2019

Body doubles: Confinement and dissociation in the nineteenth century novel

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Body doubles: Confinement and dissociation in the nineteenth century novel

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)

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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this thesis. The Graduate College will ensure this thesis is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

2019

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my committee members for all of their support and guidance throughout this long (and also very short) journey:

Matthew Sivils, my major professor, has provided excellent feedback and advice across the long process that shaped this document into being. As I finish my second degree at Iowa State University, I would like to add that writing every paper to Prof. Sivils’s standards has greatly contributed to my survival and success. As my first teacher of American literature, the extent of Prof. Sivils’s influence on my education is hard to overstate.

Next, to Anne Kretsinger-Harries. Thank you for all that you do, as both a teacher and administrator. I really had no idea what I was doing as a new TA, and you did a phenomenal job of steering us all to where we need to be to grow and develop. Also, I appreciate our conversations and your advice, which has always been both sage and practical. I will miss this cohort.

To Brandon Sams, thank you (and my classmates in ENGL 521) for completely solidifying, once and for all, my conviction that I would like to teach literature for the rest of my life, assuming the random number lottery of the job market allows this. I’ll spare you the Plato allusion, but the class was an eye-opening experience for me. Also, thank you for allowing me to submit an earlier version of the Seven Gables chapter for that class, as well as the opportunity to draft a plan for teaching the novel, which I hope that I can employ in the near future.

And to Kate Padgett-Walsh, thank you for your willingness to engage with my ideas, and for all of your excellent feedback and interesting questions and advice. You
have been a great source of encouragement and food for thought, and I wish you the best of luck.

Thanks as well to Sean Grass, for his insightful comments and feedback on an earlier version of the final chapter, which is ironically the first one I wrote, more than a year ago now. And to Dr. Brianna Burke and Jeremy Withers for introducing me to theoretical approaches that influenced my time upon this path; I am in your debt. Many thanks to Carolyn Gonzalez for her friendship, support, and near infinite tolerance, and for helping me untangle my ideas at several chokepoints in this process. Thank you to all of the English Department’s support staff (and to Deanna Ward and Teresa Smiley, in particular), for all you do to facilitate everything that happens here. Also, I’d like to thank my family for their care and support, and my SP CM 212 students for their commitment to inquiry.
ABSTRACT

The issue of the prison, as well as compartment and confinement more broadly, has long constituted a chief concern of nineteenth century authors and their critics. In the decades since the pioneering work of Michel Foucault, particular interest has been paid to the myriad ways institutions of confinement reproduce and impose their conditions within the minds and lives of the subject. Through analysis of three representative nineteenth century historical novels, two by Nathaniel Hawthorne and one by Charles Dickens this thesis further explores the dynamics of the cause and effect between the prison and alienation as inscribed upon the past. Tracing this path through the “carceral archipelago” of literary historiography, this essay charts and explicates the recurrence of the trope of a parasitic, destructive split consciousness as later popularized by Robert Louis Stevenson’s “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” The split or dual consciousness reflects a new fracture in the age-old dichotomy of the public and private, a fracture caused by the strain of transition away from an idealized and receding pre-capitalist society. In Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, the tertiary narrative of Roger Chillingworth refashions the Indian Captivity Narrative as a means of torturous transformation. Similarly, in The House of Seven Gables the narrative of Clifford’s imprisonment and stunted recovery dramatizes the futility of a class bound to the trappings of a bygone era, a rapidly eroding history of joy and sorrow. And in Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities, the wrongful imprisonment of Dr. Manette saddles him with a direct alter-ego, the shoemaker who labors mechanically and fruitlessly for the benefit of his masters, a trope that transforms the once-heroic doctor into a shade, a simulacrum, in the words of Adam Smith “as stupid as it is possible for a man to become.”
CHAPTER 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Of the myriad sociopolitical inventions of the nineteenth century, perhaps no other has accumulated such a weighty trail of cultural baggage than the development of the penal state. Beginning with the so-called “Newgate Novels” of the 1830s, writers of multivariate stripes channeled the simultaneously withering and sublime implications of incarceration, gripping wide and increasingly consumer-oriented audiences through the schadenfreude of the imprisoned subject. In Discipline and Punish, Michel Foucault argues that the modern project to divorce punishment from its traditional association with public spectacle, to instead disappear and correct both imprisoned bodies and the subjectivities they contained, only sublimated and extended the spectacle of imprisonment beyond its former boundaries (10). Works of historical fiction written in the nineteenth century, ranging from the dark romances of Nathaniel Hawthorne to the vivid reimaginations of Charles Dickens, summarily recreate the phantasmagoria of shame and social control enacted and projected by obsolete modes of punishment. Regarding the somber carnival that accompanies Hester Prynne’s sojourn to the stockade upon the stage, Hawthorne’s narrator observes that, in a still more barbarous time, Hester would have faced far greater torment and humiliation through this vestigial instrument of torture, a device and a punishment that Hawthorne goes to great pains to avoid naming (53). Hawthorne’s recreation of a Puritan tribunal, like Dickens’s dramatizations of Jacobin and Imperial justice, attempts to both confine “barbarism” to the past and to confront an uncertain present rapidly slipping into a mercurial future. Consider the anaphora that famously begins Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities:
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only. (5)

Dickens conceptualizes the heroic past as a vortex of shifting dichotomies, the historiographical source of the anxieties variously afflicting the collective consciousnesses of the 1850s and 60s. Fredric Jameson argues, concerning speculative fictions (and are they not all speculative, to some extent?), that temporal displacement reflects the “real” disentangling of the cultural narrative of history; the ebbs and flows of thought, across time, rise and fall through elision and inclusion alike. Returning to the dilemma of mass incarceration, the occluded bodies and minds of the imprisoned persist as afterimages, uncanny figurations that represent lost possibilities, futures and pasts that have become inaccessible. And so narrating the nineteenth century prison, the loaded symbol of absolute, inescapable materiality, becomes an uncanny act in that it creates and narrates a consciousness that should not exist.

Contemporaneous and interwoven with the rise of the penal state was another mass experiment in confinement and occlusion, a disciplinary institution that would become another staple locale of the nineteenth century novel: the asylum. Lennard J. Davis notes, in *A Brief History of Obsession*, that “monomania” constituted the
overwhelming majority of diagnoses for patients institutionalized between 1809 and 1899 (82). Davis visualizes this pathologization of obsession as the cultural project of quarantining undesirable bodies, consciousnesses deemed unfit to function amongst the aggregate of a burgeoning capitalist society. On the other hand, however, he argues that this same pathologization became, under more Romantic auspices, something of a rite of passage: a cultural ritual that transmuted the solitary degradation of confinement into a badge of artistic and individualistic honor (87). The “asylum experience” enjoyed by the privileged, self-committing monomaniac diffuses the most pervasive anxiety surrounding the asylum; the possibility of inescapable commitment, under false pretenses and with no hope of escape. In contemporary thrillers like Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *The Tale of the Serpent* or Thomas Preskett Prest’s *A String of Pearls*—respectively an early “sensation” novel and a penny dreadful—confinement within the asylum becomes no mere death sentence, but something more awful and permanent; oblivion, complete erasure. These widespread anxieties concerning unjust commitals and wrongful imprisonment reflect, in general, a deeper cultural fear centered around the sublimated but ever-present perception of an indescribable loss of control that characterized the mid-1800s in both Britain and America. Manifestations of this anxiety, projecting far beyond the physical outlines of the prison-door and the asylum-cot, reveal the great fault lines inherent to the era’s key processes of identity formation and myth-making.

This paper will examine at length one of these fractures in what Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll calls “the very fortress of identity” fabricated and defended by the nascent material capitalism that characterized the nineteenth century (70). I will address the specific fracture dramatized (and immortalized) by the “macguffin” of Stevenson’s
The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; the dual consciousness. Nineteenth century fictions characterize the pressing ontological problem presented by the possibility of a dual consciousness lurking within the otherwise healthy individual as reflective of the difficulty of maintaining control in a mercurial world. I argue that this struggle for control, effected between the original self and the double, permeates the traditionally enforced barrier between the public and the private by sublimating carceral bonds across the wide spectrum of life; the “Other” selves of these novels originate in the cell of confinement and return to haunt the “original” self.

The ordeal of the nineteenth century prisoner does not end upon “release,” as Dickens, Hawthorne, and Stevenson all variously delineate the myriad transformations and divisions that continue to rack the imprisoned self. These doublings, products of chronological and ontological dissociation, indicate the perception of a profound aural “loss” amid a changing and expanding world. The contours of this loss, sketched interpretatively through historical fiction, uphold the dual consciousness as both a pathological act of self-betrayal, evocative of what Edmund Burke famously dubbed “treason against property,” and the haunting the consecrates traumatic memories of this transgression. (202).

In this paper, I will trace the development of this correlation, between the material prison, the dual or divided consciousness, and the traumatic transition to a capital-oriented world through Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel-length romances, The Scarlet Letter and The House of Seven Gables, and Charles Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities - with references to other relevant primary texts, as well as Stevenson’s Jekyll and Hyde. As a trinity, these novels contain not only character-driven instances of dual consciousness but
figurations of three separate centuries all from the vantage point of the 1850s-60s. Additionally, the short timespan elapsed between Hawthorne’s composition of his first two romances reinforces the thematic links they share, while critics have speculated that Dickens may have based Dr. Manette, tertiary protagonist of *A Tale of Two Cities*, upon Clifford Pyncheon of *The House of Seven Gables* (Slater 189). In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), the transformative narrative arc of “Roger Chillingworth” constitutes a spectral continuation of colonial Indian captivity narratives, in which the doctor’s original persona falls prey to the consumptive voyeurism of the allegorical forest. Next, Hawthorne iterates a more concretely divided consciousness in the economically focused *The House of Seven Gables* through Clifford’s transformation from his shattered, post-release state of infirmity to a shadow of his former vigor - a transformation for which Hawthorne implies there can be no true, organic resolution; even with the best of all possible outcomes effected by the novel’s ending, Clifford must still cling to life only as an embodied ghost. A similar schema of doubling occurs in Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), in which case the dissociative divide between Dr. Manette, learned doctor and emblem of Enlightenment humanism, and “One Hundred and Five, North Tower” the decrepit shoemaker persona he had inhabited during his long sojourn in monarchical prison, reflects still more closely the comorbid trinity of socioeconomic transition, the divided consciousness, and the material prison. Lastly, I will treat Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde* more concretely concerning the theoretical implications of dissociative doubling.
CHAPTER 2. LISTENING AT THE PRISON-DOOR: THE GHOSTS OF THE CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE IN THE SCARLET LETTER

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s early tale “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” first published anonymously in 1832 and later reclaimed and reprinted in the 1846 collection Mosses From an Old Manse begins, following a brief introduction historicizing the text’s events, in the aftermath of a bloody frontier battle. A young man, Reuben Bourne, and his pseudo father-figure, the titular character, stand stalled in a clearing in the dark heart of the forest, pursued and surveilled by the unseen enemy (51). Acutely they feel the terror, the pressure brought upon by the mere existence of this lurking alien presence, whose nature and form Hawthorne occludes as he has the events of Battle of Pequawket itself, save for the suggestion of savagery, of a consumptive but intoxicatingly natural Otherness. This representation, or lack thereof, would come to typify Hawthorne’s American Indians: watchful but invisible or mute, like the leaves on the forest floor. Scholars have compared Hawthorne’s avoidant treatment of American Indian characters to his political stance concerning the “slavery question” of the 1840s-50s, a stance echoed to eventual disastrous effect by his college friend Franklin Pierce (Powell 147).

Hawthorne held no illusions concerning the moral wrong of slavery but assumed rather indolently that the evil practice would die out of natural causes, without so much as a whimper. And based upon how he has confined this original Other to the periphery of this dark tale of oath-breaking and stagnation, perhaps Hawthorne thought that American Indians had (or should have) gone the natural way and receded into nothingness. A notorious perfectionist and a pessimistic critic of his own work, not all of Hawthorne’s early tales would see the light of day again in the author’s lifetime, but the constrained historicism of “Roger Malvin’s Burial” as a meditation on Puritan blood-guilt and
hypocrisy would provide a recurring thematic ground sewn by Hawthorne throughout his career. And, fittingly, Hawthorne’s spectralization of the American Indian Other would become a recurring feature, too, whether as objects of historical scenery or even more insidious figurants.

Hawthorne’s first and, to the aggregate of commentators, best romance, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) follows a multi-faceted tale of sin, betrayal, and redemption in a 17th century Salem precariously perched upon the edge of the hungry wilderness. The novel, lengthened and legitimized by the sketch “The Customs House,” ended Hawthorne’s vocation as “America’s most obscure man of letters” overnight and catapulted him to forefront of literary stardom at this juncture in the American renaissance, although he would only make $1400 from this success over the rest of his life, due to both an unfavorable contract and the widespread European popularity of numerous pirated editions (Fash 178). The composition of *The Scarlet Letter* had begun in the fall of 1849, just months after the slow, agonizing death of Hawthorne’s mother, Elizabeth *nee* Manning, in Salem; a time that Hawthorne would privately dub “...The darkest hour I have lived” (*Letters* 8:429, Milder 91). Haunted by the ghosts of his unhappy childhood home and beset with a cocktail of grief and financial worries, Hawthorne gave the nascent romance his undivided attention, attacking the project with an intensity so uncharacteristic that the ordeal, “almost frightened” his wife, Sophia, through the sheer scale of his labor and output (*Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* 354). Recent literary biographers of Hawthorne have traced a rough line of thematic progression leading up to *The Scarlet Letter*, including the early tales “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” “Young Goodman Brown,” and “The Minister’s Black Veil,” as well as the 1848
tale “Ethan Brand,” the darkly claustrophobic account of an artist delving into psychological dimensions in which he does not belong, which, Robert Milder argues, prefigures and necessitates the role of Roger Chillingworth-Prynne in what would otherwise be an elongated retelling of “The Minister’s Black Veil” (Bell 19, Turner 61, Milder 109).

The baleful, wandering presence of Roger Chillingworth-Prynne within the novel has consistently presented something of a quandary to the successive generations of scholars, as both a villain possessed by a withering, gleeful malice - the mutation of his original desire “to be universally loved” into an all-consuming thirst for vengeance - and a grotesque confined to the fringes of Puritan society. In her classic study of the gendered and religious politics of The Scarlet Letter, Nina Baym visualizes Roger as moreso a proto-Freudian “monster” than an actual character, a psychological affliction attached semi-tangibly to Arthur Dimmesdale and the hollow shell of his sin, a virus-like manifestation devoid of all life without a (unconsciously willing) host (225). To Baym, Roger is both inherently pathological and something of a foil to Pearl; this pair of quasi-humans represent the qualities and consequences that Dimmesdale and Hester respectively had imbued upon their secret tryst (228). The novel’s resolution thus reflects, through Chillingworth’s occluded passing, an exorcism of the invisible thread that had wound itself around the lives of all concerned, constricting and binding them together.

In a line of argument similar to that employed by Kenneth Harris concerning Judge Pyncheon’s (in The House of Seven Gables) status as a consummate hypocrite, a conviction that stands, he argues, often implied by but never directly attached to Pyncheon by previous scholarship, Allan Lefcowitz holds in “Apologia pro Roger
Prynne” that, on the whole, critics have taken the absolute evil of Roger for granted (Harris 47). Lefcowitz notes that prior scholarship’s identification of Roger Prynne with thought on the sliding scale of the traditional Hawthornean theme of head/heart dichotomy misrepresents the character’s uncontrollable excess of emotion as clinical coldness or apathy (37). Roger Prynne’s association with losing control, the literal wilderness as opposed to the “moral wilderness” inhabited by Hester, colors his character from his first appearance in the novel.

This association rests in the grotesque of his “misshapen body” and in the natural imagery that pervades the spectacle of shame enacted in the beginning of the novel. Hawthorne describes Salem as a “black flower of civilized society” in stark contrast to the vibrant rose-bush of “the stern old wilderness,” the blood-plant that completes his Romantic grower’s conceit, established in the “Custom-House” and a consistent preoccupation of both The Scarlet Letter and The House of Seven Gables, of the flower that blooms from the corpse-laden ground of human endeavor and crowns its form as an after-image (46). The motif of black and red, ink and blood, coexisting in an unstable equilibrium upon the foundations of a nascent state, trace the contours of the space into which Roger Prynne intrudes. Baym’s analysis treats Prynne as a phantom, whose motions defy material logic and whose presence upon the periphery had no explanation nor required one. But Prynne has a history around the Massachusetts of The Scarlet Letter, a pariah’s history occluded from vision by Hawthorne’s layers of obscurantism, but a history nonetheless. The community’s regard of Roger Chillingworth nee Prynne grows more and more central to the romance as time progresses, but a certain aura of dread and misrecognition pervades this regard from beginning, a transgressive gap
(which constitutes for Roger an opportunity) within the community’s theocratic scheme of law and order erected upon ink and blood. Consider a Bostonian’s opportune words, said within earshot of a Chillingworth cross-gartered in what Bethany Reid calls “a mixture of civilized and savage attire” and accompanied by his captors, a number of silent American Indians: “Yonder woman, Sir, you must know, was the wife of a certain learned man, English by birth, but who had long dwelt in Amsterdam, whence, some good time ago, he was minded to cross over and cast in his lot with us of the Massachusetts. To this purpose, he sent his wife before him, while remaining himself to look after some necessary affairs. Marry, good Sir, in some two years or less, that the woman had been a dweller here in Boston, no tidings have come of this learned gentleman, Master Prynne. . .” (59, Reid 254). Confronted by this third-person spectre of himself and the second-hand account of both his existence and his impotence, he stays true to his mettle as a pragmatic empiricist and seizes the opportunity to bury his past existence, to start over as a tabula rasa in a new land.

