Introduction

When you are in Paris you will no doubt have an opportunity of seeing Daguerre's pictures. I shall be glad to hear from you, what you think of them. Whatever their merit, which no doubt is very great, I think that in one respect our English method must have the advantage. To obtain a second copy of the same view, Daguerre must return to the same locality & set up his instrument a second time; for he cannot copy from his metallic plate, being opaque. But in our method, having first obtained one picture by means of the Camera, the rest are obtainable from this one, by the method of re-transferring which, by a fortunate & beautiful circumstance rectifies both of the errors in the first picture *at once*. viz. the inversion of right for left; & that of light for shade.

—William Henry Fox Talbot to John Frederick William Herschel,
April 27, 1839 (Herschel, emphasis in original)

I have so much to do and such a disinclination to multiply my "counterfeit presentments."

—Charles Dickens to John J. E. Mayall, 1856 (*Letters* 8:199)

In 1856, Charles Dickens declined John J. E. Mayall's request to sit for a daguerreotype, explaining he had "a disinclination to multiply" his "counterfeit presentments" (*Letters* 8:199). The author, a celebrity at that point in his career, had been the subject of numerous daguerreotypes before—many by Mayall—and would sit for daguerreotypists and other photographers again. In this letter, however, he articulates what became a hallmark not only of his celebrity but also the broader challenge to photography this book interrogates. Dickens's complaint is threefold: he is busy, he does not want his image to be multiplied, and he feels such images are counterfeit.

Although he writes here about daguerreotypy—a nonreproducible form of photography—and not a reproducible form such as calotypy or the collodion process, the salient features of his critique are also distinctive qualities of negatives. Specifically, the multiplication of the image and distortion of reality that troubles Dickens about posing for a daguerreotype are even more pronounced in photographs with negatives. Indeed, these multiplication and distortion issues are absolutely central features of the negative process.

In *Victorian Negatives*, I argue that both technical and figurative appreciations of the photographic negative are fundamental to understanding how nineteenth-century photography came to be culturally embedded and expressed through literary works of the period. Furthermore, the negative gives us a new and useful means of historicizing Victorian debates surrounding origins and copies, particularly as these debates played out in the literary arena. The negative is a technology that facilitates image inversion and reproduction. These qualities are essential to the photographic imagination as it developed throughout the nineteenth century, and they played a role in how that imagination in turn shaped literary genres such as the historical novel, detective fiction, Gothic narratives, and—perhaps most significant—the realist novel. In the chapters that follow, I examine several experimental photographic forms and techniques that rely on or are in conversation with negative technology, and I trace how these negative-based techniques were understood and articulated in literary culture—a culture likewise invested in the art of representation. Notions of photographic reproducibility and verisimilitude may appear in sync with the aims of Victorian literary realism, but writers such as Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, E. W. Hornung, Cyril Bennett, Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy, and Bram Stoker complicate these qualities in their lives and works, at times expressing concern about and at other times interest in how negative technologies erode older ideals of representational truth as well as ideas of singularity and artistic control. They do this by featuring failed or troubled photographic reproduction within their works and challenging visual objectivity obliquely and metaphorically across their oeuvres. Several also resist photographic reproduction directly in their lives as celebrity authors. Rather than focusing on literary texts or literary lives in isolation, I see the two as entwined: literary texts and the role of literary celebrity within and beyond those texts reveal a negotiation with the negative, and a reading of one without the other misses the extent to which the negative troubles the barrier between art and life.

The negative is an essential part of photography's nineteenth-century history. In May 1844, Scottish photographer and politician George Smith Cundell published "On the Practice of the Calotype Process of Photography"

in the *London, Edinburgh and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*. Cundell champions calotypy, a paper-negative photographic process that had, up to that point, somewhat languished in the shadows of daguerreotypy. As Cundell notes, "If the comparative merits of the Daguerreotype and of the Calotype were to be judged by the interest which each has excited, or by the progress which has been made in the practice of either, the English invention [the calotype] would justly be classed in a very subordinate rank" (321). This, he goes on to claim, is because "while the Daguerreotype was at once understood, and successfully practised, over the whole civilized world, most of the few persons who have attempted the sister art, after failing of success, have given it up in disappointment" (321). The calotype process disappointed so many, according to Cundell, because its inventor, William Henry Fox Talbot, had maintained a patent and tight control over the details of the process since 1841.[1] In publishing his paper, Cundell hoped to bring these details of calotypy to light: "there is reason to believe," he writes, "that it only requires to be better known to be appreciated as an art not less beautiful than that of Daguerre, and that it is well deserving of a much greater share than it has yet received of the public attention" (321). Its virtues, he claims, are numerous, and among them is that the process "requires but little apparatus; its materials are comparatively inexpensive; and it is possessed besides of the striking advantage, of yielding a great number of perfect copies from every original picture" (321).

