ACCOUNTING FOR FAILURE:
ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT AND THE BRITISH *BILDUNGSROMAN*, 1805-1891

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation argues that nineteenth-century British literature responded in a variety of critical ways to the limits of individual success and thereby constituted failure as a defining aspect of the modern subject. While scholarship typically acknowledges how nineteenth-century British developmental narratives reflected a causal link between hard work and success, this dissertation traces an alternate history of texts in the period that strongly called this association into question. These texts portray hard work that does not necessarily lead to success while also depicting failure as a generative educative process. In the process, these works beg the question: what happens if a citizen works hard and acts according to social directives but nevertheless fails in business, personal relations, or expected individual maturation? This dissertation contends that these texts, through the portrayal of failed development, express a deep skepticism of exclusionary narrative models of individual development. Moreover, these texts hypothesize preventative adaptive behaviors that enable their readerships to avert developmental failure in the context of nineteenth-century political and social structures.

This dissertation traces this reconceptualization of failure as a generative process through a lineage of texts spanning several genres. Chapter One analyzes Robert Southey's *Madoc* (1805) through the lens of the title character's failed development. It argues that *Madoc*, which proposes a scenario of personal improvement but ultimately only offers momentary glimpses of maturation, depicts the developmental limits of colonial settings while also exposing the manner by which Romantic individualism masks failure as personal genius. Next, Chapter Two argues

that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) critiques the related social models of sensibility and *Bildung* by demonstrating the exclusionary boundaries of these superficially inclusive ideologies. Later, Chapter Three examines the history of revision in George Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) and Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61). It contends that the author's revisions to the original versions represent a crucial cultural moment in the adjudication between uncompromising cause-and-effect models of development and more complicated portrayals of the effects of individual effort. Finally, Chapter Four argues that George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891) reflects on the dangers of nineteenth-century models of individual development by offering a sustained engagement with the ramifications of novelistic prototypes of building the self, thereby highlighting the exclusionary politics of this process.

Broadly conceived, this dissertation intervenes in literary critical works about Romantic individualism, the history of the novel, and the *Bildungsroman* by scholars such as Nancy Armstrong and Jed Esty. Additionally, this project extends the usual literary archive of this type of study, examining texts of literary failure beyond the novel, including Romantic poetry, scientific works, and self-help treatises. Overall, the deployment of individual failure portrayed in this project's genealogy demonstrates an unexamined foundation for contemporary conceptions of failure as generative. These texts deployed stark instances of individual failure to suggest new models of subjectivity and establish a cultural framework in which failure generates criticism, resistance, and a new definition of success.

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INTRODUCTION

James Burgh's *The Dignity of Human Nature* (1754) describes how, within the context of education, failures of a child are developmental dead-ends that disallow any chance of future change or improvement. He explains how meddling parents often prohibit the effective education of children by "ungratefully imputing to the master's want of care the failure of their children's improvement in what nature has denied them capacities for" (225). Furthermore, Burgh contrasts this "failure of…improvement" with other children who "have made proper improvements under the same care" (225). Burgh's critique of parents demonstrates a crucial assumption that underwrites the emerging discourse of individual development in the eighteenth century: roadblocks on the path of education are insurmountable. For Burgh, the failings of the child present no generative possibilities for learning but rather only reflect the inherent flaws of the child as bequeathed by "nature."

Far from being an outlier, this particular passage, in fact, maintained its cultural currency for decades, with Vicesimus Knox quoting it in the fifth edition of his *Liberal Education: Or, a Practical Treatise on the Methods of Acquiring Useful and Polite Learning* (1783) as "not theory; but experienced and notorious fact" (312). Indeed, this perception of instances of failure as reflective of the inherently flawed "nature" of self—rather than, as in our contemporary moment, as well suited to eventual learning—was dominant in late eighteenth-century British discourse. In sum, Burgh's striking formulation of failure represents a typical view of educational improvement in the late eighteenth century: a child's path to learning can be stopped by failures resulting from intrinsic shortcomings. And once learning ceases, the child is irreparably ruined with no potential for educative recontextualization of this failure.

This project explains how British literature of the nineteenth century challenged this dead-end conception and therein established failure's widespread acceptance as a key component of individual development that underwrites eventual success. In undertaking this argument, I build on Wilhelm Dilthey's foundational take on typical contours of the *Bildungsroman* in *Poetry and Experience* (1910):

> they all portray a young man of their time: how he enters life in a happy state of naivete seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, how he grows to maturity through diverse life-experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world. (335)

This structure highlights the role of "conflict" against the limitations of society as a key educative element in a developmental trajectory. I depart from this account, however, in contending for the importance of narratives that reflect on this trajectory by foregrounding a character's failure to reach a state of "certainty about his purpose in the world."

In repurposing individual failure as a generative possibility rather than merely a developmental dead-end, these texts of the nineteenth century created the modern discourse in which failure is accepted as a significant element of the educative process. These narratives' approach diverged from eighteenth-century notions of education in which the self can be cultivated but not deeply transformed—and in which difficulties cannot be reconceived as learning opportunities. Moreover, this literature challenged the formulation by which instantiations of failure define an individual's life trajectory and instead hypothesized the ability to overcome failure through adaptive learning. Although these nineteenth-century texts depict failure as a narrative end point, they formulate a definition of the individual who can, first, spur social change and, second, adjust to avoid failure. The rise of the discourse of individual

development in the nineteenth century established a foundation for this shift by promoting a model that pushed transformation—rather than, as in the eighteenth-century, inertia—to the forefront of educational ideology.

On the literary front, this grappling took place largely in novels retrospectively classified as *Bildungsromane*. As a result, the novel became a dominant vehicle for narratives of individual development—economic, social, and psychological—in the nineteenth century. Hence this project will take these nineteenth-century developmental narratives traditionally grouped as *Bildungsromane* as a key focus when exploring the rise of the modern discourse of failure. However, this project will limit its focus to texts that invoke the typical motions of the *Bildungsroman*—leaving home, struggling against social limitations, and eventually acclimating to the structures of modern society—but withhold their protagonists' final acclimation. Georg Lukács' *The Theory of the Novel* (1916) explains how this acclimation typically consists of a protagonist's "recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world" (136). Lukács further elaborates, "The hero actively realises this duality: he accommodates himself to society by resigning himself to accept its life forms" (136). For the protagonists of the texts explored at length in this project, this final realization is replaced with an ending that forecloses knowing resignation through the complete collapse of imperialist objectives, utter rejection by central romantic partners, or, in many cases, death.

By extending and revising the argument of Nancy Armstrong's *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005), I analyze how these narratives of developmental failure provided a fertile ground for reflecting on the production of the modern subject. Armstrong writes,

> the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same. The British novel provides the test case. It came into being, I believe, as writers sought to formulate a kind of subject that had not yet existed in writing. Once formulated in fiction, however, this subject proved uniquely capable of reproducing itself not only in authors but also in readers, in other novels, and across British culture. (3)

However, my project reconceives this "modern subject" that emerged "as writers sought to formulate a kind of subject that had not yet existed in writing" (3) by examining texts of developmental failure that knowingly reflect on the cultural project of self-building. These texts provide a counter-narrative to the dominant tale of individual development as a means of societal acclimation. Rather than support the prevailing liberal notion that exceptional individuals—protagonists and readers—would be able to find a balance between inner ideals and outer society, these texts define a "modern subject" imbued with failure's generative capabilities. As such, these works expand the definition of success to include the role of failure in shaping developmental norms and individual confrontations of social structures.

In theoretical orientation, this project engages Armstrong's trajectory of the modern subject while also forcing a reconsideration of the manner by which authors challenged this formulation in developmental narratives—both within and beyond the novel. Correspondingly, this project expands Armstrong's location of the creation of modern subject formation in the novel to a broader array of literary production. This wider perspective allows for consideration of texts outside the confines of the novel that simultaneously engage in the critical exploration of development, failure, and success. Given this project's focus on development, the *Bildungsroman* provides an essential foundation—though not sole source—on which to proceed

in excavating the crucial role of failure in modern developmental discourse as a component of subject formation.

In both *Bildungsromane* and other genres, British authors of the nineteenth century started to experiment with plots that engaged the emergence of the modern individual. Heretofore unacknowledged, however, are the ways by which some of these narratives subverted typical acclimation with striking instances of failed development. These subversive narratives hypothesized—against the backdrop of more typical developmental plots in which protagonists overcome difficulties in romantic entanglements and economics to eventually make peace with their cultural position—the generative possibilities of failed development in two key ways. First, on the level of the individual, they generated an emphasis on seizing moments of failure as the means of eventual success. Absent this effort to repurpose moments of failure as a way to learn and improve, individuals will meet a dark fate (as is the case in each of the primary texts I later explore at length). Second, these narratives critiqued the societal structures that enable the ultimate failure of the protagonists. In fact, by highlighting the role of stifling external influences on the protagonists, these narratives urge readers to generate social change as a corrective. This attention to the external factors contributing to failure renders these texts more than modern morality tales. Instead, they explore the internal *and* external influences on individual failure, therein suggesting that some—but not all—agency lies outside the individual. In sum, by portraying failure as a generative possibility within the characters' tales, as well as using the depiction of failure as a means of producing social critique, these narratives created the modern discourse of failure as a key component of subjectivity.

These texts use the ultimate failure of the protagonists to create imaginative space for their readerships to locate potential correctives to this fate. In a manner similar to how Aristotle's

Poetics theorizes the spiritual and emotional purification of an audience through the dark finale of Greek tragedy, these texts' endings theorize an audience able to envision social correctives to the protagonists' failure. Yet while tragedy centrally features aristocrats, these works shift their focus to protagonists representing the emerging middle and lower classes. In effect, these texts replace tragedy's emotional cleansing with failure more reflective of their general readership. Rather than feel a sense of isolation from the action of the text, then, these readers come to realize—through identification with the protagonist—the implications of the protagonists' fate on their own lives. Because of this identification, these texts instill readers with urgency toward correcting the directly-relevant social problems explored in the works.

Moreover, these texts define the generative possibilities of narrative failure in another important way: using the idealism of the developmental novel's form to reinforce the importance of learning and adaptation as a means of eventual success—even in the face of damaging social and economic structures. Indeed, changing perspective and subsequently readjusting could have avoided the protagonists' failures. Taking Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) as an example, Victor Frankenstein's unwillingness to view success and failure in anything other than absolute terms leads to a disastrous fate for himself and the monster. In exposing this inflexibility, however, the text theorizes an approach in which Victor's flexibility prevents disaster. These texts—in suggesting approaches that could waylay failure—function as survival guides to the modern world.

Correspondingly, I will explore the mechanics through which authors defined, narrativized, and ultimately produced the model of the modern individual who fails in order to succeed. Moreover, I will examine the ways by which these authors exposed particular societal limitations as potentially determinative of an individual's life trajectory. Therefore, I focus on

texts particularly salient to the shift in discourse from failure as a developmental dead-end to a process capable of generating eventual success: narratives of development that end with the failure of the protagonist. These texts, by portraying the individual atypically along a trajectory of developmental failure rather than success, actively explore the politics involved in the making of the modern individual. These texts voice strong reservations about an exclusionary politics embedded within this process of individuation as a means of, initially, engaging in social protest and, later, promoting replacement models of developmental discourse. In answering the research question, "How was our modern discourse of failure produced?" this project argues that nineteenth-century narratives, particularly those centrally depicting failure, subverted the growing consensus view of success as resulting from hard work and upright citizenship. These narratives repurposed narrative failure as a means for critiquing the link between success, hard work, and moral behavior. Also, they suggested the manner by which later literature would mobilize failure as a crucial motivating concept across modern society.

Take, for instance, Jessica Lahey's *The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed* (2015), which recirculates a nineteenth-century conceptualization of failure in the realm of contemporary parenting pedagogy. For example, she suggests several goals "in order to help children make the most of their education," including "embracing opportunities to fail" and "finding ways to learn from that failure" (xxv). Significantly, Lahey contextualizes her advice to parents in terms of Pip's developmental failure in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61):

> When we read the story of Pip's departure from home and return to redemption in *Great Expectations*, for example, Dickens reveals one potential path through childhood, a route for rectifying our own missteps and a glimpse of a possible ending. Pip, like us, is

> imperfect, so it's reassuring to know that he finds his way through the mist and the danger and heartbreak of growing up. (241)

Lahey's use of Pip's trajectory of failure illustrates, first, the pervasive and direct influence canonical *Bildungsromane* have on contemporary conceptions of childhood, and, second, the degree to which nineteenth-century British developmental narratives are still embedded in cultural memory in a way that directly underwrites perceptions of failure and success. Here, contemporary culture categorizes failures and successes by utilizing the conventional narrative structures established in nineteenth-century British literature.

This project necessarily proceeds from this deep cultural saturation of the *Bildungsroman* and its corresponding voluminous criticism—a limiting analytical lineage that nevertheless provides the foundation for current scholarly considerations of individual development in the nineteenth century. Later critics of the *Bildungsroman* build on and respond to Dilthey's foundational criticism of the trajectory of developmental protagonists, and I will also examine development as the manner by which protagonists negotiate their youthful ideals against the limiting structures of cultural ideology and economics. I posit that development typically takes place in the narrative space in which these protagonists figure out how to acclimate to these limiting structures through the revision—though not wholesale dismissal—of these original ideals. In this process of acclimation, protagonists achieve developmental success when they are able to balance youthful ideals with social and economic limitations. And in many of Britain's most famous instantiations of a trajectory of development, the protagonist achieves this type of success. For instance, Dickens' eponymous hero in *David Copperfield* (1849-50) famously acclimates by achieving economic and romantic contentment after hundreds of pages spent

negotiating the rift between his ideals and the limits of the world. Such standard protagonists are rewarded with eventual happiness for their increasingly conventional morality.

However, this standard conception of the *Bildungsroman* does not reflect the true breadth of developmental plots in the nineteenth century. In fact, these plots encompassed a more diverse set of tales of individual development in the period beyond the formally constraining and artificial designation of *Bildungsroman*. As Marc Redfield persuasively argues in *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the* Bildungsroman (1996), the *Bildungsroman* "exemplifies the ideological construction of literature by criticism" (vii). According to Redfield,

> since the *Bildungsroman* narrates the acculturation of a self—the integration of a particular "I" into the general subjectivity of a community, and thus, finally, into the universal subjectivity of humanity—the genre can be said to repeat, as its identity or content, its own synthesis of particular instance and general form. (38)

In other words, the narrative trajectory of the discourse of the *Bildungsroman* recurs in the production of *Bildungsroman* as a discrete genre through literary criticism. This process results in a "seductive and volatile" (135) conception that, via the ideology of Western aesthetics, creates the illusion of a stable, coherent, and functionally identifiable literary genre. In reality, however, the *Bildungsroman* never functioned as any sort of stable or organizing entity within nineteenth-century literary production.

Accordingly, this project does not assume the *Bildungsroman* to be a unified literary genre suited to unproblematic definition and dissection. However, recognizing the value in over a century of literary criticism that approaches the *Bildungsroman* with varying degrees of critical trepidation, this project proceeds by utilizing the term *Bildungsroman* as a utilitarian signifier of novels of individual development. In these novels, protagonists undergo fundamental changes in

their cultural ideologies and, therefore, relationships with the modern world. Yet this type of ideological development can by no means be confined in any precise generic or formal manner; rather, narratives over a diverse set of literary discourses—including poetry, self-help books, and scientific texts—engaged the same individual developmental trajectory in ways that were comparatively influential to the novel.

Given the artificial nature of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre designation and the extensive cross-genre examination of individual development, this project expands the archive of texts usually considered in criticism of the *Bildungsroman*. These texts, located outside the artificial confines of the *Bildungsroman*, engage individual development in a manner, as Armstrong writes solely of the novel, "uniquely capable of reproducing itself not only in authors but also in readers, in other novels, and across British culture" (3). For instance, Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859) invokes many of the central issues of the *Bildungsroman*—individual development, economic struggle, and reward as a result of hard work and moral action—yet it does so by presenting numerous mini-portraits of real-life individuals. Because texts like *Self-Help* were widely read—and thereby contributed to defining the manner by which readerships viewed individual success and failure—their arbitrary exclusion from this examination would actually elide how development worked in a more all-encompassing, cross-genre fashion. In sum, the modern subject's conception of individual development—and within it, individual failure—was concurrently defined across multiple genres of British literary production.

Yet while scholarship has tended to overlook these cross-genre connections, it has also veered against consideration of narratives that do not fit the typical trajectory of a narrative development. Close attention to texts that ultimately uphold the process of individual acclimation into society (like *David Copperfield)* tends to drown out consideration of less typical works.

These works invoke the standard motions of development but subvert the standard outcome with strikingly foregrounded failure. As such, these works provide a fertile ground for the critical examination of how authors leverage failure within a developmental context in order to expose individual rigidity alongside societal limitations. By turnings its focus toward such narratives—together with more canonical texts like *Frankenstein* and *Great Expectations* seldom investigated through the lens of developmental failure—this project's account of individual development represents a broader cross-section (and therefore wider critical consideration) of narrative approaches to individual failure. This cross-section of narratives deploying failure in a developmental context is representative of the literature that comes to underwrite the modern discourse of failure. Overall, this project demonstrates how this heretofore underconsidered strand of literary depictions of failure established the general perception of individual development in which stark moments of failure are reconfigured as learning moments constitutive of future improvement and success.

The scholarship examining the *Bildungsroman* defines a valuable—albeit flawed—trajectory of the formation of developmental models in the nineteenth century. Since the initial rise of the concept of *Bildung* in German literature of the eighteenth century, authors have repeatedly emphasized the pedagogical uses of the novel for influencing readers' formative years. Robert Ellis Dye pinpoints this educative element in Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), a formative work in defining the contours of the *Bildungsroman*: for Blanckenburg, "By becoming thoroughly familiar with the characters of a work we learn which of them genuinely deserve our sympathy, and by observing the mistakes made by fictional characters in judging their fellows we become judicious in our own lives" (116). Therefore, a verisimilitudinous modeling occurs in these developmental narratives, with

readers learning from the characters' mistakes. Of course, learning a lesson through sympathy or identification is not a unique or new aspect of the developmental novel as a literary form; in fact, this impulse could be traced to more antiquated forms like the parable or fable, or even to novels of earlier decades. For instance, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) explains how these novels confronted the central issue of "how to impose a coherent moral structure on narrative without detracting from its air of literal authenticity" (117). How, then, do developmental novels differ from the pedagogical dynamic already present across literary genres and traditions?

The trend identified by Blanckenburg that would become central to novelistic plotting in the nineteenth century differs from these previous formulations in two major ways: first, rather than merely learn from characters' mistakes, readers instead internalize the portrayal of individual failure and subsequent redemption as productive. This process shifts the narrative emphasis away from avoidance of specific moral dilemmas and pushes toward the embrace of failure as the first step toward eventual success. Second, authors of the nineteenth century began to embed failure narratives into their novels as a method of generating social commentary, thereby enacting the typical model of generative failure used in novelistic plots. For instance, Shelley's *Frankenstein* (explored in Chapter Two) deploys failure in each main character's narrative layer to expose the exclusionary politics of the culture of sensibility and *Bildung*. Later in the century, George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891, explored in Chapter Four) employs the spectacular failure and death of the eponymous protagonist in order to reveal the dangerous eugenicist assumptions underwriting his developmental trajectory. These sorts of plots that depict the ultimate failures of their protagonists aim to jar readers' assumptions about the ways in which developmental narratives function. More broadly, these endings—uncomfortable and upsetting—challenge readers to examine the narrative and social mechanics of failure, as well as

to attempt to account for the key contributing factors. These works challenge dominant narratives in which cause-and-effect models of development invariably lead to the successful acclimation of the protagonist to society. In the process, these narratives of failure subvert the prominent nineteenth-century emphasis on moral effort as a clear path to success, as well as trumpet failure's emergence in its modern form as an essential model for interpreting individual development in contemporary discourse.

Literary critics since Blanckenburg further detail the trajectory of such developmental narratives and therein provide significant groundwork for this project's exploration of developmental failure. Though the details expectedly differ from study to study, Jerome Hamilton Buckley's *Seasons of Youth: The* Bildungsroman *from Dickens to Golding* (1974) provides a generally representative overview of the *Bildungsroman*'s typical developmental arc:

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city (in the English novels, usually London). There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also—and often more importantly—his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he

> has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (17-8)

This basic formula, despite its rigidity and specificity, underpins the mechanics of the narratives I examine. When narratives subvert this basic structure, this departure strategically pushes toward the establishment of the new discourse of failure as generative. The attentive reader of the period, rightfully expecting a reiteration of Buckley's outline, instead finds an arrested version of this basic narrative. At first, these narratives of failure prompt such readers to locate factors contributing to the protagonists' downfall. Thereafter, these narratives embolden these readers to reconsider and challenge these very same factors in their own lives. Moreover, these readers seize narrative failure as an opportunity to reflect on the factors that the protagonist could have controlled and apply these lessons to their own lives. In these ways, these narratives of failure knowingly responded to traditional developmental narratives with the jarring representation of failure; the manner by which these narratives of failure contrast with dominant narratives establish a new ideological model for cultural understanding based in social protest and personal change.

Recent criticism has started to turn attention to the more constraining aspects of nineteenth-century developmental models. Thomas L. Jeffers provides a well-expressed starting point for this criticism of the *Bildungsroman* and its German roots in *Apprenticeships: The* Bildungsroman *from Goethe to Santayana* (2005), stating, "Goethe started out to see whether the life of a bright but fairly commonplace individual made any sense" (7). Critics have explored this central problem from a variety of useful vantage points, particularly in their portrayal of

developmental disparity based on gender in these novels.[1] Recently, Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2012) extends these studies by suggesting, "As a matter of empirical literary history, the problem of uneven development became more conspicuous and more colonially coded in the period between 1880 and 1920, and vividly so in fictions of unseasonable youth" (7). Accordingly, Esty describes the origin of this increased focus on uneven development:

> the allegory of progress embedded in the bildungsroman [*sic*] was, in fact, unstable from the beginning (in Scott, in Dickens, in Balzac), so perhaps we should say that what happened was a shift in scale, where the thematics of uneven development attached increasingly to metropole-colony relations within the global frame rather than to urban-rural relations within the national frame. (6-7)

Esty defines the ways by which modernist authors use, rather than reject outright, the developmental model of *Bildungsroman* as a means of examining "the contradictions inherent in mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire" (3). Building on, yet also revising and extending, this premise, I trace the roots of such uneven development resulting in failure much earlier into the Romantic period and across multiple genres. This extension of the parameters of failed development demonstrates how prominent authors were already pushing against the constraints of developmental models of narration early in the century—including in works exploring the difficulties of individual development within a colonial context. Moreover,

[1] For instance, Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development* (1993) explores the conflicted manner by which female novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries react to male models of development. Lorna Ellis' *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British* Bildungsroman*, 1750-1850* (1999) engages similar ground in arguing more unambiguously for the genre's value in its "ability to portray positive female development within society while simultaneously pointing out the oppressive nature of that society for women" (40).

it allows for a broader view of the change in cultural discourse of failure by analyzing the ways in which early nineteenth-century authors initiated the portrayal of developmental failure as a means of social critique.

This focus on developmental failure also remains cognizant of recent developments in scholarship broadly grouped together as failure studies. For example, Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) reclaims failure as a process through which creative discourse can emerge. As she writes, "failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development" (3). Moreover, she thematizes,

> To live is to fail, to bungle, to disappoint, and ultimately to die; rather than searching for ways around death and disappointment, the queer art of failure involves the acceptance of the finite, the embrace of the absurd, the silly, and the hopelessly goofy. Rather than resisting endings and limits, let us instead revel in and cleave to all of our own inevitable fantastic failures. (186-7)

Halberstam's exploration intellectually diverts from the popular model by which embracing failure leads to ultimate success. To acheive this distance, Halberstam utilizes queer theory to demonstrate value in failures that do not ultimately lead to a mainstream vision of success. Yet by reconigizing failure's inextricable link with the creative challenging of boundaries, Halberstam's approach exhibits clear continuity with the discourse established in nineteenth-century narratives of developmental failure that encourage readers to embrace rather than only fear failure as part of a larger pedagogical framework.

Other scholars have generated minor rumblings of failure studies as a potential theoretical model for literary interpretation. For instance, a panel at the 2014 MLA Annual Convention posited failure studies as a productive, emerging field that necessitates further definition. This

panel suggested failure studies should take as its focus creative works that critics or audiences have deemed failures. Therefore, this approach would allow scholars to understand more fully how particular works come to be viewed as failures, as well as reclaim value in traditionally neglected subjects. At the same time, the panelists expressed anxiety about the turn to failure as a critical paradigm. This anxiety echoes Charles Ramírez Berg's brief article "Notes on the Emergence of Failure Studies" (2009), which recognizes failure's emergence as a critical lens while also identifying its potential pitfalls. He notes two main difficulties: first, "Because a failure's flaws seem all too evident, the danger for the critic is assuming a superior position to the work and the maker" (101), and, second, "we study failure all the time" (101) without necessarily branding this approach as new or unique. Berg's reservations underscore the key tenet of failure studies: reclaim failure both conceptually and through the excavation of maligned works. This process clearly relates to the current popular literature examining failure; in each case, authors and scholars suggest we shed the cultural baggage of failure in order to reclaim the valuable aspects of the creative process or glean lessons for future improvement. For this reason, my project locates failure studies along the same continuum as contemporary popular works in which failure is viewed as a generative possibility. The narratives of failure in the nineteenth-century establish the discourse that enables failure studies to excavate failure as a pedagogical opportunity. These works, in focalizing failure as a means of social critique and individual learning, lay the foundation for contemporary analysis that searches for valuable lessons within literary failures. From this vantage point, the examination of developmental failure in nineteenth-century narratives allows us to understand more clearly the origins and impulses of our contemporary critical practice.

Additionally, this project exposes the manner by which narratives of individual development across genres emphasize problematic cultural components of the general trajectory of *Bildungsromane*. To establish this standard background, the protagonists of the primary texts I later explore at length each follow a fairly standard developmental path for narratives of the period: harbor youthful ideals that cannot be accommodated at home, leave home to search for a place that authorizes these ideals, engage in a romantic relationship, and encounter barriers to the original ideals. These narratives, however, subvert the typical final acclimation in which the protagonists emerge with mature knowledge of society's—and their own—limitations. Rather, these narratives end without this typical synthesis of outer limitations and inner ideals and instead with conspicuous failure. In so deviating from the expected narrative outcome, these narratives prompt readers to investigate the factors ultimately leading to failure rather than acclimation.

Each chapter in this project will dissect the manner by which the primary texts delineate their protagonists' failure. This project's title's emphasis of "Arrested Development" reflects this approach to locating the texts' developmental hurdles that contribute to the protagonists' ultimate failure. Although the primary texts in this study define these developmental hurdles differently, they each engage and ultimately critique an essential constitutive element of *Bildung*. For instance, Southey's *Madoc* (1805) depicts the difficulty of synthesizing inner ideals and societal limits in a colonial—rather than domestic—context. Likewise, Shelley's *Frankenstein* exposes the exclusionary and codependent logic of sensibility and *Bildung*. Later, Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859) illustrates the insurmountable difficulty of escaping the patriarchal ideology of one's origin. Meanwhile, Dickens' *Great Expectations* explores the manner by which the protagonist's central romantic entanglement halts development. Finally, du Maurier's

Peter Ibbetson underscores how protagonists' individual development depends on a problematic conception of self as superior. Overall, this project's use of "arrested development" expresses the expansive ways by which narratives of the period deployed developmental failure as a means to expose fault lines within the ideology of *Bildung*.

Taking this approach further, the title's emphasis on "Accounting for Failure" emphasizes the methodology of the primary texts' depiction of developmental failure, as well as their thematic approaches to this failure. Taking key features of *Bildung* as a target for their critique, these narratives account for their protagonists' failures by revealing the exclusionary politics of typical depictions of individual development. For instance, the second chapter demonstrates that the monster's failure in *Frankenstein* depends upon Mary Shelley's particular portrayal of the intersection of *Bildung* and sensibility as social systems. The monster, denied access to typical development because of the exclusionary framework of *Bildung* and sensibility, fails to acclimate and instead moves into self-exile. This example embodies the general methodological approach to texts in this project: analyze the protagonist's final failure, examine the limiting factors contributing to this characters' arrested development, explain how the author accounts for this failure, and, finally, explore how the subsequent social critique produced by the narrative fits into a lineage that reconceives failure as a generative possibility.

Each chapter, therefore, explores this deployment of narrative failure in a primary text to illustrate how the literary culture of nineteenth-century Britain worked to mobilize failure as a generative concept. These narratives generated both guidelines for thriving within problematic social structures and social criticism that implied the definition of more desirable replacements. For instance, the first chapter ("'Toiling in infinity': Rethinking *Madoc*'s Romantic Movement") examines a largely overlooked poem from an author whose once-popular oeuvre has recently

sparked scholarly reconsideration: the historical epic *Madoc* by Robert Southey. In this poem, Southey documents the transatlantic colonial and personal conquests of the eponymous hero, thereby placing the text at a unique intersection of developmental narrative and Romantic journey. This chapter analyzes the title character's tale of conflicted development in the context of the emerging discourse of failure in the period. It demonstrates the impossibility of typical development in a colonial rather than domestic context. By utilizing a protagonist who leaves home in order to develop, *Madoc* proposes a scenario of personal improvement but ultimately only offers momentary glimpses of maturation on the path toward ultimate failure. Along the way, the text points toward a conception of development in the Romantic era in which failure is masked as personal genius. Moreover, it leverages this failure as a means of Romantic resistance to the emerging logic of imperialism within the context of the modern world.

The second chapter, "'the prey of feelings unsatisfied': *Frankenstein, Bildung*, and the Limit of Sensibility," extends this problematic conception of individualism to a continental Europe by examining the crucial codependence and exclusionary structure of feeling and development in the Romantic period. First, it engages recent scholarly readings of sensibility's role in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* by locating Shelley's invocation of sensibility alongside her use of the emerging British importation of *Bildung*. Thereafter, it argues that *Frankenstein* critiques the developmental underpinning of both sensibility and *Bildung*, therein demonstrating the exclusionary boundaries of these superficially inclusive ideologies. By placing the monster's narrative at its critical center, this chapter claims the monster inherits a model of sensibility that suggests personal teleology but ultimately excludes those who are unable to enter the circuitry of sensibility and feeling. Therefore, Shelley deploys the monster's failure to enter into this social

network as a means of social protest, exposing the limits of sensibility and *Bildung* as outwardly inclusive social models.

The third chapter, "'The machinery of Wisdom': Negotiating Failure by Revision in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations*," examines novels by George Meredith and Charles Dickens published at the turn of the 1850s into the 1860s. These novels likewise explore the manner through which England confronted the possibility of personal failure in narrative form. Using the reception history of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* as an entry point, this chapter argues both *Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations*, in their initial editions, provide critical judgments of the liberal correlation between individual effort and ultimate success or failure. However, both novels undergo significant revision in order to soften these critiques of personal development; therefore, this chapter identifies 1859 as a key turning point in nineteenth-century thought regarding the relationship between success and failure. These texts and their subsequent revisions represent a clear cultural shift from uncompromising cause-and-effect models of development to more complicated, and harder to adjudicate, portrayals of the stakes of individual effort in determining ultimate success or failure.

I conclude with "Evolutionary Discourse and the *Bildungsroman*: Formulating Self and Species in du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson*." This richly self-aware novel by George du Maurier portrays a mad, homicidal protagonist who represents the dark underbelly of nineteenth-century subjectivity as produced by the novel form. Drawing on evolutionary science, natural history, and literature, the protagonist's development leads from a sentimentalized childhood, to the typical motions of *Bildung,* and finally to murder and madness. This chapter argues that *Peter Ibbetson* reflects on the dangers of nineteenth-century models of individual development by offering a sustained engagement with the ramifications of novelistic prototypes of building the

self, thereby highlighting the exclusionary politics of this process. Therein *Peter Ibbetson* anticipates Redfield's later recognition of the manner by which *Bildungsromane* reproduce the ideology of individual development and conformity through aesthetic form. In sum, *Peter Ibbetson* thinks about the ways novels think, and thus generates a response highly critical of the history of developmental narratives and their conventions, as well as failure's crucial role in the definition of the modern model of the individual.

The primary texts examined at length represent a range of literature engaging the concept of developmental failure in the nineteenth century. Though this archive is not exhaustive, it by design draws from a wide swath of genres, decades, and works of varying degrees of popularity (both currently and within the period). In this methodology, this project draws from texts at the center of scholarly examination of the period (*Great Expectations*, *Frankenstein*), novels once considered canonical that have fallen into critical neglect (*The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *Peter Ibbetson*), a popular work within the period (*Self-Help*), and an extended composition by an author once central to investigation of the period (poet laureate Southey's *Madoc*). This project accounts for the crucial ways in which authors deploy narratives of developmental failure in order, first, to critique foundational aspects of *Bildung* across genres and, second, to stir readers consideration of preventative measures against the protagonists' ultimate fate. This two-fold approach to the depiction of developmental failure produced a discourse in which, for the modern subject, failure becomes an essential component of social and individual ideology.

