CONTENTS

Introduction: Reading for Speech 1

1 How (Not) to Talk in Jane Austen 29

2 Talking to Strangers in *Jane Eyre* 58

3 No One to Talk to in *Middlemarch* 92

Conclusion: Careful Counting, Closer Reading 123

Appendix: A Note on Method 131

Acknowledgments 147

Notes 151

Bibliography 175

Index 183

Introduction

READING FOR SPEECH

> The dialogue is generally the most agreeable part of a novel; but it is only so long as it tends in some way to the telling of the main story.
>
> —ANTHONY TROLLOPE, *AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

> "Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"
>
> —CHARLES DICKENS, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Direct Speech: A Form

"Please, sir, I want some more." If you are reading this book, you probably recognize that sentence. Those five spoken words might even conjure a scene in your mind: poor little Oliver Twist begging for just a little more gruel. Whether Oliver's abject plea, Darcy's aloof judgment about Elizabeth ("She is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me"), Cathy's impassioned declaration of love ("I am Heathcliff!"), or Kurtz's agonized cry ("The horror! The horror!"), direct speech is routinely the most memorable feature of the most canonical novels of the nineteenth century. Using computational tools, I provide evidence that direct speech is also pervasive. There is a lot of it.

Yet, despite both its prominence and prevalence, direct speech is one of the most undertheorized elements of nineteenth-century British novels and of narrative fiction in general.[1] Perhaps more than any other element of narrative, direct speech invites casual reading. There is a pervasive tendency to read

speech quickly and gullibly—as if it is a faithful report of what a character "actually" said.

The prevailing misconception that direct speech is somehow the most authentic or mimetic narrative element (when it is as artificial and constructed as any other) is one of the most successful deceptions of realist fiction. The utterances of characters often blunt our critical faculties because they heighten our pleasure. And the pleasure of reading direct speech is partly the result of the conventions that became newly established in nineteenth-century fiction: new paragraphs for a new speaker, the uniform use of quotation marks, and the optional use of speech tags. These new layout conventions make direct speech easily and instantly recognizable on the page. (You can glance at a page of nineteenth-century prose and, without reading any words, know if it contains direct speech.) These conventions not only set speech apart from the rest of narration and emphasize its distinct status but also signal reading that will be less demanding, more effortless.[2]

As a consequence of these new layout norms, readers register fictional speech as the only opportunity to hear from characters directly without narrative mediation. As Gérard Genette explains, dialogue in the novel always constitutes a scene—that is, a narrative movement where narrative time corresponds to story time or, as he puts it, NT = ST.[3] This succinct formulation clarifies one of the reasons that direct speech is so memorable: During moments of direct discourse, narration slows down and appears in "real time." It is not that speech is more "real" but that, within the conventions of storytelling, it feels the most immediate. All of this has resulted in both readerly credulity and critical neglect.

My narratological argument in *Speaking Parts* is simple: Scholars of the novel should treat direct speech with the critical seriousness afforded to other features of narrative, such as description, narration, and free indirect discourse. This book focuses on direct speech: words enclosed in quotation marks that are conventionally understood to be the exact utterance of an individual character. I examine when and why characters in nineteenth-century novels speak in words seemingly unmediated by the narrator. What, in other words, are the narrative effects of this form?

My goal is to install direct speech—a formal feature with distinct effects—to its rightful place in narrative theory. There are three main reasons to do so. First, direct speech plays a fundamental role in realizing fictional character, from the most dominant protagonist to the barely present bit part.[4] Direct speech is almost always, implicitly or explicitly, attributed to an individual

character. To examine speech is therefore to attend to how literary characters are made and received. Second, speech is the form that indexes interactions and relations *between* characters because it is always social: Characters speak *to* each other. Speech is one of the primary mechanisms that bring fictional social worlds into being. Studying speech can therefore illuminate both the mechanics of character construction (and readerly response) and the depiction of the complex social worlds represented by nineteenth-century novels. Third, reading for speech can further illuminate the ideology of individual novels.

In *Speaking Parts*, I focus on direct speech rather than on conversation—that is, I focus on a specific narrative form rather than a theme or subject or activity.[5] I examine when and why speech is represented in words, demarcated by quotation marks, that purport to be the exact utterance of individual character rather than in any of the other number of modes in which speech appears in nineteenth-century fiction.

I often initially bracket the content and style of the speech itself. I do not concentrate on speaking style—vocabulary, tics, mannerism, accent—in detail, nor do I engage in depth with disciplines that study nonfictional speech, such as dialectology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, and social history.[6] I focus less on the *what* of speech and more on the when, by whom, and *why in this way*. I also do not focus on other ways dialogue is represented in narrative fiction: indirect speech, reported speech, described speech, hypothetical speech, remembered speech, and so on. I do not explicitly engage in debates about direct speech and mimesis.[7] I do not make claims about the authenticity or accuracy of a given fictional utterance or a conversational exchange. No matter the so-called accuracy of a fictional utterance, my analysis of direct speech takes for granted that readers respond to speech enclosed in quotation marks *as if* it is mimetic. Unlike plays or even some poetry, the novel is an interior genre. I don't mean only that novels, especially nineteenth-century realist novels, often focus on the interior lives of central characters but also that even representations of exteriority—physical description, speech—happen inside a reader's head. My contention is that something different happens in our heads when we read direct speech and that we should therefore pay attention to its specific formal effects.[8]

By focusing on a specific formal element employed almost universally in realist fiction, *Speaking Parts* also engages in conversations about representation more broadly: How do individual fictional characters come into being? How do novels produce social worlds? My analysis of direct speech gets us closer to understanding how it is exactly that readers recognize that a character

is distressed or exultant, how we get a sense of the types of social relations that exist within these worlds, and how novelists convey the nature of that fictional world, whether it is, for example, intimate or alienating. In this way, I am primarily interested in a descriptive account of reading rather than a normative one—how *are* novels read and how *do* readers respond to characters, rather than how *should* novels be read and how *should* readers respond to characters. *Speaking Parts* thus contributes to the consistently dynamic scholarly conversation about realist techniques in the nineteenth-century novel, but, again, it does this by focusing exclusively on the form of direct speech.[9]

Given that direct speech makes up such a substantial portion of the novel, how can we explain its long-standing and widespread neglect? Direct speech has been widely overlooked at least partly because free indirect discourse has dominated narratological conversations.[10] Influential works of narrative theory and narratology—Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds*, Ann Banfield's *Unspeakable Sentences*, Monika Fludernik's *The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction*, to name a few—prioritize the deployment and development of free indirect discourse.[11]

