Why we turn the page : a literary theory of dynamic structuralism

Justin J.J. Ness

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ABSTRACT

WHY WE TURN THE PAGE: A LITERARY THEORY OF DYNAMIC STRUCTURALISM

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Northern Illinois University, 2019
David J. Gorman, Director

This study claims that every narrative text intrinsically possesses a structure of fixed relationships among its interest components. The progress of literary structuralism gave more attention to the static nature of what a narrative is than it did to the dynamic nature of how it operates. This study seeks to build on the work of those few theorists who have addressed this general oversight and to contribute a more comprehensive framework through which literary critics may better chart the distinct tensions that a narrative text cultivates as it proactively produces interest to motivate a reader’s continued investment therein. This study asserts that the interest in narrative is premised on three affects—avidity, anxiety, and curiosity—and that tensions within the text are developed through five components of discourse: event, description, dialog, sequence, and presentation.
WHY WE TURN THE PAGE: A LITERARY THEORY
OF DYNAMIC STRUCTURALISM

BY

JUSTIN J. J. NESS
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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David J. Gorman
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David Gorman, the director of my project, introduced me to literary structuralism six years ago and has ever since challenged me to ask the simple questions that most people take for granted, to “dare to be stupid.” This honesty about my own ignorance was—in one sense, perhaps the most important sense—the beginning of my life as a scholar.

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As the one of the one-in-three Ph.D. students globally who have struggled with mental illness, it is no exaggeration to say that I could not have done this without the determined care of Drs. Billie Cali and Dennis Long.

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DEDICATION

To every teacher who took the time
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Morning now dawned and Shahrazad broke off from what she had been allowed to say . . . ‘By God,’ the king said to himself, “I am not going to kill her until I hear the rest of the story.”

—*The Arabian Nights*

…if I were perfectly content with the way things are in contemporary criticism, I would not have spent so much time dreaming about the alternatives.

—David J. Gorman, “The Future of Literary Study”
INTRODUCTION

“In novel-writing, as in mechanics, every obstruction is a loss of power; every superfluous page diminishes the artistic pleasures of the whole. Individual tastes will always differ; but the laws of the human mind are universal.”

Beyond the external aspects of importance and significance, what makes a narrative interesting? What is the difference between a novel that sits on the coffee table for weeks on end, the bookmark languorously shifting toward the back, and a novel that results in delayed meals and postponed bedtimes? In other words, why do we turn the page? This study focuses on the components internal to a narrative that intrinsically endow it with interest.

To understand what narrative interest is, first consider what it is not. There is the cultural value of a narrative—the political, psychological, gendered, racial, and historical ramifications of what the author has to say. Moreover, there are the philosophical implications, the theoretical experimentations, and the cognitive manifestations. Whether the lot of these imbue a text with meaning through an understanding of the global zeitgeist or through a capacity to connect with an individual reader’s worldview, much of the attention paid to any narrative lies outside it. Before all this, though, there is the text itself.

The theoretical framework of literary structuralism has long been premised on the division of narrative into story and storytelling. Consequently, few have systematically addressed the

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1 George Henry Lewes, par. 20
holistic structure of narrative, and even these few have stopped far short of the comprehensive paradigmization that typifies the structuralist method. To formally approach holistic narrative structure, this work proposes a new theoretical framework that comprises not the static features of narrative, which thus far have been the primary concerns of literary structuralists, but rather the dynamic features thereof—a model not of a system but of a system in motion.

*Interest structure*, introduced in this work, is the collaborative inner workings of all narrative components targeted toward establishing the conceptual reader’s engagement with the text. In other words, interest structure is not determined through a survey of what people find interesting. It is a matter of textual mechanics that exist whether or not the human reader consciously observes them. Interest structure hones the explanations of precise literary phenomena that human readers otherwise merely suspect through vague unarticulated experience.

Interest structure theory is comparable neither to reader response nor experientiality theories, its purview pertaining to textual structure alone. Although its accompanying method, that of interest structure analysis, does, like any other analytic method, require the subjective mediation of the human reader’s understanding, this subjectivity is uniquely a means, not an end. The goal of all hermeneutical lenses is to derive textual meaning through the variability of human perspective. Conversely, interest structure analysis applies a conceptual reader to provide a dual mediation: the human reader’s subjective and limited understanding of the conceptual reader’s objective and perfect understanding of a narrative’s textual motion.

Such a theory that resists, as far as is possible to do so, the literary academic tradition of prioritizing the interpretation of texts, sometimes to the seeming exclusion of all other critical
approaches, is for this very reason a timely endeavor.¹ Not only does this work open a new division of study for the now well-established quasi-discipline of narratology, but it also advances what David J. Gorman sees as the future of literary study. First of all, the current study marks a new chapter in the identifiably historical development of literary criticism—the provision of a systematic framework built across “the fluid boundary between description and interpretation”—whereas the past ninety years or so of interpretive criticism “can recognize literature only conditionally, as an aggregate of works, arbitrarily connected at best” (“Future of Literary Study” 6). Secondly, and certainly most controversially, is the inevitable evaluative implication of assessing how two different narratives textually engage their readers: which one does it better? As Gorman observes, “If only general readers, at present, are in a position to ask whether a literary work is any good, it is because, officially at least, academic reading does not concern itself with that kind of question” (15). No, claiming that a narrative text possesses “mechanisms,” as many critics have termed such, that intrinsically motivate reading is not a novel idea: what is new is the current study’s claim that every narrative text intrinsically possesses a structure of fixed relationships among its interest components.

Historically, the structural approach to narrative has involved a dichotomy of story and discourse alone, but it is one of the essential theoretical moves of the current work to re-envision this as a trichotomy of story, discourse, and interest. To represent interest in its relationship to story and storytelling, let us turn to Alfred Hitchcock, who provides a memorable example for understanding the distinctions between the latter two structures:

¹ David J. Gorman remarks that the “prestige activity, which guides most academic careers and shapes all academic departments, remains that of commenting interpretively on particular works” (“Future of Literary Study” 3).
- Four people are sitting at a table. A bomb blows up. This is surprise.
- Four people are sitting at a table. None is aware of the bomb beneath the table. This is suspense.

These two scenarios exhibit the most fundamental principle in narratology: the telling of a story is distinct from the story itself. The above scenarios tell the same story but in different ways. The *story*—what is told—is that several people are blissfully ignorant of the bomb by their feet. The *discourse*—how it is told—varies on whether or not the audience is apprised of the bomb before it explodes. The suspense scenario, however, begs the question that the audience is concerned about the sitting individuals meeting their demise. In order for suspense to exist, there must first be interest, and in order for there to be interest, the text must first establish the “likability” of the characters involved. Just as a slight change in the discourse can transform surprise into suspense, a slight change in *interest*—why the audience cares—can significantly alter the impact of that suspense.

This study claims that the story-discourse dichotomy should be reframed as a trichotomy that additionally includes interest. Discourse has been discussed in vague, equivocating terms to include everything that is not an event in the diegetic world; properly conceived, it is only—but no less significantly—the form of diegesis observed rather than diegesis experienced. Consequently, this study suggests a reconceptualization of discourse: just as story is comprised of initial settings, climaxes, closure, etc., so too is discourse comprised of event, description, dialog, sequence, and presentation.

Although most structural theorists have considered story and discourse as definitive of narrative, few have interrogated how narrative structure motivates a reader’s interest. By pushing this question instead of begging it, interest structure reveals when and how a particular interest begins, when and how that interest ends, what type of interest it is creating, how many interests of
each type appear within a given narrative, how many interests and which ones are active at any given time, and how different interests in the same narrative interact with each other. A catalog of such information on any narrative would perhaps appear a tiresome exercise, but it is the understanding of this information within the narrative context that informs us of the narrative’s ability to perpetuate motion and motivate reading. It is the difference between observing the disassembled parts of a car engine and observing an assembled engine while the car is running.

William F. Brewer and Edward H. Lichtenstein’s (1982) structural affect theory asserts that a reader’s interest in a story largely stems from the discourse structure rather than from the event structure of that narrative. Meir Sternberg (2001, 2003) has written extensively on discourse organizations, arguing that narrativity is comprised of three universal reader-centric dynamics: prospection, recognition, and retrospection (i.e., suspense, surprise, and curiosity, respectively). Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck (2009) have proposed a compromise between this approach and Marie-Laure Ryan’s (1986, 1991) focus on the text itself as a generating force of narrative interest, yet Herman and Vervaeck still allude to a remaining need for a method that can identify narrative interest with greater specificity.

This study suggests that two restraints currently inhibit a more nuanced understanding of narrative interest: an oversimplification of “discourse” and a singularization of reading. While this study fully adopts Herman and Vervaeck’s balanced emphasis on discourse and event structures, perpetuating this dichotomy prevents a holistic assessment of the five components over which discourse presides: event, description, dialog, sequence, and presentation. Moreover, the inclusion of surprise to Sternberg’s (1978) original binary of suspense and curiosity—an inclusion that itself has become more-or-less “universal”—fails to reflect the differences between initial and
subsequent readings. In the context of narrative interest, surprise is best understood as motivating subsequent readings only.

Most narratives engage their readers or viewers via multiple interests. To separately analyze these distinct interests, this framework classifies each as its own “tension.” An interest tension is a set of textual components, such as actions and descriptions that develop a particular “theme.” A theme is a self-contained set of developments that are interrelated within the context of the story. All plot lines, generally understood, are themes, but themes need not pertain to the central thrust of a story’s development. A theme can be as large as the main plot or as small as a single development in one scene of the story. A scene, as defined within this study, is a narrative space consisting of thematically related events, descriptions, or dialogue that is distinctly set apart from the preceding and succeeding narrative spaces, which either shift the manner of developing the theme or develop a different theme altogether. Although many studies have addressed what a scene does, how one starts, or what we usually find in one, narratology has yet to come to a consensus on, or even form contesting camps regarding differing notions of, what a scene is.

Every theme generates an “affect.” An affect is the disposition of an interest that reflects how a theme’s tension operates. The affect types of “anxiety” and “avidity” are two sides of what critics have long interpreted as a single phenomenon: suspense. Anxiety is the apprehension of a potential story development whereas avidity is the hopeful anticipation of one. While anxiety and avidity share properties of suspense, they essentially are diametrical opposites. The third and final type of affect is curiosity, which, for the purposes of this study, is a gap in knowledge that the text makes known to the reader. Attendant to this awareness is the reader’s desire, motivated by the text, to see the gap closed. The type of affect that a theme generates depends on three criteria: the
contextual information afforded the conceptual reader, the cultural awareness that the conceptual reader is assumed to possess, and the likability of the characters involved in and impacted by narration and diegetic events.

Abstract Reader

It is through the conceptual reader that a human reader determines the type of affect a theme generates. Critics have proposed several formulations of conceptual reader since Wayne C. Booth introduced his “implied reader” construct in 1961. For the purposes of this project, Wolf Schmid’s notion of the “abstract reader” is particularly useful as it can operate in two capacities simultaneously: as an ideal recipient—which “understands the work in a way that optimally matches its structure, and [which] adopts the interpretive position and esthetic standpoint put forward by the work”—and as a presumed addressee, which fully understands all “linguistic codes, ideological norms, and esthetic ideas.” The ideal recipient provides the abstract reader an understanding of a narrative purely within the context of that narrative, without influence external to the text. The presumed addressee, on the other hand, offers the abstract reader just enough awareness of extratextual information—i.e., of real-world events—to identify the functions of narrative events, descriptions, and dialogue that rely on extratextual references. These two lenses—intratextual and extratextual—are both embodied in the abstract reader.

The classifications of what is avidity and what is anxiety depend on the presumed addressee’s ability to interpret cultural signifiers. For instance, if a young Jewish woman falls into a river and an unknown, brave young man rescues her, an avidity tension of their potential romance is likely to begin once they catch their breaths and gaze into each other’s eyes. Whether or not an anxiety tension begins instead, however, depends on the presumed addressee’s ability to accurately
interpret the swastika tattoo on the man’s chest. The ideal recipient, on the other hand, is responsible for processing the textual implications of these signifiers—how this Jewish woman’s predicament develops and how this development relates to other story developments in the narrative. Consequently, the abstract reader—primarily concerned with how a narrative relates to itself and thus foremost informed by the ideal recipient—relies on the presumed addressee to determine the narrative function of allusions to the real world.

The pressing question, then, regarding the current implementation of the abstract reader is which one, or what kind, does interest structure follow? Must the presumed addressee comprehend all intertextual allusions to nineteenth-century texts or only those that are recurrent in its genre classification? The reach of the presumed addressee’s cultural awareness is a matter not of discovery but of determination. As Schmid notes, “The position of the ideal recipient is thus entirely predetermined by the work; the degree of ideological certainty, however, varies from author to author” (55). The interest structure of a text is partially dependent on this reach, but it is the task of the analyst either to set these boundaries in advance or to identify them upon reflection. Where the boundaries are set is of less importance than ensuring that they are consistent. The number of differing interest structure analyses of a single narrative may be as great as the number of interest structure analysts, which would be no less a benefit to the collective scholarly understanding of that text so long as each analysis is consistent within itself according to the abstract reader it has utilized.²

² Although it is through the perspective of the abstract reader that this particular study has chosen to interpret interest structure, interest structure does not depend on the specific conceptualization of the abstract reader. Interest structure perhaps does not depend on a conceptual reader at all. This theory, of course, is merely a guess at a cognitive method, and the supposition of an entity between the human reader and the text amounts to a New Critical-type of pretending. If a human reader can make the cognitive move to directly assess the
Character Likability

As demonstrated above, the abstract reader’s perception of a character determines the affect of each theme involving that character. The study of character types, typically regarded as a matter of genre fiction, is not essentially commensurate with any hermeneutical study nor even with most structuralist studies; even so, it is not an unfamiliar topic for many literary critics. One component of character that has largely gone unobserved in literary structuralism is the means by which the likability of the character determines the reading or viewing experience of a narrative.

This study identifies four essential aspects of character likability. Two of these aspects, “benevolence” and “suffering,” are juridical aspects insofar as they hold more relevance to what the character does within the moral framework of the presumed addressee rather than to what the character is. Benevolence is the establishment of a character’s good intentions, which exculpates that character of culpability for any corresponding negative development. Benevolence not only mutes the potential influence of an unlikable aspect, thereby preventing that character from becoming unlikable, but it also inclines the reader to hope that this character meets with positive outcomes—i.e., has a happy ending. The requirements of suffering, on the other hand, are met when a character has experienced, is experiencing, or is credibly threatened to experience a form of distress that is excessive in proportion to the amount or degree of distress that character may be perceived to deserve. Suffering implies that the character deserves favorable compensatory outcomes in order to establish a balance in “diegetic justice.” Moreover, in the case of a character purely textual interest of a narrative, then the conceptual reader can be dispensed with. This, however, is a substantial “if.”
that lacks innocence and good intentions, suffering creates the capacity for this character to be forgivable, as forgiveness can serve as a favorable compensatory outcome.

The other two essential aspects, “innocence” and “integrity,” are intrinsic aspects insofar as they hold more relevance to what the character is rather than to what the character does. *Innocence* is the condition in which a character is not responsible for initiating or perpetuating any negative development as perceived through the reader’s orientation. If a character has caused a negative development, likability can still be achieved through benevolence. *Integrity* indicates that a character holds a personal code to which she/they/he commit, even in the midst of adversity. Integrity implies that a character has also suffered, as it is difficult to determine whether or not a character has integrity if she/they/he has not chosen to uphold her/their/his moral code at a personal cost to her/them/himself. Consequently, integrity enhances the likability of a character even if that character’s moral code is despicable.

While not excluding or contesting the primary impact of these four aspects, there is an additional and separate factor that influences a character’s likability: the perspective through which the story is told. Whether a character is textually constructed as likable or unlikable is partially determined by a character’s functioning as a narrator or a focalizer for at least part of the narrative. For instance, if Hitchcock’s example were a tale focalized through one of the people at the table, the reader would develop a closer attachment to this character than to the other three and thus perceive this character as more likable than the others. Consequently, the anxiety also would be greater as the reader would now perceive this character’s death as more tragic.

Additionally, whereas curiosity is merely a neutral desire for certainty, avidity and anxiety seek particular resolutions that depend on the characters involved: generally speaking, an avidity
tension operates in order to depict the potential for a positive development for a more-or-less likable protagonist whereas anxiety operates in order to depict the potential for a negative development for the same character. These tensions are thus necessarily diegetically relative to whether or not the text depicts a character as likable and to what the text has portrayed this character as needing or desiring.

Aligning with Marie-Laure Ryan’s application of the principle of minimal departure, which assumes that a fictional world parallels the actual world until a difference is specified, certain expectations function in a narrative until they are directly dismissed. As demonstrated in the example of four people sitting at a table, endangering characters that possess only a “default” likability will still create suspense. A default likability is that which a character possesses before the text communicates any likable or unlikable aspect of that character.

The Nature of Narrative Tensions

A tension is the result of textual “cues” that affectually influence the reading of a theme. As a narrative is likely to have multiple themes, it likewise will have at least as many tensions. A cue is a narrative passage that initiates a tension; extends a tension by increasing, sustaining, or decreasing it. A cue, in the framework of interest structure, is a narrative irreducible complexity, and it can take the form of an event, a description, a piece of dialog, the sequence of narrative elements, or a particularity about the narrative’s presentation. The first cue of any tension necessarily determines its affect. A single cue fulfills the minimal qualifications for a tension to exist, but a tension often includes multiple cues. Nevertheless, a tension may exist without the development of additional cues.
The closing of a theme results in its respective tension coming to an end. When a theme produces no tension, it means there is no longer any narrative interest that plotline. So long as a theme is either developing or holds the potential for development, the tension is operative. Even if a tension has no cue of a particular scene, that tension is still operative so long as it can still develop later in the narrative. In such a scene where a tension has no cue, the tension is idle. However, when a tension does have a cue of a scene—that is, when a passage of text directly increases, sustains, or decreases that tension—the tension is active. “Idle” and “active” pertain only to operative tensions. In any scene that precedes or follows the appearance of a tension, that tension is inoperative.

Although there often are a number of possible developments in any story, interest structure interprets the operativity of every tension as ending—that is, if it ends—in only one of two ways: either the theme is fulfilled, or something renders this fulfillment impossible. The means of closing the theme can be either “ideal closure” or “non-ideal closure,” terms that refer not to the reader’s orientation but to that of the tension’s affect. Ideal closure is when the final cue of a tension brings about the thematic fulfillment of its tension’s affect. For example, the bomb exploding would be ideal closure to the anxiety regarding the possibility that it might explode. Ideal closure is thus singular in nature because it is limited to producing the fulfillment that corresponds only to its tension’s affect. In other words, ideal closure for an avidity tension of the framed fugitive catching her train is precisely that: she boards the train. Ideal closure for an anxiety tension of the desperado winning the duel is the lead-filled sheriff lying in the dirt. Finally, ideal closure for a curiosity tension of how a heist was carried out is the explanation, whether directly or indirectly, of how it was accomplished.
It is because of the variable nature of “non-ideal closure” that ideal closure is oriented toward the tension’s affect and not the reader’s desire. For instance, considering the above example of the anxiety tension of the desperado winning the duel, were the desperado’s losing considered ideal closure, this would conflate the functions of avidity and anxiety, which this study shows can be profitably analyzed apart from each other. Non-ideal closure often can take many forms: referring above to Hitchcock’s scenario, the bomb could fail to explode, the four people could leave the table, an external agent could remove the bomb from beneath the table, etc.

A tension’s influence is only as great as the accumulated cues comprising it. If all tensions in a narrative end, then the themes have closed and the narrative has idiomatically “tied up its loose ends.” Conversely, a narrative just as well might be “open-ended,” meaning that the story concludes before at least one of its themes closes—that is, at least one of its tensions remains operative.

An aberrant form of closure, from the perspective of interest structure, is the lapsed tension, which ceases not merely activity but operativity and then resumes both. This correlates with a theme that closes and then reopens, indicating that the tension had merely appeared to end as a result of a “false closure.” For example, if the reader has reason to hope that the four people at the table will eventually finish their journey, the bomb exploding would appear to end the relevant tension’s operation, thereby closing the theme of their journey’s completion. However, if the narrative later reveals that the four people survived the explosion, this tension would resume its operation, regenerating the avidity of the hoped-for successful journey. The inoperative space between the false closure and the following cue is an interim.
Structural variance among tensions goes beyond their affects, their themes being closed or open, and even the number of their respective cues. Even if two tensions both operate according to the same affect, contain the same number of cues, and have closures, their respective tension patterns would likely still differ. A tension pattern is a tension’s arrangement of cue types, which reveals precisely how a text develops a particular interest. A cue sustains the interest in a tension by assisting, obstructing, sustaining, or delaying the development in its respective theme. All cues develop interest. An assistive cue is that which makes the theme more likely to reach its ideal closure whereas an obstructive cue makes this less likely. Whether a cue is obstructive or assistive pertains specifically to the affect regulating its tension. For instance, if the four people realize their predicament, this would initiate the new theme of their safe avoidance of the explosion. This tension operates in addition to, not in replacement of, the anxiety tension regarding this group’s potential demise. If one person becomes entangled in the tablecloth, thereby inhibiting his escape, this single cue is functional in both tensions: as an obstructive cue of the avidity tension because it makes this character’s safe avoidance less likely and as an assistive cue because it makes this character’s demise more likely.

A tension exists in one of three relationships with a concurrent tension: a subsidiary relationship, a parallel relationship, or an independent relationship. In a subsidiary relationship, one tension’s cues also function as cues in another tension, but not vice versa; in this relationship a contributive tension enhances the interest of a receptive tension. A parallel relationship refers to two tensions that react to the same event or action, though not necessarily in the same way. A parallel relationship between an avidity tension and an anxiety tension that pertains to the same theme creates a conflicted interest, as was demonstrated in the example of the man becoming
entangled in the tablecloth. The third relationship between concurrent tensions is that in which each is independent of the other: neither tension contributes to the interest of the other, and the two tensions never respond to the same cue. Parallel tensions can, however, contribute to the same receptive tension.

There are two measurements for the length of an interest structure tension, both of which pertain to its diegetic duration rather than to the quantity of its cues. A micro-tension is one that is operative in no more than two consecutive scenes. Consequently, a micro-tension must contain closure; otherwise, its operativity would not be confined to two consecutive scenes. Conversely, a macro-tension is one that is operative in at least three scenes, resulting in at least one scene in which the tension is operative in a scene in which it neither begins nor ends. There is no median durative form.

Organization of Project

Interest structure analysis advances our understanding of narrative, providing insight into both the textual and paratextual influences at work. The essential question addressed is whether or not interest structure analysis makes a difference in the way we read narratives. To determine the answer to this question, this study examines what the respective interest structures of nine selected novels are, these novels collectively representing three thematic genres: romance, horror, and detective fictions. This study then analyzes the implications of each novel’s interest structure within the critical context of its genre. Regarding the selection of literary texts, each chapter addresses a single affect by exploring the thematic genre that is most dependent on it. Furthermore, each chapter will provide analyzes of three novels within that thematic genre: one novel will represent a more traditional representation of the genre, one will represent a more recent
representation, and one will not belong to that genre properly but will contain significant characteristics distinctive of the genre.

Chapter One focuses on novels of romance, paying particular attention to the way these narratives implement avidity tensions and manage their impacts on the rest of their respective interest structures. This chapter will examine and analyze the interest structures of *A Room with a View* (1908) by E. M. Forster, *Oscar & Lucinda* (1988) by Peter Carey, and *Possession: A Romance* (1990) by A. S. Byatt. This chapter carefully compares how these romance narratives textually engage the reader’s interest: by signaling to the reader between which two people the reader is supposed to desire a romance, by sequentially managing the interests the reader has with regard to the point of development in the given relationship, and by implementing a variety of cues to clarify that a tension is operating according to avidity rather than anxiety.

Chapter Two addresses horror novels, focusing on how anxiety tensions motivate the reader to turn the page not despite a heightened apprehension of what the next page might contain but because of it. This chapter will examine and analyze the interest structures of *Dracula* (1898) by Bram Stoker, *The Woman in Black* (1983) by Susan Hill, and *Beyond Black* (2005) by Hilary Mantel. These novels represent epistolary, frame-narrative, and heterodiegetic narrative styles, respectively, which provide a valuable comparison of three distinct interest structure strategies. This chapter explores the reliance that horror fiction has on curiosity tensions as well as the technique often used, though not intrinsic to the genre, of developing avidity tensions in order to heighten the central tensions of anxiety.

Chapter Three attends to detective fiction and the impact that the rigid restrictions of this genre have had on the methods by which its novels cultivate interest. This chapter will examine
and analyze the interest structures of *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) by Agatha Christie, *The Lighthouse* (2005) by P. D. James, and *Alias Grace* (1996) by Margaret Atwood. As a genre that prioritizes adherence to the Van Dine principle, frequently focalizes the reader’s attention through the detective’s perspective, and spends much textual space in the management of clues, this chapter offers new insight into what structural elements are most indicative of this genre.

Reading these three novels through the analytic lens of interest structure analysis reveals previously unarticulated nuances about their functions as dynamic systems. However, the import of this study is a deeper understanding not of nine celebrated authors’ writings but of narrative itself. Interest structure does not champion a new interpretation of any literature, nor does it directly contest any. It simply increases our capacity for identifying and observing the complexities at work in narrative—the complexities we have often suspected, the complexities that have always been there.
CHAPTER ONE

AVIDITY IN ROMANCE FICTION

In the morning, the whole world had a strange new smell. . . .
It was the smell of death and destruction and
it smelled fresh and lively and hopeful.¹

Unlike solving strange murders or escaping the undead, stories of romance are as old as story itself, and love has always been, to use modern vernacular, “complicated.” In the 4,000-year-old epic, Gilgamesh rejects Inanna—the Sumerian goddess of love, beauty, sex, justice, and war.²

The apparent conflict of Inanna’s offices—similar to the conflicting offices of the later Canaanite Anat and Greek Aphrodite, also goddesses of both love and war—seems manifest as well in Lynne Pearce’s pronouncement that “romantic love is the most singular, and most singularly devastating, emotion visited upon humankind” (1).³ The similarly minded Denis de Rougemont has written perceptively on the relationship between love and tragedy in Western literature:

Love and death, a fatal love—in these phrases is summed up, if not the whole of poetry, at least whatever is popular, whatever is universally moving in European literature, alike as regards the oldest legends and the sweetest songs. Happy love has no history. Romance only comes into existence where love is fatal, frowned upon and doomed by life itself.

¹ Byatt, Possession 551.

² Alternatively, Susan Ackerman has written on what she considers the central love story in the Epic of Gilgamesh, that between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, as depicted through the “homoeroticized language and imagery that are used to describe the heroic [relationship]” (30).

³ Although Aphrodite is traditionally known as the goddess of love, beauty, and procreation, Timothy Jay Alexander notes that certain city-states—such as Sparta, Thebes, and Cyprus—perceived her also to be the goddess of war (23).
What stirs lyrical poets to their finest flights is neither the delight of the senses nor the fruitful contentment of the settled couple; not the satisfaction of love, but its passion. (1-2)

In other words, the impetus in the romance text pertains not to a promise of marital bliss but to the hope for marital bliss despite its improbability.

Each of the three novels analyzed in this chapter—A Room with a View, Oscar & Lucinda, and Possession—is premised around a central romantic theme motivated primarily by avidity, and each is comprised by a different discourse of actions, descriptions, dialog, presentation, and sequence cues. In E. M. Forster’s A Room with a View, Lucy’s snobbish social circle considers George and his father indecent; Lucy and George are occasionally in different cities, or even countries; Lucy is engaged to Cecil; and, the greatest impediment of all, Lucy refuses to admit to herself that she is in love with George. In a similar vein, that which ultimately dooms Oscar and Lucinda—in the novel of the same name by Peter Carey—is their insuperable hesitancy to express their love to each other. The first complication that Carey’s text must rectify, though, is this: at the outset of the story, the protagonists do not know each other and live on opposite sides of the world. A. S. Byatt’s Possession depicts two budding romances, in both of which the man is already in a relationship and the woman is not, yet in neither case does the current partner function as competition in the way that Cecil does in A Room with a View. An uncertainty of one’s feelings and a hesitancy to reveal those feelings are the only complications in Maud and Roland’s relationship as well as in Ash and LaMotte’s.

These complications all are diegetic; that they are also extradiegetic is a result not of their interpersonal natures but of their internal interest structures. This is to say, for example, that the reader considers Cecil an unwanted impediment only because the text first creates the desire in the reader for Lucy and George to become a couple. Without this framework, it would be just as likely
that George were the unwanted impediment in Lucy and Cecil’s relationship. It is through the complex operations of narrative tensions that any of these love stories seem to matter, or that any story of two people could be a love story at all. It is the interest structure that determines whether any narrative belongs in the romance genre or in any other. It is not the story alone, nor even the discourse itself, but all narrative components holistically operating in the framework of interest structure that inclines the reader to understand George’s pursuit of Lucy as romantic instead of threatening.

*A Room with a View* (1908), E. M. Forster

George Emerson and his father trade hotel rooms with Lucy Honeychurch and Miss Bartlett, Lucy’s cousin and chaperon, to provide the women with better views. This exchange establishes Lucy’s acquaintanceship with George, whom she determines is “nice” despite Miss Bartlett’s contrary opinion (39). Several days into their respective Florentine holidays, and after several encounters with each other, George kisses Lucy unexpectedly. Confused about how she feels toward George, Lucy escapes with Miss Bartlett to Rome on the following morning. Later on, at the Honeychurch home in Surrey, Lucy has become engaged to Cecil Vyse, a local gentleman of great self-importance, and has relegated George to the recesses of her memory. Upon learning that the Emersons have purchased a nearby cottage, she tries to convince herself, and later Miss Bartlett, that she and George are merely friends. When George steals another kiss from her, Lucy banishes him from the Honeychurch estate, but this kiss also prompts her to break off her engagement with Cecil. Still fooling herself about not caring for the younger Mr. Emerson, Lucy plans to escape once again but is this time detained by the elder Mr. Emerson, who gently helps Lucy admit to herself that she does indeed love George.
Approaching *A Room with a View* through interest structure provides insight into both the textual and paratextual influences at work. The different styles in which Parts I and II are written, a point of scholarly contention throughout the twentieth century, are more clearly revealed by examining their interest structures. For all the praise that Part II has been given in academic circles, it proves to be much more a representation of romance genre fiction than does Part I; although the narrator in Part II takes on its own personality—genuinely imbuing the second half of the novel with critical import, especially as a pre-modernist text—the interest structure here is nonetheless much more dependent on the central theme of romance than is that in Part I. Moreover, the title effectively identifies the romantic couple—even though it does not name the protagonists as do many other romance texts—a point often overlooked or the significance thereof oft underestimated by scholars. One previously unobserved function of the title is to highlight an early development that generates both avidity and anxiety, rendering George’s character ambiguous in the first chapter. Consequently, had Forster intended to write a horror story, he could have left this opening chapter as is. Most prominently, interest structure analysis elucidates the dramatic irony of the reader knowing that Lucy is in love while she herself is unaware, a tension sustained and even heightened through a variety of cues, including changes of state and narratorial intrusions.

The episodes in Italy and England form the two parts of the novel, the second written several years after the first and in a different style, as many critics have observed. Just six days following the novel’s publication, a review in the *Daily News* remarked that *A Room with a View* “begins by being brilliantly dull and ends by being humanly absorbing,” noting that Forster “gets into his stride” in Part II, when “the story begins to move with a more powerful irony and a more
real effect of passion.”

It is no surprise that many have since agreed that the second part is superior: during that interval, Forster had become a recognized novelist. When he began the Surrey portion, he had already published *Where Angels Fear to Tread* and *The Longest Journey*, and he had written most of the short stories that would form his collection *The Celestial Omnibus*. On the other hand, “[t]he Italian half of the novel,” Forster later commented, himself acknowledging the inconsistency between the parts, “was almost the first piece of fiction I attempted” (Moffat 68; Forster, “A View” 15). Despite the attention paid to the novel’s stylistic shift, however, few have speculated with any specificity on the formalist nature of that shift.

Adopting a theory of interest structure enables the critic to identify the textual causes for this single novel’s two reading experiences and to better understand why some readers feel that “[t]he real human interest begins in Part II.”

The romance interests in Part II of this novel are clear: the reader wants Lucy to admit to herself that she is in love with George, worries that Lucy will marry Cecil, and hopes that Lucy will marry George instead. The interests in Part I, on the other hand, are less obvious. For instance, the opening chapter’s discourse structure and character

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1 R. A. Scott-James, “A novel of character,” *Daily News*, 20 Oct. 1908 (reprinted in Gardner 101-04). Half a century later, Wilfred Stone expressed that “Part II contains writing that for sheer competence has not been equaled earlier” (218). Conversely, Forster famously described his third novel as his “nicest,” referring to its fulfillment of the traditional comedy’s standard marriage plot. His full meaning of “nicest” might additionally reflect his earlier disparagement of marriage as “that idiotic use . . . as a finale” (*Aspects* 38). For the novel’s fiftieth anniversary, Forster wrote a brief article, “A View without a Room,” in which he dismissed *A Room with a View* as lacking distinction, seeing in it the tired tropes of triviality: “It contains a hero and a heroine who are supposed to be good, good-looking and in love, and who are promised happiness” (15).

2 When he returned to writing *A Room with a View* in 1907, which he then was calling “the Lucy novel,” Forster wrote a letter to Leonard Woolf about the task ahead of him: “I have been looking at the ‘Lucy’ novel. I don’t know. It’s bright and sunny and I like the story. Yet I wouldn’t and I couldn’t finish it in the same style” (qtd. in Moffat 92).

description identify Lucy and George as the central figures but ambiguously mark the genre of the story. Even when the text has established the tension of their romance, Part I’s heavy reliance on description cues rather than event cues reduces the impression of story development. This shift finally occurs not at the beginning of Part II but at the end of Part I. George’s kiss closes the tension of his desire for Lucy and thereby places the majority of the text’s focus on whether or not Lucy will reciprocate. The entirety of Part II, save for the last few pages, revolves around this lingering issue of Lucy’s response. Not only are there more event cues in this section, but the description and discourse functions mostly pertain to building on the reader’s now clearly marked desire. The desire on which Part I builds, on the other hand, is so subtle as likely to go unnoticed were it not for the paratextual interest of the novel’s title.

An early allusion to the novel’s title alerts the reader to pay close attention to a group of four characters. As Lucy and Miss Bartlett dispute over who should take the larger of their two disappointing courtyard-view hotel rooms, an old man interjects: “I have a view, I have a view” (2). The old man then offers to exchange his and his son’s rooms, both with windows overlooking Florence, for the women’s. In the context of story structure, this scene enables Lucy and George to meet; in the context of interest structure, it functions as a paratextual signal that the characters involved are likely essential to the story. As straightforward as the title’s function seems to be, many critics have sought to complicate or obscure it.

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4 Of course neither the event nor the set of characters actually needs to be essential as the title might refer to a subsequent event and set of characters. Nevertheless, at this point, the reader must assume the significance of these four characters until signaled not to.
Discussions of the work’s eponymous influence most often pertain to an episode in Part II in which Lucy tells Cecil that he is like “[a] drawing-room . . . [w]ith no view” (115). This critical attention is not misplaced: without the title, this scene would not provide such a keen insight into Lucy and Cecil’s relationship. The attention, however, is disproportionate. Few critics mention the text’s first allusion to its title, the meeting between the ladies and the Emersons, no doubt because the connection is obvious. This general assumption that the exchange of rooms itself does not require analysis has led to an oversight of the novel’s discourse structure. For instance, an early review cites “the scene in the Italian square”—not the scene of exchanging rooms—as that which “first draws the lovers together.” Wilfred Stone also supplants this initial scene from its rightful primacy of titular import in claiming that “[t]he Sacred Lake and the male swimming party could have been the book’s symbol rather than the room with a view” (232). Both suggestions, though, fail to acknowledge the fundamental impact of the opening scene’s paratextual and

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5 This is not to say “A Room with a View” is the only title that could have this effect, but the totality of this title’s effect is particular. For instance, had Forster entitled the work “Lucy & George,” the reader would anticipate their romance even more quickly, which consequently would de-emphasize the opening roles of both Miss Bartlett and the elder Mr. Emerson. A full analysis could be performed on the ripple effect that such a seemingly innocuous title change would have throughout the text: though it would by no means change the basic romantic theme, the new title would continue to alter the reader’s approach to that theme.

6 Nonetheless, one Spectator review did draw upon this point a few months after the novel’s publication: “The proposal of two Englishmen, father and son, to exchange their rooms with those allotted to Lucy and her cousin, clumsily offered and reluctantly accepted, forms the ‘take off’ of the ensuing romance” (Gardner 118). The insight into the romance’s beginning at this early point in the novel has seldom been adopted since.

heteronormative expectations, or what Adrienne Rich has coined as “compulsory heterosexuality.”

Simply put, if an attractive man encounters an attractive woman in a fictional story, compulsory heterosexuality states that reader will presume a sexual attraction between them. The mere sexual attraction of a character implies sexual desire. Interpreting these character descriptions, then, as indicative of a particular character function—i.e., falling in love or engaging in sex—the physical proximity of two such characters presents a singular intention in the text’s bringing them into a shared space. However, if an attractive man crosses paths with another attractive man, it is more likely that a competitive animosity will develop between them than will a love connection. Judith Butler observes that,

[to the extent that homosexual attachments remain unacknowledged within normative heterosexuality, they are not merely constituted as desires that emerge and subsequently become prohibited. Rather, these are desires that are proscribed from the start. And when they do emerge on the far side of the censor, they may well carry that mark of impossibility with them, performing, as it were, as the impossible within the possible. (236)

Although compulsory heterosexuality does not preclude the development of queer romances, Marie-Laure Ryan’s principle of minimal departure, when held in conjunction with Rich’s theory, dictates that the characters in a fictional world are heterosexual unless otherwise indicated. Consequently, when the title gives particular attention to a scene in which a couple of women meet

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8 When Rich first published on the concept of compulsory heterosexuality, in 1980, she presented it as a purely lesbian term as lesbians suffer from both heterosexual and patriarchal norms. She has since expanded the concept to represent the struggles of any people who do not meet normative expectations.

9 It helps if both individuals, such as Lucy and George, are romantically available, but this is by no means a requirement, as discussed in the analysis below of Possession.

10 Ryan, “Fiction, Non-fiction.” Coincidentally, Ryan observed this principle in 1980, the same year that Rich wrote her seminal article on compulsory heterosexuality.
a couple of men, there was little chance that the acquaintanceship would not have developed romantically.

It is precisely the eponymous theme of rooms with views that marks George as the romantic interest, regardless of how little the reader comes to know him. Even though Stone implies that the title is arbitrary, he poignantly bemoans Forster’s distance from his male protagonist: “George as the virile male is incredible; his author never gets inside him or even close to him” (232). In voicing his protest, Stone’s word choice of “virile,” connoting a sexual maturation that is irrespective of morality, is strangely fitting for how the first chapter depicts George. Establishing George as virile occurs mainly through his juxtaposition with Lucy and Miss Bartlett. To understand the influence of this juxtaposition, however, the text must be analyzed for how it builds the characters of these two women primarily through drawing attention to the contrasts between them.

By the end of this opening chapter, the influence of character on the story structure designates that Lucy is more likely to be involved in a romantic plot than is Miss Bartlett. At the time of their meeting the Emersons, the reader knows that neither woman is married: the title “Miss” indicates the one is unwed, and a passing comment that Lucy’s mother, not a husband, paid for this Italy trip implies the other is unattached as well.¹¹ Moreover, though two adult women could share a room, their each having a room of her own implies that both women are of marriageable age.¹² Although Miss Bartlett’s age is revealed no further at this early stage, the

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¹¹ Even if Miss Bartlett or Lucy was engaged, this function would parallel that of her being single, not that of her being married. Rather than implying that a woman is ineligible for romantic pursuit, engagement in a romantic novel often marks a woman as searching for true love, thereby indicating that she is ready to be romantically pursued.

¹² This rationale is not to imply, however, that sharing a room would have indicated that they are not of
mention of Lucy’s mother as the benefactor of their vacation suggests that Lucy is still young.\textsuperscript{13} These subtle details of Miss Bartlett’s and Lucy’s ages, their marital statuses, and ultimately their relationships to each other prepare the reader to make preliminary connections between Lucy and an eligible bachelor, but they do not themselves determine that the interest in these forthcoming connections will be one of avidity instead of anxiety.

