

EXPLAINING SELECTION: EXAMINING UPTAKE IN THEORY AND LITERATURE

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Abstract

This project has at the very least a dual purpose. It seeks to elaborate on uptake, applying to it theories from sociology, linguistics, history, and philosophy, and to illustrate the process of uptake in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and demonstrate the applicability of rhetorical concepts to literary texts by generating a reading of that novel. In Chapter 1, "Explaining Selection in Theory," I offer two principles, habitus and narrative memory, to explain selection, which Anne Freadman claims is the central mechanism of uptake but does not thoroughly account for. In Chapter 2, "Exploring Selection in Literature," I use the events of the first two chapters of *North and South* to explore the ways that habitus and narrative memory guide characters' selections. Close attention to uptake in the novel reveals the ways that Margaret's powerlessness makes the subtle power dynamics of communication central to her ability to navigate her world.

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Introduction

This project, like much of my academic work, results from the combination of potentially disparate perspectives, which nonetheless have a great deal to say to one another. In this case, I am combining the concept of uptake, which comes out of rhetorical genre studies, with the analysis of Victorian literature. This project, then, has at the very least a dual purpose. First, it seeks to elaborate on uptake, applying to it theories from sociology, linguistics, history, and philosophy. Second, it seeks to illustrate the process of uptake in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and demonstrate the applicability of rhetorical concepts to literary texts by generating a reading of that novel. In order to accomplish these purposes, I have divided this work into two separate chapters, the first of which engages with the theoretical underpinnings of uptake and the second of which applies that theory to the novel.

In Chapter 1, "Explaining Selection in Theory," I begin by contrasting J.L. Austin's speech-act theory, out of which the term uptake arises, with Mikhail Bakhtin's utterance-based model of communication. Bakhtin's theory helps to situate Anne Freadman's work on uptake within a rhetorical model of communication and provide some of the background from which rhetorical genre studies arises. Freadman uses uptake to explain how people are capable of moving meaning between genres—that is, how an utterance in one genre can cause a response in another—and identifies selection as the central mechanism of uptake. I argue, however, that she does not fully answer the "how" question because she does not explain how the mechanism of selection works. I offer two principles for how individuals make selections: habitus and narrative memory. Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of habitus posits that through incorporation, the individual becomes invested with a particular orientation to and structure for the world that mark certain aspects out as relevant and important for meaning and social action. Individuals then

make selections, in a mostly unconscious way, on the basis of the habitus that orients them to the social world. In redefining narrative, Louis O. Mink and Linda Ethell both posit that narrative is a cognitive tool that allows people to understand themselves and the world. By relating experiences and events to one another in a recognizable sequence, narrative memory encourages individuals to make selections that are consistent with both the narrative of the events surrounding the utterance and the narrative of their own of identity.

In Chapter 2, “Exploring Selection in Literature,” I use the events of the first two chapters of *North and South* to explore the ways that habitus and narrative memory guide characters’ uptakes. In these two chapters, the main character, Margaret, is being courted by a man whose habitus and narrative identity lead him to make selections consistently different than her own. Because the main difference between their habitus is a matter of sincerity, defined as how well a person’s display or communication matches their experience of emotion, I discuss the nonverbal cues that are established throughout the novel and the many potential meanings that nonverbal displays can have. The gap between experience and display highlights the mechanism of selection by creating the potential for multiple interpretations of emotional displays that may not align with the sources of such displays. In order to situate and understand the characters’ uptakes, I must also, of course, explore the social, ideological, and discursive contexts of their communication. I argue that the different systems of representation portrayed in the novel compound the problem that social conventions pose to understanding the source of display. Ultimately, the novel reveals a deep-seated apprehension of the mechanism of uptake by illustrating the problems that can be caused by the disparity between the intention behind an utterance and the potential uptakes of that utterance.

Chapter 1: Explaining Selection in Theory

Anne Freadman's work on uptake in rhetorical genre studies responds to and challenges early speech-act theory's insistence on a direct causal relationship between a speech-act and its effect. Instead, Freadman argues that uptake demands attention to personal, social, discursive, and intertextual contexts in order to understand the process that occurs between the issuance of an utterance and responses to it. Ultimately, uptake is a dynamic and interstitial process that occurs not just between a speech act and a perlocutionary effect, but in the intersection of multiple configurations of social values and the people that embody them. Importantly, this convergence results in a tangle of potential meanings, implications, and actions that must somehow be assessed by both parties involved in communicating. Selection, the choosing of one or more aspects of this tangle as the most relevant context of the utterance, is therefore central to the function of uptake. Although Freadman identifies selection as central to uptake, she does not explore the principles by which people make selections. In what follows, I will offer two such principles, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the concept of narrative memory, and argue that they are central to selection because they are important tools for orienting people in and helping them to understand the world. First, however, I will situate and explore Freadman's concept of uptake in the context of an appropriately rhetorical model of communication as social action.

Communication as Rhetorical and Social Action

The concept of uptake in rhetorical genre theory has its beginnings in the speech-act model proposed by J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*. While speech-act theory serves as a useful springboard into the concept of uptake, it has some significant flaws that limit its applicability to a nuanced and robust understanding of uptake. In order to develop an

appropriately rhetorical model of communication for understanding uptake, we must first shift away from speech-act theory's static, decontextualized models of how communication works. To this end, it will be helpful to replace Austin's speech-act with Mikhail Bakhtin's utterance—which captures the complex interactions of the individuals involved in communication and the historical resonances contained in language—in order to return to an appropriately rhetorical model of communication.

Austin's speech-act model distinguishes between three types of speech acts: the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Austin describes the locutionary act as the "performance of an act *of* saying something" (94, 99)¹. By contrast, the illocutionary act is the "performance of an act *in* saying something" (99). The locutionary act is an act by virtue of the fact that something was said. The illocutionary act is an action that can only be performed verbally, such as promising, arguing, or pleading. Austin's definition of the perlocutionary act describes a more consequential action: "Saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them" (101). Of course, the perlocutionary act can also be quite unintended, but the occurrence of the perlocutionary act depends upon the perlocutionary effect. In rhetorical genre studies, uptake refers to the process by which a locutionary or illocutionary act becomes a perlocutionary act, that is, achieves a perlocutionary effect. Austin, however, is not interested in the perlocutionary effects of speech acts because he is not interested in a model of communication that accounts for the people who are communicating. He attempts to isolate the speech act itself and define it as the primary unit of communication.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all italics are in the original.

Bakhtin, by contrast, develops a model of communication that is fundamentally constituted by the people involved in communicating. Bakhtin labels the primary unit of communication the *utterance*. Furthermore, he claims that the utterance cannot be defined by any grammatical structure and distinguishes between “the *sentence* as a *unit of language*, as distinct from the *utterance* as a unit of speech communication” (Bakhtin 73). In contrast to Austin’s attempt to define speech acts according to their grammatical structure, Bakhtin uses the interaction between communicators to define the boundaries of utterances in two ways. First, he argues that “the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*” (Bakhtin 71). Second, he delimits the boundaries of the utterance according to what he calls *finalization*. The finalization of the utterance is achieved when the speaker’s intentions and plan for the utterance are completed and when there is “*the possibility of responding to* [the utterance] or, more precisely and broadly, of assuming a responsive attitude toward it” (Bakhtin 76-77). Finalization, then, represents “the inner side of the change of speech subjects” because it creates the conditions for that change by making the initial utterance whole (Bakhtin 76). Neither of these conditions requires certain grammatical or language structures; they instead rely upon the understandings of speaker and listener.

In Bakhtin’s model of communication, the utterance is inherently and dynamically interpersonal. He explains that utterances and the relationships between utterances “presuppose *other* (with respect to the speaker) participants in speech communication” (Bakhtin 72). Additionally, this presupposed other is not a passive listener but takes “an active, responsive attitude toward the utterance” (Bakhtin 68). The active orientation of the listener is an essential part of the communication process because it is this listener “for whose sake, in essence, [the utterance] is actually created” (Bakhtin 94). As a result, the speaker expects this active

responsive orientation in the listener and “[t]he entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response” (Bakhtin 94). Bakhtin labels this anticipation an utterance’s *addressivity* (95). The nature of an utterance’s addressivity shapes “[b]oth the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend[ing] on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance” (Bakhtin 95). For Bakhtin, the listener is as important as the speaker in determining the style and form of the utterance.

The composition and style of the utterance are also affected by the content or topic being discussed. Charles Schuster explains that in Bakhtin’s modified speech triangle of “speaker-hero-listener...the three elements introduce equivalent pressures on speaking and writing” (595). Bakhtin replaces subject with hero to emphasize the fact that the subject of discussion is active in shaping the concrete utterance (Schuster 595). Schuster explains that “the hero also ‘speaks’; it too contains its own accumulation of values and terms. It too carries with it a set of associations, an ideological and stylistic profile” (Schuster 596). The social and ideological resonances of certain subjects, the things that have already been said about them and how those things were said, influence the way in which people are likely to and able to speak about them. Subjects are not neutral and neither are the words used to discuss them.

Bakhtin argues that all language is always already politically and ideologically saturated and that speakers must work to negotiate these meanings as they construct an utterance. Bakhtin claims,

“When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language...The word enters his context from another context, permeated with the interpretations of others. His own thought finds the word

already inhabited. Therefore the orientation of a word among words, the varying perception of another's word and the various means for reacting to it, are perhaps the most fundamental problems for the metalinguistic study of any kind of discourse." (qtd. in Schuster 597)

In crafting the concrete utterance, the individual attempts to negotiate these pre-given meanings and associations to respond to the demands of the speech situation, including the listener, hero/subject, and the speaker's own intentions.