But the preoccupation with free indirect discourse—a technique (or *form*) used to represent consciousness in fiction—is particularly pronounced in formal and narratological criticism that takes the nineteenth-century realist novel as its subject.[12] Narrative theorists offer various ways to think about how free indirect discourse relates to the novel: The technique is definitive of the genre; it is what makes the genre distinctive; it serves as synecdoche for the genre; it is "the default mode of narration in the traditional novel"; or it is the genre's defining achievement. But they all share a conviction in its consequence and centrality.[13] In novel studies, free indirect discourse is a sort of fetish object—one that critics treat obsessively, even possessively. On the few occasions when direct speech is considered in narrative theory, it is most often so that it can stand in comparison to, and therefore shed light on, free indirect discourse. The focus on free indirect discourse has come at the expense of direct speech and has thus obscured the importance of speech and dialogue as a key feature of narrative.[14]

There are, to my mind, three reasons for the enduring preoccupation with free indirect discourse in novel studies. First, the evolution of free indirect discourse represents a landmark moment in the history of the novel: The arrival of this new and revolutionary technique irrevocably changed the course of the novel. Naturally attracted to this watershed moment in the history of the genre, critics devote time and attention to studying this mode of narration. But this devotion is also distraction.

In an essay on Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815), Frances Ferguson exemplifies the obsession with the form: "I believe," she writes, "that free indirect style is the novel's one and only formal contribution to literature."[15] Ferguson voices her dissatisfaction with the repeated treatment of free indirect discourse as a stylistic rather than formal feature of the novel. Her argument is both compelling and provocative but also limited by the same oversight as the criticism she reproves. Ferguson's assertion of the singularity of free indirect discourse is the culmination of the general critical disregard of the novel's dialogic portion. For Ferguson, free indirect discourse is not solely the most important formal feature of the novel; it is perhaps the *only* one worth thinking about. Considering that 50 percent of *Emma*, the novel she is writing about, is composed of direct speech, this is a claim worth challenging.[16]

Ferguson's claim also implicitly suggests that a technique or form needs to be exclusive to narrative fiction to be worthy of attention. To make her argument about what makes free indirect discourse unique, Ferguson sets the novel against two other genres: the drama, which is "almost nothing but direct quotation," and the epistolary novel.[17] While free indirect discourse does not appear in either of these earlier genres, direct speech, she points out, is a feature of both.[18] Even if direct speech has a lineage that extends to drama and epistolary fiction—that is, it existed in genres that predate the novel—it nevertheless takes on a singular form in narrative fiction. Ferguson notes correctly that dramatists "continually create an unfolding plot that motivates individual characters to present their views, to have thoughts that rise to the level of the expressible."[19] But it also true, as Norman Page suggests, that "the novelist, unlike the dramatist, is at liberty to combine speech with narration, description and commentary in proportions that may constantly be varied; and this liberty involves the responsibility of selecting at many points the most appropriate mode or combination of modes for a particular passage, scene or episode."[20] For instance, nineteenth-century novelists use different dialogue verbs and adverbs to describe speech; they interrupt speech with descriptions; and they describe actions that occur during speech. In other words, they experimented with what novels could do with speech that drama or even epistolary fiction could not. Novelistic speech is always read in relation to the surrounding narration. As a result, direct speech exists as a distinct formal feature of the novel.

Readers and critics recognize that free indirect discourse is a difficult technique for writers to master. This is of course also true of speech. As R. L. Stevenson complained in a letter to Henry James, "They think that striking situations, or good dialogue, are got by studying life; they will not rise to understand that

they are prepared by deliberate artifice and set off by painful suppressions." Or as Trollope wrote in his *An Autobiography* (1883), "The novel-writer in constructing his dialogue must so steer between absolute accuracy of language—which would give to his conversation an air of pedantry, and the slovenly inaccuracy of ordinary talkers, which if closely followed would offend by an appearance of grimace—as to produce upon the ear of his readers a sense of reality."[21] Both reflections make clear that, while direct speech might seem like the least literary innovation, especially compared to free indirect discourse, it is as constructed and artificial as any other element of narrative fiction. We must attend to direct discourse with the same rigorous, close attention that we regularly afford to its more storied cousin.

The second, and related, reason that free indirect discourse is privileged in narrative theory is that another story of the novel, especially the nineteenth-century realist novel, is a story about interiority. Indeed, one of the pleasures newly afforded by the novel was its ability to let readers into other minds, and free indirect discourse is one of the primary techniques (if not *the* primary one) that makes that possible. It is undoubtedly true that no other genre rivals the novel's ability to portray interiority, and it makes sense that this distinctive and, frankly, thrilling technical innovation has attracted so much attention at the expense of other features of narrative. Critics such as Alan Palmer, Marta Figlerowicz, and Megan Ward who have made the case that we have collectively and persistently overvalued free indirect discourse all also offer theories of literary character that decenter interiority.[22]

Third and finally, the appeal of free indirect discourse for novel theorists lies in its very complexity. The inherent *difficulty* of free indirect discourse makes it attractive to professional literary critics because it is fundamentally unstable. The technique requires careful unpacking—which words belong to the narrator, which to the character, and to which character exactly—even before analysis of its effects can begin. Although it seamlessly allows even the casual reader into a fictional mind, analyzing free indirect discourse is demanding. To prove their value, professional academic critics felt (and perhaps still feel) the need to show that they can do what an untrained reader cannot. Free indirect discourse makes the value of the academic clear—it demands precise, indeed *expert*, reading.

Direct speech, on its surface, does not share this critical allure; while free indirect discourse is seductively equivocal, direct speech appears simple and unambiguous. While free indirect discourse enjoys something like cult status in novel

studies, many critics regularly assume direct speech, because of its apparent simplicity, is unsophisticated and thus undeserving of formal analysis. The tendency to disregard direct speech can also be explained by its apparent lack of complexity. There is no immediate or obvious way for the trained reader to set themselves apart from the untrained reader. Contrary to the prevailing belief (and consequent professional anxiety) that direct speech does not require sophisticated analysis, examining the myriad effects of direct speech demands the kind of rigorous, attentive reading that we routinely afford to free indirect discourse.

