The Plot Thickens
Contents

List of Illustrations vii
Acknowledgments xiii
Abbreviations xv

Introduction. Material Matters: The Illustrated Victorian Serial Novel 1

ONE Imagining the Self
   Illustration and the Technology of Selfhood in David Copperfield and Cousin Phillis 51

TWO Picturing the Past
   Illustration and the Making of History in The Tower of London, Vanity Fair, and A Tale of Two Cities 88

THREE Hallowing the Everyday
   Illustration and Realism in Wives and Daughters, Mistress and Maid, and The Small House at Allington 157

FOUR Arousing the Nerves
   Illustration and Sensation in The Notting Hill Mystery, Griffith Gaunt, and The Law and the Lady 204

FIVE From Peter Ibbetson to Pickwick and Back
   The Lives and Afterlives of Illustrated Victorian Serials 249

Notes 279

Bibliography 303

Index 319
The Illustrated Victorian Serial Novel

This book starts with two pictures. The first, the cover image, is a painting of a Victorian woman holding a slim orange-gold volume in her lap. The year is 1873. The woman is Effie Millais, wife of the famous painter John Everett Millais. The volume is the *Cornhill Magazine*, an illustrated monthly journal launched by Smith, Elder in January 1860, which, from its first issue, became a major venue for her husband’s illustrations for fiction and poetry. The *Cornhill*’s wood-engraved wrapper (fig. 0.1) depicts scenes of plowing, sowing, threshing, and harvesting—a visual pun on the publisher’s original location at 65 Cornhill Street in London and a metaphor for the magazine’s ambition to harvest the best of contemporary literature for its readers. If the issue that Effie holds likewise dates from 1873, then, depending on the month, it might contain prose by Charles Kingsley, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Leslie Stephen, or Eliza Lynn Linton and wood-engraved illustrations by George Du Maurier, Marcus Stone, or Luke Fildes. The magazine’s featured fiction—two serials per monthly issue—combined text and image, usually with one full-page wood engraving and one chapter initial leading the reader’s eye into the text.

The second image, the one facing this page, shows a pair of hands holding a slim Victorian volume. The year

---

**Fig. 0.1** Godfrey Sykes, wrapper for the *Cornhill Magazine*, August 1862. Courtesy of Simon Cooke.
is 2018. The hands belong to our research assistant Michael Carelse, and the volume is a Victorian serial novel—a monthly installment of Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield*, published between May 1849 and November 1850. The slim text in Michael’s hands is part 1, now preserved in the University of Victoria’s Special Collections. Like the *Cornhill*, this serial edition of *David Copperfield* was illustrated, with visual images playing a key role for its readers; each monthly installment featured a wrapper and two steel etchings designed by Hablot K. Browne (known as “Phiz”).

These images of hands and texts, and their implications, form the alpha and omega of this study. They represent the Victorian and modern reader, both interacting with Victorian literary forms. But unlike our research assistant, most modern readers do not encounter Victorian fiction in its original publication formats, such as the illustrated periodical and the independent illustrated serial part discussed above. General readers, undergraduates, and even the majority of graduate students—as well as many scholars—read works by Dickens and other Victorian novelists mostly in fat paperback editions in which only some of the original illustrations are included (indeed, illustrations are sometimes omitted altogether) and the serial breaks are at best indicated by an asterisk at the end of a chapter. The modern paperbacks that fostered our own love of Victorian novels differ markedly in material form, page layout, and illustration placement from, for example, the slim monthly parts of William Harrison Ainsworth’s *The Tower of London* (1840), William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847–48), and Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1849–50); the monthly installments of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters* (1864–66) in the *Cornhill* and Charles Reade’s *Griffith Gaunt* (1865–66) in the *Argosy*; and the weekly installments of Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) in *Harper’s Weekly* and Dinah Mulock Craik’s *Mistress and Maid* (1862) in *Good Words.*

In this book, we try to show why this difference matters. In *Radiant Textuality* (2001), Jerome McGann reminds us that the material form of a text always signifies: the “apparitions of text—its paratexts, bibliographical codes, and all visual features—are as important in the text’s signifying programs as the linguistic elements” (11–12). McGann’s argument suggests that the transformation of Victorian novels from slim illustrated parts or periodical installments to bulky paperbacks has diminished their capacity to signify through their original form. Is this loss even partially recoverable? We think so. This study attempts to bridge the gap between Victorian and modern readers by using archival materials to create what Catherine J. Golden calls “a vital window” into Victorian reading practices (introduction, 3). Following Pierre Machery’s statement that “readers are made by what makes the book” (70), we ask, *How does the form of the illustrated Victorian serial novel invite readers to read?* This question propels us
toward a critical method that is materialist, historical, and founded on considerations of form (illustrations, advertisements, chapter initials, layout, wrappers, and periodical context). Our goal is to read Victorian illustrated serial novels in their original publication formats, asking how those forms imply specific reading practices and, in turn, demonstrating how our understanding of these texts shifts if we read them as their original Victorian readers did—in parts, over time, with illustrations constituting an integral part of the reading experience. This project, then, takes its starting point in the archive, where modern readers can hold Victorian periodicals and part installments in their hands.

The Illustration Revolution
The slim orange volume of the *Cornhill* and the July 1859 installment of *A Tale of Two Cities* both represent in material form two moments in the Victorian revolution in illustration and print technologies. In the eighteenth century, illustration was a minor aspect of book production. Triple-decker novels or collections were released largely unillustrated, although popular books sometimes included frontispieces with portraits of the author or vignettes of a setting. Book illustration was limited mainly to poetry, canonical eighteenth-century novels, or Shakespeare’s works. The late 1700s saw the rise of illustrated periodicals such as the *Novelists’ Magazine* (1780–88), in which classic books were serialized with new illustrations by contemporary artists. Charles Lamb, who, as the son of a London legal clerk, had access to such magazines as a child, referred in retrospect to the “pictured wonders” (871) of their pages: his was the first generation that saw text and image as intrinsically linked. The late eighteenth century also witnessed a sea change in illustrative technique: whereas copper engraving had dominated the book trade for three hundred years, in the 1780s, Thomas Bewick introduced the art of wood engraving. While the copper or steel engraver produces an intaglio print by creating indentations in the plate, into which ink is forced and then pressed onto the page, the woodcutter or wood engraver creates a relief print by removing wood from areas that will appear as white space and printing from the inked surface of the remaining block. Bewick’s innovation was to experiment with using steel-engraving tools rather than cutting away the wood with a knife—as artists did to produce the traditional woodcut—and with using the hard end grain of boxwood rather than the softer plank side. The resulting linear, black-and-white style of wood engraving was not only beautiful to look at but also practical to reproduce, as the hard boxwood block could be inserted into a printing form and thus combined on the same page as type; as well, it could be used for mass printing because of its durability.
Also inherited from the eighteenth century, *steel etching* was prized for its speed and practicality. The steel plate was first covered with an etching *ground* (a thin, acid-resistant coating often containing wax), and then the etcher transferred the design to the ground by laying the sketch “pencil side down” on the etching ground, covering it with a damp sheet, and passing it through the press. The lines were then drawn through the ground with etching needles of various widths, enabling the lines to be exposed to acid. Steel etching was widely used by caricaturists and prized for “its fluent line”; we see its mastery in designs by the talented George Cruikshank, one of the Regency’s great caricaturists and, later, a leading book illustrator in the 1830s and 1840s.

The 1820s saw the rise of *steel engraving* (that is, designs produced on steel plates by evacuating a line with a burin or creating dots with a tool called a *mattoir*, as opposed to the needle and acid used in etching). This technique migrated from bank notes to books, for which the durability of steel plates facilitated mass reproduction on mechanized presses and steel engraving’s high-quality silvery tones enabled the reproduction of elegant landscape paintings and portraits as well as of original book illustrations. By the 1830s, copper plates (such as those used by William Blake in his late eighteenth-century illustrated books) had mostly been supplanted by steel in book illustration. In turn, wood engraving was increasingly embraced as an art form in the 1850s and 1860s, by which point it generally supplanted steel. Notably, copper, steel, and wood engraving all involved the transfer of artists’ conceptions to the medium of the plate or block. By contrast, the final years of the century saw the widespread use of photomechanical reproduction, which enabled, for the first time, the direct replication of the artist’s pencil, ink, or wash drawing—or even a photograph—onto the printed page.

This Victorian revolution in illustration techniques coincided with technological developments in printing and transportation that enabled increasingly cheap and efficient production and distribution of print materials. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, books and newspapers were luxuries too expensive for most British people to afford. In 1815, for example, a newspaper cost seven pence, and around 1820, a three-volume novel thirty or more shillings, prices prohibitive to middle-class families. Newspapers, paper, and advertisements were all taxed, meaning that print material was priced out of the reach of many working-class readers. Moreover, for the poor, reading was additionally costly in terms of candles, made even more necessary because some people bricked up apertures to avoid the tax on windows. However, publishers were able to bring illustrated periodicals and books to a mass market at affordable prices as steam presses mechanized
printing, the paper tax was removed, wood pulp replaced linen rags as the basis for paper, railways enabled mass distribution, and illustration became cheaper. On 24 May 1851, the Illustrated London News noted that this huge drop in cost and sharp increase in production had revolutionized the printing industry: “[B]y means of improvement in the art of engraving, giving facilities for publishing rapidly large editions, illustrative engravings can be given to the public at one-fortieth of their cost a few years ago” (“Speaking to the Eye,” 452).

These innovations in print technology and illustrative techniques allowed Victorian publishers to imagine book formats that blended text and image as “equal partners in the discourse.” In wrapper designs that created brands for serials and periodicals, in full-page illustrations that graced books and magazines, and in tiny chapter initials and tailpieces, artists created images that might variously decorate, complement, add to, contradict, or complicate the letterpress—but that in all cases contributed to the rich meanings of verbal-visual forms. New publication formats—the illustrated comic almanac, the illustrated annual, the illustrated serial, the illustrated book, and the illustrated newspaper or periodical—all blended verbal and visual signifiers, a fact that book historians understand as crucial to our understanding of the period’s texts: as Robert L. Patten argues, “If we lose our ability to read images, we lose historical comprehension” (“Politics,” 111). In turn, Victorian readers became adept at visual interpretation: as Golden notes, “During the first wave of industrialization, literacy meant interpreting the details of an image as well as the words on a page” (introduction, 6).

The early nineteenth century saw a burgeoning market for illustrated literature, with a strong public appetite for political caricature and satire. As Brian Maidment has shown, comic annuals and almanacs as well as broadsides fed the popular taste for visual imagery and verbal-visual discourse. Print shops flourished, with Rudolph Ackermann opening his famous emporium of art prints and supplies in the Strand (P. James, English, 17). The innovation of colored aquatints (illustrations made by using acid to etch copper plates to different depths and colored by hand) brought color illustration to high-end books, with aquatint illustrations becoming popular in texts on landscape, flora, fauna, heraldry, battles, and events of national importance. Another fashionable and expensively produced illustrated book format was the literary annual, popular from the early 1820s to the mid-1850s: titles such as the Forget-Me-Not (1822–47) and the Keepsake (1827–57) appeared each fall in time for the Christmas gift-giving season, taking the middle-class market by storm with their combination of attractive bindings, steel-engraved illustrations, and poetry and prose by well-established, often celebrity authors.
In fiction, from the 1820s on, the monthly serial part, combining an illustrated wrapper with text and images, became the era’s quintessential fictional form, born of the cheaper illustration modes as well as of the publisher’s ability to print and distribute the early installments of a serial with minimal outlay in comparison to volume publication. One of the first such best sellers was Pierce Egan’s boisterous Life in London; or, The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn Esq. and Corinthian Tom (serialized in twenty monthly parts from October 1820 to June 1821 with hand-colored aquatints and additional wood engravings, all produced by George and Robert Cruikshank in a lively caricature-inflected style), a text that inspired at least sixty-five spinoff publications. Dickens owed his literary rise to the illustrated serial novel, starting with his comedic The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (known commonly as The Pickwick Papers and published monthly from March 1836 to October 1837 with steel etchings in every part), a serial whose sales started at less than 500 per number and grew to 40,000. Equaling Dickens’s works in contemporary popularity were the illustrated serials of Ainsworth, whose “immensely successful” Newgate novel Jack Sheppard (January 1839–February 1840) propelled the sales of Bentley’s Miscellany beyond those attained during the serialization of Dickens’s Oliver Twist. Both were illustrated with steel etchings by George Cruikshank, considered the “Lion of the day” among contemporary illustrators (Patten, Cruikshank’s Life, 2:2). Serials were subsequently released in volume form, usually with illustrations inserted (technically, tipped in) close to the plot events that they depicted.

