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“The word was appropriate to the moment”: Habit, Language Appropriation, and Alienation of Feeling in David Copperfield and The Mill on the Floss

Katlin Kocher

katlin.kocher@student.shu.edu

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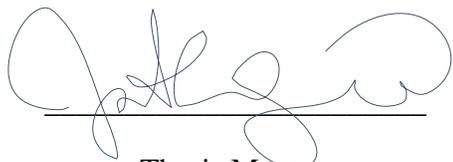
Katlin Kocher

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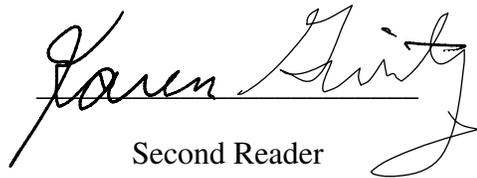
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia', written over a horizontal line.

Thesis Mentor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Ginty', written over a horizontal line.

Second Reader

Abstract

This paper investigates the relationship between memory, language appropriation, and the feeling in George Eliot's novel *The Mill on the Floss* and Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield*. Through analyzing paraphrases and misquotations from myriad characters in each novel, this paper encourages a linguistic community of memory and feeling.

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“Every one of those keen moments has left its trace, and lives in us still, but such traces have blent themselves irrecoverably with the firmer texture of our youth and manhood; and so it comes that we can look on at the troubles of our children with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain.”--George Eliot, from *The Mill on the Floss*

An Etsy search for “George Eliot” produces many results of books, jewelry, prints, magnets, buttons, and other homemade items, many of which feature the quotation “It is never too late to be what you might have been.” Although the phrase has a decidedly hopeful sentiment and these items promote the quotation as the words of Eliot, the phrase never appears in any of her written works. This prompted me to think about the appropriation of language and the way it refracts memory and feelings in *The Mill on the Floss* and Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. Both *The Mill on the Floss* and *David Copperfield* present a narrator who is retelling a story through memory, although they differ as to whether the narrator is retelling an autobiographical story or not. This retrospective attitude cultivates an aura of nostalgia, disorientation, and repetition of thought in each novel, although this attitude is conveyed quite differently. Dickens’s narrator is certainly autobiographical, while Eliot’s narrator is an outsider who pushes a sympathetic view toward Maggie Tulliver. These novels present a fragmented view of memory that mimics the way people think, and yet also expounds these memories as a reflection on the act of reading itself. Misappropriation of language becomes a symptom of misremembering and requalification. This essay will explore the *Mill on the Floss* as a structure of memory reflected through familial connection, community tradition, and narrative pressure; it will then examine *David Copperfield*’s application of a semi-autobiographical narrator, retrospective detail, and habitual tendencies. After looking at these two texts and their individual

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portrayals, the paper will qualify the way these novels become representative of the self and reader as a misquotation of feeling.

The Mill on the Floss cultivates a sense of feeling through the narrator that works as a means of paraphrase. In addition to insisting that the reader maintain a certain feeling or pay extra attention to a specific moment, the narrator paraphrases many of the actions within the novel through the device of free-indirect discourse. These instantiations of feeling are certainly poignant when the narrator makes these direct addresses, but other reflections of the text reveal that the paraphrased material also reveals more to the reader than what the other characters know themselves. As a retrospective story, the narrator is in the process of reimagining the lives of Maggie and Tom Tulliver, but must make serious choices as to what becomes a part of the narrative. In the moments where the reader is directly addressed, the narrator does so in a way that encourages further exploration of understanding feeling for the characters in the novel.

Many scholars have argued that the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* is an unreliable figure who floats throughout the novel only to comment where she deems fitting. Graham Martin more closely examines and argues for the presence of an unreliable narrator in *The Mill on the Floss*. In determining the change of the author from dreamer to involved community member, even going as far to suggest that “Such contradictions within the narrator’s attitude might be plotted along a scale marking the degree of consciousness they appear to suggest. Of the dual relationship with the story as a whole, and of the contradictory handling of childhood, the narrator seems unaware to the point of schizophrenia” (Martin 47). Interestingly enough, while Bodenheimer’s study of Eliot suggests that Eliot was altogether anxious about her writing, Martin comments on her ease of slipping from one narrative style to the next: “Certainly, in comparison with these, *The Mill*’s narrator represents a truly striking access of self-confidence

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on George Eliot's part. We can see this, as it were structurally, in the fact that the narrator is equally at home in Dorlcote Mill, in the business and social activities of St Ogg's and in the cultivated metropolitan world to which the reader is assumed to belong" (Martin 39). Although stating that the narrator borders on schizophrenia seems rather extreme, this novel features a narrator that consistently moves and changes opinions, but also urges for the reader to take on her own perspective.

Although not bearing on schizophrenia, Hao Li's *Memory and History in George Eliot: Transfiguring the Past* urges for communal memory, speculating that the novel's narrator and characters participate in a society where their memories and worth are determined by the community. Li identifies her term to extend beyond the personal, individual memory: "Communal memory' here means forms, both fictional and real, of collective mentality and moral consciousness, shared feelings, manners, rituals, customs as well as verbal expressions, which have evolved over generations. They constitute the deep-running continuity of human life" (Li 1). For Li, personal memory cannot exist without the community; each character must participate in some function of the past and how the communal memory has shaped St. Ogg. She While Li makes a valid point that Eliot draws on tradition and situates her characters in a strong communal environment, her argument overrides individuality. In stating that "If we focus primarily on personal memory, we may overlook her emphasis on communal memory as shaping and giving meaning to personal memory," Li refuses to acknowledge the fact that a character may have their own distinguished feeling or affective memory without precedence (Li 3). This is not to say that history should be kept separate from characters; far from it. Local history is vital to progress in this novel, but it also acts as a deterrent.

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The narrator of *The Mill on the Floss* provides not only the events and details of the Tullivers' lives, but also encourages the novel's reader to take on specific feelings as a result of recalled memory and suggestions for feelings. The reader must determine whether or not he or she should trust the narrator and what is being conveyed, as Graham Martin suggests. Provided that the narrator can be trusted, her interventions signify a particular need to sympathize with Maggie Tulliver and Philip Wakem. Eliot's construction of her letters parallels that of her fiction:

Starting with a defensive assumption about what her reader is thinking about her writing, she proceeds to turn the situation into a dizzying challenge to the reader's power of syntax, from which she emerges triumphant in her ironic historical equation of ancient hieroglyphics with the mundanity of contemporary fabric patterns. There is little for the reader to do but smile and applaud so highly condensed a display. (Bodenheimer 40)

In opening with a declarative statement about what she believes her reader already thinks Eliot immediately urges an opinion onto her reader, which dissuades the reader from contemplating ideas other than what the narrator presents. Through accusing the reader of feeling one particular way, Eliot alienates any sort of individual thought; this forced opinion, with statements such as "If any one strongly impressed with the power of the human mind to triumph over circumstances will contend that the parishioners of Basset might nevertheless have been a very superior class of people, I have nothing to urge against that abstract proposition; I only know that, in point of fact, the Basset mind was in strict keeping with its circumstances" (Eliot 67). Here, Eliot alienates both the narrator and the reader simultaneously; each group only knows what they are being told, although the narrator is the one who holds all of the knowledge. Through constant urges and

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appeals, the narrator's habit of intruding into the narrative to insert whatever information she feels is necessary; it is her determination as to what becomes excessive and insufficient information, and yet she projects her feelings strongly onto the text and projects them as differences of opinion with the reader.

