



“On the authority of his tombstone”:

The Double Bind of Memory in *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*

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19th-century coming-of-age novels give center stage to objects. Whether it be the recovered letter that forms the introduction to *The Professor*, or the heirlooms that Dorothea Brooke shares with her sister in the first chapter of *Middlemarch*, objects are instrumental in the beginnings of the novels. But the objects also often trigger the protagonists' first memories as is evident from Bewick's book in *Jane Eyre* or the tombstones in *Great Expectations*. Such memory objects, which set off the memory process, are also core to the early formation of the main characters. They are thus all the more crucial as they compensate for the isolation and the faulty human ties that hinder the dynamics of socialization and character development at the heart of the *Bildungsroman*.

The *Bildungsroman*, also known as “novel of formation” or “novel of socialization” (Moretti 247), perfectly illustrates Jean-Jacques Lecercle's argument that the formation of the self relies on others (109). Indeed, the *Bildung* of the protagonist—the identity-making process—hinges on a series of places, social structures, and groups. The formation of the individual seems inherently linked with the stakes of socialization. In this respect, it is striking that Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë's eponymous heroine, and Pip Pirrip, the protagonist of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* should be orphans. In both *Bildungsromane*, from the onset, the orphans appear to be radically *isolated*. Jane and Pip are violently mistreated, scolded for asking questions, and alienated. Both are in a liminal position. Jane sits on a windowsill, on the threshold between the hostile interior and the barren exterior. Pip is on the marshes, between an inhospitable home and the uninviting landscape, feeling uprooted, insular. Their being out of place is symptomatic of their being out of time, bereft of past and parents.

Their radical isolation illustrates Terry Eagleton's contention that “the self is less a relational reality than a watchful, alien presence on the periphery of others' lives” (24), and we could add, on the periphery of *death*. Indeed, in the incipit, Pip is reading his parents' tombstones in a bleak churchyard. This finds a direct echo in Jane's experience. She is engrossed in a Natural History book, Thomas Bewick's *History of British Birds*, rich with images of death and desolation. Among these images features a “quite solitary churchyard, with its inscribed

headstone” (*Jane Eyre* 6). As they are on the periphery of life, isolated, the protagonists turn to memory objects to restore relational dynamics. In so doing, the orphans become recipients of a memory discourse, their narratives embedded in *urtexts*, positioned under the aegis of these memory objects. The memory object is thus the starting point of the narrative which it pre-exists and authorizes. Yet, and this is the double bind that this paper seeks to address, while it *predates* and *authorizes* the text, the memory object is also *reconstructed* through it. It is an archive, material to be processed, exceeding the protagonists’ personal memory.

To address this issue, this paper will first focus on the seemingly incompatible functions of the memory object as both authoritative pre-text and textual reconstruction. It will then be seen that this reconstructing bias affects the subject, which is recast as object, thereby fusing remembrance and self-fashioning. Thus, in the future-oriented *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist’s progress also radically proceeds from the past as Pip and Jane must accommodate the objects of memory in the narrative of their lives.

Authority and Reconstruction

[Commençons par le] mot “archive” – et par l’archive d’un mot si familier. *Arkhé*, rappelons-nous, nomme à la fois le *commencement* et le *commandement*. Ce nom coordonne apparemment deux principes en un : le principe selon la nature ou l’histoire, *là où* les choses *commencent* – principe physique, historique, ontologique –, mais aussi le principe selon la loi, *là où* des hommes et des dieux *commandent*, *là où* s’exerce l’autorité [...]. (Derrida 11, italics in original)

Both protagonists are presented in an in-between place, in a liminal position. This liminality also applies to the narrative, whose initial stage entails the creation of a reading contract. *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* are works of fiction in autobiographic form. So, Jane and Pip must draw on their own memory to tell their lives. Yet, in the incipits, memorial reliability seems to be placed in memory objects. Pip’s example is telling. He identifies himself and provides his father’s family name, as he says: “on the authority of his tombstone” (Dickens 3). Whereas both novels should be legitimized by their protagonists’ memory, the orphans themselves relinquish this authority to physical artefacts that trigger the memory process and ensuing narrative.