Publishers also found marketing opportunities in reprinting previously published books, this time with illustrations; the novels of Walter Scott, originally published unillustrated, were reissued in such editions. Constable released the first illustrated edition of Scott’s novels, Novels and Tales of the Author of Waverley, in 1819; the sole illustration was a title-page vignette of Edinburgh Castle. Ten years later, Robert Cadell published the forty-eight-volume Magnum Opus edition, which included ninety-six illustrations by thirty-five artists (R. Hill, Picturing, 75); the contrast in illustrations for these two editions indicates the magnitude of the change in publishing practice. By 1831, Scott himself estimated that without illustrations the recent edition of his Waverley novels would have sold 5,000 fewer copies (and earned £13,000 less). The flowering of book illustration led to books now prized by book historians and collectors: William Allingham’s The Music Master (1855), illustrated with nine wood engravings by leading Pre-Raphaelite artists Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Arthur Hughes, and the Moxon edition of Alfred Tennyson’s Poems (1857), illustrated with fifty-four wood engravings by Rossetti, Millais, William Holman Hunt, and others. By the
1860s, the popular taste for illustrated texts had come to echo the predilection of Lewis Carroll’s Alice, who—not yet in Wonderland—asks, “[W]hat is the use of a book . . . without pictures . . . ?” (Alice’s Adventures, 9).25

The popularity of images also propelled the innovation of Victorian illustrated magazines and newspapers. The first illustrated mass-market periodical was the Penny Magazine, founded in 1832, the first issue of which sold 213,241 copies.26 In 1841, Punch was founded by engraver Ebenezer Landells and journalist Henry Mayhew; quickly sold to Bradbury and Evans, it featured the work of leading comic illustrators and caricaturists such as Richard Doyle, Charles Keene, John Leech, Kenny Meadows, and John Tenniel under the guidance of editor Mark Lemon. Inheritor of the strong Regency tradition of graphic caricature,27 Punch was soon to become the era’s leading comic illustrated periodical. Six years after its founding, Ralph Waldo Emerson described its images as “equal to the best pamphlets, . . . [conveying] to the eye in an instant the popular view which was taken of each turn of public affairs” (qtd. in Cruse, 408).28 In 1842, Victorians saw the first pictorial weekly newspaper, the Illustrated London News, whose opening statement described the “pencil” as “oracular with the spirit of truth” (“Our Address,” 1). The Illustrated London News subsequently distinguished itself by its “steady, week-by-week coverage in which pictures fully partnered with letterpress in conveying information and commentary about current events.”29 In France, L’Illustration, journal universel (started in 1843) offered to French readers a continental version of the Illustrated London News.30 The Graphic, founded in 1869 as a competitor to the Illustrated London News, announced with its very name as well as by its labor practices (which valued the work of artists and engravers) the importance it placed on the visual arts. William Luson Thomas, the paper’s founder, “commissioned artists of stature to paint images for the paper’s summer and winter colour supplements” and set up a gallery to “complement” the newspaper.31 Images, in short, had become crucial to Victorians’ way of knowing their world, as well as central to their reading practices.

Illustrations became central to literary magazines as well, starting with the journals of the 1830s and 1840s such as Bentley’s Miscellany (founded in 1837 by publisher Richard Bentley under the editorship of Dickens, with George Cruikshank as illustrator) and the London Journal (founded in 1845 and outselling the Times by ten million copies in 1855).32 Illustrated literary periodicals flowered in the 1860s with the establishment of family magazines such as Once a Week (founded in 1859), the Cornhill and Good Words (both founded in 1860), and the Argosy (founded in 1865). In 1859, when Dickens’s separation from his wife and subsequent fight with his publishers, Bradbury and Evans, led him to discontinue Household Words and start All
the Year Round (both unillustrated), Bradbury and Evans promptly launched a competitor, the richly illustrated Once a Week, designed to “outdo the ‘blindness’ of Dickens’s paper.” Its editor, Samuel Lucas, recruited an emergent group of black-and-white illustrators that Forrest Reid judges “more brilliant than any that had been seen before” (44); they included Millais, Du Maurier, Hunt, Keene, Tenniel, Frederick Sandys, James McNeill Whistler, Matthew Lawless, Frederick Walker, George J. Pinwell, Arthur Boyd Houghton, E. J. Poynter, and William Small. Heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and guided by Lucas toward detailed representation of all aspects of the letterpress, the magazine became, in Simon Cooke’s judgment, an “effective realization of the Pre-Raphaelites’ ideals” (Illustrated, 103). The Cornhill, started by publisher George Smith under the editorship of writer and illustrator Thackeray, also published the work of leading illustrators (Mary Ellen Edwards, Millais, Fildes, Sandys, Helen Paterson, and Frederic Leighton) and authors (Thackeray, Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, and Wilkie Collins). Smith’s recruitment of leading illustrators and authors suggests that he viewed the combination of text and image as intrinsic to reading and selling both poetry and fiction; indeed, Cooke argues that Smith aimed “to rekindle the intensity of the illustrated text” as it had been achieved by Ainsworth with George Cruikshank, Dickens with Cruikshank and Browne, and Thackeray with Doyle (Illustrated, 119). Turning away from the graphic tradition of caricature toward a more realist style influenced by Royal Academy training (which involved anatomical accuracy learned by drawing from the nude figure), the magazines of the 1860s established “sixties style,” with its use of wood engraving, close attention to physiological detail and perspective, and the belief in book illustration as a high art form, with the image composed as a miniature painting. Across the Atlantic, Harper’s Weekly (founded in 1857 and the model for and precursor of the Cornhill) provided the leading venue for illustrated British fiction in the American market: it paid British authors for their serial fiction, securing page proofs or manuscript copy before pirating publishers had the chance to enter the market. The public excitement over such publications is evident in the fact that “magazine day”—the last day of the month, on which London wholesalers received the new periodical and serial publications—was, at midcentury, a “highly anticipated public event.”

This surge of illustrated material transformed Victorian print culture and reading practices as illustration became central to both. Indeed, for French poet and critic Théophile Gautier, the sudden flowering of illustrated print matter represented nothing less than a media revolution: as he wrote in the late 1850s, “Our century does not always have the time to read,
but it always has the time to see” (qtd. in Bacot, *La Presse*, 80). For modern critics, the ubiquity and popularity of Victorian illustrations should impel us to consider the effect of the substantial differences between original illustrated Victorian forms and their modern, often unillustrated, versions. Focusing on the illustrated serial novel as a case study, we argue that form is meaning. The slim orange-gold volume of the *Cornhill* in Effie Millais’s hands signified through its wood-engraved wrapper, its full-page illustrations, its chapter initials and tailpieces, its advertisements, and indeed its use of white space as well as its letterpress.

Why serials? We have chosen them because they represent the initial form of distribution for many Victorian novels—and because they are the form most often overlooked by modern readers. Not all Victorians read their novels in serial, as Melissa Schaub notes. But “the serial form always preceded the various volume forms of a novel, so that the serial experience would be temporally prior for any reader who did engage in it” (Schaub, “Serial Reader,” 196n2). Indeed, Schaub argues that quantitative evidence alone compels us to take serial forms seriously: circulation for the monthly installments of Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* reached 40,000 and for *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41) exceeded 100,000 (Schlicke, *Oxford*, 455, 432); Reynolds’ *Miscellany* commanded 200,000 in 1855 (Altick, *Common Reader*, 394); and the *Cornhill* sold 120,000 at its peak in 1860 (Altick, *Common Reader*, 395). Such figures are striking when one considers that an initial print run of a three-volume novel would be 500 to 1,000 copies in the same period.

Why illustrated serials? Again, because the gap between Victorian and modern forms is widest when we consider the key role of illustration in many Victorian serial novels. Whereas today’s paperbacks usually eliminate some if not all of the original illustrations, Victorian serials often spoke to the eye, with illustrated wrappers and images playing a rich—even primary—signifying role for readers. Not all Victorian serial novels were illustrated. But for those that were, we describe illustrations as primary because, although visual artists usually came second in the creation process, their images often came first in the reading process. Victorian readers regularly saw illustrations before reading letterpress. They might see images on the wrappers of serials displayed in shop windows as a form of advertisement for that serial installment. When they held the text in their hands, they often saw illustrations before letterpress because steel etchings and engravings, as already mentioned, could not be combined with type. Such images were therefore printed separately from the letterpress (normally on weightier paper than the rest of the text) and then usually bound into serials before the letterpress, thus attracting both hand and eye. Even when serials featured wood engravings—which, as we have seen, permitted image and type
to be combined on the same page—illustrations typically appeared early in
the serial installment, in the form of chapter heads, initials, or captioned im-
ages that lured the reader into the letterpress. This study takes illustration
as central to the signifying system of illustrated serial fiction in its original
form. We therefore base our analyses not on the later volume editions of
Victorian novels (which regularly omitted, reduced, or cropped original de-
signs) but on the original form that Victorian readers first encountered:
slim monthly parts and periodical installments. Readers of such illustrated
serial fictions encountered the text as one that intrinsically combined “two
systems of knowing and representing the world”—the verbal and the visual.  

Pictorial (and Unpictorial) Victorians

In *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image*, Julia Thomas
demonstrates that “the narrative image was regarded as . . . a national spe-
cialty” in the Victorian era. Fascination with the visual pervades not only
Victorian reading practices but also fictional representations of those read-
ing practices, cultural practices surrounding reading, and prose style itself—
providing compelling evidence that images were central to the Victorian
imagination. Indeed, in their letterpress (and even in unillustrated novels),
Victorian authors portrayed readers as captivated by illustration. The reader
first meets Jane Eyre, for example, in a window seat, where she is engrossed
in Bewick’s wood-engraved *A History of British Birds*; the young David
Copperfield’s earliest memories revolve around an illustrated book about
crocodiles and his nurse’s illustrated quarto edition of John Foxe’s *Book of
Martyrs*; and Maggie Tulliver pores over the pictures in Daniel Defoe’s *The
Political History of the Devil* while her brother, Tom, paints the pictures in an
illustrated version of John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Fictional scenes
that show characters engrossed in illustrated books highlight the impor-
tance of visual literacy in the early nineteenth century, constructing readers
as both visual and verbal interpreters.