The calotype process differs from the daguerreotype process in several key ways, but as Cundell notes, its primary difference is in its use of a negative, from which it is possible to make many "perfect" copies of the image.[2] Whereas daguerreotypes are unique photographic objects for which there is no negative, calotypes are produced or "retransferred" using a paper negative or "reverse," as photographers such as Talbot, John Frederick William Herschel, and others called it.[3] This process has a distinct advantage, writes Talbot in his letter to Herschel on April 27, 1839. Indeed, in 1851 Frederick Scott Archer developed the negative further with the glass-negative wet collodion process. This process produced a sharper final image that was easier and faster to reproduce than the calotype process and also ultimately contributed to the decline of the daguerreotype. Collodion-based processes went on to dominate the photographic scene from the 1850s through the 1880s, the notion of "a great number of perfect copies" becoming ever more part of the definition of the photograph. According to Beaumont Newhall's *History of Photography*, "The daguerreotype was doomed" from this point on, its "disadvantage" the fact that "each picture was unique" and the process relatively expensive (28, 19).

Cundell's preference for the negative process over daguerreotypy is typical of many photographers in the era. Amateur photographer George Shadbolt notes in an 1864 *British Journal of Photography* essay that whereas he suffered "disappointment on finding the expensive nature of the materials requisite for pursing" the daguerreotype, he felt "gratification at being able to repeat the experiments" of the calotype (199). Writing in 1859, photographic entrepreneur Francis Frith likewise admits that while the daguerreotype is "very beautiful," "the fact of its being a *non-reproductive* process excluded the idea of its application to the various commercial and valuable purposes for which the great principle of photographic representation was seen to be so strikingly available . . . they are no more available for the popular uses of Art than are the costly illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum" (119, emphasis in original).[4] This preference for the reproducible was encoded into popular instruction books, such as the 1857 manual *The A B C of Photography*, which notes that the value of a negative is "in its power of producing an unlimited number of positives on paper" (ii).[5] As this range of texts indicates, the negative's value as a means of offering multiple reproductions became a common motif throughout the century, noted in philosophical essays, utilitarian instruction manuals for beginners, and specialist articles in the periodical press.

Yet photographic reproduction was not unvaryingly praised. Photography "must make a revolution in art," acknowledged Nathaniel Parker Willis and Timothy O. Porter in their 1839 essay, "The Pencil of Nature: A New Discovery" (46). However, they express concern over this revolution when it comes to the imitative quality of photographic reproduction:

> People prefer a poor representation of an object made by a human hand to the beauty of the thing itself. They will throw away a leaf, a flower, of exquisite beauty, and treasure up the veriest daub, that shall have the slightest resemblance to it. . . . We are afraid something of this indifference will arise from the new invention [of photography]. . . . If this view be correct, it may be presumed that the number of artists will be greatly lessened. (46–47)

In other words, the "slightest resemblance" offered by photography risks making people indifferent to natural beauty, and art in turn will suffer. It is notably photography's imitative quality that poses the threat here—a quality that is exacerbated by reproducing the image, even if that image is

but a "poor representation." Photographic reproduction through the negative, notes Sir William J. Newton in 1853, is imprecise: "I lose something by this means in sharpness, and perhaps in softness" (qtd. in Zillman 147). Indeed, writes William John Hubbard in 1872, "every portrait photographer" will attest that "in almost every negative he takes . . . there is some part in it that does not come out truthfully" (144–45). The photographer must therefore retouch the negative to produce the desired print. Thus, although some lauded the negative's promise, others observed that the negative introduced complications by making reproduction too easy, producing an inferior image, or suggesting that the photograph itself is not "truthful" unless it is manipulated.

These complications are richly developed in the literary arena. Two years after Dickens demurred having his daguerreotype taken, writer John Hollingshead exploited the same Shakespearean reference to "counterfeit presentments" in the context of photography in the July 3, 1858 issue of Dickens's own journal, *Household Words*. Hollingshead's story, "A Counterfeit Presentment," features Sweetwort, a famous author reluctant to have his photograph taken because his "face and head are of that peculiar character, that, under no possible combination of lights and attitude could they be agreeable in a photographic portrait, or give any correct idea of the original" (71). Sweetwort is hounded by photographers until the day a particularly determined one shows him an image of another famous individual, prize-fighter Bill Tippets. The photographer then blackmails Sweetwort: "knowing your objection to sit for a photograph," he says,

> I have been compelled to look amongst my stock for something like you, and I can find nothing so near the mark as Bill Tippets. . . . This order for two thousand copies of your likeness for home consumption, and fifteen hundred for exportation . . . must be executed within ten days, and I can only give you till ten o'clock to-morrow morning to decide. At that hour I must know whether it is to be Bill Tippets, or Mr. Edgar Sweetwort. (72)

Sweetwort "helplessly" ends up having his photograph taken rather than suffering the substitution of Tippets's image for his own.[6] In the age of the negative, Sweetwort is not in control over his own photographic likeness.