About the vignettes in Bewick’s book, Jane remarks: “[e]ach picture told a story; mysterious often to my undeveloped understanding and imperfect feelings, yet ever profoundly interesting: as interesting as the tales Bessie sometimes narrated on winter evenings [...]” (*Jane Eyre* 6-7). Caught in Jane’s hermeneutic process, the pictures become narrative, they tell a story, thus placing Jane on the receiving end of the memory discourse. However, with the simile “as interesting as,” one set of stories substitutes for another, and the text segues from

Bewick's book to Jane's mind, from interpretation to recollection, from archival object to personal memory. Likewise, Pip's description of his parents' tombstones is immediately followed by his first memory. Bewick's *Birds* and the tombstones play a twofold role. They act as authority; and yet, they make it possible to subtly branch out into personal memory, which seems to be a prolongation of the memory object, as though appended on it. In the process, Jane and Pip transit from the role of *receiver* of the archival object to that of *originator* of their own memory narrative. In other words, the orphans do not solely capitalize on the *contents* of the archival object. They primarily summon the initiatory and authoritative functions contained in the etymon of the "archive"—"le commencement et le commandement" (Derrida 11)—, to bestow these functions on their own initial memories and nascent narratives.

Beyond its authoritative function, the memory object is caught up in fanciful, even erroneous, hermeneutic processes. As they turn themselves into inheritors of a memory discourse, the orphans do not merely draw *from* the memory object, but draw *upon* it. This is evident in *Great Expectations*:

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister — Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above*", I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. (3)

In the absence of parents or photographs, the inscriptions become images, the shape of the letters shaping his parents' bodily appearance. The very workings of language are obfuscated in the process. Pip takes the anaphoric "Wife of the above" to have an extralinguistic referent, which produces a humorous effect. His failure to grasp the *textual* antecedent betrays his error in seeking *his own* antecedents from the memory object. The archive becomes a repository for his projections and expectations.

This process of appropriation is also visible in Jane's use of Bewick's book. The text is not merely quoted but actually "deliberately *misquoted*," as noted by Laurent Bury (174, emphasis added). This is the excerpt from Bewick's text, with the segments appearing in *Jane Eyre* highlighted in bold type:

Other parts of the world—the **bleak shores and isles of Lapland, Siberia, Spitzbergen, Nova Zembla, Iceland, Greenland, with the vast sweep of the Arctic zone**, are also enlivened in their seasons by swarms of sea-fowl, which range the intervening open parts of the seas to the shoreless frozen ocean [...]. In these **forlorn regions of unknowable dreary space**, this **reservoir of frost and snow, where firm fields of ice, the accumulations of centuries of winters, glazed in Alpine heights above heights, surround the pole, and concenter the multiplied rigors of extreme cold**; even here, so far as human intelligence has been able to

penetrate, there appears to subsist an abundance of animals in the air and in the waters [...]. (xiv-xv)

Bewick's *History of British Birds* is stripped of any sign of life in *Jane Eyre*, so that the very birds are left out to reflect the protagonist's isolation. This deliberate misquotation shows that the appropriation of the memory object cannot solely be attributed to the orphans' undeveloped state. It indicates intentional *reconstruction*. Consequently, the initial experience of memory objects provides an exegetic key for the upcoming memory narrative. It heralds how memory objects are adopted and *adapted* to produce a specific characterization, a specific staging of the subject. The subject itself is then turned into a memory object, which is the focus of the second part of this analysis.

Remembrance and Self-Fashioning

In the lonely graveyard, Pip's first memory programmatically conveys the sense of his threatened existence. Strikingly, the child's sense of threat is offset by the narrator's skill in conjuring up and memorializing his former self:

My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things, seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain, that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (Dickens 3-4)

The churchyard, a collection of tombstones, of monuments, becomes a spatial and mnemonic point of reference. Starting from the churchyard, then, the narrator unrolls the reel of his first memory. It grows in expanding circles to re-present and re-produce the landscape, itemized in a run-on sentence. This accumulation, heightened by the polysyndeton, presents the writer in the guise of a collector. This memory list ends with the word "Pip," disrupting the homodiegetic perspective of the first-person narrative, as the narrator sees his former, inscrutable self from without. He nevertheless places his younger self within his own collection and recollection as one memory object among others. This neat, *a posteriori* textual reconstruction is at odds with the young Pip's sense of helplessness. Dwarfed by the open-ended immensity of the marshes, the child gains consciousness of himself as a reified "small bundle of shivers," and is perhaps closest to his relatives through his haunting fear of death, of being wiped off of the Earth's surface.

