

**“THRESHOLD NAMES” IN VICTORIAN NOVELS AND PRINT CULTURE**

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## Abstract

This dissertation investigates complexities of gender and genre through a close reading of author, title and character names appearing in and around four popular Victorian novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862). Author names have been a significant component in reading Victorian women writers' authorial agency. I revisit this issue with a focus on Victorian print culture's discursive naming practices for these women authors, drawing on a revised formula of Michel Foucault's author-function: how were Gaskell's anonymity, Currer Bell's and George Eliot's pseudonymity and Braddon's onymity received by contemporary reviewers? As both author names and titles serve as crucial in-between names that present literary texts to the world, I analyze their literary and social functions using Gérard Genette's concept of paratexts.

I show how character names promote mixed genres of Victorian novels through their contrasting narrative and discursive functions. Philosophical frameworks of description and designation are introduced to read character names within the novels in parallel with the reception of these characters in periodical reviews. Based on reception studies, my research demonstrates how these names interacted with Victorian discourses on gender and genre. While various forms of women author names blurred the boundaries between masculine and feminine writing models, opposing character names crossed the generic border between realism and sensationalism. By taking multiple forms in their discursive effects on Victorian readers, all these Victorian names become "threshold names."

## **Introduction: “Threshold Names” in Victorian Novels and Print Culture**

This dissertation explores what I call the “threshold names” of mid-Victorian novels and print culture. I define threshold names as ambiguous Victorian names situated between the text and the world, description and designation, personality and impersonality. The first distinction denotes spatial modes; the second refers to linguistic modes; the third is affective modes, that is, actual impacts these threshold names have on readers. My concept of threshold names covers three major categories of author, title and character names, which will be examined in terms of mid-Victorian discourses on gender and genre, broadly informed by the division between masculine and feminine writing models and between the novels of plot and the novels of character, respectively. I want to complicate our current notions of Victorian gendered agency and genre through my historical research about threshold names appearing in and around four popular novels published in the mid-Victorian period: Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). I choose these novels as they allow me to explore gender complexity embedded in their author names as well as genre heterogeneity found in their character names. While I closely engage with the reception of both author and character names in the discursive realms of Victorian periodical reviews, I also turn to the textual world of these novels to analyze the narrative behaviors of character names. I compare Victorian print culture’s “discursive” naming practices with Victorian novels’ “narrative” naming practices to ultimately demonstrate that a parallel exists between the two naming practices. While these threshold names had a great impact on Victorian readership on the one hand, they were, on the other hand, inscribed as part of wider social discourses of Victorian print culture.

## Author Names, Gender, Victorian Print Culture

The author names under my consideration for these women writers are Gaskell's anonymity, "Currer Bell," "George Eliot" and "Miss Braddon." I use quotations marks around these names to indicate their status as linguistic and material signifiers, not as biographical persons throughout this dissertation. While the first three author names were published author names for their first major novels, "Miss Braddon" was the most frequently addressed name in periodical reviews. To investigate the relationship between these names and gender discourses of the mid-Victorian era, I place these author names in the historical context of Victorian print culture. How were they received and used by their first round of readers? How would the first receptions of these women author names challenge the preexisting authorial agency models of Victorian women writers?

My study draws on the reception studies of these women writers through their names, departing both from traditional authorship studies that have put unified authority on the figure of an author and from feminist criticisms that granted either full agency or none at all to Victorian gender. As signifiers for authorial statuses, women writers' names have been important components in assessing Victorian female authorship. Literary feminist scholars have taken up the issue of "naming" for Victorian women writers to figure out the politics of gender in nineteenth-century England. Gynocritics of the late 1970s and early 1980s often read male pseudonyms as a marker for the repressive psychology of women writers. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their feminist classic *The Madwoman in the Attic*, argue that Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot conveyed a "female anxiety of authorship" by assuming male pseudonyms. Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* established a separate female tradition from male writers and argued that women writers had to use male pseudonyms to get their works published. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong reversed this gynocritical thinking by arguing that women writers played major roles in

forming middle-class bourgeois ideologies through their domestic heroines. In this representative feminist scholarship, how to interpret women writers' names—especially their male pseudonyms—has become a critical matter for determining the extent of female authorial agency for Victorian women writers. But they have often either granted or denied authorial agency to these women writers in a wholesale way.

I revisit women author names not so much to grant or deny authorial agency to these women writers as to reveal gender complexities embedded in those names. My project re-reads women author names used and circulated in Victorian print culture to see how these names, as literary and social forms, refracted and were refracted by contemporary readership. Caroline Levine cautions in “Strategic Formalism” that feminist critics become bipolarized between agency or non-agency models of Victorian gender. Instead, Levine offers form as a strategy for reading Victorian gender in more flexible and dynamic ways. I use the same methodological thinking in reading these women author names as material forms inflected by Victorian print media. Their names became a site where various social, political and material forces collided with one another revealing the culture's own gender ideologies.

I situate my work within new scholarly efforts to reevaluate Victorian women writers in light of specific cultural and social circumstances. Going beyond binary constructions of Victorian gender, recent book historians and print culture scholars investigate the material and historical conditions of Victorian women. Laurel Brake, Margaret Beetham, Kate Flint and Jennifer Phegley all emphasize the importance of nineteenth-century print culture in evaluating Victorian literary texts.<sup>1</sup> While these scholars examine the relationship between

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<sup>1</sup> Laurel Brake, in *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the nineteenth century* (1994), argues that we need to re-evaluate Victorian literary texts in parallel with Victorian journalism, as many periodical journals provided an original site for the publication of literary texts. Margaret Beetham's *A Magazine of Her Own?* (1996) focuses on women's magazines while Kate Flint and Jennifer Phegley discuss various types of women readers in relation to the nineteenth-century print culture in *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (1993) and *Educating the Proper Woman Reader: Victorian Family Literary magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation* (2004), respectively.

gender and print culture by focusing on women readers, other scholars have come forward to reassess Victorian female authorship in more nuanced ways by situating women writers in the context of the nineteenth-century literary market. Catherine Judd argues that Victorian women writers strategically adopted male pseudonyms to protect their private, domestic selves from the contamination of the marketplace (260). Linda K. Hughes pays attention to the “material realities” of Victorian publishing industry in reading Elizabeth Gaskell’s writing (3). Barbara Onslow provides an overview of women and nineteenth-century journalism to draw a map of relations between women journalists and what she perceives as the masculine world of publishing market (xi). Janis Harris and Alexis Easley show how Victorian women writers took advantage of the periodical convention of anonymity to participate in the current debates on social and political issues. Although these scholars end up with varying stances on the problem of women author names and their relevant agencies, they all grapple with specifically conditioned, material relations of Victorian culture and join the recent critical trend to see materiality in literary works. As Bill Bell observes, “In the post-theoretical (re)turn to history there is now, in literary and cultural studies, an increasing preoccupation with material relations, manifest in the growing number of interdisciplinary approaches foregrounding the importance of the production, circulation, and reception of texts” (327).

With the same methodologies in mind, my project traces the receptions of four different women author names in Victorian review culture. I argue that these names performed specific functions for their literary works, on the one hand, and became discursive constructs of mid-Victorian print culture, on the other hand. Instead of regarding authors as the origin of meanings, I see them as literary and social functions performed through their names, drawing on theories set forth by Gérard Genette and Michel Foucault. First, a literary function of author names derives from Genette’s *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* first introduced to the Anglophone world in 1997. Its original 1987 French title *Seuils* literally

means “thresholds”(2).

[T]he paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or . . . a “vestibule” that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an “undefined zone” between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world’s discourse about the text) . . . . [T]his fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction; a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public. . .(1-2).

Genette relies on the figure of a threshold to indicate the status of paratext that surrounds literary texts. As a “vestibule” located on the outskirts of literary texts, the paratext occupies an indeterminable space not belonging to either side of the border between the text and the world. Genette’s definition not only indicates spatial ambiguities of paratextual elements such as author names and book titles, but also allows us to see these names as material entities circulated in the literary market to have certain effects on readers. The paratext takes up a space “not only of transition but also of transaction” revealing the materiality of a literary work. In his aptly titled article “Victorian Paratexts,” Bell advocates Genette’s methodologies as a good way to “to negotiate a course between textuality and empiricism” (327): “As an intellectual tool, the paratext, as defined by Genette, provides one of the most useful means to date in the attempt to rethink the relationship between the material book and its textuality, heralding, among other things, a timely return for the Derridean *hors texte*” (328). Genette’s formula provides a way to read author names as threshold figures mediating between the text and the reader.

I use Genette’s formula to investigate the ways in which author names affected the reception of their literary works. According to Genette, author names constitute the most important paratextual messages for every publication and can be divided into three different categories: onymity, anonymity and pseudonymity. If the author signs with her/his legal name, it is called onymity; if the author signs with a false name, it becomes pseudonymity; and if

s/he does not sign at all, this falls into anonymity. Genette emphasizes that each condition of an author name would have a different paratextual impact on readers. Onymity is “the way to put an identity, or rather a ‘personality’ . . . at the service of the book” (40). In contrast, anonymity often raises readers’ curiosity about the unknown authorship, which might lead to the commercial success of a book as in the case of Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (43). Lastly, pseudonymity can bring a different effect depending on whether it is a known fact or not (48). Genette emphasizes that all these naming acts should always be read as a performative act that exerts an illocutionary force on readers: “A final pragmatic characteristic of the paratext is what . . . I call the illocutionary force of its message” (10). Since author names, along with titles, are not arbitrarily designated but hold necessary implications for texts, we should conduct “a carefully calibrated analysis of their illocutionary force” (“Foreword” *Paratexts* xix).

At the same time, I use Foucault’s formula for the social meanings of woman authors as constructed by Victorian reviewers. In “What is an Author?” Foucault discusses author names as an important element that can indicate what he calls the “author-function” in society. Responding to Roland Barthes’ announcement of death of the author, Foucault writes, “It is not enough, however, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. . . . Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers. First, we need to clarify briefly the problems arising from the use of the author’s name. What is an author’s name? How does it function?” (145). Foucault suggests that an empty space left by the disappearance of the author is marked by the use and function of author names. However, Foucault’s author names do not refer to biographical persons or perform an indicative function. Author names, though apparently positioned between description and designation like other proper names, do not operate in the same way

as regular proper names: “The problems raised by the author’s name are much more complex . . . . If we proved that Shakespeare did not write those sonnets which pass for his, that would constitute a significant change and affect the manner in which the author’s name functions. . . . The author’s name is not, therefore, just a proper name like the rest” (146). Foucault calls this “the paradoxical singularity of the author’s name” (146). Author names are singular since they can perform specific functions for texts through their figurative relationships with the texts. As Mark Vareschi notes, “For Foucault, the relationship between the name of the author, the actual writer, and the text is not a literal one, not a one-to-one correspondence. It is instead a figural relationship” (13).

Like a metaphor, author names serve as the most important index that reveals the discursive mode of the text. Foucault writes: “The author’s name, unlike other proper names, does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it; instead, the name seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being” (147). Here, Foucault inscribes author names as part of discursive formations where his famous concept of author-function emerges: “The author-function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society” (148). Unlike other proper names that refer to real individuals, author names remain always present on the boundary of the text as a discursive entity to reveal its mode of being, circulation and functioning in society. As author names are always characterized as part of the discursivity of the text, they become social constructs rather than references for biographical authors. What Foucault emphasizes here is not the referentiality but the discursivity of author names —the ways in which author names characterize social discourses.

I define Genette’s formula as a literary function of author names and Foucault’s formula as a social function of author names. While both scholars read author names as

functions rather than pure references, their emphases are different. Genette, despite his material interests in paratexts, somewhat returns to the importance of text, by viewing the function of author names as part of indissoluble literary texts. For Genette, paratexts such as titles and author names ultimately belong to literary texts. While paratext reveals a functional aspect through its illocutionary force, it is “a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d’être*. This something is the text” (12). Therefore, the paratextual element remains “always subordinate to ‘its’ text” (12).

In contrast, Foucault construes authors as social characters by emphasizing the discursive function of author names circulated in society. As Alexander Nehamas puts it, “the author is not a person at all, but a ‘function’ or ‘figure’” in Foucault’s account (685). Nehamas interprets Foucault’s authors as characters manifested in texts: “Authors are not individuals but characters manifested or exemplified, though not depicted or described, in texts” (686). Not only do authors serve as “formal causes” for texts, they are also “produced through an interaction between critic and text” (686). This view defines the reciprocal relationship between authors and critics. Inasmuch as texts are products of authors, authors are products of critics. Hence this sequence: “writers produce texts; some texts are interpreted and are thus construed as works; works generate the figure of the author manifested in them” (Nehamas 688). What is notable here is the mediating role of critics who turn texts into works by generating the figure of the author. Through critical works, authors become social characters.

This observation manifests how Foucault’s author-function can lead us to reception studies of literature located in a specific cultural and historical moment. As Foucault himself grants, the concept of author-function provides “an introduction to the historical analysis of

discourse” (158).

[I]t is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each. The manner in which they are articulated according to social relationships can be more readily understood, I believe, in the activity of the author-function and in its modifications, than in the themes or concepts that discourses set in motion (158).

By following the uses of author names (or authorial figures extrapolated from such uses) in a specific culture, we can encounter that culture’s modes of discourses for certain texts. Cheryl Walker illustrates how Foucault’s position ultimately provides a link to the reception of literary texts. While Barthes and Derrida propose that “texts be construed as field of discourse without any boundaries . . . to limit the free play of the signifier,” Foucault “diverts our attention from the intentions of the text” to “the reception of texts according to the modes of distribution established by power relations” (552). Walker, though not entirely endorsing Foucault’s author-function for her feminist causes, acknowledges “the relevance of author-function to understanding culture” (568).

Even though both Nehamas and Walker do not specifically treat author names as a point of critical intervention into Foucault, their insights give me a purchase on reading women author names in terms of Victorian periodical review culture. This review culture serves as a cultural site where I can examine women authors as social characters. By tracing how different forms of women author names were used and addressed by Victorian periodical reviewers, or the discursive naming practices of Victorian print culture, I enter the critical debates about the discursive formations of Victorian gender and genre from specifically situated historical and cultural perspectives. As Foucault emphasizes, the author-function “re-examines the privileges of the subject . . . not in order to re-establish the theme of an originating subject, but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies” (158). My study on the reception of women author names in

Victorian print media can illuminate such systems of discourse and power relations. I would argue that the four women authors under my consideration were constructed as different social characters by their contemporary reviewers. Faced with no author name (for *Mary Barton*) or supposedly fabricated author names (for *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede*), Victorian critics had to create their own versions of authors (or authorial figures) out of the texts they encounter. In case of onymity (for *Lady Audley's Secret*), the authorial character was often associated with her fictional character. These author names thus became part of social discourses on Victorian gendered writings.

I extend Foucault's assumptions about the author-function to anonymity and pseudonymity. While I accept Foucault's argument that what is crucial to consider is not an author as a biographical or an empirical person but as a discursive function in society, I depart from Foucault when he sets forth an author name (that is, onymity) as a necessary mark for the author-function. Here, I wish to redirect or reappropriate Foucault's concept of author-function to reflect the condition of anonymity and pseudonymity often practiced in Victorian print culture. Robert Griffin suggests that Foucault's concept of author-function be revised to include alternative authorship models such as anonymity and pseudonymity very often practiced in the pre-modern periods.

For although Foucault identifies the author-function and its historicity with the name of the author, his focus is on how the name circulates in discourse apart from its designation as the proper name of an empirical person. Rather than invoke the flesh-and-blood writer, the name signals the status of a certain kind of writing, works as a principle of classification, and establishes a relation of homogeneity and filiation between texts. . . . filiation exists even when the author remains unknown, as in the example of texts that are signed "by the author of" (*The Faces of Anonymity* 9).

Griffin contends that the author-function can still be exercised without author names, because what is crucial is not an author herself as an empirical person but the ways in which her name is circulated in society as a discursive entity. Anonymity performs the author-function

by classifying and designating literary texts in certain ways. For instance, anonymity beginning with “by the author of” can identify and organize a set of literary texts bearing the same anonymous phrase. Indeed, my discussion of “By the author of *Mary Barton*” in the first chapter proves the validity of this argument. Therefore, the author-function does not necessarily require a proper name. Griffin asserts that “If the legal name and the fictional name are types of masks, I understand anonymity also not as a lack or absence, but positively, as another mask (10). By taking up anonymity as another form of name or address to readers, Griffin pays attention to “the historical particularity of authorship” and reminds us of “the importance of contingency and context” in reading authorship (11).

These women authors’ anonymity and pseudonymity assumed at the first appearance of their major novels could perform their own versions of an author-function in the contemporary print media not only by conducting a classificatory function for their texts, as Griffin argues in the above, but also by producing what Foucault calls “the plurality of self,” another important characteristic of the author-function: “it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subject-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals (153). My chapters demonstrate that these women author names fulfilled this criterion by raising many speculations about the authorial gender of their works. This observation ultimately supports multiple authorship models for Victorian women writers. Rachel Sagner Buurma contends that the nineteenth century had “a far more complicated understanding of the possible forms of literary authority than we enjoy today” (18). Buurma links various conditions of author names with the contested field of Victorian authorship: “The authorial signature, or the blank space of anonymity, did not simply signify to the Victorian reader a single version of literary authority. . . Rather, authorship practices like anonymity, pseudonymity, and onymity (the condition of being named) could tell a number of possible, sometimes conflicting, often

multiply meaningful stories about literary authority” (26).

My study pays attention to authorship models produced out of anonymous and pseudonymous texts. More recently, Griffin has argued that anonymous publications reveal “how much our readings depend on constructions of the author, and thus how circular that procedure actually is. We construct an author to account for the text but that author is actually a function of our reading of the text” (“Working with Anonymity” 466). This statement resonates with Nehamas’ emphasis on the interplay between the text and the reader (the critic) in generating an authorial figure. What matters is not whether a certain literary text has an author name but what effect its authorial position exerts on its audiences. As Simon During writes, the concept “author” must be “considered primarily in terms of its effect. It is not a historical constant” (123). Therefore, any erasure of legal author names, whether literal erasure (anonymity) or figurative erasure (pseudonymity), does not prevent us from observing the same author-function occur in any specific historical context. A few historicist scholars have recently addressed this issue and surmised that anonymity and pseudonymity, just like or even more than patronymics, generated multivalent and socially-conditioned authorial figures. Donald Foster shows how anonymity prompts readers to reconstruct authorial voice in the text.

In an unattributed publication, the "I" of the text is concealed from view, allowing language to circulate (in Foucault's account) freely, unobstructed by the illusion that published writing constitutes an act of communication from the author to the reader. But it is not that simple, for the writer's invisibility creates a vacuum that is inevitably filled, however imperfectly, by the reader's (re)construction of the voice-in-the-text. And the attentive reader may well recognize the writer behind the veil (379-380).

Anonymity, instead of removing authorial figures, creates many ones. Since anonymity can raise possibilities of authorial subjectivities despite its empty name tag, it should be understood as another type of authorship that participates in what Griffin calls “a play of subject positions” (*Faces of Anonymity* 10). Another historicist critic, Valerie Wayne similarly

contends that anonymity and pseudonymity facilitate “a proliferation of genders and meanings” by remaining unmoored to a fixed notion of author and gender: “[A]nonymous and pseudonymous texts remain ungrounded to an author or gender, but they function differently with respect to their audiences . . . the anonymous text. . . erases the signature of authorship and thereby opens itself more radically to a proliferation of genders and meanings. The absence of any signature more urgently requires the activities that Foucault advocates for all texts” (225). My own study displays such a proliferation of authorial genders and social significances for the anonymous and pseudonymous texts of *Mary Barton*, *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede*. Multiple models of authorship constructed by Victorian reviewers for these novels disclose multifaceted-ness of Victorian gender ideologies invested with different political, religious, ethical and commercial interests. By rereading Victorian women author names through this historical lens, my project places four Victorian women writers at the crossroads of materiality and textuality of Victorian print culture.

### **Titles**

Along with author names, I read titles as crucial threshold names that interact with the text and the public. As a linguistic construct and social entity, a title not only frames a literary text but also affects the reception of a book in a particular way. It appeals to the public as a reference to a book. Genette offers a title as a major paratext that presents a literary text to the public. If a literary text is “an object to be read,” a title, like the name of an author, is “an object to be circulated” among the public (75). This means that a title is addressed to a much wider audience than the actual readers of a literary text. As such, a book title becomes “a subject of conversation” among people, functioning at a discursive level (75). In a similar manner, Franco Moretti recognizes a title as “the most public part of a book” (145). As a shortened name for a literary text, a title plays a crucial role in a literary market. According to Moretti, a title materializes into a commodity, working as a “coded message”

for literary consumers: “half sign, half ad, the title is where the novel as language meets the novel as commodity” (135). As a commercial signifier, a title can indicate a new literary style, form or genre produced by market demands. These analyses indicate both commercial and literary aspects of book titles.

It is important to note that all four novels present their title characters as their titles (or part of the title in case of *Lady Audley's Secret*). This allows me to read the title names in terms of the novels' theme and genre. Genette offers a useful framework to figure out the relationship between a title and a literary text. A title performs three major functions for a literary text: identifying, descriptive and connotative functions. First, a title identifies a certain literary text by simply referring to it. While a title is initially baptized with certain motivations, it is used only for references later. Second, a title describes the subject matter of a literary text. Genette subdivides this function into two types: thematic and rhematic. If a title refers to literary themes (including a place, an object, a leitmotif and a character), it is a thematic title. For example, *Madame Bovary* is a thematic title as it refers to the fictional character within the novel. In contrast, if a title indicates a formal and generic structure, it is a rhematic title. Such titles as *Tales*, *Novellas* and *Poems* fall into rhematic titles since they refer to literary texts through their formal features. While a thematic title indicates one of the elements or themes in a literary text, a rhematic title concerns the whole text by denoting its formal structure. I use these terms to read *Mary Barton's* full title “Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life” in relation to its mixed genre. I also compare different genre claims made by the titles of *Jane Eyre* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. While *Jane Eyre's* realism is supported by the phrase “An Autobiography,” *Lady Audley's Secret* evokes a mystery genre by ending with “secret.”

Book titles carry not only generic implication but also cultural significance. Genette argues that every descriptive title necessarily holds certain connotative values. Whether

intended or not, all descriptive titles (thematic and rhematic titles) have their own “connotative styles”—the manner in which they describe a text—to bring different semantic effects to readers (90). Such connotative styles vary according to historical periods. For example, long narrative titles such as Defoe’s characterize the eighteenth-century novel. In contrast, short titles consisting of “full names of heroes and heroines” such as *Jane Eyre* mark the nineteenth-century novel (90). Indeed, title names such as “Mary Barton,” “Jane Eyre” and “Adam Bede” were easily identified as the protagonists by the Victorian public. These title names worked with their author names to bring combined paratextual effects to readers and, along the way, formed diverse relationships with their author names. “Mary Barton” replaced the material emptiness of Gaskell’s anonymity. “Jane Eyre”’s authenticity was weakened by the change of “Currer Bell”’s status from editor to author, due to gender incongruity between the two names. The archetypal name “Adam Bede” identified “George Eliot” as a masculine voice at first. And “Lady Audley” promoted “Miss Braddon” as a sensation novelist. All these examples demonstrate how titles work as what Moretti calls a “coded message” for literary consumers.

### **Character Names, Genre, Victorian Novels**

Another significant part of my dissertation explores the relationship between character names and genres for Victorian novels. Names figure as an important critical matter not only in reading complex Victorian gender but also in recognizing the mixed genres of Victorian novels. I link the narrative behaviors of character names appearing in *Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede* and *Lady Audley’s Secret* with the genre ambiguity of these novels.<sup>2</sup> These three novels are, though with varying degrees, relevant to the mid-Victorian genre conventions of the novel of character and the novel of plot, which can be approximately translated into

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<sup>2</sup> I discuss the mixed genre of *Mary Barton* mostly through its mixed title, not through narrative names.

realism and sensationalism in today's usage. I would argue that mid-Victorian genre boundaries were more flexible and dynamic than our own critical models of Victorian genres. While modern scholars have set up a rather rigid divide between realism and sensationalism and tried to extract relevant attributes from each genre, I challenge such critical regiments through my reading of character names both in Victorian novels and contemporary reviews. I find an analogy between the novels' narrative naming acts and the reviewers' discursive naming practices for characters to testify to the genre complexities of these novels. As with author names, Victorian periodical reviews serve as good venues for reading character names, measuring their specific effects on readers.

I approach this matter in three steps: first, character names are fictional proper names (the linguistic aspect); second, they reside in and constitute the narrative world of novels as indispensable narrative figures but can function differently even in the same novelistic space (the narrative aspect); third, they bring different effects on readers (the affective aspect). While this order suggests an accumulative movement from a specifically linguistic mode of proper names to character names as narrative figures to the practical performance of those character names in contemporary reviews, my observation starts from Victorian reviewers' discursive naming practices for major characters appearing in these novels. Victorian critics often perceived two main characters occupying the same novelistic space in opposing terms. While such words as "reality," "real," "natural" were often applied to Jane Eyre, Adam Bede and Robert Audley, contrasting expressions such as "improbable," "impossible," "horror" and "shock" were used to describe their narrative counterparts Bertha Mason, Hetty Sorrel and Lady Audley. While the first group of characters was grasped as realist characters that delivered a sense of verisimilitude, the latter group of characters was marked as anti-realist characters that evoked a sense of improbability. I broadly define the former group as realist names and the latter as sensational names. Here I use the terms "realist" and "sensational" not

in the critical senses circulated in modern scholarship but in terms of actual impacts that these names had on their first readers. This final outcome blurs the boundary between realism and sensationalism in reading Victorian novels. What we usually perceive as realist novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede* hold in fact antirealist names in them, and what we call a sensation novel *Lady Audley's Secret* have in fact a realist name in its narrative space.

To support this argument at the narrative level, I offer what I call “the consistency model of naming” for Victorian novels, drawing on both narrative theories and linguistic theories on proper names. Relying on the linguistic concept of description and designation, I shall demonstrate that characters with consistent narrative names are more likely to emerge as realist subjects in the actual world. Along the way, Genette’s narratological concepts such as the extradiegetic and intradiegetic levels and metalepsis (or narrative intrusion) will be employed to figure out the relationship between a novel(’s narrator) and characters. These narrative terms support my claim that a character’s narrative intimacy with the narrator enhances his or her stability as a character. For instance, Adam Bede emerges as one of the most realist characters in Victorian novels through his consistent naming behavior and his narrative intimacy with the narrator.

I will briefly go over the reference theories on proper names conducted by philosophers of language to build theoretical frameworks for reading the narrative behaviors of character names within the novels. Opposing sets of character names found in *Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede* and *Lady Audley's Secret* behave differently at the narrative level to set up contrasting modes of presentation. In classic philosophy on references, there is an opposition between naturalists and conventionalists over the nature of proper names. On the one hand, conventionalists argue that names are arbitrary designations without specific meanings: there is no necessary link between a name and a person. On the other hand, naturalists stipulate that there are some essential qualities in a proper name. That is, proper names carry

significations like common nouns.

This debate has evolved into the rivalry between the descriptivist theory of proper names and the causal theory of proper names in the modern philosophy of language. Gottlob Frege, one of the earliest proponents of the descriptivist theory, suggests that various types of descriptions may deliver different senses of proper names to readers. In his 1892 paper “Sense and Reference,” Frege argues that two different signs or names can designate the same thing yet present different senses. For example, the referent of “evening star” would be the same as that of “morning star,” but the two references would not deliver the same meanings. He thus argues that “a proper name (word, sign, sign combination, expression) *expresses* its sense [and] stands for or designates its reference” (57). Therefore, the reference of the sign is closely associated with the sense of the sign, “wherein the mode of presentation is contained” (57). In short, “reference is in virtue of sense” (Searle 158). Frege’s theory tells us two important things: first, there is a distinction between a sense and a reference; second, a sense of a proper name is determined by its mode of presentation. This concept of “modes of presentation” is useful in reading various narrative modes of character names to see how they delivered different senses of personhood to readers. It can also be applied to reading various discursive modes of author names to see how they evoked different senses of authorships for readers. Bertrand Russell, another leading proponent of the descriptivist theory of proper names, provides rather a different viewpoint about proper names. He argues that the meaning of a proper name (e.g., “Shakespeare”) is determined by its definite description (e.g., “the author of *Romeo and Juliet*”). Russell asserts that proper names are just “disguised” or “shorthand” definite descriptions for an object that should tell some truths about it (Boersema 1). Since we use a proper name for an object that we are acquainted with, it should always contain a definite description that identifies with that object. Therefore, a proper name is a “truncated description” for an object that we already know by acquaintance (Fitch 1). While

Russell departs from Frege by rejecting the latter's sense of references, both philosophers emphasize the descriptive function of proper names.

On the opposite side, Saul Kripke offers the causal theory of proper names. In *Naming and Necessity* (1980), Kripke rejects the long-held views of the description theory. He especially criticizes the Russellian view of proper names for failing to explain the fact that different descriptions for a proper name might be used to designate the same object. For example, Aristotle can have as many descriptions as “the teacher of Alexander,” “the most famous student of Plato” and “the author of the *Metaphysics*,” etc. (Boersema 1-2). If any of these definite descriptions could identify Aristotle, would they all serve as “proper” names for the philosopher to the same degree? What if the author of the *Metaphysics* turned out to be a different person? Instead of reading a proper name as a definite description, therefore, Kripke brings our attention to the causal relationship between name and object established when the name is first created. According to Kripke, a proper name is created by an initial baptismal act of naming for an object and continues to be used via chains of designation that directly link one user of the name to the next one. In this account, what is significant is not the meaning or descriptive function of a proper name but the act of designating a proper name that initially fixes its usage. Kripke's theory stresses that any act of naming occurs not by accident but by necessity.

While these controversies about proper names have not died out,<sup>3</sup> they offer useful conceptual frameworks for reading proper names in fictional contexts. Although their original

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<sup>3</sup> There are both proponents and opponents on either side of the controversy which is still going on today in the field of philosophy of language. One proponent of the descriptive theory of name is John Searle who reinvents it as a cluster theory where at least one description of a name should satisfy the object that a name refers to. There is also a third position represented by Ludwig Wittgenstein who proposes “family resemblance” as a new concept to solve this problem. Wittgenstein's view appeals to the pragmatism of language rather than semantics or syntax of proper names. While most philosophers today agree with Wittgenstein's views on proper names, many still believe that there are merits in accepting some of the traditional concepts of proper names such as Frege's sense and reference. See Fitch and Boersema for a more complete version of the history of philosophy of language.

debates have mostly dealt with the nature of proper names, I am more concerned with using such terms as “rigid designators” and “definite description” as tools for analyzing character references in Victorian novels. Although traditional philosophies have ignored fictional proper names as “empty names” with no referents in the real world, an increasing number of philosophers have raised alternative possibilities that fictional proper names may function just in the same way as real proper names.<sup>4</sup> David Schalkwyk suggests that fictional proper names like “Romeo” could operate in the same manner as real proper names. Schalkwyk shows that Derrida's reading of “Romeo” is very close to Kripke's, which reveals “the [same] problems that analytical philosophy has attempted to address since Frege” (188). This means that Kripke’s “rigid designators” can be applied to both real and fictional contexts (188). While all of Russell’s descriptive theory, Searle's speech act theory and Kripke’s causal theory have regarded “reference to the fictional or non-existent” as “an etiolated, secondary, derived, or empty use of language,” Derrida enlightens us on the basic principles of proper names through a literary text: “literary or fictional texts, names which have no actual bearers, are not marginal but central, exemplary” (188).

My attempt to read fictional proper names based on the philosophical frameworks of description and designation is, in a way, to combine reference theory (mostly studied by philosophers) with narrative theory (mostly led by literary critics) to create a third zone of “narrative naming theory.” Yet such attempts to bring together the two fields are not entirely new. Literary critics such as Michael Ragussis and Uri Margolin have attempted to bring the naming issues to the field of narrative fiction, although with different emphases and purposes. Ragussis emphasized the variability of proper names in novels. In *Acts of Naming* (1987), he proposes that we pay attention to a novel’s “acts of naming” in reading its plot structure. He

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<sup>4</sup> While J.L.Austin excludes fictional references as “parasitic” in his discussion of performative speech acts, other philosophers including Jacques Derrida reverses such statement by seeing fictional contexts as valid speech acts (see “Signature, Event, Context”). See other supporting claims by Nelson 22-3; Fitch 153; Sainsbury Introduction.

argues that a fiction consists of a complicated series of acts of naming (what he calls “naming plots”) and a novel’s act of “re-naming” continually redefines the identity of a character as something variable, not fixed in a narrative (11). Ragussis criticizes not only traditional philosophies for discussing general names for things and ideas but also modern philosophers for engaging with the “science” of proper names only for the sake of logic. Thus he rejects all the philosophical debates between Russell and Frege as well as Frege’s distinction between sense and reference as useless. Ragussis also denounces traditional literary critics for making facile identifications between characters and their proper names: “The critic elucidates character through the name, sometimes even making an equation between name and person that fixes character one and for all... the name designates character” (8). What he repudiates is the idea that a proper name can fix a character’s meaning in fiction: “The name in fiction... does not fix identity and hold it still. Quite the contrary, the name is a significant variable throughout the text, perpetually rewritten and recharged with varying meanings. . . . [therefore], the name functions in fiction not as a static standard-bearer that reveals character from the beginning, but as the center of a matrix of action, at the center of the plots of fiction” (10-1). Ragussis argues that fiction can bestow several names on a single person rather than reduce a human being to a fixed object. Fiction rather reveals “the complex human circumstances under which the naming of persons become charged with meaning and power” (222). What Ragussis rejects is, then, a unified meaning of a fictional proper name, not the fact that a name can carry on meanings. He resonates with the descriptivist theorists by emphasizing the descriptive functions of proper names in fiction, and especially their ability to rewrite character identities.

At the same time, Ragussis offers two important critical tools for thinking about fictional proper names. First, there is a close link between character names and narrative plots. If fiction is organized by a series of acts of renaming, we should attend to the variability of

character names to figure out fiction's narrative structure. Second, the behavior of a proper name tells of a character formation since character is created through the accumulation of the narrative acts of naming. I take advantage of Ragussis' concepts of "acts of naming" and "naming plots" to trace the behaviors of narrative names in Victorian novels and connect his theory of character formulation with my consistency naming frame.

In contrast to Ragussis, Uri Margolin reads fictional proper names as "rigid designators" following the Kripkean model. In his 2002 article "Naming and Believing: Practices of the Proper Name in Narrative Fiction," Margolin argues that "singular referring expressions" such as personal pronouns, definite descriptions, and proper names are crucial elements in fiction since they "designate or establish the individual entities that constitute the furniture of the story-world" and "serve as the objects of all subsequent qualifications or predications" (108). While personal pronouns (such as "she") and definite descriptions (such as "the prime minister of Canada") can refer to different individuals in different contexts, proper names are "unique in being fixed points in a changing world" and thus serve as "rigid designators" (109). Margolin accepts the Kripkean usage of the term "rigid designators" to distinguish proper names from other definite descriptions associated with them. Definite descriptions can be used to explain whom a certain name refers to yet cannot replace proper names *per se*. Accordingly, proper names are "rigid designators" that refer to the same object in every possible world in which the object exists. A proper name thus serves as what Margolin calls "an identifying tag that follows its referent wherever she goes and whatever happens" (109).

While Ragussis and Margolin place more emphasis on either "description" or "designation" to chart the world of fictional proper names, I use both terms for my reading of Victorian character names. I argue that character names can perform specific functions in narrative fiction depending on whether they are read as "descriptions" or "designations." In

their descriptive narrative modes, character names would function as fluid entities that carry on variable significations. In their designative narrative modes, they would serve as “rigid designators” that fix their character reference into unified forms. Yet there is no distinct line of demarcation between descriptions and designations in reading character names in fictional contexts. While the descriptive function seems to focus on the meanings of proper names and the designative function on their forms, I blur this boundary by viewing these categories as fluid, transferable, relative rather than fixed, definitive, absolute. For instance, repeated descriptions may become and serve as rigid designators for characters as in the case of “Adam Bede.” My formula, in a way, revises the Kripkean definition of rigid designators that regard proper names as unchanging containers of references to persons or objects. In my definition, rigid designators can point to the narrative constructs of accumulated descriptions or modifications that indicate certain qualities of characters.

Here, consistency emerges as a key concept in defining the relationship between proper names and characters. I shall display how consistency becomes a watchword for the process of character formulation where certain qualifications or modifications are accumulated over time in a text. In the context of fictional narrative, the stability or consistency of a character is achieved through the repetition of certain linguistic signs. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes writes that “when identical senses traverse the same proper name several times and appear to settle upon it, a character is created” (67). This shows that a character is produced when the same proper name is repeatedly modified by the same linguistic units. In her study on fictionality, Catherine Gallagher sees a link between proper names and fictional characters: proper names are “promises of characters” and their “anaphoric repetition marks the primary textual sites where we expect personages to emerge” (353).<sup>5</sup> As the deliberate

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<sup>5</sup> Here, Gallagher quotes from Eugene Nicole’s article: Nicole, Eugene. 1983. “L’onomastique littéraire.” *Poétique* 54: 233-53.

repetition of certain words or phrases usually marks the emergence of personhood, readers would take proper names as “intentional cues to different modes of reading” and put more “interpretive pressure” on them (353). Gallagher’s study supports the claim that there is a close link between the repetition of proper names and the formation of fictional subjectivity. That is, characters are created through the repetition of certain formal and semantic structures.

Such principles of consistency that figure out the relationship between names and characters can be expanded to define the relationship between names and genres. In other words, consistency becomes a barometer for measuring each character’s genre function. The more stable a character’s name stays, the more realist it seems to become. Indeed, the syntax of most realist novels of nineteenth-century is organized by the repetitions of proper names. Wendy Steiner, in *Pictures of Romance*, argues that the repetition of a proper name produces a stable subjectivity in a realist narrative. Steiner, in a comparison between painting and narrative, argues that what is specific about narrative is the repetition of the subject marked by proper names and personal pronouns. To guarantee “the continuity of identity over time,” one of the crucial narrative factors that constitute realism, a narrative needs to have a recurrent subject as a cohesive device. As such, “the narrative center resides in a literal agent, the carrier of a name” (Steiner 19). The repetition of proper names means a continuation of a fictional identity which is the sine qua non of a realist genre. As such, a realist novel unfolds proper names in a successive manner. Steiner quotes Barthes “proairetism” as the process of “the unfolding of a name.” As Barthes writes in *S/Z*, “to read is to proceed from name to name . . . it is to fold the text according to one name and then to unfold it along the new folds of this name” (Barthes 82-3).

Relying on this consistency model of naming, I argue that my three instances of Victorian novels *Jane Eyre*, *Adam Bede*, and *Lady Audley* tend to fix their realist characters (Jane, Adam, Robert) into rigid designators yet describe its anti-realist characters (Bertha,

Hetty and Lady Audley) as variable entities. Through such acts of naming, the former names are designated as stable human subjects while the latter names are described as changeable animals or objects.

While Ragussis does not specify any other controlling agencies or authorial subjectivities for a novel's act of naming, I note that the omniscient narrators take a great part in structuring the naming plots of *Adam Bede* and *Lady Audley's Secret*. These third-person omniscient narrators can deliver different degrees of verisimilitude to readers by forming narrative intimacy with characters. They not only describe or designate certain characters at the intradiegetic level but also appear as the intrusive "I" at the extradiegetic level practicing metalepsis. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette distinguishes between the extradiegetic level and the intradiegetic level of the narration. While the intradiegetic level refers to the narrative level of the characters, the extradiegetic level is a higher level of narration that decides how the story is told (228). In narratology, metalepsis occurs when the boundaries between narrative levels or logically distinct worlds are transgressed. Genette defines narrative metalepsis as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse" (234-5). Through these narrative strategies, omniscient narrators can name and use their characters for or against his or her specific narrative purposes.

I suggest that these narrative aspects of character names can be linked to the Victorian genre concerns over "the novel of character" and "the novel of plot." With the arrival of sensation fiction in the 1860s, Victorian critics began to differentiate novels that focus on incidents from novels that center on characters. E.S. Dallas juxtaposes these two schools of fiction in his 1866 critical study *The Gay Science*. Dallas presents Thackeray's "theory of character" as the epitome of the realist school that conceives the flourishing and withering of an individual as the primary goal of a fiction writer. In contrast for Dallas, the

sensation school insists that “the first consideration is given to the plot; and the characters must succumb to the exigencies of the plot” (292). According to this formula, *Mary Barton*, *Adam Bede* and *Jane Eyre* belong to “the novel of character” with their narrative focus on the development of a central character, whereas a sensation novel like *Lady Audley’s Secret* belongs to “the novel of plot” with its focus on the sequence of events. Such distinction becomes manifest in the *Quarterly Review*’s criticism of *Lady Audley’s Secret*.

