

**Narrative Syncope: Affect, Ethics, and Fainting Men in
Late-Victorian Novels**

by
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Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University, 2012
Associate of Arts, Kwantlen University College, 2007

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the
Department of English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2020

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Abstract

This project investigates the significance of fainting men in late-Victorian novels. While fainting is supposedly a female phenomenon related to women's fragility and emotional vulnerability, a large number of men swoon in Victorian novels. Fainting's form in these novels at the end of the century, I argue, reflects the emergence of materialist ideas about the brain and the nervous system's importance to human consciousness and subjectivity. Fainting is a physiologically affective response, one that reveals the nonconscious, automatist, and animal part of every human—including men.

Swooning in novels creates what I am calling narrative syncope. As a term, syncope is used across multiple discourses. In medicine, it refers to a loss of consciousness, and in grammar and music, it defines a gap, bridge, elision, or dysrhythmia. Through narrative syncope, late-Victorian novels engage not just the representation of fainting but also its novel form. That is, fainting's affective and nonhuman character mirrors what we might call the affect of narrative form, including temporal disjunctions, shifting narrative perspectives, and gaps in linguistic meaning.

While fainting men appear across Victorian literary genres and beyond, my focus in this dissertation is on three late-century novels: Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Each of the fainting men (and sometimes women) in these novels is struggling with the (im)possibilities of self-representation, as novelistic form turns from realist narration and towards an alienated and fragmented literary style. These men are, as Jacques Derrida would call them, autobiographical animals, whose nonhuman bodies and narratives both subvert and create the conditions for their subjectivity. Furthermore, as the nineteenth century struggled with the moral implications of materialism and Darwinism, these late-century novels offer a way to understand ethics as an embodied imperative. That is, affectively nonhuman bodies and narratives challenge the moral status of humans, while at the same time suggesting a greater ethical demand that emerges from the uncertain species status of the body. In exploring affective ethics in these novels, I follow Derrida's conception of ethics as an impossible demand.

Keywords: Late-Victorian novel; physiological psychology; affect theory; ethics; autobiography; deconstruction.

Dedication

For Scott, Caleb, and Ava, who are perfect.

Acknowledgements

I was able to write this dissertation thanks to support from an inspiring community of people, who generously listened to me talk endlessly about feelings, both those in this dissertation and my own. When I first decided to return to university to complete my first degree, I had no idea graduate school could be possible for me (and I had no idea how to go about doing it). It only became so because many people believed I could do it and supported me through it. This section could have been the length of another dissertation in itself, and it is impossible here to do justice to the material and emotional support I received. Please know I am grateful from the bottom of my heart.

I would like to first thank my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Linley. I have learned from and worked with her as an undergraduate student, graduate student, and research assistant. My introductions to philosophy and literary and cultural theory in her classes changed the way I saw the world. First in her classroom and later her supervision, she made space for my enthusiasm and critique, and she saw me as a scholar before I saw myself as one. Thank you for your unwavering support, patience, understanding, guidance, and candor. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Carolyn Lesjak and Dr. Michael Everton. They have been extremely generous with their time and knowledge, and I have benefitted immensely from their kindness, their insight, and their thoughtful care with my work. All three of my committee members have been academic and feminist role models for me, as they saw me not only as a graduate student and emerging scholar, but also as a mother and a human. I am so grateful.

I have also been lucky to have had the support of other faculty members in SFU's English Department. Thank you to Dr. Jeff Derksen for his mentorship through my academic career. His supervision of my Honours project insisted on the importance of my lived experience, and his encouragement, thoughtfulness, and honesty has helped me at many points. I am also grateful to Dr. Colette Colligan and Dr. Michelle Levy, whose enthusiastic RA supervision and academic mentorship not only helped me through graduate school, but allowed me to develop many other invaluable skills. Thank you also to Dr. Christine Kim and Dr. Diana Solomon for not only being wonderful teachers but

for always taking the time to give much-needed advice and support. Thank you also to our Graduate Chair, Dr. Clint Burnham, for his care and hard work.

This dissertation was written on the unceded territories of the Tsleil-Waututh, Skwxwú7mesh, Musqueam, Matsqui, Kwantlen, Katzie, and Semiahmoo peoples. I am a guest on their land.

My ability to attend graduate school and have space to think, read, and write was possible because of funding provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, SFU Department of English, and SFU Library, and because of research assistantships offered to me by faculty members and librarians. Thank you all.

Neither this dissertation nor my RA work would have been possible (or as pleasurable) without the support of SFU Library and the wonderful people there. Thank you to Michael Joyce, Rémi Castonguay, Nicole White, Ali Moore, Kate Shuttleworth, Keshav Mukunda, Catherine Louie, Jennifer Zerkee, Janis McKenzie, Judith Polson, and Aateka Shashank. Thank you also to everyone at Interlibrary Loans for sourcing anything and everything that I needed to write this dissertation. I am grateful to the Library and to the Digital Humanities Innovation Lab for being a home away from home for me.

I am also very grateful for the support I have received from the English Department staff, who have patiently and kindly helped me with the administrative work that so often needed to happen behind the scenes. Thank you to Christa Gruninger, Maureen Curtin, Wendy Harris, Laura Walker, Joseph Tilley, and Lynn Kool.

My thanks also to my supervisor and colleague, Dr. Bev Neufeld, for supporting and encouraging me through this last year.

Thank you also to the Dissertation Support Group, who provided me with the safest, kindest, and most supportive space imaginable at a crucial moment. And a huge thank you to Dr. Susan Brook, for teaching me about orchids.

A big thank you to my English 436W class, who offered their insightful analyses of these texts and sparked a renewed enthusiasm for me about their place in both late-Victorian culture and our own.

My dear friends read drafts of this dissertation, messaged constantly, explained everything, supplied me with wine and chips, and assured me that I could do this. My heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr. Jennifer Scott, Dr. David Weston, Dr. Sarah Creel, Dr. Sarah Bull, Haida Antolick, Dr. Kandice Sharren, Rebecca Dowson, Dr. Claire Macht, and Emily Macht, who are always there for me. A huge thank you also to Eleonora Joensuu, Alayna Becker, Janey Dodd, Jennifer Chutter, Dr. Alison Dean, Dr. Ryan Fitzpatrick, Dr. Natalie Knight, Dr. Marc Acherman, Livia Chan, Dr. Deanna Fong, Ben Hynes, Alyssa Arbuckle, Hannah Holtzclaw, and Ashley Morford, whose friendship, care, and support I am so lucky to have. I truly don't know what I would have done without you all.

I am grateful beyond words to my mom, Maria O'Donnell, for everything. I can't possibly say it all here, but I hope you know it. I could not have done this without your love, pep-talks, and generous childcare. Thank you to my grandmother, Mabel O'Donnell, who is always in my corner, and to my grandad, Ralph O'Donnell—I know you're proud and I miss you every day. Thank you also to my brother, Matthew O'Donnell, and his family, Melissa, Evan, and Liam O'Donnell, for the laughter, the childcare, and the dinners.

Finally, my biggest thanks go to my husband, Scott Gilbertson, and my children, Caleb and Ava Gilbertson. They made this possible in so many material and emotional ways, I could never list them all. They gave continuously, entirely, and absolutely, and showed me every day what unconditional generosity, responsibility, and love mean. Thank you for hitting the send button and knowing exactly what I needed.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In 1890, wildly popular author Marie Corelli published the Gothic romance *Wormwood*, a novel about the frightening effects of absinthe addiction.¹ The protagonist, Gaston Beauvais, falls in love with young Pauline de Charmilles, and the two are engaged to be married. Pauline, however, is enamoured with and seduced by the otherwise saintly Silvion Guidèl. When Pauline reveals her desire for Silvion and begs Gaston to break off the engagement, her fiancé is incensed at this rejection. He falls quickly into the grip of an absinthe addiction, leaving Pauline in disgrace at the altar and, eventually, killing Silvion. Gaston and Pauline meet one night and when Gaston tells her what he has done, Pauline runs from him, throws herself off a bridge, and drowns. In the wake of her death, Gaston is physically and emotionally overcome as he is haunted by the face of Pauline's beloved:

The wind filled my ears with a dull roaring noise,—something black and cloudy seemed to rise palpably out of the river and sway towards me,—the pale, stern face of Silvion came between me and the murky skies,—and with a faint groan, and a savour as of blood in my mouth, I lost my hold on thought and action, and reeled down into utter darkness, insensible. (330)

Gaston's self-narration before he swoons is largely limited to a description of his body—the wind in his ears, the sight of Silvion, the involuntary groan, the taste of blood—without any self-conscious explanation of his feelings. That is, Gaston does not narrate his feelings of guilt, exhaustion, or fear of his own desire, although those are all valid interpretations of his fainting fit. Instead, his narration of the moment, including the revelation of his inner state, is reduced to his body.

Gaston is not the only nineteenth-century literary man to faint. The pages of Victorian novels were home to many swooning men of different classes, characters, and sexual appetites, and those men lose consciousness for a variety of reasons. For example, the young doctor Hope in Harriet Martineau's *Deerbrook* (1839) faints in distress at his

¹ For Corelli's popularity as a late-Victorian author, see Kirsten MacLeod's comprehensive introduction to the Broadview edition of *Wormwood*.

wife's behaviour (249), and the prospector George Talboys swoons in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) when he reads of his wife's death (37). When the American man-of-leisure from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race* (1871) is knocked on the head by a falling piece of rock, he is "stunned" before he "recovered [his] senses" (21), a loss of consciousness that prefigures the hypnotic sleep he experiences at the hands of an underground civilization. The adventurous colonial settler Higgs in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) faints as he reaches the outskirts of the fictional country and mistakes statues for threatening giants (66); other imperialist adventurers, Horace and Leo in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886), faint during a violent encounter with the Amahagger of Africa (112). The passionate but exhausted doctor Ovid faints in Wilkie Collins' *Heart and Science* (1883) as a result of overexertion (109). In Hall Caine's *Shadow of a Crime* (1885), poor tailor Simeon faints under the burden of a secret (28) while dalesman Robbie faints from illness (210). Svengali, an impoverished musician in George du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), swoons at the sight of his own blood (358), while in the same novel, Little Billee suffers from a "fit" of unconsciousness that the narrator calls a "kind of epileptic seizure" (197).

The fainting men who form the focus of the chapters of this dissertation all appear in novels from the last decade of the nineteenth century. They include the upper-class, decadent, and possibly queer Dorian from Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), who swoons at the sight of a vengeful stalker (190); the well-to-do and industrious scientist called only the Time Traveller in H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), who is overwhelmed by the effects of time travelling and loses consciousness three times (76-78, 118, 149); and the pseudo-cosmopolitan, middle-class solicitor Jonathan Harker from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), who is fairly sure he has fainted after an encounter with the vampire, but is not entirely certain why (44). The novels in which these fainting men appear all belong to the Gothic genre, broadly defined as a form that represents human subjectivity as "both fragmented and permeable," and incorporates and negotiates the increasing "general anxiety about the nature of human identity permeating late-Victorian and Edwardian culture, an anxiety generated by scientific discourses, biological and sociomedical, which served to dismantle conventional notions of 'the human' as radically as did the Gothic which arose in response to them" (Hurley 3,

6). While the above examples demonstrate that fainting was hardly limited to the *fin-de-siècle*, fainting men in these late-Victorian novels reveal how the feeling body is at the heart of, and presents a challenge to, human subjectivity.

My claims in this dissertation meet Stoker's young solicitor exactly where he is in uncertainty and self-doubt over his loss of consciousness; in the three late-Victorian novels I read here, I argue that fainting is an expression of the body's encounter with an unknown world and represents the unknown otherness of the self. Fainting, I contend, is an affective response, meaning that it is a behaviour of the feeling body that circumvents subjectivity, self-consciousness, or agency. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term affect to refer to the feeling body broadly rather than to a specific emotion like fear or anxiety, drawing on those theorists who use the term to designate a nonconscious responsiveness of the body. Moments of fainting reveal the nonsubjective, nonhuman, and non-individual part of every man that tries to tell his story within these novels' narratives. While each of the novels I examine here suggests that the nonsubjective, nonhuman, and non-individual part of being is frightening (whether through a decaying portrait, a vision of animal-like humankind, or a blood-sucking vampire), I argue that the affective dimension of fainting opens up nonconscious life to its ethical potential, as it challenges the difference between subjective and nonsubjective, human and nonhuman, and self and other. I therefore follow Jacques Derrida's concept of ethics as I read these novels, arguing that the inability to decide whether a form of life is human or nonhuman, for example, means that there is no moral code available to decide how to behave towards those forms of life. For Derrida, when the other demands something from us, we must respond unconditionally. At the same time, the impossibility of doing anything unconditionally, and the uncertainty of how to respond to another when we are unsure of whether they are the same or very different, produces the realm of ethics itself. *Wormwood's* Gaston, desperate to eschew traditional notions of morality (and in doing so, to be free to do what he likes to whomever he likes), claims that "we are mere animals—we shall never be angels" (Corelli 77). In reply, this dissertation partially echoes Gaston's own father, when he explains that morality is "a recognition of the responsibilities of one's being" (77). While the conservative patriarch of Corelli's novel likely never meant it this way, I argue that it is exactly one's *being*—illustrated in the

novels discussed in this dissertation by fainting bodies—where ethics begin. Men who faint in *Dorian Gray*, *The Time Machine*, and *Dracula* have affective bodies that are animal, machine-like, and other to themselves, and the alterity of these fainting bodies disrupts narratives of selfhood and humanness to upend cultural and social rules about moral behavior and responsibilities towards others.

1.1. Syncope

Fainting is a term that describes a complete loss of consciousness. It therefore differs from other altered states of consciousness that emerged or were of heightened interest in the nineteenth century. In states of mesmerism, hypnosis, and trance, for example, one could have one's consciousness controlled or transformed, or could gain access to another's consciousness.² By contrast, fainting is a break with consciousness, an inability to access any consciousness. Even when characters in novels do not quite succumb but come very near to fainting, these moments emphasize lack, loss, or failure—an absence of selfhood. The nonconsciousness that occurs during a swoon is also not what we would now understand as the Freudian unconscious, the seat of repressed desires that become manifest in dreams. Nineteenth-century psychology understood the unconscious to be “the large mass of biological, neural inputs that pass without explicit notice” (Dames 222), rather than a fantastical part of the mind. While fainting sometimes occurs as the result of or concurrently with strong feelings, its beginning and end is in the body. For example, in *Wormwood*, Pauline faints when she and Gaston are discussing Silvion, before Gaston knows the truth of his fiancée's betrayal (Corelli 138-139). This faint is meant to have narrative import, indicating the significance of Silvion's name to Pauline. However, her swoon is not the appearance of the repressed desire of the unconscious, since Pauline has already given in to her desire. Instead, her faint is the

² As Alison Winter describes in *Mesmerized*, her detailed social history of mesmerism in Victorian England, a practitioner of mesmerism would place his or her subject in a mesmeric trance using the powers of animal magnetism. Winter writes that mesmerism took hold in a period when Victorians “monitored their own sensibilities, took the measure of the influence they felt from each other, and speculated about the sympathies that bound them” in an effort to discover the secrets of the collective Victorian mind and gain “a key for better understanding themselves” (12). See also Marlene Tromp's *Altered States* for a history of the transformative and transgressive social potential of altered forms of consciousness and identity during spiritualist séances.

result of an intensity of feeling, a concentration of affect so strong that it interrupts language, consciousness, and selfhood. When Gaston mentions Pauline's swoon to Silvion, the latter attempts to throw Gaston off the scent of the affair by gesturing to the fundamentally biological nature of fainting: "To faint is nothing,—many a school-girl faints at early mass, and the teachers think it of very little import" (141). To have a body is to be subject to its vicissitudes, to lose control, to be alienated from its meaning, to sometimes disappear.

The fainting men of this dissertation share Gaston's (and Pauline's) vulnerability, as they are subject to their animal bodies. Moreover, like Gaston, their subjectivity is embodied in narrative form as gaps, discontinuities, and non-linear temporalities that both break and bridge the tales they attempt to write. Gaston explicitly understands both his consciousness and his autobiography to be embodied, claiming the authenticity of his self-narration by declaring, "I will hide nothing from you! I will tear out the very fibres of my being and lay them on your modern dissecting-table; nay, I will even assist you in the proving-work of the mental scalpel" (74). Talia Schaffer notes that Gaston's descriptions of the inner workings of his brain reflect the beliefs of physiological psychology (para. 17), a Victorian field investigating the physical basis of feeling, thought, and agency.³ His autobiography is therefore necessarily fragmented, as there are parts of the embodied self that are simply unknowable and inaccessible. "There are certain phases of feeling and passion—are there not? —," he reminds another character, "which storm the soul at times,—we are shaken, but we cannot explain the shock even to our innermost consciences!" (Corelli 204). Gaston acknowledges that there are gaps in his self-knowledge, and gaps produced by his body, like his faint. One of the ways in which the narrative reproduces this gap is through the excessive use of dashes, demonstrated well in the quotation above. Or consider Gaston's description of his supposedly "exact and methodical" reasoning on learning of Pauline's betrayal: "—I found I had acquired new force,—new logic,—new views of principle,—and I was able to turn over quite quietly in mind Pauline de Charmilles' dishonour" (175). These dashes

³ Schaffer argues for Gaston's secular, modernist subjectivity, one that finds itself looking backward to physiological psychology and forward to Freudian theories of bodily drives.

suggest a halting, fragmented ability to think and communicate linguistically, while at the same time they join words and phrases together to produce the narrative. I call both the embodied and textual form of these breaks and bridges in late-Victorian novels moments of narrative syncope.

The term syncope is most often used today in its medical context to refer to the act of fainting, often defined as a transient loss of consciousness, but it has a much more complex history. Syncope also appears in grammar and music to describe similar types of disruption. In grammar, syncope or syncopation refers to the “contraction of a word by omission of one or more syllables or letters in the middle,” while in music, it refers to shifting or sustaining accents to produce an atypical rhythm (OED). The Oxford English Dictionary notes that prior to the twentieth century, syncope also had a discipline-agnostic connotation: “a cutting short; abbreviation, contraction; sudden cessation or interruption.” While the examples to which I turn in this dissertation are grounded by syncope in its physiological sense, I take advantage of the terms relative, albeit obscure, flexibility to explore interruptions and dysrhythmias of consciousness and narrative more broadly. I follow Catherine Clément’s theory of syncope as a trans-disciplinary pattern of shock, loss, and suspension that subverts or supplements the “autonomous and aware” Western model of subjectivity, and politicizes the absence of selfhood.⁴ In *Syncope: The Philosophy of Rapture*, Clément argues that syncope produces a loss of human exceptionalism. She emphasizes the potential of syncope to subvert the Western and Cartesian attitude toward the world, and particularly toward the natural world, as one of individuality, power, and action. Syncope, Clément claims, entails a letting go of mastery and accepting one’s place as a part of the world, along with animals and other forms of life.⁵ In claiming the political significance of nonsubjective or non-individuated life,

⁴ As Verena Andermatt Conley describes, Clément “looks for another approach to politics through *renoncement*, strength in weakness, and a decentering of human beings toward living things,” all present in the potential of embracing syncope as a loss of self (xiv).

⁵ Clément identifies Descartes as instantiating a version of subjectivity that sees itself as “master and possessor of nature” that can exercise a “sovereign power of the human race over animal and vegetable species” (257). To the contrary, Clément proposes, those who accept the rapture and release of syncope refuse this power (242); instead, they accept that “there is no barrier between nature and the subject” (258). To lose mastery over oneself is thus to understand how to reject mastery over other creatures. This study builds on Clément’s important insight that syncope’s embodied vulnerability can deconstruct the animal-human hierarchy.

Clément provides an important framework for the threat and the possibility that syncope's loss of self-control and agency poses to the men in the novels I have chosen. However, where she argues that a romanticized loss of self-control can create a positive relationship between humans and nature, I argue that an ethics can be found in the nonhuman aspects of the nonconscious body.

Clément is not the only philosopher to explore syncope's potential to bypass conscious awareness, subjectivity, and narrative. In *Logodaedalus: The Discourse of the Syncope*, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that philosophical discourses of consciousness produce syncope as an aesthetic form. For Nancy, philosophy is the attempt to rationally describe rationality, to self-consciously describe consciousness; literature is produced in the fractures of this self-conscious discourse because language is not transcendental enough to articulate self-presence to itself. Language itself is too material, too excessive, too difficult, too beautiful. However, for Nancy, literature is not the *metaphysical* displacement of the unconscious into language, but rather the *physiological* aestheticization of the unconscious, a rendering of embodied subjective interruption.⁶ Nancy points to an important aspect of syncope in the novels in this dissertation—that subjectivity may be expressed via language, but it is only made possible by the non-linguistic gaps in narrative.

The terms syncope and syncopation are also used by art and theatre scholars Barbara Formis and Rebecca Schneider to describe the way narratives or reenactments of history fragment, recover, and restore past time. They raise two interconnected points relevant to this dissertation. The first is that syncopated time—time that is not linear but punctuated, uneven, and recurring—challenges what Schneider calls “tightly stitched Enlightenment claims to the forward-driven linearity of temporality, the continuity of time” (29). The second is that often what returns, what refuses to stay past or linearly “before,” or what appears anew in a recreation of the past, is what has been refused,

⁶ Saul Anton, Nancy's translator, helpfully describes how literature is the aesthetic form of a philosophy of consciousness: “[T]he syncope points to the corporeality...of consciousness in its linguistic expression, the dimension and moment...wherein consciousness senses or feels itself ‘in the flesh’ and does so precisely because it is there that it blacks out, perhaps in the face of a sudden shock, a powerful emotion, or an experience of sublime grandeur” (xvii).

forgotten, incomplete, censored, or unacknowledged. Both Formis and Schneider point to trauma as a theory of syncope, when a past event cannot be properly processed and so is repeated in and as the present. What haunts the fainting characters of the novels here is not a particular traumatic event but the everyday trauma of their own otherness, like Gaston's hallucination of a "tawny spectral leopard" that follows him through Paris (355). The otherness of animality, technicity, materiality, physiology, and nonhumanness is revealed in the gaps of narrative syncope.

In contrast to Formis and Schneider's focus on trauma, I deconstruct this hierarchy via affect to argue that in moments of syncope the slippage between nonhuman-human and self-other binaries has an ethics. As I will explain fully in the next chapter, this ethics has two aspects, and both follow Jacques Derrida's model of deconstructive ethics. The first is that the fainting body is animal and other, and therefore strange and unknowable. This aspect of syncope reflects an ethical respect for the alterity of others. In Derrida's theory, ethical behavior involves acknowledging absolute otherness in all its multiplicity of difference, and respecting the boundary of that unknowability. Each of the novels I turn to in this dissertation grapples with the question of what others are, but, in contrast to theories of sympathetic identification, these novels suggest that knowing or understanding others allows us to classify them as expendable. Derrida's ethics of alterity provides a way to read the alternative ethical force of these novels—if fainting men do not even know their own bodies, how can they categorize other forms of life to be used selfishly or violently? I argue that syncope reveals the shared alterity of affective bodies and thus solicits respect for those bodies's shared vulnerability.

The second aspect of ethics made manifest by syncope is unconditional ethical response. The fainting bodies in these novels solicit a response from other characters and from readers while simultaneously challenging the traditional notion of response both for those who experience syncope and those who respond to it. Characters that are subject to non-agential, automatic, and reactive bodies are not subjects with the self-presence and free will to choose to respond. Moreover, Derrida insists that to be ethical, any response to another must be unconditional—it must have no strings attached and be unlimited and

infinite, even at the expense of the self. In fact, in proposing that bodies are strangers to the self, the novels of this study suggest that those bodies are unselfish, and affective response is unconditional. Since nobody (no body) can respond to everyone, completely and absolutely, all the time, unconditional ethics is an impossible ideal—yet one that nevertheless emerges from, and thereby literally materializes in, the body.

1.2. Syncope's Literary History

Men in late-Victorian novels have predecessors in other literary periods. In a recent study, Giulio J. Pertile examines men who faint in Renaissance literature, arguing that despite fainting's inevitable loss of consciousness, literary descriptions of fainting actually intensify feeling, suggesting that feeling the self, or autoaffection, is a form of consciousness. Pertile connects these literary examples to Descartes' theory of subjectivity, which has best been understood through a dualistic mind-body division. On the contrary, Pertile explains, Descartes' philosophy suggests that the conscious mind is only made possible through the sensing body. Referring to Descartes' concept of consciousness, Pertile writes that "the power of self-awareness it describes is first and foremost a power of feeling" (9). While Pertile emphasizes that "scenes of swooning in this period can thus often be better understood through physiology than through metaphysics or theology" (22), the physiological context in which he examines textual representations of fainting differs significantly from the nineteenth century. The Renaissance period did not yet conceive of consciousness as so fully disconnected from the body, or so "fully coterminous with first-personness" (Pertile 5) as the nineteenth century does. Binary relationships of mind and body or animal and human fully solidify in the cultural imagination after René Descartes's famous pronouncement of Enlightenment philosophy, "I think therefore I am." These binaries are therefore not fully established in Pertile's historical period, when Cartesian notions of consciousness as individuality, agency, and power are only beginning to take hold. While some Victorian theories of consciousness, like G. H. Lewes's for example, propose a theory of extended consciousness somewhat similar to Pertile's, what is significant in the representations I turn to here is the responsiveness of an *alienated* body, one that did not exist until after the Enlightenment.

Kenneth W. Heaton also turns to the Renaissance, and specifically to Renaissance drama, to argue for the “remarkable propensity for Shakespearean characters to die or faint, or to speak of these things as likely to happen, as a result of extreme emotion” (1337). Heaton records the faints of both male and female characters, and while his analysis is very brief, his argument is somewhat opposite to Pertile’s as he argues for the damaging effects of metaphysical or conscious emotion on the body. Reading both together suggests that fainting was by no means a transparent literary effect in Renaissance texts.

In the eighteenth century, two figures relevant to this study of narrative syncope begin to emerge and offer insight into the gendered aspect of fainting. One of these figures is the swooning woman, probably the figure most likely to come to mind when one thinks of fainting. Popular understanding suggests that fainting is a woman’s response, born of a gender-specific emotional capacity; Christiane Zschirnt proposes this was the case in eighteenth-century novels, where the “highly sensitive, susceptible woman overcome by her emotions” was an important feature (48). Using the eponymous protagonist of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) as a representative example, critics have linked literary swooning to the paradoxes of female sexual desire, represented as simultaneously erotically knowing and unknowing, available and unavailable, as well as to forms of repression that anticipate the Freudian unconscious and objectification of the female body that bleeds into pornography. Of particular interest are discussions that focus on syncope and narrative production, including narrative resistance to female sexual oppression.⁷ Dana Wight’s treatment of genre and narrative in her analysis of *Pamela*’s syncope as a form of passive agency is especially helpful for understanding developments in literary fainting in the nineteenth century novel. As *Pamela*’s losses of consciousness prevent her employer from raping her, Wight argues, they have the power to shift genre,

⁷ For example, Zschirnt argues that literary swooning represents a paradoxical need for women to be ignorant of sexual desire while at the same time be sexually available for marriage. She frames these losses of consciousness as precursors to the Freudian unconscious, the seat of repressed sexual desire; Ildiko Csengei argues similarly that fainting in eighteenth-century literature expresses repressed emotions and desire. In contrast, Naomi Booth argues that eighteenth-century literary fainting often offered up the prostrate female body as a pornographic object, but Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) refuses this objectification by insisting on narration in the wake of or in resistance to fainting.

turning the narrative “from a gothic plot to the marriage plot” (76). Moreover, Wight describes Pamela’s struggle to write herself through letters and a journal in the novel as a battle that sustains ever more losses as her fainting fits increase along with her chances of marriage. Yet while Pamela loses the subjectivity that we have come to associate with language and with the autobiographical “I” of first-person narrative, her body stands in for that subjectivity. Wight writes that “it is Pamela’s body, not her words, that signifies in the text” (85). While the texts that I read in this dissertation demonstrate a complex and often destabilized relationship between the autobiographical “I” and the expressive body, narratives like Pamela’s are nonetheless precursors to these late-Victorian first-person narratives.

The other significant literary figure to appear during this period is the man of feeling, a character of excessive emotional responsiveness exemplified in the pages of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* (1771), and Henry Mackenzie’s aptly titled *The Man of Feeling* (1771). As Alex Wetmore points out in his study of the eighteenth-century man of feeling, these novels draw on medical theories of the nervous system in their articulation of a “new ideal of sympathetic masculinity whose benevolent feelings arise out of sensitive nervous reactions” (103). While Wetmore does not concentrate on specific instances of fainting in these novels (although there are certainly a few), he argues that novels about the man of feeling merge a self-consciousness about the textuality of the novel—represented by non-linguistic disruptions like “intrusions, interruptions, fragmentations and digressions” (28)—with the emotional responsiveness of the male body. The Victorian novels in this dissertation also express this connection, and Wetmore and I draw many similar conclusions, most significantly as we both read expressions of physiological responsiveness through discourses of automatism. But the destabilization of the difference between men and women, and men and machines that Wetmore observes in the eighteenth century persists well beyond and helps account for the inclusion of animality and animal-human divide in nineteenth century literature and psychology. If these novels privilege emotion while recognizing the interconnection of language and culture, their narrative potential lies, according to Wetmore, in a tendency towards virtue and liberal public good even as those capacities are grounded in the mechanical body.

While nineteenth-century physiologists did locate virtuous responses like sympathy in the body and literary authors also engaged with this possibility, the novels I turn to here are problematic when it comes to sympathy and virtue. The disruption of the animal-human divide that occurs when the animal body interrupts subjectivity creates an uncertainty that has an ethical dimension. That is, ethical decisions can only be made in the novels of this study when received notions of human exceptionalism and superiority are challenged, and the difference between humans and other forms of life becomes undecidable.

Against claims that the culture of sentimentality fell out of favour at the end of the eighteenth century and that self-referential style no longer mirrored the feeling bodies in literature,⁸ Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* stands as a clear example that this is not the case. First published in 1818, the novel about a young scientist who gives life to a sensitive, literate creature made from the multiple bodies of corpses has since kept a tight hold on the public imagination of the porous boundary between what is human and natural and what is monstrously not. The novel connects narration and its interruptions with the feeling body,⁹ while its hypertextuality is evident in its double-frame structure with three narrators and multiple epistolary interjections. Men, women, and monsters in this novel all faint. When Elizabeth—the young love interest of Victor Frankenstein—swoons, it is easy to read her emotional response as a part of a cultural history depicting women's embodied emotion and sensitive nervous systems (53). But Victor is himself a nervous, sensitive, emotional man, who spends much of the novel anxious and ill. Moreover, the creature, too, is just as sensitive as

⁸ Wetmore writes that in the novels of the 1790s, “the connective tissue which had at one time bound sensibility together with self-referentiality begins to unravel and pull apart, undermining the coherence and unity of strategies of corporeal defamiliarization” (148).

⁹ For example, Margaret Linley writes that the automatic movements of the creature's newly animated body mirror the automaticity of Victor Frankenstein's responses, as the novel demonstrates “that monstrosity, the nonhuman, the aberrant or exceptional life form is fundamentally constitutive of, rather than opposed to, human nature” (261). Moreover, she points out that the “insight of *Frankenstein*, written during the scientifically and culturally sanctioned age of the articulate sensate body, is that the entire sensorium communicates. The creature's tale at the center of the novel, the voice demanding to be heard and responded to, the voice that asks ‘how can I move thee?’ (94), is often taken to be the authentic heart of the novel. At the same time, however, the text is saturated by touch, not only in the emphasis on the handmade status of the creature and thus the handiwork of invention, but in the organic connection between feeling and motion” (265-266).

Victor and Elizabeth, fainting (or coming close to it) twice in the novel.¹⁰ Victor and his creature are potent figures for this dissertation's claims; both are subject to their nervous bodies, and together they challenge the notion of superior human agency or free will and the prevailing and enduring concept of the human itself.¹¹

Men of feeling also appear in poetry during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Robert Mitchell has identified suspension as a poetic technique in John Keats's and Percy Bysshe Shelley's work, meant to pause animation in order to open the body up to new experiences. Mitchell argues that not only does this poetic suspension reflect a cultural interest in the scientific experiments of suspended animation, it reflects concerns over bodies that are either affectively habituated (and therefore politically quietest) or "too animated" (73). While Mitchell does not refer to physical fainting or swooning in Romantic poetry, and while poetry is not a focus in this dissertation, Keats's and Shelley's rendering of suspended consciousness through aesthetic form—and their concern over the politics of the affective body—is worth recognizing as part of the history of narrative syncope.

Frankenstein precedes this dissertation's novels in its obsession with humanness, physiology, forms of life, and the political and ethical claims that emerge from the porous boundaries around each of these concepts. Also like the novels in this dissertation,

¹⁰ We are introduced to a weak, exhausted, and freezing Victor in the Arctic on the hunt for the creature. He is rescued by the explorer Walton, who writes to his sister that he and his men "attempted to carry him [Victor] into the cabin, but as soon as he had quitted the fresh air, he fainted" (13). One of the first images the reader has of Victor is of his unconscious body, carried to safety and then rubbed to reanimation by other men. After he brings the creature to life, Victor describes his feelings in terms of his body, his nervous and circulatory systems, and his near-swoon: "Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly, that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness" (40). And when, on their wedding night, Elizabeth dies at the hands of the creature, Victor's shock, horror, fear, and sadness are all expressed as the simple and immediate loss of consciousness; though he wishes he were dead, "for a moment only did I lose recollection; I fainted" (165). If the creature's life, began in Victor's lab, suggests that feeling, thought, and language spring from the body, Victor is subject to the animal and the mechanical in no less alarming ways. The creature also mirrors Victor in his own fainting spells, first from the pain of a gunshot wound, and later nearly swooning from the emotional intensity of an encounter with a human: "it was an excellent opportunity," he explains, "yet, when I proceeded to execute my plan, my limbs failed me, and I sunk to the ground" (108).

¹¹ Anne C. McCarthy's study of suspension in Romantic and Victorian poetry, *Awful Parenthesis*, cites *Frankenstein*'s creature as embodying the form of suspension that will most concern the late nineteenth century—a suspended state between life and death represented by "uncanny figures of suspended animation" (113-114).

Shelley's tale has been classified as Gothic fiction or as early speculative or science fiction. Novels with fainting men such as *The Coming Race*, *Erewhon*, and *She* also fit into the category of speculative fiction. However, fainting knows no genre—or gender—in the nineteenth century. Fainting women, and occasionally men, appear in realist novels, like the aforementioned Dr. Hope (along with other women) in *Deerbrook*, the child Oliver in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839), Lady Dedlock and Esther Summerson in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1852-1853), Lucy Snow in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Margaret Hale in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854), Rosamond Vincy (and very nearly, Nicholas Bulstrode) in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-1872), Eustacia Vye in Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native* (1878), and Tess Durbeyfield (and again, very nearly, Angel Clare) in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). Towards the end of the century, Arthur Conan Doyle frequently employs the trope in his detective fiction, using "the act of fainting to represent acute emotional distress and heighten an already dramatic event" (Rodin and Key 228). Fainting characters also appear in prose poems like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856) and short stories like Vernon Lee's "Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady" (1896). Unsurprisingly, they also show up reliably in sensation fiction, a genre categorized by its melodramatic content and its language of the nervous system—as they do in *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Heart and Science*. In another sensation novel, Eliza Lynn Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* (1880), the titular rebel, Perdita, justifies not telling people about her own swoon and thereby raising questions about its (romantic) consequence, by citing its very commonness: "How many people faint! What was the use of making a fuss about such an ordinary accident? it would be silly and missy, said Perdita; and she hated being silly and missy" (159-160).

Despite this ubiquity, there are no studies of Victorian literature that are exclusively devoted to fainting men. Of the studies that focus on fainting at all, Douglas Thorpe's invokes common misunderstandings about the gender of fainting. For example, Thorpe claims that "the motif of the fainting woman" was "once one of the commonplaces of literature," but was, "in the nineteenth century, slowly disappearing" (104). While it may be true that Victorian women swoon less in nineteenth-century novels than they did in centuries past, they were hardly an uncommon figure. Moreover,

Thorpe argues that it was male authors who made use of this trope in order to undermine female agency (104), a difficult claim to challenge since the scholarly canon of Victorian literature has been weighted towards male authors. However, not only did female authors depict fainting women, male authors regularly depicted fainting men, too. Nonetheless, I agree with Thorpe's larger claim that female fainting was too unstable a sign to draw conclusions about the women who succumbed to it. As Thorpe writes, nineteenth century authors were interested in swooning not for the "apparent reduction or marginalization of female action, but for its narrative suspension, for the way in which it provides an opportunity for the scrutiny of signs" (108).¹²

For Thorpe, fainting is a plot device and swoons have narrative significance because "characters in fiction rarely faint for physiological reasons" (105). However, recent scholarship challenges his position. For example, Anne Kniggendorf's online exhibit, "Fainting in Victorian Novels and Victorian Life," emphasizes the possible physical causes of Victorian literary fainting, like corseting or arsenic fumes in fabrics and paints, suggesting that physiology is precisely the reason characters in fiction lose consciousness.¹³ Jill Matus and Elisha Cohn also emphasize the physiology of fainting, albeit through psychology, in their studies of literary shock and suspension. For Matus, literary fainting is representative of Victorian notions of shock, instances of mental trauma that include unconsciousness, trance, automatic behaviour, dissociation, and multiple selves. As I do, Matus turns to the emerging field of physiological psychology to argue that these losses of consciousness and agency destabilize the unity of identity itself. Broadly, for Matus, this trouble with selfhood, self-control, and self-knowledge crosses gender lines, as in her analysis of *North and South*, a novel where men "seem even more prone than women to excessive and destabilizing emotionality" (64). More specifically,

¹² See Victoria Bates for a thorough analysis of the complex meanings of fainting when women take the stand in the courtroom to testify to sexual assault and rape. In Bates's reading, fainting serves a positive purpose in securing and preserving feminine ideals of knowledge and behaviour.

¹³ See also Leigh Summers' *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* for the cultural significance of fainting attributed to corsetry. Summers writes that in the nineteenth century, "fainting was the physical manifestation of cultural imperatives and values that determined passivity—to the point of unconsciousness—as the epitome of an ideal femininity. [...] Men did not faint into women's arms. Women fainted into the arms of men" (137). While this is a questionable summation of fainting's cultural meaning, it is certainly not adequate to describe fainting's cultural or literary gender.

Matus includes men in her study who are shocked into fainting; for example, Matus turns to the shock and collapse of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*'s male protagonist, John Jasper, as though in a direct counterpoint to Thorpe's argument that the same novel portrays feminine passivity through Rosa Bud's swoon.

For her part, Cohn draws on Victorian and modern affect theory, rather than medical pathologizations of psychology, to argue that moments of narrative suspension in Victorian fiction—when characters have trouble staying conscious, self-aware, and in control—disrupt the progress of both the novel form and character development. However, Cohn's study perpetuates the stereotypical bias toward women fainters. Apart from her consideration of some trances, collapses, and spasms of a handful of male characters in George Meredith's writings, Cohn's swooners are largely women.¹⁴ Finally, it is worth noting that Anne C. McCarthy turns to embodied forms of suspension in *Awful Parenthesis*, claiming suspension broadly as a Romantic and Victorian poetic form that represents a sublime estrangement between subjectivity and the world. McCarthy's study demonstrates that poetic forms of suspension occur for both genders; however, her examples of suspension are broad and the gendered significance of swooning is not clarified. Nonetheless, McCarthy's argument that Romantic and Victorian poets used suspension in both form and theme to negotiate an "ontological crisis of contingency and discontinuity" in the nineteenth century is an important counterpart to my argument that narrative syncope represents narrative's inability to express subjectivity.

As this historical overview demonstrates, despite concentrated critical interest in the syncopated consciousness of women, there is a large population of fainting characters of both genders in nineteenth-century literature. By focusing on male characters in select late-nineteenth-century literature, my study demonstrates that fainting challenges human agency and narrative, not just female agency and narrative. Fainting represents a fundamental part of the affective bodies of all humans—a part of the self that is other, and that challenges the boundaries between humans and nonhuman forms of life.

¹⁴ While Cohn turns to Thomas Hardy's characters in *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* to explore lyrical pauses of self-agency, she omits references to Eustacia Vye's or Tess Durbeyfield's swoons.

Syncope's disruption of narrative and subjectivity and its challenge to human exceptionalism has an ethical dimension. While Matus and Cohn agree that nonconscious states prompted by nervous or affective responses alter traditional, Cartesian notions of ethical behaviour, awareness, and sympathy, neither extends these possibilities to claim, as I do, that troubling the boundary between men and animal or other nonhuman life might provide the basis for an ethics in Victorian novels. Like many Victorian scholars, Cohn and Matus root ethics in humanism through the idea of moral agency, which requires an individual, agential, self-aware subject with the power to make decisions about and towards others.¹⁵ I take a different approach, arguing that the inability to clearly distinguish between what is animal and human, self and other, subject or machine, defines the possibility of ethics in novels that feature fainting men. As I will show through the novels in the next chapters, there is no possibility of ethical human action unless it emerges out of the impossibility of demarcating the human from its others. Moments of narrative syncope express this impossibility.

1.3. 1890-1900: The End of the Century, The Ends of Man

While I turn to three novels published in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the myriad instances of literary fainting I have mentioned in this chapter suggest that through nonconscious bodies and forms, textuality bears witness to the nonhuman, to the animal, and to the automatic, technical, or machinic. However, just because the nonhuman is an element of the nonconscious aspects of textuality does not mean that it signifies the same things in each case. I have chosen these three novels because they grapple with new, impossible, strange, frightening, compelling, and pleasurable worlds of possibility that upend human selfhood: the ageless body of *Dorian Gray*, the evolved life forms of *The Time Machine*, and the vampiric bodies of *Dracula*. Moreover, while fainting bodies in nineteenth-century novels always call for the ethical response I mention

¹⁵ Cohn does note briefly that George Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* "emphasizes the inhumanity within human experience that is not fully registered consciously" and "values 'sensations' linked to unselfconsciousness, to eroticism, and...to animal being" (120).

above, these ageless, evolved, and vampiric bodies represent the ethical struggle between absolute alterity and the demand for unconditional response.

While nonhuman being is externalized in Dorian's portrait, the Eloi and Morlocks, and Count Dracula, that same nonhumanness is found to be inseparable from humanness itself in the affective bodies of men (and women) and in their narratives. Men are my primary focus in these novels because they were not seen to be biologically predisposed to emotional excess or physical or moral weakness, as women were. Men were (and in many ways, still are) understood to embody most fully the attributes of the human—self-control, self-possession, will, purpose, productivity, and moral fortitude. Certainly, British men were understood to be the exemplary form of the human. Women (and non-British or non-European men), by contrast, were already presumed less-than-human. If men are the exemplary form of the human, then syncope's challenge to their autonomy is a challenge to human autonomy. I do not argue that fainting feminizes the male body because doing so would essentialize the fainting body as feminine. Instead, I claim that fainting in particular and the affective body in general destabilizes essentialist elements of gender. Turning to fainting men, then, can reorient us towards the subjective and ethical significance of nonconsciousness in women that challenges the boundaries of humanness without reifying female biology as already less human and more open.

The second chapter of this dissertation lays out the relationship between the theoretical histories and fields I use to read these novels and their fainting subjects. I take a deconstructive approach towards these texts because narrative syncope reveals how impossible it is to separate the humanness that appears in these novels (as consciousness and language) from its opposite. In doing so, I bring together contemporary affect theory and nineteenth-century physiological psychology to explore how, more than a century apart, these two fields have remarkably similar ideas and concerns about the nonconscious body and its responses. I then frame two significant aspects that emerge in deconstructive readings of the affective body: autobiography and ethics. While the novels here are not autobiographical in the strict definition of the genre, each of the fainting men (and sometimes women) in these texts is struggling with the (im)possibilities of self-representation, as novelistic form turns from realist narration towards an alienated and

fragmented literary style. These men are, as Derrida would call them, autobiographical animals (*Animal*). Forms of nonconsciousness are found in the nonhuman aspects of their physiology and disrupt their attempts to write themselves and their stories. At the same time, their subjectivities and narratives depend on syncope. As Formis writes, “syncopated time defines the way that stories are told, and histories are written” (92).

I also address the ethics of affective syncope in my second chapter. The men in these novels certainly do not always behave in ways that we would call ethical—Dorian kills his friend and destroys his body in an acid bath, the Time Traveller enjoys breaking Morlock bones, and the so-called Crew of Light violate and destroy the bodies of vampires in repeated acts of vigilante violence. Yet, these humans respond in these ways because the artworks, animals, machines, and monsters of these texts ask the men in them to confront the nonhumanness of their own subjectivity and the limitlessness of unconditional ethical demand. In the face of evolutionary theory and physiological psychology, the nonhuman bodies of these texts insist that they are necessary both to subjectivity and to ethics.

My third chapter turns to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In Wilde’s novel, Dorian is gifted a painting of himself; while he remains eternally young, the portrait ages in his place. Beautiful, desired, and hungry for sensual experience, Dorian pursues pleasure and follows the demands of his animal body. I turn to the late-Victorian field of physiological aesthetics and the concept of bare life to argue that the portrait marks Dorian’s affective life and shows him not the so-called sins he has committed, but the demands placed on him by others whom he has touched. Dorian struggles with the impossible ethics of responsibility as he responds to his own animality and nonconscious desires, while at the same time he is unable to escape the portrait’s insistence that he has affected others and therefore may be responsible for them. When he faints towards the end of the novel, he experiences only a brief understanding of what it might mean to be responsible for what we touch and what touches us, whether human, animal, or object.

Chapter Four looks to *The Time Machine*, in which the Time Traveller journeys almost a million years into the future to discover that the human race has evolved into

two distressingly inhuman species. The Traveller has trouble holding onto consciousness, both when he is moving through time on the machine and during his encounters with the future Eloi and Morlock humans. The time machine extends and mirrors the Traveller's conscious and nonconscious self, and shows him his own similarity to the tool-using Morlocks and vulnerable animal-like Eloi of the future. I therefore read the Traveller's nonconscious responses alongside theories of automatism that held that humans are the same kind of sensitive automata that animals are, along with contemporary theories of posthumanism that suggest that humans are forms of life that slip ontologically between the categories of human, animal, and machine. This chapter engages most deeply with an ethics of uncertainty, as the narrative takes an impossible temporal form and reveals that although the Traveller and the beings of the future are different, it is impossible to tell how. This uncertainty between forms of life suggests that there is no moral decision-making possible about whose life counts more, whose is expendable, and on what grounds.

In Chapter Five, on Stoker's *Dracula*, I argue that the vampire mirrors the affective form of human subjectivity. The first faint belongs to Jonathan, and reveals the mysterious workings of the circulatory and nervous systems. In this chapter, I turn to Victorian theories of physiological psychology that suggest how closely related fainting is with the circulatory system, and how uncertain fainting is as a sign. I also follow Catherine Malabou's work on heteroaffection, the idea that subjectivity depends on the body's affective otherness and the otherness of the external world. The circulatory system and the vampire make up these two forms of otherness—they are both strange and they both initiate the Crew of Light's alienation from themselves. As many male and female characters in this novel faint, the very idea of gender, like the difference between self and other, becomes uncertain. And as the characters in the novel need to be affected by otherness in order to be subjects, they also nonconsciously and automatically respond generously to others. As human bodies respond and give each other and the vampire what they need, they enact Derrida's claim that generosity is only ethical when it is unconditional, and therefore when it becomes impossible to give.

Finally, my conclusion turns briefly to the example of Little Billee in George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894). While scholars have identified Trilby herself as an automaton, little attention has been paid to the men in the text. Not only does Svengali faint, but little Billee has an epileptic fit that temporarily changes his brain and his behaviour. As Billee becomes less loving and self-interested, he becomes more universally sympathetic. Billee begins to fulfill the impossible demand of ethical attention and care to many others, but only via affective loss. Little Billee's narrative includes a seemingly minor representation of narrative syncope that nonetheless helps us to see how syncope can expand, texture, and challenge our readings of the gendered and racialized body in Victorian culture, and its relationship to sympathy and ethics. The widespread forms that the phenomenon of syncope take in the late-Victorian period shows us how integral the nonconscious, animal, automatic body was to the idea of humanness, and to politics and ethics. This body remains important today, as we struggle to live ethically with different forms of life, as our nonconscious, affective bodies are ever more closely tracked and managed, and as developing social technologies both threaten and affirm our own humanity.

Chapter 2. Affect Theory, Deconstruction, and the Ethics of Narrative Syncope

Bulstrode, after a moment's hesitation, took his hat from the floor and slowly rose, but he grasped the corner of the chair so totteringly that Lydgate felt sure there was not strength enough in him to walk away without support. What could he do? He could not see a man sink close to him for want of help. He rose and gave his arm to Bulstrode, and in that way led him out of the room; yet this act, which might have been one of gentle duty and pure compassion, was at this moment unspeakably bitter to him.
— George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

We need look no further than George Eliot's realist classic *Middlemarch* for confirmation of the pervasiveness of fainting as a literary trope in the Victorian period. But fascination with syncope went well beyond literary contexts. Information and advice about the phenomenon could be found in popular, inexpensive magazines as well as medical texts. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, both *The London Journal* and *The London Reader* published articles on fainting. Turning to their descriptions of why it occurred, how to help victims of swooning, and what gender they would likely be gives us a glimpse of how fainting was understood in popular culture.

In an 1886 article titled "In Case of Fainting," *The London Reader* describes the experience of swooning by its immediacy, disorientation, and gap in consciousness:

There is a feeling of sinking and weakness, objects appear to spin about, there is sometimes a ringing in the ears, a sense of confusion, and the next thing the person is conscious of is a gradual recovery, after a blank, the existence of which he can only infer. (297)

This passage contains similarities to Gaston Beauvais's narration in *Wormwood*, when he haltingly describes his vision of Silvion Guidèl before "reel[ing] down" in a faint (330). It also, like *Wormwood*, figures the fainting subject as a man. By contrast, the *London Journal* article, "Fainting," appears in its *Ladies' Supplement*, and therefore unsurprisingly refers to the fainter by the pronoun "her" (6). However, in another *London Journal* article from 1896 called "Queer Complaints," a correspondent writes that while "the gentler sex is, by many people, supposed to hold the monopoly of such fainting-fits as are not due to disease, but to nervous affections," an "eminent doctor" assured the

writer this was not the case (416). Taken together, these articles posit that the gender of fainting bodies was in question at the end of the century. They also point to another aspect of fainting that is relevant to this dissertation—the connection between fainting and circulatory system. “Queer Complaints” goes on to tell the doctor’s anecdotes about nervous men, who faint at the sight of underdone meat and blood, or its colour in a blood orange, among other things (416). Concerned with blood in another sense, “In Case of Fainting” notes that the circulatory system may need to be stimulated to revive the victim, suggesting this could be done with smelling salts (as noted above), as well as splashing the face with cold water, rubbing the arms, and providing a sip of brandy (297).

The London Journal was a cheap and relatively popular magazine, with a readership of over half a million per week in the 1850s, suggesting that the causes and effects of fainting were items of interest for the general public (*Dictionary* 374).¹⁶ Other articles suggest that this public was also concerned with the inability to differentiate fainting from other states of unconsciousness. An earlier *Reader* article from 1870, titled “Sleep, Fainting, Apoplexy,” reflects a desire to find markers of distinction between these losses of consciousness, while again emphasizing the circulatory system by describing fainting as the cessation of heartbeat and respiration, when “the heart missed a beat, failed for an instant, failed for only once to send the proper amount of blood to the brain” (532). *The London Reader* again refers to a male fainter, rather than a female, and his bloodless face.

These articles focus on three significant aspects of fainting relevant to my argument. The first is that popular notions about the gender of fainting were being challenged in the late-Victorian period. Secondly, they reflect the fact that science was theorizing a medical basis for fainting in the organ of the heart and the circulatory system of the body. Finally, they propose that physical boundaries between forms of

¹⁶ While the *Journal*’s readership ebbed through the latter half of the nineteenth century, it remained relatively popular (*Dictionary* 374). Periodicals such as *Macmillan’s Magazine* and *The Nineteenth Century* described the *Journal* as popular in 1880/1881 and 1886, respectively (Palmegiano 472, 382), and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* noted the *Journal* was “still thriving” in 1895 (538). Little is known about the *London Reader*, but it was founded by the same proprietor as the *Journal*, although it was not as successful (*Dictionary* 602).

nonconsciousness were blurry, and therefore a source of anxiety. As these articles suggest, fainting was a contested concept and an uncertain physiological state for Victorians, despite, or perhaps because of, increasing scientific interest. People could not necessarily tell the difference between fainting and sleep or stroke; and, even more frighteningly, between fainting and death, which itself was an uncertain state. People's inability to know what exactly "life" was, and how to know when it was extinguished, caused fear and anxiety (as novels like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* [1818] aptly demonstrate).

Moreover, even doctors could not be sure whether a fainting man was dead or just unconscious. Forensic medical texts of the period use the term syncope to describe death caused by the cessation of the heart, as well as to describe transient losses of consciousness. Charles Meymott Tidy's *Legal Medicine* (1882), for example, calls syncope the medical term for both "death beginning at the heart" (284) and the non-fatal "insensibility and the loss of power to move" (38-39). In *Principles of Forensic Medicine* (1888), David Ferrier and William Guy also identify syncope as related to the heart, a "sudden failure of circulation" that could result in either fainting or death (232). Ferrier and Guy acknowledge that if a loss of consciousness like syncope is mistaken for death, the inanimate body might not be revived in time or could even be buried alive (although the latter is more likely in Catholic France and not, they promise, in Anglican England) (213). Syncope was therefore both physiologically and semantically confusing for the late-Victorians. George K. Behlmer, who also notes the pervasive Victorian fear of premature burial, points out that all this confusion over the physical state of syncope is reflected in the instability of the category. The material struggle to distinguish between states of nonconsciousness mirrors a linguistic fluidity and ambiguity of terms. He writes that the period

employed an opulent if unstable vocabulary to designate bodily conditions that hovered between the fully animate and the irrecoverably dead. Trance, coma, syncope, catalepsy, insensibility, suspended animation, human hibernation, and anesthesia were only the most common labels for what appeared to be corporal frontiers. (208)

In other words, these “liminal categories” were “far from fixed,” both physiologically and linguistically (208).

Literary depictions of nonconsciousness are similarly vague, in the sense that the text often refuses to clarify what exactly has happened during a faint or into what pathological category it might fall. Instances where characters become insensible, tumble to the floor or collapse into a chair, or suddenly “come to” or return to consciousness, may represent what we typically understand as syncope—a brief drop in blood pressure leading to a loss of consciousness—as much as they may also represent almost any of the other categories to which Behlmer refers above. The medical profession also often associated syncope with shock, which affected the nervous system; Tidy asserts that death from shock is likely caused by syncope (286), and Ferrier and Guy observe that both shock and syncope result in a lack of circulation, and they can occur together (232-233). In his 1879 paper on suspended animation, Benjamin Richardson comments that attempts to strictly classify syncope from asphyxia become pointless at times, because “as one progresses in research, the terms become cumbersome and even meaningless” (488). That is, Richardson, too, acknowledges the porous boundaries between forms of unconsciousness.

While late-Victorian authors were aware of and writing about the material basis of consciousness, emotion, and behaviour, I argue that classifying their depictions of nonconsciousness by strictly medical terms is unnecessary. Whether a fit, a spell, a swoon, a faint, a near-faint, or an insensibility, what I am calling narrative syncope is defined by the absence of consciousness and represents a condition of affective being. That is, fainting is an intensified exemplary form of affect itself, and represents a primacy of the body over will and agency that characterizes affective being. In this chapter, I bring Victorian and modern affect theorists together to illuminate the ways fainting is emblematic of affect: as nonconscious and nonsubjective, reactive and responsive, animal and automatic. Moreover, as I mention in the Introduction, narrative syncope is also expressed in the narrative structure of the novel. I thus turn to the genre of autobiography to show how syncope both disrupts and creates the possibilities for subjectivity and its narrative form, as the affective body represents a completely other and therefore

unknowable part of self. Further, affect also deconstructs animal-human and self-other binaries. It creates a form of identification between all selves and others that has an ethical function. In the last section of this chapter, I argue that Jacques Derrida's ethical theories can help us to think through how the affective body presents an (impossible) ethical ideal.