It is impossible, however, for the speaker to make the word entirely her own because "each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations" (Bakhtin 91). Each utterance bears the ideological traces of the previous uses of the words that compose it. In a more comprehensive way, however, no utterance can belong in isolation to one individual speaker. Because utterances use the words of others, expound on topics already determined by others, and anticipate the reactions of others, "every utterance must be regarded primarily as a *response*" (Bakhtin 91). Furthermore, the utterance itself can only be fully understood by exploring its *dialogic overtones*, the semantic, expressive, and stylistic ways that it responds to and integrates other utterances (Bakhtin 92). As Bakhtin notes, "The utterance proves to be a very complex and multiplanar phenomenon if considered not in isolation and with respect to its author (the speaker) only, but as a link in the chain of speech communication and with respect to other, related utterances" (Bakhtin 93). Understanding meaning, this implies, depends not only on the intentions of the speaker but upon the utterance's relationships with other utterances that precede, follow, and contextualize it. Meaning is dialogic, then, in the sense that it exists between at least two utterances and their context.

Genre is also constituted by the relationship between at least two utterances and by the context, more specifically the typified rhetorical situation, of the utterance. As Bakhtin explains, “Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances” (60). The dialogism that exists between utterances within a genre also exists between genres themselves. Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff clarify Bakhtin’s position, saying “Bakhtin also describes a more horizontal set of relationships between genres, in which genres engage in dialogic interaction with one another as one genre becomes a response to another within a sphere of communication” (83). They argue that “[s]uch an intertextual view of genre has been central to RGS’s [rhetorical genre studies] understanding of genres as complex social actions” (83). The connections between an utterance and its genre, and between interrelated genres are, in part, what allow individual utterances to participate meaningfully in social systems. As Bakhtin points out, “The very interrelations between primary and secondary genres and the process of the historical formation of the latter shed light on the nature of the utterance (and above all on the complex problem of the interrelations among language, ideology, and world view)” (62). Uptake moves between these varying levels by coordinating responses to individual utterances through the generic, social, and ideological contexts of those utterances.

Selection as the Central Mechanism of Uptake

Freadman’s model of uptake relies on this interstitial understanding of communication, which makes the mechanism of selection central to what communication can achieve. Freadman claims that meaning is created not by the speaker, but between the speaker and listener. She argues that traditional performative models of language incorrectly posit that speakers exchange meaning during communication: “To suppose that discursive interaction is the giving and

receiving of *meanings* is like describing a game of tennis as the giving and receiving of balls” (“Tennis” 44). Instead, meaning is analogous to the giving and receiving of shots—actions that have significance and perform functions because of their situation within the pre-existing rules of the game—and must, therefore, be created dialogically, “the meaning of each interaction to be the upshot of the perpetual modification of each shot by its return” (“Tennis” 45). She argues that rather than exchanging meaning, speakers exchange signs. Meaning is then created from these signs through each participant’s uptake of the other’s signs on the basis of their understanding of what those signs do within the given space and rules of the utterances. Such “[m]eaning is not content; it is place and function” (“Tennis” 59). Because communication attempts to achieve purposes as much as it attempts to share meanings, what an act of communication means relies upon what that act accomplishes between the people involved in the communication.

If meaning is created between participants engaged in communication, then we must acknowledge that what seems important to the speaker may not be the most important aspect of the communication for the listener. Freadman insists that understanding of genres and uptake must move past Austin’s speech act theory for this very reason. Austin attempts to isolate and purify the speech-act by putting aside its perlocutionary effects and sequels (“Uptake” 48). However, “uptake depends on a step that is not specified in speech act theory...the step in which our uptake selects, defines, or represents its object” (“Uptake” 48). In order to understand how communication is achieved, we must be attentive to the multiple aspects of an utterance to which a listener can respond and attempt to figure out why the listener responded to the aspect they did. As Freadman explains, “Uptake is first the taking of an object; it is not the causation of a response by an intention. This is the hidden dimension of the long, ramified, intertextual memory

of uptake: the object is taken from a set of possibles.” (“Uptake” 48). Although Freedman here identifies selection as the central mechanism of uptake, she does not elaborate on how it works. In what follows, I offer two different principles of selection that can serve as a basis for understanding how individuals select relevant aspects of an utterance.

Habitus as a Principle of Selection

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu specifies a three-way relationship between *social positions*, *dispositions (habitus)*, and *position takings* that guides individuals’ decision-making processes (*Practical Reason* 6). Social positions are individuals’ locations within the field of the social—the complex structure of social space that is defined by geographical, temporal, cultural, and economic factors. Position takings refer to moments of decision-making in which the individual navigates that social space. Dispositions refer to the principles by which these decisions are made and are central to Bourdieu’s practice-based view of the social world.

Bourdieu describes his own philosophy of the social as “a philosophy of action designated at times as *dispositional* which notes the potentialities inscribed in the body of agents and in the structure of the situations where they act or, more precisely, in the relations between” individuals and situations (*Practical Reason* vii). The interaction between an individual’s disposition and the choices possible in a particular situation guides individuals’ actions. Within this system,

“subjects” are active and knowing agents endowed with a *practical sense*, that is, an acquired system of preferences, of principles of vision and division (what is usually called taste), and also a system of durable cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of an internalization of objective structures) and of

schemes of action which orient the perception of the situation and the appropriate response. (*Practical Reason* 25)

For Bourdieu, then, decision-making is simultaneously a conscious and unconscious process. Individuals make active choices, but they are also guided by acquired systems of preferences which may govern their decision-making processes without individuals ever being aware of their presence. Bourdieu calls these systems *habitus*: “The theory of practice as practice insists...that the objects of knowledge are constructed...[and] that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented toward practical functions” (*Logic* 52). The habitus is the residue of an individual’s past choices and experiences. By recording past successes and failures, both the individual’s own and others’, the habitus helps to direct the individual’s practical choices and generate future behavior that is consistent with past behavior.

Bourdieu’s emphasis on the practical also provides an explanation for why we take the social world seriously. He explains what he calls “the necessity of the social world” as “the practical relation to the world, the pre-occupied, active presence in the world through which the world imposes its presence, with its urgencies, its things to be done and said, things made to be said, which directly govern words and deeds without ever unfolding as a spectacle” (*Logic* 52). This necessity is made possible by the transference of physical necessity onto the social through the construction of the habitus by repeated interactions with the social world: “the *habitus* is what enables the institution to attain full realization... through the capacity for incorporation, which exploits the body’s readiness to take seriously the performative magic of the social” (*Logic* 57). It is through the capacity for incorporation, through the repeated experiences of the

body within the social, that individuals come to view the social as necessary, natural, and inevitable.

It is also the capacity for incorporation which makes the individual unconscious of the nature and effects of the habitus because “the purely social and quasi-magical process of socialization...which is prolonged, strengthened, and confirmed by social treatments that tend to transform instituted difference into natural distinction, produces quite real effects, durably inscribed in the body and in belief” (*Logic* 58). These physical, embodied responses to the social direct and shape the individual’s decisions without any conscious reference to the past or past experiences. Bourdieu explains, “the body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. *What is learned by the body is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is*” (*Logic* 73, emphasis added). Individuals are constituted by the ways in which their social experiences become incorporated and enacted in their interactions with the social world. This is the central tenet of Bourdieu’s notion of the habitus:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (*Logic* 53)

The durable inscription of individuals’ past experiences of the social creates their future social practices. Despite the ubiquity of the habitus, its very embodiedness makes it largely invisible, a

force that shapes individuals' decisions without overtly influencing their conscious decision-making processes.

The habitus thus functions as one of the fundamental principles for the selection that Freadman argues is central to uptake. Habitus constitutes an internalized set of norms that allows individuals to make sense of the social world and recognize aspects of the social world as viable and worthy of response. Because an individual's previous experiences serve as the basis for their future experiences, the social world acquires a sense of inevitability in which social values become assigned on the basis of social necessities (*Logic 53*). The limitation of individuals' choices thus functions according to the mutually reciprocal relationship between practice and value in which the "most improbable practices are therefore excluded, as unthinkable, by a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable" (*Logic 54*). This reciprocal relationship also creates a kind of continuity, in which an individual's choices seem, retrospectively at least, to fit a pre-planned pattern of action. Such continuity can be explained, however, by "the necessary yet unpredictable confrontation between the *habitus* and an event that can exercise a pertinent incitement on the habitus only if the latter snatches it from the contingency of the accidental and constitutes it as a problem by applying to it the very principles of its solution" (*Logic 55*). This confrontation is unpredictable only in the sense that the habitus has "infinite yet strictly limited generative capacity," the ability to create an infinite range of responses to an infinite set of events or utterances that all, nonetheless, must be generated by the values and possibilities of the habitus in response to situations that the habitus must be able to recognize (*Logic 55*). This complex interplay between social context, individual experiences, and disposition serves as the basis for selecting an object and crafting a response.

The habitus also serves as the basis for the consistency of group values and practices: “It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought, and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms” (*Logic* 54). Practices, or the social choices and selections individuals make from a range of possible options, must then be understood in part as the relationship between the social conditions which produced the habitus and the social conditions in which the habitus is activated or applied, and will reflect the extent to which the values in those two sets of conditions coincide or conflict (*Logic* 56). This understanding of how social context shapes individual identity and decision-making helps us to understand how social groups can develop consistent sets of values and practices that may nonetheless remain tacit within the group: “the objective homogenizing of group or class *habitus* that results from homogeneity of conditions of existence is what enables practices to be objectively harmonized without any calculation or objective reference to a norm and mutually adjusted in the absence of any direct interaction or... explicit co-ordination” (*Logic* 58-9). Despite the highly individualized nature of the habitus, individuals will likely make similar selections from and responses to an utterance on the basis of their shared experiences within such groups.