A sensation novel, as a matter of course, abounds in incident. Indeed, as a general rule, it consists of nothing else. Deep knowledge of human nature, graphic delineations of individual character, vivid representations of the aspects of Nature or the workings of the soul--all the higher features of the creative art --would be a hindrance rather than a help to a work of this kind. . . . 'Action, action, action!' . . . is the first thing needful, and the second, and the third. The human actors in the piece are, for the most part, but so many lay-figures on which to exhibit a drapery of incident (486).

Since a sensation novel places too much emphasis on incidents, writes the reviewer, its characters turn into mere lay-figures that perform those actions. Here, “a drapery of incident” -- an intricate plotting pattern observed in sensation novels --is contrasted with “deep knowledge of human nature” and “graphic delineations of individual character” --a character-developing pattern observed in higher forms of creative art. The former refers to “the novel of plot” and the latter indicates “the novel of character.”

Yet, in fact, Dallas’s generic distinction was permeable. While “the novel of plot” usually refers to sensation novels where characters are sacrificed for action, it does not necessarily mean that all the characters of and in sensation novels follow the same pattern in relation to their action. Dallas offers “the relation of the characters portrayed to the actions described” as a sole criterion for differentiating between the two generic categories (293), implying that such genre boundaries are porous and could be easily demolished.

The art of fiction, which makes character succumb to the exigencies of plot, is just as defensible as that which breaks down incident before the weight of character. In point of fact, however, most novelists attempt to mix up the two extreme views of life, though they cannot help leaning to the one side or to the other; and the chief weakness of the plotting novels . . . is that while they represent circumstances and incident as all-important, and characters amid the current of events as corks upon the waves, they generally introduce one character who, in violent contrast to all the others, is superior to the plot, plans the events,

guides the storm, and holds the winds in the hollow of his hand. It is quite wonderful to see what one picked character can do in these stories in comparison with the others, who can do nothing. He predominates over the plot, and the plot predominates over all else (294).

While Dallas makes a comparison between the two genres, he does not necessarily favor one over the other. Instead, he points out that most novelists attempt to “mix up the two extreme views of life.” He recognizes a great inconsistency often detected in “the novel of plot”: there always seems to be one exceptional character that “is superior to the plot, plans the events, guides the storm” (294). Dallas complains that this chosen character is not affected by the plot development but rather predominates over the plot to remain firm and strong. This passage, then, tells us two interesting things about Victorian fiction as a genre. The generic boundaries between “the novel of plot” and “the novel of character” were not rigid; as such, a realist character like the one Dallas described as unfit for “the novel of plot” could appear in a sensationalist narrative space. Indeed, Robert Audley, as I shall discuss in the fourth chapter, functions as an inconsistent element to *Lady Audley’s Secret’s* sensation project by remaining relatively consistent. He stays in the sensation novel yet is not ruled by its generic convention. My earlier examples of mixed reviews for *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede* also demonstrate the porosity of Victorian generic boundaries. Instead of adopting a unified form of naming practices, these novels contain heterogeneous elements that blur our notions of realism and sensationalism. Although these novels have rather uniformly been designated as sensation or realist novels, they hold uncongenial elements in their narrative spaces bringing opposing generic effects to Victorian readers.

What are the critical implications for this observation? Through my historical and narrative reading of Victorian character names, I wish to show how our own usage of such critical terms as realism and sensationalism has become rigid over the years, turning into homogeneous name tags for Victorian novels. It is true that some scholars have noted genre hybridity of sensation fiction. For example, Patrick Brantlinger recognizes sensation novels’

“unique mixture of contemporary domestic realism with elements of the Gothic romance, the Newgate novel . . .” (1) and cites Derrida’s arguments about genre impurity. But very few would recognize or address genre heterogeneity or complexity of realist novels. Nancy Armstrong in her recent study on the nineteenth-century novels plans to read “the familiar terrain of realism as the other side of the Gothic, as if the two existed in a mutually defining relationship” (3) but ends up explaining away the Gothic as a residual element to realism.

[A]fter Austen no novel could claim to offer an accurate view of “nature as she actually exists in the common walks of life” without including Gothic elements. Thornfield Hall in *Jane Eyre* (1847), Miss Havisham’s house in *Great Expectations* (1860), and the ghosts in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), *Villette* (1853), and *The Woman in White* (1860) are obvious cases in point. These novels incorporate anti-individualistic elements of the Gothic, as virtually every important Victorian novel does, only to naturalize those elements as components in an all-encompassing narrative of growth and development (22).

Armstrong asserts that Gothic elements—what could be dubbed as anti-realist elements--exist in most Victorian realist novels including *Jane Eyre*, *Great Expectations* and *Villette* but does not recognize them as substantial narrative forces. Instead, she argues that every important Victorian novel that incorporates the Gothic only does so to “naturalize” those elements as part of realist individual subjects’ narrative growth and development. In other words, Victorian novels were “dependent on disruptions of the normative reality” (22).

Despite their willingness to deal with this residual material, novels celebrating the individual maintained their cultural prestige by marginalizing challenges that they could not deal with by means of incorporation and subsumption. Thus during the very period when the novel was consolidating the formal conventions of the genre, there were periodic outbreaks of new and remarkable versions of the Gothic, along with a proliferation of subgenres that include the romantic novel, the sensation novel, the imperial Gothic novel, detective fiction, mummy stories, children’s literature celebrating fairyland, boys’ adventure stories, and so forth, offering models of subject formation that could not be placed in a tradition that itself resembles a novel (22-23).

According to Armstrong, Victorian realist novels successfully marginalized challenges from other genres that they could not subsume in order to celebrate individuality and maintain their cultural status. As a result, the repressed Gothic turned its shape into other subgenres such as

the romantic novel, the sensation novel and detective fiction. While this explanation happens to illustrate the evolving history of anti-realist elements, it fails to understand them as a separate critical matter. Instead of redefining realism by way of these anti-realist elements, Armstrong concludes that they are necessary (only to be eliminated) for Victorian realism.

What Armstrong is missing here is a nuanced historical analysis of those novels. She does not see how Victorian readers perceived those anti-realist elements as heterogeneous that cannot be entirely subsumed under the category of realism and struggled with such heterogeneity interpreting it as part of a realist project at one time and criticizing it as an excessive material at other times. Indeed, Bertha's Gothic naming plot received such ambivalent receptions in its first appearance as I shall discuss in the second chapter. In a study of the female servant's role in sensation fiction, Elizabeth Steere discusses how modern critics have trouble defining sensation fiction as its texts are "usually seen as hybrids" (8). Still, her own focus on female servant characters as the recognizable tropes of sensation fiction "prompts a reconsideration of how sensation fiction is characterized" (9).

My consideration of the servant as crucial to the sensational plot also allows for a closer look at other texts from the 1860s that have not previously been recognized as exemplars of the genre, such as Elizabeth Gaskell's novella 'The Grey Woman,' as well as earlier, more typically canonical texts, such as *Jane Eyre*. Exploring such works redefines the currently accepted boundaries of what constitutes 'the nineteenth-century sensation novel,' a development that opens up exciting possibilities for future areas of focus in sensation studies. Identifying texts by Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë as sensational broadens the scope of 'sensational authors' well beyond the traditional triumvirate of Collins, Braddon, and Wood and invites consideration of how other canonical authors such as Dickens and Trollope both had influence on and were influenced by the popular genre (9).

Steer opens up a way to redefine the current boundaries of sensation fiction by including a classic realist text like *Jane Eyre* as a good example of her argument. She identifies part of *Jane Eyre*'s narrative (in this case, the female servant narrative) as sensational and thus expands the scope of sensation writers beyond Collins, Braddon and Wood to other realist writers such as Dickens and Trollope. Using her critical insight on female servants, Steer

challenges the current assumptions about sensation fiction and other genres. Steer's observation supports my earlier usage of the term "sensational" for Bertha and Hetty. While both names belong to the realist world of *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede* in modern critical terms, they evoked the same sensation of shock and horror in Victorian readers serving as anti-realist elements. While I differentiate the degrees of antirealism by categorizing Bertha as a Gothic name and Hetty as a proto-sensational name, I put them under the same brand of sensation effect.

This dissertation makes a claim similar to Steer's but works in both directions. While Steer detects sensational elements in realist novels and authors, I recognize sensational elements in realist novels and identify realist elements in sensation novels through historically oriented analyses of their character names. Although my research is limited to only three Victorian novels—two representative realist novels and one sensation novel, I would like to pave the ways for reading more Victorian novels and their genres in complex ways through the critical tool of naming that I offer here. Surely, Armstrong's detection of Gothic elements in *Villette* and *Great Expectations* and Steere's invitation to reconsider Dickens' works in light of sensation fiction raise some possibilities of locating and linking their genre heterogeneities with their particular naming practices. Likewise, Wilkie Collins' preface to the first edition of *The Moonstone* (1868), cited by both Steere and Brantlinger, provides an opportunity to read sensation fiction in terms of its realist drive: "[I]n some of my former novels, the object proposed has been to trace the influence of circumstances upon character. In the present story I have reversed the process. The attempt made, here, is to trace the influence of character on circumstances" (xxiii).

What is important in all these attempts to new directions is willingness to tap into the historical archives to change one's mind about preconceived ideas and concepts. In his recent article about archival research, Griffin writes:

[S]ustained research in the archive has the potential to challenge and subvert received ideas in any field. But to allow this to happen, we must slow down our speed of processing material and allow anomalies to appear. Often, powerful yet faulty theories continue to be repeated when the evidence points elsewhere. One has not only to research an archive, one also has to be alert to the way previous interpretations have shaped one's own presuppositions. Only then do discoveries become discoveries by virtue of their status as anomalies (463).

Here, Griffin warns historical researchers of the danger of sticking to the old critical models and assumptions even after making new discoveries in an archive. Only after a careful consideration of anomalies can we make meaningful uses of archives and adjust ourselves to new critical thinking: “Too frequently we discover only what we are looking for. Yet the historical record is so various that no short-cut explanation will be able to account for it; hence the most interesting work tends to complicate theories rather than to illustrate them” (465). Instead of abandoning anomalous names appearing in both sensation and realist novels, I read them as ambiguous elements that promote genre multiplicities of Victorian novels. The literary market of the mid-Victorian era was, after all, constituted by both the novels of plot and the novels of character, and they crisscrossed each other to present their characters as threshold names caught between description and designation, personality and impersonality.

### **Chapter Summaries**

While my dissertation commonly addresses the gender and genre complexities of Victorian threshold names, each chapter engages with different forms of author names and varying genre questions. My first chapter entitled “Elizabeth Gaskell’s Anonymity and ‘Mary Barton’” discusses Gaskell’s anonymity for *Mary Barton*. I compare the book’s “literal anonymity” with its “descriptive anonymity” “By the Author of *Mary Barton*” to see how they delivered a different sense of authorship to readers. While “*Mary Barton*” emerges as a

substitutive name for the anonymous author, it also serves as the title name of the book that helps to determine the generic boundaries of the novel. I make an intervention into long-standing debates around the novel's dual narrative structure of the political plot and the romance plot with my own reading of the mixed title of "Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life." In short, "Mary Barton" becomes a crucial proper name that defines Gaskell's early form of authorship.

In the second chapter "Jane Eyre's Alternative Proper Names: 'Currer Bell' and 'Bertha Mason,'" I analyze "Currer Bell" not only as a pseudonym but also as an editor name for *Jane Eyre*. Through a detailed analysis of the phrase "Edited by" printed as part of the first title of the book, I recover the historical significance of "Currer Bell" as an editor name. While the "editor-function" of "Currer Bell" complicated the ways in which the public received the supposedly female first-person narrated autobiography, its editorial voice can also be heard in the split self of Jane Eyre within the text. While exploring the paratextual significance of "An Autobiography" as a form of genre contract, I show that "Bertha Mason," vacillating between being plausible and being excessive in its discursivity, becomes a pivotal name on which the book's genre authenticity rests. I argue that Bertha brings genre heterogeneity to *Jane Eyre* through its narrative function, which can be compared to the editor name of "Currer Bell." Through their silent yet distinct manifestations, both proper names work against *Jane Eyre*'s realist project.

My third chapter entitled "Pseudonymity and Realism: 'George Eliot' and 'Adam Bede'" displays how "George Eliot" in its early stage of fictive life suffered an extreme degree of fragmentation and celebration at the same time with the launch of the author's first full-length realist novel *Adam Bede*. While Gaskell's anonymity and Currer Bell's editorship multiplied authorship models for *Mary Barton* and *Jane Eyre*, George Eliot's pseudonymity went beyond a Foucauldian model of "plurality of self" by producing diametrically opposing

genius and bogus authorial selves. Such a displacement of “George Eliot” forms a stark contrast with “Adam Bede” often touted as a Victorian realist ideal. At the narrative level, I compare the narrative functions of Adam and Hetty through their contrasting naming plots structured in the novel. While Adam emerges as a realist name, Hetty becomes a proto-sensational name described through animal figures and mirrors. In the end, “George Eliot” becomes connected with “Hetty Sorrel” as both names are disintegrated into immaterial existence betraying the realist claims made by *Adam Bede*. “George Eliot”’s homology with “Hetty Sorrel” parallels “Currer Bell”’s affinity with “Bertha Mason.” In both cases, the outermost existence of an authorial figure is tied to the most marginalized character identity in its discursive effect.

While the second and the third chapters reinvestigate the realist claims made by *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede* through the alienated names of Bertha and Hetty, the final chapter “Threshold Names and *Lady Audley’s Secret*” reexamines the sensation project of *Lady Audley’s Secret* through the realist detective name of Robert Audley. Unlike *Adam Bede*’s narrator who keeps a close relationship with his hero, *Lady Audley’s Secret*’s narrator widens a narrative gap with her heroine. Braddon’s narrator instead relies on Robert to pit his detective force against Lady Audley’s sensational mystery. Despite her narrator’s effort to form a narrative intimacy with the realist figure, “Miss Braddon” became coupled with the sensational name of “Lady Audley” in periodical reviews. Both “Miss Braddon” and “Lady Audley” through their moral ambiguity became representative female names in the discourse of sensationalism in the 1860s.

As my research focuses on the first receptions of these authors and their novels, I follow typical Victorian practices of conflating authors and narrators in marking the gender of the narrators of these novels throughout this dissertation. Thus George Eliot’s narrator becomes “he,” while Braddon’s narrator becomes “she.” Still when I refer to George Eliot as

a biographical person that we know as a woman writer today, I use “she.” All this complex act of pronoun-naming for George Eliot brings up the question of why we still call George Eliot “George Eliot” while other women writers including Currer Bell reclaimed their legal identities. I will briefly discuss this matter in the coda.

Overall, my project reads proper names in Victorian novels and print culture at the narrative and discursive levels, focusing on four women writers and their first major novels. By juxtaposing author names and character names, I ultimately reveal the ways in which those proper names serve as thresholds that cross the boundary between fiction and discourse in mid-Victorian literary debates over female authors and their popular novels. While this dissertation studies various proper names of women writers and their novels, it does not aim to recover their authorial agency or original source of meaning for their works. On the contrary, I read how these names, as discursive practices, work on readers in reformulating the author-function in the mid-Victorian era where the debates on gendered writing and genre distinction grew as intense literary subjects in periodical discourses. In that sense, this study is not about authors but about how to read authors through their author names. At the same time, it is about re-reading narrative genres through character names. Through such readings of discursive and narrative proper names, my project displays the threshold figure of these Victorian proper names.

## Chapter One

### Elizabeth Gaskell's Anonymity and "Mary Barton"

This chapter discusses Gaskell's anonymity for *Mary Barton* in two ways. First, two forms of authorial anonymity will be examined: the first is a literal anonymity, that is, no name on the cover of the book, and the second is the descriptive phrase "By the Author of Mary Barton." While both forms belong to the condition of anonymity as they do not directly name the author's legal identity, they delivered a different sense of authorship to readers. In the process, "Mary Barton" emerged as a crucial, though fictional, proper name for the author and the text of *Mary Barton*.

#### Gaskell's Anonymity: "No Name" and "By the Author of Mary Barton"

This section compares two different conditions of anonymity for Elizabeth Gaskell circulated in the Victorian print market after the publication of her first major novel *Mary Barton* in 1848. I use Frege's distinction between sense and reference to argue that the two forms of anonymity worked as different "modes of presentation" for Victorian readers. Although both indicated the status of anonymity, they delivered a different sense of anonymous authorship to readers. For convenience's sake, I refer to the first condition of anonymity with no author name appearing on the title page as "literal anonymity." For the alternative condition of anonymity "By the Author of Mary Barton," I use the term "descriptive anonymity" as it takes the form of a definite description. The literal anonymity is a referential nonentity with its material emptiness, with no signifier for the author figure. The descriptive anonymity, on the other hand, describes the book's authorship through the definite description of "the Author of Mary Barton."

I first evaluate the historical significance of the book's literal anonymity by using a revised concept of Foucault's author-function. Despite its material emptiness, *Mary Barton*'s anonymity could still multiply authorial subjectivities by raising many speculations about the unidentified authorship. By doing so, it successfully prevented a reading public from making any easy assumptions about the authorial gender of *Mary Barton* and rather revealed Victorian literary culture's underlying assumptions regarding the relations between gender and genre. Oftentimes, Victorian critics had difficulties juxtaposing the political theme of the novel with a female pen.

At the practical level, anonymity itself was nothing new as it was a common literary convention for nineteenth-century women writers. However, Gaskell had previously used the pseudonym "Cotton Mather Mills" to write a few short stories for *Howitt's Journal*.<sup>6</sup> Why did she turn from a male pseudonym to anonymity for the publication of *Mary Barton*? On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1848, about five months before the publication of the novel, she wrote to her publisher Edward Chapman: "If you have no objection I should on reflection prefer *no name* being given as that of the author. I do not like assuming a name, although my desire for secrecy is as strong as ever" (*Further Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 39; my emphasis). As this letter shows, Gaskell wanted to publish *Mary Barton* under a pseudonym or with "no name" at all. Indeed, she considered such a pseudonym as "Stephen Berwick" before finally adopting literal anonymity.

While such an act of un-naming or re-naming herself can be read as part of Gaskell's strategies to avoid *ad feminam* criticism prevalent among Victorian literary reviewers, my inquiries concern the reception of the literal anonymity among contemporary periodical

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<sup>6</sup> Alexis Easley argues that this adoption of male pseudonym is to appeal to readers as a male-identified urban investigator: such a unique naming choice reflects Gaskell's desire to assume "the identity of a male urban investigator—a middle-class man whose access to working-class neighborhoods and domestic spaces would not seem morally compromising" (87).

reviewers. If *Mary Barton* had been published with “Stephen Berwick” as its author name, it would have delivered a different sense of authorship than literal anonymity to readers. While the former presents a sense of male authorship, the latter gives an indeterminate sense of authorship to readers. Such gender indetermination of the author raised, in turn, the generic ambiguity of the novel.

The *Athenaeum* issued the first review on *Mary Barton* on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1848, only three days after the publication of the book. This article opens with a question if fiction could serve as a “vehicle” for delivering social facts: “How far it may be kind, wise, or right to make Fiction the vehicle for a plain and matter-of-fact exposition of social evils, is a question of limitation. . . .” (1050). While warning readers that any fiction could fall into the category of propaganda by adopting the theory of “Agitation” for its politics, the reviewer recognizes the merits of *Mary Barton* in the following manner:

But we have met with few picture of life among the working-classes at once so forcible and so fair as ‘Mary Barton.’ The truth of it is terrible. The writer is superior to melo-dramatic seductions, and has described misery, temptation, distress and shame *as they really exist*. Only twice has *he* (?) had recourse to the worn-out machinery of the novelist,--and then he has used it with a master's hand. But he is excellent in the anatomy of feelings and motives, in the display of character, in the *life-like* and simple use of dialogue: --and the result is, a painful interest very rare in our experience (1050; my emphasis).

The reviewer praises the unidentified writer for overcoming “melo-dramatic seductions” to describe the working-class condition “as they really exist” and for using “life-like” dialogue, putting the novel into the category of realism. While the reviewer readily acknowledges masterful realist techniques detected in the novel, the reviewer seems to have a difficulty determining the gender of the unknown author. The reviewer uses the male pronoun “he” in referring to the unidentified author, yet not without some hesitations about the choice. To express an uncertainty, the reviewer added the question mark in parentheses to the male pronoun. Here, the reviewer seems to have trouble associating the realist writing with a female hand. Since the *Athenaeum*'s review of *Mary Barton* could not easily attribute such

realism to female authorship, it made an incorrect speculation about the gender of the author. Such a mistake rather reveals the magazine's own preconceptions about gendered writings. In other words, *Mary Barton*'s anonymity drove the reviewer into confusion over the gender of the author. By expanding the novel's unknown authorial subject to the horizon of the male tradition of realism, anonymity worked to dissociate the genre of realism from the male gender.

However, the novel's literal anonymity had not functioned in uniform ways to destabilize the gender ideology embedded in Victorian literary discourses. Oftentimes, it rather reinforced such ideology by being branded as a woman's work. In November 1848, the *Examiner* declared that the book was written by a woman: "Unquestionably the book is a woman's" (708). The reviewer detected a female pen in its "delicate" descriptions of women and children and "minute" domestic details. The reviewer illustrated these feminine qualities to argue that they were inscribed by a female hand. In this case, anonymity failed to transpose the work's apparently feminine qualities into a gender-ambiguous zone.

Unlike the *Athenaeum*, the *Examiner* turned to the emotional aspect of the novel to depoliticize its genre. That is, it focused more on the emotional effects of the novel such as pity and sympathy than on its writing style. The reviewer even criticized the anonymous author for not offering any tangible solution for the miserable reality that "she" describes in the novel: "She does not affect to offer any solution of a problem involving so much misery, but appears to think that good may be done by wholesome sympathy, and would seem to have written with this hope" (708). The reviewer thus classified the novel as an apolitical genre: "We should convey a wrong impression if the reader supposed the book to be a political novel. It is not that. The internal passions and emotions are its materials of interest . . ." (708). In addition, such tragic pathos applies not only to workers but also to masters: the book's moral "applies with equal force to all conditions" (708). Since the novel

expressed sympathy for all human beings regardless of their class status, it should not be read as a political novel.

Interestingly, the reviewer designated *Mary Barton* as an apolitical novel only after attributing it to female authorship, proving his own limitation in naming the genre of the novel. The reviewer denounced the “authoress” for dealing with political subjects beyond her reach. This reader attempted to reduce the political significance of the novel by translating anonymity into female authorship that handles “the commonplace materials of effect” (709). In this case, literal anonymity debunked Victorian prejudices against female authorship where a woman’s work of sympathy could not constitute a political genre. In other words, it was anonymity that divulged mid-Victorian social myths about gendered writings. If the reviewer had known about Gaskell’s identity as a wife of Unitarian clergyman who was devoted to helping the working-class poor, he might not have passed the same judgment upon the novel. In this scene, the novel’s anonymity rather staged a thematic conflict between the sympathetic subject and the political subject inscribed in the novel.

While the *Examiner* tried to dissociate female authorship from the political genre by denying the novel’s politics itself, W.R. Greg rather poignantly recognized its existence in the *Edinburgh Review*. An industrialist, Greg was known as one of the most scathing critics of *Mary Barton*’s radical politics. In the review article published in April, 1849, he wrote that *Mary Barton* aimed to represent not our common humanity but “the social condition of a particular class of the people” (402). Despite its project of seeking common humanity, the novel gives more sympathy to the working-class people: “the *dramatis personae* belong almost exclusively to the factory population” (402). Since the novel was narrated from the perspectives of working-class people, it displayed a strong touch of sympathy for them.

Like the *Examiner*, Greg linked the novel’s sympathy with female authorship, suspecting that the novel was written by a woman writer: “The authoress—for ‘Mary Barton’

is understood to be, and indeed very palpably is, the production of a lady” (403). While defining the production as a “labour of love,” he warned at the same time that the novel’s work of sympathy could make “imperfect, partial, and erroneous” impressions on readers (403). Greg judged that the novel’s sympathy was “calculated, we fear, in many places, to mislead the minds and confirm and exasperate the prejudices, of the general public on the one hand, and of the factory operatives on the other” (403). Here, Greg was rather concerned about the influences of what he saw as partially distributed emotional labor of the novel could have on readers.

Unlike the *Examiner*, this *Edinburgh Review* article written by Greg readily categorized the novel as a political genre, but only to condemn its “partial” and “biased” political stance. Even if female authorship and political genre could stand together in his speculation, a specific kind of sympathy--that is, the supposed female author’s sympathy towards workers--was condemned as inappropriate. In this reading, the novel’s anonymity produced a female political subject who created a “wrong” sympathy for readers. Yet, such a stance rather disclosed the industrial class’s anxiety about the laboring class.

On a similar note, another book review issued by *The British Quarterly Review* in February 1849 went even further to criticize the unknown author for presenting an exaggerated view of factory workers in Manchester. The reviewer asserted that the story “misapprehends” and “misrepresents” the working-class population: “We have no hesitation . . . in pronouncing much of that state of things which the tale before us exhibits to be in part greatly exaggerated. . . quite out of date” (121). Quite anxious about the social unrest that the novel could bring to the nation, the reviewer rebuked that the author’s political conviction was “wrongly” inferred from the “revolutionary mania of the continent” (121). Since the author knew little about the real conditions of the working-class, the story gave “a one-sided picture” of the reality (132). The reviewer thus refused to classify *Mary Barton* as a

realist novel, questioning the unknown author's ability to describe reality in an objective way.

Instead, the reviewer turned to the romance plot of the novel to speculate about the gender of the author: "In the love portion of the story, there is a great deal that indicates the delicate touch of a female hand, and confirms the rumour which attributes the authorship of 'Mary Barton' to a lady resident in Manchester" (131-2). The critic offered the love portion of the novel as proof of the rumor about its female authorship. While he associated the romance with female authorship, he also specified the author as "a lady resident in Manchester." Since Manchester was more exposed to the "evils" of factory life than other districts-- "most of the evils to which the factory system is exposed are more rife in Manchester than in the country districts" (135), it would be an error to generalize her limited knowledge about Manchester to the whole industrial situation. Here, the anonymous author materialized into "a lady resident in Manchester" who had little knowledge about the reality of the working-class people. In this case, the literal anonymity of *Mary Barton* generated an ignorant authorial subject supported by the rumor about the gender of its authorship.

In these early reviews about the literal anonymity of *Mary Barton*, the problem of genre was often discussed in relation to the speculated gender of the author. More often than not, the book's anonymity invoked a conflict between a male-gendered realist writer and a female-gendered sympathetic, sentimental, romantic writer. Despite the political over-determination of the novel, the novel's literal anonymity delivered a sense of ambivalence and ambiguity about its authorship to readers. By stimulating different critical stances and attitudes towards the novel among reviewers, the literal anonymity generated various forms of literary discourses in reading the novel. Multiple authorial selves observed in these early reviews simultaneously testifies to and debunks Victorian print culture's gender stereotyping and *ad feminam* criticism.

Next, I turn to the book's later condition of anonymity --"By the author of Mary

Barton.” Even after the huge success of *Mary Barton*, Gaskell continued to assume anonymity for her subsequent works such as “The Moorland Cottage” (1850). *Ruth* (1853), *Cranford* (1853) and *North and South* (1855). Instead of a literal anonymity, however, these novels were published under the descriptive phrase “By the Author of *Mary Barton*.” Unlike literal anonymity, this phrase could deliver a specific sense of the novel’s authorship through description. In fact, this phrase continued to serve as Gaskell’s alternative author name until she took the first form of onymity in 1857.<sup>7</sup> In the process, “*Mary Barton*” emerged as a critical proper name that defined and measured Gaskell’s authorship in certain ways.

I read “By the Author of *Mary Barton*” as “descriptive anonymity” that could carry out two important functions: classificatory and identifying. First, the phrase performs a Foucauldian author-function without an author’s name by classifying Gaskell’s subsequent novels under the same category of authorship. As Robert Griffin argues, the phrase “by the author of” can create an affiliation among unsigned texts by placing them under the same brand of authorship. Second, it served as an identifying tag for Gaskell’s authorship by referring to the previous performance of the author. Genette discusses the formula “by the author of” as an alternative form of anonymity which became popular after Walter Scott and Jane Austen. He suggests that the formula “by the author of” produces practical effect on readers by referring to the author’s previous work. For one thing, it could serve commercial purposes. Indeed, “By the author of *Mary Barton*” functioned as a commercial name tag in the literary market. In December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1850, the *Athenaeum* advertised Gaskell’s short story “The Moorland Cottage” as the “New Christmas Book, by the Author of ‘*Mary Barton*’” (1325). The *National Review* in January 1859 used the same name tag for advertising *Ruth*, *Cranford*, and “Lizzie Leigh” which constituted “Chapman and Hall’s Select Library of

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<sup>7</sup> Gaskell assumed the first form of onymity “E. G. Gaskell” for the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1857.

Fiction” (18). These magazines adopted the descriptive phrase to take advantage of the popularity of *Mary Barton*. By referring to the previous performance by the same author, the formula “by the author of” here acted “as a kind of advertisement” (Griffin *Faces of Anonymity* 10).

Not only could the phrase serve a commercial purpose by advertising the author’s previous work, it could also redefine an author’s identity. Genette further explicates “by the author of” as “a highly devious form of the statement of identity” located “between two anonymities” that manages to “constitute an authorial identity without having recourse to any name, authentic or fictive” (45). Here, the formula serves as an identity statement without revealing an author’s name. It becomes a substitutive authorial entity at a discursive level. “By the author of *Mary Barton*” seems to fit this formula. Although the descriptive phrase could not operate between two anonymities since Gaskell’s identity had already been known to the public by the time that her second novel *Ruth* was published under that phrase, the repeated effect of such a formula still remained. After losing its original condition of anonymity, what the descriptive phrase actually did was to identify its authorship through the name of “*Mary Barton*.” In other words, the fictive name “*Mary Barton*” actually came to constitute an authorial identity for Gaskell’s subsequent novels.

“*Mary Barton*” emerged as an important proper name that influenced the reception of those works identified by the phrase “By the Author of *Mary Barton*.” The *North British Review* in its 1853 article on *Ruth* marked the book’s authorship as “the Author of *Mary Barton*” not only to keep the original condition of anonymity for the novel but also to set up a comparative critical framework between the two novels. Although the reviewer seemed to already know about the identity of *Ruth*’s author, he never mentioned Gaskell’s name. Instead, the reviewer referred to the author as “the authoress of *Ruth*” or “the wife and mother who wrote ‘*Ruth*,’” only revealing her gender (151). This critic even went so far as to

claim that, being a mother, “the authoress of *Ruth*” provided “the duties of hallowed motherhood” for her fallen heroine (155). Here, the gender of the author was linked with the novel’s theme. Although the reviewer never named Gaskell as the author, such indirect references to the authorship through gendered descriptions seemed enough to influence the reception of the work.

More interestingly, the article paid almost half of its critical attention to *Mary Barton*. After a brief plot summary of *Ruth*, it turned to *Mary Barton* to observe similarities between the two novels: “Between ‘*Mary Barton*’ and ‘*Ruth*’ there is an evident kindredness in scope” (163). The writer argued for a “family likeness” between major characters of the two novels: “Mr. Donne reminds us of Harry Carson. . . Jemima of *Mary Barton* herself . . . *Ruth* . . . only a younger and lowlier, and less humble Alice” (164). By drawing a comparison between the two novels, the reviewer urged the audience to read *Ruth* in light of *Mary Barton*. After stressing the importance of *Mary Barton* as the author’s representative work, the reviewer chose *Mary Barton* and *Jane Eyre* as two paradigmatic novels “which are perhaps most likely of all to survive in England from the present day” (167). Here, the reviewer located “the Author of *Mary Barton*” in the wider context of nineteenth-century female authorship to compare the author with other popular women writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, George Sand, Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. This review of *Ruth* rather turned its critical attention to the proper name of *Mary Barton* (standing for the heroine and the novel at the same time) to discuss Gaskell’s literary significance as a major Victorian woman writer in the end. In other words, the reviewer read *Ruth* and the Victorian literary market through the name of “*Mary Barton*.” “*Mary Barton*” served as a discursive site of reference not only for Gaskell’s second novel *Ruth* but also for Victorian female authorship in general. As shown so far, the phrase “By the author of *Mary Barton*” worked as an alternative phrase for Gaskell’s anonymity. Not only did the phrase refer to the author through description, it also

allowed the fictional proper name “Mary Barton” to serve as a stand-in for Gaskell’s authorship. That is, “Mary Barton” emerged as the key proper name that stood for both the heroine of the novel and the novel itself.

The importance of “Mary Barton” in evaluating Gaskell’s literary achievements grew even larger after the death of Gaskell as *Mary Barton* became the most recognized, if not most accomplished, novel of the author. Many literary magazines chose *Mary Barton* as Gaskell’s most popular novel that best represented her authorship. For example, *British Quarterly Review* in 1867 mentioned about the adaption of *Mary Barton* into the play “The Long Strike” and argued that it testified to the novel’s “abiding popularity” (400). The *Fortnightly Review* in 1878 also recognized the importance of *Mary Barton* in discussing Gaskell’s literary career: “she could not easily have written another novel that would take such a hold of the public mind as *Mary Barton* did . . . (369). *Mary Barton* left so deep an impression on the minds of readers that people were reluctant to read upon any other subjects for a while --Gaskell’s second novel *Ruth* was even “felt as a disappointment” (369). The reviewer thus designated Gaskell as “the author of Mary Barton”: “to the last she [Gaskell] was best known as the authoress of *Mary Barton*” (369). These posthumous reviews all agreed that *Mary Barton* best represented Gaskell’s literary performance as a novelist.

It is noteworthy that the novel’s popularity had a great deal to do with the ways in which the proper name “Mary Barton” was circulated in Victorian print culture. As the phrase “By the author of Mary Barton” was widely and repeatedly used to mark Gaskell’s authorship in periodical discourses, the proper name “Mary Barton” came to represent her authorship. Indeed, Gaskell’s author name was continuously replaced by the descriptive anonymity “By the Author of Mary Barton” before the publication of *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1857. It thus marked the middle years of her literary career beginning from the publication of *Ruth* in 1853 to the publication of *North and South* in 1855. As “Mary Barton” worked at a discursive

level to define Gaskell's authorship during the first half of her literary career as a novelist, it almost became a substitute name for Gaskell, as Hilary M. Schor writes: "In that classic nineteenth-century confusion of novelist, heroine, and text, she was constantly addressed as Mary Barton. . . . Like Mary Barton, Gaskell had found herself a voice, and then found herself "all in print" (44).

### **"Mary Barton" as Title Name**

Not only did "Mary Barton" interact with a reading public as a commodity name for the book in the literary market as shown in the previous section, it also formed a specific relationship with the text. Therefore, how to read the book title determines the relationship between forms and contents, between genre and readership for the novel. "Mary Barton" as the title name has taken center stage in the long-standing debates over the genre of the novel. As the novel seems to consist of two separate plots, it has often been criticized for its structural flaws or lack of organic unity. To make a critical intervention, I read the title name "Mary Barton" as a threshold name lying between the text and the public. First, the paratextual function of the novel's full title framed the text and influenced readers. Second, Gaskell's letters provide important epitexts that shed new light on the title-change of the novel. I ultimately show that the proper name "Mary Barton," as a primary title, played a crucial role in determining the generic boundaries of the novel.

Scholars have tended to read *Mary Barton* in terms of its dual narrative structure: the first part narrates John's rebellions against the industrial class, and the second part centers on Mary's growth into womanhood. As the entire story seems to be divided between John Barton's political plot and Mary Barton's romantic plot, the novel used to be categorized into either the industrial novel (a social-problem or Condition-of-England novel) or the *bildungsroman* with an emphasis on Mary's romance plot. Here, the genre question of the

novel is closely linked to the protagonist question of the novel. If Mary Barton becomes a proper heroine of the novel, it is more likely to be read as a *bildungsroman*; if John Barton becomes a proper hero of the novel, it is more likely to be perceived as an industrial novel. In other words, which proper name serves as the legitimate protagonist of the book emerges as a determining factor for the genre of *Mary Barton*.

The genre question of the novel was vigorously raised in the early reception of the novel. Those magazines fascinated by the novel's description of the working-class condition predominantly focused on the political aspect of the story in their reviews. For example, *The British Quarterly Review* wrote in February 1849: "The predominant sentiment of 'Mary Barton'—namely, the antagonistic estrangement of the rich and poor—bears a close resemblance to that of Mr. D'Israeli's 'Sybil'" (130). *Mary Barton* succeeded *Sybil* by taking up the class problem as its subject matter. This reviewer briefly mentioned "the love portion of the story" only to detect "the delicate touch of a female hand" from it (131). In its 1878 review "Mrs. Gaskell's Novels," the *Fortnightly Review* also categorized *Mary Barton* as the same type of novel as *Sybil*: "In all probability, it was *Sybil* that suggested to Mrs. Gaskell the idea of writing *Mary Barton*" (355). After comparing the two novels, this critic added that it was not "to detract from Mrs. Gaskell's originality" but for "pedigree-hunting" in the literary history of industrial novels (356). These critics suggested that *Mary Barton* and *Sybil* should be put into the same generic category of the industrial novel. Subsequently, Mary Barton's plot was dismissed as subordinate to John Barton's plot, the mainstay of the novel.

In contrast, other literary magazines such as the *North British Review* viewed Mary Barton as the heroine of the novel. In praising the novel for its "extreme naturalness" in delineating the poor, the reviewer recognized Mary as the working-class heroine. Despite her lowly origin, Mary "is indeed a lady. . . of nobility. . . endowed with that inexpressible grace, delicacy, and innate refinement, which accompanies a tender, unselfish, loving disposition"

(425). the *North British Review* argued that the novel's plot was interesting yet "too deliberate" in interweaving "the fortunes of Mary and her faithful lover" with "the sufferings of the masses in the bad time" (426). For this magazine, Mary's interesting love story seemed at odds with the "Condition-of-England" themes apparent in the novel. The reviewer did not even mention John Barton's name, only referring to him as "one mechanic" (425). The reviewer here viewed Mary as the heroine and her story as the central design of the novel.

Likewise, the *Westminster Review* took note of the character development of Mary Barton. The magazine called attention to the status of Mary Barton as a "Labor's daughter" as opposed to "the heiress of luxury" such as Evelina, Cecilia and Belinda (48). These comparisons indicate that Mary Barton constituted a different type of heroine from traditional ones. Since Mary comes from a laboring class, she is different from other heroines of "luxury" and comfort. Suggesting that Mary's plot constituted an indispensable part of the whole, the writer quoted Mary's refusal of Harry Carson as one of the most interesting scenes of the tale: "from this part of the story, the development of Mary's character proceeds with ever-increasing interest" (57). Mary's love story drew an increasing amount of attention from readers as it developed rapidly in the latter half of the novel. This critic further commented that "[Mary's] errors, that had their source more in the temptations to which the gift of her natural beauty exposed her, than in any serious levity of conduct, are drawn with delicate discrimination" (57). Such phrases as "the development of Mary's character" and "[Mary's] errors" indicate the maturation of Mary's character from a young girl to an adult through a range of dilemmas she faces. These receptions provided readers with a chance to see the novel as Mary's *bildungsroman*.

A critical division in designating the genre of *Mary Barton* has further widened in more recent criticism. Marxist critics mostly saw John Barton as the protagonist to read the work as an industrial novel that purported to illuminate the lives of working-class people.

Raymond Williams, a representative Marxist critic, dissociated Mary's love story from the text, dismissing it as "the familiar and orthodox plot of the Victorian novel of sentiment" (89). On the other hand, feminist critics have claimed Mary Barton as the legitimate heroine of the novel, contending that Mary's romance actually contains more nuanced social and political themes than Marxist critics have argued. They show that Mary's private interests are always materialized in social and material terms. Hilary M. Schor asserts that the work has "largely been read as John Barton's novel" and Mary Barton's plot has been considered "subordinate in subject, in political import, and in authorial skill" (*Scheherazade* 13). Opposing Marxist views on *Mary Barton*, Schor argues that the novel gives a double-plot account by juxtaposing Mary's love story with John's political plot. Since economic and sexual exploitation are closely related problems in the industrial system, love and politics become not separate but intersecting themes of the novel. More recently, Kamilla Elliott similarly reads the novel as "the politics of romance" arguing that an inversion occurs between the romance and the politics at the end of the novel. While John's political struggles end up with his emotional resolution with Harry's father, Mary's romantic relationships place her at the center of legal and political action in the end (31).