The deployment of individual failure portrayed in this project's genealogy demonstrates an unexamined foundation for contemporary conceptions of failure as generative. By examining the complicated politics of *Bildung* through a variety of textual genres, these texts participate in the birth of a literary ideology resistant to the simple causal narrative that hard work inevitably

leads to success. Rather, these texts deploy stark instances of individual failure to challenge readers' easy acceptance of this typical model and generate new models of subjectivity. In their portrayal of and responses to instances of failed development, these texts represent the cultural framework in which failure generates criticism, resistance, and ultimately a new definition of success. This definition, which crucially depends on instances of generative failure, becomes a central lens through which to view success at the onset of the twentieth century through today.

CHAPTER ONE

"Toiling in infinity": Rethinking *Madoc*'s Romantic Movement

In a July 1805 letter to Sir George Beaumont, William Wordsworth offers his rationale for the failure of Robert Southey's *Madoc* (1805), explaining "The character of Madoc is often very insipid and contemptible," to support a broader judgment that "Southey's mind does not seem strong enough to draw the picture of a hero" (194). And, indeed, few readers since *Madoc*'s initial publication have disagreed with Wordsworth's harsh judgment of the poem's title character—and, oftentimes, his view of Southey's own abilities. This chapter, however, will take a different view by exploring Madoc's developmental failure according to the standards of *Bildung* within a colonial context. I will suggest that *Madoc*, in its presentation of an "insipid and contemptible" hero, mobilizes developmental roadblocks and final failure as part of its resistance to colonialism. In this way, *Madoc* functions—through its emphasis on the failure of its Romantic hero—as an early example of the nineteenth-century trend of harnessing failure's generative capabilities to promote critical reflection on social structures. Moreover, the poem's strident emphasis on this failure in its final moments functions as a critique of the manner by which Romantic texts more broadly substitute rhetorical dexterity for an explication of developmental processes.

In order to situate *Madoc*'s portrayal of failed individual development, I will draw upon scholarship that has reconceived the ways in which Romanticism responded to nineteenth-century imperial practices. For instance, Saree Makdisi's *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (1998) uses James Mill's *History of British India* (1817-36) as a representative example of "a narrative of modernization as world history" (2) that "anticipates the actual (and much more gradual) convergence of capitalist and imperialist

practices within the process of modernization" (2). Makdisi further identifies "a number of *anti-histories* of this process, that is, a body of efforts to anticipate, understand, and contest these historical developments before they have actually taken place" (3). More broadly, he contends that Romanticism "can be partly understood as a diverse and heterogeneous series of engagements with modernization," and also acts as "a key constitutive element" of the "overall cultural transformation" (6) toward modernization. Building on Makdisi's framework, I want to suggest that *Madoc* participates in Romanticism's role as "a mediating discourse" (6) in the conceptualization of modernity by centrally depicting developmental failure as a means of resisting the project of colonial expansion. Further, I posit that *Madoc* actually participates in what Evan Gottlieb's *Romantic Globalism: British Literature and Modern World Order, 1750-1830* (2014) identifies as "global thinking" that "frequently took shape as an alternative to, rather than merely an elaboration or anticipation of, imperialism" (10).

Accordingly, this chapter will read *Madoc* as a tale of stilted development—and therefore conflicted "anti-history"—that uses failure in order to problematize colonialism within a Romantic context. By focusing on a text that "has long been regarded as one of the most spectacular white elephants of English Romanticism" (Leask 133), this reading complicates and deepens our understanding of Romanticism in several key ways. First, because it was conceived and written in the burgeoning years of what we now view as the high point English Romanticism (1789-1805), *Madoc* allows for a glimpse into the formative years of Romantic ideology. This view suggests that the development typically deployed in Romantic texts tends to substitute rhetorical acclimation for a critical examination of societal limitations. Second, in revealing the often-overlooked stasis of Romanticism's conception of the individual through the developmental failure of its title character, *Madoc* harnesses Romanticism's capability to

complicate the process of individual development within a colonial context. Finally, *Madoc* explores the strong link between *Bildung* and later nineteenth-century British narratives articulating anxiety surrounding individual development and failure. In linking these types of text, I will suggest that *Madoc* acts as an early example of nineteenth-century British literature's resistance to *Bildung* as an inclusive social model.

This new understanding of *Madoc* acknowledges previous cornerstones of Romanticism—for instance, celebrating the development of the nonconformist individual mind—and reorients them in light of the text's trajectory as a narrative of its eponymous hero's failed personal maturation. Although *Madoc* lies outside the generic boundaries of the *Bildungsroman*, it nevertheless points the way toward a broader conception of individual development according to the benchmarks of *Bildung* in the period. This conception, in fact, exposes the relationship between Romantic development and personal stasis. Supporting this idea, I contend that *Madoc* presents a model of maturation in which this stasis is masked by flashes of development and, as Southey formulates it, mental toil. As such, Madoc's stasis should not be read as an outlier of protagonists of the era but rather as an example of how Southey used failure as a means of critiquing developmental processes within a broader context of colonial ventures and Romanticism more generally.

Although *Madoc*'s ideological investments have been obfuscated because of the domination of canonical authors in describing the contours of Romanticism, these can actually allow for a broader understanding of the manner by which authors in the period conceptualized modernity. For instance, authors such as Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were more artful in framing their work in a manner suited to the presentation of grand statements of individual genius and literary criticism. On the other hand, Southey's poetic output can be

challenging in its lack of unity and numerous gestures toward antiquarian history. Moreover, Southey's work has no clear mission statement like Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) collection that defines a coherent literary or critical approach. However, this lack of explicit literary theorizing in Southey's texts paints a broader picture of Romanticism's ideological investments precisely because of his unwillingness to intervene into reading reception. In this light, the difficulties in Southey's narratives are not aberrations but rather point toward the understudied technique by which Romanticism glossed over the more troubling aspects of development with rhetorical flourishes.

Madoc's focus on the Welsh's mythical colonization of America demonstrates the tale's investment in the colonial ideology of the period. In fact, Southey's goal in *Madoc* was to produce an extended narrative poem exploring a peculiar claim in transatlantic movement: mainly, that the Welsh predated Columbus' exploration of America through the efforts of Madoc. Although foreign to contemporary readers today, this subject was by no means a unique fascination of Southey. In fact, the 1790s saw many attempts to reclaim the truth of this mythical tale. According to lore of this period, Madoc was a Welsh nobleman who led a successful expedition to America in the twelfth century. The actual history of this transmission, however, is telling in its emphasis on imperial ideology. For instance, John Dee utilized the myth between 1575 and 1783 of the Welsh discovery of America in order to justify the contemporaneous imperialistic pursuits of England (Williams 35). As Gwyn A. Williams relates, "In 1580, Dee launched Madoc at the world; he was avidly seized on by a whole generation of imperialists as a weapon against the Spanish monopoly of the New World" (35). *Madoc*'s focus on the Welsh colonization of America thereby marks its concern with a topic that had already proven important in defining the contours of European imperialistic ventures.

In fact, the subject of the twelfth-century Welsh exploration of America actually signals *Madoc*'s investigation of the contemporary political environment at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Williams reports that the Madoc myth had spread to sensational proportions by the later years of the eighteenth century,

> By the 1780s a tidal wave of Welsh Indian stories was breaking on English-speaking America. Literally scores of people reported direct conversations in Welsh with Indians, several Indian chiefs swore that their ancestors had been Welsh; many men told tales of saving their lives by talking in Welsh to Indians. There were stories of old Welsh Bibles and mysterious books among them; what appeared to be ancient forts strung out from Mobile to the Ohio were attributed to them. At least thirteen real tribes were identified as Welsh Indians, eight other tribes invented to fit. By the late eighteenth century, people realised that that they had gone up the Missouri of mystery to enjoy their golden age as the Mandans. In the last years of the century, something of a Madoc fever broke in the USA and belief in Welsh Indians became universal. (37)

Southey, as a schoolboy, became interested in the possibilities of producing literature focused on Madoc as a protagonist within this context of the popular fascination with Madoc's transatlantic journey. Because of this popularity, a poem written about Madoc at the beginning of the nineteenth century should not have seemed antiquarian or curious in any sense despite the several hundred years old subject matter. Rather, Southey was tapping into the heart of an important political topic at the turn of the century. This utilization of a historical figure representative of the contemporary politics of European colonial investments in America allows *Madoc*, as Makdisi writes more broadly of Romanticism, "to anticipate, understand, and contest" the definition of modernity before it had fully formed (3).

Southey's preface to the first edition of *Madoc* confirms the text's investment in using the historical tale as a means of exploring contemporary politics. First, he writes matter-of-factly of the internal political strife in Wales in the late twelfth century—political upheaval that caused Madoc to leave his "barbarous country" westward "in search of some better resting-place" (xix). Next, Southey continues, "The land which he discovered pleased him: he left there part of his people, and went back to Wales for a fresh supply of adventurers, with whom he again set sail, and was heard of no more" (xx). At the same time, Southey communicates that this story is no mere legend: "Strong evidence has been adduced that he reached America, and that his posterity exist there to this day, on the southern branches of the Missouri, retaining their complexion, their language, and, in some degrees, their arts" (xx). Here Southey appeals to the tale's continued cultural influence in the American colonial context. In the process, he reframes the twelfth-century story as political fact with real consequences for contemporary thought and artistic representation.

Therefore, critical approaches should treat *Madoc* as a participant in the contemporary politics of early nineteenth-century England. The selection of twelfth-century subject matter marked *Madoc* not as a historical curiosity but actually the deliberate refashioning of a myth that held a particular fascination with the public at the onset of the nineteenth century. By crafting an extended narrative poem about Madoc, Southey was not engaging in detached and isolated antiquarianism but rather creating a richly idiosyncratic character with particular resonances to thinking through colonial expansion for the later nineteenth century. Reevaluating Madoc's personal development and characterizations thus allows for a broader understanding of the manner that texts of the era formulated resistance to imperialistic practice.

However, *Madoc's* applicability to modern imperialism has generally been ignored since its 1805 publication because readers have tended to focus narrowly on Southey's use of historical detail rather than the text's broader exploration of the past in context of present politics. The initial reception of *Madoc* was quite unfavorable and often outright hostile, with much of this antagonism based in the text's antiquarian aims. One particular strident strand of criticism along these lines focused on Southey's invented quasi-authentic names for the Native American Aztlan population. For instance, John Ferriar's thoughts in the *Monthly Review* upon *Madoc*'s publication back-handedly concede the success of Southey's Welsh names ("Goervyl and Ririd and Rodri and Llaian may have charms for Cambrian ears") but also eviscerate the naming of the Aztlan characters: "who can feel an interest in Tezozomoc, Tlalala or Ocelopan?" (qtd. in Speck 112). Ferriar continues, "how could we swallow Yuhidthiton, Coanocotzin and, above all, the yawning jaw-dislocating Ayayaca?" (qtd. in Speck 112). Further critiquing the artificiality of the poem, Dorothy Wordsworth explains, "I had one painful feeling throughout, that I did not care as much about Madoc as the Author wished me to do" (101). These initial negative judgments of *Madoc* demonstrate reasons for the text's difficulty in resonating with readers as a dynamic engagement with contemporary politics.

If the initial reviews of *Madoc* were unfavorable, then the subsequent scholarly regard for the text, even among those scholars with a predisposition toward reevaluation of Southey's oeuvre, has been almost antagonistic. However, this reception history also begins to hint at the alienation caused by *Madoc*'s built-in subversion of development as a benchmark for character representation. For example, Jack Simmons' 1945 biography of Southey continues the trend of criticizing Southey's construction of names from the initial reviews of *Madoc* albeit with an added element of vitriol:

> The next of the epics to be written, though not to be published, was *Madoc*, the longest, the least successful, the most tedious of the five. It need not detain us. The story is highly involved, and it is impossible to feel the smallest interest in the cardboard characters with their outlandish names—Yuhidthiton, Tlalala, Tezozomoc and the rest of them. The poem is unlikely to find readers now, except among specialist students of Romantic literature, and perhaps Welsh or Mexican nationalists. (209)

Again, the names remain a particular point of contempt, seemingly coloring the reception of the entire work. His concession that the poem might be of interest to select groups serves as the only, albeit exceedingly discouraging, endorsement of the text. More importantly, Simmons' evaluation centers on "the cardboard characters"—judged so perhaps they do not follow through on the text's initial suggestion of development, change, and eventual acclimation.

Subsequent biographies and critical studies over the next three decades echo and amplify this judgment. Kenneth Curry's edition on Southey in the Routledge Author Guides series (1975) evaluates *Madoc* as "the longest and least interesting of Southey's long poems" (160), grounding this critique in the characters being "'flat' rather than 'round'" (161). This perceived flatness hinges on the presentation of characters outside of a strictly Romantic model championed by Southey's contemporaries. Similarly, Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch's 1977 biography claims that "*Madoc* today alienates by its remoteness" (110). In each of these cases—which are especially notable because even Southey's biographers find little to praise in *Madoc*—Southey's epic is cast as a failure, a text with overreaching ambitions populated by characters that simply do not fit the mold of Romanticism associated with the other Lake Poets.

Recent postcolonial readings of *Madoc*, however, have started to suggest that alternate vantage points can glean illuminating critical readings of the poem. Lynda Pratt explains in the

introduction to her critical anthology *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism* (2006), "In the last decade or so…Southey has at last started to become a writer worth reading" (xix). Pratt's own article, "Revising the National Epic: Coleridge, Southey, and Madoc" (1996), is representative of such shifting views. This work utilizes *Madoc* as the focus in exploring the contrasting views of Coleridge and Southey on the epic form during the long gestation of Southey's poem. Pratt's piece demonstrates *Madoc*'s potential as an object of literary study that enables further understanding of the Romantic period. Likewise, Tim Fulford's "Heroic Voyagers and Superstitious Natives: Southey's Imperialist Ideology" (1996) illustrates the generative potential of postcolonial readings of *Madoc*. Fulford provocatively argues,

> The purpose of Southey's imperialist ideology was to eradicate the similarity of homeland to colony, precisely because that similarity was partly produced by his recognition in the colonies of the fear he repressed at home—the fear that the "infections" of commercialism, Jacobinism, sensuality and superstition were powerful enough to spread throughout the common people. (47)

Fulford recognizes that Southey's imperialist tale of North American conquest is not merely a single, self-fashioned antiquarian's historical fiction but rather an expression of anxiety with broader implications for understanding imperialism in the Romantic era.

Similarly, Fiona Robertson's "British Romantic Columbiads" (1998) suggestively parallels the similarities in *Madoc*'s depiction of the Welsh conquerors and the Azteca population, concluding that in *Madoc* "Britain had been imagined to herself as the oppressor not the savior of other peoples" (16). Robertson's suggestion of ambivalence to the colonial endeavor depicted in *Madoc* is more fully addressed in Elisa E. Beshero-Bondar's "British Conquistadors and Aztec Priests: The Horror of Southey's *Madoc*" (2003). This piece posits the

concept of "hybrid horror" to describe the violence between the colonizer and colonized in *Madoc*, proposing "The poem's investigation of world cultures presents a provocative model of colliding worldviews and the hybridizing results of their impact" (89). Beshero-Bondar's article is especially effective in its identification of a "hybrid redefinition of the grounds of imperial authority, a redefinition that has horrified and alienated his readers since the time of *Madoc*'s publication" (89). These readings have built on *Madoc*'s generally unenthusiastic reception and opened a scholarly dialogue about the nuances of the text's exploration of its colonial ideology and imperialistic practice.

Generally, these postcolonial readings have been very persuasive in their exploration of the ideology of imperialism in *Madoc*; nevertheless, they have typically continued the previous trend of viewing Southey's characterizations as flat and unworthy of commentary. I depart from these critics in arguing that these flat characterizations are more accurately viewed as a problematizing of the usual developmental path. Instead, *Madoc* presents an ultimately failed trajectory that proposes personal improvement but ultimately only offers momentary glimpses of maturation. Madoc's regression and ultimate stasis thereby allows us to reorient the text as an exploration of the manner by which colonialism disallows the model of personal development typified by *Bildung*.

Madoc's structure begins by invoking the framework of a developmental journey in which the protagonist sets out from home in order to realize his inner ideals. The first part of the poem, *Madoc in Wales*, presents the hero's return to Wales after an initial voyage to North America. This portion of the work, modeled on *The Odyssey*, parallels imperialistic England's conquest of Wales with Madoc's forceful conversion of the Native Americans in North America. The majority of this part illustrates Madoc recounting his journey to the New World to his fellow

people of Wales while simultaneously struggling against the new domestic governmental structure (his brother has accepted the kingship at the cost of ceding political authority to England). Madoc quickly becomes displeased with this domestic strife and recruits other countrymen to take part in his journey back to the North American settlement. In this manner, Madoc's quest invokes the path of *Bildung* by highlighting the importance of moving from one's home in order to undertake a developmental quest.

At the same time, the structure of *Madoc*'s first book foreshadows the text's later exploration of individual developmental failure within a larger context of colonialism. First, this book emphasizes that England's conquest of Wales is fraught with tension, power struggles, and violence—and actually threatens to stifle Madoc's development. Moreover, Madoc's yarn is quickly interrupted by domestic strife, demonstrating the essentially unstable nature of individual development against the backdrop of England's colonial investment in Wales. This untidy opening suggests that disorder resulting from colonial investments is, in fact, woven into the narrative fabric of the poem from the outset. The chaotic opening vignette clearly resonates with the manner by which Romanticism acts as "a mediating discourse" (Makdisi 6) in imagining, understanding, and critiquing the logic of England's colonial investments later in the nineteenth century. By representing its title hero as a sensitive young man who must leave home in order to develop, *Madoc* signals its investment in the framework of *Bildung* as imported from Germany. However, the political backdrop of colonialism will later stunt this insight and prohibit full development and subsequent acclimation. Thereby, *Madoc* produces a character suggestive of developmental norms but thwarted by the overwhelming influence of colonialism.

The second part of the poem, *Madoc in Aztlan*, capitalizes on this suggestion of false development by depicting the ultimate failure of Madoc's imperialist goals in America. It

portrays Madoc's return to America where he finds that the one of the native populations, the Aztecas, have relapsed from their newfound Christianity to the native religion. This religion revolves around human sacrifice, violence, the worship of the idol Mexitli, as well as the perpetual subjugation of a particular subset of the other native population, the Hoamen. This second part, self-consciously modeled by Southey on *The Iliad*, presents the gruesome strategizing and battles by which Madoc asserts freedom for the minority Hoamen population. However, this focus on colonial violence has tended to overshadow the manner by which the poem undermines the efforts—and, by extension, the development—of its hero.

Madoc's victory is indeed quite fleeting, as the last lines of the poem grimly undercut the arduous conquest:

> So in the land
> Madoc was left sole Lord; and far away
> Yuhidthiton led forth the Aztecas,
> To spread in other lands Mexitli's name
> And rear a mightier empire, and set up
> Again their foul idolatry; till Heaven,
> Making blind Zeal and bloody Avarice
> Its ministers of vengeance, sent among them
> The heroic Spaniard's unrelenting sword. (395)

This passage clearly connects the poem's mythologizing of the Medieval Welsh settlers with the later conquest of the Native Americans by Spanish conquistadors, albeit while struggling to differentiate between the noble actions of Madoc and the "blind Zeal and bloody Avarice" of the "heroic Spaniard." This difficulty foregrounds the text's investment in using Madoc's historical

example as an entry point for thinking through the more broadly historical problems of colonialism.

Southey's poetic and narrative technique in this passage generates a critique of the goals of colonial processes. Rather than provide any finality in describing Madoc's lordship, the migration of the Aztecas, or even the eventual reemergence of violence among the Aztecas, Southey either utilizes enjambment or ends his lines with tentative punctuation that necessitate clarification in the next line. This structure sets up a false sense of hope in many of the lines, which is undercut in the elucidation of the subsequent line—a rhetorical construction symbolic of the cyclical nature of violence in colonial contexts. For instance, the line "Yuhidthiton led forth the Aztecas," does not invoke the eventual violent proselytizing in the name of the native idol Mexitli that this migration would entail; instead, it presents the rather hopeful phrase "led forth" to finalize the narrative of a character portrayed sympathetically throughout the tale. Later, Southey alludes to the Azteca's future to "rear a mightier empire, and set up / Again their foul idolatry." Notice the positive connotation of the rearing "a mightier empire" with the undercutting "foul idolatry" of the subsequent line. In this line, however, Southey again subverts expectation of the continuation of this negative thread by inserting the full stop of a semicolon, followed by the hope inducing "till Heaven," to close the line. Once again in the next line, Southey utilizes the blank verse form to undermine expectation, ironically revealing in the next lines that Heaven, rather than acting as a peaceful agent, has actually made "blind Zeal and bloody Avarice / Its ministers of vengeance."

The final lines of the poem then conclude with the stanza's only period to underscore the pervasive violence in this colonial context. In these lines, Heaven smites the Aztecas through "The heroic Spaniard's unrelenting sword." The reader is thereby left with the rhythmic

"unrelenting sword" as the final image of the poem—a reminder that, despite Madoc's suggested development, the course of history would be generally unchanged. It also presents a darkly ironic interpretation of Spanish colonialism, at once praising Cortés as "heroic" and condemning him as a figure characterized by "blind Zeal and bloody Avarice." The delicately constructed and deeply sardonic final stanza therefore mirrors the developmental stasis exposed by *Madoc* as a whole. Not only is the historical import of Madoc's entire journey placed under erasure, but the trajectory of the historical narrative of colonialism in America is cast as repetitive rather than unproblematically teleological. The narrative as a whole thereby questions even the possibility of development within the cyclical nature of violence that characterizes imperialistic practice.

This ending, which undermines the entirety of the proceeding narrative, was a point of criticism for reviewers of the period. One unsigned review from the *General Review of British Foreign Literature* in 1806 laments, "The greatest fault we are disposed to find with the *Madoc* is its termination. We do not like its closing incident" (Madden 112). The reviewer even goes so far as to suggest specific revisions for the poem in subsequent editions. Curiously, this trend has continued with Southey's ending not being viewed as a deliberate provocation but only as a flaw. In contrast, I suggest the regression in the ending presents an alternate resolution that challenges quick and easy framing devices often employed by other Romantic poets of the era. *Madoc* is not framed in a manner conducive to comforting moralizing; rather, it challenged the notions of the finality of individual development in significant ways.

Other Romantic poets were more inclined than Southey to present a tidy closing to their works by crafting the illusion of a coherent moral or ethic. Had Southey more definitively resolved the tensions of the poem in this final stanza, the reception to the work might have been quite different. However, given *Madoc*'s dedication to the perceived truth of the history of Welsh

settlements, such moralizing would have been out of step with the aims of the poem: to present this historical Romantic hero, flaws and all, in a manner uniquely attuned to contemporary events and the future definition of colonial endeavors in the nineteenth century. As such, this troublesome ending allows us to reframe the poem as a manifestation of the text's anxiety related to modern colonial expansion. Madoc's basic goals and qualities were not inconsistent with other characters of the period, but the ultimate futility of his efforts creates the illusion that his personality was aberrational rather than representative. If we expand our understanding of the manner by which Romanticism resisted colonialism through the depiction of failed development, the artificiality of the construction of more outwardly successful literary creations becomes clearer.

The title of this chapter refers to a passage in *Madoc in Wales* that is particularly relevant to Southey's conception of the vexed and oftentimes static nature of development within a colonial context. This early section directly follows the celebration of individualism, optimism, and exploration expressed in the planning of Madoc's initial transatlantic journey in which the Welsh travel over the ocean to North American for the first time. Southey here uses the blank verse of the poem to create a strong metaphorical link between Madoc's individual psyche and the sublimity of overwhelming ocean:

> The fourth week now had past;
> Still all around was sea, . . the eternal sea!
> So long that we had voyaged on so fast,
> And still at morning where we were at night,
> And where we were at morn, at nightfall still,
> The centre of that drear circumference,

Progressive, yet no change! . . almost it seem'd

That we had pass'd the mortal bounds of space,

And speed was toiling in infinity. (30-1)

This passage invokes the awe-inspiring and fascinating apprehension commonly expressed in shorter canonical Romantic works on the sublimity of the overpowering force nature, from Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798" (1798) to Shelley's "Mont Blanc" (1817). More than this typical usage, however, Southey utilizes the ocean to explore the metaphor of mind as nature. Pushing against "the mortal bounds of space" functions both as a figurative statement of the mental toil of unknown oceanic exploration and a real assessment of the physical danger that accompanies such journeys. In this way, Southey's depiction hinges on the end-stopped phrase, "toiling in infinity," suggesting struggle with no realizable teleological goal. Unlike other Romantic expressions of sublimity, this passage makes no attempt to articulate a refinement in personal perspective or genius resulting from natural terror. *Madoc* offers no satisfying reflective frame for this sublime experience, foreshadowing the narrative's closing challenge to a typical protagonist's developmental acclimation.

"Toiling in infinity" also serves as a succinct yet highly generative summation of the developmental stasis explored in *Madoc* as a whole. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides perhaps the most common definition of toil brought to mind by modern readers: "to engage in severe and continuous labour or exertion; to labour arduously." In this sense of the word, toil is centrally concerned with process rather than outcome. One works strenuously, but this labor need not point the way toward an ultimate larger goal. Other period definitions, however, point to the richness of Southey's word choice. For example, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides a

figurative usage of the word with citations between 1788 and 1831: "To struggle mentally." In this sense, toiling is not merely a physical process but a psychological one. Thus toiling connotes Madoc's growing doubt with his transatlantic venture—struggling toward individual development and success but at the same time being obstructed in the process.

Additionally, this mental connotation connects with another period definition with usages cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* between 1667 and 1823: "To bring into some condition or position, or to procure" (*OED*). Not coincidently, two of the four cited usages are taken from the works of Coleridge, and the contrast between these usages with Southey's draws out how *Madoc* challenges the period's typical developmental ideology. Coleridge's usage clearly demarcates toiling not only as a process but indeed the actual achievement of a teleological end: "the thing is toiled and hammered into fit shape" (qtd. in *OED*). Taken in this sense of the word, Southey's usage becomes richly paradoxical: yes, Madoc toils toward an individual goal, but in the process becomes caught up in a developmental "infinity"—an infinity characterized not by endless possibility but by a stifling lack of precise direction. Taken in the sense of the word used by Coleridge, Madoc's individual development "is toiled" into infinity rather than toward a clear end. This sense of "toiling in infinity" thereby becomes Southey's expression of the developmental stasis that characterizes Romanticism more broadly. His insistence on not clearly contextualizing Madoc's experience in a way that conforms to a Romantic worldview is not an aberration; rather, it is a key clue in exposing the artificiality of Romantic development as espoused by the canonical Romantic poets. Significantly, Southey does not resolve this dilemma by the end of the work, with the ending stanza amplifying the concept that even individual prowess and genius often drift toward developmental and historical inertia.

Herbert Tucker's *Epic: Britain's Heroic Muse 1790-1910* functions as one of the few scholarly texts that attempts to differentiate between a problematic hero like *Madoc* and other, more celebrated Romantic figures. He contends, "for all its surface adventurism the poem is too bland, like its unexceptional blank verse, to take us far into the heart of any but a bureaucratically gray darkness" (115). Cutting closer to the core of Madoc as a character, he writes,

> *Madoc*, in short is an *Aeneid* for the Romantic period, a budding poet laureate's official portrait of a blameless captain wandering between two worlds, founding a makeshift regime, and dutifully patrolling there an order as humanely maintained as the nature of the case will permit. (115)

This critique, while convincing in its classification of *Madoc* as a text with a self-conscious epic ambition based in classical literature, nevertheless marginalizes the period-specific context and distinctiveness of Madoc's heroism. In fact, Madoc's negotiation between the English and rival factions of the Welsh in his homeland mirrors the European strife of the 1790s. Moreover, as Beshero-Bondar's postcolonial critique cogently argues, *Madoc* reads not as a simplified tale of colonial domination but rather a literary case study in many of the complications surrounding sovereignty when disparate cultures clash. To classify *Madoc* as an uninspired nineteenth-century *Aeneid* is to underestimate both its connectedness to contemporaneous politics and Madoc's credentials as a Romantic figure. Tucker concludes his appraisal by noting, "The epic leaves its hero, the conqueror of little and founder of nothing, spearheading disaster relief; and in this aftermath he ends where he began" (120). This judgment accurately describes the superficial action of the resolution of the poem; however, its implication is that *Madoc* should have ended elsewhere—perhaps in some sort of triumphant return or celebration for the titular hero.

I contend that this assumption typifies the general misreading of *Madoc* as a flawed text rather than a work invested in challenging the dominant discourse of development in the period. Madoc's spirit of adventure, self-reliance, and self-doubt place him in a Romantic lineage running from German sources like Goethe's Wilhelm Meister to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner to Byron's Childe Harold. Like these celebrated Romantic figures, Madoc is an inspired character with an appetite for exploration and a penchant for introspection. These characters are Madoc's closest likenesses, so to interpret him as a retread of Aeneas overlooks his Romantic context. Yes, the epic backslides its narrative progress repeatedly and Madoc "ends where he began"; yet this backsliding actually presents an instantiation of failure that allows us to understand how other authors of the period mask developmental stasis. Without the more satisfying framing contextualization in the works of Wordsworth and Coleridge, for instance, their poetic creations would appear mired in a static holding pattern like Madoc, a comparison I will return to shortly.

In fact, the developmental "infinity" of *Madoc* mirrors the thematic core of the poem, which questions the possibility of true developmental progress within the context of colonial violence. For instance, the first part of Southey's text, *Madoc in Wales*, depicts a triumphant return for the hero. This portion of the narrative begins with Madoc's homecoming to Wales, during which he recounts his triumph in navigating the unknown waters and converting the Native American population to Christianity with little bloodshed. Moreover, he characterizes his new settlement as something of a utopia—perhaps not surprising given biographers' and critics' frequent association of this fictional settlement with Southey's and Coleridge's hypothesized Pantisocracy in America of the 1790s (during *Madoc*'s early drafting). This utopian vision of the New World contrasts sharply with the domestic politics Madoc returns to in Wales, in which Madoc views his brother as having betrayed the Welsh to the English. Gathering up those who

wish to follow him back to the paradisiacal New World, the first part ends with Madoc confidently returning to his new colony. This structural relapse cannot help but feel somewhat anticlimactic and regressive. Madoc had already escaped domestic strife in Wales in his first voyage, and thus the impetus for the second expedition seems strikingly repetitive. Nevertheless, Madoc and his followers hopefully journey to North America again, with the anticipation of escaping domestic turmoil in Europe and rather finding the New World in the utopian state Madoc left it.

The second part, *Madoc in Aztlan*, sharply undercuts any confidence in the colony's utopian underpinnings nearly at its outset when Madoc is informed,

> When we had quell'd
> The strength of the Aztlan, we should have thrown down
> Her altars, cast her Idols to the fire,
> And on the ruins of her fanes accurst
> Planted the Cross triumphant. Vain it is
> To sow the seed where noxious weeds and briars
> Must choke it in the growth. (208)

This report, so brazen in its regret of not annihilating the traces of the native religion, sets the tone for the second part of *Madoc*, mostly characterized by excessive descriptions of gory battles and human sacrifice rather than individual "growth." By here emphasizing throwing "down her altars," casting "Idols to the fire," and obstructing "the growth" of Christianity through "noxious weeds and briars," Southey's poetic imagery foreshadows the action of the second part of the poem. This second part undermines development as an organizing concept, with the mostly peaceful change of the first part undermined by a return to primal violence disguised as self-

defense and Christian duty—thereby putting into question any development of the hero or of the Azteca population described in the first part of the poem.

In sum, the structure of the poem undermines Madoc's development in the first part with the gruesomely detailed perpetual war of the second. Madoc's navigation out of developmental "infinity" becomes momentary and ephemeral. Rather than view this second part as a flawed regression, however, this part can be reinterpreted as a textual exploration of the difficulty of developing according to the standards of *Bildung* within the context of colonial violence. Through this lens, Southey's ending becomes symbolic of the anxieties only suggested in other Romantic texts. The authors of these texts more systematically overshadow their intimation of "toiling in infinity" with an emphasis on sustained introspection, a deep connection to the natural world, and the celebration of the poet as an exemplary figure. In this way, *Madoc*'s aberrations from typical depictions of development can uniquely contribute to our understanding of how developmental discourse of the period tended toward tenuous rhetorical constructions well suited to the satisfying framing of past events and narratives.