As Lucy is the more likable character of the two, the text must do more than merely depict Miss Bartlett’s concern to influence the reader toward anxiety. Though likable, Lucy is also naive and at risk of getting into dangerous situations. Lucy is warm and welcoming of people in general, and she tries to see the best in everyone. She is appreciative of any kindnesses others show her and is especially grateful for, as well as sympathetic toward, Miss Bartlett. The cold and snobbish Miss Bartlett, on the other hand, is quick to criticize others whom she deems of a lower class; so negative is Miss Bartlett that the reader might well sympathize with anyone who fell in love with her. Nonetheless, Miss Bartlett does demonstrate a genuine concern for Lucy’s safety, a concern that proves merited.

Through a similar process of differentiating the two men, the text clearly illustrates that the most eligible bachelor is George,\textsuperscript{14} but the interest created in him throughout the chapter leaves

\textsuperscript{13} The reader does learn by chapter’s end that, indeed, Miss Bartlett is not young but a spinster and Lucy’s chaperon.

\textsuperscript{14} Because Mr. Emerson is dismissively and repeatedly referred to as “the old man,” George is the apparent male paramour. At this point, the text has not determined that Mr. Emerson will not figure centrally in a love story. However, as with the heteronormative expectations that the marriage plot implies a man and a woman, so too are there expectations that those falling in love still have their lives ahead of them.
his likability in question. As a result, the first chapter fails to distinguish this novel’s genre. When the women have their belongings moved into their new rooms, Miss Bartlett insists that Lucy take the room that had been the elder Mr. Emerson’s, explaining her concern that the young George might otherwise seek out an indecent favor in return for his generosity. “If you are to accept a favour it is more suitable you should be under an obligation to his father than to him. I am a woman of the world, in my small way, and I know where things lead to” (12). Miss Bartlett immediately mitigates this concern in spite of herself, but the threat has been stated. By identifying George as a sexual being, as “virile,” the text has called attention to his capacity for both love and violence. By the chapter’s close, the reader equally experiences the avidity of George potentially falling in love with Lucy and the anxiety of his potentially assaulting her.

Before 1957, most critics would have disregarded such a grim reading of George’s character. More pronounced than even the duality of Forster’s style, as perceived by this novel’s critical reception generally, is that of the novel’s tone. Other than an insightful review by C. F. G. Masterman, who interpreted A Room with a View as simultaneously “humorous and arresting,” Forster scholars predominantly portrayed the work exclusively as a comedy of manners, a label

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15 It is important that the bachelor be likable from the reader's perspective; it is not initially important that he be likable from the perspective of the single and eligible female character. Also, this project does not intend to exclude queer romantic narratives; instead, as stated above, it is the impact of compulsory heterosexuality that influences the abstract reader to favor male-female relationships.

16 The concern that George might be a threat to one or both of the women increases throughout this and the following chapters as other characters recurrently call into question the Emersons' decency. More on this below.

17 Unsigned review, “The half-hidden life,” Nation, 28 Nov. 1908 (reprinted in Gardner 111-15). Though the review was unsigned, Masterman later wrote Forster directly, identified himself as the reviewer, and apologized that the review “very inadequately represented the pleasure which I obtained from [the novel]” (115).
that stuck for forty-nine years. Judith Scherer Herz credits James McConkey’s *The Novels of E. M. Forster* with changing the critical conversation from one of a simple comedy of errors with a variety of generic aberrances to one of a balanced work, deserving to be approached “with varying degrees of sympathy” (Herz 138). McConkey classified *A Room with a View* as belonging to the fantasy genre, likening various narrative developments to the mythical roles played by Greek deities. What is more, McConkey dispelled the long-held suppositions that the story is light-hearted and has a happy ending: “[A]s the novel draws to a close, the gods and goddesses of fantasy seem to retreat out of sight, no match for the new force which has entered the story—the force of evil” (60-61). The earlier readings understandably interpreted the story according to the comedy of manners—the playful genre that Oscar Wilde had repopularized at the end of the Victorian era—although they less understandably assumed the work a departure from Forster’s previous two novels, neither of which is jocular or straightforward. In response to the history of antithetical readings, Herz diagnoses *A Room with a View* as “several novels in one—social comedy, mythic romance, novel of ideas, shifting in modes from realism to romance to polemic, at once light and dark, celebratory and melancholy. . . . These, however, are not seen in simply either/or terms;

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18 Claude Summers retrospectively concurs with this interpretation, acknowledging that “[a]t first reading, *A Room with a View* seems deceptively lightweight” (77). For more on the trends of *A Room with a View* criticism, see Herz.

19 In 1908, an anonymous article in *The Times Literary Supplement*, which F. P. W. MacDowell has since attributed to a twenty-six-year-old Virginia Woolf, picked up on these textual cues but mistakenly read them as dismissing Miss Bartlett’s worries altogether: “[I]f we are not cousin Charlotte, in age or temper, if, moreover, we have had read what Mr. Forster has written in the past, we are amused rather than bewildered” (reprinted in Gardner 104-05). The reader is not mistaken about Miss Bartlett’s character being ridiculous, a character trait that perhaps does suggest an element of humor in her explanation to Lucy about the “more suitable . . . obligation” (Forster, *A Room* 12). However, this does not take into consideration the full context of the scene nor its ominous conclusion. Moreover, the current analysis approaches the novel as a stand-alone iteration whereas Woolf’s analysis of Forster’s oeuvre dismisses out-of-hand the possibility of this novel’s cultivation of anxiety.
rather, they are woven into a dense narrative fabric” (138-39). Regardless of the early cultural and critical influences on how one should read this novel, the anxiety the text cultivates has always been there.

This anxiety of Lucy’s possible endangerment begins earlier in the opening chapter but not with the first, nor even the second, acknowledgment of the threat. Before accepting the exchange of rooms, Miss Bartlett explains to a clergyman that she refused the Emersons offer to prevent Lucy from taking on “an obligation to people of whom we know nothing” (7). Out of context, this would signal a cause for alarm, but this statement appears pretentious as Miss Bartlett is quite concerned with how respectable people perceive her. Also, her classist prejudice against the Emersons had previously been the only motivation provided for her declining their offer. As a result, the reader does not interpret this statement as identifying the Emersons as threatening. In the second iteration of her concern, Miss Bartlett discusses the matter with an elderly woman of an “appropriate” class, with whom she “murmured that one could not be too careful with a young girl” (10). Again, it appears that Miss Bartlett regards Lucy’s safety as a lesser priority, this time subordinated to her own social climbing via a new acquaintanceship with a respectable British lady.

The anxiety tension finally begins when Miss Bartlett confronts Lucy in the privacy of their rooms. With no other audience to appease, she tells Lucy that “I alone am implicated in this. I do not wish the acceptance to come from you” (11). In other words, Miss Bartlett is vowing to protect Lucy from dealing with the repercussions—the obligation to provide “favors”—of accepting the Emersons’ generosity. Without any apparent ulterior motive remaining, Miss Bartlett’s expression
of worry seems sincere. Later, when Miss Bartlett darkly hints at “where things lead to,” the reader learns that Lucy truly is naive and does not comprehend her cousin’s unease. Lucy, not understanding where it is things lead to but noticing the seriousness in her cousin’s tone, “had the sense of larger and unsuspected issues” (12). The reader’s realized anxiety of George’s possibly taking advantage of Lucy is augmented by Lucy’s simplicity and susceptibility. The chapter concludes with another cue of this anxiety tension when Miss Bartlett finds “an enormous note of interrogation” in her new room, which had previously been George’s: “‘What does it mean?’ she thought, and she examined it carefully by the light of a candle. Meaningless at first, it gradually became menacing, obnoxious, portentous with evil” (13). Miss Bartlett’s warnings, Lucy’s naïveté, and the “portentous” note all function as cues in this anxiety about George potentially harming Lucy.

Though weaker than the above anxiety, the avidity of Lucy and George’s romance begins here as well. The likability descriptions of Lucy and the paratextual emphasis on her meeting

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20 The appearance of no ulterior motive remaining does not necessarily Miss Bartlett has no ulterior motive for showing concern for Lucy’s well-being, even in private. However, on this occasion any ulterior motive is hidden from the reader and cannot impact the reading.

21 There is a distinction between a likable character’s mistake exposing her to danger and a character’s reckless foolishness making him less likable. Lucy’s naïveté is innocent, and thus she falls in the first category. The boy who cried wolf, however, falls in the second as his naïveté was intentionally targeted toward inconveniencing and unnecessarily worrying his family; it is, of course, a tragedy when the boy is eaten, but it is less of a tragedy than if he’d heeded his family’s warnings yet had still fallen prey to wolves.

22 The anxiety here is even more complex as the text actively cultivates the question as to whether or not the Emersons are decent, which likewise takes an ominous twist when Mr. Eager later accuses the elder Mr. Emerson of having murdered the late Mrs. Emerson.

23 The overarching interest in a marriage—in this narrative and in many others—operates according to a sequence cues of smaller anticipations, those of each individual becoming attracted to the other; the attraction of each to blossom into love; their confessions of love to each other, and, ultimately, their first kiss, first time making love, their moving in together, or marriage.
George identify the two characters most likely to form a romantic connection should this prove a romantic novel. The first cue of this avidity tension—that is, the first time the reader is compelled to hope for a romantic relationship to develop between Lucy and George—appears when Lucy feels that some show of appreciation was due the Emursors for their kind offer, despite Miss Bartlett’s decision to ignore them: “It gave [Lucy] no extra pleasure that any one should be left in the cold; and when she rose to go, she turned back and gave the [Emursors] a nervous little bow. The father did not see it; the son acknowledged it, not by another bow, but by raising his eyebrows and smiling; he seemed to be staring across something” (6). Ambiguous as George’s “staring across something” is, this passage depicts George paying special attention to Lucy. It is even a form of private communication, as though no one else were present, and this privacy suggests a potential intimacy. Indeed, George has taken an interest in Lucy, but more to the point, the reader has taken an interest in their future relationship.

Soon after, the narrator likewise reveals Lucy’s interest in George: “Young Emerson scored a notable triumph to the delight of Mr. Beebe and to the secret delight of Lucy” (11). Had the delight been publicly displayed, Lucy’s reaction would merely fall in line with her jovial and youthful personality. However, she chooses to keep this delight a secret. These brief passages advance the implicit paratextual link between Lucy and George by affirming these characters’ mutual romantic desires. As long as both characters remain likable, the avidity generated regarding their potential marriage will continue to exist in the text. Every tension added to it increases the

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24 It might seem hasty already to be discussing marriage between the two, but this is the ultimate ideal closure for any romance in a traditional society. Contemporary narratives often separate the avidity for two people to have sex from the avidity for them to marry—the narrative many times avoiding the latter altogether, or saving it for the sequel. On the other hand, a romantic theme in a story set within the context of societal expectations of marriage and devoid of any undercurrent of restless rebellion will
textual prominence of this overarching theme. Lucy’s “secret delight” initiates the reader’s hope that her attraction for George will evolve into a love for him, but this extradiegetic function, with a bit of dramatic irony, is a secret to Lucy herself.

Just as the anxiety about George shifts after the first chapter, so too does the avidity of Lucy falling in love: rather than waiting for Lucy to develop feelings for George, the reader spends most of the novel waiting for Lucy to admit to herself that she has these sentiments. Consequently, most of the cues in this tension heighten the reader’s interest, not in the hope that Lucy will fall in love with George but that she will realize she has fallen in love already.25

Even though Lucy does not recognize the point at which she falls in love with George, the reader does, thereby ending this tension and terminating this particular interest. Following the harrowing experience of witnessing a murder, George calms her and assists her safe return to the hotel. Lucy debates with herself over her opinion of George, even while he is still accompanying her: “[H]e was trustworthy, intelligent, and even kind; he might even have a high opinion of her. But he lacked chivalry; his thoughts, like his behaviour, would not be modified by awe” (47). Lucy is in “awe” of George, but she convinces herself that, on the whole, he is not suitable. Before parting, Lucy casually remarks on the inevitable return to commonness, no matter how uncommon an experience one may have had. George, in staunch disagreement, surprises Lucy by stating his necessarily operate according the full development of that romance, the avidity not only culminating but (more importantly) terminating with their sacred vows never to leave each other. D. H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterly’s Lover (1928) was remarkable for this reason possibly more than for any other: the narrative creates avidity for a romance that meets its ideal closure without a wedding—effectively a subversion of romance narrative structures at that time.

25 For simplicity and eloquence, “Lucy's revelation” will hereafter refer to this avidity tension’s correlating theme.
earnest zeal for life. Lucy does not speak in response, but the narrator observes Lucy’s altered perception of her companion: “Leaning her elbows on the parapet, she contemplated the River Arno, whose roar was suggesting some unexpected melody to her ears” (48). This passage, which immediately follows George’s zealous statement, tells the reader that Lucy has fallen in love with George. She had already been trying to determine whether or not she likes him, creating mental lists of pros and cons, but here her reasoning stops. Lucy does not argue with George’s statement, nor does she silently interrogate his meaning. Instead, Lucy does not think at all: she merely hears music. The closure of this avidity tension, confirmed by her immediately altered behavior, ends the interest the reader had taken in Lucy’s falling in love with George. Following this scene, there are eight more passages in Part I alone that represent Lucy’s growing fondness for George. These passages all belong not to the interest of her falling in love, which is now an inoperative tension, but to the reader’s hope that Lucy will realize she is in love.

The tension generated by Lucy’s revelation that she loves George proves to be a protracted one, composed of many cues and spanning a good share of Part I as well as nearly all of Part II. This tension is the central interest at the conclusion of Part I, and thus it is predominantly operative at the outset of Part II, even before any cue makes the tension active therein. Though the text also

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26 This response is one of the few glimpses the text offers into George's variant thinking, and even then the narratorial perspective offers no insight into his unspoken thoughts. Stone's regret regarding George, that “[w]e may lament . . . that George has to be such a rough diamond,” is incisive as the distance imposed between George and the reader deprives the latter of the opportunity to anticipate George's falling in love with Lucy.
develops the reader’s sympathy for Lucy, and thereby her likability, the primary point of her development pertains to “the things she will not tell us,” which she likewise will not tell herself.27

Regarding Lucy’s revelation, the prominent cues are her subsequent amorous feelings, which heighten the tension of this theme, and her attempts to ignore and later suppress these feelings, which lessen the tension. The morning after Lucy develops a romantic sentiment for George, the clergyman asks if she would like to join him and his party, which includes George, for a walk to the Torre de Gallo. Lucy, uncertain how to process her new feelings and “left to face her problem alone,” declines the sightseeing trip, which she otherwise would have gladly joined: “Since she could not unravel the tangle [of her emotions when around George], she must take care not to re-enter it” (49, 50). The text leads the reader to want Lucy to be in George’s company so she can realize her feelings for him, but the text is already preparing the reader’s hopes beyond this: the hope that Lucy realizes her feelings for George so their romance can develop, and the subsequent hope that their romance develops so they can ultimately marry.28 Lucy’s resistance to this development by her refusal to acknowledge her feelings delays the ideal closure of their marriage, thereby increasing the interest in it.

27 “That, in brief,” Stone writes, “is the plot—Lucy's gradual escape from her Sawstonian confinement (the lie) into Emersonian freedom (the truth). The defining of that ‘something different' is the chief interest of the book, and that alternative has as much to do with the Emersons' maleness as with their openness” (220). Stone’s interpretation aligns with the interest structure, identifying the anticipation of Lucy's acknowledgment of her love as the main thrust of the text. Stone extrapolates the symbolic meaning that this tension contains. The building interest in this tension can be partly, if not wholly, conceived of as heightening the desire for a general liberation. Nevertheless, his hermeneutic, like all others, depends primarily on influences and motivations external to the text; it is the interest structure, however, upon which these interpretive garments hang.

28 Marriage, however, is the end of this sequence. Once married, they are perceived as at the apex of their relationship; there is thus only anxiety about something going wrong, but something must go wrong if the avidity regarding their relationship is ever to resume after their wedding.
The interest in Lucy’s revelation twice meets with geographical obstruction—when Lucy escapes from Florence to Rome and, near the end of the novel, when she plans on traveling to Greece with the Misses Alan—and receives geographical assistance on another occasion, when George moves to Lucy’s home county of Surrey. At the end of Part I, Lucy has returned to the hotel from a group outing, during which George kissed her. She enjoyed the kiss, and she feels guilty for it; she is agitated and confused, and Miss Bartlett is indignant, appalled at George’s indecent behavior. Having already pleaded with Miss Bartlett that they go to Rome, Lucy packs that night, and she and her cousin depart early the next morning. The obstruction in the tension would be less either if she had wanted to go to Rome but could not or if she were forced to go to Rome against her will. However, because she chooses to leave, Lucy is in a state of mind that inhibits the chance of her acknowledging her love for George. Likewise, because she is in another

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29 Elizabeth Langland refers to Lucy’s return home as successfully avoiding “the deeper, and threatening, possibilities [Italy] has revealed,” thereby reducing the anxiety of Lucy coming to harm, even though this tension is by now overshadowed by that of her developing a romance with George (96).

30 According to her Victorian values, Miss Bartlett is reasonable, but the text has by now depicted her in a less favorable light than it has depicted George. Had the first chapter's anxiety regarding George—rather than its avidity involving him—continued to develop, the textual function of this kiss would become complex, if not menacing. An early reviewer for the Morning Post remarked on Forster's “ingenuity and originality to conceive a character like George Emerson and touch him with a magic wand so that his love episodes appear spontaneous and sincere instead of vulgar and uncontrolled, as they might have done with a less skilfull pen” (reprinted in Gardner 110-11). With limited literary terminology in 1908, “magic wand” sufficed as an explanation for what we can now identify as a shrewd construction of character likability situated within a complex interest structure.

31 Lucy's decision to go to Rome is an event cue whereas her putting geographic distance between her and George constitutes a change of state, a description cue.
location, there is a higher chance that she will be able to distract herself from thinking about George, which further prevents her from recognizing that she loves him.  

The next geographical obstruction in Lucy’s revelation is not an actual relocation or a change of state but rather the threat thereof. When Lucy suddenly grabs at the opportunity to travel to Greece with the Misses Alan, the promise of putting miles between her and Surrey provides a way for her to avoid confronting her current troubles. The means by which this use of geography augments the theme thus differs from the two examples above as Lucy’s refusal to address her problems does not actually prevent her ability to do so. Actual distance, however, precludes interaction-based development.

The impact of geographical distance itself—as opposed to a character’s decision to create it—functions singularly as a change of state. When Lucy returns home, she is able to distract herself from her feelings for George to such an extent that she agrees to marry another man. Her out-of-sight/out-of-mind mentality ends when she learns that George is moving to Surrey. His move has nothing to do with pursuing Lucy, and thus there is no relevant action behind it. Also, his living in proximity to Lucy guarantees neither how often they will see each other nor even that

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32 Though Lucy’s flight to Rome prevents her from encountering George, it does not keep her from thinking about him. As an early foreshadowing of her trip to the Vatican City notes, “She saw him once again at Rome, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, carrying a burden of acorns” (25). The Ignudi figure referenced is muscular and naked, his genitals partially displayed. Though this passage, on a first reading, augments the tension of Lucy’s falling in love, it is only on a second reading that the reader understands that Lucy’s fantasizing in the Sistine Chapel about George takes place during her attempt to avoid him. On a second reading, then, this passage functions as two cues, increasing the interest both at the point of its textual mention as well as in the blank space between Parts I and II, filling in the fabula with salacious speculation. See Conclusion for more on the differences between initial and secondary readings.

33 Letter writing functions as a type of bridge, permitting interest development through character interaction. The anticipation of interaction, though, is channeled entirely through the receipt of mail, which disallows the reader to anticipate the characters bumping into each other in town.
he is still in love with her. Nonetheless, the news that the Emersons have purchased Cissie Villa, just a short carriage ride from Lucy’s home at Windy Corner, heightens the reader’s interest merely because this change of state increases the probability of Lucy recalling her feelings for George and thereby realizing that she loves him.

The text also utilizes location to enhance the interest of Lucy and George’s romance, but in so doing avoids influencing the interest of Lucy’s revelation entirely. Alan Wilde suggests that Lucy’s acceptance of Cecil’s proposal “is a sign of the confused state of her mind” (54). The rationale for Wilde’s analysis is clear and may even be considered obvious, but it is off the mark precisely because he, at no fault of his own, approached the text through an imprecise methodology. Interest structure analysis, however, elucidates that an initial reading of the novel does not indicate that Lucy was confused when she agreed to marry Cecil. Part I ends with Lucy and Miss Bartlett’s flight to Rome whereas Part II begins with Lucy, no longer accompanied by Miss Bartlett, at home in Surrey and engaged to a new character. That said, a great deal has changed since the kiss in Florence, and the text does not reveal just how much time has passed. Within the interest structure, then, the engagement itself does not indicate Lucy’s confusion: although the text has done nothing to eliminate this possibility, it just as well establishes that Lucy has had enough time to forget George and move on with her life. It is only the reader who certainly has not forgotten George. The revealing of Lucy’s engagement, then, threatens the progress of Lucy and George’s romance through a combination of competition, geography, and, as far as the reader can surmise, time. Though significant when it occurs, the locative impact on interest structure is infrequent. The impact of the narrator, on the other hand, is inescapable.
The ever-present narrator is sometimes so subtle that one might forget that a narrator exists and at other times is as prominent as the bewitched lovers themselves. Jo M. Turk likens the narrator of *A Room with a View* to a commentator at a play, one who stands “aside from the events and points out to the audience the import of what is happening ‘onstage’” (429). Such is the case when the narrator speaks directly to the reader:

It is obvious enough for the reader to conclude, “She loves young Emerson.” A reader in Lucy’s place would not find it obvious. Life is easy to chronicle, but bewildering to practice, and we welcome “nerves” or any other shibboleth that will cloak our personal desire. She loved Cecil; George made her nervous; will the reader explain to her that the phrases should have been reversed? (155-56)

This use of narratorial intrusion surprises the reader with a direct address, a presentation cue that is absent in the previous 150 pages. When the narrator directly addresses the audience again, only a few pages later, the text creates a contributive tension of curiosity that draws attention to a particular cue of the tension of Lucy’s revelation. Miss Bartlett visits Windy Corner, and upon learning that the Emersons have moved nearby, she warns Lucy to be wary of George: “Once a cad, always a cad” (160). Lucy, determined to treat her new neighbor as she would any other, defends George’s hasty kiss in Florence as beyond his control: “Emerson lost his head. I fell into all those violets, and he was silly and surprised. I don’t think we ought to blame him very much. It makes such a difference when you see a person with beautiful things behind him unexpectedly. It really does; it makes an enormous difference, and he lost his head: he doesn’t admire me, or any

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34 Even though, as Elizabeth Langland asserts, Forster's “omniscient and somewhat intrusive narrator . . . [is] a narrative technique more characteristic of high Victorianism than of modernism,” this intrusive narratorial voice has no precedent in this text and therefore is unexpected (92).
of that nonsense, one straw” (160-61).\(^{35}\) As the scene closes, however, the narrator comments on Lucy’s defense of George: “Lucy thought this rather a good speech. The reader may have detected an unfortunate slip in it. Whether Miss Bartlett detected the slip one cannot say” (161). The narrator’s comment generates a curiosity over what that slip is. Upon rereading Lucy’s speech, the reader observes that Lucy had meant to defend George’s kissing her because there were beautiful things behind her.\(^{36}\) Instead, Lucy mentions the beautiful things behind “him,” thereby indicating that it was her desire for George that was uncontrollable rather than, as the context implies, George’s desire for her. The discovery of Lucy’s slip ends the curiosity tension while increasing the avidity tension regarding Lucy’s revelation.

This avidity tension incites the reader to anticipate the moment when Lucy realizes she is in love with George, but the corresponding theme does not provide such a singular moment. Instead, the text repeatedly teases the reader with false closure, satisfying the reader’s hope for Lucy’s acknowledgment and then reactivating that hope through Lucy’s reverting once again to denial. The first such occurrence is built up by a lengthy mental event in which Lucy processes her recent discovery that George had not confided in his father that he had kissed Lucy:

Satisfactory that Mr. Emerson had not been told of the Florence escapade; yet Lucy’s spirits should not have leapt up as if she had sighted the ramparts of heaven. Satisfactory; yet surely she greeted it with disproportionate joy. All the way home the horses’ hoofs sang a tune to her: “He has not told, he has not told.” Her brain expanded the melody: He has not told his father—to whom he tells all things. It was not an exploit. He did not laugh at me when I had gone.” She raised her hand to her cheek. “He does not love me. No. How terrible

\(^{35}\) Lucy’s insistence here that George has no romantic feelings for her obstructs the story development of her revelation while progressing its interest development.

\(^{36}\) The text does not reprint Lucy’s speech, but the discourse operates as though it did: the narrator’s implicit directions to reread her speech functionally sandwiches the narrator’s comment between the first and second readings of Lucy’s defense of George.
if he did! But he has not told. He will not tell.” She longed to shout the words: “It is all right. It’s a secret between us two for ever.” (168)

Lucy’s realization that George’s kiss was not a demonstration of machismo suddenly makes her consider the possibility that he loves her. The reader has known that George loves Lucy for some time, but part of Lucy’s denial of her feelings for George has included, as the reader only now learns, a belief or fear that the kiss had meant nothing to George and thus that George has no feelings for her. Even though the reader has not been in anticipation of Lucy recognizing that the kiss was meaningful for George, this passage of Lucy’s beginning to understand that event more honestly augments the tension of Lucy’s revelation. Although she does not allow herself to think about George’s love for her, denying it just as she denies her feelings for him, Lucy’s interpretation of her discovery—“It’s a secret between us two for ever”—clearly marks an internal development in Lucy as well as an interest development in Lucy’s revelation. As her thought of this shared secret immediately follows her discovery that George loves her, her raised spirits do not pertain to her assurance that she had not been laughed at behind her back. Her elation is rather in knowing George’s feelings, and this new knowledge transforms the incident of the kiss from a regret she must hide to what is now a mutual intimacy.37

This transitional mental event might seem to satisfy the reader’s anticipation of Lucy’s revelation—she now knows not only that she loves George but that he loves her too—and thus should advance the reader’s interest to the next step in the marriage plot: that in which Lucy and

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37 Implicit in the statement itself is an assumption that although she and George will forever have this memory of having been together, they would never be together again. However, this does not decrease the avidity tension of their marriage because the reader has no reason to consider this statement as a threat to their wedding. Quite the opposite, this passage increases their marriage tension because it assists Lucy’s revelation, and ideal closure of Lucy’s revelation must occur for the marriage tension to receive its ideal closure.
George express their feelings to each other. Quite the opposite, Lucy again distances herself from her feelings while soon thereafter gazing at George and his head of black hair: “She did not want to stroke it, but she saw herself wanting to stroke it” (173). Lucy’s denial of her desire for George is not merely a backtracking in the interest structure of the marriage plot: it also serves as another cue of the recently relieved tension of Lucy’s revelation, meaning that the reader must return to hoping that Lucy will realize she is in love with George before the reader can focus on hoping that Lucy will express her love to George. The fact that she now envisions herself caressing George does represent a progression in Lucy’s revelation from the previous chapter, but it is still a reversion from just a few pages prior. In retrospect, the reader now understands that Lucy’s fond musing over her shared secret represented not ideal closure in the theme but false closure.

Of course, this theme of Lucy’s revelation does eventually end, but the text does not provide Lucy’s profession of love to George, nor George’s proposal, nor even their wedding. Immediately after Mr. Emerson persuades Lucy to open up to George, the discourse shifts to their honeymoon in Florence. All of a sudden, every anticipated step in the marriage plot has been bypassed as the marriage plot itself has concluded. However, though much of Forster’s critical readership sides with Wilde, who “hopes (and knows) that [Lucy and George] will live happily ever after,” H. J. Oliver points out that they “are not enjoying the usual advantages of such a situation: they are seriously discussing Charlotte—which side was she on?” (25).38 This is the equivalent of “Aschenputtel” concluding with, “And Cinderella lived happily ever after, but she

38 Following World War II, in his fiftieth anniversary piece on *A Room with a View*, Forster no longer viewed the ending to be a happy one, speculating that Lucy and George “were becoming comfortable young capitalists, when the First World War exploded—the war that was to end war—and spoilt everything,” and that they now “await the Third World War—the one that would end war and everything else too” (“A View” 15).
would always wonder why her father never intervened on her behalf, or if—perhaps, in his own way—he had.” Consequently, the narrative does not end with the cessation of the predominant avidity tension(s), as do many novels of romance, but rather with the creation of a curiosity tension.  

The benefits of this analysis are far-reaching. Interest structure contributes to the understanding of how Part I differs from Part II, and it legitimizes a more insightful and detailed reading of the novel than that which the first half-century of criticism could offer. This approach also emphasizes the central importance of the novel’s title. Though the use of paratext, a presentation cue, is not uncommon to generate a tension or identify that narrative’s thematic genre, it is uncommon for paratext to be used for a different purpose. In this case, the paratextual allusion alerts the reader to those characters likely to be involved in the prominent tensions. One of the complications unearthed through these analyses of the stylistic differences between Parts I and II and of the eponymous influence on the text is the generic ambiguity of the novel’s first chapter, premised on the uncertain likability of George’s character. Additionally, though the text often relies on description and mental events to develop characters, it effectively creates changes of state to sustain the reader’s interest in the potential for these characters interacting. This is true especially with regard to Lucy’s revelation, which this analysis affirms is the aspect of the story that creates the most interest. It exhibits the diverse functions of changes of state to increase, decrease, or suspend tensions. As a profitable comparison of how different sequences of romance avidity create and sustain tension, the following analysis of *Oscar & Lucinda* demonstrates how

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39 Though not as explicit as the narrator telling the reader that Lucy had slipped in her speech, discussed above, the text even so suggests that the reader should re-read the novel while focusing on something other than the love story—on something other than that which the reader knows ends happily.
the marriage plot remains interesting when the pivotal characters do not meet until the middle of the narrative and when competition between suitors takes an entirely different form.

*Oscar & Lucinda* (1988), Peter Carey

Oscar’s great-grandson narrates the separate upbringings of the eponymous characters who eventually form a romantic, or quasi-romantic, relationship. Oscar, a clergyman, and Lucinda, the owner of a glass factory, first meet on a ship en-route from Southampton, England to Sydney, Australia. A misunderstanding immediately interferes with their budding friendship, but they later reunite in Sydney, bonding through their gambling addictions. An innocent evening of card playing then scandalizes the community, resulting in Oscar’s financial ruin and dismissal from the Anglican clergy. Lucinda brings Oscar home to live with her—at first as an act of charity, but over time they become friends and even begin to fall in love. Because they do not discuss this love, though, Oscar feels the need to demonstrate his feelings for Lucinda, and he does so by setting off on a quest to transport a glass cathedral—a small building almost entirely made of glass—four hundred miles to the town of Boat Harbor. Oscar successfully completes this task, but, upon arriving in Boat Harbor after this harrowing expedition, his fate quickly changes. He meets a woman named Miriam, who nurses his ailments and seduces him. Afterward, Oscar feels honor-bound to marry her. He and Miriam immediately co-sign the peremptory paperwork for marriage, including the status of their wills. Later that day, Oscar returns to the glass cathedral, which is still afloat on a raft on a wide river. In mourning over his guilt for his misdeeds and his loss of Lucinda, the raft sinks and Oscar drowns. To make matters worse, because Lucinda had formalized a goodwill bet that would bequeath to Oscar her entire inheritance, a sizeable fortune, and because Oscar
won this bet upon his successful transfer of the glass cathedral, Miriam takes the entirety of Lucinda’s wealth.⁴⁰

The interest structure in this story is extensively interwoven with description, discourse, and paratext. The narrator begins the story by stating the preeminent significance of a particular pudding; the natural curiosity created by this peculiar description quickly triggers an anxiety tension, the interest of which is increased by a technique of suspension. As in *A Room with a View*, paratext initiates the overarching interest of this romance. Distinct from Forster’s novel, though, Carey’s text sustains this interest through the first third of the novel purely through order and presentation cues, with hardly any event cues. Amid the development of this avidity tension—the first of five in this marriage plot—a parallel, short-term tension enhances the interest leading up to the long-term tension’s closure. In a fashion similar to that in which interest structure helps resolve the academic dispute over the two parts of *A Room with a View*, interest structure analysis also helps sort out a critical misconception about the function of *Oscar & Lucinda*’s title. Also, a type of proleptic intrusion shifts what otherwise would have been an avidity tension so as to make it function toward anxiety instead.

*Oscar & Lucinda* has attracted the attention of postcolonial theorists, owing to the novel’s publication on the bicentennial of Britain’s colonization of Australia as well as to the Victorian-period love story between natives of the two countries. David Callahan, noting the novel’s apparent “selfconscious [sic] relationship to nineteenth-century English fiction,” stresses that Carey is not subverting colonial influence but is rather subverting that subversion: “[T]here must . . . come a

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⁴⁰ As a result of this single copulation, Miriam becomes pregnant with Oscar’s son, the narrator’s grandfather.
point when appropriation of the literary modes of the imperial begetter does not signal the throes of the anxiety of influence but rather the assumption that the earlier, or even contemporary, modes of the begetting culture are also part of the postcolonial culture and not simply the signs of metropolitan dominance and relegation” (21). To demonstrate Carey’s liberating subversion of the presumed need to subvert the British Empire, Callahan points to a scene that Carey adopts from Edmund Gosse’s *Father and Son*, recounted in full as follows:41

> On Christmas Day of this year 1857 our villa saw a very unusual sight. My Father had given strictest charge that no difference whatever was to be made in our meals on that day; the dinner was to be neither more copious than usual nor less so. He was obeyed, but the servants, secretly rebellious, made a small plum-pudding for themselves. (I discovered afterwards, with pain, that Miss Marks received a slice of it in her boudoir.) Early in the afternoon, the maids, – of whom we were now advanced to keeping two, – kindly remarked that “the poor dear child ought to have a bit, anyhow,” and wheedled me into the kitchen, where I ate a slice of plum-pudding. Shortly I began to feel that pain inside which in my frail state was inevitable, and my conscience smote me violently. At length I could bear my spiritual anguish no longer, and bursting into the study I called out: “Oh! Papa, Papa, I have eaten of flesh offered to idols!” It took some time, between my sobs, to explain what had happened. Then my Father sternly said: “Where is the accursed thing?” I explained that as much as was left of it was still on the kitchen table. He took me by the hand, and ran with me into the midst of the startled servants, seized what remained of the pudding, and with the plate in one hand and me still tight in the other, ran till we reached the dust-heap, when he flung the idolatrous confectionery on to the middle of the ashes, and then raked it deep down into the mass. The suddenness, the violence, the velocity of this extraordinary act made an impression on my memory which nothing will ever efface. (136)

Because it follows the father’s “strictest” interdiction, the anxiety here begins with the description of the maids as “secretly rebellious” in their action of making “plum pudding for themselves.” The reader now fears, on behalf of the servants, the father’s retribution. The anxiety tension builds when they consider and then retrieve Edmund, who becomes complicit in their violation of the

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41 Callahan draws attention to Carey’s acknowledgments in an early printing of *Oscar & Lucinda*, in which Carey thanks Gosse for giving him “a father who was proud of never having read Shakespeare” (Callahan 24). Callahan does not identify to which printing he refers.
interdiction, sealing his fate. As Edmund is the narrative voice and protagonist in this work—the character who is most familiar, most sympathetic, and thus most likable—the anxiety over his violation is greater than that over the maids’. However, Edmund feels guilty and becomes repentant. Consequently, alongside this anxiety, which is still active, develops avidity, a hope that Edmund’s father will honor his contrition and forgive him. His father’s response is ambiguous, for he does not address Edmund’s actions—neither his eating the pudding nor his confession—but directs his attention to the “accursed” dessert. Each of the following event cues augments the anxiety tension: his father subsequently grabbing; running; startling; seizing; and, holding Edmund’s hand “still tight[ly],” running to an ash heap to fling and rake. As a result, not only do the themes of the anxiety and avidity tensions conclude with their ideal and non-ideal closures, respectively, in the lifelong trauma Edmund experiences, but these closures thereafter serve as description cues in subsequent anxiety tensions regarding his father: the next time his father enters a scene, all of this anxiety enters with him.

Callahan further explains that Carey’s “rewriting of this scene as a much fuller drama of the loss of authority precisely when it is being most violently asserted also gains in structural significance inasmuch as it is the first time we see Oscar, his father and England” (24). Gosse’s account appears half-way through his memoir. Carey uses the account, however, to introduce Oscar and Oscar’s father: “There would have been no church at Gleniffer if it had not been for a Christmas pudding. There would have been no daguerreotype of Oscar Hopkins on the banks of the Bellinger. I would not have been born. There would be no story to tell” (5). The attribution of so much influence to a thing so commonplace is not on its face sensible. The reader’s inability to understand this relationship is a gap in the reader’s knowledge, and the indecipherable passage
itself makes the reader aware of this gap. By this means, Carey’s version of the incident, which is much longer and contains a much more complex interest structure, replaces the avidity—which had tempered the anxiety in Gosse’s account—with a curiosity that contributes to the dominant anxiety.

Though the narrator has established curiosity about the Christmas pudding, his statement is static, offering no movement either closer to or further from receiving an explanation. Therefore, when Fanny, one of the two servants in the small Hopkins homestead, becomes “outraged to discover that Oscar had never known the taste of Christmas pudding,” her shocked response augments the earlier description cue with an event cue (7). This seemingly innocuous culinary task then takes a foreboding turn as the following cue of this curiosity tension also initiates an anxiety tension: “The young’un must know the taste of Christmas pudding, and what the master don’t know won’t hurt him.” The pudding’s making must be kept secret from Oscar’s father, Theophilus, whose dualistic character, as the text has made clear, is both gentle and severe. Going behind the back of this unpredictable man creates in the reader an apprehension of Theophilus’s potentially severe reaction to this kitchen connivance, should he find it out.42 Simultaneously, the reader’s curiosity has increased with this new suspicion that the impact of the pudding is a traumatic one.43

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42 Because of Theophilus's dual nature, his reaction being severe and his reaction being gentle are equally possible. Nonetheless, this scenario creates only anxiety, not anxiety and avidity, because his mild reaction would not present a change in the situation. The reader hopes for his mild reaction only as the necessary alternative to Theophilus's severe reaction.

43 Oscar, Mrs. Williams, and Fanny look forward to the pudding, but the reader does not share this anticipation. As tasting pudding for the first time is such a commonplace, insignificant, and nonessential act, the joy of it is not significant enough for the reader to desire Oscar to experience it, especially not at the risk of Theophilus’s violent outburst.
The following sentence in the text confirms this suspicion and heightens the new anxiety: “Fanny Drable did not know that this pudding was the ‘flesh of which idols eat’” (7). No longer is there uncertainty over Theophilus’s perspective on pudding. This signals to the reader that the judgment of this act will be formative, thereby terminating the curiosity about the pudding’s impact. This statement likewise augments the active anxiety tension. However, as the curiosity tension pertains not to how this event occurs but rather to what this event leads to, its interest does not develop as the scene progresses, leaving the anxiety tension to function on its own at this point.

Through the next few pages, three paragraph-long passages of description prolong this anxiety tension; without these description cues, this section of the account would fill less than a page, as does Gosse’s account of his similar anxiety. The first passage describes the layout of the small cottage, how sound does not pass between the kitchen and the dining room, making it “a good house for secrets” (7). Oscar walks into the kitchen and sees raisins and cherries, which to him are new, exotic ingredients. This observation increases the anxiety by revealing that the forbidden pudding is in the process of being made. Theophilus’s calling Mrs. Williams—the other of Theophilus’s servants—out of the kitchen also enhances the anxiety in this tension. With evidence of the conspiracy now on display, the reader fears that Theophilus has called Mrs. Williams to censure her. Instead, Theophilus merely instructs Mrs. Williams on what size of potato she should serve for dinner, which relieves some of the tension but does not decrease the interest generated by this tension. When she returns to the kitchen, the women begin making the pudding, increasing the tension once more as they continue the risk of being found out.