This story illustrates the undesirable possibilities of the photographic image—possibilities of reproducibility that are negative because of their reliance

on the negative. The story banks on the eeriness of interchangeable photo-graphic subjects and amplifies this eeriness through the risk of photographic reproduction, the promised "two thousand copies of your likeness for home consumption, and fifteen hundred for exportation" wielded as a threat. Sweet-wort cannot bear the idea that another individual should represent himself in such abundance. Of course, the irony is that his initial objection to being photographed is his concern that photographs do not correctly capture the way he actually looks. In short, there is no possibility of an accurate photographic image—and we must imagine that either Sweetwort fails to understand the irony of giving in to the photographer's demands, or that his acquiescence is the only way he can claim some small measure of agency in the process of his celebrity. This "agency" is a farce: in the story's final paragraph, Sweetwort finds himself forced to sit "helplessly, under a broiling sun, in a glass cage upon the tiles of an elevated house near the Haymarket," much like an animal and asked to compose his "countenance according to the imperious instruc-tions of the relentless photographer" (Hollingshead 72). In Dickens's personal experiences with photographers and in this story written for his magazine, negative-based photography provides a great number of perfect—or, perhaps more troublingly, imperfect—copies. This process of photographic duplication threatens the subjectivity of the individual. The person no longer has control over his own image, his own celebrity, and by proxy his own identity.

"A Counterfeit Presentment" participated in a growing trend of liter-ary treatments of photography. From the mid-nineteenth century on, Brit-ish literary culture—the world inside and surrounding the production of texts—increasingly featured, referenced, and encoded photography. As Jane M. Rabb notes in her anthology of literature and photography,

> Literature greeted photography warmly when the daguerreotype and the calotype were announced in 1839. Less threatened than painters by the new child of science, writers like Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman in America and John Ruskin in England and others throughout the world heralded the daguerreotype process. . . . Photography became a metaphor for the veracity and even creativity of many nineteenth-century writers, and the supposedly objective camera became a model for ways of seeing and representing the world. ("Introduction: Notes" xxxv–xxxviii)

Beginning in the 1990s, many scholars have focused their attention on intersections between Victorian literature and visual culture.[7] Building on

this tradition, my work shifts focus and argues that the development of the photographic negative—the calotype initially and then the collodion wet plate and fast gelatin halide dry plate negatives—played an instrumental role in the representation of Victorian photography in literary culture.

Scholars most frequently discuss photography as a monolithic whole,[8] but I argue that as a specific technology used to produce specific types of photographs, the negative concurrently enabled distinct literary and cultural responses. Methodologically, my approach shares much with that of Owen Clayton's in *Literature and Photography in Transition, 1850–1915*. Clayton suggests it is "problematic . . . for scholars to offer a single cultural reading of photography across the nineteenth century, because of the wide range of photographic technologies, and the variety of attitudes towards these technologies, which appeared during that time" (6). Specifically, he investigates "how authorial engagements with photography were affected when technologies altered" (6). His approach highlights the fact that rather than a singular product, photography is a set of distinct processes.[9] Similarly, I consider multiple photographic forms and techniques—some mainstream, others experimental and less prominent—that had a substantial cultural impact on the Victorians. As Clayton notes, photography was not monolithic, but I also argue that the negative may be simultaneously and productively understood as a broader and more figurative category. The history of photography is also the history of the negative, and it is a history that is multifaceted and complex.

The negative, furthermore, provides us with a lens through which we might re-view the relationship between photography and Victorian culture. In this regard, my project is in sympathy with Nicoletta Leonardi and Simone Natale's edited collection, *Photography and Other Media in the Nineteenth Century*, which "moves away from the notion of an autonomous history of photography" by considering photography in relation to other media (2). By centering my project on the role of the negative in the terrain of a diverse photographic landscape, I propose to revise how we understand the history of photography and how we understand its role in nineteenth-century literature and literary culture. In addition to considering the negative materially, as multiple forms emerging out of distinct technologies and accompanied by discourses that evolve over time, I read its impact figuratively through metaphors of visual inversion and reproduction that persist in nineteenth-century fiction. Through this dual material and figurative focus, I develop a multidimensional theory of the negative based on the meanings it produces and how these meanings are articulated both directly and indirectly through

literary culture. In other words, this project proposes to destabilize previous readings of the relationship between photography and literature by insisting on the centrality of what is often thought of as marginal: specific experimental photographic techniques and the ever-present specter of the negative. In addition to literary texts, this project examines the letters and more public writings of photographers, photo historians, and the nineteenth-century popular press, as well as debates surrounding Victorian celebrity authorship. I examine discussions of daguerreotypy, calotypy, the collodion process, and the dry plate process; experimental developments such as print solarizations; the rise of the cabinet card; forensic photography; spirit photography and other double exposures; and the popularization of postmortem photography. This list is not exhaustive but rather, to borrow from Elizabeth Edwards's methodology in *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and the Historical Imagination, 1885–1918*, representative of particular photographic types. Edwards notes that instead of specific images she is interested in " 'the photography complex'—the process through which the photographs could emerge" (27). I am also interested in the photographic process—more specifically, negative photographic processes. My focus on the negative illuminates an often-marginalized part of the history of photography and demonstrates how this marginalized history is in fact central to Victorian literary culture.