Like many critics, I too have been seduced by free indirect discourse. (The unique thrill of entering another mind played no small part in my decision to spend my life reading nineteenth-century realist novels.) And yet even novels that are known and celebrated for their use of free indirect discourse include substantial amounts of direct speech. Further, while many nineteenth-century British novels include none or very little free indirect discourse, almost every novel of the period includes some direct speech. It therefore seems unreasonable to tie an entire genre to a technique that is so unevenly represented across texts. Why should free indirect discourse maintain its status as synecdoche for the novel? We should expand our attention to include not only what is rare and specific about certain novels but also a feature that all novels have in common.

To be clear, I am not arguing that free indirect discourse is unimportant or unworthy of attention. Instead, I am suggesting that we reconsider its primacy in the field of novel studies. I am also not suggesting we dethrone free indirect discourse and enshrine direct speech because I am anti-expertise. Conversely, I am proposing that the rigor and care with which we approach free indirect discourse should serve as a model for how to approach other elements of the novel, including, or even especially, direct speech. We should elevate direct speech to the status of form, and to a form that requires *expert* analysis. Free indirect discourse might deserve our attention because it is so innovative, but the revelation that such a significant portion of the novel is composed of speech invites us to reconsider the importance of direct speech to the genre of the novel. To write about free indirect discourse is to dwell on what is distinctive about the novel, but to contemplate direct speech is to investigate the genre's ordinary operating procedure.

Rather than offer an exhaustive account of speech in the nineteenth-century novel, my goal is to open new vistas for readers and scholars alike. If we bestow our attention on direct speech with the same seriousness we afford

to other features of narrative, we stand to expand our understanding of both individual novels and narrative theory more generally.

Characters, Relations, Worlds

To focus on speech is to consider whole fictional populations, the complex and myriad ways characters relate to one another (whether their connections are familial or professional or social, whether these ties are close or distant, whether the nature of these relationships is friendly or hostile), and the degree to which the novel endorses or critiques these characters and relations. Examining speech can therefore broaden the types of characters we focus on: not just major but minor; not just round but flat. It can also shift our attention to other forms of fictional personhood (not just interiority but exteriority) and, crucially, from individual characters to the representation of complex social relations and networks.

Using computational tools, I generate detailed quantitative data about direct speech and individual characters and therefore contribute to the study of two narratological categories delineated by Alex Woloch: "character-space" (the intersection of an implied, and infinitely complex, human being with the delimited form of narrative) and "character-system" (the arrangement of multiple character-spaces into a unified narrative structure).[23] By quantifying direct speech, I can evaluate the centrality and importance afforded to individual characters by novelists. My computational method makes explicit and visible the unequal treatment of individual characters by measuring the amount they speak and therefore showing what proportion of narrative space they occupy.

Collecting data about how much individual characters speak is one way of rendering concrete Woloch's metaphorical character-spaces. These data also make visible the composition of these character-spaces by showing how much each consists of the voice of the character themselves as opposed to description of their behavior and actions by either the narrator or other characters. Notably, by using speech to visualize the relative sizes of character-spaces, I am also implicitly revising Woloch's emphasis on interiority in his conception of character. Like many narrative theorists, Woloch privileges the representation of thought over speech. He asks, for instance, "how much access are we given to a certain character's thoughts, and how does the partial enactment of his perspective or point of view fit into the narrative as a whole."[24] In his framing questions, Woloch implies that readers perceive characters almost entirely through access to their thoughts. Yet fictional characters are not presented as

silent thinking figures; readers also see them acting and talking. Woloch conceives of the minor characters that surround the protagonist as "competing centers-of-consciousness."[25] In presenting data on their speech, I ask that we expand our focus and also consider them as competing voices.

Even in the case of major characters in novels—the privileged few that do have their thoughts represented in free indirect discourse—we have focused on their interiority at the expense of their exteriority. Literary critics have long trained their attention on what and how these characters think rather than what they say and how they interact with other characters. This is particularly true in the case of novelists like Jane Austen, who employ free indirect discourse masterfully and liberally. And yet even Austen's heroines are not constructed through their inner lives alone. Characters, even major characters, talk as well as think. Figure 0.1 shows the distribution of speech across all sixteen named speaking characters in *Emma*.

Emma is, by some distance, the novel's top speaker: She speaks 28 percent of the total words spoken in the novel. Twenty-one thousand words are attributed directly to her. It is not only Emma's thoughts but also her speech that develops her character. Think, for instance, of Emma's cruelty toward Miss Bates at the Box Hill picnic:

> "Oh! very well," exclaimed Miss Bates, "then I need not be uneasy. 'Three things very dull indeed.' That will just do for me, you know. I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth, shan't I? (looking round with the most good-humoured dependence on every body's assent)—Do not you all think I shall?"
>
> Emma could not resist.
>
> "Ah! ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once."[26]

The reader's sense of Emma—how she behaves, how she treats other people, how she understands herself, and how she sees others—is deepened through the novel's deployment of direct speech. In other words, even for an Austenian heroine, whose thoughts are frequently depicted in free indirect discourse and whose interiority is represented with great care and complexity, the words that are directly attributed to her in the form of direct speech play an essential role in the construction of her character. Exteriority matters because it is how we see protagonists behave in the social world of the novel and how they act in the relationships they have with other characters, including those who play only a minor role.