Despite their different goals, both Marxist and feminist critics have applied the traditional methodology of textual criticism to the work. They analyze the internal structure of the narrative to see its plot organization and characterization. They focus on either of the two main characters to support their own ideological claims. To overcome the limits of these structuralist criticisms, more recent critics have either turned to historical facts or applied a quantitative analysis to the text. For example, Brian Crick analyzes the original rough sketch of the novel to conclude that "the great preponderance of entries is devoted to Mary Barton" (515). Meanwhile, Tatsuhiro Ohno charts the entire text to prove that Mary Barton is the

heroine of the novel as she appears the most frequently in the narrative space.<sup>8</sup> Each critic uses a methodology of historicist or quantitative analysis to support Mary Barton as the proper protagonist of the novel.

While these critics old and new have offered many useful insights on the matter, they mostly viewed “Mary Barton” as an internal name, as a reference to the fictional character Mary Barton within the novel. None of them has read “Mary Barton” as a paratextual name, as the title name of the book circulated in the market. To fill up this critical gap, I read “Mary Barton” as the title name that performs a major role in constituting the novel’s genre. Not only did the title name increase the generic ambivalence of the novel, it actually helped to form its generic boundaries as an important paratextual name that presented the book to readers. This means that the name of “Mary Barton” operated at a discursive level beyond the borders of the novel’s text. As the title name, “Mary Barton” not only functioned for the text but also brought certain semantic effect on readers.

How do we read the novel’s full title “Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life”? Genette divides a title into several different categories: a primary title, a secondary title, a subtitle along with a separate category of genre indication.<sup>9</sup> While it is easy to read the first part of the title “Mary Barton” as a primary title, it seems much more difficult to decide which category the secondary part of the title “A Tale of Manchester Life” belongs to.

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<sup>8</sup> Ohno quantifies and charts the appearances of main characters such as John, Mary and Jem to reveal that Mary, not John, is the most active character while Jem acts as one of the three leading characters of the novel. Unlike most critics who divided the novel into two parts where John Barton is said to play active in the first half of the political plot and her daughter Mary in the latter half of the romance plot, Ohno views the novel’s formal structure as consisting of three parts—introduction (chapters 1-16 where Mary and John were the most active characters), development (chapters 17-33 where Mary was most active) and finale (chapter 33-38 where Mary and Jem were most active). In addition, he shows that as much as 37 percent of the novel is spent to narrate Mary’s six-day ordeals (dating from 18 to 23 March 1840) to prove Jem’s innocence without revealing her father’s crime. Ohno concludes that Gaskell devised the double-plot structure to promote the complementarity of both plots not its oppositionality (“Is *Mary Barton* an Industrial Novel?” 16-17). I come to the same conclusion yet through different methodologies.

<sup>9</sup> According to Genette, a title beginning with or containing “a tale” or “a novel” become genre indication.

Depending on the relations between the first part and the second part, it could be seen as a secondary title, a subtitle or even an indicator of genre. If it is read as a subtitle, “A Tale of Manchester Life” submits to the primary title. If it is read as a secondary title, it rather maintains an equal footing with the primary title in its illocutionary effect on readers. In my reading, I adopt the latter stance to read “A Tale of Manchester Life” as the secondary title. This is an attempt to recognize the complementarity of each plot element in the novel’s formal structure.

According to Genette’s formula, “Mary Barton” obviously is a thematic title as it refers to the character in the novel. It describes its subject matter through the proper name of the fictional character Mary Barton. Just like *Jane Eyre* or *Madame Bovary*, *Mary Barton* was likely to be perceived as the heroine of the novel by a Victorian reading public. It was a common practice to use the proper name of a protagonist as the title of fiction in the nineteenth-century, and “Mary Barton” could carry a specifically historical connotation as one of those nineteenth-century titles. Yet, in practice, such a formula could be in error. As Genette warns, the relationship between a title and a text always depends on “the receiver’s hermeneutic obligingness” (77). Readers may not accept the title character as the protagonist of a literary work despite historical connotations. Genette takes an instance of Balzac’s *Pere Goriot* which can be read as the story of a young man Rastignac even if the title only refers to Father Goriot. Likewise, the primary title of *Mary Barton* does not necessarily make Mary Barton the protagonist of the novel. After all, the novel does deal with other subject matters besides what concerns the character Mary Barton.

Indeed, the novel has a secondary title “A Tale of Manchester Life” complementary to the primary title. This additional title is basically a rhematic title as it indicates the genre of the novel (“A Tale...”), yet it also describes its subject matter (“Manchester Life”). Therefore it can be called a mixed title that designates the novel’s genre and subject at the same time.

By marking the place name in its generic format, this subtitle expands the narrative horizon of the novel from the private self of Mary Barton to the public life of Manchester. Given that Manchester was the center of the manufacturing industry of nineteenth-century England, the secondary title could fully deliver a sense of an industrial life to readers. By evoking cultural connotations attached to the name of the city Manchester, the secondary title functions as a genre-designator which frames the tale as an industrial novel.

In its full scale, “Mary Barton: a Tale of Manchester Life” forms a contrast between the theme and the rheme in describing the novel. While the primary title “Mary Barton” constitutes a central theme of the story, the secondary title “a Tale of Manchester Life” refers to the whole story by designating its genre as a tale about the industrial town. In its semantic effects on readers, the primary title indicates the private space of female subjectivity occupied by Mary Barton, whereas the secondary title articulates the public space of Manchester. The full title raises an opposition between the private self and the public space in delivering its message to the public, which seems to correspond to the narrative contrast found in the novel—a gap between Mary’s private interests and her father’s public acts. As a result, the same type of generic conflict occurs in reading the full title as we have seen in reading the narrative structure of the novel.

However, such a problem occurs only when we see the title as consisting of two separate entities. If we read it as a continuum, we can combine the primary title “Mary Barton” with the secondary title “A Tale of Manchester Life” in diagnosing its full-scale semantic effects. I contend that the primary title and the secondary title cross the boundary between the private and the public to form a mixed genre of an “industrial *bildungsroman*” in its paratextual effects on readers. I invent a generic term “industrial *bildungsroman*” to recognize the complementarity of each plot in analyzing the novel’s formal structure. The novel’s double-plot structure promotes the complementarity of each plot rather than their

oppositonality.

While the primary title presents Mary Barton as a central focus of the novel, the secondary title places her in the setting of industrial conflicts. This title reading suggests that Mary Barton belongs to the industrial town of Manchester while a Manchester life would be depicted through Mary Barton. Any public life of Manchester (including John Barton's political acts) would not deliver the same sense of personal intimacy or ordinariness to readers without the heroine Mary Barton (and her love story). As "Mary Barton" provides readers with a focal point in reading "a Tale of Manchester Life," the proper name could function as the heroine of the novel in its semantic effects.

Indeed, Mary's love story revolves around a larger picture of Manchester life. The heroine engages with not only romantic interests but also her material surroundings, as pointed out by Schor and Elliott. Although Mary does not endorse her father's violence against the master class, she tacitly agrees that social inequalities exist between masters and working-class men and tries to solve them by marrying up. As the narrator confesses, the future Mary dreams of with Harry is not a foolish, naïve romance: "Yes! Mary was ambitious, and did not favour Mr. Carson the less because he was rich and a gentleman" (81). Therefore, her pursuit of the status of a lady should be seen as a social motivation for a better life rather than mere vanity or romance. Her subjectivity as a social entity is further strengthened by her appearance at the court to defend Jem Wilson who symbolizes working-class integrity. By saving her fiancé from ignominy, Mary ends up preserving working-class morality, which had been seriously undercut by the assassination plot. In this reading, Mary is not a private self but a public figure who acts out on a social cause.

"Mary Barton" thus secures its place as the title name, turning the novel into her own story. In reading the novel as Mary's story, Schor recognizes Mary's narrative power in entitling the novel: "She has moved beyond normal spheres of action for a woman in a

novel . . . . In a sense, she has won the battle over the novel that might have been called John Barton: it has become her story” (38).<sup>10</sup> In fact, Mary’s importance as a narrative focus acquires further momentum over time. Although John Barton initiates the most striking action in the novel, he becomes dead in the end. In contrast, Mary remains to observe his death, marries Jem and leaves England for a better life. In this sense, Mary is the one who provides an alternative solution to John’s radical act of rebellion. As the protagonist of the novel, Mary Barton lives the longest in the text and concludes the whole narrative. While the novel begins with the place-name Green Heys Fields near Manchester, it ends with Mary’s name and her words: “‘Dear Job Legh!’ said Mary, softly and seriously” (393). Such narrative closure makes it possible to see the novel as Mary’s story rather than as John’s story. In this last scene, Mary reminisces of good old days that she spent with simple but honest working-class neighbors.

In reading the novel as Mary’s *bildungsroman*, it is important to take note of the entire title. By including not only the first name “Mary” but also the surname “Barton,” the full-name title perceives the heroine as a social entity linked to the public space of Manchester. By giving a social character to the heroine, the surname “Barton” differentiates Mary Barton from the traditional heroines of British novels. In his recent study on book titles, Franco Moretti argues that full-name titles could indicate the *bildungsroman* that emerged in the early Victorian period. While proper names shortened the length of titles in the nineteenth-century British literary market, full-name titles such as *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton* indicated the advents of new literary genres like the *bildungsroman* and the industrial novel. While only the first name of a heroine had been used as a title for the previous novels

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<sup>10</sup> Schor reads “A Tale of Manchester Life” as an effective subtitle for the book that makes Mary’s life “representative as well as heroic” (38). She writes, “A novel about an unimportant woman, a worker, a ‘girl,’ can be effectively subtitled, ‘A Tale of Manchester Life’” (38).

of marriage plots as in the cases of *Belinda* and *Emma*, the full name of a heroine began to appear in the 1820 and 30s to indicate genre shifts: “the marriage plot [became] embedded within genres like the *bildungsroman* and the industrial novel, where the heroine acquired a public life, which was promptly mirrored in titles like *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*. . . one word, and the image of the heroine rotates 180 degrees: from private, to public” (147). In figuring out a close relationship between book titles and genre shifts, Moretti suggests that a woman’s surname could indicate her public life as in the case of *Jane Eyre* and *Mary Barton*. However, Moretti does not account for *Mary Barton*’s generic ambiguity at the narrative and discursive levels nor consider its secondary title in categorizing the novel into the industrial novel.<sup>11</sup> According to his analysis, the full-name title *Mary Barton* can frame the novel as a *bildungsroman*. As a new title that could indicate the genre of the *bildungsroman*, *Mary Barton* marked the public life of a heroine. In my reading, the primary title “*Mary Barton*” worked to expand the heroine’s realm from the private to the public space with the help of the effective secondary title “*A Tale of Manchester Life*.” Such paratextual expansion formed a parallel with her growth from naïveté to motherhood at the narrative level. Mary grows “from silence to speech, from flirtation to love” (Schor 38). As such, the entire title could deliver a sense of the *bildungsroman* to readers.

Along with the title reading, I also conduct the epitextual reading of Gaskell’s letters. Genette divides paratexts into peritexts (located within the book such as the title and the preface) and epitexts (located outside the book such as interviews and correspondence). According to Genette, an author’s correspondence functions as a private epitext that mediates the book to the reader and brings certain semantic effects to readers upon its revelation to the public. Gaskell’s private letters that concerned the title-change of the novel becomes important epitextual evidence that supports my reading of the novel as an “industrial

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, Moretti never mentions Genette’s *Paratexts* in his discussion of book titles.

*bildungsroman*.” While tracing the title change from “Mary Barton” to “John Barton” in the letters, I will discuss the implication of the novel’s original subtitle (or secondary title), “a Manchester Love Story.” Rather than recovering authorial intention from these letters, I explore their paratextual function, the mediating role between the book and the reader.

Gaskell’s claims for the original title have further complicated the ongoing academic disputes over the genre of the novel. In the two letters written in early 1849, following the novel’s initial publication the previous year, Gaskell confessed that “John Barton” was the original title of the novel. In the first letter, Gaskell wrote: ‘John Barton’ was the original name, as being the central figure to my mind. . . . it was a London thought coming through the publisher that it must be called Mary B” (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 70).<sup>12</sup> In the second letter, Gaskell claimed again: “John Barton was the original title of the book. Round the character of John Barton all the others formed themselves; he was my hero, the person with whom all my sympathies went, with whom I tried to identify myself at the time. . .” (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 74).<sup>13</sup> Many critics have often quoted these two passages to demonstrate that Gaskell originally titled her work “John Barton” instead of “Mary Barton.” These critics include not only those who support John Barton as the protagonist but also those feminist critics who see Mary Barton as the right protagonist. The latter critics often quote these letters to acknowledge their historical forces. For example, Jenny Uglow reads the novel as Mary’s romance yet argues that Gaskell had John Barton in her mind as the original title and had to change it to Mary Barton to cater to the publisher’s demands (186). Uglow speculates that Chapman “may have been reluctant to shock the public by having the name of a murderer, John Barton, as the title” (186) and sees such choice apt given that Mary moves

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<sup>12</sup> This letter was addressed to Miss Lamont.

<sup>13</sup> This letter was addressed to Mrs. Greg.

to center stage as the narrative progresses.

In the meantime, scholars who support John Barton as the protagonist of the novel tended to read such declarations as pure authorial intentions. Raymond Williams problematizes “the change of emphasis which the book subsequently underwent, and the consequent change of title to *Mary Barton*” (*Culture and Society* 88-89). Williams regrets that the novel veers off from its convincingly portrayed industrial scenes in the early part to *Mary*’s romance in the later part of the narrative. He quotes Gaskell’s letter about John Barton as an original title of the book, supposing that such a thematic change has something to do with the title change. More recently, Macdonald Daly writes that “one of the cruelest revisions Edward Chapman forced on his newly discovered talent, in her [Gaskell’s] view, was a change of title” (xx) and that the novel’s formal incongruity proves that Gaskell “is clearly somewhat stretched by the form” (xxi). Most of these critical views separated the name “John Barton” from its historical contexts to use it for their own purposes. While they place a great emphasis on the name “John Barton” as the source of authorial intention about the original title, they do not consider what kind of discursive effects such acts of re-titling the work could have brought to Gaskell’s contemporary readers.

I suggest that we should read such an authorial statement not on its own terms but in a wider historical context to understand its discursive operations. In fact, Gaskell’s retitling of *Mary Barton* as “John Barton” should be understood as an immediate response to the critical reception of the character. In the first letter quoted above, Gaskell expressed her own disappointment with the reading public for not recognizing the centrality of John Barton: “So many people overlook John B or see him merely to misunderstand him, that if you were a stranger and had only said that one thing (that the book shd have been called John B) I should have had pleasure in feeling that my own idea was recognized” (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 70). This passage shows that Gaskell was closely following the public sentiments about her

book. She knew that some people were very angry about John Barton and his political commitment in the novel. In her previous letter to Chapman, Gaskell mentioned about people's "angry talking" about her book (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 68-9). Thus she felt pleased when her correspondent recognized her "original" idea about the novel. In the next few lines of the same letter, Gaskell quoted such authorities as God and Carlyle to justify her writing the book.<sup>14</sup> Given this context, the alternative title "John Barton" was rather used to support the politics of the novel. Likewise, the second letter was written as a reaction against "the disapproval which Mr. Greg's family have felt with regard to 'M.B.'" after Gaskell "heard of it with so much regret" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 73).<sup>15</sup> Conjecturing that Mrs. Greg's husband wrote the harsh review published in the *Edinburgh Review*, Gaskell appealed to Mrs. Greg that the tale naturally "grew up in [her] mind" after she saw the "injustice of the inequalities of fortune" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 74).<sup>16</sup>

All this epitextual evidence suggests that Gaskell's claims about the original title could be seen as her defensive strategy to preserve the other half of the novel rather than as a pure authorial assertion to change the title of the book. As many contemporary reviewers including the most scathing W.R. Greg condemned the author for siding with the working-class people, Gaskell had to justify her characterization of John Barton by renaming him as

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<sup>14</sup> Despite people's disapprovals, Gaskell believed that her work would "do good in the long run" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 70). As God would stand for the eternal truth, she would not mind people's praises or blames. Gaskell also quoted Carlyle's letter that encouraged her to keep writing "good books" to "do silently good actions" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 70).

<sup>15</sup> In the beginning of this letter written to Mrs. Greg, Gaskell asked, "May I write in the first person to you, as I have many things I should like to say to the writer of the remarks on 'Mary Barton' which Miss Mitchell has sent me, and which I conjecture were written by your husband?" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 73). Later it turned out that it was another Mr. Greg who actually wrote the harsh reviews against *Mary Barton* in the *Edinburgh Review*.

<sup>16</sup> Gaskell partly conceded that such a disapproval "would be given if [she] had misrepresented, or so presented, a part as the whole, as that people at a distance should be misled and prejudiced against the masters, and that class be estranged from class," saying that she valued the *Edinburgh Review's* criticism for "the weakness of which [she] was conscious" (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 73-4).

the hero of the novel. Ohno views Gaskell's authorial avowal in her letter as a response to W.R. Greg's harsh criticism. As Ohno points out, previous critics have read too much into this biographical fact to conclude that John Barton and his political plot is a central design of the novel.

Gaskell appealed for the legitimacy of the novel's political plot by reframing it as John Barton's story. Only through this act of renaming could she preserve the whole value of the book. Seen in this light, "John Barton" rather performed a post-paratextual function by delivering specific epitextual messages to readers: the novel is also about John Barton. Not a published title of the novel, the proper name still affected the addressees of the letters (and later critics like us) in forming the thematic and generic boundaries of the novel. This proves, in turn, that the form and meaning of a title could vary depending on the dynamics between the sender and the recipient of private epitexts.

Although Gaskell claimed that "John Barton" was the original idea of the book, she had not used either "Mary Barton" or "John Barton" to refer to her manuscript. Instead, she described it as "a Manchester Love Story" several times before she finally adopted "Mary Barton." The first evidence can be found in Mary Howitt's letter sent to the unknown publisher: "I send you the remainder of our friend's "Manchester Love Story."<sup>17</sup> Although the recipient of this letter is not identified, it shows that Gaskell already "saw her tale as a 'love story' and was not, as has been hitherto presumed, forced to consider this subtitle by her publisher" (Uglow 185). Not only did this manuscript name designate the novel as a love story, it also indicated the subject matter of the novel in the descriptive phrase for the first time. In the next two letters that Gaskell wrote to her publisher Chapman, she used the same descriptive phrase to refer to her manuscript. Only two weeks before she accepted Chapman's

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<sup>17</sup> See the note 23 for Chapter 9 in Uglow's book. According to Uglow, this letter is undated and located in Nottingham County Library, MSS DD976/20/2.

advice on the final title, Gaskell called her manuscript “my MS (a Manchester Love Story).”<sup>18</sup> When she decided to adopt *Mary Barton* as the final title, Gaskell wrote to Chapman once again: “Thank you for your suggestions; you will see that I have adopted the *additional* title of ‘*Mary Barton*, a Manchester Love Story” (*The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* 56; my emphasis). Here, it is important to note that “the additional title” in this context refers to “*Mary Barton*” not “a Manchester Love Story.”<sup>19</sup>

I read the descriptive phrase “a Manchester Love Story” as an important epitextual title that pre-framed the genre of the novel. As what Genette calls a “pre-title,” it shows how the author characterized the manuscript before its publication. Genette argues that a “pre-title” is an important “pre-paratext” as it can reveal “the genetic prehistory, or prenatal life, of the title” (66). Since a pre-title testifies to “the author’s hesitations about his choice,” it constitutes “a wholly legitimate part of the posthumous paratext” (66). This means that a pre-title is just as important as a final title to our understanding of the text. The fact that Gaskell initially described her work as “a Manchester Love Story” shows that the author initially saw her work as a romance. Although she hesitated about the final title “*Mary Barton*” offered by the publisher, it actually fitted her descriptive phrase “a Manchester Love Story” better than it

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<sup>18</sup> At other times, she simply called it “the MS” (on March 21<sup>st</sup>), “my novel” or “the tale” (on April 13<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, many critics used this historical fact incorrectly. Those critics who cut this passage off from its historical contexts saw “a Manchester Love Story” as an additional title to the supposedly original title “*Mary Barton*.” For instance, Brian Crick sees *Mary Barton* as the right protagonist of the novel yet refuses to couple the name with “a Manchester Love Story.” He argues that Gaskell preferred “*A Tale of Manchester Life*” over “*A Manchester Love Story*” since she did not want to link her heroine’s name with a mere romance. Gaskell chose “*a Tale of Manchester Life*” as the subtitle to integrate *Mary*’s name as part of a larger social landscape of Manchester. In this reading, *Mary* and her romance becomes the other half of a tale of Manchester life, not a detachable and ephemeral adjunct to the whole. While Crick tries to dissociate *Mary Barton* from what Raymond Williams calls “the familiar and orthodox plot of the Victorian novel of sentiment” and join feminist critics’ efforts to recover political meanings from *Mary*’s romance plot, he misreads Gaskell’s letters about the original manuscript name. In the same manner, Hilary M. Schor assumes that “*A Tale of Manchester Life*” was preferred by Gaskell. Yet, this cannot be true since Gaskell had already used the descriptive phrase “a Manchester Love Story” to refer to her manuscript before she adopted “*Mary Barton*” as the main title.

did “A Tale of Manchester Life” in its thematic correspondence.<sup>20</sup> Although “a Tale of Manchester Life” replaced “a Manchester Loves Story” as the final choice, the latter functioned as the pre-title that described the text in its early stage.

So far, I have investigated the paratextual functions of the published title as well as its pre-paratextual forms. Despite all those variations in Gaskell’s and her publisher’s title-making processes, it is the published title that ultimately presents the book to the public in the market. Therefore, the final title performs the most effective paratextual functions in delivering the novel’s form and contents to a reading public. While the proper name “Mary Barton” in the title indicates its genre as *bildungsroman*, the secondary title “A Tale of Manchester Life” redefines the heroine as a public figure surrounded by the industrial environment, thus forming a mixed genre of “industrial *bildungsroman*” in its paratextual effects on readers.

The long-standing controversies over the title name “Mary Barton” rather demonstrate how a title can be circulated among the author, the publisher and the reader. Early negative receptions of *Mary Barton* induced the author to claim the novel as John Barton’s story though only in private letters, reinforcing the generic ambiguity of the novel already felt by readers. Through the historical accumulation of its semantic effects, the title displays the interaction among the author, the publisher and the reader, forming a circuit of proper names between the addresser and the addressee. Different critical camps such as Marxists, feminists and book historians have turned to another moment in this title chain to take note of a

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, “A tale of Manchester Life” gives a wrong impression that the novel wholly represents Manchester life. The truth is that the tale actually revolves around a small number of working-class people with Mary’s household as the center. Terry Wyke argues that the subtitle “A Tale of Manchester Life” misrepresents the actual geography described in the novel as Gaskell’s observation was limited to the suburbs of Chorlton-on-Medlock, where the Gaskells began their married life in 1832 and resided for the rest of their lives. Wyke shows that only a limited map of the city had been represented in the novel despite Gaskell’s efforts to authenticate her text by providing historical footnotes whenever necessary: “This is not to propose, from the examination of a single footnote, that *Mary Barton* should be re-titled ‘A Tale of Chorlton-on-Medlock Life’ but this short study does suggest that it is important to recognize the degree to which it was ‘A Tale of Manchester Life viewed from Chorlton-on-Medlock’” (123).

critical circularity of the name “Mary Barton.” As a title name that forms what Moretti calls a “metonymic relationship” (152) to a book, “Mary Barton” played a significant role in determining the generic boundaries of the novel. Not only did it engage in defining the subject matter of the novel as a signifier for the text, it was also circulated in the literary market as a short name for the book *Mary Barton*. “Mary Barton” has survived many critical challenges, serving as a paratextual framework for the book. The importance of Mary Barton as the title name grows even stronger at the practical level as the public usually omits the secondary part of the title in referring to the novel. Genette argues that, due to the public’s laziness, subtitles disappear from covers and title pages (70). Indeed, on the book covers of most editions of *Mary Barton* published today sits only the name of “Mary Barton.”

### **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed two threshold names of Elizabeth Gaskell around the publication of her first major novel *Mary Barton*. First, the novel’s “no name” on the title page could multiply its possible authorial subjectivities to deliver an ambiguous sense of authorship to its early readers. In the process, it participated in wider Victorian literary discourses on gendered writings--the relationship between the gender of an author and the genre of a literary work. Second, the novel’s alternative anonymity “By the Author of Mary Barton” conducted a specific type of author-function for Gaskell by emphasizing the previous performance of the author rather than the empirical author. Not only did it form a network among literary texts published under the same name tag, it also provided a critical framework for literary analysis of other works. Lastly, I closely followed the process in which the book title had been changed from “John Barton” to “Mary Barton” to discuss what is at stake in choosing either proper name as the novel’s final title. “Mary Barton” ultimately emerged as an important proper name that functioned to determine the novel’s generic boundaries between the political

and romantic novel. With no author name appearing on the book cover, the title name “Mary Barton” became the significant clue for Victorian readers in understanding the novel.

All this demonstrates that the condition of an author name is closely associated with the function of a title in delivering an overall sense of a book to readers. I further explore this theme in the next chapter on Charlotte Brontë. While “Mary Barton” became a substitute name that filled up the material emptiness of the author name on the title page of *Mary Barton*, “Jane Eyre” formed a different sort of relationship with her supposed editor “Currer Bell” marked on the first edition of *Jane Eyre*.

## Chapter Two

### *Jane Eyre*'s Alternative Proper Names: "Currer Bell" and "Bertha Mason"

This chapter examines what I consider to be two alternative proper names of *Jane Eyre* -- "Currer Bell" and "Bertha Mason"—which delivered an ambiguous sense of authorship and genre to the public at the initial publication of the book. In addition to a close paratextual reading of the first book title of *Jane Eyre*, this chapter will also consider the narrative naming within the novel. At the discursive level of Victorian print culture, "Currer Bell" worked as both a pseudonym and an editor name which helped to construct ambiguous authorial subjectivities for *Jane Eyre*. While "Currer Bell" worked as part of *Jane Eyre*'s genre performance at first, it became a disrupting element to the book's genre claim later. At the narrative level, "Currer Bell" remains as a residual voice in the text by editing "Jane Eyre." Whereas "Mary Barton" could replace Gaskell's anonymity in forming the discursivity of *Mary Barton*, *Jane Eyre*'s narrative authority had rather been challenged by the outer existence of "Currer Bell." Lastly, "An Autobiography" offers a crucial paratextual site where "Bertha Mason" appears as a genre-heterogeneous name. Both "Currer Bell" and "Bertha Mason" remain as heterogeneous elements in Charlotte Brontë's realist project of *Jane Eyre*.

#### "Currer Bell"

Many scholars have puzzled over the name "Currer Bell" yet not given it a separate study except as the indicator of repressed female authorial agency or as the means of an escape from *ad feminam* criticism, as a veil for the female/feminine authorship of Charlotte Brontë.<sup>21</sup> Since these approaches take "Currer Bell" only as the pseudonym pointing to the

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<sup>21</sup> The former critical camp is represented by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's feminist classic *The Madwoman in the Attic*. The latter view has frequently cited Charlotte Brontë's own words from "Biographical

biographical figure of Charlotte Brontë, they fail to take account of its own primary function and effect on the first readers of *Jane Eyre*. My reading perceives “Currer Bell” as a discursive name that affected the first reception of *Jane Eyre* initially published in October 1847 with the following title: “Jane Eyre. An Autobiography. Edited by Currer Bell.” It is important to note that the phrase “edited by” lies between the name of Jane Eyre and Currer Bell. I argue that the phrase “edited by,” as a crucial paratextual device for the title, exerted a strong illocutionary force on both “Currer Bell” and “Jane Eyre,” functioning for the two names both at discursive and narrative levels. According to Genette, every paratextual element on the title page of a book can carry the “illocutionary force of its message” that can “make known an intention or an interpretation by the author and/or the publisher” (10-11). Thus, the phrase “edited by” served as a modifier for the name of Currer Bell, while its expanded linguistic construction “edited by Currer Bell” became a modifier for the name of Jane Eyre, literally and figuratively.

Reading “Currer Bell” as an editor name is, in a way, to revive the ignored function of the word “edited” in the title page as designed for the first readership of *Jane Eyre*. My own account of “Currer Bell” would, then, attempt to rediscover the historical implication of the proper name not only as a pseudonym but also as an editor name in its original sense. While I re-inscribe the paratextual significance of the phrase “edited by” which appeared on the first title page, I also consider the fact that the phrase was missing from the second editions on, which signaled the transformation of “Currer Bell” from the editor name to the

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Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell” published in 1850: “Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because—without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine'—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice . . .”(4) [quoted from the 1972 Norton edition of *Wuthering Heights* edited by William M. Sale, Jr.].

author name.<sup>22</sup> Thus “Currer Bell” emerges as “the editor-author” in the final stage of my analysis.

Still, how do we read the phrase “edited by” in mid-Victorian literary contexts? Was it a common literary convention for an autobiography or a new literary device for a new author? In his 1996 book *Misreading Jane Eyre*, Jerome Beaty discusses the historical implication of “edited by” in reading the title of *Jane Eyre*. Although not using Genette’s theories on paratexts, Jerome Beaty takes note of the importance of paraphernalia that surrounds the text of *Jane Eyre* and places an emphasis on the fact that “the first readers of *Jane Eyre. An Autobiography* were informed on the title page that it was edited by Currer Bell” (11). Beaty argues that the phrase was in wide use yet not in uniform ways – that is, not associated with any particular genre of novels of that time: “The term *edited by* was familiar in 1847 but polysemic, its descriptiveness refracted by the variety of uses to which it had recently been put” (11). He illustrates that the phrase had been used for various genres such as comic novels, Newgate novels, domestic and historical novels.

According to Beaty, it was not uncommon for Victorian novelists to use the phrase “edited by” to disguise themselves as editors. For instance, Charles Dickens used the phrase “edited by Boz” in publishing *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1844, only three years earlier than the publication of *Jane Eyre*. In this year of 1844, Edward Bulwer Lytton and William Makepeace Thackeray used the same device in publishing *Memoirs of a Muscovite*, “edited by Lady Bulwer Lytton” and *The Luck of Barry Lyndon. A Romance of the Last Century*, “edited by Fitz-Boodle.” In 1847, the same year as *Jane Eyre*, the popular domestic novelist

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<sup>22</sup> The second edition containing a preface dedicated to Thackeray appeared in January 1848. The third edition came out in April 1848 with a brief note stating that “Currer Bell” was the author of *Jane Eyre* only, denying the rumor that “Currer Bell” was the author of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*.

Anne March published *Bellah, a tale of La Vendée. From the French*, "edited by the Author of 'Two old men's tales,' etc.," (12). In these examples, "edited by" served as a literary device for marketing purposes. Although the phrase did not necessarily present a sense of any specific genre, it could indicate a work "by a well-known novelist, acknowledged by name, pseudonym, or the titles of that novelist's other works" (12). Indeed, "edited by Boz" was a familiar literary device to the most Victorian readers who knew that "Boz" was Dickens's pen name. Although Dickens assumed the editor name "Boz," he could still take advantage of his popularity in the literary market.

However, "edited by Currer Bell" did not seem to serve the same purpose as "edited by Boz." According to Beaty, the phrase "edited by Currer Bell" became "irrelevant" to the book of *Jane Eyre* for two reasons: "Currer Bell" was unknown to the public and the text itself showed no signs of editing (12). Since "Currer Bell" was "virtually unknown" in 1847, it seemed hard for "edited by Currer Bell" to produce any substantial, commercial effects on readers like "edited by Boz." Further, there is no trace or necessity of editorship in and for the text of *Jane Eyre*, according to Beaty.<sup>23</sup> The fiction of an editor created by the phrase "edited by" was dropped from the second edition because it was no longer relevant to the text: "Whatever the effect, the fiction of an editor, which was, indeed, irrelevant in a text without signs of 'editing,' was dropped from the second (January 1848) and all subsequent editions" (13). Since "edited by Currer Bell" had been the publisher's idea "perhaps intended to capitalize on the association of the device with such authors as Dickens, Thackeray, Anne Marsh, and the Countess Blessington," it grew useless after "the immediate success of *Jane Eyre*" and was eliminated from all subsequent editions (13).

While Beaty, ironically, sees no useful function of "edited by" attached to the name

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<sup>23</sup> Beaty sees no necessity of an editor for the text of *Jane Eyre*. He makes a comparison *Jane Eyre* with another "edited" autobiography of 1847—*The Autobiography of Rose Allen* "edited by a Lady." While the latter had a clear purpose of introducing a more educated pen to help its lower-class narrator, the former had no such necessity with well-written and well-educated *Jane Eyre* as the autobiographer (12).

of Currer Bell after elaborating on the phrase “edited by” to excavate its historical usage, he still alerts us to a narrative role that the phrase could play for the book *Jane Eyre* by turning Jane’s narrative into a third-person narration: “The fiction of an editor nonetheless puts the entire text in boldface quotation marks, makes the first-person autobiographer into a ‘third person’ to the first person of the ‘invisible’ editor, and raises the question of how we are to take these words by this person called Jane Eyre” (12). He even cites one example of discursive effects that such a phrase could bring to the first readers of *Jane Eyre*: The *Jerrold’s* speculated in October 1847 that “the first-person narrative was not a fictional but a thinly disguised, actual autobiography” due to the uncertainty of authorship prompted by “edited by Currer Bell” (13).

Expanding on these observations, I explore the discursive effects that “edited by Currer Bell” could bring to the readers of *Jane Eyre* at its debut. I use the term “editor-function” to mark the physical appearance of “Currer Bell” as an editor name on the title page of *Jane Eyre’s* first edition. While Foucault’s author-function closely marks the ways in which an author’s name is used and addressed in a certain discursive mode, I investigate how “Currer Bell” worked on the first readers of *Jane Eyre* as an editor’s name. While “Currer Bell” itself raised many doubts about the authorial gender of the book, the phrase “edited by” further increased the uncertainty around the authorship by registering “Currer Bell” as an editor name instead of an author name. Major contemporary book reviews for the first and second edition of *Jane Eyre* will be closely examined to see how the name of Currer Bell was received by the first round of readers of *Jane Eyre*. While the reviews for the first edition and for the second editions will be separately discussed, I deliberately limited my research within the year of 1850 when Charlotte Brontë’s pseudonymity was officially revealed to the public. Most of these early readers had difficulties figuring out the gender of the author but consented that this strange name of “Currer Bell” was fictive and new in the literary market.

This proves that “Currer Bell” was literally unknown in 1847, as Beaty points out. Issuing one of the first book reviews on *Jane Eyre* on November 27, 1847, *The Literary Examiner* referred to the book as “the first effort of an original writer” (756). While praising *Jane Eyre* as a clever book written by a new writer, the *Examiner* did not believe that it was written by a woman.

There can be no question but that *Jane Eyre* is a very clever book. Indeed it is a book of decided power. The thoughts are true, sound, and original; and the style, though rude and uncultivated here and there, is resolute, straightforward, and to the purpose. . . . There are, it is true, in this autobiography (which though relating to a woman, we do not believe to have been written by a woman), struggles, and throes, and misgivings . . . . We confess that we like an author who throws himself into the front of the battle, as the champion of the weaker party; and when this is followed up by bold and skillful soldiership, we are compelled to yield him our respect (756; my emphases).

In addition to originality, the direct and firm writing style led the reviewer to conclude that *Jane Eyre* was written by a man who stood up like a soldier to fight against social prejudices. In this reading, the new name of “Currer Bell” was translated into an innovative male author. In contrast, *Fraser's Magazine* in December 1847 announced that “the writer is evidently a woman, and, unless we are deceived, new in the world of literature” (690-691). While *Fraser's* detected a new authorship in the name of “Currer Bell” just like the *Examiner*, it strongly suspected that the author was a woman. Instead of depreciating such a fact, however, the *Fraser's* went on to celebrate this new female novelist entering the literary market with an unprecedented writing skill: “but, man or woman, young or old, be that as it may, no such book has gladdened our eyes for a long while. Almost all that we require in a novelist she has: perception of character, and power of delineating it; picturesqueness; passion; and knowledge of life.” (691). The book was very commendable because “she,” regardless of her age or gender, had every quality required of a novelist—perceptive and descriptive power, passion and knowledge. This review thus translated the new name of “Currer Bell” into a promising female novelist. In these examples, “Currer Bell” not only crossed the boundary

between masculine and feminine writing subjectivities but also represented a new authorship in the literary market. Unfamiliar with the proper name “Currer Bell,” these reviewers readily recognized it as a pseudonym or at least a fictive name for an author or an editor.

However, not all early reviewers recognized “Currer Bell” as a new writer in the market. *The Mirror Monthly Magazine*, in contrast, asserted that the book was produced by one of the female writers they knew already. Stunned by “the extraordinary daring of the writer of ‘Jane Eyre’” (376), the magazine strongly rebuked the author in the following manner:

We have undoubtedly once before met with this authoress. Though appearing under a new guise, there are resemblances in point of faith, opinion, and thought, which carry us in imagination back to another production quite as bold, quite as daring, quite as much distinguished for its insidious tendency, as the present volume. We do not point out the work lest we should make an error, and ascribe the productions of one writer to another, and thus heap unnecessary obloquy upon her head. It would be no credit to anyone to be the author of “Jane Eyre.” It is the boast of its writer that she knows how to overstep conventional usages—how, in fact, to trample upon customs respected by our forefathers, and long destined to shed glory upon our domestic circles (376).

The *Mirror* wrongly assumed that *Jane Eyre* was the second work written by the same “authoress” of daring immorality that the magazine had encountered before. “Currer Bell” was only a new mask worn by this same “authoress.” Contrary to *Fraser’s* review that extolled the author of *Jane Eyre*, the *Mirror* condemned “this authoress” for her unconventional writing, inscribing it as part of the immorality of women writers of the season: “Most of the novels with an immoral tendency that have appeared this season are from the pen of women. . . . In ‘Jane Eyre’ the immorality is peculiar” (377). Here, the reviewer capitalized on the name of “Currer Bell” to rebuke the immoral tendency of female authorship in general. In this peculiar reading, “Currer Bell” was perceived not as a new literary name but as an old female author who assumed a new alias only to spawn bad morality on society.

The *Mirror’s* critique of unconventionality in *Jane Eyre* was only the beginning of a

series of criticisms against the book which appeared successively in other literary magazines such as the *Christian Remembrancer* and the *Quarterly Review*. The former wrote that “every page burns with moral Jacobinism” (397) and the latter declared, “Altogether the autobiography of Jane Eyre is pre-eminently an anti-Christian composition” (173). I will return to these when I analyze the reviews issued after the publication of the second edition of *Jane Eyre*. For now, I make an observation that, while Gaskell’s anonymity raised a question about whether a woman writer was capable of and entitled to write a political novel at all, Brontë’s pseudonymity (or rather fictiveness) raised concerns over immorality found in women’s writing.

While “Currer Bell” was mostly received as a gender-ambiguous name in the above reviews as intended by the author, it was also read as an editor name at other times. In November 1847, *New Monthly Magazine* announced that “An autobiography, evidently in part founded on truth and experience, *however much afterwards complicated, and coloured up by the editor*, it is one of the most powerfully written novels that have lately issued from the press” (374; my emphases). While praising *Jane Eyre* as an authentic autobiography, the reviewer granted the possibility that the book might have been “complicated” or “colored up” by the editor. This magazine acknowledged the role of “Currer Bell” as an editor for the book. At the same time, the reviewer called *Jane Eyre* one of the most powerful “novels,” marking the book as a very authentic “fictional” autobiography written by an unidentified “novelist” and edited by “Currer Bell.” This proves that “Currer Bell” was part of the genre contract made by the genre indication of “An autobiography” in the title.