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Photography is frequently lauded for its verisimilitude. As Talbot writes, describing one of his early experiments in 1839, "I found out a way of fixing a picture on silver plate, which gives *normal* lights, i.e. lights for lights & shades for shades. . . . The image of a piece of lace done so, is so perfect that when examined by a lens, it still remains doubtful to the eye weather [*sic*] it is not the real object" (Herschel, November 15, 1839). This view of photography was shared by photographers and the general public alike. Edgar Allan Poe, for example, lauded photography early on as "perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science," a technology with the ability to produce a "perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented" (4–5). Not only was photography seen by many as a means of perfectly capturing reality, it was considered superior to the human eye in this regard. As Corey Keller notes, "Photography's potential contributions were seen as twofold: as a mechanical replacement for the draftsman's arduous task of manually transcribing visual observations, and as a corrective for the human tendency toward subjective interpretation" (21). Indeed, Keller continues,

"Within a scientific culture that placed great weight on empirical observation, this idea of the camera-eye served not only as a physical model, but also as a metaphor that underscored the relationship between visibility and knowability" (30).[10] In its early decades, photography was repeatedly classified according to its use value in this way. Despite a protracted debate as to photography's proper designation as art or science, it was categorized along with "Philosophical Instruments and Processes" at the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition and cataloged under "The Science of the Exhibition" in the *Art Journal*'s Great Exhibition catalog.[11]

Reminding us that "photography was not one but several inventions," Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison note that many of photography's earliest uses were in the service of art, for "scientific photography was only one species of nineteenth-century photography, and objective photography was in turn only one variety of scientific photography" (125–26).[12] Photography was notoriously difficult to categorize in relation to art and science. Robert Hunt defends the *Art Journal*'s inclusion of photography in various articles in 1851 with the note that "we have, from time to time, kept our readers acquainted with the progress of photography, both at home and abroad. We have done so because we felt certain that it must, sooner or later, become highly useful to the artist in the study of the natural" ("On the Application of Science" 106). In other words, the value of photography is what it might contribute to art—not necessarily its status *as* art.[13] In the 1860s, some were willing to argue that "photography belonged among the fine arts," while others maintained that it should "properly be understood as an objective scientific practice untouched by human hands" (S. Edwards 11).[14] The protracted art/science debate gives us another way of considering the extent to which the issue of representation in photography was vexed throughout the period.[15] Photography's proximity to scientific objectivity indicates a type of mimesis that becomes a source of anxiety when we consider that images of ourselves might be endlessly reproduced. This is the anxiety of the doppelgänger or uncanny double; it is the anxiety Dickens articulates when he writes about his disinclination to see his likeness multiplied. Conversely, photography's proximity to art suggests a distance from mimesis—a sense that despite appearing to be mimetic, such mimesis is "counterfeit." Victorian photography did not belong wholly to the art world or the world of scientific objectivity, and its position in between vexed a public that would have preferred to see it more clearly defined.

From its inception, then, photography did not enjoy uniform acceptance as a medium of scientific, objective truth—in fact, writes Jordan Bear,

"the milieu into which this supposedly revolutionary medium was inserted was primed *not* to receive photography as unquestionably objective" (5).[16] Instead, photography participated in a "vast mosaic of visual discernment," whereby "The capacity for the visual discrimination of photographic representations emerges as both a criterion for political agency and a skill to be commodified, developments that depended precisely upon an ambivalence of photography's representational role" (5). This ambivalence is precisely what I identify and analyze here. The mixed cultural reception of the photographic negative, the uses to which that negative was put, and the ways these uses emerge in Victorian literary culture support Bear's thesis. We may then push the implications of that thesis further by considering how photographic debates were encoded into literary culture. Bear describes the "intense ambiguity of the photograph's verisimilitude," and developments in literary realism particularly echo this ambiguity of photographic verisimilitude (8). We may read these echoes as figurative evocations of not just photography but negative-based photography more specifically.

This project thus situates itself alongside interdisciplinary studies of photography and literary realism.[17] As numerous critics have argued, literary realism is more complex than its name suggests.[18] If we understand realism strictly as a product of mimesis, we understand it to be an attention to the "everyday real" (Brooks 7). Yet counterintuitively, writes Alexander Bove, mimesis "depends for its success on a suppression of the relation of the sign to its referent" (655). As James Eli Adams notes, from George Eliot on, realism has provided a "suggestion of psychic depth," and "our illusion of vicarious participation" (Adams 189). The reality of realism is in many ways a misnomer, a term that seems forever subject to qualifications and exclusions, and the problem of defining realism is not simply a modern interpretative concern. Daniel Brown claims that in the nineteenth century, "those who entered into debates about realism questioned the extent to which artistic representation might—or even should—achieve the same sort of objective proof expected of scientific or technical projects" (10). Yet the notion that all "technical projects" were objective is also a misnomer, writes Daniel A. Novak: "What photography and realism shared was not necessarily their fidelity to detail but rather their inability to present those details in any coherent form" (63). In other words, photography and literary realism share an uneasy relationship with the real.