2.1. Physiological Psychology and Nonconscious Affect in the Late-Victorian Period

Twenty-first century affect theorists often overlook the nineteenth century despite its intense and diverse fascination with embodied feeling. Affect then as now refers to the receptions, rhythms, and intensities of the feeling body broadly. The emerging field of Victorian physiological psychology investigated those bodily fluctuations, reflexes, and responses that we now find in contemporary affect theory, and, like contemporary affect theory, located those aspects of humanness associated with subjectivity—like emotion, consciousness, thought, and free will—in the brain and the nervous system. For Victorians, feeling was an amorphous and highly consequential category that could encompass sensation, reflex, habit, passion, affection, or desire, and was closely entangled with questions about volition, free will, and moral agency (Dixon 140). Moreover, physiological psychologists often used fainting as an emotional or affective expression that signalled the animalism or mechanism of the body—what Brenda Ayres, Cyndy Hendershot, and Carrie Rohman refer to as the animal within.

Physiological psychology is therefore a highly relevant field for contemporary affect theory, which looks to many of the same physiological processes and grapples with the same implications for subjectivity. Contemporary affect theory occasionally acknowledges its debt to the nineteenth century, but those theorists tend to reduce nineteenth-century ideas about affect to a single discourse. They also do not fully account for the significance of the animal-human divide, an unfortunate omission considering how significant this binary is to any account of the body.¹⁷ The animal-human divide is

¹⁷ While Charles Darwin remains a significant figure in modern emotion theory, Victorian psychology is also acknowledged in Brian Massumi's claim that affect is autonomous from subjectivity, Teresa

also a key aspect of narrative syncope in late nineteenth century. The Victorian era was the age of evolution and extinction, when science revealed humanity's (often distressing) biological similarity to animals, simultaneously "connecting us to all other living creatures" even while it "defamiliarized even the most ordinary form of life" (G. Levine 6).¹⁸ For the Victorians, animals were both self and other.

Along with evolutionary theory, and often explicitly in conversation with it, physiological psychology changed the way Victorians understood the relationship between self and other, human and animal. These two sciences challenged human exceptionalism, including the ability to exercise moral agency and the right to exert mastery over the land and its creatures. Evolutionary theory did so by locating the origin of the human in animals, challenging human superiority by upending the belief that humans were created by a god in his image. If humans were the same as animals, what gave them the right to do with animals what they would? Physiological psychology challenged human exceptionalism by founding the human self on an animalistic and mechanistic body and thereby doing away with the human soul, the center of free will and moral agency. Physiological psychology's theory of affect contributed to this upheaval, because "if man's very emotions could be reduced to mere physiological reflexes, or to inherited animal survival mechanisms, then he truly would have been removed from his unique position as the pinnacle of creation" (Dixon 136). Our contemporary period continues to grapple with similar questions of kinship and power, as late-capitalism's scorched earth policy vies with growing liberal and radical politics that attend to the affective strangeness of creaturely life and attempt to discover ecological

Brennan's argument that affect is transmitted materially like hormones between bodies, and Patricia Clough's theory that media changes the affective body.

¹⁸ See Ivan Kreilkamp's "Pitying the Sheep in *Far From the Madding Crowd*" for an example of this connection and estrangement in his analysis of the inclusion of animals (in this case, sheep) into forms of community, care, and governance in Thomas Hardy's late-Victorian novel *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874). Kreilkamp argues that Hardy bases caretaking in the novel on the vulnerability of "the organic body, human or animal...always at risk and susceptible to injury" (475). More broadly, Kreilkamp connects Hardy's novel to the fact that for farmers, particularly with the 1865 cattle plague, "the animal body emerged as newly interesting and dangerous, a potential source of disease and other meanings—dangerous because of its intimacy with and similarity to the human" (478). Moreover, Kreilkamp underlines Hardy's suggestion through the novel that shepherding itself points up an unresolvable tension between the elevation of the nonhuman to subjectivity and the demotion of all life to nonindividual and nonsubjective meat.

modes of living. We can therefore both illuminate the relationship between self and other in nineteenth-century literary instances of fainting, and fill a significant gap in contemporary theories of the affective body, by turning to syncope's place in discussions of the animal-human divide in physiological psychology.

Charles Darwin is the most famous of the Victorian physiological psychologists, and one of the few whose work is acknowledged in histories of affect theory.¹⁹ Scholars also regularly recognize that Darwin's theories of natural and sexual selection influenced Victorian writers.²⁰ His theory of affect in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animal* (1872) also provides an important backdrop for Victorian literature and culture. In this follow up to *The Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin theorizes that humans's and animals's shared physiology and evolutionary progress is evidenced by their similar involuntary expressions of emotions. He casts his net wide with respect to emotion, referring often to "states of mind." Darwin divides the expressions of mental states into three indistinct categories in his theory: habitual behaviors (usually with a history of evolutionary purpose), opposite behaviors (less useful), and nervous reactions (largely uncontrollable, whether useful or not). Fainting falls into this final category, an expression of what he refers to (after Herbert Spencer) as nerve-force.

Darwin describes fainting as a trans-species phenomenon, explaining how a man may faint from "prolonged agony" (70) and how a horse, a canary and a robin each succumb to fainting from terror (77). His examples suggest that fainting, whether animal or human, is an involuntary nervous response to an indeterminate emotional state; that is, the excessive and/or uncontrollable sensitivity of the nervous system causes the faint,

¹⁹ See, for example Sara Ahmed's chapter on disgust in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, or Paul Ekman's considerable body of work on emotional expression. Ekman calls Darwin's work "the book that began the science of psychology" (3449). Many scholars would disagree with him; Kurt Danziger notes that scholars often credit the Ancient Greeks with the creation of psychology, while he argues that modern psychology began in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, Darwin's work remains undeniably significant to scholars of subjectivity and emotion, particularly for those working at the nexus of psychology and science. For other recent affirmations of Darwin's continued importance to the science of emotion, see Daniel M. Gross; Ursula Hess and Pascal Thibault; and Robert P. Spunt, Emily Ellsworth, and Ralph Adolphs.

²⁰ For a sample of Darwinian readings of Victorian literature, see Gillian Beer's *Darwin's Plots*, Gowan Dawson's *Darwin, Literature and Victorian Respectability*, and John Glendening's *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels*.

whether swooning itself is associated emotionally with either pain or fear. Trembling and quickened heartbeat, two other expressions of the nervous system, are likewise uncertain signs of emotion in Darwin's work. He notes that trembling can be caused by fear, anger, or joy (67), or even fine music (68), and a quickened heartbeat might be the result of pain (73), rage (74-75), joy (76), fear (77), or love (78).²¹ Darwin uses fainting to represent feeling that crosses the human-animal divide, both familiarizing and defamiliarizing the swoon as an expression of human and animal affective physiology. Further, fainting is also physiologically other in that it is uncertain what particular emotion, if any, it may be expressing.

While Darwin's insistence that humans and animals express the same emotions underlines the otherness or alterity of emotional expression, he tends to domesticate the animal-feeling body through an anecdotal sensibility (and even friendly intimacy). By contrast, his evolutionist colleague, Thomas Huxley, offers no such comfort when he highlights the strangeness or otherness of the human animal. Two years after Darwin published *The Expression*, Huxley delivered an incendiary lecture (also published) called "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata." In it, Huxley offers a much more alienated view of the animal source of human behaviour in his argument that both animal and human bodies behave like machines, and that consciousness is a by-product of the body's automatic workings like the steam whistle on a locomotive engine (575). He calls animals and humans "conscious automata," and, like Darwin, sees differences between the two as matters of degree.

While Huxley does not take emotion as his central topic, he is nevertheless an important, if overlooked, figure in the history of affect. In agreeing with Darwin that animals have feelings, Huxley pushes physiological psychology to the limit by declaring not only that the brain is the source of emotions (as well as thoughts), but that free will is illusory:

²¹ In her foundational work on the animal in Victorian culture, Harriet Ritvo writes that the lack of human exceptionalism is an illusion—even if Darwin removes God from the question of human exceptionalism, he finds that "the source of human preeminence lay within" (40).

We are conscious automata, endowed with free will in the only intelligible sense of that much-abused term—inasmuch as in many respects we are able to do as we like—but none the less parts of the great series of causes and effects which, in unbroken continuity, composes that which is, and has been, and shall be—the sum of existence” (xx).

In theorizing that the body is the source of feeling, and that it is separate from and has primacy over the mind, Huxley grapples with many of the same questions that affect theorists do today. While fainting does not make a major appearance in Huxley’s discussion of automatism, it provides an example of animal-human continuity in demonstrating that the evolutionary dawning of consciousness on more and more complex forms of life is the same as the coming-to-consciousness of humans after a swoon (574). Because we see consciousness grow “from a dim glimmer to its full light,” when a person comes to after a faint, we can therefore surmise that, evolutionarily, animals have a consciousness closer to the fainting end of the spectrum, a consciousness with less “intensity” but “which, more or less distinctly, foreshadows our own” (574). In other words, fainting for Huxley represents the zero sum of both human and animal consciousness, with animal consciousness simply existing closer to the state of syncope than human consciousness does. Like Darwin, Huxley posits the animal body as the same as the human body. For Huxley, both are mechanical and both produce similar forms of consciousness. At the same time, this very similitude is radically other, a version of human consciousness that is alienated from the traditional idea of the individual, self-directing, agential human.

The impact of the conscious automaton theory was widespread and significant when it was published, as Suzy Anger points out (Review), but Huxley’s lecture is not given much sustained attention by modern-day literary critics.²² Many literary critics tracing the intertwined history of Victorian physiological science and literature tend to be more interested in Huxley’s contemporaries, like the scientist and literary critic G. H. Lewes, who was also George Eliot’s partner. Lewes, like Huxley and Darwin, believes in the continuity of animal-human psychology and the physiological tenet that the body is

²² This may be because, as Gowan Dawson explains, Huxley and other Darwinists “maintained an unwavering, and vociferously proclaimed, opposition to all manifestations of aestheticism” in order to avoid being charged with a similar moral and spiritual degeneracy (193).

the cause of subjectivity. However, he disagrees with Huxley's dualist proposal that consciousness is an output of the body, and he rejects the notion that either mind or body is strictly mechanical.²³ In his 1877 volume *The Physical Basis of Mind*, Lewes explains that the body and mind are the objective and subjective perspectives on the same thing—Feeling (with a capital F)—and that either embodied feelings or conscious feelings trigger responses.²⁴ Fainting appears in Lewes's section on "Animal Automatism" in *The Physical Basis of Mind* as an example of how the difference between voluntary and involuntary states is in fact a specious division. He tells a story that also appears in William Guy and David Ferrier's *Principles of Forensic Medicine*, in which a Colonel Townshend is able to "suspend the beating of his pulse and always fainted when he did so" (Lewes 420).²⁵ This unusual case supports Lewes's theory that some involuntary processes can be controlled, while other processes which are usually voluntary sometimes happen involuntarily; therefore, he claims that "both are reflexes" (420). In troubling the meanings of voluntary behavior and reflex, Lewes points up fainting's alterity and uncertainty (as Darwin did). However, Lewes's theory is less suited to think through the narrative phenomenon of fainting because fainting entails a full absence of consciousness. Where Lewes's presents the mind and body as either side of the same coin, fainting privileges the body.

Like Darwin, William James is an important figure in the history of affect and in literary scholarship.²⁶ Like Lewes, James also disagrees with Huxley's thesis, arguing in "Are We Automata?" (1879) that consciousness is active and that its function lies in selection. However, he problematizes the division between human self and animal other by admitting the possibility that the same kind of selective, attentive consciousness exists

²³ For a thorough reading of Lewes's theories in the multi-volume *Problems of Life and Mind* (of which *The Physical Basis of Mind* is the second volume), see Rick Rylance.

²⁴ The idea that the body is actually conscious follows the same kind of logic that Giulio J. Pertile points out is at work in Renaissance texts. I take a slightly different tack because the authors to which I turn in this dissertation are more interested, I argue, in the nonconscious aspects of the body.

²⁵ Lewes does not reference Townshend by name, as Guy and Ferrier do, but does refer to Cheyne, a physician who writes about Townshend in *The English Malady: or, A Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds* (1733).

²⁶ See, for example, the David H. Evans' recent collection *Understanding James, Understanding Modernism*.

for animals (14). In addition, James alienates the body from the mind in “What is an Emotion?” (1884), when he famously theorizes that physical response is required to produce an emotional state: “the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion (189-190, original emphasis). Many scholars have debated whether James is suggesting that bodily expression comes before emotion or bodily expression is the whole emotion (we do not cry because we are sad, we are sad because we cry), or whether he is deconstructing the relationship between mind and body (crying and sadness cannot be disentangled).²⁷ In any case, James argues that there is no emotion without the body. The division between self and other breaks down in James’s reading most fully when he offers an example of his own syncope, when he faints as a child at the sight of a horse’s blood (196). James’s example depicts fainting as a physiological response that lacks any conscious reasoning or emotional state, making the body primary over the mind. It alienates the mind doubly from the body, first by removing the mind from its seat of control over or transcendence from the body, and second by describing the mind as completely unaware of the cause or meaning behind the body’s behavior.

Much of physiological psychology is dangerously gendered, raced, classed, and abled, and the theories I have mentioned above are no exception. However, in these theories, gender is not an essentialized aspect of fainting. A long philosophical tradition theorizes emotions as “not only ‘beneath’ but ‘behind’ the man/human,” as Sara Ahmed points out (3), as emotions were (and in many ways still are) seen to be felt more keenly by—and more often to overpower—women, children, non-whites, and the neuro-atypical. The theorists of physiological psychology mentioned in this dissertation are no exception to this prejudice. For example, James essentializes women in his claim that they are biologically predisposed to be delighted when they see a baby (191), and Darwin suggests that children and non-Europeans are biologically closer to animals by consistently comparing their emotional expressions. Despite this, these nineteenth-

²⁷ Many readers of James interpret this theory to mean that emotions are non-cognitive and nothing but the body. Phoebe C. Ellsworth offers a thorough and rigorous reading of James’ work to explain that this both was and was not the case for James. Ellsworth points to the importance of cognition as well as the significance of certain kinds of bodily primacy in James’s theory.

century theorists describe men as exemplary swooners, largely without gendered implications.

However, the discourse of hysteria was also taken up by physiological psychology, and, historically, this discourse did gender fainting. Hysteria has long been labelled a female affliction; the term hysteric means “belonging to the womb” or “suffering from discomfort in the womb” in Greek (OED). While medical hypotheses of the cause of hysteria have changed over time, hysterical symptoms have consistently included fainting (Showalter 15). However, as both Elaine Showalter and Mark S. Micale have described in their rigorous studies, nineteenth-century men suffer the same nervous complaints as women. While Micale offers a much longer history of male hysteria than Showalter (what he calls the “hidden history of male nervous illness”), both identify the nineteenth century as a crucial period in its medicalization. This is due in large part to Jean-Martin Charcot’s neuropathological institute at La Salpêtrière in Paris, with its “special ward for the treatment of nervous and neurological infirmities” in patients of both genders (Micale 119). Moreover, Micale also notes that fainting was pathologized as a hysterical symptom for men (195). With his overwrought nerves and his fainting fit, *Wormwood*’s Gaston could make a prime example of a late-Victorian literary male hysteric. As Micale writes, it is “the nervous man in the parlour who becomes the emblematic personality of this later generation” of nineteenth-century men (208). He identifies these fictional hysterics as “white, Christian, middle-class, professional, heterosexual,” as well as decadent, degenerate, and aestheticist (208-210). In fact, as I note throughout these chapters, some of the fainting men in the pages of this dissertation have been called hysterical by scholars who describe them as failing Victorian ideals of masculinity or challenging the boundaries of gender and heterosexuality.²⁸

However significant these readings are, sexuality and gender are only two of the ways we can understand the fainting body. Where Sigmund Freud will later theorize that

²⁸ See also Claire Kahane, who argues that the narrative voices in the latter half of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth belong to hysterical subjects who struggle between masculine and feminine identities and desire to reject the feminine. Peter Logan similarly points out the way narratives in Victorian literature give voice to the body’s nervous pathologies, like hysteria, that both condition the act of speech and undermine it.

hysteria is caused by the repression of often sexual and traumatic psychic events (Micale 245-246), Charcot did not emphasize sexuality in his findings on male patients (144). Charcot's work between 1885 and 1888 "became almost synonymous with the investigation of traumatic hysteria" (Micale 139), and he sought to prove that "hysteria had neurological, not gynecological, origins" (Stiles, *Neurology* 13). While it is historically and culturally significant to recognize the often-obscured narratives of gender fluidity or same-sex desire that appear in the same novels as fainting men do—in Corelli's *Wormwood*, for example, the swooning Gaston is at least as obsessed with his fiancée's lover Silvion as he is with fiancée—I seek here to turn to other questions opened up by the nonconscious lapses of these literary bodies. Hysteria, therefore, remains a broader context for my readings where it represents subversive and queer forms of expression and intimacy, and where it intersects with aestheticism and degeneration (which in some versions includes a devolution towards animality). However, scholars that insist on feminizing hysteria represent a contemporary obsession, not a Victorian one. The men in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Time Machine*, and *Dracula* do lose attributes associated with masculinity—like self-possession, rationality, productivity, and purpose—when they faint. However, the Enlightenment tradition had long posited European men as the ideal form of the human, and those attributes associated with masculinity were also held up as attributes of the human. Fainting men therefore beg the question of humanness itself when they lose awareness, agency, and control. They reveal that the affective body is both self and other, human and animal, responsive and automatic, strange and vulnerable.

2.2. Physiology and Nonconsciousness in Modern Affect Theory

Physiological psychology often used the example of fainting to challenge traditional understandings of animal-human difference by associating fainting with the animal, automatic, nonconscious, and unknowable affective body. These theories of the affective body suggested that consciousness was an automatic process (or even a by-product of the body) and that free will was illusory. While most of twentieth-century psychology was synonymous with Freud and his legacy, the last few decades have seen a turn to a broad scholarly interest in the body, in concert with developments in cognitive

science and political activism around gendered, sexualized, raced, and disabled bodies. Affect theory has been a part of this turn, but, as I mention above, theorists often approach the subject a-historically, or draw only on major figures like Darwin and James and so reduce the nineteenth-century to one or two lines of thinking. However, the late-Victorian interest in the affective body both prefigures and textures many twenty-first century theories that also grapple with the relationship between the conscious mind and the nonconscious body. Affect theory therefore, as Tara MacDonald puts it, “might be better understood as a material *return*” (125).²⁹ Moreover, twenty-first century affect theory makes clear that syncope is a part of the conceptual apparatus of affect theory. Modern theories posit syncope as the very structure of affect, supporting my argument that fainting helps us to know ourselves. In this study, I bring modern and Victorian affect theorists together to show how both discourses use fainting to show us the condition of our affective being: nonconscious and nonsubjective, reactive and responsive, animal and automatic, and, as twenty-first century theorists insist, full of potential.

Affect in the twenty-first century most often refers to the physiological structure of bodily feelings, sensation, and perception, and response. However, another significant approach to affect analyzes particular emotions and their cultural expressions, transmissions, formations, and politics. While there is certainly overlap and further distinctions and divisions,³⁰ we might say broadly that there are two ways of approaching affect: nonsubjective (the nonconscious affects of the body) and subjective (the structure and politics of particular emotions).³¹ While the former illuminates how affect is

²⁹ While not reaching as far back as the Victorian period, Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank have may have inaugurated one type of return to materialism when they published *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* in 1995, an edition of selected writings on affect by Silvan Tomkins from 1955. Tomkins was a psychologist whose materialist theories claimed affect as biological and limited in number, in the vein of Darwin’s emotion theory.

³⁰ See for example Eric Shouse’s article “Feeling, Emotion, Affect” for a definition of feeling, or Jonathan Flatley’s monograph *Affective Mapping* for a definition of mood.

³¹ Rei Terada argues against this binary, claiming that theories of emotion are not the subjective half of theories of affect. Instead, Terada argues that deconstruction shows that emotions themselves are nonsubjective. She explains that the traditional concept of affect-emotion theory is that “emotion requires a subject—thus we can see we’re subjects since we have emotions,” which she describes as a sleight of mind that creates “the illusion of subjectivity” (11). Terada points out that in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida explains that language expresses the difference between the ideal subject of emotion and its external object, but

structured as syncope, it is also important to acknowledge the influence of the latter, because affect and emotion bleed into each other. The explosion of modern writing on the politics of emotions emerges in response to the dangerous emotional essentialism inaugurated by Darwin's theories, and the insight of these modern theorists can help us ensure that we do not make the same mistakes of essentializing feeling through gender, race, sexual orientation, or ability. At the same time, modern emotion theory reminds us of the danger of going too far the other way and separating nature (the nonconscious body) from culture (the ideology of emotion) as a specious form of universality.³² Emotion studies insists that we account for those political bodies without reducing them, or their feelings, to their biology.

Sara Ahmed's influential work is a representative example of the field of the cultural politics of emotion (also the title of her 2004 book).³³ Ahmed argues that emotions like love, disgust, fear, shame, and happiness (among others) are not only culturally understood and expressed, but that expression is ideologically structured and therefore political. Importantly for my argument and for any reading of nineteenth-century affect, she explains that emotions stick to objects and circulate with those objects socially (10-11). That is, even if the body is primary in the expression of emotion, as in

emotion itself is not an indicator of subjectivity. Subjectivity is the expression of the *idea* of the difference between the self and other. Emotion is this difference—or we could say, it holds open this difference—but it is not expressing itself or being expressed. Because this dissertation is not about emotion as such, I acknowledge its importance but believe that, as affect deconstructs subjective expression in my readings of these novels, my analyses do not contradict emotion's potential to deconstruct subjectivity.

³² See, for example, Lawrence Grossberg's acknowledgement that emotion "is the articulation of affect and ideology," and that affect has become a catch-all term for "everything that is non-representational or non-semantic" (316).

³³ Scholars engaged in similar work include Sianne Ngai, whose *Ugly Feelings* investigates minor affects, a set of less active, noble, or passionate feelings than Ahmed's, including envy, irritation, and anxiety. For Ngai, these emotions have cultural structures and sociohistorical significance. Another influential cultural critic of affect is Lauren Berlant, who has written on love's role in both politicizing and depoliticizing gendered and racialized bodies in *The Female Complaint*, as well as late-modernity's self-destructive attachment to the promises of capitalism in *Cruel Optimism*. Elizabeth Povinelli also turns to love in her aptly named *The Empire of Love*, which looks at the way bonds and taboos of intimacy structure alternate, non-Western and non-heteronormative communities. Similarly, David L. Eng turns to the intersections of power and intimacy for queer racialized subjects, arguing for kinship's affective structure and, at times, its potential in *The Feeling of Kinship*. While Povinelli and Eng both take up feeling as a subjective and a social form of relating and belonging, Anne Anlin Cheng and José Estaban Muñoz turn to specifically racialized forms of negative affects—melancholy and depression, respectively. Both Cheng and Muñoz highlight the importance of the racialized body in subject formation, eschewing what Muñoz calls the "crypto-universalist...default white subject" of affect theory (675).

the example that we are sad because we cry, Ahmed insists that this is because the object we have come into contact with makes us cry for a social or cultural reason. Therefore, she argues that while “sensation [affect] and emotion are irreducible, they cannot simply be separated at the level of lived experience. Sensations are mediated, however immediately they seem to impress upon us” (25). Ahmed’s theory is important because the texts in this dissertation do suggest that fainting and other nervous responses can be interpreted in a determinant way, either by essentializing the fainting body (for example, feminized bodies faint and so fainting is a sign of the feminized body) or essentializing the objects that create responses (for example, if Count Dracula makes me tremble, it is because his body is inherently threatening and my body knows it). James, for example, argues that although the body’s responses can shift culturally, they occur because of “the connate adaptation of the nervous system to that object” (194). This formula does threaten to essentialize the object that produces the embodied response, but nonetheless allows for responses to change and develop with context. Ahmed teaches us how to read these formulations of emotion carefully and consider the way personal, social, and cultural histories of emotion mediate embodied responses.

However, Ahmed’s theory does not shed light on the structure of fainting. As an affective response, fainting is fully nonconscious; when someone faints, there is a disconnect between the subject’s body and mind. We might say that during a faint, consciousness is absent from the event of the body. When fainting is an expression of an emotion, there is a clear distinction between the embodied response and its conscious translation into language. Moreover, in late-Victorian novels, swooners do not often reflect on their fainting spells themselves or assign them to emotional states. Instead, fainting is simply an extreme expression of affect itself—a visceral intensity of nervous response, an overabundance of embodied feeling, a reaction of the non-cognitive body.

Major theorists of affect like Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Brian Massumi introduce the intensity of affect itself as a kind of swoon—a suspension of self-consciousness, time, and a body with recognizable limits and boundaries. In what is now a canonical text, *Parables for the Virtual*, Massumi describes affect as a virtual field of

intensities that intersect with the subject through the autonomic system of the body.³⁴ Although he does not directly mention fainting, his version of affect shares fainting's qualities of nonconsciousness; like fainting, affect is "bodily intensity," the feeling of a change in physical states (15), and a suspension of time and movement (28). Massumi separates this non-cognitive affect from emotion, which is associated with language. He writes that "an emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity [...] It is intensity owned and recognized" (28). In this theory, the circulation of affect precedes and suspends subjectivity, which can only play catch up in deciding how to interpret embodied feeling. Massumi's theory is drawn directly from the work of William James and includes multiple references to James's empiricism and emotion theory. Discussing an experiment on autonomic reception, Massumi writes:

Will and consciousness are subtractive. They are limitative, derived functions that reduce a complexity too rich to be functionally expressed. It should be noted in particular that during the mysterious half second, what we think of as "free," "higher" functions, such as volition, are apparently being performed by autonomic, bodily reactions occurring in the brain but outside consciousness, and between brain and finger but prior to action and expression. (29)

This passage echoes some of James's theory of emotion, which proposes that the body is the primary respondent to the world, but it also mirrors Lewes's argument that the entire body is conscious. However, more than either of these, Massumi's references to autonomic, bodily reactions that masquerade as volition sound uncannily like Huxley's theory of automatism.³⁵

Many Victorians saw the primacy of affect and the reduction of the human subject to an automaton as a loss or a failure of both human exceptionalism and the basis for

³⁴ Patricia Clough writes that by 2010, Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual* had "become a canonical text about affect that links it to the philosophical conceptualization of the virtual" (208).

³⁵ Massumi makes the idea of the cognitive body explicit as he discusses an experiment into the embodied reactions of children. In this study, researchers showed the children three versions of a story about a melting snowman while measuring their physiological responses. Massumi writes, "Perhaps the snowman researchers of our first story couldn't find cognition because they were looking for it in the wrong place—in the 'mind,' rather than in the body they were monitoring" (29). For Massumi, the cognitive body seems to refer to the reactivity of the body and its primacy in emotional and rational response.

moral duty. However, Massumi understands non-cognitive affect as potential. In his theory, potential refers to change, movement, and the virtual—“the pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies” that have not yet become emotions, actions, or choices (30). For Massumi, the potential of affect is life itself—animacy, process, possibility. As a different form of no less euphoric potential, Deleuze and Guattari claim that affect is the sublime subjection of the body to other forms of life and being.³⁶ They write that affect “is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack [becoming-animal] that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (240). They identify fainting as a form of subjective disintegration (reading its appearance in a novel by Heinrich von Kleist) because it represents an affect that is “too strong for me,” repeated until “the Self...is now nothing more than a character whose actions and emotions are desubjectified” (356).

All three of these affect theorists are influenced by the arch-philosopher of nonconscious affect, Baruch Spinoza, who also sees potential in affect. Spinoza’s seventeenth-century philosophical treatise, *Ethics*, was a radical departure from Enlightenment theories of the mind, free will, agency, and human exceptionalism. Contrary to René Descartes’s theories of humanism based on cognition, Spinoza argued that God was in nature, that the human mind and body could not be separated, and that behaviour was the result of bodily affects and passions.³⁷ One of Spinoza’s most important dictums from *Ethics* is now often quoted in affect theory: “no one has yet determined what the body can do” (155). For Deleuze and Guattari, and later Massumi, this axiom suggests that the body is constantly in process, being affected by itself and by other parts of the world. Deleuze and Guattari’s term “becoming” originates with the Spinozan sense of a mutable and always externally-connected body, one that enters into relationships with other bodies and objects in the world through affect and becomes no longer a singular self or a separate subject. Reading these affect theorists together can

³⁶ Massumi’s concept of affect is heavily influenced by the work of Deleuze and Guattari; the first chapter of Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual* introduces a “long-standing engagement” with Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (Massumi 17), which Massumi also translated.

³⁷ My own understanding of Spinoza has been greatly influenced by my first encounter with him in Deleuze’s *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*.

help us see a kind of ecstatic sense of possibility in the non-agential, non-individual, responsive and nonconscious body that the Victorians identified with the animal and the machine.

Recently, Catherine Malabou has also argued that affect is characterized by syncope. In *Self and Emotional Life*, Malabou seeks to compare and reconcile the philosophical and neuroscientific concepts of autoaffection—the idea that subjectivity is produced when the “I” of the self is touched or affected by the self. Malabou argues that as neuroscience investigates brain injury, it shows us how the subject can be divided from itself, or heteroaffected. To explain this, she turns to Antonio Damasio’s theory of consciousness, which proposes that emotions occur automatically for the proto-self, the most basic biological level of being (Damasio 153, 280). Prefiguring Massumi’s separation of non-cognitive affect from conscious emotion, Damasio theorizes that our subjective selves, what he calls our autobiographical selves, only come to know and name after the fact the feeling that one has experienced. Malabou writes that Damasio’s theory of a proto-self represents a “fundamental biological alterity of the self” because it is nonconscious (Malabou 64). For Malabou, this proto-self is a heteroaffected part of the self and subjectivity that is completely other and can never be known.³⁸ It is this heteroaffected part of the self that is represented in the novels I read in this dissertation, a part of the subject that feels, reacts, and is connected to the world, but that is nonetheless unknowable, strange, alienated, animal, mechanistic.

For both Damasio and Malabou, fainting is an exemplary expression of this heteroaffected self. In Damasio’s schema, when a subject comes to awareness after a fainting spell, consciousness slowly returns and “it takes a while longer for the autobiographical self to be reinstated as a process and for the situation to be perfectly explained” (94). Malabou turns to Jean-Luc Nancy’s philosophy of the body to claim explicitly that syncope represents heteroaffection because when someone faints, the body is un-self-aware, as “an affect touches me but I don’t know what ‘me’ means” (24). Even

³⁸ For Malabou, the significance of heteroaffection emerges when the self is changed radically, and stops feeling or knowing itself as a subject (as in cases of brain damage)—what she calls “hetero-heteroaffection” (11).

the most basic sense of self is only possible because of the nonconscious, heteroaffected self, and therefore, all affects “are also constantly syncoped, interrupted, and discontinuous” (Malabou 24). As she brings continental philosophy together with neuroscience, Malabou insists that in both fields, syncope underwrites the possibility of subjectivity.

Other scholars have challenged and updated these theories of nonconscious affect or offered other biological versions of affect reception and embodied consciousness, demonstrating that the form of the affect-subjectivity relationship is as much up for debate today as it was in the nineteenth century. For example, Teresa Brennan, like Massumi, argues that affect is autonomous, but Brennan claims that affect is transmitted as a material substance from one body to another. On the one hand, Brennan claims that circulated affect becomes biological, thus constituting subjectivity and creating physical similarities and differences regardless of embodied political identities like race (25). On the other, she acknowledges that affects have a social context, as they “come via an interaction with other people and an environment” (3), and that feelings and their objects can shift as subjects with different contexts receive them (6-7). Brennan acknowledges earlier historical theories of affective transmission, but laments that in the nineteenth century they were mostly romanticized and lost scientific credibility, glossing over the vibrant scientific discourse I have partially outlined here (17).³⁹

Nigel Thrift more thoroughly embraces an affect-subjectivity dualism by connecting affect to the concept of bare life through the “half-second delay” between a body’s being affected and the subject’s conscious awareness of it (67). Bare life is a term for biological life that is understood to be non-political, but that nevertheless is the basis upon which any life form becomes political. Thrift argues that affective bare life is subject to new forms of what he calls “microbiopolitics,” a disciplinary regime that takes the affective body as “available to be worked upon through a whole series of new entities

³⁹ See John Protevi and Lisa Blackman for other theories of the unstable division between nonconscious affect and conscious subjectivity. Protevi argues that the affective body itself is cognitive, and Blackman that there is a dynamic interplay of body and consciousness at the “threshold” of consciousness and nonconsciousness (371). Both Protevi and Blackman’s theories acknowledge the importance of a body already imbricated by political identity.

and institutions” (67).⁴⁰ Thrift demonstrates the stakes of syncope’s dualism by reconceptualizing bare life not as a discrete category of political identity, but as the non-cognitive level of all bodies. By locating bare life in affect, Thrift posits that affective bodies—all affective bodies—are both entirely vulnerable and the very basis for (political) subjectivity.⁴¹ While Thrift is interested in the ways that bodies are disciplined through affect, his formulation of the non-cognitive body as open to political potential supports my readings of the ways fainting bodies are identified with other forms of bare life.

Many of these theories of nonconscious affect have come under fire for their uncritical use of science or their insistence on what Ruth Leys calls the non-intentional aspect of affect (including those of Darwin, James, Tomkins, Damasio, Massumi, and Thrift). Leys claims that part of the reason these theorists turn to science and reject cognition is in order to “overturn the human-nonhuman animal divide” (470). While few of the modern affect theorists I have mentioned here directly addresses this divide, Marie-Luise Angerer is right to point out that many of these theories of nonconscious affect formulate it as “an autonomous, a-human zone of the body” (53). For Angerer, a late-modern concern with posthuman bodies of information and cybernetics (and even of cyborg possibilities) sets the stage for this version of affect. However, as we have seen, late nineteenth-century theories about the mechanical and animal behaviour of the human

⁴⁰ For an alternate reading of the body’s openness to its environment, see Patricia Clough. Clough extends Massumi’s theory by arguing that the affective body demonstrates “matter’s capacity to be informational, to give bodily form,” a capacity which is specifically modified by digital media in late-modernity (207).

⁴¹ Giorgio Agamben formulates the dyad of bare life and sovereignty in his influential text *Homo Sacer*. Bare life is any form of life that can be taken without it being considered murder or sacrifice. That is, bare life is biological life or life without political or religious significance or consequence. The sovereign is the person or apparatus that decides what constitutes bare life. The dyad are mutually constitutive concepts: “the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homines sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns” (84). And, again, in relation to devalued life: “sovereign is he who decides on the value or non-value of life as such” (142). For Agamben, the Holocaust provides a violent modern example of bare life, when Jewish people were classified as vermin and killed without legal consequence. Agamben also hints at the possibility that bare life is a part of the biological life of all subject in his discussion of suicide. Agamben draws from a German pamphlet on euthanasia published in 1920 to note that “in order to explain the unpunishability of suicide,” the authors (Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche) must “conceive of suicide as the expression of man’s sovereignty over his own existence” (136). Agamben theorizes that if bare life is “in the biological body of every living being” (140), then the individual is sovereign to act outside the law in taking her own life, as well as the possibility for the authorization (Agamben’s term) for the taking of other, non-valued lives.

mind and body were already challenging the will, individuality, and agency of the human. Moreover, the advances in technology during the latter decades of the Victorian period offered ever increasing prostheses for what human bodies lacked, suggesting that the “complete” human was only possible through the intervention of nonhuman supplements (Armstrong *Modernism* 3). Recently, theorists have used the term posthuman to account for the necessity of technology and other nonhuman attributes to the category of the human itself. Physiological psychology, evolutionary theory, and technological modernity suggest we have always been—or, at least, we were in the late-nineteenth century—posthuman.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s work is an outlier to these two major fields of affect theory, as her monograph on affect, *Touching Feeling*, moves capaciously from the biology of particular emotions to the politics of affective performance.⁴² Unlike the other theorists I have mentioned above, her affect theory does not propose that syncope is the structure of affect. However, the diverse chapters that make up her volume include a brief essay called “Interlude, Pedagogic” that offers fainting as its primary form of teaching. Sandwiched between the introduction and first chapter, this interlude describes “the most dramatic thing that happened to [her] in the summer of 1991” when she fainted at an AIDS demonstration (28). The purpose of the demonstration was visibility for queer and Black bodies with HIV, but when Sedgwick, a white woman whose body had been visibly marked by cancer, faints, her body becomes the centre of the event. She describes this embodied event as a gap:

[The] next thing I knew, the urgent sound of my name and a slowly dawning sense of disorientation suggested that I seemed very oddly to be stretched out in the dirt—coming to—surfacing violently from the deep pit of another world—with a state trooper taking my pulse and an ambulance already on the way—the gaping, unbridgeable hole left in my own consciousness felt like a *mise-en-abîme* image of the whole afternoon. (32)

⁴² Sedgwick, along with Adam Frank, recovers the mid-twentieth-century theories of Silvan Tomkins to argue for a rethinking of Freudian drives through their integration with affect. Tomkins claims that there are a limited number of originary affects and that they are biologically determined, but they can have any object or be triggered by any image. For example, in Tomkins theory the sex drive itself is not particularly emotional—as hunger is not, for example—but it is particularly finicky and urgent because it is interconnected with the affect excitement.

Sedgwick's narration of this gap follows a similar grammatical pattern to Gaston's from *Wormwood*, with multiple dashes representing the broken subjectivity produced by the swoon itself. This gap in Sedgwick's consciousness and performance is one that will not be resolved into a final meaning, but proliferates out into a multiplicity. She writes that "the meaning with which that body was so dense, too dense, was indeed not a usable one [...] in relation to the complexly choreographed performative agendas and effects of that demonstration," and notes that even the gender of her fainting body was uncertain, "*apparently female*" (33, my emphasis). The pedagogical lesson of fainting here seems to be that it destabilizes the meanings we have associated with the body (like gender), but not that it is meaningless; Sedgwick goes on to list the ways that this syncope of performance ends up creating displacements of meaning (a white body for Black ones, and cancer for HIV, for example). What is instructive about this episode seems to be that the body will perform, but perhaps not "properly," that it is undisciplined, that not every affective gesture can be recuperated or organized into a system of meaning. However, these moments where the body intrudes, if supposedly illegibly, are also openings towards other ways of being in the world, other bodies, other vulnerabilities.

2.3. Reading Narrative Syncope: Autobiography

In Sedgwick's "Interlude," fainting is both a material event and a form of reading. By turning to herself and reading the moment of her own absence from the narrative, Sedgwick teaches us about affect and the body, about ways of identifying with other bodies, and about ethical response. We might call this "Interlude, Autobiographic." Sedgwick finds instructive displacements of meaning in the gap that fainting creates for herself, when she cannot entirely narrate the moment and must describe herself as an image or a figure (32), as "that body" (33). The swoon alienates Sedgwick's body from her "self" and makes her body other, non-agential, out of her control, unknowable, and vulnerable. Even as it teaches us about the bare, physiological life of all bodies (for Sedgwick, "tired and dizzy" [32], but also a vulnerable representative of both the bodies of white women with cancer and Black men with AIDS), syncope evades the standard, self-reflective, linguistic procedures of knowing ourselves. Sedgwick nonetheless tries to

make sense of the event, to bridge the gap of her own disappearance: “There was something so absorbing and so radically heterogeneous about this space of protest that when, next thing I knew, the urgent sound of my name and a slowly dawning sense of disorientation...” (32). Here, her faint has occurred mid-sentence, as the comma between “that when” and “next thing I knew.” Furthermore, as I mention above, the halting, fragmented form of this passage mimics her slow coming-to-consciousness, and in order to narrate this moment, Sedgwick will have to switch registers from autobiographical self-reflection to a third person narrator of her strange, nonconscious body (“that body”). Syncope disrupts the auto of autobiography.

The three novels I have chosen here from the last decade of the nineteenth century are all forms of narrative autobiography in which syncope similarly troubles self-representation. As they attempt to narrate character subjectivity, these novels express the structure of affect as syncope, as interruptions of subjectivity and humanness. Moreover, as in Sedgwick’s autobiographical interlude and the description of fainting in the *London Reader*, the actual instances of fainting (or near-fainting) in these late-century novels are mostly blank. That is, there are no omniscient narrators of these swoons who provide representation, context, or meaning. Instead, fainting—and affective syncope of all kinds—troubles the very idea of narrating the self. Some scholars would, understandably, take issue with my reference to these novels as fictional autobiographies of any kind. They do not fit a strict definition of the genre that would require stories of growth or transformation—*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is not even written in the first person. Heidi Pennington, whose recent study of Victorian fictional autobiographies argues that identity is always a fictional narrative process, would likely classify these texts as autodiegetic after Gerard Genette: texts written (mostly, in this case) in the first person with an interest in the narrator’s “origins, self-representation, and social recognition” (Pennington 24), or where the narrator is “the hero of his narrative” (Genette 245)—but not as autobiographies.⁴³ However, this dissertation is not making an argument for shifting

⁴³ Perhaps Corelli’s *Wormwood* can be considered a fictional autobiography, although Gaston’s narrative does not produce the “ideal of a fixed and internal core self” that Pennington declares was “valued (and indeed, often fetishized) for offering the individual some kind of ontological security in the unstable social, political, and economic world of nineteenth-century” (35). Pennington claims that a sense of stability in subjectivity appealed to readers who were witnessing a massive change in the meaning of selfhood.

generic boundaries or for the inclusion of these texts in the autobiographic genre *per se*. Instead, I use the term autobiography in order to highlight the stakes of subjectivity through narrative form, drawing on the term's sense as writing the self, or self-life-writing. Laura Marcus claims that autobiography is the "literature of subjectivity" (231); Adam Smyth extends this claim by noting that "subjectivity has a history and can mean different things at different times" (2). Marcus explains that the genre of autobiography is one that, broadly, "unsettles distinctions, including the division between self and other" and is therefore a "destabilising form of writing and knowledge" (15). We can understand these texts, then, as physiological fictional autobiographies, in which the aesthetics of subjectivity are shaped by syncope; or, put another way, in which the aesthetics of subjectivity are syncopated by affect.⁴⁴

The late-nineteenth century saw a shift in novel genres, as multi-volume realist novels which often included narratives of individual growth and progress, like the *Bildungsroman* (sometimes itself in the form of fictional autobiography), gave way to shorter narratives and a proliferation of subgenres, like gothic novels, scientific romances (what we would now classify as science or speculative fiction), and detective novels. This period also saw a shift in narrative strategies, from mediation to syncopation. In "1825-1880: The Network of Nerves," Nicholas Dames provides an outline of an earlier historical shift in narration. He explains that free indirect style marked narrative in the early part of the century, as a mode of self-reflection in which third-person narration and

"Indeed," she writes, "the marked emphasis on an essentialist ideal of identity in Victorian literature mainly verifies its absence from lived realities" (35). To the contrary, Gaston insists that the self is, at times, unknowable and capricious.

⁴⁴ In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Terry Eagleton reveals the largely obscured origins of the term aesthetic in the mid-eighteenth century, which originated with Alexander Baumgarten in Germany, as encompassing "nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together—the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world" (13). Eagleton claims that, from the eighteenth century on, the bourgeois "law" or social order is reproduced in the aesthetics of the body—its "sentiments, affections, and spontaneous bodily habits" (23), and that because of this, the work of art produces and reproduces the kind of individual that upholds the bourgeois social order. He clarifies that notions of aesthetic objects are inseparable from historical notions of post-Cartesian, rational, individual human subjectivity: "Like the work of art as defined by the discourse of aesthetics," Eagleton writes, "the bourgeois subject is autonomous and self-determining" (23). However, he also acknowledges that "the aesthetic...provides an unusually powerful challenge and alternative to these dominant ideological forms" (3).

first-person character merge briefly to share the character's thoughts and feelings. However, with the advance of physiological psychology, self-knowledge was put into question; as science discovered that the "springs of action for physiologically grounded consciousness are neural combinations and recombinations," the resulting self-alienation was mitigated in novels by "loquacious, chatty, discursive narrative voices" (227).⁴⁵ Narrators needed to supply knowledge for their characters, and so "much of the tone and leisurely length of Victorian narrative is owed to this new epistemological split between a knowing narrator and characters who are constitutively, perhaps even ontologically, unaware of their own motives" (227). In the quotation from *Middlemarch* with which I began this chapter, this knowing narrator provides context for Lydgate's choice and explains that his feeling was that of "unspeakable bitterness." In *Middlemarch*, then, the subjectively unspeakable is supplemented by the narration.

However, Sedgwick and *Wormwood's* Gaston tell their own autobiographies with no mediating voice to provide narrative continuity or assign meaning to affective gaps. Their autobiographical narratives demonstrate a part of the condition of our affective being: it is without language, unspeakable.⁴⁶ Similarly, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Time Machine*, and *Dracula* are all synocopated autobiographies, narratives in which

⁴⁵ Dames borrows from Damasio to argue that Victorian novels consistently represent their characters through their "core consciousness," or an organism's sense of its own basic functioning, rather than as autobiographical selves represented by a unique set of individually distinct memories and habits ("Network" 218-219). In these late-Victorian novels, I update his theory (without relying on Damasio) to argue that whatever autobiographical self is produced in these novels, it is dependent on, subject to, and interrupted by affective responses that Damasio would attribute to the proto-self and core consciousness. For a reading of the romantic subjectification of affect, see Miranda Burgess, who reads anxiety as the transmission of objectless affect, and Romantic metaphor as the literary form of subject creation as it turns anxiety into a subject and object of emotion.

⁴⁶ Scholars who are critical of nonconscious affect theory are commonly (and often justifiably) concerned at affect theories' refusal of language. Affect's embodiment, nonhumanness, non-cognitive and non-linguistic nature can make it appear impoverished and of little potential (or of over-promised potential) for cultural and literary critics. Ruth Leys offers a representative critique of this lack, as, for these theorists, "the affects must be viewed as independent of, and in an important sense prior to, ideology—that is, prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs—because they are nonsignifying, autonomic processes that take place below the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning. For the theorists in question, affects are 'inhuman,' 'pre-subjective,' 'visceral' forces and intensities that influence our thinking and judgments but are separate from these" (437). Leys argues that focus on non-ideological affect is misguided, that we ought to take culture and ideology into consideration for emotion has complex cultural and ideological implications for both humans and nonhumans, and because of this, it is the purview of anthropology, literature, and philosophy (471-472).

subjectivity—consciousness, language, self-knowledge, and self-reflection—is interrupted by the physiological, affective body.⁴⁷ Rather than narrative mediation, we find unstable narrative representations (sometimes including free indirect discourse that drifts between characters), non-linear timelines, unreliable narrators, multiple narrators, and multiple textual sources. These forms of narration are informed by, and in turn, texture, physiological psychology’s theories of affect, while also prefiguring twenty-first century affect theories. As we have seen, these discourses posit the affective body as nonhuman, as non-volitional, and as full of potential. In both nineteenth- and twenty-first-century affect theory, subjectivity is undone by, but also depends upon, this nonhuman body. Following suit, late-century physiological fictional autobiographies both invoke and deny interiority while also not offering any master narrator or narrative to supply that knowledge. They offer alternate forms of affective autobiography that demonstrate how the non-normative or queer body and nonhuman or animal self exists both at the heart of, and in resistance to, the aesthetics of subjectivity.

This shift to a syncopated, affective, and, therefore, less fully human form of narrative subjectivity is not one that happens abruptly. As my Introduction shows, fainting occurred in novels throughout the nineteenth century. Further, earlier Victorian novels also incorporated suspensions of consciousness and agency. For example, Elisha Cohn studies the affective moods that suspended the narratives of realist novels of individual progress throughout the Victorian period. One of her key examples includes the fictional autobiography *Villette* from 1853. Lucy Snowe, the narrator and protagonist, is subject to suspensions of consciousness as fainting men are at the end of the century. Lucy faints, too, describing the moment as the feeling that she has “pitch[ed] headlong down an abyss,” before her final sentence ends both the chapter and volume one of the

⁴⁷ Other recent scholarly work on physiological psychology and the body in Victorian literature that investigate the nonconscious, neurological body includes Jill Matus’s *Shock, Memory, and the Unconscious in Victorian Fiction* (discussed in the Introduction to this dissertation); Tim Armstrong’s *Modernism, Technology, and the Body*, which argues that literary narratives (among other cultural objects) include representations of fragmented, augmented, and regulated bodies in response to the technologies of modernity; Anne Stiles’s *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the late Nineteenth Century*, which proposes that novels are cultural and political responses to the materialism of neurological theories of the self. See also Gregory Tate’s *The Poet’s Mind: The Psychology of Victorian Poetry, 1830-1870*, which examines the way poetry participates in or resists psychological analysis of the relation between the mind and body.

novel: “I remember no more” (164). Lucy’s (or Brontë’s) strategy to aestheticize this moment of affective interruption, nonconsciousness, and absence, is to provide a chapter and volume break, a technique we will see used again in *The Time Machine* and *Dracula*. However, when the narrative resumes, Lucy goes on to both claim ignorance about “where her soul went during that swoon,” and write an entire paragraph about the possibilities (165). Cohn argues this passage “dilates an experience for the reader that stands in for Lucy’s blankness” (51-52), but even more salient for my argument is the fact that Lucy envisions a soul that might still be sentient or lively even as her body is absent and silent. Lucy’s narrative strives for subjectivity, and the swoon’s challenge to human selfhood is overwritten by an insistence on the presence of the soul. In contrast to *Villette*, the three novels I turn to in this dissertation admit the animality of their protagonists, whether by embracing or resisting it, and reflect a growing belief that the soul either did not exist separately from the animal body or did not exist at all.⁴⁸ However, as *Villette*’s chapter break shows, there are continuities between the narrative form of fainting in *Villette* and the narrative form of fainting in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Time Machine*, and *Dracula*.

Nonhuman affect appears in literature through the nonconscious interruption of narrative by affect. In *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida writes that autobiography is the narrative form of autoaffection, a way of declaring ourselves an “I” by narrating “I am” (34). Since autoaffection produces human subjectivity (the self touches itself or moves itself and becomes self-aware), autobiography is one narrative form that separates humans from animals.⁴⁹ In this lecture, Derrida offers two important aspects of autobiography’s relation to the animal that influence my use of the term and my readings of these texts. The first is that, in all self-reflection, self-presence, autoaffection, and autobiography, humans can only write themselves by distinguishing themselves in

⁴⁸ In *Embodied*, William Cohen argues that Victorian literature located humanness in the body, partially in response to physiological psychology and changing conceptions of the soul as embodied. Cohen claims that the body in Victorian novels is a permeable surface, open to a world of objects and feelings (and bodies and foods) that create subjectivity and identity. Cohen also recognizes the subject’s embodied position in the world—what we might call their political identity—as crucial to this analysis.

⁴⁹ Derrida also argues that autobiographies are based in confession, and therefore in shame that is only possible to humans.

relation to animality (50). The second is that Derrida suggests that autoaffection itself is a form of autobiography; that autobiography is a part of animality, “generally defined as sensibility, irritability, and auto-motricity, a spontaneity that is capable of movement, of organizing itself and affecting itself, marking, tracing, and affecting itself with traces of its self” (49). In this essay, Derrida clarifies that his writing on animal-human difference never means to efface that difference or argue for animal-human continuity. However, at the same time, Derrida works to ensure there is no solid, singular ground on which we can base that decision. Who are we to say, his work asks, whether an animal can speak, or lie, or respond (32-34)? Derrida’s deconstructive approach towards the animal is a process of tracing both multiple differences and continuities.

When the fainting bodies in this dissertation disrupt autoaffection—or the “I” of autobiography—they deconstruct animal-human difference to suggest possible forms of continuity that have political and ethical consequences (which I will explain in the next section). These forms of animal-human continuity include attributes of affective being that we have seen in discourses of affect from the nineteenth and twenty-first century, including the lack of language, the unknowable body, and the disruption or suspension of temporality. My argument both develops and departs from the work of other scholars who have turned to affect in Victorian literature. Many of these scholars argue for the ways in which novels create feelings in readers. This is a significant part of Cohn’s argument, for example, and provides the framework for Rachel Ablow’s edited collection *The Feeling of Reading*.⁵⁰ In *The Physiology of the Novel*, Dames points out that Victorian literary criticism itself argued for the value of the physiological, or affective, responses of the reader to novel form.⁵¹ Other scholars argue that literary representations

⁵⁰ For the transmission of affect from text to reader, see also Adam Frank’s *Transferential Poetics, from Poe to Warhol* and Stephen Ahern’s “Nothing More Than Feelings?: Affect Theory Reads the Age of Sensibility.” Ahern both argues for the sense of community engendered in representations of sentimental contagion in eighteenth-century literature, as well as an account of the difficulty of moving beyond descriptions of affect towards revolutionary action. For alternate and diverse readings of affect, see Ahern’s edited collection *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice: A Feel for the Text*, in which essays on a wide range of literature from multiple periods use affect theory to analyze “the limits of representation” and “identities and assemblages—queer, hybrid, transnational,” as well as reader responses. An earlier version of my chapter on *Dracula* is included in this collection.

⁵¹ This body of work is a part of a larger field, physiological aesthetics, which argued that aesthetic objects—like art and music—affected the audience’s nervous system as the source of their value and

of affect work to discipline the body. Monographs like Audrey Jaffe's *The Affective Life of the Average Man*, Gesa Stedman's *Stemming the Torrent*, or Ann Cvetkovich's *Mixed Feelings* attest to the ways that Victorian novels could be understood as "intentional or unintentional conduct books" (Stedman 2), naturalizing emotional responses and likely to both "challenge and to reinforce ideologies of gender and affect" (Cvetkovich 55). By contrast, I argue that the representation of affect in these late-century novels *solicits* the reader in both form and content, a claim I will explain further in the next section. Affect, however, is in itself not disciplinary and while the novels I have chosen suggest the power in affective control, affect structured as syncope is too non-linguistic, too other, and too a-temporal to be fully managed.

Syncope's affective disruption of narrative represents an acute problem for language, as we have seen in Sedgwick's and even Lucy Snowe's autobiographical writing. Fainting is the presence of absence, the disappearance of a subject who, because of the structure of textuality, never actually disappears from the page because all readerly eyes are on them. Fainting invokes the silence of a narrator who will nonetheless pick up the narrative again immediately, perhaps referring briefly to the faint or maybe never mentioning it again. The structure of narrative syncope is echoed by other forms of grammatical gaps and bridges, like the hyphens that break up subjective narrative or like the ethical dilemma embedded in the question, "What could he do?" that interrupts the passage from *Middlemarch* at the beginning of this chapter, an idea to which I return in the section on ethics below.

I see these formal aspects of narrative as non-linguistic markers of nonhuman affect, a reading that is in keeping with the recent narrative theories of Lee Spinks and Ridvan Askin. Spinks, for example, argues that literary style is affective in that it constructs and deconstructs subjectivity. Spinks writes that

power. Aesthetic appreciation was understood to be biological, and as Dames, Robert Brain, and Benjamin Morgan have pointed out, science was an integral means to measure human responses to aesthetics. In Dames' historical analysis, physiological response was not just an indicator of how readers' minds functioned, but had greater social ramifications, as in his second chapter on the way attention and distraction to certain novel forms was also a matter of the liberal individuality and freedom.

Literature is not the expression or representation of a subject; it is the opening and differential production that makes subjectivity, presence and truth possible in the first place. Thus literature has a pre-human and inhuman force that marks the inauguration of sense before sense can be recuperated within the semantic regime of truth. (34)

Style for Spinks includes white space (as in Derrida's reading of *Le Livre de Mallarmé*) and free indirect discourse (as in his own reading of Philip Roth's *Sabbath Theater*). Similarly, I read chapter breaks and shifts in free indirect discourse as examples of nonhuman affect that structure the narrative autobiographies of the three texts I have chosen. I am therefore reading these texts as though they, too, are subjects of affect as well as representations of affective bodies or as producers of readerly feelings. Askin similarly argues that narrative itself has an ontology, or a being, and like all other bodies, its subjectivity (or what Askin refers to as its epistemology or knowledge) is only created out of its virtual being. He draws on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to claim that affect reveals the "nonhuman within the human, the objective within the subjective, the virtual within the actual" (26). In this theory, affective narrative techniques include a variety of structural and grammatical effects, that "range from the employment of inconsistent narrative voices to the mixing of incongruent narrative levels, from the projection of impossible perspectives to the interweaving of impossible storylines" (22), and from the "metaphor to the sentence fragment, from ellipsis to congeries" (23), including "infinitives, partitives, and indefinite forms" (27). While I focus on alternate types of structural and grammatical forms of interruption and fragmentation, Askin's study supports my argument that narrative syncope is a form of textually embodied affect.