Victorians’ relationship with the illustrations they loved was mediated
by domestic practices such as copying, displaying, and coloring. Illustrations
moved from book to wall when, in 1833, Branwell Brontë made a watercolor
copy of Bewick’s illustration of a goshawk as training for his hoped-for ar-
tistic career; when Eliot hung proof impressions of Leighton’s illustrations
to *Romola* (1862–63) in the Priory; when Dickens commissioned George
Cattermole to make watercolor versions of his illustrations for *The Old
Curiosity Shop* for his home; when, in the early 1850s, the French Maison
Aubert produced green wallpaper featuring wood engravings of captioned
illustrations by prominent French illustrators such as Gustave Doré and
Henri Emy; and when Vincent van Gogh displayed wood engravings from
the Graphic on his walls because he admired the work of Fildes, Frank Holl, and Hubert von Herkomer. In a unique example of illustrations finding an afterlife in domestic display, Dickens’s publishers Chapman and Hall celebrated the marketing triumph of Pickwick by giving him a set of silver ladles featuring characters from the book’s illustrations. As these examples show, artists and authors valued illustration as a way of imagining a future career or marking a success; in many cases, images from serials functioned as synecdoches, recalling an entire narrative.

Readers clipped illustrations from newspapers and magazines to decorate the walls of working-class homes and workplaces; children, as in the example of Tom Tulliver already mentioned, also used illustrated periodicals and books as coloring books. Dickens showed the trend of displaying engravings by having Mr. Weevle of Bleak House (1852–53) decorate his apartment with copper engravings of aristocratic beauties cut from the Galaxy Gallery of British Beauty. Late in the century, Olive Schreiner represented such display practices in a colonial context in her description of Gregory Rose’s room in The Story of an African Farm (1883): “It was one tiny room, the whitewashed walls profusely covered with prints cut from the ‘Illustrated London News’” (139). The Illustrated London News habitually represented its own readers’ decorative use of illustrations from the newspaper in locations as far-flung as a Chinese sampan, an Australian settler cabin, and even an Inuit dwelling, where the newspaper had been left by a whaler. Edith Nesbit’s The Story of the Amulet (1906) portrays her child protagonists coloring black-and-white newspaper illustrations with watercolors: “They were all painting. Nurse . . . had presented each of the four with a shilling paint-box, and had supplemented the gift with a pile of old copies of the Illustrated London News” (239). These practices indicate the penetration of illustrated print into everyday life; as a corollary, their representation in fiction and periodical literature signals that various forms of Victorian print media were self-reflexive about their own consumption and about the domestic afterlives of images.

The surge in visual media affected not only illustrated books but also letterpress itself, as visual art and illustrated texts inspired and influenced writers’ prose. Dickens and Ainsworth explicitly modeled their prose works on William Hogarth’s art: the subtitle of Oliver Twist (1837–39), The Parish Boy’s Progress, recalls Hogarth’s idea of a moral progress—as in The Rake’s Progress (1733–35)—and Jack Sheppard, contrasting the careers of industrious and idle apprentices, looks back to Hogarth’s Industry and Idleness (1747). Visual culture also infused verbal texts with pictorial metaphors and vocabulary. In Adam Bede (1859), Eliot, heavily influenced by realist painting, celebrates seventeenth-century Dutch art for its “rare, precious quality of
truthfulness” and bases her artistic manifesto on a literary version of Dutch realism (177). Dickens, too, wrote in a highly visual manner: as van Gogh remarked, “There is no writer, in my opinion, who is so much a painter and black-and-white artist as Dickens” (qtd. in Cohen, Charles Dickens, 5). Dickens’s very descriptions invoked the artist’s pencil, as in the opening of Great Expectations (1860–61): “The marshes were just a long black horizontal line then, . . . ; and the river was just another horizontal line, not nearly so broad nor yet so black; and the sky was just a row of long angry red lines and dense black lines intermixed” (7). Similarly, in Mary Barton (1848), Gaskell used the simile of ink drawing to describe a dark Manchester afternoon: “Houses, sky, people, and everything looked as if a gigantic brush had washed them all over with a dark shade of Indian ink” (79). Moreover, reviews indicate that Victorian critics valued visual pictorialism in letterpress: the Monthly Review said of Oliver Twist that Dickens’s novels consisted more of “a succession of forcible pictures, attractively framed, than . . . one great but compact piece” (“Art. III.—Oliver Twist,” 40; our emphasis). Similarly, essayist Frederic Harrison noted that readers looked forward to a new Trollope serial for “lively pictures of true life” (qtd. in Cruse, 281; our emphasis). On 24 May 1851, the Illustrated London News noted this general pictorial tendency in literature: “Our great authors are now artists. They speak to the eye, and their language is fascinating and impressive” (“Speaking to the Eye,” 451).

Although these related trends (of literary representations of characters reading illustrations; readers’ own practices of clipping, collecting, and coloring; and the literary pictorialism of Victorian style) reflect the nineteenth-century ascendancy of illustrated print media, Victorian critics did not universally praise illustrated books. On the contrary, the relation between text and image was highly contested, with metaphors for illustrated texts ranging from duplicitous cosmetics to professional dispute and happy marriage. In 1828, Scott, whose novels were initially published without pictures and profitably reissued in illustrated editions, dubbed the illustrated book “a faded beauty [who] dresses and lays on [a] prudent touch of rouge to compensate for want of her juvenile graces” (7). In 1844, French caricaturist Jean-Jacques Grandville figured the power struggle between pen and pencil as a battle for supremacy between youth and age, with the youthful pencil yearning to explore new worlds independently (“votre tyrannie me fatigue”) and the pen berating its younger, ungrateful colleague (“jeune ingrat”) (“La Clé des champs,” 3).60 In 1850, thirteen years after the record-breaking success of Pickwick and eight after the launch of the Illustrated London News, William Wordsworth published a sonnet deriding illustrated texts, declaring that they made discourse a mere “lacquey” to the “dumb Art” of pictures:
Discourse was deemed Man’s noblest attribute,
And written words the glory of his hand;
Then followed Printing with enlarged command
For thought—dominion vast and absolute
For spreading truth, and making love expand.
Now prose and verse sunk into disrepute
Must lacquey a dumb Art that best can suit
The taste of this once-intellectual Land.
A backward movement surely have we here,
From manhood,—back to childhood; for the age—
Back towards caverned life’s first rude career.
Avaunt this vile abuse of pictured page!
Must eyes be all in all, the tongue and ear
Nothing? Heaven keep us from a lower stage!

In contrast, the *Illustrated London News* declared on 14 May 1842 the happy marriage of text and image: “Art . . . has . . . become the bride of literature” (“Our Address,” 1).61

While Victorian critics and authors disagreed about the worth of images in print media, one fact was unassailable: visual texts had come to dominate the Victorian print marketplace. Victorian engraver, journalist, and publisher Henry Vizetelly recalled the ubiquity of print sellers on the London streets in the early Victorian period: “The shop-windows of the London printsellers were the people’s real picture galleries at this period, and always had their gaping crowds before them. The caricatures of the day, representations of famous prize fights, and Cruikshank’s and Seymour’s comic sketches were most to the taste of the cognoscenti of the pavement” (*Glances*, 88). “The illustrated book is a ‘felt want,’” wrote Du Maurier, one of the most prolific and famous book and periodical illustrators of the period;62 “The majority of civilised human nature likes to read, and a majority of that majority likes to have its book (even its newspaper!) full of little pictures” (“Illustrating,” 349). At the end of the century, Oscar Wilde characterized the Victorians’ transition to a culture of illustration as one of the mass market dictating literary form: “Since the introduction of printing, and the fatal development of the habit of reading amongst the middle and lower classes of this country, there has been a tendency in literature to appeal more and more to the eye” (112).

**Illustrated Serials in the Victorian Market**

This book focuses on one particular product of this revolution in print media: the illustrated serial novel. As we have discussed, the 1830s saw the
quick rise and grand successes of the novel in serial parts, typically published at monthly intervals and including a wrapper (of the same color paper and bearing the same cover design on every part); advertisements (usually bound in a single gathering just inside the wrapper as well as printed on the inside front and back of the wrapper); tipped-in illustrations preceding the narrative; and, of course, the letterpress itself. An alternative and equally popular form during the period was the illustrated periodical (whether in monthly or weekly parts), also bearing a cover of consistent color and design, in which serial fiction was integrated into the miscellaneous contents of the journal, which typically included advertisements as well as poetry, essays, and other (serial and nonserial) fiction.

The very form of the illustrated serial novel was designed to produce and respond to market demand, each installment impelling its readers to buy the next. This does not mean, however, that serials relied exclusively on so-called cliffhanger endings to serial parts, although these did exist. Equally important, as Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund have shown, is that the serial novel took place over time, meshing its reading with the lived experiences of its readers (Victorian Serial, 8), for whom pregnancies, births, illnesses, and deaths became linked to the unfolding of illustrated narratives. Indeed, as the Illustrated London News observed in its 1870 obituary for Dickens, his serial writing had provided a temporal structure to Victorians’ everyday life for over thirty years, arriving regularly and with regular pauses: “It was just as if we received a letter or a visit, at regular intervals, from a kindly observant gossip” (qtd. in Patten, “Publishing,” 32). Such serial pauses might prompt not only anticipation of the next installment but also reflection on the past one, on the relation between one serial part and the next, and on the links between fiction and everyday life. Indeed, Christian magazines such as Good Words used the regularity of the serial format to reinforce the importance of regular reflection and prayer.

On a pragmatic level, the serial form allowed publishers flexibility and low risk: they could risk minimal capital at the outset, pay the author and illustrator by the month, plow profits from early issues back into production, and increase or decrease print runs in response to sales. We see the advantage of such flexibility, for example, in the sixtyfold increase in Pickwick’s sales over its serial run. Serials, then, were embedded in the market, as indeed the presence of advertisements in both the part installment and the periodical attested, to an extent far exceeding that of the volume edition of the same novel. As these examples suggest, serial novels were commodities advertised, sold, and bought in the burgeoning Victorian print marketplace. This commodity status extended to illustration, which publishers recognized as meeting the public’s “boundless . . . appetite for visualized narrative.”
The illustrated serial, whether issued in part installment or in periodical form, was a “hybrid form” involving “multiple makers and mediations.” Both profitable venture and art form, it was forged in collaboration—and sometimes conflict—among the publisher, editor, author, artist, and, for much of the century, engraver, who transferred the artist’s vision onto the wood block or metal plate. The relationships among these players were often contested as publishers sought profits, editors competed for top authors and artists, authors angled to build profitable careers in a competitive market, artists struggled with editors as they faced strict publishing deadlines and tight page constraints, artists and authors variously vied with or worked alongside one another (both under tight deadlines), and artists submitted their original designs for translation by engravers onto the wood block or steel plate, each a substantially different medium. Fraught as the collaboration might be among these different interests, illustrations’ marketability rendered almost irrelevant any debate on their aesthetic value: as Edward F. Brewtnall commented in the Art Journal in 1902, “You do not like illustrations. You are hopelessly in the minority. The great majority of people, cultivated or uncultivated . . . do like them” (Brewtnall and Day, “Book,” 316).

Victorian novelists themselves disagreed about the value of serial illustration and participated in its production to varying degrees. Thackeray’s illustration of many of his own texts indicates that he saw illustration as intrinsic to the novelist’s art. Dickens’s careful collaboration with Browne over more than two decades—during which he selected scenes to be illustrated, sent instructions as to characters’ gestures and clothing, and demanded revisions to sketches (Cohen, Charles Dickens, 64)—suggests his perception of illustration as central to his fiction. Following a model of close collaboration, Trollope greatly admired Millais’s illustrations for his own fiction: “In every figure that he drew it was his object to promote the views of the writer whose work he had undertaken to illustrate, and he never spared himself any pains in studying that work, so as to enable him to do so” (Trollope, Autobiography, 144). In contrast, much as she personally liked Leighton’s illustrations for Romola, Eliot believed that illustration could never realize the writer’s vision, and she lamented that “the artist who uses the pencil must . . . be tormented to misery by the deficiencies or requirements of the one who uses the pen, and the writer, on the other hand, must die of impossible expectations” (qtd. in Haight, George Eliot Letters, 4:55–56). In practice, moreover, the editorial process did not always permit the possibility of close collaboration. Collins, for example, did not even see the illustrations to The Moonstone (1868) for the American Harper’s Weekly before they were published: the first and second parts (from 4 and 11 January) reached him in England on 30 January 1868. He wrote to Harper...
Brothers, saying that he admired the “real intelligence” shown by the artist in conveying “the dramatic effect” of the story (Moonstone, 599). Similarly, a letter written by Robert Louis Stevenson published in the Illustrated London News in October 1892, thanking the artist who had illustrated “Uma” (1892), makes it clear that he had not seen the illustrations before publication and did not even know the artist’s name: “Dear Sir,—I only know you under the initials ‘G.B.,’ but you have done some exceedingly spirited and satisfactory illustrations to my story . . . [.] and I wish to write and thank you expressly for the care and talent shown” (510).

