *Villette*: once near the beginning of the novel and once in its final pages. Perhaps this explains the relative lack of attention to the subject in criticism of the novel.[24] And, to be fair, Brontë's avowed interest in the figure is superficial at best. Although discussion of the banshee effectively bookends the novel, her interest in it apparently stems from keening's potential relation to storms. In the first instance, Brontë attempts a kind of folkloric naturalism:

> The wind was wailing at the windows; it had wailed all day; but, as night deepened, it took a new tone—an accent keen, piercing, almost articulate to the ear; a plaint, piteous and disconsolate to the nerves, trilled in every gust.
>
> "Oh, hush! hush!" I said in my disturbed mind, dropping my work, and making a vain effort to stop my ears against that subtle, searching cry. I had heard that very voice ere this, and compulsory observation had forced on me a theory as to what it boded. Three times in the course of my life, events had taught me that these strange accents in the storm—this restless, hopeless cry—denote a coming state of the atmosphere unpropitious to life. Epidemic diseases, I believed, were often heralded by a gasping, sobbing, tormented, long-lamenting east wind. Hence, I inferred, arose the legend of the Banshee. (42-43)

Lucy, in discussing the storm that presages Miss Marchmont's death, falls back on the two defining characteristics of banshees that seem to hold across time and national context: heralding imminent death and crying (Lysaght, "Irish Banshee Traditions" 103-105). Brontë deserves all due credit for positing an account of the banshee myth that avoids attributing the myth to Irish

backwardness, but it's difficult not to notice that Brontë has effectively sapped the figure of any cultural context, which is a problem in its own right.[25]

Overlooking the Irish context allows Brontë to lend some generic symbolic weight to Lucy Snowe's experience of loss without taking on the cultural baggage of the banshee figure in general or the O'Brien banshee in particular. Antiquarian Herbert Hore's roughly contemporary account of the origin of the banshee myth (composed before his death in 1865 but not published until the 1890s) finds its author arguing in a euhemerist vein.[26] Following on the heels of Walter Scott, of all people, who had argued in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830) that folklore surrounding fairies and, specifically, dueregar (or dwarfs) derived from "the diminutive natives of the Lappish, Lettish, and Finnish nations, who . . . endeavoured to hide themselves" amongst the caverns of Scotland and northern England (120), Hore traces the banshee legend to a corruption of real historical figures, in this case nurses in the service of local chieftains, whose practices and customs account for the greater part of the banshee's apparent attributes:

> Every great Irish house retained a nurse, who had knowledge of herbs, who prepared decoctions and administered them, and who attended to and watched the sick and dying. Accustomed to be up at night, she perhaps went out occasionally to gather herbs in the moonlight; and accustomed to mourn and cry, a "keener," she would, when the patient under her care was past hope, naturally begin to lament in her fashion. The inhabitants of the house or castle in which the sufferer lay, would recognise in her cries a sure sign that the sufferer was dying; and thus it came to pass that the banshee's or fairy-woman's shriek was truly deemed a forerunner of death. (127)

Perhaps understandably, Hore's genealogy of the banshee concept corresponds to at least one prominent explanation for the provenance of individual banshees. Patricia Lysaght explains,

"Since some of the names used for the supernatural death-messenger imply that she is a keening woman, and that keening and wailing are among her most prominent traits, it is hardly surprising the idea should have arisen that she was a human keening woman who must continue her activity after death" (*Banshee* 49). This belief that the banshee is a kind of ghost is not universally held and competes with alternative explanations that range from fairies to demonic or angelic beings, with perhaps the most prominent position being the lack of concern with provenance altogether.

The ghostly explanation seems to have offered more explanatory power and found favor with those interested in turning the banshee figure to some narrative account. With direct reference to Fanshawe's memoir, Lysaght suggests that the banshee is sometimes described as "the ghost of a woman who suffered violence from the progenitor of the family she follows," a motif "conspicuously absent from the archival sources and occur[ing] only in a few literary ones": "It is understandable that such a dramatic motif as the seduction and murder of a maiden should appeal to certain romantic and sensational writers but it must be regarded as uncertain whether it was ever found in this context in genuine folk tradition. If it was, it was never very prominent" (48). That Fanshawe's secondhand account of the O'Brien banshee's provenance would fall outside the norm is unsurprising but does contribute to the sense that Brontë's third- or fourth-hand use voids the banshee of its Irishness.