The second description passage discusses at some length Mrs. Williams’s hair. It ends by stating that, though her hair has always been the same, it was on this occasion different; as Oscar
has noticed this, this discussion draws attention to the possibility that Theophilus will also observe that something is different and then will make inquiries. Oscar and Theophilus are at this time sitting in the dining room, eating their dinner. Oscar, straining to repress his excitement for his special dessert, tries hard to hear the women in the kitchen. As he hears nothing, he assumes his father hears nothing as well, serving to reduce the tension.

The third passage explains Oscar’s taxonomic organization of buttons, the orderliness of which his father approves. This organization of buttons is precisely that: ordinary buttons that have been grouped and arranged according to specific criteria. Theophilus’s approval—a thing he rarely gives—establishes that his current sentiment toward Oscar is an unusually positive one. Consequently, when Theophilus’s sentiment changes to rage, this alteration is more extreme and appears all the more tragic.

What follows is the string of successive cues—Mrs. Williams calls Oscar to the kitchen under pretense, the women serve him the pudding, Oscar takes a bite of the pudding—that further increases the anxiety tension until Oscar “[feels] the blow on the back of his head” as Theophilus strikes him from behind (10). Each of these passages functions as a micro-suspension that heightens the anxiety micro-tension by momentarily delaying the development of the scene. In other words, the anxiety over Theophilus’s reaction to the pudding is more intense specifically because the text makes the reader wait longer for it. This entire pudding scene functions primarily as description, establishing what type of character Oscar is. The text takes a very different approach to building interest in romance avidity itself.

In the first theme of the novel’s central avidity tension—the first theme being Oscar and Lucinda’s eventual meeting, and the central avidity tension of their romantic coupling—the text
uses a paratextual presentation cue of the novel’s title and sustains this tension for nearly half of the novel.⁴⁴ Although long-term tensions are nothing of a novelty, this one is peculiar because the only event cues comprising it appear just a few pages before the tension ends with Oscar and Lucinda’s actually meeting. Moreover, were it not for the title initiating this tension, there would be no interest at all in the prospect of their meeting until at least sixty pages into the novel. However, because the title implies a romance both in plot and genre, their meeting is the primary interest running through these early pages, even though its tension is mostly idle.

The text then sustains this tension by juxtaposing the story of Oscar’s upbringing, pages five to sixty, to that of Lucinda’s, pages sixty-two to eighty-four; it is this latter set of sequence cues arranging Lucinda’s coming-of-age narrative to follow Oscar’s that would have created an interest in their meeting if the novel had been named something else. For the hundred pages following, the text alternates its focus between them until they finally become acquainted with each other. The use of sequence cues to initially separate Oscar and Lucinda is itself an influential technique as the tensions with which the narrative begins would have been quite different had the novel opened with Oscar and Lucinda already in a relationship. If the story had begun so, and assuming both characters were still likable, the active tension likely would not be one of avidity but of anxiety because the reader would be easily motivated to worry over this relationship ending through incompatibility or death. Nonetheless, neither these sequence cues nor the title determines that a romance certainly will develop. Instead, they present this type of relationship as the most

⁴⁴ Compulsory heteronormativity influences the reader to interpret a title naming a man and a woman as being the title of a romance story. These heteronormative expectations are evident in the titles of many works of fiction and drama throughout history, as in those of Tristian and Isolde, When Harry Met Sally, and Beauty and the Beast.
probable outcome, which is all that is required to create this avidity of their love. Sustaining this avidity, on the other hand, requires a more active role on the part of the text.

The above analysis might well seem straightforward, but several critics have taken up the issue of *Oscar & Lucinda*’s title and its impact on the text itself. Sue Ryan-Fazilleau claims that the reader’s expectation in *Oscar & Lucinda* is that the novel’s title functions as a red herring by providing misleading notions about the novel’s genre and story development. She objects that “[t]his text is the narrator’s story . . . [b]ut we had assumed that it was also Oscar and Lucinda’s story, given the title” (17). Erica Lombard and Mike Marais directly affirm Ryan-Fazilleau’s reading and even take it a step further by referring to her “red herrings” as “implicit promises”: “The novel’s title is the first [implicit promise]. Its union of their names implies that, for all the vicissitudes of their relationship, Oscar and Lucinda will end up together” (55).

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45 More pointedly, Ryan-Fazilleau accuses Carey of “cheating” in the manner he has structured his story, and she is by no means the first to make this accusation (16). While serving as a judge for the Victorian Premier’s Literary Awards, George Turner removed it from consideration because “fair play was not in Carey’s mind” (200). Similarly, in early article in *The Hudson Review*, Tom Wilhelmus commented that, while “*Oscar & Lucinda* [sic] has its moments of high entertainment,” the novel’s conclusion “is not modern so much as it is gratuitous in offending the lines of plot development the reader has been presented with up to that point” (552).

46 Ryan-Fazilleau’s analysis is often insightful, but her central claim is of a nearly, sometimes absolutely, universal reading experience. Her analysis, then, observes a subjective variable that is influenced, if not determined, by the “automatic” and “passive” reading styles that she presumes are characteristic of an average reader. Her approach implies that, upon an initial reading, a passage may shed light on only that which has preceded it. For example, Ryan-Fazilleau claims that the chapter introducing Miriam “abruptly interrupts [Oscar and Lucinda’s] story to introduce an intruder. The interruption is unwelcome to the impatient reader” and that the reader likely has “fallen into the trap of ‘automatic reading,’ and is rushing forward without paying attention to detail in her haste to find out if Oscar and Lucinda’s bet will finally lead to their much hoped-for marriage, [and thus] is irritated by this intrusion” (14, 15). Ryan-Fazilleau undermines her own attempt to articulate textually established expectations—a form of narrative interest—by conflating the human and implied reader, which leads her to speculate on matters irrelevant to textual interest, such as pacing and level of attention.
Marais make this claim while attempting first to identify the impact a title has on its story and then to discern what impact the relationship between title and story has on the reader. The methodology of interest structure corrects this premise, reorienting the focus on the impact a title has on the textual interest, a relationship that exists independently from that between title and story and even of story and human reader.

Quite the contrary to Lombard and Marais’ assertion, titles do not make “promises”; titles do, however, create first impressions. Even a title that might seem to make an explicit promise—such as Possession: A Romance—holds no responsibility for the narrative’s production of some particular story development. Closer to the point is Ryan-Fazilleau’s notion of red-herring titles, which do exist, but Oscar & Lucinda is not one of them. The eponymous juxtaposition of their names performs the notable function of creating an interest in Oscar and Lucinda having a romantic connection in some form, but it makes no more promise of a happy ending than does Romeo and Juliet. What Ryan-Fazilleau calls a “red herring” and Lombard and Marais term an “implicit promise” is rather a paratextual cue of an avidity tension that directs the reader’s attention toward and establishes the reader’s interest in a specific series of thematic developments.

The central romance in Oscar & Lucinda comprises four sequential tensions: generating the protagonists’ first meeting, Lucinda’s falling in love with Oscar, Oscar’s falling in love with Lucinda, and their forming a romantic relationship. In addition to these avidity systems, Carey’s novel implements another—one concerning Oscar and Lucinda’s becoming friends. The

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47 A key example of a red herring title is David Wong’s web-serial, novel, and film John Dies at the End, in which the eponymous protagonist does not die at the end of the narrative—or at all, for that matter.

48 Establishing a form of friendship is not a required theme in any romance, but it is a significant interest in this particular love story.
chronology implies that the ideal closure of the tension regarding their meeting will likewise function as a cue of the subsequent avidity tensions. Although the overarching theme of their romance receives non-ideal closure—the marriage between Oscar and Lucinda never takes place—it is necessary for the other systems to receive ideal closures to heighten the efficacy of this ultimate interest. Beyond these closures serving as cues, the predominant tension takes on its own cues, ones that do not pertain to any of the four sequential tensions.

The anticipation of Oscar and Lucinda’s initial meeting exists without development for the opening third of the novel. After receiving a large inheritance from her frugal mother, Lucinda moves from her small New South Wales town to Sydney, where she quickly purchases the Prince Rupert’s Glassworks Company. Meanwhile, Oscar graduates from his theological studies at Oxford and, becoming disinclined to remain in England, is newly determined “to bring the word of Christ to New South Wales” (151). With this statement, the narrator reveals Oscar’s interest in going to the Australian province where the reader knows Lucinda resides. Though the text has already established in the reader a desire for their meeting, Oscar’s unexplained—and thus seemingly fated—determination to sail halfway around the world initiates this first geographical change of state in the theme of the central characters’ romance.

It is a surprise to learn that Lucinda is not in New South Wales, where Oscar is sailing, but instead has been in England for the past year and is now returning to Sydney via the same ship that Oscar is taking. As the voyage will be nearly two months long, it seems inevitable that the two will meet before arriving in Australia. Indeed, the reader need not wait much longer for further development. While boarding, Lucinda sees a group of clergymen and notices “the unusual red hair of one of them,” which is Oscar’s most distinctive physical trait (169). Though this sighting
does not fulfill the reader’s desire for the two to introduce themselves, it does represent the merging of their individual stories: a chapter that is focalized through Lucinda no longer excludes Oscar necessarily, and vice versa. The avidity tension in their anticipated meeting heightens as they now might run into each other around any corner of the ship.

Once Oscar and Lucinda are settled into their respective cabins, the text uses a series of character descriptions, developed throughout the previous eighty pages, to heighten the reader’s interest in Lucinda’s desire to meet Oscar. Staring down from the first-class deck, Lucinda wonders “why the clergyman sat by himself,” indicating that she has a desire to know more about the lonely, red-haired man (182). This passage depicts Lucinda’s motivation for meeting Oscar as little more than a passing curiosity, but the tension created by this cue is enhanced by Lucinda’s pronounced loneliness. Ever since the passing of her mother, when she was sixteen years old, Lucinda has been “alone in the world, orphaned, unprotected. . . . There was no one she could talk to about her feelings. She was pinned and crippled by her loneliness” (104). When she relocates to Sydney, she tries to ignore her loneliness and perceive her new life as “the beginning of an adventure” (107). Nevertheless, even after she gains acceptance by a lively coterie, she still “[feels] very lonely” (132). This tension is further complicated by the recent revelation that her year-long visit to England had been an unsuccessful attempt to find a husband. Consequently, Lucinda’s fascination with the man sitting by himself both calls attention to their similarities and signals the

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49 Additionally, Lucinda’s having developed a gambling addiction in Sydney creates a character description matching that of Oscar, whose gambling addiction the text has already established. The juxtaposition of these character descriptions as a means to increase the anticipation of Oscar and Lucinda’s first meeting is a complex operation of sequence cues.
sincerity of her determination to be acquainted with him. This latter aspect is what increases the probability of their meeting, thereby heightening the reader’s attention.\(^{50}\)

The closure of the current long-term tension—that is, when at long last they meet—functions likewise as the closure of a short-term tension that begins and ends within just a few pages. Many of the novel’s 111 chapters contain their own set of short-term tensions, which effectively increase the immediate interest while slowly progressing the long-term tensions as well. The narrator begins Chapter 50 by directly announcing the meeting before it occurs. In so doing, the narrator intensifies the interest leading up to this long-awaited scene by paralleling it with the moment-by-moment tension that is more customary in shorter tensions. The opening paragraph of the chapter is worth quoting at length:

In order that I exist, two gamblers, one Obsessive [Oscar], the other Compulsive [Lucinda], must meet. A door must open at a certain time. Opposite the door, a red plush settee is necessary. The Obsessive, the one with six bound volumes of eight hundred and eighty pages, ten columns per page, must sit on this red settee, the Book of Common Prayer open on his rumpled lap. The Compulsive gambler must feel herself propelled forward from the open doorway. She must travel towards the Obsessive and say an untruth (although she can have no prior knowledge of her own speech): “I am in the habit of making my confession.” (187)

The narrator provides here an account of what “must” happen, which means what \textit{did} happen in this diegetic history and what \textit{will} happen by the end of this chapter. There are now two avidity tensions regarding their meeting: one long-term tension, which contains all of the cues leading up to this chapter as well as those in this chapter, and one short-term tension, which includes only

\(^{50}\) The description of Lucinda as being lonely and the mention of her wanting to get married do not in themselves facilitate their meeting. In other words, according to story structure—as opposed to interest structure—these elements are unrelated. This is an example of how the development of a story differs from the interest it incites in its reader.
those cues in this chapter. The first half of the chapter exhibits no action or event whatsoever, but the description that does fill this section depicts Lucinda’s state of mind—her sense of not belonging and her desperation to play cards—and thereby her motivation to leave her room. After a detailed account of her wandering through passageways and corridors, the text finally depicts Lucinda opening a door off a kitchenette and seeing “a red-headed clergyman sitting on a plush red settee. . . . She felt herself ‘nabbed,’ ‘caught in the act’” (192). Feeling she must make her presence appear intentional, Lucinda “walked directly towards him. She introduced herself and told him, “I am in the habit . . . of making confession.” At long last, the avidity tension regarding their meeting closes.

The following systems regarding their romance—becoming friends, each falling in love with the other, and romantically pairing—contain more than a hundred cues, ending with the non-ideal closure of Oscar’s death. By this time, Oscar and Lucinda not only have fallen in love with each other, but each has suspected the other’s mutual affection as well. However, both have failed to communicate their respective feelings. These assumptions of love, in the absence of direct statements of love, are simulated in the manner that each of these themes—Lucinda falling in love with Oscar and vice versa—close. In these cases, Carey’s development of character is integral to the operation of his story systems: the reader recognizes the moment each character falls in love not through the narrator’s directly stating it but by understanding what love means to each of the characters.

51 As demonstrated above in the analysis of the forbidden pudding section, there is no conflict in a single cue functioning in two different systems.
It is not a direct statement of love that signals the reader to Lucinda’s feelings for Oscar: in Lucinda’s case, it is a narratorial observation of her happiness. Lucinda, as noted above, has long been lonely. Moreover, she has not been happy since she was young and both of her parents were alive. A representative passage of her general discontent with life comes one night when, in the hunger pangs of her gambling addiction, Lucinda trots about the seedy neighborhoods of Sydney in search of a betting opportunity. This passage comes after she has met Oscar on the ship but before they reconnect in the city. The narrator introduces her lonely, late-night pursuit as follows: “She had been happy once, properly happy, deeply happy. Now, as she hung her lantern on the nail in the stables and fussed with her stubborn gelding, she could not believe what she had become” (243). This passage makes Lucinda a more sympathetic character, thereby increasing her likability. Her increased likability influences the reader to hope all the more that she find happiness. Magnifying this development is that this hope for her happiness has been conflated with—and has become inextricable from—the hope for her romantic coupling with Oscar.

In depicting Lucinda’s happiness, the narrator summarizes the various miseries that have befallen her, thereby clarifying that her having fallen in love with Oscar is the only reason she has to be happy. The narrator explains that Lucinda “did not expect to be happy whilst parcelled up in a grubby apron, clogs on her feet, scrubbing her own floors, or being snubbed at the greengrocer’s, kept out of her own [factory], denied the company of [her friend] Dennis Hasset, [and] becoming so cut off from life that her only companion was a homeless stray [Oscar)]… with blue-stained hands and a sweat-weary smell” (302). As Lucinda becomes unable to retain or hire a servant, part of Oscar’s recuperation involves doing chores for and with Lucinda. Consequently, Lucinda must perform manual labor for the first time since she was a teenager, having since then been wealthy
enough to avoid it. In addition to performing the odious tasks of cleaning and gardening, her cohabitation with a man to whom she is not married has made her something of a pariah in her community. Lucinda has already felt like an outcast as her being a woman has made her own employees—all men—feel uncomfortable in the masculine workplace of her factory. To complete her woes, Dennis, her closest friend in Sydney, has moved away. Nevertheless, Lucinda is so genuinely happy that, even before she recognizes the shift in her own disposition, “it had been silently remarked on by others. . . . They noticed, because her manner was gentler, because they were spared those ironies and sarcasms” with which she had often abused her acquaintances. This new development in Lucinda’s life has occurred incrementally, and her realization of it is so dramatic that it closes the avidity tension regarding her falling in love with Oscar:

[S]he had not recognized the moment when her scales had tipped from “down” to “up.” She had been too busy to notice, until this morning. . . . She was walking with her lodger [Oscar] down past her piebald cottage. . . . There was still dew, not a lot, but she felt it soak into the hem of her dress. She did not mind. Oscar strode through the calf-high grass beside her. Nothing happened. Nothing was said. But she thought—I am happy. (302)

This is the first time Lucinda has experienced real happiness in years. This qualification of “real” differentiates her current state of happiness from the passing happiness she enjoys while playing cards: “Tomorrow she would have won or lost, but whatever happened, happiness would be denied her. She could be happy now, not then” (139).
becoming happy, appropriately translating her “I am happy” to “I am in love.” In the same way that Lucinda does not recognize her happiness until after others do, she also does not understand right away that the underlying cause of this happiness is her love for Oscar. It is not until later that she thinks to herself, “I am in love. How extraordinary” (318). However, because the reader has already realized that Lucinda is in love, Lucinda’s realization of the same does not function in the avidity tension regarding her falling in love but rather in that regarding her awareness of it—much like Lucy in A Room of One’s Own. In this way, the closing of this avidity tension hinges primarily on character description, not merely on the explicit mental event of “she thought—I am happy.”

Despite the ideal closure in Lucinda’s recognition of her love for Oscar—and likewise that in Oscar’s subsequent recognition of his love for Lucinda—this avidity tension has existed in an inextricable relationship with another tension, one of anxiety. This novel creates a rare occurrence in which a single cue not only duplicates a tension but creates a duplicate that exists in perfect opposition to the tension duplicated—and this without terminating the original tension. Fairly early in the novel, having just begun to chronicle Lucinda’s impoverished upbringing, the narrator recounts a painful succession of events: Lucinda’s parents scraping together enough money to buy her a beautiful and expensive doll, her ripping the blonde hair off the doll’s scalp to glue black hair in its place, and her parents’ throwing plates at the wall and pans out the doorway in their perturbation and dismay. The narrator then explains, “These missiles were not directed at her, but the air was filled with a violence whose roots she would only glimpse years later when she lost her

54 Similarly, the reader realizes that Oscar is in love with Lucinda before he realizes this himself. When planning his grand romantic gesture, he is “awash with all those chemicals he had hitherto found only at the racetrack” (327). With his unrelenting gambling addiction well established, this passage refers to his gambler’s high, the most intense joy he previously has experienced, to describe his own understanding of his feelings for Lucinda.
fortune to my great-grandmother and was made poor overnight” (66-67). By revealing that Lucinda is not the narrator’s great-grandmother, the text creates an anxiety tension that parallels and counters the avidity tension of Oscar and Lucinda’s romance. This prolepsis creates a looming threat, throwing the reader into anxious contemplation of how another woman comes to bear Oscar’s child: Does Lucinda die? Does Oscar cheat on Lucinda? Does their relationship simply fail? The questions are many, but the supplemental information that might direct the reader in one direction or another is withheld for hundreds of pages. Consequently, every cue that brings Oscar and Lucinda closer to each other likewise brings them closer to both their shared and individual downfalls.

The above proleptic intrusion likewise alters the interest regarding Lucinda’s business ambitions. As an adult, Lucinda becomes wealthy through receiving a large inheritance, a sum that she shrewdly increases by running a successful company. Without the narrator’s explanation above, Lucinda’s rise from rags to riches would cultivate avidity, inciting the abstract / reader with a desire for her to transcend her socio-economic class. Conversely, every step Lucinda takes toward elevating herself heightens the anxiety tension of her doom: the wealthier she becomes, the more tragic her outcome will be.

The mapping of the central avidity tension in this romantic novel offers precise detail of just how and when specific interests are created or continued or closed. Carey’s careful reconstruction of a scene by Edmund Gosse multiplies the tension cues and thereby magnifies the textual interest, and all this ultimately in the service of character description. This novel effectuates a similar result when compounding the interest in one of its own scenes by using a short-term tension to emphasize the culmination of a long-term tension. Paratextually, the title creates a
tension that otherwise would not have begun for many chapters. Moreover, a distinct benefit of delaying the meeting between the eponymous characters allows the text additional room to develop each character’s identity; the thoroughness with which the text executes these developments becomes apparent when two central avidity tensions are closed with description cues instead of event cues. Perhaps the greatest complexity in this novel that interest structure analysis parses out is the narratorial intrusion that creates opposing tensions, which are then concomitantly maintained through the majority of the narrative, continually balancing a hope for and fear of the diegetic future.

Possession, on the other hand, performs no narratorial tricks, nor even contains a characterizable narrator. Rather, while certainly making ample use of the variety of cue types, Possession creates one of its most prominent themes and one of its strongest tensions by way of an innovative time shift in the diegetic world. This time shift imposes broad ramifications, from the likability of characters to the type of affect by which a tension primarily operates.

Possession: A Romance (1990), A. S. Byatt

Possession begins with the young scholar Roland Michell discovering letters from the famous nineteenth-century poet Henry Randolph Ash to an unknown addressee. He teams up with Maud Bailey, a scholar who specializes on the life and works of Christabel LaMotte—another nineteenth-century poet, who turns out to be Ash’s secret correspondent—to investigate the extent of the two poets’ covert relationship. The hunt for clues and documents leads them to a previously-unknown collection of dozens of letters between the two poets. Through these letters, they discover that Ash and LaMotte had solidified a strong, albeit clandestine, friendship. The reader then gives the reader insight into how this friendship ultimately transformed into an affair that resulted in a
child. However, Roland and Maud are not privy to this insight, and thus they continue their investigation. While working together in this capacity, Roland and Maud develop feelings for each other and, by novel’s end, become romantically involved with each other. The rights to these letters, however, are greedily pursued by encroaching scholars until one last letter, retrieved from Ash’s buried coffin, reveals that Maud is the descendant of Ash and LaMotte’s child and thus the probable inheritor of the letters.

This novel focuses on two different love stories, each of which develops differently. Ash and LaMotte’s romance creates an avidity that they would form a relationship, but first the text develops a curiosity tension—did Ash have an affair?—that heightens the interest in the romance avidity as soon as the latter begins. Moreover, the text supports this curiosity with yet another and separate avidity tension, regarding the hope that Roland and Maud will successfully complete their investigation. The complex relationship among these tensions is partially made possible by a diegetic temporal shift, which also transforms the two “figures” of Ash and LaMotte into the “characters” of Henry and Christabel. Both romance stories in this novel are affairs, but the text systematically deters moral objections to these couplings. Additionally, in a technique similar to the geographic changes of state in A Room with a View and Oscar & Lucinda, this novel likewise implements changes of state, but not of a geographic nature, to create opportunity for romantic development. With regard specifically to Roland and Maud’s budding relationship, the avidity of

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55 The culmination/termination of Roland and Maud’s romance has nothing to do with marriage because neither individual gives much stock to the institution. Moreover, the ideal closure proves not only to be their sharing sexual intercourse but specifically their joint experiences of having an orgasm with each other. Because the text does not just state or imply their intercourse but actually narrates it, the ideal closure becomes specified because this situation might still not be the end of the theme if the sex is bad.
their working relationship—which itself is indirectly influenced by the avidity of solving the mystery—indirectly influences the tension of their falling in love.

The same year Byatt finished this novel, Linda Anderson put out her collection of essays on *Contemporary Women’s Fiction*. Applying a feminist lens, Anderson and her contributors are likewise more concerned with the entire novel as a single unit rather than with the novel’s divided parts:

Women inherit stories, we could say, which are powerfully oppressive; part of that oppression lies in their unitary character, their repression of alternative stories, other possibilities, hidden or secret scripts. Juxtaposing stories with other stories or opening up the potentiality for multiple stories . . . frees the woman writer from the coercive fictions of her culture that pass as truth. (vii)

It is no surprise, then, that feminist criticism on Byatt’s pastiche has largely focused on how the novel, despite its formal variety, is nevertheless a single, cohesive text. Mariadele Boccardi claims that female genealogy is the binding thread, tying together Roland and Maud’s investigation with Ash and LaMotte’s affair through the late revelation that Maud descends from Ash and LaMotte’s child. Jane Campbell avers that “Byatt blurs the lines between past and present, both by moving constantly between them, thus decentering both, and by making her twentieth-century characters repeat the experience of their predecessors,” a technique that Victoria Reeve has since described as Byatt “ventriloquizing” the Victorian era (Campbell 111-12; Reeve 87). Reeve, however, takes a step beyond thematics and identifies a “rhetorical responsiveness [that] establishes ‘likeness’ between [Byatt’s] text and the narrative into which it has been inserted” (97), ascribing the text’s unification to the text itself. Campbell also comments on the variety of thematic

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56 Much of the non-feminist criticism on *Possession* pertains to either its simulation of Victorian poetry or its postmodern approach to the romance novel. For a thorough review of the early scholarship on *Possession*, see Campbell.
genres in the text: “By crossing genre lines—between epistolary novel, romance, fairy tale, detective story, academic satire, and, as I have suggested, narrative of community—Byatt’s plot subverts the concept of unitary narrative” and certain moments “defy linearity by bringing the narrative to a standstill” (139). Nonetheless, these claims tend toward generalities and vague assumptions of complex narrative structures. Interest structure analysis, on the other hand, provides a framework through which these scholars can articulate their critical insights with precision.

Rather than challenging the unitary narrative, Byatt exhibits a complex interest structure through which she not only combines genre types but also transitions between them within single plotlines. Byatt creates one timeline in the 1980s and one over a century earlier, in the 1860s. Perhaps the most innovative aspect of this temporal shift is the subtly transforming affect—from curiosity to avidity—of the tension regarding Henry Randolph Ash’s romantic affair with Christabel LaMotte.

Before the reader becomes interested in Ash and LaMotte’s romance, the text creates curiosity over whether Ash had an affair. The curiosity tension of Roland and Maud—as well as of James Blackadder, Roland’s mentor; Mortimer Cropper, Blackadder’s nemesis; and Leonora Stern, Maud’s colleague—tracking the clues of Ash and LaMotte’s relationship holds obvious parallels with detective fiction, but it varies from this tightly governed genre in its use of competition and protracted analepsis. Detective fiction sometimes contains competition, but this is almost exclusively between the detective and the culprit. Possession, on the other hand, pits the would-be detectives against each other, a type of peer rivalry that is more typical of, and nearly exclusive to, the romance. Additionally, because the detective story is primarily motivated by
curiosity, the reader tends to discover the truth only when the detective discovers or explains it. Conversely, the text of Possession provides extensive flashbacks through which the reader experiences the story no longer retrospectively as detective fiction but presently as romance.

At the outset of the novel, the reader is forced to look over a scholar’s shoulder as Roland tediously peruses a book that a deceased poet had once owned. Because the reader has no bearing on the scholarship regarding a fictional poet, the reader does not know which fragments and notes are of any importance; therefore, none of them is of any interest until the text signals the reader to take an interest. After Roland reads the two letters from Ash’s copy of Vico, the text clarifies that Roland “had no idea who she might be” (10). As Roland continues to ponder the potential implications of these letters, “it was this urgency [in Ash’s writing] above all that moved and shocked Roland. He thought he knew Ash fairly well... who lived a quiet and exemplary married life for forty years.” Because the reader’s knowledge of Ash is entirely realized through Roland, everything the reader knows about Ash suddenly becomes speculation when Roland questions his own knowledge of him. Consequently, as Roland reflects on his “knowing” that Ash was a happily married man, the reader becomes curious about whether Ash had an affair with the unknown addressee in his letters.

At this early stage, and through the first quarter of the novel, the reader’s curiosity parallels Roland’s. Moreover, there is a closely related avidity tension regarding the reader’s desire for Roland to make this discovery. Roland is an underpaid and overworked scholar at the beginning of his academic career who works under and is much overshadowed by one of the leading authorities on Henry Randolph Ash. Roland’s likability is not premised on being a “good” person but on being a sympathetic underdog, as well as being the initial focalizer of the novel. When
Roland steals the letters from the library, his larceny incites the reader both to cheer for his successful mission and to fear his capture.

However, although they are closely related tensions, the curiosity of Ash’s possible infidelity and the avidity of Roland’s hopeful discovery are not perfectly parallel. For instance, when Roland finally determines to get to the bottom of the mystery, the free-indirect discourse of “He must try to find out” augments the avidity tension but does not further the curiosity tension (25). In other words, an attempt to find information increases the reader’s interest that Roland might be about to come closer to solving the mystery, but only a passage that provides information about Ash can augment the curiosity itself.

Though the avidity tension of Roland’s mission quickly takes on several more cues, the curiosity tension does not develop at all for a few dozen more pages. The first cue of this curiosity tension is introduced and emphasized through a direct statement by the narrator. Roland has tracked down the journal of Blanche Glover, partner of Christabel LaMotte; Roland currently suspects that Ash’s addressee was one of these two women, either Glover or LaMotte. The text presents an uneventful portion of this journal, which obstructs the avidity tension of Roland’s mission, but the narrator then interjects to signal the reader to start paying more attention: “Nothing further, for three and a half weeks, except simple meals, walks and readings, music and Blanche’s plans for paintings. Then Roland found a sentence which could have been something or nothing. Nothing if you were not looking carefully” (51). Similar to the narratorial intrusion in *A Room with a View*, the narrator warns the reader that there is a forthcoming cue that is easy to miss if the reader is not attentive. The following passage of Glover’s journal concludes with her observation of her roommate and partner: “She is much exercised about a long letter which arrived today,
which she did not show me, but smiled over, and caught up and folded away.” Even though Glover cannot provide information about LaMotte’s correspondent, the narrator’s direct statement causes the reader to interpret the correspondent as Ash himself. To clarify, this indication that LaMotte’s correspondent was Ash provides closure for the curiosity concerning Ash’s secret correspondent. Regarding the curiosity tension of whether or not Ash had an affair—initially generated when Roland called into question what he knows of Ash, including his record of a faithful marriage—the closure of the secret correspondent tension functions as a cue of the affair tension: more simply said, the termination of one curiosity actually increases the tension of a related curiosity.

Both the narrator’s direct statement and the passage from Glover’s journal also heighten the avidity tension of Roland’s mission, as it seems he is coming closer to solving the mystery of Ash’s secret correspondent. However, another passage immediately lessens this avidity tension without at all influencing the related curiosity tension. After reading Glover’s record of LaMotte’s letter, Roland realizes, “There was nothing at all, except [his] own need and concern, to suggest that the long letter might be [Ash’s] own letter” (52). Noting that this journal passage is not proof that LaMotte and Ash were writing each other reduces the excitement over Roland’s discovery as it is just too vague to be of any use to him as a scholar. This lack of proof, however, does not obstruct the curiosity about Ash’s possible affair because the narrator’s direct statement confirms that LaMotte is Ash’s correspondent.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The above example of parallel tensions demonstrates perhaps the key difference between tensions of avidity and those of curiosity, which are inherently empirical and epistemological, respectively. Whereas avidity pertains to outcomes that are diegetically observable by the character(s) involved, curiosity can, but need not, have any diegetic impact. Just as this passage is a payoff for the reader—who learns the identity of Ash’s secret correspondent—but is of no consequence to Roland, who is no closer to proving any theory he has entertained, a theme of curiosity can be satisfied while an inextricably related theme of avidity remains unsatisfied.
The diegetic time shift does not merely continue telling a story with a new technique, but it actually establishes Henry Randolph Ash and Christabel LaMotte as characters in the novel, whereas they previously had not been. Through the novel’s first 170 pages, the figures of Ash and LaMotte are mere names attached to artifacts, pieces in the puzzle of Ash’s potential affair.\textsuperscript{58} Though this curiosity tension continues, spawning new curiosity interests regarding whether or not they traveled together and whether or not they had a child, the forty-eight pages of Chapter 10 create an avidity tension of Ash’s relationship with LaMotte, sparking the reader’s interest in their romance. Roland and Maud, the LaMotte scholar with whom Roland has teamed up, discover large bundles of letters that Ash and LaMotte had written to each other. Rather than merely telling the reader what conclusions Roland and Maud come to, the text provides all twenty-nine letters, unabridged. This epistolary chapter effectively creates two different time periods that are simultaneously operative: that in which Roland and Maud are reading the letters and that in which Henry and Christabel are writing and receiving these letters. Rather than merely artifacts, the letters also become the dialogue between two characters in the novel. Upon realizing Henry and Christabel’s affection for each other, the reader becomes invested in their romantic pairing. In other words, the result of these letters simultaneously existing in the diegetic 1980s and diegetic 1860s creates a perfect parallel between the curiosity tension of whether or not Ash and LaMotte \textit{did} fall in love and the avidity tension of the prospect that Henry and Christabel \textit{will} fall in love.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} The entire narrative in the referenced printing of \textit{Possession} is 551 pages long; Ash and LaMotte are treated as objects of study, then, for nearly the opening third of the novel.

\textsuperscript{59} As the avidity tension in the 1860s timeline treats Henry Randolph Ash and Christabel LaMotte as characters instead of objects of study, their first names will be used in reference to tensions operating on that timeline while their last names will continue to be used for the 1980s timeline.
Indeed, there are two romances in this novel, but they are not of equal interest: while Roland and Maud’s romance extends through more of the text, Henry and Christabel’s romance at this particular point in the novel is more interesting precisely because the text creates that interest through two tensions instead of just one.

This desire for Henry to have a romance with Christabel is currently irrelevant, however, to any anxiety that a moralistic, flesh-and-blood reader might have regarding the impact such a romance would have on Ash’s wife, Ellen. For the time being, the text depicts the longing of two characters for each other, not a spurned woman vexed by the betrayal of forty years of marital trust. Consequently, although this anxiety does exist in the narrative, it does not develop until much later, when Ellen herself appears as a character in the 1860s timeline. By this point, ideal closure in Henry and Christabel’s romance has already been achieved, and thus this tension is inoperative and can no longer be inhibited. Effectively, from the reader’s perspective, the character Henry does not cheat on another character but rather on a historical figure, for whom the text creates no sympathy. Sympathy is established only for the character Ellen, who, once introduced in the 1860s timeline, takes on the character description of a woman who has been cheated on.

The text likewise dissuades moral objection to Roland’s pursuit of an affair but through a different technique—by making his unfaithfulness mutual. Roland begins the novel in a relationship with Val, and it is a relationship of which Roland has grown weary. Among the first statements the narrator makes about Val, with whom Roland lives, is that he recently “realised, with a shock like a religious conviction, that he did not want their way of life to go on” (17). Even so, Roland is unwilling to directly end their relationship, which the text depicts in a particular scene where Val is struggling with her lack of qualifications while searching for a decent job:
Val came back, tearful and shaky, and declared that she meant at least to earn her living, and would take a course in shorthand-typing. “At least you want me,” she told Roland, her face damp and glistening. “I don’t know why you should want me. I’m no good, but you do.” “Of course I do,” Roland had said. “Of course.” (17)

This passage and others like it build an avidity tension of Roland leaving his relationship with Val. Even though Val, unlike Ellen, begins the narrative as a character, it is Roland who is the focalizer during this part of the narrative, and thus the textual interest follows his desires. Because he wants to leave the relationship, the reader is inclined to interpret this prospective dissolution as a good thing. Having established this desire by the time the text introduces Maud, Roland’s potential infidelity functions as a solution to his relationship problem rather than as a threat to Val.

Even so, were Val depicted as suffering from Roland’s pursuit of Maud, this suffering would increase her character’s likability and thereby establish anxiety regarding her being left alone; that said, Val does not suffer. Unlike Ellen, who quietly waits at home while she correctly suspects that her husband’s work trips have become mixed with pleasure, Val becomes romantically involved with someone else before her relationship with Roland dissolves. What little anxiety there had been on Val’s behalf is quickly relieved: Val’s reason for wanting to be with Roland, at least by the diegetic point at which the novel begins, is actually a disinclination to be alone. Once this disinclination is resolved—i.e., once Val finds another romantic partner—there is no longer a counter tension to Roland’s pursuing Maud.

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60 The complications of sexual attraction and the vagaries of love not uncommonly manifest in themes that are not simple to explain. See the analysis of Beyond Black in Chapter Two for a romance that operates according to two perfectly parallel tensions, one of avidity and one of anxiety, as well as the analysis of Alias Grace in Chapter Three for a romance that is not clearly motivated by avidity or anxiety but is still generated by a tension comprised of many cues.
In Chapter 15, another discourse element allows the development of the avidity of Ash and LaMotte’s romance and the curiosity about their involvement but does not allow for the development of the avidity of Roland and Maud finding answers. Whereas the sequence cues of the letters simultaneously sustain two different time periods, Chapter 15 shifts back to the earlier timeline to narrate Henry and Christabel’s relationship directly, thereby textually suspending all themes regarding Roland and Maud. Because this section of the narrative provides information to which Roland and Maud are not privy, it does not advance the reader’s interest in their ability to prove to the academic world that Ash and LaMotte had a romantic relationship let alone the reader’s interest in Roland and Maud’s relationship. The curiosity, however, does continue to develop, even in the absence of these detective-like characters.

It is this chapter that provides ideal closures for the reader’s interest both in the Henry and Christabel becoming romantically involved and in whether or not Ash and LaMotte traveled together. The reader sees Henry take Christabel’s hand and stumble over his words: “We are travelling together. . . . We decided—you decided—to come. What I do not know is whether you would wish—whether you would choose—to lodge and manage yourself separately from me after this point—or whether—or whether [sic]—you would wish to travel as my wife” (299). The reader also sees Christabel respond, “I want to be with you. . . . I am quite happy to be called your wife” (300). Roland and Maud, however, keep looking for evidence when the narrative returns to their timeline, and though the reader remains interested via the avidity tension of their finding this evidence, their search no longer holds the additional interest of a curiosity tension.

The result of the reader learning the truth about Ash and LaMotte’s relationship before Roland and Maud do is that one of the two central romances in the text—that between Henry and
Christabel—is played out only half-way through the novel. Henry and Christabel have come together, and the reader additionally knows that Henry will not leave his wife because of Roland’s early “knowledge” of Ash’s happy marriage. In a shift similar to one in Oscar & Lucinda, discussed above, Henry and Christabel’s love story is tainted with the anxiety of some imminent doom. Indeed, what follows is the anxiety—or rather, the series of anxieties—over just how their relationship ends. Consequently, the avidity tension of romance to which the text devotes the most attention is that regarding Roland and Maud, which is operative throughout nearly the entire novel.

Before Roland ever meets Maud, he hears of her by way of a reference that depicts her as uncompanionable yet sexual. Early in his investigation of Ash’s unknown addressee, Roland asks a colleague, Fergus Wolf, if he knows anything about Christabel LaMotte. Fergus happens to know quite a bit about LaMotte because he had “a brief affair with the redoubtable Maud” (39). Fergus encourages Roland to seek out Maud for help with his investigation. However, with Roland feeling trapped in a relationship, feeling no attachment to his partner, the text creates an avidity interest via the plausibility of Roland and Maud forming a romantic connection.

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61 When Fergus suggests that Roland seek her out if he is further interested in studying LaMotte, Roland asks him about Maud: “What is she like? Will she eat me?” (39). Fergus responds, “She thicks men's blood with cold.” This comment certainly functions as an obstruction in the newly formed theme of Roland’s prospective romance with Maud, and even creates a minor anxiety about what their first meeting will be like, but it does not negate the possibility of and thereby interest in this “Will they? / Won’t they?” storyline.

62 As presumptive as this textual interest is, it is not an example of compulsory heterosexuality. The text has already established that Roland has a sexual orientation toward women (whether this orientation is exclusive or not is irrelevant for the current analysis) and that Maud has a sexual orientation toward men. Roland’s dissatisfaction with his current relationship makes him, narratively speaking, “available,” and Maud is “unattached.” The compulsory presumption, then, is not that these characters are heterosexual, or at least have heterosexual proclivities, but that two more-or-less single heterosexuals of different genders will find each other attractive.
With the necessary change of state established—two romantically unsatisfied individuals meet, a change of state that also develops the likability of both characters through their suffering—the first cue of Roland and Maud’s romance appears immediately upon their meeting. The first time Roland sees her, he needs to exert effort to think of Maud in professional terms: “She was dressed with unusual coherence for an academic, Roland thought, rejecting several other ways of describing her [appearance]” (44). Once she speaks, Roland deems her voice as “deliberately blurred patrician; a kind of flattened Sloane. . . . Roland didn't like her voice.” Having invited Roland to her apartment, Maud makes them tea, and Roland’s gaze continues: “The beautiful thing in that room was Maud Bailey herself, who went down on one knee very gracefully to plug in a kettle, and produced from a cupboard two blue and white Japanese mugs” (45-46). The narrator uses free-indirect discourse to exhibit Roland’s watchfulness as well as Maud’s preoccupation while Roland watches her. Roland’s attraction to Maud creates the avidity tension of their romance, in which Maud’s coldness and Roland’s dislike of her voice become small obstacles.63

When Lady Bailey invites Maud and Roland to stay at her house while the latter two read through the Ash-LaMotte correspondence, this creates a new change of state that allows the possibility of future cues. However, this opportunity for development does not in itself bring Maud and Roland any closer, and thus it is not a cue of this avidity tension.64 The fact that they will be

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63 It is reasonable for a flesh-and-blood reader to be uninterested in Roland's romantic happiness, given his immediate objectification of an intelligent woman whom he has sought out for assistance. The text, however, focalizes sexual desire through Roland, which consequently drives the interest toward a desire for his romantic fulfillment, regardless of how Roland might rub a human reader the wrong way.