The popularity of Victorian serial illustration is evidenced by the movement of images from novels into social practices and extratextual consumer products. Modern readers might assume that serial illustrations were so attached to the serial part that they would not readily be sold separately, but this was not the case. Prints circulated widely beyond novels: for example, Browne created and sold spin-off steel etchings of Little Nell, Barbara, and the Marchioness (from The Old Curiosity Shop) and of Dolly Varden, Hugh Barnaby, Mrs. Varden, and Miggs (from Barnaby Rudge, 1841). Moreover, Joseph Clayton Clark produced more than 840 watercolors of Dickens’s characters for collectors who inserted them into volume editions as supplemental material (Patten, “Phizzing,” 312). Serial illustrations also surfaced in tie-in merchandise, theatrical adaptations, and everyday practices. Illustrations for Egan’s Life in London were printed and sold on “trays, snuff-boxes, fans, screens and handkerchiefs” and evoked in sixty stage versions (Sillars, Visualisation, 9). Stage productions based on popular best-selling novels from Pickwick and Jack Sheppard to Du Maurier’s Trilby (serialized in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine from January to July 1894) included scenes in which actors replicated serial illustrations. As Jonathan E. Hill observes, the new illustrated serial novels proved a boon to dramatists, who used them as “visual guides to staging, scenic design, costume, and character appearance” (“Cruikshank,” 441); individual illustrations—many of which had appeared in booksellers’ windows—provided the basis for tableaux vivants (441). Indeed, such was the popularity of the Cruikshanks’ illustrations for Life in London that ordinary people reenacted them for fun, overturning night watchmen’s boxes to replicate the scene of “Tom Getting the Best of a Charley” (Sillars, Visualisation, 9). At late century, Trilby propelled consumer fads for Trilby hats, waltzes, and sausages, as well as ice cream bars in the shape of feet, recalling Du Maurier’s depiction of Little Billee’s own illustration of Trilby’s bare foot. These afterlives and replications of images indicate the richly evocative nature of serial illustrations for Victorian readers.
The Victorian Illustrated Serial: Modern Critical Perspectives

By the 1860s, “illustration was firmly established as part of the narrative structure of the novel” (Sillars, Visualisation, 30). This fact prompts our central question: How did illustrations affect the way that readers consumed serial fiction? The work of book historians and literary scholars of text-image relations (such as Gerard Curtis, Catherine J. Golden, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, J. Hillis Miller, Robert L. Patten, Stuart Sillars, Michael Steig, Julia Thomas, and Mark W. Turner) provides an important context for our study, modeling scholarship that explores the interplay of visual and verbal text in lieu of “authorial intention and control, and artistic sympathy and submission.”

Patten advocates an end to mimetic criticism that “compare[s] text with picture,” arguing that illustrations are “not the text pictured” (“Serial Illustration,” 91). According to Patten, illustration “may suppose, support, subvert, explain, interpret, and critique its verbal partner, entering into a complexly reciprocal, interactive, and . . . persuasive dialogue” (“Serial Illustration,” 92). Kooistra stresses the “bitextual” relationship between verbal and visual components (Artist; see subtitle); Golden stresses the Victorian consumer of illustrated material as a “reader-viewer” (Serials, 187); Turner identifies Romola’s illustrations as a “parallel” to the written text (“George Eliot,” 17); and Miller argues for the “reciprocal” relationship between text and image: “Each refers to the other. Each illustrates the other, in a continual back and forth movement which is incarnated in the experience of the reader as his eyes move from words to picture and back again, juxtaposing the two in a mutual establishment of meaning. . . . The pictures are about the text; the text is about the pictures” (qtd. in Hall, Trollope and His Illustrators, 2).

Such appeals, relevant to all illustrated Victorian fiction, apply with particular force to serial novels, in which the placement and prominence of illustrations made images an essential part of the Victorian reading experience. Previous studies of illustrated Victorian serials have analyzed the key role of images in individual texts or the works of single authors; some of the most far-reaching analyze modes of illustration across a range of texts and authors. Such critical analyses see illustrations as variously subverting, enriching, reflecting, or complementing the written text. The most sophisticated, including those of Golden, Kooistra, Patten, and Thomas, describe illustration as an “integral, complexly dialogic, and essential feature” of the novel in this period (Patten, “Serial Illustration,” 122). Their work underpins our study.

Studies of Victorian illustration also form an important foundation for this book. Our research has been informed and guided by a handful of key resources on artists, engravers, periodicals, and illustration techniques. Bamber Gascoigne’s invaluable guidebook How to Identify Prints as well as Simon Houfe’s Dictionary of British Book Illustrators and Caricaturists,
INTRODUCTION

1800–1914, Eric de Maré’s *The Victorian Woodblock Illustrators*, and Rodney K. Engen’s *Dictionary of Victorian Wood Engravers* have provided us with reliable and specific knowledge of nineteenth-century print techniques and the artists and engravers who used them. A suite of mid-twentieth-century books on Victorian illustration by Philip James, Ruari McLean, Percy H. Muir, and Geoffrey Wakeman have served as indispensable references. The work of Patten has been invaluable to our understanding of George Cruikshank’s contributions to the development of serial illustration; of Dickens as an “industrial-age author” (see the subtitle of his book *Charles Dickens and “Boz”*); and of the professional and economic relationships that drove the creative burst of the 1830s and 1840s. Brian Maidment’s scholarship on Victorian comic annuals and almanacs as well as caricature has refined our knowledge of Victorian illustrations’ indebtedness to Regency caricature and the comic tradition. On the topic of mid-Victorian illustrated periodicals and books, the works of leading scholars Simon Cooke and Paul Goldman have informed our understanding of the complex relations among authors, artists, publishers, editors, and engravers; have deepened our grasp of the links between book illustration and artistic movements of the period, including the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; and have guided our analysis of the style of serial illustrations, particularly the wood engravings of the 1860s.

This book is also fueled by the past several decades’ explosion of scholarly interest in Victorian serial fiction. Catherine Delafield, Mary Hamer, Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, Graham Law, Carol A. Martin, J. Don Vann, and others have convincingly demonstrated the unique qualities of serial reading: its temporal dynamics, the importance of installments’ endings and beginnings, and the way in which a work’s duration “meant that serials could become entwined with readers’ own sense of lived experience and passing time” (Hughes and Lund, *Victorian Serial*, 8). Recently, Susan David Bernstein and Catherine DeRose have brought digital analysis to bear on a corpus of Victorian serial fiction, demonstrating convincingly that the language of serial fiction differs from that of nonserialized novels, bearing more references, for example, to the predicted future (“Reading Numbers,” 59). However, critics have only started to consider the narratological function of images in the plot, temporality, characterization, theme, and genre of Victorian illustrated serial novels. This book attempts to fill that gap.

Illustrated Serial Fiction: A Narratological Approach

Narratology—the theory of how fiction is narrated—can help us understand how novelists use plot to convey meaning and, in turn, how illustrations contribute to plot. In using the term *plot*, we rely on the narratological distinction between *plot* and *story*: by *plot*, a word that originally meant a ground plan,
Material Matters: The Illustrated Victorian Serial Novel

design, or scheme, narratologists refer to the artistic arrangement of events in a novel as opposed to the chronological order of the story that readers construct in their minds. The distinction between plot and story is least noticeable in linear retrospective narratives such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847), a novel that follows the development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood without toggling between time frames. In contrast, the distinction is very marked in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), wherein the narrative repeatedly departs from chronological order. *Wuthering Heights* opens after the first Catherine’s death, plunging its reader into an encounter with Heathcliff, the younger Catherine, and Hareton, whose relationships are incomprehensible to the bewildered Lockwood, who subsequently listens to Nellie Dean’s retrospective account of the elder Catherine’s and Heathcliff’s turbulent childhoods. The novel’s plot thus creates links among generations that would be less salient in a strictly chronological unfolding, which would move from Hindley’s birth in 1757 through to Heathcliff’s death in 1802 and Catherine and Hareton’s marriage in 1803.

Although narratological analysis is often applied to letterpress alone, narratologists recognize that visual information (such as that found in comic books, graphic novels, and films) constitutes one way in which plot events are represented in texts. Yet so far, few critics have asked what might happen to the received theories of the Victorian serial novel if we were to consider illustrations as integral components of plot—that is, as visually represented plot events that accrue just as much importance as those depicted verbally by the letterpress. Turner and David Skilton are exceptions: both suggest that seeing particular illustrations changed how Victorian readers understood character and plot. For example, Turner points out that the placement of illustrations in the serial edition of *Romola* (which featured full-page wood engravings tipped in before the serial part, with an accompanying chapter initial leading the reader’s eye from image to letterpress) means that the reader sees Tito and Tessa in each other’s arms before Romola herself suspects her husband’s infidelity (Turner, “George Eliot,” 22). Similarly, Skilton notes that serial readers of Trollope’s *Orley Farm* saw “Guilty,” Millais’s illustration of Lady Mason confessing to Sir Peregrine, before reading about the event in the letterpress; he argues that illustrations play a “shaping role” in the novel (“Relation,” 305–6). Moreover, Ann Lewis has suggested the role of illustration in complicating the point of view and focalization of eighteenth-century texts, and Linda M. Shires has analyzed “perspective” and “point of view” (*Perspectives*, 11) as related phenomena of both verbal and visual texts. Building on these important critical contributions, this book analyzes the richly dual texts of the Victorian illustrated serial by focusing on the narratological role of illustration, arguing that the plots of such novels are “thickened”—that is, rendered narratologically far more complex—by the presence of illustrations.
As we have discussed, the material form of the Victorian serial suggested—if not actually imposed—certain reading practices for its original readers. The dual form of the illustrated serial meant that Victorian readers both saw and read plot events, often in complex order. The unfolding of the serial over weeks or months meant that readers could also perceive patterns in which images might refer backward or leap forward in the fictional plot. We are not arguing that these effects were deliberately created; many were the effects of technical constraints. In the 1820s to 1840s, editors coped, for example, with the inability to print steel etchings on the same page as type, meaning that such images were printed on separate paper and tipped in before the letterpress. Moreover, tailpieces would often be supplied according to how much room was left on the page after the type for the letterpress had been set, meaning that the choice to insert a tailpiece was in part dictated by space availability. Deliberate or not, however, the placement of illustrations in serials created a complex reading experience in which readers saw events in images and read events in the letterpress, often experiencing a plot arrangement that exacerbated the existing complexities of the verbal plot. Narratological terms—such as prolepsis, analepsis, mimesis, diegesis, iteration, repetition, and extradiegesis—can help us to identify and understand these complex relationships between visual and verbal plots.