And the trajectory of the newly formed Chillingworth's life implies that this is not his first restart. As both an Englishman entrenched in Amsterdam and an old-world doctor, trained with great ceremony at a “German University,” the life he has led in the pursuit of knowledge has caused brushes with persecution and exile, voluntary or otherwise (110). Even the conformity of Puritan Massachusetts reflects a tale of exile, hardly addressed in the novel, of the religious persecution the Separatists had faced at home in England. So the whispers caused by Chillingworth’s presence in Salem could be a marker of his old-world Otherness as well as his acquired associations with the dark wilderness, all packaged in an unshapely vessel. And in Hester’s memories of their time
together, his deformity constitutes a lone signpost in a collage of sepulchral cities and missed connections - a ring of finality that he does not fail to grasp.

Consider also how the unrecognized “Master Prynne” delineates the misfortunes that had prevented him from joining his wife in Massachusetts, possibly as a (ir)religious exile: “I am a stranger, and have been a wanderer, sorely against my will. I have met with grievous mishaps by sea and land and have been long held in bonds among the heathenfolk, to the southward: and am now brought hither by this Indian, to be redeemed out of my captivity” (58). Prynne’s half-true representation of his captivity occludes how he has pragmatically made the best of his incarceration, his experience of the Indian captivity narrative. By co-opting this staple genre of early American literature as a primer for Chillingworth’s arc of vengeance and sexualized shame, Hawthorne not only periodizes The Scarlet Letter but begins establishing the dissociative gendered and racial politics that solidify the romance’s thematic core. Roger Prynne’s ordeal inverts the Indian captivity narrative upon gender lines, providing “a clear site for examining a variety of parameters of this conflict between ‘mind’ and ‘frontier” (Toulouse 141). This spatial dichotomy explored by the Indian captivity narrative corresponds to the binding mixture of blood and ink, black and red, that occupies the thematic center of The Scarlet Letter, a periodizing device gesturing to the hidden depths of discourse that linger in realms and narratives distanced from the (inherently Protestant and bound to the nineteenth) surface reality.

In the greater scheme of the novel, Hawthorne employs the shadowy, Othering captivity experienced by Roger Prynne-Chillingworth as the undercurrent that drives the thematic centrality of the changeling, of the inexorable but hidden process of counter-
exploration that eventually Others even the self. Allan Lefcowitz notes that past
generations of critics, when they had engaged the character at all, treated Roger (whose
presumably fake given name, Reid reminds us, was used colloquially as a verb meaning
“rape” in the early colonies) rather uncritically as a “Mephistopheles” hell-bent upon
Dimmesdale, but another useful Faustian analogy would compare Hawthorne’s physician
to Goethe’s metaphysician (Lefcowitz 38, Reid 261). For Prynne, in the grip of a
pragmatic proto-Stockholm syndrome, has succeeded in his quest to find forbidden
knowledge, saving Hester and Pearl from the cold pressure of the prison, an act that
paradoxically reaffirms the endurance of the Natural and, by extending life, extends the
duration of earthly bondage and penitence. In this essay, I argue that the after-image of
the Indian captivity narrative experienced by Roger Prynne haunts The Scarlet Letter
through the crippling material and philosophical prominence of the prison within the
romance, and the recurring anxiety that the occlusion of vision will erase and replace the
confined consciousness. Specifically, this latent potential for substitution encompasses
the terrifying prospect, as Hawthorne had in his early tale “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” of
losing connection with civilization and being reclaimed by savage Nature; a condition
that Hawthorne represents as analogous to the sidelined role of the American Indian. The
identification of Prynne/Chillingworth with the silent and/or invisible untouchable caste
of colonial society also reflects the pathologization of the imprisoned, incapable body.
This pathology, Hawthorne asserts, destabilizes constructions of identity as beholden to
overarching historical and metaphysical forces.

Well-versed in the historical lore of New England but fiercely imaginative,
Hawthorne’s figuration of colonial life harbors an uneasy balance of influences from both
the history of the period and its fiction. Famously, Nina Baym declares Hawthorne’s Puritans “Victorians” and notes the imposition of staid nineteenth century values upon Early Modern chaos, insights echoed and expanded upon by Sacvan Bercovitch’s *The Office of the Scarlet Letter*, wherein he argues against the “oppositional view” of *The Scarlet Letter* preferred by critical generations laboring under the weight of Trilling and Crews and in favor of a view that aligns Hawthorne more concretely with the insidious sustainment of hegemony (Baym 1976 23, Bercovitch 9).

Later critics have noted that Hawthorne seems to return to theocratic amalgamations of power as he simply sees no alternative, no unopposed path to freedom (Milder 75). Whatever the extent or end to which *The Scarlet Letter* performs normative myth-making, the opening sequence co-opts elements from two of the staple genres of early American literature, a literature self-conscious of its own novelty and nascent place in a storied world. Though this essay will focus mostly on the afterlife of the Indian captivity narrative effected through the occluded history of Roger Chillingworth, Hester also experiences the trappings of an escaped slave narrative. Deeply aware that she has sacrificed her freedom, Hester withers in the Puritan prison and contemplates suicide and, in a deeper cell of her mind, infanticide: “I have thought of death . . . have wished for it,-would even have prayed for it . . .” (68). She has intuited that her child will never live a wholly free life while dually tormented by the multivalent A and the absence of a father who can claim her, a predicament comparable to that experienced by slave children conceived to a free father and a bound mother; a style of rape substantiated in both historical narrative (e.g. Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*) and fictions of the day like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or Chopin’s “Desiree’s Baby.” Consider Hester’s
thoughts as she goes about her day-to-day life, years later, regarding the terrible and isolated path she and her daughter have walked in Salem:

[Hester] wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm. There was wild and ghastly scenery all around her, and a home and comfort nowhere. At times, a fearful doubt strove to possess her soul, whether it were not better to send Pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide. (153)

Gesturing to this cavernous pit of loss that Hester finds, at first, within herself, Dana Medoro persuasively argues that the scarlet A signifies “Able” and “Abortion,” as the shadow of infanticide and compromised literary vision hangs perceptibly over Pearl (147). Hawthorne lends to Pearl a transgressive voice befitting of the stigmatization she faces from the community; as a changeling child, she seems to exist on a plane removed somewhat from the “real” or mundane reality of the Romance, moving and seeing instead on a ethereal, mystic plane also occupied by Roger Chillingworth (Reid 255). Here exists another layer of literary history embedded within Hawthorne’s Romance: the clash of “spheres,” a remnant of the Dantean medieval cosmology that, in *The Scarlet Letter*, provides a visual metaphor denoting the epistemological difficulty of communicating unopposed. E.g., in the forest scene where Hester and a haggard Dimmesdale finally meet in daylight: “They now felt themselves, at least, inhabitants of the same sphere” (177).

This moment echoes the spark of recognition shared between Hester and Roger as she stands on the scaffold, surrounded by the sea of prying eyes and still thankful that she does not face Dimmesdale alone. And thus, co-opting the paradox of Indian captivity
narratives and other early literature, the most secure spheres of *The Scarlet Letter* occupy either the furthest semiotic distance from the engines of civilization (the wild wood encroaching on the Puritan settlement) or, in the case of Hester’s cell, lie closest to the heart of civilization’s black flower. For after all, the prison shares space with the graveyard, that final and original repository of secrets (45). Hawthorne frames the wilderness as a liberating space (though not devoid of the dangers represented by Mistress Hibbins and the legendary Black Man) and, similarly, the cell also as something of a liberating space by virtue of its fixed, material tangibility: a knowable quality that becomes, to Hester and the townspeople, almost comforting. The real threat, to these (to again return to Baym’s argument) rather Victorian Puritans, stems from the territory of the uncanny, the unknowable, the out-of-place, the visibly hybridized.

To an extent, the grim Puritan towns of Boston and Salem owe the pristine image of their purity to the coexistence with the untamed wild that terrifies residents and magistrates alike. But the hybrid, neither and both wild and civilized presents an especial problem. Roger’s initial appearance, cross-gartered in attire scholarly and “savage,” reflects the danger he represents - as the “Black Man of the Forest” in Pearl’s spherebound vision and therefore, in Hawthorne’s estimation, the worst of both worlds; a civilized changeling with savage fury lurking in heart, much like Reuben Bourne of “Roger Malvin’s Burial,” the tale Robert Milder identifies (along with the posthumously published “Alice Doane’s Appeal”) as most acutely dramatizing the loss of a pseudo-father and the the incestuous spirals this entails (37). A similar dissociative cocktail of possibilities, opportunities to safely transgress cultural norms, often occurs as the result of an Indian captivity narrative. In a representative example of the genre, a young woman
elopes into the encroaching wilderness to escape parental disapproval, only to face disaster, desertion, and rape at the hands of a colossal “savage.” She murders her captor and, instead of returning to colonial society, occupies his cave and observes his body’s reclamation by nature, a life of quiet seclusion interrupted after a decade by an intruding explorer, who violates the woman’s newfound sanctity by penetrating into this wilderness-bound cave with the news of her father’s death. Hester Prynne experiences a rather similar liberation at the close of *The Scarlet Letter*, retreating from the adopted homeland to which she had been bound by the shame and pride of recognition and into parts unknown, from whence she returns to Salem alone, surrounded by the trappings of wealth and mystery, and lives out her days in stately silence (244). So, in that sense, the trajectory of Hester’s life post-epilogue, with the tranquility of the wild shattered by intrusion and windfall, reflects a reaffirmation of the values (and economic value) of liberation from both rigid colonial hierarchy and the intangible inadequacy of the unexploitable wilderness.

I: Captive Will and the Determinism of the Skilled

As mutations of the captivity-narrative hero and heroine led astray in the “moral wilderness” that Hester feels springing up inside and around her, the Prynnes dramatize Hawthorne’s muted but thoroughly Romantic take on the triumph of individualism, as he crucially describes both Roger and Hester as people of “skill.” Moreso than the traditional (in the national epic tradition, specifically, a genre that Lauren Berlant argues characterizes *The Scarlet Letter*) justification of protagonism, the marker “skill” denotes both the Prynnes’s cold affinity for each other and their ability to survive and thrive in brutal conditions (23). Consider the introduction of Roger Chillingworth that Hawthorne refracts through the prism of the bailiff’s perspective, which moves the vantage point
further from the allegorical ground of the stage and spectacle and into the cold, earthen dungeon: “He described him as a man of skill in all Christian modes of physical science, likewise familiar with whatever the savage people could teach, in respect to medicinal herbs and roots that grew in the forest” (66). Note that, although Hawthorne mediates Roger’s polymathy between “physical” and thus material Christian grounds and the amorphous “whatever” of the forest and “the savage people” that lurk in its shadows, the floral resources of the wild have the capability to extend and affirm life, though not indefinitely and without substituting, as the fate of Arthur Dimmesdale attests. Hawthorne makes it clear that Dimmesdale’s physical infirmity, as one tethered to life only by his enemy’s thread, consigns him to the sphere of the ethereal as opposed to the worldly sphere of “skills,” a quality the Romance links to the durability required to survive in a rough, mercurial world.

Specifically, in Hester’s case, skill seems to denote her ability to make a living for herself as a single mother in a Puritan world hardly disposed to accept her. Even a particularly vicious “female spectator” at Hester’s public shaming concedes “She hath good skill at her needle, that’s certain” and simultaneously decries the ostentatiousness of Hester’s embroidery, though it later becomes clear that the fruit of this fallen woman’s skilled labor constitutes a necessary commodity to Hawthorne’s pageantry-obsessed Puritans (50, 73). That the divines and secular leaders of state (as well as the community at large) clothe themselves in the vestments spun of this same thread of “sin” gestures to the cultural maintenance of a hypocrisy at once normative and, as D. A. Miller articulates “sublimated” into the atmosphere itself, a maintenance that inevitably privileges the visible, the symbol (93, Miller 61). The Scarlet Letter’s love affair with the material, the
observable exterior that purports, or, at least, is assumed to even by those who know better, to elucidate the hidden qualities of the interior, probably reflects both the precariousness of Hawthorne’s worldly goods following his mother’s death and the insidious presence of economic anachronism; some vestige of burgeoning 1840s mercantile capitalism distorting precapitalist times. Hester, the narrator claims, must “borrow from the future” to effect and secure her existence (73). In a recent review, Jean Howard argues that later representations of the Early Modern period (an era to whose cultural capital Hawthorne’s historical fiction lays claim on various occasions, e.g. Hester’s vision, upon the stage of punishment, of her austere English father’s “reverend white beard, that flowed over the old-fashioned Elizabethan ruff”) gloss over “transition,” in the Marxist sense; the innumerable traumas and elisions brought upon by the organizational shift to a capitalist society, a shift that eventually becomes axiomatic enough as to erode remembrance of the shift’s existence (55; Howard 3). The aura of misdirection that permeates The Scarlet Letter’s grand dichotomic matrix of interior and exterior, body and soul, heart and mind, becomes a less invasive filter in the private depths of the forest and the earthen cell.

Hawthorne’s creation of “safe” private spaces of confinement frames these spaces as expressions of the ineffable highs and lows within the self, using this dichotomy as a measuring stick comparable to Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” as rediscovered and rewritten by the transcendentalist movement with which the author sympathized, to an extent, but could never fully embrace. In a famous passage of “Self-Reliance,” Emerson describes the healing rite of passage that outlines the path to liberation: “And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors
and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, reemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark” (10). Both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale fall under what Emerson would consider “invalids,’ the physician by virtue of his grotesquely asymmetrical body and the minister by his shameful psychosomatic frailty, and the space they share together ultimately becomes, indeed, a “protective corner” that shackles an untenable situation to a torturous life. Roger’s damning infirmity, of course, matters less in the world of ideas confined within Hester’s cell, where he gives her pause, in their exit interview “. . . with a smile of dark of self-relying intelligence” and thereby seals his trajectory on the path to a mercilessly reciprocal vengeance just barely averted, in the eleventh hour, by the hypocritical physician’s redemption (70).

And this redemption suits him; though he cannot achieve his original desire (love, or a benevolent acceptance levied universally upon him) this swan song fulfills his rash wish to become anonymous in death, for he finds peace, Reid writes only when “stripped of all power, separated from humanity, unmourned in a forgotten grave (Reid 252). Hawthorne ties this outcome, somewhat heavy-handedly, to the dilemma of substance and surface, knowledge and ignorance: “Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred” (242). Here, what the narrator dubs a moral from “among many” makes an interesting case for pragmatism and forbearance regarding the self’s nature, calling to mind Hawthorne’s preference, in “The Custom-House” to keep “the in-most Me behind its veil” and once again pressing against the ambiguity of the forest, the unknown, and the hybrid (4). The instability of this dichotomy, unwound and contained in the forest scene that heralds the end of the
Romance’s second act, considers the illusion of civilization, of control, as far more
dangerous than the unrestrained wilderness. *The Scarlet Letter* projects the ultimate view
that hybridity left unacknowledged or unclaimed (the state Pearl languishes in until the
novel’s final revelation) constitutes an ambiguity in of itself pathological, an experience
Nina Baym describes as the “horrors of the half-known life” (1970: 231).

As if to banish the corruption of individualism Chillingworth that has become,
the narrator speculates that, “[i]n the spiritual world, the old physician and the minister-
mutual victims as they have been, may, unawares, have found their earthly stock of
hatred and antipathy transmuted into golden love” (242). Apart from consummating and
pathologizing their vampiric physician-patient relationship, this conclusion to the self-
destructive arc of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth enshrines the ideal, entwining
metaphorical strands from the mercantile (“earthly stock”) to the alchemical. This
constitutes rather familiar territory to old Roger Chillingworth, who divulges to Hester, in
the privacy of the subterranean cell: “My old studies in alchemy,’ observed he, ‘and my
sojourn, for above a year past, among a people well versed in the kindly properties of
simples, have made a better physician of me than many that claim the medical degree.
Here, woman! The child is yours- she is none of mine,- neither will she recognize my
voice or aspect as a father’s. Administer this draught, therefore, with thine own hand”
(67). Here, in “alchemy” Hawthorne forges a link between the most idealistic height of
medieval/Early Modern mysticism and the healing arts of the “simple” natural people
occluded to the forest that foregrounds the mysterious, transformative potential hidden
within the watchful wilderness. This scene abounds with information consigned to the
shadows, most notably Chillingworth's former life and the recognition he cannot expect
from Pearl, though she later regards the physician as the representation of the “Black Man” that the community privately dubs him. The secrecy of this scene carries the weight of Plato’s cave, gesturing to the cavernous depths and shadowy cells that occupy the spaces between the public and the private.