64 A similar change of state occurs much earlier when Maud invites Roland to sleep over on her sofa. Since they had just met, though, the tension of their romance had not much developed, making that earlier change of state less impactful than this later one.
spending the night in that house gives equal opportunity for the tension to increase, decrease, or merely be sustained. This invitation does heighten the avidity tension of solving the mystery, though, because the specific purpose of the invitation is for them to read documents that will further their investigation.\textsuperscript{65}

Even so, the text does utilize this change of state to create a situation that assists their romance. As Maud and Roland must share one bathroom, down the hall from their individual but neighboring rooms, Roland decides to wait for Maud to use the bathroom first before going to sleep. He waits for what he thinks is ample time for Maud to have completed her nighttime ritual, but he still waits outside the bathroom door, hesitant to check if she is still within.\textsuperscript{66} While trying to peek under the door, the door opens, and Maud stumbles over him: “It was down, he saw, the hair, running all over her shoulders and neck, swinging across her face, which he meekly supposed would be furious and saw, when he looked, was simply frightened. Did she simply \textit{emit} the electric shock, he wondered, or did she also feel it? His body knew perfectly well that she felt it. He did not trust his body” (162-63). The next hundred pages pass with only a couple more cues in the tension of their romance. When the text does refocus on developing the reader’s interest in their relationship, it begins by referencing this scene: “If his solitude was disturbed by a memory of the last time he had slept near Maud Bailey, of their electric encounter outside Sir George’s wonderful

\textsuperscript{65} This takes place before the time period shift, and thus the curiosity interest regarding Ash and LaMotte’s potentially having had an affair is still operative.

\textsuperscript{66} The text’s depiction here of Roland’s thoughtful consideration of Maude contributes to the reader’s perception of his benevolence and thus heightens the likability of his character. Now that the reader has a slightly greater liking of Roland, the reader likewise has a greater desire for Roland to be happy. As it currently seems that forming a romantic relationship with Maude would make him happy, the reader ultimately has a heightened interest in Roland and Maude becoming romantic partners.
bathroom, of the electric shock . . . that had passed between them, he hardly admitted it to himself” (264). The likelihood that Roland is not acknowledging the previous encounter does lessen the tension, but it does not reduce the effect that this reminder has on the reader’s interest. After a long stretch of text that has focused mostly on developing the romance between Henry and Christabel, the text recalls the most sensual interaction that Maud and Roland have yet shared to compensate for the tension’s lull—to reactivate the tension that, though continually operative, has long been idle. Even though their personal relationship has somewhat cooled, this passage heightens the tension by alerting the reader that additional cues are forthcoming.

The interest in their romantic relationship develops alongside, with an indirect connection to, their working relationship. This correlation between tensions begins early in the novel, just after Roland takes Ash’s letters from the British Library. Before meeting Maud, he considers confiding in the two people closest to him about his larceny, but both times he decides against it. The first person is Val, but, between her weariness of Roland’s scholarly obsession and his own decreased affection for her, Roland “had not told her, and could not tell her, about his secret theft” (24). The second person Roland determines to tell is his mentor, James Blackadder, one of the foremost experts on the life and works of Henry Randolph Ash. However, although Roland does inform Blackadder of the various documents stuffed between the pages of Ash’s Vico, he suddenly and inexplicably dissembles his mismanagement of these documents. In response to Blackadder’s questioning him—“You didn't disturb anything?”—Roland replies, “Oh no. Oh no. That is, a lot of the papers simply flew out when the book was opened, but we put them back in place, I think” (35). Having withheld this information from his two closest confidantes, Roland’s decision to share
it with Maud represents less his determination to solve the mystery than his favorable opinion of Maud, despite her cold demeanor:

She was a most untouchable woman. Roland discerned in her a rigorous sense of correctness, or justice, which made her trustworthy, but would likely cause her to disapprove of his own behavior about the letters. Nevertheless, he had decided desperately to gamble on showing her the Xeroxes of the letters because he must know about Christabel LaMotte, and something not himself drove him on. He was forced to lean forward in a kind of pseudo-intimacy and speak low. (55)

This passage demonstrates that the aspects of Maud’s character that Roland dislikes will not prevent them from forming a bond. In doing so, the text signals to the reader that the obstructive cues so far established in the tension of their romance are of little effect and that the interest of their potential romance is validated.

Another instance of the text enhancing the tension of Roland and Maud’s romance by developing their professional relationship comes after they discover the bundles of Ash’s and LaMotte’s letters but before they receive permission to read them. Roland suggests that they form “a kind of pact. . . . That if one of us finds out any more, he or she tells the other and no one else” (102). When Maud agrees, it establishes a co-dependence between them. They now share a secret and have become research partners. Though the development of a working relationship does not always develop an interest in a romantic relationship, the text has already demonstrated several times that Roland is sexually interested in Maud. Maud’s willingness to further their professional relationship, then, makes the development of their personal relationship more plausible.

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67 Roland and Maud discover these letters in the home of a descendent of Christabel’s family, Lady Bailey, who consequently holds the rights to the letters. Roland and Maud eventually do receive permission to read the letters, but they do not receive this permission on the same trip during which they find the letters. The current scene takes place when Roland and Maud return to Lady Bailey’s house after receiving their long-awaited invitation.
Soon after Roland and Maud make this pact, the text begins exhibiting Maud’s interest in Roland. The text depicts the initial development of Maud’s amorous feelings for Roland only in response to its depiction of a potential alternative suitor. Fergus, Maud’s former lover, writes her a friendly letter in which he lightly disparages Roland: “[M]y spies tell me that you and Roland Michell (a dull but honourable contemporary of mine) have been discovering something or other together” (153). The letter initially obstructs the theme of Roland and Maud’s romance by presenting the possibility that Fergus and Maud might get back together. Fergus’s letter demonstrates his “habit . . . of giving little tugs at the carefully severed spider-threads or puppet-strings which had once tied” them together romantically. Maud “was not experienced enough to recognize” this ploy, but she does observe Fergus’s intent to undercut Roland: “Fergus Wolff appeared to be slightly jealous of Roland Michell . . . she knew Roland was not in her class. She should have been less ungracious. He was a gentle and unthreatening being. Meek, she thought drowsily, turning out the light. Meek” (155-56). Though Roland several times throughout the novel is distracted by Maud’s beauty or by his fantasizing about her, Maud is not distracted by her thoughts of Roland until near the end of the narrative:

She was wholly aware of Roland, sitting behind her on the floor, wearing a white towelling dressing-gown, leaning up against the white sofa on which he had slept during his first visit, and on which he slept now. She felt the fuzz of his soft black hair. . . . She felt his frown between her eyes. . . . If he went out of the room it would be grey and empty. If he did not go out of it, how could she concentrate?” (466-67)

Indeed, this is the first indication that Maud’s feelings for Roland have risen to the point of distraction with only one-sixth of the novel remaining.

This cue likewise functions as the initiation of an anxiety tension regarding the possibility that Fergus might earn back Maud’s affections, not to be confused with the non-ideal outcome of
the avidity tension, which would strictly be Roland’s not romantically connecting with Maud through any means. When Maud does not recognize Fergus’s flirtation, both tensions are influenced—the anxiety decreases as it is less likely that Fergus will win over Maud and the avidity increases as it is now a little more likely that Roland will have a chance to become Maud’s romantic partner. Maud’s deprecating thoughts about Roland’s being “not in her class,” on the other hand, have nothing to do with Fergus and thus nothing to do with the anxiety tension regarding him. These denigrating thoughts do obstruct the current avidity, but this theme is immediately assisted—made more likely than it had just been—when Maud dwells on the one potentially positive thought she has about Roland. It is even on this thought, his being “meek,” that she is holding in her mind as she falls asleep, representing a type of finality in her assessment of him.

The last distinctive method by which the text develops the romance between Roland and Maud is by depicting their synchronism, a type of implicit cue such as those of Lucy’s “unexpected melody” and Lucinda’s “I am happy.” On three occasions leading up to the distinct separation between their work relationship and their personal relationship, the text suggests that they would be a compatible couple because of their simultaneous motions and identical private thoughts. They escape together on an expedition that is ostensibly for the singular purpose of seeing the locations that Ash and LaMotte had visited together. One day during this trip, they “walked out, in these footsteps, to Filey Brigg, not sure any more what they were looking for, feeling it impermissible simply to enjoy themselves. They paced well together, though they didn't notice that; both were energetic striders” (273). Their refusal to enjoy themselves is of little consequence to the reader as the text demonstrates not only their seeming effort to remember that they ought not to enjoy themselves but also their similar pacing, implying a type of harmony to their hopeful coupling. On
a different day of their trip, they stop at a market to admire jewelry perhaps similar to what Ash had bought for LaMotte. While perusing the goods on display, “Both put their hands to their temple, as though he was her mirror” (282). In neither of these passages are Maud or Roland aware of their synchronism. Although these examples of synchronicity bear no significance to the oblivious characters, they serve as points of likability not of the characters but of the hypothetical state of their pairing.

This novel focuses on two different love stories, each of which develops differently. Ash and LaMotte’s romance creates an avidity that they would form a relationship, but first the text develops a curiosity tension that heightens the interest in the romance avidity as soon as the latter begins. Moreover, the text supports this curiosity with yet another and separate avidity tension. The complex relationship among these tensions is partially made possible by a diegetic temporal shift, which also transforms the two “figures” of Ash and LaMotte into the “characters” of Henry and Christabel. Both romance stories in this novel are affairs, but the text systematically deters moral objections to these couplings. Additionally, in a technique similar to the geographic changes of state in A Room with a View and Oscar & Lucinda, this novel likewise implements changes of state, but not of a geographic nature, to create opportunities for romantic development. With regard specifically to Roland and Maud’s budding relationship, the avidity pertaining to their working relationship—which itself is indirectly influenced by the avidity of solving the mystery—indirectly influences the tension of their falling in love.

Possession performs several innovative techniques through which it captures the reader’s interest in different ways than do most other narratives. It bolsters the interest in one of its central avidity tensions of romance with the curiosity tension of a mystery, and it enhances the interest in
this very mystery with the avidity tension of an investigation—and what is more, the avidity tension of this investigation indirectly influences the working relationship between the primary investigators, which itself builds into the second avidity tension or romance. Most prominently, the novel uses a temporal shift in the focalization of chapters initially to create a duplicate tension, much in the way the narrator’s proleptic intrusion did in *Oscar & Lucinda*, but then *Possession* additionally utilizes this shift to separate these once duplicate tensions. One of the results of this technique is the distinction the text establishes between “figures” and “characters” and how the rules of likability pertain to them differently, thereby influencing certain themes to operate according to one affect or another. This text also carefully manages the interest in its romances, which are both affairs, in such a way as to avoid inciting ethical dilemmas for the reader.

Chapter One Conclusion

The interest structure analyses of *A Room with a View*, *Oscar & Lucinda*, and *Possession: A Romance* provide instructive tension patterns, a careful comparison of which offer insight into how romance narratives textually engage the reader’s interest in various ways. Although the title *A Room with a View* similarly signals to the reader which two people the reader is supposed to desire a romance between, its title does this implicitly and serves its function within the first few pages of the narrative. The title of *Oscar & Lucinda* explicitly informs the reader which two characters are involved in the romance, a technique that allows this novel to sustain interest in their romance long-term without doing almost anything else to develop it. Also, both *A Room with a View* and *Oscar & Lucinda* implement the presentation cue of a narratorial intrusion, but the impact of each proves very different as that in *A Room with a View* appears near the end of the novel and concerns a momentarily analeptic reference; that in *Oscar & Lucinda*, on the other hand, appears
early in the text—and thus can have an impact on much more of the narrative—and introduces a
distance proleptic revelation, a type of prophecy that significantly compounds the central avidity
tension in the novel. Conversely, the narrator in *Possession* is unmemorable—as indistinct as a
still-frame camera lens. Even so, the imaginative application of sequence cues in this novel posits
its tension patterns in realms of complexity that few other novels attain.
CHAPTER TWO

ANXIETY IN HORROR FICTION

I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt; I fear; I think strange things which I dare not confess to my own soul.¹

As discussed in the Introduction of this work, avidity and anxiety are effectively two sides of the same coin: they are made of the same thing, an empirically based affectual motivation, yet each is the other’s diametric opposite. Although anxiety accounts for the type of tension in any theme leading toward an undesired outcome, the horror novel goes a step further as it additionally appropriates most of its avidity and curiosity tensions toward emphasizing the narrative’s central anxieties. Moreover, as exhibited with romance fiction’s development of avidity as discussed in Chapter One, the twentieth century produced textual innovations of horror that creatively explore the varied and variegated ways a novel can instill fear in a reader while still persuading that reader to turn the page.

Birthed by British nobility, the Gothic novel has a complicated relationship with its “bastard brother,” the horror story. The relationship between these two genres is often more easily stated in hypothetical terms than observed in an actual text. In his quest to ascertain a definition for the horror genre, Clive Bloom veritably throws up his hands in defeat: “Unlike the Gothic tale, the horror tale proper refuses rational explanation, appealing to a level of visceral response beyond

¹ Stoker 24.
conscious interpretation” (“Horror Fiction” 165). The trouble with these genre classifications is unavoidable when addressing the theories and criticisms written on the novels that this chapter analyzes. Few have trouble identifying Bram Stoker’s Dracula as “Gothic” or “Gothic horror,” but the popularization of the story has likewise made it widely recognized simply as “horror,” especially in its adaptations to film. Criticism on Susan Hill’s The Woman in Black is far from any consensus on whether this novel is Gothic, horror, Gothic-horror, or Gothic-revival, all of which have been attributed to it. On the other hand, with its magical realism firmly embedded in its setting of turn-of-the-millennium England, Beyond Black would seem the text least likely of the three novels to struggle with Gothic/horror designations; indeed, the International Horror Guild nominated it for “Best Horror Novel” in 2005, yet literary critics have almost unanimously referred to it as “Gothic.” Therefore, an assessment of these three novels requires some synthesis of the terms “Gothic” and “horror” in order to make sense of the conflicting, and sometimes self-contradicting, criticism thereon. For this reason, these two terms, as well as the less frequent “Gothic-horror” and “Gothic-revival”—are used interchangeably in this chapter.

Leaving aside this terminological dispute, Noël Carroll has taken a pragmatic approach to the narrative function of horror, attempting specifically to differentiate it from the narrative functions of other literature. Carroll subscribes to the “rhetorical bond . . . [of the] question/answer format” (131). This format, Carroll observes, is most particular to detective fiction, but horror likewise repeats the technique of presenting a question—which, in horror, is often something like “How do we escape?”—and later an answer, or means of salvation. “Monsters . . . generally have the upper hand in horror fictions; in most cases, there would be no point to the fiction if they did not. Consequently, when monsters are encountered by humans, the situation is ripe for suspense,
for the monster’s minatory motives have the best chance of success” (139). This question-answer format, however, is an epistemological motivation, not a diegetically empirical one. It is not enough to answer the question “How do we escape?”; the anxiety will continue until the likable characters have actually, successfully escaped—or, of course, until they cannot. Once the protagonist finds a means of escape or decides to fight back, the reader is still motivated by the same anxiety regarding the protagonist’s potentially being harmed, but the reader is now also motivated by the avidity regarding the new hope of the protagonist’s being victorious, in one way or another. In other words, it is not answering a question that serves as the turning point in a horror story but rather the creation of avidity tensions that parallel the driving anxiety tensions. In horror fiction especially, the distinction between anxiety and avidity often occurs when the protagonist attains agency or power. Even so, horror stories also make frequent use of both avidity and curiosity tensions to raise the stakes in the central anxiety themes’ threats.

In each novel analyzed in this chapter—Dracula, The Woman in Black, and Beyond Black—there is a central tension of anxiety that ultimately, in one way or another, influences or even manipulates the majority of that novel’s other tensions, regardless of affect. In Bram Stoker’s Dracula, Jonathan is unsettled by the eerie unknown of Eastern civilization until the threat becomes known in the unhuman form of his host. From this point on, nearly all other anxieties produced operate in conjunction with the threat that Dracula imposes. The Woman in Black, in the novel of the same name by Susan Hill, imposes a similar threat in that the narrative’s anxieties originate with her ghostly malice, but she is even so distinct from the vampire in that her retaliation proves to be premised on a type of code. Learning what this code is consequently develops curiosity alongside the central tension of anxiety throughout nearly the entire novel. Moreover, the
Woman in Black poses a danger not only directly to the young Arthur but also indirectly, via post-traumatic stress, to Arthur in his old age. Hilary Mantel’s *Beyond Black* creates a world that is both familiar and unfamiliar, anticipating events both future and past. Operating similarly to the clue structure of a detective novel, this narrative uses a variety of anxieties to progressively narrow in on what retrospectively proves to have been the underlying central theme all along.

*Dracula* (1897), Bram Stoker

The first several chapters of this epistolary novel chronicle Jonathan Harker’s visit to Count Dracula’s Transylvanian castle. A realty solicitor, Jonathan’s visit is premised on assisting the Count with purchasing property in England, but Jonathan soon finds himself a veritable prisoner of a mysterious and sinister captor. Jonathan escapes and returns home to England but not before Dracula makes the same journey. Lucy—a close friend of Jonathan’s fiancée, Mina—falls prey to Dracula’s villainy and, after her death, is reported several times as walking the countryside and abducting children. Dracula also influences a psychiatric patient named Renfield to exhibit atypical behavior, including violence toward Renfield’s physician, Dr. Seward. Concerned for the British populace—as well as for Mina, who also has fallen prey to Dracula’s pernicious bite—the knowledgeable Dr. Van Helsing leads Jonathan, Dr. Seward, and two of their friends on a mission first to destroy each of Dracula’s sanctuaries in England and then, after traveling back to the Count’s castle, to kill the vampire once and for all.

The central anxiety in *Dracula*, of course, concerns the threat that Count Dracula poses on the innocent. During the first eighth of the novel, which consists of Jonathan’s visit to Count Dracula’s castle in the distant and unfamiliar East, this central anxiety is introduced by way of two curiosity tensions. As a result, when the text reveals what Dracula is, the anxiety begins with an
already high level of tension, which suddenly makes this now infamous anti-hero an imposing and fearsome threat to the hapless protagonist. Once this central anxiety takes its dominant position in the text, influencing the majority of the narrative’s remaining interests, abnormalities in the diegetic world more often initiate anxiety than they do curiosity. It is this tendency of the predominant interest in a narrative—this or any other—that makes this novel’s curiosity tension regarding the psychiatric patient Renfield a valuable study as it initially functions as a break from the anxiety of Dracula. Moreover, the text counterintuitively uses an avidity tension to increase the central anxiety and uses a peripheral anxiety to decrease the central one.

Without the early curiosity tension regarding the mystifying region into which Jonathan has traveled, his initial interactions with the Count would lack almost any interest at all. The novel opens with Jonathan recording his travels in a journal. He describes his passage through a remote region “in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe” (6). He also notes that “every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians” (6). These passages indicate that the initial impression the text creates is not distinctly that of a horror story but, as Stephen D. Arata has articulated, a travel narrative. Keeping in mind the dual-genre characteristics of this section is helpful in performing a balanced structural analysis of the text’s intrinsic operations.

Arata does not argue that the novel begins as a mixed-genre, but rather he claims that the novel both begins and ends as a travel narrative. Hermeneutically concerned with revealing the intrinsic postcolonial and Irish nationalist characteristics of Stoker’s story, Arata observes that when Jonathan is “leaving the West and entering the East,” it is the travel narrative that initially unsettles the reader (Stoker 5). Jonathan, a student of Oriental cultures—that is, one who perceives
non-Western cultures as objects, which he studies—is the medium through which the reader understands and experiences this unfamiliar world. Arata draws attention to the “contrast between British punctuality and Transylvanian tardiness,” which represents for Jonathan the “fundamental and wide-ranging oppositions . . . between Western progress and Eastern stasis, between Western science and Eastern superstition, between Western reason and Eastern emotion, between Western civilization and Eastern barbarism” (Arata 637). It is this immersion into the unfamiliar, Arata explains, that disturbs the reader precisely because it must be vicariously experienced through the realism of the travel narrative, not through the distancing fantasy of the specifically “Gothic” genre.¹ To account for the role that this introductory travel narrative’s curiosity and anxiety tensions play in the novel’s holistic interest structure, though, the inherent Gothic/horror component cannot be overlooked as Jonathan ceases to be merely a traveling chronicler and becomes prey to these mysterious regional forces.

Upon waking to his first night in the East, Jonathan writes, “I did not sleep well, though my bed was comfortable enough, for I had all sorts of queer dreams” (6). Thus far, Jonathan has mentioned nothing of insomniatic tendencies, which would have dispelled the notion that the Orient has disturbed his sleep. Moreover, his unnerving dreams are “queer,” not recurrent. Specifically by these omissions does the text reaffirm that he is not, as he thinks, in an imaginative whirlpool” but in a land where he is now vulnerable to “every known superstition in the world.” This is not to dismiss the claim that Dracula opens with a travel narrative, but this claim must be

¹ The conflation of Gothic with horror, discussed above, is not accounted for in Arata’s reading, but whether or not he would consider this section as a “horror travel narrative” is not a necessary counter-argument to his dismissal of a “Gothic travel narrative” as a contradictory notion. The important takeaway for the purposes of interest structure is his highlighting the importance of travel descriptions and recognizing how influential they are on how a reader perceives the rest of a narrative.
qualified: as the reader is made to feel anxiety for the traveler through supernatural forces, rather than through the traveler’s natural surroundings, the novel begins with a particularly Gothic/horror travel narrative. Adding to the notion of a Gothic travel narrative, Sharon M. Gallagher comments on the impact of Dracula’s epistolary style: “The reader is not buffered by a safe distance of several years when the story occurred; the threat . . . is a present danger” (128). As the standard travel narrative supplies vicarious experiences for those who wish to see foreign lands—a notable service in 1897—this blended generic form heightens the reader’s vicarious experience of the horrific events to come, aiding the reader’s suspension of disbelief.

The result is an anxiety-infused curiosity, such as that which occurs while Jonathan is staying at an inn on his journey to Transylvania. Jonathan journals about the odd behavior of the inn’s owner: “I found that my landlord had got a letter from the Count, directing him to secure the best place on the coach for me; but on making inquiries as to details he [the landlord] seemed somewhat reticent, and pretended that he could not understand my German. This could not be true, because up to then he had understood it perfectly” (8). By this time, Jonathan has developed a premonition about his trip, but his premonition is vague. Therefore, when the owner of the inn avoids answering Jonathan’s questions about the details of his trip, Jonathan still has no more reason to suspect ill of Dracula than of the country, the coachman, or the road itself. This scene,

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2 Because the epistolary style necessarily focalizes the reader through the perspective of particular characters, Jonathan’s premonition is one that the reader is led to share.

3 Because of the fame and incessant reproduction of the Dracula character, twenty-first-century readers perfectly understand the fear underlying the landlord’s circumvention of further inquiry. However, readers at the turn of the twentieth century had not learned by page 8 how villainous Jonathan’s host would prove to be. The modern experience of reading Dracula simply does not reflect the text’s structural technique in its opening chapters to incite anxiety through curiosity from the perspective of the abstract reader.
then, creates a curiosity that contributes to the larger interest, that of anxiety. Such concerns by the natives for Jonathan’s well-being continue—a woman puts a rosary around his neck, fellow passengers on the coach look at him “pityingly,” etc.—thereby augmenting the contributive tension of curiosity established by the landlord. Because this particular contributive tension does not receive closure until the cause for the natives’ concern is revealed—i.e., until Jonathan realizes Dracula’s sinister nature—this tension remains functional even after Jonathan arrives at the Count’s castle.

The narrative implements another curiosity tension to build up to the central anxiety. However, unlike the above curiosity tension of the mystical and mythical East, in which every cue functions dually toward curiosity and anxiety, the tension regarding Dracula’s eating habits functions toward curiosity because the looming threat is still unidentified. Nonetheless, because the anxiety of the threat is currently linked with the curiosity of what that threat is, all curiosity tensions must increase the interest in the overarching anxiety tension, even if a curiosity tension ultimately prove unrelated.⁴

When Jonathan arrives at the dining room on this first evening, he finds his meal and his host awaiting him. Dracula “made a graceful wave of his hand to the table, and said: ‘I pray you, be seated and sup how you please. You will, I trust, excuse me that I do not join you; but I have dined already, and I do not sup’” (23). Dracula’s excusing himself from dining with Jonathan is structured to appear only slightly odd. It does seem abnormal that Dracula, who thus far has proven a gracious host, would not wait to dine with his expected guest. On the other hand, except for this

⁴ In such a case in which the contributive tension is irrelevant to the receptive tension, the closure of the contributive tension—the revelation of irrelevance—functions as an obstructive cue.
slight aberration in character, Dracula’s explanation seems reasonable. In Dracula’s saying, “You will, I trust, excuse me that I do not join you,” his drawing attention to something that needs to be excused creates the question of why he would break with a custom of hospitality. This gap in knowledge initiates a curiosity tension. However, Dracula adds, “but I have dined already, and I do not sup.” His reasonable and commonplace answer immediately reduces the tension that the curiosity tension had just created.

This is the beginning of a theme in which Jonathan continually finds himself eating or indulging alone. Jonathan recounts that, after finishing his supper, “I had drawn up a chair by the fire and begun to smoke a cigar which [Dracula] offered me, at the same time excusing himself that he did not smoke” (23). Jonathan once more draws attention to Dracula’s refrain from an indulgence, functioning as an assistive cue to increase the tension’s interest, but also mentions Dracula’s new excuse, which once more decreases that curiosity tension by means of an obstructive cue.

The impact of these three cues becomes more evident as the theme progresses. The next morning, Jonathan writes the following passage in his journal: “I went into the room where we had supped, and found a cold breakfast laid out, with coffee kept hot by the pot being placed on the hearth. There was a card on the table, on which was written: - ‘I have to be absent for a while. Do not wait for me. - D.’ So I set to and enjoyed a hearty meal” (25). Once again, this curiosity tension has taken on yet another assistive cue and another obstructive cue back-to-back, but the reader’s perspective has now ceased its perfect alignment with the narrator’s. Jonathan specifically journals that “I went into the room where we had supped” (emphasis added), mentally reconstructing the previous evening’s events as though Dracula had eaten with him. The reader now has not only a
superior awareness of the goings on—superior to Jonathan’s awareness—but also a new concern that Jonathan’s misremembering events will make him vulnerable in some way.

Even though Jonathan is not suspicious of Dracula’s behavior, the reader is. Noël Carroll points out that “it is important to emphasize that the emotion—suspense— with which the audience regards this situation is not a simple duplication of the emotional state of the . . . protagonist” (143). On a different level, this epistemological discrepancy itself—which is a presentation cue and not part of the actual story—creates anxiety for the reader. As this anxiety operates on the level of communication between the abstract author and reader, the text is thus exposing the reader to an emotional experience that does not exist in the diegetic world. Both curiosity tensions of the natives’ superstitions and the Count’s eating habits simultaneously end when Jonathan realizes that the common denominator is Dracula’s vampirism. This resolves both knowledge gaps in the text, and it also resolves the knowledge discrepancy between the character/narrator and the reader.

In this opening section at Dracula’s castle, pure anxiety ultimately replaces the above curiosity-fueled anxiety. Jonathan bemoans, “[D]oors, doors, doors everywhere, and all locked and bolted. In no place save from the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!” (33). As Jonathan perceives Dracula no longer as his host but as a hell-spawn menace, oddities in the rest of the narrative tend to incite more dread than they do naive wonderment. The one notable exception to this influence is the strange behavior of Renfield.

The text introduces Renfield, a patient in Dr. Seward’s psychiatric ward, in much the same way as it introduced the foreign lands of Jonathan’s expedition: by establishing an atmosphere of mystery around him. As Dr. Seward writes in his journal, “I questioned him more fully than I had
ever done. . . . In my manner of doing it there was, I now see, something of cruelty” (71). Shortly thereafter, Dr. Seward describes Renfield as inclined toward “periods of gloom ending in some fixed idea which I cannot make out.” In addition to the knowledge gap that the reader has regarding Renfield’s abnormal disposition—a gap mirroring that of Dr. Seward, who, within the epistolary structure of the novel, is the narrator in these sections—but Renfield, like the Count, is initially portrayed as likable: the Count as a benevolent host and Renfield as one suffering Dr. Seward’s cruel tactics.

The curiosity tension concerning Renfield’s behavior is his odd and inconsistent collection and consumption of living creatures. First, he forms a hobby of catching flies, using “half his food in attracting more flies from outside to his room” (80). As the rationale for this atypical behavior is wanting, this act initiates a new curiosity tension of its own. Consequently, there are now two operative tensions of curiosity involving Renfield: what is the cause of his atypical behavior, and specifically why is he sacrificing half of his food to collect flies? When Dr. Seward tells him that he must cease collecting flies, Renfield asks for and is granted three days to do so. Three days pass, and now Renfield has used all of his flies as bait to catch and collect spiders. The curiosity regarding his reason for collecting flies has become irrelevant but remains unsatisfied as the text still withholds Renfield’s rationale. While this curiosity becomes idle—i.e., the theme neither closes nor is given any more attention—the text has introduced yet another curiosity: why does Renfield want to collect critters at all? Dr. Seward then tells Renfield that he must get rid of his spiders, and Renfield again agrees.

Though the first deal Renfield makes with Dr. Seward is an obstructive cue, this second deal is an assistive cue because the text has altered the meaning of Renfield’s acquiescence: instead
of fixing the problem by getting rid of the spiders, it has now become evident that Renfield will only make the problem worse. Indeed, it is not long before Renfield has fed his spiders to his new animal collection, “a whole colony of sparrows” (80-81). This is not a new curiosity but rather a heightening of the current one regarding his inexplicable zoological obsession. This time, however, before Dr. Seward can even object to the situation, Renfield requests a kitten, a request that Dr. Seward said he would consider as a future possibility, not as a present one. Upon Dr. Seward’s next visit, Renfield “threw himself on his knees before me [Dr. Seward] and implored me to let him have a cat; that his salvation depended upon it” (81). This is a new curiosity as the text has now incited the reader to wonder what will happen if Renfield does not receive a kitten, this tension pertaining not directly to Renfield but to circumstances beyond him. Additionally, as the rationale behind these living collections has yet to be discovered, his desperation also functions as another assistive cue, increasing the interest of the curiosity tension even more. Dr. Seward holds firm, however, that it is not currently possible to provide Renfield with a cat.

The following morning, during an early visit with his patient, Dr. Seward discovers an unexpected scene, but he considers it suspicious only momentarily: Renfield was “up and humming a tune. He was spreading out his sugar, which he had saved, in the window, and was manifestly beginning his fly-catching again; and beginning it cheerfully and with a good grace. I looked around for his birds, and not seeing them, asked him where they were. He replied, without turning round, that they had all flown away” (81). Another new curiosity begins regarding the whereabouts of the birds, but this tension ceases operativity almost immediately when Renfield explains that they simply flew away. This curiosity about the absence of the birds loses all tension and thereby becomes devoid of interest. Later that morning, however, one of Dr. Seward’s
assistants reports to him that “Renfield has been very sick and has disgorged a whole lot of feathers.

‘My belief is, doctor,’ he said, ‘that he has eaten his birds, and that he just took and ate them raw!’”

(82). This explanation counters Renfield’s, demonstrating that what the text had presented as closure—Renfield’s claim that the birds had flown away—was actually a false closure. The tension—once reactivated by the assistant’s report—is operative only for this one cue as it additionally brings about true closure, restarting and re-ending the theme all at once. Nonetheless, the oddity of Renfield’s having eaten the birds—of why he would do such an odd, awful thing—increases the curiosity tension regarding his psychological condition.

All of these cues, though, function additionally as cues in the original curiosity tension regarding what is motivating Renfield’s new strange behavior. This curiosity tension receives its own false closure upon Dr. Seward’s diagnosis of his patient: “My homicidal maniac is of a peculiar kind. I shall have to invent a new classification for him, and call him a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac; what he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can, and he has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way” (82). At this point, it seems as though the tension has closed, that the diagnosis is the explanation for the behavior, and thereby the mystery solved. However, the doctor continues:

He gave many flies to one spider and many spiders to one bird, and then wanted a cat to eat the many birds. What would have been his later steps? It would almost be worthwhile to complete the experiment. It might be done if there were only a sufficient cause. . . . Had I even the secret of one such mind - did I hold the key to the fancy of even one lunatic - I might advance my own branch of science. . . . If only there were sufficient cause! I must not think too much of this, or I may be tempted.

This mental event—Dr. Seward’s idea and aspirations—restart the curiosity tension as it indicates that Dr. Seward is not actually satisfied with his own explanation of Renfield’s behavior.
Even though Dr. Seward never follows up on this desire to complete the experiment—likely dissuaded by Dracula’s form of zoophagy or interpreting such as the culmination of the would-be experiment—his aspiration is nevertheless a mental event that initiates an avidity tension that he would make such a discovery. This tension receives neither cue nor closure, but it remains at the end of the narrative as a “loose end” that has not been wrapped up. Of course, because this avidity receives no development, any reading outside of interest structure analysis is likely to have long forgotten Dr. Seward’s focalized aspiration.

The novel opens by using curiosity tensions to enhance the central anxiety imposed by the vampire himself; so too does the text utilize avidity tensions to enhance this anxiety as well. The operative relationship, though, that anxiety has with avidity is quite different from its relationship with curiosity. The earliest example of this avidity-anxiety relationship begins with Jonathan’s engagement to Mina. Because both characters are presented as likable, the text creates an avidity tension of hopeful anticipation for their marriage. Doubt, however, is thrown onto this anticipation almost immediately. Whereas Part I of the novel is comprised entirely of Jonathan’s journal entries, Part II features a dialog by post between Mina and her best friend, Lucy Westenra. In Lucy’s first letter in the narrative, she tells Mina that she has “met some time ago a man that would just do for you, if you were not already engaged to Jonathan” (64). This obstructive cue—the same type that Cecil creates in A Room with a View—presents the possibility that another love interest will appear for Mina, complicating her engagement with Jonathan. Even though this potentiality never progresses, the text has nevertheless introduced the idea that Mina might not marry Jonathan.

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5 It is worthwhile to note that if Dr. Seward died later in the narrative, as does his fellow vampire hunter Quincey Morris, his death would have brought about a non-ideal closure to this avidity theme as the ideal closure of Dr. Seward’s advancing his own branch of science would no longer be possible.
thereby enhancing the interest in the marriage-plot avidity. This point is so minor as to hardly have any impact whatsoever on the interest in this narrative, but it does create some interest and in a manner that, outside of interest structure analysis, a human reader is likely to quickly forget or even to think retrospectively as having created no tension at all.⁶

The real obstruction to this theme is perfectly parallel to what is the source of greatest anxiety at this point in the text: Jonathan’s protracted absence and his cessation of letters to Mina. Having no notion of how dire her fiancé’s predicament is, Mina wavers between downhearted imaginings and reassuring rationalizations. The reader, on the other hand, does not swing from hope to fear to hope again; the text keeps the reader in a state of anxiety. The only cues that increase the tension of this anxiety are when Mina records in her journal that, yet again, she has received no letter from or about Jonathan. Even so, every mention Mina or anyone else makes of Jonathan reminds the reader about this anxiety, thereby sustaining it. These mentionings do not change the tension in this anxiety, but they do increase the interest in it.⁷

The first cue of increasing the anxiety tension of Jonathan’s extended silent absence appears as a minor form of jealousy Mina holds of Lucy. At this point in the narrative, Mina is visiting

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⁶ An argument that this passage—Lucy’s comment about having found another suitor for Mina—creates no interest in the text must necessarily stem from an analysis of the secondary interest structure, how a narrative text creates, sustains, and eliminates interest on a subsequent reading of a text, after the reader already knows how the story will end. Through an analysis of the primary interest structure, though, this passage holds the potential to impact the story as much as Cecil does in A Room with a View or as Miriam does in Oscar & Lucinda. The fact that this passage is of no consequence and entirely forgettable is evident only after the reader has read more of the novel.

⁷ To understand how a cue could increase interest without having an impact on tension, consider the difference in the reading experience if Mina mentioned only once that she had not heard from Jonathan. Once she finally does get a letter confirming that he is alive, the reader would still experience the relief from the fear that Jonathan had died, but this relief would be contesting for attention amid all the new points of interest that the text had introduced in place of Mina’s bleak ruminations.
Lucy, the latter of whom keeps turning the conversation back to her new engagement to Arthur Holmwood, a gentleman residing reassuringly nearby: “That made me just a little heart-sick,” Mina journals, “for I haven’t heard from Jonathan for a whole month” (79). The following day, Mina writes that Mr. Hawkins, Jonathan’s boss, received a one-line letter from Jonathan that simply stated he is beginning his journey home: “That is not like Jonathan; I do not understand it, and it makes me uneasy” (83). Changing pace a few lines later, Mina shifts away from her concern for Jonathan and returns to her plans for marriage: “Jonathan and I will start in life in a very simple way, and shall have to try to make both ends meet.” Here the text quickly follows an obstructive cue with an assistive cue. The next five cues in this avidity tension, however, are all obstructive, all concern Jonathan’s absence, and are all recorded in Mina’s journal: “27 July - No news from Jonathan. I am getting quite uneasy about him” (84); “8 August - ... is he on land or sea? Where is he, and how? I am getting fearfully anxious about him” (99); “[10 August] ... I should be quite happy if I only knew if Jonathan ... God bless and keep him” (102); “[11 August] ... I felt a little sad myself, for I could not but feel how absolutely happy it [her picnic with Lucy] would have been had Jonathan been with me” (105-06); and “17 August - No diary for two whole days. I have not had the heart to write. Some sort of shadowy pall seems to be coming over our happiness. No news from Jonathan” (108). Two days later, Mina finally hears word from Jonathan, and the anxiety tension regarding the latter’s death has thus ended with the theme’s non-ideal closure, for the tension is stopped short of its maximum potential.

The text utilizes the avidity tension of Jonathan and Mina’s marriage to increase the anxiety tension of Jonathan’s death, which is thematically connected but structurally unrelated. In both curiosity tensions discussed above, the cues that produce their closure and function as cues in the
central anxiety of Dracula’s monstrosity additionally function as cues in the anxiety of Jonathan’s potential demise. Conversely, the cue that provides closure in this avidity tension—the eventual announcement that Jonathan and Mina have married—serves no other interest function in the narrative.

Unlike most of the tensions featured in Dracula, that regarding Dracula’s warning to Jonathan is unusually complex as it is an anxiety tension that ultimately decreases the anxiety tension surrounding Dracula’s character. Returning to the first few chapters of the novel, at that point when Jonathan declares himself a prisoner—though he has several rooms to himself and is free to wander about most of the castle—Dracula gives him an interdiction: “Let me advise you, my dear young friend - nay, let me warn you with all seriousness, that should you leave these rooms you will not by any chance go to sleep in any other part of the castle. It is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely. Be warned!” (40). When Jonathan determines to disregard this warning, the text creates an anxiety tension regarding the unnamed misfortune awaiting Jonathan once he falls asleep in an unfamiliar room. Thus far, the only perceived threat within the castle is Dracula himself. Therefore, the current anxiety presumably pertains to the repercussions Jonathan risks at Dracula’s own hands for violating this interdiction. At the outset of this tension of Jonathan’s violating Dracula’s interdiction, then, the anxiety of Dracula as a threat increases as it seems that Jonathan is now at greater risk of receiving some form of punishment from his host.