Maggie Tulliver analogously differs from much of her family, especially in comparison to her maternal relatives. In fact, the first mention of Maggie serves as a comparison to Tom in terms of intelligence: "The little un takes after my side, now: she's twice as 'cute as Tom. Too 'cute for woman, I'm afraid...It's no mischief much while she's a little un, but an over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the bigger price for that" (Eliot 12). While Mr. Tulliver flatters himself here in stating that this intelligence comes from his side of the family, it is simultaneously praising and an act of condemnation for Maggie; she is twice as smart as Tom, and yet her capacity for intelligence does not matter because her parents only wish to marry her off. Mrs. Tulliver brushes off this praise as a result of Maggie's inability to complete house chores effectively, and Mr. Tulliver posits that Maggie is "like a wild thing: she'll tumble in some day" (Eliot 12). With this compromise Mrs. Tulliver continues to make a comparison, although this time likening Maggie to her niece, Lucy. Mrs. Tulliver complains, "How can you talk so, Mr. Tulliver? She's too big a gell—gone nine, and tall of her age—to have her hair cut short; an' there's her cousin Lucy's got a row o' curls round her head, an' not a hair out o' place. It seems hard as my sister Deane should have that pretty child; I'm sure Lucy takes more after me nor my own child does" (Eliot 12). Maggie's Tulliver-ness is a problem for her mother, and so Mrs. Tulliver looks to her Dodson-blooded niece as a representation of appropriateness. While Maggie is of Mrs. Tulliver's own blood and her physical presence in the novel has not yet come to fruition, she remains alienated from her introduction in the novel until

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its ending. Maggie does not attempt to conform to her general social surroundings and maintains her dark appearance, and yet Maggie's differences cause others to take notice of her. In *The Mill on the Floss*, distance cultivates interest, the connections between characters, and stronger ties.

The first actual appearance of Maggie arrives as a type of segue from the aforementioned parents' bickering, and continues to alienate her from the rest of the family as an ultimate casting as "other." Mrs. Tulliver again criticizes her daughter: "'Maggie, Maggie,' continued her mother, in a tone of half-coaxing fretfulness, as this small mistake of nature entered the room, 'where's the use o' my telling you to keep away from the water? You'll tumble in and be drowned some day, an' then you'll be sorry you didn't do as mother told you'" (Eliot 12). Here, the novel introduces Maggie as "this small mistake of nature" before she actually gets the chance to speak one word. This mother chastises her daughter in the same sentence as the narrator qualifies Maggie as a mistake, suggesting that there is a certain type to follow and Maggie simply does not fit. A few sentences later, Maggie's appearance parallels that of a horse, as "Maggie was incessantly tossing her head to keep the dark heavy locks out of her gleaming black eyes—an action which gave her very much the air of a small Shetland pony" (Eliot 13). Her actions define physical appearance consistently in this novel. Maggie lacks the beautiful, kept, golden hair sported by her cousin Lucy, and instead revels in her jostled, dark hair and eyes through tossing her head to remain active. She treats her physical body as a changing mass, such as cutting her hair to prove her point of differentiation. Aside from her physical appearance, Maggie also defies her mother's expectations of what a lady should be and causes conflict with her brother, Tom. The narrator offers apologies and sympathy for Maggie and her problems with her mother, but this interaction extends beyond the mother and daughter to characters throughout the novel.

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From the novel's start, the narrator urges the reader to feel what she would like the reader to feel. The narrator has persuasive urges that encourage the reader to believe what the narrator chooses them to, such as "I must urge in excuse for Maggie, that Tom had laughed at her in the bonnet, and said she looked like an old Judy" (51). Here, the narrator "must urge in excuse" for the reader to understand why Maggie is upset and that the reader should be aware of a previous account that is not recorded in the given prose. This command does not allow much room for interpretation, although the reader is certainly free to read however he or she chooses. However, the narrator also contends that, at times, the reader is free to develop their own opinion on matters, "Early in the following April, nearly a year after that dubious parting you have just witnessed, you may, if you like, again see Maggie entering the Red Deeps through a group of Scotch firs" (Eliot 270). In this quotation the narrator relinquishes control over the narrative and couples "you may" and "if you like" together as a suggestion that seems as though it is not required to be taken. While this second example encourages the reader to believe she has some sort of control, the narrator still ensures that the scene plays out and is designed as it is told. The narrator's fluctuating maintenance of control works toward a reflection of memory, but she also breaks control to manipulate sympathy for specific characters.

In addition to control, the narrator awkwardly apologizes for the uncomfortable traits shown by the characters, but insists upon reaffirming these unpolished traits by continuing to apply for and discuss the apology. The narrator's sympathy fluidly transfers from Maggie to Philip Wakem, as the narrator frequently highlights his humpback condition, suffering paternal relationship, and his unfortunate romantic feelings for Maggie as a means of pity. While Maggie already struggles to appreciate herself and understand her feelings, Philip's passivity and helpless ambition portray him as weak:

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Maggie went home, with an inward conflict already begun; Philip went home to do nothing but remember and hope. You can hardly help blaming him severely. He was four or five years older than Maggie, and had a full consciousness of his feeling toward her to aid him in foreseeing the character his contemplated interviews with her would bear in the opinion of a third person. But you must not suppose that he was capable of a gross selfishness, or that he could have been satisfied without persuading himself that he was seeking to infuse some happiness into Maggie's life,—seeking this even more than any direct ends for himself. He could give her sympathy; he could give her help. (Eliot 250)

The narrator insists that the reader will blame Philip “severely” for such passive actions, but also states that he is certainly aware of his choices. Philip's flaccid attitude manifests in negativity when he reveals his romantic feelings for Maggie, although the narrator also asserts “Do not think too hardly of Philip. Ugly and deformed people have great need of unusual virtues, because they are likely to be extremely uncomfortable without them; but the theory that unusual virtues spring by a direct consequence out of personal disadvantages, as animals get thicker wool in severe climates, is perhaps a little overstrained,” as an attempt toward reader sympathy (Eliot 269). Philip's inability to understand the right moment to act causes him to make the grand mistake of continuing to meet with Maggie, which simultaneously compromises Maggie's trust in him after Tom discovers that they have been meeting. Such transplanted feelings illuminate the shifting, forceful memory that results from Eliot's style. Complications of understanding extend beyond that of Philip and Maggie's mind and into previous generations.