Madoc's most similar sister-text, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798), illustrates a telling example in this respect. Both Madoc and the Mariner embark on dubious nautical endeavors only to meet hardship, death, personal tests, and supernatural challenges along the way. Yet by the end of Coleridge's poem, the semblance of a coherent ethic emerges, thereby putting the voyage, its thematic aberrations, and the Mariner's accompanying struggles into a larger, more satisfyingly finished perspective. The Mariner affirms to the wedding guest:

> He prayeth well who loveth well
>
> Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best who loveth best,

All things both great and small:

For the dear God, who loveth us,

He made and loveth all. (646-50)

Coleridge's denouement thereby establishes a semblance of finality, especially in the last description of the wedding guest: "A sadder and a wiser man / He rose the morrow morn" (657-58). This ending provides punctuation and moralistic context to the supernatural journey while placing its themes of development within reach of the reader. In the cited lines, Coleridge repeatedly utilizes "loveth," clearly demonstrating an ethical imperative for the wedding guest and, by extension, the reader. The mariner's self-conscious comprehension of the lessons of his trials—along with his impulse toward imparting these lessons to others—provide the poem with a sense of resolution. Development here signifies not only a growing awareness of the importance of loving to others but also the ability to formulate this process in the first place. As a result of this rhetorical construction, the Mariner's often horrifying journey becomes a source of comfort and wisdom for the wedding guest and readership.

Coleridge's tidy finale to his title character's central conflict in *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* contrasts sharply with the final assertion in *Madoc*. In the case of *Madoc,* the pagan Aztecas will build a stronger empire than ever and eventually experience a similarly bloody war with Spanish explorers—each of which serve to undermine the developmental efforts of Madoc. However, Coleridge's textual journey manufactures satisfaction through a somewhat ambiguous

and illusory moral; he sets up the final imperative to "loveth well" earlier during a crucial moment at sea—a moment of despair at first not unlike that of Madoc while "toiling in infinity":

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watch'd the water-snakes:
They mov'd in tracks of shining white;
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black
They Coil'd and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I bless'd them unaware!
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I bless'd them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free

The Albatross fell off, and sank

Like lead into the sea. (264-83)

This extended passage establishes the disparity in the exploration of a developmental trajectory between *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* and *Madoc*. Coleridge's narrative skillfully weaves in a moral imperative toward love, prayer, and repentance. The mariner frees himself from his albatross through these processes and subsequently acts as a conduit for the poet himself in spreading the word to others.

Additionally, the rhetoric of these stanzas in *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* suggests that successful acclimation can be achieved through the transcendence of language. These stanzas emphasize the connection between sensory experience and individual development, with the Mariner watching the water snakes' "tracks of shining white," "rich attire," and metaphorical "flash of golden fire." Thereafter, the Mariner highlights the inadequacy of language ("no tongue / Their beauty might declare") before moving into the spontaneous expression of emotion that transcends language ("A spring of love gushed from my heart"). This move beyond the realm of language hypothesizes a developmental finale actually unavailable to the essentially linguistic power of poetry. In this way, this key moment in *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* represents the manner by which an appeal beyond language can actually gloss over the difficulties of developmental struggle. In the end, the title character's rhetorical framing of his development constructs his acclimation to the wedding guest.

By contrast, Madoc's struggles have no clear resolution and stress the manner by which developmental narratives cannot escape the linguistic nature of politics. The tale ends by emphasizing the difficulty and often-transitory nature of development: Madoc's struggle has been nullified, and history becomes doomed to repeat itself upon the arrival of the Spanish

conquistadors. Unlike Coleridge's poem, *Madoc* suggests that striving for individual development can be a process defined by setbacks, aberrations, and eventual failure. Instead of interpreting *Madoc* as a flawed instantiation of the developmental ideology typically deployed in Romantic texts, however, I contend it actually reveals the pitfalls of colonialism as disabling a similar developmental path. Madoc's journey invokes the same developmental signposts as that of the mariner; however, Madoc's ultimate failure emphasizes the futility of his efforts within the pervasive logic of colonialism. *Madoc* hypothesizes that, although standard development may be possible in the context of Europe—or in the essentially linguistic-free isolation of the ocean—it remains problematic in the colonies where history is constantly being narrated, reevaluated, and re-narrated for particular political aims. This exploration of development inside the colony underscores how *Madoc* participates in Gottlieb's "global thinking" as a means of testing the limits of Romantic models of development. By thinking globally, *Madoc* is able to uncover problems more easily glossed over in an oceanic or European setting, as is the case in *Lyrical Ballads*.

This contrast between the endings and themes of *Madoc* and *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* reveals how the reception of Romanticism actually obscures the mechanics of texts outside of its typical purview. Jerome J. McGann here provides a useful background: "the scholarship and criticism of Romanticism and its works are dominated by a Romantic Ideology, by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (1). For McGann, Romantic poetry creates an image of itself that "can transcend a corrupting appropriation" (13). This calculated transcendence forms an idealized lens through which the literary culture of the period is viewed and subsequently characterized. As such, texts of the period that do not

construct this idealized lens tend to be explored less closely and rather interpreted as a failed instantiation of typical Romantic motions.

The attributes of Southey's text that have led to frequent criticism provide the modern reader with a platform for better understanding of the constitution of this ideology. Indeed, *Madoc*'s "flat" characterizations and problematic ending provide an entryway for grasping, in a broader sense, how development within a Romantic context is characterized by personal stasis. This personal stasis, in which poets and characters of the period "toil" toward some teleological end, suggests that the rough edges of Southey's work expose the artificially rounded edges of other key Romantic figures like the Mariner. These delineations of Romantic ideology act as a self-affirming process and actually work to reinforce further the typical trajectory of development as borrowed from *Bildung*.

Madoc's implication that development is often a hollow rhetorical construction to overwrite complications resonates in the ways we interpret other canonical statements of Romanticism. Take, for instance, Wordworth's cornerstone of early English Romanticism, "Tintern Abbey." Not coincidently, this poem is the closing work in the carefully planned *Lyrical Ballads* collection that began with *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, thereby demonstrating Coleridge and Wordsworth's skill for retrospectively contextualizing development. In fact, "Tintern Abbey" as a whole is explicitly engaged with this framing process in manner that contrasts sharply with *Madoc*.

Wordsworth's canonical piece famously begins, "Five years have passed; five summer, with the length / Of five long winters!" (1-2), from the outset establishing a temporal distance between an original experience and the present moment. The opening stanza continues this strategy of revisiting as a means of backward reflection and reinterpretation. He writes, "Once

again / Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs" (4-5), "I again repose / Here, under this dark sycamore" (9-10), and "Once again I see / These hedge-rows" (15-16). This opening portion of the poem repeatedly calls attention to Wordsworth's reflective reinterpretation of former experience ("Once again," "Once again"), and thereby sets up the poem as a means of contextualizing development. The middle section of the poem untangles Wordworth's conflicted feelings toward maturation and urban life, eventually coming to a resolution in which he offers his sister Dorothy a prepackaged ideological lens through which to view experiences at the abbey:

> Oh! then,
> If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
> Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
> Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
> And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance,
> If I should be, where I no more can hear
> Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
> Of past existence, wilt thou then forget
> That on the banks of this delightful stream
> We stood together; and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came,
> Unwearied in that service: rather say
> With warmer love, oh! with far deeper zeal
> Of holier love. Nor wilt though then forget,
> That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake. (143-60)

These lines both reinterpret and moralize Wordsworth's experience in a manner that lends them added rhetorical weight—indeed, the rhetorical weight necessary for the construction of Romantic development. Wordsworth directly calls on Dorothy to internalize his "exhortations," creating a moral imperative in order to vindicate his conflicted feelings upon revisiting this location in the opening lines of the poem. This imperative is easily triangulated to the reader, providing a satisfied sense of wisdom gained and successful development.

Moreover, Wordsworth highlights a utilitarian purpose for their travels to the abbey: to retrospectively view their travels "with far deeper zeal / Of holier love." Wordsworth concludes the poem through the conflation of the natural setting, Dorothy, and himself, with the "green pastoral landscape" being "More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake." Like Coleridge in *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, Wordsworth explores individual struggle only to overlay the rhetoric of Romantic development. Moreover, both Coleridge and Wordsworth are able to explicate the benefits of these struggles for their audiences—thereby transmitting their developmental ideology based in rhetorical constructions and leaving the reader with a sense of absorbed wisdom. In effect, these readers, through the performative aspects of Wordsworth and Coleridge's poetry, are presented with comforting exhortations: to "loveth well" and to hold one's own "green pastoral landscape" as stand-ins for *Bildung*.

McGann's work is also informative here in examining the rhetoric that masks developmental stasis in Wordsworth and Coleridge's poems. McGann identifies the ability of the early Romantics to package solutions to difficult and deeply personal dilemmas: "Romantic

poems take up transcendent and ideal subjects because these subjects occupy areas of critical uncertainty" (73). He continues, "The aim of the Romantic poem…is to rediscover the ground of stability in these situations" (73). Thus Coleridge's Mariner acclimates through a general embrace of living beings in the context of a generalized Christian ethic, which he communicates to the wedding guest (and, of course, his readers). Wordsworth, for his part, is able to contextualize his youthful experiences from the self-fashioned perspective of self-cultivation. Thereby, he strikes the pose of acclimation when transmitting his developmental ideology to Dorothy (and also his readers).

By contrast, *Madoc*, though gestating during the 1798 publication of *Lyrical Ballads* and sharing many of this collection's concerns with particular "areas of critical uncertainty," does not present a superficially satisfying final ethic. In effect, *Madoc* raises the same developmental problems of *Lyrical Ballads* but accentuates their inability to be resolved. Using McGann's terminology, Southey's text takes up "areas of critical uncertainty," but it does not "rediscover the ground of stability" in them. Rather, it exposes the uncertainty inherent in development within imperialistic contexts, as well as suggests the manner by which the rhetoric of Romantic development writes out the types of toils suggested by *Bildung*.

Southey anonymously reviewed *Lyrical Ballads* upon its publication in 1798 in the *Critical Review*, and his critiques provided a testing ground for *Madoc*'s approach to and theory of development within a Romantic context. In respect to *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*, Southey concedes, "This piece appears to us perfectly original in style as well as in story" (149). His larger critique, however, is much less charitable, noting, "Many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful; but in connection they are absurd or unintelligible" (149). Ultimately, Southey's critique becomes quite damning: "We do not sufficiently understand the story to

analyse it. It is a Dutch attempt at German sublimity. Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit" (149).

Southey's perception of the shortcomings of *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* hints at the logic behind *Madoc*'s foregrounding of failure. I suggest Southey's criticism stems from his rejection of the rhetorical function of Coleridge's concluding moral. In stating, "We do not sufficiently understand the story to analyse it," Southey implies the essentially inaccessible logic of the resolution of the Mariner's difficulties. Because Southey's text signals an investment in the deployment of explicit failure—to the point of accused incoherence—an admonition to "loveth well" serving as the capstone to the tale would not suit his problematizing of individual development. In fact, the technique enabling this perfect originality actually obscures the limitations of social structures so central to the acclimation of *Bildung*.

Southey's criticism of *Lyrical Ballads* also reads as an in-process statement of *Madoc*'s developmental logic. From this vantage point, it is unsurprising that Southey's investment in retelling a twelfth-century tale for contemporary political purposes would clash with the more mystical atmosphere of Coleridge's poem. For instance, Southey's footnoting, rivaling the poem proper in size, provides historical background for his portrayal of Welsh and Aztec customs. This research reveals *Madoc* as a text deeply invested in the linguistic preservation and political consequences of history, with the authenticity of language, custom, and cultural interaction placed in a central position.

Due to Southey's appropriation of a historical narrative to reinterpret contemporaneous politics, *Madoc* allow us to glimpse an instantiation, as Makdisi writes, of modernity as a "process of transition" (14), characterized "as a struggle between what appears as a totalitarian system and a range of sometimes localized (and sometimes not) sites and zones and cultures of

resistance" (14). *Madoc* becomes not historical fiction in any strict sense but rather the extended exploration of Romantic notions of development against a colonial backdrop more powerful than the individual mind. As a result, *Madoc* hints at a model of personal improvement that ultimately remains static.

In this way, *Madoc* forces reconsideration of Jed Esty's timeline for how "Modernism exposes and disrupts the inherited conventions of the bildungsroman [*sic*] in order to criticize bourgeois values and to reinvent the biographical novel," as well as "explore the contradictions inherent in mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire" (3). Esty further elaborates the chronology of this argument,

> I am hypothesizing that the developmental logic of the late bildungsroman [*sic*] underwent substantial revision as the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference. What we conventionally understand as the transformation of the bildungsroman [*sic*] into the naturalist fiction of disillusionment (with its logic of fixed social hierarchies, broken destinies, and compensatory but socially eccentric artistic visions) may also have had a geopolitical dimension, one that is especially visible in the British novel tradition. (6)

Madoc's narrativizing of the relationship between colonial violence and stilted *Bildung* demonstrates that the groundwork for these modernist challenges to developmental ideology was established much earlier than has been acknowledged. Moreover, *Madoc*'s foregrounding of its hero's failure to acclimate helps create the discourse by which authors later in the century would explore the limits of developmental logic within a domestic context, as well. *Madoc*'s stasis lays the groundwork for such narratives that I examine in subsequent chapters, which invoke the

developmental model of *Bildung* but ultimately narrate its failure as a means of cultural resistance.

Overall, *Madoc* reveals itself as a text ready for reevaluation in the larger context of Romantic resistance to imperialism. Its title character epitomes the illusory nature of development according to *Bildung* in the larger context of cyclical colonial violence. Moreover, rather than reading it as a flawed version of the development depicted by other Romantic poets, *Madoc* can be more productively understood as a reflection on the rhetoric of development within Romanticism. This rhetoric has obfuscated the manner by which other authors of the period actually failed to account for developmental processes in a comprehensive manner. Instead, Southey's text suggests that when pushed to their limits in the context of imperialistic practice, these developmental processes, like Madoc, toil in infinity.

CHAPTER TWO

"the prey of feelings unsatisfied": *Frankenstein, Bildung*, and the Limit of Sensibility

"I am an unfortunate and deserted creature; I look around, and I have no relation or friend upon earth. These amiable people to whom I go have never seen me, and know little of me. I am full of fears; for if I fail there, I am an outcast in the world for ever."—The monster, to old man De Lacey (158)

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; Or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) has become the springboard for a wide variety of readings since its critical reevaluation in the latter half of the twentieth-century. Indeed, interpretations of the text incorporate the methodology of nearly all schools of literary criticism from the early 1970s to the present. This chapter aims to reframe our understanding of the novel by utilizing concepts crucial to the foundation of nineteenth-century narrative that have been a blind spot for even the most effective interpretations of *Frankenstein*: *Bildung* and failure. The British *Bildungsroman* would gain prominence as the nineteenth century progressed, with the German models of individual development becoming a key feature of popular novels in the decades after *Frankenstein*. Shelley's forerunner inhabits a liminal position in the emergence of *Bildung* as a literary model in British literature: it was conceived early enough to engage the reverberations of German-language *Bildungsromane* that filtered into British writing through readers of German-language literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Additionally, *Frankenstein* is also engaged in the cultural model of sensibility that dominated eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British prose narratives. The result is a novel that narrativizes the tension between inherited sensibility and emerging *Bildung*.

This chapter examines these ideological models side by side, contending that Shelley's text presents a test case demonstrating the monster's absolute failure to participate in sensibility and *Bildung*. The novel uses this test case to critique the exclusionary limits of each social system. In *Frankenstein*, all key narrators—and therefore all narrative layers—inherit the

cultural framework of sensibility while responding to the assumptions of *Bildung*, with the ultimate self-destruction of the monster at the narrative's center most openly exposing the exclusionary politics of *Bildung* and sensibility. I will argue that Shelley's text functions as a double critique: first, it exposes the limits of community feeling as defined by sensibility. In this way, *Frankenstein* anticipates Chris Jones' critique of sensibility as "a Janus-faced concept" that was both "an appeal to unconditioned natural feelings" and "a social construction which translated prevailing power-based relationships into loyalties upheld by 'natural' feelings" (7). *Frankenstein*'s exploration of the limits of sensibility emphasizes the manner by which its emphasis on "natural feelings" actually reinscribes existing exclusionary structures. Second, *Frankenstein* turns a critical eye on the role sensibility plays as gatekeeper within the ideal of *Bildung*. As such, *Frankenstein* stands as a vital early-century example of a text that mobilizes developmental failure as a means of social critique.

The novel's double critique of sensibility and *Bildung* demonstrates each of their systemic flaws, therein hypothesizing future social systems without similar exclusionary boundaries. *Frankenstein* offers no substantial replacement worldview or correctives but rather enacts multiple narrative layers of developmental failure as a means of social protest. Texts later in the century, including George Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859), and George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891), build on the basic critical approach exemplified by *Frankenstein* in constructing alternate lenses for viewing success and failure via the depiction of inherently flawed or exclusionary cultural systems. Yet *Frankenstein*, unlike these later texts, exposes sensibility—an outwardly inclusionary social model—as culpable in the exclusionary framework of *Bildung.* In this argument, I depart from Isabelle Bour, who recognizes *Frankenstein*'s "disintegration of the paradigm of sensibility"

(823) but also links this disintegration to an emergent emphasis on "psychological change as a prerequisite for social effectiveness" (823-24) as typified by the *Bildungsroman*. By contrast, I believe that *Frankenstein*'s invocation of *Bildung* in each of its narrative layers, but particularly in that of the monster, demonstrates the manner by which both sensibility and *Bildung* systematically inhibit development through arbitrary exclusion. By exposing these limits without offering a clear corrective, *Frankenstein* helps establish the nineteenth-century trend of utilizing failure narratives that evoke *Bildung* as a means of generating critical social commentary.

Each layer of *Frankenstein*'s nested narrative structure signals the novel's emphasis on exploring individual failure within the context of *Bildung*'s self-cultivation and development. In the outermost layer, the writings of Captain Robert Walton negotiate the readers' entrance into the novelistic world. His letters to his sister contain the entirety of the novel's narrative. Moreover, they trace the ways his personal development echoes the stages of *Bildung*—moving from an ambitious young man with artistic aspirations to intrepid world explorer. However, Walton's final decision to abort his crew's mission to explore the North Pole signals the text's invocation of developmental tropes and ultimate withholding of *Bildung*'s harmonious acclimation. Within this outermost layer, Walton's letters contain his recounting of Victor Frankenstein's orally narrated tale. Victor's narration mirrors Walton's storytelling both in its use of tropes from developmental narratives and in Victor's spectacular failure as a scientist and corresponding inability to acclimate to society. Finally, the novel's innermost layer, that of the monster, cites developmental benchmarks inherited through reading and Walton's narrative techniques. Astrida Orle Tantillo argues that *Frankenstein*, through the monster's reading of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), explores "the consequences for characters who adopt desires and aspirations from the texts that they read" (177). However, I argue that the novel in each of its

narrative layers isolates and critiques the pervasive influence of *Bildung* as both a literary and real-life model. The monster's acceptance of the developmental framework of *Bildung* —typical of characters and readers of the period—presents the novel's test of this system's limits. These limits demonstrate that the monster's ultimate inability to acclimate should not be attributed to his internal characteristics or external choices but rather to the mutually constitutive exclusionary politics of *Bildung* and sensibility. In each of these layers, *Frankenstein* presents a developmental narrative that ends in a failure to acclimate to the world—with its innermost layer showing the effects of the core assumptions and exclusionary politics of both *Bildung* and sensibility.

In the outermost layer, Walton's early letters reflect the interpenetration of his present venture, to be the first captain to lead a ship to the North Pole, and his previous youthful ambition, to be a famous poet and "obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated" (51). Walton's initial ambition correlates strongly with the most famous instance of German *Bildungsromane*. Indeed, his flirtation with and eventual abandonment of the arts recalls the protagonist's artistic ambitions in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96), the most influential narrative in establishing the arc of *Bildung* as represented in novel form. In the case of Goethe's novel, Wilhelm comes to terms with a life not characterized by spectacular success in the arts. As Georg Lukács assesses *Wilhelm*'s ending,

> The educative element which this type of novel still retains and which distinguishes it sharply from the novel of disillusionment is that the hero's ultimate state of resigned loneliness does not signify the total collapse and defilement of all his ideals but a recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world. The hero actively

> realises this duality: he accommodates himself to society by resigning himself to accept its life forms, and by locking inside himself and keeping entirely to himself the interiority which can only be realised inside the soul. His ultimate arrival expresses the present state of the world but is neither a protest against it nor an affirmation of it. (136)

Lukács traces Wilhelm's personal trajectory not to ultimate failure and resignation but rather to a "recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world" (136). Wilhelm does not become a successful artist, but neither does he become bitterly cynical; instead, he reaches ideological harmony between his "interiority" and "the present state of the world," thereby cooperatively choosing to lead a modest life and acclimating to the structural limits of modern society.

The opening of *Frankenstein*, in its confession of Walton's failed early literary endeavors, demonstrates the novel's engagement with the literary model of *Bildung* shaped by Goethe. However, Walton's self-described individual trajectory breaks from the "recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world" (136) and instead reorients his ideals in another direction. Rather than accept "society" and "its life forms" after failing in an ambitious quest to attain the poetic fame of Homer and Shakespeare, Walton sublimates his self-realization into another channel: world exploration. In a subtle rhetorical shift, Walton's autobiographical narrative begins with the modesty readers might expect of a Wilhelm-like acceptance of the gulf between inner ideals and society's structure, noting his dedication to traveling with lowly "whale-fishers" (51), his sobering decision to hire himself as an under-mate (51), and his dedication of "nights to the study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage" (51). This is the sort of humbled acceptance a reader would expect from a protagonist near the

end of a typical *Bildungsroman* in which society subsumes initial urges and replaces them with ideals less at odds with the limits of the modern world.

In a jarring turn, however, Walton's superficial emphasis on "practical advantage" shifts back to his pre-*Bildung* grandiosity in the next paragraph of his letter,

> And now, dear Margaret, do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path. Oh, that some encouraging voice would answer in the affirmative! (51)

This quotation demonstrates that Walton's change from poetry to seafaring does not correlate with the lessons of *Wilhelm* or *Bildungsromane* in general. Indeed, Walton does not reevaluate his goals in light of a youthful attempt to match the historical importance of Homer and Shakespeare but instead sublimates these grand ambitions into another realm. Even Walton's doubtful thoughts express a rhetorical undercurrent of entitled ambition, with him constructing the first line of the quoted passage in the form of a question: "do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose" (51). Instead of ending the sentence in punctuation that would match the uncertainty of his query—a question mark—he rather ends with the finality of a period. This seemingly slight substitution speaks volumes: Walton utilizes the superficial language of humility typical of protagonists of *Bildungsromane* at the end of their tales, but his punctuation reveals his lingering desire for prominence. The next sentence goes on to confirm the insincerity of his humility: "My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path" (51). Walton's rhetorical strategy creates a false parallel: either he picks an ignoble life of "every enticement that wealth placed" in his path, or he ventures out into world to pursue "glory." Given Walton's sentence construction, the road to

glory—the road consistent with the early aims of the protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*—seems the more desirable of the two options.

Walton's rhetoric hides that his aim, indeed self-described privilege "to accomplish some great purpose," merely rewrites his previous poetic aspirations in a new setting: to become singularly successful in discovering the North Pole, an endeavor Walton envisions with all the magnificence of his original aspirations:

> What may not be expected in a country of eternal light? I may there discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle; and may regulate a thousand celestial observations, that require only this voyage to render their seeming eccentricities consistent forever. I shall satiate my ardent curiosity with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man. (50)

Walton's expectations quickly move from discovery to creation, demonstrating the way he has reframed world exploration in terms of poetic invention: yes, he may "discover the wondrous power which attracts the needle" (50), yet he also might "regulate a thousand celestial observations" (50). Walton's ambition for scientific authority actually outstrips the grandeur of his previous attempts at poetry: in poetry he would at least stand beside Homer and Shakespeare in a pantheon of immortal poets, but in discovering the North Pole he would alone uncover the secrets of magnetism and "regulate" the "thousand" scientific discoveries of those who follow him. Nautical exploration for Walton thereby becomes not the acclimation of "himself to society" (Lukács 136) as happens for Wilhelm but rather the long-dreamed of apotheosis of his individual genius in even more ambitious terms. More simply, Walton's childhood ambitions have merely become more grandiose in the move from culture to science as a means of conquest, and the narrative thereafter continues to engage *Bildung* and its connection with sensibility.

However, Walton's ambition—consistent with the early-narrative *Bildungsroman* protagonist—is tempered by repeated gestures toward the tropes of sensibility. In fact, given the liminal position *Frankenstein* occupied in 1818, between the dominant late eighteenth-century literary model of sensibility and the emerging influence of German-imported *Bildung,* Walton's expressions, taken as a whole, are by no means single-mindedly ambitious. As Christopher C. Nagle argues, "If *Frankenstein* is a text fraught with contradictions, as many critics have claimed, then the fundamental engine of these contradictions is its investment in Sensibility" (119), something that "has gone virtually unnoticed in the vast body of critical literature on the novel" (120). Likewise, Anne Williams explicitly characterizes *Frankenstein* as "a novel of sensibility in which outer form is assumed to be an index of the inner self" (23). Indeed, Walton's letters to his sister do not only demonstrate a monomaniacal drive for tremendous success in modern society; rather, Walton's drive for fame is moderated by his investment in the ideology of sensibility that permeates his confessions to his sister.

Sensibility reached peak popularity as a primary narrative force in the literary marketplace of the late eighteenth century, although the key feature of the mutual exchange of feeling persisted well into the novels of the nineteenth century. This exchange of feeling—expressed through sympathy, shared tears, and altruistic emotions—served as a primary manner by which characters interpreted experience. Novels of the late eighteenth century that defined the contours of sensibility depicted emotional community building in notable sentimental texts such as Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)—the latter a work prominently featured in *Frankenstein* that holds significant influence over the monster. These texts posit the ultimate human experience as communal emotion rather than individual achievement. Susan

Manning notes, "Sensibility also functioned as a kind of social cement that holds individuals together in a moralized and emotionalized public sphere" (83). Each of the three narrative layers of *Frankenstein* explores the ethical ramifications of this "emotionalized public sphere" while at the same time exposing the exclusionary politics of this supposedly inclusive social network. Additionally, as Janet Todd succinctly judges, sensibility "is a kind of pedagogy of seeing and of the physical reaction that this seeing should produce, clarifying when uncontrolled sobs or a single tear should be the rule, or when the inexpressible nature of the feeling should be stressed" (4). In this way, the boundaries of sensibility inscribe Walton's responses to his sister, Victor, and the world around him. Later, the monster's shocking physical appearance undermines the typically openhearted emotional response governed by sensibility, thereby demonstrating this system's limits of inclusion.

Paradoxically, Walton absorbs sensibility's tenets at the same time that he longs for individual achievement and popular recognition. In his second letter to his sister, Walton questions the compatibility of nautical success and emotional human connection, without repudiating or explicitly critiquing either:

> But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy; and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavor to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me; whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. (52-3)

Walton's admission of his lack of emotional companionship might seem merely the stock response of a captain leading an expedition through the desolate North Pacific Ocean on the way to the North Pole. His cries for sympathy, however, evoke the language and tropes of sensibility (for instance, the eyes that "would reply"), and his want of an emotional connection comes not as a result of his voyage but rather from an expressive void formed earlier in life. Yet despite this longing for fellow feeling, Walton remains tethered to his drive for the recognition of an audience, as this passage demonstrates. On the one hand, Walton wants someone to "participate" in his "joy" while "glowing with the enthusiasm of success"; this desire does not solely envision the humble communal exchange of human emotion typified by eighteenth-century sentimental novels but also yearns for a companion exceptional enough to appreciate Walton's remarkable (and at this point imagined) success. On the other hand, Walton would like someone "to sustain" him "in dejection" if he is "assailed by disappointment." His desire stands as an early hint of *Frankenstein*'s depiction of sensibility—with its superficially inclusive emphasis on the mutual exchange of feeling—as one aspect within the larger exclusionary framework of *Bildung*.

In writing that he wants someone "whose eyes would reply" to his own, Walton co-opts a trope of sensibility but empties it of any mutuality. Walton's ideal companion would congratulate him in success and coddle him in failure, all the while expressing a deep understanding of Walton's emotional state through sympathetic glances. Walton avoids imagining the mutual exchange of feelings of grief, sorrow, and triumph; instead, he only considers the positive effects on his own psyche. Walton deprives sensibility of its mutuality and transforms it into merely an emotional safety net. In so doing, he positions sensibility within the paradigm of individual development and self-cultivation. In this way, emotional connection becomes merely a utilitarian step along Walton's path to eventual fame. By embedding

sensibility within *Bildung*, Walton sets in motion the main cultural tension that will lead to the monster's eventual self-immolation.

Walton's language herein establishes the juxtaposition of the two social systems at play in *Frankenstein*: sensibility (based in unmediated feeling in a given moment) and *Bildung* (based in development and acclimation over time). His dual impulse to find someone with whom to engage emotionally and to achieve greatness thereby propels the exploration of the relationship between sensibility's supposed immediate inclusion and *Bildung*'s gradual exclusion. The tension in this relationship comes to the fore through *Frankenstein*'s intertextuality. For instance, in an ironic allusion to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798), Walton reassures his sister: "I am going to unexplored regions, to 'the land of mist and snow;" but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety" (55). Walton's reference to *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* fleshes out his history as a young man steeped in the world of poetry like the typical protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*, but it also ironizes the poem's moral lesson for comic purposes. As a result, Walton's allusion to Coleridge's poem does not convey a deep understanding of the symbolic drive of the poem. Superficially, Walton comprehends the symbolism of the albatross for the Mariner, but he does not recognize the more important mismanagement of the Mariner's goals of his voyage, relationship with his crew, and responses to nature. Moreover, Walton overlooks the poem's emphasis on deep sensibility and its mutual exchange of feeling through the interaction of the Mariner with the wedding guest. Walton's flippancy displays his conversance in the poem's subject matter for the purposes of clever epistolary allusions that mark intellectual exceptionalism, yet his lack of nuanced consideration of its themes forebodes the novel's larger depiction of sensibility as a system often co-opted for the purpose of self-cultivation rather than acceptance of others.

Victor Frankenstein's arrival on the ship initially gratifies Walton's internal commitment to *Bildung* and sensibility. Victor emerges as an emotional companion in a sentimental register, with Walton writing, "I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion" (60). This desire for emotional connection, however, cannot be easily separated from Walton's drive for exceptionalism in undertaking his pioneering journey to the North Pole. In fact, Walton's comments to Victor show the paradoxical inextricability of his drive for fame and his longing for companionship:

> One day I mentioned to him the desire I had always felt of finding a friend who might sympathize with me, and direct me by his counsel. I said, I did not belong to that class of men who are offended by advice. "I am self-educated, and perhaps I hardly rely sufficiently upon my own powers. I wish therefore that my companion should be wiser and more experienced than myself, to confirm and support me;" (61)

Walton unwittingly discloses his confused desires to Victor. Yes, he longs for "sympathy" from another who can commiserate in his feelings. Yet, he also craves advice from a "more experienced" colleague, a person who recognizes the gaps in Walton's formal education—not in order to correct or supplement them but rather "to confirm and support" Walton's judgments reached by self-cultivation alone. More simply, Walton seeks a perceived equal of high enough intellectual, moral, and emotional caliber to validate his own actions.

Walton's elitist view of sensibility here hints at *Frankenstein*'s condemnatory take on sensibility's exclusionary framework. Indeed, the exclusionary power dynamic within this framework reiterates why Walton's humble crewmen cannot fill Victor's role. For instance, one of these crewmen "is a person of an excellent disposition, and is remarkable in the ship for his gentleness" (54), yet he lacks any "idea beyond the rope and the shroud" (54). Another "is a man

of wonderful courage and enterprise" (53), traits that would seemingly correlate nicely with Walton's own self-perception. Yet this mate, who "retains some of the noblest endowments of humanity" (53-54), nevertheless is "in the midst of national and professional prejudices" (53), which remain "unsoftened by cultivation" (53). Walton's elitist disposition leads him to invite these men to be part of his crew, but he cannot view them as moral or intellectual equals. They are the types of men that Walton would pride himself on influencing: softening their views, cultivating their minds, and fanning their sparks of courage. However, they remain uncultured, lacking in the social development *Bildung* would provide. These men are projects for Walton, but they do not offer the authority of Victor in confirming Walton's singular capacity for feeling and simultaneous ambition for fame, discovery, and reverence. Feeling, it would seem, is contingent on one's degree of development within the culture of *Bildung*. As a result, Walton's relationship with his crew underscores the elitist rather than communal assumptions underwriting his understanding of sensibility.