Nonetheless, when Jonathan awakes from his ill-advised slumber, he realizes “I was not alone,” observing “three young women, ladies by their dress and manner . . . [and] though the moonlight was behind them, they threw no shadow on the floor” (44, 44-45). As Jonathan studies
their beauty, he simultaneously experiences two contrasting reactions: “There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips” (45). Though the anxiety has not yet shifted away from Dracula, it has expanded to include new agents, these ethereal women, as threats. Intermixed with Jonathan’s fear of the women is his lust for them, yet the reader experiences both his fear and lust as anxiety because Jonathan’s lust makes him more vulnerable to harm. Suddenly, the Count rescues Jonathan from the women: Dracula “grasped the slender neck of the fair woman . . . [and] hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back” (46). Although the anxiety tension of the ramifications of Jonathan falling asleep outside his quarters initially increases the anxiety regarding Dracula himself, the depiction of Dracula actually rescuing Jonathan reverses the influence that this smaller tension has had on the central one. Simultaneously, the text creates a new anxiety regarding a threat that is not Dracula: the three seductive specters. This division is short-lived, though, as is the mollified anxiety regarding the Count: Dracula sharply commands the ghostly women not to harm Jonathan but only for one more day: “To-night is mine. To-morrow night is yours!” (59). Consequently, the anxiety tension regarding the threat Dracula poses is higher than ever as the reader learns that Dracula is not alone in his sinister deeds but rather has minions among the not-quite-living/not-quite-dead.

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8 The ideal closure—the fulfillment of that which causes the relevant affect—of the anxiety tension regarding the danger that these ethereal women pose to Jonathan would have been the women biting, killing, or otherwise harming Jonathan. Because Dracula’s intervention prevents the culmination of the tension’s anxiety, this closure is non-ideal.
An interest structure analysis of *Dracula* reveals that the central anxiety begins at an already heightened tension because it follows two related curiosity tensions. Moreover, upon the introduction of this central anxiety—the threat of Dracula—there seldom is a theme generating curiosity that does not simultaneously increase anxiety because any subsequent abnormalities in the diegetic world begin to initiate anxiety just as much as they do curiosity. It is this prevalent influence of the central anxiety on most other tensions that distinguishes Dr. Seward’s early accounts of Renfield’s atypical behavior simply as tensions of curiosity. In addition to the central anxiety’s relationship to curiosity, the avidity of Jonathan and Mina’s hoped-for marriage ironically increases the overarching anxiety whereas the first theme that reduces the fear of Dracula operates according to a tension of anxiety itself. Much of the influence caused by the interactions of these different tensions results from the novel’s epistolary format, which prevents the reader from making educated guesses about what might happen and what cannot happen in the diegetic future. *The Woman in Black* abides by a frame narrative instead of this epistolary style, and while this does inhibit *The Woman in Black*’s ability to create anxiety regarding the survival of its protagonist, it also allows it to transcend temporal settings and influence the tension of events that have already happened.

*The Woman in Black* (1983) by Susan Hill

Unlike the epistolary style of *Dracula*, which creates a recursive and restricted past-tense narration from a variety of voices, *The Woman in Black* is entirely narrated by Arthur Kipps, who writes reflectively from the safety of his home several decades following the main events of the narrative. In the earlier setting of these main events, Arthur is much like Jonathan Harker: a realty solicitor in late-Victorian England whose work takes him to a region he has never before visited,
a region replete with spiritualism and unspoken lore. Arthur travels to the northern-England town of Crythin Gifford to collect and record the legal documents of the recently deceased Alice Drablow, whose death has left her large house and estate—the secluded Eel Marsh—vacant with no apparent heir. Arthur discovers that no one in the town is forthcoming about the Drablow family or the Eel Marsh estate, even though it is evident that they all know something in common that Arthur does not. Possessing a scientific mentality, Arthur dismisses the bizarre behavior of the town’s citizens as rural superstition. Even when he himself sees and hears things at Eel Marsh that bear no naturalistic explanation, he downplays these experiences as tricks of the mind. Impatient with the inconvenient schedule of his transportation to and from Eel Marsh—where the vast majority of Alice’s records are presumed to be—the self-assured Arthur sets out to remain day and night at the Drablow home until he completes his vocational commission. During his two-night stay, however, Arthur—along with his canine companion, Spider—discover that the ghostly presence, the Woman in Black, is not only real but also malicious. Following a horrifying incident that nearly claims both his and Spider’s lives, Arthur quits his post and, after recuperating from his debilitating psychological trauma, returns to London. Two years later, Arthur once more encounters the Woman in Black, helplessly watching her from a distance as she kills his wife and one-year-old son. Many years later—remarried and retired—the post-traumatic toll of these experiences push Arthur to suddenly and maniacally write them out in a desperate attempt to be rid of his enduring torment.

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9 The temporal setting during which most of *The Woman in Black* takes place is indeterminate, but, based on the characters’ prevalent use of horse-drawn buggies for short travel and trains for long travel, and also based on the singular occurrence of a character owning a car—owned by Mr. Daily, the wealthiest man in the county—it is likely that the bulk of the narrative is set either in the late-Victorian or Edwardian periods.
Much of what an analysis of *The Woman in Black* adds to the discussion of interest structure stems from the complex arrangement of its temporal settings within its multi-layered frame narrative. The very points at which the narrative shifts from one temporal setting to another—its sequence cues—create tensions that build differently than they diegetically did for the protagonist even though the text never provides another character’s point of view. Perhaps what is most distinct about the interest that this novel generates is that the storytelling itself—not just the story that Arthur tells—creates an anxiety that endures beyond its narrative boundaries as it is this tension that remains operative at the end of the novel.

Hill’s novel is interwoven with intertextual allusions to its nineteenth-century forerunners, but its critical reception has been inconsistent as to whether these constitute an homage to her literary progenitors or an unimaginative imitation of them. Stephen Bann was quick to laud the novel’s “gradual development of an exquisite suspense” that prepares “the reader for the decisive point at which the balance of belief and disbelief could be tipped . . . in favor of the impossible” (12). Allan Lloyd-Smith differed with Bann, discrediting the work as derivative of the Gothic novel. Alternatively, Bloom and Gina Wisker have repackaged Bann’s assessment by suggesting that *The Woman in Black* is better understood as part of the Gothic horror revival.10 Michael Cook, on the other hand, draws the connection between Hill’s many allusions to Gothic fiction and the nature of the ghost story itself, which “redress[es] for the disturbance in the continuum of life which had brought about the haunting in the first place” (152). This raises the question, then, as to what degree intertextual references impact the interest structure of the story.

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10 Bloom, “Introduction: Death’s Own Backyard.”
In focusing on textual allusions to several literary pieces from or near the nineteenth-century—such as Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860), Sir Walter Scott’s *The Heart of the Midlothian* (1818), and Robert Burns’s “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” (1793)—Donna Cox claims that the “activation” of Hill’s novel is rooted in her literary forerunners:

The intertextual “presence” in *The Woman in Black* does not issue from a static presentation of textual reference existing as a source or mother text in the linear sense. It exists rather as an activating circuit in which the novel’s enclosed semiotic system is haunted by other semiotic systems activated in their absence by the scriptible function, which is overlaid by the interpretive act, thereby adding another dimension of transferential virtuality. (76)

Cox’s claim amounts to a call for the abstract reader’s function as presumed addressee to assess the operative effect of a narrative’s generic history on the interest structure of that narrative. In other words, if the abstract reader is accordingly oriented by the interest structure analyst, certain passages in this novel can function differently when read in generic isolation than when their interest mechanics are predicated on those of older stories.

Because *The Woman in Black* contains not just one level but several levels of frame narrative, sequence cues prominently influence the interest structure in Hill’s novel. The development of this narrative’s central tension relies heavily on discourse cues as Arthur’s memoir recounts five distinct time periods. As the entirety of the narrative is written by Arthur, the most recent time setting is the present—that is, the time of Arthur’s writing, represented here as setting (E). Temporally, the most distant setting is that in which Mr. Bentley sent Arthur to Crythin Gifford, Eel Marsh House, and the funeral of Mrs. Drablow—the setting in which most of the novel takes place, setting (A). Between these—in chronological, not textual, order—are the setting that appears a few years after (A), at which point Arthur becomes a widower (B); the setting twelve years later, when Arthur sees and purchases Monk’s Piece and marries Esme (C); and another
fourteen years after this, just days before the narratorial present, when Arthur celebrates Christmas at Monk’s Piece with Esme, her children, and her grandchildren (D).

In the opening pages, Arthur recalls, “I was then thirty-five and I had been a widower for the past twelve years. I had no taste at all for social life and, although in good general health, was prone to occasional nervous illnesses and conditions, as a result of the experiences I will come to relate” (6). This passage is an example of a description cue, which offers a helpful contrast between Arthur’s statement “I had been a widower” and the implied yet absent statement “my wife died,” which is not an event cue because Arthur, as narrator, is describing himself at an early period rather than, at this point, telling the story of how his wife died.¹¹ A clearer distinction between the functions of description and event cues comes later in the passage when Arthur describes the symptoms he suffers from past traumatic experiences, yet he does not hint at what these experiences were, whereby the text initiates curiosity. Identifying himself as a “widower” is less vague than saying that he had “experiences,” but both statements help to construct a sympathetic character.

By having provided a sense that his tale is strange and tragic, Arthur’s hopes and desires are held lightly for the short duration that they are held at all. Three paragraphs later, the narrative introduces an avidity tension. As Arthur recounts his casually riding through the countryside with his business partner, Mr. Bentley, Arthur is overcome with a sudden feeling:

I was seized by something I cannot precisely describe, an emotion, a desire—no, it was rather more, a knowledge, a simple certainty. . . . I cried out involuntarily for Mr. Bentley to stop, and, almost before he had time to do so, climbed out of the pony trap into the lane and stood on a grassy knoll, gazing first up at the house, so handsome, so utterly right for

¹¹ By the end of the novel, however, the death of Arthur’s wife ceases to be mere description and becomes an event, which means it serves as the ideal closure of its own anxiety tension instead functioning, as it does here, as creating an initial setting.
the position it occupied, a modest house and yet sure of itself. . . . I had . . . an absolute conviction that I would come here again, that the house was already mine, bound to me invisibly. (6-7)

On the following page, the text develops this setting’s events without increasing tension, stating only the culmination of things desired not their pursuit: Arthur fell in love with a woman named Esme, he purchased a small estate in the country, and he proposed to Esme in the orchard on that estate. In the span of two pages, the narrative begins and closes two separate avidity micro-tensions: one pertaining to Arthur’s desire to own Monk’s Piece, the other to Arthur’s desire to marry Esme. The former tension contains only one cue, when Mr. Bentley informs Arthur that the estate is for sale, and the latter tension is of minimal interest, containing no cues whatsoever. In other words, though the narrative generates avidity tensions very early in the text, it almost immediately closes them, meaning that avidity is no longer a working interest in the story—i.e., such tensions are now inoperative. Upon reaching a state of such satisfaction, Arthur remarks, “I truly believed that I had at last come out from under the long shadow cast by the events of the past” (8). Any counteracting avidity created by Arthur settling down is countered by this comment that these widely perceived strappings of happiness were unable to ameliorate his post-traumatic stress disorder.

The text uses these closed and brief avidity tensions to retrospectively introduce the central anxiety in the narrative. Arthur, continuing this written monologue, mentions that Mr. Bentley also seemed relieved by Arthur’s marriage and homeownership because Mr. Bentley “had always blamed himself, at least in part, for what had happened to me—it had, after all, been he who had sent me on that first journey up to Crythin Gifford, and Eel Marsh House, and to the funeral of Mrs. Drablow” (9). The text now identifies a specific sequence of specific events in a previous temporal setting that analeptically evokes a dread of that which has already happened. This passage
builds on the curiosity established earlier as it begins to fill in some of the gaps in knowledge. Simultaneously, it increases the tension in the presiding anxiety tension with this diegetic confirmation—Mr. Bentley’s guilt—of Arthur’s harrowing experiences.

These sequence cues impact the interest structure in a few significant ways. Dracula, being an epistolary novel, is told almost entirely in chronological order and in ignorance of the diegetic future. This enables one of Dracula’s victims, Lucy, to take part in telling the story even though she does not get to finish it. In The Woman in Black, however, this is not an option. All events are narrated by Arthur from (E)—the narratorial present—which means that Arthur does not die. Furthermore, as the avidity tensions regarding Arthur’s desire for a home and for marrying Esme occur in (C), the reader knows that they will have no function in the majority of the narrative, which takes place in (A).

The anxiety generated in the frame narrative adds weight to the cues in both the anxiety and curiosity tensions that begin setting (A). When receiving his assignment to go to Eel Marsh, Arthur senses that Mr. Bentley is withholding some crucial detail, so he stops in the doorway of Mr. Bentley’s office to confront him about it: “Isn’t there any more you ought to tell me, I…,' but Mr. Bentley ‘waved me away impatiently’” (28). It is specifically Arthur’s question about some missing information that initiates the curiosity tension about Eel Marsh. This is immediately followed by an assistive cue of Mr. Bentley’s refusal either to provide this information or to assuage Arthur’s concerns by assuring him that there is nothing more to it. Additionally, Mr. Bentley’s sending Arthur away without answering his inquiry heightens the anxiety that was created when Arthur mentioned Mr. Bentley’s guilt in setting (C). Unlike the events in Dracula,
then, Arthur arrives in a strange country with plenty of curiosity and anxiety already well established.

During Arthur’s journey to and throughout his stay in Crythin Gifford, these curiosity and anxiety tensions increase in unison as everything unknown is potentially a threat. On the train, Arthur chats up a Mr. Daily, who claims familiarity with the Drablow estate, but Mr. Daily dodges Arthur’s queries. As a result, this encounter leaves Arthur—and thus the reader—not only none the wiser but even more confounded. It is the quintessential function of an obstructive cue—the function performed by Mr. Daily’s reticence—in a curiosity theme to increase interest specifically through not providing information about the current mystery. Conversely, this passage functions as an assistive cue of the anxiety theme as, counter-intuitive to folk wisdom, that which Arthur does not know can hurt him most.

This curiosity tension and this anxiety tension continue to generate interest as Arthur arrives in Crythin Gifford, but these tensions do not develop in a perfectly parallel manner. He records that, upon having related his business to Mr. Daily and later to the landlord of his inn, “neither of them had done more than fall silent and look at me hard and a little oddly, when the subject of Mrs. Drablow had arisen. Nonetheless, I had been left in no doubt that there was some significance in what had been left unsaid” (38). Each instance of Arthur trying to get answers functions as an assistive cue to this curiosity tension, and each instance of someone withholding those answers functions as an obstructive cue to it. The anxiety tension, however, responds only to Arthur’s questions being ignored, not to his asking them.

When Mr. Daily does provide Arthur some information much later in Arthur’s stay, this provides closure for the curiosity theme, but for this theme only. He informs Arthur that every
time the Woman in Black has been seen, a child is violently killed, apparently from an accident. This information closes the curiosity tension regarding the Crythin Gifford community’s reluctance to discuss the Drablow family, but it also serves to direct the current anxiety toward a specific, rather than a general, threat—that regarding the malicious ghostly presence of the Woman in Black, especially with regard to the threat she poses to children.\(^\text{12}\)

These chronological distinctions are also important when interpreting Arthur’s foreboding description of setting (D), which indicate the complete telling of this tale, in setting (E), is itself a theme inducing anxiety. In this scene, the family is gathered around the hearth as Esme’s grandchildren are telling fanciful ghost stories, which proves a triggering activity for Arthur:

> There was something in the air that night, something, I suppose, remembered from my own childhood, together with an infection caught from the little boys, that excited me, old as I was. That my peace of mind was about to be disturbed, and memories awakened that I had thought forever dead, I had, naturally, no idea. That I should ever again renew my close acquaintance, if only in the course of vivid recollections and dreams, with mortal dread and terror of spirit, would have seemed at that moment impossible. (9-10)

This passage—a description cue—creates anxiety through Arthur’s reliving his trauma in (D) and enforces the curiosity over what the source of that trauma was, which presumably occurred in (A).

As Arthur listens to Esme’s grandchildren tell ghost stories in that olden Christmas tradition, Arthur recalls, “I was trying to suppress my mounting unease, to hold back the rising flood of memory” (14). This anxiety not only pertains to what he remembers from (A) but also to what might happen to him in (D) if his memories overcome him. Indeed, as his step-grandchildren push him to tell a story, Arthur is momentarily paralyzed. The kids, unaware of their step-

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\(^\text{12}\) This anxiety tension is operative until setting (B). At this time, the Woman in Black unexpectedly appears in a county far distant from Crythin Gifford to kill Arthur’s child, incidentally also killing his wife. According to lore/precedent, it does not appear that Jennet will have any further interest in haunting the aged Arthur in setting (E).
grandfather’s internal struggle, continue goading him to tell a ghost story until Arthur reaches his breaking point:

I stood up, unable to bear it any longer. “I am sorry to disappoint you,” I said. “But I have no story to tell!” And went quickly from the room, and from the house.

Some fifteen minutes later, I came to my senses and found myself on the scrubland beyond the orchard, my heart pounding, my breathing short. (16)

Arthur’s inability to remain in the room heightens the anxiety over how his PTSD might debilitate him, but it does not conclude the tension of trauma he began feeling in the room: “[R]ealizing that I must make an effort to calm myself, I sat down on a piece of old, moss-covered stone, and began to take deliberate, steady breaths in on a count of ten and out again, until I felt the tension within myself begin to slacken and my pulse become a little steadier, my head a little clearer.” Because Arthur is able to calm himself from the deleterious impact of his memories, this anxiety tension lessens, but the interest this tension generates has increased. Consequently, the next cue of this tension will generate more interest than if Arthur had not had this attack. As is typical of anxiety tensions regarding a character’s mental stability, Arthur’s ability to cope with his past will fluctuate. As the narrative has now better demonstrated Arthur’s mental state, this anxiety tension indicates three possible outcomes: ideal closure, in which Arthur goes insane; non-ideal closure, in which Arthur fully recovers; and an open theme, meaning that the novel ends before this theme receives closure one way or the other.

At this point, Arthur is merely the victim of his memories, but he soon determines that he will take action to improve his fragile mental state, thereby creating a parallel tension of avidity. Having calmed himself, Arthur realizes, “I was the one who, to judge by my agitation of this evening, was still affected by it deeply, [and] it was from me alone that the ghost must be driven” (18). His attempt at a cure is at this point vague and unknown, yet the text has created a hope that
he will cure himself somehow. The parallelism of this avidity tension with the above-mentioned anxiety tension becomes evident in the very next cue: “[A]lthough I was in control of my emotions now, I dreaded the hours of darkness that lay ahead” (18). As Arthur is now determined to conduct his own therapy, these “hours of darkness” pose an obstructive cue of this pursuit. Regarding the anxiety tension over the negative impact that his memories might have on his mental state, these same “hours of darkness” serve as an assistive cue, demonstrating the direct and converse relationship these two tensions have with each other.

Arthur’s intended remedy is to write out everything that happened to him before his life took a turn for the better—i.e., the entirety of settings (A) and (B). The primary narrative development, which occurs in setting (A), begins an eighth of the way into the novel, and Arthur does not directly represent setting (E), the time of his writing, until the final chapter and with only a few pages remaining of the narrative:

My story is almost done. There is only the last thing left to tell. And that I can scarcely bring myself to write about. I have sat here at my desk, day after day, night after night, a blank sheet of paper before me, unable to lift my pen, trembling and weeping too. I have gone out and walked in the old orchard and further . . . but seen nothing of my surroundings . . . unable to tell even the state of the weather, so that several times I have come home soaked through to the skin, to Esme’s considerable distress. (160)

Thus far, Arthur’s recording of his experiences has proven less salubrious than he had hoped, and he has yet to write the part that is truly threatening his mental stability. The anxiety of his ultimate mental deterioration increases whereas the avidity of his overcoming his trauma decreases. In other words, the tension more heavily inclines the reader toward an apprehension of tragedy than an anticipation of a happy ending. This direct address of his narratee—whom Arthur has made his confidante—also heightens the anxiety in setting (B). Notably, mentioning mysterious ills at the beginning of the frame narrative created a curiosity that only later fed into the interest of the related
anxiety tension. Here, at nearly the end of the frame narrative, such dark, withholding statements still create curiosity: as Arthur had left Crythin Gifford, what else could happen to him? These statements, though, also assist the active anxiety because that which is about to occur in setting (E)—Arthur finishing his written account—influences the reader to worry over what toll it will take on Arthur in the narratorial present.

Arthur then summons up “sufficient courage . . . to write the end of the story” (161), at which point he gives a brief, three-page account of setting (B), when the Woman in Black makes one more horrific appearance to “[have] her revenge” (164). Upon the completion of his troubling memoir, it remains unclear whether or not writing his account has made any impact on his mental status. The final three sentences return from setting (B) to setting (E), which, unabridged, read as follows: “They asked for my story. I have told it. Enough.” Arthur has now completed his therapeutic task, but this is irrelevant to the tensions regarding it. The interest in this setting was premised on the possibility that committing his trauma to paper would free his mind from the burden of it, not on Arthur’s ability/inability to tell the story. Instead, there is no indication that this exercise has had any healing effect on him at all, but there also is no clear indication that he has lost his sanity altogether. Val Scullion interprets this open ending as Hill’s not returning “to the outer framing narrative at the end of the novel, thus denying the reader a sense of closure or resolution” (297). However, the text does return to the frame narrative for those three brief sentences above. As Arthur eventually learned on his trip, the threat of the Woman in Black is that she kills a child in response to someone seeing her. Consequently—since Arthur sees the Woman in Black in setting (A), and she then kills his child in setting (B)—the threat she poses to Arthur has been fulfilled. Therefore, the openness of the novel results not from being left in the same
setting as the Woman in Black but from the two parallel tensions both remain operative at the narrative’s conclusion, leaving in question what ultimately becomes of Arthur.

_The Woman in Black_, as containing a complex frame narrative, utilizes sequence cues more extensively than does _Dracula_, and the resultant multiple temporal settings create tightly interconnected tensions that span back-and-forth over the years of Arthur’s life. Moreover, there is an anxiety tension in telling the story itself, something that the epistolary style of _Dracula_ and the heterodiegetic narration of _Beyond Black_ both prevent. As to this last comparison, the character of the Woman in Black was “a ghost who murders as a ‘conventional’ killer for ‘identifiable’ if irrational reasons,” but Hilary Mantel’s ghosts are more sociable and less intimidating, more industrious and keen to travel, but are by no means less dangerous than Hill’s murderous phantom.13

_Beyond Black_ (2005), Hilary Mantel

Alison “Al” Hart makes her living as a necromancer. She has adopted many of the flamboyant fashions and tactics of other performing clairvoyants, but she is one of only a few people who truly can see and converse with the dead. Alison realized her ability during her abusive upbringing in a brothel, a childhood that she has largely repressed from memory. Now a successful businesswoman, she hires Colette, a recent divorcée, to handle her administrative tasks. Because Alison and Colette prove to be so compatible as business partners, and given the odd hours the job requires, Colette moves in with Al. Later on, they buy a house together. However, Morris—Alison’s irritating “guide spirit,” a ghostly companion that those with “the sight” attract, for better

13 Cook 162.
or worse—also lives with them. Morris and his spirit cronies occupy themselves mostly with childish pranks, but stakes of these pranks progressively rise throughout the novel. Ultimately, they murder Mart, the homeless young man whom Al had taken under her wing. Meanwhile, Alison begins to piece together long-forgotten events of her past, recalling not only the violence she suffered but also the violence she committed as a young girl. After ten years of their working relationship, Colette leaves Alison on bad terms, but Alison manages to achieve a new start in life as she shirks Morris and finds two amiable, female spirits to be her new companions.

Unlike *Dracula* and *The Woman in Black*, *Beyond Black* does not have a single, overarching tension of anxiety. Instead, this narrative implements a single cue that splices into a series of anxiety tensions. Additionally, the text focuses more on the building of a unique narrative world, decentralizing the story itself. One of the predominant themes is simultaneously generated by two parallel tensions, one of anxiety and one of avidity, both pertaining to Alison and Colette’s relationship. Each tension counters the operation of the other, resulting in the conflicting textual interests of wanting and not wanting their professional and personal relationship to end.

The opening paragraph of the novel portrays actions not through event cues but through description cues. As description, these cues do not necessarily have an agential subject, which produces the intended misrepresentation of them as metaphors. To identify this phenomenon, created by the context of its passage, it is necessary to consider this paragraph in its entirety:

Travelling: the dank oily days after Christmas. The motorway, its wastes looping London: the margin’s scrub grass flaring orange in the lights, and the leaves of the poisoned shrubs striped yellow-green like a cantaloupe melon. Four o’clock: light sinking over the orbital road. Teatime in Enfield, night falling on Potter’s Bar. There are nights when you don’t want to do it, but you have to do it anyway. Nights when you look down from the stage and see closed stupid faces. Messages from the dead arrive at random. You don’t want them and you can’t send them back. The dead won’t be coaxed and they won’t be coerced. But the public has paid its money and it wants results. (1)
There is no paratextual indication that this narrative is a ghost story, and thus, in accordance with Marie-Laure Ryan’s principle of minimal departure, it is appropriate to interpret these “messages from the dead” as figurative upon an initial reading. Aside from the absence of any specification that this narrative world contains ghosts, the bleak descriptions preceding references to the dead set a tone in which such morbidity is neither discordant nor surprising. Following such language as “dank oily days,” “wastes looping London,” “poisoned shrubs,” “light sinking,” and “night falling,” statements regarding the dead function atmospherically and descriptively. Upon an initial reading of the text, the principle of minimal departure and the established tone of the paragraph indicates that the interest here uses descriptive cues rather than event cues.

The first event cue appears farther down on this opening page: “In the back seat, something dead stirs, and begins to grunt and breathe” (1). Now distanced from its grim complementarity, this passage adds to the “something dead,” which is paradoxically agential. However, the text presents this activity not as existing in a parallel relationship with the tone of its surrounding passages but almost as an aside within a paragraph that focuses on the car traveling along busy streets. A reader-response rendering of this passage would likely, and appropriately so, identify anxiety within this passage by relating the “living dead” entity to the popularized threat within zombie fiction. On the other hand, as this study concerns the impact of narrative not on the reader but on the abstract reader, this passage does not create an anxiety tension because the text itself offers no implication of a threat. Rather, the mention of an unusual activity, one that alludes to the paradox of death and life, initiates a curiosity tension regarding how this dead something is able to stir, grunt, and breathe.

\(^{14}\) Ryan, “Fiction.”
Though the narrative of *The Woman in Black* progresses anachronistically through several different time settings, it is fairly simple to parse between event cues and discourse cues. However, *Beyond Black* blurs these delineations. The forthcoming receptive tension—that of anxiety, which does not begin until a quarter of the narrative has elapsed—revolves around Al remembering something from her past. Two time settings are clearly presented, but Al, unlike Arthur Kipps, is not currently suffering from past trauma. Much the opposite, it is the impending mental event of Al’s remembering her past that poses the main threat in this tale of horror.

As Colette thinks there is money to be made in the memoir of a necromancer, she becomes proactive in helping Al retrieve her memories. At Colette’s insistence that Al “explain your psychic view of the world to me, and I could jot it down. Or I could interview you, and tape it” (45), Al agrees to describe her experiences in the pursuit of writing a book.15 While responding to questions about her upbringing, Al describes an encounter she had when eight years old with Mrs. McGibbet, the friendly but lonely spirit who lived in the attic. Nauseated for an unknown reason and generally afraid of the men who loitered about her home, the young Al ran up to the attic, expecting the warming welcome of Mrs. McGibbet’s customary “How’s my girl today?” Instead, Mrs. McGibbet, evidently distressed, mutters, “There’s an evil thing you wouldn’t want to see at all. There’s an evil thing you wouldn’t want to see…” She faded with rapidity; there was a scrabbling noise beneath the floorboards, and she was gone. Mrs. McGibbet never came back after that day.

15 This suggestion to write a book becomes the theme for an avidity tension, which Colette quickly initiates: “So how about it? . . . We could self-publish. Sell it at the Psychic Fayres. What do you think? Seriously, we should give it a go. Anybody can write a book these days” (46). Each interview and recording session Colette has with Al serves as an assistive cue to this tension. At the novel’s end, this avidity tension remains operative because Colette and Al separate without publishing the material. However, the recordings have not been destroyed and thus can still be published in the diegetic future.
[Al] missed her, but she realized that the old lady was too frightened to return” (101). Mrs. McGibbet’s wording is precise, alerting Al of something she would not want to “see” rather than something she would not want to *happen*. This evil thing exists in Al’s past, but, because her traumatic response to her past has caused her to block it out, it is something that adult Al has yet to experience. This passage, then, initiates an anxiety tension—the central tension in the narrative—that simultaneously exists in both time settings: that in which Al was a child and that in which Al is now an adult.

Leading up to the above scene, Al had become nauseated while watching the men “going to and fro from the garages carrying boxes. . . . She had some idea of what was in the boxes, but as she stepped inside the house it slipped clear from her mind” (100). The mention that Al “had some idea” implies that she did not fully or certainly know, thereby creating a curiosity tension. This tension immediately receives an obstructive cue when this idea “slipped clear from her mind,” indicating that, apart from what is hidden in her memory, she now has no understanding of what is in the boxes. The same narrated section then provides the above interaction between Al and Mrs. McGibbet and concludes as follows: “As for what was in the cardboard boxes, she hoped not to think about it; but sometimes the answer turned up, in dreams” (102). Al’s hope “not to think about it” serves as another obstructive cue as it indicates that Al is actively trying *not* to rectify this gap in knowledge. However, the statement that “the answer turned up” in her dreams communicates that Al subconsciously knows already what was in those boxes, thereby serving as this curiosity tension’s first assistive cue.

While recording her past for the sake of their book, Al becomes more aware of the gaps in her memory. In the following section, which is not narrated but represented as dramatic dialogue,
Colette tries to get Al to tell her what was in the boxes. However, the interest in the contents of these boxes now also impacts the anxiety tension regarding “an evil thing you wouldn’t want to see,” for the evil thing, having been described no further, might be in the boxes:

   COLETTE: So . . . are you going to tell me?
   ALISON: I might, if I was quite sure I knew.
   COLETTE: Only might?
   ALISON: I don’t know if I could speak it out.
   […]
   COLETTE: So come on, what do you think was in the boxes? (pause) Bits of Gloria [a friend of Al’s mother]?
   ALISON: No. Surely not? . . .
   […]
   ALISON: . . . I don’t know what was in those boxes, but sometimes I feel as if it’s me. Does that make sense to you?
   COLETTE: I think the big question is, will it make sense to our readers? (102-05)

Two more obstructive cues appear via Al’s first two statements, which express the uncertainties of her knowledge and of her ability to communicate it, respectively. Subsequently, both Colette’s repeated question and guess serve as assistive cues. Al’s immediate negation is obstructive, but her lack of faith in this definitive negation is assistive. In other words, Colette seems to get closer to a concrete answer, to reaching ideal closure of solving the mystery. Alison then rejects this possibility with greater certainty than she genuinely feels. The passage concludes with Al first restating that she does not know what was in the boxes, an obstructive cue, but then revealing that she sometimes feels as if it had been her. This answer is not quite sensible, but it is reliable because it has already been indicated that Al does know what the answer is. What her answer means, however, is another tension altogether.

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16 In the narrative, this dialogue is the audio recording of their discussion. Colette records all of her interviews with Al for the sake of assisting with their book writing. This narrative technique especially illustrates the need for dialog to be assessed alongside event, description, sequence, and presentation.
When Al asks Colette if this feeling that she, Al, had been in the boxes makes sense, Colette neither confirms nor denies. Instead, she transfers the question to the prospective readers of their book. These final questions begin and augment an additional curiosity tension, one that pertains to what it means that Al was in the boxes that she was watching be carried from a distance.

Victoria Stewart astutely points out that—unlike detective fiction, which requires brilliant deductive statements to be rationally explained—a story featuring a medium need not provide this rationalization because knowledge is not always a deductive property but occasionally a gift from ethereal sources. Nevertheless, towards the book’s end, Al’s seeks out this information by asking people, both living and dead, who might remind her of what she has forgotten. In other words, much like a detective story, she seeks out witnesses. During this time, she also has spells of returning to the past by means of spirit, which ultimately allows her to seek information from Mrs. McGibbet herself. Stewart observes in Al’s multiplicity of epistemological channels, which transcend time, a new type of narrative technique:

[T]his trauma in her own childhood remains veiled and obscure, revealed not by an effort of memory on her part but by figures from her past who are now “on the other side.” Mediumship becomes a tension for the integration of the traumatizing past, not by the splitting or multiplying of personality but by the supplementing of individual consciousnesses with that of other witnesses. (303)

However, what Mantel has created is nothing short of a time machine, narratively speaking. Although this might fascinate a real reader with the wonder of the fantastical, this technique is—as far as its function as a curiosity tension is concerned—identical to the development of a detective looking for clues.

Wolfgang Funk follows up on Stewart’s observation of the narrative impact had by a clairvoyant character, himself suggesting the presence of a Derridean spectral epistemology. Funk thereby perceives Al’s clairvoyance as a “form of knowledge based on an acceptance of
uncertainty and of liminal phenomena” (150). He argues that in Al’s character Hill has merged time as not only the ghosts of the past are active in the present but also as Al has access to return to her past. Her past has never left her, and she has never left it.

When Al interviews Mrs. McGibbet, the latter initially replies, “I would help you out . . . with your memorizing and all, but I’m sure the topic . . . is not a topic for decent people” (398). Nevertheless, she proceeds to imply that the “evil thing you wouldn’t want to see at all” was not something that happened to Al but rather something Al did:

“I’m sure I wasn’t seeing a little girl with a pair of scissors in her hand, snipping about a man’s private parts. I’m sure I was too busy about my own business to notice whether that was a fork you were carrying, or that was a knife, and whether you had a spoon in your pocket. . . . And I wouldn’t say I saw you go down the garden to feed the dogs. . . . I might have seen a smile on your face and a bowl in your hand, and a trickle of blood running down each arm. . . . I never looked in the dogs’ bowls, curious to see what they were eating. . . . And therefore I couldn’t have noticed McArthur’s eye plop off a spoon and fall into a dish.” (400-01)

In response to being raped by at least two of her mother’s johns, Al had cut off the genitals of one and plucked out an eye of another, feeding the amputations to the men’s vicious mongrels. However, because it has been known through most of the text that Al suffered sexual violence as a child, the revelation of the particular circumstances surrounding it does not provide closure for the anxiety tension. Closure comes about only through the realization of her own violent actions.

In other words, since Al expressed a sense that she herself had been in the boxes, the “evil thing you wouldn’t want to see” actually was in the boxes. Mantel accomplishes this misdirection through a grammatical ambiguity. As it is, the reader assumes that the clause “you wouldn’t want to see” is requisite information, implying an “evil thing that you wouldn’t want to see.” However, Mantel does not make this requisite positioning explicit, allowing for the very different meaning when the reader realizes the clausal relationship was a nonrestrictive one: the “evil thing, which
you wouldn’t want to see.” Instead of containing just one evil thing among a variety of evil things, the box holds evil itself. Because it was not made known in the text that Al is “an evil thing,” Al expressing her notion of what was in the boxes serves as an obstructive cue to the receptive tension of anxiety because it seemed to be a dead end. Moreover, Mrs. McGibbet’s assertion that Al would not want to see reflexively proves insightful, perhaps prophetic, as Al had blocked it from her memory for decades.

Al and Colette’s romantic partnership consists of two tensions that are parallel to each other but generate conflicting interests: there is an avidity that they will break up, and there is an anxiety that they will break up. Their relationship begins when Al, guided by intuition or informed by her spirit knowledge, hires Colette upon meeting her for the first time. Colette, having fallen on hard times, accepts the responsibility of handling the business end of Al’s career so Al can focus on the performance/service end. In this respect, their relationship begins with a cue that can be interpreted as Al’s pragmatic act of charity or her charitable act of self-preservation. Though they frequently bicker, both their business and their relationship flourish, so much so that they decide to buy a house together. Around this time, people begin assuming that they are romantically involved, assumptions that do not seem to bother Al but that incite Colette to a combative repudiation. Meanwhile, Colette micromanages Al’s personal life, to which Al submits in order to appease Colette. The tension driving the story of their relationship is thus a conflicting mix between the avidity that Colette will leave Al, thereby sparing Al from this unnecessary stress, and the anxiety tension that Colette will leave Al rather than work things out with her by focusing on the good parts of their multifaceted relationship.
The novel begins in medias res after Al has hired Colette but before they live together. Because of this anachronistic progression, the first depiction of their relationship relies on a description cue. Al is performing a show, and Colette is running around the venue, ensuring everything is appropriately set-up—from checking that the stage has been swept, to estimating the size and mood of the audience, to getting Al her gin and tonic. During intermission, though, Colette criticizes Al for inaccurately describing an audience member’s deceased husband but accurately describing another audience member’s kitchen cabinets. Al, in turn, chides Colette for not understanding what most audience members want to hear, the strain of working under the heat of stage lights, or the difficulties of being as overweight as Al is. This apparently recurring dispute, juxtaposed to Colette’s fastidious execution of her responsibilities, provides characterizations of the novel’s two protagonists through sketching their relationship.

Another tension regarding their relationship appears after Al’s show concludes. Al warmly expresses, “Colette, I don’t know how you do it. All your patience. These broken nights . . . I’m grateful. I might not show it. But I am, sweetheart. I don’t know where I’d be now, if we’d never met” (42). Colette replies briefly and with levity, deflecting Al’s statement of appreciation. Nevertheless, Colette thinks to herself, “Al, don’t leave me, don’t die and leave me without a house and a job. You’re a silly cow, but I don’t want to do this world on my own.” Following this opening section exhibiting Al’s show, the narrative shifts back to an earlier time period, depicting how the two women met. Because this part of the story chronologically takes place before Colette’s fearful thoughts that Al will die, this anxiety tension is not functional, nor does it again become functional until the diegetic world time has moved to a point after the opening show because it is apparent that Al lives until at least this future point. However, it is here, early in their relationship, that the
avidity tension regarding their potential romantic involvement begins: “That summer they laughed a lot. They acted as if they were in love, planning for each other treats and nice things to eat and surprising each other with thoughtful gifts” (86). As the text specifies that Al and Colette “acted as if they were in love,” creating an avidity tension that moves toward the ideal closure that they will actually fall in love at some point.¹⁷

This avidity tension regarding their romantic/sexual relationship lies dormant—i.e., remains operative but idle—until Colette eventually moves in with Al, at which point Al tests Colette’s boundaries. The first time Colette enters Al’s flat, Al gives her a magazine, ostensibly so Colette can see Al’s advertisement in the back, but below Al’s ad is another for a sex line: “‘surprisingly sleazy, these journals,’ Al said. She laid her long painted nail on an advert for Sex Advice, with a number to call after each item. ‘Lesbian anal fun. Did you know lesbians had anal fun?’” (134). Colette, however, is evidently uncomfortable with any mention of homosexuality: “‘No,’ Colette said, in a voice as distant as she could manage. Al’s scent washed over her in a great wave of sweetness. ‘I don’t know, I mean, I’ve never thought. I don’t know anything about it.’” Colette initially tries to indicate her disinterest in the matter by simply sounding distant with her monosyllabic negation, but then, upon being “washed over” with Al’s aromatic “wave of sweetness,” Colette stumbles through repetitive statements, seemingly in an attempt to convince herself of her own ignorance and/or perceived innocence. Al responds to this with composure, indicating that her raising the issue was intentional: “‘Neither do I,’ Al said. Colette thought, Spicy lesbo chicks. Al patted her shoulder; she froze. ‘That was not fun,’ Al said. ‘That was reassurance.’

¹⁷ Given the minimal departure from compulsory heterosexuality, such an explicit remark is often needed to initiate textual interest in a same-sex romance.
She dropped her head and her hair slid forward, hiding her smile. ‘I just thought we’d get the topic out of the way. So we both know where we stand.’” The topic is far out of the way, though. Quite the opposite, this avidity interest in their romance has suddenly become prominent in the narrative’s development, altering the significance of all their interactions with each other henceforth.