The Dodson sisters personify, in an exaggerated form, the narrative habit of apologetic insistence on difference, which further caricatures that of the narrator. The Dodson sisters create

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a system of memory through purchased goods and the continuance of their family line. The familial hierarchy of the Dodson sisters remains a source of pride for the family throughout *The Mill on the Floss*, although the sisters attribute themselves with privileges through further marital connections. The narrator recalls that “There were some Dodsons less like the family than others—that was admitted; but in so far as they were ‘kin,’ they were of necessity better than those who were ‘no kin,’” using the statement as a standard of behavior for the sisters throughout the novel (Eliot 38). This quotation acknowledges that the Dodson family has members that are not necessarily up to the expectations of the family, but that their family name alone sets the family at a higher status than those without the Dodson blood. Maggie and Tom consistently highlight this differentiation within the Dodsons, as the siblings often take after their Tulliver side during their childhood. Eliot takes a step further from acknowledging genetics to problematizing the siblings’ appreciation of their genes, stating “In other respects the true Dodson was partly latent in Tom, and he was as far from appreciating his ‘kin’ on the mother’s side as Maggie herself” (Eliot 38). Not only do the Tulliver children stray from the traditional Dodson values, but they also do not seem to appreciate their family history. The novel highlights “kin” and “no kin” with an apostrophe when describing these issues, which makes for a further reliance on family and inheritance. The Tulliver children should be made to appreciate their history as far as the Dodson sisters are concerned; this discussion of “kin” and “no kin” is appropriated from the sisters themselves and what they assume as being correct. This collective use of “kin” is also individually selfish, as often times the sisters namely protect themselves and their husbands alone instead of the general Dodson line.

While the Dodson family considers its blood to be sacred, the behaviors and attitudes of these family members also hold strong with the traditions they keep. Eliot writes, “A female

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Dodson, when in 'strange houses,' always ate dry bread with her tea, and declined any sort of preserves, having no confidence in the butter, and thinking that the preserves had probably begun to ferment from want of due sugar and boiling" (Eliot 38). These "strange houses" that the Dodson sisters speak of are simply those houses of anyone outside the family or its small social circles; the quotation marks themselves create a barrier from these enclosed words from the surrounding references to the Dodsons. The scare quotes surrounding "strange houses" strikes a distance between the way the narrator uses the quotations and the Dodsons's private usage. While the Dodsons's use of the words within the quotation marks is inaccurate, they do so because they believe they are calling attention to any house that is not their own as being "strange." The narrator appropriates this change with the quotation marks to show the narrator's intimate knowledge of the Dodsons, even as it marks her ironic distance from that usage. The Dodson sisters also create a hierarchy of their own person goods within their own sect of the family; when the Tullivers go bankrupt, the sisters almost refuse altogether to aid their sister in purchasing back the lost goods. The sisters maintain a level of distance from all other families, and particularly fight against the Tullivers: "Still, it was agreed by the sisters, in Mrs Tulliver's absence, that the Tulliver blood did not mix well with the Dodson blood; that, in fact, poor Bessy's children were Tullivers, and that Tom, notwithstanding he had the Dodson complexion, was likely to be as 'contrairy' as his father" (Eliot 52). Here, the Dodson sisters highlight the fact that Mr. Tulliver is "contrairy," and associate the mixed blood with negativity. In discussing family genetics, the Dodson sisters align Mr. Tulliver's contrariness with something that is passed down from one generation to the next, and yet choose this specific quality to talk about as lineage.

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Mrs. Pullet's hypochondria also functions as a habit that forces her to frequently visit the doctor. This constant visitation puts Mrs. Pullet under the impression that she has a close relationship with the doctor, and as such assumes she can reproduce his language as well as his sentiment. She boasts that "I told him there wasn't as many months in the year as I wasn't under the doctor's hands. And he said, 'Mrs Pullet, I can feel for you.' That was what he said—the very words. Ah!" sighed Mrs Pullet, shaking her head at the idea that there were but few who could enter into her experiences in pink mixture and white mixture, strong stuff in small bottles" (Eliot 51). Here, Eliot subverts Mrs. Pullet's feelings onto another man who is concurrently involved and indifferent to her body; her doctor must know her intimately with so many meetings and prescriptions, and yet he is not a relation and, as a result, is not very close with Mrs. Pullet. She latches onto this expression of feeling, "Mrs Pullet, I can feel for you," and exclaims over the connection to her daily personal habits and consumption. Her repetition of the doctor's exact words, which she is quick to note, echoes the doctor's own sarcasm; moreover, this repetition reveals that Mrs. Pullet is also oblivious to the doctor's meaning. Although Mrs. Pullet directly quotes her doctor, she falters in translating his frustration at seeing her so frequently for no actual reason; instead, Mrs. Pullet believes that his admission cultivates sympathy and feeling as opposed to annoyance and irritation. As with the narrator's quotation of the Dodsons's "strange houses," Mrs. Pullet's quotation of her physician underscores the lack of understanding between her and her physician, the quoter and the quoted, rather than testifying, as Pullet and the narrator both seem to intend, to attest to greater intimacy, sympathy, or understanding between them. Again, quotations concomitantly betray misunderstanding precisely as they are repeated proudly to demonstrate understanding.

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Although Mrs. Pullet, Mrs. Deane, Mrs. Tulliver, and Mrs. Glegg no longer bear the Dodson family name, the women expect each other to act in accordance with their practiced habits. The behavior of these sisters perpetuates the family's memory, but also entrenches the women in a cyclical maze that fights change. This problem with change becomes evident when Mrs. Glegg complains to Mrs. Tulliver about the altered time for dinner: "I never *did* eat between meals, and I'm not going to begin. Not but what I hate that nonsense of having your dinner at half-past one, when you might have it at one. You was never brought up in that way, Bessie" (Eliot 47). Mrs. Glegg conditions herself to eating and performing other acts at specific times of day, and this interruption in her normal schedule causes conflict. The women resist change by any means possible and attempt to live in their memories forever, especially through their practice of buying goods and preserving them for decades. The persistence of memory encourages these women to live in the past, and yet their reliance on family proves weak when another sister falls into trouble. Mrs. Tulliver's marriage, just as that of her sisters' marriage, does force her to make adjustments in her schedule according to her new husband, although Eliot allots that:

Few wives were more submissive than Mrs Tulliver on all points unconnected with her family relations; but she had been a Miss Dodson, and the Dodsons were a very respectable family indeed,—as much looked up to as any in their own parish, or the next to it. The Miss Dodsons had always been thought to hold up their heads very high, and no one was surprised the two eldest had married so well,—not at an early age, for that was not the practice of the Dodson family. (Eliot 37)

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Although the language concedes that “she had been a Miss Dodson,” implying that she is no longer a Miss Dodson, Mrs. Tulliver still aims to maintain the presence of her former family name. Through marriage, the Dodson sisters almost become a new person: however, the constant expression of their person as “had been a Miss Dodson” enables a stake in the past and prevents the no-longer-Miss-Dodsons from experiencing the present or the future. They remain entrenched in the past and are incapable of acknowledging the present, but also enables them to avoid the inevitable future. To recognize this familial connection more than their current marital ties operates as a means of misquoted identity, and failure to maintain coherent memory in that the fixation on the past becomes a hazy regiment that only seems as though it should be the way of living. The Dodsons misapply and misunderstand their current lives in their new marriages, which defers their understanding of the present for future reflection.