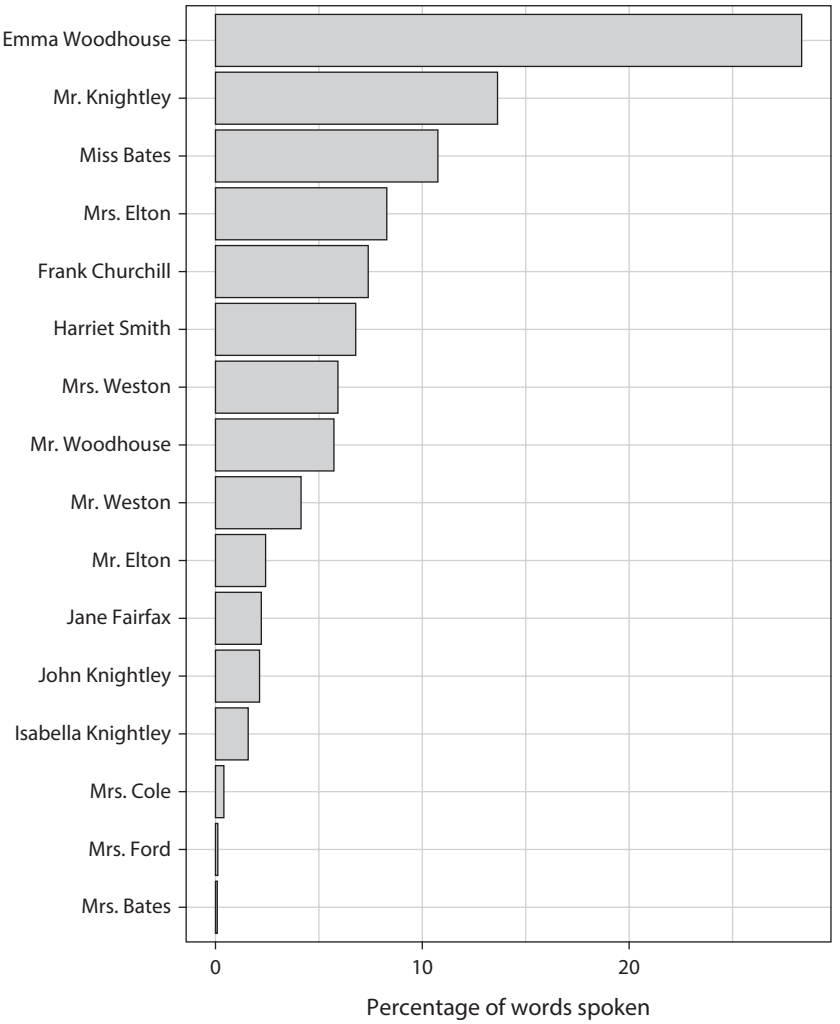

FIGURE 0.1. Amount spoken (percentage speech) by characters in *Emma*

Paying attention to speech is also a way to notice the entire cast of characters included in a fictional world, including the most minor. The data I have generated about the precise number of speaking characters in each novel illuminate to what extent these texts embody the "inclusive aesthetics of the nineteenth-century realist tradition with its dual impulses to bring in *a multitude of characters* and to bring out the interiority of a single protagonist."[27] Data about speech cannot reveal anything about a novel's ability to portray a

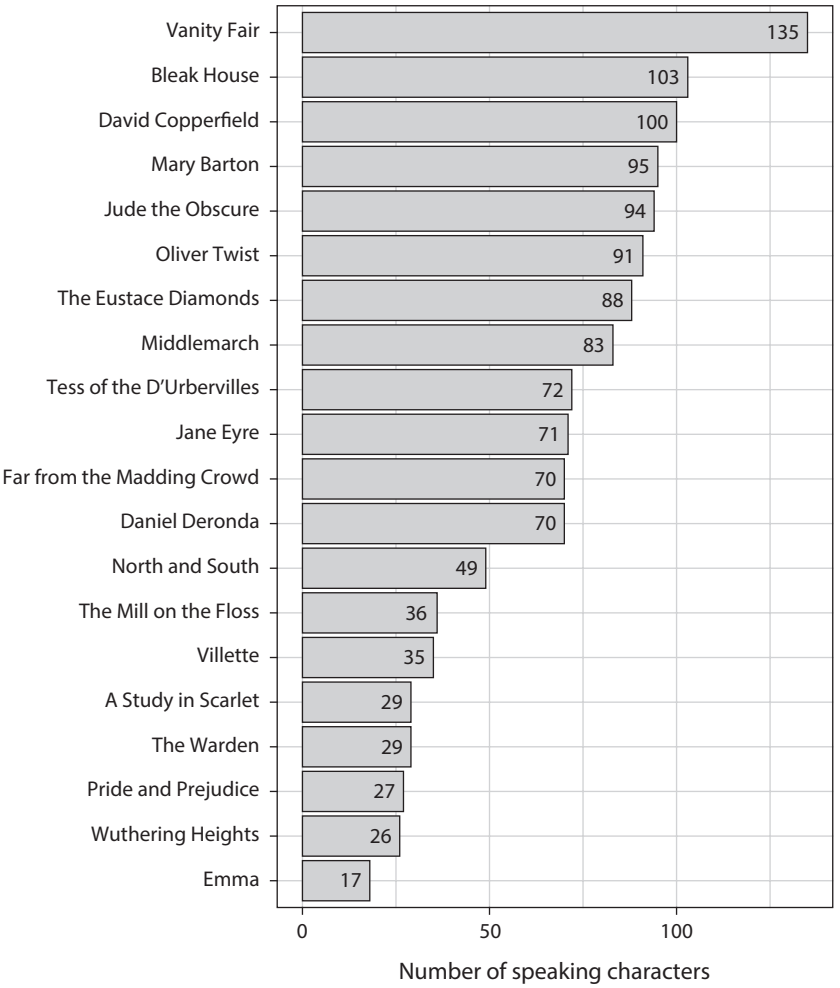

FIGURE 0.2. Number of speaking characters in twenty nineteenth-century British novels

protagonist's interiority, but they can show its exact population size. By seeing these statistics, we can get closer to an answer to a simple yet fundamental question: "How many people can be contained within a single narrative?"[28] If it is true, as Woloch claims, that "the realist novel is structurally destabilized not by too many details or colors or corners, but by *too many people*," it is worth knowing exactly how many speaking characters these novels contain.[29] Figure 0.2 shows the number of speaking characters in twenty canonical nineteenth-century British novels.[30]

Much of what we see here is unsurprising.[31] As we expect, Austen's novels (*Pride and Prejudice* [1813] and *Emma*) include only small speaking communities, while later nineteenth-century realist novels that have a reputation for an expanded field of vision (the crowded London streets of Dickens, the full fields of Hardy, the bustling drawing rooms of Thackeray) have sizeable populations. The "inclusive tendencies" of nineteenth-century novels vary widely. Some novelists keep their canvases small, while others paint with a much broader brush. But even the most populous novels, such as those set in densely populated cities, rarely have more than one hundred characters.

The data also make evident that even Austen's novels, with their tight casts, include minor characters who barely say anything at all, such as the Bennets' butler:

> Two days after Mr. Bennet's return, as Jane and Elizabeth were walking together in the shrubbery behind the house, they saw the housekeeper coming towards them, and concluding that she came to call them to their mother, went forward to meet her; but instead of the expected summons, when they approached her, she said to Miss Bennet, "I beg your pardon, madam, for interrupting you, but I was in hopes you might have got some good news from town, so I took the liberty of coming to ask."
>
> "What do you mean, Hill? We have heard nothing from town."
>
> "Dear madam," cried Mrs. Hill, in great astonishment, "don't you know there is an express come for master from Mr. Gardiner? He has been here this half hour, and master has had a letter."
>
> Away ran the girls, too eager to get in to have time for speech. They ran through the vestibule into the breakfast-room; from thence to the library;—their father was in neither; and they were on the point of seeking him upstairs with their mother, *when they were met by the butler, who said,—*
>
> *"If you are looking for my master, ma'am, he is walking towards the little copse."*[32]

This is the only time Mr. Bennet's butler is mentioned in the novel. We get no description of his personality or even of his appearance. We are certainly given no access to his thoughts, but for a brief and vivid moment he comes to life through the fifteen words that he speaks. The conventions of direct speech in the novel instruct us to read these words as if they have been unaltered—as if, that is, there was an original utterance that the third-person omniscient narrator is representing exactly.