Lysaght's own genealogy of the banshee trope, on the other hand, stresses its Irish character and, in particular, its relation to Irish sovereignty. The banshee as understood in the nineteenth century was the repository of centuries of cultural accretion, having collected divergent elements along a path toward uneasy consolidation. Lysaght traces the O'Brien banshee—Aoibheall—to traditional accounts of the 1014 Battle of Clontarf, which in the "nationalist interpretation of Irish history" remains the "climactic victory of the Irish over a

foreign foe, a victory that ended Norse aspirations of conquering Ireland" (Finnegan and McCarron 5). According to twelfth- and thirteenth-century annals, Aoibheall, a "territorial goddess of the land of Thomond" (Lysaght 194-95), appeared to Brian Boru to inform him of his impending death in battle the next day. In the centuries that followed, Aoibheall lost her strict association with the land, developing into a "tutelary being" who protected the house of the O'Briens and eventually a death-messenger attached to the O'Briens, in which position she appeared to Ann Fanshawe. It is perhaps worth reemphasizing that her appearance coincided with the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland:

> If it is accepted that the death-messenger originally symbolised the sovereignty of the land, then her ancestress-type connection with families can be more readily understood on the basis of the concept of sacral kingship. . . . On the other hand the denial of the death-messenger to foreigners who settled in lands obtained particularly as a result of the Cromwelian or Williamite confiscations and forfeitures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, can be understood in political and ethnocentric terms as indicating that they were intruders and not the rightful spouses of the lands they possessed and that they were also of dubious ancestry. (206-07)

Thus, embedded in the sixteenth-century banshee of Ann Fanshawe and the nineteenth-century appropriation of Fanshawe's account rests an avowedly, if vanishingly, political figure of Irish sovereignty, a curious being for a British novelist writing during the Great Hunger to invoke to purely personal ends.

To be clear, there is no reason to suspect that Brontë would have been aware of the banshee's symbolic lineage. However, her use of Fanshawe's encounter as material for the banshee trope and substantial basis for the narrative provenance of the nun's ghost and her

treatment of the two as distinct effectively foreclose any clear sense of the banshee's specific political meaning. Instead, both tropes are put in service of a personal, nakedly autobiographical story about the author's romantic frustrations. This kind of maneuver is a recognized feature of Brontë's writing. For example, Lyn Pykett, writing on *Villette* but without a clear reference to the banshee, has argued that the "Brontës were also key figures in the psychologizing of gothic, a process in which gothic devices were used to figure and explore the psychological interiority of fictional characters" (199). I think this is correct, but I also think that, in this instance, it's hard to ignore the ways in which such a procedure might come across as exploitative or, at the very least, tone deaf.

By using the banshee as a way to figure personal grief, Brontë willfully disregards the Irishness of the figure, a quality on which she should have had a handle even without the archival work of twentieth-century folklorists. Ultimately, the hollowing out of the banshee feels synecdochic of the larger procedure of the novel: precisely not talking about the Irish or Irish colonial suffering while simultaneously using Irish signifiers to communicate a personal, apolitical (or depoliticized) hurt.

Lucy returns to the banshee figure in the last paragraphs of the novel while describing the storm in which M. Paul apparently dies. Again, the east wind asserts itself:

> The skies hang full and dark—a rack sails from the west; the clouds cast themselves into strange forms—arches and broad radiations; there rise resplendent mornings—glorious, royal, purple as monarch in his state; the heavens are one flame; so wild are they, they rival battle at its thickest—so bloody, they shame Victory in her pride. I know some signs of the sky; I have noted them ever since childhood. God watch that sail! Oh! guard it!