Several studies of visual culture and literature have attended to poetry or romance,[19] but realism has received the most sustained critical attention. Brown observes that "a large volume of scholarship shows connections between nineteenth-century representational practices, particularly realism in literature

and painting, and an increasingly visually oriented society" (5–6). Relatedly, writers such as Novak, Clayton, Jonathan Crary, Jennifer Green-Lewis, Nancy Armstrong, Ronald R. Thomas, Regina B. Oost, Helen Groth, and Michael North have pioneered a critical tradition of reading nineteenth-century realism alongside photography. As Crary has influentially argued, "some of the most pervasive means of producing 'realistic' effects in mass visual culture, such as the stereoscope, were in fact based on a radical abstraction and reconstruction of optical experience, thus demanding a reconsideration of what 'realism' means in the nineteenth century" (9). Crary's watershed study in turn led others to consider the relationship between photography and literary realism. For example, Armstrong argues that nineteenth-century literary realism shares common ground with photography, for both evolved in response to an increasing cultural interest in visual information.[20] This visual information, according to North, was often "iconic"—photography had a "disorienting hyperreality," a hyperreality that produced a "distancing and aestheticizing effect" (*Camera Works* 25).[21] Novak's sustained critique of photographic realism goes a step further and "redefines what 'photographic realism' meant for the Victorians and changes our definition of and expectations for literary realism" (6). Proposing that photography and realism share an aesthetics of fiction or abstraction,[22] Novak challenges the critical perception that Victorians trusted photographic objectivity.[23] In other words, photography demonstrates the Victorians didn't necessarily regard visual or literary realism as mimetically real. Photography allows us to see that realism is an illusive/elusive whole constructed of the very things it purports not to be: contingency, interpretation, the subjective, and the fragmentary.

My study participates in this critical tradition, and by focusing on the role of the negative in particular, it highlights tensions surrounding origins and copies as well as reality and representation. I begin by analyzing primarily Victorian realist fiction, because my claim is that many Victorian authors grappled with and rewrote the narrative of photography in relation to realism, and I trace that rewritten narrative through their works. At times this writing and rewriting is expressed as an articulation of a realism seemingly rooted in its inverse: fidelity less to "reality" than to what is "true," as Elaine Freedgood describes it (402).[24] At other points, it is expressed in literary works that go beyond the limits of realism. For this reason, I also analyze nonrealist works in this project. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* are all examples of texts that veer into the supernatural, their challenge to realism concurrent with their critique of the image.

While literary realism ostensibly promises us a copy of an original, the "great number of perfect copies" made possible by the negative process became the subject of critique in literary culture for their abundance and their purported perfection. Many lauded the negative's capacity to reproduce images over and over again, but this potential reproducibility is often treated with ambivalence and concern by the authors I consider here. As Robin Kelsey notes in *Photography and the Art of Chance*, "Uniformity was a watchword of the modern economy, which aimed to produce precise and interchangeable parts and commodities. Because many Victorians feared a loss of humanity in this pursuit of exact equivalence, accident and error took on connotations of human vitality and uniqueness" (10). This fear is registered by celebrity authors, such as Dickens, who was himself photographed, and it is encoded into works of fiction, such as the Sherlock Holmes stories "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton." In these cases, the circulation of the image exceeds any one person's control, indicating an anxiety around photographic reproduction at large. The idea of reproduction—the negative processes' primary "advantage," to use Talbot's phrase—produces what I suggest to be a kind of existential anxiety. As Walter Benjamin puts it in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," whereas art has always been reproducible "in principle," the technological reproduction of works of art heralds a new relationship between viewer and reproduction: technological reproduction "is more independent of the original than manual reproduction" and "can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself" (218, 220). Here Benjamin is describing the massification of art: "By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced" (221). This process erodes the notion of singular authenticity and the aura, which is good from a Benjaminian perspective if we are talking about mobilizing the masses through technological representation to fight fascism in the early twentieth century. However, the erosion of singular authenticity is potentially troubling from the perspective of an author like Dickens, whose own photographic reproduction exceeded his control, much like the unauthorized reproduction of his novels in the United States exceeded his control. If Dickens's image were "reactivated" or re-created by a viewer without his knowledge, what power might this image have?

The anxiety of an image reproduced to the point where the reproduction is severed from the original referent foreshadows the anxiety of simulation. As Jean Baudrillard writes,

> Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom). Simulation, on the contrary, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value,* from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference. Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. (*Simulacra and Simulation* 6, emphasis in original)

Like Benjamin, Baudrillard writes about an era beyond the confines of the present study, yet his observations about the dissociation between representation and referent within late twentieth-century mass media is prefigured in Victorian photography, and his response is presaged in the uneasiness with which Victorian writers considered photographic reproducibility in their lives and works.[25] Indeed, notes Roland Barthes, "the age of Photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private: the private is consumed as such, publicly" (98). Thus an author like Dickens, who expresses concern about the loss of control over his image, in fact speaks to a larger awareness and anxiety over the "new social value" of "the publicity of the private." One manifestation of this photograph-enabled publicity is the development of celebrity culture.