Although the Dodson sisters remain in the past while living in the present, their children gain the ability to understand what it means to live in the present; as a result, Maggie, Tom, and Lucy become attuned to their families and the responsibility of maintaining relations with both their family history, but also developing a sustainable future. When Maggie and Tom reach adulthood, Maggie’s capacity for feeling and expression expands and develops more outlets to expose her inappropriate behavior. She becomes the love interest in part of a love triangle between Philip Wakem and Stephen Guest, who is already courting Maggie’s cousin Lucy Deane. When she arrives at Dorlcote Mill from her ill-fated boat ride with Stephen, Tom chastises Maggie and calls her disgraced, but she rebuts him stating “‘Tom,’ said Maggie with more courage, ‘I am perhaps not so guilty as you believe me to be. I never meant to give way to my feelings. I struggled against them. I was carried too far in the boat to come back on Tuesday. I came back as soon as I could’” (Eliot 392). Maggie attempts to discuss her feelings

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with Tom, but he again rejects her; it is only Mrs. Tulliver who stands by Maggie within the immediate family, insisting that “‘You’ve got a mother’” (393). Soon after, Tom is reminded by Lucy of what it means to be part of a family, even though she has been hurt by the scandal caused by the boat ride: “If you were not to stand by your ‘kin’ as long as there was a shred of honour attributable to them, pray what were you to stand by? Lightly to admit conduct in one of your own family that would force you to alter your will, had never been the way of the Dodsons” (Eliot 403). Again, the word “kin” resurfaces and is offset by the quotation marks, this time specifically mentioned by Lucy instead of a narrator or Dodson sister. This distinguished mention of the family asserts Lucy’s blamelessness of Maggie, although she still is hurt by the news. Maggie understands what it means to be part of her family in the present, unlike the attitude of her mother and aunts; she expresses her anxieties to elucidate forgiveness, but instead becomes most forgiven by her mother and aunt. Lucy’s appropriation of “kin” shows a transformation from her family’s past, and yet also connects her with her mother and aunts as a reparative gesture.

The narrator also chimes in to discuss Maggie and Stephen’s scandalous behavior, observes that “It was soon known throughout St. Ogg’s that Miss Tulliver was come back: she had not, then, eloped in order to be married to Mr. Stephen Guest—at all events, Mr. Stephen Guest had not married her—which came to the same thing, so far as her culpability was concerned. We judge others according to results; how else?” (Eliot 396). Maggie herself exudes her feelings, but the narrator complicates this vision through perpetuating the community of gossip; St. Ogg’s is a very small town, and public opinion becomes a matter of strict importance. While the town and narrator begin a conversation of gossip featuring Maggie, the only importance that Maggie concerns herself with is the feelings of others. After receiving a letter

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from Philip describing the conglomeration of feelings shared by himself, Stephen, Maggie, and Lucy, Maggie breaks down and exclaims ““O God, is there any happiness in love that could make me forget *their* pain?”” (Eliot 408). Instead of focusing on herself, Maggie projects her concern externally. She does not want her cousin, brother, or friends to be bothered with any sort of unhappiness, particularly concerning romantic love.

While the aforementioned scholarship on *The Mill on the Floss* dwells on communal memory and an unreliable narrator, many critics of Dickens argue over narrative and feeling within *David Copperfield*. Nicholas Dames’s *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810-1870* argues for a generated nostalgia and freeing of a culture from its past, while simultaneously dwelling and reveling in the previous moment; this directly combats Hao Li’s earlier observation of Eliot. In stating that “The nostalgic moment is the sign of a culture freed from its past, freed from consequences and resonances, prepared for the perfections of the future,” Dames urges for a wider definition of memory or the lack thereof (Dames 6). To be free from the past or any additional palimpsests, Dames argues, is to create a system of choice as to what is recalled and what is forgotten. In his chapter concerning *David Copperfield*, “Associated Fictions: Dickens, Thackeray, and Mid-Century Fictional Autobiography,” Dames debates the chosen associations David makes in recalling his life story. Although Dames asserts that “What this logic hinges on is the notion of pleasure: what is pleasurable to recall will be recalled, while the unworthy or painful will erase itself,” it should also be stated that *David Copperfield* also relies heavily on negative recollection (Dames 6). Through arguing that nostalgia is as “much self-definition as memory; it consists of the stories about one’s past that explain and consolidate memory rather than dispersing it into a series of vivid, relinquished moments, and it can only

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survive by eradicating the ‘pure memory,’ that enormous field of vanished detail, that threatens it,” Dames conditions his criticism through examination of retrospect and choice (Dames 4).

Audrey Jaffe more closely examines the narrator’s omniscience in the works of Dickens in her book, *Vanishing Points: Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience*. In stating that “What we call omniscience can be located, that is, not in presence or absence, but in the tension between the two—between a voice that implies presence and the lack of any character to attach it to, between a narratorial configuration that refuses character and characters it requires to define itself,” Jaffe teases out the concept of a new voice, particularly one that pertains to fictional autobiography (4). Jaffe discusses the power of formation of characters as an individual act, stating “To be a character in *David Copperfield* is to be formed, and to be formed, as Clara Copperfield’s fate alone would demonstrate, is to be subjected to another’s vision, another’s narrative” (Jaffe 116). This argument moves Li’s argument for communal memory into an interesting conversation: through the omniscient narrator, only one form of characterization is allowed to exist; the reader is denied a communal formation of character and instead must comply with what is given. This aspect of community is somewhat met when Jaffe places the narration into the wider context of Victorian ideology: “While expressing a distinctively Victorian anxiety about knowledge, then, omniscient narration is also in the business of constructing the knowledge that shapes Victorian ideologies, affirming for readers what appear to be truths of character and private life” (Jaffe 9). Jaffe’s examination allows for a means of studying the alienation of feeling through the narrative style, although this paper will discuss how awkward, misremembered, retrospective quotations serve as a means of alienation of feeling, but also claims to be intimate with those the narrator quotes or paraphrases as a result of mimicking speech.