As a form of affect, narrative syncope also represents the unknowable alterity of the body. As Sedgwick has already shown us, the fainting body is a problem for autobiography, as its meanings are obscured from the subject even as those meanings multiply and proliferate outwards. In the nineteenth century, too, fainting presented a similar problem. William James, as I have mentioned, uses the example of his own faint to describe the absolute otherness of the unknowable fainting body. His description of the moment of fainting accords with the others I have quoted in this chapter, when a subject describes his quick, bodily descent into nonconsciousness: "Suddenly the world grew black before his eyes, his ears began to buzz, and he knew no more" (196). Here, James

also refers to himself in the third person, alienating the autobiographical subject even further from himself, as he goes on to describe his “astonishment” at his own body:

He had never heard of the sight of blood producing faintness or sickness, and he had so little repugnance to it, and so little apprehension of any other sort of danger from it, that even at that tender age, as he well remembers, he could not help wondering how the mere physical presence of a pailful of crimson fluid could occasion in him such formidable bodily effects. (196)

Even as James notes in this essay the ever-increasing technical apparatuses that measure and therefore make the body knowable (191-192), he demonstrates here that the moment of syncope is not only indescribable as a nonconscious event, it is also unspeakably other.⁵² Its meaning is unavailable, even to its own subject.

Stefan Herbrechter pushes this idea even further, explaining that, in fact, no autobiography can perform the narration of the self that it promises. This is because the “auto” of the term is based in autoaffection, and (as Malabou has shown) autoaffection is only possible because of the other:

There is thus always an experience of dispossession (or desubjectification) at work [in autobiography], which is experienced (or inscribed, registered) at a material, bodily level, and which is the necessary precondition for autoaffection to arise in the first place, but which can never be narrated as such. The body who experiences (or is materially inscribed with) the autobiography can never be the body who narrates the autobiography. There is, in fact, a disjuncture between bodies at work within the autobiographical process: material, somatic, phenomenological, narrating and narrated, to name but a few. (338-339)

The body is the impossible ground of autobiography, Herbrechter suggests (along with his interlocutor, Judith Butler), because the body has its own history, a history of alterity, that is unknowable to the subject. The bodies in and of the novels in this dissertation are unruly, automatic, animal, and unknowable. They have a narrative force of their own.

⁵² See Peter Garratt on the desire to know the body in Victorian physiological psychology, and George Levine’s *Dying to Know* for a chapter on the desire to know the self through scientific objectivity in Victorian non-fictional autobiographies.

Finally, narrative syncope invokes nonhuman affect by disrupting the temporality of autobiography. In *Amnesiac Selves*, Nicholas Dames explains that the aesthetic form of fictional autobiography that emerged in the mid-Victorian period was a mostly linear narrative of events that were contextualized to give meaning and shape to the events of human life. Moreover, he shows that this form mirrored associationist models of psychology and memory. That is, mid-century, a similar aesthetics of subjectivity could be found in both psychology and literature, characterized by the same formal qualities that, post-Enlightenment, have come to represent human subjectivity. By contrast, the novels I have chosen from the end of the century are structured—like modern affect theory—by syncope. This form sees the time of the body as suspended or even absent (as in the faint itself). These physiological fictional autobiographies therefore include disordered narrative temporalities.

The syncopations of temporal shifts in these novels occur partly in response to industrial and technological changes in forms of time and in modern experience (for example, the speed of rail travel or the immediacy of the telegraph).⁵³ Along with the ability to change the body's experience of time and space, modern technology created a host of instruments and experiments to measure the affective responsiveness of the body, noting reactions that occurred before consciousness could grasp them. Sue Zemka describes the way these technologies changed temporal models of subjectivity: "Time, once the guarantor of the subject's unity in a sensory event, is now a series of gaps dividing her from her own mental and sensory processes" (26).⁵⁴ By itself, this is a persuasive enough way to understand the narrative gaps and shifts created by affect. In fact, Victorian novel critics themselves interpreted the affective structure of novel form in just this way. They believed that "the novel, physiologically considered, did what all print does, only more so: condition the physiological apparatus of the reader for the temporal

⁵³ See, for example, Wolfgang Schivelbush on the changes in subjectivity and consciousness as a result of rail travel. See also Sue Zemka and Elissa Marder on modern technology's temporal disruptions and intensifications in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century novels.

⁵⁴ Zemka's work includes a history of the moment in a variety of cultural discourses including psychology and capitalism.

rhythms of modernity” (Dames 10).⁵⁵ However, fainting has always been a disruption of linear time, and its inclusion in narrative always creates a gap or a form of what Elissa Marder calls temporal disorder. I bring these novels from the last decade of the century together because they attempt to describe what it feels like to be that affective, syncopated subject, divided from his mental and sensory processes, alienated from his body, an evolutionary animal and machine that is always other and often out of time.

2.4. Reading Narrative Syncope: Ethics

In these physiological fictional autobiographies, narrative syncope deconstructs subjectivity and also has an ethical function. In the forms I have mentioned above—the lack of language, the unknowable body, and the temporal disruptions—narrative syncope challenges the differences between human and animal, and self and other. In suggesting continuity between these binaries, narrative syncope creates the possibility of a form of identification between the self and other or the human and animal. This identification, based on affect, could create sympathy, which Victorians believed underwrote morality.⁵⁶ That is, many Victorians agreed that understanding the other would lead to compassionate feeling and/or behavior. However, narrative syncope complicates this identification through its deconstruction of subjectivity. If the other is affectively like the self, that is because the self is other; the self is unknowable and it lacks the volition and agency necessary to be a self. Where does this lead us? Two aspects of ethics emerge in the tension between sameness and difference in instances of narrative syncope in these late-century novels. The first ethical aspect of narrative syncope insists on the

⁵⁵ In *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics*, Jason R. Rudy points out that accounts of physiological responses to literature, like Dames’s, often obscure poetry’s significant place in physiological aesthetics. Rudy concentrates on the idea of electricity or electric shock as a material “physiological mode of poetic transmission” (13).

⁵⁶ Certainly, not all scholars identify the social function of feeling as moral. Rachel Ablow points out that “much of the work that has been published since the 1970s has been rather more skeptical regarding the progressive potential of literary emotion. In particular, critics have emphasized emotion’s association with individualistic rather than collective action; its tendency to promote isolated acts of charity rather than systemic change; and its ability encourage arbitrariness [...] rather than rational approaches to social problems (“Victorian” 301). For an account of sympathy that offers an alternate to either altruistic action or individualism, see Audrey Jaffe’s *Scenes of Sympathy*, in which she demonstrates how such scenes are “always about the construction of social and cultural identities, about the individual subject’s relation to the group” (23).

unknowable difference, and therefore boundary, between the self and other. Because affective being, represented starkly in instances of fainting, always includes the unknowability of the body (as, for example, in James's discussion of fainting), these novels suggest an ethical respect for alterity. The second aspect of ethics, closely related to the first, is ontological identification—identification at the level of affective being. In this case, because affective being is the same between subjects and other forms of life, a kind of sympathetic identification can take place that overturns hierarchies of power and violence. In both cases, ethical response is prompted by the vulnerable, fainting body, which solicits both characters and readers in ways that circumvent subjectivity and willful choice.

Many mid-century Victorians believed strongly in the power of literature to elicit sympathy. This belief finds its origins in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which posits literature as an aesthetic form that creates socially proper feeling and therefore socially proper, or moral, action.⁵⁷ For many, literary sympathy finds its apotheosis in Victorian realist fiction, and particularly George Eliot's literary corpus, which strives to represent both other people and the truth of the human condition as faithfully and comprehensively as possible, and therefore create sympathy and compassionate or generous feeling towards others.⁵⁸ Eliot herself expressed this belief on more than one occasion, writing for example that "...when Wordsworth sings to us the reverie of 'Poor Susan' ...more is done towards linking the higher classes with the lower"

⁵⁷ Daniel M. Gross explains the significance of literature to sympathy and therefore morality in Adam Smith by citing Smith's claim that "Sympathy does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it" (A. Smith 16). Therefore, Gross explains, we may conclude that "a moral society where sympathy predominates will also be a literate society where the dramatist and the rhetorician play an important role" (Gross *Secret* 173). Gross also cites a passage in which Smith turns to French tragedy to describe the necessity of interest to sympathy: "The reserve which the laws of society impose upon the fair sex, with regard to this weakness [i.e., passionate love], renders it more particularly distressful in them, and, upon that very account, more deeply interesting. We are charmed with the love of Phaedra, as it is expressed in the French tragedy of that name, notwithstanding all the extravagance and guilt which attend it. That very extravagance and guilt may be said, in some measure, to recommend it to us. Her fear, her shame, her remorse, her horror, her despair, become thereby more natural and interesting" (A. Smith 41; Gross, *Secret* 173-174).

⁵⁸ Rae Greiner emphasizes the importance of Adam Smith's narrative model of sympathy to nineteenth century realism's creation of "sympathetic protocols best able to serve that fiction's representational and moral purposes" (22). For a thorough discussion of George Eliot's "Hermeneutics of Sympathy," see Suzy Anger's *Victorian Interpretation*.

because “[a]rt is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot” (Natural 186-187).⁵⁹ As Eliot describes it, realist literature’s moral purpose is to make the other legible, knowable, and understandable. While Eliot, and much of realist literature, is focused on the human other, some Victorian novelists also wrote about animals, or as animals, with similar moral aims to sympathy. For example, Anna Feuerstein argues that Victorian novels represented animals as political subjects to initiate their inclusion into liberal politics. Ivan Kreilkamp claims that, in fact, “Victorian narrative and characterization developed some of their signature techniques and tropes” from novels that elicit sympathy for animals (“Petted” 89).⁶⁰

Whether realist fiction attempts to depict the particular lot of animals, impoverished farmers, oppressed factory labourers, yearning women, racialized outsiders, or anyone else, its ultimate purpose is to make the other legible.⁶¹ Scholars have recently complicated what it means to identify with or know the other, but they maintain realist literature’s function in making the other (to a certain degree) knowable. For example, while Rae Greiner formulates sympathy as an imaginative process rather than an affective one, she claims that the realist novel produces this form of imaginative sympathy (4).⁶² George Levine argues that “knowledge is a condition of sympathy, if no guarantee of it, and epistemology links immediately to the ethical” (10), even as he explains that the “the greatest Victorian fiction reaches beyond its own deep humanity to the recognition of other, unknowable realities,” acknowledging and respecting that there are some forms of alterity that we will never penetrate (254). Nonetheless, as Rachel Hollander puts it,

⁵⁹ In another case, she declared that if “Art does not enlarge men’s sympathies, it does nothing morally” (Eliot *Letters* 3: 112).

⁶⁰ For other essays on Victorian novels’ production of sympathy as animal advocacy, as well as a wide range of analyses on animals in Victorian fiction, see Deborah Denenholz Morse and Martin A. Danahay’s edited collection *Victorian Animal Dreams*, Laurence W. Mezzeno and Ronald D. Morrison’s edited collection *Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture*, and Brenda Ayres’s edited collection *Victorians and their Animals*. For non-fictional writing by animal activists, intended to elicit sympathy by describing laboratory conditions, see Jed Mayer. For a discussion of narrative strategies in a wide range of animal autobiographies (including during the Victorian period), see David Herman.

⁶¹ See Suzanne Keen for a rigorous historical account of the relationship between sympathy or empathy and literature, and the idea that either is related to ethical behaviour.

⁶² See Audrey Jaffe for an account of Victorian sympathy that relies on visual representation in narrative.

“Victorian sympathy is based on the value of understanding others. Even if complete comprehension of another person’s mind is seen as unattainable, it still functions as an ideal, and moral behavior depends upon the attempt to minimize difference and emphasize commonality” (3).⁶³ In other words, in order to behave well towards another and to give them what they need, we must understand them—their feelings, their desires, their social reality—in relation to our own.

Moreover, this version of ethical behaviour relies on the concept of moral agency, which requires individuality and free will, and suggests that moral guidelines and rules for good behaviour will lead to good feelings, connected communities, and social progress. Even those physiological psychologists who believe that sympathy is innately biological believe in its capacity for socially-oriented moral behaviour.⁶⁴ Following Adam Smith but contra George Eliot, Darwin argues that sympathy is instinctual, and that its development in humans is beneficial because it “compels us to act for the community good” (White 112).⁶⁵ And even those who emphasize the primacy of the affective body insist on the will necessary for moral agency. In his response to Huxley’s automaton hypothesis, William James emphasizes the importance of conscious, agential choice: “An act has no ethical quality whatever unless it be chosen out of several all equally possible” (“Automata” 13). Even Huxley eventually shifted under the weight of the materialist position, arguing for moral agency in *Evolution and Ethics* (1893). Challenging those proponents of an evolutionary moral sense such as Darwin, Huxley argues that immoral sentiments are equally evolved and “there is, so far, as much natural

⁶³ For an account of embodied sympathy in the modernist period, see Kristy Martin’s *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy*. Martin includes a novel by Vernon Lee from 1884, and briefly references physiological psychology’s theories of embodied emotion. Martin’s argument is that feelings are never entirely nonconscious, and sympathy is not individualistically or respectfully ethical, but rather entangles bodies and feelings together in ways that exceed individuality and offer new (and sometimes distressing) versions of compassion or love.

⁶⁴ For a thorough account of the responses to physiological psychology’s challenge to moral agency, see Thomas Dixon’s chapter “Christian and Theistic Responses to the New Physicalist Emotions Paradigm.”

⁶⁵ While Paul White explains that Darwin’s theory of instinctual sympathy was not straight-forward, as it sometimes crossed species lines and other times could not, what set it apart and prompted resistance was the idea that sympathy was “an emotional impulse” tied to the physiology of the body (123). Tara MacDonald follows a similar path on sympathy in the work of Darwin and Alexander Bain (as well as Harriet Martineau and Henry George Atkinson), and while she reads affective sympathy and mimicry largely as a “drifting of affect” between bodies (125), she also points out that Bain believed that physiological sympathy is “the disinterested element of our moral sense” (Bain 179; MacDonald 128).

sanction for the one as the other” (31). Therefore, Huxley writes, humans must choose to do right through individual action: “Let us understand, once for all that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it” (34). Combat, the attempt to “subdue nature” (34), requires will.⁶⁶

Narrative syncope, to the contrary, puts all aspects of this version of sympathy into question. Not only does it undermine will, volition, agency, and individuality, syncope suggests that the self is unknowable because of the body’s affective alterity. By extension, how could anyone know anyone else? Instances of narrative syncope also challenge the idea that ethical response leads to good feeling or positive sociality. Despite Eliot’s central place in readings of Victorian sympathy, the quotation from her novel *Middlemarch* with which I began this chapter provides an example that challenges positive social outcomes. When Lydgate, the aspiring young physician, sees Bulstrode faint, the narrator asks, “what could he do?” Faced with this ethical dilemma, Lydgate appears to have no choice but to help. Yet his actions are based in neither “gentle duty” nor “pure compassion” (776). Nothing good results from Lydgate assisting Bulstrode—not for Bulstrode, not for Lydgate, not for Lydgate’s wife, and not for the community of Middlemarch. Moreover, Lydgate, who “could not see a man sink so close to him for want of help” (776), finds his own generosity toward Bulstrode in this moment “unspeakably bitter,” a feeling so painful that it cannot even be described in language. Lydgate’s charitable actions neither produce a moral lesson nor do they suggest the imaginative work of sympathy, nor the empathetic recognition of another’s feeling, nor agential decision-making about what to do. Lydgate is compelled, in what we might understand as his own moment of narrative syncope, to respond to another.

Further, Lydgate’s response does not entail knowledge of the other but it does include a form of ontological identification—an embodied recognition of a similitude of being, solicited by a call to respond that amounts to a demand for responsibility from the

⁶⁶ However, as Roger Smith points out, Huxley still imagines that ethical behaviour—actions to “overcome suffering” and “carry out good acts”—originate in feeling, although Huxley does not say “what he thought the grounds for ethical judgment were” (123).

other. That is, Lydgate does not sympathize with Bulstrode's feeling or situation, but instead answers to the vulnerability of his body, which was so hesitating, grasping, and tottering in that moment that "Lydgate felt sure there was not strength enough in him [Bulstrode] to walk away without support" (775-776). Fainting, or near-fainting in Bulstrode's case, initiates a demand from the other and an ontological identification based in shared vulnerability. However, this identification emerges in the tension between sameness and difference, knowing and not-knowing the other. Lydgate's compulsive responsiveness (he has no choice—what could he do?) turns agency into a physiological reaction. The otherness of Lydgate's body, which makes the ethical choice for him, mirrors the alterity of Bulstrode's body, which behaves in its own strange, automatic, and unknowable way.

The novels I have chosen in this dissertation all repeat this brief version of embodied response in various ways. That is, just as Bulstrode's fainting body compels Lydgate to respond, the affective bodies of this study solicit a response from other characters that circumvents subjectivity, will, and choice. In doing so, they enact an ethics of uncertainty in the tension between self and other, knowable and unknowable, sameness and difference. Like Sedgwick and Bulstrode, fainting bodies in these novels call for or enact a complete "openness towards the other" (Derrida in Kearney 124). This openness suggests a space of ethical potential to prioritize the other and respond to the other's call before, and possibly even at the expense of, the self.⁶⁷ Jacques Derrida's model of deconstructive ethics illuminates the way narrative syncope solicits a response through an ontological identification, and shows us how a purely unselfish response to the other is the ethical ideal.

Derrida's ethical theory is based in the concept of responding to the other (a concept that originates with Emmanuel Levinas). In this ethical formula, the other calls us or demands something from us just by virtue of being other (although sometimes this demand takes the form of an explicit request or command). To be ethical is to respond absolutely to the other without being constrained in any way by self-interest. For Derrida,

⁶⁷ I discovered this quotation in Simon Critchley's *The Ethics of Deconstruction*; see this text, along with Attridge's *Reading and Responsibility*, for authoritative readings of Derrida's ethical theory.

there are a few forms that this response can take as an ethical ideal, including responsibility, generosity, and hospitality. An ethical form of hospitality, for example, is not just the moral guideline that requires us to respond to a request for shelter by opening our homes to another. Derrida explains that this rule of moral behaviour comes with a set of conditions: that the other identify him- or herself, respect our space, and recognize that we own it and our rules apply. In contrast, truly ethical hospitality is unconditional, meaning that whenever a stranger arrives, without being named, without telling us where they have come from or what they intend, we must let them in to do whatever they want in our home, even if they destroy it (Derrida, "Hospitality" 70-71). The same ideal applies in moments of responsibility or generosity: not only does ethics mean being responsible for others or being generous to others, we must be responsible for caring for all others and we must give generously without the expectation of reciprocity.

My argument for the appearance of Derridean ethics in late-century novels expands on the work of Rachel Hollander, who finds an ethics of hospitality in novels from the last decades of the Victorian period. Hollander argues that during the 1870s and 1880s, the "problem of self and other, known and unknown" began to emerge as a result of "colonial conflicts, nationalist anxiety, and the intensification of the woman question" (3). Focusing on both cultural and fictional discourses of domesticity, Hollander argues that "in the wake of an erosion of confidence in the ability to understand that which is unlike the self... a moral code founded on sympathy gives way to an ethics of hospitality," which is found "in both the plot and form of the late Victorian novel, as characters and authors open themselves to that which is other, and suggest the value of recognizing rather than overcoming the limits of knowledge" (3).⁶⁸ That is, as a sympathy based in knowledge of the other gives way to an ethics of hospitality, realist representation gives way to experimental forms of narrative that respect the unknowability of the other.

In agreement with Hollander, I also argue that the late-Victorian period struggled with the problem of otherness and that the novels in the last decade of the century

⁶⁸ See also Rebecca Mitchell, who argues that Victorian realist literature teaches its readers the ethical importance of respecting the unknowability of others.

propose that ethical behaviour includes responding to the other without needing to understand them or classify them. However, for the late-Victorians, alterity was not always external. As I have shown here, physiological psychology located the other at the level of the body and as the source of the self. As such, the other was both unknowable and the same. My argument therefore differs from Jill Larson's, who has asserted that late-century anxieties about agency produce a variety of ethical models in late-Victorian novels. Larson includes a chapter on the narrative form of ethics that emerges in the relationship between self and other and from the demand of the other. However, she claims that the novels that best demonstrate this kind of ethics (including *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) come up short, showing the limits of conscience and the solipsism of aesthetic form.

Moreover, in contrast to Hollander's claim that a new form of ethics emerges in a stark break from previous forms, I argue that the fainting body has called out for an unconditional ethical response in literature at least since *Frankenstein*. However, it is true that the novels I have chosen represent this ethical demand through generic conventions that differ significantly from the realist novel. I argue this is because they choose to experiment with the tension between other and self by creating forms of life that represent the alterity of the affective body. These forms of life—*The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s portrait, *The Time Machine*'s Eloi and Morlocks, and *Dracula*'s vampires—embody both the ontological difference of all others and their ethical demands, and an ontological similitude between themselves and others, animals and humans, that solicits an ethical response.

These novels of the 1890s therefore do suggest that ethics emerges in tandem with sympathetic identification, but that form of sympathy is quite different than the usual formulation. I argue it is based in ontological identification (a similarity of being) rather than epistemological identification (the ability to know or understand the other). Cohn argues against this possibility, drawing on Derrida's philosophy of difference by reading Thomas Hardy's realist *Bildungsroman Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). She claims that in this novel, animal alterity is the basis for ethical behaviour (235-236). More broadly, she asserts that affect theories that emphasize animal-human continuity (like Massumi's

or Deleuze and Guattari's) are inappropriate models of ethics.⁶⁹ However, as much as Derrida is concerned with multiplicities of difference and the concept of what he calls the “wholly other” (*Animal* 12), he also deconstructs the idea of a border between animals and humans, proposing that it is divided and folded over on itself (31). He also aligns ethics with sympathetic identification in pointing to images of animal suffering, explaining,

If these images are “pathetic,” if they evoke sympathy, it is also because they “pathetically” open the immense question of pathos and the pathological, precisely, that is, of suffering, pity, and compassion; and the place that has to be accorded to the interpretation of this compassion, to the sharing of this suffering among the living, to the law, ethics, and politics that must be brought to bear upon this experience of compassion. (26)

In this passage, Derrida suggests that ontological identification is the key to ethical compassion when he explains that sympathy relies on an idea of shared suffering. This identification is not about understanding or knowing the other, but about the similitude between vulnerable bodies.

If fainting bodies solicit us with this similitude or ontological identification, the late-century novels I have chosen emphasize how contingent and difficult truly ethical behaviour is. This is because truly ethical behaviour is impossible. To be responsible for all forms of life is impossible, to be generous or hospitable to the point of endangering yourself and others is impossible, to know the ways in which bodies are similar or different is impossible, to truly know what the other needs is impossible.⁷⁰ However, Derrida insists that when the demand to behave ethically in openness towards the other—without any conditions, limits, or self-interest—is impossible, that is the realm of ethics. Each of the novels I have chosen here presents these forms of ethical impossibility and

⁶⁹ Cohn turns to Alain Badiou, who challenges the radical possibilities of autonomous affect's decentering of humanism, noting that, inevitably, “bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out” (*Still* 188). Power, as Cohn describes, “re-consolidates” (188). While this may be true in some novels, it is not the whole story in the novels I analyze here.

⁷⁰ George Levine argues that while Victorian realist novels strive to know the other, the impossibility of this knowledge remains a part of many texts. He refers to *Middlemarch*'s narrator's famous invocation of the heartbeat of the squirrel: “If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence” (Eliot 203).

uncertainty through narrative syncope, which disrupts the binaries of animal and human, self and other, conscious and nonconscious. As narrative syncope creates forms of ontological identification, these novels all beg some version of the ultimate ethical question: my life or theirs?⁷¹ As they bring the complete unknowability of the other together with ontological identification with the other, these novels point to the body as the realm of ethical impossibility and uncertainty—and therefore the realm of unconditional ethics.⁷²

Therefore, the affective body in and of the text represents the ethical aesthetic. Because narrative syncope is a matter of both content and form, I argue that narrative itself includes the same affective openness and undecidability that characterizes unconditional ethics.⁷³ Narrative syncope is the form of affective being that initiates these ethics because it solicits the reader through the fainting body and through the form of the affective text itself. Bulstrode's fainting body solicits the reader when the text explicitly turns outward to ask, "what could he do?" As Lydgate steps in for the reader, *Middlemarch* models what a true ethical response looks like—unthinking, immediate, and automatic, not only without a sense of volition but also at the expense of the self—and subverts the idea that ethical behaviour comes from individual choice. Eliot also challenges the idea that ethical action results in good feeling or social cohesion in the unspeakable bitterness of Lydgate's generous response to Bulstrode. Sedgwick's reading of her own faint is similarly tinged with bitterness. She wishes her swoon was a silent collapse into insensibility that could be read as social defiance (33). Instead, her body is

⁷¹ For the uncertainty of unconditional ethical choice that must precede any decision that is made in "madness," see Derek Attridge, as well as Michael Anker.

⁷² The invocation of Spinoza's insistence that we do not know yet what bodies can do not only implies the virtual potential that Massumi writes about, but also relates to the openness towards others and the specificity that Derrida claims is required to turn the infinite demands of ethics into political choices. The novels in this dissertation enact this uncertainty through their form and content, offering narrative modes of interruption and fragmentation and representations of bodies that explore the limits of Spinoza's question. What if the body never changed? What if it evolved 800,000 years into the future? What if it could become something else entirely?

⁷³ As Derrida explains, "political, ethical and juridical responsibility requires a task of infinite close reading. I believe this to be the condition of political responsibility: politicians should read. Now, to read does not mean to spend nights in the library; to read events, to analyse the situation, to criticize the media, to listen to the rhetoric of the demagogues, that's close reading, and it is required more today than ever. So I would urge politicians and citizens to practise close reading in this new sense, and not simply to stay in the library" ("Hospitality" 67).

simply vulnerable, “supine, black-clad, paper-white, weirdly bald” (32). Sedgwick’s fainting body solicits an ethical response from those who urgently call her name, those who have called the ambulance, the troopers who check her condition, and the protesters who block her body from the gaze of the journalists’s cameras (32). But it also solicits the reader through its displacements of meaning and through its affective grammatical rhythms, as well as through the body’s vulnerability, its relation to other vulnerable bodies, its particular contextual complexity, and also its complete obscurity. As these texts demonstrate, and as the novels I have chosen here will also show, syncope calls for an ethical response to vulnerable bodies even, or perhaps only, in “intense discomfort” (Sedgwick 34).

Chapter 3. “The loveliest of little live things”: Aesthetic Forms of Life in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Towards the end of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian hosts a hunting party at his estate, Selby Royal. He is thirty-eight years old but, despite living a life of self-indulgence, he looks as though he has not aged at all. Aging in his place is a portrait of himself painted in his youth. A broken engagement from his past now threatens his life, as the brother of his jilted fiancée Sibyl Vane pursues him. Initially, Dorian’s unchanged appearance protects him, as James Vane is seeking vengeance on an older man. Eventually, however, James realizes the truth—that the youthful-looking Dorian is the man who broke his sister’s heart and caused her suicide—and follows him to his hunting party. When Dorian sees James watching him through a window, he suddenly faints. Shaken after this loss of consciousness, Dorian joins a guest on a hunt and experiences another emotionally significant episode. As a hare bounds in front of them, Dorian is suddenly “strangely charmed” by the animal and cries to his companion, “Don’t shoot it, Geoffrey. Let it live” (193). In this chapter, I explore the politics and ethics of affect that are revealed in the connection in this episode between Dorian’s faint and his sudden compassion for the hare, both of which are moments of heightened affect.

Dorian’s collapse at the sight of James Vane represents the intense response of his body, and while his faint may be connected to fear, it is not defined by any one particular emotion. Dorian’s faint is a reaction of his nervous system, and it invites a reading of Dorian as hysterical, as overly sensitive and not quite properly masculine (210).⁷⁴ However, thinking about Dorian’s embodied responses in terms of affect, particularly in the sense that Brian Massumi has outlined—as nonconscious, non-linguistic, and autonomous—reveals just how nonsubjective they are and allows us to see how they are related to the nonhuman. When Dorian reacts by fainting or crying out, he is neither in control of what he is doing nor fully aware of why he does it. The nonsubjectivity of these expressions of affect and their proximity to his compassion for the hare can

⁷⁴ Mark S. Micale writes that Wilde challenged current notions of masculinity in ways that might invite readings of male hysteria (210).

therefore help us to see how Dorian is also *like* the animal. On the surface, this is perhaps an obvious point—he is lovely and he is also hunted (by James Vane), and the idea that Dorian sees himself as a similarly beautiful and hunted creature offers a simple explanation for his sudden plea to spare the hare’s life. However, Dorian’s affective responses suggest he is alike to the hare both circumstantially and ontologically. Dorian’s nonconscious reactions reveal that his form of being is alike to an animal and, throughout the novel, they make him much more like a “live thing” than a proper subject. That is, they reveal the bare life of Dorian’s body.⁷⁵

In the Victorian period, science turned to the human body and began to create a new politics from and of it. Not only did Victorian science propose that the self was partially animal, the result of evolution and the reactivity of the nervous system, but, around the time of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*’s publication, the emerging field of sexology was beginning to classify the queer body through medical discourse (Bauer 4).⁷⁶ Affective responses are a way to understand the body both through and beyond sexual desire. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, one of the key ways in which affective responses mirror animal being, or bare life, is by suspending those aspects of subjectivity which have come to be most associated with humanness, including consciousness, self-awareness, language, and temporality. These suspensions—these moments of heightened affect and decreased subjectivity—are what I am calling narrative syncope. Gaps in

⁷⁵ As I explain more fully in Chapter Two of this dissertation, bare life is a concept forwarded by Giorgio Agamben to describe life that can be taken without being either a sacrifice or murder, life that is not protected as a political subject. Bare life’s opposite is the sovereign, who decides on which lives count as political and which lives do not. For a reading of *Frankenstein* in which the creature represents the affective bare life that is both separated from and constituent of human life, see Margaret Linley.

⁷⁶ In exploring the British translation of Continental sexological theory, Heike Bauer points out the growing discursive classification of the queer body, writing that in “late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century sexological discourses...sexuality was, at least initially, largely considered a bodily phenomenon that sexologists tried to capture and explain on paper” (16). Bauer’s research follows the methodology of Michel Foucault, who, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, points to the construction of individual identity based on the classification and discipline of the sexual body. Ivan Crozier examines British exposure to and writing about the physiology of sexuality, some which accepted and others which challenged the centrality of the body to homosexual desire. While both scholars note the significance of Wilde’s trials to the categorization of homosexuality, it is not necessarily the case that Wilde would have read this body of work before publishing *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Nevertheless, these ideas were circulating at the time. Nils Claussen reads the novel as forwarding a hereditary, physiological view of homosexuality. See also Valerie Rohy on late-Victorian theories of acquisitive versus innate homosexuality represented in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Bram Dijkstra and Linda Dowling on late-Victorian artistic practices that theorized homosexuality’s rejection of “a merely animal sexuality” (Dowling 115).

Dorian's consciousness and self-awareness are mirrored by narrative techniques that undermine the subjective quality of the novel form and engage similar forms of suspension. I argue that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is grappling with the representation of nonhuman aspects of the self and their implication in queer sexuality and non-normative relationships through narrative syncope.

The texts that I examine in this dissertation are forms of autobiography that demonstrate how the non-normative or queer body and nonhuman or animal self exists both at the heart of, and in resistance to, that autobiography. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has been read as Wilde's own autobiography, the story of a young man discovering his desire for other men—which is the way it was used at trial as evidence of his sexuality. However, when Georgia Johnston places *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in a history of queer autobiography, she suggests that Dorian's portrait “evokes the autobiographical text,” while invoking and subverting “the idea that a person's subjectivity can be read on the body” through phrenology (272-273). I want to expand this idea through affect's challenge to both anthropocentrism and mimesis. In the novel, both the portrait and the text create Dorian's autobiography by affirming and subverting the humanness of the self who narrates.⁷⁷ Elana Gomel suggests that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is autobiographical (although she does not use the term) through her focus on the novel's representation of the impossibility of either singular identity or authorship. In agreement with Gomel, I turn to the aesthetics of self-representation through the Victorian science of physiological psychology in order to examine the nonhuman and nonsubjective aspects in the syncopation of Dorian's autobiography.

In the novels I explore in this dissertation, narrative syncope represents aesthetic subjectivity—autobiography—as embodied and animal, and in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that syncopation is ultimately charged with the potential to order the world differently, as in a world where Dorian (a wealthy, white aristocrat) is not really different

⁷⁷ Johnston describes queer autobiography as a form of “meta-autobiography,” “a self-reflexive critique of ideologies that seemingly require heteronormative and masculine subjectivities and scripts as necessary in the representation of an autobiographical ‘I’” (269). Although it differs in focus and approach, Johnston's concept of meta-autobiography aligns with the nonhuman aspects of the autobiographical subject that I explore, particularly through the subversion of politically normative subjectivity.

from a hare, or other animals, or other men, or women, or even a painting. As the novel explores the freedom of the nonsubjective body (or bare life), it also explores the tension that exists within this potential escape from political control. That is, even if the world could be reordered in aesthetic freedom, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests that the body would continue to recognize its responsibilities to the demands of others. As Jacques Derrida has theorized, ethical action begins when we respond to the demands of others; however, as he also points out, it is impossible to be responsible to every other and impossible to reconcile all others's demands.⁷⁸ As we have seen with *Middlemarch*, responding to the demands of others may have uncomfortable or dangerous consequences, and what one person demands may be fatal to another or to the self. However, the impossibility of truly ethical action is what comprises the realm of ethics—the impossible is what makes any ethical decision-making possible. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests that the field of responsibility is determined by affect; in other words, Dorian is responsible to those others he has affected and those who have affected him. However, he is also responsible to the demands of his own body, the other within himself. Aesthetic representations of the responsive body include the bodies in the text, the changing portrait, and the narrative techniques of the novel. While these forms all challenge anthropocentric self-representation and reveal the nonhuman other of the subject and the body, they also reveal the impossible demands placed on Dorian to decide to whom and how he is responsible.

Each instance of syncope in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* adds to our understanding of the personal, social, political, and ethical significance of bare life in and of aesthetic forms, revealing the way in which the aesthetic potential of the body, and the embodied potential of aesthetic forms, form the basis for political struggle between animal freedom and sovereign power. The first syncope of the novel reflects the way in

⁷⁸ Derrida outlines his ethics of responsibility in, for example, “Whom to Give to (Knowing Not to Know)” from *The Gift of Death*. Derek Attridge offers an exceptionally clear reading of this chapter in “The Impossibility of Ethics: Mount Moriah” from *Reading and Responsibility*. Cynthia Willett has called Derrida’s (and others) ethical philosophy “response ethics,” for which “the direct and compelling source of obligation is not rational principle, individual preference, or character virtue, but the overpowering draw of the vulnerable other” (10). Willett uses response as a ground for interspecies ethical philosophy, echoing Kelly Oliver and her use of the portmanteau “response-ability.”

which the affective body resists linguistic meaning-making, revealing both the responsiveness of the nonsubjective body to aesthetic form and the liveliness, or animacy, of the aesthetic form itself. The second syncope turns to the bare life of female and racialized bodies, to investigate the body's freedom from and dependence on identity politics. The third example brings bare life into relation with its queer potential via the concepts of virtuality and wildness. My final section turns to the political struggle between freedom and responsibility, as the fourth example introduces the social and political vulnerability of bare life to violence, and my return to Dorian's fainting spell and the hare hunt connect bare and vulnerable life more fully with the concepts of care and responsibility. In the conclusion, I turn briefly to the deployment of bare life in Wilde's own life, in relation to his queer body on trial.

3.1. Affect and the Nonhuman Narrative

One of the novel's most significant moments suspends narrative thought and action to concentrate instead on the body's sensations. This scene of suspension, or syncope, illustrates the importance of affect, or the animal life of the body, to the possibility of subjective representation, or autobiography. This moment occurs after Dorian meets Lord Henry and immediately before the strange relationship between Dorian and his painting begins. As Dorian poses for Basil Hallward, the portrait's creator, he and Lord Henry discuss the nature of influence on identity, with Lord Henry contrasting the baseness of influence with the nobility of self-development (20-21). The conversation is too rapid and overwhelming for Dorian, who demands that Lord Henry stop talking so that he can "try not to think" (21). Indeed, the ensuing text implies that it is not thinking that occurs next:

For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips, and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him. Yet they seemed to have come really from himself. The few words that Basil's friend had said to him—words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with willful paradox in them—had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses. (21)

Rather than consciously thinking of anything in particular, Dorian seems to have had his self-consciousness suspended for these ten minutes. What he is “dimly conscious” of, even then, is not ideas but rather the simple fact that he has been affected.

This scene has often been cited in scholarly debates about the “relative influences of nature and nurture in the development of the individual” (Karschay 169), in which influence acts as a kind of energy or “almost imperceptible force” (Stern 757) with the power to shape Dorian’s queer identity and behaviour.⁷⁹ In contrast to those scholars who have read influence as an agential force, scholars have argued that the concept of influence in the novel indicates Wilde’s interest in and interpretation of scientific theories of the relationship of the body to the mind or individual character.⁸⁰ Notably for my argument, Hao Li in particular argues that this moment of influence represents Dorian’s embodied mind through a self-consciousness that internalizes his own affective responses (575). To be sure, the idea of influence shares qualities with contemporary theories of affect, as in Sara Ahmed’s model of affect that circulates and sticks to objects, or Teresa Brennan’s insistence that affect is transmitted from person to person. Massumi, too, writes that affect is autonomous, its own agent “to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is” (35). However, influence suggests notions of control, direction, or even replication, while affect is far more unpredictable and even chaotic.⁸¹ To say that someone has been affected

⁷⁹ For influence as the origin or recognition of Dorian’s queer identity, see Ed Cohen, Pamela Thurschwell, Nils Claesson, and Valerie Rohy’s work. For influence in relation to Wilde’s queer identity, see Thurschwell and Simon Stern. For the analysis of literary influence in *Dorian Gray*, see Andrew Elfenbein. Although she does not quote this section of the text directly, Audrey Jaffe also writes about the way this early scene demonstrates the social or collective nature of identity (171).

⁸⁰ Carolyn Lesjak approaches the representation of influence in *Dorian Gray* through the notions of proximity and affinity, joining scholars who have turned towards the discourses of Victorian science and psychology in *Dorian Gray* and Wildean theories of the relationship between the body and the mind. Michael Davis, for example, proposes that Wilde challenges materialist science by representing the mind as irreducible to the body, while Hao Li notes that the novel partially represents subjectivity through affect, embodied feeling that suspends the individual’s agency. Other scientific analyses of the novel include Heather Seagrott, who claims that while Wilde engages with the materialism of Victorian psychology in the novel, he ultimately rejects its rigidity in favour of the realm of aesthetics; Michael Wainwright, who argues that Wildean influence is an evolutionary theory of aesthetic heredity in the novel; and Elisha Cohn and Benjamin Morgan, who point out the aestheticization of the brain and the nervous system in the novel as both decorative (Cohn “One”) and animating (Morgan 256).

⁸¹ Daniel Pick claims that *Dorian Gray* (along with *Trilby* and *Dracula*) draws from nineteenth century concerns over an “attenuated will” that is moved by external forces of “hypnotism and suggestibility”

is to use a phrase that may be evacuated of any other meaningful context aside from the fact of sensation or response itself. Rather than think of the significance of this moment in terms of the movement of influence or affect between bodies, or between the body and mind, I argue that influence is affective in that it creates a form of suspension or interruption that elevates the body over the mind.⁸²

Dorian's response to Lord Henry sounds uncannily like Massumi's incorporation of suspension in his description of affect (referred to here as intensity):

Intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonance and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future. Intensity is qualifiable as an emotional state, and that state is static – temporal and narrative noise. It is a state of suspense, potentially of disruption. It is like a temporal sink, a hole in time, as we conceive of it and narrativize it. It is not exactly passivity, because it is filled with motion, vibratory motion, resonance. (Massumi 26)

As though acting out the qualities of Massumi's theory, Dorian is barely conscious of what is happening to him when Lord Henry speaks; we might conjecture that if he could describe his emotional state, it would be akin to Massumi's affective white noise. Dorian's response is also described as a suspension of time, as for a full ten minutes Dorian is absolutely still; yet, "still" does not adequately describe his state, as he is "vibrating and throbbing" with the pulses of his own body. Moreover, after this encounter, Dorian runs out into the garden and, as Lord Henry follows him, Dorian turns with "a look of fear in his eyes, such as people have when they are suddenly awakened" (23). The term "awakened" here may refer to both Dorian's realization of his own queer desire and the coming to consciousness that ends a syncope or a period of suspension. Via syncope, Dorian is awakened to an affective body that is queer in its new desire and queer in its new behaviour—non-normative, other and strange, yet intimate and the same.

("Body" 31), while Rohy suggests that queer influence is a form of homosexual reproduction. Thurschwell too, addresses the influence of hypnotism in *Dorian Gray*, *Trilby*, and *Dracula*, aligning it with queer influence in Wilde's novel.

⁸² Li cites affect theorists Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth to claim that Dorian's body registers "visceral forces" that are neither conscious nor can be described as full emotions, forces that can "suspend us" as we are struck by the body's feelings (Gregg and Seigworth 1). However, she develops this line of thinking into a reading of Dorian's suspension as humanistic self-consciousness that emphasizes self-reflection.

Not just a prefiguration of contemporary affect theory, Dorian's affective response to Lord Henry's speech reflects aesthetic discourse at the end of the nineteenth century. Writers in the field of physiological aesthetics theorized that the purpose of aesthetic objects and forms, like painting and poetry, was to produce a response from the body of the viewer or reader.⁸³ Moreover, this discourse emphasized nonhuman elements in its focus on the responsive body. Grant Allen, for example, takes the "organism" of the body as his primary unit of aesthetic analysis in *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877). Allen follows other physiological psychologists in granting that the nervous system is the basis for consciousness (2), figuring both human and animal bodies as "complicated and delicate machine[s]" (17). Outlining an evolutionary theory of aesthetic preference, Allen theorizes that the elements of aesthetic forms work on upper and lower classes of both humans and animals. For Allen, art—painting, sculpture, music, and poetry—that rises to the category of "aesthetic class" does so in part because it creates the "Maximum of Stimulation with the Minimum of Fatigue or Waste" for the senses, and because it can be received by the viewer, reader, or listener in disinterestedness (3, 39, 41). Where aesthetic appreciation is usually seen as a distinctly human trait, in Allen's theory it is predicated on the not-necessarily-human organism's pleasurable reception of colours, sounds, tastes, materials, and smells.

Wilde was aware and appreciative of Allen's body of work, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reflects enough of Allen's theory of aesthetics to be fruitfully read alongside it.⁸⁴ Wilde's aesthetic theory in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has been more widely understood to be in dialogue with Walter Pater, whose conclusion to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* includes his now famous exhortation, "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. Failure is to form

⁸³ For a thorough account of the experimental practices of physiological aesthetics on the body in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Robert Brain.

⁸⁴ See Lindsey Wilhelm for a history of Wilde and Allen's mutual respect and their engagement with one another's work. For a reading of Allen's *Physiological Aesthetics* as reflective of individual consumption and sexual desire at the end of the nineteenth century, see Regenia Gagnier ("Production"). For a reading of Allen's participation in the production of authority for the discipline of physiological aesthetics, and Wilde's subversion of disciplinary authority, see Ian Small.

habits” (210-211).⁸⁵ As Heather Seagrott notes, Dorian certainly follows Pater’s demand to attend to “the sensuous experience of the object or moment” (752). Like Allen, Pater emphasizes the materialism of the body and the world around it in his aesthetic theory, tending “to suspend or sideline the human as a unit of analysis, foregrounding instead nerves or animals or parts of the body” (Morgan 124). Pater is therefore a relevant interlocutor in this chapter’s exploration of physiological aesthetics. However, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* also represents the kinds of sensorial responses that Allen was theorizing—perhaps even more so given Allen and Wilde’s mutual interest in the affectively receptive animal organism of the human subject.

In the above scene between Dorian and Lord Henry, for example, the vibration that Dorian experiences, as much as it resembles Massumi’s contemporary theory of affect, also echoes Allen’s description of the transmission and reception of sound waves, which cause some bodies to be “set in motion” and vibrate (101). Referencing advances in physiological science, Allen’s is a highly materialist theory of how bodies receive sound as they are touched and moved by waves. As he explains this sound wave theory, Allen makes little reference to the individual human body, but rather uses the generic term “bodies,” which refers variously to a stone on the ground, a fist on a table, a tuning fork, a violin string, and, eventually, the inner ear (101-102). Reading Dorian’s “vibration and throbbing to curious pulses” in light of Allen’s theory suggests that Lord Henry’s words touch Dorian in a material way. Dorian is therefore not a subject realizing his identity but a receptive object, alike to the table struck by a fist or the violin string struck by a blow. In physiological aesthetics, the reception of beauty is an embodied event; Wilde’s novel represents this reception by making the body a part of the aesthetic event, as Dorian’s body becomes an object open to being touched by another body (or object or word). The aesthetic potential of the body lies both in the animality of its responses and in its potential to become equal in relation to other objects, to become an aesthetic object itself.

⁸⁵ For a selection of readings of *Dorian Gray* and Paterian aesthetic theory, see Seagrott, Davis, Cohn (“One”), John Paul Riquelme, Nils Claussen, Anna Budziak, and Caroline Levine.

As this scene marks Dorian's introduction to the affects and desires of his body and the beginning of the relationship between Dorian and his picture, we can understand this moment as significant to Dorian's autobiography, the writing of himself by both his personal narrative and his portrait. Here we see the way in which the animal body is implicated in the aesthetics of subjectivity. Autobiography usually connotes a linguistic act of composition, involving deliberately chosen and arranged memories. To a certain degree, this holds true for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, of course, since the text is a linguistic construction that tells the story of Dorian himself. However, the moment of influence that initiates Dorian's acknowledgement of his body, his relationship with his portrait, and the reader's glimpse into his subjectivity, is underwritten by non-linguistic affect. The autobiographical moment is constituted by both the affective vibrations of Dorian's body and the suspension of narrative time and not by any kind of conscious description, narrative progress, or even direct connection to Lord Henry's words. In other words, autobiography here begins with syncope.

Narrative syncope represents affect and therefore also represents what Massumi calls the "virtual" of the body, a concept that denotes the nonconsciousness of affective response and the potential of the body to be or react in any and every way. In describing the reaction of the affective body before the conscious mind can register it, Massumi writes that "[s]omething that happens too quickly to have happened, actually, is *virtual*" (30). He opposes this affective realm to actual lived relations, the possible and concrete ways that relations in the world can and do proceed following the affective event (35). As Dorian's autobiography, the novel's narrative reveals the virtual-actual border of the body through formal techniques of syncopation. In other words, the narrative reflects the embodied nonconsciousness of affect (virtual) as always occurring at the heart of conscious autobiography (actual).⁸⁶ The virtual aspects of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* include these elements because they are syncopated; that is, they represent a gap, or an attempt to bridge a gap, in subjectivity. The form of the novel's narrative reflects the

⁸⁶ As I mention in Chapter Two, my analysis of narrative techniques that reveal the virtual realm of affect draws from Ridvan Askin's theory that formal aspects of contemporary novels represent openings into the virtual of the narrative. Askin's narrative glimpses of the virtual include techniques that range from "inconsistent narrative voices to the mixing of incongruent narrative levels, from the projection of impossible perspectives to the interweaving of impossible storylines (22)."

nonsubjective elements that make Dorian's autobiography possible. Scholars have already noted in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* what Rohy calls "the perversion of novelistic form" (283), particularly in its temporality, including John-Paul Riquelme's and Kevin Ohi's reflections on its lack of linear progress and Caroline Levine's claim that the novel reveals that the realist form is about nothing but temporality itself.⁸⁷ One nonsubjective aspect of syncope is arrhythmic temporality. As Massumi theorizes the relationship between affect, narrative, and language, he formulates a possible relationship between affect and autobiography by describing the a-temporal gap that affect creates in narrative: affect is unrelated to narrative time, so when we narrate affect, we do so as a "temporal sink, a hole in time." In the quotation about affective intensity above, Massumi is referring to forms of descriptive narrative, but also, it seems, to self-narration, the thinking and articulating of what we feel. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the syncopated narrative represents and reflects these affective, nonsubjective suspensions by writing Dorian's autobiography as gaps in narration: as temporal suspensions and as suspensions of meaning.

As the text depicts Dorian's affective state in the scene of his suspension, it emphasizes the power of language as an aesthetic form rather than as an inherently meaningful mode of communication. Following the description of Dorian's ten-minute suspension, the text reflects on other analogously influential moments:

Music had stirred him like that... But music was not articulate. It was not a new world, but rather another chaos, that it created in us. Words! Mere Words! How terrible they were! How clear, and vivid, and cruel! One could not escape from them. And yet what a subtle magic there was in them! They seemed to be able to give a plastic form to formless things, and to have a music of their own as sweet as that of viol or of lute. Mere words! Was there anything so real as words? (22)

Here, language both does and does not hold an exceptional relationship to Dorian's subjectivity. While words seem to be special in their ability to create "a new world," their power to move also makes them like music. Even as the text contrasts music to

⁸⁷ Michael Gillespie identifies *Dorian Gray* as postmodern in his claim that the novel lacks any stable ideological framework.

articulation, there is nothing particularly articulate about Dorian's nascent understanding of himself, of "things in his boyhood" that "he understood...now" (22). Instead, words are more like form, and in fact, more like music, than they are like articulation. Ending the declaration about the aesthetics of language is the emphatic "Mere words!", asserting the way speech turns away from the subjectivity that language ought to grant. Even as the text insists that language does something more than music, it also reduces language to words, translates the words as music, and ultimately presents Dorian as lacking linguistic agency over what it is that he now understands. Moments later, the narrative reaffirms that it is the literal tenor of Lord Henry's words that moves Dorian, while simultaneously recognizing that there is nothing particularly human about language itself: "There was something in his low languid voice that was absolutely fascinating. His cool, white, flowerlike hands, even, had a curious charm. They moved, as he spoke, like music, and seemed to have a language of their own" (23). Lord Henry's body here is an aesthetic object in its power to produce a response, emphasizing that language is simply another kind of aesthetic form.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, language produces affective responses, thereby creating forms of syncope rather than forms of meaning. Language is aestheticized in this scene such that it works on the animal or nonhuman level of Dorian's body, at the level of affective responsiveness that is nonsubjective, non-linguistic, and shared with animal life. Allen's physiological aesthetics make poetry and other forms of language arts—what he calls narrative poetry—important for the sensory responsiveness they elicit, and he admires narrative poetry for a representational function akin to painting. Allen does not necessarily privilege mimesis (mimicry or exact representation) or the genre of realism over any other narrative form, as realism is not necessary to raise the story to the level of the aesthetic class. It does not matter in terms of Allen's theory whether Dorian behaves believably or whether a portrait actually could change its appearance. Rather, the importance of language for Allen is that the narrative evokes a pleasurable sensorial response. He therefore places a great amount of weight on the ability of language to produce particular kinds of feelings, as in, for example, his seeming certainty that a lily of the valley would produce a positive, pleasurable response (247-248). Yet, Allen also leaves space for uncertainty and the unpredictability of individual affect—or, understood

another way, for the slippery *différance* of language, the possibility that words never refer to just one thing: words are “aesthetically gratifying or the opposite in virtue of the pleasant or unpleasant sensations, the dignified or undignified emotions, memories of which are aroused in connexion with the objects they symbolize” (247-248). Further, Allen describes the effect of narrative poetry as “vague” and “massive” (rather than “acute”) due to its multiplicity of effects (257). It is the pleasurable response of the body that aestheticizes language, and not, for Allen, any particular strategy of organization or plot.⁸⁸

The beginning of Dorian’s narrative, his autobiography, therefore aligns in many ways with Allen’s suggestion in *Physiological Aesthetics* that subjectivity and narrative both rely on affect. As I mention in Chapter Two, fictional autobiographies in the mid-Victorian period tended to follow a linear sequence of events to create a meaningful life story.⁸⁹ In other words, they rely on representative elements of human subjectivity, like memory, self-reflection or self-consciousness, and temporality. Yet, Dorian’s autobiography is predicated on his body as an organism, on the nonsubjective aspects of his life. This includes not only the assertion of the affective power of “mere words,” but also the “chance” or careless manner with which Lord Henry speaks them, and the fact that their form—paradox—is a contradiction, an inability to convey transparent meaning. It is the body and its affective responses that underwrite the possibility of autobiography.

Dorian’s embodied autobiography also includes the syncopation of linearity or progress. The moment when Dorian’s autobiography begins is not a singular moment, but an irrhythmically-paced episode that focuses on Lord Henry’s words and the affective response of Dorian’s body. While this includes the representation of syncope via Dorian’s body, narrative time, too, is syncopated, moving from Lord Henry’s lengthy soliloquys, to the quick bound over uneventful time captured by the “ten minutes” or “about a quarter of an hour” during which Basil paints Dorian (26), to a minute focus on Dorian’s body. For example, after Lord Henry delivers a long and “strange panegyric on

⁸⁸ For Allen, plot is simply one aspect of narrative poetry, to be added onto sensually pleasurable representation (211-213).

⁸⁹ See, for example, Nicholas Dames’s *Amnesiac Selves*.

youth” (27), the narrative suddenly shifts its pace to pay attention to the materiality of the world in which Dorian’s body exists:

Dorian Gray listened, open-eyed and wondering. The spray of lilac fell from his hand upon the gravel. A furry bee came and buzzed round it for a moment. Then it began to scramble all over the oval stellated globe of the tiny blossoms. He watched it with that strange interest in trivial things that we try to develop when things of high import make us afraid, or when we are stirred by some new emotion for which we cannot find expression, or when some thought that terrifies us lays sudden siege to the brain and calls on us to yield. After a time the bee flew away. He saw it creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus. The flower seemed to quiver, and then swayed gently to and fro. (25)

An attention to objects supplements the linguistic expression of emotion, as the narrative slows in reflection of Dorian’s own besieged consciousness and focuses on the minutiae of bee movement and flower sway, concentrating on the sensuous in the furriness of the bee, the stellation of the blossoms, the quivering of the flower, and the journey of the lilacs from hand to gravel.

Dorian’s autobiography reflects the nonhuman, animal, or nonsubjective aspects of the human by syncopating human time, while also disrupting and challenging language’s importance in the narrative. That is, autobiography here does not reveal a subjective “who” but rather an embodied “what” and “how,” by echoing Dorian’s response to Lord Henry and creating meaning through affective responses rather than language. For example, if this is a moment of queer revelation for Dorian, as the young man realizes he is attracted to other men and, perhaps, always has been, this revelation is only made clear through inference and suggestion, through the quivering, vibrating, falling bodies and objects in the text. Before Basil is finished painting, Dorian wonders over the possibility of a lengthy friendship with Lord Henry as the older man delivers a clever repartee on the meaninglessness of the word “always”: “The only difference between a caprice and a life-long passion is that the caprice lasts a little longer” (26). When Dorian replies, “In that case, let our friendship be a caprice,” his language opens itself to a queer reading through the bodies of the two men, as Dorian immediately “flush[es] at his own boldness,” and Lord Henry “flung himself in a large wicker arm-chair, and watched him” (26). The body is not a guarantor of meaning here, but neither is

language. Instead, meaning is inferred from language and the body equally and in concert.

Further, the narrative itself holds a confusing position in relation to Dorian's interiority, as the narrator is at times an objective observer of the scene and at other times performs a privileged speech that seems to be Dorian's (or Lord Henry's or Basil's). Often, the narrative shifts quickly between biographer and autobiographer within a discrete paragraph. Take, for example, Lord Henry's interest in Dorian's suspended state of dim consciousness:

With his subtle smile, Lord Henry watched him. He knew the precise psychological moment when to say nothing. He felt intensely interested. He was amazed at the sudden impression that his words had produced, and, remembering a book that he had read when he was sixteen, a book which had revealed to him much that he had not known before, he wondered whether Dorian Gray was passing through a similar experience. He had merely shot an arrow into the air. Had it hit the mark? How fascinating the lad was! (22)

The narrative voice here moves from disembodied, to partially embodied, to fully embodied. It first watches and notices Lord Henry's "subtle smile" and his observant behaviour; then exhibits partial knowledge of Lord Henry's inner state: "He felt intensely interested. He was amazed..."; then moves to seemingly reporting Lord Henry's thoughts: "Had it hit the mark? How fascinating the lad was!" Spinks notes that the shift from objective narration to representation of a character's interiority—often called free indirect speech or discourse—is "[o]ne of the principle modes in which literary style can reproduce...affect" (37).⁹⁰ For Spinks, free indirect discourse represents affect as a zone of intersubjectivity, as it "breaks with the conventional pattern of linguistic representation which marks a division between two independent subjects of enunciation, one of which contextualizes the other" (37). Free indirect discourse makes narrative subjectivity uncertain, suggesting that narrative voice is indeterminately personal or impersonal, subjective or objective, self or other.