Literary celebrity, write James English and John Frow, "is thoroughly, if problematically, intertwined with the construction of the British literary canon" from the eighteenth century forward (40). Celebrity is that extratextual interest in an author, a notoriety that becomes all the more pronounced in the age of photography, for "to be photographically famous was to be more *familiar*," as Joss Marsh puts it ("Rise of Celebrity Culture" 106, emphasis in original). The fiction of the celebrity photograph is that it promises to "put one in the presence of fame" (106). The celebrity photograph gives its owner a false sense of being close to the celebrity—of owning a piece of that individual by way of the image. At the heart of the celebrity photograph's logic lies its failure to live up to that promise, for the owner of the celebrity photograph does not own a piece of the celebrity and is not in the presence of fame. This is particularly true because the celebrity image is not singular but multiple, existentially tied to the negative that makes its reproduction possible. There is nothing special about the celebrity photograph; there are numerous copies. Far from bringing the celebrity closer to the viewer, the multiplied celebrity image instead holds the celebrity at a greater remove.

The negative's role in reinforcing the logic of celebrity is a more pronounced iteration of its role in literary culture more broadly. The negative promises presence but then negates that presence.

The negative's most obvious contribution to photography is image reproduction, while somewhat less attention has been paid to how the negative facilitates this reproduction by inverting light and dark. Although it is a translation of the word "photography," the expression "light writing" is a curious way to describe the photographic process. Photographic images are, of course, dependent on light for their very existence. They are created by the controlled harnessing of directed light through a box and onto a piece of chemically treated metal, glass, paper, or plastic. In this way, the true subject of every photograph is light, more so than any other visual representation.[26] The expression "light writing" is curious, however, because it suggests but never states its reliance on darkness, that opposite quality so necessary to the success of the light writing. Traditionally, film must be developed in absolute darkness, and photographs are printed in a room with only red-tinged safelights. Beyond this, the portions of a photograph that appear the lightest in the final print are those parts that have received the least, rather than the most, light: the photographic representation of light relies on the obstruction of light in the development process. A negative-based photograph relies on its own inverse.

The omission of darkness in the word "photography" can be interpreted historically and culturally. "Light writing" borrows from Enlightenment rhetoric, reflecting a Victorian critique of religious faith in favor of a more scientific epistemology. Photography promises to shed light on the world truthfully and honestly. Yet darkness remains embedded in the fabric of the photographic image. Discussions of photography typically reference light as part of a dialectic: light *and* dark. This dialectic, moreover, is often expressed figuratively, replete with metaphoric associations. As Oliver Wendell Holmes writes in describing the negative-based photographic process in 1859,

> This *negative* is now to give birth to a *positive*,—this mass of contradictions to assert its hidden truth in a perfect harmonious affirmation of the realities of Nature. . . . Out of the perverse and totally depraved negative,—where it might almost seem as if some magic and diabolic power had wrenched all things from their properties, where the light of the eye was darkness, and the deepest blackness was gilded with the brightest glare,—is to come the true end of all this series of operations, a copy of

> Nature in all her sweet graduations and harmonies and contrasts.
> (55, emphasis in original)

Holmes waxes poetic in this passage about the philosophical significance of
the negative, which appears so "perverse" and "totally depraved" before it
is used to create copies of Nature. Thus behind every positive print lies a
"diabolic" negative. Photography was not alone in accruing such metaphoric
weight: Rolf Reichardt examines the way light and dark imagery more generally
was mobilized during the Enlightenment and into the nineteenth century,
coopting older religious metaphoric associations between light as true and
good and dark as false and evil.[27] As I discuss in chapter 1, the metaphoric
resonance of good and evil in particular attaches itself to photography in
this period, as writers struggled for ways to describe negative technologies.

These evocations of light/good and dark/evil at times proliferated
other, historically significant metaphoric associations. Thus Henry Morley
and William Henry Wills write in their 1854 article "Photography" that
the inversion of light and dark in a portrait may be thought of in racial
terms as rendering a white face black:

> The image was then made perfect; but, as the light parts were
> all depicted by the blackest shades, and the black parts were
> left white, the courteous assistant was there represented as a
> negro. . . . That negro stage was not of course the finished por-
> trait, it was "the negative"—or stereotype plate, as it were—from
> which, after it had been fixed with a solution of the sulphate
> of the peroxide of iron, any number of impressions could be
> taken. . . . The black face will obstruct the passage of the light
> and leave a white face underneath, the white hair will allow the
> light to pass, making black hair below, and so on. (61)

In this description, the negative face is a "negro stage" only, not the finished
image of the final photograph. Far from innocuous, metaphoric associations
between light and dark may wield enormous cultural weight as in this racial-
ized description, reinforcing associations that are not limited to abstraction
but concretized in social life.