More interestingly, the *Athenaeum* in its review article published on December 25, 1847 assumed that “Currer Bell” served as the editor for all three texts of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*: “‘Jane Eyre,’ it will be recollected, was *edited* by Mr. Currer Bell. Here are two tales so nearly related to ‘Jane Eyre’ in cast of thought, incident,

and language as to excite some curiosity. All three might be the work of one hand,--but the first issued remains the best” (1324). In reviewing *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* written by other “Bells” –“Ellis Bell” and “Acton Bell,” the *Athenaeum* first and foremost reminded readers of the “editor-function” of the first Bell “Currer Bell.” Here, the reviewer not only marked “Mr. Currer Bell” as the “editor” of *Jane Eyre* following the first book title but also raised a possibility of single editorship of “Currer Bell” for other Bells’ works. This confusion was partly caused by T.C.Newby’s advertising campaign for *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* which started in December 1847. According to Stephen Colclough, Newby “deliberately associated the work of Ellis and Acton Bell with Charlotte’s already successful novel” by using the phrase “Mr. Bell’s Successful New Novel” (161).

While “Currer Bell” could function as an editor name with the phrase “edited by,” it turned into an author name without the phrase. Its definitive transition from the “editor-function” to the “author-function” took place with the publication of *Jane Eyre*’s second edition in December 1847 which deleted the word “edited” from its title page: “Jane Eyre. An Autobiography. By Currer Bell.” Most contemporary periodical literary magazines followed this new practice in titling the work in their book reviews, officially signaling the transformation of “Currer Bell” from the editor name to the author name to the public.<sup>24</sup>

This title change had an impact on readers in recognizing the name of “Currer Bell.” Without “edited,” “Currer Bell” could literally function as the author of the autobiography *Jane Eyre*, which, in turn, made possible what seemed to be an absurd identification between the autobiographer “Currer Bell” and the autobiographee “Jane Eyre.” In its review of the second edition of *Jane Eyre* in April, 1848, *The Christian Remembrancer* expressed its own confusion over the name of “Currer Bell” as an autobiographer for *Jane Eyre*.

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<sup>24</sup> One of the distinctive exceptions was the case of the *Quarterly Review* which followed the previous titling practice, wrongly assuming that the second edition kept the phrase “edited by Currer Bell” on its title page. I will return to this matter shortly.

The name and sex of the writer are still a mystery. Currer Bell (which by a curious Hibernicism appears in the title-page as the name of a female autobiographer) is a mere nom de guerre--perhaps an anagram. However, we, for our part, cannot doubt that the book is written by a female, and, as certain provincialisms indicate, by one from the North of England. Who, indeed, but a woman could have ventured, with the smallest prospect of success, to fill three octavo volumes with the history of a woman's heart? (396).

Having no knowledge about the biographical author, the reviewer considered it inappropriate for the strange name of Currer Bell to appear as the writer of "Jane Eyre"'s autobiography. Since the magazine believed that the autobiography was written by a female writer coming from the northern part of England, it could not condone the apparent gender incongruity between "Currer Bell" and "Jane Eyre" sitting on the title page. It even suggested that there was ethnic incongruity between the two names, saying that it was "a curious Hibernicism" to use such a name as "Currer Bell" for the autobiography of "Jane Eyre." Translating the unfamiliarity of the name Currer Bell into a kind of racial otherness, the reviewer surmised that "Currer Bell" must be "a mere nom de guerre" or "an anagram." Since "Currer Bell" could not possibly serve as the legitimate author name for *Jane Eyre*, it was considered a "fake" or "disordered" author name.

At the same time, the *Christian Remembrancer* rebuked *Jane Eyre*'s lack of femininity, due to its dubious morals: "For a book more unfeminine, both in its excellences and defects, it would be hard to find in the annals of female authorship. Throughout there is masculine power, breadth and shrewdness, combined with masculine hardness, coarseness, and freedom of expression" (396). *Jane Eyre* was so immoral that it was hard to assume that a woman wrote it. However, "Jane Eyre professes to be an autobiography," and the reviewer "[thinks] it likely that in some essential respects it is so" (397). As a proof, the reviewer located some similarities between Jane Eyre the heroine and the author appearing in the Preface of the second edition: "We have before intimated our belief, that in Jane Eyre, the heroine of the piece, we have, in some measure, a portrait of the writer. If not, it is a most skilful imitation of autobiography. The character embodied in it is precisely the same as that

which pervades the whole book, and breaks out most signally in the Preface--a temper naturally harsh, made harsher by ill usage . . ." (399). The *Remembrancer* identified the authorial voice appearing in the Preface with Jane's character. Both spirits were so harsh and coarse that if that was not the case, the book would be a "most skillful" mock autobiography. Without "edited" on the title page of the second edition, its Preface served as an authentic statement written by the author named "Currer Bell." Due to the incongruence between the name of Currer Bell and the name of Jane Eyre, however, the magazine could not decide if the autobiography was real or not.

This observation suggests that whether to read "Currer Bell" as an editor name or an author name was interwoven with the genre authenticity of *Jane Eyre*. The "editor-function" of "Currer Bell" rather helped to secure and heighten the sense of narrative authenticity for the book. "Currer Bell" could not appear directly as an author's name at its debut since it would disturb the genre designation of *Jane Eyre* as an autobiography as in the case of the above review. By marking "Currer Bell" as an editor rather than an author of the autobiography, the first book title "Jane Eyre. An Autobiography. Edited by Currer Bell" could present the name of Jane Eyre as the proper autobiographer to the first readers. By separating out "Currer Bell" from "Jane Eyre" in the title, the phrase "edited by" contributed to enhancing the authenticity of Jane's first-person narration. The editor-function of "Currer Bell" thus promoted the authenticity of "Jane Eyre" as an autobiographer.

However, the "editor-function" of Currer Bell did not work evenly. Elizabeth Ribgy in her infamous attack on *Jane Eyre* in the December 1848 *Quarterly Review* raised a possibility of a double function for the "editor-author" name of "Currer Bell." After making various conjectures about the authorship of *Jane Eyre* including the rumor that Thackeray's governess wrote this book to take revenge on him, Ribgy explained away her own anxiety and confusion over the ambiguous authorship of *Jane Eyre* caused by the changing

performance of the name “Currer Bell.”

For our parts, we see no great interest in the question at all. The first edition of *Jane Eyre* purports to be edited by Currer Bell, one of a trio of brothers, or sisters, or cousins, by names Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell, already known as the joint-authors of a volume of poems. The second edition the same--dedicated, however, 'by the author,' to Mr. Thackeray; and the dedication (itself an indubitable *chip* of *Jane Eyre*) signed Currer Bell. Author and editor therefore are one, and we are as much satisfied to accept this double individual under the name of 'Currer Bell,' as under any other, more or less euphonious. Whoever it be, it is a person who, with great mental powers, combines a total ignorance of the habits of society, a great coarseness of taste, and a heathenish doctrine of religion (175).

While announcing that she had no interest in the question of authorship for *Jane Eyre*, Rigby ended up enumerating all the cases of mixed-up and variable naming practices of “Currer Bell” related to *Jane Eyre* and other Bells. After figuring out that there was a mismatch in the second edition of *Jane Eyre* between the editor name “Currer Bell” marked on the title page and the authorial signature “Currer Bell” made in the dedication to Thackeray, Rigby read the editor name Currer Bell and the author name Currer Bell as one and the same--“Author and editor therefore are one” – and was willing to “accept this double individual under the name of ‘Currer Bell.’” However, Rigby, here, wrongly replaced the second title page with the first one. In truth, the *Quarterly* incorrectly titled the second edition of *Jane Eyre* at the beginning of this article by keeping the word “edited.” While other magazines including the *Christian Remembrancer* followed the new titling practice offered by the second edition, Rigby did not catch the nuance and kept the old title. Still, Rigby’s reading fully demonstrates that “Currer Bell” could deliver a sense of ambiguity to readers by conducting the double function of the “editor-author.”

Unlike the *Christian Remembrancer*, Rigby asserted that the author must be a man, strongly denouncing the book’s immorality and crudeness: “The question of authorship, therefore, can deserve a moment's curiosity only as far as 'Jane Eyre' is concerned, and though we cannot pronounce that it appertains to a real Mr. Currer Bell and to no other, yet that it appertains to a man, and not, as many assert, to a woman, we are strongly inclined to

affirm” (175). Unable to bear “the highest moral offence a novel writer can commit, that of making an unworthy character interesting” (166), Rigby attributed *Jane Eyre* to male authorship. If it was indeed written by a woman, she must be a woman who abandoned her femininity all together: “Even granting that these incongruities were purposely assumed, for the sake of disguising the female pen, there is nothing gained; for if we ascribe the book to a woman at all, we have no alternative but to ascribe it to one who has, for some sufficient reason, long forfeited the society of her own sex” (176). This shows how strongly Rigby condemned the immorality of *Jane Eyre*, yet in a different way from the *Christian Remembrancer*. Since the book’s anti-Christian theme was so strong, she could not link it with a female pen.

So far, I have investigated the first reception of “Currer Bell” in terms of its gender and function. It produced what Foucault called “the plurality of self” by crossing the boundary between masculine and feminine authorship and the boundary between editor and author.

### **“Jane Eyre” edited by “Currer Bell”**

Now I turn to the narrative function of “Currer Bell” as editor for the text of *Jane Eyre*. I argue that the “editor-function” of “Currer Bell” modified Jane Eyre’s autobiographical voice. Beaty’s reading of “Currer Bell” as the fictional editor of *Jane Eyre* suggests that the first-person narrator could be displaced into the third-person perspective by the name of Currer Bell. In other words, “Jane Eyre” standing for the heroine and the entire text can be put under the “editor-function” of “Currer Bell.” Although Beaty drops this subject immediately assuming that there is no trace of editorship found in the text, I contend that “Currer Bell” had an influence on the narrative structure of the text by offering the third-person perspective to Jane’s “I”-narrative. I use Foucault’s passage appearing in “What is an

Author?” and Genette’s narratological term “the extradiegetic narrative voice” to discover this heterogeneous, third voice residing in Jane’s narrative.

How does “Currer Bell” function for the text of *Jane Eyre*? As an editor-name, it first and foremost reveals the diegetic mode of the first-person narration of *Jane Eyre*. Foucault gives an insight on this matter in the following passage extracted from his paper on the author-function.

The text always contains a certain number of signs referring to the author. These signs, well known to grammarians, are personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and verb conjugation. . . . In [discourses provided with the author-function] . . . their role is more complex and variable. Everyone knows that, in a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first person pronoun, nor the present indicative refer exactly either to the writer or to the moment in which he writes, but rather to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work. It would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker; the author-function is carried out and operates in the scission itself, in this division and this distance. . . . all discourses endowed with the author-function do possess this plurality of self (152).

This passage illuminates the connection between an author’s name and the first-person narration. While such signs as “personal pronouns, adverbs of time and place, and verb conjugation” could indicate an author for any given text, they play more complex and variable roles in a discourse endowed with the author-function. For instance, “I” and the present-tense verbs in a novel narrated in the first-person perspective do not directly refer to a biographical author nor to the moments of writing but to her/his “alter egos” which could shift and turn over the course of the entire narrative. This suggests that “I” in a fictional autobiography could produce multiple, shifting authorial selves instead of a unified, fixed author.

This observation is especially useful for *Jane Eyre* as the book is narrated in the first-person. I replace an author’s name with an editor’s name in the above formula to examine the “editor-function” of “Currer Bell” for the first-person narrative of *Jane Eyre*. I argue that “Currer Bell” literally and figuratively marks off the edges of the text of *Jane Eyre* to characterize its mode of being. If we replace the author with the editor in the above passage,

we can define the relationship between “Jane Eyre” and “Currer Bell” more clearly. We cannot possibly equate the editor (Currer Bell) with the real writer (Charlotte Brontë) or the fictitious speaker (Jane Eyre). Still, “Currer Bell” forms a specific relationship with “Jane Eyre” which refers to the heroine-narrator and the text at the same time. First, I show how “Currer Bell” reveals the extradiegetic mode of the text of *Jane Eyre* by functioning as the editor of Jane’s split “I”-narrative. This means that an editor stands behind Jane’s “I”-narrative instead of an author, at least apparently for the first edition. If so, we can begin to figure out the ways in which first-person pronouns and present-tense verbs are used to reveal the editor’s presence in the text. This, in turn, shows what I call the “heterogeneity” of Jane Eyre the heroine-narrator.

I argue that the direct addresses to the reader frequently appearing in *Jane Eyre* rather belong to the realm of the third, external voice beyond the pale of Jane’s narrative, echoing the presence of “Currer Bell” that literally marks off the edges of the text. I will discover some textual evidence where the first-person narration could evoke a third voice by alternating between the two different narrative sequences and selves. I link such moments to the “editor-function” of “Currer Bell.” In other words, some instances of narrative intrusion provide an occasion for “Currer Bell” to emerge as an “editor” (for the first edition of the book) or an “implied author” (for later editions which marked it as an author name). I contend that *Jane Eyre*’s first-person narration does not easily converge into one final voice. Instead, it multiplies and alternates between the character’s voice and the narrator’s voice.

The problem of splitness in Jane’s voice derives from the innately double function of the name “Jane Eyre” in the text: Jane’s “I” stands for not only the protagonist but also the narrator. Many critics have attempted to resolve this issue yet failed to escape from the binary opposition between young, rebellious Jane and old, mature Jane. For instance, feminist critic Susan Lanser divides Jane into the experiencing child and the narrating adult. To emphasize

the power of Jane's narrative authority, Lanser narrows the gap between the two entities represented by "I": "Brontë's generalizing 'I' emphasizes syntactically the harmony between the younger protagonist and the older voice" (182-3). Lanser claims that the final authority of *Jane Eyre* comes from her old "narrator" which ultimately overwrites the young "protagonist."<sup>25</sup> In contrast, James Buzard interprets Jane's voice as much more "paradoxical and ambivalent" than presumed by other critics. While Lanser reads young Jane mostly as the protagonist narrated by old Jane the narrator, Buzard sees the former as a discrete speaker whose force cannot entirely be overwhelmed by the latter. Buzard observes a wide gap between "Jane the speaker" and "Jane the retrospective narrator" and argues that the first-person narration rather heightens the effect of "the split between narrating and narrated selves" (196). Instead of closing down the gap between the two selves, Buzard recognizes a definitive split in the autobiography. Notably, what this suggests is that young Jane serves as the speaker as well as the protagonist of her own story, and her narrative voice does not entirely become absorbed into old Jane's retrospective narration. The latter view rejects the long-held assumption that only one final voice remains in *Jane Eyre*, that of a mature Jane who calls up her past memories to write up the autobiography. It thus supports the multivocality model of Jane's narrative instead of its univocality model.

I argue that Jane's double, often alternating and overlapping perspective blurs the demarcation line between young and old, rebellious and mature, Jane the protagonist and Jane the narrator. I show how Jane's splitness becomes manifest in the usages of personal pronouns and verb conjugations for the narratorial "I". In the famous red-room scene, the

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<sup>25</sup> Lanser writes, "While the governess novels rely on temporal and spiritual differences between narrator and protagonist, *Jane Eyre* relies on their identity. The absence of any attention to the act of narration in the chapters preceding Jane's arrival at Thornfield reinforces a more general masking of the distinction in *Jane Eyre* between the experiencing child and the narrating adult. Although the young Jane does learn from her mistakes, the narrator never seriously criticizes her, and the narrator's values are more or less continuous with those of the younger character" (182).

retrospective narrator suddenly appears in this manner:

What a consternation of soul was mine that dreary afternoon! . . . I could not answer the ceaseless inward question—*why* I thus suffered: now, at the distance of—I will not say how many years, I see it clearly. I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there. . . . a thing that could not sympathize with one amongst them; a heterogeneous thing, opposed to them . . . ; a useless thing, incapable of serving their interest. . . ; a noxious thing . . . I know that had I been a sanguine . . . a romping child. . . Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence . . . ; her children would have entertained . . . the servants would have been less prone to make me the scape-goat of the nursery (15-6).

At first glance, the retrospective narrator seems to successfully correct and edit young Jane's narrative in the above passage. The present narrator attempts to justify and reinforce her current narrative power by renaming young Jane as "nobody," "a thing," "a heterogeneous thing," "a useless thing," "a noxious thing." Yet, at the same time, this passage divulges a gap between the experiencing self and the narrating self by alternating between the past-tense and the present-tense verbs: "I could not answer the ceaseless inward question—*why* I thus suffered: now, at the distance of—I will not say how many years, I see it clearly." While the experiencing self could not answer why she "thus suffered," the narrating self can now "see it clearly." This sentence shows different uses of the personal pronoun "I" by contrasting the present "I" with the past "I" in a marked way. This puts the two "I"s on an equal footing. The authorial ground of the present "I" becomes even more unsteady through the equivocation of "now, at the distance of --I will not say how many years." While trying to widen a gap between the past and the present with the usage of such adverbs of time as "now" and "at the distance of," the present narrator fails to give a definitive time span between the two selves. This further weakens the final authority of the present "I." Instead of entirely overwriting the past "I," the present "I" rather reveals the heterogeneity of the name "Jane Eyre." Robyn Warhol contends that there is doubleness in the narrative perspective of *Jane Eyre* which inhabits young and old Jane at the same time, that is, the "experiencing self" and the "narrating self." The above example highlights the dissonance between the two selves which indicates "a textualized splitting of the fictional self" (860).

In another example, the homogeneity of Jane's identity is disturbed by mixed time sequences (becoming manifest through combined verb conjugations) in a childhood scene. When Jane stands up against Mrs. Read's accusation, for example, the narrator says: "*Speak* I must: I had been trodden on severely and must turn: but how? What strength had I to dart retaliation at my antagonist?" (36). Even if all the "I's, in this case, refers to young Jane, the subject position becomes shaky by combining the present- and past-tense verbs in one sentence-- "I had been trodden . . . must turn." Thus, it is not clear whether this "I" belongs to the past or the present perspective—it rather merges into a third perspective.

These two pieces of textual evidence defy the binary opposition between young Jane (the past self) and mature Jane (the present self) as well as the assumption that the latter is necessarily superior to the former as narrator and character. As mature Jane's sense of narrative time is rather slippery and variable, the present "I" fails to emerge as a stable narrator. In a word, *Jane Eyre* never grows up finally or terminally. This is to read *Jane Eyre* as an unreliable narrator with no final authority over the text. As Mark M. Hennelly argues, the narrator is "more fallible" and "less reliable" than we have assumed thus far and there is no "perfect candor" that would make her story "credibly and convincingly determinate" (703). In other words, *Jane Eyre* itself is an indeterminate text that carries narrative uncertainty with its split "I"-narrator.

Such textual indeterminacy is further reinforced by narrative intrusion--another critical matter to deal with in relation to Jane's split narrative voice. The retrospective narrator often interrupts the narrative flow to reveal the storytelling situation itself; she directly addresses and engages with the "Reader" in various manners. Lanser argues that such direct speech to the reader actually helps to consolidate Jane's narrative authority by taking the form of a public epistle where the singular form of "the reader" functions as "a substitute for the epistolary proper name" (186). While this view helps to strengthen Jane's authority as

narrator, it fails to address the reader's bafflement in the narrator's often shifting attitudes towards him. Here, I use the masculine pronoun to refer to "the Reader" as marked by the narrator. For instance, the narrator says in chapter 5: "Let the reader add . . . and he will have. . ." (47). This observation makes *Jane Eyre* as a conversation between men, between "Currer Bell" and the male-identified "Reader." Sylvère Monod points out that "the reader of *Jane Eyre* has been constantly referred to in the masculine" and adds that "the tone which Charlotte uses to address the reader, being herself shielded by her male or equivocal pen-name, is what she fancies to be the tone of a conversation between men"(504).

In fact, the narrator's direct conversation with the reader could function as a discordant voice in the text. Sylvère Monod analyzes what he calls the "thirty Readers" of *Jane Eyre* and argues that most of these direct speeches engage with the reader in a negative way: "In the thirty addresses to the reader, the thread of the narrative is temporarily interrupted while Jane pauses to tell us what we are to do or think, or, more frequently, refrain from thinking. Her appeals, her 'Readers,' are solemn, emphatic, spectacular. We shall see that among Charlotte Brontë's readers there are many fools, cowards, and Pharisees" (497-8). Whenever the narrator tells us what to do next—to imagine, think, or even wait-- the reader feels helpless. Even the phrase "as the reader knows" is in fact a "reproach." Therefore, such narrative interruption rather disconcerts the implied reader in general: "Charlotte Brontë is thus led to bully her reader because she distrusts him" (500). Similarly, Hennelly argues that the direct invocation of the reader rather testifies to the narrative anxiety of both Jane Eyre the heroine and Charlotte Brontë the author: "Brontë's direct, explicit invocations of 'the Reader' often reveal these insecurities about her developing relationships with her implied audience" (700). Carol Bock also recognizes such direct addresses as the cause of narrative instability in *Jane Eyre* and points out that such case occurs more frequently in the latter part

of the story.<sup>26</sup> Bock grants that the reader gets to perceive Jane as the character rather than as the narrator in the early part of the narrative. We vicariously experience Jane's struggle towards maturity in these early chapters and forget that there is a distance between us and Jane the narrator. Therefore, we are more prone to take frequent invocations of the reader in later chapters as "problematic and disruptive" (Bock 105).

[N]arrative moments that suddenly disturb or disregard the established relationship between the reader and the narrator . . . such moments occur when the writer intrudes to express an idea or emotion that is apparently her own rather than Jane's, thus drawing attention to the author behind the narrating protagonist instead of maintaining a focus on the character who is supposed to be central not only to the events of the story but also to the event of storytelling itself. Others feel discomfited by passages that invoke the reader and thus call attention to the audience's role in responding to the narrative. In either case, the effect of these moments is to expand our focus beyond a limited but intense preoccupation with the narrator-protagonist and to enforce a broader perspective on the narrating-receiving instance itself (69).

Bock argues that a number of direct addresses to the reader in the latter part of the novel unsettle the storytelling situation itself by having "the author behind the narrating protagonist" express her own ideas and emotions rather than Jane's. Such instances widen a narrative distance between the narrator and the protagonist, allowing us to see what lies beyond the intradiegetic level of the narrative.

While acknowledging that *Jane Eyre's* textual instability breaks down at the moments of narrative intrusion, these critics show different attitudes in identifying the interrupting voice. For Monod and Hannelley, it is Charlotte Brontë who invokes the reader. They identify the intrusive narrator with the biographical author. In contrast, Bock introduces the term an "implied author" to mark the intrusive voice: "the narrative methods adopted in *Jane Eyre* allow the implied author, Currer Bell, to take command of the implied audience Brontë had envisioned for this novel" (107). Here, she views "Currer Bell" as the implied

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<sup>26</sup> Sylvère Monod also points out that "two-thirds of the total number, are to be found in the last fifteen chapters, i.e., in the final third of the book, where as many as three occur in a single chapter, and two in a single page" (498).

author--“the creative force manipulating her narrator from behind the scenes” (106). In this reading, “Currer Bell” the “implied author” guides the implied audience through the narrative strategies of direct addresses.

I accept Bock’s arguments as more valid as they align with the paratextual function of “Currer Bell” in analyzing the narrative structure of *Jane Eyre*. Indeed, many interrupting moments reveal the narrative uncertainty of Jane the first-person narrator, making a room for the editorial voice of “Currer Bell” to emerge. The direct address to the reader first appears when Jane reflects on her friendship with Helen Burns at Lowood: “True, reader; and I knew and felt this: and though I am a defective being, with many faults and few redeeming points, yet I never tired of Helen Burns; nor ever ceased to cherish for her a sentiment of attachment as strong, tender, and respectful as any that ever animated my heart” (78). This statement tries to appeal to readers how young Jane benefitted from her relationship with Helen Burns. Again, the narrator uses the present tense --“I am a defective being”—in narrating her past experience, demonstrating that mature Jane’s retrospective narrator cannot entirely correct or remove the fault of young Jane. This editorial voice inscribes a kind of “extradiegetic narrator” that operates beyond the realm of Jane’s first-person narrative consciousness. Here, I use Genette’s narratological term to mark the editorial voice of *Jane Eyre* caused by the incongruency between the narrating Jane and the narrated Jane.

*Jane Eyre*’s editorial voice intervenes in and presides over Jane’s narrative whenever it feels necessary to reorganize the narrative structure, to redirect the narrative flow: it often changes scenes or cuts out inefficient or unnecessary parts of the narrative. This phenomenon mostly occurs when the heroine takes a new step in her life, moving the narrative development into the next stage. At the end of childhood scenes, for instance, the narrator decides to jump the narrative space of eight years to close off the childhood stage of Jane’s life in the following manner.

Hitherto I have recorded in detail the events of my insignificant existence: to the first ten years of my life, I have given almost as many chapters. But this is not to be a regular autobiography: I am only bound to invoke memory where I know her responses will possess some degree of interest; therefore I now pass a space of eight years almost in silence: a few lines only are necessary to keep up the links of connection (83).

In this passage, the “I”-narrator becomes conscious of and ends up rationalizing her own writing technique of skipping the uninteresting part of the story. While it is tempting to read this passage as the retrospective narrator’s intervention into her past life, this “I” in fact operates at a different level than other “I”s that can easily identify with young Jane. Above all, this “I” suddenly becomes self-conscious and declares that “this is not to be a regular autobiography” and expresses a deep concern over the “degree of interest” that her narrative might or might not evoke. In this way, the narrator justifies what she does in the next narrative movement—shortening the duration of eight repetitive years to “a few lines” to open a new venue for the heroine. This “I” working at a meta-narrative level hints at the external voice of an editor who remains at the edge of the text. It functions as an extradiegetic narrator.

This editorial voice reappears when Jane wanders off to Marsh End. It says, “Reader, it is not pleasant to dwell on these details. . . . Let me condense now. I am sick of the subject” (328-9). The narrator suddenly refuses to give us the details about her own past experience as a desperate beggar, condensing it to only a few scenes. Such narrative reduction reminds us that “her present story is sometimes an edited version” (Hennelly 704) and the present consciousness of Jane’s narrative is not self-sufficient. Another, more conspicuous case of an extradiegetic voice appears at the beginning of chapter 11 that launches Jane’s journey to Thornfield.

A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote, with such large-figured papering on the walls as inn rooms have: such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments. . . . All this is visible to you by the light of an oil-lamp hanging from the ceiling, and by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit in my cloak and bonnet. . . . I am warming away the numbness and chill. . . . Reader, though I look comfortably

accommodated, I am not very tranquil in my mind . . . and here I am waiting, while all sorts of doubts and fears are troubling my thoughts (93).

The very first phrase “a new chapter in a novel” of this opening paragraph directly goes against the book’s own genre claim made by the subtitle “An Autobiography.” At the opening of the previous chapter, the extradiegetic voice still managed to call the book an autobiography--“this is not to be a regular autobiography.” Yet, here, it blatantly reveals its own property as the third-person perspective by referring to the book as “a novel.” Now, *Jane Eyre* is not merely an autobiography but becomes a “fictional” autobiography. This makes all the “I”s in the entire paragraph function as a novelist rather than as a protagonist. Thus, “I” in the next sentence-- “when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy . . .”-- seems to address the implied reader at the meta-narrative level, from the exterior of the novel. The dramatic effects of the present-tense verbs used in the whole passage reinforce such claims about the novelist’s extradiegetic voice. When “I” exhort the reader to imagine various scenes in the present tenses, their immediacy expresses not only Jane’s anxieties about her next step in life but also the novelist’s own anxieties about her next narrative movement. After the fictionality of Jane’s autobiography becomes divulged in this chapter, the narratorial stance of “I” grows ever more unstable and undetermined, widening a space for the extradiegetic voice of “Currer Bell” to emerge as an editor. As these examples show, “Currer Bell” literally and figuratively worked as an editor for the text of *Jane Eyre* as it appeared both on the title page of and within the novel. Despite the editor-function of “Currer Bell” for “Jane Eyre,” the heroine and the book could still persist as a genuine autobiography through its genre claim of “An Autobiography.”

### **“An Autobiography”**

I discuss the function of “An Autobiography” which directly follows the name of “Jane Eyre” in the title in relation to the novel’s claims for realism. For *Jane Eyre*, “An

Autobiography” becomes a crucial factor to consider its narrative authenticity. As Beaty acknowledges, “It is as an autobiography that *Jane Eyre* was first read and reviewed” (“Jane Eyre at Gateshead” 170). Beaty argues that “the publisher’s other contribution to the title page, the subtitle *An Autobiography*” was retained in subsequent editions since it was “more appropriate to Brontë’s narrative strategy” than the phrase “edited by” (*Misreading Jane Eyre* 13). Since “An Autobiography” was designed to increase the genre authenticity of Jane’s narrative, it was directly related to the novel’s realist project.

I argue that “An Autobiography” served as a genre indication that worked to designate and frame the genre of *Jane Eyre*. While it has been mostly perceived as a subtitle that follows or modifies the main title of “Jane Eyre,” I read it as a separate paratextual name that had a power of its own. Genette claims that genre indication is “a relatively autonomous paratextual element” which can take over the title or subtitle (58). As an autonomous paratextual element, genre indication can perform independently or even dominates over the main title to fulfill a specific genre commitment. As Genette explains, such genres as autobiography, history and memoir carry “a more binding contractual force (‘I commit myself to telling the truth’) than do others (novel, essay)” (11). Genette, here, borrows the concept of “contract” from Phillippe Lejeune’s studies of autobiography. According to Lejeune, “autobiography is a contractual genre”(11). Since autobiography is more committed to telling the truth than other genres, it exerts a more binding force on texts and readers.

Likewise, the genre indication of “An Autobiography” for *Jane Eyre* exerts a great deal of contractual force on the text and readers. It seems to order us to read not only the heroine but also the entire book as a true autobiography. Indeed, many contemporary readers consumed *Jane Eyre* through such a genre contract and became astonished at the powerful truth of the story. The review in *Fraser’s* said, “Reality—deep, significant reality—is the great characteristic of the book. It is an autobiography,—not, perhaps, in the naked facts and

circumstances, but in the actual suffering and experience” (691). In another instance, the *New Monthly Magazine* called the book “an autobiography, evidently in part founded on truth and experience” (374). Both periodicals referred to *Jane Eyre* as an authentic autobiography. Here, the genre indication of “An Autobiography” successfully heightened the narrative authenticity of *Jane Eyre*.

The genre indication even blurred the boundary between the real and the fictional in reading *Jane Eyre*. The *Literary Examiner* questioned the book’s qualification as a novel: “Taken as a novel or history of events, the book is obviously defective” (756). It is “not a book to be examined, page by page, with the fictions of Sir Walter Scott or Sir Edward Lytton or Mr Dickens, from which . . . it differs altogether” (756). Since it elucidates “an analysis of a single mind,” it should be placed “by the side of the autobiographies of Godwin and his successors” (756). This reading puts the book under the category of autobiography rather than novel. Thus, *Jane Eyre* fulfills the genre contract that its title promises. Similarly, the *Literary Gazette* claimed, “There is obviously so much of reality in it that we cannot call it a novel, and so much of fiction in the way of dreams and embellishments, that we cannot consider it to be altogether a literal exposition of real life and circumstances”(748). Due to the “so much of reality” in the book, the *Gazette* hesitated to call it a novel. All these readings demonstrate how the genre indication of “An Autobiography” helped to frame *Jane Eyre* as an “authentic,” “real” story.

The editor name of “Currer Bell” becomes part of the genre contract that *Jane Eyre* makes with its readers. The editor-function of “Currer Bell” collaborates with the genre indication of “An Autobiography” in delivering a sense of authenticity to the audience. Genette sees a correlation between an author’s name and a genre contract: an author’s name could fulfill varying degrees of “contractual function” depending on genres (41). He emphasizes that an author’s name could become “a constituent element of the contract,”

especially for the genre of autobiography, to bring a substantial effect on readers along with other elements such as a genre indication (41). I replace an author's name with an editor's name, here, to demonstrate that the editor- name "Currer Bell" worked in tandem with "An Autobiography" as part of the genre contract of *Jane Eyre*. As seen earlier in the review by the *Christian Remembrancer*, "Currer Bell" could not function as an author name even without the phrase "edited by" because of the genre indication of "an autobiography." The genre contract made by the genre indication prevented readers from identifying the name of "Currer Bell" with the name of "Jane Eyre." Since "Currer Bell" could not fulfill the genre contract of the title, it ended up being read as a fake name. This case illustrates the ways in which "Currer Bell" participated in the genre contract of *Jane Eyre* as an editor name.

The genre contract of the title correlates with the genre conflicts detected in *Jane Eyre*. As recognized by many modern scholars, *Jane Eyre* consists of two opposing genres—realism versus Gothic romance, each represented respectively by the figure of Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason. Peter Grudin argues that "realism ends and a Gothic . . . begins when the novelist turns to Bertha" (157). In his reading, Bertha "remains obscure and eludes realistic categorization" (147). By asserting that Bertha's plot introduces a Gothic element to the realist agenda of *Jane Eyre*, Grudin and most other critics translate Bertha into a Gothic figure without question. However, Victorian reviewers in fact showed more ambivalent attitudes towards Bertha and her plot in the early reception of the work. I discuss the contemporary reviews about Bertha in terms of the genre contract of the book title to see how the genre indication affected the contemporary reception of Bertha.

Surprisingly, at first, the genre frame of "An Autobiography" inscribed the figure of Bertha Mason and her plot as realism. Indeed, two of the earliest reviews issued only a few days after the publication of *Jane Eyre* read Bertha's name and plot as part of the book's realist project. The *Athenaeum* enlisted Bertha's story as a probable, lifelike event. It argued

that the book's power of reality was so great that some of its anomalies could be ignored: "there is so much power in this novel as to make us overlook certain eccentricities in the invention, which trench in one or two places on what is improbable, if not unpleasant" (1100). While the *Athenaeum* acknowledged that Bertha's plot could be seen as "certain eccentricities" and "what is improbable" in the book, it ended up claiming that Bertha's plot could be just as "true to life" as Jane's plot: "neither is the mystery of Thornfield an exaggeration of reality. We, ourselves, know of a large mansion-house in a distant country where, for many years, a miscreant was kept in close confinement" (1101). Because a case similar to Bertha's could be observed in reality, "the mystery of Thornfield" should appeal to the public as a realistic story, not as "an exaggeration of reality." By transforming what appear to be anomalies into plausible events, the *Athenaeum* placed Bertha's plot under the label of realism, turning it into a part of the book's genre contract.

Similarly, the *Literary Gazette* characterized the whole production as authentic and argued that even "the mystery of the story" —that is, Bertha's plot—appeared to be "founded on fact" (749). This review claimed that incidents relevant to Bertha were "too likely and genuine" to having been concocted merely for the narrative interest (749). By viewing Bertha's plot as fact or likely events, the *Gazette* defended Bertha's story as part of Jane's realist narrative. These readings of Bertha's plot fulfilled the genre contract of *Jane Eyre* by designating the entire narrative structure as realist and authentic.

However, the genre contract did not take effect at all times. While the book's genre indication promoted the realist project of *Jane Eyre*, it also raised some doubts about it by questioning the validity of Bertha's plot. In this case, "An Autobiography" rather put the book to the test of authenticity and disclosed a divide between Jane's plot and Bertha's plot. Many reviewers criticized Bertha's name and plot as "excessive" and "immoral." *Fraser's* divided the book into two parts--the first half that narrated Jane's childhood and the second

half that staged Bertha's madness—only to criticize the latter for being “defective.” While elevating Jane's narrative into the plane of a great art that demonstrated “reality--deep, significant reality” (691), *Fraser's* denounced Bertha's plot as “melodramatic” and “improbable”: There are “some defects in it--defects which the excellence of the rest only brings into stronger relief. There is, indeed, too much melodrama and improbability, which smack of the circulating-library;--we allude particularly to the mad wife and all that relates to her . . .” (692). Carrying “too much melodrama and improbability,” Bertha's plot ruins the integrity of the book--Jane's plot. The magazine read Bertha's madness as an element that “smack[ed] of the circulating-library.” The *Mirror* went even further to condemn the novel's description of Bertha as “disgusting” and “revolting”: “The scene in which she [Bertha] is visited is disgusting beyond description. There is something revolting in the way in which the unfortunate sufferer is spoken of” (378). The *Mirror* lamented that many good early scenes were soon “lost in the extravagance of others,” in other words, in Bertha's madness. The periodical went so far as to claim that Bertha's plot contaminated the whole narrative of *Jane Eyre*: “there is not a single natural character throughout the work. Everybody moves on stilts--the opinions are bad--the notions absurd” (380).

Both *Fraser's* and the *Mirror* characterized Bertha's character and plot as excessive and outrageous. In these readings, the book failed to fulfill its genre contract as its genre indication fell short of subsuming Bertha's name. Instead, it widens a gap between the realist plot of Jane and the melodramatic plot of Bertha. While the former belonged to the category of “the real,” the latter belonged to the category of “the Gothic.” As Bertha's name remained outside of the genre contract ordered by “An Autobiography” in the title, *Jane Eyre* failed to achieve a complete version of its genre authenticity. Significantly, Bertha's name, not Jane's, served as the pivot on which the work's genre authenticity rests. While Jane was already always part of the book's realist project as shown from the very beginning of the title, Bertha

emerged as a variable name that could determine the work as realist or not. Misnamed as Grace Poole and unnamed as an animal figure, Bertha never utters an articulate word in the novel. She is without voice. As a marginalized name, “Bertha Mason” was standing at the center of the genre heterogeneity of *Jane Eyre*.

### **“Bertha Mason”**

As suggested already, “Bertha Mason” becomes an important narrative name in dealing with the genre complexity of *Jane Eyre*. First, the novel’s act of naming Jane and Bertha demonstrates that they are opposed yet interconnected as “double narrative names.” Second, “Bertha Mason” formed a parallel with “Currer Bell” by evoking a sense of genre heterogeneity.

I first compare the novel’s different narrative naming acts for Jane and Bertha. As the title name for the book and the protagonist, “Jane Eyre” is the name that symbolizes steady and persevering progress towards maturity and self-achievement, after all. “Jane Eyre” is all about persistent selfhood whose symbolic status comes from her initials “J.E.” As many critics point out, one of Jane’s first learning experience is to know how to conjugate the French verb *etre* “je” at Lowood. Lanser emphasizes that Jane Eyre maintains her status quo by never yielding her proper name: “at the time of writing *Jane Eyre* is in fact Jane Rochester, the narrator never yields her “J-E,” her proper name, and her autobiography appropriately remains *Jane Eyre*” (187). Through such “retention of her name,” Jane could remain as an independent writing self that overcomes the conventional marriage plot (187).

Indeed, “Jane Eyre” does not quite turn into “Jane Rochester” despite all the expectation raised in the middle of the narrative. When Rochester addresses her as “Jane Rochester” after their engagement, Jane turns white and replies: “Because you gave me a new name—Jane Rochester; and it seems so strange” (258). Jane does not willingly accept this

new name tag provided by Rochester. The night before the wedding, Jane mentions the name of “Jane Rochester” several times but only to deny the possibility of its coming into being.

[My trunks] would be far on their road to London: and so should I . . . or rather, not I, but one Jane Rochester, a person whom as yet I knew not. The cards of address alone remained to nail on: they lay, four little squares, on the drawer. Mr. Rochester had himself written the direction, “Mrs. Rochester . . .” on each: I could not persuade myself to affix them, or to have them affixed. Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist: she would not be born till tomorrow . . . and I would wait to be assured she had come into the world alive, before I assigned to her all that property (275).

In this reflection, Jane never yields her “I” and treats her new name as if it does not belong to her. She opposes her own “I” to this objectified “one Jane Rochester.” Jane cannot even allow the new name tag “Mrs. Rochester” written by Rochester to be affixed to her trunks. Instead, she exclaimed that “Mrs. Rochester” did not exist. Here, neither “Jane Rochester” nor “Mrs. Rochester” has been presented to readers as Jane’s new name. The following scenes where Jane’s wedding gown is torn down and Rochester’s bigamy is revealed rather prove that Jane’s disowning these names turns out to be a correct move, after all.

“Jane Rochester” does not appear as a fulfilled narrative name even at the finale. Not only does Jane announce her persistent selfhood at the moment of narrative climax through the famous “I”-statement --“Reader, I married him” (448), she is never addressed as “Jane Rochester” even after the marriage. Refusing to narrate her married life as “Jane Rochester,” Jane takes another long narrative jump instead: “I have now been married ten years” (450). As Beaty argues, “The first ten years of [Jane’s] happy marriage are also virtually elided and the reader hardly knows the Jane Rochester who has narrated her life story. . . . She is present only in the final few pages of the novel in largely expositional, undramatized narrative” (*Misreading Jane Eyre* 215).