⁹⁰ See Stephen Arata for a reading of free indirect discourse in *Marius the Epicurean* as an impersonal narrative technique that reveals that the novel's characters are not persons but "just arrangements of words" (141).

The same pattern can be observed in the passage above regarding the power of words, as the narrative voice shifts from knowing Dorian's thoughts to seemingly speaking them: "Music had stirred him like that...But music was not articulate...Words! Mere Words! How terrible they were!" (22). Or as Dorian reflects on what Lord Henry has made him understand about himself, in the passage connected to Dorian's interest in Lord Henry's "languid voice" and his expressive hands, "Dorian Gray frowned and turned his head away":

He could not help liking the tall, graceful young man who was standing by him. His romantic, olive-coloured face and worn expression interested him...Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself?...And, yet, what was there to be afraid of? He was not a schoolboy or a girl. It was absurd to be frightened. (23)

There are multiple shifts here in narrative perspective: observer of Dorian's frown, knower of Dorian's feelings of affection and interest, and then speaker of Dorian's self-interrogation. Beyond the multiplicity of this narration, it seems nearly impossible to decide who speaks the line, "Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself?" While this could be a partially omniscient narrator who wonders this about Dorian, it seems that it is Dorian that poses the following question to himself, "what was there to be afraid of?" Moreover, if this is a first-person interjection, if it is a representation of Dorian's subjectivity and an explicit autobiographical reflection, it is one that does not know itself, represented by the form of a question in a syncope of self-consciousness.⁹¹

3.2. Bare Life and Affective Sovereignty

As the autobiographical text reflects the syncope of the affected body, so does Dorian's portrait. At first, Basil believes his painting of the beautiful Dorian is his own autobiography, a revelation of his feelings and desire. Basil laments, "An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. We live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost

⁹¹ See Dames' "1825-1880: The Network of Nerves" for an overview of the way physiological psychology was represented in the Victorian novel through characters' lack of self-knowledge.

the abstract sense of beauty” (14). As it turns out, the portrait ends up being Dorian’s autobiography as it “held the secret of his life, and told his story” (89). In fact, autobiography and biography collapse in the portrait, as they do in the narrative, because while Dorian authors the portrait’s change through his behaviour, he is unconscious of it; at the same time, the portrait is a kind of author, telling Dorian his story. The portrait, like the narrative, marks the relationship between the virtual—or affect—of Dorian’s body and the actual events that emerge from affective encounters. Dorian’s relationships with others, when he has touched or affected other bodies in the world, appear on his picture because they are based on feeling and on those affective encounters that produce significant and unpredictable actual events. In other words, the portrait makes visible the fact that Dorian’s social relationships (his personal relationships) and his political relationships (his place in the hierarchy of rights, freedoms, and protections) are based in the body and in what Victorians identified as the animal life of the human.

The text suggests the possibility that the division between the character and the picture of Dorian Gray is one of body and soul, as in the text’s attention to Dorian’s embodied beauty and Dorian’s own insistence that the picture “would reveal to him his own soul” (103). However, the novel’s body-soul dichotomy has already been complicated and challenged by scholars like William Cohen, Anna Budziak, and Benjamin Morgan, who point out that the picture represents either the soul’s embodiedness (Cohen) or the body’s soulfulness or “enmindedness” (Budziak and Morgan).⁹² Similarly, Amit Rai claims that Dorian’s portrait marks the affective processes of bodies, which are ever-changing in relation to time and the technologies they encounter every day. For Rai, the picture marks the body’s place in the modern biopolitical regime, the form of power that disciplines, values, and legislates on the grounds of biological life itself, while the sexualized body represents “the eternal present of the sensual animal” (59). Rai’s argument is brief and leads to a call for modern criticism to embrace a similar position of becoming. However, his insight deserves more rigorous attention with regard to the way in which the affective body and its

⁹² Caroline Levine and Amit Rai both point out that the picture bears the marks not only of Dorian’s interiority but also of time itself, an essential element of bodily experience.

representation through the portrait determine the aesthetic form and ethical potential of the novel.

As it changes, the portrait displays the ways in which the bare life of Dorian's body is implicated in social and political aspects of life: in relations with others, in community, and under the law. Rai sees the painted representation of Dorian in many of the same ways that I do, as representing animal otherness and potential (virtual) affective connection, but where he characterizes this representation as abjectly biopolitical and monstrously excessive (59-60), I see ethical potential in the representation of affective otherness and the attendant responsibility demanded by those others.⁹³ Roberto Esposito, too, has argued that *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (along with *Dracula*) allegorizes the nineteenth-century threat of degeneration and represents "the autoimmunitary dream of man" as the destruction of death itself (125-126).⁹⁴ The category of the degenerate was capacious and included immoral, unnatural, and hysterical behaviour, charges of which were leveled at aesthetes broadly and Wilde in particular by degeneration theorist Max Nordau in 1895. The degenerate was also seen to be potentially afflicted by a weakness of will that made him or her more easily influenced and susceptible to what Christopher Forth has called moral contagion. However, despite degeneration's possible relevance to *The Picture of Dorian Gray's* attention to influence (and to the novels in this dissertation more generally in their deployment of mesmerism, hypnotism, and hysteria), the animal or bare life of Dorian's affective body signals demand and responsibility rather than sin and failure.

As I explain in Chapter Two, Nigel Thrift connects the idea of bare life with affect through the "half-second delay" between a body's being affected and the subject's conscious awareness of it. The delay or gap between the body's reaction and the subject's

⁹³ Rai sees the portrait as representing the abjectly biopolitical body, the "degraded monster" that is a "body satisfying its hunger for sensation without any regard to the future" (59). However, he also believes it represents the potential of "new contagious connectivities in excess of the body's functional presence," and aligns this excessive and monstrous body with "racialized, sexualized, and animalized others" (60).

⁹⁴ Scholars like Nils Claussion, Stephen Karschay, and Daniel Pick (*Degeneration*) have noted the connection of Dorian's changing portrait with behaviours that many Victorians worried indicated a devolution of society towards a more animal nature.

realization represents the virtual realm of the body (67).⁹⁵ Thrift argues that affective bare life is subject to new forms of what he calls “microbiopolitics” (67), disciplinary procedures meant to act on the affective level of the body. The first signs of a biopolitical struggle between social and political freedom based in the bare life of the affective body appear on Dorian’s portrait when he both virtually and discursively disposes of the bare life of Sibyl Vane. As an actress, Sybil is perceived by Dorian as an aesthetic object and not as a subject, as her power is that of an aesthetic form that provokes an affective response: her beauty moves Dorian to tears, and her voice, full of “tremulous ecstasy,” “stirs” him (50-51); in other words, she represents the affective virtual. Sybil does not have an actual, unchanging identity in relation to Dorian, but rather a virtual one, with all the potential to be anything (and to be anything for Dorian). This virtual identity is tied to its embodied forms, as Sibyl might be as aesthetically moving as the Shakespearean heroines Rosalind or Imogen, or as a dead body in a tomb or a “pretty boy” in the forest, or as the victim of madness or of murder (51). Moreover, as an actress Sybil represents affect and aesthetics as syncopated, since during her performances she exists out of time, unlike the “ordinary women” who are “limited to their century” (51).

As Dorian falls in love with Sybil, it becomes clear that he is in love with her as an aesthetic object in two ways: firstly, that she is capable of eliciting an affective response, and secondly, that she is not a subject. What Dorian loves about Sybil as bare life is the way in which she affects him and he is uninterested in considering the reverse. Moreover, Dorian is adamant that as bare life, Sybil is not worthy of biography: “The Jew wanted to tell me her history,” he complains of the theatre manager, “but I said it did not interest me” (53). Dorian’s courtship is characterized by a desire to keep his relationship with Sybil suspended between the virtual and the actual. The importance of Sybil’s “bareness” or virtuality becomes apparent during an exchange between Lord Henry and Dorian, when the former asks the latter what his “actual relations [are] with Sibyl Vane” (51). When Dorian replies with a burst of feeling and “flushed cheeks” that “Sibyl Vane is sacred!”, Lord Henry insists that “[i]t is only the sacred things that are

⁹⁵ Thrift does not use the term virtual, but he is referring here to the same experiment from which Massumi theorizes that affect is virtual and a-temporal, concluding that the subjects are affected before they were consciously aware of it.

worth touching” (52). Dorian’s love and Lord Henry’s claim lay out the primary political and ethical difficulty of the novel, in that they gesture to both the significance of who is allowed to be a subject (politics) and how subjects and non-subjects should be treated (ethics). We can connect Dorian’s reference to Sybil as sacred with Giorgio Agamben’s terminology for those humans who are bare life as “*homo sacer*.” The definition of *sacer*, or sacred, in Agamben is not the same as religious or spiritual sacredness but rather refers to the way in which bare life is unprotected by either human or divine law (Sudlow 42-43). Sybil is sacred in that she is not a political subject, and because her existence is not-actual—purely feeling, bare life—that makes her sacred and worth “touching” for the aesthete. Yet, as sacredness reduces Sybil to a thing and not a subject, the act of touching is depoliticized and therefore does not have to be given as much care or attention (if any at all), as it would if it were the act of touching another subject.⁹⁶

Dorian and Sybil do get engaged, as Lord Henry predicts they will, but Dorian quickly breaks the engagement because when Sibyl leaves the realm of the virtual for the actual—from actor-as-affect to wife-as-subject—she ceases to function aesthetically. Becoming a bad actor, Sybil “simply produce[s] no effect,” as Dorian puts it (85). When he returns home after declaring he no longer loves her, Dorian finds the picture changed for the first time, with a new “touch of cruelty in the mouth” (88). He connects the change in the portrait with his “sin” (89) largely by the way he knows he has made Sybil feel, recognizing his “callousness” and thinking of her “lying at his feet and sobbing like a little child” (88). However, if Dorian’s sin is having affected Sybil badly, or having ignored the fact that he would affect her, it is not really a sin in the traditional sense of breaking a moral rule. While Sybil’s demand, as an other who deserves a response, is for Dorian to follow through with his marriage proposal, Dorian hears a call from a different other—the other of his own affective body. It is impossible for Dorian to answer both demands, and it may be no better a fate for Sybil (or Dorian) if Dorian marries her after all. Moreover, while it may be an impossible demand not to affect anyone badly, it is also impossible to know in advance how one’s behaviour, speech, or feeling will affect another. This sense of the unpredictability of affective encounters is frequently emphasized

⁹⁶ I discuss the politics and ethics of touch more thoroughly in my chapter on *Dracula*.

in affect theory through Spinoza's axiom, "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (155). The portrait registers affect's impossible demands and their uncertain and embodied outcomes.

Therefore, the portrait does not represent the spiritual or supernatural of the soul, but rather makes visible what would otherwise be the invisible world of affective relations—the way in which bodies and objects affect and solicit other bodies and objects. Dorian's picture shows him that he affects others without providing any actual detail or transparent system of signification. It offers no ready answers or moral guidelines, but rather prompts both the reader and Dorian to ask whether the aesthete has responded to the demands of those bodies and objects he has affected and how he should continue to behave towards them. My argument for the portrait's representation of physiological aesthetics differs from Morgan's suggestion that the portrait offers a figure for the "mysterious principle by which consciousness emerges from inanimate matter" (257). Yet Morgan and I agree in our claims that the portrait's logic is not supernatural or spiritual but materialist. While Dorian himself describes the portrait as recording his "sins," this language is most often interpreted by scholars to mean sins of unbecoming indulgence or illegal activity during the Victorian era, including homosexual acts and drug use.⁹⁷ That is, the language of sin is most often read already as a reference to the body. Reading the portrait as representing the affective, bare life of the body sheds new light on the way in which Dorian's life story is made up by the nonsubjective or animal self at the heart of the social and political self. The portrait marks the queer body's struggle to both escape from and be beholden to the demands of others.

As an autobiography of the animal life of Dorian's body, the portrait represents the border between the virtual and the actual by depicting only what lies underneath the conscious narrative: someone has been affected. We can connect the portrait's representation of affect to the Victorian novel's representations of character interiority through physiology (Dames, "Network"). I have already noted that Nicholas Dames uses twenty-first-century cognitive scientist Antonio Damasio to explain how Victorian novels

⁹⁷ See Pick (*Degeneration*) and Rohy, for example.

represent their characters through their “core consciousness,” or an organism’s sense of its own basic functioning, rather than as autobiographical selves represented by a unique set of individually distinct memories and habits (“Network” 218-219). However, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* goes one step further than this. In *Descartes’ Error*, Damasio puts forward a minimal version of subjectivity, the idea of a “metaself,” that occurs when that self comes into contact with another object. Damasio theorizes that “subjectivity emerges...when the brain is producing not just images of an object, not just images of organism responses to an object, but a third kind of image, that of an organism in the act of perceiving and responding to an object” (243). Damasio’s version of basic subjectivity is visual, not verbal, deploying the language of images. Further, he declares that he sees “no reason why animals without language would not make such narratives” (243). *The Picture of Dorian Gray* uncannily represents a similar version of subjectivity through the portrait and, in its non-verbal nature, captures the possibility of animal subjectivity in its images of sensorial responses. In terms of Damasio’s neural theory, the picture is an autobiography of Dorian’s self in as much as it is an autobiography of the metaself, a representation that traverses the boundary between human and animal.

In the portrait, Dorian recognizes his affective connection to Sybil, and therefore her demand, and vows to reconcile with her and to never sin again. Too late, he finds, when Lord Henry tells him the next day that Sibyl has tragically committed suicide. As Dorian tries to decide how he feels about his responsibility in her death, he seems at first to cast himself as entirely responsible, declaring that he had “murdered [Sibyl] as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife” (Wilde 96). Carolyn Lesjak points out that the mutual influence of bodies and objects over each other expresses “the wonder of atoms for Wilde: the recognition that our bodies are simultaneously ours and others” (18). Dorian’s concern over the way in which he has affected Sybil is the ethical extension of that recognition. Responsibility in this case has its beginning and end in affect: Dorian has affected Sibyl, and the actual relations that emerge from that virtual intensity are out of his control, even while he is implicated in them. Feeling is both political and ethical for Dorian in the sense that feeling makes him responsible for Sybil and therefore makes Sybil’s life count.

In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida offers a reflection on the ethical demand we receive from others and to which we must respond, in order to be responsible or to practice ethical responsibility. He draws on Søren Kierkegaard's reading of the biblical story of God's demand that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac, and Abraham's willingness to fulfill this request. For Derrida, this story exemplifies the impossibility of ethics as absolute responsibility towards others. Abraham is caught between two others in this story—God, the absolute Other, and Isaac, his son, a particular other—and he must behave unethically towards one in order to be responsible to the other. Derrida suggests that this is the impossibility of all behaviour towards others: we can only choose to be responsible to some others in their absolute singularity and respond to their particular demands if we ignore our possible responsibilities to all others. Of course, Dorian's predicament with Sybil and his feelings of guilt do not map precisely onto the religious mythology of Abraham and Isaac, but Derrida's articulation of ethics as an impossible responsibility to every other and not a calculable moral rule can help us to understand both the portrait and the body's affective function, as it reminds Dorian of this responsibility. That is, Dorian should not marry Sybil because it is the right or moral or religious thing to do, but Dorian has a responsibility towards her because he has affected her. We might understand Dorian's decision to break their engagement not as irresponsible, but as sacrificial (similar to, at the risk of sounding blasphemous, Abraham's), in that Dorian must sacrifice Sybil to the otherness of his own body and queer desire.

Regardless, Dorian recognizes that he is responsible to Sybil somehow, and more particularly, to Sybil's feeling, and he struggles to acknowledge that responsibility through the correct register of his own feeling. He laments to Lord Henry, trying to decide who is to blame for Sybil's death: "why is it that I cannot feel this tragedy as much as I want to?" (97). Lord Henry, described by the text as "irresponsible" himself (42), urges Dorian not to feel responsible through his grief (the ethical) (97), nor to practice that responsibility by attending the inquest into Sybil's death (the political) (95). Discussing Derrida's deconstructive ethics and the impossibility of absolute responsibility towards all others, Derek Attridge describes the difference between deconstructive ethics and politics as simply the move "from the realm of the impossible to the possible" (65). Lord Henry, however, dismisses the relationship of feeling to either

the ethical or the political. He reduces Sibyl to the status of bare life, an object to produce sensation aesthetically but one that is not properly or politically human: “you must think of that lonely death in the tawdry dressing-room,” he tells Dorian, “simply as a strange lurid fragment from some Jacobean tragedy, as a wonderful scene from Webster, or Ford, or Cyril Tourneur. The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died” (Wilde 100). Lord Henry and Dorian decide that Sibyl will remain in the realm of the aesthetic and the affective, and that this realm is neither ethical nor political. Her life does not count, politically—she never *really* lived—and so her life is not grievable. Lord Henry tells Dorian, “...don’t waste your tears over Sybil Vane. She was less real than they [the characters she plays] are” (100). For Lord Henry, it seems, there is one humanist political order and he can decide who is outside of it.

In doing so, Lord Henry suggests that grief is a political feeling by insisting that it properly belongs to subject-to-subject relationships and defining Sybil as an object. While Sybil is a subject, and exerts agency by taking her own life, that subjecthood need not define responsibility. Writing about Derrida’s own examples of the infinite types of responsibility, Attridge explains that “responsibility, if it is not mere calculation, can never be anything other than absolute, whether it is responsibility to God, to humans, to cats or to languages” (65). If affect registers the demands of any and all others, it offers the possibility of ethics and politics that cross boundaries like self-other, subject-object, male-female, human-animal.

Judith Butler has written about grief as a political feeling, one in which the ability to mourn marks the political subjectivity and mutual vulnerability of the subject of grief and the subject who grieves. Dorian and Lord Henry both seem to recognize that grief for Sybil would constitute Dorian’s affective vulnerability and his responsibility. For Butler, grief functions similarly as it “contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am” (28). While Butler does not reject the idea of autonomy, she explains that “from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, [we are] implicated in lives that are not our own” (28). Reading Butler alongside Derrida reveals the significance of the body in our

responsibility to own another, and grief as an expression of that responsibility.⁹⁸

Moreover, Butler writes that the self is “undone” by intimacy and grief, which challenges the very possibility of autobiography:

What grief displays, in contrast, is the thrall in which our relations with others hold us, in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often *interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide*, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control. (23, my emphasis).

There exists then an ethical potential for aesthetic feeling— affective response—to undo subjective selfhood because it expresses the potential of being connected to, and therefore responsible to, any variety of bodies and objects.

Dorian attempts to refuse responsibility and grief in order to control his feelings and his narrative. If affect—the virtual realm of the body—is bare life, Dorian and Lord Henry attempt to occupy the opposite political position known as sovereignty. The sovereign is defined by Agamben as one who has the power to decide the rules regarding whose life counts (Dorian’s) and whose bare life does not (Sybil’s). The sovereign creates the political order, but also exists outside of it. Dorian’s behaviour represents political sovereignty in the sense that he desires to exist outside of the political order, without responsibility for any aspect of Sybil’s life or death. As in Agamben’s thinking, sovereignty and bare life are not just binary opposites—sovereignty relies on bare life. Bare life is the other that ensures and constitutes sovereignty. While Dorian attempts to exempt himself from responsibility through the aesthetic freedom of bare life, the portrait insists that responsibility is a part of bare life.

Therefore, part of Dorian’s sovereignty includes a freedom from linear or narrative temporality, a feature of the virtual and of bare life. When Basil finds that Dorian has recovered from the news of Sybil’s death so quickly, he is horrified, and his sympathy is directed towards the very bareness of her body: “You went to the Opera

⁹⁸ In a slightly different way, Lesjak also reads Butler alongside Wilde to open up the question of gender with the question of ontology: “to show how deeply interested [Wilde] is in the question of what is ‘livable,’ using the matter of life itself within scientific discourse as the basis for his immanent critique of ‘the real’ and ‘the unreal’ and the ‘possible’ that might emerge out of their changed and charged relations” (21).

while Sibyl Vane was lying dead in some sordid lodging?...Why, man, there are horrors in store for that little white body of hers!” (105). Basil insists that Dorian’s responsibility to Sybil is tied to her body, now to be violently subjected to an autopsy, and he narrates this responsibility temporally through Sibyl’s body in both a past and a future of Dorian’s possible grief (in a sordid lodging, at a morgue). Dorian, however, refuses this temporality, replying:

What has the actual lapse of time got to do with it? It is only shallow people who require years to get rid of an emotion. A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don’t want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them. (105)

Through Sibyl’s death and the first marking of the picture, the affective body structures Dorian’s being not as a subject that can create a temporal narrative out of an affective response, but rather as a sovereign whose power is based on the ability to manage both the feelings (bare life) of his body and the a-temporal suspension of affect itself.

The history of emotion suggests that men are naturally more capable of controlling their feelings than women, who are subject to them. Both Dorian and Lord Henry equate the female bodies of the text with biological life and emotion. At first, Lord Henry notes that women with “straw-coloured hair” are “so sentimental” (47) connecting the physiological and psychological. Similarly, when Sybil is near Dorian, she is “dominated” by “an ecstasy of happiness” (84). In trying to absolve himself of his responsibility for hurting Sybil, Dorian repeats Lord Henry’s claim that “women were better suited to bear sorrow than men” because “[t]hey lived on their emotions” (89), and in further attempting to assuage Dorian of his guilt over Sybil’s jilting, Lord Henry declares women to be primitive, slaves who “appreciate cruelty” and “love being dominated” (100). While these examples are certainly a part of a larger tradition that equates women with emotion and weakness, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* attaches this sensitivity to the body by marrying the biological with the aesthetic—the affective and the affecting bare life of the body. For example, later in the text, the Duchess of Monmouth, vying for Dorian’s attention, insists he must think her husband married her “on purely scientific principles as the best specimen he could find of a modern butterfly,”

to which Dorian laughingly warns against her being stuck by pins (187).⁹⁹ The discursive production of bare life around already vulnerable bodies threatens to make identity politics biological, giving these bodies a dangerous aesthetic framework for that bare life.

3.3. The Virtual and the Wild

After deciding to exert his affective sovereignty against the demands of others, Dorian enters the period of his life during which he explores and embraces the aesthetic responses of his body. In experimenting with the responses that objects and bodies produce for him, Dorian engages with the realm of the virtual. As the virtual describes the a-temporality of the affective body—where the body processes affective responses too quickly for consciousness to process them linearly—this part of Dorian’s life is punctuated by narrative syncopation. As Dorian enjoys the pursuit of sensation, he puts into practice his desire to dominate or be sovereign over his feelings, remaining at a remove from the other objects and bodies that, like Sybil, produce a powerful aesthetic response. Because what Dorian desires is queer, both in the sense that the text heavily implies his sexual relationships with other men and in the sense that his behaviour is non-normative and non-reproductive, we can also see how his aesthetic sovereignty allows him to escape oppression. As Dorian embraces his animal self and rejects its political dimension, he also rejects political oppression. Lord Henry says that beauty “has its divine right of sovereignty,” implying that because Dorian is beautiful, he is also able to partake of this sovereignty (24). If we replace “beauty” with “aesthetics”—with the responsiveness of the body—that sovereignty begins to overlap with bare, or animal, life, offering a new possibility for the part of life that could otherwise be figured as bare, vulnerable, and unprotected.

As the novel continues to form the autobiography of Dorian’s body, we are introduced to another textual form of autobiography, the yellow book given to him by Lord Henry that “seemed to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it” (123). This phrase, describing the uncanny familiarity of the text, “written before he

⁹⁹ For a reading of artistic representations of the biological inferiority of women as responses to burgeoning sciences of evolution and neurology, see Dijkstra.

had lived it,” sets the stage for the non-linear temporality of this section. Dorian’s encounter with this book, widely accepted to be *À Rebours* (*Against Nature*) by J. K. Huysmans, exhibits many of the characteristics of narrative syncope discussed above. The novel is absent of the usual markers of literary narrative, “without a plot and with only one character” (121). In place of plot, the yellow book tells of its protagonist’s attempt to compress a history of subjectivity into himself, “all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own” (121). Like Lord Henry’s speech and like the physiological theory of the novel, the text is a rhythmic form rather than a meaningful one, with a “cadence of sentences, the subtle monotony of their music, so full as it was of complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated [that] produced in the mind of the lad, as he passed from chapter to chapter, a form of reverie, a malady of dreaming, that made him unconscious of the falling day and creeping shadows” (121). This rhythm banishes temporality while Dorian reads, unconscious as he is of the lapse of time. Notably, too, this rhythm is repeated in the repetitive punctuation of the sentence by its many commas.

As Dorian attempts to focus on a “life of the senses” like the one that he finds in the yellow book (121), he describes the desired outcome of aesthetic responsiveness to be a “creation of worlds” that reject any connection with the past, which are “new and delightful” with an “element of strangeness” (127). What he is attempting to consistently access is the newness of feeling arising out of the syncope of affective response. He describes this newness of feeling through a metaphor of sleep, from which awakening to the actual of the morning is so often a disappointment, but which could be otherwise. As one wakes from sleep (or, we might say, comes to after a loss of consciousness or looks up when a novel has been finished), “[v]eil after veil of dusky gauze is lifted, and by degrees the forms and colours of things are restored to them, and we watch the dawn remaking the world in its antique pattern”:

Nothing seems to us changed. Out of the unreal shadows of the night comes back the real life that we had known. We have to resume it where we had left off, and there steals over us a terrible sense of the necessity for the continuance of energy in the same wearisome round of stereotyped habits, or a wild longing, it may be, that our eyelids might open some morning upon a world that had been refashioned anew in the darkness for our pleasure,

and be changed, or have other secrets, a world in which the past would have little or no place, or survive, at any rate, in no conscious form of obligation or regret, the remembrance even of joy having its bitterness, and the memories of pleasure their pain. (127)

The virtual affect of the body is akin to the “unreal” of the night, when things might be anything or in any relation, only barely glimpsed as “black fantastic shapes” (127). In an echo of the episode with Sybil, Dorian ultimately desires for these suspensions of the actual to have no consequences, although in the passage above, these are framed as social rather than political: obligation and regret. He also rejects the past in favour of a present ever opening to the newness of the future, suggesting a new aesthetic temporality where the body is free from having to remember any responsibility to others.

To do so, Dorian makes himself affectively open in his “worship of the senses” (126) to a wide variety of objects and experiences, including “modes of thought” (127), the ritual of Catholic mass (128), perfumes and music (129), jewels (130-132), embroideries and tapestries (132-134), and ecclesiastical vestments (134). This famous Chapter Eleven is known for putting into literary representation Pater’s aesthetic philosophy, particularly his lament over the difficulty of always experiencing the world anew: “our failure is to form habits” (Pater 197).¹⁰⁰ However, this chapter also engages Grant Allen’s insistence that the most aesthetically pleasing language is that which is the most sensually stimulating, as in the section on jewels, which describes Dorian’s visceral enjoyment of “pistachio-coloured peridot, rose-pink and wine-yellow topazes, carbuncles of fiery scarlet with tremulous four-rayed stars, flame red cinnamon-stones,” and more (Wilde 130). This is also the case with the yellow book, which is written in “that curious jewelled style” (121). Read alongside Allen’s theory, the narrative seeks here to write this portion of Dorian’s life by producing aesthetic sensations through language, and not by narrating a series of events. Not only does Chapter Eleven engage the affective body

¹⁰⁰ Karschay and Wainwright both turn to this chapter to argue for the novel’s scientific theories of heredity, including (for Karschay) Dorian’s limited free will and responsibility (Karschay 172-173). See Lewis J. Poteet and Elisa Glick for this chapter’s engagement with Huysman’s novel and aestheticism, Richard Ellmann for its reflection of Wilde’s own aestheticism, Regenia Gagnier (*Individualism*) on this chapter’s lists as a “private canon” reflecting decadent identity (90), Bonnie J. Robinson on the chapter’s importance to what she calls the “perversion of decadence,” and Andrew Elfenbein on the compression of time in this chapter as a “reactance against the poetics of realistic, triple-decker fiction” (502).

rather than the conscious subject, its listing of aesthetic objects mimics what Morgan calls “Allen’s lists of words,” which “disintegrates both the human being and the aesthetic object into discrete, immediately interacting elements such as nerves, muscles, colors, or curves” (Morgan 88-89).

Chapter Eleven also expands and compresses time, as it spans the course of approximately two decades, chronicling Dorian’s various abandonments with non-descriptive and heterogeneous temporalities that mark the beginning of paragraphs: “It was rumoured of him once” (128), “and so he would now” (129), and “at another time” (129). The formative events of Dorian’s life are untethered here from any particular time or sequence. So, too, is the way that Dorian sees his own subjectivity. In an act of overt autobiography, Dorian not only recognizes that aspects of his own “temperament” and “passions” are inherited from his ancestors, but he muses that his selfhood might have come from literary ancestry, or that “the whole of history was merely the record of his own life...in his brain and in his passions” (138). While Dorian’s interest in genetic and hereditary influence has been well-discussed by scholars like Michael Wainwright, for example, his discussion of ancestry is also significant for the way it compresses time, like the yellow book. History, here, is not a series of past events in which Dorian is politically implicated, but is rather a timeless amalgam that both inspires and exists through aesthetic response.

As Dorian wants to remain sovereign over his feelings, he also refuses the histories of any of the objects or concepts he explores. That is, the histories of those objects or concepts exist purely in Dorian’s present, and not for the object or concept itself, and so they create no responsibility, no obligation or regret. For example, the text tells us that Dorian “collected together from all parts of the world the strangest instruments that could be found, either in the tombs of dead nations or among the few savage tribes that have survived contact with Western civilizations, and loved to touch and try them” (129). This acknowledgement of contact elides the painful history of Imperialist plunder, oppression, and genocide in favour of the pleasure of touch while reproducing a racist imperialist ideology by designating non-Western cultures “savage.” Dorian has also stolen a sacred instrument, the *juruparis* of the Indigenous peoples of

South America (129). His pleasure in this instrument unseats Western music as the most aesthetically pleasing, since “the harsh intervals and shrill discords of barbaric music stirred him at times when Schubert’s grace, and Chopin’s beautiful sorrows, and the mighty harmonies of Beethoven himself, fell unheeded on his ear” (129). Dorian desires the freedom of syncope without the demand of the other that moves him. He identifies the syncopation of non-Western music—the harsh intervals and shrill discords—as stirring, but also characterizes this music as “barbaric.” As he appreciates the aesthetic effects of syncopation but ignores its demands (for example, the recognition of a history of imperialism), Dorian fetishizes this music as product of colonized cultures. Even worse, the exoticized non-Western instruments are monstrous, “things of bestial shape and hideous voices” (130). Moreover, some of these items contain in their very materiality a history of animal and ecological violence, like the jewels pillaged from the earth, or the “Delhi muslins...stitched over with iridescent beetles’ wings” (135).

Here we can see the political potential and danger of Dorian’s practice. On one hand, Dorian celebrates the animal life that is a part of every human, elevating it from the suppressed to the spiritual, from the body as shameful vessel to the body as aesthetic vehicle:

The worship of the senses has often, and with much justice, been decried, men feeling a natural instinct of terror about passions and sensations that seem stronger than themselves, and that they are conscious of sharing with the less highly organized forms of existence. But it appeared to Dorian Gray that the true nature of the senses had never been understood, and that they had remained savage and animal merely because the world had sought to starve them into submission or to kill them by pain, instead of aiming at making them elements of a new spirituality, of which a fine instinct for beauty was to be the dominant characteristic. (126)

Dorian also celebrates his own animal or nonhuman form in his delight with his ever-changing portrait (135). Davis reads the nonhumanness of Dorian’s change as an instability of the self, noting Wilde’s engagement with Pater through Dorian’s “growing monstrosity” (554). For Davis, this monstrosity indicates something that we might align with the virtuality of affect and aesthetic response:

a depiction of the openness to transformation of any self and of the fundamental indeterminacy and unpredictability of the relations between mind, body, and external influence which this implies. The heightened sensory experience of aestheticism entails the basic instability of the self because it is precisely that instability which enables, and is compounded by, aesthetic response. (554)

In other words, Davis recognizes that the novel figures monstrosity as a fundamental, even possibly positive, aspect of having a self.

If affect is, by this measure, a condition of the body that allows an aesthetic response, it also unseats the hierarchy between human subject and nonhuman aesthetic object. Reading this possibility through other late-Victorian writers engaging with physiological aesthetics, Morgan suggests that

To render aesthetic response animalistic or mechanistic, or to think of form as apprehended semiconsciously, might also require a consideration of the ways in which the surrounding matter and objects of the world could themselves become animated or bear human traits. Aesthetic experience might be that experience in which physical things themselves respond to acts of human perception. (128)

Through affect, and through the virtual potential of syncope, aesthetic experience holds the potential to reorder a hierarchy of subjects and objects. Cohn suggests this possibility through *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s attention to the agency of atoms:

In this idea of unconscious vibration, Wilde evokes a molecular world that, in its indifference to human actions and human values, has egalitarian potential, expressed as 'strange affinity'... Rather than fret at the problem of action, Wilde suggests an attraction, a strange affinity, between objects at every level from the molecular to the political. The idea of a materially shared world does not depend on forms of the human, or human institutions: it is differentiated not into autonomous individuals acting for themselves but into objects that have their own integrity. ("One" 202)

Jane Bennett and Mel Y. Chen have pursued similar theories in their recent work, arguing for the vitality and animacy of bodies, parts, objects, and concepts. For these theorists,

affect is, or can be, a characteristic that animates humans and nonhumans alike.¹⁰¹ Affect brings nonhumans into relation with humans and has the queer potential to disorder proper hierarchies and intimacies; as Chen says, “queering is immanent to animate transgressions, violating proper intimacies (including and between humans and nonhuman things)” (11). As Dorian becomes a thing-like instrument affected by Lord Henry’s speech, his syncope or his subjection to the affect of queer objects (like instruments and jewels and religious vestments), queer chemicals (like opium), and queer relations (like male intimacy and sex) has the potential to reorder his place among those nonhuman things.

However, on the other hand, Dorian can play with the ideas and objects of the politically “monstrous” or not-properly-human—the bare lives of those South American Indigenous whose artefacts have been removed—while also retreating to his white, moneyed, imperialist identity, “throw[ing] open to the world his beautiful house and hav[ing] the most celebrated musicians of the day to charm his guests” (125). Dorian can therefore experience transgressive intimacy with objects and others while still retaining his position as politically superior. The possibilities and dangers of celebrating the suspension of the self in favour of the body, the animal, and the monstrous, can be further illuminated by reading the concept of wildness through Dorian’s aesthetic sense-worship. Wildness is significant to my reading of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* because it appears in both recent queer theory and in Catherine Clément’s *Syncope*, one of the few works that directly addresses the philosophical and political implications of syncope. In queer theory and in Clément’s work, wildness describes a syncope that breaks with the civilized and orderly in a refusal of the social, the rational, the oppressive, and the self.¹⁰² Clément’s work includes a compelling examination of the way the rationalist Western philosophies

¹⁰¹ Massumi gestures towards something like this ethos when he writes of affect, “the absence of a clear line of demarcation between the physical, the vital, the human, and the superhuman; the undecidability of immanence and transcendence – also has implications for ethical thought” (39).

¹⁰² Although it is not a point that she develops at length, Bennett notes that her concept of vibrant matter, or Thing-Power, “bears a family resemblance to... what Henry David Thoreau called the Wild” (2), which further has “interesting affinities with Deleuze’s idea of the virtual” (xv). While I do not draw on either of these particular theorists, Gilles Deleuze heavily influences Massumi’s theory of affect and Askin’s theory of differential narrative, and it is worth noting the connection Bennett makes here between his concept of the virtual and a theory of wildness that is “a not-quite-human force that addled and altered human and other bodies” (2).

of subjectivity are underwritten by losses of selfhood, consciousness, and temporality. However, her sections on syncope in Eastern philosophy veer dangerously close to exoticism and fetishism. For example, she writes in her introduction of India's influence on her idea of syncope:

India, however, brings a certain illumination to this terrain that is hers alone: the endless beauty of her percussions, their incredible melodic capability, their science of pauses; the daily contact with death, familiar, lived, and without terror; the charm of the *ghazals*, the power of this love poetry, even more enchanting because I did not know its language, Urdu, and the ravishing dancing women whose repeated performance finally thrust on me the shock, then the image, and finally the very word, "syncope." (20)

Clément's homage to the syncopation of India's music, dance, and poetry is neither disrespectful nor (necessarily) incorrect, but it is reductive and misleading. India is a large and heterogeneous country, and it strikes me that, like Dorian's reception of the harsh intervals and shrill discords of non-Western music, the particular syncopation of Indian art is only highlighted because it is different to Clément, and not because it is particularly syncopated. That is to say, all music, all dance, all poetry is syncopated—or has the potential to be so.

Jack Halberstam offers a similar critique of Michael Taussig's conception of wildness as he extends this concept to queer theory, explaining that Taussig is an anthropologist who counters colonial narratives of wild and violent colonized people with the revelation that wildness is at the heart of colonial knowledge production (139). Halberstam writes that even as Taussig breaks down the difference between the civilized colonizer and the primitive colonized through wildness, he, like Clément, "actually reproduces the colonial terms of encounter within which a wild other embodies the unknown, the magical, and the antidote to the ills of Euro-American cultural values" (139). Dorian's use of a variety of non-Western objects for the purposes of producing his own suspensions of Western selfhood reproduces this same troubling hierarchy.

Nonetheless, wildness still offers potential for thinking about Dorian's queerness and his queer relationships through the virtual and the actual of his body. For example, Dorian's relationships with other men and his non-normative relationships with objects

are represented as wildly excessive and chaotic, “the spirit of the unknown and disorderly” (Taussig 219), the too much of the masses of jewels or the different types of music. But these relationships are also wild—outside of the social and political—because they do not appear to mark Dorian’s body. In the logic of the text, this means that Dorian (to a certain extent) has these interactions outside of actual relationships. The text connects Dorian’s flawless appearance and his wildly asocial behaviour explicitly as it introduces this period of Dorian’s life:

Even those who had heard the most evil things of him, and from time to time strange rumours about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs, could not believe anything to his dishonor when they saw him. He had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked grossly became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked them. (124)

Dorian can be affected, and in turn affect others, by the pleasures of the body that he seeks out in an “ill-famed tavern near the Docks...under an assumed name” (124), or in the “dreadful places near Blue Gate Fields” (135) because the history of these encounters is marked only on his picture. Wildness here means Dorian is physically unmarked by the politically transgressive.

Dorian’s socially scandalous, queer encounters are wild and affectively virtual, taking place in suspensions of so-called “civilized” behaviour, time, and narrative. They exist out of time as “mysterious and prolonged absences” (124), periods defined vaguely as “day after day, until he was driven away” (135), kept out of memory or out of the linear temporality of autobiography by the “means of forgetfulness” of his other sensual experiences with jewels and music and other “treasures” (134). As markers of significance in Dorian’s autobiography, these encounters do not form a history of knowledge or experience but a history of syncope, a history of gaps and suspensions of knowledge. What happens in these prolonged absences is never fully revealed, only gleaned from the whispers of other men who hear “evil things against him” and “strange rumours” of “dishonour” (123-124). As Halberstam and Taussig suggest, wildness “challenge[s] the unity of the symbol” or disrupts meaning and signification (Halberstam 144, Taussig 219), making it impossible to tell exactly what is dishonourable or exactly

what has marked Dorian's portrait. Wildness disrupts the stability of signs like "evil," "dishonour," or "sin," in the sense that these concepts are not applicable to an animal body or to the animacy of an object.

Therefore, in as much as what is marked on the portrait is an affective encounter, and in as much as this section of the text underlines how transgressive or queer those encounters are, it is not strictly allegorical to say that what is "dishonourable" or sinful about these encounters is marked on Dorian's portrait rather than his body. The transference of this marking is, instead, utopic, since it is politically necessary for Dorian to participate in queerness in this wild fashion to avoid the political threat to the body in the late nineteenth century (violence that remains a threat today). Chen and Bennett would no doubt agree with Halberstam's statement that wildness is "queerly vital" (145). Syncope provides a wild escape from the biopolitical oppression of the queer body. But we should always keep in mind that in the novel this wildness intersects with Dorian's "unspotted," white, pure body, not just the body of the beautiful but the body of the politically sovereign. As the narrative reminds us, Dorian's "great wealth was a certain element of security. Society—civilized society, at least—is never very ready to believe anything to the detriment of those who are both rich and fascinating" (136). Dorian's security is predicated on his wealth, which is itself a product of his whiteness and his imperialism. His spotless identity belongs to a body that is not available to all subjects.

Finally, this section of the text also includes the most transgressive autobiographical narration. In a section that offers a form of wildness by challenging the meaning of objects and acts and recreating them in aesthetic freedom, the narrative also breaks with its biographical reporting of Dorian to offer an opinion. Describing the refusal of wealthy society to reject one of their own, the narrative shifts to a clever inventiveness and epigrammatic turn of phrase that seems to mimic Lord Henry's:

For the canons of good society are, or should be, the same as the canons of art. Form is absolutely essential to it. It should have the dignity of a ceremony, as well as its unreality, and should provide the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit and beauty that makes such plays delightful to us. Is insincerity such a terrible thing? I think not. (136-137)

The form of this passage may be Henry-like, but the first-person “I” interjection is singular, the only occurrence of it in the text. In the Penguin edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, editor Robert Mighall claims “[t]his is the only place in the book where the narrator ventures an opinion directly” (246 n. 11). This seems on the surface to be the case, but the next lines that follow this subjective interruption are, “It is merely a method by which we can multiply our personalities,” and, beginning the next paragraph, “Such, at any rate, was Dorian Gray’s opinion” (137). What exactly is covered by Dorian’s opinion here is unclear (although it certainly includes the multiplicity of personality), but it could also include the rejection of insincerity’s terribleness. If so, this is the autobiographical appearance of Dorian’s “I” breaking into the narrative, a kind of spontaneous writing of Dorian’s subjectivity through the nonsubjectivity of an unstable narrative perspective. In effect, this “I” is auto-written or auto-graphed, and this personal interjection is made personal and possible by the impersonal—the affective and temporal syncopation of Chapter Eleven.

3.4. Vulnerable Life and Affective Ethics

As the portrait marks the ways in which Dorian has affected others and been affected by them, the novel moves towards two extremes, as the management of affect within social and political contexts suggests that some lives are worthier of living, and as affective response reveals bare life as equal with, demanding of, and responsible to other lives. The latter chapters of the novel first position Dorian as sovereign, unconnected to the outcomes of those affective encounters. In his wildness, Dorian takes self-protection and sovereign potential towards extreme ends. As the narrative employs the language of the animal body and of automatism, it suggests a connection between the aesthetic escape of embodied pleasure and the frightening and violent compulsions of the animal body. In assuming that the laws of Victorian England no longer apply to him as a wild subject and an aesthete, Dorian does not perceive that the portrait reveals another system of affective connection. Instead, there seems to be no ethical imperative in Dorian’s behaviour towards others, and he approaches them as he did Sybil, as expendable bare lives. However, narrative syncope reveals the many contexts in which Dorian is vulnerable: as a body always open to being radically affected; as an animal guided by his senses; as a

queer subject living outside of the socially acceptable and the politically protected. Towards the end of the novel, the bare life of Dorian's body—its material physiology, its animal responsiveness, its desire for pleasure and sovereignty, and its underlying vulnerability—occupies a more fluid and uncertain place in social and political hierarchies. Finally, James Vane's hunt for Dorian and Dorian's fainting spell bring the bare life of affective forms like humans, animals, and objects sharply into focus.

Dorian's murder of Basil Hallward clarifies his understanding of himself as not only outside any social or political order but with the power to decide which lives are worth living (as with Sybil Vane). Basil finally sees the altered portrait after a confrontation with Dorian, during which he laments the rumours plaguing Dorian's name. As Basil begs Dorian to change his behaviour for the better, he lists the men and women who have come into contact with Dorian and been brought to social ruin. Basil approaches these transgressions with a mixture of social and spiritual concern, gesturing towards the "dreadful things" that are said about Dorian (143) and the insistence that "only God" can see Dorian's soul (146). However, Basil also touches on an affective context when he asks Dorian to consider the responsibility that inheres in encounters with others, declaring that "[o]ne has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends," and imploring Dorian to use his "wonderful influence...for good, not for evil" (145). While Basil's use of influence here has connotations of moral direction and control, he nonetheless suggests (as the portrait does) that Dorian cannot simply remove himself from the consequences of his encounters.

To Basil's insistence that only God can see his soul, Dorian reveals the altered portrait. When Basil discovers the history of Dorian's affective life in the picture, the focus in these scenes remains on Basil's vulnerable body as nervous, affectively bare life. As Basil realizes what the picture represents (or imagines he does), his feeling is expressed through his body:

He had never done that. Still, it was his own picture. He knew it, and he felt as if his blood had changed in a moment from fire to sluggish ice. His own picture! What did it mean? Why had it altered? He turned, and looked at Dorian Gray with the eyes of a sick man. His mouth twitched, and his

parched tongue seemed unable to articulate. He passed his hand across his forehead. It was dank with clammy sweat. (149).

While his body is overtaken by the affective intensity of the moment, Basil's language engages multiple contextual registers: aesthetic, as the portrait fills Basil with "disgust and loathing" as its "marvellous beauty" is being destroyed (149); supernatural, as whatever is changing the portrait seems an agent of "foulness and horror" (150); material, as that change is also embodied on the canvas like "leprosy" or the "rotting of a corpse" (150); and finally, moral and religious, as Basil attempts to atone through a "prayer of repentance" for the "evil" Dorian has done (151). In these swiftly changing discourses, Basil identifies the ways in which encounters with others become forms of embodied responsibility as he reacts viscerally to the aesthetic form of affective representation, and equates the overlap of supernatural affective production (foulness and horror) with the materialism of body (leprosy and rot). However, the language of bodily disintegration pathologizes and spiritualizes affective response, and is thus an inadequate framework for the portrait's narrative.

Dorian's response to Basil, on the other hand, is affectively sovereign, as Dorian is described as an audience member to Basil's performance (as he was with Sybil), "absorbed in a play when some great artist is acting," experiencing neither "real sorrow...nor real joy" (149). However, any sovereign distance Dorian keeps here from the bare life of his body soon collapses, as he is overcome with hatred for Basil and "the mad passions of a hunted animal are stirred within him" (151). The affective encounter of these two vulnerable bodies ends up in a kind of horrible actuation of Butler's concept of undoing, as Dorian opens the bare life of Basil's body to himself in a violent killing. As Dorian violates the boundary of Basil's body, the text emphasizes the physiology of Basil's life and the vulnerability of the man as a body, as Dorian takes a knife to the "great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down on the table, and stabbing again and again" (151). This fleshly materiality is also significant in that it figures the body that Dorian attacks in nonsubjective terms—the man and not Basil, a vein and not a person—suggesting that the death of this body might be occurring outside of a moral framework that would place either God or the liberal agential individual at its centre. In dying, Basil's body is a thing of blood and bone and not an individual human;

in fact, the narrative itself vacillates between calling Basil's corpse a man and a "thing" (152). It also breaks the wholeness of the subject into the nonhumanness of its individual parts, moving seemingly of their own accord as the "outstretched arms shot up convulsively, waving grotesque stiff-fingered hands in the air" (152).

While lacking the same kind of de-individualizing narrative, Dorian's animality and his wild violence against Basil's body reflects a kind of syncope that is based in a nonhuman automaticity of the body. Dorian's feeling of hatred is "uncontrollable" and so are his resulting actions, occurring without self-reflection. Dorian sees the "glimmer" of a knife, "move[s] slowly towards it," "seize[s] it," and "rushe[s]" at Basil (151). This representation of automatic behaviour reflects Huxley's theory of physiological response, which preceded Grant Allen's by a few years. Huxley captured public attention by positing that the responsiveness of the body was responsible for everything special, spiritual, and individual about humans. Like animals, Huxley claims, humans are guided by the automatic or mechanical reactions of their bodies, and their consciousness is merely the awareness of those reactions (577). Figuring humans as conscious automata was not only a distressing possibility for questions of free will and agency, but it was also seen as a sacrilegious one, since it did away with the notion of the soul as a guiding property of humans that distinguished them from lower forms of life. For many, too, automatism complicated the very idea of ethics or responsibility. If humans were not in control of their actions, how could they be responsible for them? And if they could not willfully choose to do either good or bad, what did ethical behaviour even mean?

On the one hand, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* seems to perform the consequences of this concern: if there is no individual choice, there is no basis for ethics, and humans are, instead, simply caught like animals in a struggle for survival. On the other, however, the novel suggests that the body recognizes the absolute responsibility of one to another through affect, and reveals the mutual vulnerability of other bodies and objects. Ethical decision-making in this case is not about choice, in the humanist sense of the term, but about the impossibility of choice, the impossible knowledge that absolute responsibility means responsibility toward all others. Discussing Abraham's responsibility to God, a responsibility that leads him to agree to murder his son, Derrida quotes Kierkegaard as

saying “the instant of decision is madness” (Derrida 66). Attridge glosses Derrida’s reading of Abraham’s decision by declaring that, “We cannot say whether it is more an act or an event, whether it is something Abraham does or something that happens to him” (Attridge 65). The realm of ethics is absolute responsibility, not agency. Dorian is not wrong in believing that his worship of the body means that he occupies a life beyond right or wrong, good or bad. What leads him to unethical behaviour is his belief that his adoration of the body, the nonhuman, the animal, the aesthetic, means he is no longer responsible to any other.

Basil is in some ways a model for an ethics of responsibility, since he recognizes both the subjection of his bare life to Dorian’s ideal aesthetic form, admitting, “[a]s long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me” (15), and recognizes his own responsibility as the architect of both Dorian’s vanity and the portrait’s alteration, declaring, “I worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We are both punished” (151). The portrait captures the mutual responsibility and vulnerability, the affective encounter, of Dorian and Basil, and narrative syncope amplifies the bare life of their bodies in its nonhuman and non-individual character. For example, the narrator tells us, “There was a stifled groan, and the horrible sound of some one choking with blood” (151). As an effect of nonhuman style, the sentence is constructed passively and effectively made subject-less, an evacuation of the subject that is repeated in its objectivity and objectification. As an effect of that non-subject’s mutual vulnerability with other forms of life, the narrative substitutes the phrase “some one” for Basil as the subject of the attack, implying, like Basil’s “thing”-ness, that it could be any body made actual and mortal in this way.

As Chen’s methodology suggests, reading the language of Basil’s death through the concept of animacy reveals that Basil does not need to be alive to affect Dorian. In Dorian’s desire to be rid of Basil’s body, we can read an aesthetic hope along with his legal one that the destruction of the body will also destroy any affective connection with Basil and so responsibility towards him. Dorian’s fear that he will be left with Basil’s body prompts another episode of syncope, in which the “suspense” of uncertainty over whether Alan Campbell will appear to destroy the body coincides with a suspension of

Dorian's subjectivity. Watching the clock, Dorian becomes "horribly agitated" and his behaviour resembles that of an animal, as he begins "to pace up and down the room, looking like a beautiful caged thing" (159). Dorian's shuddering body stops keeping pace with industrial temporality, that marker of human civilization, as time starts "crawling with feet of lead" and then stopping altogether (159). At the same time, he also experiences a more physiological kind of syncope that seems connected with the circulation of his blood, as his hands become "curiously cold" (159).¹⁰³ In an effort to convince Alan to carry out the horrible destruction, Dorian describes this suspension as a near faint (162), framing his body as vulnerable in its terror and his circumstances as vulnerable to a matter of "life and death" (160).

However, Dorian's vulnerability is not enough to move Alan and neither is his figuring of Basil's dead body as an affectless object of scientific and "intellectual curiosity" (162). Dorian therefore resorts to blackmailing Alan with the threat of social ruin, writing a scandalous secret on a piece of paper. This manipulation does indeed inspire help, but it also reveals Alan's own body as vulnerable. The written word, unknown but perhaps hinting at queer behaviour (either sexual or non-normative in another way), provokes an affective response, as the scientist turns "ghastly pale" and "felt as if his heart was beating itself to death in some empty hollow" (163). The narrative turns to the affective physiology, the animality or bare life, of Alan's body and its syncope, in the action of his heart and in his shuddering, groaning, and shivering, as the clock seems "to be dividing Time into separate atoms of agony" (163). Moreover, the vulnerability of Alan's body reads the threat of other bodies as material as metal, "as if an iron ring was being slowly tightened round his forehead," as Dorian's "hand upon his shoulder weighed like a hand of lead" (163). Like Dorian, Alan behaves automatically in this syncope, replying "mechanically, as if words could alter things" (163). As with Dorian's response to Lord Henry's speech, the narrative suggests that the power of words is in their ability to affect the body through their form but not necessarily their content.

¹⁰³ I address blood circulation and syncope more fully in my chapter on *Dracula*.

Whatever it is that Dorian writes, the narrative never reveals; the paper contains any number of meaning-evacuated or meaning-full words (163).

The vulnerable animal body, located at the heart of biopolitics as Dorian decides whose life is worth living, appears in this scene in another way. Alan arrives at Dorian's wearing an Astrakhan coat, a coat made from the wool of fetal lambs. While any clothing rendered from animal products gestures to violence (as in the threading of muslins with beetles' wings), this type of coat seems particularly horrific in its violent production, as the lambs may be extracted via induction or abortion (if they are not miscarried), often alongside the deaths of their mothers, before they are skinned. On one hand, this envelopment in the animal body makes visible Alan's own animality, as though he is a lamb to the slaughter of Dorian's sovereign. On the other hand, the coat is also recognizable as the body of the animal (bare life) that serves its purpose for Alan, a life-taking that is neither murder nor a sacrifice. With its skin as coat, the animal body guarantees the humanness of the subject that can use it to supplement their own nakedness, their lack of warmth and protection.

As the novel moves towards its end and the destruction of Basil's body does not release Dorian from affective connection or responsibility to it, Dorian's intimate connections with other bodies begin to appear differently to him. A chance meeting at an opium den with Adrian Singleton, a social outcast whose exile is blamed on Dorian by Basil, "strangely move[s] him," and prompts Dorian to wonder if "the ruin of that young life was really to be laid at his door" (181). The narrative shuttles between an acceptance and a dismissal of responsibility: on the one hand, the narrative seems to take on Dorian's own thoughts as it declares that "[e]ach man lived his own life, and paid his own price for living it," while at the same time, the next paragraph begins by reminding us that men and women sometimes "lose the freedom of their will. They move to their terrible end as automatons move. Choice is taken from them" (181). As a technique of syncopation, the narrative's uncertain occupation of perspective reflects the very nonhumanness and non-individuality of behaviour upon which it is theorizing. Either Dorian Gray or Adrian Singleton could be the object of this narrative reflection, suggesting that individuality and choice are not adequate frameworks for ethical responsibility. Here, the uncertainty of

autobiographical subject-object relations reflects Butler's suggestion that vulnerability includes an undoing or interruption of the subject's conscious self-narration.

When Dorian responds suddenly to Basil with feelings of hatred, he claims that he feels like a hunted animal. He is not wrong in his feeling, although its object may be misplaced, since he is in fact hunted as an animal by Sybil's brother, who blames Dorian for Sybil's death. James bases his own sovereignty, his ability to decide that Dorian's life can simply be taken, on the (unpredictable) consequences of Dorian's affective encounter with Sybil and through the discursive production of Dorian's life as animal. In James' concern over the possibility that Dorian may mistreat Sybil, he swears to his mother, "believe me that if this man wrongs my sister, I will find out who he is, track him down, and kill him like a dog" (69). Here, the identification of Dorian with a dog produces James' sovereign power because it engages a set of linguistic suggestions about power over life and death, and not because anything politically inheres in "dog-ness"; as Chen writes, "the statement that someone 'treated me like a dog' is one of liberal humanism's fictions: some dogs are treated quite well, and many humans suffer in conditions of profound indignity" (89). For James to use the dog as a figure that gives him power over Dorian's life is to reveal the way that the concept of bare life is always an available political category for humans.¹⁰⁴ Cary Wolfe describes this as a characteristic that defines modern biopolitics, pointing out that "the distinction 'human/animal'—as the history of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism well shows—is a discursive resource, not a zoological designation" (10). The same historical moment that for Dorian and Grant Allen finds the human in the animal life of the body is also one that finds the power over life in the same realm.