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In *The Pleasures of Memory: Learning to Read with Charles Dickens*, Sarah Winter recalls both Dickens as a living celebrity and as a writer deeply embedded in associationism. In temporally situating the theory, she writes “Within Dickens’s lifetime, associationism changed from a dominant to a residual psychological theory that nevertheless persisted in Victorian popular culture as a commonsense view about the relation between memory and both personal and social identity” (Winter 16). The concept of associationism is completely interwoven with memory, but she also argues for the reflective nature of social conditions. In writing that “Memory is essential to imagination because it supplies the ideas and impressions that these creative activities work upon,” this idea becomes particularly important when considering *David Copperfield* (Winter 41). Dickens’s novel relies entirely on the secondhand information received and spoken through a singular narrator; surely this narrator has an active memory, but he also relies on his imagination in redeveloping the world of his past. The narrator’s past becomes part of a community conversation in that “The associative powers of memory extend outward from individual minds to social life through discourse, so that thinking and reading also function metonymically as forms of social connection” (Winter 18). While this pertains to the act of reading and the relationship between author and reader, this idea also concerns the relationship between the narrator and the reader alone. A novel such as *David Copperfield* relays countless social connections, but also forms another connection with the reader through the reiteration of memory.

David Copperfield presents a narrator who shares and processes the recollection of his life history through describing external actions and a series of meaningful events. Copperfield’s mind works on a changing scale, as Nicholas Dames argues that “That is, David’s recollections

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are set in a context of past-and-future concatenation; his memory flips backward and forward, cross-referencing and indexing his mnemonic data” (Dames 145). Occasionally the narrator confronts the reader with his feelings, but more often than not the events are described as he remembers them. This recollection is cause for concern due to the retroactive telling of events; David Copperfield is a much different man than he was as a boy, and yet he mixes his feelings and responses with influence of both past and present. This almost Wordsworthian reflection on time complicates the narrative because of this acknowledgement of the past, although Copperfield also remains conscious of the fact that his storytelling has holes. In discussing the start of his mother's courtship, Copperfield confesses that “Whether it was the following Sunday when I saw the gentleman again, or whether there was any greater lapse of time before he reappeared, I cannot recall. I don't profess to be clear about dates” (Dickens 33). Similar to the narrator of *The Mill on the Floss*, Copperfield confesses an apology for factual errors. This lack of clarity in time suggests that what remains important is the actual occurrence and relations in life rather than things that can be entered into a system frame. The novel continues to focus on people, actions, and feelings without acknowledging specific chronological information. Nicholas Dames suggests that memory and imagination function as a system of cultural development, stating “How can this blatantly retrospective—and finally very *wordy*—text be engaged in forming only bound memories, only those recollections that are relevant, concordant, and integral? *David Copperfield's* status as a text of complete and detailed memory, after all, has only been strengthened by its place in the early memories of so many of its readers” (Dames 140). While the narrative does move chronologically throughout David's life story, the events are not strapped down by dates. Instead, time progresses as a series of events and feelings. What this focus on content and admission of possible mistakes implies is that the fictional

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recollection of memories becomes the most important feature of the narrative, not the “real” or “actual” events that are remembered.

In describing the general happenings of his birth, the narrator compacts Time and jumps ahead to the aftermath of his birth, stating that “I was born with a caul” (Dickens 13). He continues to affect this memory with specific observations, stating that “I was present myself, and I remember to have felt quite uncomfortable and confused, at a part of myself being disposed of in that way. The caul was won, I recollect, by an old lady in a hand-basket, who, very reluctantly, produced it from the stipulated five shillings, all in halfpence, and twopence halfpenny short” (Dickens 13). In telling the story of his caul, he also quickly relays that of a seemingly unimportant old woman. He attributes her with specific language, stating “she, to the last, expressed her indignation at the impiety of mariners and others, who had the presumption to go ‘meandering’ about the world...She always returned, with greater emphasis and with an instinctive knowledge of the strength of her objection, ‘Let us have no meandering’” (Dickens 14). While this woman is both connected to him through possession of the caul, she is also completely unrelated as any other relation. However, David immediately thinks back on her signature statement and reprimands himself in his neglecting to move entirely chronologically throughout his life: “Not to meander myself, at present, I will go back to my birth” (Dickens 14). He later calls attention once more to his stopping the story to remark that:

I might have a misgiving that I am ‘meandering’ in stopping to say this, but that it brings me to remark that I build these conclusions, in part upon my own experience of myself; and if it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong

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memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics.

(Dickens 25)

This repetition of “meander” and “meandering” does not move beyond the first two chapters, and yet he calls specific attention to the appropriation of the old woman’s phrase through his quotation marks. By offsetting the word with this punctuation, the narrator calls attention to the specific connotation with the old woman; instead of simply meaning “to wander aimlessly; to follow a circuitous course” (“meander, v.”), the word takes on a specific warning not to behave this way. In again calling attention to his keen observational skills, David reiterates that he will not meander through describing his life, and yet proceeds to do this exact task.

Over the course of Copperfield’s autobiography, he admits to making mistakes of memory or the instability to recreate a moment exactly as it happened. However, Copperfield also relies on the memories and stories that others have contributed, such as the novel’s opening scene of his birth. Forster argues for a lapse in need for minute observational detail, in that:

It seems almost too much to assert of a child, say at nine or ten years old, that his observation of everything was as close and good, or that he had as much intuitive understanding of the character and weaknesses of the grown-up people around him, as when the same keen and wonderful faculty had made him famous among men. But my experience of him led me to put implicit faith in the assertion he unvaryingly himself made, that he had never seen any cause to correct or change what in his boyhood was his own secret impression of anybody, whom he had had, as a grown man, the opportunity of testing in later years. (Forster 1.17)

Copperfield must relay this information to the reader from what has been told to have happened; surely Copperfield is present at his own birth, but his consciousness and psychological

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development could not be fully realized. The first lines of the novel suggest the narrator's ambiguous opinion on life:

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. (Dickens 13)

The novel again leaves out an actual date from the description, leaving only "a Friday" as a place marker for a specific date, let alone a year. These first sentences also introduce the fact that this information is described to him retrospectively, and furthermore implies that to trust the narrator means for the reader to trust those consulted sources. To say that "(as I have been informed and believe)" and "It was remarked that" indicates that the narrator trusts this outside information and relies upon its being the truth. Two pages later, the narrator again calls attention to the adherence to the senses of others over those of his own: "This was the state of matters, on the afternoon of, what I may be excused for calling, the eventful and important Friday. I can make no claim therefore to have known, at that time, how matters stood; or to have any remembrance, founded on the evidence of my own senses, of what follows" (Dickens 15). Through discussing the senses of others, in this case because of the mental impossibility and memory of a newborn, Copperfield calls to attention the fact that all of this information comes from others, which further implies that he should not be blamed if anything proves to be false.