At Marsh End, Jane feels content with her choosing “to be a village- schoolmistress, free and honest” over becoming “Mr. Rochester’s mistress” at a “pleasure-villa” in France (359). She remains “Jane Eyre” instead of turning into “Mr. Rochester’s mistress.” By

refusing to be called in any other ways than “Jane Eyre,” she keeps her identity as “J.E.” The power of “J.E.” continues even when Jane assumes an alias. Although Jane tries to hide her identity from the Rivers, it is only by changing her surname from Eyre to Elliott: “My name is Jane Elliott” (337). Thus, her initials “J.E.” could be kept intact, which later serve as a clue to her real identity inscribed on the painting. Hennelly argues that “Jane shares Charlotte Brontë’s (alias Currer Bell’s) delight in encoded initials” and the “J.E.” reveals “the author’s and character’s common concern with the relationships between personal and textual selfhood” (703). Therefore, “Currer Bell” and “Jane Eyre” can be juxtaposed through their shared function of initials for authorial and textual selfhood.

The power of “J.E.” as encoded initials becomes most distinct when St. John recovers “the words ‘JANE EYRE’—the work doubtless of some moment of abstraction” from “the ravished margin of the portrait-cover” (381). A moment of revelation occurs when “J.E.” turns out to be no other than Jane Eyre. While the name “Jane Eyre” has been abstracted into “J.E.” earlier by Jane herself, the full name is being abstracted from the margin of the portrait again. Thus the name continues to be circulated in printed forms. Not only is the signature written down on the portrait, it is also advertised through a paper when Jane seeks for a governess position earlier. Jane decides to follow a little tip given by “a kind fairy”: “You must inclose the advertisement and the money to pay for it under a cover directed to the Editor of the Herald . . . answers must be addressed to J.E. at the post-office there” (86).

This shows how “Jane Eyre,” standing for the character and the text itself, is produced through abstraction in speech, writing, and advertising. Sharon Marcus argues that this concept of abstraction is “crucial to understanding the relation of writing to female subjectivity” in *Jane Eyre* as it mediates between “embodiment and invisibility, self-effacement and self-advertisement, femininity and professional identity. . . .” (206-7). Like

Hennelly, Marcus finds an analogy between the biographical author's strategy of keeping her initials and the heroine's strategy of keeping her initials: "Brontë's career as Currer Bell, like Jane Eyre's as Jane Elliott, transformed pseudonymity into a form of veiled self-advertisement, into a strategy for disowning the difficulties of female embodiment by exploiting the powers of abstraction" (207). Jane Eyre is produced as a narrative subject through the alternation between "Jane Eyre" and its abstracted and advertised version "J.E." As Jane's name is repeated in the same pattern of "J.E." she becomes stabilized into a realist figure.

While "Jane Eyre" could be fixed into an abstract yet intelligible name, "Bertha Mason" remains unintelligible throughout the narrative. "Bertha Mason" functions as a "Gothic name" by crossing the boundary between animality and humanity. Instead of being named in print, Bertha first appears as sound—"a demoniac laugh . . . goblin-laughter" (147). Such sound turns into impenetrability itself when Bertha assumes the human figure of Grace Poole: "such absolute impenetrability is past comprehension" (154). Misnamed and incomprehensible, Bertha is likened to an animal that makes "a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarrelling" (208) or described as "the wild beast or the fiend in yonder side den" (210). Jane makes her own observation about the enigmatic creature: "what creature was it, that, masked in an ordinary woman's face and shape, uttered the voice, now of a mocking demon, and anon of a carrion-seeking bird of prey?" (210). For Jane, Bertha wavers between Grace Poole with an uninteresting human shape and the beast with an intriguing sound.

In fact, Bertha's name does not appear until Rochester's attempt at bigamy is exposed: "I now inform you that she is my wife . . . Bertha Mason by name" (291). Even after Bertha's name appears in print for the first time, she is soon redefined as an ambiguous figure by Jane's narrative: "What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first

sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (293). Mediated by Jane’s realist point of view, Bertha literally borders between beast and human being. While Jane’s perspective appears in the forefront, Bertha’s is never presented to readers. Even the scene where Bertha’s name is called by Rochester for the first and last time in the novel is indirectly presented to readers through the third-person perspective of the host of the Inn: “we heard him call ‘Bertha!’”(428). Bertha adds a Gothic angle to Jane’s realist narrative as the name for a “mysterious lunatic.” In other words, Bertha’s name is used to increase what Hennelly calls “mysterious indeterminacy” of the book: “the word ‘mystery’ is repeated compulsively” in relation to Bertha’s name (709). In short, Bertha brings genre heterogeneity to *Jane Eyre*.

At the same time, however, Bertha serves as Jane’s dark double, as noted by many critics. Grudin argues that Bertha is “Jane’s ‘secret sharer,’ a substitute self who realizes and suffers for all the dangerous potentials of the protagonist’s character” (157). Above all, it is worth noting that young Jane in early chapters is called by various non-human names. Since Jane assumes double perspectives as the heroine and the narrator as I demonstrated earlier, her name is constantly redefined by the retrospective narrator: “I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there . . . a thing . . . a heterogeneous thing . . . a useless thing . . . a noxious thing” (15-6). Here, Jane’s name is dehumanized into a “thing.” Just as Bertha vacillates between animality and humanity, so Jane seesaws between thing-ness and humanness. As Nicole A. Diederich argues, Jane and Bertha are interconnected as Gothic doubles (23). Here, Jane becomes part of Bertha’s Gothic plot. Warhol points out that the realist and Gothic genres in *Jane Eyre* are “not so much in competition as in continuous oscillation with each other” doubling each other at crucial narrative moments (858). Since Jane lives a Gothic romance yet tells a realist tale, “binary oppositions between genres (the assumption that either a novel is realistic or not, and that its value resides in its generic consistency) cannot hold”

(863-4). Although Jane's realist tale predominates as Bertha is eliminated from the text, Jane becomes the ultimate benefactor of all the Gothic romances unfolded in the later narrative. She remains as "Jane Eyre" instead of "Jane Rochester," reminding readers of her savage-like childhood self.

I link Bertha's narrative function as a "Gothic name" with the "editor-function" of "Currer Bell." As shown before, the editorial voice of "Currer Bell" generates pauses in the narrative of *Jane Eyre*. Such interrupting moments reveal narrative dissonance between realist and Gothic genres. I take note that the voice of "Currer Bell," apparently silent yet manifest at the same time, disturbing yet unifying, excessive and redundant yet essential, forms a parallel with Bertha Mason. Both names are fictive, unreal, and residually located at the margins of the text. Just as "Currer Bell" crosses the gender boundary as an ambiguous author name between masculinity and femininity, the "author-function" and the "editor-function," so "Bertha Mason" crosses the genre boundary as an ambiguous character name between realism and Gothicism. While both names are ultimately displaced by the realist names of "Charlotte Brontë" and "Jane Eyre," they play important roles as heterogeneous elements in the realist project of *Jane Eyre*.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter explored the ambiguity and heterogeneity of *Jane Eyre* through Charlotte Brontë's two alternative proper names—"Currer Bell" and "Bertha Mason." First, the editor name of "Currer Bell" further increased a sense of authorial ambiguity, already caused by the gender-ambiguous pseudonym, for the first readers of *Jane Eyre*. While Elizabeth Gaskell's anonymity for *Mary Barton* multiplied the book's authorial selves without restraints, the editor name "Currer Bell" worked as a modifier for *Jane Eyre* in constructing the discursive formations of the book's authorship. Likewise, at the narrative

level, “Currer Bell” reduced Jane Eyre’s authority by intervening in her narrative as an editorial voice. Second, *Jane Eyre*’s genre fulfillment made by the genre indication of “An Autobiography” rested on the name of Bertha Mason who could not be entirely inscribed as part of the book’s realist claims. Thus “Bertha Mason,” just like “Currer Bell,” remains as a heterogeneous element for *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë’s realist project of *Jane Eyre* becomes shaky and slippery via these two threshold names. I further explore a Victorian novel’s genre complexity caused by a heterogeneous narrative name in the next chapter on George Eliot. While *Jane Eyre*’s realist claims made by the first-person narration are supported by the genre contract of the book title, *Adam Bede*’s realist narrative is both guaranteed and hampered by its third-person omniscient narrator’s direct intervention into the novel.

### Chapter Three

#### Pseudonymity and Realism: “George Eliot” and “Adam Bede”

This chapter compares “George Eliot” and “Adam Bede” in relation to George Eliot’s first full-length realist project *Adam Bede*, published in February 1859. While “Currer Bell” as the male editor name conflicted with “Jane Eyre” the female autobiographer’s name, the male proper name “George Eliot” did not appear to have such a problem in marketing the realist hero “Adam Bede” at first. Still, “George Eliot” sparked much controversy for the authorship of *Adam Bede* due to its unknown status. As contemporary reviewers realized the high quality of realism manifest in the novel, they became more curious about this unknown “George Eliot” who created it. Although George Eliot succeeded in fulfilling her realist aim through “Adam Bede,” her name was destabilized into many different forms during its secrecy, often falling into the irreconcilable extremes of a fraud and a genius. Thus, “George Eliot,” in its early life, went against the truth claims made by “Adam Bede” which stood for both the novel and the title character.

#### The Fictional Life of “George Eliot”

There are many similarities between George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* and Currer Bell’s *Jane Eyre* in their first receptions. Both novels delivered a sense of realism to readers, after all, and both women writers assumed pseudonyms to publish their first major novels under disguise. However, it should be noted that they worked under different paratextual conditions. While *Jane Eyre* delivered a sense of realism to readers with the help of its genre designation of “An Autobiography,” *Adam Bede* did not have such a genre contract with the readers. The book only advertised the title character “Adam Bede” as the subject matter of the novel. It was thus readily received and consumed as a novel, a fictional account of “Adam Bede,”

unlike *Jane Eyre*. While both “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” were unknown pseudonyms which raised speculations about author identity for their first major novels, “Currer Bell” performed the additional function of an editor for *Jane Eyre*, which complicated the readers’ speculation processes. In contrast, there was no such modification attached to “George Eliot” in the title of *Adam Bede*. With no genre or gender ambiguity attached to the name, “George Eliot” could function as a patronymic for *Adam Bede* in so far as its pseudonymity remained unknown to the public.

For “George Eliot,” however, there was an external force intervening in the secrecy, which shortened the duration of its pseudonymity. While “Currer Bell” could keep its secret at least for two years after the publication of *Jane Eyre*,<sup>27</sup> George Eliot was “outed” by Joseph Liggins only about two months after the publication of *Adam Bede* and had to suffer from public curiosity and misattribution. In the end, both women writers had to reveal their secrets to keep their distinct authorial identities from being conflated with other proper names. However, their motives and direction were different. While “Currer Bell” was supplanting her sisters’ names as the center of the Brontë myth, “George Eliot” was displaced by other proper names such as “Joseph Liggins” and “Gilbert Elliot.” That Charlotte Brontë had to write the famous “Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell” to officially prove her separate identity from her sisters in December 1850 tells us that “Currer Bell” was still at the heart of the Brontë mystery even after three years of her writing career. While Currer Bell disclaimed the authorship of the other Bells’ works to rein in the puffery of her authorial fame, George Eliot had to claim her authorship for *Adam Bede* to take up her position as a beginning novelist. Therefore, I see more distinction between “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” in discussing their pseudonyms. Both pseudonyms raised public curiosity and debates over gendered

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<sup>27</sup> Charlotte visited her publisher Smith & Elder in September 1848 to reveal her identity for the first time. But after that, her incognito was pretty well preserved until she met Thackeray on December 4, 1849 (Smith *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, vol.2 111-15; Note 1136). Thus, “Currer Bell” remained “largely anonymous until 1849” (Birch 66).

writing, but their discursive routes and paratextual conditions were different. While the first readers of *Jane Eyre* mostly saw a masculine writing style in the female autobiography and thus condemned it as “unfeminine” and “immoral,” the first readers of *Adam Bede* detected both masculine and feminine writing styles in the novel, especially after the pseudonymity of “George Eliot” was lifted.

In analyzing the function of a pseudonym, it is important to distinguish between an unknown pseudonym and a known pseudonym. According to Genette, the unknown pseudonym refers to a case where an author assumes a pseudonym without revealing such a fact to the public. In this case, the pseudonym would be taken in the same manner as any other patronymics by readers. The status and effect of an unknown pseudonym would not be much different from those of a legal author name. On the other hand, if the status of a pseudonym is known to the public, it would bring a different kind of effect—what Genette calls the “pseudonym-effect”—on readers: “As for the pseudonym-effect, it assumes that the fact of the pseudonym is known to the reader” (49). While the effect of a given pseudonym may “very well coincide with the reader’s total ignorance of the fact of the pseudonym,” the “pseudonym-effect,” in contrast, depends on “the reader’s having information about the fact” (48). Genette’s distinction tells us that a pseudonym would take effect on readers only if its pseudonymity—its fictiveness—is known to the public.

Given this claim, it is notable that “George Eliot” went through a functional transformation from an unknown pseudonym to a known pseudonym for *Adam Bede*. When the novel was first published on February 1, 1859, very few suspected that “George Eliot” was a pseudonym.<sup>28</sup> Yet it took a different turn when Reverend Henry Anders claimed

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<sup>28</sup> The pseudonym “George Eliot” was born on February 4, 1857 when the author sent a letter to the Blackwoods. Blackwood had previously addressed the unidentified author as “the Author of Amos Barton” and even playfully as “My Dear Amos.” For example, see John Blackwood’s letter to George Eliot dated January 30, 1857 (Haight *The George Eliot Letters* Vol.2 290-291). However, “George Eliot” first appeared as an author name on the title page of the *Scenes of Clerical Life* in 1858.

“Joseph Liggins” as the author of *Adam Bede* in his letter published in the *Times* on April 15, 1859: “The author of *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* is Mr. Joseph Liggins, of Nuneaton, Warwickshire. You may easily satisfy yourself of my correctness by inquiring of any one in that neighborhood. Mr. Liggins himself and the characters whom he paints in *Scenes of Clerical Life* are as familiar there as the twin spires of Coventry” (10). Although this statement was more than enough to raise a public eyebrow over the authenticity of the name “George Eliot,” it was the letter of “George Eliot” sent to the *Times*, the next day, flatly denying Anders’ claim that increased public skepticism over the identity of “George Eliot.”

Sir,—The Rev. H. Anders has with questionable delicacy and unquestionable inaccuracy assured the world through your columns that the author of *The Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* is Mr. Joseph Liggins, of Nuneaton. I beg distinctly to deny that statement. I declare on my honour that that gentleman never saw a line of those works until they were printed, nor had he any knowledge of them whatever. Allow me to ask whether the act of publishing a book deprives a man of all claim to the courtesies usual among gentlemen? If not, the attempt to pry into what is obviously meant to be withheld--my name--and to publish the rumours which such prying may give rise to, seems to me quite indefensible, still more so to state these rumours as ascertained truths. I am, Sir, yours, &c., GEORGE ELIOT. (7).

Although this letter was actually written by George Henry Lewes on behalf of “George Eliot,” it was as “George Eliot” that the author’s determination to “withhold his name” was publicized. Instead of putting out the rumor, this strong desire for secrecy further prompted public curiosity and even anger among critics. A week later, the *Critic* strongly rejected the author’s demand for the “literary etiquette”--his right to remain unknown--arguing that it is a reader’s right to know an author’s name for a book: “What courtesy is usual among gentlemen (let us ask Mr. ELIOT) to shield the man who tacitly says to the world: ‘I have written a book; I have thrust myself upon your notice; intruded myself into your mind; presumed to divert the channel of your thoughts, and now I am afraid, ashamed, or unwilling to tell you who and what I am?’” (387).

On the same day, the *Leader* rebuked “George Eliot” with even stronger resentment: “From some cause or causes unexplained, the author of this ephemeral trifle chooses to

conceal his name, and affect the airs of a ‘Great Unknown’” (524). Whoever this Reverend Mr. Anders might be, he should be credited for his “ingenious idea of tempting the snake out of his hole by piping false notes at the orifice” (524). The reviewer downplayed the popularity of *Adam Bede* by referring to it as a mere ephemeral and resented the author’s condescension towards the readers as an affected “Great Unknown.” The *Leader* was further perplexed by the rumor that “George Eliot” is a pseudonym: “To mystify the matter still more, it is now said that Eliot is not Eliot, but merely a *nom de plume*. Now, what nonsense this is! What right has Mr. Eliot, or Mr. Blank, *alias* Eliot, to assume that there is any courtesy to prevent the discovery of his identity? Does he mean to assert that the public has not a right to learn his name if it can?” (524). These angry remarks demonstrate that the name “George Eliot” had been perceived as a regular patronymic rather than as a pseudonym before the name of Joseph Liggins entered the scene.<sup>29</sup>

I mark “Joseph Liggins” as an important proper name that turned “George Eliot” from an unknown pseudonym to a known pseudonym for *Adam Bede*. Surely, there had been a constant rumor about George Eliot’s pseudonymity since the publication of *Scenes in volume form* in 1858 which printed “George Eliot” on its title page. However, it was only after the publication of *Adam Bede* that Joseph Liggins entered the literary scene in full scale, generating many doubts over the name of George Eliot in the public arena. After Anders’ letter, “George Eliot” was considered to be a fictive name by many readers. The pseudonymity of “George Eliot” was thus debunked by Liggins. Although Liggins did not entirely reveal the biographical author behind the mask of “George Eliot,” he successfully revealed the fictiveness of the name to the public, bringing a change of perception for the

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<sup>29</sup> This was not the first time that the name of Joseph Liggins was mentioned in relation to George Eliot’s works, however. Earlier in July 1857, the reviewer of “Janet’s Repentance” in the *Manx Sun* ascribed the *Scenes of Clerical Life* to “the gentleman . . . named Liggers” (Haight *GEL* Vol.2 Note 877). Although misspelled in this issue of the magazine, this was the first case where George Eliot’s work was ascribed to Liggins, according to Haight.

author and the work.

This disclosure brought sort of a “pseudonym-effect” on the reception of *Adam Bede*, prompting readers to recognize a feminine writing style in the novel. I compare the reviews on *Adam Bede* written before and after the Liggins affair to analyze this partly pronounced pseudonym-effect. Before the Liggins affair, people literally read “George Eliot” as the name of a male author. The two book reviews published by the *Athenaeum* and the *Saturday Review* on February 26, 1859 recognized a distinct male voice in the novel. Recognizing “true genius” in the author of *Adam Bede*, the *Athenaeum* praised “his” realist writing technique: “It is as though he had made acquaintance with real human beings” (284). Even when the *Athenaeum* descried “a cunning and delicate hand” in the description of Hetty Sorrel (284), it did not infer female authorship from this observation but considered it as part of a skilled male authorship. The *Saturday Review* also recognized the power of observation in the novel linking it with the male gender: “[The author of *Adam Bede*] is evidently a country clergyman, and the object of his observation has been the rustic life of a village . . .” (250). The *Review* even grumbled over the manner in which the author described Hetty’s pregnancy, denouncing it as inappropriate: “Hetty's feelings and changes are indicated with a punctual sequence that makes the account of her misfortunes read like the rough notes of a man-midwife's conversation with a bride. This is intolerable” (251). A woman’s pregnancy was considered an “intolerable” topic for a novel, especially if it was written by a clergyman.

After the lifting of the pseudonymity of “George Eliot,” however, reviewers began to show more uncertainty in determining the gender of the author. They often detected both masculine and feminine hands in the novel. In the summer of 1859 where people were still making conjectures about the mysterious figure of “George Eliot,” some reviewers suspected that the novel was written by a woman. The *Bentley's Quarterly Review* in June 1859 expressed its suspicion that “it is from a female pen” (436). It boldly declared that, since

“genius, to be sure, is of no sex,” it would not put a limit of sex to human capacities.

[T]his shall be our answer if ‘George Eliot’ proves to be no *nom de guerre*, or if Mr. Anders is right and the author *is* Mr. Joseph Liggins after all, as he persists in declaring himself; or, as others say, a very young man, son of a small town tradesman, who has dug into other memories, and knows nothing of what he writes but through the fancy. But until the fact is proved against us we shall continue to think that the knowledge of female nature is feminine, not only in its details . . . but in its whole tone of feeling. . . . So having thus satisfied our candour, we will not further invade the reserve the author seems determined to maintain in spite of all attacks made on it by ‘Times,’ correspondents, but continue to apply such personal pronouns as *he* would have us use (437).

This critic ultimately read “George Eliot” as the male pseudonym for a female writer. After enumerating all possible alternative scenarios where “George Eliot” would not be a pseudonym, “Mr. Joseph Liggins” or even a young son of a certain tradesman would turn out to be the real author of *Adam Bede*, the *Review* still insisted that the book was written by a woman since it could observe a great amount of feminine feeling in the novel. After making its own discovery, however, the *Review* announced rather reservedly that it would keep using male pronouns to refer to the author to respect “his” choice.

The *Edinburgh Review* in July 1859 also dealt with the disputes over the authorship of *Adam Bede* yet with quite different manners. The *Review* praised “Mr. Eliot”’s balanced treatment of all characters: “truly Shaksperian [sic] is the power Mr. Eliot possesses of adapting his thoughts to every nature and to every situation” (240). Next, the reviewer narrated all the sagas of this war of authorship waged between “Joseph Liggins” and “George Eliot,” quoting relevant letters and sources including “the latest suggestion [they] have received [attributing] the authorship of ‘Adam Bede’ to a lady, also a native of that part of Warwickshire with which internal evidence connects the work” (243). However, instead of delving into the matter, the *Review* ceased the inquiry and defended the author’s right to remain anonymous. It even criticized readers’ excessive curiosity for an author’s private self: “Surely this monomania of the public is as illogical as it is provoking” (244). After enumerating many cases of anonymity shown in the literary history, the critic concluded that

“mystery has its charm” (246) and readers should be grateful to the author of *Adam Bede* for giving them such a book, “whether his name be Liggins or Higgins, or, as Messrs. Blackwood resolutely affirm, some name *not the least like* Liggins; and whether the authorship be concealed from timidity, pure love of mystery, or any other motive” (246). While the *Edinburgh Review* seemed to respect the author’s claim for anonymity, it still made another conjecture about “George Eliot” by inserting a recent rumor about a lady from Warwickshire being the author.

*Sharpe’s London Magazine* in the same month again announced that it would not make any conjectures about “George Eliot,” but for different reasons.

As to the authorship of this book we have no new theory to offer. People have made so many impossible discoveries on this subject that the time has arrived when a confession of having achieved no discovery, and of being in a state of total ignorance, will pass for a wiser and more original utterance than the wildest pitch-and-toss prophecy. The indications, masculine and feminine, are so evenly balanced as to defy detection of preponderance either way. . . . Whoever George Eliot be, whether man or woman, or both conjoined, whether old writer or new, George Eliot has written a book of which he (we use the masculine generically), in his retirement, may well be proud (271-2).

*Sharpe’s* boldly announced that it would not waste its energy trying to discover the true authorship of *Adam Bede*. It derided all attempts so far made by other periodical sources to track down the authorship of the book and declared that it would rather focus on the literary value of the work itself than spend its energy in engaging in such futile efforts. Since all geniuses had surpassed their own gender boundaries to take humanity as their foremost principles, there was no need to make a fuss about the author’s personal background such as her sex and age. What really matters was that an author called “George Eliot” wrote a magnificent book called *Adam Bede*. Instead of designating the author of *Adam Bede* as either male or female, *Sharpe’s* lauded “George Eliot” as an androgynous writer. It argued that all this puzzlement over the “sex” of the author rather proved that “George Eliot” belonged to the class of geniuses: “These objective geniuses will start from the first principle of humanity, and sex will be to them but a subdivision modifying that humanity” (272). Just

like the *Edinburgh Review*, *Sharpe's* dubbed "George Eliot" as "Shakespearean" who showed both masculine and feminine talent in creating "real" characters. In these examples, George Eliot was unsexed or de-sexed to emerge as an androgynous writer, anticipating Virginia Woolf's authorship model celebrated in *A Room of One's Own*.

However, the pseudonym-effect of "George Eliot" did not operate evenly. While it brought some positive effect on the first readers of *Adam Bede* by having the book judged without any biases against age and gender of the author, it also prompted all possible scenarios for the mystery of "George Eliot," putting the name at the two extremes of being a bogus writer with his fake identity and of being a genius writer of highest order. In the following analyses of reviews and letters, I shall demonstrate how the pseudonym-effect of "George Eliot" disintegrated the authorial identity of George Eliot, going beyond the model of "plurality of self" previously observed in Elizabeth Gaskell's anonymity and Currer Bell's pseudonymity. Since George Eliot did not come forward to reveal her identity, the myth grew. This disingenuous secrecy outraged more people over time, which, in turn, displaced George Eliot into an insubstantial and unintelligible authorial identity.

The *Athenaeum* in its weekly gossip column on June 11, 1859 expressed its own disconcertment over the pseudonymity of George Eliot.

How of the man who chooses to call things--himself included--by a wrong name? Take the case of the gentleman writing under the mask of George Eliot,--writing 'Adam Bede' and 'Sketches of Clerical Life.' If a man pleases to sign himself George Eliot instead of (say) John Jones, does anyone from that fancy or reserve of this acquire a right to assume the credit of his work--to trade on this assumption--to misrepresent his publishers--and raise money on his assumed distress? All this, it is said, has been done by a certain, or uncertain, Mr. Liggins. Mr. Liggins, we are told, claims to be the author of 'Adam Bede,' . . . . Hereupon Messrs. Blackwood, under their proper personalities, and the shadowy George Eliot, write to the *Times*, protesting that Mr. Liggins's claim to renown and halfpence is a mere imposture (780).

In following the recent development in the "George Eliot" mystery, the *Athenaeum* jumped from "a certain or uncertain, Mr. Liggins" to "the shadowy George Eliot" because it could not find any substantial, biographical person standing behind those names. The *Athenaeum* thus

read both names as empty signifiers: “The doubt arises--who is Mr. Liggins? Has anybody ever seen him in the flesh? Is he a shadow like George Eliot?” (780). Instead of recognizing either name as real, this critic renounced both names as “uncertain” and “shadowy.” Along with Joseph Liggins, George Eliot became an intangible existence.

Yet, this was only the beginning of the fragmentation of George Eliot’s authorial identity. While Currer Bell’s mixed authorship with the other Bells further promoted Charlotte Brontë to a versatile writer, George Eliot’s mixed authorship with Joseph Liggins demoted the author to a swindler or a liar. In less than a month from the above review, the *Athenaeum* issued another review that condemned the author of *Adam Bede* for making this fuss out of nothing: “It is time to end this pother about the authorship of ‘Adam Bede.’ The writer is in no sense a ‘great unknown’; the tale, if bright in parts, and such as a clever woman with an observant eye and unschooled moral nature might have written, has no great quality of any kind” (20). This review even claimed that “Mr. Liggins, with his poverty and his pretensions, was a mystification, got up by George Eliot,” comparing the latter to “the showman in a country fair [who] sets up a second learned pig to create a division among the penny-paying rustics” (20).<sup>30</sup> In other words, George Eliot is a mere trickster who set up the hoax of “Joseph Liggins” to sell his books. Denouncing George Eliot’s “elaborate attempt to mystify the reading public,” the reviewer asserted that the author could not be a woman since “no woman of genius ever condescended to such a ruse” and “no book was ever permanently helped by such a trick” (20). In this reception, George Eliot became an unbearable existence that represented inauthenticity and untruthfulness itself.

Even more confusion was created for the identity of George Eliot as the author name was often misnamed as “George Elliot.” *The New Quarterly Review* misspelled it as “George Elliot” when it offered a possibility of plural authorship for *Adam Bede*: “The author, or

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<sup>30</sup> According to Rosemary Ashton, it was William Hepworth Dixon who wrote this review (*George Eliot* 34).

authoress—for report says the name of Elliot is assumed, and, moreover, that the works published under that name are written by more than one person” (16). While expressing its own uncertainty over the authorship of *Adam Bede*, this magazine, ironically, created its own version of the author by marking the last name as “Elliot.” Sidney Godolphin Osborne made the same mistake in his letter sent to the *Times* on June 3, 1859, entitled “The Great Unknown.” After summarizing the claims made by both Joseph Liggins and George Eliot, Osborne expressed his deep concern over those who had given charity to Liggins on his allegedly false claims: “A Mr. Joseph Liggins, of Attleborough, is the suffering author, who, it is said, wrote lately in your column a short note as to the authorship of *Adam Bede*, under the signature of ‘George Elliot’” (10). Contradicting his own claims for balanced judgments, Osborne wrongly marked George Eliot as “George Elliot.” While all these misnaming practices further destabilized the authorial identity of George Eliot in the public sphere, they were also found in the private sphere. In her letter sent to George Eliot on June 3, 1859, Elizabeth Gaskell showed the most intriguing act of misnaming George Eliot.

Dear Mr. "Gilbert Elliott,"

Since I came from Manchester to London I have had the greatest compliment paid me I ever had in my life. I have been suspected of having written “Adam Bede.” I have hitherto denied it; but I really think, that as you want to keep your real name a secret, it would be very pleasant for me to blush acquiescence. Will you give me leave?

Well! if I had written Amos Barton, Janet's Repentance and Adam Bede I should neither be to have nor to hold with pride and delight in myself -- so I think it is very well I have not. And please to take notice I knew what was coming up above the horizon from the dawn of the first number of Amos Barton in Blackwood. -- After all it is a pity so much hearty admiration should go unappropriated through the world. So, although to my friends I am known under the name of Mrs. Gaskell, to you I will confess that I *am* the author of Adam Bede, and remain very respectfully and gratefully yours,

Gilbert Elliot. (Haight *GEL* Vol 3. 74)

This curious letter indicates not only two misspellings of the last name of George Eliot as “Elliott” (at the head of the letter) and “Elliot” (at the tale of the letter) but also the change of its first name from “George” to “Gilbert.” Thus, double or several misattributions take place

in this letter via the three proper names of “Gilbert Elliott,” “Gilbert Elliot” and “Mrs. Gaskell” (as Gaskell referred to herself in the letter). First, Gaskell’s circles misattributed the work of George Eliot to “Mrs. Gaskell.” Gaskell quite enjoyed this misattribution made to her. However, Gaskell wrongly assumed that the pseudonym “George Eliot” stood for “Gilbert Elliott” or “Gilbert Elliot” and held to this assumption by playfully signing herself as “Gilbert Elliot” at the end of the letter. Gordon Haight identifies this person as “Gilbert Elliot” who went to Cambridge and worked as a rector or a dean in several regions. According to Haight, “Mrs. Gaskell may have suspected that he was George Eliot” (GEL vol.3 Note 142). While Gaskell’s literary circles suspected that “Mrs. Gaskell” assumed the name “George Eliot” to write *Adam Bede* and *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Gaskell suspected that “Gilbert Elliot” assumed the name “George Eliot” to write these stories. Here, the name of George Eliot was doubly displaced as “Gilbert Elliot” and “Mrs. Gaskell.”

After receiving this letter, George Eliot wrote to William Blackwood on June 6: “I hope the inaccuracy with which she writes my name is not characteristic of a genius for fiction, though I once heard a German account for the bad spelling in Goethe's early letters by saying that it was ‘genial’ -- their word for whatsoever is characteristic of genius” (Haight *GEL* Vol. 3 76). George Eliot accused Gaskell only of the misspelling without recognizing that Gaskell made another wrong attribution regarding her works. Later on November 10, after all the mystery was solved, Gaskell sent another letter to George Eliot addressing her this time as “My dear Madame.” In this letter, Gaskell acknowledged that she “upheld Mr. Liggins as the author for long” but knew that he was “a regular rascal” and “never was such a fool as to believe that such books as yours could be a mosaic of real and ideal” (*GEL* Vol. 3 197). Gaskell added that “I should not be quite true in my ending, if I did not say before I concluded that I wish you were Mrs. Lewes. However that can't be helped, as far as I can see, and one must not judge others” (197). After admitting her own mistake and recognizing all

the literary merits “George Eliot” bestowed on the world, Gaskell confessed that she felt sorry because she could not call the author “Mrs. Lewes.”

All these cases demonstrate how the proper name “George Eliot” was constantly renamed and redefined as an unsteady discursive construct both in the public and private spheres in its early life form. It remained as a fragmented name until the mystery of “George Eliot” was solved. At the end of June, 1859, George Eliot resolved not to keep the secret any longer, as George Henry Lewes wrote to Madame Bodichon on June 30, 1859: “You may tell it openly to all who care to hear it that the object of anonymity was to get the book judged on its own merits, and not prejudged as the work of a woman, or of a particular woman. It is quite clear that people would have sniffed at it if they had known the writer to be a woman but they can't now unsay their admiration” (GEL Vol 3, 106).

However, George Eliot had to pay a great price to “get the book judged on its own merits” by losing her authorial integrity along the way. The fictive identity of “George Eliot” was literally thrown into the realm of fiction as it was narrated from diverse angles by a number of people invested with varying interests. As it was supplanted by other proper names such as “Joseph Liggins” and “Gilbert Elliot,” the figure of “George Eliot” was doubly and triply removed from his readers. It became a “shadow” in the end as dubbed by the *Athenaeum*. Given her claims for truthfulness in her theory of realism, there is an unsurmountable irony that George Eliot had to use and keep this feigned name to present her first full version of realism to the public. George Eliot had to sacrifice her own fidelity to launch her realist project in 1859.

**“Adam Bede”: the Realist Name vs. “Hetty Sorrel”: the Proto-sensational Name**

Unlike “the shadowy George Eliot,” Adam Bede was like a “real” person to Victorian readers, as the first book review issued by the *Athenaeum* on February 26, 1859

demonstrates: “The character of Adam is finely done; he is a man as well as the first hero in the story” (284). As Adam Bede delivered a strong sense of realism to readers, he became one of the most prominent realist characters in Victorian novels. In contrast, Hetty Sorrel delivered shock and horror to not a few Victorian readers, emerging as an anti-realist heroine. At the end of this article that praised *Adam Bede*’s overall effect of realism, the *Athenaeum* berated the author for not softening “the whole scene of proceeding to execution” which “gives the reader a shock that is decidedly painful” (284). Based on these contradicting review commentaries, I argue that *Adam Bede* consists of opposing narrative names of Adam Bede and Hetty Sorrel. While Adam unfolds a realist naming plot, Hetty rather shows what I call a “proto-sensationalist” naming plot. In other words, each character makes disparate genre claim within the same novel. Each term can approximately be translated into the mid-Victorian genre convention of “the novel of character” and “the novel of plot” as spelled out by Dallas.

While *Adam Bede* has been predominantly studied as a representative realist novel of mid-Victorian era in modern criticism, an increasing number of critics have begun to detect genre conflicts residing in the novel through the opposing characters of Adam and Hetty. Sarah Gates orders that we view each character as representing a disparate component of the novel, pointing out that those who refuse to read the novel as “essentially monogeneric” often end up “locat[ing] this conflict within the project of realism itself –that is, within the tendency to sneak the ‘ideal’ into the ‘real’” (20). In an attempt to challenge such scholarly practices, however, Gates rather redefines the novel’s genre conflict as the clash between realism and romance than between realism and proto-sensationalism: “[Hetty] is the inarticulate object who becomes the projected heroine of the hero's romance” (25). Similarly, Rosemary Ashton reads Hetty’s seduction plot as the novel’s “lapses into pastoral idyll, romance, even myth” (*George Eliot* 30).

I redefine such genre conflicts in the novel as a clash between realism and “proto-sensationalism” structured by the naming contrast between Adam and Hetty. Although the critical term “sensation novel” as a separate genre was not coined before 1860,<sup>31</sup> such words as “sensation,” “shock” or “horror” were already in frequent uses in 1859. Besides, Willkie Collins’s fifth novel *The Woman in White*, often touted as the first sensation novel by modern critics, was soon to be serialized in Dickens’ *All the Year Round* from November 26, 1859 through August 25, 1860. Accordingly, *Adam Bede* was often read by Victorian literary critics as containing a disparate plot that revolves around the character of Hetty Sorrel. As I shall demonstrate in the reviews about Hetty, she was often perceived as an unpredictable and incomprehensible creature just like the sensation heroine Lady Audley. Since many languages that described Hetty in the reviews anticipated a sensation heroine, I adopt the term “proto-sensationalism” to categorize Hetty’s naming plot.

First, I analyze the novel’s different naming acts for Adam and Hetty at the narrative level; Second, I investigate how each character name makes different genre claim for the novel at the discursive level, that is, within the contemporary reviews. As I argued in the introduction, a realist novel is more likely to adopt the consistency model of naming based on designation in presenting its protagonist. This formula applies to *Adam Bede* that designates its protagonist as a stable subject through its consistent act of naming but describes its proto-sensationalist heroine as an unintelligible object through its variable act of naming. Adam’s consistency becomes a crucial factor in diagnosing the novel’s realism. In short, Adam serves as a realist character with consistent names; Hetty functions as a proto-sensational figure with unpredictable names. As the novel’s opposing narrative naming acts construct Adam and Hetty as generically contrasting narrative figures, they perform opposing genre functions at

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<sup>31</sup> According to Elizabeth Steere, there is much controversy over when the term “sensation novel” was first used, although the OED cites the year of 1863 as the first use of the term (186 Note 5). However, it is clear that the term “sensation novel” was not used before 1860.

the discursive level, increasing the novel's genre complexity.

How does the novel name Adam and Hetty? From their fictional births, Adam and Hetty are created under different narrative conditions. I illustrate two early scenes where the proper names of "Adam Bede" and "Hetty Sorrel" first appear in the novel:

In his tall *stalwartness* Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black hair, made the more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent and mobile eyebrows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood. The face was large and roughly hewn, and when in repose had no other beauty than such as belongs to an expression of *good-humoured honest* intelligence (6; my emphasis).

"You've quite made up your mind to go back to Snowfield o' Saturday, Dinah?"

"Yes," said, Dinah, quietly. "I'm called there. . . . If it wasn't for that clear showing of the Lord's will I should be loth to go, for my heart yearns over my aunt and her little ones, and *that poor wandering lamb, Hetty Sorrel*. I've been much drawn out in prayer for her of late, and I look on it as a token that there may be mercy in store for her" (31; my emphasis).

Most notably, the narrator presents the two names at different narrative levels to bring contrasting effect. While Adam's name appears at the extradiegetic level, Hetty's name turns up at the intradiegetic level. "Adam Bede" is directly baptized and introduced to us by the omniscient narrator; there are no intermediary or intervening forces between "Adam Bede" and the readers. In contrast, "Hetty Sorrel" is indirectly mentioned in a dialogue between Seth and Dinah; it is inscribed as part of Dinah's speech. Not only does Hetty's name appear vicariously through Dinah's words, her image is filtered through the latter's point of view. Hetty's name seems disengaged as it is doubly removed from readers. We would only remotely get the first impression of her character in this first scene.

In addition, the narrator uses different referential modes for Adam and Hetty. While the narrator designates Adam as an "honest" workman with the quality of "stalwartness," he describes Hetty as "that poor wandering lamb." Adam is designated as a morally superior human figure with his bodily strength. In contrast, Hetty is renamed as a domestic animal-- "that poor wandering lamb." Since this descriptive phrase modifies the name of Hetty Sorrel,

she first makes her appearance as an animal rather than a human figure. As shown in this example, the narrator uses different referential modes for Adam and Hetty, a designative mode for Adam and a descriptive mode for Hetty.

First, the narrator continually attaches such moral epithets as “stalwart” and “honest” to Adam’s name to construct him as a Victorian type.<sup>32</sup> The narrator’s repeated uses of such moral epithets make “Adam Bede” an exemplar of Victorian realist values. A mysterious horseman appearing at the end of the first chapter is a major case of using the moral epithet of “stalwart” to refer to Adam. The narrator tells us that the elderly man “stopped his horse when Adam had passed him, and turned round to have another long look at *the stalwart workman* in paper cap. . .” (12; my emphasis). Here, Adam is perceived as “the stalwart workman” by the horseman. As the adjective “stalwart” could signify both physical and moral strengths by definition, the phrase fully indicates Adam’s steady quality. This phrase, in fact, echoes what the narrator did with Adam’s name at the beginning of this chapter and thus makes a parallel narrative with it. By epitomizing Adam into the same epithet at first sight, the horseman, though strange and unknown yet to readers, almost works on the same extradiegetic level as the narrator in its effect on readers.<sup>33</sup> Both the narrator and his substitute figure, the horseman, present Adam as a consistent character whose interiority and exteriority correspond through the use of the moral epithet “stalwart.”