Indeed, James tries to make good on his promise when he finds Dorian at the opium den. Temporality becomes the grounds on which James will or will not carry out his threat of death in punishment for Sybil's suicide. When Dorian questions how long it has been since Sybil's death (eighteen years), James declares that time is of no importance, that what matters is that Dorian accept the consequences of his encounter

¹⁰⁴ See Nicole Shukin on the contemporary political significance—and instability—of the human-animal boundary to capitalism and biopolitics (the politics of and power over biological life).

with Sybil. Dorian, however, uses the lack of time's mark on his body to insist he could not possibly be the man that James is hunting, as his face "had all the bloom of boyhood, all the unstained purity of youth" (Wilde 182). In this exchange, not only does James simply have no other information about Dorian that would help to confirm his identity, but Dorian's selfhood is reduced to the autobiography of his body (which exists elsewhere, on his picture). James needs a temporally linear and thematically coherent autobiography in order to establish his power over life and death, whereas Dorian's body escapes this narrative.

However, James soon discovers that Dorian is, in fact, the same man that broke his engagement to Sybil, and he pursues him to Selby Royal. As host of a party one afternoon, Dorian finds himself staring at the face of the vigilante at his window and promptly faints. As the full physiological expression of the virtual, this swoon is an interruption of consciousness and time for Dorian and, as a narrative technique, it is both overfull of potential meanings and evacuated of any meaning at all, occurring outside of the purview of the narrative. The nonsubjectivity of the faint is amplified as Dorian's body is removed from narrative sight; when Dorian swoons he is in another room, while the narrative perspective remains with Lord Henry and the Duchess of Monmouth. The narrative again takes the position of the spectator, evacuating subjectivity both from the sentence and the scene, describing the inarticulate sounds of the body without a subject: "[f]rom the far end of the conservatory there came a stifled groan, followed by the dull sound of a heavy fall" (190). In this sense, the faint is doubly virtual; if for Massumi, affective encounters are virtual in that they happen too quickly for the subject to realize them, the narrative agrees by highlighting its incapability of registering the virtual.

Further emphasizing the nonsubjective nature of syncope, Dorian does not narrate his own faint; that is, he is not the one who writes the syncope into his autobiography. As Lord Henry arrives late on the scene to discover what has happened to Dorian, finding him "lying face downward on the floor in a death-like swoon," Dorian is confused, asking what has happened before belatedly remembering (190). It is Lord Henry who narrates the nonconscious time of Dorian's body, telling him, "you merely fainted. That was all" (190). Prior to this, Dorian's pleasure in the virtual of the body—its wildness, its

affective responses, its sensual experiences—has relieved him of much social and political consequence. Now, in its similarity to the state of death, Dorian's faint reflects his vulnerability. It also provokes the compassion and care of those around him, because the affecting vulnerability of the fainting body itself comprises a demand for ethical response. Where Dorian's body has been out of narrative sight, it now takes center stage in its very physical materiality, as Dorian's guests "carr[y] him at once in the blue drawing-room" and lay him on the sofa; as Lord Henry reassures him he is alright; as they provide Dorian with the comfort he has previously shunned but suddenly needs post-swoon, when he "must not be alone" (190).

After this definitive break with subjective consciousness, at the mercy of his body and those who can decide whether it counts or not, Dorian is no longer sovereign over his embodied responses. Again, he describes himself as "hunted, snared, tracked down," and further, "sick with a wild terror of dying, and yet indifferent to life itself" (191). As James has declared his promise to kill Dorian like a dog, bare life underwrites the sense of Dorian's vulnerability—hunted like an animal and under threat of being killed without trial, Dorian is the figure of bare life to James' sovereign. He spends three days in his room, its own kind of syncope as a period of an "excess of anguish" (192), before reemerging at the party, seemingly himself again and in control of his feelings. Almost immediately, however, he is overwhelmed. As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, when Dorian joins Sir Geoffrey Clouston on a hunt, he is suddenly "strangely charmed" by the hare that bounds in front of them, crying, "Don't shoot it, Geoffrey. Let it live" (193). Undone again by the affective force of the "loveliest of little live things," Dorian is unwilling to be sovereign over the life of the hare (196). Moreover, this call for compassion is also seemingly subject-less and non-agential, as Dorian explains, "I don't know what made me say it. Some whim, I suppose" (196). Mutually vulnerable this time with the hare, Dorian's autobiography or self-conscious account is again interrupted. What Dorian and the hare share is the mortality of bare life, but as the basis for sensual experience and aesthetics, bare life is not the state of exception, but the condition of humanness—and humaneness—itsself.

Nonetheless, there is an ethical question raised by *The Picture of Dorian Gray*'s responsive, aesthetic bodies in their conscious, narrative representation.¹⁰⁵ The hare is an aesthetic body because it produces an aesthetic response. The hare is as vulnerable as it is lovely, and it is as lovely as it is lively. As an aesthetic body in both its quivering sensitivity and its beauty, the hare connotes innocence and fragility through its physical appearance and social history.¹⁰⁶ The hare and Dorian therefore both share the kind of spotlessness that helps to guarantee the correct kind of wildness. The Jewish theatre manager, by contrast, is “hideous,” with “greasy ringlets” and a “soiled shirt”; fat, with “an oily tremulous smile” and hands covered in jewels (49, 79). This representation is one of incorrect wildness or unruliness, of an aesthetic body that does not just produce a response (in this case, of loathing from Dorian [79]). Rather, the Jewish manager evokes the dirt and uncleanness of which an early reviewer of the novel in the *Daily Chronicle* accused the entire book, noting its “garish vulgarity” and its transgression of the boundaries between “Humanity and Animalism” (217). The reference to the uncleanness of animality invokes the concern with immunity from contagion that Esposito claims characterizes modern biopolitics, one that will appear most horrifically in the discursive production of the Jewish people by the Nazis as parasites (116) (or, as Agamben has it, as lice [114]).

The Jewish body in the novel also evokes disgust, described by Ahmed as the affective response to the stickiness of and contamination by the unclean object or other. In describing the association of disgust with food, Ahmed writes that “[s]urvival makes us vulnerable in that it requires we let what is ‘not us’ in; to survive we open ourselves up” (83). The connection of disgust with the vulnerability of openness—the ingestion of the disgusting thing—leads Ahmed to claim that disgust “shows us how the boundaries that allow the distinction between subjects and objects are undone in the moment of their making” (83). In other words, the very affective response that would distinguish between the self and the disgusting other breaks down that distinction through the affective openness of the self to the other. Since affect is a zone of encounter and intimacy, the

¹⁰⁵ For a theory of response as trans-species ethics, see Kelly Oliver and Cynthia Willett.

¹⁰⁶ For a reading of rabbits as representative of class conflict in *The Time Machine*, see James T. Collinge.

representation of the Jewish manager as greasy, soiled, and oily suggests an attempt to identify proper and improper aesthetics via the fear of affective contact by the “sticky” racialized body. We are left with the ethical question of whether or not Dorian’s compassion for the hare is grounded in the cultural context of racialized aesthetics.

Finding himself free upon discovering that it is James Vane who has been killed by Sir Geoffrey’s shot, Dorian spends the remainder of the novel trying to decide how to proceed. He wants to “be good” (200), but does not know how to go about it. When Dorian abandons Hetty Merton by breaking their plans to run away together, he thinks he has been selfless by preventing her ruin, but not only does Lord Henry point out that Hetty will never be happy in her own class again (Wilde 201, C. Levine 192), Dorian seems to miss the fact that this behaviour is precisely what led to Sibyl’s suicide. In wanting to enjoy the pleasurable responses of the body without having to recognize the vulnerability and responsibility that occasions those responses, Dorian has also missed the vulnerability of other bodies and objects. As his autobiography exists apart from himself, Dorian has no readily-available temporally self-reflective narrative to remind him of his past encounters and their consequences. While Lord Henry has given Dorian all manner of contradictory and, at times, empty advice, he now seems to recognize the ethical significance of the bare life of the affective and animal body, as he tells Dorian:

Life is not governed by will or intention. Life is a question of nerves, and fibres, and slowly built-up cells in which thought hides itself and passion has its dreams. You may fancy yourself safe, and think yourself strong. But a chance tone of colour in a room or a morning sky, a particular perfume that you had once loved and that brings subtle memories with it, a line from a forgotten poem that you had come across again, a cadence from a piece of music that you had ceased to play—I tell you, Dorian, that it is on things like these that our lives depend. (Wilde 206-207)

Lord Henry here claims that it is affective responsiveness that provides the grounds for life and the grounds for ethics, both the subjective life of which the self is aware, and the simultaneously animal and political life of the body that affects and is affected by others.

Dorian, however, does not come to fully understand the ethical significance of affect. He believes that, freed of the bodies of Sybil Vane, Basil Hallward, Alan

Campbell, and James Vane (and, in another way, of Hetty Merton), he is without history and therefore without consequence. The picture, however, seems to disagree, as it marks Dorian's break with Hetty by intensifying "the scarlet dew that spotted the hand... like blood newly spilt" (211). Frustrated, Dorian imagines that it is his motives and not his actions that the portrait is marking—"Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy?" (212). Yet, as the portrait counts Dorian's consequence in the lives of others, this stain and Dorian's self-reflection make sense, because once Dorian has affected Hetty, it is impossible to predict how she will respond. Wanting to rid himself of ethical obligations, Dorian destroys the painting with the same knife he used to kill Basil (212). This final act only fails to destroy Dorian, however, because the painting has marked the affective connections upon which, as Lord Henry has explained, life is dependent. The narrative syncope of this moment reflects that of Dorian's faint as, again, the narrative turns away from the affective subject of the sentence: "There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony" (212). Unlike the faceless body of Dorian's swoon, this body is "withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage," and at first (too quickly to have happened), he is unrecognizable to his servants, any vulnerable body (213). Dorian's autobiography closes with a full rejection of subjectivity, as the cry of no one emanates from a newly blank canvas representing the youthful Dorian and a body identified only by the inhuman jewels that mark its hands. Dorian cannot refuse responsibility without destroying the body itself.

3.5. Conclusion

In 1895, five years after the first publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde was accused of being a sodomite by the father of his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. Concerned about his reputation and urged by Douglas, Wilde sued the Marquess of Queensberry for libel. The case lasted only days before Wilde withdrew the suit and Queensberry was declared not guilty. If the Marquess had reason for calling Wilde a sodomite, then it seemed almost certain Wilde would be prosecuted—which, indeed, he was, and eventually found guilty and jailed. In the brief period before he was arrested, it was thought Wilde might flee to France. Reportedly, the Marquess told Wilde, "If the country allows you to leave, all the better for the country. But if you take my son with

you, I will follow you wherever you go and I will shoot you like a dog” (Robins 14). If true, the Marquess threatens Wilde with the same language of bare life that Wilde had used five years before in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to drive home the violence of James Vane’s threat. While the turn of phrase is not an unusual one, I want to emphasize the importance of its use against Wilde as a signifier of the logic of the Marquess’ violence against the threat Wilde supposedly posed. To accuse Wilde of being a sodomite, a capacious term capturing any sexual intimacy between men, was to accuse him of immorality, unnaturalness, transgression, and queerness. To invoke the animal as a figure to hold that threat is significant. As Agamben, Esposito, and Wolfe have pointed out, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the discursive production of human life as animal or bare life—as contagious, unclean, or wild—has underwritten political violence. Queerness has shared a particular relationship with animality, in that as much as sexual intimacy between two men has been deemed unnatural, contemporary discourse has compared it to sexual intimacy between humans and animals. Without putting too much pressure on the specific recourse to canine symbolism here, I want to follow Chen’s example in attending to the ways that “animality, sexuality, race, ability [are] stationed in regard to one another” (98), suggesting that it is important for us to think through the political implications of Wilde’s—and Dorian’s—queer animality.

As Wolfe has described, through the biopolitical production of bare life we are all potentially animals under the law. For those whose human and political rights are frequently endangered, as Wilde’s was, it is therefore crucial that we recognize the availability of queerness to abject animality in the production of bare life. Esposito places *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in a history of eugenics, in which the production of the Jewish people as parasites signals the biological threat of contagion and the state of emergency used by the Nazi regime to justify the violence towards them. While influence as contagion might also suggest this threat, I want to emphasize the production of Wilde’s body as “wild” and therefore bare and open to violence. To his detractors, Wilde was not beautiful or vulnerable, like the hare—his dress was loud, he was highly unnatural, he was like a woman in his hysteria, he was the worst of men in his egomania, he was unruly and undisciplined (Nordau 317-322). For the Marquess to call Wilde a dog, on the other hand, is to represent him as a tamed and abject companion to be put

down. Not only does the identification of humans with animals continue to justify state violence against them, as we have seen in Donald Trump's invocation of the animal against Mexican immigrants and black bodies, but in the fragile anxiety of contemporary heteronormativity, queerness continues to be linked to the unnatural intimacy between humans and animals. By contrast, in its suspension of human agency, subjectivity, and control, narrative syncope evokes the animality of the bare body without yet ascribing any particular social or political symbolism or value.¹⁰⁷ *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reveals the political danger of bare life that will be invoked in the life of its author, while celebrating the freedom and ethical potential of the affective body.

¹⁰⁷ In *Still Life*, Cohn also describes affect theory's subversion of particular forms of value as its significant potential (193).

Chapter 4. “Insensible upon the machine”: The Technologies of Affect and Narrative in *The Time Machine*

In H. G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895), the Time Traveller journeys into the future to encounter two species of evolutionary descendants: the pale, fragile, child-like Eloi, and the grotesque, cannibalistic, and subterranean Morlocks. In doing so, he travels more than 800,000 years in time—but moves in physical space only a few feet. During the Traveller’s initial voyage, he describes how difficult it is for him to stay conscious and aware while moving at a new pace through time. As he seats himself in the machine and presses the lever, he experiences an immediate physical response, “a nightmare sensation of falling” (76). As he speeds up his “motion” through time, he relates:

An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange, dumb confusedness descended on my mind. I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback – of a helpless, headlong motion! (77)

Eventually this feeling turns to “hysterical exhilaration” which makes him “too confused” to attend to either the unusual motion of the machine or the visions of the future that surround him (78). The movement through time affects the Traveller’s body as much as movement through space would. Creating a physiological response to time travel that results in a break with consciousness—a narrative syncope—the time machine disrupts both the Traveller’s embodied place in time and his subjectivity.

This chapter explores the politics and ethics of affect that emerge in Wells’s novel as disruptions of human time and consciousness produce narrative syncope and reveal that nonhuman technologies are the basis of human subjectivity. This early scene suggests that, in order to remain conscious and in control of himself, the Time Traveller needs the temporality in which his body exists to be stable and linear. His confusion while on the machine suggests that human time—the temporality in which the Traveller retains conscious self-awareness—is opposed to technology, which has the ability to disrupt or suspend human time. However, affect adds another temporal layer to the opposition between humans and technology, since, as we have seen in *The Picture of*

Dorian Gray, affect is a-temporal; that is, affect happens to the body virtually, “too quickly to have happened” (Massumi 30). Moreover, Victorian science theorized that what we now understand as the affective body—the responsive, reactive, feeling body—behaved like a machine. If technology in the novel, represented by the time machine, is a-temporal, nonconscious, nonhuman, and automatic, so is the affective human body.

Syncope both undermines and affirms humanness through the bare—or nonsubjective—life of the affective, automatic body, and the bare life of the disrupted narrative. Throughout the novel, as I will show, the Time Traveler seeks to reconcile the nonhuman and automatic part of his selfhood with his species superiority as a human and as a white, male, educated, bourgeois subject. At the same time, he struggles to differentiate himself from the animalistic others of the future while attempting to order the sequence of events lost in the gap of nonconscious time and the disruptive temporality of the affective body. After the publication of Darwin’s evolutionary theory, heterosexual British men, believed to be most firmly situated on the human side of the animal-human divide, were seen as vulnerable to their animal natures, which could “usurp masculine rationality and return man to a state of irrational chaos” (Hendershot 97).¹⁰⁸ Scholars like Cyndy Hendershot and Carrie Rohman have demonstrated that Wells and other late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century writers “thematize clearly the post-Darwinian uncertainty [about] the human subject’s stability in relation to its species status” (Rohman 64).¹⁰⁹ In *The Time Machine*, the instability of the human-animal divide is yoked to the

¹⁰⁸ In Chapter 5 of her book, Hendershot explains that the animal within appears in three post-Darwinian texts, J. S. Le Fanu’s “Green Tea,” Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Stevenson’s “Ollala,” writing that animality is ultimately a threat to gender difference and power. All of the texts in this dissertation—and in fact, all texts, including all texts featuring fainting men—are underwritten by the animal or nonhuman of the narrative. Post-Darwin, however, this animal appears through the physiology of the human body. *Jekyll and Hyde* certainly offers another model of the syncopated text, wherein Jekyll’s conscious and nonconscious selves slip back and forth between each other, undoing any strict dichotomy between human subject and nonconscious animal life. Further, one of Hendershot’s examples (Le Fanu) features a man haunted by animality in the form of a monkey; *Wormwood*, the novel example with which I begin the Introduction, features the same trope, as the fainting Gaston is followed by a leopard.

¹⁰⁹ Rohman uses this phrase in support of an argument about subjectivity in the modernist genre, claiming that Wells is “among the first modernist writers” to narrate his human character’s animal subjectivities (64). Analyzing two of Wells’s other novels, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *The Croquet Player*, Rohman uses Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Continental philosophy to read the inability of humans to repress their animal natures as evidence of the ontological (or biological) similarity between humans and animals. For her part, Hendershot reads the animal within as psychologically repressed in Le Fanu’s story, and

automatic and the technical, creating a syncopated narrative wherein disruptions of temporality are both challenges to and constituents of autobiographical narrative and forms of humanness.

The Time Machine, therefore, does not represent the repression of the animal within in order to uncover its meaning, as Rohman and Hendershot partially claim. Instead, like the other novels in this dissertation, it expresses the instability between what is human and what is not. *The Time Machine* embodies the kind of “impossible” narrative that Jacques Derrida outlines in *Without Alibi*.¹¹⁰ Derrida writes that literary events, in particular the life-changing events of autobiography, are underwritten by a kind of mechanism or automaticity of behaviour or grammar. Derrida suggests that if we could, in fact, begin to imagine the “organic” and “aesthetic” form of the singular event with the “repetition” and “calculable programming” of the inorganic machine, we could produce a “new figure,” an “im-possible event” that belongs to the future (72-73). For Derrida, the term im-possible indicates the “the edge that forms the union and the separation of the possible and the impossible, the dash between them—the im-possible as possible or the possible as im-possible” (quoted in Fagan 70).¹¹¹ In other words, the “impossible” makes the “possible” possible, or creates the conditions for the “possible” to happen.

In fact, *The Time Machine* does imagine the event and the machine together, using im-possible temporalities of future history and future memory to recall a narrative in which everything that is singular or unique—the event of time travel, the human autobiographer, and his narrative of the future—is only made possible by the disruptive

claims that Wells’s *The Island of Dr. Moreau* turns the animal within to the “animal without, a projection that protects the British subject from his own biological connection to the animal world and which provides ideological justification for imperialism” (129). It is worth noting that scholars pay the most attention to *The Island of Dr. Moreau* when analysing Wells’s interest in neurology and in the animal-human boundary. For example, in *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Anne Stiles investigates Wells’s interest in evolution and brain development; in Stiles’s edited collection on neurology and literature, Laura Otis compares *Dr. Moreau* to the recent trial of brain scientist David Ferrier, prosecuted for his use of vivisection in his experiments on animals.

¹¹⁰ Darko Suvin claims *The Time Machine* is crucial to the history of science fiction as a literature of cognitive estrangement, another kind of impossibility that depends on the “opposition between the bourgeois reader’s expectations and the strange relationships found at the other end” (209-210).

¹¹¹ This quotation is originally from Derrida’s “Deconstructions: The Im-Possible,” in Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen’s *French Theory in America*.

automatism of machines, through the time machine itself and the automaton body of the Traveller. Elana Gomel has already noted the two incompatible versions of evolutionary temporality that make up *The Time Machine*: one in which the future is determined (or automatic) and one in which the future is contingent (or singular) (“Shapes”). Building on that insight, this chapter turns to the way in which the Traveller’s singular autobiographical humanness—his subjectivity, self-representation, and sovereignty—are predicated on nonhuman technologies—his automatic body, the time machine, and the narrative.

While each novel in this dissertation explores the centrality of automaton bodies to representations of human subjectivity, *The Time Machine* most fully ties self-representation and human power to technology and machines. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is largely focused on the ways in which the human body itself is animal, with Dorian desiring to escape into the wildness of bare, animal life while also remaining sovereign enough to control the animality of the body. As we will see in the next chapter, *Dracula*’s automatism is connected to the body’s circulatory system, a representation of the otherness of human and animal bodies. By contrast, *The Time Machine* grapples most fully with the possibility of the human as an animal-*machine*, while the Traveller’s desire for power is predicated on his ability to control the technical aspects of human life. Moments of narrative syncope, the points where the difference between the Traveller and the seemingly less-than-human beings of the future break down, reveal how narrative itself is both a technology of power and an automatic, “bare” form. Tim Armstrong, Sue Zemka, Elissa Marder, and Karl Heinz Bohrer have demonstrated how modern technological advancements in transportation, communication, perception, and even time-keeping itself have given rise to narratives characterized by temporal disruptions, distraction, fragmentation, and a focus on the singular moment.¹¹² What needs to be more

¹¹² These narratives are characterized by distracted subjectivities (Armstrong “Two”); fragmented, supplemented, and regulated bodies (Armstrong *Modernism*); and an increased attempt to narrate the significance of singular moments (Zemka). As I mention in Chapter One, scholars like Elissa Marder and Karl Heinz Bohrer argue that disorders and interruptions of temporality in modern literature are responses to the experience of modernity (Marder) and constitutive of modern aesthetic form more broadly (Bohrer). For rigorous analyses of nineteenth-century technological advancements, see for example Anson Rabinbach and Wolfgang Schivelbusch.

fully addressed is both the way that modern technological advancements were coupled by understandings of subjectivity itself as automatic or animal-mechanical, and the ways in which these disruptions or failures of self-representation in narratives of modernity are so closely tied to assertions of human power.¹¹³

The Time Traveller's aim to speak the temporally-fractured body and world into linear and legible narratives, to write himself as an autobiographical being and to write himself in human time, works to form a justification for his fear and violence towards the beings of the future. Instances of narrative syncope, when it is uncertain or undecideable whether the Traveller's body or the narrative form is human or nonhuman, are therefore ethically-charged. In fact, even the Time Traveller's putative first-person account of the future is actually second-hand, reported by the frame narrator. Following Derrida's theory of an im-possible future event, the narrator's account of the Time Traveller's journey combines the im-possibility of narrative with the im-possibility of making a truly ethical decision: one that responds to our obligations to all other beings, in complete openness towards all other beings. As Madeleine Fagan writes of Derrida's ethical position, "the im-possible offers a way of conceptualising ethics that engages with the difficulties internal to the concept as its very condition of possibility; the condition of possibility of any ethics or responsibility is that it is without stable foundations" (70-71).¹¹⁴ I argue that the very uncertainty of hierarchical categories like human and nonhuman, or agency and automatism, creates an im-possible field for ethical decision-making, and therefore makes any ethical decision possible. While *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests that the body determines the im-possible ethical field of responsibility, and (as we will see) *Dracula* that the body is central to and engages in absolute and im-possible generosity, *The Time Machine's* ethical tensions remain in challenging those

¹¹³ A notable exception to this is Zemka's chapter on Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, which argues that Jim engages in a kind of animal-time that upsets hierarchies of power. Technology, however, is largely absent in Zemka's analysis of this novel. Zemka writes of Jim's panic and his narrator Marlow's "rapturous insight" that "Jim is an anxious adventurer and Marlow is his anxious interpreter: each pursues his vocation, which in the terms of this analysis are temporal vocations, ways of living and narrating time, specifically as it consolidates around the virtues of human self-mastery and human apprehensions of the other" (181).

¹¹⁴ See also Cary Wolfe, Derek Attridge, and Michael Anker for readings that emphasize uncertainty and impossibility in Derrida's writings on ethics.

human attributes like thinking, choice, knowledge, and memory, while acknowledging that they are nonetheless necessary to ethical decision-making.

Each instance of syncope in *The Time Machine* develops the idea that what makes humans singular, individual, unique, and powerful is a product of the automaticity of the animal-machine and its technological supplements. The first syncope of the novel introduces the affective body as technological and the time machine as a prosthesis, through an engagement with contemporaneous theories of consciousness and automatism. The second syncope reveals an uncanny encounter with future forms of life that represent technological, nonhuman aspects of the self. The third introduces the ethical significance of the im-possible conjunction of the automatic and the event, through the idea of uncertainty. Finally, the fourth syncope, occurring towards the end of the novel, offers an opportunity to read the syncopated narrative form as underwriting the possibility of autobiography. In the conclusion, I turn briefly to the possibility that we might read in narrative syncope a resistance to Wells's later eugenicist beliefs.

4.1. Technologies of Consciousness

The first syncope in the novel, the disruption of the Time Traveller's conscious attention with which I began this chapter, demonstrates the way in which subjectivity is both made possible and disrupted by technology. On the one hand, the time machine is an extension of human consciousness, and therefore a prosthesis that affirms the Traveller as a powerful, technical (or tool-using) human.¹¹⁵ At the same time, human consciousness itself, as it is represented through the Time Traveller's narrative, is characterized by the technology of automatism.

The first time the Time Traveller presses the lever on the machine, allowing him to move through the middle hours of the day in an instant, he experiences a "nightmare sensation of falling" (76). This sensation is unconnected to any other kind of disturbance, either visual or aural, but is instead the sensation of nonhuman temporality—the

¹¹⁵ Tim Armstrong identifies Wells as an author of what he calls prosthetic modernism, but he focuses only on Wells's narrative use of body modification and does not mention *The Time Machine* (*Modernism* 85).

sensation of having time move at a different speed than the Traveller's consciousness. However, the disconnect between the feeling of falling and the apparent lack of change in the Traveller's surroundings leads him to claim that his "intellect had tricked [him]" into believing he was moving (76). The Traveller seems to believe that his mind is affecting his nervous system, as the feeling of falling could be an illusion of consciousness, but the opposite turns out to be true: as an accelerated temporality produces sensation, it also disrupts consciousness. As the Traveller begins to speed into the future, he notes that those unpleasant sensations challenge his conscious attention, describing his mental state as a "veil of confusion" (78). Explicitly connecting confusion with physiology, the Traveller notes that "insensibly, the absolute strangeness of everything, the sickly jarring and swaying of the machine, above all, the feeling of prolonged falling, had absolutely upset my nerve" (79). As the Traveller laments his inability to determine how and when he should halt the machine, he theorizes that his body's molecular cohesion is, like attentive consciousness, dependent on or a product of human temporality. "So long as I travelled at a high velocity through time," he explains, "I was, so to speak, attenuated—was slipping like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances!" (78). Nonhuman time thins out or disperses the Time Traveller's body as well as his subjectivity.

In this scene of time travel, the Traveller is unable to narrate his experience, his thought, or his feelings, a set of autobiographical difficulties that places him in the company of literary modernism's other characters.¹¹⁶ The machine acts as a supplement for the Traveller's "limits of representation" (Greenberg 613), with many scholars claiming that the description of time travel mimics the techniques and technology of early cinema.¹¹⁷ However, few scholars have addressed the novel's exploration of the material

¹¹⁶ See for example Jonathan Greenberg and Caroline Hovanec. Michael Sayeau also categorizes *The Time Machine* as a modernist novel, which sees modernity's industry and progress lead to stasis.

¹¹⁷ See for example Keith Williams, Caroline Hovanec, Jonathan Bignell, Laura Marcus, and Chris Morash. Arguing that Wells's oeuvre contributes substantially to modernity's culture of cinema and technology, Williams concentrates on the visual effects of time travel that mimic the capacity of film, including the "accelerated motion," "temporal condensation," and the "alternation of light and darkness" as the day becomes night and then day again with ever increasing speed (25). For her part, Hovanec argues that cinematic effects of time travel produce a distinctly modernist "hazy aesthetic" (472). Hovanec also argues for the significance of embodied sensation by way of technology, claiming that by the end of the novel, the Traveller becomes "a Dorian Gray-like aesthete driven to experience ever more sensations" (475).

effects of time travel as it relates to late-Victorian conceptions of consciousness.¹¹⁸ That is, they have tended to understand the time machine as mediating and extending the human senses, particularly vision. While the time machine is an extension of the senses, we can also see in the Traveller's period of syncope that the machine extends consciousness itself, while simultaneously revealing the archaeology of consciousness's possibility.

In the narrative that frames the Time Traveller's adventure, the Traveller outlines his hypothesis that time or "duration" is the fourth dimension of any existing object (60). Consciousness obscures our ability to perceive time as a dimension of objecthood because "*our consciousness moves along it*" at "a uniform velocity" (60, original emphasis; 62). However, the Traveller insists that when we think about techniques of consciousness like memory, we can see how our minds are already time machines when we "jump back for a moment," when we "become absent-minded" (62). For Philmus and Hughes, this theory "validate[s] time travel from the standpoint of human consciousness as a possibility of human consciousness" (53) in order to "reaffirm the possibilities for human will" (55), including freedom of thought from preconceived notions (49) or the agency of free will (53). However, there is a pervasive non-agency or automaticity that underwrites the possibility of agential movement through time. Even as one consciously attempts to access a memory, "jumping back" not only makes consciousness analogous to the technology of the machine that "mak[es] such movement both possible and prolonged within 'objective' or external time" (Williams 24), it also engenders a non-agential disappearance of self-presence—to become absent-minded.

Consciousness and the time machine are indeed analogous in the novel but it is not the affirmation of human freedom that makes them so. Instead, syncope reveals that the time machine occupies a dual relationship to consciousness: on the one hand, the time

Williams notes, too, that the Time Traveller's use of the term "switchback" to refer to the machine is echoed by director D. W. Griffith to describe narrative flashbacks (30). For an alternate reading, see Miles Link, who reads the sensations of time travelling as a kind of euphoria for the Traveller, a case of "technophilia" in a novel that otherwise critiques the mechanization of time and of human potential (148).

¹¹⁸ Exceptions are Keith Williams, who mentions that the Time Traveller's theory of time consciousness resembles that of Henri Bergson (24), and Philmus and Hughes, who connect the theory with William James's (48, n. 4). Neither develops their insights significantly.

machine is a technological object that mediates embodied consciousness. That is, the machine extends embodied consciousness into the future, allowing not just an extension of sight or sound into the future (as the camera or the phonograph do) but an extension of the entire human apparatus of consciousness to experience a new form of temporality. Marshall McLuhan writes that clothing is “an extension of the skin” like “the wheel is an extension of the foot,” “the book is an extension of the eye,” and “electric circuitry [is] an extension of the central nervous system” (31-41). While McLuhan is particularly interested in the way these prostheses enable human communication and perception, other theorists propose that extensions or supplements of the body and the mind constitute humanness itself. Derrida, for example, has written extensively about the supplements that replace a uniquely human lack, like language, writing, lying, and clothing. In contrast, animals are not *lacking* because (or if) they do not have access to these supplementary characteristics.¹¹⁹

Bernard Stiegler clarifies the relationship between prosthesis and temporality by drawing on the myths of Epimetheus, the Greek god who gave animals gifts but forgot people, and Prometheus, his brother, who supplemented Epimetheus’ forgetfulness by gifting humans with fire and art. Stiegler theorizes that all technology represents a kind of prosthetic attempt to preserve humanness—human life and memory—in external forms. He writes, “As a ‘process of exteriorization,’ technics is the pursuit of life by means other than life” (17). As Cary Wolfe puts it, prostheses are “forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically ‘not-human’ and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is” (Wolfe xxv). In particular, Stiegler describes the way technologies for preserving memory in time mark humans *as* human, while also affecting both consciousness and memory. Temporal objects affect consciousness because “consciousness is itself to be understood on the basis of a temporal flux” (Roberts 59). The time machine’s extension of consciousness suggests that it, too, is a supplemental technology that distinguishes

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Derrida’s discussion of clothing and nudity in *The Animal that Therefore I Am* (5).

between human and nonhuman, one that alters consciousness and the human capacity for self-awareness and subjectivity.¹²⁰

While on the one hand the time machine extends consciousness, on the other it activates and mimics the temporality and automatism of the affective body itself. As I have described in Chapters Two and Three, Brian Massumi and other modern affect theorists point to the non-cognitive time during which the body is affected and before the conscious subject registers the feeling of having been affected (either as internally or externally). Massumi calls this the virtual potential of the body. The time machine, too, is virtual in its temporality; it moves too quickly for the subject to register cognitively. Not only this, but for those subjects outside of the machine, it disappears; when the Traveller allows his dinner guests to send a model of his machine through time, it “became indistinct, was seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone—vanished!” (66). The Psychologist explains this as “presentation below the threshold,” equating this disappearance with the speed of a bullet or a turning wheel (67). While the examples emphasize the inability of the visual sensorium to keep up with the temporality of the machine, we might also understand “below the threshold” to be a virtual affective realm.

In its dual relationship to human consciousness, we can imagine the time machine within a modern history of physiological and psychological experimentation that monitored and measured body-time and sought the human (the singular or eventual) through the inorganic (technology), beginning in the nineteenth century. This history is one where, as in *The Time Machine*, the affective body and the conscious subject are produced through and with technology, both the technology of the experimental apparatus but also the automatism of the responsive body. In fact, Nigel Thrift locates a history of nonconscious affect in the experiments of Wilhelm Wundt in the mid-

¹²⁰ Mark Hansen draws on Stiegler, along with other philosophers, to account for the role of affect in time consciousness, subjectivity, and perception. He analyzes new media art that uses technology to expand the possibilities for self-affectation, “allows for a fuller and more intense experience of subjectivity” (589). Hansen turns to neurologist Francisco Varela to investigate the relationship between affect and tertiary memory; I do not draw on Hansen here because Massumi’s conception of affect as occurring too quickly for consciousness to grasp is a highly relevant theory for Wells’s novel. Varela’s theory is not irrelevant but it is unnecessary for my analysis.

nineteenth century, precursors to Massumi's proposal that the body reacts before the mind and "that consciousness takes time to construct" (Thrift 67).¹²¹ Like nineteenth- and later twentieth-century experiments meant to measure physiological responses, the time machine stimulates an affective reaction. However, as Lisa Blackman and Henning Schmidgen have pointed out, such experiments ask us to reevaluate what a machine *is* along with what consciousness is; that is, whether we can really isolate the organic and non-organic, or subjective and nonsubjective, parts of the experiment (Schmidgen 214, Blackman 371).¹²² While the Traveller's conscious engagement in the time machine seems unlikely given the passage above, as the Traveller does little more than pull the lever and has a difficult time bringing himself to willfully halt it, Schmidgen and Blackman's arguments suggest a fundamental uncertainty between the human and nonhuman, subjective and nonsubjective, organic and inorganic elements of the experiment. The Traveller is not really in control of the machine, prosthesis though it may be—he is in collaboration with it. Like Derrida's im-possible event, it is difficult to

¹²¹ Thrift connects these experiments with those of Benjamin Libet in the mid-twentieth century which conclude the same thing; Libet's experiments provide evidence of Massumi's influential theory of nonconscious affect (Massumi 29). Thrift also connects the revelation of nonconscious, reactive body-time to imperceptible movements—or unconscious temporality—of the body being made visible by the camera. In the early twentieth century, Walter Benjamin notes precisely the same thing, writing, "The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones... Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man" (236-237). Moreover, in this essay Benjamin notes that watching a film creates a too-fast-for-subjective-attention (or below the threshold) affective response in the viewer, a shock effect that mimics the pace of modern life (238, 250 n. 19). Extending this type of analysis, Mary Ann Doane makes the case that film represented temporality as a-systematic to provide a site for affect in its absence from modern systematic temporality. Doane's argument is that "such a strategy is not designed simply to deal with the leakage or by-products of rationalization; it is structurally necessary to the ideologies of capitalist modernization" (11). While these are relevant connections to the Traveller's automaticity and his relation to the machine, this chapter is not primarily focused on the visual.

¹²² Schmidgen explores the significance of Franciscus Donders's experiments, writing that "physiological experiments are machines not simply because the historical focus is on instruments and technological systems; rather, they are machines because they combine technological components with parts of human and nonhuman organisms to form essentially precarious, but functioning, arrangements of flows and interruptions that are directed toward the production of semiotic events. I argue that this generalized notion of the machine allows us to investigate in detail the relation of matter, sign, and time that was (and still is) of crucial importance in the scientific practice of physiology and other experimental life sciences" (214). Lisa Blackman draws on Schmidgen and this history of experimentation to investigate Gertrude Stein's early-twentieth-century experiments in automatic writing, which were, according to Stein, "a process of becoming unconscious," wherein Stein's conscious subjectivity and the automatism produced by the experiment and its devices are inseparable (371).

separate the machine (which is automatic, programmed, repetitive, or inorganic) from the event (which is singular, unique, and organic).¹²³

In fact, the very nineteenth-century evolutionists that scholars note influenced Wells's writing of the *Time Machine*—Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer—theorize the automatic nature of human behaviour and subjectivity. For Derrida, automatism is characterized by repetition and a lack of affect or autoaffection (a sense of self) (*Without* 72); in other words, machinic behaviour is the result of a-subjective programming. As I describe in Chapter Two, nineteenth-century physiologists theorized that humans were a kind of automaton in that they behaved automatically as a result of responsive or reactive nervous systems, including the brain. While this theory existed before Thomas Huxley adopted it to compare the behaviour of humans and animals, Huxley developed the most explicitly mechanical theory of the mind in his lecture “On the Hypothesis that Animals Are Automata, and Its History.” As I have mentioned in previous chapters, Huxley responds to Descartes' proposal that animals are “unconscious machines” by claiming that while animals do respond in an automatic way to their environment, they are “conscious, sensitive, automata,” whose “actions are the results of their physical organization” (574). Huxley cites experiments in modern physiology alongside evolutionary principles to hypothesize that the difference in animal and human neurology is one of degree; both forms of life are sensitive machines whose “affections of their sensory nerves give rise to molecular changes in the brain, which again give rise to, or evolve, the corresponding states of consciousness” (575). Far from being an agent of human behaviour, consciousness was a by-product of the body's responsive relationship to the world, the “steam-whistle” on the engine of the body (575).¹²⁴ Huxley insists that consciousness, what is often considered most human about humans (Anger, Review 50),

¹²³ Zemka too, notes, the importance of Hermann von Helmholtz's experiments in the latter half of the nineteenth century on “the velocity of neural transmission,” meant to measure responses and reaction times to stimuli (24-25), the kind of experiments that informed representations of the “moment” in Victorian literature.

¹²⁴ Suzy Anger writes that Huxley's thesis “took a profound hold on the Victorian cultural imagination,” and characterizes some objections as “near-hysterical” (Review 50, 51). Huxley's theory provoked a series of responses from physiologists like William Carpenter and George Lewes, who, as I note in Chapter Two, were resistant to the idea that humans lacked sensibility or agency entirely (in other words, that they were merely programmed).

is actually a biological and technical, and therefore an animal or nonhuman, process. Moreover, he proposes that neither consciousness nor the soul (if it exists, an equally epiphenomenal concept) has any volitional effect. Instead, by Huxley's account, free will is akin more to the feeling of freedom than to any actual exertion of agency and this feeling can be experienced by both humans and animals alike.¹²⁵

Like Huxley, Herbert Spencer is most often read alongside *The Time Machine* to illuminate the novel's evolutionary influence,¹²⁶ fittingly as the famous father of social Darwinism and promoter of the idea that the principles of evolutionary fitness governed the successful progress of society and its individuals. However, also like Huxley, Spencer was an automatist who believed that the psyche was dependent on the impressions it received from the outside world.¹²⁷ In *The Principles of Psychology* (1855), Spencer writes, "Out of a great number of psychical action going on in the organism, only a part is woven into the thread of consciousness" (495). In summing up the material aspects of Spencer's thinking, David Bates writes that for the physiologist, "the conscious mind was in a sense a complicated fiction constructed out of a limited set of sensory experiences," while "the *unconscious* activity of the nervous system was continually generating responses, integrating memories, and producing automatisms" (158-159, original emphasis). Spencer theorizes that consciousness is generated when the body has to adapt to a new situation (566), but the subject's will is no more than the feeling of these new automatisms.¹²⁸ Spencer argues that "when an impression received from without" prompts the organism to change its behaviour, there are "various of the impressions which must accompany and follow" the possibility of "motor changes"; when those feelings and ideas

¹²⁵ See my chapter on the relationship between Huxley's theory of human and animal will and Thomas Hardy's representation of human and animal willingness and consent in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

¹²⁶ See, for example, Steven McLean and Elana Gomel ("Shapes").

¹²⁷ Although the quotation from Spencer is too late to be directly applicable to *The Time Machine*, C. U. M. Smith writes, "Spencer's general position is summed up in the Autobiography he worked on at the end of his life and which was published posthumously in 1904: 'the form of life which we call Mind, emerges out of bodily life'" (137).

¹²⁸ Bates writes: "Reason, for Spencer, was explained as a gap in the series of automatic functions, a moment of interruption, that is, where these acquired ideas and memories, the evolutionary inheritance, this whole storehouse of automatisms, would be newly organized to help adjust the organism to its challenging environmental circumstances. Reason existed to bridge the difference between the 'perfectly automatic' and the 'imperfectly automatic'" (158-159).

prompt new behaviour, it is “the *ego* which is said to will the action” (618, original emphasis).¹²⁹ Spencer’s concepts of consciousness and will, like Huxley’s, sound very alike to the Traveller’s self-narration or autobiography: unpleasant sensations and a series of external impressions substitute for an articulate description of self-presence, then give way to a sudden change in behaviour that might be described as willful but that is not precisely an act of volition.

The Time Traveller’s record of his experience during time travel echoes some of the narrative aspects of conscious automatism described by Huxley. As the Traveller describes the inability of his confused mind to “attend” to the machine, he also notes that he is unable to think of anything “but these new sensations” of time travel. Like Huxley’s automaton, the Traveller’s mind can exert no agency over his body but is rather carried along by his embodied affections. Even when he begins to muse on the possible progress of civilization he is about to witness, the Traveller describes these thoughts occurring from “a fresh series of impressions [that] grew up in my mind—a certain curiosity and therewith a certain dread—until at last they took complete possession of me” (78). By this description, his thinking is not evidence of the self-presence of the subject, but rather a kind of gradual accumulation of thoughts that exist almost as their own agents, apart from the Traveller. They are not the product of the Traveller’s conscious attention but rather something that happens *to* him—they “grow up in [his] mind” and take “complete possession” of him. As such, this series of impressions undercuts any self-aware autobiographical narrative they are meant supply. When the Traveller decides, despite his aforementioned concern about molecular cohesion, to stop the time machine, his representation of the moment also carries the charge of automatism with it. He has already described how time travel has “upset [his] nerve.” The neurological response of syncope carries with it here the physiological symptoms of confusion and sickness; he recalls that, in this state, “with a gust of petulance I resolved to stop forthwith. Like an impatient fool, I lugged over the lever” (Wells 79). While the Time Traveller ostensibly tries to exert some control over the situation, his actions sound out of control, the

¹²⁹ In the third edition of *The Principles of Psychology* (1897), Spencer clarifies this section on the will and more fully undercuts the self-presence of the subject by arguing that “the mental *I*” is the organism’s “aggregate of feelings and ideas” (504, original emphasis).

suddenness of his “gust of petulance” underlining the spontaneous automaticity of his “foolish” actions. The Traveller’s impatient discharge of energy sounds very much like the greyhound of Huxley’s automaton theory, who exerts his will as a “free agent” insofar as “his action is in accordance with his strong desire to catch the hare,” and insofar as there is no leash to hamper him (Huxley 575-576).

There are two other aspects of the Traveller’s recollection of his own thinking that form an automatist or nonhuman form of autobiography. The first is that the phrase “series of impressions” suggests imagery rather than a narration of thought, resisting (like the narrative of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*) an articulate or linguistic—human—form of consciousness. Not only does this prefigure the kind of image-based self-narration that modern affect theorist Antonio Damasio has claimed is available to animals, but it also echoes the kind of self-narration Huxley proposed was open to animals. Huxley writes that animals have the same kind of consciousness that humans do, but that animal consciousness differs in both its lower intensity and its linguistic lack: animals “can have no trains of thoughts, but only trains of feelings” (574). The Traveller’s series of impressions slides between these two types of narration, as both thoughts of humanity’s “wonderful advances” and feelings of a “certain curiosity and therewith a certain dread” (Wells 78). The second Huxleyan aspect of the Traveller’s narration is the materiality of the phrase “series of impressions.” Huxley writes that the “emotions of brutes, and such ideas as they possess” are “dependent upon molecular brain changes” which are caused by the “affections” of the nervous system (575). Memories are also the result of these nervous affections, as “each sensory impression leaves behind a record in the structure of the brain” (575). Like a printmaker’s press, the nervous system leaves behind its affective ink in the brain.

Read together, Huxley and Spencer illuminate some of the stakes involved in the temporal form of the Traveller’s self-narration. Both physiologists understand consciousness to be an organic trait, varying only in degree or complexity between animals and humans. For Huxley, this is the difference between trains of feelings and trains of thought; for Spencer, simple changes of state result only in a kind of basic animal consciousness, not “one which we can in any sense realize to ourselves” (324).

Moreover, Spencer illuminates the significance of time to this automatist autobiography. Writing years before Wells on the movement of consciousness through time, Spencer explains:

our notion of Time is the notion of relativity of position in the series of states of consciousness; as this presupposes a series of such states; as this presupposes successive changes of state; it follows that that which is required to produce changes of state, is that through which Time is disclosed. (253)

For Spencer, time is a product of our sense of change—which is precisely what constitutes consciousness itself.¹³⁰ Not only does this speak directly to the Traveller’s theory of the relativity of time and consciousness, but Spencer also describes the importance of linear temporality to consciousness. Organic changes alone, he tells us, are not enough to constitute what we understand as consciousness. “Consciousness is not simply a succession of changes,” he writes, “but an *orderly* succession of changes—a succession of changes *combined and arranged* in special ways. The changes form the raw material of consciousness; and the development of consciousness is the *organization* of them” (323-324, original emphasis). As though foreshadowing Stiegler, Spencer describes consciousness as a kind of aesthetic technique of the subject, the making of consciousness out of temporality.

Out of these automatist theories arises a kind of complex or articulate self-presence that distinguishes between animal and human consciousness. Nevertheless, even that self-presence is, ultimately that of the automaton—the self-presence of the conscious machine. Conscious automatism in *The Time Machine* differs from its appearance in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. While Wilde’s novel has a narrative form that is underwritten by nonconscious interruptions of subjectivity, Wells’s novel proposes that the difference between humans and nonhumans can be found in narration, in the ability to create a coherent story from a temporally linear train of thoughts. While Dorian seeks power through sovereignty over his body and its feelings, even if this includes rejecting linear temporality, the Traveller finds power in his use of technology, which includes the

¹³⁰ Spencer continues: “And it needs but a little reflection to see, that without motion, subjective or objective, no changes of consciousness could ever have been generated” (253).

technology of narrative. Or, perhaps it is the frame narrator that wields this power. That is, either we understand the Time Traveller's reported narrative as faithful—that it is, indeed, what the Time Traveller said—or we understand it as the editorial work of the frame narrator. In what follows, I take the frame narrator's retelling of the Time Traveller's narrative to be faithful enough, while acknowledging that its very impossibility is a part of narrative self-presence itself.

The time machine has given the Traveller the power of authorship, as it gives him the opportunity to tell this unique and singular story to his audience in a demonstration of his mastery over the organization of events and over the mechanisms of time itself. However, the time machine also undercuts this power by denying the Traveller the possibility of organized, linear narration, as it disrupts subjectivity and creates a gap—or a syncope—between the years 1894 and 802,701. When the Traveller reaches future London, he is left without the power of autobiography or self-narration, both for himself and, on a massively autobiographical scale, for humankind because he does not know what has happened in the intervening years and immediately imagines himself as a powerless animal. He worries whether “cruelty had grown into a common passion” and “the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful?” (80),¹³¹ lamenting that he might be seen as less-than-human by the creatures of the future, like “some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness—a foul creature to be incontinently slain” (80). Panicking, the Traveller describes himself as feeling “naked in a strange world” (81). This reference to nudity can be understood as a reference to what Derrida has called human lack—like other prostheses, clothes supplement the human lack of fur, feathers, or scales, and represent both their need for and their ability to create and use this supplement. Clothes, too, are the result of technology; they are the product of the skills of weavers and seamstresses and the mechanics of industrial looms, and the product of human ability to use nature and technology to their advantage. To be without a narrative of history is to lack protection and to be a naked, vulnerable, human-animal.

¹³¹ Theresa Jamieson claims this is the case and the lesson of the novel, arguing that *The Time Machine* figures a degenerative crisis of masculinity resulting in part from a lack of labour.

The unknowable gap between nineteenth-century and future London is not the only challenge to the Traveller's narration. The Traveller's narrative is non-linear in and of itself because he has travelled to the future and back again and is now narrating for his audience things that have happened in their collective past (over the last week) but in humanity's collective future. Describing the frugivorous diet of the Eloi, the first future form of life the Traveller encounters, he seemingly checks himself; "however," he says, "I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant future now" (Wells 86). This phrase functions as its own kind of syncope, a self-reflective pause or glitch in the narrative that acknowledges the impossibility of what the narrative seeks to do in the tension of its temporal grammar (I am telling you something now that happened in the future which is my past). Just as Derrida has theorized what he has called the im-possible event of thinking together both the repetitive programming of the machine and the unique singularity of the event, this is reflected in the im-possible grammar of the narrative, as it tries to account for both the repetitive or programmed future while also describing the unique event.

4.2. Being with Machines

The second example of syncope in the novel appears in the complete loss of consciousness the Time Traveller experiences after he comes face to face with the Morlocks. In future London, the Traveller is desperate to assert his superiority over what he sees as the less-than-human creatures of the future. However, the difference between the Traveller and his evolutionary descendants is largely illusory; while they may look and act differently, their ontological similarity—the ways in which they are the same kinds of beings or forms of life—belies the underlying insistence in the narrative that they are the animals to his human. Instead, both the Traveller and the future inhabitants of London can be understood as posthuman, as forms of life who slip ontologically between the categories of human, animal, and machine. This second syncope emphasizes how ontologically similar the Traveller is to the Morlocks, while also drawing attention to the narrative techniques that affirm human autobiography.

Following his moment of fear upon arriving in the future and briefly attempting escape, the Traveller meets the Eloi. His fear abates as he is able to render them inferior by infantilizing and feminizing them, describing them as “exquisite” and “frail” with a “graceful gentleness” and “childlike ease” (82). Their clothes are a distinguishing feature of their difference, as they are more naked than he but not suffering from it, with bare legs, bare heads, and simple clothing that accompanies their own seeming physical and intellectual inferiority (81-83). The Traveller’s narrative suggests they are also like animals, as he claims they touch him with their “tentacles” and eat their meals of fruit with “a pretty absence of ceremony...with their hands, flinging peels and stalks, and so forth, into the round openings in the sides of the tables” (85). Language, too, is a supplement or prosthesis that supposedly separates humans from animals, and the Eloi’s language, like their bodies and their clothing, is childlike and unsophisticated. The Eloi’s language is as much music as it is communicative, as they speak “in soft cooing notes to each other (83). And though they might understand each other perfectly well, they are uninterested in bridging the communicative gap between themselves and the Traveller, giving him an opportunity to demonstrate his linguistic mastery by trying to teach them English, “like a school-master amidst children” (86).

The Traveller’s sense of species superiority is short-lived, however, as his machine is taken underground soon after his arrival by the Morlocks. Its disappearance creates a lack of technological supplementation for the Traveller, and his feeling is again represented as embodied and material; again, thought comes to him as though from some external source, “like a lash across the face” (94). Imagining that he could be left “helpless in this strange new world,” the Traveller insists that “the bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation” that “grips [him] at the throat and stop[s his] breathing” (94). The Traveller sprints around, crying, yelling, and flailing in a moment Hovanec reads, along with others like his fainting spell, as a manifestation of male hysteria. For Hovanec, who places the Traveller in the company of Jean-Martin Charcot’s male hysterics suffering from the shocks of modern life and travel, this hysteria is indicative of his unreliability as a narrator and thus of the text’s status as modernist and aestheticist (Hovanec 469, 475). Unlike many other scholars of hysteria, Hovanec does not connect the pathology to a sexual cause, but rather a traumatic one; the chapter title is, after all,

“A Sudden Shock.” Israel Zangwill, a late-nineteenth-century author, notes in an otherwise generally positive review that this is the oddest aspect of the novel—that a “cool scientific thinker” like the Traveller “behaves exactly like the hero of a commonplace sensation novel” (in Wells 273). Whether or not we choose to label the Traveller’s state as hysterical, however, his behaviour is utterly rooted in sensation; he is like Huxley’s and Spencer’s automaton in that he is not in control of his actions and his embodied response is syncopated in the sense that it creates gaps in conscious awareness and self-reflection.

His first-person narrative, then, is characterized by a syncopation of self-awareness and memory, gaps in both his consciousness and agency. The Traveller feels “faint and cold” when he realizes the time machine is gone, as though the distinguishing human trait of consciousness disappears along with the human technology of the machine (95). Moreover, this moment is marked by a sense of dispossession and uncertainty, as the Traveller cannot quite remember what exactly he does in his state of panic. “I think I must have had a kind of frenzy,” he conjectures and, after describing what he can remember—“sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind”—remarks that waking the next morning he cannot immediately “remember how I had got there, and why I had such a profound sense of desertion and despair” (95-97). If the affective body is like a machine, conscious self-awareness is not only a by-product of the body (like Huxley’s steam-whistle), it also lags behind the body’s automatic behaviour, a glitchy recording that requires a minute to warm up. Again, the Traveller connects the loss of his technology with animal helplessness, hearkening back to his earlier fear and vulnerability when he arrived in the future. Further, this automatism is not just mechanical but also animal, for as the Traveller fears the loss of the time machine, he sees himself like an animal, like the Eloi, “cut off from [his] own kind—a strange animal in an unknown world” (96), caught in “the most hopeless trap that ever a man devised” (99). Finally, this feeling of animality, provoked by the disappearance of supplemental technology, is also repeated here through a lack of other supplemental technologies. As the Traveller panics trying to find the machine, he rushes into a dark building where some Eloi are sleeping. He describes what he assumes his appearance must be to them, “strange enough, coming suddenly out of the quiet darkness with inarticulate noise and the sputter and flare of a

match” (96). Frustrated that the Eloi cannot help him, the Traveller drops the match. In this moment he loses two supplements that represent humanness—the supplement of language (now, just “inarticulate noise”) and Promethean fire (now, an extinguished match).

There is, however, a way in which the technology of the body, its automatism, is used by the Traveller as a tool. To recover the time machine, the Traveller believes that he needs knowledge of the future, to “learn its way, watch it, be careful of too hasty guesses at its meaning,” to “find clues to it all,” as he continues to learn the Eloi language (99). Besides the fact that the Traveller does almost nothing but make “hasty guesses” at the history of 802,701 (a point to which I will return), he also seems to claim that knowledge about the time machine’s location will come as a result of the nonconscious brain. “I determined to put the thought of my Time Machine,” the Traveller tells his audience, “and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx, as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way” (99). Tasking his brain to work out the machine’s location without his conscious attention, the Traveller seems to refer here to unconscious cerebration, the idea, brought to public attention by William Carpenter in 1874, that the unconscious brain works to produce meaning which is then revealed to consciousness.¹³² Referring to the automatism theories of Carpenter, Spencer, and others, David Bates writes that in the nineteenth century, thinking was understood as

something that took place both unconsciously and consciously. The relationship was not antagonistic necessarily, but neither was it wholly harmonious. Intellectual insight came from both conscious attention and the interruptions from the automatic nervous system. (159)

Bates explicitly connects these theories of mechanical intelligence with twentieth century conceptions of computational intelligence, but what may be even more relevant is the idea that, as Schmidgen and Blackman have suggested, there is no definitive way to

¹³² Scholars like David Glover, John Greenway, William Hughes (*Beyond*), Jill Matus, Anne Stiles, Jenny Bourne Taylor, and Sally Shuttleworth have all examined the appearance of unconscious cerebration in the Victorian novel; Glover, Greenway, Hughes, and Stiles in particular in relation to another text in this dissertation, *Dracula*.

separate what is automatic from what is creative, or what is programmed from what is unique—in other words, what is machine from what is event. The Traveller relies here on the unconscious technology of the body, its automatic memory function and its nonconscious processing, to prevent him from being an animal.