In turn, Walton longs for Victor to exercise authority over his undeveloped way of thinking—a contradictory manner of viewing the world that exposes fault lines in the rising discourse of individualism in the nineteenth century. Walton revels in his grandiose goals, yet he also feels an impulse typical of the period for outside regulation. He writes to his sister,

> Now I am twenty-eight, and am in reality more illiterate than many school-boys of fifteen. It is true that I have thought more, and that my day dreams are more extended and magnificent; but they want (as the painters call it) *keeping*; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavor to regulate my mind. (53)

Walton's comments reveal his deep insecurity; he nervously writes of younger schoolboys who are more skilled, more literate, and generally more developed. Yet these remarks also reveal his egotistical grandiosity; others may be more literate than Walton, but none have an imagination "more extended and magnificent." Moreover, in finding somebody to fill the role Victor steps into, Walton requires not only fellow feeling or a nuanced understanding of his ambition but also someone that would "endeavor to regulate" his passions. Walton paradoxically embraces and fears his dreams, and as a result he seeks an outside source to temper these passions on his behalf—a source of societal regulation in an isolated oceanic setting that would otherwise be enacted through romantic relationships and economic hardship in tales of *Bildung.*

Walton's aspiration for a friend that would "endeavor to regulate" his imagination and ambition runs parallel to the normalizing function of *Bildung*, which conventionally transforms ideal ambitions into realistic goals more suited to societal structures. Hence the subtext of Walton's early letters suggests not a disdain for his ambition nor a condemnation of his yearning for fame; instead, these letters express a clear desire for outside regulation in order to mold his impulses into something more manageable and acceptable to society (something that his poetry would never have been). This dual function—finding a companion with whom to engage in the emotional exchange of sensibility and seeking an outside check on his inappropriate ambitions of *Bildung*—provides another signal of *Frankenstein*'s engagement with the mutually influential relationship between sensibility and *Bildung*. Consequently, *Frankenstein* suggests a relationship between unchecked ambition and sensibility in which the mutual exchange of feeling, rather than emphasize unmediated emotion, actually reinforces the process of exclusion and self-regulation typified by *Bildung*'s focus on cultivation and development. In this way, the novel suggests

sensibility acts not only as a means of transgressive immediacy through untempered emotion but also as a conservative force that fits subjects to the limits of societal structures.

Frankenstein's formal regulatory structure as a nested narrative unavoidably forces the issue of the reliability of each tale—questions of which only solidify as the text proceeds from Walton's letters, to Walton's manuscript of Victor's tale, to the monster's failed coming of age story relayed from Victor to Walton. From the outset, however, the reader must recognize that each of these narratives does not carry the same weight. As the outermost of the nested narratives, Walton's letters to his sister Margaret provide key guidelines. Though they are written in the first person, complete with Walton's insecurities, prejudices, and subjective filter of reality, they nevertheless represent the precise transcripts, the primary sources, of Walton's prose to his sister. There is no editor, no further outside shell. Because of this authority, Walton's ideology becomes crucial to readings of the tales of Victor and the monster: these are not word-for-word transcriptions but rather retellings that refocus the prejudices, views, and prose style of their amanuensis. In sum, Walton's outlook as a writer, including his conflicting view of sensibility and *Bildung*, dictate the terms through which the readers receive the two nested narratives. The manner by which Walton's ideology accounts for the relationship between sensibility and *Bildung* reverberates in the novel's other narratives—with these narratives actually serving to refine rather than challenge Walton's judgment of these cultural systems. Therefore, the novel as a whole functions as a test case for Walton's ideological assumptions.

The literary echoes contained in Walton's final notes before the beginning of his self-organized chapters of Victor's tale offer significant clues as to how the narrative will unfold. He writes to his sister of Victor,

> He then told me, that he would commence his narrative the next day when I should be at leisure. This promise drew from me the warmest thanks. I have resolved every night, when I am not engaged, to record, as nearly as possible in his own words, what he has related during the day. If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes. (62)

Most obviously, Walton's plan echoes the motif of found manuscripts central to the construction of sentimental novels in the eighteenth century. This overlap is no coincidence: Walton, a person steeped in the conventions and literature of sensibility, would be aware of this motif as a tool for stoking an audience's interest. A number of the most influential sentimental novels utilize this structure; take, for example, Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, which opens with a brief introduction explaining the provenance of the manuscript. The narrator saves the manuscript by trading it for a philosophical text. He recounts afterward,

> When I returned to town, I had leisure to peruse the acquisition I had made: I found it a bundle of little episodes, put together without art, and of no importance on the whole, with something of nature, and little else in them. I was a good deal affected with some very trifling passages in it; and had the name of a Marmontel or a Richardson, been on the title-page—'tis odds that I should have wept. (49)

The Man of Feeling subtly perpetuates a model by which the reader with the capacity to recognize the genius of the author becomes glorified, too. In this case, the narrator takes a previously discarded text and recognizes its wisdom and ability to affect readers on the level of Marmontel or Richardson. This narrator becomes lionized for possessing a keen eye able to rescue wisdom for the masses. Thus, *The Man of Feeling* does not merely champion the protagonist of the text proper, Harley, but also acknowledges the unique genius necessary in bringing such a text to public attention. The reader's receipt of feeling thereby elevates him to a

higher cultural level, and the culture of literary sensibility comes to mask literary self-congratulation. In *Frankenstein*, Walton's letters display the same rhetorical strategy for hooking a reader, thereby ironically underscoring sensibility's covert investment in developmental tropes as an elitist means of enabling in *Bildung*.

Walton's framework in *Frankenstein* fictionalizes and critiques this mutual admiration between found-text author and found-text reader. Apparently, Victor has found nobody else to whom he can confide his tale, yet Walton's unique capacity for feeling apparently urges Victor onward in his storytelling. These finders of "lost" texts become not only the means by which consequential tales find a supposedly sympathetic audience; rather, they also become surrogate geniuses themselves, proceeding with the self-perception that if not for their acute sensibility others would not benefit from these tales. Unlike the narrator of *The Man of Feeling*, however, Walton goes one step further in acting as Victor's amanuensis, taking the role of author who transcribes Victor's journey for posterity. Walton's taking up of the pen allows for *Frankenstein* to perform its work as a sustained critique of sensibility and *Bildung* because the text as a whole becomes a testimonial to the inefficacy of Walton's ideological positions.

I would like to consider several critical points in Walton's assumption of this role. First, he is not a trained to transcribe another's words accurately. As a result, we must view Victor's entire narrative with some degree of skepticism—for it is composed not of Victor's words but rather those of a second hand, and partial, source. Second, Walton's methodology of transcription leaves much room for error. He writes, "I have resolved every night, when I am not engaged, to record, as nearly as possible his own words, what he has related during the day" (62). He continues, "If I should be engaged, I will at least make notes" (62). This process of transcription can quite easily become faulty; even on days in which Walton has no other

obligations, he still does not record Victor's tale until nightfall, at which point Walton backfits his memories. As if this methodology were not enough to call the precision of the text into question, Walton reconstructs these memories in a first-person narrative told in Victor's voice. This procedure does not lend itself to accurately representing Victor's words. Indeed, this process reinforces that Walton had not wholly moved beyond his youthful hopes for poetic fame. Additionally, chapter designations in the narrative suggest readability—and a self-regulatory impulse to fit within established literary norms—as a more important touchstone than the exact transcription of Victor's tale. Walton thoroughly establishes his narrative through literary tropes and conveniences rather than through faithfulness to his source.

The reader must hence proceed cautiously because of the tone Walton self-consciously establishes in his opening letters, which aims to use sensibility as a means of manipulation rather than in the mutual exchange of feeling. Primarily, his sister will be the recipient of the tale, and Walton has shown a tendency to manage her literary expectations throughout the opening letters. In this way, Margaret fills the role of confidant and comforter for Walton, but his attitude toward her is not altogether so simple; in fact, his rhetoric demonstrates the hollowness of his use of sensibility. And because the novel does not include Margaret's response, it forces the reader to focus on the implications of Walton's rhetorical maneuvers rather than her reception. For instance, in one passage describing his excitement at the appearance of Victor, Walton anticipates his sister's criticism, and in the process reveals his own insecurity:

> Will you laugh at the enthusiasm I express concerning this divine wanderer? If you do, you must have certainly lost that simplicity which was once your characteristic charm. Yet, if you will, smile at the warmth of my expressions, while I find every day new causes for repeating them. (61)

This brief paragraph exposes several of Walton's techniques in manipulating literary reception. First, he unwittingly discloses the insecurity he feels in his "enthusiastic" worldview, turning this discomfort into a biting preemptive strike against his sister. In accusing her of potentially losing "the simplicity which was once" a key feature of her personality, Walton tries to regulate her reception through emotional manipulation rather than the mutual exchange of emotion. Simultaneously, his rhetoric implies reward for the positive reception of "the warmth of my expressions." Walton skillfully walks the line of expected gender roles in this paragraph: either his sister has lost her "characteristic charm" by rejecting the judgment of her brother, or she wholly accepts his prepackaged opinions. Walton's rhetorical techniques are assertive and his presentation of the upcoming tale, by extension, is underwritten by similar uses of sensibility to regulate reception.

For instance, directly before beginning Victor's tale, Walton offers a curious affirmation of the hoped-for reception of his narrative: "This manuscript will doubtless afford you the greatest pleasure: but to me, who know him, and who hear it from his own lips, with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day!" (62). In the first part of this statement, Walton affirms, indeed nearly coerces, Margaret into receiving "the greatest pleasure" from the manuscript. In the latter half, he reveals the role this manuscript will play in his own life: striking a Wordsworthian theme, Walton imagines the "interest and sympathy" he shall glean from the manuscript at a later date. Indeed, this imagined future utilitarian usage of the manuscript recalls Wordsworth's final lines of "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798" (1798) in which he expresses the future practical uses of the Wordsworth siblings' time near the River Wye:

Nor, perchance,

If I should be, where I no more can hear

Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams

Of past existence, wilt thou then forget

That on the banks of this delightful stream

We stood together; and that I, so long

A worshipper of Nature, hither came,

Unwearied in that service: rather say

With warmer love, oh! with far deeper zeal

Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,

That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake. (147-60)

Wordsworth's lines signify most importantly for future recall and introspection: "should be," "no more," "then forget," "We stood together," "hither came," "then forget," "many years of absence," "were to me." Wordsworth is not so much concerned with immediate experience but rather with the pleasures memory will provide at a future date. Similarly, Walton's final line before beginning Victor's tale, "with what interest and sympathy shall I read it in some future day!" explicitly emphasizes futurity. For Wordsworth and Walton, the present should be a constructed literary pose for future usage above all else; living in the moment is not of primary concern. "Seize the day" becomes "write the day," and the immediacy of sensibility is subverted by the artifice of storytelling. The rhetoric of Walton and Wordsworth suggest that sensibility's

concern with immediate emotional response becomes incorporated into *Bildung*'s focus on self-cultivation and the narration of development.

Walton's vision of the text's futurity also unambiguously names "sympathy" as a hoped for result but again actually demonstrates how sympathy works within an uneven system of development. From the outset, even before the opening of Victor's proper narrative, or indeed, Walton's complete knowledge of the particulars of Victor's story, Walton declares his intention to craft a text for future feeling that will both document and rekindle the emotion he once experienced with this mysterious traveler. Like Wordsworth's poem, Walton's text is a capsule for the future—a capsule meant to stoke the flame of feeling at a future date. Additionally, the text becomes a stand-in for the long-wished for companion he never had; it permanently provides "the company of a man who could sympathize" (53) with Walton, a man "whose eyes would reply" (53) to his own. Walton's conception of himself as an author and his text as a producer of future affect constrains and defines the narrative to follow; the importance of recording Victor's story in his precise words becomes secondary to literary conventions and a concern with futurity.

Moments like these throughout the text define Walton's role as more than only an amanuensis but actually a mirror of Victor's ideological manipulation of the tropes of sensibility. These moments are further complicated by sections in which Victor directly addresses Walton. These instances range from nervous reaffirmation of Walton's affective response to the narrative ("I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes express" [80]), to overly simplified moralizing in a Faustian vein ("Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge" [81]), to recognition of boredom ("I forget that I am moralizing in the most interesting part of my tale; and your looks remind me to proceed" [84]), and to expression of insecurity ("I fear, my friend, that I shall render myself

tedious by dwelling on these preliminary circumstances" [101]). Exchanges such as these ironically illustrate the artificiality of Walton and Victor's exchanges; these talks are not the wished-for meeting of two minds but rather long-form storytelling typified by alternating interest, boredom, moralizing, and general long-windedness. Moreover, hollow gestures toward the tropes of sensibility reinforce *Frankenstein*'s investment in showing the ways by which appeals to feeling can be repurposed for other ends.

A later passage explaining the editing process of the text demonstrates the mutually constitutive nature of sensibility and *Bildung* by further calling into question the accuracy of Walton's transcriptions. Walton writes,

> Frankenstein discovered that I made notes concerning his history; he asked to see them, and then himself corrected and augmented them in many places; but principally in giving life and spirit to the conversations he held with his enemy. "Since you have preserved my narration," said he, "I would not that a mutilated one should go down to posterity." (232)

This paragraph reveals several key facts. First, Victor was apparently unaware of Walton's intention to preserve the narrative in textual form. This secret hints at Walton's conscious subversion of truthfulness as a tenet of sensibility and emotional exchange. Next, upon finding out this intention, Victor appoints himself the editor of the text, making changes as he sees fit—foremost boosting the "life and spirit to the conversations" with the monster. Such a revision strategy suggests that Victor was unsatisfied with the more modest portrayal of rhetoric of either himself or of the monster. Finally, and perhaps most notably, Victor becomes invested in his tale being passed to future readers. He assiduously changes the text in order to control his message: he was a victim of circumstance in his quest for knowledge, and others should heed his experience before undertaking single-minded intellectual goals as their ambition. This moral

exhibits a tendency to back away from other moments of self-implication. More importantly, Victor's concerns parallel Walton's intense anxiety surrounding the control of the text in the future. They both give lip-service to dismissing literary ambition, but their actions suggest a firm commitment to managing the affective responses of readers. Walton's letters and Victor's tale will not be private; rather, they will be read by others seeking wisdom.[2] In this case, again, Walton and Victor subsume their initial *Bildung*-driven quests for fame into the construction of the narrative.

Shelley's 1831 revision of *Frankenstein* further elucidates the relationship between the sympathetic tropes of sensibility and the self-cultivation of *Bildung*. Walton writes of Victor,

> Yet, although unhappy, he is not so utterly occupied by his own misery but that he interests himself deeply in the projects of others. He has frequently conversed with me on mine, which I have communicated to him without disguise. He entered attentively into all

[2] In stark contrast to the intertextuality of these narrative layers, Victor's emphasis on the performance of moral acts provided the core of the highly popular stage adaptation by Richard Brinsley Peake, *Presumption; Or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823). The play, combining the basic plot of the novel with some character shuffling and the addition of low comic relief, hinges on the theme stated outright in the title: presumption. Just as Victor's message at earlier points in the novel warns others not to pursue intellectual goals single-mindedly, the Victor of the play moralizes outright:

> How am I to avoid the powerful vengeance of the monster formed by my own cursed ambition. I gave him energy and strength, to crush my own guilty head! My hours pass in dread, and soon the bolt may fall which will deprive me of existence! [The diabolical act I have committed in raising a being, recurs each moment and conscious stricken—I shudder to think.] (3.1)

Frankenstein's simple moralizing in *Presumption* obscures the more complex textual dynamic at play in the novel, initiating a tradition of overlooking the sustained tension between narrative traditions that propels the novel. The novel's amalgamation of sensibility with *Bildung* is lost, and the audience is instead presented with a simple variation of the Faust narrative, in which Frankenstein's ambition overpowers his moral grounding. The result is a text, though influential, much less nuanced in its treatment of the driving cultural forces behind the actions of Walton, Frankenstein, and the monster than Shelley's original.

> my arguments in favour of my eventual success, and into every minute detail of the measures I had taken to secure it. I was easily led by the sympathy which he evinced, to use the language of my heart, to give utterance to the burning ardour of my soul; and to say, with all the fervour that warmed me, how gladly I would sacrifice my fortune, my existence, my every hope, to the furtherance of my enterprise. One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought for the dominion I should acquire and transmit over the elemental foes of our race. As I spoke, a dark gloom spread over my listener's countenance. At first I perceived that he tried to suppress his emotion; he placed his hands before his eyes, and my voice quivered and failed me as I beheld tears trickle fast from between his fingers—a groan burst from his heaving breast. I paused; at length he spoke, in broken accents—"unhappy man! Do you share my madness?" (1831, 27)

In this passage, Victor uses sympathy as a weapon through which Walton "was easily led" to reveal his greater nautical plans. Walton then clearly demonstrates the dual impulse toward recognition in the larger world (consistent with the early aims of the protagonists of *Bildungsromane*) by discovering a heretofore-unexplored land for the good of mankind and toward engagement in a sympathetic exchange of emotion. Shelley's 1831 revision clarifies the tension between these models: Walton would "sacrifice" his "fortune, existence," and his "every hope" in order to achieve his singular goal. Simultaneously, he desires a friend with whom to enter into sympathetic exchange. This inner conflict becomes the driving force in Walton's actions—whether to enter into society and seek fellow feeling, or to strike out on his own utterly singular journey. This conundrum symbolizes the interlocking nature of sensibility and *Bildung*

in *Frankenstein*, as well as the conflict between individual cultivation and societal acceptance more fully explored in the monster's developmental narrative.

To recap, in transitioning from Walton's opening letters to his novelization of Victor's oral tales, we must review several key textual dynamics at play. First, Walton's role in the text's creation is highly problematic. He does not record Victor's words as spoken (sometimes delaying transcription until days later), and he is obviously devoid of objectivity due to three main reasons: his desire for an emotional connection with Victor, the creation of a compelling narrative for his sister, and the recording of a tale that Walton himself, with "interest and sympathy," will read "in some future day!" (62). These factors point to Walton's deployment of sensibility as a means of self-affirmation and audience management as a guiding force the narrative: he creates the text, he formulates it for an audience, and he manipulates it for his own future edification. Consequently, readers must proceed with trepidation into the subsequent narratives of Victor and the monster: they are filtered through the literary ideology of Walton, and therefore more strongly reflect an attempt to work through the issues of his psyche in a textual space rather than to act as a strict documentarian of the fantastic tale he has undertaken to record. As a result, Victor's understanding of sensibility and ambition, to an extent, reflect Walton's own views.

Victor's narrative by turn emphasizes the importance of sensibility through friendship, community, family, and shared feeling from the outset. He notes, "I feel pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its bright visions of extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self" (67). Victor's childhood is populated by a host of characters that make up his "domestic circle" (67), or supportive emotional community: his father, his brothers, Elizabeth, his friend Henry Clerval.

Victor romanticizes this time, remarking, "No youth could have passed more happily than mine. My parents were indulgent, and my companions amiable" (66). Victor describes a sentimentalized childhood, echoing the idealized portrayals of youth common in eighteenth-century novels of sensibility. Given Walton's fondness for such narrative tropes, and given his role as author and ultimate editor, it is unsurprising that Victor's narrative fits so nicely into this sentimental framework.

However, Victor's rosy portrayal of an idyllic youth quickly pivots into an account of his burgeoning difficulties in acclimating to the world, thereby signaling his narrative's investment in the stages of *Bildung*. He notes,

> I feel pleasure in dwelling on the recollections of childhood, before misfortune had tainted my mind, and changed its bright visions of extensive usefulness into gloomy and narrow reflections upon self. But, in drawing the picture of my early days, I must not omit to record those events which led, by insensible steps to my after tale of misery: for when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion, which afterwards ruled my destiny, I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys. (67)

First, Victor here accounts for his difficulties in terms strikingly similar to other developmental narratives by drawing a contrast with his youthful ideals ("all my hopes and joys"). Second, Victor's logic highlights the manner by which his self-exile from communities of feeling—and therefore the culture of sensibility—becomes a structural difficulty in his path of individuation. In fact, in subsequent paragraphs, Victor goes on to describe his early forays into natural philosophy, including his absorption of the works of outmoded alchemists. Overall, Victor

mistakenly views his process of self-cultivation via *Bildung* as requiring his removal from his social network and, by extension, sensibility. In this way, *Frankenstein* generates a model in which those who are not excluded from sensibility can survive in modern society: remain within pre-established communities of feeling.

When Victor's experimental interests later shift to the principles explored in texts of centuries past, he demonstrates an unwillingness to adapt to the conventions of society. This resistance diverts him from the typical trajectory of *Bildung*. He concedes, "The raising of ghosts or devils was a promise liberally accorded by my favorite authors, the fulfilment of which I most eagerly sought" (69). In other circumstances, Victor's youthful interests might have failed given that his "incantations were always unsuccessful" (69). Instead of moving on to another pursuit, however, he "attributed the failure rather to my own inexperience and mistake, than to a want of skill or fidelity in my instructors" (69). Victor's failed experiments shift him into a monomaniacal focus on achieving his goal of raising life. Victor refuses to engage with anything but absolute notions of success or failure in this endeavor, and he has difficulty situating his effort along a continuum of relative development. Victor's unwillingness to adapt his behavior and eventually acclimate to conventional society portends his eventual failure. As such, his perspective pushes him outside the developmental path of *Bildung*—characterized by self-cultivation over time—and its accompanying enabling of acclimation to society as a result of shifts in self-perception.

Turning to the innermost narrative of the novel, the monster's attitude reflects the pervasive influence of his creator's move away from the gradual acclimation of *Bildung*; however, the monster's deviation from the path of *Bildung* and eventual failure to acclimate signal the exclusionary politics of sensibility and its place within the larger trajectory of *Bildung*.

The monster's central motivation throughout most of his narrative, finding another with whom to sympathize and share emotion (first through his creator, next with the De Lacey family, and finally through a like-kind companion), signals his absorption of the cultural emphasis on sensibility. Unlike Walton or Victor, however, the monster's attempts to engage in a community of feeling are rejected outright. As a result, he has no ability to form social bonds. As the monster relates,

> But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans. (146-7)

The monster's exclusion from the culture of sensibility, which he defines by its key features of emotional and physical bonding ("smiles and caresses"), thereby becomes a test case of the limits of sensibility as a social system. Moreover, because the monster remembers no physical development, his narrative forces the reader to consider only the process of mental cultivation typical of *Bildung*.

The monster's lack of emotional bonds within a family—so central to the narratives of Walton and Victor—presents him with a foundational example of the exclusionary nature of sensibility. Without the privilege of the built-in emotional network that a family would offer, the monster—given his apparently hideous appearance—realizes the flaws of sensibility as a supposedly inclusive social system. Rather, he determines sensibility, though superficially inclusive, bonds through likeness ("I had never yet seen a being resembling me") or pre-

established contact ("I had never yet seen a being…who claimed any intercourse with me"). Absent these two prerequisites, the monster's exclusion from communities of feeling propels the novel's critique of sensibility: these outwardly inclusive communities are, in reality, circumscribed by conditions unrelated to individual sentiment and, thus, push some to the margins.

Recent criticism by James C. Hatch and Frances Ferguson emphasizes the role of physical disgust at the monster's appearance in his exclusion from networks of feeling and sensibility. For instance, Hatch explores "how shame and disgust occurring in and directed at the Creature undermine the role of sympathy that Adam Smith theorized as a determiner of social relations" (34). In a similar register, Ferguson contends,

> Mary Shelley depicts the failures of sympathy as so pervasive that they resist explanation in terms of characterological weaknesses. The young child William, the cosmopolitan De Laceys, and even the creature himself have a reaction to his appearance so immediate as to make it clear that no one, even with minimal socially induced prejudice, would automatically extend sympathy to him. Individual humans, however innocent and however good-hearted, have only a limited capacity to judge individuals in face-to-face encounters. (111)

Each of these arguments perceptively associates the monster's failure with the limits and exclusionary nature of sensibility and sympathy. Such criticism builds on David Marshall's earlier work that describes *Frankenstein* as "a parable about the failure of sympathy" (195). Yet, in particular, Ferguson's recognition of the widespread failure of sympathy across age, class, and geographical border is crucial to understanding *Frankenstein*'s ideological critique. Along these lines, I agree that *Frankenstein* explores the manner by which the limits of systems of literary

culture pervade society. However, I also contend that *Frankenstein* performs a broader critique of the detrimental influence of literary culture in exposing the crucial intersection of both sensibility and *Bildung*. Taken together, these literary ideologies define the narrative and developmental limits in each of *Frankenstein*'s layers, with the monster's layer most clearly engaging the exclusionary mechanisms of feeling and development via *Bildung* as workable social models.

Foremost, the monster's narrative provides an example of how sensibility and *Bildung* actually work together to produce social inequality. Superficially, sensibility and its literary iterations proceed on a foundation of absolute inclusion, welcoming all who meet its requirements into a network of feeling. Henry Home, Lord Kames in *Elements of Criticism* (1762), for instance, defines this inclusionary means of social bonding as,

> that extensive influence which language hath over the heart; an influence, which, more than any other means, strengthens the bond of society, and attracts individuals from their private system to perform acts of generosity and benevolence. (92)

Bildung, on the other hand, works through gradual exclusion: it harmoniously coexists with burgeoning Victorian principles such as liberalism and hard work. In *Bildung*, one follows a pattern of development, gradual and each with its own individual idiosyncrasies, which differentiates the developed from the undeveloped. This differentiation allows the Wilhelms of the world eventually to assimilate back into modern society. Indeed, these Wilhelms embrace gradualism, realize their own humble limitations, and disappear into accepted anonymity of society. *Frankenstein*, however, shows the way that sensibility—despite its gestures toward inclusion—functions in actuality within the exclusionary criteria of *Bildung*.

As a result of sensibility's exclusivity, the monster deduces the rigid nature of his potential failure or success in his attempt to forge a connection—and begin the process of acclimation to society—with the De Lacey family. He notes in this regard, "for the importance attached to its success inspired me with a dread lest I should fail" (155). Because he realizes sensibility either includes or excludes absolutely, he expresses overwhelming dread at the prospect of success or failure in his interactions with the De Laceys. In this way, the monster's interaction forms the core of the novel's engagement with sensibility. Moreover, it explores the absolute limits of feeling as an inclusionary model of interaction—for if the De Laceys reject the monster, sensibility will be exposed as a merely an exclusionary social filter.

Likewise, this interaction explores the politics of the gradual exclusion of *Bildung*. Before interacting with the De Laceys, the monster communicates his investment in *Bildung*'s gradual progression: "Besides, I found that my understanding improved so much with every day's experience, that I was unwilling to commence this undertaking until a few more months should have added to my wisdom" (155). The monster recognizes his gradual improvement in comprehending the world—that "wisdom" can be built progressively over the course of time, otherwise known as *Bildung*. At the same time, he sees the rigid nature of this gradualism in that it can only lead to eventual success or failure in acclimating to society. The monster's interaction with the De Lacey family thereby becomes an incisive critique of both sensibility and *Bildung*. This interaction suggests that sensibility—a cultural system that feigns inclusivity at the expense of those without physical resemblance or previous social connections—actually functions as one of the elements of gradual exclusion within the developmental trajectory of *Bildung*. In fact, sensibility's exclusive framework prohibits rather than enables *Bildung* from facilitating the monster's gradual acclimation into society—the typical outcome of *Bildungsromane*—by not

allowing the monster to participate in any sort of community of feeling necessary for the self-cultivation and development of *Bildung*.

Jerome Buckley's outline of the traditional arc of the *Bildungsroman* proves useful in understanding how sensibility's exclusionary framework relates to the development of the protagonist in each of *Frankenstein*'s narrative layers:

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city (in the English novels, usually London). There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also—and often more importantly—his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (17-8)

Frankenstein signposts many of these features in the narratives of Walton and Victor. However, the novel accounts for these characters' failures to acclimate at the end of a developmental path

by exploring Walton and Victor's own shortcomings. For instance, Victor's final manic quest toward the desolate North Pole to contain the monster symbolizes his previous monomaniacal self-removal from communities of feeling and the developmental path of *Bildung*. Walton's final failure is more ambiguous, yet the tone of his narration tends more toward learning a grave Faustian lesson than, as Lukács writes, an "ultimate arrival" into the present state of society. In each of these cases, however, Walton and Victor, based on their social and economic positions, were provided the opportunity to enter communities of feeling and follow the typical trajectory of *Bildung*. Here *Frankenstein* suggests to its readers that remaining within established social networks would have prevented their dark outcomes. Ultimately, they fail to acclimate in this manner, unlike the monster, due to their own choices and internal character flaws.

The monster, on the other hand, goes through the motions of *Bildung* as articulated by Buckley but is ultimately denied access to society in a manner condemnatory of its exclusivity. First, he is born in a country setting with "some sensibility," only to find his appearance and lack of social connection a constraint on his development. Second, his relationship with Victor reenacts the hostility-fueled father-son relationship typical of *Bildung*, with the child struggling against his father's ideology. His early reading list, formed by the limits of the texts he can find in the wild, mobilizes the conceits of "unprescribed reading" and limited schooling in service of illustrating intellectual constraint. He leaves his place of origin, and in the new setting of the De Lacey home his education in life begins with the absorption sensibility via familial attachment. In this setting, as Eric Daffron points out, "Their sympathy serves, in turn, as a model for the monster" (426). Continuing this developmental trajectory, the monster's eventual rejection by the De Lacey family substitutes for the typically "debasing" sexual experience that causes the

protagonist shame and spurs him to reevaluate his worldview.[3] In the typical *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist would now engage in "painful soul-searching" and eventually conform to society. In the monster's case, he attempts to initiate this process of conformity: certainly, his request to Victor for a partner represents a logical solution arrived at through soul-searching. Victor's rejection of the monster's request for this partner, however, marks the final external limit of the monster's *Bildung*. The monster's self-cultivation cannot continue absent social connection, which even his only relation rejects in primary or surrogate form. As such, *Frankenstein* demonstrates how sensibility actually functions as a component of *Bildung*'s gradually exclusionary trajectory; indeed, rather than permit a social model based on inclusion, sensibility instead undergirds *Bildung*'s exclusionary framework.

Ultimately, sensibility's exclusionary framework inhibits the monster from the individual development of *Bildung*—and in the process underscores the exclusionary politics of development as represented through *Bildung*. Because of his inability to acclimate to society, the monster is unable to return home and, as in Buckley's model, "to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his *success* or the wisdom of his choice" (18, emphasis mine). Rather, he can only enact failure by retreating to the social isolation of the North Pole. As the monster relates to Victor[4] in the novel's final moments:

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[3] Safie's central position in this segment of the narrative reinforces this reading of sexual symbolism. Her role in holding the family together is categorically contingent on her status as the exoticized, sexualized other. Thus, the monster's rejection at the hands of the family symbolically stages his sexual rejection by Safie.

[4] This passage is significant in freeing the monster from the central, most mediated position in the narrative. The monster now can directly speak with the author (Walton) after the death of Victor, and his words assume the same authority of those of his creator. This shift in narrative authority parallels the novel's attempt to give voice to those disenfranchised by sensibility and *Bildung*.

> Yet I seek not a fellow-feeling in my misery. No sympathy may I ever find. When I first sought it, it was the love of virtue, the feelings of happiness and affection with which my whole being overflowed, that I wished to be participated. But now, that virtue has become to me a shadow, and that happiness and affection are turned into bitter and loathing despair, in what should I seek for sympathy? I am content to suffer alone, while my sufferings shall endure: when I die, I am well satisfied that abhorrence and opprobrium should load my memory. Once my fancy was soothed with dreams of virtue, of fame, and of enjoyment. (242)

This passage represents on a primary level a description of failed sensibility. In this respect, the monster's invocation of "fellow-feeling" in the context of "sympathy" aptly demonstrates what David Marshall terms Shelley's "philosophical investigation of the failure of sympathy" (181). Likewise, Fred Botting explains that though the monster's "own narrative…constructs the image of a sensitive, benevolent and victimised being," he is "forcibly excused" from this "human chain" (16). More than fictionalizing the limits of sympathy, however, the passage also codes the failure of sensibility within the larger framework of *Bildung*. Notably, the monster conflates his "dream of virtue" with dreams "of fame." Through this rhetorical strategy, he frames his failure within the context of sensibility as a component of *Bildung*. By connecting "virtue" with "fame" in the context of the monster's failure, the novel ironizes British developmental narratives' tendency, as Franco Moretti states, to subsume "Any type of conflict or diversity" within "the fairy-tale-juridical opposition of 'right' and 'wrong'" (210). Moreover, this desire marks his narrative as a *Bildungsroman* because, like Wilhelm and Walton, the monster transforms his youthful intellectual exemplarity into a yearning for fame.