> The wind shifts to the west. Peace, peace, Banshee—"keening" at every window! It will rise—it will swell—it shrieks out long: wander as I may through the house this night, I cannot lull the blast. The advancing hours make it strong: by midnight, all sleepless watchers hear and fear a wild south-west storm.
>
> That storm roared frenzied, for seven days. It did not cease till the Atlantic was strewn with wrecks: it did not lull till the deeps had gorged their full of sustenance. . . .
>
> Peace, be still! (545-46)

There's a lot to unpack here, but it's worth taking a moment to clarify what's happening. M. Paul, having spent three years attending to a family-owned plantation in the West Indies, is returning to Villette, and Lucy expects that they will be married soon. Instead, M. Paul's boat is caught in a storm caused by the polar easterlies, and M. Paul is killed although Lucy declines to say so outright.

What I want to discuss at some length is how this instance of the banshee works in concert with the prior reference with which I began this section. Lucy says that she has heard the "keening" voice presaging death three times "ere this" without fuller explanation. What I want to suggest here is that Lucy's "this" might well refer to the time of her narration as much as to the night of Miss Marchmont's death. If the latter is taken as read, this would certainly explain why Lucy is working for Miss Marchmont in her early twenties: three members of her family have died, leaving her without material support. If, however, we take the metaleptic structures of the novel seriously, the three instances might plausibly expand to include not just her family (now conceived as a single tragedy), but Miss Marchmont and M. Paul as well.

Such a reading allows us to make sense of Lucy's attempt to gloss over the death of her family by way of an extended metaphor. M. Paul's death at sea provides the figurative scheme

by which Lucy describes the difficulties of her late adolescence (another longish quotation, forced on me by the nature of Brontë's language):

> It will be conjectured that I was of course glad to return to the bosom of my kindred. Well! the amiable conjecture does no harm, and may therefore be safely left uncontradicted. Far from saying nay, indeed, I will permit the reader to picture me, for the next eight years, as a bark slumbering through halcyon weather, in a harbour still as glass—the steersman stretched on the little deck, his face up to heaven, his eyes closed: buried, if you will, in a long prayer. A great many women and girls are supposed to pass their lives something in that fashion; why not I with the rest?
>
> Picture me then idle, basking, plump, and happy, stretched on a cushioned deck, warmed with constant sunshine, rocked by breezes indolently soft. However, it cannot be concealed that, in that case, I must somehow have fallen overboard, or that there must have been wreck at last. I too well remember a time—a long time—of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltness of briny waves in my throat, and their icy pressure on my lungs. I even know there was a storm, and that not of one hour nor one day. For many days and nights neither sun nor stars appeared; we cast with our own hands the tackling out of the ship; a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (39)

This account is marked by multiple metaleptic effects. One, as I've already suggested, is the presence of M. Paul's later literal but unnarrated death, which substitutes for the undisclosed tragedy of Lucy's early life. Another is the fact that Lucy suggests this metaphor, a function of her narration and seemingly dependent on M. Paul's death, forms the basis for the nightmares

she began having in the aftermath of her family tragedy (perhaps a decade before she even met M. Paul). A final effect is achieved in terms of a buried allusion to Coleridge.

Lucy, before elliptically admitting the tribulations that marked her late adolescence, invites the reader to imagine her "in a harbour still as glass." Here Brontë is making a fairly direct reference to *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*. Near the end of the supernatural ordeal, the speaker of Coleridge's long poem finds himself in a "harbour-bay" as "clear as glass" (477).[27] Brontë achieves a Bloomian metalepsis inasmuch as this is not a simple instance of quotation or allusion. She quotes with careful selection and an important difference. Clearness is a unique feature of glass. Stillness isn't. Most things are still. So, why the quotation, and why the revision?

The quotation is easier. For one thing, Coleridge's poem is, outside of *The Tempest*, probably the most significant English text dealing with a tragedy at sea, which makes it a prime intertext and antecedent for the thematics of *Villette*. More importantly, though, *Rime* is a poem structured around corrupted causal mechanics. The speaker shoots the albatross because he needs to suffer the endless consequences of having shot the albatross. The mariner does not initially give any reason for shooting the bird. He merely says that he "shot the Albatross" (80). It is only after the bird has died and the winds have stopped that the rest of the ship's crew determine the full import of the mariner's actions: he "kill'd the Bird/That made the breeze to blow" (91-92). Of course, he argues for a different account, saying that he killed the bird that caused the fog, but there is little reason to assume this is anything other than an attempt to acquit himself within the strange causal logic that has overtaken the ship. Birds don't cause breezes or fog; they are subject to them. If the logic of causality that dictates the rest of the story holds, the mariner kills the bird because of a supernaturally dictated compulsion. The mariner, in response to the