The second epithet that tags onto Adam’s name is “honest.” At the end of the passage that introduces Adam’s name for the first time, the narrator endows Adam with the quality of “good-humoured honest intelligence.” Though unlearned, Adam comes to represent the very

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<sup>32</sup> Here, I follow Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of an epithet as “an adjective indicating some quality or attribute which the speaker or writer regards as characteristic of the person or thing described.”

<sup>33</sup> This mysterious horseman later reappears as the administrator of Stoniton prison. He let Dinah into the prison cell when she comes to see Hetty.

best value of the British artisan class through such a designation. Indeed, “honest Adam” becomes rigid designation through the novel’s narrative chain of uses. Adam’s name is continually modified by this epithet. In the confrontation scene between Arthur and Adam, the narrator states that Arthur “had thrown quite dust enough into honest Adam’s eyes” (268). Here, the narrator seems to side with Adam by designating him as “honest Adam”: Arthur deluded not just Adam but “honest Adam” by seducing Hetty. Mr. Irwine calls Adam “the fine honest fellow” when he is told about Adam’s genuine love for Hetty (394). Bartle Massey is concerned only about “an honest man” when he hears of Hetty’s trial --“the harm or good that may come out of her to an honest man” (374). Even Hetty walks “on honest Adam’s arm” before she receives Arthur’s letter through Adam (288). All these narrative instances show that the adjective “honest” serves as another moral epithet for Adam’s name. As the quality of stalwartness and honesty modify Adam’s name in the form of moral epithets, Adam emerges as a rigid designator of such Victorian ethos. They serve as identifying tags for Adam that follow him wherever he goes and whatever he does within the fictional world of *Adam Bede*.

As these moral epithets formulate Adam into a rigid narrative figure, Adam emerges as an archetypal figure as the narrator declares at the beginning of his narrative--“Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name” (6). The narrator links Adam’s name with the British lineage to warrant its role as a narrative center. Just like the Biblical Adam created by God, Adam Bede is baptized by the narrator as a paradigmatic British carpenter. Such designating power reinforces Adam’s representativeness as an undeceiving British blood, as Carol A. Martin argues: “the virtues and values of the Anglo-Saxon race, as well as the ‘Celtic blood’ tying his lineage to the pre-Roman inhabitants of Britain and his given name, from the biblical Adam, mark him as an archetypal figure” (498). Not only that, Adam’s surname “alludes to the Venerable Bede, the eight-century Benedictine monk and author of The

Ecclesiastical History of the English People” (498).

This act of naming formulates Adam into a realist type. Later in the middle of the narrative, Adam emerges as a realist narrative figure by simultaneously being named as typical and atypical.

Adam, you perceive, was by no means a marvelous man, nor, properly speaking, a genius, yet I will not pretend that his was an ordinary character among workmen; and it would not be at all a safe conclusion that the next best man you may happen to see with a basket of tools over his shoulder and a paper cap on his head has the strong conscience and the strong sense, the blended susceptibility and self-command of our friend Adam. He was not an average man. Yet such men as he are reared here and there in every generation of our peasant artisans. . . they make their way upward, rarely as geniuses, most commonly as painstaking honest men. . .(192-3).

In the above, the narrator proceeds to designate Adam as neither a genius nor an ordinary workman. He assures readers that no workmen would have such strong moral sensibility as “our friend Adam.” In short, Adam is not an average man. Yet at the same time, the narrator claims that Adam-like figures can be found in every generation of British peasant class. Here, Adam is a general type as well as a particular individual. Such simultaneity rather reinforces his realist claim in the novel. Catherine Gallagher explores a conflict between types and individuals in realist novels: “fictional characters may refer to people in the world by conforming to type, but they only resemble people in their nonconformity” (“George Eliot” 66). As Gallagher suggests, such tension between types and individuality defines realism. Adam fits this explanation by serving as a type and by exceeding it. By vacillating between typicality and individuality, Adam is constructed as a realist character. In the process, his name is homogenized into one of these “painstaking honest men.”

While Adam becomes a realist name by being fully endowed with “proper” human qualities, Hetty remains as a heterogeneous element by being associated with non-human objects. She is persistently renamed through various animal species across the entire narrative. Earlier in the novel, a couple of young animals are named in a row to indicate Hetty’s immaturity and incompleteness. The narrator describes Hetty’s beauty in the following

manner: “It is a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks . . . a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you” (76). Here, Hetty is likened to a kitten or duck, helpless and vulnerable creatures. In addition, the narrator calls Hetty “a young star-browed calf . . . inclined for a promenade out of bounds” (77), associating her immaturity with an uncontrollable young calf. In this chapter alone, Hetty is successively tagged with three different animal names. Yet that is not the end of the list. Later in the looking-glass scene where Hetty tries on her best dress, she is described as “the little puss” by the narrator who appreciates her beauty on our behalf: “How pretty the little puss looks in that odd dress!” (138). Such a catalogue of animal names indicates that “Hetty” is constantly reconfigured into a new set of descriptions instead of being fixed into a unified human subject. “Hetty Sorrel” functions as a variable, descriptive name rather than rigid designation.

This indicates that Hetty Sorrel is denied a sense of human consciousness or individual subjectivity in its referential mode across the narrative. Gillian Beer notes that “Hetty” is linked with a plant-name, “the tall red sorrel” appearing in Chapter Two with “the sound of the scythe being whetted” close by: the ominous and repetitive sound of the scythe foreshadows “Hetty’s fall” (61-2). Whether in plant or animal terms, the proper name “Hetty” performs a descriptive function by varying its character identity. And such naming practice for Hetty limits the extents of her human agency: “Hetty--never herself articulate and given remarkably little direct speech . . . is described in terms of young animals” (Beer 63-4).

Such narrative naming practices equate Hetty with animality itself in the end. During Hetty’s suffering journey, the narrator states that “the dread of bodily hardship mingled with the dread of shame, for Hetty had the luxurious nature of a round soft-coated pet animal” (340). Here, the narrator identifies Hetty with a “pet animal” that cannot bear bodily pain. Along with a set of domestic animals –a kitten, a duck or a calf—which previously renamed

Hetty, this descriptive phrase “a round soft-coated pet animal” reinforces her image as a pet accustomed to bodily pleasure. Such categorization stands in contrast to what the narrator had claimed right before--that it would be such an “intolerable shame” for Hetty to be taken to “the parish” (339). Even in this rare scene where Hetty’s moral consciousness is given in the form of a moral shame against beggary, her physicality seems to define her property as vain.

In fact, the abstract, homogenous term “animal” keeps returning whenever Hetty’s physicality comes to the surface either at the intradiegetic level or at the extradiegetic level. The Reverend Mr. Irwine uses the term to describe Hetty when he relates to Bartle Massey about Hetty in prison: “she shrank up like a frightened animal when she saw me” (375). Similarly, the narrator uses the same term to give out Hetty’s first (bodily) response to Dinah’s visit: “Hetty kept her eyes fixed on Dinah’s face—at first like an animal that gazes, and gazes, and keeps aloof” (401). In these last scenes, Hetty’s name turns into the general reference of “an animal” without being specified as any one particular animal. It turns into sheer animality.

Such abstractions of Hetty’s name into animality can be read as part of the novel’s project of displacing Hetty’s humanness. Hetty is not given much of a human agency as she is frequently described through animal figures. Although Hetty later confesses her crime to Dinah, such speech remains fragmented and incomplete, not enough to evoke her human agency. By effacing her human subjectivity, such act of un-naming facilitates the narrative closure on Hetty. As Beer argues, “Hetty is not endowed with a rich inner life. Quite the contrary” (71). It is no wonder, then, that Hetty could not tell, after her crime was revealed, which one is her name between “Hetty Sorrel” and “Dinah Morris” written in her diary: “[Hetty] had a small red-leather pocket-book in her pocket, with two names written in it—one at the beginning, ‘Hetty Sorrel, Hayslope,’ and the other near the end, ‘Dinah Morris, Snowfield.’ She will not say which is her own name....it was thought probable that the name

which stands first is her own name” (367). The reason is not simply because the two female characters are contrasting doubles in some sense--Dinah served as Hetty’s replacement by becoming a house wife for Adam-- but also because Hetty could not identify herself with a human name—that is, a personal proper name written down on paper.

This descriptive narrative mode turns Hetty into a proto-sensational name. It is not a coincidence that it is through the medium of a mirror that Hetty makes a debut on stage: “Hetty Sorrel often took the opportunity . . . of looking at the pleasing reflection of herself in those polished surfaces” (67). As Hetty appears as the reflection on the surface of the old oak table, her existence is doubly removed from readers. Just as her first name in print is vicariously introduced to readers through Dinah, so is her body represented through surfaces and mirrors. Hetty is thus marked as a shallow, superficial figure to disturb the novel’s tranquil realism. She becomes a narrative necessity only to be removed from the text after the climax of the gallows scene at the end of book five. After being released from the death sentence at the last minute, Hetty disappears from the stage. She reappears only as the form of absence in Dinah’s words that deliver “the death of the poor wanderer” in the final chapter of the book (480). This shows that Hetty is used as a narrative tool for the novel’s suspense. Hetty’s instrumentality as a proto-sensational event disrupts the novel’s claims for realism. Only by offering Hetty as a sacrifice could the novel sustain its realist project that center on the figure of Adam Bede. Hetty’s proto-sensational name recalls Bertha’s “Gothic name,” even though Hetty is a much evolved form of human shape compared to Bertha’s speechless animality.

I demonstrated so far how the novel’s different narrative modes of designation and description construct Adam and Hetty as contrasting narrative figures. While “Adam” secures consistency as a rigid designator, “Hetty” becomes variable as a descriptive figure. As a result, Adam emerges as a stable subject with a full sense of human properties such as honesty and

stalwartness, whereas Hetty becomes an unstable object associated with animality and superficiality. What this signifies is that the more stable a fictional proper name stays in the narrative, the more personality (or human property) its character seems to acquire in and beyond the text.

The same opposition can be found in the discursive naming practices for the two characters conducted by the contemporary reviews. John Chapman argued that Adam delivered a stable sense of personhood to readers as opposed to Hetty who came off as unpredictable. Chapman perceived Adam as the central figure of the novel “whose mind is as robust and firmly set as his body” (488). As Adam’s physical structure corresponded with his mental state, he delivered a strong sense of stability to readers.

A character built up from the firm foundations of native sagacity and an indomitable sense of justice as is that of Adam Bede. . . or moulded and directed by an informing and ever-present influence--an unfaltering religious faith, as was Dinah's, is, in our opinion, far more easy to understand and describe, than it is to track the devious course of a wayward creature like Hetty throughout the latter part of her career. The more completely a mind is directed by unreasoning impulses and seeming caprice, the more difficult it becomes to imagine its probable action under extraordinary circumstances. . . (511).

According to Chapman’s reading, Adam’s character is built up from the firm ground of justice and Dinah’s character from unwavering faith. They are consistent and intelligible characters, easy for readers to figure out. In contrast, Hetty is a “wayward creature.” As she lacks stable human properties, it seems hard to pin down her character. Her course of action is “devious” and “unpredictable.” Since Hetty’s mind is controlled by the “unreasoning impulses” and “seeming caprice,” it is hard for readers to imagine her next moves. Chapman transposed such unpredictability into “death-like impenetrability” (512). Because Hetty is inconsistent and unstable, she becomes opaque and unintelligible. While Adam conveyed an abiding human quality in the minds of Victorian readers, Hetty delivered a sense of unfathomability. Here, Hetty anticipates the sensation heroine “Lady Audley” who was often perceived as an anomaly and impenetrability by readers.

Hetty's name as a signifier for impenetrability becomes even more manifest in *Sharpe's* review which took note of Hetty's impersonality through the image of "a brute." The reviewer described Hetty as an "immoral beauty" to mark her ambivalent qualities. The author of *Adam Bede* presented Hetty's beauty as a foil to her moral weakness--"we are made to feel the fulness of her personal beauty: we are made to feel the utter lack of moral beauty in her"--which delivered a sense of ambiguity to readers: "We never actively like or dislike Hetty from first to last" (274). Due to such incongruity between Hetty's perfect physical form and her irregular mental status, the critic felt troubled to understand Hetty's character. This ambivalence resulted in "unprecedented" and "anomalous" effects-- Hetty "affects us as some suffering dumb brute would affect us" (274). Here, the reviewer renamed Hetty as a "suffering dumb brute" to emphasize the abnormal effect that she brought to readers. Such discursive act of naming attested to the ways in which she influenced this Victorian readership.

[T]his Hetty is no less an animal than the kitten to which she is likened. . . . she steals away and hides herself like a wounded brute, and she cannot kill herself because of her "animal fear". . . .Alas! that this kitten. . .should have to undergo human metamorphosis! . . . . Alas! that the waxen prettiness of a doll-face should come to be crowned with awful Medusa snakes! Sad to think of, are Hetty's half-human sufferings" (274).

In these seemingly endless lamentations over Hetty's sad fate, the reviewer constantly renamed Hetty into various shapes and qualities from an "animal," a "brute," a "kitten" to a "doll-face." This act of renaming totally dissolved Hetty into animality and thingness in the reviews, following the novel's narrative naming act. These discursive modes of references, in turn, reinforced Hetty's image as an impersonal, unreal figure in the minds of Victorian readers.

As implied already, these naming practices can illuminate the genre ambiguity of a Victorian novel which often contains a heterogeneous element to its own genre claims. Just like *Bertha Mason* which contradicts Jane's realist plot, Hetty's naming plot worked as a

heterogeneous element to Adam's (and the novel's) realist project. In that sense, Bertha's "Gothic" name makes a parallel with Hetty's "proto-sensational" name. Unlike Adam who was easily charted into "the novel of character," Hetty rather belonged to "the novel of plot" as recognized by many Victorian reviewers. While some reviewers perceived Hetty as hampering the entire novel's generic unity, others argued that narrative suspense and interest was mostly drawn from Hetty and criticized the author for making her leave the stage too early.

Indeed, not a few Victorian critics observed a generic conflict between Adam's plot and Hetty's plot and acknowledged that each character performed a different genre function for the novel. They detected both generic traits in *Adam Bede* unlike modern criticism that has entirely categorized it as a realist novel without question. The novel was often read as "the novel of plot" through Hetty. For example, the *Edinburgh Review* diagnosed Hetty as a proto-sensational figure, linking her name with the term "sensual": "reading on and on, the impression that after all *she was but a toy fit for a sensual fancy*, overbears all others" (236; my emphasis). This reviewer argued that Hetty's sacrifice was necessary for the narrative resolution that reconciled the two male characters – "noble Adam Bede the carpenter, and Arthur Donnithorne the gentleman" (236). The act of re-naming Hetty as "a toy fit for a sensual fancy" indicates that the reviewer saw Hetty playing an anti-realist role in the novel, standing in contrast to "noble Adam Bede" (236). Drawing a parallel between Eliot's Hetty and Dickens' Dora in *David Copperfield*, this reader argued that Hetty was sacrificed for the novel's blissful narrative closure for Adam and Dinah. Just as Dickens had to eliminate the "Child-Wife" figure Dora for his narrative purpose, "Mr. Eliot" ensured that Hetty should "not obtain too great a hold over the heart of the reader" for his realist project (236).

The *Edinburgh Review* further criticized "Mr. Eliot" for describing Hetty in the way that "moderates our pity for her fate" (236). Because the author opposed Hetty's physical

beauty to her moral deformity, readers are prevented from feeling genuine sympathy towards her: “Hetty commands sympathy neither as a bad man’s victim, nor as a good man’s love” (236). By describing Hetty as an unsympathetic and unsympathizable character, the author reduced Hetty to a female nonentity in the novel. Such a narrative scheme turned Hetty into a “helpless pet,” which brought an unsatisfactory effect on readers: “Still, when all is over, a sense predominates of the utter inferiority of poor Hetty's nature, and to the last our sensations follow the lead the author takes in his first description of her, and it is rather as for some pet animal tortured and crushed, than as a conscious suffering woman, that our painful pity dwells on the end” (240). This passage shows how readers responded to the author’s handling of Hetty. Readers were forced to follow the author’s lead in perceiving Hetty’s nature from the beginning to the end of the narrative, yet with remorseful “sensations.” As the author described Hetty as “utterly inferior,” it was rather as a tortured pet animal than as a conscious human subject that Hetty received “painful pity” from readers. This review article demonstrated that readers often felt anger against Hetty’s lack of human agency. At the same time, this article also evokes a sensation heroine in reading Hetty by using such words as “sense’ and “sensation” in describing the readers’ feeling towards her.

Similarly, the *Sharpe’s* reviewer saw that Hetty provided the novel with a proto-sensational plot. As Hetty operated as a heroine who could bring suspense and action into the narrative, “Hetty is much more the heroine than Adam Bede the hero, and at the end of the fifth book Hetty leaves the stage. At that point, too, the interest culminates” (272). Hetty served as a rightful heroine of the novel by raising the narrative suspense to the climax before she was removed from the stage and thus drew even more interest from readers than Adam did. At the same time, *Sharpe’s* criticized the author of *Adam Bede* for becoming too much of a “character-maker” by unnecessarily narrating Adam’s married life with Dinah at the end of

the novel.<sup>34</sup> Such ending was written “solely with the view of exhibiting ‘Adam Bede’ (and Dinah) under a new phase” (273). Therefore, it is “an excrescence which might be pared away almost with advantage” (272). In other words, it was not a good idea for the author to go on telling about Adam’s married life after Hetty’s disappearance from the stage: “A writer who had regard to his plot would no more have thought of prolonging his book a hundred and thirty pages beyond that crisis of the scaffold and the reprieve, than he would have thought of flying” (273). It was wrong for the author to gear its narrative closure toward Adam while remaining silent about the rest of Hetty’s life in exile. Both the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Sharpe’s* equated the author and the narrator of *Adam Bede* by directly blaming “George Eliot” for treating Hetty unjustly.

Just as *Sharpe’s* reviewer gave a mixed review in naming the genre of *Adam Bede*, the *Saturday Review* also detected both generic features represented by Adam and Hetty. At first, the *Saturday Review* acknowledged that the novel delivered a sense of continuity to readers. Yet, it criticized that such continuity is “wholly in the characters” and the story (the plot) itself “breaks down” (250).

This series of events [Hetty’s child-bearing, child-murder and transportation] takes the author from ground where he is strong to ground where he is weak. He knows and cares nothing about trials, scaffolds, and pardons. He only brings them in because he conceives that a certain allowance of melodrama is a necessary ingredient. The consequence is, that the third volume is weak, poor, and superficial, compared with the other two. We are taken away from the new region of lifelike carpenters and dairymaids into the hackneyed region of sham legal excitement. The degree of horror and painfulness is also out of keeping with the calm simplicity of rural life . . . why a picture of village character and village humour should be made so painful as it is by the introduction into the foreground of the startling horrors of rustic reality. We do not expect that we are to pass from the discreet love of a well-to-do carpenter to child-murder and executions, and the shock which the author inflicts on us seems as superfluous as it is arbitrary (250-1).

Like the *Sharpe’s*, the *Saturday Review* basically diagnosed Eliot as a “character-maker”

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<sup>34</sup> Here, the reviewer used the terms “incident-makers” and “character-makers”: the former “fit[s] their characters to their plots” and the latter “introduce[s] their incidents solely for the purpose of exhibiting their characters in the required light” (272-3). These terms precede and correspond to Dallas’ division of the “novels of plot” and the “novels of character.”

rather than an “incident-maker” and criticized the author for trying out his weak points. Here the critic observes that the author of *Adam Bede* introduced a series of melodramatic scenes related to Hetty only as “a necessary ingredient” of the novel, otherwise too simplistic and eventless. As a result, we are transported from “lifelike carpenters and dairymaids”(250) into the “sham legal excitement”(250) which causes unexpected horror and pain.<sup>35</sup> While this reviewer complains that Hetty’s plot conflicts with the idyllic rustic life depicted in *Adam Bede*, his language of “horror” and “pain” reminds us of later readers’ responses to sensation novels. He does not understand why the “village humor” should be replaced by “the startling horrors of rustic reality.” The author inflicted “superfluous” and “arbitrary” “shock” on readers by inserting such painful events as child-murder and execution into the narrative. Although this review denied Hetty’s place in the novel, unlike the *Sharpe*’s, it acknowledged that the two generic elements coexist in the novel.

These mixed reviews about *Adam Bede* not only recognized both realist and anti-realist elements in the novel but also treated Hetty as a legitimate heroine of the novel. Despite their somewhat different stances on the novel’s proto-sensationalism, they all recognized Hetty as a crucial narrative figure who acted out the narrative suspense of the novel. In this context, some magazines even rebuked Eliot for abandoning Hetty too early in the narrative. *Dublin University Magazine* criticized “Mr. Elliott [sic]” for “killing off poor disgraced Hetty” too early in the novel. It asked “whether it is not rather a timid and painful murder of a heroine, and rather an anti-climax, happening early in the third volume” (485). The *Magazine*’s use of the word “murder” suggested that Hetty was used as a sacrifice for the author’s realist project. This statement implies that the author would rather suffer an anti-climax than leaving his proto-sensational heroine alive until the end of the narrative. This

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<sup>35</sup> Here, the irony is that that Hetty’s plot was based on a true story while Adam’s plot was created out of the author’s imagination.

rhetorical question rather proved that Hetty drove the narrative climax of the story. Even Chapman, who approved of Eliot as a “faithful and wise historian,” (487) regretted Hetty’s premature withdrawal from the story. Although Hetty is “ignorant, vain, and entirely wrapped up in herself” (494), Chapman claims, “the reader [still] longs to know somewhat of the fate of Hetty during those dreary years of transportation, as well as the circumstances of her death” (510). All these commentaries testify to Hetty’s generic significance as a proto-sensational heroine.

### **George Eliot’s Realism and *Adam Bede***

Now I turn to examine the novel’s other narrative strategies to promote Adam as a realist hero to discuss them in relation to the author’s theory of realism. Given that *Adam Bede* was narrated by an omniscient narrator unlike *Jane Eyre*, it is important to observe how the narrator uses various narrative strategies and theoretical formulas to construct Adam as a realist subject. I argue that the omniscient narrator not only comes forward to guide our thoughts but also forms a personal intimacy with Adam, practicing metalepsis along the way. The narrator relies on metalepsis to support his designation of Adam as a consistent, reliable character. In narratology, metalepsis occurs when the boundaries between narrative levels or logically distinct worlds are transgressed. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette defines narrative metalepsis as “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.) or the inverse” (234-5). In *Adam Bede*, the omniscient narrator often practices this metalepsis by entering the intradiegetic level, turning up as a sort of a character that converses with Adam. This makes him partly a “homodiegetic narrator” –a narrator who is also a character in a story as defined by Genette (*Narrative Discourse* 248).

Such metalepsis becomes most manifest in the famous chapter 17 “In which the story

pauses a little” where the narrator acts as if he knew Adam for a long time. He appears as an “I”-form to participate in the narrative as a character, a close friend of Adam: “But I gathered from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age, that few clergymen could be less successful in winning the hearts of their parishioners than Mr Ryde” (163). The narrator even quotes Adam’s words verbatim as a proof of his narrative authenticity: “‘but,’ said Adam, ‘I’ve seen pretty clear, ever since I was a young un, as religion’s something else besides notions. It isn’t notions set people doing the right thing—it’s feelings’”(163). Such personal conversations between the narrator and Adam continue throughout the rest of this chapter to enhance Adam’s credibility as a reliable source. While such narrative intrusion increases the affective intimacy that readers feel towards Adam, it at the same time risks the novel’s realist project by giving narrative advantage to the protagonist. Indeed, the narrator’s personal intimacy with Adam seems to go against Eliot’s own version of realism elaborated in the same chapter. The narrator discusses the art of realism as a difficult job of truth-telling and argues that the true objects of art are commonplace people, not idealized heroes and heroines. Just like Dutch paintings that boast “rare, precious quality of truthfulness,” we should “tolerate, pity, and love . . . these more or less ugly, stupid, *inconsistent* people. . .” (160-1; my emphasis). Here, the narrator exhorts readers to tolerate “inconsistent people” around us. But he contradicts his own theory by going all lengths to preserve Adam’s consistency as a realist character through his narrative strategies. While this realism aims to depict common, inconsistent people, the title protagonist becomes an exception to this rule.

The narrator’s realist claim made in chapter 17 is at variance with his inscription of Adam as a “persistently consistent” character in the later chapter of 33 entitled “More Links.” The narrator idealizes Adam as a realist hero of the novel not only by attaching Victorian ethical value to his name but also by directly designating him literally as a “consistent” character in this chapter. In the middle of this chapter, the intrusive narrator comes forward to

defend the most distinctive yet enigmatic imperative of the narrative, that is, Adam's love for Hetty.

Possibly you think that Adam was not at all sagacious in his interpretations, and that it was altogether extremely unbecoming in a sensible man to behave as he did—falling in love with a girl who really had nothing more than her beauty to recommend her, attributing imaginary virtues to her. . . . But in so complex a thing as human nature, we must consider, it is hard to find rules without exceptions. Of course, I know that, as a rule, sensible men fall in love with the most sensible women. . . . But even to this rule an exception will occur now and then . . . and my friend Adam was one. For my own part, however, I respect him none the less: nay, I think the deep love he had for that sweet, rounded, blossom-like, dark-eyed Hetty, of whose inward self he was really very ignorant, came out of the very strength of his nature, and not out of any inconsistent weakness. Is it any weakness, pray, to be wrought on by exquisite music? . . . For the beauty of a lovely woman is like music: what can one say more? . . . Beauty has an expression beyond and far above the one woman's soul that it clothes . . . the rounded neck, the dimpled arm, move us by something more than their prettiness—by their close kinship with all we have known of tenderness and peace. The noblest nature sees the most of this *impersonal* expression in beauty . . . for this reason, the noblest nature is often the most blinded to the character of the one woman's soul that the beauty clothes (319).

In the above passage, the narrator is at pains to make sure that Adam stays as a “consistent” character. The narrator, in very intricate ways, tries to persuade the readers that Adam's love for Hetty is “consistent” with his noble character. While it seems very “unbecoming” for a “sensible” man like Adam to love a girl like Hetty who has nothing but superficial beauty, human nature is such a complex thing that we should understand his choice. Here, Eliot's narrator rather perfects Adam into an idyllic hero by defending his love for Hetty as “strong” and “consistent.” He acts out various strategies of naming to plead his case. First of all, he directly addresses readers as “you” (“Possibly you think. . .”) to close down a gap between the reader (the narratee) and himself. Through a direct address, he tries to persuade readers with more urgency. Besides, the “I”-narrator expresses his own opinion about the matter: “For my own part, however, I respect him none the less: nay, I think the deep love. . . came out of the very strength of his nature, and not out of any inconsistent weakness.”<sup>36</sup> Through

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<sup>36</sup> Caroline Levine saw this statement as the manifestation of the narrative specificity: “the voice of the narrator [draws] attention even to the specificity of ‘his’ own perspective. ‘He’ presents opinions as if they belonged to a specific character (123). As I argue here, the flip side of such specificity is the narrative intervention, its strained efforts to keep Adam as a realist character.

his deep-rooted trust in Adam's character, the narrator induces the readers to perceive Adam as a reliable narrative figure. Here, the narrator participates in the story as sort of a character that seems to be on familiar terms with the protagonist. He practices metalepsis, once again, by intruding upon his diegetic world. Not surprisingly, the narrator befriends Adam by addressing him as "my friend" in the middle of the passage. He conducts this act of naming to claim Adam as one of his rare exceptions to the general rule. And this helps narrow the distance between the reader and the character: As the narrator blurs the boundary between the intradiegetic level and the extradiegetic level, readers are invited to feel the same degree of intimacy towards Adam.

It is ironic that Adam is privileged to become a realist hero of the novel this way since Eliot's theory of art refuses to idealize any human aspects and seeks to locate their realities in specific terms. Eliot proposed similar versions of realism in the two articles formerly published in *Westminster Review* in 1856. In the first article that reviews *Modern Painters*, Eliot introduced realism as a new doctrine proposed by John Ruskin: "The truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism—the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality" (626). Here, Eliot epitomized realism as "a humble and faithful study of nature" which takes the form of "definite, substantial reality." Eliot rejected any vague forms of art that purports to idealize human aspects and argued that artists should represent people with concrete descriptions in order to "remould our life," that is, to expand our sympathy for our fellow creatures (626). A few months later in "The Natural History of German Life,"<sup>37</sup> Eliot similarly emphasized

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<sup>37</sup> Drawing our attention to Riehl's study on the German peasantry, Eliot defined realism as the faithful accounts of men and women to show people as they really are.

that “a real knowledge of the people” could be acquired only with “a thorough study of their habits, their ideas, their motives” (55). Eliot ordered us to pay attention to the particularity of individual lives instead of abstract or idealizing theories or principles. In these theories of realism, Eliot mostly used the terms “real” and “realism” as an antithesis against the “idealizing” tendency of previous art forms or theories. For Eliot, something unreal is to idealize or perfect an individual character or class, which could mislead a reading public about the reality. A “real” character, in Eliot’s views, could still be incomplete yet should be specific and particular.

Given such claims, Hetty’s impersonalized beauty, along with Adam’s persistent consistency, do not quite perform the realist job. In the earlier passage, the narrator widens an affective gap between the reader and Hetty by transferring her beauty to the impersonal domain of music: “the noblest nature sees the most of this *impersonal* expression in beauty.” Here, the narrator not only uses Hetty’s beauty as a foil for Adam’s noble nature but also reinforces her impersonality by marking Hetty as the container of an idealized, unspecified form of beauty. This idea of “impersonal beauty” betokens an unlocatable aesthetics, which ends up flattening Hetty to an abstract form instead of substantiating her inner reality.<sup>38</sup> Lacking concrete and tangible personhood, Hetty turns into an aesthetic form itself, as immaterial as music. Such etherealization is on a continuum with the narrator’s previous act of renaming Hetty into animality. Either in abstract or animal terms, Hetty’s name is not fully endowed with “human” properties. The narrative underdetermination of Hetty’s humanness and overdetermination of Adam’s consistency rather contradicts Eliot’s theory of realism that

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<sup>38</sup> Caroline Levine argues that “Eliot’s visual model offers a calculated critique of Kantian aesthetics: the impersonal beauty of form prompts the spectator to be blind to the reality of character, while ethical realism, focused on the reality of the other, is all about an exchange between persons”(122). While Levine argues that Eliot consciously introduced “impersonal beauty” as a foil to “the reality of character,” this does not clear the author of the charge that he sacrificed Hetty for Adam’s sake. It is Eliot’s narrator who created and demolished the whole character of Hetty for his realist project.

purports to advocate substantiality and resist any idealizing tendency.

### **Conclusion**

As I argued so far, “George Eliot” turned into a “shadow” while Adam grew into substantiality in the discursive world of print culture of 1859. Both proper names become threshold names by crossing the boundary between reality and fictionality. What is notable is the fact that, while “George Eliot” formed a contrast with “Adam Bede,” it rather formed a homology with “Hetty Sorrel” by emerging as an unsteady, disintegrated author name in its discursive identity. The reception of “George Eliot” as an unstable proper name in the early stage of its social life in the discursive world of print culture formed a parallel with the construction (or rather the deconstruction) of “Hetty Sorrel” as an unintelligible proper name in the narrative world of *Adam Bede*. Just like Hetty, George Eliot turned into an incoherent and abstract figure. Both Eliot’s pseudonym and Hetty’s proto-sensational name ironically stand in contrast with the novel’s project of realism, which places the most emphasis on the truthfulness or verisimilitude of characters, by belying the whole narrative process of genre designation.

In the next chapter on Mary Elizabeth Braddon, I explore how a “real” author name can still be made into another sensation name along with her most popular sensation heroine Lady Audley. While I continue to discuss the genre hybridity detected in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, I explore how the novel’s genre claim complicates its narrative naming acts in relation to the thematic and generic rivalry between Lady Audley and Robert Audley, the sensational criminal and the realist detective. While *Adam Bede’s* omniscient narrator uses his narrative voice to keep personal intimacy with its protagonist, *Lady Audley’s Secret’s* omniscient narrator, ironically, uses her narrative voice to keep “impersonal intimacy” with its sensation heroine.

## Chapter Four

### Threshold Names and *Lady Audley's Secret*

This chapter focuses on three threshold names embedded in and surrounding *Lady Audley's Secret*—"Miss Braddon,"<sup>39</sup> "Lady Audley" and "Robert Audley"—in relation to the novel's sensationalism. I first trace how "Miss Braddon" as "the authoress of *Lady Audley's Secret*" engaged with the social discourse on sensationalism of the 1860s. The ambivalent treatment of the author as a "talented" sensation novelist forms a parallel with the ambivalent treatment of the title character as a "beautiful" anti-heroine in the periodical reviews. Next, I explore the generic and thematic ambiguity of the novel by investigating what I call "the threshold logic" embedded in its narrative structure. On the one hand, the novel carries contrasting narrative names of Robert Audley and Lady Audley, who serve respectively as the realist detective and the sensationalist criminal to bring the effect of genre hybridity. The novel's genre instability is further increased by the threshold rhetoric where the word "threshold" literally keeps appearing at every corner of the narrative to mark a very thin line between reason and madness, virtue and depravity.

#### "Miss Braddon" and Sensationalism

By examining the author function of "Miss Braddon," I demonstrate how the name interacted with the critical discourses on sensation fiction burgeoning in 1860s England. I argue that "Miss Braddon" performed a discursive function in Victorian society as an influential sensation author. Foucault's concept of the author-function combines an author's

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<sup>39</sup> Most contemporary reviewers uniformly addressed the author of *Lady Audley's Secret* as "Miss Braddon" in their reviews. Yet, *Lady Audley's Secret* was first serialized anonymously in the form of "By the Author of Aurora Floyd, etc." Later, its book form printed the author name as "M. E. Braddon."

name with a social power, marking off the edges of a discursive construct formed through that name. An author's name becomes a function when it remains always present on the boundary of the text as a discursive entity to reveal its mode of circulation and signifying function in society. "Miss Braddon" became one of the most popular author names discussed in mid-Victorian print culture following the huge success of *Lady Audley's Secret* in 1862. Not only did "Miss Braddon" become a hallmark for Victorian sensationalism, it remained present on the boundary of the text *Lady Audley's Secret* as the author was almost always discussed along with the name of Lady Audley. As Jenny Bourne Taylor notes, "It was Braddon who embodied the sensation novelist par excellence, and it was *Lady Audley's Secret*, with its child-wife Lucy--the ambiguous anti-heroine with the golden curls and bewitchingly winning ways--which epitomized the most notorious, and most disturbing, aspects of the lighter reading of the 1860s" (vii).

I read "Miss Braddon" as an ambivalent author name. On the one hand, "Miss Braddon" was criticized for rousing sensation through vulgar subject matters such as murder and bigamy. On the other hand, "the authoress" was often acknowledged for her capacity to construct her narrative plot in an intricate way. Torn between her high formal capacity and cheap literary materials used for plotting, "Miss Braddon" became a threshold figure just like her sensation heroine "Lady Audley" who evoked intense attraction and repulse at the same time. E.S.Dallas in his *Times* review saw a contradiction in the depiction of Lady Audley and linked it with the author's hard task to reconcile form and content: "It is not easy to represent a woman in such a position, or with a character capable of such acts; to combine so much beauty with so much deformity; to depict the lovely woman with the fishy extremities. Miss Braddon would be entitled to rank as the first of lady novelists if she had perfectly succeeded in reconciling these contradictions" (4). The mixed receptions of "Miss Braddon" and "Lady Audley," in turn, revealed Victorian critics' genre anxieties about sensationalism --the

incongruence between form and content, surface and substance, plot and character.

The following reviews demonstrate that “Miss Braddon” as a representative sensation novelist of the 1860s received more varied receptions than many modern critics have assumed thus far. While “Miss Braddon” was easily condemned as the source of a bad influence on the middle-class readership, as pointed out by many scholars, what is less noted is the fact that “Miss Braddon” was at the same time recognized as a talented writer who knew how to tell a story. While the author was uniformly criticized for creating such a female “monster” as Lady Audley, her gift as a storyteller was often acknowledged and even praised in these early reviews. The *Critic* in December 1862 opened its review article with perplexity about the popularity of *Lady Audley’s Secret*: “These popularities are strange facts to meditate upon; and to account for them would be next to impossible. . . . the book before us, where the heroine is a murderess, a bigamist, and an incendiary, has run through five editions in as many weeks” (178). The *Critic* attributed the book’s remarkable popularity to the “strange contradiction” of British readers who desired a story where “the principal character is a beautiful woman, with an atrocious, devilish disposition, such as none among us ever met with, or few of us have even dreamed of . . .” (178).

Like the *Times*, the *Critic* saw a contradiction in the character of Lady Audley as beautiful outside but devilish inside. While condemning Lady Audley as an impossible and unreal creature, the reviewer granted that the sensation heroine roused some interest in readers: “Although we assure ourselves over and over again that no such creature as the heroine ever existed, that the whole fabric is an exaggeration and the events altogether impossible, still we are deeply interested in her fate; the hunting element within us is aroused, and we cannot rest until we know her end” (178). Though surprising, Lady Audley still succeeded in intriguing readers. However, the *Critic* asserted that this appeal was caused by a wrongly-guided public taste and would soon die out: “this epidemic will surely be a fleeting

one” since “we are made of better stuff and more healthy materials than to suffer under it long” (178). Here, the *Critic* used such phrases as “better stuff” and “healthy materials” to differentiate the sound reason of readers from the morbid spirit of Lady Audley. After defining Lady Audley as unhealthy literary material in this way, the review turned to criticize “the authoress” for misusing her talent as a novelist.

But the worst and most sad feature of its case is, that many of the best novelists of our day are pandering to feed these morbid tendencies--and for this reason we regret the more to see Miss Braddon joining their ranks and marching in their course. For *the authoress of "Lady Audley's Secret" is far from being a mediocre writer*. This production of hers bears evidence to great ability, and talent of no mean order. . . .Pity it is that the authoress has not used her indisputable ability for novel writing with a higher aim and a better purpose. The more we recognize her gifts the more deeply do we deplore what we consider the misuse of it. . . . but if Miss Braddon's ambition leads her to hope for a more lasting fame, such as her talents fully entitle her to, we counsel her to walk upon a broader and safer road with steadier and less exaggerated steps (178-9; my emphases).

In the above passage, the *Critic* acknowledged “Miss Braddon”’s talent as a novelist. While denouncing the reading public’s morbid appetites for sensation novels, the reviewer regretted that “Miss Braddon,” one of the best novelists of the day, was jumping on the bandwagon of sensationalism to resort to the popularity of sensation novels. Since “Miss Braddon” was not a mediocre writer, it was a pity that the authoress “misused” her talent as a novelist. The reviewer even suggested that the author should pursue other literary genres than sensation novels to fully achieve her capacity as a writer, to secure “a more lasting fame.” Just like “Lady Audley,” “Miss Braddon” was constructed as a threshold proper name that evoked both appeal and condemnation.

The *Quarterly Review* also held to the contradictory views on “Miss Braddon” and “Lady Audley.” Like the *Critic*, it saw an inconsistency between Lady Audley’s beautiful form and her wicked interiority, between her peaceful surfaces and inner secrets: “How exciting to think that under these pleasing outsides may be concealed some demon in human shape, a Count Fosco or a Lady Audley!”(489). It used the rhetoric of contamination to analyze the reading public’s appetite for sensation novels, diagnosing the public excitement

over sensation novels as “morbid” and calling it “a wide-spread corruption” (482). Subsequently, the *Quarterly Review* expressed concern over the commercial spirits of sensation novelists who produce “so many yards of printed stuff, sensation-pattern” just to meet the market demands (483). The review especially criticized the bigamy plot as the most distinct offence of sensation novels and diagnosed *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* as “bigamy novels *par excellence*” (490). At the same time, this reaction, just like the *Critic’s*, recognized the great talent of the author. While denouncing *Lady Audley* and *Aurora Floyd* as “exaggerated specimens of the sensational type,” the review touted them as the product of “an author of real power, who is capable of better things than drawing highly-coloured portraits of beautiful fiends and fast young ladies burdened with superfluous husbands”(490-1): “[N]otwithstanding the glaring improbability of the incidents, the superhuman wickedness of the principal character and the incongruities of others . . . the author has succeeded in constructing a narrative the interest of which is sustained to the end. The skill of the builder deserves to be employed on better materials” (491). In this passage, the *Quarterly Review* recognized the well-constructed plot of *Lady Audley’s Secret*. The author excelled at building and sustaining narrative interest in readers. At the same time, this periodical advised that such writing skill be used for “better materials” than *Lady Audley*. That is, it was improper for the “authoress” to apply her plotting skills to *Lady Audley*, dubious literary material. Just as the reception of “*Lady Audley*” revealed the critical concerns over the gap between ideal form and vulgar contents, the reception of “*Miss Braddon*” revealed the critical anxieties over the inconsistency between clever staging (plotting) and mediocre actors (characterization).