A key narratological term that we deploy in this book is prolepsis (from the Greek pro, before; and lepsis, act of taking), meaning a flash-forward and referring to plot events that jump ahead in the narrative and therefore appear before their chronological position in the story. Prolepsis is distinct from foreshadowing because it involves the revelation of an actual plot event as opposed to foreshadowing’s intimation of a possible event or outcome. Victorian serial wrappers, seen before readers opened the letterpress, were proleptic by virtue of their position, anticipating plot events to follow. Although many wrappers merely gave general hints of the narrative to come (in part because authors often wrote to installment deadlines and so could not always provide the whole manuscript to their illustrators), some provided distinct representations of characters and plot arcs: David Copperfield’s wrapper, for example, shows a child’s journey from cradle to grave (fig. 0.2), and A Tale of Two Cities’s wrapper shows a guillotine (fig. 0.3), revealing the novel’s French Revolutionary setting and—as readers would eventually realize—pointing to the novel’s final plot event, the execution of Sydney Carton.

Serial illustrations were also often proleptic: typically, they were either tipped in before a serial part or concentrated in the early pages of the letterpress in the form of chapter initials and full-page plates. Even in

FIG. 0.3 Hablot K. Browne, wrapper for Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, part 1 (June 1859). London: Chapman and Hall. Courtesy of W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Queen’s University.
full-page folio sheets such as those of *Harper’s Weekly*, readers saw illustrations before they read the installment’s letterpress. When readers view an image before starting to absorb the letterpress, they already know something—often a great deal—about the plot to follow; the letterpress then reiterates and elaborates on what the illustration has already shown, and readers wait to see when the verbal text will match (or fail to match) their visual expectations. For example, readers of Thomas Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd*, serialized with illustrations by Helen Paterson in the *Cornhill* from January to December 1874, opened chapter 43 of part 10 (October 1874) to see a chapter initial showing a man digging by a gravestone; this initial faced a full-page wood engraving depicting a man kneeling over a coffin as a woman looks on in agony (fig. 0.4). Part 9 of the novel had ended with Gabriel Oak delivering to Bathsheba Troy’s home the coffin containing the body of Fanny Robin (her former servant) as well as that of her illegitimate baby by Bathsheba’s husband; to spare Bathsheba, Gabriel

---

**FIG. 0.4** Helen Paterson, illustration, “Her tears fell fast beside the unconscious pair,” and chapter initial for Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, part 10. *Cornhill Magazine*, October 1874, 490 and facing. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Victoria Libraries.
had erased from the coffin lid the chalked words “and child,” leaving only the identification “Fanny Robin” (FMC, 9:280). Part 10’s full-page illustration, then, proleptically shows readers, before the letterpress tells them, that Bathsheba will see Troy kneeling lovingly before the bodies of his former lover and their dead child, an event that occurs in the letterpress at the end of chapter 43. The chapter initial matches a still later plot event: only at the end of chapter 46 does the letterpress recount the events of Troy ordering a gravestone and planting flowers around the grave by night, the scene of the chapter initial. Readers of the Cornhill serial, therefore, saw two of the novel’s pivotal scenes in advance, prompting questions of emotional import and plot impact that would later be confirmed, replaced, or refined by the letterpress: What will Bathsheba and Troy say to one another over the coffin of his lover and illegitimate child? Will Bathsheba condone his behavior? Console him? Reject him? Will he defend himself? Lie? Leave her? Will Troy dig up the grave for some reason? Such speculation suggests that the process of reading illustrated serials involved testing multiple proliferating hypotheses against known visual information. Readers became speculators, wagering on possible relationships among characters and guessing about possible plot lines. The proleptic knowledge imparted by illustrations thus functioned for Victorian readers as what educational psychologists call an advance organizer—information known in advance that shapes subsequent interpretation, or in this case, plot detail that affects how readers understand the subsequent letterpress.

In narratology, the counterpart of prolepsis is analepsis (from the Greek ana, back; and lepsis, act of taking), meaning a flashback and referring to plot events that propel readers backward in the story, thereby bringing into the narrative “now” an event that occurred in the chronological past. As we have discussed, opening illustrations of serial parts often played a proleptic role, pointing forward in the plot, but they could also be analeptic, reminding readers of a past event from a previous installment. For example, the opening full-page wood engraving for part 11 (November 1874) of Far from the Madding Crowd represents the scene narrated at the end of part 10: Troy swimming out to sea from a rocky cove and being pulled by a current between “two projecting spurs of rock” (FMC, 10:511; fig. 0.5) just before he is rescued by sailors in a passing boat. Part 11’s opening image shows the moment in part 10 at which the swimmer raises “his left [hand] to hail” the boat (FMC, 10:512), flashing readers back to Troy’s rescue, which remains unknown to those left on shore. Part 11’s chapter initial, showing a forlorn Bathsheba at a window, is proleptic, indicating her pensive state to come, when she will not know whether her husband is alive or dead (see fig. 0.5).
Readers of part 11 will discover in retrospect, however, that the full-page illustration of Troy swimming is in fact complexly both analeptic and proleptic because it contains in its foreground a visual detail not mentioned in part 10: the presence of an eyewitness who saw Troy swept out to sea—indeed, as the image shows, saw his arm raised to hail the approaching boat—but did not see his rescue by that boat. At the beginning of part 11’s letterpress, this witness’s account will lead the community to believe that Troy has drowned. The illustration’s caption points forward to this account with a reference to the eyewitness: “He saw a bather carried along in the current” (FMC, 11:617 facing). The illustration stands poised, then, between two accounts of the same event and two time frames in the narrative. Its duality infuses with irony the image of Bathsheba’s pensive state: her husband is not dead, as the reader knows, but she will think that he is, as the witness’s testimony implies. As these examples indicate, prolepsis and analepsis are intrinsic to reading illustrated serials; the plots of serial novels are
rendered less linear, more complex in the relation between plot and story, by the readers’ visual apprehension of plot events.

So far, we have focused on the temporal relationship between image and letterpress, showing how a narratological analysis of images complicates the relation of plot and story. Another key narratological distinction is between mimesis and diegesis. The term mimesis comes from the Greek word for imitation and refers to sections of text in which the narrator depicts scenes in detail; diegesis is derived from the Greek for narrative or statement and refers to the telling of events as opposed to their showing. In a famous example, Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* opens with a chapter of diegesis, or summary, titled “The Period”—“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . .” (*TOTC*, 5)—before moving into a mimetic scene, or detailed showing, of the Dover mail coach. By depicting specific plot events in detail, illustrations can support textual mimesis, increasing readers’ sense of being shown a scene; they can also, by depicting general background of setting or context, evoke a sense of historical diegesis.

A notable form of illustration’s participation in mimesis was one in which image placement precisely matched its representation in the letterpress—that is, image and text appear side by side or with one immediately following the other, a surprisingly rare placement in Victorian serials. As we have noted, the limitations of Victorian print technology meant that steel engravings and etchings could not be printed on the same page as type (hence the facing pages in many cases); however, the innovation of type-high wood blocks enabled the insertion of images in the letterpress itself, allowing text and image to match precisely. We refer to such close placements as examples of matching mimesis, having failed to find an existing narratological term that captures their import. In this book, we use this term to refer to instances in which the illustration and the letterpress show, in their different media and in detail, precisely the same event at the same time for readers; this phenomenon is striking because it approached, as much as was possible, a Victorian multimedia visual-verbal experience. We see Thackeray playing with matching mimesis in part 4 (April 1847) of *Vanity Fair*, in which the letterpress’s sentence “Miss Sharp put out her right fore-finger—” is physically interrupted on the page by an inset wood engraving of Becky pointing her finger at George Osborne. The sentence resumes underneath: “And gave him a little nod, so cool and killing, that Rawdon Crawley, watching the operations from the other room, could hardly restrain his laughter as he saw the Lieutenant’s entire discomfiture” (*VF*, 4:124; fig. 0.6). Matching mimesis can produce high drama, as in the historical novels of the period, or irony, when used (as above) to draw attention to the minutiae of social interactions.
Nar ratological terms also help us analyze plot events that echo or repeat one another. Narratologists distinguish between *iterative* and *repetitive* aspects of plot. *Iterative* (from the Latin *iterare*, to do again) refers to events that occur regularly: these are the narrative equivalent of the imperfect verb tense, the expression of a habitual event or state. *Repetitive* (from the Latin *repetere*, to reread or repeat) refers to different scenes with similar elements: these repetitive plot events may produce effects of echo, déjà vu, irony, pathos, or uncanniness. In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Paterson’s chapter initials showing Bathsheba’s farm labor are iterative: the serial’s first chapter initial, for example, depicts her carrying a milking pail (fig. 0.7), an action that Gabriel observes every day for several days: “Five mornings and
evenings passed. The young woman came regularly to milk the healthy cow or to attend to the sick one” (FMC, 1:13). The image, therefore, does not capture a single action but rather multiple iterations of the same action. Another example of iterative illustration occurs in Sidney Paget’s famous images of Sherlock Holmes in the *Strand Magazine*, wherein depictions of Holmes reading the newspaper, gazing into the fire, or curled asleep in
his armchair stand for his habitual states of contemplation or trance (fig. 0.8); despite captions linking such illustrations to particular moments in the letterpress, the visual depictions stand in for Holmes’s daily activities. Thus Paget not only depicts Holmes in moments of high action but also frequently shows scenes of profound contemplation, thereby intellectualizing Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective hero.

Repetitive illustrations, rather than depicting habitual actions, show the relationship among discrete actions that involve similar plot elements but not necessarily the same characters. Du Maurier’s moving series of deathbed scenes in the chapter initials for Gaskell’s realist *Wives and Daughters*,

![Image](image-url)
for example, establishes a leitmotif among related scenes involving Squire Hamley, first mourning his dead tenant and then his dead son (figs. 0.9 and 0.10). In a contrasting genre and to different effect, we see repetition in Warwick Goble’s illustrations for H. G. Wells’s science-fiction novel *The War of the Worlds*, serialized from April to December 1897 in *Pearson’s Magazine*. Images for parts 3 and 7 show repetitive events: in part 3, a man in the tentacled grasp of a tripod-like fighting machine; in part 7, a man limply hanging from the tentacle of a similarly silhouetted machine (figs. 0.11 and 0.12). The plot events thus depicted are similar (people in the foreground, at the picture plane, grasped by an outstretched tentacle as they flee a Martian machine in the far background), as are the manners of their showing (both images are rendered in pen and ink wash, with the letterpress wrapping around them, their unruly shapes conveying the disorder that they depict).

**Fig. 0.9** George Du Maurier, chapter initial for Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, part 11. *Cornhill Magazine*, June 1865, 682. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Victoria Libraries.

**Fig. 0.10** George Du Maurier, chapter initial for Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, part 16. *Cornhill Magazine*, November 1865, 513. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Victoria Libraries.
An important function of Victorian illustration was its capacity to introduce extradiegetic elements (from the Latin extra, outside; and the Greek diegesis, narrative)—that is, elements that are outside those described in the letterpress. An example of an extradiegetic element in an illustration is the poster indicating “MURDER! £100 REWARD!” that Browne inserted in the background of “Shadow,” his dark plate of Lady Dedlock on the stairs (fig. 0.13) in part 16 of Dickens’s *Bleak House,* serialized in part installments between March 1852 and September 1853. The poster’s reference to Tulkinghorn’s murder and the police search for the guilty brings the London street world into collision with the isolated grandeur of the Dedlock estate. A famous example of extradiegetic illustration is *Vanity Fair’s* “Becky’s second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra” (fig. 0.14), an image that opens the novel’s final double part (19 and 20). Here, in a striking example of purposefully extradiegetic illustration by the author-illustrator, Thackeray himself
Material Matters: The Illustrated Victorian Serial Novel

draws in the image detail that he chose not to reveal in the letterpress, showing his money-hungry antiheroine, Becky, hiding behind a curtain holding what looks like a vial in her hand and eavesdropping while Jos reveals to Dobbin that he has insured his life. When Jos dies three months later and Becky inherits, this extradiegetic steel etching, together with the caption’s intertextual allusion to Clytemnestra’s murder of Agamemnon, intimates that Becky is a murderess, a visual suggestion that exceeds the more restrained letterpress.