Pip's first memory is interrupted by the as yet unknown Abel Magwitch. The runaway convict asks him for victuals and a file to break the irons on his legs. His first address to Pip in the narrative is a death threat. Magwitch places Pip on a high tombstone, threatens him with cutting his throat, as well as tearing out, roasting and eating his heart and liver (6), thereby dramatically augmenting the fear of death and of falling into oblivion. Ivan Kreilkamp argues that the scene introduces a fear of obliteration that will echo through the whole novel:

At the novel's core lies a fear of being forgotten or misremembered, of "perishing out of all human knowledge." The entire work plays out the tension of its opening scene, where Dickens contrasts two possible fates: that of being remembered and memorialized, as Pip's parents are in letters inscribed on their tombstones, or alternately, of being obliterated and forgotten—not remembered but dismembered and cast aside [...]. (81)

His fear of death and disappearance is reminiscent of Brontë's protagonist, when Jane is punished and left to stay in her late uncle's deathly chamber.¹ In the Red Room, Jane is faced with death² and with the fact that she has no blood relation with the Reeds, no human ties. Driven to extremes of distress by the absence made present by the memory objects—vehicles of a memory that exceeds hers—, she is confronted with *herself*. That is what the mirror encounter reveals:

[N]o jail was ever more secure. Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travelers. (*Jane Eyre* 11)

Mirrors are a staple of self-consciousness, self-knowledge and self-construction, as has been notably demonstrated by Foucault and Lacan. Significantly, it is after finding the door locked, and being barred access to the domestic spheres of socialization (and identity-making), that she looks into the mirror. The mirror thus appears as an alternative, a gateway to another place, another reality ("depth," "revealed," "visionary hollow"), a space that is *different from*, but also *magnifies* reality ("All looked colder and darker [...] than in reality"). Jane's objectification throughout the Gateshead section—"a heterogeneous thing," "a useless thing," "a noxious

¹ *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* epitomize "[...] the preliminary fear of the outside world as a menace for individual identity" core to the English *Bildungsroman* (Moretti 248).

² Tellingly, when she comes back to Gateshead as a young adult, her aunt confesses to having told Jane's uncle, John Eyre, that she was dead. The Red Room episode encapsulates this fear of death and falling into oblivion. Likewise, Pip's sister would want Pip dead: "[...] all the times she had wished me in my grave, and I had contumaciously refused to go there" (Dickens 32).

thing” (*Jane Eyre* 12)—climaxes in the mirror. Haunted by the sepulchral objects of the Red Room, Jane becomes one herself in the looking-glass. Tellingly, she expresses her anger, noting: “I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say” (*Jane Eyre* 9). Her mirror experience then is one of autoscopy, she sees herself from without. She becomes an object in the etymological sense: a “thing put before”. This disembodiment, this estrangement from the self, actually makes it possible to *see* it, and might therefore paradoxically be a preliminary step towards a consciousness integrated in the self. This is what Michel Foucault underlines:

[L]e miroir [...] a sur la place que j’occupe, une sorte d’effet de retour [...]. À partir de ce regard qui en quelque sorte se porte sur moi, du fond de cet espace virtuel qui est de l’autre côté de la glace, je reviens vers moi et je recommence à porter mes yeux vers moi-même et à me reconstituer là où je suis [...]. (15)

If the question of recognition runs deep in the passage, it is all the more indication that there is a mirror encounter, that Jane has had access to *a* vision, *her* vision of *herself*, thus initiating the identity-making process.³ Though frightening and folkloric, the image she sees is self-made: it is the product of her exuberant imagination, which is transferred from Bewick’s pictures to her own image. It is her interiority projected and superimposed on her exteriority. Her striking specular vision is imprinted in memory, as one more memory object stored with the relics of the Red Room, which becomes the echo chamber for Jane’s mind.⁴ Such a memory object is the trace of a formative experience.⁵ It will serve as a fundamental milestone through which Jane can construct her identity.