Narrative Memory as a Principle of Selection

Selection also relies upon the individual’s recognition that the utterance happening now is related to utterances and events in the past, upon “the long, ramified, intertextual memory of uptake.” As Freedman explains, “without that memory, the sequence of acts would be unintelligible as a sequence, it could not establish its credentials...and it could not enact its consequences” (“Uptake” 42). Such memory relies upon our ability to put events into sequences

in such a way that we can create connections between them and meaning out of the whole. Narrative, as a cognitive tool for putting events into a sequence that defines them in relation to one another, provides a productive way of thinking about this memory and the types of selection that it makes possible. In this section, I will argue that narrative memory is necessary to understand how uptake makes possible the translation of utterances between genres and sign systems. Then, I will suggest that narrative memory takes two different forms that both determine our selections: first, as shared narrative history and second, as individual narrative identity.

The Problem of Semiosis

Uptake is dialogic not only in that it relates utterances to other utterances, but in that it relates disparate systems of meaning to one another. Just as genres must be understood through their intertextual connections to other genres, utterances must be understood through their intertextual connections to vastly different kinds of utterances. Because communicative sequences can, and often do, move from one meaning-making system to any other meaning-making system, the potential for communicative translation becomes almost impossibly complex. Narrative memory helps to identify which translations are relevant in a given situation as we take up a given utterance.

Freadman identifies the interplay between the abstract realm of ideas and the physical realm of the body as a central problem in developing a full understanding of how uptake works and insists that “we should not overlook the threshold that must be crossed between language and the body” (“Uptake” 43). She turns to the concept of translation in order to explain the possibility of this connection. She explains that “‘translation,’ of whatever kind, is the mediation of a boundary, not its obliteration. I will say that the same applies to uptake, because I want to

say that ‘uptake’ is the local event of crossing a boundary” (“Uptake” 43). Freadman discusses the mediation of these boundaries in terms of Peirce’s notion of infinite semiosis, which helps her to account for the ability of utterances to be taken up across boundaries. Freadman explains that the communicative units in which Peirce is interested are “*actions associated with knowledges*, and Peirce would count them signs... They signify in their sequence, in the ways in which each is articulated with other sign-events” (“Uptake” 49, emphasis added). Thus, Peirce brings the realm of communication out of the purely verbal or ideological and reconnects it to the practical: “When Peirce theorizes infinite semiosis, he is at pains to ensure that the realm of signs is subject to no other force but that of signs. But he is equally concerned not to allow signhood to remain within, or to be defined by, the realm of pure ideality. Signhood has effects in the world, it changes things, gets people to do things, has material consequences” (“Uptake” 49). The necessity of the social world and the incorporation of social values—that is, the performative magic of the social whereby social values are made real and pressing by their enactment in the body—endow the ideality of signs with practical consequences and effects. The substitution of the ideal for the practical, and the comparability of values across social fields, allows for this translation between meaning-making systems.

Importantly, for Freadman, taking her cue from Peirce, signs are not only lingual units, but actions that have ideological associations: “All these things are signs—that’s what guarantees that they can translate into one another; but we are talking about translation, not porridge. They need to be translated because they are formally and materially distinct from one another” (“Uptake” 49). Here is uptake. Uptake, by bringing into play all of our social and ideological presuppositions, by tapping into our previous knowledge of how utterances translate across genres, by using our own physicality as incentive, allows us to move an utterance across formal

and material boundaries and to see the ways that the utterance ramifies across different meaning-making systems.

Furthermore, Freedman explains that any act of communication already participates in such intersystem play: “Semiotics holds that a semiotic act is constituted by signs from a variety of media and a variety of languages. It is this principle, the always-already of intersystem translation, that” constitutes uptake and makes possible an individual’s response to an act of communication (“Uptake” 50). Like Bakhtin’s utterances, “[a]ll signs thus refer both forwards and backwards to other signs” (“Uptake” 42). However, the intersystem translation of signs also “ensures that semiosis is infinite, that it does not close and is not confined to a particular domain” (“Uptake 50). Consequently, Freedman concludes that “[i]nfinite semiosis is not infinite in a single dimension, but can ramify in multiple ways” (“Uptake” 50). Because infinite semiosis is multi-directional and multi-dimensional, individuals’ proclivity for fitting events into narratives is particularly important. Narratives help to make sense of the tangled mess of infinite semiosis by making sequences recognizable as sequences, by separating out a single dimension of such semiosis and demarcating it as a significant series of actions tied together by meaningful relationships. Selection depends upon the way that we locate a particular utterance in a narrative sequence that relates it to other utterances.

Memory as Collective Narrative History

Historical theorist Louis O. Mink argues for the centrality of narrative in creating knowledge and constructing histories. Mink calls narrative “a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivaled, in fact, only by theory and by metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible” (Mink 213). He explains:

On the one hand, there are all the occurrences of the world – at least all that we may directly experience or inferentially know about – in their concrete particularity. On the other is an ideally theoretical understanding of those occurrences that would treat each as nothing other than a replicable instance of a systematically interconnected set of generalizations. But between these extremes, narrative is the form in which we make comprehensible the many successive interrelationships that are comprised by a career. (Mink 214)

Narrative offers a way to process and structure experience, creating a comprehensible package out of a chaos of information that can then be applied to and used to understand various experiences. This process orders knowledge, but it also attempts to unify it: “The cognitive function of narrative form, then, is not just to relate a succession of events but to body forth an ensemble of interrelationships of many different kinds as a single whole” (Mink 218). Mink is careful to clarify, however, that “‘events’ (or, more precisely, descriptions of events) are not the raw material out of which narratives are constructed; rather an event is an abstraction from a narrative” (220). We can label things discrete events, and make sense of them as events, only after they have been placed in relationship to other events within a narrative sequence.

This is equally true of utterances as events. Individuals are able to make sense of utterances because they can locate those utterances within a narrative sequence and relate them to other utterances within that sequence. Bakhtin locates each utterance in what he calls chains of speech communion: “Each individual utterance is a link in the chain of speech communion. It has clear-cut boundaries that are determined by the change of speech subjects (speakers), but within these boundaries the utterance...reflects the speech process, others’ utterances, and, above all, preceding links in the chain (sometimes close and sometimes—in areas of cultural

communication—very distant)” (Bakhtin 93). Utterances are always responsive; they respond to other related utterances in terms both of what has already been said and how it was said. As Bakhtin points out, it is impossible for an utterance to be original in the sense that it addresses an entirely new topic in an entirely new way: “The object of speech, regardless of what this topic may be, does not become the object of speech for the first time in any given utterance; a given speaker is not the first to speak about it. The object, as it were, has already been articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways. Various viewpoints, world views, and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it” (Bakhtin 93). The utterance is always crafted out of what has gone before, out of established social and political beliefs, pre-existing speech genres, and previous stances on a topic. Our sense of narrative memory enables us to recognize the precedents of the individual utterance and to decide upon the way in which those precedents are meaningful to the utterance at hand. Speakers then select the aspect(s) of the utterance that seem consistent with this narrative history, which enables them to respond in ways that continue the narrative in which they locate the utterance.

As noted above, however, the utterance is not only responsive but also addressive, and this addressivity is equally important in situating the utterance within the chain of speech communion. Bakhtin explains that “the utterance is related not only to preceding, but also to subsequent links in the chain of speech communion. When a speaker is creating an utterance, of course, these links do not exist. But from the very beginning, the utterance is constructed while taking into account possible responsive reactions, for whose sake, in essence, it is actually created” (Bakhtin 94). An utterance both responds to previous utterances and, being in its nature addressive, anticipates other utterances. When speakers craft utterances, they do so with a sense of narrative continuity in mind. It is important, then, that history is collective narrative memory

because that narrative helps speakers to predict what will come next and informs their expectations of probable responses.

Memory as Individual Narrative Identity

Narratives, because they pick and choose and reconstruct, can never be neutral. They point attention to certain things and away from others and embed ideologies that tell listeners how to interpret the information being presented; “[p]articlar narratives express their own conceptual presuppositions” (Mink 214). While Mink, for obvious reasons, is interested in these questions primarily as they relate to culturally derived narratives of history, narrative is also used on much smaller scales as a way for individuals to make sense of their place in the world. These presuppositions are not just, then, cultural ideologies broadly speaking that help to construct narratives of country formation and political evolution. They are also localized presuppositions that help individuals navigate social space.

Philosopher Linda Ethell argues that narrative creates the illusion of stable and unified personal identity: “That we represent ourselves to ourselves, and others, in interpretations of those events that we take to comprise our histories (selection is the fundamental mode of interpretation) seems incontrovertible—it is the source of our identity as self-interpreting beings” (94). These narrative identities allow individuals to make sense of both themselves and others, and it is through the construction of such narrative identities that individuals make sense of their lives and choices. As Ethell points out, however, this making sense is a continuous process that does not always guarantee a good fit between an individual’s actions and the narrative she uses to interpret them: “We may be mistaken or self-deceived in our idea of who we are, or we may meet with experiences that, if we do not simply deny them, demand revision of our existing self-representation” (95). In this sense, narrative memory shapes selection by encouraging the

individual to select an object and craft a response that is in keeping with her sense of her own identity in narrative. That is, the individual is likely to respond in a way that is narratively consistent with her previous selections and responses in order to maintain a stable sense of her own identity, although this process of selection can also lead to disparate uptakes that generate revision of that narrative identity.