Another function of illustration in which the visual predominates over the verbal is the interpictorial (from the Latin inter, between; and pictorius, of painting), referring to the relationships among visual images, either in the same collection or source or among sources. Whereas the reference to Clytemnestra, above, is intertextual, illustrations may similarly make visual—that is, interpictorial—references to other images, paintings, and

---

**Fig. 0.13** (left) Hablot K. Browne, “Shadow,” illustration for Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, part 16 (June 1853), front matter. London: Bradbury and Evans. Courtesy of University of Calgary Special Collections.

**Fig. 0.14** (right) William Makepeace Thackeray, “Becky’s Second Appearance in the Character of Clytemnestra,” illustration for his *Vanity Fair*, parts 19 and 20 (April 1847), front matter. London: Bradbury and Evans. BC–First Editions 601. Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, University of New Brunswick Libraries.
visual tropes. In part 11 of *Jack Sheppard*, for example, George Cruikshank’s steel etching of Jack posing in prison for his portrait to be painted by James Thornhill (fig. 0.15) cleverly replicates the cheeky pose of the actual Thornhill portrait,90 in which Sheppard points to the door, indicating his plans for another jailbreak. Cruikshank’s etching needle renders Thornhill’s incomplete painting as well as Cruikshank’s artistic antecedents Thornhill and Hogarth, Thornhill’s son-in-law (Patten, *Cruikshank’s Life*, 2:114–15).
Another example of illustrators using interpictorial references to pay tribute to their artistic forebears is Millais’s wood engraving of “The Prodigal Son” (March 1863; fig. 0.16) for Thomas Guthrie’s *The Parables Read in the Light of the Present Day* (Good Words, January–December 1863), in which the characters’ positions reference those of Albrecht Dürer’s woodcut *The Descent from the Cross* (ca. 1509; fig. 0.17); Jason Rosenfeld terms this “a conscious evocation” (119). Millais’s interpictorial reference simultaneously pays tribute to
the woodcut as a form of high art, renders homage to Dürer as one of its foremost practitioners, and hallows the embrace of the father and the prodigal son by implicitly alluding to Christ’s body being taken down from the cross.

Finally, in historical fiction, which combines a plot involving fictional characters with readers’ knowledge of a known historical event, the relation between plot and story becomes instead one among plot, story, and

FIG. 0.17  Albrecht Dürer, The Descent from the Cross (ca. 1509). Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; gift of Junius Spencer Morgan, 1919.
received history: a threefold relation among narrative elements. In historical fiction, therefore, the analysis of illustrations departs in key respects from the analysis of other genres and requires additional terminology. First, while historical illustrations may and often do anticipate the letterpress, the effect of prolepsis is reduced considerably because readers already know the outcome of the historical plot. Readers may, however, await the illustrator’s interpretation of a particularly famous scene or wonder how the fictional characters’ lives will unfold in relation to known historical events. In considering the role of illustration in historical fiction, we therefore supplement our narratological approach with terminology developed by historians. They identify two modes of historical illustration: the metaphorical (from the Greek metaphorēin, transfer), which renders images of imagined historical scenes; and the metonymic (from the Greek metonymia, change of name), which renders historical ideas by images of actual artifacts such as paintings, buildings, or documents, showing the association of things with ideas. Metaphorical illustration captures readers’ imaginations, inviting them to visualize themselves as though present at historical events as these unfolded; by contrast, metonymic illustration invites readers to imagine themselves as archaeologists, examining remains of the past as these exist in the readers’ present. Adapting these terms enables us to analyze the complex temporal relations of historical as well as fictional plots of illustrated Victorian serials, reconstructing, as far as we can, their unfolding to Victorian readers.

Our narratological analysis of illustrated serials extends beyond the single serial part to consider the text-image relationships that developed over a serial’s duration, which might range from weeks to years. Over this extended period, images accrued meaning through complex patterns of repetition, juxtaposition, contradiction, and/or irony. They looked backward to earlier plot events after a week or even several months, repeated or contrasted with earlier images, or anticipated events in serial parts to come. They echoed known images from other visual media such as etchings, books, and paintings. Finally, serials reflected on their own modes of production (both verbal and visual), self-consciously drawing attention to the conditions under which they were created. Later chapters in this book explore how the proleptic, analeptic, mimetic, diegetic, iterative, repetitive, and extradiegetic functions of Victorian serial illustrations render more complex the plots, temporal structures, characterizations, themes, and subgenres of Victorian fiction; how illustrations create intertextual and interpictorial meaning; and how self-reflexive illustrations (ones that referred to or queried the status of visual representation) complicate our understanding of Victorian novels—an understanding that has hitherto rested largely on their volume forms.
Victorian Serial Reading Practices: Historical Evidence

Concrete evidence of Victorian reading and interpretative strategies—that is, the way in which people read serial letterpress and illustrations in relation to one another and what they made of this relation—is scant: unsurprisingly, Victorians seldom recorded exactly how they read books. We do possess convincing evidence of widespread proleptic visual and verbal reading from Vizetelly, who recalled the frenzy over Pickwick: “[N]o sooner was a new number published than needy admirers flattened their noses against the booksellers’ windows, eager to secure a good look at the etchings, and peruse every line of the letterpress that might be exposed to view, frequently reading it aloud to applauding bystanders” (Glances, 123). Similarly, we know that William Charles Macready, actor and close friend of Dickens, saw Cattermole’s wood engraving of the dead Little Nell (fig. 0.18) before reading the serial letterpress of The Old Curiosity Shop: “I saw one print in it of the dear dead child that gave a dead chill through my blood. I dread to read it, but I must get it over” (qtd. in Skilton, “Relation,” 305). In 1862, Chambers’s Journal generalized about the reading public’s widespread habit of proleptic visual reading: “On taking up a book for the first time, probably three people out of four will look to see if there are any pictures before reading a single page” (“Book-Prints,” 135).

![Fig. 0.18](image-url) George Cattermole, “At Rest,” illustration for Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, part 40. Master Humphrey’s Clock, 6 February 1841, 46. Courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.
The format of Trollope’s *Orley Farm* (1861–62) provides strong evidence of analeptic reading practices—in this case, the letterpress recalls illustrations from previous installments. In part 16 (June 1862), the narrator invites readers to turn back to part 2 to contemplate Millais’s illustration of Lady Mason sitting alone in her drawing room (fig. 0.19), an image captioned “There was sorrow in her heart, and deep thought in her mind”.93 “In an early part of this story I have endeavoured to describe how this woman sat alone, with deep sorrow in her heart and deep thought on her mind, when she first learned what terrible things were coming on her. The idea, however, which the reader will have conceived of her as she sat there will have come to him from the skill of the artist and not from the words of the writer. If that drawing is now near him, let him go back to it” (*Orley Farm*, 16:178–79; our emphasis). Significantly, part 16’s passage not only suggests a nonlinear reading strategy, whereby readers flip backward in the serial, but also indicates an occasion on which the visual (the “skill of the artist”) predominates over the verbal (“the words of the writer”).

Further explicit contemplation of Victorians’ serial reading practices came at the end of the century from Du Maurier, whose career as both illustrator and author encompassed the visual and verbal aspects of illustrated serials. He recalled mid-Victorian reading practices as having been complexly proleptic and analeptic as the public consumed Dickens’s serial fiction from the 1830s to the 1850s: “Our recollections of Bill Sikes and Nancy, and Fagin, and Noah Claypole, and the Artful Dodger, of Pickwick and the Wellers, père et fils, Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Prig, Micawber, Mr. Dombey, Mr. Toots, and the rest, have become fixed, crystallised, and

---

**Fig. 0.19** John Everett Millais, “There was sorrow in her heart, and deep thought in her mind,” illustration for Anthony Trollope, *Orley Farm*, part 2 (April 1861), front matter. London: Chapman and Hall. Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Victoria Libraries.
solidified into imperishable concrete by these little etchings in that endless gallery, printed on those ever-welcome pages of thick yellow paper, which one used to study with such passionate interest before reading the story, and after, and between” (Du Maurier, “Illustrating,” 350). Before, after, and between: with these references to reading images over time, Du Maurier captures the intricate temporal relations of text and image, whereby images anticipated and recalled plot events, held attention during serial reading, and sustained readers’ interest in, memory of, and anticipations of plot events during serial pauses. Indeed, Dickens himself noted in 1841 that plot events in serial texts often derived their meaning from “the intimate relation they bear to what has gone before, and to what is to follow” (qtd. in Axton, “Keystone,” 31).

In addition to these explicit accounts, we also possess one uniquely detailed source of evidence concerning Victorian serial reading practices: the speculation surrounding Dickens’s last—and unfinished—novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, illustrated by his son-in-law, Charles Collins (brother of Wilkie), and Fildes (of the Graphic). This serial, which started publication in April 1870, was cut short by Dickens’s death on 9 June. After his death, his publishers had enough copy for three installments (July, August, and September) before the serial abruptly ended. The incomplete novel left readers in suspense about whether Edwin is really dead; if he is, how he died; whether he was murdered and, if so, who killed him; and what is the real identity of the mysterious Datchery. The abrupt end of The Mystery of Edwin Drood after its sixth installment thus places modern readers in a perpetual serial pause—stuck, as it were, in September 1870, with no forthcoming installments to relieve the suspense.

Immediately following Dickens’s death, speculation swirled concerning his intended ending of the novel. Despite readers’ desire for closure, Chapman and Hall announced in the Times of 23 June 1870 that “no other writer could be permitted by us to complete the work” (“The Mystery,” 12), and Wilkie Collins refused to finish his late friend’s novel. Nevertheless, unofficial theatrical productions and unauthorized novelistic completions flourished, and newspapers and magazines were filled with speculative editorials, letters, and articles. From 1870 onward, critics fruitlessly scoured biographical sources (John Forster’s Life of Charles Dickens; Dickens’s letters and number plans; and the recollections of the novel’s main illustrator, Fildes) for the “answer to the enigma.” Lacking proof of Dickens’s authorial intentions, they turned to illustrations to solve the mystery, providing an invaluable archive of evidence about how Victorian readers used illustration as well as letterpress to predict plot.

In particular, critics focused on the vignettes in Charles Collins’s wood-engraved wrapper (Cohen, Charles Dickens, 212)—illustrations that
preceded the first issue, providing proleptic information to the reader, but that could be (as these readings show) reexamined for clues as each succeeding part installment unfolded. R. A. Proctor’s *Watched by the Dead* (1887), J. Cuming Walters’s *Clues to Dickens’s Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1905), and Andrew Lang’s *The Puzzle of Dickens’s Last Plot* (1905) lay bare this process as they scour the wrapper (fig. 0.20) for evidence of Dickens’s projected resolution of the plot. As Lang summarizes, they suggest variously that Jasper’s position in the upper-right corner under the allegorical figure holding a dagger suggests his guilt (78–79); that the figure ascending the stairs points his hand to the murderer, Jasper (79–80); that the figures at the bottom of the page represent Jasper and Drood, who is still alive (80–81); and that the same figures represent Jasper and Datchery.101 Our point is not who is right and who is wrong—but rather that, because Dickens’s death left *Drood’s* plot suspended, Victorian readers for once explicitly articulated how the wrapper and illustrations provided them with clues as to theme, characterization, and plot outcome. What emerges from this unusual archive of evidence is that although we might think of a wrapper as having afforded merely predictive clues to narrative when Victorians first read the serial, it was in fact revisited mentally as the letterpress revealed new aspects of the plot, suggesting reinterpretation and reconsideration of previously viewed visual information.