In this way, Chillingsworth addresses the spatial displacement of confinement, a dissociative hierarchy that modernizing forces have turned upon its head: “Fallen into the pit, or say rather, thou hast ascended to the pedestal of infamy” (69). The spectacular punishment that ends the cycle of confinement and release so begins and ends this romance, the event that holds the shadows within and the throng without up to the light of understanding. This dichotomy of depth and height towers from this cell planted at the original soil of “civilization” and creates a spectacle consumed by both insiders and outsiders. The audiences of both Hester’s punishment and Dimmesdale’s Election speech span the full spectrum of society and its outcasts, from the potentates of state to the literal witch Mistress Hibbins and silent, grizzled American Indians watching from the fringes. These glimpses of Chillingworth's sometime teachers and captors characterize the role of the distant Other in the community’s collective process of identity formation; in this pageantry defined by “the overpresence of spectacle” the success of the example depends upon the enforced presence of the counterexample and the figurant (Berlant 16). But the nature of The Scarlet Letter’s rituals of punishment, refracted semi-consciously through the filter of historical fiction, complicates the purity of this affirmative purpose, for both Hester’s cross-examination and the Election become rituals of disciplinary Othering, in which Hester and Dimmesdale become recognizable signs of difference at a level so
insidious as to mimic nineteenth century determinist ideas about the nature of race. For example, consider Pearl’s travels during the preamble to the Election:

She ran and looked the wild Indian in the face; and he grew conscious of a nature wilder than his own. Thence, with native audacity, but still with a reserve as characteristic, she flew into the midst of a group of mariners, the swarthy-cheeked wild men of the ocean, as the Indians were of the land; and they gazed wonderingly and admiringly at Pearl, as if a flake of the sea-foam had taken the shape of a little maid, and were gifted with a soul of the sea-fire, that flashes beneath the prow in the night-time. (228)

Note Hawthorne’s deliberate use of a vegetal metaphor (“grew conscious”) to describe the overnatural, the living product of “reserved” civilization’s failed attempt to enforce purity between itself and the constricting power of the wilderness, to constrict the great chasm of Nature that surrounds the Puritan settlement. The adjective “native” refers doubly to the nature/nurture dichotomy that the novel addresses largely through the account of Pearl’s uncannily precocious childhood and to the racial dissociation established in the previous sentence; Pearl outwils the wilderness and earns the favor of the captain, that leader of the “wild-men of the ocean” by virtue of her uncontrollable energy, the golden chain from his hat, which she wore “with such happy skill, that, once seen there, it became a part of her, and it was difficult to imagine her without it” (228). This blessing, effected through a chain, serves also as a binding that replicates Chillingworth’s first appearance at a similar event, bedecked in a mixture of European and American Indian clothing - for Hawthorne explicitly links these “wild-men of the sea” to the Indian spectators, foreshadowing Pearl’s departure across the sea in the
romance’s shadowy epilogue. In a sense, this scene also affirms the kinship between Chillingworth and Pearl as otherworldly, transgressive beings dislocated from the normative conceptions of space shared by most of the other characters; e.g. the stubbornness that prevents both Hester and Dimmesdale from fleeing the scene of the “crime” and drives them to establish deep roots at the site of the “moral wilderness,” thereafter building a connection with the idea of the land that only Hester can eventually bear to sever.

II: A for Addiction; Haunting and Shameful Selves

The cultural work accomplished by these spectacles of punishment substitutes a moribund exile for death, as Pearl’s parents experience the dissociation and dislocation as a harrowing but ineffable process of becoming Other, as opposed to having been born “Other” through natural causes. Additionally, this scene deepens the shadowy liminality of the novel’s ideas regarding legacy, as it introduces and seems to reinforce the idea that, perhaps, Pearl could be a “legitimate” child: “They say, child, thou art of the lineage of the Prince of the Air! Wilt thou ride with me, some fine night, to see thy father? Then thou shalt know wherefore the minister keeps his hand over his heart!” (226) Mistress Hibbins, the witch sporting a decidedly higher social standing than most victims of the Salem Witch Trials, hails Pearl as a daughter of Satan in such a way that instantly recalls the lingering suspicions the community holds (at arm’s and whisper’s length from the main action) regarding Chillingworth’s true identity as the devil who tempts and torments the worthy Dimmesdale. Pearl’s interaction with the captain completes the reference, as the sailor describes a “. . . black-a-visaged, hump-shouldered old doctor” thereby crafting the familiar racialized image of the legendary “Black Man of the Forest,” the entity representing the allure and power of the exotic wilderness (228). Addressed
jokingly by the bizarrely smitten sailor as “witch-baby,” Pearl provides an example of the power that, according to Hibbins or the narrator, could potentially characterize her birthright: “If thou callest me that ill name, I shall tell him of thee; and he will chase thy ship with a tempest!” (228). Through this possible reference to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and her eventual disappearance from Salem for adventures unknown, Pearl establishes the sea as a realm within her domain, an extension of the whispering creek of the forest where the family of three could function in daylight, as one. And thus, *The Scarlet Letter* utilizes the trope of becoming, belonging, and being Other because of race or “wildness” as territorial markers corresponding to divisions in collective and individual mental space; barriers and portals to be crossed. Even further afield from the main arc of the romance, the displaced pseudo-frame narrative “The Customs-House” owes its exigency to what Gordon Hutner calls a “quixotic poise” based upon the idea that the narrator has been scalped, a reference to the French bounty practice designed to play native tribes off each other that had become, by Hawthorne’s time, a stereotypical trapping of savagery (114). Hawthorne’s metaphor for his victimization (and, to an extent, tokenization) thus implicates the incoming Democrats, who maintain an anonymous, shadowy presence on the fringes of the sketch, as bloodthirsty American Indians invading his peaceful tenure in Salem. Hawthorne’s generally avoidant position on racial politics throughout *The Scarlet Letter* and his larger body of work shows its transcendentalist fantasy of distance in that he never counters the wholesale characterization of American Indians as savages in any way other than the suggestion that “civilized man” can become just as savage as, or even worse than, the phantasmal Indian staring at the stage.
In this light, Hawthorne casts Chillingworth as something of corruption of the “noble savage” trope, a hybrid between the best and worst characteristics of civilization and nature - a man of cold science dominated by the burning passion of the wild, a changeling, a shapeshifter, and a consummate temptress. Chillingworth masks the appearance of traditional gendered corrective to secure this secluded interview with Hester, vowing to make her “. . . more amenable to just authority than you may have found her heretofore” (67). Here, he references both the “rightful” authority he has abdicated as husband and the privacy of the provider-client relationship while crucially suggesting the transformative nature of his craft, the possibility to cure or at least elucidate hidden ailments. In that sense, the Neoplatonic dilemma of Chillingworth’s role within *The Scarlet Letter* becomes also a Hippocratic quandary replete with the darkest loopholes of the social contracts that guide Puritan society. Such anxiety stems from the potential to dominate, to subvert, to somehow distort the reality of nineteenth century life - a potential that lurks behind the appearance of sacred, intimate respectability as embodied by corrective institutions and the professionals that represent, with the doctor healing the body and the prison/asylum healing the mind. Hawthorne maps these anxieties once more upon the dialectical opposition between civilization and the wilderness, restraint and freedom that must intermingle but ultimately remain in check. In these terms, Chillingworth's hybridization proves ultimately untenable as, healer of the body and thinker of great thoughts, he gives into both the fiery, vengeful passion and the cold clinicality of the artist, much as Ethan Brand does in a darkly introspective early tale, by overstepping the bounds of his sphere and becoming jailor as well as doctor (Lefcowitz 36, Milder 47). For even in their interview in Hester’s cell, Chillingworth
knows half-consciously that he has become (and as Dimmesdale will dub him) a torturer, for he “noticed her involuntary gesture, and smiled” (69). Here, he feels that Hester’s gaze has penetrated his newfound gendered and racialized hybridity as infirmities comorbid with the lingering grotesque of his body, and thus her “involuntary gesture” grants him the self-assurance of having regained control. And this self-righteous illusion of regained control defines his character arc throughout the Romance, showing also the wider cracks of dissociation on the prison-door of identity. However, as the narrator notes, Chillingworth retains one redeeming human quality: “But what distinguished the physician’s ecstasy from Satan’s was the trait of wonder in it!” (128). This redemptive “wonder” enshrines the fire of obsession, the compulsive need to explore, understand, and conquer while still acknowledging, on some hidden level, the sanctity of the colonial wilds, much romanticized during the American renaissance - this thread of wonder (a quality much like Hester’s durable “skill”) pushes against a material determinism that threatens the sanctity of the self through unchecked change.

The Scarlet Letter oscillates between two opposing but intrinsically organic schemata of change; long, steady decay that produces a desert, “a moral wilderness” and sudden, transformative growth typified by images of bloom, of “flowering” that recall the novel’s original description of the scarlet A as “so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy” (50). The chronological discrepancy that at once divides and unites these gendered modes of change reflects the chaos of socioeconomic transition, in the Marxist sense; an anxiety heightened by the cultural work of the so-called “American Renaissance,” a renaissance wrestling with the novelty of the culture and literature it purported to refashion (Powell 122). The opposition
between decay and bloom, in which only the positive result produces immediate observable effects, speaks also to the persistent anxiety caused by the weight of systemic objectification, classification; forces that both of Hawthorne’s narrators in *The Scarlet Letter* and “The Customs-House” experience as a fear of erasure, the ultimate victory of oblivion (or at least alienation) in the grand scheme of history. Nina Baym deftly unpacks the source of this anxiety: “Hawthorne’s Puritan community considers its own laws the ultimate moral framework of the universe to the point where such laws define, rather than reflect or contain, morality as well as good and evil” (1970, 213). Baym identifies the community’s network of vigilant social restraint as both what Foucault would call a “carceral archipelago” (one ultimately evadable in the forest, by the babbling book that tells no tales) and the defining construction of *The Scarlet Letter*’s historical fiction (Foucault 172). The drive for oblivion presents at once horrifying and alluring prospect for Hawthorne, and, by extension, for the members of the love triangle that must grapple with the best way to either bury or live with transgression. Consider Chillingworth’s response to Hester’s plea for absolution in the face of public shame:

‘I know not Lethe nor Nepenthe,’ remarked he; ‘but I learned many new secrets in the wilderness, and here is one of them,—a recipe that an Indian taught me, in requital of some lessons of my own, that were old as Paracelsus. Drink it! It may be less soothing than a sinless conscience. That I cannot give thee. But it will calm the swell and heaving of thy passion, like oil thrown on the waves of a tempestuous sea. (68).

Here, Chillingworth moves from the cavernous waters of the GrecoRoman underworld, the sphere of virtuous Paganism and suicide in the Dantean cosmogony enmeshed in the
undercurrents of *The Scarlet Letter*, to the forest where the old physician learned perhaps forbidden knowledge from his “savage” captors. To an extent, this comparison expresses a sentiment equal parts Pre Raphaelite and imperialist by equating American Indians to the damned and/or forgotten ancients; note also, that the comparison to Paracelsus provides a specific name as opposed to the shadowy, nameless Indian. In this way, Hawthorne buys into the “ghost” narrative of American Indian representation; the only character in *The Scarlet Letter* who interacts (and has shared bondage) with natives buries them within the shroud of his own secrecy, co-opting them as vanished arbiters of the power and persistence of Nature, much as the work of the GrecoRomans was absorbed and alienated by Medieval presentism, a fate replicated also by Romantic visions of the Medieval and the Early Modern (Morgan 111).

Additionally, this moment also reinforces Chillingworth’s strategy of gendered corrective, extending the mixed nautical metaphor with the promise that his medical skill “. . .will calm the swell and heaving of thy passion, like oil thrown on the waves of a tempestuous sea,” an image that feminizes passion as Hester’s predicament and thus a hysteria, while the deep, stormy sea serves as another reminder of fertility, of the power of Nature over human customs. Chillingworth finds the idea of fertility, given the circumstances, particularly agonizing and he laces his corrective subconsciously with reminders of his painful consciousnesses of both his physical inadequacy and his subsequent deterioration. Here, he turns to the familiar trope of decay to soliloquize his situation, consigning himself to oblivion as “A man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge” (69). Chillingworth’s rather melodramatic declaration - an extension of the preceding scene’s spectacle and
Hawthorne’s experimentation with archaisms - makes the crucial leap from passive decay to the imagery of consumption, detailing the afterlife of appetites of the mind and the flesh. “The hungry dream” is the progenitor of the gaze, the all-consuming to desire to know that drives the new life Chillingworth has fashioned for himself. The penetrative discourse of Chillingworth’s gaze, sharpened by his professional hubris, manifests not only as a longing for justification, for poetic vengeance, but as a masochistic or even self-destructive impulse: “Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl’s fantasy” (69).

Here, Chillingworth use of “veil” as verb of choice constitutes an unknowing but self-conscious marker of corrupted desire, of what he has internalized as a “dishonor” and an abdication of his (A)bility to tell truth from fiction, to find the division between his “hungry dream” and the infantilized “fantasy” he attributes to her. The veil represents a deficiency of the physician’s self-knowledge, for he cannot bear to have others penetrate the cell of his heart even as he creates a pathway for them to do so (Medoro 32). Made “paradoxically unreadable and multiply read” by his insatiable lust for vengeance, Chillingworth throws caution to the wind by latching himself to Dimmesdale (“The Leech”) and attempting to replicate his state of anguished dependence in the externally pure but inwardly damaged young man; he and Dimmesdale become bound together in self-flagellation (253). The carceral nature of their relationship highlights the torments and transformations afflicting the self in the dissociative realm of gothic historical fiction.

The cohabitation of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale dramatizes a process of torturous transformation effected through confinement, a binding that so mimics the natural as to make itself undetectable under normal circumstances. No adjective enjoys a
more precarious life cycle in *The Scarlet Letter* than [the] natural, capitalized or not in the manner of romance and Romance, a protean change effaced between “nature” or “Nature,” as well. Nina Baym argues that Hawthorne’s romance functions on the fine line between “organicism and artifact,” a distinction that captures the novel’s oscillation between consciousness of a hand of artifice (generally belonging to Chillingworth or Hawthorne himself) that shapes and the alters the nature of reality (1970: 234). In this way, *The Scarlet Letter* allows forms of deception unnoticeable when confined to the novel’s social real, the Salem as constructed within the textual artifact, to reveal themselves and have themselves revealed within the self. In the preamble to the forest outing scene that strips away the encumbrance of the Salemite “real,” Hawthorne addresses the mutability of “naturality” when applied to gendered and societal relations: “The very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position” (153). The crucial phrase “become like nature” reflects the precarious position of both a Salem closer than comfort to the “encroaching” wilderness and the sordid and varied paths of the characters about to convene, for the first time in years, in that enchantedly private vale of woodland. This scene chases the narrative thread of horrifying transformation established by Hester’s few brief interactions with Dimmesdale after the novel’s chronological leap from Pearl’s infancy to an uncannily eternal childhood, a thread emphasizing that the guilty minister has become “much changed;” his sickly exterior now reflects both his internalized shame and the influence of his leech. Dimmesdale acquires an infirmity, a barely hidden deformity cast in the shape of his guilt and that, to an extent, reflects Chillingworth’s attempt to replicate
himself within the psyche of his patient. Early on in their acquaintance, the old physician calls Dimmesdale “A rare case!” and qualifies his interest through both “wonder” and the echoes of Plato’s dark cave: “I must needs look deeper into it. A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body! Were it only for the art’s sake, I must search this matter to the bottom” (127). By solving the puzzle of Dimmesdale, Chillingworth creates a scenario where the frail minister becomes completely dependent upon his physician’s care, his “skill” to nurture shame and enshrined ideals of respectability into a nexus of addiction and gratifying torture. “A for addiction” certainly deserves a place on the list of words called to mind by the novel’s central symbol, as Chillingworth, infirm of body and sound but sickened of mind, creates a scenario where only the physician’s mysterious medicines keep Dimmesdale tethered to life (208). The novel addresses this bond’s importance in familiar spatial terms: the opposite poles of unnavigable depth and the visible peak, both of which conceal the possibility that someone (or something) else lurks beneath the surface while affecting a natural appearance. Dimmesdale’s dependence on the older man rests heavily on his easy-going, trusting nature and his at times solipsistic focus on his own compromised purity.