The negative illuminates the dark side of photography and a literary
culture increasingly engrossed by that technology. In this project, I identify
three types of literary references that evoke the negative: direct references
to photography in relation to the celebrity author, direct references to

photography in Victorian narratives, and metaphoric and/or formal references to daguerreotypy and negative-based processes in works of largely realist fiction. The chapters that follow illustrate the extent to which the reproduction of the image is not merely a modern concern but a preoccupation very much present in the works and lives of major Victorian fiction writers, such as Dickens, Conan Doyle, Hornung, Bennett, Stevenson, Wilde, Hardy, and Stoker. Most of these authors are canonical, for canons, as Kelsey puts it, "are conversations around which a culture can define itself, and without them collective aspiration and social value threaten to dissipate into the blunt and banal exchanges of commerce" (4). In each chapter, I focus on a particular form of Victorian photography with a distinct relationship to the negative and read each photographic technique in relation to Victorian fiction and literary culture to demonstrate how this technique affects or is in conversation with the literary sphere. The impact is often implicit rather than explicit. I contend that the photographic negative has shaped the way we see in ways we no longer see. The negative is thus an absent presence in photography as well as culture.

The book is organized chronologically only in the broadest sense. I begin with two chapters on Dickens's fiction from the 1850s, when the collodion process made photography more accessible to a general, amateur public. The remainder of the book focuses on the diversification of photographic techniques and literary representations of photographic sensibilities in the 1870s through the 1890s. The technological development of the negative necessarily grounds this project in particular technologies and precise historical moments, yet despite this specificity, the more figurative implications of the negative stretch across the era. This project pairs historical specificity with a broader, theoretical analysis. I treat the negative as a distinct material process and read the figurative implications for this process in relation to literature and literary culture. This method allows me to treat the negative as at once a set of particular practices and techniques and as an overarching quality embedded in most photography and literary works that address photography. Specific negative-based techniques and the overarching figure of the negative are often treated as marginal to histories of the photographic image. When it is seen at all, the negative is often disregarded as peripheral, but here I insist that it is absolutely central to how we understand the photographic image and that image's relationship to other forms of representation.

<div align="center">❧</div>

Chapter 1 examines Charles Dickens's ambivalent relationship to photography. Dickens was photographed many times, and his image was central to the establishment of his literary celebrity. At the same time, photography made him uncomfortable in physical and philosophical terms: he found sitting for his photographic portrait awkward, and he was wary of the uncontrolled multiplication and circulation of his image. Critics have noted a photographic subtext in Dickens's realist fiction. I argue that in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens manages this photographic subtext by rendering it nonreproducible: in short, it follows a Daguerrean logic. By the time Dickens wrote *Tale* in 1859, the wet-plate collodion process had somewhat eclipsed the daguerreotype in popularity in England. Yet the novel—which is set in a period before the invention of either collodion or daguerreotype photography—is formally invested, I argue, in the photographic imagination of the daguerreotype. Through the doppelgängers Darnay and Carton, Dickens introduces the idea of reproducible photographic technology but then stifles its spread. His critique of the past in the service of the present, his fixation on and disruption of dark and light imagery, and his concluding meditation on Sydney Carton's individual "I see" are part of a unified figurative system: a photographic imagination.

Little Dorrit also reveals a photographic subtext, and in chapter 2 I read this subtext as solarized rather than Daguerrean. Solarization is an nonreproducible photographic technique in which a negative or print is exposed to flashes of unfiltered light during development. This partially inverts dark and light in the finished image, such that the image appears part positive and part negative. Reading contemporaneous discourses about and examples of solarization alongside Dickens's famous novel of light and dark, I suggest that *Little Dorrit*'s shadows are important because of the irregular way dark and light interact in the novel. Experimental photography illuminates a reading of *Little Dorrit*'s shadows and its light. By extension, experimental photography is more central to the history of photography and Victorian realism than we presently acknowledge. A fringe photographic experiment, one that is not explicitly referenced in *Little Dorrit*, solarization nevertheless shares with this novel a critique of an established metaphoric connection between light and truth, plus a challenge to a nineteenth-century conception of realism understood as photographic objectivity. Chapters 1 and 2 read metaphoric treatments of photography in Dickens's fiction and suggest that both texts are photographic even as they limit a key component of the negative process: multiplication. At the same time, these treatments repurpose inversion, the other primary component of the process, in the interest of

undermining photography's truth claims. These literary treatments, carried out largely at the level of metaphor, are in sync with Dickens's distaste for and need to cultivate a photographic celebrity persona.