Conversely, in *Great Expectations*, the absence of a mirror encounter means that Pip is not presented with an image of himself, with a vision of himself as object that could be housed in

³ This is the first in a series of mirror encounters which problematize identity throughout Jane’s progress (she then uses a mirror to draw a deprecatory self-portrait in chapter 16, or sees Bertha’s reflection in a mirror, sporting her wedding veil before tearing and trampling on it in chapter 25, or else in chapter 26, clad in her wedding dress, she sees her mirror image as a stranger’s).

⁴ This is underlined by Claire Bazin: “La chambre est le miroir de la peur grandissante de l’enfant, qui la déforme à son tour, transformant l’espace entier, mais aussi chaque objet [...]” (15).

⁵ This mirror encounter compares with Milly Theale’s encounter with the Bronzino portrait in *The Wings of the Dove*. As evident from the epizeuxis “dead, dead, dead” (James 139), Milly’s encounter strikingly climaxes in what the painting does *not* represent, death. Its significance lies in catalyzing the heroine’s (self-)consciousness, as is also the case for Jane.

memory and on which he could build his identity.⁶ In Satis House's distorting light, the mirror never sends back Pip's image but only Miss Havisham's: "[...] she turned her eyes from me, and looked at the dress she wore, and at the dressing-table, and finally at herself in the looking-glass" (Dickens 68). The jilted bride's exclusive use of the looking-glass foretells Pip's central error in identifying *her* as the source of *his* great expectations and maturation. Pip's process of self-definition is thus foredoomed.

Whether or not they can get an image of themselves as memory objects *within the diegesis*, Jane and Pip both refashion themselves as memory objects in *their narratives*. This indicates the instrumental role of memory objects in the self-referential enterprise central to autobiographical writing. The histrionics of the Red Room episode might be read as narrative excess. Yet, it is an informed decision. Indeed, beyond their intrinsic intensity, the young protagonist's experience and perceptions in the Red Room chapter are couched in a theatrical mode which, up to Jane's closing fainting spell, builds up the dramatic force of the passage: "unconsciousness closed *the scene*" (14, emphasis added). This is all the more significant as, from a very early age, Jane knows of the requirements of a neutral memory narrative. Indeed, when Miss Temple, a schoolmistress, asks Jane to recount her unjust treatment by her aunt, she declares: "[s]ay whatever your memory suggests as true; but add nothing and exaggerate nothing" (*Jane Eyre* 60). Jane contends that, "[t]hus restrained and simplified, [her narrative] sounded more credible [...]" (60). Readers are made to understand that theatricalizing the self as object is intentional and purposeful. The beginning of the Thornfield section is a case in point:

A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play: and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the "George Inn" at Millcote, with such large figured papering on the walls as inn rooms have; such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantelpiece, such prints [...]. All this is visible to you by the light of an oil lamp hanging from the ceiling, and by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit [...]. (*Jane Eyre* 79)

This passage can be paralleled with the practice of collecting through writing to which the narrator of *Great Expectations* also resorts. However, in this passage from *Jane Eyre*, narrator and protagonist are reunited in a single pronoun: "I", which bespeaks progress towards self-

⁶ The notable exception being his caricatural dressing up before leaving for London. Mr. Pumblechook's mirror is too small for Pip to even see the entirety of his body in it: "I [...] had gone through an immensity of posturing with Mr. Pumblechook's very limited dressing-glass, in the futile endeavour to see my legs" (Dickens 182). As Pip cannot see his whole body in the mirror, his sartorial transformation before going to London is tantamount to self-disintegration and travesty. It is against such travesty that Jane fiercely rebels, when she refuses Rochester's presents.

integrity and unification. At the same time, representative distance is maintained as the narrator sees her former self as object. Jane is both director and on-stage actress, recollecting agent and recollected object, on a par with the objects in the room. This scene, which is like a memory image, is described in the present tense: it is thus made as visible and present to the reader, who is addressed, as it is alive in the narrator's mind. The narrative morphs into a five-act play, showing how memory objects are artificially staged at pivotal moments to signalize the maturation process.