Now, take Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), which, with its impulse toward narrative fairness, includes a sizeable population of eighty-three speaking characters (comparable to several Dickens novels). Many of these are minor characters who appear in the novel only a few times and pass mostly unnoticed. The following passage includes several of these minor characters discussing more central significant characters:

> Thus it happened that on this occasion Bulstrode became identified with Lydgate, and Lydgate with Tyke; and owing to this variety of interchangeable names for the chaplaincy question, diverse minds were enabled to form the same judgment concerning it.
>
> Dr. Sprague said at once bluntly to the group assembled when he entered, "I go for Farebrother. A salary, with all my heart. But why take it from the Vicar? He has none too much—has to insure his life, besides keeping house, and doing a vicar's charities. Put forty pounds in his pocket and you'll do no harm. He's a good fellow, is Farebrother, with as little of the parson about him as will serve to carry orders."
>
> "Ho, ho! Doctor," said old Mr. Powderell, a retired iron-monger of some standing—his interjection being something between a laugh and a Parliamentary disapproval; "we must let you have your say. But what we have to consider is not anybody's income—it's the souls of the poor sick people"—here Mr. Powderell's voice and face had a sincere pathos in them. "He is a real Gospel preacher, is Mr. Tyke. I should vote against my conscience if I voted against Mr. Tyke—I should indeed."
>
> "Mr. Tyke's opponents have not asked any one to vote against his conscience, I believe," said Mr. Hackbutt, a rich tanner of fluent speech, whose glittering spectacles and erect hair were turned with some severity towards innocent Mr. Powderell.[33]

Like most characters in most novels, Dr. Sprague, Mr. Powderell, and Mr. Hackbutt never have their thoughts represented in free indirect discourse. They are not round characters, nor are they particularly complex; but they are fully realized. They speak themselves into being through the words that are directly attributed to them. Readers understand them, and readily "believe" in them, because direct speech immediately conjures an embodied character, even if we have little access to other information about them. Paying attention to direct speech opens a broader picture of fictional characters—not just major characters but also minor and unnamed characters, like Mr. Bennet's butler or Mr. Powderell, who make up a small but essential part of the social

world depicted in these fictions. By turning to minor or even super-minor characters—characters who emerge in their totality through direct speech—we can shift our sense of literary character.

In both Austen's and Eliot's fictional worlds, characters, even the most minor, are often named and known. They make up the knowable communities of the novel. But many nineteenth-century novels also include speaking characters who are completely unknown, strangers to the protagonists of their novels. Consider, for instance, the scene in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) when young Oliver takes a wrong turn on his way to the bookseller and is suddenly accosted by Nancy and Bill Sykes. Nancy, initially identified as the young woman, is pretending that Oliver is her runaway younger brother whom she will take back home to their parents. The onlooking women, who speak first here, are reacting to Nancy's story about her ungrateful "brother":

> "Young wretch!" said one woman.
>
> "Go home, do, you little brute," said the other.
>
> "I am not," replied Oliver, greatly alarmed. "I don't know her. I haven't any sister, or father and mother either. I'm an orphan; I live at Pentonville."
>
> "Only hear him, how he braves it out!" cried the young woman.
>
> "Why, it's Nancy!" exclaimed Oliver; who now saw her face for the first time; and started back, in irrepressible astonishment.
>
> "You see he knows me!" cried Nancy, appealing to the bystanders. "He can't help himself. Make him come home, there's good people, or he'll kill his dear mother and father, and break my heart!"
>
> "What the devil's this?" said a man, bursting out of a beer-shop, with a white dog at his heels; "young Oliver! Come home to your poor mother, you young dog! Come home directly."
>
> "I don't belong to them. I don't know them. Help! help!" cried Oliver, struggling in the man's powerful grasp.
>
> "Help!" repeated the man. "Yes; I'll help you, you young rascal! What books are these? You've been a stealing 'em, have you? Give 'em here." With these words, the man tore the volumes from his grasp, and struck him on the head.
>
> "That's right!" cried a looker-on, from a garret-window. "That's the only way of bringing him to his senses!"
>
> "To be sure!" cried a sleepy-faced carpenter, casting an approving look at the garret-window.

"It'll do him good!" said the two women.

"And he shall have it, too!" rejoined the man, administering another blow, and seizing Oliver by the collar.[34]

Oliver, Nancy, and Bill Sykes (who is not identified by name in the passage but is named a few paragraphs earlier) are part of the fictional community of named and known characters in the novel. But this short passage also includes the direct speech of four other characters who never receive names and never appear again in the novel: the two women, an ungendered onlooker, and a carpenter. (The indolent butcher boy also speaks, although his words are reported rather than represented directly.) Despite their anonymity, their fleeting presence, and the relative brevity of their utterances, the speech of these characters serves an important function: It adds texture to the fictional social world. Through five short utterances, Dickens effectively represents a crowded street in London bustling with commercial activity, in which consumers, working people, and idle onlookers interact with people they do not know. The inclusion of these characters in nineteenth-century novels indexes the rise of impersonal, anonymous interactions in a modernizing, increasingly commercial, and increasingly urban England.

Paying attention to direct speech across entire casts thus allows us to think about the structure and nature of the fictional worlds they inhabit. Speech is individuating (it helps construct character), but because it is externalized (characters speak out loud and *to* each other), speech is also a social act. The distribution of speech across characters as well as the amount and type of their verbal exchanges form our perception of the novel's social world. To analyze fictional speech is therefore to attend to the social world of a given novel.

Reading for Speech

In the three main chapters of this book—on Jane Austen's novels, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*—I read for speech. In each case, I use quantitative findings about the use of direct speech to motivate closer analysis of canonical texts. In chapter 1, "How (Not) to Talk in Jane Austen," I show that the frequency with which Austen's characters speak (or don't speak) establishes sympathy and approval for certain characters and manufactures disdain for others. Specifically, I identify two regular features in the representation of direct speech across Austen's novels: what I term *persistent speech* and *elided speech*. Persistent speech, a narrative sequence in which two consecutive

instances of direct speech are attributed to a single character, marks characters as irritating and vulgar, while elided speech, a narrative technique that obscures the exact words spoken by certain characters at key moments, reinforces both social intelligence and moral integrity. I demonstrate how these two new ways of thinking about the distribution of speech provide a heuristic for understanding the consistent modes of character construction across Austen's novels.