Mr. Dick's attempt at creating a biography of King Charles the First perpetuates a physical and verbal tick, particularly in conversation with David. In his attempt to memorialize the Lord Chancellor, Mr. Dick understands that history is unchangeable, and yet still attempts to

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manipulate the language and ends up weaving in “King Charles the First.” In asking David when King Charles the First was beheaded, David responds with the correct year only for Mr. Dick to respond “So the books say; but I don’t see how that can be. Because, if it was so long ago, how could the people about him have made that mistake of putting some of the trouble out of *his* head, after it was taken off, into *mine*?” (Dickens 212). Betsey Trotwood later explains to David that ““That’s his allegorical way of expressing it. He connects his illness with great disturbance and agitation, naturally, and that’s the figure, or the simile, or whatever it’s called, which he chooses to use. And why shouldn’t he, if he thinks proper!” (Dickens 215). In transferring himself into his writing, whether purposeful or not, Mr. Dick pushes his “madness” into that of another body; in this case, the other body is a body of text. Through writing his mentality into the Memorial, Mr. Dick transposes his memories into that of another man while thinking that he is doing this work for another. This appropriation of his own memories and feeling that is used to describe the life of another is determined by Mr. Dick as to what is “proper,” allowing for his feelings to be mediated and combed through.

Mr. Dick’s penchant desire for memorializing King Charles I becomes a translation of memory and narration. Much of this work relishes in excessive feelings and pessimism rather than maintained alienation and detachment, as might be helpful in writing biographically about someone who one has never met. Rosemarie Bodenheimer examines tangible letters and diaries of Eliot in her book, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*, as a means of connecting the author with her fiction. In her second chapter “Constructing the Reader,” Bodenheimer examines the letters of Mary Ann Evans and Charlotte Brontë to determine a connection between author and woman. Through examining visible change of handwriting and content, specifically apologies for poor handwriting and defensive content,

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Bodenheimer exclaims, “It is remarkable how often such apparent self-criticism or discouragement becomes turned through exuberant writing into a vehicle for self-creation. The passage is an attempt to do what it complains of being unable to do: it fuses those fragments of reading and knowledge through an act of linguistic metamorphosis” (39). Bodenheimer also writes on the process of reading letters and who reads them, Eliot’s religious controversies with her family, Eliot’s choice to elope, and politicized place as a popular female writer in the nineteenth century. Although this book focuses on the letters of George Eliot, her letters mirror her narrator and that of *David Copperfield*, as well as characters like Mr. Dick. Each narrator apologetically calls attention to their inability to capture moments just as they would like, just as Mr. Dick struggles to characterize King Charles. In translating the body into text, Mr. Dick shades the narrator in a way similar to the Dodson sisters’ relationship to the narrator in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Micawber likewise functions as a perpetuation of paraphrased persona through his need to be remembered, specifically through his letters and signatures. The first letter from Micawber describes a series of debts and problems that he has contracted, states that “This is the last communication, my dear Copperfield, you will ever receive,” and then presents the signature on staggered lines as:

From

The

Beggared Outcast,

WILKINS MICAWBER. (Dickens 274)

This format continues with every other letter that he sends to David, with the exception of one letter that calls attention to this alteration in signature in writing a quotation from Thomas Gray’s

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poem, “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard and stating “—With the plain Inscription, WILKINS MICAWBER” (Dickens 718). This letter is designated “Most secret and confidential” before attending to the rest of the letter, which concerns the reveal of Uriah Heep’s misdoings. Micawber forms his letters almost always as a request for help, but also ensures that he and his memory are preserved through the conscious signing of the letter with artistic flourish and drawn out modifiers. In other instances, Micawber attaches himself to his letters in signing off as “On / One / Who / Is / Ever Yours, / WILKINS MICAWBER,” “Remain, / Of / A / Fallen Tower, / WILKINS MICAWBER,” and finally, “The / Eye / Appertaining to / WILKINS MICAWBER, / Magistrate,”¹ (Dickens 536, 708, 877). These staggered words prolong Micawber’s presence and call attention to each and every word individually; a separate line is reserved even for simple words, such as “A,” “Of,” and “Is,” distributing equal importance to all words. His extension of the signature builds up his name, but also comes to be expected as Micawber spreads his moniker as well as his language itself. Micawber’s letters often only indicate one or two thoughts, but he builds them up with extraneous wording and then couples the sentences with an overly long sign off.

Although Wilkins Micawber engrains himself into his letters, his character is much more than a signature on a page. Dickens’s novel suggests that form is a structured mode of reproduction, and while the content can be altered, the form is unchanging. This form takes on the structure of quotations; throughout this paper, I have demonstrated various changes in appropriated quotation, but they often demonstrate similar form. For Micawber, he constructs his idea of the self through misappropriating his form of the signature. His signatures work toward a conscious nostalgia for the future, one that attempts to forget and avoid present

¹ Here, slashes are inserted to indicate where Micawber’s signature moves to the next line and is indented.

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concerns, like the mentality of the Dodson sisters, but also a nostalgia that cultivates a desire for the best. While Micawber has yet to have much success in his life, he still looks on toward the future with optimism and, somehow, a specific kind of nostalgia. He categorizes the means by which he will achieve happiness, suggestive of Dames's notion that "Nostalgia is, as I have claimed, is largely a function of disconnecting and naming; and it is no accident that the phrenological diagram, with its diverse, isolated, and taxonomized attributes, is one of the book's recurrent images" (15). Micawber associates happiness with money and success, but also that of friendship and kinship with people like David. Micawber's signatures become a legitimate formal aspect of the novel, just as that status of the quotation, and as Winter suggests, "The mental coherence postulated by associationism also means that thought becomes highly formalized, a quality that nevertheless does not detract from the mind's ability to range freely" (Winters35). In attempting to cultivate the self, Micawber makes his signatures more structured and detailed, if not more ridiculous, but they become associated with his character's need for upward mobility, paralleling the idea that "Just as nineteenth-century associationism promised to cleanse the eighteenth-century associative mind of its scattered madness, so Dickens's fictional autobiography reworks the architecture of a personal past to construct a more organized, more classified, more coherent self" (Dames 148). Sarah Winter associates memory with formal aspects of language, claiming, "Memory ensures retrieval of the connections between particular past thoughts and the specific words that signify them, not only for an individual but also for the entire linguistic community" (Winter 44). Although this is not Micawber's autobiography, he intrudes into David's life as a means of improving his own self, but also as a way to keep the memory of his person alive and thriving.