FIG. 0.20 Charles Collins, wrapper for Charles Dickens, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, part 1 (April 1870). London: Chapman and Hall. Courtesy of W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Queen’s University.
INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately, the *Drood* archive is unique. For most Victorian illustrated serial novels, no such evidence of reading practices exists. In the absence of such evidence, this book uses the form of Victorian illustrated serials (wrappers, page layout, illustration order, and serial breaks) as a basis on which to reconstruct how their first readers interpreted their complex visual and verbal information as the plot unfolded over weeks or months. Given that readers could see as well as read aspects of the plot and that serial illustrations often appeared either before or after key plot events in the letterpress, we ask what role images played in aspects of narrative such as characterization, focalization, mimesis, diegesis, plot, suspense, temporality, and genre. In so doing, we attempt to reconstruct the temporal, inter pictorial, and inter textual complexities of illustrated serials. A brief case study will model our method, focusing on a single illustration from one of the century’s most popular serials.

Illustrating Method: Part 2 of *Jack Sheppard* as Case Study

The illustration we have chosen to analyze to demonstrate our method (fig. 0.21) is from Ainsworth’s immensely successful *Jack Sheppard*. The monthly serial was illustrated by George Cruikshank with steel etchings and published in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, where it overlapped for four months with *Oliver Twist* (1837–39); it was subsequently published in fifteen weekly serial parts in 1840 (Sutherland, Stanford, 323). *Jack Sheppard* is a Newgate novel, not a mystery like *Drood*, yet it invites very similar reading strategies to those of *Drood*, whereby illustrations are seen first before the verbal plot and then revisited and reexamined as readers progress through subsequent serial installments. In the case study that follows, we offer an in-depth analysis of this illustration from *Jack Sheppard*, showing how proleptic and analeptic reading strategies function powerfully in this popular but now little-read early nineteenth-century novel.

First, some background: Ainsworth based his popular hero on one of the best-known figures in the *Newgate Calendar*, the thief and jail breaker Jack Sheppard, who was executed at age twenty-one at Tyburn in November 1724 (Hollingsworth, *Newgate*, 132–34). In addition, as already mentioned, Ainsworth owed a considerable debt to Hogarth’s *Industry and Idleness*, which provided the model for his contrasting narratives of two carpenter’s apprentices, Jack and his counterpart, Thames Darrell. The serial owes a debt to *Oliver Twist*, likewise a novel about thieves and the London underworld; however, Ainsworth’s narrative follows the infamous Jack Sheppard to the gallows, whereas Dickens’s redeems Oliver and endows him with a cozy family, leaving him safely ensconced in a middle-class home. At this stage in the late 1830s, Ainsworth, Cruikshank, and Dickens were close collaborators, with Dickens having recruited Ainsworth to *Bentley’s Miscellany*,
which Dickens had edited from its inception, and Cruikshank having illustrated Dickens’s *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and *Oliver Twist* before *Jack Sheppard* and being scheduled to illustrate *Barnaby Rudge* (Patten, *Cruikshank’s Life*, 2:102). All three men were ambitious and overworked, with Dickens and Ainsworth vying for position as the period’s most popular author; Ainsworth and Cruikshank setting their sights on being the era’s leading historical fiction writer and illustrator, respectively; Cruikshank illustrating two major serials in *Bentley’s* as well as other commissions, including the *Comic Almanack*; Dickens writing two major serials, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* (April 1838 to October 1839), and trying unsuccessfully to start *Barnaby Rudge*; and Ainsworth taking over the editorship of *Bentley’s Miscellany* in January 1839 from an overloaded Dickens. Moreover, all three were frustrated that Richard Bentley was enjoying what they saw as undue profits from their very considerable labors. Out of this stormy professional relationship among publisher, star editors, leading authors, and the outstanding illustrator of the period, the serial of *Jack Sheppard* was born, assuming the position of lead serial in *Bentley’s* ahead of *Oliver Twist*—and prompting sales of the magazine to increase by 10 percent (Patten, *Cruikshank’s Life*, 2:130).

The serial opens on the night of 26–27 November 1703, the actual date of a great storm that devastated southern Britain, drowning a thousand seamen off the Downs, felling trees, collapsing chimneys, and destroying the grounds of St. James’s Palace. Ainsworth’s two opening installments use the night of the storm as a backdrop for a dramatic boat chase, gunshots, several drownings, a death from a falling chimney, and the narrow escape of the infant Thames, who is named after the river that nearly claims his life. The novel then skips forward twelve years, reopening with a teenaged Jack surrounded by Hogarthian signs of immorality (gin and cards), and Thames, an apprentice at the same carpenter’s shop, who evinces signs of moral uprightness that will guide him on a more virtuous course of life. The serial eventually reveals the two as cousins, both related to a noble Lancashire family; Jack is hanged at Tyburn, whereas Thames, revealed to be a marquis, marries the carpenter’s daughter.

Ainsworth had completed the first epoch of three in *Jack Sheppard* by the time Cruikshank began illustrating the serial in March 1838, meaning that the illustrator had an ample manuscript on which to base his designs. Moreover, Ainsworth’s letterpress describes the scenes to be illustrated—including costumes, architecture, lighting, furniture, and decor—with greater visual specificity than that of Dickens, indeed packing them with antiquarian detail, some of which was cut by Bentley (Patten, *Cruikshank’s Life*, 2:98). Ainsworth’s and Cruikshank’s collaboration was close. Although no records exist of their exchanges concerning the early illustrations of *Jack
Sheppard, we know that for the later ones, Ainsworth sent Cruikshank antiquarian material on which to base his designs; Cruikshank sent Ainsworth notes on particular details that he thought the author should insert into the letterpress to ensure a close match of text and image; and Ainsworth enquired of Cruikshank as to details of the illustrations to insert in the letterpress when, later in the serial, the artist worked ahead of the author in their pressure-filled publication schedule (see Patten, Cruikshank’s Life, 2:112–13). As Patten summarizes, in the Jack Sheppard illustrations, “the fit between text and picture is so explicit that neither could have been produced without [author and artist] consulting the other” (Cruikshank’s Life, 2:99).

FIG. 0.21 George Cruikshank, “The Storm,” illustration for William Harrison Ainsworth, Jack Sheppard, part 2. Bentley’s Miscellany, February 1839, 113 facing. Courtesy of W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Queen’s University.
The illustration on which we focus here faced the first page of part 2 in the February 1839 issue of Bentley’s Miscellany. It is proleptic, showing the great storm of November 1703 before the letterpress describes it. The steel etching depicts a dramatic scene of death and survival in the heart of the tempest and in the heart of London, demonstrating a still image’s capacity to convey extreme movement and turmoil. The illustration, like all the others for Jack Sheppard, is rectangular and bordered with a dark margin, conveying a gravitas that had largely been missing from the borderless, oval-shaped vignettes of Oliver Twist (Patten, Cruikshank’s Life, 2:100). Cruikshank sets his scene under an arch of Old London Bridge, a noteworthy location that had recently passed into history with its 1832 demolition after the 1831 opening of New London Bridge; Ainsworth had sent the artist a book, Richard Thomson’s Chronicles of London Bridge (1827), from which to copy the architectural details, thereby ensuring historical accuracy. The bridge’s representation thus functions as a historical metonym, pointing readers to the story’s association with the newly vanished and iconic architectural monument.

The etching’s lines impressively convey the force and movement of the storm, with water flooding by, wind driving, and rain beating down. A dark arch of Old London Bridge frames the action. Nothing else remains stable: in the illustration’s center, a man balances precariously on a narrow ledge below the bridge, clutching a baby in one arm. Behind him, another man clings to the rock, poised on the edge of the roaring torrent; before him, an empty skiff tears past in the current, while in the foreground, a third man grasps desperately for a ledge even as the Thames River bears him away over a raging waterfall. As befits this dark scene of terror, the illustration contains almost no white space, with the bridge’s dark arch deeply crosshatched and the gray sky and dark water differentiated deftly by Cruikshank’s etching needle, which juxtaposes the deep lineations of the torrential water, pouring over the waterfall in a convex curve to the left, with the barely moonlit rain pelting in torrents in a reverse curve. The spume from the waterfall provides the image’s only white space, spraying upward to the left in a dramatic countermovement to the falls and the rain.109 As William Blanchard Jerrold, a journalist and later the author of London: A Pilgrimage (1872; illustrated by Doré), wrote of Cruikshank’s early plates for the series, they are “absolutely astonishing . . . for the technical skill in rendering infinite varieties in light and shade, of emotion, of scenery” (qtd. in Patten, Cruikshank’s Life, 2:114).

Narratologically, this proleptic illustration opening part 2 anticipates a point of peak dramatic action and suspense, prompting readers to embark on the installment’s letterpress with specific questions: Who is the man
under the bridge with the baby? Who is the baby? Who is the pursuer clinging to the rock ledge? Who will live and who will die? Notably, both Jack and Thames are infants, and part 1 features scenes in which they are switched, so readers opening part 2 would not know which baby might end up in this perilous position. Part 1’s action scenes, which portray a chase through the London slums, have revealed that Thames is the son of a beautiful, possibly aristocratic, woman. She is pursued by her brother Rowland, who, assisted by Jonathan Wild (another actual historical figure, a famous thieftaker), seeks to kill “the bastard” Thames and his father, Darrell (JS, 1:29). When part 1 closes, the woman has fallen, apparently to her death. Part 2’s turbulent opening illustration therefore gives readers a glimpse of the dramatic action to come, luring them into the plot of the February 1839 installment. To contemporary readers who knew from the Newgate Calendar Jack’s trajectory to the gibbet, this illustration thus creates suspense where one might think none would exist, introducing perilous situations outside the received narrative of Jack’s life. Interestingly, the illustration is also metonymic—that is, drawing attention to a specific historical artifact—being set under Old London Bridge. In other words, the leading image for part 2 functions as a modern film trailer would do, proleptically indicating the nature and setting of the action to follow, establishing the historical and action-based genre of the narrative, and impelling readers forward by revealing tantalizing glimpses of the plot to come. Writing in June 1840, Thackeray recalled this “brilliant” image of “Old Wood’s dilemma in the midst of that tremendous storm, with the little infant at his bosom” (Essay, 54), one that stayed with him long after reading the serial of Jack Sheppard.

Very notably, in the letterpress that follows the illustration, the account of the storm is delayed. The reader moves backward in time from the dramatic image to scenes that include Mrs. Sheppard praying for Jack’s future (ironic to the reader who already knows that he ends up being hanged); the ruffian Blueskin singing a comic ditty and proposing to Mrs. Sheppard; and the discovery of Thames’s mother’s ring with her name, Aliva Trenchard, engraved upon it. Only after these elements of pathos, comedy, and mystery do readers learn from Wild that Darrell has “embarked upon the Thames, where,” if his boat does not capsize in the storm, “he stands a good chance of getting his throat cut by his pursuers” (JS, 2:118). This dialogue represents the first mention of the storm before chapter 6’s title, “The Storm,” announces to the reader that the letterpress is about to catch up to the proleptic illustration.

When the letterpress does at last provide an account of the dramatic events under the bridge, those events are focalized through Wood, the carpenter and main character in the image. Once again, the letterpress takes
us backward in time, to before the storm hits and Darrell embarks on the Thames. In a lengthy prologue to the scene matching the image, the narrator describes Wood walking beneath Saint Saviour’s Church and looking up at the sky, which arouses “an undefined sense of approaching danger” and signals “prognostications of a storm” (JS, 2:119). Wood then announces his intention to cross the Thames to get home before the storm hits (an irony, since readers already know from the illustration that he will get stranded under the bridge) and is offered a lift by Ben, an old salt, who bets a fellow sailor that he can make the crossing safely (another irony, since readers have already seen the image of an empty skiff and a man being carried away by the torrential river). Readers thus approach the boat chase—in which Wood and Ben watch as Rowland (Aliva’s brother) tries to kill Darrell (Aliva’s secret husband) and Thames (Aliva’s son)—armed with considerable advance knowledge of what will happen next.