Refashioning the subject as a memory object articulates specific subjectivities. Thus, it poses a central question about the autobiographers' enterprise. As Annette Tromly puts it, "[t]hat question centers on the validity of the self-image the autobiographers project in their stories" (17). As Jane is both director and on-stage object, remembering and remembered, she evokes the relation between narrator and protagonist, who, in an autobiography, are one and the same. Memory, to Jane, is a constructive process. It is to be fashioned in the narrative as it is in life. This is evident from the advice she provides Rochester with: "if from this day you began with the resolution to correct your thoughts and actions, you would in a few years have laid up a new and stainless store of recollections, to which you might revert with pleasure" (*Jane Eyre* 117). She then puts this piece of advice into practice. She draws a deprecatory self-portrait using a mirror, and a beautiful image of Blanche Ingram, who she thinks will marry Rochester, her master, the man she loves. These two contrasting images are mementos of the fact that she does not stand a chance with her master. The subject turns herself into an anticipatory memory object meant to guide future actions. This process is reminiscent of the medieval use of the Art of Memory to remember virtues and vices personified in memory images. Through these images, memory "[...] is used to remember past things with a view to prudent conduct in the present, and prudent looking forward to the future" (Yates 74). Representing herself as a memory object, Jane seeks not to stray off the virtuous path: her own self-portrait is a potent reminder that it would be immoral and foolish to entertain hopes of a union with Rochester. This future-oriented memorializing of the self as object—through self-portraiture—stands as a foremost instance of the endeavor to control one's existence pragmatically. Memory objects, which stem from the past, inform both present consciousness and future choices.

Great Expectations features a theatrical scene comparable to the one in which Jane showcases herself as memory object in the Millcote inn. Tellingly enough, the scene is that of Magwitch's trial, in which people indiscriminately point at Magwitch, the condemned convict, and Pip, whose own fate and identity have been fused with that of his benefactor:

The whole scene starts out again in the vivid colors of the moment, down to the drops of April rain on the windows of the court [...]. The sheriffs, other civic gewgaws and monsters, criers, ushers, a great gallery full of people—a large theatrical audience—looked on as the two-and-thirty [accused] and the Judge were solemnly confronted. [... Magwitch] went last of all [...] and he held my hand while all the others were removed, and while the audience got up (putting their dresses right, as they might at church or elsewhere) and pointed down at this criminal or that, and most of all at him and me. (Dickens 522-24)

Pip's vivid memory is made equally striking to readers through a theatricality that re-produces and probably surpasses the dramatic dimension of the trial itself. The account of the trial ends with the pronoun "me," with the memorialization of the self *in* the scene, facing a trial that is not his. Magwitch sought to live vicariously through Pip by turning him into a gentleman in England, and Pip is now vicariously undergoing Magwitch's trial. Magwitch's death sentence entails Pip's loss of benefactor and fortune. Most importantly, it symbolizes how his life prospects were doomed from the start when, as a child, he brought the convict a file and some victuals. Pip's recollection of Magwitch's trial and his first, opening memory in the marshes are mirror scenes: in both cases the narrator seeks to memorialize his former self in the scene so as to order and control a lived experience. Ironically, in both cases, the attempt at turning himself into a memory object through narrative only brings into sharper relief his inability to control his life in the story.

It comes as no surprise then that Pip should entertain the view that one's lifepath is a succession of causes and consequences, determined from the onset. The way he metaphorizes this idea evokes the chain of his convict, and thus the beginning of his narrative:

That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But, it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day. (83)

Oblivious to the fact that his life is an alloy of both metals (Talon 131), the narrator dichotomizes gold and iron, high and low standing, expectations and reality. The metaphor thus plays into the wide network of Pip's erroneous reading of signs, archives, memory objects and of himself. Henri Talon notes that "[the fictional autobiographer] gives us the impression that he cannot always see through the young boy he was, nor fully understand [...] the significance of his own life" (131). In the two narratives, molding the self as memory object is nothing short of an attempt at ordering and understanding experience. But staging the self as object also bespeaks a struggle for control in the face of a past that is seemingly inaccessible yet crushingly, spectrally present and decisive. Thus, ruins, letters, drawings, torn veils, stolen files, broken chains, testaments, whether they function as obstacles or *dei ex machina*, show

that the protagonist's progress is only possible through the confrontation with memory objects, as will be analyzed in the final part of this paper.