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In consistently speaking and writing the phrase “in short,” Micawber’s conversations become paradoxically longer while affecting to be abbreviated. In first meeting Micawber, David learns that Mr. Murdstone has arranged for David to live with him: ““I have received a letter from Mr. Murdstone, In which he mentions that he would desire me to receive into an apartment in the rear of my house, which is at present unoccupied—and is, in short to be let as a—in short,’ said the stranger, with a smile and in a burst of confidence, ‘as a bedroom—the younger beginner whom I have now the pleasure to’” (Dickens 167). In verbalizing his habitual “in short,” twice in this case, Micawber gains confidence in introducing himself to young David Copperfield. This phrase acts as a crutch for Micawber, as he uses it as a filler for conversation in which he does not feel entirely comfortable. “In short,” however, also acts as a means of paraphrase itself; in attempting to describe something more immediately, Micawber attempts to shorten his message and instead finds himself elaborating further than necessary. Dickens’s employment of habitual characterization has been studied for quite some time, notably by Athena Vrettos and Sarah Winter. Sarah Winters also argues that “A serial memory is formed by interconnected verbal and visual elements, including sensations and ideas. Any element of such a chain of associated images, if it comes to mind through recollection or imagination, will unleash the entire series or cluster of associations” (Winter 16). Dickens’s characters are reflective of his own memorization skills concerning public speaking, as he instills consistent traits: “These memory techniques involved both mental visualization and gesture” (Winter 36). In breaching the worlds of the novel and public speaking, Dickens ties various memories into different genres that require a need to be remembered.

Like Micawber’s need to be remembered and useful, Uriah Heep establishes his character through his self-quotation and reliance on the same idioms throughout the novel. Uriah Heep

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alienates himself through his attempt to be remembered as a successful man who has improved his social position, and it is this alienation that backfires and ultimately causes him to be retained in prison at the end of the novel. Although he attempts to attach himself to Mr. Wickfield and Agnes, the excessive attitude that he performs the task causes him to fail. His overbearing probes into the quality of the relationship of David and Agnes puts David on the defense toward Uriah; instead of keeping his feelings to himself, he overshares and establishes his desire to marry Agnes and control the Wickfield practice so much so that he alienates himself from achieving genuine feeling for or from others. Upon first meeting Uriah, David compares him with black magic, recalling that “I caught a glimpse, as I went in, of Uriah Heep breathing into the pony’s nostrils, and immediately covering them with his hand, as if he were putting some spell upon him” (Dickens 229). In this meeting, Uriah declares his purpose in that “I was engaged for a moment, but you’ll excuse my being busy. You know my motive. I have but one in life” (229). Uriah attempts to distract his ulterior motive of taking over the practice by appearing busy and pretending to be helpful, but David is able to later see through the disguise. David’s general first impression of Uriah is one of discomfort and claustrophobia, which foreshadows the events to come.

Uriah often calls attention to his humbleness similar to the way Micawber refers to the shortening of his speech, although he does so in a way to entreat compliments, stating, “I am well aware that I am the umblest person going” and “I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I’ve got a little power” (244, 581). These excerpts are just two of many habitual linguistic utterances from Uriah, but they also echo in his mother. At one point, he becomes bold enough to insinuate that he can finally transcend his profession into becoming an actual member of the Wickfield through joining with Agnes, interjecting that “To be her father is

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a proud distinction, but the be her usband—“ (582). This indication causes Mr. Wickfield to spasm and others to recoil against the idea; Uriah crosses the line between the professional and the personal, and as a result completely isolates himself from the business. After Heep is finally caught in his lies by Micawber, he is punished through the penal system, and yet he again puts on a façade of trust in order to receive preferential treatment. Uriah Heep is not necessarily punished for his domineering ambition, but he is unable to exist as a genuine being. For Dickens, character depends on the ability to quote themselves; unfortunately for Uriah, his self-quotation proves fruitless and collapses on itself due to his inability to sustain his genuine language.

The narrator toys with the function of language often throughout the novel. In an early conversation between Betsey Trotwood and Clara Copperfield, the narrator inflects language visually and through dialogue tags that further isolate phrases, but also work as a means of free indirect discourse. The women discuss the subjects late Copperfield's teachings to Clara: “‘About keeping house for instance,’ said Miss Betsey. ‘Not much, I fear,’ returned my mother. ‘Not so much as I could wish. But Mr. Copperfield was teaching me—’ (‘Much he knew about it himself!’) said Miss Betsey in a parenthesis” (Dickens 20). Here, Betsey's interjection is not only written to include parentheses, but is described as being spoken “in a parenthesis.” Betsey is of course making a snide comment on her late brother's mannerisms and quality of teachings, but the language suggests distaste for this type of speech and the need to isolate it. To describe something as being spoken of “in a parenthesis” intimates a bracketed, quieted phrase; while Betsey is certainly not shy about voicing her opinion, to speak in this way suggests that she reveres the memory of her brother and his chosen wife, whether she agrees with his decisions or not. Instead of simply leaving the parenthesis, which are already consumed by the reader, the

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narrator pushes on the tone of Betsey and calls attention to the grammatical structure of the phrase.

Dickens first introduces Betsey in memorable conversations with the doctor waiting on Clara Copperfield. Of the doctor, Dickens writes, “It is nothing to say that he hadn’t a word to throw at a dog. He couldn’t have *thrown* a word at a mad dog. He might have offered him one gently, or half a one, or a fragment of one; for he spoke as slowly as he walked; but he wouldn’t have been rude to him, and he couldn’t have been quick with him, for any earthly consideration” (Dickens 21). While this doctor is certainly “the meekest of his sex, the mildest of little men,” he is also denied the ability to “throw a word” at a dog, let alone a person (Dickens 21). This robbing of linguistic agency removes the doctor from exposing genuine feeling; in not having the permission to play with language, the doctor can only act the role that he is ascribed by the narrator. However, this also comes with the price of informing Betsey Trotwood of the baby’s sex, which is another matter clearly defined in language and pronouns. Names and naming in this novel garner the ability to exercise power over another person, although it seems that “Every character in *David Copperfield* has multiple names. Richard Babley is called Mr. Dick to his face, and Mrs. Markleham is called the Old Soldier behind her back. Steerforth is misremembered as Rudderford,” to name just a few (Bottum 435). However, characters in this novel become very much attuned to their name and its place in the social sphere, as “in *David Copperfield* names are not a joke from which the characters are excluded. Dickens has let his characters in on their naming, and a richness and subtlety of names results” (Bottum 436). The ability to name a person implicates them in an act, identifies them for life, and can also develop a particular memory.