Any sense of narrative consistency, however, depends upon social and cultural definitions of narrative continuity. Philosopher Paul Ricoeur argues that “an examined life is, in large part, one purged, one clarified by the cathartic effects of narratives, be they historical or fictional, conveyed by our culture” (qtd. in Ethell 95). To rephrase, an examined life is one in which an individual has been able to fit the experiences she has had and the decisions she has made into culturally sanctioned narratives. Such individuals can feel good about their choices, and therefore their identity, because those choices have been fit within the parameters of culturally accepted and recognized narratives of personal development that align with particular identities. Identity thus is a nexus of cultural categories defined by stock narrative patterns and of individual choices that are either made in order to conform to those narrative patterns or retroactively placed within them.

Bourdieu, of course, argues that identity also consists of deeply incorporated physical and social experiences. I would posit, however, that in order for habitus to actually constitute identity, it must be placed into a narrative that uses social values to interpret it as a recognizable personal and social identity. This move, though not explicitly present in Bourdieu, is not contradictory to his theories of the relationship between habitus and field. Rather, it is an extension of his argument that the social is only made real through incorporation in the body and that the body becomes value-laden only through its position within the field of social values.

Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship in which the habitus—incorporated, learned social experience, which is both structured and structuring—helps us to internalize social narratives because embodied knowledge is something that we are, not something that we have. Those narratives then help us to make sense of the habitus, even as they reinscribe it by encouraging choices that are consistent with the narrative and therefore also with the habitus. The combination of narrative memory and habitus allows us to account for the role that identity plays in uptake without having to rely on a dichotomy between society and identity or on an essentialized view of a unitary self.

Bourdieu himself seems to suggest that habitus has a narrative component, albeit one that is physical or practical, rather than ideological. He argues that the embodied knowledge of the habitus recognizes possible futures, or narrative continuations of the present, embedded in the action and structure of the present: “But these responses [to the present moment] are first defined, without any calculation, in relation to objective potentialities, immediately inscribed in the present, things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable ‘upcoming’ future...[which] puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation” (*Logic* 53). A coming moment, then, is quasi-present because it “is inscribed in the very physiognomy of the present” as individuals determine their actions in the present in anticipation of the quasi-present coming moment (*Practical Reason* 82). This is not a conscious process, but instead a dispositional response: “one can, for example, be adjusted to the necessities of a game...without ever needing to give oneself such an objective” (*Practical Reason* 82). This is the mechanism of uptake. There are a number of possible futures inscribed in the structure of the present, but habitus and narrative necessity select the possible future that

makes the most sense within the field and for the individual, designating it as the natural continuation of the social narratives converging in the event.

Consequently, narratives and habitus support one another: “The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history” (*Logic* 54). This reciprocal relationship is what creates a sense of narrative continuity or consistency, recognizable patterns that individuals can unconsciously replicate. Bourdieu explains: “Because native membership in a field implies a feel for the game in the sense of a capacity for practical anticipation of the ‘upcoming’ future contained in the present, everything that takes place in it seems *sensible*: full of sense and objectively directed in a judicious direction” (*Logic* 66). Choices become common sense to individuals when they fit within the logic of existing social narratives and coincide with individuals’ previous patterns of behavior, the habitus-based narrative of their personal identities. These choices thus fall within a defined range and can be constructed into a cohesive narrative, despite the fact that individuals do not often consciously make decisions with the intent to create such a narrative. As Bourdieu suggests, the appearance of narrative continuity in a person’s life is created by the application of the habitus to solve problems generated by the habitus (*Logic* 55). The conditions for recognizing an object and the criteria for choosing a response are generated by the same principles and thus help to construct consistent narratives for personal identity.

Once we look at narrative not just as a literary or fictional form, but as a strategy for structuring and a mechanism for understanding the world, we can begin to understand the ways in which narrative memory facilitates uptake. Narratives do not have to have particular forms; they do not have to be linear. As structured sequences of events that both generate and allow the naming of relationships between events, they merely have to create discrete events and place

them in recognizable relationship to one another. As such, narrative memory influences selection in two ways. Narratives help individuals to locate utterances in chains of other utterances and to make selections based on how the particular utterance relates to the other utterances in the chain. Narratives also encourage individuals to make selections that are consistent with their sense of their own identities in narrative.

Conclusion

Establishing habitus and narrative memory as principles of uptake allow us to better understand the process of uptake as it occurs on a largely unconscious basis. This perspective accounts for the way that social values are replicated in individual actions. It offers a way of understanding identity, and identity's effects on communication, in a way that does not rely on essentialist views of an inherent and unified self. It also enables us to describe an individual's orientation to the world in a way that both allows for individuality and maintains the social context of individual identity development. Importantly, it also maintains the centrality of the body in developing this orientation and in making the social meaningful, moving deliberately away from analyses of communication that are uninterested in the physical and embodied contexts of communication. As such, uptake describes, with a good deal of accuracy, what actually happens during communication.

There is a tension, however, between the unconscious process of uptake and social and individual resistance to consciously considering uptake. Uptake, due to its roots in speech-act theory and rhetorical genre studies, has inherited a view of communication in which the action achieved by communication supersedes both truth value and form. Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* illustrates the mechanism of uptake beautifully, exploring the differences between social value systems that result in varied selections and uptakes, but it nonetheless questions models of

communication that give primacy to functionality. Instead, the novel establishes a both-and view of communication, in which communication both has truth value *and* is practical and situational, and in which meaning is both content *and* place and function. The novel enacts its social moment's dispute over the nature of value, between the rising industrial emphasis on value as functional (i.e. things are valuable because they allow or achieve other things) or the more traditional emphasis on value as inherent (i.e. things are valuable because they have beneficial moral qualities). Ultimately, the novel privileges the second even as it recognizes the first. Although Gaskell acknowledges the social functions of communication, she seems to view them mostly as obstacles to be overcome in order to communicate on a higher level of moral truth. I think it is important to acknowledge and understand this resistance. Uptake is, undoubtedly, an excellent scholarly explanation of how communication works. We must be aware, however, that many people are and will remain skeptical of the ability for communication, and through it community, to be meaningful if communication is pragmatic rather than content-driven.

Chapter 2: Exploring Selection in Literature

North and South concerns itself intimately with the relationship between emotion, expression, and social expectations that underlies its quest to demarcate an authentic self separate from the socially-created self, a dichotomy that is ultimately complicated though not, perhaps, intentionally. Gaskell's novel, even as it enacts uptake, views rhetorical models of communication with suspicion. Gaskell frames the central problem of communication as one of sincerity—that is, of saying exactly what one is experiencing, thinking, or feeling in order to ensure a correspondence between internal states and external display. The text repeatedly enacts the problems of attempting sincere expression in a social world that assumes that words and actions are calculated to achieve certain uptakes. Gaskell also explores the problems inherent in knowing how to take up others' words and actions when there is the possibility that those words and actions were crafted expressly to create a certain uptake rather than being an honest or truthful expression of the other's thoughts or feelings. Gaskell acknowledges the rhetorical nature of communication, but expresses anxiety about the potential for manipulation that rhetorical models make possible. Sincere expression, Gaskell seems to suggest, is necessary in order for society to engage in the kind of meaningful dialogue that can generate innovative solutions to social problems and that can create meaningful relationships between individuals. Also necessary is the ability to suspend (or perhaps to see through) socially-learned uptakes and to participate in different systems of social values that open new perspectives and new ways of seeing social realities. Paradoxically, the text seems to simultaneously endorse a form of social relativism and place a strict emphasis on authenticity and sincerity that vilifies any behavior that shows itself to be attuned to social uptakes.

The primary incompatibility between Henry Lennox and Margaret Hale revolves around the differences in their habitus and narrative identities that lead to their different perspectives on uptake. Henry, the man of society, relies almost exclusively on socially-coded meanings and the social value placed on material things and physical attributes. Thus, he selects for the aspects of the utterance that conform to social convention, without attempting to account for the identity and experiences of the speaker. Margaret, though mostly aware of these social meanings, is contemptuous of them and dismisses them as interfering with any kind of genuine interaction with the world. Instead, she selects the aspects of the utterance that seem to correspond with her knowledge of the speaker's identity, experiences, and intentions. Because of this fundamentally different method of selection, their relationship is fraught with disparate uptakes. Placed at the beginning of the book, their relationship establishes the problem of uptake as the central concern of the novel. As such, it constitutes an excellent opening into Gaskell's assessment of the question of uptake and its proper role in communication. I will use a close examination of their interactions in chapters 1 and 3 to explore Gaskell's complex stance on the interrelationships between experience, emotion, the body, expression, interpretation, and society. In so doing, I will show how the tensions surrounding uptake that are introduced by Margaret and Henry's unsuccessful relationship are then elaborated on and connected to other parts of the novel.

Experience & Display

By distinguishing between the physical enjoyment of the shawls and the enjoyment of their social status, the scene in which Margaret displays the India shawls to Mrs. Shaw's guests explores the problematic connection between experience and display, when display can be taken up in socially-coded ways that have little to do with the original experience that prompted it. Although I acknowledge that experience and display are mutually constitutive, not separate and

opposed, I am using the term experience to refer to the thoughts and feelings that comprise characters' internal lives and states. By contrast, I am using the term display to refer to any externalization of that experience, including nonverbal cues as well as utterances. Throughout the novel, emotion, pleasure, and the body become sites of contest where the tension between individual experience and social identity is enacted. Margaret's navigation of the tension between her own physical and emotional experiences and her display of them is central to the novel's commentary on the fraught nature of uptake.