Memory and Futurity

The two novels are underlain by a series of tensions—between teleology and etiology, orphanhood and inheritance, futurity and tokens of the obfuscated past, identity-making and recollection. The potential success of Jane's and Pip's *Bildung* thus lies in accommodating the objects of memory in the narrative of their lives. Magwitch's trial exemplifies the legal discourse which is refracted throughout *Great Expectations* and core to the classical *Bildungsroman*. According to Franco Moretti, “[w]ell beyond ‘contents,’ the cooperation of literature and law in the symbolic legitimation of the existing order is inscribed and articulated in the very *rhetorical structure* of the *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman* in fact seems to justify itself as a form in so far as it duplicates the proceedings of a trial” (212). Indeed, the pervasive legal discourse of *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* seems to betray a legal *ethos*, shaping characters' minds and interactions.⁷ Nowhere is the weight of this legal discourse more forcefully articulated than in memory objects. Working as evidence in the framework of legal investigation, they are a means of accounting for the past from the present standpoint. The fictional legal investigation is a metatextual reflection of autobiographic writing, which also endeavors to accommodate circumstances and evidence into a coherent narrative that does justice to the complexity of reality. Thus, after being hit in the head and seriously injured by Orlick, Pip's sister draws a “T” which actually stands for a hammer, metonymically designating her aggressor who works at the forge (Dickens 144). The letter T is turned into a mimetic, symbolic sign, denoting the tool of Orlick's trade, the murder weapon, and supposed to lead

⁷ Among many examples, this is evident from Jane's internal trial, her psychomachia, before she decides to draw contrastive pictures of Blanche and herself (“Arraigned at my own bar, Memory having given her evidence [...]; Reason having come forward and told, in her own quiet way, a plain, unvarnished tale, [...];—I pronounced judgment to this effect” [*Jane Eyre* 136]), or from the testimony she gives of her mistreatment at Gateshead following Miss Temple's encouragement that “[...] when a criminal is accused, he is always allowed to speak in his own defense” (*Jane Eyre* 60). Likewise, her conversations with Rochester often take the form of interrogations (“resume your seat and answer my questions” [*Jane Eyre* 106]), which is also characteristic of Pip's questioning following his visit to Satis House: “[...] my sister [...] asked a number of questions. And I soon found myself getting heavily bumped from behind [...] and having my face ignominiously shoved against the kitchen wall, because I did not answer those questions at sufficient length” (Dickens 76).

directly to the criminal. Language, the tool of communication par excellence, is instrumentalized, dethroned by another system of communication, that of objects, which reveals their potent signifying power. Ironically, Pip's art of misreading the tombstones in the incipit contaminates the novel's legal discourse. Here though, while he is eventually able to see the resemblance between the shape of the letter and that of the hammer, Pip is oblivious to its logical implication that Orlick is the offender, confirming his continuous misreading of memory objects.⁸ In the same vein, *Jane Eyre* foregrounds the role played by memory objects in reconstructing past deeds and events: following Bertha's night visit to Jane's room and her tearing the wedding veil apart,⁹ Rochester tries to discard Jane's vision as "the creature of an over-stimulated brain" (242). It is through the torn veil, an object testifying to the memory of the night before, that Jane can prove her claims: "[b]ut, sir, when I said [it must have been unreal] to myself on rising this morning [...] there—on the carpet—I saw what gave distinct lie to my hypothesis,—the veil, torn from top to bottom in two halves" (*Jane Eyre* 243). Even if, at that stage in the narrative, Jane must make do with Rochester's lie that it was probably Grace Poole, the object substantiates Jane's memory. Thus, hammer and veil are objects on which the memory of committed crimes rests. These objects connect past and present, but they also take on prophetic force as Orlick tries to murder Pip later in the narrative, and the torn wedding veil prefigures Jane and Rochester's impossible marriage and separation. Pip's and Jane's inability to fully decipher memory objects in these two parodies of police investigations should not undermine their significance, for memory objects shape both the orphans' lives and life stories.

During the Thornfield section, when Jane goes back to her dying Aunt in Gateshead, the latter discloses a letter she was sent three years before by a certain John Eyre from Madeira. The letter not only reveals that Jane has an uncle, but also that he wishes to adopt and make her his heir. For Jane, going back to Gateshead amounts to returning to the past, and the letter appears to be a potent memory object: through it, Jane is presented with a past and parentage, but it is also through John Eyre that her marriage with Rochester will be impeded (*Jane Eyre*

⁸ The stakes of *reading* evidence and memory objects are emphasized by Pip. He notes that the Constables "[...] persisted in trying to fit the circumstances to the ideas, instead of trying to extract ideas from circumstances" (Dickens 142), but fails to put this lesson to use in his own life.