hermit's query is "forc'd . . . to begin [his] tale" and to wander without stopping (613). By a similar (or, maybe, communicated) magical force, the mariner compels the Wedding-Guest to listen to his story. All of these actions are carried out without an expectation as to their consequences, which would seem to preclude any attribution of intention. They happen because the narrative forces them to occur. The consequences, which are necessary, cause the action, not by dint of the actor's intention but because the effect of the narrative wouldn't be possible without them. By the same token, I argue, M. Paul's death happens as much because Lucy needs a metaphor for her prior tragedy as for any other reason.

Finally, Lucy's substitution of still for clear remains to be accounted for. The most immediate explanation is that Lucy prizes stillness where Coleridge's speaker doesn't precisely because, where still waters meant suffering for him, rough waters are what has spelled tragedy for Lucy. When Lucy describes the fortunate lives of her friends, she does so in terms of calmness: "I do believe there are some human beings so born, so reared, so guided from a soft cradle to a calm and late grave, that no excessive suffering penetrates their lot, and no tempestuous blackness overcasts their journey" (482). The longer explanation depends on still's adverbial meaning, something like "in the future as in the past." Before she admits the deceit at the bottom of her long metaphor, Lucy tries to neutralize temporality itself, to stop time before it can turn back on itself. Paradoxically, though, she does so from within the metaleptic figure; she is already embedded in the tragedy still to come.

Conclusion: An Answer of Peace

I've yet to draw out the final metaleptic element of the storm passages that seems to me relevant in this context: the reference to Genesis 41. Both times Lucy invokes the banshee, she refers to the east wind and its dreadful consequences. Initially, reading the east wind's association with death seemed to me like a simple exercise. Ireland lies west of England, so the foul wind blowing might be readily associated with the metropole's failed famine response. I don't think that's wrong, but biblical references to the east wind significantly enhance such a reading. In Genesis 41, Pharaoh has two dreams: one of seven healthy cows followed by seven lean ones; another of seven full ears of corn followed by "seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind" (*KJV*, Gen. 41.7). Neither Pharaoh nor his assembled magicians can interpret the dream, but a servant vouches for Joseph's dream reading. Joseph asserts that the images of plenty and famine will come to pass and that the unit of seven indicates the length in years—which makes sense considering corn is subject to annual planting cycles. Seven years of famine should call to mind the duration of the Great Hunger (1845-52). Not coincidentally, seven years also represents the time elapsed between official recognition of the famine in the fall of 1845 and the completion of the *Villette* manuscript.[28] Joseph's story diverges from the reality of the Great Hunger on the order of response: Joseph counsels setting aside a store of food that might be distributed during the lean years. England chose not to traffic in responsible resource management or equitable distribution based on need.

Whether intentional or not—and Brontë's assertion that "'Villette' touches on no matter of public interest" would seem to put the question to bed (qtd. in Gaskell 390)—Brontë calls on that most hallowed of literary sources, the Book of Genesis, in her effort to divert attention away

from a too obvious connection to the Irish during the Great Hunger. Hoping to undercut the political and cultural significance of the banshee by making it a mere function of the weather, Brontë inadvertently reinserts the problem of the famine in terms that couldn't be more explicit. If the banshee was too close to the Irish for comfort, it was still not a direct link to famine. The east wind, positioned as a diversion, provides the link in certain terms: seven years of "very grievous" famine (Gen. 41.31). If Brontë was hoping to distract from the banshee and thus the Irish and thus the famine, she could hardly have done worse than associating it with a term so obviously loaded with figurative baggage that it demands investigation, which would of course reveal that the very first mention of east wind in the most widely read book in the western canon connects it to famine. Worse, Brontë connects it to a story of responsible statecraft, of what could have been if the English had acted with due force. I don't think she meant to, but that's kind of the point here.