The India shawl scene, like many others in the novel, is richly textured with sensual details that foreground the nature of physical sensation and experience:

So Margaret went down laden with shawls, and snuffing up their spicy Eastern smell... Occasionally, as she was turned round, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror over the chimney-piece, and smiled at her own appearance there—the familiar features in the usual garb of a princess. She touched the shawls gently as they hung around her, and took a pleasure in their soft feel and their brilliant colours, and rather liked to be dressed in such splendour—enjoying it much as a child would do, with a quiet pleased smile on her lips. (11)

In part, Margaret's delight stems from the potentially absurd juxtaposition of her own social standing with the social standing denoted by the shawls, "the usual garb of a princess." Largely, however, her enjoyment stems from the physical experience of them, the spicy smell, the soft feel, and the brilliant colours. Margaret's embodiment, her thorough enjoyment of the sensations and activities that her body makes possible, set her apart from her companions even at this early moment of the book. The description of her walks at Helstone emphasizes her physicality, "Margaret used to tramp along by her father's side, crushing down the fern with a cruel glee, as

she felt it yield under her light foot and send up the fragrance particular to it” (18). The use of verbs in this description also suggest how far Margaret’s experience differs from the proper social identity available to young women who, it would seem, would never tramp or crush, would never cause others to yield with cruel glee.

The potential problems established by Margaret’s unruly physicality are quickly mediated by the social identity that she has internalized and mapped out into a narrative identity for herself. Immediately after the above description, the narrator notes that Margaret’s “keen enjoyment of every sensuous pleasure, was balanced finely, if not overbalanced, by her conscious pride in being able to do without them all, if need be” (19). Margaret’s natural enjoyment of sensory experience and physical pleasure is contradicted by the narrative that she constructs for her own identity of the virtuous, self-sacrificing woman who does not need material possessions—or physical or sexual pleasure—to live a fulfilling moral life. Throughout the novel, Margaret revels in her ability to sacrifice her own comfort and to place other people’s interests and feelings above her own. The novel leaves open, however, the extent to which this self-sacrifice is chosen and the extent to which it is, in Bourdieu’s words, “a kind of immediate submission to order that inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway denied and to will the inevitable” (*Logic* 54). Margaret’s experiences, whether pleasurable or not, almost always come last in any of the social hierarchies she participates in. The value she places on her own self-sacrifice may serve to contain her physicality, but it may also serve as a way of creating a positive narrative of identity out of potentially hostile or oppressive social conditions. Regardless, Margaret’s conflictingly physical and repressive habitus and self-sacrificing narrative identity guide the majority of her decisions throughout the novel.

The novel's interest in controlling the relationship between experience and display extends beyond Margaret's attempts to regulate her own experiences. Throughout the text, pleasure and emotion are described as either childish—as in the passage above's “much as a child would do”—or inappropriate. Moments of pleasure that are described as childlike contain pleasure for its own sake, an experience that is relatively unmediated by social expectations. Moments of pleasure that are described as inappropriate contain the display of emotion or pleasure for social gain. Mrs. Thornton, particularly, holds that the business of young women is to ensnare wealthy husbands (72) and takes up almost all of Margaret's displays of emotion either as attempts to engage John Thornton's affections or as commentaries upon his worth and eligibility as a husband. In this way, the inappropriate display of emotion also becomes inextricably linked to sexuality, sexual knowledge, and, perhaps most dangerously, a kind of sexual agency masquerading as passivity.

Gaskell's main distinction between childlike and inappropriate or sexual emotion seems to lie in the difference between expressing emotion because one feels it and expressing it because it will be taken up in a certain, socially-advantageous, way. Inappropriate display betokens a conscious manipulation of the way that social values influence the uptake of particular emotions, while childlike display is constituted by a lack of awareness about social uptake, sometimes to the extent of a lack of self-preservation. In short, the childlike display of emotion has expression as its end while the inappropriate display of emotion uses expression as a means to some other end. The text mediates the relationship between experience and display by distinguishing between these two different causes for it.

Henry's intrusion on the India shawl scene emphasizes the power of social uptakes to define the nature and causes of display:

Just then the door opened, and Mr. Henry Lennox was suddenly announced. Some of the ladies started back, as if half-ashamed of their feminine interest in dress. Mrs. Shaw held out her hand to the new-comer; Margaret stood perfectly still, thinking she might be yet wanted as a sort of block for the shawls; but looking at Mr. Lennox with a bright, amused face, as if sure of his sympathy in her sense of the ludicrousness at being thus surprised. (11)

Henry's intrusion into the utterly feminine world of the shawls sparks a variety of reactions—themselves uptakes of his potential uptake of the women's behavior—that reveal the many possible interpretations of their occupation, interpretations the text itself comments upon. In one interpretation, their behavior is a uniquely female pursuit, something frivolous and wasteful but unavoidable as a constitutive part of their gender. Henry makes this uptake apparent in his conversation with Margaret, remarking that “[p]laying with shawls is very different work to drawing up settlements” (12). Despite the social restrictions that enforce women's interest in dress and their exclusion from the “real true law business” (12), Henry's uptake of their occupation is scornful. The shawls also have particular class associations that influence how the women's interactions with them can be taken up. Just as one of the women laments that she could not afford an India shawl for her daughter, Henry responds to Margaret's comments that India shawls are perfect things with “I have no doubt they are. Their prices are very perfect too” (12). Because of their high prices, the shawls are objects that have and convey a particular social value in terms of economic wealth and class status. In this uptake, the women's enjoyment of the shawls is an enjoyment of the status that they symbolize. Of course, all of these uptakes can, and probably do, run simultaneously as well. Despite its emphasis on Margaret's enjoyment of the physical sensations of the shawls, the scene leaves open her enjoyment of them as social symbols

and her sense that the women's collective enjoyment of the shawls is something ludicrous or frivolous. At the very least, Margaret's display of her physical pleasure is open to any of these uptakes and the social judgment that accompanies them.

Because emotions and pleasures are socially coded in this way, it becomes dangerous to express them because they can be taken to signify something else. In Margaret's interactions with Henry, as we will continue to see, she often simply emotes while he takes her expressions as indicative of their socially coded meanings. Because uptake is bidirectional—that is, it changes the nature of the original utterance—Henry's uptakes change the nature of Margaret's expressions, making them into communicative acts that she did not intend. The most problematic aspect of the relationship between experience and display lies in this bidirectionality. Because emotion has a symbolic social meaning, the uptake of emotional display is integral in determining its meaning, even if that uptake is at variance with what the speaker perceives to be her own experiences, motives, or intentions. Of course, it is deceptive to separate entirely the social meaning from the experience of emotion because emotional response is in part determined by social context and socially-learned responses. Nevertheless, the physical experience of emotion that the novel repeatedly explores is a very different sort of thing than the contextualized social meaning of emotion (for a more thorough explanation of the novel's physiology of emotion, see Matus). Margaret repeatedly struggles with conveying her powerful emotional experiences sincerely without running afoul of the potential social uptakes that those emotions may generate.

Display & Sincerity

The conversation Margaret has with Henry following the scene of the India shawls extends the problem of display into a problem of sincerity by highlighting the gap between

expression and reality when selection separates the speaker's intentions from the uptake of an utterance. In part, sincerity is a way of assessing the relationship between experience and display, and Margaret almost always defaults toward the belief that her own and other people's utterances are sincere displays of their emotional experiences, and she attempts to take up their meaning as such. Henry, by contrast, is uninterested in the kind of intimacy that would allow him to understand the intentions behind utterances and instead relies on the combination of appearance and social meaning to take up others' utterances. By illustrating the different selections that Henry and Margaret make, Gaskell interrogates the relationship between sincerity, habitus, and uptake.

The difference in Margaret and Henry's habitual uptakes also leads to differences in the sincerity of their displays. Margaret, who seems to assume that other people will take up her displays in the same way she takes up theirs, allows her emotions to dictate her displays: "it was almost a surprise to see him; and now she was sure of a pleasant evening. He liked and disliked pretty nearly the same things that she did. Margaret's face was lightened up into an honest, open brightness...She received him with a smile which had not a tinge of shyness or self-consciousness in it" (12). Much like the adjective childlike is attached to innocent displays of emotion throughout the novel, the adjective conscious is often used synonymously with sexual awareness and/or interest, as it is here. This later becomes very apparent in Margaret's interactions with Thornton after his proposal. When Thornton comes to bring her mother fruit, Margaret tries to interact with him civilly and disinterestedly but instead ends up "sitting in burning silence, vexed and ashamed of her difficulty in keeping her right place, and her calm unconscious of heart, when Mr. Thornton was by" (219). In this example, it is not only display but also the experience of sexual awareness that is inappropriate. Inappropriate or sexual displays

of emotion are conscious displays, then, both in the sense that the individual is aware of and willing to manipulate the social uptakes that their behavior can produce and in the sense that the individual is aware of herself or others sexually. Here, the fact that Margaret is enthusiastic in welcoming Henry but not self-conscious about her display indicates that she is sincere in expressing her happiness to see him because she is unaware of any sexual attraction or interest between them.

Of course, her ignorance is also shown to be partially willful, a consistent repression of any emotional experience that is unpleasant, unwanted, or ill-timed that recurs throughout the novel. Margaret is quick to avoid anything on Henry's part that suggests sexual interest: "Margaret did not quite like this speech; she winced away from it more, from remembering former occasions on which [Henry] had tried to lead her into a discussion (in which he took the complimentary part) about her own character and ways of going on. She cut his speech rather short" (13). Because his utterances make her uncomfortable emotionally, she preempts them, an uptake that precludes the more uncomfortable and irreversible uptake that could result if he continues. Throughout the text, Margaret shows herself to be particularly adept at repressing and avoiding evidence of emotions, both her own and others', that she does not want to experience or engage with. This repression creates one of the central tensions in the novel's endorsement of sincerity. The text simultaneously lauds complete and utter sincerity and honesty, and suggests that Margaret's repressions are a moral and practical necessity.