⁹ As it features extreme terror, fainting, and a mirror encounter, the passage reduplicates the Red Room episode. The mirror, that "visionary hollow" which objectified and crystallized Jane's Gateshead condition, now offers a vision of the potential actualization of female domestic life embodied by Bertha, a radical Other.

251) thereby also conditioning her future. During the Marsh End section, Jane Eyre has temporarily erased and renounced her identity, using the alias Jane Elliott. One night, St John Rivers comes to her school: he has received a letter from Mr. Briggs who is the solicitor of John Eyre, Jane's uncle, and asking whether he can help find out a certain Jane Eyre's whereabouts. St John Rivers tells the contents of the letter to Jane, which are the story of Jane's life, thus disclosing her identity. His narrative, which is replete with the lexis of the law—"solicitor, will, documents, letter, property, crime" (*Jane Eyre* 322-26)—is a moment of realignment for Jane and readers alike. St John also produces a fragment from a portrait painted by Jane which she abstractedly signed Jane Eyre: a piece of evidence which for him corroborated that the story was hers, that she was Jane Eyre, John Eyre's adopted legatee. He can then declare, "[...] you [are] rich—quite an heiress" (*Jane Eyre* 325). But it is also during this conversation that Jane discovers that St John Rivers is actually her cousin, St John *Eyre* Rivers. The will, the solicitor's letter, and the fragment of the painting (with her signature) bring together the pieces of Jane's identity—her real name being associated not only with her life story, and inherited fortune, but also with the parentage of the Riverses. Through these memory objects, the past spurts into the present, providing Jane with wealth, relations, and restoring her real identity, all of which are inherently linked. Teleology, the novel's purposive design, proceeds from etiology as Jane's progress is permitted by the obfuscated past that materializes through memory objects, which coalesce inheritance, recognition, and social integration. Moretti notes that:

[...] the recognition-inheritance pattern, [...] is] the most typical form of the English happy end. [...] These inheritances are not gifts offered by saintly Cardinals or repented sinners as in *The Betrothed*. They are something which Tom, Waverly and Jane *have a right to*. And this "something" is not only a vast rural estate, or a nice sum of money, or a title: it is their very identity [...]. (205)

In *Great Expectations*, which stands as "perverse and obstinate counter-model to [the English *Bildungsroman*]" (Moretti 265), the process is reversed and invalidated. Pip first becomes wealthy, but the identity of his benefactor, with whom he has no blood connection, must precisely remain unknown, thereby becoming the novel's central secret. Moreover, while Jane was able to temporarily renounce her name, symbolically disengaging from her identity to better readopt it, Pip is legally bound to keep his name,¹⁰ which, as a childish compression and misconstruction of his real name (Philip), foreshadows the impossibility to construct the self. Contrary to Jane, Pip cannot break from his childhood state of existence by first symbolically renouncing his identity to subsequently reintegrate it through inheritance and connections. He

¹⁰ Mr. Jaggers explains, "[y]ou are to understand that it is the request of the person from whom I take my instructions, that you always bear the name Pip. You will have no objection, I dare say, to your great expectations being encumbered with that easy condition" (Dickens 161).

can only somehow grow back into the novel's initial stages, into the child he was. This is evident from the recurrence of memory objects, which, in both novels, become yardsticks through which to measure the orphans' progress.