Away from the comparatively urban confines of Salem, Hester quickly intuits the cause of Dimmesdale’s life of carceral self-suppression and they meet, finally, on the same sphere: “The soul beheld its features in the mirror of the passing moment” (177). The abrupt switch to dispassionate, clinical language consolidates Hawthorne’s framing of the clearing scene as one of tacit revelation consecrated by the anonymity of the wilderness: “So they lingered an instant longer. No golden light had ever been so precious as the gloom of this dark forest” (182). This motif, the piercing light of truth
confined to the ineffable heart of the darkness it should banish, fulfills a ritual function that proves to be too little, too late. Hester realizes the enormity of the sorrows Dimmesdale’s prison of guilt has inflicted upon him and argues that he must immediately sever his connection with Chillingworth if he hopes to enjoy peace outside of this clearing. Though content to throw himself at Hester’s feet once he understands the hidden nature of Chillingworth’s care, Dimmesdale feels obligated to engage one more time in a spectacle of purification and thus condemns the facade of his selfhood to undue scrutiny. Hawthorne’s narrator writes “We have thrown all the light we could acquire upon the portent, and would gladly, now that it has done its office, erase its deep print out of our own brain . . .” thus implicating the reader for their part in the parade of artifice that has transpired, simultaneously affecting distance between the heavy tragedy of dissociation through the clear, dry voice of the historian or the shopkeeper (240-1).

Deprived of the object of his obsessive vengeance, Chillingworth recedes to the fringes of the narrative, the forest of the racialized pariah from whence he had come, and then into his Earthen grave leaving behind “a very considerable amount of property, both here, and in England, to little Pearl” (243). This windfall, conjuring comparisons to the financial upsides dolled out to white women at the end of Indian captivity narratives (e.g. the generous bounty Hannah Dustan receives for the scalps of her captors/their children) allows Pearl and eventually Hester the agency to escape the bleak memories of Salem and to enjoy Early Modern prosperity in the storied (and thus safe) Britain. Hawthorne’s abrupt shift to financialization and material matters collapses the cavern of introspection that has characterized the previous few scenes -the ethereal meeting in the forest, the futile preparations, the final spectacle of punishment - recontextualizes the novel in a
public history marked by change, erasure, and lapses of memory. Of course, the narrator’s assertion “erase its deep print from our own brain” carries the rhetorical intention of the opposite, even if Hawthorne (a notoriously brutal critic of his own writing) honestly believed the romance would fade from regard.

The dissociative spiral of Chillingworth, Hester, and Dimmesdale reflects, to an extent, Hawthorne’s rewriting of the Indian captivity narrative as the crux of his Romance of guilt, alienation, and transformation. *The Scarlet Letter* exists in a deterministic universe characterized by an unstable equilibrium between the natural and the artificial, the surface and the inmost heart - an equilibrium that can tolerate neither baseless claims of purity nor dangerous hybridity. The demonization of Chillingworth reflects a pathological anxiety linked to the socially significant and signifying act of binding, an anxiety built upon the uneasy equation between the mind and body.

Following Fredric Jameson and Nina Baym, Hawthorne’s fictionalization of the past presents a commentary on the ills of the present and prospects for the future, on which front he forsees a wide and shadowy identity crisis. Hawthorne’s attempt to create a national literature creates a permutation of national history as well, juxtaposing the future’s rapid onset with the endurance of ghosts seeded upon the stolen ground of the New World – I argue that the unique exigency of *The Scarlet Letter* demands that the primary zone of conflict of this juxtaposition occurs within the self and between this “original” self and the ambiguously Othered shadow, simultaneously it and something else, that haunts experience.
CHAPTER 3. CONTAINING IDENTITY IN THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s second successful novel, *The House of Seven Gables* (1851) marks not so much a departure from the obliquely Calvinist formula of *The Scarlet Letter* as Hawthorne’s redoubling upon some of its deepest preoccupations. The persistence of these meditations on, among other themes, the nature(s) of sin, guilt, and human civilization, coupled with the exceedingly short time span (1850-1) and precarious financial situation in which Hawthorne wrote both novels has firmly cemented comparison between *The House of Seven Gables and The Scarlet Letter* as a standard point of contention among critics (Rosenthal 4, Buitenhuis 7). From this comparative foundation the critical conversation diverges first and foremost to a select few “unavoidable” issues within the novel: discussion of Hawthorne’s claim, in the preface to the first edition, that he has written a romance as opposed to a novel, the holistic viability of the work’s characters, Hawthorne’s dim view of Lockean historiography, and the novel’s abrupt and apparently happy ending (Kehler 146, Rosenthal 6). Much ink, in particular, has been spilled over the years upon attempts to reconcile the ending with the “natural” progression of the novel’s story, to discern something finite about Hawthorne’s poetics at work in *The House of Seven Gables*. Presumably Bernard Rosenthal has the manifest difficulty of navigating the novel’s poetics in mind when he remarks, in his exhaustive survey of the novel’s critical heritage, that a panoply of critics have treated the novel’s abrupt end as “a symptom of larger [structural] difficulties” (Rosenthal 15). Both Rosenthal’s frame and the critical conversation from which he derived it engage the novel’s dissociative structure as an ailment, a malady that severs the connections and misfires the synapses that (should) hold the novel together. The source of this
dissociative tension, the Gothic disolver of bonds, stems in no small part from
Hawthorne’s tarnished dialectic of innocence and worldliness. The tarnishing, the
dissolution, of this Puritan dichotomy reflects a historical and cultural shift that has both
updated and standardized worldliness.

The novel begins as something of a character sketch of Hephzibah on the day she
blemishes her aristocratic pride by submitting to mercantile subsistence and expanding
gradually to a ponderous, detailed vista of semirural New England life upon the
introduction of Clifford, Phoebe, and Holgrave. As Kenneth Dauber puts it, Hawthorne
“luxuriates” over the middle of the novel, taking craftsmanly pleasure in the community
he has built around Pyncheon-Salem (Dauber 151). To clarify Dauber’s conception of the
novel as the container of its middle, in its intense centralization *The House of Seven
Gables* depicts not the linear, logical passage of time but the construction, maintenance,
and inhabitation of an interior space.

Much as he did in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne has named *The House of Seven
Gables* after an inanimate but powerful object, a discursive dwelling place that projects
boundaries into the Cartesian world, that materializes human usage of time and space at
both the personal and public levels. Hawthorne dramatizes this process of materialization
most coherently in the dialogues Phoebe and Holgrave share amidst the wizened,
unearthly Pyncheon chickens. Of these dialogues, which more often than not become
diatribes domineered by Holgrave, one in particular captures Hawthorne’s defeatism, his
doubt in a providence independent of collective human will:

. . . And we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper
influence on our own world, which will be no longer our world, but the world of
another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. I ought to have said, too, that we live in Dead Men’s houses; as, for instance, in this of the seven gables!”

“And why not,” said Phoebe, “so long as we can be comfortable in them?”

“But then we shall live to see the day, I trust,” went on the artist, “when no man shall build his house for posterity.” (183)

The radical vision of the future advanced hereby Holgrave reflects not only transcendentalist skepticism toward the newly coagulated narrative of American history but a deeper discontent with the structural limitations of human civilization. In *The Dominion of the Dead*, Robert Pogue Harrison argues that the origins of the house stem from the neolithic burial site—that human settlement took root around the ancestral graves and not vice versa—and that, over the past two centuries, this “necromantic” structure of civilization has, as Holgrave once dreamed, edged and closer and closer to oblivion (Harrison 50-2, 89). Harrison justifies his claims concerning the organic sanctity of the home, of one’s ancestrally claimed space, partially upon the existence of the classical household god (which the progenitor Colonel Pyncheon more so became than “brought over from England” as Hawthorne puts it) as the central nexus of the house, a lifegiving hearth, the dwelling/resting place of an apotheosized ancestor. (Harrison 43, 24).

But the Pyncheons’s house and all the generational “worlds” that unfold from this space remain tethered to the grave of Matthew Maule, a connection reinforced and maintained by the endurance of Maule’s Well and enclosed, supported by the carpentry of successive Maule descendants. In a sense, the retributive action of *The House of Seven*
*Gables* represents the danger of allowing another to construct and thus implicitly share one’s intimate ancestral space (Harrison 41).

Scholars have made much of Holgrave’s wholesale abandonment of his world-weary philosophy of habitation in the novel’s sunny resolution, seeing it variously as an act of betrayal, a comment on the fickleness of art and the artist, or Hawthorne’s caving to critical pressure, but for our purposes the act of moving into the dead Judge’s “unhistoried” home recreates the crime that sealed the Colonel’s legacy. Holly Jackson, however, notes the cohesion between Holgrave’s grievances against “dead worlds and generations” and Thomas Jefferson’s political philosophy and sees his decision to dash his misgivings and entwine the Pyncheon and Maule bloodlines as evocative of “the ultimate American ambivalence” concerning issues of dynasty in a nation ideologically split between republicanism and capitalism (Jackson 28, 32). Holgrave has taken Phoebe’s advice and settled into a comfortable and thoroughly capitalist liminality that allows him to immaterialize the Maule/Pynchon legacy. Or, by the admission of Hawthorne’s amorphous narrator: “Modern psychology, it may be, will endeavor to reduce these alleged necromancies within a system” (26). Here, Hawthorne attaches two conditional filters to already murky narrative waters - for the narrator has physical agency at this stage in the novel and sometimes seems to be the author himself - a distancing act that mirrors the mission of “modern psychology,” an unclear and unstable entity. Holgrave’s character arc elucidates this “modern psychology” as an inevitable cultural shift grounded in the economic necessity of dematerializing a doubtful past. In the end, he finds it most comfortable to confine the past to the past and banish his ambivalence, so that he may function in an artificially unified reality.
The essential drama of *The House of Seven Gables* confines and regulates the spatial legacy of the Maule/Pyncheon ancestral house to a single, fixed point by attempting to force this stability upon Clifford and Holgrave, the scions of the feuding families. In both cases, Hawthorne’s shifting dialectic of “shadow and substance” institutes barriers that compartmentalize each character’s mental space into two discrete identities. This process of transformative fragmentation, through which the stunted Clifford and the aimless Holgrave assume radically divergent identities, carries with it the absolute materiality of the prison - the shadowy space in the novel’s periphery that has robbed Clifford of his agency and the cultural determinism that binds Holgrave internally. By momentarily destabilizing and doubling the identities of Clifford and Holgrave, Pyncheon and Maule, Hawthorne snapshots a world in transition, at once ancient and startlingly new, torn between a hastily constructed republican history and the onset of American capitalism. Through the apparent restabilization of clans Maule and Pyncheon, Hawthorne argues that the most effective path to reconcile precapitalist history and the market-driven world lies upon the crux of a selective myopia toward the negative core of identity.

Diagnosing Hawthorne’s reluctance or inability to delve into Judge Pyncheon’s psyche in the hope of discovering the reality of the man, Kenneth Marc Harris writes “The nature of the self is, of course, a vast and nebulous issue that pervades virtually all nineteenth-century literature” (Harris 148). Specifically concerning *The House of Seven Gables*, William J. Scheick addresses this “vast and nebulous issue” as the novel’s Humean problem, arguing that Hawthorne, selectively anathemic to Puritan empiricism, has grasped that the perceptual basis of identity lies in perception itself, that this
substantive building block of human society lacks “real” substance even to the easily fooled eye of the beholder (Scheick 137-8). To Hawthorne, the slate is not blank but indecipherable and worse; duplicable, fragmented.

In that sense, the novel turns to the built environment as arbiter of identity. Place, an enduring human construct that carries the localized weight of the dead, constitutes the novel’s most consistent preoccupation, for it applies (or should apply) the pressure necessary to stabilize and materialize identity. But in *The House of Seven Gables* this pressure does not apply as it should, evenly and all at once, for an oversaturation of identity has displaced stable “place” into alternatingly a crushing weight and an insubstantial shadow. For the primary (and titular space) from which the protagonists seemingly effect a miraculous escape functions as a “recess where the shadow images of the dead maintain a privative presence” that contains other receptacles of departed afterimages; most notably the leering portraits of Colonel and Judge Pyncheon and Alice’s harpsichord (Harrison 149). That these afterimages press down upon the selfhoods of living characters comes as no surprise, as Hawthorne frames the house’s dominion over identity as an oppressive, imprisoning force. The mansion’s tendency to isolate and confine identity reflects the ordeal, rarely mentioned and strangely glossed over by the revelation of Jaffrey’s “accidental” framing of his cousin, that Clifford must have endured in prison.

**I: Clifford Pyncheon and the Compartmentalization of the Self**

The dynamic foil of Clifford and Judge Pyncheon collapses upon the moment of its consummation, in roundabout accordance to Puritan ideas of hierarchical permanence. In the early days of Puritan occupation, roughly contemporary with the emergence of
Cartesian dualism, life was usually brief and brutal in the land that would become Hawthorne’s Salem. Even throughout (or perhaps as a response to) particularly harsh New England winters, the separatists held themselves aloof from the worldly struggles of eking out a colonial existence from scratch through fervent belief in their status as God’s chosen people, predestined and exceptional. Scholarship has traced the continuous rebirth of this Calvinist impulse (most poignantly visualized by John Winthrop’s *City Upon a Hill*) in both the American sociopolitical milieu surrounding “manifest destiny” at large and in Hawthorne’s *Seven Gables*, becoming something of a characteristic stomping ground of American literature and culture.

Hawthorne gestures to that genre of national fantasy in his preface, through the classification of *Seven Gables* as a “romance” as opposed to a “novel” with a note on characterization: “The personages of the Tale—though they give themselves out to be of ancient stability and considerable prominence—are really of the Author’s own making, or, at all events, of his own mixing” (3). Though this preface purports thinly to distance the narrative from the “actual soil” of Salem, Hawthorne’s *no mea culpa* concerning characterization gestures to a fracture of self-doubt in his customary obscuranatics. His painter’s metaphor, of “mixing” characters from unknown materials saturated with the “clouds overhead” Salem and its history, suggests that he may finished the novel and found that his characters had mixed, bleeding into each other promiscuously. As Jonathan Arac asserts, the predominant critical view holds that Hawthorne generally handles his characters as discoveries, products of exploration, as opposed to creations (49). *Seven Gables* narrates a journey of self-discovery that suddenly reifies the destabilized self into a single image, resoundingly and startlingly whole. The ending, not Hawthorne’s preface,
is the genuine abdication afoot here: the “clouds overhead” and the “actual soil” share a portentous consanguinity.

In the preamble to the narrative’s sudden collapse, Hawthorne provides a tortured glimpse of the mixing of Clifford and Judge Pyncheon: “As for Clifford, an absolute palsy of fear came over him. Apart from any definite cause of dread, which his past experience might have given him, he felt that native and original horror of the excellent Judge, which is proper to a weak, delicate, and apprehensive character, in the presence of massive strength” (172). This moment, strategically poised at the end of a chapter as if on the edge of a precipice, culminates the “predator and prey” oppositional dynamic that Hawthorne has built in anticipation of its consummation. Judge Pyncheon, securely in possession of his portion of the ancestral “English beef” functions as a force of brute animality that encounters and attempts to consume Clifford’s wispy immateriality. Hawthorne grounds this encounter, complete with its foregone conclusion, in the dust and deep shadow of the fatal parlor and the forgotten stories it holds. Anticipating the hour of undoing, Colonel Pyncheon’s portrait shivers and the foundations of the great house follow suit as the moment of revelation approaches (224). This long-awaited watershed occurs when Judge Pyncheon punctures the bubble of purity that encloses the ethical edifice of the Pyncheon-house: ‘Of my Uncle’s unquestionably great estate, as I have said, not the half-no, not one third, as I am fully convinced-was apparent after his death. Now, I have the best possible reasons for believing, that your brother Clifford can give me a clue to the recovery of the remainder!’” (234). This act of reclamation (which the Judge spends most of the novel attempting to disguise as an afterthought) constitutes an inquiry into an “apparent” both constructed and made unsubstantiable by reality. The
weight of reputation and respectability has built up the House of Seven Gables as, to co-opt Judge Pyncheon’s formerly hidden Panglossian optimism, even more than the best it could possibly be. Unveiled for all its unabashed materialism, Judge Pyncheon’s plot send Hepzibah to an unheard-of fit of mirth: ‘Clifford?-Clifford know of any hidden wealth?-Clifford have it in his power to make you rich?’ cried the old gentlewoman, affected with a sense of something like ridicule, at the idea (234). Note how the object of her incredulousness focuses on her brother’s existence as a wasted shell, a nonentity that the flustered Judge unwittingly resurrects to reclaim his control of the rhetorical situation. Pressured to delineate his reasoning (to reveal his “object” as Hepzibah frames the situation), he paints an aptly biased portrait of a pre-trauma Clifford that reveals much by way of omission:

‘I do not belong to the dreaming class of men,’ said the Judge quietly. ‘Some months before my uncle’s death, Clifford boasted to me of the possession of the secret of incalculable wealth. His purpose was to taunt me, and excite my curiosity. I know it well. But, from a pretty distinct recollection of the particulars of our conversation, I am thoroughly convinced there was truth in what he said. Clifford, at this moment, if he chooses- and choose he must-can inform me where to find the schedule, the documents, the evidences, in whatever shape they exist, of the vast amount of Uncle Jaffrey’s missing property. He has the secret. His boast was not an idle word. It had a directness, an emphasis, a particularity, that showed a backbone of solid meaning within the mystery of his expression. (235) Judge Pyncheon presents a radically different view of Clifford’s past than the one provided by the narrative’s brief forays into Hepzibah’s memories. The vision he presents
oscillates between his characteristic purposeful projection- “his purpose was to taunt me, and excite my curiosity”- and a certain deathly honesty. Pyncheon the consummate hypocrite has convinced himself of the absolute validity of his perception and thus betrayed the sanctity of the ancestral memory that holds the enterprise together by sheer force of will (Harris 150). The judge possesses the animal force, updated for the demands of a new century, to oppose the Colonel’s supernatural will through his own devotion to it; like his ancestor before him, he cuts too deep to the “backbone of solid meaning” and discovers its intangibility. Note how he expects Clifford to corroborate his claim with “. . .evidences, in whatever shape they exist,” a vague categorical request that designates materiality as both a sort of minimum requirement and the only meaningful one, as far as ownership is concerned (235). His association of materiality with absolute truth collapses given the Pyncheon-House’s projection of boundaries far beyond its own time and place in the world of objects, a projection of a unified facade that Pyncheon foolishly overextends in his pursuit of anachronistic purity.