Notably, however, the letterpress does not match the image until the narrator has dilated into a protracted Romantic set piece describing “sailing on a dark night upon the Thames” (JS, 2:123):

The sounds that reach the ear, and the objects that meet the eye, are all calculated to awaken a train of sad and serious contemplation. The ripple of the water against the boat, as its keel cleaves through the stream—the darkling current hurrying by—. . . the solemn shadows cast by the bridges—the deeper gloom of the echoing arches—the lights glimmering from the banks—the red reflection thrown upon the waves by a fire kindled on some stationary barge—the tall and fantastic shapes of the houses, as discerned through the obscurity;—these, and other sights and sounds of the same character, give a somber colour to the thoughts of one who may choose to indulge in meditation at such a time and in such a place. (JS, 2:123)

This set piece exemplifies Thomas’s observation that letterpress may actually contradict an illustration’s content (Pictorial, 12–14). Here, there is no match between the narrator’s call for solemn contemplation and Cruikshank’s action-packed image. Instead, Ainsworth states baldly that “it was otherwise with the carpenter” and that “this was no night for the indulgence of dreamy musing” but rather “a night of storm and terror” (JS, 2:123) before finally narrating the dramatic boat chase, in which Rowland and Darrell have a sword fight in the heart of the gale; Darrell is run through and plunges into the torrent; Wood and Ben manage to pluck Thames from his father’s hands as he sinks; and Rowland pursues the skiff that carries the baby as it plunges over the falls at Old London Bridge. Ainsworth
interweaves this action scene with vivid description that paints with intense imagery and highly figurative language the torrential storm that the reader has already seen in Cruikshank’s image:

But as Rowland sprang to the helm, and gave the signal for pursuit, . . . the stream was black as ink. It was now whitening, hissing, and seething like an enormous cauldron. . . . The blast shrieked, as if exulting in its wrathful mission. Stunning and continuous, the din seemed almost to take away the power of hearing. . . . It penetrated the skin; benumbed the flesh; paralysed the faculties. . . . The destroying angel hurried by, shrouded in his gloomiest apparel. . . . Imagination, coloured by the obscurity, peopled the air with phantoms. Ten thousand steeds appeared to be trampling aloft, charged with the work of devastation. (JS, 2:126–27)

Ainsworth’s letterpress provides a figurative tour de force, elaborating for the reader on the illustration previously viewed—and now, presumably, recalled. The chapter builds to a literal cliffhanger when Ben tells Wood that the skiff will not survive the twelve-foot waterfall at the bridge span and then shrieks, “The bridge!—the bridge!” (JS, 2:127), the final words of the chapter.

Given the cliché of Victorian serial parts ending in cliffhangers, one might think that the part would end here, but it does not. (Indeed, current scholarship such as that by Hughes and Lund has shown convincingly that serial parts bore complex relations to one another, not only those of suspense.) Instead, the next chapter in part 2 embarks on another protracted narrative dilation before mimetically rendering the events of the image. This dilation occurs when Ainsworth, always interested in promoting a historical sense of place through his fiction, expounds upon the history of Old London Bridge in a new chapter that bears the bridge’s name as its title. In a passage that invites readers to contemplate the old bridge as historical metonym, he describes its structure and takes readers back to the days when the spikes of the “reverend and picturesque” bridge were “garnished . . . with the heads of traitors” (JS, 2:127, 128); he also traces the presence of a chapel in its early years. Only then, with Cruikshank’s metonymic image elaborated upon with historical detail, does Ainsworth narrate the action scene that matches the illustration: the collision of the skiff with the bridge, Wood’s dramatic leap to safety, Ben’s death in the torrent, and Wood’s vague perception that a man has reached the shore behind him (a perception confirmed for readers by the visual image already seen). Interestingly, this account in the letterpress faces another illustration (fig. 0.22), titled “The Murder on the Thames”: it depicts the two boats before the collision
with the bridge at the moment when Wood and Ben grab Thames from the arms of the drowning Darrell. Thackeray admired this image, complimenting Cruikshank’s skillful etching of “the gloom of the old bridge, a few lights glimmering from the houses here and there . . . a great heavy rack of clouds . . . sweeping over the bridge, and men with flaring torches, the murderers, . . . borne away” (Essay, 54). This new image, then, is analeptic: we have already read about this event, so it provides a flashback to the dramatic scene of the rescue. In a complex temporal relation, the image moves readers backward in time even as they catch up in the letterpress to part 2’s proleptic first image, in which Wood and the child perch perilously in the middle of the roaring storm with their pursuer on the ledge behind them.

FIG. 0.22 George Cruikshank, “The Murder on the Thames,” illustration for William Harrison Ainsworth, Jack Sheppard, part 2. Bentley’s Miscellany, February 1839, 128 facing. Courtesy of W. D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Queen’s University.
In the rest of the novel, the letterpress returns repeatedly to the scene on the bridge—that is, the moment when Thames loses his birth family and gains his name from the river, when he is claimed by Wood, and when he enters his adoptive London home and subsequent apprenticeship with Jack. First, Thames’s very name recalls the scene. In addition, part 4 explicitly recalls the image, when Rowland remembers it in an analeptic passage: “[T]he whole scene upon the river is passing before me. I hear the splash in the water—I see the white object floating like a sea-bird on the tide—it will not sink!” (JS, 4:350). Gruesomely, the reader returns analeptically to Cruikshank’s illustration when Wild (accompanied by Rowland) returns to the bridge and plucks a rotten head from the Thames. His mention of the “starling” (the base of a bridge pier) locates the two precisely in relation to where Wood stood in Cruikshank’s image:

“You remember that starling, Sir Rowland,” he said maliciously, “and what occurred on it, twelve years ago?”

“You remember that starling, Sir Rowland,” he said maliciously, “and what occurred on it, twelve years ago?”

“Too well,” answered the knight, frowning. “Ah! what is that?” he cried, pointing to a dark object floating near them amid the boiling waves, and which presented a frightful resemblance to a human face.

“We’ll see,” returned the thief taker. And, stretching out his hand, he lifted the dark object from the flood.

It proved to be a human head, though with scarcely a vestige of the features remaining. (JS, 6:574)

The serial thus returns repeatedly to this key visual and verbal scene of naming and struggle until Thames is identified as the Marquis de Chatillon (but reaffirms his working-class affiliations by marrying Wood’s daughter). Adding to this process of viewing and re-viewing, theatrical adaptations offered readers a further and different way of recalling illustrations: during the “Jack Sheppard craze” (Meisel, Realizations, 265) of 1839 to 1840, such adaptations played fast and loose with the novel’s plot but used faithful reproduction of the serial’s images as a lure for audiences. The Adelphi’s poster featured twelve illustrations, including part 2’s “The Storm,” inviting readers to reexperience the serial in a live-action performance (Meisel, Realizations, 273). To match its scenery with the serial’s images, the Royal Surrey Theatre hired Cruikshank to oversee its scenery production; one of its sets included four rooms designed to recall Cruikshank’s four-panel representation of one of Jack’s escapes.111

As this analysis suggests, the serial plot of Jack Sheppard eschews suspense in favor of proleptic illustration and the known trajectory of Jack’s life; instead of suspense, readers get irony, pathos, antiquarian detail, narrative dilation, historical metonymy, and comedy interspersed with dramatic
action scenes as well as quick cuts between proleptic and analeptic scenes. Such proleptic and analeptic effects, produced by the order of illustrations in *Bentley’s Miscellany*, are particular to the serial. They indicate the complex experience of *Jack Sheppard*’s initial readers as they moved back and forth in the reading process from image to text and back to image again. In reconstructing the experience of serial reading as shaped by material form, we see that far from unfolding in linear fashion, the plot of the serial novel leaps ahead visually into the heart of the action, then moves backward in time, then outward into Romantic dilation, then forward again into action, then outward again into historical metonymy and diegesis, then forward into action again, and then back into the action with an analeptic image.

We should remember, in this context, that Jack Sheppard was a household name; Ainsworth understood that his readers would already know the arc of his main narrative, which takes us from Jack’s infancy to his death at the scaffold. Ainsworth’s dramatic unfolding of the story, then, as well as Cruikshank’s images, forms the heart of the serial novel’s creative enterprise. Readers would have been asking not *What will happen to Jack Sheppard?* but *What will happen next in this particular scene? How will this scene animate the history of London?* and *How will the text interpret and elaborate these stories (of Jack Sheppard and of the great storm of London) that I already know?* Thus, the narrative technique of one of the century’s most successful illustrated serials encompasses artistic interpretation and elaboration as well as complex visual prolepsis and analepsis in the context of a known narrative trajectory.

Just as Du Maurier described viewing Dickens’s illustrations before, during, and after the serial, therefore, readers of part 2 of *Jack Sheppard* in *Bentley’s Miscellany* thus engaged in formal strategies of prolepsis (viewing Cruikshank’s image in advance), matching (equating the verbal scene with the visual image), and then analepsis (returning to re-view this key illustration). The process of reading illustrated serials, then, appears as profoundly nonlinear: moving forward in the novel repeatedly requires moving backward in the plot, re-viewing and revisiting key scenes, and comparing visual and verbal information. As this example suggests—and the rest of this book demonstrates—the illustrated serial novel is thus far less linear and much more complex than the received history of the Victorian novel has suggested. By means of its complexity as well as the popular forms that recalled it to memory, it involved readers in an intricate interplay of verbal and visual narrative elements.

The illustrated serial novel, savored by readers over time and enjoyed for its verbal and visual interplay, thus demanded complex reading strategies that
this book attempts to reconstruct and explore. Like Jane Eyre poring over Bewick’s *Birds* or David Copperfield fascinated by Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, Victorian readers had to develop the visual literacy necessary to comprehend text and image in complex relationships. Moreover, serial readers had to develop reading strategies that comprehended proleptic information, extratextual knowledge, flashbacks and repetitions, and metonymic, intertextual, and interpictorial effects. Like Du Maurier, they had to develop the capacity to read and reread the image before, during, and after the serial part. And like Gautier, they had to recognize that seeing had become essential to their way of knowing the world.

In the pages that follow, we explore what happens to the received view of Victorian novels when we, too, take seriously images and the serial form. This book spans the period of the late 1830s (the moment that witnessed the huge successes of *Pickwick*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Jack Sheppard*); through the period of the great family magazines and the so-called golden age of book illustration;¹¹² to the fin de siècle, when the illustrated serial novel waned in favor of new forms such as the novella and the linked series of short stories. We base our four main chapters on case studies of two or three illustrated serial novels, grouped by genre: autobiographical, historical, realist, and sensation fiction. We have chosen to group novels according to genre because, while the strategies of serial reading are similar between genres, the consequences of these complex text-image relations differ from one genre to the next. The final chapter focuses on illustrated serial fiction’s self-reflexivity about the very nature of illustration and seriality.

Consideration of text-image relationships reveals the great complexity and richness of Victorian illustrated serials. They impel reflective and complex reading strategies. They interpellate critical readers. They thicken plots. And they push us to reconsider what we think we know about Victorian novels. Far from constituting a mere prelude to the volume edition, the illustrated serial emerges as considerably less linear and far more intertextual and self-reflexive than later volume editions of the same text. Taking account of serial illustration thus demands rethinking the very forms of Victorian fiction.