The Traveller does not only need the prosthetic supplement of technology as a human, he emphatically locates some of those technologies within his body itself. This collapse between human and technology suggests that the Traveller is a form of technical or mechanical being that contemporary theorists like Wolfe would call posthuman. Wolfe writes that the term “posthuman” names “the embodiment and embeddedness of the human being in not just its biological but also its technological world, the prosthetic coevolution of the human animal with the technologies of tools and external archival mechanisms (such as language and culture),” and also “the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks” (xv). The representation of the Traveller’s body as affectively automatic, technologically mediated, and capable of producing information nonconsciously are all examples of the way humanness—emotion, capability, reasoning—are embedded in and overlap with technological systems. Nicholas Gane’s recent summary of posthuman theories notes that theorists like Donna Haraway and Katherine Hayles describe posthuman bodies as prostheses or information systems, both alike to and able to integrate with other prostheses, communication systems, and technologies. The Traveller’s attenuation of subjectivity on the time machine and his body’s nonconscious processing of information fit neatly into the kind of posthuman framework these theorists describe. Further, the approaches of Huxley and Spencer (and many of their contemporaries) to the automatism of human intelligence, creativity, feeling, and will show how both nineteenth-century and current neuroscience suggests that consciousness is posthuman.¹³³

The Traveller’s representation as posthuman is significant because many scholars understand the Eloi and Morlocks to be posthuman. Both Ralph Pordzik and Elaine

¹³³ Wolfe devotes a chapter in *Posthumanism* to the neuroscientist Daniel Dennett and his theory of language; see also Pramod K. Nayar’s chapter “Consciousness, Biology, and the Necessity of Alterity” for an overview of the way modern theories of neurology see posthuman consciousness arising from the information system model—interactions between the body and its environment.

Despres explore the way descriptions of forms of life in the novel seek to differentiate between the human and the posthuman, in this case drawing on the term posthuman to describe the Eloi and Morlocks as evolutionary human descendants.¹³⁴ Kelly Hurley coins the term “abhuman” to describe not only the frightening evolutionary mutability of the white, imperialist human form into the abject creatureliness of the Morlocks, but to read that creatureliness back into the contemporary form of the human. While Hurley’s reading of *The Time Machine* (and her readings of the abhuman more broadly) concentrate on the mutability of the body’s form, she agrees that little separates the Traveller from his descendants of the future, despite his desire to the contrary.

The appearance of the Morlocks continues to destabilize the difference between the Traveller and the posthumans of the future. Like the nonhuman temporality of the time machine and future London, the Morlock encounter activates the automatism of the Traveller’s body. In the dark ruins of the future, the Traveller sees two eyes watching him and experiences what he calls “the old instinctive dread of wild beasts” (106). While the Traveller claims to “overcom[e his] fear to some extent,” it is nonetheless expressed through automatic physiological response—a moment of syncope in which he clenches his fists and seems paralyzed. When he tries to speak to them, his voice is “harsh and ill-controlled” (106).¹³⁵ There is every reason to sympathize with the Traveller’s initial fear of the Morlocks since he encounters them in the dark and he has no idea what dangers the future holds. However, this scene hints that his embodied response to their creatureliness is not the fear of prey for predator, but rather ontological identification: the uncanny response of two forms of life that are alike in their lack of humanness and in the prostheses or supplements that they use to make up for this lack. The Traveller, like the Morlock, lacks the technology of speech here, both because his voice falters and because speech ultimately accomplishes nothing in this encounter. Moreover, both the Morlock and the Traveller are caught out-of-time—the Morlock in this new a-historical age and

¹³⁴ See also the off-handed use of the term by Sayeau and Hovanec to seemingly indicate the same.

¹³⁵ Parrinder reads this as a moment in which eye contact is disturbing because it puts the animal Morlock and the human “on terms of equality” (59).

the Traveller in a sudden suspension of time, as he is “halted spellbound” in the impossible temporality and “profound obscurity” of the future’s ruins of the past (107).

If it is true that an instinct of survival against a predatory threat prompts the Traveller’s response to the Morlocks, this ought to be borne out by his narrative description of them. However, the Morlocks are not rendered in particularly threatening terms (a point to which I will return); rather, their features slip between human and animal. Their figure is “ape-like,” and their colouring is “dull white”—a descriptor that seems uncertainly attached to skin or fur. They have “strange large grey-ish red eyes” and “flaxen hair on its head and down its back” both like a human and like an animal. In fact, the Traveller seems to express more revulsion than fear towards the Morlocks, as when he tells his audience that the “small, white moving creature” locks eyes with him, making him “shudder” because it is “so like a human spider,” a “little monster,” “a “bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing” (107). This shudder is not because he identifies the Morlocks as threateningly unknown, but because he cannot identify a proper division between human and animal. In this scene, the Traveller’s instinct is again a kind of impossibility. It is both the automatic programming of his body while also a singular, experiential event (how can his body already know to be scared of a future species that is only threatening, if indeed it *is* threatening, because it has evolved to be so in the future?).

Again, the uncertain species category of the Morlocks is replicated in the Traveller himself. When the Traveller and the Morlock come face to face, the experience is again one of ontological identification and uncanny recognition, a moment of syncope reflected as a loss of prosthesis and a loss of time in the narrative for the Traveller. As the Morlock climbs down a shaft, the Traveller lights a match to dispel both the darkness of the ruins and his lack of knowledge. However, as the Traveller identifies his disgust at the “human spider” and watches its retreat down the shaft, the match falls out of his hands, “going out as it dropped,” and by the time he has “lit another the little monster had disappeared” (107). Unlike the Morlocks, the Traveller cannot see in the dark, and his Promethean fire—a technology or supplement that means to distinguish humanness—fails him in this moment, in which he becomes *less* equipped or advanced than the

Morlocks.¹³⁶ He loses a sense of time as well, claiming, “I do not know how long I sat peering down that well. It was not for some time that I could succeed in gradually persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human” (107). Along with the loss of vision added by the match, the Traveller also loses his place in time and his ability to narrate. His reflection resumes as the “truth gradually dawn[s]” on him; the gap between encountering a Morlock and being able to narrate its history is marked by a gap in his own consciousness. As much as the Traveller recognizes the Morlock as a human-animal, his narrative uncannily represents himself as one, too.

This encounter and narrative gap occur again, leading to a full break with consciousness, when he ventures into the Underworld in search of the time machine. The Traveller’s climb down into the Morlocks’ underground caves through a shaft immediately initiates a break or syncopation of human time that echoes his experience of time travel, as the Traveller experiences extreme physical discomfort in his descent and must stop at the first tunnel he finds to “lie down and rest” (115). At this point, he is emotionally exhausted from “the prolonged terror of a fall” and physically exhausted from holding onto the metal bars as he climbs down the shaft (115). The sensory input of the Underworld is temporally and physiologically disruptive in its “unbroken darkness” and its rhythmic “throb-and-hum of machinery pumping air down the shaft” (115), so the Traveller must lie down, losing time again in this syncope as he notes, “I do not know how long I lay” (115). The atmosphere, the smells and sounds of the caverns that are “stuffy and oppressive,” filled with the loud “thudding sound of a machine” and the “faint halitus of blood in the air” (115-116), along with the Traveller’s encounter with the Morlocks, creates a disorienting experience in many ways akin to time travel.¹³⁷ Just as time travelling produces unpleasant sensations, the Morlocks are described as having a “peculiar unpleasant odour,” and their examination of him “indescribably unpleasant” (117).

¹³⁶ Parrinder identifies the Time Traveller with Prometheus, but claims that his gift of fire is not deserved by the degenerative Morlocks (48). This reading places the Traveller in the company of gods rather than posthumans.

¹³⁷ Halitus, meaning both vapour and exhalation, might also suggest that the Traveller breathes in particles of these others.

Moreover, like time travelling, the encounter makes him ill, with the Morlocks described as “*nauseatingly* inhuman” whose curious touching makes him “shiver violently” (117, my emphasis). Again, the Traveller lights a match to supplement his lack in the dark, reaffirming his superiority to the Morlocks who immediately run from the fire. Any possibility of prosthetic power is quickly dashed, however, as “the match burnt down, and stung my fingers, and fell, a wriggling red spot in the blackness” (116). Like the match, the Traveller’s self-control and consciousness fail him, as he lies down because the “throb” of the machinery is making him “giddy” (118), and his hasty climb back up above ground brings on a “deadly nausea” and “struggle against faintness” (118). Somehow, the Traveller wins this struggle until he is safely in the sunshine again, at which point he is no longer able to stay conscious: “Then, for a time,” he tells us, “I was insensible” (118). Like his time on the machine, his time underground causes the Traveller to lose control of both his agency and his position in time or his temporality. Further, as the technology of the time machine both mediates and reflects the automatism of the Traveller’s affective body, so does the technology of the Morlock machinery.

This passage also reveals that, like the Time Traveller, the Morlocks are technical beings, and it is their uncanny affinity with the Traveller’s most human qualities that prompts his embodied response to them. The Morlocks are not just animal-machines in the evolutionary hierarchies of Huxley and Spencer, but they are makers, users, and controllers of technology. They are not just animal predators of the Eloi, but agriculturalists or ranchers, treating the Eloi like “fatted cattle” (125). They are perhaps also industrial processors of meat, since the thudding machines of the Underworld seem closely connected to the smell of blood and a “red joint” laid on a Morlock table (116). Like Derrida’s im-possible event, the Morlocks are im-possible beings, the biological result of the evolutionary coding of humans whose source originates in the Traveller himself, and yet still unique creatures whose identity category is unfixed, slipping between human, animal, and posthuman.

Finally, in accounting for his fainting spell, the Time Traveller narrates that he was unconscious “for a time.” How much time is never specified; the chapter ends on his collapse in the morning, and the next chapter begins with a reiteration of his fear and

hatred for the Morlocks before returning to circadian temporality in the afternoon. This chapter break is an aesthetic technique that naturalizes the lost temporality of syncope through the regularized disruptions that characterize the form of Wells's novel. In fact, the leap over lost time becomes the very form of the novel itself since, as readers, we are used to letting go of the temporality of plot at the end of a chapter and are ready to begin anew at the next. Nicholas Dames suggests nineteenth-century readers would likely have felt the same, as the period saw "the honing of the chapter...into a way of thinking about the segmented nature of biographical memory, as well as the temporal frames – the day; the year – in which that segmenting occurs" ("Chapter"). He also points out the paradoxical nature of the chapter's aesthetic function, "a technique of discontinuous reading that finds a home in a form for continuous, immersive reading" ("History"), and notes that by the modernist period, the chapter both "dissolved and reaffirmed the unit of the chapter as a significant measure of human experience" ("Chapter"). Following Dames' analysis, we can see how this break works in two ways. On the one hand, it demonstrates the mastery of the human autobiographer over the narrative, affirming a creative power over syncope, memory, and life-writing. On the other, however, the break makes the novel a kind of im-possible future form, where the syncope—the nonconscious or automatic—is necessary to the writing of human life—literally, to autobiography.

4.3. Uncertainty as an Ethical Opening

After the Traveller recovers from his fainting spell and the narrative resumes in the next chapter, he decides that he is vulnerable to the Morlocks and that he has the right to defend himself against them, at any cost. As he casts the Morlocks as forms of life that can be killed, he imagines that this sovereignty issues from—not over—the very bareness of his body: his feelings, his instinct, his automatism, and his perceived ontological difference from the human-animals of the future. However, the Traveller also experiences a syncope that disrupts the clear division between himself and the Eloi and Morlocks, a destabilization of difference that leads us to ethical questions about affect and power. Michael Pinsky has drawn on Derridean ethics in his reading of *The Time Machine* to explore the way the law is created by the singular "Other"; in Pinsky's reading, this other is the time machine itself. While I agree with the significance of the other in *The Time*

Machine, I take Derridean ethics in a different direction by emphasizing that the category of posthuman troubles the demarcations of difference such that there is no clear, universal mode of deciding whether or how one has power over another and to whom one has a responsibility. Elana Gomel offers a similar consideration in her article on posthuman ethics in science fiction, noting that the question of ethics is so pertinent in texts that feature posthuman forms of life because “there is nothing natural or self-evident about human rights because there is nothing natural or self-evident about humanity” (“Science” 340). Gomel suggests, however, that *The Time Machine* is not one of these texts since the Morlocks and Eloi are represented as innocent animals (344); I disagree.¹³⁸ The syncope that occurs during what Hurley calls the “epic battle” (85) between the Traveller and the Morlocks helps us to explore this further, emphasizing the similarities between their forms of life, underlining questions of narrative and embodied vulnerability, and introducing an ethics that has no stable ground.

As the Traveller recounts his feelings about the Morlocks following his swoon, he positions himself variously in relation to them. He tells his audience that the journey underground has made him feel hopeless about the possibility of escape. Before this encounter, he had assumed that he was capable of deciphering and overcoming any obstacle, including the “childish simplicity of the little people” and the future’s “unknown forces,” but now, he insists, he must face “an altogether new element in the sickening quality of the Morlocks—a something inhuman and malign” (119). I argue that it is not so much the inhuman in the Morlocks in opposition to his own humanness that worries the Traveller, but rather the fact that he cannot feel his species superiority to them. They are too much like him—perhaps as intelligent, as omnivorous, and as capable of using technology as he is. At any rate, they are interested in the very same piece of technology that he is, the time machine. As Hurley points out, try as he might to “renounce all kindship” with the Morlocks, “the novel always emphasizes his greater similarity to the abhuman ape-men,” and although the Traveller may be horrified by the smell of blood, his first act upon returning to his present time is to “wolf down a meal of

¹³⁸ By contrast, Gomel claims that it is another of Wells’s novels, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, that asks questions about consciousness and ethics (“Science” 344).

red meat” (86-87).¹³⁹ There is simply no reason why the Morlocks should nauseate him, why they should be described as unpleasant, or why he should cast them as less human than the Eloi or himself (although the Eloi are occasionally referred to as animals, the Morlocks are overwhelmingly so, as fish, owls, cats [107-109], as worms, Lemurs, and vermin [113]).

Scholars who have attempted to find reasons for the Traveller’s abhorrence of the Morlocks have consistently proposed less-than-completely-compelling solutions. For example, Norman suggests that the Traveller may see the Eloi as more human because he has an emotional connection to humans and remembers them (incorrectly) as being as lovely as the Eloi, so that his memory of “mankind in general necessarily resembles more the Eloi than the Morlocks, thus erroneously rendering the Eloi the appropriate species on which to pin the hopes of nineteenth-century man” (13). While her reference to the significance of emotional connection and affective belonging is insightful, Norman’s explanation hinges on the Traveller’s memory as mistaken, as well as not accounting for the Traveller’s own acknowledgement of Victorian humans as effecting cruel class-divided working conditions (Wells 110). Pordzik argues that the Traveller bases his connection to the Eloi on appearance alone—an argument supported by the Traveller’s statement that “the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perform a sharer in their degradation and their Fear” (Wells 125)—in accordance with racist hierarchies of the nineteenth century. As cogent as this reading is, it does not explain the Traveller’s reaction so much as it points out that some bodies, like the Morlocks’ or like the non-white bodies of Victorian England, may be coded by those with power as being disgusting and nonhuman and therefore open to violence (a context I discuss in relation to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*). For Hurley, the “disproportionate terror and disgust” of the Traveller is a recognition of his own Morlock-like abjectness, while his violence towards them is evidence of his similar beastliness and his “overcharged hatred” of them functions as a way to distinguish himself (87). As I argue above, it is not abjection that the Traveller recognizes in the Morlocks but a shared posthumanism. Moreover, the Traveller’s violence does not mimic the Morlocks’

¹³⁹ Nate comes to the same conclusion.

behaviour, since there is no evidence other than the Traveller's insistence that the Morlocks are violent killers. In the end, Hurley seems correct in stating that the Traveller's response to the Morlocks is ultimately something "he cannot quite justify or explain" (Hurley 84). His abhorrence is the uncomfortable affective possibility that can arise from ontological identification.

The narrative's inability to consistently distinguish between the Traveller and the Morlocks is repeated in the narrative uncertainty about whether the Traveller's fear of the Morlocks is animal or human. The Traveller initially frames his fear as similar to that of an animal's: "Instinctively I loathed them. Before, I had felt as a man might feel who had fallen into a pit: my concern was with the pit and how to get out of it. Now I felt like a beast in a trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon" (119, my emphasis). However, if he is not entirely an animal in relation to the Morlocks, as above, and his fear does not, in fact, arise from a biological response as prey to predator, then it arises because his nonconscious brain has already deciphered the fact that the Morlocks are cannibals. This second possibility figures both the Morlocks and the Traveller as hybrid human-animal-machines: the Traveller gains knowledge from his mechanical, nonconscious body about the monstrous, inhuman, and technology-using habits of the Morlocks. Moreover, the Traveller decides here that the Morlocks are to be feared because they commit "foul villainy" under the cover of darkness, a descriptor that seems to belong more properly to human subjects ("villainous" seems an odd descriptor for animal predation) (119).

The ethical conundrum of the text begins to emerge most fully in this passage. The Traveller suggests that it is the information processing of his body, its unconscious cerebration, that underwrites his sovereignty, or his right to make decisions to help live or make die. He is reminded of the meat in the Underworld, seemingly unrelated to anything he is thinking of "but coming in almost like a question from outside" (120). The meat vaguely resembles "something familiar" to the Traveller (120), and from this he will later extrapolate that the Morlocks are cannibals, feeding on the Eloi during the night.¹⁴⁰ He

¹⁴⁰ The Time Traveller believes that the Morlocks and Eloi are the same species and therefore Morlock consumption of Eloi flesh is cannibalism: human "prejudice against human flesh is no deep-seated instinct" he notes. "I tried to look at the thing in a scientific spirit. After all, they were less human and more remote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago" (125).

narratively couples his embodied, instinctive fear and hatred of them with this hypothesis as, “with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be” (124). However, *before* even explicitly entertaining this possibility, the Traveller decides he will find a protective basecamp and arm himself against the Morlocks, again basing this decision on his ontology: he insists he will not cower like the weak Eloi because he is “differently *constituted*” as a Victorian subject (120, my emphasis). On the one hand, to be constitutionally equipped to respond to fear in this way suggests the Traveller’s response occurs not because of a superior human agency or will, but rather as a predetermined outcome of his own evolutionary design. At the same time, the Traveller’s statement continues to underline how contingent any translation of feeling into external meaning is, since his audience must believe that both late-Victorian England and future Eloiian England have prepared him to decipher the embodied fear and mystery that confronts him now. Moreover, his need for weaponry is the human need for a prosthetic supplement against the “natural” viciousness of animals. The fundamental ethical question of the text, which can never be properly decided, emerges here: is the Traveller an animal who instinctively perceives the Morlock threat through his automatic, affective body, and will respond instinctively, or is he a human who has the knowledge to decide whether the Morlocks are a threat and how to respond? In other words, is this an inscription or an event?

The Traveller’s response to the Morlocks is *both* inscription and event because both the Traveller and the Morlocks are posthuman. It is therefore impossible to separate the technologies of the body (affective automatism, unconscious cerebration) from technologies of human power (narrative, fire, weaponry) in the Traveller’s narrative, which makes it a fruitful text through which to explore affect in relation to posthuman ethics. That is, the syncopated text can help us to see how the affective body is technical, and it can also help us to think through how affect might relate to posthuman ethics. For example, the uncertainty over what role the affective body plays as an information technology seems to respond directly to Ruth Leys’ critique of theories of non-intentional affect. Leys writes that non-intentionalist paradigms of affect are appealing to theorists because “the moment one abandons [them] in favor of some kind of intentionalist interpretation of the affects one finds oneself forced to provide thick descriptions of life

experiences of the kind that are familiar to anthropologists and novelists but are widely held to be inimical to science” (471). Rather than suggest that automatist theories like Huxley’s, Spencer’s, Massumi’s, and Thrift’s are simply not applicable analytic frameworks to the work of narrative, thinking through the way nonconscious affect informs this thick description can help us focus on the way uncertainty is ethical—that is, the way uncertainty can ethically challenge positions of sovereignty and power. In fact, Derrida suggests, according to Cary Wolfe, that thick description is exactly what is necessary to each ethical moment, in “his insistence that we pay vigilant attention to the particular instance of decision, of justice, in all its thickness and heterogeneity, without letting formulae and maxims do the work for us” (96).

Moreover, affect’s challenge to the Traveller’s human agency through the animal and machine, both the automaticity of his affective body and his explicit need for supplemental tools, complicates sympathy while replacing it with potential (if uncertain) ontological identification. The Traveller mentions sympathy only once in his narrative, after he visits the Underworld and as he works out why the Eloi are frightened of the Morlocks, claiming that “the Eloi had kept too much of the human form not to claim my sympathy, and to make me perforce a sharer in their degradation and their Fear” (125). Sympathy requires one of two things, either an *a priori* form of representation that can provoke a sympathetic response (as in, for example, George Eliot’s belief that realism is the aesthetic form most likely to produce sympathy), or a response that is automatic, produced through the affective body (as in, for example, the theories of physiologists Alexander Bain and Charles Darwin). Regardless, *The Time Machine* upends both aspects of sympathy, since the Traveller continually narrates both representational difficulty and affective uncertainty. The novel prompts a host of questions around sympathy: why should physical appearance be a more powerful force for sympathy than behaviour? Does “perforce” in the context of this revelation mean that the Traveller has no choice but also to be afraid, as some programmed automatism of his affective body? How can anyone behave ethically if their behaviour is programmed? And, if this sympathy is biological, does fear give the Traveller ethical grounds to behave violently towards the Morlocks?

Posthuman ethical thought, particularly the ethics of uncertainty that Derrida proposes, suggests that ethical behaviour involves attending to these questions. Derrida agrees with James in that he believes that anything that is “calculable”—that is, automatic or programmable—is not ethical; instead, he suggests, we must submit any ethical decision making to the “ordeal of the undecidable” (“Force of Law” 24). In *The Time Machine*, the explicit narrative inability of the Traveller to settle on whether the Morlocks or himself are human or not provides an opportunity to ask these questions about the self and the other. As Wolfe describes, Derrida’s work encourages us to see how “we are not that ‘auto-’ of ‘autobiography’” that we imagine ourselves to be—that is, we are not the self that writes or speaks its life. Instead, we are posthuman, “not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, [...] but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a precondition of our subjectivity” (88-89).¹⁴¹ Instead of making decisions as superior (autobiographical) humans towards other forms of life, we would have to acknowledge for each ethical decision that we are one (posthuman) form of life in relation to and affecting another.¹⁴² Like the im-possible moment in which the Traveller finds himself, Derrida asks for each ethical decision to be likewise treated as im-possible.

Narrative syncope, therefore, becomes ethically charged in the uncertainty between similarity and difference, inscription and event. For example, the justification for the Traveller’s violence against the Morlocks seems to be their cannibalism, but if both the Traveller and the Morlocks are posthuman forms of life, then putting the slightest amount of pressure on this explanation causes the gap of uncertainty to appear. The Traveller’s nervous system and brain seem to produce this insight, working unconsciously to put the various obscure aspects of the future into a plausible narrative,

¹⁴¹ Wolfe draws on Derrida to argue that we only know what mortality is like through the other, “and for that [we] are held hostage (to use Levinas’s term) in unappeasable ethical debt to the other” (84). For another discussion of Derrida’s “hyperbolic ethics” in relation to the animal, see Kelly Oliver.

¹⁴² Wolfe writes, “What this means for bioethics in the pragmatic sense is that Derrida is of little use in enabling us to formulate new guidelines about particular surgical or experimental procedures that we could then generalize on behalf of more progressive policies. But he is of immense use in forcing us to live with the fact that no matter how such policies are drawn, the distinction between human and animal should be of no use in drawing them” (98).

while the “clues” meant to provide evidence of Morlock predation are continually only barely narratable.¹⁴³ For example, the Traveller only knows that the Eloi express something like fear or aversion in the dark and around the Morlock wells; he “fancied” he saw the Morlocks “carrying some dark body” (105); Weena gives a “shiver” when asked about the Underworld, which the Traveller interprets as signs that she finds “the topic unendurable” (112); and the red joint conjures a “vague sense of something familiar” (120). Hovanec has referred to this as a narrative technique called “delayed decoding” after theorist of the novel Ian Watt, exemplifying modernist aesthetics as “a style that produces epistemological uncertainty, predicated on the failure of the senses to produce stable empirical knowledge” (464). If the Traveller’s body is an information system, it is not a truth-telling device. What Hovanec has defined in Wells’s novel as the “hazy aesthetic” of modernism is in fact the syncopation of an im-possible future, and that future’s resistance to categorization is open to the other. The future’s uncertainties are moments of not knowing the other while recognizing ontological similitude and vulnerability. Recognizing and attending to that uncertainty is ethical.

The Traveller continues to narrate an uncertain history and his own uncertain place within it as he journeys to the Palace of Green Porcelain with an Eloi companion, Weena, to protect and arm himself against the Morlocks. The Palace, a ruined museum filled with decaying artifacts, becomes a site that continues to challenge both the Traveller’s species superiority and his right to enact violence on the Morlocks. On the exterior of the museum is an inscription, but since it is written in “some unknown character,” neither Weena nor the Traveller can read it, depriving them both of the human attribute of linguistic mastery (127). This is repeated in the library of the museum, full of books that have “long since dropped to pieces,” while “every semblance of print had left them” (131). The Traveller is unable to access language and history to maintain his superiority over the Eloi and Morlocks. This is also the case in relation to the technology of machinery. In the Palace, the Traveller finds “huge bulks of big machines” and feels in his element as he has a “certain weakness for mechanism” (129). Moreover, if the

¹⁴³ See Michael Parrish Lee for a reading of cannibalism in the novel that connects knowledge with physical consumption.

Traveller wants to “linger among” the machines (129), he is precisely like the Morlocks, who, he discovers, have an entrance to the Underworld through the Palace. The Traveller has no idea what the machines are for, and here, too, the supplements usually at his disposal fail him, believing that if he could only “solve their puzzles” he would have “powers that might be of use against the Morlocks” (129).

Instead, the Traveller resorts to the technology of weaponry, refashioning a lever from one of the machines into a mace “for any Morlock skull I might encounter,” remarking that he “longed very much to kill a Morlock or so” while recognizing that it is “very inhuman, you may think, to want to go killing one’s own descendants!” (130). The status of the Morlocks and the Traveller are continually slipping here, as he claims at first that he is justified in killing Morlocks because it is “impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things” and that only his “disinclination to leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard” (130). In the moment of weapon-creating, which should be an affirmation of humanness, the Time Traveller admits killing Morlocks—whom he recognizes as human—would make him inhuman. Meanwhile, the language with which he describes such killing shifts between the animal lust for blood and the human transgression of law: if it is the Morlocks’ inhumanity that justifies his “thirst for murder” (130), “murder” also implies that Morlocks possess the status of subjects. Finally, this moment seems to echo an earlier one when the Eloi “fail to understand” and respond to the Traveller’s attempts to recover his machine, and he “had the hardest task in the world to keep [his] hands off their pretty laughing faces” (97). In this instance, the Traveller identifies this desire for violence as “a foolish impulse” prompted by “the devil begotten of fear and blind anger” that is “eager to take advantage of [his] perplexity” (97). Like a programmed machine, the Traveller describes a tendency towards violence when frustrated or confused, a tendency that does not quite belong to him but, like his thoughts and feelings, arrives from some external source.

More exciting than the lever is the box of matches that the Traveller finds, ostensibly because the Morlocks are frightened of them, but also, I argue, because

matches are a Promethean supplement that distinguishes humans from animals. He almost immediately puts these matches to use as he and Weena journey to recover the time machine and return to nineteenth-century London. Before crossing a forest, he lights a fire, noting Weena's joyful interest, a contrast to Morlock fear but nonetheless still (to the Traveller) evidence of an absence of knowledge about fire.¹⁴⁴ They are soon pursued by Morlocks, and the Traveller is delighted that the fire he has set seems to be spreading (135). As the Morlocks approach, and as the Traveller uses matches and his fist to hold them off, Weena faints. Unable to tell if she is alive or dead, the Traveller experiences another instance of narrative syncope, losing both time, his new campfire, and his matches as he unexpectedly falls asleep:

I felt very weary after my exertion, and sat down. The wood, too, was full of a slumbrous murmur that I did not understand. I seemed just to nod and open my eyes. But all was dark, and the Morlocks had their hands upon me. Flinging off their clinging fingers I hastily felt in my pocket for the match-box, and—it had gone! Then they gripped and closed with me again. In a moment I knew what had happened. I had slept, and my fire had gone out. (137)

The Traveller needs more time to process this scene's full array of sensory experiences, including his own experience of consciousness, than he has. This lag in processing time produces a syncope in the Traveller's autobiography, as time disappears in a nod. The environment shifts radically from one sentence to the next—there is a fire and matches and then suddenly there is not and the Morlocks are close. The Traveller simply cannot properly narrate a story from which he has been absent and he cannot narrate a consciousness that is not under his control. This is not the only time, of course, that he has “dozed” unexpectedly, making him similar to Weena in not just his fainting spell but in the fact that he seems as “easily fatigued” as the Eloi. Moreover, in each case it seems as though sleep overtakes him, creating a syncope of consciousness (124, 142).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ For the relationship of fire-making to creativity and the values of imperialism, see Teresa Jamieson (89). While the Traveller indeed refers here to fire-making as “art” (135), I turn here to the way in which this art is meant to guarantee a greater human power, and not solely an imperialist one.

¹⁴⁵ Elisha Cohn writes about the suspensive narrative qualities of sleep in George Meredith's works, arguing that they offer an alternative to “excessive attentiveness” (28).

After this syncope and without matches, the Traveller describes his defence against the Morlocks. For their part, the Underworlders pull him down, and seem to climb on top of him, with their “little teeth nipping at [his] neck” (137). The Traveller’s response to the Morlocks, however, is as disproportionate as Hurley has called his feelings; he takes pleasure in killing, as he describes the “succulent giving of flesh and bone under [his] blows” (137). The Morlocks become blinded by the light of the rapidly spreading fire, yet the Traveller continues his “furious” killing and crippling (138). He claims this is because he does not realize their blindness, but he has already described them as disoriented, “blundering hither and thither against each other” (138). His other excuse for viciously attacking the helpless blunderers is his “frenzy of fear” and the “quivering horror” they provoke in him (138, 139). The Traveller uses the automaticity of his body as justification for his violence, echoing an earlier interpretation of continued Morlock servitude to the Eloi: “they did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or *as a man enjoys killing animals in sport*: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism” (120, my emphasis). Power, the Traveller suggests, is inscribed on his body.

However, this power is still synocopated by the recognition of shared vulnerability and mortality that Derrida and Wolfe have described, through both biological mortality and subjection to the technology of language. The Traveller’s collapse makes his body vulnerable and disposable, alike to Weena, who has shivered and fainted in her own syncope and whose body he will never recover, and to the Morlocks, whom he momentarily casts as possibly afraid in the face of his violence (137).¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the Morlocks make “uncanny noises” in the face of the fire the Traveller has set, an almost-speech that mirrors the Traveller’s own screaming through this “nightmare” time (139). As if to cement this similarity in mortality and technicity, the Traveller theorizes one final time on the relationship between the Morlocks and Eloi by casting the Morlocks as

¹⁴⁶ Derrida writes: “‘Can they suffer?’ asks Bentham, simply yet so profoundly. Once its protocol is established, the form of this question changes everything. It no longer simply concerns the *logos*, having it or not, nor does it concern, more radically, a *dynamis* or *hexis*, this having or manner of being, this *habitus* that one calls a faculty or ‘capability,’ this can-have or the power one possesses (as in the power to reason, to speak, and everything that that implies). The question is disturbed by a certain *passivity*” (*The Animal* 27).

technical beings in both their biology and their tool use. He imagines that evolution might lead to a kind of perfect, if intellectually boring, society, where “an animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless” (141). He then supposes that for some reason a shortage in food supply advantaged the Morlocks because they were tool-users:

The Underworld being in contact with machinery, which, however perfect, still needs some little thought outside habit, had probably retained perforce rather more initiative, if less of every other human character, than the Upper. (142)

The Traveller’s dismissal of the “other” human characteristics that no longer belong to the Morlocks rings hollow, as he makes a final attempt at producing a historical memory that casts himself as the being with more human character.

4.4. Posthuman Narrative Technologies

After the Traveller unfruitfully searches for Weena and the blaze he has set begins to die out, he continues on his way to recover the machine. When he finds it, he again repeats his desire for revenge, lamenting that he has no need of his iron bar to inflict violence during the machine’s recovery (143). He does, however, get his wish in butting heads with one of a group of curious Morlocks, whose only crime when they come upon the Traveller seems to be touching him. With the Morlock dispatched, the Traveller escapes, reminding his audience of the narrative syncope of time travel: “I have already told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling... For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went” (144). As he journeys millions of years farther into the future, the sun grows red, forms of life become tentacular and monstrous, and the air turns cold, thin, and hard to breathe. As the Traveller brings the machine to a stop “to see if any traces of animal-life remained” (147), the combination of horror and lack of oxygen makes him physically ill, as he “shivered, and a deadly nausea seized [him]” (148). Feeling “giddy” he gets off the time machine, but, “sick and confused,” the sight of a round, tentacled life-form “hopping fitfully about” brings on another syncope: “Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon

the saddle” (148). That fainting eventually overtakes him is implied in the next chapter: “So I came back. For a long time I must have been insensible upon the machine” (149).

This scene repeats aspects of the first two types of syncope I have described in this chapter: the interruption of subjectivity by the machine (and the machine-like body) and by an ontological identification with an uncanny form of future life.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, like the Traveller’s swoon after visiting the Underworld, this syncopation of the body also becomes subsumed into the form the novel. The actual nonconsciousness of the Traveller occurs—or disappears—in the break between chapters, suggesting that the very art of autobiography itself holds space for the mechanical or automatic. This final section uses the syncope that occurs as the Traveller journeys millions of years into the future to consider the form of the narrative more broadly and what is political about this aesthetic form, bringing together some strands regarding memory as prosthesis and the ethical uncertainty of narrative.

Since *The Time Machine* deals explicitly with the subject of human evolution, scholars have been particularly interested in the way Wells’s novel incorporates what David Shackleton calls inhuman time, or time that exceeds the scale of human life or understanding, through its narrative. Scholars generally fall into one of two camps regarding time travel and evolution: the first sees Wells creating a linear narrative about evolution, and the second sees him fragmenting linear narrative to complicate evolutionary time.¹⁴⁸ Shackleton and Larry W. Caldwell both fall into the second camp,

¹⁴⁷ Michael Sayeau also supposes that it is the “the uncanny horror of this world” that “overwhelms him,” when “he feels he is about to faint, and leaps into the time machine...” (143).

¹⁴⁸ Link falls in the first camp, arguing that the time machine is a “conceptual device” that “allows its inventor to construct a story of humankind by organizing evolution into a beginning (nineteenth-century society), middle (the degeneration of humankind) and end (the death of life on earth)” (136). Link claims that this sequence produces a warning about human folly (136). He is in the company of Richard Nate, Steven McLean, and William Greenslade, who argue that Wells’s novel is a narrative of degeneration, and Herbert Sussman and Michael Sayeau, who find the “evolutionary catastrophe” (Sayeau 130) of *The Time Machine*’s future is a critique of industrial progress. Scholars who have investigated the novel’s subversions of narrative temporality include Gomel, as I have noted, who explores the way the contingency of evolutionary temporality is embedded within the deterministic narrative temporality of time travel. While her argument is that the two exist in tension with each other, she does suggest that the narrative form ultimately privileges “a design of history” (“Shapes” 344). Gomel repeats and expands this reading in the chapter “The Time Machines: H. G. Wells and the Invention of Postmodernity” to include three chronotopes: “the time-travel loop, evolutionary contingency and the apocalyptic intoxication of the End Times” (47). In this case, Gomel suggests that these temporalities form the basis for postmodern science

and offer particularly prescient arguments in relation to the ability of the Time Traveller to narrate his own story, his autobiography. These scholars frame the temporal order of narrative as something humans need, as “essentially consolatory,” as Caldwell puts it (133). Yet the Traveller’s narrative is not an ordering of events meant only to make sense out of evolutionary or geological history; rather, the narrative also seeks to order the events of the Travellers’ life and his own history, which includes the history of humans up until 802,701. This attempt at narration can be illuminated by Stiegler’s thought in two ways: the first is that individual human memory is also made up of what is passed down culturally, epigenetically—something the Traveller lacks once he speeds through time. As Mark Hansen summarizes Stiegler’s theory of memory technologies, “It is only because a subject has the capacity to assume a collective past that has not been lived by it that it can assume and re-present its own past (secondary retention or remembrance)” (596). The second is that consciousness as temporality or duration is only produced by forms of recorded memory, or temporal objects. To draw on Hansen’s summary of Steigler again, this means that primary retention, the act of consciously experiencing and retaining an event, “is not only thoroughly contaminated with the other forms of memory but is in fact conditioned by them” (597). This is demonstrated in the novel through the framing structure of the narrative, the conceit of which is that the Traveller has returned from the future and is now recounting his story orally to the frame narrator in a present which is actually three years later.¹⁴⁹ The frame narrative thus repeats the grammar of impossible temporality contained within the time travel narrative itself, with the added suggestion that what ought to be the most authentic, transparent, original expression of memory is equivalent to the playing of a record. Further, what the frame narrator asks the

fiction narratives. Charles Tung similarly claims that the multiple temporalities of the novel, including “Darwinian time” (104), critique the idea of a singular, “imperial and commercial” modern temporality (96). Holly Norman argues that Wells’s subversion of linear temporality works to synthesize evolutionary and biblical time, while Larry W. Caldwell argues that *The Time Machine*’s impossible linearity reveals the constructed nature of all narrative, including “master narratives” like evolution (132). For his part, Shackleton suggests that “through its resistance to narrative organization, the geological time of *The Time Machine* remains inhuman,” challenging Frank Kermode and Paul Ricoeur’s arguments that “narrative humanizes time” (852). Nicholas Ruddick, too, connects the novel with a geological time beyond human comprehension, but argues that Wells invokes it in order to return to what he calls the “topicality and temporality” of 1894.

¹⁴⁹ See Heidi Pennington on the suspension of readerly disbelief for failures of memory in fictional autobiographies.

reader to believe is impossible—that he has simply recorded exactly an incredibly long speech delivered by the Time Traveller. Narrative in both the frame narrator’s and the Traveller’s case functions like a machine, speech and memory like a recording device.

The mechanistic or automatic quality of the Traveller’s autobiographical narrative appears in the multiple failures of memory that reveal the narrative to be syncopated in its form as well as its content. That is, the Traveller’s story does not just contain suspensions of consciousness at the level of the affective body, but also at the level of memory.¹⁵⁰ For example, the Traveller tries again and again to correctly narrate the temporal progression of his descendants, “watchful for every impression that could possibly help to explain the condition of ruinous splendor in which I found the world” (87). Impressions, however, are not something one can have mastery over or absolute knowledge about, as the Traveller’s own earlier “series of impressions” suggest. Nonetheless, he first imagines that a shift in British political economy to Communism and lives of “ease and security” would explain the landscape and the gentle androgyny of the Eloi (88). While he is at pains to affirm to his audience that his suspicions about the precocity of Eloi children are correct (88), he begins a lengthy discourse on the progress of society by saying that he “had got only a half truth—or only a glimpse of one facet of the truth” (90), and closes his explanation of humankind’s “perfect conquest of nature” to admit that his explanation was simple and “plausible enough—as most wrong theories are!” (92). I have already discussed the ethical consequences of the Traveller’s belief that the Morlocks are cannibalizing the Eloi. In addition, though, the inability of the Traveller to narrate an epigenetic history for himself suggests that he is alike to both the Eloi and the Morlocks in this way, too, as their lack of history is evidenced by the decay of books and inscriptions in the Palace of Green Porcelain (131).

However, the failures of the Traveller’s memory also seem to guarantee his unique humanness as well as undercut it. That is, the repetitive programmability of memory guarantees the unique singularity of the event precisely where it breaks down. For example, when the Traveller is in the Morlockian Underworld, he laments,

¹⁵⁰ For Jill Matus, failures of memory due to shock in Victorian literature point to the way the body processes trauma but they are not, for her, challenges to the humanness of the narrator.

“Necessarily my memory is vague” (116). This failure of memory is accompanied by a lack of other prosthetic implements—or what the Traveller calls here “appliances,” which he expected to find in the future; he is disappointed to find he remains “without arms, without medicine, without anything to smoke [...]—even without enough matches,” adding to this list the recording technology of the camera as he despairs, “If only I had thought of a Kodak! I could have flashed that glimpse of the Underworld in a second, and examined it at leisure” (117). This desire seems to foreshadow Stiegler’s point since the Traveller’s telling of this story—as a story—is as much a photograph as anything else, a narrative technology that infinitely repeats the event of the Underworld each time it is told, or read, or heard. The Traveller needs a camera at the very point that his memory functions as one, but only as narrative. That is, memory is a prosthetic technology that humans need to supplement forgetfulness.

Again, when the Traveller recounts his and Weena’s exploration of the Palace of Green Porcelain, he explicitly denies his ability to create temporal order in his narrative: “I cannot tell you all the story of that long afternoon,” he explains, “It would require a great effort of memory to recall my long explorations in at all the proper order” (132). Instead, the Traveller offers an a-temporal list of things he remembers doing, including writing his “name upon the nose of a steatite monster” (132). We might call this list a syncopation—I remember this, and this, and this, in no particular order—that nonetheless produces a rhythmic form that expresses the very human forgetfulness of the Traveller. The technology of memory is underscored when the Traveller writes his name, which is never revealed to the reader. The nameless Traveller is not a human but a mechanical recording device, that nonetheless writes his human name as though he is programmed to do so, “yielding to an irresistible impulse” (132). In fact, naming itself is a prosthetic technology, a humanizing of the otherwise inhuman machine. Again, after the Traveller’s return, the time machine, the technology which allows the production of the entire narrative, is described by the Traveller as a prosthesis that supplements his own forgetfulness: “This room,” he tells his audience, “and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Machine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is a dream...” (152). Human life, the Traveller suggests (anticipating Stiegler) is forgetfulness, and only technology can

produce it; “the pursuit of life by means other than life” (Stiegler 17). If recording the end of time is radically inhuman, the Traveller reveals himself to be most human in the way he immediately begins to forget it.

As I have already noted, the narrative incorporates the physiological syncope of fainting by subsuming the gap in consciousness as the material break of the chapter form. This occurs following the Traveller’s swoons after visiting the Morlocks underground and after seeing the evolved life forms of extreme futurity. These instances of syncope are automatic in two senses: in the first, they are the result of the automatic (or non-agential) functioning of physiology, and in the second, they are automatic because they repeat the programmed, or formulaic, structure of the novel. Yet, as with the affectively automatic and still evental or unique experience of the individual human, the autobiography of the Traveller is also unique, a description of an unrepeatable event, the event that makes up his memory.

The human or evental character of the Traveller’s memory—its singularity or uniqueness—is also repeated through the syncopation of its narrative form in two editorial interruptions to the text. In the first, the Traveller is reflecting on the possible evolution of the Morlock-Eloi relationship following his visit to the Underworld. As he is describing the way Weena, who is unfamiliar with Victorian clothing, places flowers in his pocket, the frame narrator interrupts to tell us that “*the Time Traveller paused, put his hand into his pocket, and silently placed two withered flowers, not unlike very large white mallows, upon the little table. Then he resumed his narrative*” (121, original emphasis). The interruption is formally different than the rest of the text; although the punctuation of the Traveller’s multi-chapter speech features quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph to indicate the continued speech, those marks seem to become naturalized as the speech takes the form of a continuous narrative. This break, however, is italicized, despite the fact that no other part of the frame narrator’s writing is, syncopating the narrative to both break and suture together its recording. Further, although the flowers may have ostensibly come from anywhere, their dramatic placing on the table serves as a kind of material proof of the Traveller’s narrative. In much the same way that the chapter

break aestheticizes the nonconscious, a-temporal, and materialist threat to subjectivity, the Traveller's narrative depends on its syncopation or break for its very authenticity.

In the second instance, the Traveller's narrative contains a footnote. As he walks through the Palace of Green Porcelain searching for weapons, he notices that the floor is sloping towards the entrance of the Morlock underworld. The original text contains an editorial clarification: "It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope, but that the museum was built into the side of a hill. – ED" (129). Like the frame narrator's interruption, this footnote draws attention to the narrative as a narrative, breaking its flow by introducing a history of production. The footnote otherwise serves no particular purpose in terms of the narrative; it makes no difference at all whether the floor slopes or not. Moreover, it is unaccountable and undecidable—what editor is this meant to be? Wells? The narrator? The narrator's publisher? Wells's publisher? The footnote activates the formalism of textuality itself, suggesting the repetitive and inscriptive forms of editing and publication, while simultaneously enacting this textuality as a singular event—*this* narrative moment, *this* question of architecture, *this* editor.

The frame narrative of *The Time Machine* suggests that the Time Traveller's entire journey is a syncope, a disappearance of himself from the frame narrative and then a breathless return to it. Catherine Clément describes the break in consciousness during a fainting spell in terms of space as well as time: "When she comes to, her first words will be 'Where am I?'... The real question would be, rather, 'Where was I?'" (1). Of course, unlike the crowd gathered around Clément's imaginary swooning subject, everyone is desperate for the Time Traveller to narrate his absence, even offering a "shilling a line for a verbatim note" (Wells 73). Clément claims that syncope is necessary for the artist's creative capacity: "the artist's reality demands crossing through an essential syncope, a veritable mental collapse, resulting in new work... This eclipse that fractures consciousness is the very prerequisite for the creative act" (236). However, the syncope of the Time Traveller as an aesthete, as Hovanec calls him (475), also leads us to an ethical challenge in the frame narrative. Instead of accepting the determinism of the Traveller's narrative, the frame narrator leaves the future "black and blank," suggesting only that the white flowers produced by the Time Traveller mid-tale confirm that the

future will contain human gratitude and tenderness (Wells 155-156).¹⁵¹ The frame narrator's reading of these flowers as indicators of compassion reproduces a humanist form of sympathy, but an alternate reading would recognize that they remain as unaccountable as the Traveller's narrative. "It's a curious thing," the Medical Man at the Time Traveller's dinner party says, "but I certainly don't know the natural order of these flowers" (152).

As the final image of the text, these flowers reproduce the same qualities of syncope that require ethical attention: they may be aesthetic objects, but they are also out-of-time, silent, uncertain, and uncanny forms of life. They remind us that attending to the uncertainty of the text, in all its "thick description," is itself an ethical act. Simon Critchley insists that deconstructive reading is an ethical demand (Critchley 1): attending to those dependent and slippery categories of difference, knowing that any ethical decision involves an ordeal of the undecidable that cannot be resolved (Derrida "Force" 24). The very form of the Traveller's autobiography, then, opens itself up to ethical possibility, as the Traveller tries again and again to narrate history, explicit about his uncertainty and attentive to alternate possibilities. While this is ultimately an ethical failure on the part of the Traveller in the blithe misrecognition of himself as the true historical form of the human—one who need not bother to let the rest of the Eloi know about the death of Weena since he sees her as bare life—he also supplies the unending slippages between human-animal-machine in moments of narrative syncope. These ontological uncertainties provide opportunities for readerly attention. Critchley reminds us that Derrida has said that deconstruction itself is ethical since it is an "openness towards the other" (in Critchley 28).

In *Without Alibi*, Derrida uses the example of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's autobiographical *Confessions* in order to show how what is life-changing and special about Rousseau's confession is also a mechanical or automatic production. While the Traveller's first-person narrative is not a confessional autobiography, the frame through which Derrida proceeds can help us to think through the significance of the Traveller's

¹⁵¹ Caldwell argues that the narrator's interpretation of these flowers, which have been given to the Traveller in a "typically vapid Eloi game," is a "structured misreading" (133).

account of himself. As Derrida insists that philosophy begin to think together “an unheard-of conceptual form,” “the new figure of an event-machine,” he also suggests that “this thinking could belong only to the future—and even that it makes the future possible” (73). In the time travel narrative, the Traveller loses those aspects of subjectivity that make him seem transcendently and uniquely human; his response is both a violence and a narrative resistance that attempts to affirm his human difference from these im-possible future forms of life. Yet, his autobiography itself reveals the im-possible form of his own subjectivity, a singular, unique event that is nevertheless underwritten by the most mechanical, automaton-like behaviour. To be able to recognize this im-possible conceptual form—that it is the machine, the recording-device that allows the human to be autobiographical—suggests the political significance of the frame narrative: that another future is possible, one in which humans confront not the difference between humans and animals or humans and machines but the multiplicity of differences between forms of human-animal-machine life.

4.5. Conclusion

If some of Wells’s literary corpus represents an uncertainty about the guaranteed species status of humans in relation to animals, later in life he became interested in maintaining a hierarchy within the category of the human. As scholars like Greenberg and Hovanec note, the “Wells of the twentieth century was a eugenicist, an advocate of scientific planning, and a writer of technoutopias [...], a figure bearing little resemblance to the skeptical author of *The Time Machine*” (Hovanec 479). As Hovanec suggests here, eugenicism—the desire to modify and improve the human race through selective reproductive practices—is understood to be a development in Wells’s thought after the publication of *The Time Machine*. Parrinder argues that Wells’s evolutionary narrative cannot be a form of eugenicist thought because cultural changes could not span such a vast temporal distance (39). However, I want to suggest that if we read *The Time Machine* forward into Wells’s belief that the future belongs to “the fit, the bounded, the healthy individual” (Diaz 23), we can see how narrative syncope may help us disrupt the eugenicist possibility of a masculinist, imperialist, white supremacist future.

In contrast to Parrinder, I believe that the novel could be read as a cautionary tale that suggests that social engineering might protect against a future of Eloian decadence and Morlockian cannibalism. However, the figure that ought to represent the fit, bounded, healthy individual is the Victorian man who is supposedly constituted differently to protect himself against the contagion of the disgusting Morlocks and to survive as the fittest. Yet this very man is vulnerable to syncope, to the vagaries of the body and its automatisms. This embodied vulnerability also resists the kind of transcendence that some posthumanist theories suggest may be possible as man merges with machine. *The Time Machine* therefore offers insight into the impossibility of classifying anyone as the fittest form of the (post)human, even if, for the Traveller, it is easier to close one's eyes in a swoon than to recognize this.

Chapter 5. Feeling Other(s): *Dracula* and the Transfusion of Affect

In a scene that occurs early in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Jonathan Harker describes an encounter with three vampire women.¹⁵² After falling asleep in a room the Count has forbidden him to enter, he awakes to their approach, and, in a dreamlike state, he describes how they make him "uneasy," with "some longing and at the same time some deadly fear" (42). As Harker feigns sleep, suspended in this mixture of terror and arousal, one woman kneels over him and brings her mouth to his neck, making his skin "tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer" (42-3). The vampire pauses, pressing her teeth to his neck, but while Harker waits in eager anticipation, another feeling intrudes upon his desire, "another sensation" that "swept through [him] as quick as lightning" (43). "I was conscious of the presence of the Count," Harker writes, "and of his being as if lapped in a storm of fury" (43). As Harker's eyes open "involuntarily," he witnesses Dracula berating and banishing the women before they fade through the window into the night. Finally overwhelmed by the intensity and strangeness of this encounter, Harker describes his own disappearance in the final line of the chapter: "Then the horror overcame me, and I sank down unconscious" (44).

Harker's description of his skin's pre-contact knowledge of another body and his sudden embodied reception of the Count's emotional state suggests the transmission of affect—the movement of feeling between bodies. Moreover, Harker's faint emphasizes the physiological, nonconscious aspect of affective transmission, as the reaction of his body supersedes his consciousness in a moment of narrative syncope. In *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker both lose consciousness when they are bitten by the vampire, but Jonathan's body is powerfully affected by the Count even without that puncturing bite. Jonathan's experience of syncope, read next to the many instances of fainting that

¹⁵² An earlier version of this chapter appeared as "Feeling Other(s): *Dracula* and the Ethics of Unmanageable Affect" in *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice: A Feel for the Text*. Adapted by permission from Springer Nature: Palgrave Macmillan, *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice: A Feel for the Text*, edited by Stephen Ahern, 2019.

occur throughout the novel, suggests that affect in this novel is a physiological response to the powerful, material presence of otherness. The vampire embodies this otherness, but, as both syncope broadly and Jonathan's encounter specifically show, affect is also the otherness or alterity of the body. The vampire hunters experience syncope—they are touched by alterity—both from the bite of the vampire and from simply being alive and in the world. Therefore, the vampire activates and represents not just the alterity of a world full of other bodies, species, cultures, objects, and feelings but the location of these alterities in the subject's own body.

As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine*, bodies in *Dracula* are subject to their nervous systems and behave automatically. Stoker references automatism when he writes about unconscious cerebration (the brain's ability to figure out a problem below the level of consciousness) (69, 237) and mentions by name the physiologists Jean-Martin Charcot, John Scott Burdon-Sanderson, and David Ferrier. Anne Stiles, too, notes Stoker's references to these physiologists and argues that the vampire is a "stand-in for localizationists and automatists who argued that we were no more than the sum of our brain functions," implying that "neurologists are monsters, and they create soulless monstrosities" (55). Similarly, Nancy Armstrong has argued for the otherness of vampiric desire, which causes the vampire's victims to "automatically repeat its behaviour" (122). For David Glover, John Greenway, and Diane Long Hoeveler, unconscious cerebration and automatism represent an otherness or animality that lurks beneath consciousness and agency. For these scholars, we might say that vampiric automatism represents the fear of the animal within. My analysis of narrative syncope incorporates each of these arguments to a degree—that vampiric otherness is frightening or threatening, that humans are not in control of their behaviour, and that nineteenth-century physiological psychology describes an alienated and animal source of selfhood—to suggest the ways in which the affective body is already other to the subject.

Being affected means being touched by otherness, and therefore, alterity is a necessary part of selfhood. For the humans of *Dracula*, the unknown other exists within their very bodies, and without it, they could not be subjects. On one hand, that unknown is found in the autonomous nervous systems, including the circulatory system—a strange

part of every self that is nonsubjective but makes subjectivity possible. On the other hand, the vampire is an exemplary external body that not only affects the nervous and circulatory system, but also represents the unknown world that is constantly touching and affecting the bodies within it. The intrusion of that world is also necessary to subjectivity. In *Dracula*, as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine*, affect need not be read as communicative, influential, or pathological, as scholars like Laura Otis, Jill Galvan, Stephanie Moss, and William Hughes have argued.¹⁵³ Instead, affect is the touch of alterity—what theorists call heteroaffection—which undoes the very notion of internal and external, self and other. That is, affect creates an uncertainty between the subject (or the self) and the other, because the otherness (or alterity) of affect is necessary to subjectivity and selfhood.

As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine*, the affective uncertainty between self and other opens bodies and texts to ethical readings. While *The Picture of Dorian Gray* explores the impossible ethics of responsibility, *Dracula*'s instances of narrative syncope connect an ethics of uncertainty similar to *The Time Machine*'s with an ethics of generosity. We owe our very affective being to otherness—both the otherness of our own autonomous, automatic, affective systems, and the others of the world who touch us. Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Derrida, and Catherine Malabou (“Go”) all call the gift of affective alterity a generosity of being. There is a dual movement to this generosity: one aspect is that true giving or generosity comes from the other of the body, non-subjectivity or nonconsciousness; the other aspect is that affect is the gift of being itself. Following Malabou's connection of this generosity with the neuroscience of affect, I argue that in *Dracula*, syncope and the nonconscious, automatist, affective body create the possibility for epistemological uncertainty and absolute generosity.

Automatic, affective responses in the novel—instances of narrative syncope—create uncertainty about the differences between humans and vampires, undermining the

¹⁵³ Laura Otis argues that the affective nervous systems of both the vampire and his hunters form communication networks, while Jill Galvan argues that the vampire communicates with automatist bodies through hypnotism. For their part, William Hughes and Stephanie Moss claim that the automatisms or affective performances in the text are evidence of hysteria.

certainty that the vampire ought to be destroyed. Many scholars read *Dracula*'s trajectory as a stamping out of dangerous and contagious alterity, as in Stephen Arata's reading that *Dracula*'s threat is that of reverse colonization (*Occidental*) or Roberto Esposito's claim that *Dracula* spreads degeneration through blood.¹⁵⁴ However, just as many have pointed out that the vampire and his human hunters are neither morally nor behaviourally much different, as in Carol Senf's suggestion that the supposed goodness of the vampire hunters resembles the alleged evil of the vampire ("Unseen").¹⁵⁵ However, moments of affective uncertainty, or narrative syncope, show how the unknown similarities and differences between human and vampire can be found *at the very level of being*. Jacques Derrida would call these unknown similarities and differences incalculable or undecidable, and therefore a necessary aspect of any ethical decision. Ethical behaviour in the novel is not underwritten by good versus evil but by the tension between affective intimacy and alterity.