The first cue throughout this passage is that regarding Colette’s moving in with Al. With the text having already likened them to lovers, this passage directly addresses its respective tension by strengthening it further. This is followed by an immediate succession of three cues—Al drawing attention to the advertisement for sex advice, her specifying that it refers to lesbianism, then her framing her observation as a question—that forces Colette to comment on lesbianism. These three cues are all assistive as they create a sexual awareness between the characters. The text again presents three cues in quick succession, but these exist in a tug-and-pull relationship to each other: Colette responds with intentional distance, she is pleasantly affected by Al’s aroma, then Colette emphasizes her negation in an awkwardly defensive manner. Colette’s initial response functions as an obstructive cue as she seems to be disinterested in the topic, but her obvious attraction at least to the way Al smells functions as an assistive cue as it demonstrates Colette is not as disinterested as she thinks she would like to be. Colette’s clumsy repetitions of her ignorance further betray the difference between what she wants and what she acknowledges herself to want, thereby providing another assistive cue.

Al’s response proves even more ambiguous than Colette’s. Al’s initial “Neither do I,” which vocally aligns herself with Colette’s expressed position, serves as an obstructive cue because it seems that the issue will be dropped. Sitting in silence as she listens to Al, however, the
words “Spicy lesbo chicks” pass through Colette’s mind. This thought serves as an assistive cue by depicting Colette’s enhancement of the ad, no longer lesbians but “lesbo chicks” who are additionally “spicy,” further betraying her true desires. When Al then pats Colette’s shoulder, her subsequent clarification that it was not in a lesbian manner further proves an assistive cue by exhibiting the new tension between them. The passage in which “[Al] dropped her head and her hair slid forward, hiding her smile” initially creates an obstructive cue because it appears that Al is hanging her head from embarrassment.18 The realization that she has done this in order to hide her smile, though, serves as yet another assistive cue because it undermines both the “embarrassment” reading of her hanging her head as well as her actual motivation for patting Colette’s shoulder.

This highly efficacious passage concludes with Al’s explanation that she wanted to “get the topic out of the way” so they “both know where [they] stand” (134). It is only at this point that the text reveals that Al’s raising the issue was planned. Therefore, allowing Colette to identify her stance first implies Al’s open-mindedness to a sexual partnership. Paired with Colette’s underlying interest, this open-mindedness creates an assistive cue by firmly establishing the possibility for their relationship to develop sexually. Al’s final comment ostensibly closes the matter between them by communicating to Colette that they will not become sexual, but from the abstract reader’s perspective, though, Al is observing that she is aware of Colette’s current reluctance.

Al and Colette eventually buy a house together, which reignites the interest regarding their relationship because of Colette’s heightened concern over what the neighbors might think.

18 Initially reading Al’s hanging her head as an expression of embarrassment is consistent with her character description thus far in the novel, exhibiting the influence that description cues can exert on event cues.
However, after a couple of years in this arrangement, two more tensions relating to their relationship appear almost at the same time: an anxiety tension about Al killing Colette and an avidity tension that moves toward the hope that Colette will leave Al, liberating the latter.

Al is depicted until the very end of the novel as being very soft-spoken, as not standing up for herself, and certainly not as being violent. This is true to such an extent that the revelation at the end of the novel that a young Al once cut off a man’s genitals and scooped out another’s eye is an immense surprise, nearly an incredible one. The credibility, however, of these past actions—the remembrance of which proves to provide closure for the primary anxiety tension—influences the tension that includes Al’s imagined violence toward Colette. As Colette becomes more micromanaging of Al’s daily life, Al outwardly submits, but she internally harbors resentment toward Colette. In one passage, Colette is complaining about how her car-enthusiast ex-husband, Gavin, seemed to be ashamed of her car: “It was all I could afford, at the time. I used to say, what’s your problem, Gavin? It gets me from A to B” (259). Al does not vocally respond to this innocuous comment, but she thinks, “[I]f I were a great enthusiast for motoring, and somebody said ‘It gets me from A to B,’ I think I would sneak up on them and smash their skull in with a spanner—or whatever’s good to smash skulls in, that you keep in the back of a car.” Because the necessary conditions of Al’s imagined violence—indirectly offending a petrolhead—do not exist between Al and Colette, Al’s thought functions not as event but as description. However, later on in the same conversation, Al has another much more relevant thought about their own vehicle: “[W]hen me and Colette bought the car, soon after we got together, it was quite easy, a good afternoon out, but now we can’t even buy a Balmoral without Colette nearly driving us off the road, and me thinking of ways to stove her skull in. It shows how our relationship’s come on” (260). Here, Al
has shed the hypothetical “[I]f I were Gavin” rationale to murder Colette and admits to herself that sometimes she, Al, wants to kill Colette. These two thoughts are mental event cues that function as assistive cues, heightening the tensions in the possibility of Al killing Colette.

The most prevalent conflict in the development of Al and Colette’s relationship is Colette’s becoming extremely critical of Al. Upon re-entering their home of now four years, Colette chides Al, “All those marks rubbed along the walls. Do you know you leave a mark? Wherever your shoulders touch it, and your big hips. You smear everything, Al. Even if you’re eating an orange, you slime it all down the wall. It’s a disgrace. I’m ashamed to live here” (261). Colette then starts monitoring Al’s food consumption, intimidating Al into abiding by a strict and minimalist diet, and searching through all of their food upon returning home to tally everything Al had eaten in her absence. This oppression dawns upon Al one evening when—after having just given money to a young homeless man, Mart, to buy a kebab from the food truck down the street—she is alone in their kitchen: “I am refused bread in my own house . . . I am refused a slice of bread” (280). Soon thereafter, Al prepares herself to explain to Mart why she can no longer feed him from her kitchen:

It had come to this: either she ate, or Mart did. I’ll have to explain to him, she thought. How Colette checks up on me all the time. How she controls the groceries. How she shouted, the day you came, when she finally stock-taked the fridge and realized two eggs were missing. How she accused me of eating them boiled and made me ashamed, even though I never ate them, you did. How she supervises every minute of my day. How I can’t just go freelance shopping. How, if I took the car, she’d want to know where. And if I drove off by myself, she’d want to know why. (285)

This is not the closure of the avidity tension regarding Al’s liberation, but it does serve as the climax of Al’s frustration and sense of injustice. Nevertheless, Al herself never considers leaving Colette, and it is ultimately Colette who leaves Al. Al, having suffered through extreme sexual and physical violence, appears to be forgiving of all lesser transgressions and tends to self-deprecate until she finally absorbs the blame for these offenses herself. This tension, then, parallels not what
Al wants but rather what is best for her. This avidity is complicated, however, by Al’s fear of living alone and by her continued appreciation of what Colette has done for her, stoking the coals of interest regarding their relationship and the hope that Colette might change even yet.

Unlike *Dracula* and *The Woman in Black*, both of which develop anxiety through the unpredictability of malevolent entities, *Beyond Black* is horror fiction with an unknown nemesis. Although one may speculate on the villainous potential of several characters, this anxiety interest is nearly matched by the avidity interest of Al and Colette’s relationship. The structure of this novel, then, differs significantly from that in horror novels proper in its subordination of story to setting as well as its innovative, albeit not unique, balance of interest structure in two discourse settings. It is, however, consistent with the genre’s use of curiosity to initially build the central anxiety as well as with its closing of receptive tensions.

*Beyond Black* certainly relies on anxiety to an extent that merits its classification as a horror story, but the manner in which it develops the tension of this anxiety would call this designation into question. Much of the narrative is multi-functional, and its interest structure lends as much to the construction of a peculiar diegetic world as it does to the telling of a story. The only major anxiety that is not directly rooted in these diegetic peculiarities is that regarding Al and Colette’s relationship, but the text holds the reader back from the full experience of horror here by juxtaposing this tension to a parallel avidity tension regarding the very same theme.

Chapter Two Conclusion

Whether a critic prefers “Gothic,” “horror,” “Gothic-horror,” or some other term to identify anxiety-motivated fiction, the potential methods of creating, sustaining, and terminating this interest are far more varied than are the opinions of their genre classifications. This chapter applies
the interest structure analysis approach to three horror novels: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Susan Hill’s *The Woman in Black*, and Hilary Mantel’s *Beyond Black*, which represent epistolary, frame-narrative, and heterodiegetic narrative styles, respectively. *Dracula* uses curiosity to build up a forthcoming anxiety; avidity to emphasize an operative anxiety; and, perhaps most curiously, a micro-tension of anxiety to lessen a macro-tension of the same. Whereas description and event cues figure most prominently in *Dracula*, the framework of *The Woman in Black* relies most heavily on sequence cues to extend tensions back and forth through the diegetic timeline. The most pronounced relationship between tension affects in this novel is that between anxiety and curiosity, which prove complexly intertwined while nevertheless avoiding parallelism. *Beyond Black*, on the other hand, confounds the relationship between its various anxieties until the reader has become deeply immersed into the mysticism of what otherwise appears a familiar, contemporary world. Indeed, the text spends so much time elaborating on what this world is and how it works—attempting to make the departure from reality as minimal as possible—that the central anxiety theme sometimes seems only minimally threatening, or even as mere background.

The horror story’s temporal structure precedes murder and mayhem, or at least such befalling the protagonist, but the detective story follows it. Another way to perceive the distinction between these two genres is by comparing the protagonists: the horror protagonist is often the character most in danger whereas the detective protagonist, at least in the Golden-Age iterations, is rarely in any danger at all. Considering these diametric functions, it is perhaps commonsensical that the interest structures of the two thematic genres are also inversely related: whereas horror fiction tends toward using curiosity tensions early on to build up that narrative’s overarching anxiety, detective fiction often builds its predominant curiosity on introductory anxiety tensions.
CHAPTER THREE

CURIOSITY IN DETECTIVE FICTION

To begin with, a murder—that by itself is a calamity of the first water. 
But not only that, the circumstances are unusual.¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, G. K. Chesterton observed that a “rude, popular literature of the romantic possibilities of the modern city was bound to arise” and, indeed, that it had “arisen in the popular detective stories, as rough and refreshing as the ballads of Robin Hood” (5). Although some critics have claimed that detective-story elements have existed in literature since Ancient Greece, there is a general concurrence that the detective genre took form in the nineteenth century.² The defense of the genre as literature worthy of critical study, however, was a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon.³

¹ Christie 43.
² Willard Huntington Wright suggests that detective-like fiction existed at least as far back as the tale of a thief robbing the treasure-house of Pharaoh Ramsinit, recorded in Herodotus’s The Histories (Wright 12). Dorothy L. Sayers also finds detective elements in the ancient texts of the Jewish Apocrypha and Virgil’s Aeneid (Sayers 11). The first “modern detective story,” according to Michael Cohen, is William Godwin’s 1794 novel, Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams (16).
³ Despite detective fiction being one of the most popular genres of literature ever produced—or, rather, because of it—academic readership has long denigrated the genre as low-brow. Chris Ewers, after mentioning that Agatha Christie’s worldwide sales are surpassed only by Shakespeare and the Bible, remarks that “while a bibliography of exegesis on the Bible or Shakespeare’s works could fill up a telephone directory, there was a time when the number of critics writing about Christie could fit in a telephone box” (97). Ewers points out that the academic snobbery toward popular literature has operated according to a “reverse logic,” measuring an author’s critical import in an inverse ratio to that author’s sales. In 2015,
While high modernists responded to the Victorian and Edwardian literatures by challenging the rules of the novel, detective writers responded to contemporary cultural concerns with a self-analytical structuralism by which they carved their own rules in stone. By a Newton-Leibniz type of coincidence, one so peculiar that many detective fiction readers would likely consider it a violation of plausibility, 1928 introduced the publications of two significant works of literary structuralist theory, written in complete isolation from and ignorance of one another: Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* and Willard Huntington Wright’s “Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories.” Propp broke down Russian folktales into thirty-one “functions,” or plot developments, claiming that his method comprehensively accounted for all of the 500-plus stories analyzed in his study. Conversely to Propp’s purely descriptive approach, Wright’s agenda was prescriptive and proscriptive, and the widespread adherence to his twenty rules established the detective story as the most rigidly defined genre of fiction to date.

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1 There was actually a third structuralist work of note published in 1928, Edwin Muir’s *The Structure of the Novel*. As Muir, like Wright, was British, it is possible, although undetermined according to the current study, that Wright and Muir posed a mutual influence on each other’s work.

2 Wright published his “Twenty Rules” under his pseudonym S. S. Van Dine. I refer above to Wright as the author of “Twenty Rules” to avoid dissociating this text from his other contributions mentioned in this study and published under his legal name. The Works Cited of this study lists Wright’s 1928 treatise under “Van Dine.”

3 In 1929, Ronald Knox condensed Wright’s twenty detailed rules to a pithy ten in his “Decalogue.” In America twenty years later, Raymond Chandler released his own “Ten Commandments” of the genre. By this time, however, the “classical” detective story, as it is still known, had been crystallized as a mostly British phenomenon. Consequently, Chandler’s contribution to the regulation of the genre pertains more to the American hard-boiled form of the genre than to the form discussed in this chapter.
The most important of these rules, dubbed the “Van Dine principle,” states, “The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery” (189). Nearly a century later, the Van Dine principle continues to be the preeminent criterion for whether a story belongs to the genre of detective fiction or to that of something else—e.g., mystery, thriller, crime, etc. Robert Rushing explains the Van Dine principle as a “presumed pact between the author and the reader,” noting that “at the point in the novel in which the detective announces the solution, the reader must be able, in principle, to solve the mystery. If the reader has been sufficiently astute and careful, he or she will have amassed the necessary clues and followed the detective’s logic to its proper end” (89). Any discrepancy in knowledge between detective and reader must be either in the reader’s favor or, if in the detective’s favor, unnecessary for solving the case.

Consequently, a compelling detective story must be carefully balanced in that not enough innovation produces a stagnated literary form, yet too much innovation can disqualify the story

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4 There are other common characteristics of the detective story—namely that there be a singular detective or detective-like character and that the deduction not be assisted by supernatural powers—but it is this interactive quality that no story can lack and still be classified as detective fiction.

5 Skeptical of how often novels labeled “detective fiction” actually provide enough information for the reader to solve the crime, Rushing also asserts that the Van Dine principle “virtually never describes the real compact between author and reader” (90). J. Madison Davis, on the other hand, argues that the mere existence of a controversy over whether or not any detective-ish novel is proper detective fiction “implies that a mutual conspiracy of publishers, authors, and readers has created a set of rules that crime novels are obligated to obey” (30). The issue is thus a classic example of ironic reasoning in which the tendency toward rebellion proves the influence and enforcement of the rules.

6 This is the fundamental distinction between a detective novel and a mystery novel: the first gives the reader enough information to solve the crime whereas the latter does not. For this reason, several critics, such as Rushing and the current author, classify many of the Sherlock Holmes stories as mystery fiction, not as detective fiction. This, of course, is merely a technical distinction; there is nothing inherently superior about detective fiction over its cousin genre. This is also an anachronistic classification, attributing to the stories of Conan Doyle labels that were not in contemporaneous use—that is, not in the way they have been used since 1928.
Stories that achieve this balance provide a study sample particularly complimentary to interest structure analysis, for answering “Why do we turn the page in a detective story?” is tantamount to determining in what ways a text can keep its reader sufficiently informed about a puzzle while still sustaining the reader’s curiosity in it.

The most common technique by which a detective novel upholds the Van Dine principle is by focalizing most, if not all, of the narrative through the detective, thereby ensuring that the reader knows everything about the case that the detective knows. This is the strategy that Agatha Christie employs in *Murder on the Orient Express*, a novel in which the reader is not privy to any scene in which the famed Inspector Hercule Poirot is not present and engaged. P. D. James’s *The Lighthouse* veers far from this technique, giving the reader access to a great deal of information and activity before the detective, Commander Adam Dalgliesh, becomes aware of it. Indeed, the text offers some insights to the reader that apparently elude Dalgliesh entirely. These approaches—two ends of the spectrum—illuminate by juxtaposition the strange structure of Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace*. More than half of this narrative is focalized through the detective figure, psychologist Dr. Simon Jordan, who knows nothing the reader does not—nothing, at least, that proves helpful.

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7 Charles Rzepka draws attention also to the unique responsibility that the detective fiction writer bears to “[set] up the intellectual game of detection ‘fairly.’ . . . [This] is alien to nearly every other form of literary realism, where we rarely assume the author to be ethically delinquent when he or she withholds certain facts, feeds us misinformation, or is mistaken him- or herself” (15).

8 Wright himself argued that the detective tale ought to be considered as much a puzzle or riddle as it is a work of fiction: “Its widespread popularity and interest are due, at bottom and in essence, to the same factors that give popularity and interest to the crossword puzzle. . . . [T]he structure and tension of the crossword puzzle and of the detective novel are very similar. In each there is a problem to be solved; and the solution depends wholly on mental processes—on analysis, on the fitting together of apparently unrelated parts, on a knowledge of the ingredients, and, in some measure, on guessing. Each is supplied with a series of overlapping clues to guide the solver; and these clues, when fitted into place, blaze the path for future progress. In each, when the final solution is achieved, all the details are found to be woven into a complete, interrelated, and closely knitted fabric” (5).
in piecing together the puzzle. This narrative, though, arguably exists just outside of the detective fiction genre as it ends with the detective figure and the reader alike no closer to the truth than when they began.

In addition to these techniques, the paratext of the title proves ever as influential in detective fiction as in romance and horror. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, romance titles commonly name the protagonistic love birds or something that quickly identifies them—*Oscar & Lucinda* and *A Room with a View*, respectively—whereas horror titles often reference the central threat, as do *Dracula* and *The Woman in Black*. Both of these titling strategies, though, would prove counterproductive for detective fiction, a genre premised on not knowing who or what the central threat is or was. Consequently, detective fiction titles tend to reference the type of crime committed, such as Anthony Berkeley’s *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* (1929) and Wright’s *The Gracie Allen Murder Case* (1938); an important clue, such as Ronald Knox’s *The Three Taps* (1927) and Ian Rankin’s *Knots and Crosses* (1987); or, as exhibited in the first two novels analyzed in this chapter, the location of the crime, as in Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934) and P. D. James’s *The Lighthouse* (2005). However, this commonality is not shared by the third novel that this chapter addresses, Margaret Atwood’s *Alias Grace* (1996), which has a title that functions as ambiguously as does its narrative.

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9 There are plenty of instances of a detective fiction title descriptively referring to the culprit—e.g., Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892), Christie’s *The Man in the Brown Suit* (1924), Ruth Rendell’s *The Monster in the Box* (2009)—but these titles do so while yet concealing that culprit’s identity.

10 More recently, it has become commonplace for a detective novel to take on a whimsical or melodramatic title, such as Ruth Rendell’s *The Best Man to Die* (1969), which helps to mollify the underlying horror of the murder and thereby allows the reader to focus on the bloody puzzle.
An unexpected phone call abruptly interrupts Detective Poirot’s holiday. Poirot soon finds himself on a full passenger train car that, due to a blizzard, comes to a halt far from any town or station. On the following morning, one of the passengers—a Mr. Ratchett, whom Poirot soon recognizes as the iniquitous culprit of crimes long passed—is found stabbed to death in his cabin. Mr. Ratchett’s cabin, however, was locked from the inside. Moreover, the trackless snow surrounding the train indicates that the murderer is still aboard. Over the course of the next day, Poirot—with the assistance of M. Bouc, Poirot’s former colleague with the Belgian police force and current director of the train company, and of Dr. Constantine, a coroner—interviews the other twelve passengers, most of them twice. Poirot ultimately deduces the cause for the unusual circumstances of the murder—it was a collaborative effort among twelve passengers—but judges their motive to have been just. For the sake of providing a consistent testimony to police once the situation is investigated, Poirot concocts a false narrative that includes a stowaway who leapt from the train and escaped.

*Murder on the Orient Express* is typical of its genre and time period in that its central curiosity is the collective product of independent tensions, a phenomenon referred to in this study as the “clue structure.” The novel also entirely focalizes its scenes through its lead detective, which is one of the surest techniques detective fiction utilizes to maintain adherence to the Van Dine principle. Even so, the mere title of the novel provides the reader the upper hand in solving the mystery until the discovery of Ratchett’s lifeless body. It is because of the title that the text generates interest in the reader with comments that do not interest Poirot. Additionally, as the title implies the novel’s genre, the reader likewise gets a head start on Poirot in solving the murder,
even before the murder occurs. When Poirot sees a couple of young lovers, or people he initially assumes are young lovers, the reader is alerted not to their romantic affections but rather to their suspicious behavior. Moreover, just as the novel dissuades the reader from becoming too invested in avidity tensions of romance, so too does it actively minimize the anxiety tension the passengers being trapped on a train with a vicious murderer.

The central curiosity tension of a detective novel—the “whodunit” theme—is certainly the driving force of the narrative, but it often plays out this influence indirectly through the many clues involved in the mystery. M. Bouc, while discussing the crime scene with Poirot, points out that their task of detecting the culprit has been exacerbated by clues that seem only to contradict each other. Poirot shares M. Bouc’s frustration: “One cannot complain of having no clues in this case. There are clues here in abundance” (63). This complication is likewise felt by the reader because, more often than not, attending to one clue means delaying attention to another. Every clue functions as its own theme until the significance, or insignificance, of that clue becomes evident. The theme of each clue contributes to the interest in the predominant curiosity of who the killer is but does not necessarily have any direct relationship to the development of any other clue, even though they may develop simultaneously. Consequently, one theme might receive considerable development in one scene only to then be idle for the next dozen scenes.

One example of how these clue tensions operate is the theme of the button that Mrs. Hubbard finds in her room:

“You see this button?” [said Mrs. Hubbard.] “Well, it’s not one of my buttons. It’s not off anything I’ve got. I found it this morning when I got up.”

As she placed it on the table, M. Bouc leaned forward and gave an exclamation.

“But this is a button from the tunic of a Wagon Lit attendant!” (99)
In a murder investigation, everything that is out of the ordinary and to which attention is drawn, no matter how small, is of potential importance—so too this button. When Poirot later learns that none of the conductors has lost a uniform button, this discovery increases the curiosity tension of the button and thereby augments the curiosity of the case itself. However, it does not augment the curiosity of other factors pertinent to the mystery, such as the monogrammed handkerchief that Poirot finds near the body. Instead, the discovery of the button initiates its own tension, and the revelation that no conductor is missing a button functions as a cue of this contributive tension. Although this tension produces more interest than does any other tension in this scene, it remains idle—generating no new interest—for the next nine chapters.

The clue with the most developed theme—i.e., with the tension containing the most cues—is the scarlet kimono. The scarlet kimono is introduced into the text while the murder is taking place, unbeknownst to Poirot. Even so, the circumstances are mysterious, and thus the scarlet kimono is understood to be a clue straightaway. Poirot is attempting to sleep in his cabin when he is awakened by “something heavy [that] had fallen with a thud against the door. He sprang up, opened it and looked out. Nothing. But to his right some way down the corridor a woman wrapped in a scarlet kimono was retreating from him. At the other end, sitting on his little seat, the conductor was entering up figures on large sheets of paper. Everything was deathly quiet” (38). The interest generated here is then idle for forty pages but becomes active again after Ratchett’s body is found and during Poirot’s first interrogation, which is of the conductor. Poirot asks him if he had seen any passengers in the corridor during the presumed time of the murder. The conductor responds,

“One of the ladies went to the toilet at the far end, I think.”
“What lady?”
“I do not know, Monsieur. It was far down the corridor, and she had her back to me. She had on a kimono of scarlet with dragons on it.”

Poirot nodded. (79-80)

The text provides the reader with no additional information as to what the kimono means or whose it is, but its mere mention serves to remind the reader of it. As the reader is no closer nor further from understanding the significance of the kimono, the tension neither increases nor decreases; instead, it remains steady as this reminder functions only to sustain the tension. Even though the tension does not change in this theme, the returned attention to this detail raises the reader’s interest in it. Of the following seventeen chapters, the scarlet kimono is mentioned in eleven. The text mentions this clue—raising, lowering, and sustaining the tension—more than twice as many times as it mentions any other clue. Therefore, it can safely be said that this clue generates more than twice as much interest than does any other.

The curiosity of the scarlet kimono is inextricably linked to the larger curiosity of who the murderer is—though not vice versa—as long as both remain operative because the interest that arises from the textual prevalence of the scarlet kimono is purely based on its significance during the investigation and not on its significance in the solution of the mystery. Despite the high frequency with which the text references it, the kimono ultimately proves irrelevant to the case: “Further to confuse the issue,” Poirot explains while giving his solution at the end of the novel, “a ‘red herring’ was drawn across the trail—the mythical woman in the red kimono. . . . Where the garment came from in the first place I do not know” (260). The irrelevance of the kimono comes as a surprise to the reader; although surprises can sometimes dually function as initiating new tensions, this surprise simply ends the reader’s interest in the kimono. This clue actually inhibits Poirot’s, and vicariously the reader’s, ability to solve the crime, but it is still the most effective clue at motivating the reader to keep turning the page until the solution is given.
The interest structure of clues is one of the surest indicators of a detective story; alternatively, focalizing the majority of the narrative through the character of the detective or the detective’s assistant is not definitive of but commonplace in the genre. The entirety of Murder on the Orient Express is focalized through Poirot, and thus the focalization does not create much difference between the story, discourse, and interest structures. Nevertheless, even though this comprehensive focalization often prevents the detective from knowing things the reader does not, it does not prevent the reader from knowing things that the detective does not. Primarily, the detective does not know the title of the novel, which frequently gives the reader not only an advantage in solving the crime but also the ability to find interest in scenes that otherwise would be devoid of it.

Although some detective tales begin with the shrewd sleuth rubbing his or her chin while studying a chalk outline, or even with the action of the crime itself, this narrative begins in a rather soporific manner. The first few pages depict Hercule Poirot—internationally renowned investigative genius and hero—in a blasé mood. He is passing the time on a train platform by making polite but half-hearted attempts to respond to the unskilled small talk of the officer who has escorted him to the station. The officer—a Lieutenant Dubosc, whose acquaintance Poirot evidently had not made until taking up the case he has just solved—waits with Poirot for the next train to arrive, which Poirot will board not as a hired investigator but as a tourist on holiday. Running out of conversation topics, Lieutenant Dubosc remarks on that most tired of talking points—the weather: “Let us hope you will not be snowed up in the Taurus!” (5). Poirot’s attention heightens in response to this comment as he experiences both an angst about becoming snowbound
as well as a learned person’s fascination with such weather phenomena. Nevertheless, this is but a faint glimmer of interest before Lieutenant Dubosc continues his tedious chit-chat.

The thought of being snowbound in a train does create anxiety for the reader but not, as Dubosc remarks, with regard to the Taurus. The title of the novel plays a paratextual influence here by giving the reader some type of assurance that, in one way or another, the story will place Poirot either on the Orient Express or in a comparatively uneventful place where his focus may be on that train. Consequently, the Taurus has already been marked with a probability of low significance. Therefore, when the text introduces the idea of a train becoming snowbound, Poirot feels this anxiety with regard to the Taurus while the reader feels this anxiety with regard to the Orient Express.

Once Poirot has boarded the Taurus, the title is again used to impose a discrepancy between what is of interest to the characters and what to the reader. The train comes to a halt because a small fire has broken out beneath the dining car. One of Poirot’s fellow travelers, Ms. Debenham, expresses no interest in the fire but is rather vexed at the thought of missing her connecting train: “[W]e can’t delay! The train is due in at 6:55 and one as to cross the Bosphorus and catch the Simplon Orient Express on the other side at nine o’clock” (12). Poirot, who is standing near the

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11 There no doubt are ways that an author could finagle a setting on one train (the Taurus) while titling the story by reference to another train (the Orient Express), but this would function as a type of surprise, producing an unexpected product.

12 This tension of anxiety only ceases operation when the conductor of the Orient Express informs Poirot that they indeed have become snowbound. The anxiety macro-tension regarding their being snowbound—as opposed to that regarding the possibility of their becoming snowbound—not only contains few cues but also proves to generate an open theme: the novel ends with the train still stuck in the snow. Though the snowdrift ultimately functions as a change of state, ensuring Poirot that the murderer is yet aboard the train, it still retains its functionality as an interest tension. Nonetheless, because this tension has been idle for so long—most of the novel—the interest here does not give the impression of a “cliff hanger,” even though it structurally is.
woman, casually acknowledges to her that they might well miss the 9:00. He does not feel any of Ms. Debenham’s anxiety because he is not planning on traveling the Orient Express during his vacation, but he also does not understand this woman’s anxiety since another train, no doubt, will service that route before too long. Nonetheless, even though the text is focalized through Poirot’s perspective, the reading is influenced by Ms. Debenham’s anxiety because the title has foreshadowed the significance of the Orient Express. This is the first textual mention of the eponymous train, which creates an extradiegetic anticipation of the puzzle, which now is fast approaching. A curiosity tension paralleling Poirot’s interest is also at work here: although the title has given the reader a little advantage over Poirot at this point, the text is entirely focalizing through Poirot the reader’s interest in why Ms. Debenham must be on the 9:00. The reader’s extradiegetic avidity for the characters to reach the Orient Express also parallels Ms. Debenham’s own, albeit motivated differently.

Instead of resting securely at his destination once he gets off the Taurus, Poirot receives an urgent telegram requesting his assistance back home posthaste.13 Dutifully, he straightaway purchases a ticket for the next homeward-bound train—the 9:00 Orient Express. Poirot’s purchasing a ticket for the eponymous train assists the reader’s anticipation of participating in the puzzle, but Poirot’s boarding the Orient Express creates for the reader a diegetic apprehension of an ensuing murder. The predominant curiosity tension, though, has been operating through this entire section preceding Poirot’s boarding the fated train.

13 The telegram reads, “Development you predicted in Kassner Case has come unexpectedly please return immediately” (14; emphasis original). The curious nature of the telegram—What is the Kassner Case? What development has occurred? Why is Poirot’s return so urgent?—initiates a new curiosity tension. This tension, however, remains operative but is never again active in this text. The narrative creates interest in this case that it never develops, nor even sustains.
The title-influenced discrepancy between the reader’s and Poirot’s interpretations is also well demonstrated through the text’s Poirot-focalized depictions of Ms. Debenham and Col. Arbuthnot, both of whom travel on the Taurus with him. When the text describes Poirot’s observations of their odd behavior, the text is in no way indicating that Poirot is sizing them up for a conspiratorial homicide. The reader, on the other hand, is led to suspect not that Ms. Debenham and Col. Arbuthnot have committed a crime but that they will. Consequently, before the murder takes place, there is a parallel anxiety tension that mirrors this curiosity tension. Upon finding Ratchett’s corpse on the train, this particular anxiety tension ceases its operation, but the curiosity tension takes over the narrative, preventing almost any other type of tension to be active.

The early interactions between Miss Debenham and Col. Arbuthnot also exhibit the peculiar manner in which detective fiction appropriates the marriage plot, which traditionally has been rather a seldom occurrence in this genre. Wright’s third “Rule” was a strict prohibition of romantic development. In 1929—the year following Wright’s “Twenty Rules” and five years before the publication of *Murder on the Orient Express*—Marjorie Nicolson celebrated that “the pure detective story to-day is never—and what a relief!—a love story” (122). Nicolson’s observation was accurate, especially in the Golden Age of detective fiction, but this was not because romance was omitted from these stories. Characters still fall in love from time to time, but these developments are often portrayed not through the avidity of the marriage plot but through the curiosity of suspicious behavior.

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14 The third rule of Wright’s “Twenty Rules of Detective Fiction” reads as follows: “There must be no love interest in the story. To introduce amour is to clutter up a purely intellectual experience with irrelevant sentiment. The business in hand is to bring a criminal to the bar of justice, not to bring a lovelorn couple to the hymeneal altar” (Van Dine 189).
Having thought that Col. Arbuthnot was smitten with Miss Debenham and that she was welcoming of his attention while on the Taurus, Poirot reassesses his assumption of this seemingly budding couple after they three board the Orient Express. Having already observed Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham’s acquaintanceship on the Taurus, Poirot takes note of their seeming estrangement in the dining car:

At the next table, a small one, sat Colonel Arbuthnot—alone. His gaze was fixed upon the back of Debenham’s head. They were not sitting together. Yet it could easily have been managed. Why?

Perhaps, thought Poirot, Mary Debenham had demurred. A governess learns to be careful. Appearances are important. A girl with her living to get has to be discreet. (26)

Poirot’s suspicion at this early point is that Col. Arbuthnot is enamored of Miss Debenham, but the detective has no reason or inclination to suspect mischief, let alone murder. Because Poirot does not interpret this perceived oddity through the generic hermeneutic of detective fiction, as does the reader, he suggests to himself an explanation that falls within the confines of courtship. For the reader, however, the text has created a curiosity tension that generates suspicion that the forthcoming murder might be the result of these two passengers working together.

The deviation from expectation—Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham not sitting together on the Orient Express, though they had on the Taurus line—creates a curiosity tension that does not end until the very last page of the narrative when Mrs. Hubbard declares, “Mary and Colonel Arbuthnot - they love each other” (264). This revelation provides no closure to an avidity tension as the reader has never been led to hope for their romantic happiness. Instead, it produces closure for the curiosity tension, for it, paired with the solution to the murder, explains their initial familiarity and subsequent estrangement. Because detective fiction depicts love primarily as suspicious behavior, Poirot does not include in his solution this point of their being in love. Moreover, beyond solving the murder, Poirot speculates no further on the matter, demonstrating
not the slightest interest in the marriage-plot tension of “Will they? / Won’t they?” As Poirot’s interest in Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham’s familiarity, aside from his passing amusement aboard the Taurus, has pertained singularly to their possible collusion, the text guides the reader along the cognitive pathways of the focalizer to likewise interpret love as pertinent only insofar as it can provide answers to the puzzle.\(^\text{15}\)

Poirot’s perception of this tentative relationship aligns with the reader’s once he has been made aware of a murder aboard the train. Nevertheless, the tension of this theme—that maybe Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham are in homicidal cahoots—lessens in light of the immediate preponderance of alternate theories. Because Poirot is suspicious of not only Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham but also of ten other people, the text marginalizes the reader’s focus on the Arbuthnot-Debenham collusion theory.

Returning to the discovery of Mr. Ratchett’s corpse and that first conversation between Poirot and M. Bouc as they consider the evidence, the text explicitly yet inconsequentially creates a tension of anxiety. The scene concludes with the suddenly startled M. Bouc’s voicing his new realization: “The murderer is with us—on the train now....”\(^\text{16}\) This passage creates a horror-motivated plotline, one that seems as though it should be quite influential on the interest of the text

\(^{15}\) In the 2017 film adaptation of *Murder on the Orient Express*, directed by Kenneth Branagh, Poirot holds and gazes at a framed picture of a woman: “My sweet Katherine. My love,” he pines when alone in his cabin (32:55-33:10). By depicting Poirot as possessing romantic sentiments, the film creates a lens that interprets Col. Arbuthnot and Miss Debenham’s relationship with a note of avidity, but even this is only in addition to the curiosity that their familiarity toward each other incites.

\(^{16}\) Christie 47 (emphasis and ellipsis original). It strikes this author that the impact of M. Bouc’s ominous observation is greater for being the last sentence of its respective chapter than it would have been were it in the middle of a lengthy dialog, the joint product of order and presentation cues.
but ultimately proves to be of almost no influence at all. Each theme in which M. Bouc’s statement functions as a cue; this anxiety of whether or not the killer will strike again and the curiosity about the killer’s identity both naturally close upon the identification of the culprit because the revelation that it was a twelve-person conspiracy also reveals that no one else was ever in danger. It is plausible that the identification of the murderer might have resolved only the curiosity but not the anxiety if the villain had remained at large, a progression particularly common in the thriller genre, which itself is partially an offshoot of the detective genre.

The minimization of anxiety in this narrative is a product not only of its tension comprising few cues—which is narratively demonstrated by the text’s ignoring M. Bouc’s disquieted comment—but also of the text systematically diminishing the interest of this anxiety tension. The first two countering cues appear shortly before M. Bouc’s comment, enervating the influence of its resultant anxiety in advance of its solidification: M. Bouc’s concern with apprehending the criminal merely to avoid annoyance and Poirot’s openly expressed relief from boredom. While still inspecting Ratchett’s corpse and cabin, Poirot initially tries to avoid taking on the responsibility of investigating the crime. M. Bouc, being well familiar with Poirot’s deductive abilities, earnestly attempts to sway Poirot toward assuming leadership of the situation, but his reasons for doing so having nothing to do with a fear that their lives might be in peril: “You comprehend what I am about to ask of you. I know your powers. Take command of this

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17 Assessing the threat reflexively, however, is not a component of interest structure on an initial reading but is accounted for in the follow-up study to this work, which focuses on the differences in the interest structures of initial and subsequent readings of a narrative. For more on primary and secondary interest structures, see Conclusion.

18 Diminishing the efficacy of a tension in advance occurs in the same way that curiosity tensions in Dracula strengthen the central anxiety before the text specifies what the anxiety regards.
investigation! . . . I speak for the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons Lits. By the time the
Yugo-Slavian police arrive, how simple if we can present them with the solution! Otherwise
delays, annoyances, a million and one inconveniences” (46). Poirot proves not difficult to
persuade, but, like M. Bouc, his motivation lacks any sense that he might be in danger: “In truth,
this problem intrigues me. I was reflecting, not half an hour ago, that many hours of boredom lay
ahead whilst we are stuck here. And now—a problem lies ready to my hand” (47). M. Bouc, as the
director of the train company, initially holds the authority in this situation, and it is while he holds
this authority that he identifies his primary worry as the bureaucratic tedium that awaits him.
Although this is a real anxiety for M. Bouc, it is not one that the reader shares. When authority
transfers to Poirot, he states that he is glad to no longer be bored, as though this were the looming
threat. Just the same as how the reader/viewer is never concerned whether or not Sherlock will
have something to do to fill his days, the text’s function here is not to create or increase tension
but to weaken a tension so it does not become a distraction from the novel’s central interest:
wondering “Who?” rather than fearing “Who’s next?”

Additionally, the narrative even actively minimizes the anxiety of a lurking murderer by
imposing textual silence: Poirot evidently does not think about it, and thus the reader tends not to
as well. The first time he draws attention to their being in danger is during his first interview with
Miss Debenham. Poirot asks her, “Are you very much distressed that a crime should have been
committed on this train?”; Miss Debenham coolly responds, “I have not really thought about it
from that point of view. No, I cannot say that I am at all distressed” (148). Shortly after this, Poirot
interviews Mrs. Hubbard, during which he tries to placate her evident stress: “At any rate,
Madame,” Poirot addresses her, “you are quite happy and contented now?”}, to which Mrs.
Hubbard replies, “Well, no, I wouldn’t say that. Here we are stuck in a snowdrift and nobody doing anything about it, and my boat sailing the day after tomorrow” (173). By the end of the narrative, the reader learns that both women were among twelve conspirators, and thus it is logical that they would not feel threatened. Accordingly, their nonchalance might be perceived as clues to their involvement in the crime. If this were part of the interest structure, though, the text would depict Poirot, M. Bouc, and Dr. Constantine—the innocents aboard—as feeling anxiety to contrast with the conspiratorial passengers who do not. Even if Poirot and his two associates were remarkably courageous and thus would not demonstrate such anxiety, the lack of anxiety among the passengers would merit some acknowledgment from Poirot as being odd. Poirot, however, seems not to consider this as a key to solving the mystery, and thus these passages serve rather to diminish the correlative anxiety.