A once self-evident purity has dwindled and decayed to the point where it can no longer serve as a bastion of unity that anchors, defines, and regulates a “pure self-hood” in a finite space, a foundational shift elucidated further in the narrative’s uncertain corroboration of Judge Pyncheon’s account of Clifford’s previous life. Note how Hawthorne frames this rebirth in a latently dehumanizing brand of legalese, an appropriate elegy for the deceased Judge: “Whencesoever originating, there now arose a theory that undertook so to account for these circumstances as to exclude the idea of Clifford’s agency” (311). Presumably, Hepzibah has synthesized this story from Judge Pyncheon’s comments shortly before his death, co-opting the formerly self-serving
narrative -dredged, Hawthorne implies, from an unstable mixture of historical truth and false memory -as a fixed and finite “will” that absolves Clifford of his former dead weight of responsibility. The supremely conditional “idea of Clifford’s agency” of course masks the human cost of the situation disappearing the Jaffreys Pyncheon and the family curse in one fell swoop, an exorcism consummated by the acknowledgement of Clifford’s trauma and subsequent fall from “complete” humanity. Clifford’s long imprisonment has relegated him to the world of objects, a severance from which he can never fully recover (313). Hepzibah shields her brother from a “miserable resuscitation of past ideas,” a choice crucially consistent with Holgrave’s newfound avoidant philosophy of ownership: to forget what could have been.

Hawthorne imbues Clifford as an enduring emblem of wasted intellectual and social potential, juxtaposing the shattered prisoner of the main narrative with cryptic, fragmentary glimpses of his pre-trauma exuberance - a former self recalled briefly to life as the Pyncheon siblings fly from their ancestral home. The revitalized Clifford describes his newfound freedom in the language of the material prison, evocative of both his long sojourn in jail and the sudden loosening of the myriad binds and bonds subsumed by the House: “As for us, Hepzibah, we can dance now!-we can sing, laugh, play, do what we will! The weight is gone, Hepzibah; it is gone off this weary old world; and we may be as light-hearted as little Phoebe herself!” (250). Clifford experiences the banishment of this great and terrible weight, this release from the invisible burden that has held him in its iron grasp, as a moment of frenzied, incomprehensible, and sublime joy. The sheer shameless vivacity of his unbridled joy in release signals, to Hepzibah and the reader alike, a personality shift drastic enough to constitute a complete replacement, a
substitution. Note also, that even his language has transformed; Clifford’s tongue now bears a sardonic wit, he issues commands (“Come!”) with spontaneity, and frequently employs both anaphora and vocatives. In short, the transformed or remade Clifford mimics something of the archaic decadence and rhetorical grandiosity of the Judge’s style. And rightly so, for this changeling of Clifford, Hawthorne implies, has sprung not from nothing but the elephant in the room: “And, in accordance with his words, he began to laugh, still pointing his finger at the object, invisible to Hepzibah, within the parlor. She was seized with a sudden intuition of some horrible thing. She thrust herself past Clifford, and disappeared into the room, but almost immediately returned, with a cry choking in her throat” (250). By occluding a graven image of Judge Pyncheon as he as occluded the decades Clifford spent in confinement, Hawthorne employs the same ethos of substitution that guides Foucault’s argument, in *Discipline and Punish*, that the deliberate veiling of imprisonment and torture has failed to strip punishment of the voyeurism that pervaded the communal symbol-making process of judgment (10).

Clifford’s abrupt transformation makes the nature of this “invisible object” abundantly clear, but Hawthorne insists on maintaining the inverse dramatic irony of the situation, luxuriating over the corpse for an entire chapter - a decision hardly appreciated by contemporary critics. But note how aptly the “invisible object” atomizes the complex web of transactional history that has built this moment; Judge now occupies Clifford’s space in the world of objects, while the former prisoner revels, for the time being, in wanton freedom. The spirit of openness that grips this new and literally reformed Clifford slices through the layers of social restraint and political pressure that had characterized the sepulchral house, inaugurating a breathless and sometimes cutting realism that clashes
with the suddenly Edenic romance unfolding the last third of the novel. Robert Milder, following a current through sources as diverse as Julian Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Henry James, attributes a similar bifurcation of purpose to Hawthorne himself, noting the deep and porous distance between the plain realist of Hawthorne’s notebooks and the shadowy moralist who narrates his romances (7).

To Milder (who discounts Hawthorne’s political writings for brevity’s sake), the murky dualism of this no-man’s land cannot be boiled down to a measured or, at least, mediated construction of pragmatism. “There are two Hawthornes,” he declares, substantiating the dual identity through an analogy to the ending of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: “Hawthorne was a Marlow, protectively lying to the world, but he was also the Intended, who required to be lied to, sometimes even by himself” (24). Milder’s analogy uniquely captures the precarious morality play embedded in the denouement of The House of Seven Gables; the two Cliffords united by the fall of Judge Pyncheon. The ghost of the Intended (for Milder correctly identifies the source of Hawthorne’s “angel-in-the house” fantasy, as mediated by his secularism) transgresses from a mere haunt to a material reality through this glimpse of a vibrant, cloaked Clifford that the romance holds up as emblematic of the forever-tarnished intended, the potentialities made fruitless by the chains of bondage. So, the profoundly uncanny nature of this transformed Clifford, upon which Hepzibah has an acute and immediate grasp, stems from the resurgence of intent that should not and cannot be replicated in the markedly real capitalist world his sister has come to inhabit.

Hawthorne substitutes the pressure lifted from Clifford’s shoulders by Jaffrey’s banishment for a sense of “unreality” that presses down, instead, upon Hepzibah’s
experience as she and the rejuvenated Clifford make a spontaneous exit. Note how this veil, this covering layer of unreality settles over her: “Hepzibah now noticed that Clifford had on a cloak-a garment of long ago-in which he had constantly muffled himself during these days of easterly storm” (250). This cloak, the “garment of long ago” bears the aura of the old and the stifling, “muffling” power of the house but the siblings precede unmoored by its crushing influence, now safely a product of the past. To an extent, this moment reflects a victory of the human spirit over the dynastic tyranny of material concerns, or at least a victory in spirit, given the saccharine nature of the romance’s final enterprise. To inaugurate the emergence of the new/old Clifford, Hawthorne engraves an emblem of his former self’s vibrance upon a pillar marking the threshold (and holding up) the construct whose hidden injustice has held the Pyncheons prisoner since their arrival in the land that would become Salem: “It was merely the initials of his own name, which, with somewhat of his characteristic grace about the forms of the letters, he had cut there, when a boy” (252). Through this transition, at the crux of departure, to Clifford’s physical mark upon the house that had so marked him, by virtue of its ability to constrain space and those who inhabit it, Hawthorne frames a scene of reclamation, a transition from a private and deeply miserable past to a shining future of commerce and publicity.

The mark of the prison leaves intensely private scars, and this flight, framed simultaneously as childish whim and “to the ends of the earth” occludes them in a past of unstable ownership, in which Clifford’s former self has slipped the bonds of time and place to fulfill the simulacrum of his forgotten destiny (253). Hawthorne later asserts more concretely the folly of this excursion, the sheer impossibility of constructing a unified self for a Clifford haunted by the persistent shadow of this former self, a self who
has not entirely escaped the superimposed shadow of the Judge and dreary history of bondage he represents.

The brother and sister departed, and left Judge Pyncheon sitting in the old home of his forefathers, all by himself; so heavy and lumpish that we can liken him to nothing better than a defunct nightmare, which had perished in the midst of its wickedness, and left its flabby corpse on the breast of the tormented one, to be gotten rid of as it might! (252).

Here, the “defunct nightmare” forms the murky history of exploitation, of the Maules and the environment, that Hawthorne and by extension the Pyncheons would like to see sealed away in favor of the new, the artificial. The explicit reference to “flabby” once again calls to mind the sloth and gluttony of the Judge, whose animalistic “English beef,” like that of the guilty ancestor, amounts to a pervasive and all-encompassing desire for dominion over the material. Such an iron will, personal or collective, Hawthorne asserts, proves too brittle and inflexible to weather the storm of change on the horizon (Jackson 47).

The prospect of creating (or unlocking) a new self to counter the economic, domestic, and sociopolitical turmoil facing the America of the 1840s conveyed an anxiety that inhabits the murky core of *The House of Seven Gables*: the possibility of being lost, as in the dark woods of old, in one’s own home and among one’s own people. The scope of this dissociative experience Hawthorne refracts once more through Hepzibah’s role as observer, trapped between waking and dream: “She had lost the faculty of self-guidance, but, in view of the difficulties around her, felt it hardly worth an effort to regain it, and was, moreover, incapable of making one” (253). Claudia Johnson takes this loss of “the
faculty of self-guidance” as emblematic of Phoebe’s eclipse of Hepzibah in a sort of “angel of the house” sense (89). The creeping disregard in which Hawthorne’s narrator holds Hepzibah, as the beholder of the disillusionment brought upon by the main action of the romance, eventually transforms into a shadowy regard as she learns to channel her brother’s infirmity for her own ends.

Hepzibah’s arc in *The House of Seven Gables* reflects the narrative’s greater struggle toward religious and economic equilibrium, a return to justice and normalcy. Hawthorne introduces Hepzibah as she stumbles awake from a sleepless night, following the maiden’s daily routine at an ironical, sunny narrative distance that emphasizes her intangibility, her long abdication from the world of living. He characterizes the creaks and crashes of her morning routine as “inaudible” in the cavernous home that has consumed her aspirations. From this sepulchral chamber the nunnish Hepzibah recites (“inaudibly”, of course) an “almost agony of prayer-now whispered, now a groan, now a struggling silence” (30-1). The narrator makes it clear that this equivocal call is heard in all its “almost agony.” But is it answered? In the tidy allegorical sense, yes - through the imminent arrival of the angelic Phoebe, whose example as the only other woman active in the novel’s present highlights Hepzibah’s squandered potential, the older woman’s status as a living anachronism, bound by worry for her falsely imprisoned brother and by her own imprisonment in Colonel Pyncheon’s ill-gotten pyramid. Remember, however, that despite the cloud-searching claims of his preface and Poe’s early accusations of over-moralizing, that such tidy allegory can scarcely hold itself together in Hawthorne’s body of work, particularly in the longer works where the cracks show across the meta-narrative.
II: My Brother's Bookkeeper: Dissociative Economies of the American Renaissance

The most telling aspect of how *Seven Gables* interweaves the anxieties of economic transition with Clifford’s ghostly condition finds expression in the balancing act Hepzibah Pyncheon plays to work out her role(s) as caretaker, consumer, and entrepreneur in an America that left her in the dust. Hepzibah prays for an end to the “struggling silence” with which she shares the deathlike house, a preoccupying force akin to “unfinished business”. This apparent oxymoron accurately describes the state of affairs that characterizes the narrative, and its culmination, its sudden collapse upon the Judge’s death. The best way to resolve this fraught silence, the ending suggests, amounts to pacifying and avoiding its historical source and surging on into modernity, into the capitalist American domestic of the 1850s (Jackson 39). Hawthorne’s intrusive narrator describes how “Miss Hepzibah, who, for above a quarter of a century gone-by, has dwelt in strict seclusion; taking no part in the business of life, and just as little in its intercourses and pleasures” has steeled herself to open up the shop-window and shine shameful light upon the paralysis of her “innumerable yesterdays” (31). The compressed compound verb “gone-by” invokes the ceaseless motion of the outside world, of time passing more and more quickly as American society establishes a “business of life” far removed from the stunted aristocratic leisure the Pyncheons have come to idolize.

The ancestral space of the Pyncheons has faded, like the worn shop floor that Hepzibah has spent painstaking days or weeks preparing, nursing her shame. She has subjected this rusty foundation to “rigid discipline” but found that the pathological rust had “eaten through and through their substance” (35). This image of decay, of dematerialization, reaffirms the nature of the blight that has struck the Pyncheon: they have fallen victim to a crisis of materiality, left behind by an age of change and
exploitation as Clifford and Hepzibah flounder to recover from their temporal and spatial isolation, something of a “Rip Van Winkle” experience. Kenneth Marc Harris declares *The House of Seven Gables* a much more openly Calvinist work than *The Scarlet Letter*, an assertion that holds true when dealing with the doomed Pyncheon siblings: the end vindicates them, but they remain tainted by their long suffering under the family curse (Harris 148). Hawthorne’s romance mediates its determinism through the shifting sieve of small business, of subsistence in a liminal “still-life.”

Consider the sociopolitical implications of another moment of trepidation Hepzibah experiences while setting up shop: “A lady- who had fed herself from childhood with the shadowy food of aristocratic reminiscences, and whose religion it was, that a lady’s hand soils itself irremediably by doing aught for bread. . .” (37). This “shadowy” diet once again diagnoses a waning of materiality, a gradual vanishing of substance. In this instance, it becomes clear that purity hangs in the balance here, for Hepzibah’s hand “soils itself irremediably,” a phrase of judgment equal parts Calvinist and pathological. Recall also, Hawthorne’s insistence that he avoids the “actual soil” of Salem in this novel so concerned with the everyday economics of village life. At times, the faceless and nameless residents of the town permeate the barrier between the public and the private, the great sacred boundary violated by Hepzibah’s commercialization of their space: and, later, the allure that leaves Clifford half-poised in the window, eager to join the ranks but unsure how. Hawthorne consistently dramatizes the inability of the Pyncheon siblings to rejoin this world by calling back to their immateriality, he casts them as shadows. Note Hepzibah’s nervous refrain as Clifford’s bearers approach the house: “He has had but little sunshine in his life-poor Clifford-and, Oh, what a black
shadow!” (103). In his present state, Clifford remains a shadow defined by his absence, an incomplete, a negative daugerrototype of his wasted potential. However, he still retains the potential to recover to the extent that Hepzibah can act in his stead, to carve out a comfortable niche in the neoliberal world that has sprung up and surrounded their respective prisons like a sudden, impenetrable jungle.

Hepzibah learns how to leverage her position as Clifford’s caretaker to become a responsible Capitalist matron, a director of narrative and work-flow. To an extent, the development of this role reflects Hepzibah’s inability to perform as a “pure” commodity, to wholly let go of the historical and gendered baggage that has reduced her to a deathlike state of worry and trepidation. Theresa Goddu points out that, as an “antiquated virgin’, she fails to play her proper role as a woman by entering the marriage market. Throughout the novel, Hepzibah remains private Pyncheon property” (120). This analysis of the “marriage market” highlights the hypocrisy of the Pyncheon obsession with the purity of the clan’s blood, despite the intrinsic corruption (“God will give you blood to drink”) dooms the lineage to decay, to desiccation, to self-destruction and autocannibalism. So, typically of Hawthorne, the providence of Maule’s prophecy has both a natural explanation, revolving around a rather circuitous explanation of the alleged wizard’s gift for medical conjecture, and a social one: the Pyncheon curse reflects the inability of an aristocracy to survive on land alone. Thus, the union of the Maule and Pyncheon clans achieved through the sudden alliance of Holgrave and Phoebe reflects both the exorcism of bad blood and the provisional replacement of Hepzibah and Clifford. The two siblings, like the withered chickens that have clung to life in the Pyncheon’s decrepit coop, cannot adapt without abdicating to the promise of new life (O’Connor 223). A large part of this
process of adaptation revolves around learning to use others for one’s own ends, something of a new prospect for the chronically isolated Pyncheon siblings. Though Clifford, the stunted aesthete, can hardly bear to look at his own sister, Hepzibah serves fiercely as his gatekeeper and de facto manager, rebuffing her imperious cousin for his attempted trespass: “She made a repelling gesture with her hand and stood, a perfect picture of Prohibition, at full length, in the dark frame of the door-way” (127). She presents a “formidable front” here that the Judge possibly recognizes as empty bluster, a barrier between the Judge and his pursuit of the empty knowledge that will undo him.