At other times, however, “*Miss Braddon*” became a target of harsh criticism against the sensation genre itself. While the *Critic* and the *Quarterly Review* credited the author with her talent for sustaining narrative interest, the *Examiner*, with the title “*Miss Braddon’s Kitchen Stuff*,” entirely discredited the author’s talent by placing her works under the

category of “kitchen literature.” The article begins by citing S. W. Fullom’s claim, recently published in the *Morning Herald*, that *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* bear many resemblances to his own novel *The Man of the World*. After going through parallel scenes in detail between *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *The Man of the World*, the *Examiner* cites Braddon’s own refuting note which states that her novels “are entirely and thoroughly original, and not derived in the slightest degree from Mr Fullom’s book” (200). What is interesting to note in the following columns is the way in which the reviewer takes a stance between the two opposing claims. This reader at first seems to credit Braddon by acknowledging that “Miss Braddon is not a copyist from Mr Fullom.” (200). Yet the review soon turns to blame “Miss Braddon”’s own investment in sensation fiction, her participation in “the production of a kitchen literature.”

The numerous parallels above cited serve only to show how in the production of a kitchen literature, destitute alike of thought and fancy, the very incidents used are common to the tribe of dealers in such fiction. They simply are as the scraps of glass in the kaleidoscope. We can hardly doubt that a swarm of writers for the hawkers, for the London Journals, for the Reynolds’s Miscellanies, for the Family Heralds, &c., could come forward and divide Miss Braddon’s stories among themselves, all claiming original right in the wretched scraps out of which she has shaken a pattern that she flatters herself,—as many other honest people flatter themselves over their own commonplace, whether in conversation or in literature,—is “entirely and thoroughly original.” To the compounding of “sensation novels” out of such stuff as we find in *Lady Audley’s Secret* or *Aurora Floyd* there goes no genius of any sort. For the production of this sort of kitchen literature little more is wanted than . . . a coarse mind, avoidance of all contact with good literature, and a full dietary of unwholesome reading (200).

In this long passage, the *Examiner* denounces “Miss Braddon’s stories” as “kitchen literature” with their insipid plots like “the scraps of glass in the kaleidoscope.” It seemed ridiculous for “Miss Braddon” to claim her rights for originality through such works as *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd* when anyone out there pursuing popular interests could come forward to “divide Miss Braddon’s stories among themselves.” The periodical thus makes an assertion that no “genius” or originality can be found in Braddon’s novels, which are produced by “a coarse mind” and “unwholesome reading.” Here, the *Examiner* directly

blames “Miss Braddon” for producing fragmented and repetitive patterns of sensation plots. With its ironic and derisive tone, the magazine rather regards “Miss Braddon” as the culprit for the craze of sensation novels. Instead of saving her name for better purposes, it criticized her for creating dull, mass-produced plots. If sensation novels contaminated people’s minds through their unwholesome materials, it was due to sensation novelists like “Miss Braddon” who makes such low-quality kitchen “stuff” like *Lady Audley*. As indicated by such metaphors as “kitchen stuff,” “scraps” and “compounding,” this review does not endorse the character or the plot of the novel. “Miss Braddon’s Kitchen Stuff” is made not from good plotting skill but out of random “compounding” of scrap materials.

Likewise, the *North British Review* expressed its deep discontent over both forms (plots) and contents (characters) of Braddon’s sensation novels. In its article entitled “Sensation Novelists: Miss Braddon,” the *Review* went over seven sensation novels of Braddon to evaluate the author in a proper way. Declaring that “that which is bad in taste is usually bad in morals” in the beginning, the reviewer decides to apply the test of morality to the works of “Miss Braddon ” (181). First and foremost, this review, just like other reviews of the time, took issue with the ambivalence of *Lady Audley* as a sensation character.

Lady Audley is at once the heroine and the monstrosity of the novel. In drawing her, the authoress may have intended to portray a female Mephistopheles; but, if so, she should have known that a woman cannot fill such a part. The nerves with which Lady Audley could meet unmoved the friend of the man she had murdered, are the nerves of a Lady Macbeth who is half unsexed, and not those of the timid, gentle, innocent creature Lady Audley is represented as being. Whenever she is meditating the commission of something inexpressibly horrible, she is described as being unusually charming. Her manner and her appearance are always in contrast with her conduct. All this is very exciting; but it is also very unnatural. The artistic faults of this novel are as grave as the ethical ones (186-7).

W. Fraser Rae, the reviewer, censured Braddon’s characterization of *Lady Audley*, whose charming appearance belies her horrible deeds as a grave artistic and ethical failure of the novel. For Rae, a heroine should not be represented as contradictory as *Lady Audley*. If the author attempted to create “a female Mephistopheles” out of *Lady Audley*, it was simply a

wrong act because “a woman cannot fill such a part.” Rae’s dissatisfaction with the ambivalent character of the sensation heroine later figured in another metaphorical division between the surface and the substance of metal: “They [sensation novels] glitter on the surface, but the substance is base metal” (203). This in turn shows the reviewer’s own anxiety about the incongruity between surface and substance.

Instead of acknowledging the interest or suspense that Braddon’s sensation novels raised in a reader’s mind, Rae disparaged the property of such sensation itself. He first denounced the author’s obsession with sensation effect: “Miss Braddon” is “a slave...to the style which she created” and “‘sensation’ is her Frankenstein” (197). Just as Victor Frankenstein came to stand in for his creation –the unnamed monster-- in this passage, “Miss Braddon” became the creator of undesirable sensation. Rae later seemed to acknowledge the author’s great skill in arranging her materials, that is, in plotting her story with suspense: “She can tell a story so as to make us curious about the end ”(201). However, he soon disqualified such skill as the condition for a great novelist: “Does the power of doing this alone stamp her as a great novelist?” (201). Rae even went so far as to claim that “the ‘sensation tale’ is no novelty” and that “all great novels are as sensational as those of Miss Braddon” (202). For example, some works written by Scott, Bulwer Lytton and even George Eliot could be as sensational as Braddon’s works: “*Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, are unquestionably novels wherein there are incidents as highly coloured as in lady Audley's Secret “ (202). Still, the difference lies in the way those sensation materials were presented to readers. While the works of George Eliot are “truthful taken as wholes,” crime is not an accident but “the business of life” in Braddon’s novels (202). Rae emphasized that the condition for a good novel should be the extent of truth to life, not the sensation effects brought about by such shocking events as murder and bigamy. Since Braddon’s works are “so grossly untrue to nature, we can hardly pardon the authoress if she drew them in

ignorance, and cannot condemn her too strongly if, knowing their falseness, she introduced them for the sake of effect” (203). Here Rae strongly suspected that the author of *Lady Audley* wrote only for the sensation effect and devalued her works as the lowest class in the literature. Although she was “without a living rival” in her branch of literature, her works appealed to fascinate only “ill-regulated minds” and “the lowest in the social scale” (204). This sentence well illustrates how Victorian critics linked sensation fiction with a low-class readership. In the finale, the reviewer designated Braddon’s works as “the literature of the Kitchen” and diagnosed its popularity as temporary: “She may boast, without fear of contradiction, of having temporarily succeeded in making the literature of the Kitchen the favourite reading of the Drawing room” (204). Like the *Examiner*, the *North British Review* considered sensational subjects as low-brow and its effect as ephemeral. This statement also demonstrates that Braddon’s novels had a mixed readership designated by “the Kitchen” and “the Drawing room.” According to Susan D. Bernstein, this “genre-policing” rather reveals the culture’s anxiety about sensation fiction “aping true literature” (“Ape Anxiety” 263).

As seen so far, “Miss Braddon” functioned as an archetypal author name for Victorian sensationalism. Not only did the name raise literary concerns over the inferior literary “stuff” used in sensation novels like *Lady Audley*, it also alerted critics to the sensation effects those contents could bring on a larger social scale. “Miss Braddon,” as a gendered author name, became a crucial constituent of the Victorian discursive construct called sensationalism and was marked as an ambivalent figure just like her creation *Lady Audley*. Braddon was “always known as ‘the author of *Lady Audley’s Secret*,’ and it was in this role above all that she upset the growing cultural distinctions between different kinds of fiction” (Taylor xi). Carrying a discord between surface and substance, form and matter, “Miss Braddon” and “*Lady Audley*” served as distinct female threshold names in the Victorian print culture of 1860s.

### **Robert Audley: the Realist Detective vs. Lady Audley: the Sensation Criminal**

Now I investigate the contrasting narrative names of Robert Audley and Lady Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* to offer them as evidence of the novel's genre hybridity. Although *Lady Audley's Secret* has mostly been designated as sensation fiction in modern criticism that heavily draws on the sensation figure of Lady Audley, I read Robert Audley as a realist figure that constantly undercuts the book's sensational qualities. I argue that the generic rivalry between the detective and the criminal at the narrative level brought opposing effects on readers at the discursive level. Even if both *Adam Bede* and *Lady Audley's Secret* produced a sense of genre ambiguity, their narrative routes to that end were different. While the former's genre complexity is caused by Hetty's proto-sensationalist naming plot that remains heterogeneous to the book's realist project, the latter's genre hybridity takes effect due to Robert's detective naming plot that constantly tries to preside over and conquer the book's sensation project. Refusing to have a close tie with its sensation heroine, *Lady Audley's Secret* weaves its narrative threads through Robert the realist detective.

The title of *Lady Audley's Secret* becomes a threshold name by carrying both thematic and generic uncertainties for the novel. According to Genette's formula, *Lady Audley's Secret* is a thematic title as it presents the heroine's secret as the subject matter. The thematic function of the title sets up a binary opposition between secret and detection. In other words, it frames detection as an important narrative space and induces readers to anticipate the detective plot of the novel: the novel is as much about reading as detection work as about the heroine's secret. It is noteworthy that the title contains the heroine's name yet ends with her "secret." In other words, the title presents not the heroine's name but her secret as its ultimate subject matter, showing a different title-naming pattern than the three novels that I discussed so far. While the titles of *Mary Barton*, *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede* offer each protagonist name as a major theme providing readers with a central figure to follow, the title of *Lady*

*Audley's Secret* present readers with a "secret" to solve instead of a heroine to sympathize or identify with. This, in turn, allows us to read *Lady Audley's Secret* as a rhematic title. The title performs the rhematic function by evoking a sensation genre through the theme of "secret." At the same time, all these four titles consist of or include proper names. As Franco Moretti argues, the growth of literary market in the nineteenth century "forced titles to become shorter" and "proper names were a great way to do so" (147).

This analysis of the title anticipates a thematic and rhematic rivalry between Lady Audley (as the secret-producer) and Robert Audley (as the detective) at the narrative level, which reveals and promotes the mixed genre of the novel. As such binary oppositions constitute the mainstay of the novel's semantic and generic structure, detection emerges as an important narrative space where Robert Audley's character works as a stable name at the narrative level which contradicts the sensational project of *Lady Audley's Secret*. A few modern critics have taken notice of the mixed genre of the novel and Robert's role in it. Patrick Brantlinger raises a fundamental question about what constitutes a sensation novel. Taking advantage of Jacques Derrida's observation about the impossibility of genre purity, Brantlinger argues that the sensation genre is a mixture of "contradictory forms, styles and conventions" like other genres: thus, a sensation novel "stands midway between romanticism and realism . . . popular and high culture forms" (3). While viewing the element of mystery as a key feature that defines sensation fiction, Brantlinger ultimately shows that there is a very thin line between realism and sensationalism. Since many sensation novelists often wrote stories based on daily newspaper events, it might as well be said that "to sensationalize was to be realistic" (9). Similarly, Pamela K. Gilbert sees that there is a major generic opposition between Robert Audley's plot--the "traditional high-culture theme" and Lady Audley's plot--"a popular culture melodrama" in the novel: this is a rivalry between "the coming-of-age and social integration of Robert Audley" versus "the decline and fall of the scheming

adventuress” (219). Gilbert stresses that the novel’s dual narrative structure “replicates the struggle occurring in the popular fiction market between the healthful ‘taste’ for more elevated reading material. . . and the debasing addiction to ‘low’ fictions like the sensational novel” (219). While “Lady Audley, her secret, and her deeds form the sensational story that has traditionally been read as marking the novel’s genre,” “the forced growth of Robert Audley and the masculinization of his character constitute an equal and complementary counternarrative to Lady Audley’s tale . . .” (220). In short, the novel contains many anti-sensationalist elements, and Robert’s plot forms a counter-narrative to Lady Audley’s plot. While both elements reside in the text, only the latter was “‘selected’ by readers as a generic property” (220). Here, Gilbert takes note of the two plots’ complementarities marked by the third rhetorical space of detection (218). This is to regard detection as a crucial narrative space that mediates between the two primary narratives. These critical views all grant that the novel contains both sensationalist and realist elements and commonly recognize the novel’s detective plot as a mediator between the two generic spaces.

Extending this analysis that highlights the detective space of the novel, I read Robert Audley as a realist narrative name in the novel. As in *Adam Bede*, I use the distinction between description and designation to reveal the novel’s contrasting narrative modes for the two character names. The narrator uses a descriptive narrative mode for Lady Audley and a designative narrative mode for Robert to deliver a different sense of genre for each character. I refer to the former as a sensationalist naming plot and the latter as a realist naming plot. My reading of Lady Audley and Robert Audley supports the novel’s mixed genre. As I explained in the introduction, this model of consistent naming does not exclusively apply to realist novels (or Dallas’s “novels of character”). Just like any realist novel can contain an anti-realist naming plot as in the case of Hetty’s proto-sensationalist naming plot in *Adam Bede*, any sensation novel (or the novel of plot) can contain a realist naming plot that conflicts with

its own sensation project. Therefore, a sensation novel like *Lady Audley's Secret* can also show a stable naming pattern for its realist detective Robert Audley. I show how Robert shows a consistent naming plot and thus emerges as a realist character, compared to its sensation heroine whose name turns into an empty designator in the finale. Robert's name grows into a "rigid designator" as the unflagging detective figure with the assistance of the novel's omniscient narrative voice. The narrator uses Robert's detective power to solve mysteries and defeat the sensation heroine—to maintain the realist morale of the novel. As the novel's narration is often focalized through Robert's point of view, Robert assumes a greater narrative authority over time.

Robert first appears as a listless lawyer yet gradually emerges as the one and only detective figure in the novel. As the self-designated detective, Robert performs various acts of naming for the sensation heroine, unfolding the mystery-solving process as the secondhand narrator. He collects all the fragmented names of the heroine to complete the puzzle, renaming and un-naming her along the way. Thus a narrative climax occurs when Robert identifies "Lucy Graham" as "Helen Talboys" through his detective work. And the evidence is revealed during his interview with Lady Audley:

"What evidence?"

"The evidence of two labels, pasted one over the other, upon a box left by you in the possession of Mrs. Vincent, the upper label bearing the name of Miss Graham, the lower that of Mrs. George Talboys." (272)

In this confrontation, Robert successfully located the heroine as Helen Talboys solving the mysteries of the two proper names at hand. What is most interesting about this moment, however, is the fact that Robert becomes the first one that recognizes such evidence and thus performs the act of renaming the heroine. Only after Robert finishes this act through his detective work at the intradiegetic level does the narrator come to acknowledge and deliver the newly-identified name "Helen Talboys" to readers at the extradiegetic level: "He paused

upon the threshold of that chamber in which he had left Lucy, Lady Audley; otherwise Helen Talboys, the wife of his lost friend” (365). As the narrator follows Robert’s intradiegetic naming act to mark the heroine as “Helen Talboys,” the proper name is presented to readers as another signifier for Lady Audley for the first time ever since it first appeared as a dead name in the *Times* newspaper at the beginning of the novel.

Later, such a renaming act by the narrator appears, once again, in relation to Robert: “Robert Audley uttered no word of horror when the story was finished. He moved a little nearer towards the door against which Helen Talboys stood. Had there been any other means of exit from the room, he would gladly have availed himself of it. He shrank from even a momentary contact with this creature” (394). This scene that displays another confrontation between the detective and the heroine proves how the narrator’s act of naming for the heroine is focalized through Robert, often sympathizing or identifying with the latter’s point of view. Not only does the narrator follow Robert’s act of renaming the heroine, the narrator goes even further to un-name the heroine as “this creature,” a dehumanized name form for the heroine yet a proper mode of presentation for Robert at this narrative moment.

Robert’s power as detective can even halt the narrative process to heighten suspense. When Robert visits Helen’s father to solve the mystery of the lost Helen Talboys, he decides not to use little George to get information: “I will not seek to come one step nearer the secret through him. I—I am not a detective officer, and I do not think that the most accomplished detective would like to get his information from a child” (176). This self-conscious thought almost coincides with the narrator’s position. Here, the narrator obscures any plot development through Robert. In other words, the narrator seems to wait until Robert does his own detective work. This scene serves two purposes. One function is to heighten narrative suspense by screening information through Robert. The other is to strengthen Robert’s status as a detective. In this scene, again, the narrative distance between the narrator and the

detective remains very close to each other.

Robert's narrative power is strongly driven by his intimacy with the narrator, which increases as the novel progresses. As judge and gaoler, Robert secures the utmost degree of narrative authority at the end of the novel. He becomes a moral judge for Lady Audley who takes control of the heroine's subversive madness. When Robert delivers Lady Audley to the mad-house, the narrator says that "he had been her judge; and he was now her gaoler" (382). Not only does Robert read and solve all the signs and questions for us as the one and only detective officer designated by the novel, but he also keeps a close relationship with the narrator. Robert's growing intimacy with the narrator justifies his status as a realist character that fights against the heroine's growing madness.

These examples support Robert as an alternative narrative power. He moves in every direction to solve the mystery with what little information he obtains along the way, filling up the gap left by the narrator. Brantlinger complains that the novel's omniscient narrator oftentimes hides and withholds information from us: Braddon "pushes third-person omniscient narration to its logical limits," though without "any consciously experimental intention" in mind (14). Despite all the foreshadowing acts, Braddon's narrator does not convey all information but disguises "much of it as hints, clues, hiatuses, as when Lady Audley orders her maid to send what would be, if revealed, an incriminating telegram" (14). Braddon's omniscient narrator obtains narrative authority by "withholding the solution to a mystery" (15) but loses reliability as a trustworthy narrator at the same time. This is the point where Robert's name emerges as a replacement for the unreliable narrator: "structurally, the detective emerges in the sensation novel as a substitute for the forthright narrative personae of more realistic novels . . ." (16). Indeed, Robert could secure his narrative power through his role as the designated detective of the novel.

In contrast, the narrator describes Lady Audley as a variable entity. As the narrator

constantly renames and unnames the heroine following Robert's moves and her own narrative moves, Lady Audley loses her name and character over time. Her multiple names—"Helen Maldon," "Helen Talboys," "Lucy Graham," "Lucy Audley" and "Madame Taylor"-- are only used to produce more narrative doubt and suspense rather than to support her human characteristics. The narrator imposes all of these proper names on the heroine only to destabilize her character in the end. Her unstable identity as a character becomes most conspicuous when one last change of her name takes place. When Robert delivers Lady Audley to the madhouse in Belgium, he renames her as "Madame Taylor" which seems to function as a new designator for the heroine's body: "Your name is Madame Taylor here . . . I do not think you would wish to be known by your real name" (390). Here, Robert tries to distinguish "Madame Taylor" from the heroine's "real name," but it is not clear what her real name should be. While "Taylor" could be seen as nearly an anagram of "Talboys," Lady Audley-turned-Madame Taylor is not returned to her former husband Talboys but deposited into an asylum in Belgium. Thus, the new last name "Taylor" turns into a mere "empty designator" for the exiled female body rather than a new identity tag for Lady Audley. The novel completes its act of unnamning the heroine by describing her as "a certain Madame Taylor": "It is more than a year since a black-edged letter, written upon foreign paper, came to Robert Audley, to announce the death of a certain Madame Taylor, who had expired peacefully at Villebrumeuse . . ." (445). Here, the proper name of Lady Audley turns into the "indefinite description" of "a certain Madame Taylor" --an alienated foreign title. Thus "Lady Audley" dissolves into a nondescript name at the end of her sensational naming plot. Through such unnamning act, the narrator reduces the heroine into almost a nonentity.

Now I turn to the discursive naming acts conducted by periodical reviews to find the same generic contrast between the detective and the heroine. For most contemporary reviewers, the proper name of Lady Audley represented typical material for an "impossible

monstrosity.” Her name often evoked a sense of unreality due to her ambivalence as a character. One review article called the heroine “a smiling fiend” unprecedented in the history of British devilry and described her wanderings as “morbid” and “unreal” which constitutes “the one great mistake of the book” (*Rose* 82). Since “such a faired haired, child-like, petted, virtuous-seeming simpleton, never in nature carried a blight through the green landscape, as does Lady Audley through the novelist's pages” (*Rose* 82), the heroine seemed “unreal” to this reviewer. The *Athenaeum* also regarded Lady Audley as an unlikely figure after comparing her with Becky Sharp.

In many ways she puts us in mind of Becky Sharp; but she is a far more beautiful woman, not nearly so clever or amusing, and more violent and cruel: yet there is a family likeness between the two. The determination to sacrifice everything and everybody in order to secure wealth and position in the same in each; but there is still a difference. Of Lady Audley we are told that “the master passions of her life had become her rulers, and the three demons of vanity, selfishness and ambition had joined hands and said, ‘This woman is our slave; let us see what she will become under our guidance.’” Becky Sharp had her master passions well in hand, and managed them with tact and delicacy; Lady Audley allowed hers to run away with her, and took refuge for her enormities under the shelter of insanity. Her career is consequently less interesting, and her character less finished and life-like, than that of Mrs. Rawdon Crawley. Not sufficiently sane to win our sympathy in her wicked designs, and yet not mad enough to render her crimes excusable on that plea, Lady Audley leaves on our minds the same sort of impression that a bad dream might do. She is not a woman that we can believe in and may ever expect to meet with, but only a brilliant and incomprehensible anomaly (525).

While there is a “family likeness” between Lady Audley and Becky Sharp in pursuing worldly desires, Lady Audley is different from Becky Sharp since she fails to control her passion and instead takes advantage of her insanity. Therefore, Lady Audley’s course of action is “less interesting” and her character is “less finished and life-like” than Becky Sharp. Not sane enough “to win our sympathy” nor mad enough to be excused, Lady Audley leaves us an impression as an “incomprehensible anomaly” (525). Here, Lady Audley turns into an abnormal character that cannot be real or “life-like.” She is perceived as an “improbable” figure delivering no sense of realism to readers. In these early receptions, Lady Audley stood for ambiguity itself that could not be entirely fixed into one definitive form or category.

Instead of being viewed as a person or a human character, she was simply described as a “fiend,” a “blight,” or an “anomaly.” Failing to gain any sense of verisimilitude and personality, the name was easily identified with sensation or madness itself.

In contrast, Robert Audley emerged as an appealing character that delivered a sense of realism to Victorian critics. The *Athenaeum* declared that “the most natural and agreeable character in the book is that of Robert Audley, a good-natured, indolent young barrister who is suddenly roused into restless activity by the mysterious disappearance of his particular friend George Talboys” (525). This remark takes Robert’s growth into manhood through the mystery-solving task as a natural narrative development of the novel. The *Athenaeum* also quoted Robert’s misogynist thoughts at length to read them as convincing: “his distress and perplexity at his own state of mind are amusing enough” (525). Likewise, the *Critic* commended Robert as a realist figure standing in opposition to the unreal heroine:

Let us hope, as we believe, that the heroine is an impossibility. But there are other characters in the book which are life-like, and are drawn admirably. Robert Audley, the indolent barrister, too indolent to hold a brief, shaking off his lethargic nature, learning that the game of life was not in his hands alone, rousing himself to energetic action through love for his friend; his is truly a masterly portrait. Here Miss Braddon shows that she possesses a clear insight into human nature; she causes him to possess conflicting and contrasting qualities, and makes his life full of the inconsistencies which constitute a part of most of our daily lives (179).

In the above, the *Critic* called the heroine “an impossibility” while referring to Robert as “life-like” and “admirable.” The ways in which Robert overcomes his lethargy to become active in his life show that his character is “truly a masterly portrait.” The *Critic* went on to compliment the author for depicting Robert as a complicated character with many internal conflicts and contrasts. Such characterization of Robert rather proves that “Miss Braddon” can delve into human nature in a proper way. In this review, Robert’s inconsistencies were perceived as part of his completeness as a realist character, while Lady Audley’s inconsistencies were denounced as mad and improbable. In other words, Robert was perceived as belonging to “the novel of character” while Lady Audley was to “the novel of

plot.” These inconsistencies in the critical naming acts for Robert and Lady Audley in the Victorian periodical reviews formed a parallel with the novel’s contrasting narrative naming acts, contributing to increase the novel’s genre ambiguity.

In the above reviews, Lady Audley’s sensationalism was treated as an anti-realist element. The heroine becomes an object instead of a human subject because she evoked sensation and impersonality at the same time. I observe that such a readerly effect goes against the traditional formula of realism that purports to facilitate a sympathetic identification between the reader and the protagonist and anticipates Walter Pater’s aestheticism. Stephen Arata uses the term “impersonal intimacy” to introduce Walter Pater’s anti-realist aesthetics that subverts Victorian principles of realism: “When the artifact in question is a person-in-a-book, our relation to that figure is best described as one of impersonal intimacy” (133). Instead of treating fictional characters as if they were real, we see them as “aesthetic objects made from words” (132). Fictional characters are not real people but merely arbitrary combinations of words. According to Arata, Pater’s concept of impersonal intimacy directly challenges Victorian “cultivation of right readerly feeling” which presupposes “sympathetic engagement with fully realized, psychologically complex, and socially embedded fictional characters” (137). Readers can easily identify themselves with fictional characters in a realist novel that emphasizes the links between sympathy, right feeling, and the moral education of the reader. In contrast, they can hardly identify themselves with sensation heroines like Lady Audley. Unrealistic and improbable, Lady Audley thus promoted a kind of “impersonal intimacy” for Victorian readers as an anti-realist heroine.

I link these reviewers’ responses with the novel’s narrative strategy that aligns detachment or engagement with naming. In addition to the generically opposing naming acts for Lady Audley and Robert Audley at the intradiegetic level, the narrator keeps a different

narrative distance with each character through the uses of the intrusive “I” at the extradiegetic level. While *Adam Bede*’s omniscient narrator practices metalepsis to form a close tie with its hero, *Lady Audley’s Secret*’s omniscient narrator does the same to keep an “impersonal intimacy” with its heroine. In fact, this intrusive “I” occurs most frequently around Robert to reinforce the narrative intimacy between the detective and the narrator. For example, it describes Robert’s nonchalant character in the following manner.

I doubt if he even had any correct notion of the amount of his uncle’s fortune, and I am certain that he never for one moment calculated upon the chances of any part of that fortune ultimately coming to himself. So that when one fine spring morning, about three months before the time of which *I am writing*, the postman brought him the wedding cards of Sir Michael and Lady Audley . . . when, I say, these documents reached Robert Audley—they elicited neither vexation nor astonishment in the lymphatic nature of that gentleman (33; my emphasis).

Here, the narrative “I” interpolates its thoughts to sketch Robert as a gentleman with lymphatic nature. It reassures us that Robert would neither know about his uncle’s fortune nor calculate upon his share in it. Further, the phrase “about three months before the time of which I am writing” gets to reveal the outermost figure of the author who had spoken through her narrator thus far.<sup>40</sup> The narrator/writer puts Robert in the middle of her own writing activity by specifying the time that the event occurred. It seems as if the writer had observed Robert receive these wedding cards in person. In this passage, Robert should come off to readers as a realist figure, somebody whom the author had known for a long time. What all this indicates is that Robert is as close to the narrator as to remain enmeshed in the writer’s narrating process.

Robert often echoes the morally ambivalent narrator through the narrative voice of “I.” When Robert recoils from Lady Audley’s counterattack, the narrator says, “I do not say that Robert Audley was a coward, but I will admit that a shiver of horror, something akin to

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<sup>40</sup> Here, I refer to Braddon’s narrator as female to align with the Victorian convention of conflating the author and the narrator as I explained in the introduction.

fear, chilled him to the heart, as he remembered the horrible things that have been done by women, since that day upon which Eve was created to be Adam's companion and help-meet in the garden of Eden" (274). In an effort to prevent readers from regarding Robert as a cowardly person, the narrator seems to justify Robert's horror against Lady Audley—his denunciation of female humanity as evil. By condoning Robert's double standards against women as well as his misogynist thinking in general, the narrator takes the risk of becoming a morally ambivalent authority. As Brantlinger points out, the detective in a sensation novel can often emerge as "a personification of the morally ambivalent role of the narrator" (16).

The novel's narrative intimacy with Robert forms a stark contrast with its impersonal treatment of Lady Audley. The narrator's partial treatment or her favoritism towards Robert becomes manifest when the intrusive "I" describes Lady Audley as impersonal objects rather than an intimate human being. While the narrator's "I" is used for Robert to increase its narrative intimacy with him, it hardly explains or shows to us Lady Audley's inner thoughts or motives. By hiding most things about the heroine as secrets, the intrusive "I" does not intend to close the distance between Lady Audley and the narrator as well as between Lady Audley and readers. When the novel uses the intrusive "I," it is only to emphasize her selfishness or grotesqueness. After Lady Audley's true identity has been revealed, for example, the narrator takes a harsh stance on the heroine in the following manner:

My lady slept. Through that long winter night she slept soundly. Criminals have often so slept their last sleep upon earth . . . . The game had been played and lost. I do not think that my lady had thrown away a card, or missed the making of a trick which she might by any possibility have made: but her opponent's hand had been too powerful for her, and he had won. She was more at peace now than she had ever been since that day . . . . She might rest now, for they now knew the worst of her. There were no new discoveries to be made. She had flung the horrible burden of an almost unendurable secret off her shoulders, and her selfish sensuous nature resumed its mastery of her. She slept, peacefully nestled in her downy bed, under the soft mountain of silken coverlet . . . . Not that I think she had any fear of shadowy visitations in the still hours of the night. She was too thoroughly selfish to care very much for anything that could not hurt her (372).

The narratorial "I" appears on stage to deliver its own opinion about Lady Audley's fall, but

not in a sympathetic way. This intrusive “I” does not believe that the heroine totally surrendered to the current situation or decided not to make a trick any more. It is simply that she met a very formidable enemy like Robert Audley. The narrator wants to remind us of Lady Audley’s “selfish sensuous nature” through these commentaries: “My lady” was “too thoroughly selfish” to be afraid of ghosts. Here, the narrator uses the intrusive “I” only to facilitate a negative image of the heroine. In the next passage, Lady Audley’s selfishness is associated with her desire for material wealth as well as her physical beauty:

My lady was thinking how much the things had cost, and how painfully probable it was that the luxurious apartment would soon pass out of her possession. She looked at herself in the cheval-glass before she left the room . . . and my lady smiled triumphantly as she contemplated the reflection of her beauty. . . . Whatever they did to her, they must leave her her beauty, she thought. At the worst they were powerless to rob her of that. . . . My lady wrapped herself in an Indian shawl; a shawl that had cost Sir Michael a hundred guineas. I think she had an idea that it would be well to wear this costly garment; so that if hustled suddenly away, she might carry at least one of her possessions with her. Remember how much she had periled for a fine house and gorgeous furniture, for carriages and horses, jewels and laces; and do not wonder if she clung with a desperate tenacity to gauds and gew-gaws in the hour of her despair. If she had been Judas she would have held to her thirty pieces of silver to the last moment of her shameful life (373-4).

The narrator, once again, uses the intrusive “I” to keep her opinion about the heroine in the negative. It drives home how thoroughly selfish Lady Audley is by telling us what she was thinking even at this moment of crisis—how she grudges leaving her “luxurious apartment” and “costly garment.” Interestingly, the *Critic* also quoted these two passages in its review to prove Lady Audley as morally irredeemable: “[S]he remains a hardened beautiful sinner to the last. When her game was lost, and on the night of her confession, there is no change in her selfish sensuous nature” (179). Here, the *Critic* directly followed the novel’s narrative strategy of keeping distance from Lady Audley through the intrusive “I” and ended up with the same negative opinion as the narrator about the sensation heroine.

Along with such an intrusive “I,” the narrator’s reference of the heroine as “my lady” in the above passage and throughout the novel works as another form of impersonal intimacy. While this direct address seems to function as a kind of noble entitlement for the heroine--

since it apparently marks or respects the heroine's status as a lady-- what it actually does in the narrative is the opposite--to reveal the incongruity between the noble title and the base materiality of the character. I argue that this direct address to the heroine by the narrator rather widens a gap between the readers and the heroine by operating as a form of narrative irony. It reveals the ambivalent character of Lady Audley as a bigamist-turned-lady and a lady-turned-murderer. By most frequently addressing the heroine as "my lady" throughout the novel, the novel successfully keeps "impersonal intimacy" with its sensation heroine. Such an ironic naming act conducted by the narrator sometimes merges with Robert's own usage of the same direct address for Lady Audley. When Lady Audley tells a lie about the bruise on her wrist, Robert thinks --"My lady tells little childish white lies" (88).

The narrator practices different distance-keeping strategies for the two characters throughout the rest of the novel. When Robert finally reunites with George in his room, the narrator delivers these comments: "We know how much Robert had to tell. . . . he said very little of the wretched woman who was wearing out the remnant of her wicked life in the quiet suburb of the forgotten Belgian city" (442). These comments demonstrate how the narrator wants to form the utmost degree of intimacy with Robert while showing the least degree of sympathy towards Lady Audley. Here, "we" refers to the implied reader and author combined together who should remain on Robert's side listening to his narrative. Thus, "we" are supposed to follow Robert's act of naming the heroine as "the wretched woman" who is "wicked" and sent to be "forgotten." At the end of the novel, the narrator, once again, passes a harsh judgment on the heroine while trying to kindle some positive hopes for her former husband George Talboys.

He is a young man yet, remember, and it is not quite impossible that he may by-and-by find someone who will be able to console him for the past . . . and there may come a time in which the shadow my lady's wickedness has cast upon the young man's life, will utterly vanish away. . . .I hope no one will take objection to my story because the end of it leaves the good people all happy and at peace. If my experience of life has not been very long, it has at least been manifold; and I can safely subscribe to that which a mighty king and a great philosopher declared, when he said that neither the experience of his youth nor of his age had ever shown

him “the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread (446-7).

The narrator shows a friendly attitude towards George and wants us to form a positive outlook for his future. The narrative “I” wants to “leave the good people all happy and at peace” with the hope that “no one will take objection to my story.” Here, the narrative “I” appears for the last time to justify its ending, to show readers that its life experience is rich enough to perform poetic justice. That is, good people such as Robert Audley and George Talboys should be saved and a wicked woman like Lady Audley should be abandoned and punished. The novel tries to turn its sensation project into a realist project by eliminating the sensation name and by having a moral finale through Robert at least on the surface level. This makes Robert a realist name as opposed to Lady Audley’s sensation name. At the same time, however, Robert’s name is also inscribed as part of the novel’s moral ambiguity, as I shall demonstrate below.

### **The Threshold Rhetoric**

*Lady Audley’s Secret*’s generic ambiguity is further reinforced by its thematic uncertainty generated by what I call “the threshold rhetoric” built into the entire narrative. This threshold rhetoric is repeated throughout the novel to deliver a sense of moral dubiousness to readers. It becomes manifest, for example, in the following passage:

Mad-houses are large and only too numerous; yet surely it is strange they are not larger, when we think of how many helpless wretches must beat their brains against this hopeless persistency of the orderly outward world, as compared with the storm and tempest, the riot and confusion within:--when we remember how many minds must tremble upon the narrow boundary between reason and unreason, mad today and sane tomorrow, mad yesterday and sane today (205).

Here, a contrast between “the orderly outward world” and “the confusion within” is built and dismantled consecutively; and a thin line between reason and unreason, madness and sanity has been drawn to formulate the trope of threshold.

That this passage comes after Robert's own internal monologues about the emptiness of life shows us that even Robert Audley becomes susceptible to the moral ambiguity of the novel. In fact, the novel's sensation elements such as secrecy and madness do not entirely belong to the heroine but also apply to Robert Audley. As the only detective, Robert controls much information, often holding and revealing many secrets that he obtains along the way. Robert discloses his own information only little by little just like Lady Audley. His character is formulated by the tension between secrecy and disclosure, just like Lady Audley. This observation places Robert at the border between reason and madness, between realism and sensationalism.

At one time, Robert is accused of madness just like Lady Audley. When Robert suspects Lady Audley of her name change, Lady Audley accuses him of being insane--"You are mad, Mr. Audley" (271)-- and warns that he might go to a lunatic asylum--"I would warn you that such fancies have sometimes conducted people, as apparently sane as yourself, to the life-long imprisonment of a private lunatic asylum" (273). The sensation heroine talks to Michael Audley "very seriously, about this strange and awful question—Robert Audley's lunacy" (294). Even Robert himself partly, though for a different reason, acknowledges the impact of this accusation: "The mask that she wears is not to be plucked away. My uncle would rather think me mad than believe her guilty" (274). This exchange shows that Robert is no different from Lady Audley; he is on the verge of madness just like Lady Audley.

Later, the narrator more directly shows that a fragile balance of mind could also apply to the realist detective. When Robert fears that the ghost of "hapless George Talboys" might appear in his apartment, the narrator tells us that "do not laugh at poor Robert because he grew hypochondriacal, after hearing the horrible story of his friend's death. There is nothing so delicate, so fragile, as that invisible balance upon which the mind is always trembling. Mad today and sane tomorrow . . . Who has not been, or is not to be, mad in

some lonely hour of life? Who is quite safe from the trembling of the balance?" (403-4). The narrator orders us not to laugh at Robert because each one of us is also standing on the invisible line between madness and sanity. While these rhetorical questions seem intended to prevent Robert from being read as a timid character, they further blur the boundary between the detective and the criminal. Despite his role as detective, Robert could become mad at any time and interchange places with Lady Audley the accused criminal.

Such reversibility indicates moral ambiguity, which is strengthened by the threshold rhetoric repeated throughout the text, used both in the literal and figurative senses. For example, Mr. Maldon "stood on the threshold of the parlour-door, staring at Robert Audley with a half-drunken, half-terrified aspect, scarcely consistent with the dignity of a retired naval officer" (167). The narrator, here, describes Mr. Maldon as standing "on the threshold of" the door to reveal his status of inconsistency as a former soldier. Robert makes many threshold pauses: "Robert paused upon the threshold, fearful of awaking his uncle" (216). He even ponders that "the history of Lucy Graham ends abruptly on the threshold of Mrs. Vincent's school" (240). The threshold indicates both the literal object of the chamber and the school and the figurative sense of ambiguity or indeterminacy of a relevant behavior or an event. Robert's threshold pause appears most influentially when he recognizes variable proper names of the heroine: "He paused upon the threshold of that chamber in which he had left Lucy, Lady Audley; otherwise Helen Talboys, the wife of his lost friend" (365). Here, Robert's literal pause upon the threshold of Lady Audley's chamber indicates the threshold status of the heroine in the figurative sense. At this moment, we the reader, the narrator as well as the detective do not seem to know what to call her.

Still, threshold rhetoric is most frequently applied to Lady Audley herself. Her menial double Phoebe Marks often "crossed the threshold of the [lady's] apartment" to execute Lady Audley's order (299). And Lady Audley "heard the brutal laughter of Mr. Marks

as she crossed the threshold of the inn” (318); “My lady appeared upon the threshold of the door as Phoebe spoke” (320). Whenever the heroine is engaged in illicit schemes, this liminal language appears to increase the suspenseful uncertainty of the text. Such threshold rhetoric contributes to reinforcing the novel’s thematic ambiguity. It is linked with Dr. Mosgrave’s dubious diagnosis on Lady Audley’s symptom, as he informs Monsieur Val at the hospital that “she had shown some fearful tokens of the lurking taint that was latent in her mind; but that she was not to be called ‘mad’” (389).