The more pressing way to think about Pharaoh's dream in this context concerns how it embeds an example of a stupefying refusal to acknowledge reality in a novel that is doing exactly that. *Villette* willfully, which is not to say intentionally, acts as though it's not about the Great Hunger. Pharaoh's dream seems pretty simple. The images are direct. The only code that needs breaking is the repetition of the number seven, and Joseph supplies a fairly straightforward abductive response. Joseph says that he acts through divine intervention, but does he need God's help? One wonders if Pharaoh's magicians just weren't willing to deliver bad news and hadn't hit on Joseph's foolproof scheme for diverting blame. More seriously, the story speaks to a social context in which the fear of punishment silences anyone who might productively intervene.

It is in this capacity that I think the metaleptic adoption of the biblical story has the most purchase in the reading of this chapter. As I've repeatedly stressed, Brontë's efforts to render

unthinkable things manageable rely heavily on obfuscation and fail because of the complexity of these obfuscatory measures. Just as was the case with allegorical ghost stories, metalepsis offers a false promise of diversion or suppression, instead revealing the unacknowledged allegory in its full vitality. The attempts to suppress the symptoms of Irish suffering, to make them serve the much more comfortable ends of figuring personal melancholy overwhelms the novel's figurative system, and what emerges is an even more strident insistence on the fact of real death.

What I think *Villette* ultimately tries to do—the function the novel tries to serve—is rewrite Pharaoh's dream in a way that absolves England of its guilt. In Genesis, power demands that a text be interpreted, an interpreter does so, and meaningful preparations are made based on the interpretation. *Villette*, like Pharaoh's dream, is a text about famine, but there's no Pharaoh and no Joseph. The function of *Villette* is to be a text that doesn't have a social context of power and responsibility, that only appears after the damage has already been done, whose real meaning can be safely ignored because it isn't something to be discussed anyway. England doesn't have to act; it just has to mourn. And it doesn't have to mourn for the Irish; it can mourn for Lucy Snowe's dead loved ones.

To be clear, I'm no Joseph here. Real history is linear. There's no going back, and in this reading the point of the novel is to render the possibility of a Joseph irrelevant. The famine's already happened. Brontë tries desperately not to talk about it, to talk about anything else. The same logic of compounding elements to obscure the real topic that pervades the novel is what ultimately dooms the endeavor. Lucy says more than Brontë means her to, and noticing a banshee is about as difficult as figuring that seven probably amounts to seven years. That this reading hasn't happened before says more about the magicians than it does about the dream.

Notes

1. With one exception, which I will mark, I take quotations from the corrected 1907 edition of Fanshawe's memoirs.

2. Julie Donovan's "Ireland in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*" stands out in this regard, and I discuss it later in the chapter.

3. Althusser describes his process in this way: "we have simply tried to apply to Marx's reading the '*symptomatic' readings* with which Marx managed to read the illegible in Smith, by measuring the problematic initially visible in his writings against the invisible problematic contained in the paradox of *an answer which does not correspond to any question posed*" (29).

4. Caroline Elkins, in her magisterial study of the British Empire, *Legacy of Violence*, squares the numbers this way: "The disaster claimed the lives of up to 1 million of the poorest of Europe's poor and forced an estimated 3 million to emigrate from Ireland, leading to an overall population decline of nearly 25 percent—a decline that continued such that Ireland's population dropped from 8.1 million in 1841 to 4.5 million in 1901" (113).

5. It's worth noting that, in O'Brien's account, the banshee and ghost components of the figure create a contradiction. The figure is understood to be the ghost of a young woman murdered by one of O'Brien's ancestors, and it's unclear why she would return from the dead to perform a kind of service, death-messaging, for the family of the man who killed her. Perhaps this contradiction explains why O'Brien's version of the banshee's provenance is not typical of folk accounts.

6. I'm simplifying a bit here. Davies offers a range of behaviors for purposeful ghosts, but vengeful spirits dominate the archives (4-6).

7. There might be a way to think of symptomatic allegory in the Jamesonian vein as in some way analogous to Lawrence's vitalism-by-way-of-organization. Unfortunately, this already dense chapter can't sustain such a discussion.

8. Although I don't have time to discuss this in much detail, I want to suggest that the constitutive contradiction I'm describing here calls into question the neat structuralist scale between "the fantastic" and "pure allegory" that Tzvetan Todorov offers in *The Fantastic* (65). That scale assuredly exists and might represent a useful heuristic, but I think Todorov overlooks how easily pure allegory can be corrupted and how necessary such corruption or the threat of such corruption really is.