Note, however, an off-hand remark in the Judge’s response to Hepzibah’s gatekeeping: “Hepzibah, my beloved Cousin, I am rejoiced!’ exclaimed the Judge, most emphatically. ‘Now, at length, you have something to live for’” (127). In this preface to a long exultation upon his virtues and rights and best intentions for Clifford, Judge Pyncheon sneaks a quick jab at Hepzibah and her station, noting acerbically that the “perfect picture of Prohibition” blocking his path now finally has a purpose, a stake “at length” in the business of life. The Judge informs Hepzibah that Clifford “belongs to us all” and offers to collaborate with her, to “. . . watch together, and labor together, to make our dear Clifford happy” (127-8). The labor he refers to, in this attempt to enforce rhetorical closure on the conversation, amounts more or less to surveilling her brother and his cousin to extract the useful information the Judge believes him to possess. His language of ownership clearly dehumanizes Clifford, treats him as a commodity to be used or squandered. A core tenet of capitalist thought motivates the Judge’s disbelief at Hepzibah’s continued opposition; Judge Pyncheon, hypocrite and something of a solipsist, simply cannot believe that Hepzibah would unpractically place her brother’s
interests above her own self-interest (129). Of course, the Judge cannot fathom the particularities of Hepzibah’s gender and class positionality: perhaps she maintains some degree of vested self-interest in keeping Clifford to herself. Through him, she maintains both the joy of company and the ability to act viscerally, acquiring agency through the exigency generated by his liberation. I argue that the interconnection of these two thematic strands within *The House of the Seven Gables* capture the romance’s essence as a tale of economic uncertainty and the dissociative results of confinement, products of a determinism grounded in a legacy of shame and decay. The novel’s overtidy resolution reflects, to an extent, an act of self-deception that dematerializes the physical and mental evidence of the present’s bounded relation with the past. Hawthorne accomplishes this, I argue, through his tacit suggestions(s) that the lives of Clifford and Pyncheon are already spent, that they linger as ghosts playing a supporting role, awaiting oblivion as the next generation enjoys a life of ignorant bliss.
CHAPTER 4. DR. MANETTE AND MR. HYDE: CONFINING IDENTITY IN A TALE OF TWO CITIES AND THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Produced three years after John Rae’s report on the fate of the doomed Franklin expedition, Wilkie Collins’s 1857 play The Frozen Deep vehemently denies Rae’s allegations of folly begetting cannibalism, blaming the savagery of the natives and the inhospitable clime for the party’s demise. Though nominally written by Collins as a “summer occupation” assigned by his collaborator and pseudo-mentor Charles Dickens, Dickens was deeply unsettled by the thought that a respectable Englishman would turn to cannibalism and interfered in the production to an extent that the final playbill bore the lengthy subtitle “Produced Under the Management of Charles Dickens,” and understandably both contemporary and scholarly sources treated the play as if it had solely been Dickens’s work (Nayder 71, 106). Dickens and Collins themselves acted in the production’s original run in early 1857, with Dickens later co-opting some performances as charity benefits for the family of the recently deceased Douglas Jerrold (Nayder 94). The first of these debuted on 4 July 1857 at the Gallery of Illustration before a dignitary-studded audience, including the royal family. Queen Victoria, already of Lady Franklin’s party, was particularly charmed by Dickens’s performance as Richard Wardour and wrote a glowing review of the production in her diary (Hibbert 63). The experience evidently left a lasting impression on Dickens, too, as Wardour’s selfless melodrama weighed upon his imagination in the ensuing years as he cultivated his affair with Ellen Ternan (whom he had first encountered through her role as Wardour’s daughter) and observed the disintegration of his family life; this drama of a man selflessly and selfishly torn would burst, with significant edits, into print in the form of Sidney
Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* (Glancy 14, Slater 27). Moody and tempestuous, pitiful and finally noble, indolent and somehow always in the right place at the right time, Carton’s troubled figure has unavoidably polarized responses to the novel. Even in one of the most favorable contemporary reviews, an anonymous reviewer remarks in the *Morning Chronicle*:

> Accustomed as we are to digest works of fiction-good, bad, or indifferent-we can say, in all truth and honesty, that we were not prepared for the part which Sydney Carton plays at the end of the story. It might, perhaps, have been guessed, but the uninterrupted flow of the tale seems never to suggest it; and when the reader draws near its accomplishment, he is perfectly amazed at a solution so unexpected, and withal so natural. (*Morning Chronicle* 7)

The unknown reviewer identifies firmly in the minority with the phrase “so unexpected, and withal so natural,” but of course the novelty of Carton’s sacrifice has long since worn off with the immortalization of the novel’s ending in the Anglophone canon as a defining symbol of the French revolution. Richard Maxwell has observed that the efficacy as well as the meaning of Carton’s sacrifice lies in its escaping detection, the success of a substitution (Maxwell ii). On Carton, John R. Reed writes “Although he cannot muster the will to change his own life, he channels his will in selfless service of principle, embodied by Lucie, that he worships” (Reed 270). And so Dickens writes sensationally, a conspirator and something of a prophet disclosing this sublime capstone jewel of the revolution amid ample smoke and mirrors.

Attempts to triangulate the place of *A Tale of Two Cities* in the early Victorian *zeitgeist* typically analyze the fine line between Dickens’s sources and inventions,
particularly the extent of Thomas Carlyle’s influence upon the novel (Sorensen 11). In
the preface to the first volume, Dickens cites Carlyle’s *The French Revolution: A History*
as an inspiration, an evocation taken cynically by Sir James FitzJames Stephen, writing in
an 1859 issue of *Saturday Review*, to mean that “. . . Mr. Dickens happened to have read
the History of the French Revolution, and, being on the look-out for a subject, determined
off-hand to write a novel about it” (Stephen 741). As a jurist with a decidedly Tory
streak, Stephen takes particular umbrage to Dickens’s claim that, in regards to Carlyle “. . .
no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of that wonderful book” (Dickens,
*Preface* ii). He concludes his scathing review by expressing, once again, his incredulity
that Dickens would accept Carlyle’s sensational and arguably polemicized account
without further reading on the subject, making dark insinuations about Dickens’s
education and background to the effect that the novelist, not being a gentleman, must
borrow his “philosophy” wholesale from learned sources, sentiments echoed by
anonymous reviewers (who could easily have been, if not Stephen himself, his brother
Leslie or various members of their social circle) working for *The Observer* and *The
Spectator*.

To the landed intelligentsia, Dickens can have no “philosophy” of his own nor the
faintest idea of what constitutes one in the first place (Stephen 73). Mark Philp argues,
however, that Dickens’s interpretation of events diverges from Carlyle when depicting
key moments in the Revolution, reflecting both his readings of Thiers and Young and his
underhanded suggestion that the Revolution resulted from a breach of the social contract
(Philp 27). Specifically, Philp addresses the abrupt shift in British receptiveness to the
Jacobin cause following the Terror of 1792, crediting the vindication of Edmund Burke’s
“Reflections on the Revolution in France” (1790) with enforcing rhetorical closure upon the subject, a moratorium more or less upheld by early-to-mid nineteenth commentators (Philp 28). Burke describes the essential crime of the Defarges as “treason against property,” slights upon the church, the state, and the family symbolizing human order and dignity (Burke 201). Defarge’s hesitation to implicate the son in-law of his former master stands as a prime individual example of this credo, which Dickens characterizes as a successful upholding of a social contract, as opposed to the brutality his wife experienced at the hands of the Marquis.

The calculus concerning guilt and “treason against property” in *A Tale of Two Cities* becomes complicated by the novel’s dual narrative, the personal drama of the Manette family paired against the roiling backdrop of the Revolution. Richard Maxwell observes that Charles Darnay’s refusal to assert his rights as Marquis somehow implicates him, though Dickens never addresses Darnay’s rationale for doing so (Maxwell iv). Even once he has returned to rescue Gabelle, the pervading sense of the affair remains, as evoked in the dramatic opening scene of Volume III, that Darnay is doing the right thing for unclear reasons. His noble convictions, transcendental abstractions of the highest degree, cause him to return, and his heritage, the blood-tainted property upon his hands, lands him summarily in a crowded Parisian prison. Here, he is at once alone and surrounded by a multitude in a bastion of inescapable materiality.

He experiences, in short, a taste of the toil and solitude to which the Evremondes had subjected Dr. Manette. The psychological damage of solitary labor, of starvation from the fruits of his learning and calling, split Dr. Manette into a shadow of his former self. He becomes a drone struggling to simulate contentment; the material prison has
consumed and superseded what Robert Louis Stevenson calls “the very fortress of identity” (Stevenson 57). Much like the conflation of A Tale of Two Cities with the historical French Revolution, the duality represented by Jekyll and Hyde has endured as a cultural construct through its meditation upon the possibility of evil lurking behind a benevolent facade.

In A Tale of Two Cities, Dickens fleshes out similar concerns about predatory violence passing undetected beneath an edifice, but Manette and the Shoemaker reflect a different duality; good (as in stimulating) works and mindless labor, as opposed to good works and evil deeds. Both transformations, both dualities, are products of self-medication and even a proto-Stockholm syndrome. Confined by Victorian cultural expectations of respectability, Jekyll turns to occult compounds to escape his intricately constructed societal prison, as represented by his laboratory, and live viscerally through Hyde so that he may remain tethered to his otherwise existence (Harrison 54). Meanwhile, Manette must transform himself out of a more physical necessity; inhabiting the persona of the Shoemaker allows him to ignore trauma and provide the material goods demanded by the conditions of his confinement. In both cases, the transformations of Manette and Jekyll are framed as acts of substitution, fantasy narratives that ameliorate their core identities to the endurance (or even enjoyment) of previously unbearable conditions. Such a logic of substitution speaks to Dickens’s acute awareness of “. . . the privacy of the traumas inflicted by the prison” (Grass 107). Stevenson similarly enforces this narratological divide through Utterson’s complete (and almost comical) unawareness of the double life led by Jekyll before he lays hands on his friend’s first-hand confession.
I argue that the transformations of Manette and Jekyll, effected through literal and relational confinement, reflect Victorian anxieties about the promiscuous relationship between privacy, social control, and the material state, as emblematized by the image of the prison. First, I will address how both of these novels conceptualize “treason” in such a way that conflates a mind/body duality with morality. Building upon the intersection of these immutable dualities, this essay will also explore how both Dickens and Stevenson connect the idea of treason, a dual allegiance, to the shadows that infest the imaginative landscapes of both *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and counterbalance the absolute materiality of the prison as a “correctional institution.” From there, I expand my analysis to treat the transformative process as a form of “work” in more detail, unpacking the suggestion that the adoption of the Shoemaker and Mr. Hyde fulfill a role in a prison-industrial complex. Finally, this essay will analyze the “confessions” made by Jekyll and Manette from their respective prisons as musings upon the possibility of true escape from attempts to confine and set finite limits upon identity.

1: Diffusions of Identity: Treasons, Self-Medication, and Addiction

The possibility of treason, secret infidelities to oneself and/or to the social order, haunts the texts of *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Jekyll and Hyde*. Dickens draws a fine line between political treason and treason to the idea of the self, portraying the rebellion (if not the bloodthirst) of the Jacobites as justified due to the collective Monseigneur’s numerous breaches of the social contract. By contrast, the accusations of treason levied principally against Darnay prove to be false; products of pedantic Revolutionary zeal or the inventions of Barsad and Cly, agents who create sedition where they cannot find it (Dickens 77). Addressing Dickens’s depictions of Chancery and kangaroo courts as a
change in his methodology for the depiction of social discipline, D.A. Miller
demonstrates how the courts of *Bleak House* supercede their material boundaries through
insidious domination: “To violent acts of penetration it prefers the milder modes of
permeation, and instead of being densely consolidated into a force prepared to encounter
a certain resistance, it is so finely vaporized–sublimated, we should say, thinking of
alchemy and psychoanalysis together–that every surface it needs to attack is already
porously welcoming it” (Miller 61). Miller’s analysis holds true for the trials of *A Tale of
Two Cities*, too, which derive their power from alchemical definitions of treason enforced
and sublimated into the air of the countryside and the fog of the city by the anxieties of
revolution. Dickens describes the cross-examination of witnesses by Bully Stryver and
“Mr. Attorney-General” (the figurehead of the state legal apparatus) as a wardrobe
malfunction somewhat reminiscent of Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Emperor’s New
Clothes”:

Mr Stryver then called his few witnesses, and Mr Cruncher had next to attend
while Mr Attorney-General turned the whole suit of clothes Mr Stryver had fitted
on the jury, inside out; showing how Barsad and Cly were even a hundred times
better than he had thought them, and the prisoner a hundred times worse. Lastly,
came My Lord himself, turning the suit of clothes, now inside out, now outside
in, but on the whole decidedly trimming and shaping them into grave-clothes for
the prisoner. (Dickens 79)

Dickens utilizes bloated, repetitive syntax and circular action (Cruncher running himself
ragged fulfilling pointless requests) to lampoon the stuffy seriousness and essentially
arbitrary nature of the proceedings. He sets the scene as a bureaucratic English ritual that
just barely masks the bloodlust of the Jacobite court that later condemns Darnay (Philp 30). Controversially, and responding perhaps to Burke’s version of the Revolution, Dickens visualizes “treason” in the context of the era as a mere change of clothes and the authorities as overzealous tailors. The implications of assigning guilt through not even skin-deep methods rings even more heinous sourced from a changeling like Barsad, the long-lost brother and antithesis of the upright, consistent, and exceptionally English Miss Pross.

Similarly, the state’s dialectic of absolute good and evil “even a hundred times better than he had thought them, and the prisoner a hundred times worse,” essentially constituting a character argument, becomes outrageous from the mouthpiece of a professional informer. Carton’s testimony, through his own “likeness,” saves Darnay and highlights the essential relativity of treason: the English government, as do Defarge et al. once the Terror has begun, treat treason as a commodity with a set production quota. This industrial logic illustrates a departure from the traditional, ninth-circle of Hell meaning of “treason” as well as, perhaps, Dickens’s interpretive slant as a writer of historical fiction. Consider Jerry Cruncher’s comment once the court has returned its verdict: “If you had sent the message, ‘Recalled to Life’, again,’ muttered Jerry, as he turned, ‘I should have known what you meant, this time” (Dickens 83). Here, Cruncher gestures to the symbolic link between Alexandre Manette, Charles Darnay, and Sydney Carton that culminates in an exchange of experiences, treasons, and a final self-sacrificing act of substitution. Treason to oneself, however, resists mass-production and causes a deeper scar than any court can ordain.
Dickens frames Manette’s transformation into the shoemaker as a treason against himself, a denial of his value as an individual. The shoemaker, made in Manette’s image, is a pale and base substitution hijacking the aura of a champion of humanity (Benjamin 14). This aural loss, an externality of Manette’s transformation via rote reproduction pervades the cryptic first glimpse of Manette provided through the novel’s *in medias res*, famously prefaced by the narrator’s observation “. . . that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other” recalls him to life as one among the shadowy sea of humanity, leaving the details of his torment and symbolic death to the imagination (Dickens 14). This declaration of unknowable individuality perhaps reflects a comment upon the anonymity and drudgery engendered by the population booms of the industrial revolution. The notion of memory appears, too, in the phrase “recalled to life” as repeated by Mr. Lorry and Cruncher, reflecting Dickens’s conceit that solitary confinement constitutes a form of death, an absolute imposition on the subjective human condition. And thus the reborn Manette’s struggle to assume his former identity, to remember how to perform the societal role of his past self, becomes an act of self-imposition; he must know and forget selectively and confine himself “for his own good” in mental prison walls of his own construction (Foucault 67). For cruel memory consummates Manette’s treasons against his heroic precapitalist identity—he, like the despondent Jekyll of his final confession, has lost control of self-image he projects (Stevenson 63). Racked by shame, Manette initially balks at the prospect of exposing his new damaged self to Lucie (“wait! It would kill me if I saw her too soon”) but it does not take him long to become imprinted upon by his daughter’s innocence, “the golden thread” that leads him from the labyrinth toward futurity and a more finite
subjectivity (Dickens 17). Dickens’s intense focus upon the psychological ordeal
Manette experienced, the wholesale negation of his old identity through conversion into
“One Hundred and Five, North Tower,” grounds the doctor’s narrative in individual
trauma without much direct exploration of the “Rip Van Winkle” angle: Alexandre
Manette must live and function in a changed world (Dickens 44). The timing of his
release and the immediate aftermath, just after the beginning of the American revolution,
gives form to an underlying subtle culture shock Manette that absorbs as he renews his
practice and finds solace in a quiet benevolent life that is eventually shattered by his
involvement, via his son-in-law, in the Reign of Terror. This development and its
philosophical underpinnings reflect Dickens’s interpretation of the pamphlet literature of
the 1790s, particularly the works of Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft (Philp 35).