Unlike Wilhelm and potentially Walton, however, the monster is unable to recover from this grandiosity within the framework of modern society due to external limitations. And the monster's linguistic constructions reflect this failed bid for individualism: he notes several tropes of sensibility, punctuated with "I wished to be participated." Rather than finishing the novel as an individuated modern protagonist, the monster views himself as the (direct) object of society's regulatory framework. He can no longer envision a world in which he could accurately and actively state, "I wished to participate in this system." Rather, society works upon him. In the end, the monster has no home to which he can return and no socioeconomic context in which he can insert himself with his newly gained wisdom. As Anne McWhir states, "Frankenstein's creature can be educated as a human being only if society is willing to accept him as such" (76). I argue that the mutually constitutive framework of *Bildung* and sensibility disallow this possibility. The monster's retreat to the North Pole thereby becomes the symbolic instantiation of the failure of *Bildung* through sensibility's exclusionary limits.

The Wilhelms—and perhaps Waltons—of the world come to realize their own limitations as a result of the gradual sorting of *Bildung*. They yearn for artistic fame but ultimately realize their more anonymous place within the framework of normative society. In contrast, the monster's process of *Bildung* fails in absolute terms: after following the typical path of *Bildung*, he is denied accommodation within the world because of the exclusionary framework of sensibility. By highlighting how the seemingly inclusive system of sensibility, like *Bildung*, actually denies access to development and acclimation, Shelley's novel performs the work of social protest: it gives a voice to the marginalized and demands its readers recognize society's exclusionary framework. Unlike texts later in the century, however, Shelley's novel does not grapple with suitable replacements for this system as a corrective. In the next chapter, I will

examine three texts from 1859, Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859), Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1860-61), and Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), each of which more directly engages with the ways by which society can generate alternate systems as a result of narrative failure. As I will demonstrate, each of these authors revised their initial texts in an effort to grapple with the ramifications of narrative failure. They substantially adjusted narrative outcomes by writing out the more troubling aspects of individual failure, thereby narrativizing a key mid-century tension between success and failure. Though Shelley revised *Frankenstein* in substantial ways, her changes tend to amplify the themes of the original 1818 text rather than reestablishing the manner through which failure is portrayed. Therefore, Shelley's text offers no alternative and instead remains an instantiation of failure as textual objection, giving voice to those who become, as the monster categorizes himself, "the prey of feelings unsatisfied" (243).

CHAPTER THREE

The "machinery of Wisdom": Negotiating Failure By Revision in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations*

Samuel Smiles' tremendously popular tract of Victorian improvement, *Self-Help* (1859), documents the lives of people who exemplify progress by means of hard work and moral action—a notion central to nineteenth-century thought. Smiles fashions himself a Plutarch for the nineteenth century, recording the details of the lives of successful individuals to inspire readers. Invariably, Smiles narrates the biographies of these individuals by emphasizing the formative influence of consistent and extensive hard work on achieving recognition and financial success. And, indeed, this model of success gained widespread acceptance among readers upon initial publication. Yet despite *Self-Help*'s tremendous popularity, in the years subsequent to the first edition the rumblings of a larger cultural shift emerged through critics of the text. These critics faulted the way English culture in general—and Smiles in particular—viewed the causal relationship between individual effort and ultimate success or failure. These critics asked, "what of noble failures?"

In response, Smiles offered a conciliatory preface to the 1866 edition of *Self-Help* directed at mollifying these critics. Smiles concedes in this preface, "It is true, the best of men may fail, in the best of causes" (34)—a striking retreat from the strict control over one's own destiny espoused in the text proper. Furthermore, Smiles fumbles to bridge his original presentation of successful men and these newly imagined "best of men" that fail: "But even these best of men did not try to fail, or regard their failure as meritorious" (34). So what is the ultimate relationship, for Smiles, between self-improvement and success? *Self-Help*'s 1866 preface does not decisively resolve this question, only concluding tentatively (and somewhat contradictorily in

a preface to a text that exclusively focuses on tales of success) that "success in the good cause is unquestionably better than failure," but that "it is not the result in any case that is to be regarded so much as the aim and the effort" (34). For Smiles, success clearly is virtuous, but he has a difficult time explaining why a strong effort that fails could be just as meritorious as successful cases. Therefore, the 1866 preface bends to the changing discourse of success and failure as represented by his vocal critics—a concession that nevertheless awkwardly angles to uphold Smiles' original valuation of "success in the good cause."

This chapter will approach this critical moment in British cultural history by examining novels published contemporaneously with *Self-Help* at the turn of the decade from the 1850s to the 1860s, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* by George Meredith (1859) and *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens (1860-61). Like *Self-Help*, these novels explore the causal relationship between individual effort and ultimate success or failure. Unlike *Self-Help*, these novels approach this relationship with a critical eye, presenting narratives that seize control over ultimate success or failure from the individual protagonist and place it with, in the case of *Great Expectations*, a romantic interest and, in the case of *Richard Feverel*, a rigid philosophical system devised by a domineering father. Significantly, these novels draw on the cornerstones of the British *Bildungsroman;* however, each novel ironizes typical developmental narratives of the period through the surprising presentation of individual failure. In this way, the protagonists' ultimate failures function as critiques of *Bildung*'s social ideology, therein prompting readers to generate new social models that avoid *Bildung*'s demonstrated pitfalls.

As with *Self-Help*, however, the story of these publications does not end with the initial composition of these novels. Like Smiles, Meredith and Dickens revised their initial conceptualizations in significant ways—and, like Smiles, each of these authors had difficulty

negotiating between individual development and ultimate failure. As a result, both authors walk back their initially biting critiques of the causal relationship between individual effort and failure, resulting in texts that, in the long-term, exemplify the complexities of thorny cultural shifts at the turn of the decade. In the case of *Richard Feverel*, Meredith extensively revised the original 1859 publication in the following decades, trading the novel's initially uncompromising and acerbic ironizing of *Bildung* and replacing it with a perspective much more ambiguous in its accounting for individual failure. In the case of *Great Expectations*, Dickens softens the original manuscript's reluctance to unite the protagonist and his love interest with a redemptive finale that calls into question the thematic architecture of the novel's arbitration between success and failure. Therefore, *Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations* exemplify a key issue at the turn of the 1850s into the 1860s: the difficulty of accounting for the cause of individual success or failure. In fact, further examination of texts that provide either a clear path for success (like *Self-Help*) or an extended narrative to problematize such paths demonstrates the overlapping values of these superficially different approaches—values that, in the case of the extended narratives, would become further refined for more unambiguous critique by the century's end.

As with *Self-Help*, both *Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations* shift their originally uncompromising take on where to place blame for failure, thereby marking a turning point in the manner in which narratives in the nineteenth century mobilize failure. In previous chapters, this project has examined cases in which literary depictions of failure were utilized, in the case of *Madoc*, to challenge the conception of Romantic development within a colonial context and, in the case of *Frankenstein*, to protest exclusions from typical development narratives. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that *Richard Feverel* and *Great Expectations* typify a conflicted English literary tradition of subverting the characteristics of *Bildung* as a means of generating a

critique of larger social conventions (a trend that extends to the novel treated in the next chapter, George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* [1891]). At the same time, I will show that the authors' changes to the texts' initial versions manifest British culture's initial reluctance to view failures, in the manner of *Self-Help*, as anything except problematic cultural aberrations.

Critical approaches to *Richard Feverel* have run the gamut from psychobiography, to analysis of the unity (or lack thereof) in the novel, and, more recently, to consideration of its redefinition of sexual normativity. Yet, for many years, the primary manner of interpreting *Richard Feverel* was the psychobiographical approach: first, examine the heartache in Meredith's own marriage; second, identify a particular strand of misogyny in Sir Richard; and, finally, explain away *Richard Feverel*'s flouting of novelistic conventions in the protagonist's ultimate failure as an aberrant manifestation of Meredith's personal bitterness. For instance, an introduction to the 1926 American reprint of the novel begins with this startling critical aphorism: "Every good novel is autobiography" (Lambuth vii). The introduction continues by examining point-by-point comparisons between the plot of *Feverel* and Meredith's own marital ordeal; as this critic writes, Meredith's fiction "allowed himself a self-revelation which he rigorously suppressed in even intimate speech" (Lambuth vii). From this critical perspective, *Feverel* is a closed discursive system of personal confession—an unsurprising association given the *Bildungsroman*'s relationship to eighteenth-century confessional narrative. Additionally, this perspective suggests that such confessional writing, in fact, constitutes a key element of classic nineteenth-century self-help, with Meredith coming to understand himself more thoroughly through the process of composition. Lionel Stevenson's introduction to a subsequent edition of the novel, printed in 1950, does not stray from this previous critical approach of invoking a confessional framework for interpreting the novel, noting Meredith "revealed his inmost secrets

in the pages of his book" (xxi). Likewise, in an influential formulation of this approach, Stevenson's 1953 biography of Meredith provocatively suggests, "the novel was doubly Meredith's own confession" (63). This confession-oriented approach, however, by no means diminished with the rise of formally-oriented New Criticism in the mid-twentieth-century. For instance, a 1981 reading of the novel begins its particular critique with the central framework, "While writing it [*Feverel*], Meredith himself was undergoing the experience of desertion by his first wife" (Shaheen 14). More recently, even a 2005 overview of Meredith's oeuvre reminds us, "Meredith himself is always present to his readers" (Auchincloss 95). These interpretive gestures toward "Meredith himself," *Feverel* as confession, and Meredith's personal revelations have been historically prolific in critiques of the novel. Yet what leads a diverse set of critics over the course of an entire century to fixate on the autobiographical impulse of *Feverel*, even after such analysis had been largely excluded from scholarly analysis?

I suggest that this drive toward branding the novel as confessional or autobiographical, in fact, results from the novel's embedding of closed, unproblematic—indeed, systematic—approaches to life exemplified by *Bildung*. *Feverel* as a novel is a wild narrative beast, flailing in every which direction while resisting critical impulses to neatly cage its thematic arc. Because of this novel's particular confrontation of tidy systematicity, critics have been driven to contain it at all costs, to close the text off by branding it confession or autobiography. If it does not make sense formally, as the rationale went, at least we can make sense of it in light of Meredith's own anger over marital strife. Therefore, critics have actually reembedded the rigidity of the novel's fictional System into their own critical framework for approaching the text. Yet undertaking this approach is to reject categorically, even turn a blind eye toward, the novel's head-on collision

with the causal relationship between the cultural ideology of the *Bildungsroman* and individual failure.

Likewise, the criticism that classifies *Richard Feverel* as a *Bildungsroman* embeds the systematizing tendencies of the narrative, thereby missing the narrative ironizing of *Bildung* at work in the text. This ironizing produces a textual dynamic acutely engaged with critiquing the social ideology of *Bildung* as deployed in developmental narratives. Superficially, *Richard Feverel* correlates closely with the plot arc the typical *Bildungsroman*: the protagonist, young Richard, is guided by his didactic father, Sir Austin, in order to avoid the pitfalls of marriage. Previously, Lady Feverel had an extramarital affair, leading Sir Austin to create a codification of aphorisms and developmental strategies in order to produce a successful child: his System. Subsequently, Richard fights against his father's prescribed rules, finding a young lover of whom his father does not approve. Thereafter, Richard subverts his father's wishes through a clandestine marriage. Therefore, in the rising action of the novel, *Richard Feverel* closely resembles a *Bildungsroman*: young Richard faces a problem of transition between adolescence and adulthood, engages in youthful rambles, and attempts to acclimate successfully into societal framework.

However, this attention only to the rising action ignores the dark ending of the novel in which Sir Austin's didactics come back to haunt the young protagonist: Richard is seriously injured in a duel with a rival for his wife's affections, and his wife consequently dies of emotional trauma. In this manner, *Feverel* mirrors the initial narrative developments of the *Bildungsroman* but glaringly subverts them by ending on a catastrophic note. As Sven-Johan Spånberg claims in his study of *Feverel*, the "differences between the standard *Bildungsroman* and Meredith's novel are, in fact, so striking that *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* emerges rather

as a critique of the philosophy and conventions of this type of fiction than as a continuation of its traditions" (63).[5] Sir Austin's System, as an ironic codification of *Bildung*, allows the first edition of *Richard Feverel* to perform its work as a sharp critique of the connection between effort, moral uprightness, and ultimate success or failure in the period.

Many critical readings have uncovered the manner by which the novel accounts for the causes of Richard's failure to acclimate to society. For instance, David Williams classifies young Richard as the "victim of a System" (111). Likewise, William Roberson writes of "the System's failure to comprehend the artistic, playful impulse" (107). And as John R. Reed observes, "Richard himself is not free from temptations of self-indulgence," for, after all, "Any system might corrupt itself if unrestrained in appetite" (62). These particular critical maneuvers are by no means unique in *Richard Feverel* interpretations; in fact, a general critical trend dissects the faults in Sir Austin's System that eventually lead to Richard's downfall. For the purposes of this analysis, however, the particular defects of the System are not so much important as is the way by which the System reinscribes *Bildung* and generally engages a causal relationship between actions and success or failure (differing in degree between editions).[6] For instance, Kenneth

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[5] This interpretation has by no means been completely accepted within critical approaches to *Feverel*. In fact, Nikki Lee Manos counters Spånberg's assertion in claiming that "there was no need for Meredith to write an anti-*Bildungsroman*" (19) because Carlyle had already done so. I find this claim problematic on several levels. First, this contention ignores that *Feverel*'s dark ending clearly undermines the thematic arc of the *Bildungsroman*. Second, recognizing that Carlyle had already undertaken a related project in no way prohibits Meredith from making a similar crucial gesture. Instead, a more productive approach engages Meredith's text as an ironic recontextualization of the typical motions of *Bildung* by means of its protagonist's jarring failure.

[6] Clifford Siskin's uncovering of system as lost, discrete genre is a relevant point of reference. Siskin identifies system as an actual genre that authors self-consciously utilized in the eighteenth century. When system became less profitable, however, authors turned to writing novels with systematic aims and impulses; rather than explicitly account for the world through a detailed nonfictional prose description, authors began to create systems within the novel form. The novel becomes, at this point, no longer a fictional prose narrative with its roots in romance but rather a unique vehicle for presenting the world as a totalized system. Whether illustrating the

Millard's evocative analysis in light of the tradition of the self-help book of the Victorian period contends that works like *Feverel* "expose the mid-Victorian ethos of self-help and rigorous self-determination as harmful and divisive, both to the individual and to society" (25). Millard suggests that a narrow critical focus on the particular flaws of Sir Austin's System misses the larger dynamic at play in the novel. This dynamic stridently critiques the totalizing social ideology of *Bildung* rather than only particular aspects of it, thereby using Richard's failure as a corrective to novelistic depictions of successful acclimation into modern society typical of the period.

Sir Austin's System does not reiterate the exact particulars of the *Bildungsroman*—and, indeed, how could it, as the subgenre was not formally defined in English literary criticism until decades later? Rather, the System stands in for the general ideology of *Bildung* and its narrative enactments in its prescription of a particular path of development for those making their way into cultural adulthood. Critical approaches that attempt to dissect the particular shortcomings of the System—of which readers are only given momentary glimpses through quotations from Sir Austin's fictional collection of aphorisms *The Pilgrim's Scrip*—miss the thematic core of the text. Indeed, Sir Austin's *The Pilgrim's Scrip* functions as an allusive placeholder for cultural productions like John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) that exert significant ideological influence. *Richard Feverel*'s System points the way toward an ironic fictionalization of the

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unrelenting systemic coherence of politics (as in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*), character (as in Jane Austen's *Emma*), or personal development against a societal backdrop (as in the *Bildungsroman*), the novel changes into an important discursive force for absorbing, containing, and redeploying the world-encompassing vision of the fading genre of system. And along the way, as Siskin writes, "the condition of modernity" appears: "we know that it is no one's fault and everyone's; thanks to the pervasiveness of embedding, we have the System to blame" (118). In this way, the idea of "system" becomes an agent that can be blamed as it were human.

influence of *Bildung* in which the failed acclimation of the protagonist critiques developmental narratives' prescriptive social ideology in turn of the decade England.

Meredith regularly utilizes a vocabulary of success and failure in defining the contours and effects of the System, thereby explicitly engaging the cultural flashpoint of the perceived causal relationship between effort, morality, and success or failure. For instance, the novel's sardonic narrator reflects on the causal relationship between success or failure and the System's influence on young Richard early in the tale: "As yet, however, it could not be said that Sir Austin's System had failed. On the contrary, it had reared a youth, handsome, intelligent, well-bred, and, observed the ladies, with acute emphasis, innocent" (118).[7] Besides openly considering the potential of failure, this brief passage also implies "the contrary," elsewhere described explicitly as success. For instance, after Richard's initial subversion of the System through his love affair with Lucy, the narrator describes,

> Journeying back to Bellingham in the train, with the heated brain and brilliant eye of his son beside him, Sir Austin tried hard to feel infallible, as a man with a System should feel; and because he could not do so, after much mental conflict, he descended to entertain a personal antagonism to the young woman who had stepped in between his Experiment, and success. He did not think kindly of her. (204)

Thus, the narration sets out a clear vocabulary by which the System is judged: failure and success. Examples such as these persist throughout the narrative, serving to heighten Sir Austin's anxiety regarding the potential of failure, as well as to perpetually lampoon the causal relationship between the System and Richard's eventual failure to acclimate to it.

[7] In citing the 1859 version of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, I utilize Edward Mendelson's 1998 Penguin Classics edition.

Sir Austin's System, and by association the *Bildungsroman*, becomes a self-justifying structure that resists the specificity of its subjects and instead imposes its own totalizing ideology. A significant moment in this regard comes in Sir Austin's examination of a letter from Lady Blandish, a prominent subscriber to the wisdom of *The Pilgrim's Scrip* and therefore the System. In the letter, Lady Blandish admits to comforting herself in moments of self-doubt with these aphoristic words of *The Pilgrim's Scrip*: "For this reason so many fall from God, who have attained to him; that they cling to him with their Weakness, not with their Strength" (202). Here, Lady Blandish sees wisdom in Sir Austin and accordingly falls back on the textual manifestation of his life philosophy in moments of uncertainty.

However, Lady Blandish does not end her deliberation on *The Pilgrim's Scrip* at this quotation; rather, she aims to pull back the curtain on Sir Austin's philosophical process. She writes, "I like to know of what you were thinking when you composed this or that saying – what *suggested* it. May not one be admitted to inspect the machinery of Wisdom?" (202). Strikingly, Lady Blandish here wants to know what lies behind the eloquent aphorisms of the System. Moreover, she phrases her request by using the metaphor of the machine—the self-regulating, self-coherent symbol charged with meaning in this period of increasing industrialization. Indeed, for Lady Blandish, Sir Austin's words are closed, authoritative, machine-like: she would simply like the opportunity to see the gears shifting the motor of the System. She continues, "I feel curious to know how thoughts – *real* thoughts are born. Not that I hope to win the secret" (202). But precisely what discourse allows for the discernment of "real" as opposed to any other type of thoughts? What "secret" facilitates the creation of these "real" thoughts? For Sir Austin's System as well as the *Bildungsroman*, the illusion of "real" or "secret" authority is perpetuated by the production of social ideology in the protagonist and, by extension, the reader.

The mechanistic discourse of the System and the *Bildungsroman* that allows for this production of "*real* thoughts" permits developmental models to appear as total, complete, and closed off from cultural negotiation. In aspiring to create a totalizing System, and indeed having a readership accept the tenets of the System as "real," Sir Austin initiates his own authority. Like the novelist who portrays a particular developmental path in the *Bildungsroman* as forging a union between the individual and modernity, Sir Austin possesses the "secret" key to this higher level of understanding—and, luckily for their readerships, they have deemed it proper to disseminate this wisdom through textual form. Therefore, the creation of his System parallels the creation of authority in the typical developmental novel, resulting in an ideology that exerts force on its readership through rhetorical tropes, confident posturing, and a mechanized model of individual development. Unsurprisingly, after this moment Sir Austin disarms Lady Blandish's opinions in the margins of her letter: "Women are cowards, and succumb to Irony and Passion, rather than yield their hearts to Excellence and Nature's Inspiration" (203). Here Sir Austin's misogyny parallels the construction of rhetorical authority in the *Bildungsroman*, in which the male-oriented ideology of acclimation tends to drown out any dissenting voices.

Sir Austin's codification of his ideal trajectory of individual development reveals the exclusionary politics of the *Bildungsroman*. When he discovers his son's rushed marriage to Lucy, Sir Austin remarks, "it is useless to base any System on a human being" (327). The narrator acerbically continues, "Richard was no longer the Richard of his creation: his pride and his joy: but simply a human being with the rest. The bright star had sunk among the mass" (328). In this passage, the metaphor of Richard as a sinking star ironically repurposes the positive focalization usually devoted to protagonists of the *Bildungsroman*. In a typical developmental trajectory, these protagonists grapple with ambitions that outstrip the social and economic

structures available to them. In this scenario, these protagonists, after some struggle, accept their station in society—representing the harmony of the individual and the modern world. Yet in Richard's case, his mechanized upbringing that disallows for human foibles actually leads to his tragic ending in which "his bright star" sinks below the station available to him and rather into the catastrophic.

Meredith establishes the tragic nature of Richard's failure as a protagonist—and, by obvious extension, of Sir Austin's System—in the denouement of the novel. In the penultimate chapter,[8] Sir Austin begins by nervously waiting for his son's return to Lucy, now accepted into Sir Austin's estate as a feminine ideal worthy of his son. Richard does not arrive when expected, and the atmosphere grows tense, with Lady Blandish reasonably stating, "I fear that we must give him up tonight" (474). In response, Sir Austin attempts to reassert the last vestiges of his authority: "If he said he would come, he will come." Subsequently, the narrator reveals the latent insecurity behind Sir Austin's bluster: "He was conscious that nothing save perfect success would now hold this self-emancipating mind. She had seen him through." Sir Austin's stubbornness in holding to an unattainable ideal of "perfect success" both foreshadows the tragic ending and underscores one of its contributing factors: his pride as author of the System. Rather than primarily concern himself with the outcome of his son's journey, he instead, full of pride, focuses on saving face in his predictions with Lady Blandish. In this way, Meredith again derisively associates Sir Austin's status as author of the System with the authors of *Bildungsromane*: like these authors, Sir Austin comes to value the integrity of his own narrative over the multiplicity of scenarios encountered in lived experience.

[8] In fact, this chapter is titled "The Last Scene," thereby knowingly nodding to the theatrical context of the tragic finale.

Meredith reinforces this critique of the *Bildungsroman* by subverting his novel's narrative framework in the final chapter, replacing the established narrator with the epistolary voice of Lady Blandish. As Kenneth Millard writes, *Feverel* "ends with an invitation for a witness from outside the family to assess the success of the story we have read" (37). By completing the novel with a chapter wholly devoted to the narration of Lady Blandish—a narrative setup unique in the text—Meredith reinforces the power of her dissenting voice as a critic of prescribed development. Besides narrating the final action of the novel—Richard surviving a duel foolishly fought for Lucy's honor and her consequent death—Lady Blandish reinforces dissent to the typical pride of novelists of developmental texts. In this chapter, Lady Blandish narratively silences Sir Austin's voice once and for all, reinforcing *Richard Feverel*'s deep skepticism of Sir Richard's particular type of narrative authority that parallels developmental novels of 1859 England. Moreover, the chapter strikingly removes the self-consciously ironic narrator, thereby eliminating the potential ambiguity caused by ironic commentary and instead ending on a clear note of criticism of totalizing novelists. Meredith's conclusion strongly underwrites the narrative's clear critique of a mechanistic relationship between individual effort and success or failure. Just as Richard's individualism was overwritten by Sir Austin, Sir Austin's System is overwritten by Lady Blandish—a knowing jab at the typically male-dominated discourse in developmental narratives of the period. Moreover, Richard's clear failure to uphold the "perfect success" of Sir Austin's System, or even to acclimate in a manner typical of protagonists of *Bildungsromane*, allows *Richard Feverel* to perform its work as a critique of the cause-and-effect successes of the English conception of *Bildung*. Indeed, trying to prescribe a route for success—whether in Sir Austin's System or in

Bildungsromane—necessarily draws on an all-too-simplistic understanding of causal relationships within society.

Likewise, Dickens' original manuscript of *Great Expectations* engages the same cultural tension as *Richard Feverel* by utilizing narrative failure to critique the relationship between individual effort, moral uprightness, and a successful life. This original version famously ends on a somber note in which Pip and Estella do not carry through the romantic trajectory of the narrative in an amorous union; instead, they meet for a moment, reflect, and separate, thereby underscoring the ways by which Pip's development has not allowed for traditional novelistic success. However, Dickens rewrote the ending of the manuscript version for initial publication, in the process creating a public version of the text that invokes the concept of failed development but, in uniting Pip and Estella, does not fully carry through its generative implications by prompting its readership to consider where Pip went wrong.

Historically, Dickens' decision to alter the ending from manuscript to publication has been one of the most controversial and numerously discussed issues in Victorian criticism. Exploring the difficult terrain of authorial intention, scholars have tended to explain Dickens' decision to revise his original manuscript as a result of advice from fellow novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton (to which Dickens alluded, albeit not in specific detail of either Bulwer-Lytton's rationale or Dickens' judgment). John Cloy's assessment in this respect is representative: "Although Bulwer's exact words to Dickens have not been preserved, they were convincing enough to persuade the younger novelist to make a substantial alteration" (170). However, Jerome Meckier has persuasively called the factual basis for this historical belief into question by examining the precise dates of Dickens' interaction with Bulwer-Lytton alongside the known revision and publication dates of *Great Expectations*. This analysis leads Meckier to opine that

the historical propensity to blame Bulwer-Lytton, in fact, results from "Dickensian diplomacy," or "keeping himself detached and blameless while manipulating and propitiating others" ("Defense" 41). However, while Meckier's analysis profits from this close attention to authorial control in consideration of the revision process of *Great Expectations*, it falters in absolutely privileging even hypothetical authorial intention when analyzing how the novel functions within its cultural context. Rather than focus narrowly on Dickens' intention, then, analysis of the multiple endings should more productively proceed from close attention to the cultural matters explored earlier in the text—thereby demonstrating the stakes of each resolution and, furthermore, how each ending accounts for them in its closure.

In the bulk of the novel[9] leading into the brief endings, Dickens frequently casts plot in terms of rigid failure or success. In short, I will contend that the first version, by withholding a satisfactory resolution to these issues, begs readers to consider critically the contours of this plot and to investigate the causes of Pip's failure. In contrast, the published version, by employing a fairytale-like, improbable union with Estella, does not challenge the reader to examine Pip's failure but rather suggests uncritical acceptance. Before reaching these divergent endings, however, each version of the novel establishes a developmental framework typical of *Bildung* in

[9] When referencing the published version of the ending, I cite from the 1998 Broadview edition edited by Graham Law and Adrian J. Pinnington; additionally, quotations from the original manuscript version are cited from the Broadview edition. Though Edgar Rosenberg makes the case that "The textualist has in fact to consider not two endings but six" (93) based on minor textual and manuscript variants, I will follow scholarly convention in examining only two versions of the ending: 1) the serial text/first edition and 2) the manuscript of the Pierpoint Morgan Library (as reproduced in the aforementioned Broadview edition). My reasoning is that these versions represent the most vital textual negotiations of the workings of failure in *Great Expectations*. Yet Albert A. Dunn, in particular, raises pertinent questions about the change of "I saw the shadow of no parting from her" in the serial publication to "I saw no shadow of another parting from her" in the 1868 book version in claiming, "the revision could be understood to mean that there would not be another parting because Pip and Estella would not meet again" (41). Despite this intriguing concept, I read this slight shift in phrasing as tweaking the original implication of romantic union rather than promoting further ambiguity.

which successful acclimation into society stands as the end goal—a point sometimes missed in the hotly-contested debate over whether the original manuscript[10] or published version[11], or neither[12], has more literary merit.[13] Indeed, the plentiful scholarly interpretations of the two

[10] Though Claire Jarvis admits a "slight preference for the fully pessimistic original ending," her analysis explores both endings in the context of "the limited joy available in any ending to this plot" (1267) due to the novel's "trope of sexual delay that highlights its narrative delays" (1263). David Paroissien more forcefully argues for the superiority of the original version "based on empirical grounds" (276), which he defines as examining the narrative structure in context of the passage of time between the action and Pip's narration. Likewise, Alex R. Falzon's analysis of the endings in light of the novel's title suggests, "Dickens's original ending was, indeed, less 'calculated' and more plausible than its bland successor" (58). Falzon further judges, "it would have been perfectly in tune with the new, 'regenerated' Pip who *can,* now, recognize his past mistakes and enumerate Estella on that list of past, forgotten, woes" (58). These critics' arguments represent the most compelling modern defenses of the original ending, which has historically been the dominant critical position since the nineteenth century.

[11] Jerome Meckier has been the staunchest modern critical defender of the published version of the ending. For instance, he claims that through the cyclical nature of the published version Dickens "achieved both symmetry and closure" ("Defense" 54). On a slightly different note, Douglass H. Thomson close reads the final line of the published version in manner that "neither seals Pip's and Estella's separation nor predicts their togetherness" (95), thereby sidestepping common criticisms of this version's "happy" finale. A. L. French, however, uses the plot's timeline to argue, "Dickens hasn't betrayed his artistic conscience because he has carefully implied, for the attentive reader, a psychologically right end for the hero" in which Pip is "well into a futile and celibate middle age" (359-60). Similarly, John T. Smith reads the final line of the published version ironically by interpreting Pip's narration ("I saw no shadow of another parting from her") as evidence that he is still unable to imagine accurately the future of his relationship with Estella. While not firmly arguing the superiority of the published version, Edwin M. Eigner nevertheless explains how Edward Bulwer-Lytton's frequently demonized suggestions for revision helped Dickens to avoid "a fashionable unhappy ending, designed to gain immediate popularity" and instead write an ending based on "the time-tested rules of English narrative romance" (107-108). Likewise, Robert A. Greenberg views the revision as satisfying in how Dickens uses the published ending to "establish the connection between present and past" (161).

[12] For instance, Robert L. Patten's recent work intriguingly suggests, "No single instantiation or reading can capture all the novel's potential" (177)—a result of the "various temporalities" (177) that permeate the work (most notably, the difference in readers' expectations of three-volume novels and serial publications). From a different vantage point, Sean O'Sullivan sees *Great Expectations* "as a bifurcation into alternatives" that is particularly salient to a discussion of how "satisfaction" runs counter to the serial form. Andrew Sanders, meanwhile, contends for the importance of the conventions of comedy to the novel, ultimately concluding, "*neither* ending should necessarily be seen as destructive of the 'comedy' of the novel as a whole" (64). Anton Kirchhofer offers another perspective, exploring the evolution of *Great Expectations*' ending

endings tend to duplicate the rigid distinction between success and failure that characterizes young Pip's worldview, in a manner similar to the way that critics of *Richard Feverel* have reduplicated the rigidity of Sir Austin's System within their own criticism. For instance, Marshall W. Gregory writes in defense of the published ending,

> The revised ending relates to the thematic structure of the whole novel in a way that the original does not, and thus becomes a more elevated and *successful* statement of Dickens's moral vision. While the original ending is *successful* in tying up loose ends, it *fails*, where the revised ending *succeeds*, in giving a final emphatic utterance of the values which have informed the whole rest of the novel. (406, emphases mine)

This interpretation of the endings, like many others, tends to present an absolute judgment of the relative "success" in providing finality to the narrative rather than exploring the cultural tension represented by the narrative shifts and revisions. My argument will proceed by stepping outside of this rigid structure and instead examining the manner by which the movement between the

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"under the sign of the author-function" (148) through the influence of multiple agents beyond Dickens. Caroline Levine explores the manner by which *Great Expectations* responds to contemporaneous suspense novels and therein "defamiliarizes suspense itself" (98) in providing multiple ambiguous endings. In analyzing the novel's plotting from a Freudian perspective, Peter Brooks points out the "somewhat arbitrary and unimportant" nature of deciding between the two endings (136). From an editorial perspective, Edgar Rosenberg argues that individual preference for either version is essentially "beside the point" (107). Milton Millhauser, however, believes that the two brief endings symbolize Dickens' inability to "commit himself imaginatively, because he is not sure where he stands" (276) in respect to accounting for Pip's personal progress. Martin Meisel, meanwhile, judges that both endings provide "a similar graceful accent to a more or less completed structure" (326-327), and, therefore, "in the total architecture of the novel neither ending is very important" (326).