By examining the distinct effects of these two features in specific scenes in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Mansfield Park* (1814), and *Pride and Prejudice*, I offer new answers to long-standing questions about affective engagement with Austen's characters: Readers regularly adore certain figures not just because they have access to their interiority, as is commonly thought, but also in response to specific patterns of speech presentation. But my argument also moves beyond affect. I argue that these patterns of representing speech are used to signal the social rules that govern polite behavior. In this way, they not only elicit emotional reactions from readers but also invite them to form moral judgments. Austen thus uses direct speech as a disciplinary tool—to punish and reward her characters for spurning and adhering to strict social norms such as when to speak and how much. The form of direct speech is used as a moral and ideological signal about which characters are most deserving of social reward.

Chapter 2, "Talking to Strangers in *Jane Eyre*," calls attention to the surprising presence of twenty-two speaking characters in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* that do not receive a proper name. Prompted by this unexpected statistic, I ask, Why do these unnamed speaking characters (whom I call *bit parts*) exist in this novel? And what is the effect of their speech? I argue that, by including the speech acts of anonymous minor characters, Brontë depicts a social landscape that is dramatically different from the tightly knit "knowable communities" of Austen's fictions. The locales of *Jane Eyre*—largely, but not entirely, outside of urban centers—are neither empty pastoral landscapes nor known, if stratified, organic communities but instead complex social worlds inhabited by anonymous working people. The presence of this speaking ensemble (waiters, guards, ostlers, coachmen, shop assistants) brings back into view, if only briefly and superficially, populations that do not receive representation in other novels set in the countryside.

Further, these very minor characters, so far overlooked in literary theory, serve an important narrative function: They index the rise of impersonal anonymous interactions in modernizing, industrializing England. The representation of these anonymous interactions—face-to-face contact between two people who do not belong to the same community—constructs an alternate

vision of the countryside to that presented by much nineteenth-century realist fiction. The technique also aligns Charlotte Brontë with the realism of her contemporaries including Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Elizabeth Gaskell. Brontë's gothic romance is, perhaps surprisingly, attentive to the new social dynamics and texture of modernity—estranging and treacherous but potentially liberating.

Drawing on narrative theory about minor characters as well as sociological theory about the nature of certain relations in modern society, I argue that Brontë's representations of Jane's impersonal encounters with unnamed speaking characters have two significant narrative effects. First, Jane's brief verbal exchanges with unnamed characters at moments when she is at her most vulnerable (often when she is traveling alone) reinforces the solitude of this famously lonely heroine. And second, these interactions make manifest the alienation and anonymity newly characteristic of modern society, or what the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies calls *Gesellschaft*. Finally, I propose that these encounters reveal Brontë's awareness of not only the estrangement and danger of life in public but also the emancipation that the new social order promises for some members of society.

The questions that animate the chapter on *Jane Eyre*—*how many* characters speak and *who* they are—naturally lead to questions about the *quantity* spoken by various characters. Chapter 3, "No One to Talk to in *Middlemarch*," begins by showing the distribution of direct speech (how much and how often do characters speak) and the speech networks (to whom do they speak) in various canonical novels. Mapping conversational networks reveals the placement of characters in relation to each other, renders visible the structure of a novel's social world, and shows the density and fragility of the fictional relations.

Network analysis shows that *Middlemarch* takes a singular approach to the arrangement of characters: Unlike almost any other nineteenth-century British novel, the protagonist of *Middlemarch* is not the most central character in its speech network. Analyzing speech reveals that Dorothea is strikingly peripheral. By depicting a large and complex fictional world in which characters have different types of relationships—familial, social, professional—Eliot portrays both strong bonds between friends and family and weak connections between acquaintances. Drawing on the sociologist Mark Granovetter's concept of strong and weak ties, I argue that seeing the architecture of the novel allows us to better understand the reasons that both Dorothea and Lydgate fail to achieve their ambitions. Dorothea, embedded in a network that consists primarily of her family, lacks weak ties and thus lacks the social influence that

she yearns to wield. Lydgate, who seeks professional relationships with his patients, lacks the strong ties necessary to succeed as a new doctor in the town. Eliot documents the town's transition from an insular community to one in which commercial and professional relations dominate. Like Brontë, Eliot indexes the growing prevalence of impersonal social interactions and the ways that life in the countryside, as in the city, is increasingly inflected by the alienation and mobility of life under capitalism. In *Jane Eyre* and *Middlemarch*, Brontë and Eliot act as midwives of capitalism, each ushering in a new world that offers increased mobility and freedom for certain members of the social order, particularly those who share the gender and class of their protagonists.

Each of the three chapters examines works of different historical moments (early, mid-, and late century), different subgenres (novel of manners, gothic romance, realist fiction), different types of character (female members of gentry, working-class men and women, the landed gentry, and the emerging professional class), and different narrative effects (characterization and world-building). Each chapter can be read on its own as a case study that showcases the benefits of my computational approach, advances direct speech as a narratological category worthy of study, and makes a new argument about individual novels. Each also shows how attention to speech can yield new insights into character, narrative structure, social relations, and ideology.

By coupling computational tools with close reading, I offer new answers to long-standing questions about these novels. Often the feeling or perception that I examine is itself not new or revelatory—readers already know that they admire Elizabeth Bennet, that Jane Eyre is lonely and vulnerable, and that Dorothea Brooke is punishingly isolated—but my objective is to explain exactly why it is that readers routinely love Austen's heroines and how it is that they perceive that Jane and Dorothea are lonely. My goal is to shed light on the formal mechanisms that generate certain narrative effects and to uncover the social and political commitments of these texts.

Readers of *Speaking Parts* may initially perceive a certain tension between the chapter on Austen and the chapters on Brontë and Eliot. In some ways, they would be right to notice a difference. My argument in the Austen chapter is more firmly focused on formal and character-based analysis of interpersonal interactions between two developed characters, while the arguments in the chapters on Brontë and Eliot are more sociological and explicitly political. By showing how characters navigate changing economic and social conditions, both Brontë and Eliot take ideological stances about the advantages and disadvantages of England's transition to a commercial, professional society.