The thematic uncertainty supported by the threshold rhetoric omnipresent in the novel becomes more manifest when the narrator tells us how Lady Audley’s room at Audley Court grows into a museum for visitors. “Audley Court is shut up. . . . The house is often shown to inquisitive visitors, though the baronet is not informed of that fact, and people admire my lady’s rooms, and ask many questions about the pretty, fair-haired woman, who died abroad” (446). In one of these last statements of the novel, the narrator makes clear that Audley Court is closed forever. Yet at the same time, the narrator adds that the house is open for curious visitors like us the reader without the master’s (and Robert’s) approval. In other words, Lady Audley’s room literally becomes a museum for people so that they can memorialize her name. The fact that people ask many questions about this once supreme female ruler of the house suggests that the novel in a way helps to perpetuate Lady Audley’s existence. Although the novel’s very last passage tries to give us some formal moral lessons, we are still attracted to the heroine’s beauty and luxury. Lady Audley still lives in our memory, even after her secret has been revealed to us. While Robert Audley works as a realist name in contrast to Lady Audley’s sensational name both in the narrative and discursive levels, Robert’s name becomes enmeshed in the novel’s sensation project by submitting to the threshold rhetoric that draws on a thin borderline between reason and madness. All these narrative and discursive turns further reinforce the novel’s generic ambiguity.

## Conclusion

*Lady Audley's Secret* treats its heroine and the detective differently in terms of narrative naming acts and intimacy. The sensation heroine dies as a nonentity after going through several stages of renaming acts, whereas the realist detective works as a central narrative focus functioning as a secondhand narrator of the novel. This observation shows that Robert Audley and Lady Audley, respectively, serve as the realist and sensationalist narrative naming plot in the text. Robert Audley becomes “the villain-finder and the moral antithesis of Lady Audley” (4) as touted by E.S. Dallas in the *Times* review. While this formula seems to overlap with the opposing naming plots detected in *Adam Bede*, the difference lies in the fact that *Lady Audley's Secret's* commitment as a “sensation novel” reverses the genre positions that these rivalling characters take up within the novel. While *Adam Bede*, as a realist project, constructs its title protagonist Adam Bede as a consistent name, *Lady Audley's Secret*, as a sensation novel, rather uses Robert's name as a narrative center to deconstruct his anti-realist heroine Lady Audley. While *Adam Bede's* omniscient narrator keeps a close distance with its protagonist by maintaining personal intimacy with Adam, *Lady Audley's Secret* remains detached from its sensation heroine by practicing the narrative strategy of “impersonal intimacy.” Such narrative practices align with the novel's apparent though dubious moral ending --“the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread” (447).

I examined the generic multiplicity of four Victorian novels through their character in this dissertation. Mary Barton's domestic romance plot stands as a contrast with John Barton's political plot. Bertha Mason's Gothic name, Hetty Sorrel's proto-sensational name and Lady Audley's sensational name all form a contrast with their realist counterparts Jane Eyre, Adam Bede and Robert Audley. Bertha Mason, Hetty Sorrel and Lady Audley, though

residing in discrete novelistic spaces, converge by delivering an unusual sensation to Victorian readers. As anti-realist sensations are achieved through these female proper names, they become anti-realist characters in the history of mid-Victorian novels. Tracing female proper names from Bertha to Lady Audley also shows the evolving history of morally ambiguous women characters in Victorian novels. Even if defined by different generic categories, these female proper names show much more similarities among themselves than with their narrative counterparts in each novel. These similarities in turn testify to the generic fluidity of the novels that I examined.

This dissertation also displayed the complexities of Victorian female authorship by investigating various conditions of women author names. On the one hand, different paratextual conditions of anonymity, pseudonymity and onymity could enlarge or redefine four women writers' authorial agencies or subjectivities in more complex ways than critics have assumed so far. On the other hand, these author names formed different relationships with their title characters. Elizabeth Gaskell's anonymity was substituted by the name of Mary Barton; Currer Bell's editor-function modified Jane Eyre's authoritative self; George Eliot's pseudonymity worked against Adam Bede's realism; Braddon's sensational authorship reinforced Lady Audley's ambivalence. At a closer look, we can see gender affiliations or conflicts between these author and character names. Later critics' construction of Gaskell as a feminine author "Mrs. Gaskell" was supported by the domestic, romantic, female proper name "Mary Barton." The male editorship of "Currer Bell" collided with the female proper name "Jane Eyre" in and beyond the novel. It is interesting to see how masculine authorial identities of Currer Bell and George Eliot were ultimately aligned with the most marginalized female characters Bertha Mason and Hetty Sorrel, respectively, in their discursive effects on Victorian readers. Currer Bell and George Eliot emerged as heterogeneous and liminal figures just like Bertha Mason and Hetty Sorrel in their first receptions. In contrast, the

feminine authorial identity of “Miss Braddon” was easily associated with Lady Audley in the discursive realm despite the narrator’s utmost effort to detach herself from the sensation heroine in the novel. Just as “the Author of Mary Barton” constantly defined Gaskell’s authorship, “the Author of Lady Audley’s Secret” persistently modified Braddon’s authorship both in Victorian and modern criticisms. While it was alternative female proper names such as Bertha Mason and Hetty Sorrel that caused a sensation among Victorian readers in *Jane Eyre* and *Adam Bede*, it was the female title name that shocked people in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. Following female proper names from the domestic heroine Mary Barton to the sensation heroine Lady Audley shows how female characters are perceived differently according to their generic effects. Likewise, all four women author names demonstrate how female authorial identities were complicated by the generic performances of their texts. All these proper names, whether real or fictional, become “threshold names” by crossing the boundaries of gender and genre in mid-Victorian literary market.

### **Coda: Critical Afterlife: “Currer Bell” versus “George Eliot”**

Using a pseudonym is already a poetic activity, and the pseudonym is already somewhat like a work. If you can change your name, you can write (Genette *Paratexts* 54).

Both “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” provide apt examples of Genette’s epigraph, since these pseudonyms were adopted by Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot even after their secrecy was lifted. If both women authors relied on these fictive identities to keep producing new works, why has one pseudonym persisted as the legitimate author name while the other one has fallen into disuse? Even if I cannot provide a definitive answer to this vexing question for most Victorianist scholars, I offer one possible solution to this problem by turning the why-question into the how-question. As a coda to this study of threshold names, I conduct a diacritical reading of author names for these two comparable women writers in Victorian print media. How were they named by contemporary reviewers during their life and after their deaths? This reading ultimately demonstrates how our own critical naming behaviors are interlocked with the discursive naming practices conducted by nineteenth-century print culture practitioners.

Consistency operates as a key to measure the critical naming history of these women writers. As with character names in novels, the most frequently used author name became an identifying tag for each author in reality. Despite many commonalities such as the epithet of “genius” attached to their author names, the biggest difference between “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” was their longevity in printed form. One name was short-lived and the other long-lived in print. As Brontë died very young, she only produced three major novels during her lifetime --*Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* and *Villette*--all published under “Currer Bell.” Although George Eliot was only three years younger than Brontë, Eliot was able to write for 25 years

longer than Brontë. Given that Eliot published all of her novels under “George Eliot,” this pseudonym, repeatedly marketed for longer periods, was more likely to grow into a rigid designator than the short-lived “Currer Bell.” Catherine Judd points out that “George Eliot” displays “a profound tenacity that is entirely lacking with the Brontës”: “[I]n the same way that Amandine Aurore Lucie Dudevant is always ‘Geoge Sand’ . . . we think today of ‘George Eliot’ and never consider Mary Ann Evans to be Mary Ann Evans”(262).<sup>41</sup> Rosemarie Bodenheimer also writes that the name of George Eliot is “the one that has proven the most enduring, the one that did not fade away once the gender and identity of the author became known” (“A Woman of Many Names” 20). Both Judd and Bodenheimer recognize the unusual persistence of “George Eliot” in modern critical naming practices, compared to other Victorian women writers.

Although Judd attributes the endurance of “George Eliot” to the “fault” and “habits” of modern critics and publishers (262), I would argue that “George Eliot”’s tenacity as well as “Currer Bell”’s disappearance can be traced back to the nineteenth-century naming practices by periodicals. As noted already, “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” were continually marketed as author names for their books during their life. Most Victorian periodicals respected and followed such naming practices even after their identities had been revealed. It was a well-known fact that Currer Bell, Ellis Bell and Acton Bell were three distinct Brontë sisters by the time that *Villette* was published in 1853. Still, periodicals marked the author of *Villette* as “Currer Bell” not “Charlotte Brontë.” In April 1853, *Westminster Review* followed this naming convention:

Indeed, no more distinct characteristic of Currer Bell’s genius can be named, than the depth of her capacity for all passionate emotions. Comparing “Villette” with “Ruth,” in this respect,

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<sup>41</sup> Judd decides to use “Mary Ann Evans” instead of “George Eliot” throughout her essay to demonstrate the ways in which Mary Ann Evans used the male pseudonym to promote her social and moral authority in the public sphere.

we are comparing sunlight with moonlight, passion with affection; and there is no writer of our day, except George Sand, who possesses the glory and the power which light up the writings of Currer Bell. She has not the humour, so strong and so genial, of Mrs. Gaskell. . . . Nor has Currer Bell any tendency towards the graceful, playful, or fanciful (490).

This review comparing Gaskell's *Ruth* and Brontë's *Villette* was written by George Henry Lewes. Notably, Lewes named the author of *Villette* as "Currer Bell" throughout this essay. He knew who "Currer Bell" was but never mentioned her true name. Instead, Lewes used female pronouns for "Currer Bell" and compared her genius with George Sand's. In contrast, Lewes addressed the author of *Ruth* as "Mrs. Gaskell" whose humor is "strong" and "genial." While this article introduced *Ruth* as written "by the author of 'Mary Barton'" following *Ruth*'s descriptive anonymity, Lewes unreservedly revealed the biographical personage of its author by addressing her as "Mrs. Gaskell" from early in his review: "We wish to show how Mrs. Gaskell treats the subject, and in her exposition we follow, as she has followed, ordinary notions" (477). While Lewes had knowledge about both women writers, he divulged only "Mrs. Gaskell," keeping Charlotte Brontë intact. "Currer Bell" operated as the only author name for Brontë during her lifetime. This review, in turn, shows how the feminine designation "Mrs. Gaskell" was already in circulation in the early 1850s despite her assumed anonymity during her early writing career.

Likewise, George Eliot was referred to as "George Eliot" even after the revelation of her secret authorship for *Adam Bede*. John Chapman in the July 1860 *Westminster Review* essay on *The Mill on the Floss* bragged without modesty about his correct speculation about the gender of the author of *Adam Bede* but still addressed the author as "George Eliot." Like Lewes, Chapman used female pronouns for "George Eliot": "[W]hatever may have been George Eliot's motive in shrinking from personally gathering her abundant laurels, whether constitutional fastidiousness, over-refined taste, or real indifference, she could not possibly have decided upon a more efficient disguise than that of the clerical character" (24). Other

periodicals followed the same mixed practice of naming the author as “George Eliot” but modifying the male pseudonym with female pronouns. Even if some of these periodicals called Eliot “the authoress” to denote her gender more explicitly, “George Eliot” worked as a legitimate author name for most Victorian critics.<sup>42</sup> Both “Currer Bell” and “George Eliot” appeared in print as the only author names for Brontë and Eliot during their lifetime.

However, deaths became a historical turning point for their author names by raising a social demand for obituaries and biographies. I shall compare the receptions of their posthumous names in periodicals by reading obituaries as well as critical responses to the biographies of the two authors. I will demonstrate how death served as a crucial occasion where a significantly different pattern appeared in the critical naming for the two women authors. On April 7, 1855, the *Examiner* issued the following obituary for Charlotte Brontë:

On Saturday, March 31st, 1855, died at Haworth Parsonage, Yorkshire, CHARLOTTE, wife of the REV. ARTHUR BELL NICHOLLS. Strangers knew her through the fame she had earned by her writings; but her friends forgot the genius of ‘CURRER BELL’ in the greater qualities of the woman. In proportion to the strong love borne to her while living is the bitter regret caused by her death” (215).

The *Examiner* used “Charlotte Brontë” not “Currer Bell” in reporting the death of the author and asserted that “Currer Bell”’s genius was superseded by “Charlotte Brontë”’s womanhood as her womanly qualities were well recognized by her friends. This obituary highlighted the biographical person of “Charlotte Brontë” instead of the authorial identity of “Currer Bell.” In a similar vein, the *Critic* on December 15, 1855 reported that “Mrs. Gaskell has undertaken to write the ‘Life of Charlotte Brontë,’ that fervent genius too soon snatched from us” (627) and replaced each woman author’s name with her representative heroine’s name: “Jane Eyre deserved to fall into the hands of a woman; and what woman has better fitted for

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<sup>42</sup> For instance, the *Saturday Review* and the *Athenaeum* in their reviews on *The Mill on the Floss* used the term “authoress” to refer to George Eliot.

the task than Mary Barton?" (627). Here, Gaskell's name was identified with her "Mary Barton" and Brontë's name was conflated with her "Jane Eyre." As the *Critic* unabashedly merged "Jane Eyre" with "Charlotte Brontë," not distinguishing the fictional creation from its creator, Jane Eyre was understood as the byproduct or extension of Charlotte Brontë's life. At the same time, this interchangeability between authors and characters demonstrates how they become threshold names by crossing the discursive and fictional realms.

This critical behavior stands in contrast with the continuance of "George Eliot" as the signifier for both the author and the woman after her death. The *Times* issued its obituary entitled "George Eliot" on December 24, 1880, only two days after the death of the author: "A great English writer has suddenly passed away. 'George Eliot,' to give her the name by which Mrs. Cross was known wherever the English language is spoken or English literature is prized, died on Wednesday evening, after only three days' illness" (9). Unlike in the case of Brontë, the *Times* definitively chose "George Eliot" over "Mrs. Cross" as the proper signifier for the author because "George Eliot" already became a designative name for her in the publishing world of "English literature." Throughout this obituary, the *Times* referred to the author as "George Eliot" not only to emphasize her intellectual properties—"the life of George Eliot is, as we have said, little more than the history of her literary activity" (9)-- but also to mention a few biographical facts or traits about her: "For the biography of George Eliot few materials exist. . . .Marian Evans--whom all the world knew as 'George Eliot'--was born, we believe, in Warwickshire . . . (9). While bringing up Eliot's earlier maiden name "Marian Evans" to mark her birth at Warwickshire, this obituary writer stressed once again that "George Eliot" was the name that this author was known to the whole world. The *Times* continued to capitalize on "George Eliot" as a marker for both the person and the writer until the end of this essay: "the friends of George Eliot have long recognized her rare and commanding gifts both of intellect and character" (9). Likewise, *the Saturday Review*, on

January 1, 1881, published its obituary entitled “George Eliot.”

MRS. CROSS was so little known by the name which she had recently acquired that it is convenient to speak of her by her chosen literary designation as George Eliot. It happens, by an odd coincidence, that a great French writer had many years before assumed a similar disguise. There can be little doubt that one of George Eliot's motives in taking the name of a man was to puzzle readers and critics. The partial success of the experiment, though the mystery was soon removed, illustrated the peculiar character of her genius (12).

Just like the *Times*, the *Saturday Review* decided to adopt the well-known author name “George Eliot” instead of her “recently acquired” legal name of “Mrs. Cross” to follow the author’s chosen form of self-designation. While recognizing a similarity between “George Eliot” and “George Sand,” this review did not pursue the subject any more considering it “an odd coincidence.” It speculated that the pseudonym “George Eliot” was taken up by the author to put her writings under the critical experiment. In the rest of this essay, the writer went over almost all major works of Eliot to evaluate them anew after her death. In the middle of these passages, the *Saturday Review* asserted that “the best of all George Eliot’s grave or humorous remarks are appropriated to characters who are not mere representations of herself” (12). This recognition of distance between George Eliot and her characters formed a stark contrast with the *Critic*’s conflation of *Jane Eyre* with Charlotte Brontë.

This disparity in the critical naming practices for Brontë and Eliot has intensified after the publication of their biographies. While it was after the publication of Gaskell’s *Life* that “Currer Bell” was fully transformed into “Charlotte Brantë,” “George Eliot” became further rigidified as the one and only identifying name tag for the author over the course of the late nineteenth century. Margaret Harris, in comparing George Eliot with Currer Bell, writes, “It is notable that [George Eliot] continues to be known by her pseudonym, while Charlotte Brontë and her sisters quickly passed from the anonymity provided by their pen-names. Elizabeth Gaskell published *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* in 1857, but it was *George Eliot's Life* that her widower John Cross ‘arranged and edited’ for publication in 1885” (131).

As Harris points out, “George Eliot” firmly remained as part of the title of her biography whereas “Charlotte Brontë” replaced “Currer Bell” in the title of her biography. I further develop this linkage between biographies and the institutionalization of author names at a closer look. My research shows that “Currer Bell” gradually turned into “Charlotte Brontë” after the publication of Gaskell’s biography in 1857, whereas “George Eliot” survived two biographical turns in 1883 and 1885 by not allowing her alternative proper names such as “Marian Evans” and “Mary Ann Evans” to overwrite her authorial identity.

Gaskell’s *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* played a significant role in turning “Currer Bell” to “Charlotte Brontë,” not only through its book title but also through its project of recovering Brontë’s proper femininity. Through this biography could “Charlotte Brontë” emerge as a feminine proper name separated from the coarse and immoral “Currer Bell” often touted in the periodicals even after her death. According to Linda Peterson, the *Life* was a project conceived by Charlotte’s closest friend Ellen Nussey who urged Charlotte’s husband Arthur Nicholls to “authorize a biography in order to refute errors in fact and judgment that were circulating in the obituaries” (134). To defend Charlotte against further ignominy of impropriety and coarseness, Gaskell erased all improper materials from Charlotte’s letters provided by Nussey and stressed “Brontë’s exemplary domesticity” throughout the biography (135). One of Gaskell’s strategies for achieving this goal was to divide her subject into two different but compatible categories of the author and the woman, adopting what Peterson calls a “parallel currents” model: “This masterful biography constructed the woman writer in terms of a ‘parallel currents’ model: ‘her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman.’ It separated the identity of the author from that of the woman” (132). “Currer Bell” had to be renamed as “Charlotte Brontë” to shake off the former’s image of masculinity and immorality. The much denounced author “Currer Bell” was thus reinvented as the amiable, feminine, dutiful daughter and sister “Charlotte Brontë” in the biography.

Indeed, after the *Life* was published, most reviewers changed their critical naming practice for the author from “Currer Bell” to “Charlotte Brontë” and paid more attention to Brontë’s quality as a woman than as an author. In June 1857, *the National Magazine* issued a review of the *Life* with the title “Charlotte Brontë.”

It is a pregnant fact, indeed, that a writer, one of the most original, powerful, and popular of her day, stands out from the rest of the world still more by her life than by her genius. The reader of these volumes will find it more possible to forget Jane Eyre and Lucy Snowe than this small still woman, with her indomitable soul; her quiet self-denying heroism, both active and passive; her strong, but not stubborn will; her warm and generous, but steady and consistent feelings. Her genius was brilliant, but her soul shone, we think, with a fuller light than that which through her writings has flashed upon the world (76).

The magazine urged readers to turn their attention from Currer Bell the genius writer to Charlotte Brontë the “heroic” woman whose will was “strong” but not “stubborn” and whose feelings were “warm,” “generous,” “steady” and “consistent.” It asserted that anyone who reads this biography would take more interest in “Charlotte Brontë” than in her literary works. By emphasizing the feminine qualities of “Charlotte Brontë,” the magazine successfully separated out the biographical person of Charlotte Brontë from the masculine writer Currer Bell. Later, this reviewer even exclaimed, “[W]hat a new idea is given of the masculine-minded reckless writer of *Jane Eyre*, when we hear of her quietly shedding tears of grieved feeling over a harsh criticism in the *Times* newspaper!” (78). Such a feminine image of Charlotte Brontë overrode the masculine writing of Currer Bell in this review. In the same month, *the Eclectic Review* opened its review of the *Life* with even stronger biographical focus than *the National Magazine*:

This is one of the saddest lives we have ever read. We opened it with great curiosity to discover how it was that the daughter of an obscure Yorkshire clergyman had been able to learn enough about human nature to write three such remarkable fictions as “Jane Eyre,” “Shirley,” and “Villette;” but before we had read many pages we became far more interested in the fate of the woman than in the discipline and development of the authoress: the genius of Currer Bell was forgotten in the sorrows and struggles of Charlotte Brontë. And now that we have finished the strange, sad story, we have no heart for mere literary criticism; we must lay aside her books, and leave their brilliant excellences uneulogized, and their scarcely less brilliant faults uncensured: others may criticize her writings--we are unable to think of

anything but her life (630).

The *Eclectic Review* confessed that it became more interested in the personal fate of the woman Charlotte Brontë than in the literary development of the genius Currer Bell after reading Gaskell's *Life*. The *Review* was so infatuated with this woman that it was determined to leave all her creations behind and concentrate on her life story. All these biographical turns testify to what Miriam Elizabeth Burstein calls "the nineteenth century's obsession with the Brontës not as authors, but as women" (177). Burstein argues that Charlotte's "Biographical Notice" along with Gaskell's *Life* had affected the mid-nineteenth-century critical responses to the Brontës. While the former "introduced a biographical focus that shaped all subsequent discussion of the text," the latter "consolidated . . . the Victorian interest in reading the Brontës through a biographical lens" (175). As Burstein points out, the biography would soon overwrite all Brontë criticism.

In another example, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* entitled its review of the *Life* as "Currer Bell" instead of "Charlotte Brontë" but ended up identifying Charlotte Brontë with her heroine Jane Eyre. E.S. Dallas, the writer of this review, denounced "Mrs. Gaskell" for inserting unnecessary details about Charlotte's growth as a woman in the biography which he saw as unrelated to Currer Bell's development as an author. To correct this error, Dallas tracked down the literary merits of "Currer Bell." However, he followed the same "parallel currents" model adopted by Gaskell by marking Brontë's authorial self as "Currer Bell" on the one hand and by addressing her private self as "Charlotte Brontë" on the other hand.

In *The Professor*, however, as in *Villette*, and in *Jane Eyre*, she carries out her favourite idea of a heroine. In the general outline of character she is herself, in fact, her own heroine. She purposely made her heroines plain, if not ugly. . . . Full of strange fancies, morbid likings and dislikes, the heroine--the double of Miss Brontë--was the most matter-of-fact person in the world. . . . A good little woman, no doubt. But what was there so attractive about her? How was this humdrum little creature--this Frances Henri, this Lucy Snowe, this Jane Eyre, this Charlotte Brontë--raised into a heroine of romance? She was not only attractive, she was fascinating, because she had an eye which nothing could escape. . . . Powers of observation

so acute had . . . a fascination like the eye of a basilisk . . . (91-2).

Dallas associated the plain but powerful character of Jane Eyre with her creator. “Miss Brontë” intentionally created Jane Eyre as her double having the same traits as herself. Dallas saw no distinction between the author and her fictional characters by questioning the romantic appeals of “this Charlotte Brontë” put together with her heroines in a row-- Frances Henri, Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre. And the answer was that Charlotte Brontë could attract the reading public through her powers of observation, with her supervising eye like a “basilisk.” Dallas even went so far as to claim that “She [Charlotte Brontë] is herself, in fact, her own heroine” (92). In this reading, all of Brontë’s romantic heroines became a mere reflection of herself.

These Victorian receptions of Gaskell’s *Life* were a signal for the biographical shift to Brontë criticism which has continued until the mid-twentieth century. According to Elizabeth Langland, Gaskell’s *Life* “advanced an image of Charlotte Brontë as a model of Victorian womanhood” and this biographical criticism predominated Brontë criticism until the early 1960s (394). Carol Bock more minutely traces the history of biographical reading of Charlotte Brontë from mid-Victorian period up until the late 1970s. Bock shows how Victorian critics, after the publication of Gaskell’s *Life*, came to identify the storyteller of Brontë’s novels with the author Charlotte Brontë by “[referring] indiscriminately to Jane Eyre or Charlotte Brontë as though they did not know the difference between a novelist and a first-person narrator” (28). This critical tendency facilitated what Bock calls “the confessional tradition” in Brontë criticism (32). As I demonstrated so far, Victorian print media set the stage for such biographical criticisms by renaming “Currer Bell” as “Charlotte Brontë.”

While the biographical name of “Charlotte Brontë” supplanted the author name of “Currer Bell” after the huge success of Gaskell’s biography, “George Eliot” firmly kept its

place as the sanctioned author name without losing its designative force after the publication of two early biographies of George Eliot. One is Mathilde Blind's *George Eliot*, published in 1883 as part of John Ingram's "Eminent Women Series." The other is *The Life of George Eliot*, arranged by her short-term husband John Cross, published in 1885. While contemporary reviewers often reverted to Eliot's maiden names such as "Marian Evans" and "Mary Ann Evans" to follow the earlier part of her life in the biographies, they all returned to "George Eliot" at the end of their essays, helping to perpetuate "George Eliot" as the only designation for the author. As Susan Bernstein notes, Blind's biography was "the first biography of Eliot" (*Roomscape* 105). Though lesser known than Cross's biography to today's critics, Blind's biography enabled contemporary reviewers to appreciate the biography of one eminent woman writer written by another like Gaskell's *Life*. In October 1883, *the British Quarterly Review* gave out these commentaries to Blind's biography:

Miss Mathilde Blind deeply sympathizes with George Eliot. She has spared no pains to make a coherent and attractive narrative; she has 'interviewed' Miss Evan's [sic] brother and some of her early friends, and has thus succeeded in presenting us with a complete biography; interspersing her account with many incisive criticisms. Occasionally she carries her sympathy almost to the point of excess, particularly in the attempt directly to justify George Eliot's relations with Mr. G.H.Lewes . . . . Miss Blind's style of tracing the literary result to the experience and life of the author is very attractive (473).

This review took turns between "George Eliot" and "Miss Evans" in referring to the subject of the biography. While it was for the author "George Eliot" that Blind felt deep sympathy, it was the woman "Miss Evans" that the biographer sought to retrieve through the interviews with Eliot's private circles. The review, however, returned to "George Eliot" to mark her illegal relationship with Lewes. While praising Blind's methods overall, the *British Quarterly Review* faulted Blind for overusing her sympathy to defend Eliot's private choice.

A few months earlier, the *Academy* rather depreciated the value of Blind's biography in its review entitled "George Eliot.": "[I]t must be confessed that one lays down this study of

George Eliot with some disappointment” (286). Unlike the *British Quarterly Review*, the *Academy* regretted that Blind gave “fewer glimpses into George Eliot’s personal relations” (286). While acknowledging that it was informative to know about “the kindly encouragement afforded to Marian Evans” (286) by her early intellectual friends at Coventry, the *Academy* still deplored that Blind had not delved into Eliot’s private relationship with George Henry Lewes as well as her short married life with John Cross.

[People] will be still more wishful to discover what new light is shed upon the peculiar bonds that linked the clever, volatile George Henry Lewes with a woman who was his superior by so many degrees . . . Again, many will be desirous of ascertaining more about the second domestic connexion formed by the novelist shortly before her premature death. But on these points Miss Blind just repeats information of which we are already possessed. Mr. Cross has but a line or two at the end of the volume; and we are not told whether the account of his wife which he promised to the world is in progress. The episode of George Eliot’s informal union with Lewes is passed over in a slight account which will cheat the scandal-lover of his quest . . . (286)

Just like the *British Quarterly Review*, the *Academy* used Eliot’s maiden name “Marian Evans” to discuss the author’s early life but returned to “George Eliot” to discuss her scandalous life with “volatile George Henry Lewes.” This periodical also complained that Blind did not fully provide the prospect of the upcoming biography written by “Mr. Cross.” In these reviews for Blind’s *George Eliot*, “George Eliot” appeared most frequently as the author name.

“George Eliot” was also perpetuated as the rightful author name in the reviews for Cross’s biography. As this much anticipated biography mostly consisted of Eliot’s own letters and diaries, it raised disappointment and acceptance at the same time. With few guiding commentaries about the subject, Cross’s biography often failed to rouse or satisfy people’s curiosity about Eliot’s private life. *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* in April 1885 issued an article entitled “George Eliot” to evaluate Cross’s biography in a negative way.

In many respects expectation will be disappointed by *the Life of George Eliot*. Mr. Cross

gives us a bundle of letters instead of a portrait. On the most crucial question in George Eliot's life he is altogether silent. The result is a volume of some interest, but in no sense a biography. Vicious as was Mr. Froude's method, he has given us Carlyle, 'warts and all.' But this excessive reticence of Mr. Cross leaves George Eliot just where she was before this book was published (271).

The magazine was disappointed by this biography since "Mr. Cross" failed to give a portrait of George Eliot's private life, the essence of all biographies. Comparing it with Froude's unrestrained biography on Carlyle, the magazine declared that Froude's biography was much better than Cross's since the latter did not say a word about the personal traits of George Eliot. As Cross's biography hardly evaluated the author's personal life, George Eliot remained the same George Eliot as readers knew her before her death. Likewise, John Chapman in his July 1885 *Westminster Review* article criticized Cross's biographical method.

The first few words of this programme are liable to raise hopes destined only to speedy disappointment. A full collection of George Eliot's letters, with extracts from her journals and private memoranda--a collection arranged in proper order, and linked together almost into a narrative by the discreet adjunction of a few explanatory notes --what could be more desirable? It would be preferable even to an autobiography . . . . But alas! this simple reproduction of old letters, with their faded ink and yellowish-tinged paper, is very far from the "particular method" adopted by Mr. Cross. He has "pruned" the precious relics in his hands--pruned them of everything that either seemed irrelevant to his own purpose, or that his wife, according to his judgment, would have wished to be omitted. He tells us, with something like complacency, that no single letter has been printed in its entirety! . . . . we cannot hinder the melancholy reflection that the very passages which the author of a correspondence is likely to expunge, are precisely those which would be of most interest to posterity. And if this be true of autobiographers in general, how much more so of George Eliot! (162).

Chapman suspected that "Mr. Cross" expunged all important materials from Eliot's letters, preventing readers from constructing the right sense of the private character of George Eliot. Given that George Eliot was an author very susceptible to literary criticism, "Mr. Cross" had to display Eliot's correspondence as it was without such "pruning." Chapman especially resented the fact that Cross did not copy any of her letters concerning the most interesting part of her life including her early religious revolt as well as "her connection with THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW" (163). Having had once enjoyed a close friendship with George

Eliot, Chapman even went so far as to claim that “no reader of her novels will believe that she was such a lamb as this correspondence would depict her. ‘A little more wickedness, if you please!’ is what we are tempted to call for” (163).<sup>43</sup>

Still, other periodicals like the *Athenaeum* praised Cross’s new method of biography-writing by arranging the author’s first hand materials as they were with the least editorial intervention. “These long-expected volumes have been compiled with great tact. Mr. Cross has aimed at making them a self-revelation of his wife’s career and character, and he has been for the most part successful in the discharge of this difficult undertaking” (145). The *Athenaeum* further approved such arrangements as a good way to illuminate the author’s own thoughts and feelings about her life and works: “The novel method of extracts arranged in order of time tells the tale spontaneously, and George Eliot the woman stands forth revealed to the world in all the strength and refinement of her intellect, in all the clinging trustfulness of her moral and emotional nature” (145). Either way, all these reviewers continually referred to the subject of the biography as “George Eliot.”

While most reviewers of Cross’s biography conveniently skipped George Eliot’s private relationship with George Henry Lewes, either assessing the biographer’s editing techniques or illuminating the subject’s literary achievements overall, the *Saturday Review* made a pause to offer a distinct criticism against Eliot’s conduct as a woman.

One other not very pleasant subject we may as well mention at once and get over. For Mr. Cross's treatment of the connexion between Mary Ann Evans and George Henry Lewes we have no blame, and indeed very little comment; he has got himself out of a difficult situation very well. George Eliot's own attitude towards her conduct is briefly but significantly exhibited here, and simply condenses into little the curious paradox (some cynical people say the amusing inconsistency) of a woman who for years inculcated the sternest submission of inclination to duty in her books, and practically illustrated her principles by living all the time with another woman's husband. . . . [W]e shall only say that, when third persons speak

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<sup>43</sup> Chapman was the editor of *Westminster Review* when he hired “Marian Evans” to work for him and live in his home in The Strand in London. For a detailed account of the strained relations between Eliot and Chapman in the late 1850s, see Rosemary Ashton’s *142 Strand*, especially from pages 244-248.

of "Mrs. Lewes," of "husband," of "wife," and so forth, in reference to this connexion, they not only debase the moral currency, but, taking the matter out of debatable points, endorse a deliberate literary and historical falsification. It is no more true that the author of *Adam Bede* was Mrs. Lewes than it is true that the author of *Adam Bede* was Mr. Liggins (181-182).

*The Saturday Review* in this passage showed some interesting dynamics of naming George Eliot. It first used one of Eliot's earlier maiden names "Mary Ann Evans" to allude to her private "connexion" with George Henry Lewes but soon reverted back to "George Eliot" to divulge a literary irony of how the author's stern morality in her works belied her own conduct in private life.<sup>44</sup> This reviewer, in addition, declared that it would object to any person's reference to George Eliot as "Mrs. Lewes." Addressing George Eliot as the wife of George Henry Lewes and vice versa would not only contradict the current social morale but also commit a serious misattribution of her literary works. Just as "Mr. Liggins" could not become the author of *Adam Bede*, "Mrs. Lewes" would not serve as the author name for Eliot's novels. This was one of the harshest and the most conservative reviews of the dead George Eliot in the 1880s. Although *the Saturday Review* returned to the consistent name of George Eliot later in this essay, it debunked the unstable correspondence between her biographical self as a fallen woman and her authorial self as a moral instructor. Rejecting both "Mary Ann Evans" and "Mrs. Lewes" who had an illegal liaison with a married man, the conservative magazine settled on the name "George Eliot" to walk a safe moral ground. Here, "George Eliot" became the only author name morally sanctioned by the conservative magazine.

So far, I have compared the critical naming practices for "Currer Bell" and "George

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<sup>44</sup> This vacillation between "Mary Ann Evans" and "George Eliot" anticipates and echoes modern biographers' concern about what to call George Eliot in different stages of her life. For instance, Rosemarie Bodenheimer writes: "the play between 'Mary Ann/ Marian Evans/ Lewes' and 'George Eliot' must concern everyone who writes about this woman and artist of many names, not least when it comes to making decisions about what to call her. I use George Eliot when the working novelist is in question, and I follow the lead of her signatures in naming her for any given period of her personal life" (*The Real life of Mary Ann Evans* xvii).

Eliot” before and after their deaths, in an attempt to address the question of why we call George Eliot “George Eliot” when we call Charlotte Brontë “Charlotte Brontë” instead of “Currer Bell.” While Gaskell’s biography served as a significant site for changing Currer Bell’s masculine authorial identity into Charlotte Brontë’s feminine personal identity, Cross’s biography failed to do so by merely copying Eliot’s own words and views about herself and her works. Even though Blind’s biography made a significant contribution to Eliot criticism by offering a female point of view about Eliot’s life, its adulation was often denounced as too facile. Whereas “Currer Bell” could become “Charlotte Brontë” through Gaskell’s active intervention, “George Eliot” endured its fame as “George Eliot” with no one definitively proper feminine name inserted by either biographer and approved by Victorian critics. Such different Victorian receptions of each woman author’s biography, along with the degree of persistence of each name in print, affected not only late Victorians’ but also modern critical naming of “Charlotte Brontë” and “George Eliot.” In other words, the immediate posthumous naming acts in the obituaries and in the reviews of early biographies set the stage for how these women writers continue to be named. Indeed, one can see how predominantly “Charlotte Brontë” appeared as posthumous author names in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Likewise, “George Eliot” marked every title page of the reviews written after her death. Unlike “Currer Bell,” “George Eliot” surmounted all the obituary and biography naming challenges to become institutionalized as the lawful author name in modern criticism.

I shall briefly go over how Elizabeth Gaskell and Mary Elizabeth Braddon were named in obituaries to round out my study of four women authors. As already mentioned, Gaskell was often touted as “Mrs. Gaskell” after her authorship for *Mary Barton* was known to the Victorian publishing world. In fact, “Mrs. Gaskell” soon became the most commonly addressed author name for Gaskell in the periodicals, especially after the publication of *the Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which allowed the first form of onymity “E.G. Gaskell.” This

married title “Mrs. Gaskell” continued to define her authorial identity before and after her death. All obituaries uniformly marked her name as “Mrs. Gaskell” and gave mixed reviews about her works. In December 1865, *Macmillan’s Magazine* announced Gaskell’s death through its obituary essay entitled “Mrs. Gaskell”: “Another of the writers I have known has passed away in the person of Mrs. Gaskell” (153). The *Magazine* asserted that any biography of Gaskell would not help to illuminate her literary works since she led a “more calm and less eventful” life compared to other women writers (154). This raises a contrast with reviewers’ earlier enthusiasm over the biographies of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. Instead, the *Magazine* stressed how “Mrs. Gaskell” began to write as a mother to “drown the memory of a dead child” (154). This reviewer argued that Gaskell’s late career into the novelist had both strengths and weaknesses. While her characters “had none of the exaggeration so universal almost amidst women writers,” readers “never get further than an intimate acquaintance” (154). They do not learn to know Gaskell’s characters as they know “the Père Goriot, or Colonel Newcome, or Jane Eyre, or Adam Bede” (154). While recognizing “Mrs. Gaskell”’s authorship as mild and feminine, the *Magazine* noted a lack of depth in her characters compared to Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Eliot’s *Adam Bede*.

Likewise, the *Saturday Review* printed “the unexpected announcement of the death of Mrs. Gaskell” in its obituary column entitled “Mrs. Gaskell” (638). The *Saturday Review* criticized “one-sided” social views manifest in *Mary Barton* and commented that it was desirable for “Mrs. Gaskell” to abandon her earlier social aims to write for more sympathetic and appealing stories of *Cranford* and *Sylvia’s Lovers*. This review chose *Cranford* as best representing Gaskell’s feminine authorship and even compared it with Austen’s works: “*Cranford* is, in its way, the most perfect of Mrs. Gaskell’s creations, and we do not hesitate to say that it is the most perfect little story of its kind that has been published since the days of Miss Austen” (638). In referring to Gaskell as “Mrs. Gaskell,” all these obituary reviews

reproduced her image as a womanly writer.

While Gaskell was designated by her married surname, Braddon was continually described by her unmarried surname “Miss Braddon” even after her death. The *Athenaeum* on Feb 13, 1915, in its obituary entitled “Miss Braddon,” repeated the well-known image of the author as a sensation novelist: “We regret to notice the death . . . of the writer known for a long period as Miss Braddon. Showing an early turn for writing, Mary Elizabeth Braddon produced her first novel . . . in 1860. Two years later she made a great success with ‘Lady Audley's Secret,’ which at once attained a wonderful popularity” (143). Similarly, the *Academy and Literature* announced “the death of Miss Braddon, whose work began to entertain the public as long ago as 1862, when the famous ‘Lady Audley's Secret’ made her name” (100). Just as Braddon had been touted as “Miss Braddon” and associated with Lady Audley in most reviews during her lifetime, she continued her critical afterlife as “Miss Braddon” who created one of the most popular sensation heroines Lady Audley. While Braddon had already married John Maxwell during her writing career, she was known and addressed as “Miss Braddon” by most contemporary reviewers.

This persistence of “Mrs. Gaskell” and “Miss Braddon” continued until modern biographical writings were released in the late 1970s. That Gaskell’s letters became available only in 1966 with the title *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell* demonstrates not only the same lack of interest in her life but also the same endurance of her fame as “Mrs. Gaskell” as practiced by Victorian print media. Winifred Gérin’s *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography* published in 1976 was the first modern biography that made full use of Gaskell’s letters and recovered her full name “Elizabeth Gaskell.” Likewise, Braddon’s biography became fully available to us only in 1979 through Robert Lee Wolff’s *Sensation Victorian: The Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon*. These late biographical turns for Gaskell and Braddon can be contrasted with early and unceasing interest in the lives of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot.

All these observations have two implications. First, it shows how the history of author names is enmeshed with the history of literary criticism. As a container of literary and discursive significance, the form of an author name could work as a critical framework. Second, such institutionalization of author names has influenced and shall influence our own critical models. This calls for our attention to the politics of naming Victorian women writers in our own literary criticism—how to name them will decide how to read them.

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