Affective alterity comprises the realm of ethics because bodies need to be affected by otherness in order to be subjects and in order to respond to others. *Dracula* represents this affective alterity as a dangerous gift received by bodies that are ethically open to others. Openness towards the blood-sucking Count offers one version of Derrida's impossible ethics by suggesting that an openness towards others might include the body. As the novel represents affected bodies in their automatist responses and reflexes, it transforms generosity from something that a subject chooses into something automatic and unthinking. Few scholars have located ethics in the affective alterity represented by the vampire; one exception is Jamil Khader, who reads *Dracula* through trauma theory to suggest that an ethics of responsibility emerges in the novel through the identification of

¹⁵⁴ Charles Blinderman writes that the Count is both a representative of physiological psychology and a "parasitic degenerate" (428), and John Glendening argues that the vampire is "modernity's devolutionary nightmare" (115). Scholars like Erik Butler and Nancy Armstrong also see *Dracula*'s influence as a reproductive threat.

¹⁵⁵ However, the seemingly happy ending of the novel does not quite eliminate the threat of the vampire, if indeed he was ever a threat at all. Not only do Nicholas Daly, Arata (*Occidental*), and Erik Butler note that the novel ends with the birth of a son to Jonathan who may likely be a vampire himself, but the idea that hunters are morally or behaviourally different from *Dracula* is challenged by many scholars along with Senf, including those who liken *Dracula* to a threat, like Arata (*Occidental*), Erik Butler, Glendening, and Otis.

the self with the other.¹⁵⁶ While Khader focuses on witnessing, I turn instead to affect, locating ethics in the uncertainty and generosity of affect's alterity. In *Dracula*, scenes of affective encounter and alterity are also scenes of ethical plenitude.

An ethics of uncertainty and generosity also emerges in the form of the novel's narrative syncopation, a mirror for the moments of syncope that characters experience. Many forms of writing in the text are autobiographical in the sense that characters attempt to write about themselves and their feelings in response to unsettling and disorienting events. These attempts are nonetheless syncopated, subject to gaps and temporal disjunctions. We have seen in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine* that these syncopated narratives are nonhuman forms of writing that give rise to and challenge the human attributes of textuality. Like *The Time Machine*'s frame narrative, *Dracula*'s patchwork form of multiple genres and authors adds another layer to this syncopation. Some scholars have already identified the close relationship between textuality and the body in *Dracula*. Otis suggests that the vampire hunters form a nervous system "of paper and wire" with Mina as its "integrative centre" (200, 198), as writing becomes a substitute for memory that is no better or worse than its physiological counterpart (200-201). While the vampire hunters are connected through blood and media exchanges, their narratives represent their attempts to auto-graph or to write themselves that are disrupted by syncope. Even Otis acknowledges how "noisy, self-propagating, and highly flawed" language is in the novel (246 n.14). Against scholars who argue that alterity emerges through technology or the intrusion of the vampire,¹⁵⁷ I argue that heteroaffection interrupts or syncopates narrative expressions of conscious self-awareness. Narrative syncope does not occur only because Count Dracula shows up—it is *already* the state of the autobiographical human. As in the other novels in this

¹⁵⁶ The other scholars that read a possible ethics in *Dracula* include Otis', who suggests that the networked neurological system of the hunters could be interpreted as a collective good and a weapon against the vampire (although she is not convinced of this reading), and Nancy Armstrong, who claims that the sameness of vampiric desire might lead to a conflict-free utopia.

¹⁵⁷ For example, Friedrich Kittler notes that the novel's narrative takes the form of an information system (and weapon); Brundan argues that *Dracula* locates a power struggle between organic and technological forms of translation; Jennifer Wicke that the narrative can only emerge through mass cultural technological mediation; and Erik Butler that vampirism makes writing impersonal and humans into non-subjects.

dissertation, syncopated bodies and narratives not only undercut human superiority, they offer forms of ethical openness towards others.

Each instance of syncope in *Dracula* develops our understanding of affective alterity and the ethical questions and possibilities that surround it. In the first section, I concentrate on Jonathan's experience of fainting and narrative syncope, comparing it with Lucy's and Mina's swoons at the hands (or fangs) of the vampire to demonstrate how the circulatory system and the narrative are hetero-affective. The second section looks to the wide variety of narrative syncope that occur for both men and women in the novel, exploring the way affective responses complicate gender, prompt unthinking generosity, and reveal that affect itself is a generous gift from the other. In the final section, I look to vampiric touching as an extreme version of dangerous generosity that pushes boundaries and limits to show us the ethics of embodied and textual syncope. In the conclusion, I turn briefly to clinical narratives of neurologically atypical patients, suggesting that *Dracula* might offer an ethical challenge to current medical narrative practices.

5.1. Circulatory Hetero-affectation: Fainting and Narrative

The scene with which I have begun this chapter, Jonathan's encounter with the Count and the women during a state of affective suspension, is exemplary of affective response. Other scholars see this scene as pivotal for its sexual suggestiveness, and they read the affective intensity of the scene as sexual desire between Jonathan, the vampire women, and Dracula. In a well-cited example, Christopher Craft writes that Jonathan is femininely passive as he "awaits a delicious penetration from a woman whose demonism is figured as the power to penetrate," but that this desire is interrupted by the even more transgressive possibility of Jonathan's penetration by Dracula (109-111).¹⁵⁸ However, the

¹⁵⁸ See also Marjorie Howes' repetition of this reading; Stephanie Moss on Jonathan's "harem desires" (140); John Allen Stevenson on the vampire women as representative of a frightening and foreign sexuality (143-145); Dejan Kuzmanovic on the release of Jonathan's repressed desire that will upend his identity before it is again consolidated (416-417); Senf on the scene's representation of the "total irrationality" of sexual desire ("Unseen" 167); Glover on the novel's use of the blonde vampire as an "enemy within" to corrupt Jonathan and "cut him off forever from respectable domesticity" (70); and Hughes' reading that the

critical certainty that *Dracula* is a novel about repressed sexuality is a modern one—early contemporary reviewers of the novel rarely included sexuality in their assessment of its “bad taste” (Hughes, *Reader’s* 85). While I agree with Elizabeth Miller that “it would be folly to deny any erotic potential in *Dracula* (it is, after all, a novel about biting and sucking)” (para. 8),¹⁵⁹ I see it as a critical omission that few scholars have been interested in the final line that breaks the tension of this scene, in which Harker describes his own absence from the narrative as he falls unconscious in a faint.¹⁶⁰ Connecting this loss of consciousness with both the sexual and non-sexual responses of Harker’s receptive body in this scene reveals that the automatic and nonsubjective responsiveness of the body exceeds sexual desire.

That is, Jonathan’s response in this scene is about the pleasure of syncope as much as it is about the pleasure of sex. Writing about Nancy’s work on the gap opened up in autoaffection (the self’s feeling of itself), Derrida explains that Nancy describes “a syncope of contact, a quasi-masturbatory auto-affection,” that “comes down to autoerotism lost in pleasure, sinking in syncopated laughter” (38). These lines, it seems to me, could be equally applicable to Jonathan’s heady recognition that not only does he desire the touch of the women, but he enjoys the feeling of syncope, giving himself over to this moment of self-absence. To lose or let go of oneself can also be sensually pleasurable. For instance Catherine Clément writes of the euphoric pleasures of syncope, including but not limited to orgasm; following her lead, I see sexual desire in *Dracula* as just one example—and not even necessarily the most interesting one—of embodied, nonconscious, and othering feeling.¹⁶¹ As Craft explains, “Harker awaits an erotic

scene “suggests the dissolution of customary and accepted gender boundaries as much as it does the presence of sexual taboos ranging from premarital sexuality to oral-genital contact” (*Reader’s* 48).

¹⁵⁹ Miller offers a rigorous account of the wide variety of sexual readings of *Dracula* available as of her publication in 2006, suggesting that “it is possible to go too far” (para. 8) to contort both readings of the text and its author’s life to fit a narrative of sexuality.

¹⁶⁰ Those who do note it, Katy Brundan and Dejan Kuzmanovic, read this swoon in the framework of Jonathan’s gender and sexuality, here feminized (Kuzmanovic) and homoerotic (Brundan). While Craft does not explicitly mention Jonathan’s syncope, he does note that Jonathan enacts a “swooning desire for an overwhelming penetration,” using fainting metonymically to suggest femininity (109).

¹⁶¹ Clément writes that it “would be easy to collect all the accidents of thought, language, and deed in Freud’s work, and to include syncope with them as a psychosomatic phenomenon, with hysterical origins, rehearsing a forever unknowable primal scene...I do not exclude meeting Freud, even less encountering

fulfillment that entails *both* the dissolution of the boundaries of the self and the thorough subversion of conventional Victorian gender codes” (108, my emphasis). While Craft does not follow up on his remark about the dissolution of the subject’s boundaries, choosing instead to turn the focus of any crisis of identity towards homosexuality, I open this inquiry up towards the feeling of being touched itself—a feeling that is syncopal, that evacuates subjectivity, and that activates the other in the self.

Losing consciousness and being bitten by the vampire both result in a gap in the subject’s self-touching or autoaffection. In her study of brain science in *Dracula*, Stiles has recently noted that Stoker uses the signs of fainting to represent Lucy Westenra’s encounter with the vampire. Rather than a description of “blood, fangs, crucifixes, and other items of vampire iconography,” the vampire’s bite prompts a slow sinking out of consciousness (Stiles 50). Mina records Lucy’s description of her encounter with the vampire as a “vague memory of something long and dark with red eyes” (Stoker 94). Lucy says, “I seemed to be sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears, as I have heard there is to drowning men” as “my soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air” (94). Lucy describes a kind of out-of-body experience, in which she claims to have watched Mina shake her awake before she returns to consciousness (94). However, Stiles is correct to point out that this moment is also one of a loss of consciousness, a loss of individuality, and a loss of “bodily control” (50). Arguing that the vampire represents brain science’s rejection of the soul or free will, Stiles claims that as Lucy is vamped by Dracula, she “becomes a mere body that goes through the motions of survival without the guiding force of a soul or free will” (50). For Stiles, the vampire’s ability to strip a subject of their soul and agency represents the threat of automatism and of physiological psychology’s soullessness (73).¹⁶² However, Jonathan’s encounter with the vampires and his subsequent swoon, along with the rest of

Lacan, but that is not enough—or rather, it is no longer enough for me” (19). In other words, we might say, sex is great, but have you ever been undead?

¹⁶² While Stiles does admit that *Dracula* “cannot entirely reassure us that we are more than the sum of our brain functions” (80), the thrust of her argument is that the novel upholds a “traditional, religious worldview...in which human souls, willpower, and intellect ultimately triumph over vampiric automata” (69). Hoeveler argues similarly that if *Dracula* depicts a brain science of automatism and hypnotism that others the subject via the “reptilian residue at the base of the human brain” (para. 23), it does so firmly through the figure of the vampire.

his initial journal entries, demonstrate how he is subject to the vicissitudes and automatisms of his nervous system without ever having been bitten. The vampire is simply representative of what is already alien and other—what is already vampiric—within humans. If the human body is already like the vampire's, then the body produces an uncertainty over what is particularly human and subjective.

As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine*, we find in *Dracula* a representation of conscious automatism, in characters that are conscious in the sense that they may be aware of what is happening but have no control over it. As I have discussed throughout this dissertation, Thomas Huxley theorized that both humans and animals were conscious automata, sensitive machines whose “affections of their sensory nerves give rise to molecular changes in the brain, which again give rise to, or evolve, the corresponding states of consciousness” (575). For Stiles, the vampires are these automatons, but Jonathan, too, is subject to this automatic action, not only when he faints, but also, for example, when his eyes open “involuntarily.” Furthermore, these automatisms are aligned closely with the circulatory system. Jonathan records that when the first vampire woman leans over him and touches her mouth to his throat, he closed his eyes and “waited—waited with beating heart” (43). As the touch of the other affects him, Jonathan is suddenly aware of a part of his nervous system that normally works unnoticed, the blood pumping from his heart through his veins. Blood is responsive to the other. *Dracula* therefore engages what Kristie Blair has called the Victorian culture of the heart, as it draws on the inseparable materiality and metaphoricity of an organ that many would have understood to be “the most intimate part of an individual yet the most detached, in the sense that its actions cannot necessarily be controlled” (4). As Blair describes it, the heart was already a fraught literary object, suggesting the possibilities of connection and sympathy but also vulnerability and alienation (6-7).

Physiological psychologists also connected syncope with the heart and with blood flow. William Benjamin Carpenter, the physiological psychologist famous for the concept of unconscious cerebration with which Stoker was familiar, categorizes fainting as an affective and involuntary response that can be caused by the circulatory system. In *The Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874), Carpenter describes the ability of emotion to

affect the sympathetic system, claiming that “we continually see the action of the heart quickened by emotional excitement; whilst a violent ‘shock’ to the feelings may seriously reduce it, or may even paralyse it (as in fainting)” (127). According to Carpenter’s theory, fainting is a physiological affective response literally involving the heart. In Jonathan’s case, his circulatory system is affected by the vampire, an affection that will become obvious as blood becomes the central mechanism of the vampire’s touching. That is, blood is implicitly a part of the novel even before it is explicitly so.

Indeed, C. M. Tidy, “[l]ate-Victorian Britain’s leading forensic physician,” connects syncope specifically to the heart (Behlmer 219-220).¹⁶³ While Tidy refers to syncope as a cause of *death* “beginning at the heart,” either by deficiency or blood circulation (250-251), the connection is still relevant. While the causes of death by syncope that Tidy enumerates are largely physiological (like hemorrhages or starvation), he also connects emotional shocks to syncope:

Sudden death from what is called shock (including mental emotion, joy, grief, terror, etc, fatal concussion, blows on the epigastrium, lightning and electricity, and some suddenly fatal forms of apoplexy) is probably the result of syncope. Such causes as those enumerated act through the nervous system, either on the cardiac ganglia of the sympathetic or on some other portions of that system, or upon certain definite tracts in the medulla oblongata or brain. (251)

Tidy explains here that a broad spectrum of shock, including emotional shock, can cause death by acting on the nervous system, stopping the heart.

Another late-Victorian work on forensic pathology also uses syncope to refer to the heart’s inability to circulate blood resulting in losses of consciousness and possible death. David Ferrier is mentioned by name in *Dracula*, a reference Stiles reads as largely negative since Ferrier practiced vivisection on animals to work on brain localization and famously stood trial for it. However, in 1888, Ferrier took over authorship of William A. Guy’s *Principles of Forensic Medicine*, a text written to help medical examiners and doctors in ascertaining death and determining its cause. In the section on “Death from

¹⁶³ For the possibility that Stoker’s novel is a response to what Behlmer calls Victorian moral panic over the possibility of premature burial, see Natalia Wójcicka.

Failure of the Circulation,” Ferrier and Guy write that syncope occurs due to “diminished blood pressure in the cerebral centres” and is closely connected to the “sudden cessation of the heart” (232). The shock that stops the heart is broadly attributed to the nervous system: “[t]he heart may be inhibited temporarily, or finally and for ever, by central nervous influence, as by emotion or blows on the head” (232). Ferrier and Guy’s text does not distinguish between the physiological and the emotional when it comes to the power to affect and even to cause death. Either to the “nervous irritation” of a physical blow or an emotional one, the body is vulnerable to the world, and at any time this world might violently touch the body and cause a loss of consciousness or even death. Like a physical blow to the head, emotion is connected with the circulatory system in such a way that it is powerful enough to arrest the body’s most fundamental and automatic process—its heartbeat.

The idea that emotion affects the heart, even to the point of death, is not necessarily a radical one in the context of Victorian literature. As Dinah Birch notes, “[m]any readers have noticed how often George Eliot’s more emotionally damaged characters die of heart failure” (43). Taking fainting into consideration adds texture to this statement, however, because fainting suggests that just having emotions is already damaging to the heart. Reading Tidy alongside Ferrier and Guy here emphasizes that being affected means being touched, materially. As such, as we see not just in Jonathan’s swoon but throughout the novel, blood is a privileged substance for thinking about the kind of affective alterity that syncope represents.

Two physiological psychologists, William James and Alexander Bain, demonstrate in their work not only Birch’s truism that “[f]eelings run in the blood” (43), but that those feelings are strange and other to the subject. Their psychological examples complement the previous medical ones to offer an important context for *Dracula*: that the source of feeling is located in the body but may be hidden to the self and not coincide with the self. James’s now-famous essay “What is an Emotion?,” published in 1884, was written as a supplement to Ferrier’s work on the localization of mental and physical action in the brain. James had previously engaged in the debate over human automatism, responding to Huxley’s automaton theory by, for the most part, disagreeing with Huxley

and insisting on the importance of choice as indicative of the ethical capacity of humans (“Automata”). In his later attention to emotion, however, James seems to implicitly offer a version of automatic behaviour when he describes the non-cognitive level of physiological response. In this essay, James is keen to show that emotion is embodied, stating that if we subtract physiological response from emotion, we are left with nothing. He notes that the circulation of blood can be measured to indicate an affective state; he refers to the Italian physiologist Angelo Mosso and his plethysmograph, an early blood pressure machine that allowed the Victorians to recognize how varied and nuanced physical expressions of emotion were. James writes that the plethysmograph had “shown that not only the heart, but the entire circulatory system, forms a sort of sounding-board, which every change of our consciousness, however slight, may make reverberate ... That the heart-beats and the rhythm of breathing play a leading part in all emotions whatsoever, is a matter too notorious for proof” (“Emotion” 191-192).¹⁶⁴

James’s mention of the plethysmograph gestures toward a field in Victorian science that was focused on the objective measurement of the body and its capacities, as I discuss in relation to *The Time Machine*. However, James follows this more general point—that the circulatory system is an integral part of the expression of feeling—with an anecdote about his own youthful and mysterious response to the appearance of blood. As proof that emotion is physiological, James offers a discussion of affective states that do not properly correspond to named emotions such as anger or fear. He notes the “cutaneous shiver” we experience when listening to music, the breathless arrest of the heart when caught off-guard, a feeling of “all-overishness” when we watch a friend wander too close to a precipice, and, significantly, his own swoon at the sight of a horse being bled (“Emotion” 196). Speaking in the third person, James insists that nothing in his cognitive knowledge could have produced this response:

He had never heard of the sight of blood producing faintness or sickness, and he had so little repugnance to it, and so little apprehension of any other sort of danger from it, that even at that tender age, as he well remembers,

¹⁶⁴ He continues: “Hardly a sensation comes to us without sending waves of alternate constriction and dilatation down the arteries of our arms. The blood-vessels of the abdomen act reciprocally with those of the more outward parts” (191-192).

he could not help wondering how the mere physical presence of a pailful of crimson fluid could occasion him such formidable bodily effects. (196)

Blood also mysteriously causes fainting in Bain's work on physiological psychology in *The Senses and the Intellect*. Like James, Bain also believed in the "agency of the body" (Dixon 144), and here he seems to suggest that there may be inexplicable social and personal reasons one might faint at the sight of blood. He writes:

There are many of our strong likings on the one hand, and strong antipathies on the other, that come under the class of reflected influences. The sight of blood affects some persons to fainting, which cannot be owing to anything in the mere appearance of it; apart from association, the rich scarlet hue would make this a really agreeable object to the eye. (409)

Bain is ostensibly discussing moral approbation and disapprobation, the moral training of children by the association of actions with feelings of approval or disapproval. His reference to fainting at the sight of blood, however, seems to be only tangentially related to the question of moral aversion. Instead, like James, he seems to be suggesting that the automaticity of the body is also its strange otherness.

Blood may be a privileged subject to demonstrate alterity because of what it represents—the sight of blood is the vision of that which is never seen, the hidden source of the animacy of creaturely life, the interiority of the self suddenly external to the self. To see blood is to be confronted by the bare (or biological) life that makes sovereignty (or subjectivity) possible. Perhaps this is why Jonathan is so suddenly convinced that, following his vampiric encounter and fainting spell, the vampires are "waiting to suck my blood" (44), since that is part of the affective body that they have already been touching.

Brian Massumi's definition of affect is broadly applicable to *Dracula*, as it is to the other novels in this dissertation: a nonconscious intensity that acts at the level of the body, virtually. Massumi's model of affect draws heavily on the work of James, in particular through the idea "that relationality is already in the world and that it registers materially in the activity of the body before it registers consciously" (*Parables* 231). While I will return to Massumi, I want to supplement this model of affect with that of

Catherine Malabou, in order to explore the idea that affect is other to the self.¹⁶⁵ In “Go Wonder: Subjectivity and Affects in Neurobiological Times,” Malabou turns to neurobiology to ask if the autonomy of affect—the physiology of emotion and the processes of the body—“challenges the vision of a self-affecting subjectivity [autoaffection] in favor of an originary deserted subject, a subject that is definitely not present to itself [heteroaffection]” (4).¹⁶⁶ In describing different theories of autoaffection, Malabou draws on some of the same Continental philosophers and neuroscientists that are referred to in this dissertation, like Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Antonio Damasio, and Baruch Spinoza, to describe affect as the feeling of existence or self-difference, and autoaffection as the perception of this feeling.¹⁶⁷ Malabou writes that “the ‘I’ who feels itself is the dominant structure of all affective modification” and “[t]he very structure of subjectivity, within the metaphysical tradition, was one and the same with the structure of autoaffection, that is, as this kind of *self-touching* through which the subject is feeling its singular presence” (6). For theorists who critique the concept, like Derrida and Deleuze, autoaffection implies a subject who exists prior to being affected and becomes present to itself through affect.

Malabou is primarily interested in how brain injuries and pathologies challenge the metaphysical version of subjectivity (autoaffection). For Malabou, the disaffection displayed by neurologically traumatized subjects challenges psychoanalysis and autoaffection because the subject stops feeling things at all, becoming an entirely different person who cannot be healed through therapy and is no longer in touch with their affects. This disaffected, traumatized subject was also of interest to Victorian physiologists such as Huxley, who used the automatic, unfeeling behaviour of brain-injured patients to theorize the essentially automatic nature of human behaviour. As I

¹⁶⁵ That the affective life of the body, or bare life, is the nonsubjective or other part of the self is implicit in Massumi’s work in the sense that the self does not know its own affective responses.

¹⁶⁶ Malabou writes: “The problem is knowing whether emotions and affects are still considered rooted in an originary process of autoaffection of the subject—where the subject has to touch itself in order to be moved or touched by objects—or if the study of the emotional brain precisely challenges the vision of a self-affecting subjectivity in favor of an originary deserted subject, a subject that is definitely not present to itself” (“Go” 4).

¹⁶⁷ While Malabou does not draw on Massumi, we can connect the idea of autoaffection to what he calls one’s “sense of aliveness” (36).

have noted above, Stiles makes the connection between these disaffected patients and the vampires of *Dracula*, but I want to take this thinking in a different direction in order to consider the ways in which the fainting subjects of the novel are neither self-present to themselves nor entirely disaffected or changed. When Jonathan faints, he experiences an affective response that does not involve his subjective self. When he awakes again, he is still himself (more or less), but he is uncertain about what has happened and cannot quite trust the line between his conscious and nonconscious self. He cannot decide if the events of the night before have occurred or if he has dreamed them, writing, “I tried to satisfy myself on the subject, but could not arrive at any unquestionable result,” and noting “small evidences” like his oddly folded clothes that point to either his being unconscious while the Count has folded them or his doing so while his “mind was not as usual” (44). Harker is uncertain about whether the strange self or the stranger has performed the act.

Ultimately, Malabou is interested in theorizing the entirely disaffected subject as hetero-heteroaffected; that is, utterly alienated from their own affects and no longer themselves, as with patients of brain injury. In order to do so, she explains how cognitive science suggests that subjects are primarily heteroaffected, that is, other to themselves. Drawing again on Derrida, Malabou writes that heteroaffection offers two important caveats for subjectivity:

(1) the one who is affected in me is always the other in me, the unknown “me” in me, a dimension of my subjectivity that I don’t know and don’t perceive, and that (2) what affects me is always somebody other than myself, something else than the feeling of my ownness. (20)

Moreover, Malabou makes syncope a key example of physiological heteroaffection (through Jean-Luc Nancy’s work), because it is an absolute interruption of subjectivity. For Nancy, Malabou explains, the “subject’s self-touching is always discontinuous—absent to itself as it were—as if it were the touching of an other” (23). Syncope occurs when “an affect touches me but I don’t know what ‘me’ means” (24), but Malabou is further clear that “because the primordial affect (the affect of the self for itself) is always interrupted by the intrusion of alterity, all particular affects (love, hatred, joy, sadness, wonder, or generosity) are also constantly syncope, interrupted, and discontinuous” (24). Heteroaffection—and thus the vampire—reveals that selfhood or subjectivity is

only made possible by something that is not the self. In other words, the subject is touched by something other, but in this moment, as Malabou clarifies, the subject is not his- or herself; the other of the world touches the other of the self. In this crucial early scene from *Dracula*, the other is the vampire—in all his extended alterity to which I will return—that touches the circulatory system of his guest.

The autobiographical narrative that Jonathan writes in his journal underlines his uncertainty about what he is feeling and from where his feelings originate.¹⁶⁸ While Senf is right to identify Jonathan as a “parochial Englishman” who is not particularly concerned with understanding the other (“Unseen” 164), his account of his progress from uncertainty to fear to aggression can help us think through the respect for alterity that heteroaffection can prompt. Jonathan’s experience in Transylvania and with Dracula “snowballs,” the term Massumi uses to describe James’s affect theory (*Parables* 213). Traveling to Castle Dracula and exposed to new ways of being, foods, train schedules, sounds, temporalities, and people, Harker does his best to manage his feelings because he has “business to do” and he can “allow nothing to interfere with it” (Stoker 13). However, he begins to feel uneasy as his landlady becomes increasingly agitated by his destination. After she offers him a rosary, he admits his nervousness while being unable to pinpoint its source; it could be “the old lady’s fear, or the many ghostly traditions of this place, or the crucifix itself” (13). Harker’s perception of others’ fear increases the closer he gets to his destination, as when his companions scream at the arrival of his driver (who we will later realize is Dracula) (17). Later, he discovers that the time is midnight and gets “a sort of shock,” recognizing that “the general superstition about midnight was increased by [his] recent experiences” as he waits “with a sick feeling of suspense” (18).

Jonathan’s journal is punctuated by these physiological syncopations, nonconscious states that interrupt his ability to write himself. Therefore, underneath his autobiographical narrative exists the record-keeping of embodied responses that have uncertain causes and affinities with the bare lives of affected animals. For example,

¹⁶⁸ Germane to this discussion is William Reddy’s argument that the self is a disaggregation of thoughts and feelings; Reddy claims that cultural codes help to translate thoughts and feelings into legible emotions.

Jonathan's fear and nervousness seems to extend, or to be shared, across species lines on his journey to the castle, as dogs and wolves begin to howl and the horses in their shared fear "strain and rear" and "shiver and sweat" (18-19). While Harker expresses his fear, his uncertainty produces a kind of syncopated narrative, a dysrhythmia of self that is touched by otherness. By the same token, as Jonathan and Dracula make their way to the castle, Harker cannot accurately report what occurs both because he is not sure what he feels and because he is not sure if he is even conscious. As Dracula repeatedly stops the calèche to "disappear into the darkness," Jonathan writes that he "must have fallen asleep and kept dreaming of the incident" (19). Later, as they approach Castle Dracula, Jonathan may be conscious but not in control of himself; he repeatedly declares himself paralyzed with fear as he witnesses first "a ring of wolves" gather and then Dracula's powerful dispersal of them. As the others of this new place affect Jonathan, his journal registers this heteroaffection as the other in him, as Malabou would put it, an other he does not know (as in the causes of his feelings) and cannot perceive (as in his moments of sleep or paralysis).

Harker is primed to be afraid of Dracula and the women he meets at the castle by everything that occurs on his way to it. Both Massumi and Lisa Blackman offer priming as an explanation for the automatic behaviour of the body that either seems subjective (but is not) or conforms to certain expectations. Blackman writes that priming "relates to a variety of techniques used to modulate thought, action, belief and feeling" (377); similarly, Massumi writes that "[p]riming addresses threshold postures (presuppositions) orienting a participant's entry into the situation, plus the associated tendencies that carry the orientation forward through the encounter" (*Power* 29). In other words, priming opens up a space in theories of automaticity for the significance of social, cultural, and political expectations, intersections, and entanglements. When the Count "lean[s] over" Harker and touches him, Harker "cannot repress a shudder," which at first seems to indicate knowledge that the Count is a particular kind of being, inhuman, disgusting, or repulsive (24). Clasen, for example, reads this scene in exactly this way, drawing on theories that frame disgust as evolutionarily beneficial. While Clasen admits disgust is culturally constructed to a certain degree, he argues that it "rests on an evolutionary substrate" (389), a claim that could be used to fix the Count as an object in which disgust

inheres.¹⁶⁹ In contrast, Harker also notes that although he is struck with “a horrible feeling of nausea,” this could be due to nothing more than the Count’s bad breath (24). Priming, therefore, challenges the idea that affect is ideologically empty,¹⁷⁰ but it also challenges the possibility that affect reveals some kind of natural or a-political ideology. This first section of Jonathan’s journal reveals that his physical reactions do not necessarily signify anything either about himself or about the ontology of the other that has touched him. Even as Jonathan grows increasingly suspicious of the Count, his writing remains ethically uncertain about why that might be.

Some chapter breaks in Jonathan’s journal attempt to absorb the loss of time that occurs during syncope and the break in autobiographical narrative, as they do in *The Time Machine*. For example, after Jonathan “[sinks] down unconscious” in a faint, the chapter ends, beginning again as he wakes the next morning in his bed, uncertain whether the previous night’s events had occurred or whether they had been a dream. However, because chapter breaks are interspersed throughout Jonathan’s record-keeping, seemingly without any particular pattern in relation to the change of day or time, they are also disruptive, causing a syncopation of temporality and flow within his autobiography.

The first chapter break occurs as Jonathan and Dracula approach the castle, and while Jonathan expresses concern over whether he has been awake or asleep, as I note above, the break occurs *after* he has “suddenly became conscious” of their arrival, cutting off and then beginning anew his awakening and description of Castle Dracula (20). In addition, breaks occur within different entry dates, with entries for May 3rd, 4th, and part of the 5th making up the first chapter, and May 5th continuing into the second chapter, along with May 7th and 8th. The form of dividing the journal into both dates and chapters is temporally disorienting, as a reader wishing to ascertain the dates of events is

¹⁶⁹ Sara Ahmed explains that people use disgust to other the unknown. Writing about Charles Darwin’s description of his feeling of disgust for an inhabitant of Tierra del Fuego, Ahmed argues, “The question of what ‘tastes bad’ [or is disgusting] is bound up with questions of familiarity and strangeness: here, the proximity of the bodies of others is read as the cause of ‘our sickness’ precisely insofar as the other is seeable and knowable as stranger-than-me and stranger-to-us in the first place” (83).

¹⁷⁰ Ruth Leys in particular articulates this as a concern about affect theorists like Brian Massumi who are interested in the “non-intentional” aspects of affect. I address Leys’s argument in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

confronted with trying to decipher the event dates backwards from the recording dates, all the while ignoring the chapter breaks as markers of temporal significance. These disjunctive breaks also, as in *The Time Machine*, makes the editorial process of novel hyper-visible. Who has decided to end and begin the chapters in this way? Further, when Chapter II breaks the May 5th entry, the date is repeated at the beginning of the chapter; when Chapter III breaks the May 8th entry, the date is not repeated. Attending to these irregularities reminds us that the text is not, in fact the self-aware and conscious rendering—the transparent autoaffection—of Jonathan, but rather is the process of remediation, or subjectivity by heteroaffection; after all, it is another—Mina—who has put this text together (161).

Jonathan claims that writing in his diary, “entering accurately,” helps to “soothe” him (41). When Mina repeats this belief, she invokes the structure of autoaffection: expressing herself in her journal “is like whispering to one’s self and listening at the same time,” she records (72).¹⁷¹ However, the strange and nonhuman syncopates even this intimate and gentle attempt to write the self. The nonconscious and the animal appears in the emergence of a subjectivity that can speak and hear itself. Even Mina immediately clarifies her statement by reminding the reader that she is not, in fact, writing in the traditional human sense because there is “something about the shorthand symbols that makes it different from writing” (72).¹⁷² If, autobiographically, Jonathan strives for the accuracy of his records and Mina the self-touching of subjectivity, both reveal the underlying alterity of textuality. Writing mirrors heteroaffection, where moments of syncope affect the body (of the text) precisely where the self (of the text) is not. Both fainting and journaling reveal the nonhuman other that disrupts subjectivity.

¹⁷¹ Otis argues that writing is soothing for the hunters because it provides “an illusory support network, reassuring one—falsely—that one is not alone in one’s thoughts” (197).

¹⁷² Wicke argues that the novel is replete with examples of modern mass-mediated culture, and offers shorthand as one example, an “invisible [...] translated [...] submerged [...] cryptogram” (471).

5.2. Gender and Generosity

In my analysis of *The Time Machine*, where both the Traveller and Weena faint, I focus on the Traveller's posthumanist similarity to Weena. *Dracula's* narrative offers multiple instances of syncope from the perspective of both men and women, which can help us to more fully address the relationship between fainting and gender. Fainting, and the resulting narrative syncope, is not a representation of femininity or non-heteronormative sexuality in this novel, although there are some points at which this reading could hold. For example, Lucy, and later Mina, could embody the consumptive exhaustion or the "anemic and anorexic" (Khader 75) womanhood of the Victorian heroine. Jonathan, too, can be read as feminized in his faint, as mentioned above. The connection of fainting with hysteria, as in Moss's work, suggests a particularly feminine pathology. Moss reads hysterical episodes in *Dracula*, including fainting, as analogous to hypnosis and the vampiric trance. She argues that the novel presents proto-Freudian models of gender and sexuality that become hysterical, hypnotic, or vampiric as the characters who perform them chafe against rigid social boundaries and their repressed natures begin to emerge. However, scholars have produced so many readings of gender and sexuality in relation to the novel that their binary terms cease to adhere to any stable markers. Gender—and gender as a marker of sexuality—is in fact far more fluid in this novel than any connection between fainting or hysteria and femininity suggests.¹⁷³

When the novel actually deploys the term hysteria, it describes not a sexualized or gendered pathology, but a surfeit of sudden, uncontrollable intensity, an excessive expression of feeling. For example, the distressed landlady who begs Jonathan not to travel to Castle Dracula is described by him as "hysterical" and "excited" (12); Mina calls herself "hysterical" when she desperately begs Van Helsing to help Jonathan recover from his time at the Castle (165); she also calls Arthur Holmwood hysterical as he cries and "beat his palms together in a perfect agony of grief (203); and Van Helsing calls Seward's neurologically atypical patient Renfield hysterical when he begs to be set free from the institution (218). On the one hand, a body is a body—there is nothing

¹⁷³ Drawing on French medical discourses on hysteria at the end of the nineteenth century, Mark Micale writes that homosexuality was often connected to effeminacy (199-201).

particularly gendered about any of these episodes, which are better understood as moments of syncope. As Malabou points out, all emotions are also “constantly syncope, interrupted, and discontinuous” because subjects are primarily heteroaffected; beyond this, these moments are breaks in selfhood, “threat[s] to self-possession and governance,” as Jill Matus has described (3) and as I discuss in Chapter Two.

On the other hand, gender’s social construction means that fainting (or any other emotional response) can be politically captured as a symptom of gender. Many late-nineteenth-century subjects would indeed consider it feminine to have no control over one’s emotions; as Glover points out, “by that period ideals of manliness had largely been purged of any open expression of feeling in favor of a self-confident physical robustness that regarded any undue sensitivity with suspicion” (46). Besides the fact that, as Glover points out, Stoker writes emotionally expressive male characters—by Glover’s argument, “in vindication of the feminized Irish” (47)—, the focus of this chapter is how *Dracula* demonstrates that being a subject means being primarily heteroaffected and that the ethics that emerge out of heteroaffection are not rooted in self-aware, conscious subjectivity. Hysteria in *Dracula* is neither a gendered pathology nor a definitively extra-emotional response. That is, fainting is linked to the physiological as much as, or in these cases, even more so, than it is to the emotional. While this has also been the case with both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Time Machine*, the overt context of blood and the circulatory system in *Dracula* amplify the physiological aspects of syncope. The physiological basis of syncope, coupled with the fact that fainting is not limited to any particular gender in the novel, represents an instability in gender categories at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁴ Both male and female bodies behave generously, expressing an ethics of generosity that exceeds total capture by either gender category.

¹⁷⁴ Micale notes the general deconstruction of gender occurring at the end of the century, as “Charcot-era science and medicine simultaneously bore a critical, deconstructive relation to the sex/gender system of its day. The new knowledges accomplished this work principally by probing gender differentiation—and with it the biology, psychology, and ontology of masculinity and femininity—in original and provocative ways that reflected back obliquely on Victorian/Wilhelminian sexual culture. Within avant-garde European medical circles during these years, questions of gender, sexual behavior, and sexual identity were intensively argued, investigated, problematized, theorized, and reconceptualized in ways that would have been unthinkable at the beginning of Victoria’s reign fifty or so years earlier” (174-175). Examples of this

Lucy's own struggle with the way the vampire affects her circulatory system demonstrates the relationship of syncope to physiology in a way that makes gender as open and uncertain as selfhood is. As with Jonathan, Lucy already behaves in ways that suggest she is heteroaffected before the bite of the vampire. She begins sleepwalking after Mina's arrival in Whitby and before she meets Dracula; as William Hughes suggests, drawing on Carpenter's work, somnambulism was understood in the nineteenth century to be an automatism (*Beyond* 146). Mina writes in her journal that when she finds Lucy, she is able to undress her and lead her back to bed because "as soon as her will is thwarted in any physical way, her intention, if there be any, disappears, and she yields herself almost exactly to the routine of her life" (84). This description of Lucy as seemingly volitional but in fact easily guided into performing tasks automatically sounds very much like the brain-injured patients that Huxley describes as automatons and Malabou describes as hetero-heteroaffected, "an originary *deserted* subject, a subject that is definitely not present to itself" (Malabou "Go" 4, original emphasis). In the case of Sergeant F—, for example, Huxley writes of a brain-injured soldier who experienced periods of seeming nonconscious behaviour, where he would go about his usual business but without truly engaging in the world around him. He can be stuck with pins, Huxley explains, or given a glass of vinegar, without seeming to notice; he "offers no resistance to any change of direction which may be impressed upon him, or to the forcible acceleration, or retardation, of his movements" (569). Like Lucy, Sergeant F— seems to be sleepwalking.

Thus, when Lucy sleepwalks, when she experiences this syncopation of consciousness, she reveals that there is an originary, automatist affect at work at the centre of every self that is not known by the self at all. Hughes argues against critics like Burton Hatlen that this sleepwalking might be a "response to a summons issued by the vampire" (Hughes, *Beyond* 146) to suggest instead that hysteria may be the cause of her somnambulism, a susceptibility symptomatic of her gender that makes it difficult for Seward to identify vampirism as the cause of her eventual illness. However interesting this reading may be, Stoker's inclusion of the hereditary aspect of somnambulism

science that Micale notes include Darwin's and Huxley's evolutionary theories, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing's and Havelock Ellis's sexological theories (175-176).

suggests it is unnecessary—its reading as gendered says more about gender’s social construction (and Hughes’ repetition of it) than it does about whether sleepwalking is feminine or not. In fact, the text suggests that Lucy’s sleepwalking is not a symptom of her gender and it is not a product of vampirism; it is a “congenital and hereditary complaint” (Hughes *Beyond* 144) inherited from her father, who “had the same habit” (Stoker 72). We can understand Lucy’s sleepwalking as an automatism that crosses gender lines, one activated by an alienated part of herself.

As she is vamped by Dracula, Lucy is subject to episodes of syncope that are congruent with blood loss, as the text encourages us to connect the vampire’s visits with her fainting episodes, her “bloodless” appearance (105), and her partial recovery by blood transfusions (to which I will later return). I have already noted the example, also discussed by Stiles, of Lucy’s recollection to Mina of her loss of consciousness. Later, too, Seward and Van Helsing find Lucy lying unconscious beside her dead mother, apparently having been victimized by the vampire who leaves the “little wounds” on her neck “looking horribly white and mangled” (134). Fortunately, Lucy leaves a memorandum describing the moments just prior to Seward and Van Helsing’s appearance, when her mother, having come to check on her, sees a wolf at the window and panics. As Lucy’s mother succumbs to her fear, her own syncope leading to death beginning at the heart (131, 151), she falls against her daughter. Lucy writes, “her head hit my forehead and made me dizzy for a moment or two. The room and all around seemed to spin round” (131). As the room fills with dust motes, Lucy reports that she “tried to stir, but there was some spell upon me, and dear mother’s poor body...and I remembered no more for a while” (131). While the implication here is that it is the vampire (or his emissaries) who paralyze Lucy, her fainting spell also has a very physiological explanation, since she is concussed by her mother and then trapped beneath her body. Lucy’s syncope is an example of heteroaffection since she experiences syncope, or an absence of selfhood, when her body is touched by the very material weight of one of the most significant others in her life—her mother.

Other male and female characters beyond Jonathan and Lucy also experience syncope by fainting or coming close to fainting. These syncopated narrative moments

consistently emphasize the close relationship between heteroaffection—being touched by otherness—and the nervous system, including the circulatory system. While Lucy is the most traditionally feminine figure, Mina is described by Van Helsing as a “combination” of genders, with a “man’s brain...and a woman’s heart” (207). Scholars, too, have perceived Mina’s gender—or her performance of it—as dual. They debate whether or not she is representative of the late-Victorian New Woman, a polarizing description of women who threatened patriarchal and heterosexual norms by working, eschewing marriage, expressing themselves, enjoying embodied pleasures like food and sex, and otherwise generally demanding more than they were socially and politically afforded.¹⁷⁵ However, Mina’s experiences with syncope, like Lucy’s, emphasize the alterity of the autonomic nervous system, and assigning gender to those experiences relies on and reifies assumptions about gender expression and context. Mina twice comes close to fainting. The first time, she is bringing Lucy home from a sleepwalking episode, during which Lucy has wandered out to the churchyard of Whitby Abbey and has been visited by Dracula. As they must make their way back through the town in the middle of the night, Mina is anxious about both Lucy’s health and the possible tarnishing of her reputation. “My heart beat so loud all the time,” Mina recounts, “that sometimes I thought I should faint” (89). Mina’s own inner narration connects the hyper-present sound of her heartbeat—the sound of the circulation of her blood—with fainting, making it impossible to separate her noisy heartbeat from both her midnight exercise and her anxiety. What is crucial here in terms of the automatism of the body is the possibility that Mina’s accelerated heartbeat is unrelated to her conscious awareness. What is crucial in terms of gender is that Mina’s nervous system responds to social expectation, and not as a symptom of femininity.

¹⁷⁵ Moss, for example, notes that before Mina marries, she displays feminist tendencies, like a desire to write like “lady journalists do” (Stoker 56); after her marriage though, “in place of the New Woman, the Victorian hysteric begins to emerge” (Moss 137). However, in “*Dracula*: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman,” Senf only partially agrees with Moss, noting that Mina possesses some qualities of the New Woman but resists the epithet as a whole (48), while Lucy, in her overt desire and vampiric sexuality, is the New Woman who must be destroyed (42-45). See Sally Ledger for a foundational analysis of the New Woman, “as sexually transgressive, as heavily implicated in socialist politics, and as a force for change” (6).

Mina's second episode of near-fainting connects the internal other of her body with the external others of story, sound, and media when she receives a shock and is overcome, rendered "powerless" in her chair, as Dr. Seward allows her to listen to his phonograph recording recounting the staking of the vampire Lucy (198). External and internal alterity collide here, as Mina is powerfully affected and does not know yet what she is feeling or thinking, noting that her "brain was all in a whirl," with both the "multitude of horrors" of the staking and the possibility that "Lucy was at last at peace," and that she "didn't know what to believe" (198). The subjective and physiological collide again, as Mina's shock seems to arise directly from hearing of Lucy's horrific death and suspends her conscious agency for a moment. She is then revived physiologically by Seward's brandy, which works its action on the body. These near-fainting episodes of physiological intensity at its most nonconscious or homeostatic level punctuate the narrative. When Mina writes, "It is all so wild, and mysterious, and strange," she is referring to the story of Lucy's vampirism, but her assessment is equally applicable to the workings of affect (198). In this moment, Mina seems to pride herself on her stoicism and emotional strength, writing that "fortunately," she was "not of a fainting disposition" (198). If fainting is read as feminine here, Mina is insistent that she is not. However, since she does faint later in the novel, we can read her own belief as resistant to the idea that femininity *is* a disposition, or that fainting is an expression of biological constitution.¹⁷⁶

These moments reflect Malabou's definition of syncope as an instance when "an affect touches me but I don't know what 'me' means" (24). Individually, this lack of knowledge is reflected in Mina's narrative, her first-person journal entries, as a disjuncture between cause and effect—a gap or syncope in first-person narrative—or an uncertainty about "what 'me' means." In the first example, as in some moments in Jonathan's journal, neither we nor she can be precisely sure what causes Mina's near-syncope. In the second, as the "forked metal" of the phonograph affects Mina, along with Seward's voice, the contents of the diary, Mina's expectations and memories, the surface

¹⁷⁶ See Wicke for a reading of this scene that points to the ways in which technology mediates the body through the voice, as when Dr. Seward's recorded voice transmits "latent emotional power" to Mina (470).

of the chair, and the heat of the brandy (198), Mina does not know how to reconcile her body's behaviour with her image of her self. There is a gap in her consciousness and self-awareness, along with an uncertainty about the *kind* of person she is. That uncertainty over her selfhood doubles the instability of fainting as a marker of gender.

In reading these moments of syncope as nonconscious and nonhuman, automatic and strange, we might borrow also from another twentieth-century theory of affect. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose work influenced Massumi's, claim that affect joins bodies and subjectivities and beings and objects. They suggest that bodies can be assemblages, parts in a combination of animal and machine that make something happen or produce affect, labour, identity, movement, and so on.¹⁷⁷ Here, the affective assemblage emerges where Mina is not. As she is suspended in the breathless discovery of Lucy's tragic death, Mina is not a woman and wife and individual whose boundaries end at her skin, but becomes part of a body-ears-phonograph-sound assemblage, joined together through the overwhelming affective interruption of her syncope. For Armstrong, the vampire embodies a frightening Deleuzian figure of collectivity that can and must be destroyed because it is not individual (*How* 121), but the automaticity and assemblage of Mina's body here reveals that she is already not an organic individual but as much a machine as the phonograph. However, this assemblage is not productive. She is intimately responsive to or ready to join in assemblage with a world of organism and technologies; her body is always open to the other.

Harker is also not the only man in the novel to faint. Renfield, an institutionalized patient of Dr. Seward and a victim of Dracula, faints (or nearly does so) after Van Helsing's brain surgery briefly prolongs his life. Renfield, jealous of Dracula's attention towards Mina, angers the Count and receives a head injury from him. When Seward finds him, he is lying in "a glittering pool of blood" (241), and Van Helsing has a few moments to relieve the pressure on his brain through a procedure the doctor refers to as trephine. As Stiles notes, Stoker had medical knowledge of the trephine procedure from his

¹⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari use the example of the mythological Amazon woman, who cuts off her breast to become a "fearsome woman-bow-steppe assemblage" to describe how "an assemblage is necessary for organisms to be caught within and permeated by a social field that utilizes them" (71).

brother, Sir William Thornley Stoker (Stiles 62), who wrote a memo to Stoker explaining that removing “the depressed bone” or the blood clot “might give instant relief” (Stoker, *Notes* 179-183). Although there is no “biting or sucking” in this scene, there is nothing *but* blood. As the patient struggles for life, presumably still lying in the puddle of his own blood, Van Helsing decides he must wait to see how death progresses to “fix the best spot for trephining” (242). Van Helsing, Seward, Arthur, and Quincey Morris wait and watch, and Seward records the responsiveness of his own circulatory system, one he is sure mirrors the embodied agony of his companions: “Inured as I was to sick beds and death, this suspense grew, and grew upon me. I could almost hear the beating of my own heart; and the blood surging through my temples sounded like blows from a hammer” (243). Blood is identified here as the substance that is responsible for Renfield’s absence of subjectivity as well as the part of Seward’s body that responds to and creates a gap in his own sense of self.

After Van Helsing performs the procedure, Renfield regains consciousness for a moment and attempts to narrate what Dracula has done to him. He begins describing his fatal encounter with the Count by offering the same caveat that Jonathan has earlier, “I have had a terrible dream” (243). As he stops and “seemed fainting,” Quincey finds brandy to revive him, and his story begins with a new certainty that “it was no dream, but all a grim reality” (243). Seward again mentions unconscious cerebration, the idea that even in the interim while Renfield is not consciously aware or thinking, “his poor injured brain had been working” for itself (243). Subjectivity and knowledge are both physiological here, intimately related to the brain and blood, and moreover, only possible through the alterity of the body. Renfield’s (near) faint seems less associated with his status as a “insane”—an identity associated with bodily automatism and compromised will and agency (R. Smith 42-44)—and more with the medical consequences of blood loss.

When Van Helsing brings Renfield back to consciousness, the patient’s value seems overwhelmingly to be in the information about Dracula with which he can provide the hunters. However, his extended monologue also serves another purpose as autobiography, in its explanation of the patient whose subjectivity and behaviour have

eluded the doctor's grasp. Renfield describes being enchanted by Dracula, who enters his room as "a red cloud, like the colour of blood" (245); he explains that his interest in consuming animals like birds and rats is because they are full of "red blood, with years of life in it" (244). Yet, Renfield can only be "sane" enough (244) to explain himself autobiographically through an almost total absence of self. His gap in selfhood begins with his unconscious state and ends in the material gap Van Helsing creates in his body by way of the trephine. In this way, the most rational, Cartesian, human speech that Renfield can produce is also the most physiological and automatist. As Renfield comes closer to death and his explanation slows down, his conscious speech is broken but a kind of automatic speech continues. "[I]t seemed as though his memory had gone on working in the interval" of Renfield's pause, Seward records, noting that Van Helsing exhorts him not to interrupt the dying man, since Renfield "cannot go back, and maybe could not proceed at all if once he lost the thread of his thought" (245). Like a machine, Renfield's brain continues to produce a narrative of self even as, or only because, he experiences a syncope of consciousness.

Arthur Holmwood, Lucy's fiancé, is another man in this novel who has a tenuous hold on consciousness. When Arthur arrives to find Lucy seriously ill (although he does not yet know she is a victim of the vampire), Van Helsing's caution that Lucy is "bad, very, very bad" is so distressing that Arthur becomes pale and must sit down as he is "almost fainting" (113). In fact, after staking the vampire Lucy, he collapses in a way described similarly to fainting. As Lord Godalming, Arthur might fill the role of overwrought member of the leisure class, but other than being an ardent if unwilling expresser of emotions, Arthur is not feminized in other ways or described as decadent or an aesthete. As scholars like Senf ("Unseen"), Wicke, Erik Butler, and Craft have noted, the language of Arthur's staking is penetrative and easily read as sexual, as his "untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it" (Stoker 192).¹⁷⁸ Not only does the act of staking mimic heterosexual penetration, the reference to Arthur's "untrembling" arm is an echo of earlier language in the passage, the repetition suggesting

¹⁷⁸ See also C. F. Bentley, Burton Hatlen, and Eric Kwan-Wai Yu.

a complete (and, if gendered, masculine) physiological composure. However, immediately after Lucy has ceased “writhing and quivering,” Arthur “reeled and would have fallen had not [the vampire hunters] caught him,” as “great drops of sweat sprang out on his forehead, and his breath came in broken gasps” (192). Arthur is as capable of violent, heterosexual masculinity as he is of nervousness and swooning, suggesting that gender categories are not adequate to capture the logic of the novel’s instances of syncope.

Arthur’s syncope can also help us see how gender categories were themselves becoming inadequate at the end of the nineteenth century. Craft, for example, has noted that sexual desire in *Dracula* puts gender into question as homosexual desire between the men of the novel (including the vampire) is displaced onto women’s bodies. In the scene above, Craft claims that Arthur’s penetration of Lucy is an effort to reaffirm heterosexuality and penetrative masculinity. However, if we continue to read sexuality in *Dracula* as only one example of embodied response, we begin to see that episodes of syncope refuse any particular definition of masculinity or femininity. In Arthur’s case, what does it mean to be masculine? Does it mean being violent and penetrating, or reasonable and capable? Or being Lucy’s fiancé? Or does it mean being sensitive and swooning, or emotional and unsure? Or being Seward’s dear friend? Syncope, and therefore, affect itself, reveals the fluidity of gender categories and represents the fact that binary ideals of gender were under pressure at the end of the century. Micale argues that late-nineteenth-century scientific writing challenged previously accepted markers of gender and sex, with even the most stridently misogynistic, homophobic, and racist writing struggling to define gender and sex through “biology, psychology, and ontology” (174). For Micale, male hysteria represents one area in which traditional categories of gender and sex refuse to inhere, prompting writers to perform diagnostic calisthenics to avoid admitting the nervous system’s “socially subversive” possibilities (207-208). If we resist diagnosing fainting as a gendered symptom of hysteria, and instead read it as an expression of the structural form of affect (as Malabou has suggested), we can locate a challenge to binary gender in the feeling body and in the subjectivity that emerges from it.

As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, what might be culturally coded as feminine or hysterical are instead markers of the one thing the novel suggests is biologically “true”—that bodies are heteroaffected, vulnerable to the alterity of their blood and nerves as well as the alterity of the world. And, just as Malabou has theorized, the heteroaffected body is also the site of affective ethics. Drawing on Derrida’s work, Malabou summarizes that heteroaffection, realized physiologically as syncope, leads to a theory of generosity “that is a pure gift, unconscious of itself, unable to feel itself give” (24). Nancy and Derrida call this a “generosity of being,” and Malabou calls it “ontological generosity” (24-25). In their own brief moments of syncopated action, as they respond without conscious thinking or consideration, characters respond to another’s syncope with affective generosity. When Mina is overcome listening to the phonographic diary, Seward does not just give her brandy, he “jump[s] up with a horrified exclamation, and hurriedly tak[es] a case-bottle from a cupboard” (198). Seward does the same at Van Helsing’s insistence for the swooning Lucy (118), and Quincey “flies” for a decanter equally quickly for the patient Renfield (243). Harker is “just in time” to catch Mina in her faint, suggesting a reflex action (273), like the group when Arthur begins to collapse following his staking of Lucy (192). When Arthur grieves openly about the death of his fiancée, Mina responds to this hysteria, or the syncope of excessive emotion, by “opening [her] arms unthinkingly” and allowing the man to cry on her shoulder (203). These moments are generous in that they are prompted by alterity—both from the other and in the automaticity of the self.

Massumi, too, has written about a kind of unthinking generosity that occurs automatically. In *The Power at the End of the Economy*, he argues against the idea that individuals make rational choices in their own economic self-interest, claiming that the free market is not a product of rational, self-interested actors, but rather made up of and dependent on affect. For economic subjects, rationality and feeling are inseparable and intertwined, “interlocked and mutually intensifying” (9). Based on this claim, Massumi goes on to theorize how subjects make affective choices that are neither individual nor rational, calling this kind of so-called decision-making a “doing done through me.” Drawing on the philosophy of David Hume, Massumi claims that actions occur based on the sympathetic transmission of affect that intersects with feelings, desires, and

contexts—in other words, some actions occur as an affective combination of self and other. There is no particular reason, he therefore suggests, why a subject should act in their own self-interest rather than against it (58-65). For example, Massumi writes of the figure of the “ordinary hero” who acts against their own self-interest to save others, as in, for example, running into a burning building. He writes that these subjects act “in the heat of the event, launched instantaneously into action by the sign of the life-threatening affection of the other,” as, unthinkingly, a “nonconscious decision has been made...through her” (80). I would not necessarily characterize the moments I have outlined here, the nonconscious responses to a perceived syncope of consciousness or self-control, as against self-interest, but neither are they self-interested in the usual sense of the term. Instead, these nonconscious responses are fully about the other.

These nonconscious responses also offer a counterpoint to moments when the group of hunters move “with a single impulse” to attack the Count (and to greet a telegram from Mina) (Stoker 266, 264). Laura Otis’ reads this as behaviour that indicates that the hunters belong to a “unified body, informed by a communal nervous system,” one that reflects the Count’s own organic network of blood and hypnosis (206). All of these impulsive, unthinking, nonconscious movements, both generous and violent, are forms of what Massumi calls “bare activity”—the affective, nonconscious level of the body that is ready to make its next “decision” through the subject (*Power* 20-21). One way to understand why a subject(’s body) would “choose” these nonconscious actions is through priming. We could say that the hunters are primed—or affectively made ready—to move impulsively together in violence towards Dracula because they expect he is a dangerous threat, they have received Mina’s warning telegram, and they are being affected by each other.