INDEX

abstract society. *See Gesellschaft*
The Accomplished Youth (educational text), 29
Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll), 20, 123
alienation, 16–17, 19, 75, 90, 120–21. *See also* isolation
Amis, Kingsley, 162n39
anonymous interactions, 62, 66–70, 77–79, 84–91, 105, 111, 165n25. *See also* collisions; encounter; transaction; unnamed speaking characters
Asymmetry (Halliday), 123
Auerbach, Erich, 94
Austen, Jane, 9, 14–19, 21, 29–34, 60, 79, 127–28, 157n41, 159nn2–3, 161n22, 162n37. *See also* elided speech; persistent speech; *specific works*
Austen Said, 160n7
Autobiography (Trollope), 1, 6
The Awkward Age (James), 22

bad form, 53–55
Bakhtin, Mikhail, 155n14
Ballantyne, R.M., 20
Bamman, David, 159n53
Banfield, Ann, 4, 153n7
Beer, Gillian, 170n33
bit parts. *See* unnamed speaking characters
Blake, N.F., 152n6
Bleak House (Dickens), *11, 59,* 77–78, 95–99, 156n31
Brontë, Charlotte, 16–19. *See also specific works*
Brown, Kate, 167n51
Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, 20
Butler, Marilyn, 48

cameos, 63
Carroll, Lewis, 20, 123
centrality, 4, 8, 65, 93, 103–10, 113, 115, 129, 169n24, 170n39
Chapman, Raymond, 152n5, 157n38
character-space, 8
character-system, 8
Charlie to the Rescue (Ballantyne), 20
A Christmas Carol (Dickens), 1
Clarissa (Richardson), 124
Claybaugh, Amanda, 47
Cohn, Dorrit, 4
Collins, Wilkie, 74–75
collisions, 69–70, 78. *See also* anonymous interactions
complexity, 6–7, 68
computational literary studies, 27–28, 124–29, 160n7, 171n8. *See also* speech data
Conrad, Joseph. *See specific works*
conventions (nineteenth-century), 2–4
cooperative principle, 151n1
The Country and the City (Williams), 79–80
country fiction (discussion of), 16–18, 60, 62, 79–82, 110–11
The Curate in Charge (Oliphant), 20

Daniel Deronda (Eliot), *11, 59, 96–97,* 108
David Copperfield (Dickens), *11, 59, 96–97, 100,* 103–9
Davidson, Jenny, 45–47
Defoe, Daniel, 123–24
dialect (discussion of), 152n6
Dialect and Literature in the Long Nineteenth Century (Hodson), 152n6
Dickens, Charles, 1, 12, 17, 20, 23, 59–60, 62, 66–67, 69–70, 75–79, 100, 151n2, 156n36, 157nn40–41. *See also specific works*
digital humanities. *See* computational literary studies
Dinkler, Michal Beth, 162n30

Eagleton, Terry, 78–79
eigenvector centrality, 108, 113, 169n24, 170n39
elided speech, 15–16, 30, 32, 35, 40–51, 56–57, 128, 163n45
Eliot, George, 14, 18–19, 21, 62, 79. *See also specific works*
Emma (Austen), 5, 9–12, 30, 34–35, 37–42, 47–49, *59, 96–97, 100,* 103–7, 161n21, 167n44, 169n11, 169n23
encounter, 70, 74–79
epistolary fiction, 5, 155n18
The Europeans (James), 20
The Eustace Diamonds (Trollope), *11, 59, 96–97, 99, 101*
experimentation, 5
exteriority, 9, 15, 30. *See also* interiority

face-to-face interactions, 16, 61, 78–80, 84, 111, 166n34
Far from the Madding Crowd (Hardy), *11, 59, 96–97,* 98
Farrer, Reginald, 162n39
Ferguson, Frances, 5, 155n18
The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction (Fludernik), 4
Fielding, Henry, 123–24
Figlerowicz, Marta, 6, 155n22
flat characters, 63–65, 68. *See also* unnamed speaking characters
Fludernik, Monika, 4, 152n5, 153n7, 155n14
Forster, E.M., 63
free indirect discourse, 4–7, 9, 29–30, 44, 53–56, 95, 159n2

Galef, David, 63, 65, 165n22
Galperin, William, 29
Gaskell, Elizabeth, 17, 21, 62, 66, 73–74, 156n36. *See also specific works*
Gass, William H., 63–65
Genette, Gerard, 2, 43, 67, 152n3, 153n7
Gesellschaft, 17, 19, 62, 68, 91
Gissing, George, 20
Godwin, William, 23, 157n40, 160n14
Goffman, Erving, 166n34, 167n38, 167n40
Granovetter, Mark, 17, 92–93, 112–13, 120–21
Gregg, Lynn Weinlos, 159n3
Grice, H.P., 151n1, 152n5
Grundy, Isobel, 160n9

Haggard, H. Rider, 21
Halliday, Lisa, 123
Harding, D.W., 162n39
Hardy, Thomas, 12, 20, 66, 156n36. *See also specific works*
"Hearing Voices in Austen" (Pinch), 159n3
Heart of Darkness (Conrad), 1, 21
Herman, David, 152n5, 155n14
Heuser, Ryan, 159n53
Hodson, Jane, 152n6
Houston, Keith, 170n1
hypocrisy, 45–47

interiority, 6, 8–11, 29–30, 32, 54–55, 61, 155n22. *See also* exteriority
Iser, Wolfgang, 63, 68
isolation, 61–62, 68, 70–71, 77–91, 115–17, 120. *See also* alienation
Ives, Sumner, 152n6

James, Henry, 5–6, 20, 22, 157n37. *See also specific works*

Jane Eyre (Brontë), *11,* 16–18, 58–63, 65, 68, 80–82, 84–88, 90–91, 95–99, *100,* 108–9, 128, 164nn1–3. *See also Gesellschaft;* isolation; unnamed speaking characters
Johnson, Claudia, 162n39
Jude the Obscure (Hardy), *11, 59,* 95–98