*Murder on the Orient Express* is emblematic of the Golden Age detective fiction novel, from its well-ordered clue structure, to its focalization through the detective, to its minimization of both romance and horror narrative elements. Nonetheless, by giving the reader an “inside look” while Poirot initially goes about his travels unaware of forthcoming events, events to which the title has directly alerted the reader, the novel begins with several chapters in which the reader gets to begin the detective work even before the detective himself. These few chapters, however, are marginal when compared with the hundreds of pages of scenes and materials to which the reader is privy before the detective in *The Lighthouse*, and privy to some matters even that the detective never learns about at all. Nonetheless, this enhanced separation of the reader’s and the detective’s perspectives does not prevent *The Lighthouse* from upholding the Van Dine principle in its own emblematic way.
Commander Adam Dalgliesh must cancel his weekend plans with his girlfriend, Emma, as he has been called to investigate the suspicious death of world-famous novelist Nathan Oliver. While staying on the VIP retreat island of Combe, Nathan has been hanged from the parapet of the island’s lighthouse. Assisted by Inspector Kate Miskin and Sergeant Francis Benton-Smith, Dalgliesh soon discovers that the island’s nine residents and five visitors—who all assume, at least ostensibly, that Nathan’s death was a suicide—do not feel themselves in danger. The atmosphere of the island changes, however, when Dalgliesh discovers the bludgeoned corpse of Combe’s beloved ex-priest, Adrian Boyde. Complicating this new homicidal panic, an outbreak of the SARS virus—which Dalgliesh contracts, incapacitating him physically but not mentally—results in the remaining thirteen people being quarantined to the island rather than rescued from it. Nevertheless, with his assistants giving him information from their continued interviews and inspections, the brilliant Dalgliesh solves the murders from his hospital bed. Upon his full recovery, he and Emma become engaged.

The attention, or lack thereof, given to the interview stage of the narrative as well as the multi-perspectival lens through which the reader must approach the text result in *The Lighthouse* operating according to a very different interest structure than does *Murder on the Orient Express*. Upon Dalgliesh, Miskin, and Benton’s arrival on the island, there is a ninety-six-page section—a quarter of the novel—comprising the first round of interviews. In this section, the curiosity interest regarding Nathan’s unknown murderer dominates the text. The comparable section of the interview stage in *Murder on the Orient Express* makes up over three-quarters of that narrative, and its conclusion brings about the end of the novel. Conversely, *The Lighthouse*’s interview phase
comes just slightly past the novel’s halfway point. Largely by means of varying the focalization of scenes through characters other than the lead detective, the narrative of *The Lighthouse* complicates the detective interest structure by adding themes that are unrelated to the central curiosity—plotlines that in response to “Whodunit?” might as well answer, “Who cares?” These entangled themes—including a legitimate avidity of romance and a sustained anxiety following the discovery of the body—produce a more complex form of the detective novel that gives its reader several new reasons to turn the page.

Unlike *Murder on the Orient Express, The Lighthouse* focalizes relatively little of its text through its lead detective figure. The novel is divided into a prologue, four parts, and an epilogue, comprising a total of fifty-one chapters. Of these, only twenty are focalized through Detective Commander Dalgliesh whereas thirteen are focalized through suspects and two through the victim. This consequently creates a lot of activity and information to which the reader is privy and Dalgliesh is not. The narrative thus not only stays true to the Van Dine principle but even gives the reader quite the advantage over Dalgliesh in solving the crime. From the perspective of interest structure, minimizing the focalization through the detective gives this text ample opportunity to spark curiosity, heighten anxiety, and hamper avidity through the epistemological dissonance between detective and reader.¹⁹

One instance of the multiple focalization influencing the interest structure of the predominant curiosity pertains to Nathan’s plan to move to the island of Combe. It is not until one-

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¹⁹ Allowing the reader to see events through different eyes than those of the detective and to see different events than what the detective sees is a tactic that has enabled the contemporary detective novel to keep pace with more action-packed genres, such as thrillers and crime fiction, while still adhering to the Van Dine principle.
third of the novel has transpired that Dalgliesh learns of this plan, but the reader has been aware of this since the beginning of the narrative. The first sentence of Part I depicts eighty-year-old Emily Holcombe in her island home, Atlantic Cottage. She is the only person who permanently resides on the island: all others are seasonal residents, whether employees or guests. There is an article in Combe’s charter that prohibits anyone else from taking up full-time residence on Combe, with the sole exception of anyone who had been born on the island. As it so happens, Nathan is the only living person whose birthplace is Combe—more specifically, Atlantic Cottage. In the first of two chapters that the text focalizes through Nathan, he reflects on his sense of belonging on the island and even of the island belonging to him, blissfully unaware that he will die on it the following morning:

[H]e knew, too, from seeing it again, that he had to have Atlantic Cottage. . . . This overwhelming need was buttressed by considerations of space and convenience but there was something more elemental, something in his blood responded to the ever-present rhythmic pulse of the sea. . . . His father had been a boatman in the old days on Combe and [Nathan] had lived with him in Atlantic Cottage until he was sixteen . . . . Walking along the cliff towards the harbour, he thought how strange it was that he should return to Combe with such an assurance of coming home. (42)

Nathan informs Emily through the formal channels of Combe’s management personnel that he intends to move to Atlantic Cottage before too long, but Emily makes it immediately clear that there is nothing anyone could offer to remove her from the home where she intends to spend her remaining years. Both Nathan and Emily are strong and willful people, which causes Combe’s management to worry about how the situation will pan out.

Dalgliesh, however, does not learn of the dispute over the cottage until halfway through the interview section. Consequently, for a sizable portion of the narrative, neither the detective nor his assistants are suspicious of Emily. The reader, on the other hand, has been led from the
beginning to suspect Emily’s involvement in Nathan’s hanging—indeed, even to suspect her more than anyone else, save for Nathan’s daughter.

Perhaps the most critical use of this dramatic irony technique—that is, putting the reader a step ahead of the detective—pertains to Nathan’s daughter, Miranda, who has been staying with him on the island. When she tells her father that she plans to marry his personal assistant, Dennis Tremlett, Nathan responds with vitriol: “I don’t need to be told how long the affair has been going on. I knew in San Francisco that you’d at last found someone to fuck. I confess it didn’t occur to me that you’d been reduced to making use of Tremlett—a cripple, penniless, my employee. . . . Were you obliged to take the only available man who offered, or was it a deliberate choice to inconvenience me?” (65). Nathan then tells Miranda that he will fire Tremlett and, if she does not break her engagement, cut her out of his will. It is early the next morning when Nathan’s corpse is found dangling from the lighthouse and later that day when Dalgliesh interviews Miranda. She honestly informs the detective that she had announced her engagement to her father just the night before. However, when Dalgliesh asks Miranda how her father reacted to this news, she calmly answers, “He was very sweet about it, but didn’t say very much except that he was glad for us and he’d seen it coming” (168). Though the reader knows that Miranda is lying, Dalgliesh does not, and neither do his assistants.

Miranda’s dissemblance displays the distinction between the whodunit curiosity tension and the avidity of the detective solving the crime, two tensions that are never clearly distinguished in *Murder on the Orient Express* once Ratchett’s body is found. As Dalgliesh does not detect the lie, the likelihood that he will solve the crime has decreased just a little—in other words, the tension has loosened. For a reader approaching this scene for the first time, it might seem counterintuitive
that such a climactic scene would be interpreted as a loosening of tension, but it is only this one avidity tension that has done so, not the scene entire. Occurring simultaneously is the rising tension of curiosity regarding who killed Nathan: the text previously established a motive, and now the text presents her as hiding something. Consequently, her lying to Dalgliesh himself initiates a new anxiety tension, one regarding the possibility of Miranda getting away with the lie. The cumulative tension in the scene, then, does increase, but interest structure allows us to discern precisely which tension increases and which does not.

Miranda’s lie also impacts her likability, which has less to do with her being a suspect in her father’s murder than with her character’s juxtaposition to the detective. When Nathan maliciously castigates her, her likability is established through both suffering and innocence: not only does her father effectively threaten to disown her, but he does so for something she had not thought he would oppose. Her forbidden love is not, at this point, an act of conscientious rebellion; instead, it is the result of her grossly miscalculating her father’s response. The motive Miranda would have had for killing her father—if she had killed him, but, alas, she is innocent here too—is one that has already been used to establish her as likable. Her murdering her father would only reflect negatively on her character, textually speaking, if there were other options for her to safely marry her betrothed, options that she disregarded in favor of needlessly committing patricide. Nathan’s cruel threats already satisfy the curiosity tension regarding why Miranda might have killed him. If the reader did not already know that Nathan dies, his threats would have created an avidity for retributive justice. If, in this alternate development, Miranda had murdered him, this act would have, among other things, filled this hypothetical avidity for justice, thereby determining that Miranda’s actions would not completely alienate her from the reader. Nevertheless, Miranda’s
obstructing the investigation by lying to Dalgliesh puts her at odds with the protagonist and thus contributes to her unlikability.

To create a theme of romance—one that operates according to avidity, not the curiosity of suspicious behavior—it is necessary for a detective fiction novel to allow for the development of independent tensions, which generate themes that are not dependent on the central curiosity nor pose any contribution to it. *The Lighthouse* accomplishes this prerequisite specifically through its alternation of focalizers. Whereas the scant inclusion of romantic development in *Murder on the Orient Express* was primarily subordinated by the all-consuming curiosity regarding Ratchett’s mysterious assassin, romance in *The Lighthouse* operates according to avidity as Dalgliesh and Emma consider their relationship with each other outside the context of the ongoing investigation.

The addition of a love story to *The Lighthouse* is precisely that: an additional, unrelated element tacked on to provide a fuller affectual experience for the reader. Dalgliesh and Emma are never depicted as being in the same physical space until the antepenultimate page of the novel. Moreover, as Emma does not work for the New Scotland Yard, nor does she have any connection to anyone on the island of Combe, she consequently exists in only one theme. Because Dalgliesh is the protagonist in the narrative, the theme of romance that includes him and Emma serves to promote both his benevolence and sympathy—exhibiting his capacity for love and the difficulty he faces in being separated from his loved one, respectively—thereby enhancing even further the likability of his character. Although the avidity of their romance does not assist with the curiosity surrounding the investigation, these two themes are equally influenced by the anxiety created when Dalgliesh contracts the SARS virus—threatening the case as well as jeopardizing his future with Emma.
As discussed in Chapter One of this study, ideal closure for any romance story varies according to the initial setting of that relationship—whether the characters concerned know each other at the outset of the text, or if they hate each other, or if one is engaged/married to someone else, etc. The form that this particular ideal closure would take is determined in the first chapter of the novel, after Dalgliesh has received his assignment to Combe. As he is thinking through his itinerary before he leaves, he considers at great length on the phone call he must make to Emma to cancel their weekend plans, his thoughts on this point culminating in the first cue of their romance avidity tension: “And there were three words he wanted to say to her which he found he could never speak over the phone. They too would have to wait” (11-12). In this case, as the two parties concerned are already a couple, the specific theme of avidity pertains to the desire that Dalgliesh will tell Emma that he loves her.

However, the very next mention that the text makes of Emma—located in the next chapter focalized through Dalgliesh, which does not come for nearly a hundred pages—shifts this hoped-for ideal closure: “He had first told Emma Lavenham of his love, not by mouth but by letter. . . . His letter had been a clear proposal of marriage. . . . but marriage had never afterwards been mentioned between them” (107-08). Although Dalgliesh makes the distinction between writing “I love you” and saying “I love you,” the text satisfies the created desire for him to have expressed his love at all, and it does so not through a new interchange between the couple but through Dalgliesh’s reflection on something that had already happened when he called to cancel their weekend plans. In other words, diegetically, the act of closure in this avidity tension precedes the mental event that precipitated it. However, because the text implements sequence cues to manipulate the reader’s experience of the diegetic timeline, the interest in Dalgliesh’s telling
Emma that he loves her is just as influential as if it were leading up to a future proclamation. The ideal closure has now shifted from Dalgliesh telling Emma that he loves her to their becoming engaged. Throughout the rest of the novel, Dalgliesh frequently reflects on his relationship with Emma, hoping for a future with her as well as doubting its plausibility. The text depicts Dalgliesh’s internal debate as a tension experienced by the reader, but the reader experiences this tension too in a different manner than does Dalgliesh.

These passages present obstructions to this avidity only in the form of Emma’s possible disinterest in marriage, but the text suddenly shifts the nature of these obstructions while not altering the nature of the theme’s ideal closure. There is a solitary chapter in the novel that is focalized through Emma, the only chapter not focalized through the investigation team or a character on the island. Emma confides in a close friend that “[Dalgliesh] may not want marriage, and I do” (261). While Emma continues to feel anxiety over Dalgliesh’s possible disinterest in marriage, and Dalgliesh over hers, the reader now knows that all such worries are no hindrance to their happiness. Emma, however, confides in her friend one more thought that has been bothering her: “I know he had to go away this weekend. Only this time it feels different. I’m afraid he may not come back, that he’s going to die on that island” (262). The obstructions to their happy ending no longer take the form of their internal conflicts but of the threats that soon arise to Dalgliesh’s life: from the killer becoming active again and from the outbreak on the island of a pernicious disease.

The text’s ability to generate anxiety after the murder has taken place is aided, as is the avidity of Dalgliesh and Emma’s engagement, by not restricting the focalization of the narrative to a single character. As the detective and the assistant characters are rarely in danger in detective
fiction, a variable focalization enables the text to depict the horror-like plotlines of the characters who remain vulnerable to harm. During the first day of the investigation, everyone on Combe assumes that Nathan has killed himself. Therefore, there is no murderer to fear. On the second day, when the lab report determines suicide an impossibility, the islanders are a little disturbed that such violence occurred on Combe, but they nevertheless demonstrate no concern for their own safety. After all, none of them particularly liked Nathan, and they assume that no one could have a motive to kill anyone else. Then, with a quarter of the novel remaining, the finding of Adrian’s battered corpse dismantles the collective sense of security, enhancing this anxiety tension until the culprit is discovered and apprehended.  

A little more than three-quarters into the novel, the text uses surprise twice to initiate two unrelated tensions of anxiety. One of these tensions, the announcement that Adrian has been murdered, contributes to the overarching curiosity whereas the other, the realization that Dalgliesh has contracted the SARS virus, does not. Adrian’s death is a surprise as there had been no anxiety tension building up to it before the climactic scene. When Dalgliesh finds that part of Adrian’s face “had been smashed to a pulp,” the text dispels the previously held solace in the belief that the murderer’s only target was Nathan (298). Now confronting a serial assailant, the text activates the anxiety tension of a third person possibly being murdered. Simultaneously, this discovery removes Adrian from probable suspicion while also providing additional clues with which to narrow down the suspects of both murders. Additionally, as he is reporting Adrian’s horrific death over the phone, Dalgliesh receives news that the illness he has been battling over the past few days, an

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20 Additionally, once Miskin and Benton discover proof of the murderer’s identity, the murderer reacts by taking someone hostage, thereby threatening another life in what is, compared to Murder on the Orient Express and Alias Grace, a hybrid of detective fiction and thriller novel.
illness that has steadily exacerbated, is actually the SARS virus. While obviously creating an anxiety with regard to Dalgliesh’s health, this information also serves to obstruct the avidity of Dalgliesh’s team solving the mystery. Even so, this impact on the reader’s interest in the investigation does not influence the predominant curiosity itself as the disease provides only logistical hindrances, not clues.

Interest structure aids—if not enables—the effort to precisely identify variations within the highly regulated genre of detective fiction. In comparison with Murder on the Orient Express, the shifting perspective in The Lighthouse establishes a different correlation between the detective’s investigation and the reader’s interest in it. As a result of this approach, the reader remains apprised not only of everything the detective discovers but also of certain things of which the detective is ignorant, thereby breaking the parallel between interest structure and story structure that tends to typify the Golden Age detective novel and enabling the fuller development of affects other than curiosity. Conversely, as “Golden” Age refers to the height of structured, decisive, and rule-abiding detective fiction—a structure that does exist in but does not comprehensively define the contemporary detective novel—Alias Grace might well be considered the “fool’s gold” of the genre.

Alias Grace (1996) by Margaret Atwood

In this historical-fiction novel, set primarily in 1859 Ontario, budding psychologist Dr. Simon Jordan conducts a series of interviews with Grace Marks, who, sixteen years prior, was convicted of murdering Nancy Montgomery and Thomas Kinnear while working at the latter’s farm. Another worker on the estate, James McDermott, was convicted of these murders alongside Grace. As a result of this sensational and widely reported trial, in which both of the accused were
found guilty, McDermott was sentenced to death whereas Grace was sentenced to life. By the time Dr. Jordan meets Grace, several doctors have classified Grace as criminally insane, yet there has developed a growing philanthropic cabal convinced of her innocence and determined to achieve her release. Dr. Jordan attempts to discover what actually occurred on that fateful summer day in 1843, but Grace, whose autobiographical memory is uncannily detailed, claims amnesia during the crucial hours of the murder itself. After months of daily interviews shed no new light, Dr. Jordan agrees to let Dr. DuPont hypnotize Grace, which seemingly evokes the spirit of Grace’s closest friend, Mary Whitney. Mary—who died prior to Nancy’s murder, and to whom Grace frequently alludes throughout their interviews with Dr. Jordan—claims during this hypnosis to have killed Nancy herself and that Grace knows nothing of it. Bewildered by this quasi-spiritual confession, Dr. Jordan flees Ontario, failing to write the report that some had hoped would exonerate his patient. Thirteen years later, Grace at long last receives a pardon, moves to a farm in New York, and enters a tolerable marriage.

Whereas *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Lighthouse* create straightforward affects, always uphold the detective as a hero for whom the reader should cheer, and ultimately provide a lucid and decisive explanation of the crime, *Alias Grace* does none of these things. Even though its framework is strikingly similar to that of a traditional detective tale—the unknown circumstances surrounding a murder, a detective figure attempting to discover what really happened, and the reader knowing everything about the case that the detective figure knows—this novel continually withholds information and clarity from the reader. By the narrative’s end, both the detective figure and the reader are left to question whether anything that has been “learned” about the crime is actually true. Consequently, whereas the central theme in detective fiction of
any age is closed—i.e., the detective ultimately solves the case—the predominant theme in *Alias Grace* leaves the reader to continue to engaging in endless curiosity after there are no more pages to turn. This novel also exhibits several tensions that are affect-ambiguous: rather than creating competing parallel tensions—such as the tension in *Beyond Black* regarding the concomitant desires for Al and Colette to break up and to stay together, respectively—the text of *Alias Grace* creates tensions that do not clearly indicate whether the affect generated is anxiety or avidity.

In cultivating the predominant curiosity in this text, the detective figure is trying to determine not “Who did it?” in the traditional sense but more of a “Did she do it?”, with respect to only one suspect. The detective figure, Dr. Jordan, is neither a professional detective, such as Poirot and Dalgliesh, nor a detective by hobby, such as Anthony Berkeley’s Roger Sheringham or R. Austin Freeman’s Dr. John Thorndyke. Dr. Jordan’s practice as a mid-nineteenth-century physician engaged in psychological study leads him to spend the bulk of his investigation simply listening to Grace tell him whatever she wants to tell him.\(^{21}\) Only once does Dr. Jordan interview a third party to corroborate Grace’s story,\(^{22}\) and only once does he visit the location of the murder; yet, even on this visit, he does not expect to—nor does he—discover anything of importance.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Grace narrates her first session with Dr. Jordan by mentioning, “I told Dr. Jordan that I did not know what he wanted me to say. He said it wasn’t what he wanted me to say, but what I wanted to say myself, that was of interest to him” (67).

\(^{22}\) This third party is Kenneth MacKenzie, Grace’s defense attorney.

\(^{23}\) When Dr. Jordan arrives at the house in which the murders took place, he realizes that “[h]e hasn’t meant to go right up to the house - he’s only been intending to look at it from a distance” because “[w]hat can be gained from looking . . . apart, that is, from a vulgar frisson, and the indulgence of morbid interest? It’s like visiting the site of a battle: there is nothing to be seen except in the mind’s eye. Such confrontations with the actual are always a disappointment” (384).
The essential difference between the interest structures of most detective novels and that of *Alias Grace* pertains to their respective clue structures. Whereas the central tensions in *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Lighthouse* each comprise several dozen contributive tensions, the central tension in *Alias Grace* consists of no more than a half-dozen. The predominant tensions in both *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Lighthouse* account for the multiplicity of clues, both the obvious and the seemingly insignificant. Conversely, *Alias Grace* does not focus on collecting, arranging, and interpreting a variety of clues. Instead, its central interest—whether Grace killed Nancy—depends on just two contributive tensions: whether Grace is capable of murder and whether she is telling the truth.

Indeed, there are many conflicting points of view, diegetically, about whether Grace is predisposed to violence at all. There are twelve cues in the contributive tension regarding Grace’s capability/incapability to commit murder: four suggest that she is capable, six indicate she is not capable, and two are ambiguous. The first ambiguous passage takes place while Grace tells Dr. Jordan that, when feeding the chickens at the Kinnear farm, the one rooster in the bunch would peck at her ankles, provoking her threatening response: “Mind your manners or I’ll wring your neck, I told him; although in fact I could never bear to do anything of that sort” (219). In this one recollection, Grace simultaneously depicts her inclination toward and her aversion to violence, both of which she has already established in her conversations with Dr. Jordan. Grace has admitted to having contemplated both drowning a couple of her younger siblings to reduce the financial

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24 This difference is all the more notable when considering that *Alias Grace* is a longer novel than *The Lighthouse* and a much longer novel than *Murder on the Orient Express*. Containing over forty cues of its own, this tension regarding the truthfulness or lack thereof of Grace’s statements is the most efficacious—or, textually speaking, the most interesting—of any in the three novels discussed in this chapter.
burden on her family and also killing her abusive and negligent father (108, 129). Additionally, Grace has told Dr. Jordan about a game she and Mary would play in which they would name people whom they would like to scalp (150-51). On the other hand, Grace has said that real blood horrifies her and that she “would never kill a spider” (101, 216). When Nancy told her to kill a chicken for dinner, Grace recalls having squeamishly replied that she “had an aversion to shedding the blood of any living thing . . . I could not bear the thought of it, and began to cry” (249-50). There is perhaps some logic in that a violent person might also have non-violent tendencies whereas a non-violent person does not necessarily have violent tendencies, meaning that any doubt on the issue would lend toward Grace’s being violent. Even so, Grace, who is now in her thirties, only displays violent inclinations through her recollections of being a young girl. Those convinced that she is violent swear to it based on their familiarity with her when she was a teenager. Those who swear by her gentle nature are those who have become acquainted with Grace only since she has been sentenced. Certainly, Grace could have matured in the thirteen years between her conviction and her interviews with Dr. Jordan, but Grace never gives any indication that she has made such a change over time or has even had reason to change her behavior.

This curiosity tension regarding Grace’s proclivity to violence remains open—i.e., it receives no closure and thus fails to direct the central interest—but its final cue, which is also the second ambiguous passage in the tension, perhaps proves to be the most complicating statement in the entire novel. While Grace and McDermott, her accused accomplice, are on the run, she has an opportunity to turn him in to the police. She chooses not to, however, realizing this would mean his almost certain death: “There is something despicable about betrayal; and I’d felt his heart beating next to mine, and however undesired, still it was a human heart; and I did not wish to have
any part in stilling it forever, *unless I should be forced to it*” (339; emphasis added). Though this theme does not close, its final cue indicates that Grace might consider herself capable of murder, a subtle contrast to her claim that she could never kill a chicken.

Throughout Grace’s narrated passages, she often informs the reader that what she is truly thinking is not what she tells Dr. Jordan. Though her confessed dissembling never seems to be of any consequence—in stark contrast to Miranda’s bald-faced lie in *The Lighthouse*—much attention is given to building interest in this one question: Is Grace lying? The reader knows that she is—or that she says she is—lying to Dr. Jordan, but whether or not she is lying to the narratee is up for speculation, and thus the reader cannot be certain when Grace is lying to Dr. Jordan, if she ever does. The reader cannot even be certain that Grace is lying to Dr. Jordan when she explicitly states that she is doing so. Consequently, though much of her recounted story is plausible and thus believable, the reader must receive it with skepticism. Dr. Jordan never catches Grace in a lie, no matter how small, but the suspicion that she is duping him haunts him nevertheless: “Somewhere within herself - he’s seen it, if only for a moment, that conscious, even cunning look in the corner of her eye - she knows she’s concealing something from him” (363).

The singular instance in which Dr. Jordan confides in someone his suspicions of Grace’s dishonesty is framed in a way that actually bolsters the reader’s trust of Grace. His confidant is Kenneth MacKenzie, Grace’s former defense lawyer. “What she says,” Dr. Jordan explains, “has the ring of truth; her manner is candid and sincere; and yet I can’t shake the suspicion that, in some way I cannot put my finger on, she is lying to me” (377). MacKenzie—an unlikable character—
agrees that Grace is lying. He also says she is a cold-blooded killer. Just as Dr. Jordan is not yet prepared to face this latter view, the reader is inclined to resist it. The reader’s experience of the narrative has been almost entirely focalized through Dr. Jordan or narrated by Grace herself. Now an unlikable character has voiced an opinion. Not only this, but that opinion poses a conflict with the two protagonists, sitting uneasy with Dr. Jordan and maligning Grace. The reader is thus inclined to disagree with that opinion, regardless of how sensible or accurate it is.

At the end of Dr. Jordan’s sessions with Grace, he postpones and ultimately shirks writing his assessment of her because “the fact is that he can’t state anything with certainty and still tell the truth, because the truth eludes him. Or rather it’s Grace herself who eludes him. She glides ahead of him, just out of his grasp, turning her head to see if he’s still following” (407). As with the contributive tension regarding Grace’s capacity for violence, this one also receives no closure that would provide a clear answer one way or the other. Instead, the final cue of this contributive tension similarly evokes an even greater confusion.

On the antepenultimate page of the novel, Grace is journaling her thoughts to Dr. Jordan, who has become for her a type of ideal interlocutor. However, she does not have his address, and thus he will never read what she writes. She confides in him—i.e., in herself—that, upon her release from prison, she entered an unfulfilling yet satisfactory marriage. Much to her annoyance, her husband continually pleads with her to forgive him for having caused her tormenting

25 Dr. Jordan, and thus the reader, learns from the interview that MacKenzie and his law firm were prejudiced against Grace from the beginning and that MacKenzie aggressively defended her innocence not because he believed in it but for the sake of his own career advancement.
incarceration, even though she repeatedly reasons with him that it was not his fault. Grace writes that the only way she has found to placate her husband’s obnoxious supplications is to say that she forgives him, but this too bothers Grace: “I don’t feel quite right about it, forgiving [my husband] like that, because I am aware that in doing so I am telling a lie. Though I suppose it isn’t the first lie I’ve told” (458). Grace does indeed receive her pardon, but whether or not she is innocent remains unknown.

Greatly disparate from detective fiction proper, the predominant tension of curiosity in *Alias Grace* remains operative at the novel’s conclusion. However, as the end of a text can have no influence on the interest development throughout the beginning and middle of the text, *Alias Grace*’s open theme itself does not influence the novel’s interest structure to develop differently than that in *Murder on the Orient Express* or *The Lighthouse*. In other words, the interest structure of the text refers to its initial reading specifically, and thus the conclusion of a novel—i.e., whether or not the predominant theme closes—cannot influence the cultivation of the interest.

This open-ended characteristic is also reflected in the way the text uses avidity and anxiety tensions. At the beginning of the novel, Grace recounts for her narratee the calumnies circulated about her situation—not only her supposed involvement in Nancy’s murder but especially her questionable relationship with McDermott: “That is what really interests them - the gentlemen and the ladies both . . . was I really a paramour, is their chief concern, and they don’t even know

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26 When Grace worked at the Kinnear farm, where Nancy was murdered, Grace’s husband had then been a boy who worked at a neighboring farm. Some believed it was his testimony against Grace that assured her conviction. Years later, when he heard she was being released, he sought her out to marry her as a type of penance. Given her previous accommodations and her precarious financial situation as a suddenly freed woman, Grace agrees to marry him anyway. Nonetheless, as Stephanie Lovelady observes, “Grace agrees to the marriage, but afterward always calls Jamie ‘Mr. Walsh,’ indicating distance between them” (58).
themselves whether they want the answer to be yes or no” (27). This distinction, wanting “the answer to be yes or no,” is the crucial difference between whether this interest tension recounting their relationship utilizes avidity or anxiety. It is, in other words, ambiguous, the one affect that hardly ever appears in genre fiction and thus the best argument for Alias Grace not belonging to the genre of detective fiction. An ambiguous tension is not one that contains conflicting cues in pursuit of an ideal closure but rather one that possesses conflicting ideal closures. Using an ambiguous interest tension, Atwood creates another relationship that aims toward conflicting the reader’s desires and thereby the narrative’s interest.

Whereas The Lighthouse clearly develops a romance via an avidity tension and Murder on the Orient Express less clearly develops one via a curiosity tension, Alias Grace depicts a situation in which two characters sometimes act romantically, or at least sexually, but both the contextual development of these scenes as well as the likability of the characters themselves creates a tension of ambiguity. While Dr. Jordan is visiting Ontario in order to conduct his interviews with Grace, he rents a room from Mrs. Rachel Humphrey, with whom he ultimately engages in a relationship that both pleases and disturbs him. Dr. Jordan, as co-protagonist with Grace, ought to guide the affect of the tension enacted: if he desires to be with Mrs. Humphrey, their relationship should operate according to an avidity tension, and if he tries to avoid her, then her pursuit of him should operate according to an anxiety tension. However, both of these circumstances are simultaneously applicable as Dr. Jordan can never decide what it is he wants.

Even Dr. Jordan’s first impression of Mrs. Humphrey presents the inconsistencies of his desire: “As a rule, Simon avoids her type of attenuated and quietly distraught female, although doctors attract such women like magnets. Still, there’s a severe and unadorned elegance about her
- like a Quaker meeting house - which has its appeal; an appeal which, for him, is aesthetic only.

One does not make love to a minor religious edifice” (74). This mixed affect receives an equally mixed first cue. Later on, when nursing Mrs. Humphrey after she faints in his room, Dr. Jordan feels a wave of protective pity for her that he cannot really afford. The woman is only his landlady; apart from that she’s a complete stranger to him. He has no wish to alter this situation, despite an image that leaps into his mind, unbidden - aroused no doubt by the sight of a helpless woman extended upon his tumbled bed - of Mrs. Humphrey, semi-conscious and with her hands fluttering helplessly in the air . . . kicking spasmodically, making faint mewing noises while being savaged by a hulking figure that bears no resemblance at all to himself; although - from above, and from the back, which is his point of view during this sordid scene - the quilted dressing-gown looks identical. (142)

At the outset, this interest tension suggests a pair of conflicting tensions: that Dr. Jordan succeeds in copulating with Mrs. Humphrey and that he manages to evade her. However, even when their relationship turns sexual, he is still unsure whether he wants to continue having intercourse or move to another residence. Dr. Jordan thinks that “He’s gotten himself in too deep with her” and that “Having a mistress - for that is what she’s become . . . - is worse than having a wife” (363). Nevertheless, every night they go through their routine of coquettish foreplay, reliably culminating in his “[w]ords of passion and burning love, of how he cannot resist her, which - strange to say - he himself actually believes at the time” because he is “driven by what feels like uncontrollable desire” (365, 366). Is he being lured to bed against his better judgment, or is his need for love overcoming his stubborn ambition? The text provides no definitive answer to these questions, and thus the cues that the text provides can offer no directed influence on precisely where the reader’s interest ought to lie.

Another example of an ambiguous theme bears hardly any interest at all, its impact on the tone of the novel’s closure is significant. It is an embedded theme—or, as Marie-Laure Ryan originally observed it, an “embedded narrative”—in which Grace reflects late in the novel on
Jeremiah’s offer before the murders to take her away from the Kinnear farm. Moreover, as an analeptic embedded theme, it imbues the text with a note of ambiguity about a plot development that is not even diegetically possible: Grace sometimes wonders what would have become of her if she had run away with Jeremiah. She concludes, “My fate would have been very different. But only God knows whether it would have been better or worse” (456). The text draws attention to this alternate diegetic development in the context of the uncertainty as to whether Grace’s actual diegetic outcome presents regret or relief. Consequently, the text complicates the ideal closure of the larger tension regarding her release from prison. Because this embedded tension is analeptic and thus immediately receives closure, and because it is what Grace thinks after she has been released from prison, the text prevents the larger ideal closure from seeming ideal.

Although this novel’s implementation of horror elements is not ambiguous like its depiction of romantic interest, *Alias Grace*’s application of such anxiety tensions is nearly as atypical to the detective genre. In its opening pages, the novel reveals the essence of the tragedy: Nancy Montgomery and Thomas Kinnear suffer violent deaths, for which the court finds James McDermott and Grace Marks guilty. Even the death of Mary Whitney—who, unlike the four previously mentioned characters, is not based on a historical figure—is foretold within only a few pages of the character’s introduction. These prominent examples indicate not that this novel avoids anxiety tensions but that, when it does use anxiety tensions, they do not remain operative for long. This demonstrates that the text does not heavily depend on these micro-tensions of anxiety for the essential interest it is creating in the story, but it frequently does rely on them set the narrative’s tone.
Early in the novel, Grace describes a frightening visit she receives from a phrenologist, which is the first narrated interaction between Grace and any doctor:

[H]e comes through the doorway, big stomach, black coat . . . . I see his hand, a hand like a glove, a glove stuffed with raw meat, his hand plunging into the open mouth of his leather bag. It comes out glinting, and I know I have seen a hand like that before; and then I lift my head and stare him straight in the eye, and my heart clenches and kicks out inside me, and then I begin to scream. Because it’s the same doctor, the same one, the very same black-coated doctor with his bagful of shining knives. (29)

This passage concludes its respective chapter, but the following page begins with the continuation of the same scene:

I was brought round with a glass of cold water dashed in the face, but continued screaming, although the doctor was no longer in sight; so was restrained by two kitchen maids and the gardener’s boy, who sat on my legs. The Governor’s wife had sent for the Matron from the Penitentiary, who arrived with two of the keepers; and she gave me a brisk slap across the face, at which I stopped. It was not the same doctor in any case, it only looked like him. (30)

The narrative never does identify that doctor nor what it was he did to Grace with his “bagful of shining knives.” Instead, these two adjoining passages establish both the trauma Grace has thus far undergone during her incarceration as well as the questionable state of her mental health. Though the conclusion of the one chapter certainly creates an anxiety tension that motivates the reader to turn the page, and quickly, the micro-tension of her immediate harm closes whereas the macro-tension of her potential future encounter with the evil doctor remains operative until Grace is released from prison.27

27 This evil doctor is never again referenced, but, according to interest structure, the threat he poses to Grace functions identically to the threat that a ghost or serial killer poses to someone locked in a house: it remains until the vulnerable character achieves distance from the threat—geographical space from most spiritual threats, temporal or “quick” (life) space from most human threats. The difference is a matter of interest structure: whereas a horror text continually reminds the reader that the threatened character could suffer attack, the text of Alias Grace lets the reader forget the specific threat, leaving only the sense that her situation is dangerous.
Another example of an anxiety micro-tension not only confirms that these tensions in *Alias Grace* set the tone of the narrative but also demonstrates the distinction this presents from the traditional detective novel, which often implements one macro-tension of anxiety to aid the interest development, even if this tension itself is not much developed. As Grace recounts her life story during her meetings with Dr. Jordan, she comes to the incident of her mother’s death and burial. As Grace and her family are at the time on a ship, emigrating from Ireland to Canada, “burial” means dropping her mother’s body into the ocean. With her father unfeeling and indisposed, the funeral duties fall to the eight-year-old Grace, who fortunately does receive some guidance from the elderly and empathetic Mrs. Phelan, a fellow passenger:

I sat as if paralyzed, and did not know what to do next. But Mrs. Phelan said we could not leave her lying there, and did I have a white sheet for her to be buried in. And then I began to worry terribly, because all we had was the three sheets. There were two old ones that had been worn through and then cut in two and turned, and also the one new sheet given to us by Aunt Pauline; and I did not know which to use. It seemed like disrespect to use an old one, but if I used the new one it would go to waste as far as the living were concerned; and all my grief became concentrated, so to speak, on the matter of the sheets. And finally I asked myself what my mother would prefer, and since she’d always placed herself second best in life, I decided on the old one; and at least it was more or less clean.

This single, unabridged passage includes an entire tension: it initiates an anxiety as to which sheet should be used, enhances the anxiety with a cue as it seems both options are bad ones, and terminates the anxiety as she picks one of the old sheets. This anxiety tension neither ostensibly nor actually bears any relevance to the predominant tension in the text. Also, its durative effect extends no more than a paragraph. This brevity does not discount the status of the tension, but this example, as well as the previous, does represent the different application of anxiety tensions in this novel compared with that in *Murder on the Orient Express* and *The Lighthouse*. In other words, this comparison demonstrates the inclination of detective novels proper to implement at least one anxiety macro-tension to aid in the interest of the story’s development.
The ambiguity that *Alias Grace* cultivates is the product of the text’s careful balance of its characters’ likability and its representations of characters’ desires, which serve to effectively mute the tension in these themes. Indeed, it is not a failure of the text but the compelling creation of narrative interest nearly devoid of narrative tension. As to how a reader should interpret the narrative, Stephanie Lovelady sagaciously suggests that “[i]t would be wrong . . . to impose any one of these three explanations—mental illness, possession, or outright deception—on *Alias Grace* as the authoritative one, because the novel is so committed to ambiguity, multiple narratives, and undecidability” (57). Even without the current methodology to guide her reader, this critic discerns the essential impression cultivated by the complex affect and tension pattern shaping the reading experience of *Alias Grace*. As demonstrated above, interest structure analysis enables the precise articulation of how the text creates this impression.

Chapter Three Conclusion

Although no edict of detective fiction has come close to the universal acknowledgment that has been given to the Van Dine principle—which *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Lighthouse*, and *Alias Grace* all uphold—this genre classification might actually depend just as much on the clue structure of a narrative. This is the prominent distinction between the first two novels, widely accepted as “detective fiction,” and the third, which generally is not. Even the focalization through the detective has proven merely a strategy to uphold the Van Dine principle, a strategy that is far from necessary to achieve this goal. Both *The Lighthouse* and *Alias Grace* amply exhibit the arbitrariness of focalization with respect to a text’s adherence to the Van Dine principle, and even the Golden Age standard of *Murder on the Orient Express* gives the reader a paratextual head start on the mystery.
Beyond what defines the detective fiction is that which characterizes it, which is, in a word, anything. Whether this evolution would be irksome or pleasing to those early detective writers, the stringent guidelines by which they abided by before World War II would almost certainly make this development at least surprising. Romance and horror both have a place in the detective novel, which comes not at the expense of the mystery but does tend to delimit the emphasis thereon. Because love need no longer be depicted as suspicious behavior, and because the discovery of one body is now more likely to be followed by another, there tend to be more scenes in the contemporary detective narrative in which the central tension of curiosity—the “whodunnit?” interest—are idle.

As a consequence, more attention has been given to the tension that has always existed in the detective novel but has rarely been given any critical or even conscious attention: the avidity regarding the reader’s hope that the detective will be successful in finding out the culprit. Because the detective can fall in love, his likability is augmented by her character trait of benevolence, and the avidity tension increases. Because the detective can die, her likability is augmented by her character trait of suffering, and the avidity tension increases. While the overwhelming focus has been on the puzzle nature of the genre, these stories have subtly improved in their abilities to generate interest, and the puzzle has had nothing to do with it.
CONCLUSION

There well might be responses to this work claiming that the analyses provided herein could be performed entirely outside the theoretical framework introduced in this study. In anticipation of such an objection, it is a worthwhile clarification that interest structure does not necessarily improve the ability of every critic to comprehend the structure of every narrative. Rather, the central purpose of this study is to develop an extensive and systematic framework in which one’s comprehension of one aspect of a narrative might be situated in such a way that a fuller understanding of the entire narrative might be more readily achievable.

This work additionally contributes a reframing of narrative as a trichotomy of story, discourse, and interest structures, rather than the traditional reckoning, which has observed only a dichotomy of the first two. There is a century-long dialog that represents narrative as a) a story b) that is told, and from this perspective the binary is sensible. However, upon consideration of the discourse’s function, it becomes readily apparent that there are aspects of the narrative that are not story that the discourse is nonetheless in charge of overseeing. This study identifies five components of discourse in all: event, description, dialog, sequence, and presentation.