As Dickens avowedly keeps present-day (late 1850s) concerns alive on the
backburner from the novel’s famous opening paragraph, it is not so much of a stretch to
connect Dickens’s reading of these pamphlet wars with those (socialist and otherwise)
that flared up around the revolutions of 1849 (Jones 57). For the worst symptom of
Manette’s split existence, the summative symbol of the entrenched domination of the
Gorgonesque Marquis and his ilk, revolves around his recourse to material labor. Unable
to bear witness, in his confinement, to the democratic reforms engendered by the passage
of time, doubly cruel fate has cursed Manette to experience the worst of nineteenth
century factory serfdom, without even the satisfaction of effecting his own sustenance.

Responding to Defarge’s well-meaning offer to improve his working conditions,
Manette vocalizes nothing more than his enforced indifference: “I must bear it, if you let
it in” (Dickens 42). Dickens characterizes this brutalized, defeatist frame of mind as the
condition of modernity, a treason against Manette’s noble self-concept as well as the intrinsic value of a human being. As the shoemaker, Manette must obey “. . . in the old mechanically submissive manner, without pausing in his work” (Dickens 203). The heavy emphasis on the relentless, robotic image of the shoemaker reflects another of Dickens’s standard preoccupations, the propagation of artificial, mechanical qualities into cultural parlance through the school-factory-prison system. Stephen James credits Dickens’s enduring popularity and skill as a mid-Victorian novelist in no small part to his ability “. . . to insinuate a sense of people's temperamental characteristics through an observation of their mechanically repeated gestures and turns of phrase” (James 216). “One Hundred and Five, North Tower” displays practically no natural characters; all actions that he performs are intensely mechanical, charged with desperate repetition. Even his eventual rehabilitation at the hands of Jarvis Lorry follows, at first, a formulaic process of observation, trial, and error once he realizes that entreaties to Doctor Manette had a passive effect upon the automaton, who “. . . appeared to be stirred by some perception of inconsistencies surrounding him” (Dickens 205). Thus Dickens frames Manette’s relapses into the shoemaker persona as pathological in the societal as well as individual sense, a coping device that symbolically undoes historical progress and exemplifies what Dickens considers true treason: becoming uncritically and mechanically “infected with the new doctrines” to the point of ignoring one’s duty to humanity (Dickens 249).

The conflicting constraints of Humanist duty and utilitarian order appear prominently in Manette’s most violent transformation, occurring once Lucie has departed upon her honeymoon with the progeny of his tormentors:
The Doctor looked at him for a moment - half inquiringly, half as if he were angry at being spoken to - and bent over his work again. He had laid aside his coat and waistcoat; his shirt was open at the throat, as it used to be when he did that work; and even the old haggard, faded surface of face had come back to him. He worked hard - impatiently - as if in some sense of having been interrupted. Mr Lorry glanced at the work in his hand, and observed that it was a shoe of the old size and shape. He took up another that was lying by him, and asked what it was? ‘A young lady’s walking shoe,’ he muttered, without looking up. ‘It ought to have been finished long ago. Let it be.’ (Dickens 202)

Dickens represents Doctor Manette here as a base, degraded mechanical and attires him as such, shedding the cloth of his respectability and profession for sweat and toil. He works in a demented frenzy, managing to convince himself that he will be rewarded beyond his station if he surpasses his quota. Note also that, aesthetically speaking, the shoemaker has a consistent downward cast, hunched conspiratorially over the shameful necessity of his work. Finally, the reappearance of the “young lady’s walking shoe” once again conjures images of his sustenance, his thoughts of his daughter. This comes on the heels of Manette’s lucid and somewhat one-sided wedding’s eve conversation with Lucie, in which he describes, in an almost confessional manner, the perfect child of light that ingrown hope allowed him to foster. He imagines this child “coming to me in my cell, and leading me out into the freedom beyond the fortress,” imagery evocative, once again, of Lucie’s passive ability to steer men through the labyrinths of identity and foreshadowing the trials she will undergo for her husband (Dickens 197). This illusory child, whose identity Lucie forcefully claims but cannot fully realize in the case of the
father, reflects how Manette must utilize his skills and effect a solution to the persona he created as a coping mechanism: for all her love and constancy, Lucie alone cannot mend him. However, his rediscovery of the healing arts, achieved through the efforts of the loyal Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross, allows him to self-medicate and undo the damage caused by rote industry.

In a sense, the manner of Manette’s salvation reflects Dickens’s application of a bourgeois standard to a (mostly) pre-Capitalist world. During one of Mr. Lorry’s first visits to the home of the Manettes, the sight of the “disused shoemaker’s bench and tray of tools” lurking merely around the corner from the Doctor’s examination table rattles the banker: “I wonder,” said Mr Lorry, pausing in his looking about, ‘that he keeps that reminder of his sufferings by him!” (Dickens 98). Miss Pross immediately challenges the business-minded “confirmed bachelor” over this statement, a reaction stemming from the comfort that it provides to her master as a fall-back option, as well as possibly from her own status as a blue collar servant. Manette seems to be able to function well in his practice as long as he faces no stronger reminder of his sufferings than the bench, no “extraordinary jarring of that chord” (Dickens 210). For example, his knowledge of Charles Darnay’s true heritage ignites the transformation; perhaps this drudgery constitutes a necessary act of self-medication, enacted so that he may pacify himself as an aristocrat prepares to marry his daughter (Dickens 142). Best medical practice, however, vindicates Mr. Lorry’s core belief that the presence of the bench, as a reminder of his having recovered or “risen” socially from his split identity, provides Manette’s transformation with the tools he needs to relapse. Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross crucially develop their plan to cure Manette by presenting the doctor with a hypothetical case study
that allows him to unknowingly diagnose his own symptoms. Manette’s descriptions to this effect, at times bordering on psychoanalysis, are telling to say the least: “It may be the character of his mind, to be always in singular need of occupation. That may be, in part, natural to it; in part, the result of affliction. The less it was occupied with healthy things, the more it would be in danger of turning in the unhealthy direction. He may have observed himself, and made the discovery” (Dickens 210).

The irony of the moment waxes still higher through the crucial phrase “healthy things,” a tongue-in-cheek reference to Manette’s profession and another vindication of the value Dickens places on meaningful, benevolent, and intellectually honest work. Even Manette, who “may have observed himself” lacks the critical awareness to pick apart the classes to which he belongs, as his care and caregiving insulate him from the memories of his assumed identity, for a form of localized amnesia accompanies each relapse. Thus he maintains the shoemaker’s bench semi-consciously as a hallucinogen, suggestive of an addictive personality, a diagnosis that Dickens perhaps connects implicitly with the role of the working class consumer in the Victorian marketplace—policed by commodities, surveillance, and appetites (Miller 193). And so the transformative divide between Manette and the shoemaker, a product of addiction, domination, and treason to oneself emerges as an emblem of the human spirit’s ability to shake off the yoke of aristocracy and mechanical industry through honest, meaningful, and benevolent works. Dickens conceptualizes the death of the shoemaker as a victory, a humanistic and decidedly bourgeois reaffirmation of identity that allows Manette to remain strong and fearless in the wake of the Reign of Terror even as events spiral out of his control. Eventually, he masters his rage at Lorry for having destroyed his workbench (which Dickens depicts as a
ludicrous scene; a greying capitalist gargoyle of a banker demolishing that “reminder of his [Manette’s] sufferings” by hand) and embraces the deterministic ebb and flow of the times and his small, finite place in the universe as a single fixed point of identity. The drama of the doctor and the shoemaker as earnestness and resignation is reenacted in miniature by Carton and Darnay, each a half of an identity, a side profile in a mirror. Returning to the topic of self-medication and public and private identities (for the shoemaker’s returning existence remains a secret to Manette) I will address how Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde* operates in conversation with Dickens’s take upon the mind/body and good/evil dualities.

The more sinister aspects of a doctor’s potential to control and manufacture identity come rushing to the forefront in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. On the surface a far cry from the benevolence and summarized surgery of Dr. Manette, Dr. Jekyll’s modifications to his home’s “surgery theater” suggest that, while he presumably holds a medical degree, in practice he is more an inorganic chemist, a producer of manufactured knowledge (Stevenson 55). Born into wealth, power, and leisure, Jekyll fixates upon the idea of medicating and improving the mind so that the lowly body may live freely, a transcendent tendency that recent scholars have linked persuasively to the budding opium and cocaine culture of the *fin de siecle* (Harrison 57, Comitini 114). In his post-mortem confession, Jekyll gives lip service to the rationalization that he undertook a noble risk by serving as his own test subject, but it becomes clear that his greed and exceptionalism have far eclipsed any altruistic motivating factors. Racked by guilt over Hyde’s activities, he engages in a flurry of benevolent acts, times in which “the days passed quietly, almost happy” (Stevenson
But his addiction gradually resurfaces and fights with him for control of their material vessel: “I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught” (Stevenson 63). Like Manette, Jekyll retains the tools required to effect his transformation, but he retains also a guilty awareness of having committed treason against nature, of his longing for an altered state.

In this sense, Jekyll the addict becomes something of an archetypal mad scientist through his drive to escape materiality, to tip the balance of the Cartesian duality through unchecked expansion of the life and work of the mind, the only labors befitting of his class. He cannot endure undue regulation of his body. In his own words, Jekyll (being “inclined by nature to industry”) provides a succinct summary of his tendency to squirm under policing: “And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to hold my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public” (Stevenson 55). Compare with Dr. Manette’s self-diagnosis: “It may be the character of his mind, to be always in singular need of occupation” (Dickens 210). Viewing their self-narratives through what Foucault terms “the medical gaze,” both Jekyll and Manette problematize an invasive lack of social productivity: Manette’s private transformation reduces the value of his labor, while Jekyll’s public transformation damages society’s values (Foucault 18, 89). The medical gaze gives form to anxieties concerning the overbearing power of objectivity, the undue influence of the doctor to diagnose and dehumanize, to shape society as he sees fit.
The suggestion of treason, of addiction, of any complex evil lurking in the heart of the physician, plays specifically to the fear that those who tasked with interpreting the webs of identity and reality may “turn” and abuse the power invested into them by social contract. Debbie Harrison writes, concerning the “transforming draught” that Jekyll abuses to produce Hyde: “Addiction, as an uncontrollable somatic and psychological state, lends itself in a profound way to the Gothic mode, which, as Fred Botting observes, 'signifies a writing of excess’” (Harrison 54). In light of the social contracts beholden to physicians, the Hippocratic oath and patient/client confidentiality (note how Utterson, a lawyer and solicitor, also represents a profession trusted implicitly by the ruling classes; Dickens carries this archetype to its logical extreme in *Bleak House* through his depiction of Mr. Tulkinghorn as a fat spider nestled in a web of secrets) the possibility of illness among medical professionals becomes particularly treasonous and scandalous, for “... the moral weakness of the patient formed an important causal factor in the progression of the disease, as the literary texts of De Quincey and Coleridge make clear” (Comitini 115). C.f. Dickens: “The Doctor knew, that up to that time, his imprisonment had been associated in the minds of his daughter and his friend, with his personal affliction, deprivation, and weakness” (Dickens 282). Viewed through this pathological lens, the transformations of Manette and Jekyll each constitute the physical manifestation of mental illnesses caused by literal and cultural confinement, the forces that fragment and limit identity.

In regards to the matrices of intersecting dualities (mind/body, good/evil, private/public) that pervade *Jekyll and Hyde*, John R. Reed characterizes the novella as an “anomaly” insomuch as it “so openly imports philosophical and psychological issues”
into a digestible narrative (Reed 389). Reed focuses his analysis on the struggle of wills between Jekyll and Hyde, a struggle seen to a more agreeable conclusion in Manette’s case, as perhaps the most crucial trait of the shoemaker is his apparent lack of will. The shoemaker identity, a pacified product of industry, cannot exert its own existence in the fashion the willful Hyde can exploit Jekyll’s indulgent nature. Hyde meanwhile operates as a pervert backed by the protections of his class, calling to mind the diplomatic immunity enjoyed by the unnamed Doctor of W. T. Stead’s “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon,” a beast who procures and consumes three working-class virgins every fortnight (Stead III, 56). Perhaps Hyde’s collision with the little girl on a London thoroughfare and the subsequent overreaction of passers-by also recalls Stead’s depictions of upper–class predators satisfying their appetites with wanton abandon and then retreating, undetected, to the safety privileged lives and professions. Note how Hyde fears no repercussions for his unspecified scandalous deeds until the discovery (an act Stevenson describes with oxymoronic literalism as “overlooked”) of the profane murder of Sir Danvers, upon which “. . . his terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide” (Stevenson 69). Prior to this incident, the elimination of a man of comparable or higher social capital than Jekyll, Hyde has flaunted his perfidy in face of societal expectations of discretion, openly defying the fear of detection that so torments Jekyll (Miller 8). The identity Jekyll has created to escape the prison of his recognizable, respectable body and indulge his pleasures vicariously now threatens them with literal imprisonment and then, eventually, the inescapable confinement offered by the gallows of Newgate.
While both Manette and Jekyll ultimately lose the ability to control their alternate identities under certain conditions, Jekyll’s secrecy and profound belief in his mental exceptionalism compounds the problematics of the cognitive overlap, a sort of meta self-awareness, that exists between his identities. The differences between Manette and Jekyll’s methods for “getting a second opinion” present a dichotomy of sin and innocence, self-knowledge and ignorance fed by desire. Inconveniently trapped in Hyde’s body, Jekyll exploits the incidental retention of his handwriting to coerce a friend and colleague, Hastie Lanyon, into providing him with the specialized tools and knowledge to reverse the transformation. The resulting moral shock, of course, inflames Lanyon’s respectable sensibilities to the point of no return: he sees himself and his profession implicated in Jekyll’s duplicity (Stevenson 33). Lanyon’s ethical outrage results from the materialization of his suspicions, the discovery of his friend’s treason and mental compartmentalization. Jekyll’s confession ends the novel on a fractured note, as the abrupt shift away from omniscience transforms the narrative into that of a prisoner on a stay of execution (Grass 5). Returning in part to the case of Dr. Manette, I will conclude this essay with an examination of how the prison came to represent absolute materiality, the body’s dominance over the mind.

II: The Prison of the Body: Duality and Monomania

The imposing facades of the prison loom upon the horizon of Victorian fiction, reflective of a hegemonic cultural imperative to correct where possible and, failing that, to destroy or at least contain. A crucial imaginative element of the prison, as a facility for containment, revolves around sending a message through forceful material imposition, a message to the effect that “You are small, insignificant, and insufficiently corporeal. I am not.” This directive, effected through architecture and social stigma, was seized upon by
writers like Dickens and Stevenson whose works, in one way or another, suggest the containment and confinement will dilute, compress, and mass-produce identity. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens treats this dilution of self as an act of mediation between the corporeal and the intangible, the mind and the body, the wall and the shadow. This “shadow and substance” motif, evaluated in the context of Manette’s unknowability, his alter ego, and Jekyll’s apparent monomania underlying Stevenson’s narrative of pendulum duality, suggests how the nineteenth century body became conceptualized as a prison for the mind.

In *Obsession: A History*, Lennard Davis delineates the early days of obsession as a cultural phenomenon, arguing that “the diagnosis of monomania opened the doors to a wide-ranging application of the idea of insanity to the general population” (Davis 68). Davis reports an explosion of monomania diagnoses (though he acknowledges that statistics concerning internment of the diagnosed are murky at best) from one end of the nineteenth century to the other, no small indicator of the cultural force behind deeming minds and bodies unfit for society. The ubiquitousness of the diagnosis coupled with the apparent subjectivity of the criteria likely contributed to the persistent fear, well-documented in the literature of the period, of being committed to an insane asylum on trumped-up charges and effectively disposed of—a staple trope of Victorian fiction, from the sensation novels of Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon to more mimetic works by George Eliot and Thackeray. What better manifestation of the possibility of losing control over one’s mind and body than the brooding walls of the prison/asylum? Impenetrable, sordid, and evoking the specter of modern anonymity, prison walls to Dickens consistently pose a faceless, bureaucratic threat to society at large. Jekyll is
acutely aware that the threat implicit in these walls reeks of social isolation, of blind, procedural, and possibly irreversible punishment (*Discipline and Punish* 38). The moral terror experienced by the “insane” and falsely condemned subject manifests in the narrative of Dr. Manette; crucially, these accusations have the full institutional force of the state behind them, leaving the victim utterly powerless and without recourse. As supporting characters in *A Tale* note upon several occasions, and following Dicken’s conviction that prisons served as little more than proving grounds for criminals, the brutality of Manette’s punishment caused the symptoms it was intended to punish, fashioning him into an embodiment of monomania (*American Notes* 239). Dickens collapses the illusion that Manette suffers a uniquely French fate, or even a monarchistic one, through his characterization of Darnay’s ordeal at the hands of the English court system, once again bridging the idea of the gothic possibilities of the professions.