[13] A related debate in this regard is whether the fictional Estella is living at the time of the serial publication. Recently, Jerome Meckier notes, "Pip withholds his autobiography out of consideration for its principals – Biddy, Joe, Jaggers and especially Estella – lest serialization in their lifetimes disturb them unnecessarily" ("Estella, Dead or Alive?" 227). This issue, however, has become so narrowly focused on the matter of Estella's status at the time of narration that it neglects the manner by which Dickens' two endings not only push against each other but also demonstrate a key crux of defining development in the period.

endings produces this sense of failure or success based on the earlier narrative (that is consistent between the two versions) and therein demonstrates the fraught nature of accounting for failure at the turn of the decade from the 1850s into the 1860s.

Great Expectations' opening chapter invokes the logic of evolution as a framework for the forthcoming narrative, and therein sets the tone for a story that applies the rigid judgments of success or failure to its protagonist. In this opening, Pip (our first-person narrator) ironically utilizes the language of failure to describe the premature deaths of his five siblings. Pip explains that these "five little brothers" died by reason that they "gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle" (39). This usage plays with the multiple valences implied by "living," primarily invoking the primary, literal definition of being alive. However, the last phrase of the sentence, "universal struggle," invokes a meaning significant to *Great Expectations*' contemporary cultural context: Darwin's theory of evolution. In fact, Darwin utilizes this exact phrase in *On the Origin of Species* (1859), a text published shortly before Dickens' serialization of *Great Expectations*. In Darwin's text, he dedicates a chapter to the "Struggle for Existence," which he defines "in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny" (51). Notably, Darwin's conception of this struggle explicitly deploys a definition by which an individual is classified as a "success" (or, by implication, failure) based on offspring. Darwin explains this process as "the universal struggle for life" (50), or "the whole economy of nature, with every fact on distribution, rarity, abundance, extinction and variation" (50). Therefore, *Great Expectations* begins with an explicit allusion to *On the Origin of Species* that effectively casts the trajectory of an individual's life within the larger cultural context of the evolution debate. By doing so, the text establishes a

critical vantage point suspicious of totalizing narrative systems—like evolution and *Bildung*—that impose rigid structures of failure and success on readers' lives.

Likewise, *Great Expectations*' opening passage, upon closer consideration, engages another key cultural framework of the period: the developmental plot typified by the British *Bildungsroman*. Indeed, a reading of this passage in light of *Great Expectations*' literary antecedents reveals a meaning particularly relevant to consideration of the novel as a narrative that explores the contours of success and failure. The typical British *Bildungsroman* deploys a common plot by which, after initial resistance to modern cultural expectations, the protagonist accepts an anonymous albeit functional role in modern society. Dickens uses this very same outcome in the resolution of *Great Expectations*, with Pip accepting a more humble position as a clerk in Herbert's company. In light of this literary standard, the death of Pip's brothers who "gave up trying to get a living" subtly invokes another modern definition of "living": the way by which a person makes enough money to survive. This definition, coupled with the rigid conception of success and failure contained in the allusion to Darwin, establishes a darkly ironic framework for understanding the narrative to follow: the struggle to acclimate in the manner typical of protagonists—defined as "success"—can be an untenable goal given the cutthroat nature of modern society. In fact, even the death of infants can be ironically invoked as an example of individuals who cannot successfully make a living in both the literal and figurative sense of the phrase.

Later, Herbert Pocket's reintroduction to the plot as an adult provides Pip with a point of contrast for comprehending society's rigid, and sometimes merciless, framework of success and failure. This contrast emphasizes failure and success as inherited social constructs rather than categories of *a priori* knowledge. As Pip narrates in this passage, "I have never seen any one

since, who more strongly expressed to me, in every look and tone, a natural incapacity to do anything secret and mean" (208). At the same time, Pip tempers his compliment,

> There was something wonderfully hopeful about his general air, and something that at the same time whispered to me he would never be very successful or rich. I don't know how this was. I became imbued with the notion on that first occasion before we sat down to dinner, but I cannot define by what means. (208)

In this passage, Pip's belief that Herbert "would never be very successful or rich" illuminates the manner by which *Great Expectations* explores the ideology of success and failure. First, on a superficial level, this passage highlights the connection between economic prosperity and success. Second, it also exposes the obscure workings of cultural ideology in a fashion similar to *Richard Feverel*'s "machinery of Wisdom." In the case of *Great Expectations*, Dickens emphasizes the hazy workings of the process of ideological imposition by utilizing the passive voice ("I became imbued") without naming the statement's true subject ("I cannot define by what means"). Moreover, Pip draws on this "notion" only a few pages later, again highlighting the passive nature of his belief system: "again, there came upon me, for my relief that odd impression that Herbert Pocket would never be very successful or rich" (214). Again in this case, Dickens utilizes a passive construction in order to highlight Pip's indistinct impressions of how he has received accepted cultural beliefs. For in *Great Expectations*, as in typical British narratives of development, the logic of success and failure insinuates itself into the consciousness of the characters. By drawing attention to the passive nature of the process, Dickens emphasizes the manner by which social ideology propagates in individuals.

Pip's functional definition of success, based in economic prosperity, becomes unmistakably intertwined with his pursuit of Estella as a love interest. Alex R. Falzon concisely

notes the inextricable connection between economics and romance in the context of the multiple valences of the title of the novel:

> And yet, this title is – again like the ending of the novel itself – duplicitous (and highly ambivalent, to say the least): since it can take on – as the novel progresses – both Jaggers the lawyer's meaning (pertaining to that outer, mundane sphere of public commerce and pecuniary success; knowing, as he does, that Magwitch is the true benefactor willing Pip to be brought up as a 'gentleman'), and Pip the orphan's interpretation of the same words (pertaining to the inner, 'erotic' sphere of private sentiment; believing, instead, that it is Miss Havisham whom he should thank for his 'lucky star': namely, Estella). (53)

I would clarify this dynamic, however, by noting that Pip's pursuit of Estella in large part depends upon his ability to fulfill these economic expectations. Indeed, Pip's embrace of economic power is coexistent with his beliefs regarding Estella. These beliefs, inherited from literary models, cast Pip as a hero who needs to gain riches in order to be a suitable match for Estella. These interrelated factors will later play a central role in the workings of both endings, when the promise of Pip's union to Estella based on economic prosperity either collapses completely or is upheld in the manner of the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

Earlier in the narrative, however, Pip clarifies the logic of his attachment to Estella, primarily by noting his fairytale-like conception of their relationship. He writes that Miss Havisham "had adopted Estella, she had as good as adopted me, and it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together" (261). Pip's usage of "fail" here is filled with irony, not only explicitly referring to Miss Havisham's intentions but also foreshadowing Pip's failure to marry Estella in the original manuscript version of the novel. Additionally, the passage establishes the framework of a fairytale typified in English developmental narratives. In this way, Franco

Moretti judges the British *Bildungsroman*, unlike the developmental novels elsewhere in Europe, as "combining constraint and consolation" (210). In these British novels, "Any type of conflict or diversity—whether of interests, ideas, ethical options, or erotic preferences—is removed from the realm of the questionable and translated into the fairy-tale-juridical opposition of 'right' and 'wrong'" (210). Absorbing this cultural framework, Pip casts his interactions with Estella in terms of a fairytale, with the couple being destined for each other from young age, rather than fully comprehending factors like class that could complicate their relationship. This passage also highlights the literary influence working on Pip in this view of their relationship, with Pip interpreting their tale as "a rich attractive mystery, of which I was the hero" (261). Significantly, Dickens' narrative here embeds a self-aware commentary on typical British novels of development, thereby setting the stage for the original manuscript's suggestive undermining of the causal relationship between individual effort and ultimate success or failure found in typical British *Bildungsromane* of the period.

This causal relationship also influences the manner by which Estella views her own developmental trajectory—a viewpoint likewise challenged in the original manuscript ending. In one notable earlier passage, Estella and Miss Havisham engage in a rare verbal conflict. After Miss Havisham accuses Estella of being unfeeling and cold, Estella retorts, "I am what you have made me. Take all the praise, take all the blame; take all the success, take all the failure; in short, take me" (331). Estella's logic, in line with the original manuscript's ending, undermines simple causal relationships in several ways. First, she invokes the typical causal model of development in stating, "I am what you have made me," therein displacing blame onto Miss Havisham and recognizing the limitations in self-defining developmental models. Second, she cites binary relationships (praise/blame and success/failure) typical of Victorian ideology. Finally, she

complicates these rigid binaries by containing all of them within her own conflicted personality ("in short, take me"). In sum, this passage engages the British novel's logic of individual development but muddies its easy cause-and-effect mechanics, in a manner that acts as a small-scale treatment of the themes of the original manuscript ending. Yes, Miss Havisham has exerted significant influence on Estella's personality. Yet, at the same time, Estella emphasizes her personality cannot be distilled into a simple model of failure and success. Rather, her description pushes away from a fairytale-like distinction between good and evil and toward a more nuanced and modern self-definition. In terms of challenging the novel's readership, Estella's confrontation of simple causation and rigid categorization foreshadows the dynamic of the original manuscript ending.

This original manuscript ending capitalizes on the novel's earlier questioning of British literature's typical developmental tropes by prompting readers to reconsider simple causal relationships. Moreover, in the process, the manuscript ending follows through on the earlier narrative push toward a more nuanced narrative adjudication of failure and success. This version of the ending describes Pip's encounter with Estella four years after the novel's main plot, during which time Pip heard rumors of "her as leading a most unhappy life, and as being separated from her husband who had used her with great cruelty" (510). Their bittersweet encounter carries through this somber tone when, as Pip describes, "the lady and I looked sadly enough on one another" (510). Estella then remarks on her own developmental trajectory: "I am greatly changed, I know" (510), before shaking hands and giving a final resolution to their relationship. The final paragraph reads,

> I was very glad afterwards to have had the interview; for in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance that suffering had been stronger than Miss

Havisham's teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be. (511)

First, Pip stresses the multiplicity of factors in any individual's development by emphasizing Estella's subsequent "suffering" as being "stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching." Second, the final sentence accentuates empathy and mutual feeling over easy adjudication of developmental failure or success. By avoiding an ending that accepts a fairytale-like definition of good and evil, or emphasizes simple causality in which Pip is rewarded for his newfound acclimation into the economy, this manuscript version allows this developmental plot to move beyond Moretti's judgment of the British *Bildungsroman* wherein, "Any type of conflict or diversity—whether of interests, ideas, ethical options, or erotic preferences—is removed from the realm of the questionable and translated into the fairy-tale-juridical opposition of 'right' and 'wrong'" (210). Instead, the narrative hypothesizes the generative possibilities of deploying narrative failure through which readers are prodded to reconsider the narrative's values—and their own—after Pip and Estella's romance does not accord with novelistic convention. Rather, this failed relationship creates space for a key critical reflection: effort and moral action may not always lead toward an ending characterized by societally-defined success through marriage.

At the same time, the original manuscript ending reinforces the European *Bildungsroman*'s typical acceptance of the gap between inner ideals and the means of achieving them in society. Moreover, it prompts readers to investigate the causes of this gap. Georg Lukács refers to this dynamic as the "educative element" in which "the hero's ultimate state of resigned loneliness does not signify the total collapse and defilement of all his ideals but a recognition of the discrepancy between the interiority and the world" (136). In the case of this original ending of *Great Expectations*, Pip cannot follow through either of his original ideals: fulfillment of his

destiny as a great gentleman or marriage with Estella. Rather, these inner ideals clash with, in the first case, the realization of Magwitch's role as the secret benefactor, and in the second, Estella's own will and lived experience. Pip, like other protagonists of European *Bildungsromane* before him, finds that society will not accommodate his inner ideals and that, instead, he must accommodate his inner ideals to the limitations of the world. By ending the narrative with the ultimate failure to achieve his romantic ideal (rather than, for instance, with the successful readjustment of his great expectations through becoming a modest part of the British economy in Cairo), *Great Expectations* pushes further: it begs readers to question the limits of society's ability to accommodate Pip's, or any protagonists' (or person's), inner ideals.

In this light, Pip's inability to become a gentleman or marry Estella mobilizes failure to explore the limits of liberal society. Class structure makes social and economic mobility extremely difficult for a person of Pip's background. These same structures disable Pip from uniting with the higher class Estella. Though these features through which the narrative highlights the limits of society are by no means unique to *Great Expectations* in contrast to other European *Bildungsromane*, Dickens' novel restructures the typical narrative arrangement by ending on a somber note of disappointment rather than an acceptance of the external world and its structures. Typically, a reader would expect to find such a passage in which a longed-for ideal is not realized earlier in the novel before the protagonist ultimately comes to, as Lukács states, an "ultimate state of resigned loneliness" that nevertheless "does not signify the total collapse and defilement of all his ideals" (136). In the case of Pip, however, the placement of his inability to unite with Estella in the text's final chapter pushes failure, rather than resigned acceptance, to the forefront of the novel. The novel thereby leaves readers with a final moment that highlights Pip's limitations, and, by extension, the limits of society. Pip's individual failure stands in for the

failure of society to allow for social and economic mobility, and the novel's dismal concluding chapter only highlights this structural limitation. *Great Expectations*, with its original manuscript ending, uses ultimate failure as a means of social critique, thereby exploring the generative capability of narrative failure in order to stir societal change in its readership. By subverting the conventional way protagonists of developmental novels acclimate to society, *Great Expectations*' manuscript ending prompts readers to examine the factors that that led to this jarring, atypical ending.

Dickens' published ending, however, partially rescinds this biting critique of societal limitations and instead capitulates to the fairy tale ideals that characterized the endings of earlier works such as *Oliver Twist* (1837-39). Indeed, the published ending to *Great Expectations* subverts the societal limitations established so vividly earlier in the narrative by uniting Pip and Estella. In this version, the ensuing years have produced a completely remade Estella, who now actually sympathizes with, and indeed loves, Pip. She states,

> There was a long hard time when I kept far from me, the remembrance of what I had thrown away when I was quite ignorant of its worth. But, since my duty has not been incompatible with the admission of that remembrance, I have given it a place in my heart. (503)

After the death of her churlish husband Bentley Drummle, Estella finally admits to herself that she, in fact, loves Pip. The tale ends by the couple holding hands, leaving behind their past existences, and forging a future together:

> I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and

> in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw the shadow of no parting from her. (503)

By awkwardly uniting Pip with Estella, this ending subverts any pretense toward an "ultimate state of resigned loneliness" that reconciles the inner ideals of the protagonist with the larger structures of the outside world. Instead, it utilizes an improbable *deus ex machina* in which Estella's character has completely transformed—coincidently taking the precise shape as that projected by Pip's ideals. In sharp contrast to Lady Blandish' ending to *Richard Feverel*, this version of the ending reinforces the fulfillment of male desire. As a result, this change recasts the tone of the entire preceding narrative, with Pip unexpectedly achieving success (as defined by the previous established values) by the sole means of another person's improbable transformation.

The published ending to *Great Expectations* undermines the generative power of the manuscript version by capitulating to the original fairytale ideals of its protagonist—ideals that he seemingly had relegated to fantasy long before in the narrative. Yet John Kucich, in particular, recently interprets this ending in an original manner: "Pip's great achievement, however—and the great change in the novel's symbolic conceptualization of expenditure—is his new ability to give without overt self-appropriation" (105). In Kucich's reading, Pip's selfless acts of giving near the novel's end make narrative space for him to unite with Estella. Yet even this nuanced interpretation falls back into the fairytale pattern in which the morally good are narratively rewarded, therein substituting the generative capability of depictions of failure with simplistic wish fulfillment.

Rather than using failure as a means of critiquing the limiting economic and social structures of society exemplified by *Bildung*, the published version posits that such limitations

can be overcome—as long as protagonists hope hard enough and wait long enough for other characters' will to bend to their own. Though D. A. Miller persuasively recognizes, "That the text can issue in either of two opposite resolutions points up the indeterminacy with which, in particular, the function of Estella has been invested" (274), such an interpretation neglects the manner by which novelists of the period began to harness the generative capabilities of this "indeterminacy" through portrayals of ultimate failure. Such endings of failure—whether congruent with the setup of the previous narrative or not—tend to subvert the typical deployment of developmental narratives by positing a readership that learns to rethink their ideology as a result of the generative possibilities of failure. In the case of *Great Expectations*, the original manuscript ending harnesses this newfound possibility, while the revised publication falls back into pre-*Bildung* conventional narrative closure.

This shift in tenor from the manuscript version stands alongside Smiles' 1866 preface to *Self-Help* as an ideological revision that represents the trouble in adjudicating narrative success and failure at the turn of the 1850s into the 1860s. Yet while Smiles backs away from his initial assertion that success is wholly self-determinative based on effort and morality, Dickens, in the published ending of *Great Expectations*, moves toward this fairy-tale of self-determination. Indeed, the published version of *Great Expectations* runs quite close to the narrative ideology of *Self-Help.* While Jerome Meckier posits that Dickens authored *Great Expectations* as a direct corrective to and critique of *Self-Help*'s ideology that "posed a unique challenge to Dickens' conception of himself as the era's premier social realist" ("Dickens Frowns" 552), this interpretation cannot account for the fairytale-like aura of the novel's published ending. Meckier uses the novel's final passage as evidence that Pip's life "is no Smilesian anecdote" ("Dickens Frowns" 551) and instead "proscribes Smilesian success stories" ("Dickens Frowns" 551).

However, as V. J. Emmett, Jr. persuasively argues, the published ending in which Pip unites with Estella "rewards him for his bourgeois virtues" (10) established through working hard as a means of economic success in Cairo. Moreover, Meckier's interpretation of the ending as a counterpoint to Smiles elides the centrality of Pip's romantic entanglements throughout the narrative, with Estella's love representing an unattainable ideal because of personal *and* economic barriers. By changing Estella's perspective with only a short paragraph of explanation, Dickens reinforces the fairytale conception of the world that Smiles espouses, if on romantic rather than economic terms. This capitulation demonstrates the tension of accounting for success and failure in the period, with champions of self-determination and critics of societal structures alike dovetailing after rethinking their initial conceptions.

My main point, then—aside from pointing out the way by which *Great Expectations* sets up a rigid adjudication between success and failure, as well as how the manuscript ending harnesses the generative potential of undermining the typical acclimation of a *Bildungsroman* protagonist—is to highlight the complicated and self-contradictory nature of accounting for failure at the turn of the 1850s into the 1860s. In this period, even texts with some critical distance from developmental tropes (like *Great Expectations*) struggle to forge a satisfying narrative without resorting to the very conventions on which they reflect. In total, Dickens' narrative cannot be characterized as either a defense or repudiation of Smiles' logic—for indeed, as explored earlier, Smiles' own logic is often contradictory and conflicted. Rather, we should view both *Self-Help* and *Great Expectations* as representative of a formative period in British culture—one in which texts struggled to account for instances of failure at the same time they grappled with the pervasive cultural ideology that rewards good behavior and strong effort with ultimate success. The tension between the impulses to critique simple cause-and-effect models of

failure and to conservatively support these models paved the way for our contemporary fetishization of failure's generative power. This fetishization of failure's generative power, in fact, often serves to buttress the exclusionary nature of social and economic structures because failure is seen as a necessary step toward eventual success. This formative moment presents problems for critics because representative texts do not fit any easy categorizations; rather, texts such as *Great Expectations* begin to hypothesize the generative potential of portrayals of failure—portrayals that would be more definitively deployed in texts such as du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* later in the century. These later texts have a clearer conception of how to embed a failed version of the *Bildungsroman* plot to prompt the critical reconsideration of their readerships; at this point, however, *Great Expectations* begins to clear the path for such texts only in fits and stops.

Meredith's stridently pessimistic ending to the 1859 edition of *Richard Feverel* might seem, to the attentive reader, impervious to such narrative softening. Yet Meredith revisited and revised substantial portions of the novel beginning in the 1870s, creating a text much less openly critical of established social order and its exertion of authority in prescribed developmental systems such as the *Bildungsroman*.[14] Nevertheless, Meredith's revisions have generated far less

[14] Meredith revised *Richard Feverel* for publication several times, with varying levels of change. As Edward Mendelson, editor of the 1998 Penguin Classics edition, succinctly notes, in 1875 Meredith "revised the book for the Tauchnitz series of cheap paper-covered editions published in Leipzig for travellers and other English-speaking readers abroad" (xxvii). This revised edition was reprinted in Britain in 1878. Later, Meredith made revisions to the novel when preparing it for republication in a series of his collected works. In citing Meredith's revisions, I use John Halperin's Oxford edition that "is a reproduction of Volume II of the Memorial Edition," a collected series of Meredith's works published between 1909 and 1912. For a comprehensive overview of the changes between revisions, see Lillian Sacco's 1967 dissertation, *The Significance of George Meredith's Revisions of* The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. Accordingly, my aim in this chapter is not editorial in working out the various shifts between each edition—some large and some small—of *Richard Feverel*; rather, it is to utilize the standardized version of

critical discussion than the robust conversation surrounding Dickens' changes to *Great Expectations*. The editors of editions of the novel who have taken up the issue, however, are divided about the relative merits of Meredith's revisions. For instance, Edward Mendelson (editor of the 1998 Penguin Classics edition), judges the 1859 version as "a more coherent and compelling work than the later versions," as a result of the fact that "The Meredith who revised the book was an author whose later novels were less impassioned, less ironic and less interesting than his first" (xxviii). Charles J. Hill agrees in the introduction to the 1964 edition from Holt, Rinehart and Winston: "Despite superfluities and excrescences, the original text of the novel is much to be preferred to the author's subsequent revision of it" (xxix). Taking the opposite view, John Halperin (editor of the 1984 Oxford University Press edition) assesses, "Meredith revised *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* when he was an experienced author at the height of his powers; his changes are an improvement on the original, erasing as they do some extraneous material and focusing our attention more narrowly on what is important" (xx). Lionel Stevenson's introduction to the 1950 edition from The Modern Library, however, falls somewhere in the middle: "The net effect of his revision was to diminish the satire and proportionately to increase the emotional element" (xxvi). Likewise, scholarly works on the revisions of *Richard Feverel* have not demonstrated consensus related to the net effect of Meredith's changes. For instance, Gillian Beer's full-length study of Meredith's novels perceptively judges that the "novel itself outgrows" the "heavy anti-feminine jibes" (29) of the 1859 version. Additionally, L. T. Hergenhan judges the revision "better than the original novel, better in its form, characterization and style" (542). In sum, various editors and scholars have interpreted the effects of Meredith's

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Meredith's revisions in order to draw out the major shifts in cultural discourse since the original 1859 publication.

revisions in a variety of ways, with even the two most recent editions (from Penguin and Oxford) diverging substantially in valuation and editorial approach.

Meredith's revisions consist of two major types of changes: consolidation and deletion. In the case of the former, Meredith consolidates the first four chapters of the 1859 version into a single, more economical chapter. In the case of the latter, he prominently deletes an entire chapter, "A Shadowy View of Coelebs Pater Going About with a Glass-Slipper," as well as less substantial passages (presumably to avoid reference to characters and actions that were eliminated elsewhere in the text). My analysis will treat each of these main changes separately, ultimately demonstrating the manner by which Meredith's revisions obscure the 1859 version's critique of key literary and cultural antecedents, as well the "machinery of Wisdom" in which these antecedents participate.

Meredith's decision to consolidate the first four chapters of the 1859 publication into a single chapter eliminates substantial quotations from Sir Austin's "The Pilgrim's Scrip" and therein blunts the narrative's critique of totalizing systems like *Bildung* through Richard's ultimate failure. For instance, the 1859 text begins, "Some years ago was printed, and published anonymously, dedicated to the author's enemies, a small book of original Aphorisms, under the heading, THE PILGRIM'S SCRIP" (9). From the outset, the 1859 text calls into question modes of production of textual authority by juxtaposing the anonymity of Sir Austin's authorship with the personal motivation to spite an enemy in writing the text. This juxtaposition immediately exposes the manner by which the cultural cachet of author-function disguises personal prejudice as general wisdom in the production of textual and cultural authority—foreshadowing Lady Blandish's later call for Sir Austin to explain the "machinery of Wisdom."

By contrast, the revised opening reads, "Some years ago a book was published under the title of "The Pilgrim's Scrip.' It consisted of a selection of original aphorisms by an anonymous gentleman, who in this bashful manner gave a bruised heart to the world" (3). Rather than expose the obscure manner by which Sir Austin masks his personal prejudice as wisdom, this revision instead highlights an expressive sentimentality. Sir Austin, in this version, writes anonymously not to bolster his authority but rather to hide his "bashful manner" and "bruised heart." The net effect of this change dramatically alters the subsequent narrative's tone and perspective in exposing the arbitrary and biased manner in which textual and cultural authority is produced: the original version explicitly engages these issues from the outset, while the revision buries them beneath personal emotion.

Furthermore, the compression of the opening four chapters of the 1859 text removes many of the quotations from Sir Austin's "The Pilgrim's Scrip," with the ultimate effect of further obscuring the narrative's engagement with cultural ideologies such as *Bildung*. The 1859 text, for instance, contains one set of quotations that directly invokes the pedagogical processes involved in *Bildung*:

> 'Life is a tedious process of learning we are Fools.'
>
> And this also is open to mild interpretation, if we do not take special umbrage at the epithet. For, as he observes, by way of comment: 'When we know ourselves Fools, we are already something better.' (9)

These quotations parallel the educational path championed by *Bildung* and developmental novels: begin by overestimating one's talents and potential, confront the difficult realities of the outside world, adjust one's self-valuation to recognize weaknesses and individual limits, and finally accept one's place in the world. More significantly, these lessons emphasize the dark

irony exposed in Richard's ultimate failure to acclimate: such prescriptive developmental ideologies, in fact, become detrimental forms of textual authority when used in a pedagogical manner. Through this dark irony, the original version of *Richard Feverel* mobilizes failure as a means of social critique to create new space for alternate modes of viewing the world. The absence of such direct quotations in Meredith's revisions undermines the rhetorical power of Richard's failure. Rather than accounting for Richard's failure through a direct portrayal of the flawed cultural authority of Sir Austin's System, Meredith's revisions shield such authority—and thereby *Bildung*—with Sir Austin's personal foibles.

Meredith's revisions similarly downplay the 1859 version's commitment to questioning the authority of *Bildung* through idiosyncratic typography. For instance, in the aforecited "machinery of Wisdom" passage of the 1859 version, the capitalization of "Wisdom" highlights the manner by which the novel questions the production of narrative authority in a broad sense rather than only the particular "wisdom" of Sir Austin. As Lillian Sacco notes, "The liberal use of capitalization in the original version produced a burlesque effect because many of the words received undue emphasis" (109). Meredith's revisions eliminated this feature in many cases, with the 1859 version's "machinery of Wisdom" changing in revision to "machinery of wisdom" (186). The effect of the shift in this case is to severely narrow the focus of Lady Blandish's critical questioning of the production of narrative authority and instead place emphasis on Sir Austin's own idiosyncrasies. Such changes moderate the 1859 version's willingness to use playful typography to ridicule authoritative cultural ideology.

Likewise, Meredith's deletion of an entire chapter later in the text blunts the 1859 text's direct engagement with the dissemination of prominent literary ideologies. This deleted chapter consists of a visit to Sir Austin by Mrs. Caroline Grandison, identified in a second-hand manner

by the narrator: "said to be a legitimate descendant of the great Sir Charles" (158). In this curious intertextual moment, Meredith connects *Richard Feverel* with the fictional universe of Samuel Richardson's immensely popular *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-1754). Richardson's novel records the life of the good-hearted eponymous hero, and Meredith's appropriation lampoons Sir Austin for clinging to outmoded and unrealistic models of moral development in his System. At first glance, this chapter, which ridicules a novel over a century old, might seem to be unnecessary and a logical candidate for excision. Yet, as Sven-Johan Spånberg persuasively argues, Meredith's "technique of allusion brings about a confrontation of different sets of values and views, and a new sense of truth emerges from the calculated clash of opposed modes of narration" (15). Spånberg outlines two primary effects in the use of *Sir Charles Grandison*: first, Meredith could "ridicule, at the beginning of his career, types of fiction and literary conventions he considered hopelessly dated and false" (16), and, second, he could "attack the antiquated social and psychological ideals these works embodied and helped to perpetuate" (16). In sum, Meredith's allusive method allows him to craft a narrative world in which the faults of unrealistic literary and social ideals could be exposed.

I would like to take this assessment one step further, however, by arguing that Meredith's use of *Sir Charles Grandison*, in fact, follows the critical path of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as outlined in the previous chapter: Meredith, like Shelley, highlights the mutually constitutive nature of sensibility and *Bildung*, albeit with a different tenor. Whereas *Frankenstein* exposes the exclusionary nature of sensibility and *Bildung*, *Richard Feverel* underscores their detrimental idealism. When Meredith's narrator judges, "No lady living was better fitted to appreciate Sir Austin, and understand his System, than Mrs Caroline Grandison" (160), the novel reveals the manner by which *Bildung* and sensibility rely on each other to establish social authority.

Furthermore, Caroline Grandison's "honourable mention" in the "pamphlet 'On the Educational Claims of Woman'"—authored by one of the female disciples of Sir Austin's System—as "a woman, pure delicate, beautiful, a pattern Wife and Mother" (163), with additional expertise in the field of anatomy, serves to stress the mutually constituted authority of sensibility and *Bildung*. At this point in the novel, the narrator has already firmly established the connection between Sir Austin's System and *Bildung*, whereas sensibility and its culture of feeling remained at the periphery. By integrating Caroline Grandison and her accompanying outmoded worldview in which purity of heart lays the foundation for mutual exchange of feeling, this chapter rounds out another key cultural component of Richard's eventual spectacular failure.

Each of these aspects of Meredith's revisions—the consolidation of the early chapters and the deletion of the Caroline Grandison chapter—weaken the critical, and thereby socially generative, nature of Richard's failure. Meredith's revisions might create a veil of literary realism in presenting characters not explicitly linked to the social and literary culture of sensibility and *Bildung*. In this way, the narrative becomes more a study of individual foibles than an exploration of larger cultural systems. However, these changes likewise obscure the mechanics of Sir Austin's System that cause Richard's jarring failure. Absent the aphorisms of "The Pilgrim's Scrip" that draw on the developmental notions of *Bildung*, as well as the Caroline Grandison chapter's allusions to sensibility's relationship to *Bildung*, the cause of Richard's failure becomes much more difficult to discern. This difficulty blunts the generative possibilities of deploying a shocking ending of failure; rather than investigate the larger cultural influences implicated in Richard's failure, the reader instead would explore the realism of the psychology of the individual characters in searching where to place blame. This revision blunts the original version's critique of developmental ideology by reconfiguring development as an internal—

rather than culturally embedded—process. Overall, the revisions downplay the methodology by which the 1859 text hypothesizes the generative nature of narrative failure through which readers' investment in the plot produces an enthusiasm for correcting its characters' flaws in adjusting their own, and others', cultural philosophy.

Both the manuscript version of *Great Expectations* and the original publication of *Richard Feverel* hypothesize a readership stirred to critical investigation by the jarring nature of the ultimate failures of the protagonists. The manner by which these texts harness the generative nature of narrative failure would be more clearly deployed later in the nineteenth century. For instance, my next chapter will explore one such text, George du Maurier's *Peter* Ibbetson, which more clearly narrativizes failure as a means of generative social commentary. Unlike *Great Expectations* or *Richard Feverel*, du Maurier does not revise *Peter Ibbetson* to temper the disconcerting portrayal of a protagonist's failed development; rather, du Maurier builds on the narrative methodology formulated in texts like *Great Expectations* and *Richard Feverel*. While works like these experimented with their deployment of narrative failure as a means of stirring a readership, they also were unable to carry through such notions because of the difficulty of negotiating failure with their hypothesized readership's conventional expectations. Far from offering unequivocal counternarratives to Smiles' simple cause-and-effect model of success in *Self-Help*, these works actually are mired in the same difficulty in accounting for failure at the turn of the 1850s into the 1860s.

Smiles' accommodating 1866 preface advises readers that "it is not the result in any case that is to be regarded so much as the aim and the effort, the patience, the courage, and the endeavor with which desirable and worthy objects are pursued" (34). Perhaps this sentiment rings true for the revisions of *Great Expectations* and *Richard Feverel*, which work toward the

"worthy object" of refining the original versions' deployment of developmental processes but actually only muddle their critical impulse. At this point, the weight of conventional narrativizing of development—felt both in the expectations of readerships and in the authors' own sense of narrative propriety---is too much to bear for the original, critical versions. Texts like these, however, paved the way for more self-reflexive developmental narratives that would, by century's end, achieve a more capacious critical distance. Still, in their manner of using failure as a means of generative critique, the original versions of *Great Expectations* and *Richard Feverel* prompt readers to uncover "the machinery of Wisdom" and to trace the manner by which cultural conventions in general, and *Bildung* in particular, construct and disseminate precarious models of cultural authority.