Krapp, George Phillip, 152n6

Lambert, Mark, 151n2, 162n37
Lee, Sabrina, 159n53
Leech, Geoffrey, 151n1, 152n5, 155n14
Leila (Bulwer-Lytton), 20
Le-Khac, Long, 159n53
Little Dorrit (Dickens), 67, 75–79, 169n28
Long, Hoyt, 159n53
Lukacs, György, 94
Lynch, Deidre, 152n4

main characters. *See* protagonists (discussion of)
Maiwa's Revenge (Haggard), 21
Manning, Susan, 152n4
Mansfield Park (Austen), 16, 30, 38–40, 42, 45, 47–51, 95, 162n28, 162n39, 163n53, 163nn43–45
Marcus, Sharon, 167n53
Mary Barton (Gaskell), *11, 59,* 95, *96–97,* 98
McMaster, Juliet, 160n9
Mee, Jon, 152n5
Meredith, George, 21
Middlemarch (Eliot), *11,* 13–14, 17–18, *59,* 92–94, *96–97,* 101–4, 106–22, 128. *See also* strong ties; weak ties
Miller, D.A., 30, 55, 159n2, 162n39
The Mill on the Floss (Eliot), *11, 59, 96–97, 101*
mimesis, 2–3, 22–24, 65, 67, 72, 152n3, 153n7, 155n14, 157n38
minor characters, 11–15, 63–68, 71, 79, 111–12. *See also* unnamed speaking characters
minor roles, 63
Moretti, Franco, *66*

narrative speed, 43–44
narrative theory, 4–8, 17, 65, 124, 152n4, 153n7, 155n14, 155n22
North and South (Gaskell), *11, 59,* 73–74, *96–97,* 101, 156n31, 167n38
Northanger Abbey (Austen), 30, 35, 38–40, 42–44, 49

Oliphant, Margaret, 20
Oliver Twist (Dickens), *11,* 14–15, *59,* 69, 95, *96–97*
omniscient narration, 30, 42, 50

Page, Norman, 5, 22, 152n5, 157n38
Palmer, Alan, 6, 152n5, 155n14, 155n22
Parkes, M.P., 170n1
persistent speech, 15–16, 30, 32, 35–40, 42, 44–57, 128, 161n18, 161n21
Persuasion (Austen), 30, 38–40, 42, 49
Pinch, Adela, 154n8, 159n3
Porter, Jane, 20
The Prelude (Wordsworth), 58
Pride and Prejudice (Austen), 1, 11–12, 16, 29–30, 34–45, 47, 49, 52–55, *59,* 66–67, *96–97, 100,* 108–9, 158n46, 169n23
"The Profession of the Author" (Marcus), 167n53
protagonists (discussion of), 92–93, 95–97, 102–4, 108–9, 128
Proteus Principle, 153n7
Puckett, Kent, 53, 163n53

A Quantitative Literary History of 2,958 Nineteenth-Century British Novels (Le-Khac and Heuser), 159n53
quotation marks (discussion of), 123–24, 133–34, 167n54, 170n1

Rée, Jonathan, 154n8
Reform Act of 1832, 114, 120
representation (discussion of), 3–4, 8, 16. *See also* unnamed speaking characters
Rich, Adrienne, 164nn1–3

Richardson, Samuel, 123–24
Rubery, Matthew, 154n8

satire, 32
Searle, J.R., 151n1, 152n5
Sedgwick, Eve, 25–26
Sense and Sensibility (Austen), 16, 30, 35, 38–40, 42, 44–49, 51, 161n22, 162nn29–30
Shady Characters (Houston), 170n1
Short, Mick, 151n1, 152n5, 155n14
A Small House at Allington (Trollope), 20
Smith, Adam, 90
Smith, Carmen, 160n7
So, Richard Jean, 159n53
social networks. *see* speech networks
sociological theory, 93–94, 166n34, 167nn38–39
speech acts, 107, 151n1
speech data, *10–11,* 19–31, 38, *49, 59,* 96–112, 156nn35–36, 157nn39–41, 158nn44–46, 169n21. *See also* computational literary studies; elided speech; persistent speech; speech distribution; speech frequency; speech networks; utterance length
speech distribution, 24–27, 98–103, 108–12
speech frequency, 95–98
speech networks, 103–20
Staten, Henry, 94
Sternberg, Meir, 153n7
Stevenson, R.L., 5–6
Stovel, Bruce, 159n3
"The Strength of Weak Ties" (Granovetter), 92
strong ties, 17–18, 93, 116–20. *See also* weak ties
A Study in Scarlet (Doyle), *11, 59, 96–97*
suspended quotation, 151n2, 162n37
sympathy, 15, 19, 32, 35, 42, 47, 50, 66, 94, 102, 160n14, 161n21

A Tale of Two Cities (Dickens), 20
"The Talk in Jane Austen" (Stovel and Gregg), 159n3
Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Hardy), *11, 59, 96–97,* 99, 101, 108–9
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 12, 17, 62. *See also specific works*
Thaddeus of Warsaw (Porter), 20
theory (discussion of). *See* computational literary studies; free indirect discourse; narrative theory
Thomas, Bronwen, 151n1
The Time Machine (Wells), 21
Tomalin, Claire, 48, 162n39
Tönnies, Ferdinand, 17, 62, 68
Toolan, Michael, 152n5, 155n14
A Town Traveller (Gissing), 20
transaction, 70–75, 79, 84–91, 115
"The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction" (Underwood, Bamman, and Lee), 159n53
Transparent Minds (Cohn), 4
Trilling, Lionel, 48
Trollope, Anthony, 1, 6, 20–21, 23, 157n40. *See also specific works*
"Turbulent Flow" (Long and So), 159n53
Two on a Tower (Hardy), 20

Underwood, Ted, 159n53
unnamed speaking characters, 16–17, 58–61, 64–68, 71, 73–90, 111, 165n25. *See also* anonymous interactions; encounter; flat characters; minor characters; transaction
Unspeakable Sentences (Banfield), 4, 153n7
utterance length, 22–25, 32–35, 96, 157nn39–41, 158n44

Vanity Fair (Thackeray), *11, 59,* 71–74, *96–97, 100,* 108–9, 166n37
Villette (Brontë), *11, 59,* 88–91, *96–97,* 167n51, 168n55

Ward, Megan, 6
The Warden (Trollope), *11, 59, 96–97*
Warren, Austin, 64–65

weak ties, 17–18, 93, 112–13, 115, 117–22. *See also* strong ties
Wellek, René, 64–65
Wells, H.G., 21
White, Laura, 160n7
Williams, Raymond, 61, 69, 79–80
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 23, 157n40, 160n14
Woloch, Alex, 8–9, 11, 63–65, 67–68, 102, 152n4, 169n12
The Woman in White (Collins), 74–75, 167n39
Woolf, Virginia, 26, 61
Wordsworth, William, 58
Wuthering Heights (Brontë), 1, *11*, *59*, 96–98, *100*