The single-minded methodology of these possibilities, of bringing mental anxieties into form, appears readily in Dr. Manette’s fantasy, the sordid dream-narrative of the prison: “And she showed me her children,” said the Doctor of Beauvais, ‘and they had heard of me, and had been taught to pity me. When they passed a prison of the State, they kept far from its frowning walls, and looked up at its bars, and spoke in whispers” (Dickens 197). Here Manette vocalizes how his anxiety, his unearned punishment and violent transformation have marked him as a pariah, a shameful secret for his kin to acknowledge silently. He details, too, how the fragmentation of his own identity created for Lucie, in his dream-narrative, a sort of parallel identity or doppleganger that tethered his former identity to existence, and yet existed in a reality removed from his former life. At the moment of her departure, the profound loss of his identity surges to the forefront
of his mind and he fears, irrationally, that Darnay will imprison Lucie in a world away from him; thus he ignores her frantic insistence that she was “that child.” (Dickens 198).

Manette fixates on the “frowning walls” of the institution that has sublimated his identity, and imagines his child and grandchildren standing reverently in the shadow of his punishment (Paroissien 37). The shadow extends the material and symbolic reach of the prison as an arena of punishment, mirroring the spectacle of Gaspard’s execution:

> It is frightful, messieurs. How can the women and the children draw water? Who can gossip of an evening, under that shadow? Under it, have I said? When I left the village, Monday evening as the sun was going to bed, and looked back from the hill, the shadow struck across the church, across the mill, across the prison - seemed to strike across the earth, messieurs, to where the sky rests upon it!

(Dickens 178)

Gaspard’s suspended form emits a shadowy miasma that eclipses all joy and freedom in the immediate blast radius of the Marquis’s death at the hands of the “new philosophy” of vengeance (Dickens 131). Ewald Mengel demonstrates how the assassin’s slow, torturous death corrupts the fountain as a traditional symbol of life, of fertility and fecundity (Mengel 29). The universal fecundity of Gaspard’s shadow displaces all other material concerns by conspicuously inflating absence, creating a fog of despair and confusion that stirs revolutionary feeling, pathologized as a sort of infectious monomania, among the citizens of France.

Returning to Manette’s vision, a similar dynamic of shadows substantiating formerly ephemeral ideas into material threats upon a subject’s freedom pervades the narrative once the situation in Paris has degraded into the Terror. Having wandered into
the melee in search of information concerning Darnay’s fate, Manette wears his unjust imprisonment as material proof of his suffering, a badge of honor among the revolutionaries. His unique identity allows him to find Lucie an opening: “My dear, there is an upper window in the prison, to which Charles can sometimes gain access at three in the afternoon” (Dickens 286).” This crucial window, a gap in the sordid confining edifice of the prison and a godsend to Lucie, also has a dual nature: it is simultaneously a symbol of hope and a threat to others’ freedom. Imprisonment in *Tale* has an insatiable hunger and a virulent contagion, with Dickens playing up the conceit that the blind hatred of either the aristocracy or the revolutionaries would love to impose themselves on Lucie, the archetypal “angel in the house” who represents unambiguous purity. But Manette’s narrative splits Lucie into two identities; her actual material form, and the child of his mental prison. Pining for Darnay, Lucie “kissed the prison wall,” a gesture that represents both her devotion and the conflation of the prisoner and the prison, the container of the body that contains the mind and/or soul. (Dickens 287). This semiotic slippage qualifies the imprisoned existence (and, by extension, 1850s capitalist existence) as something of a Russian nesting doll model of life, one that insulates and dulls the viscerality of life. Observe how Manette’s final “relapse” cements the self-contained nature of his alternate identity, an oppressed shadow: “Don’t torture a poor forlorn wretch,’ he implored them, with a dreadful cry; ‘but give me my work! What is to become of us, if those shoes are not done to-night?” (Dickens 356). Here, Dickens probes the possibility of complete annihilation of identity if production quotas are not met, a poison of the era that Manette finally transcends. In a sense, Manette’s release from the prison of the shoemaker reflects
an affirmation of traditional values, an intimate narrative that bursts into life in his confession of his sins.

The confessional narratives of Manette and Jekyll reflect the summation of Victorian attitudes toward imprisonment and criminality: the pathological view of offenders, the dissociative and transformative trauma that force prisoners to adopt identities that will enable them to survive, obey, and adapt. The conceptual prison of mind/body duality has loaded the image of the prison with a crushing, corrective materiality that Dickens connects to the emergence of industrialization through Dr. Manette’s recurring transformation into a harassed, fearful shoemaker denoted only as the exact locale of his imprisonment. In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll*, Jekyll effects his transformation into the dastardly Mr. Hyde as sojourn from his detectable body, a body he views as a prison imposed by his bourgeois society. This grounds the narrative in the shame and guilt engendered by addiction, of covert cultural malpractice; a cycle broken in Manette’s case by the intervention and care of his friends and daughter. Jekyll, too much a mad scientist obsessed with his championing his individualism and tormented by his knowledge of his other self, can neither recover nor be rehabilitated from his transformation.

Reading *A Tale of Two Cities* in light of Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde* demonstrates how the character drama of Dickens’s revolutionary novel reflects discrete commentary on the insidious externalities of capitalism’s ascension to cultural hegemony in Victorian England, namely the perpetual unbalancing of age-old moral and metaphysical dualities. The prison-industrial system attested in these novels has the power to regulate, confine, and split identity, with the absolute materiality of the
prison/asylum becoming emblematic of the frightful possibility that progress, futurity, will enforce new imaginative barriers upon the human condition. The difficulties of commodifying the abstract products of medicine and thought highlight a cultural anxiety concerning the trust placed in the essential professions in an rapidly changing and even more rapidly growing world. Dickens’s and Stevenson’s narratives of transformation are rooted in the notion of isolation among the multitude, of solitary confinement substituting one’s role in society: a dangerous image of class mobility. Lastly, these narratives dissect anxieties concerning the doctor or the intellectual’s ability to create and maintain a life of the mind diffuse from providing beneficial services; services Victorians would prefer to conceptualize as too moral for the marketplace. Also, this way of enforcing a pathological boundary between the mind and the body creates the fissures through which that most insidious other, the haunted self, can pass undetected and undermine the sanctity of the present’s solid, monolithic face.
CHAPTER 5. GENERAL CONCLUSION

Recently, new historical evidence came to light presenting some disturbing but hardly surprising insights into Charles Dickens’s personal affairs throughout the serialization of *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859. The find, discovered in a neglected archive and painstakingly authenticated by the University of York’s John Bowen, consists of a epistolary exchange between Edward Dutton Cook and William Moy Thomas, both journalists who had written for Dickens’s *Household Words* (Bowen 1). Of this pair of now obscure men of letters, Cook and his wife Lynda lived next door to Catherine Dickens and her children in Camden, while Thomas was best known as an English translator of Victor Hugo’s novels (Bowen 1). Cook writes to Moy in an 1879 letter concerning the separation of Charles and Catherine Dickens some twenty years ago: “He discovered at last that she had outgrown his liking. She had borne ten children and had lost many of her good looks, was growing old, in fact. He even tried to shut her up in a lunatic asylum, poor thing! But bad as the law is in regard to proof of insanity he could not quite wrest it to his purpose” (Bowen 2). While Dickens had, in at least one prior letter, stated that his spurned wife had a mental illness, the revelation that the beloved novelist (who generally had a genial public image in his lifetime) had attempted to imprison his wife in an insane asylum waxes particularly sinister (Paroissien 39).

Following the gendered trope of the asylum in nineteenth century literature, a false committal for Catherine could be nothing but a method of disposal, a complete erasure of her public and private life for her husband’s benefit and petty vengeance. The inciting incident of the separation, Dickens’s affair with Ellen Ternan, became a private scandal among a tiny circle of friends, acquaintances, and literati, but a scandal so
otherwise buried that scholars did not uncover conclusive evidence of the affair’s existence until the 1930s (Slater 42). The long sojourn in the unknown enjoyed by these scandals reflects the effectiveness of Dickens’s efforts to keep his private life private, to preserve his reputation. Recalling Nina Baym’s salient application of Victorian ideas of respectability to *The Scarlet Letter*, a moral stain of this magnitude would have alienated Dickens’s audience and publishers, an ignominious end to his career. Dickens did not live to face his Roger Chillingworth, or, perhaps more aptly, his Pearl; although his relationships with both his children and his sometime collaborator Wilkie Collins soured, in some cases irreparably (Nayder 91). At any rate, the fate Catherine Dickens narrowly avoided strikes a strange, dissonant chord with the trinity of false accusations that characterize the plot progression of *A Tale of Two Cities*; the last of which becomes law and sends an innocent man, the doppelganger Sidney Carton, the English Charles Darnay who recaptures the essence of Charles Dickens’s beloved Wardour. Dr. Thomas Harrington Tuke, a friend of Dickens and the administrator of an upscale asylum in Chiswick, as the doctor who probably refused to commit Catherine without sufficient proof - a refusal that ended their friendship (3). Bowen proposes that Tuke’s probable moral victory over Dickens constitutes the triumph of professionalism, of clarity and veracity in medicine - the pursuits, of course, to which Dr. Jekyll devotes himself to once he has rehabilitated himself to the extent of may upholding social contracts, even as Hyde breathes down his neck in anticipation of the final confrontation.

A self-made man in the Algerian sense and, moreso than the vaguely aristocratic Hawthorne, one of the first authors to make a living writing for newly minted mass markets, Dickens held a fierce pride in the face and the work he let the world see. In “The
Custom-House,” Hawthorne famously wrote of the veil he kept between his self (“the inmost Me”), his work, and his audience, though his sketch deals explicitly with the political scandal caused by his dismissal as Customs Officer of Salem (4). Relatively happy with his desk job, Hawthorne became a casualty of the patronage system in 1848 when the triumphant Whig party purged Democrat-Republicans from the civil service wherever possible. Not particularly engaged in party politics and a competent officer, Hawthorne’s furloughing gave him a first taste of fame as cause celebre of the Democratic party, a lost cause he tried to milk for every last drop of recognition in “The Customs House”.

Robert Milder notes in “Two Hawthornes” the wide spectrum of difference between the worldly pragmatism of the author’s private writings and the poised Romanticism of his fiction, a dichotomy he relates to the persistent preoccupation among the Romancer’s biographers, with divining the source of the secret shame contemporary commentators and scholars alike have detected in Hawthorne’s body of work (Milder 50, 113; Turner 67). As well, biographers have noted that the budding American artist found himself simultaneously encumbered and liberated (from obligation and alienating labor) by the solitude of the years consigned to writing his early tales in the dark cell of Salem’s Old Manse. Of course, some uncertainty lurks in the connection of autobiographical context to the work produced by authors; the salience of the “intentional fallacy” and the nigh two centuries elapsed between the present and the careers of Dickens and Hawthorne ensures, to an extent, that the exact contours of the “veil” will remain ephemeral. However, I have provided enough evidence to indicate that, for both authors at both times of composition, these historical fictions dramatized and personified, through
characters like Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, Manette, and Lucie, the dissociative
annihilation and rebirth of the self; recall that, to sing “The Song of Myself,” the self
must be allowed to decay and decompose, to mingle with the lowly grasses that populate
the undergrowth. Metaphors of decay, specifically Romantic and vegetal in Hawthorne’s
case, typify across these historical fictions an overarching sense of cultural dread - the
suggestion that “progress” in the material sense was obliterating some ineffable, almost
heroic quality of the past. Nina Baym describes Hawthorne’s poetics as poised upon a
precarious precipice between “organicism and artifact,” the pinnacle of naturality and the
impenetrable uncanny valley (1970, 220). Baym’s divination of this dichotomy at work
within The Scarlet Letter carries weight, likewise, in the thematically and chronologically
adjacent The House of Seven Gables, wherein Clifford Pyncheon falls in and out of the
object class and Phoebe’s perfection exists at an “angel in the house” level that just
cannot be wholly real. John R. Reed has made a similar argument, concerning A Tale of
Two Cities, that early and historicist criticisms of the novel’s flat characters (e.g. the
wholly evil Evremondes, Lucie’s arch innocence) overlook the lurid hyperreality that
characterizes Dickens’s characters, who are just too large for life but not uncanny enough
to become wholly lifeless (2011, 32). In particular, his elderly characters, like Dr.
Manette and Mr. Lorry, or Bleak House’s Grandpa Smallweed and Turveydrop, reflect a
consciousness defined by chronological distortion, a dissociation made still more definite
by the cavernous shadows of A Tale of Cities and its backdrop of the Terror. In another
testament to the crushing cultural weight the French Revolution had accrued by even the
1840s, Lauren Berlant writes of how Hawthorne visualized his dilemma after the abrupt
end of his tenure at the Salem Customs-House: “Now a ‘politically dead man,’ he
pictures himself as a victim of the French Revolution, his head ‘axed’ by federal
‘guillotine’ of patronage (41); he also imagines himself as the Headless Horseman of
Irving’s ‘Legend of Sleepy Hollow,’ a ghostly vestige of the American Revolution” (1).
Berlant argues that this specific combinations of symbols typifies this nascent stage of
American literature as an experiment in mythmaking, a negotiation that has “worked to
make America intelligible, as an objective formation, to citizens en masse and to persons
individually” (6). Of the plethora of dichotomies I have addressed in this essay, as a
semitic divide the public/private opposition seems most broadly pervasive in nineteenth
century processes of identity formation, in respect to the dual consciousnesses dramatized
by Hawthorne, Dickens, and Stevenson.

The moral panic caused by Jekyll and Hyde, most notably Mansfield's stage
portrayal of the duo in the wake of Jack the Ripper (coupled with the enduring image of
the doctor who requires two virgins a fortnight in the Maiden Tribute) constituted in
Britain a terror echoing that triggered by the French Revolution, placing similar strain on
the public and private spheres and ultimately stemming from the same fear of ravenous
traitors in our midst. The cultural endurance and multifaceted nature of this panic
ultimately shows us how shocking Dr. Manette's transformation was to Dickens, and
probably to his readership: a serious and frightening suggestion underlies this piece of the
novel, too often dismissed as melodrama.

Attempts to confine, correct, and consolidate identity through imprisonment only
imparted to both parties (prisoner and warden) that some unknowable, negative essence
inhabited the heart of identity, which exists only via perception and construction.
Therefore the capitalist prison aims, through re-education by labor, to conflate and
restrain the self with absolute materiality, to convince the imprisoned to ignore the introspective, negative core of identity in order to produce and survive.

The failure, whole or partial, of this materialization to simulate "authentic" self-hood fragments an identity into separate consciousnesses, pieces of an unknowable whole. Through the uncomfortable duality of Dr. Manette and "105, North Tower" Dickens characterizes the capitalist project of confining the unknowable, ineffable core identity as an uniquely modern act of hubris, an act of pouring faith into a substitution. From Dickens to Hawthorne’s romances of the previous decade, I have connected a similar constellation of dots across what Foucault calls the “carceral archipelago,” a phrase denoting the modern webs of surveillance and information assurance that, through “the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation” extend the influence of the prison beyond material bounds (304). In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Hawthorne visualizes a continuation of the colonial Indian captivity narrative, effected through the transformative othering by “Roger Chillingworth,” as a multivalent narrative of loss, dissociation, and change. A similar figuration of dissociation caused by rampant socioeconomic change occurs in *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), in which Clifford Pyncheon, broken and disheveled by the ordeal of solitary confinement, passes into the object class under the material weight of the past - though he can still relapse into a shadow of his prior state. I argue that the trope of dual consciousness in the nineteenth century novel, culturally immortalized by Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Jekyll and Hyde,” reflects a wide-reaching collective anxiety stemming from the Industrial Revolution’s painful transition to a capitalist society; the “growing pains” viscerally experienced by the self in age driven by commodification, objectification potentially displacing the self
through a cold presentism. In that sense, I argue that this transitional crisis also represented a crack in the traditional public/private semiotic divide, in which the increasing number of objects, people, and ideas weighed heavily on the historical fictions of the day; note that both “American Literature” and “Victorian Literature” existed as literary constructs in the nineteenth century, as reflections of the transformative nature of this cultural work, which reached wider audiences than ever before. To complete my broad claims about the nature of this change, I will end this essay with a gloss on one of Robert Pogue Harrison’s conclusions in *The Dominion of the Dead*; that, since the early twentieth century we have, as a species entered unknown territory as marked by our distance from the home, from reminders of death (63). In a sense, Harrison mourns the mourning of a medievalist conscious of the mighty gravitational pull secular industrialization has had on the course of human history (“Some truths are only glimpsed in the dark. That is why in moments of extreme need one must turn to those who can see through the gloom.”) and his book narrativizes a collective distancing from the past itself and the prospect of death – what ultimately happens, he wonders, to a society that solves the problem of organizing its immensely complicated heritage by consigning it to oblivion? (138). I have demonstrated that *The House of the Seven Gables* in particular functions as an account of lethe, of the unacknowledged persistence and return of the spectres of the past amid a future of “progress”. As such, the haunting of and by the “Other self” denotes an important point of fracture as the nineteenth century novel grapples at length with self-image, inescapable containment, and economic history.
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