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Betsey Trotwood insists that Clara Copperfield is to give birth to a baby girl, who she expects to be named “Betsey” in order to establish a reparative life without the mistakes made by the aunt. Before David is born, Betsey tells Clara that “From the moment of this girl’s birth, child, I intend to be her friend. I intend to be her godmother, and I beg you’ll call her Betsey Trotwood Copperfield. There must be no mistakes in life with *this* Betsey Trotwood” (Dickens 19). In naming and offering protection for this new Betsey, Aunt Betsey inscribes her intentions with a name. However, this is quickly determined not to be the case; Clara instead gives birth to David, a boy, and Betsey Trotwood escapes the novel until David runs into some trouble later in the novel. David Copperfield’s name becomes fluid for the entirety of the novel: he is Steerforth’s “Daisy,” Betsey’s “Trotwood,” Clara’s “Davy,” and simply “Copperfield” to the Micawber family. David never really seems to protest against these appointed names, or at least the narrator rejects to find any problem in reflecting on them. He instead celebrates the changes at times, “My aunt took so kindly to the notion, that some ready-made clothes, which were purchased for me that afternoon, were marked ‘Trotwood Copperfield,’ in her own handwriting, and in indelible marking-ink, before I put them on... Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me” (Dickens 225). It is Betsey who decides to change the name she calls David, but she does not ask David’s permission of any sort. Betsey informs Mr. Dick of the decision, stating “I have been thinking, do you know, Mr. Dick, that I might call him Trotwood?” ‘Certainly, certainly, Call him Trotwood, certainly,’ said Mr. Dick. ‘David’s son’s Trotwood.’ ‘Trotwood Copperfield, you mean,’ returned my aunt” (Dickens 225). She ensures that this will be the name David uses from now on, which details him with specific memories and experiences that are specific to Trot. Betsey’s renaming becomes a kind of quotation; she appropriates his original name and transfers David’s self from one name to another. In this

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novel, the forming of identity and being known is very important in relation to memory, as well as associative feeling. These names create a community of Copperfields, although they are all one and the same person. In creating and identifying simultaneously with all of these personas, David Copperfield develops an alienated feeling of memory that isolates an experience associated with each significant name.

When David is addressed by Steerforth as “Daisy,” David again becomes excited by the chosen name and accepts the change laid out for him. However, David and his feelings again become property of another through the declaration of name. Just before determining the nickname, David and Steerforth are in the Steerforth home, and discussing their friendship: “‘Now, Copperfield,’ said Steerforth, when we were alone, ‘I should like to hear what you are doing, and where you are going, and all about you. I feel as if you were my property.’ Glowing with pleasure to find that he had still this interest in me, I told him how my aunt had proposed the little expedition that I had before me, and whither it tended” (Dickens 299). While Steerforth already has David reading to him and is manipulating David’s feelings as a younger boy, Steerforth also jokes that “I feel as if you were my property.” Instead of finding offense in this statement, David revels in this statement of belonging. Shortly after, Steerforth assigns the name “Daisy” to David, in voicing the fact that he does not to attain a higher degree: “‘Not I! my dear Daisy—will you mind my calling you Daisy?’ ‘Not at all!’ said I. ‘That’s a good fellow! My dear Daisy...I have not the least desire or intention to distinguish myself in that way...You romantic Daisy!’” (Dickens 300). While he asks permission from David, this permission is almost invalid because he knows that David will agree to almost anything asked of him. The name “Daisy” later attracts the attention of Miss Dartle, who prompts David to answer for this nickname in asking, “‘But really, Mr. Copperfield...is it a nickname? And why does he give it

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you? Is it—eh?—because he thinks you young and innocent? I am so stupid in these things.’ I coloured in replying that I believed it was. ‘Oh!...Now I am glad to know that! I ask for information, and I am glad to know it. He thinks you young and innocent; and so you are his friend” (305-6). When David is directly addressed as “Daisy” by someone other than Steerforth, he becomes embarrassed because the nickname is specific to their friendship only. “Daisy” and Steerforth’s relationship makes David play a role that is different from his typical self; his identity becomes unstable and gives him more space to make awkward mistakes.

The narrator suggests that the memories that impress upon the mind can be somewhat arbitrary, further implying the random selectivity of memory. As a means of investigating memory and associationism in conjunction with Dickens, Sarah Winter aims to “seek not only to illuminate the larger cultural effects of Dickens’s consistent practice of serial publication but also to analyze in detail how his novels elicited certain kinds of reading practices that involved shaping readers’ memories of reading in ways that also supported a social reformist agenda” (Winter 3). Her investigation of memory relates largely to associationism, which is similar to that of “As an analogue of experience, reading, like memory, creates trains of thought or mental associations that can be implemented in various ways” (Winter 15). David recalls the end to his first visit with the Peggotty family, but attributes that this particular set of memories has made a lasting impression on him without necessarily knowing the exact reason:

I don't know why one slight set of impressions should be more particularly associated with a place than another, though I believe this obtains with most people, in reference especially to the associations of their childhood. I never hear the name, or read the name, of Yarmouth, but I am reminded of a certain Sunday morning on the beach, the bells ringing for church, little Em'ly leaning on my

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shoulder, Ham lazily dropping stones into the water, and the sun, away at sea, just breaking through the heavy mist, and showing us the ships, like their own shadows. (52)

Although David does not come into contact with the physical reminder of the memory, he collapses a variety of specific memories into one large paraphrased one; this groups the concepts, but also allows them to remain individually. Of course David visits the Peggotys in Yarmouth after this first trip, but he characterizes this memory with both ambiguity and specificity. This phenomena also appears in conjunction with Agnes Wickfield, as he recalls, “I cannot call to mind where or when, in my childhood, I had seen a stained glass window in a church. Nor do I recollect its subject. But I know that when I saw her turn round, in the grave light of the staircase, and wait for us, above, I thought of that window; and I think I associated something of its tranquil brightness with Agnes Wickfield ever afterwards” (Dickens 233). Here, *Copperfield* associates the nebulous “something of tranquil brightness” with the precise character of Agnes. Agnes is often described as a type of an angel, so this connection with the divine also correlates. In this novel, memory attaches itself to a certain object and moment, but in doing so isolates itself from the remainder of other memories.

The Mill on the Floss and *David Copperfield* function as retrospective, semi-autobiographical texts that use language as an experiment; the narrators tug and play with words and meaning, punctuation, and addressing of the reader as a means of manipulation. These texts reflect large spans of memory and time; each one encompasses decades and decades, and makes use of paraphrase and direct quotation as a way to compress and coalesce time and space. Characters are attributed with specific habits and feelings; while these habits and feelings may seem individualized, they instead function as a means of collective memory. The circulation of

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habit, feeling, memory, and language develop a communicative memory, but also extends beyond this creation into the world of the reader. The narratological means of affecting memory makes use of free indirect discourse in the form of paraphrase. Through appropriating language from one character and attributing it as a collective use, the narrator develops a palimpsestuous text that circles back on itself and constantly recalls memories of others.

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