The contrast between Margaret and Henry in their discussion of wedding rituals also links sincerity to habitus. Margaret is weary and wants a genuine answer, "a few pleasant, quiet ideas connected with a marriage" (12). Henry thinks that she is hinting at her interest in him as a husband, which leads him to the compliments that she so quickly suppresses. In his response,

Henry emphasizes the necessity of observing social convention, “not so much to satisfy oneself, as to stop the world’s mouth, without which stoppage there would be very little satisfaction in life” (12-13). Because he is himself so accustomed to behaving in a certain way because it maintains proper social appearances, he consistently focuses on the socially conventional aspects of others’ utterances. Margaret does not care so much about the “forms and ceremonies” (12) which, her conversation seems to suggest, are unattached to the real purpose and joys of a marriage and, by extension, a fulfilling life. Because she attempts to behave in ways consistent with her feelings and moral beliefs, she focuses on the aspects of others’ utterances that suggest their own emotions and values. While Henry’s habitus leads him to select appearance in crafting an uptake, Margaret’s habitus leads her to select meaning.

Their discussion of Helstone emphasizes Margaret’s sincerity in the face of Henry’s uptake of her words as an idealization or metaphor intended to create symbolic social meaning:

“There is the church and a few houses near it on the green—cottages, rather—with roses growing all over them.”

“And flowering all the year round, especially at Christmas—make your picture complete,” said he.

“No,” replied Margaret, somewhat annoyed, “I am not making a picture. I am trying to describe Helstone as it really is. You should not have said that.”

“I am penitent,” he answered. “Only it really sounded like a village in a tale rather than in real life.”

“And so it is,” replied Margaret, eagerly. “All the other places in England that I have seen seem so hard and prosaic-looking, after the New Forest. Helstone is like a village in a poem—in one of Tennyson's poems.” (13)

This exchange establishes three different selections of Helstone that lead to three very different uptakes. Helstone can be a village, a picture, or a tale; that is, it can be taken up as a reality, a sign, or a setting. Henry takes up Helstone as a picture, a sign of the Hale's status as a good family with ties to the landed gentry.

Margaret's views of Helstone are more complicated. Despite her enthusiastic depiction of Helstone as a setting in a tale, she also wants to claim that she is describing the reality of the village: "But I won't try and describe it any more. You would only laugh at me if I told you what I think of it—what it really is" (13). Margaret's speech distinguishes between reality and socially-mediated views of reality. Even after viewing Helstone, Henry Lennox's view of it remains socially mediated. Paul Kanwit argues that Henry's descriptions of Helstone while he is there treat it as a landscape painting, static and "fixed," and that Margaret is quick to remind him that life at Helstone is changeable and contains disappointments (206). However, despite her belief that she can access an unmediated reality, Margaret's view of Helstone is clearly influenced by the social idealization of the idyllic English countryside and the purity of country life. As Rosemarie Bodenheimer explains, "Once [Margaret] has been educated by the forthright class antagonisms of the north, the social realities of the south emerge from behind the picturesque sketches" (56). Margaret's view of reality changes when her social setting changes and when her values change accordingly.

By claiming unmediated access to reality, however, Margaret elides her own uptake. The interaction of her habitus and narrative identity effectively erase her selections as selections. Her emphasis on purity and sincerity in her own identity, her disavowal of social forms and ceremonies, lead her to ignore the ways in which her own views are also informed by social norms and values. One of the main tensions of the novel, then, is its endorsement of Margaret's

purity—its view of her as a neutral arbiter of meaning—even as it shows the ways in which her views change as her social setting and experiences change. The novel scrutinizes the change in Margaret's uptakes that is produced by the changing social values which challenge both her habitus and identity, even as it lauds her as having a kind of transcendent access to reality through her moral purity.

The difficulty of escaping symbolic social meanings emerges further in Margaret's final refusal to tell Henry about her home: "But indeed I cannot tell you about my own home. I don't quite think it is a thing to be talked about, unless you knew it" (14). Margaret relies here on an epistemology that gives primacy to experience and suggests that communication is insufficient to acquaint someone with the reality of a situation if they have no basis in shared experience. Her discomfort emphasizes the mediating role of habitus in uptake and the effect that the clash of different habitus can have when intention and selection are oriented differently. Henry's response to this statement reinforces her concern by failing to recognize the epistemological problem that Margaret identifies. Instead, he takes up her statement not as a genuine expression of her feelings and beliefs, but as a punishment to him for disagreeing with her and as an opportunity for further flirtation: "because I made an unlucky remark, you will neither tell me what Helstone is like, nor will you say anything about your home" (14). While his statement is not false, it is also not entirely true. His unlucky remark has made Margaret refuse to tell him about Helstone, but only because it has highlighted the insufficiency of words to convey reality—and, perhaps, his unwillingness to take her seriously. Making himself the center of the conversation, he takes Margaret's remarks not as her honest assessment of the potential for communication but as a strategy for negotiating the power dynamic of their relationship.

Henry makes a similar uptake in the proposal scene when Margaret resists his advances: “I have been too abrupt. I am punished” (28). The passive construction of his sentence keeps the focus on his experience and eliminates Margaret as an actor. Furthermore, his assumption that Margaret is responding merely to the form of his speech (its abruptness) and not to the content of it (their prospective relationship) and punishing him for failing to act in the proper form erases her refusal. Rather than being a rejection of him or a statement of their incompatibility, Margaret’s refusal is made into a rejection of the form of communication he uses and not of Henry himself. This uptake is understandable as a method of protecting himself from emotional pain, but it also reveals the habitual selection of appearance that both makes him completely incompatible with Margaret and leads him to make her into an aesthetic and sexual object. Margaret’s displays are sincere in so far as they are prompted by her thoughts and feelings and relatively unconcerned with social forms. Henry, unconcerned with other people’s feelings and obsessed with social conventions, is incapable of taking up her displays as sincere. Instead, he consistently takes up her displays as responses to or anticipations of social forms.

Sincerity & Representation

Henry’s visit to the parsonage in chapter three is in many ways a metacommentary on the problems of superficiality in uptake and the tension between appearance and signification, between a sign and reality. Henry’s preoccupation with aesthetics and social conventions influences the ways that he takes up Helstone, the parsonage, Margaret, and her family. This section of the novel both emphasizes Henry’s appearance-driven approach to communication and raises the question of how systems of representation are implicated in the selection and uptake of utterances. By looking explicitly at the uptakes available within different systems of

representation, Gaskell explores the possibilities for making sincere expressions, and being taken up as sincere, within prescribed systems of meaning-making.

Household taste, most importantly décor and its relationship to nature, was an important sign system to the mid-Victorians (Kanwit 195). Henry's response to the household décor of the parsonage opens the third chapter and establishes the disconnect that systems of representation can create between sincere intentions and appearance-driven uptakes:

The little drawing-room was looking its best in the streaming light of the morning sun. The middle window in the bow was opened, and clustering roses and the scarlet honeysuckle came peeping round the corner; the small lawn was gorgeous with verbenas and geraniums of all bright colours. But the very brightness outside made the colours within seem poor and faded. The carpet was far from new; the chintz had been often washed; the whole apartment was smaller and shabbier than he had expected, as back-ground and frame-work for Margaret, herself so queenly. (23)

Henry cannot appreciate the beauty, and potential moral edification, afforded by the natural scene, but instead focuses on the internal furnishings that indicate a lack of economic wealth. As John Kanwit points out, "Though Margaret had earlier acknowledged her home's modest furnishings to Henry, he nevertheless expects more from a woman with a 'good family' (23). Henry believes that he can provide a better 'frame' (23) for a woman whom he envisions as an aesthetic object" (203). Henry's equation of social standing and material possessions lead him to form expectations for the parsonage that are consistent with his aesthetic views of Margaret, her beauty, and her family and not with Margaret's own communications about her home.

This moment reinforces Margaret's earlier point that she could not convincingly describe Helstone to him. Though it seems that Margaret means she could not describe her home to anyone, the problem of mediation seems especially prominent in the case of explaining it to Henry because of the conflict between their habitual modes of expression and selection. For Henry, the social and symbolic meanings of a country parsonage possessed by a good family are far more important than Margaret's attempts to convey the reality of such a place. Kanwit argues that "Henry, a member of an ascending profession, obsesses about overt displays of wealth and raising his class stature—attributes that would have led many contemporaries to call him 'vulgar'" (203). It is not until Henry sees the evidence of status in their household décor that he grasps part of what Margaret had been trying to communicate to him through language all along. Preoccupied with signs of class status, Henry is still unable to recognize the true value of Helstone for Margaret and her father. He reads only the appearances of the decor and is unable to connect it to what it reveals about the character of the house's inhabitants.

The second system of representation the chapter explores is language, and the disconnect between sign and signification in language is further emphasized in Henry's appraisal of the evidence of Margaret's occupations at the parsonage. Although earlier he had been very interested in how she would pass her time—assuming that she would either be gardening or attending "[a]rchery parties—pic-nics—race-balls—hunt-balls" (14)—and had refused to believe her when she denied her father's ability to afford such social entertainment, he is not invested in trying to understanding her pursuits when he comes across evidence of them. While he waits for Margaret to come back with her mother, "He took up one of the books lying on the table; it was the *Paradiso* of Dante, in the proper old Italian binding of white vellum and gold; by it lay a dictionary, and some words copied out in Margaret's hand-writing. They were a dull list of

words, but somehow he liked looking at them. He put them down with a sigh” (23). The list of words is evidence of Margaret’s intelligence, her desire and ability to read and comprehend texts that are foreign to her, and her ability to move beyond surface appearances into the meaning beneath. To Henry, they are only appreciable as an extension of Margaret’s aesthetic—pretty to look at because they are written in her handwriting, but otherwise entirely uninteresting. They hold no interest for him because they do not provide any evidence that the Hales have economic or social capital. Of course, Gaskell’s use of a list of words to emphasize the disparity between appearance and meaning highlights the tension surrounding language in the novel. Just as Henry and Margaret diverge over the proper value and interpretation of the list of words, they diverge over the function of language as a communicative medium. Attuned primarily to the social conventions on the surface of language, Henry is incapable of interrogating how different values and perspectives can alter the way that language is used. By contrast, “Margaret’s openness to learning language new to her and her willingness to learn additional ways of interpreting signs” (Elliott 151) leads her to view language as a medium that requires sincerity on the part of the speaker and attention to intention on the part of the listener.