Mina offers another example of generosity in relation to the comfort she offers Arthur. Her reaction, she claims, is because “[w]e women have something of the mother in us” (203). Rather than think of this as a biological truism, Mina’s explanation can just as easily suggest that her expectation as a woman is to offer comfort to men—an expectation Quincey Morris repeats to her just moments later when he says that “[n]o one but a woman can help a man when he is in trouble of the heart” (204). However, in

response to Quincey's grief, Mina "impulsively...bent over and kissed him" (204), a nonconscious action that might be motherly or might be more intimate and transgressive. The moment of syncope cannot disentangle generosity from gender, but it can help to underline its instability. Perhaps Mina is generous regardless of gender and her statement is a rhetorical capture of affect through gender, or perhaps she is primed to be physically generous to Quincey because she has grown up as a woman. Generosity's uncertain connection to gender here is not just ethically but also politically significant for late-Victorian theories of affect. William James, for example, does not imply that women are more emotional than men, but he does use affect to reproduce gender norms. While "[t]he egg fails to fascinate the hound, [and] the bird does not fear the precipice," he writes, similarly "[n]o woman can see a handsome little naked baby without delight, no man in the wilderness see a human form in the distance without excitement and curiosity" ("Emotion" 191). While James's reference to fainting seems radically uncertain and disconnected from identity altogether, his affirmation about maternal feeling serves to reproduce a dangerous and oppressive narrative about female biology. Understanding affect as absolute alterity can help us to see how these responses are not biologically but autobiographically or discursively gendered.

Small moments of unthinking generosity are important, then, because they reveal the heteroaffected self and the possibility that heteroaffection might prompt an ethics of generosity that does not rely on an individual subject who chooses. Massumi underlines the ethical significance of what the nineteenth century was calling conscious automatism by claiming that any unthinking generosity is a "contrary tendency" to the economic system (and, I argue, the social, political, and ethical systems) that insist on subjective, rational individualism (*Power* 82).¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Massumi extends this sense of automaticity or heteroaffection to include nonhuman being. He writes that un-self-interested generosity "is a *nonpersonal and nonhuman virtue of the relational event*. However recuperated, it is a sign of the potential for feral becomings, done through me, beyond the human capital pale, churning out from the inmost end of the relational field of

¹⁷⁹ Massumi calls unthinking moments of generosity "ontopower"—being-power or affect power (*Power* 82).

life” (*Power* 83, original emphasis). This un-self-interested generosity can be as small, he suggests, as the moments in *Dracula* when bodies are caught, cradled, kissed, and revived: “anywhere a gratuitous act of generosity or kindness or feral connection comes about, without the vehicle it moves through even pausing to think about it, a minievent has sympathetically decided itself, cutting modestly into the flow of everyday life” (*Power* 83). That is, Mina can “recuperate” her comfort under the sign of maternal instinct and we can still read her moment of generosity as connected to the nonhuman, bare life of the animal, affective body.

Heteroaffection does not just prompt an un-self-interested gift of generosity towards others, but it is a gift in and of itself, given from the alterity of the world and the alterity of the subject. It is the gift that makes subjectivity possible. Drawing on Nancy, Malabou writes that an “affect is a gift that comes from the absolute outside of being” (“Go” 25). The original text reads: “[t]he generosity of being offers nothing other than existence, and the offering, as such, is kept in freedom” (Nancy *Experience* 147). In his extended response to Nancy’s work on autoaffection, Derrida also responds to this theory of ontological generosity, writing, “[t]his generosity is no longer simply the virtue of a subject, or what Descartes might have grasped by this word” (Derrida 21). In their combined thinking, these three philosophers suggest that there is a mutual coincidence of generosity, in giving and receiving the freedom of existence. Of course, existence is rarely free, and far less so for those subjects who do not enjoy political or social freedom. The body is a politically significant site because, as Derrida says, “giv[ing] out of *generosity* or because *one can* give (what one has) is no longer to give. Giving is possible only where it remains *im-possible*” (23, original emphasis). Derrida’s insistence prompts us to look at where freedom and generosity collide, where the body and the subject are open to the gift of being and whatever it may bring.

Affect is represented as this gift that comes from the outside of being when Van Helsing experiences syncope in the form of a fit of laughter. The vampire hunter is discussing the mingling of the group’s blood in Lucy, and his acknowledgement of the alterity of this intrusion is telling: “King Laugh,” as he calls it (158), “come[s] when and how he likes” (157). Seward calls this fit of laughter “hysterics,” and likens Van

Helsing's behaviour to a woman's (157). However, Glover claims that this moment also represents both the way "the male unconscious seems to possess a self-regulating capacity to return the psyche to a state of balance or equilibrium" and the way "its workings remain mysterious, as unfathomable as they are uncertain" (80). While Glover makes cogent and important points about the function of overwhelming emotion here, there is more to say about this moment. Van Helsing accepts this subjective interruption without aggression, he recognizes his powerlessness before it, and he refuses to pathologize it. These are all ethical responses, including his openness to the healing power that laughter's release of tension offers—King Laugh is "good to come, and kind" (158)—and his demands that Seward be understanding and patient with him. In terms of heteroaffection, laughter is the form of syncope that Nancy identifies as a gap in philosophical discourse through which life is made possible, "the trembling in which it can feel its life" (*Discourse* 133): "health," Nancy writes, "or more specifically, the feeling of being alive, consciousness—is only acquired or secured by a moment of syncope," through laughter (*Discourse* 134). But King Laugh allows Van Helsing to return to subjectivity without any uncertainty about what has occurred, without any feeling for the other, and with an easy ability to gloss the moment as autobiography. As a gift, this moment of laughter over the violated body of a woman closes Van Helsing off again to the world, ready to decide Lucy's fate and help Arthur maim and dismember her dead body. Van Helsing's recuperation of syncope into a form of power means we could consider him a new version of what Ann Cvetkovitch has called the "sensitive man" of sensational novels, whose affective vulnerability (in her examples, "affective attraction" to emotional female characters) underwrites and obscures their domination and control (8).

Lucy, however, experiences heteroaffection as an unequivocal gift of being. When she receives a blood transfusion from Arthur to counteract the vampire's bite, she writes upon recovery that she feels happy again, and that

[s]omehow Arthur feels very, very close to me. I seem to feel his presence warm about me. I suppose it is that sickness and weakness are selfish things and turn our inner eyes and sympathy on ourselves, whilst health and

strength give Love rein, and in thought and feeling he can wander where he wills. (Stoker 117)

Otis notes that this moment can be read as though a part of Arthur's mind has entered into Lucy's along with his blood (216), but I want to offer another reading that suggests that what Arthur gives Lucy is the capacity to feel, revealing the external source of the self that makes feeling and subjectivity possible. This example is, like the faint, an extreme form of a quotidian and primary alterity, grounded not only in the sense of being affected by the other, but of having one's very liveliness dependent on the alien (and normally largely unnoticed) feeling of being alive itself. To be heteroaffected not only makes selfhood possible here, but makes it healthful and, perhaps, ethical.¹⁸⁰

However, this touching is not just physiological, it is surgical. Both the hunters and the vampire affect subjectivity by puncturing the body, with a tube for blood transfusion or with pointed teeth. Because of the way it moves between bodies and because of Van Helsing's claim that receiving transfusions from four of the hunters makes Lucy a "polyandrist" (158), blood in *Dracula* has been consistently "overdetermined as a psychoanalytical substitute for semen" (Hughes, "Sanguine" 4) or given an otherwise broad sexual interpretation.¹⁸¹ Otis reads blood as an overdetermined marker of "family, nation, or race" (Hughes, "Sanguine" 4), as a means of communication, and as a symbol of money.¹⁸² Putatively, blood ought to be related somehow to souls in the novel, as Hughes points out, but it also has a materialist, vitalist

¹⁸⁰ George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* also deals with a blood transfusion that momentarily revives a character after death. In this novella, a young man is cursed with the psychic intrusion of the feeling of others, a plot that suggests the interruption of subjectivity and the alienation of the self by the transmission of affect, although ultimately, for Matus, "Latimer's reactions to his brother, his father and Bertha are therefore revelations not so much about them as about himself and his emotional orientation to the world around him" (132). While Matus reads the transfusion scene as indicating the physiological basis for life and soul, she emphasizes the importance of the unknown and mysterious nature of life itself. Kate Flint agrees, while claiming that *The Lifted Veil*'s transfusion scene is related to *Dracula*'s through its suggestion that blood is a gendered fluid.

¹⁸¹ For blood as semen, see also Craft, Stevenson, Apasia Stephanou, Blinderman, and Jack Halberstam; for the sexual nature of blood, see Kuzmanovic, Wicke, Yu, and Khader.

¹⁸² For the racial aspects of blood, see Patrick Brantlinger, Arata (*Occidental*), Blinderman, Stevenson, Otis, and Halberstam; for its communicative potential see Nancy Armstrong, and Brundan; and for its monetary connections, see Halberstam, and J. Jeffrey Franklin. See also Mathias Clasen, whose "biocultural" reading of *Dracula* rejects symbolic readings (379), and Elizabeth Miller, who writes, "[i]magine a *Dracula* in which... blood is merely blood" (para. 1).

aspect (“Sanguine”), which many of these very critics acknowledge through Renfield’s suggestion that he wants to consume blood because “the blood is the life” (Stoker 130).¹⁸³ Through the notion of affect as a gift, the hetero-affective gift of being that Lucy receives, blood is in this case a materially affective substance. The responsiveness of the circulatory system, therefore, stands in for the broader potential of being affected or touched by alterity—generously.

5.3. Vampiric Touching, Vampiric Feeling

Touch and its place in the nineteenth century are being recovered by scholars redressing a long-held focus on Victorian technologies of vision. In the recent collection *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century: Image, Sound, Touch*, David P. Parisi explains that the late-nineteenth century ushered in a modernity in which the sense of touch was an object of scientific rationality and experimentation. In this volume, Christopher Keep also discusses touch’s importance by illuminating the ways in which touch was central to both understandings of and embodied integrations with the electric telegraph, which seemed to mimic the body’s forms of affective communication (241); Margaret Linley uses *Frankenstein* as a model for new media’s potential to touch, as media “activates the bodily senses and feelings, and thereby moves or mobilizes audiences” (258). Keep’s and Linley’s arguments offer important context to the way the narrative form of *Dracula* touches the bodies within it.¹⁸⁴ Receiving Seward’s letter about Lucy’s failing condition and consequently hurrying to her side, Arthur declares to Seward, “I read between the lines of your letter, and have been in an agony” (Stoker 113). However, the vampire’s touch is also the intrusion of pure alterity. As the narrators and compiler of the text seek to identify the vampire as a monster, Dracula’s touch is

¹⁸³ This list is certainly not meant to be exhaustive, but a representative sample of readings of the multivalence of blood in the novel.

¹⁸⁴ The focus of this chapter is the affective touching of the characters within the novel. As I mention in the Chapter Two, much scholarly analysis of affect in Victorian literature turns to the affective touching of the reader by the novel. Moretti offers one such reading of *Dracula*, in a foundational analysis that divides its interpretative framework between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Moretti writes that the novel’s withholding of knowledge from its readers “generates suspense” in order to touch them so materially that “[t]hey are dragged forcibly *into* the text; the characters’ fear is also theirs” (107, original emphasis).

recognized not as a technique so much as it is an ontological necessity. As Hughes writes, for Dracula, blood “can be regarded only as food, a secular substance” (“Sanguine” 8).

The vampire offers a limit case for thinking about hetero-affective ethics, not only because his touch violates the boundary of the skin, and because that touch is a part of the very being of the Count, but also because his mode of hetero-affectation in most cases seems to create hetero-hetero-affected subjects—or at the very least, non-autobiographical subjects. Touch has an ethics of its own, an ethics of otherness or alterity that is prompted by the boundary of skin that separates subjects. Sarah Sorial describes one way that these ethics appear in Nancy’s work on touch and the body. For Nancy, bodies signal their uniqueness and singularity, and that singularity affects others and prompts connection (n.pg.). Touch reveals this singularity because it occurs at the boundaries of bodies: “because [the figure of the touch] opens me up to the strangeness of the other, her alterity or singularity, [it] also creates a space for ethical obligation” (n.pg.). Sorial explains that “the moment I physically touch the body of the other, I am made aware of its separateness, its uniqueness, and the limit it presents to what I can know. The attempt to conquer this space that the touch creates is also the attempt to conquer the alterity of the other” (n. pg.). The ethics of touch arise in the respect for the singularity and uniqueness of the other, prompted by the reminder of the boundary of the body. What ethics, what generosity of ethos, can we imagine from a puncturing of this boundary, a puncturing that seems nothing like a gift?

I proceed with caution here, because I do not want to erase the cogent reading that those touched by the vampire are violated and victims of trauma, as in Khader’s reading. But the mythical nature of the vampire lends itself to metaphoricity, and I want to lean on that as I explore the way in which the vampire activates and reflects the alterity already present within the bare life of the body. The vampire’s touch seems like far less of a gift than Arthur’s generous blood donation, to say the least. And while Lucy’s autobiography ends when she becomes a vampire, it is certainly possible to interpret her change in behaviour as an injury, a hetero-hetero-affectation or disaffectation that prevents her from being affected, or being affected in the usual ways, or expressing affection, or even from being a human subject. To be touched by alterity can result in just such an injury, and to

be open to that injury is the condition of being an embodied subject. That is, it is important to understand the underlying ethics that surround touching as it relates to the vampire because affect already assumes the porousness of bodies.

Dracula suggests that Sorial's summary of a philosophical ethics of touch can help us to consider the ethical import of syncope, when an affect touches me and I do not know what me means. To be touched and broken open, gapped, syncopated, and made other to ourselves, full of terrified desire, drained of life, and overwhelmed by possibility, is to become open to unnarratable alterity, or what Massumi calls the "pure potential" and virtuality of affect (*Parables* 98). *Dracula* himself *is* this pure potential: his body is wildly mutable and he has no voice in this text, "the anthropocentric narrative of the members of the 'Crew of Light' and their almost hysterical representation of the vampire's radical Otherness (cultural, sexual, racial, colonial, and economic) as a wholly different species" (Khader 87).¹⁸⁵ As I point out in other chapters of this dissertation, a significant aspect that marks the lineage of affect theory from Baruch Spinoza, through Deleuze and Guattari, to Massumi and Thrift, is summed up in Spinoza's dictum, "no one has yet determined what the body can do" (155). With specific reference to Deleuze's resistance to identity politics and biological essentialism, Thrift glosses the significance of Spinoza to the potential of the uncertain or indeterminate in affect theory, saying that "we really have no idea either what affects human bodies or minds might be capable of in a given encounter ahead of time..." (62-3). Since the vampire is not any one particular form of life, changing from human-like to animal and even to particulate, his fluidity of identity is exemplary of affect's open-ended potential in this regard.¹⁸⁶ Deleuze and Guattari note this about the figure of the vampire in popular culture, which, for them, represents a positively- and ethically-charged loss of self as a figure of affective "becoming," exemplifying the instability and mutability of the self in its encounters with bodies, objects, environments, or temporalities (275). As they put it, affect is "the

¹⁸⁵ Senf, too, notes *Dracula*'s lack of narrative voice in the novel ("Unseen" 162).

¹⁸⁶ Drawing on Giorgio Agamben's theory of bare life and the camp (as in Holocaust), Khader interprets Lucy's conversion to vampirism as a form of bare life, "collaps[ing] the distinctions between the human and the inhuman," and losing the power of narrative in the novel (84-86). Khader does not completely extend this analysis to *Dracula*, who occupies the position of victimizer rather than bare life in Khader's reading.

incredible feeling of an unknown Nature,” and it is the very sense of being unknown that might prompt a feeling of responsibility; it “is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is an effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel” (240). Dracula has been accused of being Other by scholars, as in Halberstam’s reading that the monster of this novel is a technology that produces Otherness as monstrous. The affective vampire, however, embodies an otherness that opens the subject towards the potential of the body itself.

Unsurprisingly (I will point this out at the risk of sounding obvious), Dracula behaves without respect for the singularity and alterity of others. As he touches the bodies of others, he is not reminded of their difference and their distance but instead transgresses the boundary of the body and, sucking the blood of his victims, he takes others in and makes them his own. He becomes a potent figure for thinking through the materiality of affective touching because alterity is not alterity at all for Dracula; it is selfhood. There is no real difference between selves and others, between autoaffection and heteroaffection, between consciousness and nonconsciousness, between temporality and syncope, for the vampire. He speaks in the voice of the other, trying to learn the “English intonation” of speech, and he dresses in Harker’s clothes (Stoker 26, 47). Unlike the heteroaffected subjects of everyday heroism that Massumi writes about, Dracula’s alterity is never contrary to his own self-interest—indeed, his very affective blood runs gold (Stoker 266; Otis 218; Halberstam 104). It is Dracula’s ability to capitalize on that which seems utterly unmanageable—heteroaffection—that is monstrous and compelling.

Dracula’s ability to capitalize on the ethically-charged gift of affect includes the management of feeling. That is, Dracula does not just control his own feeling, an important signifier of morality in the nineteenth century (Glover 77), but he controls the feeling bodies of others *through touching*. He is able to control the wolves that disturb him and Jonathan on their journey to the castle, raising his voice “in a tone of imperious command” and sweeping “his long arms, *as though brushing aside some impalpable obstacle*” (Stoker 20, my emphasis); as a manager of alterity, the Count touches the untouchable. As to the horses who become so disturbed by these wolves, Harker notes that the Count quiets them with touch: “He petted and soothed them, and whispered

something in their ears, as I have heard of horse-tamers doing, and with extraordinary effect, for under his caresses they became quite manageable again, though they still trembled” (18-19). The Count repeats his attempts to soothe and direct through touch when he greets Harker one morning, placing his hand on Jonathan’s shoulder; while the vampire is barely able to control his anger at seeing a rosary, and throws Jonathan’s mirror out the window, the solicitor seems barely perturbed, remarking only that the Count’s actions are “very annoying” (31). Later, when Dracula wants Harker to write to his employer to let him know the solicitor will remain at the castle for the next month, Dracula lays “a heavy hand on [his] shoulder” (37). Suffice it to say, the vampire gets what he wants. While there are certainly other reasons for Harker’s acquiescence, like his fear and his belief that he is the Count’s prisoner, these moments of touching are nonetheless significant for their potential to create intimacy and to comfort, even—and especially damagingly—while they are yoked to the Count’s desire to force another to do something he or she is resisting.

Dracula touches without regard to uniqueness, alterity, or the boundaries of the other. Yet, so do the vampire hunters. Many scholars have pointed out that the vampire hunters behave like the vampire: Senf explains that their apparent goodness is very like Dracula’s supposed evil (“Unseen”); Otis that their communication networks are similar and that the “lunatic and the monster differ from the hunters neither in their desires, nor in their methods, nor in their gory deeds” (208); and Butler accurately points out that Van Helsing is actually Dracula’s competitor for violating the boundaries of the other.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Butler offers a strong critique of Van Helsing, declaring he “stands apart from the rest of his cohorts, calls the shots from behind the scenes, manipulates others like puppets on a string, and makes them carry out his will” (23). Like the Count, he uses touch to manage the feelings of others and direct their behaviour. About to convince Arthur to give blood to Lucy, “Van Helsing slapped him on the shoulder,” saying, “Come!...You are a man, and it is a man we want” (113). The text makes the unethical potential of this touching apparent because, like the vampire’s, it is so potently intimate. Van Helsing uses

¹⁸⁷ See also Kuzmanovic, who writes that “Van Helsing, in spite of his allegedly ‘open mind,’ is the one whose need to diagnose (and thus destroy) Dracula is the strongest” (423-424, n. 9).

touch as a connection between two embodied boundaries and as an affective transmission through that boundary to convince the other hunters that vampires should be killed. As Seward resists what he explicitly calls the need to “mutilate her poor body,” Van Helsing yokes touch to trust: “For answer he put his hand on my shoulder, and said, with infinite tenderness:—‘Friend John, I pity your poor bleeding heart; and I love you the more because it does so bleed...But there are things that you know not...and bless me for knowing’” (149). The tenderness that Seward connects here with Van Helsing’s touch is deployed to secure Seward’s faith in the older man’s knowledge of vampire ritual.

Van Helsing continues to use touch to gain the hunters’ trust in his direction to kill. He “laid a hand on [Arthur’s] shoulder” to convince him to violate Lucy’s body, saying “Brave lad! A moment’s courage, and it is done. This stake must be driven through her” (191). As Arthur’s swoon in this scene already syncopates gender, that same syncopation can be read as a form of resistance to the staking. In an effort to mitigate this resistance, Van Helsing again lays a hand on Arthur’s shoulder to implore, “Arthur, my friend, dear lad, am I not forgiven?” (192). The combination of intimate touching and the language of friendship works in concert to manage Arthur’s feelings. Van Helsing continues this behaviour when he reassures and convinces the hunters, as when Seward seems uncertain whether he is behaving ethically with Renfield. Van Helsing comforts Seward by laying his hand on Seward’s shoulder, saying “in his grave, kindly way:— ‘Friend John, have no fear’” (219). Or when he tries to explain to Jonathan the ways in which Dracula is slowly gaining power, Van Helsing “laid his hand tenderly on his shoulder as he spoke:—“Ah, my child, I will be plain. Do you not see how, of late, this monster has been creeping into knowledge experimentally” (264). Touch, here, confuses comfort and kindness with political expediency, an almost literal velvet glove covering the violence Van Helsing wields. Touch acts to manage the affective animality of the body, offering a new form of what Elsie B. Michie has identified as a need to manage “unruly” post-Darwinian animals who threatened to upend hierarchies of power (145).

In the same way Van Helsing mimics Dracula’s use of touch to manage the other hunters, he and his hunters also act without respect for the singularity of the other. Sorial explains that in Nancy’s work, there is another way in which we violate this singularity—

by speaking for the other, by claiming to know them. “To speak on her behalf,” Sorial writes of the other, “would constitute an ethical closure or would be an injustice to the other because I would have to subsume the other into my own categories in an attempt to understand her” (n. pg.). In language that seems utterly appropriate to *Dracula*, Sorial describes to what this ethical closure might lead:

In abolishing the limit that the other’s body represents, we transform the ‘other’ into an ‘Other,’ and fix the other as either divine, worthy of glorification, or as evil, an Other that must be excluded or exterminated...We are able to inflict cruelty on the Other because it no longer constitutes a point of origin, or a uniqueness” (n.pg.).

Is this not exactly what the hunters do to the Count? After Harker decides the women he meets at Castle Dracula are trying to suck his blood, he attempts to make an escape, searching the Count’s coffin for a key and finding his sleeping body. As Harker touches the Count and is affected by the contact at the boundary of the body, he shudders and, looking at the Count’s “mocking smile,” interprets the kind of threat that Dracula poses not just to himself but ontologically, as “perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst [London’s] teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless” (Stoker 53-54). Just as Nancy and Sorial suggest that the discourse of the other can allow for violence, Harker’s certainty about the Count’s body and what its contact means leads him to decide that the Count is an “Other,” is evil and in need of extermination, and so he “seized a shovel...and lifting it high, struck, with the edge downward, at the hateful face” (Stoker 54). Harker’s desire for violence and his belief in Dracula’s threat is an affective closure and an appropriation of alterity. However, the touch of Dracula’s eyes—the affective touch of the other—seemingly “paralyse” Harker, who experiences a syncope or suspension and cannot complete his murder of the Count (54).

Van Helsing is even more intent on producing a discourse of the other. While he may respect the gift of syncope that King Laugh brings him, Van Helsing is truly a biographer in the most literal sense—a narrator of the biological being, of the ontology of the other. He is the one who describes the divided gender of Mina’s body, her man’s brain and woman’s heart, a narrative about her biological being. In an earlier instance,

when Arthur arrives to his weak and ill fiancée's bedside, he is upset to the point of near fainting (113). However, needing his blood for a transfusion, Van Helsing tells Arthur, "Our nerves are not so calm and our blood not so bright than yours!", and moments later insisting that Arthur's blood is "so pure that we need not defibrinate it" (114). While Van Helsing makes a judgement about the relationship between Mina's behaviour and her biological being—her man's brain is logical and intelligent while her woman's heart is caring and compassionate—he also creates a biological narrative about Arthur that has no apparent relationship to their interaction. He has never met Arthur before, and knows nothing about his medical history. He simply decides, despite material evidence to the contrary, that Arthur has a well-managed nervous system and, with doing no medical testing whatsoever, that his blood is "pure" enough to be immediately injected into Lucy.¹⁸⁸

More dangerously, however, he is also the teller of the vampire biography, a story about bodies and their threats to so-called healthful life that justifies his violence towards them. Without being able to hear Lucy's story from her own lips or her own pen he opens her coffin and touches her, "raising the eyelids and looking at the eyes, and once more opening the lips and examining the teeth" to prove that her body is vampiric and inhuman, declaring that he must "cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and...drive a stake through her body" (179). Not only does this suggestion make Seward shudder, he notably describes the ostensible cure for vampirism as a mutilation (179). This is an incredible leap to make—how certain must one be, how watertight the discursive proof, to be able to justify mutilation? Van Helsing himself offers alternative explanations for Lucy's death as Arthur may see it: "some more mistaken idea that this woman was buried alive; and that in most mistake of all we have killed her" (180). As Natalia Wójcicka has pointed out, Stoker attributed the myth of the vampire to the possibility of mistaking the signs of death and burying someone alive, referencing this

¹⁸⁸ In *Transfusion: Its History, Indications, and Modes of Application* (1883), Charles Egerton Jennings notes that men are often preferable blood donors for transfusion because their blood is "less prone to coagulate" (57); Van Helsing's pronouncement regarding the purity of Arthur's blood echoes this deployment of science to prop up essentialist beliefs. Jennings also notes that "[i]t is notorious that the donor is most prone to faint" (35), and while none of the men in the novel swoon while offering their blood to Lucy, they each lie down to rest after.

contemporary concern in his novel. Although Wójcicka does not refer to it, Guy and Ferrier's text affirms syncope, or fainting, was a state that could look very close to death. All of this is to say that the hunters must take Van Helsing's vampire biography at his word, and that they do so with violent consequences.

Van Helsing discursively produces the vampire body and then decides who amongst them is vampire. So much of what Van Helsing ascribes to the vampire as "cunning," "brute," and "devil" is physiological: he is "so strong in person as twenty men," he can "direct the elements" and "command all the meaner things," he can "grow and become small; and he can at times vanish and come unknown" (209); his only sustenance is blood, he "throws no shadow; he make in the mirror no reflect," "he can transform himself to wolf" and bat and "elemental dust," he can move through any material and "see in the dark," (211). The vampire has a "mighty brain" and "iron resolution" (212), an assessment Van Helsing will later change for no apparent reason to declare that some of Dracula's faculties are underdeveloped—that he has a "big child-brain" (264). Senf has already demonstrated the narrative techniques that Stoker uses to undermine the hunters' righteous mission to destroy the Count. She points out that he omits a narrator's voice in order to "stress the subjective nature of the story which his narrators relate" and even that they "themselves occasionally question the validity of their perceptions," an uncertainty that I have been arguing is an ethical acknowledgement of the distance between self and other ("Unseen" 161). However, it is important to note not just the subjective nature of the hunters' decision-making, but the fact that Van Helsing's decision-making about who may live and who may die and who may be disinterred and brutally mutilated is based on a discourse about the vampire body that suggests in many ways that the vampire might be anyone – might be big or small, look like an animal or a human or a dust mote, might be willful and smart or erratic and childlike.

The idea that the transmission of affect is the gift of being, a gift that comes from outside (or does not coincide with the self) and is strange and unknown, a gift of a moment of syncope that disrupts subjectivity, is the grounds for an ethics that does not come from subjectivity. Syncope is a gift because it allows for being and feeling; because it holds open the possibilities of the body in its responses to other bodies and objects and

moods and stories and ideas; and because its alterity embodies the tension between the self and the other. It is politically crucial that, as embodied subjects, we are first and foremost never quite sure what a body can do. As a character, Dracula is a limit case for affective ethics because his hetero-affective alterity is so completely unknown and because his disruption of subjectivity holds open the possibility of never returning to that subjectivity. Therefore, we can read an ethics of hetero-affectation in *Dracula* as an ethos of generosity towards the possible forms, becomings, expressions, and responses of unknown beings and collectives, made especially clear when characters express uncertainty or attempt to discern the assemblages in which they are caught rather than resorting to a violence prompted by the transgression of affective and physical boundaries.

My use of the term “discern” comes from another theory of the material alterity of affect that is highly relevant for *Dracula*. In *The Transmission of Affect*, Teresa Brennan follows James’s theory of embodied emotions to argue that affects are material, that they circulate in the blood and between people as hormones, and that they appear in nineteenth-century discourse as hypnosis, mesmerism, and crowd theory. For Brennan, the idea that feeling might originate outside of the self is a departure from Freudian analysis that, by her interpretation, locates feeling within the individual subject and therefore available for therapy (12-15).¹⁸⁹ By contrast, affect’s transmission, which might include transformation, requires discernment. Brennan suggests that what subjects can do with the knowledge of affective transmission is account for the forces, bodies, and histories that have shaped the intensity of the moment and influenced its interpretation as a particular emotion, without using that feeling to judge the other from which it is presumed to come, and thus without directing violence or aggression on them. Discernment, we might say, is the narrative expression of an ethos of generosity. For example, while Jonathan’s recording of his own embodied responses and their transmissive context at Castle Dracula in the first section of the novel does not quite

¹⁸⁹ For challenges to Brennan’s reading of Freud, see “Perspectives on Teresa Brennan’s *The Transmission of Affect*,” where Amber Jacobs points out this is a mischaracterization of psychoanalysis (113). In the same article, Kate Flint points to the significance of Brennan’s work for nineteenth-century literature and psychology, including George Eliot’s and George Lewes’s theorizations of the ethical effects of affective transmission.

reach the transformative or utopian level offered by Brennan, his very uncertainty in discernment is generous. We might say that for a while, Jonathan is committed (generously) to giving the Count the benefit of the doubt.

This ethos of generosity is found at its most pure in moments of syncope, in moments where subjectivity is absent. However, we also find an individual representative of this ethos partially in Mina. Despite Mina's insistence that she is not of a fainting disposition, she does indeed faint twice. The first occurs when she is visited by Dracula, who comes to her as a "pillar of cloud" with "two red eyes" (227-228). When his "livid white face" bends over her, Mina is unsure of whether she is asleep or awake, and decides that "in my dream I must have fainted, for all became black darkness" (228). Like Lucy, Mina experiences vampiric heteroaffection as a total break with consciousness and subjectivity, through the alterity of the vampire and her own circulatory system. She faints for the second time in response to Van Helsing's insistence that they must continue to pursue Dracula and find him as soon as possible, despite the fact that the vampire has seemingly lost interest in the group. He delivers his explanation dramatically, seemingly shocking Mina into a faint as he warns her, "Time is now to be dreaded—since once he put that mark upon your throat" (273). Mina collapses as Van Helsing seems to be reminding her that she has a limited amount of time before she irreversibly becomes a vampire. However, by all accounts, Mina already knows this about herself, to the extent that she suggests killing herself before she can harm any one of them as a vampire (254). But when Mina is reminded that because of the violent exchange of blood they will have to hunt down and do violence to the vampire, she loses consciousness. The vampire is no longer a direct threat, but he will be killed because of the frightening heteroaffection he produces through his touch. Mina's faint is a mirror image of the one she experiences at the fangs of the vampire, as though her syncope resists Van Helsing's attempts to decide Dracula's identity and decide it is worthy of death. Mina experiences syncope, and is touched by the absolute alterity of being, at the very moment the lead hunter declares his sovereignty over both her being and the vampire's.

Khader also finds Mina to be an ethical model when she protests the hunters' pursual of Dracula after she drinks the vampires' blood. This scene, in which Dracula is caught "forcing her face down on his bosom" (Stoker 247), has been read alternately by scholars as rape (including forced fellatio) or seduction (Khader 90). Khader argues that their intimacy in this moment includes a slippage between the Self and Other, during which "her willingness to introject the Other" means "Mina becomes open to the radical alterity of the Other" (89). For Khader, Mina's submission to and identification with the vampire means that "[r]ecognizing her intimate connections with the radical Other and the slippages between Self and Other becomes the precondition for bearing an ethical responsibility for the persecutory Other" (90). This responsibility, Khader points out, appears in Mina's uncertainty over why the vampire hunters would continue to pursue Dracula once he has fled. However, if we read the vampire here as *ontologically* other (rather than a singular, identifiable Other), we can update Khader's ethics of radical alterity to include the ethos of generosity inherent in heteroaffection. That is, Mina does not necessarily need to be willing to "introject the Other" in order for us to understand why she is open to the radical alterity of the other. As Malabou and Brennan suggest, affect already *injects*, whether subjects are willing or not. That this moment is followed not only by Mina's resistance to violence but also her faint, which attempts to avoid both narrating the other and participating in violence, further solidifies the relationship between subjective interruption and ethics.

Khader also reads gaps in consciousness and narrative through an ethics of alterity. For Khader, victims of the vampire do not have direct individual access to their moments of trauma, but, in compiling their stories, they do have access "at the collective level" (78). Khader claims that "such a collective project is necessary for working through the trauma" but he cautions that

the novel portrays the risks involved in any collective project that imagines or constructs a community on the basis of trauma, full identification, and the transference process, for such a project may ultimately be founded on the violent obliteration of the victims and their memories, as well as on the violent and xenophobic disavowal of the Other. (78)

Khader makes an ethical case here for preserving narrative syncope, moments that escape narrative while nevertheless allowing for it to proceed. This is indeed what attendance to alterity through heteroaffection allows us to do. We can therefore extend this cogent ethical reading to the context of affective otherness in the scene, an openness to the possibilities of the unknown and the other, including the alterity of the self. When Mina recounts her encounter with Dracula, narrative syncope allows her to remain open to the mystery of her embodied subjectivity in her encounter with the vampire, underscoring the significance of affective strangeness and uncertainty. Affective alterity for Mina includes her circulatory system, as she notes that her “heart sank” when she sees the vampire, and immediately following that her “heart stood still” and she could not scream because she “was paralysed” (251). Trying to describe her affective state, she does not exactly say she is scared, but rather appalled and bewildered, and finally, “strangely enough, [that she] did not want to hinder him” (Stoker 251). As in Jonathan’s narrative, the gaps or syncopations in Mina’s narrative and in her body show how the ethical model of alterity in the novel is not limited to an intimacy with the Other, but also to an attention to one’s own strange feelings and feelings of strangeness, and an uncertainty about one’s own being and the form of the other that has affected it.

Vampiric touching through hypnosis also helps us to determine what an ethos of generosity might mean. After Mina has taken in the blood of the vampire to become heteroaffected in the most material way, drinking the other in, she urges Van Helsing to hypnotize her so she can tell the hunters where Dracula is. Van Helsing understands his hypnotic power to be a form of influence following Charcot’s work (Stoker 171), a belief repeated by Seward (299). Scholars, too, have understood hypnosis be a form of influence, control, or communication; for example, Otis reads hypnosis as a counterpart to Dracula’s vampiric influence and communication.¹⁹⁰ But, as with readings of influence in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, these interpretations are not quite accurate—or at least,

¹⁹⁰ Other examples include Galvan, who points to Mina as an unconscious communication machine in the manner of Victorian beliefs that woman are natural automatons because they are “short on will” (62). Khader calls hypnosis “coerced identification” (90); Thurschwell claims that through hypnosis Dracula “take[s] over the minds as well as the bodies of [his] entranced victims” (37); Moss argues that hypnosis suggests that the self is “shaped by outside forces” (132); and Glover agrees by referring to Carpenter’s reading of hypnotism as control that “bypasses the conscious decision of the mesmerized subject” (78).

they are not the whole story. Mina's hypnosis represents a syncope that opens up her own alterity and her body's part in the vampiric assemblage. She cannot read Dracula's thoughts, as is popularly suggested (for example, by Hilary Grimes [149] and Khader [90]), but is rather open to his affective physiology. She can see what he sees: "nothing; it is all dark"; can hear what he hears: "the lapping of water," "the sound of men stamping overhead," and "the creaking of a chain"; and do what he does: nothing, it is "still," "like death" (Stoker 272). Mina's narrative syncope in her unconscious hypnotic state creates a description of the body that may help the hunters determine that Dracula is on an anchoring ship, but it does not resolve itself into knowledge about the thoughts of the other. Further, there is no epistemological clarity about Dracula's ontological being through Mina's affective connection with him—she is simply touched by the feeling of otherness.

If narrative syncope forms the basis for an ethos of generosity in this novel, then it also eliminates the need for sympathy as it is traditionally understood to form the basis for ethics (as in *The Time Machine*). Indeed, when Mina instructs Jonathan to feel pity for the Count, she herself points out how toothless sympathy is—as compassionate, imaginative feeling for another—in the face of a politics that identifies threatening otherness as worthy of death: "That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all... You must be pitiful to him, too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction" (269). Feeling sympathy for the vampire need not stop Jonathan from killing him. In addition, while Seward's testimony to Van Helsing's "all-embracing sympathy" (Stoker 106) could secure the hunter as a moral authority, Otis points out that "if sympathy means the ability to enter another person's mind, then the most sympathetic figure in the novel is the Count" (Otis 205). An ethos of generosity in this novel is far more difficult than even feeling what another feels or feeling pity for a monster; it is giving when it is impossible to give and being open to (even strange and terrible) others.

Finally, Mina's implication in a hetero-affective ethos of generosity emerges in her position as compiler of the full narrative of the novel. Khader notes that the narratives of the individual victims contain gaps around the traumatic event of vampiric encounter, one that is supplemented by combining narratives to create a more complete memory. Mina's

desire to give Jonathan back this memory in the form of a complete narrative to explain what has happened to him seems on the surface to be an ethical one (Stoker 198-199). Jonathan's syncopated memory from his time with the Count is described by others as brain fever and himself as an "injury to the brain" (156); Malabou writes that for neurologically disaffected patients, "[n]arrative work is a clinical gesture" (*New* 54). However, a biographical narrative risks speaking for Jonathan in an eagerness to heal him. Malabou argues that writing narratives for patients involves discovering "what rhetoric could possibly account for the breakdown of connections, for destructive metamorphosis? And who would write the aphasic's novel [that is, who will write for someone whose brain injury means they cannot]? Who would write the story of losing all affect? *What mirror could reflect a brain?*" (55). *Dracula's* answer is the preservation of the vampire's absence in the mirror—heteroaffection exists simply as narrative syncope, and ethically so. In keeping with this ethics, the novel is nothing but syncopation, an absence of temporal rhythm and authorial consistency. If the text is "a mass of type-writing," containing no "proofs of so wild a story" (Stoker 326-327), it is because writing any autobiography that explains heteroaffection would be to auto-graph not only the self but also the other. As Kuzmanovic notes briefly, "there are signs that Van Helsing wants to turn Jonathan's experience into a 'case,' which needs explaining out and transference emotion in order to be cured" (424 n.9). Not only would this case be Van Helsing speaking for Jonathan, it also functions as an extended attempt to speak for the vampire. Generosity as narrative syncope means accepting that the gift of heteroaffection is other and unknown, and therefore outside of writing, allowing narrative syncope to be not reflective but rather overfull with potential.

5.4. Conclusion

Stiles describes the patchwork form of *Dracula's* narrative—full of anecdotes, letters, journal entries, newspapers clippings, and other media, along with the hunters' commitment to objective and truthful recording—as evidence of a kind of scientific "veracity" (78-79). The very quality that makes the narrative syncopated, that creates nonconscious gaps in the narrative, is also what makes it scientific in Stiles' measure. In the twentieth and twenty-first century, as Malabou points out, cognitive scientists strive

to create a coherent narrative out of their neurologically atypical patients' disaffection. Malabou identifies this narrative style as best exemplified by Oliver Sacks, who "weave[s] the patient's coolness, indifference, and the disintegration of emotion into a narrative intrigue that must not be disaffected itself" (54). Yet, even Sacks' evident compassion for his patients is underwritten by a worrying concern with their so-called soulfulness. Writing about his patient, William, who attempts to "bridge" "abysses of amnesia" with "fluent confabulations and fictions of all kinds" (109), Sacks laments that "if only he could be *quiet*, one feels, for an instant," then "reality might seep in" and "something genuine, something deep, something true, something felt, could enter his soul" (114). William is, for Sacks, the disaffected patient that Malabou has written about, whose "chatter[ing]" hides his lack of affect, his inability to feel (114); even more upsetting, Sacks asks whether the nursing sisters looking after William believe he even "*has* a soul" (113, original emphasis). For Sacks, William's own narrative, syncopated in the sense that his constant talk bridges a gap that would otherwise exist, is not enough to qualify him unconditionally as human, or *as* human as Sacks himself.

Antonio Damasio, another contemporary cognitive scientist, writer of case studies and believer in the idea that ethics underlies neurobiology, similarly attempts to write a dangerous biography for his patient "S". Damasio and his fellow clinicians determine that S experiences disaffection around the emotion fear; that is, she has trouble feeling it and recognizing it (65-67). However, when Damasio attempts to narrate her case, he notes that she is a "tall, slender, and extremely pleasant young woman," with such a "predominantly pleasant attitude" that "[o]thers would say that her approach was excessively and inappropriately forthcoming" (64). Damasio's implicit sexualization of S, with his hint of predatory interest in her inappropriate behaviour—"[m]ake no mistake," he writes, "her behaviour caused no discomfort to anyone" (64)—creates a discourse of otherness that does not vilify S or make her monstrous, but does make her vulnerable as it provides a subjective interpretation of her affective body. Arguing for the significance of social and cultural factors to emotion, Daniel M. Gross points out that not only does Damasio's experiment on S assume a baseline of "normal" judgment without a "statistically valid sample that can be reliably purged of race, gender, age, cultural bias, and so on" (31), "the supposedly generic man" of scientific inquiry "now becomes a

slender woman with boundary issues” (30). “It is as if,” Gross continues, “the racist and anti-Semitic blunders of nineteenth-century physiognomy had never happened” (31-32).

While Massumi eagerly embraces scientific examples as the basis or support for his theories of affect, he also notes the danger of science’s apparent desire to define the monstrous—the process of responding to the affective “surprise” of the unknown world by confirming its monstrosity as recognizable and predictable (*Parables* 233). *Dracula* offers a challenge to science through a surprising alterity that does not respect the limits of the body, and through the representation of violence against the vampires, whose becomings and mutabilities as birds, wolves, or dust particles (to name a few forms) enchant, shock, and interrupt subjectivity, although they are reduced to recognizable sameness and subjected to the most unethical violent touching, staked and beheaded. However, *Dracula* also offers a narrative challenge to cognitive science, making visible the danger of writing for the other, of turning their forms of syncope, their gaps and bridges and interruptions, into a fully affective narrative. Stoker’s novel suggests, if only in its own gaps, that an ethical narrative needs to be uncertain in order to be generous; that a truly ethical narrative, dangerous though it may be, embraces this uncertainty not as pathological damage but as a condition of affective life.

Conclusion

In George Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894), the young washerwoman and nude model Trilby becomes a renowned singer under the tutelage and mesmerism of the musician Svengali. Before this happens, she is ardently pursued by Little Billee, one of three British artists living in Paris. After nineteen refusals, Trilby finally accepts Billee's twentieth marriage proposal, but his joy is short-lived as his mother arrives from England as passionate to halt the marriage as Billee has been to secure it. Mrs. Bagot is horrified that her respectable son might marry a working-class woman who once modeled for artists, and she convinces Trilby to break the engagement and leave Paris. Little Billee protests this injustice vehemently to Taffy and the Laird (the other two Englishmen) in what the novel's narrator describes as a "rampage," during which the "poor boy" goes "tearing and raving about [their Parisian apartment], knocking over chairs and easels, stammering and shrieking, mad with excitement" (196). Although his two friends try to calm him, Billee refuses to be placated, finally, "gasp[ing] and scream[ing]" as he falls "down in a fit on the floor" (197). This loss of consciousness is diagnosed as an epileptic seizure, and its aftermath is brain-fever and a lengthy convalescence. As he recovers, Billee discovers that his illness has created a loss of emotion towards others, as "his power of loving had not come back with his wandering wits...not even his love for his mother and sister, not even his love for Trilby—where all *that* had once been there was a void, a gap, a blankness" (200).

Little Billee's fit, while not exactly a faint, represents an instance of narrative syncope, a transient loss of consciousness that mirrors those I have described in this dissertation. Billee is not usually a focus of scholarly interest in *Trilby*, despite the fact that an entire part of the eight-part novel is devoted almost entirely to him. Attending to his syncope shows us how integral his narrative is to the novel as a whole and, in turn, helps to texture, challenge, and expand our readings of the gendered and racialized body in Victorian culture, and its relationship to sympathy and ethics.

Like many other fainting men, Billee fits Mark Micale's description of the subversively feminine hysterical man; he is a sensitive artist and is repeatedly referred to

as feminine, both in his physical and mental characteristics: he is “small and slender,” “delicate” and “graceful,” with a “girlish purity of mind” (Du Maurier 6, 9). However, these markers of femininity intersect with (rather than cause) the neurology of his syncopal fit. Billee’s loss of consciousness is pathologized as a seizure and he understands his loss of emotion to be a highly material brain injury:

It was as though some part of his brain where his affections were seated had been paralysed, while all the rest of it was as keen and active as ever. He felt like some poor live bird or beast or reptile, a part of whose cerebrum (or cerebellum, or whatever it is) had been dug out by the vivisector for experimental purposes, and the strongest emotional feeling he seemed capable of was his anxiety and alarm about this curious symptom, and his concern as to whether he ought to mention it or not. (212)

The problem of Billee’s lack of emotional attachment here is a physiological one, the implication being that his brain has been materially affected as much as if someone had taken a scalpel to it.

Moreover, Little Billee compares himself to the vivisected “bird or beast or reptile” of neurological studies, both tacitly acknowledging the animal alterity of his affective brain and placing himself in the company of case studies published by nineteenth-century physiologists like Thomas Huxley. That is, this reference suggests that Billee, like the other fainting men in this dissertation, is an automaton. Fiona Coll and others have already established that Du Maurier is exploring and complicating theories of automatism in this novel, but these scholars argue that he does so through Trilby, the “singing-machine” (Du Maurier 441). This approach genders the automaton’s failures of humanness, such as lack of agency and weakness of will.¹⁹¹ While gender is most certainly an important aspect of the novel, it is insufficient as an explanation for automatism. The problem with Billee’s emotions is “a little clot of blood at the root of a nerve” as he puts it (Du Maurier 261). The source of his feelings is, therefore, a malfunction of the organ of the brain, and there is no version here of a masculine, self-

¹⁹¹ See also Rosanna Nunan, Phyllis Weliver, and Jill Galvan.

possessed, volitional, transcendental subjectivity against which to compare Trilby's automatic behaviour.

Along with the “numbness of his affections” (211) and diminished “moral existence” (213), Little Billee experiences an enlarged capacity for generosity to others. Like other fainting men and women in this dissertation, Billee behaves ethically towards others when he is absent to himself. The narrator calls Billee's ethical behaviour “quick, wide, universal sympathy” (230), and it partially mirrors the ethics of ontological generosity that we have seen in *Dracula*. Billee spoils his mother and sister with gifts because “there was never a more generous son or brother than Little Billee of the clouded heart” (227). His “clouded” generosity is supplemental, emerging in the gap between himself and his emotions, and supplementing his autoaffection in order to make him more human. Billee's generosity is that of an automaton who behaves compulsively (in some ways like Lydgate or like the vampire hunters): “He could be as easily demonstrative to his mother and sister as though nothing had ever happened to him—from the mere force of a sweet old habit—even more so, out of sheer gratitude and compunction” (211). To others, too, Billee “became more considerate...in thought and manner, word, and deed than he had ever been before, as though by constantly assuming the virtue he had no longer he would gradually coax it back again” (212). At the same time, one admirer of Billee's admits that “he seemed heartless and capricious; as ready to drop you as he had been to take you up” (232). The text implies there is a difference between being generous and being an individual with the kinds of self-interest and particular feelings towards other individuals that we traditionally associate with generosity (like love), and the second is not needed—in fact, it is a hindrance to the first.

Little Billee's generosity is also excessive and grows beyond his social class, as in his game participation in singing at those “humble gatherings” (230) of the “free and easies” (228) that the working classes frequent; or in the “genial caressing love of his kind,” the “warm contact of his fellow-man at either shoulder and at his back,” whether “on a penny steamer” or “on the yacht of a millionaire” (232). As he travels in a second-class carriage, Billee “sympathetically tak[es] stock of his fellow-passengers, and mildly env[ies] them, one after another, indiscriminately!” (254). This sympathetic stock-taking

sounds in one way like imaginative sympathy for the good of the social—indeed, Billee is reading George Eliot’s realist novel *Silas Marner* on the train. In between reading, he gives up his corner seat so a wife can better care for her husband, and he generally “ma[kes] himself useful and pleasant to his fellow travellers in many ways” (254), so that they come almost to “love him as an old friend” (254). However, calling Billee’s sympathy indiscriminate gives the lie to the idea that it is properly imaginative, an attempt to know the other and their relationship to the self. Instead, Billee’s sympathy is impersonal; it is simply the result of existence.

Billee’s generosity and his extended absence from his self-interest and emotions make visible the gift of heteroaffection. His subjectivity originates in otherness, both in the otherness of a brain with which he feels frustrated (261), and in the generous alterity that will recover his emotions, through the eyes and the voice of sympathetic Trilby (309-310). His experience suggests, too, just how radical this heteroaffected version of generosity might be. Not only does Billee have a lack of “vanity” (212), he is un-self-interested to the point of danger, musing to a canine companion that the best thing of all to do in the ocean is “to lie asleep at the bottom” (261). Rosanna Nunan has already begun to explore Billee’s “deadening of consciousness” by linking it with Trilby’s mesmerized state and finding in both Billee and Trilby evidence of a “subliminal self” that was being theorized at the end of the century (n. pg.). However, Billee’s dangerous lack of self-interest belies the idea that generosity could belong to any sort of self-ness because its origin is in Billee’s brain and his total break with consciousness—when, as Malabou puts it, “an affect touches me but I don’t know what ‘me’ means” (24).

The text’s suggestion that, for Billee, generosity originates in the affective, nonconscious, nonsubjective body has wider implications for the novel as a whole. For example, while Jill Galvan argues that Trilby is a sympathetic medium because her gender predisposes her to lack agency and to channel friendly feeling, Trilby’s syncopal absence of self and her generosity in giving and receiving affect are too alike to Billee’s to be easily explained as a consequence of gender. Moreover, the supposedly evil mesmerist Svengali is also a sensitive automaton, a “bundle of nerves” (Du Maurier 356) who faints at the sight of blood (358). Svengali, like *Dracula* and like the theater manager

in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is represented as Jewish, as animal-like, and as “unclean” (104), and the threat of his mesmeric control encapsulates white Victorians’ racist fears about the threat of Jewish people (Pick, *Svengali’s*). However, mesmerism is about the body and is in many aspects a representation of heightened affect. It therefore need not be (only) understood as a threatening form of mind control. As we have seen in other novels, affect always comes from the other (including the other of the nonconscious body) and all bodies in this novel are affected and affecting. Trilby affects people through her voice while, in an echo of Svengali’s mesmeric practice, she also affects Billee with a look and thereby cures his brain damage. The Laird, too, affects Trilby in a Svengali-like way, insisting on the villainous nature of mesmerism so forcefully that he produces “cold shivers” “down Trilby’s back” along with her “fear and repulsion” of Svengali (73). As Coll explains, “despite the theatrics surrounding Svengali’s mesmeric display, then, it is actually the Laird who does the most ‘impressing’ upon Trilby’s mind in this scene” (759). Finally, it is worth noting that Svengali’s mesmerism begins in generosity when he heals Trilby’s ocular neuralgia by “making passes and counterpasses” on her face and neck (Du Maurier 67-68).¹⁹²

Reading *Trilby* in light of Little Billee’s syncope reveals the nonconscious, affective body to be a space of ethical potential (in this case, generosity) in its orientation toward the other. The novel demonstrates that absolute generosity is an ideal that is ultimately (and quite literally) unlivable—Billee does not care whether he lives or dies and Trilby ends up unable to survive without Svengali. *Trilby* therefore suggests that subjectivity itself involves limiting generosity. On the one hand, the novel holds Trilby up as a cautionary tale to this truth, blighted because she was not able to close her embodied generosity off from the non-British Svengali. On the other hand, Trilby and Little Billee are both models of goodness in the novel. The generous body also gives us another way to see Svengali’s mesmerism as a potential affective gift. This reading in no way erases Du Maurier’s anti-Semitism, but it implies a certain factuality about the ethical potential of the affective, animal, automatic body—of all bodies.

¹⁹² See Hilary Grimes and Fiona Coll for readings that challenge the traditional notion of Trilby as an empty vessel made into a singer by the controlling and evil Svengali.

In *Trilby*, as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Time Machine*, and *Dracula*, syncope is terrifying and pleasurable. It demonstrates that the affective, nonconscious, and nonhuman body is at the heart of subjectivity, and it has an ethics of generosity, uncertainty, and responsibility that emerges in the deconstruction of the nonhuman-human binary. Syncope also deconstructs the biological essentialism of late-nineteenth-century hierarchies of gender and race, revealing the bodies of the Victorians's ideal humans—non-racialized British men—to be as vulnerable, as nervous, as hysterical, as non-agential, and as other as women and racialized people. To be clear, this deconstruction does not undo the violent powers of human exceptionalism and its patriarchal and imperialist forms. Syncope can even be recuperated into that exceptionalism, as *Van Helsing* demonstrates so well. However, deconstructing the basis for that exceptionalism through syncope reveals counter-narratives that acknowledge and, at times, celebrate animality, alterity, wildness, uncertainty, and vulnerability.

In 1899, *The Cornhill Magazine* published Stephen Gwynne's "The Decay of Sensibility," a screed against Jane Austen, the "mortally stupid, confined, narrow-minded society" in which she lived and set her novels, and the "poor creatures" of her books resigned to a life of sensibility—"the attribute which used to display itself by rapturous joy, by copious tears, by hysterics, and principally by fainting-fits" (18-19). Gwynne concedes that Austen (and other authors of hysterical female characters) could only write what she knew, and fainting was it. He explains, however, that sensibility was on the decline at the end of the century as women realized that they needed to employ other tactics to gain power over men. As they had fewer fainting fits and hysterical episodes, by 1899 women were "much less inconvenient" people (30). Gwynne, it seems, has missed the number of men who faint in Victorian novels. Moreover, he is wrong that sensibility is on the decline at the turn of the century—at least, when it comes to male characters.

In fact, British (and Irish) modernist literature is home to many sensitive, responsive men and their feeling bodies. In Henry James's 1908 ghost story "The Jolly Corner," Spencer Brydon faints after an encounter with the apparition of the self he might have been, who turns out to be a complete stranger (188). In James Joyce's *The Portrait*

of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), swooning represents both sexual and spiritual rapture for Stephen Dedalus (114, 174), who also has a “fit” of vomiting and near-fainting after a vision of divine punishment for his sins (159). Similarly, D. H. Lawrence describes the intensity of (often sexual) feeling as swooning in *Women In Love* (1920), in which Rupert Birkin faints after a nude wrestling match with Gerald Crich (308). In E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), the Indian physician, Dr. Aziz, faints after being acquitted of sexual assault against a white British woman (231). Even Lord Peter Wimsey, the detective hero of Dorothy L. Sayers’s novels, faints after being rescued from a bog in *Clouds of Witness* (1927) (204).

Fainting men also appear in American literature through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including in classics like Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842), Charlotte Perkins Gillman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892), many of H. P. Lovecraft’s short stories, such as “The Call of Cthulu” (1928), and in the later post-war novel *The Invisible Man* (1952) by Ralph Ellison. Male swooners also appear in film; some notable examples from the early to mid-twentieth century include the tramp in Charlie Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush* (1924), Freder in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927),¹⁹³ and Scottie Ferguson in Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958). All of these examples suggest that the male body remains a source of both distressing and pleasurable vulnerability beyond the temporal and geographic boundaries of late-Victorian literature. Late-Victorian psychology may have identified and investigated the affective, animal, and automatic aspect of the body, but, as I hope these examples from *Trilby* to *Vertigo* suggest, that aspect deserves further political and ethical analyses through instances of syncope from Victorian literature and beyond.

¹⁹³ Tom Gunning argues that Freder’s fainting fits indicate his femininity and clash with his supposed role as hero (64, 67).

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