CHAPTER FOUR

Evolutionary Discourse and the *Bildungsroman*: Formulating Self and Species in du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson*

By the final decade of the nineteenth century, *Bildung* had become so deeply entrenched in British literary culture that narratives were able to perform its typical developmental motions with critical distance. Their reiteration of developmental tropes utilized an ironic approach that prompted readers to reexamine troubling ideological assumptions in the acclimation of typical *Bildungsromane*. This chapter will examine one such narrative, George du Maurier's *Peter Ibbetson* (1891), in which the title character claims (in first-person narration) to achieve the harmony between individual ideals and societal limitations typical of developmental narratives of the nineteenth century. Consequently, *Peter Ibbetson* uses the space between one's self-perception of this individuation and the actual reality of failure as a means of generating social critique. Through depicting its title character's failure, *Peter Ibbetson* emphasizes that an individual's manner of accounting for personal failure requires problematic—and sometimes violent—notions of exceptionalism rooted in literary models of development.

Superficially, Peter Ibbetson's developmental trajectory follows the typical stages of *Bildung* (moving to the city, rebelling against a father figure, and having a sexual awakening). Yet by presenting Peter's madness, murderousness, failure, and death—failures by any literary definition of development in the period except Peter's own—the novel forces its readership to reconsider uncritical acceptance of the influence of developmental narratives. Drawing on a conglomeration of evolutionary science, natural history, and literature, *Peter Ibbetson* probes the dangers of nineteenth-century models of individual development by offering a sustained

engagement with the ramifications of novelistic prototypes of building the self, highlighting the exclusionary politics of this process of differentiation.

Likewise, du Maurier's deployment of narrative authority in the text's structure—a performative element of the text's history that has frequently been lost on readers too eager to connect du Maurier with his protagonist—exposes the hollowness of literary influence. In this way, *Peter Ibbetson* internalizes, performs, and ultimately critiques the narrative ideology of *Bildung*. In sum, *Peter Ibbetson* reflects on the ways novels promote models of self-building and thus produces a response highly critical of the conventions of developmental narratives and their role in perpetuating a particular model of individual superiority. This model of the subject, when taken to its extreme through *Peter Ibbetson*'s title character, produces an exclusionary model of individuation based in contemporaneous theories of eugenics. As such, *Peter Ibbetson* critiques the manner by which developmental ideology of *Bildung* actually underwrites this oppressive application of biological theory.

Nancy Armstrong's study, *How Novels Think* (2005), provides a useful context for the role of the novel in subject formation that *Peter Ibbetson* recognizes, narrativizes, and ultimately critiques. Armstrong argues that "the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same" (3). Novelistic protagonists, like modern subjects, are represented as capable of personal growth by proving themselves "the exception to the social rule"—a process that "individuates" and "makes them exemplary of individuals in general" (5). Further, Armstrong contends that for this novelistic protagonist to come to be, "novels had to think as if there already were one, that such an individual was not only the narrating subject and source of writing but also the object of narration and referent of writing" (3). Armstrong's choice of phrase here—in which novels "think"—particularly illustrates her central argument: novels

both produce and confirm the modern subject by "thinking" into existence a product that they at the same time presume to be already present. I assert that *Peter Ibbetson* is deeply skeptical of this process; its protagonist narrates his individuation into being but actually only implements a hollow version of *Bildung*. This resulting narrative in which the protagonist masks his failure as development exposes the dangerous influence of literary models of building the self. In this way, *Peter Ibbetson* uses its protagonist's failures in the typical motions of *Bildung* as a means of generating social critique in order to imagine a model of the self less grounded in exclusionary politics.

Because readers have tended to accept *Peter Ibbetson*'s narrative at face value rather than explore its critical distance, however, the novel stands today as little more than a biographical curiosity—the first novel by the author of the more highly lauded (and more frequently republished) *Trilby* (1894). *Trilby*'s popularity alone, however, does account for the pervasive misreadings of *Peter Ibbetson*. Upon further examination, in fact, du Maurier's ironic self-mythologizing in *Peter Ibbetson* has actually performed the hollow model of development examined in the novel. Andrew McCann contends that *Peter Ibbetson* "is a novel about the conditions under which fiction itself is produced" (59). I agree with McCann that the novel "approaches the metafictional" (59); however, McCann limits *Peter Ibbetson*'s reflective impulses to "romance fiction" (59), whereas I believe that the novel reflects directly on the negative possibilities of nineteenth-century developmental narratives and the assumptions of literary authority that buttress them. To recover this ironic deployment of literary authority, I will first examine the particular history of misreading *Peter Ibbetson* in its print editions, especially the last heavily circulated editions of the 1960s, as well as current electronic editions. Later, I will explore how *Peter Ibbetson* provides a startling case in which a fictional editorial apparatus

intersects with real editorial decision-making, thereby producing and perpetuating a mythology of the author that demonstrates the text's forward-thinking self-reflexivity in its critique of individual development. This performative critique accentuates the novel's exploration of the uncritical manner by which developmental ideology is propagated through the exclusionary politics of eugenic theory.

Peter Ibbetson was first published in a variety of forms. It was serialized in *Harper's Monthly* in the second half of 1891. A cheap single-volume version was printed in October 1891, with illustrations by the author intact; curiously, a more expensive edition, published in two volumes, omitted du Maurier's extensive illustrations (Ormond 429). As biographer Richard Kelly reports, "initial sales of the novel were not exceptional" (60). L. Edward Purcell notes that *Peter Ibbetson* only "received a mildly enthusiastic response from the Anglo-American critics and public" (62) However, *Peter Ibbetson* rode the literary coattails of *Trilby*'s popularity, and became more widely read following the latter's publication in 1894 (Kelly 60). Interestingly enough, *Trilby* outshone *Ibbetson* even before its first public airing. In fact, du Maurier's publishers were so enthusiastic that they offered the author "double the *Peter Ibbetson* terms" for *Trilby* (Wood 90). Thereafter, this initial lukewarm popularity has remained fairly steady throughout the last century, with *Trilby* receiving the bulk of critical, editorial, and popular attention given to du Maurier.

However, *Ibbetson*'s superficially romantic and fantastical plot has provided a significant, if not overwhelming, degree of appeal for audiences, particularly in the first half-century following its initial publication. This surface narrative takes the basic shape of the *Bildungsroman*: a sentimental youth pushes against the hardship of modern society, moves to London, struggles against an overly controlling father figure, and finally (believes) he comes to

peace with himself and the society within which he resides. Peter's tale begins with his idyllic youth in France, lusciously described and illustrated by du Maurier with clear references to the sentimental narratives in vogue over a century earlier. Peter's childhood experience centrally features a relationship with Mimsey, another child with whom he shares sentimentalized formative experiences (including interacting with the natural world and the quirky characters who populate their village). This sentimental opening sets the stage for the forthcoming narrative: it both provides the raw material that Peter will draw on in his fantastical voyages of "dreaming true" and the idealized vision of perfect developmental harmony against which his real-life adult failures fall short.

This harmonious foundational narrative abruptly ends with the sudden death of both of Peter's parents, as well as Mimsey's mother. One of Peter's relatives, Colonel Ibbetson (commonly referred to as "uncle"), thereafter assumes responsibility for the young boy. At this point, Peter—who had previously been referred to only by his childhood appellation Gogo—is rechristened Peter Ibbetson in order to establish him within the respectable lineage of his conventionally successful uncle. However, adolescent Peter begins to rebel against his father figure in a manner typical of *Bildungsromane* with his uncle's womanizing creating a wedge. At this point, Peter's tale of development follows the trajectory of a typical *Bildungsroman*: he leaves his uncle's governance to make his own way in the world as an architect. Peter finds relative economic stability but does not feel ultimate satisfaction in his personal or social position. As with other protagonists of nineteenth-century developmental narratives, he strives to find a balance between self and society; however, Peter's subsequent path differs drastically from the typical one of acclimation.

Like typical protagonists of *Bildungsromane*, Peter's romantic relationship proves a crucial aspect of his development and acclimation; however, the hollow form of this relationship encapsulates the emptiness of Peter's larger developmental trajectory. Indeed, Peter finds self-proclaimed contentment through the formation of a twenty-five year relationship with his childhood companion, Mimsey (known as Mary in adulthood), now the Duchess of Towers. This relationship, however, takes place under the most unusual of circumstances: he murders his uncle (after learning of Colonel Ibbetson's claim to be his real father). The state places Peter in prison and, later, an asylum for over two decades as a result of his conviction of this crime. Only within this confined setting does Peter narrate the developmental acclimation typical of protagonists of *Bildungsromane*.

The fantastical means by which Peter achieves this acclimation emphasizes the emptiness of his developmental trajectory. He believes he reconnects with his childhood companion-turned-duchess, Mary, by means of "dreaming true"—a process in which Peter inhabits his past down to the smallest detail while sleeping. For twenty-five years, Peter claims they cultivate a relationship exclusively through this process. Thus, while Peter narrates his absolute contentment and acclimation by the novel's end, the reader becomes suspicious of this easy resolution; after all, the protagonist's process of individuation becomes possible only through the mystifying logic of the novel's essentially inaccessible central device of dreaming true. Because the first-person narrative, however, proceeds as if this tale were indeed a successful developmental narrative in content and form, the reader receives a particularly distorted vision of successful acclimation into society. This distorted vision magnifies the problematic ways in which typical developmental narratives promote a model of self-building connected more deeply to individual prejudice than harmonious acclimation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the fantastical romantic tale of Peter and Mary quickly became the centerpiece of the audience's reception of the novel—with the obvious failures of Peter's developmental plot omitted. Yet through this romantic element of the story, *Peter Ibbetson* maintained some popularity into the first half of the twentieth century. For instance, it was well received enough to have multiple printings by both its British and American publishers. Moreover, it was adapted first as a Broadway play (1917), next as a feature silent film (*Forever*, 1921), then an opera (1931), and finally a full-blown Hollywood blockbuster starring Gary Cooper (1935). Further editions were published concurrently with these adaptations, but by mid-century *Peter Ibbetson*'s popularity had seemingly run its course. The highly sentimentalized plot emphasized in these adaptations did not appeal to either British or American audiences of the post-World War II years.

Indeed, when reduced only to its romantic elements, *Peter Ibbetson* does not present much of interest to modern literary tastes. Taking the plot and narrative structure into consideration more broadly, however, *Peter Ibbetson* actually mobilizes tropes typical of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels for distinctly contemporary ends. For example, *Peter Ibbetson* embeds a found text—a staple of eighteenth-century sentimental novels—to set in motion a postmodern-style performance of narrative authority. I will examine the self-conscious artifice of this structure to assert, in contrast to the common reception of the novel, that this framing narrative places an ironic distance between du Maurier the author and *Peter Ibbetson* the novel. In the years since the publication of the novel, this distance has been written out of the text—both literally (by adaptations on the stage and screen) and figuratively (by critical assessments). Yet by examining the structure of the novel and how the framing narrative has, in fact, established an autobiographical mystique around the novel, I contend the nested structure

pushes the reader toward a decidedly ironic reading of the text—one that emphasizes the problematic nature of authority propagated in typical developmental narratives of the nineteenth century. Overall, this narrative nesting is essential to understanding both *Peter Ibbetson*'s critique of narrative authority and its long history of misreadings as veiled autobiography.

This critique is set in motion by the title protagonist leaving a manuscript in the hands of his literary editor, Madge Plunket, and thereby creating distance between du Maurier, Peter, and the editor. The title page of the novel emphasizes this distance between the title character and the editor: "*Peter Ibbetson*, with an introduction by his cousin Lady ***** ("Madge Plunket")." Notably, Lady ***** feels compelled to take on a pseudonym, Madge Plunket, in her literary role, which only adds to the narrative distance. In her editorial introduction, Madge supplies various anecdotes regarding the life of her cousin. More significantly, she makes an appeal for the sanity of her cousin and therefore the truth of his narrative: "At the risk of being thought to share his madness—if he *was* mad—I will conclude by saying that I, for one, believe him to have been sane, and to have told the truth all through" (9, citations taken from 1964 edition). As a result, the reader approaches the manuscript from the outset as a narrative penned by a man—at the very least—accused of madness. Additionally, the reader begins the manuscript proper with suspicion, wondering why the introduction goes to such lengths to assure the audience of the author's sanity. Is he a wronged hero? Conversely, is the introduction not altogether truthful? This tension, carefully crafted through structural layering, also pervades the narrative proper.

Indeed, Madge's intervention into the text does not end at this introduction; rather, she emerges as an editor at several moments in the manuscript and thereby highlights the distance between editor (Madge), author (du Maurier), and fictional "author" (Peter Ibbetson). For instance, Madge censors important information in the narrative through her editorial authority,

which emphasizes the flawed and inconsistent manner by which narrative authority is constructed. In addition to hiding her identity, Madge (actually Lady *****) makes editorial decisions based on propriety throughout the manuscript. For example, she deletes "several pages" of description of Peter's school years because some of the "masters and boys" remain alive, and giving their real identities "would be unadvisable for many reasons" (63). However, Madge reassures the reader that "there is not much in what I have left out that has any bearing on his subsequent life, or the development of his character" (63). This editorial strategy in which only suitable developmental elements are included continues in similar fashion when Madge leaves out Peter's "personal descriptions that are not altogether unprejudiced" (85) of his cohort in the army. In both cases, Madge hovers at the periphery of the text, shaping its boundaries and scope. Predictably, each of the few mentions made of Madge in the manuscript are ebullient compliments to her character, despite the scant interaction between her and Peter. Madge's intrusions thus make the reader aware that the editorial function is an ever-present force in the text, filtering Peter's manuscript and developmental trajectory for the sake of propriety and continuity. Further, her clear self-interest stresses how personal agendas necessarily constitute any narrative—and thereby reinforces Peter's use of self-serving versions of developmental tropes and biological theories for his own ends.

Moreover, the end of the novel, like the beginning, calls attention to itself as artifice through the device of the editor. The manuscript ends with Peter's triumphant plan to write the secrets of the afterlife and dreaming true for the public's benefit. In fact, in the penultimate line of his manuscript, he describes himself as "strong and active" despite his age. However, he lives only long enough to write, "First of all, I intend" (344), before the manuscript ends (Peter apparently dies midsentence). In this last moment, a final editorial intervention from Madge

undercuts Peter's intention to make known the secrets of his mystical processes of dreaming true. She writes, full of melancholy, of seeing his body upon death: "As he lay there, in his still length and breadth, he appeared gigantic—the most magnificent human being I ever beheld; and the splendor of his dead face will haunt my memory till I die" (344). *Peter Ibbetson* then finally concludes with her signed assumed name, Madge Plunket, at the bottom of her note. This ending contrasts sharply with the manner by which the novel was later received and adapted. Indeed, the novel demonstrates Peter's tale to be the result of literary authority and the adherence to developmental tropes rather than only a simple supernatural romance.

Nonetheless, the impulse to ignore the framing narrative and editorial function of Madge Plunket altogether, despite these significant and numerous moments in the text, has been pervasive in critical readings of *Peter Ibbetson*. The few critical readers of the novel have almost uniformly interpreted it as an uncomplicated extension of the psychology of the author, du Maurier. T. Martin Wood's 1913 book-length study of du Maurier asserts that the author "wrote his autobiography" (106) in books like *Ibbetson*. Likewise, Derek Pepys Whiteley emphasizes the autobiographical nature of the work by arguing that "the author expressed the thoughts which haunted him…contrasting the sunlit scenes of his childhood at Passy with the squalidly dreary surroundings of Pentonville in the mid-'fifties." Leonée Ormond's comprehensive 1969 biography even goes as far to assert, "The hero of the novel, Gogo Pasquier, later given the English name of Peter Ibbetson, is, of course Du [*sic*] Maurier" (419). Richard Kelly's 1983 biography does little to counteract this trend, reading first-person accounts of du Maurier's actual childhood dreams against *Ibbetson* (67); more generally, Kelly argues that Peter's childhood is an idealized dream vision of du Maurier's (71-2). Finally, the sole peer-reviewed scholarship focusing on *Peter Ibbetson* in the 1990s contends that du Maurier's novels "became vehicles for

perfecting du Maurier's life experiences as dictated by the author's deepest, self-fulfilling fantasies" (Golden 50)—tellingly, this article is titled, "Turning Life into Literature." Necessarily, each of these interpretations has wielded much influence due to the scarcity of scholarly work on *Peter Ibbetson*.

If these interpretations did little to draw attention to *Peter Ibbetson*'s critical commentary on narrative authority, however, then the adaptations of the novel positively promoted sentimentalized identification. For instance, the 1931 opera substitutes Peter's ultimate failure and death in the ending with a happy afterlife union with Mary. Later, the 1935 Hollywood version removes Madge Plunket; rather than begin the tale with her editorial musings, the film presents a single screen of text to set the scene: "The middle of the last century.....in a suburb of Paris where many English families had made their homes...." Thus the film sets a tone of sentimental recall rather than editorial intervention from its outset. Expectedly, Mary and Peter unite in the afterlife in this version, too. In each of these cases, the novel's ironic appropriation of the found manuscript trope has been completely eliminated. In a sense, Madge's introduction serves its purpose too well; by so effectively fictionalizing this editor, the novel's introduction disappears into its own artifice.[15]

More recently, the last widespread printing of *Peter Ibbetson* in 1964 provided a perfect opportunity to correct the highly sentimentalized and autobiographical reception of the text. The Heritage Press, a New York monthly publisher of modestly lavish editions of classic novels, undertook the project. This press catered to a self-perceived cultivated audience by printing "The classics which are our heritage from the past, in Editions which will be the heritage of our

[15] I was not able to obtain a script of the 1917 Broadway adaptation. However, I can relate that Madge Plunket features as a character in the play. This would be a fruitful area for further research in the reception of *Ibbetson*. Unfortunately, all copies of the 1921 silent-era adaptation, *Forever*, are presumed lost.

future," as every issue of each pressing's newsletter and de facto introduction, the *Sandglass*, proudly proclaims. The particular edition of the *Sandglass* that accompanied the pressing of *Peter Ibbetson*, in fact, announces the novel's worthiness for an elite audience, quoting and agreeing with a review that judges *Ibbetson* "a book for the few, therefore, rather than the many—a book to be passed over carelessly by those who do not feel its charm" (2). Contrary to its reputation as the lesser known debut of the author of *Trilby*, the Heritage Press felt the novel able to stand up to the classics; indeed, in the months surrounding the publication of *Peter Ibbetson* (February 1964), the Heritage Press presented works by Plato (*The Trial and Death of Socrates*, July 1963), Rostand (*Cyrano de Bergerac*, August 1963), the Brothers Grimm (*Fairytales*, September/October 1963), Fenimore Cooper (*The Spy*, November 1963), St. Augustine (*Confessions*, December 1963), Dickens (*Five Christmas Novels*, January 1964), Moliere (*Tartuffe* & *The Would-Be Gentleman*, April 1964), and Pushkin (*Eugene Onegin*, May 1964). Clearly, the Heritage Press had few reservations about placing *Peter Ibbetson*, despite its previous mild literary reception, in canonical company for its readership. This canonical status, however, faded as the decade finished, with only one further, no-frills edition published in 1969. By the 1970s, *Peter Ibbetson* had fallen off the popular and critical radar.

The Heritage Press capitalized on the contemporaneous literary success of du Maurier's granddaughter, Daphne, whose fiction had been popularly adapted for the screen (most notably by multiple Alfred Hitchcock films, including *The Birds*, released at the time of the preparation of the Heritage Press' version of *Peter Ibbetson* in 1963). Previously, Daphne du Maurier wrote a family biography, *The du Mauriers* (1937), including a substantial treatment of the childhood of her grandfather, George. In contrast to the highly sentimentalized childhood of the protagonist in *Peter Ibbetson*, she writes of George's parents' "debts, the harshly worded letters from

creditors…the puckered frown he never saw…the strained silences, the anxious letters" (130). This gritty view of George's childhood obviously contrasts sharply with the idealized sentimentalism of Peter's manuscript. One might reasonably expect Daphne du Maurier to explicate this portrayal, as a corrective to the common autobiographical and sentimentalized readings, in the introduction she wrote for the Heritage Press version of *Peter Ibbetson*.

Rather than act as a fact-checker, however, Daphne perpetuates the autobiographical mythology through psychobiographical critique: "He was unaware that as he wrote he spilt upon the paper before him not only his hidden longings but the frustration of his dead father" (xii). She also works, albeit very generally, to ground the mystical process of dreaming true in modern science:

> Nor need the modern reader scoff at "dreaming true." Kicky [George's family nickname], if he did not know it, was ahead of his time. In 1892 hypnosis was still a vague term, and telepathy an unknown word. A trained psychologist of today would not dismiss *Peter Ibbetson* as pure fantasy. (xii-xiii)

Beyond this awkward retrofitting of dreaming true with contemporaneous science, Daphne pushes even further in her description by asserting, "nothing is forgotten that we and our forebears have known, experienced, and seen, but all images, like photographs, are printed on our subconscious minds forever" (vi-vii). In sum, Daphne's special introduction for the Heritage Press edition has the effect of reinforcing the conflicted—and problematic—readings of the previous several decades.

From another perspective, however, Daphne continues the performative critique of narrative authority set in motion by George's original printing. Now, in front of the framing fiction of Madge, the reader has another filter through which to view the manuscript—that of

George's widely read granddaughter. The Heritage Press edition thus presents a work even more persistent in emphasizing its own artificiality: not only does the 1964 edition of *Peter Ibbetson* contain the original Madge frame, it also offers a playful introduction by Daphne du Maurier that continues the performance of narrative authority of the original project. The typical editorial practice of the Heritage Press supports a reading of Daphne's introduction as textual play; in fact, the *Sandglass* generally engages in intellectual mischief and finds delight in textual disruption and upsetting high-literary expectations. Even in the issue devoted to *Ibbetson*, the *Sandglass* playfully observes of the correspondence with Daphne, "Miss du Maurier's letters to us have been typed by herself, and we are delighted to notice that she *ex*-es out her errors" (3). Similar lightheartedness abounds in the complete run of the *Sandglass*. For instance, one edition presenting the works of Homer prefaces with "It's a Homer!" and subsequently divides its commentary into first, second, and third bases—and, of course, home plate (June 1942). In sum, the paratext of the Heritage Press printing of *Peter Ibbetson* reinforced the original novel's playful performance of—and distance from—the narrative authority typical of developmental tales of the nineteenth century.

The playful editors of the Heritage Press, however, probably had little idea that their edition of *Ibbetson* would be the last heavily circulated version for fifty years. That being the case, the opportunity to squelch further autobiographical and sentimentalized readings of the novel was missed. Subsequently, after lying dormant—in terms of criticism, adaptations, and printings—for nearly half a century, *Peter Ibbetson* has reemerged as a public domain electronic text with no editorial apparatus and a tendency to conflate the story and its narrative frame. For instance, a 2007 print-as-you-pay version of *Ibbetson* by the Echo Library proclaims that it "Includes an Introduction by Madge Plunket, Du [*sic*] Maurier's cousin." Likewise, a 2008 print-

as-you-pay edition by Bibliolife offers a similar description: "The writer of this singular autobiography was my cousin who died at the-Criminal Lunatic Asylum of which he had been an inmate three years." In the former case, the Echo Library collapses any distinction between du Maurier and his protagonist; in the latter case, Bibliolife offers the opening line of Madge Plunket's framing narrative as an official product description. Increased access to *Peter Ibbetson* has resulted in an even further disintegration of the divide between character and author. Rather, it has served to continue the novel's performance of the way narrative authority is transmitted. As a result, these contemporary editions of *Peter Ibbetson* foreground the importance—and continued relevance—of the novel's resistance to the ways developmental narratives uncritically propagate models of authority.

Recent criticism has started to explore the manner by which *Peter Ibbetson* responds to literary tropes of the nineteenth century in a self-aware manner. Lionel Stevenson's 1960 study of *Peter Ibbetson* establishes this trend (albeit without looking too deeply into the structural mechanics of the text). Stevenson notes of du Maurier, "Writing in the transitional decade of the nineties, he derived ingredients from the accumulated fiction of the whole nineteenth century, and instinctively combined them with current ideas that were to develop into major innovations of the twentieth" (48). Stevenson's words have proven especially prescient in the recent minor revival of *Peter Ibbetson* as an object of critical attention due to its mélange of theories of ancestral memory circulating at the time of its publication—and, less pervasively, for its engagement with evolutionary science. This latter subject will provide the point of departure for the remainder of this chapter, in which I will explore how du Maurier's novel critiques the dominant literary model of individual development in which failures (as exemplified, in Peter's case, by madness and violence) become justified through evolutionary theory.

Peter Ibbetson's structure takes the eighteenth-century sentimental novel as its starting point in its idyllic depiction of Gogo's childhood before launching into a nineteenth-century style tale of individual development. *Peter Ibbetson*, in fact, demonstrates a broad awareness of canonical *Bildungsromane*. For instance, Peter's narration alludes to *Oliver Twist* (65, 91), *John Halifax, Gentleman* (71), and Micawber from *David Copperfield* (80). More than only make superficial allusions to these works, however, Peter embeds the key milestones of the developmental narratives into his story: first, he rebels against his father figure, Uncle Ibbetson, and leaves his supervision. Second, he apprentices to Linton in architecture, and gets a taste of the life of the well-off but not aristocratic. Third, he has a sexual awakening upon viewing the beautiful Duchess of Towers (of course, later discovered to be his childhood companion Mimsey). In each of these benchmarks, Peter's developmental path accords closely to the typical *Bildungsroman*, and the reader assumes that he will eventually acclimate to modern society in the manner of other protagonists at the end of their developmental trajectories.

However, du Maurier throws this typical model of development into sharp relief when Peter kills his uncle in a fit of rage surrounding his parentage. In this scene, Peter has been informed that Colonel Ibbetson is, in fact, his real father. In response, Peter confronts his uncle, his uncle confesses he slept with Peter's mother, and Peter brutally murders the colonel in a fit of violent rage. One might assume that this catastrophic event would end any adherence to a typical developmental model. Yet Peter's first-person narrative proceeds as if this tale were indeed still a typical *Bildungsroman* in content and form, with Peter blissfully unaware of the murderous threshold he has crossed. Instead, Peter continues to narrate his development as though this murder has not disrupted the typical path of a protagonist.

The manner by which *Peter Ibbetson* uses Peter's failure to acclimate in the mold of conventional protagonists anticipates postmodern approaches to madness and identity. For example, in the prototype for the playful communication of madness in the early pages of Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, Peter writes without context midway through the novel, "it is not always amusing where I live, cheerfully awaiting my translation to another sphere" (148). This casual description of forced confinement subsequently solidifies with references to visits from a chaplain, a priest, and a doctor. Finally, Peter explicitly mentions his "brother maniacs," who "are lamentably *comme tout le monde*, after all," and "only interesting when the mad fit seizes them" (148). From this point forward, the narrative delves deeper into the mechanics of dreaming true and Peter's experiences in the asylum. The typical narrative of *Bildung* has been irrevocably subverted, though Peter as first-person narrative does not directly acknowledge it.

The initial point of narrative rupture—Peter's murder of Colonel Ibbetson—hence becomes crucial in understanding Peter's trajectory of failed development. Superficially, Peter murders his uncle because of the colonel's paternity claim. Significantly, however, the text presents no strong evidence that the colonel is actually lying. In fact, the colonel responds to Peter's angry questioning in an impartial manner: "How can I tell for certain whether you are my son or not? It all comes to the same" (217). Nevertheless, Peter, half-heartedly claiming self-defense, brutally murders Colonel Ibbetson. He describes the superfluous violence in explicit detail: "I struck him again on his head as he was falling, and once again when he was on the ground. It seemed to crash right in" (218). Peter finally closes this section of the narrative with a jarringly dispassionate statement: "That is why and how I killed Uncle Ibbetson" (218).

The dishonor of Peter's mother would not seem to be the most inconceivable reason for momentary rage and violent murder; however, Peter's attitude toward the colonel has been

curiously underscored with racial prejudice throughout the narrative. For example, Peter traces the colonel's personality flaws in a particularly racialized manner: the colonel's mother, Peter notes, "had been the only child and heiress of an immensely rich pawnbroker, by name Mendoza; a Portuguese Jew, with a dash of colored blood in his veins besides" (72). Peter subsequently identifies several physical characteristics in his uncle that, to his particular way of thinking, demonstrate the validity of these claims: "indeed, this remote African strain still showed itself in Uncle Ibbetson's thick lips, wide-open nostrils, and big black eyes with yellow whites—and especially in his long, splay, lark-heeled feet" (72). This conventionally racialized description of Colonel Ibbetson betrays a discomfort with Peter's own potential genetic impurities; after all, Peter's "uncle" is in reality his "mother's first cousin" (72). Later, Peter tautologically confirms the colonel's treachery while dreaming true: Peter sees that "he had been my father's bitterest enemy and the main cause of his financial ruin, by selfish, heartless, and dishonest deeds too complicated to explain here—a regular Shylock" (209). As a result, Peter's defense of his mother's honor is imbued with the sublimated fear of his own racial impurity. If the Colonel is in fact Peter's father, then Peter's heritage includes "a Portuguese Jew" and "a dash of colored blood." Because Peter is enthralled with emergent discourse of evolutionary science and the possibility of systematic population control, this potential impurity fuels his homicidal furor.

Peter's fascination with biological theory, established in the idyllic scenes of his childhood in France, sarcastically underscores the formative influence of childhood—for better or worse—on one's developmental trajectory. In a particularly important early passage, Peter reads a treatise on geology (the *Manuel de Géologie Élémentaire*, authored by the fictional local teacher M. Jules Saindou) "with such hauntingly terrific pictures of antediluvian reptiles battling

in the primeval slime" that leads Peter to "many a nightmare" (17). Significantly, this frightening vision of reptilian evolutionary fitness stands as the first experience Peter mentions of dreaming—later the central motif of the novel in the escapism of dreaming true. Peter explicates his fantastical vision of these natural phenomena while drifting off to sleep as a child:

> Down shrank the water; and soon in the slimy bottom, yards below, huge fat salamanders, long-lost and forgotten tadpoles as large as rats, gigantic toads, enormous flat beetles, all kinds of hairy, scaly, spiny, blear-eyed, bulbous, shapeless monsters without name, mud-colored offspring of the mire that had been sleeping there for hundreds of years, woke up, and crawled in and out, and wallowed and interwriggled, and devoured each other, like the great saurians and batrachians in my *Manuel de Géologie Élémentaire*. (21)

Peter's disturbing fantasy contains a host of exaggerated animal creations, and he revels in the image of these organisms battling for biological supremacy. He delights in the contemplation of unreal biological permutations of insects and reptiles—and then envisions circumstances by which the underpinning logic of survival of the fittest enables the eventual destruction of lesser species. This unique mixture of combative evolutionary theory and nightmares establishes two key features of the Peter's developmental trajectory: first, the central plot device of dreaming true, and, second, Peter's underlying belief that he will have to fight the same violent battle as the reptiles in the primeval slime to individuate, develop, and eventually acclimate to society.

Peter's formative childhood exposure to biology also extends to real mid-century schoolbooks, therein demonstrating the novel's critical engagement with the influence of evolutionary theory. Peter, eager to delight Mimsey's beautiful mother, would read from a variety of texts for Mimsey, notably including "*Peter Parleys Natural History*" (32), a text that

Peter reports they "got to know by heart" (32). Peter Parley was a pen name of Samuel Griswold Goodrich, a popular American author who published fictional and nonfictional accounts of biological subjects. Peter most likely refers here to the highly popular *A Pictorial Natural History* (1859), a text proclaimed on the title page as "for the use of schools." This text, like the *Manuel de Géologie Élémentaire*, contains imagery of "antediluvian reptiles battling" that would have enthralled the young Peter, as well as deepened his belief in the necessity of violent biological competition as a means of individuation.