Henry’s visit to the parsonage also highlights drawing as a system of representation and raises the question of what is actually represented in the drawings that Margaret and Henry create. The drawings represent their subjects, of course—the cottages and trees and figures that are on the paper—but Henry’s, at least, also represents his feelings about Margaret and constitutes perhaps the only sign in the novel of which her uptake is more superficial than his. Margaret does not look at the drawing as something that speaks to her about Henry’s character or feelings. Instead, she looks at it as something to be valued for how well the medium is used and not for the deeper meaning that it reveals. Margaret’s departure from her typical selection of

meaning to the atypical selection of appearance suggests that there is a willful repression of meaning in the scene, as there was with the compliments earlier in the novel. Margaret's embarrassment over being the center of attention triggers a different part of her habitus that leads her to repress an aspect of an utterance that could be taken as interest in her.

As he does with the compliments, Henry makes Margaret—in a very obvious and straightforward way—the object of his scrutiny when he includes her in the drawing. When he shows Margaret the drawing, “She laughed and blushed: Mr. Lennox watched her countenance” (25). As Jill Matus points out, “Often indicated by blushing and feelings of shame, Margaret's knowledge and awareness of herself as sexually attractive is repeatedly denied even as it is simultaneously recognized and commented on by others” (42). Although Matus does not pursue this line of inquiry, blushing does constitute an important communicative mechanism throughout the novel. Importantly, however, blushing and shame are associated not only with Margaret's awareness of being sexually attractive but with Margaret's awareness of anyone's sexuality and particularly with any attention that seems liable to uptake emotional display as sexual interest. Margaret's response to Edith's behavior illustrates this: “Edith saw Captain Lennox hesitating whether to come in. She threw down her music, and rushed out of the room, leaving Margaret standing confused and blushing to explain to the astonished guests what vision had shown itself to cause Edith's sudden flight” (14). Suddenly the center of attention, Margaret is embarrassed and unsure how to explain Edith's behavior without her words being taken up as evidence of her own sexual knowledge. In the drawing scene, Margaret's blush could be evidence of either her own sexual awareness or her embarrassment at Henry's gaze; Henry is clearly watching Margaret's face to gauge her reaction and use her blush to determine her interest in him.

He certainly seems to take it up as an indication of her interest in him because he increases the sexual language in the conversation:

“It was irresistible. You can't know how strong a temptation it was. I hardly dare tell you how much I shall like this sketch.”

He was not quite sure whether she heard this latter sentence before she went to the brook to wash her palette. She came back rather flushed, but looking perfectly innocent and unconscious. (25)

Margaret's response in this scene suggests the connection between the aesthetic and sexual objectification of women. As in Margaret's interaction with Henry at Mrs. Shaw's, the narrator is careful to tell us that Margaret appears “innocent and unconscious” of the sexual nature of his words. Nevertheless, her blush indicates that she takes up Henry's aesthetic gaze in the same way that she takes up sexual interest (as cause for embarrassment), suggesting that for a young woman of marriageable age there is little difference between being admired aesthetically and being desired sexually. Of course, since we're reading this scene largely through Henry's perspective it is possible that Henry misreads her expression. However, since he has a vested interest in taking up her emotional display as sexually interested, and he seems to be otherwise good at seeing what he wants to see, it seems unlikely. Her surprise at his proposal also suggests that she did not take the comment sexually or that she was able to repress the potentially sexual nature of his comments and behavior.

Something about the medium of drawing seems to have made it safer for Henry to express his emotions sincerely because the novel makes it clear that he is not generally as sincere in language, or at least that his emotions are not often strong enough to demand expression in language. Despite the deliberateness of his expression in drawing, he makes the comment above

accidentally: “He was glad of it, for the speech had slipped from him unawares—a rare thing in the case of a man who premeditated his actions so much as Henry Lennox” (25). His usual premeditation suggests that he is aware of the potential effects of his utterances and often speaks purposefully to elicit a response rather than speaking sincerely what he thinks or feels. Although this premeditation is not linked to sexuality, in the way that consciousness is, it is shown to be potentially more damaging as it prevents meaningful dialogue and relationships.

Margaret’s relationship with John Thornton emphasizes the importance of sincerity. Because John cares more about the truth than he does about offending her or her father, Margaret is able to openly dispute with him about appropriate standards of behavior and she is able to convince him to rethink his relationship with his workers. Valerie Wainwright argues that “through vital and often vehement interaction John Thornton and Margaret Hale eventually achieve what Gaskell perceives is of fundamental importance to the good life: both are capable of the kind of rigorous reflection that contributes to a crucial refashioning of their individuality” (87). I would argue, however, that neither conflict nor individualism are central to Gaskell’s view of the good life. Ultimately, it is not the conflict that either Margaret or John take away from their encounters but the knowledge that sincerity in expression is necessary if we are to learn how to appropriately take up the words and actions of those whose value systems are different from our own. Dorice Elliott notes that in his speech to Mr. Colthurst, John espouses the view that “[b]ecoming familiar with others...teaches one to read the sign systems of their dress, demeanor, gestures, and speech; correctly reading these signs leads to understanding and understanding leads to affection” (Elliott 151). Margaret is eventually able to convince John that this cooperative model of labor relations is better than an antagonistic one because his sincerity of expression allows her to understand his values, opinions, and character. The interactions that

create their better understanding of one another convince them both, as they are meant to convince the reader, that attention must be paid to signification and uptake in order to construct a more fair and functional society.

Margaret and Thornton's relationship is not the only one that operates primarily on the valuing of sincerity over effect. In their relationship, sincerity is necessary for learning to engage with others in a way that can make society more healthful and productive. In Thornton's relationship with his mother, sincerity is shown to be the only way of knowing another person at all. The narrator observes that

A stranger, a careless observer might have considered that Mrs. Thornton's manner to her children betokened far more love to Fanny than to John. But such a one would have been deeply mistaken. The very daringness with which mother and son spoke out unpalatable truths, the one to the other, showed a reliance on the firm centre of each other's souls, which the uneasy tenderness of Mrs. Thornton's manner to her daughter...betrayed the want of a secure resting-place for her affection. (87)

The narrator places the same emphasis on contextualized uptakes in this passage that the text places on them in Margaret and John's relationship. Mrs. Thornton's behavior could easily be taken up in unintended and deeply mistaken ways by a stranger—someone who does not know what her and her son's systems of signification are—or a careless observer—someone who does not take the time to try to figure them out. However, the concern over sincerity in this passage is more than a question of correcting socially-constricted uptakes; it is a question about an individual's fundamental ability to know another human being. What this passage reveals is a deep-seated anxiety about identity when communication is pragmatic rather than sincere.

Ultimately, we can know another person only through their communicative acts and that knowledge becomes deeply suspect if the main purpose of communication is to anticipate and secure certain uptakes. Systems of representation, even as they make possible the kind of behavior that anticipates uptakes, must also allow for the kind of emotive and sometimes daring sincerity that can reveal the center of the soul and ensure honest and meaningful interrelationship.

Representation & Scripts

Prescribed systems of representation also raise the question of symbols within a system that always mean or accomplish the same thing in a given situation, what I will refer to as scripts. Despite the novel's vilification of premeditated behavior, it also reveals the necessity of social scripts and conventions in showing people how to communicate with and relate to one another. Gaskell demonstrates some of the problems that arise from not having social scripts in Henry's proposal scene—despite her seeming insistence that true intentions and a pure heart will communicate themselves to others, almost magically and despite any potential problems that genre, medium, or social convention may pose. Henry, who is usually so fluent, has trouble finding the right words to use, and the scene is full of stops and starts as they both struggle to use wordings that will not hurt or offend the other even as they know that their meanings will. Proposals, as highly private events that exist at the edge of a polite society that prefers to ignore sexual attraction, do not have easy scripts that allow their participants to accomplish their purposes with relative ease.

Henry does not even have to say anything for Margaret to sense that they are about to pass the bounds of comfortable and familiar conversation:

she wished herself...anywhere away from him, for she was sure he was going to say something to which she should not know what to reply. In another moment the strong pride that was in her came to conquer her sudden agitation, which she hoped he had not perceived. Of course she could answer, and answer the right thing; and it was poor and despicable of her to shrink from hearing any speech, as if she had not power to put an end to it with her high maidenly dignity (28)

Margaret's agitation over her own agitation suggests that unanticipated subjects, particularly in conversations in which the response is high-stakes, can cause emotional disturbance strong enough to be visible—that is, that the experience of emotion in these situations can lead automatically to its display. Conversely, the scene also suggests that strong emotion can preempt speech and make reply difficult. In part, then, Margaret's inability to reply could be because she has not figured out her feelings about Henry, since she has so consistently repressed them. Primarily, however, her problem seems to stem from the absence of a script that could help her to craft a response consistent both with her emotions and her narrative identity.