The third major contribution this work makes is through its development of a systematic theory of character likability. It is symptomatic of a structuralism devoid of an interest framework that such a paradigmatic approach to the likability of characters had previously been overlooked. It is, after all, the purpose of likability to determine how narrative elements are operating to create textual interest.
The first chapter of this study demonstrates how avidity tensions are implemented and managed in romance novels. Interest structure exhibits how a narrative identifies the characters that ultimately will be involved in a romantic relationship as well as how the text persuades the reader to care about their mutual happiness. This chapter also analyzed the impact that a narratorial intrusion can have on the central avidity tensions of a text. It is most notably the clever rearrangement of sequence cues in this Possession that posits its tension patterns in realms of complexity that are not espied in A Room with a View or Oscar & Lucinda. The overarching interest in a marriage operates according to a sequence cues of smaller anticipations: each individual becoming attracted to the other, the attraction of each to blossom into love, their confessions of love to each other, and ultimately their first kiss / first time making love / their moving in together / marriage. Additionally, interest structure analysis reveals the influence that compulsory heterosexuality has on the abstract reader to favor male-female relationships; consequently, an explicit remark is often needed to initiate textual interest in a same-sex romance. As with the heteronormative expectations that the marriage plot implies a man and a woman, so too are there expectations that those falling in love are young and still have their lives ahead of them.

The second chapter of this study addressed anxiety-motivated fiction in the form of works belonging the horror genre, providing an analysis of the epistolary, frame-narrative, and heterodiegetic narrative styles in Dracula, The Woman in Black, and Beyond Black, respectively. The texts all tend toward implementing tensions of curiosity and avidity to build up the tension of the central theme before it even properly begins. Horror stories often utilize both avidity and curiosity tensions to increase the central anxiety tension.
The final chapter of this study shows how detective fiction often builds its central curiosity through an early establishment of anxiety tensions. This narrative phenomenon was seen in interest structure analyses of *Murder on the Orient Express*, *The Lighthouse*, and *Alias Grace*. As a result, this study found that detective fiction novels are just as reliant on the clue structure as they are bound by the Van Dine principle. Moreover, because the contemporary detective, unlike that figure of the early twentieth century, can fall in love and die, this character’s likability is heightened, and thus the interest in the narrative is heightened as well. Also, allowing the reader to see events through different eyes than those of the detective and to see different events than what the detective sees is a tactic that has enabled the contemporary detective novel to keep pace with more action-packed genres, such as thrillers and crime fiction, while still adhering to the Van Dine principle.

It is the interest structure that determines whether any narrative belongs in the romance genre, horror genre, detective genre, or no genre in particular. This determinism often, though not always, begins with the narrative’s title: romance titles commonly name the couple-to-be or something that quickly identifies them,¹ horror titles often reference the central threat,² and detective fiction titles tend to reference the type of crime committed, an important clue, or the location of the crime. Regarding likability, there is a distinction between a likable character’s mistake exposing her/them/him to danger and a character’s reckless foolishness making her/them/him less likable. One of the essential principles, though, in determining how and how

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¹ Compulsory heteronormativity influences the reader to interpret a title naming a man and a woman as being the title of a romance story.

² Because the character of Dracula is so broadly known, the modern experience of reading *Dracula* does not reflect the text’s structural technique in its opening chapters to incite anxiety through curiosity from the perspective of the abstract reader. Contemporarily, the title functions as a paratextual cue for the central anxiety.
much character likability influences the interest a text generates is that the diegetic desires of the human reader do not necessarily parallel those of the narrator or any character. Focalization through a character, though, can induce a reader to align her/their/his desires with that character even if the reader perceives that character as unlikable. Additionally, the presentation of a passage can also have a significant impact on that passage’s ability to captivate a reader’s interest: for instance, the interest generated by a line of dialog that appears as the last sentence of its respective chapter is greater than that of the same line in the middle of a lengthy dialog.

This author recommends the adoption of this work for the purposes of developing a mythometric efficacy to be utilized in computational narratology, refining close-reading practices for the benefit of narrative medicine, and launching a formal study of the growing narrative savvy in our narrative-saturated culture. Moreover, likability theory has the potential for a much broader application. An integral component of this expansion depends on the reorientation of likability from a conceptual category, in which form it pertains to the abstract reader, to a psycho-social category that concerns flesh-and-blood readers. If applied through the frameworks of experientiality and narrative medicine, likability theory could potentially serve as signpostings of the cultural identity, political inclination, and mental health of a particular individual. In other words, these secondary characteristics of likability pertain less to what makes a character likable than to what makes a character interesting.

To reconstruct likability theory as a practical assessment of any sociological orientation, one would need to conduct several large surveys of diverse groups of people.\(^3\) For instance, let us suppose that one wanted to determine if the manner in which a person perceives fictional characters

\(^3\) The type and extent of diversity would depend on the categories one wishes to assess.
tends to represent that person’s political-party alignment. The survey in this case could provide a list of the names of a dozen popular villains, heroes, and anti-heroes and a dozen popular figures. The names would be organized alphabetically in order not to betray any character’s or person’s moral alignment. The participant would be instructed to cross out any unfamiliar characters and figures, rank them according to preference, and briefly describe what is likable and what is unlikable about each. Referencing the characters and figures list, the participant would then answer a series of questions about the characters and figures as well as about a variety of historical as well as hypothetical situations. The hypothesis behind this particular study is that the more conservative a participant is, the more likely it will be that the participant will most prefer purely good heroes, such as Superman, and least prefer purely evil villains, such as Scar from *The Lion King*.

The next project this author will attend to will be a thorough interest structure analysis of Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. This novel has been the focus of more narratological expositions than any other literary work in English, and thus a detailed mapping of the tension patterns in this narrative will allow ample opportunity to compare the usefulness of this methodology with many of the traditional methodologies on which literary structuralism has been founded. It is also within this project that this author will explore primary and secondary interest structures—that is, the interest a narrative text cultivates upon a first reading compared with that upon a second reading.

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4 To determine a character’s morality in a detailed manner that would provide the stagnant categorizations required for such a study, moral orientation, Gary Gygax’s system of moral alignment might prove useful. Popularized through the role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*, Gygax’s system is a paradigm that determines whether a character is lawful, neutral, or chaotic and whether that character is good, neutral, or evil. All nine combinations are possible and represented in fiction.
Byatt’s *Possession: A Romance* concludes with a postscript: Ash meets his daughter, at this time a child, for the first time but does not reveal his identity. Instead, as he is aware that LaMotte’s sister and brother-in-law are raising his and LaMotte’s daughter, Ash asks the little girl if she would pass on a message to her “aunt.” The message is coded, meant to reveal his identity to LaMotte alone and thereby confirm that he received her letter about their child. The little girl promises to relay the message, but she soon forgets all about it. Jean-Louis Chevalier has curiously remarked that this postscript is “outside the narrative, yet at the very heart of the story” (131). The statement is paradoxical, yet one immediately comprehends its meaning. Just as the novel’s subtitle—*A Romance*—challenges the notion of where the narrative begins, so too does its postscript conflict with the sense of an ending.

Neither a foreshadowing title nor a detached postscript is unique; indeed, it is their regularity that illustrates the evident need for a theory of interest structure. The subtitle creates an expectation that necessarily impacts the interpretation of character interaction, and the postscript re-ignites a hope merely to snuff it out. Although a greater exposure to traditional literary structuralism might have prevented Chevalier from misrepresenting the relationship between narrative and story, the consequent presumption of the standardized story-discourse binary would still have restricted his perception of a fundamental truth about this narrative. It is only by adopting the trichotomous conceptualization of story, discourse, and interest that we may comment on “the very heart” of any narrative.
WORKS CITED

Primary


Secondary


Cox, Donna. “‘I have no story to tell!’: Maternal Rage in Susan Hill’s The Woman in Black.” Intertexts, vol. 4, no. 1, 2000, pp. 74-88.


Suggested Further Reading

General


**Regarding Character Likability**


**Regarding Closure**


**Regarding Tensions**


Regarding Thematic Affects


APPENDIX A

ORIGINS OF INTEREST STRUCTURE
Ancient Origins

c. 335 BCE  Aristotle, *Poetics*

Appraised the “structure of incidents” (συνίστασθαι τοὺσ μύθους) as paramount in the tragedy and indicated that the function of this structure is to incite an emotional response from the audience: emotion equals investment, equals interest.¹ Though he considered surprise as the most cathartic element, his premise, that the interest generated by a text depends on the structuring of its events and actions, is the irreducible complexity of the interest in story. Additionally, he asserted that the interest in a narrative exists in direct proportion to the complexity of that narrative, indicating that this interest is to some degree measurable.

c. 19 BCE  Horace, *Ars Poetica*

Introduced the notion of in mediās rēs, which—among other things—developed Aristotle’s notion that the structure of a narrative directly impacts its interest by drawing attention to the capacity of a diegetic anachrony in the storytelling to accomplish this very phenomenon.²

Modern Origins³

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¹ “Much more effective . . . [than] a play with characterization,” Aristotle asserts, “will be a play with a plot and structure of events” (Aristotle 38).

² “Nor does he begin the Trojan War from the egg [ab ōvō], / but always he hurries to the action, and snatches the listener into the middle of things [in mediās rēs]” (Horace, Ins. 145-46). In other words, when a narrative begins at the beginning of the story, the audience knows everything there is to know; however, when a narrative begins in the middle of the story, the audience becomes curious about in the events that have led up to this point.

³ Although the *Poetics* and *Ars Poetica* remained highly influential throughout the centuries, little progress was made in the way of literary structural analysis until nineteenth-century theorists turned critical attention to the novel.
1822 **Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle), *De L'Amour* [“On Love”]**

Identified the dual function of a novel as providing “new lights . . . upon our knowledge of the human heart” as well as “the veritable pleasure of novels” of “day-dreaming” (58). Though far detached from current vernacular, the distinction Stendhal makes between a fictional text as A) intermediary between reader and the real world and B) narrative as intermediary between reader and the diegetic world anticipates not Viktor Šklovskij’s twentieth-century binarization of narrative as fabula and sujet—which is widely held as the modern origin of structuralism—but rather Wolf Schmid’s twenty-first-century binarization of implied/abstract author as A) presumed addressee and B) ideal recipient.

1859 **George Henry Lewes, “The Novels of Jane Austen”**

Argued that the interest in a story is only secondarily derived from the subjective preferences of an individual reader and primarily from the textual ordering of events. He further observed that narrative text that does not increase the interest in a story must consequently decrease it. From this observation, Lewes deduced his claim that the ratio of event quantity to narrative length directly impacts the pleasure of reading.5

1859 **Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will***

Indicated that the interest in a story—the “pleasure of pursuit”—depends on the balance of improbability and possibility.6 Discussing narrative in the proto-structuralist terminology of “systems,” he formed his notion of the requisite conditions for story construction around what he considered the story’s ultimate goal—to end in an interesting manner.7

1863 **Freytag, *Die Technik des Dramas* [“Technique of the Drama”]**

Created a five-part model of interest development in drama: introduction, rise, climax, fall, and catastrophe. This model—much like that of Vladimir Propp, sixty-five years later—blended objective and subjective approaches by establishing an absolute order of

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4 It is Nicholas Dames’s thoroughly researched anthology chapter “Theories on the Novel” that first directed me to Stendhal as the modern originator of structuralist thought on the novel.

5 “The laws of construction, likewise, are derived from the invariable relation between a certain order and succession of events, and the amount of interest excited by that order” (Lewes, par. 20).

6 “The attraction of a plot, in its narrowest sense, is due, largely, to the play of intellect and of will in curiosity and imaginative anticipation. Any spectacle which involves great uncertainty of issue, however little value this issue may have in itself, may stimulate in a pleasurable manner the activities of attention and expectation. The highest degree of this gratification is obtained when the event is neither too improbable and unexpected, nor too certain” (Bain 222).

7 Bain’s requisite conditions for story are that it produce “an interesting end, the occupation of the powers in working for that end, its gradual approach and final attainment” (220).
development comprised of varying components: for instance, he noted that the “exciting momentum/force” is necessary whereas the “tragic moment/force” and the “moment/force of last suspense,” though both common, are dispensable. Freytag further identified that each story generates its own interest in accordance with the time that it takes to tell the story, with irrelevant details negatively impacting that interest.8

1864 Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*

Promoted the scientific study of the novel by claiming an empirical approach would liberate its study rather than restrict it.9

1864 Hippolyte A. Taine, *History of English Literature*

Argued that the interest in a novel can be heightened by, among other things, the quantitative increase of passages relevant to the point of interest.

1880 Émile Zola, “The Experimental Novel”

Advocated that literary critics approach the novel with the scientific method that Claude Bernard—a celebrated nineteenth-century physiologist who helped pioneer blind-experiment methodology—applied to medicine.10

1884 Walter Besant, “The Art of Fiction”

Advocated for the study of the novel at universities, claiming it to be as important as any other art, but he paradoxically claimed that theory and teaching could not advance the collective understanding of the novel, a point that he supported by disparaging contemporary scientific approaches. As a further contradiction, surprisingly harmonious with the scientific approach he besmirched, Besant suggested that a novel could be studied according to its individual components. It was this suggestion that prompted Henry James’s seminal response, mentioned below; prompting this response has proven Besant’s most significant influence on the study of interest, though indirectly so.

1884 Henry James, “The Art of Fiction”

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8 Freytag noted that “every separate structure must awaken and satisfy an independent interest; and this is possible only by using sufficient time” (117). Moreover, much like Lewes, he observed that “[t]he exposition should be kept free from anything distracting” (120).

9 Today, when the Novel is growing and expanding, when it is beginning to be the serious, passionate, living form of literary study and social inquiry . . . when the Novel has submitted itself to the study and discipline of science, it can claim the freedom and rights of science” (as cited in Dames, 518-19).

10 Zola declared it was not enough to study merely “the expression of sentiments . . . because it is essential also to exhibit the working of these sentiments” (49).
Promoted the critical and theoretical study of the novel by claiming that no legitimate criticism or theory on the novel yet existed, a claim that was particularly dismissive of the scientific approaches mentioned above. James momentarily acknowledged the possibility of studying the story apart from the narrative as a whole, but he predominantly stressed the need to study a novel as a whole, indivisible unit.

1895 Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), “On Literary Construction”

Identified that the interest generated by a narrative partially depends on the order in which a writer makes the reader think about certain aspects of the novel such as description, story, and complementary subplots. Lee also observed that the repetition of aspects related to a single theme tends to increase the reader’s interest in them by reminding the reader of that theme. In developing her notion of mood, however, Lee conflated the impact that a reiteration of a theme has on its own mood with the impact that a theme has on the mood of another theme.

1917 Viktor Šklovskij, “Art as Technique”

Introduced the notion of defamiliarization, which is often held to be the first distinction between the content and presentation of narrative.

1921 Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction

 Hinted at a development in the scientific approach to the novel, for which this essay has occasionally been hailed as formalist criticism, even though it provided little in the way of a theory on which subsequent formalist criticism could build. Lubbock was aware of his

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11 As Dames points out, literary scholars since the middle of the twentieth century have widely credited James, as well as the later Percy Lubbock, with initiating the critical study of the recent form of the novel. By bringing attention to the “Victorian School” theorists, such as Lewes and Bain, Dames demonstrates that “James’s claim of a general absence of critical consciousness about the novel is a shrewd and enabling tactic rather than a truth” (507).

12 “This sense of the story being the idea, the starting-point, of the novel, is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole” (James 18).

13 “The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread” (James 18).

14 Lee explained that if the themes in a novel “come to nothing, and leave the Reader disappointed, incredulous, less willing to attend after having wasted expectations and sympathies . . . if you confuse [the reader’s] ideas or waste his energy, you can no longer do anything with him” (5, 10).

15 For a succinct overview of Šklovskij’s contributions and the impact thereof, see Gorman, “Viktor Shklovsky at 115.”
own linguistic restrictions when discussing fiction in the systematic manner he would have liked.\textsuperscript{16} This perhaps was why he held that a comprehensive scientific approach was not possible.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{1921 Viktor Šklovskij, “Sterne’s Tristram Shandy: Stylistic Commentary”}

Introduced the terms \textit{fabula} and \textit{sujet}, which distinguished the object of art from the essence of art that it represents, respectively. From this distinction, and by means of several interpretations and misinterpretations, would ultimately develop the classical structuralist dichotomy of story and discourse.

\textbf{1925 Boris Tomaševskij, “Thematics”}

Adopted Šklovskij’s \textit{fabula} and \textit{sujet} but attributed to them more literature-specific meanings: \textit{fabula} as the events that occur in the causal, temporal in which they occur and \textit{sujet} as the manner in which these events are communicated. Although Tomaševskij “misinterpreted” the \textit{fabula/sujet} binary, his application has proved a more functional approach to breaking down narrative for narrative analysis.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{1927 E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel}

Identified that the interest a story possesses is directly related to how much of the story the reader is able to remember.\textsuperscript{19} More famously, Forster disputed Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics} by claiming that character, not action, is the heart of a story’s interest.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{16} “The want of a received nomenclature is a real hindrance, and I have often wished that the modern novel had been invented a hundred years sooner, so that it might have fallen into the hands of the critical schoolmen of the seventeenth century” (Lubbock 22).

\textsuperscript{17} “Even if a critic’s memory were infallible, as it can never be, still it would be impossible for him to give a really scientific account of the structure of the simplest book, since in the last resort he cannot lay his finger upon a single one of the effects to which he refers” (Lubbock 11).

\textsuperscript{18} It is a point of historical irony that Tomaševskij never credited Šklovskij for developing the \textit{fabula/sujet} binary, and many in literary structuralism and post-structuralism have since credited Šklovskij, not Tomaševskij, for the revised version of the binary, which veritably founded literary structuralism. For more on the development of this dichotomy, see Gorman, “Russian Formalism”; Schmid, “The Slavic Cradle.” For more on the general misconception (and a correction) of this dichotomy, see Gorman, “Shklovsky and Narrative Theory”; Schmid, “Fabel und Sujet.”

\textsuperscript{19} “Memory and intelligence are closely connected, for unless we remember we cannot understand. If by the time the queen dies we have forgotten the existence of the king we shall never make out what killed her” (Forster 88).

\textsuperscript{20} Forster dismissed suspense as “the only literary tool that has any effect upon tyrants and savages” and story itself as a “tapeworm” and “the lowest and simplest of literary organisms” (26; 27-28).
1928 Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*

Identified thirty-one occurrences, or “functions,” that account for the story development in all Russian folktales. He also suggested that the *scheme* of a story—its series of functions—can serve to measure a story, though Propp did not provide a method for such a measurement.\(^{21}\)

1961 Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*

Introduced the concept of the implied author, which provided a means for discussing the intention of a text.\(^{22}\) Booth also coined “implied reader” as a correlative term. Additionally, Booth identified three types of “narrative interest”: *intellectual* interest pertains to our desire to know facts and truth; *qualitative* interest identifies a wish for closure, for developed patterns to be completed; and *practical* interest refers to our investment in the success or failure of those whom we love or hate, respectively. With this trichotomy, Booth was the first to suggest a multiplicity of structural motivations.

1966 Claude Bremond, “The Logic of Narrative Possibilities”

Condensed Propp’s thirty-one functions by dismissing character perspective and introducing the elementary sequence, a three-step development by which everything in a story begins, develops, and concludes. Whereas Propp premised his thirty-one functions on how they relate to the hero, Bremond created his structure from a first-person perspective adaptable to any character.

1966 William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience”

Described narrative as having two functions: the *referential* function, which establishes a story in its contextual world by telling events in the chronological order in which they occurred, and the *evaluative* function, which describes the purpose in the story’s being told. The evaluative function determines whether or not a narrative is *tellable*, a concept that assesses both the purpose and the interest of a story to determine whether or not is worth being told.

\(^{21}\) “The scheme is a measuring unit for individual tales. Just as cloth can be measured with a yardstick to determine its length, tales may be measured by the scheme and thereby defined” (Propp 65).

\(^{22}\) Several scholars predating Booth had coined terms signifying a concept strikingly similar to Booth’s implied author, including Viktor Vinogradov’s *obraz avtora* (“author’s image”) in 1926, Jurij Tynjanov’s “literary personality” in 1927, and Jan Mukařovský’s *subjekt díla* (“work’s subject”) in 1937. See Schmid, “Implied Author.”
1970  **Roland Barthes, S/Z**

Developed five codes for understanding and interpreting a narrative: the hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic, and cultural codes. For the sake of the current study, only the first two codes are directly relevant. The hermeneutic and proairetic codes, which Barthes described as “irreversible” because they function only sequentially, each categorizing a type of readerly motivation. The hermeneutic code deals with “mysteries of the text” and how the text misdirects the reader and otherwise withholds answers. The proairetic code, the “narrative drive of the text,” pertains to the anticipation of actions and events—i.e., suspense.\(^{23}\)

1970  **Juri Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text**

The first work to theorize about event itself, claiming that there are two types of event: that which does not and that which does develop the plot.

1972  **William Labov, Language in the Inner City**

Developed the evaluation function as having four types. Two of these types—external evaluation and the embedding of evaluation—pertain to the narrative’s purpose; the other two types—evaluative action and evaluation by suspension of the action—refer to the interest generated by the story. In these latter types, Labov implied that action is inherently more captivating than is represented dialogue and that the attention of the listener increases if the storyteller, when relating two or more related actions, imposes narrative distance between the actions.

1975  **Mary Louise Pratt, “Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse”**

 Adopted Labov and Waletzky’s notion of the tellable in oral storytelling and applied it to literature.

1978  **Christian Kock, “Narrative Tropes: A Study of Points in Plots”**

Utilized tellability to describe the structures of genres.

1984  **Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot**

Applied a hybrid of formalism and Freudian analysis to assess narrative interest. Brooks implied not only that desire is measurable but also that this measure depends, in a Labovian

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\(^{23}\) It is within these two codes that all tensions operate.
sense, on those elements that delay the satisfaction of the desire. Claiming that the satisfaction of desire is also the termination of desire, Brooks’s notion of binding represents a suppression of this satisfaction; the longer the reader must wait for that satisfaction, the greater it will be.

1986 Marie-Laure Ryan, “Embedded Narratives and Tellability”

Interpreted tellability as existing in direct proportion to the complexity of plot sequences.

2002 David Herman, Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative

Introduced a linguistic model of narrative that employs a quantitative component. Herman held that the language structures in the text and the reader’s cognitive processing of those structures contribute more-or-less equally in the endeavor to measure the interest of the actual story as opposed to alternative developments therein.

2003 Wolf Schmid, Narratology: An Introduction

Introduced the concept of the abstract reader, effectively providing the much-debated conceptual reader notion with a capacity for a predetermined cultural awareness.

2003 Meir Sternberg, “Universals of Narrative and Their Cognitivist Fortunes (II)”

Proposed three universal categories of narrative: surprise, suspense, and curiosity. He also formulated the relevant concepts of “initiating event or situation,” “outcome of the initiating event,” and “additional discourse material” (518).

2008 Peter Hühn, “Functions and Forms of Eventfulness in Narrative Fiction”

Reinterpreted Lotman’s dichotomy as being a distinction between non-anthropomorphic (“event I”) and anthropomorphic (“event II”). Hühn applied this distinction in order to measure the impact of eventfulness of individual plot developments.

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24 “Textual energy, all that is aroused into expectancy and possibility in a text, can become usable by plot only when it has been bound or formalized. . . . As the word ‘binding’ itself suggests, these formalizations and the recognitions they provoke may in some sense be painful: they create a delay, a postponement in the discharge of energy, a turning back from immediate pleasure, to ensure that the ultimate pleasurable discharge will be more complete. The most effective or, at the least, the most challenging texts may be those that are most delayed, most highly bound, most painful” (Brooks 101-02).

25 Ryan’s notion of “complexity” pertains to the number of possible outcomes from a position in a plot whereas the current project’s notion of the same refers to the number of actual developments in a particular sequence.

26 “[C]ounting how many verbal clauses of each type a given narrative contains [in order to] assign exact values to the relevant parameters and thereby check for genre-specific patterns” (Herman 46).
2017 Wolf Schmid, “Eventfulness and Repetitiveness”

Argued that the measurement of eventfulness does not depend on a bifurcation of event categories, asserting instead that such can be determined through an assessment of the given event’s relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility, and non-iterativity.
GLOSSARY

**abstract reader**
“the contents of the author’s image of the recipient that is fixed in the text by specific indexical signs”\(^2\); the combined perspective of two conceptual entities (IDEAL RECIPIENT, PRESUMED ADDRESSEE) through which INTEREST STRUCTURE is interpreted.

**active tension**
the state of a TENSION in a SCENE in which a CUE develops that tension.

**affect**
the conceptual, intratextual quality that determines how a TENSION develops. See also ANXIETY, AVIDITY, CURIOSITY.

**ambiguous tension**
a TENSION in which the AFFECT is textually conflicted, often accomplished through the construction of ambiguous LIKABILITY; a tension that cannot be determined to operate according to AVIDITY or ANXIETY.

**analeptic**
the nature of “any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment”\(^3\); pertaining to a flashback. See also PROLEPTIC.

**anxiety**
the AFFECT by which a TENSION operates to create an apprehension of a possible outcome in the DIEGETIC world.

**assistive cue**
a CUE that heightens a TENSION by increasing the probability that a THEME will reach its IDEAL CLOSURE.

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\(^1\) To distinguish terms this study introduces—that is, terms to which this study applies definitions or applications that would not be found outside of this study—these terms are represented by headwords in both bold and italic font; technical terms that are adopted without modification from other sources are represented by headwords listed in bold font only with no italics. Terms that are listed elsewhere in this Glossary are represented in small majuscules in the definitions of other terms.

\(^2\) Schmid 54. Schmid elaborates that “the abstract reader can be seen as a presumed, postulated addressee to whom the work is directed and whose linguistic codes, ideological norms, and esthetic ideas must be taken into account if the work is to be understood [...] [and it can be seen as] an image of the ideal recipient who understands the work in a way that optimally matches its structure, and who adopts the interpretive position and esthetic standpoint put forward by the work” (54-55; 55).

\(^3\) Genette 40.
**assistive tension**
a TENSION that exists in a SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP with another tension in such a way that the INTERSECTION functions like an ASSISTIVE Cue of that other tension.

**avidity**
the AFFECT by which a TENSION operates to create an anticipation for a possible outcome in the DIEGETIC world.

**benevolence**
a JURIDICAL ASPECT of LIKABILITY that establishes a character’s good intentions, which exculpates that character of culpability for any corresponding negative development; one of four essential aspects of likability. See also INNOCENCE, INTEGRITY, SUFFERING.

**central tension**
the TENSION that contains the most CUES among all tensions in a narrative; the tension produced by the CENTRAL THEME.

**central theme**
the THEME that is most predominant in and most representative of a narrative; the theme that generates the TENSION that is comprised of the most CUES and thereby produces the most INTEREST; a narrative’s main plot.

**change of state**
a development in the “set of properties that refer to an agent or to the setting at a particular point in time”; the alteration (in character identity, diegetic geographical location, etc.) that often results from an action or event.

**closed theme**
a THEME that ultimately receives closure, either by achieving its IDEAL CLOSURE or by such being rendered impossible by the theme’s receiving NON-IDEAL CLOSURE; a theme that is INOPERATIVE by the end of the narrative.

**concurrence**
the occurrence of two or more TENSIONs being ACTIVE (and thus OPERATIVE) in a single SCENE.

**conjunction**
the occurrence of two or more TENSIONs being OPERATIVE in a single SCENE in which no more than one of these tensions is ACTIVE.

**contributive tension**
in a SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP, the TENSION whose closure functions as the INTERSECTION and thus as a Cue of another tension.

**cue**
a narrative passage that contributes to a TENSION by increasing, sustaining, or decreasing it, or by initiating or terminating it. See also ASSISTIVE CUE, OBSTRUCTIVE CUE; DIRECT CUE, INDIRECT CUE.

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**curiosity**  
the AFFECT by which a TENSION operates to create a gap in knowledge in the DIEGETIC world as well as a motivation for the reader’s desire to fill this gap.

**counter interest**  
narrative text that functions to directly reduce the INTEREST created by a THEME.⁵

**default likability**  
the intrinsic LIKABILITY attributed to a character upon the text’s introduction of that character but before the text provides any information regarding the four essential aspects of that character’s likability/UNLIKABILITY. See also BENEVOLENCE, INNOCENCE, INTEGRITY, SUFFERING.

**description cue**  
a narrative passage featuring description that functions as a Cue of a TENSION.⁶

**dialog cue**  
a narrative passage featuring dialog that functions as a Cue of a TENSION.

**diegetic**  
pertaining to “[t]he (fictional) world in which the situations and events narrated occur.”⁷ See also EXTRADIEGETIC, HETERODIEGETIC, HOMODIEGETIC.

**diegetic justice**  
refers to the moral balance depicted in the DIEGETIC world of a narrative as regards the LIKABILITY of a character; determines both JURIDICAL ASPECTs (BENEVOLENCE and SUFFERING) of likability.

**direct cue**  
a CUE that functions in only one TENSION⁸; a cue contributes to a tension directly and not as part of another tension. See also INDIRECT CUE.

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⁵ It is important to note that counter interest reduces only the interest of a theme and not the tension produced by a theme. In other words, counter interest does not pertain to the probability of a theme achieving its ideal closure; it pertains only to the interest that a reader has taken in a theme, as directed by the narrative’s interest structure.

⁶ Gerald Prince remarks that description is “[t]raditionally distinguished from narration and commentary” (19).

⁷ Prince 20 (“diegesis”).

⁸ To clarify, a single passage can function as two different cues in two different tensions without either cue functioning in two different tensions.
**discourse structure**
the textual composition of event, description, dialog, sequence, and presentation.⁹ See also INTEREST STRUCTURE, STORY STRUCTURE.

**embedded narrative**
“any story-like representation produced in the mind of a character and reproduced in the mind of the reader”; originates through a DIEGETIC mental act either as a “retrospective [interpretation] of the past [or a projection] of the future.”¹⁰

**event cue**
a narrative passage featuring an event (or action) that functions as a Cue of a TENSION.

**extradiegetic**
refers to that which is “[e]xternal to (not part of) any [DIEGETIC world].”¹¹

**false closure**
closure that appears before a Cue of the same TENSION; a textual component that ostensibly closes a THEME, which later reopens. See also TRUE CLOSURE.

**focalization**
“[t]he perspective in terms of which the narrated situations and events are presented”¹²; often functions through a narrator taking on the perspective of a character.

**general tension**
the totality of TENSIONs in any given SCENE.

**heterodiegetic**
refers to a narrator that is not a character in the story being narrated.¹³ See also DIEGETIC.

**homodiegetic**
refers to a narrator that is a character in the story being narrated.¹⁴ See also DIEGETIC.

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⁹ Although “discourse” is a term traditionally used by literary structuralists, this study’s application of the term in “discourse structure” is particular to interest structure theory as it does not align with prior understandings of literary structuralism.

¹⁰ Ryan, “Embedded” 320, 323.

¹¹ Prince 28.

¹² Ibid., 31.

¹³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.
**humor**
a non-essential aspect of character **LIKABILITY** that generates an INTEREST that exists outside of any **THEME**; does not necessarily generate a **TENSION**.

**ideal closure**
closure that fulfills the **AFFECT** of a **THEME**; closure that actualizes the outcome hoped for or feared or fills the gap in knowledge.

**ideal recipient**
the entity of the **ABSTRACT READER** that “understands the work in a way that optimally matches its structure, and who adopts the interpretive position and esthetic standpoint put forward by the work.”\(^{15}\) See also **PRESUMED ADDRESSEE**.

**idle tension**
the state of a **TENSION** in a **SCENE** in which a **CUE** does not sustain or develop that tension. See also **ACTIVE TENSION**.

**independent relationship**
the **TENSION RELATIONSHIP** between two **TENSIONS** in which neither tension contributes to the other and in which the tensions are not parallel.

**indirect cue**
a **Cue** of a **CONTRIBUTIVE TENSION** that functions to develop the **TENSION** in a **RECEPTIVE TENSION**. See also **DIRECT CUE**.

**innocence**
an **INTRINSIC ASPECT** of **LIKABILITY** that establishes a character as not responsible for initiating or perpetuating any negative development, as perceived through the reader’s orientation (as opposed to the orientation of the author, the conceptual reader, the/a narrator, or a character); one of four essential aspects of likability. See also **BENEVOLENCE**, **INTEGRITY**, **SUFFERING**.

**inoperative**
the state of a **TENSION** in any **SCENE** that precedes or follows the appearance of that tension.

**integrity**
an **INTRINSIC ASPECT** of **LIKABILITY** that establishes a character as possessing a personal code to which she/they/he adheres even in the midst of adversity, which thereby enhances the likability of that character; one of four essential aspects of likability. See also **BENEVOLENCE**, **INNOCENCE**, **SUFFERING**.

**interest**
not what is told (story) or how it is told (discourse) but why the reader cares.

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\(^{15}\) Schmid, *Narratology* 55.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>interest structure</td>
<td>the collaborative inner workings of all narrative components targeted toward establishing the conceptual reader’s engagement with the text. See also DISCOURSE STRUCTURE, STORY STRUCTURE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intersection</td>
<td>a CUE that functions in two or more TENSIONs that exist in a SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interim</td>
<td>the INOPERATIVE space in a LAPSED TENSION between the FALSE CLOSURE and the following CUE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intrinsic aspect</td>
<td>an aspect of LIKABILITY that holds more relevance to what the character is rather than to what the character does. See also INNOCENCE, INTEGRITY; JURIDICAL ASPECT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juridical aspect</td>
<td>an aspect of LIKABILITY that holds more relevance to what the character does within the PRESUMED ADDRESSEE’s moral framework rather than to what the character is. See also BENEVOLENCE, SUFFERING; INTRINSIC ASPECT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lapsed tension</td>
<td>a TENSION that contains FALSE CLOSURE. See also INTERIM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likability</td>
<td>the aspects that collectively establish the reader’s alignment with any character; essentially consists of BENEVOLENCE, INNOCENCE, INTEGRITY, SUFFERING. See also HUMOR; DEFAULT LIKABILITY, UNLIKABILITY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macro-suspension</td>
<td>an extra-scenic SUSPENSION of thematic development that consequently increases the INTEREST of the OPERATIVE TENSION; suspension that exists in at least one SCENE in which the tension is IDLE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macro-tension</td>
<td>a TENSION that is OPERATIVE in at least three SCENEs, resulting in at least one scene in which the operative TENSION neither begins nor ends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>micro-suspension</td>
<td>a brief SUSPENSION of thematic development that consequently increases the INTEREST of the ACTIVE TENSION.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>micro-tension</td>
<td>the TENSION in a THEME that is OPERATIVE in no more than two consecutive SCENES.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-ideal closure</td>
<td>closure that does not fulfill the AFFECT of a THEME; one that prevents the actualization of the IDEAL CLOSURE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obstructive cue</td>
<td>a CUE that lessens TENSION by decreasing the probability that a THEME will reach its IDEAL CLOSURE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**obstructive tension**
a TENSION that exists in a SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP with another tension in such a way that the INTERSECTION functions like an OBSTRUCTIVE Cue of that other tension.

**open theme**
a THEME that, at the story’s conclusion, has not received IDEAL CLOSURE or NON-IDEAL CLOSURE.

**operative**
the state of a TENSION in any SCENE that appears after a tension begins and before it ends.

**parallel relationship**
the TENSION RELATIONSHIP between two or more TENSIONS that react to the same series of CUEs, though not necessarily in the same way.

**paratextual cue**
a non-narrative component that partially comprises the presentation of the narrative material (title, packaging, digital layout, etc.); functions as a PRESENTATION Cue of a TENSION. See also CUE.

**presentation cue**
a component of EXTRADIEGETIC narrative presentation that functions as a Cue of a TENSION.

**presumed addressee**
the entity of the ABSTRACT READER that “fully understands all linguistic codes, ideological norms, and esthetic ideas.”16 See also IDEAL RECIPIENT.

**primary interest structure**
the INTEREST STRUCTURE of a narrative text upon an initial reading of it. See also SECONDARY STRUCTURE.

**proleptic**
the nature of “any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later”17; foreshadowing. See also ANALEPTIC.

**receptive tension**
in a SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP, the TENSION that is heightened by the CUE of a CONTRIBUTIVE TENSION.

**scene**
a narrative space—consisting of thematically related events, descriptions, or dialogue—that is distinctly set apart from the preceding and succeeding narrative spaces, which either shift the

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16 Schmid 54-55.

17 Genette 40.
manner of developing the THEME or develop a different theme altogether.\textsuperscript{18}

**secondary interest structure** the INTEREST STRUCTURE of a narrative text upon a subsequent (second, third, etc.) reading of it. See also PRIMARY INTEREST STRUCTURE.

**sequence cue** an instance of an anachrony in the storytelling—whether ANALEPTIC, PROLEPTIC, or a skipping of DIEGETIC time—that functions as a Cue of a TENSION.

**story structure** the DIEGETIC development that is represented by a narrative. See also DISCOURSE STRUCTURE, INTEREST STRUCTURE.

**subsidiary relationship** the TENSION RELATIONSHIP between two TENSIONs in which one (the CONTRIBUTIVE TENSION) increases the INTEREST of the other (the RECEPTIVE TENSION).

**suffering** a JURIDICAL ASPECT of LIKABILITY that establishes a character’s deserving of favorable compensatory outcomes in order to establish a balance in DIEGETIC JUSTICE; one of four essential aspect of likability. See also BENEVOLENCE, INNOCENCE, INTEGRITY.

**surprise** the closure of one TENSION that also serves as the initiation of a new tension.\textsuperscript{19}

**suspense** the generalized reference to the textual effect generated by TENSIONs of AVIDITY and/or ANXIETY.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Prince defines *scene* as “*[t]he conventional equivalence between narrative segment and narrated is usually marked (in English) by the (relative) absence of narratorial mediation, the emphasis on moment-by-moment action, the careful detailing of specific events, the use of the preterit rather than the imperfect, the preference for point-action verbs rather than durational ones, etc.” (85-86).

\textsuperscript{19} Sternberg offers a more traditional definition of *surprise* as “*[t]he emotion obtaining when expectations about what is going to happen are violated by what in fact does happen. The production of surprise is considered particularly effective when, although what in fact does happen violates expectations, it is well grounded in what happened earlier” (96). The definition given by this study, though, indicates the retrospective function of surprise as opposed to the projective function of the components of interest structure.

\textsuperscript{20} Prince defines *suspense* as “[a]n emotion or state of mind arising from a partial and anxious uncertainty about the progression or outcome of an action, especially one involving a positive character” (96). According to this definition, either there can be no suspense in the anticipation of a hoped-for development (such as a love story), or the only response a reader may have to any development is an anxiety that something will go wrong—whether the protagonist be killed by the monster or fail through any means to
suspension
the delay between the CUEs of a TENSION that increases the INTEREST in that tension. See also INTERIM, LAPS ED TENSION; MACRO-SUSPENSION, MICRO-SUSPENSION.

tension
a CUE or a set of cues working in conjunction with each other and operating according to a single AFFECT. See also AMBIGUOUS TENSION; ASSISTIVE TENSION, OBSTRUCTIVE TENSION; CENTRAL TENSION; CONTRIBUTIVE TENSION, RECEPTIVE TENSION; LAPS ED TENSION; MACRO-TENSION, MICRO-TENSION; TENSION PATTERN.

tension pattern
that which maps the increasing and decreasing probability of a THEME reaching its IDEAL CLOSURE; the arrangement of CUEs in a TENSION.

tension relationship
the interchange, or lack thereof, of influence between TENSIONs of different THEMES. See also INDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP, PARALLEL RELATIONSHIP, SUBSIDIARY RELATIONSHIP.

theme
a self-contained set of developments that are interrelated within the context of the story. \(^{21}\) See also CLOSED THEME, OPEN THEME.

tone
the perspective of a SCENE or narrative that the INTEREST STRUCTURE imposes on the reader’s interpretation of textual CUEs. \(^{22}\)

true closure
closure that definitively ends a THEME. See also FALSE CLOSURE.

unlikability
the aspects that collectively establish the reader’s inverse affectual response to any character (i.e., AVIDITY for negative THEMES, ANXIETY for positive themes). See also LIKABILITY.

mARRY the protagonist’s paramour. For this reason, this study bifurcates suspense into anxiety and avidity in order to give attention to the nuances of the narrative phenomenon of suspense.

\(^{21}\) Although Prince qualifies theme as a macrostructural category that “is an ‘idea’ frame rather than, for example, an action frame (plot),” this study applies the term as the underlying idea of an action frame to bring attention to small developments that would not traditionally be considered plots (99).

\(^{22}\) Prince’s likening of tone as “[t]he narrator’s attitude toward the narratee and/or the situations and events presented” is helpful identifying the source of tone but falls short of commenting on its function.