In the final chapter of *Great Expectations*, Pip goes back to the forge, and faultily projects himself on his young nephew:

[...] I laid my hand softly on the latch of the old kitchen door. I touched it so softly that I was not heard, and looked in unseen. There, smoking his pipe in the old place by the kitchen firelight, as hale and as strong as ever, though a little grey, sat Joe; and there, fenced into the corner with Joe's leg, and sitting on my own little stool looking at the fire, was—I again! (550)

Unmarried and childless, Pip still does not appear to have found his place in the world. As an outsider, looking in, he is witness to the family group rather than being a part of it. In this respect, the instances in which the narrator recasts his former self as memory object integral to his recollection ask to be reread as narrative remedying, or narrative manipulation to make up for hindered development, integration and self-perception. Pip has remained “on the periphery of other's lives” (Eagleton 24), and of his own. Somehow still struggling with his memory and with himself, lacking the distance essential to self-representation, he resorts to an intermediary, as if to make sense of his own past and experience. He places his uncle's nephew, also named Pip, on his parents' tombstone, thus duplicating and circling back to the beginning of his own life, to the first link in the chain, the first puzzling memory object. The memory object reveals the thwarted development of the protagonist of *Great Expectations*. In *Jane Eyre*, this role of memory objects in helping measure up the character's evolution is evident when Jane returns to Gateshead: “[g]lancing at the bookcases, I thought I could distinguish the two volumes of ‘Bewick's British Birds’ occupying their old place on the third shelf [...]. The inanimate objects were not changed: but the living things had altered past recognition” (*Jane Eyre* 194). The Natural History Book, that early memory object, signals Jane's own progress, heightened by the contrasting demise of the Reeds. Pip's re-encounter with the initial memory object shows virtual absence of progress, and signposts the circularity of *Great Expectations*. Conversely, Bewick marks out the spiral structure of *Jane Eyre* and reveals the heroine's maturation and growth. The reencounter with emblematic memory objects molds and highlights Pip's and Jane's respective trajectories and fashions their narratives to the end.

Consequently, the orphans' identity and progress are predicated on memory which largely depends on memory objects, that are themselves “semanticized” through Jane's and Pip's readings of them. Memory objects fertilize the very consciousness that fertilizes them. This

dovetails with the causality dilemma this paper has sought to address, whereby memory objects perform the contradictory functions of authoritative pre-text and textual reconstruction. This *textual* causality dilemma finds its source *within* the diegesis in the codependent, reciprocal, and cross-fertilizing interplay between memory object and subject. The object can only become *memory* object through the childlike or retrospective, emotional or rational, faithful or fanciful, obituary, legal, and evidently autobiographical gaze, which is enlightened in the process.

Conclusion

“Mute thou remainest—Mute! yet I can read
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face:
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings, all at once
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
And deify me, as if some blithe wine
Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,
And so become immortal.”—Thus the God,
While his enkindled eyes, with level glance
Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept
Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.
(Keats 495)

In *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*, memory objects serve protean functions. Whether they be archives authorizing and initiating the narrative, elucidatory keys to one’s past and origins, yardsticks to measure the protagonist’s progress, or overt attempts at externalizing consciousness, memory objects are material correlates of interiority. As any endeavor to represent the self falters over the lack of distance essential to representation, memory objects help circumvent this problem, as evident from Jane’s Red Room experience. Didier Maleuvre’s argument that “in order to speak *about* myself, I must be, in a sense, *beside* myself” (153), could be the formula behind Jane’s and Pip’s self-refashioning as memory objects. Recasting the *self* as memory object is instrumental to *see* the self, which is impossible in reality. In *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*, the workings of memory objects mirror autobiographical writing, which seeks to understand and represent the self. Indeed, focusing on the best-known early 19th-century “essay in English autobiography”, John Foster’s “On a Man’s Writing Memoirs of Himself,” Keith Rinehart notes:

Foster's essay consists mainly of advice to the autobiographer. The kind of autobiography which concerned Foster was a man's account of his own life for his own use, "endeavoring not so much to enumerate the mere facts and events of life, as to discriminate the successive states of the mind, and the progress of character." [...] The justification of such autobiography is of course to know one's character more adequately and to improve it. (179)

For fictional autobiographers Jane and Pip, autobiography functions like a memory object as it syncretizes memory and futurity, self-knowledge and self-construction, recollection and progress. The autobiographical enterprise *facilitates*, rather than just recording, identity making; like memory objects, it helps construct the very consciousness that constructs it. Thus, memory objects raise metatextual questions on autobiography, for they contain and articulate the tensions at the heart of autobiographical writing. Jane's and Pip's autobiographies are also material correlates to their interiority. *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations* evidence that the attempt to comprehend and construct oneself and one's place in the world largely depends on memory and its objects, or more precisely, on one's reading of them.

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