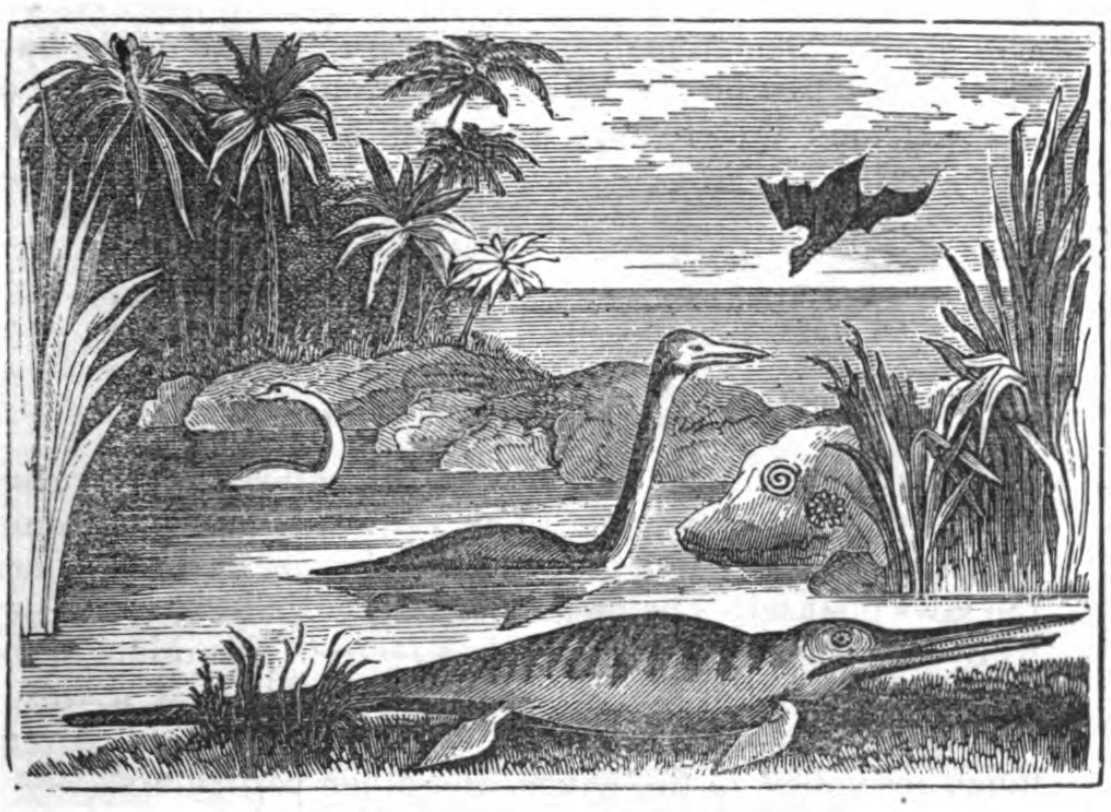

Figure 1: Illustration from Goodrich's *Natural History* depicting extinct species.

Especially notable in Figure 1[16] is the representation of the *Ichthyosaurus* in the foreground. Goodrich's description of this animal strongly echoes Peter's earlier enthusiastic fantasy of "monsters" devouring each other. Goodrich writes, "It had the teeth of a crocodile, the head of a

[16] Illustration excerpted from 1854 James Munroe and Company edition (35).

lizard, and the fins or paddles of a whale" (34). He continues, "This animal used to live principally at the bottoms of rivers, and devour amazing quantities of fish, and other water animals, and sometimes its own species" (35). In this description, Peter absorbs, indeed memorizes, a model of existence in which one animal must "devour" its own kind in pursuit of survival. Moreover, Goodrich notes that the fossil had been discovered in "the cliffs at Lyme Regis, England" (35), theoretically placing the *Ichthyosaurus*' violence not in an exotic land but in the foreground of an illustration of ancient Europe.

Peter's absorption of the biological descriptions of Goodrich's *A Pictorial Natural History* likely also extended to the section cataloguing *Homo sapiens*—a portion of the text strongly imbued with an underlying belief in the correlation between race and intelligence. Goodrich notes, "Europe, the western part of Asia, and the north of Africa, have been possessed, since the dawn of authentic history, by a white-skinned race, the highest in intelligence, and the most elegant in form" (123). Goodrich is less charitable to the race "of black skin," which is characterized by "coarse features, and inferior intelligence" (123) in contrast to the "white-skinned variety," who "are remarkable for their cultivation of letters and science" (123). This "white-skinned variety" is categorized "as the only race amongst which any considerable progress is made in intelligence from age to age" (123). This racially defined manner of categorization, constitutive of pedagogy through its inclusion in a self-proclaimed schoolbook, suggests that Peter's disgust with Colonel Ibbetson's supposed non-white ancestry was cultivated at a very young age. It also reaffirms the repulsion with which Peter would greet any thought that "coarse features, and inferior intelligence" might populate his own lineage.

This dual fascination with violent competition and culturally defined inferior beings leads the adult Peter to ruminate on eugenic possibilities while narrating his childhood in retrospect.

On the one hand, Peter holds a utopian view of the evolutionary possibilities of mankind: he wonders, "And when once the human will has been set going, like a rocket or a clock or a steam-engine, and in the right direction, what can it not achieve?" (106). On the other hand, Peter's proposed methodology for setting mankind in this "right direction" begins to betray the dark underbelly of his mixture of optimism and evolutionary biology. He argues:

> We should in time control circumstance instead of being controlled thereby; education would day by day become more adapted to one consistent end; and, finally, conscience-stricken, we should guide heredity with our own hands instead of leaving it to blind chance; unless, indeed, a well-instructed paternal government wisely took the reins, and only sanctioned the union of people who were thoroughly in love with each other, after due and careful elimination of the unfit. (106)

The result of this sort of lawmaking would be that, according to Peter, "cruelty should at least be put into harness, and none of its valuable energy wasted on wanton experiments, as it is by Nature" (106). Mankind could govern developmental perfection through state intervention into suitable biological matches. This project of biological and social control would enable developmental acclimation by closing the gap between individual ideals and societal limitations. In short, Peter wants to apply his pond fantasy on a human scale, with the notable exception that those fit for decision making would simply pick which "shapeless monsters" and "mud-colored offspring of the mire" to exclude. Presumably, the included population would be those who fit the model of "education" that would "become more adapted to one consistent end." In consideration of Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics; Or, The Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified* (1851) in the context of her reading of *Peter Ibbetson*, Anne-Julia Zwierlein writes,

> In this evolutionary utopia, individual development will be congruent with that of society as a whole. There will be no process of adaptation or assimilation in order for individuals to fit their environment; instead, there will be perfect harmony from the start. At this point, we could add, the traditional occupations of the *Bildungsroman* will have become obsolete. (355)

Zwierlein's reading suggests the connection between nineteenth-century social theory and the development models engaged in *Peter Ibbetson*: the impulse toward a conventional model of individual development works to erase difference and intimates the rise of eugenics based in evolutionary theory.

Peter Ibbetson probes beneath the superficial incompatibility between models of development (based on change over time) and eugenics (based on innate qualities), suggesting the former actually underwrites and enables the latter. Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry Into Its Law and Consequences* (1869) provides an encapsulation of the logic from which Peter draws wherein "a man's natural abilities are derived by inheritance" (1):

> it would be quite practicable to produce a highly-gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several consecutive generations. I shall show that social agencies of an ordinary character, whose influences are little suspected, are at this moment working towards the degradation of human nature, and that others are working toward its improvement. I conclude that each generation has enormous power over the natural gifts of those that follow, and maintain that it is a duty we owe to humanity to investigate the range of that power, and to exercise it in a way that, without being unwise towards ourselves, shall be most advantageous to future inhabitants of the earth. (1)

Pushing against Galton's emphasis on "natural gifts," *Peter Ibbetson* shows the role of developmental models in enabling social control based on eugenic theory. Indeed, Peter's hollow developmental trajectory—in which he plots his life story in terms of a *Bildungsroman* without actually experiencing its transformative benchmarks—authorizes his Galton-derived judgments related to fitness and education. *Peter Ibbetson* suggests the irony of this relationship: the self-fashioning of development sanctions external regulations based only on "natural gifts." Moreover, the novel's fantastical central motif—dreaming true—critiques the illusory nature of the justification for eugenic regulations due to the ironic distance inherent to its fantastical conceits.

Perhaps as a result of the novel's dual fascination with fantasy and real-world political influence, the central motif of dreaming true has proven the most intriguing aspect of the novel for recent critics and audiences. Indeed, recent scholarship on *Peter Ibbetson* has usefully undertaken a contextual study of this process. Athena Vrettos keenly relates the process of dreaming true to "a more widespread interest among late nineteenth-century writers and researchers in the possibility that dreams might rechannel collective or ancestral memories." *Ibbetson* is representative of a propensity to view dreams "as social, rather than solitary, mental functions." Vrettos suggestively notes of the eugenicist tendencies of the text that *Peter Ibbetson* "offers a fantasy of mental control as social control," with du Maurier "unwittingly" exposing "some of the ideological underpinnings of theories of ancestral memory that were exploited, to catastrophic ends, in the twentieth-century [*sic*]." In reclaiming *Peter Ibbetson* as more than a

romantic fantasy, this argument suggests the most significant aspect of the novel is the overlap between Peter's individual development and his politics based in evolutionary theory.[17]

Additionally, Vrettos suggests the novel's structural connection between Peter's highly sentimentalized childhood and his later fantastical journeys while dreaming true:

> Thus, while the first half of du Maurier's novel foreshadows modernist accounts of involuntary memory by emphasizing the random, fleeting, and discontinuous character of reminiscences as they pass through a solitary consciousness, the second half of the novel resists these limitations, instead envisioning memories as infinitely retrievable and recorded with photographic accuracy in the ancestral depths of the unconscious mind.

Vrettos here argues that the second half of the novel, in which Peter dreams true and revisits his childhood and ancestral past, represents a forward-looking and hopeful model of mental faculties. My interpretation departs from Vrettos at this point; rather than view the second half of the novel as an experimental championing of contemporary theories of collective dreaming and ancestral memories, I contend that the second half largely exposes the dark implications of the model of individualism featured as the endpoint of the title character's developmental trajectory—a self-regard that justifies murder, state population control, and lack of concern for those deemed unfit.

The explanation of the mechanics of dreaming true provides the first hint of the trope's sharply ironic usage in the text. At first, Peter accidentally stumbles into a true dream, only to

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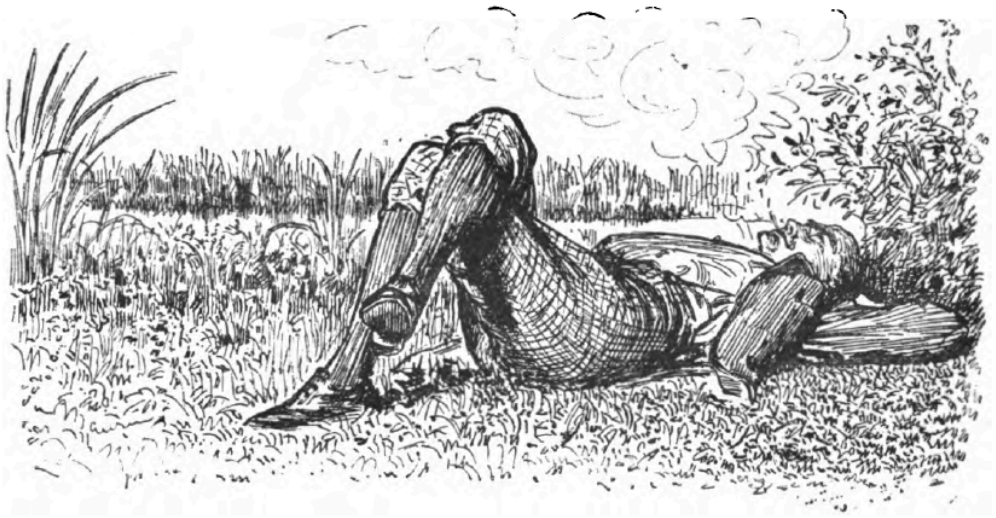
[17] Paisley Mann recent work, however, takes a different view: while "Peter's verbal narrative" supports the idea of extraordinary recall, "the novel's illustrations work to challenge this belief in memory's reliability" (161). However, this argument does not fully capture the inherent political qualities of the novel in exploring the relationship of typical developmental narratives and exclusionary eugenics. In this manner, *Ibbetson* confronts contemporaneous political issues and emerging ideology in a sustained, critical manner.

meet the Duchess of Towers. She informs him that dreaming true is, in fact, "very easy" (175), and proceeds to instruct him as to the methodology of the process:

> My father taught me; you must always sleep on your back with your arms above your head, your hands clasped under it and your feet crossed, the right one over the left, unless you are left-handed; and you must never for a moment cease thinking of where you want to be in your dream till you are asleep and get there; and you must never forget in your dream where and what you were when awake. You must join the dream on to reality. (175)

Therefore, to travel beyond the bounds of the individual mind, Peter must only place his hands behind his head and cross his feet. The text offers this single illustration[18] of the dreaming true position late in the novel:



"I AM THERE EVERY NIGHT."

Figure 2: Illustration of simple physical position necessary for dreaming true.

[18] Illustration excerpted from 1891 Harper and Brothers edition (409). Note also that this illustration, as with all in *Peter Ibbetson*, is signed "du Maurier," thereby ironically undercutting the authenticity of the found manuscript plot device. For further discussion of the fundamental role of illustrations in *Peter Ibbetson*, see Susan Zieger's "'Du Maurierness' and the Mediatization of Memory."

In order to suspend disbelief, readers would have to accept that the secret to this extraordinary discovery is assuming a fairly commonplace posture. Unlike *Frankenstein* (1818), which cultivates its supernatural aura through the exclusion of the actual mechanics of imbuing the monster with life, du Maurier amusingly exposes the process as something quite testable. One can imagine enthusiastic readers hurrying to bed, assuming the dreaming true position, and being sorely disappointed. However, the driving force behind this trope is a means of exploring the novel's social agenda rather than positing any serious methodology for reaching supernatural states.

This social agenda is likewise suggested by Peter's escape into dreaming true as a means of masking his own developmental failures—failures that he suggest throughout the novel but never makes a focal point. In his narrative of personal development, the reader encounters several tropes of failure typically encountered by protagonists before they acclimate by negotiating their ideals against societal limitations. For instance, Peter, like Wilhelm Meister before him, takes his turn at the arts—in Peter's case, poetry. Nonetheless, he is clearly unsuccessful, writing: "Oh me duffer! What a hopeless failure was I in all things, little and big" (114). Peter's language of failure, however, hints at a deeper self-loathing than is typical of the nineteenth-century developmental protagonist; Peter does not only fail, he is "a hopeless failure" in everything he tries. Notably, Peter is unable to seize the generative power of this failure as a means of eventual success. Rather, this dark undercurrent sets the stage for Peter's pivotal action in the narrative—the murder of Colonel Ibbetson—and his escapist fantasy of dreaming true.

Likewise, Peter's class inadequacy, which references the initial discomfort of typical developmental protagonists who eventually acclimate, leads Peter into escapist fantasy. In his youth, he doubts himself when in conversation with those above his station, noting that when

others "indulge in lively professional chaff, which would soon become personal and free and boisterous," he would "not shine, for lack of quickness and repartee" (119). To combat this insecurity, Peter, rather than adapt his behavior, invents a world of imaginary snubbing and one-upmanship in which he excels. At parties, he assures the reader, "I was always well content to be the least observed of all observers, and felt happy in the security that here I should at least be left alone; that no perfect stranger would attempt to put me at my ease by making me the butt of his friendly and familiar banter" (140). In another instance, Peter is not invited back after a gathering of the elite organized by Lady Cray. Peter assures himself that he has, in fact, rebuffed them; upon later being called to perform an architectural task by Lady Cray, Peter reveals, "as a friend, Lady Cray seemed to have dropped me long ago, 'like a 'ot potato,' blissfully unconscious that it was I who had dropped her" (194). This attitude contrasts sharply with that of his sentimentalized youth, in which people of all professions and classes would engage in idealized banter without regard to social boundaries. Moreover, his eventual escape into dreaming true contrasts with the typical path of protagonists in developmental narratives who adjust their behavior and expectations to fit into society.

Peter's escapist fantasy of dreaming true offers a way to cope with his insecurities related to the limitations of his social class. When dreaming true, he need not interact with others who would only make him the focus of mockery; instead, he can interact with the one noble personage he idealizes, the Duchess of Towers, and choose his setting in the safety of past events. Because the murder of Colonel Ibbetson renders any typical forward trajectory of development inaccessible to Peter (as he will be committed for the remainder of his life), dreaming true allows him the chance to fulfill a perverted version of the typical developmental

path. Indeed, this fantasy allows him to fulfill the expectations of nineteenth-century middle class protagonists without meeting any real benchmarks of typical development.

Dreaming true also allows Peter to sidestep societal boundaries and overpower limitations in wealth or status, thereby subverting the transformative power of these struggles in typical developmental narratives. For example, Peter and the Duchess of Towers amass a collection of the finest art in European history. Meanwhile, Peter self-affirms his superior understanding of cultural reference points by copiously alluding to quotations from Mussett (31, 53, 107), Byron (32), Malherbe (53), Hugo (67, 221), Dante (125), Prudhomme (139), Virgil (152), Barbier (301), and Villon (303), among numerous others. Peter also has the chance to view elite members of society from his dreaming vantage point; as a result, his egotism belies his inner insecurity:

> it may gratify and encourage some of its members to hear that Peter Ibbetson (ex-private soldier, architect and surveyor, convict and criminal lunatic), who has had unrivalled opportunities for mixing with the cream of European society, considers our British aristocracy quite the best-looking, best-dressed, and best-behaved aristocracy of them all. (268)

Peter combatively admits his social status as "convict and criminal lunatic" while at the same time reasserting his superior powers of discernment. In this way, Peter self-validates his development without actually going through the typical motions of *Bildungsromane*. This narrative technique suggests the danger in the model of self-narrativizing propagated by such developmental narratives: one need not actually change in order to assert hollow (literary) authority. Such authority, when constructed outside of confinement, has the direct potential for violence by means of eugenics.

Peter solidifies the connection between this developmental perspective and evolutionary ideas of his childhood by dreaming true beyond the limits of his own life, actually traveling into the distant past in order to view remote ancestors. In one passage, Peter draws upon his understanding of contemporaneous notions of evolution in order to establish authority. Just as he imagined reptiles fighting for survival in the slime, he sees seemingly remote ancestors hunting mammoths—and he takes pleasure in the evolutionary distance from this lineage. This passage draws upon the Victorian fascination with mammoths, which, along with close relatives mastodons,[19] were central to the discussion surrounding evolution:

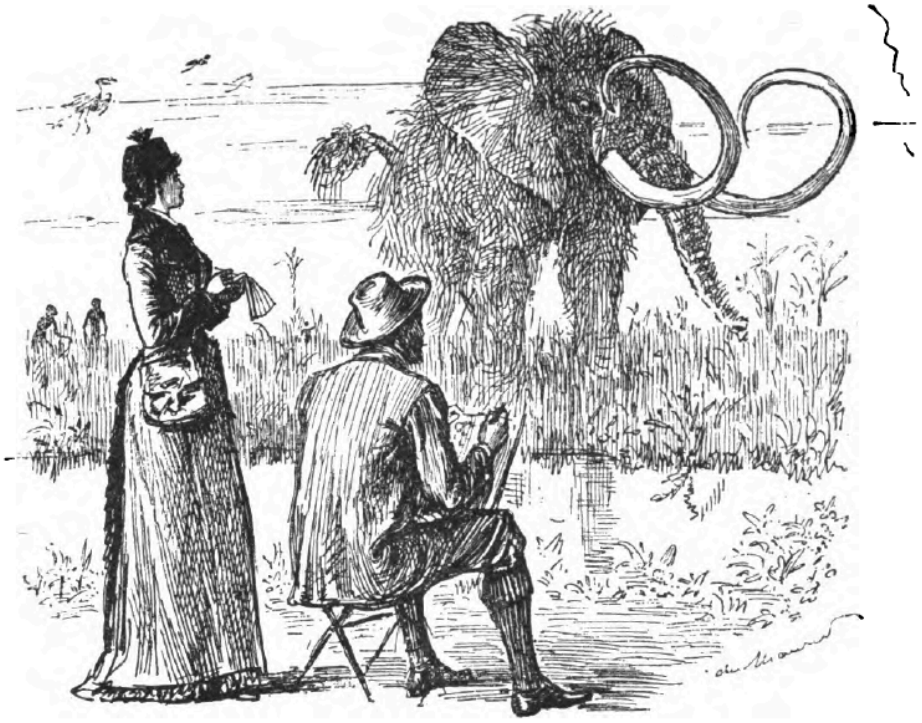
> We have walked round him and under him as he browsed, and even *through* him where he lay and rested, as one walks through the dun mist in a little hollow on a still, damp morning; and turning round to look (at the proper distance) there was the unmistakable shape again, just thick enough to blot out the lines of the dim primeval landscape beyond, and make a hole in the blank sky. A dread silhouette, thrilling our hearts with awe—blurred and indistinct like a composite photograph—merely the *type*, as it had been seen generally by all, every one of whom (*exceptis excipiendis*) was necessarily an ancestor of ours, and of every man now living. (305-6)

This passage primarily invokes the discourse of evolutionary science, first by positing a common ancestor and second by placing them in the environment of mammoths. Note that in the earlier nineteenth century, mammoth fossils were central to the debate between evolution and catastrophism. French scientist Georges Cuvier, for instance, claimed an evidentiary basis for catastrophism based on mammoths, "for how else might one explain the clear demarcations separating the various strata, the overturning of strata, and the specter of the Siberian mammoth

[19] Though now clearly demarcated as separate species, mammoth and mastodon were often used interchangeably into the mid-nineteenth century ("mammoth," *Oxford English Dictionary*).

found frozen in the ice with food still in its mouth?" (Appel 44). By placing mammoths alongside early humans, Peter endorses evolutionary science—and by extension the only evolutionary theorist explicitly mentioned in the novel, Darwin, whom Peter held "in warmest and deepest regard" (130).[20]

Moreover, du Maurier's illustration[21] accompanying this passage hints at the tautological basis for Peter's eugenicist perspective. In this illustration, Peter and the Duchess of Towers are depicted observing the mammoth alongside early human ancestors:



"THE MAMMOTH!"

Figure 3: Illustration of Peter Ibbetson sketching mammoth while ancestors hunt.

[20] In fact, Darwin admits the puzzling case of the recent extinction of the mastodon (234) in *On the Origin of Species* but ultimately argues that its fossil record need not clearly support gradual extinction for evolutionary principles to hold: "If the conditions had gone on, however slowly, becoming less and less favourable, we assuredly should not have perceived the fact" (235). In other words, the lack of a gradually declining fossil record does not prove the validity of catastrophism in all cases.

[21] Illustration excerpted from 1891 Harper and Brothers edition (369).

Here we see early humans (who Peter notes are the ancestors to "every living man now living") hunting the extinct mammoth. Additionally, Peter portrays himself sketching in the illustration—a unique circumstance in the novel, and a device that serves to create an ironic distance between the experience of dreaming true and its later recollection. Susan Zieger writes of this illustration, "In Du Maurier's [*sic*] fanciful appropriation, bodies have been reduced to eyes and configured as a living photographic apparatus. This technologization and reduction of the body delivers a eugenic message" (47). This pivotal illustration establishes this eugenicist viewpoint by grounding Peter's perspective in the evolutionary debate of the period—providing him with a circular rationale for his worldview: Peter inherits a dangerously eugenicist outlook, Peter reads about evolution, Peter "sees" evolutionary processes occurring that conform to his eugenicist perspective while dreaming true, and, finally, Peter justifies his own logic. In doing so, he also works around the common Victorian anxiety posited by Leo J. Henkin's foundational *Darwinism and the English Novel* (1940) that the human, "though he had traveled the farthest along the path of evolution, had not traveled far enough from his animal ancestry" (222). Peter's anxious test cases—the primordial swamp, his racially impure uncle, and his primitive hunting ancestors—provide reassurance that he has distanced himself from his evolutionary ancestry. Yet because each of these test cases that establish his superiority merely exists in Peter's mind, his argument becomes completely tautological. The eugenic element of dreaming true grounds itself in these hypothetical imaginings and therefore only reiterates Peter's already existing beliefs.

Dreaming true therefore is a recapitulation of the biological and social views Peter has absorbed and refined in the novel up to this point. Dreaming true for Peter is, in a sense, strikingly similar to imagining the emptied pond in his childhood—in each case, Peter can observe from a distance, delight in watching others, and ultimately reassert his own superiority.

This sense of self-satisfaction allows him the platform to make general biological recommendations for society. He addresses the reader:

> Wherefore, oh reader, if you be but sound in mind and body, it most seriously behooves you (not only for the sake of those who come after you, but your own) to go forth and multiply exceedingly, to marry early and much and often, and to select the very best of your kind in the opposite sex for this most precious, excellent, and blessèd purpose; that all your future reincarnations (and hers), however brief, may be many; and bring you not only joy and peace and pleasurable wonderment and recreation, but the priceless guerdon of well-earned self-approval! (298)

This entreaty for those "sound in mind and body" to reproduce contrasts sharply with his advice toward those less suitable for passing on one's traits:

> Wherefore, also, beware and be warned in time, ye tenth transmitters of a foolish face, ye reckless begetters of diseased or puny bodies, with hearts and brains to match! Far down the corridors of time shall club-footed retribution follow in your footsteps, and overtake you at every turn! Most remorselessly, most vindictively, will you be aroused, in sleepless hours of unbearable misery (future-waking nightmares), from your false, uneasy dream of death; to participate in an inheritance of woe still worse than yours—worse with all the accumulated interest of long years and centuries of iniquitous self-indulgence, and poisoned by the sting of a self-reproach that shall never cease till the last of your tainted progeny dies out, and finds his true nirvana, and yours, in the dim, forgetful depths of interstellar space! (299-300)

Athena Vrettos aptly writes that passages like these depict eugenics "as a personal imperative that extends its benefits into the wider sphere of human history. It offers a fantasy of mental

control as social control." Peter's eugenicist assumptions come to underwrite humanity on a personal and a historical level: governments should encourage the fit to reproduce, and individuals should regulate themselves—lest they are haunted by the hell of dreaming true progeny. Peter becomes the embodiment of Herbert Spencer's theory of generational influence explored in *Social Statics* that man "must remember that whilst he is a child of the past, he is a parent of the future" (517). Spencer continues, "He, like every other man, may properly consider himself as an agent through whom nature works; and when nature gives birth in him to a certain belief, she thereby authorizes him to profess and to act out that belief" (517). In Peter's case, this acting out takes place only in the neutered fantastical setting of dreaming true; for others outside asylum walls, this acting out could become decidedly more violent.

In sum, Peter's path of individuation follows a trajectory typical of developmental narratives—but his tendencies to misread his own experience and invest in fantasy allow him to cast typical developmental failures as success. For instance, after committing murder, the state has taken away his chance to acclimate harmoniously into society. As a result, Peter's fears, racial assumptions, and general disgust with those unlike himself—in short, his developmental failures—are reified as historical and biological fact. Peter's already exclusionary worldview becomes inwardly justified through his fantastical journeys while dreaming true. Thus, these prejudices of a childhood recollection of a street scene later take shape on the scale of humanity:

> gay, fat hags, all smile; thin hags, with faces of appalling wickedness or misery; precociously witty little gutter-imps of either sex; and such cripples! jovial hunchbacks, lusty blind beggars, merry creeping paralytics, scrofulous wretches who joked and punned about their sores; light-hearted, genial, mendicant monsters without arms or legs,

who went ramping through the mud on their bellies from one underground wine-shop to another. (49)

Peter's tendency has always been to set himself apart with a strikingly judgmental vision of the general populace, and his vision of society is obviously highly exclusionary. Peter's distancing recalls a process that Cannon Schmitt terms "savage mnemonics" (20), or "to know the human was to remember, and to remember specifically an outmoded or incipient version of oneself" (4). For Peter, this process encompasses both past biological failures—seen through dreaming true—and current failures—seen plainly on the street in people Peter interprets as outmoded versions of himself.

The circular logic of Peter's final encounter with Mary while dreaming true provides a final critique of his model of individuation in which typical novelistic development enables social and biological control. She, now deceased and therefore equipped with a supposed clearer bird's eye view of the world, proclaims that "like begets like, *plus* a little better or a little worse; and the little worse finds its way into some backwater and sticks there, and finally goes to the bottom, and nobody cares. And the little better goes on bettering and bettering" (331-2). Mary's observation recalls Peter's initial thrill at reptiles battling their way out of the "primeval slime," and Peter finds pleasure in the knowledge of how far humans have come from this terrifying scene. And presumably the source of delight Peter finds in documenting to the smallest detail the shortcomings of those on the street, in eliminating Colonel Ibbetson, in encouraging the unfit not to breed, is the knowledge that they will be the "little worse" relegated to "some backwater." Gillian Beer writes of how evolutionary thought tends to turn into "a means of confirming our value, suggesting that we inherit the world at its pinnacle of development and are the bearers of a progressive future" (18). Mary's triumphant proclamation—which exists only in Peter's

imagination—demonstrates the circular logic that suggests *Peter Ibbetson*'s critique of novelistic development and its logical endpoints in eugenic theory.

In proposing my central claim that that *Peter Ibbetson* reflects on the ways developmental novels produce authority, I argue that that its usage of the arc of the *Bildungsroman* draws its audience's critical attention to the mechanics of this subgenre's plotting. In doing so, it highlights that successful acclimation into modern society—whether real or imagined—can produce a vantage point of superiority that yields troubling results. For, as Armstrong notes, "not all fictional characters could become the protagonists of a novel" (4)—there has to be a path to self-fulfillment in order to achieve individuation and "unique subjectivity" (4). *Peter Ibbetson*, in the psychologically revealing statements of its first person narrative, begs the question: what happens to those characters and, by extension, people who do not fold into this established narrative of self-building? Do they get assigned to "some backwater?" And who makes the decisions? After all, *Peter Ibbetson* sustains the irony that its protagonist completely recedes from the physical world in order to achieve individuation; by all appearances, his maturation tends more toward what Henry Maudsley terms society's "increase of insanity" as correlative of "development" (206) rather than vice-versa. If this modern subject, who murders and finds solace only in dreaming true, can leverage the literary models of development to arrive at a theory of eugenics, then, *Peter Ibbetson* suggests, readers should question both the mechanics of self-building in the *Bildungsroman* and the danger that the individuated self will "acclimate" in dangerous ways with far-reaching social implications.

CODA

This project has traced the manner by which a particular strand of nineteenth-century British narrative reflected on the limits of *Bildung* and its developmental ideology by depicting protagonists' failure to acclimate to modern society. This lineage pushed beyond representing a protagonist's difficulties in negotiating between inner ideals and the outer structural limitations of society typical of the *Bildungsroman*; rather, this lineage suggested the initial steps of this developmental path but ultimately foregrounded the protagonist's failure to negotiate between these poles and eventually find contentment in a modest life. Despite emphasizing failure and resignation, however, this lineage actually came to underwrite the manner by which developmental discourse now incorporates drastic failure as a vital competent of eventual successful acclimation. In this way, these texts revised the discourse of education to include the sweeping collapse of individual ideals as a typical feature of the modern subject's development.

This collapse of ideals along the path of development came to be viewed as a matter of course in the twentieth century. Texts of the twentieth century that invoke features of the traditional *Bildungsroman* would emphasize isolation and alienation (in the Modernist era) and the collapse of structured rationalism (in the Postmodern era). Nineteenth-century texts that end in failure established the strategies that would govern the narrative logic of these twentieth-century narratives by forcing readers to confront their ideological assumptions when expectations are undermined. In this way, this project has explained how the resignation that would characterize twentieth-century developmental narratives has much earlier antecedents than previously acknowledged in scholarship.

Also, this project has shown the manner by which texts of the nineteenth century anticipated our contemporary critical moment. For instance, Marc Redfield recognizes in

Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman (1996) that the *Bildungsroman* has a tendency to recreate its ideology in readers' criticism. Each of the primary texts explored in my project already grappled with central problem by—in a way that prefigures twentieth-century metafiction—embedding frequently used tropes to reflect on developmental fiction's limits. Along the way, these texts suggest that development narratives of the period reproduced their ideology in ways that should be challenged through the formation of alternate social structures.

This recognition led to one way in which these narratives advocated for the generative capability of failure: the hypothesizing of more inclusive social systems implied by those narratives that push current ideology to its limits. In this way, these nineteenth-century texts paved the way for the more thorough twentieth-century exploration of the limits of development within the diverse contexts of, for instance, colonialism, globalism, gender dynamics, race, and the spread of digital technology. By narrating the ultimate failure of protagonists within these contexts, authors of the twentieth century actually redeployed the literary strategies of the previous century to generate social commentary.

In a different register, however, this nineteenth-century depiction of developmental failure also enabled the contemporary popular discourse in which crippling failure is viewed as a cornerstone of eventual success. By implying adjustments that could enable eventual success and stave off failure, these nineteenth-century texts—despite a surface commitment to using failure as a means of social critique—helped create a culture in which failure is perceived as an important basis for instruction and learning. In this culture, students are frequently encouraged to embrace their failures as a means of learning and thriving within a modern capitalist framework. In this way, educational assumptions have shifted appreciably from the eighteenth-century model of failure as permanent endpoint that I explored in my Introduction. In turning attention to the

origins of emphasizing failure within the context of individual development, I hope to enable a better understanding of our contemporary moment. In a larger critical sense, I believe the fetishization of failure within educational theory conservatively reinforces the limitations of a capitalist framework by implying the usefulness of preventive social structures. Perhaps by returning to the socially critical impulses of the nineteenth-century texts explored in this project, we can undertake the massive project of understanding the effects of the uncritical acceptance of failure within our culture's developmental discourse.

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