While the Dickensian use of a photographic sensibility undermines reproducibility and objectivity, Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories would appear, at first glance, to reassert photography's ostensible truth claims and value as a reproducible form of documentation. The development of forensic photography in the 1870s and its increasing use to document crime scenes and compile visual catalogs of known criminals speak to a broader cultural reliance on photography's documentary effects, particularly in the field of law enforcement. This use of photography was also negative-based, relying on reproduction to spread information in the service of law enforcement. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the nineteenth century's most famous literary detective does not make use of a camera in his own investigations. Chapter 3 analyzes photography's role in the Holmes canon and the incongruity between this role and the public perception of the technology. In the first Holmes short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia," a photographic portrait is proof of the king of Bohemia's indiscretion with an actress named Irene Adler, and thereby also serves as a means of blackmail. Although this type of photograph would have been reproducible, the king and Holmes pursue the portrait as though this visual representation is a unique object. Holmes is a scientist, but his scientific method begins to fray when vision comes into the picture. He fails to truly observe Adler, which—ironically—matters very little in the final analysis, for she gives the king "her word" that she will never use the photograph against him. The word bests the image in the final analysis, and the story comes to an abrupt conclusion. Caught up in his own way of seeing, Holmes fails to notice the solution to the case. This is the negation of perception—a breakdown between the machine-like functioning of the eye and the work of interpretation.

Chapter 4 builds on the idea of photographic exposure, developed in this book's treatment of Dickens's life and the works of Conan Doyle, by considering the motif of the double exposure: a single image produced from two negatives or two images combined in one negative. Moving from fin-de-siècle short fiction about photography and double exposures to works by Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde, the chapter argues that the technique/mistake of the double exposure operates as a salient metaphor for the complications of narrative and social reputation at the end of the century. The double exposure is then duplicated in the rhetorical figuration of the double negative. Whereas the photographic negative connects

with themes and concerns about the reproduction of representation in works by Dickens and Conan Doyle, reproduction happens at the level of the negative itself in E. W. Hornung's "A Spoilt Negative," Cyril Bennett's "The Spirit Photograph," Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Instead of a single image capable of being reproduced over and over again, the image in a double exposure is at its core already multiple, calling into question the idea of originality and authenticity even more dramatically than in traditional negative processes. While the short stories depict an optimistic view of the implications underlying photographic reproduction at the level of the negative, Stevenson's and Wilde's Gothic tales are implicitly much more skeptical, illustrating figuratively and grammatically the negative impact double exposures can play on representation, the individual, and reality itself. This plays out most dramatically in the instance of Wilde's celebrity persona and infamous trials.

Chapter 5 analyzes how photography exposes absence rather than presence in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Photographs appear throughout the novel, consistently signifying affective attachment. Yet Sue and Jude have no portraits of their children. Why, in an era when postmortem images were so prevalent and in a text that features photography repeatedly in conjunction with affective attachment, don't Jude and Sue reproduce images of their dead children through photography? I read the novel's missing postmortem photographs as part of a broader failure to see and record. In other words, if "A Scandal in Bohemia" is a story about the problems inherent in trusting the visual record, *Jude* depicts the results of denying that visual record altogether. Such a negotiation between the photographic record and its absence may be seen in the development of Hardy's Wessex more generally. Wessex is a historic/fictional palimpsest of southwestern England and serves as the famed location of most of Hardy's major novels. Hardy created maps of the region, commissioned etchings of Wessex locales for the collected Wessex Novels edition of 1895–96, and contracted a photograph for each of the collected Wessex edition novels of 1912. Like postmortem images, these "Wessex" photographs reproduce nostalgia and even bereavement for a rural England that no longer is and paradoxically—given the photographic record—never was.

By way of conclusion, the book turns to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to address the connection between photography and memory via the first literary example of a vampire whose image cannot be reflected and (implicitly) duplicated photographically. Dracula abounds with technology: shorthand,

the phonograph, and the telegraph all help the characters tell their stories. Yet the novel is notably missing the most prevalent photographic technologies of the day and is thus a photographic negative of a different sort. Dracula cannot be visually contained or reproduced, and the conclusion addresses this characteristic alongside late Victorian fan culture. I suggest Dracula's absent reflection mirrors for us the experience of the fan: no matter how many photographs one might have of a given celebrity, the logic of celebrity dictates that something is always at a remove, unreproducible, and unseen. The logic of fandom is one that relies on the literal and the metaphoric negative in that it requires the reproduction of the celebrity's image and the negation of the celebrity's presence. The idea of containing the image and its reproductions is one we can trace through early twentieth-century film adaptations of *Dracula*; in a broader sense, this idea of containment and loss of control is very much still with us as we consider the implications of a digital photographic process. We no longer need negatives, but the implication of the negative persists residually, influencing photographic culture through new forms.

Photography, writes Jennifer Green-Lewis, "has an unusual relationship with the idea of truthfulness. . . . Built into the idea of photography is the fantasy of perfect re-presentation, a mirroring of the object which surpasses mimesis. A photograph, in theory, can more than replicate appearance. It can duplicate it" (*Framing the Victorians* 25). I argue that it is precisely this "more than" replication that so preoccupied Victorian novelists and that the negative illuminates a specific and sustained concern with reproducibility and inversion embedded in Victorian literary culture's preoccupations with celebrity, representation, and realism. These are preoccupations we share with the Victorians, and by better understanding the logic by which photography and literature intersected in the nineteenth century, perhaps we might illuminate and better understand our own uses of photographic images and literary texts alike.