9. Of course, I already know. Lucy Snowe knew M. Paul was going to be dead. It's a rhetorical withholding.

10. For a fuller discussion of this aspect of the marriage plot, see Ablow 106-11, Dever 123, and Kendrick 23.

11. It's worth noting that a full sixty percent of the ghost figures in this chapter can be traced back to some kind of domestic or sexual violence.

12. I want to take a moment here to acknowledge that there is at least one good reason to be suspicious of O'Brien's account. I argue in a later section of this chapter that the banshee represents a corrupted form of a traditional sovereignty goddess. If O'Brien was familiar with the legends surrounding her ancestors, she may have provided an explanation that would have been less likely to offend her English Royalist guests.

13. For one such example, see Coogan 229-31.

14. I have fewer qualms about criticizing the emphasis on intention. I think it's fair, although probably controversial, to say that what happened in Ireland was genocidal in effect.

Within a decade, something close to a quarter of the island's population had died or emigrated. Whether this was intentional in the traditional sense seems, to me, largely beside the point. Foucault's comments on power relations in *The History of Sexuality* suggest that a more expansive understanding of intention might be needed to reckon with the enormity of the issue: "Power relations are both intentional and nonsubjective. If in fact they are intelligible, this is not because they are the effect of another instance that 'explains' them, but rather because they are imbued, through and through, with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject" (94).

15. It's probably worth noting that Mitchel himself was no prince. He was a vile racist who, after relocating to America, became a pro-slavery secessionist. See McGovern. I mention it mostly to acknowledge racist ideology's resilience even in the face of overwhelming material inducements to solidarity amongst the oppressed.

16. The anonymously authored *Poor Paddy's Cabin* was published in London by an English press and severely criticized the Catholic church. With that in mind—and I admit, no other evidence—I think the authorial pseudonym "An Irishman" might protest too much.

17. Scott eventually provided an accurate quotation in the 1832 edition of *The Tales of the Crusaders* (see the note on pages 164-65). Knowing that the memoir had been published and that, as a result, readers could check his work against the original, Scott requested a copy of Fanshawe's memoirs in an 1831 letter to his publisher, Robert Cadell (*Letters* 475).

18. In the next section, I discuss Boru's place in a longer history of Irish sovereignty.

19. In H.C. Fanshawe's notes to the 1907 edition of the memoirs, he confirms that in 1651 Henry Ireton, a Roundhead general, accused O'Brien of aiding the enemy by secreting goods and cattle on her property, thus confirming her Royalist associations (405).

20. See the *OED* entry for "ochone." Burton speaks of the howling "ohone" of "those Irish women" (176). Scott, in form the reader may have come to expect, simplified the spelling slightly: "ohon" (272).

21. Take, for one especially repugnant instance, Charles Kingsley's description of Ireland and the Irish in an 1860 letter to his wife: "But I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe that there are not only more of them, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours" (qtd. in Duffy 25).

22. For a much fuller discussion of the Wife of Bath's language, see Bjork, especially 340-44.

23. More recently, William A. Cohen provides more analysis in the vein of Yaeger's in "Why Is There So Much French in *Villette*?"

24. Carole Silver, who mentions Brontë's work and whose avowed interest concerns the euhemerist influence on the literature of the day, doesn't mention the banshee in *Villette*: "Oddly enough, Victorians made little use of the banshee motif in fiction; perhaps it was still too much believed, perhaps it was too localized, too identified with the Irish" (174). I would argue that the final suggestion is most likely correct.

25. Brontë's mobilization of the "long-lamenting east wind" may, in this regard, say more than she means to, a point to which I return at the end of the chapter.

26. The article itself is edited and includes annotations by noted euhemerist David MacRitchie, whose "pygmy theory" of fairy provenance has been well-documented elsewhere. See Silver, especially 47-50.

27. Line numbers refer to the 1798 edition of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*.

28. In a letter dated 30 October 1852, Brontë asks a friend's opinion on the manuscript, which suggests its recent completion (qtd. in Gaskell 389).

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