Gaskell illustrates the usefulness of social scripts in allowing people to assess their surroundings and their relationship with others: “[Mrs. Thornton] made all these reflections as she was talking in her stately way to Mrs. Hale, and uttering all the stereotyped commonplaces that most people can find to say with their senses blindfolded” (89). Mrs. Thornton's use of social scripts allows her to observe the Hales' home and occupations, make assessments about their character, and decide how she would like to conduct her acquaintance with them, all without sacrificing her social propriety. There is, however, no stereotyped commonplace that will work for Margaret in her predicament, either as a satisfactory reply or as a stalling tactic that can give her enough time to recover emotionally and formulate an honest and tactful response.

Henry's proposal threatens the narrative identity of purity and daughterly devotion that she embraces, and she must reassure herself of her ability to respond to his potentially dissonant advances with the silence consistent with her maidenly dignity.

As in other situations in which Margaret doesn't know what to say—or knows that anything that she says or does will be taken up in ways contrary to her intentions—she relies on the use of silence to retain her agency. Margaret seems to want a romantic relationship, and really all of her relationships, to be built upon respect for her as a person, primarily her intellect and morals. It is perhaps this emphasis on intellect that leads her to assume that she has ultimate control over her body and emotions and to act as if her body and emotions are somehow separate from her as a person. The novel's repetitive comments on her appearance and dress highlight how difficult it is for her to have people see beyond her looks. The repeated incorrect uptakes of her displays also emphasize how difficult it is for her to get people to take her expressions as sincere rather than conscious displays. She seems to respond to this difficulty in part by trying to neutralize her own body's experiences and displays, and the book comments frequently on Margaret's ability to be both silent and completely still. On the one hand, her silence is picturesque in inviting views of her as an aesthetic object, "some great Egyptian statue" (251). On the other, it confounds other character's readings of her by refusing to present them with any kind of display to interpret. The neutralization of her body is in this sense a social presentation that attempts to convey her purity and intellect to others, or at least to refuse to give them any emotional information that they can take up in ways contrary to her own sense of narrative identity. This is not entirely successful, as many of the other characters still describe her as haughty, an adjective she expressly denounces (86). Still, there is something commanding and

indescribable about her presence that allows her to use her silence to gain control of hostile situations and that convinces onlookers of the purity and dignity she values so highly in herself.

Margaret is certainly not in control of the proposal scene, despite her assurance that her dignity will allow her to be. Henry gets the better of her from the beginning by “taking her by surprise, and getting sudden possession of her hand, so that she was forced to stand still and listen, despising herself for the fluttering at her heart all the time” (28). In part, it seems that Margaret is concerned that her emotion, her fluttering heart, will display itself physically and be read by Henry as an acquiescence regardless of the verbal response she gives him. This concern is shown to be legitimate by his behavior at the end of the chapter when he takes “her sad and pensive face” as a sign that he is “not so indifferent to her as she believes” and decides not to give up hope (30). Because Margaret has relatively little social power, and because of the restrictive nature of polite conversation, there is very little that Margaret can do if he persists in this belief. She cannot negotiate with Henry, as she attempted to do in her description of Helstone, to correct this misunderstanding. Because romantic and sexual interest had to remain largely unspoken—remember the extreme interest in blushing and other nonverbal cues—the disparity between intention and uptake becomes more pronounced and the stakes of such miscues become higher. Margaret is largely at the mercy of his perceptions, mistaken though they may be, and his repeated misreadings of her displays highlight her inability even to determine the meaning of her own emotions.

Her lack of control is also evident in the fact that Henry can force her to stop and listen to him. Throughout the book, she is subject to the force of other people’s wishes as one of John’s observations accidentally makes clear. When he is at the Hales’ for tea, John notes that when

She handed him his cup of tea with the proud air of an unwilling slave...he almost longed to ask her to do for him what he saw her compelled to do for her father, who took her little finger and thumb in his masculine hand, and made them serve as sugar-tongs. Mr. Thornton saw her beautiful eyes lifted to her father, full of light, half-laughter and half-love, as this bit of pantomime went on between the two, unobserved, as they fancied, by any. (74)

Although Margaret's love for her father seems to make her willing and happy to perform this service, the language of force in this passage remains problematic. The equation between a woman's position and slavery, while overly dramatic, emphasizes Margaret's aversion to being the object of masculine attention and being required by her social position to submit to someone else's opinions of how she ought to feel or behave. Margaret's choice is paramount here—her agency, that is her feelings about and desire to perform her duties, makes the difference for her between obligation and care. This seems particularly relevant in the context of Henry's proposal. Unless Margaret is able to marry a man who will treat her as an equal, her duties as a wife and mother will be forced and burdensome, rather than performed willingly and happily. Henry's misreadings and his force in the proposal scene reveal that he is most certainly not that man.

Margaret's response makes it clear that she has recognized the vulnerability that this development in their relationship could cause for her: "Pray, let us both forget that all this' ('disagreeable,' she was going to say, but stopped short) 'conversation has taken place" (29). She equates forgetting the conversation with erasing the emotion. If Margaret does not have to respond and they can both forget that the utterance ever happened, then the reality of their relationship is not altered. This suggests that expression, not meaning or emotion, dictates the nature of relationships. By erasing the aberrant expression, they can return to a social script that

is both more familiar and more comfortable—and one in which Margaret can retain the narrative identity of purity and daughterly devotion she embraces. In this light, Margaret’s consistent repression of Henry’s sexual interest makes a good deal of sense. By avoiding any hint of it, Margaret is attempting to protect herself from having to bear the (false) responsibility for his feelings—which his anger at her rejection seems to suggest is a reasonable precaution—and is making selections that are consistent with her narrative identity. Henry’s reaction to this comment rejects the assumption that expression is more important than emotion, an odd sentiment from someone who consistently selects appearance over meaning, and emphasizes his own hypocrisy in demanding that Margaret validate his emotions when he has consistently refused to try to understand hers. Although Margaret’s selection serves to protect her sense of identity, it poses a potential threat to his.

Henry selects the social view of his eligibility as a suitor, not Margaret’s response, to uptake Margaret’s rejection: “A struggling barrister to think of matrimony!” (29). Although the novel makes it clear that Margaret would not be able to explain why she could not love Henry, he does not bother to ask. This is, in part at least, probably a defense mechanism. By displacing the personal onto the social, Henry is able to protect himself from the emotional pain of her rejection. His selection also serves as a direct invocation of the narrative identity he embraces, that of the well-bred professional who can raise his social position through his wit, talent, and hard work (and perhaps an advantageous marriage). By selecting in this way, Henry is using a potentially humiliating and painful experience to reify his own narrative identity. Rather than Margaret’s rejection being a threat to his sense of self, this uptake makes her rejection a confirmation of it. Although Margaret rejects him because he is too superficial, the effect of her rejection is ultimately to reinforce his superficial identity and habitus. Normally circumspect and

anticipatory, Henry has been emotive and impulsive throughout his time at Helstone. The rejection that accompanies this new expressive behavior leads him to move quickly and vehemently back to “worldly” (30) ways of talking, ways that do not rely on emotion but use social convention to form utterances instead. In short, her rejection marks the failure of his non-habitual behavior and encourages him to return to his appearance-based habitus.

This selection also denies Margaret’s agency by suggesting that society—or at the very least, social expectations—rather than Margaret, made the decision against him. It is unsurprising then, that Margaret is so annoyed by his speech that she will not answer him (29). Margaret uses her silence as a mechanism for reclaiming that agency and refusing to validate any uptake that erases her ability and right to make decisions as a rational human being. She also uses her silence as a censoring mechanism, as a refusal to engage with a habitual selection that she views as deeply flawed:

How different men were to women! Here was she disturbed and unhappy, because her instinct had made anything but a refusal impossible; while he, not many minutes after he had met with a rejection of what ought to have been the deepest, holiest proposal of his life, could speak as if briefs, success, and all its superficial consequences of a good house, clever and agreeable society, were the sole avowed objects of his desires. Oh dear! how she could have loved him if he had but been different, with a difference which she felt, on reflection, to be one that went low—deep down. Then she took it into her head that, after all, his lightness might be but assumed, to cover a bitterness of disappointment which would have been stamped on her own heart if she had loved and been rejected. (31)

In this explicit consideration of their responses to the conversation, Margaret emphasizes the differences between their habitus that make them ultimately incompatible. Concerned with appearance and social class, Henry responds to his disappointment by subordinating his emotion to superficial social goals. Concerned with meaning and emotion, Margaret responds to her own emotional turmoil by trying to understand the motivations of the person who has caused it. Her review of multiple and potentially conflicting interpretations of his behavior emphasizes how important it is to her to select for motivation and character in taking up others' words and actions.

Conclusion

Because my readings up to this point have been very localized, I want to conclude by considering a more comprehensive reading of the novel that is made possible by such close attention to uptake. When I first read *North and South*, I was frustrated by Margaret's consistent repression of her own and other characters' emotions, as well as her stubborn insistence that she ultimately had the correct interpretation of other characters' behavior, even when she clearly did not. However, the ways that systems of representation and social scripts influence the possibility for both sincere display and the uptake of display as sincere in the novel reveal the complex relationship the novel creates between repression, identity, and agency. Although Margaret's repression is restrictive and occasionally damaging, it also gives her agency in a novel where she has almost no control over what happens to her or what the uptakes of her behavior are. Repression protects Margaret from experiencing emotions that would be damaging to one of the few positive narrative identities available to her socially. By suppressing her emotional experiences, it also prevents them from escaping as displays that could be misread in ways dangerous to her. And, finally, her repression thwarts others' potentially oppressive or

threatening utterances by taking them up in less-threatening ways, thereby giving her a measure of control over other people's meanings. Margaret's relative powerlessness makes the subtle power dynamics of communication central to her ability to navigate her world. Although repression and sincerity still stand in tension with one another, the novel ultimately endorses Margaret's deep investment in sincerity and cooperative relationship as necessary for personal fulfillment and social progress in a world that runs on socially-conditioned uptakes.

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